



**COUNCILS, COMMITTEES,
AND YAGS (OH MY!):
ON FORMAL YOUTH
LEADERSHIP**

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN YOUTH AFFAIRS COALITION (AYAC)

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) is Australia's national peak body representing the needs and interests of young people aged 12-25 years, and the wider youth sector. AYAC is committed to Australia being a nation where young people are respected and have the power to lead change for a better world.

AYAC's work involves policy development, advocacy, research, consultation, information dissemination, and capability building. Our approach is informed by the insights of our members – including young people, academics, state and territory youth peaks, and youth-led organisations – ensuring that policy-makers and the community understand the impacts of how policies and decision-making affect young people and the youth sector.



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We would also like to acknowledge that this report builds on the vital work of state and territory youth peaks, who labour tirelessly to support young people and the youth sector.

Thank you to our primary funder, the Australian Government Office for Youth, for supporting this research.



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. This report was prepared on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

As the national peak body for young people, we acknowledge First Nations young people as the future custodians of this land. We recognise the urgent need to actively engage in the essential work toward reconciliation and provide platforms for First Nations young people to lead positive change. AYAC remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart and stays true to its values of supporting the leadership and self-determination of First Nations young people.

Always was, always will be.

Executive summary

Youth leadership programs offer structured platforms for young people to develop essential skills, gain confidence, and actively contribute to their communities. By providing opportunities for young people to lead and participate in decision-making through formal youth leadership initiatives, we nurture their potential and – when principles of youth empowerment are implemented with fidelity – amplify their voices in shaping the world around them.

This report delves into the critical aspects of youth leadership, aiming to identify elements of effective programs, and current deficiencies that must be addressed to successfully meet the evolving needs of young people. By synthesising insights from best practice research, feedback from young people, and recommendations from existing programs, it offers a comprehensive framework for designing and implementing youth leadership initiatives. The primary focus is on formal youth leadership, defined here as young people taking on prescribed roles and responsibilities within organisations and communities – such as student representative councils, youth advisory committees, and youth parliaments – which are often situated within a structure of “strict institutional framing and official governing” (Määttä & Aaltonen, 2016, p. 161). However, many of the report’s findings and recommendations are broadly applicable across the spectrum of youth leadership opportunities.

Youth leadership is a multifaceted concept encompassing a range of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills such as communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence. Key findings highlight the importance of clarity and cohesion in youth leadership program design, emphasising the need for clearly defined goals and evidence-informed approaches. This report advocates for a holistic framework that integrates program content, delivery methods, and program culture, aligning closely with the needs and aspirations of young people.

In addition to generalist youth leadership competencies, a focus on development of professional skills and political literacy, combined with comprehensive orientation and ongoing support, is deemed essential for empowering young leaders taking up formal leadership opportunities. Inclusion and equity also emerge as critical imperatives in youth leadership development. Programs – both formal and informal – must address power imbalances, involve diverse voices in program design, and ensure equitable access, so that all young people can benefit from the positive outcomes associated with participation.

Further, the report underscores the significance of establishing alumni associations as a means of meeting future youth leadership needs. Mechanisms such as these foster ongoing engagement and mentorship opportunities, support the sustainability of youth leadership programs, and have the potential to amplify benefits of program participation, both for alumni and future cohorts of young leaders.

Young people are keen to participate in formal decision-making mechanisms, but they want support and development opportunities to help them engage in a meaningful manner. They also, rightly, want assurance that the opportunities offered to them are meaningful, and that their policy advice will be acted upon. By embracing the principles outlined in this report, organisations – including government – can create inclusive, empowering, and impactful youth leadership programs that contribute to positive social change and meet the diverse needs of future generations.

Summary of findings and recommendations

Conceptualising youth leadership

Key findings

- All young people are capable of developing and exhibiting leadership qualities.
- A dismissive attitude towards young people by some adults can cause harm to young people.
- To participate effectively in formal youth leadership opportunities, a broad matrix of generalist leadership skills plus specialist skills and knowledge is required.

Key recommendations

- Organisations should clearly communicate – and demonstrate – a youth-centred approach.
- Formal youth leadership programs should build on generalist leadership skills and include training in relevant professional skills and upskilling in political literacy, to support young people's effective participation.
- The youth sector should continue to advocate for cultural change to address negative attitudes towards young people. A coordinated approach should be explored to amplify and strengthen advocacy efforts.

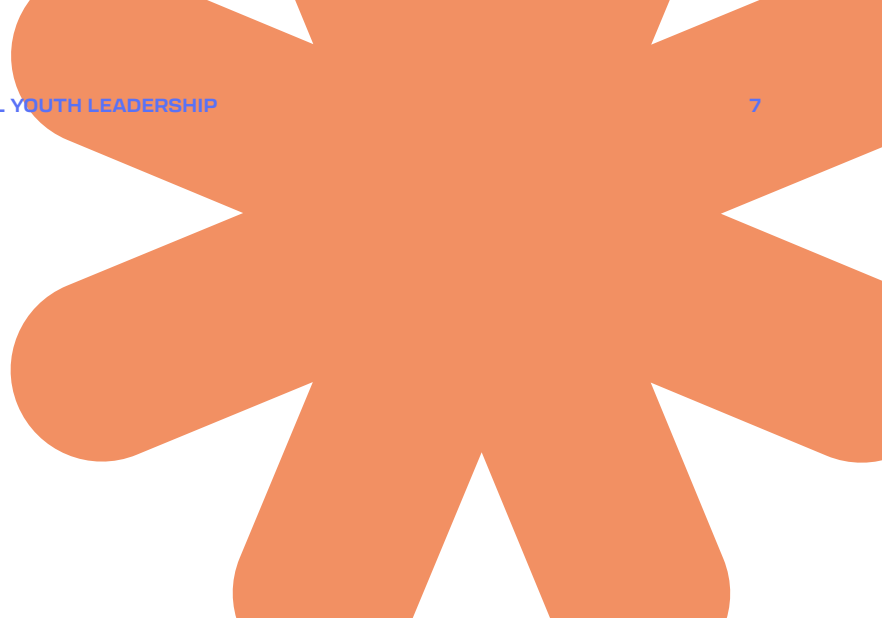
Effective youth leadership programs

Key findings

- Effective youth leadership opportunities focus on interpersonal and intrapersonal skill development, as well as on cultivating ethical standards in leadership.
- Skills developed through effective youth leadership programs have broad applicability beyond leadership – including study, employment, and community settings, and in interpersonal relationships.
- Participation in effective youth leadership programs can act as a protective factor for young people, particularly in relation to their mental health and wellbeing.
- Effective youth leadership programs benefit not only participants, but also organisations and the wider community.

Key recommendations

- Youth leadership opportunities should be considered and cohesive, with clear program goals and objectives.
- Organisations offering youth leadership opportunities should pay attention to program content, method of delivery, and program culture to be effective.



Meeting future youth leadership needs

Key findings

- ✿ Many young people want to develop their leadership skills but have not previously engaged in any opportunities, often due to systemic barriers.
- ✿ Lack of trust in government dissuades many young people from taking up formal youth leadership opportunities.
- ✿ Alumni associations are an important means through which future youth leadership needs can be met for participants and organisations alike.

