Meaningful Youth Engagement

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Agenda

1. The fundamentals of creating meaningful youth engagement
2. Frameworks and principles for youth engagement
3. Creating an enabling environment
4. Safeguarding considerations

What is Youth Engagement?

Youth Engagement: is the result when young people are involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive social change. Youth Engagement and domestic programs are not mutually exclusive. Domestic programs can be designed to engage youth to drive positive social change and/or designed for youth to experience a personal positive change within themselves with indirect benefit of impacting the broader community.

Source: http://actforyouth.net/youth_development/engagement/

The significance of youth engagement

1 **Central principle of youth development:** According to the ecological perspective of human development, young people are agents of their own development.

2 **Better equipped communities and leaders:** organizations can enhance the design of services, opportunities and supports that young people need to develop in healthy ways.

3 **It's their right:** from a political point of view and rights-based approach, youth deserve the right to represent their own interests.

4 **Promotes civic engagement:** it prepares young people to be active citizens in a democracy.

Source: http://actforyouth.net/youth_development/engagement/

The fundamentals of meaningful engagement
Theory to practice

- Be inclusive by recognizing differences

- Strengths-based program design

- Be mindful of power and privilege and the dynamic it creates

- Ensure content is relevant
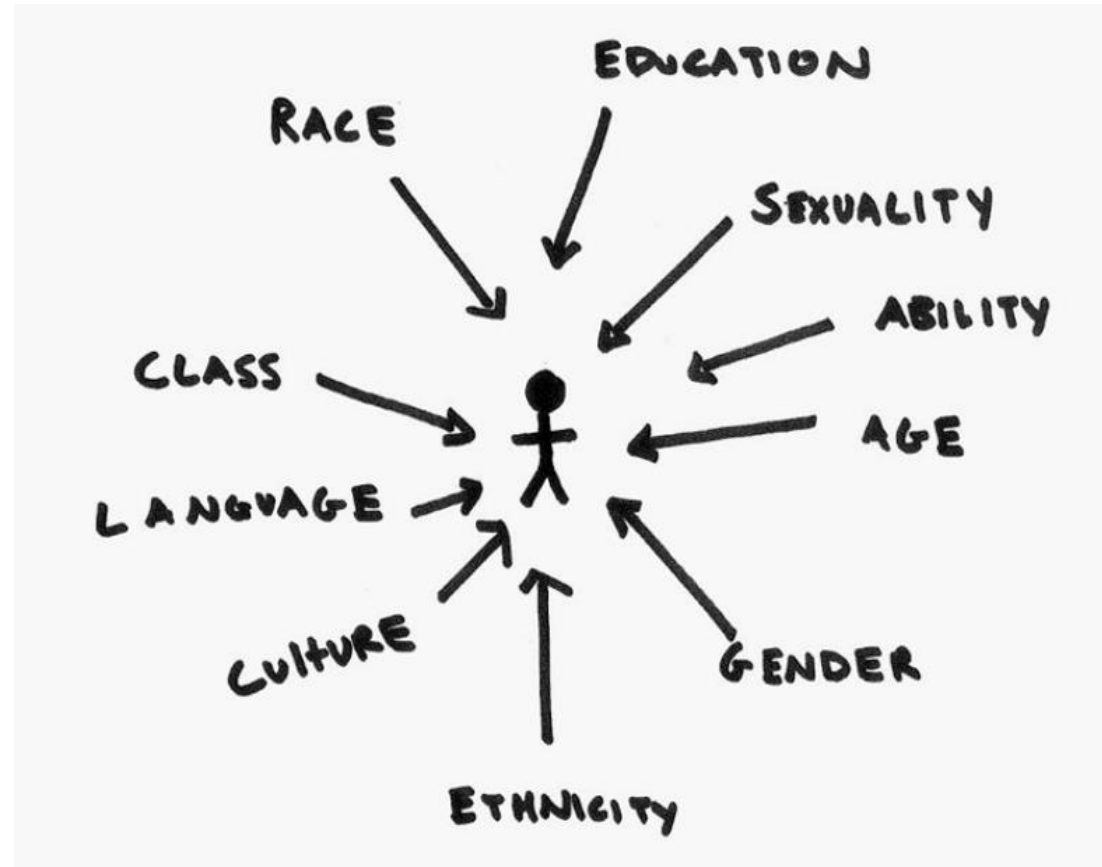
The fundamentals of meaningful engagement
Theory to practice continued

