Youth co-research toolkit

Practical guides and resources for researchers

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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.

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

- Tools and templates

- Tips

- Considerations

- 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.

*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.

Guide	1. Introduction to youth co-research	2. Getting started with youth co-research	3. Implementation of youth co-research
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Templates		• Youth researcher position description / expression of interest template • Youth researcher brief • Onboarding meeting agenda template • Goal-setting template	• Youth researcher training workshop agenda template • Youth researcher training workshop presentation • Mid-project review meeting template • Exit interview template

Acknowledgements

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.

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.

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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Bottom left. CMY / Sam Biddle.

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.

Guide 2: Getting started with youth co-research

This guide provides an overview of how to prepare for co-research. Are you questioning whether co-research is right for you? Are you feeling unsure about what you can do within your constraints? Use the information, considerations and tools in this guide to figure out what's appropriate for your context, and to learn about ways to advocate for co-research, prepare your team, and onboard youth researchers.

Contents

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Is co-research suitable for your project?

Co-research is just *one* way to meaningfully engage young people in research (see Table 1). Whilst co-research brings many benefits, it is also important to determine whether co-research is the most appropriate or feasible approach by considering your research purpose, context, duration, and the parameters that you are working within.

Before commencing co-research, understand it as a process that:

- is **relational** – prioritises building relationships to establish honest, transparent communication between collaborators
- is **impactful** but can be **challenging** – demands the **willingness to sit with discomfort and uncertainty** and the ability to reframe tensions as opportunities
- is **reflexive** – requires the capacity to continuously reflect and adapt
- is **committed to unsettling dominant power dynamics** between youth researchers and senior researchers
- **takes time** and **requires resources.**

To enable co-research, researchers and the organisations they are working within need to be committed to core youth engagement principles:

- **Establishing a clear purpose** for young people's involvement.
- **Mutual learning** whereby researchers and young people are both teachers and learners.
- **Trust** in each other as colleagues and partners who bring different strengths and expertise.
- **Capacity building** for both youth researchers and the researchers who work with them.
- **Flexibility** to navigate the many moving parts of a co-research process and openness to unexpected directions and outcomes.
- **Transparency and honesty**.

> The extent to which young people can be involved in research depends on the barriers they may face to participation due to multiple intersectionalities. For example, gender and sexuality, educational attainment, cultural background and socio-economic status.

Focusing on what makes for **meaningful participation** is **non-negotiable** when engaging with young people in research. If you can only consult with young people and seek their advice, listen deeply and take their feedback onboard in a way that genuinely influences outcomes. Thank young people for their input, pay them for their time, report back to them on the outcomes of their involvement and leave the door open for future collaboration.

If you can involve young people in specific phases of the research cycle, brief, train, supervise, and collaborate with them. Make it an experience that is impactful, enjoyable and inspiring – for both young people and the researchers working with them. Make spaces for engaging and rich discussions, with laughter, connection and learning from one another – and for pizza 😊. Ideally you will have the luxury to work slowly, carefully and iteratively with young people. No matter what the circumstances, strive to maximise opportunities for mutual transformation, love of learning, collegiality and exploration.

> Plan to embed young people throughout the project design, rather than only involving them when it is convenient or when you need something from them.

> **What is 'meaningful participation'?** The Nine Basic Requirements, informed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, state that meaningful and ethical participation is: transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, youth-friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable.[1] Meaningful involvement in co-research is where young people feel: valued, supported, heard, respected, safe, trusted, and confident to shape the research and contribute to knowledge production, a sense of ownership and responsibility.

There is significant literature and practical guidance on the principles of best practice youth engagement, and this overlaps with how you should approach youth co-research. Refer back to these concepts and principles to continually reassess your practice against the goal of meaningful co-research.

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1 Save the Children (2021) The nine basic requirements for meaningful and ethical children's participation. Save the Children.

Approach	Consultancy/ advisory	Participatory	Co-research	Youth-led
Involvement in research cycle	Often at early and late stages (i.e research conception, instrument design, and analysis/ dissemination).	Often during data collection and sometimes during analysis.	In all stages.	In all stages.
Role of young people	**Contribute**: Young people are invited to respond to ideas developed and initiated by researchers.	**Participate**: Young people are involved in research roles to a certain extent, and only in some stages of the research.	**Partner**: Young people have training or research skills that mean they are and integral part of the project team and collaborate with the team across the research cycle and have defined responsibility in project activities.	**Lead**: Young people conceptualise and lead the projects.
Role of adults	**Lead**: Conceptualise and lead the project. They secure the resources, hold decision-making power and are responsible for delivery.	**Lead**: Lead all aspects of the research projects, whilst engaging with young people as equals int he data collection and/or design process.	**Partner**: Collaborate with youth researchers and provide support and guidance to build skills and capacities, whilst retaining project management responsibilities.	**Support**: Support, enable and strengthen initiatives led by young people and help amplify youth voice and influence.
Example models	Youth advisory groups.	Youth co-designers or peer researchers.	Cohort of trained youth researchers.	Small scale initiatives programs, campaigns.

Table 1: The roles of young people and adults across different youth involvement approaches in research.

Further resources

- Wellbeing Health & Youth guidebook: Youth engagement in health research
- 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

Tool

- **Recommended reading list**

🚧 Co-research barriers

To decide which approach (see Table 1) might best suit your context, consider the parameters you need to work within and assess the factors that may constrain or enable youth involvement.

Barriers might include:

- gaps in researchers' knowledge and skills about youth involvement principles
- attitudes that reinforce traditional power dynamics or are resistant to new ways of collaborating
- perceived difficulties associated with the ethical requirements to work with young people
- rigid funding application requirements
- time, staffing and money constraints
- systemic inequality and or/discrimination barriers that prevent some groups of young people from accessing opportunities to participate
- lack of flexibility to customise processes to accommodate young people's involvement
- unrealistic expectations of young people's contributions.

Challenges, some of which are unique to the co-research process, can also create barriers to successful co-research (see 'Navigating challenges' in the **Implementation** guide for more detail)

Image credit: Pexels / Cottonbro Studio

⊘ Co-research enablers

Alongside the fundamental concepts of co-research (creating spaces for shared dialogues and new possibilities, reframing tensions as opportunities, unsettling dominant power dynamics, and prioritising relationships), **enablers of co-research include:**

- dedicated time upfront in the project, which allows young people to be involved in the initial agenda-setting and design phase
- sufficient budget to allow for appropriate remuneration for youth researchers and for training and support time
- opportunities to build professional researcher capacity (youth engagement and mentoring skills, time, support, etc.)
- prior and continual opportunities for youth researcher capacity building
- can-do attitudes that embrace the uncertainties and fluidity of the co-research process and an openness to new ways of working
- guidance from more senior or experienced researchers with youth co-research experience
- guidance and support from youth engagement practitioners who can play a bridging and supporting role between youth researchers and researchers
- agreed mechanisms for continual communication.

In practice, the ways young people are involved in a project may shift along a continuum of participation (see Figure 2). There is not necessarily a right or wrong way to involve young people, and the approach is dependent on the research aims and goals, the age and capacity of the young people, young people's priorities, the supervisor's capacity and skills to support and mentor, and the context in which research takes place. Research projects may chop and change or blend approaches at different moments. For example, a project may start by consulting young people but later involve collaboration and co-research, or vice versa.

Figure 2: The different ways that young people can be involved in research can blur. Generally, the more enablers that are in place, the greater the ability to implement collaborative approaches where young people have more ownership.

Image credit: Unsplash / Headway

Readiness for co-research

As well as considering barriers and enablers, when thinking about whether co-research is most appropriate or feasible, consider the following from the perspectives of all involved.

Young people

- Are young people interested in contributing their lived experience to the research?
- Do young people have research skills or an interest in developing these?
- Do young people have the capacity and interest to be involved across the entire research cycle? Or only in certain phases?

Researchers

- Do I have the skills to engage with young people, or the capacity to upskill?
- Do I have the capacity to support and mentor?
- Do I have the support of my team/organisation?

Organisations/institutions

- Is there resourcing and commitment to support co-research?
- Is there scope for young people to influence the research agenda?
- Does the culture value shared decision-making and is there an openness to challenge traditional power dynamics?

A helpful exercise to undertake before deciding whether to pursue co-research, or what this might look like in your context, is to map the parameters you are working within. Figure 3 can act as a prompt to help you to understand what you can do.

Even if you don't have all the co-research enablers in place, there are still many meaningful ways that you can engage young people (for example, youth advisory groups, peer research or as collaborators in co-design research). Tailor co-research to work for your context; be clear with your collaborators how you are working within your constraints and document your learnings for future projects.

You may find that when you reflect on your process, co-research may have been achieved during some parts, but you cannot honestly say it was always practiced as planned. This is okay, and documenting your evolving methodology is part of the process. Be honest and careful about how you apply the term 'co-research' and what it looks like in your context, so that co-research practice is not misrepresented or reported in a tokenistic way.

Tool

- **Self-assessment tool**

Use this self-assessment tool to gauge your level of readiness to commence co-research with young people.

Further resources

- Orygen co-designing with young people guide
- Save the Children child- and youth-friendly participatory action research toolkit
- Young and Well enabling participation guide

Your organisational parameters

Budget

Timeframes

Funding requirements

Level of committment to youth engagement

Risk management

Policies and proce-dures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people involved in research

What you can do/ what level of youth involvement is possible

You/your team's parameters

Skills and knowledge

Experience in youth engagement

Time

Capacity

Connections to young people
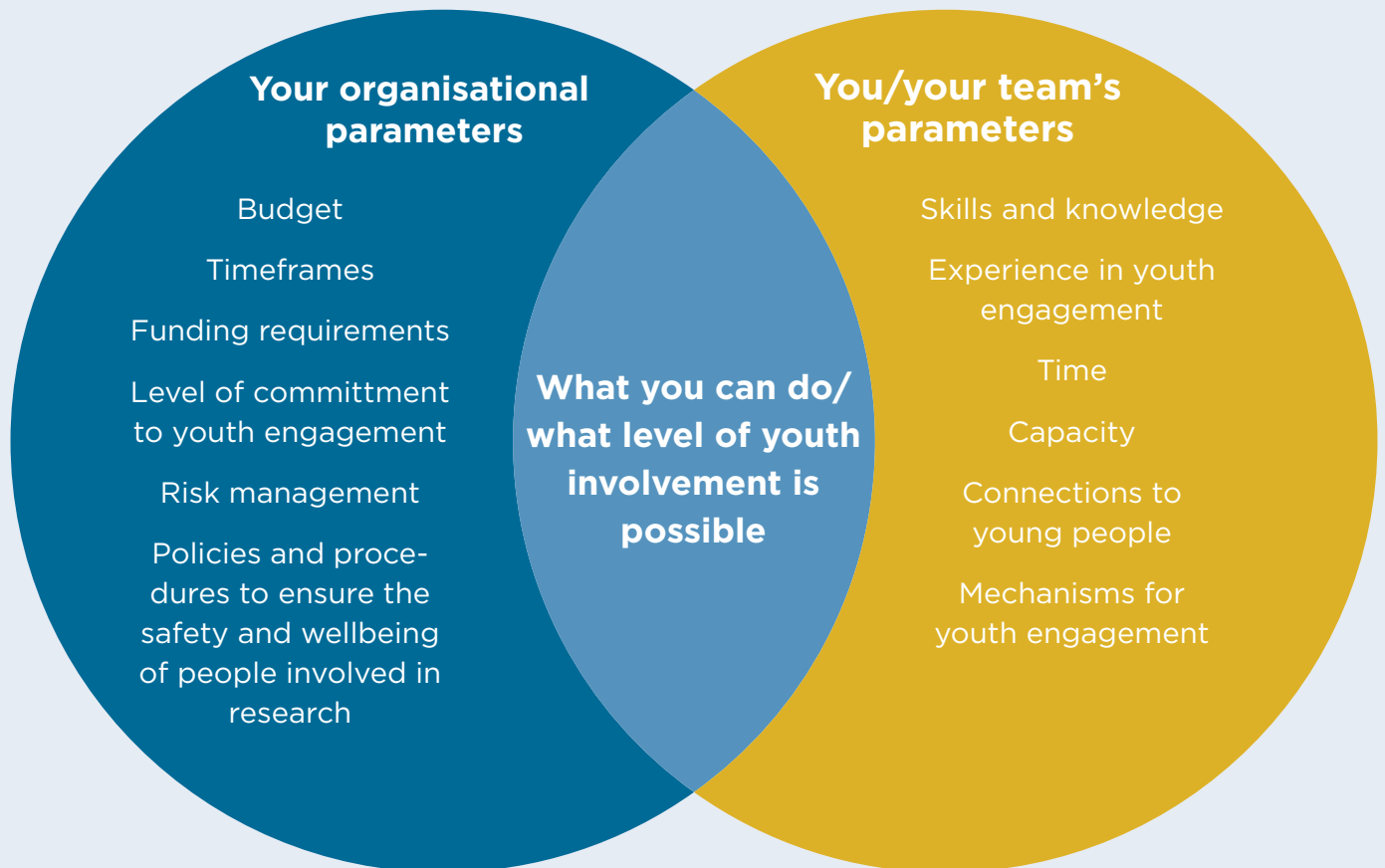
Mechanisms for youth engagement

Figure 3: Consider the parameters you are working within when thinking about what level of youth involvement is possible in your context.

How to advocate for co-research in funding and ethics applications

You may be faced with issues when submitting ethics applications or funding bids that question the practicalities and ethical considerations associated with youth co-research. Whilst every project is different, below are some common questions that might be asked by reviewers and example responses that can be tailored to your context.

Question	Example response
How will youth researchers be trained and mentored?	Youth researchers will be recruited, trained and mentored in robust ethical research practice using a cohort model (see the **Implementation** guide for more detail). Training will draw on the support of additional resources, such as the Youth Co-research Toolkit (Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies, 2022). Youth researchers will work in pairs to enable peer mentoring and support. The cohort will meet fortnightly to share learnings, insights and any challenges throughout the research process. Youth researchers will be employed for [x time period], and each supervised by an experienced researcher.
How will youth researchers benefit from their involvement?	Youth researchers will benefit from the practical experience and research training opportunity of being embedded in an intergenerational research team, alongside experienced researchers. Youth researchers will have the opportunity to develop strong research skills and interpersonal skills, and new expertise in [research topic]; and nurture their confidence and interest in pursuing careers with a research dimension. They can contribute meaningfully to the improvement of services, or to changes to policy and practice that affect their lives, and gain recognition for this. Working closely with the team, youth researchers will develop meaningful relationships with research professionals, potentially helping their career prospects. As co-researchers, young people can become more aware of important social issues, and this can lead them to advocacy and activism in their communities.
How will the research process benefit from youth co-research?	Youth researchers can identify issues and questions often overlooked by adults and can offer their perspectives on how to prioritise research aims, as well as to facilitate recruitment, particularly with groups of young people that may be hard to reach. Youth researchers can develop research tools and instruments that are more accessible to the study participants, plus more relevant outcome measures. Youth researchers can offer diverse lived experiences and perspectives to provide a deeper and more nuanced interpretation of the data. Data collected by young people from young people offers increased reliability and richness due to increased rapport and balanced power dynamics between researchers and participants. In the dissemination phase, youth researchers can advise and make decisions about how and where research is published, so that it is easily accessible to target audiences. Involving young people as co-researchers, with shared ownership of the research process and outputs, is essential if their rights are to be truly respected and is ultimately necessary to align with a youth-rights approach to research.

Question	Example response
How will children or young people participate in this research?	A team of x young people will be employed to work alongside the researchers to collaborate on the project design and deliverables, and [insert methods/activities]. Youth researchers are not research participants and no data will be collected from them. Rather, they are paid research assistants to the research team. They will be aged [age range] and have received extensive research training, including [insert training activities].
How is young people's participation indispensable to the conduct of the research?	Young people's involvement as youth researchers will ensure that the research activities and deliverables are age-appropriate and will help to minimise the power imbalance that often characterises research with young people.
How will any ethical risks be mitigated and managed?	Risks associated with youth researchers experiencing distress through interviews: Youth researchers will be provided with training to ensure they can conduct safe, ethical research. The academic researchers on the team are experienced and will seek to minimise any risk and oversee and support the youth researchers to manage risks. They will fully train the youth researchers in preparation for interviews. Experienced researchers will co-interview alongside the youth researchers [where/when this is required in your context]. The collaborative nature of the project will ensure that all researchers know where and when their colleagues will be conducting research, ensuring their safety. Mechanisms will be in place for youth researchers to check in with the research team before and after interviews, including advising where and when interviews are taking place, and to debrief afterwards. All researchers will provide scholarly and emotional support for one another, to minimise stress, with a specific focus on the needs of the youth researchers, such as dedicated meetings to provide training and support. All researchers are aware that they can seek out additional support through recommended, local counselling services.

Preparing your team

Preparing your team to undertake the co-research process is vital.

What is needed from you and your team to enable co-research?

Soft skills

- excellent communication
- active listening
- open-mindedness
- approachability
- creativity
- flexibility
- awareness of dynamics and behaviours associated with power and privilege.

Supervision responsibilities

- setting clear shared expectations
- inducting youth researchers
- training / up-skilling youth researchers
- briefing and developing work plans/tasks (where relevant)
- undertaking regular check-ins, meetings and supervision
- providing and receiving robust feedback.

Time for

- relationship building with youth researchers
- relationship building and management with project partners
- youth researcher supervision/mentoring and management of expectations
- collaborative design of research questions and methodologies
- finding creative solutions to overcome challenges and explore possibilities along the way
- reflexivity and reflection.

> You will need longer than you think. However much time you think you need to undertake co-research, triple it.

Partnership management (if you are working with a stakeholder who brings youth engagement expertise, access to networks of young people and/or subject matter expertise)

- setting clear shared expectations
- negotiating roles and responsibilities throughout
- agreeing on roles when engaging with youth researchers
- agreeing on appropriate modes for communicating/engaging with youth researchers.

> We recommend a ratio of, minimum 1 researcher: maximum of 3 youth researchers. Consider this as you build your team and recruit young people.

> Co-research with young people can allow you to build many different professional skills, and your experience as a mentor and supervisor.

Further resources

- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Getting the right team

Recruiting youth researchers

When reaching out to young people about co-research opportunities, consider partnering with a local or national youth-facing organisation with networks of young people or who have established youth advisory groups or consultants. This pathway can be helpful to reach young people who may have a research interest, or those with experience working with adults in different ways.

When seeking out a youth engagement partner, consider what kind of young people you are seeking to work with (that is, a certain age, lived experience, skills, location) and approach an organisation with relevant expertise and experience.

For more ideas on how to approach recruitment and potential partners, see the further resources.

The practical considerations you will need to make before starting discussions with a partner about involving young people as co-researchers include:

- What is the purpose of involving young people?
- Specifically, what activities will you ask young people to do?
- How long will young people be involved?
- How many young people will be involved?
- How will young people's contributions be used?
- What will young people gain from the co-research experience?
- What training, mentoring or other capacity-building will your team provide?
- How will young people be remunerated and recognised for their time and contributions?
- Who will be responsible for direct liaison with young people?
- What formal agreements need to be in place to manage this partnership?
- What insurance and other HR requirements need to be in place?
- How will your research team and the partner organisation communicate regularly, and resolve any challenges along the way?
- Who are the lead team members/key contact points from both parties?
- Do you require young people to have specific prior knowledge or skillsets?
- At what stage of the research process are you engaging young people? How will this impact how much young people are informed about the project? Is there a project brief that young people can consider before confirming their involvement?

When recruiting, some practical things you may need to prepare include:

- a Memorandum of Understanding/Partnership Agreement (if partnering with a youth organisation)
- a brief detailing tasks and due dates
- a role description
- consent forms for under 18s and parental consent, depending on what permissions the partner organisations have in place
- a high-level project plan and timeline / key milestones
- information on your youth safeguarding policies and procedures (including Working with Children Checks if involving young people under 18 years of age)
- research ethics approval, if applicable.

If you are seeking to partner with a youth organisation, it is best to start the conversation as early as possible. Do not underestimate the length of time it takes to build and formalise partnerships.

If you are recruiting young people via a youth organisation, be mindful that young people's prior experiences with this organisation may shape their expectations of involvement in your project. Early on, be very clear about how you expect to work together about communication, professionalism, and responsibilities. Think about how you can clarify and check these expectations with young people. Where possible, co-creating roles with young people can help to ensure that your expectations are realistic and suitable.

Tools

- **Youth researcher brief**
- **Youth researcher role description / expression of interest**

Further resources

- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Recruiting young people to partner in research
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Safeguarding and duty of care

Roles and responsibilities of youth researchers

Why are you asking young people to be involved? How will they contribute? Be clear on this at the outset and acknowledge that your motivations for engaging youth researchers may be different at different phases or change along the way.

Clear roles and responsibilities help young people to make informed decisions about what they are signing up for; can help avoid disappointment; clarify what parts of their identity they bring to the process; and get everyone on the same page. Before assuming what a young person can bring to the process, consider why young people say they want to be involved, and their interests, preferences, time commitment, age, experiences, capabilities, skills and goals.

> What expertise do young people want to contribute? How can I amplify this through the project?

Young people may bring:

- prior experience engaging with other young people and/or participating in youth engagement activities
- youth networks
- innovative, relevant strategies to engage young people
- lived experience as a young person, which informs the overall approach to engaging other young people in the research project
- fresh perspectives or different ways of looking at things (for example, developing research questions you may not have thought of, and analysing the data using a different lens).

> Young people won't always have access to young participants for your research. If this is something you are looking for, seek this from a strategically identified partner organisation.

> Do you wish to work with a youth researcher who brings certain skills or lived experience? Communicate this with young people so that they are clear about what they are bringing to the process.

Young people might play a key role in a wide range of tasks in the research cycle. Next are some suggestions about how they can take responsibility in the research process. Bear in mind that youth researchers might blend multiple roles and tasks, depending on the focus, scope and needs of the project.

> Young people don't just have to be involved in projects about young people. Co-research can apply in various settings beyond social research, including quantitative studies, big data research and analytics.

Image credit: CMY / Sam Biddle

Research phase	Possible tasks for youth researchers
Conceptualisation	Co-create, revise and prioritise research questions
	Conduct environmental scans and literature reviews
	Contribute to developing funding bids
	Attend project kick-off meeting
Project planning	Set up a team communication channel
	Schedule meetings for the research team
	Provide feedback on research timelines
	Identify suitable locations for research activities
	Consult on reimbursements for participants
	Co-create impact tracking maps for evaluation purposes
Research design	Co-create research methods and data collection instruments
	Review research tools and provide feedback (e.g., interview discussion guides, workshop agendas, surveys)
	Lead youth feedback on research tools
	Support the development of participant sample attributes and recruitment methods
Ethical approval	Contribute to and/or review ethics applications
	Develop materials (e.g., consent forms, participant information sheets)
Participant recruitment	Create recruitment materials and social media collateral
	Communicate with participants (e.g., scheduling interview times/locations)
Data collection	Conduct fieldwork, for example, interviews (with support from the research team as required) and workshops
	Note-taking
	Transcription
	Desk research / mapping exercises
Stakeholder/partner engagement	Identify potential partners
	Communicate with stakeholders
Analysis and interpretation	Co-produce coding framework
	Enter and code data
	Develop data dashboards
	Statistical analysis
	Identify preliminary findings
	Participate in collaborative analysis sessions with the team
	Communicate findings back to participants
Reporting	Draft or review/feedback on sections of the report
	Co-author publications (e.g., journal articles)

Research phase	Possible tasks for youth researchers
Translation and dissemination	Create research translation materials that are engaging, relevant and relatable to young people
	Be involved in planning and presenting at events (e.g., webinars, exhibitions, conferences)
Evaluation	Attend retrospective meetings at the end of projects/milestones to reflect on successes, challenges, and learnings
	Provide feedback on the process
	Co-create evaluation tools
	Collect impact data throughout the project

Image credit: Pexels / Zen Chung

Youth co-research payment guidelines

Formal payment helps to recognise and value young people's time and expertise and to foster a constructive co-research environment that is equitable and respectful.

Activities that require payment can include when young people:

- have an ongoing contribution to the development of research design, ethics, methods, tools, data collection and analysis, literature reviewing and report writing
- are involved in recruitment and engagement of youth participants for specific projects
- facilitate or co-facilitate data collection.

At universities, youth researchers can be employed on a casual basis as research assistants. Whilst pay rates differ between institutions, this payment rate can be decided upon based on the following considerations:

- What is their level of responsibility?
- What is their level of skill and experience?
- What tasks will they be carrying out? What level of skill is required?
- Are those tasks critical to the research that is being conducted?
- Are they also bringing their lived experience / other expertise to the project?
- Is the payment country, culture and context-sensitive?
- Is the payment in line with the current cost of living and comparable to similar award rates?

Industry awards

For an ongoing role, the best place to find information on current hourly rates for research, facilitation or engagement roles is either the Higher Education Industry Award or the Social and Community Services Pay Rates. Once you have developed the position description and responsibilities, we suggest you refer to the Fair Work Ombudsman award rates below in consultation with your Human Resources department. Alternatively, your university, institution or organisation may have an internal pay rate based on these awards.

Short-term/one-off engagement

If you are engaging young people in short-term or one-off research activities, the below pay rate guides can help you to determine fair remuneration, as well as non-financial ways to acknowledge their contribution.

Further resources

- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guide: Package of thanks, value & remuneration
- Wellbeing Health & Youth: Remuneration tool
- Centre for Multicultural Youth: Youth researcher engagement guidelines and reimbursement guidelines

Example of budget justification for funding applications:

Each youth researcher will be employed at HEW4.1 for a period of 3 months, to cover 0.5 months of intensive research training, drawing on training resources such as [insert materials that will be used] and 2.5 months of research work. When appointing youth researchers we consulted with youth organisations who advised that HEW4.1 is appropriate compensation relative to the training and experience level of an 18–21-year-old.

Induction

Beyond the standard induction and orientation to your organisation, set a time for kick-off meetings to brief youth researchers and establish introductions with your team, and any other stakeholders. As part of your induction, make time for conversations to align expectations and get on the same page.

Getting to know each other

Before you start, take some time to get to know each other as a whole team, and one-to-one. An intentional conversation can be meaningful, illuminating and a great way to start building trust.

Conversation starters:

- What is one superpower you bring that will help you and the team in this project?
- If you think back on the journey that has led you to work on this project, what would be the significant events that have brought you here?
- What are three important things you want your colleagues to know about you?
- What are your greatest strengths in a team?
- What skills would you like to improve? Or things you are interested in learning?
- What motivated you to get into this particular role/area of interest?
- What are you hoping to achieve through this project?
- What are your expectations of yourself? Of each other?
- What are you most excited about?
- What do you feel nervous or uncertain about?
- What questions do you have for each other at the start of this project?

> For inclusive and respectful practice, identify whether young people have any access or inclusion adjustments/ considerations, and work with them to find out how they are best supported (for example, young people with a physical or cognitive disability; young people who may have cultural considerations; young people's preferred pronouns; or young people who face transport disadvantage).

Discussing the project

Be prepared to share as much information as you can about the project – without being too overwhelming. Consider sharing a project plan or excerpt of a funding proposal.

Set up an onboarding meeting with youth researchers to discuss:

- project aims, objectives and a timeline
- who is involved and who youth researchers will be engaging with specifically
- who youth researchers will be reporting to
- funding source and funder expectations/ deliverables
- any constraints that you are working within that can't be changed
- reporting requirements
- any challenges you anticipate along the way
- who has decision-making power, and what level of decisions the project team can make
- processes which may take time, and anticipated timeframes (such as ethics approval/sign-off).

