

National Youth Model: Connecting CF Youth Project

Youth Engagement Strategy

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Introduction

The ultimate goal of this youth engagement strategy is to propose recommendations and strategies to actively engage CF youth to bring about meaningful change within themselves and within their communities. Over the past five years, significant effort has gone into understanding CF youth needs, defining a framework through which youth needs can be addressed and finally, in defining initiatives to address specific youth needs.

This engagement strategy also builds upon an understanding of the importance of involving youth in decision-making. A framework is proposed for the effective engagement of youth within the CF community and the benefits are outlined. Key findings and recommendations on how to create a respectful and hospitable environment are also tabled.

Strategies are dependant upon successful tactics, which define the details of how to accomplish the strategic objectives in the near term. The pilot project outlined in this document does just this. It puts in place a process to engage youth and generate tangible results. The resulting youth-centric website is a big step in the right direction towards the ultimate goal of the youth engagement strategy.

Deliverables

The CFPSA's Connecting CF Youth Engagement Strategy includes the following deliverables:



1. A summary of advantages and the importance of youth engagement;
2. A **detailed plan** for the summer of 2004 pilot project which includes:
 - a. The components of the youth engagement project tailored to the needs and challenges of the CF community;
 - b. Recognition of various national and local factors that contribute to and/or hinder youth engagement;
 - c. Resource requirements to manage and support ongoing youth engagement;
3. **Pilot project results**, including successes, challenges and the results that are to include the development of a **preliminary version of content** for the CF family youth website; and
4. **Recommendations** for the subsequent implementation of the engagement strategy.

Background Context

In 1998 a Standing Committee on National Defense and Veteran Affairs (SCONDVA) report recommended that special attention be given to programs and services for youth from military families. The SCONDVA report recognized that youth within the CF community face the same challenges as all other youth, but with added stress resulting from parental separation and deployments, frequent relocations and the isolation of several CF Bases. A series of initiatives were put forward and led to the creation of the National Youth Model. The National Youth Model is founded on four core program and services: healthy choices, supporting youth, connecting youth and leadership development.

In 2003 with funding from the National Defense On-Line Program, the CFPSA launched an initiative to focus on the “connecting youth” component of the National Youth Model. The initiative was to explicitly focus upon objectives that support transition, ease the stress of relocation, build and sustain meaningful relationships, and encourage a sense of belonging within the community.

A series of visioning sessions was hosted across Canada with CF family youth and CFPSA personnel in the fall of 2003. Outcomes from these sessions validated a premise that a CF youth-centric website could indeed benefit these youth and provide tangible benefits against



the objectives of the “connecting youth” component. The CFPSA decided to move forward and formally establish a ‘virtual’ youth engagement strategy for the potential website. The strategy exercise also needed to define the website development, content management, and ongoing sustainability aspects of the website which targets CF youth and their friends.

The Importance of Youth Engagement

Increasing Value

In recent years many organizations, both private and public, have included youth involvement as an integral part of their development policies. Research supports the value of youth engagement as an effective method to define youth needs and permit organizations to compile valid data on which to base decisions for the appropriate allocation of resources.

Organizational Benefits

While youth make up a significant proportion of the Canadian Forces community, they are currently a huge untapped resource. Youth are champions of unique perspectives and new experiences. They table innovative ideas and dynamic views about the future. As a result, they could enrich the decision-making within an organization.

The future of any and all organizations is based upon their success in attracting the ‘next generation’ of employees, managers and even clients. In today’s world, engaging youth permits organizations to be more connected and responsive to the youth community which is, in fact, the organization’s resource pool of the future. Creating a youth-friendly organization inspires the confidence of young users, clients, and stakeholders and enhances the reputation and credibility of the organization. Youth engagement can also improve the image of an organization which, as we know, is vital to the health of any organization.

Staff Benefits

Staff is positively affected by youth engagement initiatives. They often benefit from the energy and refreshing creativity of youth. Engaging a youth clientele also raises the importance of tangible results and strengthens a community-building capacity within staff. A



by-product of this community-building capacity is the development of a broader base of citizen involvement which creates a stronger, more inclusive sense of community.

Youth Benefits

Involving youth pays big dividends to young people. Youth engagement leads to youth development and youth development contributes to the health of vibrant and inclusive communities. Providing youth-leadership opportunities addresses a number of essential youth needs. These needs include opportunities for relationships with caring adults, peer group support, and meaningful engagement in the community at local and national levels. These opportunities also provide the potential for developing a range of skills that include critical thinking, planning, and understanding group dynamics. This sets the stage for a more engaged citizenry in the CF community as the youth build self-esteem and new leadership skills. Additionally, engaging youth provides valuable insights and builds energy and creativity for actions that we can all benefit from!



The Connecting CF Youth Pilot Project

This section of the document presents an overview of the summer of 2004 pilot project: Connecting CF Youth. The pilot project defined and implemented the near-term tactics of the CF Youth Engagement Strategy. Positive results from this project have validated the key elements of the strategy.

Goal

The goal of the pilot project was to implement a youth engagement strategy in a virtual environment to build the first mock-up of a comprehensive CF Youth website during the two summer months of 2004.

Objectives

Five key project objectives were defined at the start of the project:

- Engage youth across the country for the on-line work project;
- Build a viable website mockup which provides a solid springboard to the future;
- Evaluate the potential reach and impact of a virtual project involving youth;
- Observe and compile the impacts on participants involved in a virtual project; and
- Create momentum for engaging CF youth across the entire CF community.

