

YOUTH MATTER

**A practical guide to increase
youth engagement and
participation in Tasmania**

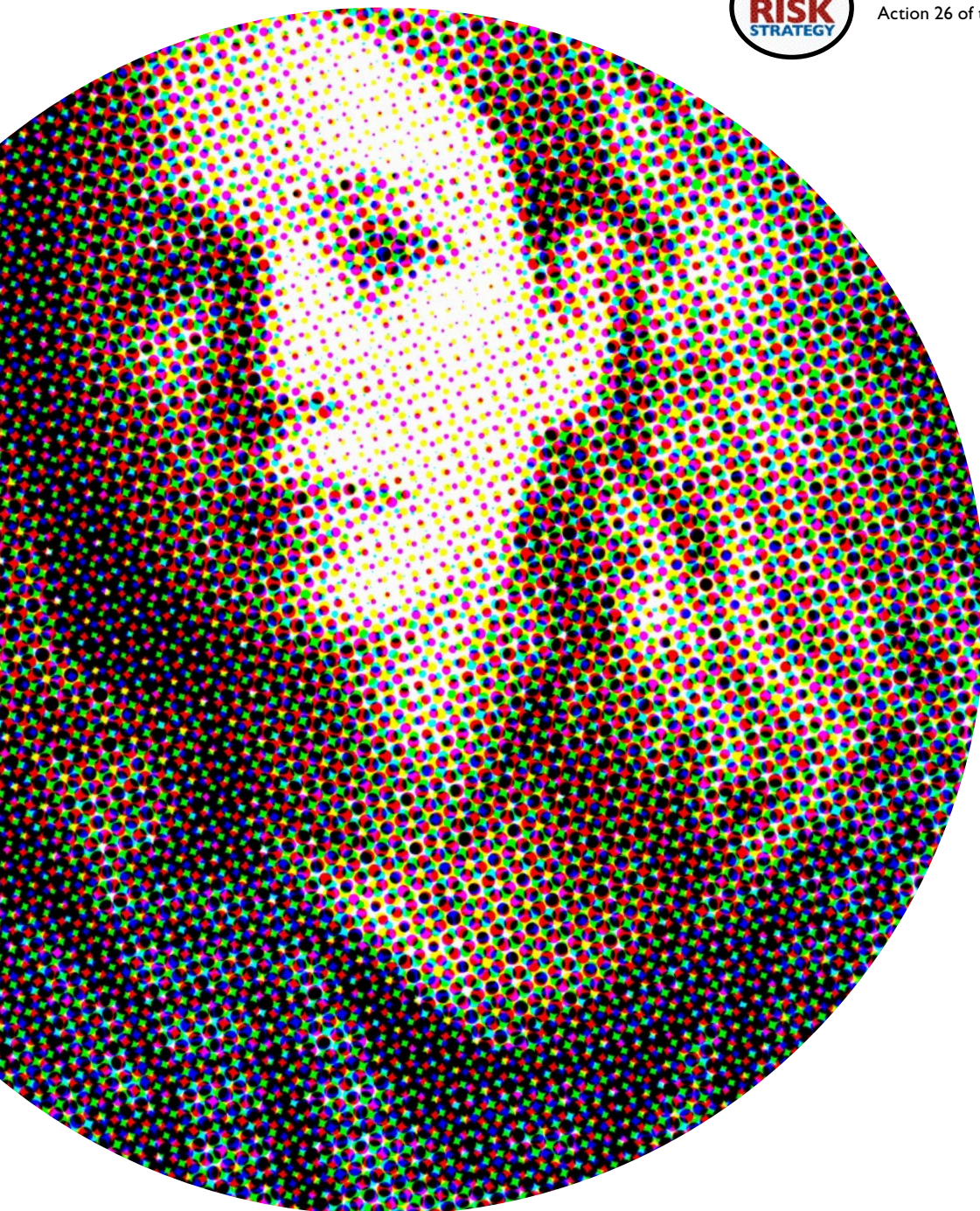
Preface/Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all young people who participated in this process, without your honest and open feedback this resource would not have been created.

We would also like to thank the schools and service providers that assisted us to facilitate these sessions with young people, and other stakeholder groups who have reviewed and provided feedback to strengthen this resource.



This resource delivers on
Action 26 of the Youth at Risk Strategy



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Introduction

Background

The *Youth at Risk Strategy* (the Strategy)¹ was released on 5 June 2017. During the development of the Strategy it became clear that the voices of many young people are not being heard, especially young people who live in remote locations or young people facing some challenges.

Youth at Risk are defined in the Strategy as any young person aged between 10 and 17 experiencing or displaying indicators of vulnerability (risk factors) which if not addressed would expose the individual, family or community to significant harm (actual or potential). Action 26 in the Strategy was created to improve youth participation, by developing a range of innovative consultative mechanisms and more inclusive practices to provide these young people with a voice. This resource has been developed to deliver on this action.

This resource will assist policy makers and service providers to engage with young people who are service users. It will also provide young people with more opportunities to have their ideas heard and understood by policy makers and service providers when designing or reviewing youth services.

The Voices of Young People

During the development of this resource Communities Tasmania met with almost 400 young people from across the state. Young people were sourced through schools and the services they accessed within the community. The project team attempted to consult with a broad cross section of young people from across Tasmania, specifically including isolated or marginalised young people. Participation in the consultation process was voluntary.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the locations of these young people by gender and areas of disadvantage². Some young people and organisations who were approached were unable to, or chose not to participate.

The ages of young people who participated in the consultation process ranged from 11 to 18 years (two young people over 18 were also interviewed), however, 13 to 16 years was the most predominant age range.

Sessions were held in schools and at services that young people use. Discussions were had with young people in small and large groups (2 to 30) and in one on one interviews.

These consultations provided insight into what young people in Tasmania think are the barriers to youth participation and how government and services can better communicate and engage effectively with young people.

¹ Tasmanian Government, *Communities Tasmania, Youth at Risk Strategy*, June 2017.

² Not all young people live in the area indicated but may be accessing services in this area.

