



Activities Guide

For the 2013 -2014 Festival

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American Friends
Service Committee



Introduction

Why Youth and the Federal Budget?

Young people are a huge sector of US society, whose voices are largely ignored by those who set the policies and make the laws. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there were 40,717,537 youth age 10-19 in the United States—14% of the total U.S. population. As one IHTD participant put it, “It’s important that adults understand that we are being affected by the decisions that are made for our country.”

Young people across the country certainly are feeling the effects of an economic and political system that benefits the wealthy and corporations at the expense of everyday, working people. Here are just a few examples:

The jobs crisis. In July 2011, the number of unemployed, work-eligible youth was 4.1 million, which puts youth unemployment at 18.1%—more than double the national average.

The student debt crisis continues to ensnare an entire generation of college-bound young people with the nightmare of never-ending payments. The Federal Reserve estimates that outstanding student loan debt has surpassed \$1,000,000,000,000 and college dropout rates are on the rise.

And we can’t leave out the *attacks on public education* in general, which have severely affected children of color, and youth living in low-income communities. Sixty percent of the federal budget goes to military spending, while a mere 6 percent is allocated towards education, and federal policy is focused on market-based reforms that encourage privatization.

At the same time, *the militarization generation* has seen exponential spending increases in the Pentagon, the Department of Homeland Security, border militarization, and the mass incarceration of low-income communities, communities of color and immigrant communities during their lifetime. Despite all of the devastating social and economic crises affecting the lives of young

people in the US, social theorist Henry Giroux points out that “Children have fewer rights than almost any other group and fewer institutions protecting these rights. Consequently, their voices and needs are almost completely absent from the debates, policies, and legislative practices that are constructed in terms of their needs.”

But what if youth voices and needs were central to the discussion around our federal spending priorities? Would things look differently?

The **‘If I Had a Trillion Dollars’ Youth Film Festival** asks young people, ages 10-23, to share their opinions, ideas, and visions for the discretionary spending portion of the federal budget. The festival is geared towards educating and inspiring young people to engage in civic activism. With IHTD, young people have the opportunity to learn about federal priorities, explore their own priorities, and potentially travel to Washington D.C. to share their opinions with legislators themselves.

And on another level, the festival gives adult allies in the movement the chance to listen to and learn from young people about the most important issues affecting their lives. By circulating youth-produced short videos and creating a national audience for IHTD, we are able to integrate the diverse voices and ideas of visionary young people into the nation’s debate about the budget and federal spending.

It’s time to stop ignoring, and start listening, to the voices of kids, teenagers and young adults as we seek social and economic justice in the U.S. Thank you for your interest in the “If I Had a Trillion Dollars” Youth Film Festival!

Introduction

How to Use this Guide

The “If I Had a Trillion Dollars” Youth Film Festival is a way for young people to get engaged with the economic cost of war, our country’s inflated military budget and the over \$1 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthiest. Emancipatory education is designed to encourage civic responsibility, foster a critical view of power and inequality, assist students in becoming catalysts for change, and advocate practices that are critical, engaged, and empowering.

This **Activities Guide** is meant to provide a context for young people creating videos for the contest. Through group activities, journaling and facilitated discussion, youth will gain an understanding of how our federal budget works and what our nations priorities are in terms of budgeting, and begin to explore their own personal budget priorities.

The Curriculum is broken into four parts: **Budgets 101, Checking Out the Facts, Exploring Our Priorities, and Additional Resources.** Each section has a few activities that can be done together, or you can pick and choose which activities are best suited for your group. The Learning Objective, Materials, Activity Time and Directions are listed at the beginning of each activity. Some activities have Suggested Discussion Prompts in boxes at the end of the activity. These are meant to help you facilitate a discussion with the group to get to the meaning and main Learning Objective for the activity.

