



YIELD Hub

# Finding, Engaging & Sustaining New Generations of Youth Leaders

---

## A Practical Guide

***Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRRH)***  
*initiatives struggle to recruit young leaders outside of an elite few, typically  
educated, urban, and economically better off. The field must be willing to identify  
and engage youth in all their diversity in AYSRRH efforts. This requires  
intentionally recruiting youth across diverse identity groups and  
socio-cultural contexts.*

## How to use this guide

This practical resource guide is sourced from the YIELD Hub's third Action Learning Cycle on Finding, Engaging, and Sustaining New Generations of Youth Leaders. The guide is divided into four practical sections: Themes for Exploration, Organisational Levels of Development, Recommendations & Sample Actions, and Next Steps. These sections aim to assist you or your team in assessing your organisation's efforts towards the topic, utilising the provided tools and resources to achieve your organisational goals, and connecting with other organisations to share your journey with a wider community.

## Acknowledgements

This guide would not be possible without the commitment and contribution of the **Cycle 3 member organisations** who worked with the YIELD Hub over the course of 7 months. The practical recommendations are derived directly from their Action Learning Goals and Implementation activities. Five organisations participated in the cycle: **Annihilate the Taboo, FP2030, Gender Equality Solutions (LLC), Irise Institute East Africa, Pathfinder International, Reach A Hand Uganda,** and **Restless Development**. Through their collective experience and learning, they identified significant areas for reflection, commitment, and recommendations. These have also been compiled into a valuable resource that is accessible on the [YIELD Hub website](#).

## Glossary

**ALC** - Action Learning Cycle

**ALG** - Action Learning Group

**AYSRHR** - Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights



We need to create a space for diverse young people to be valued and incorporate their experiences and ideas in decision-making processes

- ALC 3 Member -

## Finding, Engaging, and Sustaining New Generations of Youth Leaders

The topic of priority from this cycle draws from the [YIELD research findings](#) which reveals how AYSRHR initiatives struggle to recruit young leaders outside of an elite few, typically educated, urban, and economically better off. Even the mechanisms for recruiting youth leaders require some form of experience, often making those already engaged in the space have the advantage of selection over others with little exposure.

This leaves behind huge groups of strategically positioned young people who need to be engaged and mobilised. This requires the intentional recruitment of youth across diverse identity groups and sociocultural contexts. Youth leaders from the most underserved communities are urgently needed to expand participation in and benefits of youth AYSRHR.



## Themes for Exploration

Several important themes emerged from the topic of Finding, Engaging, and Sustaining New Generations of Youth Leaders. These themes reflect the challenges that many organisations face when striving to engage a diverse cross-section of young people, prioritising the most underserved, and building more sensitive systems for diverse young people to sustain them in programmes. Take a moment to **review the themes** below, consider how your organisation implements the practices described under each theme, and **rate your progress** using the scale provided for each theme. Mark the stars to rate your progress.

### 01. Recruitment

**Inclusivity and Community Engagement:** Our organisation effectively recruits young people from marginalised communities where our projects or programme sites are based and prioritises inclusivity in its recruitment process to ensure a diverse representation of young people.



### 02. Opportunities

**Equitable Opportunities and Local Adaptation:** Our organisation ensures that opportunities are equally accessible to young people across different countries and regions, and effectively adapts global youth networks and initiatives to suit local contexts and needs.



### 03. Retention

**Sustaining Engagement and Impact:** Our organisation effectively retains young leaders in programmes and projects over time, mitigating the loss of young leaders to ensure continuity and intended impact of our programmes.



### 04. Collaboration

**Partnership Effectiveness and Collaborative Reach:** Our organisation's partnerships and collaborations with youth-based or student-run organisations are effective in engaging young people and expand our reach and impact among diverse groups of young people.



## Rating Themes – Scoring Guide



**Extremely Effective** - Implementation is exemplary and consistently achieves desired outcomes with best practices in place.



**Very Effective** - Implementation is consistent and successful, with only minor areas for further improvement.



**Moderately Effective** - Implementation is regular with moderate success, though further enhancements could be made.



**Somewhat Effective** - Implementation occurs but with inconsistent results, indicating a need for refinement.



**Not Effective** - Implementation is rare or unsuccessful, with significant room for improvement.

### Self-assessment

Lower scores (1-2 stars) suggest starting with Foundational Level strategies in the practical guide to build a stronger basis towards engaging and sustaining youth. Moderate scores (3 stars) indicate readiness to refine existing practices. You should look at the guide's Proficient Level recommendations, activities, and tools. High scores (4-5 stars) imply a strong foundation, allowing your organisation to focus on Advanced Level strategies within the guide, aiming for innovation and sector leadership. Whether you're looking to build foundational strategies, enhance your proficient practices, or innovate at an advanced level, the guide provides a valuable resource for progressing in each of these critical areas.

