**CITRA’s Building a Community Legacy Together (BCLT) Program**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

1. **What is the BCLT Program?**

The BCLT Program is an intergenerational program for high-school aged youth and older adults (age 65 and over). The program trains youth to interview elders 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. Older adults are an underutilized resource in communities who have a wealth of knowledge to share, and youth, in particular, can benefit from their life lessons. The BCLT model is based on decades of experience developing intergenerational programs at Cornell University, including CITRA’s Legacy Project.

1. **What is the goal of the program?**

The goal of the BCLT Program is to create meaningful interactions between youth and older adults, allowing youth to learn from older adults and older adults to share their wisdom with younger generations. BCLT promotes respect for older adults and the wisdom of age, and it seeks to combat ageism, including youths’ attitudes towards elders and elders’ attitudes towards youth.

1. **Who can run the BCLT Program?**

Any youth organization or aging services organization can choose to run the BCLT Program by following the training materials. Sponsoring organizations should have experience in conducting community-based educational programs, including participant recruitment. It often works best in collaboration with two sponsoring organizations, ideally one organization that serves youth and one that serves elders.

1. **Who can 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 among middle school-aged youth and younger. The program is also 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. Elders that are recruited should show no signs of dementia or mental health issues.

1. **What is the structure of the program?**

The BCLT Program is comprised of three components: the youth training, the youth and elder interviews, and the youth-led community presentation. The program includes an eight-hour training for youth, typically divided into four two-hour sessions before and after the interviews with elders (number and length of sessions can vary according to trainers and participants’ schedules). After the interviews, the youth review and organize their lessons learned from the elders. As a group, the youth then give a community presentation on the advice they learned from all the elders.

1. **What is the difference between a BCLT and an oral history interview?**

The goal of a BCLT interview is to get information from the whole experience of a “life well lived" with the intent of gleaning specific advice from the interviewee. Life stories are secondary, important only for putting the advice in context.The goal of an oral history interview, on the other hand, is to learn something about an historical period from the point of view of someone who lived through it. Lessons about life may emerge, but it is secondary to the historical “storytelling” narrative.

1. **What are the expected benefits of the program?**

In addition to gaining wisdom from elders 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. For older adults, the program allows them to make meaningful connections and pass on their knowledge to younger generations. This may, in turn, decrease their sense of social isolation, increase their self-esteem and sense of purpose, and improve health. On a community level, the BCLT Program encourages respect between generations and captures a diminishing resource of knowledge.

1. **How to get more information?**
For more information about the BCLT Program, contact the Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging (CITRA) by email at citrainfo@cornell.edu. You can also find more information and training materials online at <http://citra-bclt.human.cornell.edu/>.