

Making youth consultation 'REAL'

Consultation and research in general can be seen as pretty dull processes.

We believe that we can make it a fun, educational experience for all involved by using our Girl Guide and Girl Scout educational method and practising leadership. In this section, we will give you some tips to make your consultation more Relevant, Exciting, Accessible, and Learner-Led.

Tip: Think about how these four elements intersect and will have an effect on each other. For example, if you decide to run your consultation online to make it more accessible to a certain group of girls who cannot travel, how will that affect how exciting your consultation is?

Relevant

According to a U-Report survey, 55% of girls and young women don't feel included in decisions that affect them.

Girls want to have a say in decisions that affect them, and many don't think they have that possibility right now. We need to give them opportunities to express themselves on topics that matter to them and that will make a difference in their lives.

Whether it is about asking them what kind of Girl Guiding / Girl Scouting activities are interesting to them, or hearing what they would like to change about the world and how we can help, we need to consult girls on issues that are relevant to their interests, needs and aspirations.

Define the objectives of your consultation

Every youth consultation needs to have clear objectives defined from the start. We need to know what we are asking, and how we are going to use the data we collect. And girls need to have a clear understanding of why we are consulting them, so they can hold us accountable.

Guiding questions:

- What is the purpose of your consultation?
- What do you want to find out about?
- What are you going to do with the information collected?
- In a week/month/year's time, how will girls see the impact of this consultation?

Share your findings with girls

While youth consultation should always be relevant to us, we need to make sure that it is also relevant to the young people we consult. Girls should see that their participation has made a tangible difference in their life and the life of other girls. Think about how you can share your findings and the impact they are going to have.

Guiding questions:

- How are you going to disseminate your findings and how are you going to make sure girls have access to them?
- How can you inspire and support girls to use your findings in their own activities and projects (this could be to influence how things are done in their unit, to create an advocacy campaign, etc.)?

EXAMPLE:

The WAGGGS "Listen to Girls" game was created to share the findings of U-Report consultations with girls and young women in a fun and interactive way. It can be played individually or as a group, offline or online. By getting to know the results of the polls, anyone can explore girls' views and experiences, as well as take action on the issues they highlighted.



Exciting

A quality Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting activity should always be fun - and youth consultation should be no exception!

We can make sure girls are excited to make their voice heard, by making consultation innovative, active and enjoyable.

Use creative, non-formal research methods

When we think about youth consultation and research, the first methods that come to mind are the traditional ones outlined below and mentioned in "Be the Change 2030": surveys, focus group discussions, interviews, etc.

While all of those methods are very effective, we can also be creative and use participatory, non-formal techniques to gather information from girls.

Guiding questions:

- Think about the research methods you want to use during your process. How can you use the Girl Guide and Girl Scout educational method to make these methods more exciting?
- Think about ways that you might already be using everyday Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting activities to listen to girls.
- How can you use those activities and methods to collect and validate data, so the consultation feels fun and exciting
- This could include: reflections, discussions and debates, voting opportunities in games and activities, creative outputs (journaling, drawings, etc.), active evaluation games, etc.

EXAMPLE:

To mark 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence in 2017, WAGGGS asked Girl Guides and Girl Scouts to draw the places and spaces where they feel most under threat from violence to create a global voice demanding that gender-based violence is eradicated.

TIP

To explore different solutions and methods, consider practising leadership using the creative and critical thinking mindset and the responsible action mindset. This should help you to innovate to create a positive impact.

Create incentives to participate

Girls want their voice to be heard, and if the consultation objectives are clear and relevant to them, chances are they will be keen to engage! However, multiple factors such as time or availability may deter them from taking part.

We can find innovative ways to motivate them to share their ideas, by creating perks for those who take part in the consultation.

Some ideas could be:

- Giving early access to an event, an opportunity or a resource
- Creating a badge or sticker for taking part in the consultation
- Creating a prize draw

Guiding questions:

- How can you motivate girls to take part in a fun and meaningful way?
- How can you make perks relevant and exciting to girls?

EXAMPLE:

As part of the "Listen to Girls" game aimed at sharing the results of a recent U-Report poll, WAGGGS has created a limited free digital and physical badge that can be earned after a girl has played the game.

TIP

Don't assume what young people would find exciting: ask girls directly what would motivate them to take part!



Accessible

When asked, "What is your biggest barrier to being involved in decision making?"

- Girls, 13-17 years old, said their age (32%).
- Young women, 18-30 years old, said the lack of access to decision-makers (39%).

Lack of accessibility is an important obstacle in girls' participation: what is the point of speaking out if no one is here to listen?

We need to make sure that when we consult girls, every and any girl can take part and feels confident to do so, whatever her personal circumstances are.

Ensure your consultation process is inclusive

Accessibility can take a lot of planning, it needs to be taken into account from the beginning of the process, and not as an afterthought. Rushing the process might lead to consulting only girls we can easily reach, and therefore making their participation tokenistic.

We need to actively set up strategies to make sure that the group of girls we consult reflect the diversity of experiences that girls have in the world today.

Guiding questions:

- How can you reach girls that are not usually heard? Reflect on your potential blind spots: which girls might you not be thinking about?
- How can you make sure they are informed of the consultation taking place?
- How can you make sure that girls with different thinking styles can fully take part in your consultation?
- How can you make your consultation accessible to girls with different contexts? Think about geography, age, disability, internet access, ability to travel, languages spoken, etc. If there are stark inequalities amongst the girls you are trying to reach, you might need to carry out separate consultations.
- How will you make your consultation safe, inclusive and appropriate for girls from marginalised groups? What additional safeguarding measures might you need?
- How will you create a brave space, where all girls feel empowered to share their opinions freely?

TIP

To explore different solutions and methods, consider practising leadership using the collaborative and worldly mindsets. This should help you to work with others to create spaces where everyone can fully participate.

Support girls to make informed decisions

Accessibility does not stop at making sure that girls can materially answer our questions. We need to make sure they have all the tools they need to give an informed opinion.

We need to give them time and space to explore the topic we are consulting them on, to think about it critically and to form their own views. This will help them feel confident in their opinions and decisions, and make the consultation more meaningful.

Guiding questions:

- What knowledge do girls need to answer the questions?
- Think about different types of knowledge: big picture vision, understanding of the context, of other people's perspectives, of consequences of the decisions taken, etc.
- How will you check that all participants have the essential understanding needed to answer questions fully?

TIP

Make sure you are facilitating reflection, not influencing it. Remain objective, do not give your opinion and make sure you present all sides of the story.



Learner-Led

Self-directed learning is a key component of the Girl Guide and Girl Scout educational method.

Activities and opportunities should be led by girls, especially where they are directly concerned, like in the case of a youth consultation.

We need to create an open, enabling environment where they can take the lead and be heard.

Involve girls in designing and planning the consultation

Direct involvement in a project is key to creating empowering, enabling learning experiences for girls.

Providing space for girls to lead during the consultation process will increase their involvement and interest in the consultation by making them feel ownership, and develop a consultation that is truly responsive to their priorities.

It will also help make the consultation process more relevant, exciting and accessible by including diverse voices from the start. Use the guiding questions to clearly map out the role girls will have in the consultation.

Guiding questions:

- What level of girl engagement are you able to support? Will you be able to involve girls at all steps of the process or will you focus on a couple of key stages where you can truly confidently support girls to take the lead?
- How can you meaningfully involve girls in those stages, which include defining objectives, deciding on your approach and methods, planning the timeline and resources, identifying who you want to consult and how, collecting the data, processing it and disseminating your findings, and evaluating the consultation process?
- How can you make sure this is an empowering learning experience for the girls involved?

TIP

Think about involving girls in designing and planning the consultation, but also in data collection. Peer-to-peer consultations bring powerful results because they can create more openness, honesty and a two-way dialogue not always achievable in adult-youth consultations.

EXAMPLE

At the 36th World Conference in 2017, WAGGGS decided to conduct a research project to explore why more Young Women were not standing for governance roles within the Movement. The Young Women Research Team (YWRT) was created to ensure that this project, named Motion 32, was fully designed and carried by young women in a truly participatory approach.

Listen actively to what girls are saying

This might seem obvious, but it is possibly the most crucial element of a meaningful youth consultation.

If we're not genuinely interested in what girls have to say, or are not committed to taking into account their perspectives, there is no point in consulting them at all.

A youth consultation is not a way to endorse our own ideas! We need to keep an open mind and be ready to actively listen and take into account girls' input and feedback, even if it goes into a different direction than what we had imagined.

Guiding questions:

- How can you make sure your consultation process, approach, methods, questions, etc. are as neutral as possible? How can you guarantee they will allow a varied range of opinions?
- What internal biases might be influencing how you view the results of the consultation? How can you avoid confirmation bias?
- What will you do if the results of the consultation are completely unexpected?

TIP

To become a better listener, consider practising leadership using the worldly and collaborative mindsets. This should help you to challenge yourself to understand and take into account different perspectives.

