TAILORING ONLINE HEALTH PROMOTION:

A TOOLKIT FOR COMMUNITIES

June 2007
# Tailoring Online Health Promotion

"A Toolkit for Communities"

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INTRODUCTION
About this Toolkit

**Tailoring Online Health Promotion: A Toolkit for Communities** has been produced to share our learning and experiences in working to build a health promotion web site (www.youthspark.ca) to meet local needs by and for rural youth in Huron County, Ontario Canada. The Toolkit is loosely organized according to the phases of project development that we experienced in the YouthSpark project.

Our project included an evaluation component, which helped us identify factors that enabled and hindered the process of creating, maintaining and sustaining the project. This Toolkit contains a compilation of our learning as a result of the evaluation and is presented using a step-by-step approach from the initial stages of developing a vision for the project, implementation, marketing, evaluation and sustainability. We used a participatory approach with our work with youth, which is reflected throughout this Toolkit. We believe this approach is essential for any successful youth-centred program.

We hope that you find this Tool Kit useful to meet your needs as you plan, evaluate and work to sustain your own health promotion projects.

If you have any comments or questions you would like to share about this project or this site, please contact Dr. Ruta Valaitis, Associate Professor, School of Nursing, McMaster University - email valaitis@mcmaster.ca

We gratefully acknowledge funding for this project provided by Health Canada's Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund (DSCIF).

*Health Promotion: A Toolkit for Communities. Produced by Huron County Health Unit and McMaster University, School of Nursing.*

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About YouthSpark

The aim of the YouthSpark Health Promotion Web Site Project was to provide Huron County youth with the opportunity and skills to design and implement a web-based intervention, under the guidance of a full-time website design expert and a project coordinator. The site serves two main functions.

First, the site acts as a local interactive resource centre for information created by local rural youth that is specific to their needs related to a variety of health promotion and other issues identified as important for youth in this region.

Second, the site provides ongoing peer support through a secure discussion board, which is moderated by project youth in partnership with public health professionals in order to answer questions and refer youth to appropriate service providers.

Other web-site features are being continually added to meet youth’s needs based on their feedback. It is an iterative process. The web site attempts to feature community and youth assets (e.g. music and art) and uses multimedia assets to encourage youth engagement.

The aim of the project was to address alcohol-use in ways that appeal to youth and to encourage risk reduction behaviours, while focusing on the underlying factors associated with problematic substance use. We hoped to increase engagement in the community, enhance skills, self esteem and employment potential for youth.

If you visit the YouthSpark web site, you will see that although it addresses alcohol content, it is not explicit to the
site. This was a strategic decision that may seem to go against how you believe a health promotion web site should appear. As you work through the steps of our Toolkit, you will see why we made certain decisions and how the participatory approach we took shaped the direction of the project. As you navigate through the Toolkit, you will see that the health promotion topics addressed by the site grew to be broader than simply to include alcohol use.

This online health promotion project involved working with several groups of youth, including at-risk youth, to develop a peer-led initiative using an iterative participatory design process. A menu of topics and features from the health promotion web site that was developed is shown in the image on the left. A link to the YouthSpark web site is also available in the right hand column.

This web-based project aimed to provide both at-risk youth and youth at large with an opportunity to engage in their community both online and in person, thereby not only providing a substance use prevention tool but also addressing underlying factors associated with problematic substance.
YouthSpark Leaders

The Youth Spark Health Promotion Web Site Project was a campus-community partnership between researchers at McMaster University School of Nursing and the Huron County Health Unit in Ontario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Spark Research and Evaluation Team</th>
<th>Youth Spark Core Youth Development Team</th>
<th>Youth Spark Implementation Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruta Valaitis RN, PhD Associate Professor, School of Nursing, Dorothy C. Hall Chair in Primary Health Care Nursing; McMaster University</td>
<td>Danielle Bedard</td>
<td>Erica Horbanuil, Spark Web Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda O’Mara RN, PhD Associate Professor, School of Nursing, Researcher Systems Linked Research Unit; McMaster University</td>
<td>Tasom Jeong</td>
<td>Penny Nelligan, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherri Bezaire, BHSc Health Promoter; Huron County Health Unit</td>
<td>Amanda Johnson</td>
<td>Beth Henning, Medical Officer of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Savage, MSc Epidemiologist; Huron County Health Unit</td>
<td>Jessica McCabe</td>
<td>Alex Berry, Public Health Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivan Raczycki</td>
<td>Shahrriar Sabri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katie Vanderhaar</td>
<td>James Wilkinson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Links

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For more information about the research and evaluation of the Spark Youth Health Promotion Project contact:
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Audience for the Toolkit

**Tailoring Online Health Promotion: A Toolkit for Communities** is aimed to support anyone who is engaged in delivering health promotion through the Internet.

Potential audiences who may find the Toolkit useful includes:

- Addictions specialists
- Community Police
- Health promoters
- Information Technology Specialists
- Public / community health nurses
- Public Health Communications Specialists
- Youth Workers
- ...and anyone else who has an interest in developing health information for the web.

[YouthSpark.ca](http://YouthSpark.ca)
 Toolkit Authors & Contributors

Many people have contributed to the development of Tailoring Online Health Promotion: A Toolkit for Communities including:

- **Dr. Ruta Valaitis** RN, PhD Associate Professor, School of Nursing, McMaster University; Principal Investigator of the Spark Youth evaluation
- **Dr. Linda O’Mara** RN, PhD Associate Professor, School of Nursing, McMaster University; Co-investigator - Spark Youth Program Evaluation
- **Sherri Bezaire**, BHSc Health Promoter, Huron County Health Unit; Co-investigator – Spark Youth Program Evaluation; Project Coordinator – Spark Youth Project
- **Erica Horbaniuk**, Spark Web Site Coordinator, Huron County Health Unit
- **Brian Gould**, Tool Kit Site Design & Multimedia Production Consultant

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GETTING STARTED
Develop a Vision and Logic Model

Developing the Initial Vision

Develop goals for your project at the start. Even though the project goals will likely be refined along the way, overall project goals should be developed with and communicated to all stakeholders involved in your community.

We used the term "tailoring" in the title of this toolkit to mean steps to take in the process of adapting a web intervention to fit with the needs and characteristics of the target audience - in our case, the web-based health promotion intervention was built to appeal to rural youth in a specific county in the province of Ontario. Ontario's newly revised Mandatory Core Programs and Services Guidelines (which as of April 2007 were still in draft form) refer to tailoring interventions in this way. Krueter and Skinner (2000) have argued that the term "tailoring" refers to interventions that are tailored to individuals rather than population groups. They argue that the term "targeting" is a better fit when designing interventions for populations. You can read more about this debate in terminology by reading the following:


Getting Community Buy-in

It is critical to involve key stakeholders in your planning. In our YouthSpark project, we had support from the Huron County Public Health Unit Executive Director and senior management team as well as staff from other local community agencies serving youth. Getting this buy-in was key, since our project focused on youth.

Community involvement was helpful to assist in recruitment of youth for the project, promotion of the site to youth, and for general assistance to maintain the health promotion web site as the project progressed. We needed community involvement so that the site reflected not only public health services but also reflected broader services available to youth.

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in the local community. At this point, we had not involved youth in planning, although, this likely would have been very helpful to do.

Check that your project vision aligns with your organization's mission. If your project presents a new service delivery strategy that has not been tested before (i.e. providing health advice online), and is not explicit in your organization's mission, at the very least the goals of the service need to be closely aligned with the overall mandate and mission of the organization. If this is lacking, you will likely run into problems with sustainability and continued buy-in.

**Establish Infrastructure**

**Determine Human Resource Needs**

Determine your staffing needs, including the mix of staff (health promoters, addictions management staff, PHNs, IT staff, program evaluators, etc.) to support your project. Where possible hire or involve existing staff members with skills creating and maintaining web pages. If existing staff do not possess these skills, you may want to bring in new personnel with these skills. Ensure that these staff members can mentor the team in picking up these skills.

To ensure that you tailor the web site to meet your population's needs, involve your population (i.e. youth) in the development of the health promotion web site. Therefore, involving staff members who have good teaching and facilitation skills and understand and work well with the population of interest is vital. Your staff will be facilitators for the project team.

Technical support is crucial for your web site project to be successful. So, don't forget about your IT staff members who...
provide server support in your organization!

To help determine all of the human resources that you will need, it is useful to start by creating a **logic model**.

**Develop your Logic Model**

Your logic model will help you determine the major components of your program as well as guide you in developing your evaluation plan. There are many wonderful online resources to help you build a logic model for your project. Follow the links on the right to some helpful sites.

Consider involving program evaluation experts to help you. This is where academic linkages (local colleges or university health sciences programs) can be helpful. You can also involve health evaluation staff, if you are lucky enough to have them in your organization.

We have attached an example of our YouthSpark logic model which incorporates the phases of development, implementation and sustainability.

**Consider Funding Options**

You may find that your health promotion web site project is well aligned with your organization’s mission and mandate. If this is the case, you may be able to support your program with base funding. Consider other funding sources to get you started but be sure to consider the issue of sustainability so that your project can continue beyond what is possible with limited project funds.

