

Inclusive and meaningful youth participation is fundamental to the design and delivery of services that meet young people's needs.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child holds that young people have the right to have a say in all matters that affect them. In Queensland, the *Human Rights Act 2019* also guarantees the right of every person to take part in public life without discrimination.

The Queensland Family and Child Commission model of participation refers to children and young people as 'young people' or 'youth', as it's intended for use as best practice when working with both children and young people (younger and older than 18 years of age).

Youth participation is about genuinely connecting with young people, supporting them to share their views, amplifying what they've told us and making sure their views influence decision-making.

## The Queensland Family and Child Commission Model of Participation

The QFCC model of participation combines **two approaches** and **four key elements**:

**1. Engagement** with young people involves proactively seeking opportunities to **connect** with them and providing appropriate **support** to help them to express their views in meaningful ways.

**2. Advocacy** for the views of young people involves taking steps to **amplify** what they say and ensuring their views **influence** decision-making.

The QFCC model of participation draws together concepts from the UNCRC, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, Hart's Ladder of Participation and the Lundy model of child participation.



Embedding meaningful youth participation within an organisation can take time and practice. The following questions have been designed to guide organisations to **connect** with young people, **support** them to share their views, **amplify** what they say and make sure their views **influence** decision-making.

Further information on each of these elements can be found in the *Queensland Family and Child Commission Model of Participation*.



## Connect

**Connect** is about creating opportunities to hear the views of young people in a way that works for them. It involves being proactive, adaptable and creating an approach that is safe and suited to the young people you want to hear from.

- Why do I want to involve young people and what do I want to achieve?
- What are the legal and ethical considerations? Is a formal ethics approval needed?
- What aspects of my work can young people realistically influence? How will I communicate this to them before they take part?
- How will I attract and involve the young people most impacted, keeping in mind the topic, their age and other characteristics?
- How will I listen to and action the views of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other under-represented demographics?
- Are there any cultural protocols relevant to the participants? How will I adhere to them?



## Support

**Support** is about putting processes and mechanisms in place to ensure young people feel welcome, safe and confident to fully express their views. It involves offering a tailored approach that meets the needs of the young people who are participating.

- How will young people be involved in planning and delivering the youth participation?
- What are the risks for young people and for the organisation and what mitigation strategies can I put in place?
- How will I maintain participants' confidentiality, ensure duty of care and respond to disclosures?
- What age-appropriate support services will I recommend to young people?
- How will I ensure young people are empowered and are heard among adults?
- What interactive activities are best suited to the participants, keeping in mind the topic, their age and other characteristics?
- How can I give back to young people (in an age-appropriate way) to let them know their time and expertise is valued?
- How will I support the development and growth of young people throughout their participation?



## Amplify

**Amplify** is about promoting the views of young people in an accurate way. It involves understanding why and how young people want to share their views and making sure it is done in respectful, safe and culturally appropriate ways.

- How do the participants want to have their views heard and where would they like to publish or share them?
- How will I get explicit consent to share the views of young people?
- How will I ensure the safety of young people when sharing their views?
- How will I share the views of young people in respectful and culturally appropriate ways?
- How will I ensure an adult lens does not change the meaning of young people's contributions?
- When will young people have the final view and edit of information being shared?
- How will I share my experiences and learnings with others and encourage others to engage young people in their work?



## Influence

**Influence** is about meaningfully incorporating the views expressed by young people into decision making processes. This involves taking young people's views seriously and providing transparent feedback on what action has been taken and why.

- What opportunity will young people have to give feedback about the participation opportunity?
- What have I learned from this process? How can I improve the next youth participation activity?
- What action will be taken as a direct result of young people's participation?
- How will I ensure the views of all young people who participated are valued and considered, including challenging or dissenting feedback?
- How will I follow up with participants, provide feedback and inform them of the next steps and actions taken?
- How will I connect young people with other decision-makers?
- How will I support young people to stay involved with my organisation?
- How will I embed youth participation in my work and in other areas of my organisation?

## Next steps

Take steps to embed youth participation in your organisation's processes and continue to foster productive working relationships with young people. By widely promoting the benefits of youth participation, you can play a vital role in changing the discourse about young people and the positive impact they can have.

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Art. 12; Human Rights Act 2019 (QLD) S23(1)