

## A Guide to Partnering With Young Leaders to End Youth Homelessness

# Training Tool 5: Process for Determining the Role of Youth Partners

This tool is designed to assist team members in using empowering and collaborative practices to define the roles of team members, including youth partners, in the campaign to end youth homelessness in Connecticut.

Roles are often unclear when individuals first begin to work together or when teams are first established. Research on teams demonstrates that this lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of individual team members can hold back a team's success.<sup>1,2</sup> All individuals within a team have unique skills and strengths. It is only when the contributions of all team members are valued that teams perform best. Youth partners should be provided the same opportunities as their older counterparts in figuring out what function or role to play within a team. The roles and responsibilities of youth partners should not be fully defined ahead of time by the team.

**This tool describes how to put into practice the Second Commandment of Youth Partnership: *Youth Partners Should Play a Meaningful Role.***

Similar to other partners, youth partners have different skills and expertise that they bring to the team. Authentic youth partnership involves creating opportunities and empowering group processes for youth partners to identify and define their own roles within the context of the team goals. Not only will this increase the success of the team, but also motivates youth partners to stay actively engaged and feel ownership over the work. It is also important to discuss role expectations so misunderstandings and power dynamics between team members can be discussed and addressed.



## Roles and Responsibilities

### Definitions

**Roles** are defined as an individual's part or function that they play within the group. Serving as a note taker in a meeting or as a spokesperson for the team are both examples of roles.

**Responsibilities** refer to the specific tasks or duties that team members are expected to complete as a function of their roles. Participating actively in meetings and completing assignments between meetings are examples of responsibilities.

### Example

#### Coordinator Role

Responsibilities:

- Schedule meetings and send out agendas
- Oversee the implementation of activities
- Serve as primary contact
- Maintain timelines established by team
- Develop and oversee the action plan

### Reflection Activity

Take a few minutes to brainstorm the variety of roles that may be needed in your team to achieve the team's vision/goals. What do you think your role should be? What kinds of roles do you think that other partners may play on the team? How about youth partners?

*The purpose of this reflection activity is to bring to the surface some of the assumptions that you may have about your own role as well as what roles others may play on the team.*

### Tips:

- To build ownership of the work, ensure that youth partners get to choose their own path to the extent possible. Not every opportunity is one a young person might be interested in or feel they are good at. Giving them reasonable leeway to play roles or perform duties closer to their own hearts allows for personal growth and ownership, as well as a better quality product in the end.
- There is a point at which certain roles or responsibilities defined by individuals may not be realistic or perhaps are not needed at that time to accomplish the goals set by the team. In these situations, it will be important to facilitate a process for individuals to redefine or adjust their roles based on the need.

## A Process for Determining Youth Partners' Roles

Use the activity below to facilitate a collaborative process for individuals to define and clarify their roles on a team. When teams are faced with time constraints, it may be appealing to either define youth partners' roles for them or directly ask youth partners to decide what role they would like to play on the team. However, we caution against taking these routes as that would not follow positive youth development best practices. Youth partners may not have had prior experience working on teams, particularly with older adults and professionals, and may need a more interactive process to consider their strengths within the role that they would like to play. Also, defining a role for a youth partner supports power dynamics from the beginning of the partnership, whereby older adult partners tell youth partners what they will be doing. Youth partners will not grow committed to the team and vision if they are not given the same opportunities and supports to choose how they can meaningfully contribute to a team. Benefits of the Iceberg Activity are to create space for new partners to build trust, get to know each other's strengths and limitations, and to clarify assumptions and expectations about your own role and others' roles.

### Activity: Icebergs

<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To help individual team members uncover their areas of strength and skills that they bring to the partnership</li> <li>• To see the similarities and differences among individuals</li> <li>• To match individuals' strengths and skills to the roles and responsibilities that are needed to achieve the team's goals</li> <li>• To define and clarify roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	1-2 hours
<b>Group Size</b>	6 to 25 participants
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flip chart and easel</li> <li>• Flip chart sheets for each participant</li> <li>• Markers</li> <li>• Post-it notes</li> </ul>
<b>Timing of Activity</b>	The best time for this activity is early on in the formation of new partnerships but after the team has defined their vision and goals.
<b>Preparation</b>	Prepare materials for the second part of the activity (Group Iceberg) ahead of time. On a large piece of butcher paper, draw an iceberg similar to the example on page 6. On the top of the iceberg, write up to three of the team's major goals. Then, on the bottom of the iceberg, write the roles that you think would be needed to achieve these goals. If specific roles have not been discussed by the team already, this list could be used as a way to begin the conversation and get input on the roles that will be needed.

