Degrees of Involvement

For everyone involved in Youth Participation, it’s important to give young people a choice. This will ensure that everyone feels included and respected.

Readerships

Youth Participation depends on feedback from both young people and adults. Understanding your audience is critical to creating effective projects. The following sections provide a guide to assessing the level of involvement your youth participation project will require.

An effective tool for involvement

Youth Participation guidelines have been developed from a set of learnings that have been developed and used in a wide range of health education fields over a number of years.

This toolkit will show you ways to apply the practical elements of this framework to your project.

What is youth participation?

There are many key elements to Youth Participation.

Purposeful relationships: Young Participation is a collaborative approach in which adults and young people and organizations and partnerships.

Advantage: The active process where those who get involved choose to do so, and take risks where their contribution will be valued.

Youth projects: People work on projects that affect them.

Valuable roles: Everyone needs to feel that their project is valued.

All three must be addressed in order to ensure that young people take ownership of the process.

Why involve young people in alcohol-related initiatives?

Because young people have unique cultures and needs, it’s essential to adapt a creative approach. Participating in alcohol-related initiatives empowers young people to make decisions and create their own alcohol-related policies.

There are often barriers to involving young people in alcohol-related initiatives. For more information on degrees of involvement, ALAC’s ‘Keeping it real’ booklet, and Westhorp’s Continuum, explained on alcohol issues. Two excellent models from the theory of participation as a choice.

Rewards and appreciations

Food, kai and refreshments

Comfortable environment

Accessible times

Realistic time frames

Clear purpose

Participatory as a choice

Trusting relationships

Open communication

Acknowledgement of cultures

Real and relevant issues

For more information on degrees of involvement, ALAC’s ‘Keeping it real’ booklet, and Westhorp’s Continuum, explained on alcohol issues. Two excellent models from the theory of youth participation as a choice.

Engaging young people in alcohol-related initiatives

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Checklist

1. Does your Youth Participation programme offer:
   - Participation as a choice?
   - Acknowledgement of culture?
   - Trusting relationships?
   - Empowering skills?
   - The flexibility to change?
   - Allowing time?
   - Facilitating and allowing youthful input?
   - A worthwhile contribution?

2. Does your Youth Participation programme include:
   - A worthwhile contribution?
   - Fun and interest?
   - Addressing barriers?
   - The flexibility to change?
   - Open communication?
   - Acknowledgement of cultures?
   - Real and relevant issues?

3. Does your Youth Participation programme involve:
   - Clear purpose?
   - Trusting relationships?
   - Open communication?
   - Acknowledgement of cultures?
   - Real and relevant issues?

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Making it work

Making the Youth Participation process work.

Important:
- Everyone should feel it has value and is worth their time.
- Reflection: the things done, ideas, issues, and decisions of the project need to be transparent and understood.

Documentation:
Encourage everyone, with group, to reflect on their personal contribution and how this may impact the outcomes and in some way contribute towards the project.

Evaluation:
- The process should be open, involve all stakeholders, and focus on the intended outcomes of the project.
- Each team should be able to identify if they choose to operate at whatever level they choose, is valued.
- Ensure people can get to the venue. Make the location welcoming and comfortable and provide food. Ensure information is clearly communicated.
- There needs to be sufficient time, money and other resources to make a reasonable job of the project.
- Young people should be able to see they're getting more control over their lives by participating.

Financial:
- People need to see that any contribution they make, financial or otherwise, contributes to the project.
- Resourcing: resources need to be in place and matters are predictable, all the time.

Time to consider:
- Getting young people onto the project, and getting young people engaged is the key. It’s important to make sure they understand about what they are doing and why.
- 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.
- Young people need to be reimbursed for any agreed expenses such as bus fares.
- During and after meetings.
- Encourage everyone to be upfront about their motivation, ensure the contribution, and get a commitment from the participants to do the same.
- THINGS TO CONSIDER: What is your project – describe it.
- THINGS TO CONSIDER: What are you trying to achieve – aim.
- THINGS TO CONSIDER: What are the barriers – what could make it hard for young people to get involved.
- THINGS TO CONSIDER: Where will you find them – where do they go?
- THINGS TO CONSIDER: How will you build supportive working relationships between young people and adults?
- THINGS TO CONSIDER: How will you evaluate, provide feedback and celebrate your success?
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Aim for improvement
Planning and development guidance: Youth Participation projects – learning experiences.

As young people for this feedback and suggestions on the project – learning experiences.
- Young people: forms can be found in the ‘feedback’ box on the next page.
- As adults who have worked with young people.

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