

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

YOUTH RESOURCE



RESOURCE CONTENTS

WHAT THIS RESOURCE IS FOR	3
ABOUT YNOT	3
YOUTH PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS	4
WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE INVOLVED	5
HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED	5
NEED SOME HELP?	6
DIFFERENT WAYS TO PARTICIPATE	7
BOARDS AND COMMITTEES	7
CASE STUDY 1	7
CONSULTATIONS	8
CASE STUDY 2	8
COMMUNITY GROUPS AND EVENTS	9
CASE STUDY 3	9
MENTORING	10
CASE STUDY 4	10
VOLUNTEERING	11
CASE STUDY 5	11
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP	12
CASE STUDY 6	12
RESOURCES AND LINKS	13
GENERAL	13
BOARDS AND COMMITTEES	13
CONSULTATIONS	13
COMMUNITY GROUPS	13
MENTORING	13
VOLUNTEERING	13
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP	14
USEFUL WORDS	15

WHAT THIS RESOURCE IS FOR

Youth participation and leadership is all about having a chance to have your say in decision making and being involved with your community. This resource has information about why it is good to be involved with youth participation and leadership and where you can find these opportunities. There are lots of different ways for young people to be involved and this resource explains some of them.

There are stories from other young people in this resource so you can learn more about what youth participation and leadership is like and what you can get out of being involved. This information might give you some ideas about what opportunities, activities or groups you would like to know more about or participate in.

There are also links to other websites which have more information about these different topics. You can either click on them as you read through the resource or find the website address at the end of this document along with a list of useful words.

This resource was developed for Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

ABOUT YNOT

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) is the peak body for the broader youth sector in Tasmania. YNOT has input into and responds to policy direction, advocates for the youth sector and lobbies for the needs and initiatives of young people.

Integral to the work of YNOT is the youth participation structure, known as the Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF). TYF is Tasmania's peak youth consultative and participatory body. Its members are 12 to 25 years of age, who gather together to discuss issues that affect the youth of Tasmania.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION PROGRAMS

Young people make lots of positive contributions to their community and people within communities often want to help young people participate and be involved.

The Government, community organisations and businesses are keen to involve young people in planning for the future, to create positive change. They value your ideas and want to include you in decision making.

The good news is that everyone benefits from youth participation; this includes you as the participant, the organisation that involves the young people and the whole community.

There are many different ways that you can participate in your community. The best way to find opportunities is to think about your interests and skills, and how you can do something that interests you.

By participating, you can build your confidence, develop experience and meet new people, which can open up many more opportunities.

It can seem hard to know where to start, so the idea of this guide is to give you some ideas and tips about getting involved. Remember, though, that it is great to just get out there and give something new a try.

Many of the opportunities for you to get involved will also help you to develop leadership skills. Volunteering and helping out in your community is a fantastic way to learn more about yourself and your strengths, and to prepare for your future.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE INVOLVED

Participating in extra activities or groups outside of school is a great way to build up your experiences and meet new people. Taking the time to participate will also benefit your job opportunities, as employers will be impressed by the time you have given to learn new skills and contribute to community groups.

If you are thinking about ways to get involved, have a think about what skills you have and what you enjoy doing. Have a look for opportunities to participate with a group or organisation that works in an area that appeals to you. For example, if you are interested in sport you could help out with an active after-school program or sit on the board of your sports club.

Becoming involved in your community is a great way to open yourself up to new experiences and make a contribution, by helping to improve things for the future. Getting involved is also a fantastic way to meet people who are interested in the same things as you.

Be open to sharing your thoughts and ideas. Your ideas could lead to change if the right people hear what you have to say. You can share your ideas with the organisers about how to get more people involved, and also be sure to discuss any problems you might be experiencing.

One of the best things about getting involved is that you never know who you may meet... It could even lead to work in the future.

LINK

Have a look at the Youth Affairs Coalition of Victoria's youth participation resource, named YERP. It has some great information, including a document that talks about **the benefits to young people of becoming involved**.

HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED

As mentioned earlier, it is best to look for opportunities with an organisation or group that interests you, as you will get more from the experience. You are also more likely to enjoy participating when it involves an area that you're interested in.

Look for opportunities that are advertised in places where you and your friends spend time. Opportunities may be shared through newsletters, facebook, and on notice boards at schools, YMCA, church groups, shopping centres and sports facilities... just to name a few.

You can also seek out opportunities by doing some research about what is on offer. You could read the newspaper, visit the websites of organisations you are interested in, or sign up for some mailing lists so that you find out about new opportunities as they come up.

It can also be useful to ask around, so don't be afraid to ask for help. Your parents, teachers, friends and family may have ideas that could help you to find a way to get involved.

If there is a particular organisation that you would like to help out with, it may be worth contacting the organisation to ask whether there is an opportunity for you to get involved.

Participating is also a great way to try something new. By volunteering in a workplace you can find out more about an area that you're interested in studying. Another benefit of participating is that it can help you to build up some different experiences to use in your resume.

LINK

YERP also has a page about **how to make a difference in your community**.

NEED SOME HELP?

Just like when you start a new job, there are lots of things you will need to know when you start helping out in a group or organisation.

You should have a contact person or buddy who will help you to get started. It is a good idea to have a chat with them to find out what is expected of you, so that you know what to do.

Try to get to know your contact person. This way, you will feel comfortable to ask questions and to speak to them about anything that is worrying you. Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for extra help if you need it.

There are things that you can do to help your participation to go well. Keeping your contact person or supervisor up to date is very important. For example, make sure you let someone know if you are sick or cannot make it in on a day that you planned to be there.

Remember to speak to your contact person if you are not happy with how things are going, as they can give you advice or help you find a solution. After all, the organisation or group will be grateful that you have taken the time to help out, and will want you to enjoy your experience.

LINK

The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) has written a set of **employment tips** in consultation with young people. Although they focus on employment, they provide practical information that is relevant to young people who are participating.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

There are many different ways to get involved and you will find more information about these options below. Remember that you will enjoy helping out more if you choose an area or activity that you really like.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Boards are in charge of making decisions about how to run a community organisation. A committee is usually formed to make decisions about an event.

A board is made up of a group of people who are interested in the organisation, and have the skills to help. The board members have meetings to make decisions about the way the organisation is run, and to check over the organisation's finances.

It is best if board members have varied backgrounds and skills. Boards want to involve young people because they have different ideas, skills, and experiences to contribute to making decisions.

Becoming a board member might seem a bit scary at first, but young board members are given extra support. Sometimes organisations might give you more responsibility over time, for example, you might attend three board meetings before you are able to vote to make decisions.

Being involved in decision making will give you a lot of experience. Your involvement with a board will also show future employers that you are responsible, and that you are comfortable in professional meetings.

CASE STUDY 1

Board membership – Jemma

Jemma joined the board of a youth broadcasting organisation after finding out about the opportunity through a work mate.

Jemma has found that being a board member has been a great opportunity to learn how boards work and the role that they can play within an organisation.

Jemma said that being a board member has helped to develop her communication skills and has shown her the importance of taking notes in meetings, and planning for the future.

"These are also skills that I have developed which I can use outside of my role as a board member."

LINK

YERP has a page about **young people participating on boards and committees**.

CONSULTATIONS

The Government and organisations hold consultations when they are deciding whether to move ahead with a new idea. Consultations give people who will be affected by the plan or idea the opportunity to share their opinions.

Consultations are a great way to voice your opinion and share your ideas about a topic that is important to you. Being involved in a consultation will also give you an opportunity to have a say before decisions are made, and hopefully this will mean the right decisions will be made.

After the consultation has finished, the organisers will tell you how your feedback will be used. The organisers should also let you know whether they will write a report about the consultation, and where you can find a copy.

Some examples of the ways consultations can be run include:

- A discussion or interview with one participant to get feedback;
- A survey where people respond to questions about the topic;
- A number of small groups talk about the topic and then give a response on behalf of their group.

CASE STUDY 2

Steph

Steph found out about opportunities to participate in consultations through the youth group she was already involved in.

Steph said that participating in consultations has helped her to build her confidence and that she is now comfortable speaking with others, in addition to speaking in front of a crowd. Steph said that her experiences with consultations has helped her to have the confidence to speak to politicians

Steph also said that some other fantastic opportunities that have opened up for her, through her participation.

"I have developed leadership skills that include simple things like the ability to speak to people and confidently make phone calls."

LINK

Check out the Statewide Youth Collaborative Group's **guide to consultation for young people**. It includes tips and information about participating in a consultation.

COMMUNITY GROUPS AND EVENTS

Helping out in a community group or helping to plan a special event that matters to you is a great way to get involved.

