



WE TRUST YOUTH RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

RIP to the RFP (Rest In Peace
to the Request for Proposal) -
Hello collaborative relationships and
“co-creation”

A JOINT INITIATIVE BY:



START-UP FUNDS SUPPORTED BY:



WE TRUST YOU(TH) RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH YOUTH

by We Trust You(th) Problem Solving Community

BACKGROUND

The [We Trust You\(th\) Initiative](#) aims to tackle practical problems that result from systemic inequities that currently thrive within relationships between youth-led organizations and youth-focused donors and iNGOs. To support collective problem solving between youth, iNGOs, and donors, We Trust You(th) issued a public [challenge](#) and established a [practical problem solving community](#).

For iNGOs and donors, who currently often hold the most power and decision-making, We Trust You(th) is co-hosting three practical problem solving workshops. To support workshop follow-up and others who have accepted the challenge or who want to improve their ability to equity partner with young people, We Trust You(th) will be sharing lessons and recommendations publicly.

The following recommendations were compiled and collected based on the discussions held during the third and last We Trust You(th) Problem Solving Community workshop. Under We Trust You(th), donors, iNGOs, and youth-led efforts (listed in acknowledgments below) came together to rethink the proposal development process. They aimed to identify ways to make it more collaborative and equitable, especially by using what is often described as a “co-creation process”. **Recommendations outlined below are intended to help youth-focused donors and iNGOs take necessary steps to tackle the following problem:**

FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM

Together they acknowledged a fundamental problem: money moves in inequitable ways between donors, iNGOs, and YLOs. This is particularly evident during the typical proposal development process.

Example Practical Problem: Competitive proposal development processes can create inequitable and even unethical practices between iNGOS and YLOs, resulting in limited participation of YLOs in proposal design and tokenistic efforts.

OUR HOPEFUL OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP WERE:

- Identify ways of making the proposal development process more collaborative and equitable, especially a more detailed co-creation process.

SO, WHAT IS OUR PROPOSED ACTION?

LONG TERM CHANGE:

Most (donors, iNGOs, and youth alike) were interested in collaborating to reimagine the whole process - making the Request for Proposal (RFP) Rest in Peace (RIP).^{*} They welcome the opportunity to redefine and reimagine the status quo. For example, flip the dynamic to where YLOs determine community priorities/needs and capacity, donors' commitment, and then youth choose who they want to partner with.

NEAR TERM CHANGE:

We recognise that the above goal won't happen overnight. So, to help solve proposal development issues in the short term, donors, iNGOs, and youth have shared (separately and together) how they could change their practices in the near term to encourage collaboration during the proposal development process.

NEAR TERM ADJUSTMENTS DONORS AND INGOS CAN MAKE TO GET CLOSER TO GENUINELY CO-CREATING PROPOSALS WITH YOUTH:

FOR INGOS SMALL(ISH) THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW:

Be transparent and clear as possible:

share templates, timelines, deadlines, draft documents, budgets, and invite youth partners to calls with donors. Provide clear guidelines and transparent information before the proposal development process. Consider using a shared folder (like or google folder) or platform (like salesforce).

Pay your youth-led collaborator ideally before, at least after:

Check to see if you can pay for their time in developing the proposal in advance (regardless if you win the grant or not). If you really cannot, once you're awarded as the prime grantee, make the first payment to your youth partner as back payment for the development stage.

Be very clear what the terms of any exclusive agreements you ask youth-led efforts to sign. Be sure they understand the implications. Set clear mutual expectations (including what they expect from you).

Share why something wasn't included: If something young people shared or wrote is not included, explain why. This will help to give youth the reassurance that their hard work and input will be validated and listened to and it is not just tokenistic.

Build relationships with diverse youth-led efforts in other ways, like in strategy development and shaping your organizational ways of working, this way when proposals requests pop-up, you will already have strong relationships that are less transactional.

FOR DONORS HERE ARE SMALL(ISH) THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW:

Longer planning stages: Set more reasonable deadlines, in phases to allow for relationship development and co-creation of proposals, like a simple concept submission first. Do not ask for lengthy work plans and milestones upfront from a large number of applicants.

Adjust your language and templates. Remove jargon and make the proposal development forms easy to download, email, or share on a collaborative platform like Google Docs. Offer templates in multiple languages and encourage participants to apply in their preferred language.

Fund collaborative planning and strategizing: make sure your grantee know that compensating youth & YLOs fairly for their time spent, including working on the proposal development process is a priority and covered cost.

Listen to Understand. Do not be speculative, be informed by young people. Co-creation should start at the beginning, by identifying what important information that needs to be learned and who needs to be leading the conversation. Youth should decide with you what the focus of the funding is, who gets funding, and how much.

Review and decision-making process prior to launching a grant: Put youth in the driver's seat of deciding who gets funded. Advocate internally if young people reach out and say the application is complex. Put a system in place that supports shared decision-making power with young people. **You're missing the mark if you don't have youth in decision-making!**

IN PHASE 2.

We Trust You(th) intends to explore this reimagining more concretely with donors and iNGO partners. We will aim to **create systems that allow young people to thrive**. We Trust You(th) also seeks to create spaces for youth to work with youth, since they understand the issues and can create safer spaces that are relationship-driven.

We plan to work collaboratively with donors and iNGOs to redesign the full process so it caters to young people's needs. Please stay tuned for phase 2!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Recommendations made are primarily developed by We Trust You(th) co-leads and youth partners. However, they are strengthened by our ally partners and the wider We Trust You(th) problem solving community.

- **Youth Partners:** We Trust You(th) is co-led by five youth-led organizations: [International Youth Alliance for Family Planning](#), [CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality](#), [Copper Rose Zambia](#), [Green Girls Platform](#), and [¿Y Yo Por Qué No? \(YYPN\)](#). In addition, the co-leads have established formal youth partnerships with [Concealed Narratives](#), [Youth to Youth Cameroon](#), and UP Babaylan – three additional youth-led efforts who provide strategic guidance and input.
- **Ally Partners:** We Trust You(th) proudly collaborates with [Elevate Children Funders Group](#), [EngenderHealth](#), [Children Rights Innovation Fund](#), [Participatory Grantmakers Community of Practice](#), and [We Are Purposeful](#). Critical kick-start funds have been provided by [Family Planning 2030](#), [UN Foundation](#).
- **We Trust You(th) Problem Solving Community:** Inputs provided by iNGOs and donors who attend the second workshop have been integrated into these recommendations. ([Workshops Attendees](#))