



Involving Young People in Grant Making

Young people are often involved in consultation and shaping services which impact on their lives and increasingly young people are involved in decision making and leadership roles. However, there still seems to be a reluctance to involve young people in decision making regarding financial matters whether that be participatory budgeting, financial management or grant making. Grant making is decision making and assessment activities associated to the distribution of funding. It seems that the reluctance to involve young people is based on institutional or adult perception of risk in involving young people.

The argument to support young people's participation generally can be utilised when considering young people's financial influence and decision making.

Young People have a right to participate

The right of young people to participate in decisions that affect them has been firmly endorsed through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Participation Promotes Resiliency

The resilience model is built upon enhancing competence in young people as much as reducing a given risk behaviour or undesirable outcome. This approach sees young people as part of the solution, not just the focus of the problem. Youth participation promotes resiliency by building on young people's strengths, including energy, enthusiasm and creativity.

Participation Reduces Risks

Research has shown that a sense of connectedness, through involvement in the social environment of family, parents, school, and community, has an influence on promoting health and protecting young people from risky behaviour. The research demonstrates that young people with strong social connections were less likely to engage in activities such as drinking and driving, violence, early and unprotected sex, and drug use. Extensive studies by other research and advocacy groups also indicate clearly that young people who feel involved, safe, valued, and connected, are less likely to engage in risky behaviours.

Participation is central to positive youth development

During adolescence, young people begin to define their own self-worth in terms of their skills and their capacity to influence their environment. It follows that in order for young people to make a healthy and effective transition to adulthood, they need opportunities to demonstrate that they are capable of being responsible, caring and participating members of society. Young people often have little opportunity for meaningful involvement during this key transition period, with the consequences that alienated young people often turn toward self-destructive activities (risk-taking) or maladaptive social behaviours.

Young people as contributors to the grant making decision making process

Case Study: Big Lottery Fund Young People's Fund; Young People's Panels

Almost 500 young people participated in 32 Young People's Panels across each of the local authority areas in Scotland as part of the Big Lottery Fund (BLF), Young

People's Fund decision making process since 2006 - 2008 assisting them to invest £20 million in projects where young people directly benefit.

This bold step by the Big Lottery Fund to engage young people in decision making created a unique national participation and training opportunity for young people from Stornoway to Stranraer. Young people were able to bring their insight and local knowledge to the national priorities of BLF enabling young people to make recommendations' on applications. Alison Magee, Big Lottery Fund Scotland Chair said, *"Young people from local areas brought a wealth of knowledge to the decision making process"*

YouthLink Scotland, through Volunteer Development Scotland, developed a national training programme for members of the Young People's Panel who came from wide and diverse backgrounds and all aged between 11 and 25 years. The training required young people to think beyond themselves and to acknowledge that not everyone sees or experiences an area in the same way. The training enabled the group to individually and then collectively identify their priorities and discuss local issues and possible gaps in local provision all of which enabled them to inform their recommendations to BLF YPF.

Young people made recommendations to the national committee but did not make the final decision. This was a positive step as young people welcomed the opportunity to participate but felt at times felt restricted and frustrated by their limited role.

Young People as partners in the decision making process

Case Study: CashBack for Community Youth Work Fund

Over the last three year £6.5 million has been distributed to over 640 groups though the Proceeds of Crime Act by the Scottish Government. Panels for the 32 local authority areas of Scotland were established involving the key stakeholder's relevant to the theme of the fund; including young people. Young people, as with adult panel members received training on an online decision making tool, grading the relevance of key outcome of the fund. The young people using existing training from another grant making programme, participated in local panel meetings to assess applications.

Young people made decisions with adults in geographic panels.

Young people as leaders of grant making

Case Study: YouthBank Scotland (YBS the network of YouthBanks in Scotland)

A YouthBank is an innovative grant making and empowerment initiative run by young people for young people in their local communities across Scotland. YouthBank builds on young people's skills and experiences to enable them to give cash for action, funding young people's ideas for the benefit of their whole local community. However, YouthBank Scotland is more than just a way of giving out grants. It is about supporting and training young people to enable them, through the grant making process and related activities, to benefit themselves, their communities and other young people.

Outcomes for young grant makers in a YouthBank context

- Increased confidence, sense of empowerment and raised aspirations.
- Development of new skills, experiences and qualifications.
- Improved health and well being
- Improved financial and emotional literacy.
- Increased employability.

- Viewed by others as active citizens and positive contributors to society.

For the Grant Pot Investors– more bang for your buck!

- Meaningful engagement of a future proof group
- Reaching more of the community you could not reach on your own
- Maximising the peer approach and support model
- Creatively investing in communities – participatory budgeting in action
- BIG impact from relatively small investment
- Capacity to run a grant scheme with lower overheads
- A pool of trained and experienced young grant makers

Independent Evaluation of YBS including beneficiary chain analysis and case studies is available at <http://tiny.cc/7j2v3>

Conclusion

Involving young people in financial decision making or grant making should be approached as involving young people in any decision making model. There has to be value placed on the contribution made by young people, a clear purpose for their participation, accessible meeting times, easy to read and understand information and a willingness to enter into collaboration to share in shaping the agenda as well as the processes of supporting their participation. Young people will require an investment in time and training as assumptions cannot be made about their skills set or motivation as young people are not a homogenous group. Training is also a risk mitigation strategy. Training enables knowledge and skills development, understanding and application, and developed experience, therefore reducing risk.

YouthBank Scotland can provide accredited training **Introduction to Grant Making** (OCN level 2/SCQF level 4&5 one credit) for young grant makers in any context. YouthBank Scotland is happy to work with those interested in involving young people in grant making to explore their capacity, perceived challenges and identify potential solutions.

Further Information

Further information on training or in relation to the YouthBank Scotland initiative can be found at <http://www.youthbankscotland.org/> or contacting Heather McVey hmcvey@youthlinkscotland.org