Joining a group that is in charge of organising an event can be a great way to have a go at helping out, as planning the event is likely to have a short timeframe. This will help you work out whether being involved will fit in with your other commitments.

If you are helping out in a community group, they may be flexible with your participation, based on when they are busy or when they are holding events.

Working within a community group is also a great way to meet people who live in your community and have the same interests as you. Look for opportunities with organisations in your local area.

CASE STUDY 3

Community Groups and Events - Yasmir

Yasmir found out about an opportunity to help organise a concert through the youth group she was involved in.

Yasmir said that she enjoyed working in a team, as the group shared the jobs between them. She said that it worked well to break down the big task of organising a concert into smaller parts, for example choosing the bands and booking services for the event.

Yasmir's advice for other young people who are thinking about helping to organise an event is to make sure you have a good group of people to help out. Over all, Yasmir enjoyed helping out and would recommend being involved in organising an event, as a good way to start out.

"The feeling of accomplishment at the end of the event after everything goes smoothly is something everybody should feel at least once in their life."

LINK

Although there are many ways to find opportunities within your community, there are two large global organisations that have local community groups - **UN Youth Australia** and **Rotaract**. These organisations both offer opportunities to make a difference in your local community.

MENTORING

Mentoring is where a person (the mentee) is matched up with a more experienced person (the mentor) who shares their knowledge, skills and networks.

The mentor meets with the mentee regularly to provide support and advice to help the mentee to reach their goals. Mentoring programs will match the mentee with the mentor, based on the mentor's skills and experience, and what skills the mentee needs to develop.

Mentoring benefits both the mentor, and the person they are mentoring. The mentor improves their leadership skills and gives back to the community by mentoring, and the mentee has the opportunity to learn from their mentor's experience.

As a young person it is more likely that your involvement with mentoring will be as a mentee. However, experienced young people can be mentors too. For example if you have played a sport at a senior level you could mentor someone who is starting out in that sport.

CASE STUDY 4

Mentoring – Jack

Jack was interested in radio and found his own opportunity after attending a youth conference and meeting a radio show host.

Jack took the initiative to contact the radio station, and after doing some work experience he asked whether he could go on the radio show with the host he had met.

Jack is now a regular co-host on the radio show and has learnt a lot from the radio show host, who has been a mentor.

"Not many people my age get the opportunity to be a radio host. My mentor has taught me a lot about journalism and how to get my foot in the door."

Jack's experience shows that it is important to follow your interests and that it is important to make a good impression when you meet people. This experience shows that it can pay off to be brave and ask whether you can get involved.

LINK

The Australian Youth Mentoring website contains **useful information** about what mentoring involves. If you are interested in finding a mentor, the website also includes contact details for organisations in Southern Tasmania and a list of other opportunities.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is a fantastic way to help out within your community. An added bonus is that employers value volunteer experience when they see it on resumes, particularly for young people who haven't had an opportunity to get much work experience yet.

There are lots of different opportunities to volunteer, and you can choose an area that is important to you. For example, if you love animals you could volunteer at an animal shelter. Or if you enjoy talking with people who have lots of life experience, you could volunteer to visit people in a retirement home.

If you are interested in a particular type of job or career, you could also volunteer to do a work placement or work experience. Work placements are usually for a short amount of time such as one day or a week. They are about getting the chance to learn about what a job or career is like and give you some experience in that workplace. Sometimes you can do work placements through your school but you can also contact workplaces yourself and ask if you could do some work experience with them.

Volunteering – Tom

Tom was looking to gain some experience in the youth sector and contacted a youth focused organisation after reading an article and doing some research about the organisation.

Tom has found that volunteering in a small office has helped him to develop some valuable workplace skills and experience, which add to what he has already studied.

"Volunteering in any workplace is a great way to familiarise yourself with how workplaces operate."

CASE STUDY 5

As a young person himself, Tom found it valuable to volunteer in an organisation that is passionate about engaging with and helping young people.

Tom said that by volunteering in an area that he is interested in working in, he has met people and formed relationships that may lead to work opportunities in the future.

"Participate in every opportunity that is open to you through your role as a volunteer as these experiences will enhance your skills."

Tom's experience shows that it is valuable to make the most of opportunities as a volunteer. In a small community, the people you get to know might be helpful when you are looking for work.

