



Youth co-research toolkit

Practical guides and resources for researchers



Co-research toolkit overview

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed to support and guide researchers who wish to meaningfully engage young people as co-researchers to explore and solve real-world problems, together.

The information in this toolkit mainly draws on the experiences and learnings of researchers working in the fields of social and cultural youth studies. However, you can apply the resources in diverse research settings.

Our definitions

Youth researcher: A young person with some research skills and knowledge who is directly engaged in the research process.

Researcher: A professional researcher employed in a research institution, a non-government organisation or the private sector.

Co-research: A research process in which youth researchers and researchers work together to generate and activate knowledge.

Young person: The definition of a young person varies considerably. We developed this toolkit based on our experiences working with young people aged 16 to 25 years. However, the co-research principles and resources in this toolkit can also be applied to work with younger age groups.

What does this toolkit provide?

This toolkit offers guidance, advice, tips and practical tools to support collaborative co-research partnerships between researchers and young people. We hope it inspires positive, sustained change in how young people are involved in research and provides the tools needed to put ideas into action.

The resources help researchers to:

- understand more about co-research and the benefits of working with young people as 'youth researchers'
- navigate challenges, like addressing power imbalances and defining roles and responsibilities
- work with young people safely and ethically
- answer questions about payment and remuneration
- communicate with youth researchers to work together effectively.

*Explore supports a partnership between young people and researchers to enhance the relevance and responsiveness of research (and post-research responses) with and for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

How to use this toolkit

Start by reading the *Introduction to youth co-research* guide. It outlines what co-research is in theory and practice, and how it can benefit the research process, outcomes and individuals involved. From there, the *Getting started with youth co-research* guide gives you all you need to know about planning and preparing for co-research. The *Implementation of youth co-research* guide provides information, tips and advice for navigating the co-research process. Within each guide, you will find:

- Case studies

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- Tools and templates



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- Tips



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- Considerations



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- Further resources.

How was this toolkit developed?

The need for this toolkit was identified through our research collaborations with young people, researchers and partners as part of the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies. Our team conducted an environmental scan of existing guides and toolkits, which identified a gap in practical resources to support researchers to put youth co-research approaches into practice. The toolkit responds to this gap and aims to build effective youth collaboration in research on issues that impact young people's lives.

We have been fortunate to work long-term with youth researchers aged 16 to 25 in the Centre for Multicultural Youth's Explore* program. These experiences in Australia have informed the toolkit resources. The toolkit also draws on evidence from academic literature and existing resources.

It is a work in progress. It will be refined, refreshed and added to over time, and supplemented with resources tailored for specific groups of young people and areas of research.

We have developed a complementary toolkit to support and guide youth researchers in the early stages of their co-research journey, with a focus on social research. That toolkit offers information, advice, training materials and practical tools to build young people's confidence and skills as researchers.



Guide	1. Introduction to youth co-research	2. Getting started with youth co-research	3. Implementation of youth co-research
Contents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth involvement in research 2. What is youth co-research? 3. Principles of youth co-research 4. Co-research in action: Case studies 5. Why involve young people as researchers? 6. Case studies from researchers and youth researchers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is co-research suitable for your project? 2. Co-research barriers 3. Co-research enablers 4. Readiness for co-research 5. How to advocate for co-research in funding and ethics applications 6. Preparing your team 7. Recruiting youth researchers 8. Roles and responsibilities of youth researchers 9. Youth co-research payment guidelines 10. Induction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What can co-research look like? 2. Capacity-building for researchers working with young people 3. Capacity-building for youth researchers 4. Building relationships 5. Navigating challenges in co-research 6. Advice from youth researchers 7. Quick tips for working together 8. How to manage ethical issues when working with youth researchers 9. Feedback and evaluation
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended reading list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment tool • Mapping abilities and roles tool • Positionality question cards • Self-reflection journal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation starters • Self-reflection journal • Impact mapping • Implementation checklist • Positionality question cards
Templates		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth researcher position description / expression of interest template • Youth researcher brief • Onboarding meeting agenda template • Goal-setting template 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth researcher training workshop agenda template • Youth researcher training workshop presentation • Mid-project review meeting template • Exit interview template



Acknowledgements

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**YOUNG &
RESILIENT
RESEARCH
CENTRE**

The Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University deploys youth-centred, participatory co-research and co-design methods to work with young people and communities to inform policies, programs and interventions that can minimise the risks and maximise the benefits of the digital age. The Centre develops innovative, digital tools and methods to support the meaningful involvement of children and young people in social and cultural research.



