



Youth Participation Kit

Resource sheet
for young people

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Where to Start?

There are so many different ways to get involved in the community, it can be hard to decide where to start! This sheet has some ideas to get the ball rolling.

First things first

Before thinking about how you want to get involved in your community, you should ask yourself **why** you want to get involved. Figuring out the 'why' gives you a better chance of choosing the right 'what'.

Some common reasons why young people want to get involved are to:

- meet new people
- help others
- stimulate and influence change
- find a new hobby or activity
- learn or develop skills
- build experience for their resume.

Once you've thought about the 'why', you can start to think about the ways you would like to participate. This will depend on your 'why', as well as your personality, likes and dislikes, and the skills you already have. For example, if you're into sports, computers, animals, teamwork or anything else, there's probably a way to participate that involves putting this to use. If you choose something you're interested in, you'll probably have a more successful and enjoyable experience.

Useful tip

There are so many different ways to get involved in your community, it can be hard to choose where to start! Talking to people who know you can be really helpful— they might be able to tell you about opportunities they know of, or help you work out what kinds of opportunities are suited to your personality.



What's out there?

There are lots of opportunities to get involved in a range of different ways. Here is a list of examples to get you started:

Help provide a service

This category is what most people think of as 'volunteering'—giving your time or services for free to help others. Some examples include:

- become a mentor for someone in need (eg. AIME)
- help people with gardening or household tasks (eg. Volunteer Task Force)
- work in a wildlife shelter (eg. Native ARC)
- provide tutoring for struggling students (eg. The Smith Family)
- help at a community entertainment station (eg. RTR FM or 4UFM Albany)
- 'microvolunteering', where you complete small online tasks for others (eg. Help from Home).

Give advice or have your say

There are also lots of opportunities to share your ideas on how to improve your community. Some of these include:

- joining your local Youth Advisory Council (more details in Resource 3)
- getting involved with organisations who advocate for young people, such as the Commissioner for Children and Young People or Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA)

- joining The Panel to complete online surveys
- applying to represent young people in the WA YMCA Youth Parliament
- becoming a board member in an organisation that helps the community (see Resource 3)
- being part of one-off consultations and events hosted by various organisations from time to time (see 'Finding an Opportunity' below).

Help with community activities

Every community has lots of activities and events that are only possible with the help of volunteers. For example, you might:

- organise youth events as part of your local Youth Advisory Council
- help out a local sporting club as a scorer, runner, coach or committee member
- be part of a Cadets WA unit in your local area
- join the Young People's Planning Committee for National Youth Week
- volunteer to help at a specific event (Volunteering WA keeps a database of events you may like to be involved in).

Advocate for a cause

If there's an issue or cause you're really passionate about, you might like to become an advocate for it in the community. Some ideas include:

- finding an organisation who supports the cause and helping them with their work
- starting your own organisation or social enterprise to support the cause (see Resource 4)
- running community events to raise awareness or fundraise (see Resource 4)
- starting petitions
- writing an online blog or 'letters to the editor' of your local newspaper.

Lend a hand in emergencies

When something bad happens, there are lots of people who help out—and many of them are ordinary people who volunteer with emergency services. These include:

- organisations who deal with community threats such as fire brigades, the State Emergency Service and marine rescue services
- organisations who support the people who have been affected, such as the Red Cross.

Finding an opportunity

Once you have an idea of what you'd like to do, you need to find out where and how you can do it. Volunteering WA and YACWA's Pling have online databases of opportunities, or you could consider visiting your local youth centre or Volunteer Resource Centre to talk to someone about where you might be able to get involved.

If you're interested in becoming a mentor, you can also see an online database of opportunities through the Australian Youth Mentoring Network. And of course, doing an online search can help once you've got an idea of what you're looking for.

If you're interested in youth issues and opportunities, there are some organisations who often share articles, ideas and opportunities through their channels. You might like to follow some of these groups on your social media platform of choice:

- Youth WA on Facebook
- Youth Affairs Council of WA on Facebook and Twitter
- Foundation for Young Australians on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
- ABC Heywire on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Case Study: Kirsten Beidatsch

"Volunteering for the community is the most important, valuable thing you can do, especially volunteering across diverse organisations. I have learned skills I use every day, met the best people in the community and networked with members of other volunteer and professional sectors. Proving what I can do as a volunteer got me my job and gained me the respect of my community and it makes you feel good about yourself to know you are giving something back. There is a volunteer role to suit everyone, you just need to go out and find it"



Kirsten Beidatsch

Kirsten is the 2015 Volunteering WA Youth Volunteer of the Year, and has also received awards at the WA Youth Awards and from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. She has been involved in a wide range of community activities and organisations, including providing a community activity at the Mt Barker Community Garden where she serves as the Chairperson, and lending a hand in emergencies with the Mt Barker SES unit as the Local Manager.

Using her knowledge and experiences as a carer for a family member, she also gives advice by serving on her local Shire's Disability Access Committee and the WA Community Health Service Disability Access Committee for Plantagenet Hospital. Kirsten knows how valuable volunteering is, and so she works hard to help other young people get involved in the community as well.



For more information, please contact:

Department of Local Government and Communities

Gordon Stephenson House, 140 William Street, Perth WA 6000

GPO Box R1250, Perth WA 6844

Telephone: (08) 6551 8700 Fax: (08) 6552 1555

Freecall (Country only): 1800 620 511

Email: info@dlgc.wa.gov.au Website: www.dlgc.wa.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Tel: 13 14 50

www.dlgc.wa.gov.au

