

Authentic Youth Engagement in Policy Framework

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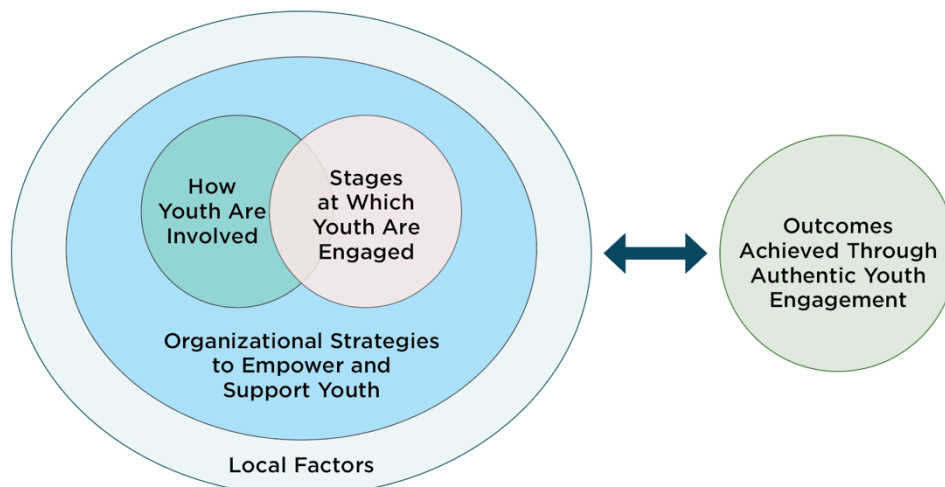
Through the Authentic Youth Engagement in Policy Project, Child Trends and the project’s Research Group composed of youth and adult representatives tested and refined existing models of youth engagement in the policy process, resulting in the **Authentic Youth Engagement in Policy Framework** (“the Framework”) presented below. The Framework is grounded in the research of Samantha Holquistⁱ and Julie Petrokubi,ⁱⁱ informed by the expertise of the project’s Research Group, and refined through a qualitative study profiling five organizations that engage youth in their policy efforts. For more information on the study and findings, see the [Authentic Youth Engagement in Policy Project](#).

The Framework is organized around a series of questions detailing the following:

- How are youth involved?
- At what stages are youth engaged?
- How do organizations empower and support youth?
- What local factors help or hinder authentic youth engagement?
- What outcomes are achieved through authentic youth engagement?

While presented in a linear manner, the Framework is not intended to represent a linear or static approach. The interconnections between the Framework components can be seen in Figure 1 below. Each organization takes a unique approach to authentic youth engagement, and we hope the Framework serves as a tool for readers to examine their own work and opportunities to expand and support authentic youth engagement in the policy process.

