

ENGAGING YOUNGER AUDIENCES

A practical guide for towns when drafting
TIPs, developing business cases or
delivering projects (and beyond)

Towns Fund[®]
Fund[^]

Terms & Conditions

- This document has been developed by the Towns Fund Delivery Partner, a consortium led by Ove Arup & Partners Ltd with our partners, Grant Thornton UK LLP, Nichols Group Ltd, FutureGov Ltd, Copper Consultancy Ltd and Savills UK Ltd (collectively 'we'). The content of this document is for your general information and use only.
- Neither we nor any third parties provide any warranty or guarantee as to the accuracy, timeliness, performance, completeness or suitability of the information and materials found in this document for any particular purpose. You acknowledge that such information and materials may contain inaccuracies or errors and we expressly exclude liability for any such inaccuracies or errors to the fullest extent permitted by law.
- Your use of any information or materials contained in this document is entirely at your own risk, for which we shall not be liable.
- This document contains material which is owned by or licensed to us. This material includes, but is not limited to, the design, layout, look, appearance and graphics. Reproduction is prohibited other than in accordance with the copyright notice which can be found at townsfund.org.uk
- Unauthorised use of this document may give rise to a claim for damages and/or be a criminal offence.
- This document may also include links to other materials, websites or services. These links are provided for your convenience to provide further information. They do not signify that we explicitly endorse these materials, websites or services.
- Your use of this content and any dispute arising out of such use of the content is subject to the laws of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- For formal Government guidance on Towns Fund please visit gov.uk

WHY ENGAGE YOUNGER AUDIENCES?

Every young person is unique with different needs and circumstances. Youth participation in projects is essential - now more than ever, young people are central to the economic recovery and stimulation of towns.



“Where possible, communities should be part of originating ideas, setting objectives and visions rather than just giving feedback on proposals that are already some way along.”

The Towns Fund Further Guidance
MHCLG – June 2020



Young people care about their communities and their voices need to be heard to future-proof and shape towns that reflect their interests and skills.



By engaging young people, you can connect with a wider audience and make sure your projects have a long-term appeal.



Young people have the ability to utilise communications and engagement channels older audiences don't have access to. By getting them involved in your projects, you are widening their reach, gaining buy-in and helping to secure your town's future.

WHO ARE YOUNGER AUDIENCES?

For the purpose of this guide, younger audiences are those identified as aged from primary school age (4 to 5 years old), to those in college and further education (21 to 22 years old).

Young people can often feel like their voices aren't being heard. By engaging younger audiences and placing them at the centre of your projects, you can challenge this perception and use best-practice engagement to gather their support and get them involved in transforming their area for the better.



4 – 10 YEARS

WHY?

This age group can reach parents as advocates and their educational investment connects them to projects

HOW?

Best reached through skills and education related outreach.



10 – 15 YEARS

WHY?

The same as above applies, but this age group also have their own growing personal connection to projects and they can be social media advocates

HOW?

Best reached through skills and education-related outreach and social media.



15 – 22 YEARS

WHY?

This age group can be social media advocates and promote projects using their own channels

HOW?

Best reached through social media and active representation – see page 9 on 'Give young people a seat at the table'.

HOW CAN YOU ENGAGE YOUNGER AUDIENCES?

Young people should be regularly engaged. As they develop and grow up in your town, they will have a unique understanding of what it needs. Their involvement can positively shape your improvement projects and the future of your town.

Youth engagement can generate fresh and innovative ideas to drive projects forward. However, to get young people on board, you need to work out what appeals to them and how best to reach them.



You can maximise youth engagement through:



Utilising social media channels and other platforms popular with young people (page 6 provides ways to make the most of social media channels).



Being open (avoid 'speaking down' to young people or trying to simplify information).



Above all, by demonstrating that you're genuinely listening.



WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUNGER AUDIENCES

1

MAKE THE MOST OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is one of the most regularly-used and popular forms of communication, especially with younger audiences.

Using social media effectively means that you can share information about projects, ideas and content such as videos and infographics (the shorter and more visual, the better), to engage and build advocacy amongst your local community.

Use the following channels to get young people on board:



TikTok



Instagram



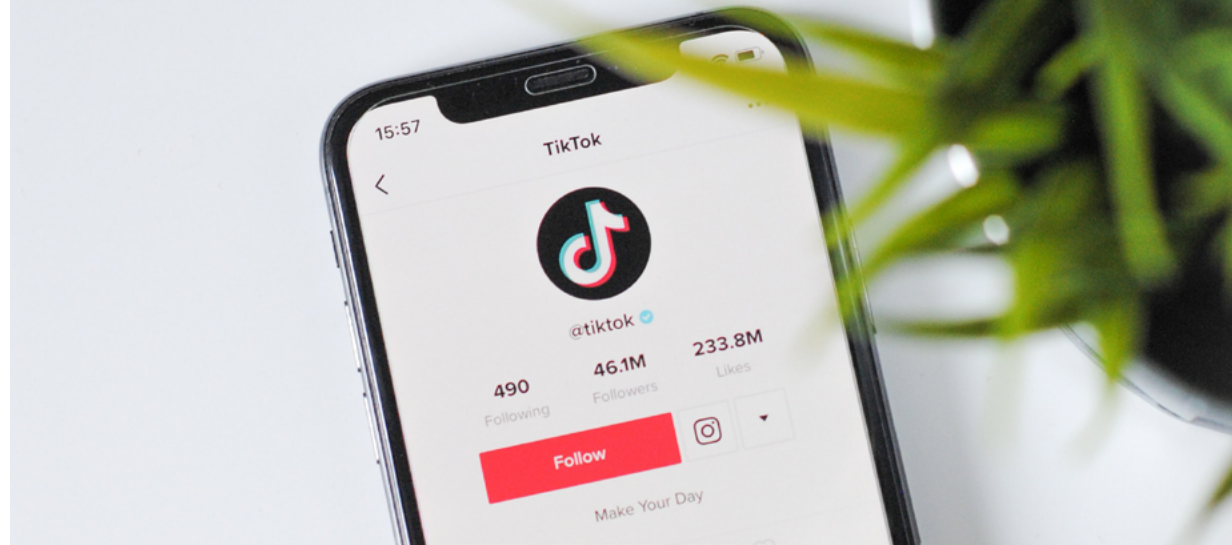
Whatsapp



Facebook



Twitter



HAVE A DYNAMIC SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Post regularly and use infographics, video content and images with minimal text and eye-catching aesthetics to promote project key messages and get young people interested.

UTILISE LOCAL INFLUENCERS

Many young people have massive individual social media followings, with thousands of followers. By engaging young influencers and using their connection to your town, you will enhance the online following of your projects.

After all, photography can bring a town to life and highlight the human stories that have shaped your town's vision.

MAXIMISE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUTH GROUPS

Many youth groups or existing networks have their own channels and local connections – again incorporate these to push out content to a wider audience.

TARGETED ADS AND ALGORITHMS

By tapping into what young people are already looking at on the internet, you can connect with them and increase interest in your town's projects.

HASHTAGS

People use the hashtag symbol (#) before a relevant keyword or phrase in their Tweet to categorise and help them show more easily in Twitter search.

Use hashtags that are trending or popular with young people to maximise the reach of your content.

2 ENCOURAGE YOUTH ADVOCACY

Young people are often passionately active and experts on social media. Gen Z and Millennials are credited with changing the face of activism.

As well as targeting content at them through social media channels, you can also build and use their advocacy to promote your projects from a vibrant and fresh perspective. They are able to harness social media and digital connection to raise attention to the issues that are important to them.



Besides through social media, other ways that young audiences can advocate for your projects and towns are:



Get them talking about what makes your town so valuable - at events or in media coverage or on your town website.



Work with them and their social networks to reach a larger portion of your community.



Give them a platform to be heard and represent the views of young people by setting up, for example, youth councils backed by local government.



Tap into thought leadership from young entrepreneurs and business leaders and their innovative ideas.

3 SKILLS AND EDUCATION -RELATED OUTREACH

Preparing young people for the future is more important than ever. Projects have a key role in engaging in skills and education-related outreach to invest in young people.

Your improvement projects have a key role in investing in young people's education and skills. In return, this provides opportunities for them to grow, live and contribute to your town and its successful future.



How can you reach out to young people?



Mentoring and buddy programmes



Work placements and summer internships



Stalls/workshop events at schools/ colleges/libraries/youth centres/ universities



Writing and art competitions (some towns have held creative writing projects to tell the story of their town's future)



STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) sessions



Skills-building training exercises focusing on specific skills related to projects (some towns have held interactive sessions with school children aged 7 to 15).

4

GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Giving young people an opportunity to be heard and contribute to your town's projects will reap long-term benefits. One town established a shadow board to support the development of their Town Investment Plan and beyond.



'We have established a Shadow Board of college students who have inputted into the bid process and will remain involved in the project development and strategy implementation process beyond bid submission. This youth engagement has been a priority for me, as Chair of the Board, given our objective of arresting youth flight and retaining young talent.'



ENGAGE

It's important to engage in an open dialogue with young people surrounding their communities and create meaningful youth participation. Transparency is the key. In order to be open with young people, let them in!

REPRESENTATION

Appoint youth representatives to Town Deal Boards – from this, organise specific youth working groups to capture young people's voice and opinions.

FEEDBACK

Listen to their feedback and demonstrate how you have taken it into account in your communication materials (eg newsletters, social media posts, website).

PARTNER

Partner with youth organisations – schools, colleges, community centres, LGBTQIA+ groups and charities.

HOW CAN YOU TELL YOUR STORY TO YOUNGER AUDIENCES?

If you utilise the approaches set out on the previous pages, it will allow you to connect with younger people and maximise youth participation. This is especially important in a time when COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting young people, in schools, colleges, apprenticeships or sectors mostly bearing the brunt of the crisis.

‘Investing time in young people by demonstrating the value of your projects, and the benefits they will bring, can provide mutually satisfying outcomes and better future for your town.



Above all, when telling your story:

BE REAL

Ensure that your dialogue with young people is open and transparent.

BE INNOVATIVE

Utilise social media and digital technology to speak to young people via the media that they are most familiar with.

BE SUPPORTIVE

Young people require a helping hand as they're making their way – providing this opportunity through your projects can achieve their buy-in and long-term advocacy.



Visit the [Towns Fund website](#) for more stakeholder engagement resources