



INTRO

PARTICIPATION

PLAY

SAFETY

SOCIAL

Protective Factor

# PARTICIPATION





# WHERE TO START

**Participation involves thinking, feeling and doing for sustained, meaningful contributions to society.**

Create welcoming spaces and environments and enable child and youth-led initiatives.

Progressively build the skills of children and youth over the ages to increase their capacity to participate, with increasing levels of responsibility and diversity of opportunities to contribute.

Include all ages of children and youth in planning, decision-making and governance.

Consider providing youth mentorship, internship and employment opportunities.

# WHAT

The participation of children and youth takes many different forms. It can include internships, jobs, participation in planning and governance, and other acts of citizenship. It can be one-off or ongoing, temporary or permanent, formal or informal, paid or voluntary. In at nutshell, it is about engagement and participation in society.

When children are given opportunities to participate, they acquire greater levels of competence which in turn can enhance the quality of their participation.<sup>1</sup> The full engagement of young people considers the heart (emotion), the head (cognition) and the feet (action) and has five key dimensions: competence, confidence, connection, caring and character; and, that when engagement exhibits these 5Cs, young people can better exhibit the 6th: contribution.<sup>2,3</sup>

*“We are the future of Canada and want to be a part of the development and building of the future we want to see.”<sup>4</sup>*

– Children First’s Young Canadians’ Parliament

## CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is the expression of a public identity. It is the recognition of an official position by a government and the ability to enjoy the rights and privileges following from that position by an individual.<sup>5</sup> Children and youth are active agents in our society today, not passive recipients of external influences.<sup>6,7,8</sup> Young people desire “to be treated as respected and valued members of society and as citizens in the ‘here and now.’”<sup>9</sup>

Citizenship and civic engagement are interrelated. Democracies are healthy to the extent that their citizens are involved and that in turn is dependent on citizens having opportunities to participate and believing that they can influence outcomes and make a difference.<sup>10,11</sup>

## DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION

- **Consultative** – entails mechanisms through which to elicit perspectives and then use that to inform initiatives. It is adult-initiated, adult-led and managed; children do not control outcomes
- **Participatory** – entails opportunities for children to be actively involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives. It is adult-initiated but is done in partnership with children. It empowers children to influence or challenge both process and outcomes and allows for increasing levels of self-directed action by children over a period of time
- **Self-initiated** – where children are empowered to take action and are not merely responding to an adult-defined agenda; issues of concern are identified by children; adults serve as facilitators rather than as leaders; children are controlling the process.<sup>10</sup>

### THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child specifies the right of children to participate in decisions that affect them.<sup>12</sup>
- Goal 16.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes the importance of ensuring “responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.”<sup>13</sup>
- In the report Child Participation in Local Governance, UNICEF notes that a common theme in its work across several nations is that participation “at the local level is considered key to ensuring that children’s participation endures.”<sup>14</sup>

*“When children and youth are marginalized in planning and policy making, the public programs and environments that get created tend to exclude them thereby further relegating young people to the private realm of their homes where they further disengage from community with increasingly fewer opportunities to engage in the broader community and shape their place in society.”<sup>15</sup>*

### EARLY YEARS



### ADOLESCENCE

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child imposes no lower age limit on the exercise of the right to participate.<sup>10</sup> Young children are experts in their own lives with the competence to communicate and a unique insight into their experiences.<sup>16</sup>

In one study in the UK with a sample of six hundred 13 to 16 year-olds, 81% said that they had never been asked their opinion on local issues and had not had any opportunity to contribute to local government decision making; but, 72% wished to have opportunities to voice their opinion.<sup>17</sup>

**66% of Grades 8-12 students in BC felt that the activities they took part in were meaningful.<sup>18</sup>**

66%



**44% of Grade 8-12 students felt that their ideas were listened to and acted upon in the meaningful activities they took part in over the past year.<sup>18</sup>**

44%



## DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

Digital Participation refers to the use of the internet, social media, and mobile technology to enable participation in democratic life.

Digital technologies are a key part of young people's realities and need to be taken into consideration when engaging children and youth.<sup>19,20</sup> Children are going online more often, for longer, at younger ages, with more devices and for different purposes.<sup>21,22</sup>

*“Children value technology as a way to learn more about issues that their communities face, to gather information, to be informed about events, and to share views and experiences with others.”<sup>23</sup>*

Digital platforms and tools have been shown to be one way to increase the social inclusion of young people who may be experiencing disadvantages arising from their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, among other socio-cultural dimensions.<sup>24,25,26</sup> However, not every young person has equal access to the internet or digital devices. Policy makers need to consider how digital participation can increase social inclusion but also to be aware of disparities in digital access, as it has the potential to both reinforce and exacerbate existing social inequalities.<sup>27,28,29</sup> Digital literacy is also necessary to enable young people to meaningfully engage online.<sup>30</sup> The online world is complicated and full of misinformation (not intentional) and disinformation (intentional).<sup>31</sup>



## IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATION TO CHILD AND YOUTH MENTAL WELL-BEING

### WHY

Participation has many benefits for young people's well-being.<sup>10,32,33,34,35</sup> There is ample evidence showing its effects on positive child and youth development. Positive impacts include:



#### INCREASE

- Communication and collaborative skills
- Levels of civic competence
- Feelings of belonging
- Self-esteem
- Social connections to both peers and adults in the community
- Opportunities to have fun<sup>36</sup>
- Awareness and capacity to engage in and contribute to their community<sup>33</sup>
- Sense of purpose and hope for their future<sup>37</sup>

#### AGENCY & AUTONOMY

**Agency** is the desire and ability to make decisions and drive change in one's own life, in community, and in the larger spheres of influence.<sup>38</sup> Agency is among the top priorities for young people's mental well-being.<sup>39,40,41,42,43,44</sup>

**Autonomy** is feeling and thinking independently, a sense of self-governance and freedom to make choices. Even at young ages, when a child has autonomy, even in small ways, it helps to build self-confidence and self-esteem and is considered a critical part of healthy development.<sup>45</sup>

*In a research project with a sample of over 200 students, 94% said that participatory activities had made them feel like they could improve things in the community and that they felt proud of their achievements; and 97% said that the participation had made them feel more independent, trusted and responsible.*<sup>46</sup>

Poor quality and inauthentic opportunities for participation can have a negative impact on young people's sense of agency and autonomy and can create a barrier to young people's desire to get involved in future participatory opportunities.<sup>36,47,48,49</sup> Several studies found that when the participation – particularly in decision making processes – is perceived to be tokenistic and ineffective, it can fuel young people's views that nothing matters and heightens their feelings of distrust, cynicism, exclusion and powerlessness.<sup>10,36,9,50</sup>

*“children have highly developed skills to spot token participation”*<sup>51</sup>

*“token participation may be more problematic than non-participation because the invitation to participate creates expectations that remain unfulfilled.”*<sup>52</sup>

## SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-CONFIDENCE, SELF-EFFICACY, SELF-CONCEPT

**Self-esteem** refers to when you appreciate and value yourself.<sup>53</sup>

**Self-confidence** is your belief in yourself and your abilities.<sup>53</sup>

**Self-efficacy** refers to one's belief in one's ability to achieve specific goals.<sup>54</sup>

**Self-concept** is how you perceive yourself and is derived from self-esteem and self-efficacy.<sup>55</sup>

All of these strongly impact mental well-being and positive child and youth development.<sup>56,57,58,59,60</sup> Young people's voice in decision making, particularly when supported by caring adults, promotes self-efficacy and self-confidence, among other developmental assets.<sup>61,62,63,64</sup>

## PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOURS & EMPATHY

**Prosocial behaviours** are acts that are intended to benefit others (e.g., helping, sharing, comforting, volunteering, and cooperating).<sup>65</sup>

**Empathy** is the ability to perceive and to be sensitive to the emotional states of others, coupled with a motivation to care for their well-being.<sup>66</sup>

Prosocial behaviour leads to increased well-being<sup>67,68</sup>  
 "Policy makers and practitioners are correct to see kindness interventions as effective ways of improving well-being."<sup>69</sup>

Empathy motivates many prosocial behaviours, inhibits aggression, and facilitates cooperation.<sup>70</sup> Children as young as one year of age demonstrate empathy, display prosocial behaviours and are generally eager to be helpful, seeking opportunities to assist others and taking pride in their helping.<sup>70,71,72,73,74</sup> Empathy is also a protective against antisocial behaviour as low cognitive empathy is strongly associated with delinquent behaviour.<sup>75,76,77,78,79</sup> The development of empathy is influenced by both biological and environmental processes.<sup>80</sup> Positive relationships foster empathy development from a young age via social learning and imitation. "In adolescence empathy development is more strongly associated with the quality of peer relationships at school and in community environments."<sup>81</sup>

*"[The] same region of the brain corresponding to personal rewards (the ventral striatum) is also activated by helping others. This has led to a new understanding of the adolescent brain as being ripe for social learning opportunities, and that providing opportunities for youth to help others is vital for their development."*<sup>82</sup>

## CITIZENSHIP, BELONGING & MATTERING

While citizenship has frequently been recognized as status, it is probably most immediately experienced as a feeling of belonging.<sup>83,84</sup> Feeling like outsiders and not as full-fledged citizens negatively impacts young people's wellness.<sup>85,86</sup>

*“Being young right now is hard. It feels like we're constantly reminded that nobody cares about our futures: not our government, not the generations that came before us and definitely not our political system.”<sup>87</sup>*

Participatory projects have been shown to overcome children and youth's feelings of social exclusion.<sup>88,41,42,43,86</sup> One impact of participation on young people is a higher sense of belonging and an increased sense of commitment to their community.<sup>47</sup> Through young people's participation in the community, their social trust increases, their communities feel more welcoming and there is a higher acceptance of people different from themselves.<sup>36,89,48,90,91,92</sup>

