



Generic Youth Development Framework

A Discussion Document

FOR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

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Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne. 2011



Generic Youth Development Framework

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Ani Wierenga and Johanna Wyn

Executive Summary

Introducing this document

This document sets out a generic youth development framework. It recognises that many organisations, including non-government organisations, education systems, the Department of Defence and private institutions contribute to youth development and that some have done so for many decades. Evidence of good practice developed by these organisations, as well as Australian and international research and discussion documents, provide a background for this framework, to build a strengths-based approach to positive youth development.

A separate document provides a more detailed description of the key evidence used in this document.

The generic youth development framework was initiated by the Department of Defence and was developed by the Youth Research Centre at The University of Melbourne.

The framework reflects a synthesis of available literature on positive youth development. Readers familiar with youth development will find much that confirms current practice. The framework builds on rather than supersedes other frameworks (such as the *Ausyouth* youth development framework), strengthening and extending current practice.

The interpretation of the generic framework is supported by indicators. These are designed to help the reader to identify elements relevant to their context.

The use of the framework is supported by a synthesis of findings on governance, curriculum and program design, program leader requirements, inclusion, community involvement and continuous improvement.

Aims

It is intended that this document be used as a resource for discussion to inform good practice in the sector.

The rapidly changing social, technological and economic landscape that confronts young people in the 21st century creates new opportunities for youth development organisations, and opens up important areas of discussion and debate for these groups.

This document aims to support organisations to make the most of these opportunities – to engage in reflection and debate that will affirm good practice and initiate new practices where appropriate, by:

- affirming good practice in familiar developmental areas including: social skills, leadership, decision-making, team work, healthy lifestyles, community service, responsibility, identity building, self esteem and resilience
- drawing on an emerging consensus by governments, youth development organisations and researchers that youth development approaches recognise the whole person across physical, social, emotional, spiritual and mental dimensions, and that opportunities for youth development should be available for all young people
- acknowledging that positive youth development is not just about the individual young person – youth development is about connecting with young people's social and physical worlds, and that programs increasingly recognise the significance of young people's connection with and contribution to communities

The framework at a glance

The framework identifies three elements: **values, principles** and **practices**.

- The two underpinning and over-arching **values** of positive youth development are:
 - valuing young people
 - doing things of value

- The youth development **principles** that derive from these values are:
 - recognising strengths
 - building the team
 - looking out for each other
 - engaging with the real world
 - being active citizens
 - becoming reflective, resilient learners

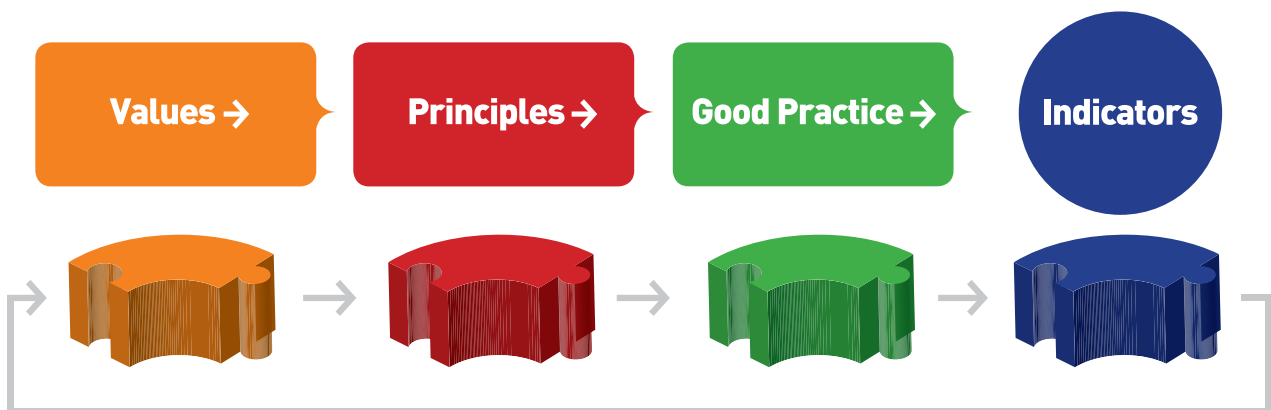
- The youth development **practices** that exemplify these principles are identified.

Indicators

To support discussion about the implications of the framework, the implications (in the form of **indicators**) are spelled out for three groups: for the young people participating in youth development programs, for the volunteers, parents and others who deliver these programs, and for the organisations responsible for the programs.

Because this is a *generic* youth development framework, the relevance and weighting of the elements will be different for each organisation. The indicators enable the reader to consider what the framework means for their organisation and to consider the degree of importance of each element for them.

The indicators, linked to the framework, support a process of continuous improvement at all levels. Embedding youth development within a learning organisation model with a cycle of inquiry and improvement is an effective strategy for ensuring best practice.



Key messages

Youth development is optimised when it is informed by a strategic approach, including these elements:

- The organisation has a meta-strategy* in place that makes transparent the links between organisational goals and the principles and frameworks informing youth development
- Youth development contributes to and is an outcome of a continuous improvement cycle to ensure best practice at all levels of the program
- Youth development requires an integrated approach across physical, social, emotional, spiritual and mental dimensions
- The program is relevant to individuals and their communities, is open to all young people and is underpinned by principles of inclusivity

For young people, a generic world-class youth development program:

- Addresses physical, social, spiritual, emotional and mental development through age- and ability-appropriate activities that build their character, resilience, skills and attitudes
- Ensures that young people participate actively in the program, including in decision-making and in exercise of leadership, and that different groups are made to feel welcome
- Provides activities that are meaningful, safe and fun, and that make a positive difference in the community through service and experiential learning
- Enables young people to have opportunities to extend their social skills through sustained and meaningful connections with others outside their usual family and social circle, and are able to engage in activities that extend them beyond their usual comfort zone

* A meta-strategy is an approach (or methodology) used to implement organisational goals and plans. A meta-strategy makes explicit the areas within the organisation that have responsibility for implementing goals and ensures that the whole of the organisation takes ownership for the successful implementation of plans.

Key messages CONT.

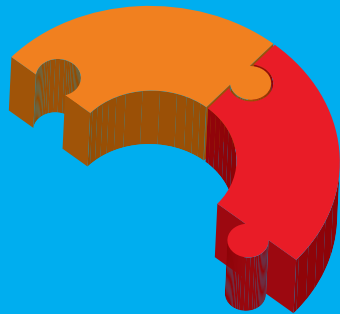
For volunteers, parents and young leaders, a generic world-class youth development program:

- Supports volunteers, parents and young leaders with professional development that builds their knowledge and skills, and extends and challenges them
- Ensures that volunteers, parents and young leaders have a clear understanding of the goals and aims of the organisation and of their responsibilities to the organisation and to young people
- Provides volunteers, parents and young leaders with opportunities to engage in decision-making about the program
- Models positive development approaches and behaviour, including recognising diversity and achievement
- Builds sustained and meaningful connections, communication processes and partnerships with individuals and groups in the community

For organisations, a generic world-class youth development program:

- Clearly articulates and communicates its meta-strategy for youth development
- Has strategies that promote inclusiveness and recognise diversity of the target population
- Ensures good governance procedures in relation to the safety of young people and volunteers; appropriate engagement and partnership-building with local communities; risk management; equitable use of financial and social resources within the youth development programs; and personal and professional development of staff
- Provides mechanisms that support participation in decision-making by volunteers, parents and young people
- Provides professional development for volunteers to build their skills and knowledge
- Recognises the achievements of young people, volunteers, parents and others at the institutional level
- Has in place strategies for the recruitment and training of high quality volunteers and leaders
- Ensures that a cycle of evaluation that supports continuous improvement is in place
- Communicates the responsibilities and rights of young people and of volunteers

A



Overview

1: What is Youth Development

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs¹ defines youth development in the following way:

Preparing young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent.

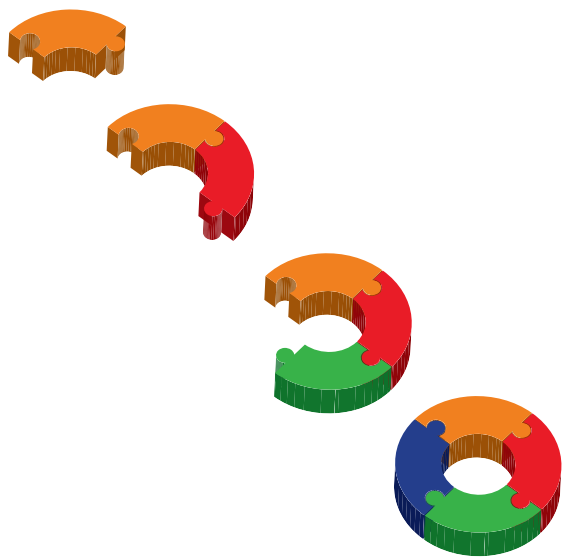
Building on and strengthening this definition of youth development over a decade later, youth development organisations acknowledge the importance of young people’s connection and contribution to communities. Synthesising these new approaches, this framework adopts the following definition of youth development:

Youth development builds the personal strengths that create positive attributes in young people. It is development in the sense of allowing for the growth of identity and sense of self in relation to the world. Youth development promotes personal development competencies and talents through age and culturally appropriate strategies. It builds young people’s sense of belonging and connection in communities and, by supporting young people’s contribution to their communities², it enhances cross-generational and cross-cultural communication. Youth development is a process that benefits all young people, whatever their starting points or circumstances³. It is an ongoing process, which is strengthened by sustained and integrated application of good practice principles⁴.

Developmental areas

There is a consensus in the youth development literature that the important developmental areas are social skills, leadership, decision-making, teamwork, healthy lifestyle, community service, responsibility, self identity, self esteem, and resilience.

