NYC YOUTH CIVIC ACTION GUIDE

- INVESTIGATION

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Acknowledgments

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Investigation
**Topic Three:**
**Mapping Your Community—Assets and Needs**

How do you get to know your community to identify a significant issue? By identifying and understanding the different assets and needs within your community, especially from various perspectives, you gain new information and ideas that lead to selecting an issue.

**Begin by discussing the terms “asset” and “needs.”** Ask, “What words and phrases come to mind with each term?” Often the term “assets” is less familiar so it’s important to clarify these concepts.

- **Assets** can be people, structures, the natural environment, an existing program, economic means, history, culture, and more.
- **Needs** are elements missing or under-resourced for you and your community to thrive such as adequate jobs, sources for healthy food, parks, after school programs, safe spaces, and more.

With your YLC, talk about why knowing assets and needs matters when exploring the community. Include that looking at assets gives us a lens to see what is going well, what is positive in the community before we look at what is lacking or needed.

**Include your organization!** Include multiple stakeholders from your organization in interviews and/or surveys to build connections and deeper understanding of issues that impact the organization and community.

Then begin the process of community mapping.

**Mapping Your Community**

During this process, your YLC identifies what exists in the community that is supportive and enriching and what is lacking to better know what actions would be productive and meaningful.

**Meeting Virtually?**

**Individual Maps**
Each participant creates their own map with paper and pens or markers and posts in a shared Google Doc.

**Collaborative Virtual Maps**
Create a shared map using Jamboard or Padlet. Add virtual sticky notes, photos, links to websites, and more.

**Meeting In-Person**

**Supplies:**
- easel paper
- markers for each participant
- sticky notes
Step One: What is the shape of this community?

- On shared or individual paper, draw the outline of this particular community as defined and described by the group. Are there major streets or parks that form the edges or boundaries? Create the shape.
- Note that this is a “symbolic” map – not intended to be to scale or inclusive of everything. This is meant to be creative and expressive in a fun and collaborative way.

Step Two: What do you “see”?

- Ask everyone to close their eyes and imagine they are flying over the community like a bird—what do they see from this perspective (such as trees, parks, roads, buildings)? Discuss and list.
- Ask everyone to close their eyes and imagine a drone’s view of your community. What do they see from this perspective (such as trees, parks, roads, buildings)? Discuss and list.
- Continue to identify:
  - Safe and unsafe places
  - Organizations that support and involve youth
  - Libraries
  - Family-friendly locations
  - Art hubs, for example, where public art is displayed
  - Community parks and gardens
• Continue to create a list and, when ready, place what has been identified on the map. Be creative with shapes and colors as desired to identify the different places. A legend can be added.

Step Three: Assets and needs?
• Review the maps to determine what represents an “asset” and what represents a “need.” Use colors or other identifiers to note which is which on the maps.
• Discuss how the map gives clues about what represents community needs and significant issues.
• Take a photo of the map so between meetings everyone can be on the lookout for what needs to be added. Most importantly, discuss getting input from peers and other community members. Being in a YLC means youth represent the voices of youth and adults in their communities. They can fulfill that aspect of the program by capturing what others see as community assets and needs through doing interviews and surveys.

Note that this mapping process can be ongoing. If we can continually see the community with fresh eyes and remain open to the perspectives of others, the map stays dynamic and has an ongoing purpose.

Continue to draw upon the interests, skills, and talents of group members. These are your YLC’s greatest assets.
Topic Four:
The Four Corners Experience—Finding Your Action Issue

After identifying community assets and needs, you are ready to select your action issue. The Four Corners Experience is a dynamic interactive process for identifying a key issue and using the MISO Method of Action Research for deeper investigation and preparation.

Why the MISO Method? We often rely on a “search” engine like Google to find out information. However, “research” requires us to “look again” and add to what has been known before. The MISO Method can be used repeatedly during the Five Stages of YLC as you learn about issues during investigation, and as you prepare and plan for action. MISO can also be used in schools and by organizations to expand finding out about any topic.

