



MINISTRY OF  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI  
Administered by the Ministry of Social Development

**YOUTH  
PARTICIPATION**

# **BENEFITS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION**

**NEARLY  
ONE IN FIVE  
NEW ZEALANDERS  
ARE AGED 12 TO 24.**

**Their thoughts, experiences,  
opinions and ideas add an  
important and vibrant quality  
to policy advice for government.**

Youth participation and input in government decision-making is vital for a number of reasons:

## **YOUTH PARTICIPATION SUPPORTS BETTER DECISIONS**

Government policies have a significant impact on young people and their lives. Policies that affect the whole community and specifically impact on young people's lives benefit from youth participation. Young people are valuable members of the community and have a wide range of experiences, viewpoints and ideas to contribute alongside other citizens.

Good policy needs to be informed by the viewpoints of those the policy intends to benefit. By including youth participation in public decision-making processes, research shows there can be a marked improvement in the quality of programmes and services received by young people.

## **YOUTH PARTICIPATION INVOLVES THOSE WHO CANNOT VOTE**

Young people under 18 years of age do not have the opportunity to influence the formation of government through voting in general or local body elections. Providing alternative means of contributing to government decision-making and ensuring good communication channels are critical in providing those under 18 with a voice to government.

Youth participation is about creating opportunities for young people to influence, solve problems, inform, shape, design and contribute to an activity or idea. These opportunities are created through developing a range of formal and informal mechanisms for youth participation from:

- youth advisory groups to focus groups
- ongoing consultation work to supporting youth-led projects.

## **YOUTH PARTICIPATION IMPROVES OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**

Healthy youth development occurs when young people have the opportunities and support to contribute to New Zealand society in a way that is valued and respected. Having access to effective youth participation is a vital factor in cultivating young people's wellbeing, and their sense of belonging and identity.

Giving young people a place in decision-making processes builds a broader base of citizen involvement and creates stronger, more inclusive communities. Both young people and communities benefit when young people are active partners in projects that aim to build community wellbeing.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

# THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Before involving young people in any decision-making, there are a number of steps that will help to ensure good youth participation practice. The following principles<sup>1</sup> are tools to support you in involving young people meaningfully and effectively in decision-making.

## STEP ONE:

### GET ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

- Support staff doing youth participation.
- Allocate adequate resources.
- Offer real roles and relevant issues to young people.
- Value young people's contributions.
- Involve young people from the beginning to the end of the process.

## STEP TWO:

### CREATE SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT

- Acknowledge young people's cultural beliefs and values.
- Invite a diverse range of young people to participate.
- Ensure participation opportunities are accessible.
- Inform young people about opportunities and that they are under no obligation to participate.
- Recognise participation is beneficial to young people.

## STEP THREE:

### CREATE A YOUTH-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

- Build positive relationships between your organisation and young people.
- Develop a sense of belonging and security for young people.
- Create youth participation that is fun and challenging.
- Provide young people with information about the issue and the decision-making process.
- Provide young people with timely feedback about the decision-making process and how their input was used.

<sup>1</sup> Based on principles developed by the National Children's and Youth Law Centre (1995), *Promoting Youth Participation: A Rights Perspective*, University of New South Wales, Australia and the International Save the Children Alliance Ltd (2005), and *Practice Standards in Children's Participation*, London: United Kingdom with additional principles added by the Ministry of Youth Development, Wellington, New Zealand.

# PARTICIPATION

A key role of the Ministry of Youth Development is to ensure that a diverse representation of young people's opinions, experiences and interests are made available to government to support the best possible decision-making. We offer a broad range of youth participation channels that provide different types and levels of involvement and help ensure a diverse range of young people's views are heard.

The Ministry of Youth Development works with government departments to improve youth participation in their work by:

- increasing young people's involvement in broader community consultations
- doing 'youth-specific' consultations on national and other significant policy matters
- advising how to engage young people in broad consultation processes including reviews

- improving young people's access to submission processes for Bills and other items before Select Committees.

The Ministry of Youth Development provides a range of support to improve youth input in government decision-making including:

- comprehensive youth participation advice on policy and programme matters

- expertise in facilitating face-to-face youth participation methods
- direct access to young people from a range of backgrounds
- strong links to local and national youth organisations
- web-based tools for undertaking youth consultation
- practical guides about doing youth participation in decision-making.

For more information and advice about youth participation – contact the Ministry of Youth Development.

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