Governments and organisations that engage in best practice in youth development are increasingly extending their gaze beyond these particular elements, to recognise the development of the whole person across physical, social, emotional⁵, spiritual⁶ and mental⁷ dimensions. For an example of a national government approach where these dimensions are well integrated, see *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*⁸ and see *Scouts Australia*⁹ for an integrated organisational approach.



By attending to good practice elements and indicators in their Youth Development Framework (YDF), a youth development organisation can attend to these different developmental areas in young people in ways that are relevant to their organisation's goals. For example:

- Action in the group and in the world means **physical** engagement and contributes to that level of development
- Structured opportunities for group work contribute to the development of **social** skills, understandings and identity
- Exercising commitment to something bigger than self, coupled with the events and processes that support the integration of that experience, can contribute to **emotional** strength and **spiritual** development
- Encountering new experiences, and learning new skills and attitudes can contribute to cognitive or **mental** development.

In addition, by creating optimal conditions for fostering youth development, young people, leaders and organisations will find that they are active shapers of practical and cultural changes in their communities.

2. **A Strategic Approach**

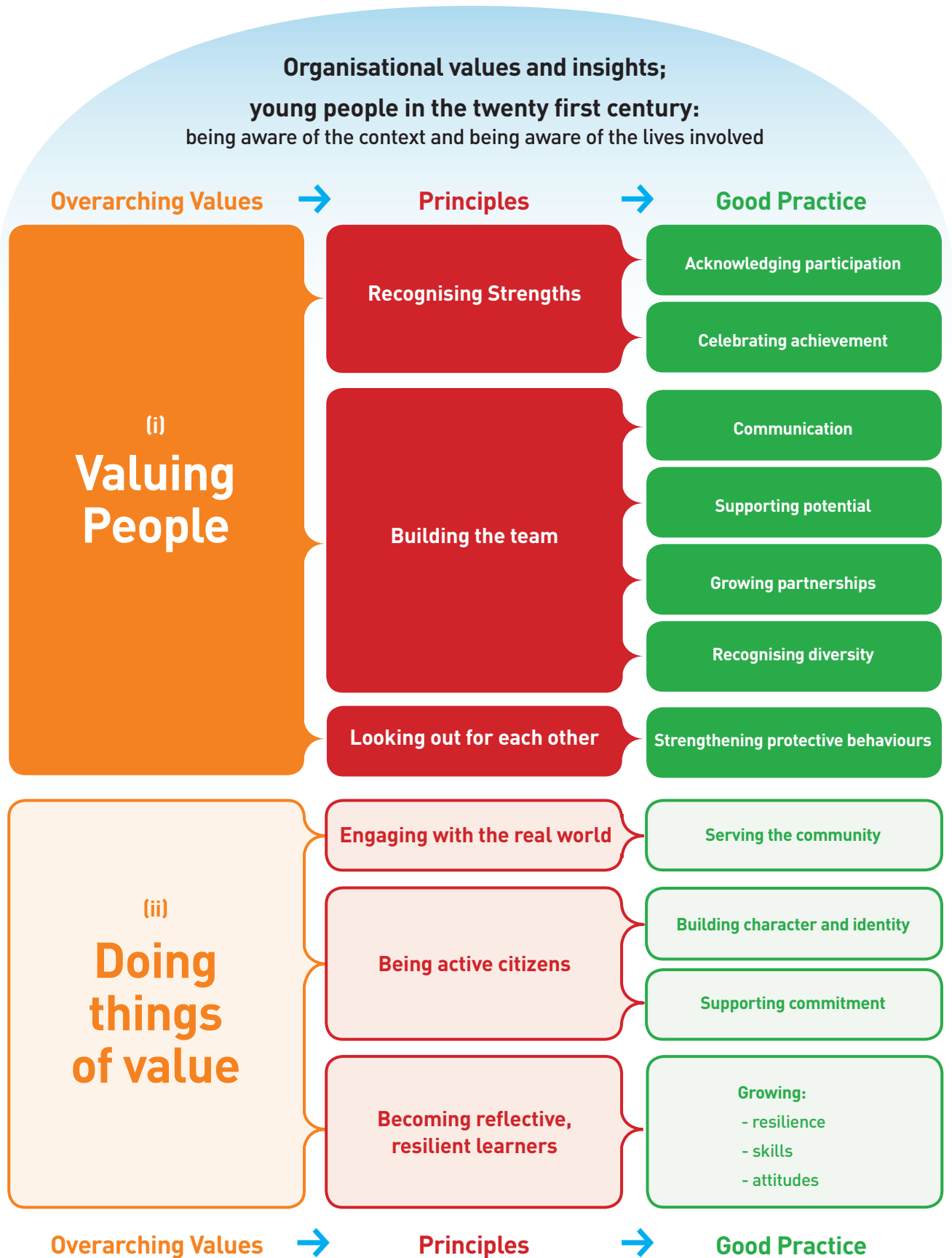
A Youth Development Framework plays an important part in an organisation's strategic approach to promoting positive youth development. To optimise its use, a Youth Development Framework would be integrated in an organisation's **meta-strategy**.

A meta-strategy is an approach (or methodology) used to implement organisational goals and plans. A meta-strategy makes visible the areas of responsibility for implementing goals and ensures that the whole of the organisation takes ownership for the successful implementation of plans.

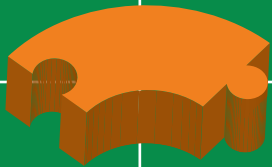
A meta-strategy links youth development to the broader goals of the organisation and to its structures (such as governance, human resources management and evaluation). Youth development values and principles should be linked to an organisations' vision statement and included in an organisation's evaluations¹⁰.

Continuous improvement through an integrated approach to youth development that enables an organisation to build in a cycle of review, evaluation, reflection and improvement, is part of a meta-strategy. Continuous improvement enables the organisation to develop, as it engages in the development of young people.

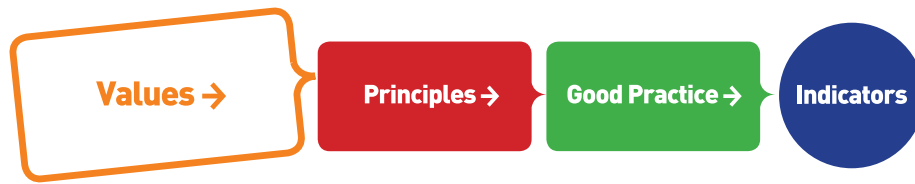
3. Flowchart of the framework



B



The Framework



1: **Overarching Values for Youth Development**

The Youth Development Framework emerges from two overarching values:

(i) Valuing people

Respectful engagement, at all levels, is a focus of progressive organisations in the twenty first century. It is a feature highlighted in both youth program design literature¹¹ and volunteering guidelines¹². Strength-based approaches are increasingly accepted as being the most effective for working with young people¹³ and these are being adopted in health, education, social policy and research¹⁴.

(ii) Doing things of value

In the twenty first century, communities need young people to be active citizens¹⁵ and are increasingly concerned with issues of social engagement¹⁶. Meanwhile, in a fast changing world, research reveals that young people seek real, purposeful roles¹⁷ and welcome opportunities for meaningful, accessible ways to engage.

Section B: The Framework

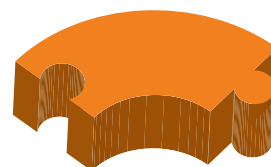
Rationale for these two overarching values

The two overarching values identified in this framework highlight different parts of the youth development picture. The first value is about establishing the contexts, structures, cultures and sets of relationships that promote youth development. The second is closely related, highlighting the experience for participants in the conduct of youth development activities. By making these links, the overarching values draw together consistent themes from the Australian and international literature¹⁸, and make more explicit from the outset two of the tenets underpinning these trusted frameworks.

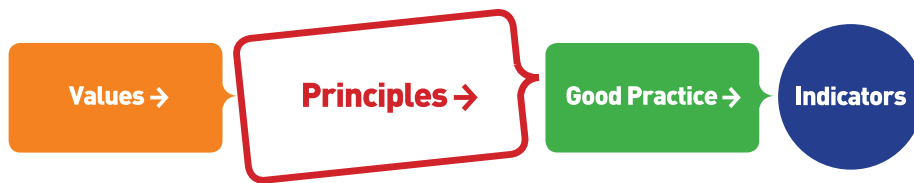
Australian research highlights that the most effective youth development strategies engage *both* these values simultaneously¹⁹. Organisations that have a recognised and respected social purpose beyond serving the young people themselves have an edge, as they acknowledge young people's capacity to give something back to their communities²⁰. The acknowledgement of young people's potential to contribute to their communities in positive ways sits in contrast to the emphasis of some earlier, quite prominent youth development models, which were underpinned by ideas of protecting young people from themselves and from society²¹.

Organisational values and insights

Organisations that actively engage in youth development bring their own values, history, insights and relationships to a particular community of young people. The flowchart of the framework is encased within a statement of context: 'Organisational values and insights' and 'Young people in the twenty first century: being aware of the context; being aware of the lives involved'. The important first step for using this framework is being (or getting) on the same page: naming these values, insights and key relationships. This step will inform any further work with the framework.



Section B: The Framework



2. Principles

(i) Valuing people

The first set of principles acknowledges that people engage with and remain connected to voluntary organisations because of the quality of the social relationships they experience there. Organisations need to attend to the processes that create trust and underpin engagement, as well as organisational and group culture.

→ Recognising strengths

Creating a supportive context is a strong element of any youth development strategy²². Acknowledging young people's participation and celebrating their achievements are particularly important.

