# A Checklist for Putting Positive Youth Development Characteristics into Action in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

## What is positive youth development?

Positive youth development (PYD) is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths (Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs).

Positive youth development can be divided into eight key practices, including:

1. Physical and psychological safety;
2. Appropriate structure;
3. Supportive relationships;
4. Opportunities to belong;
5. Positive social norms;
6. Support for efficacy and mattering;
7. Opportunities for skill-building; and
8. Integration of family, school, and community efforts.

To learn more about positive youth development and the eight key PYD practices, please visit: http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development. For resources on incorporating PYD practices into your program, please visit: http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/publications/positive_youth_development.html.

## Introduction to positive youth development

You're already doing important work toward preventing teen pregnancy- thank you! But even a good program can be strengthened. PYD is an approach to programming that focuses on providing experiences that give youth opportunities for healthy and successful development. PYD practices can be integrated to improve any teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) program and OAH-funded grantees should work to incorporate key PYD practices into all interactions with – and programs for – youth.

This checklist may seem a bit daunting. Don't worry! Organizations aren't expected to incorporate every single one of the items in this checklist; these are simply examples of how an organization can integrate PYD into their programs. However, this checklist can help you purposefully integrate key PYD practices into all interactions with – and programs for – youth.

## How to use this checklist

Implementing PYD practices is a process that can take time. You can use this checklist to find out where your program is already integrating elements of positive youth development, and where you can improve.

For each of the eight key PYD practices there are several items, each of which can be answered with "Describes us well," "Almost there," "We're just getting started," or "Does not describe us."

It is helpful to have several TPP staff members review the checklist individually, compare and discuss the results, and brainstorm strategies for improvement. If you notice that most of your areas for improvement are centered in one or two of the eight practices, check out the resources we have for those specific areas. If your areas for improvement are spread across the checklist, consider reviewing some of the general materials on PYD to get you in the right frame of mind for making these important changes. If items in the checklist are beyond the scope of your program, consider referring teens to community partners for those services, as needed (for example: exploring education and workforce opportunities).

## Physical and psychological safety

**1**

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program provides safe facilities and encourages health-promoting practices that increase safe peer group interaction and decrease unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.[1]

| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In our TPP program, explicit policies and staff training indicate that physical and sexual harassment, violence, and bullying are not tolerated. | | | | |
| Staff members make youth feel comfortable, supported, and safe. | | | | |
| Staff members encourage youth to be respectful of the rights and choices of others related to sexuality and sexual health. | | | | |
| Staff members are trained on privacy and confidentiality laws in their state, ensuring that information and feelings youth share are managed appropriately. | | | | |
| Staff members have been trained in managing group dynamics and creating a safe environment for youth to discuss sensitive topics related to sexual health. | | | | |
| Staff recognize and prevent bullying situations. | | | | |
| Staff proactively resolve conflicts among youth. | | | | |

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[1] Descriptors of each category in this checklist are adapted from the National Research Council's *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* summary. http://www.iom.edu/~/media/Files/Report%20Files/2004/Community-Programs-to-Promote-Youth-Development/FINALCommunityPrograms8Pager.pdf.

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## 2 Appropriate structure

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program provides clear and consistent rules and expectations, and age-appropriate monitoring.



| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All adolescents are greeted warmly and made to feel welcome the moment they enter our front door. | | | | |
| Our TPP program always has a sufficient number of adults to supervise activities, keep youth safe, and support positive relationships with youth. | | | | |
| The expectations our program has for adolescents in our program are explicitly stated at the beginning of the program and maintained throughout. These expectations are challenging but achievable. | | | | |
| Our staff members provide a reason or explanation for all requests and rules. For example: "In group discussions, one person speaks at a time so that we can all hear everything that is shared." | | | | |
| Our TPP program provides age-appropriate structure. As adolescents age, we incorporate additional opportunities for them to give input into program governance and rules. | | | | |
| Staff implement the program as intended (fidelity). Fidelity is assessed by staff, youth, and outside experts at regular intervals. | | | | |

