



Getting the Right Start-
**Identify the Right
Leadership**

A strong training and technical assistance resource leader needs a unique and varied set of skills and attributes, right from the beginning, to do the job well. Without the right leadership, the organizations will not get off the ground or build and grow over time. Strong interpersonal skills drive the success of constituency and partnerships building yet concrete business expertise is required to manage the often lightly staffed non-profit. And, the charisma needed for the public duties of the position must be tempered with flexible, shared leadership skills to bolster community ownership of youth development principles and changes.

Interpersonal and trust-building skills

A training and technical assistance resource center's success depends on an engaged, committed and active constituency. The leader must possess the skills and personal integrity to build strong, trusting relationships and support. Understanding the priorities and needs of the audience(s) is critical.

Establishing and maintaining connections

Since a training and technical assistance resource center is about working across organizational lines and pulling diverse audiences of community members together, strong skills in networking and group facilitation are critical to success. This means being willing to meet face-to-face with a wide variety of stakeholders, being 'out there' in the community, in other organizations, in government and funding offices, and in youth development organizations where the practice is taking place. It is necessary to have good instincts about deploying effective group processes and facilitative leadership skills. It also requires the ability to "stay the course" to affect long term change, which is inherent in partnerships and systems change work.

Flexible, shared leadership skills

Leaders must play dual roles: forwarding a strong, convincing action agenda while bolstering the constituency to own and embrace youth development principles and changes. The leader must be accomplished at delegating work, sharing the responsibility of success, and knowing when to take credit for accomplishments so that the center and its collaborations are seen as successful, while not slighting or undermining participating agencies.

Strong communication skills

Strong verbal and written communication skills that can market, persuade and inform are critical. The leader must possess a curiosity, inquisitiveness, and questioning approach combined with superb listening skills.

Solid grounding in youth development principles

A youth development training and technical assistance resource center leader is required to uphold and represent the principles of the field. In this advocacy role, the leader must hold a strong belief and respect for the youth development field, and have a depth of knowledge about what has been done and what still needs to be done. An aptitude for seeing the youth-serving sector holistically and then assisting others in implementing high quality youth development practices is also important.

Organizational management skills

Given the typically small staff size of youth development training and technical assistance resource centers, the leader must possess the full gamut of organizational management skills: fiscal, administrative, fundraising and marketing. (*See Tools and Resources: Leadership Skills and Quality Checklist.*)