



Foundations of Shared Learning

In this *Unveiling Youth Potential* program, youth, mentors and learning coaches are asked to endorse the value of **Shared Learning**. This means that each of us is responsible to support one another in learning, and we are responsible to ask for help from others when we need help in learning. The responsibility for learning is shared.

Why do we care so much about Shared Learning?

We want to advance the understanding of the group, and access the best thinking among participants. Even the experts and learning coaches are here to learn and teach.

Giving and receiving is one motion.

To achieve Shared Learning, we encourage the following practices:

Integration: To the extent possible, we must try to integrate our learnings. For example, we want to integrate self leadership and community leadership, and strategic and operational ways of thinking.

Community Wisdom: We believe that through these shared learning processes, we can access the wisdom in a diverse community, and we can then apply that wisdom to community projects that will make a positive change.

Learning Context: There are many ways to organize your thoughts. Constructing a detailed understanding of a situation is critical if you are seeking wise solutions for community development. We can use a variety of thinking tools to support intelligent action. Below are three inter-related perspectives that can potentially improve our thinking:

1. **Focus on Foundational Thinking**: What inspires our strategic, operational and tactical actions? From all possible options, how do we choose our actions? In North America, most people are involved in operational and tactical work; few are skilled at thinking strategically. We rarely reflect on the foundations that drive us.
2. **Causal Understanding**: There is power in knowing *how* and *why* things work. From this vantage point we can perform diagnostics, create and innovate.
3. **Responsible Caring**: What we care about influences our actions. Community development requires that we consider the largest dimensions of caring.

Individual → Family → Community → Nation → Humanity → Life

Experiential Learning: Leadership skills are forged in the fire of engagement. This program is about learning how to affect positive change in your community through doing. We learn to do by doing.

Collaborative Learning Etiquette: Each group member is responsible for:

- Improving the level of understanding in the group.
- Sharing ideas and opinions.
- Carefully listening to the comments of others.
- Respectfully challenging the ideas presented.
- Reflecting on the conversation.
- Managing personal conduct.
- Integrating and assimilating the learning.
- Create and map their own learning (Living Learning Maps)

Time is Limited: Let's accept this and do our best.

Evaluating Shared Learning: When you are evaluating Shared Learning, these questions may be helpful in assessing the effectiveness of shared learning...in informal feedback loops and formal evaluations:

1. Did you feel your opinions were heard and acknowledged by the group? Why or why not?
2. Were you able to share your opinions? Why or why not?
3. Was the process helpful for accessing the best thinking of participants? Explain.
4. How did you feel about learning as a group?
5. Was the process effective for uncovering the important issues facing local youth? Why or why not?
6. What could be done to make learning as a group more effective?
7. What did you like most about the session?
8. What areas could be improved?
9. What are the most striking things you learned from the discussion?
10. Would you be willing to meet again for further discussions?
11. Other comments?