Pilot Project Description

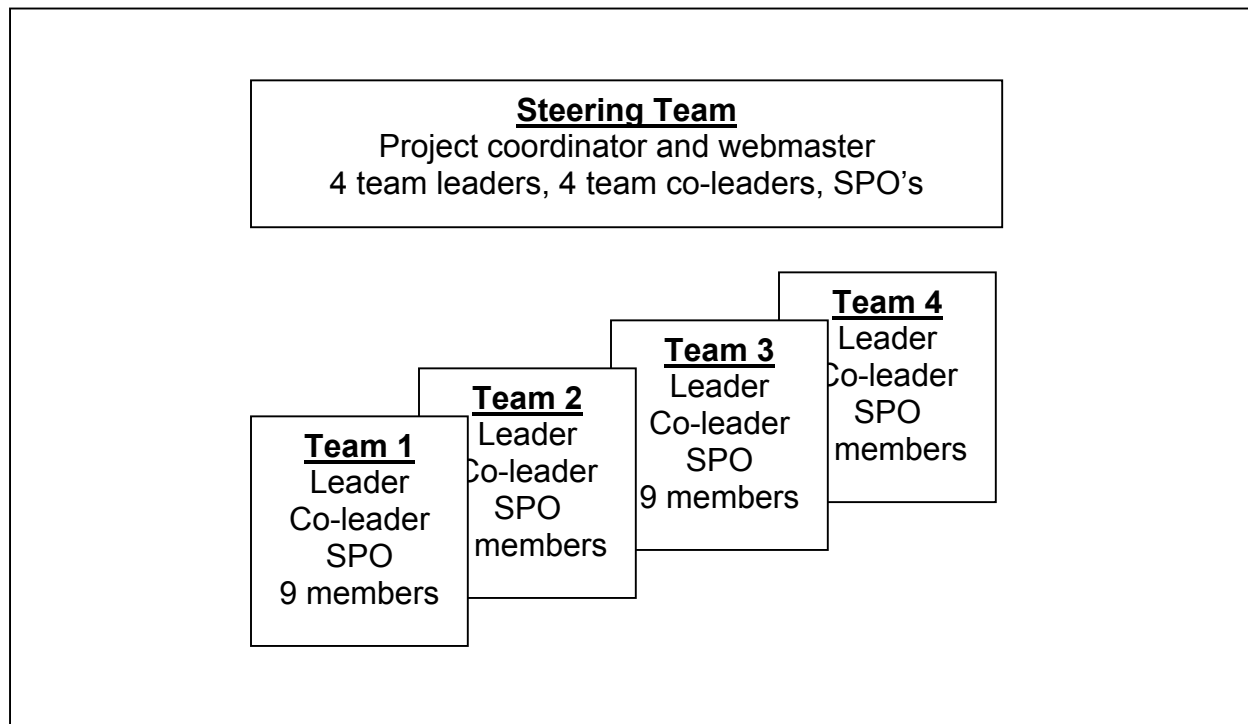
The Connecting Canadian Forces Youth Project is a virtual program, involving youth between the ages of 13 and 18 working together to build the framework of the future CF youth website. The project revolved around a working website that offered all the necessary information to participants, and that provided a forum for exchange, discussion and posting of ideas. The project was comprised of three phases:

Phase I: Promotion, Recruitment and Team Selection – The First Two Weeks

During this first phase, a predefined promotional campaign was used to recruit the most motivated youth (movers and shakers) at the national level. Our focus was on recruiting a mix of CF and civilian youth, with a target CF participation of 60%.

A management structure was defined for the projects, and from the youth participants recruited, AJP selected four team leaders and four co-leaders to guide the four teams through the project. Special project officers were also selected for each team. These officers were given complementary assignments to facilitate team progress. A steering team was put in place to ensure progress and focus on all aspects of project governance. An incentive program was also implemented so that each participant received an incentive gift for their involvement in the project.

The following diagram illustrates the project structure put in place for the pilot project.





Phase II: Youth Build a Website – The Next Five Weeks

The four teams attacked the website development work in sequential weekly assignments. Five weekly assignments were designed in a manner that would facilitate the development of the future website in a step-wise manner. Because participants were recruited from almost all Canadian time zones and at least one European time zone, a centralized work website was created for the duration of the project. This work website contained three distinct sections:

1. A public area that presented the overall program and the mock-up throughout the development; it also featured a 'survey of the week' for anyone between the ages of 13 and 18;
2. A member section featuring the five assignments for the project, descriptions of roles and responsibilities, ground rules, etc.; and
3. A secure forum section for member interaction and discussion. The forum had 6 rooms: a lounge to hang out, one discussion room for each team, and one discussion room for the steering team.

Project participants were provided with tools which permitted and facilitated the community-building. This was a necessity for the project. The tools provided were a work website, regular conference calls, on-line forums and email. The following professional support was also provided:

- A forum moderator was present most of the time to answer questions and moderate interaction on the forum;
- A webmaster; and

A creative writer and marketing specialist participated in the conference calls to provide feedback and information to team leaders. These professionals were always available to answer questions within the forum.

A detailed four-step work process facilitated team progress:



1. Detailed assignments posted on the workspace with tool kits to help youth find supplementary or complementary information;
2. Conference calls with steering team – included a workshop on the topic prior to the teams tackling the assignments;
3. Team reports submitted, translated and posted on the public site; and
4. Weekly summary project report posted in mock-up section of worksite.

The purpose of this process was to ensure that results were youth driven and youth focused.

The five assignments were based on a 'build-by-number' approach which led the teams towards the end result of a completed mock-up of the website. The assignments were:

'Build-by-Number' Approach

Assignment 1 - Website content
Assignment 2 - Web Architecture
Assignment 3 - Detailed Content
Assignment 4 - Look and Feel
Assignment 5 -Promotion

* The assignment results can be found in Annex 1.



Phase III: Evaluation and Results Promotion – The Final Two Weeks

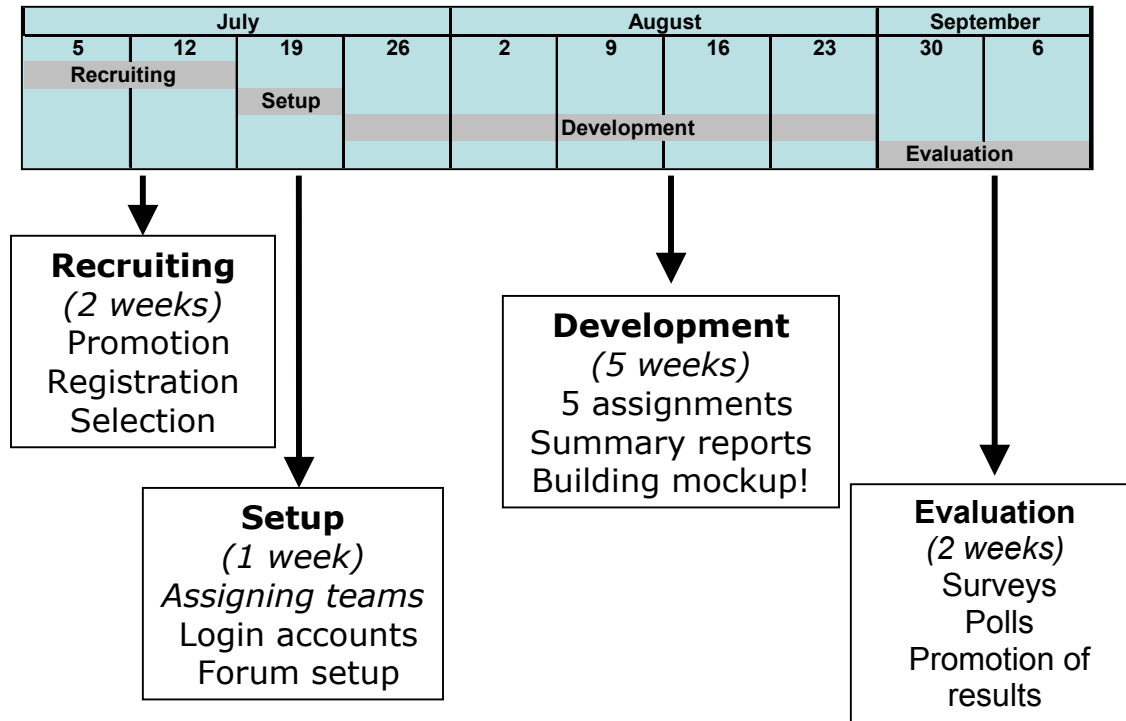
Throughout the project, youth informed parents and youth coordinators about their progress. An article summarizing the weekly work and progress was produced by a participant and posted on the CFPSA website so that recreation coordinators were kept in the loop. Three information emails were sent to the parents of participants during the project.