**Think about Technology Resources**

Ensure that you have budgeted for the hardware and software that you will need to support your web site project. In order to create an interactive multimedia web site you will require a variety of software packages such as tools for capturing and editing audio, video and image files. You may decide to
include software to support interactive discussion boards, blogs, Wikis or other interactive communication tools. Some of these purchasing decisions will be best made once you have worked through the early phases of the development phase. Some of the basic software packages that we found to be useful for our health promotion site included the following essentials:

- Macromedia Studio 8 (includes: Dreamweaver 8; Flash 8; Fireworks 8; Contribute 3)
- Adobe Creative Suite 2 (includes: Photoshop CS2; Illustrator CS2)
- phpBB 2.0.22 (Free- supports online discussion boards)
- Windows MovieMaker

Nice to have:

- Camtasia

IT staff were very helpful in guiding us regarding the set up and maintenance of our web site. You may find their comments very useful as you begin to plan your web site. You can avoid some headaches down the line if you involve them in the very early stages of your project. Click on the link on the right to learn more from the IT staff.

Project Team Support

- We used FirstClass (a communication system, which supports the health unit's email system) to support a shared discussion space and "shared office space" to store and manage all communication with the research and YouthSpark leaders for the project.
- Above is a screen capture of how the site was set up. The SparkYouth conference was set up for use by the core youth team and the web and project coordinators. This was where the youth shared their

Leverage the use of your existing communication systems to document sharing, communication and archiving of records to support the project.

For access to use of collaborative communication tools in Ontario, contact the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care PHHIT Office regarding the use of the collaborative tools.

Public Health Ontario
work, asked questions and kept track of decisions about the project. This also served as a good strategy to help keep the research team informed of what was happening with the core youth team. The other project conferences were accessed by the researchers and health unit staff and served as a "shared filing cabinet for minutes, key document sharing, and supported ongoing discussions.

Since the McMaster University as well as the Huron County Public Health Unit used FirstClass conferencing systems, we were able to link the two systems in such a way that each participant logged into their own home conferencing system to access this shared project space; it reduced the need for creating separate logins.

### Recruit & Hire

#### Core Youth Development Team

The core development team members that you hire should have a mix of skills. Although we thought that it would be easier to hire people for specific skills as outlined in the SPARK Dream Team document, this was not how the youth roles evolved in the project. We found that sharing multiple roles worked better so that the team members would work more closely and synergistically with each other. For example, all youth created web site content (articles), and participated in creating videos to get health messages across.

An example of an advertisement we used for our core youth development team staff as well as a job description for youth is available. It is important to identify core job responsibilities for team members and processes for how you will work together as a team as well as with other health unit staff.

In recruiting youth for your project, use creative, non-traditional ways to advertise the positions. The SPARK team advertised through high school guidance counsellors, COPE classes (these are classes that are designed for youth who are at-risk of dropping out of school), local youth service providers, the Health Unit website and through word of mouth. Be clear in defining the type of youth you are recruiting (at-risk and/or high functioning) and make this clear to the agencies you are recruiting from to ensure that

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you recruit a team that best represents the target audience you are trying to reach.

When interviewing for the positions, it is best to keep the environment relaxed and keep the interviewing team size small. The interview process is overwhelming in itself for youth, so it is best to try to put them at ease. Keep your questions as open-ended as possible to avoid yes and know answers. This allows the youth the opportunity to express themselves and let their creativity show. Be prepared with prompts in case you are having difficulty getting a dialogue going. An example of our interview questions is available. Have your project coordinator conduct the interviews since they are going to be working directly with the team and thus most able to identify youth who will best fit the project.

To help determine all of the human resources that you will need, it is useful to start by creating a logic model.

As with most youth-related job positions you will likely experience some attrition. You may find that you are constantly recruiting and orienting new staff. This is a normal process and hard to avoid. Try to keep the work environment as youth-friendly as possible to help reduce attrition rates. Attrition rates tend to be higher when working with at-risk youth. They tend to function really well and excel during good home life times. Conversely, we noted attendance issues, poorer quality of work, lack of engagement, and higher rates of attrition when youth were experiencing personal stress.

**Adult Supports**

Research from the peer-led literature shows that it is helpful to have adults work with youth as facilitators. Empowering young people is challenging for adults, since it involves a change in style from teaching to facilitation (Harden, Weston, & Oakley, 1999). Adults need training to be enablers of youth participation (Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), 1993), and understand group dynamics, sharing power with...
youth, and community organizing (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). It is important to find a balance between giving youth control and guiding them in youth-led initiatives (Valaitis & O’Mara, 2006).

The web coordinator’s job description is provided to help you in developing your own. Note that the role indicates that the coordinator was also the project supervisor and supervised the youth. Consider how you would handle tension that may occur when the adult in a youth driven project also holds this supervisory role while at the same time in a facilitator role. This tension will likely exist in youth-led projects where youth are hired for a specific job but must report to an adult “supervisor”. To overcome some of this tension the health unit hired a web coordinator and also assigned a health promoter to support the project. This was somewhat helpful in that it allowed us the opportunity to spread out the “supervisory” duties so one person wasn’t always dealing with authoritative responsibilities. Therefore, adults were not always seen by youth in an authoritative role. It also freed up more time for adults to work with youth in a facilitative manner.

It is also important for the youth and adults involved in the project to meet on a regular basis throughout the project. Not only does this allow the youth to feel connected to the organization, but also for the adults to feel connected to the youth. Youth and adults work differently and by keeping the lines of communication open it allows for both parties to gain an understanding of each other's perspectives. It will also help to build relationships between youth and adults and begin to break down stereotypes each hold about the other.
Orientate Core Youth Team

Orientation of Youth

Developing an orientation package for your youth team will assist in providing a smooth transition in bringing youth into your organization. The package should reflect the vision and mission of your organization and follow the same premise of adult staff orientation but in a youth-friendly manner. We developed a print and CD version of our orientation package. The package included three different elements: 1. office policies and procedures and human resources information, 2. process for web content creation and 3. web design tutorials. We also conducted a variety of team building activities with youth team to help build a sense of understanding and respect between team members and project staff. We found that this also helped to establish the image of project coordinators as facilitators and part of the “team” rather than authoritative supervisors.

Team Building Exercises and Activities

Participating in team building activities allows the team to gain an understanding of each other and gives them opportunities to start thinking and working as a team. We had a very diverse group of youth who probably would never have come together on their own since they represented different youth sub-groups, so this was especially important. Developing a sense of “team” also helped to create sense of ownership and belonging to the project and therefore youth were less likely to miss deadlines as they didn’t want to let down the team. Choose team building activities that are reflective of the types of youth and team-building programs in your area. We choose to use the following:

- True Colours – True Colours is a personality analysis program incorporating the theories of Myers-Briggs into an effective method for students to discover and understand the natural strengths and talents of each individual
- Sensitivity training – Youth attended a local retreat and participated in activities that allowed the youth to

Run team-building exercises early on and throughout the project to encourage positive team functioning.
discuss how certain scenarios affected them and how to put themselves into another person's perspective.

- Team building and leadership training – Youth attended a local retreat and did activities that included games and activities to bring the team together and create a vision for the SPARK team and teach them leadership skills.
- Christmas mission impossible – Youth created games for the youth to do throughout the project that not only allowed them to have some fun at work but also made them work and think together as a team.
- Campfires – Youth had evening campfires to allow them to come together in a social setting and get to know each other on a more personal level to help build the relationships between the team members.

Office Policies and Procedures

Introduce youth to your organizational policies and procedures. We involved our youth team in the development of policies and procedures for the project by asking them to put themselves “in our shoes” (see attached document). Scenarios were given regarding missed deadlines, missed work and project successes and how they should be handled. From there youth developed a contract which outlined group norms. This benefited the team by giving them a sense of involvement in the “supervisory” responsibilities and also ensuring they had a very clear understanding of what the repercussions would be if they don’t follow the policies. This is especially important when it comes to missed deadlines and not showing up for work.
Technology Training Sessions Offered

Online lessons were created for the youth to gain a variety of web design skills. These training sessions were initially offered to the full group by the web coordinator, but since we experienced turnover in youth they were created on a CD for youth to complete on their own with support from the web coordinator. The CDs were also used by youth who participated in initial sessions for later review. Design lessons were provided that reflected the software we choose to use to support the project. Youth were asked to create sample designs to gain experience using the software before they were asked to create designs for the website. Lessons were offered in:

- Design 101
- Colour concept
- Flash basics
- Fireworks basics
- Contribute

Design101.pdf
Design101.doc
Fireworks Basics.pdf
Fireworks Basics.doc
Colour Concepts.pdf
Colour Concepts.doc

Project Development Skills

Online tutorials were given to youth to help develop skills to provide content and develop the site. These sessions were provided by the project coordinator or other professionals within the organization and then online. These sessions developed youth’s skills and knowledge that they needed to work within the organization and learn to become effective communicators with co-workers and community partners and in developing health promotion messaging. Lessons were given in:

- Time management
- Writing for the web

Time Management Lesson.pdf
Time Management Lesson.doc

Outlines were also included to help facilitate interaction between the youth and the adult resources they would be working with to gather credible content for the site. You can view examples of telephone, email and voicemail guides that we created for youth (following the web development section of the toolkit). We found that youth were very intimidated by...
making telephone contacts and found it helpful to have a written conversation guide in front of them to help facilitate their meetings. These guides also helped to ensure that each adult resource was receiving a consistent message about the project as well as what would be expected of them if they were to assist youth in the project.

