Why Involve Young People?

Organisations can benefit from young people’s energy and creativity by involving them in decision-making and opportunities to influence change.

The rationale for involving young people

Young people represent about 20 per cent of our community. They participate in community life, use community services and resources, and have ideas and opinions about the community. Harnessing their ideas, energy and innovative thinking can help to shape the future of Western Australia and your organisation in new and exciting ways.

This is particularly relevant if your organisation provides services to young people. Under the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child young people have a right to express their views in all matters affecting them (Article 12).

In addition, young people also receive many personal benefits from participating in organisations and the community.

How your organisation may benefit

There are many ways your organisation may benefit from involving young people.

- Young people are good at coming up with new ideas and projects, and are often capable of creating and managing them with minimal support.
- Young people have unique knowledge and experience and can be a fantastic resource for many aspects of your organisation.
- Young people can adapt to and use new technology, and can use technology to improve organisational efficiency.
- Youth participation enhances your organisation’s understanding of this large, diverse section of the community.
- Involving young people increases the diversity of your organisation’s engagement with the community.
- Input from young people will keep your organisation informed of current and emerging issues.
- For organisations that provide services to young people, involving young people will increase the likelihood that your initiatives will be relevant and effective.
- Young people involved in your organisation will become great community advocates.
Why encourage young people to participate?

Young people who participate in organisations engage in practical learning and develop skills that will help them in their own lives. The experience helps them understand the world around them and gives them realistic expectations as to what they can do in their community. Participation:

- teaches strategic decision making, problem solving and negotiation skills
- shows how organisations work
- gives young people a sense of social inclusion
- provides experience and grounds them in the real world
- connects young people and the community
- empowers young people and increases their confidence.

Case Study: Engaging young leaders on aged care and community boards

The Engaging Young Leaders on Aged Care and Community Boards program aims to create a world class aged care and community sector by creating age diversity on boards. This is achieved through an annual training program for emerging leaders in governance, a series of ‘unconventions’ and a best practice online toolkit.

“Young Directors are beneficial not only on youth organisations but on a wide range of community organisations including aged care”.

Alicia Curtis, Program Coordinator

The program demonstrates that engaging the perspectives of younger leaders has many positive outcomes for organisations. These include:

- championing collaboration between the aged care and youth sectors
- accessing an untapped resource to assist with the challenges of the aged care and community sector
- strengthening the succession planning of organisations as many boards are filled with ‘Baby Boomer’ Board Directors
- improving the diversity of boards and ensuring better conversations, representing diverse interests and perspectives.

The program is an initiative of Southcare in a unique partnership with a number of community organisations, which was started with seed funding from a Department of Local Government and Communities’ Social Innovation Grant.

For more information visit
www.youngleadersinagedcare.ning.com

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