



Mini Guide

Youth Advisory Groups

What is a Youth Advisory Group?

A Youth Advisory Group is a mechanism for participation that enables health researchers to work with a smaller group of young people (up to 15 people) from the intended target audience for their research. Through this mechanism, young people can help inform and shape the research to meet the needs of other young people who will be engaged in the research project.

We think of a Youth Advisory Group as an 'inner circle' of young people, who can help co-produce health research with the research team. Ideally, you form a Youth Advisory Group at the outset of your research, to guide your youth engagement throughout. Importantly, a Youth Advisory Group does not have to be a highly formalised method of gathering young people.

You may also want to consider whether forming a Youth Advisory Group is the best approach for the phase and/or project. If you and your team are operating with very constrained resources and capacity, you may instead want to reach out to other organisations who already have Youth Advisory Groups (or similar mechanisms for youth engagement) to see if you can seek advice from young people at key points in the project cycle.

Sometimes it can be better to engage with young people in spaces where they are already well-supported and comfortable, through working in partnership with more specialised organisations who have established relationships with young people. If you choose to go down this path, it is still important to make sure you remunerate young people for their time, and report back to them on the outcomes of their engagement.



Why do it?

Youth Advisory Groups have been shown to make important, positive contributions to research projects (Sellars et al. 2021). It is an effective way to get feedback from a smaller group of young people throughout the research process to ensure your research is fit for purpose for the target group of young people who may benefit from your research.

As with all aspects of how you are engaging with young people, you will need to consider questions of sharing power in setting the agenda, making decisions and measuring success.

A gateway to other methods of engagement

The key thing to consider when including a Youth Advisory Group in your research project is that it should be thought of as an inner circle but not the only circle you get feedback from during your research project.

PREPARE

Important considerations

Take note of the considerations below in order to ensure the success of your youth advisory group.

- Purpose and remit: YAGs should contribute meaningfully to the decision-making processes that define and guide a project or organisation.
- Representation and diversity: Which young people will your research need to engage? The answer to this question is a useful starting point for determining who needs to be represented.
- Recruiting through youth networks: Recruiting at least some of the young people through organisations who engage young people can be one way of having a smaller group that is connected to a wider youth network.
- Set the scene: Working with young people and the research team to establish expectations and build trust and rapport. This is key to good experience all round. Have a Terms of Reference for your Youth Advisory Group to communicate expectations.



- Staff support: Ensure there is at least one staff member who can be a trusted point of contact with capacity for timely communications and some to support the team to do good practice youth engagement.
- Value young people's contribution: ensuring that young people

CONNECT

Tools for effectively developing and facilitating a Youth Advisory Group

As part of the suite of resources WH&Y has developed to help you engage young people in health research, there are some simple tools and templates which can help you to effectively prepare, recruit for and facilitate a Youth Advisory Group:

- Recruitment
- Terms of Reference
- Remuneration
- Induction
- Capacity-building
- Sustaining engagement
- Package of thanks

REFLECT

Reporting and evaluation of Youth Advisory Groups

If you have used YAGs we propose several measures and methods to report on and measure impact of youth involvement in your final research publication.

A recent review of Youth Advisory Groups in health research (Sellars et al. 2021) proposed greater reporting on the following:

- Demographic fit between intended cohort for the research and those who are represented in the Youth Advisory Group.
- Level and nature of involvement of young people
- Format and frequency of meetings

Further resources:

- NSW Advocate for Children & Young People Guide to setting up a Youth Advisory Group