

# CITRA

CORNELL INSTITUTE FOR TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH ON AGING

Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging  
**Building a Community Legacy  
Together (BCLT)**  
An Intergenerational Program  
for Youth and Older Adults

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## Training Manual

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## About CITRA

The Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging (CITRA) promotes translational research on aging, including the development, implementation, and dissemination of innovative, evidence-based intervention programs. CITRA was founded in 1993 as an Edward R. Roybal Center funded by the National Institute on Aging. CITRA is located in the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research (BCTR) at Cornell University.

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# I. Background for Facilitators

Welcome to the Building a Community Legacy Together (BCLT) program! The BCLT program is based on decades of experience developing intergenerational programs at the Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging (CITRA), including on elder wisdom and advice-giving by elders to young people.

The BCLT program trains youth to interview elders (ages 65 and over) about their general advice for living a happy and successful life, as well as specific questions that solicit advice of particular interest to the youth. In addition to learning about older people's life lessons and engaging in a community service experience, the program exposes the youth to social science methods, including interviewing skills and techniques to interpret, analyze, and present interview data.

## A. Program Overview

The goal of this program is to implement, evaluate, refine, and disseminate an intergenerational program called Building a Community Legacy Together (BCLT). The BCLT program gathers the wisdom of older adults so their advice for living can be passed down to future generations. The BCLT program does this by providing a structured opportunity for high school-aged youth to interview elders living in the community and in senior living settings about their life lessons, and to present these life lessons to their communities. It allows youth to learn about older people and aging, and helps to create respect for the wisdom of age and combat ageism.

In addition, the BCLT program provides youth with an opportunity to develop skill sets that will be useful to them in the future (e.g., interviewing, research, and public speaking skills). From the standpoint of older participants, the program provides an opportunity for elders to benefit from the experience of sharing wisdom with the young. In so doing, it may reduce their sense of social isolation, provide a sense of usefulness, increase self-esteem, and improve their attitudes toward youth.

The program can be completed within three months or less. The length of time depends on how long it takes to recruit participants, the logistics of getting youth and elders together for an interview, the time devoted to summarizing the interviews, and the complexity of the community presentation.

The BCLT program is based on the success of the Cornell Legacy Project in which more than 1,000 adults 65 and over were interviewed to seek their practical advice on

issues such as education, work and career, dating and marriage, raising children, finding happiness, and avoiding regrets. These lessons for living are described in detail in the easy-to-read books *30 Lessons for Living: Tried and True Advice from the Wisest Americans*<sup>1</sup> and *30 Lessons for Loving: Advice from the Wisest Americans on Love, Relationships, and Marriage*.<sup>2</sup>

Many lessons for living are available in video format on the Cornell Legacy Project YouTube channel found at <https://www.youtube.com/user/CornellLegacyProject> or on the Cornell Legacy Project website at <http://legacyproject.human.cornell.edu/>. See **Appendix A** for BCLT Related Resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Pillemer, K. (2011). *30 Lessons for Living: Tried and True Advice from the Wisest Americans*. New York, NY: Penguin Group/Hudson Street Press.

<sup>2</sup> Pillemer, K. (2015). *30 Lessons for Loving: Advice from the Wisest Americans on Love, Relationships, and Marriage*. New York, NY: Penguin Group/Hudson Street Press.

## B. Rationale for the BCLT Program

In preparing to conduct the BCLT program, it is important for you to understand the underlying rationale for the program.

### 1. Seeking the Advice of Elders

Before getting involved in the BCLT program, young people may ask: “Why should I listen to older people's advice about how to live my life?” Below are several reasons why the wisdom of older adults can be a uniquely important source of guidance for younger people.

- Listening to the advice of older people has promoted well-being and even survival for millennia.

Over the 1.5 million years of human existence, it is only in the past 100 years that most people have gone to anyone *other* than local elders for solutions to life's problems. Anthropologists tell us that in prehistoric times, the accumulated wisdom of older people was a key to human survival. Not only did the old (and especially grandmothers) improve the survival chances of their grandchildren by caring for them and finding them food, they also were the source of tried and tested experience. The true "elders" to whom group members would go in time of crisis.

Later in agricultural societies, the family elder was often the only one who knew how his clan's property should be farmed or how to handle drought or pest infestation. Without that elder's knowledge, starvation could ensue. Therefore, consulting older people is really a "natural" thing for humans to do.

- Elders are a unique and extraordinary generation.