Key recommendations

- ✿ Organisations offering youth leadership programs must take active steps to ensure equitable access, so that all young people can benefit from these opportunities.
- ✿ Youth leadership programs should be genuinely youth-led, co-designed, and based on principles of youth empowerment.
- ✿ In order to (re-)build trust with potential participants of formal youth leadership initiatives, organisations must commit to acting on young people's input. In cases where this is not possible, organisations should be transparent about why.
- ✿ A comprehensive onboarding procedure should be developed to support young people moving in to formal leadership roles. Ongoing wrap-around support may also be needed to optimise participation.
- ✿ Monitoring, evaluation, and review processes should be incorporated into formal youth leadership programs. These processes must be inclusive of youth voice.
- ✿ To assist in meeting future youth leadership needs, organisations should establish an alumni association for past program participants.
- ✿ Alumni association activities should be informed by an alumni engagement plan, co-designed and co-led, adequately resourced, and aligned with both organisational and alumni needs.

Introduction

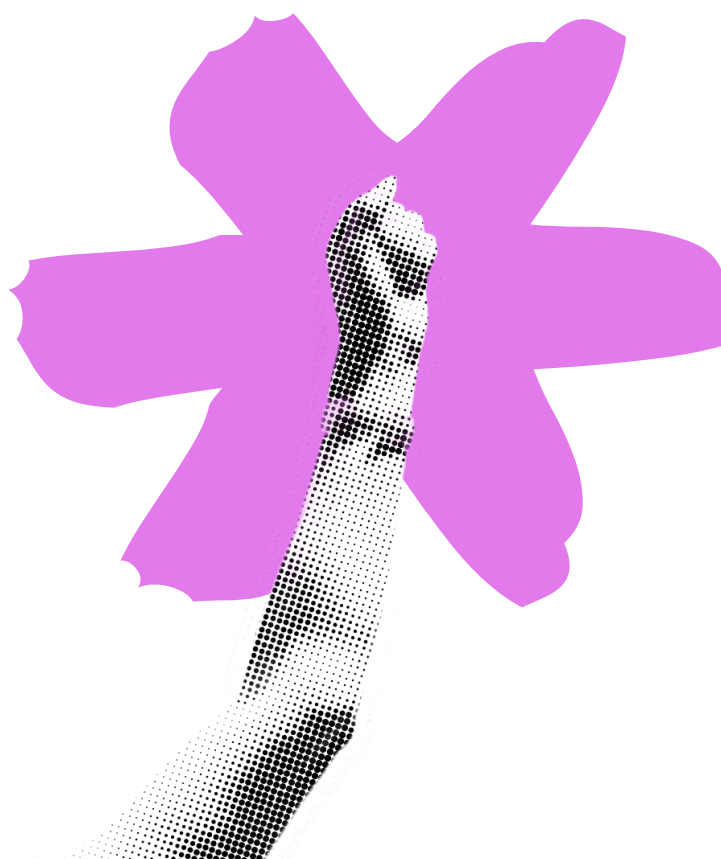
The importance of youth leadership development cannot be overstated. It provides significant benefits not only to the young people who participate but also to the communities in which they live and work. Across Australia, there are numerous youth leadership programs designed to support various cohorts of young people, each varying in location, purpose, and target demographic. However, while program specificity can be a strength, it can also mean that many young people who are interested in leadership development – but who don't meet program criteria, or don't fit prevailing ideals of a 'youth leader', or who have their own motivations for development that don't align with program goals – miss out. Despite the existence of many generalist and specialist youth leadership programs, many young people from marginalised groups also still find themselves excluded, intentionally or otherwise, from these opportunities.

After a period of almost ten years without government funding, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) received a small grant from the Australian Government in 2020 to implement two key projects. As a result of this renewed commitment to youth engagement at the federal level, there has been an increase in activity from both the government and AYAC to consult and engage young people in decision-making. This is an important affirmation of young people's right to have a say on issues that impact them – a right that is enshrined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN General Assembly, 1989).

The first project that AYAC received funding for was the Young Leaders and Advocates Fellowship. The purpose of the Fellowship was to bring together a youth stakeholder pool to represent young people in decision-making forums (including federal government), provide policy advice to AYAC, and act as youth spokespeople. To support these objectives, AYAC provided training in media engagement, facilitation, communication, policy development, and advocacy. The first cohort concluded in December 2021.

The second project was to establish the Australian Government's Youth Steering Committee (YSC), in partnership with the Office for Youth (OfY). The main purpose of the YSC is to advise the Australian Government on issues relating to young people. The first cohort of the YSC, recruited in 2022, worked closely with OfY and the Minister for Youth, The Hon Dr Anne Aly, to co-design the Australian Government's youth engagement strategy, *Engage! A strategy to include young people in the decisions we make*. They also provided input into other key government priorities, including the *National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality*, the work of the Net Zero Taskforce, the Health Department's vaping policy, and the *Australian Universities Accord*.

As a sector leader, it is important that AYAC sets an example for the wider community by providing meaningful and considered youth participation opportunities for young people in Australia. A key part of this is ensuring that AYAC's organisational mechanisms for youth consultation and participation are robust, and that we provide leadership development pathways to



a diverse spectrum of young people, to enhance their input into a broad range of opportunities. As the inaugural term of the YSC draws to a close, AYAC is particularly interested in learning from the expertise and experience of this group. This will support AYAC's planning for future youth leadership opportunities, as well as provide input into future iterations of the YSC.

This report is therefore situated at a pivotal moment in Australian youth affairs, and provides an opportunity to explore how both the youth sector and government can ensure that our youth leadership opportunities are inclusive, empowering, and impactful; that they contribute to positive social change; and that they meet the diverse needs of both current and future generations.

Research questions

This report delves into the critical aspects of youth leadership, aiming to identify elements of effective programs, and current deficiencies that must be addressed to successfully meet the evolving needs of young people. By synthesising insights from best practice research, feedback from young people, and recommendations from existing programs, the objective is to present a framework for designing and implementing effective youth leadership initiatives.

More specifically, through this project AYAC aims to understand:

- What is youth leadership?
- What 'works' in youth leadership?
- How might we best meet future youth leadership needs?



Methodology

Environmental scan and literature review

A brief environmental scan was conducted in February and March of 2024. A literature review was conducted between February and April of 2024.

Youth Steering Committee consultation

Consultation was conducted with members of the Youth Steering Committee (YSC) on 19 March 2024 in Canberra. There were ten YSC members present – three young men, six young women, and one non-binary young person. Two additional committee members, a young woman and a young man, subsequently provided written feedback via email. The committee is comprised of young people from diverse backgrounds, with members aged between 14 and 25 years at the time of the consultation. All states and territories were represented at the consultation, except for the Northern Territory. The consultation was conducted via a series of small-group and whole-group discussions and activities.

Youth survey

Young people around Australia were invited to complete an online survey on youth leadership. The survey was open from 28 March 2024 to 19 April 2024. The body of the survey comprised 6 questions that were presented as a mix of open and closed questions. Respondents were asked to provide basic demographic information at the start of the survey and were invited to provide further information at the end of the survey, if they chose to, to support a comparative analysis of the experiences of different groups. Less than 1% of respondents chose not to provide this supplementary demographic information.

