

Participation:
All aBoard!

Young people on boards and committees



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About this guide

INTRODUCTION

Participation is more than just giving children and young people a say. It's about listening to their views, taking them seriously and following through on their ideas and suggestions wherever practical.

Children and young people have lots of enthusiasm and great ideas to share and organisations can benefit greatly from children and young people's participation. Children and young people can also benefit and learn new skills from participating in organisations.

There are many ways that children and young people can participate in the decision-making processes of organisations. One way is for children and young people to be part of a board or committee. This might be a committee made up only of children and young people or a board or management committee with a mix of adults, children and young people.

All aBoard! will help organisations to get children and young people involved on boards and committees so that everyone benefits.

TAKING PARTicipation seriously kit

This guide, *All aBoard!*, was developed as part of the Commission's *TAKING PARTicipation seriously* kit.

Being part of a board or committee is not for all children and young people. Like some adults, some children and young people would rather get involved in forums, surveys or other activities than be part of a committee that meets regularly.

There are lots of other practical ideas and tips for children and young people's participation in the Commission's *TAKING PARTicipation seriously* kit.

The kit contains a series of booklets and information sheets that give information about children and young people's participation, as well as practical ideas that people can apply in their organisations or workplaces to make space for kids' participation.



TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously includes the following components:

- **Sharing the stage** – an overview
- **Conferences and events**
- **Involving kids in staff selection**
- **Meeting together – deciding together:** involving kids in case-planning
- **Count Me In!** – involving children and young people in research
- **Checking the Scoreboard** – helping groups and organisations check how well they're involving kids
- **All aBoard!** – children and young people on boards and committees
- **Participation** – references, models and resources

You can find these resources at www.kids.nsw.gov.au/publications/taking.html or by telephoning 61 (02) 9286 7276.

Key elements of participation

The information in this guide is based on the five key elements of effective participation, which you can find out more about in *Sharing the Stage*:

1. Kids' participation is part of an organisation's culture
2. Kids have a place in decision-making
3. Adults adapt to kids' way of working
4. Adults cultivate strong relationships with kids
5. Participation rewards kids and organisations.

Thank you!

This guide was written following consultations with children, young people and adults in organisations across NSW. The NSW Commission for Children and Young People would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who contributed to the development of the guide – turn to page 30 for a full list.

Getting started

WHY PARTICIPATION IS GOOD FOR KIDS, ADULTS AND YOUR ORGANISATION

Participation is important for children and young people because it gives them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them, learn new skills, have fun and develop a closer connection to their community. In addition, programs and services created for kids better reflect their needs.

"I knew about the organisation and the good work it was doing for young people and wanted to be part of that."

Rey, 20 years

Organisations can provide a better service by listening and responding to their stakeholders. Having children and young people on a committee gives organisations an easy way to consult with kids and seek their input on a range of issues. Children and young people on the committee also provide a valuable link to other kids in the community.

What are the benefits of kids being on committees?

A US study done in 2000 by the University of Wisconsin-Madison interviewed children, young people and adults from over 30 organisations to find out their experiences of kids being involved in committees. They found that:

- Adults experience kids' abilities first-hand and begin to appreciate their contribution – this can combat the negative stereotypes some adults have of children and young people.
- The commitment and energy of adults to the organisation is improved.
- Adults and the organisation experience a stronger sense of connection to their community through the involvement of children and young people.
- Children and young people help to clarify the organisation's mission for everyone involved.
- Organisations may become more appealing to potential funding bodies.

Why get kids involved in a committee?

There are lots of good reasons for children and young people's participation in the decision-making processes of organisations.

However, before getting kids involved on a board or committee, organisations should consider whether this is the best way for the organisation to involve children and young people.

It may be that children and young people want to form a committee – which is a great starting point!

Or it could be that there are issues the organisation wants to get children and young people's input on directly and on a regular basis. A committee is a good way of doing this.

Why the organisation is setting up a committee will influence how the committee is formed and who is involved.

If the organisation has an existing adult board or committee, the types of issues the committee deals with should be considered to see whether children and young people will be able to participate in these issues.

It's useful to remember that while children and young people may be experts on issues affecting kids, they also often have many views – as most people do – on other issues that affect them in their local areas or everyday lives. Being on a committee can also give children and young people an opportunity to learn more about issues that affect them.