Figure 1 – Consultation Sessions by Areas of Disadvantage Across Tasmanian LGA's

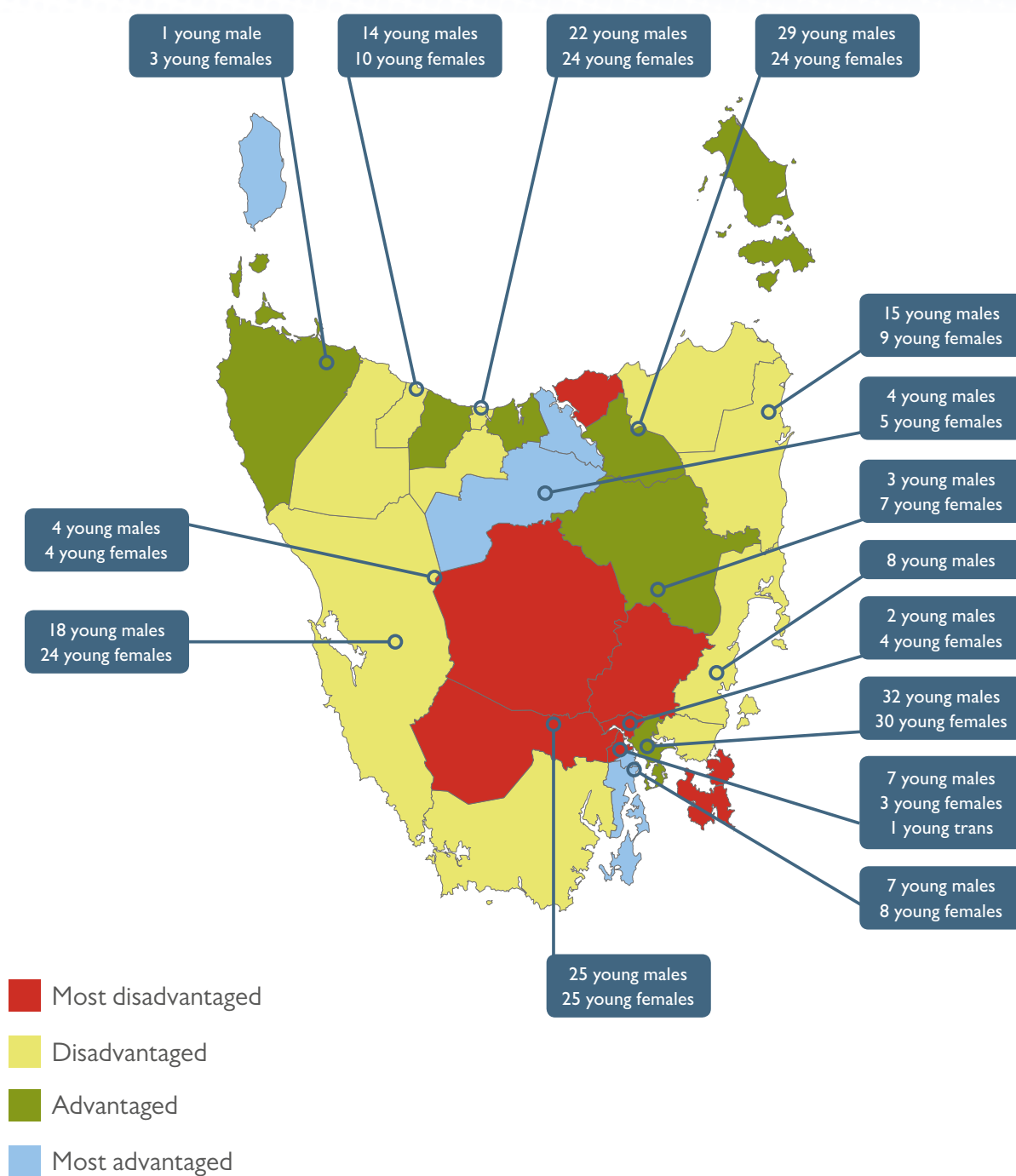


Image modified and sourced from the Dropping off the Edge Report (2015)

The **#1** one way to increase youth participation and engagement identified by young people was to **support, encourage** and **build** their **confidence**.

The **#1 barrier** to youth participation was **fear, nervousness, shyness** and **embarrassment**.

Based on the feedback provided, young people should be given opportunities to provide real and meaningful feedback on issues that are important to them from a very early age.

While the tools provided in this resource will improve youth participation and engagement, the most **effective** way to reduce barriers and increase participation is to make this a **normal** and **expected experience** starting in early primary school.

Young people need to feel that they have been **listened** to and **believe** that their feedback is important and appreciated. They also need to understand **how** their feedback has been used and wherever possible the **outcomes** that have been achieved because of **their** feedback.

Why should we engage with young people?

Young People's Rights

It is a human right for children and young people to be able to voice their opinion. Young people should be recognised as experts in their own lives and experiences. UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF Simplified Version) –

Article 12: *Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.*

Article 13: *Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.*

Benefits to young people

Youth engagement and participation can provide significant benefits to young people, some of these benefits include:³

- Increased self-esteem
- New relationships
- Reduced depressive symptoms
- Decreased risk of suicide
- Increased coping mechanisms and well-being
- Reduced substance use and smoking
- Strengthened resiliency
- Increased ownership for one's own care
- Personal growth and identity development
- Increased critical thinking

3 Ontario Centre for Excellence in Child and Youth Mental Health

- Broadened and strengthened social networks
- Improved academic performance and reduced school dropout rates
- Enhanced leadership skills
- Young people are empowered and have greater control over their lives
- Services for young people are improved and more relevant

Community Benefits

Youth engagement and participation can also have a number of community benefits, these include:

- Improved individual and community outcomes
- Stronger service systems that are flexible, responsive, inclusive, accountable that meets the needs of young people
- Improved trust between the community and policy makers
- Improved understanding of problems being faced by young people
- Increased public value for money, by distributing funding to programs and services that are required, which young people will use
- Removed negative stereotypes of young people
- Development of skilled workers
- Development of community pride and personal responsibility
- Better informed planning and decision making
- Better public policy
- A more engaged Tasmanian community
- A more inclusive and responsive Tasmanian Government

Youth engagement and participation can also have a number of community benefits.



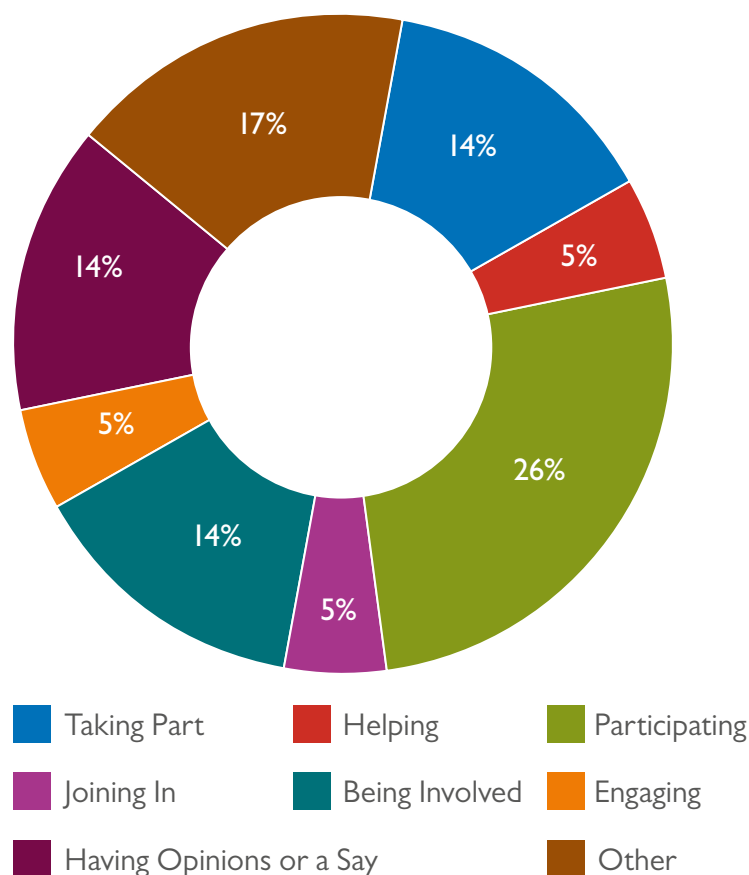
What does youth participation and engagement mean to young people?

