



CITTÀ DI BASSANO DEL GRAPPA
Medaglia d'Oro al Valor Militare

Methodologies and Tools to Boost Youth Participation

A toolkit aimed at increasing youth involvement in civic and democratic activities.



Methodologies and Tools to Boost Youth Participation

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Page of Contents

1	<i>About YAMAG Project</i>	4
2	<i>About this Toolkit</i>	5
3	<i>Lack of Youth Participation - Core Problems and Consequences</i>	6
4	<i>Benefits of Youth Participation</i>	9
5	<i>Methods to Keep Youth Needs Updated</i>	11
6	<i>Methods for In-Depth Needs Analysis</i>	15
7	<i>How to motivate young people to participate?</i>	19
8	<i>Methods that Support Youth Participation</i>	21
9	<i>Evaluation</i>	53
9	<i>Bibliography</i>	67



About YAMAG Project



Kofi Atta Annan

FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The YAMAG project is an initiative aimed at increasing youth involvement in civic and democratic activities within the local contexts of the project's partners.

By collaborating with various European Youth Groups and Youth Organisations, YAMAG seeks to share effective methods and approaches for making civic participation more appealing and accessible to young people.

A key component of the project is the development of a "Glocal" Youth Program. This program is designed to engage young people directly in the decision-making process at both the local and European levels. The objective is to reduce social isolation among young people, thereby providing them with more equal opportunities to participate in society and enhancing their interaction with decision-makers at the local level.

The YAMAG project is funded by the European Union through the "European Youth Together" action, ensuring alignment with broader EU objectives on youth engagement.

“

"Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace."

”

About this Toolkit

Our Purpose

The toolkit "Methodologies and Tools to Boost Youth Participation" aims to offer practical guidance for increasing youth involvement in local governance and community affairs. It is targeted at youth workers, educators, and local administrations who wish to build stronger ties with the youth population.

Our Mission

The toolkit outlines the multiple benefits of youth participation, such as bringing fresh ideas to community projects and ensuring that youth-specific needs are addressed. It suggests methods for understanding youth needs through needs analysis, using tools like surveys, focus groups and others. The toolkit also provides information on how to motivate young people to get involved by aligning projects and actions with their interests and needs. We recommend non-formal educational methods, such as role-playing or simulations, as effective ways to engage young people. Last but not least, our toolkit includes relevant information and tools to evaluate the impact of your actions, ensuring effective youth engagement.

Our Vision

We hope this toolkit will serve as a comprehensive and useful guide for all those committed to fostering youth participation at local and European levels.



Lack of Youth Participation

Core Problems and Consequences

To ensure a robust and thorough understanding of the complexities surrounding youth participation, we used a hybrid methodology that combines Problem Tree Analysis with Mind Map techniques. This approach helped us to identify not just the core problems and root causes, but also the direct and indirect consequences of lack of youth participation.

The process involved brainstorming and organizing thoughts on why young people do or do not participate in community activities, what inhibits or empowers them, and the consequences of their participation or lack thereof. The analyses were created based on discussions with experts, youth workers, and the young people themselves.

Continuing from our analysis results, we decided to illustrate the potential future consequences through a story. This narrative will give you a quick look into the life of Alex, a 20-year-old living in the year 2050. By diving into Alex's world, we aim to create a clearer picture of what society might look like in the future if current trends of low youth participation continue. This exercise is not merely a fiction but a warning and a call to action, rooted in the real data and possibilities discovered in our analyses.

Now, let's jump into the future to explore a society that failed to involve its youth in important decision-making processes.



We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.



Franklin D. Roosevelt

32ND PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES



Back to the Future



Is this thing on? Can anyone hear me? This is Alex, sending you a message from the year 2050. If someone is there, please pay attention! The future might depend on this!

I can't believe how disconnected my world is; I always thought the adults would have it figured out by now. But as I look around, I see the long-lasting impact of our society's neglect of youth participation.

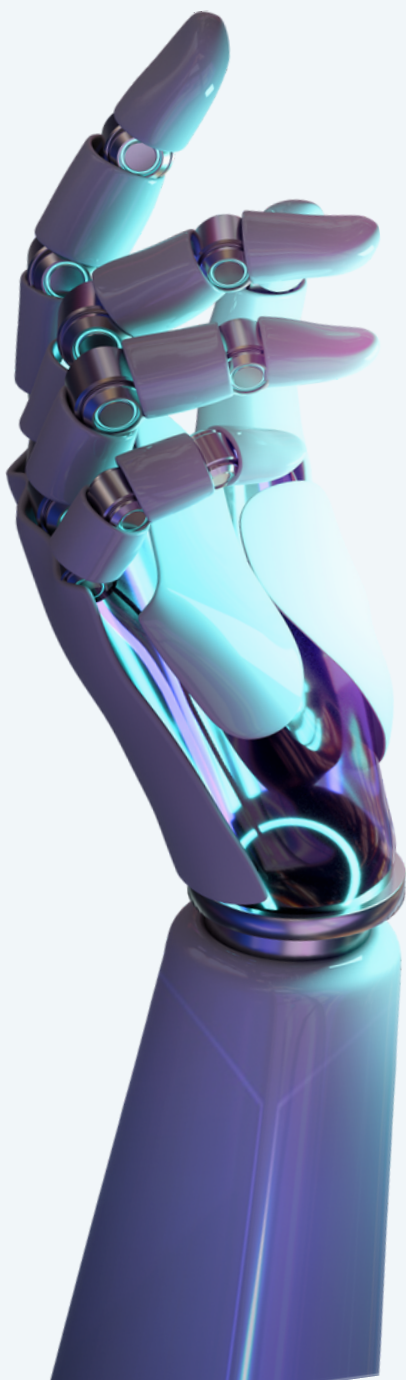
Nobody in power seems to represent my interests or those of my friends. We're mainly governed by people who have no understanding of current youth issues.

It's like our voice doesn't matter!

Most young people have turned inward, absorbed in virtual realities that offer an escape from a world that doesn't seem to care about them. Their interests, hopes, and concerns are not reflected in societal structures. Local councils are filled with older adults who have little understanding or care for the needs of younger generations.

*The spread of **fake news and misinformation** is overwhelming. Most of my friends don't know what to believe anymore, which makes them easy targets for radical views that promise simple solutions. Without trusted platforms or civic education, young people find themselves drawn to extreme ideologies. Small factions have begun to form, undermining the sense of community.*

*So many people I know are **struggling with their mental health**. My father told me this started already since he was my age, but this is at a totally different level. Schools report record-high levels of anxiety, depression, and other emotional problems. We're the generation that grew up feeling we don't matter, which negatively affects now our well-being.*



The lack of youth employment programs and other social services specifically designed for young people is staggering. **Youth unemployment rates are increasing fast**, and social programs aimed at young people are poorly designed and executed, deepening social inequality. I can't find a job, and neither can most people my age.

Educational institutions have not kept pace with the rapidly evolving job market, leaving many of us unequipped for the types of jobs that are available. Curriculum and training programs are outdated, focusing on skills that are no longer in demand.

There is a **disconnect between policymakers and the youth**; decisions are being made without consulting us or considering our specific needs and challenges. Also, there is a lack of investment in sectors that typically employ young people, such as entry-level positions or internships. Even if such opportunities do exist, they are often unpaid or poorly paid, making it impossible for young people to sustain themselves financially.

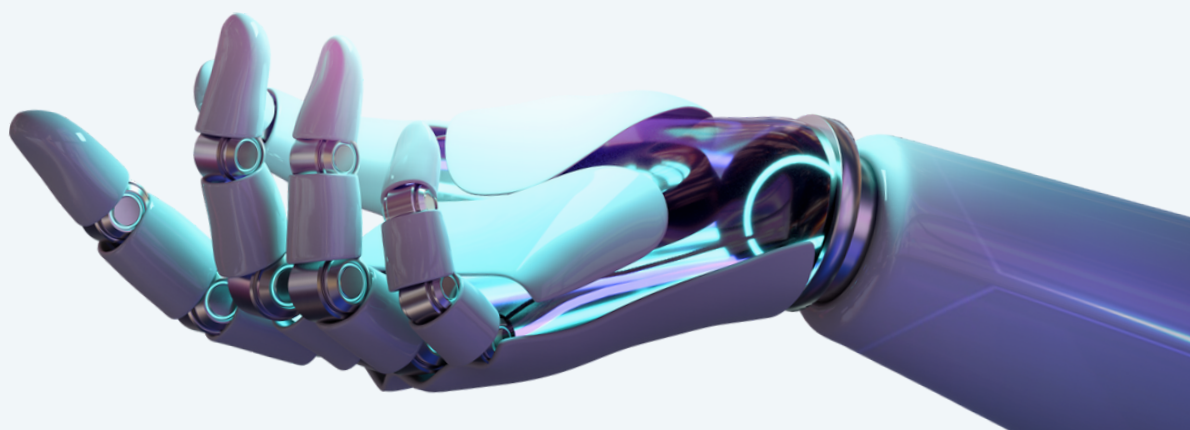
The competition for jobs is fierce. With more people pursuing higher education, **the job market is saturated with overqualified individuals** competing for a limited number of positions, while the other jobs have been taken by robots.

Social and economic inequalities are exacerbated by a lack of access to resources such as career guidance, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities, especially for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, the cycle of unemployment and social inequality perpetuates itself, leaving my generation with a sense of **hopelessness and disengagement**.

The **gap between generations is now bigger than ever**. There's a lot of resentment from both sides, making it hard to come together to solve common problems. Community cohesion has suffered dramatically. Older adults blame the young for not participating, while the young feel they were never given a chance to.

