



Overview of Best Practices for Youth Inclusion in Organizational Governance

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Benefits | For youth-focused or youth-serving organizations, young voices with recent experience as the organization's target demographic can provide valuable and critical insights on how to better serve the needs of that same demographic today. Such organizations can benefit from including younger perspectives in their governance in two major ways:

1. Making the board better informed in its decisions.
2. Creating an active pipeline for a new generation of leadership.

Definition | The term "young" is relative. In most cases, age is not in and of itself the inherently valuable quality, as opposed to the ability to offer a missing perspective and foster a diversity of viewpoints that better prepares the organization to serve the youth demographic.

Pathways | There are two main pathways through which organizations incorporate younger perspectives into their governance:

1. Adding them directly to decision-making bodies, such as the board of directors.
2. Creating advisory committees that report to decision-making bodies.

Best Practices | These high-level recommendations are derived from research conducted by The Boarding School, a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to empowering young people to become effective participants in governance of organizations that impact their lives.

- **For Board Seats**

- Institutional Positions: Enshrine reserved seats in the organization's bylaws to ensure long-term continuity and signal commitment to youth inclusion as an organizational value and priority.
- Equal Standing: Avoid creating a lower class of board members by granting reserved seats the same term lengths, voting powers, committee assignments, etc., as other board members.
- Staggered Terms: Where possible, reserve two or more seats on staggered terms to provide built-in mentorship and help new members feel more comfortable as full participants sooner.
- *Example: [Princeton University's Young Alumni Trustee model](#)*

- **For Advisory Committees**

- Clear Purpose: Before anything else, ensure key stakeholders are aligned on the committee's purpose to drive toward concrete outcomes instead of creating more bureaucratic bloat.
- Careful Recruitment: Set clear size and demographic goals to reflect the relevant population; cast a wide net but vet candidates thoroughly; actively seek out candidates with the target profile.
- Conscious Mentorship: Make participation a valuable professional development opportunity for members by treating it as a pipeline for current and future talent within your organization.
- *Example: US Youth Soccer Athlete Council*