We asked young people how they would define ‘youth participation and engagement’/what ‘youth participation and engagement’ meant to them.

We heard that participating, taking part, having an opinion or a say and being involved were the most popular responses.

Figure 2 provides an additional breakdown of the responses that were received.

Figure 2 – What is Youth Participation and Engagement?



Additional responses that are grouped under ‘Other’ include:

- Having a go and trying anything
- Interacting
- Talking and working with workers to get support and things you need
- Going to a youth group
- Students showing up to school and doing the work they are given
- Doing things you don’t feel comfortable doing
- Slightly taking charge

Young People's Experiences of Participation

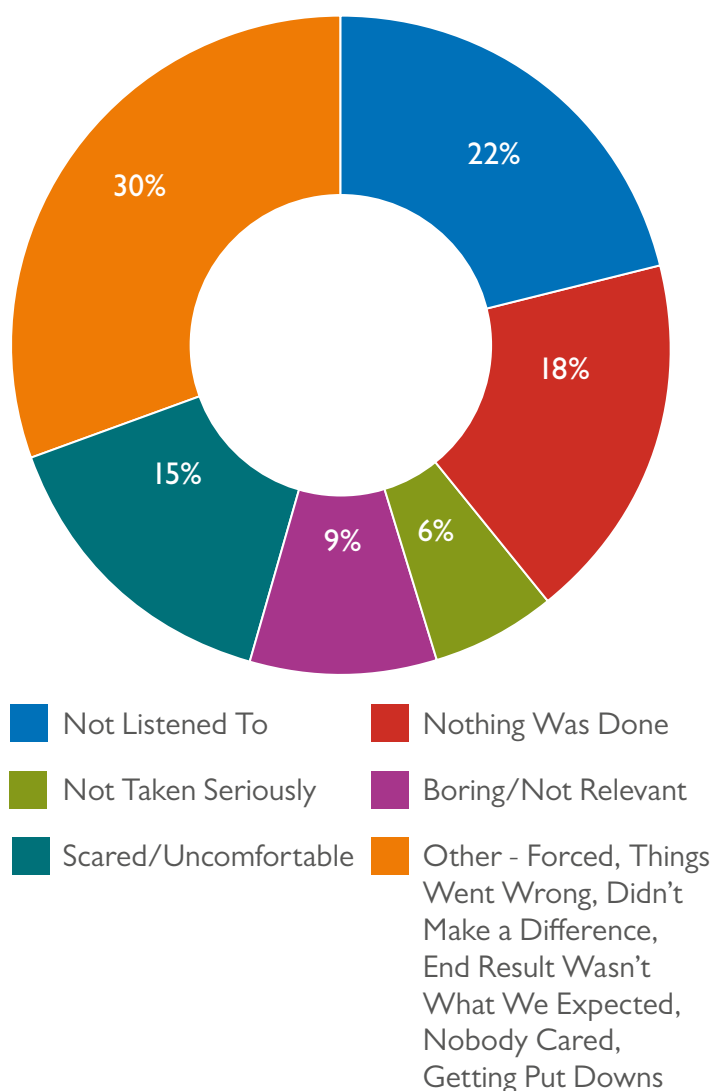
We asked young people a series of questions relating to their lived experiences of providing feedback or participating.

We heard that:

- 60% of young people had been given at least one opportunity to provide feedback or their ideas about a service or issue that impacted on them. These opportunities included things like giving feedback about school, sporting clubs and services they had used.
- 21% of young people consulted felt that not being listened to impacted negatively on their engagement experience, followed by inaction or nothing being done with their feedback (18%), and being scared or uncomfortable (15%).
- 28% of young people said that being heard or listened to helped to make their experience positive, followed by helping people and/or making a difference (15%) and getting action, seeing that something was done (14%).

Additional responses can be found in Figures 3 and 4.

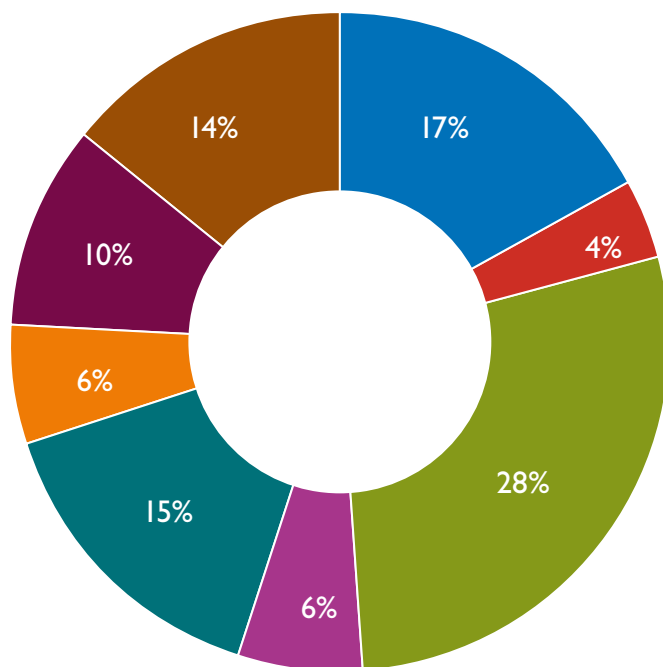
Figure 3 – What does a Bad Experience Participating look like?



CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY FORUM

Community members in a regional Tasmanian town raised some concerns about young people riding dirt bikes. The local council organised a community forum to discuss the issue and potential solutions. Tom, a local high school student, felt strongly about this issue and attended the community forum to put his side of the story forward. At the forum Tom talked about the limited options for young people to ride their dirt bikes around the town. Adults at the forum interrupted Tom as he was speaking, shouted at him and told him that dirt bikes should be banned. Tom sat down and didn't speak for the rest of the forum. Tom was disheartened that he was unable to finish putting his view across. Tom does not want to participate in any more consultations, but he still plans to ride his dirt bike in the town.

Figure 4 – What Does a Good Experience Participating and Engaging Look Like?



- Getting Action/Something Was Done
- Having my Say/Telling my Story
- Being Heard/Listened To
- Being Asked
- Helping People/Making a Difference
- Fun/Easy to Understand
- Giving Ideas/Suggestions
- Other - Increased Confidence, Grateful, Empowering, Had an Understanding of Where I Was Coming From, Well Organised, No Pressure, Good Experience, Interested in The Topic.

