CONTENTS: YOUTH CONSULTATION TOOL KIT

INTRODUCTION **pg 2**

PART 1: **Consulting with young people** **pg 3**
What is consultation with young people? pg 3
Why consult with young people? pg 3
Which young people should be consulted? pg 3
What age range should be consulted with? pg 3
How to deal with sensitive topics pg 4
Who should do the consultation? pg 4
When to consult with young people? pg 4
Where to consult with young people? pg 5
What costs are involved? pg 5
Why evaluate the consultation process? pg 5
Preparing an outline plan for your consultation pg 6

PART 2: Checklists **pg 7**
Checklist 1: Interactive/face-to-face consultation pg 7
Checklist 2: Written consultation pg 9

PART 3: Consent **pg 11**
What makes consent valid? pg 11

PART 4: Privacy law considerations **pg 12**
Privacy laws and consultation pg 12
Storing and retaining information pg 13
Organisational openness pg 13
Consultation and contracts pg 13

PART 5: Levels of consultation and practical models **pg 14**
Table A: What consultation methods to use pg 15
Table B: What consultation method to use depending upon level of impact pg 16
1. Surveys or questionnaires pg 17
2. Interviews pg 18
3. Internet discussions, surveys or online feedback pg 19
4. SMS text consultations pg 20
5. Hypothetical stories and situations pg 21
6. Forums pg 22
7. Youth reference group pg 23
8. Youth Peer Consultation pg 24
9. Arts programs or initiatives pg 25
10. Focus Groups pg 26
11. Casual conversations pg 27
12. Comments/suggestion box pg 28
13. Graffiti board pg 29
14. Postcards pg 30
15. Vox pops pg 31
16. Submissions pg 32

PART 6: **Protecting children and young people from abuse and harm** **pg 33**
What does mandatory reporting mean? pg 33
Protecting children and young people from abuse and harm pg 33

INTRODUCTION

This youth consultation tool kit will assist organisations in learning how to effectively consult with young people between 12 and 25 using various methods.

The kit contains practical information sheets outlining different methods of consultation, as well as providing tips about which consultation method to use for the purpose of the consultation.

Sections in the kit include:

Consulting with young people
This section provides general tips and issues to consider when planning a consultation with young people.

Checklists for planning a consultation
The checklists are designed to help you plan for written and face-to-face consultations.

Methods of consultation
This section looks at a variety of consultation models and details the benefits and limitations of choosing certain methods. Advice is provided on choosing a method to suit your consultation needs.

Consent
This section looks at the role of consent when consulting with young people.

Privacy law considerations
This section highlights what you should consider in terms of privacy laws and the usage and storage of information gathered from consultations with young people.

Protecting young people from abuse and harm
This section outlines the South Australian system of mandated reporting any incidences of child abuse or neglect.

For further information on consulting with young people, please contact the Office for Youth on (08)207 0660, or e-mail us at officeforyouth@saugov.sa.gov.au

PART 1: Consulting with young people

This section provides general tips and issues to consider when planning a consultation with young people.

What is consultation with young people?

Consultation provides opportunities for young people to influence decisions. It is a form of participation where the advice of young people is given or views are exchanged. It is a tool used to gather the views of a range of young people for a specific purpose.

Why consult with young people?

Consultation with young people enables:

- young people to contribute to identifying issues that matter to them, this can potentially minimise conflict
- the young persons/peoples' version to be received
- an understanding by young people of project objectives and limitations
- communication of an organisations objectives and priorities, leading to improved decision-making based on young people's opinions
- new ideas, perspectives and better targeting of resources to be brought to program development and policy making
- building partnerships between young people and other community members which improve and strengthen communities as a result.

Which young people should be consulted?

When thinking about which who to consult, you may wish to consider:

- which young people have an interest in, or are affected by the issue?
- which young people would benefit from involvement in the consultation?

Cohorts of young people may include:

- young people with disabilities
- young people with chronic illness
- marginalised or vulnerable young people (including those who are in the youth justice system)
- young people under the Guardianship of the Minister
- young Indigenous people
- young people that identify as belonging to specific cultural backgrounds
- newly arrived migrants and refugee young people
- young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender
- rural young people.

What age range should be consulted with?

It may be appropriate to set upper and lower age limits for consultations, or have different methods of consultation available to young people of different ages.

In relation to age you need to consider:

- topics - ensure your topics are appropriate for the age group
- the level of consultation required - for example, how much time away from home or school will be required by young people
- method of consultation – how will you get young people's views?
- safety - for example, young people may need to travel from home and may require travel assistance
- relevance - for example, do young people of this age group use your service.

How to deal with sensitive topics?

When discussing particularly sensitive issues, it is important that young people's physical, mental and emotional safety are your first considerations.

It is not always suitable to involve young people in decision-making when dealing with sensitive issues, although a general discussion around an issue may be appropriate with a trained facilitator.

Who should do the consultation?

You may wish to consider whether:

- someone from your organisation will run the consultation or would an independent person be more appropriate?
- it is appropriate to involve young people as facilitators and how young people will be informed of the impact of their input?

A good facilitator will:

- enjoy working with young people and see young people's participation as valuable
- communicate effectively with young people and have time to devote to the process.

A good facilitator should:

- ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to have their say
- make young people feel comfortable
- show young people respect and treat information sensitively
- make the process enjoyable for all.

When to consult with young people?

Consultation should occur before key decisions are made about things that will affect young people.

When working with young people, a long lead in time is important to allow for arrangements to be made around young peoples' schooling, work and transport issues.

Where to consult with young people?
Young people are much more likely to be involved if the venue is youth-appropriate. Informality may sometimes be helpful to encourage participation; however this may be seen as disrespectful in some circumstances.

Where a formal approach is used (such as a formal meeting structure), it is important to ensure that all those involved understand the process for contributing and are encouraged to contribute.

What costs are involved?
When planning your consultation, it is important to consider:
- the available budget for the consultation
- what other resources are available to you
- the suitability and skill of staff with the time and capacity to manage the consultation.

The cost of the consultation may include:
- venue hire and refreshments
- advertising
- information and workshop materials
- displays
- travel for young people
- honorariums.

Why evaluate the consultation process?
If an extensive consultation has occurred, an evaluation should be considered. It is important to tell young people what will happen, or what has happened with the information gathered from a consultation.

Evaluation tells you what worked, what didn't and why. Consider the tools you will use to collect data for evaluation – will it be formal and planned or informal?

The type of evaluation technique selected will depend on how the results intend to be used, how much time and resources the technique will require and your assessment of the most appropriate technique for the particular participants.

Examples of evaluation techniques include:
- feedback from participants through focus group interviews
- informal discussions
- self-completed questionnaires
- complaints raised by young people and/or your organisation
- observations raised by young people and/or your organisation.

Preparing an outline plan for your consultation
It may be useful to produce a short outline of the proposed consultation. The following headings may help to guide your planning for consultations with young people.

1. Project name

2. Brief description of the project
Examples: a policy project, research, a new or existing youth program, service or event, a youth-focused resource.

3. Describe the purpose and objective for involving young people
What are the reasons for young people being involved?

4. Describe the methods used to involve young people
Will the consultation include regular ongoing involvement with a core group and/or consultation with a wider group? What consultation method/s will be used e.g. – focus group, discussion board?

5. Describe the range of young people to be involved in the method(s) to be used and how they will be recruited
What is the target group of the project? Is there a diversity of young people? How are you going to recruit young people?

6. Working with a facilitator and other groups
Do you need a facilitator? Who will facilitate the meetings and how? Who will be the main contact for the young people? Should you work with the Office for Youth? Do you want to consult with a youth advisory committee if you are working with regional young people?

7. Describe the practicalities of involving young people
What will the process and timeframe be? Where will the consultation/s be held? When and how often will the consultation/s be held? What resources are required (people and financial)? How will young people be supported to make the most of their involvement and develop their skills?
What is the content of the issue to be consulted on? Are there any specific youth-appropriate consultation resources required?

8. Describe how information received will be recorded, analysed and provided to young people

9. Describe how the youth consultation process will be evaluated
Will young people be involved in the evaluation? If so, how will they be involved?

Information in this sheet has been adapted from the following:
Local Government Community Services Association of SA Inc. (2002) *Making It Real – a resource for community consultation.*
Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

PART 2: Checklists
The following section contains two checklists. Checklist one is for those preparing for face-to-face consultations, checklist two is for those preparing for a written consultation response.