People in their seventies and beyond have lived through experiences many of us in the United States today can only imagine. Their lives have often included what psychologists term "ultimate limit situations."<sup>3</sup> These are situations like illness, oppression, job loss, crushing poverty, and risking one's life in war. Living through one or more of these “ultimate limit situations” often leads to wisdom that younger generations have not yet attained. This unique perspective is a valuable lens through which younger people can view their own lives.

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<sup>3</sup> Ardel, M. (2010). “Age, Experience, and the Beginning of Wisdom.” In Dannefer, D. & Phillipson, C. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Social Gerontology* (pp. 306-316). London, England: Sage Publications.



As you will see, BCLT youth participants are invited to ask the elders life lesson questions that they find especially relevant to their own lives (e.g., education or career path advice, relationship advice, etc.).

- The elders offer an alternative to conventional wisdom.

In our studies, we have found that advice from elders often shakes up conventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom is a generally accepted theory or belief that members of a society learn while they are growing up, but is not necessarily true. Conventional wisdom offers up images of “the good life” and reinforces the values of the culture (e.g., “working hard will make you rich”). It ultimately becomes the basis of our identity and self-esteem. It's very hard to see beyond conventional wisdom, even if it makes us live smaller and less happy lives.

In their advice to young people, elders often reject what has become conventional wisdom and point to an alternative. This challenge to the conventional worldview is often the true value of their advice to young people. Elders can help youth examine their assumptions and make more conscious decisions about how they define happiness and success.

The working assumption of the program is that the wisdom of elders—who are “experts” on living—can serve as a helpful guide for youth. They bring experiential knowledge of just about every problem a human being can go through. Teenagers may find that the roadmap for life the elders provide can help them take a new look at their own situations and choose new ways of living that will make them happier.

## 2. Research Evidence on Intergenerational Programs

There is research evidence that intergenerational programs fill a number of major social needs, and they provide positive outcomes to participants.<sup>4</sup>

First, research suggests that intergenerational programs help break down age segregation. They allow older people to serve as role models for the young, and provide youth with a historical perspective that enriches their lives. The inverse is also true: older persons can benefit from increased interaction with youth, and contact with young people in intergenerational programs can reduce social isolation. Many older participants in intergenerational programs report that these programs give them a sense of usefulness, which in turn enhances their self-esteem and life satisfaction.

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<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, M., & Sánchez, M. (2014). “Intergenerational Programs and Policies in Aging Societies.” In Harper, S. et al (Eds.), *International Handbook on Ageing and Public Policy* (pp. 367-383). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Second, intergenerational programs are a primary way to combat negative attitudes and prejudice between the older and the younger generations. In particular, properly planned and carefully executed intergenerational programs have been found to be a promising method of alleviating the pervasive ageism in our culture. Increased contact between the generations, when well-planned and organized, can lead to improved attitudes of youth toward the elderly and the reverse.

Third, both youth and older persons are important community service resources. There are a host of pressing social problems that confront our society and too few resources to adequately address them. Persons under 18 and over 65 frequently have more time available to volunteer and address social problems. Thus, forging links between the generations can ultimately lead to community service projects that tap the strengths and resources of both old and young.

### 3. Benefits to Youth

We anticipate the following benefits to the youth who participate in the program:

- Improved social skills

Interaction with older adults enhances communication skills, promotes self-esteem, develops problem-solving abilities, and fosters friendships across generations. These social skills are essential for youth in their personal and professional lives.

- Enhanced knowledge and research skills

The BCLT program provides opportunities for youth to learn interview techniques, understand interview data and summarize results, and gain public speaking and presentation experience. These skills are important for youth in their education and future careers, helping to promote tomorrow's leaders.

- Respect for the older generation

The program fosters positive attitudes towards aging. In addition, as youth are learning "advice for living," they are also *unlearning* inaccurate aging stereotypes (e.g., elders don't contribute to society, etc.). This program reinstates the value of elder wisdom, which has become increasingly devalued in a more mobile society where youth do not routinely grow up with grandparents.

## 4. Benefits to Older Adults

We also anticipate the following benefits to the elders who share their advice for living:

- **Improved health**

Studies of intergenerational programs have found positive physical and mental health outcomes for older adults, including improved self-esteem, decreased social isolation, and a feeling of usefulness in their communities. Intergenerational programs help to stimulate elders both mentally and physically.

