

Youth Voice Agency Level Assessment (Y-VAL)

Eight Critical Themes

1. Overall vision and commitment (8 items):

The agency has developed formal structures and policies for voice/participation

- Clear roles for participation
- Transparent assessment of efforts to promote participation

2. Collaborative approach (5 items):

Young people are treated as valued partners in decision processes

- Involved from the beginning, including decisions about what goals to focus on and how to address them
- Respect and mutual learning, willingness to compromise, responsiveness
- Youth-friendly meetings
- Information/transparency about what will happen/has happened as a result of decisions

3. Empowered representatives (5 items):

Young people are supported in a way that will maximize their potential to have an impact on decisions

- Multiple young people participating consistently over time
- Supported preparation, meeting happens as planned
- “Pipeline,” opportunity to develop leadership skills

4. Commitment to facilitation and support of Y/YA participation (3 items):

The agency invests resources to support participation

- Dedicated staff time
- Addressing barriers: meeting times, location, transportation, child care needs, etc.
- “Point person” whose job includes managing logistics of participation
- Incentives provided for participation (may be monetary or non-monetary)

5. Workforce development (4 items):

The agency ensures that all staff are able to interact collaboratively with young people

- Young people participate actively in hiring
- Staff are trained about agency policies and commitment to participation
- Job performance evaluation includes attention to staff competencies related to participation
- Agency is developing peer roles

6. Participation in developing programming/program policies (5 items):

Young people have an impact on how the program works with the population

- Substantial and systematic involvement in decisions about program models/services
- Efforts to improve services, retention, accessibility
- Efforts to make the organization more youth friendly/responsive—communications, privacy, decor, etc.

7. Participation in evaluation (4 items):

Young people are engaged in efforts to determine how well the agency is doing its work

- Systematic efforts to gather feedback on services
- Young people help decide on how efforts will be assessed
- Young people are informed about findings from evaluation/CQI
- Agency acts on data and reports on this to young people

8. Leading initiatives and projects (3 items):

The agency supports young people to take the lead on projects they design

- Provides tangible support to initiatives initiated by young people
- Young people can make decisions about funding
- Transparency about funding distribution