

# UNLOCKING THE POWER OF YOUTH

A CHECKLIST FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL  
GOVERNMENTS



Local and regional governments are increasingly acknowledging the pivotal role that youth<sup>1</sup> should play in achieving ambitious climate targets through local action. Often the systematic inclusion of youth voices in processes and activities of local and regional governments (LRGs) is not put into practice due to a lack of information or unclear path to implementation.

If you are you asking yourself:

- *How can my local / regional government engage with young people in our community and benefit from their interests and experiences? Where do I begin?*
- *How can my local / regional government empower young people to engage and even lead on local action?*
- *Our city/region is localizing the SDGs and we wish to engage the youth, as an important stakeholder group. How can we do this effectively?*

ICLEI can help you reply to those questions through this checklist for local and regional governments. This is based on a literature review, hands-on experience of our experts working with LRGs, and consultations with youth groups and LRGs. This list also includes successful actions implemented by ICLEI Members.

### **How to use this document**

Please use this checklist to guide and inspire your local or regional government, whether you are just starting in this space or have already engaged with young people in your community.

Actions are listed under 'What to do?', while suggestions for key performance indicators (KPIs) are listed under 'How to measure impact?'.

Local and regional governments which are currently running youth engagement programs or working with young people in their community are invited to share their reflections on this list. This is a living document open to feedback and suggestions from the two stakeholders groups it aims to bridge the gap between: subnational governments and young people.

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*The actions are aligned with the 3 pillars of engagement as defined in [ICLEI's Vision on Youth Engagement in Global Climate Action](#). Although the engagement pillars are focused on ICLEI's strategy to engage youth in climate, it should be noted that this checklist is not limited to a specific theme such as climate. Instead, it can be widely applied to multiple areas of work focused on sustainable development.*

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<sup>1</sup> ICLEI aligns itself with the [UNFCCC definition of youth](#), which considers all children and young people below the age of 35.

# ADVOCACY

## Actions for an increased influence of young people on policy and strategy

Youth engagement can contribute to better policy design and implementation. It is therefore important to put in place actions to raise awareness and enable youth involvement, for example within municipal departments and externally to residents.

|  | <i><b>What to do?</b></i>  | <i><b>How to measure impact?</b></i>   |
|--|--|--|
|  | <b>1. Increase awareness and sensitivity of municipal staff on youth engagement</b>  |  |
|  | 1.1. Inform internal LRG departments on active youth organizations on the ground (identified target group)   | 1.1.1. Internal database with youth organizations and contacts to youth in kindergarten, schools, universities, etc.<br>1.1.2. Dedicated youth-specific communication and outreach plan and tracker  |
|  | 1.2. Provide own staff with clear information and the approach to participatory processes to effectively engage youth organizations and different groups / demographics of youth | 1.2.1. Guidelines for LRG staff on how to engage with youth in their work. This should include training on inclusive, safe, ethical and age appropriate engagement<br>1.2.2. Develop a youth stakeholder engagement plan<br>1.2.3. Incentives provided for LRG staff that engage youth effectively |
|  | <b>2. Communicate the relevance of youth' contribution to the community</b>  |  |
|  | 2.1. Showcase successful collaborations between LRG entities and youth (e.g. dedicated events, joint projects, reports, infographics, social media)                              | 2.1.1. Number of activities delivered on local project led by or co-organized with youth<br>2.1.2. Number of youth speakers at LRG-organized events  |
|  | 2.2. Provide young people and youth-led organizations space in regular LRG communications with decision-makers and residents   | 2.2.1. Number of conversations annually with the Council/decision-makers (e.g. in Council sessions)<br>2.2.2. Number of youth-lead content in official government (LRG) communication to residents   |
|  | 2.3. Easy information access for young people on how to engage with local/regional governmental bodies   | 2.3.1. Dedicated youth liaison as reference person within the LRG<br>2.3.2. Number of engagements with the youth liaison per year  |

|  | What to do?  | How to measure impact?                           |
|--|--|--|
|  | <b>3. Programs and campaigns designed to inspire cultural and behavioral change and contribute to social movements for environmental sustainability</b>                  |  |
|  | 3.1. Provide guidance to youth on developing initiatives and campaigns that support sustainable development and change in the community (see <a href="#">Example 1</a> ) | 3.1.1. Number of new youth-led projects annually |

## GOVERNANCE

### Actions to increase civic engagement

From theory to practice young generations need to be part of the implementation of sustainable actions at all stages, starting with priority setting all the way until monitoring its impacts. Embedding youth in the governance structure will allow to put in place a consistent engagement policy and will result in a more co-created and co-owned process.

|  | What to do?  | How to measure impact?  |
|--|--|---|
|  | <b>4. Programs or campaigns to increase youth focus and youth inclusion in policy and plans</b>  |   |
|  | 4.1. Increased attention of youth perspective in environmental policy  | 4.1.1. Specific mentions of youth in environmental policies and pledges   |
|  | 4.2. Initiatives or campaigns to increase civic engagement at the individual, household, or community level (see <a href="#">Example 2</a> )   | 4.2.1. Number of people participated in or interacted with referenda, elections, or petitions   |
|  | <b>5. Youth voices in formal decision-making processes</b>   |   |
|  | 5.1. Youth representation guaranteed in the local council / decision-making body and co-creation methods with youth (see <a href="#">Example 3</a> ). To avoid ad hoc youth participation, institutionalization within the local governance system through local regulatory provisions is key. Ensure that young people from different groups are represented and are equally able to participate. | 5.1.1. Number of youth participating in formal decision- and policy-making.<br>5.1.2. Youth climate council established or youth representative seats on existing council |

|  | What to do?   | How to measure impact?  |
|--|---|---|
|  | 5.2. Equal opportunities for youth representatives in the policy process  | 5.2.1. Environmental policies (institutional, local, national) proposed by youth representatives out of total<br><br>5.2.2. Environmental policies (institutional, local, national) approved by youth representatives out of total proposed<br><br>5.2.3. Number of meetings with youth representation out of total meetings by Council |
|  | 5.3. Dedicated budget earmarked for youth initiatives and their direct management of these (see <a href="#">Example 4</a> ) | 5.3.1. Amount of budget earmarked for youth initiatives<br><br>5.3.2. Participation of youth enabled through the budget, in youth initiatives   |
|  | 5.4. LRG venue available for youth representatives' meetings and activities   | 5.4.1. Number of meetings enabled by providing this space for youth meetings  |

## KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

### Actions for upskilling and creating more job opportunities

The key to integrating young people in the green workforce is to equip them with a relevant set of tools, knowledge and training. This gives them a fair chance to participate in sustainability jobs.

|  | What to do?  | How to measure impact?  |
|--|--|---|
|  | <b>6. Inclusive and accessible capacity-building or training programs geared towards youth</b> |   |
|  | 6.1. Informative sessions organized with local schools or youth organizations                  | 6.1.1. Change in youth perception of control over their own future, personal freedom, access to resources, inclusion in decision-making, before and after participating in initiative (collected through youth opinion surveys) |
|  | 6.2. Easy access to information (infopoint, website) appropriate for all age groups            | 6.2.1. Number of platforms where information is available   |
|  | 6.3. Trainings and/or courses offered to the community with facilitated access for youth       | 6.3.1. Number of courses with facilitation for youth (reserved seats, reduced fares)  |

|  | What to do?  | How to measure impact?  |
|--|--|---|
|  | 6.4. Agreements signed with education institutions to collaborate on projects  | 6.4.1. Number of partnerships with local schools  |
|  | <b>7. Effective re-skilling programs, transition programs, and opportunities for communities who want to shift to sustainable jobs</b> |   |
|  | 7.1. Youth engaged by the LRG or municipal/regional services as trainee/intern with compensation                                       | 7.1.1. Number of trainee involved overall<br>7.1.2. Average amount of the compensation. If it is not an amount, list the benefits       |
|  | 7.2. Young professionals hired by the municipality or municipal services   | 7.2.1. Number of youth employed, or otherwise utilizing skills, as a result of training   |
|  | 7.3. Young professional who have switched to jobs supporting sustainable development   | 7.3.1. Number of people who changed jobs to sustainable jobs. This can be collected by data through an employment history questionnaire |
|  | 7.4. Re-skilling programs for young people to make the shift to sustainable jobs   | 7.4.1. Number of professional programmes for jobs related to sustainability   |
|  | 7.5. Job opportunities for youth, by gender  | 7.5.1. Number sustainable jobs available for junior position /young professionals   |

This checklist supports the concrete application of the [UNFCCC Framework - Glasgow Climate Pact](#), particularly of paragraph 64 that ‘urges Parties and stakeholders to ensure meaningful youth participation and representation in multilateral, national and local decision-making processes, including under the Convention and the Paris Agreement’.

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## Examples from the ICLEI network

### Example 1 | Turku | Finland

Turku in Finland has [several youth initiatives](#) addressing a broad range of topics, including climate and inclusive decision making. The programs support youth-led initiatives through dedicated grants, the set up of youth committees and the support of international youth exchanges. Moreover, Turku has been championing the [1.5 degrees campaign](#) to raise awareness and provide concrete tips to its residents so they can actively contribute to the city's ambitious climate targets. The campaign was initially launched as a competition with great engagement of youth. Finally, students at the University campus receive specific advice on how to reduce their energy consumption by a team of [fellow students who have been trained to become energy mentors](#).

### Example 2 | Espoo | Finland

Espoo in Helsinki, Finland has a [Future Mentors Programme](#) aimed at bridging the gap between policymakers and the youth, establishing a dialogue between them. The Future Mentors Programme is a reversed mentoring programme, where the young Future Mentors share their fears, hopes and dreams related to their home city with the mentee, who is a local decision maker. The role of the mentee is to learn from the thoughts of the next generation.

### Example 3 | Olympia, Boise, San Antonio | United States of America

Some U.S. cities are creating opportunities for youth community members to be involved in the policy process through youth climate councils or representative seats on existing councils. In [Olympia](#), local youth climate action clubs and members of a non-climate focused youth council are being involved in the development of the city's new Climate Action Plan. In [Boise](#), the Youth Climate Action Council gives youth members the tools and guidance they need to take direct climate action within the local community. In [San Antonio](#), the Mayor's Youth Engagement Council for Climate Initiatives is providing a way for youth to be engaged and invested in the policy process through the City of San Antonio's Climate Action & Adaptation Plan, enabling them to advocate for climate policy in their local community.

## Examples from the ICLEI network

### Example 4 | Cascais | Portugal

Cascais in Portugal has a [Youth Participatory Budget](#) dedicated to young people's ideas to improve the community. This is Cascais' democratic way of deciding what to do with a part of the municipal budget. Beside this opportunity, youth associations are also welcome to submit ideas for project implementation in the city at the [AdaptCascais Fund](#) call for proposals and join the local effort toward increased capacity to respond to climate change. Selected ideas are awarded up to €3 000 in funding to be put into practice. The Cascais' [Youth Empowerment](#) program, instead, provides young citizens with opportunities to learn more about different topics through courses, workshops and field experiences. All activities are linked with the SDG(s) they contribute to and are part of the city's strategy to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement.