
Youth Participation Certificate

Summary of Consultation Questions

Please circle where appropriate

1. Do you believe that youth participation in programs or activities should be recognised?

Yes

Comments

The activities of all people who participate in community activities should be recognised in some way. Due to some of the challenges that young people face, such as high unemployment, recognition is an important way to promote individual confidence and encourage continued participation.

Youth participation activities are already recognised in various ways by individual organisations, however there are some instances where youth participation may not be fully recognised or acknowledged. There is a sense that with increased recognition, in a form valued by young people, will assist in encouraging increased participation by young people.

Recognition needs to occur during, and immediately after, the participation activities, but on-going recognition by groups such as tafe colleges, schools, universities and employers is also vital.

2. What is the most appropriate way to recognise youth participation?

Comments

Views on this varied and a range of possible recognition strategies were identified, including media, newsletters, public for a, reference letters and certificates are all ways of promoting a positive image of young people and their participation activities.

A number of different strategies for recognising the participation of young people could be adopted by an organisation at any one time, for example, issue a certificate and/or arrange a media release or interview with the local paper.

3. Do young people need a youth participation certificate?

Yes

Comments

'Need' is probably overstating the case for a youth participation certificate, as young people are not a homogenous group. Different recognition strategies will appeal to different groups of young people. For those young people who do feel appropriately recognised for their contributions a certificate may be considered unnecessary.

However the availability of such a certificate would ensure that there is an additional formal way of recognising youth participation activities.

4. What should be the primary purpose of the certificate?

Comments

The primary purpose of the certificate should be formal recognition of the contribution that young people make to the community.

5. Should the certificate focus on youth participation of any kind or should some requirements be put in place?

Comments

There are two aspects to this response:

- 1) Voluntary work as compared to other forms of participation (eg: work for the dole, training and education) should be distinctly recognised as an activity that is quite unique from other unpaid participation activities. The definition of 'volunteering' is that it is:
ie: - undertaken through not-for-profit organisations or projects
- of benefit to the community
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- for no financial payment; and
- in designated volunteer positions only
- 2) Responses from the Volunteering Australia Network on whether the certificate should have set parameters or be quite flexible in what it recognises were mixed. Taking these into account, Volunteering Australia would support a certificate that sets out some general guidelines that will help organisations think about what recognition can be offered to youth participants in their programs and activities, but allows them a fair amount of latitude in deciding the specific elements of participation to recognise.

Guidelines which are too prescriptive eg: must have participated for 100 hours etc may discourage participants who do not meet this requirement but still consider that their contribution is valuable and helps to achieve significant outcomes. The notion of linking to a particular amount of contribution would go against the trend of what we know about young people's participation in volunteer work, that is, they prefer short-term project work to on-going commitments. Prescriptive requirements could also serve to preclude some of those youth participants who currently receive no, or limited, recognition for their activities.

If the aim of the certificate is to recognise youth participation, then it should allow organisations the flexibility to recognise that participation on whatever basis they think appropriate to the activities undertaken and the organisation's requirements. For example, organisations could note what the participation has involved, such as hours worked, project aspects involved in, tasks undertaken, involvement in planning, skills demonstrated and outcomes.

Organisations could set their own policies around when it is appropriate to issue a youth participation certificate which could be incorporated into the organisations' volunteer recognition policy that organisations are encouraged to develop under the *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations*.

6. *If there are to be participation requirements, what form should these take?*

Comments

There should not be 'requirements' as such, rather some general statements about the sorts of things that organisations could think about when determining the situations in which a youth participation certificate could be issued.

For example:

- Commitment – whether on-going or for the purposes of a particular task or activity;
- Community awareness
- Degree of participation
- Contribution to outcomes
- Achievements in overcoming barriers to volunteering

7. *Which organisations should be able to distribute the certificate?*

Comments

The organisations in which young people participate should be able to distribute the certificate. For volunteer activities this should only be not-for-profit organisations or projects.

8. *Should there be requirements for organisations wishing to distribute the certificate?*

Comments

Requirements on organisations wishing to distribute the certificate should be limited. Bureaucratic requirements would have the effect of deterring some organisations, particularly smaller ones, of issuing them.

9. *Should the issuing organisation's brand or logo be able to be included on the certificate?*

Comments

Yes – this should be an option as it is important for young people to be able to identify their participation in a particular activity / program or organisation. Some young people may receive more than one certificate if they work with a number of different organisations over a period of time.

