

Youth Voice Gold Standard



Each Anchor Community has at least 2 young people participating in Core Team meetings as full members, and has a structure in place for ensuring a body of young people outside of the Core Team choose some improvement projects that the Core Team implements for each reducing goal.

Young people's voices, ideas, creativity and perspectives are critical for system change work to end youth and young adult (YYA) homelessness, and we believe in creating multiple ways for young people to participate in ACI work. Every community will have different strategies, and this guide outlines some of the important principles and practices that we believe leads to quality youth engagement in system work.

Gold Standard Principles:

Set Youth and Young Adults up for success

- Before asking young people for their expertise, ensure they have the necessary tools to support them throughout the process.
- Are young people prepared to participate in meetings?
- Are we debriefing and asking for feedback afterwards?
- Do they fully understand all of the ACI concepts and data sets?

Reduce Barriers to Participation

- Provide different channels for young people to provide their ideas and feedback so that there are lower barrier ways to engage with the ACI For example, utilizing surveys, social media to blast a questionnaire to young adults asking what barriers keep them from accessing housing services. Ask young people the best ways to connect with young people!

Set Clear and Realistic Expectations

- Young people have lives outside of this work and we should treat their time with respect. We should be collaborating on deadlines with everyone at the table, and it is important to remember that some of the young people we work with are still experiencing homelessness.

Highlight the Impact of YYA Voice

- Always follow up with young people about how their voices impact the work! Core teams should be able to articulate how youth input was influential in the final decision or product. Consider the impact in communities and statewide.

Diversity in Voices at the Table

- We need to hear from all young people. A diversity of YYA voices enriches the wealth of change you can have on a system. Each young person has a different experience within the system but also a difference of identity due to race, gender, sexuality, etc, can expose unexplored territory with a new perspective.

What do we mean when we say each Anchor Community has 2 young people participating in the Core Team as full members?

- Young people are prepped to understand ACI and meeting topics.
 - Example: Meeting agenda should be sent out before meeting to prep young people (and others) about what is being discussed.
- They feel supported and comfortable enough to contribute ideas and recommendations during meetings.
 - Group agreements/norms required to level power dynamics and accessibility for the conversation.
- They feel their ideas matter and are taken seriously.
 - Setting aside time to hear young people or ask them questions intentionally.
- They feel empowered to disagree with the group.
- Their input has made a difference in group decisions.
- They are compensated for their time at the AWHWA stipend rate.
- They co-facilitate and co-create meeting agendas.
- They are specifically consulted about reducing improvement projects.
- They are leaders in designing their Core Team's youth engagement strategy, with active support from older folks.
- Meetings are designed in partnership with young people and with young people in mind.

Self-Reflection Questions:

- What does meaningful partnership between adults and young people look like?
- How do young people directly impact decisions made?
- How are young people generating solutions or ideas in this process?
- How are young people benefiting from being experts of their own lived experiences along with an invaluable knowledge base about the system we are trying to change/impact?

What do we mean when we say each Anchor Community has a structure in place for ensuring a body of young people outside of the Core Team chooses some improvement projects?

- The Core Team has an articulated strategy for engaging a group of young people beyond the two on the core team in identifying improvement projects for each reducing goal.
 - Examples of structures could be: Youth Action Boards, hosting youth summits, focus groups, and participatory action research projects
 - Young people are supported to understand and use relevant data.
 - Young people are actively empowered to develop and influence reducing strategies.
- The Core Team must implement some of the ideas young people identify.
- The Core Team is constantly reflecting on places to engage young people in brainstorming, feedback, strategy, etc.