# Organisational Levels of Development

The scores above should indicate where your organisation stands in its journey towards ensuring young leaders are engaged and sustained within your organisation. Based on this rating, different means and methods are available to evaluate and achieve your goals. Below are three levels: **Foundational**, **Proficient**, and **Advanced**. Depending on the level of work your organisation has done so far, each level offers recommendations, actions, and tools to help you progress towards your goal. We've created a checklist for each level description to help you determine from which level to begin making use of the recommendations. If your answer is 'yes' to each question, you should mark next to it. If you've checked 3 or less points from a level's checklist, this means that this is the level you should begin.

## 1. Foundational Level

At the Foundational level, organisations are in the early stages of integrating youth work into their operations. They are beginning to recognise the value of engaging young people and are taking initial steps to incorporate inclusive and diverse practices.

### Checklist

	<b>Does your organisation have a defined mission statement that includes youth engagement as a core component?</b>
	<b>Have you started to implement basic diversity and inclusion policies?</b>
	<b>Is there a preliminary strategy in place for recruiting and engaging young people?</b>
	<b>Are you beginning to gather feedback from young participants to inform program development?</b>
	<b>Do you provide basic training and development opportunities for youth workers?</b>

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Make diversity and inclusion non-negotiable values from the outset. The varied perspectives will enrich your programmes and make them more effective. Actively seek and value feedback from young participants. Their insights can guide your initial efforts and help you make meaningful improvements.



## 2. Proficient Level

Organisations at the Proficient level have established systems and practices for youth work. They actively engage young people in decision-making, offer regular training and development for youth workers, and have started to measure the impact of their youth programs.

### Checklist

	Is youth participation in decision-making processes institutionalised within your organisation?
	Do you have established partnerships with other organisations or sectors for youth work?
	Are digital tools and platforms regularly used to facilitate youth engagement and program delivery?
	Is there a system in place for ongoing training and capacity building of youth workers?
	Do you regularly review and adapt your youth engagement strategies based on feedback and impact assessments?

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT



1. **Institutionalise Youth Voice:** Ensure that young people's inputs are not just heard but actively shape organisational decisions and strategies. Their involvement should be a standard practice, not an afterthought.

2. **Sustain Momentum:** Keep the energy and commitment high by celebrating successes, recognising contributions, and continually seeking innovative ways to engage and support young people.

### 3. Advanced Level

Advanced organisations are leaders in the field of youth work. They not only have robust systems and practices in place but also contribute to the broader community and policy discussions on youth engagement. They innovate, share knowledge, and set standards within the sector.

#### Checklist

	Does your organisation play a leadership role in community or sector-wide initiatives on youth work?
	Are you actively involved in policy discussions or advocacy efforts related to youth engagement?
	Do you have a comprehensive impact measurement and reporting system for your youth programs?
	Are success stories and learnings from your youth work widely disseminated for broader sector learning?
	Is there a continuous innovation process in place for developing new strategies and programs for youth work?

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**1. Lead by Example:** Use your organisation's achievements to inspire others in the sector. Share your successes, challenges, and lessons learned widely to elevate the entire field of youth work.



**2. Advocate for Change:** Leverage your experience and expertise to advocate for policy changes that support youth work and youth engagement more broadly. Your voice can influence systemic change.

**3. Foster a Culture of Continuous Improvement:** Encourage everyone in your organisation to seek ways to do things better, more efficiently, and more effectively. Make reflection and learning integral to your organisational culture.

## Recommendations & Sample Actions

You may now move on to the level that indicates your organisational development best and implement the recommendations that align with your goals.

### Level 1: Foundational



#### Broaden Youth Access to Essential Information and Empowerment Opportunities

##### Activities

- Develop and deliver a series of interactive, culturally sensitive workshops and information sessions, both online and in community spaces, tailored to the identified needs of young people from different backgrounds.
- Engage in partnerships with local media and online platforms to disseminate information widely and effectively. You can partner with local libraries, schools, and community centres to set up information kiosks providing access to your programmes and services.
- Develop a mobile app or website featuring interactive learning modules, resources, and a Q&A section to address the needs and questions of young people.

