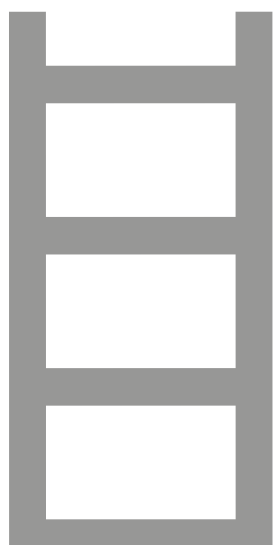
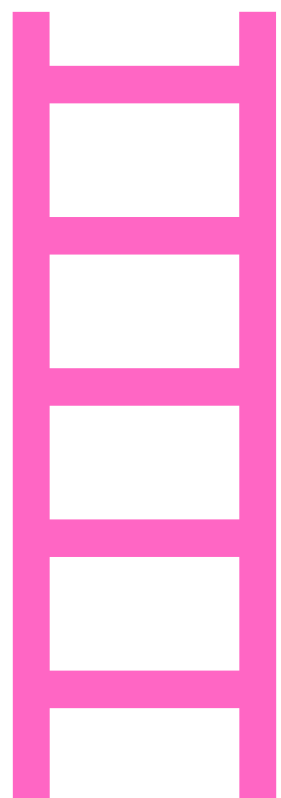
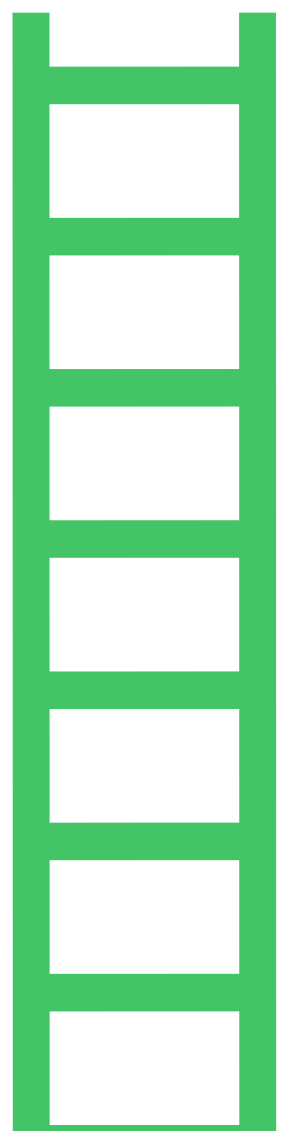


Youth Voice & Participation

for Music Education Hubs



A practical toolkit for
empowering young people
in musical settings

Written and produced
by Lawrence Becko and
Liz Coomb





In this toolkit...

- 1 Introducing youth voice in hubs
- 2 How to use this toolkit
- 3 Tools and exercises

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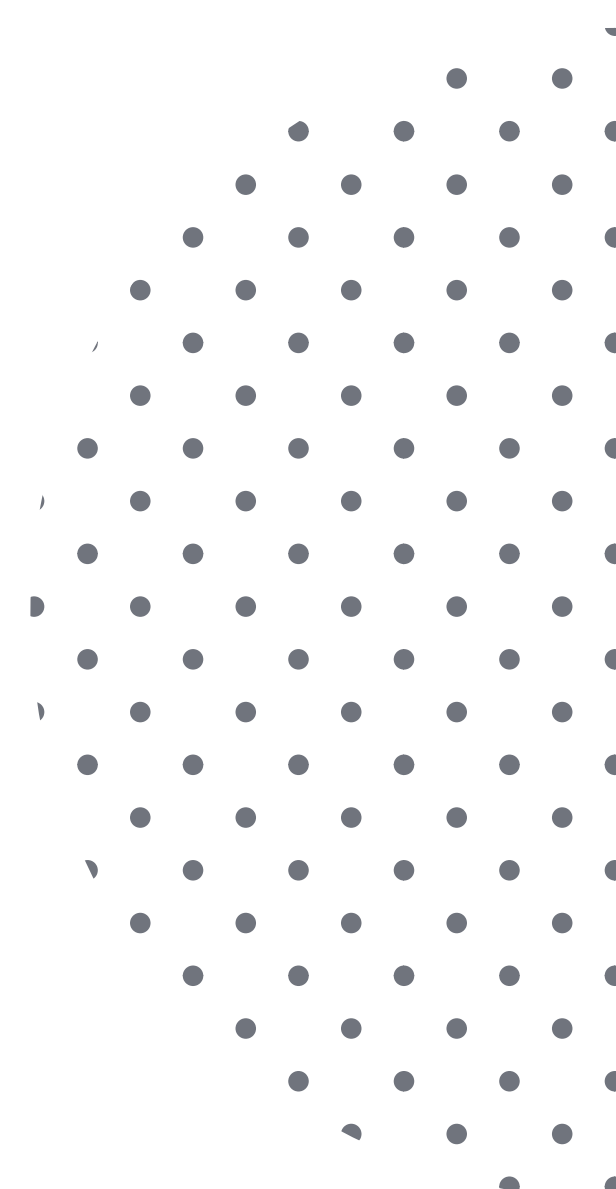
Introducing youth voice in music hubs

1

Youth voice is increasingly recognised as a key aspect of inclusion and diversity in hubs.

Many hubs already have elements of youth voice happening in across their activities, with a number showing a strong commitment and desire to go further. Youth voice can be part of operations, as well as teaching and delivery.

Sound Connections, Lawrence Becko Associates and mac makes music worked with five hubs in the West Midlands to understand the opportunities and challenges for youth voice in hubs. This toolkit has been developed in response to this work.



