

Incentivizing Youth – Reflective Guide

A frequent oversight in youth programs is the failure to provide incentives that genuinely meet the needs and priorities of young participants. This lack of thoughtful incentives can signal to youth that their broader life circumstances and challenges are not fully recognized or valued. Correctly identifying and offering the right incentives not only supports youth in participating more fully but also can help to address ongoing disparities that youth may face.

Questions for YWC Facilitators

The following questions aim to guide facilitators in critically examining and improving their selection processes to foster inclusivity and equal opportunity in youth development programs.

1. Identifying Relevant Incentives:

- What are the primary barriers that prevent youth from participating fully in our program?
- How can we identify which incentives are most valued by our youth participants?

2. Assessment of Needs:

- Have you conducted surveys or focus groups with youth to understand their needs and preferences regarding incentives?
- How often are these assessments updated to reflect changing circumstances or new cohorts of youth?

3. Evaluating the Impact of Incentives:

- What methods will you use to evaluate whether the incentives provided are effective in increasing participation and engagement?
- How will you measure the impact of these incentives on overcoming the specific SDOH factors affecting your participants?

4. Collaboration with Community Resources:

- What local community resources (e.g., transportation services, healthcare providers) could be partnered with to provide necessary incentives like transportation tokens or medical care?
- How can these partnerships be developed and maintained to support the ongoing needs of the youth?

5. Budgeting for Incentives:

- How is the budget allocated for incentives, and is it sufficient to cover the needs identified?
- Are there ways to increase funding or resources through grants, donations, or community partnerships to support these incentives?

6. Feedback Mechanisms for Improvement:

- How do you gather feedback from youth about the usefulness and adequacy of the incentives provided?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that feedback leads to timely adjustments in the incentive offerings?

To effectively address the challenge of providing relevant incentives in youth programs, facilitators can adopt several strategies to ensure that their offerings resonate with the needs of young participants and genuinely support their engagement. Here are some practical tips to guide facilitators in this process:

References

Government of British Columbia (2016). Youth Engagement Resource Tool Kit Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/data-monitoring-quality-assurance/information-for-service-providers/youth-engagement-toolkit>

Ramey, H. L., Lawford, H. L., Rose-Krasnor, L., Freeman, J., & Lanctot, J. (2018). Engaging diverse Canadian youth in youth development programs: Program quality and community engagement. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 94, 20–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.09.023>

School Mental Health Ontario. (2024). Student Engagement Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://smho-smso.ca/online-resources/student-engagement-toolkit/>
National Network for Youth (2023). Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Youth Engagement. Retrieved from <https://nn4youth.org/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-youth-engagement/>

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health. (2021). Quality standard for youth engagement. Ottawa, ON. Retrieved from www.cymh.ca/ye_standard

Law, D., Valli, M., & Zhang, C. (2017). Engaging millennials: Promoting community health through dynamic student-led initiatives. In *Youth engagement in health promotion* (Vol. 1, No. 3)