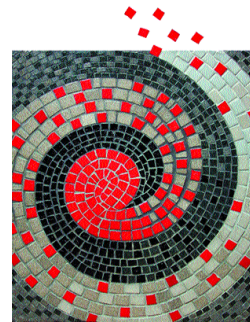


# Explore Meaning and Renewal in Youth Work

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**“One of the most important things in recruitment and retention is individual capacity building—promoting self-awareness by focusing on who they are and how that guides what they want do.”**

## BEGINNING WITH YOUNG YOUTH WORKERS

Leadership & Renewal Outfitters offers a year-long Journey Fellowship program for young adults, ages 18–22 years old, who have indicated they want to work with youth. The fellowship application asks for responses that will be used to determine if interested individuals are *ready* to do the work, *willing* to commit the time, and *able* to work around jobs and other commitments to participate in the program. Each application is read and scored by three to five raters, and the top twenty-five applicants are accepted into the program as Explorers. Even though the experience is focused on the individual, group membership is important to the process because it promotes networking and support among the participants.

The program consists of four weekend retreats that help participants explore who they are and what they want to be doing with their lives. In addition, they are mentored by experienced youth workers and work as interns to gain exposure to youth work. Costs for housing, meals, retreats, internships, and materials are paid by The Journey Fellowship program. Explorers who have completed the program help recruit applicants for the following year on their high school or college campuses, and become a good voice for promoting the youth work profession.

## ONGOING RENEWAL

Leadership & Renewal Outfitters also offers a year-long Journey Fellowship program for experienced youth workers who are interested in renewing themselves personally and professionally. As with the Explorers program, twenty-five applicants (called “Trailblazers”) are chosen to participate each year. The focus of the retreats is on individual renewal and reflection, but being part of the group builds a networking and supportive community. The purpose of the Trailblazers program is to promote individual rejuvenation, help participants reconnect with their reasons for being in youth work, and create a framework in which they can develop better strategies for both doing meaningful work and sustaining themselves in the process. They also learn how they can go back and help others reconnect and renew themselves.

*Over the past three years, **The Journey Fellowship** has served 147 youth workers: 76 were perspective youth workers (ages 18 to 22 years old), 36 were early-career youth workers with less than 5 years experience, and 34 were tenured youth workers with 10–30 years of experience. Since 2003, 26.5% of the Journey Fellows were African American, .5% Asian-American, 2% Latino and 71% white. 54 different youth-serving organizations have been represented in the fellowship and an additional 57 youth-serving organizations have had Journey interns serving their organizations.*

