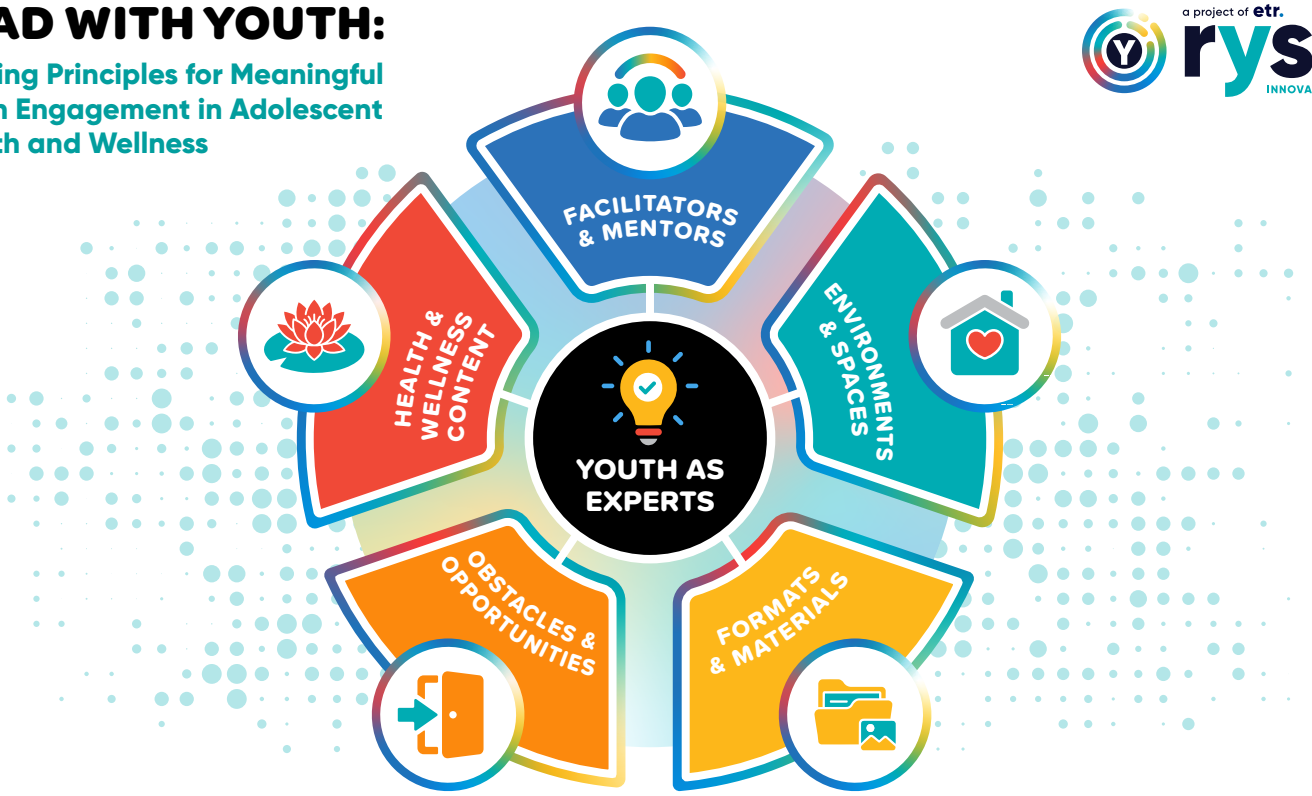
LEAD WITH YOUTH:

Guiding Principles for Meaningful Youth Engagement in Adolescent Health and Wellness

a project of etr. ryse INNOVATION HUB



Lead with Youth Expertise

Recognize young people as experts in their own lives, experiences, needs, and communities. Seek out and value their perspectives, priorities, and knowledge throughout program development, delivery, and evaluation. Create meaningful opportunities for young people to share power, shape decisions, lead, and influence what programs are prioritized and how they learn and improve. Show young people how their contributions inform decisions and action.

Trusted, Relatable, and Responsive Facilitators and Mentors

Recruit and prepare facilitators and mentors who are dependable, relatable, knowledgeable, and responsive to young people's lives, experiences, and communities. Build authentic relationships, communicate openly and without judgement, respect youth voice and autonomy, and balance privacy and safety with appropriate support.

Supportive Learning Environments and Spaces

Create environments where young people feel safe, comfortable, and respected. Offer flexible ways to participate, respond to young people's individual needs and experiences, and foster authentic relationships, open communication, and opportunities to connect with and support one another.

Relevant, Representative, and Engaging Formats and Materials

Use formats and materials that reflect young people's lives, experiences, values, and interests. Make learning relevant and relatable through current, real-world examples and offer creative, interactive, and varied ways for youth to engage with content, express themselves, and build understanding.

Reduced Obstacles and Expanded Opportunities

Recognize and address obstacles that can make it difficult for young people to receive health and wellness information, resources, services, and support. Work with youth to identify practical ways to reduce obstacles, protect privacy, and expand flexible, youth-friendly pathways to the information and support they need.

Comprehensive and Accurate Health and Wellness Content

Provide accurate, relevant, and comprehensive information that reflects the many dimensions of young people's health and well-being. Build knowledge and skills that help youth understand and care for their well-being, navigate relationships and resources, critically evaluate health information, and make informed decisions about their health and lives.