LINK

Volunteering Australia has a useful resource about how to look for opportunities to volunteer. **Volunteering Tasmania** has also developed some good fact sheets that contain information and advice about volunteering.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social entrepreneurship is about taking the initiative to make a difference about a community issue that you care about. As a young person, you are well suited to starting or helping out in social enterprises because you have new ideas and want to make a difference in your community. Social enterprises often need the help of volunteers, so this can be a great way to get involved and learn some new skills.

If you have an idea to start a social enterprise, it can be a big undertaking, especially if you are doing it alone. But it can also be very rewarding, so if you've got a great idea that could make a difference in your community, have a think about how to bring it in to action. You may be able to get funding to start your social enterprise through the government, community grants or corporate programs.

Examples of social enterprises:

- A retail business that uses their profits to pay for mental health resilience training in their community;
- A company that donates 20 cents from every bottle of water sold to provide clean drinking water to villages in Africa; and
- A car repair business that charges customers to fix their cars, to cover the cost of providing mechanical training to disadvantaged young people.

Social Entrepreneurship – Ollie

Ollie founded a social enterprise to provide training and inspiration to other young people, to encourage them to think about how they can turn their passion into a business opportunity.

Ollie shares his own story about starting a business with young people, so that they have the information they need to start their own journey. Ollie said that although it is good to support young people, he thinks it is important that young people learn their own lessons along the way.

Through his experience in working with young people, Ollie said that young people like to learn by hearing other people's stories, rather than formal classroom teaching.

Ollie said that young people are naturally good at finding different solutions to problems and that these skills are essential when starting a social enterprise.

CASE STUDY 6

LINK

YERP has lots of useful information about youth participation, including a **document about social enterprise**. A number of organisations also run programs and mentoring opportunities for young people who have an idea for a social enterprise.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

GENERAL

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria – YERP 5 reasons to get involved

<http://yerp.yacvic.org.au/why-it-matters/for-young-people/5-reasons-to-get-involved>

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria – YERP How to make a difference

<http://yerp.yacvic.org.au/get-started/for-young-people/how-to-make-a-difference>

Tasmanian Youth Forum – TYF Employment tips for young people

www.ynot.org.au/about-tyf/reports

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria – YERP Young people on boards and committees

<http://yerp.yacvic.org.au/taking-part/involve-young-people/young-people-on-boards-and-committees>

CONSULTATIONS

Statewide Youth Collaborative Group – Top Ten Tips; SYC's guide to consulting for young people

<http://www.ynot.org.au/sites/all/files/ynot/FINAL%20SYC%20Top%20Ten%20Tips%20Pamphlet.pdf>

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Youth Central Victoria – Start or join a group

<http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/government-info-assistance/do-it-yourself-democracy/finding-the-people/start-or-join-a-group>

MENTORING

Australian Youth Mentoring Network – Info for young people

<http://www.youthmentoring.org.au/info-for-young-people.html>

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering Tasmania – Volunteer Connect

<http://www.volunteeringtas.org.au/for-volunteers/volunteer-connect/>

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria – YERP Starting a social enterprise

<http://yerp.yacvic.org.au/find-money/for-young-people/starting-a-social-enterprise>

Youth Central Victoria – Starting your own business

<http://www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au/jobs-careers/starting-your-own-business>

USEFUL WORDS

Board	The group of people who make decisions about how an organisation is run. Board members have the skills needed to make decisions.
Charity	An organisation that is run to help a particular group of people, for example people living in poverty.
Contact person	The person who will help answer your questions when you are participating in an organisation.
Community	A group of people who are brought together by their common interest or background. This may be because of where they live, their hobbies or their religion.
Community grants	Money given to organisations or groups to help them do their work. This money usually comes from government.
Mentee	The less experienced person who is given advice by the more experienced person.
Mentor	The more experienced person who gives advice to the less experienced person.
Not-for-profit	An organisation that is run for a purpose, but isn't run to make money.
Organisation	A group that has formed to achieve a common goal. Organisations have formal structures to make sure they achieve their purpose.
Participant	The young person helping out in the group or organisation.
Social entrepreneurship	A business that is run to achieve social benefits in the community.
Volunteering	When you give your time to help out in your community, without receiving payment.

For further information, please contact
the Youth Network of Tasmania.

Suite 4a, Mayfair Plaza
236 Sandy Bay Road
Sandy Bay 7005

03 6223 5511
admin@ynot.org.au