



Youth Engagement Strategy

Report to St. John's City Council
October 2020

Prepared by Organizational Performance and Strategy on
behalf of the Youth Engagement Action Team (YEAT)

Youth Engagement Action Team



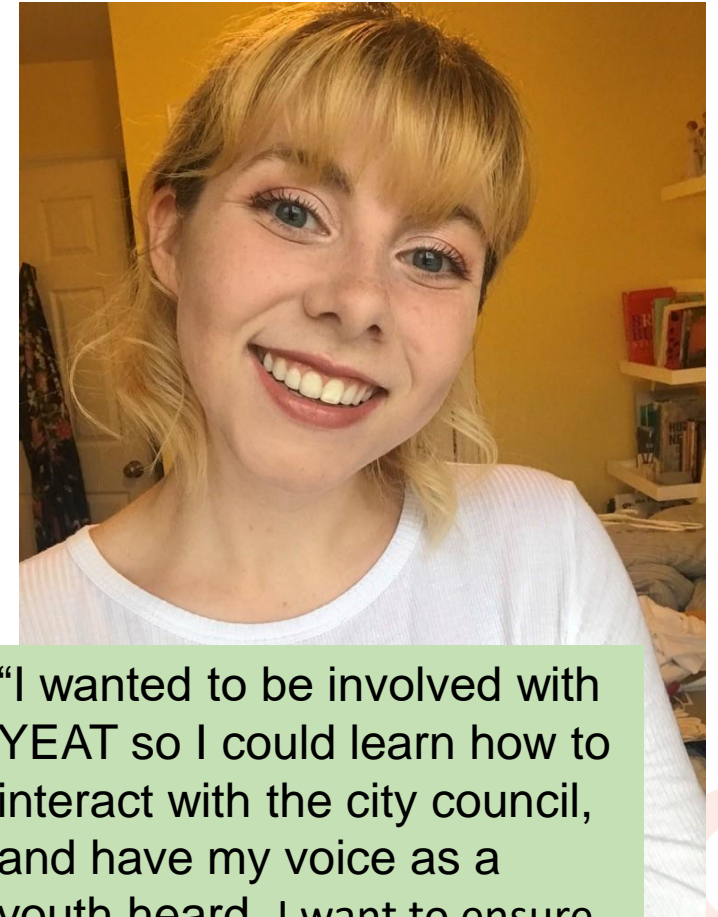
“A few months ago, I joined the Youth Engagement Action TEAM (YEAT).

Why did I want to be involved in YEAT? Many people in my generation are leaving the rock—if I want to stick around, then I have to work hard to build a life on these rocky shores. And like most people in my generation—it’s hard to find work and harder to be heard politically. YEAT gave me a voice at the table. Don’t we all want to make our home a better place? I wanted to be involved in YEAT to work towards a good cause, send a report to the council, and help make the city a better place. A place where my generation and I can build a life, raise our families, and call our home.”

- YEAT Member, Melissa Wong



“I wanted to be a part of YEAT because I saw it as an opportunity to help the City understand some of the challenges that youth may be facing in engaging. I believe there is a unique way for the City to increase youth engagement and I hope we can provide some insight into how they can do that. - YEAT member Maria Penney



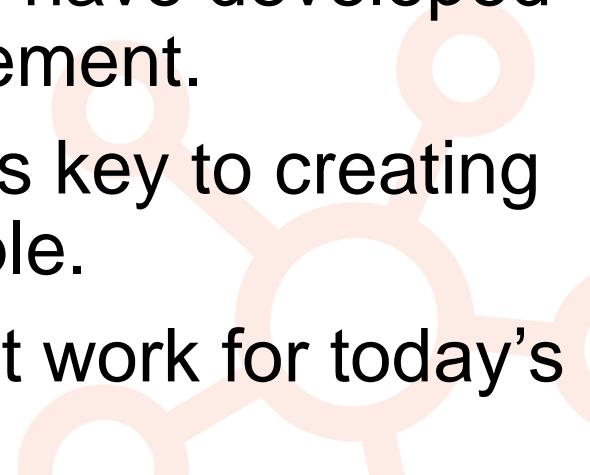
“I wanted to be involved with YEAT so I could learn how to interact with the city council, and have my voice as a youth heard. I want to ensure youth engagement is more of a priority within our future communities.” – YEAT member Hannah Baker

