

Overview of Youth Participation

(Adapted from AED/Center for Youth Development Policy Research)

Forms of Youth Participation

Choosing	Young people can choose which activities they wish to participate in and how they wish to participate
Decision-Making	Young people can meet on a regular basis to discuss and modify existing program rules and regulations
Planning	Young people can meet regularly to plan future programs or community activities
Assessing	Young people can “map” their communities or engage in program evaluation activities
Communicating	Young people can regularly present the program to outsiders: tours, talks to community audiences, presentations to funders
Implementing	Young people can lead program activities, such as, present workshops, lead field trips, or hire youth and/or adult staff.

Benefits to Youth

- Promotes a rich cultural diversity within the program.
- Promotes choice and opportunity towards achievement of participants’ full potential.
- Ensures that programs have relevance and flexibility to all young people.
- Increases the likelihood that all forms of discrimination are challenged and unacceptable, and a sense of membership is promoted.
- Encourages young people to stay in the program. Program retention rates increase.

Benefits to Youth Workers

- Youth participation keeps adults engaged, and thus makes job more satisfying.
- Youth are more likely to respect youth workers, hence meeting their own psychological needs.
- Youth workers are more likely to be successful when they utilize strategies of youth participation.

Benefits to the Community

- Encourages civic involvement by engaging youth more intentionally and deeply within their community and their programs’ community.
- Promotes youth as vital and contributing members of their communities.
- Increases opportunities for community members and vendors to engage with youth.