**Centre for
Multicultural Youth**

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) is a not-for-profit organisation providing specialist knowledge and support to young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. CMY links decision-makers and researchers directly with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, supporting youth participation in policy and advocacy.



CRIS
Centre for Resilient
and Inclusive Societies

The development of this toolkit was made possible by funding from the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS).

CRIS is an independent think-tank involving university and civil society partners, led by the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation (ADI) hosted by Deakin University. Researchers across academic institutions with community partners undertake research on some of the trickiest challenges that our society is facing. CRIS is proud to support the development of the next generation of youth researchers and leaders through the Explore program led by the Centre for Multicultural Youth.

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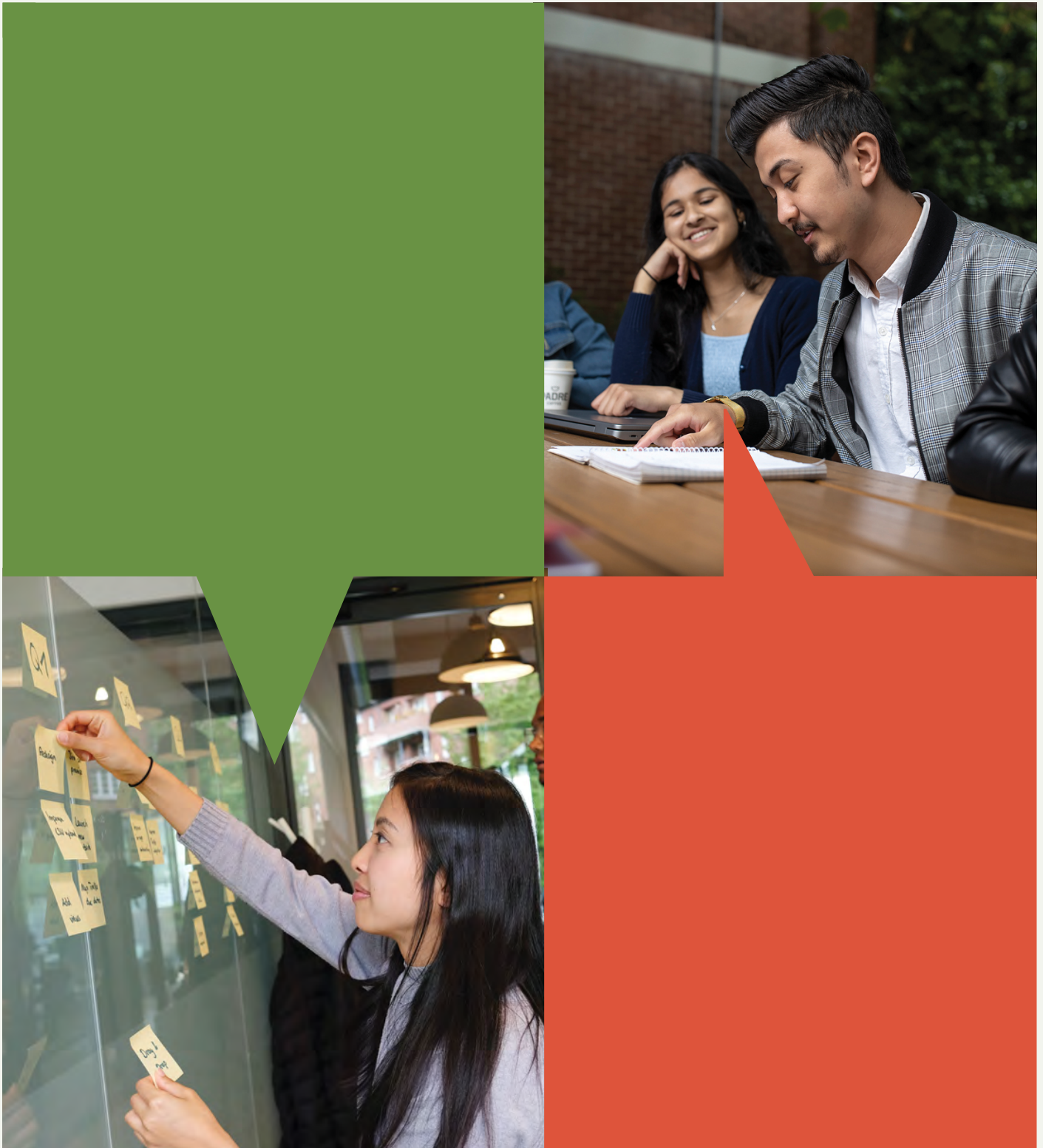
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Acknowledgement of Country

