



GROWING UP IN CITIES CANADA

Creative Tools: Civic Engagement of Young People

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Creative Tools:

Civic Engagement of Young People



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
CHILD RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



CANADIAN COMMISSION
FOR UNESCO



ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH ALLIANCE



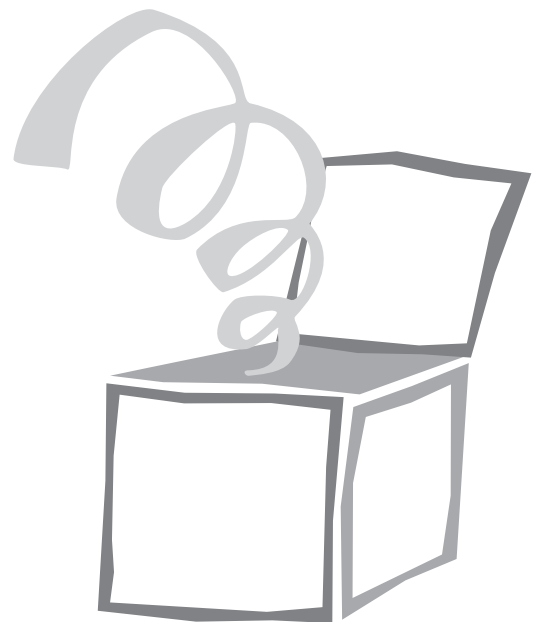
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GATINEAU YOUTH COMMISSION



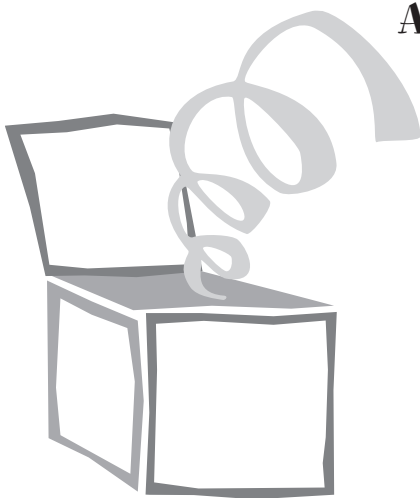
REDWIRE NATIVE YOUTH MEDIA



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Welcome

There are more young people living in our cities than ever before. Current research shows that cities that are more child and youth friendly are better places for all to live. Many Canadian cities are attempting to better include children and youth in decisions affecting them. However, without the right tools and processes for involving young people this remains challenging. Cities and local action groups are seeking simple action-based strategies that support the civic engagement of young people.

This “toolkit” results from the learned experience of an innovative project entitled **Growing Up In Cities Canada** (GUICC). The GUICC initiative was undertaken under the leadership of the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. The project is in partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU), Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) in Vancouver, HeartWood Center for Community Youth Development (CCYD) in Halifax, Redwire Native Youth Media in Vancouver and the Gatineau Youth Commission in Gatineau. These partners represent a unique partnership model for bringing about change. It includes front-line urban youth organizations (EYA, HeartWood, Redwire), municipal governments (Ville de Gatineau), a higher learning organization (IICRD, University of Victoria), and an international agency promoting best practices on civic engagement (CCU).

The approach and tools in the kit build on our combined experience of working with young people. They were field tested in three different Canadian cities: Vancouver, Halifax, and Gatineau, and provide a Canadian example of real municipal child and youth civic participation.

The tools themselves are designed to be youth-friendly, fun and stimulating, and to provide a practical basis for gathering young people’s perceptions on the strengths and challenges in their local communities. They also form a basis for developing concrete action plans that involve young people in civic decision-making in partnership with local adults, community planners, and municipal government representatives.

The creation of this toolkit would not have been possible without the key contributions of the front-line expertise of HeartWood, Ville de Gatineau, EYA, Redwire and CCU. Special individuals we would like to thank include David Driskell and Louise Chawla who shared the original UNESCO GUIC framework. David Driskell’s encouragement in developing common tools to promote healthy communities for young people was especially useful. In addition, individual thanks are extended to Debbie Anderson and Anka Raskin of the City of Vancouver for their feedback on drafts of the toolkit, Joseph de Sylva from the Ville de Gatineau and Andrew Whitemore of the Halifax Regional Authority.



Special thanks are also extended to Michele Cook (IICRD) who deftly sorted through massive amounts of information in order to organize the materials and provide a structure for the document, Lis Bailly (Portfolio Art Services) for her excellent work in designing the toolkit, and Doug Ragan and Jackie Amsden (EYA), Brian Braganza and Kirstan Moore (HeartWood), Louis D'Amour (Ville de Gatineau), Stan Williams (Redwire), Elizabeth Barot (CCU), Anka Raskin (research assistant IICRD), and Yvonne Rondeau (IICRD)

for providing input on different versions of the document. We would also like to acknowledge the generous funding from the Government of Canada, Community Development and Partnerships Directorate (CDPD), for supporting the GUIC Canada initiative in the context of their Social Inclusion Initiatives.

Finally, we would like to especially thank all the young people and their adult supporters for their energy, enthusiasm and insightful and critical reflections. Without their vision and practical suggestions this toolkit would be merely more paper and empty words.

We hope this toolkit inspires you in undertaking a process to meaningfully involve young people in building child-youth friendly cities.

PHILIP COOK AND NATASHA BLANCHET-COHEN

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CHILD RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

Opening your toolkit

Young people's needs and perspectives have traditionally not been taken into account in the planning of urban environments, nor have they been involved in the decisions that affect the policies, services, and spaces that shape their daily lives.

There is, however, a growing recognition both internationally and in Canada of the need to actively engage children and youth in urban planning and local governance at the civic level. Our urban centers, which are home to more Canadians than ever before, are under-resourced, and require a new vision of participatory governance that includes diverse stakeholders. Young people need to be meaningfully included not only because they have the right to a voice in matters that concern them, as stated in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), but also because young people are experts on their local environment and a powerful resource for creating healthy communities.

As Canadians, we want urban environments to:

- ◆ Foster the social inclusion of all members of society, including children and youth
- ◆ Reflect and be accountable to the diverse needs of young people
- ◆ Create spaces for young people to express their views in youth-appropriate ways
- ◆ Encourage young people to engage in shared decision-making with adults
- ◆ Establish mechanisms that provide young people equal rights of access to basic services

The social inclusion of children and youth implies that all young people are respected for the unique knowledge and assets they possess. It also assumes a responsibility to ensure that their diverse voices are genuinely heard and their needs met within families, communities, and local governance structures.

Finally, social inclusion promotes the creation of an enabling environment to allow young people to represent themselves in ongoing decision-making processes that affect their lives and shape their communities and local environment.

GROWING UP IN CITIES - CANADA TEAM, 2003

*“If you don't know the system...
you can't change the system.”*

BILL MILLS, MAYOR OF TRURO, NOVA SCOTIA

“We are interested in getting youth involved in civic decision-making, but we see a lot of tokenism in terms of consultations. People need to know how to meaningfully consult with youth because youth have something to say. This needs to be done in youth language – not three-syllable words.”