Five reasons for hubs to embrace youth voice

Youth voice is a human right, enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, one of the most widely ratified declarations in history.



Youth voice is key to safe and inclusive practice: it opens up new potential for conversations and engenders a more trusting and transparent environment.

Youth voice increases representation and opens up dialogue. By asking diverse groups of young people what they need, our work becomes more representative and relevant.



Youth voice delivers high quality outcomes and impact, and is increasingly an expectation of funders such as Arts Council England and Youth Music.



Youth voice is an eye-opening experience: it is a great way to get creative, generate new ideas and have fun in an inclusive way.

Integrating youth voice in **delivery**

There are many ways a hub can integrate youth voice into their delivery. Some of the most common are:

- Involving students in repertoire choice in lessons and ensembles
- Providing opportunities for co-production and programming at performances, events and festivals
- Applying youth voice principles when working with vulnerable, disengaged or overlooked young people
- Training and developing young music leaders and supporting alumni
- Gathering regular feedback and evaluation.

Integrating youth voice in **strategy**

There are many ways a hub can integrate youth voice into their delivery. Some of the most common are:

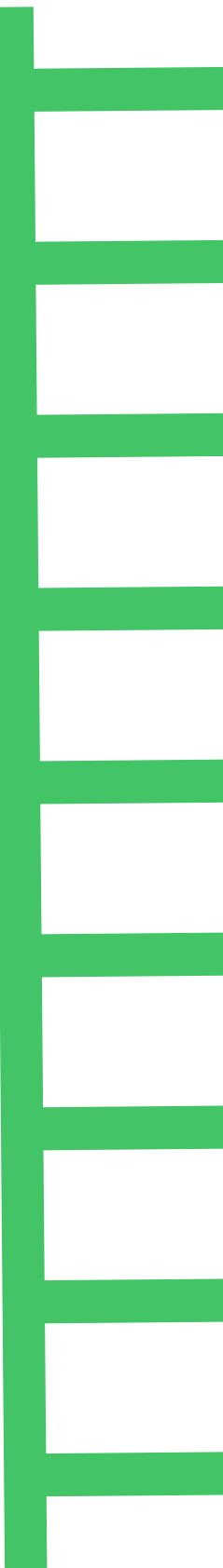
- Forming dedicated youth boards or councils
- Involving young people in hub governance, for example by inviting young representatives to sit on the hub steering group
- Market research and service improvement through focus groups
- Embedding youth voice in workforce development
- Encouraging partners to take a youth voice approach.



What hubs need to do next

Embedding youth voice in a hub is a process and it requires time, investment and energy from all involved. Here are some key first steps we have identified:

- Think about how you can **integrate and join up existing youth voice activity**. Use the audit tool in this kit to start mapping out your offer.
- Ensure all staff (office and delivery teams) undertake high quality **youth voice training**, such as that provided by Sound Connections and Lawrence Becko Associates.
- Commit to **including youth voice in your budget and business case** – and ensure that dedicated funds go towards this process.
- **Communicate and collaborate** with other hubs and partner organisations – we all have the same goal.
- Make sure you **capture, monitor and evaluate your progress**. You will learn so much from the journey you are embarking on.



2

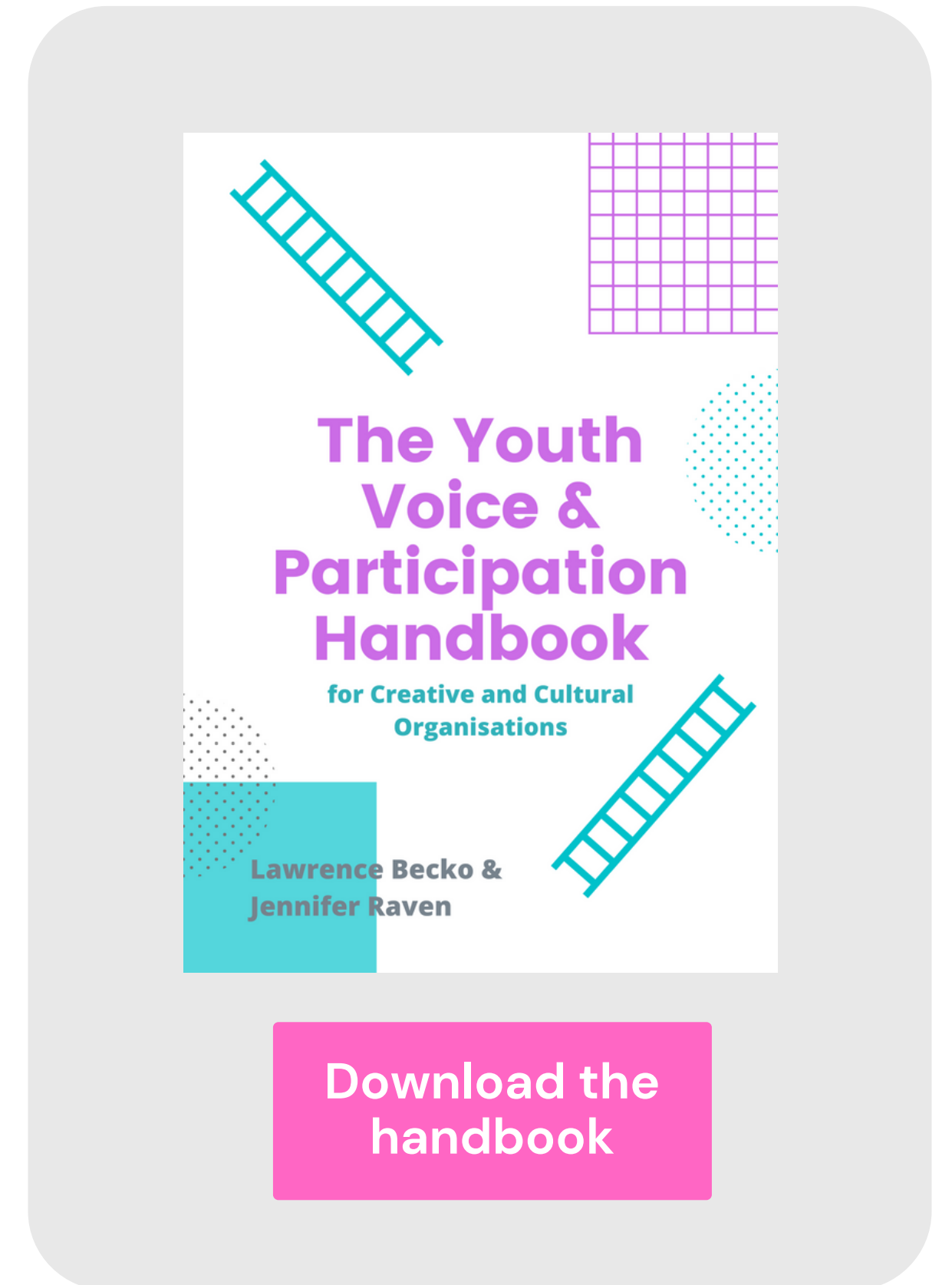
How to use this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed by an expert team of youth voice specialists, based on consultation with five hubs in the West Midlands and extensive work with other hubs and creative organisations across the UK.

