YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

MODULE 5: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION: SUSTAINING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT









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VIEWING ADDITIONAL MODULES

This module of the JCSH
Youth Engagement Toolkit is
one among eight. The modules
were developed as a single,
comprehensive toolkit so we
encourage you to explore
them in sequence for the
best experience. To view the
other modules, return to the
main JCSH Youth Engagement
Toolkit page to access links to
all eight. Enjoy!



Youth Engagement in Action: Sustaining Youth Engagement



Steps for Policy & Decision Makers Steps for Practitioners

- 1. Report Back to Young People
- 2. Seek Out Future Engagement **Opportunities**
- 3. Share Success Stories

- 1. Create Follow-Up Activities
- 2. Maintain the Relationships
- 3. Link Youth to Organizations and Opportunities

Depending on their experience, young people may be motivated to stay engaged with a project or initiative or disengage from the opportunity. Sustaining factors involve practices and spaces to maintain relationships, connections, motivation and action. When planning for a youth engagement initiative, think beyond the initial event, meeting or project, to establish mechanisms that will sustain involvement.





"I am inspired to share the findings of this study to my peers."

Youth Participant

SUSTAINING STEPS FOR POLICY AND DECISION **MAKERS**

1. Report Back to Young People

If you have asked youth to give input on a policy or program, it is important to report back to them on how their ideas were used. Seeing and hearing about the impact of their contribution motivates young people to stay engaged and get involved in future opportunities (e.g. civic engagement). Young people are also in a key position to share information with their peers. If they have been involved in developing a policy or program, youth will likely have a greater interest in and ability to support implementation.

2. Seek out Future Youth Engagement Opportunities

If you have involved young people in decision-making, policy development or program design, you will be in a unique position to identify other projects that would benefit from youth voice. Look for new and existing opportunities to sustain the engagement of young people or innovative projects to engage new youth.

3. Share Success Stories

Help facilitate a culture shift by sharing the benefits and experiences of youth engagement with those who are less familiar or sceptical. Share recommendations, reports, pictures and videos or do presentations on the outcomes of a project. Be an advocate for youth voice within your ministry, school board or district or organization.

SUSTAINING STEPS FOR **PRACTITIONERS**

Create Follow-Up Activities

If an initiative has concluded, or funding has run out, consider involving interested young people in developing proposals for future funding, or in follow-up activities that require less support. These could be small research inquiry projects, taking action on recommendations from the project, or assisting with elements

INQUIRY BASED LEARNING

Darren Haley, Coordinator of Student Services with the South Shore Regional School Board, NS describes the benefits of engaging young people in designing their own learning environment. "At the middle-school level - we're experimenting with inquiry-based learning. Youth are facilitating their own learning, which has changed how we view best practices. We've seen increased attendance, lower office referrals, and better report cards"



"I will take this information back to my community and remain focused on what needs to be done in order to continue/implement the projects we have started here. I also look forward to regularly reconnecting with the people I have met."

Youth Participant

of project reporting. Most youth engagement activities foster great motivation and commitment for community change so it's important to keep the momentum going rather than letting it fizzle out. Some additional follow-up activities include:

- · Establishing local youth groups to discuss/take action on a certain issue
- · Creating "youth messages" (videos, posters, blogs, skits, etc.) to share information from the project
- Delivering presentation to adults and youth about the project outcomes, recommendations, and/or next steps
- Fundraising for next steps and/or future events
- Holding weekly/monthly conference calls
- Developing planning committees or advisory committees to provide ongoing input
- Conducting follow-up evaluations 3– 6 months later which ask young people to reflect on the experience and how it impacted them
- Connecting youth to other opportunities and organizations that further their goals and match their interests

"The people (leaders and youth and adults) are amazing! Very easy to talk to and get along with! Made some great new friends this weekend."

Youth Participant

" The highlight was meeting new people:) and seeing everybody I met last year"

Youth Participant

Maintain the Relationships

The friendships and supportive relationships that young people develop through youth engagement activities are often what they value and learn from the most. Create mechanisms and spaces to help maintain these relationships. Establish a Facebook page; find a meeting space for young people to connect in person; host follow-up events, social gatherings or calls; and check-in

YOUTH AND **DECISION MAKING**

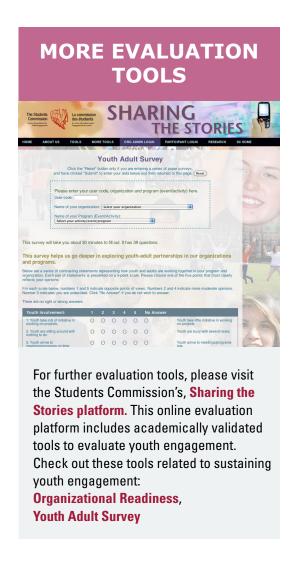


"We engage youth in a number of ways and for a variety of reasons. As a Government Agency, our legacy has been the ability to coordinate groups of youth through a consultative workshop type process and then line them up with an opportunity to speak with decision makers (Ministers, committees, etc). When decision makers hear directly from youth, support is there, policies are created, and change happens." - Mellissa Wood, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, NT

with young people even after the project has wrapped up. Thank you letters or cards, certificates and volunteer-hour accreditation are other ways to maintain connections and recognize contributions.

Link Youth to Organizations and Opportunities

If there are not any resources or activities to support ongoing engagement, seek out other opportunities for young people. Link them to different community organizations - do a resource tour, visit organizations in person and introduce them to staff and youth members. If a young person showed interest in a specific issue or



"I will take what I have learned (especially about the influence of support networks) back to work to see how we can use these networks to share information with youth"

Adult Participant

activity, connect them with community organizations or projects working in this area. A young person's support network should expand, not shrink, following a youth engagement activity.

AN INDICATOR FRAMEWORK

First, review the indicators for Sustaining Youth Engagement. Then as an individual or organizational team, think about your current practices. How do you currently sustain young people's engagement? Do you report back to young people? What could you do differently? Use the Assessment Tool to record your discussions and set goals for improving engagement practices.



Remember, some of these indicators may not be relevant to your context, or may be better understood as a goal your organization is working towards. Don't be afraid to start small or prioritize the areas you'd like to work on.