- **Positive psychosocial development**

Psychologist Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development identifies a series of stages in which a healthy developing individual should pass through from infancy to older adulthood, including the stage of "generativity vs. stagnation" in later life.<sup>5</sup> Generativity is the concept of giving back to future generations and sharing what has been learned in life. Erikson argued that without generativity, older adults could feel stagnant and unproductive. The BCLT program provides an ideal way to share what one has learned over a lifetime and therefore helps to achieve generativity for older people.

- **Social engagement with youth**

It is relatively easy for elders to participate in the BCLT program and therefore may induce older participants to engage in other programs serving youth, as well as other opportunities for community and social engagement.

## 5. Community Benefits

There are also potential benefits for the community, including:

- **Community knowledge gain**

This program gathers advice from local communities based on lived experience, demonstrating how individuals from similar communities can live their lives. It offers community-specific "road maps" from people who have travelled the entire route, with advice on overcoming barriers on that road.

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<sup>5</sup> Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton and Company, Inc.

- Capturing a diminishing resource

Unfortunately, the generation that lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II is steadily diminishing. Capturing their wisdom now has urgency for a society that will not be able to access it later. Likewise, the generation that lived through the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights Movement is aging. It is important now more than ever to capture their life lessons.

## C. BCLT versus Oral History Projects

Both the BCLT program and oral history projects allow youth to interact in a meaningful way with an older generation. However, it is important for BCLT leaders to understand the key differences. It is also important for participants who may have been involved in prior oral history projects to understand why BCLT is different.

	Oral History Interviews	BCLT <i>Life Lessons</i> Interviews
Goal	The typical goal of an oral history interview is to learn something about an historical period from the point of view of someone who lived through it, while providing a service to older people by letting them reminisce. Lessons about life for other people may emerge, but it is secondary to the historical, “story-telling” narrative.	The goal of a BCLT interview is to get information from the whole experience of a “life well lived,” with the intent of gleaning <b>specific advice</b> from the interviewee in important areas of life. Life stories are secondary, important only for putting the advice in context.
Questions	Typical oral history project questions might be: “What was it like growing up in the Depression?” or “What did you do for fun when there was little money to buy toys or take vacations?”	By contrast, typical questions for an intergenerational program such as the BCLT program might be: “Let’s talk about your work and career for a bit. <b>What kinds of advice would you have for younger people</b> who are trying to decide on a meaningful career or find a purpose in life?” or “What is the key to a long and happy marriage like yours?”
Age	Most oral history projects involve adults of differing ages. For example, youth might interview people in their fifties for their memories of the Gulf War.	The BCLT program is targeted for elders age <b>65 and older</b> . We have found that the most interesting contrasts to youth’s worldviews and daily lives come from individuals in this age range, as their experiences have been very different from adolescents today.

It is possible to combine the two approaches; in fact, in all BCLT interviews the elder's life history will certainly provide a context for the advice they offer. But to avoid confusion, the main goal of the BCLT program is asking elders to frame their experiences in terms of *wisdom and advice* for the younger generation.

## D. Required Steps for Facilitators

The BCLT program is relatively simple to initiate and run. There are six basic requirements to run a successful BCLT program.

These steps include:

1. Select a program leader
2. Recruit youth and elders
3. Conduct youth training
4. Facilitate youth interviews with elders
5. Assist youth in summarizing interviews and compiling a group report
6. Facilitate youth presentation to the community

### 1. Select a Program Leader

The first step is to select one or more program leaders. The program leaders are responsible for implementing the BCLT program. A few BCLT programs have been run with one program leader, while most have been run with two program leaders who work together but have separate responsibilities. We have found that potential program leaders are either working with youth or have access to youth programs, or they are working with elders or have access to programs for elders. They are not typically working with both youth and elder populations. Therefore, many successful BCLT programs have instituted a team of two program leaders, one who recruits and trains the youth and one who recruits elders and helps facilitate the youth/elder interviews.

The program leader model you choose and how you decide to distribute responsibilities between several program leaders will depend on the particular skills and resources at your disposal.

- Program leader working with youth

Any interested party who currently works with high school-aged youth can initiate and implement the BCLT program. The youth program leader needs to have training or teaching experience with high school-aged youth as they will conduct the BCLT youth training. The benefit of finding a program leader already engaged in an established youth program is that one can often recruit all the youth at once and run the BCLT program during regular program hours. In other words, the BCLT program becomes part of the curriculum or planned activities for that specific youth group.

Youth program leaders can be found in a variety of settings, such as Cooperative Extension's 4-H youth programs, Boys & Girls Clubs, afterschool programs, service clubs, community centers with youth programming, and County Youth Bureaus.