You can use the activities and frameworks that follow to kickstart your youth voice journey. You could work through these individually, or better still, share them with your management or teaching team.

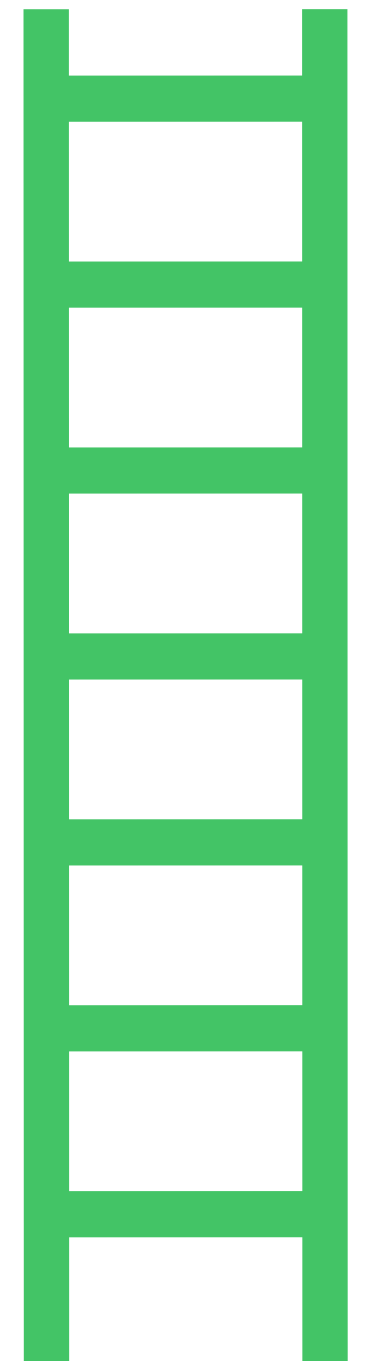
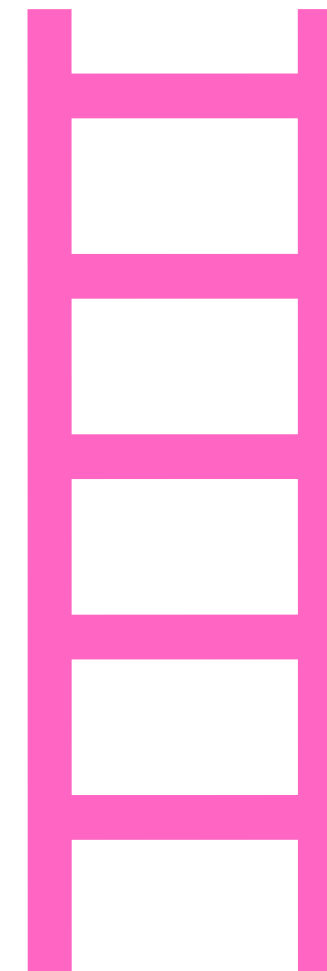
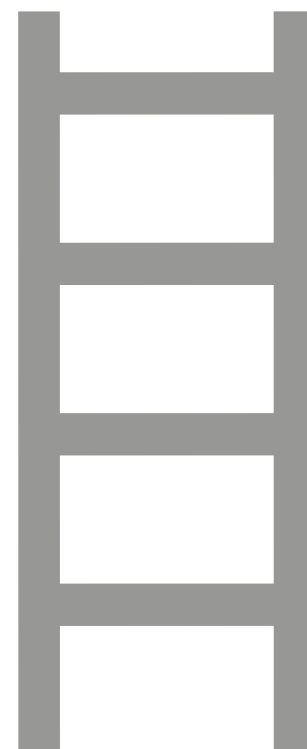
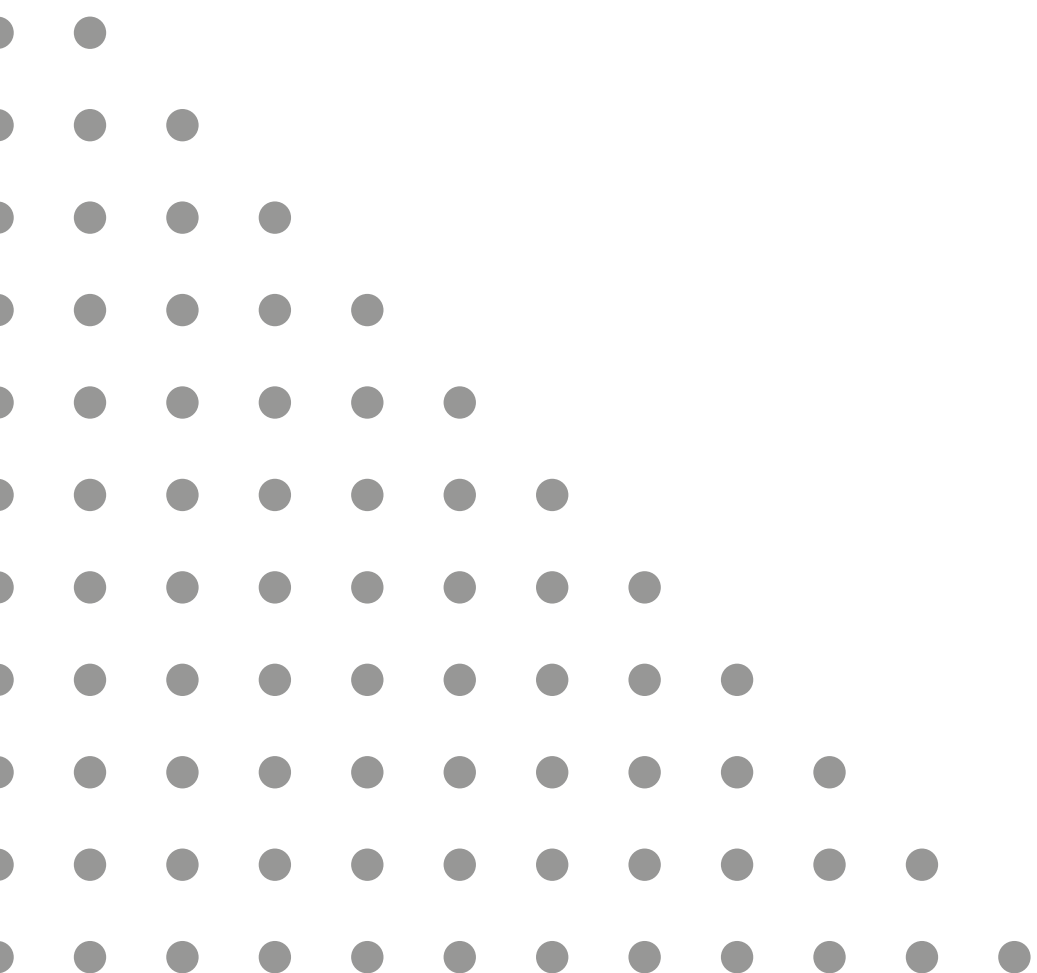
Before you undertake the exercises in this toolkit, we strongly recommend that you read **The Youth Voice & Participation Handbook** by Lawrence Becko and Jennifer Raven, published by Sound Connections.

