Types and Sources of Power

Formal Power - power often tied to a formal position where the responsibilities of that position includes the ability to influence or make decisions affecting a community

Informal Power - power that is not tied to any position, often resulting from personal characteristics. This power allows the person/group to influence and/or represent a community without formal decision making.

Sources of formal or informal power:

- **Resources**- money, knowledge, skills, materials
  - *Example - A local foundation can decide what issues and organizations should receive the foundation's resources.*
- **Elected or appointed position**
  - *Example - A city council member can vote on decisions affecting citywide policy.*
- **Community support and/or representation**
  - *Example - A well respected youth organizing group has the support of and can mobilize hundreds of local youth to speak out on an issue*
- **Others' perception of power**
  - *Example - A local activist regularly tells decision-makers of his ability to mobilize large numbers in his community. Although this activist has limited support within the community, decision-makers often listen to and support his ideas.*

Personal Power - power resulting directly from the persons or persons representing a group

Sources of personal power:

- **Expertise**- knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the task
  - *Example - A Youth Innovation Fund Board's extensive understanding of pressing issues in the community.*
- **Personal attraction**- characteristics associated with likeability ("charisma" and ability to inspire)
  - *Example - A teacher's passion and inspirational descriptions about the impact service-learning has had in her classroom*

- **Effort- dependability and evidence of higher than expected time commitment**
  - *Example - A Youth Innovation Fund grantee's demonstrated hard work and commitment to addressing a local issue*
- **Legitimacy - actions clearly display a particular value commonly held among partners**
  - *Example - A recently elected mayor's decision to implement the youth voice agenda on which she campaigned, as soon as she is in office.*

<u>Positional Power</u> - power resulting directly from the position and tasks performed by a particular group

Sources of positional power:

- **Centrality - access to information in a broad and diverse communication network**
  - *Example - A site coordinator's ongoing communication with young people, adults, local decision makers, community organizers, funders, other Youth Fund sites, etc.*
- **Flexibility- ability to improvise and innovate**
  - *Example - A Youth Innovation Fund Board's ability to identify and address the most pressing issues in a community*
- **Visibility- the number of "influential" people with whom a group interacts**
  - *Example - A Youth Innovation Fund Site's ability to interact with diverse influencers as a result of access to influential groups held by the various consortium partners*
- **Relevance - how much a group's work is connected to larger community's priorities**
  - *Example - A Youth Innovation Fund Youth Board addressing an issue identified as a pressing concern of youth and adults in the community*

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