There are multiple approaches to consulting with young people; these checklists are intended as guides only when working with young people.

CHECKLIST 1: INTERACTIVE/FACE-TO-FACE CONSULTATION

Setting goals and objectives

Have the goals and objectives of the consultation been defined?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Which young people?

Have you decided which young people should be consulted?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Do the young people who will be consulted need to be a representative sample?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Have you decided how to recruit participants?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Who should do the consultation?

Has an appropriate person been chosen to lead the consultation or facilitating?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
If a facilitator is used, have they had an appropriate police check prior to working with young people?	**YES**	**NO**	

Supporting participants

Have support mechanisms for participants been considered and strategies put in place?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
How will young people reach your venue safely? For example, will you cover the cost of transport? If it is a late night meeting, how will young people be getting home?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Is the venue accessible? For example, is it close to public transport?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Does the time of the consultation suit participants?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Are participants to be reimbursed for expenses?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Is your consultation process sensitive to the diversity of young people if required?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Is your consultation process sensitive to the cultural practices of the young people involved?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Does your consultation promote gender equity and support?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Is accessible language being used for the consultation and for all related information?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Has a strategy been planned to provide feedback and outcomes to participants?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
How will you acknowledge/thank participants for their contribution?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
If the consultation process is to take a long time, have strategies been planned to keep participants engaged?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Will debriefing be available to participants if necessary?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
What will happen with the information gathered?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Have strategies been considered to make young people feel safe and comfortable in the consultation?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Privacy and consent

Have privacy and consent issues been considered where appropriate?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Evaluation

Has an evaluation technique been chosen and scheduled into the process?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

CHECKLIST 2: WRITTEN CONSULTATION

Setting goals and objectives

Have the goals and objectives of the consultation been defined in a youth friendly language?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Has adequate time been allowed for young people to prepare and submit their responses?			

Which young people?

Have you decided which young people should be consulted?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Do the young people who will be consulted need to be a representative sample?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Have you decided how to reach participants?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Supporting participants

Have support mechanisms for participants been considered and strategies put in place for those young people with low levels of literacy and written skills?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Has adequate notice been given to young people to prepare and submit their response?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Are participants to be reimbursed for their time?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Is your consultation process sensitive to the cultural practices of the young people involved?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Does your consultation promote gender equity and support?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Is accessible language being used within the consultation document and for all related information?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Has a strategy been planned to provide feedback and outcomes to participants?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
How will you acknowledge/thank participants for their contribution?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
If the consultation process is to take a long time, have strategies been planned to keep participants engaged?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Will debriefing be available to participants if necessary?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
What will happen with the information gathered? How is this relate to young people?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Is there a contact person available for young people to ask questions and receive support?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Privacy and consent

Have privacy and consent issues been considered?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Evaluation

Has an evaluation technique been chosen and scheduled into the process?	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

PART 3: Consent

The application of privacy laws and obligations depend on the nature of the organisation and no general advice can be given as to whether your organisation is bound by specific privacy laws or principles. However, it would be prudent for any organisation to implement an appropriate privacy policy and consider this in light of the requirement to keep young people safe and protected. The purpose of this information sheet is to assist your organisation with this task.

Seeking consent from young people before gathering information is a prudent measure and accords with the principle that information should be collected in a fair and reasonable manner.

People have the legal capacity to consent if they have the mental ability and maturity to understand the nature and effect of what they are consenting to.

Age is relevant in assessing the capacity to consent, but not decisive unless the person is very young. The legal capacity to consent is not age dependant. It is fair to assume that a young person has the capacity to consent to being involved in the consultation unless there is evidence or reason to believe otherwise.

What makes consent valid?
Consent needs to be informed. This means that the person has the capacity to understand the situation and consequences of taking part.

Consent needs to be freely given. This means that the person can make his/her own decision, free from influences or pressures.

Consent needs to be specific. This means that the consent applies only for the information to be used for the purpose outlined.

The consent needs to be current. This means that the consent must not be given so long ago that relevant circumstances or the person's view may reasonably have changed.

It is important to remember that consultations with young people are not legal advice.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

PART 4: Privacy law considerations

Privacy laws and consultation

Privacy codes govern the collection, use, storage, transfer and correction of personal information. The concept of personal information is very broad and in general, is that information which, whether true or not, is about a person and can be used to identify them. It is important to note that opinions can constitute personal information.