The guide will take you through the theory, practical application and strategic implications of working with youth voice. This will prepare you for thinking more deeply about youth voice in your hub.



3

Tools and exercises





First time you had a say

Think about the first time you had a say about something that mattered to you. How old were you? What happened? How did you feel? Write down your answers in the first box, then ask your colleagues and young people to share theirs.

You

Your
colleagues

Young
people

What are the benefits of youth voice for...

In small groups, discuss what the benefits of youth voice might be for your hub, for your young people and for wider society. What common themes emerge?

Your
hub

Young
people

Wider
society



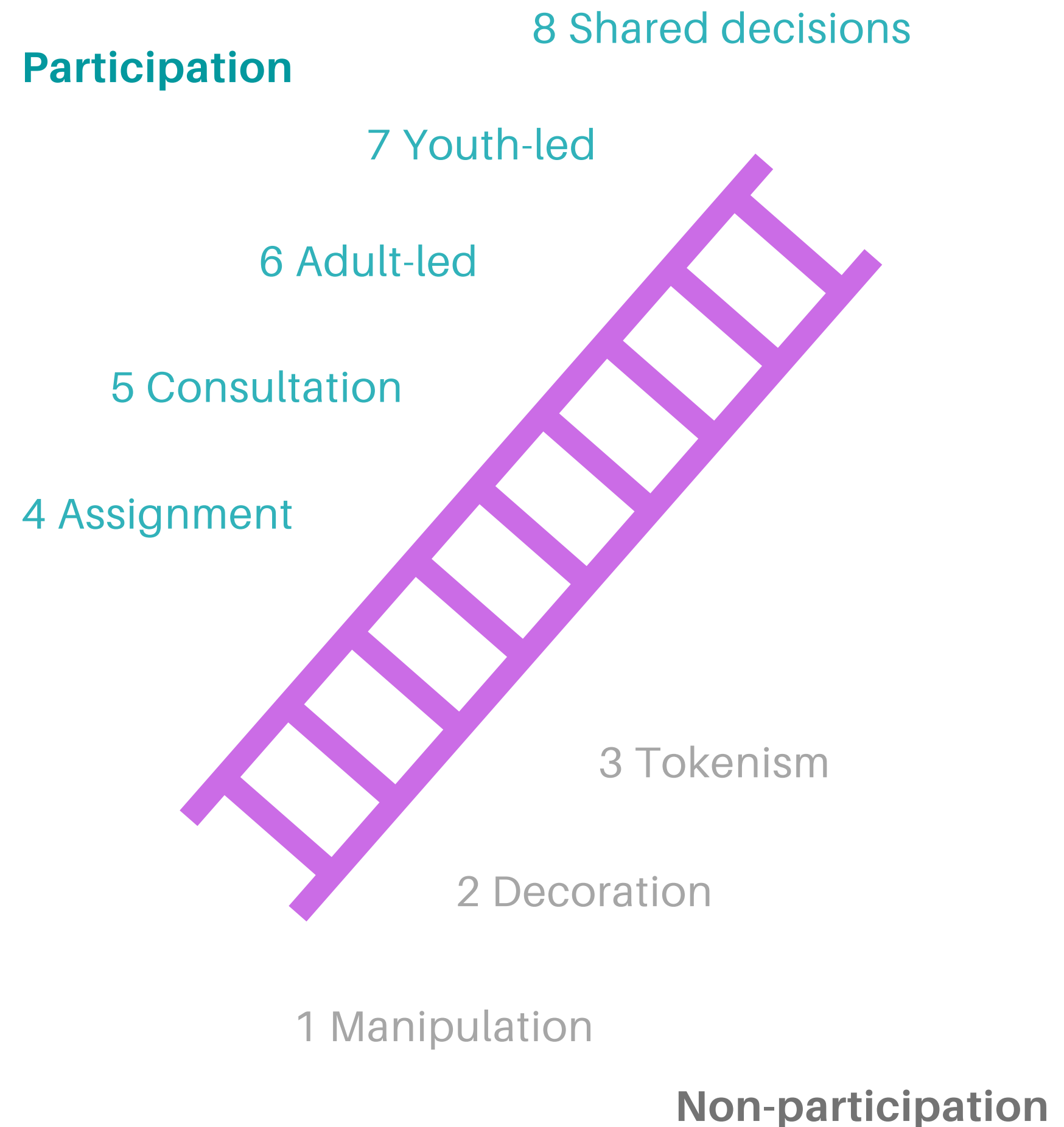
The Ladder of Youth Participation

The Ladder of Participation is possibly the best known youth voice and participation model. We owe the ladder to Sherry Arnstein who created the first version in 1969. Since then it has evolved and developed, and the version we refer to today was developed by Roger Hart (on behalf of the United Nations) in 1992.

The Ladder is rooted in citizenship and democracy; it encourages us to consider how we meaningfully involve children and young people as active citizens. The Ladder is divided into two zones: non-participation and participation.

The ladder is a fantastic tool for better understanding our youth voice work journey. It provides ready-made scaffolding and a clear direction of travel. Remember that youth voice isn't a 'race to the top', but a gradual progression towards a range of ideal scenarios and mindsets. You can read more about each rung in the **Youth Voice & Participation Handbook** by Lawrence Becko and Jenn Raven (pages 10–15).

Read this *before* undertaking the following activity.



Activity audit

List your key activities in the first column. On what rung of Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation do they fall? What would take it up to the next rung, or the one after?

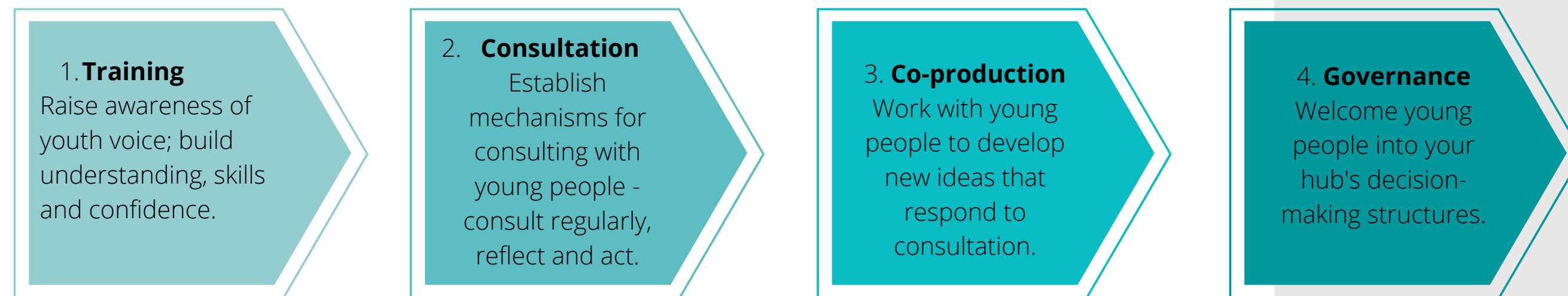
1 Activities	2 What rung on the ladder?	3 What would take it up a rung or two?
Example: weekly Wind Band rehearsal	5	Introduce 15 minutes of feedback at the end of each rehearsal. Nominate two reps to report back to staff with student views and requests.

Leading the change

Embedding youth voice: four stages

To come into its own and have maximum impact, youth voice needs to be wholly embraced by both the lead organisation and the hub partners. During our time developing youth voice and supporting other organisations to do the same, we have observed the following phases of development. Of course, in real life youth voice doesn't happen in an entirely linear way: there is often lots of overlap and moving back and forth between stages. Nevertheless, this flow diagram can be a helpful way to clarify the process you are embarking on, check your progress, and remind yourself that it takes time.

Whilst it's important to keep the long-term goal in sight, it's also important to celebrate the successes along the way so make sure to keep a log of your youth voice achievements, however big or small.

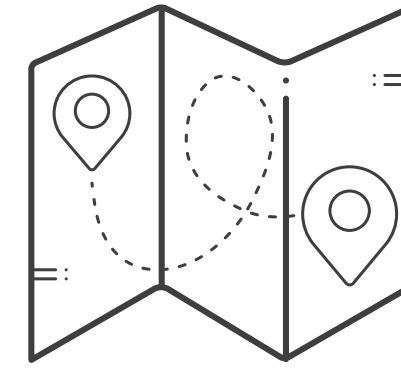


Youth voice as a change process

When it comes to organisations embedding youth voice, we increasingly describe it as a change process. By this, we mean that it requires a willingness to embrace new methods, approaches and strategies. As with any type of organisational transformation, it will need planning, managing and reviewing. This is always most effective when shared across teams, departments or specialisms. Change is a shared responsibility and everyone deserves the opportunity to be consulted as part of the process.



External and internal drivers

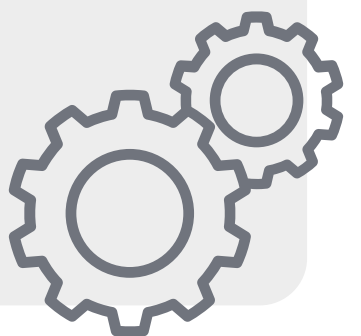


You need to be ready before you start a youth voice change process. Use this exercise to gain a clearer insight into the operating environment and how it interacts with youth voice

List the external drivers and factors that will affect your ability to take a youth voice approach...



List the internal drivers and conditions that will enable you to implement youth voice...



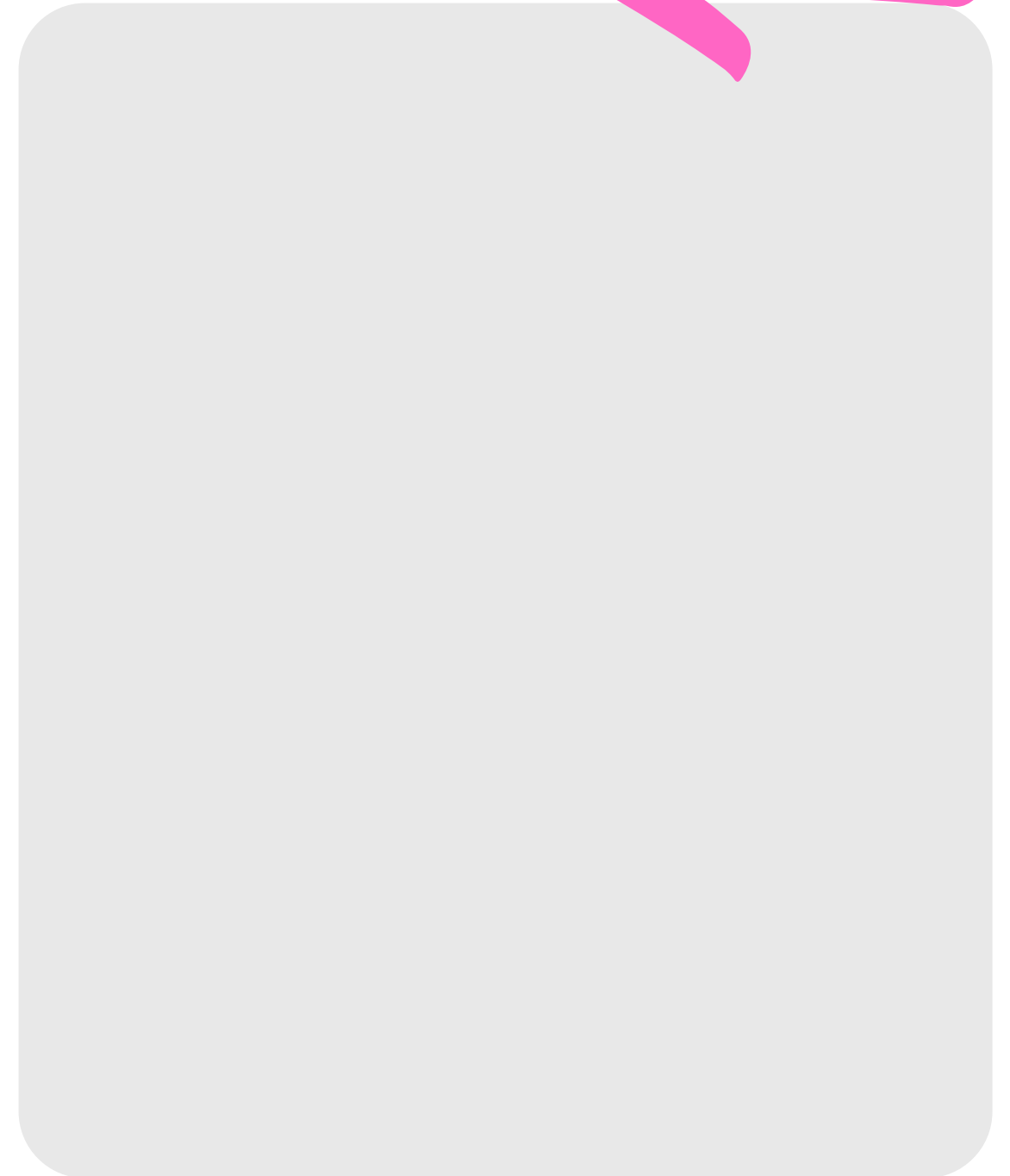
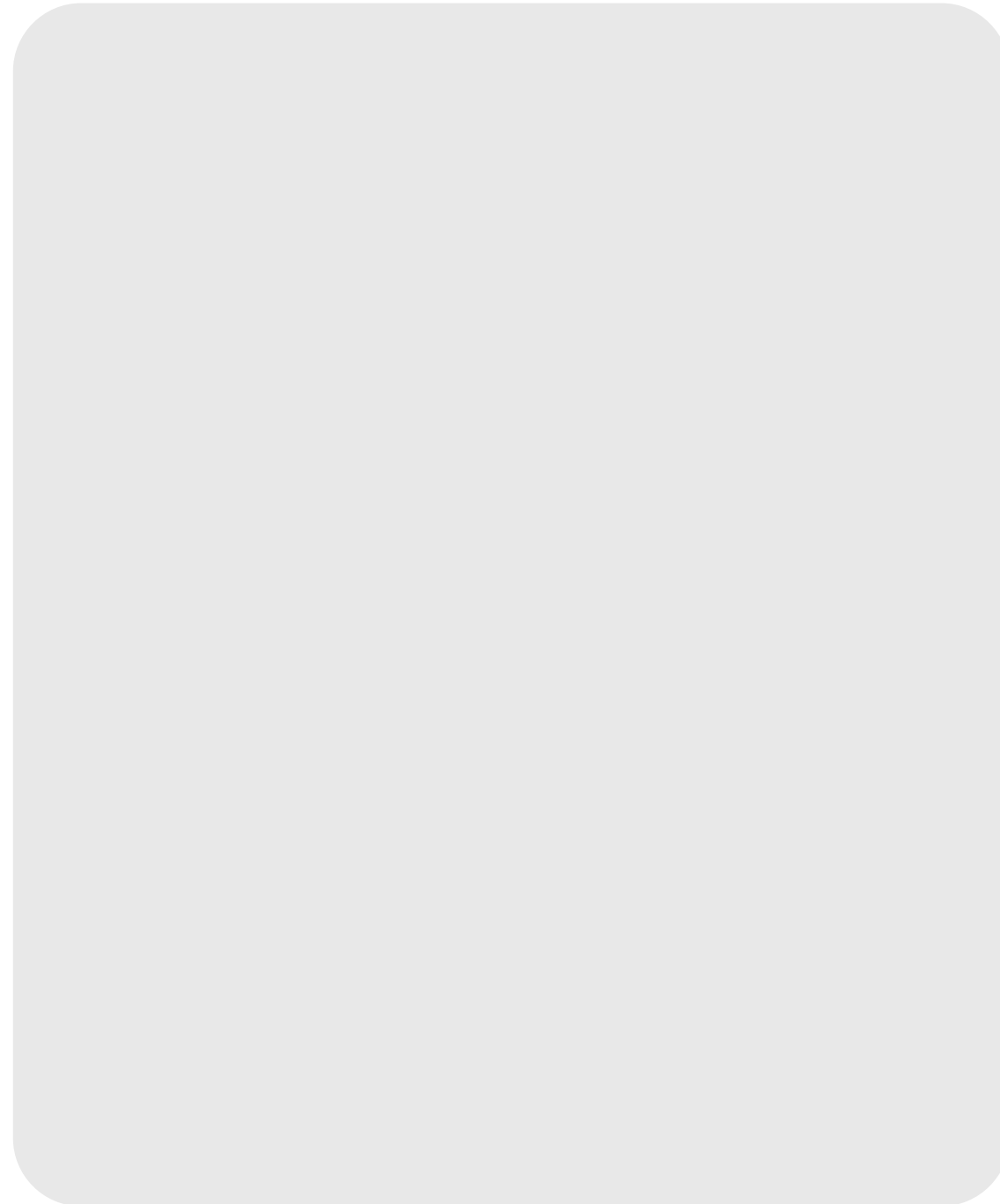