I'm not sure what the future holds for me, or for any of us. What kind of parent will I be in a world like this? What kind of world will I be leaving for my children or grandchildren? The idea is too daunting to contemplate.

Time is running out, and this connection won't last much longer. If you're listening, **maybe you can still make a difference**. Act now, for all our sakes.



Benefits of Youth Participation



During our analysis, it became clear that youth participation offers multiple benefits that extend beyond individual growth to contribute to community and societal well-being.

Below, we outline the top 10 most impactful benefits of youth participation.

1 Community Development

When young people get involved in their communities, not only do they bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas, but they also contribute to local projects that make neighborhoods safer, cleaner, and more lively. Their participation ensures that plans and services work well for everyone in the community, young and old alike.

2 Innovation and Creativity

Youth often bring a fresh perspective to local problems. Their creativity and innovative solutions can be critical in tackling community and societal challenges, making their participation essential.

3 Skills Building

Engaging in community projects allows young people to develop critical life skills. Leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, and communication skills gained through active participation are invaluable in both personal development and future employment.

4

Increased Civic Engagement

Young people who are engaged in their community often become lifelong voters and active citizens. Their involvement enhances democratic processes and leads to more robust community dialogues.

This sense of connection and importance also motivates young people to continue being active and responsible community members in the future.

5

Social Cohesion

Being part of community projects or initiatives helps young people to connect with people from different backgrounds. This builds a sense of solidarity and helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness.

6

Mental Health

Active involvement in meaningful community activities can have a positive impact on mental health because it provides young people with a sense of purpose and a feeling of accomplishment.

7

Informed Citizens

Participation in community initiatives and civic processes gives young people a broader understanding of how society works, making them well-informed and responsible citizens.

8

Empowerment

Participating in decision-making processes early gives individuals the confidence to express their opinions. This sense of empowerment is vital for self-esteem and future civic engagement. Also, early experience in community involvement sets the foundation for a lifetime of leadership. Today's socially responsible youth, aware of their societal duties, are tomorrow's community leaders, policy-makers, and advocates.

9

Decreased Anti-Social Behaviour

Engagement in community and civic activities provides young people with positive channels for expression, reducing the likelihood of involvement in risky or anti-social behavior, radicalisation or extremism.

10

Enhanced Trust

Involving young people in decision-making leads to more inclusive and relevant policies that address community needs. Their active participation fosters transparency, enhancing trust between citizens and community institutions.



Methods to Keep Youth Needs Updated

Keeping the needs of young people updated is essential for fostering meaningful youth participation in community and civic activities. As societal conditions change, understanding the evolving needs of youth allows for the design of relevant programs and policies. This not only encourages more active participation from young individuals but also ensures that their contributions are effective and impactful in shaping a better community and society.

In this chapter, we will explore various tools and methods to stay updated on the changing needs of young people. To do this it's important to have a systematic approach for gathering and analysing information.

Here are some methods and tools that can help in performing a needs analysis:

1. Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are structured sets of questions designed to collect specific information from a target group. In the context of understanding youth needs, these tools can be very helpful for gathering a large amount of data in a relatively short period.

How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Identify the Objectives

Determine what you want to know about youth needs.

STEP 2: Design the Questions

Make sure they are clear, unbiased, and directly related to your objectives.

STEP 3: Choose the Format

Decide whether it will be online, on paper, or conducted face-to-face.

STEP 4: Sample Size

Decide on the number of respondents needed for reliable results.

STEP 5: Distribution

Use multiple channels to reach as many young people as possible, such as social media, email, or through educational institutions.



Tips and Tricks

- Turn the survey into a game-like experience to make it more engaging;
- Offer small rewards, such as gifts or points, to encourage completion;
- Use online tools like Google Forms or Survey Monkey for easy setup and distribution;
- Incorporate images, GIFs, or videos to break the monotony and make the survey more engaging;
- Design the questionnaire short and to the point, using multiple-choice or Likert scale questions for quick and easy responses.

2. Focus Groups

Focus groups are moderated discussions with a small group of participants. These groups are designed to explore attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and reactions in a way that is less structured than surveys or questionnaires.

How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Define Objectives

Clearly identify what you want to explore regarding youth needs.

STEP 2: Select Participants

Choose a diverse set of individuals to get a broad range of perspectives.

STEP 3: Develop Questions

Create open-ended questions to facilitate discussion.

STEP 4: Choose a Moderator

Select someone skilled in guiding conversations and managing group dynamics.

STEP 5: Arrange Logistics

Decide on the venue, time, and equipment needed for the discussion.

Tips and Tricks

- Choose someone skilled in leading discussions and relatable to the youth;
- Plan a well-structured meeting with clear objectives and discussion points;
- Create a casual, comfortable environment to help participants open up;
- Approach the young participants with respect and validate their opinions, treating them as equal stakeholders in the conversation.

3. Interviews

Interviews involve one-on-one conversations between an interviewer and a respondent. The goal is to obtain detailed information about a participant's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward specific issues, including youth needs.

How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Set your Goals

Decide on what you aim to discover regarding the needs of young people.

STEP 2: Develop Questions

Create a mix of open and closed questions to guide the conversation.

STEP 3: Choose Participants

Search for individuals whose views you believe are particularly informative.

STEP 4: Train Interviewers

Make sure the interviewer understands how to ask questions without leading the respondent.

STEP 5: Arrange Logistics

Schedule the interview at a convenient time and place for the participant. With permission, record the interview for more accurate analysis.

Tips and Tricks

- Offer various time slots or even virtual interviews to suit their schedules;
- Small incentives, like gifts or snacks, can make participation more appealing;
- Clearly communicate how the interview will directly contribute to initiatives or changes that benefit them.

4. Observational Studies

Observational studies involve researchers watching and gathering data on how young people interact in a specific setting or situation without directly intervening. This can offer insights into natural behaviours, attitudes, and preferences.



How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Choose the Setting

Choose a location that is relevant to the youth needs you are exploring.

STEP 2: Secure Ethical Approval

Make sure you have ethical approval, especially if the subjects are minors.

STEP 3: Choose Observation Type

Decide whether the observation will be "participant" (researchers are a part of the activity) or "non-participant" (researchers observe without getting involved).

STEP 4: Create Coding System

Have a checklist or criteria to guide what behaviours or activities you are observing.

STEP 5: Obtain Consent

Obtain consent if the observation setting is a private or semi-private space.

Tips and Tricks

- Ensure that the observation is done in such a way that protects the anonymity and privacy of the young people involved.
- Offer a platform for the youth to discuss their views on what was observed, turning the process into a learning opportunity for them.
- Although the observation itself is passive, incentives can be provided for participation in any follow-up activities or discussions.
- Keep observation periods short to avoid fatigue or altered behavior.





Methods for In-Depth Needs Analysis

When speaking about youth participation, basic data collection tools like surveys and focus groups often provide a foundational understanding of young people's needs. However, for a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis, employing advanced methods can be particularly effective.

In this section, we'll explore a range of these advanced methods, such as the Problem and Solution Tree, World Café, and Fishbone Diagram, techniques that will allow us to delve deeper into the complexities of youth needs, preferences, and challenges.

1. Problem and Solution Tree

This is a visual tool that helps identify and analyze the root causes of a specific issue, as well as its consequences. The “tree” has a trunk, which represents the main problem, branches that symbolize the effects, direct and indirect, and roots that stand for the causes, direct and indirect as well. By using this method, you can get a good understanding of a specific issue affecting young people, making it easier to find effective solutions.

How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Select Participants

Gather participants from diverse backgrounds: youth workers, educators, young people, parents, etc.

STEP 2: Create the Core Diagram

Draw a tree on a large paper, whiteboard, or digital platform visible to all, and define the core problem as the “trunk” of your tree.

STEP 3: Identify Direct Causes

Identify the direct causes of the problem and place them closest to the “trunk”. Label these as “Direct Causes.”

STEP 4: Identify Indirect Causes

Next to them or below, identify the indirect causes and label these as “Indirect Causes”.

STEP 5: Highlight Direct Consequences

Do the same for consequences. Direct consequences are branches closest to the “trunk”, labelled as “Direct Consequences.”

STEP 6: Highlight Indirect Consequences

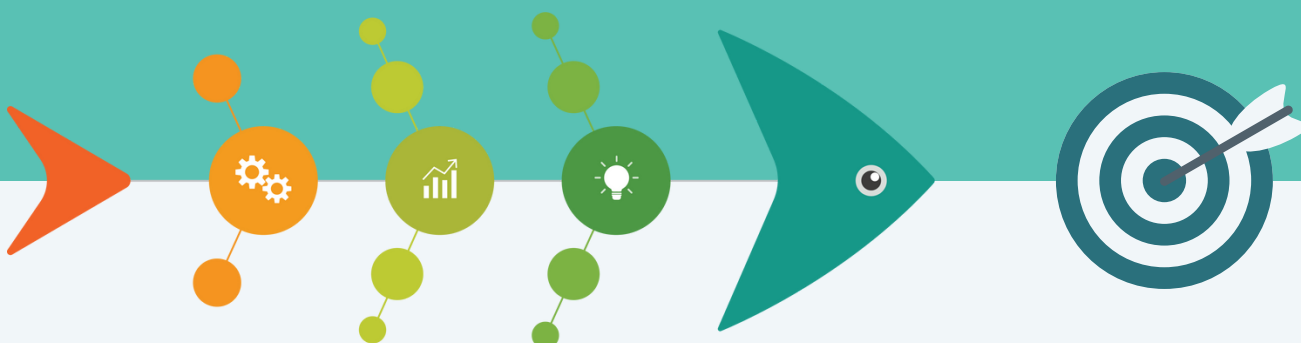
Identify the less immediate outcomes and place them further from the "trunk," labeling them as "Indirect Consequences."