It is important to have the resources to support children and young people's participation. Helping kids participate will require an extra commitment – whether in staff time or funding. The organisation may need to allow extra time for projects and slow down a little to allow the committee to form and children and young people to feel comfortable participating.

Involve kids from the beginning

In setting up a committee of children and young people only, it is a good idea to involve kids from the beginning.

It may be useful to get an advisory committee together – which includes kids – to set up the new committee. This will help to make sure that the committee better meets the needs of children and young people.

Participation is for all kids

Organisations often have difficulty defining who children and young people are representing on the committee – do they represent a specific group of kids, all kids in the area, or just themselves?

It is important to recognise that no child or young person can bring the full range of kids' views and experiences to a committee, just like no adult can.

Organisations should make an effort to involve a diverse group of children and young people. Other organisations can help to identify and support a range of children and young people to participate.

For example:

A youth service wanted young people with a disability to participate in their youth committee. A local youth disability service referred two young people to their youth committee and provided a worker to support the young people during the meetings.

If children and young people are there to represent a specific group – such as a school – organisations should provide support to allow them to access and connect with that group. For example, a young person may need support from their school to organise meetings during school time or use school facilities, such as a photocopier to copy surveys.


The role of kids on the committee

Organisations should be open and honest to children and young people about their role on the committee. Are they there as advisors or decision-makers?

It is important to be up front about what is expected so that kids can make an informed choice about whether they want to participate in the committee.

Include children and young people's role on the committee in the constitution, terms of reference or committee guidelines. This makes it clear for everyone – children, young people and adults.

Give children and young people opportunities to be involved in work that is relevant to the purpose of the committee. However, don't assign them with meaningless roles just to give them "something to do".



Children and young people will gain more from their participation if their role matches their interests and they are supported. For many kids an important part of being on a committee is about learning new skills. For example, a young person who is studying business at school or accounting at TAFE may be interested in being the committee's Treasurer and working alongside the organisation's Administrator.

What the committee looks like

There are many different structures that boards and committees can take and no one model is right or wrong. Organisations should seek the views of children and young people about what they think the committee – and kids' participation in the committee – should look like.

If it is an adult committee and children and young people are being asked to participate, consider having at least two kids on the committee so they can support each other.

Some examples of different committee structures include:

- *An advisory group of children and young people to the organisation's board. The advisory group includes two board members (either adults or children and young people) who discuss issues with the group on behalf of the board and report back to the board. The group gives input on particular issues and takes on projects that it recommends to the board.*
- *One youth organisation that holds regular entertainment events for young people has an entertainment committee that discusses proposals for events, assists with advertising and provides advice on dates, local support acts and artists they'd like to see. They also help out at events.*
- *As well as children and young people, ask local youth workers or teachers to join the committee.*

"Having youth workers on the committee means you get lots of support."

Jaye, 15 years

some facts...

Can kids under the age of 18 years be committee members?

A child or young person under the age of 18 years cannot be appointed as a director of a company (a "director" is anyone who is officially appointed to an organisation's board and has legal obligations in this role).

However, a child or young person can participate in a company board as an advisor or be appointed as a member of the board or management committee of an incorporated association.

What does the law say?

Companies

Under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Commonwealth) a person under 18 years cannot be appointed as a director of a company. Note that a person is considered a director regardless of the title they are given (they may be called an "officer" of the board) where they are performing duties that a director would. However, children and young people can still participate in a company board as advisors rather than decision makers.

Incorporated Associations

In NSW the *Associations Incorporation Act 1984* (NSW) allows non profit groups to become legal entities through incorporation and regulates incorporated associations. As the Act does not set a minimum age requirement for members of a board or management committee of an incorporated association, children and young people may participate at any age. However, children and young people under 18 years cannot be appointed as a "public officer" of an incorporated association – this is the official contact person for the association who lodges forms on the association's behalf.

Co-operatives

Under the *Co-operatives Act 1992* (NSW) children and young people under 18 years can be members of co-operatives. However, they are not entitled to vote or be appointed to "office" – this includes as secretary, director or in any other management positions of the co-operative board.

Legal duties

Children and young people under 18 years have the same legal duties as members of a management committee who are over the age of 18 years. All members have a duty to act honestly, with care, in good faith for the benefit of the organisation and with diligence and skill that a reasonable person would. Members of a committee, including children and young people under 18 years, can be held liable for the consequences of any breach of their duty.