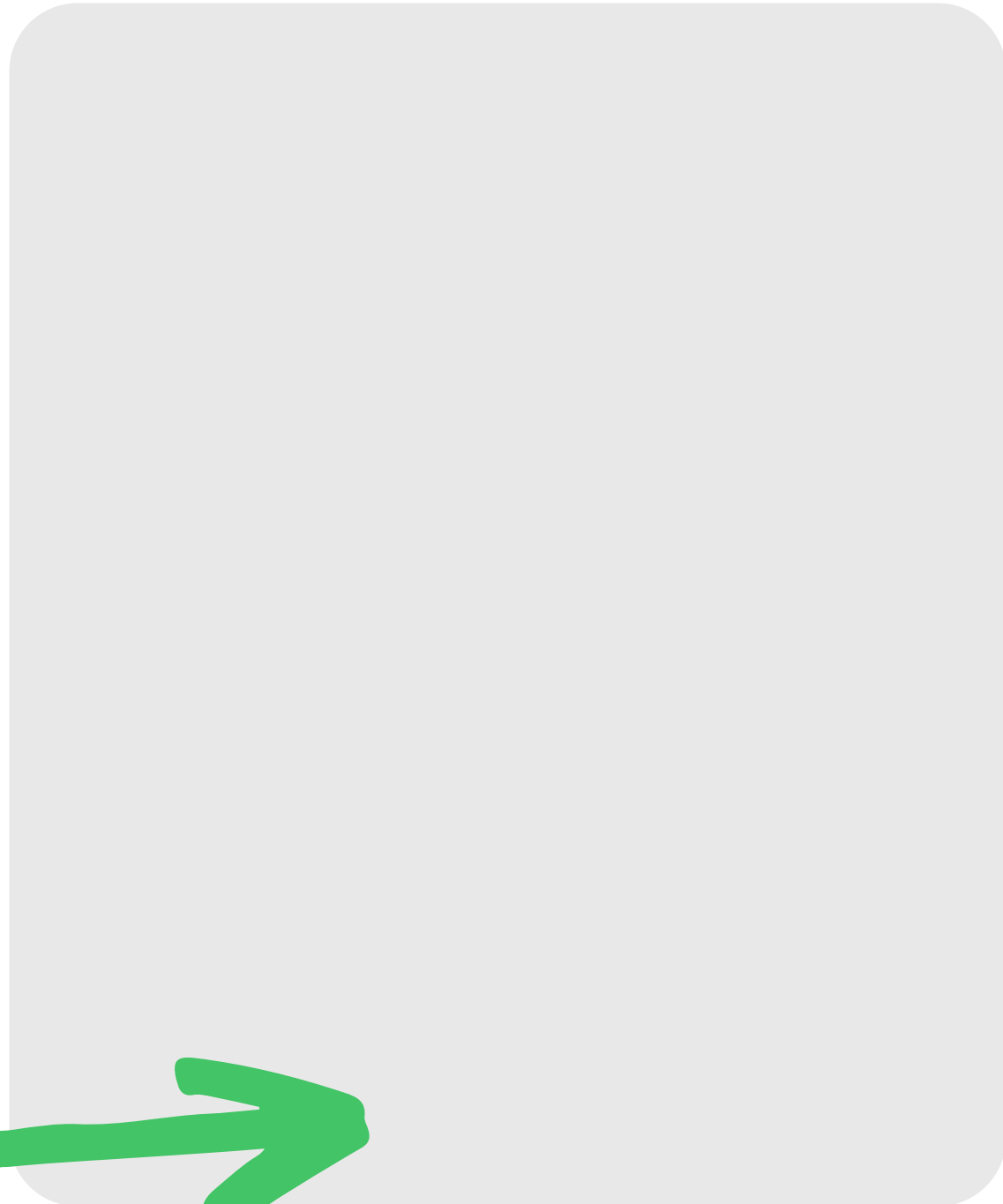
Practical considerations

