Outcomes

❀ Learn more about the history and structure of VOICES

❀ Be introduced to the youth leadership and engagement element or our program

❀ Get reconnected to the heart of the work that we do – why do we do what we do?

This is really challenging work – even on the hard days, what is it that keeps you in this field of work? What really matters to you?
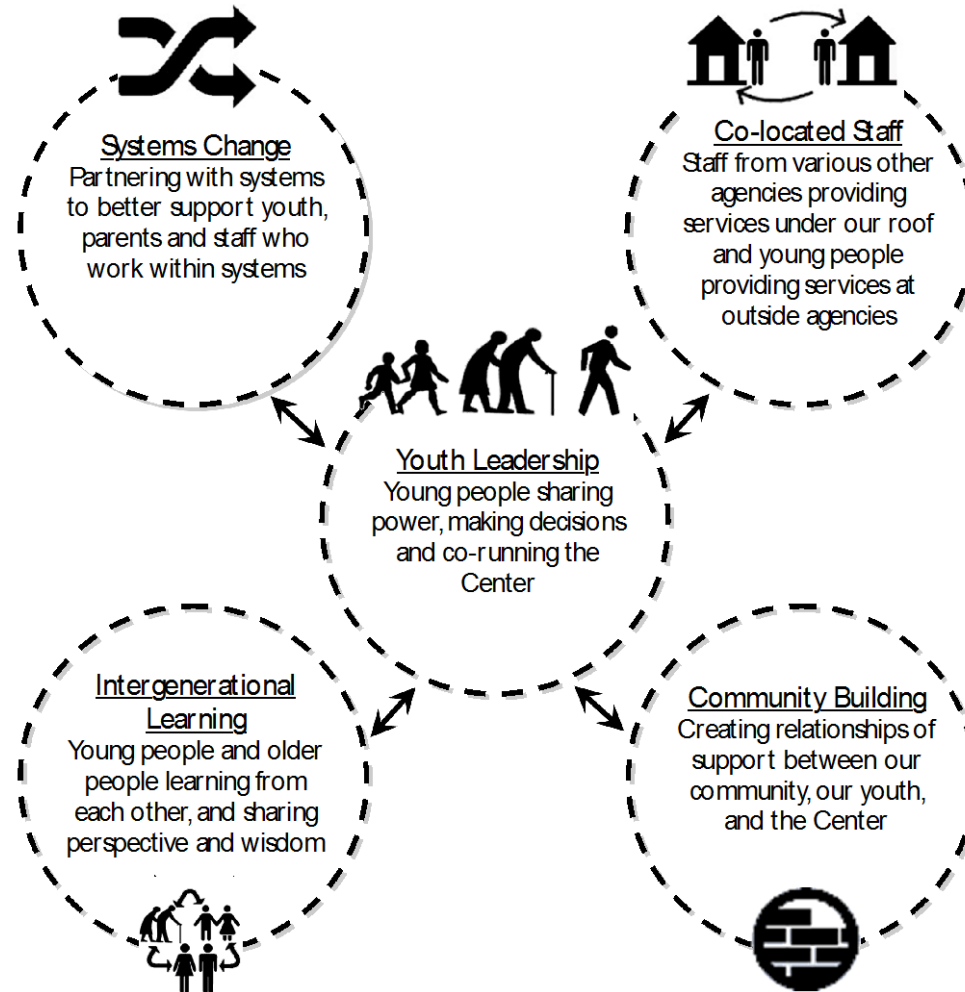
What are the two things that are working well for emancipated foster youth in your county?

If you could have it your way and change things for young people emancipating out of care, what would you dream for?
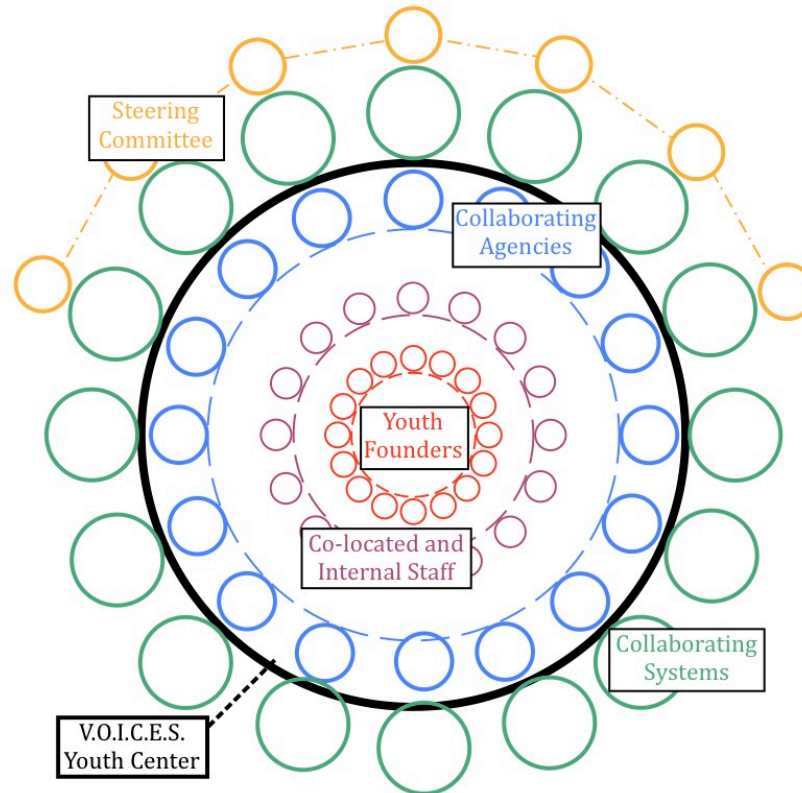
VOICES