**Orientation of Other Staff**

Holding a staff orientation session about your project within your organization helps to keep staff informed about a) what you are doing, b) what could be expected of staff if a youth were to ask them for help as a content resource and c) potential linkages between different program areas. Continued updates should be given throughout the organization to help keep people informed of your project’s progress. Keeping the lines of communication open within your organization may also help if you are experiencing problems with the way you have chosen for your youth to connect with their adult resources. This way you can trouble shoot along the way to ensure that the process works for both youth and adult resources.
Getting Started References

Reference List


WEB SITE DEVELOPMENT
Use a Participatory Design Approach

Identify your Audience

The first step of any web site project is to identify your population of interest. In our case, we wanted to reach a broad cross section of youth in Huron County between the ages of 14 to 24 years.

Why involve your population in planning?

It is important for adults in who work with young people’s organizations to understand youths’ needs, as youth define them (Hart et al., 1997). We directly involved our core youth who were hired for the project in the needs assessment stage of the project. Peer leading gives young people a sense of control that can be empowering and promote a feeling of usefulness (Turner, 1999; Caron, Godin, Otis, & Lambert, 2004). In addition, peer led initiatives provide youth with opportunities to act as potential change agents, rather than the targets of prevention efforts (Berkley-Patton, Fawcett, Paine-Andrews, & Johns, 1997). Active engagement supports the notion in health promotion where individuals work with professionals to define and work out strategies for change (Svenson, 1998; Caron et al., 2004).

Regardless of the population of interest that you are working with, it is always valuable to involve your population in the design of your health promotion web site. To help ensure that the technology is user friendly and relevant for your audience, using a participatory design approach will help. It will ensure that you collaborate WITH your population rather than design the site FOR your population (Darin Ellis & Kunrlawan, 2000).

Use Existing Data About your Population

Leverage what you already know about your audience

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Use data about your population of interest that you may have already collected from other work. For example, we used results from focus groups conducted with youth in Huron County which provided useful information about youth’s health concerns that should be taken into account. Although this is helpful in determining content for a health promotion web site, **it is not sufficient to determine design specifications for your site.** The next section will provide some activities to help you.

**Determine Structure & Function**

**Determine Design Specifications**

More information is needed to identify the design specifications for your health promotion web site. Consider the following:

- What content should the site include?
- What features or functions should the site have? How should the features function?
- Should there be a discussion board? If so, who should monitor it if anyone?
- What about help from professionals? Alternatively, should the focus be on youth-to-youth communication?
- How quickly should you attempt to respond to questions posted on your site? Within a week or a day?
- Will someone monitor the site over the weekend?

These are the types of questions that a participatory design activity can help you answer.

**About Scenario-based Design**

We used techniques from the field of computer science as well as action research to obtain design specifications for the site.
Others have used similar approaches to support health-related interventions (Clemensen, Larsen, Kyng, & Kirkevold, 2007). The technique we used was scenario-based design (Carroll, 2000; Bodker, 2000; Blythe M. & Wright, 2006).

We ran ‘Think Tanks’ with youth in order to get their views about design specifications for a health promotion web site as well as learn from them about what they thought would be indicators of success for the project. Think Tanks were conducted with 5 groups of youth from various geographic regions of Huron County, and a variety of youth sub-groups. These included groups of high school students, youth who were involved in an alternative education program, youth who were out of school and looking for work, and youth who were involved in a church group.

Running a Scenario-based Design Activity

The major activity during the “Think Tank” meetings involved a scenario-based design exercise which is driven by needs of system’s ‘users’ rather than the system itself (Bustard, He, & Wilkie, 2000). Links to the right provide instructions for the activity as well as some links to useful web sites related to scenario-based design.

The first task was to explain the purpose of the activity. Participants were encouraged to be creative and use whatever means to capture their ideas that they wanted. We supplied coloured pens, paper and refreshments for participants.

Persona

Working in small groups of 2 or 3, youth were asked to create a fictitious character (Persona) who represented a typical youth in Huron County; they were asked to describe his/her characteristics, the context in which they lived and their activities over a typical day.

Scenarios

Youth were then asked to create 2 or 3 scenarios for each persona which represented situations that brought the persona to the health promotion web site. Youth described what happened when they used the site and how the situation was resolved. This design activity helped to indirectly trigger the identification of content, process and functions they
Persona and Scenario Examples

Scenario A - Transcript

Ok, so my guy’s name is Drew McDougall, he’s 16, and he’s in between grade 10 and 11, and it’s also summer. He’s male. His job is a cow milker and he’s a part-time hacker. At 4:30 he gets up and then from 5:00 to 7:00 he milks the cows, and then catches the bus at 7:36 and then goes to school. He goes skateboarding in the summer and snowboarding in the winter. And then he watches TV and plays Nintendo. He has dinner, he milks more cows, or the same cows, anyway, and then he does Internet which is supposed to be homework, talk, talk, but it’s really hacking. And then he goes on MSN and then he’s on the phone with girls until like 12:00 and then he goes to sleep and it’s like 12:30. So he’s a hacker so he loves computers. He’s violently depressed and suicidal, and he’s got peer pressure. So the scenario is he just attempted suicide again. He tried to hang himself from the curtain rod after overdosing. His mother’s set of putting him in the hospital unless he gets help. The people involved are his sister Holly who sees a flyer for the Spark website at school and forces Drew to go on it, and her mom too. And then what Spark does it gives Drew some help and gives Holly and

Drew’s mother some advice on where to get him counseling and what they can do for him. And the happily ever after was, after much counseling and hard work by all parties, including the Spark website, Drew is doing much better. He now is on medication and no more suicide attempts.

What happened just before this scenario?  Drew just attempted suicide again, tried to hang himself from the curtain rod after overdosing. His mother is threatening to put him in the hospital unless he gets help.

Who was involved?  His sister Holly sees a flyer for the Spark website and forces Drew to go on it.

What is  SPARK gives Drew some help and gives

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In addition to providing an idea about marketing for the site (Flyer), this scenario also suggests that the site should provide information and advice about local services. Questions remain regarding how the advice should be provided. Should there simply be information posted on the web site? Or should advice be available online through a private discussion board where discussion takes place? Should a public health nurse provide direct online counselling in a chat or on the phone in this situation?

Further probing to get answers to the above questions could have helped obtain richer data through this exercise. For example:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What would you see when you got to the page?
- Who would have responded to give help?
- How would the person have communicated with Drew?
- How quickly would Drew have gotten a response?

### Persona and Scenario B - Transcript

**Participant:** The third guy his name is Bert Guy, his nickname is Bert and he’s just a party. He’s a party guy. He’s 23 years old. He’s in the final year of college. He did ok. He lives to go to parties. Has the hands-on skill to follow his career path doing whatever he wants to do, always comes up partying, but can’t get his life on track because he’s excessively partying. It does not work very well for him and he doesn’t have a job. Has a good relationship with his parents but he spends hours away from them; spends hours a day on the Internet chat site. **Group Leader:** When you said he did too

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much partying, what kind of partying? Participant: Um, just out with friends all the time, drinking too much. Just basically every day hung over. He parties too much but if he wanted to apply himself he could do well but he just can’t seem to get out of that rut. Group Leader: So what’s the scenario for him? Participant: Scenario? Parties. Party info online. Wants to find where the parties are happening, which he could probably do. Trying to find information for a job; thought that Spark might have links for jobs around for the region. Trying to meet somebody to teach him math. He needs a tutor to pass math for his final year in college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What happened just before this scenario?</th>
<th>Name: Bert “The Party” Guy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex: Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade in School and/or Job: Final year in college did okay but lives to party, has the hands-on skills to follow his career path but can’t get his life on track due to his excessive partying. Does not work, has good relationship with parents but lives hours away. He spends hours a day on the internet chat sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was involved?</td>
<td>Bert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is happening?</td>
<td>-Party info online- wants to find where the parties are happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-trying to find information for a job, thought that SPARK might have links for jobs around the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-trying to meet somebody to teach him math, needs a tutor to pass math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the scenario end?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above youth also had difficulties completing the entire activity. Despite this, his feedback provided us with helpful directions about the type of information that youth want (help with homework and potential job opportunities). Such topics would not typically be viewed as “health promotion” topics. However, they identified issues important to Huron youth. Providing information about jobs opportunities or links to help with school work on a health promotion web site may draw some youth who might typically not visit a health promotion...
The materials on this web-site (http://www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/OHPToolkit) are intended to assist you in developing programs & services relevant to your area and circumstances. Feel free to use / adapt any of the documents on the site with the following acknowledgement:

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talking about a fictitious character. This technique may also be a useful way to gather data about sensitive issues. In our case, many of the scenarios addressed sensitive issues such as bullying, violence, and substance abuse issues.

Scenario-based exercises can therefore help identify:

- potential technical features desired on your health promotion web site (instant messaging, discussion board; anonymous access to professional help),
- content deemed important by your audience (local contact information for mental health services, local events, help with job opportunities).
- Participants to share ideas about sensitive issues.

Scenario-based design provided the YouthSpark project with a valuable source of data to inform the health promotion web site design specifications. (Further details will be made available in a future publication.)
Develop a Prototype

At this point you have collected information that informs you about the design specifications. Now what?

There are many approaches to starting to construct your web site. We chose to use a rapid prototyping approach. The document by David Walker PhD (2006) introduces the notion of Prototyping—what it is, why use it and the pros and cons.

What is Prototyping?