Before getting started, we recommend that you read through the entire Activities Guide and choose activities that suit your group and that you have time for. For example, if you only have an afternoon with your group you may only want to do 1-2 activities. If you have a couple of days, you could try all of them! Some activities require handouts that are listed on separate

pages from the activities. It is designed this way to make it easy for you to make copies for your group. Some activities also may require the internet and access to the National Priorities Project website. Be sure to keep this in mind when you decide which activities to use.

Additional Resources and ways for young people to stay engaged with the issues discussed are at the end of this Activities Guide. We hope that this is helpful and that young people will be motivated and inspired to work in their communities.

Thank you for your work to help build a better U.S. for all of us! We hope to see you in Washington, DC!



IHTD participants travel from Chicago to DC



Budget Basics

What's a budget?

What are priorities?

What are current spending categories?

What's the current budget breakdown?

Budget Basics

Glossary of Terms

A **Budget** is essentially made up of two things: money in and money out. The activities presented in this guide, and the aim of the “If I Had a Trillion Dollars” Youth Film Festival, is to engage young people in exploring the ‘money out’ part of the U.S. Federal Discretionary Budget. That said, it can still be useful to check in with youth participants to make sure they have a solid understanding of where the money is coming from, which of course includes taxes. If the youth you’re working with have an interest in exploring more about the ‘money in’ aspect of the federal budget, they should check out the “[Where does the money come from page](#)” of the National Priorities Project, at www.nationalpriorities.org

A **Priority** is something that is regarded and treated as more important than other things. In terms of the federal budget, priorities are those spending categories (listed in full below) that receive more funding than others. Take a look at the chart on the next page. Spending on militarism is clearly a priority of the US Government, given the current federal budget breakdown. But do the current spending decisions reflect the priorities of the public, and of our communities across the U.S.? Or do they reflect the priorities of multinational corporations (such as weapons manufacturers) and wealthy individuals (the majority of US Senators are millionaires!) who have more power than they should? That’s what we hope you’ll explore in the following activities.

The following **Spending Categories** are used by National Priorities Project to sort federal spending, though they do not correspond to the official government functions. Rather, they are meant to organize the many government subfunctions into intuitive groupings:

Discretionary Spending is negotiated between the President and Congress each year. This is where everyday people have the most potential power to affect change.

Mandatory Spending is dictated by law and covers categories such as social security and medicaid.

Income Security & Labor includes funding for job training, disability, retirement, unemployment insurance, and social security.

Health includes funding for Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP and other health-related expenses.

Military includes funding for national defense and security, nuclear weapons activities and international security assistance.

Food includes funding for agriculture and nutritional assistance.

Veterans' Benefits includes funding for healthcare, housing, and income benefits for veterans.

Transportation includes funding for the development and support of air, water, ground, and other transportation.

Education includes funding for elementary, secondary, higher and vocational education.

Environment, Energy & Science includes funding for natural resources and environment, supply and use of energy, and science and research activities.

Housing & Community includes funding for housing assistance and credits, community development, disaster assistance, and services supporting social needs.

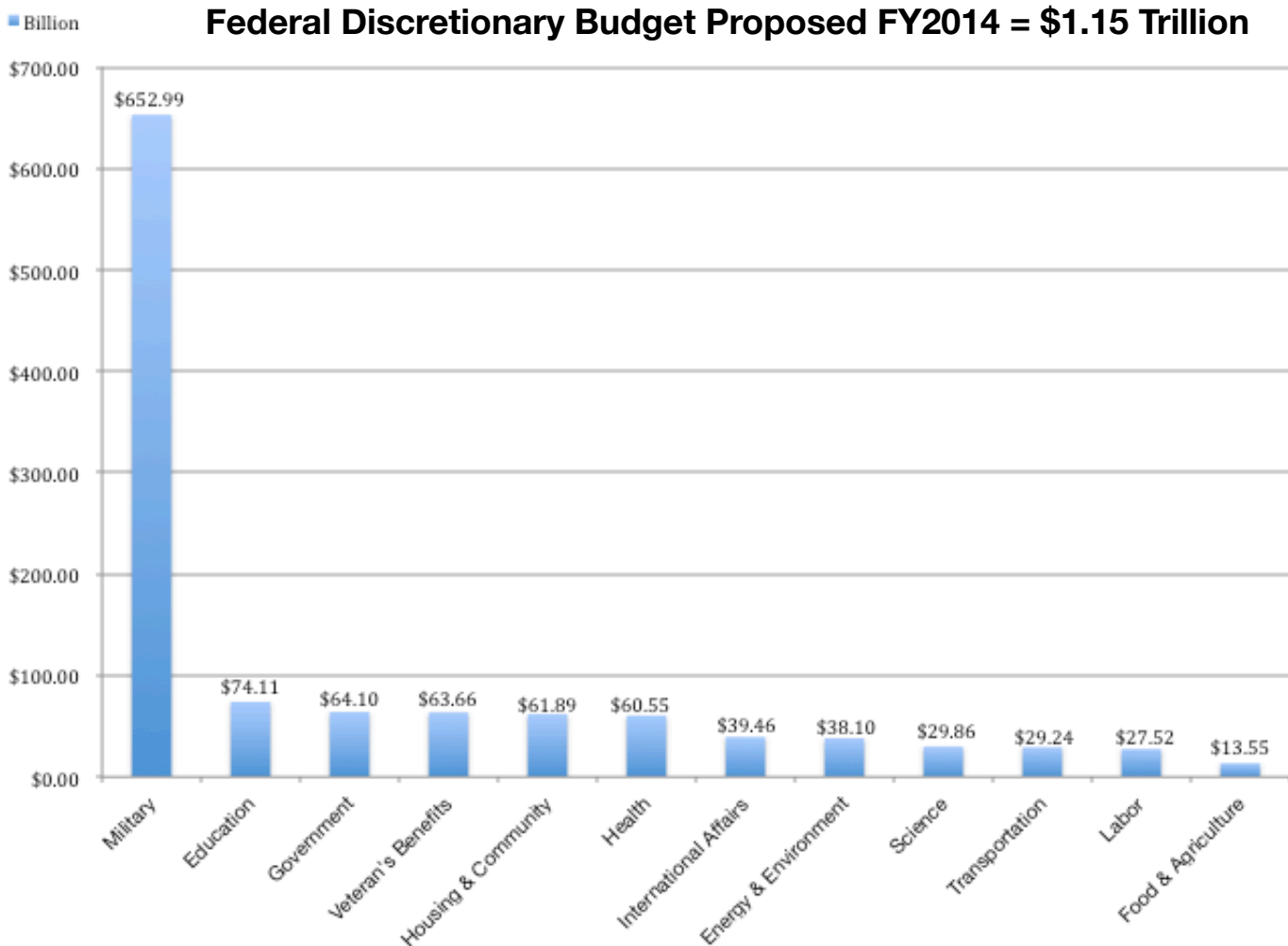
International Affairs includes funding for diplomatic, development, and humanitarian activities abroad.

Government includes funding for commerce, law enforcement, overhead costs of federal government, and undistributed offsetting receipts.

Interest on Debt includes interest being paid on national debt.

Budget Basics

Charts



Does the current allocation of tax dollars reflect your priorities?



Budget Basics

Counting Pennies Activity

Learning Objective: To help young people better understand the priorities at the center of the discretionary budget.

Materials:

- FY 2014 Proposed Discretionary Budget Chart
- Index cards or signs with the names of individual *Spending Categories* (page 5),
- 100 pennies* for each participant or small groups
- 1 Minute for Peace Handouts

