

Youth Media

**I EXIST.
I AM VISIBLE.
I MATTER.**



An examination of the field and five youth
media organizations funded by
the Stuart Foundation

The background image shows a museum gallery with large windows on the left. Several children are interacting with digital displays. One child is wearing a VR headset and holding a controller. Another child is looking at a screen showing a person. A girl in the foreground is looking at a screen. The overall tone is educational and interactive.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Stuart Foundation is pleased to present this report on youth media and our experience with five outstanding and dynamic organizations in the field.

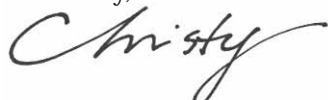
Nearly seventy years ago, our founder Elbridge Amos Stuart created the Stuart Foundation to ensure that “opportunities and possibilities remain open and available to all young men and women who have high ideals and are willing to make sacrifices for their attainment.” Today, we honor his commitment to providing opportunities for others through our work on a range of issues affecting the lives of children and young people. We work with innovative organizations and passionate individuals that strive to ensure that children and youth grow up in safe, caring, and nurturing families; have opportunities to learn in engaging and effective schools; and live in safe, supportive, and vibrant communities.

Over three years of partnership with youth media organizations our appreciation for the impact of youth media and the value of the developing field has grown. We are deeply inspired by the transformative experiences we have witnessed in young people who have been encouraged to develop new skills and confidence through their involvement with youth media programs. We have seen that the power of creative media pushes young people to go beyond the probable and envision what is possible, not only for themselves but for their entire generation.

While our experience with each individual program has been positive, our commitment to support the youth media field has been strengthened by the findings summarized in this report.

We share the results of this study to bring focus and attention to the benefits of excellent youth development programs and to contribute to the understanding of this ever-changing and entrepreneurial field. We also hope that the successes and challenges outlined in this report engender more discussion and investment in youth media as a powerful tool for positively impacting the lives of young people.

Sincerely,



Christy Pichel, President

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*The Stuart Foundation gratefully acknowledges the staff and young people from **Just Think**, **L.A. Youth**, **Pacific News Service**, **Youth Radio**, and **Youth Sounds** who generously gave their time and knowledge to make this study possible. Their insights and profound reflections have been critical to our understanding, appreciation, and continued learning in the field of youth media.*

We also thank the team from Putnam Community Investment Consulting for the research, analysis, and preparation of this report, and Cabrera Design for assisting in its graphic design.



(Photo Credits: Youth Radio, Karen Sachar)



Youth Media

Media conceived,
developed, and
produced
by youth
and disseminated
to others.

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE & METHODOLOGY

Purpose

In 2003, the Stuart Foundation commenced making grants to organizations that engage middle and high school age youth in hands-on learning of sophisticated media production techniques, web design, and writing skills. This emerging and growing field has come to be known as “youth media.” For the purposes of this analysis, we define youth media as “media conceived, developed, and produced by youth and disseminated to others.”

The Foundation engaged Putnam Community Investment Consulting to conduct a retrospective assessment of five media-based experiential learning grants. The grants in this cluster vary in terms of intervention, length of grant term, youth population served, and quality of evaluative data collected by each grantee. Yet, these grants share common goals of developing youth through participation in experiential media programs. Through this cluster review, staff hoped to learn:

- What did the Foundation accomplish by funding this cluster of grants? Was it a good investment?
- To what extent did each grantee reach (or make progress toward reaching) its objectives?
- What impact did these grants have on youth participants and stakeholders?
- What were the successes and challenges of these grantees and what could be done to increase the likelihood of success?

- What is unique about youth media as a youth development strategy, and what are the emerging trends?
- What are the opportunities for future philanthropic funding with these grantees and in the field?

The purpose of this project was not to evaluate the merits of the individual organizations, but to learn from their experiences over the grant period in order to deepen the Foundation's understanding of youth media programs and their potential to make a positive impact on the lives of young people. In addition, given the relatively limited research conducted on youth media programs, staff hoped to share its findings with the youth media field and philanthropic colleagues to increase both discussion and investment in this field.



Methods

This report was informed by the following sources:

- Interviews with four current and past Stuart Foundation staff involved with the Foundation's youth media grantmaking.
- Telephone interviews with staff from each grantee organization (total of eight interviewed).
- A focus group of nine executive directors and program staff from each of the five organizations.
- In person interviews with 10 youth (one to three youth participants from each organization). Interviewees were selected from a short list provided by each organization, and the final selection was typically based on the availability of the young person within the project time frame.
- Telephone interviews with at least one community stakeholder for each organization. Interviewees were selected from a list provided by each organization. Stakeholders included teachers, professional journalists or media producers, and others.
- Grantee proposals, reports, and Stuart Foundation staff grant recommendations.
- Review of grantee websites and samples of youth-produced media and writing.
- When available, outside evaluations of grantee programs.
- A search of related literature and websites.

Organization of this Report

- Part I provides an overview of the Youth Media field: the history, range of programs, goals and challenges, and a discussion of the unique attributes of experientially-based youth media programs within the broader youth development field.
- Part II provides an overview of the grant cluster, with a description of the grantee's programs, an analysis of achievements and challenges, and impacts on youth.
- Part III discusses common themes and findings across the grant cluster: the impact these programs have on the youth they serve, accomplishments, and challenges. This section concludes with recommendations about ways in which philanthropy can continue to support these grantees and the field as a whole.
- The Appendices contains a list of individuals interviewed for this report, the interview instruments used, and a bibliography.

PART I. I EXIST. I AM VISIBLE. I MATTER.

The Emergence of the Youth Media Field

Make no mistake; youth media IS a field. While it still continues to emerge and transform, it has been around for some time. Interviews with Stuart Foundation grantees yielded interesting insights into the origin and development of youth media. According to Youth Radio Executive Director, Ellin O'Leary, youth media traces its roots to the alternative media movement of the 1970s, which launched National Public Radio. In addition, O'Leary sees youth media as a confluence of trends, including youth news, rap music, and the need for young people to express themselves and tell their stories.

Technological change has also fueled the development of youth media. The transformation of technologies has made it possible for youth to produce broadcast quality films and radio shows and to distribute them widely at remarkably low cost. According to O'Leary, "Ten to fifteen years ago, when my kids were in middle school and high school, their only media outlets were the school newspaper. One of the most obvious changes over the past 15 years has been the revolution in technology, both the emergence of the Internet as a medium of mass communication unlike any traditional media, and the increasing affordability and usability of digital technology needed to produce professional quality visual and audio products. As a generation of young people has grown up with these technologies, they know how to navigate and communicate in the rich multi-media language that these technologies have fostered."

Kevin Weston of Pacific News Service echoed O'Leary's observation, "One trend I've seen is that everything is heading towards youth media. Everyone that was doing some sort of youth enterprise is now doing youth media. Every one of those organizations that was doing youth organizing now say they do youth media." Grantees reviewed in this study also observed that youth media organizations are partnering with other experientially-based youth development programs such as those that focus on the arts, environment, and entrepreneurial endeavors. The youth media organizations contribute their communication skills, helping the other groups employ video, print, radio, and other media tools to better achieve their goals.

Within the range of youth development programs (even experientially-based programs such as arts, environment, and leadership programs) youth media appears to be a particularly effective means of engaging young people. Youth media practitioners offer various explanations for this engagement. For youth who have grown up in a media-saturated world, it is empowering to become an active producer as well as a consumer of media. At its core, youth media addresses a fundamental need of young people to communicate with their peers and the broader world, especially at a time when community has become increasingly fragmented. Producing a concrete product that can be viewed by others increases young people's sense of efficacy in the world and validates what they have to say. As Sandy Close of Pacific News Service notes, the communication that youth media facilitates lets young people say, "I exist, I am visible, I matter."

"Youth media is an incredibly effective hook to get youth engaged in things when school does not."

**- Judy Agnew,
Bay Area Video Coalition**

The Youth Media Landscape

As more organizations use media with youth, the range and diversity of youth media programs has multiplied. Youth media programs vary by structure, size, goals, youth participants, content, products, distribution, and audience. Although research in the field remains in its infancy, a survey completed by the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (Tyner, 2003) sheds some light on the emerging field. The sidebar shares some of the key findings from this report.

Youth media programs use a variety of media, including print, radio, video, digital photo, web, animation, computer graphics, and audio, or some combination of these. The growing convergence of digital media technologies enables youth media programs to utilize a mixture of media to communicate a single story. For example, an organization's web site can employ computer animation, stream an audio clip of an interview, show digital photos, and have a written commentary. Because of this convergence, youth media organizations are moving beyond teaching youth reading and writing; they now work toward teaching multi-media communications skills.

The content produced by the youth is as varied as the individuals themselves. According to Ellin O'Leary of Youth Radio, the stories "range from perennial adolescent subjects like flirting and keeping secrets from your parents to narratives of life behind bars." Because most independent youth media organizations are committed to allowing youth to express themselves authentically, the subject matter is often raw, honest, and refreshing. Youth tackle issues such as the sexual abuse experienced in foster care; the effects of death, dying, and bereavement on teens; and, what it is like for young soldiers to return from war. They also deal with national and international topics such as the Democratic and Republican conventions and United States - Mexico border issues.

National Association for Media Arts and Culture, Tyner, K., ed. (2003, pp. 77-78)

A Closer Look: Media Arts 2003:

Case Studies from NAMAC's

Youth Media Initiative.