Walker (2006) writes: “Prototyping is a development methodology in which a model is quickly constructed to test or illustrate design features and ideas, in order to gather user feedback. Subsequent models are created by refining earlier versions, with the aim of convergence on the desired end product. This design methodology is sometimes known as evolutionary design or incremental development.” Read more by downloading the document on the right.

How we used Prototyping

We met with the core youth development team to review a summary of the data that we collected from Huron County youth about the content and features that youth felt our web site should contain. With the guidance of the web and project coordinators, youth began to create the look and feel for the web site based on the results of this work. This design process went back and forth until they came up with their first prototype.

We quickly realized that we needed to learn how to set up, manage and maintain a current, relevant and interactive site which presented many challenges.

Below are 10 questions that you will likely need to address to
build your prototype:

1. How will you encourage discussion online? A bulletin board Blog or wiki?
2. How will you decide on priority topics to cover since it is unlikely you can address everything?
3. Who will answer questions that youth might post on a discussion board? Adult professionals or youth?
4. Which questions posted to the site will youth address and which will health unit professionals address?
   Consider involving other community members in responding to questions from youth. Capitalize on your community’s assets.
5. How will you manage liability issues if information posted on the site by others is incorrect or slanderous?
6. What sites will you link to and how will you know that they were good quality sites?
7. How will you respond if someone posts profane or inflammatory information or comments on your site?
8. How will you protect confidentiality of youth who posted on your site? Or will you?
9. How will you keep the focus on your population of interest?
10. How will you keep your site current?

Develop a Prototype

Blogs or Bulletin Boards

You will likely be faced with questions about how to set up a interactive discussion space on your site. Since blogs have become popular, we questioned if this would be a good communication tool for our site. After discussing the issues with our IT consultants, we decided that a bulletin board to support discussions would be the best tool to meet our needs. You can review the document to the right prepared by our IT expert (Marian Doucette), which illustrates the differences between blogs and bulletin boards.
Usability Testing

An initial prototype was tested for its usability by youth in the community. The next section briefly describes how the prototype was built and how usability testing was conducted. It is important to note that the site was edited based on the results of this initial testing; however, it changes regularly based on new content and feedback received from the target audience. Web sites need to continually evolve to stay fresh. But the template that the site is built on can stay more constant (e.g. the names for various menus).

The prototype was built based on the ideas that came from early work (Personas and Scenarios and focus groups with youth). For example, youth not only wanted access to health information and local resources, but they also wanted access to links about community events for youth and information about job and volunteer opportunities.

The technique for testing we used was called a think aloud technique. This technique allows you to identify problems in design on your site. It does not test the youth for their skills and abilities! It tests your skills and abilities in creating a user-friendly site.

How to run a think aloud:

Provide think aloud instructions on paper which instruct participants to complete a number of typical tasks which you feel will be commonly done by your audience. This allows you to see where they run into problems. Ask them to talk out loud to tell you what they are thinking as they complete the task.

Have a recorder with you taking notes of where errors have occurred or where the user is confused. This signals an area that needs redesign.

We recorded the users while they were testing the site using software called Camtasia. Camtasia

Although your site will always be changing, it is vital that you test the main design elements with your users.

Try using a think aloud technique to test the usability of your site.

Use software to capture the audio and video the computer mouse activity for later analysis.

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(http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.asp) allows you to capture all audio (you need to hook up a microphone to your computer) and mouse movements. This is helpful so that you can later review problem areas more closely. Other software is available that can record the screen activity such as Captivate (http://www.adobe.com/products/captivate/).

Alternatively, you could audio tape and/or videotape participants as they work through the tasks in the think aloud, but the quality of the video recording will not be as clear. It can also be more intimidating for participants to be videotaped while they work through a think aloud. Using software to record is less obtrusive. If you find that you do not have funding to purchase the recording software, you can also run the activities with 2 observers who take notes while someone else directs the activity. Have a hard paper copy of your web site’s main page to mark up as you observe the activity to note where problem areas are found. Observers should compare their notes about their observations regarding problem areas as well as activities that were problem free. After every testing session, hold a short debriefing meeting to go over the issues that you have identified while it is fresh in your mind.

Here is one example of a design flaw we picked up in our think aloud. A menu of words was created by the core youth team hired for the project. We hoped that the menu names would be easily understood by everyone and it would ease their navigation around the site. Words such as “After School” were meant to bring youth to a page with links for jobs and volunteering opportunities in the County. During the think aloud, we learned that youth thought that the menu name “After School” would bring them to a page that listed where parties were happening. The menu name was changed to “Get Involved” based on discussion with the participants.
Develop a Prototype

Think Aloud Protocol References


Develop Content

Youth Creating Web Site Content

Many teens have created content for web sites through sharing of artwork, stories, photography, or videos (Lenhart & Madden, 2005). Having youth create content helps to ensure that the information is in a form that will be received positively by youth in your community.

Establishing a Process for Contacting Community Resources People

Relationships were established at the beginning of the project with community partners who work with youth in the community. We continued to make new contacts with community partners as new issues were identified by youth where we did not feel we had the expertise to deal with at the health unit. Building strong relationships with community partners was very important to ensure that:

- the core youth team who were hired for the project by the health unit had access to resources they needed to
develop accurate and relevant content for the site,
- partners could help to promote the site,
- partners could assist in recruiting youth to work on the project, and,
- community partner involvement was considered to be important to help ensure sustainability of the project.

**Tips for Youth for Contacting Community Resource People**

The youth team found it somewhat intimidating to contact adult resources. They were hesitant and nervous about making connections especially using the telephone. To help them overcome these barriers, a process for contacting community resource people was put into place and templates (see documents links in the right hand column) were created to assist them. The templates consisted of suggestions about what to say on the telephone, what to write in an email or how to respond to a voicemail message. Lists of potential interview questions were also created to assist youth when interviewing their contacts about web site content. These guides helped put youth at ease and helped to ensure that all community resource people received the same information about the project and had a clear understanding of the expectations, if they agreed to be resource for the youth team.
Develop Content

Generating Content

Allowing youth control over what content was on the site and the creativity to express their opinions in a youth-friendly way was important to the success of the website. We found that this gave youth a sense of ownership over the site and made them want to develop things that were of high quality, since they felt it reflected them rather than the organization.

Although youth took into account the earlier work from the needs assessment activities with youth, we also tried to align with health unit events. We established an outline of different issues that were being highlighted each month (ex. Drug awareness week) and then asked the youth to try to incorporate these into their monthly content where possible.

Monthly meetings were held for the youth to brainstorm and determine what issues would be addressed the following month. Each month six new topics were chosen – two of the youth would be assigned two topics and the other two would identify one. Sometimes the youth would also choose to work on the extra two areas as a team and create content together. In regular weekly meetings we checked to make sure that no one was falling behind and reassigned the workload to youth who had less going on at school or with extra-curricular activities.

Youth had lots of opportunity to get in touch with their adult resource, create their piece and have it approved in time for the following month. Youth indicated that it was important to create fresh content for the site every month. They felt the site could easily become stale.

It was also important to create a youth-friendly office space in the health unit for the youth team to work. One
area of the health unit was equipped with computer stations, ‘funky’ lights, bean bag chairs, balls and other youth-friendly objects to help them feel comfortable and at ease in the office. Youth were also permitted to bring head sets and listen to music while they worked. The YouthSpark room setup was used as a model for a youth-friendly space that was also used by the Youth Action Alliance Group that are run out of many health units.

Providing youth with office space and a structured work environment can help them feel that they are working in a professional environment.

Develop Content

Review Process for Web Site Content

An approval process, similar to the one that exists for health unit employees, was put into place to ensure that web content from youth’s submissions for the site was accurate. We wanted to give youth as much control over creative aspects of the writing as possible.

Youth had lots of opportunity to get in touch with their adult resource, create their piece and have it approved in time for the following month. Youth indicated that it was important to create fresh content for the site every month. They felt the site could easily become stale.

The process involved the following steps:

1. Youth identified issues they wanted to address for the current month.
2. Youth worked with the project coordinators to identify a resource person (from the community or health unit staff) to assist them in developing content for their piece.
3. After the youth finished creating their web site piece and the adult resource verified that the content was accurate, it was sent to the health unit’s

Communicate a clear approval process for website content

Keep your site fresh and new.

It is important that content be in a form that is clear and accurate but keeps the voice of youth.

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communications specialist. The specialist assessed readability levels, provided expert advice on the method chosen to deliver the message and made suggestions to improve the writing style where needed.

4. After corrections were made, the piece was sent to management for final approval, before it was uploaded to the site.

This process helped to ensure that everyone was aware of the content placed on the site and that important content had not been missed that could potentially cause fall-out or harm. The aim was to keep people informed, and ensure accuracy rather than to limit youth in their approach to developing creative youth-friendly health messages. Despite our intention, this process was reported to be a challenge for youth. They viewed the process as too “corporate” and cumbersome. It took time for them to adjust to this review and approval process.

Keeping everyone informed helps to avoid future harm or fall-out
Develop Content

Incorporating Multimedia on the Web Site

Working with the youth team, we learned that youth are not responsive to traditional health promotion messaging. In order to overcome this barrier we asked our youth to be creative in how they addressed teens in our region. They used a variety of non-traditional methods to help get their messages out in a youth-friendly way:

- Pictures with captions
- Videos featuring youth in their community
- Written articles

Navigate around the youth site to look for examples. Some examples may be found in links to archives. Youth in our community responded favorably to this type of messaging.