It is important that decisions and obligations are explained to children and young people in a clear and easily understandable way. Participating on a committee will be a new experience for many children and young people and organisations should be prepared to spend time explaining these obligations if needed.

Contracts

Children and young people under 18 years may have limited rights and obligations in relation to contracts signed on behalf of the organisation, such as leases or funding agreements. Under the *Minors (Property & Contracts) Act 1970* (NSW) children and young people under 18 years are only bound by contracts, leases, etc, which are for their benefit and where they understand what they are agreeing to. Organisations may wish to seek legal advice before deciding whether or not children and young people under the age of 18 years will sign documents on behalf of the organisation.

Recruiting kids to the committee

An application process can help organisations choose children and young people who are right for their committee. It's important to have clear selection criteria so that any children and young people who are not successful in their application to be part of the committee understand why.

To get a broad range of children and young people involved, it is important that the committee is promoted to a range of kids who have the opportunity to apply.

Consider promoting the opportunity by working with schools and other organisations that work with kids. Make sure workers, teachers and others in the community know about the role of the committee. If they are going to be encouraging kids to join the committee, they need to know what it's all about.

Advertisements and information packages for the committee should include all the information children and young people need to know, including the skills kids may need, age range, if they will be paid, how members will be chosen and meeting obligations.

Also remember that there are many children and young people who have limited literacy skills. Consider alternative ways to get the message across about the committee and allow kids to speak about their application to a worker, rather than having to do a written application.

Here are some ideas for reaching a broad range of children and young people:

- *Ask children and young people who are current or former members of the committee to help promote it. That way children and young people can hear from other kids about what the committee is really like.*
- *Have a stall or table at events, such as Youth Week festivals, where committee members can provide information on the committee and encourage kids to join.*
- *Put an advertisement in the local newspaper about the committee. Include a logo or photo that stands out to attract more readers. Or, contact the newspaper and ask if they will write an article about the committee.*
- *Find out from the local community radio station if they have a program for young people and ask if they will make an announcement or interview existing committee members.*
- *Hold an information night about the committee for children, young people and their families. Combine it with a consultation on local issues and provide food and drinks.*
- *Hold a forum or other event for children and young people and ask kids attending to join the committee. This gives them an opportunity to see what the committee does and what they could be a part of.*

- *Have information on the committee available in languages other than English. This is useful for children and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as their families.*

For example:

One local Council we spoke with was building a skate park and wanted young people on the development committee. The youth worker visited local skate shops, where they put up notices about the committee and talked to the shop assistants. They were able to find young people who skated and regularly visited the skate shop to be part of the committee.

One of the best ways to find the right children and young people for your committee is by asking them to fill in an application form. An example of a kid friendly application form is at page 21 of this guide.

If there are a lot of applications to choose from, ask some children and young people who have not applied to help with the selection. Make sure the children and young people who are unsuccessful are told in a supportive way and, where possible, offer them other opportunities to be involved in your organisation.

Before the first meeting

Set some time aside before the committee begins its work for an induction session. This will help children and young people understand what the organisation and committee is all about.

For many children and young people this may be their first time on a committee. It can take time for them to feel comfortable participating in a committee, so allow time for them to get to know each other and build trust.

It is a good idea to invite parents, guardians and friends to all or part of the induction session. This provides an opportunity for family members to get to know the organisation and workers, as well as what children and young people will be doing on the committee.

An example of an induction program is included on page 23 of this guide.

To make the induction session fun refer to *TAKING PARTicipation seriously – Conferences and events* for examples of activities to use.

Keeping it going

SUPPORTING KIDS

Developing a good relationship with children and young people on the committee is really important. Children and young people will be more likely to participate if they feel supported and comfortable with the organisation.

All children and young people are different and might need different levels of support to participate. Some children and young people may need to be reminded a week before the next meeting and others may need to be reminded a few days before.

Appoint a staff member as the contact and support person for children and young people on the committee. This person should be approachable and available to children and young people outside of meeting times. They should also have a good understanding of the organisation and be able to represent the interests of children and young people within the organisation.