→ Building the team

Young people look for a sense of connectedness and seek belonging. Some prominent authors talk about young people looking for their tribes²³. A welcoming program atmosphere has been identified as an important feature in youth development studies²⁴. Within organised groups, inclusion of young people from diverse backgrounds is important but often overlooked, unless explicitly placed on the agenda. For the strength of the program, supporting potential, growing partnerships and recognising diversity are particularly important.

→ Looking out for each other

In a world that is increasingly understood through the lens of 'risk', youth development programs need to engage with what this means. At all levels (individual, group and organisation) this may mean strengthening protective behaviours. In terms of the many risks that face young people as they grow up, Australian and International work highlights that strength-based approaches double as preventative approaches. It is important to intentionally bring this lens to perceived 'risk' areas, for example, health and wellbeing concerns should focus on building capacities in, and resources for, young people to care for their own bodies and to look out for each other. New Australian research²⁵ highlights that young people can be supported to position themselves protectively in relation to the risks they encounter.

Section B: The Framework

(ii) Doing things of value

The second set of principles recognises how and why young people engage, stay engaged in, and grow through program-based activity. It highlights the importance of experience, and the 'stretch' element of people extending themselves and achieving things that they did not know they could do.

→ Engaging with the real world

This principle is about engagement in the world. Research is suggesting that young people can be very perceptive about what is 'real', purposeful and worthy of respect. Young people more readily engage in community-based activity that they perceive to be meaningful or purposeful²⁶.

→ Being active citizens

Citizenship is described differently across the literature as a status, a set of obligations and entitlements, and a significant element of personal identity. Each of these elements is important. The emphasis for youth development organisations is on 'active' engagement and on providing accessible ways for people to engage with their communities. There is a strong body of research specifically addressing this area, focused on civic engagement²⁷ and civic service²⁸.

→ Becoming reflective, resilient learners

Resilience is recognised across the youth, health and education literature, as internal strength and the capacity to adapt as conditions change. Action and reflection are central to the idea of resilience. They create space for learning from action. In theory and in practice, there is increasing recognition of the ways in which individual and community resilience are inter-linked²⁹. It is important to recognise a learning continuum at three levels: individuals, leaders, and organisations.



Section B: The Framework



3. Good practice

Valuing people → Recognising strengths

Acknowledging participation

Acknowledging participation is about benefiting from the contribution of all participants. It is about governance, and employing models and mechanisms to make the roles of young people, leaders and the organisation in decision-making clear. Acknowledging and promoting participation is also a key strategy for enabling young people to belong. In the twenty first century, there are several reasons why this is important.

First, having clarity about opportunities for participation, roles and expectations is important to young people³⁰. Young people value having opportunities to get things right. When asked about participation in clubs and societies, some young people identify sports clubs as places that allow them to do this: roles, time commitments and expectations are all clear; young people feel that they belong³¹. In this way, barriers to participation are reduced.

Secondly, in an era when people are increasingly 'time poor', they are far more likely to engage and stay engaged where they can see that their input personally make a difference³². Participatory mechanisms and having a 'voice' enable young people to feel that they belong.

“

In 2011, the Department of Defence organised its first annual **Youth Engagement and Development Congress**, involving the three cadet organisations: Australian Navy Cadets, Australian Army Cadets, and Australian Air Force Cadets.

As a result of this year's Congress, and the enthusiastic input of many young people from across the three organisations, a process to draw more powerfully on young people's insights is being developed and supported by the three cadet organisations. Cadets will meet to shape the program for next year's Cadet Congress.

”

Section B: The Framework

Valuing people → Recognising strengths

Celebrating achievement

This element of good practice is about recognising people's contribution to organisations or communities through the things they do. Research on why young people become engaged and stay engaged with community activities finds that ongoing participation in organisations is promoted through clear milestones for achievement³³. Where large tasks are broken down into small 'wins', and these happen incrementally, there is a sense of effort being rewarded.

An important part of recognising achievements is formal or informal celebration. This could be as simple as telling a story of success or achievement to the group. A key feature of young people's ongoing commitment is the statement 'we did that'³⁴. Recognition can happen in formal and informal ways, within the organisation and with a wider audience of friends, family and community.

The elements – milestones with incremental achievements and rewards – are important for volunteers too. This should include recognition of excellence in outcomes of programs and in mentoring.

At the organisation level, it is important to identify benchmarks and achievements, particularly of volunteers and young leaders. A body of research highlights the benefit of organisations tracking achievements in youth development³⁵.



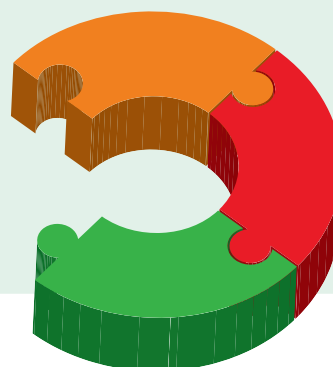
The High Resolves Initiative³⁶ is designed to help young people realise that they have a personal role to play in how human society develops as a global community, and that the choices they make in life will make a difference. This aim is encapsulated in their motto: 'our world, our choice'³⁷.

High Resolves is a secondary school educational initiative that includes two progressive programs designed to build on each other: the *Global Citizenship Program* for Year 8 students and the *Global Leadership Program* for Year 9 and 10 students³⁸.

Throughout Year 9 and 10, students consolidate their newly developed leadership skills through a series of action projects. Students identify a community issue as a focus for their project and then identify key deliverables and a project plan. Each deliverable is broken down into tasks. Students learn first-hand about the key elements of project management. A 'plan, act, reflect' framework is used throughout the project, and the group is encouraged to reflect and celebrate as it progresses through the project. The students get to create presentations – 'this is

what we did' – and to share these with their school and to their community. At the *High Resolves Annual Summit*, student from different schools gather to share their experiences, and hear from leading experts and role models. Last year, the celebration included a 'flash mob' dance at the international *United Nations* NGO conference.

When students are given opportunities to take part in social action, they become more constructive and independent thinkers. This supports their capacity to step up to leadership roles in their communities. One former *High Resolves* student says: 'I hold *High Resolves* completely responsible for my now ceaseless passion for social justice.'³⁹



Section B: The Framework

Valuing people → Building the team

Communication

This element of good practice is In today's world there are many opportunities to speak and broadcast oneself, but less developed opportunities to listen, absorb, and understand⁴⁰. Communication between generations is an area of increasing importance, which is now highlighted in international youth policy⁴¹. Communication across difference (class, gender, race, culture and other community groups) is also becoming more important. Youth development organisations can promote communication skills by providing opportunities to speak and to listen, within groups, across generations, within

the organisation, with key stakeholders. Young people are more likely than earlier generations to be familiar and at ease with using different technologies. Accordingly, some forms of communication may work best in digital forms. The Inspire Foundation is an example of an organisation that employs digital communication to support young people through enabling them to be connected, especially in relation to mental health matters⁴².



Led by the *Inspire Foundation*, the **Cooperative Research Centre for Young People, Technology and Wellbeing (YAW-CRC)** brings together 63 partners: a mix of researchers from 13 universities, innovative thinkers from industry and business, mental health and youth advocates across the non-government and government sectors, and young people.

Over the next five years, the partner organisations will work together to conduct research that helps to better understand how technologies can be used to ensure that all young Australians are safe, happy, healthy and resilient.

The CRC's *Connected and Creative* program focuses on using technologies to promote the good mental health of young people who are vulnerable or marginalised. It will explore how young people use existing technologies in their everyday lives, and investigate the role of technologies in addressing barriers to wellbeing. Creating opportunities for young people to communicate with their peers and others is an important element of this program⁴³.

YAW-CRC is being established with the support of the Australian Government's *Cooperative Research Centres Program*.



Section B: The Framework

Valuing people → Building the team

Supporting potential

The strength of any organisation lies in its people. Supporting potential involves the recognition of people's capacity, and active mentoring of this capacity by peers and adults. In youth development, potential is often supported through developing leadership⁴⁴. This applies to adults and young people.

Research highlights the importance of acknowledging skills, having opportunities to develop and test new skills, and to stretch capacity within a supportive environment⁴⁵.

It also highlights the importance of feedback, opportunities to reflect on progress, identify weaknesses and build on strengths.

A significant body of evidence highlights the importance of mentoring in youth development⁴⁶. Mentoring involves an ongoing relationship (peer to peer, adult to young people) to develop capacities. Mentoring is an important aspect of organisational culture for young people and adults.



Girl Guides Australia recently had the opportunity to explore more deeply what it means to mentor young leaders with the 2010 AusAID funded national *Be the Change* advocacy project. *Girl Guides* provides girls aged 5 to 18 years with a non-formal education program that is dynamic and flexible, offering values-based training in life skills, decision-making and leadership. *Guide* groups are run by trained volunteer leaders committed to enabling girls and young women to grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members.

In the *Be the Change* project, 25 Guides aged 14 to 30 years from across Australia attended a two-day workshop on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and advocacy. Participants explored the MDGs and identified an issue that was important to them. They then developed and implemented an individual project that led them to advocate on that issue. Following the national workshop, all participants organised and ran a two-day tailored workshop in their state. At this workshop, they educated up to 30 Guides and community members. The state participants made a pledge to take action on one or more of the MDGs and to raise awareness within their communities. *Girl Guides Australia* supported participants by ensuring key personnel were involved to support the young women in planning, implementing and evaluating their workshops; providing personal follow-up via a paid National Project Manager; providing time during a national workshop for participants to design and start developing their project plan; providing templates to assist participants to complete their projects; ensuring participants had the opportunity to share individual project

progress; and ensuring the events were run by young people for young people (peer education).