With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that we work on their traditional lands, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on whose Country we are based and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and future.

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Guide 3: Implementation of youth co-research

This guide provides information and practical tips to support you in putting co-research into action. Use it to explore how to build the capacities of all involved, nurture relationships, and navigate challenges.

Co-research can look different depending on who is involved, the research questions, the methods and the research context. As such, rather than being prescriptive, this guide provides ideas, inspiration, and considerations to think about when implementing co-research.

Contents

1. What can co-research with young people look like?
2. Capacity-building for researchers working with young people
3. Capacity-building for youth researchers
4. Building relationships
5. Navigating challenges in co-research
6. Advice from youth researchers
7. Quick tips for working together
8. How to manage ethical issues when working with youth researchers
9. Feedback and evaluation



What can co-research with young people look like?

Possible models of co-research include:



Cohort model

A group of young people are recruited to be part of a longer-term co-research program, which will give them experience working across multiple different projects over a longer time (for example, 1 year). They are provided with research skills training and are supervised by a team of experienced researchers. The young people can work together in pairs or small groups to enable peer mentoring and support, and meet regularly to share learnings, insights, and challenges.

See, for example, the Explore program and the Wellbeing Health & Youth Commission.

Works best when:

- there is ample resourcing to support training, supervision, mentoring and remuneration
- you are working with young people of a similar age
- you are partnered with a youth-facing organisation that could support the engagement of this cohort
- there are multiple projects that youth researchers can be involved in.



Group model

A group of young people are recruited and trained to work on one specific project. Like the cohort model, young people can work together and learn from each other.

Works best when:

- there is moderate resourcing available
- the research project and the young people would benefit from a co-research approach.



One-to-one

One young person is embedded into the research team and provided with skills training, supervision and mentorship from one experienced researcher.

Works best when:

- there is limited resourcing and time
- you are recruiting a young person who brings some specific expertise – either lived experience and/or some pre-existing skills/knowledge
- there is a young person, who may have been involved initially as a participant, who has an interest in further collaboration as a researcher, or who is passionate about the project.

Image credit: Pexels / Anna Shvets





Possible forms of engagement with youth researchers:

Youth researcher is involved across the entire research project – from inception to dissemination.

Pros: Young people feel a sense of ownership; there is time to build relationships/rapport; young people can contribute to shaping the research agenda and knowledge production.

Cons: Young people's availability may fluctuate throughout the project; sustained engagement may be challenging with competing priorities; requires greater resources.

Youth researcher is involved during particular project phases.

Co-research doesn't necessarily have to involve large-scale, long-term projects to be meaningful. Young people may have the capacity to dip in and out of projects at certain time points to support certain phases or tasks, which can be just as valuable.

Pros: Young people can still be involved as collaborative research partners if they have reduced capacity for longer-term commitments; requires less resourcing.

Cons: Can slide into tokenism without careful consideration of how young people will collaborate as research partners; can be harder to build trust and rapport; requires careful management of one another's expectations so that no one feels let down at any stage in the process.

Image credit: CMY / Sam Biddle







Capacity-building for researchers working with young people

Co-research is an opportunity for researchers to develop skills in youth engagement, project management, supervision, and mentoring, as well as learn new ways of flexible and adaptive working. Co-research works best when researchers have the practical skills to enable collaboration and align expectations (see the **Getting started** guide for more information).



Be mindful that those involved in co-research are on a mutual learning curve and that many of the skills required come with learning as we go. Make room for mistakes, be ready to navigate bumps in the road, and be prepared to give and receive kindness.

Before engaging with young people, take time to prepare with those who will be working with youth researchers to decide what training, or refresher training, would be helpful and how you will support each other through the process.

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, or watch 'how to' videos)
- within your organisation, such as a skill-building workshop led by an experienced team member
- formal professional development courses in youth engagement
- reaching out to and meeting with other researchers or youth engagement practitioners to seek their advice and experience around similar projects to the one you are planning to undertake
- mentoring from experienced youth researchers.



After a co-research project, ask youth researchers to provide you with robust feedback about how you might further develop your skills or knowledge.

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Capacity-building steps for researchers:



Clarify the purpose of young people's involvement.



Conduct a rapid audit of your team's youth engagement skills and experience. Where are the gaps? What training would be helpful? For example, do you need additional training to work with young people from a specific cultural background or with lived experience?



Arrange any necessary training for your team. This might include:

- › models, principles and methods for youth participation and engagement in research
- › ethical research practice with young people, particularly those with any specific lived experiences relevant to your project (for example, young people with disability or chronic illness, LGBTIQ+ young people, young people from refugee backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people)
- › youth safeguarding (and additional requirements if engaging with young people under 18)
- › if possible, identify someone experienced in your network and outside the research team who can provide troubleshooting, mentoring and support about involving young people as co-researchers.



For any training needs raised by your team, identify who can provide the training. Is there a youth-facing organisation with expertise in this area? Is there someone in your organisation who has expertise in this area? Could a young person provide this training?



Be prepared to identify and offer additional training if team members change.

Further resources:

- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Capacity building
- Youth Affairs Council Victoria youth involvement toolkit
- Orygen youth partnerships in research toolkit
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network youth participation with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds guide
- Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People youth participation resources
- Berry Street youth engagement training

Image credit: Pexels / Keira Burton





Capacity-building for youth researchers

To enable meaningful collaboration, youth researchers will likely need a blend of formal and informal training and mentoring. Formal training, such as skills-building workshops, may be required to learn about research methods and ethics. 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.

Capacity-building steps for youth researchers:



Understand young people's perceptions of their current capabilities and skills, and how they would like to upskill.



Design and offer training sessions for youth researchers that meet both their needs and the requirements of the project.



Consider how to embed peer-to-peer learning opportunities across the project. For example, youth researchers could work in pairs to collect or analyse data.



Plan for how youth researchers will be supported to learn new skills and develop expertise throughout the project (for example, regular check-in meetings and access to training programs/resources).

Templates



- **Youth researcher training workshop agenda template** (to structure a group training session)
- **Youth researcher training workshop presentation** (to deliver a group training session)

Further resources

- **Youth Co-research Toolkit: Social research training guides** (Introduction to social research, research ethics, power and privilege, project management)
- Barnardo's Young Researcher's Toolkit

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Building relationships

Co-research works best when there are positive relationships between collaborators. Strong relationships can allow young people to feel able to speak up when they need support managing challenges, to feel confident to fully contribute to the research and can enable lead researchers to also feel supported by their team. Building strong relationships is about all collaborators putting in effort, time and commitment to meeting each other where they are at.

Strategies for building and maintaining relationships with youth researchers include:

- One-to-one conversations that build rapport and enable communication about changes, challenges and successes.
- Discussions about your and the youth researcher's strengths, interests, motivations, preferred ways of working and support needed.
- Communicate when and where you are available.
- Learn to be comfortable with awkwardness – at least for a bit. If young people are unsure how to contribute, provide them with explanations, choices or examples when asking for their input.
- Create safe spaces where young people and researchers feel able to speak up. For example:
 - › Have a discussion as a group at the start of your project where everyone can share what helps them to feel comfortable (for example, respect, inclusivity, non-judgment, willingness to share and listen). You could write this up into a 'group agreement'.
 - › Have a 'safe space' check-in at any regular meetings you hold, where you can revisit what you've agreed to and use it as a tool for continuing these conversations.
 - › Ask young people for their ideas and opinions, but don't expect them to have all the answers.
 - › Routinely reflect on the research process together and invite feedback on how to strengthen it.
- Challenge traditional power dynamics – experiment with setting aside your title.
- Ensure that you debrief after any challenges are met by the youth researcher, yourself or the whole team.



