YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Created by young people to elevate young people.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit was created by a group of young people who have experience with the mental health system in the state of Oregon and several supportive adults as a part of the Oregon Healthy Transitions Grant (2018-2023). Created to help support meaningful youth engagement on committees, councils, boards and other leadership structures, it was initially used by the Healthy Transitions Statewide Steering Committee in 2020. The toolkit was designed to be universal in nature with the hope that it could be applied across multiple settings to elevate and sustain youth and young adult voices. For the purposes of this document, "youth" engagement is a shorthand term for youth and young adult engagement.

This toolkit was not intended to be exhaustive on the subject of meaningful youth engagement and we recommend that readers seek out additional material from diverse perspectives. In this document, contributors chose to share what worked best for them—a select set of tools that they found to be most helpful when building a foundation for creating, supporting, and sustaining their own voices as youth within Healthy Transitions. You may find all of the items relevant and useful to your work, or just a select few. Either way, we hope that this collection will help you launch, enhance and sustain meaningful youth engagement in your work.

HEALTHY TRANSITIONS

The 2018 Oregon Healthy Transitions Grant was focused on improving access to treatment and support services for youth/young adults who experience mental health challenges. The project explored different ways to meet the needs of 16-25 year-olds, particularly those who were less likely to engage in traditional services (e.g., young people who are houseless or LGBTQIA, who live in rural communities, or who are involved in the foster care or juvenile justice systems). The project included the Healthy Transitions Statewide Steering Committee, which was designed to bring together leaders from across the state to connect systems and organizations,

identify challenges, make recommendations at the state level, and influence policy related to the mental health services cliff that transition-age youth face. Members included young people in Oregon who have lived experience with behavioral health systems, child welfare systems and houselessness. This committee also received community-based perspective from Douglas and Lane County youth and service providers from mental health and other youth-serving systems. This project aimed to increase youth voice and leadership at every level to drive youth-led policy and system change. The Oregon Healthy Transitions Grant concluded in 2023.
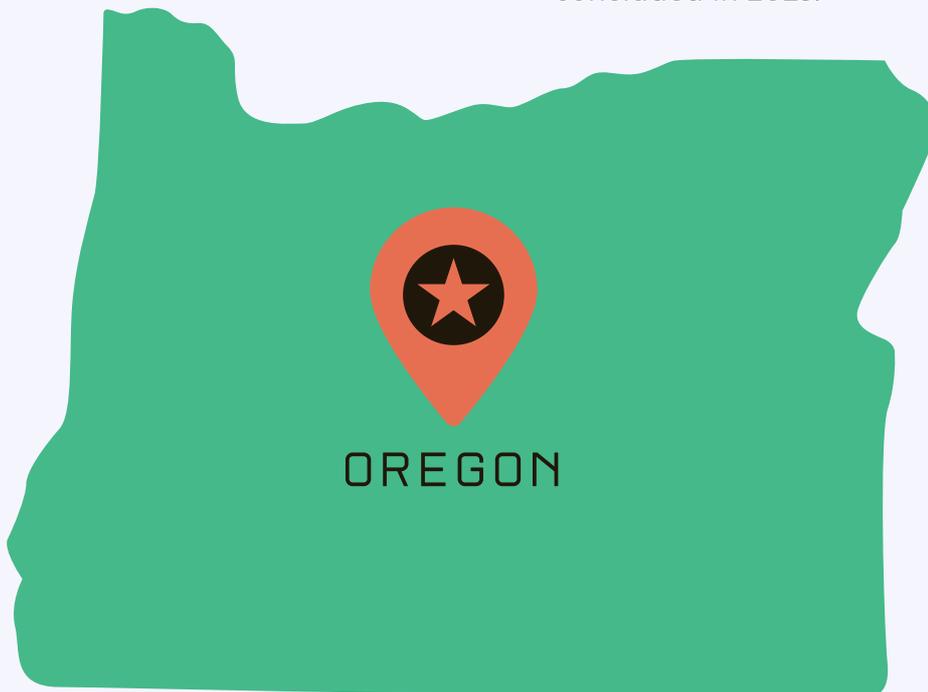
OREGON

This grant was a partnership between the Oregon Health Authority (Child, Adolescent and Family Behavioral Health and Services), Portland State University's School of Social Work's Regional Research Institute, the Early Assessment and Support Alliance Center for Excellence, and Youth ERA. This was funded through a grant (Healthy Transitions #SM80861) by the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AUTHORS

The following people wrote the contents of this toolkit as staff of the Oregon Healthy Transitions Project:

Shannon Marble - Healthy Transitions Project Director (2022-2023)

Sarah Rasmussen - Healthy Transitions Youth/Young Adult Coordinator (2022-2023)

Emilie Lamson-Siu - Healthy Transitions Project Director (2019-2022)

Elliott Hinkle - Healthy Transitions Youth/Young Adult Coordinator (2019-2021)

The following individuals contributed their time, energy and expertise to the creation of this toolkit:

- Macy Bretz
- Mackenzie Bige
- Shane Roberts
- Juanita Aniceto
- Molly MacGraw
- Tamara Sale
- Sophia Sivers
- Janet Walker
- Patrick Crawford
- Lev Schneidman
- Deborah Loy
- Aimee Walsh
- Matthew Rasmussen
- Sean Cummins
- Haley Hardin

TOOLKIT USE

It is the hope of the creators of this toolkit that it is a useful tool for those working to support the voices of youth and young adults as agents of change. Not only are users free to share the document, but we encourage its wide distribution as we hope that everyone that can use it gains access to it. Please pass it along through your own social networks, and encourage others to do the same. All we ask is that individuals use the following suggested citation so that the wise folks who contributed to this work are given credit:

Healthy Transitions Oregon Youth/Young Adult Engagement Toolkit (2023). Retrieved from Regional Research Institute, Portland State University on [ENTER DATE].

"I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT FOR YOUTH TO HAVE A VOICE IN SYSTEM CHANGE WORK, BECAUSE THE YOUTH ARE GOING TO BE THE ONES NAVIGATING THOSE SYSTEMS."

-GREY, THEY/THEM

CORE VALUES

to support youth voice.

Core values are the fundamental beliefs of an individual, group or entity. Because core values can influence behavior, it is important that committees, programs and agencies seeking to serve young people embrace core values that express a commitment to ensuring that young people's voices and perspectives guide their work.

This section provides the core values of the Healthy Transitions Statewide Steering Committee as examples that center the experiences of young people, define the value of their voices, and identify youth/young adults as key partners at the table. It is the hope that groups and organizations will reference this list when exploring their own core values, and incorporate some (or ones like them) in that process.
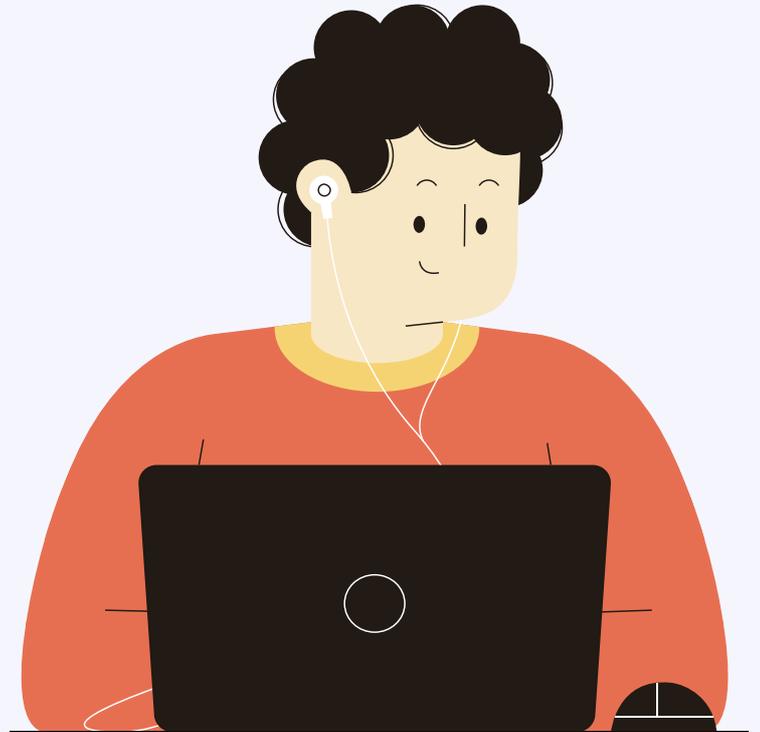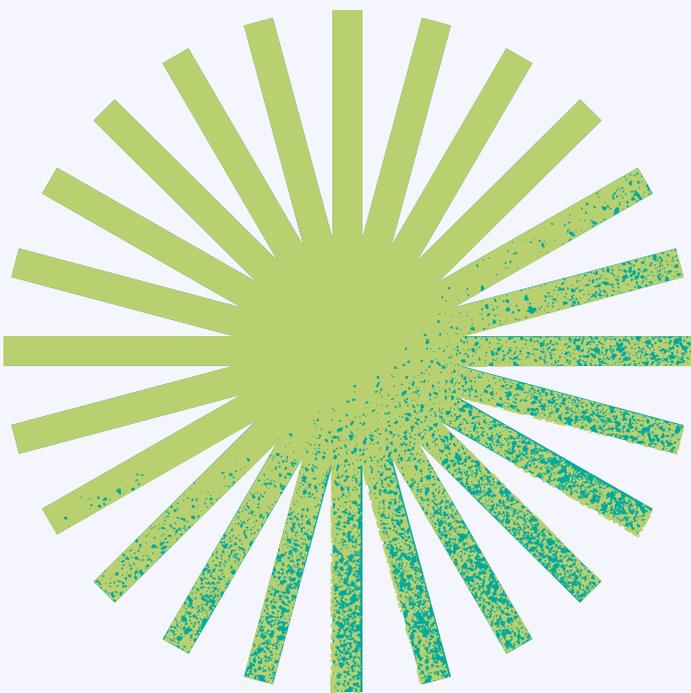
- **Youth are the experts.** Those who are directly impacted by youth-facing systems and services (such as government, school, justice, etc.) should have the strongest voice in changing them.