CASE STUDY: TEACHER FEEDBACK

Year 8 Maths teachers at a Tasmanian high school have devised a “two stars and a suggestion” feedback system to help increase student engagement. At the end of each Maths class students anonymously provide their views on two things that worked well in the class (two stars); and a suggestion on what they would like to change about the class. Teachers have taken student feedback on board and where possible have implemented relevant suggestions in time for the next Maths class. Year 8 students at the school feel their views are being heard, can see immediate changes within the classroom and feel they have some influence on how they are being taught. Teachers have noticed that students are now more engaged and willing to participate in their Maths classes.

Barriers and Ways to Promote Youth Participation

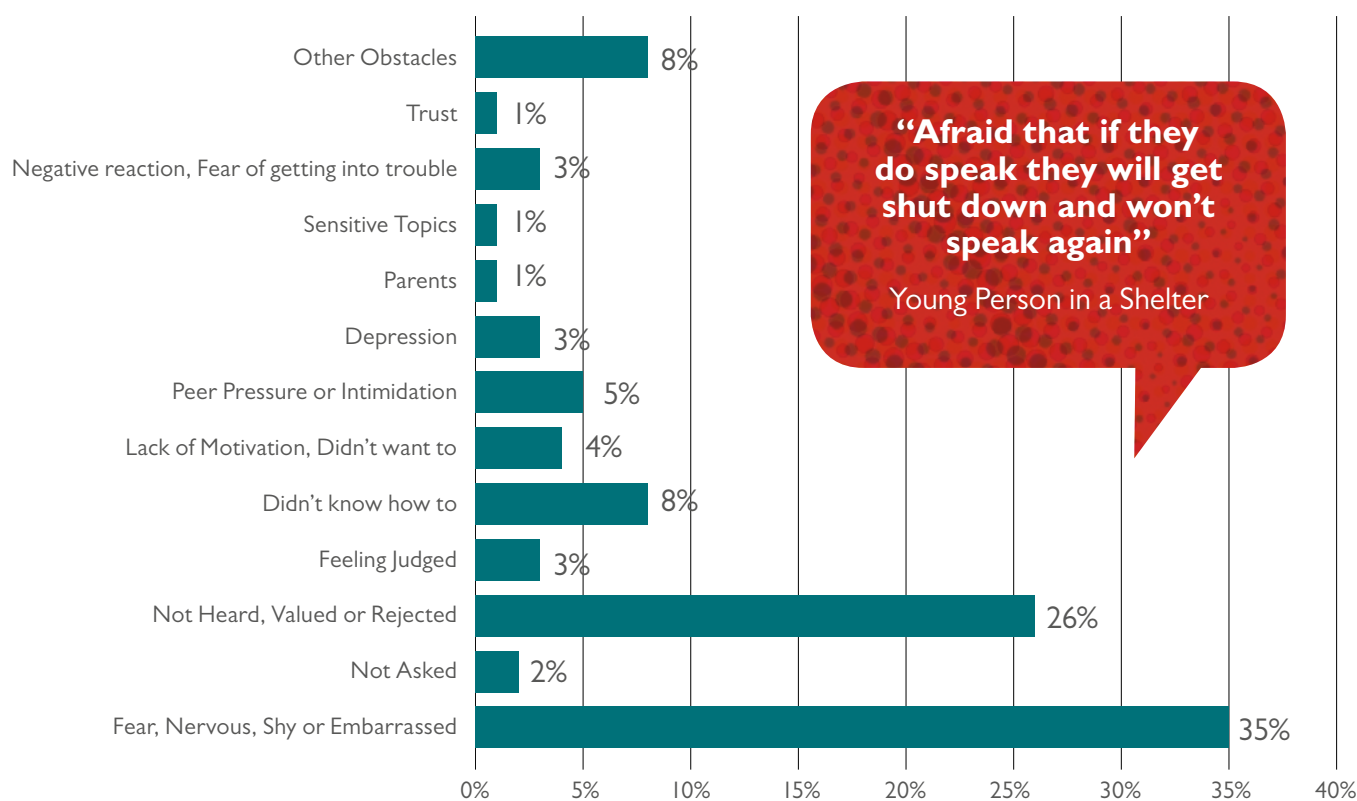
We asked young people what they think may prevent or encourage some young people from providing feedback on issues that are important to them.

We heard that:

- 35% of young people believe that being fearful, nervous, shy or embarrassed would be the main reason young people don't participate, followed by not being heard, valued or rejected (26%).
- 20% of young people believe that support, encouragement or increasing a young person's confidence would improve participation rates, as well as providing a variety of feedback options such as online, anonymous options and shorter surveys (18%), asking young people, allowing them to have a say and listening to their opinions (17%).

A breakdown of responses can be found in Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5 – Barriers to Participation*



“Afraid that if they do speak they will get shut down and won't speak again”

Young Person in a Shelter

“Adult opinions overshadow a kid's opinion - adults always have the last say”

Young Person at
Reece High School

*It should be noted that while 'transport' or 'lack of financial means' were not specified by young people, feedback was provided by several key stakeholders to suggest that these were also real barriers to youth participation. These barriers may contribute and explain in part why some parents don't allow young people to participate

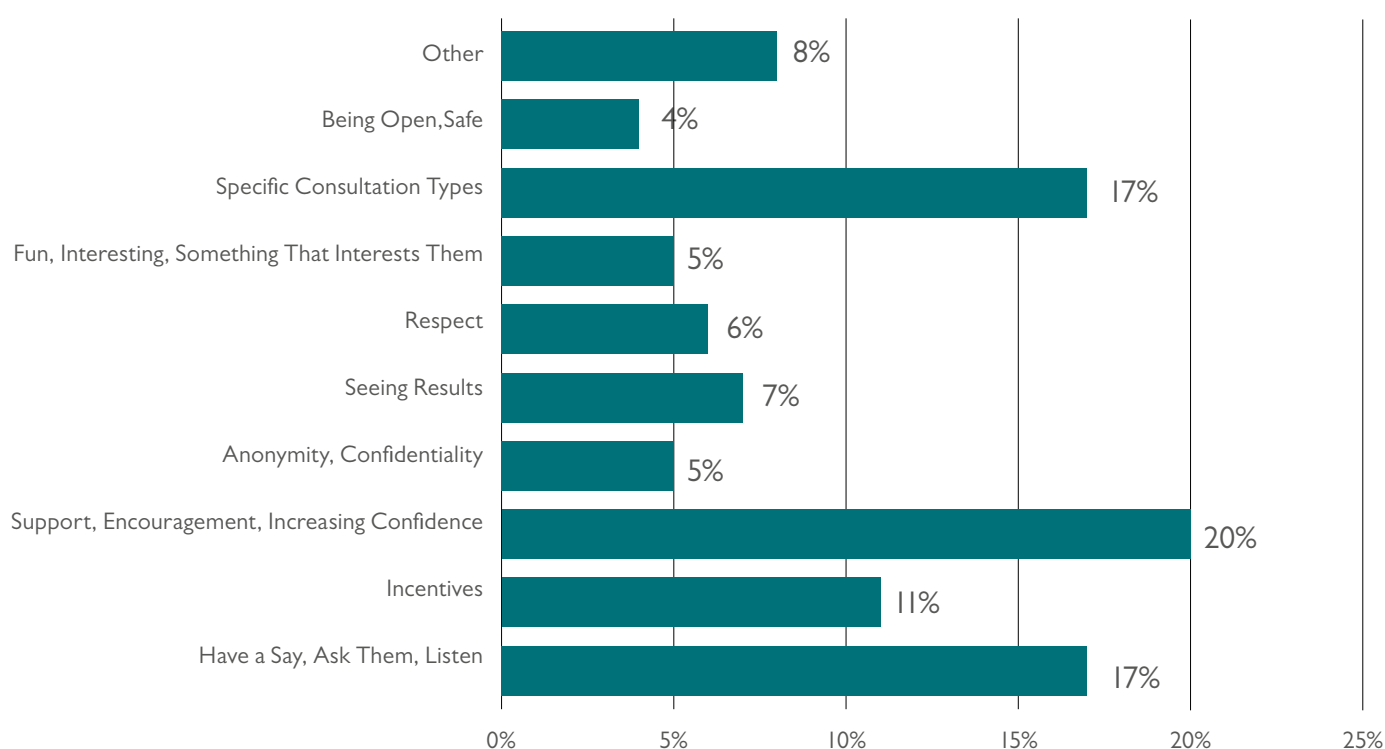
**“Go to younger people
before adults”**