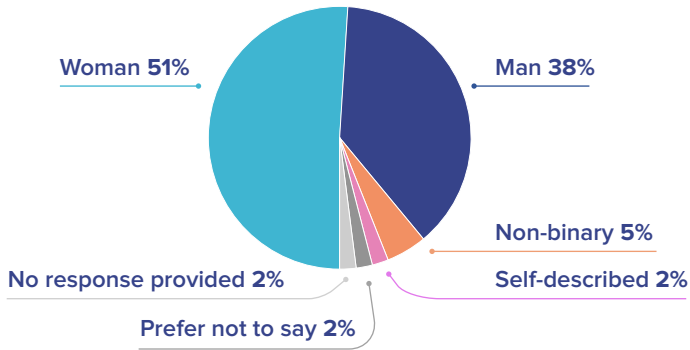
In total, we received 640 survey responses. Once invalid responses were excluded (e.g. residing outside Australia, completed by bots), we were left with 366 surveys. A demographic breakdown of respondents is provided on the next page.



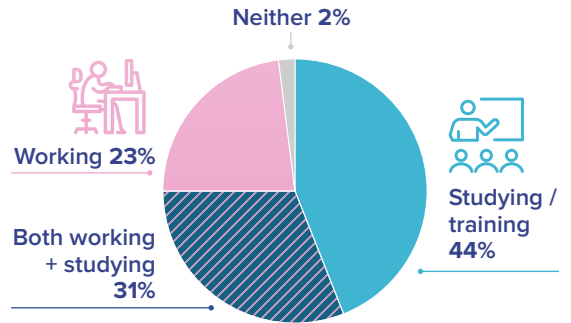
Youth survey responses: demographic breakdown

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

Gender

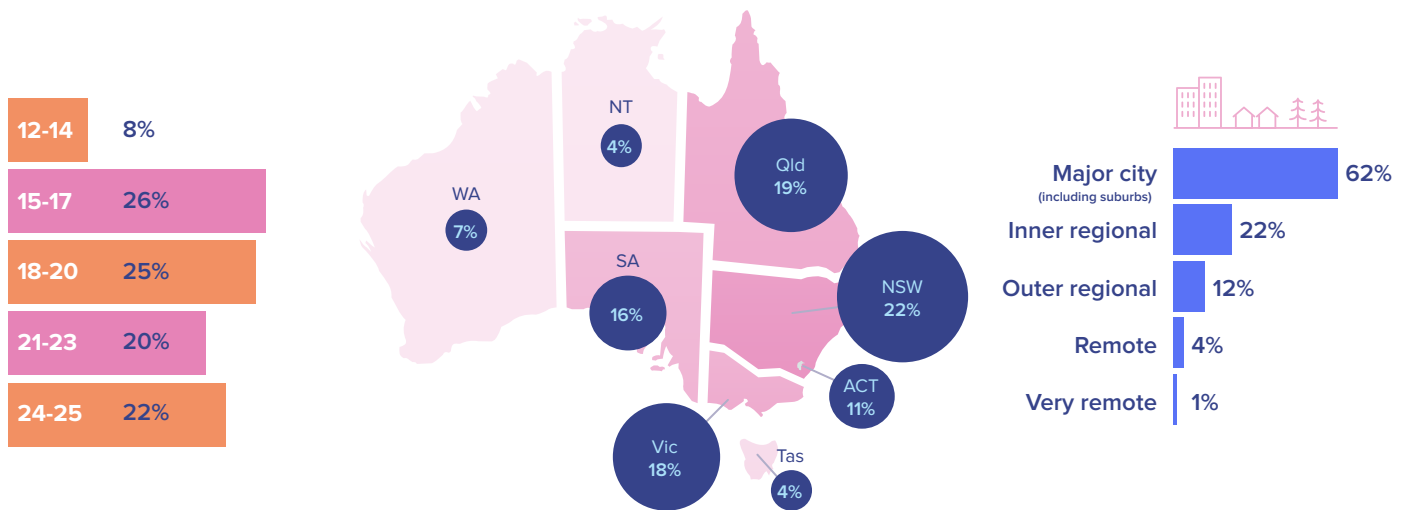


Study + work status



Age

Location & Regionality



In addition, 22% of survey respondents identified as having a disability, 24% were from culturally or racially marginalised groups, 16% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 36% were from the LGBTQIA+ community.

Report limitations

While there was a suitable level of diversity among respondents, it should be noted that a convenience sample was used for the youth leadership survey. The results may therefore not represent the experiences of all young people.

AYAC also acknowledges the extensive experience of many sector-leading organisations in running youth leadership programs. Unfortunately, the scope and timeframe available did not allow for sector interviews and input into this report. Further work to explore this in more detail would be beneficial.

Discussion

1. What is youth leadership?

What the literature says

One thing that seems to be broadly agreed upon in the literature on youth leadership is that there is no clear-cut, universal definition of youth leadership (Metzger, 2007; Mortensen, 2016; Puxley & Chapin, 2021; TerMaat-McGrath, 2010). Various, it has been described as the ability to influence others, in a socially and ethically responsible manner, and help them act on their own beliefs (Mortensen, 2016); the “acquisition and demonstration of interpersonal intelligence...the ability to communicate a vision and inspire action, and the necessary subskills for accomplishing those endeavors” (Metzger, 2007, p. 11); and the “process of developing social skills and being involved in community action, often related to social inequity” (Puxley & Chapin, 2021, p. 1064). To further muddy the waters, terms such as ‘leadership’, ‘participation’, and ‘engagement’ have often been used interchangeably (Corney et al., 2022).

Within the literature, there is also somewhat of a split between researchers who view young people as *current* leaders within their communities and as possessing valuable expertise in their own right; and those who view young people as *future* leaders, yet to ‘earn’ or ‘grow into’ their leadership potential (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; Khan, 2022; D. T. L. Shek & Leung, 2016; TerMaat-McGrath, 2010; Wright, 2008). AYAC would argue that defining young people only according to their future potential is, in fact, indicative of the very problem with the way young people are viewed and treated in our society – that is, as ‘less than’, as not (yet) relevant, patronised, ignored, dismissed. (For further detail, see the discussion of ‘adulthood’ in Corney et al., 2022). Indeed, research calls attention to the fact that this unsympathetic and dismissive attitude towards young people negatively affects their self-confidence, denies them access to decision-making processes that directly impact their lives, and can condition young people from marginalised groups to accept other forms of discrimination (Mgala & Shutt, 2011; Oto, 2023).

“To me, youth leadership is young people being able to stand up and talk about what they believe in and to be able to inspire and lead other people to take action on issues that matter to them.”

—YSC member



Further, empirical evidence suggests that leadership potential is influenced by environmental, rather than hereditary, factors (Metzger, 2007; Yuan et al., 2022). AYAC therefore affirms the strengths-based perspective that *all* children and young people are capable of being leaders and exhibiting exemplary leadership qualities at any age – and it is up to the adults and systems around them to nurture this capability, and to facilitate access to avenues that enable young people to fully explore their strengths and leadership potential.

Finding
 All young people are capable of developing and exhibiting leadership qualities.