Global Context

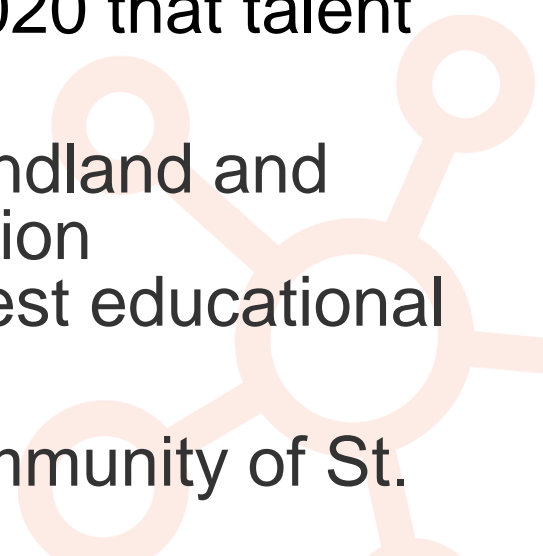
- Youthful Cities tracks indicators that make a city attractive to youth since 2013
- 13 Canadian cities ranked in 2018 index. St. John's ranked 13th.
- In 2019, the ranking included 22 cities and St. John's was 16th on the list.
- Check out the full report [here](#).



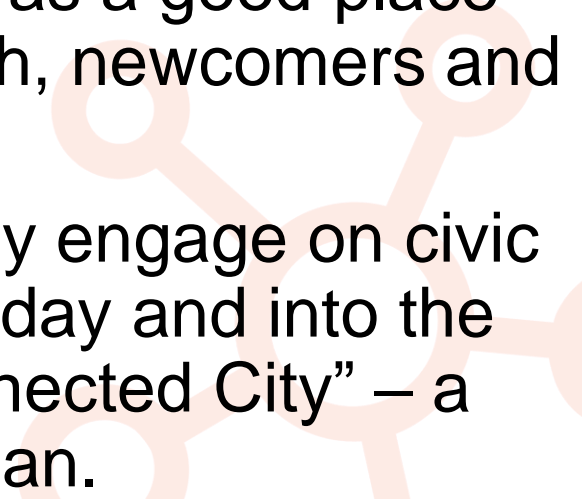
Global Context

- Many cities across Canada and around the world struggle with youth engagement.
 - Some jurisdictions have undertaken youth engagement strategies lead by youth, for youth. Some cities have developed policies and frameworks to guide youth engagement.
 - There is a recognition that youth engagement is key to creating a sense of belonging and place for young people.
 - Traditional methods of civic engagement do not work for today's youth.
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Local Context

- According to provincial population projections, the number of young people under 35 is trending downward in the St. John's Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)
 - The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Technology Industries (NATI) has [noted](#) as recently as June 2020 that talent supply is their greatest challenge.
 - According to Statistics Canada, at 28.5%, Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest proportion of the population aged 25 to 64 with a college diploma as their highest educational qualification in 2016.
 - St. John's student body represents 16% of the community of St. John's
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Why Youth Matter

- City's recent place marketing strategy stresses the importance of youth to the City's future economic prosperity
 - Young people need to feel confident that they can “make it here”
 - City needs to lift the position and profile St. John's as a good place to live and immigrate to, that is engaging with youth, newcomers and tomorrow's skilled workers.
 - Creating space and opportunity for youth to actively engage on civic matters and influence decisions that affect them today and into the future will play a significant part in creating a “Connected City” – a strategic direction in the City's 10-year Strategic Plan.
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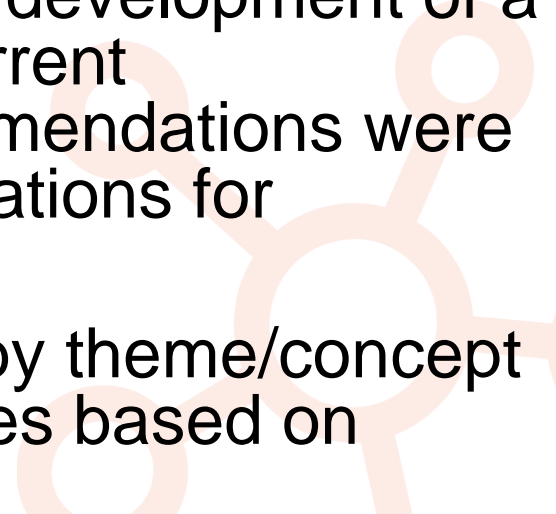
Youth Engagement Action Team (YEAT)