BEVERLY PODLECKI, BRITANIA COMMUNITY CENTRE YOUTH WORKER, VANCOUVER

CRC Article 12

1. PARTIES SHALL ASSURE TO THE CHILD WHO IS CAPABLE OF FORMING HIS OR HER OWN VIEWS THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS THOSE VIEWS FREELY IN ALL MATTERS AFFECTING THE CHILD, THE VIEWS OF THE CHILD BEING GIVEN DUE WEIGHT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AGE AND MATURITY OF THE CHILD.

2. FOR THIS PURPOSE, THE CHILD SHALL IN PARTICULAR BE PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD IN ANY JUDICIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS AFFECTING THE CHILD, EITHER DIRECTLY, OR THROUGH A REPRESENTATIVE OR AN APPROPRIATE BODY, IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE PROCEDURAL RULES OF NATIONAL LAW.



Purpose

The primary purpose of this toolkit is to help municipalities increase the social inclusion of young people, especially those at risk. It also seeks to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of city planning.

The toolkit uses participatory research tools to:

- ◆ Create dialogues between young people and adults
- ◆ Help adults acquire appropriate tools and knowledge to effectively work with young people
- ◆ Establish the groundwork to create child-youth friendly cities

The toolkit is based on a framework that was shaped through the experiences of the GUICC process to create more child-youth friendly Canadian cities that are more inclusive of young people, particularly those facing economic, political, social, and cultural barriers.

The toolkit promotes:

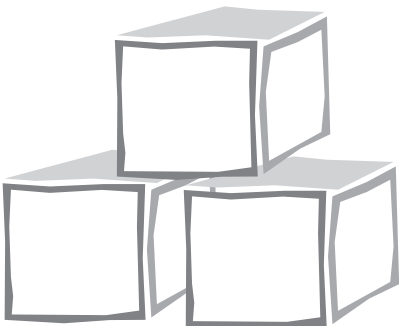
- ◆ Trust
- ◆ Mutual respect
- ◆ Commitment to action
- ◆ Power sharing

The toolkit demonstrate that the participation of young people in urban social planning benefits:

- ◆ Young people
- ◆ Communities more widely

How can this toolkit improve civic engagement?

- ◆ By facilitating learning about young people's needs in the context of specific services (e.g. transportation, zoning, or recreation)
- ◆ By aiding in the consultation of young people on specific projects (e.g. park planning or community recreation services)
- ◆ By helping to improve relationships between young people and municipal structures (e.g. clarify misperceptions between police and young people)
- ◆ By encouraging young people to collectively reflect on their local environment (e.g. in an educational setting)



Key participants

The activities outlined in this toolkit work best with young people aged 13-18.

While people above or below this age range should not be excluded from the activities, modifications may be necessary for different ages. In GUICC, we worked with youth between the ages of 8 and 30.

Outcomes

Adults (municipal staff and youth leaders) will have skills to:

- ◆ Uncover young people's perspectives
- ◆ Increase young people's understandings of their situation
- ◆ Lay the groundwork for collective plans of action

Young people will have skills to:

- ◆ Gain a better understanding of their current situation and environment
- ◆ Influence community decision-making processes
- ◆ Gain awareness of the processes of democracy and participation in the context of their local environment

Communities will have skills to:

- ◆ Develop and maintain good relationships with young people
- ◆ Communicate and work effectively across different ages, cultures, and abilities
- ◆ Engage in inter-generational dialogue on a range of civic issues

“And so it's huge. There's a whole mistrust and it becomes like you can't go to the police and talk to them, and have them help you. They no longer help you. They are somebody you fear...somebody that is intimidating to you. I think we need to do a lot of work on that. And I think having more people know what the city does – that the city has an advocate now for the last year – having that knowledge is important and so is having the city aware of what's going on for youth.”

SARAH, 21, VANCOUVER

“Both adults and young people need training. Adults need education regarding the power that young people have in affecting change. Young people need training about how to harness the power they have.”

JILL JOHNSON, SENIOR MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE, WEST VANCOUVER

who is this toolkit for?

- MUNICIPAL SERVICE PROVIDERS & STAFF
- YOUTH CENTERS, YOUTH SERVING ORGANIZATIONS
- COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
- TEACHERS & YOUTH MENTORS



The need for practical tools

municipal services & programs:

- TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION
- COMMUNITY SAFETY
- RESIDENTIAL AREAS HOUSING
- NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS
- PARKS, STREETS AND PUBLIC PLACES
- ENVIRONMENT
- COMMUNITY CENTERS
- BY-LAW ENFORCEMENT & ZONING
- VOTING IN ELECTIONS
- SHELTERS
- POLICE & FIRE
- EMPLOYMENT
- GARBAGE COLLECTION

Why target municipal governance?

Municipal services and programs affect a surprisingly broad range of areas from community safety to the environment. The design and operation of these services and programs impact young people’s everyday lives in concrete ways. Municipal departments such as parks & recreation, cultural affairs, social planning, and community planning often lack the tools to engage children and youth in meaningful ways.

Why involve young people in municipal governance?

The big picture... The imperative to include children and youth in planning, design, and governance is officially recognized at the international level. Key documents that provide credibility and legitimacy to local efforts in this area include:

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The CRC recognizes that young people under 18 are entitled to express their views in all matters that concern them (ARTICLE 12). Young people have a right to receive and impart information and ideas.

www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm

The Habitat Agenda

This agenda affirms the commitment of world governments to create more sustainable human settlements. In meeting this agenda, special attention needs to be paid to the participation of community members, including children and youth, in shaping cities, towns and neighborhoods that secure adequate living conditions for everyone. It emphasizes the importance of making use of young people’s insight, creativity, and thoughts on the environment.

www.unhabitat.org/unchs/english/hagenda/

The Agenda 21 of the Earth Summit

This agenda identifies children and youth as a major group who must be involved in participatory processes to create more people-friendly, sustainable environments.

www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm

“Our teens are often forgotten wherever they go. People talk about younger children but never talk about teens because teens, in adults’ eyes, are a problem group and troublemakers. . .we must not think and say what youth need but must, instead of talking, listen to them so they can tell us what they need and what they want in the city, what’s good for them. They are the only ones who can tell us this. We must never presume, oh, that will be good for you. This is the error that most adults make.”

JOSEPH DE SYLVA, PRESIDENT OF YOUTH COMMISSION, MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR, GATINEAU



At a more local level... These international frameworks have been translated into specific policies, programs and initiatives that call for child and youth participation in our cities:

National Plans of Action

Commitments by state parties, including Canada, to support children’s rights. Plans of Action stress the importance of implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in local governance settings, putting children front and centre.
www.sen.parl.gc.ca/lpearson/

Growing Up in Cities (GUIC)

A collaborative undertaking of the MOST Programme of UNESCO and interdisciplinary teams of municipal officials, urban professionals, and child reserach advocates who work with young people to define priorities and create change through more responsive urban policies and practices.
www.unesco.org/most/guic/guicmain.htm

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI)

An international initiative launched by UNICEF in 1996 in an attempt to make cities livable places for all. CFCI advocates the adoption of governance approaches and participatory urban management that promote the realization of child rights.
www.childfriendlycities.org/

Growing Up in Cities Canada (GUICC)

A project that builds from the knowledge and experience of UNESCO’s Growing Up in Cities project to create a ‘made in Canada – for Canada’ national project. GUICC recognizes the diversity of local realities across the country: aboriginal self-governance, municipal government processes, French and English language issues, and maritime and central Canadian cultures. Using a participatory rights-based research framework that builds on the strengths of children, youth and their communities, GUICC examines how local governments in Canadian cities can engage children and youth in creating better cities.
www.growingupincities.ca