- **Program leader working with elders**

Any interested elder program leader needs to have experience working with elders, ideally including training or teaching elders. Generally, the program leader working with elders has fewer responsibilities than the youth program leader since there is no formal training of the elders. As a result, elder program leaders typically do not initiate the program. However, folks working with elders are welcome to partner with a youth worker and launch a BCLT program in their own community.

Elder program leaders can be found in a variety of settings, such as local senior centers, the Office for the Aging, senior housing, AARP chapters, retired teacher associations, Retiree Service Volunteer Programs (RSVP), lifelong learning institutes, or any program that regularly engages elders in activities or community service. It is critical that the elder program leader is able to evaluate whether potential elder participants have any memory loss issues and are prepared to offer their advice. This is key to having good interview experiences for the elder and youth participants.

## **2. Recruit Youth and Elders**

- **Recruit high school youth**

The next step is to recruit the youth to participate in the program. The BCLT program is specifically designed for high school-aged youth. High school-aged youth generally have the confidence and maturity levels needed for successful interviews. Based on our experience, we have found that the program is less effective and more difficult to implement among middle school-aged youth and younger.

We also suggest that each program leader only works with about 10 youth at one time. The 1:10 ratio of program leader to youth worked well at all our test sites. In other words, two program leaders are suggested to work with a group of 20 youth.

Previously, youth have been recruited to participate in the BCLT program from organizations such as schools, 4-H clubs, Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, etc. As already noted, tapping into an established youth program means that one can often recruit all the youth at once and run the BCLT program during regular



program hours. This means that the BCLT program becomes part of the curriculum or planned activities for that specific youth group.

When recruiting youth, we recommend that program leaders give youth and their parents a written description of the BCLT program that includes the requirements for completion of the program and the expected time commitment (see **Appendix B**). The time commitment will vary depending on how you organize the program. For instance, the BCLT program can be run with weekly two-hour sessions over 6 weeks.

Alternatively, the BCLT program could be organized in fewer but longer sessions. Again, this depends on the needs and schedule constraints of participants and program leaders. We strongly recommend that program leaders decide when the program sessions and the community presentation will take place before recruiting youth. This way, the youth can tell program leaders if they will be available on the dates you are running the training or offering the community presentation.

The basic requirements for **youth** participating in the BCLT program are:

- a) **Complete the BCLT youth training by attending all training sessions.** Training session topics for the youth include: basic listening and communication skills, interviewing skills, summarizing interviews, identifying life lessons from the interview data, creating a group report based on the interview findings, and designing a community presentation on findings from the elder interviews.
- b) **Conduct an interview with an elder.** Each youth participant interviews an elder. The interview can last up to 1 hour and will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. (Note: Extra time is allocated for instructions, set-up, and discussion.) The interview will take place in one of the training sessions listed above.
- c) **Summarize your interview and help compile a group report.** Individual interview summaries can be completed as homework and will be compiled in a group report on the findings from all the interviews. Compiling the group report will take place in one of the training sessions listed above.
- d) **Participate in a community presentation.** All youth are asked to participate in a presentation to the community of the findings from the interviews. The community presentation is separate from the training sessions listed above (often on a day, time, and location more convenient to community members).

Finally, don't forget to let the youth being recruited know that the BCLT program is fun! Youth who have participated in the BCLT program have found the program to be interesting and enjoyable, and they would recommend the program to other young people.

- **Recruit elders 65 and older**

Next, recruit elders to participate in the program. The BCLT program is designed for elders age 65 or older. Elders 65 and older are more likely to be retired and have more time to participate than those under 65. They are also more likely to have had life experiences that are crucial to the formation of advice and the expression of lessons to offer the youth about living well, no matter what the circumstances.

Recruitment of elders is usually done with the assistance of aging services providers or partners. Written information regarding the nature of the BCLT program and any expectations for elder participation is available in *Appendix D*. Give this information sheet to anyone assisting you in recruiting elders to help them determine which elders to approach or attempt to recruit for the BCLT program. Please note that this information sheet is not for the elders themselves, but for the aging services providers or partners recruiting the elders.

As previously mentioned, elders that are recruited for the program should show no signs of dementia or mental health issues. (Note: This may be hard to determine without intimate knowledge of the person, which is why it is often best to partner with aging services providers or partners.) Recruited elders should be talkative and interested in sharing their wisdom and advice for living. In other words, they should be prepared to offer advice for living or recommendations about how to live one's life. There may be elders in the community with very interesting lives who do *not* have the willingness or ability to share what lessons they have learned as a result of their life experiences. It will be important to consider this distinction when recruiting elders to participate.

