

YouthBuild BRIDGE Mentoring Toolkit: Book I

Bridging the Opportunity Gap for the Next Generation



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Welcome to the BRIDGE

Dear YouthBuild Directors, Mentoring Coordinators, and Program Staff:

Please join me in thanking the United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), for making YouthBuild BRIDGE Mentoring possible through a generous National Mentoring Programs Award.

Also, it is my great honor to be the first to **thank YOU** for helping to close the opportunity gap for young men of color by participating in the pilot launch of YouthBuild BRIDGE Mentoring. By saying yes to this program enhancement, you are also saying yes to a better future for a group of high-potential individuals who have seen more than their share of poverty, crime, violence, and tough family lives.

You are saying yes to a smoother transition from adolescence to adulthood – a traditionally rocky road even in the best of circumstances. And by saying yes to the hard work of bridge-building, you are saying yes to community engagement, youth empowerment, and staff development.

For me, it feels like you are saying yes to love. For that, I am so very grateful.

Sincerely,

John Bell

*Vice President for Leadership Development, Graduate Leadership, and Mentoring
YouthBuild USA*

Part I. Introduction

Document Overview

YouthBuild BRIDGE Mentoring provides twelve months of curriculum that Mentoring Coordinators and other YouthBuild Mentoring staff can utilize over the duration of the program. Below, you will find a synopsis of the five parts of the curriculum along with suggestions on how to best use this toolkit:

- **Part I. Introduction** — provides an overview of the BRIDGE Mentoring Program, including program requirements and the concept of the **BRIDGE**. Pay particular attention to “Before You Begin,” as this section discusses tips and strategies that help staff to get off to a solid start as they implement their group mentoring program.
- **Part II. Overview of Group Mentoring** — gives the reader an understanding of various aspects of group mentoring, including the difference between **activity-based** and **curriculum-based** mentoring. **Putting “Mentoring” into Group Mentoring** describes going beyond activities and field trips to focus on the development of mentoring relationships.
- **Part III. Program Design: Strategies and Options** — discusses the nuts and bolts of **curriculum-based** group mentoring. This section points out the benefits of using two mentors per small group, and furnishes important details on matching mentors-to-mentors, and mentees-to-mentees within the small group setting. Part III describes how to use the **activities matrix** and the **lesson template** — two major tools for creating effective lessons.
- **Part IV. Mentor Training Module: “Facilitating Group Mentoring”** — provides the actual workbook that program staff can follow to train volunteers on how to facilitate group mentoring. The training is approximately 2 hours long, and it should be offered in addition to YouthBuild’s Pre-match Mentor Training.
- **Part V: The BRIDGE Curriculum** — consists of detailed instructions for exercises to be used in the bi-monthly group mentoring lessons. This section also provides instructions on how to involve guest speakers, along with suggestions for implementing two job fairs sessions and program celebrations. Staff should scan the lessons early on to gain an understanding of the content. Also, choose two or three lessons to examine in depth, as this will help the reader to understand how the curriculum is to be delivered.

Program Overview

In 2014, YouthBuild USA received a two-year, \$1.7 million OJJDP National Mentoring Programs Award to launch the YouthBuild BRIDGE Mentoring Project. The initial funding is for two 12-month cycles covering the 2015 and 2016 calendar years, but the hope is

that YouthBuild organizations will continue their group mentoring efforts on into the future.

The purpose of the grant is to engage young men of color from 45 YouthBuild programs in 38 states in support of their transition to adulthood. Stemming from the *My Brother's Keeper* Initiative, this project addresses the opportunity gap for young men of color by improving their academic and placement outcomes, and increasing their opportunities to connect with positive adult males of color as role models.

These additional BRIDGE Mentoring services complement the three months of group and 12 months of one-to-one mentoring already provided by many YouthBuild mentoring programs.

Group mentoring sessions should take place in the late afternoon or early evenings, after formal YouthBuild programmatic activities are done for the day. They will occur either on-site at the YouthBuild program or at another central, safe community-based location provided by a partnering organization. Local programs are asked to conduct meetings, if possible, during high crime times (based on research of local statistics), in order to provide alternative positive activities.

Program Requirements

YouthBuild sites participating in BRIDGE Mentoring Programs are required to:

- Recruit a ratio of 2 adult mentors for every 6 to 8 mentees participating in the program. Mentors ideally will be found from several different groups, including:
 - Current volunteer 1:1 mentors already matched with mentees in the program;
 - Professionals from partnering organizations within the community (e.g. Concerned Black Men);
 - Successful YouthBuild graduates; and
 - YouthBuild staff.
- Provide mentors with the basic two- to four-hour initial training using YouthBuild's [Mentor Pre-Match Training Toolkit](#) and the approximately two-hour mentor training module **Facilitating Group Mentoring**, which can be found in Part IV of this toolkit. PowerPoint slides are also provided with this training.
- Fulfill other requirements of the subawardee agreement as defined by YouthBuild USA, including provision of monthly and semi-annual reports; participation in training and technical assistance conference calls, webinars, and other events; and compliance with research as needed.

Concept of the “BRIDGE”

Being successful in life has a lot to do with managing transitions or, simply put, figuring out how to get from here to there. The young men in the YouthBuild Program are facing a time of great transitions in their lives. Between boyhood and manhood, these youth are at the cusp of entering the job market, or finding a career; starting a family; and securing housing. The youth in our program often have the added risk factors of poverty and the lack of job opportunities, school failure, criminal activity, and gang involvement.

The BRIDGE Mentoring experience is meant to serve as a bridge that helps the young men of YouthBuild make successful transitions from a precarious late adolescence into a healthy and productive adulthood.