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

The evidence is clear on the importance of supportive adults for the mental well-being of children and youth.<sup>93,94,95</sup> Participation in the community enables the formation of supportive connections between young people and adults.<sup>47,96,97</sup> Supportive adults can also be a key enabler of the effective participation of young people.<sup>88,98</sup>

**Mentors:** Research suggests that young people's mentoring relationships are associated with better academic, vocational and psychosocial functioning, including fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression and less problematic behaviours such as theft and violence.<sup>98,99,100,101</sup>

**Connecting a face to the action:** Studies show that providing young people more exposure to community members can enhance their sense of belonging.<sup>102</sup> Studies also emphasize to policy makers themselves that relationship building is key to the effective participation of young people in decision making and that this often involves long-term and frequent contact with young people to build those relationships and to strengthen trust.<sup>103,104</sup>

**The role of adults in child and youth participation:** Studies show that the most effective adults in young people's lives are not overly directive but rather are responsive and provide appropriate structure, challenge and support.<sup>105,106,107</sup> From a more equal collaboration perspective, a “youth-adult partnership” is one that involves citizens across generations working together to address common concerns, integrating young people's perspectives and skills with professional adults' experience and wisdom.<sup>108</sup> At their best, youth-adult partnerships emphasize mutuality and respect among young people and adults, with a goal-oriented focus on shared leading and learning.<sup>109</sup>



## VOLUNTEERING

Many studies have found that young people’s informal and formal volunteering is positively correlated with reduced depressive symptoms, better self-reported health, and increased self-esteem.<sup>110,111,112,113,114</sup> While some benefits of volunteering (e.g., employability skills, social connections) can occur regardless of whether the participation is voluntary, research suggests that psycho-social benefits are more likely incurred when the participation is not compulsory, particularly if the volunteer work exposes young people to new opportunities, supports their experience, challenges them, and is of high quality.<sup>90,115,116,117,118</sup>

## EMPLOYMENT

There is debate as to whether child and youth employment positively or negatively impacts healthy development.<sup>119</sup> However, it all comes down to “it depends.” Some of the negative employment contexts that studies have identified include inadequate training, worker injury, power imbalances, and situations where young workers may not know their rights, and may feel uncomfortable raising safety issues at work.<sup>120,121,122</sup> Some of the benefits for young people include a growing sense of autonomy and purpose, broadening relationships with adults and peers, a sense of achievement and status and a stronger sense of responsibility.<sup>123</sup> Studies find that the majority of adolescents have had satisfying work experiences and have felt that it has helped to prepare them for adult life.<sup>124,125,126</sup>

**An evaluation of the Food Project** – a Massachusetts organization that hires 140 adolescents each summer to grow food to donate to hunger relief organizations – found that the key elements to successful outcomes were:

- positive adult role models
- exposure to young people different from themselves
- strong alignment between activities and outcomes
- high expectations from staff
- opportunities to learn from mistakes.<sup>127</sup>

*“Actually, I think kids come here and sometimes don’t know who they are, but they discover it through the program. That’s what happened to me.”<sup>128</sup>*

- Former participant and current director of the program, Greg Gale

# HOW

## ACTIONS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION

### LEGEND

-  RURAL/SMALL TOWN
-  URBAN/MID-SIZED COMMUNITY
-  INTERNATIONAL

## CREATE A STRATEGY

 Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland

### Dumfries and Galloway Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022-2027

In 2018, Dumfries and Galloway Council agreed to the region's first Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy for people aged 12 to 25. The Dumfries and Galloway Council's commitment is:

- We will ensure young people have the skills, ability and confidence to speak out
- We will talk with, listen to and value our young people
- We will make sure that young people have opportunities and are given choices to actively and meaningfully get involved in the decisions that affect their lives
- We will act on the views of young people by reviewing and changing Council services as required

Examples of actions from the Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy implemented from 2018-2021 include 10,000 Voices, an initiative that succeeded in gathering the voices of 10,000 young people ages 10 to 25, reaching 46.9% of all young people in Dumfries and Galloway. The findings from 10,000 Voices were used to inform municipal planning priorities and service delivery by a wide range of partners across the region. A Youth Action Group was also created

and was given a budget of 120,000 pounds to invest in youth groups, projects and events to address issues highlighted through 10,000 Voices. Other events included the Roots Activist and Volunteer



Gathering which focused on providing young people with the opportunity to develop their activist and volunteer skills; and the LGBT Youth Gathering that brought together 200 LGBT youth and their allies. The Chameleon Youth Steering Group was formed coming out of the LGBT event and, among other activities, continues to hold a LGBT Gathering in Dumfries and Galloway every year.

The 2022-2027 Youth Participation and Engagement Strategy outlines the youth democracy structures that were put in place in the municipality: the Dumfries and Galloway Youth Council (DGYC) and the Galloway Champions Board Project. The DGYC is made up of 35 volunteers aged 12-25 who have been elected by their peers to serve a two-year term. Aside from a local focus, these Youth Councillors also represent the view of youth from Dumfries and Galloway at a national level. The Champions Board Project is the overarching term used to describe the engagement between youth in care and Senior Officers and Elected Members through the targeted services delivered by Council Youth Work Services for youth in care.

