



HART'S LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

HOMESTRETCH WA – COP RESOURCE

WHAT IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

Youth participation empowers young people by giving them opportunities to meet community needs through decision-making and delivering services to the community. Young people can see that their actions have positive outcomes and learn skills to support their own and the wider community's development.

Participation is a fundamental right. It is one of the guiding principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that has been reiterated in many other Conventions and Declarations. To participate effectively, young people must be given the proper tools, such as information, opportunities, education about and access to their civil rights!





YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT VS PARTICIPATION?

Youth engagement refers to a wider scope of activities, which empower young people by involving them in their communities.

An example of youth engagement might be a service running, organising and facilitating a youth group camp.

While youth participation is focused on action taken by young people themselves, youth engagement also incorporates activities provided to young people in community settings.

An example of youth participation might be a service empowering young people to help facilitate and organise a youth group camp where they share their skills and support other young people to feedback what they would like from the camp. Youth participation ensures the camp is a meaningful and safe experience for them as well as build a sense of personal and community development.

Youth engagement can also lead to empowerment of young people, and may be a good stepping stone for young people into youth participation activities.

"YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN SERVICE OR PROGRAM DECISION MAKING OR DESIGN"
YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOICE CONCERNS AND PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITIES WHICH IMPACT THEM

"YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND THE SCOPE OF WORK, THERE'S NO POINT"
ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES SHOULD SUPPORT AND PROVIDE ACCESSIBLE AND TRANSPARENT INFORMATION ON WORK AND DECISIONS THAT IMPACT YOUNG PEOPLE

"WE LET YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATE, THEY JUST DON'T WANT TO"
YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T OFTEN UNDERSTAND OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE, TYPICALLY DUE TO BEING LEFT OUT OF IMPORTANT DISCOURSE AND POWER IMBALANCES IN THEIR PERSONAL CIRCLES AND COMMUNITY.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

MYTHS AND ASSUMPTIONS

"WHAT IF A YOUNG PERSON IS USED OR NOT LISTENED TO? HOW CAN THEY MEANINGFULLY CONTRIBUTE?"
BY ENCOURAGING THE ONGOING USE OF HART'S LADDER ENSURES WE DO NOT INTENTIONALLY OR UNINTENTIONALLY EXCLUDE YOUTH PARTICIPATION, AND FIND WAYS TO SUPPORT AND EMPOWER YOUTH!

"I DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE DECISIONS TO INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE"
ALL YOUTH WORKERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO EMPOWER THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE.
ADVOCACY INDIVIDUALLY AND SYSTEMICALLY CAN CREATE CHANGE!

"YOUTH PARTICIPATION CAN BE TRIGGERING OR TOO OVERWHELMING FOR MY CLIENT. I DON'T THINK THEY SHOULD"
PARTICIPATION IS TRAUMA INFORMED, SUPPORTIVE AND INTENDED TO WORK AROUND THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY. OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE CAN BE EMPOWERING AND SUPPORT THEIR CAREER!

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN HOMESTRETCH WA

Lived experience work together as part of the Home Stretch WA - Community of Practice team by bringing expertise in youth advocacy, youth participation and the integration of relevant lived experience, into the ongoing design, development and delivery of Home Stretch WA.

Home Stretch WA recognises young people as equal partners in this work and values their lived experience, alongside the learned experience of experts and policy makers. We walk together.



