

Making it work

Making the Youth Participation process work requires:

Enjoyment: Everyone should find it fun and enjoyable to be involved.

Recognition: The strengths, talents, skills, interest and abilities of the young people involved should be recognised, celebrated and extended.

Commitment: Everyone involved, adults and young people alike, must show commitment to each other and to the outcome or intention of the project.

Inclusion: The process should be open, involve all appropriate participants and not exclude anyone who is impacted by the work.

Valuing: People need to see that any contribution they make, at whatever level they choose to operate, is valued.

Resourcing: There needs to be sufficient time, money and other resources to make a reasonable job of the project.

Empowerment: Young people should be able to see they're getting more control over their lives by participating.



ASK YOURSELF:

What is your project – describe it.

(Eg. after-ball party, youth needs analysis)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Include target audience, purpose, aims, objectives, outcomes and anything else that may be relevant. Ask yourself: is this a project that young people will want to be involved in?

Having a good description is essential in assessing your Youth Participation process later. Be prepared to develop and amend your description, as things may change.



ASK YOURSELF:

Why do you want or need to involve young people?

(Eg. because this issue affects them)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

When you're kick-starting a Youth Participation project you need to consider why the partnership between adults and young people is important.

Young people can bring fresh new perspectives and creative, innovative energy – but they do not always need to be involved in projects that don't affect them. Remember, Youth Participation works best when the project is real, means something to young people and they choose freely to be involved.



ASK YOURSELF:

Why will young people care about this? What can they offer?

(Eg. desire to make a difference, helping to promote the event)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Encourage everyone to be upfront about their motivation, ensure the contribution, commitment and outcome sought is clearly communicated to everyone. Spelling these things out at the beginning can be a useful reference when you come to unexpected hurdles.



ASK YOURSELF:

What degree of involvement will you need?

(Eg. onto-it organiser, ad-hoc advisor)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

You need to decide what level of involvement is required. Will it be necessary to meet weekly, as a team and make equal decisions about the event – ie, needing 'onto-it organisers'? Or are you requiring less structure that can be achieved through ad-hoc advisors?



ASK YOURSELF:

What are the **barriers** – what could make it hard for young people to get involved?

(Eg. meetings during school hours, can't afford to catch the bus there, etiquette of meetings)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Ensure meeting times will be appropriate so everyone can attend, and not too time-consuming. Ensure people can get to the venue. Make the location welcoming and comfortable and provide food. Ensure information is clearly communicated before, during and after meetings.

You don't necessarily have to pay young people for their involvement, it's good to foster a culture of volunteerism and 'giving something back' to the community. However, young people should be reimbursed for any agreed expenses such as bus fares.



ASK YOURSELF:

What are the **potential benefits** for young people, adults and the community?

(Eg. young people will feel valued, they'll develop leadership skills)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

They should be benefits you can articulate and measure. For example, young people may develop their public speaking skills. Adults may find their work evolves and involves more hands-on youth mentoring. Organisations may be challenged and adopt new policies. The wider community thinks more positively about young people.



ASK YOURSELF:

Where will you **find** them – where do they go?

(Eg. schools, drop-in centre)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

You'll need to get out and go where they are. This could mean finding and going to places where young people gather – schools, on trains or buses or in public spaces like parks or malls. It could also mean being more switched on to youth culture. For example, young people are very mobile so the best way to contact them could be by texting.



ASK YOURSELF:

How will you build **supportive working relationships** between young people and adults?

(Eg. delegate appropriate adult, arrange some training)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Relationships are fundamental to successful Youth Participation. If adults initiate the project and invite young people, one of the adults needs to take responsibility for regularly checking with young participants to ensure they're enjoying the process and feeling informed. Sharing tasks, eg. training together, can often help equalise partnerships.



ASK YOURSELF:

How will you develop and extend young people's **skills**?

(Eg. confidence with public speaking, dealing with the media)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

When Youth Participation includes effective youth development, you see young people grow through their involvement.

Start by identifying existing skills, knowledge and experience. For instance, the confident extrovert in your group might be the one you'd ask to secure prizes for your event. Or, a young person considering a police career may appreciate the opportunity to see real policing in action by taking part in a Controlled Purchase Operation.



ASK YOURSELF:

How will you **evaluate**, provide feedback and **celebrate** your success?

(Eg. de-brief feedback dinner, rewards for all involved)

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Get creative with the closure so everyone can identify highlights and hopefully end on a positive note. Fun awards may get people laughing, a chilled-out debrief dinner may help everyone relax. Taking time to review outcomes and assess what worked and what needed improvement is important - your next Youth Participation project will be all the more successful for it. Record your evaluation and include the thoughts of everyone involved. Encourage both young people and adults to reflect on their personal contribution and provide feedback to each other.



Aim for improvement

Planning and implementing successful Youth Participation projects is a learning experience.

- :: Ask young people for their feedback and suggestions on ways to improve involvement.
- :: Talk with others involved with Youth Participation projects.

Sharing experiences, information thoughts and successes is important and a valuable professional development opportunity.