Young Person at
Kings Meadows High School

**“Saying their ideas are
valued and there is no
wrong answer”**

Young Person Save the Children


Figure 6 – Encouraging Increased Participation



**“Explain that processes take time;
communicate with young people to
help them understand why they may
not see immediate results, so that
they don’t get discouraged.”**

Young Person Jordan River Learning Federation

Resources for Engaging with Young People



We have developed
a suite of resources that
will help.

Based on feedback that has been provided by young people we have compiled a range of resources that have been adapted to help Government and Non-Government services to improve engagement with young people, particularly vulnerable young people that may be hard to reach, these include:

Resource 1 – Pathways to Participation

Resource 2 – The Ladder of Participation

Resource 3 – Principles of Youth Engagement

Resource 4 – The Do's and Don'ts of Youth Engagement

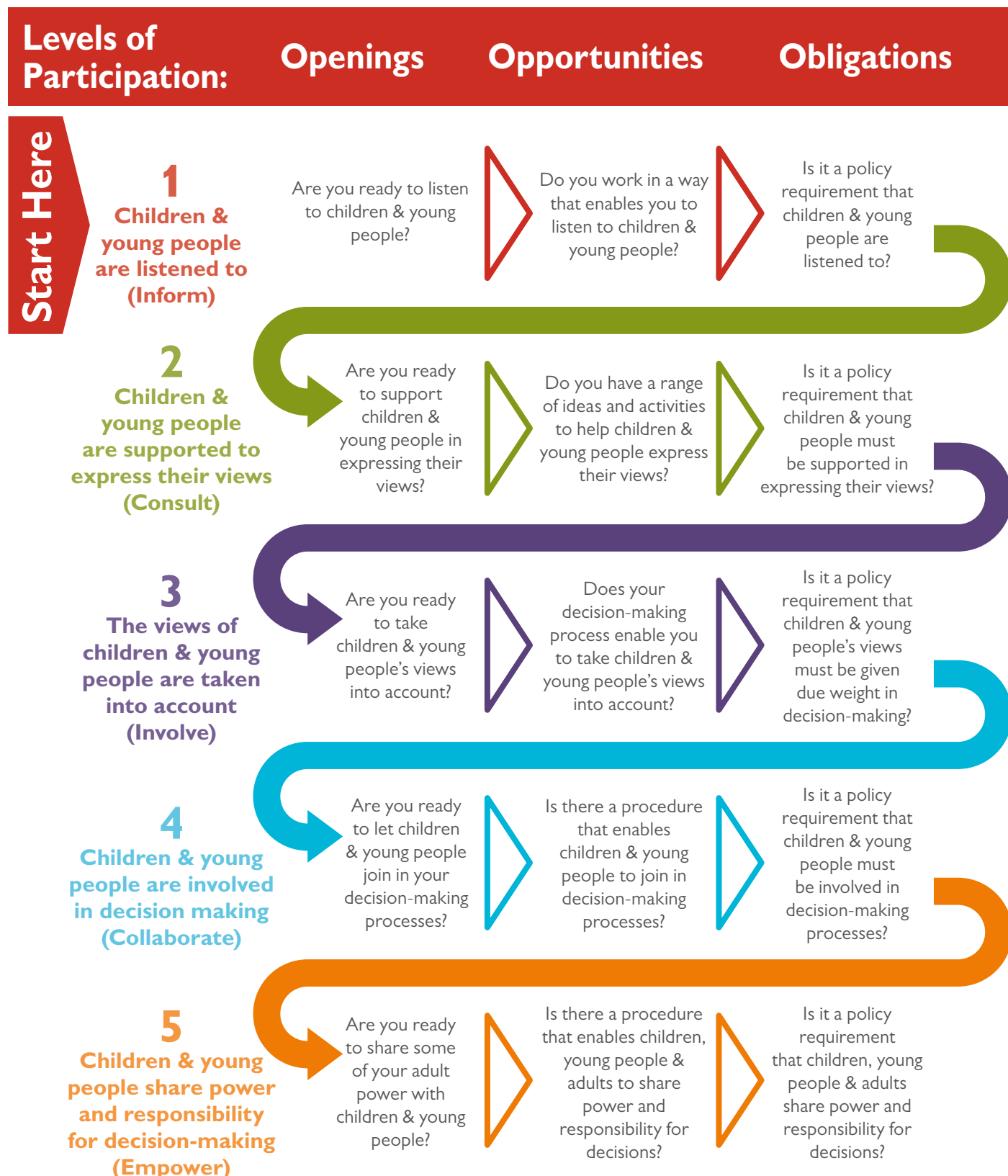
Resource 5 – The Youth Engagement Checklist

Resource 6 – Examples of How to Engage with Young People

Resource 1 – Pathways to Participation⁴

Youth participation is a process rather than a specific event. The model below can be used by organisations to assess their readiness and commitment to youth participation.

The questions provide organisations with an indication of what level they are currently at and help to identify what they need to improve to be at the level they would like to get to.



⁴ Adapted from Harry Shier (2001) Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations

Resource 2 – The Ladder of Participation⁵



⁵ Adapted from Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992), Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship, UNICEF.

Resource 3 – Principles of Engaging with Young People⁶

The principles below form the foundation of engaging with young people and should be reflected in all processes and methods of engagement.

1.1. Establish why you are engaging

What is the purpose/question? What level of engagement do we need (are you informing, consulting, involving collaborating or empowering)? (Refer to Appendix 1 and 2).