This effort brings young men of color together with stable and caring mentors who work with them to build the skills, knowledge, and character traits that will help them to become healthy and productive adults. The interactive curriculum provided in this toolkit facilitates this effort and aims to inspire both mentors and mentees in the process.

BRIDGE is an acronym that stands for: Belonging, Responsibility, Initiative, Diligence, Greatness, and Encouragement. The BRIDGE curriculum features interactive lessons that encourage mentees to identify and enhance these qualities in their lives.

Before Getting Started

BRIDGE Mentoring can be a powerful tool for young men, and it is especially effective if staff follow the strategies described below:

Obtain Buy-In From Administrators and Other Staff: The supervisor(s) should be kept informed about the project. When possible, administrators and other staff should assist the Mentoring Coordinator with the recruitment of mentors, mentees, and guest speakers, and with helping to round up other resources.

Staff Time Commitment: The BRIDGE materials are comprehensive, and they will help staff save a great deal of time. But, understand that coordinating a program is work, and it will take a concerted effort to implement successfully.

Use Mentoring’s Effective Practices: As with one-to-one

The BRIDGE

B = Belonging – Trusting others and being trustworthy; seeing oneself as part of a family, team, community

R = Responsibility – Duty to self and others, cooperation, respecting others

I = Initiative – Ambition, having a plan and the power to act

D = Diligence – Determination, persistence in the face of temporary setbacks

G = Greatness – Seeing your own talents (while being humble); also, giving back to others

E = Encouragement – Gaining satisfaction and courage based on progress made

mentoring, mentoring coordinators will do well to follow mentoring's Effective Practices; 3rd Edition*. This document describes the "how-to's" for the basic tasks of recruiting, screening, training, matching, monitoring and supporting, and closure/transition.

Emphasize Mentor Commitments: Some volunteers, especially in a group setting, believe that if they don't show up, another mentor will be there to fill in for them. But whether in a group or one-on-one, when a mentor misses a meeting, it represents for the mentees yet another broken commitment in their lives. During recruitment, orientation, and training, it is important for mentors to understand that their commitment is just as important as if it were a one-to-one match.

Part II. Overview of Group Mentoring

Benefits of Group Mentoring

The one mentor to one mentee model has the advantage of providing an opportunity for mentors and mentees to develop close, trusting relationships. When he feels safe, a mentee will often open up to their mentor in a way that might not happen in the group setting. However, a major drawback of one-to-one mentoring is that takes considerable staff time (and therefore financial resources) to recruit, train, and find enough committed volunteers to match one mentor for each mentee.

The number of group mentoring programs is on the rise. Not only is this model more economical to run, but it also has many other benefits, including:

- Group mentoring often attracts more male volunteers than one-to-one mentoring, as men like the added structure and focus on group activities;
- Mentoring is done onsite, and therefore the task of monitoring is much more manageable;
- Having multiple mentors can soften the affects of an ineffective mentor (someone who doesn't know how to connect with young people);
- This model uses "the power of the group" to affect changes; teens are often more open to listening to their peers than to adults.

About "Curriculum-Based" Group Mentoring

Most of the YouthBuild sites currently engage in an "activity-based" group mentoring model that accentuates field trips. The BRIDGE Mentoring Program is a "curriculum-based" group mentoring effort, consisting of on-site educational lessons that follow detailed delivery instructions.

In the BRIDGE Mentoring Program, mentors help to facilitate groups and to deliver the curriculum. Lessons focus on developing the skills and knowledge that will help mentees to successfully transition from late adolescence to early adulthood. Additionally, during a sharing period, mentees are given the opportunity to talk about how their lives are going and to receive support from their mentors and from other mentees.

Putting the “Mentoring” into Group Mentoring

In the one-to-one model, mentoring occurs through the development of a close and trusting relationship. It is challenging to develop these types of relationships within the group mentoring sessions, but there are at least four things that staff can do to promote bonding between mentors and mentees, and between the mentees themselves.

- **Include a Sharing Process**
The most important thing a program can do to promote true mentoring is to give mentees the opportunity to talk about their lives within a safe and supportive setting. (This document will later explain how to set up smaller “discussion groups” that serve to create a safe and supportive atmosphere for sharing.)
- **Promote Consistency:**
For relationships to develop, and for participants to feel safe and supported, “consistency” needs to be integrated into the program, including:
 - *Consistency of meetings.* Group meetings should be held twice a month. Any less frequent and it will be difficult for participants to develop trusting relationships.
 - *Consistency of attendance.* Program staff must do everything possible to ensure that mentors and mentees show up for each meeting. Strategies for increasing attendance include thanking mentors and mentees for showing up, and providing meeting reminders via phone calls and emails. Scheduling the meeting at a convenient time and providing a simple meal at the end are also good incentives to participation.
 - *Consistency in the make-up of small discussion groups.* To promote confidentiality and a sense of safety, place the same mentors and mentees together in the same small discussion groups.
- **Provide Brief One-to-One Mentoring Before and After Sessions:** Encourage mentors and mentees to seek each other out just before and just after mentoring sessions. Even if it’s only 10 or 15 minutes of personal attention, these personal connections can make a big difference in the life of a mentee.
- **Provide Proper Mentor Training:** Just as in a one-to-one program, group-mentoring volunteers must be taught the proper mentor attitudes, program rules, and guidelines. YouthBuild’s pre-match training can be found in the [Mentor Pre-Match Training Toolkit](#). Be sure to provide volunteer mentors with

this basic mentor training, along with the Group Mentoring Training and PowerPoints provided with this document.

Part III. Program Design — Strategies and Options

BRIDGE Curriculum Overview

The BRIDGE curriculum covers 24 sessions spanning 12 months in support of mentees' transition across the bridge from adolescence into adulthood. The curriculum (found in Book II) includes 15 session plans covering a range of topics, along with all handouts and worksheets needed to conduct these sessions.

The recommended BRIDGE schedule (found in Book II on Page 4) includes 9 alternative sessions providing opportunities to celebrate milestone achievements and expose mentees to additional resources and expanded networks through guest speakers, job fairs, and college visits. Mentoring Coordinators are encouraged to be creative in adapting these alternative sessions to their local YouthBuild program style.

Getting Started: Review the Curriculum

Staff should begin by scanning the BRIDGE lessons and activities. Although the lessons provided can be considered turnkey, each site has the option of adding additional exercises, depending on the needs of the population being served.

If a YouthBuild site decides to customize the curriculum, utilize the **exercise/warmer template** to develop lessons, as following this template will provide uniformity to the curriculum.

Another option for curriculum customization is to form a small team to review the existing lessons and to make suggestions. Such a team can be comprised of program staff, YouthBuild alumnae, and even current students. This team can also be used to brainstorm a list of guest speakers.

Preparing the Sessions

Mentoring Coordinators will need to complete the matrix for each session prior to each meeting. They may be developed in their entirety, a few at a time, or one at a time. The reasoning behind not creating them all at once is that staff might want to customize the activities, adjust the timeframes, etc.

Using a blank activities matrix (from the appendix, and looking at the example on a previous page), make decisions on the following:

1. **Networking:** Decide on your “networking/1:1 mentoring time” either before the session, after the session or both. This is the period where mentors and mentees have an opportunity to meet 1:1, and strengthen the bonds in their relationships
2. **Warmer:** Choose a warmer and insert the name into the matrix, along with who is leading the exercise, and materials needed. Place the estimated time for completion in the right column.
3. **Sharing Exercise:** Based on the size of your small discussion groups and past experience, designate an amount of time for small group sharing in the right column (typically 10 to 20 minutes).
4. **Educational Module:** Review the designated lesson and describe the estimated timeframes for the “educational module” (see example on P-[insert #]). In the right hand column of the matrix, write in an estimated time for the lesson (it will typically be 50 to 60 minutes).
5. **Incentives:** Decide on the incentives (food, drinks, school supplies).
6. **Closure:** Make the decision on who will close the session (often, the Mentoring Coordinator). Reviewing the lesson, you might want to keep in mind a point or two about it so that you can sum up the activity. Also, review your calendar so that you can announce the next group session date.

Preparing Mentors for the Sessions

A prepared mentor is more likely to stay committed to the program for the long haul. Here are several tips for keeping your mentors engaged:

1. **Train.** All mentors must be screened and trained prior to meeting with the mentees. Training includes the [Mentor Pre-Match Training Toolkit](#), and the Mentor Training Module: “Facilitating Group Mentoring.”
2. **Equip.** Provide each mentor with a copy of the BRIDGE Mentoring Curriculum.
3. **Prepare.** One to two weeks prior to each session, furnish each mentor with the activities matrix for the upcoming session.
4. **Request.** On email or by phone, ask mentors to review the designated lesson, and also make them aware of any part of the curriculum that may need more of their attention so that they can better facilitate activities.
5. **Remind.** Remind mentors to contact each other outside of the sessions so that they can coordinate their facilitation, review the progress of each mentee, discuss group management, etc.
6. **Thank.** Each time you talk to them, take the opportunity to thank them for their service.

Developing Small Discussion Groups

While putting together the BRIDGE Mentoring Program, staff will typically want to bring together relatively large numbers of mentees, such as 20 or 30 at a time. But in order to facilitate the development of close relationships, the larger group of mentees should be divided into smaller discussion groups.

What would a group meeting look like? Let's say that a group mentoring session might start with 24 mentees. Typically, the Mentoring Coordinator would welcome the larger group and talk about the day's activities. But later, during the interactive exercise and sharing portion of the session, mentees will retreat to their assigned smaller groups: four groups of six mentees each (along with two mentors per small group).

It is important that the same mentees are placed in the same small discussion groups during each session, as this creates a sense of belonging. Meeting with the same mentors and cohorts also helps mentees to feel safe during the sharing process.

Please note that information on how to set up and manage the sharing process, including dealing with difficult issues that might arise, can be found in "Part IV: Mentor Training Module: 'Facilitating Group Mentoring.'"

Using Two Mentors Per Small Group

Each small discussion group should be facilitated by the same two volunteer mentors. Changing the make up of the groups and changing mentors undermines the mentees' confidence that they can safely share what is going on in their lives.

Each program is free to set its mentor to mentee ratio, but the suggested ratio is two mentors per six, seven, or eight mentees.

The smaller discussion group format also creates more time for sharing. If eight mentees are asked how their week has gone, then everyone would have an opportunity to speak. But, with 20 mentees in a group, many would be left out.

The benefits of using the **two mentors** per small discussion group, include:

- *The two-mentors system reduces the negative affect of mentor absences.* When one mentor is absent, the other mentor can hold the group together and a sense of continuity and confidentiality will be maintained; mentees won't have to be absorbed into another discussion group.
- *Two mentors are able to work together to better serve mentees.* Place two mentors with the same small group of mentees and they form a team to:
 - assess how each mentee is doing
 - prepare and present the curriculum

- facilitate discussions, and
 - bounce ideas off of each other.
- *Two mentors working together are able to better manage the group.* If there is a problem with a mentee's behavior, one mentor will always be available to walk this individual out of the of the group to talk to them and try to get them back on task.

The Matching Process

Matching mentor-to-mentor. The key to putting together an effective two-mentor team is to strive for a **balance** between the mentors. There are endless possible combinations of how to create a good balance, but the examples below provide some strategies for mentor-to-mentor matching.

Consider matching:

- experienced, confident mentors with a new, inexperienced mentors
- introverts with extraverts
- serious with fun loving
- calm with excitable
- baby boomers with young adults

Matching mentor pairs to groups. Consider placing the strongest mentor team with the potentially most challenging group of mentees.