Some other ways to support children and young people's participation on committees:

- *Provide or arrange transport or reimbursement of costs at the meeting. Children and young people may not be able to afford to pay for their travel or to be reimbursed in a few weeks by a cheque.*
- *Encourage children and young people to bring another person, such as a teacher, parent or friend, along to the first few meetings while they are settling in and getting to know others.*
- *If the organisation has other committees which are provided with administrative support, this should be extended to the children and young people's committee. This shows that the entire organisation is committed to children and young people's participation.*
- *Contact the child or young person's school or work and let them know about their involvement on the committee.*
- *Make the organisation's resources, such as computers or meeting rooms, available for children and young people to use outside of the committee meeting times.*

Children and young people on the committee can also be supported by seeking the views of other kids in the community through consultations and forums. This can demonstrate to the organisation that the views of children and young people on the committee are supported by a broader range of kids in the community.

Making committee meetings friendly for kids

If children and young people are going to participate in meetings, they need to not only be prepared, but also feel comfortable about sharing their views.

Make time at the beginning of the meeting for everyone to introduce themselves – especially if there are people who haven't been for a while or haven't been before. Don't assume that all children and young people know each other. If it is a meeting with children, young people and adults, encourage the adults not to sit together.

“Having a welcoming meeting environment to walk into is really important.”

Anton, 11 years

Children and young people have said that meetings run better if there are rules and procedures that everyone understands. This includes having an agenda, keeping minutes and having a set meeting time and place. At the beginning of the first meeting, the committee should decide how it will run meetings so that everyone participating understands. For many children and young people this may be the first time they have been to a committee meeting.

See page 24 for information to give children and young people that explains common meeting terms. Committee members should avoid using jargon and acronyms during meetings, and if there are commonly used terms, explain them to kids.

For example:

One community based organisation we spoke with created a list of commonly used acronyms and jargon that all committee members could refer to during meetings.

Here are some suggestions to make meetings friendly for children and young people:

Planning for the meeting:

- *Have meetings outside school hours – ask children and young people what times are best for them. They may have other commitments like exams, study, school holidays and work.*
- *Plan meetings in advance and don't change the time unless everyone is given plenty of notice. Many young people do casual work and are not able to have time off or can't afford to give up a shift.*
- *Keep meeting papers brief so that children and young people don't have too much to read before the meeting. Work with them to write an example business paper for staff that is written in a way friendly to kids.*

At the meeting:

- *Create a relaxed environment by sitting on lounges rather than around a table.*
- *Provide child-friendly (and healthy) food and drinks.*
- *Let children and young people know in advance if adults will be formally dressed so they can also dress formally if they choose to.*
- *Help children and young people feel welcome and show that the committee is interested in what they have to say. Keep in mind that they may not always understand what is being discussed or may be too shy to ask questions or give their input.*
- *Provide opportunities for children and young people to learn new skills. If they make mistakes or say something that is not clear remember that this is all part of the learning process.*
- *Check the legislation relevant to your organisation's structure to see whether you are legally required to have formal processes like voting and passing motions. These can make meetings boring and difficult to understand – so consider only using them if you are legally required.*
- *See if children and young people want to write up notes on butchers' paper during the meeting. This helps everyone see what's going on and the notes can be typed up and sent out after the meeting (see page 26 for a kid friendly minutes template).*
- *Explain decisions during meetings in a visual way by using butchers' paper and drawing maps. This is particularly useful for children and young people with a disability or limited literacy skills.*

Between meetings

Where children and young people are on an adult committee, another committee member should meet with them before meetings to review the agenda and clear up any questions about the agenda. They can then meet again after the meeting to debrief and answer any questions the child or young person has about the meeting.

“Before meetings send out minutes, agendas or other information we need for the meeting, so there is enough time to read over it. Also have a contact person we can call if we have any questions.”

Marshall, 14 years

In adult committees information is often exchanged informally between meetings via email, phone calls or seeing each other regularly. This means that children and young people sometimes miss out on information. Part of the committee contact person's role can be to make sure children and young people know of any changes or issues that arise between meetings. This way children and young people are up to date and as prepared as everyone else for meetings.

Consider these other suggestions on how organisations can support kids between meetings:

- *Ask children and young people for the best way to contact them outside of meetings. Some kids may prefer email or SMS, while others prefer to receive a letter in the mail.*
- *Email is a great way for the committee to keep in contact between meetings, but some children and young people may not have an email address or regular access to a computer. One organisation assists kids to set up an email account and reimburses their costs for using the internet at an internet café or library.*
- *Call children and young people when they are unable to make it to meetings to update them on what happened and any opportunities they might like to get involved in.*

Making the committee more than just meetings

Many organisations have long formal meetings for their boards and committees which can get really boring for children, young people and adults.