TIPS FOR ENGAGEMENT

7 GOLDEN RULES OF PARTICIPATION

Included in a report written by the Children and Young People’s Commissioner (Scotland). The rules were created to remind adults of what participation means from the point of view of children and youth and to remind young people to think about what they need from adults to support them to participate.

1. Understand my rights
2. A chance to be involved
3. Remember it’s my choice
4. Value me
5. Support me
6. Work together
7. Keep in touch

FIVE THINGS CITY COUNCILS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE, ACCORDING TO YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Engaging young people means breaking down a harmful tradition of exclusion
2. Don’t wait for young people to participate—bring participation to them
3. Make participation as informal as possible
4. Young people will give it to you straight
5. Know that this is a never-ending commitment

MECHANISM FOR PARTICIPATION




Tirana, Albania

Children’s Local Council

Tirana, the capital and largest city in Albania, elected Erion Veliaj as mayor in 2015. He has structured his vision for urban change around children and has a Chief Child Officer to ensure that the vision of the mayor is translated into all parts of municipal affairs. One of the mayor’s approaches is the [Children’s Local Council](#) where every day different classes of students come to city hall to talk with the mayor or one of the City directors. It is about changing the way that people at city hall think by strengthening connections with young people and hearing about their experiences and ideas. Once a month, high school students are invited to take over City administration. One student becomes the mayor and others become directors. This results in upwards of 150 adolescents getting the opportunity to play at being senior-level City staff each month. An example of one idea that children raised with the mayor and senior staff was the need to make friendlier urban environments around schools. As part of the response to this, every weekend the City has groups of children work with the Parks and Recreation team, biking around the city and focusing on improvements to the built environment. The initiative is not just about improving the public realm; it is also about integrating the involvement of children as part of the City’s operational culture.



 Lewisham, United Kingdom

### Young Mayor’s Project

The [Young Mayor’s Project](#) is at the heart of Lewisham’s Children and Young People’s Citizenship and Participation Strategy. The Young Mayor is elected by young people. Candidates must live or attend school in Lewisham and be between the ages of 12 and 17. The second place candidate automatically becomes the Deputy Young Mayor. The third and four place candidates are automatically invited to serve as Young Advisors to the Young Mayor and Young Deputy Mayor. Young Advisors are a group of around 25 young people who act in a similar role to a cabinet. Young people go through an application process to become a Young Advisor. There is also a Young Citizens Panel which is open to any 11 to 18 year-old who would like to get involved. Throughout the year, the young representatives work with peers, politicians, local government staff and other adults on local and regional activities. This includes campaigns, strategic conversations and project development. The young representatives also take responsibility for consulting with young people from across the borough about how the Young Mayor’s annual budget of 25,000 pounds should be spent.



### BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

- Develop a Youth Council that is relevant to the local context, the current mission, and the developmental phase appropriate to the body
- Adult allies are important
- Recognize and address anti-youth attitudes
- Be purposeful in providing social networking opportunities
- Provide youth development opportunities (e.g., ongoing training)



## The “Italian City of Youth 2023”

[Giovani Onlife Napoli](#) is a project developed by the City Council of Naples to allow for real change in how young people participate in their local government, with new mechanisms – both online platforms and physical structural shifts – that aim to enhance participation:

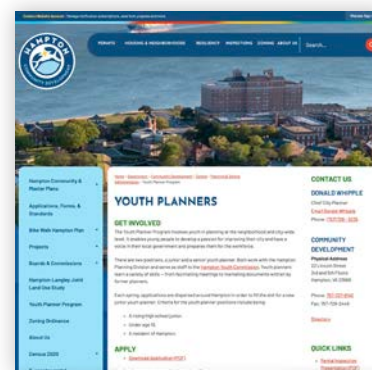
- Four Youth Ambassadors (YAs) will be elected to provide official representation of youth voices.
- An official and permanent local government table will be established to receive the thoughts and ideas from young people which will then be taken to Council.
- An online platform will be developed that will facilitate gathering input, thoughts and ideas from young people, with the ideas and requests brought to “the institutional working table to be discussed and integrated into the political intervention lines of the municipality”.

At the end of the project, a large public event will take place to celebrate and to provide a report-back to young people to communicate all the actions that have been taken. This will be held as part of the annual June Youth Review of the Councilorship for Youth and Employment.



## City of Hampton Youth Planners

The City of Hampton established the [Youth Planner Program](#) (YPP). In the YPP there are two positions: a junior and a senior youth planner. Both youth planners work in the Hampton Planning Division and act as staff liaisons to the Hampton Youth Commission which is made up of 20 to 30 high school students appointed by the City. The youth planners work 15 hours a week after school for two years. Beginning with the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, each municipal document has an entire section written entirely by the youth planners and focused on young people’s strategic issues. The City of Hampton provides the youth planners with training so that they can effectively participate in the City’s Planning department, survey their peers, make recommendations to Council and serve on City Boards and committees.



