

## Good Practice Guidelines

# Youth Development

### Introduction

These good practice guidelines support the learning and development of community and non-profit organisations that reach and engage with young people. Drawing on sector resources and research, they have been developed by the Centre for Social Impact for Rātā Foundation and Foundation North.

### Indicators of Good Practice

<p>Indicator #1: <b>Strengths-based approach</b></p>	<p>A strengths-based approach is one of the keys to helping young people reach their full potential. It focuses on the positive by recognising that all young people have unique strengths, skills, interests, knowledge, experiences and talents, rather than identifying them as a 'problem'.</p> <p>The strengths-based approach aims to understand the 'whole person' – their sense of identity and their aspirations, ideas, skills and future potential – and help them to identify and build on their strengths.</p>
<p>Indicator #2: <b>Approaches that use appropriate cultural frameworks</b></p>	<p>To achieve positive outcomes for Māori, Pacific and other culturally diverse young people, youth development approaches should recognise, value and affirm their cultural identities through incorporating their languages, values, concepts, customs and protocols.</p> <p>Positive youth development for young Māori (rangatahi):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• enables them to engage as Māori</li><li>• supports them to participate in their communities (whānau, marae, iwi and hapū)</li><li>• encourages concepts of collective responsibility</li><li>• helps them to develop their confidence in navigating both Māori and Pākehā settings.</li></ul>
<p>Indicator #3: <b>Approaches that build quality relationships</b></p>	<p>Good-practice youth development enables young people to form safe, high-quality, consistent and long-term relationships with adult role models. The adults both support and challenge the young people, helping them to develop resilience and move towards independence.</p> <p>Relationships between young people and adults, including youth workers, should be respectful, transparent, inclusive, and creative.</p>

Indicator #4:  
**Approaches that support youth participation**

Good-practice youth development supports young people to participate in their communities – and in doing so build positive connections and access the information and support they need. Through sustained participation, they build a platform from which to share their ideas and aspirations, and can develop a greater sense of ownership (agency) over their wellbeing.

Good-practice youth participation:

- has a clear process for youth engagement
- creates youth-inclusive environments
- ensures equitable inclusion for all young people
- encourages young people to participate on their own terms
- supports young people to influence, share and lead decision-making in partnership with adults.

Effective youth participation gives young people opportunities to make decisions on issues that affect them and their peers, and shows them that their civic participation is valued.

Indicator #5:  
**Building connections**

Young people’s development is enhanced through positive social connections with their peers, families/whānau, cultures, communities, schools, workplaces and institutions.

Good-practice youth development helps young people to forge these connections and strengthen their sense of belonging through programmes and activities that:

- engage young people alongside their families/whānau
- connect young people to a range of social environments and interest groups
- connect or reconnect young people to their culture, marae, iwi and hapū
- connect or reconnect young people to education, training and employment.

Good practice also involves working with others to design and deliver integrated programmes that enable young people to access the right services and support quickly and easily – particularly where they have multiple or high needs.

Indicator #6:  
**Appropriate organisational policies, procedures and practices**

Good-practice youth development can also apply to an organisation’s policies, programmes and ways of working. Organisations should:

- have clear purposes, objectives and values that together provide a strengths-based framework for their engagement with young people
- have systems to keep young people safe, physically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually. These include appropriate vetting processes and child protection policies in line with the Children’s Act 2014
- ensure that youth workers are safe, supervised and supported with self-care
- support youth worker training and development
- work in ways that uphold the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi
- encourage staff to engage in reflective practice
- seek feedback from young people on their experiences with their programmes/ services
- shape and re-shape programme design and ways of working based on feedback from young people and other appropriate stakeholders.

## Demonstrating Good Practice

When seeking funding for youth development initiatives, community organisations should describe how the proposed initiatives align with the six indicators of good practice. Many funders expect to see evidence of:

- how the organisation identified the need for the initiative (that is, which young people it will include and why)
- how young people have been involved in shaping the initiative, and their opportunities for further participation
- how the initiative takes a strengths-based approach and is culturally appropriate to the targeted young people
- how the initiative connects to other services, programmes and communities
- whether the organisation has policies, procedures and practices that indicate good-practice youth work
- how the organisation plans to improve the initiative using young people's feedback.

### Key Questions:

#### Can We Strengthen our Youth Development Practice?

- Is our organisation familiar with the principles of effective youth development in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa?
- Have we considered how we meet the needs of diverse young people?
- Are we providing young people with safe, quality and consistent adult relationships?
- Are young people able to influence, share or lead decision-making in our programmes/organisation?
- Are our youth workers trained, supervised and supported to practise self-care?
- Do we have feedback mechanisms for young people taking part in our activities/programmes?
- Are we connecting young people effectively to other services, activities and communities?

---

## Key Resources for More Information

- 1 **The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa** (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002):  
[www.myd.govt.nz/resources-and-reports/publications/youth-development-strategy-aotearoa.html](http://www.myd.govt.nz/resources-and-reports/publications/youth-development-strategy-aotearoa.html)
  - 2 **Positive Youth Development Aotearoa** (Wayne Francis Charitable Trust, 2011):  
[www.wfct.org.nz/positive-youth-development/](http://www.wfct.org.nz/positive-youth-development/)
  - 3 **SCOPE Standards for Youth Work Organisations** (SCOPE Aotearoa Charitable Trust):  
[www.scopeaotearoa.org.nz/review-process/the-standards/](http://www.scopeaotearoa.org.nz/review-process/the-standards/)
  - 4 **Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand, Second Edition** (Ara Taiohi, 2011):  
[www.arataiohi.org.nz/career/code-of-ethics/](http://www.arataiohi.org.nz/career/code-of-ethics/)
  - 5 **UN World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement** (United Nations, 2016):  
[www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2016/07/world-youth-report-on-youth-civic-engagement/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2016/07/world-youth-report-on-youth-civic-engagement/)
  - 6 **Circle of Courage®** (Reclaiming Youth International):  
[www.starr.org/training/youth/aboutcircleofcourage](http://www.starr.org/training/youth/aboutcircleofcourage)
-

Case study:

# Youth Development: Good Practice



PHAB Pasifika is a community group that enables Pacific youth (with and without disabilities) to take part in positive and life-enhancing social and recreational opportunities. It is all about “giving young people with Pacific Island heritage the confidence to explore their options through providing culturally appropriate opportunities for fun, inclusion and social participation”.

PHAB demonstrates effective youth development practice through:

- co-designing activities with youth members, who are “kept at the forefront of any decision-making processes”
- its strengths-based approach – helping young people to gain skills, build self-reliance and develop in ways that are meaningful to them
- enabling young people to build positive social networks with their peers and meaningful relationships with adults
- providing culturally relevant environments in which young people can explore and develop their identities.

For more information on PHAB Pasifika, visit: [phab.org.nz/pasifika-2](http://phab.org.nz/pasifika-2)

This good practice resource was developed in 2019 by: