

Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health

# Youth Engagement Toolkit

MODULE 5: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION: SUSTAINING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



**JOINT CONSORTIUM** FOR SCHOOL HEALTH

The Students  
Commission  
of Canada  
Centre of Excellence for  
Youth Engagement



La commission  
des élèves du  
Canada  
Le centre d'excellence pour  
l'engagement des jeunes



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## Viewing Additional Modules

***This module of the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (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.

This toolkit has been revised in 2024 to include information and tips about engaging with youth in a post-pandemic world. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 prompted a global shift from traditional face-to-face teaching to online and hybrid learning methods; this global change required significant adjustments in teaching practices and course design. This toolkit aims to bridge the gap between the virtual world and in-person connection to support educators

and adult allies in navigating the hybrid learning environment and supporting youth to maintain engagement and a sense of community online.

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:

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

## Steps for Practitioners

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.

## SUSTAIN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



To access "How to Sustain Youth Engagement: Keep the Momentum Going!" video.



“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.

To effectively report back to youth on how their input influenced a policy or program, consider using online platforms such as social media posts, email updates and dedicated web pages. You can also create engaging infographics or short videos to visually communicate the impact of their feedback. Hosting interactive webinars or live Q&A sessions allows for direct engagement while online surveys or discussion boards offer a way to gather further input and demonstrate ongoing value. By using these methods, you can ensure transparency and maintain youth engagement.

“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

"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

## 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.

## 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"

Inquiry-based approaches to learning encourage students to build valuable and transferable skills including realistic goal setting and goal-tracking, time- and priority-management, information gathering, critical thinking, communication of ideas and learning and self-assessment and reflection.

As a case example, professors at McMaster also follow a particular approach to designing and facilitating inquiry-based courses. They suggest that teaching through "inquiry" involves engaging students in the research process with instructors supporting and coaching students at a level appropriate to their starting skills. Students learn discipline-specific content while at the same time engaging and refining their inquiry skills.

All My Relations workshop is another example of Inquiry based learning. This workshop designed by a humanities teacher from Calgary Connect Charter School is an inquiry into the historical and contemporary relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada.



## 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 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/taking action on a certain issue
- Creating a social media page and establishing a social media presence for the project as a way to sustain youth engagement online
- 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



## 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 social media presence with interactive content; find a meeting and virtual space for young people to connect in person and online; host follow-up events, social gatherings or virtual meetings; and check-in 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 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.

## 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

*“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



## More Evaluation Tools

For further evaluation tools, please visit the Students Commission's, **Sharing the Stories platform**. This online evaluation platform includes academically validated tools to evaluate youth engagement. Check out these tools related to sustaining youth engagement:

**Organizational Readiness,**  
**Youth Adult Survey**

## 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.

### ASSESS YOUR PRACTICE SUSTAINING

Indicator Framework

Assessment Tool