

**The HOPE VI
Youth Leadership for Change Initiative
Formative Evaluation Report (2000 – 2003)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Democratic responsibility can be acquired only through practice and involvement. It does not arrive suddenly in adult hood through simple maturation; it must be fostered directly from an early age. I believe the environments we occupy as youth and the extent to which we feel involved in shaping them, or caring for them, is a particularly important domain for such learning.”

Roger Hart, City University of New York

The goal of the HOPE VI Youth Leadership for Change (YLC) initiative is to engage youth as critical participants in the revitalization process in their own housing developments, as well as in the local community. YLC builds on and amplifies ongoing youth programming efforts operative before and during the HOPE VI program. YLC models, encourages and supports increasingly active involvement by youth in the community revitalization process. YLC provides training, tools and guidance for youth and adults to grow, develop and institutionalize a process that allows their priorities, ideas, hopes and dreams to be further realized during and after the HOPE VI revitalization.

There are three key components of the YLC initiative:

- (1) national leadership training conferences**
- (2) regional community forums and program development**
- (3) social action and enterprise projects at the local level, initiated and implemented by youth in partnership with adults**

YLC began in 2000 as a partnership between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOPE VI office, the National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED) and the University of California at Berkeley. Over the past three

years, approximately 500 youth and adults from 54 US Housing Authority cities have convened at the national, regional and/or local levels through YLC. Youth and adults have worked together to learn skills, showcase ongoing projects, gain inspiration, and develop plans to catalyze work on policy issues and concerns in their neighborhoods.

During the first year, the YLC National Conference and related community projects focused on teaching youth and Housing Authority staff about the participatory design and urban planning processes. The aim was to equip them to effectively participate in the physical redevelopment of their communities during the HOPE VI revitalization process. Additionally, the conference focused on leadership development, and social enterprise planning.

The second and third years of the initiative focused on the implementation of the social enterprise action plans. At a second national conference, and in subsequent regional forums, youth learned about how to use multi-media tools (video, radio production, web and digital photography) and to implement social enterprise action plans. The aim again has been to support youth and adults to address local problems and to participate in changing social and economic conditions and opportunities. In the third year, YLC has grown to include a greater network participating partners, including Temple University, and many community organizations.

This formative evaluation report provides a documented history of the development and ongoing implementation of the YLC initiative. The follow-up study assesses how participants from HOPE VI sites around the country have benefited from their involvement during the first three years of the YLC initiative. This study documents the degree to which participating HOPE VI sites have involved youth as active participants in the community revitalization process. It also identifies and examines the challenges HOPE VI sites face in sustaining ongoing authentic youth involvement in this process.

This study presents three central findings about the content and quality of that work:

- (1) In order for youth to be genuinely engaged as participants in the community revitalization process, adults must be involved and trained to facilitate this process.** PHA staff, parents, and youth development professionals all need to play a crucial role in this collaborative work. The YLC theory of change asserts that when adults are supported, involved and trained to offer guidance, youth involvement is more meaningful, authentic, and sustainable. Youth bring energy, optimism, and creativity into the equation, while adults bring experience, legitimacy and resources. Alone, neither youth nor adults are as able to create sustainable change. Together, their ideas and actions have the necessary potency to realize the comprehensive goals of HOPE VI YLC initiative.
- (2) Public Housing Authority (PHA) organizational development, capacity and flexibility to work with youth in HOPE VI requires sustained participation in local initiatives, augmented by involvement in national conferences and regional events.** Organizations that benefit the most from YLC participate in the

national conferences and regional forums. This participation adds value to the ongoing work at the local level, and provides a meaningful framework for youth to participate in community revitalization.

(3) The success of YLC social enterprise projects requires that participants, over time, formulate and follow a trajectory for action which includes three fundamental ingredients:

1. a plan (e.g., social enterprise planning guides)
2. concrete skill training to implement plans (e.g., urban planning, architecture and design, video, photography, radio, web design, public speaking, presentation)
3. opportunities to “practice the adult/youth partnership” over time, to propel project ideas forward after conferences, forums, and workshops.

This report includes: (I) **Background** section including a detailed history, (II) **Project Description**; (III) **Methodology and Theoretical Framework**; (IV) **Findings**; (V) **Analysis and Discussion**; (VI) **Conclusions**; and (VII) **Recommendations**.