

# Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport

## Youth Engagement Principles

**Inclusiveness:** Acceptance and embracing of diversity including opinion, religion, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, image, ability, age, geography and mental health. This includes the removal of barriers, including economic barriers, to enable youth engagement.

**Positive youth development:** Alignment with a positive youth development approach.

**Accountability:** Developing standards of practice and accountability for youth engagement/development work, including responsibility for reporting back to youth. Include evaluation and monitoring as appropriate.

**Operational practices:** Commitment to operational practices that sustain youth engagement and enable youth development workers – including approaches to meet the needs of youth. These may include:

- Adults as allies/partners with youth
- Youth-led and/or peer-to-peer initiatives
- Approaches that provide opportunities to youth for meaningful action
- Recognition of mutual benefit for adults and youth
- Demonstration that youth contribution is valued.

**Strengths-based approach:** A commitment to working with youth to identify needs and build upon youth assets. This includes skill development and capacity building i.e. education, training, on-going professional development, opportunities for group knowledge, skills and networks. Also includes a commitment to facilitate/provide opportunities for ongoing feedback, peer-review and self-reflection.

**Flexibility and Innovation:** Commitment of youth and adults working with youth to be open to new ideas, and have a willingness to take risks and challenge existing established processes and structures. Includes flexibility to hear and respond to youth-initiated ideas.

**Space for youth:** Ensuring caring and supportive environments where youth feel safe. Includes both policies and practices that make space available to youth and enable youth to feel safe in that space.

**Transparency:** Being clear about the purpose of engaging youth, using youth-friendly approaches when interacting with youth and ensuring youth understand outcomes and products of their engagement.

# Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport

## Youth Engagement Principles

**Sustainability of resources:** Sustainability of financial resources for best-practice youth engagement initiatives can help to ensure youth engagement initiatives are not limited.

**Cross-sector alignment:** Youth engagement has been embraced across agencies of government at all levels (i.e. federal, provincial and municipal) and many non-governmental organizations. MHPS is committed to working with other ministry partners and stakeholders to ensure alignment where possible of its youth engagement approach.

**Collaboration:** A commitment to working with others doing similar work to share knowledge and facilitate action while fostering development of strong and lasting relationships. An example could include a youth engagement community of practice.

December 2010