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### 3 Supportive relationships

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program fosters caring relationships, social support, positive communication, and provides supportive guidance.

| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Youth report that our staff members are trustworthy and reliable. | | | | |
| Staff members are comfortable discussing and addressing young people's questions about sexuality and sexual health in a nonjudgmental manner. | | | | |
| Our program provides opportunities for youth to interact positively with one another through structured and unstructured activities. | | | | |
| Staff members model healthy relationships and support youth in developing positive relationships, including healthy romantic relationships. | | | | |
| Staff members encourage youth to proactively communicate with their partners to establish boundaries related to sexual health and behavior. | | | | |
| Staff members work to build on and enhance each youth's unique strengths (for example: artistic, musical, mathematical, interpersonal skills). | | | | |
| Staff are trained and able to proactively engage quiet and withdrawn youth, positively engaged youth, and acting-out youth without singling anybody out. | | | | |
| Our program assists teens in building communication skills, especially around sexual decision-making. | | | | |
| Staff members interact with all adolescents in a supportive, affirming, and caring manner. Staff are trained and able to connect with youth while maintaining healthy professional boundaries. | | | | |

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## 4 Opportunities to belong

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program provides opportunities for meaningful inclusion of all youth, opportunities for positive identity formation, and support for cultural and bicultural competence.



| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our program is inclusive of adolescents from a variety of cultures and backgrounds (including LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities, sexually experienced youth, sexually inexperienced youth, etc.). | | | | |
| Each of our program sessions have activities that involve opportunities for sharing and listening, such as ice-breakers, scenarios to react to, and/or reflection time. | | | | |
| Our program provides opportunities for youth to work together to accomplish a goal. | | | | |
| Our program is "branded" to help youth feel like they are a part of something special. | | | | |
| When working on activities or projects, our staff members provide all youth with roles, such as time-keeper, note-taker, or spokesperson. | | | | |
| Our program has activities and materials displayed throughout that are representative of the population we serve (for example: images in posters, etc.). | | | | |
| Staff members receive training in cultural competence, particularly as it relates to ethnicity and sexuality. | | | | |

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## Positive social norms

**5**

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program encourages behaviors and values that promote respect (including clearly communicated expectations). Research finds that positive social norms can be important to adolescent development.



| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff members provide clear messages emphasizing that relationship violence of any kind, in any type of relationship, is not acceptable. | | | | |
| Staff members model positive, respectful interactions, especially when discussing topics related to sexual health and sexuality, and encourage youth to do the same. | | | | |
| When discussing sexual health, our staff members promote positive norms related to healthy decision-making (for example: drawing connections between decisions about sex and contraception and the educational goals youth have for themselves, etc.). | | | | |
| Our staff members encourage youth to create a positive environment in their schools and community. This includes being intolerant of derogatory attitudes, behaviors, or comments related to gender or sexuality. | | | | |
| Adolescents help create "ground rules" that provide the foundation for all program activities. | | | | |
| Our program teaches youth to think critically about what influences their lives and decisions, such as peer pressure, the media, cultural norms, and gender norms. | | | | |

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## 6 Opportunities to make a difference

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program provides support for youth autonomy, opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles, and encourages youth to achieve meaningful change in their community.



| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our program creates meaningful opportunities for leadership and initiative for adolescents in our program (for example: involving teens in efforts to encourage youth in the community to make informed choices about their sexual health, etc.). | | | | |
| Our staff members help youth see connections between sexual and contraceptive decisions and achieving their educational and career goals. | | | | |
| Our program has a youth advisory council and the council's recommendations are applied toward meaningful changes in our program and community. | | | | |
| Our program encourages youth to make a difference in their community by developing or referring teens to community service learning projects, as appropriate. | | | | |
| Our staff members engage youth in achieving their goals related to education and employment, or refer youth to other organizations who can help with these items, as appropriate. | | | | |
| Staff members receive support, through training and supervision, on providing adolescents with leadership opportunities. | | | | |