At the time of recruitment or prior to the interview by a young person, give the elder a written orientation to the BCLT program that includes the requirements for completion of the program and the expected time commitment (see *Appendix C*). Be sure that you or your aging services partner go over all the points on this sheet to make sure the elder understands what they are agreeing to. If for any reason the elder is unable to read the information themselves, the recruiter should read the information to the elder prior to their consent to participate.

The basic requirements for **elders** who participate in the BCLT program are:

- a) **Read and think about the sample interview questions.** It is really important to give the elders the interview questions ahead of time. The written orientation sheet (*Appendix C*) that you give the elders at the time of recruitment includes the 10 questions from the Legacy Project. However, it is important to make it clear to the elders that these questions may not all show up in the interview. Let the elder know that the youth will be developing some of their own questions. The final list of interview questions should be given to the elders before their interview. That is, at least several days before the interview. We have found that interviews are much more fruitful if the elders have had time to think about the questions prior to their interview. Please make a plan with the elder at the time of recruitment to get the final list of questions to the elder, whether that be by email, fax, mail, or in-person.
- b) **Participate in at least one interview with a young person.** The interview can last up to 1 hour and will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. (Note: Extra time is allocated for instructions and set-up.) Elders and youth have consistently suggested that they would like to participate in more than one interview. Feel free to do this, however, remember that it would require more time.
- c) **Attend the BCLT community participation (not required).** All elders are encouraged to attend the youth's presentation of the interview findings to the community. Again, we strongly recommend that you confirm the community presentation date before recruiting elders. This way, the prospective elders can tell you if they will be available on the date you are offering the community presentation. Feedback from the youth indicates that they really appreciate seeing the elder they interviewed at the presentation.

As with the youth, elders can be recruited from a variety of sources. Program leaders who already work with older adults can incorporate the BCLT program into their curriculum or planned activities for that specific elder group. Program leaders can recruit elders from **personal contacts**, such as by asking friends and co-workers. These folks may know of elders in the community who may be interested in the BCLT program. The program leaders can collect the recommended names with their contact information, and then recruit these elders themselves.

Program leaders can also **partner with a local aging services provider** or organization who will assist in the recruitment of older adults. Aging services or elder care partners could include: formal aging service providers such as senior centers, senior housing sites, and continuing care retirement communities; local Area Agencies on Aging; AARP chapters; retired teacher associations; Retiree Service Volunteer Programs (RSVPs); and Lifelong Learning Institutes.

Elders who have participated in the BCLT program have found the program to be interesting and enjoyable, and they were quite happy to share their advice, thoughts, and wisdom with the youth.

- **Permission or consent to participate**

If you are working with existing youth or elder organizations, they may already have established standards for permission or consent of participants. Most youth programs require parental permission for youth to participate. Check whether the standard permission forms used in the programs you are recruiting from are sufficient for participation in the BCLT program, or whether you will be required to collect specific youth, parental, and elder permission for participants in the BCLT program. Please note that you also need permission to take photographs and/or videos during the interviews and permission to record the interviews. Photos and/or videos are helpful when preparing the community presentation, and the recordings are the source of data for the community presentation.

Permission forms that are specific to BCLT are provided in **Appendix E** (Youth), **Appendix F** (Parent), and **Appendix G** (Elder). These may be modified, as needed.

Program leaders are responsible for ensuring permission or consent for all participants in the program. Permission or consent should be acquired during the recruitment stage or prior to participation in the program.

### **3. Conduct Youth Training**

*This is an overview. The complete youth training can be found in **Section II (Component 1 – Training the Youth Interviewers)**.*

After recruitment is complete, the third step is the youth training. In this step, the program leaders teach the high school-aged youth basic listening and communication skills in preparation for their interviews with the elders. The youth training also includes: background information on ageism and elder wisdom; guidelines on how to develop interview questions; instructions on interviewing, confidentiality, and dealing with unexpected situations; and hands-on experience role-playing the interviews.

The curriculum for the youth training is provided in this manual, and it is comprehensive and easy-to-follow.

## 4. Facilitate Youth Interviews with Elders

*This is an overview. The complete interview session can be found in **Section III (Component 2 – Conducting the Interviews)**.*

The fourth step, once the youth have completed their initial training, is to facilitate the interviews with the youth and elders. As a reminder, be sure to take photographs and/or videos during the interviews that can be used in the community presentation.