Activity time: 30-40 minutes

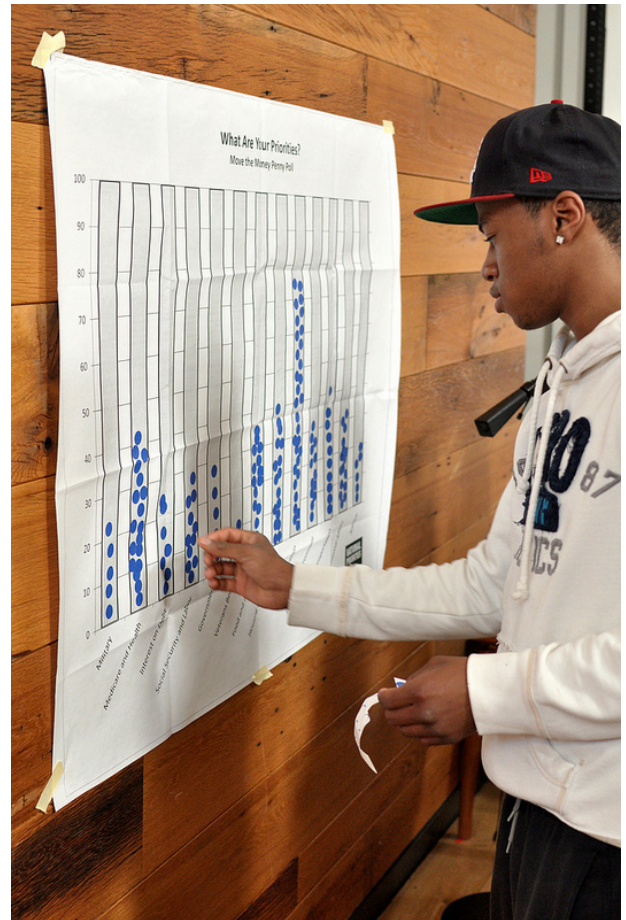
Directions:

1. Lay out Spending Category signs.
2. Start the activity by reviewing the *Spending Categories* (on page 5). Ask participants for their definitions of each term, filling in as needed.
3. Give each participant or small group 100 pennies. Explain that each penny stands for 1% of the whole. (Review that 100% = 1 whole if necessary). *Be sure to save 100 pennies to show the percentages that are actually allocated to each spending category at the end of the activity.*
4. Ask participants to consider each of these spending categories, and to consider how they want their tax dollars spent.
5. Instruct members to place the number of pennies by the sign for each spending category in the amount/percentage they think that category deserves. (i.e. If you think Education deserves 30% of the budget, 30 pennies should be placed by the sign for Education.)
6. Once participants have finished placing their 100 pennies by their priorities, take some time to share back with the larger group.
7. Share the actual FY 2014 Proposed Discretionary Budget Chart with participants. (If you have them, distribute 1 Minute for Peace handouts to participants.
8. Have a discussion about the activity - use the prompts below if needed.

*Instead of piling pennies on Spending Category cards, participants can also use: pennies in glass jars, poker chips, candy, sticker dots or anything else to represent a percentage of how tax dollars are spent.

Suggested Discussion Prompts:

- Which spending category did you give the most pennies to? Why?
- Which spending category did you give the least pennies to? Why?
- Did your priorities match the current priorities? Why do you think that is?
- What do you think of about the current priorities? How do they make you feel?
- Was it difficult to decide how to spend your pennies? Why or why not?
- If you worked in a small group, how did you decide how to spend your pennies?





Checking Out the Facts

How is poverty in the US connected to the federal budget?

What priorities does current spending reflect?

What are some budget trade-offs?

Checking Out The Facts

“The state of the States - True or False?” Activity

Learning Objective: To offer young people the opportunity to engage with important facts regarding the state of health care, education, employment, energy and poverty in the United States, and compare with the state of spending on militarism.

Materials: A pre-determined list of 10-15 True or False Statements (See Checking Out The Facts: Sample True/False Sheet on pages 10-11).

Activity time: 30 minutes



Directions: This activity can be done as a simple a Stand up / Sit Down activity.

Stand Up / Sit Down*:

Tell the group you are going to read them several statements. If they think that the statement is true, stand up. If they think that it is false, sit down. You (or a volunteer participant) can read the statements one at a time. Ask participants to explain why they think this statement is true or false before revealing the answer. After going through the list of statements, debrief the activity with the group (use the prompts below if needed).