- **Representation matters.** Changing systems cannot rest on a few, hand-picked leaders, but should include a representative spectrum of youth who have experienced the systems in place.

- Youth/young adults should have a **broad range of services accessible** to them, including employment, educational resources, and positive youth connections that contribute to social and emotional well-being.

CORE VALUES

- Youth needs and experiences (personal and professional) should **drive how systems work** as opposed to systems driving what youth receive.

- Young people must have **access** to developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive and specific services and supports.
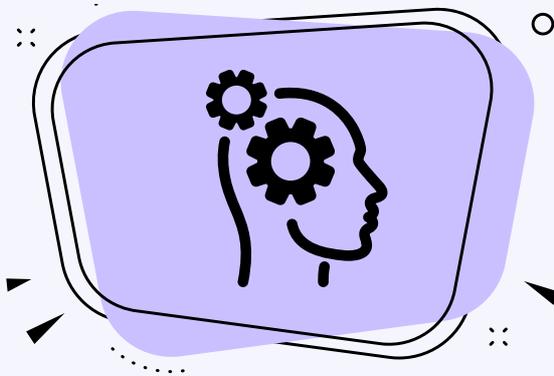
- Systems should work to **address barriers** to quality services that result from systemic and institutional oppression of young people based on race, religion, national origin, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical disability, socioeconomic status, geography, language, immigration status, and other intersecting identities.

- Meeting the needs of all youth/young adults requires **critical exploration and analysis** as well as **direct action**. Youth engagement and provision of services must be from a trauma-informed perspective. System change must be rooted in equity as well as both racial and social justice.

- Systems should **collect data** that evaluates the extent to which services and supports are working in terms of achieving desired outcomes and goals of young people. This data should then be used to guide systems' future investment in services and supports (for example, advocating for the expansion of services that show positive outcomes).

- Transition-age youth/young adults make up a unique group of individuals that have specific and diverse needs and require systems and services that are **responsive** to this. In particular, transition into, out of, between and across services must be addressed and supported.

- Services must **work across systems** to avoid organizational and systemic silos and promote collaboration, coordination, and innovation.
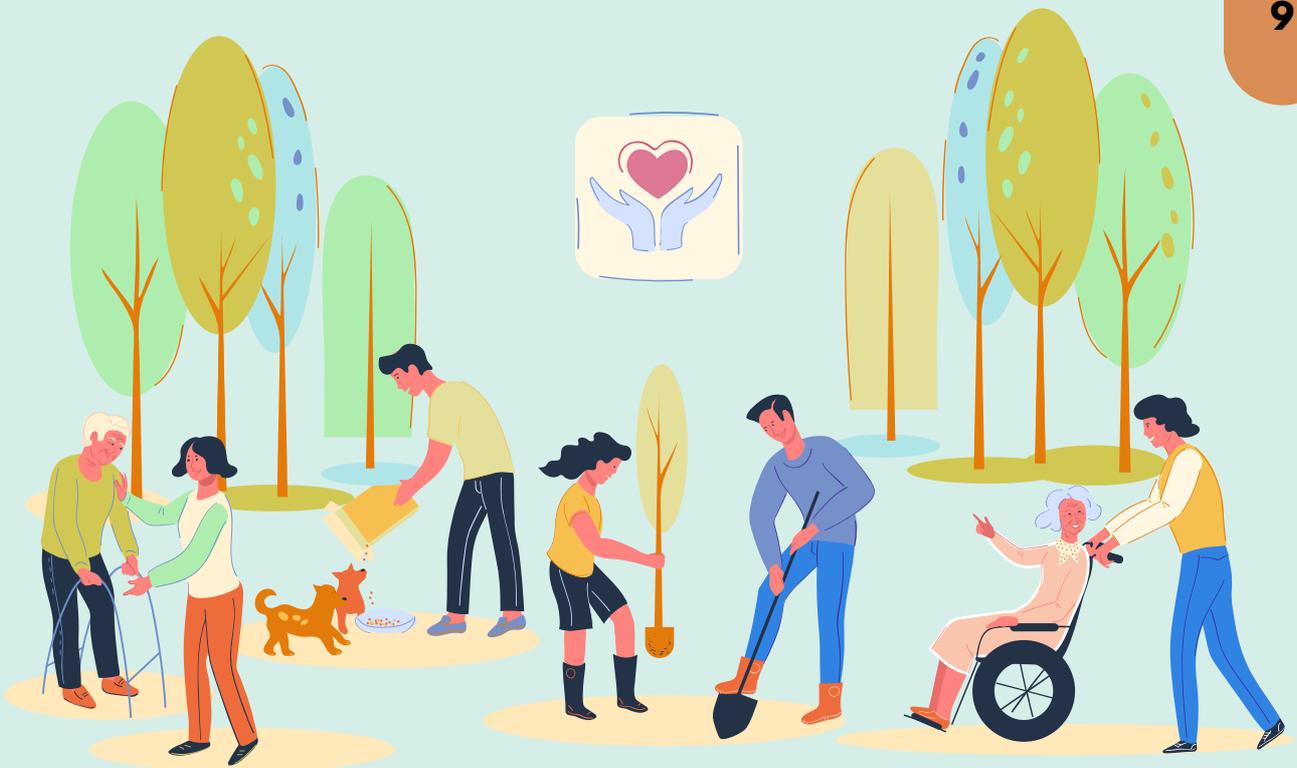
CORE ELEMENTS

to support meaningful youth engagement

Funders are increasingly requiring grantees to include consumer representation in program design, implementation and evaluation, but don't always provide a clear pathway for doing so. In recent years, new research aimed at identifying best practice methods for engaging youth in this work has deepened our understanding of how to implement processes that are consumer informed and guided. Supporting young people to be the drivers of systems change is crucial to improving outcomes for transition-age youth.

Most of the core elements highlighted in this next section were originally identified in "Involving Youth on Boards with Elected Officials - Core Elements of Program Design" (Jessica Collura and Shepherd Zeldin, University of Wisconsin-Extension, October 2010). This document was created by Wisconsin 4-H Educations and Kenosha County 4-H Youth Development Programs. With permission from the original authors, members of the Healthy Transitions Statewide Steering Committee amended the strategies and language included with each core element in order to best represent the beliefs and values of this group of young people and the work of Healthy Transitions.

The original document can be viewed here: *https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/youthadultpartnership/files/2011/07/INVOLVINGYOUTHONBOARDS.pdf*

CORE ELEMENTS

From the original authors: *"Our research study in Kenosha, combined with the lessons of previous research, indicates that effective initiatives are characterized by five core design elements, as summarized below. Each core element can be implemented in different ways depending on local circumstances. In other words, County Educators have many options in terms of selecting those strategies that are consistent with the core design element. The bottom line is that it is up to each Educator to choose those options that will work best in their county. It is important, however, that County Educators strive to implement at least one strategy within each core element."*

Core Element 1: Role expectations are clear and explicit. Both youth and adults understand their responsibilities.