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## **7** Opportunities for skill development

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program provides opportunities for adolescents to learn physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills that prepare them to make positive decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, as well as educational and career opportunities.



| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our program uses interactive techniques (examples may include role playing and/or practicing refusal skills) to deliver content. | | | | |
| Staff members help youth make connections between skills they learn related to healthy romantic relationships and success in other settings, such as education and work. | | | | |
| Our staff members engage youth in determining their goals and in identifying how those goals can be achieved (such as abstinence, practicing safer sex, and use of contraception). | | | | |
| We help youth identify milestones to celebrate as they move toward achieving their goals | | | | |
| We present youth with opportunities that can help them achieve their goals (for example: career fairs, college fairs, assistance with scholarships, etc.). | | | | |
| Staff members are trained and able to identify opportunities for youth to learn and apply skills to real-life settings, such as visiting a health clinic to request information about relevant health services. | | | | |

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## 8 Integration of family, school, and community efforts

These items assess the degree to which your TPP program emphasizes coordination and collaboration with family, school, and community partners.



| PYD characteristics | Describes us well | Almost there | Just getting started | Does not describe us |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our program links adolescents to sexual and reproductive health services that they need within the community. | | | | |
| Our program recognizes the importance of linking youth to resources that go beyond sexual and reproductive health to build connections between the youth in our program and other people or resources, as needed (for example: introducing youth to an employer or site in need of a volunteer, connecting youth to mental health services or job training programs, etc.). | | | | |
| Our program engages parents through family activities, newsletters, websites, or other program activities. | | | | |
| Our program equips parents to talk to their adolescents about sexual and reproductive health. | | | | |
| Our TPP staff members (perhaps with peer leaders) engage members of the community to share information about teen pregnancy prevention. | | | | |
| Our program provides professional development opportunities for our staff members to increase their abilities to engage with families, schools, and other community partners. | | | | |
| Our TPP program staff members are trained in community mobilization. | | | | |

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## General resources on positive youth development

- Make the connection: How positive youth development offers promise for teen health & teen pregnancy prevention. *Webcast. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/news/events.html#May2014-MaketheConnectionWebcast
- Make the Connection webcast supplemental articles and resource list. *OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/news/assets/May%202014%20TPP%20Event/pyd-resourcelist.pdf
- Positive youth development. *Resource list. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/publications/positive_youth_development.html
- Free Training in Positive Youth Development. *Family and Youth Services Bureau.* http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2015/02/free-training-positive-youth-development
- Positive youth development of pregnant and parenting teens. *Resource list. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/paf/resources/positive-youth-development.html
- Understanding youth and positive youth development. *Toolkits, presentations, fact sheets, videos, and research. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/engagement.html#UnderstandingYouthandPositiveDevelopment
- Positive Experiences + Positive Relationships + Positive Environments = Positive Youth Development. *Webpage. FindYouthInfo.gov.* http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development
- Understanding positive youth development. *Webpage and resource list. ACT for Youth Center of Excellence.* http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/

## Resources organized by key characteristics

**1** **Physical and psychological safety**

**Related resources for programs**

- Engaging youth. *Presentations, tool kits, a tip sheet, and a fact sheet on engaging youth. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/engagement.html#EngagingYouth
    - Teaching strategies for successful outcomes: Why they work in evidence-based programs and how we can bring them to life without compromising fidelity. *Presentation by Healthy Teen Network for an OAH grantee conference.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/ta/tpp-training2-methodologies.pdf
    - Classroom management: Creating a safe and comfortable learning environment for all: Handling difficult participant behaviors & challenging situations. *Presentation by Healthy Teen Network for an OAH grantee conference.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/ta/tpp-training2-classroom-mgmt.pdf