- YOUTH ADVISORY GROUPS
- STEERING & WORKING GROUPS
- LIVED EXPERIENCE CONSULTANTS

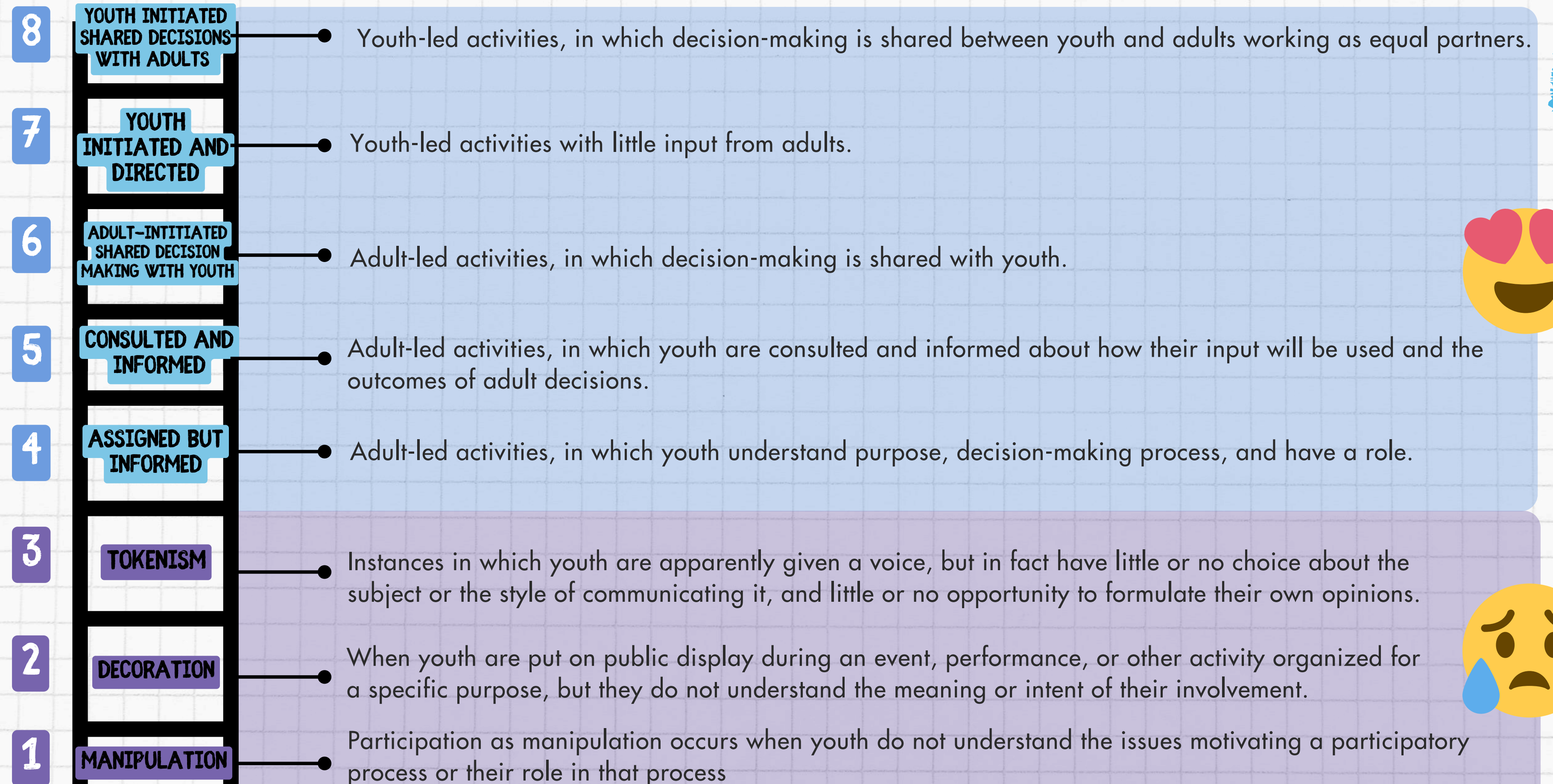
HART'S LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION


A "LADDER," WHERE EACH ASCENDING RUNG REPRESENTS INCREASING LEVELS OF **YOUTH AGENCY, CONTROL (ADULT AGENCY), OR POWER**, TO ACHIEVE TRUE YOUTH PARTICIPATION!

"The ladder was simply offered as a schema to help bring a critical perspective to a subject that at that time altogether lacked one.... The most beneficial quality of the model has probably been its utility for helping different professional groups and institutions to rethink how they work with young people: youth workers, television and radio directors, scout leaders, play workers, street workers, health professionals, and even some school teachers. Its simplicity of form and clarity of goals enable them to find a language to look at their current ways of working systemically, and in so doing, come up with something more complex and useful to their particular context."