 Toronto, Ontario

## Mouse City

[Mouse City](#), developed by the organization Small Print, involves children aged 2 to 12 in designing a miniature cardboard city for mice that addresses real-life urban issues such as the need for accessible public transit. Small Print also educates municipal planners on how to transform fun, creative, accessible loose play materials into feedback that can inform policies and design that shape cities. Mouse City is a method that can instill lifelong engagement in civic issues and is both a way to educate young children in planning and city building, as well as a way to facilitate this age group to share their experiences and ideas using storytelling and art.



 Krakow, Poland

## YouthKraKHack

Tools such as hackathons enable direct communication between young people and decision makers and can help to stimulate creativity, to develop public trust and to encourage a culture of participation. In 2018, the first YouthKraKHack took part in Krakow with 50 young people who designed ten proposals to present to municipal officials. “Young people were invited to innovate, be bold and dare to reform municipal policies”. Some of the projects from the hackathon are now in the implementation phase, some served as an inspiration to a similar solution, and some were directed as a recommendation for organizations outside of local government. All of the ideas were considered when designing Young Krakow 2.0, the City’s youth strategy. The Committee of Citizens Dialogue for Youth acted in the role of an information hub with regards to further action taken on the proposed youth recommendations.

 Oslo, Norway

## Augmented Reality with Youth in Urban Planning

This [study](#) involved field work with Augmented Reality (AR) that was done in 2020 and 2021 over five weeks with 5 different groups of youth from 8 different districts in Oslo. The youth were tasked with planning where to plant a portion of Oslo’s 100,000 new trees. The researchers noted that AR was a highly intuitive tool for youth and that the youth found that the AR helped with the creation of their planning proposals on site at scale. Through their use of AR, the majority of the youth participants reported an increased understanding of urban planning and an increased sense of confidence in displaying their designs. The participants also expressed appreciation of being given control of the planning process. The downsides of the AR experience were mainly related to limitations with the current technology which still had bugs and was imprecise.

Following this case study, the research team embarked on a new set of case studies which expanded to other projects in Oslo (e.g., car-free streets) and included participants of all ages.

Madison, Detroit, United States

### Hip Hop Architecture Camp

Founded in 2016, the aim of the [Hip Hop Architecture Camp](#) is to build the capacity of young people who may not otherwise engage in urban planning to participate by providing an introduction to architecture through the lens of hip hop culture. The Hip Hop Architecture Camp was created by architect Michael Ford to encourage under represented youth to pursue careers in design. The camp enables youth to collaborate with design professionals, as well as hip hop artists to draw connections between the complex structure of rap lyrics and design, sparking ideas for improvements of and new spaces for their communities. The first camp was hosted by the Madison (Detroit) Public Library over four Saturdays. The library provided the space, the municipal planning department provided the funding. The Toronto Public Library hosted a camp in 2018 for 10 to 14 year olds.



## PUTTING YOUTH ON THE AGENDA

Yolo County, California, United States

### Prioritizing Youth in Rural Communities

Yolo County is a rural region in California. In 2022 the County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to establish the [Yolo Youth Commission](#) as a two-year pilot program and authorized the Yolo County Office of Education to administer the program. The Commission is meant to create “a permanent pathway for young people to shape their future and build community in Yolo.” 87 youth between the ages of 13 and 18 applied to the Commission of which 15 were selected. Youth Commissioners will provide insight into community and education issues to help the public sector better understand and address the needs of young people in the region.

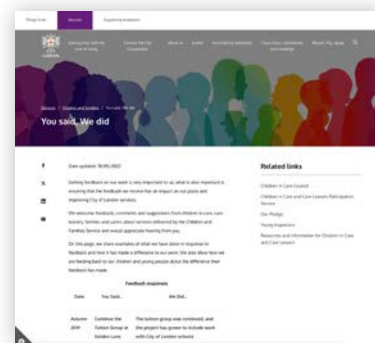


# COMMUNICATION

 London, United Kingdom

## You Said, We Did

As part of the City of London’s Children and Young People’s Plan 2020-2025 there is an articulated commitment to strengthen communication. One action the City has taken is the creation of the [You Said, We Did web page](#). On this page they share examples of what the City has done in response to feedback and how it has made a difference. The City also simplified the Children and Young People’s Plan 2022-2025 into a colourful, visual, [3-page document](#) that helps to communicate what the focus areas are and provides a template at the end with blank columns for “How we will achieve this” and “How we will measure this”, seeking input from young people for ideas on how they would like to see the outcomes achieved and measured.