Make the meetings more interesting by having small group activities and breakout sessions. At the beginning of the meeting run warm up activities to get everyone energised and excited about the meeting. Refer to *TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously – Conferences and events* for examples of activities to use.

“We are doing this in our free time, so it should be fun.”

Brigid, 15 years

Other ways to make the times you meet more interesting are to:

- Organise lunch or dinner with the committee, staff and management before or after the meeting.
- Combine the meeting with a skills development session or activity.
- Involve children and young people in the organisation’s annual planning day.

For example:

One youth organisation we spoke with made their planning day fun for everyone attending by breaking up into groups and asking each group to make a collage or video of their vision for the service. Young people were involved in planning for the day and running some of the activities.

Organise social activities outside of meetings so that members can get to know each other, debrief about the committee and have fun at the same time.

Keeping kids interested

“You do it because you want to make a difference and if you don't see any worthwhile changes, you lose your enthusiasm pretty quickly.”

Joey, 21 years

To keep children and young people interested in the committee they should find their involvement fun and challenging. They should also feel as though their commitment is appreciated. Different children and young people will have different ideas about what keeps them interested and it's important to ask what they want to gain from their participation.

The work of the committee

Children and young people have said that they prefer committees where there is a mix of project based work and opportunities for them to provide advice or communicate issues. This provides them with practical activities to work on that enable them to achieve something "real" in a relatively short timeframe. It also demonstrates an appreciation of their ideas and suggestions.

If the committee focuses on only a few projects, this will allow them to do these projects well, rather than spreading the committee too thinly and overworking the children and young people.

It is a good idea to set up sub-committees or working parties to focus on particular tasks or projects. Children and young people can then join these depending on their interests. These sub-committees could include other children, young people and service providers from the community.

Here are some examples of the different work that children and young people's committees do:

- *Representing issues for children and young people to the organisation.*
- *Providing advice to management, elected members or staff.*
- *Consulting with local children and young people by organising projects such as surveys and forums.*
- *Organising events and activities for children and young people in the community, such as Youth Week events.*
- *Providing services by producing information or training for other children and young people.*
- *Lobbying community decision-makers.*
- *Having input into policies and plans for the organisation, including strategic planning and local government social planning.*

Giving kids opportunities to develop skills

To keep children and young people interested organisations should provide them with opportunities to develop their skills. Participating on a committee is a way for children and young people to learn skills that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to learn.

“Share the Chair and Secretary roles between everyone on the committee, that way we all learn new skills.”

Shai, 18 years

Think about opportunities that extend outside the board or committee, such as being involved in staff selection, participating in meetings with external stakeholders or representing the organisation with staff at events.

Children and young people could also be asked to assist with consultations or participate in work that organisations are doing in their local area or at their school.

Dealing with a turnover of kids

Often the timeframes children and young people work to may be shorter than adults. Children and young people may become frustrated by the length of time it takes for a project to happen or for their work to change things within the organisation. Explain how decisions are made within the organisation and keep children and young people up to date about the progress of projects.

Children and young people may also leave because they have other commitments, such as school, or for personal reasons. It should not be assumed that the committee is not working or that the young person is unreliable. Having a set term for membership can be useful so that children and young people know upfront how long their commitment is required for.

For example:

One local government youth advisory committee we spoke with appoints membership officers who support new members and answer any questions they have about meetings, processes and to explain any “unwritten rules”.

It may be that the project the committee is involved in or the work available to the committee is not ongoing. If so, it is ok to wrap up the committee and consider other participation strategies the organisation can adopt.

Appreciating kids

Showing children and young people that you appreciate their participation is really important. Appreciation is not just about paying children and young people for their time. However, if adults are being paid for their time, children and young people should also be paid.