## **Introduce the Activity**

Introduce the activity to the group: “An iceberg is a good metaphor for thinking about the portion of what we know and don’t know about youth partners (and other partners) when it is a new partnership.”

Draw a large iceberg on a flip chart and tell the group that only about 20% of an iceberg is above the surface of the water, whereas 80 percent is below the surface.

Tell the group, “Like an iceberg, we tend to see only the top 20% of youth partners’ talents and often make assumptions about what they could contribute to the team. However, about 80% of youth partners’ talents (how they can contribute to the team) is hidden until we can bring it to the surface. Clarifying individuals’ roles on a team is an important process that will affect the success of the team and level of commitment of team members.”

### **Step 1: Draw Iceberg**

Give each team member a sheet of flip chart paper. Have everyone draw an iceberg similar to the one that was drawn on the large flip chart in the front of the room. Be sure to have them include the waterline.

### **Step 2: 20% Above the Surface**

Ask individuals to write about five or so things that they are good at, have achieved, or can share as a resource to the team. Ask them to use one sticky note per thing – therefore, five or so sticky notes. They should stick the five or so notes on the 20% above the surface of the iceberg. Demonstrate writing and sticking a few examples on the iceberg in front of the room, such as, “website design,” “team player,” and “project management.” (See Personal Iceberg example on page 5).

### **Step 3: 80% Below the Surface**

Ask team members to write the actions, efforts, and hard work they did to become this great resource. Ask them to use one sticky note for each action, effort, or talent, and then stick each note on the 80% area below the surface. Demonstrate writing and sticking a few examples on the iceberg in front of the room, such as “use Wordpress,” “good listener,” and “note taker at meetings,” “return phone calls,” “maintain calendar.” (See Personal Iceberg example on page 5).

