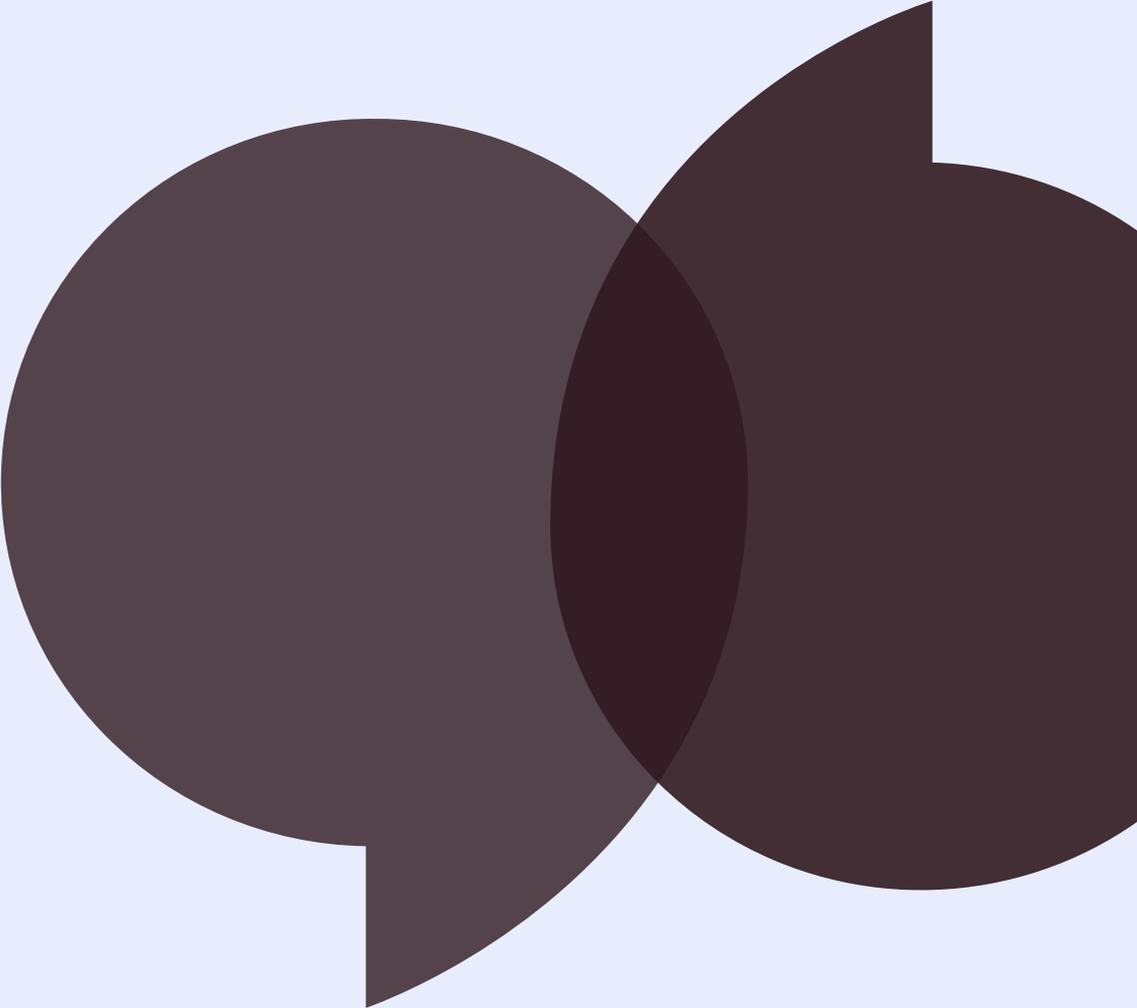


A Typology of Young People's Participation in Grant-Making



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A structured typology of young people's participation in grant-making, categorising different levels of involvement based on depth, decision-making power, and learning opportunities.

1. Tokenistic Participation

Young people are included for optics rather than meaningful contribution. It looks good and the young people will likely have given up a lot of their time and effort but there is no real substance to their participation. Young people involved in tokenistic participation may learn that participation is a sham.

What does this look like?

- Young people may be involved but have no real decision-making power.
- They may have decision-making power but are not fully trained, supported and informed.
- Supporting adults may influence (often in the form of "advice").

For Example:

- Youth people are invited to contribute to a funding panel but:
 - Have not been supported to understand their role or to be prepared and informed enough to contribute in a meaningful way.
 - Adults are not skilled enough or open enough to give full weight to young people's input
- Young people are tasked with making funding decisions autonomously but:
 - Have not received the training and support required to ensure that they feel confident and equipped to undertake this role and are prepared, knowledgeable and informed enough to make criteria-based decisions that are fair to the applicants.
 - Have not been supported to assess applications ahead of the panel meeting. (The purpose of a panel meeting is to agree decisions as a group. If young people are seeing applications for the first time at a panel meeting this is not meaningful participation.)
 - Those facilitating either consciously or unconsciously influence decision-making. This can occur as a result of poor preparation and support for young people and facilitators stepping in to "help" at the point of decision-making because young people are struggling with the volume and content of applications.