The following logistics should be considered in preparation for the interviews:

- Interview pairs

Each youth participant is paired with one elder participant from the same community, and each youth is asked to interview that elder about their life lessons. We have found that the most successful interviews are one on one, rather than two or more youth per elder (or two or more elders per youth). This elicits more undivided attention and also allows for additional time for follow-up questions. The interview pairs should be determined before the interviews, with careful consideration of how you want to match them (e.g., career interests, race or ethnicity, gender, etc.).

- Interview questions

The interviews include questions that ask the elders about their advice for living. We have provided a list of the relevant questions previously used in the Cornell Legacy Project in **Handout 1**. The program leaders may select and use any questions from this list. Youth should also develop additional questions related to their specific interests and concerns (see **Handout 2**). We recommend a minimum of 8 questions for each interview, but preferably 10 or more.

We have found that the elders really appreciate seeing the questions ahead of time. Giving the elders some time to think about the questions beforehand contributes to a better interview. At the time of recruitment, you can give the elders the 10 questions from the Legacy Project. However, it is important to make it clear to the elders that these questions may not all show up in the interview. Let the elder know that the youth will be developing some of their own questions.

The final list of interview questions should be given to the elders *before their interview* with a youth. That is, at least several days before the interview. Please make a plan with

the elder at the time of recruitment to get the final list of questions to the elder, whether that be by email, fax, mail, or in-person.

- **Interview length**

Plan for each interview to last up to 1 hour. However, interviews typically last anywhere between 30 and 60 minutes. Youth should be encouraged to ask *additional questions* if they have extra time remaining.

Youth and elders are also asked to arrive ahead of the interview to allow time for introductions, instructions, and set-up. Time should also be allocated after the interviews for the youth to briefly debrief their interviews and talk about next steps.

- **Interview location**

Interviews must be supervised by the program leaders, and the program leaders must be able to see and react to any problems that may arise. Ideally, each interview should take place in a private room to assure the privacy of the elder and to reduce any noise that could interfere with their ability to hear. Office suites or individual classrooms in a school are examples of good spaces to use for interviews. It is important, however, to keep any doors partially open so that the program leaders can check in throughout the interviews.

Ideally, the interviews should be conducted all at once (in separate spaces). Given the space requirements, however, they could be scheduled individually over a week. One or both of the program leaders would need to be present for every interview.

## **5. Assist Youth in Summarizing Interviews and Compiling Group Report**

*This is an overview. The complete group report session can be found in **Section IV (Component 3 – Unpacking the Data)**.*

After the interviews, the fifth step is to help the youth engage in a process of summarizing and compiling their interview data. The goal of this process is to create a final group report on the life lessons of elders in their community to be shared with the public.

It is important that the youth summarize and report their findings as soon after the interviews as possible. Typically, the youth summarize their own interview data as homework and then report back their findings to the rest of the group a week after the interviews. Keeping up the momentum of the program helps the youth stay focused and recall the information from the interviews more easily.

As part of compiling the group report, the youth will need to create a group presentation to share with the community. Ideally, this should be a slide presentation (e.g., PowerPoint). The program leaders will need to assist the youth in the creation of this presentation. Detailed steps for how to facilitate this process are provided in the manual.

## 6. Facilitate Youth Presentation to the Community

*This is an overview. The complete community presentation session can be found in Section V (Component 4 – Facilitating the Community Presentation).*

Once the group report is complete, the sixth and final step is to facilitate the community presentation. It is important to schedule the community presentation ahead of time in order to procure the youth's commitment to attend and participate in it. It is equally important to invite the elders in advance, ideally at the time of their recruitment. This allows them enough time to arrange their schedules and to deal with any transportation needs. Elders enjoy the youth presentations, and the youth really appreciate it when the elder they interviewed is present.

The program leaders and participants should invite others in the community to attend the presentation as well, including teachers, local legislators, aging services providers, etc. For this, you may want to send out press releases, individual invitations, and social media notices well in advance.

The date of the community presentation will depend on the schedule for the youth training and the interviews. Program leaders should also try to avoid scheduling conflicts with other community events. Often, the location of the community presentation is different than the youth training and interviews to accommodate a larger crowd. For example, you may want to consider public spaces in the community, such as libraries and community centers. The space should be booked prior to sending out any notices. Be mindful to choose a day and time that is convenient for most community members. You may want to book an additional back-up "bad weather" date at the venue, just in case.

## E. Avoiding Interview Pitfalls

Following this manual should help to avert most pitfalls. However, any interactive program is bound to contain surprises, both positive and negative. Therefore, program leaders should plan measures—in advance—to reduce any risk, no matter how unlikely.