To access the information on the South Australian Information Privacy Principles, go to www.premcab.sa.gov.au/pdf/circulars/Privacy.pdf

To access the Code of Fair Information Practice, go to: www.health.sa.gov.au. Click on 'Publications', then 'Guidelines' to access the Code of Fair Information Practice PDF file.

The following privacy issues should be taken into account when consulting with young people:

1. The purpose of the consultation

Consider the type of personal information that needs to be collected to meet the purpose of the consultation.

Consider if personal information is required.

2. Collecting personal information

Only the personal information needed for the purpose of the consultation should be collected.

3. Privacy statements

If the information collected identifies a participant, they need to be informed of the following before or at the time of the consultation:

- the identity of the organisation and how it can be contacted
- the purpose of collecting the information
- how the participant can gain access to the personal information he/she provided
- what personal information will individuals be given the right to correct
- who, if anyone, the organisation is going to share the information with
- how the information is going to be kept secure.

4. When to deliver a privacy statement
You could advise participants of their right to privacy:
- by telephone
- by website – if consulting over the web, the privacy statement needs to be provided on the main page of the site
- in a focus group – the privacy statement can be explained at the start of the focus group.

Note: anyone delivering a privacy statement should use a standard script to refer to points and to make sure all of the requirements of the privacy statement are covered. The person's decision to agree or not should be recorded in a file note or similar.

5. How the information from the consultation will be used?
When the participants have been informed of the specific purpose of the consultation through the privacy statement, the information collected can only be used for that purpose.

If you want to use the information for another purpose, the participants must be informed of this new purpose and consent for this needs to be obtained.

Storing and retaining information
The privacy laws highlight the importance of storing personal information securely. Some measures to consider are:
- storing information in a secure place
- removing a person's identity from the information as soon as possible
- protecting electronic information with a password
- backing up discs and storing them separately from computers.

Organisational openness
Privacy laws state that an organisation must have clearly expressed policies on how it manages personal information. These policies need to be made available to anyone who asks for them.

Consultation and contracts
If consultation services are going to be contracted out, you must be mindful that you are unable to contract out your obligations under the Information Privacy Principles.

When contracting out services, include a clause in your contract or service agreements indicating the requirement that contracted agencies abide by the privacy principles. Good practice dictates that all information collected on your behalf is returned to you.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

PART 5: Levels of consultation and practical models

There are no discrete, uniform methods of consultation – each consultation will have a life of its own, shaped by levels of complexity and the depth of information required.

Most consultations can be carried out in different ways; they can be done more or less cheaply, making innovative twists or modifications. In any case, selecting a consultation model is only part of the story – other issues such as how the method is used to reach excluded groups and the skill level of those facilitating the process may be equally as important.

The following pages have been included to help you choose the appropriate consultation method for your purposes. Table A has been designed to help you choose a method of consultation suitable for the type of consultation information being sought. Table B helps you to decide which consultation method to use depending on the level of impact the project/issues being consulted on has on young people and/or the wider community.

The consultation models following tables A and B have been included to highlight the benefits and limitations of different models.

TABLE A: What consultation methods to use

	Consultation Method ***Note: The numbers in the brackets refer to a corresponding consultation information sheet.***															
Consultation Objectives	Surveys or questionnaires (1)	Interviews (2)	Internet discussions, surveys or online feedback (3)	SMS text consultations (4)	Hypothetical stories and situations (5)	Forums (6)	Youth reference group (7)	Youth Peer Consultation (8)	Arts programs or initiatives (9)	Focus Groups (10)	Casual conversations (11)	Comments/suggestion box (12)	Graffiti board (13)	Postcards (14)	Vox pops (15)	Submissions (16)
Gather quantitative information	✔															
Gather qualitative information		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Make decisions						✔	✔									
Influence decision making	✔				✔	✔	✔	✔		✔						
Develop objectives/vision			✔			✔	✔	✔	✔	✔						
Development options	✔		✔			✔	✔	✔							✔	
Identify concerns and issues	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Test ideas/ prioritise options		✔	✔			✔	✔	✔		✔				✔		
Potential for consensus/ agreement	✔					✔	✔									
Potential to reach large numbers	✔		✔	✔		✔		✔	✔					✔	✔	✔
Inclusive for those who do not normally participate	✔		✔	✔				✔	✔			✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Inclusive for small groups/ individual contact	✔	✔		✔				✔			✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Develop relationships							✔			✔	✔					
Satisfy statutory requirements	✔					✔	✔			✔						✔

TABLE B: What consultation method to use depending upon level of impact

LEVEL OF IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE	CONSULTATION METHODS TO USE*
INDIRECT/GENERAL IMPACT Examples: Feedback on climate change. Broader community planning. New/changed facilities in the broader community. Economic development in the region.	Surveys or questionnaires (1) Internet discussions, surveys or online feedback (3) SMS text consultations (4) Youth reference group (7) Arts programs or initiatives (9) Casual conversations (11) Comments/suggestion box (12) Graffiti board (13) Postcards (14) Vox pops (15)
LARGE/DIRECT IMPACT Examples: New programs specific to young people. Changes to the school system. New/changed facilities in the local community. Changes to/new youth policy.	Interviews (2) Hypothetical stories and situations (5) Forums (6) Youth reference group (7) Youth Peer Consultation (8) Focus Groups (10) Submissions (16)

LEVEL OF IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY	CONSULTATION METHODS TO USE
INDIRECT/GENERAL IMPACT Examples: Dry zone applications. Broader community planning. New/changed facilities in the broader community. Economic development in the region.	Surveys or questionnaires (1) Internet discussions, surveys or online feedback (3) Vox pops (15) Submissions (16)
LARGE/DIRECT IMPACT Examples: New programs. Facilities and/or services in the local community. Changes to the health system. Changes to workplace relations. Changes to policy affecting the community.	Interviews (2) Forums (6) Focus Groups (10) Submissions (16)

Note: The numbers in the brackets refer to a corresponding consultation information sheet.

1. Surveys or questionnaires

Involve

A structured consultation process in which participants respond to a set of written questions. These might be multiple choice, tick the box, or a combination of structured questions. Surveys can be conducted in which the participant provides answers to questions by telephone.

Benefits

Surveys can:

- be posted on the Internet, in the mail, completed on site or taken home, and are useful if distance or time is an issue
- be completed by a large number of people without creating much extra work
- be completed in private and anonymously if privacy is an issue.

Answers can be more easily collated and analysed through structured questions. It is possible to use a consultant to record the answers if the literacy of participants is an issue.

Questions can be tailored to meet the needs of the participants.

Limitations

Surveys do not involve social interaction between participants, and those being consulted cannot raise issues or concerns, or comment on the relevance of questions.

Participants may have difficulty reading or writing, which means that someone else may have to read questions and record answers, resulting in increased workload and margin for error.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

2. Interviews

Involve

A face-to-face discussion where one or more people ask questions of the person being consulted. It may be structured or informal. Usually the same questions are asked in each interview to achieve measurable outcomes.

Benefits

Interviews can:

- provide opportunities to discuss issues that may be sensitive and not easily discussed in a group
- encourage a rapport between participant and consultant
- be a comfortable and relaxed process if the interviewer is sufficiently skilled
- get in-depth information and feedback.

Limitations

Interviews can be:

- intimidating for young people who are unfamiliar with interviews, have limited English language skills, or have previously experienced interrogation or intimidation in interviews
- an inefficient method if a large sample of young people are to be consulted, as each interview needs to be individually scheduled
- unsuitable if participants have limited time or are geographically isolated, as the interview cannot necessarily be scheduled at a time and venue convenient to them.

Interviews may offer no group interaction or opportunity for young people to bounce off each other.

Tips

Providing some skill development for young people not accustomed to interview processes may be useful.

Interpreters can be used when interviewing young people with limited English. Keep the language in the interview direct and simple to make it more accessible.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

3. Internet discussions, surveys or online feedback

Involve

Using the Internet as a medium to post a survey, host a discussion group or request feedback.

Benefits

The Internet can:
- be useful if distance or geographic isolation is an issue
- allow for anonymity by avoiding face to face contact
- be completed at any time, providing flexibility and allowing for time limitations
- be effective for ongoing monitoring or receiving regular feedback
- reach a broad population
- use existing email lists or websites to post the information
- provide opportunities for interaction through 'chat' facilities of a diverse group.