** Alternatively, have youth raise / lower hands in order to account for accessibility needs of the group you're working with.*

Suggested Discussion Prompts:

- *Were you surprised by any of the facts you heard today? If so, which ones and why?*
- *What do you think of the facts you learned today?*
- *How do you feel about the facts you learned today?*
- *What needs changing?*
- *Who has the power to change some of these facts?*
- *What could you do/how could you get involved?*

Checking Out The Facts

Sample True/False Sheet

1. More than 3 million people are likely to experience homelessness in a given year.
True - And 1.3 million of them are children.
2. There are more empty homes than there are homeless people in the U.S.
True - For every person experiencing homelessness, there are around 6 houses sitting empty, owned by banks and multinational corporations.
3. 10% of children in the US live in poverty. **False** - Over 16.4 million children live in poverty in the United States, which is 22% of all children in the US.
4. In 2010, 14.5% of households were food insecure (frequently hungry) for at least some time during the year. **True** - that's 17.2 million households!
5. Last year, 84 million people in the U.S. went without health insurance for a time last year or had out-of-pocket costs that were so high relative to their income they were considered underinsured. **True** - That means nearly half of all working-age US adults lacked access to quality healthcare last year.
6. In 2009, 25% of bridges and 33% of roads in the US received a "C" grade for safety, passing safety standards. **False** - 1/4 of bridges and 1/3 of roads received a "D" grade!
7. The national unemployment rate remains at around 8.2%. **True**
8. For youth ages 16-24, the average unemployment rate was more than twice national average at 18.1% in July 2011. **True** - And the breakdown of unemployment by race is even more concerning: white youth -15.9%, Black youth - 31.0%, and Latino youth - 20.1%
9. In Philadelphia this year, the Mayor closed 23 public schools due to "budget cuts" while approving \$4 million for construction of a new prison facility. **False** - He approved spending \$400 million for the construction of a new prison, after closing 23 public schools!
10. US military spending accounts for 25% of all military spending worldwide.
False - The answer is 42%!
11. The US locks up 25% of the entire world's prison population, even though we only make up 5% of the general population globally. **True** - Making the United States is the most militarized and most imprisoning country in the world.
12. The U.S. intends to spend \$28 billion per year to militarize our borders, including the continued construction of an 850 mile wall on the border with Mexico, operation of surveillance drones, construction of detention facilities, and more. **True** - Each mile of the

Checking Out The Facts

Sample True/False Sheet (Cont'd)

highly militarized border wall costs between \$6 and \$9 million, though it is largely ineffective at its stated purpose of stopping unauthorized border crossings.

13. Since 1971, the US has spent \$1 Billion on policing and incarcerating people as part of the 'War on Drugs.' **False** - *the US has spent over \$1 Trillion on prisons and policing efforts targeting working class and Black and Latino communities over the past 40 years.*
14. Since 2001, US taxpayers have lost over \$1.1 trillion in tax cuts to the wealthiest 10% of Americans. **False** - *Tax Cuts for only the wealthiest 5% of Americans have kept over \$1.1 trillion out of funds available to the public and in the pockets of an elite few.*
15. All corporations pay their fair share in taxes here in the US. **False** - *Due to loopholes and tax evasion methods, many of America's largest corporations pay \$0 in taxes, while many others pay tax rates of around 10% (even though the corporate tax rate is 35%). This means billions of dollars to be used for the public interest are lost every year.*
16. The collective total of all student loan debt in the U.S. has reached more than \$1 trillion dollars. **True** - *This massive debt owed to student loan companies means college grads are less likely to start small businesses and/or own homes than previous generations.*

Sources:

1. National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty
2. CNBC.com
3. US Census 2010
4. USDA Economic Research Service
5. Commonwealth Fund 2012 Biennial Health Insurance Survey
6. American Society of Civil Engineers 2009
7. US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011
8. US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011
9. Alternet.org (<http://www.alternet.org/philly-closes-23-public-schools-generously-builds-400-million-prison-where-kids-can-hang-instead>)
10. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
11. Michelle Alexander "The New Jim Crow"
12. Business Week <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-03-13/the-price-tag-for-sealing-the-u-dot-s-dot-border-isnt-pretty>
13. Prison Policy Institute <http://www.countthecosts.org/sites/default/files/Economics-briefing.pdf>
14. National Priorities Project
15. US Uncut
16. New York Times <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/11/business/economy/student-loan-debt-weighing-down-younger-us-workers.html?pagewanted=all>

Checking Out The Facts

Examining the Budget Trade-Offs

Learning Objective:

To offer young people the opportunity to explore budget trade-offs using the National Priorities Project “Trade-Offs” online tool.

Materials:

Internet Access or pre-selected trade-offs from National Priorities Project website (See *Sample Budget Trade-off Resource Sheet* on the next page), index cards.

Activity time: 45 minutes

Directions:

1. Visit the National Priorities Project website Trade-offs page at www.nationalpriorities.org
2. Under the ‘Interactive Data’ tab, select ‘TRADEOFFS’
3. Select your state. You can also choose your City, Congressional District and/or County.
4. Choose a program and note the cost of that program to taxpayers in your chosen location.
5. Step 2 of the trade-offs tool lets you reallocate the tax dollars to reflect your own priorities.
6. Create color coded index cards:
 - On one set of cards, write the dollar figure on one side and the program that is funded for that amount on the other side.
 - On the other set of cards, write the dollar figure on one side and the possible trade-offs (choose 1 or 2 for each card) on the other side.
7. Pass out cards and ask for volunteers to read corresponding cards. (So for \$100 million you can have... or you can have...)

Suggested Discussion Prompts

- *Do these trade-offs make sense to you?*
- *What were your first reactions to some of these trade-offs?*
- *Did any of the trade-offs really stand out for you? If so which one and why?*
- *What would these trade-offs make possible?*
- *How would the U.S. look, act, feel, and be different?*
- *How are these differences important to you or those you care for and love?*

Checking Out The Facts

Sample Budget Trade-off Resource Sheet

Taxpayers in the city of Chicago, Illinois will pay \$5.27 billion for Enacted Department of Defense for FY2014. For the same amount of money, the following could be provided:

- 50,000 Children Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year **AND**
- 40,000 Elementary School Teachers for One Year **AND**
- 50,000 Head Start Slots for Children for One Year **AND**
- 50,000 Households with Renewable Electricity - Solar Photovoltaic for One Year **AND**
- 50,000 Households with Renewable Electricity-Wind Power for One Year **AND**
- 50,000 Military Veterans Receiving VA Medical Care for One Year **AND**
- 50,000 People Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year **AND**
- 50,000 Scholarships for University Students for One Year **AND**
- 50,000 Students receiving Pell Grants of \$5550

*With **\$175.84 Million** still remaining unspent.*



Exploring Our Priorities

*What spending categories matter to you most?
What priorities do you share with your peers?
What have other youth made videos about?*

Exploring Our Priorities

Power of Our Words

Learning Objective: To offer members a space to reflect on their ideas about community and national needs, personal priorities.

Materials: Notebooks, pens/pencils, decorative materials (optional)