Participants from the national workshop provided feedback that this project was a 'life changing experience' for them. In particular, undertaking individual projects has cemented individuals' commitment to the MDGs and provided an opportunity to lead their schools, community groups and Guide Units in this area. Comments from participants included: '*Great opportunity for self development and to challenge yourself*'; '*Thank you so much: the experience was amazing*'; '*YAY: Be the Change was marvellous and there should be one each year in each State*'.

Guides reflect that they are getting better at finding the balance between youth-driven and adult-supported projects. People require different levels of support. Acknowledging that young women are still learning, one of the organisation's ongoing questions about supporting young leaders is: 'how do we provide the right level of guidance and support from more experienced Guides, whilst allowing the young leaders to run with and own the project implementation?' Key learnings for the organisation include ensuring that participants have a clear understanding of their commitment to the project up front, encouraging participants to identify their own mentor/coach to help them achieve the expected outcomes and using the *Girl Guides Australia* website to provide access to documents and answer questions for anyone involved in the project delivery.



Section B: The Framework

Valuing people → Building the team

Growing partnerships

Community/Organisational partnerships

Partnerships between organisations and communities are central to the day-to-day operation of youth development organisations. These formal or informal links are the resource bases for many local groups. They are also the foundation of innovative projects⁴⁷.

Youth-adult partnerships

Youth-adult partnerships are the partnerships formed by adults and young people to achieve community-based goals. Such partnerships are increasingly recognised as a useful strategy for promoting youth development and youth participation as well as for building strong programs and communities⁴⁸. Recent research argues for a re-think of the assumption that young people should be left alone to achieve their goals and the belief that adults should 'get out of the way'⁴⁹. Partnering across generations is a learning curve for all involved.



The **Duke of Edinburgh's Award** has been working with the *CREATE Foundation*, local police, and state government on a South Australian youth development project to **support young people in care**⁵⁰.

An international program represented in over 130 countries, the *Duke of Edinburgh's Award* is designed to empower young people by providing a platform for them to grow personally in four fundamental areas: skills, volunteering, physical recreation, and adventurous journey. The framework that the Award provides is flexible enough for operators to use it within other programs that they may be organising, to strengthen or support the programs, with the benefit of achieving an internationally recognised award.

For example, the *CREATE Foundation* conducted a program from January 2008 to May 2010 called *mission:be*, which was an empowerment (resilience-building) and leadership program for 14 to 18 year olds under the Guardianship of the Minister.

Due to the flexible nature of the Award's framework, participants were able to use very personal improvements for their activities. For example, one participant who had been through significant abuse used her counselling sessions for her skill, as the goal from the sessions was to facilitate behavioural change. It also

provided an environment where she could talk about things without being uncomfortable. As a result, her carers noticed many changes including participation around the home and increased ownership and responsibility. Another participant was able to assist his carer with the other children in their care and put that toward his volunteering requirement within the Award. This had a double effect of providing much needed assistance to his carer and a much deeper understanding for him of what it is like for his carer to look after him and the other children in her care. It helped him to develop a new perspective.

Outcomes for participants include improved self-confidence, improved ability to set and attain goals, improved interpersonal relationships, and a sense of achievement. Many would not have gone to a school graduation. Finishing something and being rewarded for their effort was a new experience. Developing and delivering the program took the financial and expert support of a cross-section of organisations including the *Duke of Edinburgh's Award*, *Families SA Northern Metropolitan District Centres*, *Salisbury Twelve25 Youth Enterprise Centre*, *Shine SA*, *South Australian Police*, *BCS Adventure Services* and *Drug Arm*.



Section B: The Framework

Valuing people → Building the team

Recognising diversity

At the level of the organisation and the group, it takes awareness and forethought to engage diverse groups in opportunities for participation and decision-making⁵¹. A significant body of work explores youth development as inclusive practice⁵².

One important element picked up by this literature is that of valuing and acknowledging others' contributions as a strength⁵³. Central to this work is the idea of valuing self and others, and growth and development in self and others. This work highlights awareness and acknowledgement of diversity and difference⁵⁴. Specific themes are Indigenous youth⁵⁵, sexuality⁵⁶, gender⁵⁷ and ethnicity or cultural difference⁵⁸.

Equality of opportunity and fairness are a central concern when working with young people. Many of the day-to-day challenges that are encountered are directly related to young people's circumstances or opportunities. An inclusive and informed understanding of self and others can be a foundation for creating equality of opportunity. In youth development work in the contemporary world, there is a need for increased understanding of specific areas of disadvantage⁵⁹ including in particular disability⁶⁰, socioeconomic or educational disadvantage⁶¹, geographic location (eg rural/regional disadvantage)⁶², and the implications of equity issues for program activities⁶³.



The **Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)** is a community-based charity that delivers programs and services to help build strong people, families and communities from over 500 *YMCA* centres across Australia. The organisation works in partnership with government, non-profit groups and other organisations to provide programs and services to more than 500,000 Australians every week in health and fitness, recreation, accommodation, child care, camping, youth and family services⁶⁴.

The *YMCA* has formalised its *Commitment to Social Inclusion* as a national policy. The policy was formally adopted at the AGM of the *National Council of YMCAs* in 2008. It begins: "*The YMCA values the individual worth, uniqueness and diversity of all people. We seek to remove barriers to participation in programs and activities that will enable all people to meet their full potential, and experience meaningful involvement in the YMCA Movement and the community, according to the Mission statement and values of YMCAs in Australia.*"⁶⁵

The policy commits the Member Associations to achieve social inclusion through:

- Striving to remove any barriers to full participation in community life, and recognises that these barriers may be social, economic, attitudinal, cultural, geographic or political
- Supporting and fostering active citizenship, in particular committing the *YMCA* to fostering a spirit of volunteering and local governance;
- Enhancing people's rights, access and opportunities: the principles of *access* and *inclusion* are recognised as an important element of social inclusion
- Advocating for the rights of all people in our communities: the *YMCA* recognises that it is uniquely placed to use its relationships to influence decision makers on behalf of those less able to express their views and needs.

Since the introduction of this policy, its existence and use in decision-making has continued to shape people's expectations and organisational culture.



Section B: The Framework

Valuing people → Looking out for each other

Strengthening protective behaviours

One of the characteristics of the 21st century is a world saturated with an awareness of risk⁶⁶.

For young people, this is revealed as an awareness of the many challenges and uncertainties that face children as they grow up. Examples include the reality of family breakdown, the high incidence of mental health problems amongst young people, and the tendency for technological development to outpace ethical frameworks. There is an increasing awareness that, rather than being completely shielded, young people need to learn to engage with and manage some of the risks they are likely to encounter.

There is debate about how best this can be done⁶⁷. Australian and International work highlights that strength-based approaches double as preventative approaches

to many of the challenges that young people face⁶⁸. New Australian research highlights that young people can be supported to reorient their thinking and to position themselves to lessen vulnerability in relation to the risks they encounter⁶⁹. This strengths-based and resilience-building approach brings an important lens to youth development programs, and it means paying particular attention to both culture and curriculum.

At the level of groups and organisations, in an increasingly risk-averse society, understandings and perceptions of risk and risk management are becoming well developed. Organisations become increasingly aware of their responsibilities to keep individuals safe and minimise harm.

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In addition to running the programs through schools, The *Duke of Edinburgh Award* works to build partnerships between various sectors of the community to make the Award available to all young Australians. They bring together community groups that care for disadvantaged and ‘at risk’ young people, with organisations that are able to provide sponsorships and grants to enable them to participate in the Award.

Such an example is the **Nintiringanyi Cultural Training Centre**⁷⁰. The Centre manages the *West Cairns Youth Prevention and Diversion Program*, which develops and implements initiatives to divert young indigenous people considered to be ‘at risk’ from adverse contact with the criminal justice system. This is achieved by addressing youth issues in a culturally appropriate

way and by engaging positive young Indigenous role models to work with these young people, instilling positive and moral lifestyle choices.

Since the *Nintiringanyi Cultural Training Centre* started operating the program, their 11 participants have completed their Bronze Award and progressed onto the Silver level of the *Duke of Edinburgh Award*. These participants have also become role models to other Indigenous young people at risk in the West Cairns region, with Department of Child Safety and Youth Justice caseworkers reporting great changes in their clients as a result of their friendships with the participants. Through the success of the original 11 participants, another 35 young people within the group have expressed interest in beginning their Award.

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Section B: The Framework

Doing things of value → Engaging with the real world

Serving the community

Serving involves doing things of value that are useful in the real world. Young people talk about this in terms of ‘giving something back’.

‘Civic service’ is a concept that has been developed around the globe⁷¹. The value of service to the community is identified and promoted. Many ways of providing service to the community are explored. There is scope for exploring the value and relevance of this idea more widely in Australia.

The idea of ‘service learning’, which emerged within the USA, has had a mixed reception in Australia. Youth researchers have highlighted that young people should be seen as valuable contributors to, and shapers of, communities rather than simply its ‘servants’ who will replicate the old structures⁷².

In recent decades, there has been renewed interest in exploring the ideas of a civil society, as a place that both protects and develops its citizens. Within this context, the idea of young people’s place in communities has been explored.



The report of a national longitudinal evaluation of **State Government funded youth development programs**: *‘Doing positive things’*⁷³, noted that some form of community service was the foundation of activities in most of these programs. Young people and teachers consistently rated such community involvement highly. Teachers acknowledged that, if the youth development programs were ‘the best they could be’, there was a need to ‘get out into community more’, believing that there would be important social outcomes: *‘It introduces the students to volunteer work that may carry over when they are adults. In other words it may help breed another generation of volunteers. And as a result, more future volunteers, more responsible citizens in the future.’* Although this was a new experience for many young people, it was widely accepted as worthwhile. However young people indicated it happened less frequently than it should.