Some considerations for successful interviewing experiences are:

- Private interview spaces are available

As previously mentioned, you will need a meeting location that will allow for separate spaces, ideally separate rooms, for the youth to interview the elders. You want the interview spaces to be private to facilitate intimate conversation. Each room will need at least two chairs close to each other, in case the elder has hearing difficulties.

- Transportation needs are arranged

Check with the youth and elder participants that they have transportation to and from the interviews. Ideally, your meeting space will have access to public transportation. If the youth or elders do not have access to transportation, you should help them make arrangements. Be sure to provide insurance coverage for any volunteer drivers.

- Alternative “bad weather” dates are scheduled for interviews

There should be a clearly stated “bad weather” date, so that the alternative date is already on the calendars of the participants and the meeting location. The elders and youth should know whom to call in case of bad weather to find out the status of the meeting.

- Strategies are developed for youth or elders who do not show up for an interview

Youth or elder participants may be unable to participate on the scheduled interview day due to unforeseen circumstances. If an elder is unexpectedly unavailable for the interview, the interview could be rescheduled depending on the elders’ availability. You could also arrange for an extra elder to come on the interview day, explaining to them that they are the “back-up” in case any other elders are unable to come. If a youth is unexpectedly unavailable for the interview, the interview could be rescheduled or another youth participant could conduct the interview (i.e., if another elder is also a no-show). Only under extenuating circumstances should a youth be paired with more than one elder, or an elder be paired with more than one youth (e.g., language barriers, etc.).



One way to increase chances that folks show up is to *remind participants of meeting date, time, and location*. The day before the youth and elders have a scheduled interview, there should be a phone call and/or email confirming the meeting date, time, and location.

## F. How to Use This Manual

This manual is designed for training teams. It is not a participant manual; instead, it provides detailed directions for program leaders who will conduct the program. As you have seen, the manual begins by providing a program overview and rationale for the program. The curriculum for the program follows, with all the activities described in detail. Handouts and other resources are included at the end of this manual.

You will note that a variety of exercises and techniques are used to help the youth learn new skills. We intend for the youth training sessions to be an interactive experience. Although information is sometimes communicated in a conventional teacher-student format, the program's success is dependent on the youth participants learning and *practicing* new skills.

### 1. Types of Activities

The activities will be successful to the extent that the program leaders can get the youth actively involved in the learning process. Because this is not always an easy task, the manual contains structured exercises and role-plays in which the youth actually discuss and practice what they have learned.

It will be useful to review the basic types of training methods that are used:

- **Mini-lectures**

At various points in the manual, the program leaders are directed to give a short talk about a topic. These "mini-lectures" are printed in bold type in the manual. The goal of these mini-lectures is to convey basic knowledge and information to the youth participants.

Please note, however, that *these mini-lectures do not have to be read word for word out of the manual*. Program leaders can familiarize themselves with the content of the mini-lecture and make it their own.

- **Brainstorming**

In these exercises, youth generate ideas about a topic in a free, open discussion. The goal of a brainstorming exercise is to call out ideas from as many youth as possible. These ideas are not immediately judged or evaluated as good or bad; they are listed on a

flipchart or whiteboard for later group discussion. The program leader's role is to be encouraging and positive, to assure the group that there are no "right" answers, and to summarize and draw connections among the various comments.

- **Pairs and Role-Plays**

Youth participants are asked to break into pairs and to role-play in this manual. Although some are resistant to role-playing, in the BCLT program there is simply no better alternative for learning and practicing the skills highlighted in the program. In role-plays, the youth have an opportunity to try out a new technique in a structured, "safe" setting. Even if a youth participant is not one of the role-players, he or she benefits by seeing the technique "in action."

## 2. Handouts

The manual provides you with a number of pages that are to be duplicated as handouts (these appear at the end of the manual). The handouts serve as reference materials for the training sessions and can also be read over at home. Each participant should receive a complete set of the handouts, preferably in a notebook, at the beginning of the program.

## 3. Literacy

The BCLT program is structured such that youth and elders with minimal literacy levels are able to fully participate, including those with difficulty reading English and those who are illiterate. All handouts are written in easy-to-read plain language, and participants are never forced to write or to read in the program. For this reason, please do not ignore the instructions in the manual to *read written materials aloud* (or to ask for volunteers to read them aloud). Reading the material aloud not only eliminates literacy problems, it also allows participants time to consider the material.