Structure. Slightly over half of the 59 youth media organizations surveyed operate under the fiscal umbrella of a larger nonprofit organization with broader missions in the arts, education, or youth development. Twenty percent of the respondents operate as stand-alone, nonprofit organizations devoted exclusively to youth media work. Nearly half of the youth media programs in the study are relatively new, with one to five years of service. A fifth of them have been in operation for only one or two years.

Size & Staffing. These organizations operate with relatively small budgets and staff. The majority have operating budgets of less than \$150,000, with 22% of these reporting budgets under \$10,000. The organizations typically have a staff of 1 to 5 people...59% employ a full-time director or coordinator. Almost three-fourths of the program directors or coordinators make under \$55,000 a year.

Purposes. Most of these youth media organizations are to encourage creative self-expression, to give youth a voice, to prepare youth for negotiating a digital world and to provide an alternative to commercial, mainstream media. Most of the responding organizations accomplish their objectives through programs that focus on direct media access and instruction to youth, and with workshops and curriculum development. Some programs also have a teacher-training component.

Participants. They are most likely to be found in urban or rural settings with a demographically diverse client base of poor or lower-income youth. The youth served are typically adolescents in grades 7 through 12. However, most organizations direct a small percentage of their program to students in grades 4 and 6 and to adults, especially teachers.

As important as the content of youth media is its distribution. While widespread distribution still challenges many youth media organizations, the number of distribution channels have expanded in recent years. They now include major newspapers such as the New York Times and the San Francisco Chronicle; newspapers, magazines, and books (Foxfire) written by youth; zines, blogs, and web sites; video monitors in art galleries; community screenings and performances; broadcasts on mainstream radio and TV channels such as National Public Radio, CNN, and PBS; film festivals; streaming over the Internet; cell phones; and, podcasting.

Because different youth media programs use different distribution channels, the audiences that they reach vary greatly. Smaller programs struggle to get on local stations and to distribute their products. In contrast, larger, more established youth media organizations have been successful at distributing their products. Youth News L.A. Bureau/L.A. Youth produces a newspaper that reaches three million people each year and Youth Radio produces media content that reaches an audience of 27 million per year. The Internet is greatly increasing the potential audience reach of youth media organizations; Youth Sounds was contracted to produce a youth television program for a local station. The show's six segments were aired twice, but one segment was downloaded from the station's web site 72,000 times, primarily by youth from the East Coast.

Emerging Trends and Challenges for the Field

In addition to the phenomenal growth of the field over the last 10-15 years, there are a number of other trends affecting youth media. As the field matures, older and more established youth media nonprofits emerge as leaders in the field. At the same time, a wave of new groups and programs are on the rise. The heterogeneous nature of the field makes it hard to have a shared vision, common principles and best practices, and makes it difficult to assess collective impact. Success breeds new challenges. Called upon to mentor and provide

technical assistance to smaller organizations, established youth media nonprofits find little funding to support these efforts.

The youth media field is also becoming more integrated into mainstream institutions. For example, journalism schools are starting to support youth media. Teachers' education programs around the country now instruct aspiring teachers about youth media. Some charter schools now allow students to prepare portfolios of multi-media work on a CD rather than write final reports. Several larger youth media organizations are intentionally building community partnerships with academic institutions and media companies to help create a more structured path for youth to acquire academic and work skills, and move into media careers.

Today's youth media combines the power of technology with the age-old desire to communicate with one another. Young people have grown up with these technologies, and are quick to master them. Because of this, youth are playing a prominent role in defining the direction of youth media programs, while the adults take more of a backseat, serving as allies and supporting the youth with skills training and organizational infrastructure. For example, at Youth Radio, youth insisted on playing music as a backdrop to their youth news show, which was being broadcast on a local radio station despite objections from adult staff members. The youth news program is now in its third season -- a remarkably long run for any news and commentary show.

These organizations find themselves in a common nonprofit bind, with a need for more organizational development that can lead to increased funding, yet with budgets so tight that they cannot afford to divert funding to organizational development without cutting into direct client services...Although the commitment of resources to client service is admirable, it is difficult for the field to professionalize and grow without parallel support for staff development, organizational development, evaluation for program improvement, visibility, and outreach.

-Tyner, 2003, p. 78

Youth media organizations also face a number of challenges related to funding, organizational capacity, distribution, and evaluation. According to the 2003 NAMAC survey, almost all organizations say that their work is hampered by a lack of awareness of their programs, technology access issues, and the fact that youth already have a large menu of activities from which to choose. The lack of funding for their programs was a common lament; the numbers of clients served correlate with the budgets and staff members of the organizations. Only 10% have a full-time staff of six or more, and most depend on volunteers, part-time staff, and consultants to manage the organization and implement the programs. Although they hope to expand the programs and reach out to more youth, the majority of these organizations are hamstrung by a sheer lack of capacity.

In addition, a number of the people we interviewed emphasized distribution as a challenge for many youth media organizations, especially for the smaller ones. They stressed how important it is for the youth and for their self-esteem to have their voices heard and acknowledged by audiences. As youth media organizations grow, the number of stories, commentaries, and videos created by their students expands, as does the need to find

new distribution channels for all of their work. According to Pacific News Service, “while many community organizations and schools support young people in media projects, distribution is often left out of the equation.” (PNS interim report, March 2005.)

Finally, according to Pacific News Service, “many practitioners and academics expressed concern for the need to define and sustain the youth media field before funding trends abandon it to new projects and ideas. It is becoming increasingly important to communicate the parameters of this diverse field that includes everything from school-based animation projects to independent zines to mainstream television PSAs. Whether focused on final products or training/process, all youth media projects in this range make important contributions to a young person's development and potential...” (PNS interim report March 2005.) Unfortunately, according to the NAMAC 2003 survey, “Most of the evidence about successful program implementation in the youth media field is anecdotal. Very little rigorous research has been done to identify promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned that can be used by youth media practitioners” (Tyner, 2003, p. 82) or that can be communicated to potential funders.

I learned how to interview, have a good work ethic, be creative and be organized. When I talked to the admissions counselor at UCLA, she saw my film and said, 'Wow, you know so much already!'

– Youth Sounds participant

I never thought I could do this kind of work. I love the radio. I listen to it all the time. Now I'm behind the controls, making my own show. It's a dream come true.

– Youth Radio participant

Coming here, I am more focused on taking care of my family, doing good, staying out of trouble.

– Pacific News Service participant

When I applied for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists scholarship, you had to turn in four works and two recommendations. I knew that had I not been in L.A. Youth I would not have gotten that scholarship.

– L.A. Youth participant

My secret passion is to become a director now; the stuff that I've learned in the two programs that I've been in has really influenced me in having that as my passion.

– Just Think participant

PART II. IMPACT: THE ORGANIZATIONS

Overview of the Grant Cluster

The Stuart Foundation's Youth & Communities program has been making grants in the area of youth development for several years, but the five organizations highlighted in this study represent the Foundation's first foray into programs focused intentionally on youth media. As such, these grantees were carefully selected not only for their pre-eminence in the field, but also for the different approaches they represent within the field of youth media. Their budgets range from several hundred thousand dollars to \$3.5 million. The oldest (Pacific New Service) has been operating since 1969; the most recent, Youth Sounds, began in 2001 and in early 2006 became a program of the Bay Area Video Coalition. These programs use different media and formats, target different youth populations, and distribute youth-produced media to vastly different audiences.

While all of these organizations are built on a solid foundation of youth development principles and best practices, they are youth media organizations, as distinct from youth development organizations that use media as one tool or project in a broader array of activities for young people. What these groups have in common is that they are experientially-based; youth do not just learn about media, they gain the tools and the skills to create their own media products, whether a newspaper article, a poem in an on-line zine, a radio interview, a video documentary, a film, or a hip-hop CD.

At the time these grants were made, the Foundation recognized that these youth media programs were on the risk-taking end of the broader youth development field. These programs provide youth with the skills and tools to communicate directly with their peers and with a broader adult audience. While youth receive editorial guidance, the articles, stories, films, music, and messages they create are very much their own. They reflect an authentic and often raw youth voice, bringing an important youth perspective to some of society's most challenging issues.

In the relatively short time since the Foundation's grants were made, each of these programs has grown and changed, sometimes in unexpected ways. The following describes the programs, participants, and audiences of the five grantees in the cluster, highlights their key accomplishments and challenges, and looks at some indicators of the impact of these programs.