Roger Hart

HART'S LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION





HART'S LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

NON-PARTICIPATION RUNGS

1. MANIPULATION

YOUTH DON'T UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES MOTIVATING A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS OR THEIR ROLE IN THAT PROCESS

Sometimes adults [workers] feel that the end justifies the means.... If youth have no understanding of the issues and hence do not understand their actions, then this is manipulation. Such manipulation under the guise of participation is hardly an appropriate way to introduce youth into democratic processes or youth/community participation. This is NOT Youth Participation!

Example: Service workers consulting youth in some hidden manner to create ideas to come up with 'a youth design' for a Home Stretch WA poster. The process of analysis is not shared with the youth and is usually not even made transparent to other adults or services. Youth have no idea how their ideas were used, just asked a list of vague questions.



Youth
Agency

- Are solely participants of the activity.
- Do not understand the purpose of the activity.
- Passively learning.
- Expected to follow directions without questions asked.
- Are not consulted about the effectiveness of the activity or asked to assist in evaluation.

Adult
Agency

- Do not allow youth to participate in the planning of the activity.
- May not have awareness about how youth could be contributing.
- Are 100% in control of the activity and outcome.
- Do not allow youth to participate in the evaluation of the activity.



Youth
Empowered 0%

2. DECORATION

WHEN YOUTH ARE PUT ON PUBLIC DISPLAY DURING AN EVENT, PERFORMANCE, OR OTHER ACTIVITY ORGANIZED FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE, BUT THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OR INTENT OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT.

The reason this is described as one rung up from 'manipulation' is that adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by youth participation. They simply use the youth to bolster their cause in a relatively indirect way - for "decoration"!

Example: Occasions where youth are told how to look for a specific event and have little idea of what the event is about and no say in the organizing of the occasion. The young people are there because of the refreshments, or some interesting performance, or they were simply told to, rather than the cause or event itself.

Youth Agency

- Understand the purpose of the activity.
- Passively learning.
- Expected to follow directions without questions asked.
- Participate without awareness of how they could be contributing.
- Not consulted about the effectiveness of the activity or asked to assist in evaluation.

Adult Agency

- Do not allow youth to participate in the planning of the activity.
- May not have awareness about how youth could be contributing.
- 100% in control of the activity and the outcome.
- Explain the purpose of the activity to youth.
- Use youth for the activity but in an indirect way with no real purpose.
- Do not allow youth to participate in the evaluation of the activity.

Youth Empowered 0%



3. TOKENISM

INSTANCES IN WHICH YOUTH ARE APPARENTLY GIVEN A VOICE, BUT IN FACT HAVE LITTLE OR NO CHOICE ABOUT THE SUBJECT OR THE STYLE OF COMMUNICATING IT, AND LITTLE OR NO OPPORTUNITY TO FORMULATE THEIR OWN OPINIONS.”

A selective process, sometimes a one speak for all situation. Tokenism is a common rung young people experience. Sometimes it can feel “tickboxing” or disingenuous as there are a lot of controlled variables, sometimes including what is voiced by the young person!

Example: How youth are sometimes used on conference panels. Articulate, charming youth selected by adults to sit on a panel with little or no substantive preparation on the subject and no consultation with their peers who, it is implied, they represent. If no explanation is given to the audience or youth of how they were selected, and which youth’s perspectives they represent, this is usually sufficient indication that a project is not truly an example of participation.

Youth Agency


- Understand the purpose of the activities they are doing.
 - Are not quite passive, but not active (just awkwardly vibing).
 - Have little power in decision-making.
 - Have little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions and ideas.
- * Might be asked to represent all youth without the opportunity to prepare or consult their peers.

Adult Agency

- In control of the activity and the outcome.
- Might ask youth for minimal input during planning, implementation, and evaluation, but will not take input seriously or will only take very surface-level input.
- Say they give youth a voice, but youth have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it.

Youth Empowered 0-15%





HART'S LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

PARTICIPATION RUNGS

4. ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED



WHEN YOUTH (1) “UNDERSTAND THE INTENTIONS OF THE PROJECT,” (2) “KNOW WHO MADE THE DECISIONS CONCERNING THEIR INVOLVEMENT AND WHY,” (3) “HAVE A MEANINGFUL (RATHER THAN ‘DECORATIVE’) ROLE,” AND (4) “VOLUNTEER FOR THE PROJECT AFTER THE PROJECT WAS MADE CLEAR TO THEM.”

Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

Example: The organisation decides to hold a youth advisory group for their young people and prepare the session plan and topic. Lived experience consultants are asked to come up with ways to make the yag engaging. Each consultant brainstorms ideas to present as they understand the importance of the yag and consultation process. After attending the yag, the organisers set a debrief with the consultants, the outcome of debrief not made known to young people.

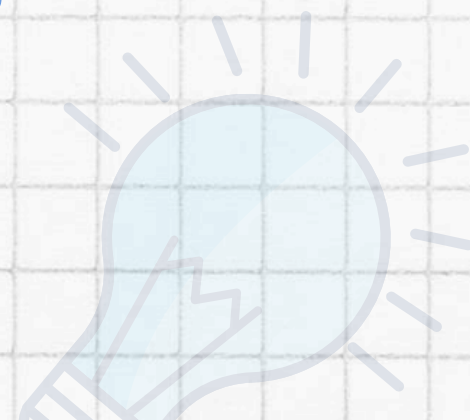
Youth Agency

- Understand the purpose of the activities they are doing.
- Youth did not plan the activity; it has been assigned.
- Actively participating in what has been assigned.
- Have a more meaningful (rather than decorative/passive) role in the activity.
- Might be asked to provide opinions about evaluation, but it might not be used to inform future activities.

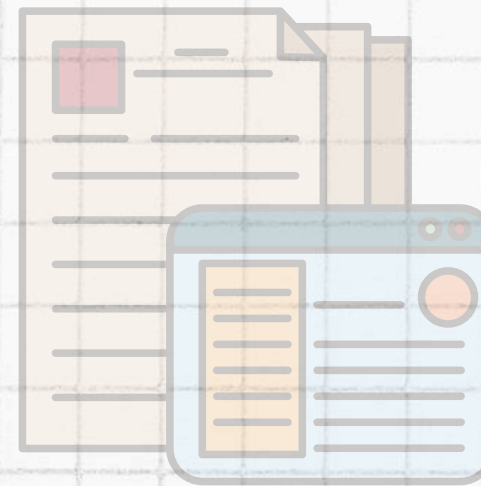
Adult Agency

- Decide the activities for the young people.
- Considers young people’s interests and learning styles, makes decisions without youth input.
- Allow and encourage youth to be active participants and aware of the activity's purpose.
- Might create space for youth to evaluate or give feedback on an activity; the feedback might be used on to make only surface-level changes or might not be used to inform future activities.

Youth
Empowered 20 - 40%



5. CONSULTED AND INFORMED



ADULT-LED ACTIVITIES, IN WHICH YOUTH ARE CONSULTED AND INFORMED ABOUT HOW THEIR INPUT WILL BE USED AND THE OUTCOMES OF ADULT DECISIONS.

Youth act as “consultants for adults in a manner which has great integrity. The project is designed and run by adults, but youth understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously.”

Example: After attending the previous youth advisory group the lived experience consultants ask if they could help co-facilitate the next one. The decision for their participation and which consultants, still sits with the organisation. The feedback from the previous debrief is taken seriously and problem solved by the organisation, the consultants still provide consultation and are made aware of outcomes and the process, but still do not have final say or the power to dispute until after. More of a trial and error process of genuine youth participation stage.

Youth Agency

- Give advice to adults about the activities and projects.
- Understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously by adults.
- Might be asked to provide opinions about evaluation that will be used to inform future activities.

Adult Agency

- Design activities and projects.
- Consider youth advice when planning.
- Lead implementation 100%
- Might create space for youth to evaluate or give feedback on an activity that is used to inform future activities.



Youth
Empowered 40 - 60%

6. ADULT INITIATED SHARED DECISIONS WITH YOUTH

ADULT-LED ACTIVITIES, IN WHICH DECISION-MAKING IS SHARED WITH YOUTH

Participation that constitutes adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth occurs when adults initiate participatory projects, but they share decision-making authority or management with youth.

Example: Lived experience consultants and youth within the organisation consult, collaborate and finalise a youth participation resource at the request of the organisation to help support youth workers involve the participation of youth in service and program design. Youth determine important aspects of youth participation and make decisions with the adults on when and where the youth participation resource is rolled out.