If children and young people are asked what would make them feel appreciated, it is likely that they will come up with lots of ideas. These are some ideas from children, young people and organisations:

- *Provide kid friendly food, drinks and reimbursement for travel costs.*
- *Appoint a young person as a Chair or Co-Chair of the group.*
- *Provide a budget for the committee to spend at their discretion.*
- *Ask the elected representatives or management to attend meetings regularly to talk to the children and young people about what the committee is working on.*
- *Ask children and young people who leave the committee to assist with training or mentoring for new members and give them a written reference (without them having to ask you for it first).*
- *Invite local media along to a meeting and ask them to do a story about the committee.*
- *Present children and young people with certificates of appreciation at the launch of a project or the organisation's Annual General Meeting.*
- *Ask local businesses to donate gift vouchers, movie passes etc, to give to children and young people on the committee.*
- *Have the entire organisation, including staff, management and members of the committee, show their appreciation to children and young people for their time. This shouldn't be the responsibility of just one person.*

For example:

One local area health service we spoke with wrote letters to the young people's school, family and work to let them know about each young person's participation on the service's youth committee and what they contributed to the service.

Review how the committee is working

As an organisation develops, the way that children and young people participate may also evolve. It is important to regularly review how well children and young people's participation is working for them and for the organisation.

The review should allow everyone involved to reflect upon their involvement and voice how they feel it is working. The Commission's resource *Checking the Scoreboard* can assist organisations to review children and young people's participation and develop strategies to improve participation. It is available on the Commission's website at www.kids.nsw.gov.au/publications/tps_scoreboard.html.

It is also a good idea to allow time during each meeting to informally discuss how everyone feels the committee is working, including meeting procedures, meeting times, places, etc. This will help to identify anything that's not working for children and young people.

Some organisations also ask children and young people who are leaving the committee to meet before they leave and talk about their experiences of the committee and what they think worked well or not so well.

Remember that the initial stages of a committee's existence, or children and young people's participation, may be a time of experimentation. Participating on a committee should be viewed as a learning process for children and young people and the organisation. New issues the organisation has never considered might arise that need to be dealt with. Organisations should be flexible, give children and young people opportunities to voice their concerns and be open to working together to address these concerns.

Other ways for kids to participate

Once the organisation has strategies in place for children and young people to participate on boards or committees, it is a good idea to start thinking about other ways that kids can participate in the organisation. The Commission's *TAKING PARTicipation seriously* kit can help with this. It contains lots of other practical ideas and tips for children and young people's participation.

By providing a variety of opportunities, children and young people will continue to be interested in participating. Providing different opportunities will also encourage a broader range of children and young people to get involved and give the organisation a wide range of views.

Practical participation tools

Name: **Committee application form**

Purpose: *A committee application form for children and young people to use*

Application form

Name: _____

Age: _____

Postal address: _____

Phone number/s: _____

Email: _____

Are you: (please circle) male or female

Are you from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background? (please circle)