1.2. Identify who needs to be engaged

Is the purpose/question relevant to young people? Will they care about this issue?

Is there a specific cohort/group of young people who this is relevant to?

If young people are the main stakeholders speak with them first (before adults).

1.3. Learn from past experiences

Has the question been asked before?

Has this group of young people been consulted before?

What were the outcomes from previous consultations?

What are the lessons you can learn from past experiences or can you build upon them?

1.4. Listen, understand and encourage

Listen in a non-judgemental and friendly way – there are no “wrong answers”.

Consider ways to encourage young people to participate, and increase their confidence while participating.

Allow young people to give feedback on their own terms, don't force young people to participate.

1.5. Be honest, upfront and open

Be honest and upfront about how will we use their feedback.

Manage expectations – be clear about what is in it for them and what level of impact their feedback may have.

Whenever possible provide follow up and a feedback loop to those who participated.

1.6. Be relevant, innovative, creative and fun

Use appropriate language and consultation methods for young people.

Mixed methods and a range of options may increase participation.

Maintain confidentiality or provide an anonymous option if needed.

Be innovative, creative and have fun.

Be flexible and ready to change the approach at any time if it is not working for the audience.

⁶ Adapted from the South Australian Better Together Engagement Principles and based on feedback received from young people.

Resource 4 – Do's and Don'ts of Youth Engagement^{7, 8}

DO

- Encourage and provide opportunities for young people to engage from an early age
- Ask young people for their opinions regularly
- Communicate/promote engagement opportunities
- Provide information on the purpose of the engagement and what is required of the young person
- Undertake consultation activities that increase the confidence of young people
- Let young people have a say and listen to them
- Use multiple and flexible engagement techniques to meet the needs of young people
- Show appreciation for the contributions of young people
- Consider using incentives to acknowledge participation
- Tell young people how their feedback will be used
- Provide contact details and ways that the young person can obtain further information following the consultation
- Follow through with what you say and be honest
- Share feedback and results with young people
- Take young people and their opinions seriously
- Be open to all of the opinions of young people and reinforce there are no “wrong answers”
- Respect the privacy and anonymity of young people
- Make engagement fun, interesting and relevant for young people
- Make sure young people feel safe and comfortable in the engagement environment
- Be understanding and respectful when discussing sensitive topics
- Build trust with young people

DON'T

- Make young people feel scared, nervous or embarrassed
- Ignore young people
- Devalue or reject a young person's opinion
- Force or intimidate young people to engage
- Keep the results of engagement a secret
- Make engagement boring
- Engage all young people the same way
- Judge young people or their views
- Isolate or belittle young people
- Breach a young person's trust
- Disrespect the views of young people
- Bribe young people to participate
- React negatively to young people or their opinions
- Allow adults to prevent young people from engaging
- Be dishonest or unrealistic about how feedback will be used or the impact it may have
- Raise young people's expectations of what can be achieved from the engagement process
- Think all young people are the same, or that they will like to engage in the same way
- Let others intimidate or dominate a group engagement process
- Don't use jargon or acronyms that young people may not be familiar with
- Don't try to use slang to make yourself look cooler
- Don't dumb down how you speak to a young person

⁷ Based on feedback received from young people.

⁸ Statewide Youth Collaborative, Top 10 Tips - SYC's Guide to Consulting with Young People, 2012

Resource 5 – Youth Engagement Checklist⁹

Engagement Purpose

- ☐ Are you clear about the purpose of the engagement?
- ☐ Are you clear about the questions you would like answered?
- ☐ Have you determined what level of engagement is required? (informing, consulting, involving, collaborating or empowering, etc)
- ☐ Have you asked the young people how they would like to be communicated with and determined the most appropriate way to engage with them?
- ☐ Have you decided how you will communicate with young people about their role in the engagement activity? (e.g. managing expectations)

Location

- ☐ If a location is required, is it familiar to the young people participating?
- ☐ Is the location appropriate for all participants? (e.g. access, facilities, travel, etc)
- ☐ Is the location youth friendly? (comfortable and safe with appropriate equipment, etc)

Facilitators

- ☐ Do the facilitator(s) have appropriate qualifications or skills? (e.g. working with vulnerable people check, trained in active listening, non-judgemental, encourage participation, can manage conflict)
- ☐ Do the facilitator(s) have existing rapport with the children or young people?
- ☐ If the facilitator(s) are not known to the children or young people, will trust building activities be used?

Timing

- ☐ Have you determined the duration of the engagement activity? (e.g. one-off, ongoing, or over a specific time period)
- ☐ Have timing considerations such as holidays and religious festivals been taken into account?
- ☐ Does the day, time and date suit the participants? (e.g. after or during school)

Participants

- ☐ Have you determined the target group(s)?
- ☐ Is the purpose of the engagement relevant to the target group(s)?
- ☐ Are young people likely to care about the issue?
- ☐ If young people are the main stakeholders have you spoken to them before other stakeholders?
- ☐ Have you decided how to recruit participants?
- ☐ Have you determined how you will ensure a diverse range of young people are consulted? (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, abilities, locations, socio-economic status, etc)
- ☐ Have you determined how many young people you would like to consult with?
- ☐ Have you arranged for relevant organisations (e.g. service providers, community groups, schools, etc) to facilitate access to groups of young people?

Budget

- ☐ Have you considered all resources that may be required and the available budget? (e.g. cost of facilitator, location expenses, materials to conduct engagement activities, acknowledgment of participation and promotion of activities, etc)

⁹ Adapted from Engaging Children in Decision Making – A Guide for Consultation and based on feedback received from young people
Additional resources - www.researchgate.net/publication/42797884_Consulting_Young_People_A_Review_of_the_Literature;
mengage.org.au/images/work/Community-Engagement-100-Ideas-to-Help-Engage-Hard-to-Reach-People-Booklet.pdf;
www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/participation-guide;
www.youthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/Consulting+Young+People+About+Their+Ideas+and+Opinions.pdf

Past Learnings

- ☐ Have the questions you would like to ask been asked before?
- ☐ Has the group of young people participated in similar engagement activities before?
- ☐ Do you know the outcomes of previous engagement? Is this engagement necessary?
- ☐ What are the lessons you can learn from the past engagement experiences or can you build upon them?

Engagement

- ☐ Are consultation methods appropriate for the age group(s) you are working with?
- ☐ Have you considered ways to encourage all young people (who have been identified as participants) to fully participate, and increase their confidence while participating?
- ☐ Will young people find the planned activities fun and rewarding?
- ☐ Are questions clear, age appropriate and free from jargon?
- ☐ Has a suitable timeframe been allocated to complete the activity?
- ☐ Is there flexibility in the engagement strategy to enable a variety of engagement options to enable a number of young people to participate, or to change your approach if it's not working?
- ☐ Have you considered whether an anonymous engagement process is required?
- ☐ Is it appropriate for parents/carers to participate directly in the engagement process?

