



## Youth advisory groups

Youth advisory groups offer a structured, ongoing platform where young people can advise, co-create and evaluate projects. This approach can be used to encourage deeper involvement, build trust and ensure a child- and youth-centred environment. They can advise on design, recruitment, communication strategies, data interpretation and dissemination. Youth advisory groups are especially helpful for capturing diverse child or youth perspectives, building trust and ensuring your work remains relevant to their experiences.

### The benefits of youth advisory groups

- **Insights into youth needs:** Identify barriers, challenges and interests from a young person's viewpoint.
- **Communication guidance:** Suggest child-friendly or youth-focused language and platforms.
- **Tools and pilot testing:** Review surveys, interview guides or other methods to ensure they are engaging and appropriate.
- **Inclusivity advice:** Propose strategies for involving marginalised or diverse groups of young people.
- **Co-design:** Participate in or even lead workshops or events that shape your research or project outcomes.
- **Dissemination:** Help share findings with peers, community groups or social media networks.



NOTE: In research projects, children or young people can be both participants and advisory group members, but these are separate roles. Research participants provide data for analysis, while advisory members guide the project's direction and process.



## Keep in mind

**Advisory group recruitment:** Refer to the [Recruiting children and young people into your project](#) section.



### Training and upskilling

Providing proper preparation and support for children and young people is essential for ensuring their meaningful participation. Meaningful participation is possible only when those involved have sufficient information, experience, and training to contribute effectively.

Determine whether children and young people require any training or upskilling to perform their roles and responsibilities within the project. Provide training and upskilling prior to commencing the project to ensure full and meaningful involvement, and to reduce any potential risk of harm.<sup>13</sup>

Peer-to-peer training involves engaging children and young people in training their peers. This method provides children and young people with the opportunity to learn from and share knowledge with those of their own age.<sup>30</sup>

### Defining roles, responsibilities and goals

Collaborating with children and young people to define roles, responsibilities and goals helps to develop a sense of ownership and can enhance engagement.

Define and agree upon the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the project from the very start. This helps to manage expectations and avoid potential disappointments about what can be achieved through involvement. Involving children and young people when allocating defining roles and responsibilities (where possible) can also be beneficial.

Facilitators should openly discuss children and young people's goals for their involvement. This helps to align their contributions with their own objectives and what they perceive to be meaningful.

Children and young people have different strengths and capabilities. As such, they each will derive meaning from different types of activities and roles within a project. When defining roles, responsibilities and goals, consider showcasing their strengths while also providing opportunities to grow and develop new strengths.

### Coordination and management of advisory groups (ongoing)

This section provides guidance on how to manage an advisory group clearly and effectively. The information is presented for consideration, not in any particular order.

#### Terms of Reference

- Create a *Terms of Reference* document.
- This document explains the purpose and goals of the advisory group.
- It also describes the roles and responsibilities of each member.



## Planning considerations



### Advisory group meetings

To ensure effective and collaborative Advisory Group meetings, consider the following:

- **Planning and scheduling meetings**
  - Determine the duration (e.g. 90 mins), frequency (e.g. fortnightly, monthly) and location (in-person, or online) of meetings. This will be dependent on the individual needs of the project.
  - Use tools like Doodle polls or availability tables to find a time that works for members.
  - If meeting online, set up re-occurring calendar invites with meeting links (Zoom, Teams, Webex) and send to all members.
- **Establish and share meeting agendas ahead of each scheduled meeting**
  - Distribute a brief agenda a few days prior to each meeting to allow members to prepare and keep discussions focused.
  - This is a good way to gently remind members that an upcoming meeting is approaching.
  - Consider including any reading material and documents (where relevant).
- **Rotate meeting times if needed**
  - For groups with varied schedules or time zones, consider rotating meeting times occasionally to accommodate everyone's availabilities.
- **Note taking and sharing meeting minutes**
  - Designate someone to take minutes to capture key meeting discussion points, decisions made and any post-meeting and action items required.
  - Share these promptly with all members, particularly those who were absent during the meeting (so they are kept in the loop of where the project is up to).
  - Besides note taking, assign other roles as needed (e.g. timekeeper or facilitator) to ensure meetings run smoothly and everyone has a chance to participate.

### Encourage participation and engagement

- Begin each meeting by inviting members to share updates or raise relevant issues.
- Review outstanding tasks and follow up action items from previous meetings to maintain momentum and ensure accountability and progress within the group.
- A Working Together Agreement (WTA) can help foster a collaborative environment, especially for members who are unfamiliar with each other or have not worked together before (see the [Group agreements](#) section for more details).
- It is important to get every member to contribute and agree to the content in the WTA.
- Clarify communication expectations, such as response times to emails and other communications between meetings. This can help keep everyone aligned and ensure timely feedback.
- Acknowledge members' contributions during and outside meetings to encourage ongoing engagement. Consider sending a summary email that highlights members' contributions.

### In-person meetings

- Ensure meeting location is accessible to people with physical disabilities e.g. buildings have ramps etc.
- Consider using a creative method of engagement (e.g. [Art based activities](#), [Photography](#), [Task-oriented and activity-based methods](#))



## Online meetings

- If appropriate and with everyone's consent, recording meetings may help those who cannot attend in person. Add guidance on whether recordings will be used and how they'll be shared or stored.
- Consider enabling closed captions, for accessibility.
- If using Zoom, there are a [suite of apps](#) (e.g. Miro, Kahoot!, Zoom whiteboard) that can be used to increase engagement and collaboration during team meetings.

## Tips for engaging and seeking feedback



If you are meeting online, try encouraging members to use the chat option or breakout rooms. This can help young people who may feel shy or not ready to speak. Give people other ways to join in and share their thoughts.

## Flexible approaches to engagement and feedback

- Use different ways to keep everyone engaged (like emails, shared communications channel).
- Allow members to share ideas and ask questions in ways that suit them best.
- Be flexible and open to changes that support group members' needs.
- Provide opportunities for group members to give feedback on the meeting process itself. This could help in fine-tuning the format, length, and timing of meetings as the project progresses.
- Offer opportunities for members who were unable to attend meetings to provide feedback or input outside of meetings, such as through email or using the comments function in shared documents.

If you need feedback on specific documents, consider sharing a live version of the file. This allows multiple members to work on the document simultaneously and see each other's changes in real time, avoiding version control issues with all edits automatically saved. Just be sure to save local copies of different versions of the document as you go, in case you need to review a previous version later.

## Resources and publications

[A Guide to Establishing a Children and Young People's Advisory Group | Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People.](#)

A comprehensive Guide from the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People NSW on establishing and running child and youth advisory groups, including a checklist.

[How to write a Terms of Reference for a Project? – Explained with Example | Change Management Insight.](#)

Actionable steps for developing a Terms of Reference.

[Terms of Reference Template | Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.](#)

[Children's voices for change: Co-researching with children and young people as family violence experts by experience | Dimopoulos et al. \(2024\).](#)

Insights to including a Youth Advisory Group in research with young people who have experienced family violence.