##### Tools & Resources

**Tool:** Eventbrite for organising and managing event registrations.

**Resource:** "[How to Run a Successful Workshop](#)" by MindTools offers tips and strategies for planning and executing interactive sessions.

**Tool:** Touchscreen kiosk software like KioWare can be used to set up interactive information stations.

**Resource:** The "[Public Kiosk Design Guidelines](#)" by the City of New York offers insights into designing accessible and user-friendly kiosks.

**Tool:** Appy Pie or WordPress for building user-friendly mobile apps and websites without extensive coding knowledge.



#### Cultivate an Inclusive and Diverse Organisational Culture through Recruitment

##### Activities

- Host diversity and inclusion training for all staff members to understand the importance of diverse perspectives and how to foster an inclusive environment.
- Utilise diverse recruitment platforms and actively reach out to community groups and educational institutions in marginalised areas to broaden your recruitment outreach.
- Implement inclusive policies and practices that are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they meet the evolving needs of diverse youth populations.

##### Tools & Resources

**Tool:** LinkedIn Learning offers courses on [diversity, inclusion, and belonging](#) that can be utilized for staff training.

**Resource:** "[Diversity & Inclusion Framework & Implementation Plan](#)" by the Government of Canada provides guidelines on implementing diversity and inclusion in organisations.

**Tool:** [Culture Amp](#) for gathering diversity and inclusion insights and tracking progress over time.





# Level 1: Foundational (cont.)



## Establish a Dynamic Youth Engagement Strategy & Framework

### Activities

- Develop an inclusive engagement strategy with youth representatives, including clear metrics for participation, impact, and diverse representation. Regularly review and adapt the approach based on feedback and changing needs.
- Form a youth council that actively participates in organisational planning and review meetings, providing feedback and suggestions from a youth perspective.
- Implement a 'Youth Voice' feedback mechanism, such as an online forum or suggestion box, to collect and act upon the input from young participants regularly.

### Tools & Resources

**Tool:** [Trello](#) for planning and tracking the development and implementation of engagement strategies.

**Resource:** "A Guide to Youth Engagement Planning" by the [Forum for Youth Investment](#) provides a framework for creating an effective youth engagement strategy.

**Resource:** "A Guide to Youth Advisory Councils" by [YouthPower](#) Learning offers insights into forming and running effective youth councils.

**Guide:** "[Youth Participation Guide](#)" by the UNFPA provides strategies for effective youth engagement through feedback.



## Ensure Equitable Support and Opportunities for All Youth Workers

### Activities

- Establish a mentorship programme that pairs experienced staff with new youth workers, providing a structured support system and growth opportunities.
- Establish a professional development fund accessible to youth workers for attending workshops, conferences, or further education relevant to their roles and interests.
- Offer a range of workshops and training sessions covering soft skills, leadership, project management, and cultural sensitivity, ensuring a well-rounded skillset.

### Tools & Resources

**Resource:** "[Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™](#)" by MENTOR offers a comprehensive guide on establishing a high-quality mentoring program.

**Tool:** [Chronus](#) or Mentorloop, mentoring software that facilitates pairing mentors and mentees and tracks their progress.

**Guide:** "[Developing a Staff Development Program](#)" by the Council on Foundations outlines steps to create a fund and program for professional development.

**Tool:** Use budgeting software like [QuickBooks](#) to allocate and manage funds dedicated to professional development.



## Level 2: Proficient



### Empower Youth in Organisational Decision-Making and Strategy Development

#### Activities

- Establish a youth advisory board that plays a significant role in guiding programme decisions and strategy, ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon.
- Provide structured opportunities for young people to lead initiatives and projects, supported by adequate resources and mentorship.
- Set up occasional 'Youth Strategy Sessions' where young people can contribute ideas and feedback on program design and organisational policies.

#### Tools & Resources

**Resource:** "[Youth Advisory Boards](#)" by Advocates for Youth offers tips and case studies on how to effectively integrate youth advisory boards into organisational decision-making.

**Tool:** BoardEffect or Diligent Boards, governance software that can help manage board activities and include youth representatives effectively.

**Resource:** "[Youth Leadership Development Guide](#)" by ACT for Youth offers comprehensive guidelines for supporting youth leadership initiatives.



### Address the Digital Divide to Enhance Youth Participation and Engagement

#### Activities

- Implement digital literacy programmes and provide necessary resources (like internet access and devices) to ensure all young people can participate fully. This also includes providing necessary technology, running digital skills workshops, and ensuring online platforms are accessible and inclusive.
- Launch a technology lending library, offering laptops, tablets, and Wi-Fi hotspots to young people lacking access to digital tools.
- Organise digital literacy bootcamps focusing on essential skills like internet research, digital communication, and online safety.