Civic Youth Strategies

The City of Vancouver formally committed to supporting youth involvement in city decision-making in 1995, with the Civic Youth Strategy policy. As part of the strategy, the City has funded the hiring of a team of youth as City staff Youth Outreach Team.
www.vancouveryouth.ca

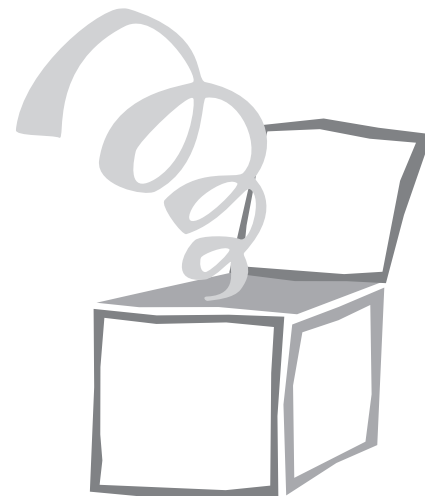
If you give me a fish, you have fed me for a day. If you teach me to fish then you have fed me until the river is contaminated or the shoreline seized for development. But if you teach me to ORGANIZE, then whatever the challenge, I can join together with my peers...and we will fashion OUR OWN SOLUTION!”

YOUTH ACTIVIST, VANCOUVER

To read more stories...

ABOUT HOW CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE IMPROVING THE RESILIENCE, SECURITY, CAPABILITY AND LIVABILITY OF THEIR CITIES, CHECK OUT AN ONLINE REPORT ‘CHILD-YOUTH FRIENDLY CITIES’ THAT BRINGS TOGETHER STORIES OF CITIES AROUND THE WORLD .
WWW.EYA.CA

www.eya.ca





Benefits of involving young people

There are multiple benefits of child and youth participation in municipalities at both the individual and societal levels. These include:

- ◆ Positive youth development (self esteem, self efficacy, social skills)
- ◆ Increased resiliency (sense of personal connection, interpersonal skills)
- ◆ Improved programming and services (more responsive and sustainable)
- ◆ Greater social inclusion (increased stakeholder involvement, decreased marginalization)
- ◆ Strengthened democracy (greater child and youth input in decision-making and governance)

Participation

PARTICIPATION IS
CENTRAL TO POSITIVE
GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

PARTICIPATION
PROMOTES RESILIENCY

PARTICIPATION
IMPROVES YOUTH
PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES

PARTICIPATION
PROVIDES FOR
SOCIAL INCLUSION

PARTICIPATION
STRENGTHENS
DEMOCRACY

Participation is central to positive growth and development:

In adolescence, young people begin to define their self-worth in terms of their skills and their capacity to influence their environment. For young people to make a healthy and effective transition to adulthood, they need opportunities to demonstrate that they are capable of being responsible, caring, and engaged members of society.

Child and youth participation offers young people the chance to develop important decision-making and problem solving skills, to develop meaningful relationships, and to bolster self-esteem. Increasingly, research shows that young people who feel involved, safe, valued, and connected are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (IICRD, 2004).

The personal health benefits of the meaningful participation of youth has been studied by the Canadian Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (2003), which states that engaged youth are less depressed, have higher self-esteem, are more physically active, obtain higher grades in school, and show a greater commitment to their friends, families and communities.

Participation promotes resiliency:

Within the context of government services, young people tend to be viewed as problems in need of solutions. The resilience model of young people's development places the emphasis on potential rather than on problem intervention. This approach sees young people as part of the solution, not just the focus of the problem. Child and youth participation contributes to a resilience approach by building on youth strengths, including energy, enthusiasm, and creativity.

“A key part of sustaining children’s participation is successful partnerships whether with other children, adults or institutions.”

BLANCHETT-COHEN, COOK, HART

“I really feel that having the youth outreach team as part of the City government is an effective reminder to politicians that youth issues must be considered as serious and meaningful. Their presence helps to legitimize the work of the youth community and provide institutional support for the youth organizations.”

YOUTH OUTREACH TEAM, VANCOUVER

Participation improves youth programs and services:

By involving youth in planning, development, and evaluation, those responsible for programs and services can direct available resources towards finding more successful approaches to issues affecting youth. Research in community development and health promotion shows that people of all ages are more likely to make a commitment to a program when they have been involved in the program's design and implementation plans. (see Blanchett-Cohen et al 2004)

Participation provides for social inclusion:

Creating opportunities for the participation of diverse groups of young people including cultural-minority youth, youth in care, indigenous youth, young people with different sexual orientations and youth with mental or physical disabilities makes it such that all young people feel part of the community. This in turn provides for stronger relationships amongst young people and between young people and the rest of society.

Participation strengthens democracy:

Engaging children and youth in meaningful discussions around issues that affect them respects their right to participate, and fosters an understanding of a rights-respecting system of governance. It enables young people to exercise their political rights, increasing their ability and desire to create community change. By allowing young people in community decision-making they become part of the solution, and democracy and social robustness is strengthened. (see Checkoway and Richards-Schuster, 2001)

Challenges of involving young people

While municipalities recognize the value and importance of involving children and youth, this is easier said than done. Effective participation requires:

- ◆ Acknowledgement that young people have something important to offer
- ◆ Commitment to incorporating young people's ideas and perspectives
- ◆ Willingness to listen to and give due weight to young people's ideas
- ◆ Engagement in a 'Process' – this takes time!
- ◆ The building of 'Relationships' – this is a long-term commitment!
- ◆ Adapting a youth friendly 'Style of Interaction' – this requires making things engaging and accessible to young people!
- ◆ The understanding that different groups of young people have different perspectives
- ◆ Human and financial resources (e.g. honoraria or monies for food and travel)

“A citizen is a person who lives in a city, who has opinions, and who wants to be heard. It is not only someone who is 18 years old and who has the right to vote.”

JOSIANNE, 17, GATINEAU

Stay tuned in...

CHECK OUT THIS WEBSITE!
CHILDREN AS PARTNERS (CAP)
IS A PLACE WHERE YOUNG
PEOPLE AND ADULTS FROM
AROUND THE WORLD WHO
SUPPORT CHILD
PARTICIPATION CAN SHARE
WHAT THEY THINK, WHAT
THEY KNOW AND HELPFUL
INFORMATION.
WWW.IICRD.ORG/CAP/

www.iicrd.org



What is a child friendly city?

“IT IS A CITY,
OR ANY LOCAL SYSTEM
OF GOVERNANCE,
COMMITTED TO FULFILLING
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.
IT IS A CITY WHERE THE VOICES,
NEEDS, PRIORITIES AND
RIGHTS OF CHILDREN ARE AN
INTEGRAL PART OF PUBLIC
POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND
DECISIONS.
IT IS, AS A RESULT,
A CITY THAT IS FIT FOR ALL.”
CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES
INITIATIVE, UNICEF



Creating a child-youth friendly community

While provision of health, clean water, sanitation, safety, good living conditions and proper nutrition are central to children's survival, development and protection, it is their participation that is the cornerstone of children's well-being and sustainable child-youth friendly cities. Children and youth need to be involved as meaningful partners in the planning and design of services, not only because they have a right to a voice in matters that concern them, but also because they are the greatest experts on their environment and a powerful resource for social change.

