The Youth Engagement Continuum

The youth engagement continuum helps situate youth-led social change relative to other prevailing approaches to youth work.

Each of the five strategies described in the continuum offers services and programs to young people and plays an important role in supporting their healthy growth and development as individuals. Communities benefit most, however, when young people also have meaningful opportunities to engage in civic leadership and youth organizing. The development of strong and vibrant cities, communities, and states requires the intentional cultivation of organizations at each level of the continuum.

### YOUTH SERVICES
- **Client**
  - Provide services to address individual problems and behaviors
  - Define programming around treatment, prevention, and basic needs

### YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
- **Participants and interns/staff**
  - Provide supports and safe spaces
  - Foster caring relationships between youth and adults; support youth-adult partnerships
  - Develop talents and assets
  - Provide opportunities for growth, development, and new roles
  - Build individual competencies

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
- **Participants, leaders, interns/staff, and board members**
  - Incorporate youth development AND leadership development
  - Offer leadership opportunities within the program and organization
  - Deepen historical and cultural understanding of shared experiences and community issues
  - Build skills and capacities for making decisions and solving problems
  - Provide opportunities to participate in community projects
  - Support youth-adult partnerships

### YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
- **Leaders, interns/staff, and board members**
  - Incorporate youth development, leadership development, AND youth civic engagement
  - Promote political education and awareness
  - Build skills and capacity for identification and analysis of issues and for action around issues
  - Cultivate build collective identity as agents of social change
  - Engage in advocacy efforts

### YOUTH ORGANIZING
- **Members, leaders, organizers, interns/staff, and board members**
  - Incorporate youth development, leadership development, youth civic engagement, AND
  - Offer opportunities to serve as core staff and governing body
  - Build a membership base to which youth leaders are accountable
  - Develop campaigns and utilizes tactics—including direct action—to effect systemic change
  - Take active roles in alliances and coalitions