Activity Time: Flexible

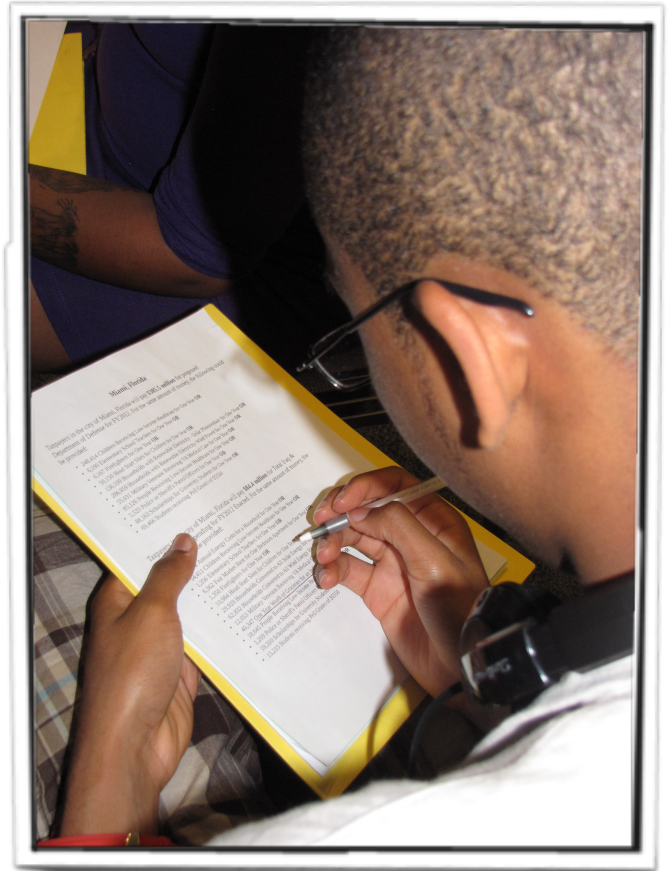
Directions:

If group members don't already have journals, this activity can be extended by asking members to decorate notebooks or journals to personalize them for their reflections. Journal entries can be made at the beginning or end of several meetings, or can be done as a longer reflection activity. Create space for members to share excerpts from their journal entries in pairs or small groups.

Suggested Journal Prompts:

Choose prompts to inspire reflection about personal priorities. Print local trade-offs from <http://www.nationalpriorities.org/tradeoffs> and ask group members to reflect on their reaction to these trade-offs:

- *What my city/town needs more than anything is...*
- *What my school needs more than anything is...*
- *What I love about my city/town is...*
- *If I could change anything in the world I would change...*
- *My top three national priorities are... Why?*
- *My top three community priorities are... Why?*



Guiding Questions for Facilitators

- *Is it difficult to choose between priorities?*
- *What are the first priorities that come to mind?*
- *Do you have any priorities that you don't see reflected in the trade-offs?*
- *How did you decide your priorities?*

Exploring Our Priorities

A Living Pie Chart

Learning Objective: To offer young people the opportunity to explore personal priorities for the national budget.

Materials: Signs for 5-6 major Spending Categories (see page 4).

Activity time: 30-40 minutes

Directions:

- Hang signs for Health, Education, Military, International Relations, etc.) in different corners/ locations in the room.
- Ask members to “vote” for the Spending Category that best answers each question that you ask by standing by that sign.
- After members have settled by the signs of their choice, ask them to explain why. (This can be a debate or simply a quick share.)
- Ask the following questions:

-Which of these spending categories is the most important to you?

-Which of these is least important to you?

-What values and/or beliefs are reflected in your answer?

-Which of these do you think receives the most federal funding currently?

-Which of these do you think receives the least federal funding currently?



Exploring Our Priorities

Artistic Expressions

Learning Objective: To offer young people the opportunity to explore personal priorities for the federal budget, and consider the similarities and differences between personal and collective priorities.

Materials: Poster board, art supplies, journals

Activity time: 1 hour

Directions:

1. Ask participants to choose one budget priority that is important to them personally. Instruct them to journal for a few minutes about why it's a priority for them, and how it might benefit others in their community as well.
2. Ask participants to design a poster, individually or in pairs that displays a message about their budget priority, why it is important to them, and how it might also benefit their others in their community.
3. Distribute art supplies and give youth plenty of time to create their posters.
4. Ask participants to share their finished posters with the whole group, and have some discussion about the posters as they are presented. Be sure to have each artist verbally explain their priority, and reasons that it is important to them and could be important for others, along with descriptions of their poster. Allow time for questions and answers amongst the youth participants.