Just Think

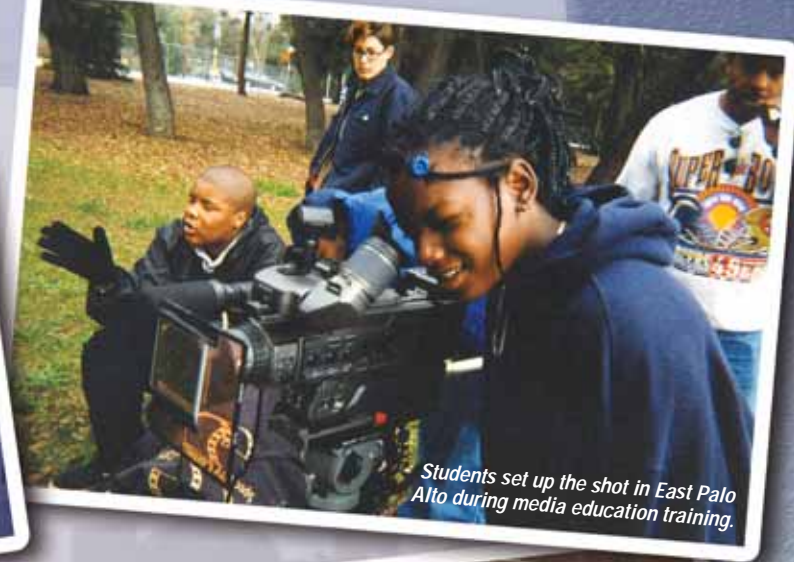
Just Think teaches young people to understand, evaluate, and create media messages. It works from the notion that young people need to learn to think for themselves about the many messages they receive from the media. Beyond that, Just Think believes that young people can become critical consumers *and* creative producers of media, and that the independent voices of youth can powerfully impact local and global communities. The organization produces media arts and technology curricula that combine media literacy education with hands-on media production. Additionally, it delivers in-school and after-school programs that teach media literacy concepts, and media arts and technology skills to youth and their adult allies. Just Think targets diverse schools in low-income communities. Youth from across the Bay Area attend summer intensive workshops, and Just Think reaches out to youth who cannot access workshops with a mobile production studio in a converted school bus. Youth media products are shown for peers, parents, teachers, and community members at community screenings.

Assessment. Just Think produces high quality media literacy resources for parents and educators, and successfully provides hands-on multi-media training for youth in schools and community settings. Program goals align with youth development best practices and with the media literacy field. The program produces quality youth media work, and maintains a strong commitment to providing youth opportunities for showing their work in public forums. Challenges faced by Just Think include:

- Institutionalizing and sustaining pilot programs within whole schools, districts, and across districts. The crisis in funding for public education makes it difficult for districts to commit resources for outside programs, even those which help them meet their educational goals. The burden of sustaining programs from year to year falls entirely on nonprofit partners like Just Think.
- Just Think has had difficulty achieving a steady and predictable growth of its core programs and budget. In recent years, the budget has undergone significant expansions and contractions as project-specific grants have come and gone. A U.S. Department of Education grant (\$250,000/year for 3 years) to pilot and evaluate in-school media literacy curricula has been a boon to the organization, but ends in 2006. Like other organizations in this cluster, Just Think has begun to look at entrepreneurial ways to generate earned income, and has developed a detailed business plan for marketing its Media Literacy curriculum packets. However, it has not begun implementing the plan due to lack of start-up capital.
- Just Think's executive director left the organization in March 2005. The co-founder/board president stepped in to lead the organization. At the time of this writing, Just Think was seeking a new director with experience in business/marketing and nonprofit management to guide the organization as it sought to increase its earned and contributed operating income.

"Some of my students wouldn't have come to school otherwise. We'd call them and say: 'Hey, you need to be here, you're in the film!' Did it raise the rest of their scores? No, but they stayed alive for another year."

*- Sarah Brant,
Peer Resource teacher,
Balboa High School, San Francisco*



Students set up the shot in East Palo Alto during media education training.

Organization: *Just Think, San Francisco, CA*

Year Founded: *1995*

Annual Budget: *\$353,280*

Stuart Funding: *March 2004: \$80,000 (one year) for general support.*

Accomplishments:

- *Reached nearly 1,400 students, parents, and educators through direct programs.*
- *Reached an estimated audience of 1,770 through presentations of youth-produced media in schools and communities.*
- *Received more than 100,000 visits for its youth-produced media on its various websites.*
- *Expanded youth media programs to 4 new school sites.*
- *Partnered in US Department of Education-funded media literacy curriculum pilot and evaluation.*
- *Developed business plan for generating income from curriculum sales.*

Check Them Out:

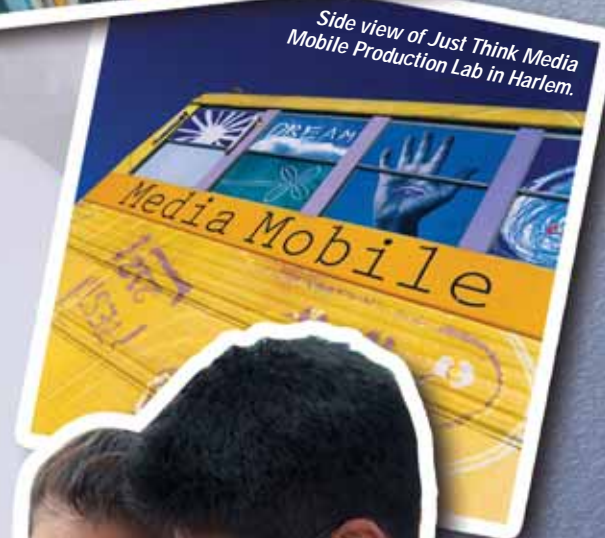
www.justthink.org

www.justthink.org/youthmedia/index.html

This link goes directly to Just Think's youth media work.



Students at Glenwood Elementary get media savvy aboard JT'S Media Mobile School Bus.



Side view of Just Think Media Mobile Production Lab in Harlem.



Students set up a shot as part of JT'S Youth Media Educators Program.

L.A. Youth

L.A. Youth (Youth News Service L.A. Bureau), the largest independent youth publication in the country, publishes six newspapers a year with a printing of 120,000 copies that reach a readership of 500,000 per issue. The Los Angeles Times prints the paper as an in-kind contribution, with the paper distributed free to more than 1,500 public and private school classrooms, as well as libraries and community-based youth programs throughout the Los Angeles region. L.A. Youth has a dual mission: to train students in critical thinking, writing skills, and literacy, and to provide peer-written information for a young audience that has little faith in mass media's ability to reflect its concerns. The agency dedicates itself to fostering job and educational skills, providing a forum for communication, giving young people a voice in civic life, and helping them grow into productive adults. L.A. Youth trains more than 600 youth reporters each year, who represent a cross section of the region's ethnic and socio-economic groups. It is one of the few venues in Southern California where young people from different backgrounds can meet and work with each other. Responding to the unmet needs of youth in the Los Angeles foster care system, L.A. Youth launched the Foster Youth Writing and Education Project in 2003 to recruit and train foster youth as writers, photographers, and illustrators for the publication.

Assessment. L.A. Youth has grown to become a nationally respected youth media program, with a reputation for a high quality product and a program grounded in youth development principles and best practices. The Foster Youth Writing and Education Project has been very successful since its inception just two years ago, both in the apparent impact it has had on foster youth participants and the challenges these young

people face, and on placing the spotlight on the problems within the foster care and juvenile justice systems. The success of the project has enabled L.A. Youth to attract support from foundations that had not previously supported its youth media focus.

Challenges facing the Foster Youth Writing project include:

- As more foster youth join the program, L.A. Youth may need to add staff to continue providing the kind of intensive coaching needed to help foster youth initiate and complete their work. The organization faces a decision to continue expanding to meet demand or to limit the scope to maintain the quality of service.
- While L.A. Youth has always served a diverse group of young people, the organization has not generally had to deal with the kinds of serious social, emotional, family, academic, and other problems that are common among youth in foster care. L.A. Youth must find appropriate ways of supporting foster youth in dealing with the range of issues they bring with them to the program, while maintaining their focus on journalism and writing.

Challenges facing L.A. Youth include:

- Evaluating and communicating the impact of its program remains an ongoing challenge. The organization has good systems for tracking basic data (participation, articles published, distribution, number of classrooms, etc.), but lacks a system for collecting and analyzing information to clearly demonstrate impact on youth. Staff also expressed a desire to maintain contact with program alums to gather data on long-term outcomes.

- Increased distribution costs (especially gasoline) will make it difficult to significantly increase the newspaper's circulation in the coming years. Consequently, the organization is looking to its website as an increasingly important dissemination vehicle. A top priority for the organization is to enhance the website and make it easier to add and update content.
- As L.A. Youth nears its 20th year of service, it faces challenges of institutionalization, including the eventual transition of leadership from the founder/executive director to a new generation of leadership. The director and board have identified an immediate need for a new chief operating officer position to manage the increasingly complex operations and upgrade internal systems.

Organization: *L.A. Youth, Los Angeles, CA*

Year Founded: *1988*

Annual Budget: *\$692,000*

Stuart Funding: *March 2004: \$160,000 (two years) for general support, with focus on growing the Foster Youth Writing and Education Program.*

Accomplishments:

- *Trains 600 youth journalists each year.*
- *Increased distribution to 375 new high school and middle school classrooms, reaching a readership of 500,000 students, teachers, parents, and community leaders per issue.*
- *Implemented and evaluated Year 1 of foster youth writing project. Recruited and maintained working relationships with 40 foster youth.*
- *Published 15 articles by foster youth and placed these stories in other youth-focused publications.*
- *L.A. Youth articles picked up by mainstream media outlets, resulting in increased attention to issues such as school violence and foster youth.*

Check Them Out:

www.layouth.com

The home page banner provides a link to the Foster Youth Writing Project.



L.A. Youth interviews nurses about the bird flu.

"A lot of teens want the recognition for doing something great. That's what L.A. Youth does, it brings out people; it lets them shine."

*- Youth staff writer,
L.A. Youth newspaper*



Homeless youth on Hollywood Blvd.