#### Tools & Resources

**Tool:** [TechSoup](#) offers discounted technology and resources for non-profit organisations, including software and hardware.

**Resource:** "[Digital Literacy Training Toolkit](#)" by NTEN provides a collection of resources for setting up digital literacy programs.

**Resource:** "[Youth Participation in Development: A Practical Guide](#)" by Oaktree

**Tool:** Librarika or TinyCat can be used to manage the inventory and lending process of technology devices.

**Resource:** "[Digital Literacy Training Toolkit](#)" by NTEN offers resources and curriculum suggestions for running digital literacy programs.



## Level 2: Proficient (cont.)



### Foster Leadership and Advocacy Skills Among Youth Workers

#### Activities

- Launch a leadership development programme specifically for youth workers, including mentorship and leadership workshops.
- Facilitate opportunities for cross-sector learning and collaboration to broaden their perspectives and impact.
- Support youth-led initiatives by providing seed funding and mentorship for projects that youth workers are passionate about leading.

#### Tools & Resources

**Guide:** "[The Ultimate Guide for Leadership Development](#)" to learn how to create personalised development experiences that flex and adapt to leaders' needs.

**Resource:** "[Collaboration Toolkit](#)" by Youth Service America offers guidance on establishing and maintaining cross-sector collaborations.

**Toolkit:** "[Investing in Youth Lead Impact](#)" by CHOICE offers a toolkit for funding youth-led organisations.



### Secure Sustainable Funding for Youth Capacity Building and Empowerment

#### Activities

- Develop a comprehensive proposal or case studies showcasing successful youth-led initiatives and their impact, to attract potential funders interested in capacity building.
- Engage with a diverse range of funding partners, including private sector entities, to secure long-term support for these initiatives.
- Develop a 'Youth Impact Report' highlighting success stories and the return on investment in youth programs, to be shared with current and potential funders.
- Host roundtable discussions with potential funders to showcase the impact of your youth programs and explore partnership opportunities.

#### Tools & Resources

**Guide:** "[Writing Effective Case Studies](#)" by the Harvard Family Research Project offers guidance on documenting and presenting impactful stories.

**Guide:** "[The Nonprofit's Guide to Pitching to Corporate Sponsors](#)" by Donorbox provides strategies for engaging with private sector entities.

**Tool:** Piktochart for creating visually appealing impact reports that highlight success stories and ROI.

**Resource:** "[Impact Reporting Guide](#)" by Social Value UK offers insights into creating impactful and meaningful reports.

**Guide:** "[Unlocking the Power of Roundtable Discussion](#)" provides tips, benefits and best practices for executing successful roundtable events.



## Level 3: Advanced



### Champion Youth Leadership and Engagement as Key Drivers of Organisational Success

#### Activities

- Create a digital platform or newsletter to highlight stories of youth leadership and engagement, showcasing their achievements to a wider audience.
- Utilise various platforms, including social media, conferences, and networking events, to amplify these stories and advocate for the value of youth leadership in driving societal change.
- Launch a series of 'Youth Leadership Awards' to recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions by young people within your organisation and the broader community.
- Organise an annual 'Youth Impact Conference' where youth workers can present their projects, share their achievements, and network with peers and sector leaders.

#### Tools & Resources

**Resource:** "[The Nonprofit Email Marketing Guide](#)" by Mailchimp provides tips on creating engaging newsletters.

**Tool:** Hootsuite for managing and scheduling posts across various social media platforms to share youth leadership success stories.

**Guide:** "[Public Speaking for Advocacy](#)" by Harvard Kennedy School offers tips on effectively advocating for youth leadership at conferences and events.

**Resource:** "[6 Tips for running a successful association awards program](#)" by Award Force offers a guide on setting up an awards program.

**Tool:** Use Award Force or OpenWater to manage award nominations, judging, and announcements.

**Guide:** "[The Step-by-Step Guide to Hosting a Youth Conference](#)" by the United Nations provides comprehensive instructions on organising youth-centric events.



### Systematise the Documentation and Sharing of Youth Engagement Success Stories

#### Activities

- Develop case studies and best practice guides based on successful youth engagement strategies, making them available for wider learning and adoption. This could include publishing reports, hosting webinars, and creating online resource hubs that serve as repositories of best practices and case studies.
- Publish a quarterly newsletter featuring articles written by youth workers and participants about their experiences and learnings in your programs.