Finding
 A dismissive attitude towards young people by some adults can cause harm to young people.

Recommendation
 The youth sector should continue to advocate for cultural change to address negative attitudes towards young people. A coordinated approach should be explored to amplify and strengthen advocacy efforts.

In this report, we do not attempt a synthesis of existing definitions of youth leadership. Rather, the following discussion is informed by the primary function of the Youth Steering Committee as an advisory body to the Australian Government. We therefore use a formal framing of youth leadership, whereby young people’s participation is centred around taking on prescribed roles and responsibilities within organisations and communities, with these roles often situated within a structure of “strict institutional framing and official governing” (Määttä & Aaltonen, 2016, p. 161).

“Leadership [is] just about being your authentic self. It’s about showing people what you care about and doing something about the things you care about. It could be just about showing up, it could be just about speaking up, it could be just about providing support. So, if you can do any of these things you’re already a great youth leader.”

—YSC member



Youth leadership programs

There is a wealth of youth leadership programs available across the country and globally (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; Puxley & Chapin, 2021). Youth leadership programs may be run by youth-focused or youth-led organisations (Australian Youth Climate Coalition, n.d.; The Y, n.d.), NGOs (UN Youth Australia, n.d.; World Vision Australia, n.d.), charitable organisations (Lions Australia, 2021; Rotary, n.d.), religious organisations (CYC Ministries, n.d.; SU Australia, n.d.), sports clubs (Western Bulldogs, n.d.), or by organisations and people in governance (City of Fremantle, n.d.; National Leadership Forum, n.d.; Yarra City Council, n.d.). They may be place-based, such as being delivered in a school (School for Student Leadership, n.d.) or local council area (Foundation for Young Australians, n.d.); or they might focus on a specific topic such as environmental and animal justice (Jane Goodall Institute Australia, n.d.), or a specific cohort such as young people with cancer or queer young people (Canteen, n.d.; Minus18, n.d.). Programs may be short, comprising a handful of workshops; or they may be delivered over a more extended period of time, such as a multi-year term on a youth advisory committee.

Depending on the underlying definition of leadership, the purpose and feel of the program may also vary. For example, some programs have the goal of upskilling ‘the leaders of tomorrow’ or supporting young people to develop ‘future work skills’ in preparation for taking up leadership positions in a global market. These future-focused programs are more likely to be rooted in ‘adultist’ perspectives, whereby adults are seen as developed, rational, and mature, and young people are conversely seen as irrational, impulsive, and less

intelligent. As a result, adults are positioned as the holders of wisdom that is imparted to young people through these leadership programs, while young people’s perspectives, strengths, and capabilities are largely overlooked or actively disregarded (Oto, 2023). Other programs, however, take more of a strengths-based approach, and are set up to support young people to design and deliver a project in their school or community, or utilise the expertise of young people to advise a specific organisation or body. While not always perfectly implemented, these programs are more likely to recognise young people as having their own leadership agency, and tend to take more of a partnership approach.

This landscape has been described in the literature (see, for example, TerMaat-McGrath, 2010), and was corroborated by the findings from our environmental scan.

Finding

Many leadership programs are limited to a specific cohort or identified end goal.

Interestingly, despite the issues noted above regarding a precise definition of youth leadership, there appears to be a fair degree of consistency in the types of topics covered and skills developed through these different programs. Common topics include types of leadership and exploring personal values; course content regularly includes skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making; and almost every program has the stated aim of empowering young people and building their confidence.

“To me youth leadership is being involved in your community and standing up for what you believe in. Working towards a goal, regardless of what other people have to say.”

—YSC member

What young people told us

Only 46% of survey respondents said they had participated in any kind of formal youth leadership opportunity. Given the survey was likely completed by young people who are already relatively engaged, this figure is, in reality, probably an overestimate of the total percentage of young people who have undertaken formal youth leadership training. This suggests that there is a gap here that AYAC could fill, especially if barriers to participation, as outlined in the section below on future youth leadership needs, can be addressed.

Finding

Many young people want to develop their leadership skills but have not previously engaged in any opportunities, often due to systemic barriers.

Recommendation

AYAC should explore ways to engage more young people in formal youth leadership opportunities, with consideration of barriers preventing participation.

The three types of formal youth leadership programs most commonly engaged in by our survey respondents were:

- ✦ **Student Representative Council (SRC):** This appeared frequently across the responses, indicating its widespread presence in schools and educational institutions. SRCs provide an avenue for student voice in matters of academic and wellbeing concerns, campus culture and facilities, and social aspects of student life.
- ✦ **Youth Advisory Groups/Committees:** YAGs/YACs often provide opportunities for young people to offer input, advice, and recommendations to organisations and government on issues affecting young people. Many respondents mentioned participation in this type of body.
- ✦ **Youth Parliament/Youth Parliament Programs:** These programs provide young people with a platform to engage in parliamentary-style debates, discussions, and decision-making processes. Several respondents mentioned involvement in this type of program.

Young people’s experiences within these programs likely establish initial parameters for what young people think of as ‘leadership’, especially formal types of leadership.



Members of the YSC, in particular, are in a unique position to understand the ins and outs of formal youth leadership, given that they were recruited specifically to provide advice to the Australian Government on youth-related issues. When this group was asked to define formal youth leadership, the following themes emerged:

- ✿ **Interpersonal skills**, including empathy; open-mindedness; communication; facilitation; teamwork and collaboration; connection in community.
- ✿ **Intrapersonal skills**, including confidence; emotional intelligence and self-awareness; passion and caring; curiosity; and perseverance and resilience.
- ✿ **Professional skills**, including consultation and advocacy skills; media skills; formal meeting skills (chairing, agenda, minutes); organisation; and understanding the mechanics of parliament, government, and policy-making.
- ✿ **Problem-solving abilities**, including critical thinking; resourcefulness; strategic thinking; and decision-making.

These skills and characteristics align closely with what is commonly taught in generalist youth leadership programs, and with what has been found in the research to ‘work’ in youth leadership (see research summary in next section). One key difference, however, is the emphasis placed by the YSC on the need for professional skills and political literacy in formal youth leadership contexts. Given most young people are unlikely to have previously had significant formal training in these areas, they should be prioritised in formal youth leadership programs.

Finding

The way young people conceptualise formal youth leadership largely aligns with generalist youth leadership research and practice.

Recommendation

In formal youth leadership contexts, programs should include training in relevant professional skills and upskilling in political literacy, to support young people’s effective participation.

“It’s standing up for what you believe and getting involved, and I think reaching out to the changemakers and reaching out to the figures that really do have an outsized influence on what affects young people.”

—YSC member



2. What 'works' in youth leadership?

What the literature says

There is broad agreement that effective leadership involves both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (TerMaat-McGrath, 2010, p. 22). Additionally, there is a strong argument that effective leaders not only successfully achieve goals, but do so in an ethical and responsible manner (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; D. T. Shek et al., 2017). Youth leadership programs therefore need to nurture all of these skills.

In this context, research into 'effective' youth leadership programs predominantly focuses on positive impacts and outcomes for program participants. There is also research focus on specific program elements that support these positive outcomes, in terms of session content, mode of delivery, and program/organisational culture.

It has been noted, however, that there has been limited evaluation of youth leadership programs, either formal or informal, that could be described as scientifically rigorous (Mandoh et al., 2023; Puxley & Chapin, 2021; D. T. Shek et al., 2017). Evaluations are frequently conducted by researchers who are in some way connected to the program in question; rarely incorporate measures of objective outcomes; are often heavily reliant on self-reported data; and rarely employ randomised control trials. Inconsistencies also emerge when comparing findings from quantitative versus qualitative studies (Curran & Wexler, 2017). Each of these factors can impact confidence in the validity of results. While the sheer body of evidence in this space does tend to lend a certain weight to the overall findings, they should nevertheless be interpreted with some caution.

Key research findings are summarised in the table on the next page. The information in the table could be used to form the basis of a Theory of Change or program logic (or similar) for AYAC youth leadership programs. This would support clear communication of the content, structure, and objectives of AYAC's youth leadership offerings.

Finding

Effective youth leadership opportunities focus on interpersonal and intrapersonal skill development, as well as on cultivating ethical standards in leadership.

Recommendation

AYAC should develop a Theory of Change or program logic (or similar) that clearly outlines the purpose and intent of its youth leadership programs.





(Ballard et al., 2021; Bastable et al., 2022; Bates et al., 2020; Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; Mandoh et al., 2023; Metzger, 2007; Puxley & Chapin, 2021; D. T. L. Shek & Leung, 2016; TerMaat-McGrath, 2010; Wisniewski, 2010; Wu et al., 2022).

Finding

Skills and attributes developed through effective youth leadership programs have broad applicability beyond leadership – including study, employment, and community settings, and in interpersonal relationships.

Finding

Participation in effective youth leadership programs can act as a protective factor against a range of negative outcomes that young people may experience, particularly those relating to mental health.

Recommendation

Organisations offering youth leadership opportunities should pay attention to three key threads to ensure program effectiveness – program content, method of delivery, and program culture.

In addition to the above positive outcomes experienced by individual participants in effective youth leadership programs, benefits to both the community and the leadership program itself have also been identified.

Community benefits include having young people involved positively in the community; young people are supported to become ‘responsible’ citizens; social issues that impact the lives of young people and the broader community are addressed; community members learn that young people are valuable contributors to the community; and adult community leaders benefit from the experience of being a mentor (Ballard et al., 2021; Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; Metzger, 2007; Oto, 2023; TerMaat-McGrath, 2010). When youth leadership programs are effective, both the program and its host organisation also benefit, primarily through improved program sustainability. This manifests via participants remaining committed and involved over the longer term, and development of a program pipeline through engagement of participants’ siblings and peers (Bates et al., 2020).

Finding

Effective youth leadership programs benefit not only participants, but also youth-focused organisations, and the wider community.



What young people told us

As part of our youth leadership survey, young people were asked what they considered to be the most useful aspects of previous youth leadership opportunities they had participated in.

The top three elements identified by respondents were:

- ✿ **Communication and collaboration skills:** Effective communication, including listening, debating, negotiating, and presenting ideas, emerged as crucial. Collaborative activities and creating a safe space for open communication were highly valued. This aspect helps in fostering teamwork, understanding diverse perspectives, and building confidence in expressing oneself.
- ✿ **Practical and tangible skills:** Participants found practical, hands-on activities valuable, such as learning how to run meetings, organise ideas, and engage in advocacy. Tangible skills like media training, policy understanding, event facilitation, and self-reflection were emphasised for their applicability in real-life leadership scenarios.
- ✿ **Networking and relationship-building:** Opportunities for networking, connecting with leaders from various fields, and building supportive communities were highlighted. Participants valued the chance to meet others with similar goals and backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging and support.

These aspects not only equip young people with essential leadership competencies but also empower them to make meaningful contributions in their communities and beyond.

YSC members also gave clear indications of what they consider to be an effective youth leadership program. The themes below were distilled from feedback provided on what was beneficial for them during their time on the committee, and what didn't work so well.



According to these expert young people, effective youth leadership programs have the following elements:

- ✦ **Opportunities for personal and professional growth:** including being exposed to broad and unique opportunities and experiences; feeding curiosity and learning; and opportunities to represent their communities.
- ✦ **Meaningful participation:** contributions must be valued, meaningful, and acted upon; and should be co-designed and youth-led.
- ✦ **Positive group culture:** including safety and respect; inclusion; support for and from peers; teamwork and collaboration; open-mindedness.
- ✦ **Connection:** including with (like-minded) peers, decision-makers, and community.
- ✦ **Diversity and inclusion:** opportunities must be accessible; diverse voices must be heard.
- ✦ **Information-sharing:** including clear understanding of expectations and scope; transparency; closing the loop; clear communication and sharing of information by host organisation/s.
- ✦ **Program support:** including emotional and informational support from host organisation/s; and supportive structures and processes.

Two of these areas were particularly highlighted by committee members. The first was the stipulation that youth leadership opportunities must be meaningful, to avoid youth engagement being tokenistic in nature. That is, programs should ideally be co-designed and youth-led, and adults or formal bodies engaging with young people through these programs must commit to taking action on issues raised by participants. The second area highlighted was the vital importance of positive group culture in the youth leadership setting – that is, it is not just the content of the program that matters, but how it is implemented. Organisations should pay particular attention to these elements in the design of youth leadership programs.

Finding

Youth leadership program elements valued by young people closely align with those elements found to be effective in the research literature.

Recommendation

Organisations offering youth leadership programs should prioritise meaningful participation opportunities for young people, and establish structures and processes that support a positive group culture.

“The culture of this group matters.”

—YSC member



3. How might we best meet future youth leadership needs?

What the literature says

Young people’s needs change over time (Fisher, 2022), with new challenges and concerns constantly emerging – including, in recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of AI, the cost-of-living crisis, the youth mental health crisis, and ongoing concerns about climate change (Gunasiri et al., 2022; Mandoh et al., 2023; McGorry et al., 2023). Likewise, professional practice in the youth sector is ever-evolving (Jeffer, 2015); so, too, advances in technology that can support youth leadership development and advocacy work (López Peláez et al., 2020). It is, therefore, crucial for organisations to undertake regular review of their youth leadership offerings, to ensure they reflect current best practice, and that they continue to meet young people’s leadership development needs. Young people must be included in these review processes, with youth participatory action research offering a method to achieve this (DeJonckheere et al., 2016).

One ‘practical’ criticism is that there is often a lack of clarity around definitions of leadership on which programs are based, or that programs lack a sound theoretical foundation. This can result in conflicting or unclear program goals or an ad hoc approach that may not be effective (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; Mortensen, 2016), and may limit the feasibility of program evaluation (Puxley & Chapin, 2021). Indeed, the need for greater clarity – of program purpose, direction, vision, and goals – was a repeated theme in feedback received from the YSC.

Recommendation

Organisations should undertake regular review of their youth leadership programs. Review processes must be inclusive of youth voice.

Recommendation

Youth leadership opportunities should be considered and cohesive, with clear program goals and objectives. Programs should be evidence-informed, and consistent with the values of the organisation delivering them.

Before emerging youth leadership needs can successfully be met, however, organisations must first address extant program shortcomings. Common criticisms broadly fall into two categories – practical and ethical.

Finding

There are a number of key critiques of current youth leadership programs that must be addressed to ensure future programs are cohesive, inclusive, and fit-for-purpose.



Another practical criticism is that there is often a mismatch between what facilitators consider important and what young people consider to be beneficial elements of youth leadership programs, as well as what each perceive to be effective leadership (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013). Many young people engage in informal modes of political and civic participation – such as signing online petitions, making ethical consumer choices, or using social media to raise awareness of issues relevant to them and their communities – as opposed to, or in conjunction with, engaging in more conventional, formal modes of participation (Chowdhury, 2021; Khan, 2022; McCormack & Collin, 2024; Stephenson et al., 2024). While adults often tend to view this type of participation as ‘amateur and irrelevant’ (Chowdhury, 2021), young people, conversely, tend to hold in high regard those young changemakers who show such leadership. It must also be noted that this type of alternative action by young people occurs in the context of their persistent exclusion from formal political structures and processes (Chowdhury, 2021).

- ✿ many youth leadership programs do not serve the needs of multicultural and First Nations young people because they “often reflect a model of participatory citizenship and individual empowerment that affirms white institutional worlds” (Khan, 2022, p. 1285; Walsh et al., 2019); and
- ✿ youth leadership opportunities, particularly those in the formal domain, are predominantly offered to young people who are advantaged in some way, including those who are high-achievers, who are from privileged backgrounds, who are already engaged, or who currently demonstrate leadership skills of the kind deemed ‘acceptable’ by society (Määttä & Aaltonen, 2016; Metzger, 2007).

Addressing concerns around the ethical credentials of youth leadership programs is critical to the experience of young participants, as well as to the quality, viability, and reputation of individual programs. Given AYAC’s position as Australia’s national youth peak, it is essential that we demonstrate leadership in this space.

Recommendation ✿

Youth leadership programs should acknowledge both formal and informal modes of participation and leadership as equally valid, and should acknowledge the context in which this type of engagement by young people occurs.

In addition to the above practical criticisms, there are also several ‘ethical’ criticisms of youth leadership programs, centred largely around concerns about tokenism and equity. These include, for example, that:

- ✿ many youth leadership programs do not adequately and explicitly address power imbalances between young participants and adult facilitators, resulting in the unsatisfactory outcome of young people “not exercising leadership, but taking steps to plan and implement activities prescribed by adults” (Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006, as cited in Mortensen, 2016, p.18);

Recommendation ✿

Youth leadership programs should be genuinely youth-led and co-designed to avoid tokenism.

Recommendation ✿

Organisations must co-design youth leadership programs with multicultural and First Nations young people, to ensure programs meet their specific youth leadership development needs.

Recommendation ✿

Organisations offering youth leadership opportunities must take active steps to ensure equitable access, so that all young people can benefit from these opportunities.

What young people told us

Regarding future youth leadership needs, two-thirds of survey respondents indicated that they were ‘very interested’ or ‘extremely interested’ in participating in youth leadership training. This demonstrates a clear appetite for greater access to youth leadership opportunities.

Finding

There is a demand for leadership development amongst young people in Australia.

Recommendation

AYAC should explore ways to expand their suite of leadership development offerings to meet demand.

The three skills most frequently identified by survey respondents as being crucial for effective participation in formal youth leadership opportunities were active listening, building a team and working together effectively, and public speaking. Other skills that were noted as being important (in no particular order) included critical, creative, and strategic thinking; presenting ideas; fostering collaboration and resolving disagreements; responsible leadership; inclusive practice (including dealing with unconscious bias); prioritising tasks and efficient use of time; advocacy and negotiation skills; goal setting and developing a ‘vision’ for your group/project; and self-confidence. A sizeable proportion of survey respondents (20%) indicated that, in their opinion, all of the skills listed as options to choose from (40 in total) were important to be an effective young leader. This demonstrates that the matrix of skills required for effective participation in formal youth leadership spaces is broad. These findings can inform the development of future AYAC training programs.

Finding

There is a broad matrix of skills required for effective participation in formal youth leadership opportunities

There was a strong preference among survey respondents (45%) for youth leadership opportunities to be delivered in a hybrid format, with both online and in-person attendance options made available. Many respondents considered it important to support face-to-face opportunities where possible – as these were perceived to be more fun, engaging, and effective – while still enabling attendance for those

“Young people want to engage and just need a mechanism to [do so].”

—YSC member

Skills frequently identified by survey respondents as being crucial for effective participation in formal youth leadership opportunities:

- Long-term planning/strategic thinking
- Self-confidence
- Group decision-making
- Writing and presenting ideas
- Active listening**
- Public speaking
- Empathy
- Negotiation skills
- Critical thinking
- Advocacy skills
- Innovation and creative thinking
- Self-awareness
- Flexibility in changing situations

Goal setting

Analytical skills

who were unable to make it in person or who prefer online engagement. Notably, however, a number of respondents who expressed a preference for online-only sessions indicated that this was to ensure a level playing field for participation, with some sharing that they had previously experienced hybrid workshops where they were unable to see or hear properly, or felt left out of activities and discussions that were happening in the in-person space. Given that online participants are more likely to be from marginalised groups, such as disabled young people (eSafety Commissioner, 2023; Smart et al., 2023), particular care must be taken to ensure that this marginalisation is not exacerbated by accessibility and inclusion measures that are not well considered.

Recommendation

Facilitators of hybrid sessions must ensure that online participants are equally included in all session activities, so that they are not disadvantaged by their mode of participation.

Based on their experience as participants in the inaugural YSC, current committee members provided some additional recommendations about how to meet the future youth leadership needs of incoming cohorts.

YSC members were asked to reflect on how prepared they felt to contribute meaningfully at the beginning of their time on the committee. The average ‘preparedness’ score was 6.5 out of 10, indicating that some additional orientation may have been beneficial. Some committee members indicated that they would have appreciated having more detailed information up-front about how the committee would operate, and that ‘preliminary meetings’ may have helped them settle in to the role. However, it should be noted that this data was gathered towards the end of the program and therefore may not accurately reflect how respondents felt at the beginning of their time on the committee.

Recommendation

A comprehensive orientation/onboarding procedure should be developed to support young people moving in to formal leadership roles.

Recommendation

Monitoring and evaluation should be incorporated into formal youth leadership programs, to measure impact and support continuous improvement processes.

Further recommendations from the YSC are outlined in the table below:

Training content should include:	Implementation recommendations:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation • Advocacy • Communication • Diversity and inclusion • How to create a positive culture • Political literacy • Formal and professional skills • Exploration of values and their relationship to developing an authentic leadership style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffolding of learning, including more opportunities to practise skills and build confidence • More time to formulate responses, to support effective contribution to government consultation processes • Additional support from host organisation/s (e.g. in the form of regular check-ins) • Local support in their home state • Strengths-based approach, including peer-to-peer coaching/mentoring • Youth-led or co-designed • Diversity sub-committees • Use of informal youth-friendly communication channels to support relationship-building and processing of information • Greater leadership role for young people, including utilising connections with community • Additional opportunities for involvement in formal leadership processes (e.g. conferences, department meetings, organisational and governmental decision-making)

These recommendations not only align with effective youth leadership program elements as outlined earlier in this report, but build on these with specific skills and information required when taking up formal youth leadership opportunities. They also highlight areas that aim to address some of the critiques outlined above, particularly those around tokenism, and equity and inclusion.

Finding

To participate effectively in formal youth leadership opportunities, generalist leadership skills plus specialist skills and knowledge are required.

Recommendation

Organisations offering formal youth leadership opportunities should ensure that, in addition to effective generalist youth leadership elements, their programs also incorporate the specialised skills and knowledge required for effective participation in that particular context.

Notably, the overall flavour of the implementation recommendations is one of wanting both more support from the host organisation/s and a simultaneous desire for greater ‘ownership’ of the opportunity to sit with the young people themselves. We would argue that these are, in fact, two sides of the same coin. That is, that when young people are appropriately supported, in the way that *they* need (rather than in the way deemed by adults to be needed), they are more truly empowered.

Recommendation

Organisations should ensure that youth leadership opportunities are genuinely based on principles of youth empowerment.

Specifically in the case of the YSC, it appears that, despite the many benefits of participating in this program, it was still experienced as somewhat siloed and isolating for some participants. This is

understandable, given committee members are dispersed right around Australia, and only met in person a couple of times. Care should be taken to minimise or mitigate this isolation, especially for participants who may feel it more keenly – such as younger participants, or those living in geographically isolated areas or from historically marginalised groups.

Recommendation

Organisations should provide holistic, wrap-around support for young leaders, especially in programs where there are limited opportunities for the young people to get together in person. Particular attention should be given to the needs of participants from marginalised groups and younger cohorts.

Despite the unique opportunity to advise the Australian Government offered by this program, there was also an overall feeling among the group of having been thus far underutilised. Such assessments are not uncommon in formal youth leadership spaces, and there are several factors that could have contributed to this being the experience – including that participants may have had an incomplete understanding of the limitations of their role; government departments may have been unaware of the consultation opportunities available; resistance to youth voice within government and the public service; the general constraints of working within the machinery of government; and the likelihood that the full potential of the program is yet to be realised (given this was the inaugural cohort). On a positive note, this expressed desire to contribute to an even greater extent indicates that these young people feel empowered by their participation in the YSC, and serves to illustrate the high levels of political engagement of both this group and young people more broadly.

Recommendation

AYAC and OfY should explore ways to further utilise the expertise of the YSC.

One additional recommendation from the YSC regarding future youth leadership needs is for increased publicity or acknowledgement of the positive work they are doing. Young people, like anyone else, deserve recognition for their achievements. The value in this approach is confirmed by research evidence, which suggests that public sharing of tangible outputs from formal youth leadership programs not only amplifies the impact of the work itself, but crystallises for young participants the significance of their contribution (Mandoh et al., 2023).

However, this recommendation from the YSC carries additional weight in the context of persistent media representations of young people as politically apathetic and disengaged (Mikola & Mansouri, 2015), or, especially for young people of colour, as a threat to society (Khan, 2022). Given the overwhelmingly negative depiction of young people that the public is exposed to, it is important to leverage opportunities to shift this narrative whenever possible. However, in

doing so, care should be taken to avoid perpetuating the common stereotype of young leaders as ‘gifted over-achievers’ or as having ‘succeeded against the odds’, as this framing can also be unhelpful, and can reinforce barriers to participation that are disproportionately experienced by young people from marginalised groups (Khan, 2022).

Recommendation

Organisations offering youth leadership programs should share and promote the achievements of young people in the program, taking care to avoid perpetuating unhelpful stereotypes of young leaders.

“[L]ots and lots of young people DO care about policies, they’re just often not heard in the general public.”

—YSC member



Barriers to participation

Unfortunately, there are many young people who experience significant barriers to participation in formal youth leadership opportunities, who are therefore locked out of accessing the positive outcomes noted earlier in this report. Organisations need to better understand the experiences of these young people, so that barriers can be addressed, and the positive gains from youth leadership participation can be available to all (Bates et al., 2020).

To this end, AYAC asked young people about barriers they may have experienced that stopped them from participating in formal youth leadership opportunities. To capture a range of experiences, we asked about barriers that may have stopped them from participating fully or in the way they would have liked to participate, as well as about barriers that may have stopped them from participating at all.

Broadly speaking, barriers fell into one of three primary categories, outlined below. These themes highlight that a blend of internal and external factors can impact a young person’s ability to engage in leadership opportunities. Notably, too, many young people experience barriers across more than one category, illustrating the complexity of youth engagement.

Personal capacity and skills

One significant barrier identified by survey respondents as having prevented them from participating in formal leadership opportunities was a lack of confidence (28% of respondents). As noted earlier in this report, one factor that contributes to this is the dismissive attitude towards young people that is commonly held by adults (Mgala & Shutt, 2011). A significant number of respondents further indicated that they felt they lacked the necessary skills or knowledge about the topics being addressed by the group (28% of respondents) or about how formal groups operate (e.g. understanding meeting procedures, roles within the group) (25% of respondents). As noted by Bastable et al. (2022), opportunities for engagement must be accompanied by skill development to support success.

Many potential participants (28%) also said they do not have enough spare time or energy to enable them to participate – understandably, given almost one-third

(31%) of survey respondents were already juggling concurrent work and study commitments. The obligation to prioritise basic needs is likely compounded for young people experiencing poverty, and exacerbated by the current cost-of-living crisis. This issue must be addressed, to ensure that youth leadership programs are open to everyone, regardless of privilege.

While some of these factors are indicative of issues of a much larger scale than most organisations have the capacity to individually address, much of this feedback can nevertheless inform program recruitment processes. Several recommendations are outlined below.

Finding

Many young people need to prioritise paid opportunities (e.g. part-time or casual work) to support themselves and their families, and this limits time available for leadership opportunities.

Recommendation

To support participation of young people from low-income families in leadership opportunities, organisations should aim to remunerate young people for their participation, at a level commensurate with minimum wage or higher.

Recommendation


Organisations should clearly communicate – and demonstrate – a youth-centred approach, to counteract ubiquitous ‘adultist’ messaging and its harmful effects on young people’s confidence.

Recommendation

An overview of youth leadership training content should be clearly publicised prior to program recruitment, so that young people can see that any knowledge gaps – real or perceived – will be addressed to support their participation in the program.

Accessibility, diversity, inclusion

For some young people (21%), physical barriers such as lack of access to transport or geographic isolation prevented participation in in-person opportunities; while for others (6%), technological barriers such as not having a computer or having a poor internet connection hindered their participation. These barriers disproportionately impact young people from low-income families, rural and remote areas, First Nations communities, and those with certain disabilities (Rosier & McDonald, 2011; Smith et al., 2024), posing a significant equity issue. A considerable percentage of survey respondents (18%) also indicated that concerns around feeling safe and accepted had impacted their participation in formal leadership opportunities, with some young people noting that specific access needs (e.g. around neurodiversity, disability, chronic illness) had not been met. Concerns around tokenism and lack of diversity were also raised, with 21% of survey respondents saying that having no-one else like them in the group was a barrier to their participation.