- A Youth Engagement Action Team (YEAT) was created in Nov. 2019 to provide perspective on how youth currently engage with the City of St. John's, identify barriers to engagement, determine tools for engagement, topics of interest, and ideas for how the City can improve both how it communicates to youth, and how youth experience public engagement.
- Between November 2019 and February 2020, YEAT met in person to familiarize themselves with the project scope and current City programs and services and made plans to engage other young people in this work. Once the Pandemic hit, YEAT moved to online meetings.
- Working with City staff, YEAT collected feedback from the youth demographic through two in-person events and an online survey and project page at engagestjohns.ca

Highlights of What we Heard

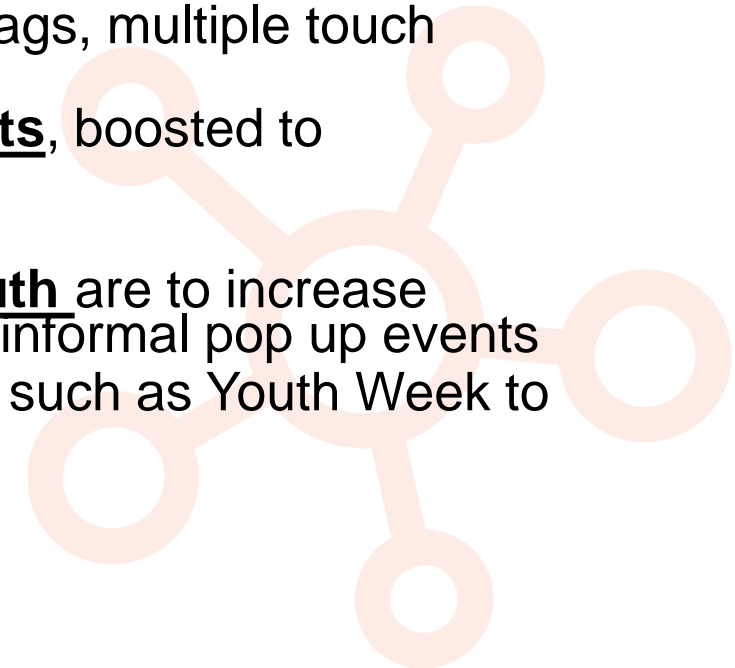
- A [What we heard document](#) was released in June 2020. Key components of what we heard include:
 - There are barriers to participation in civic engagement– the biggest ones are awareness of opportunities and time to participate
 - Current city committee structures are not effective for youth– limited awareness of YAC and not enough youth involved in other City committees
 - Low level awareness generally of opportunities to engage and be involved; currently need to follow everything the city does to learn about engagement
 - Youth interested in a variety of topics – things that impact them and their city
 - There is a view that the city does not make it easy for youth to engage – public meetings a challenge for many and not a preferred approach
 - Youth want variety and ease of participation and notification – quick and simple

From What we Heard to Recommendations

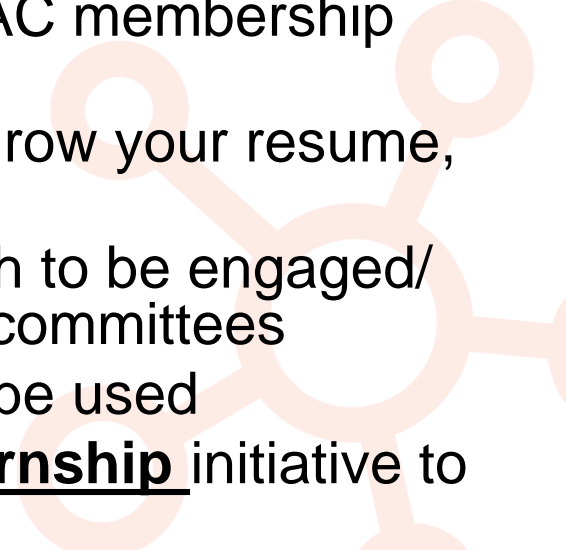
- YEAT met to review what was heard and developed recommendations. These recommendations were shared with the city's Youth Advisory Committee co-chairs and Recreation (youth) staff for feedback.
 - Additionally, as city staff were working through the development of a new place marketing strategy and reviewing its current communications practices on social media, recommendations were also shared with staff in Marketing and Communications for feedback.
 - What follows is an overview of recommendations by theme/concept and considerations for implementation and timelines based on feedback from all of these stakeholders.
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Recommendations

