
About Canvassing

These questions provide a step-by-step process for planning your own youth engagement projects. If you choose to type up these answers, you will have the start of a concept paper for your boss, grant proposals for funders, or recruitment flyers for teens. These questions appeared throughout the *Youth VOICES in Community Design* handbook at the end of each chapter. Here, they are provided together for your convenience.

Step 1: Get Started

Corresponds with Chapter 2: Benefits and Challenges of Engaging Youth in Policymaking

1. Why do you want to engage youth in decision-making? What prompted your interest in youth engagement? Was it a problem (such as a lack of local bike lanes), a circumstance (such as consideration of new ordinance), or an individual (such as a new mayor)?

2. How would youth engagement strengthen your work?

3. How would youth benefit from an engagement project associated with your organization?

4. What challenges might you face? Any initial ideas for overcoming them?

Step 2: Assess Your Organization's Readiness

Corresponds with Chapter 3: Are You Ready For Youth Engagement?

5. What are the attitudes of you and your colleagues regarding engaging youth in policymaking?

6. At this time, where do you think your organization is on the Power Continuum Table? Where would you like to be? How will you get there?

7. What staff resources can your organization devote to a youth engagement project?

8. What financial resources currently exist for a youth engagement project? What fundraising options exist? (Foundations, government agencies, local corporations?)

9. With whom might you partner to run the project? (Youth organizations, schools?)

Step 3: Decide Which Approach Is Right For You

Corresponds with Chapter 4: Models of Youth Engagement

(**Note:** We suggest also reviewing Chapter 7: Case Studies of Successful Projects.)

10. Which youth engagement models most appeal to you? Why?

11. Based on your answers in Step 2 (staff, funding, colleagues), which models do you think are realistic for your organization at this time?

12. What role will youth have in selecting your project framework (or in selecting activities within that framework)?

Step 4: Decide How to Recruit Youth

Corresponds with Chapter 5: Recruiting Youth

13. What mix of youth will you seek to recruit (age, race, academic performance, etc.)?

14. How will you find youth? Will you tap other organizations to get the word out? Which ones?

15. Will you offer a stipend? How much?

16. Will you use adult nominators?

17. Will you have a selection committee review applications? If so, who might be on it?

18. How will you inform any applicants who are not selected for your project? Are there other ways the project might engage these youth later? Are there other programs to which you can refer them?

Step 5: Decide How to Train the Youth

Corresponds with Chapter 6: Training! Training! Training!

19. What knowledge, characteristics, or interests should youth have before they are recruited for your project?

20. What can they learn after being recruited, through training you will provide?

21. How might you structure your training (one day, a weekend retreat, throughout a semester?)

22. Which of the California Center training modules are suitable for your project?

23. Are there other organizations in your community that might help with your training?

Step 6: Set a Timeline

By this point, you have a rough idea of how long your project planning will take. It helps to put your timeline on paper. Remember to build in extra time, since unforeseen things always come up.

Phase 1: Assessing and Gathering Resources

Depending on your situation and your proposed project, this phase might take a month or a year. Consider how much time you will need to build support among colleagues and superiors, how long it will take to build a network of partner organizations (if appropriate) and raise funds (if necessary).

(**Note:** Corporate grants are often decided upon in a couple of months; foundation grants typically take about 6 months; government grants 8-10 months or more. Remember, you can always start with small projects that cost little or nothing.)

Activity	Projected Dates / Length of Time
Start date	
Building internal support	
Recruiting organizational partners	
Identify existing resources that might let you avoid fundraising	
Fundraising, if needed	

Phase 2: Project Planning and Recruitment

Once your internal support, partners, and funding are squared away, you can start actually planning the details of the project. In most cases, recruitment takes longer than expected. It is best to give yourself 1-3 months for recruitment, depending on the announcement and selection approaches you have chosen.

Activity	Projected Dates / Length of Time
Finalizing project model	
Planning and researching youth training agenda	
Developing recruitment materials (with application deadline)	
Getting the word out (mailings, posting flyers, etc.)	
Extended recruitment period (in case you don't get enough applications the first time)	
Selection process (will take longer if you are selecting via committee or interviews)	

Phase 3: Project Implementation

We cannot predict your project implementation activities since every project is different. Use the blank lines to record activities and times appropriate to your project.

Activity	Projected Dates / Length of Time

Phase 4: Evaluate, Sustain the Project, or Maybe Wrap Up

If your project centers on an event, it will have an end date. If you are establishing a permanent youth commission, the project will not end but may have a natural cycle when you can evaluate, revise the model, and go again. Try to predict what will be right for you, but give yourself the freedom to be flexible.

Activity	Projected Dates / Length of Time
Evaluating the project	
Celebrating accomplishments	
Planning the next phase, including possibly growing or expanding	
Recruiting new youth (if applicable)	
Renewing funding (if applicable)	
Archiving materials so your project can be replicated in future (if it is ending)	