STEP 7: Find Solutions

After the tree is complete, brainstorm potential solutions for the causes and come up with preventative or mitigative measures to reduce the negative consequences.

Tips and Tricks

- Use an interactive digital platform that allows participants to contribute in real time. You can consider Mural, Miro, Google Jamboard or Padlet, among others;
- Use colorful visuals and multimedia elements to sustain interest and enhance understanding;
- Give young participants equal voice in the discussion, valuing their input.



2. Fishbone Diagram (Ishikawa)

The Fishbone Diagram, also known as the Ishikawa Diagram or Cause and Effect Diagram, is a graphical tool for identifying and categorizing the possible causes of a specific problem or outcome. This method is often used to identify both direct and indirect causes and their relationships to the problem at hand, making it useful for complex issues.

How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Define the Problem

Clearly articulate the problem or issue you're examining. Write it at the "head" of your fishbone diagram.

STEP 2: Gather Participants

Include individuals who are familiar with the issue, and importantly, young people who experience it.

STEP 3: Identify Categories

These serve as the “bones” of the fish and usually include aspects like People, Process, Environment, and Technology.

STEP 4: List Causes

Under each category, brainstorm possible causes of the problem. Add these as smaller “bones” connected to the main category “bones.”

Tips and Tricks

- Start with a few main branches and allow for more to be added as the discussion evolves. Set a specific time limit for each section of the diagram to keep the activity focused and engaging;
- Have one person act as the facilitator to guide the discussion, and others to brainstorm ideas;
- Make the diagram colorful and visually appealing for the young participants by using different colors for different categories or causes;
- Allow participants to vote on the most critical causes or issues identified during the session to prioritize actions.

3. World Café Method

World Café is a structured conversational process that aims to facilitate open dialogue between participants, allowing them to share ideas and gain a deeper understanding of a specific issue or topic. Participants rotate between tables, each focused on a different question or aspect of the problem at hand.



How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Select a Venue

Choose a comfortable space that can accommodate multiple tables.

STEP 2: Table Hosts

Assign a host for each table who will stay put and summarize the previous conversations for newcomers.



STEP 3: Round of Questions

Prepare a set of questions or topics that each table will discuss.

STEP 4: Timed Rotations

Set a specific time for participants to rotate to a new table.

STEP 5: Summary of Discussions

In the end, bring everyone together for a collective discussion and sharing of insights gained at the various tables.

Tips and Tricks

- Transform the venue into a comfortable and fun, relevant to the theme, to spark interest. For example, if discussing environmental issues, add a "green" aesthetic to the setup;
- Incorporate elements of gamification, such as points or badges for contributing with useful ideas;
- Offer small treats or refreshments for participation;
- Add an element of surprise by integrating music into the rotations. When the music stops, it's time to move to the next table, making the process more dynamic.

4. SWOT Analysis

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This method is often used in organizational settings but can be adapted for analyzing the needs of young people within a community.

The SWOT analysis helps to identify internal and external factors that can influence the success of a program, project, or policy aimed at youth participation.

How to Prepare?

STEP 1: Assemble a Diverse Team

Make sure to include young people, community members, and experts who are aware of the issue.

STEP 2: Identify the Objectives

Clearly state what you are trying to achieve through this analysis, whether it's understanding barriers to youth participation or finding potential areas for new initiatives.



STEP 3: Conduct the Analysis

Create a four-quadrant grid. Label each quadrant as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Then populate each area based on brainstorming and discussion.

Tips and Tricks

- Allow participants to prioritize issues by sticking color-coded labels or stickers onto the SWOT grid.
- Use smaller groups to focus on one quadrant at a time and then share with the larger group for a more comprehensive view.

How to motivate young people to participate?

Motivating young people to participate in activities such as community development or decision-making processes can be challenging but is crucial for their engagement. Here are some strategies to consider:

✓ Show Relevance

Young people are more likely to participate if they see a direct connection between the activity and their own lives or interests. If you can point out how their input will bring changes that affect them personally or solve problems they care about, they're more likely to get involved.

✓ Offer Incentives

While it's ideal for young people to be intrinsically motivated, offering small rewards can serve as an initial incentive. Once engaged, their intrinsic motivation to make a difference could kick in.

✓ Ownership and Decision-Making

Allowing young people to take control over a project or initiative gives them a sense of responsibility. This helps them feel like a valued part of the team, which, in turn, boosts their confidence and motivates them to give their best.

✓ Peer Influence

Young people often look to their peers for cues on what is considered worthwhile or cool. Engaging key influencers or popular students in the activities can help attract their followers as well.

✓ Make it Accessible and Convenient

The easier you make it for young people to participate, the more likely they are to do so. Activities should be scheduled at times and in locations that are convenient for the young people you're trying to engage.

✓ Use Technology

Young people are generally tech-savvy. Utilizing platforms they are already comfortable with, such as social media or specific apps, can make the process of engagement smoother and more appealing to them.

✓ Showcase Success Stories

Highlighting examples where youth involvement has led to actual changes can serve as a powerful motivator. This shows that their efforts can lead to tangible results.

✓ Offer Immediate Feedback

Young people value immediate rewards and recognition. Providing feedback shortly after their participation can give them a sense of accomplishment and encourage them to remain involved.

✓ Create a Safe Space

Creating a safe space where young people feel valued, heard, and respected is essential for their active participation and engagement. In such an environment, they are more likely to open up, share their ideas, and contribute meaningfully.

✓ Flexible Commitment

Offering flexible commitment options can significantly enhance participation, especially among young people who may have varying schedules due to school, work, or other responsibilities.

Methods that Support Youth Participation

In this chapter, we will explore some methods designed to facilitate meaningful youth participation. These methods span from formal structures like Youth Councils to more interactive and tech-savvy approaches such as Youth Blogs or Forums. The goal is to showcase methods that enable young people to actively engage in decision-making processes, voice their opinions, and contribute to community development.

Each method offers its own set of advantages and is suited to different contexts, objectives, and age groups. By considering these possibilities, you should be able to better design strategies that are inclusive, engaging, and relevant to the needs and preferences of young people.

These include:

- Youth Councils or Committees
- Youth Juries
- Community Meetings
- Participatory Budgeting

1

Formal Structures for Youth Participation

This category primarily focuses on formalized methods that give young people an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

These methods provide structured environments where youth can discuss, advocate for, and even directly influence policies or projects that impact them.



Youth Councils or Committees

Youth Councils or Committees are formal groups that consist of young people who have the responsibility to discuss, advocate, and make decisions on issues that are important to them. These groups can exist in various settings such as schools or communities, and even on a national level. The main purpose is to give young people a platform where their opinions are heard and where they can have a direct impact on decisions that affect them. The councils often work with adult mentors or local officials to put their ideas into action. Being a part of such a group provides young people with important skills in leadership and civic participation.

How to prepare?

- ✓ Make sure the council represents various backgrounds, perspectives, and interests to have a more balanced view on issues.
- ✓ Have specific goals and a well-defined mission statement to guide the council's activities.
- ✓ Provide initial and ongoing training for council members on topics like leadership, public speaking, and project management.
- ✓ Foster a culture where members feel comfortable expressing their opinions without judgment.
- ✓ Allow members to contribute to meeting agendas to ensure that issues important to them are discussed.
- ✓ Hold regular meetings to keep everyone engaged and up to date on council activities.
- ✓ Focus on projects that are realistic and achievable in the short term to keep members motivated.
- ✓ Maintain openness about decisions, meeting minutes, and future plans.
- ✓ Pair new members with more experienced ones for guidance and support.
- ✓ Organize events or initiatives that allow council members to interact directly with the community they represent.

- ✓ Regularly assess the effectiveness of the council's actions and make necessary adjustments.
- ✓ Acknowledge and celebrate achievements, no matter how small, to boost morale and motivation.

More about Youth Councils:



<https://participationpool.eu/resource-category/youth-participation/traditional-forms-of-participation/youth-councils/>

Youth Juries

Youth Juries are formalized decision-making bodies where a group of young people gathers to debate and deliver verdicts on issues that affect them. Unlike Youth Councils, which are more long-term and may cover a broad range of topics, Youth Juries are often convened for a specific purpose and a limited duration. Participants are presented with a particular issue or scenario and are tasked with arriving at a conclusion or recommendation, often after hearing from experts or stakeholders.

The purpose is to provide young people with a structured environment where they can practice critical thinking, debate, and collective decision-making. The findings or recommendations of the Youth Jury can then be presented to decision-makers, or used as part of a larger community or organizational strategy.

How to prepare?

- ✓ Make sure the addressed topic or question is clear and understandable for the participants.
- ✓ Ensure that jurors have access to diverse perspectives on the issue to be able to take have an informed decision-making.
- ✓ Use a trained facilitator to guide discussions and keep the group focused.
- ✓ Make sure the jury's conclusions or recommendations are presented in a way that they can be easily understood and acted upon by decision-makers.
- ✓ Inform the participants how their input will be used and, if possible, the impact it had.

Community Meetings

Community Meetings are organized events where people from a specific area come together to discuss issues, plans, or developments that affect them. These meetings are usually open to the public and can be organized by local governments, community organizations, or even by individuals who are concerned about a particular issue. For young people, attending these meetings provides an opportunity to understand community dynamics, voice their opinions, and become active participants in decision-making processes.