*Photo Credits: Libby Hartigan,
L.A. Youth, Los Angeles, CA*

*L.A. Youth, Melanie
smiles for the camera.*



Pacific News Service

Pacific News Service (PNS) is an alternative news agency established in 1969 to foster journalism produced by groups not generally represented in the mainstream media. In 1991 PNS launched YO! (Youth Outlook), a youth-produced news magazine with a distribution of 25,000. Since then, PNS expanded its youth communication programs to include The Beat Within, a journal of writing by incarcerated youth, and other programs targeted to niche populations of young people. Web, video, and audio products now augment all student work, and PNS youth produce news in multiple formats, including a bi-weekly public affairs segment on a Bay Area commercial television station. PNS sees its various youth media projects “as a model for enhancing the communication skills of the most marginalized young people in California.” PNS reaches its intended youth population by working with young people where they are - in juvenile halls, homeless drop-in centers, low-income schools, suburban malls, and Silicon Valley assembly lines. Many PNS youth staff writers, editors, and office support staff are former program participants.

Assessment. Pacific News Service continues to engage some of society's most disconnected and hard to reach youth. It is respected and emulated for its unique approach within the youth media landscape. Over the period of its Stuart Foundation grant, PNS transitioned from a primarily print-based youth media organization to a multi-media one in which young people use video, audio, and the Internet as integrated tools for communicating with other youth and adult audiences. Despite limited resources, PNS has launched several important initiatives during the grant period, and has made progress in integrating the

different elements of its diverse programs into a more unified organizational structure. According to the organization, the Stuart Foundation's flexible support during the grant period was critical to the success of the effort. Challenges for PNS include:

- Funding is always stretched thin over the many PNS programs and activities. Salaries are low and long-time staffers find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet in the high-cost Bay Area. A new core of younger staff have been trained and stand ready to take on senior staff roles, but the organization cannot afford to pay them at that level. PNS staff point out that the work they do with hard-to-reach youth is labor intensive, with no economies of scale. Staffing has expanded somewhat recently, but not relative to the work.
- As PNS has moved into electronic media, particularly television, lack of resources has limited technical quality (an important concern for their mainstream, commercial broadcast partner).
- PNS expressed concern that some funders are turning away from supporting programs that serve disconnected youth. They worry that insistence on the part of some foundations for deliverables, and quantifiable short-term outcomes will make it increasingly difficult to find support for working with disenfranchised youth.

“... This is what The Beat introduced me to, a piece a paper and a pencil. Then, I soon learned how to introduce the paper and pencil to my thoughts. Writing how I felt and what I thought felt good. Letting that load of stress, pain, fear, and dreams off my shoulders felt good.”

– Mervyn Wool,
former incarcerated youth and
current Beat Within employee

Organization: *Pacific News Service, San Francisco, CA*

Year Founded: *1969*

Annual Budget: *\$1.74 million*

Stuart Funding: *June 2003: \$350,000 (three years)
for core operating support.*

Accomplishments:

- *Strengthened core youth media programs and incubated 5 youth-led entrepreneurial media projects targeting niche populations (e.g. homeless youth, suburban youth, Afghan youth).*
- *Trained/mentored 400 YO! youth journalists and served 12,000 incarcerated youth through The Beat Within over the term of the grant period.*
- *Trained/mentored, on average, 60 to 100 De-Bug journalists per year.*
- *Provided media internships for 130 formerly incarcerated youth.*
- *Moved from print-only to multi-media approach, including video, audio and web-based formats.*
- *Launched biweekly YO! Program (reaching an audience estimated at one million viewers) in partnership with a commercial San Francisco Bay Area TV station.*
- *Initiated California Council of Youth Relations for youth to give input to state-level policy makers and practitioners in the child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health and education systems.*

Check Them Out:

thebeatwithin.org/news

www.siliconvalleydebug.org

www.youthoutlook.org/news

These web links provide more information on a range of Pacific News Service programs: The Beat Within, DeBug, and YO! Youth Outlook.



(Photo Credits: Neela Benerjee & Ryan Furtado)

Youth Radio

Youth Radio trains youth and young adults, ages 14 to 24, in a variety of media including radio, print, web, video, and music production. Youth-produced radio broadcasts reach a local, statewide, and national audience estimated at 27 million. Youth Radio promotes young people's intellectual, creative, and professional growth through training and access to media. Through hands-on practice, peer-to-peer teaching, internships, and production of award-winning programming, Youth Radio students learn the basics of broadcasting. In the process, their experience exposes them to a broad spectrum of media-related careers. Through their journalism education, Youth Radio students also strengthen adult transition skills such as leadership, teamwork, and civic engagement, while building basic "life-skills" such as verbal expression, writing, computer technology, and critical thinking. Participants also receive support to pursue higher education and develop their professional careers.

Assessment. Recognized nationally as one of the preeminent youth media organizations, Youth Radio's work is exemplary - from its well-honed youth development model to its award-winning and innovative journalism. Other benchmarks of success include the extensive distribution of its content through leading public and commercial media outlets and the web; its programs to help youth advance academically and professionally; its commitment to academic research and evaluation; and the professional quality of its staff. According to the organization, the Stuart Foundation's flexible, general support has enabled Youth Radio to expand its programs, build its staff, reach more youth around the country, expand its operations

to Los Angeles., and continue to excel in what it does. This, in turn, has enabled Youth Radio to continue to serve as a leader in the youth media field. Challenges faced by Youth Radio include:

- The biggest challenge faced by Youth Radio in recent years has been the lack of adequate office space to accommodate its expanding staff, programs, and equipment needs. In response, Youth Radio has launched a capital campaign to purchase and construct a new, state-of-the-art headquarters in downtown Oakland. The commitment to buy the new building has brought its own share of challenges and benefits, including staff and board members' time committed to the building search and putting in place the organizational changes necessary to accommodate the growth that the new building will permit. By moving into the heart of Downtown Oakland, Youth Radio also tackles the challenge (and opportunity) of serving as a pioneer for job creation, economic development, and urban revitalization in a redeveloping area of this East Bay city.
- Like other organizations in the youth media field, Youth Radio faces the difficulty of evaluating impact on youth. Youth Radio has begun to tackle this challenge by employing ethnographic research to gather qualitative data, by helping youth compile portfolios of their work, and by building a new database that will be used to track individuals' progress as they proceed through the program.

- Youth Radio faces the difficulty of “going to scale” with youth media programs to reach more youth while maintaining the quality of the program and the supportive environment that youth find so engaging. Youth Radio's online curriculum, *Teach Youth Radio*, will allow teachers around the country to integrate written commentary and radio production into their classrooms.

Organization: *Youth Radio, Berkeley, CA*

Year Founded: *1992*

Annual Budget: *\$2.4 million*

Stuart Funding: *December 2002 & 2004: \$875,000 (four years) for general support. The 2004 renewal was also for expansion to serve Southern California youth.*

Accomplishments:

- *Strengthened and expanded ongoing operations and programs, increasing the number of Northern California youth served annually from 350 to over 600.*
- *Launched a 24-hour web radio station and began distributing Youth Radio features through Apple iTunes and podcasting. Radio and TV programming now reaches an estimated 27 million youth and adults annually.*
- *Initiated a 10-week training program for youth ages 18-24.*
- *Launched a Los Angeles bureau that works with 250 youth and broadcasts on local and national public radio stations and an online curriculum for teachers to integrate radio and web stories into their classrooms.*
- *Provided structured support to help youth transition from high school to college and careers.*
- *Provided a variety of internships and paid positions for 46 youth.*
- *Launched a capital campaign to finance the purchase and construction of a new, state-of-the art, 20,000-square foot headquarters building in downtown Oakland. Full occupancy expected by Spring 2007.*

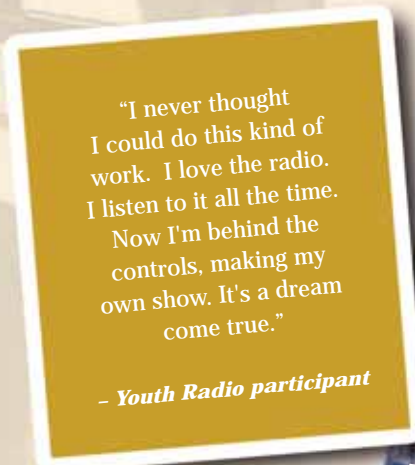
Check Them Out:

www.youthradio.org/webradio/index.shtml

This link takes you to the latest in Youth Radio's commentaries and music.



Youth Radio graduate and Media Production Director, Nishat Kurwa, working a story with participants Ashley Jones and Marcy Duffy.



"I never thought I could do this kind of work. I love the radio. I listen to it all the time. Now I'm behind the controls, making my own show. It's a dream come true."

– Youth Radio participant



DeSean Walker at the mixing table.



Peer Teacher Brandon McFarland on the air.

DeShawna Riley in the recording booth.