Matching mentees into small groups. Make sure that the mentee makeup of each discussion group of six to eight mentees is a balance of personalities. For example, don't put all the boys with potential behavioral problems in the same group, nor all the vocal mentees, quiet mentees, etc.

Activities Matrix

The "Activities Matrix" is a tool that can help YouthBuild Mentoring Coordinators and/or mentors to develop mentoring sessions. To use this matrix, create a table with three columns and six rows and label them as shown below. For each session:

- insert the name of the lesson or activity,
- provide a brief description of the activity (including who does what), and
- estimate the time for completion.

Those planning the sessions don't have to stick to the order provided with the example matrix below. When developing a session, always consider the mentees' interests and energy levels. When students have been sitting all day, include a warmer or educational lesson that helps them to burn off excess energy.

Activity Matrix Example*

Activity Area	Brief Description	Time
Networking/ 1:1 Mentoring Time	Try to arrive 15 minutes prior to the session to make 1:1 contacts with mentees.	4:45— 5:00
Warmer	Official session start: Warmer: “Name Tent Introductions” – Mentoring Coordinator leads. With a colored marker, each person writes down their first name in big letters, and draws two or three symbols representing hobbies and interests. When called upon they introduce themselves to the large group.	5:00— 5:20
Sharing Exercise	Break down into smaller discussion groups for “Good News/Bad News.”	5:20— 5:45
Educational Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lesson – 7 Initiative.” Mentoring Coordinator will bring materials to make a vision board. Bob Jones (mentor) has agreed to introduce the exercise. (5 mins) • Mentees will make vision boards in the small groups. (35 mins) • Mentoring Coordinator will write discussion Q’s on the board and mentees will share work in the small group. (10 mins) • Mentoring Coordinator will ask if anyone wants to share their vision board with larger group. (5 mins) 	5:45— 6:45
Incentives	Pizza and drinks. (Let everyone know that the room will be open for at least 20 minutes so everyone can finish eating.)	6:45— 6:55
Closure & Adjourn	Mentoring Coordinator thanks everyone for his participation and announces the next meeting time. Session is adjourned.	6:55-- 7:00

There are two pages of blank activity matrices in the appendix. Staff may also create their own customized session plan matrices (if they want to add or delete an activity, for example).

Lesson Template

This toolkit presents exercises and warmers in a standard form so that all the important elements are covered. The headings are:

- Name of Exercise/Warmer
- Purpose
- Time

- Instructions
- Debrief

Exercises and warmers provided in this package utilize these headings. Should staff or mentors wish to develop additional curriculum, it's a good idea to create each activity by using the same headings.

Utilizing Guest Speakers

Recruiting guest speakers is a very important part of the program, as this is a good way for Mentoring Coordinators to recruit local experts who can speak to the issues that young men of color within your program are facing. Examples of topics include gang involvement, encountering law enforcement, responsible fatherhood, conflict resolution, and healing racial divides.

Guest speakers can provide a change of pace (and add a different voice) to the group-mentoring program. Staff might use these individuals to deliver existing curriculum, to develop new lessons, or to give an inspirational/educational talk.

Speakers can come from the community, from YouthBuild staff, YouthBuild mentors (both one-to-one and group mentors), and from alumnae. Mentoring Coordinators should put a special focus on recruiting YouthBuild alumnae to become guest speakers, as the proximity of ages and life circumstances will resonate with the program's current mentees.

As staff recruits guest speakers, ask them for topics they would be comfortable presenting (that would interest young men of color in their mid to late teens). As you speak to them, keep the topics of existing curriculum in mind, as choosing related subjects can strengthen the existing curriculum.

Another idea is to bring together panels of guest speakers, 3 to 5 individuals that can address a common topic. Panels can be facilitated by the Mentoring Coordinator or a mentor. As panel members are recruited, provide them with a few starter questions so that they will know what topics will be discussed. After panel members respond to the starter questions, prompt attendees to ask additional questions.

Strategies for utilizing guest speakers include:

- Recruit someone who has experience in presenting to youth, including the program's current mentors.
- Tell them about the interests and needs of the YouthBuild population.
- Help them to choose an existing lesson or to decide on an appropriate topic.
- Decide on the date and time to present.
- Give them a length of time to present (10 to 20 minutes is usually appropriate).

- Ask them to prepare and practice their presentation, so that they can keep it in the predetermined timeframe.
- Let them know that off-color language, stories, and innuendo are inappropriate. Disparaging anyone's sexuality, gender, or lifestyle is not allowed, as is asking them to convert to a religion or political party.
- Describe the layout of the room, including seating arrangement.
- Request that they arrive at least 20 minutes prior to the beginning of the session.
- Staff can also help speakers to brainstorm an activity/exercise that mentees and mentors can work together on after the speaker's presentation. (To get an idea of how to develop an exercise after a speaker's presentation, look at some of the existing examples provided within the BRIDGE curriculum.)

Planning Job Fairs

The recommended BRIDGE calendar includes two job fairs over the course of twelve months, with one in the second quarter and one in the fourth quarter. The objective of these job fairs is to expose mentees to a variety of career options and introduce them to professionals to increase their network of people who may support them in bridge-crossings throughout their lives. Job fairs are also a good way for YouthBuild programs to increase their visibility within the community.

A BRIDGE Mentoring job fair is conducted as a "speed networking" event, in which all mentees have a chance to meet all of the business/professional people present. Here are the steps you need to take for a successful fair:

1. **Identify the industries and types of jobs you want to feature.** You could do this partly by surveying the mentees about their interests, but remember that you want to expose them to possibilities that they might not have considered. While architecture, construction, and engineering might be obvious choices for YouthBuild students, you might also think about focusing on areas for potential understanding and healing in your community, such as law enforcement or clergy. You could also do a YouthBuild graduates focus, inviting back alumni to share their work experiences. With two job fairs to conduct, you have opportunity to be creative here.
2. **Invite employers and employees from businesses representing these industries.** You might want to conduct your first job fair by focusing on the mentors themselves and perhaps ask them to invite a colleague from their workplace as well. The advantages with this is you already have a committed group (mentors) and it gives mentees a chance for a practice run to get comfortable with the whole idea. However you do it, make sure you get enough industry representatives to make for a ratio of 3 to 6 youth to 2 adults/professionals.
3. **Set up room.** You'll need a large enough room to accommodate enough tables (or chair rounds) to seat 6 to 10 each. Two adults in related industries will be

- seated at each table/round. Youth will work their way through the tables in groups of three to six (depending on the total number of participating youth), so make sure the room available is large enough to allow for ease of movement between tables.
- 4. Prepare participants.** Let everyone know that each group will have a total of 10 minutes at each table. The two professionals at each table should be prepared to give a brief (no more than two minutes each) overview of their work, including basic information like job title, company/organization they work for, how long they've been doing it, one thing they love about it, and one big challenge. Depending on their industry and organization, they might bring a brochure or other material to leave with mentees who may want to dig deeper. Mentees should be prepared with at least one question for each adult about their job, industry, education to get where they are, or any other related work-related question. Talk through this a bit with them in the previous session, so they have some time to think about their questions. Provide youth with paper and pen to take notes and responses to their questions.
 - 5. Conduct job fair.** Start out with participants seated at starter tables (3 to 6 mentees, two adults). Blow a whistle (or ring a bell) to launch the first ten-minute speed networking session. At this point, adults begin explaining their jobs (two minutes a piece, see point 2). At the four minute mark, a short whistle will indicate that they should move to questions from mentees. If you have mentors who are not representing their jobs, have them help facilitate to make sure no one mentee or job representative monopolizes the conversation. Whistle/ring bell at 10 minutes to indicate that youth should rotate tables (adults stay seated). Repeat.
 - 6. Debrief.** After all groups of mentees have had 10 minutes at each table, stop and bring everyone's focus back together. Ask for a few volunteers (either youth or adult) to share something surprising or important they learned. Make sure to thank the guests for their participation.

Note: Some of the participants may want to follow up with each other after the fact (e.g. connect off-site for further career exploration). Make sure to follow your program's policy in responding to such follow-up requests.

Coordinating a College Visit

The recommended BRIDGE schedule (Book II, page 4) includes a college visit in Quarter Three (Session 15). Depending on your YouthBuild program's schedule and the alignment of the BRIDGE mentoring, you may want to schedule this either earlier or later, to have the best and most timely impact on participating students.

The best way to plan for a college visit is to get in touch with the Admissions Office at the college or community college you would like to visit, and let them know that you have a group of young men that would benefit from exposure to the benefits of post-

secondary education. Admissions Officers have experience arranging such visits and giving tours. Also explain the YouthBuild population to the Admissions Office person, so that they will be prepared to discuss the advantages their institution could offer them (e.g. low costs and financial aid, and courses that may appeal to YB populations).

Finding Warmers

Warmers are important because they help kick the sessions off in a fun and interactive way. Within the BRIDGE program, warmers should be done in the larger group (prior breaking up in the smaller discussion groups). This curriculum does not provide these exercises, so staff will need to search for them. Warmers can be found in books such the following four publications, all from McGraw Hill Publishing:

- *Games Trainers Play*
- *The Big Book of Team Building Games: Trust-Building Activities, Team Spirit Exercises, and Other Fun Things to Do*
- *The Big Book of Humorous Training Games*
- *201 Icebreakers: Group Mixers, Warm-Ups, Energizers, and Playful Activities*

The Internet is also a valuable source of icebreakers, team-building exercises, and warmers, such as these provided courtesy of Brande Mora of San Antonio YouthBuild.

- *30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas:* <http://www.onlineexpert.com/elearning/user/pdf/natsem/managingdiverseworkforce/team-buildinggamesactivitiesideas.pdf>
- *13 Top Team-Building Activities:* <http://vorkspace.com/blog/index.php/13-top-team-building-activities/>

Other interactive warmers can also be found by using Internet search engines and inputting terms such as: warmers, ice breakers, interactive exercises for youth, team games, team building games, and team building activities.

Part IV. BRIDGE Mentoring for Mentors

Welcome to BRIDGE Mentoring

Thank you for volunteering to become a mentor in Youth Build's BRIDGE Mentoring Program. You, our mentors, are the key to helping these young men of color to navigate a difficult part of their lives: the transition from late adolescence to adulthood. Your commitment to develop mentoring relationships with them in the group setting can help them to become healthy and productive adults.

YouthBuild staff believes in the power of group mentoring, and in connecting these young men with strong role models like you. We want you to know that our staff will strive to assist you in this process every step of the way. This training will introduce you to some of the tools and techniques that can be utilized during the group mentoring process.

BRIDGE Mentoring Background

YouthBuild USA received a two-year, \$1.7 million OJJDP 2014 National Mentoring Programs Award to launch the YouthBuild BRIDGE Mentoring Project. The initial funding is for two 12-month cycles covering the 2015 and 2016 calendar years, but the hope is that YouthBuild organizations will continue their group mentoring efforts on into the future.

The purpose of the grant is to engage young men of color from 45 YouthBuild programs in 38 states. These young men are often affected by poverty, lack of education, poor home environments, and insufficient job and career opportunities. Many of them have grown up in areas where substance abuse, gang activity, and crime are rampant.