## G. Icon Key

To ease the facilitation process, the curriculum is written in a script format that includes the following icons to indicate specific activities for the facilitator (listed in the order that they appear):



GIVE mini-lecture



DIVIDE group into pairs and/or role-play



DISTRIBUTE handout



WRITE DOWN comments on a flipchart or whiteboard



STOP and read "words of caution"



START brainstorming exercise



DISPLAY slide

## H. Preparing for the Training Sessions with Youth

As previously noted, the youth training includes an opportunity for the youth to get to know one another, learn and practice communication and interviewing skills, and summarize the interviews and create a group report their findings. See **Section II (Component 1 – Training the Youth Interviewers)** and **Section IV (Component 3 – Unpacking the Data)**.

This training is designed to be participatory. We suggest that you consider how to *arrange chairs, desks, and tables* to increase the likelihood of participation. We all know how much youth love *snacks* and special food treats. The promise of food will keep some kids engaged. Plan for one or two *breaks* during each session for youth to use the bathroom or stretch and move their bodies.

You may want to start each session with a short icebreaker exercise. Something quick, active, fun, or silly. This helps the youth relax, focus, and build community while having fun together. Games or exercises that ask questions and encourage listening would be great choices. You may need to add some time to each session in order to include an icebreaker exercise. Ideally, these exercises should not last more than ten minutes. See **Appendix H** for examples of icebreaker exercises.

Please distribute *all the handouts* at the first session. All handouts can be found at the end of this manual. If possible, place all the training handouts in a notebook. Have extra copies of all training handouts available in case one or more youth forgets or loses their notebooks.

## I. Program Outline

The following proposed program outline is divided into *4 components* with *6 sessions* (see next page for more information, including expected time for each session):

### Component 1 – Training the Youth Interviewers

- Session 1. What is the BCLT program all about?
- Session 2. Interviewing skills

### Component 2 – Conducting the Interviews

- Session 3. Interviews (plus homework)

### Component 3 – Unpacking the Data

- Session 4. Summarizing group findings
- Session 5. Preparing the community presentation

### Component 4 – Facilitating the Community Presentation

- Session 6. Community presentation

Please note that the first 5 sessions are considered training sessions and they are typically on the same day, time, and location every week, whereas the sixth session is considered separate and it is often a different day, time, and location to accommodate more community members (e.g., town hall, public library, etc.).

The time allotted for each training session may be shorter or longer depending on the composition of the group. For instance, a shorter session may be possible if the youth already have some experience interacting with older people. In some cases, you may need to increase the length and scope of the training. For example, when there is racial or ethnic diversity between youth and elders, there may need to be more time in the communication section addressing diversity and different communication styles. It is also possible that you may need to schedule more than 6 training sessions in order to limit each one to 1 hour. Or you may decide to have an extra session instead of assigning homework.

The total time for training the youth interviewers, conducting the interviews, summarizing the group findings and preparing the community presentation, and presenting the group report to the community is **12 hours (plus an additional 2 hours for homework)**.

## Component 1. Training the Youth Interviewers

<b>What is the BCLT program all about? (2 hours)</b>	
20 min	Introductions
25 min	Overview of the BCLT program
30 min	Ageism and elder wisdom
45 min	Developing the interview questions
<b>Interviewing skills (2 hours)</b>	
10 min	Introducing yourself
20 min	Basic listening skills
25 min	Specific interviewing skills
20 min	Follow-up questions
45 min	Role-playing the interview

## Component 2. Conducting the Interviews

2 hours	<b>Interviews:</b> Each youth interviews an elder (age 65 or older) living in the community and/or in elder living settings
2 hours	<b>Homework:</b> To be completed at home before the next session, youth summarize their own interview data

## Component 3. Unpacking the Data

2 hours	<b>Summarizing group findings:</b> The youth engage in a process of sharing their interview data with each other and summarizing their findings as a group
2 hours	<b>Preparing the community presentation:</b> Based on the group findings, the youth prepare a presentation on the life lessons of the elders to be presented to their community

## Component 4. Facilitating the Community Presentation

2 hours	<b>Community presentation:</b> The youth present their group findings to the community
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## J. Materials

- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Markers
- Watch or timer
- Computer (for viewing videos of elders, typing and printing interview questions, helping youth create community presentation, etc.)
- Digital projector and screen (optional)
- Handout packet for each youth participant
- Portable digital voice recorders (with the ability to transfer audio files to a computer)
- Sticker dots (assorted colors or patterns)