Recommendation 


Youth leadership programs must be a safe space for young people of all cultural identities, all abilities, and from all walks of life. Access and inclusion measures should be embedded in program design.

Recommendation 

Organisations must ensure that their programs include a diverse range of participants, and that this inclusion is not tokenistic.


Social and economic factors

Economic constraints, such as not being able to afford participation costs, were a barrier for 11% of survey respondents.


Recommendation 

Organisations must ensure that cost is not a barrier to young people’s participation in leadership programs.

Social pressures and expectations were also a deterrent to participation, with a considerable number of survey respondents indicating that they were worried about disapproval or backlash from family (11%), friends (7%), or the wider community (11%). Further, 9% of respondents said they did not like the idea of being part of ‘the system’ and that this dissuaded them from participating in formal youth leadership opportunities. This correlates with research findings that indicate a general lack of trust in government among young people, and particularly among First Nations young people (Stephenson et al., 2024).

Finding 

Lack of trust in government dissuades many young people from taking up formal youth leadership opportunities. This is likely amplified if systemic distrust is widespread in young people’s communities.

Recommendation 

To support youth leadership development, government must work to establish trust through better representation of young people’s needs, values, and policy concerns.

Recommendation 

Reconciliation and self-determination for First Nations communities are central to removing additional barriers to participation in formal youth leadership opportunities that may be experienced by First Nations young people.

Scepticism around a perceived lack of genuine power or intention behind the leadership opportunities can also deter participation, with 18% of survey respondents saying that they did not participate because they didn't think the group really had the authority to effect change. This wariness is unsurprising given some young people would have personal experience of programs involving tokenistic forms of non-participation (Bastable et al., 2022; Hart, 1992), combined with young people's general exclusion from political and civic decision-making and widespread 'adulthood' (Corney et al., 2021).

Recommendation

In order to (re-)build trust with potential youth leadership participants, organisations must commit to acting on young people's input. In cases where this is not possible, organisations should be transparent about why.



Many of these issues raised by young people echo the critiques raised in the literature, as outlined earlier in this report. To reiterate, these barriers to participation *must* be addressed to ensure that any youth leadership opportunities offered by organisations are available to all young people, and meet both current and future youth leadership needs.

YSC alumni

When youth leadership programs are done well, there is often a strong commitment among graduates to remain actively involved – either directly with the host organisation and/or through civic participation more broadly (Ballard et al., 2021). Indeed, members of the outgoing YSC expressed an almost unanimous desire to continue their engagement with AYAC and OfY, and to 'give back' to the program, "so our contribution doesn't end at the end of our term" (YSC member).

YSC members saw much value in an alumni association, with potential benefits not only for themselves, but also for new YSC members (e.g. through provision of support and mentorship by alumni) and to AYAC (e.g. through utilising alumni as a resource and/or talent pool). This aligns with research findings that characterise effective alumni associations as engendering a mutually beneficial relationship between alumni and the host organisation – whereby the organisation provides alumni with opportunities to participate in activities that they find personally and professionally rewarding, and the organisation benefits from alumni support in meeting strategic and developmental needs (Broom et al., 2023).

YSC members anticipated personal and professional benefits from an alumni association in both the shorter term – such as staying connected with fellow program graduates, and staying informed on the YSC and the ways in which future cohorts build on the inaugural group's work – and in the longer term – such as expanding their networks, and exploring state-based opportunities as networks grow.

Finding

Alumni associations are an important means through which future youth leadership needs can be met, at both participant and organisational levels. Alumni also benefit through development of this mutually beneficial relationship.



Recommendation

AYAC should establish an alumni association for past members of the YSC.



When asked what they would like an alumni association to look like, YSC members recommended a tiered approach that allows for different levels of engagement, depending on the capacity of individual members. Although little research has been done in this area, Broom et al (2023) posit that alumni-level factors such as career stage and capacity, and activity-level factors such as type and intensity, may interact to determine the degree of alumni engagement. They suggest, for example, that early-career alumni may be more interested in participating in networking and social events, while alumni who are in their mid- to late career may be more interested in mentoring and coaching; and that overall level of engagement is also mediated by the quality of experience alumni had as program participants (Broom et al., 2023).

Functions identified by the YSC as potential alumni association activities included mentoring new YSC members, especially those from the same home state; an alumni newsletter, including updates from AYAC and OfY on the current YSC; invitations to state and national youth events, including the National Youth Forum; regular catch-ups; and building state-based alumni chapters. Other strategic activities offered in the literature as appropriate for alumni organisations include (but are not limited to) supporting program optimisation and continuous improvement, as well as broader organisational strategic planning, such as through serving on an advisory board or in a consultant role; serving as a facilitator, guest speaker, or panellist within the program or at conferences and seminars; assisting with program recruitment and acting as a program ambassador; supporting applied group projects of future program cohorts; facilitating internships/mentorships in their organisations, when in a position to do so; and serving in leadership roles within the alumni association itself (Broom et al., 2023).

The YSC was eager for the alumni association and its activities to be designed and led as a collaborative project between AYAC, OfY, and alumni. They were also keen for association activities to be accessible for all alumni, i.e. predominantly delivered online.

Recommendation

The YSC alumni association should be a collaboration between AYAC, OfY, and YSC alumni, with engagement activities to be co-designed and co-led, and aligned with both organisational and alumni needs.



Given that alumni associations offer an opportunity to boost the work of the host organisation, Broom et al. (2023) recommend that organisations have an alumni engagement strategy in place, that “clearly identif[ies] the engagement activities that enhance and further the program’s mission” (Broom et al., 2023, p. 13). This can help ensure that alumni activities are coordinated and that they optimise positive outcomes for all stakeholders, particularly as stakeholder needs evolve.

However, securing adequate resources to support effective alumni engagement is a common challenge, and failure to do so can result in coordination of alumni association activities becoming an add-on responsibility for current staff members of the organisation, who may already be overstretched (Broom et al., 2023).

Recommendation

AYAC should develop an alumni engagement plan to guide and optimise alumni engagement activities.



Recommendation

The YSC alumni association should be adequately resourced.



Conclusion

As Australia's national youth peak, we at AYAC want to ensure that youth leadership opportunities are informed by both research evidence and the needs of young people. This report has explored key questions around defining youth leadership, particularly formal youth leadership; identifying elements of effective youth leadership programs; and successfully meeting future youth leadership needs.

Whilst there is a plethora of youth leadership programs available, these do not necessarily meet demand, and do not always meet the needs of young people. Additionally, there are often significant systemic barriers that limit or prevent participation of many young people, particularly those from marginalised groups.

To meet future youth leadership needs, and ensure that the positive outcomes of participation are available to *all* young people, these barriers must be addressed. This report has proposed a number of actions that organisations can take to achieve this. Alumni associations also proffer considerable opportunities to meet future youth leadership needs, provided such organisations are coordinated and appropriately resourced.

This report has further offered the bones of a framework that can be used to inform the development of effective youth leadership programs. This framework consists of three interwoven threads: program content, method of delivery, and program culture. When youth leadership programs are centred around these three elements, clear benefits abound – not only for participants, but also for the organisation hosting the program, and for the wider community.



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