



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The Recruitment & Retention of Young Leaders

WHAT IS YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?

- + Youth engagement is the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity, with a focus outside of him or herself. The kind of activity in which the youth engages can be almost anything—sports, the arts, music, volunteer work, politics, social activism—and it can occur in almost any kind of setting.



HOW DO ENGAGED YOUTH ACT?

- + Performs the activity or spends time with the organization frequently
- + Talks to others about the activity/organization
- + Initiates the activity him/herself (rather than at the suggestion or urging of others)
- + Participates actively and regularly, with a specific purpose in mind
- + Brings other people to the activity/organization and seeks out others with similar interests
- + Leads and organizes others who are involved in the activity/organization
- + Advocates energetically on behalf of the activity/organization
- + Seeks adult support and structure when needed, acts independently when appropriate

HOW DO ENGAGED YOUTH THINK?

- + Thinks the activity/organization is an important one
- + Is well-informed about the activity/organization
- + Sees an important sense of purpose in the activity/organization



HOW DO ENGAGED YOUTH FEEL?

- + Cares about the activity/organization with which he or she is involved
- + Derives a sense of belonging from the activity/organization and feels connected to the people in the activity/organization
- + Finds the activity or participation in the activity fun or enjoyable
- + Feels that the activity is meaningful - that it's an important and worthwhile thing to be doing
- + Feels that the activity is an important part of his or her identity
- + Derives a sense of pride, accomplishment or satisfaction from achievements in the activity/organization
- + Gains a feeling of competence and sense of control over events related to the activity or organization
- + Feels disappointment, sadness or frustration when participation in the activity is blocked or things are not going well

THINGS YOU CAN DO: Creating Purpose

- + Involve youth in decisions that affect their lives.
 - + Talk to young people informally and formally about issues that are important to them.
 - + Involve them in decisions and in developing and running youth programs.
 - + Hold youth forums
 - + Include young people on boards or committees
 - + Creating junior-level leadership positions for young people is a great way to engage young leaders and give them not just a place at the table, but a **voice at the table too**.

SNOWFLAKE LEADERSHIP MODEL



THINGS YOU CAN DO: Focus on Issue-Based Advocacy

- + Create opportunities for young people to work in partnership with adults on important social problems and issues such as racism, poverty, and the environment.
- + **Issue-Based Advocacy!**
 - + Help mobilize youths' energy around important issues.



THINGS YOU CAN DO: Create Commitment

- + Give young people a responsibility within the organization
 - + Start small, then go big!
 - + Create a sense of engagement & meaning
 - + Encourage youth to recognize that their voice is needed to help solve important problems within our society

YOUTH

DECIDE

your future. your vote.

THINGS YOU CAN DO: Provide Leadership & Skills

- + Promote youth leadership by encouraging young people to plan and facilitate meetings and activities.
- + Help bring young people together to work creatively in action-based events such as workshops, conferences or exploring new activities
- + Assist young people in developing skills that will allow them to advocate better on their own behalf and create programs and activities that will engage other youth.
- + Provide young people with opportunities to learn research skills, or community development skills such as power mapping.

THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Promote Growth

- + Actively listen to, and respect the ideas of, young people.
 - + Assist them to connect with organizations and institutions that can support them in executing their ideas
 - + Take action on issues that concern them
 - + Explore new skills and activities (like outdoor adventuring, a new sport, environmental action, volunteering at a food bank).
- + Host events and workshops that are appealing to young people and fit their schedules.
- + Support the adults and organizations who effectively support and work with youth in meaningful ways.
- + Establish mentorship programming

THINGS TO BE AWARE OF

- + Engagement can be a long slow process with lots of "ups" and "downs"
- + The process is as important as the product
- + It's important to avoid taking control of projects or activities just because you want things to get done "right" or quickly
- + When working with youth, adults should think about what they can learn from young people, not just what they can teach them
- + Youth involvement has to be meaningful, and not just "token"
- + Adults need to be flexible about things like etiquette, dress, the times and dates of meetings—working professionals or young parents may be unable to attend every meeting.
 - + Create opportunities for people to virtually login to meetings.
- + Food and drinks are a good way to bring young people out to a meeting or an activity
- + It's important to be open-minded and respectful of differences, and to expect the same from young people

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- + What are your current demographics?
- + How will youth outreach benefit your group or cause?
- + Who are you targeting with your outreach right now?
What changes can be made to outreach to young adults?
- + Why would someone want to join your group or cause?
What will they get out of it? How does this tie-in with your mission statement?
- + Rate your current recruitment effort or plan. How could you improve?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- + Do you have a recruitment announcement? A member application? Do you have other tools your group needs to produce to help with recruitment?
- + What are some cost-effective ways to recruit young members for your group? Remember to list ideas that are financially smart and cost effective!
- + Next steps—based on what you've discovered, what are the three most important action items to improve your youth outreach strategy?

IN CLOSING! 😊

- + Be Intentional!
 - + Mentoring programs
- + Focus on recruitment, as well as retention– they are two different things!
- + Think about the elements that members already get out of the League
 - + How does this apply to young people?
- + Create environments for leaders to grow
 - + Snowflake Model
 - + Member->Volunteer->Leader