Community service was both enjoyable and a positive learning experience that contributed to gains in skills and knowledge as well as to self-esteem, particularly for those who were initially reticent to take on a new and somewhat daunting personal challenge. *‘It’s not just the community who gets something out of it – we also get a lot out of it.’* Other young people linked these service-based opportunities to those involved with ‘meeting new people’, and this has implications of mutual learning from an increased range of contacts.

However, this research also highlighted that such service needed to be based in the active participation of participants in determining the nature, location and purpose of that service. Where service was an ‘obligation’, it was much less effective.



Section B: The Framework

Doing things of value → Being active citizens

Building character and identity

Identity, which is the way in which any role is acted, owned and integrated, is a particularly significant element of youth development⁷⁴. At the heart of youth development is the experience of embracing a new challenge and extending oneself beyond what one knows one can do. Young people talk about this as ‘stretching’ themselves, or as discovering more fully their potential as a person⁷⁵. They also talk about character development⁷⁶, discovering self-motivation, teamwork and initiative⁷⁷.

Closely related to these gains are the elements their leaders identify: experiencing fun, adventure and learning in a healthy way, with managed risks and in a supportive environment⁷⁸.



The **Young Endeavour Youth Scheme** is a not-for-profit organisation that provides young Australians with a unique, challenging and inspirational experience at sea. For over 20 years, it has been recognised internationally as a leading youth development program. Youth development programs conducted in the context of sail training use an experiential learning technique, where participants learn the core skills of sailing a tall ship and, in the process, develop a broad range of skills and attributes – becoming more effective team members, leaders and communicators.

The *Young Endeavour Youth Scheme* comprises three distinct phases, delivered over an 11-day period. These are the *Crisis Phase*, the *Transition Phase* and the *Arrival Phase*.

The *Crisis Phase* lasts for three to four days, during which the youth crew are confronted by and learn to overcome many challenges including seasickness, working with new and unfamiliar people, lack of sleep, and learning new skills and sailing terms. The youth crew are encouraged to develop essential teamwork and leadership skills in the process, and also discover their inner strength and ability to persevere.

This leads into the *Transition Phase*, when the youth crew move from instructor-led to self-led activities. As they gain the required technical skills to sail a square-rigged vessel, they take on leadership roles within each watch of eight youth crew members. The program culminates in the *Arrival Phase*, when the youth crew are given command of *Young Endeavour* for a 24-hour period. During this time, members of the youth crew implement what they have learned, putting into practice their newly acquired sailing skills, as well as skills in communication, self-awareness, teamwork and leadership.

The tall ship environment therefore provides a unique and powerful opportunity in which young people can expand their horizons. It immerses the youth crew in a novel and completely unfamiliar culture. By removing them from established surroundings, they are compelled to adapt to their new circumstances.



Section B: The Framework

Doing things of value → Being active citizens

Supporting commitment

Outside of schooling, structured and well-resourced long-term opportunities for young people's sustained engagement in and with their communities are becoming increasingly rare. However, there are many indications that these opportunities are more important than ever. This element of good practice is about investment of energy over time.

Commitment entails individuals looking beyond the self and their immediate situation, to collective action, and to higher ideals and values. Commitment is fostered in programs that create space where people can reflect on their own situation and contribution, and on their part in the big picture. Research on learning shows that experiences and actions are most powerful when they are accompanied by opportunities for reflection that enable integration of experiences. In practical terms, this is about providing relationships, spaces, events and processes that support the integration of action, experience, thought and possibility.

Commitment comes from a combination of elements. These include opportunities for sustained service; clear understanding of the story or goals of the organisation, its social purpose and work in the world; clarity of personal stories, goals and roles; a vision of possibilities; a sense of belonging, teamwork and partnerships; and participation in decisions and action in the world⁷⁹.

Commitment is both a prior condition and an outcome; that is, it can feed into all of the above, and be promoted by each of these elements.



Scouts Australia aims to encourage the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development of young people so that they can take a constructive place in society as a member of their local, national and international community⁸⁰.

Scouting is an international youth movement – the largest youth movement in the world. The organisation has a commitment to local community issues and needs, but highlights that it is equally important that, no matter where in the world, the same scouting fundamentals apply, that is shared values, directions and methods⁸¹.

Scouting commitments include that a program must be 'by' young people, as opposed to a program 'for' young people. This means that it is 'a program developed from the aspirations of young people, and with their participation, since they are the main agents of their own development and happiness'⁸².

Australian *Scouts* have committed to service in both domestic and international arenas. These include environmental programs such as *Clean up the World* and *Clean Up Australia*, to health related programs ranging from Bangladesh to the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. For the latter, *Scouts* are currently in partnership with *Rotary* is assisting in the building of school toilet facilities, with emphasis on facilities for girls.



Section B: The Framework

Doing things of value → Becoming reflective, resilient learners

Growing resilience, skills and attitudes

Research on the outcomes of Australian youth development programs finds that young people who participate in youth development programs acquire confidence, skills, knowledge and develop teamwork skills and attributes. This is most likely to occur in youth development programs which involve 'hands-on' activities and work for the community. Programs that allow young people to participate in planning achieve the best outcomes⁸³.

Resilience is about developing adaptive capacities. Research in youth and community development emphasizes the important relationship between resilient young people and resilient communities⁸⁴. Young people can be innovative shapers of communities.

The outcomes of two Australian studies identify the factors that build strong and resilient learners. These include inclusive programming; hands-on or action based learning approaches; and involvement in program decision making⁸⁵.

Young people are quick to highlight the value of the skills they learn through youth development programs⁸⁶. The skills developed are both life-skills that support them in everyday interactions, and specific expertise which opens further opportunities. The attributes developed through good programs include personal, societal, cultural attitudes and values⁸⁷.



The **New South Wales State Emergency Services Cadet Program** is a youth development program that aims to provide young people with the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to achieve an understanding of the NSW State Emergency Service and its role in the community. The specific goals of the program are: to provide progressive, interesting and challenging training that encourages the development of positive personal and team characteristics among participants; to encourage the idea of achieving success in life through the spirit of service to Australia and commitment within the local community; and to provide an understanding of the NSW State Emergency Service and other Emergency Service agencies⁸⁸.

Because the *State Emergency Services Cadets* is a new program, the *NSW State Emergency Service (SES)* has seen itself as a learning organisation, building the program 'from scratch' and from the 'ground up'. The organisation has worked to draw best practices from existing programs, and learn some lessons before starting. Particular messages received early from SES volunteers, were that people want to 'get out of there and do things', that time is a big issue, and that volunteers feel they have not got time to attend a cadet program every week for a full year. It is also important to cut down the paperwork and streamline the processes involved.

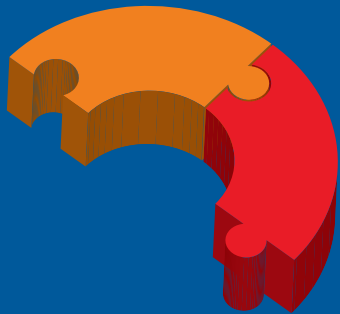
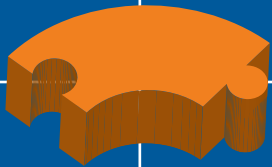
In response, the *SES* has put together a short one-off course and offers this in partnership with schools. Its availability is based on capacity and availability of volunteers. The program is funded by the NSW State Government, with a pilot tested in 2008. In 2009, the *SES* started to roll out delivery of the Cadet program in secondary schools.

The *SES* Cadet program delivers four units of competency from the nationally accredited Public Safety Training package. The program in schools is delivered over 100 minutes per week for 10 weeks or five full school days. Five modules are needed for completing the *SES* induction. Four of these are offered in schools, and the final one is undertaken when the individual joins a *SES* unit.