Youth Agency

- Might determine topics or provide input about decision-making on adult-determined topics.
- Share decision-making power with adults.
- Understand the process of planning and implementing an activity.
- Provide input and opinions that are treated seriously by adults.
- Might be asked to provide opinions about evaluation that will be used to inform future activities.

Adult Agency

- Take youth input into account.
- Plan the activity while being heavily influenced by youth voice, opinions, interests, and preferences.
- Frequently create space for youth input on adult-decided topics at planning and implementation.
- Might create space for youth to evaluate or give feedback on an activity that is used to inform future activities.



Youth Empowered 60 - 80%

7. YOUTH INITIATED AND DIRECTED

YOUTH-LED ACTIVITIES WITH LITTLE INPUT FROM ADULTS.



Youth-led activities with little input from adults. When youth conceptualize and carry out complex projects by working cooperatively in small or large groups. While adults may observe and assist the youth, they do not interfere with the process or play a directive or managerial role.

Example: The lived experience consultants request an evaluation of the youth engagement plan and to have a meeting with the department to talk through where commitments of the plan have been made within Home Stretch WA and how youth voices will be supported following the dismantle of Community of Practice. The community of practice program managers help facilitate a meeting with the department at the youth request, however discussion and evaluation is youth led and directed.

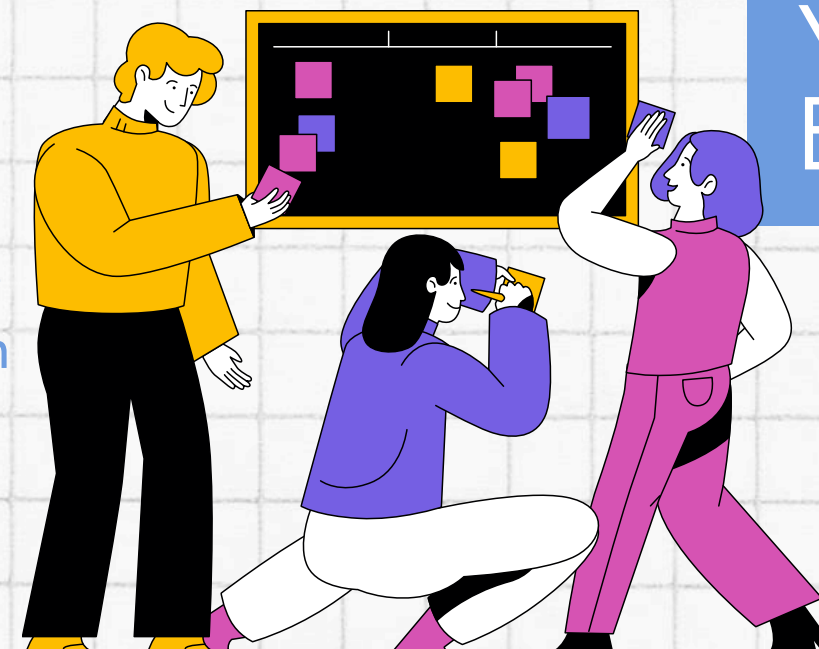
Youth Agency

- Determine idea for activity.
- Implement activity.
- Evaluate activity.
- Work independently from adults, which might result in missed opportunities as a result of the lack of true partnership.

Adult Agency

- Support youth decisions and implementation.
- Trust in the leadership of young people.
- Are likely not consulted by youth about planning, implementation, and/or evaluation of the activity.

Youth
Empowered 80 - 100%



8. YOUTH INITIATED SHARED DECISION WITH ADULTS

YOUTH-LED ACTIVITIES, IN WHICH DECISION-MAKING IS SHARED BETWEEN YOUTH AND ADULTS WORKING AS EQUAL PARTNERS.

Participation that constitutes youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults occurs when youth—though primarily teenage/young adults in this case—share decision-making authority, management, or power with adult partners and allies. Hart notes, however, that examples of this form of youth participation are rare: “The reason, I believe, is not the absence of a desire to be useful on the part of teenagers. It is rather the absence of caring adults attuned to the particular interests of young people. We need people who are able to respond to the subtle indicators of energy and compassion in teenagers.”