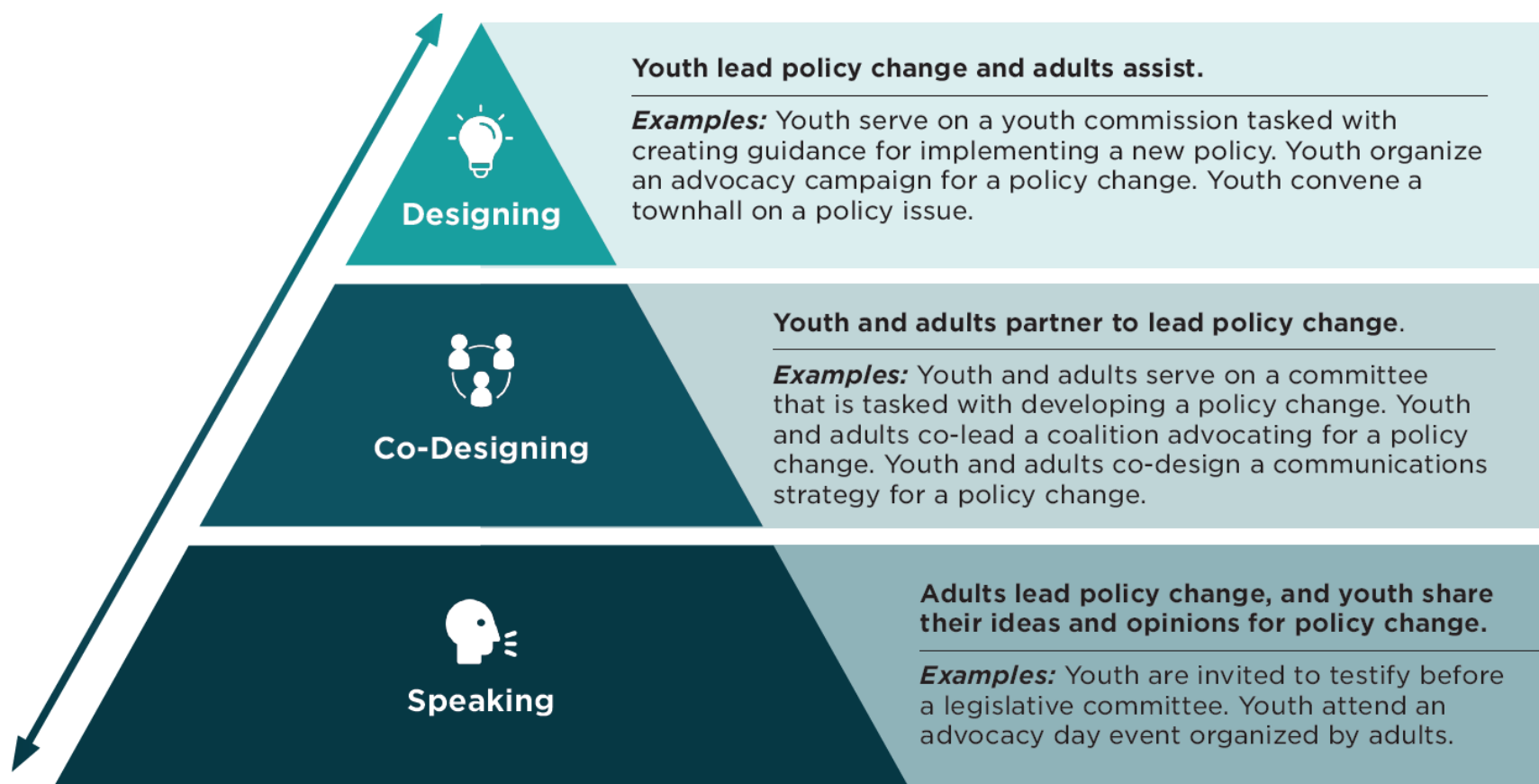
Figure 1. Authentic Youth Engagement in Policy Framework



How Are Youth Involved?

Youth may play many different roles in the policy process as they share their lived expertise. Their roles may continuously shift over time and depending on the activity. The Framework organizes youth roles into three categories: **speaking**, **co-designing**, and **designing**. These roles are visualized in a triangle to reflect that youth often start in speaking roles and—with scaffolding, support, and intentional organizational shifts in leadership from adults to youth—move into co-design and design roles over time.ⁱⁱⁱ