## THE COMMUNICATION OF YOUTH-FRIENDLY CITIES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUNICIPALITIES

In the report [Mapping Best Practices for Youth-Friendly Cities](#), municipalities in six countries were reviewed from 2020-2021 with regards to local youth policies, implementation methods and hands-on examples of various dimensions of youth friendliness. In the section on Communication and Information, the report writes that a youth-friendly city “communicates with young people in places and through channels young people are familiar with and in a language they comprehend.” Some examples are:

- Social media that young people can use to contact relevant decision makers
- The City has a dedicated and regularly updated web page for young people
- Young people (e.g., through a Youth Council) co-create municipal communication channels
- The City trains municipal staff to provide reliable information to young people
- The City provides an umbrella structure for youth organizations and youth facilities for communication, networking, cooperation and coordination of youth activities in the city

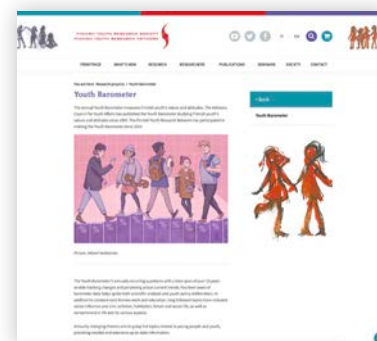


# ANNUAL MASS PULSE CHECK

 Finland

## Youth Barometer

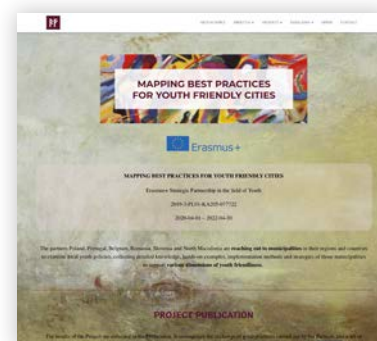
Published since 1994, the annual [Youth Barometer](#) in Finland has been one mechanism through which the government engages young people and keeps track of changes in values, attitudes, behaviours and other trends. The themes explored by the barometer change slightly each year, related, in part, to the hot topics of most relevance to young people aged 15 to 29.



# YOUTH PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

 Valongo, Portugal

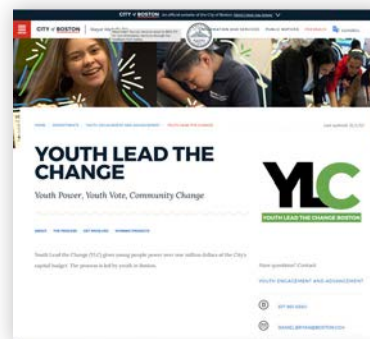
Valongo implemented its first youth [participatory budget](#) in 2014 as part of its broader initiative for a “more informed and more participatory community.” The main aims of the youth participatory budget are to promote positive youth development, deepen the dialogue between youth and the municipality, reinforce the democracy and transparency of municipal decisions, mix generations, and encourage young people to become more active in their communities. Every young person from the age of 6 can vote in the youth participatory budget, with implementation in all public schools, with particular emphasis on promoting the participation on schools located in rural districts. The Youth Participatory Budget has three categories: School, Extracurricular, and Generations (which encourages intergenerational initiatives). Young people submit ideas for projects within these categories, with the number of submissions growing each year and the budget increasing from 10,000 Euros to 200,000 Euros (which funded 20 projects in 2021).



 Boston, Massachusetts, United States

### Youth Lead the Change

[Youth Lead the Change](#) (YLC) started in 2014 as an initiative for youth-led participatory budgeting in the City of Boston. The project goals of YLC are to: increase youth power; allow all voices to be heard; build stronger, safer and healthier communities; strengthen city-wide sense of pride, solidarity and equality; and, create pathways into civic life. Each year, the City of Boston invests one million dollars of the capital budget to YLC and empowers young people to decide how it will be spent in their communities. Youth pitch ideas, develop proposals and vote on three projects to be implemented. Examples of recent winning projects include: Plant trees and plants around the city; Improve the physical space of homeless shelters; Create an accessible youth Wi-Fi lounge in City Hall; Develop a space where people of all ages can come together and create all types of art; Expand Boston’s bike sharing system.



## PARTICIPATION IN THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET

 Swansea, Wales

### City of Swansea Annual Budget Conversation with Children and Youth

Since 2013, the City of Swansea has held an “[Annual Big Budget Conversation](#)” with children and youth. Through this process, young people participate in workshops to explore budget proposals and have taken part in a range of financial decisions related to education services, care services for older people and disabled adults, cultural services, highways and transport services, and future spending. All input is reported back to City Council for consideration and children and youth are provided feedback about how their input has been taken into account.

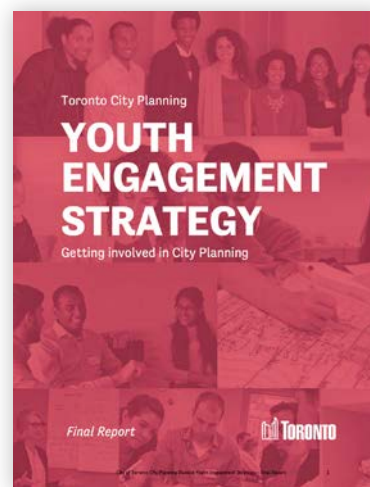


# INTEGRATING URBAN PLANNING INTO SCHOOLS

 Toronto, Ontario

## Planners in Classrooms

Among the Guiding Principles of the City of Toronto's Youth Engagement Strategy are: putting youth in positions of influence, building the capacity of youth, and going to where the youth are. This, combined with the City of Toronto Planning Department's goal to make Toronto the most engaged city in North America, led to the inclusion of [Planners in Classrooms](#), an educational outreach program, as one of the proposed actions in the strategy. The fundamental objective of Planners in Classrooms is to bring city planning out of City Hall and into Toronto schools, with the short-term aim of teaching younger generations about city planning and the long-term aim of mobilizing young people to feel more ownership over their communities and to engage in city planning throughout their lives.