Ethical Considerations

- ☐ Have you provided the young person with age appropriate information that allows them to make an informed choice and provide their informed consent to participate? Does the young person understand this information and are they able to understand the purpose and consequences of participating?
- ☐ Is the young person aware that their participation is voluntary and they can stop participating at any time?
- ☐ Have parents or carers been informed about the engagement process, the young persons participation and role?
- ☐ Is parental/carer consent required? If yes, has a method been put in place to obtain this consent? (e.g. the publishing of recordings or pictures and/or young people who can't obtain informed consent)
- ☐ Have you determined how the information will be stored?
- ☐ Have privacy and confidentiality issues been considered where appropriate?
- ☐ Is consent required from the organisation that has responsibility for the young person at the time of the consultation? (e.g. school principal)
- ☐ Are staff aware of their legal obligations around privacy, mandatory reporting and information sharing?
- ☐ Have you informed the young people how their feedback will be used? Be realistic about what is achievable from the engagement process.
- ☐ Have you determined how you will provide feedback to participants on the outcome of the engagement activity?
- ☐ Have you considered how feedback from young people will be stored?

Disclosures

- ☐ Is there a documented process in place for dealing with disclosures?
- ☐ Are facilitators aware of what to do if they see or hear something that raises concerns about a young person's safety?

Evaluation

- ☐ Has an evaluation technique been chosen and scheduled into the process?
- ☐ Have you determined how young people and their parents or carers (if appropriate) will be able to provide feedback on the process and outcomes of the engagement activities?

Acknowledgement

- ☐ Have you determined how you will acknowledge the contribution of young people's time and expertise? (e.g. award, certificate or voucher, etc)

Resource 6 – Examples of How to Engage with Young People¹⁰

Arts and Cultural Programs			Cost: High	Time: High
Arts and cultural programs give young people an opportunity to express their views via a creative method. This might include visual, written, musical or drama performances. Programs can be individual or undertaken in larger groups and can cater to a wide age group and variety of interests.				
Level of Participation				
<input type="checkbox"/> Inform	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consult	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Involve	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Empower
Advantages		Disadvantages		Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Many young people like hands on activitiesShort term commitment requiredAllows for community involvementDoesn't require high literacy levelsAllows young people to express their ideas in a creative wayCan cater to a wide age group		<ul style="list-style-type: none">High level of resources and planning requiredNeed facilitator with appropriate creative skills or ability to acquire skillsNot all young people are interested in creative activities		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Young people can take on roles within programsCan provide skills to young personCan include a wide range of fun and creative activities
Examples:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Musical workshops or festivals eg. BigHart shed music festival in WynyardArt/Digital Art/Photo exhibition or competitionStorytelling/drama workshops				

Newsletters / Flyers / Posters			Cost: Medium Time: Low	
Newsletters, flyers and posters are one of the easiest ways to distribute and publicise information to a large audience. They have the flexibility to be distributed via a range of means such as displayed in public places, printed, mailed, e-mailed, promoted on websites or social media. They are generally used to impart information to young people, however young people can be involved in their development as well.				
Level of Participation				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inform	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consult	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Involve	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate	<input type="checkbox"/> Empower
Advantages		Disadvantages		Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to provide a consistent message across a large audience• Timely way to provide information and updates• Can be used to gain feedback on an issue• Young people can participate and be involved in their development or production/distribution		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires young people to read them (and have a basic level of literacy)• Can be costly if professionally published or mail out options are used• Requires a medium level of skill to develop		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure your language is easy to read, clear and concise. Avoid jargon and acronyms.• Use pictures, photos and graphics to make the document eye-catching• Make sure you have consent if using photos of young people
Examples:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular newsletter to update young people on a particular issue• Flyer or Poster to promote a youth event or youth service				

¹⁰ Adapted from Government of South Australia, *Better Together: A practical guide to effective engagement with young people*; Mitchell Shire Council, *Enhancing Youth Engagement Toolkit*; and from feedback from consultations with young people in Tasmania.

Group Activities

Cost: Medium Time: Medium

Activities that bring together groups of young people, can include team building exercises, group discussions and focus groups. Can explore and analyse a range of issues or ideas in more depth and allows young people to work together.

Level of Participation

☒ Inform ☒ Consult ☒ Involve ☒ Collaborate ☒ Empower

Advantages

- Can increase problem solving skills of young people
- Able to further analyse issues
- Groups bounce ideas off each other and generate innovative solutions
- Young people may feel more confident if discussing issues with friends
- Can use peer facilitators
- Time limited – don't require long term commitment from young person

Disadvantages

- Peer pressure/ judgement within group
- May not be suitable for discussing sensitive issues
- Not representative of all young people

Tips

- Use as part of a larger engagement strategy
- Can be run in a range of settings to enable participation across relevant groups
- Make sure the issue is relevant to the group of young people

Examples:

- Focus groups – may target specific youth cohorts depending on the topic under discussion eg. LGBTIQ, school groups, sporting groups
- Group Discussions
- Peer led discussions

Forums

Cost: High Time: High

Where a large group of people can come together to explore and share ideas about an issue. This method involves presentations, facilitated discussions, a defined structure and agenda.

Level of Participation

☒ Inform ☒ Consult ☒ Involve ☐ Collaborate ☐ Empower

Advantages

- Large groups of young people can participate
- Allows interaction between young people, topic experts, government and non government services
- Young people can receive information (participant) or provide information (presenter)
- Group activities can be effective in generating ideas and solutions
- Young people can hear from/and be heard by a range of people from diverse backgrounds
- Young people can be involved in setting the agenda and content of the forum

Disadvantages

- Requires large amount of resources and planning
- May not be suitable for discussing sensitive issues
- Requires access to a large venue, catering and engagement of guest speakers

Tips

- Creative presentations and engaging guest speakers can spark innovation and discussions

Examples:

- Youth conferences; Conferences on topics of relevance for young people

Interviews / One on One discussions

Cost: Medium Time: High

Gives a young person an opportunity to discuss an issue face to face. The interview may be formal and structured or informal.

Level of Participation



Inform



Consult



Involve



Collaborate



Empower

Advantages

- Can be useful for discussing sensitive issues
- May reduce issues with a young person being influenced by peer pressure or feeling judged by their peers/others
- Issues can be discussed in detail and personal examples can provide insight into an issue
- Young person can express their personal view and feel listened to

Disadvantages

- Not representative of all young people
- May be intimidating to some young people who do not like talking to strangers/adults
- Unable to bounce ideas off other young people
- Can be difficult if a young person does not want to open up or expand on issues
- Difficult to capture isolated groups

Tips

- Use peers or someone known to the young person if that makes them feel more comfortable
- Be warm, friendly and non judgemental

Examples:

- Face to face discussions with marginalised groups to discuss sensitive issues (eg. drugs and alcohol, mental health issues, LGBTIQ issues)

Social Media

Cost: Medium Time: Low

Social media sites are used by a large number of young people and are often used as the preferred method of communication with their peers.