At the end of the project, all participants completed an evaluation questionnaire to gain insight into the youth experience. Results will be shared with the CF community to reinforce the positive impact of youth engagement. A newspaper article has been produced and is posted at www.cfpsa.com!

Project Timeline

Given the original terms of reference for the pilot project, an aggressive timeline was required. The project definition, recruitment and website development took place within the two summer months of 2004. The close-out and project evaluation was scheduled for September.

Project Timeline Overview



Incentive Program

Incentives are an essential element of youth engagement projects. A three tiered program which aligned to predetermined roles and responsibilities was defined for the pilot project. Participants received an equivalence of \$8 for each hour worked on the project and were compensated accordingly:

- Team Members: \$200 gift certificates for 5 weeks of work;
- Co-leaders: \$800 for 7 weeks of work; and
- Team Leaders: \$1000 for 7 weeks of work.

Team leaders were responsible for evaluating each team member’s work weekly. Work was rated from 0 to 3 (3 being good). Expectations needed to be met and if they weren’t, a portion of the incentive was deducted. Members needed to complete their weekly workload



on schedule, and return the completed evaluation form at the end of the project in order to be compensated fully.

Results and Findings

This section of the report includes the compilation of the results from the project survey and the consultation process with participants that completed the project. The objectives of this project-end research were to better understand the participants and get feedback on their experience. The research focused on:

- Findings from questions asked during specific assignments;
- Results from the survey posted in the lounge on the project website; and
- Results from the evaluation questionnaire completed by all 48 participants.

The results of this research are compiled against the three phases of the pilot project.

Participation Profile

First let's take a closer look at the profile of participants who participated in the pilot project. We had fairly equal representation from a gender and age profile. Of the 48 participants, 38% were male and 59% were female. For the two age groups, 54% were aged from 13 to 15 and 46% were between 16 and 18 years old.

Participants came from most regions of Canada. The only region with no representation was the Canadian north, with no participation from any of the three territories. Three provinces were also not represented are: PEI, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan. The breakdown of participation across the regions is as follows:

- Atlantic: 24%
- Central: 32%
- West: 34%



- Overseas: 10%

CF Community Representation

66% of our participants were from Canadian Forces families. Participants were affiliated to the following bases:

- Greenwood
- Comox
- Val Cartier
- Shilo
- Petawawa
- Gagetown
- Esquimalt
- North Bay
- Belgium
- England

When asked if they have participated in other programs or activities organized by the Canadian Forces, 31% indicated that the Connecting CF Youth Project was their first program. Another 38% of participants indicated that they have participated in less than 5 activities a year organized by the CF. Only a small percentage of participants (31%) have been involved in over 5 activities a year organized hosted at the recreation center on their base. Interestingly, 48% were unable to identify who the recreation coordinator was on their base.

KEY FINDING: 'Virtual nature' of our Connecting CF Youth program has strong outreach power to reach youth not normally involved in traditional programs offered by CFPSA.

This finding demonstrates that the 'virtual nature' of the Connecting CF Youth program has a strong outreach quality. The Internet permitted the CFPSA



recreation department to reach out, create a rapport and engage in a relationship with youth that had not been reached in the past.

When asked about where they attend extra curricular activities, 20% indicated that they do not typically participate in extra curricular activities. Once again, the 'virtual nature' of the project effectively reached a youth audience that is not normally involved in extra curricular activities. 65% of participants indicated that they attended extra curricular activities at their school or community centre. 61% of participants attend activities offered at the local MFRC.

Why young participants got involved

Two most common reasons for youth participation, emerged as key deciding factor of youth participating in this project:

1. The social aspect of meeting other youth from across the country; and
2. The value of this type of work experience.

Only 16% of the participants indicated that the incentive gift was the first reason they got involved. However, when asked if participants would get involved in the project if there was no incentive gift, 54% replied no or indicated that they weren't sure.

KEY FINDING : Incentive gifts should be considered as an important element to stimulate youth involvement.

All participants were satisfied with the experience. 100% of participants indicated that they would recommend this experience to their friends.

Phase I Results: Promotion, Recruitment and Selection of Participants

The first phase of the Connecting CF Youth Pilot Project involved the promotion, recruitment and selection of participants. Given the short timeframe for the startup and delivery of the project over the summer vacation period, the recruitment period lasted only 9 days.



Participants and more specifically, steering team members, needed to be selected by the second week of July.

An aggressive recruitment campaign was put in place. As observed with other youth engagement projects, youth involvement depends heavily on direct contact and interaction with adults. Youth are more likely to get involved if they are approached and guided by an adult from their community.

AJP initiated the following promotional initiatives for our recruiting campaign:

Focus on Youth

- Sent e-mails to the 65 visioning session participants from the Fall of 2003;
- Created poster for CF Rec Centres;
- Banner posted on HRDC Youth Path website;

Focus on CFPSA Youth Coordinators

- Letters sent to CFPSA Rec Directors which included the poster;
- Direct phone calls to youth coordinators (10);
- Personal e-mails sent to youth coordinators;
- Reward program instituted for recruiting youth;

Focus on Parents:

- Article posted on CFPSA website;
- Article in community newspapers *Aurora* and *ADSUM*; and
- E-mail chain sent to parents known to be active in communities.

Summary Results of Phase I

In total, 92 youth registered to take part in the project in less than 2 weeks. In order to register, the youth needed to access the Connecting CF Youth website (www.connectingcfyouth.ca), fill out an application and explain why they wanted to participate. On the application they could select the role(s) they wanted to apply for (leader, co-leader, member or survey participant). Applicants that failed to properly complete the electronic form were automatically rejected. Eighteen participants were interviewed for positions on the steering committee, and twelve were selected (4 leaders, 4 co-leaders and



4 special project officers). Roles and responsibilities for each position can be found in Annex 2.

A pool of 80 potential participants was left to choose from. Sixty-five were pre-selected based on availability, the reason why they wanted to participate, and if they were from a CF family. A pre-selection e-mail was sent to get parent consent for the youth participation. Fifty-three participants responded within the predetermined time limit. They were assigned to one of 4 teams. Once the teams were formed, the team leaders established contact and provided access IDs for the forum.

From the initial fifty-three who started the project, 5 dropped out over the course of the summer (9.5 % drop out rate).

Promotion Results

When participants were asked how they heard about the project:

- **62%** were approached by an adult, either by a parent;
- **(55%)** or by staff on the base **(7%)**;
- **10%** responded to an ad in the community newspaper (ADSUM, Aurora);
- **6%** found out simply by surfing on the Internet; and
- **1 participant** returned from past visioning sessions after being solicited by e-mail.

KEY FINDING : Adults play a valuable role in youth engagement programs. They help youth make the first step towards getting involved. They encourage youth during the process and can have a significant impact on promoting results within the community.

