

# Youth Voice Agency Level Assessment (Y-VAL)

## Eight Critical Themes

- 1. Overall vision and commitment (8 items):** The agency has developed formal structures and policies for voice/participation
  - Clear roles for participation
  - Transparent assessment of efforts to promote participation
- 2. Collaborative approach (5 items):** Young people are treated as valued partners in decision processes
  - Involved from the beginning, including decisions about what
  - Respect and mutual learning, willingness to compromise, responsiveness
  - Youth-friendly meetings
  - Information/transparency about what will happen/has happened as a result of decisions
- 3. Empowered representatives (5 items):** Young people are supported in a way that will maximize their potential to have an impact on decisions
  - Multiple young people participating consistently over time
  - Supported preparation, meeting happens as planned
  - “Pipeline,” opportunity to develop leadership skills
- 4. Commitment to facilitation and support of Y/YA participation (3 items):** The agency invests resources to support participation
  - Dedicated staff time/FTE
  - Addressing barriers: child care, transportation/ distance, consent
  - “Point person” whose job includes managing logistics of participation
  - Incentives provided for participation (may be monetary or non-monetary)
- 5. Workforce development (4 items):** The agency ensures that all staff are able to interact collaboratively with young people
  - Young people participate actively in hiring
  - Staff are trained about agency policies and commitment to participation
  - Job performance evaluation includes attention to staff competencies related to participation
  - Agency is developing peer roles
- 6. Participation in developing programming/program policies (5 items):** Young people have an impact on how the program works with the population
  - “Substantial and systematic” involvement in
  - Decisions about program models/services
  - Efforts to improve services, retention, accessibility
  - Efforts to make the organization more youth friendly/responsive—communications, privacy, décor, etc.
- 7. Participation in evaluation (4 items):** Young people are engaged in efforts to determine how well the agency is doing its work
  - Systematic efforts to gather feedback on services
  - Young people help decide on how efforts will be assessed
  - Young people are informed about findings from evaluation/CQI
  - Agency acts on data and reports on this to young people
- 8. Leading initiatives and projects (3 items):** The agency supports young people to take the lead on projects they design
  - Provides tangible support to initiatives initiated by young people

Suggested citation: Youth MOVE National & Regional Research Institute, Portland State University. (2016). Youth/Young Adult Voice at the Agency Level: A Self-Assessment (YVAL Self-Assessment). Decorah, IA: Youth MOVE National.