



Planning engagement with children

Youth Participation Kit: Organisations

Resource 7

Much of the information provided in this resource includes ideas and techniques that are just as effective when involving children. However, when children are involved, there are some special things to remember.

Things to consider

- Children require the same information and feedback as young people when they are involved in your organisation.
- Use pictures and diagrams to communicate ideas. Use simple words, pictures and lots of colours to produce child friendly agendas, minutes and reports for children. Children will understand complex ideas better through the use of pictures, communicate more confidently and it also helps when working with children from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Give children the opportunity to be involved with planning and running activities. Giving them some control will make it more fun, give the children a sense of accomplishment and encourage them to participate more.
- Have your meetings in a secure, safe and child friendly location. If you are having regular meetings, changing venues can make it fun.
- Build trust with children by making sure they interact with the same staff members each time. Start each session with fun activities to break the ice.
- Have more frequent breaks to relieve boredom, and to allow them to go to the toilet and get a drink. You can use meal breaks too.
- Make sessions shorter and make them fun. Try incorporating games and physical activities to break sessions up, recapture their attention, and make sure children enjoy the experience.



Planning engagement with children

- Be prepared to be flexible, to adapt to suggestions made by children and to cope with changes in their energy and mood. You can plan activities for these situations. Prioritise what you want to achieve so you can change your schedule easily and still meet your goals.
- You have a duty of care to look after the children you are working with. Have emergency contact numbers for parents, guardians and carers.
- If the involvement of children is to be ongoing, you may need Working with Children Checks for staff and volunteers. See the [website](#) for more information.

Activities that work well with children

Good, bad and funny

Have children write down things that are good, bad and funny about an idea, and put them in a hat. These can then be read out to the group for discussion. This is a good evaluation technique for child participation.

Getting creative

Children can draw or paint a picture or make something that reflects their idea. They can explain their idea using their artwork to the group.

Brainstorm

Have an open discussion on a topic and have someone (this could be a child) write all the ideas on a piece of paper or board.

Cardstorm

Similar to a brainstorm, have children write or draw ideas on pieces of paper, and stick them on a wall. Get the group to sort the ideas and categorise ideas that are similar.

Democracy decision making

Write a list of ideas on a large piece of paper (these could be taken from a brainstorm).

Children can stick a smiley face or sad face next to ideas they like or don't like.

Create a matrix by listing ideas vertically and things you want children to consider about each idea horizontally. Children can then put stickers in the squares they agree with.



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Case study: The Commissioner for Children and Young People's – Change Champions

Children and young people under 18 years from across Western Australia are invited to the Change Champions reference group to have a say and be heard on issues that affect them. The Commissioner will use their views to help make Western Australia a better place for all children and young people.

Every school term the Commissioner will email the reference group a question. For example, What needs to change in your town for young people?

The answers are anonymous and the reference group members can go into a draw to win a \$25 gift voucher. Parental permission is required and parents have the option of being notified what questions will be asked so they have opportunity to discuss the question with their child beforehand.

"I would like you to become one of my Change Champions – a group of Western Australian children and young people who are interested in sharing their views, insights and recommendations on important issues. I look forward to using your views to help make WA a great place for all children and young people to live." Colin Pettit