Use this grid to map out the youth voice activities you plan to carry out, the anticipated outcome of each one, and the resources each activity will require to become a reality. See the [Youth Voice & Participation Handbook](#) for more advice on planning activities.

Activities

Outcomes

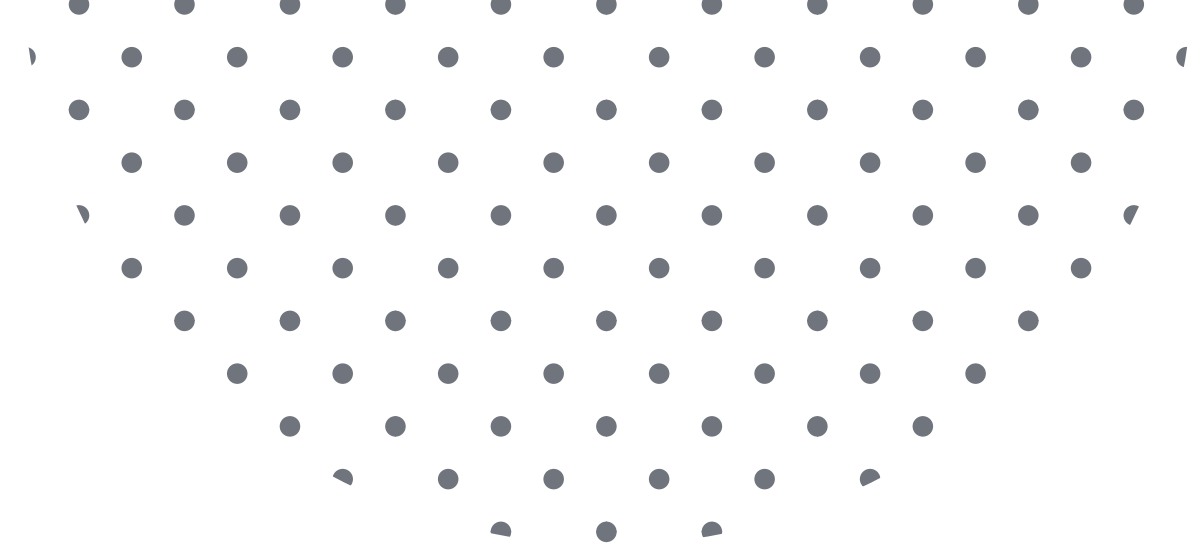
Resources



Ready for change?

Before you get going, we highly recommend taking the Youth Voice Readiness Self-Audit. We've designed these questions to help you think the key aspects of the process from a variety of perspectives. You can also use the audit to track your progress.

ARE YOU READY?	NOT YET	GETTING THERE	YES!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">To listen and be curiousTo empathise and communicateTo learn and changeTo share power			
IS YOUR TEAM OR ORG READY?	NOT YET	GETTING THERE	YES!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is willingness and motivation there?Does everyone understand what is at stake?Do people have the awareness, skills and training, including safeguarding?Is there allocated budget and capacity?			



ARE YOUNG PEOPLE READY?	NOT YET	GETTING THERE	YES!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do young people want this?Is it appropriate and timely for them?Is it safe and suitable to proceed?How will they be kept in the loop?			
IS THE WORLD READY?	NOT YET	GETTING THERE	YES!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How will this be received?Can you manage the response?What will change and how will you capture it?			

Good luck!

Let us know how you get on:

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