GUIDE 04

BUILDING SKILLS FOR IMPACT

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Why is building skills for impact important?

Effective youth engagement involves recognising that everyone has unique strengths and experiences that evolve over time. It's essential to create opportunities for young people to build their skills, allowing for better participation. Policymakers should ensure that proper training and support are in place so that young people feel valued and can contribute meaningfully. This not only acknowledges their input but also helps them gain skills that enhance their future education and employment options. Additionally, policymakers can learn new methods of engagement, such as mentorship and communication, through their interactions with youth. It's important to embrace mistakes as part of the learning process and to adapt as needed.
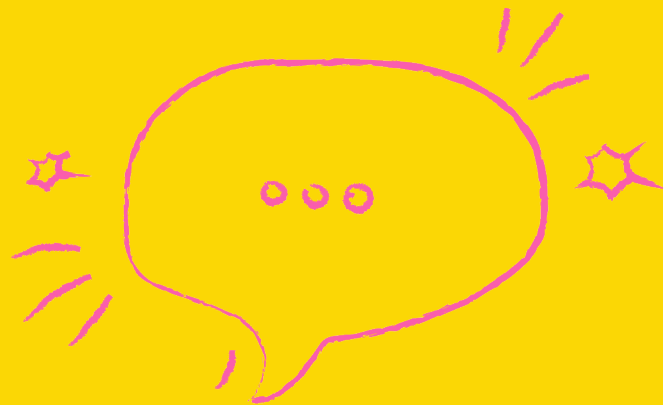
01
SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BUILD THEIR SKILLS

Young people are experts in their own experience and may be interested or already knowledgeable in the policy topic.

Setting young people up for success to fully participate in policy-making processes means supporting young people to develop an understanding of government processes, critical thinking skills and communication and negotiation skills.

Skills required for active youth participation in policy-making processes:

POLITICAL LITERACY

- Basic understanding of concepts of democracy
- Awareness of their rights and duties as citizens
- Knowledge of basic laws, political rights and democratic institutions
- Understanding of the role of political parties and, interest groups
- Knowledge about how to influence policy development

DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES AND VALUES

- Responsibility
- Social justice
- Human rights
- Respect and acceptance
- Identity
- Diversity
- Conflict resolution

CRITICAL THINKING

- Ability to collect information from different sources
- Ability to analyse, interpret and judge information
- Communication skills for a political discussion
- Ability to take a position based on prior critical analysis

Source: OECD (2017), based on European Youth Forum (2002)

Formal training, such as skills building workshops, may be required to learn about the policy topic or policy or research processes.

Informal training and mentoring, such as one-to-one sessions or fortnightly group discussions, can support the development of professional skills in time management, communication and teamwork.

STEPS TO BUILD YOUNG PEOPLE'S SKILLS

ASSESS CURRENT SKILLS

Understand what skills participants already have and what areas they want to develop.

EMBED PEER LEARNING

Pair youth participants for collaborative tasks (e.g., data analysis or co-facilitation).

PROVIDE TRAINING

Design training sessions tailored to youth needs and project goals (e.g. media training, research, advocacy).

ONGOING SUPPORT

Ensure regular check-ins and access to relevant resources throughout the engagement.

The framework below should help you to identify the skills and knowledge needed for different youth engagement approaches.

ENGAGEMENT METHOD	SKILLS REQUIRED	KNOWLEDGE PREPARATION
Workshops	Minimal, focus on creativity	Topic overview and workshop structure
Focus Groups/Consultations	Basic communication skills	Questions and background on consultation topic
Advisory Committees	Leadership, collaboration, advocacy	Policy cycles, governance processes
Town Halls/Public Hearings	Public speaking, presentation skills	Topic details and political processes
Campaigns/Advocacy	Communication, social media, teamwork	Audience targeting, lobbying strategies
Youth-Led Research	Data analysis, research methods	Research ethics, survey design, analysis tools

See the 'Youth Skills Development' mini-guide for more details on core skills young people need to meaningfully engage with government in policy processes.

02

SUPPORTING OFFICIALS TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN POLICY PRACTICES

Youth engagement is an opportunity for policymakers to learn new ways of flexible and adaptive working and develop skills in supervision and mentorship.

Capacity-building will look different for different teams, depending upon levels of experience and expertise. Skill-building sessions can be formal and informal, for example:

- Chats with colleagues about their experiences.

- Self-guided (putting aside some time to read resources and toolkits. For instance, see the '*Speak to us in a way that makes sense*' mini-guide for advice on effectively communicating with young people).

- Within your organisation, such as a skill-building workshop led by an experienced team member. Officials could connect with the Office for Youth.

- Formal professional development courses in youth engagement

- Reaching out to and meeting with other officials or youth engagement practitioners to seek their advice and experience around similar projects to the one you are planning to undertake.

If you completed the '*Role Mapping Matrix*' in 'Guide 3: Preparing to Engage', you should already have a good indication of areas where your team will need to build capacity. Now that you are actively engaging with young people, you may ask for their support in identifying opportunities for growth and development within your team.

- Are there areas of knowledge or skills you can learn from the young people you are engaging with?

- Are there additional cultural competencies you should familiarise yourself with, now that you have recruited a diverse range of young people?

- Are there additional areas young people may identify for consideration?