#### Tools & Resources

**Tool:** Use content management systems like WordPress or Drupal to build an online repository that's easily accessible and navigable.

**Guide:** "[How to Create and Manage a Digital Archive](#)" by Jisc offers practical advice on digitising and managing resources.

**Guide:** "[Digital Preservation Handbook](#)" by the Digital Preservation Coalition offers best practices for creating and maintaining digital archives.

**Resource:** "[The Nonprofit Email Marketing Guide](#)" by Mailchimp provides tips on creating engaging newsletters.



## Level 3: Advanced



### Implement an Impactful Youth Programme Evaluation and Learning Framework

#### Activities

- Implement a comprehensive impact assessment framework that includes regular follow-ups with programme alumni to capture their progress and challenges.
- Regularly review and adapt programmes based on these evaluations, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and learning.
- Develop a 'Youth Program Dashboard' to track and visualise participation rates, engagement levels, and success stories in real-time, facilitating ongoing assessment and adaptation.
- Conduct annual impact assessments involving youth workers, participants, and other stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and identify areas for improvement.

#### Tools & Resources

**Resource:** "[A Guide to Youth-Led Evaluation](#)" by Oxfam provides a comprehensive approach to impact assessment.

**Guide:** "[Continuous Improvement Strategies for Nonprofit Organizations](#)" by Walden University offers strategies for fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

**Tool:** Data visualisation tools like Tableau or Microsoft Power BI can be used to create interactive dashboards showcasing program metrics.

**Guide:** "[Data Dashboards 101: Tips, Tools, and Resources](#)" by Idealware provides an overview of setting up and using data dashboards effectively.

**Resource:** "[A Guide to Evaluating Youth Work](#)" by the Council of Europe outlines methodologies for assessing the impact of youth programs.



### Enhance the Long-Term Support and Development Pathways for Youth Alumni

#### Activities

- Establish an alumni network that provides ongoing support, networking opportunities, and further learning resources to former youth workers. This programme should also facilitate the transition of youth alumni into broader roles within and outside the sector, supporting their continued growth and contribution.
- Host annual alumni events to facilitate networking, professional development, and collaboration opportunities among past and present program participants.

#### Tools & Resources

**Tool:** Alumni management platforms like Graduway or [Almabase](#) help manage alumni networks, events, and communication.

**Guide:** "[Best Practices for Alumni Engagement](#)" by CASE provides strategies for building and maintaining an effective alumni network.

**Tool:** Use platforms like Eventbrite for event management and Zoom for virtual gatherings.

**Resource:** "[Alumni Event Ideas Planning](#)" by Medium offers tips on organising memorable alumni events.



## Next Steps

**Congratulations if you've reached the end of this resource. We understand that this is just the start of a journey that involves time, unlearning, consultations, substantial collaboration, and considerable budget support.** We advise organisations to use this guide as a starting point for introspection and action. Engage with the themes, implement the recommendations, and take concrete steps towards incorporating these insights into your organisational strategies. Remember, the journey of sustaining youth leaders is ongoing. We urge you to connect with others in this field, share your experiences and learnings, and continue contributing to the evolving narrative of youth engagement.



### Taking action

Still not sure where to start? Take our **Engaging & Sustaining Youth Leaders Quiz** to find out which level of actions apply to your organisation.

[Start Quiz](#)



### Connect & Share

- Is your organisation on the journey to engage and sustain youth leaders? We'd love to hear how this resource is helping you take action. **Tag us on social media, and include #LearningActivation**
- If you have made significant progress towards your goal but need more personalised and direct support, you can contact us. The YIELD Hub provides technical assistance in the form of consultancy services for organisations interested in delving deeper. **Send us an email, [info@yieldhub.global](mailto:info@yieldhub.global)**

We deeply appreciate the ALC 3 member organisations for their invaluable contributions and insights. Their seven-month dedication was crucial in creating this comprehensive guide.

We also extend our thanks to you, the reader, for your dedication to this significant cause. Your efforts to engage and sustain young leaders support our mission to establish youth partnership as the norm, rather than the exception, in the AYSRHR field.

# Contact Us

---

Want to learn more about this resource?



Contact us: [info@yieldhub.global](mailto:info@yieldhub.global) OR check out our website: [www.yieldhub.global/resources](http://www.yieldhub.global/resources) for other useful resources.



[@Hub\\_YIELD](https://twitter.com/Hub_YIELD)



[@yield\\_hub](https://www.instagram.com/yield_hub)



[@hubyield](https://www.linkedin.com/company/hubyield)