Everyone is different. Consider diverse needs and preferences when building trust and rapport.



Unsettling traditional power dynamics can be tricky (they will likely always exist). But, at the same time, can be as simple as recognising that a young person knows more about something, or has ideas about how to do something better.

Strategies for building and maintaining relationships with other project collaborators include:

Relationships with youth-facing partner organisations

- Identify what each partner wants from this relationship, and where there are mutual benefits and aligned objectives.
- Agree on how and what decisions should be made together.
- Agree on responsibilities and develop practical strategies for sharing the workload in ways that maximise the available expertise and work within resource constraints.
- Have mechanisms for routine consultation and communication throughout the project.

Relationships with other researchers

- Reflect both individually and as a team on the co-research journey to identify lessons learned and respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.
- Keep each other accountable by calling out power dynamics.
- Reach out to those with co-research experience to seek mentoring and advice.

Tools



- **Conversation starters**
- **Self-reflection journal**





Navigating challenges in co-research

Supporting youth involvement in any research context can be complex, but some unique challenges can arise in co-research. These challenges should be expected – not feared.

In the co-research process, if acknowledged, challenges and tensions can be reframed as opportunities for creativity, learning and innovation. Openly discussing challenges with those involved can help to explore ways to circumvent them together. Being upfront about challenges, particularly when research is fast-paced and decisions need to be made quickly, helps to improve transparency, honesty and trust between collaborators.

Overall, the involvement of young people in co-research should be pragmatic, flexible and suited to the setting and focus of the study. Crucially, it should be shaped by young people's preferences, choices, abilities and interests, and should respect their time, skills and commitment. Practically, co-research needs to account for sufficient planning, time and funding. Establishing regular rhythms and mechanisms for communication between all parties, having space for reflection, asking and not assuming, re-checking and negotiating expectations can help to navigate challenges as and when they arise.

All these things are strengthened by building relationships, which enable honest and open communication.

Challenge	Tips
 Unclear or shifting roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early in the project, clearly define roles and responsibilities together to ensure that young people are aware of the expectations of them. Discuss with youth researchers what they want to achieve through the project, and what their skills, strengths and areas for improvement are (see the Getting started guide for more detail).• Be upfront about any limitations that the research project has, such as timelines and budget. This can provide important context around priorities and decision-making throughout the research cycle.
 Different expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold regular project meetings with the whole team. Once a fortnight, have a standing item on the agenda to revisit roles and responsibilities.• If young people are promised certain responsibilities (e.g., data collection), ensure that there are opportunities and support for this to happen. If things change, communicate this and explain why.• Provide young people with a written brief about the role, including time commitments, frequency and schedule of meetings, hours of work and remuneration information.• Reflect on the assumptions that you may have about youth researchers (i.e., professionalism, communication methods, experience), and raise these together to get on the same page.• Agree on a protocol for youth researchers to provide feedback about their experience.



Challenge	Tips
 Miscommunication or lack of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decide with youth researchers the best channel for communication and conduct regular review sessions so that you can address issues as the project progresses.• Set up specific channels via Slack, Discord, WhatsApp or Microsoft Teams where frequent communication can take place between team members.• Make time and space for honest check-ins. Even if nothing has progressed with the project, communicating this is still important.• Be mindful that young people might communicate their priorities in a different style from what researchers are used to (e.g., not showing up, non-verbal communication, actions as well as words).• Clarify terms and acronyms and check for understanding. Avoid jargon and take the opportunity to introduce youth researchers to terminology that is relevant to the research project.• Agree on who will ultimately take responsibility for decisions and how these will be shared with the whole team.
 Disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate any changes to project timelines.• Throughout a project, arrange regular check-ins so that you can discuss progress.• Run group brainstorming sessions to reflect on ideas, solutions, what is working well and what can be improved. Encourage young people that no idea is a bad idea.• Consider setting up reading groups to sustain momentum.• Give youth researchers a sense of ownership by allocating tasks and responsibility for activities they are passionate about.• Prioritise social time to build relationships. Allow time for the team to get to know each other personally and professionally, to build trust. Provide opportunities for youth researchers to develop relationships with different team members, so that young people have networks of support they can access when needed.• Identify and support training needs and provide examples of what you could offer (e.g., conducting interviews together, stepping through how budgets are developed, peer mentoring, and professional development courses).• Create opportunities for meaningful collaboration by ensuring that spaces are safe and welcoming. Start your project or any one-off activities with a discussion around what helps everyone to feel comfortable, able to speak up, and empowered to bring their best to the project. You could also do some fun activities that encourage the team members to share their skills, strengths, weak points and preferred ways of working and communication.• Use creative and engaging methods to work together (e.g., icebreakers, breakouts, mind mapping, drawing, workshops, brainstorming, games, polling) and online collaborative tools (e.g., video meeting platforms, Miro) if working remotely.