- To address issues of **awareness and time to participate**
 - Simple message is: Make it Fun and Easy!
 - Have one stop shopping, i.e. **one city app** where everything can be found
 - Continue to offer options for **online** participation such as engagestjohns.ca
 - Create more **quick polls** and **simple tools** for easy participation online
 - Remove the need to participate in-person – use **streaming** for example
 - Use **social media** more in line with how youth consume it – tags, multiple touch points, reminders, more visual/less text
 - Increase reach of communications with **targeted youth efforts**, boosted to demographics, location of advertising
 - Create **youth focused panels** (see Slide13)
 - Partner with **youth-focused organizations/go to where youth** are to increase awareness of civic engagement more generally and do more informal pop up events
 - Tap into **well established, existing events** and partnerships such as Youth Week to engage youth
 - Create **youth specific content** for web/socials

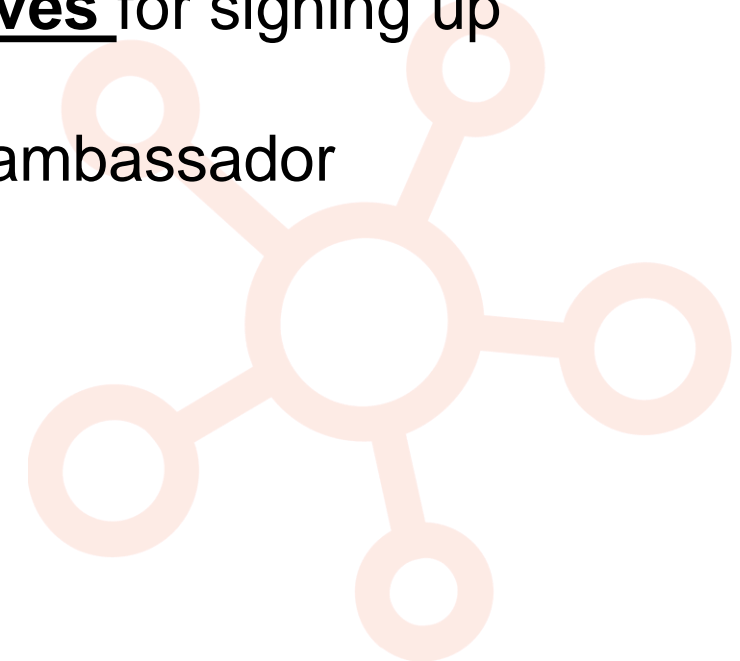


Recommendations

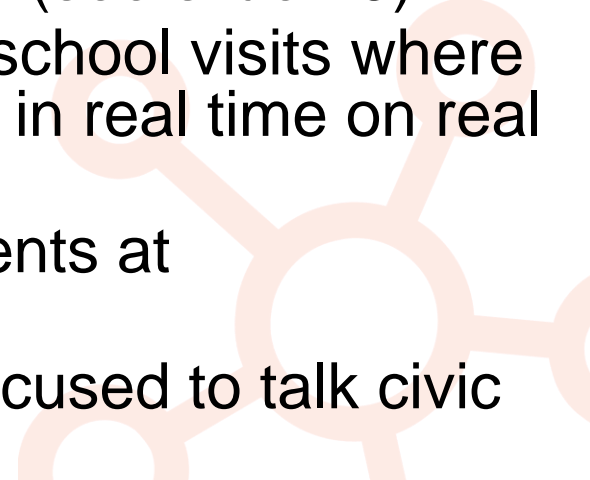
- To address issues with **city committees and composition**
 - Consider adding **additional youth voices** to city committees to ensure there is balance of perspective
 - Dismantle Youth Advisory Committee and create more opportunities for **ad hoc committees/working groups** such as YEAT with defined duration and focused on specific priority areas and provide current YAC membership opportunity to stay involved
 - **Market opportunities** for these committees as way to grow your resume, **network**, learn about how the city works,
 - Create an **ongoing promotion** of opportunities for youth to be engaged/**database** of youth interested in working groups/ad hoc committees
 - Make it clear how the **outcomes** of the committees will be used
 - Consider establishing a **youth ambassador/youth internship** initiative to support youth engagement work in priority areas
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Recommendations

