

Supporting youth empowerment through social science research preparation

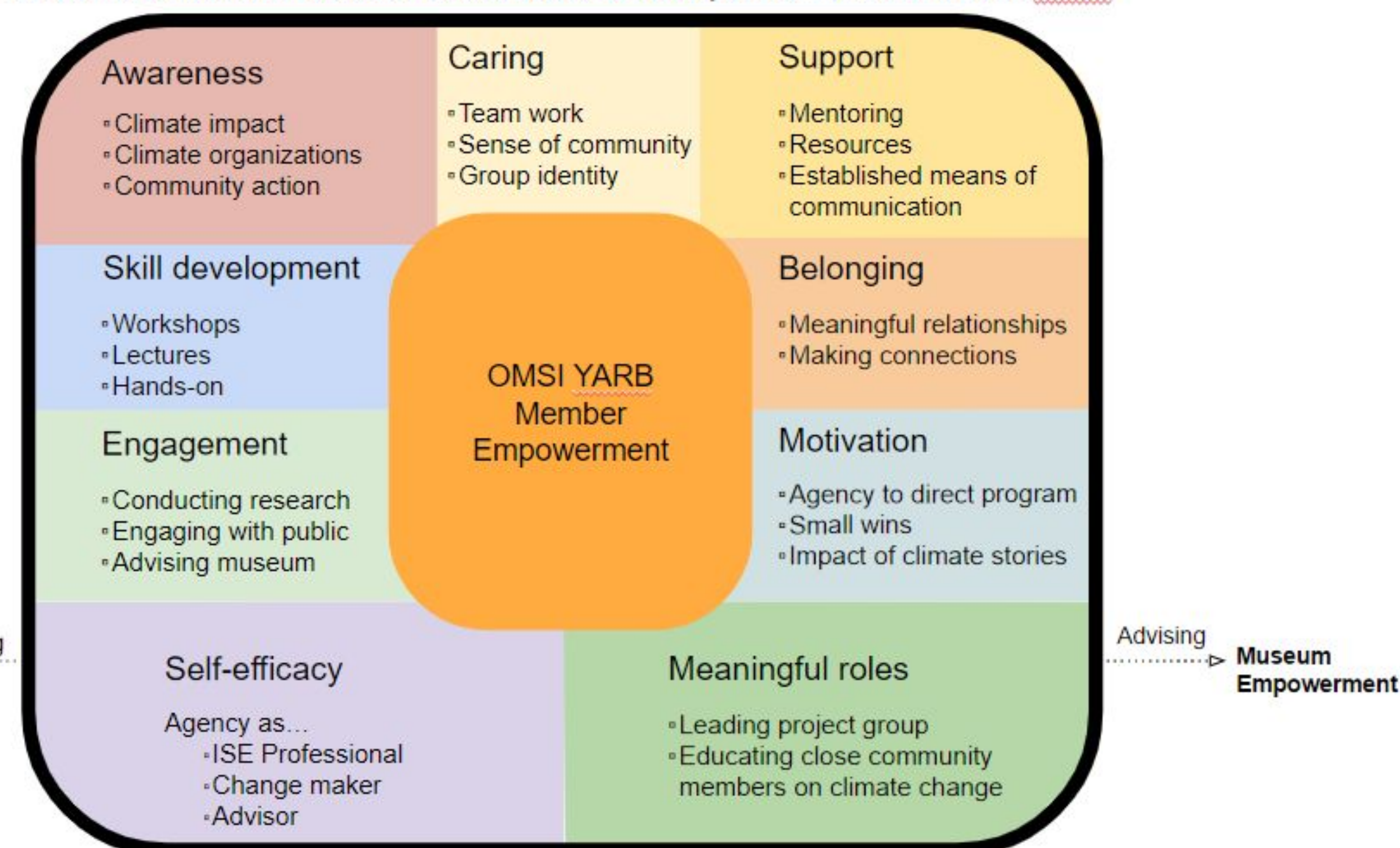
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Youth Lead the Way

OMSI's *Youth Lead the Way* project engaged a cohort of youth to work in paid positions as purveyors of climate science. The teens served as a Youth Advisory and Research Board (YARB), developing skills in research, communication, and leadership; engaging in timely conversations with their own communities; and serving as advisors for ongoing exhibit projects. One deliverable of the program was for youth to work in small groups to develop and deliver 'Climate Stories'; materials in a variety of interactive formats with the goal of engaging the public in climate impact education.

Local model with evidence-based details of empowerment in OMSI's YARB



Adapted from Maton, K.I. (2008). Empowering Community Settings: Agents of Individual Development, Community Betterment, and Positive Social Change. American Journal of Community Psychology, 41: 4-21.

Social Science Training with Youth

Staff and partners conducted ongoing training workshops with the youth on social science methods so they could:

- 1) do primary and secondary content research for their stories
- 2) do professional inquiry to collect evidence on the performance of their stories.

Many youth have little or no research and evaluation experience. Talk with them to find out what they know and where they could use support. The following topics provide a great foundation:

- Literature reviews
- Logic models
- Research Fundamentals
 - Asking Research questions
 - Primary vs secondary research
 - Inductive vs deductive research
- Data collection
 - Ethics of working with human subjects
 - Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods
 - Collecting data: surveys, observations and interviews
- Reviewing, analyzing and presenting data
 - Team-Based Inquiry techniques: Reviewing, sorting and grouping data
 - Using Google sheets
 - Cross tabs
 - Useful functions
 - Data visualization

Impacts on youth

- Increased sense of empowerment and agency
- Growth of research skills, and solidification of the importance of evidence based decision making
- Fostered leadership, interpersonal, and job readiness skills
- A deeper understanding of the issue they're exploring, such as climate change



What we learned

Tap into resources you have at your organization. If you have an in-house research or evaluation department, talk with the staff there. If not, reach out to faculty or graduate students from a local university, or staff from partner organizations.

- Begin work on social science methods early in the program - even prior to exploring the topic deeply.
- Plan for pertinent staff to conduct general trainings on research and evaluation methods.
- Establish ongoing "Research and Evaluation Advising Sessions" to provide cohorts with individualized support throughout.

