



Ontario Youth Matter! Campaign Organizing & Planning for 2011

January 19th, 2011

The Assembly Hall Community Cultural Centre
Toronto, Ontario

Facilitation, Documentation and Reporting by Traction Strategy

The Ontario Youth Matter! campaign (OYM!) is at a natural turning point.

Since its launch in the fall of 2008, those involved with bringing the OYM! mandate to life have been working hard to build relationships with stakeholders and allies, actively advocate with the provincial government, and learn about and put into practice models for engaging youth in dialogue that influences policy.

The OYM! co-chairs and supporters have successfully met many of their goals—including encouraging the Ministry of Children & Youth Services to develop a Youth Policy Framework.

Still, there are some aspects of the mandate that remain unfulfilled. There is potential to go further with the campaign, fill some outstanding gaps and convert opportunities into accomplishments.

Today, as one funding source wraps up and another has just been secured, OYM! is positioned to set new goals and make plans to take the mandate to the next level.

It is for this purpose that the OYM! co-chairs came together with other active and interested supporters for a day of facilitated planning on January 19th, 2011 at the Assembly Hall in south west Toronto.

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Acknowledgements

The resources required for this planning day were generously provided by United Way Toronto.

Much gratitude is also extended to Gillian Mason of United Way Toronto who, as one of the co-chairs of the campaign, has played a pivotal role in bringing success to this campaign. As this campaign shifts into the next phase, Gillian is moving on to explore her own new goals and adventures.

Session Aims + Participants



Session Aims

The specific aims of this planning day were:

1. To review and reflect on goals and activities to date.
2. To collaboratively develop a set of goals and priority actions for OYM! up to and immediately following the October 2011 provincial election.
3. To identify the resource and organizing needs required to make the campaign successful.
4. And, importantly, for everyone to have the opportunity to share their perspectives, actively participate in the workshop and contribute their expertise and ideas to the future direction of OYM!.

Participants

In alphabetical order by first name, the participants of the session were:

Arsema Berhane, OYM! Co-Chair

Caitlyn French, Laidlaw Foundation Intern

Gillian Mason, OYM! Co-Chair, Senior Vice President, Strategic Initiatives and
Community Partnerships, United Way Toronto

