



Planning for youth participation

Youth Participation Kit: Organisations

Resource 3

Like any new initiative, starting a project to involve young people in your organisation requires planning. This resource sheet offers steps through the planning process and outlines a number of key factors to consider.

Set your goals

What does your organisation hope to get out of involving young people in the organisation or in a project? As a first step, identify what information is needed from young people, and then develop consultation strategies to obtain it. The type and depth of feedback required, and the resources available, will shape youth participation for your organisation.

Young people can be involved to:

- help develop ideas from scratch
- provide feedback on a project that is partially or well developed
- provide input into the organisation's work or projects on a more regular basis.

The engagement with young people may consist of:

- one-off consultations with young people for a particular project, for example one-off focus groups, surveys or forums
- ongoing involvement of young people in the organisation's planning, for example on advisory committees and boards.

Working with young people provides organisations with an opportunity to get creative and try new ways of doing things—particularly when developing a new idea or a new project. For ideas on engagement models and techniques, see resource sheets 4, 5 and 6.



Planning for youth participation

Plan ahead

There are a number of things to consider when planning to involve young people.

Costs involved

The costs of youth participation will vary depending on the engagement approach. The budget may include:

- food
- transport
- hiring venues and/or equipment
- training for staff and young people
- staff hours to manage the initiative
- recruiting a facilitator
- funds for gifts, incentives, prizes or celebrations as thankyou for participation.

Ensure the experience is enjoyable—young people are giving up their time to participate in your organisation's activities and projects. Providing food, compensation to travel to a venue out of hours (especially school hours) and offering access to developmental opportunities are incentives for young people to participate, and shows them that their contribution is valued.

Feedback

Showing that young people's feedback and participation are valued may be critical factors in the success of your initiative. Hence, plan to provide young people with ongoing feedback until their involvement is complete and formally recognise their work. Inform them of the outcomes of their participation, how their contribution will be used, and what the end result is. This will also encourage them to keep contributing and provide ideas for other projects.

Evaluation

Before approaching young people, develop an evaluation plan for project including the engagement strategy adopted. This provides the means to seek feedback on what was done well and what needs improvement. For example:

- Were the set goals achieved?
- Did the engagement strategy provide you with the information you were after?
- Did the young people enjoy their experience and would they do it again?



Planning for youth participation

Make sure that the evaluation is done from the organisation's and the young people's point of view. In ongoing youth participation, regular evaluations demonstrate how young people are making a difference over time and highlight any areas that need attention. For help developing an evaluation tool, you can access some tips and examples from [My-Peer Toolkit](#).

Recruiting young people

Once the organisation sets its goals and decides to engage young people, the next step is to plan how to invite young people to be involved.

Find young people

There are many ways to recruit young people to get involved in an organisation:

- Tapping into the organisation's existing networks, such as clients and partner organisations, and young people who are already committed to your organisation.
- Contacting other organisations that regularly engage with young people, such as the [Youth Affairs Council of WA](#) or [Propel Youth Arts WA](#).
- Contacting organisations that work with and support young people. Your local government's Community or Youth Development Officers may be able to inform you about local youth organisations.
- Advertising through online databases such as [Volunteering WA](#), [GoVolunteer](#) and [Seek Volunteer](#).
- Advertising through local schools, training organisations and universities. Some universities even have dedicated volunteering support offices.
- Promoting through community and youth newsletters and papers.
- Having an online and social media presence and ensuring that webpages are appealing to young people.

Also consider the 'reward' for young people who participate and include this in your promotional materials. Rewards may be material (e.g. free pizza, gift vouchers), however non-material rewards can also be very effective. These include the opportunity to make a difference, develop new skills, meet new people, and help your community.

Diversity

When it comes to youth participation, encouraging diversity is important as young people are not a homogenous group. The kind and number of young people your organisation engages with will depend on the objectives of the organisation or the project. Providing as



Planning for youth participation

many young people the opportunity to participate as possible may be important to your organisation and young people.

Some groups of young people miss out on opportunities to be involved, including:

- young people with disabilities, including mental and physical health issues
- culturally and linguistically diverse young people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- young people who are carers
- young people in care
- young people who are homeless or experience housing stress
- young people who live in regional and rural areas
- young people who identify as being of diverse sexuality or gender
- other disadvantaged young people.

Engaging with local organisations that provide services for the disengaged groups may be a good starting point in reaching some of these young people.

Ethical considerations

When planning for youth participation in your organisation, effective strategies to address ethical considerations need to be in place. Some of the essential ethical considerations include harm, privacy and consent. This list is not comprehensive. It is just a guide to help you get started.

Harm

Any participation activity must protect young people from risk of physical and emotional harm. This includes:

- providing a safe location and safe transport to and from the location
- ensuring all staff working with young people have been appropriately screened (they may be required to hold [Working with Children Checks](#) by law)
- taking special care when talking to young people about sensitive issues.

If dealing with issues that may cause emotional harm, use trained staff and consider offering free access to counsellors.



Planning for youth participation

Privacy

When conducting a consultation, information that can identify the young people involved, or which may be considered sensitive (such as ethnicity, religion or political views) may be collected. It is the organisation's responsibility to protect this information, and to inform the participants why the information is needed, what will happen with it and how it will be protected. It is the right of all participants to be able to access the information at any time and ask to have it removed. Establishing a privacy policy and making sure that all the participants have read and understood it is a good starting point.

Consent

It is important that all young people give their informed consent before they get involved. Informed consent means that the young person knows their role, their rights and what will happen to the information they provide.

Usually, consent is obtained by asking participants to fill out and sign a form. Sometimes this is not practical. For example, it is acceptable to assume that registering interest or completing a survey is indicative of consent. Ensure that this is clearly stated and that the participants have the information they need.

When dealing with children and young people under 18 years of age, consent should be obtained from their parent, guardian or carer. If you are still concerned, refer to the Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia's webpage on [child safe organisations](#).

Case study: Young Change Makers

Formerly known as the City of Gosnells Youth Advisory Council (YAC) and then GOZYAC, Young Change Makers (YCM) is a group of young people who represent their peers and actively participate in community activities. The group is supported and facilitated by the City of Gosnells Youth Services team, whose goal for the group is to give the young people the space and tools to set their own goals for community events, activities and advocacy.

YCM is one of the oldest YAC groups in WA, having been formed in the late 1990s. However, as young people grow older and move on from the group, recruitment is a constant activity.



Planning for youth participation

YCM take part in weekly meetings and workshops during the school term where they plan various activities for local young people and their community to encourage participation, inclusion and a positive representation of youth.

Some of the past projects have included:

- volunteering at community events
- fundraising
- supporting local young people
- clean up Australia
- school holiday workshops for local young people.