Youth Consultation Toolkit
2014 to 2019
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>What's involved</strong></th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Surveys or questionnaires</strong></td>
<td>Structured consultation. Young people respond to a set of questions.</td>
<td>• Can be completed by large numbers of young people; • Can be completed anonymously; • Easy to collate due to structure; • Questions can be tailored to target group; and • Can be posted online or hard copy.</td>
<td>• Highly structured; • No social interaction between participants; and • Literacy issues.</td>
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<td><strong>Online discussions, polls or feedback</strong></td>
<td>Using online methods to pose a question or seek feedback.</td>
<td>• Allows quick response; • Can be anonymous; • Provides flexibility in time; and • Broad reach.</td>
<td>• Access to internet; and • Technical knowledge.</td>
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<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face discussion. Can be structured or informal.</td>
<td>• Encourages rapport between parties.</td>
<td>• Can be confronting for young people; • Limited interaction; and • No appropriate for large numbers of people.</td>
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<td><strong>Comment cards</strong></td>
<td>Distribution of reply paid cards with specific questions.</td>
<td>• Broad reach; • Provides specific information; and • Takes consultation into the community.</td>
<td>• Limited interaction; and • Literacy issues.</td>
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<td><strong>Peer consultation</strong></td>
<td>Young people interacting with peers through surveys, interviews and focus groups.</td>
<td>• Interaction between different groups of young people. • Skill development for peer leaders; and • Young people given</td>
<td>• Time consuming if peer leaders require training and support; and • Some issues may not be appropriate for peer consultation.</td>
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<td>Forums</td>
<td>A facilitated gathering that seeks input into a decision-making process through the development of recommendations or outcomes.</td>
<td>• Useful for detailed analysis on defined projects.</td>
<td>• May not be representative of all young people.</td>
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<td>Art programs/initiatives</td>
<td>Young people Expressing themselves through art in either a collaborative group effort or individual project, which can be structured and planned, or more spontaneous. Requires an audience so that the views and ideas expressed are seen or heard.</td>
<td>• Encourages young people to express themselves freely; • Engages young people who have language and/or literacy issues; • Provides opportunities for skill development; and • Engages other community members as the audience.</td>
<td>• May require substantial planning time and specific resources.</td>
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| **Casual conversations** | Simply asking young people their opinions through a casual conversation. Casual conversations can be one-on-one or conducted in a group. | • Can be conducted anywhere, for example, in the workplace or after a meeting, and by various methods including phone or e-mail;  
• Can be effective for ongoing consultation;  
• Can be useful when there is limited time; and  
• Helps build up a relationship of trust. | • Information not easily recorded. | • Young people need to be aware that the information they disclose in the casual conversation may be used as data. To avoid any misunderstanding, phrase questions so that it is clear that the conversation is part of a consultation. For example, “I want to know what you think about this because...” |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **Suggestion boxes**   | Encouraging people to place their written suggestions or comments into a readily available secure box. The box is usually placed in an accessible location with pens and paper available for use. The box may be advertised by signs and can be used temporarily or as an ongoing method of consultation. | • Useful if there are limited resources and/or time;  
• Effective for ongoing consultation;  
• Easy for participants to use; and  
• Comments can be made confidentially, particularly if the box is placed in a private space. | • The suggestion box may not be accessible to young people with limited literacy;  
• This method restricts following up comments or suggestions;  
• The success of this method relies on young people taking the initiative to make comments;  
• The suggestion box is not a personally engaging process; and  
• Comments may not come from a representative sample. | • Where appropriate, outcomes stemming from the comments and suggestions can be displayed near the box. This can be a way of reporting back to participants and promoting the effectiveness of making suggestions. |
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<th>Hypothetical stories/situations</th>
<th>Presenting participants with invented stories or situations and gauging their responses to them. By focusing on how characters in a story might feel the discussion is de-personalised. A hypothetical can involve a discussion or written response.</th>
<th>• Can be effective in discussing difficult or potentially distressing issues without asking participants to reveal their own experiences; • Can allow for free and honest responses than if asked directly about the same issues; and • Can be more engaging for participants. This method can be used in a group or individual setting.</th>
<th>• Time and planning is needed for drafting the hypothetical stories and running the consultations; and • This method may distress the participants if asked to discuss a controversial or distressing issue that is close to their own experience.</th>
<th>• Depending upon the subject matter, a professional facilitator may be required to host a hypothetical; • A debriefing may be necessary following a discussion about a potentially distressing topic; and • It is important to have a strategy in place outlining what to do if a participant reveals something that needs to be acted upon.</th>
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<td>Vox pops</td>
<td>Spontaneously approaching people and asking them to briefly comment on an issue or question. Vox pops are usually recorded on film or audiotape.</td>
<td>• A large number of opinions can be accessed; • Usually gets high response rates; • The consultation comes to the participants; • People can be identified or remain anonymous; and • Is a fun and easy interaction for young people.</td>
<td>• Don't usually allow for follow-up; • Don't involve in-depth consultation; • Don't usually involve a representative sample of people; • May not get well considered answers; and • Usually require audio or film equipment.</td>
<td>• Vox pops can be more effective when the questions are short and clear, and when the issue being discussed is broadly known; and • They can be used effectively alongside other forms of consultation, for example, vox pops can be conducted at a forum.</td>
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Youth reference group

A youth reference group is a group of young people providing feedback on a repeated basis. Variations of a youth reference group include youth advisory committees and project action teams. Youth reference groups can have a dual function of providing support and feedback to an organisation or project while actively pursuing independent projects. Youth reference groups may operate informally or within formal committee structures.

- Enables young people to provide regular, direct feedback into a project or organisation;
- Incorporates young people's perspectives and input into organisational structures;
- Helps to develop young people's skills in communication, group work and running a committee; and
- Encourages young people to take an active approach to issues of importance to them.

- Requires time, planning and adequate resources to work effectively;
- Can be costly;
- Formal approaches might be off-putting to some young people; and
- It may be difficult to keep young people engaged over long periods of time.

- Reference groups may be more effective if young people are involved in establishing the group. Reference groups may be more effective if young people are involved in establishing the group.

Graffiti wall/board

Creating an accessible public space, usually on a wall, where participants can write their comments in their own time. Hanging up butcher's paper on walls and providing markers can be an easy way to do this. Graffiti boards can be left hanging for as long as required and can be replaced at regular intervals.

- Easy to establish and use; informal in nature which can encourage people to respond freely; and fun to participate in; and responses can be anonymous.
- Comments may be difficult to interpret; this method restricts the following up of comments and suggestions.
- Leading questions can be placed on graffiti boards to guide the feedback; and graffiti boards can be displayed after use.

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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| **SMS/text consultation** | Sending out text messages through mobile phones asking for feedback or opinions on an issue or question. | • Can target a large group of young people;  
  • Takes the consultation to young people;  
  • Is quick and easy to do;  
  • Uses 'youthful' technology. | • Excludes young people without mobile phones;  
  • Does not involve personal contact with young people;  
  • Is limited to simple questions;  
  • Limits the amount of information gathered from individuals;  
  • It is difficult to target a representative sample;  
  • Organisations need access to mobile phone numbers in order to send messages. | • Obtaining consent before consulting through SMS text messages may help ensure it is not intrusive. |
| **Submissions**       | Calling for submissions as part of a process of review, establishing a particular program or service, or seeking comment on discussion papers. Submissions can be oral or written. | • Demonstrates a commitment to openness;  
  • Is a cost effective form of consultation;  
  • Can be indicative of wider community support/outrage. | • Are not generally 'youth friendly';  
  • May be overlooked by young people in newspapers;  
  • Will most likely be responded to by those with a particular interest in the topic;  
  • May exclude those with poor written and oral skills;  
  • Are time consuming to organise and analyse results;  
  • May be biased and not provide overall guidance. | • If calling for submissions, be sure to advertise in all youth street press, as well as state and local papers;  
  • Have clear guidelines prepared in a youth friendly format to ensure young people understand what is expected of them. |

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