

Abstract

There are a range of benefits when youth-serving agencies include service recipient voice in decision-making regarding agency policies and programming. Yet many agency stakeholders lack awareness of strategic best practices to ensure the consistent and meaningful participation of young people in decision-making.

Youth Voice in Development

The Y-VAL, prior to testing, was vetted extensively by the YMN Youth Best Practice Committee and partners in the field.

Young adults reviewed items:

- How essential is it to include each item as an expectation?
- What do you think about the wording?
- Do the items “cover” the themes adequately?

Why the Y-VAL?

- Provides a framework of key indicators of meaningful and successful youth voice
- Allows for a collective and reflective process to better understand how an agency collaborates with youth and young adults
- Promotes a shared vision for success between youth and adults
- Helps move agencies towards sustainable youth engagement
- Helps young people advocate for support and involvement in decision making and programming
- Helps assess the impact of technical assistance

Y-VAL Themes

1. Overall vision & Commitment to Youth Voice
Are overall policies and procedures in place to support meaningful youth engagement?
2. Collaborative Approach
Are young people treated as partners in the process?
3. Empowered representatives
How well are adults and youth working together?
4. Commitment to Facilitation & Support of Y/YA Participants
Is the agency investing resources to support youth and young adults?
5. Workforce Development
Are all agency staff able to collaborate with young people?
6. Participation in developing the program and program policies
Are young people able to make an impact on programming?
7. Participation in evaluation
Are young people engaged in assessing how the agency is doing?
8. Leading initiatives and projects
Are young people supported to take the lead on projects?

Using Y-VAL in Your Organization

Your organization:

Will have 15 or more people complete the assessment online

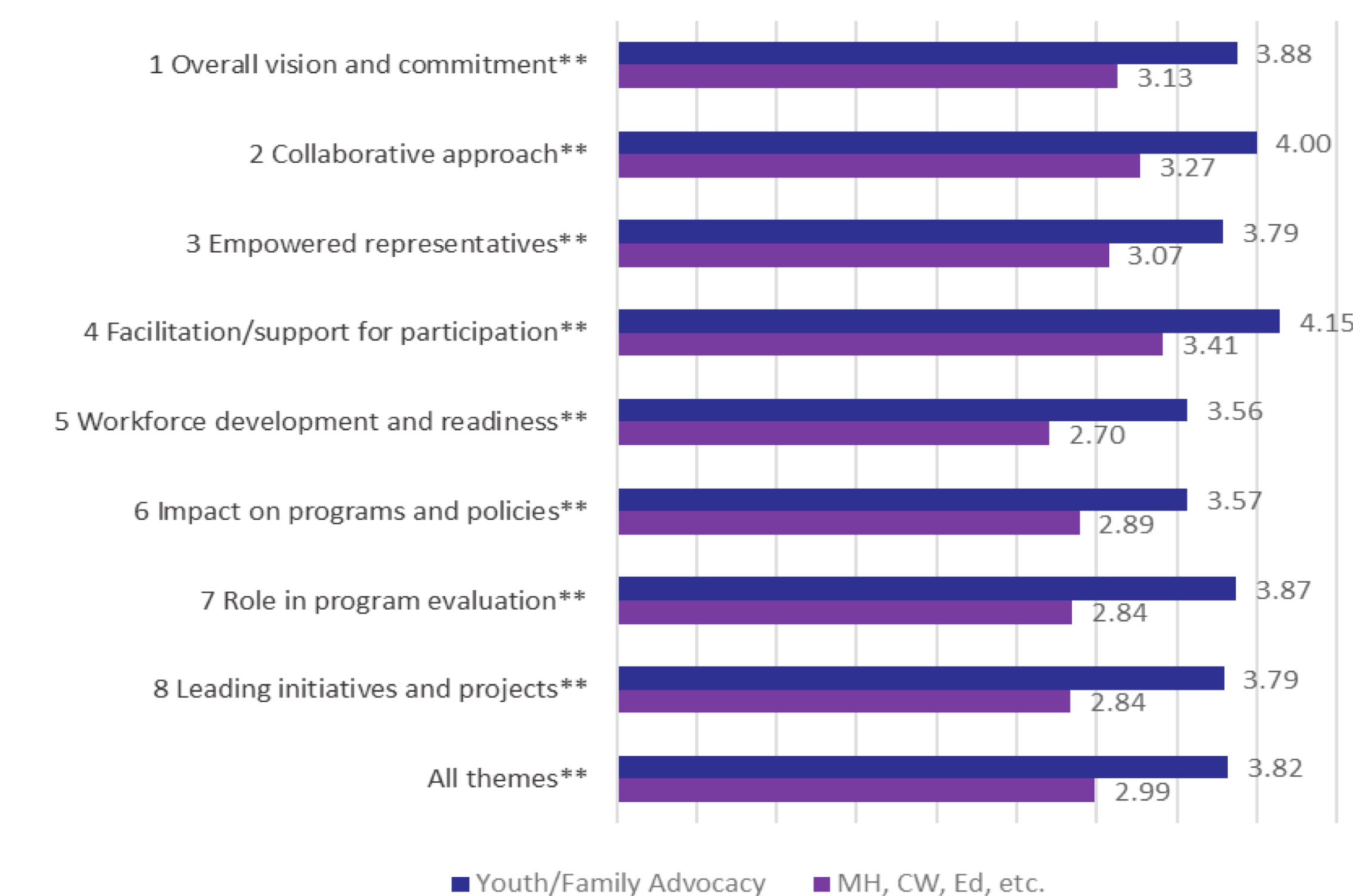
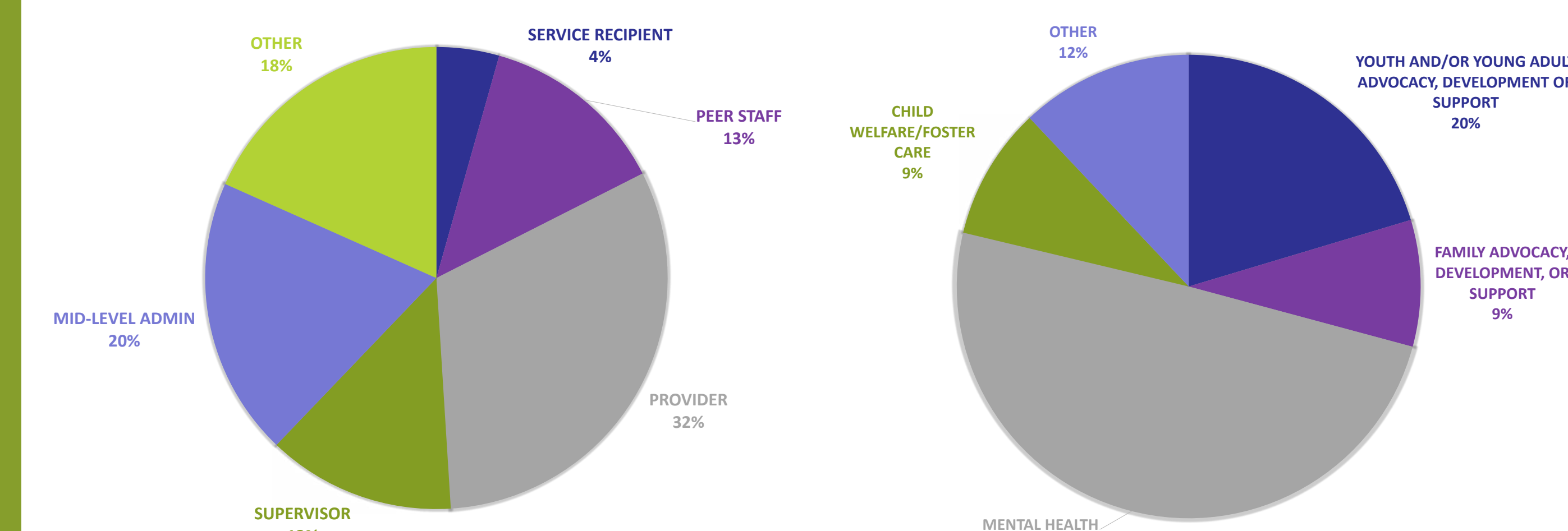
And then:

Will receive findings and tailored TA recommendations

Learn more and request the Y-VAL at youthmovenational.org/yval

Validation Study

- ▶ 385 Participants: Youth and Providers
- ▶ 40 States and Territories
- ▶ 50% of Participating Organizations: Mental Health
- ▶ 64% of Participants: Over 30 years old
- ▶ 22% of Participants: 16 – 26 years old
- ▶ Young adults gave ratings that were significantly higher



Overall Theme Mean and Org Type (* = significant differences)

| Theme | Items | Cronbach's α |
|------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| 1 Overall vision and commitment | 8 | 0.93 |
| 2 Collaborative approach | 5 | 0.91 |
| 3 Empowered representatives | 5 | 0.93 |
| 4 Facilitation/support for participation | 3 | 0.78 |
| 5 Workforce development /readiness | 4 | 0.76 |
| 6 Impact on programs and policies | 5 | 0.91 |
| 7 Role in program evaluation | 4 | 0.87 |
| 8 Leading initiatives and projects | 3 | 0.84 |
| All themes | 37 | 0.97 |