Levels of Engagement, Influence and Opportunity (Young People)

Minimal influence

Symbolic engagement

No learning opportunities

Potential negative learning and outcomes.



2. Consultative Participation

Young people are asked for their opinions but do not influence final funding decisions.

Their perspectives may be gathered through surveys, focus groups, or advisory sessions.

Young people understand the process and that their input will be taken seriously and make a difference.

Adults retain full control over fund allocation.

Examples:

- Young people are invited to help design a fund for other young people that will be run by adults.
- Young people provide recommendations on grant applications, but funders make the final decisions.

Levels of Engagement, Influence and Opportunity (Young People)

Some influence

Input without final say

To be meaningful, this type of participation should be supported by learning opportunities for young people that mean they are fully informed of the purpose and limitations of their input and that mean they are informed and fully equipped to undertake the role.

Level of influence will vary according to capacity and willingness of adults to genuinely engage and take on board young people's opinions.

Considerable risk of becoming tokenistic if adults do not genuinely engage and take on board young people's opinions.

Levels of influence will vary according to the extent to which young people have been supported to understand and undertake the role.

Considerable risk of becoming tokenistic if young people are not fully supported to understand and undertake the role.

Where adults do engage well and young people are fully aware of the limits of their influence this is a legitimate and meaningful form of participation.



3. Collaborative Participation

Young people work alongside adults in assessing applications and making funding decisions.

They receive training and support to understand the grant-making process.

Decision-making is shared, with young people having a defined role in funding allocation.

Example:

- A mixed panel of young and adult assessors' reviews grant applications together.

Levels of Engagement, Influence and Opportunity (Young People)

Shared decision-making

Structured involvement of young people.

Supported by learning opportunities for young people that mean they are fully informed of the purpose and limitations of their input and that mean they are informed and fully equipped to undertake the role.

Level of influence will vary according the capacity and willingness of adults to genuinely engage and take on board young people's opinions.

Considerable risk of becoming tokenistic if adults do not genuinely engage and take on board young people's opinions.

Levels of influence will vary according to the extent to which young people have been supported to understand and undertake the role.

Risk of becoming tokenistic if young people are not fully supported to understand and undertake the role.

Where adults do engage well and young people are fully aware of the limits of their influence this is a legitimate form of participation.

Note: this type of participation requires a lot of commitment, planning and possibly a significant amount of training for the adults involved if young people are to have an equal voice and influence in shared decision-making with adults.



4. Youth-Led Decision-Making

Young people are the primary decision-makers in grant allocation.

They design the criteria, assess applications, and allocate funds with minimal adult intervention.

Requires comprehensive training, long-term mentorship, and structural support.

Examples:

A youth-led funding board controls a specific grant, setting priorities and making final decisions. This may be facilitated by adults but not in any way influenced

It is known that a fund will receive hundreds of applications and be hugely over-subscribed. Adult assessors assess applications from an eligibility technical and financial perspective and pass eligible applications to young people to make final decisions based on criteria that the young people have developed (see YouthLink Scotland case study)

Levels of Engagement, Influence and Opportunity (Young People)

High influence

Independent decision-making

Levels of influence will vary according to the extent of adult intervention.

Risk of tokenism where adult intervention moves beyond facilitation and influences decision-making.

Levels of influence will vary according to the extent to which young people have been supported to understand and undertake the role.

Risk of tokenism and arbitrary/unfair decision-making if young people have not been fully supported to understand and undertake the role.

This type of participation requires a significant commitment of time and resources to ensure young people are fully informed and equipped to make decisions autonomously and in the interests of the fund, the applicants and the young people that will benefit.



5. Fully Youth-Designed and Managed Funding

Young people create and manage the entire grant-making process, from fund design to evaluation.

They advocate for and shape youth-led funding models at a systemic level.

The role of any support organisation is to finance (make funds available).

Example:

A youth-led organisation identifies a need or issues affecting young people; attracts funding; designs the fund model; decides fund objectives and criteria; receives and assesses applications independently; distributes funding and monitors delivery and evaluates impact for their own learning and future iterations of the fund or new funds that they will deliver.

Levels of Engagement, Influence and Opportunity (Young People)

Some influence

Input without final say

Requires institutional commitment to sustained youth leadership and investment in long-term support.

This model is very rare as it requires that there is no pre-determined accountability for specific impact or restrictions on the use of funds from whoever provides the financial input.

It is most likely to occur when young people are fundraising independently and not distributing public money.





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