Answers can be easily collated and analysed through structured questions.

Limitations

This method:
- is dependent on young people having Internet access
- may require access to a database of young people or a large number of hits on a page by a target group
- may be difficult to ascertain representation
- may have a minimal of depth to responses
- requires some technical capacity to post the survey onto the Internet.

Tips

Ask young people within your organisation if they can assist in making the language used in these methods youth friendly.

Get in contact with organisations in the youth sector. They may be able to post a survey or host a discussion group on your behalf.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

4. SMS text consultations

Involve

Sending out text messages through mobile telephones asking for feedback or opinions on an issue or question.

Benefits

This method:
- can target a large group of young people
- takes the consultation to young people
- is quick and easy to do
- uses ‘youthful’ technology.

Limitations

This method:
- excludes young people without mobile telephones
- does not involve personal contact with young people
- is limited to simple questions
- limits the amount of information gathered from individuals

It is difficult to target a representative sample and organisations need access to mobile telephone numbers in order to send messages.

Tip

Obtaining consent before consulting through SMS text messages may help ensure it is not intrusive.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

5. Hypothetical stories and situations

Involve

Presenting participants with invented stories or situations and gauging their responses to them. By focusing on how characters in a story might feel the discussion is de-personalised. A hypothetical can involve a discussion or written response.

Benefits

Hypotheticals can:

- be effective in discussing difficult or potentially distressing issues without asking participants to reveal their own experiences
- allow for free and honest responses than if asked directly about the same issues.

Invented stories can make it more engaging for participants. This method can be used in a group or individual setting.

Limitations

Time and planning is needed for drafting the hypothetical stories and running the consultations.

This method may distress the participants if asked to discuss a controversial or distressing issue that is close to their own experience.

Tips

Depending upon the subject matter, a professional facilitator may be required to host a hypothetical.

A debriefing may be necessary following a discussion about a potentially distressing topic.

It is important to have a strategy in place outlining what to do if a participant reveals something that needs to be acted upon.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

6. Forums

Involve

People coming together to share ideas about an issue with the purpose of having some input into a decision-making process. Forums are usually facilitated, with a structured agenda and involve reaching resolutions or recommendations.

Mixed stakeholder forums are forums in which a variety of people who have an interest in an issue come together. Young people might attend a mixed stakeholder forum alongside employers, politicians, teachers or others with a stake in the issue.

Benefits

Forums can:

- involve a broad range of young people
- be beneficial with young people interacting with others in order to discuss issues and come to conclusions
- develop young people's skills in communication and public speaking, group facilitation, working effectively as a team and researching new topics
- be an empowering experience if young people raise issues of importance to them and determine the forum's agenda.

Limitations

Young people may not feel comfortable discussing personal issues in a group forum.

Forums usually take detailed planning and time to organise.

Transportation, schooling and work commitments may be barriers to young people attending a forum.

Requires a skilled facilitator and may require small group leaders.

Holding a forum may not get full participation from all participants.

Tips

Have a long lead in time for the organisation of the forum.

Young people can be involved in the organisation of the forum.

Creative presentations can be part of the forum.

An audience can be invited in order to hear the findings of the forum.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

7. Youth reference group

Involve

A group of young people providing feedback or support to an organisation, agency or project on a repeated basis. Variations of a youth reference group include a youth advisory committee or project action team. Youth reference groups can have a dual function of providing support and feedback to an organisation or project while actively pursuing independent projects. Youth reference groups may operate informally or within formal committee structures.

Benefits

A youth reference group can:

- enable young people to provide regular, direct feedback into a project or organisation
- incorporate young people's perspectives and input into organisational structures
- help to develop young people's skills in communication, group work, and running a committee
- encourage young people to take an active approach to issues of importance to them.

Limitations

A youth reference group requires time, planning and adequate resources to work effectively.

Can be costly.

Formal committee approaches might be off-putting to some young people.

It may be difficult to keep young people engaged over long periods of time.

Tip

Reference groups may be more effective if young people are involved in establishing the group.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

8. Youth Peer Consultation

Involve

Young people consulting with their peers through methods such as interviews, surveys and peer-led focus groups. The key factor is that young people carry out the consultation with other young people. Typically, the consultants receive training and often conduct the consultations on behalf of an organisation.

Benefits

Youth peer consultation can:

- be accessible to young people who are more comfortable sharing their opinions and ideas with each other
- support young people and other community members to work in partnership with one another
- be empowering for young people because they play a valuable role and have some control over the consultation process.

Youth peer consultation often involves skill development or participation in areas such as communication, research, interviewing skills or group facilitation.

Limitation

If the peer consultants require training, then adequate time and resources need to be incorporated into the consultation process.

Tip

Peer consultants can be employed for the consultation or reimbursed for their work.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

9. Arts programs or initiatives

Involve

Young people expressing themselves through art in either a collaborative group effort or individual project, which can be structured and planned, or more spontaneous. Requires an audience so that the views and ideas expressed are seen or heard.

Benefits

Arts programs or initiatives can:

- encourage young people to express themselves freely
- engage young people who have language and/or literacy issues
- provide opportunities for skill development
- engage other community members as the audience.

Limitation

May require substantial planning time and specific resources.

Tips

A wide range of art forms can be used such as painting, theatre or role- playing, creative writing or photography.

Arts programs or initiatives are often effective alongside other methods of consultation, for example, a written explanation of the art may further outline the views and opinions being expressed.

Young people can take on a variety of roles in the design, direction or organisation of the process.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

10. Focus Groups

Involve

A small to medium group of young people responding to an issue, information or questions presented in a consistent, structured way so that each focus group produces measurable outcomes. Focus groups often require participants to undergo some training and can be augmented using peer facilitators. The aim is to get feedback from the focus group rather than devise outcomes or resolutions.

Benefits

Focus groups can:

- involve a diverse range of young people
- be accessible to everyone through effective facilitation
- trigger discussion and provide a social experience through group interaction.

Limitation

May not be suitable for young people to discuss personal issues.

Requires a skilled facilitator.

The number of young people per focus group may be limited.

Transportation, schooling and work commitments may be barriers to young people attending a focus group session.

Tip

To get a broad sample, various agencies and organisations such as schools or youth services can be invited to run focus groups. The information collected can then inform one consultation.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

11. Casual conversations

Involve

Simply asking young people their opinions through a casual conversation. Casual conversations can be one-on-one or conducted in a group.

Benefits

Casual conversations can:

- be conducted anywhere, for example, in the workplace or after a meeting, and by various methods including phone or e-mail
- be effective for ongoing consultation
- be useful when there is limited time
- help build up a relationship of trust.

Limitation

Information not easily recorded.

Tip

Young people need to be aware that the information they disclose in the casual conversation may be used as data. To avoid any misunderstanding, phrase questions so that it is clear that the conversation is part of a consultation. For example, 'I was wanting to know what you think about this because…'

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

12. Comments/suggestion box

Involve

Encouraging people to place their written suggestions or comments into a readily available secure box. The box is usually placed in an accessible location with pens and paper available for use. The box may be advertised by signs and can be used temporarily or as an ongoing method of consultation.

Benefits

Comments/suggestion box can be:

- useful if there are limited resources and/or time
- effective for ongoing consultation
- easy for participants to use.

Comments can be made confidentially, particularly if the box is placed in a private space.

Limitations

The comments/suggestion box may not be accessible to young people with limited literacy.

This method restricts following up comments or suggestions.

The success of this method relies on young people taking the initiative to make comments.

The comments/suggestion box is not a personally engaging process.

Comments may not come from a representative sample.

Tip

Where appropriate, outcomes stemming from the comments and suggestions can be displayed near the box. This can be a way of reporting back to participants and promoting the effectiveness of making suggestions.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

13. Graffiti board

Involve

Creating an accessible public space, usually on a wall, where participants can write their comments in their own time. Hanging up butcher's paper on walls and providing markers can be an easy way to do this. Graffiti boards can be left hanging for as long as required and can be replaced at regular intervals.

Benefits

A graffiti board is:

- easy to establish and use
- informal in nature which can encourage people to respond freely
- fun to participate in.

Responses can be anonymous.

Limitations

Comments may be difficult to interpret, this method restricts the following up of comments and suggestions.

Tips

Leading questions can be placed on graffiti boards to guide the feedback.

Graffiti boards can be displayed after use.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

14. Postcards

Involve

Printing reply paid postcards with questions on the back requesting written feedback. These are distributed broadly.

Benefits

Postcards:

- bring the consultation to young people by distributing the cards directly to them; for example, in venues, shops and café's and through the street press and magazines
- reach a broad and large population
- provide details of how to get more information on the topic.

Limitations

Postcards may not be appropriate for young people with language or literacy issues.

They may not promote interaction of young people.

High response rates cannot be guaranteed.

Tip

Young people can be involved in the design of the postcards.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

15. Vox pops

Involve

Spontaneously approaching people and asking them to briefly comment on an issue or question. Vox pops are usually recorded on film or audiotape.

Benefits

Using vox pops:
- a large number of opinions can be accessed
- usually gets high response rates
- the consultation comes to the participants
- people can be identified or remain anonymous
- is a fun and easy interaction for young people.

Limitations

Vox pops do not:
- usually allow for follow-up
- involve in-depth consultation
- usually involve a representative sample of people.

Using vox pops can mean you may not get well considered answers.

Vox pops usually require audio or film equipment.

Tips

Vox pops can be more effective when the questions are short and clear, and when the issue being discussed is broadly known.

They can be used effectively alongside other forms of consultation, for example, vox pops can be conducted at a forum.

Adapted from: Youth Affairs Council of Victoria and Office for Youth, Department for Victorian Communities. (2004) *Consulting with young people about their ideas and opinions – Taking Young People Seriously.*

15. Submissions

Involve

Governments call for submissions as part of a process of review, establishing a particular program or service or seeking comment on discussion papers. Submissions can be oral or written.

Benefits

Using submissions:

- demonstrate a commitment to openness
- are a cost effective form of consultation
- can be indicative of wider community support/outrage.

Limitations

Submissions:

- are not generally ‘youth friendly’
- may be overlooked by young people in newspapers
- will most likely be responded to by those with a particular interest in the topic
- may exclude those with poor written and oral skills
- are time consuming to organise and analyse results
- may be biased and not provide overall guidance.

Tips

If calling for submissions, make sure you advertise in all youth street press, as well as state and local papers.

Have clear guidelines prepared in a youth friendly format to ensure young people understand what is expected of them.

Part 6: Protecting children and young people from abuse and harm

South Australia has a system of mandated reporting where certain members of the community are required by law to report any incidences of child abuse or neglect. All members of the community are encouraged to do so even if they do not come under the mandated reporting requirements.

To report child abuse and neglect call the Child Abuse Report line: 13 14 78.

Based upon the information provided a decision is made as to whether further investigation is required.

What does mandatory reporting mean?
Certain groups of people are required by law to contact Families SA if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child is being abused or neglected, and this suspicion is formed in the course of their work. This is a legal obligation which carries a penalty if you fail to comply.

In South Australia under the Children's Protection Act 1993, the following persons are mandated notifiers:

- medical practitioners
- nurses
- dentists
- pharmacists
- psychologists
- police
- probation officers
- social workers
- teachers
- family day care providers
- employees of, or volunteers in, government departments, agencies or local government or non- government agencies that provide health, welfare, education, childcare, sporting and recreational or residential services wholly or partly for children.

Changes to the Act which will come into effect in late 2006 will add the following persons to this list: Ministers of religion and employees and volunteers of religious/spiritual organisations.

If you are unsure about reporting, consult with a social worker by calling the Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78. Additional information is provided to participants attending Mandatory Reporting Training.

Protecting children and young people from abuse and harm
Mandated notifiers must make a report to Families SA if they have current concerns about the safety, welfare or well being of a child. All reasonable suspicions of abuse or neglect should be reported without delay. Mandatory reporters need to be aware that:

- it is your personal responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect – it is not the responsibility of your supervisor, principal or employer
- you do not have to prove that abuse has occurred
- you must accompany your notification with a statement of the observations, information and opinions on which the suspicions are based
- you are immune from civil liability for reporting your suspicions in good faith.

It is the role of Families SA to assess the notification and determine whether departmental action is warranted. It is important to remember that child protection is everyone's responsibility and that even if you have made a report, you may still have a role in supporting the child or young person.

For further information visit: www.familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au

From: The Department for Families and Communities website - http://www.familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au, accessed 31 July 2006