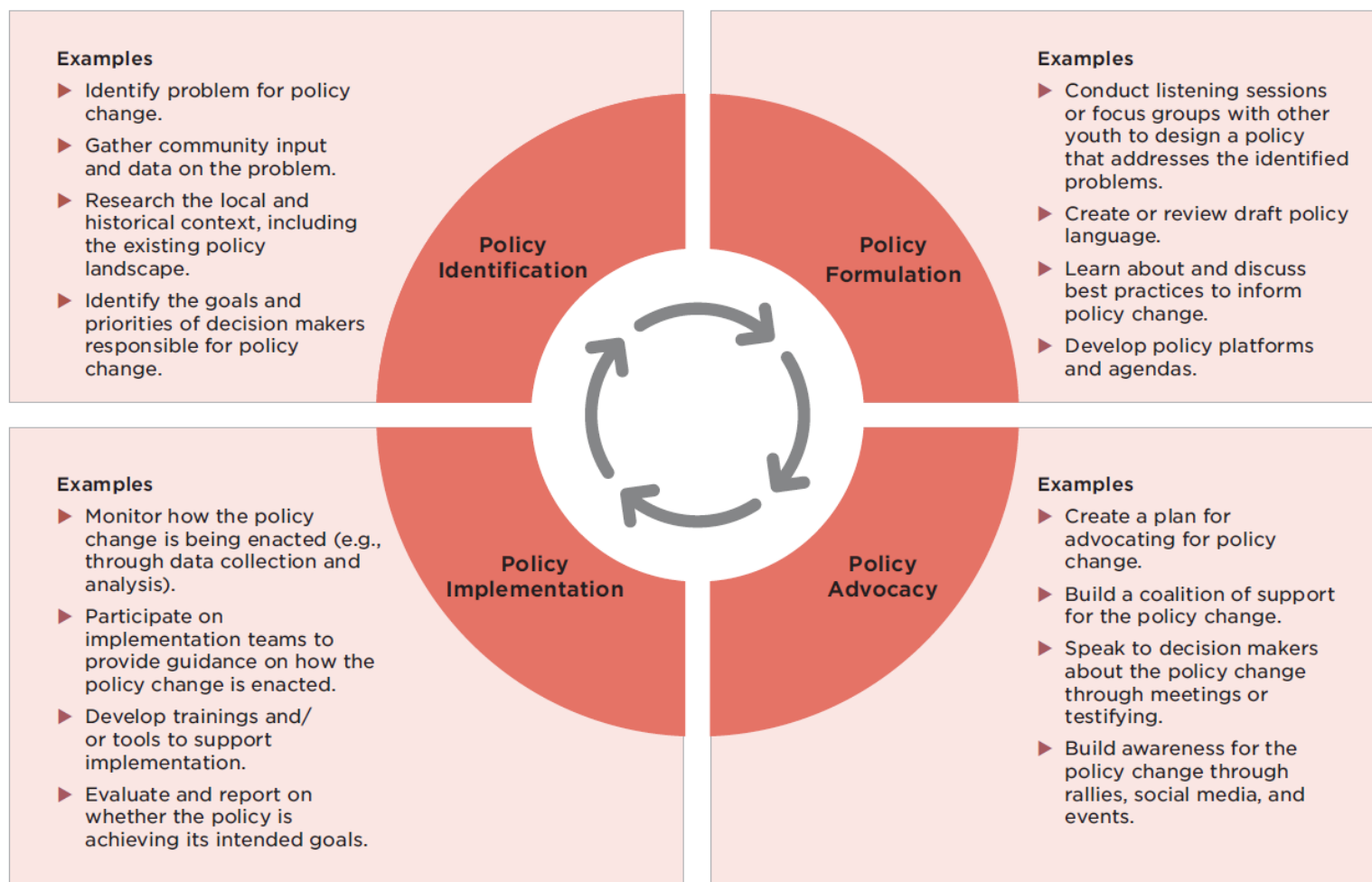
Figure 2. How Are Youth Involved?



At What Stages Are Youth Engaged?

Youth may be engaged in the policy process at different stages. The Framework organizes the policy process into four stages: **policy identification**, **policy formulation**, **policy advocacy**, and **policy implementation**. While the Framework presents the stages of the policy process in this order, policy change often does not occur in a linear manner.