# MEASUREMENT

 Swansea, Wales

## Measuring Young People's Participation in Decision-Making: What Young People Say

Drawing upon research undertaken in Swansea (U.K.) to explore how young people aged 11 to 16 thought their participation in decision making should be measured, the article [Measuring Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) focuses and reflects on the views of young people and the construction of a new participation measurement scale. The young people in Swansea identified three minimum standards for the development of a new scale: Easier to understand language – concise, non-technical, non-patronizing, no jargon; Simple and clean visuals – do not saturate it with graphical representations as it is often childish or irrelevant; Get rid of hierarchy – do not suggest, for example, that autonomous decision making is better than consultation. The young people did not see this as linear but rather as fluid – different modes for different times.

The youth from Swansea's new scale includes:

- I am able to take action or make decisions myself
- I am able to take action or make decisions jointly with other people
- I am able to give my view and it affects actions or decisions that are made
- I am able to give my view but it does not affect action or decisions that are made
- I am unable to give my view or take any action



# EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

 Halifax, Nova Scotia

## Youth WORX Program

[Youth WORX](#) is an employment program for 16 to 24 year olds that provides a supportive work environment that offers 24 weeks with a paid job and life skills building. The program targets young people who are not in school and who are facing barriers to employment. A recent analysis of program participants found that 51% had mental health issues, 48% had a learning disability, 48% did not graduate from high school, 44% lacked job experience, and 2% had a history of addictions. The City of Halifax funds the program but half of the program costs are offset by the fees that the program charges clients for the services provided by the participants. The employment part of the program has involved operating the Youth WORX café in the Sackville Sports Stadium, delivering and repairing green carts on behalf of the municipality, and working at the municipal Enviro Depot paper recycling services. The mentoring part of the program includes working alongside Youth WORX staff who provide guidance and coaching. The youth complete self-assessments throughout the program to monitor their own perceptions of the skills that they are gaining. Results have shown that participants experience an increase in all nine employability skills (e.g., confidence, stress management, time management, teamwork, accountability, adaptability, etc.).



# MECHANISMS FOR EMPLOYMENT

 New Orleans, Louisiana

## Pathways and Summer Success Youth Internship Programs

The Office of Youth and Families in New Orleans has a suite of what they refer to as their [Signature Programs](#). This includes the: Junior Civic Leadership Academy, an 8-week program that provides young people with an in-depth look at city government with hands-on demonstrations; the Mayor for a Day Contest in which the winners are sworn in and shadow the mayor for a day; as well as the Youth Advisory Council that provides feedback to City Council and City departments, organizes an annual youth summit, and leads a collective impact project. Also included in the suite of Signature Programs are two internship programs: Pathways Youth Internship Program, a year-round workforce readiness program that seeks to mitigate child poverty, unemployment and recidivism by providing participants with paid work internships, workshops, case management, and mentoring; as well as Summer Success Internship Program: a 5 week summer program for at-risk and system-involved youth which aims to increase financial stability, employment access, and positive social supports for participants.

 Amsterdam, Netherlands

### DropOuts

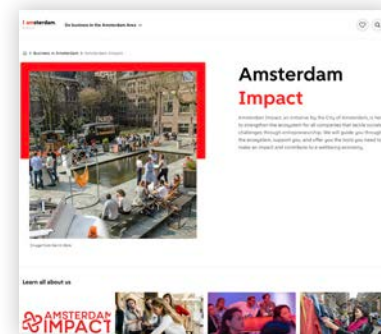
Founded in 2014, DropOuts is a social enterprise advertising agency that only employs young people who have difficulty entering the labour market due to dropping out of school or due to a physical disability. While the agency is focused on young people between the ages of 18 to 30, there may be components of this approach that could inform initiatives for younger age cohorts. DropOuts aims to employ youth for a maximum of three years, after which the company helps them to move on to another employer. New employees are often recruited through cooperation with the City of Amsterdam. Many of DropOuts clients are companies that need to meet the social return investment (5% of revenue) that the City of Amsterdam sets in procurement processes.

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

 Amsterdam, Netherlands

### Amsterdam Impact

[Amsterdam Impact](#) is the City of Amsterdam’s initiative to nurture social entrepreneurship in the city and to transform the whole economy into one that creates both social and financial value. Part of Amsterdam Impact includes integrating impact entrepreneurship into the curriculum at all levels to help build a generation with skills to make a difference. In 2021, Amsterdam Impact developed a six-lesson series on social and sustainable entrepreneurship for 500 children ages 9 to 12. Amsterdam Impact also co-founded 1,260 places in Futureproof, a nation-wide program for 16 to 27 year olds to gain entrepreneurial skills and work experience within impact businesses. In 2022, the City of Amsterdam joined the City Deal Entrepreneurship, a network of 80 organizations to strengthen the Dutch impact entrepreneurship ecosystem to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable and inclusive economy.