Example: Lived experience consultants sitting on the guiding panel as equal partners to raise any questions or issues and comment on decision making, in collaboration with youth who were not able to make the meeting and in Homestretch WA programs. Ensuring there is a genuine youth voice at high levels of governance.

Youth Agency

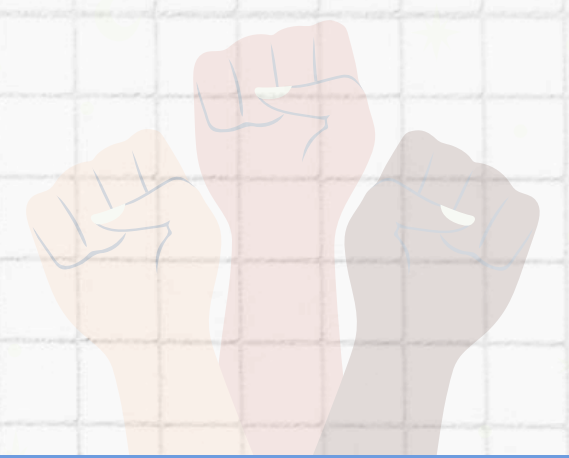
- Determine ideas for the activity.
- Invite adults to join them in making decisions about the project.
- Implement the activity.
- Work together with adults to evaluate activity and make changes for future projects..

Adult Agency

- Serve as a resource for youth as they plan an activity.
- Are consulted by youth to make decisions in partnership.
- Serve as support for youth while they facilitate their activity.
- Work together with youth to evaluate activity and make changes for future projects.
- Trust in the leadership of young people.

Youth Empowered

100%



YOUTH ARE EMPOWERED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND UPLIFT EACH OTHERS LIVED EXPERIENCES IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGES!

CREATE AND EXPAND ON SKILLS THAT YOUTH ARE INTERESTED IN AND GIVE THEM OPPORTUNITIES THAT A LOT OF ADULTS MAY HAVE NOT GIVEN THEM PREVIOUSLY. THIS ALSO OPENS DOORS FOR THEM IN THEIR CAREER IF THEY WISH!

DECISIONS AND SUPPORT ARE YOUTH-FOCUSED, FUTURE-FOCUSED AND PERSON CENTRED, RATHER THAN JUST MADE BECAUSE ITS WHAT THE ADULTS THINK IS RIGHT. THERE IS MORE OF A SUCCESS RATE WHEN YOUTH ARE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO MEANINGFULLY PARTICIPATE!

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

FACTS AND BENEFITS

OPENS OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATIVELY SOLVE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR YOUTH AND YOUTH SERVICES! PROMOTING GENUINE ACTION TOWARDS ACCESSIBILITY, INCLUSITIVITY AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION.

BUILDS SELF DETERMINATION, COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY BETWEEN YOUTH AND SERVICES WHICH CREATES A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST!

APPRECIATING AND EMBEDDING UNDERSTANDINGS FROM THE JOURNEYS THAT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE HELPS US BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW TO SUPPORT YOUTH INDIVIDUALLY AND SYSTEMICALLY FOR FUTURE SOCIAL CHANGE AND ACTION!



YOUTH PARTICIPATION

SERVICES AND YOUTH WORKERS

The Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation is a great starting point in reflecting whether a program, activity or service has genuine participation of youth. Services and workers might ask themselves or young people to rate themselves on the ladder in terms of how they've participated in their experience as a young person with lived (and in some cases learned) experiences! The youth and agency points are helpful breakdowns of what each rung involves on both sides and whether it is empowering young people!

The background is a light gray grid. The text is centered and flanked by hand-drawn black lines. The corners and edges of the grid are decorated with various colorful, hand-drawn shapes: a pink blob in the top-left, a yellow star-like shape in the top-left, a blue scribble in the top-center, a pink scribble in the top-right, a green scribble in the top-right, a blue spiral in the top-right, a yellow scribble in the middle-right, a pink scribble in the middle-right, a blue scribble in the bottom-left, a green scribble in the bottom-left, a yellow flower-like shape in the bottom-center, a pink scribble in the bottom-right, and a pink scribble in the bottom-right.

**THANK YOU
VERY MUCH**