One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself.

- Malcolm X

You’re organized and ready to work. Now it’s time to get serious. Every Bridge Kids Group concentrates on an issue in their community and develops a creative solution to help address a specific problem.

In this Helping Hand Guide, you will learn about:
- Bridge Kids focus areas
- Brainstorming
- Reaching consensus
- Doing your research

Bridge Kids Groups choose from one of the following 5 focus areas, learn more about the topic and how it affects their community, and then design and carry out a project that has a positive impact in their community. The Bridge Kids focus areas are:

**Economic Development**
projects that generate income by expanding an existing business or starting a new business through social enterprise and microfinance

**Education**
projects that expand access to education, promote the value of education, and/or improve the quality of education at all levels

**Environment**
projects that promote protection of the natural world and address climate change, renewable energy and the sustainable use of resources

**Girls’/Young Women’s Rights**
projects that improve girls’ and young women’s access to education, training, careers, sports and other opportunities and promote the rights of girls and young women to have greater personal choice
Health
projects that help to prevent the spread of disease, promote good physical, mental and emotional
health and wellness and/or improve access to care

Discuss these areas in your group. Get a sense of which topics your group finds most interesting.

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorm! A brainstorming session is a time when a group thinks freely and spontaneously
generates ideas about a given subject. Choose the 2 or 3 most popular focus areas. Take each
focus area one by one. Ask your group to think about each focus area in relation to your
community. What comes to mind? What do you see when you walk/ride through your community?
What are everyday people saying about the topic? What's positive? What needs to change?

Tips for Brainstorming
- Write ideas on large paper or a chalkboard so everyone can see.
- Every idea counts! And every person counts. Don't put a lid on creativity, so write down
every contribution.
- If an idea is unclear, ask the person who suggested it to explain further.

Organize your Ideas
Review the ideas and try to put related ideas into main categories. This task will help you
organize your thoughts and eliminate repetition.

For example, suppose your group discussed health and some of the ideas from your
brainstorming session were:
- We don't have a hospital or clinic in our neighborhood
- Medicine is very expensive
- Increase in diabetes
- Most people don't have proper nutrition
- There are many teenage pregnancies
- Healthy food is more expensive than unhealthy food
- There are many cases of asthma
- Young people don't go to the dentist regularly

You may put your ideas into the following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCESS TO CARE</th>
<th>PHYSICAL CONDITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No hospital/ clinic</td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive medicine</td>
<td>Teenage pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of proper nutrition</td>
<td>Asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Healthy food expensive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of dental care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Narrow Down Your Focus Area Choices

Once you have organized your ideas, it will be easier to determine which focus area your group would like to choose.

- Ask your group to take a few minutes to think about their number one choice for your focus area.
- Take a vote. Ask each person to only vote once. They should vote for their top choice. One by one, call out the name of each focus area you brainstormed about, asking those for whom that topic is their first choice. Record the number. The focus area with highest number of votes wins.

REACHING CONSENSUS

Consensus is collective agreement. If there is a clear winner from your vote, you have reached consensus. If there are two topics that are very close in number of votes, you may need to do a little more work to reach consensus.

- Ask for two volunteers from your group, one who feels strongly about one of the top focus areas and one who feels strongly about the other.
- Give each volunteer a chance to advocate for his/her topic. To advocate is to support or defend a cause. Each volunteer should take a turn trying to persuade the group to choose his/her topic by saying why it is important in the community and why the group would be successful when they do a project in that focus area. The volunteer can also talk about how the issue has touched him/her personally and why they feel strongly about it.
- Have a final vote. After each volunteer has pleaded his/her case, the group can have one last discussion and then take a final vote. You now have your focus area!

DOING YOUR RESEARCH

Now that you have your focus area, you need to learn more about it. Don’t move too quickly to start to design your project. You will want your project to address a real need, so you want to learn more about your topic in relation to your community. Here are some questions to get you started:

- What are some general facts about your focus area?
- What is the impact of your topic on your community as a whole? On families? On individuals?
- Why do problems related to your topic exist in your community?
- Are there individuals, organizations, or government offices working on the issue?
- What are people in your community saying/doing about the topic?
- What are some ways people in other communities or countries have approached the topic?
What are some creative strategies people others have used to address this issue?

Research Strategies

- Utilize
  - Reliable sources on the internet
  - Books
  - Magazines
  - Newspapers
  - Interviews
    - Find out who has information about your topic and talk with them.

- Dig deeper – Don’t just settle for easy answers. Think and ask questions.
- Make sure everyone in the group has an assignment. Work individually or in groups.
- Give your group a reasonable amount of time to do the research.
- Get together and share your findings!
- Is there anything else you need to know?

You should be feeling quite knowledgeable at this point. Now it’s time to make some concrete plans! See

Helping Hand Guide to Planning Your Bridge Kids Project