



Conducting one-off consultations

Youth Participation Kit: Organisations

Resource 4

This information sheet lists some of the most common methods used by organisations to collect feedback from young people in a one-off or short-term manner.

Surveys

Surveys can be done on the phone, in person, by mail, by email or online. When asking young people to participate, online surveys promoted through social media channels are more likely to reach the target group and have a higher response rate. Short individual surveys in areas where young people congregate may also be successful. There is a level of risk with this approach, as young people may not be there or be willing to participate on the day.

Information young people can provide could relate to their behaviour, opinions about issues of interest and projects, and their beliefs around current affairs and trends. Demographic characteristics of the sample together with the findings could then be presented as statistics. Young people could also provide quotes which may give greater insight and can be helpful to present alongside statistics.

Tips for writing survey questions:

- Check back with your goal for the initiative and create questions which align to it.
- When developing questions, try not to guess the answer you'll receive as this often leads to a bias in the results.
- Think about how you will communicate your results for each question (e.g. percentage, a graph or a pie chart). This will help you design your questions and select the format of responses (e.g. rankings out of five, short answers, yes/no).



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A number of platforms are available for creating online surveys which will help with the design process. Some of tips for designing an online survey are:

- make sure they are short and user friendly
- make sure your survey is accessible for young people with disability.

For advice on promoting surveys through social media, see resource sheet 6.

Interviews

Interviews involve sitting down with a young person and discussing an issue. They can be structured or unstructured, either with set questions or a more open approach.

Some tips for good interviewing:

- Have a set of topics or questions to keep the interview on track and to help present your results.
- Be flexible so you can respond to issues that arise which you didn't anticipate. Sometimes this can be the most useful information.
- Using a trained interviewer can help get the most out of interviews.
- If you are going to record the information (audio or video), make sure you tell the young person before you start and get their permission to record.
- Try to use straightforward language and avoid acronyms in your questions.

Focus groups

Focus groups are like a group interview, where a group of young people are invited to openly discuss a topic. It is a good way for young people to interact with the facilitator and each other to explore an issue. It also allows for a range of opinions to be collected in a single session. Facilitating a focus group can be a challenge. It is important to make sure everyone is respected, their opinions heard, and that no one voice dominates the group, which can be particularly challenging when dealing with sensitive issues. It can also be difficult to keep everyone on track when there is an opportunity for open discussion. Using a trained facilitator can help; the [Youth Affairs Council of WA](#) may be able to help you to find a facilitator experienced in working with young people.

Focus groups can also be held in online spaces. Online platforms such as [Tricider](#) and [All Our Ideas](#) can be useful, however when selecting a platform be aware that young people may not participate if they are required to have a login for the site. Existing social media channels could be used as well, for example, a question and answer session could be arranged for a certain time or day on your organisation's Facebook page.



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Forums

Forums are a great way to open communication between young people and a range of stakeholders in relation to a given issue. They may include presentations to provide information to participants regarding the issue, followed by a full discussion. The aim of forums is to briefly establish a shared body of knowledge on an issue (through presentations) and then resolve the issue and/or create recommendations (through discussion). Forums require resources and planning, and a skilled facilitator to make sure young people have the opportunity to contribute without being intimidated by the structure, or the presence of many stakeholder groups.

The Speak Out for Change: Youth Voices on Youth Issues Summit is an example of a successful youth forum. More information is available from the [Youth Partnership Project](#) website under 'publications'.

Youth panels

There are some situations where an organisation may want young people to choose between options for a project or a program, and a survey or other methods may be too limited to provide the level of feedback required. For example, an organisation may require young people's feedback to select a model for a new youth initiative, a consultant to deliver a service, or an employee for a youth-focussed role. In these cases, the organisation can consider creating a young people's panel by either tapping into an existing group or creating a new group.

The panel members are provided with information about the options and are given the opportunity to ask questions and seek additional information before coming to a decision. The organisation needs to inform the panellists whether their decision will be the final decision, or if it will be taken as a recommendation.

This process is very empowering for young people when done correctly and teaches them valuable insights about the decision-making process. Putting decision making power in the hands of young people can be unnerving for organisations, but the outcomes for the organisation and young people are usually well worth it.

For example, many youth organisations in the United Kingdom engage young people on recruitment panels for youth workers; the City of York Council has produced a [guide](#) to facilitating a young person's recruitment panel.



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Embedding youth engagement at your organisation

The methods explored above provide a good starting point for engaging young people in your organisation. However, it is often the case that the best youth consultations are those led by, or conducted based on the advice of young people themselves. Your organisation may consider creating a youth reference group to guide youth consultations. Resource sheet 5 has more information about how to run reference groups.

Case study: Ministerial Youth Advisory Council

The Ministerial Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) was established in 2017 to provide advice to the Minister for Youth on matters relating to young people. MYAC is comprised of 12 young people, aged 25 years and under, who draw upon their relevant knowledge, experience and skills.

Since its establishment, the MYAC has provided important input and valuable, experience-based advice to the Minister on youth focused issues including homelessness, mental health and unemployment.

The MYAC has been an active participant in the State Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing important advice and input, participating in both the COVID-19 Ministerial Youth Roundtable and the COVID-19 Youth Taskforce, and contributing to solutions that will assist young people on the road to recovery.

Members of the MYAC have previously undertaken their role in a voluntary capacity. However, in recognition of the important principle of valuing young people's contributions, the McGowan Government has now introduced remuneration for Council members.

Other matters that MYAC members have provided advice on include:

- violence in schools
- young carers and review of the Carers Recognition Act 2004
- the Western Australian Youth Health Policy 2018–2023
- the Law Reform Commission's review of Gender Reassignment Laws
- the review of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA) exceptions
- Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality
- the Residential Tenancies Act review 2019.