An enabling environment

The key factor identified in the GUICC research in creating a child-youth friendly city was the presence of an enabling environment. An enabling environment is one in which young people have the opportunity to:

- ◆ Make decisions in their family
- ◆ Make decisions in their peer groups
- ◆ Make decisions in their community
- ◆ Engage in community activities
- ◆ Identify barriers to child-youth participation in local decision-making and participate in improving their level of involvement
- ◆ Influence government decision-making
- ◆ Be involved in local decision-making processes

The GUICC project found that an enabling environment was influenced directly by:

- ◆ Child-Youth Perceptions of Self: the capacities that young people identify in themselves
- ◆ Youth Mentoring Younger Children: young people being in supportive relationships with children
- ◆ Child-Youth Perceptions of Community: the people and places that are important to young people, how they feel about their social and physical environment
- ◆ How Adults Perceived Children and Youth: what adults think are the roles and responsibilities of youth (individually and collectively)

“The relationships are key. First, seeing them as young people who already have something that they can give to their neighbourhood or their community. Then providing them with an opportunity to take part in stuff and get connected...to convey that ‘Hey, this is your neighbourhood. It's great that you're here. What do you want to do?’”

BILL HAMILTON, COMMUNITY SCHOOL COORDINATOR, WINDERMERE SCHOOL, VANCOUVER

A blueprint for action



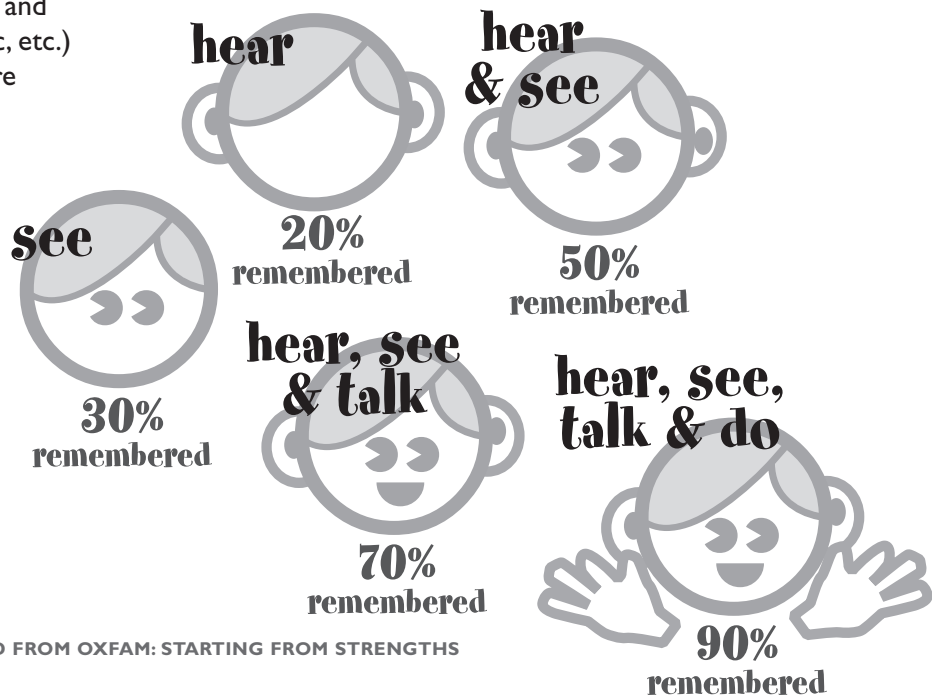
To effectively create an enabling environment, the tools described in this toolkit need to be put into context. Each of the activities is part of an overall approach based on four key foundational principles.

- 1. Experiential Age-Appropriate Learning Activities**
- 2. A Child and Youth Rights Lens**
- 3. Strengths as Building Blocks**
- 4. A Participatory Action Research Process**

These four principles provide the foundation for the activities and a basis for fostering an enabling environment to create child-youth friendly cities. What does this mean? Read on and find out.

1. Experiential age-appropriate learning activities

Each of the tools in this toolkit incorporates an experiential element that draws on different participation methods (discussing, drawing, building, playing, etc.) and learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.) to ensure that young people of all ages are able to be meaningfully involved. It builds on the research that has been carried out with respect to children's normal development and learning. This knowledge demonstrates that children and youth learn best through experiential activities that involve hearing, seeing, discussing and doing.



2. A child and youth ‘rights lens’

The tools in this toolkit support the concept that all children, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, ethnic status, sexual orientation, or any other difference, have basic rights and deserve a life with dignity, peace and respect. They are designed to encourage young people to express their perspectives on issues of social inclusion, particularly Indigenous youth, children with disabilities, kids living in poverty, and other socially excluded groups of children whose role in civic society has traditionally been ignored or down played.

Seeing children and youth as rights holders fosters civic inclusion and engagement, because it recognizes that:

- ◆ Young people are important members of society, often making up the majority (e.g. aboriginal/immigrant communities)
- ◆ Different aspects of young people’s lives are interconnected and not sectoral (e.g. just housing, or just safety)
- ◆ Better decisions are made when children and youth are involved in finding solutions for issues affecting themselves and their communities

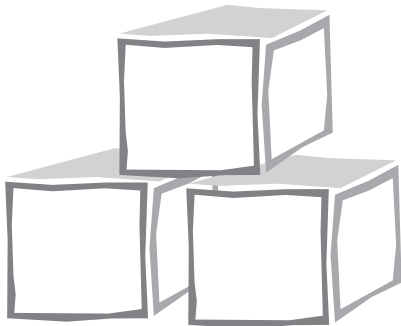
3. Strengths as building blocks

A rights-based approach acknowledges that gaps need to be filled. The best process to ensure that rights are realized is to build on personal and collective strengths.

These include the strengths of:

- ◆ children and youth
- ◆ their communities
- ◆ other support structures in place

The tools in this toolkit focus on how young people can be supported in a community and how they in turn can support the community, as opposed to being seen as clusters of “problems” that need “fixing”. This does not mean that problems are ignored, rather that the process begins with identifying assets. This assets-based approach has been shown to have both a deeper, lasting impact and to help provide the basis to address multiple problems at the same time.



“It’s really hard for youth because we’re stuck between a child and an adult, and we struggle with that... Instead of stereotyping us and saying we’re bad, I feel that they should be encouraging us and telling us, empowering us, empowering us youth. Like they’re telling us... ‘Make something in life. Do something with your talent’. I’ve changed a lot in my life, and so I feel like I’m a good person, and I’m a strong native woman.”

CRYSTAL, 19, VANCOUVER

4. A Participatory Action Research Process

Research is often viewed by youth with fear and suspicion. These fears are often well-founded as there is a long history of research being used by government and academia to justify policies that are harmful to people and communities. On the other hand, research can also be seen as structured curiosity and carried out with critical attention paid to who defines the questions that are asked, who has a say in the analysis of the results, and what purposes the research serves. Done in this way, research can be a powerful tool for groups of people to reach deeper understandings of issues that are important to them and to articulate their needs, priorities, and visions of the world.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) not only helps in identifying and understanding issues, but also engages young people and adults in processes of critical inquiry to bring about change in a timely and inclusive manner. Participants engage in activities that involve identifying issues and strengths, analyzing and prioritizing these findings, and developing action plans.