How to prepare?

- ✓ Include topics in the meeting agenda that are relevant to young people to keep them engaged.

- ✓ Use Q&A sessions, breakout groups, or voting methods to encourage active participation.

- ✓ Provide youth participants with information or briefs on the topics to be discussed so they can prepare in advance.

- ✓ Allow a young person to take on the role of spokesperson or facilitator, at least for a part of the meeting.

- ✓ Give young people tasks or roles in implementing decisions made during the meeting to keep them involved after the meeting ends.

More about Community Meetings:



https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/TOOL-11-Tips-on-holding-community-meetings_0.pdf

Participatory Budgeting for Youth

Participatory Budgeting for Youth is a process in which young people are given the opportunity to allocate a portion of a municipal or organizational budget to community projects or initiatives of their choice.

The method allows for direct involvement in the decision-making process related to how public or organizational funds are spent. This not only educates young people about financial management and public administration but also empowers them to actively contribute to their communities.



The process typically involves several stages, including idea-collection, discussion and prioritization of proposals, and finally, a vote to determine which projects will be funded. Young people can take on various roles throughout the process, from generating project ideas to promoting specific initiatives and even overseeing their implementation.

How to prepare?

- ✓ Hold sessions to educate participants about budgeting basics and the scope of the available funds.

- ✓ Make sure all stages of the process are clear and transparent, so participants have full visibility into how decisions are made.

- ✓ Use various communication channels to ensure that all young people, regardless of their background, are aware of and can participate in the process.

- ✓ Consider using online tools for submitting ideas, discussions, and voting to reach a broader audience.

- ✓ Update participants on the implementation of the projects they chose, and allow them an opportunity to be involved in the oversight.

More about Participatory Budgeting:



<https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/>

2

Non-Formal Youth Engagement Techniques



In this section, we will focus on Non-Formal Methods and Tools designed to involve young people in community development and decision-making. These methods offer a more relaxed and flexible environment compared to traditional settings. They encourage creativity, hands-on involvement, and deep emotional engagement. From brainstorming solutions in Idea Hackathons to sharing personal stories in Story Circles, these techniques offer a broad range of opportunities for young people to express themselves and influence their communities.

These include:

- Idea Hackathons
- Role-playing & Simulations
- Six Thinking Hats Method
- Dotmocracy
- Community Mapping
- Future Wheel
- Debates
- Story Circles
- Photovoice
- Digital Storytelling
- Interactive Theatre
- Other Art-based Methods
- PechaKucha
- Round Robin
- Carousel Brainstorming
- The Jigsaw Method
- Gallery Walk

Idea Hackathons

Idea Hackathons are events that gather young people for a limited period, often ranging from a few hours to a couple of days, to brainstorm and create prototype solutions to specific challenges within the community. These events usually start with the identification of problems or challenges that need solutions. After forming teams, participants engage in intense brainstorming sessions, guided by facilitators or experts in the field.

During the hackathon, teams work on developing their ideas into viable solutions, which could range from a mobile app to a social awareness campaign. Participants are usually given access to various resources like software, hardware, or even subject matter experts who can guide them through the problem-solving process. The event often concludes with each team presenting their prototype solution to a panel of judges, community members, or stakeholders.

Idea Hackathons can serve as a great platform for youth to engage in community issues actively, develop problem-solving skills, and even deliver tangible solutions that can be implemented for the benefit of the community.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Incorporate prizes or incentives to foster a competitive environment.

- ✓ Use interactive digital platforms for team collaboration.

- ✓ Have mentors or experts in the field available for guidance.

- ✓ Create a dynamic and comfortable environment to keep energy levels high.



Role-playing & Simulations

Role-playing and simulations are activities where young people take on the roles of different decision-makers, stakeholders, or community members to better understand and navigate decision-making processes. These activities often involve scenarios that are either based on real-life situations or are hypothetical but realistic. Participants are given a set of circumstances, objectives, and resources and are tasked with making decisions just like they would in a real-world situation.

Here are some examples for incorporating Role-playing & Simulations into youth participation:

Youth Employment Programs

Scenario: The local government is debating whether to allocate funds for youth employment programs.

Roles: Unemployed youth, local businesses, community leaders, and local government officials.

Objective: Argue for or against the importance of such programs and decide on fund allocation.

Youth Mental Health Services

Scenario: A proposal to set up a youth mental health center in the community is up for discussion.

Roles: Young people facing mental health issues, parents, healthcare professionals, and local government.

Objective: Evaluate the need and resources for a youth-specific mental health center.

These examples are designed to involve young people in discussions and decision-making processes that directly impact them. They offer a way for youth to engage in civic issues, understand various viewpoints, and contribute to solutions.

All you need to do is to use your creativity to develop scenarios tailored to the specific needs and concerns of the young people in your community. The key is to make the scenarios relatable and impactful for the youth involved, so they feel motivated to participate and contribute their ideas. The more varied and relevant the scenarios, the richer the discussions and solutions will be.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Use multimedia elements like videos or sound effects to set the scene.
- ✓ Allow for debriefing sessions where participants can discuss their thoughts and feelings after the activity.
- ✓ Incorporate real-world issues that participants can relate to, making the activity more meaningful.

Six Thinking Hats Method

The Six Thinking Hats Method is a useful tool for fostering comprehensive discussion and problem-solving during interactive workshops. Developed by Edward de Bono, this technique encourages participants to adopt six distinct styles of thinking, each represented by a colored hat:



White Hat: Focuses on facts, data, and information.



Red Hat: Emphasizes feelings, emotions, and intuition.



Black Hat: Cautious and mindful of potential drawbacks or risks.



Yellow Hat: Optimistic viewpoint, concentrates on benefits and feasibility.



Green Hat: Creative thinking, encourages new ideas and solutions.



Blue Hat: Organizes the thinking process, sets the agenda, and summarizes conclusions.

Using the Six Thinking Hats Method can provide a structured yet creative framework for tackling problems and making decisions in your interactive workshop.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Introduce the concept of the Six Thinking Hats and explain what each hat represents.

STEP 2: Pose a question or problem relevant to the youth in your workshop.

STEP 3: Allocate time for participants to "wear" each hat. This can be done individually or in smaller groups.

STEP 4: Rotate the hats at regular intervals, giving participants the chance to approach the problem from different angles.

STEP 5: Finally, use the Blue Hat to organize and summarize the discussion, noting any conclusions or action points.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Use actual colored hats or cards for a more engaging experience.

 - ✓ Ensure that each participant has an equal opportunity to contribute under each hat.

 - ✓ It might be helpful to have a neutral facilitator to guide the process.
-



Dotmocracy

Also known as "dot voting" or "multi-voting," is a simple yet effective method for group decision-making and prioritization. It is particularly useful in interactive workshops involving youth, as it provides a way for all participants to have their say in an efficient and inclusive manner.

Dotmocracy offers an efficient, equitable, and interactive way for young people to engage in decision-making. By integrating this method into your workshop, you can ensure that the preferences and priorities of all participants are taken into account.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Identify the issues or topics that you want to prioritize or make a decision about.

STEP 2: On a large board or flip chart, write down the different options, ideas, or solutions relevant to the issue at hand. Each option should have its own section on the board.

STEP 3: Provide participants with colored stickers or markers. These will serve as their "dots."

STEP 4: Invite participants to place their dots next to the options they consider most important or relevant. They can distribute their dots however they see fit - either concentrating them on one option or spreading them across multiple choices.

STEP 5: Quantify the dots to identify which options received the most votes. These become your prioritized or selected actions.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Limit the number of dots per participant to avoid overwhelming the process.
-
- ✓ Facilitators should clarify any rules or constraints ahead of time.
-
- ✓ Consider a follow-up discussion to reflect on the results and plan next steps.

Community Mapping

Community Mapping is a technique that allows youth to physically or digitally map out their community's resources, challenges, and opportunities. This method engages participants in a hands-on way, giving them the opportunity to identify key aspects of their community that may need attention or improvement.

Community Mapping can be a dynamic way to get youth involved in their communities while also giving them the tools to initiate change.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Define the scope of the map. Decide what geographical area or community aspects you want to focus on. This could range from a small neighbourhoods to a larger municipal area.

STEP 2: Provide materials such as large sheets of paper, markers, stickers, or digital mapping tools if the workshop is virtual.

STEP 3: Instruct participants to identify and mark important places, resources, or features in the community. These could include schools, parks, local businesses, public transport stops, or areas that need improvement like vacant lots or unsafe spaces.

STEP 4: Encourage participants to add notes or comments to explain the significance of each marked point. This could include personal stories, community history, or ideas for improvement.

STEP 5: Once the map is complete, facilitate a discussion around the findings. What patterns or themes emerged? How could these insights be translated into actionable steps for community development?

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Collaborate with local organizations or government bodies who might be interested in the data collected.
 - ✓ Use the completed map as a basis for future projects, mobilizing the youth to tackle identified issues or gaps in community resources.
-

Future Wheel

The Future Wheel is an interactive method often employed in workshops to help participants think about the potential future impact of a specific issue, decision, or trend. By mapping out primary, secondary, and even tertiary effects, the method promotes critical thinking and encourages participants to consider the broader implications of actions.

This method is an effective way to engage young people in thoughtful discussion about the impact of decisions and actions, and it can be particularly useful in helping them understand the complexities of the issues they care about.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Identify the issue or focal point that will be the center of the wheel. Write this in the middle of a large piece of paper or digital canvas.