Youth Sounds

A youth development and media arts program specializing in video, audio, and music production, Youth Sounds teaches students to use industry-standard editing programs, build marketable job skills, and produce professional-quality work. Upon completion of beginning and intermediate training, youth are accepted into an advanced audio or advanced video program. Students are also accepted into paid employment with Corner Store Productions, which produces videos and DVDs on a contract basis for nonprofits and government agencies. Throughout the different levels of training, Youth Sounds provides the skills, space, and support for youth to articulate their experiences and share their stories. Originally an after school program at Oakland's McClymonds High School, Youth Sounds works with very disadvantaged young people, many of whom come from challenging, low-income backgrounds, and have few opportunities to succeed academically or economically. The media these youth produce reaches a wide audience. Through broadcasts on public and commercial television stations Youth Sounds' PSAs and films have been seen by tens of millions of people. Youth Sounds work has also been viewed at over 60 film festivals and installations at local art galleries. BUMP Records has sold 4,000 music albums and regularly has 150-300 people attend its live performances.

Assessment. In the five years prior to its merger with the Bay Area Video Coalition, Youth Sounds emerged as one of the most innovative youth development and media arts organizations in the country. In particular, Youth Sounds earned respect for the high quality of its instruction, the preeminent quality of its products, and the extent to which it gives youth creative license, responsibility, and input in directing the organization. Respected by its peers in the youth media field, Youth Sounds creates opportunities for career development and

distribution of youth work. This has led a number of more established youth media organizations and academic institutions to pursue partnerships. While Youth Sounds met many objectives of its grant and stands out for its application of youth development best practices, it was not successful in expanding its leadership base beyond the executive director, nor in improving its administration and program operations.

According to the organization, the Stuart Foundation played a pivotal role in Youth Sounds' development. The grant from the Foundation was Youth Sounds' first major general support grant, which gave the then-fledgling organization the stability and flexibility to grow and be responsive to new opportunities and pushed the executive director to clarify his vision and goals. Challenges faced by Youth Sounds include:

- The rapid, opportunistic expansion to different sites made it more difficult for staff to share information and resources and to feel connected with each other.
- While Youth Sounds made some progress on organizational development objectives, it did not succeed in broadening its leadership base. Youth Sounds' dynamic leader was the only staff member responsible for management and administration, making the organization vulnerable to a loss or change of leadership.
- Youth Sounds lacked adequate organizational infrastructure, including effective systems for strategic program planning, business planning, fund development, reporting, and evaluation.
- Because reporting and evaluation systems were weak, existing data was inconsistent and often contradictory, hindering Youth Sounds' ability to create a clear organizational record of its accomplishments.

- Youth Sounds never attained its own 501c3 designation.
- Lack of infrastructure made it hard for Youth Sounds to track its progress, report accurately to donors, and strategically allocate resources to accomplish goals.

"This whole program is one giant breath of creativity, of life. When the outside world is beating life out of me, I come here, breathe in, and know I can make it. It gives me opportunity to let the world see what I see through my eyes everyday."

– Youth Sounds participant

Video set-up at Factory Program.

Organization: Youth Sounds, Oakland, CA

Year Founded: 2001

Annual Budget: \$532,000

Stuart Funding: December 2003: \$80,000 (one year) for general support and capacity building.

Accomplishments:

- Provided introductory, intermediate, and advanced training in video and music production for approximately 200 youth at McClymonds High School in Oakland and other Bay Area sites.
- Presented youth-produced media to several million people (estimated) through television broadcasts, PSAs, and the sale of 4,000 music CDs.
- Partnered with San Francisco State to provide youth with certification in the use of music and video production software.
- Expanded social enterprise activities to provide valuable work experience for youth and generated income of \$150,000 from Youth Sounds operations.

Check Them Out:

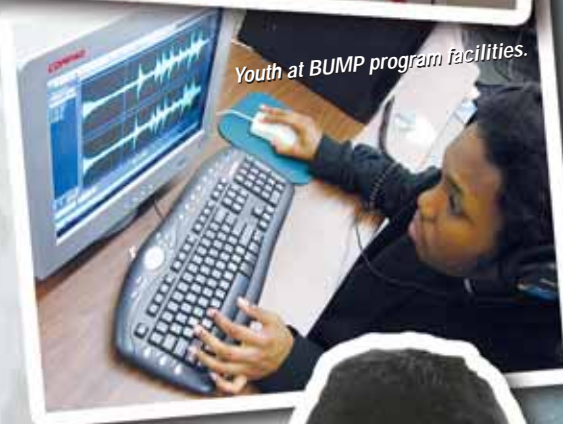
www.youthsounds.org/bump/index.html

This link goes to the Youth Sounds BUMP Records site.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In January 2006, Youth Sounds merged with the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) - an established, well regarded, and experienced youth media nonprofit that has operated since 1976. This merger with BAVC has allowed Youth Sounds to address the infrastructure challenges noted in this report. Now a program of BAVC, Youth Sounds has been able to expand its reach, strengthen its ties to industry internships and collaboration, and broadly ensure a stronger infrastructure for continued growth and development. Ken Ikeda, Executive Director of Youth Sounds, has become the Director of the combined BAVC youth programs that now includes introductory, intermediate, and advanced programming in digital video, web, and music at 11 school and community-based sites in three Bay Area counties. The current BAVC youth programs budget is \$1.6 million.



Elements, a video installation project at Southern Exposure Gallery.



Youth at BUMP program facilities.

The Factory Program in action.

Photo Credits: Youth Sounds, The Factory Program and Bay Unity Music Project (BUMP) Program

In Their Own Words: The Transformative Power of Youth Media

In an effort to better understand the breadth of impact these programs have on youth, the Stuart Foundation and its consulting team selected six commonly recognized indicators of high quality youth development programs. These impact indicators are Caring Relationships, Safety, Participation & Contribution, Skills Development, Academic Success & Career Pathways, and Life Transformation.

The collected information reveals that each organization positively impacts the lives of youth according to all indicators. Below we briefly explain the importance of each

indicator, and share the story through the perspective of the youth, but also organizational stakeholders. While these interviews are not representative of all participants, they do provide eloquent insight into how these programs are experienced by youth from a range of backgrounds, and the impact these programs have on their participants. For confidentiality, the youth are identified by their initials and organization. Brief biographical information is provided in Appendix A.

Caring Relationships

The presence of caring adults in young people's lives is widely recognized as a critical factor in positive youth development. Both stakeholders and youth consistently noted this as a strength of programs in the cluster. Relationships were built with both program staff and other youth participants.

[The Beat Within workshop]...was almost the most consistent part of being in [juvenile hall]. Most of the adults in my life were authority figures, and for the most part it was a negative relationship...Through relationships that I started at The Beat and then coming into the office, I was treated more as an adult...what I said mattered, they considered it, so it made me more confident, more eager to ask questions, to express myself to adults. **(RM, PNS)**

Libby (Hartigan, L.A. Youth Managing Editor) helped me find my voice. She always encouraged me. It's helped so much. **(VC, L.A. Youth)**

Youth Radio is a family, like my second home. They have watched me grow and someone is there to help when you fall. There are so many hands to help you get back up. There is so much support you can feel it. **(DT, Youth Radio)**

The adults...help guide us and teach us, but any new idea is youth-based. It's all in the hands of the youth. They won't tell us to fix it. The youth will tell the youth to fix it. They won't restrain any of our creativity and they help make it possible for us to do it. **(EE, Youth Sounds.)**

Safety

Provision of physical and emotional safety is universally recognized as a basic indicator of quality and a prerequisite for positive youth outcomes. The programs in the cluster clearly provide youth with a sense of emotional safety, and for some young people, these programs are the only place where they feel safe enough to express themselves. Group discussions, one-on-one encouragement, and the creation of supportive environments stand out as some of the ways programs helped youth feel safe.

[Youth Sounds] provided a safe zone where I could be me. I was not too trusting of other people. Group talks help you get to know people. You don't have to censor how you feel and put makeup on it. **(VH, Youth Sounds)**

...at first it might seem weak to be into writing; but there were enough people who were into it...they made it OK to be passionate about writing. **(RM, PNS)**

I feel happy when I'm working there. I know what I'm doing. It doesn't make me nervous. **(B, Just Think)**

The Beat workshop was a cool environment; it was OK to express how I felt. **(AR, PNS)**

Participation & Contribution

Youth participants see the experience of working in youth media as an opportunity to make a difference in the world and to have their views heard by other youth as well as adult audiences. Each program promotes youth leadership and is structured to encourage youth creation of media.

We had a screening [and]...it made me feel really good because people were coming up to me afterwards saying 'that was such a good piece, you should show it to everyone.' It felt really good to hear compliments like that. **(BL, Just Think)**

One of the greatest feelings I got from L.A. Youth is being able to communicate what I think to 200,000 other teens across L.A. That's just an incredible feeling and getting the feedback and being able to share ideas and feeling you can really make a difference with other teens is one of the greatest things [I've gotten from the program]. **(MM, L.A. Youth)**

My work is on the web so lots of people go there. When my work is on KQED, I think, 'Oh my God, so many people are listening to you!' The people say, 'Oh, you work for Youth Radio. Did you do that piece?' I feel famous. **(DT, Youth Radio)**

Youth Radio was a start for me. I opened myself to do new things. I want to serve the community and give back to my community. I am doing an article on youth gangs in El Salvador. I will travel to El Salvador in December for two weeks by myself to gather information for the story. **(GS, Youth Radio)**

I never thought adults could respect us and take seriously what we put on paper and on the air...Adults see us with a camera or a mike and they think, 'Wow!' and they respect us for it. **(DT, Youth Radio)**

Skills Development

All of the programs in the cluster stress the development of communication skills, especially writing and speaking, as a measure of success in their programs. Most of the programs also teach a range of technical and artistic skills that serve as basic tools for communicating in a multi-media world.