When questioned on the recruiting and selection process, most participants commented that the process was effective and they did not see any required modifications to improve it. A few mentioned that it should be made clear that most of the discussion on the forum would be in English. Participants mainly commented on increasing the promotional activities and focusing on schools as the target for the program promotion.



When asked if they had a good understanding of the goal of the project at the moment they registered, 7 % indicated that they had a poor understanding, 63% had somewhat clear understanding, and 29 % had a very clear understanding.

One participant made a very valid point:

"By making sure that applicants are truly interested in the long term effects of what they are doing today, make sure they are interested and enthusiastic, fairly knowledgeable (as I am sure you did this time as well! 😊) make sure applicants know WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM!"

This highlights a reality when promoting 'virtually' to youth. The information that they identified as missing was actually on the website. AJP suspect that a majority of youth have a tendency to scroll quickly through the text and sections of the website. They are more likely to look and retain information that is communicated via visuals, short sentences and not buried in too many layers.

KEY FINDING: Parents and adults are key to the success of a youth recruiting campaign. They need to be the primary target audience for the promotional campaign as they are in a position to be able to influence youth of the merits of joining such program.

Phase II Results: Website Development

The Working Website

Given the fact that the website was created in less than 3 weeks, AJP asked participants in their first assignment how we could improve the working site. Member suggestions included the following:

- 27% of participants suggested a Who's Who Section. This would address who is working on the project, and what they're doing. It was suggested that AJP



create a “Project Address Book” which would basically organize, and add more detail to the “Member List” already found in the forum;

- It was also suggested that we needed to have a permanent FAQ, and one that would be updated periodically, as some of the information wasn’t applicable to our project; and
- Quite a few suggested that Avatars would be interesting, help to keep more members enthusiastic, and add a bit of “spice” to the forum. A petition was created in the lounge to seek the right to have Avatars. (Avatars are small icon that identify a user)

Generally speaking, the members were satisfied with the website and the forum application. They all felt it met their communication and exchange needs for the project.

When questioned on the different sections of the website, 62% indicated that the site mock-up was helpful and provided them with the big picture of the project. Interestingly enough 21% of the participants never checked the mock-up or did not know there was a mock-up of their work on the public site. This again demonstrates that youth don’t necessarily read the information provided to them and there is a clear need to repeat information in a multitude of ways through numerous venues and formats.

Working on the Internet

As mentioned earlier in this document the step-wise approach was used to build the mock-up. The five assignments defined were:

1. What’s it all about: Defining the content of the future website;
2. Architecture that rocks: Building a flowchart;
3. The write tools: Populate the flowchart with articles and content;
4. Looking good: Developing a design and look and feel for the website; and
5. Getting the word out: Promotion strategy for the site.

Other activities organized during the project:

- A scavenger hunt organized in the lounge by one of the SPOs;



- Surveys were conducted to determine the best prize;
- A contest was set up in the lounge for the promotion of the website by youth;
- Some members took the initiative to organize games and build a birthday calendar; and
- Forum Games: riddles, SIGGY PET HANGOUT!, and numerous polls including military connections, childhood memories, surveys, etc.

Overall, 74% of the participants found the assignments just long enough. Only 1 participant found that the assignments were too long, and 23% indicated that they were not long at all.

Most participants found they could fit the assignment into their personal and work schedules. A few participants suggested dedicating more than 7 days to accomplish one assignment. They suggested that assignment timelines should have been extended, allowing 2 weeks to be completed.

"It all fit fine into my schedule. Only a few problems with the time zones, but nothing that couldn't be solved."

The two favorite assignments were the writing of the article for the website (31%) and the design of the website (33%). The three remaining assignments received lower percentages:

- What is all about - 13%
- Flow Chart - 13%
- Promotion - 10 %

Assignment preference is obviously related to personality traits. Participants with a high interest in technology preferred the design and flowcharting assignment. Participants with a personal interest in communications were at ease with the writing assignment.

"I love to design! I was working at a Graphics Design Firm for the summer. I have always had a passion for art, design and the way things look aesthetically. I'm a



creative person, and I always love to just get in there and create something. That is why I liked this task the best”.

”Why? I love writing!!! I found it easy and fun. I enjoy writing and my topic was simple.”

Other factors that influenced the level of interest of the participants were:

- How well they understood the topic (or how well it was explained);
- How easy it was to do;
- How entertaining it was (How fun!); and
- If it permitted them to get to know other members.

”This was the one that took the most effort, and not fun effort! Noone wants to write articles during summer vacation! ”

”Found that whole guerilla marketing idea to be a little weird... maybe needed some more detail into exactly what it is you’re looking for in advertising.”

When questioned on their preferences of how to complete the assignments, 65% of participants indicated that they preferred doing the assignment on their own and then submitting it to their team leaders. They used the forum to post specific questions. This provided the participants with flexibility in managing their schedule.

”I’m more independent so I prefer to work on my own. It’s not fun having to rely on someone else when you’re trying to meet deadlines.”

Another 28% preferred getting together with their team members to discuss the assignment before completing it on their own.

”I always think it’s best to get everyone together to brainstorm ideas but I also think it’s important that each person give their own unique opinions.”



Only 7% indicated that they would prefer completing the assignment as a team.

"I preferred completing the assignment as a team, like looking at other ideas that team members have come up with and then expanding on them or getting more ideas out of those."

KEY FINDING: When working virtually it is best to assign work according to participant interests. A solution is to have the participants select the assignment and have many stages to each assignment. It is important that assignments be simple and presented in a step-by-step manner. The Internet's interactive nature can provide a positive impact on the learning component of assignments (such as a PowerPoint course, e-learning etc).

The pilot project was all managed through the steering committee. Weekly conference calls were organized to brief participants on the upcoming assignments, troubleshoot and make announcements. Each steering team member was responsible to communicate the assignment deliverables and determine, with their team, the best way to complete the work. Team leaders and co-leaders were also responsible to stimulate participation within their team, and when necessary, manage participants that were not meeting the basic requirements of their role.

A total of **3485** articles were submitted on the forum by members. This works out to 139 articles (or individual postings) every day for the duration of the 5 week pilot project (excluding weekends).

Teams also communicated on MSN, in a chat room set up for working teams, by e-mail and "Private Message" (PM) messaging.

54% of the participants indicated that aside from the forum which was set up for the project, the preferred communication venue for assignments was MSN. Only 11% suggested e-mail was the best way to communicate. 30 % indicated that the chat room was their preferred method to meet and discuss the assignments. Most participants were active



during the evening and were able to set up team meetings using MSN and chat rooms. The reality of time zones was an inconvenience for organizing team meetings.

Additionally the project coordinator and web master sent a total of 1306 e-mails to team members during the duration of the pilot project and over the course of the recruitment. That's an average of approximately 27 e-mails per participant! This demonstrates the necessity to have project leaders establishing a solid presence and contact with participants throughout the project, nourishing personalized contact. By keeping parents and youth coordinators informed throughout the development phase of the project, AJP was able to provide youth with personalized encouragement throughout the project. In specific situations, parents and youth coordinators were involved to provide specific participants with support, encouragement and explanations. This approach yielded positive impacts on the performance of the youth.