Involving youth on professional boards, committees, and councils may be new to many program participants and as such role clarity is critical. In order to ensure both youth and adults understand their purpose and responsibilities, we recommend implementing the following strategies:

- **Develop a position description sheet** that clearly outlines role expectations and responsibilities for both youth and adults. Be specific and concise. Program participants should all have copies and access to this document.

- **Encourage youth and adults to talk to each other** about their respective role expectations. By engaging in this conversation, both youth and adults will have a clear understanding of how best to interact throughout the year or term.

- **Host an orientation** for both youth and adults. During the orientation, discuss the role expectations and responsibilities outlined on the position description sheet. Allow time for participants to ask questions, express concerns, and clarify understandings. Consider time limitations for youth and adult members and offer flexible options (such as before the regularly scheduled board meetings or during the evening or on a weekend, if possible).

- Prior to youth participation, all members of professional boards, committees and councils should be orientated to the **Ladder of Youth Participation** (see below), identify which rung the group is operating from, and ensure that young people have a good understanding of where they stand. This may include discussion around any action steps that the group is working on to change the participation level of youth as well.

Ladder of Youth Participation
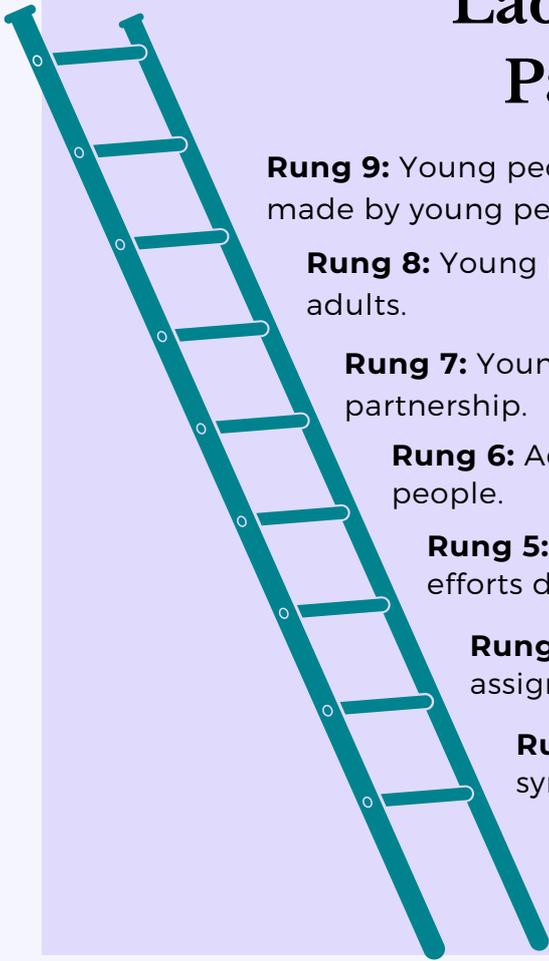
Rung 9: Young people initiate and direct actions, decisions are made by young people.

Rung 8: Young people initiate, but share decision-making with adults.

Rung 7: Young people and adults initiate and direct in full partnership.

Rung 6: Adult-initiated, but share decisions with young people.

Rung 5: Young people are consulted and informed of efforts designed and directed by adults.

Rung 4: Young people do not initiate, but are assigned and informed.

Rung 3: Young people are tokenized and have symbolic representation.

Rung 2: Young people are decoration.

Rung 1: Young people are manipulated.

Core Element #2: All adults/members are responsible for creating and upholding a welcoming environment for everyone - one in which decision making and power is truly shared.

In order to support the voices and the meaningful engagement of youth/young adult members, it is necessary for the young person to feel welcomed and valued. Groups should do the following to make sure youth feel there is a collaborative environment:

- Every adult that attends or participates in meetings should **share the responsibility of welcoming young people** to the group, helping them acclimate to the setting, and encouraging their participation.

- Youth representatives should have a **placard** or **name tent** just as all other official members of the committee do.

- Create a **photo roster** of program participants. A photo roster is a useful tool to assist in learning the names of all members.

- **Seating matters.** Mentors and allies should make sure they're sitting near or next to young people.

- **Assign a "mentor" or "go-to" person** for each youth representative. Although it is important to stress that all adults are responsible for welcoming and assisting youth, it is necessary to assign one adult to serve as a safety net for the young person. This adult should be an ally for the youth and someone the young person feels comfortable approaching.

"WHEN MY VOICE IS TAKEN SERIOUSLY, SUCH AS MY FEEDBACK BEING IMPLEMENTED, IT MAKES ME FEEL VALUED."

-SHANE, HE/HIM

Core Element 3: Adults use effective assistance strategies to help youth acclimate to the group and guide their participation.

To support the growth and knowledge of new youth members of the group, it's important that adults and mentors implement the following strategies:

- Provide youth with any necessary **background knowledge** and **information**, such as the following: the history of the group, why the group exists, the group's desired impact, how decisions are made, various roles in the group, how leaders are promoted, barriers the group is hoping to address, literature that helps provide context for the work that's happening in the group, and anything else that is relevant.

- Positively **reinforce youth participation** in both word and action, such as "Thanks for sharing your perspective!" or "That's a good idea."

- Make time to **engage** and **debrief** with youth before and/or after meetings. Youth may have specific questions about the meeting agenda, group issues, or terminology used. Arriving early and staying five minutes after the meeting provides youth with an opportunity to ask any questions they may have. It also provides a brief opportunity for youth to engage in small talk and build rapport with board members.

- Ask young adult members about their **specific experiences** and **areas of expertise** that they'd like to strategically share with the group, how comfortable they are with doing so, and the ways that they'd like to do so. This way, adults can refer to them when extra support is needed on a particular topic. Members can ask for youth input and ideas during committee meetings, but young people may not initially feel comfortable voicing their opinion and offering ideas. Thus, it can be helpful if the chair or other members make sure young people have the opportunity to voice their opinions.
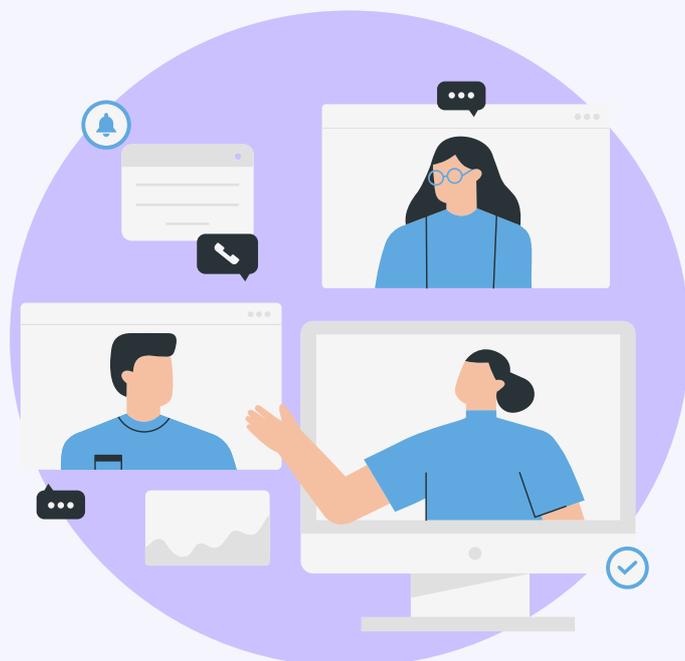
Core Element #4: The board, committee, or council, in one or more substantial ways, is involved in designing, promoting or being responsible for the meaningful engagement of youth.

Creating group buy-in and ownership is critical for the success of meaningful youth engagement. In order to create buy-in and support, we offer the following recommendations:

- Identify and support "**champions**." Champions are members that support and have knowledge of meaningful youth engagement, advocate for its existence, and work to build enthusiasm. In short, champions work to create group buy-in.

- **Involve the group** in the recruitment/identification of youth members. If the committee/council is fully adult-centered, encourage members to consider how they view young people and their strengths, and explore their own assumptions about "ideal candidates" in order to address representation limitations. Utilize a variety of options for recruiting and identifying youth.

Core Element #5: Allow time for relationship building. Youth need the opportunity to engage with each other and other members outside of the committee/council/board setting.

Creating opportunities for youth to engage in conversations and socialize with other members helps facilitate greater youth participation during board meetings. In order to create time for relationship building, we suggest the following:

- **Create a planning committee** that provides the space for young adult members to help plan and inform the group's agenda, review materials in advance, ask questions, and assess how the group is supporting meaningful youth engagement.

- **Host a meal** for youth and adults before meetings. Youth need time to engage with members, including other youth/young adult members, outside of meetings. Time is limited and everyone has a hectic schedule. Hosting either a potluck or catered dinner once or twice a year prior to a meeting provides an opportunity for youth and adults to socialize without requiring an extra commitment. This can also help new members orient to the group in a less formal setting.

MENTORING

to elevate youth voices & foster mutually beneficial relationships

Mentoring is defined as a mutually beneficial relationship between a young person and an older or more experienced person who acts in a helping capacity to provide support and promote learning. This relationship aims to benefit areas of a mentee's personal and/or professional development. A mentor acts as a sounding board and provides support, knowledge, encouragement, guidance, and constructive feedback to the mentee by developing a genuine interest in the growth of their abilities and talents. In turn, the mentor gains powerful insight from a young mentee that can help ensure that their practice and decision-making is relevant to young adults. Mentoring programs have been identified as one way to encourage and support meaningful engagement of youth members by building capacity of both youth and adult participants.

The **Oregon Youth Advocates Mentoring Program** (OYAMP) was developed in 2020 as a result of young adults' experiences participating in Oregon state councils and their identification of the need for more meaningful and supportive relationships with adult council members. Using Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation, OYAMP was designed to teach professionals about the value of including youth perspective on policy planning and decision making bodies. In addition, the program aimed to engage youth in higher levels of participation within these bodies by providing real opportunities to be involved and lead, therefore affecting local and statewide change. Through a partnership between Healthy Transitions and the Youth and Young Adult Engagement Advisory (YYEA), a 6-month OYAMP pilot was implemented in the Spring of 2021 across several state-level behavioral health councils. Seven mentor-mentee dyads participated in the pilot and evaluation process. OYAMP Coordinators sent dyads weekly worksheets and provided individual dyad support as needed. Due to the social distancing constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, participants largely met virtually and communicated by phone/email. Dyads were encouraged to meet at least monthly.

✕ ▢ —

Timeline	Focus	Materials
STAGE 1: DEVELOPING RAPPORT & TRUST BUILDING		
Month 1	Rapport building, trust building, read through OYAMP guide together	Month 1 Monthly Checklist & Tipsheet, OYAMP Program Guide, Mentoring Program Agreement
Month 2	Continue building rapport/trust, begin goal identification and action steps	Month 2 Monthly Checklist & Tipsheet, completed OYAMP Pairing Forms, OYAMP Program Guide, Blank Goal Setting Worksheet (ex. 1)
PHASE 2: THE MIDDLE – REACHING GOALS		
Month 3	Goal development, full group check in / Mid-Point Evaluation	Month 3 Monthly Checklist & Tipsheet, Mid-Point Evaluation Questions
Month 4	Additional goal worksheets/review, support material development activity	Month 4 Monthly Checklist & Tipsheet, Blank Worksheet Template
Month 5	Goal work continues	Month 5 Monthly Checklist & Tipsheet, Ice Breaker examples, Blank Goal Setting Worksheet (ex. 2)
PHASE 3: CLOSURE		
Month 6	Dyad discussion / decision around endings, full group CELEBRATION and final EVALUATION	Month 6 Monthly Checklist & Tipsheet, Closure Activity, Final Evaluation Questions

< >

Participants reported having positive experiences in the project including:

- Virtual meeting tools enabled some dyads to be matched when distance otherwise would have been a barrier, as well as created ease of communication.
- Increased ability to incorporate youth voice in committee meetings.
- Program was mutually beneficial and provided an opportunity for shared learning.
- Increased youth knowledge of systems work.

They identified challenges with the program as well, including:

- Developing relevant goals that fit the intended scope of the project—for example, identifying goals that relate to favorable outcomes specifically within council youth engagement.
- Though some found flexibility of the program to be helpful, others desired for the process to be more structured.

Suggestions were made by participants for future implementations of the program, including:

- Offering participants who are not otherwise paid for participation a stipend. Since the overarching goal of this mentorship project is to improve the function of the committee/council through the development of youth leadership and involvement, participants should be paid for their time as they are putting in effort towards this goal by developing individual skills of the youth member.
- Clarifying materials including specific examples of OYAMP-based goals (such as identifying and connecting to trainings, speaking up in meetings, presenting, networking, reviewing agendas, etc.)
- Specific guidance for mentors.

"WHEN I TRULY BEGAN TO FEEL LIKE MY VOICE WAS BEING HEARD AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY ALONGSIDE PROVIDERS, SYSTEM BUILDERS, AND ADVOCATES, I BEGAN TO BELIEVE EFFECTIVE POSITIVE CHANGE WAS POSSIBLE. AS A PERSON OF LIVED EXPERIENCE IN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES, I WAS ABLE NOT ONLY TO RAISE THE VOICES OF MY PEERS, BUT IN TURN, I BEGAN TO HEAL.

I WAS SEEING POSITIVE CHANGES AROUND ME, AND MY EFFORTS WERE ACTUALIZED. NOTHING COMPARES TO THAT FEELING OF PROVIDING SERVICE FROM THE HEART."

-SAM, SHE/THEY

CENTERING EQUITY

in youth engagement to transform systems.

Centering equity and elevating the voices of young people who are not typically represented in advocacy efforts is crucial to meaningful youth engagement. The social services field has historically taken a "one size fits all" approach to addressing social issues. The systems and services that currently exist were designed to meet the needs of people who hold the most privileged identities <u>and</u> who had the most power to influence the construction of these systems; primarily white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, and upper or middle-class individuals. The erasure of experiences of underrepresented groups, such as people of color, people with low incomes, people with disabilities, and people who identify as LGBTQ+, from this approach laid the foundation for today's systems that perpetuate inequity and have direct, consequential, and disproportionate impacts on the most marginalized people, particularly those who hold multiple, intersecting marginalized identities.

Oftentimes, young people are seen as a **monolithic, homogenous group** where the voice of one young person is viewed as representative of all young people. Unless action is taken to support the inclusion of young people from marginalized communities, only the most privileged young people are able to engage in advocacy and voice their needs. As a result, the **unique experiences** and **needs** of youth from underrepresented communities and often go **unheard** and **unacknowledged**.

Some examples of underrepresented youth include:

- Youth from diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds
- Youth involved in systems (foster care, juvenile justice, mental health services)
- Youth with mental or physical disabilities
- Youth who are homeless or living in poverty
- Youth with non-traditional or non-nuclear family backgrounds
- Youth exposed to violence or abuse
- Youth with limited English proficiency
- Youth from immigrant or refugee communities

In order to transform these inequitable systems, **concerted efforts** must be made to include and give opportunities to youth from diverse backgrounds and lived experiences. In addition to including information on how to center equity in your efforts to recruit and retain young people to your work in the sections below, we created a list of **additional resources** at the end of this toolkit that are specifically dedicated to centering equity in youth engagement. We want to elevate the amazing work that other organizations and communities have contributed to this topic and encourage you tap into the wealth of knowledge that already exists.

RECRUITMENT

Recruiting young people to serve on councils and committees is an ongoing, active process. This age group experiences life transitions that can make long-term commitment to an initiative challenging. Furthermore, young people with lived experience of mental health and substance use challenges may need to step away from work on councils and committees to focus on their own wellbeing. As a result, it is natural to have some turnover among young people engaging with your work. Anticipating this turnover and engaging in continuous recruitment is crucial in order to maintain progress within the group.

While this toolkit separates "recruitment" and "retention" of young people into two sections, its important to understand these topics go hand-in-hand. Actions taken to further youth recruitment also further youth retention and vice versa. Keep this in mind as you read the following pages.

Make an orientation packet to give to potential recruits with essential information, including:

- Overview of group
- Membership criteria and expectations
- Mission statement and core values
- Current and previous projects
- Example agenda
- Current schedule
- Important contact information
- Other relevant materials, like acronym sheets or a list of definitions for commonly used terms.

Making this information accessible and engaging from the initial onboarding is essential to successful recruitment and ongoing retention.

Outline a general onboarding procedure to follow with prospective youth. Create a bullet-pointed list with each step youth and/or staff take from the time a young person reaches out about your opportunity to the time they attend their first meeting. If applicable, include information on any standardized correspondence with materials or forms sent to youth, application or interview processes, orientations and follow-ups with youth after they attend their first meeting. This procedure ensures that no piece of the onboarding process is accidentally overlooked and young people have the necessary information to successfully join your group. Get feedback on this procedure from young people regularly.

RECRUITMENT

Take steps to alleviate any social anxiety or stressors that could prevent a young person's participation. Some young people can feel intimidated by the prospect of joining a group where they don't know anyone, especially groups that primarily consist of adult professionals. The stress of navigating a new social situation can prevent them from getting or staying involved in work they'd otherwise be interested in.

A great strategy to mitigate this stress is to **meet with interested young people individually** for an informal conversation or orientation before they attend any meetings. During the meeting, do the following:

- Ask them questions to get to know them, what they are passionate about, and why they are interested in participating in your work.

- Share a little about yourself and why you are involved in this work to build rapport.

- Familiarize yourself with the needs of each young person (i.e. medical, social, legal) and make sure there is more than enough support to accommodate them.

- Review the orientation packet and ask them if they have any questions to make sure they feel prepared to join your group.

If possible, you may want to **consider asking another young person involved with the group to join** and share their experiences with the prospective young people. This onboarding meeting is a great way to build trust with prospective young people, help them feel more comfortable joining, and establish yourself as both a safe person and a social support for youth in your group.
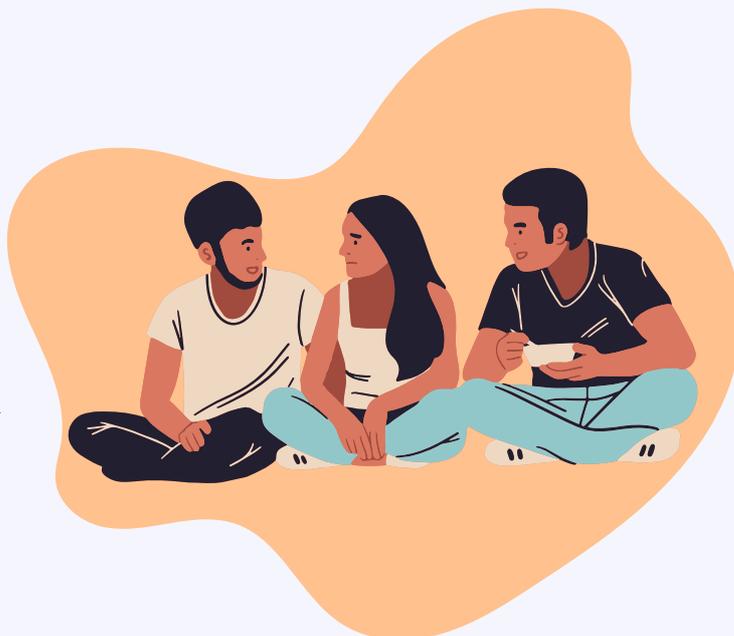
Create on-ramps to opportunity. Present capacity-building roles or opportunities to youth as they exit programs and systems. Add this to discharge and graduation processes for youth wellness programs, school leadership cohorts, youth leaving foster or juvenile systems in the community, and the like. These programs allow young people to develop skills and learn to use their voice to create change.

The **Early Assessment and Support Alliance**'s (EASA) **Young Adult Leadership Council** (YALC) offers a great example of an on-ramp to opportunity. This 2-year outreach and treatment program for young people with early symptoms of psychosis invites current EASA participants and graduates of the program to join YALC. YALC helps to shape the direction of EASA, emphasizing participatory decision-making and peer support, and provides recommendations to policy makers and state/local officials on how to best support transition-age youth.

More information on YALC can be found on their website: https://easacommunity.org/the-young-adult-leadership-council.php

RECRUITMENT

Prioritize recruiting youth who are often overlooked and not traditionally asked to serve. Traditional recruitment methods often draw from the same pools of youth who are already active within advocacy and engagement efforts, overlooking potential new leaders and leaving certain voices out of the conversation. Youth not traditionally asked to serve often hold one or more marginalized identities and come from underrepresented communities. Here are some strategies to use when recruiting underrepresented youth:

- **Take time to build trust.** Understand the demographic of youth you want to recruit. Be willing to engage with and embrace a young person's circumstances and culture.

- **Meet underrepresented youth in their communities** and reach out to them through information outlets they are familiar with (i.e. neighborhood or faith-based newsletters, social media, gathering places in their area).

- **Cultivate mutually beneficial and meaningful relationships** with culturally specific and community-based organizations with youth programming. (i.e. faith institutions, non-profits, local schools). Ask people working directly with youth to share your opportunity with them.

More information on this can be found in Youth Service America's "Engaging Youth Not Traditionally Asked to Serve" at https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/gysd/pages/6212/attachments/original/1452183179/YNTATS_Resource_Final_(5).compressed.pdf?1452183179
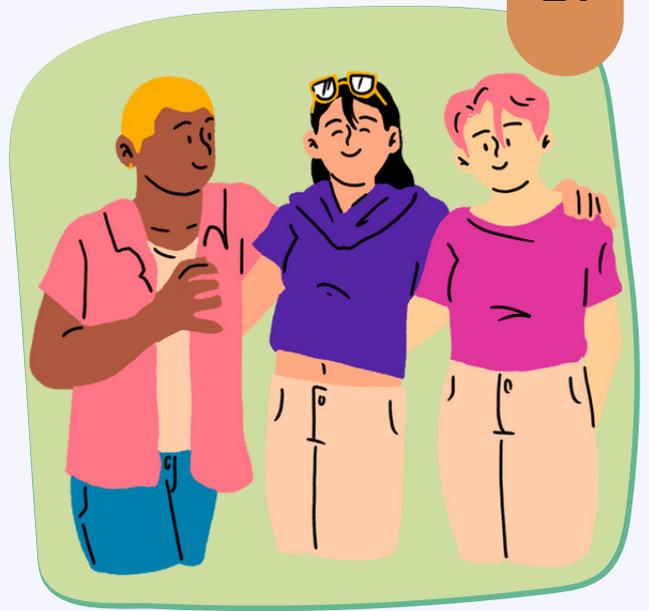
Outreach for recruitment can happen in many different formats:

- Run a social media advertisement or post a flier in local online forums, newspapers, and newsletters.

- If you don't work directly with youth, **connect with adult professionals who do and ask them to share the opportunity** with the young people they work with. Request assistance from transition coordinators, special education teachers, therapists, juvenile workers, guidance counselors, peer support specialists, and culturally-specific advocates.

- Consider partnering with community leaders, nonprofits, and organizations to bolster recruitment efforts. Ask them to post fliers in their offices or to share the opportunity of their own social media accounts

- Have existing youth members aid in recruiting through their own social networks and connections. Provide incentives to members who refer their friends!

"GETTING TO BE A PART OF ACTUAL CHANGE AND SHARING MY OWN POINT OF VIEW WAS REALLY EMPOWERING."
-SOPHIA, ANY PRONOUNS

RETENTION

Showing that youth and young adult members are a valued part of the group through policies, words, and actions will bolster retention efforts. Though turnover is normal within councils and committees among this age group, making participation mutually beneficial and engaging will support retention. This can be done in a variety of ways:

Take time at the beginning of every meeting for introductions. Each meeting should start by having every person share their name and pronouns, regardless of whether there are any new members in attendance. This practice affirms people's identities and creates a safe space for everyone, including young people who transgender/gender diverse or young people who are questioning their gender.

More information on why pronouns matter can be found on the Human Rights Campaign website: https://www.hrc.org/resources/why-we-ask-each-other-our-pronouns

Prioritize community-building in your meetings. Young people want to feel like they belong and fostering a sense of community amongst participants is important to them wanting to come back. A community-building activity should be built into every meeting to build rapport among the group.

Some examples of community-building:

- Ask a silly icebreaker question and have each person respond. We included a list curated by youth in our resources section.
- Put members into groups of 5-10 people. If your meeting is virtual, use breakout rooms. Instruct them to make two lists and appoint a scribe. For list one, members will identify 10 facts every person in the group has in common with each other. This list cannot include anything too general (i.e. we are all humans, we are all part of this group, etc.). For list two, groups will come up with one completely unique fact for each member of the group. Each person's fact cannot be something any other group member has in common. Give groups 10-15 minutes to complete both lists and have them share their lists with the larger group.
- Play group charades. Make flashcards with charades prompts (i.e. brushing your teeth, bull riding, cutting onions). Pick two to three people who will compete against each other as "guessers". Pick a flashcard to quietly show everyone except the guessers. On the count of 3, everyone else will quietly act out the prompt on the card. The person who guesses the prompt first, wins. Choose new guessers for each round. This game can also be played virtually.

RETENTION

Focus on capacity building vs. just "adding a youth member to the board/organization/committee". This would be considered decoration or tokenization (See Ladder of Youth Participation). Ask youth for their personal and professional development goals. Provide ongoing training and opportunities to young people to support their passions, interests, and strengths.

Create an array of opportunities for young people to engage in decision-making processes, develop leadership skills, inform your programs, engage other young people, etc. so that youth may participate in a manner that suits them. Not everyone will have the same amount of time or energy to devote to group activities and young people's capacity to engage can fluctuate over time. One size never fits all!

Allow young people the opportunity to direct what the group works on. Provide structure to a brainstorming session for young people so they can narrow down what they want to pursue. When young people direct the group's actions toward an issue or project they deem important, they are much more likely to stay involved.

Be conscious of the inherent power dynamic between adults and young people. Young people often view adults as authority figures and have been taught to defer to the ideas and suggestions of them as such. Adults participating in or supporting meetings with youth should resist the urge to direct the group's efforts/attention or reality-check ideas from young people that may seem implausible or impractical. Young people's ability to think outside of the box is a true asset to systems change and encourages those of us working in social services to think creatively. As adult supports, it is our responsibility to be open to new ideas and help young people achieve them.

Instead, **ask open-ended, clarifying questions** that encourage young people to think critically and come up with action steps to pursue their ideas, such as "What would tackling this project look like?" or "Can you share more about what you're hoping to accomplish with this project?" Questions like these will give you a better idea of what information they might need to make informed decisions and how you can support their ideas.

RETENTION

Prioritize the well-being of the young people participating above all else. Oftentimes, the systems that youth are trying to transform are the same systems that have caused them immense harm. We want advocacy work to empower young people, not re-traumatize them. Make sure that meetings are trauma-informed and check in with young people after meetings to debrief and provide support, as-needed.

Check-in with young people if you suspect they are struggling. In addition to managing their advocacy work, youth with lived experience also juggle maintaining their mental health, learning how to "adult", keeping up with bills and responsibilities, and navigating all the psycho-social transitions people of their age group experience. It is normal for young people to get too busy or stressed out to engage with advocacy and as a result, communicate with you less frequently or take a step back from the group. However, if a young person suddenly stops communicating with the group or begins acting out of character in ways that raise concerns about their wellbeing, be sure to follow up with them one-on-one and ask how they are doing. We want young people to take care of themselves, communicate with us when they need a break, and ask for help if they need it. Checking in with them shows that you care and models good communication skills that young people can learn from.

Self-care and community care are extremely important for this work and must be at the center of the culture to create a healthy and functioning workspace. This could include:

- Checking in with each other one-on-one.
- Asking youth and young adults on a regular basis what their current capacity is to engage in the work both within and outside of meetings (as this may fluctuate over time).
- Planning times to build relationships with one another to create a space where vulnerability is supported.
- Holding times for rest and breaks (between meetings, during busy weeks, etc.).
- Figuring out what the needs of your team are and work to fully hear and meet them.
- Making space during meetings to foster a sense of community in the group and facilitate connections.
- Leading by example, normalizing conversations about wellness and self-care and being the first to initiate such conversations as appropriate.

RETENTION

Provide stipends to members not otherwise paid for their work to ensure retention. If professionals are being paid for their time and expertise to be part of a committee, young people should also be compensated for their time and expertise as well. Experiential knowledge is just as valuable as academic or professional knowledge and it takes an incredible amount of emotional labor for young people to use their lived experience to inform their advocacy work.

Young people participating in your group sacrifice time they could use in other ways, including being paid to work at a job. We recommend providing a stipend amount that is comparable to the hourly rate of a living wage in your geographic area, but any stipend your organization can afford to pay is better than no stipend at all. Providing stipends also bolsters equity efforts as it allows young people who might not be able to afford to use their time to volunteer for your cause the opportunity to get involved. Additionally, consider offering an onboarding stipend to give to new members once they have completed orientation and attended their first meeting. This will encourage new members to prioritize the group and continue to participate.

Get creative with how you can provide stipends or incentives. Think beyond gift cards, food, etc. Gift cards can't be used to pay rent, and snacks don't pay for childcare. Establish policies and procedures that allow stipends to be paid through online payment platforms, like Venmo or CashApp. Lastly, communicate clearly when members can expect to be paid.

Make sure that adults participating in or supporting the meeting understand how to interact with young people. It can be helpful to review the appropriate ways adult professionals should engage with young people in these settings on a regular basis. Young people involved with planning and imagining the **Youth Engagement Power Hour**, an event series hosted by the Oregon Healthy Transitions Project in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) Office of Resilience and Recovery, created a "Youth Engagement Rules Sheet" document for exactly this purpose. For context, the Youth Engagement Power Hour was a virtual presentation series consisting of youth leadership councils, and organizations or efforts that used best practices for youth engagement to achieve success. The series worked to highlight presenters' statewide youth engagement and advocacy work to educate and inform planning initiatives and policy work within OHA. The goal was to give young adults with lived experience a platform to elevate their voices and create a space where their advocacy and lived experience were placed at the forefront of informing work within the mental health system of care. To ensure the safety and support of youth presenters, young people involved with planning the series made a "Youth Engagement Rules Sheet" that was sent to all attendees prior to the event and reviewed at the beginning of each Power Hour. The document contained an acronym outlining the "rules" attendees were expected to follow. We've included this document on the next page. Please use it if you find it helpful!

RULES FOR HEALTHY YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

R

Reasonable

Ask youth reasonable questions that are relevant to the topic, culturally-appropriate, age-appropriate, comprehensive, logical, and overall made with sound judgment.

E

Equity

Value perspectives from differing cultures, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, socioeconomic status, etc. Be intentional about making space and uplifting the voices of these youth and integrating their feedback.

S

Safe

Engage in a way that is trauma-informed. Be mindful to not ask questions or raise conversation points that might re-traumatize individuals. Avoid pressing for details regarding trauma and lived experience.

P

Participation

Participation can look different from person to person and even day by day! Show up to this space however you deem appropriate; what's crucial is your presence and excitement to engage with the topics; whether that be through asking questions, networking, or just active listening.

E

Experts

Remember that youth are experts on their own lived experiences, and hold experiential knowledge, which holds value just as much so as that of academic and professional knowledge.

C

Collaboration

Aim to collaborate! Network and follow-up with organizations, youth councils, and young adult leaders and invest the time to maintain ongoing communication as is appropriate—helping uplift their voice and empowering them in their goals. Follow up within an appropriate time period.

T

Think

Think critically and with open-mindedness and curiosity. Some ideas, perspectives, and feedback might be new or differing from your own ideas and/or perspectives—allow this to challenge you in bringing fresh perspective. Think on how these ideas could be integrated into your organization.

ASSESSMENT

to measure support for youth/young adult participation

As discussed in the Core Elements section of this document, despite an increased emphasis on including youth/young adult voice in service design and delivery, most providers and other stakeholders don't have a good understanding of how to do engage youth successfully. Two newer measures for assessing the conditions that support the meaningful inclusion of youth voice were developed and validated for use at the agency and council/committee level to help providers, agencies, and councils or committees improve this understanding.

Researchers at Pathways Research and Training Center collaborated with Youth MOVE National to develop two tools to measure support for meaningful participation of youth and young adults in advising and decision-making, which are now available for

use through Youth MOVE National. The assessments were co-developed with youth and young adults and identify a set of themes required for youth-driven best practices within agencies and on committees/councils.

The Youth Voice at the Agency Level (Y-VAL) and Youth Voice on Council and Committees (Y-VOC) Assessments can be used in some of the following ways:

- To further your own understanding of where your program is with meaningful youth engagement.
- To use a data informed approach to guide to your work in developing youth driven practices.
- To establish a framework for youth program development.