Challenge	Tips
 <p>Power imbalances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiment with setting aside titles. Have everyone in the team know each other on a first-name basis.• Insist that young people take the lead on key project activities, such as chairing meetings or reviewing outputs.• Give young people a sense of ownership by assigning responsibilities for tasks they are passionate about or interested in.• Make time and room for continual reflexivity. Carefully consider your positionality, power, privilege, and biases, as well as ways of working and communicating, at the outset and throughout the research process. For power imbalances to be redressed, those in positions of power must constantly question whether they are imposing their views or perspectives.• Pay attention to small things, like who is doing most of the talking or who talks first.• Genuinely appreciate young people's suggestions, ideas and feedback.• Ensure that young people know that their contributions are valuable for the research process and wider outcomes.



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Case study: Nina’s challenges

Nina has been involved as a youth researcher on several co-research projects, where she has had experience facilitating participatory workshops and designing evaluation tools.

Nina says that one of the biggest challenges that she has had to face was a lack of clear expectations. There were a few times when Nina’s expectations of her role did not align with the senior researchers.

“I felt like I got dropped into the deep end with the fact that I was required to make a lot of decisions that I didn’t expect were going to be my decisions to make. Their expectations of me were really high, but I hadn’t expected it to be that high.”

There was another instance of miscommunication and unclear expectations: *“I ended up dropping out of that project because [of] the way that it was pitched to us, the time commitment and responsibilities weren’t made clear. We had to do tasks like recruiting participants, which was something that has always been done for us. We also had to sort out the physical space where we would need to hold the workshop and organise the timing and logistics. All these tasks meant that the role required a lot more work than I expected, and I didn’t have that time. Having made those expectations clear at the start would have been helpful.”*

Nina emphasises that she liked having that responsibility, but it would have been good to know about it beforehand and have clearer expectations before starting. *“The thing that helped was having the other young researchers in the youth program to talk to and also reaching out to people on the research team and clarifying the expectations.”*

Concerns, thoughts and feelings from the perspectives of those involved in co-research

From the perspective of researchers working with young people...	From the perspective of youth researchers...
“We are falling behind and are missing deadlines...”	“What hat am I wearing? What part of my identity/experience should I be bringing?”
“We’re working too slowly...”	“This role isn’t what I had expected...”
“I don’t have enough time to provide enough support.”	“This is requiring way more hours than I thought it would...”
“I don’t have enough time to stop, think, and reflect.”	“I can’t keep up with all these tasks...”
“Why don’t the youth researchers want to stay involved?”	“I’m feeling like I’m not being taken seriously.”
“This is new to me – I’m not sure how to delegate.”	“I feel like I’m not being told about the bigger picture.”
“I haven’t heard back from the youth researcher in a while...”	“I don’t feel like I can say what I really think.”
“I’m feeling stressed about how much is on my plate...”	“I haven’t been told what is going on with the project.”
“I’m not sure how much time the youth researcher will need to give because the process is uncertain.”	“I don’t feel like I can ask for help...”
“What level of support should I provide without over- or under-estimating?”	“I can’t speak on behalf of all young people.”
“When can I meet with the youth researcher? Their availabilities are constantly changing...”	“Am I the right person for this job?”



Advice from youth researchers

Alex recommends that researchers can be supportive by:

“Being approachable, honest and asking youth researchers what would be helpful.”

“Regularly checking in with young people and referring them to others that can provide support.”