KEY FINDING: The organization structure must provide direct personal contact with each individual. Considerable human resources are required to react in a timely manner, and to establish a guiding presence in the virtual space. Individualized messages such as e-mail, and PM provide participants with a direct link and ownership to the project.

When questioned, 75% of participants felt that their ideas were welcomed and respected all the time. Another 23 % felt they were welcomed and respected most of the time.

"I tried to think critically to stop people from getting too carried away. I feel in every project there has to be at least one person who is willing to pop a bubble."

The project coordination staff needed to provide coaching to leaders and co-leaders on how to moderate specific participants. Ultimately, the involvement of a project coordinator (viewed as the authority) is necessary to exercise control in unacceptable situations. The project coordination staff found it interesting to see how youth are much more direct in stating what they thought amongst themselves. Very direct messages were sent to and from members that were not pulling their weight, who were late handing in assignments, or not using proper language. It is difficult for us to determine if it had a negative impact on the productivity level of participants. No one complained about the approach.

KEY FINDING: Include training for leaders on how to moderate a forum and respond to specific situations. This would not only provide the youth with a learning situation but would ensure that every team gets the same treatment for specific situations.

A number of members mentioned the importance for leaders and coordinators to be available to answer questions. When members had requests or questions, they expected an answer in a very short timeframe (within 12 hrs). Essential criteria for the selection of a leader is how available and accessible he or she can be. In an isolated case, a team leader was removed from a team because of a move from England to Canada. Even though the co-leader tried to take over the leadership, AJP noted a negative impact on the team resulting from the absence of the leader.

AJP also noticed that the participation rate and interaction on the forum significantly varied from one participant to another. Leaders and co-leaders AJPre instructed to stimulate participation and establish their presence on the forums but members did not have the same requirement. The total number of postings from one member to another varied from a dozen to over 200 postings. Although the number of postings is clearly related to the level of involvement in the forum, it did not necessarily indicate the quality of work produced for the assignments.

When asked if there was a reason that prevented them from posting on the forums, 48% indicated that there was no reason, 32% had nothing to say, 11% did not understand or were not fluent in English¹, and 9% indicated that there was simply a lack of time.

When asked how the project coordination team could stimulate interactivity on the forum, a large majority of members felt that it wasn't a problem during the project. Even though

¹ The forum was available in both French and English but youth themselves determined that posting would be primarily in English.. We had a very high number of bilingual participants.



many did not identify the level of interactivity on the forum as a problem, a few suggestions for stimulating interaction were given:

- Include more topics on different subject matters; and
- Usage of humour when introducing topics and assignments.

Other comments from leaders included:

"I think we did everything we could. People won't participate if they don't want to, no matter what you do. I think it is important not to lose their interest early on in the project, that way they will want to be a part of it."

KEY FINDING: Carefully selecting leaders based on their leadership skills is not enough. Because of the virtual nature of such a project, leaders need to be available, have reliable technology, and accessibility.

The Web Space as a Meeting Space

AJP found that a majority of participants get involved in this type of program in order to meet other youth. The site needed to be a fun and relaxing destination to boost enthusiasm, help youth interact, and help them make the forum their own. To provide such an environment, a lounge was created in the forum where all members could read and post topics. Topics in the lounge ranged from music, to sports, to arguments, jokes and announcements.

Some participants posted information about their parents returning from a foreign deployment. This generated significant reaction from all participants. Some participants used the forum to learn a bit more about the CF reality.

Participants created games and surveys for the lounge. The most popular game was the "Loving Riddle".

AJP also had planned a scavenger hunt. As approximately 50 % of the participants engaged in the scavenger hunt, AJP noticed no significant increase in the posting rate on the forums.



A contest was created to boost the promotion of the “survey of the week” on our public site. In the first week of the contest, participation rate went from 24 weekly participants to 86.

When questioned about the fun and relaxing aspects of the lounge, 98% of participants felt that there was enough activity to keep them entertained. The most popular activities were:

- Anything that helped them to get to know members;
- Humorous activities (joke, funnies), joke of the day, riddle exchange, etc.; and
- Competitive games such as the contest and the scavenger hunt. Many mentioned the scavenger hunt as an exciting activity.

Incentive Gifts

For this project, each team member received an incentive gift. This approach provided us with the potential of treating participants more like employees and approaching the project more like a job. Expectations needed to be met and if they weren't, a portion of the incentive would be deducted.

There is no doubt that the generous gift was a great incentive for youth to participate in the program. It was also an incentive to finish assignments and submit acceptable work in order to receive the prize.

When asked in the first week of the project, why they got involved, 33% mentioned that it was because they like virtual programs, 25% wanted to meet new friends, 20 % wanted to include the work in their resume, and 8% mentioned the reward as the primary reason to get involved.

At the end of the program, 54% indicated that they were not sure if they would participate, or definitely not participate, in a similar project if there was no incentive prize.

With this flexible and lucrative approach, the majority of participants were happy with the working conditions and expectations placed on them. 76% of participants indicated that they felt the incentive gift was just right for the work they done. 10 % thought it was too much and 13% thought it was not enough.



This 13%, that demonstrated no real appreciation of the compensation for the work they did, tended to be needier and demanded to know when they would receive their prize. Considerable time was needed to explain the terms for receiving the incentive, simply because they had no understanding of the value of their contribution in the working world.

KEY FINDING: Clear and precise expectations, with milestones, need to be explained to members in order for them to understand what is required of them in order to receive an incentive prize. A contract, along with the consent form, should be signed by the parent and the participants. This should clearly state the expectations, eliminating any grey zones.



Recommendations

Become More Youth-Driven

Given the positive outcomes of youth engagement, national organisations should become more youth-driven in nature, through the orchestration of an internal culture change. The first major step in this change is the promotion and communication of the importance of youth-centric programs across the organization. A key aspect of the promotion is the concept of youth inclusiveness.

Staff and decision makers within CFPSA and the CF will need to be educated on the benefits of including youth in project development and decision making in order to evolve the current culture and ensure that the CF community collectively supports youth participation. Including youth in all aspects of program development can significantly improve the chances of success for most programs. Youth inclusiveness should become a fundamental guiding principle.

Additionally, the CFPSA will need to look at the legal considerations, travel policies and privacy issues behind involving youth in special projects.

Engage the CF Community First

Community involvement significantly influences the reach and impact of virtual projects. Connecting CF Youth programs should capitalize on synergies with existing CF communities. A lightweight structure need to be put in place to bring together youth coordinators, parents, base representatives and youth representatives to promote engagement programs within the community. This type of structure would also build and solidify links to other organizations within the community (i.e., schools, youth organizations, etc.)