We have designed and implemented five best practices to guide our work with current and former foster youth. Time over time we have evaluated the effectiveness of this model and have found that each element is crucial to the success of individual youth, our program and the community at large.

Systems Change
Partnering with systems to better support youth, parents and staff who work within systems

Co-located Staff
Staff from various other agencies providing services under our roof and young people providing services at outside agencies

Youth Leadership
Young people sharing power, making decisions and co-running the Center

Intergenerational Learning
Young people and older people learning from each other, and sharing perspective and wisdom

Community Building
Creating relationships of support between our community, our youth, and the Center

V.O.I.C.E.S. Sonoma Model for Systems Change

The diagram above, the "V.O.I.C.E.S. Sonoma Model for Systems Change," portrays the inter-generational and inter-agency collaboration taking place within Sonoma County. Dashed lines indicate teams that exist. Smaller circles represent individuals and agencies, while the larger green circles represent collaborating systems. All teams will participate in various times in shared decision making about how the Center operates and what services it will provide.

Current and former foster youth form the core of this program. All youth utilizing V.O.I.C.E.S. are required to enroll as members. All members are expected to contribute back to the wellbeing of the overall V.O.I.C.E.S. community.

Teams exist among current and former foster youth, co-located and internal frontline staff and agency directors. Intergenerational leadership takes place as members of each of these teams come together to provide direction, serve on committees, make presentations, develop policies and procedures and shape the ongoing vision of the program.

LEGEND:

⬛ (black)	V.O.I.C.E.S. Sonoma
🟥 (red)	Youth Founders and Staff
🟪 (magenta)	Co-located and Internal Staff
🟦 (blue)	Collaborating Agencies
🟩 (green)	Collaborating Systems
🟧 (orange)	Steering Committee

VOICES

LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

8) YOUTH-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH ADULTS

This happens when projects or programs are initiated by youth and decision-making is shared between youth and adults. These projects empower youth while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.

7) YOUTH-INITIATED & DIRECTED

This step is when youth initiate and direct a project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.

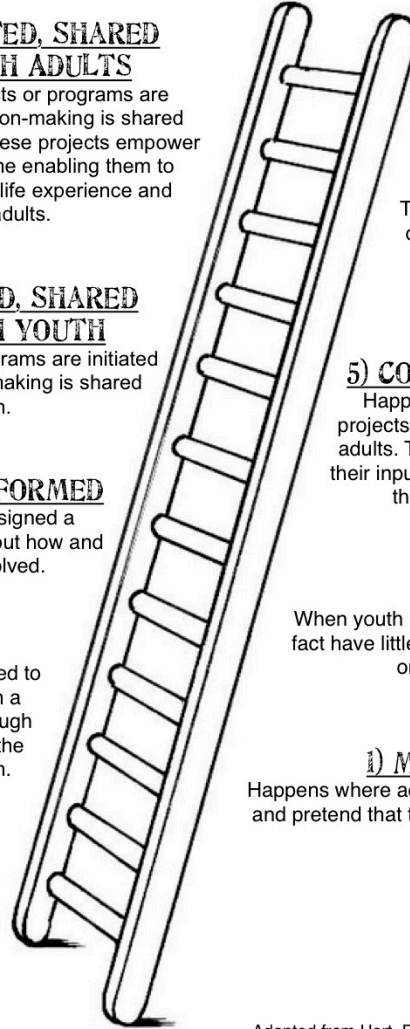### 6) ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH YOUTH

Occurs when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the youth.

5) CONSULTED & INFORMED

Happens when youth give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The youth are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.

4) ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED

This is where youth are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.

3) TOKENISM

When youth appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

2) DECORATION

Happens when youth are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by youth.

1) MANIPULATION

Happens where adults use youth to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by youth.

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship.*
Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Fun

Love

Coaching

Intergenerational Relationships

Nurturing

Celebration

Relationship Building

Home away from Home

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