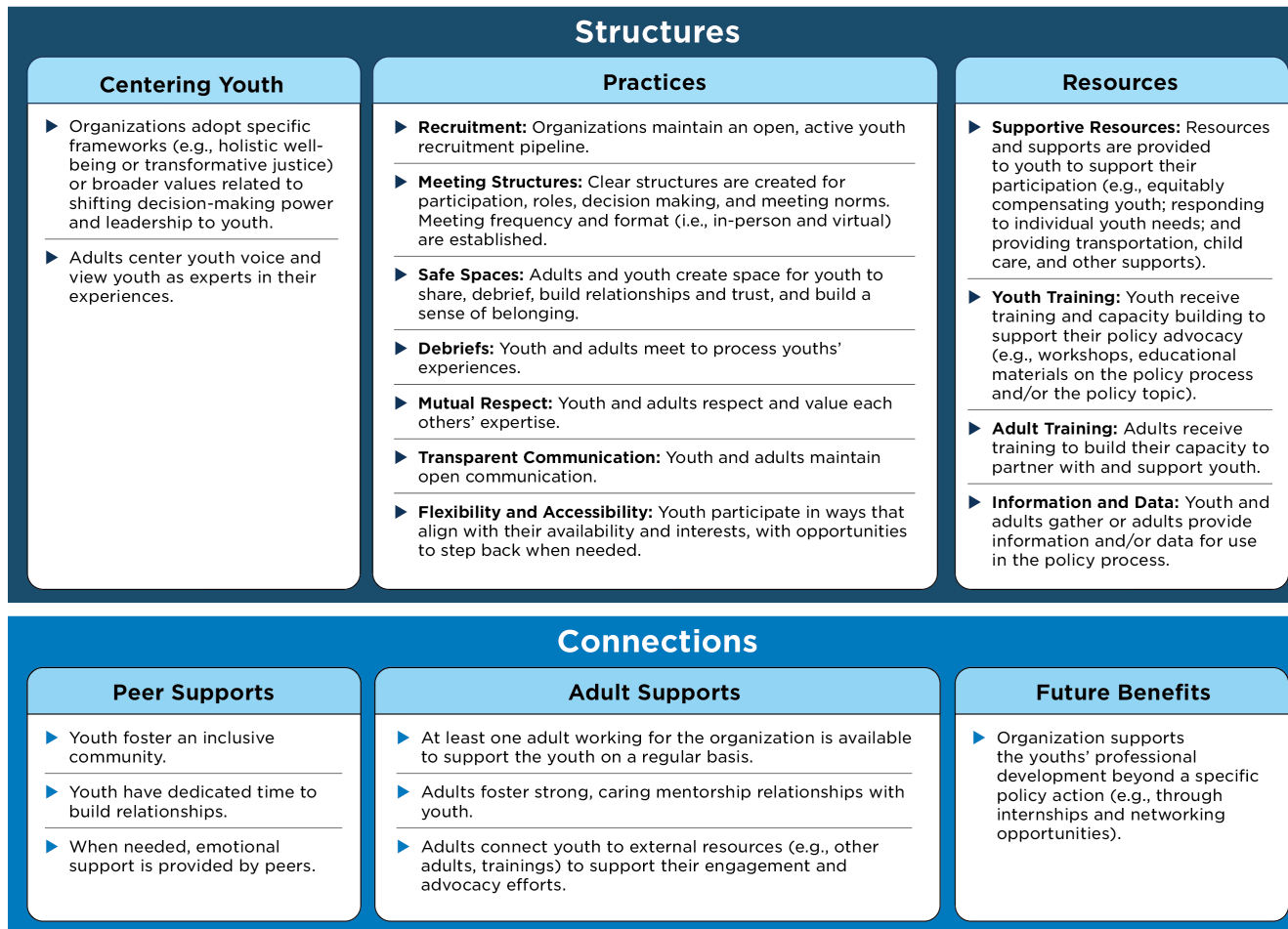
Figure 3. At What Stages Are Youth Engaged?



How Do Organizations Support and Empower Youth?

Organizations adopt strategies to empower and support youth in the policy process. The Framework groups these strategies into two categories: **structures** that support youth engagement (i.e., how organizations conduct their work) and **connections** that organizations facilitate between youth and their peers, adults, and future benefits.

Figure 4. How Do Organizations Support and Empower Youth?



What Local Factors Help or Hinder Authentic Youth Engagement?

Local contextual factors include the local environmental characteristics (e.g., political, geographical, historical) that help or hinder authentic youth engagement. The Framework organizes contextual factors into six categories: **stakeholder and partner engagement**, **political landscape**, **history of youth engagement**, **geography and infrastructure**, **historical local and systemic inequities**, and **philanthropic/private support**.