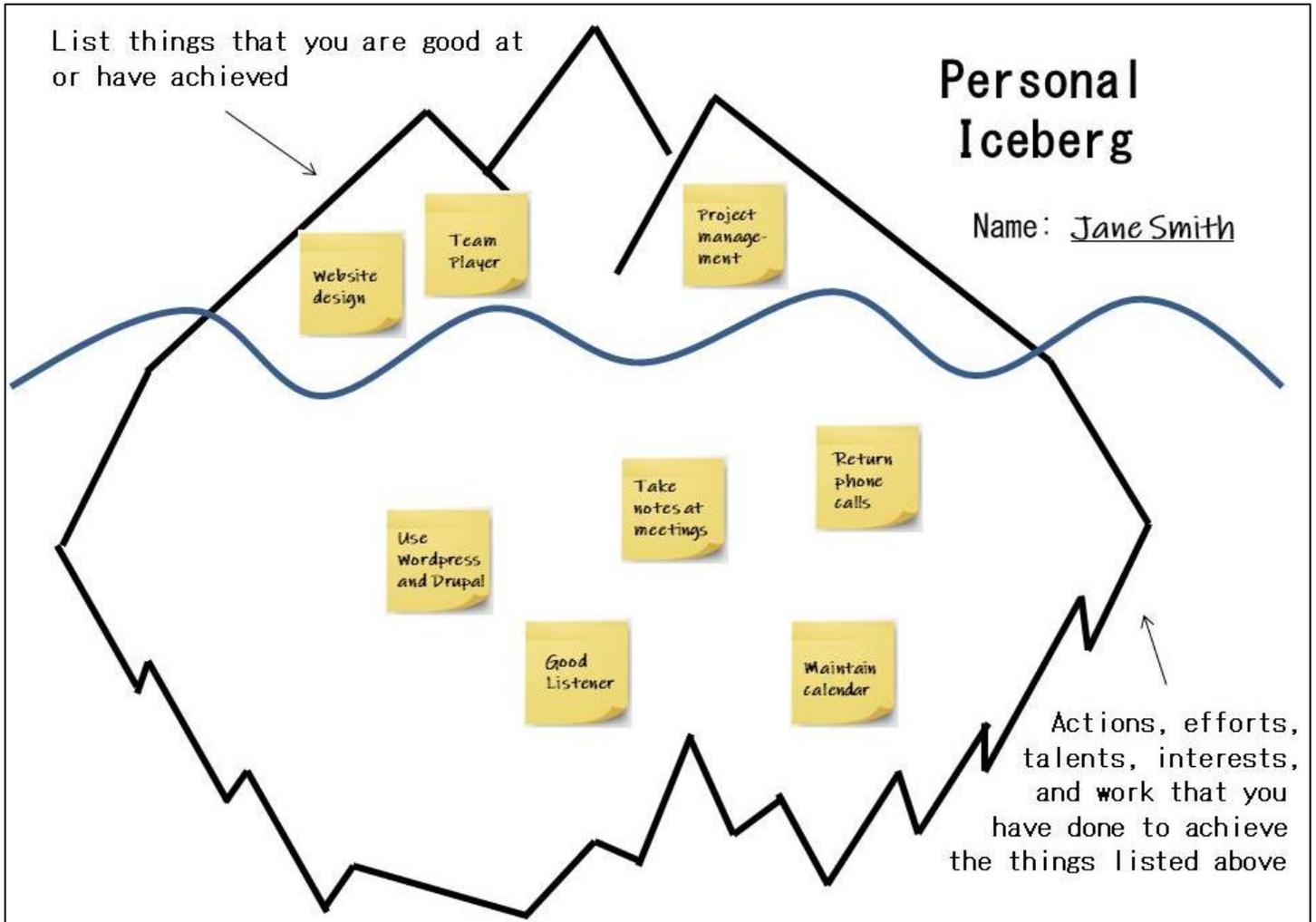
### **Step 4: Gallery Walk**

Ask individuals to hang their icebergs on the walls around the room, and have the individuals walk around and view the icebergs (i.e., take a “gallery walk”) to observe what others wrote.

### **Step 5: Reflection and Discussion**

When participants have completed the gallery walk, ask the following questions:

- What did you learn about participants whom you did not know before?
- What are the most common similarities (or overlap) between team members?
- What differences exist?
- Any strengths and skills missing that are needed in the team?



\*The sticky note graphic was designed by Freepik.com.

### Step 6: Introduce Group Iceberg Activity

Tell the group that the second part of this activity is designed to help the team match individuals' strengths and skills to the roles and responsibilities that are needed to achieve their vision. Post on the wall the Group Iceberg that was prepared ahead of time that displays the team's goals and a list of roles and responsibilities that may be needed to achieve these goals.

### Step 7: Discuss Roles and Responsibilities

Present an overview of the team's major goals that have already been decided in a previous meeting, and then list the various roles and responsibilities needed to achieve the team's goals. Write down each role and a brief definition of the role within separate sections of the 80% below the surface of the iceberg (see Group Iceberg example on page 6).

### Step 8: Connect Individuals' Skills to Roles

Ask team members to write their initial on each of their sticky notes on their personal iceberg, and then remove the sticky notes from the flip chart paper. Once removed, ask them to think about the different roles that are needed and where their skills would be most useful to the