Stemming from the *My Brother's Keeper* Initiative, this project addresses the opportunity gap for young men of color by improving their academic and placement outcomes, and increasing their opportunities to connect with positive adult males of color as role models.

Length of Commitment

Length of Commitment: As a YouthBuild BRIDGE mentor, you are asked to meet with a group of mentees twice a month, for 12 months, for 90 to 120 minutes a session.

Attendance at every session is expected and an important part of this commitment.

Recent research by Dr. Jean Rhodes championed the phrase "But first, do no harm." This is a reminder to mentors to not make a haphazard commitment. What Dr. Rhodes found in her research is that young people whose mentoring relationships terminated prematurely were *worse off* than youth who were never mentored. The young men in

our program will feel betrayed and abandoned if yet another adult fails to keep their promises to them. We, at YouthBuild, want and need you as a mentor, but if you don't think you will be able to fulfill this commitment, please do not step forward.

Additionally, because of their chaotic lives and the many pressures they are facing, it's not unusual for YouthBuild mentees to drop out of the program. If one of the mentees you are working with stops showing up, or fails to attend regularly, please encourage them to participate, but don't see this a personal failure.

Concept of the "BRIDGE"

Being successful in life is about managing transitions or, simply put, about figuring out how to get from here to there. The young men in the YouthBuild Program are facing a time of great transitions in their lives. Between boyhood and manhood, these youth are at the cusp of entering the job market, or finding a career; starting a family; and securing housing. The youth in our program often have the added risk factors of poverty and the lack of job opportunities, school failure, criminal activity, and gang involvement.

The BRIDGE Mentoring experience is meant to provide a BRIDGE that helps the young men of YouthBuild make a successful transition from a precarious late adolescence into a healthy and productive adulthood. You, the mentors, are an important part of that BRIDGE (and of building the bridge).

This effort brings young men of color together with stable and caring mentors, and together they work through the BRIDGE activities. This interactive curriculum inspires youth to build the skills, knowledge, and character traits that will help them to become healthy and productive adults.

Mentor to Mentee Ratios/Group Sizes

Two mentors will be matched together and assigned to facilitate the same small discussion group of six to eight mentees for the duration of the program. There's an important reason behind this: we want to place the same mentors and mentees in the same small groups to promote a sense of safety and confidentiality. (Imagine getting up the nerve to discuss a sensitive issue with a small group of people, and then being faced with telling a different group of people about the same sensitive topic two weeks later.)

The BRIDGE

B = Belonging – Trusting others and being trustworthy; seeing oneself as part of a family, team, community

R = Responsibility – Duty to self and others, cooperation, respecting others

I = Initiative – Ambition, having a plan and the power to act

D = Diligence – Determination, persistence in the face of temporary setbacks

G = Greatness – Seeing your own talents (while being humble); also, giving back to others

E = Encouragement – Gaining satisfaction and courage based on progress made

Benefits of “Two Mentors Working Together”

When two mentors are matched together and they meet consistently with the same small discussion teams, they can work as a team to:

- assess how each mentee is doing
- prepare and present the curriculum
- facilitate discussions, and
- bounce ideas off of each other.

It also helps to have two mentors in a group if there is a problem with any mentee’s behavior; one mentor will always be available to walk an individual out of the group to talk to them and try to get them back on task.

Benefits of Group Mentoring

<i>Mentee Benefits:</i>	<i>Mentor Benefits:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Normalize feelings (when they find that others are in a similar situation)● Improve problem solving skills and therefore make better choices● Understand the importance of completing their academics● Be supported and inspired by their peers and by mentors● Become aware of job opportunities and career fields● Develop social and relationship skills● Work through individual challenges● Build confidence and self esteem● Learn to set and achieve goals● Develop a sense of teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Knowing that positive changes in mentees can have a "ripple effect" in the world■ Obtaining personal gratification through the act of giving■ Enjoying the rewards inherent in developing caring relationships■ Enhancement of communication and leadership skills■ Increased self-confidence gained through leadership

What BRIDGE Mentoring “Looks Like”: The Group Mentoring Activities Matrix

Let’s take a look at what the year will look like. Together we will customize each group mentoring session by using the activities matrix (attached). Our choices for customization will include:

- The sequence of activities (a sequence is suggested, but we can move the flow of activities around)

- A group warmer to start the session (if you have any suggestions for warmers, please let me know!)
- The time allotted for each activity (each site will have a specific timeframe to complete their sessions)
- Incentives: refreshments may be served, and some programs may want to include give-aways, such as school supplies

The Mentor's Role in Curriculum Delivery

BRIDGE mentors can fill four primary roles: group facilitator, active participant, session leader, and guest speaker.

The mentor as group facilitator: As previously stated, mentors will work in teams of two within the smaller groups of six to eight mentees. While in these smaller groups, mentors will help facilitate the lessons and lead the group discussions.

The mentor as active participant: The mentor's primary responsibility during curriculum delivery is to make sure that the mentees understand what they need to do and that they are on task. When it seems appropriate, mentors may also participate in some of the exercises. (Mentees appreciate it when they see that their mentors are growing and learning, and that they are enjoying this process.) A caution: While participating in exercises, it's best to not go too deeply into your own personal issues, as this can take the focus off of the mentees.

The mentor as session leader: Each YouthBuild site has the option of how they want to utilize mentors. Some sites may ask mentors if they want to lead specific lessons. By "leading a lesson," we mean that that mentor provides instructions about the lesson or exercise to the larger group, prior to the mentees breaking into their smaller groups. (Some sites may also ask a mentor to furnish the welcome at the start of the group session.) If you do decide to lead the larger group, please try to spend as much time as you can working with your assigned smaller group after you have provided instructions.

The mentor as a guest speaker: YouthBuild mentors have a wide variety of life and career experiences that can be shared with the young men in the program. If you have a comfort level in presenting on topics of interest to young men of color, please inform your Mentoring Coordinator.