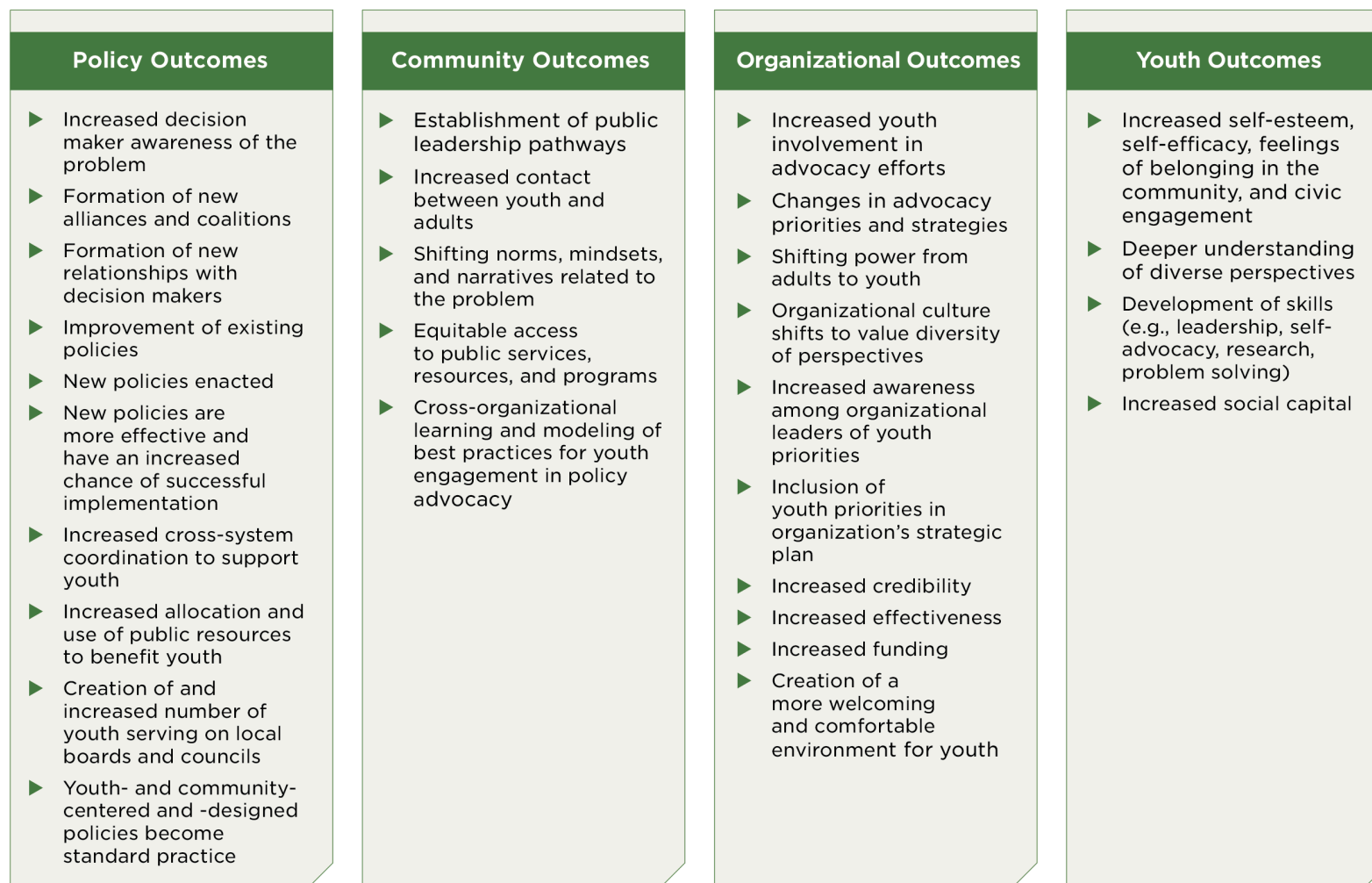
Figure 5. What Local Factors Help or Hinder Authentic Youth Engagement?



What Outcomes Are Achieved Through Authentic Youth Engagement?

Authentic youth engagement leads to outcomes at multiple levels. The Framework organizes these outcomes into four categories: **policy outcomes**, **community outcomes**, **organizational outcomes**, and **youth outcomes**.

Figure 6. What Outcomes Are Achieved Through Authentic Youth Engagement?



Acknowledgments

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References

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ⁱⁱ Petrokubi, J. (2014). Building bridges, making change, and inspiring engagement: A case study of youth-adult partnership in a local government youth commission. Retrieved from <https://dp.la/item/82db9fd32d5e368168d68c2acc4b9f1f>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Holquist, S. (2019). Student voice in education policy: Understanding student participation in state-level K-12 education policy making. Retrieved from the University Digital Conservancy, <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/206658>.