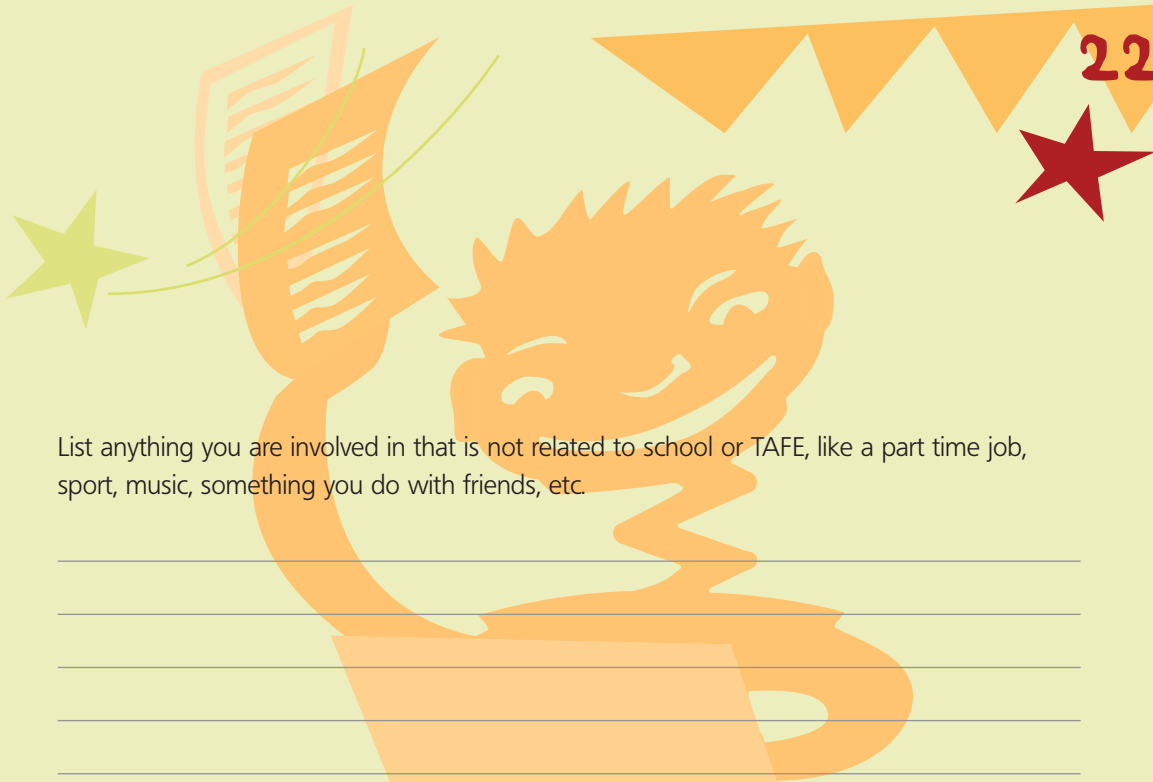
YES or NO

Are you from a non-English speaking background?

YES which one _____ or NO (please circle)

Do you attend school or TAFE, if yes please tell us which one:

What are your interests?



List anything you are involved in that is not related to school or TAFE, like a part time job, sport, music, something you do with friends, etc.

What kind of skills have these interests helped you develop?

What skills would you like to develop?

Applications close 8 October 2005

Please send your completed application form to:

If you need help filling in the form or would like to speak to someone about your application, please contact ...

Practical participation tools

Name: **Induction program for children and young people**

Purpose: *A program to introduce children and young people to each other, the committee and the organisation.*

Induction program

- 9.30am: Group introductions and get to know each other activities
See Conferences and Events for ideas on fun activities
- 10.00am: Introduce staff and management to kids
- 10.15am: Presentation on what the organisation does
Make it interesting and visual
- 10.45am: Morning tea break
Provide kid friendly and healthy food and drinks – juice, muesli bars, lollies, soft drink and fruit.
- 11.05am: Presentation on the role of the committee
- 11.30am: Brainstorm activity on issues for the committee to consider
See Conferences and Events for ideas on brainstorming activities
- 12.15pm: Summary of the day and opportunity for questions
- 12.30pm: Lunch

Practical participation tools

Name: **Common meeting terms explained**

Purpose: *Kid friendly explanation of what common meetings terms mean*

What is an agenda?

An agenda is a list of the issues – usually called items – that will be discussed at a meeting. It includes the time, date and place for the meeting. The agenda for each meeting, along with any other information the committee needs, should be sent out to all members before the meeting.

What does the Chairperson do in a meeting?

The Chairperson (sometimes called the "Chair" for short) keeps the meeting running smoothly. They make sure that what is talked about is related to each agenda item and that everyone has a fair chance to give their input.

In a meeting, what is "general business"?

General business – sometimes called "other business" – is the time set aside at the end of a meeting where members can discuss other issues not included in the agenda items. It is a good idea for members who want to raise anything during general business to tell the Chair at the beginning of the meeting so there is enough time to discuss everything on the agenda.

What are minutes?

Minutes are the official recording of a meeting. They are important so that each committee member knows what was said at the meeting. The minutes are not a word for word report of what was said in the meeting, but a record of the main points and any decisions. They include the names of members who are at the meeting and who could not attend (usually called "apologies").

What does the Secretary do in a meeting?

The Secretary writes the minutes during the meeting. It is their role to listen to what is being said and clearly write down the main points and any decisions that the committee makes.

Practical participation tools

Name: **Committee meeting agenda**

Purpose: *Example of a kid friendly agenda for a committee meeting*

Committee meeting agenda

Name of committee
Meeting time, date and place

Chair

The name of the person who will be "chairing" the meeting

Apologies

List the people who let you know they couldn't come to the meeting

Previous minutes

This is where you read over the minutes from the last meeting and check they include what was said. When you all agree they are what was said the committee agrees to "accept" them.

Items to be discussed

List each issue to be discussed as a separate point, including the name of the item and, if needed, the points for discussion.

Other business

This is where the Chair will ask if there is anything to be discussed that was not included on the agenda.

Next meeting

Time, date, place.