Participatory...

- ◆ Helps to ensure that young people traditionally excluded from decision-making are key players and partners throughout along with the city staff, researchers and youth-serving organizations
- ◆ Empowers participants by building on their strengths
- ◆ Enables participants to share valuable information, hear issues from others, and think about possible actions

Research...

- ◆ Systematically collects information and makes sense of it, by identifying the issues, analyzing the information, and grouping it into themes and priorities
- ◆ Requires diligent documentation to validate the process, and
- ◆ Involves all participants as researchers

Action...

- ◆ Is the ultimate goal of young people's engagement in the activities
- ◆ Flows from the participatory research activity carried out by the participants
- ◆ Concretely improves young people's lives their communities
- ◆ Actions can be concrete or less tangible

“It would be great to see more initiatives that aim to develop the critical thinking skills of young people, learning how to research and transfer their knowledge in effective ways.”

MICHELLE MUNGALL, MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR, NELSON

Doing PAR with young people leads to...

Power

SHARED DECISION MAKERS IN THE PROCESS REQUIRES SHARING POWER

Action

RESEARCH IDENTIFIES PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, AND ACTS ON AGREED-UPON KNOWLEDGE

Capacity

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS INCREASE THEIR SKILLS AND ABILITIES IN WORKING TOGETHER

*Adapted from Environmental Youth Alliance's experience



IT IS NOT EASY
TO REMAIN PARTICIPATORY
AT ALL STAGES.



CITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS
COME WITH AGENDAS AND
CONSTRAINTS.
WHAT COUNTS IS TO BEGIN
WITH A COMMITMENT TO
ALLOW FOR PARTICIPATORY
PROCESSES AND TO BE HON-
EST WHEN YOU ARE NOT
TRULY PARTICIPATORY.
EXPLAIN THE CONSTRAINTS
AND BE AS TRANSPARENT
AS POSSIBLE.

Many people feel research is removed from their everyday lives. PAR breaks the tradition by involving participants in the research. Research takes on a different meaning: it is about participants examining their lives in different ways, and identifying ways of conveying their perspectives. Make sure you discuss this with the team and the young people at different points reminding them of the collaborative process, encouraging them to raise concerns and challenges.

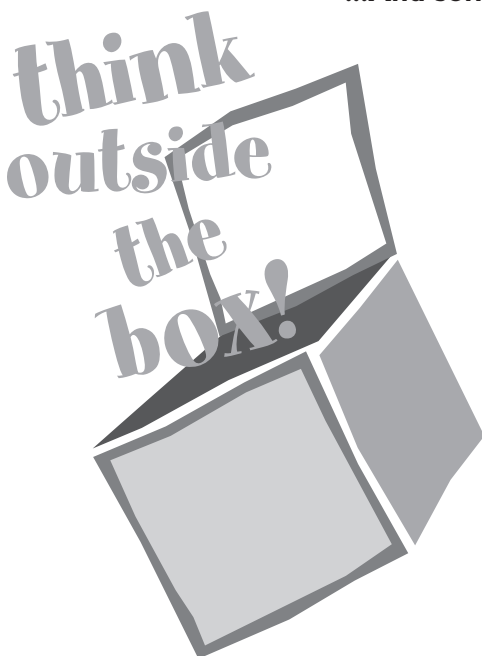
Examples of concrete benefits of PAR:

- ◆ A youth center gets built
- ◆ Bus services are changed to reflect young people's schedules
- ◆ A place in the community for young people's gathering (e.g. vacant lot, green space) is protected
- ◆ Traffic is closed down in a residential neighbourhood
- ◆ More street lights are placed in alleys
- ◆ A community fundraises for a skateboard park following skateboarders' provision of community service to improve perception of skateboarders

Associated benefits of PAR:

- ◆ Improved self-image (e.g. young people realize they have opinions that interest the wider community)
- ◆ A community that becomes more open to young people's perspectives (e.g. young people are invited to community meetings)
- ◆ A healthier community (e.g. stronger inter-generational partnerships)
- ◆ Stronger youth networks

...And some concrete changes are not expensive to implement!



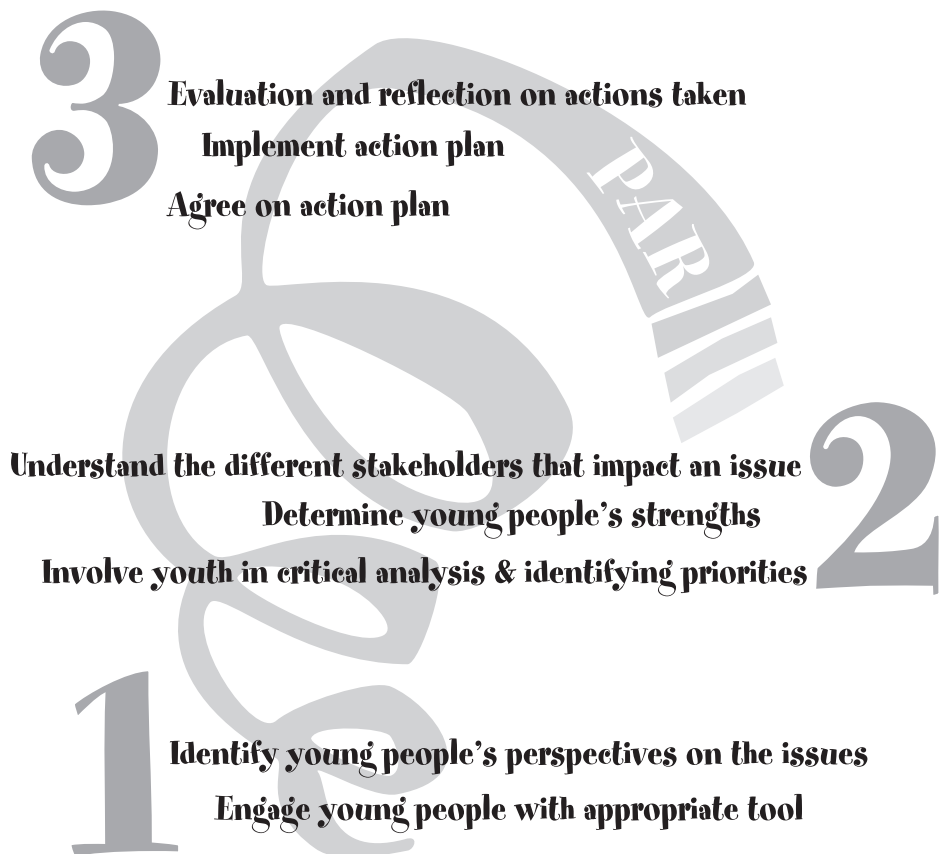
The Participatory Action Research Spiral

As the Participatory Action Research process is ongoing, it is helpful to visualize it as a spiral. PAR is essentially a process of action and reflection. As actions come out of initial PAR processes, young people continue to be involved in evaluation, critical analysis, identification of new priorities, and the development of new action plans to address issues that come up.

- ◆ All stages connect
- ◆ The flow is circular not unidirectional
- ◆ The tools can be useful at all levels

In using the participatory action research tools in this toolkit, the GUICC project stimulated inclusive dialogues on community change-making by:

- ◆ Creating a safe space for all participants
- ◆ Ensuring diverse representation and participation of stakeholders
- ◆ Using trained facilitators
- ◆ Carefully documenting and collating participants' responses
- ◆ Involving young people in critical analysis
- ◆ Collectively identifying plans of action based on strengths and priorities



AN EXAMPLE OF A
PAR PROJECT IN ACTION

City of Vancouver and PAR



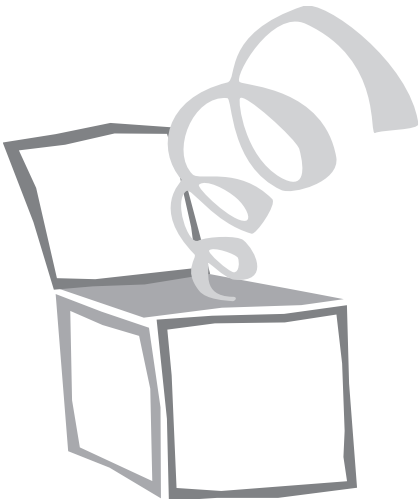
www.heygetout.ca

'Get Out! Push Your Boundaries' is an interdepartmental initiative between Social Planning, the Office of Cultural Affairs, and the Park Board of the City of Vancouver. The program enhances the health and well-being of Vancouver's youth by increasing access for diverse youth to participate in art, sport and culture.

The Youth Outreach Team worked with the Environmental Youth Alliance Youth Mappers. They held a consultation with 20 youth from across the city to seek their input on what the program would look like. This served as a basis for designing a programme that involves:

- ◆ Grants to youth
- ◆ New recreation programs
- ◆ Evaluation and participatory research

Check it out at www.heygetout.ca



Laying the foundation



Doing it right: being ethical

Consideration of ethical issues are important when working with young people:

- ◆ To safeguard the interests and rights of the children involved in the research activities
- ◆ To inform parents and guardians of the nature of the research activities
- ◆ To ensure that legal requirements on human rights have been met
- ◆ To ensure privacy and the proper protection of research materials (e.g. information gathered)

Key ethical principles

Children and youth are vulnerable to the possibility of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Organizations working with young people need to:

- ◆ Maintain proper boundaries between adults and children
- ◆ Provide for appropriate approaches to discipline
- ◆ Abide to sound and thorough screening practices for those working with young people
- ◆ Establish procedures for disclosure
(adapted from HeartWood child safety policy)

It is important that information be provided verbally and in age-appropriate writing, and that all participants (and their guardians if under age) sign consent forms. Participants also need to know:

- ◆ All of the information about the project, process and possible outcomes
- ◆ How information will be managed
- ◆ That their safety will be respected
- ◆ That they have an option to not participate if they are uncomfortable
- ◆ That their input will be acknowledged, and name identified if indicated
- ◆ Whether an honorarium will be offered to those participants requiring assistance (food, transportation, etc.)
- ◆ That they need to sign consent and ethics forms
- ◆ That they may need to obtain parental consent (need to verify ages for which parent consent forms are required with your governance body)

The Appendix provides an explanation of elements that generally need to be included in research consent forms. Make sure to verify the procedures that apply in your jurisdiction. (see page 68)

PAPERS AND PROCEDURES

DON'T REPLACE

RELATIONSHIPS.



YOUNG PEOPLE TUNE INTO

ADULTS ENERGIES.

THIS IS THE BASIS FOR THE

TRUST AND RESPECT

ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESSFUL

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PEOP-

PLE.

CONSENT FORMS ARE

CRITICAL FOR ETHICAL &

LEGAL REASONS.



YOUNG PEOPLE SOMETIMES

FEEL IT IS DISEMPowering TO

NEED PARENTS' SIGNATURES.

TAKE THE TIME TO EMPHASIZE

THAT THIS DOES NOT TAKE

AWAY THE CHILD'S POWER

OVER THEIR KNOWLEDGE.

What applies to your city?

- CRITERIA FOR REPRESENTATIVE FOCUS
- GROUPS:
- SOCIO-ECONOMIC
- IMMIGRANT
- DROP-OUT
- MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS
- INVOLVEMENT IN SPECIFIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS
- ENGLISH MOTHER-TONGUE
- PAID WORK
- INVOLVEMENT IN AT LEAST ONE ACTIVITY
- AGE (I.E. 12-15 & 15-18)
- GENDER

* From The City of Gatineau



Each project is unique: who is participating?

Even though young people are often grouped together on the basis of age, their realities vary depending on experience, background, and the context within which they live. Different groups of young people may have divergent perspectives on the same issue. One cannot assume that one group speaks for all young people nor that older youth speak for children. When choosing participants, take into consideration:

Age

Developmentally, young people's needs and perspectives vary between the age of 13 and 18. It is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Early adolescents and late adolescents may have very different concerns.

Gender

Male and female development differs, as do their perspectives.

Indigenous/Non-Indigenous

Indigenous identities are linked to distinct histories and cultural expressions. Priorities and issues will differ between non-Indigenous young people and Indigenous young people and between Indigenous youth themselves.

Culture

In an increasingly multicultural society like Canada, attention needs to be paid to cultural diversity and language. Immigrants represent the majority population in many city neighbourhoods and may significantly impact the cultural make-up of young people.

School/Non-School based

School dropout rates are significant in many parts of the country. The reality of a person who attends full-time school, and one who works full-time will differ.

Level of involvement in issues & activities

Involvement in activities exposes young people to different perspectives and will impact their awareness of issues. It is therefore important to try to include both "involved" and "uninvolved" youth.

City size

The size of the city where a young person lives impacts their issues and concerns. For instance, in a small city, the lack of things to do may be an issue. This may not be the case for young people living in a large metropolitan city.

How you choose the participants will depend on the purpose of the activities. For comprehensive studies, you will need to ensure a broad cross-sectional representation of children and youth. When consulting with young people on a specific project that affects only one sector of the population, this may not be necessary. It will, however, be necessary to clearly identify the populations involved in presenting any results from the activities.

Opening the space: engaging participants

Below are methods we found useful to ensure that young people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse views participated in the activities.

- ◆ Connecting with youth-serving organizations that have established networks of resources and skills
- ◆ Hosting the activities in public schools to reach both specific age groups, and diverse voices within that range
- ◆ Working with recreation leaders, or local mentors at community centers to access a wide range of youth who frequent the center (e.g. interest groups, sports, and drop ins)
- ◆ Having someone familiar acknowledge and praise the young people involved in the focus group, or consultation reinforced the importance of the activity
- ◆ Ensuring that the young people understood the process, how the information was going to be used, and how they would be kept in the loop allowed them to feel that the activities were a valid use of their time
- ◆ Connecting with supportive adults who had regular contact with the young people was critical in ensuring continuity and follow-up on action plans

Choosing your group size

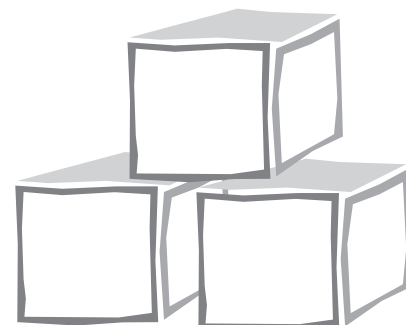
Group size can vary. The maximum number of recommended participants in an activity is between 10 and 15. In these activities it is the richness of the information, the process and the diversity of voices that is important...not the size of the group.