Graham Clyne, Peel Children & Youth Initiative, United Way of Peel

Kadeem Henry, Program Participant, African Canadian Youth Justice Program

Laura McDonough, Manager, Public Policy, United Way Toronto

Lynsey Kissane, Research & Development Associate, George Brown College

Mobafa Baker, Program Manager, Youth Justice Education Project,

African Canadian Legal Clinic

Nathan Gilbert, OYM! Co-Chair, Executive Director, Laidlaw Foundation

Nicole Dupuis, Stakeholder Engagement, United Way of Peel

Pamela Grant, Executive Director, Youth Challenge Fund

Peter Amponsah, OYM! Co-Chair, Re-Integration Social Worker,

African Canadian Youth Justice Program

Susan Vardon, Director, Special Gifts, United Way Toronto

Trevor Johnson, Community Partnership & Funding, City of London

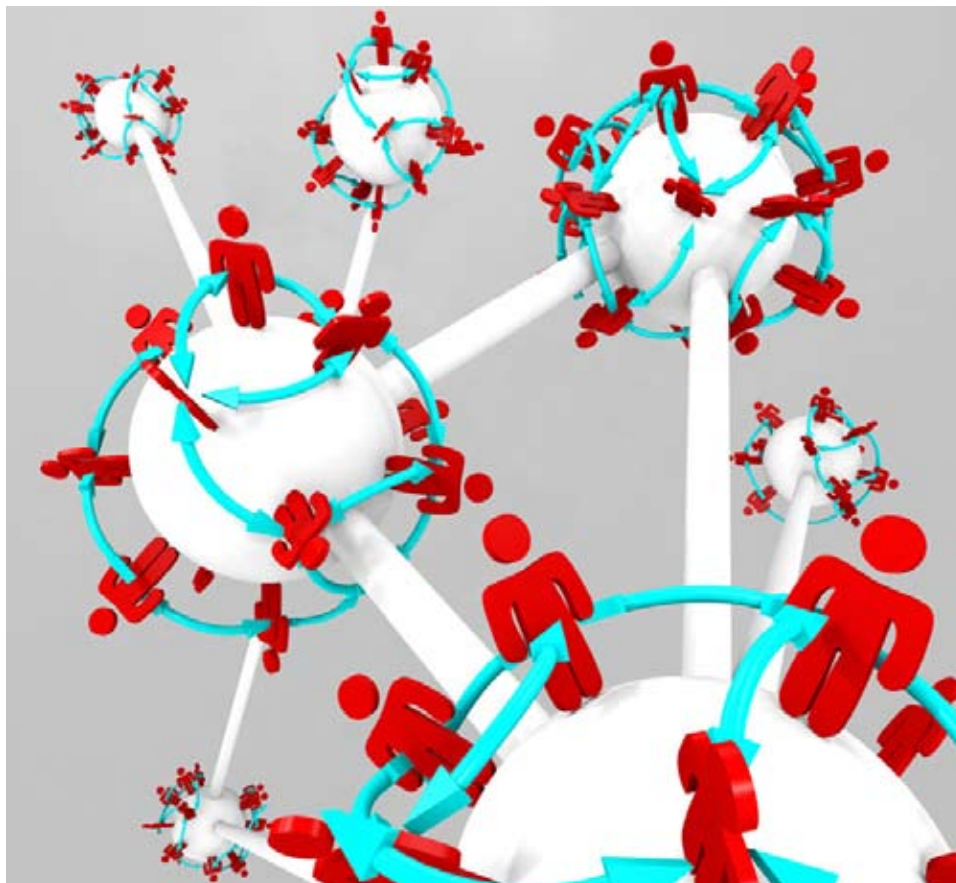
A Snapshot of the OYM! Campaign

The Ontario Youth Matter! (OYM) campaign for better youth policies is a coalition of individuals and community organizations calling on the Ontario government to implement a Provincial Youth Policy Outcomes Framework.

OYM! is described by those involved as a “vibrant and successful campaign full of surprises that has brought together multiple stakeholders of all generations to bring about positive social change”.

The next phase of the campaign is viewed as offering new opportunities to further “grow the effort into something beautiful”. Although there is a clear mandate around which people have organized, there is also an “openness to where the initiative will land” as new people join in and bring fresh energy and diverse perspectives to “build on the foundation of work already done”.

Elements of this campaign that are considered important to the picture include the “representation of many different faces at the OYM! events and activities” and “connecting the dots around the province”.



Review of Campaign Mandate and Activities to Date

OYM! Mandate



When the OYM! campaign launched the primary mandate was clear: advocate for the provincial government to create a comprehensive *outcomes based* youth policy framework.

An “outcomes” based framework is seen as effective because it focuses on and is driven by a vivid, shared vision of “better lives” for youth. This framework is less about processes and program particulars than it is about positive, measurable change in the lives of Ontario’s youth.

Supplementing the core mandate is a set of goals that organizers aimed to achieve when originally developing the campaign.

Because youth programming and supports are typically “under-funded and uncoordinated across ministries and programs”, a primary goal was to improve the way in which ministries work together and fill the gaps that youth slip through.

A second essential goal was to keep youth at the front of the campaign effort by ensuring their voices are included in a meaningful way, and actively include them in the campaign “movement”.

Thirdly, campaign organizers aimed to “link” people and organizations across Ontario and encourage participation in the campaign.

Upon reflection it is clear that great strides have been made over the last few years in achieving the mandate. However, while the government *did* agree to develop a youth policy framework, they *did not* commit to that framework being outcomes based.

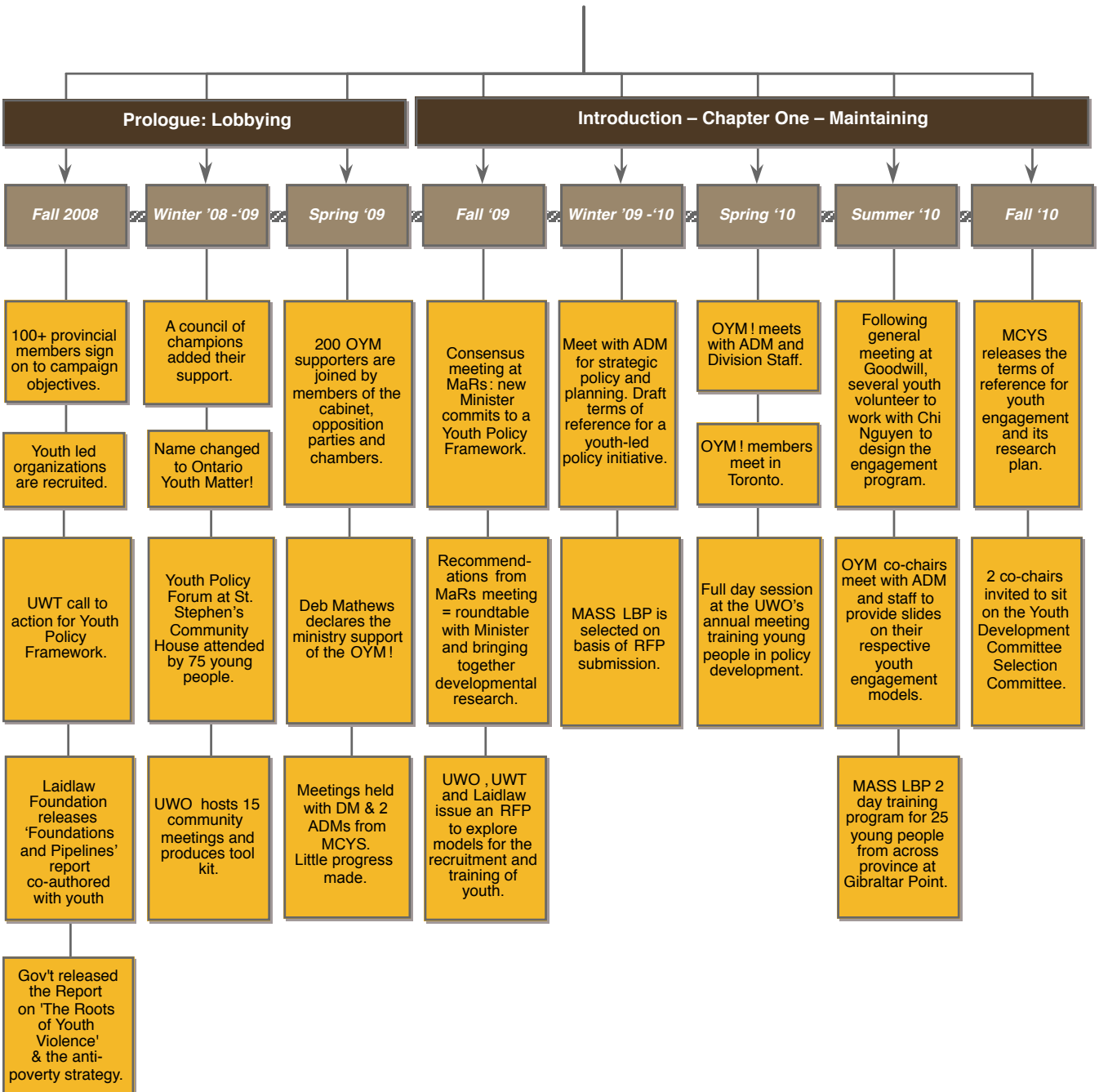
As such, the updated mandate of the OYM! campaign is essentially:

To work with the provincial government on the development of a meaningful youth policy framework and continue to advocate for it to be outcomes-based.

It is also clear that notable advancements have been made in achieving the campaign goals. Nonetheless, it is felt that these goals could be taken to another level. The updated goals of the campaign for 2011 are found on page 11.

Activities to Date

Since its inception in the fall of 2008, the following OYM! campaign activities have been accomplished.





Memorable Moments

Looking back on these activities, the ones that really stand out as memorable for organizers include:

- The dynamic demonstration of 200 supporters at Queen’s Park that triggered the government to make a commitment to the youth policy framework.
- The 2010 meeting with ministry staff and OYM! reps where it became apparent that the ministry was changing the way it did business.
- The Toronto Island event organized by MASS LBP that brought together 25 youth to provide training and build the confidence necessary for young people to organize youth policy forums in their communities.
- The workshop at St. Stephen’s which saw 75 youth engage on the topic of how to influence policy.

Successes

While a great success of the OYM! campaign so far has been “getting the ear” of the provincial government and convincing them to establish a youth driven policy framework, those who were actively involved in the campaign and support it are also proud of other significant accomplishments.

These other accomplishments include:

- The proactive outreach to and involvement of youth in campaign leadership and activities;
- Providing learning opportunities for youth to ignite their participation in the development of policies;
- The “intergenerational interaction” and “adult / youth co-chair model” of the campaign which provided an opportunity to “really hear and understand each other”;
- First steps in reaching “beyond Toronto” to make it a truly province-wide campaign by including non-Toronto based members at every meeting;
- The effective use of limited resources.

Challenges

No campaign is without its challenges, and OYM! is no exception. One of the major hurdles OYM! organizers and supporters have experienced is maintaining momentum. With a “changing cast” of people involved over a relatively long period of time and the continual need to re-focus and re-clarify where the campaign was headed, keeping a steady pace and being sure of next steps has not always been easy.

Limited human and financial resources constrained the campaign activities and efforts “to go a little further”, both outside of Toronto and into other Ministries, were not realized to the extent that organizers would have liked.

Furthermore, little time and few resources put limits on the capacity of the group to involve even more youth and circle back to those who expressed interest along the way.

There was also the challenge of carrying out the tasks and activities of the campaign while concurrently “creating and defining the OYM! way of organizing”. This includes exploring and refining models of campaign leadership and youth engagement in addition to the effort to maximize the expertise and learning around the table.

Finally, the group grappled with the question of “whether to lead or follow”. Early on, it was proposed that OYM! should develop its own policy and not wait for the government. Today, while the government has agreed to create a framework, it falls short of being outcomes based. As such, the question of whether it would have been more effective to develop an OYM! framework first and only subsequently present it to the government is still unanswered.





Lessons Learned

It is essential to understand and apply what has been learned to date in order to successfully navigate through the next phase of the campaign. A few of the lessons learned from the work completed so far include:

- Regular evaluation of the purpose and goals of the campaign is important either to keep the group moving forward on the same course (or a new trajectory), or allow the group to “wrap up” if their work together is finished.

There is power in numbers. For this campaign this is especially true if there are numerous youth involved. More youth involved allows for a diversity of voices and experiences to inform the campaign, but it also shows the government that there is the potential for a movement to build around the issues.

- Having to function without too much structure and a certain level of uncertainty or “fuzziness” is not unusual for a multi-stakeholder coalition. It requires trust and patience and focus on the goals.
- Collective leadership can have its share of communication challenges. But it is helpful to know how to talk through differences with each other, hear one another’s perspectives, and examine the existing “power dynamic”.
- Energy and motivation to keep up momentum can come from continuing to look for the potential to be successful.
- It is helpful to think of the work in the next phase as “holding the government accountable for what they have promised” and “working with them to make this the best possible framework”.

OYM! Campaign Goals for 2011

By the end of 2011, the OYM! organizers would like to see the following:

- 1.** A province-wide **outcomes-based** youth policy framework with broad political “buy-in” across political parties and ministries.
- 2.** Involved, supported youth who are energized to influence policy that affects them by actively engaging in the campaign and serving as leaders.
- 3.** A high functioning campaign team with clear roles, an increased capacity to carry out the work, and the potential to “leave a legacy” for those who want to build on it.
- 4.** Public discourse on the issues concerning youth has been incited and the critical issues are on the election agenda.

Goals that campaign organizers and supporters feel especially confident about include engaging youth and continuously advocating for an outcomes-based framework. However, securing the ear of the political parties seems a more difficult task, as does ensuring that the “right people” or “right allies” are at the table.

Specifically, some of the challenges and barriers to achieving these goals are:

- The group is missing expertise for certain tasks.
- Limited human, financial or infrastructure resources to carry out work for meaningful but potentially lofty goals.
- Unsure how to mobilize youth and connect planned and emerging youth initiatives across the province.
- This is asking the government to make a significant shift in how they do their work. OYM! is “not the government” and may not be at the table when the decisions are made.
- Time to get the work done is seriously constrained by political timelines.
- Not all tasks are clearly defined or assigned.
- Leadership teams needs additional personnel / support.

Some of the ways these challenges might be addressed include using social media and other forms of technology for mobilizing youth and supporters around the province; staying focused on the priority tasks and being *very realistic* about what can be accomplished; and quickly linking into the provincial government’s activities and events to maximize resources and impact..

Opportunities and Actions to Move Forward

It is understood that the prime opportunities for OYM! action are found in the plans of the provincial government to research and develop a youth policy framework. OYM! organizers can position themselves to influence the results of these efforts by becoming involved in or responding to the government's activities and developments as they unfold.

The Provincial Government's Plans

The following outlines the government's plans for developing a youth policy framework in 2011.

	Jan '11	Feb '11	Mar '11	Apr '11	May '11	June '11	July '11	Aug '11
Youth engagement	First (in person) meeting of YDC	Begin local capacity building	Second (in person) meeting of YDC		Youth Consultations	Third (in person) meeting of YDC		
		Multi-ministry Youth Summit			Regional engagement sessions conducted			
					Youth Policy Frameworking Conference			
Youth policy framework (report and develop)					Writer to begin drafting version of framework		Public release of the working version of the YPF goals	
Research process	Submission of draft papers	Submission of final papers	Draft trajectory shared with Research Forum participants	Release final Developmental Trajectory, Discussion Guides, Engagement Tools				
	Mid-point meeting of researchers			Research Forum				

Key Areas of Activity for OYM! in 2011

Upon reflection of the government's plans and the opportunities therein to achieve OYM! goals, organizers have identified **four inter-related, strategic areas of activity** for OYM! on which to focus and around which to build working groups or sub-committees. They are:

- 1. Reaching out to and proactively including youth** in the campaign leadership and activities.
- 2. Developing and implementing a communications strategy** that effectively delivers the OYM! message and call to action to youth and allies across Ontario, and to the current government and other political parties. These would include the development of OYM! communications material and tools (some of which can currently be found on the OYM! / Laidlaw website).
- 3. Continuously developing an influential relationship with the government** including participating in their planned activities and even co-planning them where possible.
- 4. Working towards the production of a “report card”** that holds the government accountable for their framework and measures the success of its implementation.

A fifth activity that underscores the others is resource development and management. While the campaign is not an organization requiring a complex resource development strategy, there are basic financial, human and logistical resources needed and having a sub-committee to look for and bring in these resources will be valuable.





Resources Needed to Fulfill the Activities

NEED	OPTIONS
Financial and Human Resources	Access to workspace at supportive organizations
Communications expertise	Some staff resources within participating organizations
Dedicated somebody	\$45,000 from United Way Ontario
New leadership	Piggyback on meetings held by the government or other organizations
Funding to hire staff	Financial contributions
Evaluation data	Ask ministry for support
Four youth leaders	
Need some senior level staff from orgs	
Tools and Systems	
Social media	
Implementation plan	
Common place for sharing information	
Work plan with key milestones	
Digital media	
Communication strategy	

Organizing for Success!

Values Guiding the OYM! Campaign

Values express what is important to us. They shape our choices and act as a filter for decision making. Issues bring us together but common values are the glue that hold us together.

As a coalition of individuals and organizations, OYM! relies on a set of shared values to act as a framework in the absence of formal or traditional structures.

In no particular order, some of the values that shape how OYM! is organized and guide the development, decision making and implementation of the OYM! activities are:



Impact
Results oriented

Authentic, inclusive
youth engagement

Commitment
Timeliness

Vision
Focus

Balance
Flexibility

Boldness
Persistence
Determination

Teamwork
Collaborative
Consensus

Integrity

Experience
Confidence

Shared leadership
Respectful listening

Advocacy

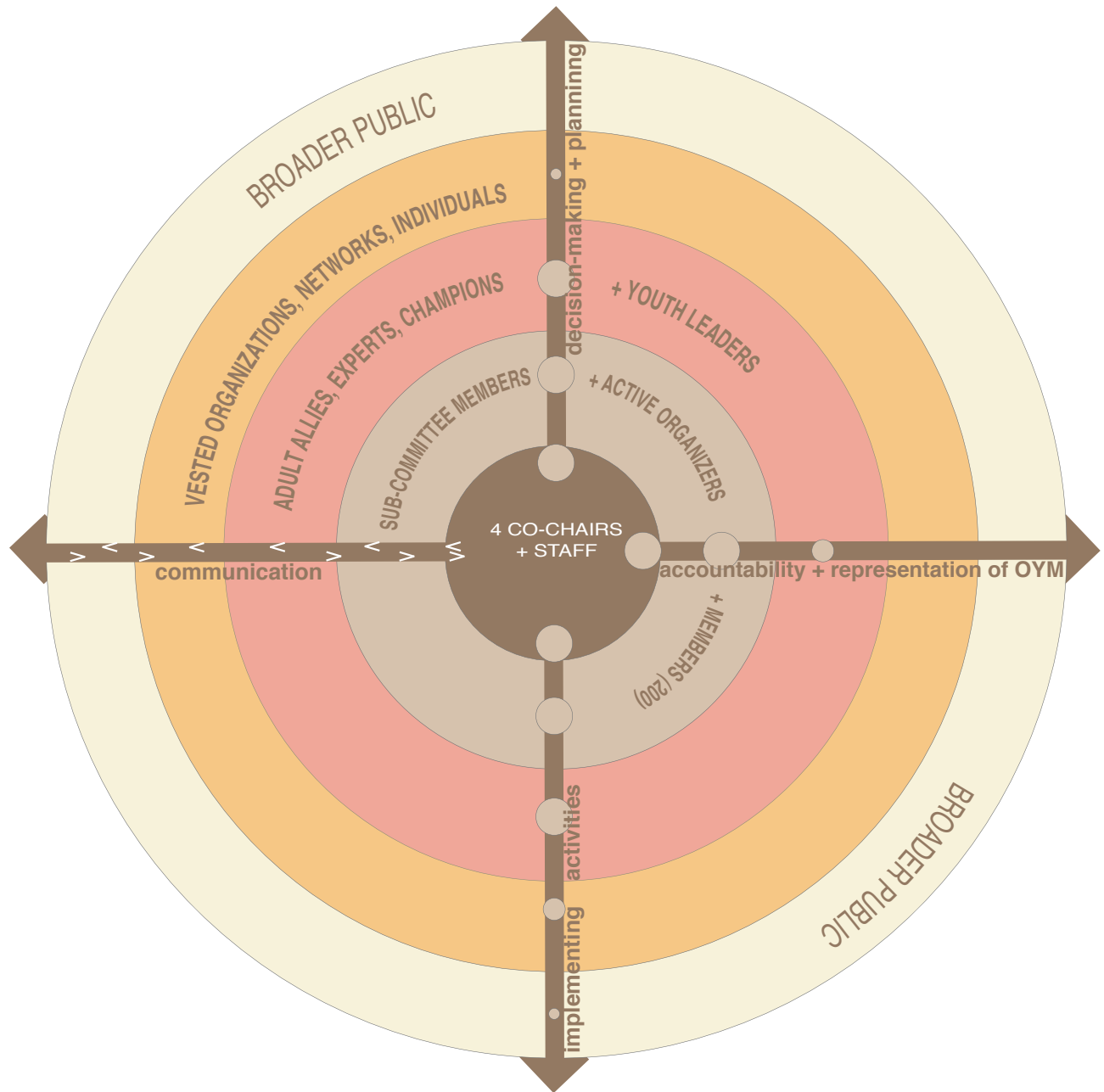


Model for Organizing

“Citizens groups should have as little structure as possible. The right amount is just enough to address their goals. In an attempt to become legitimate, many small groups decide they need more structure. Unfortunately, this can lead to spending more time on the needs of the organization than on the reason for getting together...a common mistake is involving small numbers of people heavily. They should strive to involve large numbers of people lightly. Flat organizations, which emphasize horizontal connections, seem to be the best bet for involving large numbers of people lightly.”

*~ Citizen Works: Tools for Democracy
(www.citizenworks.org)*

The proposed model or “vehicle” for organizing and carrying out the OYM! goals can be viewed as a series of concentric circles that depict varying degrees of involvement in campaign activities, decision-making / planning and accountability / representation as well as the flow of communication. With permeable lines between the circles, this model shows the openness of the OYM! to inviting in new people and allowing people to move in and out of roles depending on their ability to commit or contribute.



LEADERSHIP



“Good leaders are the key to community organizing. They do not tell other people what to do, but help others to take charge. They do not grab the limelight, but nudge others into the limelight. They are not interested in being The Leader, but are interested in creating more leaders. They recognize that only by creating more leaders can an organizing effort expand.”

*~ Citizen Works: Tools for Democracy
(www.citizenworks.org)*

The desired leadership model for this campaign is **four co-chairs** (two community oriented youth and two adult allies who are in a position to leverage key relationships and resources) supported by **five sub-committees** (communications, government relations, youth engagement, evaluation, and resource development).

With the exception of aiming to recruit youth for each, there are few parameters defining the composition or number of people on the sub-committees. The goal is to get people on them who are able and willing to get the work done.

The job of the co-chairs is essentially to keep the campaign on track and moving in the right direction. It is to trigger the sub-committees and work with them to develop integrated action plans that strategically move towards the goals.

With input from other core participants, the co-chairs also lead the preparation to hire any staff and help guide the work of the staff person (as is appropriate based on the expectations of the funder providing resources for the staff person).

The primary task of the sub-committees is to develop and drive the implementation of a strategic action plan for their main area of activity.

Everyone seems pleased and appreciative of the dedication and hard work the current co-chairs have done so far. There is no indication that an alternate leadership model is needed at this stage or that any of the co-chairs need to be replaced (with the exception of the current vacancy of an adult ally chair).

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The leadership and sub-committee members can only do so much. Ultimately, the success of this campaign is a joint effort and a shared responsibility. Because there are few formal systems for accountability and ensuring follow-through when someone commits to a task, the individuals must self-monitor and the group must draw on the common values to guide any dialogue if there are accountability concerns.





Critical First Steps and Staying on Track

“Once you’ve completed the necessary groundwork, you need to act. Surprisingly, many groups never get around to acting. John Gardiner says, “Many talk about action but are essentially organized for study, discussion or education. Still others keep members busy with organizational housekeeping, committee chores, internal politics and passing of resolutions.” While many interest groups get together just for discussion, community groups tend to work best when acting accompanies talking. Otherwise, they tend to shrink.”

*~ Citizen Works: Tools for Democracy
(www.citizenworks.org)*

The critical first steps needed to launch the campaign plan for 2011 are:

- 1.** Develop a terms of reference / job description and recruit a ‘dedicated person’
 - Draft by co-chairs and send out to members for review.
 - Then post. Expect it to take about a month to fill.
- 2.** Generate interest in the sub-committees and then produce a work plan for each.
 - Communications
 - Youth Engagement
 - Government Relations
 - Measurement and Evaluation
 - Resource Development
- 3.** Fill in the vacant co-chair position and recruit more youth (especially on sub-committees)
 - Everyone think about possible people to recruit and feed back to co-chairs
- 4.** Distribute this report as well as the report from the November meeting with youth to the larger membership.



To stay on track and keep the work moving forward steadily, the OYM! organizers will need to actively and frequently communicate with one another about the progress of tasks they are responsible for and regularly re-evaluate the capacity of the group to fulfill the core activities (see appendix 3: “regular evaluation of plan”).

Announcing and celebrating milestones will also help keep the group motivated and energized for the next round of action.

APPENDIX 1: Tips for Sustaining a Community Coalition¹



Focus on your mission. As your coalition grows and more activities are implemented, it is easy to lose sight of your original mission. Review your mission and vision. Are you still on target?

Seek out champions, not simply members. You need champions on your coalition, not people who simply warm seats at your meetings. Coalition members must believe in the cause and be dedicated to the mission.

Create a sense of urgency. Your coalition is attempting to create significant change in your community. People must understand that time cannot be wasted. Action is required now – not next month or next year.