Ask a Pro Management

Developing a process for the management of questions submitted to health professionals will help ensure that responses are posted in a reasonable time frame. We felt that it was essential that questions be answered within a forty-eight hour time-frame if not sooner, so that youth would get timely responses to their questions.

Navigate around the youth site to look for examples. Some examples may be found in links to archives. Youth in our community responded favorably to this type of messaging.
Youth anonymously emailed questions into a general mailbox which SPARK team members could access. Questions were then directed to appropriate health professionals or community resource members by the web coordinator. In the absence of the web coordinator the project coordinator referred the questions to appropriate staff. Health professionals were then asked to respond as soon as possible. Contacts were established with program leaders. A backup professional was also identified if someone was away or too busy to respond. Responses were emailed back to the web coordinator and then posted to the site.

Navigate around the youth site to look for examples. Some examples may be found in links to archives. Youth in our community responded favourably to this type of messaging.
Develop Content

Web Site Disclaimer

You will likely want to include a disclaimer for your web site. A link to this information was posted as a footnote at the bottom of each web page on the site. Here is an example of text that we included in our web site.

Web Site Disclaimer Example

Important Information about this web-site
The goal of youthspark.ca is to provide local, credible information regarding topics of interest and concern to youth in Huron County, Ontario, Canada.

The youthspark.ca team consists of youth ages 16-24, health professionals from the Huron County Health Unit and other local professionals from the area.

Youthspark.ca believes in and supports youth in sharing their views and opinions. Views expressed on the website and/or forums and/or blogs and/or external links, are not necessarily the views of youthspark.ca or the Huron County Health Unit. All information provided on this Web site is given for your convenience only. The Health Unit / County of Huron does not accept any responsibility for damages or expenses incurred as a result of reliance thereon. Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained within the Youthspark Web site is correct and the Health Unit / County of Huron accepts no responsibility for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies. We reserves the right to change notices and descriptions without advanced warning. In the case of a difference between the version presented on the Web site and the version of content in the County's records, the County's
records shall be deemed to be correct.

Linked Sites
The sites to which links are provided on this Web site are not under the control of the youthspark.ca team. The Health Unit / County of Huron is not responsible for and makes no representations or warranties concerning the contents of any linked site or any link contained in the linked site. Youthspark.ca Web site provides links to you only as a convenience, and the inclusion of any link does not imply endorsement, investigation or verification by the County of Huron of the linked site.

Copyright
Canadian copyright law protects this Web site and the material images appearing within it. Such Web site materials and images may not be copied, published, distributed, downloaded or otherwise stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or converted, in any form or by any means, electronic or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Youthspark.ca is a project funded by Health Canada and the Huron County Health Unit, County of Huron.

The following copyright statement was included on the bottom of each page.

© 2006 SPARK Core Youth Development Team
Huron County Health Unit
Develop Content

Research Information

Since we built in an evaluation of our site, we made it clear to users that use of the site was being monitored for evaluation purposes. We also identified that a formal evaluation study was being conducted which was approved by an ethics review board. A link to this information was posted in a footnote found at the bottom of each web page on the site. Here is an example of text that we included in our web site.

Research Information Example

If you use this public web site, it means that you have consented to have your communications and activities monitored for research purposes. Details about the research are outlined below.

To decide whether or not you want to be a part of this research study, you should understand what is involved and the potential risks and benefits. This form gives detailed information about this study. Once you understand the study, you can choose whether or not you wish to continue to use this web site.

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Dr. Ruta Valaitis, Dr. Linda O’Mara and Sherri Bezaire because you have chosen to use the SPARK Web Site. Researchers at McMaster University and professional staff at Huron County Health Unit have financial support from Health Canada for this study. There is no conflict of interest that exists in relation to any of the researchers in this study. A conflict of interest exists if there is potential benefit to the investigator(s) beyond the professional benefit from academic achievement or presentation of the
WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

The SPARK web site was created by youth and health professionals at the Huron County Health unit. We believe that youth who live in Huron County have unique needs. It is important for Huron County health unit staff, who provide services to youth in this County, to understand youth’s needs so that they can plan more effective programs. In addition, we are interested in evaluating this health promotion web site so that we can make improvements where needed. Although this health promotion web site will address many topics and the content will change on an ongoing basis, we will focus some of the content on use of alcohol by youth.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This study aims to evaluate the SPARK web site and to learn more about issues facing Huron County Youth, including the topic of alcohol use among youth. The results will help identify what works well and what doesn’t so that improvements can be made to better meet the needs of Huron County youth. We can also use the information to plan other programs to meet Huron County youth’s needs. In addition to being interested in health and social needs that youth may have, we are particularly interested in learning about Huron County youths’ views and use of alcohol. Therefore, some elements of the web site will be geared to this topic.

WHAT WILL MY RESPONSIBILITIES BE IF I TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

ALL PARTICIPANTS

If you interact with this site, you are consenting to the following:

You agree to have your activity on the site tracked. As long as you do not enter any personal information about yourself on the site, your use will
be anonymous. We will use software which will collect data such as which pages you visited, how long you visited the site, which page you entered from, which page you exited from and the path you took throughout the site. Although we will be able to tell how you have used the site, we will not know who you are.

You agree to allow the researchers to analyse messages you post on the site. We are interested in the number of messages you have visited, read or posted on the message board and the content of what you have written. Your messages will be anonymous, so we will not be able to identify who you are. Remember not to post any personal information about yourself on the message board. Any private emails you send to a public health professional or peer in this website, will not be monitored by this study. The content of such emails will be completely confidential between you and the person that you have communicated with in email.

SELECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

On the site, you may be invited to participate in a number of additional research activities. It is totally up to you if you want to participate in any of them or not.

You will be invited to:

provide feedback about the web site in an online survey.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=28542277
All responses you make in this online survey are completely anonymous and confidential. For research purposes your responses will be associated with an anonymous identification number. This number will not be linked to browser cookies or your computer IP address or any other method that could identify you. When you complete the survey, you will see results of the survey from
everyone who has completed. You will only be presented with grouped results. In other words, no information from individuals will be presented. Click on the link (link to come) to see the invitation to participate in the online survey.

email us if you want to participate in a 20-30 minute telephone interview to provide us with feedback on the site and to discuss your experiences with it. You can email the principal investigator (Valaitis@mcmaster.ca) if you wish to participate. We will ask you if we can audiotape the interview so that we can accurately capture your comments. The tape will be transcribed for analysis and destroyed after the analysis is completed. Your name will be removed from any transcripts. We may use quotes from your interview to report results. However, the quotes will be kept anonymous. We will arrange a time that is mutually convenient for the interview. You will be provided with a $20 gift certificate for your participation in the interview. Click on this link (link to come) to email the principal investigator, Dr. Ruta Valaitis, to indicate your interest in participating in the interview.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

Huron County Health Unit staff will attempt to ensure that the SPARK site is safe. That means that the site will be monitored regularly by Huron County staff. Any messages which are in any way deemed abusive in the message board will be removed from the site. While the SPARK staff tries to ensure the information displayed on its website is correct and current, they cannot guarantee that the content will be completely accurate. Links provided on the SPARK website are for informational purposes only. The Huron County Health Unit cannot take any responsibility for the content, accuracy or currency of any information held on web pages outside of the SPARK site.
**HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?**

All users of the SPARK web site will be included in the study and will also have the right to participate in any of the optional research activities noted above.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS FOR ME AND/OR FOR SOCIETY?**

We cannot promise any personal benefits to you from your participation in this study. However, possible benefits include an increased sense of support, increased sense of your community, increased awareness about health matters and social and health resources available in the Huron County region. Your participation may help others who want to build a health promotion web site to meet local needs in the future.

**IF I DO NOT WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?**

It is important for you to know that you can choose not to take part in any aspects of this study. An alternative to visiting the SPARK web site is to contact the Huron County Health Unit (519-482-3416) for health information and advice or contact the Health unit in your region. Choosing not to participate in this study will in no way affect services offered to you by staff at the Huron County Health Unit.

**WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT PRIVATE?**

Your data will not be shared with anyone except with your consent or as required by law. You are encouraged NOT to enter any personal information such as your address or phone number on the site. When you post messages, you are encouraged to use a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity. Your name will only be kept if you email us offering to participate in an interview. A list linking the number with your name will be kept in a secure place, separate from your file. The data, with identifying information removed will be securely stored in a locked office.
If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used and no information that identifies you will be released or published. If you agree to participate in the interview, you will have the right to review and edit any tapes. We will transcribe the audiotapes for analysis. Audio tapes will be viewed only by members of the research team and they will be destroyed after the analysis is completed.

CAN PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you volunteer to be in any aspects of this study, you may withdraw at any time and this will in no way affect the quality of care you receive at the Huron County Health Unit. You have the option of asking us to removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. For example, if any messages posted in the discussion boards are abusive or threatening, they will be removed.

WILL I BE PAID TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?

If you agree to participate in the interview, we will reimburse you with $20 gift certificate to be sent to you after the interview. If you request to have your data withdraw, you will not be required to return the gift certificate.

WILL THERE BE ANY COSTS?

Your participation in this research project will not involve additional costs to you.

IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS, WHOM CAN I CALL?

If you have any questions about the research now or later, please contact Ruta Valaitis at 905 5259140 ext 22298 or email Valaitis@mcmaster.ca.

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If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Hamilton Health Sciences Patient Relations Specialist at 905-521-2100, ext. 75240.

