

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



Meaningful Youth Engagement requires intentional planning to address the operational considerations and implications of engagement. Thinking through the operational considerations of recruitment, facilitation, staff capacity and communication enables meaningful engagement.

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Recruitment

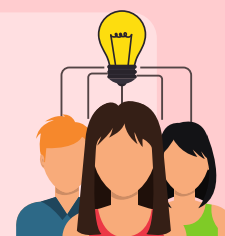
1 The best recruitment strategy is a relationship strategy, where you or your organization can recruit diverse youth because you have an authentic and ongoing relationship with communities and organizations.



2 Reach out to specific organizations that also have a commitment to youth engagement to connect with their networks.



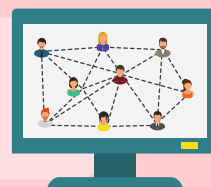
3 If the youth engagement opportunity is relatively short in terms of time-frame, consider partnering with organizations that have an ongoing youth engagement process and/or advisory council.



4 Consider where and how you promote the youth engagement opportunity. Give as much information about the project as you can – why and what is the intention; and logistics such as, what support can be offered; information about accessibility, etc.



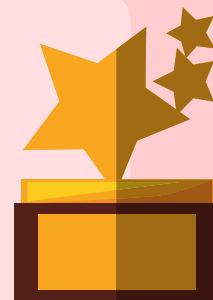
- 5 Promote the opportunity in physical and online spaces where youth are.



- 6 For physical accessibility, ensure you have a detailed description of the space, including measurements.



- 7 Remuneration – In most cases, youth can be ethically compensated for their time and skills. In some cases, such as a service user of a specific organization, it may not be appropriate to financially compensate youth. In ongoing youth structures, the youth can be asked to consider questions of financial compensation.



Communication

There is no perfect checklist for meaningful engagement, but transparency, consistency and accountability in communication are crucial to organizational success. Operational considerations vary significantly depending on the type and context of engagement, but communication about engagement parameters enables meaningful engagement - no matter the context.

ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD ENSURE CLEAR COMMUNICATION OF:

- ☐ Compensation
- ☐ Accessibility
- ☐ Time commitment
- ☐ Scope of engagement
- ☐ Expectations
- ☐ Other important information concerning the context of engagement



Approaches to Facilitating Meetings and Events

Facilitation approaches focused on creativity, participatory engagement and minimizing power dynamics are recommended to ensure meaningful engagement.

CREATIVITY

Spaces that are colourful, youthful and friendly are conducive for meaningful engagement.



Convening meetings with fidget toys, from colouring pages to playdough to pipe-cleaners, enables young people to engage on their own terms and allows for a more relaxed and inviting environment

Participatory Engagement

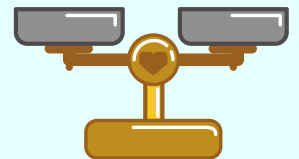
Leveraging facilitation techniques that are discussion-oriented, based in consensus and allow for diverse mechanisms of participation, ensures youth are able to participate on their own terms, in the way that suits them best.



Consider using approaches such as, the Art of Hosting, a method grounded in a philosophy that trusts the wisdom of the group to self-organize, and emphasizes small group, participant-led discussions.

Minimizing Power Dynamics

Meaningful engagement acknowledges the power dynamics between adults and youth, alongside the power differentials created through systems of discrimination and privilege.



Co-creating safer spaces, through group development of community guidelines based on the needs and experiences of youth in the space, is an effective mechanism to minimize power dynamics and ensure a space is as safe as possible for diverse young people.

Check in with partner organizations or other community resources to see if they have ways of convening groups that work in their context.

Participatory approaches are often effective in lessening barriers to participation but need to be well-supported and managed to be safe.

Additional Operational Considerations

- i Have organizational resources, including clear staff roles, governance support and financial resources, been identified?
- ii Do young people know, from the get-go, that we're striving to be inclusive of diverse identities? How?
- iii Is our space physically accessible and can we describe that adequately? Have we considered other accessibility needs such as providing ASL, large print documents or attendants?
- iv Is translation needed?
- v Are there gender-neutral washrooms?
- vi Is there appropriate support available, including:
 - Written resources such as Kids Help Phone
 - Shared community standards agreements
 - Conflict resolution process
 - Mental health support
 - Elder support (appropriate for the community)
- vii Can we provide additional spaces as appropriate, such as a quiet room, a prayer room, or others?
- viii Are we providing food, transportation support, child care and other support?
- ix What barriers exist that we haven't mitigated?



Want More Information?



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