- To address **tools and format for engagement**
 - Online is the preferred option; create online methods that are exclusive to youth; create a **youth panel** using engagestjohns.ca similar to an Angus Reid panel where youth receive direct notifications when there are opportunities for engagement; **provide incentives** for signing up and participating
 - Create **youth-lead pop up** events tapping into an ambassador program

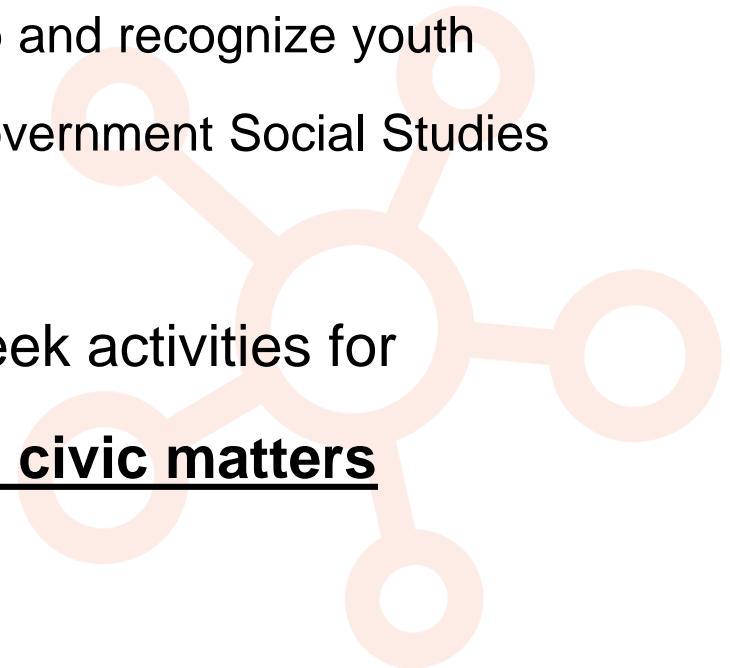


Recommendations

- To address **city-youth interactions in schools for engagement**
 - K-12 – Further build on opportunities for youth to actively engage in civic matters through the **existing school/city connections**, build civic engagement into curriculum content where possible (see slide 15)
 - **Pilot an initiative to have video** content to use in school visits where there is a direct engagement with youth – feedback in real time on real projects/initiatives
 - Post-secondary – organize **city/youth focused** events at Memorial/College every year hosted by youth
 - Have councillors host **events/community/youth** focused to talk civic engagement
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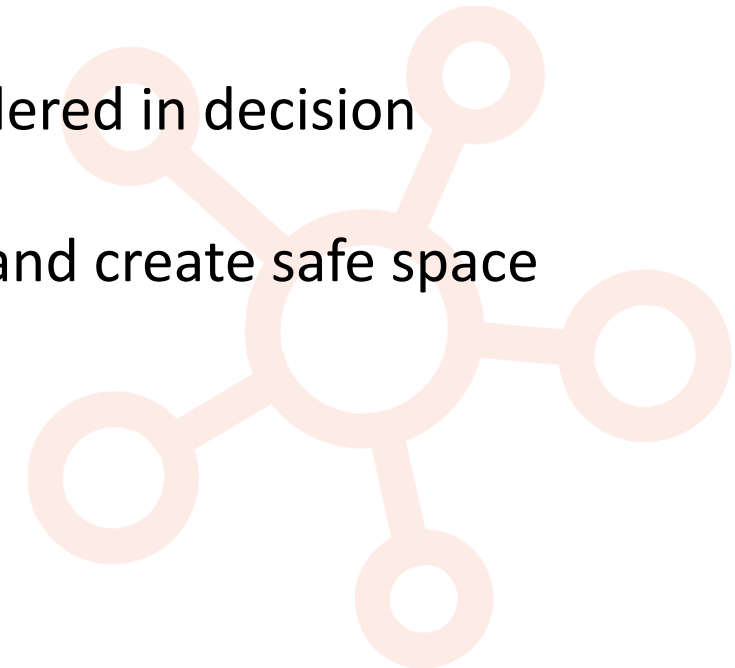
Recommendations