Inclusion of the issuing organisation's brand or logo also helps individual organisations to be recognised as contributors to youth development.

10. *How can the administration of the youth participation certificate be sustained in the future?*

Comments

There would need to be a central body or organisation responsible for promoting the existence of the youth participation certificate. The body would encourage organisations to issue the certificate. It could also work with issuing organisations to develop strategies to collect data about the extent of 'take-up' of the certificate by organisations, the impact of

this on young people’s perceptions of the value of their own contribution, and community awareness and acceptance of the certificate as a means of recognising participation by young people.

A marketing strategy would be vital to alerting organisations to the existence of the certificate in the first instance.

On-going funding would be needed to co-ordinate this effort.

11. Should a single recognisable certificate format be used?

Yes

A single, recognisable certificate, with the same design carried over several years, would be important to gaining awareness and acceptance by all parties – issuing organisations, young people and the broader community.

12. Should the certificate carry any standard explanation or statements about the reason for issue?

Yes

Comments

An overarching statement about youth development and positive participation would be helpful. The broad statement should be consistent with the primary purpose of the certificate.

Additional space should be allowed to encourage organisations to provide details of a particular contribution if desired.

13. Should a pre-printed certificate be used?

Yes

Comments

Although the cost may seem small, many not for profit organisations will not have the necessary resources to produce the certificate in hard copy to a standard that reflects the importance and value of the certificate.

14. What is your preferred option? (please circle one option)

Option 3 OR 5

Comments

Options 3 or 5 would best address some of the issues raised in responses to Questions 1–13. However, responses received from our own network indicate a wide variety of views on this question.

15. Would anyone be disadvantaged by this option?

Comments

It is unlikely that anyone could be disadvantaged by either of these options. One argument might be that the certificate doesn't help in recognising the 'extra' contribution that some young people make and that all participation activity is treated equally.

This answer may depend on the final aims of the youth participation certificate.

16. Would this option meet the needs of the young people?

Comments

This is something that young people themselves need to be consulted on and would depend on how organisations would intend to use the certificate.

17. Would this option meet the aims and objectives of a youth participation certificate?

Yes

Comments

Organisations would be able to stipulate hours worked, level of commitment, practical achievements and personal attributes of the participant.

18. Would this option meet the general requirements of a youth participation certificate?

Yes

Comments

Option 5 is obviously the most flexible.

19. What is the likely impact of the option on the issuing organisation?

Comments

Limited bureaucracy involved so theoretically organisations would be able to access and issue the certificates as they thought appropriate. It is possible though that the more generic the certificate the less valued it is by organisations so this could impact on take-up of the certificate.

20. Would you use it?

Yes

Comments

21. Have you any further suggestions or comment on any aspect of the Youth Participation Certificate, its format or implementation?

Comments

As well as having its own “Youth Participation” logo, the certificate would need to be regarded as being ‘owned’ by a particular organisation in order to have widespread credibility eg: ANTA -, this way the certificate would be seen as supporting the policy objectives of the particular agency. However provision for logos of individual organisations would also be needed to identify who issued the certificate.

The paper is not clear on the definition of “youth” – this is important to define clearly in terms of the certificate so that it is seen as relevant to the target audience. For example, a ‘youth participation’ certificate would perhaps not be as valued by a young person who is 22 (an adult) and university qualified and in full-time employment, as a young person aged 15 who is undertaking some form of participation for the first time.

On page 4, the paper refers to “voluntary involvement” – it is important to be clear about what this means. Volunteering Australia’s view is that for an activity to be recognised as “volunteering” it must meet all elements of the definition of formal volunteering. Community activities, which are undertaken as part of a school curriculum which require a young person to participate, are not “volunteering” and should not be confused as such. This however in no way devalues the contribution of community work as part of a curriculum; it is just that “volunteering” is not the appropriate term to describe it.

Name (optional)

Kylee Bates

Organisation (optional)

Volunteering Australia

In preparing this response, Volunteering Australia sought the views of the network of state and territory and regional volunteer centres. Although only a small number of replies were received Volunteering Australia was also able to draw on its own knowledge of volunteer involving organisations and volunteering activities.

Thank you

Please lodge your response to these questions to:

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