Suggested Discussion Prompts:

- *Why did you choose this as your priority?*
- *What commonalities did you notice between the posters?*
- *What differences?*
- *What is made possible if priority was given to this category over others? Provide positive and negative consequences.*
- *What happens when people speak up and “advocate” for their priorities?*

Exploring Our Priorities

Video Screening

Learning Objective: To engage young people in facts relating to social and economic issues and to start thinking about personal priorities.

Materials: “If I Had A Trillion Dollars” DVD or youtube channel

Activity time: 30-40 minutes

Directions:

- Using the “IHTD” DVD or youtube channel, view last years selected films.
- After the films, discuss the budget priorities reflected in each.
- What techniques did each filmmaker use to tell the story of the federal budget?
- What techniques might you use to make your video?

Guiding Questions for Facilitators

- *Did your priorities match the priorities of other youth?*
- *Were there any repeating themes within the films? If so, what?*
- *Why do you think so many youth chose to focus on education?*
- *Have you ever experienced budget cuts in your community? If so, what kind of cuts and how did they impact your community?*
- *What cause are you most passionate about?*
- *What budget priority would your film focus on?*



Exploring Our Priorities

Create your IHTD video!

Learning Objectives: To learn the basics of video production; to effectively communicate ideas about personal and collective priorities through media; to create a 3 minute video for the “If I Had a Trillion Dollars” Youth Film Festival!

Materials: Video Camera, Microphone (optional), Computer, Editing Software, Creativity!

Activity time: Varies.

Directions:

1. For a more in depth look at how to produce a video for the IHTD Youth Film Festival, please see our IHTD **Video Making Toolkit**. It is available for download at ihtd.org/resources.



Additional Resources

Invest in People, Not the Pentagon: This is an AFSC kit for community groups, Quaker meetings, faith communities, students, and anyone else who is ready to work in this crucial moment to make sure that vital social programs are preserved and that deep cuts to Pentagon spending are made. <https://afsc.org/resource/invest-people-not-pentagon>

Move the Money Toolkit offers all the materials you need to enter the current national debate about Pentagon spending, while building the capacity of colleagues and allies to join in as well. Designed as a training of trainers, Move the Money's resources include a detailed blueprint for actual, participatory training, as well as fact sheets and backgrounders on broad range of topics. <http://nationalpriorities.org/en/analysis/2013/move-money/>

National Priorities Project's **Budget basics** materials will build your capacity to understand and have an impact on federal spending and revenue decisions. <http://nationalpriorities.org/en/budget-basics/>

NPP's **Database:** This one of-a-kind database contains state and local level data on federal spending and correlated social well-being indicators in eight issue areas. Our categories include: health, education, energy, housing, labor, poverty and military. The database allows users to note actual localized federal spending trends, as well as the potential impact of that spending. <http://nationalpriorities.org/en/interactive-data/database/>

Homeland Security: Looking at over a decade's worth of federal budget material, NPP has calculated the total amount the U.S. government has allocated for homeland security since 9/11. Total funding is broken down to show homeland security spending that is included in the annual Pentagon budget (DoD Annual Totals) and homeland security spending funded through any other federal agencies (Non-DoD Annual Totals), including the Department of Homeland Security. <http://nationalpriorities.org/en/analysis/2013/homeland-security-spending-since-911/>

An annual analysis of the President's budget NPP's analysis of the FY2014 federal budget. The publication offers state-level data and cross budget category comparisons. <http://nationalpriorities.org/en/analysis/2013/president-obamas-fiscal-year-2014-budget/>

Tax Day: See NPP' interactive tax chart which calculates the breakout of individual federal tax dollars. <http://nationalpriorities.org/en/analysis/2013/taxday-2013/>

“Bombs and Budgets; Tools for Reclaiming Communities from Militarism”: To mark the now decade-long US-led “Global War on Terror,” The War Resisters League and the South Asia Solidarity Initiative have created a popular education-style workshop curriculum that explores how organizing against federal military spending relates to and can forward local campaigns for economic justice, as well as how the past decade of war has effected Afghans and what they are doing in response. Available for download at: www.warresisters.org