CONSENT STATEMENT

I have read the preceding information thoroughly. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that by choosing to interact with the SPARK web site, I have agreed to participate in this study. I understand that I can print a copy of this form as a reference.
Develop Marketing Approaches

Marketing Your Website

Begin creating a plan for marketing and promoting your website at the beginning of the project. Allow your youth team to be creative in generating ideas and be open to using unconventional marketing approaches to ensure that your target audience will be receptive to receiving your messages.

Marketing ideas that were identified in the YouthSpark project as well as during initial meetings in the community with youth to determine the personas and scenarios.

Huron Stock

Huron Stock – This was a large youth-centred community event to launch the website. The core youth team along with project coordinators organized a day long outdoor concert and interactive health fair. Eleven bands in total were hired to perform at the concert, and health unit staff and community partners were asked to create youth-friendly interactive health booths. Forty youth were recruited to volunteer for the day and were given community service hours for the time spent assisting in the event. (Ontario secondary school students are required to contribute 40 hours of community volunteer work in order to graduate).

This unique event proved to be well attended and a great success demonstrating how youth’s ability to “think outside of the box” was valuable in promoting health information and marketing of the site to youth in the area in a new way.
Develop Marketing Approaches

Photovoice Contest

A photovoice contest was held asking youth to take photographs of how drugs and alcohol have affected their community. Photovoice has been shown to be an effective strategy to promote the voices of oppressed populations. A number of published papers noted in the references link (Can this be hyperlinked to the page here?) provide more details about photovoice methods, ethical issues, benefits and cautions.

In Huron, photovoice was incorporated into the YouthSpark web site. The contest was promoted using posters, through the website, and on MySpace and facebook. Analysis of the photos and captions will be used in future health unit program planning and to assist in the generation of content for the YouthSpark web site.
MySpace and Facebook

MySpace and Facebook online networking systems were used to help direct youth to the YouthSpark website. A SPARK profile was set up at each site with controls set so that notes could only be read by friends. “Friends” connected to YouthSpark identify other friends who contact their friends, and so on. This growing list of “friends” are then invited to view the YouthSpark site. New website content, and all promotional events were advertised through these two vehicles. We have not yet evaluated the effectiveness of this popular vehicle, used by growing numbers of youth, for its effectiveness as a promotional tool for our website. However, initial experience with it has shown somewhat promising results.
Develop Marketing Approaches

Community Outreach

- **Parent and community meetings** - An adult information night and community partners information nights were held at the health unit to market the site in the County. They were organized to inform parents about YouthSPARK, to help parents recognize the types of issues youth face and to provide them with strategies to address youth issues. It also gave youth and community partners an opportunity to meet face-to-face for open discussions regarding issues youth face in Huron County.

- **Outreach into schools** - Program coordinators visited schools and presented at staff meetings and classes (Lifestyles classes, Physical Education classes, etc.) that aligned well with YouthSPARK’s mission. It was somewhat difficult to get into the schools and therefore we suggest that you may want to get early buy-in for promotion of the site in schools.

- **Sponsored events** - YouthSPARK sponsored a bus to transport students to a youth concert in a nearby city. It both provided youth with needed transport to the concert while at the same time helped to promote the web site.

- **Media Promotions** - a number of media releases, media advisories and newspaper advertisements, were distributed to local media throughout the project (see side examples). These highlighted the website and the promotional events going on in the community. Due to the unique nature of this health promotion strategy we received excellent coverage by our local media; due to our success, we were only required to purchase advertising for one newspaper ad throughout the project. The aim of the media releases was to inform the community about our project rather then raise awareness with youth about the site. Youth reported to us that newspapers and local radio were not a useful form of advertising for them.

Invitation to “Parent Night”

- [Parents Nite Media Release](Doc)
- [Parents Nite Media Release](PDF)

Example of Media Release

- [Youth Spark Media Release](Doc)
- [Youth Spark Media Release](PDF)
Flyers – Flyers were created and handed out at local schools and events highlighting activities the youth team were working on – this was seen by the youth as effective form of advertising; many youth activities were successfully being publicized this way in the county.

Develop Marketing Approaches

Promotional Materials

Funding was available for marketing materials. We engaged our core youth team to identify items that would appeal to youth. They identified the following promotional items that had appeal for our rural youth.

- Lanyards
- Pens
- YouthSPARK messenger bags
- Wrist bands
- T-shirts
- Taxi cards – Business cards were created with the phone numbers of all local taxis companies for youth to slip into their wallets to discourage drinking and driving.
Posters
Ask a Pro card – Business cards highlighting the Ask a Pro section of the website. They were given to youth, as another way to ask questions when the professionals were not available to be in the schools.

Promotional materials were distributed throughout the schools and at local events (eg. Local hockey games, dances) by the youth team. Some promotional materials such as the “Ask a Pro” cards and “Taxi Cards” were also distributed by the Public Health Nurses and Addiction Councillors through the school program. A promotional video was also developed for use in community meetings and events. (See example)
Web Site Maintenance

Maintaining Your Web Site

Ongoing maintenance of your website is crucial for its success. Based on feedback from youth the site needed to have new content uploaded monthly for youth to continue to be attracted to visit the site and to keep it from getting "stale".

Moderation of bulletin boards

At the beginning of the project the discussion boards were moderated by the web coordinator. This was used as a strategy to model to youth appropriate methods to moderate online discussion. It would be helpful to create guidelines for your own agency to outline what would be considered an inappropriate posting that would need to be removed. Youth were taught that even if someone posted an idea that they disagreed with, as long as it was not offensive or threatening, it would not be removed from the discussion boards. After three months of moderating the discussion boards under the guidance of the web coordinator, youth were given moderator privileges.

Spamming was a significant problem on our discussion boards. We were continuously being hit by inappropriate messaging sometimes up to 25 spam messages per day. In order to deal with this problem youth were given a schedule when they were expected to moderate the boards and remove spam messages. Spamming software was then put into place by our IT staff to assist in controlling this problem.

In order to keep the discussion boards fresh it was important for our youth team to log on and start or continue discussions on various topics on an ongoing basis. This helped to keep the discussion boards active and helped to encouraged other youth to post comments. It also helped to send the message to youth that others were reading and paying attention to their postings.
Involve Youth in the Community to Help Maintain the Site

As the project began to develop, it became important to reach out to other youth in the community to ask them to help provide content for the site. This can be done a number of ways:

- ask youth to voluntarily submit pieces for the site,
- holding contests,
- work with a school classroom to provide content,
- working with other youth in your organization (we worked with the Youth Action Alliance team who maintained the Smoke Rings content of the web site)
- pay youth to contribute content for the site

General Maintenance Tasks

General maintenance of the site needs to be ongoing. Tasks include:

- Daily moderation of the discussion boards
- Regularly (every 2-3 weeks) uploading new content to the site and archiving old content (articles and ask a pro)
- Updating an events calendar (if you have one)
- Checking links to make sure they are still live
- Searching new websites to link to and to link from
- Updating the volunteer and job section where the community sends opportunities for work and volunteering in your community to post on your site (if you decide to have such a feature)
- Keeping the site looking fresh (for example making small changes to the site that reflect the season or changing your home page to reflect the new content that is on the site)

These activities help to keep your website fresh and keeps youth coming back to see what is new.
Web Site Development References

Reference List


SUSTAINABILITY
Sustaining the Web Site

If you obtained outside funding or only have one-time funding to create the infrastructure for your initial website, you will need to create a plan to support its sustainability. A plan for sustainability should be built into your initial logic model and should be fine-tuned throughout the course of your project. Take into account the roles, functions and resources that you will need to keep your website functioning.

People Resources for Sustainability

Project Coordination

It is suggested that you should have one person or committee in your organization to oversee your website. Roles may include:

- coordinate the running of the website
- ensure that the website is being maintained properly
- work with community organizations, school boards and internal staff to continue to recruit youth to submit content for the site,
- promote the site
- provide support/ supervision to a youth ambassador to promote a youth-driven site (see below)
Web Coordination

Suggested roles for a web coordinator include:

- be responsible for all technical aspects of the website,
- work with your IT department to ensure that your website meets your organization’s IT requirements/specifications, and update the web site software as needed, and
- be responsible for training a youth ambassador in the software being used to support your site, and provide youth with technical support as needed.

Youth ambassador

In order to keep a youth-driven (led) site we decided to employ a youth ambassador to support the project beyond the life of the grant period. Due to financial restrictions we were unable to keep all 4 members of the core youth team employed. However the need for youth to be involved in the project was seen as a key to its success. A youth ambassador was hired for ten (10) hours a week and funds were allotted to paying youth to create content for the website.

The youth ambassador’s role (see link to the job description) was defined as:

- reaching out to youth in the community
- recruiting youth to generate content for the site
- promotion of the site
- general maintenance of the site including: moderating the discussion boards, keeping the front page fresh and checking to ensure links to the site are active.

All three key players as noted above will need to work

Consider hiring a Youth Ambassador from the community to support the web site.

Toolkit Ambassador

Toolkit Ambassador
Seeking New Content

New Content

In order to ensure that your site remains "fresh" you will need to find a way to continue to generate new content.