The GUICC activities were carried out with as few as 5 and as many as 28. Small groups allow for a richness in the description that is lost in larger groups. Larger groups can be broken up into several facilitation teams.

THERE IS OFTEN A TENDENCY TO OVER-REPRESENT THE PERSPECTIVES OF INVOLVED YOUNG PEOPLE.



DISCONNECTED YOUTH ARE DIFFICULT TO ACCESS. IDENTIFY ENTRY POINTS BY ENGAGING PEERS AND ACCESSING PLACES THAT THEY FREQUENT.





Preparing yourself

Facilitation is...

GUIDING THE GROUP
DISCUSSION IN
A MEETING OR WORKSHOP
SO THAT YOU ACCOMPLISH
WHAT YOU SET OUT TO DO
AND EVERYONE FEELS HON-
OURED, SAFE
AND COMFORTABLE.

To effectively facilitate the participatory research activities you will need:

Adequate knowledge:

To be able to perform well you will have to have an adequate knowledge of the objectives of the focus groups, and relevant issues and concerns of the group. It does not mean having all the answers, you need to be open to learning from all participants.

Active listening skills:

You need to be able to listen to what the participants are saying so you can summarize comments and repeat them back to the participants to ensure understanding. It is only possible to gain information from the group if the facilitator is NOT talking too much.

Leadership skills:

The role of the facilitator is also that of a leader. Leadership does not mean taking over the group, but rather directing the discussion, bringing the focus back to the topic while respecting each participant.

Good relationship with the participants:

In order to encourage discussion, participants need to be able to communicate with you comfortably. Sincere interest in learning about the community and children's needs should be felt by the group. A good facilitator is sensitive to the needs of the group. One approach is to take a minute to ask: "Think of a time you had a good conversation. What made it great?" This helps people keep in mind good communication skills so everyone is heard.

Patience & flexibility:

Keep in mind the age group and context of young people's lives. If the activities are taking place after a school day, young people may feel tired of listening and sitting down. Break-up the activities and introduce energizers at different points. Don't lose your sense of humour!

Practice & training:

As with all skills, being a good facilitator takes practice and training. It is important to take the time to critically reflect on your role after each session. This can also be part of the evaluation with young people.

Here are some things to keep in mind when learning to be a facilitator:

Connect with the group & stay focused

- ◆ Have clear goals
- ◆ Communicate openly
- ◆ Keep the big picture in mind
- ◆ Capture everyone's attention
- ◆ Use creativity and magic
- ◆ Use visuals and sound
- ◆ Use energizers, games, activities and the outdoors

Trust the process

- ◆ Be present
- ◆ Watch carefully and pay attention to energy, emotions and body language
- ◆ Pause and think – rather than react
- ◆ Seek counsel from co-facilitator(s)
- ◆ Adapt
- ◆ Link and connect ideas

Draw on group strengths

- ◆ Provide examples that are relevant to the experience of the participants
- ◆ Draw on their language and metaphors
- ◆ Validate their experience and interests
- ◆ Allow the participants to answer as many questions for themselves as possible
- ◆ Encourage participation / discussion about experiences
- ◆ Affirm cooperation
- ◆ Do not judge the process or the product

Keep it simple

- ◆ Don't use jargon: use plain language
- ◆ Allow silence

Turn the page for more tips from the Youth Outreach Team in Vancouver...



FACILITATION IS NOT EASY
WHEN MEETING A GROUP
FOR THE FIRST TIME.



BE SURE TO INTRODUCE
YOURSELF AND HAVE
EVERYONE INTRODUCE
THEMSELVES. IF YOU ASK PEOP-
LE TO SAY THEIR AGE, GIVE
YOURS TOO.
MAKING PEOPLE FEEL COM-
FORTABLE IS ABOUT ESTAB-
LISHING YOUR
CONNECTION WITH
THE GROUP.



Tips for effectively involving young people from Vancouver's Youth Outreach Team:

FOR MORE INFORMATION
ON HOW TO ENGAGE YOUNG
PEOPLE, CHECK OUT THE
CIVIC YOUTH STRATEGY WEB-
SITE OR CONTACT THE CITY
OF VANCOUVER YOUTH
OUTREACH TEAM BY EMAIL:
talk@vancouveryouth.ca

www.vancouveryouth.ca

- ◆ Include youth in public processes
- ◆ People are busy and often running from place to place. This includes youth! Juice and snacks are usually a good idea
- ◆ When working with youth it's a good idea to keep evenings and weekends open to meet
- ◆ City jargon and language can be confusing and a bit much at times and is best avoided
- ◆ Make sure the location is not a barrier to participation. Providing bus tickets is often appreciated
- ◆ Manage meeting agendas effectively so they are not too long or unnecessarily complex
- ◆ Create an environment that is welcoming in both physical and social terms
- ◆ More facilitators...hey, get some youth on board and train them to be the facilitators
- ◆ Propose the idea to co-workers to create positions for young people in your department
- ◆ Match youth with mentors in your workplace and provide ongoing training to help young people develop the skills they need
- ◆ Seek training for the adults you work with to build understanding of youth development and youth participation
- ◆ Work through people who have relationships with youth



Making your plan

These tools can be used for different purposes, but you must think through the process before starting. For example, a municipality can undertake a city-wide consultation or focus on a specific project.

When making your plan, consideration needs to be given to:

Select the coordinating team to carry out the activities:

- ◆ What are the skill sets of the team? Do they have facilitation skills and experience working with young people? Do they have an understanding of the participatory nature of research?
- ◆ How long will the team be involved?
- ◆ What is the team's level of commitment to the young people?
- ◆ Will the same team be involved in carrying out the follow-up activities and action plans?
- ◆ Is the team connected to municipal decision-making?

1.

Communicate the process to the young people to honor them and avoid deceptions:

- ◆ In what context are the activities being carried out?
- ◆ What are in the short and long-term action plans that young people can realistically carry out? Awareness of how the municipal system works is important.
- ◆ What is the process? Explain what will take place, and how the young people will be involved now and in the future.

2.

Plan for next steps:

- ◆ What are the anticipated end goals?
- ◆ Who needs to be at the table to make the action happen if action is the end goal? Who are the allies within municipal decision-making?
- ◆ How will information be reported back to the young people? If there will not be an opportunity to go back to them, explain what specifically happens with the information they share, and how it reaches city decision-making.

3.

Documentation

MAKE THE PROCESS
MORE PARTICIPATORY.



IDENTIFY A YOUNG PERSON
WHO IS INTERESTED IN
DOING DOCUMENTATION.
REVIEW THE ITEMS AND THE
WORKSHEET WITH THEM.
AFTER THE SESSIONS, COM-
PARE NOTES AND COMBINE
WORKSHEETS.
IN GUICC, REDWIRE FOUND
THIS MENTORING CRITICAL
TO CAPACITY-BUILDING.

Parallel to the research in which all participants are involved, documentation can ensure accuracy and validity of information gathered with the tools. Both the process and the responses of the participants in the activities can be important to document. Consider these items in developing a format that meets your needs:

Before...

- ◆ Prepare worksheets for each activity to assess and summarize the research information you gather. (see sample in Appendix page 71)

During...