STEP 2: Ask participants to brainstorm and identify the immediate or "primary" impacts of the central issue. Write these around the central point, connecting them to it with lines.

STEP 3: Next, identify the "secondary" impacts stemming from the primary ones. Draw these around the first layer of impacts and connect them with lines.

STEP 4: If possible, consider a third layer, identifying "tertiary" impacts stemming from the secondary ones.

STEP 5: Once the Future Wheel is complete, facilitate a group discussion to analyze the different layers, prioritize key impacts, and brainstorm potential solutions or interventions.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Make use of color-coding to distinguish between positive and negative impacts, or primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.
- ✓ Combine this method with others, like Community Mapping, to provide a more comprehensive view.
- ✓ Consider using digital tools like interactive whiteboards for virtual workshops.

Debates

Debates can be an engaging and enlightening method to encourage critical thinking and articulate expression among young people. The activity involves dividing participants into groups that are tasked with arguing for or against a particular statement or issue.

Debates can be a compelling way to engage young people in active dialogue about issues that matter to them, providing both education and skill development opportunities.

Here are some formats that you can use to conduct debates:

Traditional Debate

Divide the participants into two teams; one argues in favor and the other against a specific statement. Each team gets a set time to present their case, offer rebuttals, and make a closing statement.

Fishbowl Debate

In this format, a small group sits in a circle in the middle of a larger circle formed by the rest of the participants. The inner circle engages in a debate while the outer circle listens and then offers feedback.

Oxford Debate

This is a formal debate format where the audience votes on the issue before and after the debate. The team that sways the most audience members to their side is declared the winner.

Speed Debating

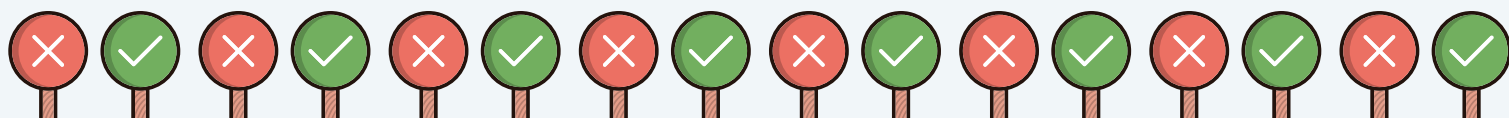
This is a time-bound format where participants switch partners and topics at regular intervals, allowing for exposure to multiple issues and viewpoints.

Role-play Debate

Participants are assigned roles (e.g., government official, activist, citizen, etc.) and debate from the perspective of their assigned roles.

Four Corners Debate

Label the corners of the room as 'Strongly Agree,' 'Agree,' 'Disagree,' and 'Strongly Disagree.' Pose a statement and have participants move to the corner that represents their opinion. Allow time for discussion within each corner before bringing the group back together for a full-room debate.



Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Choose topics that are relevant and interesting to the young audience.
- ✓ Use a neutral facilitator to keep the debate on track and ensure that all voices are heard.
- ✓ Establish clear rules for respectful and constructive discourse.
- ✓ Allow time at the end for reflection and for participants to express how their opinions may have shifted during the debate.

Story Circles

Story Circles provide a space where young people can share personal stories in a safe setting. The format is relatively simple: participants sit in a circle and take turns telling stories related to a predetermined theme or question. This method allows for deep, meaningful discussion and fosters empathy and understanding among group members.

Story Circles can be used for building community, understanding social issues, and fostering interpersonal skills among young people.



How to implement it?

STEP 1: Pick a theme or topic that is relevant and of interest to the participants.

STEP 2: Arrange the participants in a circle to create a sense of equality and inclusivity.

STEP 3: Establish some guidelines, such as listening without interrupting, maintaining confidentiality, and respecting differing viewpoints.

STEP 4: Participants take turns sharing their stories related to the chosen theme.

STEP 5: After each story, the group may ask questions or provide reflections. Alternatively, the discussion can be saved until everyone has shared.

STEP 6: Close the circle with a group reflection or summary of what was learned or gained from the stories shared.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Provide a comfortable and safe environment to encourage openness.
- ✓ Use prompts or questions to help participants think about what story they may want to share.
- ✓ Be mindful of time, ensuring that each participant who wants to share has the opportunity.
- ✓ Consider inviting a skilled facilitator to guide the process, particularly if the topics are sensitive or emotionally charged.



Photovoice

Photovoice is a participatory research method that enables individuals, particularly young people, to express themselves through photography. Participants are provided with cameras and asked to capture images that represent certain themes, issues, or aspects of their lives or communities. These photos are then used as discussion starters in group settings, allowing young people to share their perspectives and experiences.

Photovoice can be a powerful tool for amplifying the voices of young people and gaining a deeper understanding of their perspectives and concerns.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Decide on a theme or topic that the photos should address, such as community safety, educational experiences, or environmental concerns.

STEP 2: Provide cameras or smartphones to the participants, along with some basic photography guidelines.

STEP 3: Give participants time to take photos that represent their views on the selected theme.

STEP 4: In a group setting, participants share their photos and explain why they chose to capture these particular images.


STEP 5: The group discusses the common themes, concerns, and insights that arise from the photos and their descriptions.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

✓ Ensure that the participants have the proper permissions for photographing certain locations or individuals.

✓ Encourage creativity by allowing participants to edit or modify their photos to better convey their messages.

✓ Use the photographs in multiple ways, such as in exhibitions, presentations, or as advocacy tools, to bring broader attention to the issues identified.



Digital Storytelling

Digital Storytelling is a method that combines traditional storytelling techniques with digital tools to create multimedia narratives. Young people can use text, images, audio, and video to share their stories, experiences, or viewpoints on issues that matter to them. These digital stories can then be easily shared online or presented in various settings.

Digital Storytelling allows young people to become creators, not just consumers, of digital content. It is a flexible and engaging way to discuss serious issues, share experiences, and even propose solutions.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Participants decide what story they want to tell. It could be personal, or it could be about a community issue.

STEP 2: Create a storyboard or script that outlines the main points, images, and other media elements to be included.

STEP 3: Use digital tools such as video editing software, audio recorders, or even simple smartphone apps to create the multimedia story.

STEP 4: The final product is shared in a group setting, on social media platforms, or during community events.

STEP 5: After sharing, open the floor for discussions, questions, or constructive feedback.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Provide a tutorial or a quick training session on the digital tools that will be used.
 - ✓ Ensure that stories adhere to a reasonable length, to maintain engagement and clarity.
 - ✓ Offer options for anonymous sharing if the topics are sensitive.
-

Interactive Theatre

Interactive Theatre is an engaging method that allows young people to explore social issues, community concerns, and decision-making processes through drama and performance. In this setup, young participants act out scenarios that are relevant to them, giving them a chance to "live" different roles and perspectives.

Interactive Theatre is an excellent tool for exploring complex social dynamics, as it offers both the actors and the audience a chance to engage with issues in a deeply personal way. It can be particularly useful for tackling controversial or sensitive topics, as it allows for a nuanced exploration of multiple viewpoints.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Choose a subject matter that is relevant to the youth community you are working with.

STEP 2: Develop a storyline or script that encapsulates the topic. Alternatively, improvisation can be used.

STEP 3: Participants rehearse the roles, possibly with the help of facilitators or theatre experts.

STEP 4: The play or scene is performed in front of an audience, which can be made up of community members, stakeholders, or other interested parties.

STEP 5: In many interactive theatre setups, the audience has the opportunity to intervene in the storyline, ask questions, or even take on roles themselves.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Use professional actors or theatre experts as facilitators to guide the young people in script development and acting techniques.

 - ✓ Incorporate multimedia elements like video or sound to enrich the performance.

 - ✓ Prepare a list of discussion points or questions to facilitate a debrief session after the performance.
-

Other Art-based Methods

Art-based methods offer a creative and expressive way for young people to engage in civic activities, social issues, and community development. Through various forms of art like painting, sculpture, music, or performance, youth can express their ideas, concerns, and solutions in a non-verbal yet impactful manner.

Art-based methods can be particularly effective when dealing with sensitive or complex issues, as they allow participants to process and express emotions in a different way. They are also great tools for promoting empathy and understanding within the community.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Decide whether the art form will be visual, auditory, or performative.

STEP 2: Define the social issue or community concern that will be the focus of the art project.

STEP 3: Under the guidance of facilitators or mentors, participants create their art pieces.

STEP 4: Arrange a community event, exhibition, or online platform where the art can be displayed or performed.

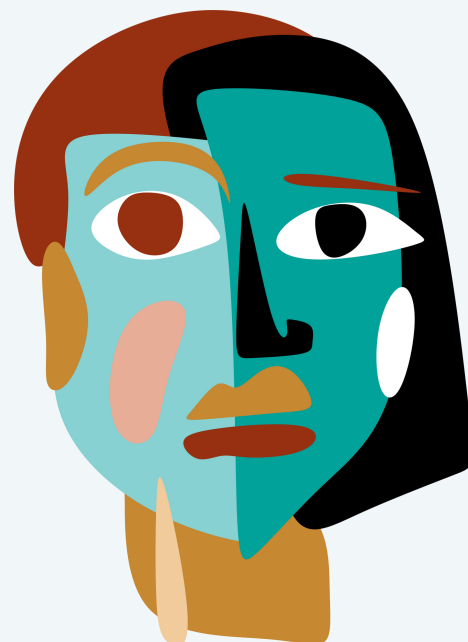
STEP 5: Use the art pieces as a starting point for community discussions or educational sessions.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Consider providing basic training or workshops on the chosen art form if participants are new to it.

 - ✓ Include experts or artists in the field to provide guidance and enhance the quality of the final output.

 - ✓ Create a safe space where all forms of expression are accepted and valued.



PechaKucha

PechaKucha is a presentation format that originated in Japan and has gained global popularity for its efficiency and engaging nature. In a PechaKucha presentation, the presenter uses 20 slides, each displayed for 20 seconds, resulting in a presentation that lasts precisely 6 minutes and 40 seconds. This format is excellent for keeping the audience engaged and focused, as it moves quickly and covers various aspects of a topic in a short amount of time.

By using the PechaKucha format in your workshop, you can introduce youth to a unique way of presenting that is both fun and educational.

How to implement it?

Topic Selection	Allow participants to choose topics they are passionate about. This will encourage more meaningful engagement.
Slide Preparation	Teach participants how to create impactful slides. This usually involves a balance of visuals and text, with the emphasis on the visuals.
Timing Practice	Make sure everyone practices keeping time. The 20-second rule for each slide is crucial for the format.
Tech Setup	Ensure that the technology, such as projectors or screens, is set up and tested before the workshop starts.
Presentation Order	Decide on the order of the presentations. You could do this randomly or have participants choose the order.
Feedback Loop	After each presentation, allocate some time for feedback from both peers and facilitators.
Reflection	At the end of the session, encourage participants to reflect on what they learned from both presenting and listening to others.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Encourage the use of multimedia elements like videos or interactive polls within the presentation.
- ✓ Incorporate a peer evaluation component where participants can vote or comment on each other's presentations.
- ✓ Offer small incentives or rewards for the best presentations as judged by peers or facilitators.
- ✓ If possible, relate the topics to real-world issues that are relevant to the participants to increase engagement.



Round Robin

Round Robin is an interactive and democratic method often used in group discussions or decision-making processes. It's particularly beneficial for ensuring that all voices are heard. In a Round Robin session, participants sit in a circle, and each person takes a turn to speak, share an idea, or answer a question. This method is excellent for brainstorming, problem-solving, and information sharing.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Explain the Round Robin format and set time limits for each speaker, if necessary. Make it clear that when it's not someone's turn, they should be actively listening.

STEP 2: Introduce a topic or question for discussion. You can have multiple rounds with different topics or questions.


STEP 3: Select a person to start. After they speak, move to the next person in the circle.

STEP 4: Assign someone to write down important points or ideas that come up during the discussion.

STEP 5: After everyone has had a chance to speak, summarize the key takeaways from the discussion and talk about the next steps or actions that will be taken.

STEP 6: Give participants the opportunity to share what they felt worked well and what didn't during the Round Robin session.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Use visual aids like a talking stick, which is passed around to signify whose turn it is to speak.
 - ✓ Choose topics that are relevant and interesting to the young audience to ensure full engagement.
 - ✓ Incorporate elements of a game, like rewards for the most constructive or creative contributions.
 - ✓ Link the discussion topics to real-world scenarios or decisions that the participants might face, making the activity more engaging and relevant.
-
- 

Carousel Brainstorming

Carousel Brainstorming is an active, engaging method that encourages participants to move around and interact with various topics or questions. It is ideal for generating a large number of ideas or gathering multiple perspectives within a limited time frame.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: Set up stations around the room, each with a flip chart or large sheet of paper. Write a different question or topic at the top of each.

STEP 2: Divide the participants into small groups. Assign each group to a station.

STEP 3: Give groups a set amount of time (usually around 2-5 minutes) to brainstorm ideas or answers related to the topic at their station. They can write, draw, or list their thoughts on the paper.

STEP 4: After the time is up, groups rotate to the next station. They review what the previous group wrote and add their own ideas.

STEP 5: Once all groups have visited all stations, gather everyone for a discussion. Review the ideas at each station and talk about common themes, interesting insights, or surprising discoveries.

STEP 6: Take note of the ideas generated and discuss how they can be acted upon, if applicable.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

-
- ✓ Consider using tablets at each station for digital input, especially if this is more engaging for the young participants.

 - ✓ Use images, videos, or real-world items at each station to stimulate creative thinking.

 - ✓ Use countdown timers and background music to keep the activity lively and on track.

 - ✓ Offer small rewards or recognition for particularly creative or insightful contributions.

The Jigsaw Method

The Jigsaw Method is an interactive teaching and learning strategy that encourages active engagement and cooperation among participants. In this method, each participant becomes an "expert" on a specific sub-topic and then teaches it to others. It's particularly useful for breaking down complex subjects into manageable parts.

This method is quite flexible and can be adapted to various settings and group sizes, making it a valuable tool for youth participation in discussions, learning, and decision-making processes.

How to implement it?

STEP 1: The main topic or problem is divided into smaller, manageable sections.

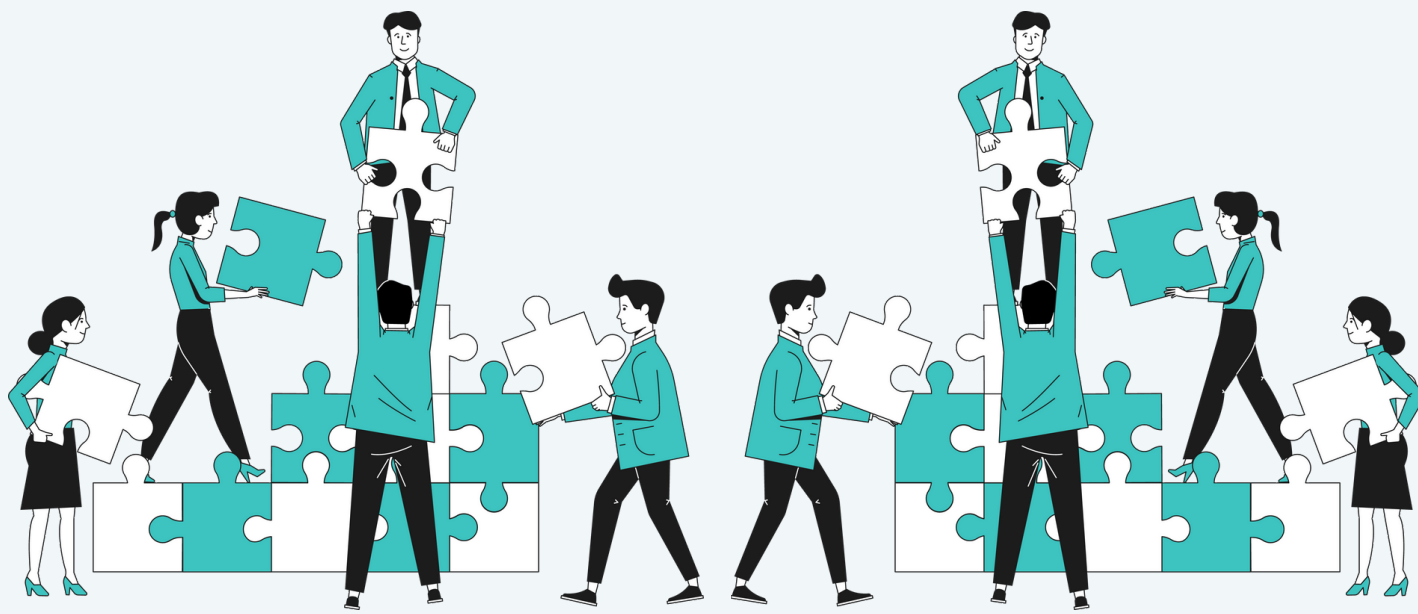
STEP 2: Participants are divided into small groups, and each group is assigned one of the smaller sections of the topic.

STEP 3: Each "expert" group studies its assigned section. They can use various resources to become experts in that section.

STEP 4: After the "expert" groups have studied their section, new groups are formed, each containing one representative from each "expert" group. These new groups are then tasked with teaching each other what they've learned.

STEP 5: After each person has presented their sub-topic, the group discusses how the different sections relate to each other and to the main topic.

STEP 6: Often, there's a review session or assessment to gauge what participants have learned and to ensure that knowledge has been shared effectively.



Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Choose topics that are relevant and interesting to the youth involved.

- ✓ To make it more engaging for young people, you could incorporate multimedia resources or hands-on activities.

- ✓ Make sure every participant has a specific role or section to become an "expert" on, ensuring everyone is actively involved.

- ✓ Especially for younger participants, providing a structured format or templates can help guide their learning and presentations.

- ✓ This method thrives on cooperation, so create an environment where participants feel comfortable sharing and learning from each other.

Gallery Walk

The Gallery Walk is a collaborative and interactive technique commonly used for sharing information, generating ideas, or reviewing material. It is often used in educational settings but is highly adaptable for public forums, including youth engagement events.

How to implement it?

- STEP 1:** Choose a topic or series of subtopics relevant to the participants, particularly if they are young people. These topics can be written as questions or statements. You can also use other visuals, like images, newspaper articles, etc.

- STEP 2:** Place large sheets of paper around the room. Each sheet should have a topic or question at the top.

- STEP 3:** Divide participants into small groups, giving each group a different coloured marker or pen.

- STEP 4:** Groups move from station to station, reading the topics and adding their ideas, responses, or comments in a designated amount of time.

STEP 5: After each group has had a chance to visit every station, everyone walks around to review what has been written.

STEP 6: Gather back as a large group to discuss observations, new ideas, or action steps. This can also include voting on the best ideas if the Gallery Walk is being used for decision-making.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Choose topics or questions that are directly relevant to the youth involved.
- ✓ Young people often appreciate the use of visuals. Consider adding images, diagrams, or even multimedia elements to make the stations more engaging.
- ✓ Younger audiences may have shorter attention spans, so keep time limits in mind when planning rotations.
- ✓ Use interactive methods like voting or quick quizzes to summarize what was learned or decided during the Gallery Walk.

3

Youth-Led Initiatives and Engagement Platforms

In this section, we will explore a range of ideas that put young people at the forefront, allowing them to take charge, express their ideas, and contribute to meaningful changes in their communities or organizations. From digital platforms where they can share their stories, to real-world projects they can spearhead, these approaches are designed to cultivate a sense of ownership, enhance skills, and broaden horizons.

These include:

- Youth Blogs or Magazines
- Open Space Discussion
- Youth Forums
- Collaborative Projects
- Peer Education



Youth Blogs or Magazines

Youth Blogs or Magazines are platforms that allow young people to express themselves in written form. These digital or print spaces are often dedicated to issues that resonate with the youth, whether it's social justice, mental health, education, or lifestyle. The content can include articles, interviews, reviews, and more. The objective is to give young people a voice and a platform where they can share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

By writing for a blog or a magazine, young people can improve their communication skills, understand the importance of research, and learn about journalistic ethics. They also learn to work in teams, especially if the blog or magazine is a collaborative effort. Additionally, these platforms can serve as a portfolio, showcasing their skills to colleges or future employers.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Encourage a range of content formats like podcasts, videos, and infographics in addition to written articles.
- ✓ Use social media to promote content and engage a broader audience.
- ✓ Involve youth in the editorial process, from content planning to editing.
- ✓ Establish a regular publication schedule to maintain engagement.
- ✓ Create opportunities for mentorship by involving professionals in the field.
- ✓ Host workshops on effective writing, SEO optimization, or graphic design to upskill contributors.



Open Space

Open Space is a method for organizing and running meetings or multi-day conferences where participants create and manage their own agenda. This approach is especially useful when dealing with complex issues that don't have a single correct answer. In this setting, young people can propose topics they are passionate about, and then self-organize discussions or working groups around those topics.

The process usually starts with an opening circle where participants identify the issues or questions they want to explore. These are then placed on an "agenda wall," and participants join the discussions that interest them most. There is a principle of "two feet" which means that anyone can leave a discussion that they find uninteresting and join another one.

This method is excellent for youth engagement because it gives them control over what is discussed, and it validates their agency in shaping conversations. It's particularly effective for generating many ideas and for dealing with issues where many viewpoints are needed.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Make sure to have a well-facilitated opening circle to guide young people through the process of agenda setting.
- ✓ Document the discussions either digitally or with traditional paper and pen, so participants can later review the information and action points.
- ✓ Allow for movement and flexibility in the schedule.
- ✓ At the end, consider having a closing circle where everyone can reflect on what they've learned or actions they want to take.
- ✓ Use digital platforms to continue the discussions beyond the physical meeting, enabling more in-depth exploration of the topics.
- ✓ Encourage adults or experts in the field to participate but not dominate the discussions, to provide a balanced perspective.

Youth Forums

Youth Forums serve as organized platforms where young people can voice their thoughts, interact, and discuss various subjects that are pertinent to them. They can take place in educational settings, community centers, or online. These forums offer a structured environment for youth to engage in meaningful dialogue and often include elements like workshops, expert talks, and panel discussions to enrich the experience.

The main aim of Youth Forums is to empower young people to express their views, ask questions, and be part of a larger conversation that impacts them directly or indirectly. They usually focus on a wide array of topics, from societal issues and education to health and community development. These platforms offer young people the opportunity to gain knowledge, develop critical thinking skills, and learn from their peers and experts in the field. It also provides a setting for collective problem-solving and brainstorming.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Plan the forum around topics that are both relevant and engaging to the target audience.
- ✓ Involve young people in the planning and organizing process to ensure that their interests are represented.
- ✓ Use interactive tools like polls or Q&A sessions to keep participants engaged.
- ✓ Invite guest speakers or subject matter experts who can provide valuable insights and stimulate discussion.
- ✓ Make sure to create a safe and inclusive environment where all voices are heard, and respectful dialogue is maintained.
- ✓ Offer opportunities for follow-up actions or projects, giving participants a sense of ongoing engagement and impact.



Collaborative Projects

Collaborative Projects are initiatives where young people work together to accomplish a shared goal or create something new. These projects can span various areas such as community service, educational tasks, or organising events. They offer youth the chance to be directly involved in decision-making processes, from the project's conceptualization to its execution and evaluation.

The essence of Collaborative Projects is teamwork and shared responsibility. Young participants divide tasks, contribute individual skills, and combine their efforts to achieve the project's objectives. The experience fosters not only technical skills related to the project but also soft skills like communication, leadership, and problem-solving. It also encourages a sense of community and belonging among the participants as they work towards a common goal.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Clearly define the project's objectives and expected outcomes so everyone is on the same page.
- ✓ Involve the youth in planning stages, including budgeting and resource allocation, to give them a comprehensive understanding of the project.
- ✓ Use collaborative tools like shared documents or project management software to keep everyone updated.
- ✓ Establish regular check-ins or meetings to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments.
- ✓ Provide a platform for participants to showcase the results, be it a community presentation, a website, or a social media campaign.
- ✓ Encourage reflection and feedback sessions after the project's completion to discuss what worked well and what could be improved.



Peer Education

Peer Education is a strategy where young people are trained to inform and educate their peers about specific subjects. This could range from voter registration and civic participation, environmental sustainability, local governance, to community development projects. The main advantage is that messages might be more effectively received when delivered by peers who speak the same "language" and understand the same cultural nuances.

In Peer Education programs, a subset of young people are trained in specific topics and effective communication skills. These peer educators then serve as a resource, disseminating information, and promoting skills development and involvement among their peers. The format could vary: workshops, one-on-one counselling, group discussions, or even online platforms. Peer Education not only benefits those who receive the information but also enriches the peer educators themselves, enhancing their understanding of the subject matter, and building their confidence and leadership skills.

Tips to Make It Engaging for Young People

- ✓ Select peer educators who are respected by their peers and who display strong communication skills.
- ✓ Invest in comprehensive training for the peer educators to ensure that they are well-equipped to convey accurate and helpful information.
- ✓ Use interactive methods to engage the peer audience, such as games, role-playing, or group discussions.
- ✓ Encourage peer educators to share their own experiences or stories to make the subject matter relatable.
- ✓ Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the program through surveys, focus groups, or other feedback mechanisms to ensure that the program's goals are being met.
- ✓ Maintain ongoing support and supervision for peer educators, including refresher training and emotional support.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential component of any youth participation initiative, method, or program. Its primary role is to assess the effectiveness of these activities in achieving their set objectives. Furthermore, it serves as a tool for accountability, quality assurance, and continuous improvement. This chapter will delve into the significance of evaluation, outlining its critical aspects and how it adds value to youth participation initiatives.



Why is Evaluation Important?

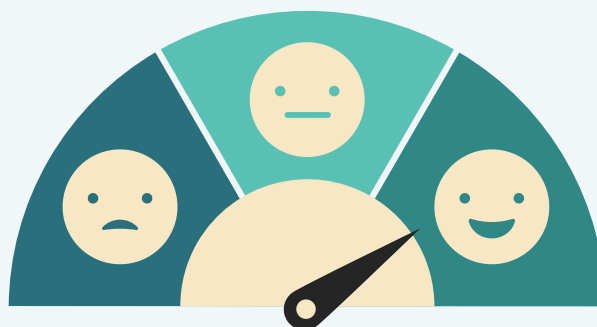
Learning and Growth

Evaluation is a powerful learning tool. It allows everyone involved – youth, educators, facilitators – to reflect on their experiences and extract meaningful lessons. Through evaluation, young people can gain insights into the relevance and impact of their activities in relation to their lives and communities. It's an opportunity for them to deepen their understanding of the subject matter, recognize the value of their educational experiences, and develop critical thinking skills.



Inspiration and Motivation

When young people see the tangible outcomes of their efforts, their motivation to engage and improve increases. Evaluation can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of a project, providing a clear direction for future initiatives. It advances the cycle of continuous improvement, encouraging youth to set higher goals and strive for greater achievements.



Promoting Change and Improvement

At the heart of evaluation is the desire for change and improvement. Whether it's modifying methodologies, adjusting project goals, or transforming personal attitudes and behaviours, evaluation facilitates both operational and personal transformation. It prepares young individuals to adapt to societal changes and personal growth.

Fostering Participation

Participatory evaluation reinforces the principle of active involvement. By engaging youth in the evaluation process, they practice exactly the participation they are learning about. It validates their role in the decision-making process and ensures that the programs they are part of are truly reflective of their needs and aspirations.

Embracing Diversity of Perspectives

Evaluation is not just about assessing outcomes; it's about embracing a range of viewpoints. During the process, young people engage in discussions, share their thoughts, and debate the meanings and implications of their actions. This diversity of interpretation is vital for developing tolerance and understanding.

Strengthening Future Actions

Finally, evaluation is about looking forward. It's not only about assessing what has been done but also about using those insights to shape future actions. For youth initiatives, this means developing strategies that are more connected with the needs and contexts of young people, ensuring that every new project is built on the learnings of the past.

Evaluation methods and tools








In the context of youth participation and community engagement, various methods can be used to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of initiatives. The tools and techniques outlined in this section are just a snapshot of the many options available. These methods are versatile, and while they are presented in the context of youth engagement, they can be equally applicable to a range of other circumstances.

Evaluation methods can be broadly categorized based on the scale of interaction they involve. We will look firstly at personal methods, which are introspective and individual-focused, allowing participants to reflect on their own experiences and learning. Secondly, we will analyse some interpersonal methods that facilitate a one-on-one exchange, promoting a deeper understanding between individuals. Lastly, we'll focus on group methods which foster collective reflection and consensus-building within larger gatherings.


We will list several evaluation methods within each of these categories that you can research more on to understand their strengths and limitations and to be able to select the most appropriate one for your needs.


Personal Methods








These methods involve individual reflection and assessment, where participants evaluate their own experiences, learning, and feelings.

Surveys and Questionnaires	      
Purpose	To collect quantitative and sometimes qualitative data on participants' experiences, learning outcomes and opinions.
Method	Develop a series of questions that participants can answer, including multiple-choice, Likert scale, or open-ended formats. These can be administered online or on paper.
Benefits	Can reach a large number of participants quickly and can be easily analyzed for trends and patterns.
Considerations	Ensure questions are clear and unbiased. It may be helpful to pilot the survey with a small group to test for understanding.










A Letter to Oneself	
Purpose	To encourage participants to reflect on personal goals, experiences, and feelings, which can be compared at a later date to assess change and growth.
Method	Ask participants to write a letter to their future selves, detailing their current state and aspirations. Determine when they will next read the letter (e.g., in one year).
Benefits	Provides a personal and emotionally engaging form of reflection.
Considerations	Participants may need guidance on what to include. Ensure they have a safe place to store the letter until it's time to revisit it.

Diary	
Purpose	To enable continuous reflection on daily experiences and emotions, contributing to an understanding of personal development over time.
Method	Participants are provided with a physical or digital diary to regularly record their thoughts and experiences.
Benefits	Offers a detailed account of the participant's journey and change.
Considerations	Participants must be encouraged to write regularly. Privacy must be respected, and participants should understand how these diaries will be used.


Reflective Essays	      
Purpose	To allow participants to articulate their learning and experiences in a structured narrative form.
Method	Participants write an essay reflecting on key experiences, what they learned, and how they've grown.
Benefits	Encourages deep reflection and articulation of thoughts.
Considerations	Some participants may find writing an essay challenging. Providing a structure or prompts can help guide their writing.










Self-Assessment Checklists	      
Purpose	To help participants evaluate their own skills, knowledge, and attitudes in a structured way.
Method	Develop a checklist of specific skills, knowledge, and behaviors that participants can use to rate themselves.
Benefits	Empowers participants to identify their own strengths and areas for improvement.
Considerations	Checklists should be comprehensive and reflective of the program's objectives. Provide instructions on how to interpret and use the checklist for personal growth.








Interpersonal Methods








These methods involve interaction between two or more individuals to share, compare, and discuss experiences and opinions.

Interviews	
Purpose	To gain detailed qualitative insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and learning.
Method	Conduct one-on-one conversations using open-ended questions to explore participants' views in depth.
Benefits	Allows for a deep understanding of individual experiences and the opportunity to follow up on interesting points.
Considerations	Requires skilled interviewers who can establish rapport and ask probing questions. Interviews must be scheduled, which can be time-consuming.



Focus Groups	      
Purpose	To collect a wide range of information, ideas, and feedback from a group, highlighting group dynamics and shared experiences.
Method	Facilitate a structured discussion among a small group of participants, prompting them to discuss specific topics or experiences.
Benefits	Can reveal consensus or diversity in experiences and opinions, providing a breadth of insight.
Considerations	The facilitator must be able to manage group dynamics and ensure that all voices are heard. Group think can sometimes influence individual responses.

Peer Review	      
Purpose	To foster a supportive environment where participants can give and receive feedback from their peers.
Method	Participants are tasked with assessing each other's contributions or work, providing comments and suggestions for improvement.
Benefits	Encourages critical thinking and allows participants to benefit from diverse perspectives.
Considerations	It's important to establish clear guidelines to ensure that feedback is constructive and respectful. Some participants may be uncomfortable with this method.








Pair-Share	      
Purpose	To engage participants in personal reflection and sharing, followed by collaborative insight-building.
Method	Participants pair up to discuss a topic or experience in depth, then bring key insights to share with the larger group.
Benefits	Helps participants articulate and refine their thoughts through dialogue and provides a platform for quieter individuals to speak in a smaller setting.
Considerations	Pairs should be thoughtfully matched to ensure productive conversation. Time management is crucial to allow all pairs the chance to share in the larger group.

Group Interactive Methods

These methods involve the entire group and are designed to gauge the collective feelings, views, or learning of the participants.



Checking Expectations








Clothes Line	      
Purpose	To visually represent participants' expectations, fears and intended contributions.
Method	A string is stretched across the room to act as a line. Participants are given paper shapes resembling clothing items on which they write down their hopes, concerns, and intended contributions to the program. These paper "clothes" are then hung on the string.
Benefits	This visual arrangement allows everyone to see the range of thoughts and feelings in the group. It can serve as an icebreaker and helps to foster a sense of community and understanding among participants.
Considerations	Ensure there is enough time for everyone to write their thoughts and for the group to review the "laundry." The facilitator should encourage an atmosphere of trust and respect to promote honest and open sharing.










Contributions


Fears


Expectations

Three Posters	      
Purpose	To encourage participants to set personal goals, recognize potential challenges, and commit to making a contribution.
Method	Prepare three large posters with the prompts: "What do I want to take home?", "What do I want to avoid?", and "What can I contribute?". Participants add their responses to each poster.
Benefits	Helps participants to actively engage with their personal objectives and the group's dynamics from the outset.
Considerations	Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to each poster. The activity should be facilitated to maintain focus on constructive and realistic expectations.








End of the Day Reviews








Reflection Groups	      
Purpose	To facilitate group processing of daily events and insights.
Method	Divide participants into small groups at the end of the day to discuss what they learned, felt, and experienced.
Benefits	Encourages collective reflection and deepens understanding through shared perspectives.
Considerations	Ensure each person has time to speak, and encourage respect for all contributions. It can be helpful to have a set of guiding questions to structure the discussion.

The Three Words Review	
Purpose	To prompt succinct reflection and synthesis of the day's experiences.
Method	Ask each participant to think of three words that best capture their day and share them with the group.
Benefits	This quick and engaging activity can capture a wide range of emotions and thoughts.
Considerations	Be prepared to support participants if they struggle to find words. This activity can also serve as a springboard for deeper discussion.








The Telegram	
Purpose	To encourage concise and focused reflection on the day's key takeaways.
Method	Participants write a short message, like an old-fashioned telegram, summarizing their main insights or feelings about the day.
Benefits	Helps to distill thoughts into a focused message and can reveal what aspects stood out most to participants.
Considerations	Limit the number of words or sentences to encourage brevity and clarity in the reflection.








Visual Evaluation Methods

The River	      
Purpose	To use creative expression for reflecting on personal or group journeys.
Method	Participants draw a river, using symbols or drawings to represent key experiences, challenges, and milestones they have encountered.
Benefits	Facilitates a deeper, visual reflection and can be a powerful tool to express complex emotions and paths.
Considerations	Provide a variety of art materials and encourage creativity. Some participants may need more guidance to get started, so offering prompts can be helpful.








Train to the Future	      
Purpose	To encourage participants to reflect on their progress and set goals for the future.
Method	Participants draw or use a template of a train and its carriages, each representing different stages of their journey and destinations they aim to reach.
Benefits	Helps in setting clear goals and acknowledging the progress made towards them, and can inspire discussion about future aspirations.
Considerations	Some individuals may need assistance in identifying future goals or may feel anxious about the concept of a fixed "destination", so be prepared to offer support and flexible approaches to this activity.








Snap-shots

The Thermometer	      
Purpose	To check participants' comfort, mood, or engagement in a quick, visual manner.
Method	A large thermometer drawing or graphic is displayed, and participants mark the level that corresponds to their current state.
Benefits	Offers a quick snapshot of the group's overall sentiment, can track changes over time, and is easily understood.
Considerations	Ensure that the thermometer has a scale that is clear and that participants have the privacy to mark their true feelings without peer pressure.

The Speedometer	      
Purpose	To assess participants' energy levels, pace of work, or sense of progress.
Method	Participants use a drawn or digital speedometer to indicate their current 'speed,' with different areas representing varied levels of energy or progress.
Benefits	Encourages self-assessment of one's own pace and can help in adjusting activities to better align with the group's energy.
Considerations	Clarify what each section of the speedometer represents and be sensitive to those who may feel they are lagging behind, offering support as needed.

Final Evaluation

Last Round	      
Purpose	To provide a structured opportunity for participants to express their concluding thoughts, reflections, or emotions at the end of a session or the entire program.
Method	In a circle or another inclusive arrangement, participants take turns without interruption to share their takeaways, impactful moments, or any unresolved feelings.
Benefits	Allows for closure, ensures everyone has a voice, and can highlight the diversity of experiences within the group.
Considerations	Time each share to ensure everyone has a chance to speak, and establish guidelines for respectful listening to maintain a supportive environment.

Sculpting	      
Purpose	To use physical expression as a means to explore and communicate group dynamics, interpersonal relationships, or emotional states within the group.
Method	Participants use their bodies alone or in concert with others to form 'sculptures' or tableaux that represent abstract concepts or group sentiments.
Benefits	Engages kinesthetic learners, can be a powerful non-verbal communication tool, and often reveals underlying group sentiments.
Considerations	Ensure a safe space for physical expression, be mindful of personal comfort levels with physical proximity, and discuss the meanings behind sculptures to fully understand their significance.

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