The members of the CF youth community would also be responsible ifor organizing and supporting activities to solidify the engagement process, namely:



- Complementing the virtual program with real-time initiatives such as hosting training at the beginning of each new virtual project, organize celebrations at important project milestones. etc.;
- Promoting initiatives and showcasing results within the community. Could be done by a simple bulletin board display at the base community center or youth center. Include engagement promotion in all the current forms of activity promotion; and
- Supporting youth engagement with technology such as computer labs.

Youth and adults need to forge a strategic *alliance* for youth-centric programs. Youth need to be guided, coached, counseled, mentored and managed. Building this new alliance will foster multi-generational relationships which can only benefit the CF community as a whole.

Youth programs need adult involvement to:

- Open doors in order to include youth in the decision-making process;
- Promote informed youth decision making;
- Offer formative experiences;
- Ensure youth presence and involvement is acknowledged and valued; and
- Formally involve youth at every program level: governance, quality control, censorship, promotion etc.

Implement an Ongoing Recruitment Strategy

Exploring and implementing multiple recruiting processes is essential to the survival of a continuous virtual engagement program in the CF community. Different tactics will need to be employed simultaneously to engage youth over a prolonged period of time. Speaking of time, the window of opportunity to engage youth is relatively small. Today's youth are constantly bombarded with information and choices. Trends and fads rule! With an effective engagement strategy, youth may commit their time and energy to specific projects for weeks to years.

Technology will need to be used to effectively manage virtual relationship building and nurturing at a national level. The use of a youth database has very tangible benefits to a perpetual recruiting exercise. The database information will need to be kept up to date in order to capitalize on leads and opportunities. The database will provide a more formal



management structure to solicit the ongoing participation of these movers and shakers, who will ultimately become a leadership community within the larger CF youth community. With the database in place, a promotional plan will need to be implemented to continuously nurture and recruit new members to the leadership community. The ongoing engagement of this youth leadership community will need to be supported by some form of participation compensation program in order to “hook-and-hold” these youth. Many groups already involved in youth engagement have found success with incentives relating to:

- Training;
- Celebrations (events, social outing etc.); and
- Gifts.

Ongoing recruiting efforts should also target organizations with educational and youth development objectives. Schools and youth organizations or clubs are a natural fit.

Prioritize Youth Development

Youth engagement programs should make youth development a priority to help youth develop skills, critical thinking and social behavior. “What’s in it for me?” is the driving force behind any and all types of client engagement irrespective of client age. When youth learn how they will benefit from the engagement, a strong relationship can be built.

Resources should be invested to build on the interactive nature of the Internet to provide e-learning initiatives and didactic tools. Development opportunities could take the form of training for technology use, website understanding, or even leadership skills training. Youth value many different forms of training. New partnerships with CFPSA Rec Centers could also offer mentorship programs.

Irrespective of the type of development opportunity offered, it is important that these offerings be available on an ongoing basis. This will add momentum to the engagement strategy.

Match Website to Youth Working Habits

Technology is well integrated into youth life. On-line opportunities need to be tailored to address the web habits of today’s youth. Although the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat



has recommendations and guidelines for the look and feel aspect of government websites, the CFPSA should recognize that the youth site will need its own look and feel in order to become a recognized destination for youth. A first step towards this recognition will likely be the adoption of the recommended look and feel for the new website. The summer pilot project designed not a government, or large institution website, but a youth website. Adopting this design is, in essence, listening to the client's voice.

Other key considerations for the website are:

- Need to exploit the interactive nature of the Internet with lots of visuals, graphics and sounds;
- Should be simple and easy to navigate;
- Clear concise directions must be given on the site; and
- The website needs to be supported by a team of experts with a 'who's who?' list and hot line for questions.

Annex 1: Assignment Results

Assignment #1 compilation of teams' report

"What's it all about"

We're here to build a website for Canadian Forces families' youth. We first need to determine what the website should talk about! Your first task will be to create a list of potential subjects for the future CF youth website. Please list your topics and subtopic in order of priority.

1. Topics Specific to CF Youth

1. **Communicate -> As we read through the reports and team forums the aspect of communicating was a recurrent theme. Communicating, in the context of the CF website, promotes exchange and interaction. Several options are available to address this need and could be included in the flowcharts:**
 - **Forum** - an easy to navigate forum including different rooms for different geographical areas, as well as a "lounge". Different topics could be posted (such as music, sports etc.).
 - **Chat room** : An idea that everyone seemed to like was a chat room. This would allow CF Youth around the country (and the world) to chat in real-time and meet each other. It would make for a friendly and safe place where teens could go to discuss things.
 - **Virtual Journals:** Many suggested featuring journals such as "Greatestjournal.com". CF Youth could write in their journals, receive comments, PM others. This is a great way to create interaction.
 - **Find a lost friend** - a database of names used to find CF friends that have moved or that CF Youth have left behind/lost contact with.
 - **Pen pal program** : We've included this idea but if you keep it in your flow chart you should explain how it would work in the virtual world...
2. **Moving and re-location -> All teams recommended that the future website should include a section that deals with the challenge of re-location. This section could include the following information in various formats:**
 - What teens should expect when being re-located (in Canada or Abroad)
 - Helpful links (such as to different language courses, other countries websites, etc.)
 - Information focusing on positive aspects of moving
 - Tricks and tips to make it easier to move
 - Special stories from youth sharing their experiences about re-location (of course they would be very moving stories J)
 - How to stay in touch with old friends; access to a database will facilitate youth keeping in touch (this might need to be thought out more)
 - How to make new friends: Including a youth contact list for every base will help the welcome wagon. First contact would be initiated through e-mail and followed up with a meeting once the youth's family has been re-located in the new neighborhood.
3. **Information on CF bases in Canada and abroad -> This section was highly recommended by all teams. It would provide updated information on what's happening on CF bases and in the surrounding communities. It could include the following information in various formats:**

- **A map** indicating the location of the different military bases (in Canada and abroad)
 - **Activities and programs** for youth on every base and in their surrounding communities. (Programs at the MFRC, community youth programs, fitness activities, clubs etc.)
 - **Education opportunities** for the different bases and surrounding communities (lists of schools, courses for teens - such as swimming, babysitting, etc.)
 - **Facilities** available on each base with contact information - community centers, pools, libraries, etc.
 - **Job opportunities** for youth including job postings, employment centers, addresses, etc.
 - **Local youth hot spots** featuring movies theaters and shopping centers. Other useful information could be a listing of types of hot spots (for lunch, dancing, shop, hang out, etc.)
 - **Calendar of events:** Special events at different bases. This calendar could allow members to post special events for their base and/or community. (IE: when their new band is going to play a gig, dance, opening of a new store, etc.)
 - **Gallery for pictures:** youth events, different base activities
 - **An editorial section** for youth write-ups about happenings on their base and in their community
4. **Dealing with 'being a CF youth' :** Include a section which focuses strictly on providing advice to youth who have specific issues. This section would provide teens with information and it could also link them to a professional for counseling (a program similar to "Children's Help Line"). It could include the following information in various formats:
- **Stress and coping with stress:** could include online pressure/stress tests. Information and tips on how to deal with stress, etc.
 - **Information on current affairs:** information and advice on how to deal with topics such as SARS, EXTACY, DRUGS, divorce, etc. These subjects should be selected by youth.
 - **Help lines and help sites :** Gives a list of phone numbers and links to websites.
 - **Health promotion for youth:** Information and programs promoting health, such as nicotine cessation program, weight control program, fitness for youth etc.
5. **Deployment -> This section would deal specifically with coping with the deployment of parents. It could include the following information in various formats:**
- What to expect, and how to deal with some of the issues
 - Help line for youth having trouble dealing with the deployment of a parent
 - A program that would facilitate communication with deployed CF parents (i.e., video cams, special conference calls, etc.)
 - What about war... and world-wide conflicts? Simple, easy to understand information about the conflicts were Canadian troops are deployed.