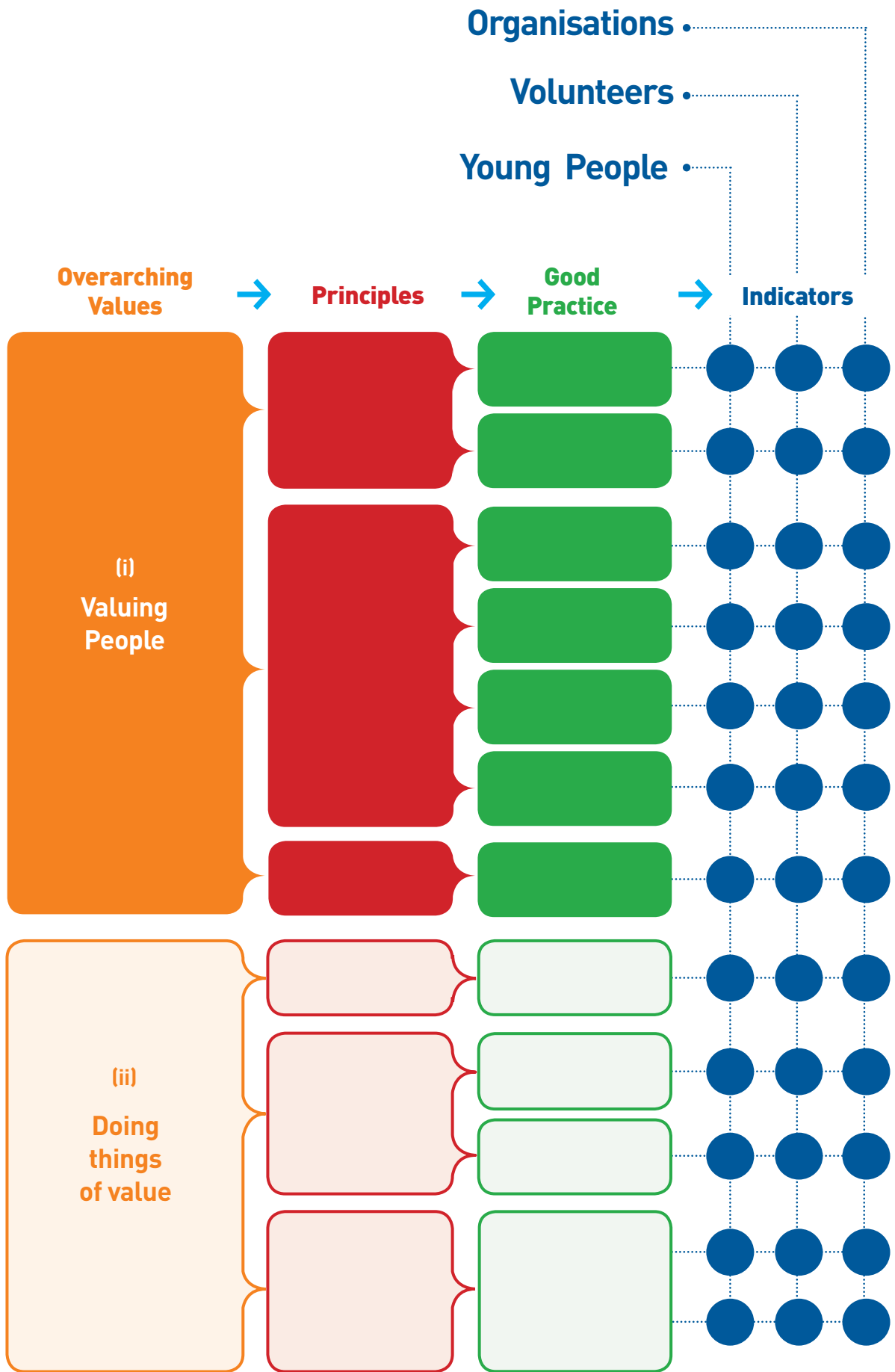
Young people and volunteers have responded positively to this modular approach to learning. Feedback suggests that this approach enables them to commence their service quickly, with the necessary skills in place.



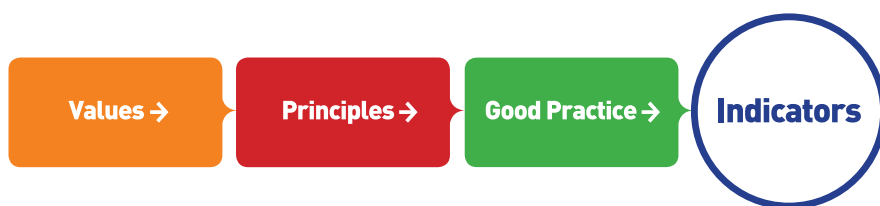
C



Indicators



Section C: Indicators



Indicators

This section describes the implications of the principles articulated in this generic Youth Development Framework for three groups:

- a) the **young people** who participate in youth development programs
- b) the group of **volunteers** who lead the programs in local communities, including parents and young leaders
- c) the **organisation** responsible for the program, including managers with overall responsibility for the conduct, governance and future directions of the programs

The mapping of these indicators of good practice that follows is intended as a basis for discussion. It illustrates how the framework integrates the core **Values** underpinning the framework ('valuing young people' and 'doing things of value') with the **Principles** derived from these values, and how this leads to **Good Practice**. The **Indicators** show potential detail of the practical application at different levels (young people, program leaders and provider managers) of any organisation that aims to promote positive youth development.

These indicators were developed on the basis of the available literature. Whereas the majority of this literature on indicators and implications for good practice relates to *young people*, the explicit additional focus on *volunteers* and the *organisation* in this model represents an expanded approach to youth development.

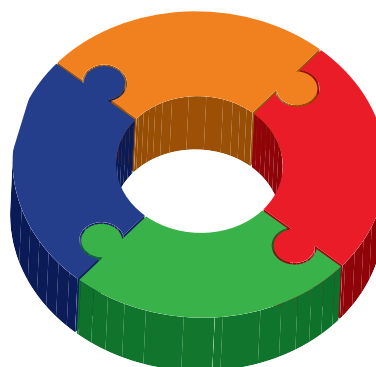
The indicators integrate curriculum, governance, evaluation and processes for inclusion and embed a strengths-based approach across all these elements. For the young people, the volunteers and for those in management roles in the

provider organisation, the focus is on development and improvement and building on existing strengths (of young people, of the volunteers and of the organisation).

Because this is a *generic* youth development framework, the relevance and weighting of the elements will vary for different organisations. The indicators enable the reader to consider what the framework means for their organisation and to consider the degree of importance for them.

Indicators, linked directly to the principles of good practice, are integral to any learning organisation and embed a dynamic, ongoing process of improvement within the framework, building on strengths.

The principle of *continuous improvement* has emerged as a key element in youth development frameworks. A cycle of inquiry that enables all participants to engage in reflection and contribute to improvements to programs is an essential part of a strengths-based approach. It is only through the recognition of strengths and the embedding of a process that enables young people, volunteers and the organisation to build on these, that programs remain relevant, vital and effective.



1. Young people

Valuing people	Indicators for young people
<p>Recognising strengths</p>	<p>Acknowledging participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people are able to voice their views and engage in decision-making in programs → Young people’s decision-making roles in the organisation are clearly identified → Programs are youth-led and youth-initiated → Young people have responsibility for achieving program outcomes <p>Celebrating achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Achievement is rewarded for all participants → Age-appropriate levels of skill achievement and contribution to the organisation and community are recognised → Young people achieve incrementally (step-by-step) → Regular opportunities are provided for the recognition of the achievements of young people through formal and informal celebration → Leadership is celebrated → Achievements of young people are celebrated with friends, family and community as well as with the group or program
<p>Building the team</p>	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Oral and written communication skills using different technologies (including drama, digital communication and face to face communication) are promoted → The organisation communicates its expectations of young people to them → Young people have opportunities to be listened to and to learn to listen to others → Young people communicate with stakeholders in the community <p>Supporting potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Prior achievements and skills of young people are acknowledged → Young people are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → mentored by peers and adults → given opportunities to reflect on progress, identify weaknesses and build on strengths → valued as resources → able to explore their talents and skills in a supportive environment → given opportunities to exercise leadership <p>Growing partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people experience teamwork to achieve real-world goals (reciprocity) → Young people develop teamwork skills with peers, leaders and community members → Youth/adult partnerships are fostered to achieve organisational and community goals <p>Recognising diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people feel welcome to participate, regardless of culture, skill level, race, gender or ability → Diverse skills and achievements are celebrated → Diversity within the group and the community is recognised → Opportunities for engagement in activities are provided at an appropriate skill level
<p>Looking out for each other</p>	<p>Strengthening protective behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The curriculum recognises the strengths in diversity and cultural differences → Young people feel part of a community and collective enterprise → Program activities are meaningful to young people → Participants learn to appreciate each other’s culture



Doing things of value	Indicators for young people
Engaging with the real world	<p>Serving the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people are offered opportunities to provide service on a continuing basis → Young people undertake practical activities in the community that make a difference → Service is recognised by the organisation
Being active citizens	<p>Building character and identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people reflect on activities, service and integration of experiences → Young people undertake activities that enable them to meet new people outside their social circle (extending social networks) → Young people solve problems, and understand ethical issues and behaving ethically <p>Supporting commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people are clear about their personal goals → Young people understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → the goals of the organisation → their role in the organisation → Program activities make a difference to young people and to the community → Goals are achieved through teamwork and partnerships → Young people participate in decisions about the curriculum → Young people have a sense of belonging in the program → Young people have opportunities for sustained service
Becoming reflective, resilient learners	<p>Growing resilience, skills and attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people participate in experiential learning → Young people have opportunities to build their decision-making skills → Young people build self-esteem, capacity for reflection, leadership skills, and interpersonal relationships across diverse groups → Programs are flexible enough to give room for experimentation → There is a safe and supportive environment for risk-taking → Young people have the opportunity to learn work- and career-related skills → The pleasure of learning is reinforced and enhanced by experiences and activities that are fun → Young people have opportunities to provide feedback on the quality of the program

2. Volunteers

Valuing People	Indicators for volunteers: parents, young leaders, others
<p>Recognising strengths</p>	<p>Acknowledging participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Relevant, ongoing professional development is provided on participatory approaches, involving young people in decision-making and inclusive practices → The program is open to contact with and involvement from families and significant others → Curricula are devised in collaboration with young people → There is understanding of age-appropriate activities and levels of development so that programs are inclusive → There are opportunities for volunteers and parents to be involved in decision-making about the programs in which they work <p>Celebrating achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Excellence in mentoring and leadership by volunteers through formal and informal celebration within the organisation and community is recognised → Excellence in outcomes of programs is recognised
<p>Building the team</p>	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The roles, responsibilities and expectations of volunteers, parents and young leaders are clearly communicated → Promotional material is accessible in different forms (eg digital, hard copy) and different languages → The curriculum embraces the use and appreciation of new forms of communication technology → Communication skills are promoted within communities, with young people and with the organisation <p>Supporting potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Regular opportunities are provided for volunteers and leaders to review performance → Volunteers, leaders and others are supported by the organisation to undertake staff development that is relevant to the local context in which they are working → Volunteers, leaders and others are offered accredited induction and ongoing training → Volunteers, leaders and others have regular opportunities to reflect on research on youth development programs → Volunteers and leaders have mentoring opportunities within the organisation <p>Growing partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Networks with other organisations with commonality of interest are identified and explored → Professional development in community partnership building is provided → The organisation recognises that partnership building takes time → Partnerships are used to develop relevant 'real world' activities for young people → Partnerships between young and older people in the community are supported → Program activities provide opportunities for increasing social networks <p>Recognising diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Volunteers, leaders and others take steps to ensure that the program is open to all young people in the community → Volunteers and program leaders participate in professional development to heighten awareness of inclusion → Volunteers, leaders and others provide a curriculum that recognises cultural and social diversity → Networks with other organisations and local organisations are fostered and utilised to enhance the diversity of youth development opportunities → Opportunities for young people to meet new people outside their social circle are created → Tolerance and teamwork are promoted
<p>Looking out for each other</p>	<p>Strengthening protective behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Young people, families and communities are supported and strengthened through activities that make a difference and are open to all young people → Teamwork is promoted → Healthy risk-taking is supported in a safe and supportive environment → Appropriate referral of young people to other organisations and programs is made → Tolerance and building trust among group members is promoted → Skill development is promoted through activities that are structured and sequential in their learning outcomes



Doing things of value	Indicators for volunteers: parents, young leaders, others
Engaging with the real world	<p>Serving the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The value of service to the community is identified and promoted → A variety of ways of providing service to the community are explored → The concept of civic service is explored and utilised → Program activities are meaningful and purposeful → Activities that benefit the community are promoted
Being active citizens	<p>Building character and identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Activities that involve action in the community are promoted → Professional development supports volunteers and others to reflect on their actions → Activities build on the existing skills of young people, as appropriate to their age, and expand on them → The program provides opportunities for young people to experience teamwork <p>Supporting commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Activities, events and processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → support sustained involvement in the community and increase integration of experience → build a sense of belonging in the organisation for volunteers
Becoming reflective, resilient learners	<p>Growing resilience, skills and attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The curriculum builds on volunteers' experience, in and out of the organisation → Social connections and obligations are recognised in program planning

3. Organisations

Valuing People	Indicators for Organisations
<p>Recognising strengths</p>	<p>Acknowledging participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The organisation has a meta-strategy for youth development → An integrated professional development program is provided for volunteers and leaders → Mechanisms are in place to support young people's and volunteers' role in decision-making about programs → Participation by volunteers and young people is well-structured and adequately (participation can be resource-intensive) → A range of communication technologies is available to support the engagement of decision-making by young people and volunteers <p>Celebrating achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The organisation identifies the relationships between the organisation's aims and positive youth development → The organisation recognises achievement at multiple levels of responsibility and status (eg young people, different groups of volunteers) → Achievement is celebrated formally and informally, within program groups, in the community and in the organisation
<p>Building the team</p>	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The range of stakeholders with whom the organisation should communicate is identified → Communication is made through a range of approaches and technologies as appropriate → Program outcomes expected for young people are specified and communicated → Program outcomes expected for volunteers are specified and communicated (ie professional development) → Responsibilities are clearly communicated → Referral networks are identified and communicated to volunteers → Appropriate and relevant forms of communication are used to reach all groups (including different languages where appropriate) → Communication processes ensure reciprocity: mechanisms are supported for two-way dialog and communication between the organisation, volunteers and young people, employing blogging, texting and face-to-face events <p>Supporting potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The key competencies needed by adult and young volunteers are identified and provide the basis for leader training → Arrangements are made to seek formal recognition for the existing knowledge and skills of volunteers → Young people and volunteers are seen as a resource → The organisation identifies the resources required to support professional development of volunteers → Volunteers are supported to engage in critical reflection about their programs → The organisation provides incentives to attract and support volunteers from a range of cultural and professional backgrounds <p>Growing partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The fundamental role of interconnection of social networks as a premise of positive youth development is acknowledged → The diverse range of partnerships, the goals of these partnerships for the organisation, and the ways in which these partnerships will be supported with parents, communities, other organisations, is identified → Partnerships between the provider and other organisations (eg schools) and community groups are strengthened as appropriate → Clear entry points for young people, for volunteers and for other community organisations are provided → Clear exit points are offered, with support via a transition program through partnerships with employers and education providers → Volunteers and other group leaders are provided with professional development in building and maintaining partnerships → The organisation recognises that robust connections between social networks require nurturing and resourcing



Valuing People	Indicators for Organisations
Building the team cont.	<p>Recognising diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Access for all young people and volunteers is facilitated through institutional gateways → Resources are provided to support the participation of socially-excluded and marginalised young people (eg materials in different languages) → The barriers that exclude young people and volunteers from participating in the organisation are recognised and addressed → Volunteers are recruited from different groups and contexts
Looking out for each other	<p>Strengthening protective behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Volunteers have access to high-quality professional development → Volunteers and leaders are equipped to involve young people in decision-making within programs → Opportunities are provided for volunteers and leaders to interact across programs → The organisation has <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → protocols for risk management → ethics guidelines

Doing things of value	Indicators for Organisations
Engaging with the real world	<p>Serving the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The organisation invests in staff development to enhance service in communities → Opportunities within the wider organisation to build the skills of volunteers are leveraged → Personnel are well-informed about the program and their role in promoting service to communities, including service in, for and with the community → Long-term partnerships are built between the provider and other organisations, including communities → Effective recruitment strategies ensure the quality of volunteers and leaders
Being active citizens	<p>Building character and identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Learning organisation principles build continuous improvement in all aspects of the youth development program <p>Supporting commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The organisation demonstrates good governance practices → The organisation supports the development of a strong youth development curriculum → Sufficient resources are dedicated to achieve the organisation's aims in youth development → Volunteers and leaders have ongoing skill development through professional development
Becoming reflective, resilient learners	<p>Growing resilience, skills and attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Learning organisation principles are employed to ensure continuous improvement → Training of volunteers is framed as critical reflection on research and practice among professionals → Flexible management models are employed to cater to the needs of volunteers and the communities that they serve → The links between professional development and quality programs are recognised → Evaluation processes assess the quality of training of volunteers

D



Using the Framework

Using the framework

Organisations engaged in youth development know that young people are at the centre of all they do. How they use this Youth Development Framework will reflect their organisational history, its distinctive values, its relationships to particular groups of young people and the insights these relationships have developed. An important first step in using this framework is for an organisation to recognise and affirm its organisational values and knowledge, including being aware of its context and the lives involved. These values will inform processes for governance, program development, recruitment and training of leaders, and strategies for inclusion and community involvement

1. Governance

In youth development organisations, the necessary characteristics or principles, practices and procedures to be covered include:

- affiliation with a state, national or internationally based organisation, which provides clear principles for youth development
- alignment with a set of national or internationally recognised standards
- those national standards linked to things that can be measured
- a focus on particular elements of quality
- ways of recording and assuring quality of activities and outcomes
- procedures for gathering, storing, and accessing basic information from client groups, including who is there, what age, parental consent forms, personal data, allergies, things needed to know, hospital agreement
- responsibilities and expectations
- lines of authority (clear roles)
- processes for input (participatory mechanisms, voice)
- affirmation and reward structure (incremental, honouring each step)
- partnership strategy

Australian Government literature addresses policy frameworks and governance structures for youth development⁸⁹.

Governance and Risk

In a fast-changing world, contemporary young people need to develop their capacities to engage with risk and

uncertainty. One thing being identified by some commentators is that increasingly young people are protected from risk, and prevented from developing skills necessary to engage with risk in their lives. Risk presents a double-edged sword for youth development organisations. Adventure – the experience outside the known world – can be a vital part of what draws young people to activities and central to the dynamics that extend them to grow. Organisations carry the burden of managing real and perceived risks in a climate of increasing risk aversion.

In this context, clear policies and procedures become increasingly important. By way of a good practice guide, the base-line policies leading youth development organisations have in place include:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy (Child Protection Policy, with Police Check/Working With Children Check requirements in line with state legislation)
- Policy for Dealing with a Complaint of Sexual Misconduct
- Internal Grievance and Dispute Resolution Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Whistleblowers Policy
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- HRM Policies (Recruitment, performance management, appraisal, personal development etc)
- Privacy Policy
- Internet and Email Usage Policy
- Communications Policy (identifying who can say what)
- Various relevant finance policies (Audit, depreciation, asset management, payroll etc)
- Volunteer Management

2. Curriculum and Program Design

Volunteers, young leaders and others play an important role in interpreting how the overarching values of a youth development organisation will be implemented. Curriculum and program design is a key point at which these values are implemented. Program leaders also make decisions about activities in youth development programs that are appropriate to their young people, their circumstances and context. The following elements and characteristics are integral to good curriculum and program design:

Elements of curriculum

- Awareness of social context
- Leadership (supporting potential: mentoring, training, peer leadership)
- Communication (interpersonal, group dynamics, technologies)
- Partnerships (peers, cross generational, parents, across units, cross-agency)
- Personal and community wellbeing (awareness, strategies in literacies and language)
- Living with diversity (growing a culture of awareness: gender, race, disability – drawing on their experience)
- Safety and risk management
- Civics and citizenship
- Self-efficacy
- Resilience

Characteristics of curriculum

- Positive development
- Connected to community (parents)
- Inclusive
- Age-appropriate, sequencing in accordance with the various stages of adolescence⁹⁰
- Accounting for different adolescent learning styles, preferences and needs
- Engaging and relevant to experience
- Experiential learning approaches⁹¹
- Accredited where possible⁹²

3. Program Leader Requirements

People are at the heart of all great practice in youth development. This highlights the importance of recruitment, training and keeping good people. Many contemporary youth development organisations work with volunteers. Organisations aspire to equip volunteers for best practice in their roles, and to keep young people safe. Volunteers make a commitment to the organisation from their own or family time. In this context, establishing, managing and reviewing good practice in minimum standard requirements for youth development program leaders or volunteers becomes especially important. Some leading youth and community development organisations recognise the following minimum standards for anyone (paid or unpaid) coming in contact with young people:

- Police screening and suitability assessments
- First Aid qualification
- Child Protection
- Safeguarding Children Awareness

As a good practice benchmark, *Guidelines for Volunteers* have been released by Volunteering Australia⁹³.

