

Civic Engagement & Youth Leadership

Developed from *Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed* by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Stepping Up is a strategic framework from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services that strengthens the Government of Ontario's commitment to young people. *Stepping Up* consists of seven themes and 20 outcomes that help inform and align the work of service providers, community groups etc. with research and what youth themselves believe they need in order to succeed. Civic Engagement & Youth Leadership is one of the framework's seven themes and has three associated outcomes.

Why Civic Engagement & Youth Leadership?

Young Ontarians have a lot to offer their communities. We know that better outcomes are achieved when youth are heard and involved. It is important to ensure that all young people in Ontario have the opportunity to learn life and leadership skills so they can be engaged, contribute to issues they care about and participate in decisions that affect them.

What outcomes do we want to see for Ontario youth?



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Ontario youth play a role in informing the decisions that affect them.



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Ontario youth are engaged in their communities.



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Ontario youth leverage their assets to address social issues.

Why is this important?

We know that young people have innovative ideas and opinions, and they have much to contribute. We need to engage Ontario's youth, encouraging them to contribute to their communities and help shape the decisions that affect them. It is also clear that encouraging civic engagement and giving young people leadership opportunities helps them build capacity and life skills. Giving young people more of a voice in government, policy and decision-making builds their capacity while providing platforms for youth to lead change and take action. Youth participation broadens the discussion and enhances decisions about civic policies and programs.

16 / 20 How can we help Ontario youth be heard?

We can help Ontario youth be heard by:

- **Informing young people and others about youth rights** by respecting the rights of youth by understanding the individual and social factors that can limit young people's participation.
- **Equipping youth voice:** The more capacity young people have, the more likely they are to participate. Having a sense of duty is one of the most powerful incentives for turning out to vote and education makes a significant difference to whether young Canadians vote or not.
- **Creating opportunities for those less likely to participate:** We know that some youth are less likely to use their voice in traditional ways than others. By creating more and flexible mechanisms for young people to have their say, we can achieve better results and ensure that decision-makers hear from more young people.

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How can we support youth to be engaged in their communities?

We can support youth to be engaged in their communities by:

- **Engaging youth in ways that work for them:** To be effective, strategies to engage young people to participate and lead should reflect their availability, skills and interests. This may involve reaching out to youth at certain times of the day, or by using youth-friendly engagement tools such as social media.
- **Ensuring young people know about opportunities:** Youth are much more likely to volunteer when they have been asked or invited to. Taking advantage of youth friendly communication tools can help ensure youth know about opportunities.
- **Nurturing participatory values:** We can nurture young people’s sense of civic responsibility by helping them to understand their assets and the ways that they can contribute.

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How can we understand and harness the contributions of youth?

We can understand and harness the contributions of youth by:

- **Being receptive to youth ideas:** Individuals, communities and organizations should listen and respond thoughtfully to youth ideas, and collaborate with young people wherever possible to make change happen.
- **Supporting youth-led innovation:** Investing in youth-led innovation can have significant benefits for both young people and their communities. Supporting youth-led innovation involves empowering more young people to lead and act as agents of social change in their communities.

For more resources related to *Stepping Up*, don't forget to visit the eXchange!










The eXchange is YouthREX’s online learning community. You can visit it anytime and find hundreds of intentionally curated and created resources focused on youth work, all in one place.

How can a youth program measure these outcomes?

YouthREX has curated measures directly related to the theme of **Civic Engagement and Youth Leadership**. Each one is youth-friendly and open access, making it easy to use when it comes to evaluating youth programs!

You can find YouthREX’s measures [here](#).

Each measure includes the following information:

-  An Overview
-  Developers
-  Subscales
-  Good to Know
-  Stepping Up Theme(s) & Outcome(s)
-  Psychometrics
-  Target Populations
-  Learn More
-  Length & How it is Measured

Learn More

This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets focused on the Government of Ontario’s **Stepping Up** framework. Check out the other factsheets in the series by clicking on the links below:

- [An Introduction to Stepping Up](#)
- [Health and Wellness](#)
- [Strong, Supportive Friends and Families](#)
- [Education, Training and Apprenticeships](#)
- [Employment and Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Diversity, Social Inclusion and Safety](#)
- [Coordinated and Youth-Friendly Communities](#)