The MISO Method of Action Research
uses four methods of inquiry; the acronym is MISO:

- **Media** – internet, television, newspapers, films, maps, books, billboards, and more
- **Interview** – asking an expert knowledgeable about the topic
- **Survey** – using set questions with people who have knowledge about a subject or for general knowledge or opinions
- **Observation** – using our surroundings or prior experiences, or creating an experiment or simulation

Meeting Virtually?
Each participant can create their own Four Corners Experience page (ideally having paper, markers, and sticky notes). If possible, collaborating on a Jamboard or Padlet lets everyone interact and build on the ideas of others in real time with virtual easel paper and sticky notes. Ideas for how to adapt the in-person experience described here is provided for each step, as needed.


Step One
Paired Interviews – Interests, Skills, Talents

- Form groups of 4 or 6 around a sheet of easel paper. Everyone has a marker.
- Model the process by drawing a frame on the easel paper; see the top image on page 10. The groups draw a frame on their paper. The first step is an abbreviated version of Personal Inventory to find out what each person in the group brings — their interests, skills, and talents. Participants pair up in their small groups. Direct the pairs to “Interview your partner and represent within the frame your partner’s interests, skills, and talents.” The term “represent” is intentional so using words or images is up to the individual. Allow three to four minutes. Leave the large space in the center blank.
- In complete silence, ask the participants to look at the representations in the frame to learn about all group members.
- Now that you know about your group, continually draw upon interests, skills, and talents while moving forward with the Four Corners Experience; this keeps everyone interested and involved.

Meeting Virtually?

Decide on your small groups (4-6 people). Within each group, pair off to learn about each other using either breakout rooms or Facetime-style phone calls to find out about your partner. Then convene in the small groups to share information about each other. Be sure to represent these aspects of each group member on the individual or shared visual being created.

Step Two
Identifying or Narrowing Your Issues

- Group members take one minute to simultaneously write the issues they care about inside the circle that are either: 1) related to the organization, or 2) of general concern in the community.

OR

- If you have one or a few issues: Place a circle in the middle of the paper, a little larger than a fist. Each small group can tackle the same issue or different issue being considered. Write that issue in the center and then add subtopics of that theme, for example, if Youth Unemployment is the BIG issue, subtopics could be resume writing or interview skills. The narrowing of the issue will differ between groups as they engage in the Four Corners process.
- Now, take one minute for the small group to agree on a key issue or subtopic to explore further. Sometimes, two or more issues or subtopics go together and that is fine. Circle the selected issue(s) or subtopic(s).
Step Three
In Person – Asking Questions

• Each group states their issue. Using sticky notes, each person writes 2-4 questions regarding the issue on their paper, one question per sticky note. They also write and deliver questions to other groups. Take four minutes for nonstop questions. The adult facilitator also adds questions. Everyone is up and moving around!

• Then, take two minutes to get to know the questions on your paper including those left by others.

Meeting Virtually?
Questions in Chat
Type questions in the chat. You may be surprised by how much more willing some people are to pose questions this way.

Jamboard Four Corners
If you are using Jamboard to host the Four Corners Experience, each group can have a separate tab on the shared document. This enables participants to move to other groups’ tabs in order to share questions.

Step Four
In Person – Preparing for Action Research

• Add eight additional lines to the inside section of the frame: four corners, two vertical and two horizontal lines from the center circle. After developing questions comes research. There are four ways to conduct Action Research. The acronym is MISO; see page 8 for more details.

• On the model, print Media, Interview, Survey, and Observation, one in each large space. Place questions in the action research method best suited for obtaining answers; questions are on sticky notes so they can be moved.

Meeting Virtually?
Individual Pages
Each participant can use sticky notes for their questions. In their small group, participants can offer questions to each other to add on a sticky note and into one of the MISO quadrants.

Shared Visuals
Jamboard and Padlet are user-friendly for creating quadrants and for moving virtual sticky notes.
**Step Five**

**Conducting Initial Action Research**

- Decide who will participate in each MISO approach. Designate time during and between meetings to do the “finding out.”

- Where do you start? Identify the most pressing questions, then prioritize and divide tasks based on interests, skills, talents, and areas for growth.

- Include documents available at the organization for media and people within the organization as experts to interview and for surveys.

- Be inventive about how you seek to capture information.

During this Action Research step, be sure to look into different policies and practices related to this issue under review or in the process of being developed or changed at your site or within the community or city. Does this information assist in thinking about this issue?

For information on Conducting Interviews and Creating Surveys, go to page 12.

**Step Six**

**Discussing Findings**

- As you complete the initial MISO Action Research/Investigation, discuss findings. Did you discover assets? Do you agree on the need? What else might you need to know? Place a sticky note in the middle of their easel paper with the significant need or Action Issue that has been selected.

- In each corner of the easel paper (virtual or individual paper), write the word **Policy, Practice, Advocacy, and Our Action**. During the next session on **Confirming your Action**, fill in these corners as ideas become more developed.

**Meeting Virtually?**

If using a platform like Jamboard or Padlet, save your documents for continued work. If individual pages have been created, save them! These will be added to in the next session.
SKILL DEVELOPMENT ALERT!
On the next few pages, find additional information on Interview Techniques and Tips, Creating Surveys, and Interactive Surveys. Developing these skills builds confidence to interface with the community and collect significant data.

Why does data-gathering matter? Capturing the voices from the community is essential in designing meaningful action to benefit all. Stakeholders often want solid evidence that data provides.

Interview Techniques and Tips
Interviews are typically with experts who offer insights and information from their unique perspective.

1. As a YLC, list community members with diverse perspectives on community assets and needs, including people within your organization. Select who you will interview either by inviting interviewees into a YLC meeting or conducting them, often in pairs, in the community.

2. Draft interview questions, then rehearse with a YLC member.

3. Decide how you will record the interview or otherwise capture significant information.

4. Ideally for practice, conduct an interview all together, perhaps with someone knowledgeable from the organization. Then, youth can work in pairs to conduct other interviews during or between meetings.

5. Share your findings with your group and create or add to a master “Assets/Needs” Chart.

Creating Surveys
Surveys gather information and perspectives from diverse populations within the community.

1. In small groups, make a list of who in the community offers diverse perspectives on the community’s assets and needs. REMINDER! Youth members represent other youth in the community. Collecting additional youth insights, ideas, opinions, and recommendations is an essential aspect of a YLC.

2. Draft survey questions (see Survey Success!, pages 17-19) and practice with your YLC members. Revise survey questions as needed.
How can you gather important information to support change that matters in your community?

You can survey community members! Design a survey about your topic of focus that uses the following FOUR types of survey questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION TYPE</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>DEVELOP YOUR QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close-ended</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
<td>Do you make choices that help limit your amount of water waste? YES NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likert scale</td>
<td>A point scale (usually 5 levels of response)</td>
<td>Water conservation is important. Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Agree Agree Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>A question with pre-determined choices. Sometimes you may want your participant to choose only one response, or you may want your participant to choose more than one response.</td>
<td>In what ways do you conserve water? (Circle all that apply) a. Take shorter showers  b. Check your toilet for leaks c. Insulate your water pipes d. Turn off water when brushing your teeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td>A question that allows the participant to provide a more detailed answer. HINT—To keep your results manageable, you may suggest a word limit for the response.</td>
<td>Tell how you conserve water in your community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic Questions: If you want to learn about the background of participants, you can also add demographic questions about each participant’s name, age, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, education, or other relevant categories.

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3. **Decide how to distribute the survey** (e.g. in person with paper or digitally – Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics). If in person and if the target is other youth, this can typically be done one-on-one at school or places youth gather, such as a youth center. If done in the community, work in pairs. If a digital survey, generate a list of email addresses and blast out the survey and/or create a card with the link to the survey to distribute in the community. Keep in mind not all people have internet access.

4. **Analyze the collected survey data.** Analyzing strategies are included within the Survey Success documents. What information does this tell you about your topic?

Read on to learn about interactive surveys.
Interactive Surveys

Collecting information in real-time provides participants and facilitators with data that can be used – immediately. Interactive surveys can be designed for all ages. Here are two types of interactive surveys.

Public Opinion Survey

Create a large wall or table-sized chart to capture responses to a set of questions. Have a scale with varying degrees of responses. Use different stickers (circles for youth, triangles for adults) to distinguish different populations for tabulations. Include a “graffiti” board or space for open-ended comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Use</th>
<th>Adults Use</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Do Not Agree</th>
<th>Tell us why you responded this way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In our community, adults listen to youth.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Open For Comments!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In our community, youth can effect change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In our community, youth have resources and skills to help them effect change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Count-Up Survey

Pose a multiple-choice question. Have participants respond by placing a token (beans, poker chips, bottle caps) in bowls or other small containers. Various participant groups can use different types of small objects so you can easily identify demographics. A comments space or additional paper allows for explanations. Cover the bowls or cups with paper to secure the privacy element of this method.

What community issue is your priority? Select one.

Topic Five: Confirming Your Action Issue

Confirming your issue or cause gives each YLC member — youth and adults — a common purpose. Now that you have looked at community assets and needs, and worked through the Four Corners Experience, your YLC can make an informed decision about an issue.

If you explored several community issues, consider which has priority to the YLC and the host organization and meets an authentic need. Aim for consensus — full group agreement on the issue. Selecting one or two issues is essential to move from investigation, to preparation, and then to action through Policy, Practice, or Advocacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>involves influencing the structure of the organization’s official laws or governing concepts, and the strategic plans around these laws or concepts.</td>
<td>involves reviewing the process of everyday work being done within the organization, and coming up with ideas, strategies, or methods that can be integrated and effectively improve the work of the organization.</td>
<td>involves developing campaigns to engage others in knowing about, thinking about, or doing something about critical issues facing the community that advance the work of the organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continuing the Four Corners Experience

The YLC began the process of identifying an issue during Four Corners (Topic Four). Ideally, youth spent time getting answers to questions using the MISO Method of Action Research and know of current guidelines or policies in place related to this issue. Youth will have gathered different community perspectives from interviews and/or surveys. This leads to a deeper understanding of the issue and to identify a specific action issue to work on.

In small groups:

- For each “need” selected, come up with two reasons the “need/issue” would be significant to explore and have meaningful impact. Who would be impacted?
- Determine how the YLC could meaningfully address policy, practice, or advocacy.
- Come up with a list of what leadership and personal skills would be developed by taking on this issue.
- Will your ideas promote a more fair, just and inclusive City?
- On their Four Corners easel, virtual, or individual papers, write ideas, one in each corner of ways to take action: a Policy idea, a Practice idea, and an Advocacy idea. Which do you prefer? The final idea selected by the entire group will go in the fourth corner.

**NYC Department of Education, Office of Sustainability: Improve Policy**

The YLC members learned about how climate change will affect their communities. They helped create the NYCDOE Youth Climate Summit that brought together students from around the city to learn about the impacts of climate change and formulate a plan for how to tackle this huge challenge. Additionally, they supported the Office of Sustainability in creating a new Student Sustainability Coordinator position for high schools to take on additional leadership in their schools.

**Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design: Improve Practice**

Youth at Williamsburg HS for Architecture and Design worked to combat bullying issues in their school. The YLC developed facilitation skills that would allow them to be more effective communicators with their peers. They also developed a peer survey to be administered the following school year to identify which specific bullying issues exist and are priorities within the school.

**NYCHA Youth Take On Homelessness: Advocacy**

The youth chose homelessness as their campaign focus. To learn more and investigate the issues, the YLC had a workshop with the Director of Men’s Homeless Shelter and Officers from PSA3 and volunteered at a Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen. They planned a donation drive for the Men’s Homeless Shelter and designed a forum focused on helping people who are homeless.
### Survey Success!

How can you gather important information to support change that matters in your community?

You can survey community members! Design a survey about your topic of focus that uses the following FOUR types of survey questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION TYPE</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>DEVELOP YOUR QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close-ended</td>
<td>Do you make choices that help limit your amount of water waste?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES  NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likert scale</td>
<td>Water conservation is important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree Disagree Somewhat Agree Disagree Neutral Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>In what ways do you conserve water? (Circle all that apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Take shorter showers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Check your toilet for leaks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Insulate your water pipes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Turn off water when brushing your teeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td>Tell how you conserve water in your community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demographic Questions:** If you want to learn about the background of participants, you can also add demographic questions about each participant’s name, age, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, education, or other relevant categories.

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**Remember!!!!!!**

If you are part of a group that is issuing a survey, be sure to ask any survey-takers if they have taken the survey yet. You do not want to have the same person take your survey more than once. That would make your findings unreliable.
REPRESENTING RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Close-ended, Likert Scale, and Multiple Choice questions will give you results that are QUANTITATIVE. This means you can determine percentages that show how your community is thinking about this issue.

To understand your findings and determine percentages, add up the total number of participants who gave each answer and divide the sum for each answer by the total number of participants that were surveyed.

SAMPLE

You surveyed 50 participants to see what issue is most important to them. Below are the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What issue is most important to you?</th>
<th>Divide each answer’s sum by total surveyed</th>
<th>Convert decimals to percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Bullying (20 participants)</td>
<td>Bullying: 20/50=.40</td>
<td>40% of participants chose BULLYING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Safety (8 participants)</td>
<td>Safety: 8/50=.15</td>
<td>16% of participants chose SAFETY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Recycling (12 participants)</td>
<td>Recycling: 12/50=.24</td>
<td>24% of participants chose RECYCLING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Housing (10 participants)</td>
<td>Housing: 10/50=.20</td>
<td>20% of participants chose HOUSING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can represent your quantitative findings through:

- **Pie charts**
- **Bar graphs**

Quoting notable statistics – You can also describe your statistics in words. For instance, you might write, “40% of participants found bullying to be the most important issue to them while 24% of participants favored recycling, 20% preferred housing, and 16% favored safety.”
REPRESENTING RESULTS

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS
Open-ended questions are QUALITATIVE, meaning you will have responses in participants’ own words. When you conduct interviews and transcribe participants’ responses, you will also have qualitative data that represents the participants’ own words.

To understand your findings, look for themes in people’s responses. For example, in reading the open-ended question results, you might notice many participants referring to bullying. Next you will go through each survey and highlight all references to bullying in a certain color. Once you finish reading all the surveys, you will then compile all the highlighted quotes into one document. This same strategy can be used to identify multiple themes at once, using multiple colors to highlight.

You can represent your quantitative findings through:

- **Quotes** – One of the best ways to report findings is by pulling the most representative or significant quotes from your participant responses. These may be quotes that are most common or standout by being unique. You might write:
  
  *One participant highlighted, “Bullying is an important issue for me because I have experienced it firsthand at school.”*

- **Word clouds** – You can use a “word cloud” generator like wordle.net to create a visual representation of words most used by your participants.

- **Table with descriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sample Responses</th>
<th>Why is this important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>• “I hate getting bullied. It has made it hard to keep friends.”</td>
<td>• Bullying impacts one’s perceptions of themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Someone who bullies always finds an excuse to make fun of you and it changes how you think about yourself and makes the day a struggle.”</td>
<td>• Bullied individuals struggle with social situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Bar graph/pie charts after coding/clumping similar answers** – See examples of bar graphs and pie charts from the “Quantitative” section.