I've learned such an incredible amount about how to write, and edit. They teach you how to edit stories, how to improve on them, how to write more vividly, more detailed, how to make the reader feel like they're there. **(MM, L.A. Youth)**

I learned a lot about communication and computer stuff. I talked to a group of high school kids for Youth Outlook. Before I wouldn't be able to just talk, I'm shy. **(AR, PNS)**

I learned to DJ live. My writing has gotten better. I learned how to make beats, how to make videos using expensive equipment, how to act, how to fix a commentary on ProTools. How to make a show for web radio, and administration skills from my work at the front desk. **(DT, Youth Radio)**

I was taught how to work with concepts, lighting, camera technique, and how to interview. I have served as a cameraman, an actor, and as an assistant to director of photography. I learned directing and story writing. **(VH, Youth Sounds)**

I think [my students] learned strong and solid multi-media skills in a way they never would have with just the Peer Resources class. There's no question. They also learned or strengthened question-asking skills from doing interviews. The skills become very real. **(Sarah Brant, Balboa H.S.I, Just Think stakeholder)**

Academic Success & Career Pathways

Fostering academic achievement and providing career training portends the success of each of these programs; academics and career development also represent formal program elements for several organizations in this cluster. While not all programs have career development in mind, all are providing youth with learning experiences - such as responsibility, follow-through, and group work - that can position them for success in the workplace.

When I applied for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists scholarship, you had to turn in four of your works and two recommendations. I knew that had I not been in L.A. Youth I would not have gotten that scholarship. **(VC, L.A. Youth)**

I had dropped out of high school when I first was going to The Beat. But after that, the first chance that I had to be consistent in school, I took it. I began thinking of myself as a writer and as a reader, too-they were bringing books a lot and encouraging us to read. It changed the way I thought about my future.

(RM, PNS)

I want to major in business and want a degree in broadcasting or film. I never thought I could do this. Now I have the skills. The question is how can I use them? **(DT, Youth Radio)**

I got opportunities I would never have gotten. We took a trip to the Sundance Film Festival. I met a whole lot of independent artists, lots of people making really good films without good budgets. There was so much energy and talent. I talked to a lot of people about how they got where they got. I knew where I wanted to be; I just didn't know how to get there. I had never heard of a filmmaker from Oakland. **(VH, Youth Sounds)**

Life Transformation

The net impact of the opportunities, skills, and developmental assets these programs offer is life-changing, and sometimes life-saving. Youth and stakeholders attest to these impacts.

My secret passion is to become a director now; the stuff that I've learned in the two programs that I've been in has really influenced me in having that as my passion. **(BL, Just Think)**

I don't know what I'd be doing if I hadn't met them when I was at juvenile hall. I didn't have a lot of prospects. When I just coming out of institutions at 18, I didn't have family support, I didn't have a clear idea of what I wanted to do, except I knew I didn't want to go back to jail. So being involved in all these projects, being exposed to all these people, got me really enthusiastic, and I started thinking about journalism, traveling-it kind of opened up the whole world for me. **(RM, PNS)**

When I first entered I was really immature. I used to think and act like a kid. Now I am more responsible. I know how to act in certain places. **(DT, Youth Radio)**

What do I do differently now as a result of Youth Sounds? I don't let (peer) pressure and being disadvantaged prevent me from being different and from being happy. I do not let it stop me from being creative. At Youth Sounds, I realized that it was OK to be unique...I learned that you can walk this path and not have to be considered stupid or mediocre. **(VH, Youth Sounds)**

They've raised the bar on the expectations for our kids. Sometimes you expect less of at-risk kids. They've helped them achieve something they wouldn't have otherwise.
(Lynn Peterson, Linden Center, L.A. Youth stakeholder.)

PART III.

WHAT IS NEXT? KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The Stuart Foundation has found its investment in the field of youth media to be extremely worthwhile, building its knowledge and learning of youth media, and more broadly, youth development. Each grantee provided unique insights into the field, advanced the goals of the Youth & Communities Program, and made a significant impact on the youth served.

The five grantees reviewed in this study:

- Served 12,000 youth annually.
- Reached audiences of over 27 million people.
- Produced a wide range of high-quality youth programming.
- Utilized nationally recognized youth development principles.
- Received multiple awards for pre-eminence in their field.

As a result, youth participants:

- Gained a voice and sense of social responsibility.
- Improved basic literacy skills.
- Increased confidence and credibility.
- Learned how to relate to adults and peers more positively.
- Strengthened career-related skills.
- Made more successful transitions to adulthood.
- Experienced transformative changes in their lives.

Grantee organizations accomplished this while:

- Serving as leaders and models for the field.
- Expanding programs and responding to opportunities.
- Maintaining clear mission and vision.



Billy Taing at camera shoot.

(Photo Credit: L.A. Youth)

Impact on Youth

As described in the previous chapter, all five grantees in the youth media cluster have created program environments that foster a feeling of physical and emotional safety among their participants -- a basic pre-condition of effective youth development efforts. The programs also engender a strong sense of connectedness and caring among youth participants and adult staff. Many youth described these programs using terms such as “family,” “supportive,” “my second home,” “belonging,” and “community.” Youth believe they are treated as equals with staff and feel supported and encouraged to take leadership.

From this basic foundation of safety and supportive relationships, these programs imprint on the field of youth media an impressive array of positive impacts for the young people they serve.

- Giving youth a **voice**. The skills to communicate effectively and the tools to reach an audience of peers or adults are central to all of these programs. Youth learn that what they have to say matters. When they know they will be heard and that people care what they say, it imparts a tremendous boost to their confidence and sense of efficacy in the world.
- Fostering a **sense of social responsibility**. As young people discover that they can impact the community or the world, many realize the responsibility that comes with that ability. Many youth see the experience of working in youth media as an opportunity to contribute, to have an impact, to create positive change in the community, and to make a difference in the world.
- Inspiring a **commitment to excellence**. Youth recognize that their work will be distributed to large audiences. This knowledge inspires youth to take greater responsibility for what they communicate.
- Helping youth gain **confidence and credibility** by changing how individual youth are being viewed by the adults in their lives. The grantees also give youth a sense that they can have a positive impact on the way young people are viewed and treated by society as a whole.
- Helping **young people relate to adults and peers in more positive ways**. Learning how to give and receive constructive criticism has been a positive outcome for many youth.
- Improving basic literacy skills of **reading, writing, and communication** that can boost academic achievement.
- Strengthening **adult transition skills** such as leadership, teamwork and civic engagement, and building basic “life-skills” such as critical thinking, verbal expression, planning, and accountability.
- Teaching **career-related skills** such as those in journalism and media production. All of these programs seek to pass on skills that can lead participants to jobs and careers. Youth Radio and Pacific News Service go one step further by providing structured opportunities for youth participants to become program interns and permanent staff within their organizations.
- Addressing **critical issues** that affect youth help focus public attention on these issues and influence policy makers.
- Youth from all of the programs spoke of **powerful changes in their own lives**. They experienced transformation on many levels: increased confidence, motivation to achieve academic and career goals, self-determination to direct their lives, and willingness to contribute to their communities. Many programs succeed in touching the hardest to reach -- low-income, foster care, and incarcerated youth who have been let down by schools and other institutions.

Successes

Part II of this report looked at each of the five grantees' achievements, successes, and challenges during the grant period. This section describes some of the key successes and challenges that are common to all of the groups in the cluster.

- As described above, the greatest accomplishment of these organizations is the cumulative impact they have in **transforming the lives** of young people. Over the course of the three-year grant period, some 12,000 young people from the Bay Area and Los Angeles have participated in the five grantees' youth media programs. The youth have published hundreds of articles, poems and essays; thousands have seen their films and videos; listeners have heard their radio pieces locally and nationally. These programs have touched, changed, and sometimes even saved the lives of youth.
- Each of these groups has a **clear mission and vision** that guides its programs. They have all succeeded in staying true to their missions while adapting their programs to the ever-changing technological and cultural environments of the media world.
- The organizations in this cluster have provided **leadership** and have served as **models for the field** of youth media. While these groups have received formal recognition for their leadership and excellence, they have also all provided invaluable mentoring to other organizations for which they receive little recognition -- or compensation.
- While it was beyond the scope of this report to analyze the cost-effectiveness of these programs, it is apparent that overall they **accomplish a great deal with relatively limited resources**. Each grantee met and surpassed most or all of its basic grant objectives, and each continued to branch out in new and promising directions that were often not anticipated.
- Like all nonprofits, these organizations have had to weather the difficult funding environment in the wake of the economic downturn that began at the beginning of this decade. While this has posed some specific challenges, it should be noted that they have managed to **expand their programs in new and exciting directions** throughout this period. These organizations have been agile in responding to new opportunities for program growth and creative in finding resources to support that growth, particularly their exploration of income generating entrepreneurial approaches.
- Campbell et. al. (Campbell, 2001) noted the tension between process and product, and between youth autonomy and adult guidance that is inherent in youth media programs. Each of the grantees appears to have **successfully balanced elements** in a way that works for that organization. In all five groups, youth appear to have a high degree of autonomy in decisions about the content and quality of their media projects. At the same time, each of these groups has a highly dedicated adult staff that provides structure, high expectations, guidance, teaching, and support. Achieving this balance has enabled these groups to provide strong youth development environments where youth produce high quality media products.



Funding Challenges

- Based on our interviews, it seemed that funding was the greatest challenge these organizations faced. They stressed the **need to become more financially sustainable and efficient**, and to increase earned income from social enterprise activities.
- They also found it challenging to keep up with **rapid innovations** in digital media technology. Despite the decline in the cost of media technology over the last 10-15 years, it still remains expensive for youth media organizations to equip their students with good quality computers, software, video, audio, and recording equipment, and to provide their students with the latest industry standard software.
- Given cash flow limitations, these groups do not have adequate **financial reserves** to respond to new opportunities.
- It is increasingly difficult to make ends meet on a **nonprofit salary in high cost regions** like the Bay Area and Los Angeles. As staff members become more skilled and experienced, the organizations can no longer afford to pay them competitive salaries.
- Program staff expressed frustration that they need to continually **make the case** for their programs, despite having a long track record of success. Some sense that the field of youth media still lacks legitimacy, is not well understood, and not clearly defined.

Organizational Challenges

- Several organizations currently experience challenges with leadership **transition**. They seek to maintain

relationships, systems, and procedures so that people are accountable, roles are clear, and quality is maintained as their organization grows.

- Several grantees are experiencing significant organizational challenges relating to **growth**. Some of the younger groups are struggle to create basic administrative systems or stabilize funding, while the older organizations grapple with ensuring a smooth transition to the next generation of leadership.
- The constant pressure of day-to-day work makes it difficult to find time or opportunities to connect with other youth media leaders, which leads to a **sense of isolation**.
- Space has been a challenge for some of these programs, whose success in expanding their activities, and the number of participants has created a **need for greater physical space**.

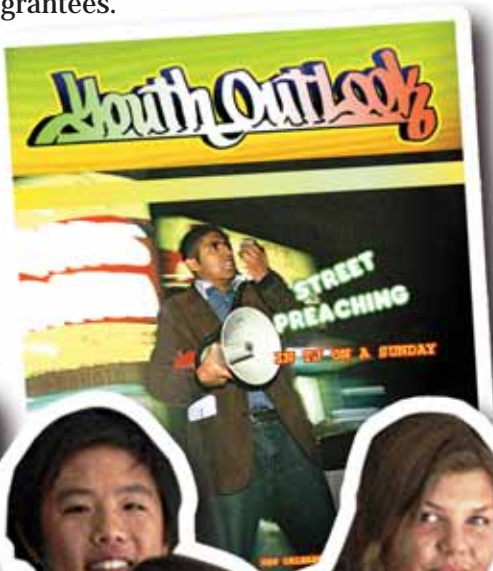
Programmatic Challenges

- Program staff stressed the **inadequacy of purely numerical indicators** to determine impact. They also stated that they do not feel they have the resources or systems to evaluate their programs more fully. The challenge is capturing and communicating the transformations these programs foster in youth, especially those transformations that happen over long periods of time.
- The **multiple levels** on which these programs operate **further complicate evaluation** of youth media programs. A comprehensive evaluation could examine not only youth development outcomes, but also media quality and the program's impact on audiences and the broader society.

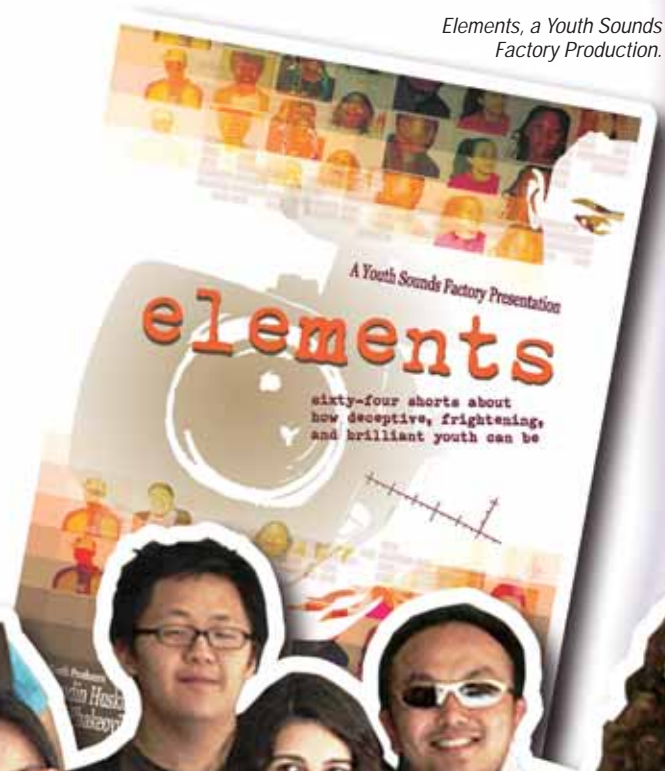
Other Challenges

- As some of these groups have begun to place youth-produced media in more mainstream and commercial outlets, the issue of **technical quality** has become a challenge.
- Creating sustainable **partnerships with public schools** to integrate quality youth media and media literacy curricula into the classroom has been challenging for some of the grantees.

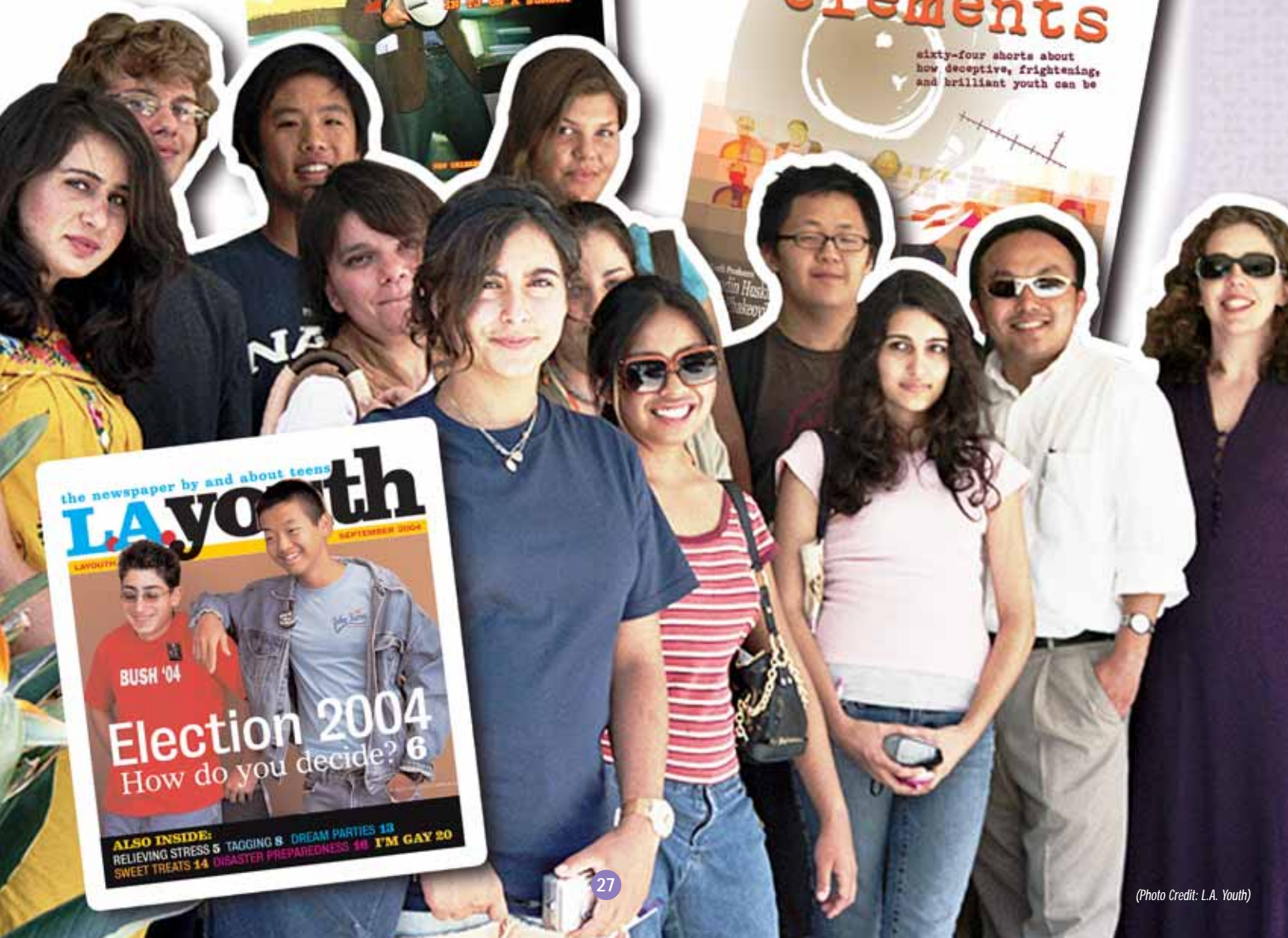
Youth Outlook, a publication of the Pacific News Service.



Elements, a Youth Sounds Factory Production.



- Youth media programs are challenged to **adapt to rapid changes** in the way media is created, disseminated, and consumed. This is a field where immediacy matters and success goes to the nimble. Youth media programs are challenged to respond to these opportunities with limited resources, while maintaining program focus and consistency.