- ◆ Tape-record the session (you must have permission for this). Indicate the number on the tape-recorder when a remark stands out so that you can easily return to it. Remember that transcripts and direct quotes are very valuable when advocating for change.
- ◆ Take rapid notes during activities
- ◆ Collect the maps/note cards from participants after each activity
- ◆ Meet immediately after every activity/workshop with facilitator in order to share observations and highlights, discuss notable comments, and cross-reference data

Soon after the activities...

- ◆ Read all the notes
- ◆ Summarize and complete worksheet
- ◆ Determine how to present the analyzed material back to the participants
- ◆ Review the analysis with the participants within 2 weeks of conducting the activities
- ◆ Incorporate the participants' feedback into the worksheet



X Tool functions

In this manual we identify four key activities or tools that can be used to engage young people. Each tool has a different function. This is an overview – you will find lots of ideas and examples for using these tools in the section called ‘Take up your tools’.

Mapping:

Helping young people to understand themselves in relation to a broader context

The mapping activities create an open-space for young people to define what matters to them in terms of their internal selves, and their physical and social environment. Mapping helps young people become aware of themselves in relation to their environment. It may be the first step to connecting. It is only once they understand what issues are important to them, that youth can meaningfully contribute.

Visioning:

Helping young people to identify needs, concerns and wishes

Visioning provides an opportunity for young people to imagine their ideal city. It allows for deeper understanding of children’s perspectives and visions of a healthy community that is supportive of young people. Visioning also results in young people looking at their current reality in new ways.

Photo-tour:

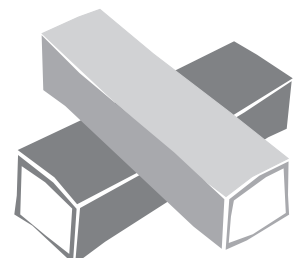
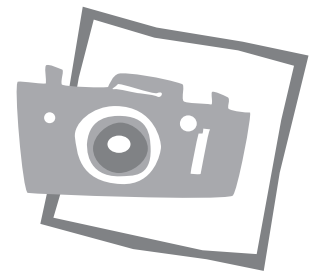
Helping young people to reframe their involvement in their community

The photo-tour involves young people walking through their community and taking pictures of the places that are important to them. Through the process and products, young people visually share their perspectives on their community.

‘Jenga’ with a twist:

Helping young people to identify strengths and move into action

The Jenga activity focuses on identifying specific issues of concern to young people in their community, and how these can be addressed using young people’s resources, and those in the community. Participants think about how they can take action in their communities and who or what are their supports.





Using the tools

Strengths:

Inclusive:

The diversity of activities invites youth to participate in ways other than talking or writing.

Creative:

The activities, especially mapping and visualization, allow space for imagination.

Give voice:

The activities allow youth to represent their stories on their terms.

Fun:

Introducing the game element in the Jenga activity spices up the process.

Challenges:

Facilitation and listening:

People leading the activities need to listen to what is said, and not just take a distanced stance of the researcher observer. This means asking questions and giving space when appropriate.

Data analysis:

The openness and multiplicity of these activities complicates the data collection process. A clear plan of how the data is collected and used needs to be laid out beforehand.

Time requirements

At a minimum you need to allocate:

Mapping: Two activities for 45 minutes each

Visioning: 1 hour

Photo Tour: 1 hour for activity
1 hour for developing (if needed)
30 minute photo finishing
30 minute debrief

'Jenga': 1 hour



Sequence options

We recommend that the four activities be carried out in the order presented as each activity builds on the previous one. Needs may vary depending on the context within which the tools are being carried out. Here are some options for sequencing with advantages and disadvantages.

Activities carried out over a longer period of time:

Activities can be used, for example, over a month with each meeting focusing on one activity. The advantage to this approach is that it allows for relationship-building and processing of information. The challenge may be in maintaining the commitment of the same group of young people and resources for the facilitation team.

Selecting just one or two tools:

Some activities may be considered more appropriate given the objectives of the process. Be aware of the objectives of each tool, and their limitations, to avoid disappointment or misreading of the information.

Activities adapted to reflect diverse perspectives:

When activities are adapted to make them more appropriate for the group, they can be more successful. Adaptation needs to be carefully thought out and requires piloting in order to verify whether the adaptation works or not.

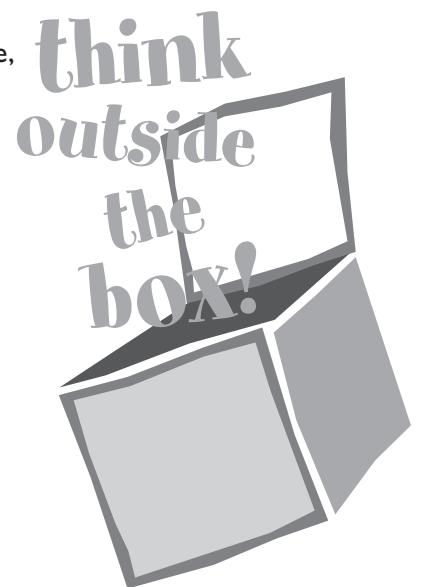
Helpful tips for successful activities

- ◆ Take time to play, and spread the activities out to allow time to discuss what happened.
- ◆ Have food – and not just pizza! Think about healthy food that young people like (e.g. fruits, popcorn, granola bars etc.).
- ◆ Honoraria – there are different perspectives on giving young people honoraria. Some consider it an indication of the value placed on young people's knowledge, others argue that it goes against the principles of participation. Bus tickets are often important to provide.
- ◆ Time and location – make sure you schedule the activity according to young people's time such as after school and weekends. Consider a meeting place this is easily accessible to young people or is a place the young people already frequent.



TIPS FOR PLANNING

SUCCESSFUL ACTIVITIES





Preparing the group

In engaging young people in the tools, it is important to establish a trusting, positive relationship and increase their comfort with the facilitator and the other participants. At the beginning and during the activities, engage in fun experiential activities.

Energizers to create trust

The following games/activities put participants at ease and increase their energy level. Through the activities, participants also experience the different components and emotions associated with social inclusion and social exclusion. Take the time to discuss how each of the games and roles make the young people feel, and how they help in creating a good space.

Cat and Mouse Game*

Community supporting it's most vulnerable

The group stands in a circle holding hands. Two members of the group are asked to volunteer to play the cat and the mouse. The cat stands outside the circle and the mouse remains inside the circle.

How to play? The cat tries to catch the mouse by running around the circle or trying to get inside the circle. Participants forming the circle try to protect the mouse, so when the cat gets in the circle, the members of the circle release the mouse while trying to keep the cat inside without breaking the chain. When the mouse is caught, two other participants take on the role of cat and mouse.

Jump In - Jump Out*

An energizer that builds group trust

The facilitator asks the participants to stand in a circle. A ball of string is unwound by passing it from participant to participant. When the ball has been passed to all participants the string is placed on the ground so as to form a circle, with all participants standing outside the circle.

The facilitator starts the game by shouting 'Jump In'. All participants jump into the circle. The facilitator then shouts 'Jump Out' and all participants jump out of the circle. The facilitator continues to shout these directions. He/she may then say, 'Jump In - Jump In'. All those participants who begin to jump out must leave the circle. The game continues until only one is left in the circle, or until the facilitator thinks participants have been suitably energized.

* ADAPTED FROM PLAN INTERNATIONAL INDONESIA, 2001