- Provide clarity of purpose

- Avoid generalizing about youth

- Reduce barriers for participation

- Mechanisms to gauge progress

- Celebrate and recognize accomplishments

Framework and principles of meaningful engagement
Gerard De Kort's Grid of Engagement

Organisational Areas	Non-participation	Passive involvement	Influence	Partnership	Self-mobilisation
Analysing needs and setting objectives	Adults design and execute the project and might inform young people as the target group	Young people are consulted in the early stages but ignored later	Young people are consulted and involved in the execution of the project, but the objectives are set by adults	Young people are consulted, define the objectives of the project and execute it together with adults	Young people plan and execute the project and can choose how to involve adults
Information and communication	Young people are not informed or consulted	Information is easily accessible and youth-friendly (one-way information)	Regular consultative meetings are organised (two-way information)	Meaningful exchanges occur between young people and adults (collaboration)	Young people inform each other and possibly adults
Decision-making	Young people are not consulted	Young people are consulted but not taken seriously	The views of youth are listened to and acted upon on a regular basis	Shared decision-making and action occurs and feedback from young people is sought	Young people have power over the allocation of resources and the direction of the project, but can seek the assistance of adults

Gerard De Kort's Grid of Engagement ^{continued}

Organisational Areas	Non-participation	Passive involvement	Influence	Partnership	Self-mobilisation
Administration	No young administrators	Young people occasionally help by doing menial tasks on a volunteer basis	Young people are structurally involved in administrative activities ranging from book-keeping and typing to conducting research and collecting data	Young people play an integral part in the day-to-day running of the project	Administration is effectively controlled by young people, possible aided by adults
Design and implementation of activities	Designed and run by adults	Young people are consulted in the design	Young people partly design and run some of the activities	Young people design and run activities in cooperation with adults	Young people design and run all activities, possibly aided by adults
Advocacy	No involvement of young people	Young people present at public campaigns, but are not involved as organisers	Young people are encouraged to provide input on running a campaign	Young people take a significant role in forming organisations or unions or participating in public rallies and campaign or contributing to policy papers and public debates	Young people handle advocacy issues, possibly aided by adults

Gerard DeKort's Grid of Engagement continued

Organisational Areas	Non-participation	Passive involvement	Influence	Partnership	Self-mobilisation
Service, support and education personnel	Support is provided only by adults	Young people are consulted on support-, service-and-education-related issues	Young people are occasionally consulted or made counsellors or educators of other young people	Young people from the target group are trained to become counsellors or educators of other young people and work alongside adult counsellors or educators	Young people are the only counsellors or educators available to the target group, possibly trained or assisted by adults
Employees	No young employees	Young people are employed in jobs not related to project objectives	Some young people are employed as experts in a peer-related project	Young people are employed as experts and may be managers	The project is effectively managed by young professionals
Monitoring and evaluation	Undertaken by adults only	Young people are involved in M&E	Young people are involved in M&E and its outcomes	Young people design M&E tools and work with adults	Young people initiate, design, execute and report on projects, possibly aided by adult experts

Creating an enabling environment
Promoting agency and decision-making

- Create space for youth to lead

- Create a safe space for youth to try, fail and succeed

- Actively learn from all youth and observe behaviors

- Accountability and transparency

- Prepare youth

- Show up

- Adequate resourcing

- Track retention

- Create growth opportunities

Safeguarding considerations: planning stage

- Do no harm

- Mindset: "safe from" → "safe to"

- Conduct a robust risk assessment (intersectional)

- Integrate strategies and plans for addressing risks

- Include safeguard considerations into the budget

- Community mapping: assessment of external protection and support services and resources

Safeguarding considerations: implementation

- Normalizing reaching out for support

- Public engagement safeguards

- Understand the informal and formal rules and patterns of violence within each community

- Build safeguarding indicators into your program design to monitor and evaluate

- Ensure facilitators and staff have received safeguarding training