Practical participation tools

Name: **Committee meeting minutes**

Purpose: *Example of a kid friendly minutes from a committee meeting*

Committee meeting agenda

Name of committee
Meeting time, date and place

Chair

The name of the person who "chaired" the meeting

Present

List of the people who were at the meeting

Apologies

List the people who weren't able to come to the meeting

Previous minutes

This is where you read over the minutes from the last meeting and check they include what was said. When you all agree they are what was said the committee agrees to "accept" them.

Items to be discussed

List each issue that was discussed as a separate point, including the name of the item, what decisions were made and who is responsible for taking action on the issue. For example, the minutes could look like this:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Person responsible & Timing</i>
<i>Youth Week</i>	<i>Promotional stall during Youth Week</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate how much it will cost 	<i>Troy – by 10 June</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about materials for stall 	<i>Hannah – by the end of June</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise volunteers for stall 	<i>Kir – by the next meeting</i>

Other business

Write down anything else that was discussed at the meeting and any action the committee is taking on the issue.

Next meeting

Time, date, place.

Useful resources

Kids on boards and committees generally

Youth on Board: 14 Points to Successfully Involving Young People in Decision Making (2004). The Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne, www.youngaustralians.org

Based on the US version by Youth on Board (www.youthonboard.org), this resource is useful for organisations that are either starting to consider young people's participation or already have strategies in place. The guide features activities, checklists and case studies as well as practical strategies for young people's participation, such as conducting an organisational assessment or making meetings work.

Sharing a new story: Young People in Decision-Making (2003). Ani Wierenga, The Foundation for Young Australians, Melbourne, www.youngaustralians.org

Considers why involving young people in decision making is important and provides useful information on what helps young people to get involved and what gets in the way. It also includes a number of frameworks and toolkits for young people's participation.

The Power of an Untapped Resource: Exploring Youth Representation on Your Board or Committee (2001). Association of Alaska School Boards, www.aasb.org

Provides checklists for young people and adults to assess their ability to provide effective participation for young people. It also contains information on assessing a board's readiness to involve young people, choosing and recruiting young people and determining their roles on the board.

Youth Participation Handbook: A Guide for Organisations Seeking to Involve Young People on Boards and Committees (2000). Office of Employment and Youth, South Australia, www.maze.sa.gov.au

Provides key steps and factors to consider when recruiting young people to boards or committees. It includes different strategies for involving young people, barriers young people face, selection and recruitment, developing skills and supporting young people.

Youth on Board: Why and How to Involve Young People in Organisational Decision Making (2000). National Centre for Nonprofit Boards, Washington.

Briefly examines why organisations would want to include young people in their decision making processes, overcoming barriers and examples of involving young people. It also provides an overview of Youth on Board's 14 point plan for successful young people's participation.

Youth in Decision Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organisations (2000). National 4-H Council, University of Wisconsin Extension, Wisconsin.

Documents a study of young people and adults from organisations across the US – illustrating the positive influences young people have on organisations where they are involved in decision making processes. Contains many useful points that organisations and young people can use to support young people's participation on committees.

www.atthetable.org

The resources page of this website contains a link to a list of over 70 links and 30 downloadable resources on young people's participation and involving young people in boards and committees.

Local government youth committees and councils

Face the Challenge, Take the Risk, Enjoy the Ride: A Local Government Guide to Youth Participation (2003). Glenorchy City Council, Tasmania.

Provides information on how young people have participated within Glenorchy Council, a checklist for young people's participation and steps local councils can adopt to establish participation strategies.

Hear by Right: Setting standards for the active involvement of young people in democracy (2001). Harry Wade, Anthony Lawton & Mark Stevenson, Local Government Association, London.

Outlines a set of standards that were developed to encourage local councils to support young people's participation. The standards cater for councils involved in different stages of young people's participation and provide strategies, indicators and case studies of young people's participation in local government.



Making it real: Young people in democratic structures (2001). Hilary Kitchen, Local Government Information Unit, London, www.lgiu.gov.uk

Written for those working in local government, including Councillors, this report uses two case studies from local councils to explore some of the issues for young people and Councillors who are part of youth committees. It looks at meeting processes, support workers, aims and goals of the committee and evaluation.

www.yapa.org.au/youthcouncils

This page contains guidelines, constitutions and information from a number of local government youth councils in NSW that can be downloaded to assist youth committees and councils.

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