Although there are many options of how this can be done, we choose to pay youth in the community to submit content for the site by the "article". An article could take the form of text and images or a multimedia presentation (video, podcast, etc). This is a strategy that we are currently testing. A promotional video was created to recruit youth for submissions of articles. (see example)

The following is the process we are using to edit, approve and post content on the website:

1. Content is submitted either through the website or by mail to the program coordinator
2. Program coordinator reviews the piece with youth ambassador to ensure relevance of content to the target population
3. Working with professionals in the health unit and community partners, the program coordinator reviews the "article" for accuracy
4. The "article" is then sent to the communications coordinator for editing
5. The "article" then goes to management for approval
6. Once the "article" is loaded to the website, a check is issued to the creator

This process helps to ensure that the site is youth-driven and also ensures that all content on the site is accurate. You can determine a process for generating, editing and approving web content.

We suggest paying youth who submit quality articles.
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review our process at www.youthspark.ca.

We also offered online training sessions for youth (see side training sessions) to help them prepare their submissions. This gives youth an opportunity to gain skills in different areas of developing content for a website and also assists with quality of the product being received.

Ongoing Evaluation

You will want to have a plan to evaluate your website from the beginning of your project. It will be important for continued program success. By monitoring hits to the website you will gain an understanding of which pages are being most and least frequently visited. It is important to pay close attention to returning visitor data since this can help you determine community issues that youth or other visitors to your site are most interested in. However, there are limitations to analyzing website hits alone. Web site counters, like the one we used, can typically measure you how long a visitor stayed on your site; a one second hit on a page may not necessarily indicate interest --- a one second hit could actually tell us that they are not interested.

Your evaluation should also include periodic checks with youth in the community about the site. This will help to inform you if youth know about and are using the site, what areas of the site interest them and ways to improve the site.
Sustainability References

Reference List

EVALUATION
Overview Ethics and Consents

**Before the web site is launched:**
It is important to think about evaluation of the project when you are designing the project. We used the logic model to assist us in determining some of our evaluation criteria. We addressed program components, activities, target groups, short term and long term outcomes. Interpreting findings from evaluation data leads to decision making about later program changes and sustainability.

Also, we engaged community youth in think tanks early on in the project to identify indicators of success.

**Once your web site is launched:**
You may find that you need to modify the indicators of success as you learn from youth and service providers about what is important to them.

We identified tools and activities to help us measure the success of our web site including:

1. Tracking web site utilization statistics
2. Conducting an online survey
   - for youth who used the web site
   - for local professionals serving Huron County youth
3. Conducting phone interviews
   - with youth using the web site
4. Conducting in-person focus groups
   - with health unit staff who worked with youth on the project
   - with community service workers who worked with youth on the project
5. Completing a content analysis of online postings on the web site’s discussion forums

Useful web site for program evaluation is:

- Program Evaluation Toolkit
- Spark Logic Model (Doc)
- Spark Logic Model (PDF)

Use research to guide evaluation

- Example of Spark think tank evaluation statements

Identify indicators of success
Ethics review boards

Since we planned to evaluate the web site project, we were required to obtain ethics approval for all of our evaluation activities from our Ethics Review Board. Check with your agency regarding the Ethics Review board in your jurisdiction. It would be important to consult with them before conducting any evaluation activities. Start this process early. Review boards can take from 1 to 3 months before you obtain final approval.

Start to work on getting ethics review approval early.

Here are links to the consent forms we used.

1. Agency Information Sheet (Doc)
2. Health Unit Intro & Consent (Doc)
3. Youth Recruit, Email Consent (Doc)
4. Youth Letter of Intro & Consent (Doc)
5. Youth Core Consents (Doc)
Web Site Utilization Reports

Web site statistics are typically collected by the IT department and can be provided to individuals involved in online health promotion programs. These statistics are generally helpful to identify trends in use and provide direction regarding less used and more popular pages on your site. This information can be useful to ‘tweak’ the web site based on the results. The software program that we used to capture utilization data for our site was StatCounter.com. Below is a StatCounter.com screen capture illustrating statistics reported for our site. It is useful to capture data about the unique and returning visitors to the site to get a picture of how interested people are in coming back to view your site.
Online Survey Tools

It is valuable to survey your web site visitors to ensure that the web site is meeting their needs. We created two surveys:

1. an online survey to capture youth perceptions of the web site
2. online survey for professionals serving Huron County youth

Examples of Surveys

- Spark Online Youth Survey
- Health Worker Online Survey
Phone Interviews

You may want to interview youth web site users to learn about their perceptions of the site. Our questions included:

Review consent form with youth to ensure understanding of rights.

1. How did you hear of / learn about the site?
2. What were you looking for when you went to the site? Did you find what you needed?
3. What was your experience like using the site? (Prompts: frustrated navigating the site? felt supported?)
4. What features did you use on the SPARK web site? (Prompts: Discussion forums, polls, articles, links to resources)
5. What was your experience like with these features (discussion forums, surveys, polls?)
6. In what ways, if any, did this web site help you feel connected to Huron County?
7. How did you feel about the community information that was available on the site? (Prompts: Do you think that anything you read/experienced on our web site changed your ideas or thinking about things in any way?
8. Do you think that anything that you read/experienced on our website changed your ideas or thinking about health/social issues in Huron County in any way?
9. How did you feel about the health information that was available on the site?
10. What did you find out from the site that you didn’t know previously? (Prompts: about Huron County or health information)

11. What did you like about the site?

12. What was your favourite place on the site to go?

13. What didn’t you like about the site?

14. What would you change about the site? What else would you like to see on the site?

15. Do you plan to go back to the web site? Please explain.

16. Is there anything else you think we should know?

In Person Focus Groups

You may want to conduct focus groups with adults providing services to local youth to explore their perceptions of the web site in meeting clients’ needs. We held focus groups with both health unit staff and professionals in community agencies offering services to youth to explore their perceptions about the site as well as process issues related to working with core youth on the development of site. We were also interested to learn about their views about substance use and abuse and how well the site addressed these issues; therefore some of our questions referred to this aspect.

Our questions included:

1. In what ways have you been involved in this project?

2. Describe your experiences interacting with the core youth development team (the four youth hired to work on the project). In what capacity did you work/communicate with them?
3. What do you think are the underlying factors that impact on Huron County youth's hi-risk behaviours?

4. In what ways has the project addressed these underlying factors, if at all?

5. How do you feel the youth core development team (hired youth) is doing leading this project? What changes have you seen in them, if any, since the start of the project?

6. What has excited you about this project?

7. What has concerned you about this project?

8. What unexpected issues, successes or concerns have arisen since your involvement with this project?

9. Please comment if you think the web site SPARK has been successful or not. How do you know?

10. Is there anything else you think we should know?

Content Analysis of Web Site

We completed a content analysis of the online forum discussions as well as the content that was posted to identify what topics were of interest and to describe the type of activity that occurred online. Below are examples of the content of the discussion forums.

The first image illustrates the top level of the discussion board listing most of the major discussion topics.
The image below is a screen capture of a portion of the discussions that occurred in the lower level under the topic of “alcohol and drugs”.

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LESSONS LEARNED
Lesson #1

Develop a Vision and Logic Model

For any web related project, it is important to involve your IT department from the start. IT staff are essential to include in your discussions about the vision of the project to ensure their buy-in and project success as it develops. Remember that your innovation may be new to them as well, so they will be more likely to buy-in if they have been involved in planning.

Involve your IT Staff to help in the early stages.

Involvement of an academic institution can be a valuable way to help provide credibility for your project. They can also assist in providing access to research evidence to guide your work as well as evaluation of your project. In the YouthSpark project, we involved 2 student nurses who were enrolled at McMaster in a nursing research course. The students lived in Huron County, returned home for the summer, and were able to assist in project evaluation as part of their research practicum.

Involve academia from your area for assistance.

Support your vision with research evidence wherever possible. If there is little research available to guide you along the way related to your idea, look for research in related fields. Incorporate program evaluation into the project to help build new knowledge. This Toolkit for Communities will provide some of the tools that we used in our evaluation. You may find them as helpful starting points.

Use research to guide your vision.
Lesson #2

Recruit and Hire

Give youth opportunities to participate in the project in a variety of ways in order to develop skills such as web design, multimedia development, and writing health content.

Have more than one staff member available to facilitate the youth team. Working with youth in not always easy and thus it is helpful to be able to consult with another adult facilitator to problem solve when problems arise. In addition, it can also reduce the stress of having to have one person present for every meeting with youth, which typically occur after school hours and traditional work hours.

Be clear when hiring or assigning project coordinators that to work with youth, adults will likely be working outside regular business hours to avoid any scheduling issues later on.

When youth were co-located at the health unit they felt that they were part of a larger organization. It also allowed youth to access professional advice when needed from their supervisors. Youth were also more productive when working in a structured environment and having other team members present to discuss their ideas. It also gave them an opportunity to have access to resources that they may need to complete their work. We allowed the youth to work six hours in the office and four hours from home; this seemed like a good balance and worked well for the youth team and project and web coordinators.

Establish clear roles and responsibilities for team members early on. Youth need to know what will be expected of them throughout the project to avoid any confusion about roles and responsibilities. It is best to review the job description so they know exactly what will be expected of them.

Create a meeting schedule for youth and adults to meet in order to keep the lines of communication open and to help build relationships.
Lesson #3

Orientate Core Youth Team

Working with youth on YouthSpark was much like a community development process. Expect some confusion at the start of the project about directions and role’s of individuals. Be prepared to spend time sorting out these issues upfront and revisiting them over the life of your project.