It is recognised among leading youth development practitioners that no amount of procedural learning will replace the life experience, capacity for self-reflection and capacity to develop trust with groups and individuals. These qualities are encouraged by mentoring and peer support structures as well as ongoing 'professional development'.

Accordingly, it is useful for youth development organisations to utilise a developmental continuum for staff as well as young people. As with young people, wherever possible this is accredited and transferable.

4. Inclusion

Organisations that engage with young people are increasingly recognising the need to attend and respond to social diversity. This means engaging with young people from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous, female, remote and/or those from low socio-economic backgrounds, as well as with young people with disabilities. In some countries (although not Australia) this is a legal requirement for youth development programs. With their broad reach across the Australian youth population, national organisations are strongly positioned to take a lead in inclusiveness. Best practice in youth development involves having policies and processes in place to benchmark and promote awareness. Understanding barriers and enablers to participation provides new opportunities for community engagement.

5. Community Involvement⁹⁴

Stakeholder participation is emerging as a significant focus in contemporary youth development both in Australia and internationally. To be engaged in best practice in the 21st century means exploring new forms of participatory leadership and input across stakeholder groups. Development of a stakeholder matrix, work with schools or other local agencies, and active communication with parents are all significant elements of sustainable youth development programs.

Some forms of community engagement require re-shaping as communities change. For example, it can be increasingly difficult to sustain youth adult partnerships in a resource-scarce environment⁹⁵, and so these important relationships need extra attention.

One leading international organisation⁹⁶ has developed the following set of questions. They could be used to review the input of young people or other key stakeholder groups:

- What is the strategy for involving these stakeholders?
- How likely are we to use it?
- What is the process for review?
- In what ways does this strategy involve resources to sustain, resource and regenerate the engagement of the stakeholder group?

Recognising the challenges in stakeholder engagement, the possible answers are pitched in open – and progressive – ways:

- a) emerging** (there are resources available and a plan)
- b) established** (young people contribute to a strategic plan)
- c) advanced** (key local partnerships exist to promote active involvement of young people)

Additional contemporary approaches include developing links to local, regional, national and international structures and initiatives for the active involvement of young people, and developing research partnerships to engage stakeholders in a cycle of inquiry.

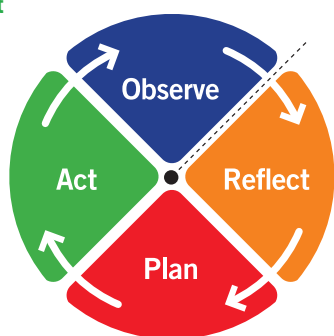
6. A Cycle of Inquiry

In youth development programs, the learning of all involved drives good practice⁹⁷. Organisations’ integrated cycles of evaluation and planning underpin this learning. External evaluation can be extremely useful for establishing national and international reference points or benchmarks. However ongoing internal evaluation of outcomes and processes can be even more important. Both can be useful parts of internal and external communication strategies.

In government and across the youth sector, ‘action research’ approaches are being recognised for their accessibility and their effectiveness in supporting learning for participants, leaders and organisations⁹⁸. Action research approaches involve all stakeholders in evaluation processes.

The inquiry cycle follows this simple logic⁹⁹:

1. **Observe**
2. **Reflect**
3. **Plan**
4. **Act**

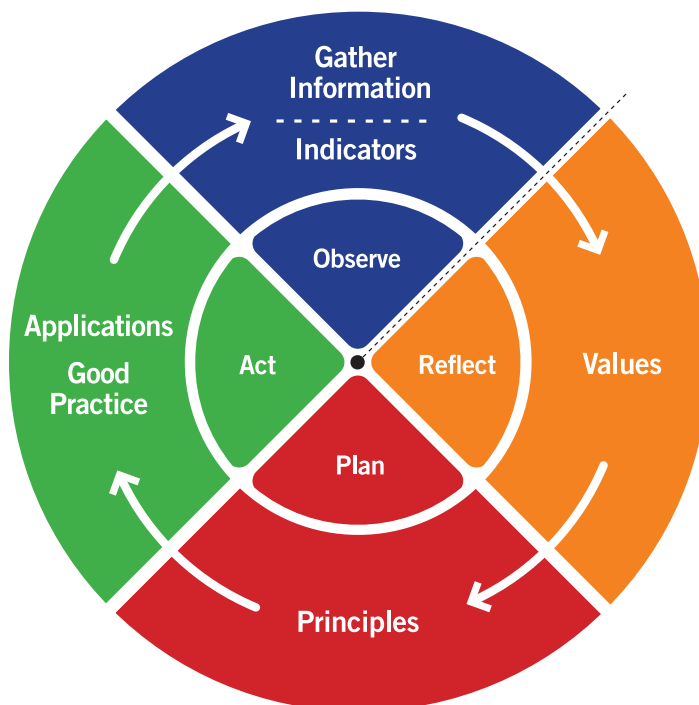


Evaluation Inquiry Cycle

The **Indicators** section of this Youth Development Framework provides a list of significant areas that can readily be explored by youth development organisations using such a cycle.

Because the cycle repeats (eg annually), it provides a progressive and non-judgmental way of consolidating learning from good work, as well as input from trials, accidents, community inputs and unanticipated consequences.

The core elements of the youth development framework: the **values, principles, good practice applications** and **indicators** – can be mapped onto this logic to provide an integrated cycle of inquiry.



YDF Integrated Evaluation Inquiry Cycle

E



Supporting Material

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The following are endnotes directly cited in the text of this discussion document. See the next section for full references of these citations.

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Section E: Supporting material

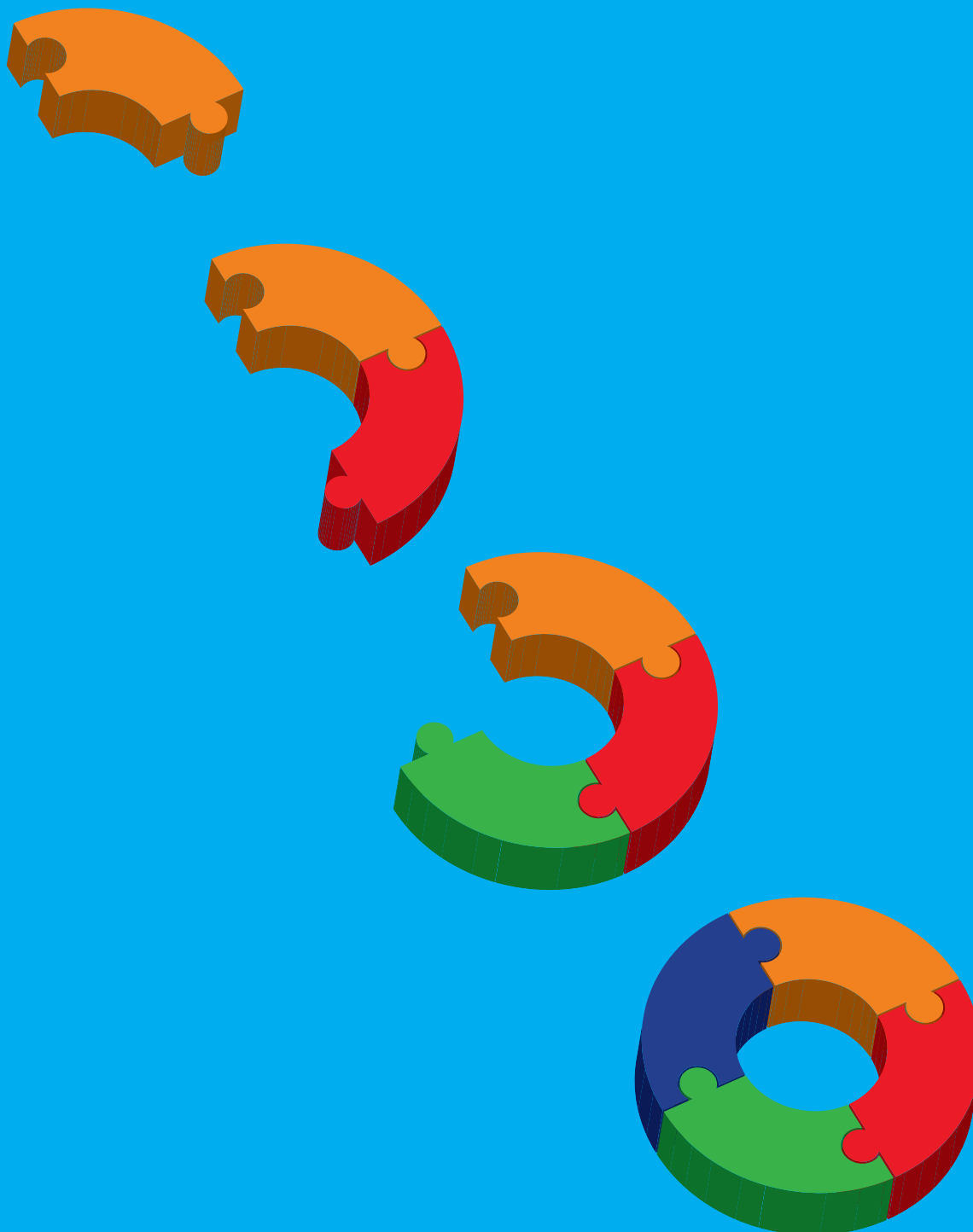
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Generic Youth Development Framework

A Discussion Document



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