Critical Elements for Successful Group Mentoring

Elements that are important in developing successful group mentoring include:

- *Mentor Attitude* – Group mentors must strive to develop relationships of trust of respect. Mentors who push too hard, too quickly are bound to fail. Their mentees won't want to be around them.

- *Mentor Commitment* – Unless there is an emergency, attend every group mentoring session. It's not okay for a mentor to miss a session because he believes his co-mentor will be there to pick up the slack; mentees feel betrayed if mentors are not regular in their attendance.
- *Treating Mentees Equally* – Strive to give each group member equal amounts of attention and positive feedback. This includes the time just prior to and after mentoring sessions; instead of choosing one or two mentees to connect with one-to-one, mix it up. You can't talk to each of your mentees every time, so try to give personal attention to every mentee at some point or another.
- *Find the Positive* – These young men are used to hearing what they do wrong. Make a point of catching them doing something right. Also, give them praise for their personal qualities (humor, commitment, social skills, leadership, heart, etc.).

Tips and Strategies for Delivering the Curriculum

The following information is pertinent for mentors who might be leading a lesson and facilitating the large group, as well as mentors who are assisting with the facilitation of the sharing process and exercises within their respective small groups.

Review the Lesson Ahead of Time. If the lesson includes small group work, talk to your co-mentor about the curriculum to decide on the best ways to assist the mentees to complete the exercise or activity.

Greet Everyone. Before the session begins, all mentors should put a smile on and cordially greet the mentees and other mentors. Understand that mentees will be watching their mentors to see how they interact with each other.

Look for One-on-One Time. Both prior to, and at the end of sessions, seek out mentees to engage them in individual conversations. These informal mentoring contacts are extremely important, as they can build the bonds between mentors and mentees.

Pay Attention to the Small Discussion Group Seating Arrangement. Prior to the start of the mentoring session, find a quiet part of the room and set up the chairs in a circle. During the small group meetings, seat yourself across from your co-mentor; this strategy balances the power of the group; it also helps in group management, as it places mentors in closer proximity to the mentees.

Don't Openly, Strongly Disagree with Your Co-Mentor. As a mentor team, you will want to put on a unified front. Just as in good parenting, good mentors don't have strong disagreements with each other in front of mentees. If you do have a strong

disagreement with the approach of your co-mentor, or you are upset over something he said, try to talk to him out of earshot of the mentees.

Do Not Jump to Solve Mentees' Problems. Just as in one-to-one mentoring, group mentors should not attempt to solve their mentee's problems. When it comes to finding solutions to problems, the goal of group mentoring is to either 1. Assist the mentee who has described the problem to solve it himself, or 2. Pull healthy solutions from the mentee's peers. (More on this in "Facilitating Small Group Discussions" [on p.-.](#))

Group Rules and Disruptive Behaviors

- Start and end on time.
- Respect each other.
- One person talks at a time.
- Encourage, support, and try to help each other.
- What is said here is confidential (except for harm or danger, which mentors must report).
- Everyone try to stay on task.
- No disruptive behavior.

Other strategies for dealing with discipline issues:

1. Immediately report any discipline issues to the Mentoring Coordinator.
2. Walk the offending mentee(s) out of the group and talk to them. "We really want you here, but if you persist in being disruptive I'm afraid we can't have you in the group this week." (After one or two warnings, you may have to exclude them.)
3. Try a different mix of mentees (it could be that one or two mentees are egging each other on).
4. Reduce the number of mentees in the group, or add mentors.
5. Move physically closer to the mentees that are acting out.
6. As mentees elevate their emotions and their voices, become calmer. If you challenge them by getting louder, it's likely that they will become louder themselves. But, if you lower your voice and intensity, it's possible that this will have a calming affect on them.
7. Put on your "I mean business" face. (Good schoolteachers know this technique.)

Facilitating Small Group Discussions

The best way to put "mentoring" into "group mentoring" is to create a place where mentees can be real about how their lives are going. This can be done within the small group setting when mentees feel safe. As previously stated, "consistency" is the key —

consistency of the same mentors and meeting in the same small groups, and the consistency of everyone showing up.

Creating a Standard Sharing Exercise.

It is good to have a time during each session where mentees can share how they have been lately. This way, each mentee will be able to express himself, and to receive praise, support, and advice from group members. One way to do this is to introduce an exercise called “Good News/Bad News.”

The following is a script for mentors to introduce this exercise in the first sharing session (but please feel free to use your own words).

How to Address Confidentiality and Group Rules: Today we are going to do an exercise called “Good News/Bad News.” It will give everyone a chance to talk about how things are going for them. But first of all, we want to try to make this a safe place to talk. So, I want to emphasize what it means to “keep confidentiality.” This means that anything that is said in this group will remain confidential — or secret — unless it has to do with harm or danger to anyone, and then, as you know, the mentors would need to tell someone in the program. Does everyone agree to keep what is said here confidential? Does everyone remember the group rules, too? One person talks at a time, no making fun of each other, and above all, support and respect each other.

Introducing the Sharing Process: Back to “Good News/Bad News.” Every group meeting, I’d like us to talk about what’s happened to each of us since the last time we saw one other. So, during the week, think about what you will share with the group. You can begin with either your good news or your bad news.

I’ll start off by sharing mine. (Mentors should not go deeply into their personal issues. Never describe a fight you’ve just had with your wife or children, money problems, etc. On the other hand, don’t make your good news too good — as I just bought a brand new car — this may make the mentees feel that you are from a different world than the one they live in.)

My bad news is that my alarm didn’t go off on Tuesday and it made me late for an appointment. I hate that when that happens because I’m almost never late. My good news is our cat turned up meowing at our door last night. This made us really happy because we thought she was lost, and we really missed her.

Now, who wants to be first to share their good and bad news?

Tips for Facilitating the Sharing Process

- Never force a mentee to share. If they feel uncomfortable mentors can say something like, “That’s okay, we’ll come back to you later if you think of something.”
- Don’t embarrass a mentee by saying, “That’s okay, you don’t have to share. I can see you are shy.” This will only make them more sensitive and more unwilling to talk.
- To stimulate more discussion, after each person shares you can say, “Does anyone have any questions or comments about what he just shared?”
- If a mentee who shared has a problem or issue, don’t jump in and solve it for him, as this isn’t good mentoring. Let’s say a mentee named Art is angry because his girlfriend left him for another guy. To facilitate the discussion, use what it called the “cost/benefit” analysis:
 - First, throw it out to the group: “Does anyone have any suggestions for Art?”
 - Then, if someone has an unhealthy suggestion, such as “Art, track the guy down and beat him up!” you might say, “Well, Art could do that, but what might happen?”
 - When someone comes up with a good suggestion, as in, “Art, sounds like you should let it go and find a new girlfriend,” then affirm. “That sounds reasonable. Art, is that something you could do?”
- Some mentees may want to share out something that is too deep or sensitive for the group process. Examples could be that a mentee describes something that might put someone at risk, as in talking about someone’s infidelity, a sexual act, pregnancy, abortion, gang activity, criminal activity, etc. If you feel that the discussion is too heavy for the group, or that it might be putting someone at risk, one option is to say: “I’d really like to hear more about this situation, as I can see it’s important to you. But, as this is a sensitive topic, I’d like us to talk right after this group is over. Okay?”

Dealing with Difficult Issues

During the small group sharing process, a mentee might bring up one or more issues that would be difficult for mentors to deal with. For instance, they could talk about problems with relationships, housing situations, economic stability, criminal activity, or substance abuse. Here are some tips for dealing with difficult issues:

1. **Don’t jump to try to solve a mentee’s problem for him.** Mentors are not there to give advice, but to help these young men to come up with their own solutions.
2. **Empathize with the mentee, but do it without becoming emotional.** Losing your cool will only serve to raise the mentee’s tension. Instead, show that you care by

saying something like, “Gosh, it sounds like you are going through a really rough time.”

3. **You are not a counselor, so don't probe.** When you try to go deeper by asking probing questions, you might not know what to do with a mentee's responses.
4. **Stop the mentee if he is sharing something harmful about others.** Let him know that he is divulging information that could potentially harm someone. Examples: talk about someone's infidelity, a pregnancy, gang involvement, or hurtful gossip.
5. **Stop the mentee if he might be revealing too much about himself.** Stop him, but at the same time, try to make this person not feel like he is being cut off: “I really want to hear more of what you have to say, but I think it's something that might be better addressed outside of the group. Can we please talk about this right after today's session?”
6. **Help the mentee ask for help.** If the issue is critical, take the mentee aside and ask him if he and you could meet with the Mentoring Coordinator to see what to do about the problem; it could be that the issue might need to be elevated to a licensed counselor, law enforcement, or someone in healthcare. Additionally, there could be a situation where program staff might have to help a mentee talk to his parents or caregivers about an important issue.

Preparing for a Session

Steps for session preparation:

1. Make sure your Mentoring Coordinator has provided you with the upcoming session's activity matrix at least a week ahead of time. If he hasn't, call or email him.
2. Review the BRIDGE lesson and familiarize yourself with any activity that may take place in the small group setting.
3. Contact your co-mentor by phone or email to discuss the upcoming session, and small group activity. You may also want to talk about your mutual observations and concerns about any of the group members.
4. If you don't understand any part of a lesson or activity, contact your Mentoring Coordinator for clarification.

Sample Training Agenda

Topic	Minutes
Welcome and Introductions	0-10
Group Mentoring Process & Overview of “The BRIDGE”	11-25
The Mentors Role in Curriculum Delivery	26-35
Tips and Strategies for Delivering the Curriculum	36-45
Group Rules and Disruptive Behaviors	46-60
<i>Break</i>	61-70
Facilitating Small Group Discussions & Problem Solving	71-85
The Group Mentoring Activities Matrix	86-90
Preparing for a Session	91-100
Sample Lesson	100-115
Questions, Comments, & Adjourn	115-120

BRIDGE Mentor Training Handout: Activities Matrix Example

Activity Area	Brief Description	Time
Networking/ 1:1 Mentoring Time	Try to show up prior to the session to make 1:1 contacts with mentees.	4:45— 5:00
Warmer	Official session start: Warmer: “Name Tent Introductions” – Mentoring Coordinator leads. With a colored marker, each person writes down their first name begin big letters, and draws two or three symbols representing hobbies and interests. When called upon they introduce themselves to the large group.	5:00— 5:20
Sharing Exercise*	Break down into smaller discussion groups for “Good News/Bad News.”	5:20— 5:45
Educational Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Lesson – 7 Initiative.” Mentoring Coordinator will bring materials to make a vision board. Bob Jones (mentor) has agreed to introduce the exercise. (5 mins) • Mentees will make vision boards in the small groups. (35 mins) • Mentoring Coordinator will write discussion Q’s on the board and mentees will share work in the small group. (10 mins) • Mentoring Coordinator will ask if anyone wants to share their vision board with larger group. (5 mins) 	5:45— 6:45
Incentives	Pizza and drinks. (Let everyone know that the room will be open for at least 20 minutes so everyone can finish eating.)	6:45— 6:55
Closure & Adjourn	Mentoring Coordinator thanks everyone for his participation and announces the next meeting time. Session is adjourned.	7:00

*The sharing exercise will be described later within this document under the heading “Facilitating Small Group Discussions.”