

Organizational readiness checklist

Reflection Tool

Determining Committees' Readiness for Youth Engagement

Principle 1: Opportunities for youth leadership
Youth tell us: "We want our voice heard." "We want a genuine role in decision making." "Our participation is greater than adult participation."
When getting ready for youth engagement, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Have you asked youth what they want? Have you asked them how they want to be involved? (i.e. avoid assumptions about what they might like/want)▪ Who sets the agenda?▪ What is the ratio of adults to youth on your committee?▪ Do youth hold positions of leadership on your committee?▪ Are there opportunities for youth to come up with their own ideas and have these ideas acted upon?▪ Are you intentional about building in time for skill-building when working with youth?

Principle 2: Unique, active involvement that inspires youth
Youth tell us that active involvement means: "I'm involved and interested." "Feeling like we are contributing to something big." "We are inspired to participate (through different mediums)." "Engaging in experiential learning and celebrating the individuality of each person." "We want to come. Adults value us." "Youth are enjoying themselves." "We should feel like we are a part of something."
When getting ready for youth engagement, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Are you open to creative and/or outside-the-box ideas?▪ Do you incorporate icebreakers and fun activities into your meetings?▪ Do you utilize personal strengths of youth to help plan, organize, facilitate, and implement activities?▪ Do you take into account the personal interests of youth to ensure activities are meaningful for them?▪ Do you allow youth to be involved in initiatives that can influence change in your organization?▪ Do you consider youth involvement in initiatives that may not be seen as youth-specific (e.g. environment, human rights, poverty, infrastructure, etc.)?

Principle 3: Inclusive youth involvement from start to finish
Youth tell us this means: "Youth and children's voices are heard." "Inclusive of all youth." "We should always be involved." "Adults follow through on our ideas."

When getting ready for youth engagement, consider:

- If an initiative is designed, developed, intended for youth, have you asked youth if that is what they need/want?
- Are youth involved in all stages of planning, implementing and evaluating?
- If not, when do you involve youth? What would make it possible to get youth involved earlier?
- Do you ensure you have a diversity of youth voices (e.g. level of involvement, gender, culture, age, sexual orientation, interests, etc.) represented?
- Are you clear about what you want youth feedback for? Are you transparent about the givens or what is non-negotiable?
- If you have asked for youth opinion/feedback, do you follow through on their recommendations? Do you inform them about the outcome?

Principle 4: An environment open to everyone's ideas and contributions

Youth tell us:

"Adults and youth are both contributing."

"Everyone shares the work."

"New ideas are created."

"Ideas are being heard."

When getting ready for youth engagement, consider:

- Do you negotiate ground rules/expectations at the beginning to ensure respect is maintained?
- Do you provide clarity about the goals of the group? Are you transparent about the givens or what is non-negotiable?
- Do you allow youth opportunities to assume leadership roles in planning and implementing of activities?
- When ideas are brought forward, do you take the time to consider pros and cons of each before making a final decision?
- Are you more concerned about the process of youth engagement or the outcome?

Principle 5: Respectful of all participants

Youth tell us:

"Non-judgmental participation."

"Don't baby us, help us to be comfortable but also equal."

"Be respectful of all ages to ensure youth comfort."

"Don't forget to take our schedule into account."

When getting ready for youth engagement, consider:

- Do you negotiate ground rules/expectations at the beginning to ensure respect is maintained?
- Do you consider the developmental stage of the youth you are working with?
- Do you consider individual strengths and abilities of a young person rather than their age?
- Do you hold your meetings at times when youth can attend?
- Where do you hold your meetings? Are they accessible? Do you go to where youth are? If not, do you provide transportation to help get youth there?

Principle 6: Opportunities for supportive connections through mentors and peers

Youth tell us:

“Support us in building relationships with mentors and peers.”

“Help us to find a common ground to form connections.”

When getting ready for youth engagement, consider:

- Do you incorporate icebreakers and other fun activities into your meetings?
- Do you provide adults sufficient time/resource to build connections with young people?
- Do you use a strength-based approach (e.g. DA) when working with youth?
- Do you encourage youth on your committee to recruit and orient new members?