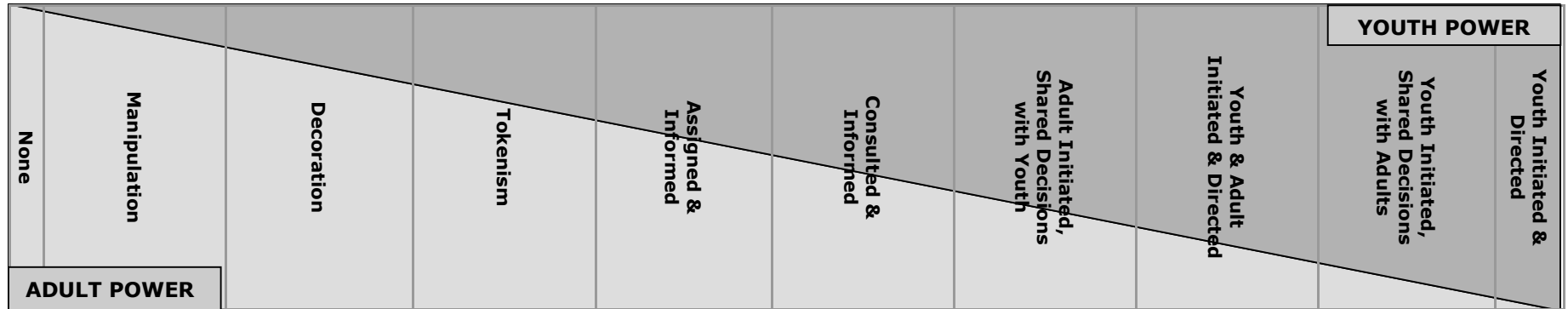


# A Continuum Model for Understanding Youth Participation

This continuum can help you understand and identify how power is shared among youth and adults within your organization. Different organizations may have different values and goals for youth participation, and the power balance will probably shift in one direction or another, or even back and forth, over time. Regardless of where your group or organization falls on the continuum, it is important to understand your organization's level of youth participation and to identify your own goals for youth involvement.



- **None:** Adults have complete authority over the project.
- **Manipulation:** Adults use youth involvement to communicate their own messages.
- **Decoration:** Adults use youth to promote or support a cause without informing youth. Youth are not involved in design or decisions.
- **Tokenism:** Symbolic representation by few youth. Adults set the agenda and make decisions. Youth may not have genuine voice and may be asked to speak for the group they represent.
- **Assigned & Informed:** Youth do not initiate the project, but understand it and have some sense of ownership.
- **Consulted & Informed:** Project is designed and run by adults who consult with youth. Youth make recommendations that are considered by adults.
- **Adult Initiated, Shared Decisions with Youth:** Project is designed and run by adults who share decisions with youth.
- **Youth & Adult Initiated & Directed:** Project is designed and run by youth and adults in full partnership.
- **Youth Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults:** Project is designed and run by youth who share decisions with adults.
- **Youth Initiated & Directed:** Project is designed and run by youth and decisions are made by youth.

Adapted from "A Model for Understanding Youth Participation," Youth Council of Northern Ireland, and "Ladder of Young People's Participation," Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.

by the *Maine Youth Action Network* (MYAN), 2008

A program of the People's Regional Opportunity Program (PROP)  
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# Assessment of Youth Participation Within Your Program or Organization

Use this tool to help you assess where your organization falls on the youth participation continuum within these different categories. You may want to identify where you are now, and also to make notes about where you want to be. Setting goals for youth participation and assessing the balance of power within different aspects of your programming are important steps in strengthening your youth programming.

	Governance (Boards)	Program Design	Rule-Making & Enforcement	Program Marketing	Day-to-Day Decisions	Staff Recruitment & Training	Program Evaluation
None							
Manipulation							
Decoration							
Tokenism							
Assigned & Informed:							
Consulted & Informed							
Adult Initiated, Shared Decisions with Youth							
Youth & Adult Initiated & Directed							
Youth Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults							
Youth Initiated & Directed							

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