- Photo gallery of places where troops are deployed

6. **Fun -> A section of the website featuring fun and leisure programs. All four teams included this topic in their report. This section of the future website could include the following programs and applications in various formats:**

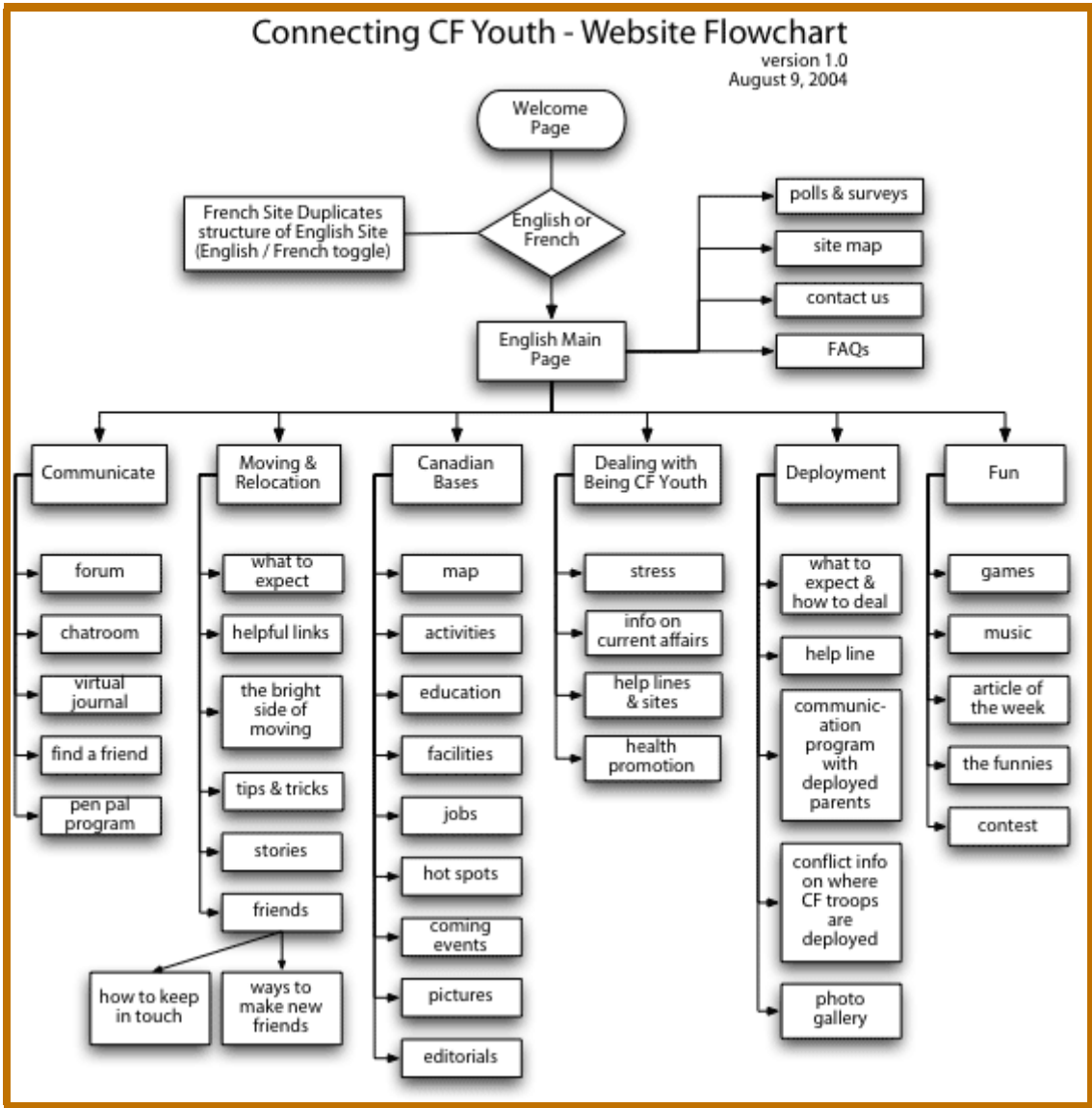
- **Games** : on-line arcade filled with classic games (Pac Man, Blaster Ball, Monopoly, tic-tac-toe, etc). Also include potential links to other gaming sites. Team members recommended having a section targeting younger kids which would feature games for different age groups.
- **Music** : Music is extremely popular with youth. We need to determine what the section would feature that would not be found elsewhere on the Internet...
- **Article of the week**: A section that would feature an article about a fun subject, such as a movie review, a fun experience, etc.
- **The Funnies** : Comics and jokes (could probably be an exchange)
- **Contest**: This section would need to be defined in your flowchart

2. **Other Sections to Include on the Future Website**

1. **Welcome and About the WEBSITE ->** Presenting what the site is all about and who the target audience is. It would include the mission statement and present the site's objectives and goals.
2. **Site Map** - Members recommended having a very creative map that would help newcomers discover the site. Recommendations also suggested finding a fun name for the Site Map.
3. **Links to other sites**: Possibly a bank of related links. These links would need to be arranged in categories.
4. **Contact Us and Feedback**: A place where the users submit feedback or questions about the site. This section would also include the list of all of the people involved in the site's management. (A who's who list)
5. **News**: Current events or announcements to be posted and updated daily
6. **FAQ about the website (Frequently Asked Questions)**
7. **Polls and Surveys**

Assignment #2 compilation of teams' flowcharts

"Architecture Rocks"



Assignment #4 compilation of teams' report

Looking good!



Assignment #5 compilation of teams' report

"Creating A Buzz..."

Teams brainstormed , explored the internet and asked professionals to find the best and most original ways to promote the future CF youth web site... The following are the most original and feasible (well, maybe a few aren't) proposals... Check it out!

TOP ideas team for promotion activities...