Level of Participation



Inform



Consult



Involve



Collaborate



Empower

Advantages

- Relevant form of networking/communication for young people
- Can target a large number of young people at one time
- Accessible for young people in rural and remote areas
- Can get immediate feedback on posts
- Online discussions can generate innovative ideas
- Easy to use and provide regular updates

Disadvantages

- Requires access to technology
- May share inappropriate responses
- Difficult to assess whether responses are genuine
- Young people may be unaware of privacy settings

Tips

- Can be used to invite young people to events
- Can be linked to other forms of youth engagement such as polls, surveys
- May require consent from parents
- Appoint a moderator to ensure posts are appropriate and to eliminate bullying

Examples:

- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

Email / SMS

Cost: Medium Time: Low

Text messaging between phone devices and the use of email are widely used methods of distributing information to a large number of people quickly. There can be limits to the size of information sent and this method requires a young person to consent to you contacting them via their email address or phone number.

Level of Participation



Inform



Consult



Involve



Collaborate



Empower

Advantages

- High level of usage among young people
- Easy to use and can be automated for large groups
- Can send attachments, photos and flyers

Disadvantages

- Requires access to phone numbers or email addresses of young people
- Requires access to technology or a mobile phone
- Unable to discuss issues face to face

Tips

- Make sure your SMS/ email is not too large as young people may have limits on their accounts/ phone plans
- Gain consent and advise if you are going to contact the young person via email or SMS

Examples:

- Email a group of young people an invitation to an event
- Remind young people about the event using SMS or request that they RSVP via SMS

Surveys

Cost: Low Time: Low

Surveys collect information using a set list of questions. They can be distributed and responded to via a variety of formats including email, online surveys, paper/hand written responses, phone calls and discussed in face to face interviews.

Level of Participation



Inform



Consult



Involve



Collaborate



Empower

Advantages

- Questions can be designed to provide a range of response formats from yes/no to free text responses.
- Can be anonymous
- Low cost and easy to use
- Inclusive of diverse groups of young people
- Can easily collect and analyse a large amount of data

Disadvantages

- Requires a level of literacy
- May require access to technology
- Unable to generate ideas through group interactions or discussions
- Surveys responses will only be as good as the design of the survey
- Requires access to contact details of participants

Tips

- Make sure surveys are short and use age appropriate language
- Don't use jargon or acronyms
- Make sure the topic is relevant to young people
- Include why you are doing the survey and what the information will be used for
- Identify if the survey responses will be anonymous

Examples:

- Online surveys, written surveys
- Interview surveys could be conducted by peers

Work Experience / Volunteering

Cost: Low Time: Medium

Work experience and volunteering can provide opportunities for young people to engage with their local community and businesses. They can provide young people with new skills, learning experiences and contacts which can enhance a young person's employability.

Level of Participation

☐ Inform ☐ Consult ☒ Involve ☒ Collaborate ☒ Empower

Advantages

- Provides skill development for a young person
- Can build a young person's confidence in the workforce
- Can build relationships between young people, the community and local businesses
- Allows local businesses to assess and train potential new employees

Disadvantages

- Requires a level of supervision within the workplace
- Requires appropriate safe guards such as insurance, adherence to workplace health and safety standards

Tips

- Placements in the workplace should be meaningful for the young person
- Identify a workplace mentor who would work well with young people in the workplace
- Consider a collective approach across local businesses to broaden the opportunities available for young people

Examples:

- Volunteering for local community events
- Work Experience opportunities within local businesses

Youth Reference Groups / Youth Council

Cost: Medium Time: Medium

Youth Councils and Youth Reference Groups allow a group of young people to voice their opinions, provide feedback and be involved in decision making for specific issues, programs and policies. They are often used by schools (Student Representative Councils), local government, state government and non government organisations to bring a representative youth voice to the table when developing policies, programs and services.

Level of Participation

☐ Inform ☒ Consult ☒ Involve ☒ Collaborate ☒ Empower

Advantages

- Builds a young person's skills and confidence
- Provides a structured forum for youth development
- Young people are involved in decision-making within the community
- Allows young people to work collaboratively
- Allows government and services to have ready access to young people and their views/feedback

Disadvantages

- May not be representative of all young people
- Marginalised and minority groups may not be included
- Requires an ongoing commitment by a young person
- Requires resources and administrative support

Tips

- Encourage young people to establish the group, terms of reference and group processes
- Encourage active decision making by young people – don't allow adults to do too much
- Ensure there is an adult available to provide guidance and support

Examples:

- Student Representative Councils at local schools
- Youth Reference Groups for specific services or NGO's – Headspace Youth Reference Group

Boards and Committees¹¹

Cost: Low Time: High

Participation by young people on Boards and Committees enables them to take on an influential and shared leadership role alongside adults within an organisation. This role may involve high level decision making, influencing policy and budgets for an organisation or a specific project.

Level of Participation

☐ Inform ☐ Consult ☐ Involve ☒ Collaborate ☒ Empower

Advantages

- Can help an organisation gain insight and perspective on youth issues
- Young people can bring new and creative ideas to the table
- A young person may re-energise and bring new life to an organisation
- Can improve a young person's leadership skills, understanding of organisational processes and awareness of community issues

Disadvantages

- Young people may need help to understand and participate in meeting processes
- Usually involves a high level of commitment by the young person and regular attendance

Tips

- Young people may need encouragement to feel comfortable and speak out in meetings
- A board or committee member can be assigned to mentor and support a young person

Examples:

- A young person serves as a member of a non-profit Board for a non-profit organisation
- A young person serves as a member of a Steering Committee for a particular project or process

Mentoring Programs

Cost: Medium Time: Medium

Mentoring can help to support and encourage young people to develop their skills and potential, build trusting relationships, and can assist them in overcoming barriers in their personal development. A mentor acts as a sounding board and confidant for a young person.

Level of Participation

☐ Inform ☐ Consult ☒ Involve ☒ Collaborate ☒ Empower

Advantages

- Can build a young person's self esteem and enhance their life skills
- Can improve interpersonal skills
- Can provide direction and increase motivation of a young person
- Builds relationships and helps to develop community partnerships

Disadvantages

- Building relationships and trust with young people takes time and perseverance
- Mentors and young people need to be effectively matched to achieve the best outcomes

Tips

- Mentoring can be youth initiated – a process where the young person recruits a mentor who is known to them from the local community
- Mentoring relationship needs to be flexible to meet the individual needs of the young person
- Mentors will need to be have a Working With Vulnerable People check and undertake relevant training

Examples:

- An adult community member is matched with a young person and undertakes a role of mentor to support and encourage a young person to develop their potential
- A local business assigns a mentor to support a young person undertaking work experience, volunteering or who is a new employee within their organisation
- Peer to peer mentoring where a young person with a particular skill or experience mentors another young person who may be new to an organisation or particular experience

¹¹ Further information available at: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2004), *Young People on Boards and Committees – A Handbook for Organisations Working with Young People*.

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