Focus on team building skills to address diversity in youth’s backgrounds. Set as many team building activities as you can in the first few months of work and consider revisiting these when your team is experiencing difficulties. This will inevitably happen. Team building skills will help get youth and the adult facilitators working and thinking like a team.

Due to the high attrition rates with youth it is helpful to develop an orientation package to help facilitate the transition of new youth being introduced into the project. This will help keep disruption to the project to a minimum.

It is important that youth follow through with all orientation lessons planned so youth develop the skills needed to create health promotion messaging that reflect the creativity youth posses and would be receptive to learning from.

Have assigned mandatory work days as often as possible, so that the team can work together at the same time and the same place. We found working from home was not the best work environment for this type of project and detracted from team work and good team communication.

Explain to youth the expectations of the organization that is supporting the project – in other words- explain what it means to be an “employee” in your organization and the system’s expectations. Many youth found it difficult to work in a structured environment. We found this was one of the biggest hurdles to overcome for the project. It is difficult to find a balance between what the system needs and creating a youth-friendly environment. Be prepared to face this hurdle. Hopefully some of the resources that we have shared and the lessons learned noted above will provide you with some tools to help.
Lesson #4

Determine Structure & Function

We asked our core youth team to lead these exercises with the research team. Although this was a useful strategy to reduce intimidation for youth, the richness of the data collected was compromised since youth were not trained to get participants to expand more on their ideas. We suggest that adequate time is spent to train leaders for this exercise so that they learn skills to elicit richer personas and scenarios.

Pilot test the exercise for group leaders to get comfortable with it.

 Audiotape feedback sessions and transcribe the dialogue for later analysis to ensure that you have not missed anything critical.

 Run the activity with a variety of sub-groups to ensure that you identify a variety of perspectives.

 Encourage participants to dream big when creating their scenarios and personas and not to be held back by what they think you want to hear or what they think is impossible to achieve from a technical perspective.
Lesson #5

Develop a Prototype

Although much work had been done to collect information from the community about the design specifications, we needed to refer back often to the summary (of information we received from youth during the think tanks) when building the prototype. There was a tendency to build the web site based on preconceived notions of what we thought a health promotion web site should contain, rather than what the community identified in their personas and scenarios.

There was a tendency to provide information about typical health topics such as healthy eating, even though this topic was never mentioned in the scenario-based activities. As a start, we chose topics that were identified more often in the data gathering phase.

We also needed to continually remind ourselves that topics outside the traditional “health topics” were appropriate to include, such as information about job opportunities, volunteering and social events.

There was a tendency for the group to veer back to wanting to produce a comprehensive compendium of health information. We quickly came to realize that we could not manage this nor did we have to be the local encyclopaedia of health information. In addition, it would not be sufficient to only provide on one-way information sharing (text on a web site); rather youth seemed to be asking for opportunities for dialogue with peers and professionals in the community. By providing opportunities for dialogue, we created an interactive rather than static health information web site. Based on our youth feedback in design activities, we had to develop a site for youth that provided a safe and anonymous environment for communication with peers and professionals.
Lesson #6

Blogs or Bulletin Boards

Have we mentioned involving IT early in the process before? I think we have, but it does not hurt to repeat this message. Take a look at the list of notes made by our IT staff that we wish we would consider before we started! Some of the issues that were identified occurred because of the timing of the funding dates and the need to spend grant monies by set deadlines! Despite this, we learned a lot and are not too embarrassed to share our mistakes with you! Hopefully we can spare you some embarrassment in your projects.

Here are some key points made by our IT staff outlining lessons learned:

IT staff should be involved at the very beginning of a project in addition to maintaining communication throughout the project.

IT staffs can help define the back-end technology required for meeting your project’s target goals. This is not to say that the technology piece should drive the design, but that you can use the technical requirements to frame conversations about the design.

One of the best ways to get IT buy-in with a technology project is to involve IT staff with the planning process; invite them to become stakeholders. Sustaining their involvement can easily be maintained by:

- Publishing defined project goals, manuals, training documents
- Encourage knowledge transfer
- Realize the values of working together
- Keep all stakeholders up-to-date with the project

They can be more valuable to the project than just being technical “firefighters.” Ask them what types of training or support they can provide for you.

Communicate any challenges you encounter during the project as they’ve probably encountered the same situation or know of a solution.
Lesson #7

Usability Testing

We found that it was very useful to conduct the think aloud technique with a variety of youth-males and females with variety of different and levels of computer comfort and literacy. This was found to be very helpful as it pointed out where people had difficulty navigating through the site, posting notes on the discussion boards, or where they did not understand the language that we used for menu names.

Lesson #8

Develop Content

We learned that adults and youth required some give and take in the process of developing web site content. Youth needed to learn that the content had to be accurate and credible and adults needed to allow youth to use unconventional methods of getting their messages out – so that youth would be engaged with the material.

Try to enlist the help of as many adult resources as you can to assist youth in developing their content. This had many benefits for us including: a) helping to build a sense of community ownership of the site b) spreading the workload among professionals in the community, c) helping community members better understand youth and the youth to better learn about community resources. We found that often resource people were overloaded with work; therefore, they found it difficult to respond to youth. Despite this, many were also very supportive.

Allow lots of time to create web content (from issue identification to uploading content to the web site). It takes time to go back and forth between adult resources and youth to ensure content accuracy and to get final approval. Be prepared for some resistance from youth in having to go through an approval process. Communicate to youth the rationale for needing to have a process and then involve youth in developing it to get buy-in.
Lesson #9

Develop Marketing Approaches

Promotion needs to be ongoing and varied to reach a variety of audiences.

Inform your schools and school boards in your district about your project and launch early marketing plans as this is the best link to your target audience.

It is important to enlist youth to develop creative marketing ideas, while keeping youth focused on the event or approach. At the same time they need guidance about being realistic in their expectations of what is possible with limited time and budgets. We found that youth tended to think in large scale events. It was important to communicate with them what resources were required and available for marketing events.

Try to have a short timeline between the introduction of a promotional idea from youth and its implementation. We found that although youth were focused on an idea at the beginning, as time went on they tended to lose interest resulting in the work having to be picked up by project staff to bring the idea to fruition.

Many of our community events tended to be adult-focused; in retrospect we would have likely achieved better results focusing on youth in schools and community events.

Ask your youth team about forms of advertising that appeal to them.

Get local media buy-in from the beginning. If they understand the aim of your project and feel it addresses an important community issue/s you may get media coverage of your project at no cost.

When running contests to market your web site, involve schools from the beginning if possible. We found it helpful to engage a class in our photovoice contest as a class project. This helped with photovoice submissions and increased traffic to the web site.

Set restrictions with Myspace and Facebook accounts to restrict visitors from writing on your space. If you establish the account for visitors to simply read the materials, you will reduce the chances of inappropriate content being written and attributed to your site. Precautions were taken to limit the available features visitors could use that are available on these online networks.

When using online networks such as MySpace or Facebook to market your site, steer discussions to the website rather than having them occur on the network site.
Develop a Vision and Logic Model – Lesson #10

Web Site Maintenance

- Keep the site clutter free as this helps to keep the site appealing to youth
- Change content monthly to keep the site from getting stale
- Archive all past material so youth can access it if they choose
- Consult with your IT staff to install an anti-spam software program to help keep spam to a minimum
- Allow youth to decide what content they would like to create in order to ensure you get content that appeals to them.

Develop a Vision and Logic Model – Lesson #11

Overview Ethics and Consents

We found it challenging to recruit youth to participate in ANY evaluation activities. We suggest using incentives, such as gift certificates to popular stores for your population of interest.

The ethics review board agreed that having youth complete the online survey was deemed to be consent and signed consent was not required. This was very helpful in getting online feedback from youth and adults without having the burden of obtaining consent. The feedback we obtained was anonymous.

Getting consent for online gathering of information offered unique challenges. Getting youth’s consent for phone interviews was much more difficult especially where youth were under 18 years of age where parental consent was required. Continued follow up was needed to recruit youth. We permitted youth to either fax, mail or bring in signed consents to the health unit. Having the youth drop their consent forms off at the schools with their guidance councillor proved to be the best way to gather consents.
Develop a Vision and Logic Model – Lesson #12

Web Site Utilization Reports

We added counters to each page and also blocked the IP addresses of people working on our site so that we would not artificially inflate our statistics.

We used open source software (PHPbb) to support our discussion forums, which had limitations in gathering statistics on use of our site. For example, every time a discussion thread was opened to be read by a staff member or researcher, it was counted. We could not block their “views” of the discussion forums, thereby inflating our statistics. If you want more accurate and detailed statistics of your use of discussion forums, you may want to consider other discussion board software solutions. Consult your IT department for this.

Develop a Vision and Logic Model – Lesson #13

Online Survey Tools

We found it difficult to engage youth in evaluation activities. We suggest using incentives, such as gift certificates to encourage participation.

We used surveymonkey.com to construct our surveys. This product was easy to use and affordable. There are other many online survey tools which you may wish to consider.
Develop a Vision and Logic Model – Lesson #14

Content Analysis of Web Site

It is important to moderate the discussion forum in a timely manner; we reviewed the postings daily. It is important to be able to demonstrate that the board is active. You can assist in this by checking the board regularly. Before you start analysis of the content on the site, we found that it was important to identify the research questions. Our questions were:

What are the most common topics discussed online?
What is the proportion of messages posted by hired youth compared to community youth?
What type of communication occurs online? (support, advice, asking questions, sharing experiences, sharing resources, etc.)