Communicate. Talk about your activities and actions with coalition members and the community. A lack of information causes rumours and second-guessing.

Say “thank you” often. The contributions of every coalition member are important. Express your gratitude. When appropriate, make it formal.

Listen. Humans have two ears and one mouth for a reason – listening is twice as important as speaking. Listen to feedback and recommendations. Pay special attention when members ask for help.

¹ From the Office of the Fire Marshal, Ontario Government

APPENDIX 2: Operating a Coalition and Making it Thrive²

- Make sure you are an active listener, that is, that you focus all your attention on the speaker, making sure there are no distractions, and that you are concentrating on what message the speaker is trying to get across.
- Keep those you are talking to from taking the defensive. A great way to do this is by using “I” instead of “you” to start sentences. For example, “I’m not sure I understand the approach you’re taking on the media campaign. Could you explain it to me?” is sure to get a clearer, more open response than “You aren’t getting anywhere on the media project, are you?”
- Make sure communication is complete; never assume that staff members or volunteers know what is supposed to be done or how you feel about a certain issue.
- Keep coalition members up to date on what the coalition as a whole is doing, and on what groups who are members of the coalition are doing on their own.
- When you are developing the objectives of your coalition, make sure that your goals are discussed and shared by all the members of your coalition.
- Make your presence known in the community. A coalition that is not well known in a community is probably a coalition that is not very effective. Recruit and train teachers and students involved in drama clubs, journalism and other clubs to begin youth presentations and support group activities about teen sexuality.
- Ask local officials to endorse your plans. Endorsement from community leaders can give your coalition greater respect and prestige in the eyes of other community members.
- Delegate leadership and authority throughout the coalition. If a single person dominates a coalition, you run the risk of the group falling apart if she decides to leave. An organization with shared leadership is much less vulnerable than one that is not.



APPENDIX 2 con't: Operating a Coalition and Making it Thrive²



- Keep a constant look out for new members to add a fresh perspective and new enthusiasm to your group.
- As important as new members are, though, don't forget the long-term workers who have done so much for your coalition. Be sure to give them the recognition and support they deserve.
- Keep your promises. If you're not sure you can do it, don't say it.
- Set winnable goals; break problems down into smaller "sub-goals" that are achievable, and that you can celebrate along the way.
- Acknowledge diversity among your members, and among their ideas and beliefs. One way to handle sensitive issues (over which members of your group disagree) is to hold open forums discussing them, instead of coming out with a hard and fast policy.
- Be persistent. You are most likely working to change conditions that have been a certain way for years; you can make a difference, but it probably won't happen overnight.
- Evaluate what you have done: what went well, and what you should change for next time.
- Celebrate your accomplishments, and take a little bit of a breather.

² The Community Toolbox (<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/>)

APPENDIX 3: Regular Evaluation of Plan³

Review of Actions to Date

1. What did we say we were going to do? (refer to workplan, action items, strat plan etc)
2. What did we actually do from the plan? Of this, what was:
 - a. Completely done
 - b. Partly done
3. What has happened that is new, unplanned or unexpected?
4. What of the accomplished activities:
 - a. Were relatively easy
 - b. Were difficult
 - c. Went well / were successful
 - d. Didn't work out well
 - e. Had a significant impact
 - f. Were strategic and lead us towards our vision
 - g. Were not strategic
 - h. Are leading to more or new activities / tasks
5. What was the KEY to success of the activities that went well?
6. What was NOT done that we planned on doing?
7. Why were some things not able to be achieved?
8. What have we learned that is important to keep in mind as we move forward?
9. What activities / tasks carry over to our next phase?



Planning for the Next Phase

1. What are our realistic but strategic goals for the next 'phase'? (goals should come from / connect back to your 'strategies to your vision'. Some old goals may be changed because of new information or ideas.)
2. What are we most excited about seeing come to life?
3. What looks the most daunting or challenging?
4. What looks the easiest or achievable?
5. Why is achieving these goals important?
6. What will be different for us if they are accomplished?
7. What are the consequences if they are not achieved?
8. What are the primary activities or events that relate to each goal?
9. When do they need to be done by?

³ Traction Strategy (www.tractionstrategy.ca)