Invite feedback, ideas and suggestions in the areas where there is scope to influence. This could include:

- developing research aims and questions
- designing methodology
- creating impact-tracking tools / evaluation process
- plans for engaging a wider group of young people, as advisors, peer researchers or participants.
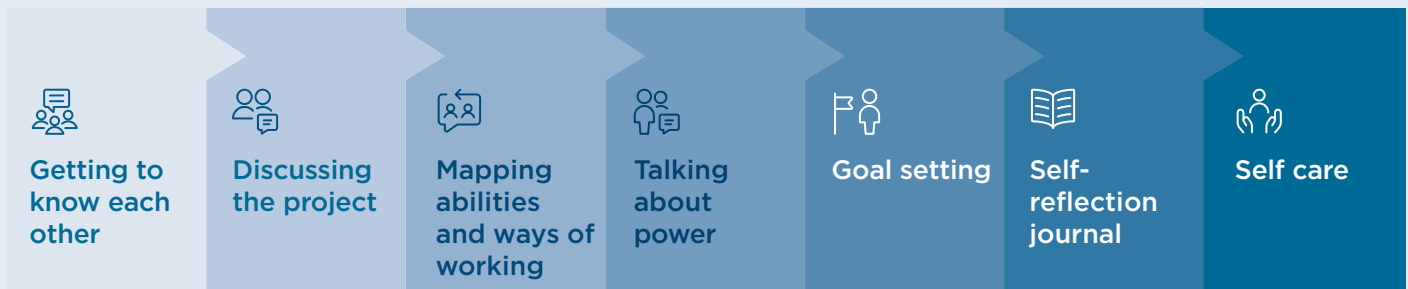
Templates

- **Youth researcher brief template** (use this as a starting point for induction discussions)
- **Onboarding meeting template** (use this to help structure your meeting)

Youth co-research induction steps

| Getting to know each other | Discussing the project | Mapping abilities and ways of working | Talking about power | Goal setting | Self-reflection journal | Self care |

Mapping abilities and ways of working

We have developed a simple and interactive **mapping abilities and roles tool** to help you and the youth researcher/s discuss your respective strengths, skills and abilities, roles, responsibilities, questions, communication, and preferred ways of working.

You can revisit this documentation if your roles and responsibilities evolve throughout the project, or if you encounter challenges along the way.

If you are employed by different organisations, you may want to formally write up your respective roles and responsibilities in a Memorandum of Understanding.

Talking about power

As part of the activity above, or as part of your induction for youth researchers, reflect individually, and then come together as a team, on questions to critically examine power using the questions on these **positionality cards**.

See the Power and Privilege Training Guide included in the Youth Co-research Toolkit to revisit issues of power and privilege in social research and for guidance on exploring your positionality.

Goal setting

Just like other team members, youth researchers will bring a unique set of skills, knowledge and experience to the project team. Given that this might be an early or formative research experience, this is a chance to support their, and your, professional skills and experience. Appropriate support can help youth researchers to meaningfully contribute to the project and provide invaluable experience that furthers their personal and professional development. Use this **goal-setting template** to discuss and document youth researchers' goals.

Self-reflection journal

A self-reflection journal enables critical reflection during the research process.

For researchers working with young people: This **self-reflection journal** prompts questions for researchers to carefully consider their positionality, power, privilege and biases, as well as ways of working and communicating, before, during and after the research process.

For youth researchers: This **self-reflection journal** is designed to support youth researchers to reflect on their goals, achievements, thoughts, feelings and challenges throughout the co-research process. This can help youth researchers to identify their experiences, strengths, and areas for development.

Self-care

Discussing self-care with youth researchers is a way to enable safe, ethical and respectful co-research, especially if their role asks them to draw on their lived experiences or to work directly with the lived experiences of others.

Consider how you will identify and respond to any potential impacts of the research project on youth researchers' wellbeing, especially if the subject matter is personal or sensitive, or if other people involved in the research may share experiences that could be triggering.

Tools and templates

- **Onboarding meeting agenda**
- **Mapping abilities and roles tool**
- **Positionality question cards**
- **Goal-setting template**
- **Self-reflection journal for researchers**

Further resources

- Self-care resources in the youth co-research toolkit for young people
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Induction checklist
- Wellbeing Health & Youth Guidebook: Induction presentation template
- Self-reflection journal for youth researchers
- Power and Privilege Training Guide