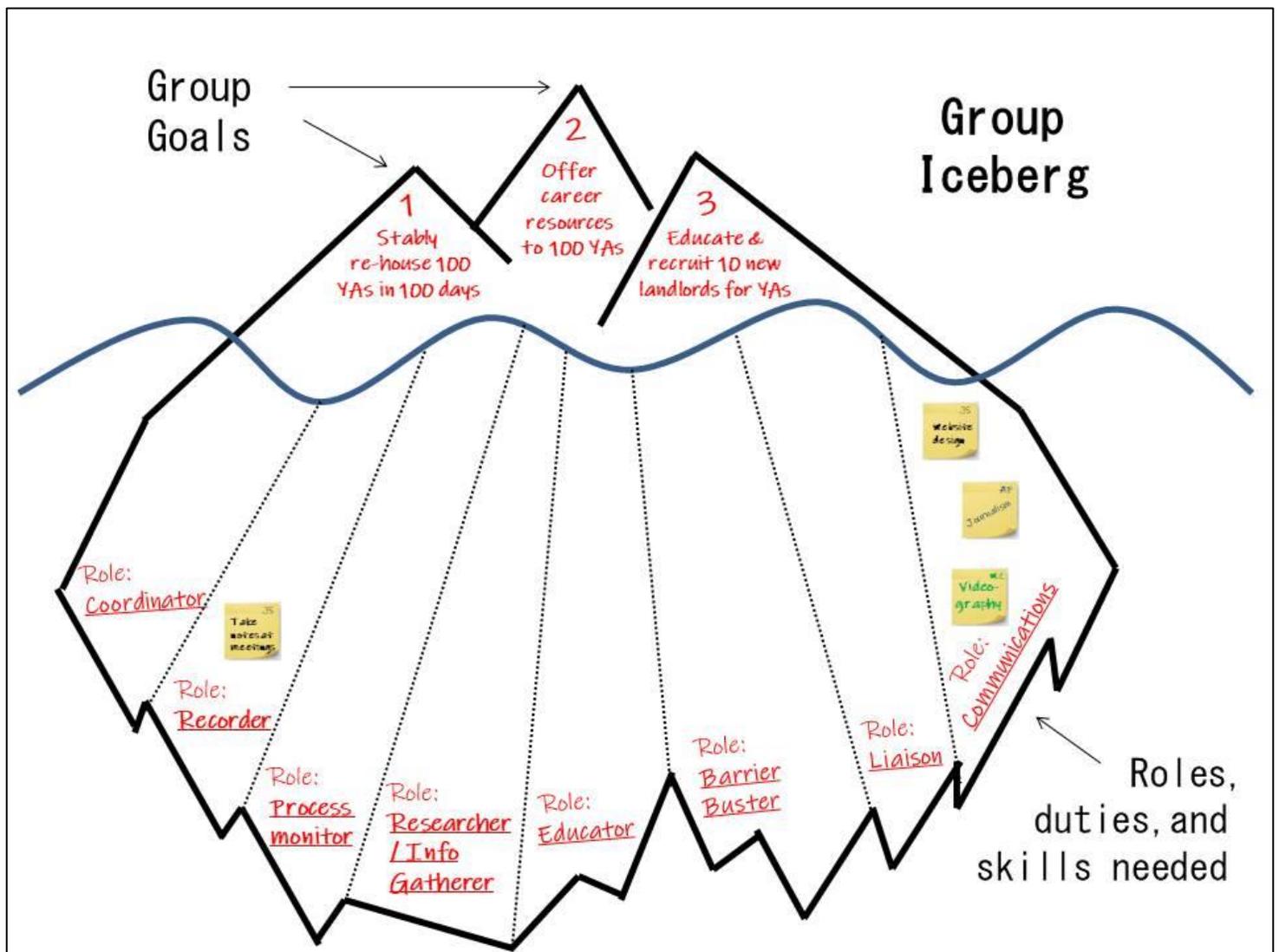
team. Ask them to post the sticky notes of their skills on the Group Iceberg within the sections that correspond to the role.

### Step 9: Decide on Individuals' Roles

When individuals are finished posting their notes on the iceberg, ask the following questions:

- What do you see? Are there overlaps and/or skill areas that are missing?
- Where do most of your personal sticky notes fall?
- What roles are you most interested in playing on the team?

Facilitate a dialogue that will bring to the surface people's assumptions about other's roles as well as their own. Overlap may be appropriate for some roles. However, in cases where there's a lot of overlap and specific roles are not covered based on individual's skills or interests, it may be necessary to create a process for negotiating individuals' roles.



## References

1. Drach-Zahavy A, Freund A. Team effectiveness under stress: A structural contingency approach. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior* 2007;28:423-50.
2. Pearsall MJ, Ellis AP, Stein JH. Coping with challenge and hindrance stressors in teams: Behavioral, cognitive, and affective outcomes. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 2009;109:18-28.