Dan says:

“Just listen and communicate. Many young people come into research projects without having many ideas. Let the youth researchers know they’re still very important to the projects, including their views and opinions. Actively give opportunities for youth researchers to upskill.”

Nina shares two pieces of advice for adult researchers:

“Firstly, be clear. Have as many of the expectations set out beforehand as possible and communicate that in a clear way to young people. This includes logistical and practical things like time commitment or tasks they will be doing. That information should be made available to anyone you want to recruit.”

“Secondly, try to make researchers available for questions, especially when busy periods come up. This is based on what I liked about the people who worked with us. The fact that they made themselves available when things were tricky. There is a lot of value having things like being supported and not having to work alone on things especially when things don’t make sense.”



Quick tips for working together

Planning phase

- **Adopt and advocate for a co-research mindset.** Genuinely welcome, accept and incorporate young people's input, even if this challenges your own or strays from standard approaches.
- **Consider why you want to engage young people as co-researchers.**
- **Be prepared for a messy, complex reality.** It's not co-research if it turns out the way you expected or imagined. It's a non-linear, experimental and fluid process where the power, control and identities of those involved are constantly renegotiated. Being prepared for this and being flexible to and planning for adaptation is key.
- **Consider what skills, processes and resources your team and organisation need to support young people's engagement.** Are you confident in supporting and mentoring young people in the research process? Is your organisation or institution able to onboard and pay young people for their contributions? Consider what training, support, processes or resources you may need to ensure it is a positive experience for both youth researchers and your team, and who can help.
- **Work with youth researchers through established programs.** Inviting young people to be involved through established training programs can be a particularly helpful first step, as these young people receive training and have an established trusting relationship with the program leaders.
- **Consider youth researchers' goals, preferences and capabilities.** What do young people want to get out of the co-research process? Make time to understand this to make the experience as rewarding as possible.
- **Prioritise social time to build relationships.** Having strong relationships helps to overcome challenges that may occur.
- **Set clear expectations and be honest and transparent about young people's contributions.** Get on the same page at the outset and communicate this in any paperwork.
- **Identify and support training needs** to ensure young people are equipped to meaningfully contribute.

Throughout

- **Communicate consistently and accessibly.** Be honest and upfront about changes and challenges.
- **Regularly debrief** and provide supportive, constructive feedback.
- **Be flexible** to re-negotiate workloads or revise deadlines.
- **Showcase youth researchers' contributions and diverse strengths.** Provide a range of opportunities for youth researchers to be involved that play to their existing strengths and celebrate the project's achievements, big and small, along the way.
- **Give youth researchers a sense of ownership.**
- **Evaluate your practice.** Build regular feedback loops to understand how your process is going and what can be improved for the youth researchers involved.
- **Make time and room for continued reflexivity.**
- **Recognise and celebrate achievements.** Build a regular 'highlights' agenda item at your regular project meetings or in communication channels. Take the time to recognise specific achievements and contributions of youth researchers, verbally and/or in writing. For exceptional contributions, consider nominating a youth researcher for a state or territory youth award. Provide a letter of reference or be a referee. Acknowledge their collaboration in publications, reports, and via dissemination channels (for example, project website, social media posts, news articles).

Templates



- **Mid-project review meeting template**



How to manage ethical issues when working with youth researchers

There are some unique challenges to consider when involving young people as researchers. The following guide provides some suggestions on how to mitigate against potential ethical risks.

