Active Research and Investigation

Training Starter Template

Objectives: All participants in the training will be able:
• Increase awareness of how various research methods can be used to better understand community issues
• Analyze various sources of information to identify potential solutions to problems
• Learn ways to facilitate and guide student-led research and investigation efforts

Total amount of time: ____________________  Number of participants: ____________________

Preparation: ____________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________

Materials: ____________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________

✓ Investigating Issues in Your Community

Training Opening

• Engage Participants ____________________ minutes
  (Ice breaker/warm up activity related to the topic)
______________________________
______________________________

Introduce the Topic ____________________ minutes
(Motivate participants, show them why the topic is important, and share objectives and agenda)
______________________________
______________________________

Training Middle ____________________ minutes

• Explain that as a special kind of project-based learning, a civic learning and engagement project entails facilitating youth in crafting a driving question around a public issue and then conducting research or investigation to help uncover potential answers to the question that identify the root cause(s) of the issue.
• For example, if the driving question students identify is, “What man-made factors might be causing the soap suds visible in the stream behind our school?,” then investigating the root cause of the problem could take many forms, such as interviewing community members, conducting observations, recording data at different locations and times of day, testing the water, and studying a map to identify chemical or industrial plants within a 5-mile radius of the river.

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- Divide participants into small groups of 3-4. Use the sample driving question above, or have each group come up with its own driving question. Give each group a copy of the checklist, *Investigating Issues in Your Community*, and ask them to identify a few of the research methods listed that could provide possible answers to the question. Encourage participants to come up with their own potential research methods as well.
- Have each group share their responses. Answer any questions the participants may have about implementing the various research methods listed. Debrief by explaining that multiple methods of investigation yield deeper understanding of an issue.
- Next, have each group continue with the brainstorming exercise. This time, use the *Investigating Issues in Your Community* checklist to discuss analyzing data and reporting findings. Each group should discuss what method(s) they would use to report findings. For example, if the research method included interviewing community members about the soap suds in the stream, a possible way to report findings might be to create a short video filming the suds in the water along with interviews of community members that could be shown to the city council.
- Have each group share ideas about how they would report findings for their project.
- Reiterate that it is important to make sure that research, investigation, and reporting findings for civic learning and engagement projects are youth-led as much as possible. Adults should take the role of facilitator – guiding, but not leading, the process.
- As a group, discuss the various ways youth can be involved in researching and investigating a civic learning and engagement project. Could taking the group through a sample issue (as we just did) help them better understand the process? What challenges might be faced? What supports will staff need to provide a successful experience? How can the program coordinate with the local school?
- You may wish to record important points from this discussion and create a document with helpful facilitation tips that could be used as a staff resource.

Training Wrap Up and Closing

- Summarize, consolidate _______ minutes
  (Connect back to the objectives, check for understanding, and discuss questions)

- Plan Next Steps _______ minutes
  (Be specific about application to immediate practice)

- Closing Comments _______ minutes
  (Acknowledge, motivate and inspire)
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Post-training assessment and revision

- Formal or informal assessment of effectiveness of training
- Note changes to make
- Note areas for additional training