



Youth Participation Kit

Resource sheet
for young people

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Working with People

You're likely to be working closely with others when participating in your community. Working in teams is a great way to meet new people, to share the workload, and build your team and leadership skills. Good teamwork doesn't just happen, so here are some tips to help you learn to manage a team.

Keeping people informed

For your group to be effective, everyone will need to know what is going on. Holding regular meetings is a must, whether you hold them in-person or use technology to bring everyone together. Organising meeting agendas and minutes may sound boring, but they help you to keep your discussions on track, check that everything you decide is recorded for future reference, and keep people in the loop about the latest developments. Meetings don't have to be boring—there's no set rules for how they have to be run, so think outside the box, be flexible, and have fun.

Keeping people involved

It's common for people to come and go in projects, and for some people to be more committed than others, particularly in longer-term or ongoing activities. Things change in people's lives so you need to be flexible and understanding of this. Look for the positives, for example if people decide to leave a project it means you can recruit new members who will bring new ideas and points of view.

There are many ways you can help keep people involved, such as:

- Asking people to commit to a set length of involvement. If they know what they have to do beforehand, they can decide whether it's right for them.

Useful tip

Like any other skill, working with other people requires practice and ongoing learning. Everyone has to work with other people at some point, which means that we all have experiences that we can learn from and use to give advice. If you're not sure how to approach a situation or if you're having some trouble, talking it over with someone can be really helpful.



- Taking the time to let the team get to know each other. Team building activities help people to care about the people they're working with, which makes them more likely to stay committed. Plus, they're fun and help people to make new friends!
- Giving members specific roles in the group. This spreads the responsibility and gives everyone a sense of purpose and ownership, as well as making everyone accountable for the things they've agreed to do.
- Making meetings as fun as possible. Provide snacks if you can, be flexible with meeting times and choose venues everyone can get to.
- Thinking about what people get out of being involved and talking about it. Give people the chance to offer their own ideas for activities, discuss people your members might want to ask to be referees for their resumes, and plan ways to celebrate your group's work together.
- Asking everyone to be on the lookout for new members—this keeps people thinking about what makes a good team member.

Holding good meetings

- Meetings are a key part of teamwork, but there are lots of ways that meetings can become a chore. Below are some tips to make the most out of meetings.
- Every meeting should have an agenda so people know what to expect. It should be sent out to everyone beforehand so they can prepare in advance. You also need to appoint someone to take 'minutes', or at least to record the key information and decisions from the meeting. You might make this an ongoing role or rotate the responsibility to a new person each meeting.
- Every meeting needs a Chair who is in charge of making sure the meeting runs smoothly. Some groups elect an ongoing Chair while others rotate the responsibility. Being a good Chair is a skill, and although it can be scary at first it can be really useful in other parts of your life.
- Talk about how meetings will work at the start of the project. Agree what kinds of things should be discussed, how people can add items to the agenda that they want to talk about, and decide on some ground rules for how people should behave: for example, agree to always be respectful, decide if it's okay for people to interrupt, or if it's okay to use phones during the meeting.
- Everyone should get a chance to speak. The Chair of the meeting is in charge of making this happen. If someone is dominating the conversation, the Chair should ask others direct questions so that their opinions can be shared too.
- Silence is usually awkward, but it isn't always bad. It might mean that people need more time to think about something, are too scared to share their ideas, or that they don't understand the topic well enough to have an opinion. If you find your group in a long silence, ask questions to try to work out why.
- Sometimes meetings can get heated when you're discussing important topics. The Chair should make sure that everyone is okay and call breaks if discussions get too intense. If your meetings are often like this, you might need to review your group's aims, meeting structure and agreements on behaviour to work through the issues.
- If your group is working on a big project, it can help to break the group into sub-groups with a specific responsibility. For example, you might separate an events project group into scheduling, logistics and promotions teams that work on the nitty-gritty details separately in between meetings. This way you save meeting time by letting the small decisions be worked out outside of meetings but still making the big, important decisions together.

- People tend to get bored after sitting still for too long. Think of ideas to get people moving during meetings. Depending on your group you might want to do quick activities regularly (stretches, games) or even have a meeting where you walk somewhere while discussing the agenda.

Building a good team

The point of working in a team is making the most of the different things each person has to offer. When you're putting a group together, consider the different skills you'll need to achieve your goal and try to find different people who can contribute to different tasks. Not everyone needs to be good at everything!

Having a diverse team is also important. Youth participation is about getting all young people involved in their communities, and all young people have the right to be involved.

Some young people find it harder to get involved because they have a disability, don't speak English as well as others, are really shy, or for other reasons. You may have to find ways to help them to overcome this so that you can make the most of the skills and insights they can offer. Try to engage as many different people in your group as you can.

Dealing with problems

Not everyone gets along, and you might find yourself having a hard time dealing with someone else in your team. The most important thing is to keep your cool and do what you can to always be respectful—even if it seems the other person isn't! Usually you will have a leader in your group or organisation who you can speak to about the problem. You might feel scared or embarrassed, but remember that you have a right to participate without someone making it difficult for you, so explain yourself and ask the leader to help you manage the situation. It's not fun to deal with, but you're likely to face similar situations in the future as well, so it's good to learn to tackle them while you're young.

Case Study: Dimitrio Sidi & Teach Learn Grow

Teach Learn Grow (TLG) is a youth-led organisation that aims to bridge the gaps in education by engaging young people as volunteers to mentor and tutor rural students who need a bit of extra help.

Through their Rural and eMentor Programs, TLG engage over 200 volunteers. The Rural Program is held twice yearly, providing a week-long face-to-face mentoring program to over 14 schools in rural WA. The eMentor Program is conducted online over the course of seven weeks, providing students with mentoring and help with things like peer pressure and goal-setting.

TLG volunteer Dimitrio Sidi's leadership was recognised when he was a finalist in the Edith Cowan University Community Leadership Award at the 2015 WA Youth Awards. As General Manager, Dimitrio oversees a core team of 35 volunteers who deliver TLG's programs.

With so many people involved in the organisation, it takes a lot of effort to make sure things go smoothly. Dimitrio's top tips for working with people are:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate—especially when everyone has such a diverse range of interrelated tasks. Having consistent meetings as well as clear channels of authority for reporting helps keep communication clear.
- Set a clear timeline of tasks for your team—this helps maintain accountability amongst your team members, and also helps you identify when people have a lot of tasks and may need assistance.
- Create a culture of empowerment and involvement—people are more likely to be productive and put in their all if they feel that they are contributing to the overall work of the team. Try to avoid making decisions for people or telling people exactly how to do their role. Instead, empower them by giving them responsibility and ownership over how they do their work.

"TLG would not be at the large scale that we are at today without the work of the many volunteers who have come together to help drive the organisation forward. The work of the individual in driving our growth is only as valuable as the amount that it is embraced and supplemented by the work of others within the organisation."

Dimitrio Sidi



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