Next: Future Opportunities For Philanthropy

Each of the organizations highlighted in this report are leaders and models for the field in California, and nationally. Each has brought the Stuart Foundation unique insights into what works in the youth media field, and has advanced the goals of the Foundation's Youth & Communities program. In every case, these organizations indicated that their Stuart grant was not “just one more grant.” The support provided operational stability and the flexibility to change and develop their programs. As one program staff said:

“It has become a pillar grant for us, because they are investing in youth media as a core focus, rather than just a little project.” Looking to the future, the Stuart Foundation will continue to support youth media, and hopes that this report will help others in philanthropy join in building the field more broadly. While various opportunities for future investment emerged from conversations with these organizations and youth media stakeholders, this report recommends close attention to those on the following page:



- Continue to invest in organizations that are **leaders** in the youth media field, while also exploring ways to support emerging, innovative organizations.
- Support the **mentorship** role played by many of the veteran staff of established youth media organizations on behalf of the next generation of youth media leaders.
- While continuing to provide **core operating support**, provide additional smaller grants targeted to specific organizational needs. These could include grants for technical assistance to address organizational development issues or for one-time costs such as technology/website upgrades. Explore the potential for smaller “**opportunity grants**” or an “**innovation fund**” to provide proven programs with a pool of flexible investment capital to try out new ideas or respond to changes in technology.
- Help youth media grantees and the field grapple with the challenges of **evaluating** program impact. Convene youth media organizations, youth, and stakeholders to work toward a common language around best practice and impact in the youth media field. Help build consensus between programs and funders about what impacts are the most important to measure. Support grantees to put in place creative and cost-effective assessment practices that will build program strength without draining organizational resources.
- Increase **attention** to and **understanding** of youth media among philanthropic organizations. One program staff suggested that philanthropy could sponsor a youth media 'expo' at a Council of Foundations conference. Foundations could also share their experiences with youth media funding in a variety of regional and national philanthropic forums.
- Foster **networking** among youth media organizations to overcome isolation by sponsoring a regular convening of youth media practitioners.
- Promote programmatic **collaboration** within individual foundations and across philanthropies to support integration of youth media in the work of other systems, public schools, child welfare, juvenile justice, etc.

APPENDICES / REFERENCES

APPENDIX A - LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Program leaders

Just Think: Elana Rosen, Interim Executive Director/Board President

L.A. Youth: Donna Myrow, Executive Director

Pacific News Service: Sandy Close, Executive Director; Kevin Weston, Senior Editor; Patricia Johnson, Development Director

Youth Radio: Ellin O'Leary, Executive Director; McCrae Parker, Director of Youth Development and Training; Lissa Soep, Education Director and Producer

Youth Sounds: Ken Ikeda, Executive Director

Focus Group Participants

Just Think: Elana Rosen, Interim Executive Director/Board President

L.A. Youth: Donna Myrow, Executive Director

Pacific News Service: Sandy Close: Executive Director; Raj Jayadev, De-Bug Editor

Youth Radio: Ellin O'Leary, Executive Director; McCrae Parker, Director of Youth Development and Training

Youth Sounds: Ken Ikeda, Executive Director

Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC): Paige Ramey, Director of New Initiatives (not a grantee)

Stakeholders

Just Think: Sarah Brandt, Peer Education Teacher, Balboa High School, San Francisco

L.A. Youth: Lynn Peterson, Workability Coordinator, The Linden Center, Los Angeles

Pacific News Service: Michelle Ball, Program Manager, KBWB TV (WB20 affiliate), San Francisco

Youth Radio: Adriana Carrillo, Academic Programs Coordinator, Early Academic Outreach Program, University of California, Berkeley

Youth Sounds: Judy Agnew, Executive Director and Paige Ramey, Director of New Initiatives, BAVC

Youth

Just Think

- **BL**, an 11th grade student at Balboa High School in San Francisco, who participated in Peer Health And Media Education (in-school) and in Just Think's summer intensive media workshop.

L.A. Youth

- **B** has been in the Foster Youth Writing and Education Project for 10 months and had a story published in the November 2005 issue. He is in the 11th grade at the Linden Center, a nonpublic school for Emotionally Disturbed children ages 5-22. He suffers from schizophrenia and lives in a group home, but visits with his family on weekends.
- **VC** is a freshman at Pasadena City College. She has been with L.A. Youth for five years. During that time she has published three feature stories, one cover story, one cover photo (which won an award from the L.A. Times), and many smaller items.
- **MM** is a junior at a private parochial school. He has been with L.A. Youth for 2 years and has published two feature stories and some smaller items.

Pacific News Service

- **RM**, age 22, began attending The Beat Within workshops at age 15 when he was in San Francisco Juvenile Hall. He has worked at PNS for six years as a staff writer and now as editor of YO! He is a junior studying English at SF State.
- **AR**, age 20, began attending The Beat Within workshops at age 13, also while in juvenile detention. She has been employed part-time at PNS since age 15 as an office assistant. During that time she finished high school and is currently enrolled in her first year of nursing school at City College. Both of these young adults exemplify the impact that PNS programs can have.

Youth Radio

- **DT** is a 17-year-old senior at Berkeley High. When she was seven years old, she and her mother made the perilous journey from El Salvador escorted by a "coyote." She and her mother have just become U.S. citizens.
- **GS** is a 17-year-old senior at Berkeley High. She was raised by a single mother, who was an immigrant from El Salvador. Since she was eight years old she has worked, first in her mother's hair salon, and now at Youth Radio and U.C. Berkeley.

Youth Sounds

- **VH** is an 18-year-old freshman at San Francisco City College. He was raised by a single mother in West Oakland, and attended a number of different schools before attending and graduating from McClymonds High School.
- **EE** is a 19-year-old sophomore at San Francisco State University. Her mother immigrated from South Africa and now works for Wells Fargo Bank and her father is a realtor. She attended Skyline High School in Oakland.

APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Questions for Stuart Youth Media Focus Group

Tell us your name, what you do at your organization, and what is one thing about your job as a leader in youth media that most inspires you?

What makes youth media programs unique within the field of youth development programs?

Describe two snapshots of the national youth media field, 10 - 15 years ago and in the present. What would those two snapshots look like - such as numbers of groups, types of activities, number of young people being affected, audience, etc. How would you characterize the youth media field at each point in time?

What are the trends within youth media organizations or in the youth media field as a whole? Use flip chart.

What are the successes and challenges that the youth media field in California has faced in recent years? What could be done to strengthen the field?

How would you characterize the impact your program has on the youth who participate? On the community/broader society?

What are the challenges of assessing impact on young people? On the community/broader society? What do you wish you could do that you currently cannot?

Does the target audience affect the ultimate impact of the program as a youth development vehicle or a vehicle for social change?

How should funders look at impact in youth media programs? What is reasonable to expect?

What are the challenges of communicating impact to funders, donors, board members, other stakeholders, the public, etc.?

Tell us more about the funding landscape for youth media organizations.

How could philanthropy better support youth media, overall?

How could the Stuart Foundation support and advance the field of youth media?

How could the Stuart Foundation better support your organization (beyond continued grant support)? Is there anything else you wanted to say but did not get a chance to say about anything we have talked about? Or is there anything we haven't covered that you think is important for the Stuart Foundation to hear about?

Youth Interview Questions

Introductory Questions

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. School and Grade:
4. How would you describe your ethnic or cultural background? (optional)

Questions about the program:

5. When did you start with X organization? How long have you been with it?
6. How did you hear about it; how did you get involved?
7. What made you decide to get involved; what attracted you to this program?
8. How often do you participate?
9. Is there anything that makes it difficult for you to participate as much or as often or as much as you'd like?
10. What is your role in the organization? What are you responsible for?
11. What is the atmosphere like at X organization?
Probe: Do you feel safe and supported there?
12. What kind of guidance and support do you receive from adults at X organization? Probes:
 - What kind of expectations do they have about your performance?
 - Do they treat you with respect and listen to your opinions?
 - Do they know who you are and what is important to you?
 - Do they know what is going on in your life outside the program?
13. Do you have an opportunity to get feedback from and give feed back to other young people? (Give an example)
14. Do you feel you have a say in important decisions about your work and about the program or organization?
15. Do you get support in setting goals, applying to college and/or applying to technical school or certification programs?
16. Do you have opportunities to take initiative, to be a leader?

Questions about how this program has affected you: (Please give examples)

17. Think back on all the things you've worked on? What have you worked on? Do you have a portfolio of your work? Have you gotten anything published or broadcast?
18. What kinds of skills have you learned as a result of participating in this program? Probes:
 - Communication skills, public speaking skills, editing skills, writing skills, graphic design skills, etc.
 - Are learning experiences challenging, interesting?
19. How important is it for you to have your work seen/heard by others? What impact did that have on you?
20. Has participating in this program affected your schoolwork?
21. Has this program had an impact on your life? What do you do differently now than before you started working with X organization? Probes:
 - Has it helped you grow or make progress toward any goals?
 - Your relationships to other young people?
 - Your relationships with other adults?
 - Your relationship with your community or the broader society?
 - Leadership skills and opportunities?
 - Other?

Conclusion

22. What would you tell a friend or another young person about this program, why to get involved or not to get involved? (What do you like the most?)
23. Is there anything you don't like about the program or that you wish were different? (What do you like least?)
24. Is there anything else you want to add?

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