

WHAT ARE SOME LESSONS YOUTH LEADERS HAVE LEARNED ABOUT THESE SPACES?

- Although this is a convening intended to be really intergenerational, some of the adults can be exclusionary, be condescending and adultist, and some spaces generally lack the welcoming vibe for young people.
- There are some adult allies in these spaces, and I would rely on other youth leaders to point you in the direction of those folks. Introducing yourself to adults with other youth leaders sometimes makes it easier, and makes those spaces feel less uncomfortable.
- There are a lot of people and opportunities in the room! When you get someone's business card, follow up. If you have ideas during the convening, write them down and communicate them to people in charge. Sell yourself and your areas of expertise, and the opportunities will continue to roll in.
- Be yourself, have an open mind, and don't be afraid to ask questions or for accommodations

TIPS, ADVICE, AND BEST PRACTICES

NAVIGATING PROFESSIONAL SPACES AS A YOUNG ADULT

"WHO ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE & WHY AM I HERE?"

- There's a contact list in everyone's folder/packet, so you can figure out who specific people are, if you see or hear from someone you found particularly interesting or want to connect with!
- Generally: they're from all over the country in communities that are doing work for opportunity youth in one way or another. Some are funders, there's folks who run local non-profits, business leaders, people from colleges, schools, GED programs, job training, etc.
- You are here because you are considered a youth leader! That can mean many things to folks, but you are valid and your voice is so necessary in this space. The adults here might work with young people, but they aren't young people themselves and they'll never be as in touch with your experience and the experiences of your peers as well as YOU do!

"I CAME TO REALIZE THAT MY STORY AND PAST EXPERIENCES HAVE HELPED ME TO LEARN THAT I CAN HELP OTHERS THAT HAVE BEEN AFFECTED IN THE SIMILAR SITUATION."

"THIS SPACE IS REALLY OVERWHELMING AND THERE'S TOO MUCH TO TAKE IN"

- Most of the plenary sessions are videotaped, so you can always go home and watch the recordings to capture anything you feel like you missed or want to show your colleagues back home.
- If there are multiple sessions you want to go to, most materials are sent out to everyone after the convening electronically so you can still get that information as well!
- There's always a lot to take in, so take some notes, process in the way that works best for you, and soak in what you can!

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT PACKING, TRAVELLING, AND EXPLORING THE AREA?

- Pack with functionality in mind, with some professional clothing and some comfortable or “casual” clothing.
- Look at the weather! Especially on days where there will be site visits or walking tours
- Save room in your suitcase for souvenirs
- Bring a journal, notebook, your laptop, etc to take notes throughout the convening!
- Have a buddy to explore with you or notify people of your location/plans for your own safety and comfort

“FIND HEALTHY WAYS TO PLAY AND NOT LET IT IMPACT YOUR LEADERSHIP AND HOW YOU PLAN TO SHOW UP AS A PROFESSIONAL. SET BOUNDARIES AND STANDARDS OF WHAT BEING A PROFESSIONAL MEANS TO YOU. BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT THESE STANDARDS, SO PEOPLE ARE AWARE THAT ARE TIMES YOU AVAILABLE TO WORK.”

"I'M SOCIALLY ANXIOUS OR UNCOMFORTABLE IN A SPACE WITH SO MANY PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW"

- Seek out the other youth leaders! We have time together right away on the day the convening starts, even before the site visits. That is at least a smaller group to get to know, and you will even hear from some youth leaders on orientation calls. We are here to make sure you feel comfortable!
- Networking is really tricky and difficult, but the more people you meet the first time around, the more comfortable the second and third time will feel! Just be yourself, and don't push yourself to be super extroverted if you don't have the capacity for it. Do what you're able and make sure to take time to recharge
- We all have a commonality of working with opportunity youth! That's why we're all in this room! Maybe start by asking people where they're from, what kind of work they do, or what brings them to this space as well!
- Feel secure and confident in your place in this space – young people are the experts in the room!
- Bring business cards or ensure you get business cards from others. Follow-up within 48 hours of getting home from the convening if possible, even just to say that it was nice to meet them and share the experience with them.

"BREATH,
LEARN, SHARE
AND LIVE"

"HOW DO I BALANCE WORK AND PLAY?"

- Look at the sessions beforehand and plan your convening experience. What sessions are relevant to my work? Are there any speakers or session leaders I want to hear from? What topics interest me or make me feel excited?
- Know your self care routine and plan accordingly. Make sure that you are not overwhelming yourself to the point that you are compromising your own mental health or well-being!
- Play! Have fun! Explore the city! Spend time with people you know, new friends you're making, or quality time with yourself!
- Don't let fun get in the way of your working self.