ASSESSMENT

Eight Critical Themes of the Y-VAL (Y-VOC includes themes 1-4):

1. OVERALL VISION AND COMMITMENT TO YOUTH VOICE

2. COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

3. EMPOWERED REPRESENTATIVES

4. FACILITATION OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

5. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

6. PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPING PROGRAM POLICIES

7. PARTICIPATION IN EVALUATION

8. LEADING INITIATIVES & PROJECTS

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN USING THE Y-VAL AND/OR Y-VOC :

CLICK HERE

RESEARCH ARTICLE DESCRIBING DEVELOPMENT OF THE Y-VAL AND Y-VOC:

CLICK HERE

DESCRIPTION OF THE THEMES (SUBSCALES) OF THE Y-VAL AND Y-VOC:

CLICK HERE

The Oregon Healthy Transitions project used these measures to assess meaningful youth engagement with HT services providers and the HT Statewide Steering Committee at the beginning of the grant. Because both the Y-VAL and Y-VOC identify specific areas of strength and challenge in support for young people's voice, the baseline assessment also provided important input into planning for efforts to increase voice. The tools were then used again in order to document the extent to which youth/young adult voice has been enhanced as a result of the grant and where additional effort was needed.

"IT WAS EMPOWERING AND SURPRISING TO FEEL THE FULL ATTENTION AND INTEREST FROM COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS, ESPECIALLY DURING THE TIMES WE'RE LIVING IN. FEELING THAT MY VOICE WAS HEARD HAS CONTRIBUTED TO A MONUMENTAL SHIFT IN MY CONFIDENCE TO GET INVOLVED THE WAY I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO."

GREY, THEY/THEM

CONCLUSION

One of the stated goals for the 2018 Oregon Healthy Transitions (OR-HT) Project was to increase youth and young adult voice and leadership at all levels of the state's system of care. Over the grant period, OR-HT staff and the Statewide Steering Committee worked to connect systems and organizations, identify challenges and make recommendations at the state level, and influence policy related to the mental health services cliff that transition-age youth face. These efforts ultimately had an immense impact on the systems that serve young people in Oregon. The success of the project was due in large part to the commitment of the OR-HT staff to providing opportunities where "consumers" of mental health systems (child and adult) had the opportunity not only to voice their perspective but be drivers of system change. This toolkit contains the knowledge and expertise of the OR-HT staff as well as the insights and perspectives of the young leaders, on the strategies that were found to be most helpful when building a foundation for creating, supporting, and sustaining youth voice within Healthy Transitions.

We can empower young people to transform inequitable systems, promote justice, and improve the health and well-being of their peers by creating opportunities that build the capacity, skills, and voices of young people and allowing them to lead policy and decision-making, Engaging young people as equal partners requires accountability of adult supports and systems partners to view youth engagement as more than "getting young people to the table", but as an opportunity to truly invest in the next generation of civic leaders. We hope this toolkit inspires you to take meaningful steps toward engaging young people or toward improving your current youth engagement strategies. We appreciate the time and attention you've dedicated to reading our toolkit!

MORE YOUTH TESTIMONY

Why youth voice and engagement matters.

"It is important for youth to have a voice in youth systems change work because they are the primary source of hands on systems experience. **Collaboration is key** in any complicated problem-solving situation, so why not have a primary source sitting at the table? They offer the **unique perspective** of living these processes in the real world, as opposed to the theoretical formulation of these policies and practices based on statistics and abstract analysis. Qualitative data and first-hand feedback is the most direct and impactful form of data collection and quality improvement. Yes, it might be more difficult to quantify, but it is the true essence of capturing the human experience and reminding the system of care leaders of the deeply personal, intense, and emotional nature of their work: **to humanize the people they serve.** At some point youth will inevitably transition into adulthood, why not begin now to treat them with the same respect of others seated at the table?"
Sam, she/they

"I think it's important for youth to change the systems of care so we can have **a future worth living**, so we can have more **creative conversation** and learn through experience how youth can **shape the culture** at large."
Shane, he/him

"It feels incredible for my voice to be heard in committees and councils because as a queer, non-binary, BIPOC person with disabilities, I am often disregarded even though the issues that most people strive to 'fix' are integrated into these marginalized communities of people. White supremacy is so ingrained into society that oftentimes, our marginalized communities are trained, for the lack of better word, to be quiet and not to express any emotion that we feel towards any topic that affects us due to fear of being isolated, shut down, or even severely harmed. I believe that it is so important and valuable to have people from **different backgrounds**, including age ranges, to be able to have their input and opinions heard, rather than dismissed and these committees and councils are a way to do that and to **advocate for the change we need** in our society." *Sage, they/them*

RESOURCES

For further information on youth council formation and conduct.

Guide to Authentic Youth Leadership & Collaboration by Youth Catalyst Team and Youth Collaboratory

This guide details creating a mission statement based in group values, managing conflict, making group decisions, team engagement, developing peer relationships, payment structures, and meeting structures.

https://www.youthcollaboratory.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-04/Guide%20to%20Authentic%20Youth%20Leadership%20and%20Collaboration.pdf

Creating and Sustaining a Thriving Youth Advisory Council by Adolescent Health Initiative

In this guide, you can find a thorough compilation of the logistics of forming a youth council, created by youth council members themselves. Recruitment and retention, leadership and member roles and responsibilities, and project setup are discussed. Example materials for agendas, project structures, and applications are provided.

https://umhs-adolescenthealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/manual-for-website.pdf

Creating Youth Advisory Councils: Lessons Learned by Youth & Young Adults by Kaiser Permanente and Arts Integrated Resources

This guide provides a "Quick Start Guide" Roadmap for youth council formation and discusses key components of partnering with youth, securing resources, recruiting members, adapting to differing work styles, logistics of planning and conducting meetings, and sustaining a council long-term.

http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/KPCO_CreatingYouthAdvisoryCouncilsToolKit_April2018.pdf

Forming a Youth Advisory Council by National Youth Foster Advisory Council

This toolkit contains further youth testimony and a short and simple 10-step guide to forming a youth council. Infrastructure, networking, recruitment, and logistics are discussed.

https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Adult-and-Childrens-Services/Children-and-Families/CAHC/Youth-Advisory-Councils-Manual/Section-2---Starting-a-YAC/How_to_Start_a_YAC.pdf?rev=1e73f802d03d40d58b9e3a11381a6ab2

Youth as Equal Partners: A Guidebook on Youth Involvement by United Way of America

This guidebook is designed to provide your organization with a roadmap of how to involve youth as equal partners in all aspects of your work. It begins with a comprehensive explanation of the "equal partners" concept, and the benefits of implementing this approach. This is followed by the twelve practice-based, research-supported key components. The latter section outlines a simple process that can help your organization discover all of the possibilities for youth involvement and equal partnership. It includes tools that can assess your readiness to involve young people and walks you through the process of securing power-sharing commitments from adults.

https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Adult-and-Childrens-Services/Children-and-Families/CAHC/Youth-Advisory-Councils-Manual/Section-1---Basics/Youth_As_Equal_Partners_Guidebook.pdf?rev=a93a41e82b0e4b78877a4cb4d5a58a2b

Youth Voice in Action: Tips, Strategies, and Advice from Youth Evaluators by YouthPower and The American Evaluation Association
In this webinar, young evaluators and their adult allies discuss the importance of engaging youth in participatory evaluation activities, such as questionnaire development, data collection, and analysis.
The panel of presenters share insights about the positive contributions that youth voices make to research and evaluation activities, and what the youth themselves learn as a result of participating. They also share tips and strategies for including young people in research and evaluation activities.
https://www.youthpower.org/youthpower-webinar-participatory-evaluation-engaging-youth-evaluation

Youth-Adult Partnerships in Evaluation by Shep Zeldin, Libby Bestul, and Jane Powers
This resource guide discusses key tips in partnering with youth in evaluation, including using existing curricula and resources and collaborating with outside perspectives. Various issues that may arise within an organization when working with youth are addressed, including concerns from adults regarding competency, challenging norms, and making a flexible structure to adapt to youth's schedules. The benefits of youth-adult partnership within evaluation are also discussed.
https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/youthadultpartnership/files/2012/10/YAP-Resource-Guide.pdf

Youth Participatory Action Research Curriculum by Oregon Health Authority and The Institute for Community Research
This guide gives engaging activities that help team-building efforts for a youth-centered research team, as well as a guide for conducting a research project by and for youth. Data analysis and utilizing data for social change is also discussed.
https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/Documents/CurriculumYPAR2014.pdf

Youth Led Advocacy as a Research Tool by Sarah Segal and Linda Randall
This short guide gives a brief and accessible how-to for engaging in youth participatory research. A step-by-step for conducting peer research is given, including: clarifying expectations, identifying goals and outcomes, setting timelines, celebrating successes, and others. A sample week-to-week agenda is also given.
https://www.yacvic.org.au/assets/Documents/Youth-Led-Advocacy-as-a-Research-Tool-pubMar13.pdf

Teen Engagement in Developing Program Best Practices by After School Matters Youth Advisory Council
This manual provides a general overview of best practices in advisory council engagement for youth. Topics included are: creating a safe and supportive environment, interaction and engagement, and recruitment. Case study examples from youth programs and councils are given.
https://www.expandinglearning.org/sites/default/files/After%20School%20Matters_Mikva%20Challenge%20Instructor%20Toolkit.pdf

Sharing a New Story: Young People in Decision Making by Australian Youth Research Centre
This 80-page report focuses on three key elements for young people in decision-making roles: meaning, control, and connectedness. It offers a reflective toolkit for organizations looking to work alongside young people. The report itself features the voices and stories of young people discussing challenges and successes relating to engagement and participation. Adult-centrism, tokenism, and other issues are discussed in depth along with solutions to address these issues.
https://education.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2690277/2003-Sharing-a-new-story_WP23.pdf

RESOURCES

For centering equity and representation.

Guide to Centering Equity in Collaborative Community Work by Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative

This article provides focus discussion questions to reflect on how equity can be centered within community work. Suggestions are given for applying equity to structure, practices, services, and organizational culture, including examining power dynamics, diversifying recruitment efforts, conducting a structural analysis of data to address systemic inequity, and conducting consistent program evaluation.

http://wec.wceruw.org/documents/Guide-Centering-Equity.pdf

A Toolkit for Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Youth Advisory Council by Council of Michigan Foundations

This toolkit discusses creating a youth-adult partnership that is inclusive and diverse. Group activities are suggested to challenge and discuss the group's beliefs, values, and understanding of diversity. These activities can be used within councils and organizations to create a workshop geared towards diversity and inclusion. A step-by-step instruction guide is given for administering a plethora of different activities and discussions.

https://www.michiganfoundations.org/system/files/documents/2021-09/Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Toolkit.pdf

Racial Equity Impact Assessment by Race Forward

A Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) is a systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. REIAs are used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions. The REIA can be a vital tool for preventing institutional racism and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities.

https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment_v5.pdf

Why Am I Always Being Researched? by Chicago Beyond

In this publication, we offer "how" we can begin to level the playing field and reckon with unintended bias when it comes to research. Chicago Beyond created this guidebook to help shift the power dynamic and the way community organizations, researchers, and funders uncover knowledge together. It is an equity-based approach to research that offers one way in which we can restore communities as authors and owners. It is based on the steps and missteps of Chicago Beyond's own experience funding community organizations and research. The guide begins by naming seven inequities standing in the way of impact, each held in place by power dynamics.

https://chicagobeyond.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ChicagoBeyond_2019Guidebook_19_small.pdf

Organizational Racial Equity Toolkit by JUSTLEAD Washington

The REJI Organizational Toolkit is designed to guide organizations towards becoming better advocates for race equity. Discussed are initial building blocks and preparatory work an organization should invest in before undertaking race equity work. The REJI Organizational Assessment Tool is also introduced—a tool that any organization, regardless of where they are beginning their equity work, can conduct to understand how their organizations are currently operating. Strategies for organizations are suggested to further their efforts to operate equitably. Supplementary tools and templates that can help organizations to apply a race equity lens to their work are also given.

https://justleadwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/REJI-Organizational-Toolkit_Full-1.pdf

MATERIALS

For youth advisory council applications, agendas, assessments, and evaluation.

Youth Engagement Toolkit Evaluation Tool by Ministry of Children and Family Development, Province of British Columbia
The Evaluation Tool is intended to help organizations rate their youth engagement practice and understand their areas of strength and areas for improvement. By systematically considering youth engagement practice across five themes of youth engagement, participants can assess youth engagement within their organization.
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/information-for-service-providers/youth_engagement_toolkit_evaluation_tool.pdf

Youth Involvement and Engagement Assessment Tool adapted from Jones, K.R. (2006). "Youth-adult partnerships: Are you there yet? How to evaluate your youth development program." Cooperative Extension Service. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky.
This aims to assess youth involvement, youth engagement within the community, and youth retention. An explanation of different scores is given, along with potential next steps to improve within each category.
https://youth.gov/docs/pyd_AssessmentTool.pdf

Youth Adult Partnership Rubric by The Neutral Zone and Michigan State University
This pamphlet provides a form that your organization can fill out online regarding youth-adult partnership.
https://cep.msu.edu/upload/documents/Youth-Adult%20Partnership_v1.0.pdf

Measuring Youth Engagement: Guidance for Monitoring and Evaluating Youth Programs by USAID and Youth Power
To help organizations more effectively measure youth engagement, this resource provides a list of possible 'targets of measurement' that could be adapted for measuring engagement of youth in programs, community groups, and governing bodies. The measurement statements are classified at three levels: youth, program or organization, and enabling environment.
https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthLead/files/resources/Measuring%20Youth%20Engagement.pdf

Measuring and Understanding Authentic Youth Engagement: The Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric by Heng-Chieh Jamie Wu, Mariah Kornbluh, John Weiss, and Lori Roddy Each of the four dimensions of the Y-AP rubric has a number of specific items for observers to rate. The observation rubric provides details of behaviors that embody each rating and gives examples. Categories include: Authentic Decision-Making, Natural Mentors, Reciprocity, and Community Connectedness.
https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1095954.pdf

Organizational Assessment Checklist by Youth on Board
This checklist is to be used as a guide to help give direction, uncover hidden issues, help understand tasks, and guide commitment to this initiative. Use this checklist as a tool with your board, your staff, young people, or other concerned parties.
https://fredla.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/YouthOnBoardOrganizationalAssessmentChecklist.pdf

MATERIALS

For ice breakers and community-building.

- If you were a kitchen utensil, what would you be and why?
- What's your biggest pet peeve?
- What are you grateful for right now?
- Who is your go-to Mario Kart player?
- Find a thing in your vicinity or on your person. Play show-and-tell and explain why you chose it.
- What is your personal weather forecast?
- If you had a disclaimer sign on yourself, what would it say?
- What are you watching on Netflix right now?
- What was the most recent thing you
  - cried about?
  - got angry about?
  - got really happy about?
- What is something you really like about yourself?
- What would your younger self admire about your present self?
- What did you want to be when you were little?
- What's a bad habit...
  - you have?
  - you've broken?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What's a skill you wish you had?
- What is your favorite snack?
- What do you do to make yourself feel better?
- What's something you're good at?
- Who is your idol?
- What's a movie you've seen a million times? (or book)
- What is your dream job?
- Share a fact (about anything!)
- What's your favorite thing to do alone?
- Tell about a time you got in trouble at (or another memory from) elementary school?
- What's an embarrassing moment you've had recently?
- What is your comfort...
  - food?
  - tv show?
- What is your guilty pleasure?
- Tell us a silly secret you've been keeping.
- What's a common thing you've never done?
- What's an annoying question people always ask you?
- What would you give a Ted talk on?
- What's something you have that you worked really hard for?
- What subject should be taught in school?
- What song would be played on a loop in your personal version of "the bad place" or hell?
- What is your favorite nap location? or Describe the best nap you've taken
- What do you wish was illegal?
- What fashion trend needs to come back?
- What's your favorite weird food combo?
- What wastes the most time in your day-to-day life?
- Share an unpopular opinion.
- What's something you regret purchasing?
- What's your favorite way to waste time online?
- What are you the best at in your family?
- What's your ideal retirement location?
- What's your ultimate hype song?
- Who is the most interesting stranger you've met?
- What is a goal you've achieved? What's a goal you want to set?
- What should our currency be instead of money?
- Describe a strange substitute teacher you had.
- What is the worst or best advice you've been given?
- If we are just a simulation, what glitch needs fixing? +
- What is something you're hilariously bad at?
- What is your most used app?
- What is your favorite month?
- Would you rather fight one bee the size of a bear or a thousand bears the size of a bee?