



Working with people

Youth Participation Kit: Young people

Resource 6

Chances are you'll be working closely with others when participating in your community. Working in teams is a great way to meet new people, to share the workload, and build your team and leadership skills. Good teamwork doesn't just happen however, so here are some tips to help you learn to manage a team.

Keeping people informed

For your group to be effective, everyone will need to know what is going on. Holding regular meetings is a must, whether you hold them in-person or use technology to bring everyone together. Organising meeting agendas and minutes may sound boring, but they really help to ensure your discussions stay on track, check everything you decide is recorded for future reference, and keep people in the loop about the latest developments. Remember though, meetings don't have to be boring—there's no set rules for how they have to be run, so think outside the box, be flexible, and have fun.

Keeping people involved

It's common for people to come and go in projects, and for some people to be more committed than others, particularly in longer-term or ongoing activities. Things change in people's lives and you need to be flexible and understanding of this. Look for the positives, for example if people decide to leave a project it means you can recruit new members, who will bring new ideas and points of view.

There are lots of tips you can use to help keep people involved:

- Ask people to commit to a set length of membership. If they know their commitment beforehand, they are more likely to stick to it.



Working with people

- Take the time for the team to get to know each other. Team building activities help people to care about the people they're working with, which makes them more likely to stay committed. Plus, they're fun and help people to make new friends!
- Give members their own specific roles in the group. This spreads the responsibility and gives everyone a sense of purpose and ownership, as well as making everyone accountable for the things they've agreed to do.
- Make your meetings as fun as possible. Provide snacks if you can, be flexible with meeting times and choose venues everyone can get to.
- Think about what people get out of being involved and talk about it. Give people the chance to offer their own ideas for activities, discuss people your members might want to ask to be resume referees, plan ways to celebrate your group together.
- Ask everyone to be on the lookout for new members—this keeps people thinking about what makes a good team member.

Organising effective meetings

Meetings are a key part of teamwork, but there are lots of ways that meetings can become a chore. Here are some tips to make the most out of meetings:

- Every meeting should have an agenda so people know what to expect. It should be sent out to everyone beforehand so they can prepare in advance. You also need to appoint someone to take 'minutes', or at least to record the key information and decisions from the meeting. You might make this an ongoing role or rotate the responsibility to a new person each meeting.
- Every meeting needs a Chair, who is in charge of making sure the meeting runs smoothly. Some groups elect an ongoing Chair while others give a different person this job each time. Being a good Chair is a skill, and although it's scary at first it can be really useful in other parts of your life.
- It helps to talk about how meetings will work at the start of the project. Agree what kinds of things should be discussed, how people can add things to the agenda that they want to talk about, and make some ground rules for how people should behave (for example, agree to always be respectful, decide if it's okay for people to interrupt, or to use their phones during the meeting).
- Everyone should get a chance to speak. The Chair of the meeting is in charge of making this happen and if someone is dominating the conversation, the Chair should ask others direct questions so that their opinions can be shared too.



Working with people

- Silence is usually awkward, but it isn't always bad. It might mean that people need more time to think about something, are too scared to share their ideas, or that they don't understand the topic well enough to have an opinion. If you find your group in a long silence, ask questions to try to work out why.
- Sometimes meetings can get heated when you're discussing important topics. The Chair should make sure that everyone is okay and call breaks if discussions get too intense. If your meetings are like this a lot, you might need to review your group's aims, meeting structure and agreements on behaviour to work through the issues.
- If your group is working on a big project, it can help to break the group into sub-groups, each with their own specific responsibility area. For example, you might separate an events project group into scheduling, logistics and promotions teams, who could each work on the nitty-gritty details separately in between meetings. This way, you save meeting time by letting the small decisions be worked out outside of meetings but still making the big, important decisions together.
- People tend to get bored after sitting still for too long. Think of ideas to get people moving during meetings; depending on your group you might want to do quick activities regularly (stretches, games) or even have a meeting where you walk somewhere while discussing the agenda.

Building a good team

The whole point of working in a team is that different people have different things to offer. When you're putting a group together, consider the different skills you'll need to achieve your goal and try to find different people who can contribute to different tasks. Not everyone needs to be good at everything!

Having a diverse team is also really important because youth participation is about getting all young people involved in their communities, and all young people have the right to be involved. Some young people find it harder to get involved because they have a disability, don't speak English as well as others, are really shy, or for other reasons - but despite this they usually have lots of useful skills to offer a group. You should try to engage as many different people in your group as you can.

Dealing with problems

Not everyone gets along, and you might find yourself having a hard time dealing with someone else in your team. The most important thing is to keep your cool and do what you can to always be respectful - even if it seems the other person isn't! Usually you will have



Working with people

a leader in your group or organisation who you can speak to about the problem. You might feel scared or embarrassed but remember that you have a right to participate without someone making it difficult for you, so explain yourself and ask the leader to help you manage the situation. It's not a fun thing to deal with, but it's likely that you'll face similar situations in the future as well, so it's good to learn to tackle them while you're young.

Case study: Teach Learn Grow

Teach Learn Grow (TLG) is a volunteer-led not-for-profit organisation that aims to bridge the gap in education for primary school children experiencing disadvantage in Australian communities. TLG does this by improving the educational outcomes of primary aged children through engaging one-on-one tutoring and mentoring sessions with high-achieving volunteer university students.

Through their Rural and eMentor Programs, TLG engages over 650 volunteers annually. The Rural Program is held twice yearly, providing a week-long face-to-face tutoring program to over 30 schools in rural Western Australia. The eMentor Program is conducted online with webcams and headsets over the course of eight weeks, providing students with one-on-one mentoring and support with important topics such as cyber safety, health and wellbeing, goal setting, leadership and positive relationships.

TLG Chief Executive Officer, Bridget Staude, returned to the organisation four years after volunteering in leadership roles and running Rural Programs. Bridget oversees a core executive team of four staff members and 60 volunteers who deliver TLG's programs which involve over 600 program volunteers every year.

With so many people involved in the organisation, it takes a lot of effort to make sure things go smoothly. Three top tips for working with people are:

- **Have a clear purpose.** As a charity, it's important that the vision and mission stay at the forefront of what we do. This is what motivates and unifies our team to work together towards our common goals and helps ensure all decisions we make are focussed on achieving our purpose.
- **Create positive culture.** As an organisation that relies on volunteers, establishing a positive team culture for all our volunteers is of the utmost importance. Creating a community where all our team members feel respected, valued and appreciated has allowed our organisation to flourish. We devote significant time and resources to



Working with people

maintaining our culture and our reputation as a great organisation with whom to volunteer.

- **Communicate effectively.** The key to running a successful team is clear and frequent communication at all levels of the organisation. Building positive relationships amongst our team members helps us foster an environment where team members feel supported and comfortable asking for help and giving feedback. Effective communication and clear expectations of each team member helps our volunteers feel a sense of belonging to their team and the organisation as a whole.

“Teach Learn Grow was founded by passionate young people who were driven to make a difference to their community. While the organisation has grown exponentially in recent years, motivated and compassionate young people are still at the heart of what we do. Without the help of hundreds of generous volunteers every year, TLG would not be able to provide its programs to students experiencing disadvantage across Australia,” Bridget Staude.