1. **News by the week.** Have a weekly newsletter to send via email to participants and youth coordinators on bases and in schools. We could start to build a database with names of those interested in receiving the newsletter.
2. **Party Time!** Host a concert or a dance at recreation centers featuring popular local bands to promote the site. Call it the Connecting CF Youth Dance. All profits would go towards activities on the site.
3. **Recruit and WIN** Have a promotional competition where participants compete to get the most youth signed up to visit the site, kind of like what we did in the forum during the project.
4. **Talk Talk Talk** . What better way to spread the word. ...word of mouth!
5. **Put up cool posters** in high youth traffic areas such as schools, youth centers, CANEX libraries, malls, movie theaters, internet cafes, swimming pools, washrooms etc.
6. **Chain Promotion** : Send out an e-mail chain letter
7. **Ask us about it!** Booths at Canadian youth events promoting the site and recruiting participants. Youth would provide the information.
8. **Show me your business card!** Provide all participants with business cards (including their name and their role). They could use them to promote the site to other youth in the community!
9. **Oh no telemarketing !** Participating youth at each base need to call and inform 10 other youth from the same base about the project.
10. **Sandwich Boards** Cool and funky sandwich boards could be designed and posted at different locations on the base, at the community school, etc. Actually, we could have a design contest! And of course the winners would receive gift certificates at Subway!
11. **Lollipop Ads** - Sponsored by Canex stores, participants could sell lollipops in their community with tags that feature the site name. We could have a catchy tag line. (I've done this for a political campaign in school and for anti-drinking and driving awareness. It's fun!) The fund raiser could be organized so that half of the money is kept by the participants. A win-win situation... Yeah!
12. **Home Sweet Page** ...Change the homepage or screen saver of computers at recreation center to a promo for our site. ...
13. **Participants' Personal Site** ; Advertise on members' personal site. What better way to reach friends...
14. **Tour the Province!** Get YOUTH REPS to go across provinces to chat with CF Youth about the site (and even just about being CF youth!)
15. **Morning Announcements in Schools** -Pre register a cool and different announcement that tells kids to check the website. Every participant would be responsible to have it aired at their school!
16. **Celebrity Endorsement** - Get a Canadian celebrity to support the program. Ben Mulroney supports Sponsor a Child... He might want to support CF youth...
17. **Humor Sells !** People like humor. I reckon, we should have a massive guy in a chicken suit, running down the street with flyers telling people they'll have a "Clucking Good Time" with CF Youth..... then again... I just always thought a man in a chicken suit was irresistible.

And now for the most original promotion approaches.....

18. **Tattoo Your Name on My Head!** (It's an actual campaign according to mum!) - This one guy on the net is willing to advertise our site by tattooing it on his head for a year, all for the low cost of \$35,000. Hey, if AJP wins the lottery, it could be an option!
19. **Corn Maze Ad** - We could get a massive plot of land and plant a corn maze in the shape of our web address. Again, we'll get bonus advertising when the media comes to take pictures of it. I am a genius! (from a participant in Alberta!)



Annex 2: Roles and Responsibilities

R & R: Roles and Responsibilities!

Okay, now let's get down to business...

To recognize your hard work and important contribution to this pilot project, you and each of your team members will receive a special gift. The value of this reward will depend on your role and the number of hours you contribute every week. When your work is complete, the gift is yours!

Each week, Louise (pilot project coordinator) will assess the work carried out by team leaders, co-leaders and members respectively. An appropriate number of points will be awarded to each personal file. If you've earned enough points - you'll receive a special gift!

Check out your R & R - and earn some very cool gifts!

Team Leaders

Your special gifts will be sent to you at two different times during the pilot project. First, at the beginning of August, and later that month when the project ends.

Team Co-Leaders

Your special gifts will be sent to you at two different times during the pilot project. First, at the beginning of August, and later that month when the project ends.

Team Members

Your special gifts will be mailed to you when the pilot project is complete, at the end of August.

Show me the ...!

Team Leaders

AS A TEAM LEADER, YOU WILL:

- Guide and motivate your team of ten through five weekly assignments.
- Act as a liaison between your team and the project coordinator, Louise. You will also be the team's primary contact with the project moderator.
- Be available to participate in six scheduled conference calls during the pilot project.
- Have your parent's permission form signed and returned to Allan Joyner Productions.
- Pass along information to your team members for each assignment. You'll help team members conduct research and contribute ideas.
- Evaluate the respective contribution of team members toward the project assignment to help the coordinator to award special gifts appropriately.
- Ensure that project rules are followed during team working sessions.
- Submit a report with team findings and work completed after each of the five work weeks.
- Help recruit team members and promote the website to potential visitors.
- Set an example for your team by generating creative ideas, respecting deadlines, and delivering requested materials.
- Complete the project evaluation form.
- Evaluate your team members each week based on their regular participation and their completion of five assignments.

Be sure you understand your role and weekly responsibilities! To qualify for your special gift, you need to fulfill these duties. If you're not sure...ask!

Be flexible! Your requirements may change (just a little) as the project advances.

Think Big! If you'd like to do more than your role requires...we're behind you all the way!

We anticipate that team leaders will work 7 weeks: from July 12 to August 29. They will contribute approximately 15 hours per week and their special gift will be valued at \$1,000.00 .



Team Co-Leaders

AS A TEAM CO-LEADER, YOU WILL :

- Act as the team leader's right hand-person by assisting in all tasks.
- Be available to participate in six conference calls during the pilot project.
- Promote the recruitment of members (during the first two weeks) and promote the website to encourage visitors to participate in contests and trivia challenges.
- Help recruit members and participants for feedback on the working website.
- Work closely with team leader during the five assignments.
- Have parent's permission form signed and return to Allan Joyner Productions.
- Help organize and prepare team working sessions.
- Set an example for team by generating creative ideas, respecting deadlines, and producing requested materials.
- Complete each assignment and submit work to the leader before due date.
- Complete the project evaluation form.

Be sure you understand your role and weekly responsibilities! To qualify for your special gift, you need to fulfill these duties. If you're not sure...ask!
Be flexible! Your requirements may change (just a little) as the project advances.
Think Big! If you'd like to do more than your role requires...we're behind you all the way!

**We anticipate that co-leaders will work 7 weeks: from July 12 to August 29.
They will contribute approximately 10 hours per week
and their special gift will be valued at \$800.00 .**



Team Members

AS A TEAM MEMBER, YOU WILL:

- Belong to one of four teams. You'll be guided by, and report to the team leader.
- Collaborate with team members to generate creative ideas, respect deadlines, and produce requested materials.
- Provide ideas, content and feedback for each of the five development phases of the pilot project.
- Participate in team meetings organized by team leaders.
- Help to promote the website to potential visitors.
- Provide your team leader with regular feedback throughout the pilot project.
- Complete the project evaluation form.
- Have parent's permission form signed and returned to Allan Joyner Productions.

Be sure you understand your role and weekly responsibilities! To qualify for your special gift, you need to fulfill these duties. If you're not sure...ask!

Be flexible! Your requirements may change (just a little) as the project advances.

Think Big! If you'd like to do more than your role requires...we're behind you all the way!

**We anticipate that members will work 5 weeks: from July 26 to August 29.
They will contribute approximately 3 hours per week
and their special gift will be valued at \$200.00 .**