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- Bullying and school climate. *Resource list. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/publications/healthy-relationships.html
- Creating safe and respectful environments in the classroom. *Training module for teachers. Department of Education, National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments.* http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/resources/creating-safe-and-respectful-environment-our-nations-classrooms
- Prevent bullying. *Webpage. HHS, StopBullying.gov.* http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/index.html
- Bullying prevention training center. *Webpage. HHS, StopBullying.gov.* http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/index.html
- Build a safe environment. *Webpage. HHS, StopBullying.gov.* http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/build-safe-environment/index.html
- Staff and program capacity. *Toolkits, presentations, tip sheets, and a podcast. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/implementation.html#staff
- Creating group agreement. *Tip sheet. Advocates for Youth.* http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/for-professionals/lesson-plans-professionals/221?task=view
- Creating harmony in the classroom. *Guidelines. Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.* http://www.fmcs.gov/internet/itemDetail.asp?categoryID=67&itemID=20448
- Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect. *Guidelines and a state statutes search. Child Welfare Information Gateway, Administration for Children and Families.* https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/

**2** **Appropriate Structure**

**Related resources for programs**
- Replicating with fidelity. *Presentations, guidelines, and a toolkit. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/implementation.html#fidelity
- Teen pregnancy prevention evidence review. *See information on staffing requirements under "Implementation Requirements and Guidance" for each program. HHS.* http://tppevidencereview.aspe.hhs.gov/EvidencePrograms.aspx
- Understanding and working with youth. *Fact sheet. 4-H.* http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/youthdev/yd1470.pdf
- Ten tips for running effective meetings with youth. *Webpage. Michigan State University, 4-H.* http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/ten_tips_for_running_effective_meetings_with_youth
- Structuring recreation and youth programs to facilitate social inclusion. *Webpage. University of Minnesota.* https://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/241/24.html

**(3) Supportive relationships**

**Related resources for programs**

- Mentoring. *Research, trainings, toolkits, and tip sheets. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, National Mentoring Resource Center.* http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/
- Putting positive youth development into practice: A resource guide. *National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth.* http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/PosYthDevel.pdf
- Talking with teens about reproductive health: How to tackle the tough topics. *E-learning module. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/learning/talking_with_teens/index.html

**(4) Opportunities to belong**

**Related resources for programs**

- Cultural competence. *Presentations, tool kits, podcasts, fact sheets, and webinars. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/cultural-competence.html
- Engaging select populations (including males and fathers, youth in foster care, homeless and runaway youth, youth in Juvenile Justice, LGBTQ youth, pregnant and parenting teens, minority youth, and rural populations). *Resource list. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/engaging-select-populations.html
  - Engaging select populations. *E-learning module. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/learning/esp/index.html
- Supporting and serving LGBTQ youth. *Resource list. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/publications/healthy-relationships.html#LGBTQ
- Energizers and icebreakers: Creating engaging and meaningful education sessions for and with adolescents. *Presentation developed for an OAH grantee conference.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/ta/tpp-training2-energizers-icebreakers.pdf
- Examples of service-learning within the school curriculum. *Tip sheet and research. Findyouthinfo.gov.* http://findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/service-learning/what-are-examples-service-learning-programs-schools

**Related resources for youth**

- Building self-esteem: a self-help guide. *Guide. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.* http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Building-Self-Esteem-A-Self-Help-Guide/SMA-3715

## 5 Positive social norms

**Related resources for programs**

- Healthy relationships. *Website and tip sheet. Girlshealth.gov.* http://www.girlshealth.gov/relationships/healthy/index.html
- Dating violence. *Webpage. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/healthy-relationships/dating-violence.html
- Dating violence. *Resource list. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-publications/publications/healthy-relationships.html#DatingViolence
- Toolkit to incorporate adolescent relationship abuse prevention into existing adolescent pregnancy prevention programming. *Family and Youth Services Bureau.* https://prep.rti.org/ARAtoolkit/index.html
- Teen dating violence: characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships. *Webpage. FindYouthInfo.gov.* http://findyouthinfo.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence/characteristics
- Helping youth build relationship skills. *Webpage. ACT for Youth Center of Excellence.* http://www.actforyouth.net/sexual_health/community/adulthood/relationships.cfm
- Talk with your teen about healthy relationships. *Webpage. Healthfinder.gov.* http://healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/parenting/healthy-communication-and-relationships/talk-with-your-teen-about-healthy-relationships

