

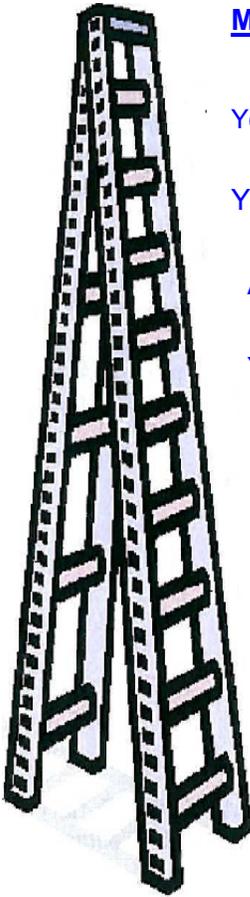


4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

Nebraska 4-H Youth Development

Ladder of Youth Participation

As we work with youth, it is important to remember that we are preparing youth for leadership and life experiences. This preparation needs to happen in the most positive and meaningful way. The following ladder is a guide to help lead the partnerships in a positive direction. The higher up the ladder, the more meaningful the action is for the youth. The bottom four rungs demonstrate the adults clearly have the power and control. In the top four rungs, the power and control begin to shift. The bottom four rungs are not necessarily bad, but less meaningful for youth. The top three areas are places that we want to see youth in their leadership involvement. One is not necessarily better than the other.



Maximum Youth Involvement/Youth as Partners

Youth initiated and directed by youth

Youth initiated but share decisions with adults

Adult initiated but share decisions with youth

Youth are consulted and informed

Youth are informed and assigned tasks

Youth are tokens; may be asked for ideas

Youth are used as decorations for the program

Youth are used to communicate adults' messages

Minimum Youth involvement/Youth as Objects

Youth Initiated, Shared Decision with Adults: Youth come up with the idea and initiate adult involvement. The two work together to share the decision-making. This is the most meaningful partnership for youth.

Youth Initiated and Directed: Youth come up with the idea and take the leadership and run with it.

Adult Initiated and Directed: The ideas of several adults who consult with and share ideas with young people in order to make it work for both youth and adults.

Consulted and Informed: Youth are asked what they think and want, but do not really have many choices. Adults still tell youth what their role is but at least they ask first.

Assigned and Informed: Youth and adults are working together and youth may have an active role but they are pretty much told what to do. Adults will think of the idea, want the money, and tell the youth what their role is.

Tokenism: Making small concessions to kids. Youth may feel empowered for a short period of time but then nothing happens. Examples: Youth forum in which a youth voice is expressed but not taken any further. Youth are given title of “Jr. Staff” but have no say in decisions at all.

Decoration: Agency honors youth once a year in a ceremony, awards banquet, article in paper, etc. This is not a bad thing to do, but is not necessarily meaningful in terms of partnerships.

Manipulation: A program for the benefit of the adults involved. Youth involvement might be a grant requirement. Young people are USED to get the grant funds.