Enriching Program Elements

The following program elements, although not required, have been previously applied and well received by program Participants. We highly encourage Facilitators to adopt as many elements as possible for instructional enrichment.

Community Partnerships: It is beneficial to have partnerships with local organizations and service providers should a Participant and/or their family need a referral to free or low-cost programs. You will be working closely with Participants and assessing their physical, mental, and academic needs. It is integral to refer a Participant to social services such as free or low-cost meals, health care, or mental health services, if the need arises. Representatives from these community organizations can be invited to Project ROOTS as guest speakers.

Daily Attendance Sheet: Sign-in sheets are recommended for each. A sign-in sheet should include the date of the session, the topics covered, and a name and initials field for Participants.

Field Trips: Field trips can offer educational and socially engaging opportunities! Field trips must be planned with attention to budget, transportation needs, and other logistics. Additional permission slips may be necessary for field trips (Please refer to Appendix A for a *Field Trip Guide).*

Graduation: The purpose of a graduation ceremony is to acknowledge the completion of the program and the Participants' active participation. A graduation ceremony should take place on the program's final meeting date. Graduation eligibility may be determined at your discretion, but it is recommended that certificates be awarded to Participants that have attended a majority of the sessions (Please refer to Appendix A for a sample *Graduation Guide).*

Guest speakers: Guest speakers add expertise and at times provide a new perspective for Participants. *Screen your guest speakers before* to ensure professionalism, age appropriateness, and relevance for your program. (Please refer to Appendix A for a *Guest Speaker Guide).*

Interactive Lessons: Experiential education that includes hands-on, creative, exploratory learning relevant to Participants' own life experiences is a holistic approach to education and can be a stimulating way to engage and excite learners. This means reading, writing, discussing poetry and other arts, the use of educational videos throughout lessons, and getting Participants out of their seats and into their communities as often as possible. Though some suggestions for incorporating arts and technology are integrated within each activity, specific videos and online activities should be current, previously researched and included as necessary.

Journals: Journals provide a space for reflection. Allow Participants to express themselves freely in their own journal whether through writing or drawing. Offer Participants support and anonymity by offering to read journal entries or showcasing their art that they might not otherwise feel comfortable with doing on their own. While the journal is

an excellent tool for self-reflection, journaling should more than often be a take-home opportunity.

Mentorship: If Participants vary in age, it is beneficial for older Participants to act as peer mentors for younger Participants. Positive peer-to-peer mentorship helps build social and communication skills, empathy, and motivation in both the mentor and mentee. Mentors and mentees should be paired based on assessments of each Participant, noting compatibility and shared interests. Mentors should be volunteers who are trained and given clear expectations. They can work with mentees for portions of lessons or on special projects. It is also beneficial to recruit volunteers from local high schools or colleges to act as mentors or co-Facilitators.

Motto/Mantra: A motto is a phrase or saying that is repeated as an affirmation or a reminder. A ROOTS motto can be a guiding principle for your group, a way to get the Participants' attention during a lesson, and an empowering affirmation for Participants. Some examples of mottos or mantras include:

- I am strong. I am vulnerable. I am human. I am perfect just the way I am.
- I believe in myself. I believe that I can do anything I put my mind to.
- I am powerful. I can change my life. I can change the world.
- When I say Project, you say ROOTS! Project, ROOTS! Project, ROOTS!

Planning/ Steering Committee: The lessons in this toolkit are designed to be operated and facilitated by staff members/volunteers at an existing program facility or host agency. It may be useful to create a planning committee who will oversee prepping for lessons and organizing ROOTS logistics, such as field trips. This planning committee can include the ROOTS Facilitator(s), host agency staff members, volunteers, and caregivers. The original Girls Only! program was operated by a unique collaborative of representatives from government agencies, including the San Diego County District Attorney's office, the City of San Diego's Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention, the San Diego Police Department, the Boys and Girls Club in Encanto, and representatives from community-based organizations. It will be at your discretion how often to meet, how to best communicate, and how roles and responsibilities will be divided.

Program Sustainability: There are no required costs for operating a Project ROOTS program. The host agency may incur regular programming costs for general supplies and staffing. Project ROOTS also operates through the support of volunteers and in-kind services. Some lessons and activities require materials that may need to be purchased. Similarly, it may be useful to budget money for field trips, transportation for field trips, and other expenses such as food for a graduation ceremony or caregiver orientation. Fundraising and applying for grants is recommended.

Questions/Comments Box: There are some questions or comments that many Participants may feel uncomfortable asking in front of the larger group. These questions/comments could be something that has happened to them personally, a question they might not want the group to know they have experienced or have thought about, or an anonymous thought or feeling about ROOTS, and so on. As we know, no question is a bad question, therefore it is encouraged to answer and discuss them all! The questions box can be a decorated recycled shoe box or card box. The box should be available at

every session and located in an area where questions may be submitted discreetly. Prepare pieces of paper where Participants can write down their questions and have them readily available next to the box. Aligning with the “safe space” standard, ensure the Facilitator is the only person with access to the questions by wrapping or taping shut the box. After each session, gather all the submissions and prepare to answer or discuss the questions/concerns at the following session. Keep in mind that the questions submitted are often sensitive so be cautious in the way you are presenting or reading the question, if appropriate. Answer the questions during the announcement portion of the day or if the question is related to the discussion for that day, you may also consider answering the question then.

Records: Keeping a portfolio for each Participant is a useful way to maintain records. Keep track of permission slips, completed Participant work, copies of grades, evaluations, referrals, and disciplinary actions. Records are useful for getting to know your Participants, measuring progress throughout the program, referring Participants to outside services as necessary, and they can be a reference point when highlighting a Participant’s work to their caregiver(s).

ROOTS Bucks: ROOTS Bucks are part of an incentive program designed to reward Participants for positive behavior. The protocol for ROOTS Bucks, how Participants can earn them and what they can be used for, should be introduced at the first session. ROOTS Bucks can be earned for active participation during activities, being helpful to the Facilitator or others in the group, earning certain grades in school, demonstrating progress in a personal goal, and/or for special occasions. Once Participants have earned a specified number of ROOTS Bucks, they can be used to “purchase” items from the “ROOTS store” (treats, books, movies, etc.), or they can be donated to a friend or donated to the “ROOTS Charity Fund” where the group collectively selects and donates items to a charity. ROOTS Bucks can be incorporated into lessons about financial literacy, coaching Participants to save and spend responsibly.