- The City has well-established methods to engage school-age children and youth in the schools:
 - Personal development, leadership and volunteer opportunities for High School & Post Secondary Students
 - City youth staff currently meet and support every high school student in the city through support of the Career Development Course
 - City partners with MUN Volunteer Service Bureau to develop and recognize youth through annual volunteer awards
 - Presentations and engagement within Grade 3 Municipal Government Social Studies Curriculum
 - Youth of the Year
 - Youth Art & Talent Shows
 - Meet the Mayor opportunity as part of National Child Week activities for school age children
 - **Use these platforms to continue to engage youth on civic matters**



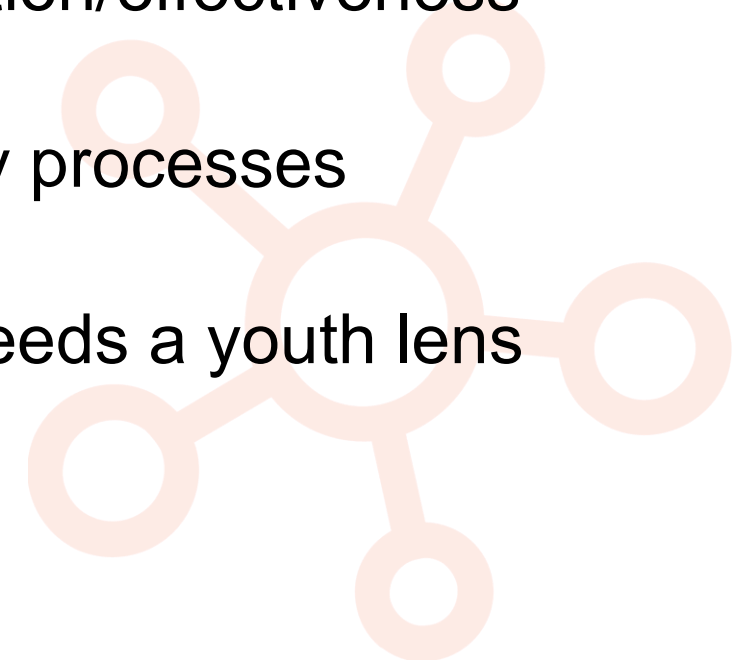
Recommendations

- To address issues of **creating a welcoming environment for youth**
 - **Make** council meetings youth friendly – invite youth-based organizations to attend/participate
 - Create **youth-focused events** such as youth forums, live youth events on social meeting
 - **Explain** how youth voices/perspectives are being considered in decision making
 - Demonstrate **value of youth voices** in decision making and create safe space for participation

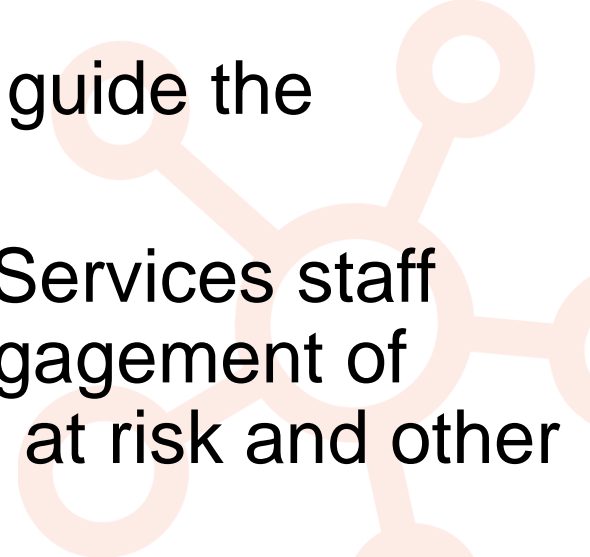


Considerations

- Human and budget resources available to support implementation of recommendations
- Link to other city strategies and resources to ensure embeddedness
- Need to create mechanisms to check implementation/effectiveness using continuous improvement thinking and tools
- Consider impact of recommendations on other city processes requiring civic engagement
- Revisit the city's engage policy to determine if it needs a youth lens



Timelines and Next Steps

- Share results with City departments who focus on youth/civic engagement/city planning/marketing and communications
 - Determine which recommendations should be prioritized and resourced
 - Establish an ad hoc youth-based committee to guide the implementation of the recommendations
 - Use established relationships that Community Services staff have with youth serving agencies to ensure engagement of hard to reach youth such as newcomers, youth at risk and other vulnerable groups.
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Thank you to the ALL the YEAT members who volunteered their time at various points throughout the research, staffed a booth, reviewed data, attended meetings, asked questions and made suggestions to bring this project to fruition.

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 - Nabeel Mansoor
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