# TOOLS, RESOURCES & GUIDES

**Tips for Engagement:** Relationships are Critical for Participation

[https://www.yacwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2643\\_MeasuretheMagic\\_001.pdf](https://www.yacwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2643_MeasuretheMagic_001.pdf)

**Practical Guide** to Including Seldom-Heard Children and Young People in Decision-Making

<https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/24470/1/PracticalGuieSeldomHeardChildren.pdf>

**Child and Youth Participation** – Options for Action

[https://ciudadesamigas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CFCL\\_Child\\_and\\_Youth\\_Participation\\_-\\_Options\\_for\\_Action.pdf](https://ciudadesamigas.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CFCL_Child_and_Youth_Participation_-_Options_for_Action.pdf)

**Knocking on the Door:** Youth Civic Engagement and Its Impact on Social Connectedness and Wellness

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fec97c81c227637fcd788af/t/636c9ec36328e25b234bd5fc/1668062919450/CivicEngagementReport\\_V8.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fec97c81c227637fcd788af/t/636c9ec36328e25b234bd5fc/1668062919450/CivicEngagementReport_V8.pdf)

**Involving Young People in Civic Matters:** Supplementary Guide

<https://www.edmonton.ca/public-files/assets/document?path=PDF/Involving-Young-People-Guide.pdf>

**The Municipal Youth Engagement Handbook**

<https://www.ubcm.ca/sites/default/files/2022-03/LGAW%20FCM%20-%20Municipal%20Youth%20Engagement%20Handbook.pdf>

**Authentic Youth Civic Engagement:** A Guide for Municipal Leaders

[https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/19733-Authentic\\_Youth\\_Civic\\_Engagement.pdf](https://rhyclearinghouse.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/19733-Authentic_Youth_Civic_Engagement.pdf)

**Encouraging Children's Participation in Municipal Services and Projects:** Framework

<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretsocials/sites/default/files/arxiu-documents/encouraging-children-participation-municipal-services-projects.pdf>

**Participatory Budgeting Tool**

<https://pbnetwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Welsh-Govt-PB-toolkit.pdf>

**Block by Block Playbook** – Toolkit that walks through every step of running a community Minecraft Workshop

<https://www.blockbyblock.org/playbook>

**Matrix for Measuring Child Participation**

<https://bibalex.org/baifa/Attachment/Documents/114976.pdf>

**Child Participation Assessment Tool**

<https://participationpool.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Council-of-Europe-2016-Child-Participation-Assessment-Tool.pdf>

**Are We Making a Difference?** Understanding the Leading Practices in Youth Volunteerism and Service

[https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/youthinnovation-report\\_final\\_lr.pdf](https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/youthinnovation-report_final_lr.pdf)



# GUIDES TO ENABLE THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OVERALL GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING

**Can You Hear Me?** The Right of Young Children to Participate in Decisions that Affect Them

<https://bibalex.org/baifa/Attachment/Documents/114976.pdf>

**Child Engagement Toolkit**

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/9093-tcs-child-engagement-toolkit.pdf>

**Involving Children in Decision Making:** Your Quick Guide

<https://childcomm.tas.gov.au/>

**A Guide to the Effective Involvement of Children and Young People Resource Pack**

[https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/guide\\_to\\_involving\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people/Guide%20to%20Involving%20Children%20and%20Young%20People.pdf](https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/guide_to_involving_children_and_young_people/Guide%20to%20Involving%20Children%20and%20Young%20People.pdf)

**Youth Participation in Governance:** Creating Youth Friendly Communities

<https://heartwood.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/YouthGovernance.pdf>



## GUIDES TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN URBAN PLANNING

**A Kid's Guide to Building Great Communities:** A Manual for Planners and Educators

<https://www.cip-icu.ca/Files/Resources/kidsguide.aspx>

**The City at Eye Level for Kids**

[https://thecityateyelevel.com/app/uploads/2019/06/eBook\\_CAEL\\_Kids\\_Book\\_Design\\_Kidsgecomprimeerd.pdf](https://thecityateyelevel.com/app/uploads/2019/06/eBook_CAEL_Kids_Book_Design_Kidsgecomprimeerd.pdf)

**Placemaking with Children and Youth:** Participatory Practices for Planning Sustainable Communities

<https://nyupress.org/9781613321003/placemaking-with-children-and-youth/>

**Co-Designing with Children:** Collecting and Structuring Methods

<https://www.designsociety.org/publication/38546/Co-Designing+with+children%3A+Collecting+and+structuring+methods>

**Designing Cities with Children and Young People:** Beyond Playgrounds and Skate Parks

<https://www.routledge.com/Designing-Cities-with-Children-and-Young-People-Beyond-Playgrounds-and/Bishop-Corkery/p/book/9781138890824#>

## RESEARCH

**Child Led Participation:** A Scoping Review of Empirical Studies

<https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/4921/4921>



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