## 6 Opportunities to make a difference

**Related resources for programs**

- Bright idea: Four ways to engage at-risk youth in community service. *Webpage. Administration for Children and Families.* http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2014/04/bright-idea-four-ways-engage-risk-youth-community-service
- Youth transitioning to adulthood: How holding early leadership positions can make a difference. *Webpage. FindYouthInfo.gov.* http://findyouthinfo.gov/youth-briefs/youth-transitioning-adulthood-how-holding-early-leadership-positions-can-make
- A step-by-step guide to helping youth gain workforce credentials. *Guide. Administration for Children and Families.* http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/news/2012/11/step-step-guide-helping-youth-gain-workforce-credentials
- In outreach work, no substitute for peers. *Case study and tip sheet. Administration for Children and Families.* http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/features/street-outreach-programs-reach-out-youth-diverse-needs/outreach-work-no-substitute-peers
- Tips for creating effective youth advisory councils. *Tip sheet. Advocates for Youth.* http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/1853

**Related resources for youth**

- Finding a college. *Website with a college navigator, student resources, and financial aid information. U.S. Department of Education.* https://answers.ed.gov/link/portal/28022/28025/Article/657/Finding-a-college
- Find your path. *Webpage. U.S. Department of Labor.* http://www.dol.gov/findyourpath/
- Youth leaders' toolkit: Resources for teens who want to help younger children launch a bullying prevention project. *Toolkit. Stopbullying.gov.* http://www.stopbullying.gov/resources-files/youth-leader-toolkit.pdf
- Corporation for National and Community Service. *Webpage.* http://www.nationalservice.gov/
- Make a friend—be a peer mentor. *Tip sheet. Office of Juvenile Justice Programs.* https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/171691.pdf

## 7 Opportunities for skill development

**Related resources for programs**

- Using Facebook®: Lessons from the field. *Presentation at an OAH grantee conference.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/Assests/techtools.pdf
- Using social media to reach participants. *Webinar. Administration for Children and Families.* http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/using-social-media-20140423
- Questions to ask your doctor. *Website and tip sheet. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.* http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html

**Related resources for youth**

- "Speak Up!" Interactive tool for youth. *Administration for Children and Families.* http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/multimedia/speak-up/index.htm
- Talking with your doctor. *Tip sheet. GirlsHealth.Gov.* http://girlshealth.gov/disability/medical/talkdr.html

## 8 Integration of family, school, and community efforts

**Related resources for programs**

- Parental engagement. *Tip sheets and presentations. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/engagement.html#parental
- Strategies guided by best practice for community mobilization. *Fact sheet. Advocates for Youth.* http://advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/Factsheets/strategies%20guided%20by%20best%20practice_8-11-14.pdf
- Health and service referrals. *Resource list. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/resources/referrals.html
- A teen-friendly reproductive health visit. *Tip sheet and infographic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/health-care-providers/teen-friendly-health-visit.htm

- Teen pregnancy: The health communicators' social media toolkit. *The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* http://www.cdc.gov/teenpregnancy/socialmedia/index.htm
- Building collaborations. *Toolkits, tip sheets, presentations, and webinars. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/building-collaborations.html
- Using social media to engage youth. *Presentations, a tool kit, a webinar, a video, and a fact sheet. OAH.* http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/engagement.html#using
- Project Connect implementation guide. *A resource guide for state and local health departments and others who intend to implement Project Connect in their communities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.* http://www.cdc.gov/std/projects/connect/guide.htm