

THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ***BASELINE TOOL***

Start Smart: Assess Your Youth Engagement Approach.



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Executive Summary

The first step in building a youth engagement strategy is to reflect on how your organization currently engages with young people.

The Youth Engagement Baseline Tool helps your organization assess its internal and external practices through a youth lens, identify challenges or barriers, and take the first step toward building a youth engagement strategy. This assessment tool provides your non-profit team with a framework for brainstorming and envisioning effective youth engagement in your community.

Below, you will find a series of questions created to guide you and your team as you begin to develop the initial stages of developing a youth engagement strategy. This process starts with assessing both your internal and external practices through a youth lens.

By the end of this assessment, you will have a clear understanding of how your organization prioritizes youth engagement and which areas you are willing to invest more resources into.

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Why You Need This Tool

To effectively engage young people moving forward, it's essential to begin with a comprehensive review of how your organization has involved youth in the past. Evaluating your previous youth engagement efforts will help your team identify areas for improvement and reflect on potential solutions that may or may not have already been implemented.

With this evaluation, your organization can strategically plan a new approach that incorporates lessons learned from the past and modifies or applies existing solutions to address any challenges encountered in engaging youth.

How To Use This Tool

Below, you will find three groups of questions designed to guide your discussion on how your organization engages with youth.

The questions are divided into three main sections: evaluating your internal practices, examining your external practices, and concluding with a series of reflection questions that will help you round out your discussion.

These questions should be addressed in a team setting. If you have youth among your staff or as volunteers, I strongly encourage you to include them in these conversations.

Take your time to carefully consider each question and explore all the different answers that may arise. The goal of this part of your youth engagement strategy is to gather as many opinions, reflections, and pieces of feedback as possible.

The result should be a better understanding of your organization's engagement with young people and what potential changes could look like moving forward.

Please keep in mind that this exercise is not intended to create a detailed plan for the next steps. Instead, its purpose is to gather enough information to help you develop a youth engagement strategy that is tailored to your organization's capacity and resources while addressing the identified gaps.



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Internal Assessment

Examine how your organization operates and interacts with youth. This section is designed to evaluate your internal operations through a youth engagement lens.

1) Does your organization employ young people between 18 and 30?

- If yes, are they actively involved in decision-making discussions that impact the organization or the community? How so? Can it be expanded upon?
- If not, has your organization made efforts to recruit young people? What changes could be made to focus on recruiting youth better?

2) Do you believe that the opinions of youth in your community—staff, volunteers, members, and clients—are valued, listened to, and respected?

- If yes, in what ways do youth participate? What existing processes help facilitate their involvement? How can these be improved or expanded upon?
- If no, what changes are needed for your organization to implement processes that ensure youth feel valued, listened to, and respected?

Internal Assessment

3) Which programs, projects, initiatives, or teams could benefit from youth engagement? How would they help?

4) If your organization were to create a youth space dedicated to receiving and implementing feedback from young people, what would it look like? Carefully consider the resources and capacity your organization is willing to invest in this initiative and envision what it could look like.

External Assessment

Assess how your organization engages with youth externally. You may include youth volunteers in this assessment or in the internal practices section.

- 1) Has your organization previously recruited youth volunteers? Have you ever implemented targeted recruitment efforts to engage young people?
- If yes, were these efforts successful? Reflect on what worked and what didn't.
 - If no, what challenges or barriers are preventing your team from recruiting young volunteers? What steps can be taken to overcome these obstacles?

- 2) Does your organization have established relationships with youth-serving organizations in your community or focus area?

- If yes, is your organization actively engaging with these youth-serving communities to identify shared needs, issues, or ideas?
- If no, which organizations do you know of that your organization could start building a relationship with?

External Assessment

3) Does your organization's mission directly impact youth? Would you be open to engaging youth even if they aren't directly receiving your services? What would that look like?

4) How do young people perceive your organization? Is it viewed negatively, positively, or with apathy? If you're unhappy with their perception, what steps can you take to change it?

Concluding Reflection

To round out the reflection, assess the outcomes of your discussion and identify any barriers, challenges, or gaps that were mentioned.

1) Evaluate your organization's ability to engage youth and discuss realistic actions to start bridging the gap with them. What would the first step be?

2) What gaps or challenges does your organization face in effectively engaging youth?

3) Do you foresee any barriers that may hinder your ability to engage youth?

Youth Consultant

Hi, my name is Sarah!

I work with non-profit organizations to help them build their youth engagement strategies and walk them through every step of the process.

I fundamentally care about youth. I care about their futures, and I care about your organization. Without young people engaged in your community, the consequences you'll face will be detrimental. You need youth to support your organization today and tomorrow.



The key to your organization's success isn't complicated – all you need is the youth.

That's where I come in!

I work to bridge the gap between youth and community organizations just like yours to help you solve your most pressing problems and overcome issues so that you can work on building a resilient, strong and hopeful community.

If you're interested in learning more about how we can work together, I'd love to learn more about your ideas on youth engagement and how I can support them. [Reach out here](#) or learn more by taking a look at the [services I offer](#).

If you are wondering what to do next, I highly recommend you consult [The Youth Engagement Blueprint](#), which outlines the next steps after you have assessed your youth engagement approach.

Thanks for reading! As always, share your thoughts, comments and youth engagement experiences with me, I'd love to hear them!