



## APPLICATION TOOL 8

### Evaluating Your Programming Mix

One of the five most important factors cited by pastors and youth ministers for the effectiveness of their youth ministries was the *wide variety and nature of youth programs*. They described an impressive diversity of events and program features that characterize the youth ministries of their congregations. No one program made the difference, rather it was the diversity of programs and activities that offered young people ways to growing religiously and spiritually. The most common youth ministry practices in the EYM Study included:

1. Spiritual support groups
2. Bible study and religious education
3. Service and mission trips
4. Retreats
5. Prayer and spiritual formation
6. Peer ministry and youth leadership
7. Youth-oriented worship
8. Family and intergenerational activities
9. Special events

Use the following questions to evaluate the overall programming mix of your youth ministry.

#### **Balance of Youth Ministry Practices**

Use the nine most common youth ministry practices identified in the EYM Study to reflect on the balance of programming in your congregation's youth ministry.

- What are your strongest youth ministry practices (programs, activities)? Use the nine most common practices as a guide to identifying your strengths.

- Do you have a good balance and variety among the different types of youth ministry practices in your congregation?
- Is your programming mix too oriented toward one or two major programs, neglecting other youth ministry practices and programs?
- How can you begin to expand your congregation's youth ministry practices?

### **Diversity of Youth Ministry Settings**

As the EYM Study found, effective ministry with youth happens in the life of the whole congregation, in the programs and activities of youth ministry, and at home. Use the following questions to reflect on the diversity of settings in your congregation's ministry with youth.

- Where is the primary focus and energy for your congregation's youth ministry—in the whole congregation, in the youth ministry programs, or in the family and household?
- Does your congregation's youth ministry have a good balance among the three settings? Do you overemphasize one setting (e.g., youth programming ) to the neglect of the other settings? What are the consequences of an overemphasis on one setting or the neglect of the other settings?
- How can you transform some of your youth programming into family and whole church programs or activities (e.g., developing family or parent-teen service projects, or church-wide mission trips)? (See Chapter 3 for congregational ideas and Chapter 5 for family and household ideas.)

### **Types of Programming**

There are three fundamental types of programs: 1) large group, gathered programs, 2) small group programs, and 3) individualized or one-on-one programs. Use the following questions to reflect on the different types of programming in your congregation's youth ministry.

- What is the current balance among the three types of programming? If you had to assign percentages to each type of programming, what would your profile look like?
- Does your congregation's youth ministry have a good balance among the three types of programming? Does your youth ministry overuse one type of program and underutilize the other two (e.g., too many large group gathered programs and an underutilization of small group or individualized and one-on-one programs)?
- Can you offer three versions of the same activity—as a large group program, small group program, and individualized or mentored program? Could you reach more young people by offering the same activity in three formats?
- How can you use the new digital technologies (the Internet, social networking, online learning activities and video podcasts, etc.) in conjunction with each of the three types of programming?

## Variety of Program Formats

There is so much competition for time that a youth ministry must be very creative in offering program formats that work for young people and their families today.

- How much variety in program formats does your congregation's youth ministry incorporate: weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, extended time, full day, overnight, weekend, weeklong, after-school, etc.?
- What are the most popular formats? Which formats are underutilized?

How can you use the variety of program formats to make it easier for youth to participate and/or to attract more youth participation? Can you offer the same program in multiple formats to increase participation?