Ethical risk/challenge	Mitigation strategies
Youth researchers experience distress from exposure to distressing or triggering information (e.g., when conducting interviews).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide formal and informal support to youth researchers (e.g., through structured training workshops, debriefings, check-ins).• Before data collection, ensure youth researchers are fully across the research topic, and have the option to choose when they are involved, and withdraw their involvement if they choose to.• Encourage researchers to develop self-care plans to respond to questions such as, “What activities or strategies can you do when feeling stressed?” “What might get in the way and how could you overcome these barriers?” “Who can you talk to about something on your mind?”• Provide contact information for relevant support services, if required.• Consider hiring a small group of youth researchers, who can work together and provide peer-to-peer support.
Youth researchers do not maintain ethical conduct during the research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide adequate training to youth researchers so that they understand the power and responsibilities that come with being a researcher, and how their actions have the potential to cause harm to participants.• Provide training so that they are aware of the ethical implications involved in participant recruitment and informed consent.• It may be appropriate to monitor or co-lead data collection activities in the first instances, as youth researchers build their experience and skills.
Adult participants may doubt a youth researcher’s abilities and refuse to participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure participants understand the purpose and plan of the research, the role of the young people, and why they are being involved as researchers (particularly if the research subject is sensitive).
Power differentials between youth researchers cause tensions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure every researcher receives the same level of training and support.• Provide private channels of communication to check in with youth researchers about any issues that may arise between the team.
Youth researchers experience discomfort due to power differentials between themselves and adult participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before data collection, build youth researchers’ knowledge about the participants and subject matter.• Embed critical-reflexive conversations with co-researchers before, during, and after data collection, to collaboratively identify issues and find solutions.• Provide close guidance and support during data collection activities involving adults.
Obtaining parental consent for youth researchers who are under 18 years of age.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create an open dialogue with parents/legal guardians about the roles, responsibilities and benefits of being a co-researcher.• Develop a process if parents/guardians have concerns or questions, for example, by providing a senior researcher contact number or email.



Feedback and evaluation

At the start of your project, think about how you can monitor and evaluate the impact the co-research process has on the overall outcomes of the research and for those involved. Ideally, doing this process together with your team (including youth researchers) means that you can embed regular opportunities for gathering feedback throughout the whole process.

By mapping impacts throughout the lifecycle of a project, and even after, you can see the change that is being made. This process can be undertaken together with stakeholders, including young people. Check out this **impact mapping tool** developed by the Young and Resilient Research Centre, based on learnings, sources, and expert guidance from **Matter of Focus**. It can help you to see what data, information and feedback you need to collect to help understand the progress towards the change you are hoping to make.

Learn more about the impact mapping framework developed by Matter of Focus here:

- **What is impact mapping?**
- **A simple framework to help you understand change**

Image credit: Pexels / Andrea Piacquadio



At the end of your project, you could conduct an exit interview to collect feedback and reflections from youth researchers on their experience in the role. This can help to identify and document what has worked well and what hasn't, and to use this feedback to continually improve your practice. An exit interview is not compulsory but could be offered as an option to provide reflection and constructive feedback if the youth researcher would like to do this.

Template



- **Exit interview template**

Further resources

- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Monitoring & evaluating youth engagement
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Template feedback form
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Tool – Reflective impact log
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Tool – Monitoring and evaluating youth engagement using a theory of change



Implementation checklist

- Involve young people in determining their roles and responsibilities.
- Develop a project plan and a timeline (acknowledging that it will likely change through the co-research process). Build in time buffers to allow for upskilling young people and reviewing and revising tasks.
- Ensure youth researchers are aware of the time commitment required and the project timeline.
- Prepare a project initiation and planning session for the whole team, including youth researchers, so that everyone can get on the same page at the start.
- Encourage youth researchers to ask questions and clarify any tasks.
- Agree on how you are going to communicate, make decisions, feedback on one another's work, feedback process improvements, and manage the research project.
- Get to know the individual youth researchers. What are their unique strengths, interests and abilities? What support do they need?
- Ensure that each youth researcher has one person they are checking in with if they have any questions – someone who understands the project and can provide ongoing guidance and support.
- Create a shared glossary of key terms to enable everyone in the project to speak a common language.
- Consider how you will evaluate the co-research process and how this affects the outcomes of the research. Develop a plan to monitor and evaluate the co-research process as early on in your project as you can.
- Provided necessary information about your organisation (for example, HR processes, policies, mandatory training).
- Agree upon working arrangements (for example, working from home and office requirements).
- Provide skill-building opportunities as required.
- Arrange regular, informal check-ins.
- Provide opportunities for youth researchers to showcase their strengths and reflect on their achievements.
- Encourage youth researchers to communicate and support each other (if working in pairs/groups).
- Ask for youth researchers' feedback about being part of the co-research process.
- Reflect on whether you are imposing views or perspectives.
- Reflect on your ways of working – what is going well and what could be improved?

Further resources

- Wellbeing Health & Youth respectful practice cards
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Implementing and sustaining youth engagement
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook Tips: Sustaining youth engagement



