

RAYE SUITE OF TOOLS

Guide for the Youth Engagement Checklist

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INTRODUCTION TO THE RAYE SUITE OF TOOLS

The **Readiness for Adolescent and Youth Engagement (RAYE) Suite of Tools** guides organisations that involve—or plan to involve—adolescents and young adults in ways that are safe, meaningful and mutually beneficial. Grounded in current best practice, the suite contains two complementary instruments. The Engagement Checklist – on which this guidance focuses – evaluates individual opportunities for involving young people, ensuring mutual benefit for both young people and the engaging entities. The Structural Reflection Tool a deeper examination of the financial, operational and systemic conditions that make genuine youth partnership possible. Together, the two tools help teams and organisations working with, or intending to work with, youth to move beyond good intentions toward measurable readiness for youth participation.

HOW THE RAYE SUITE OF TOOLS WAS DEVELOPED

Creation of the RAYE Suite followed an evidence-driven, highly participatory journey. Work began with a broad scan of existing readiness frameworks and youth-engagement checklists. That desk research uncovered persistent gaps—particularly around organisational culture, safeguarding, resourcing and policies—which shaped an initial concept note for two interconnected instruments rather than a single assessment tool.

Young people were at the centre of design from day one contributing through interviews, focus groups and co-creation workshops, and ensuring that every draft statement spoke to lived realities rather than abstract ideals. Their insights were then tested and refined in dialogue with safeguarding specialists, operations staff, programme leads and other technical staff, producing wording that was both ambitious and practical.

Field-testing provided the final proving ground. In collaboration with War Child Holland's research and development team, the draft RAYE Suite was piloted in War Child programmes in Jordan and Colombia. Each country ran live workshops that brought together key staff from senior management, operations, finance, HR and programmes. Their feedback was candid and invaluable. Participants in Jordan observed that “the tool is extremely comprehensive; it touches every critical point

we need to think about for youth engagement,” and added that “this was a very eye-opening exercise — we really enjoyed administering the tool.”

A participant in Colombia had this to say about the tool: “If we’d taken this tool before launching our big youth empowerment project, our whole roll out would have been smoother.”

Revisions made after the pilots streamlined the flow of statements, removed duplication, clarified terminology and added space for youth-friendly action planning. The version in your hands is the product of that collective effort—grounded in research, shaped by young people, refined by practitioners and proven in real-world settings.

PURPOSE OF THE ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Before you advertise, recruit, or brief young people for an engagement opportunity, you need proof that the activity is ready – budget in place, risks mitigated, roles clear, data protected. **The checklist is that proof.** It serves as a practical pre-engagement planning and verification tool. Each line maps to one readiness standard. Its aim is not to score or grade, but to prompt systematic review of preparedness across key domains. When every line shows **Yes** (or a justified **N/A**), you can launch the opportunity with confidence, knowing that key considerations have been addressed.

USING THE ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

For best functionality – particularly the drop-down menus for responses – opening the workbook in **Microsoft Excel** rather than Google Sheets is recommended. This guide explains the process and offers step-by-step instructions that walk you through assessing pre-engagement readiness using the checklist statements.

1 | What you need

- The Youth Engagement Checklist workbook.
- Relevant planning documents for the specific engagement opportunity (e.g., concept note draft, budget draft, safeguarding policies, risk assessment, communication plan, etc.).
- Allocated time for review and verification.

2 | When to complete it

- **Start** the checklist **no later than four weeks** before your planned launch date for the engagement opportunity.
- **Six-to-eight weeks is safer** if several departments (e.g., finance, HR, safeguarding) need to provide input or approvals.
- **Finish** the checklist – and ensure all items marked "No" have been addressed and flipped to "Yes" – **before** the call for applications goes public or recruitment begins.

3 | Who fills it in

- Appoint two **Checklist Facilitators (CFs)**. One is usually the **youth-engagement focal point**; the other might sit in programmes, safeguarding, or operations, depending on the nature of the engagement.
- The CFs are responsible for:
 - Reading this guide and familiarising themselves with the checklist items.
 - Listing every colleague or document needed to verify the checklist items.
 - Scheduling short calls or a single workshop to gather the necessary information and evidence.
 - Recording the responses accurately in the checklist file.
 - Following up on any missing actions or requirements until every line is "Yes" or has a justified "N/A" with a note.

4 | How to use the checklist

- **Review each statement** in the checklist in relation to the specific youth engagement opportunity being planned.
- **Indicate the status** for each statement based on current readiness:
 - i. **Yes:** The requirement is already met or planned for, and evidence exists.

1. *In the comment cell:* Paste a quick reference (e.g., "Safeguarding Policy v3, p. 12" or "Budget line 4.2 approved 10 Apr" or "See Concept Note Section 5").
 - ii. **No:** The requirement is still missing or incomplete.
 1. *In the action needed, owner and due date cells:* Write the required action, owner, and deadline (e.g., "Draft risk assessment | Safeguarding Lead | 15 May" or "Confirm budget line w/ Finance | Project Mgr | 20 Apr").
 - iii. **N/A (Not applicable):** The requirement genuinely does not apply to this specific activity.
 1. *In the comment cell:* State clearly *why* it doesn't apply (e.g., "Virtual-only engagement; no travel risk" or "Participants all over 18; caregiver consent not required").
- Use **plain language**. Short, clear comments are preferred. The goal is verification and tracking actions.

5 | Tips for an efficient process

- **Collect evidence first:** Open the relevant documents (concept note, budget, safeguarding policies) *before* you start assessing the checklist items to prevent guesswork.
- **Block just enough time:** A simple, small engagement might need only 60-90 minutes to review if documents are ready. A complex, multi-country initiative may require a longer workshop or several focused sessions.
- **Involve a youth advisor (Recommended):** Where feasible, ask a young person (or a group of young people) familiar with your context to briefly review key documents (like the concept note or outreach materials) for clarity and youth-friendliness. Even a quick glance can catch things adults overlook.
- **Update in real time:** As soon as an action is completed (e.g., finance adds the budget code, a policy is updated), the responsible CF should update the checklist answer from "No" to "Yes" and note the date or evidence in the comments.

6 | Closing, filing and sign-off

- **Final review:** Before seeking sign-off, the CFs review the checklist line-by-line; every row should read "Yes" or have a clearly justified "N/A".
- **Sign-off:** Email the completed checklist file (or a summary of completion) to the senior manager/team member who owns the activity or holds budget authority; this serves as the request for final approval to launch.
- **Filing:** Save the final, signed-off version in a shared project folder, ideally alongside the concept note. Use a clear filename convention, e.g., YYYY-MM_YE_Checklist_[EngagementName].xlsx (e.g., 2025-06_YE_Checklist_DigitalStorytelling.xlsx).
- **Living document:** Consider keeping the checklist accessible during implementation. If a planned safeguard, resource, or process encounters issues, briefly note it on the checklist and trigger necessary adjustments. This helps capture real-time lessons learned.

7 | Repeating the process and continuous learning

Treat the checklist as a standard part of your planning process for *each* new youth engagement opportunity. Regularly using it helps embed good practice and ensures thorough preparation. After the engagement concludes, revisit the checklist during a lessons-learned exercise: "What would we answer differently next time based on our experience?" That reflection cycle is how good practice turns into great practice.

ANNEX: GLOSSARY

| Term / Phrase | Definition and Scope in this Checklist |
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| Accommodation (Options) | Practical adjustments planned to make participation possible for all young people—e.g., wheelchair-friendly venues, sign-language interpretation, large-print files, transport stipends, mobile data bundles, childcare support. |
| Assistive technology | Hardware or software designed to help people with disabilities perform tasks (e.g., screen readers, adaptive keyboards). Included as a potential budget item. |
| Background checks | Verification processes (e.g., police checks, criminal record checks) conducted on adults who will have direct contact with youth, as part of safeguarding procedures. |
| Budget authority | The level of financial spending the designated coordinator is permitted to approve without needing further sign-off. |
| Caregiver consent | Formal permission obtained from a parent or legal guardian for a young person under the age of 18 to participate in the engagement activity. |
| Check-ins (Progress + Wellbeing) | Scheduled interactions between staff/coordinators and youth participants to discuss task progress, overall experience, emotional wellbeing, and any support needs. |
| Code of conduct | A set of rules outlining expected standards of behaviour for all participants (youth and adults) involved in the engagement, often linked to safeguarding policy. |
| Concept note | A written document outlining the purpose, scope, logistics, target audience, and key details of the planned youth engagement opportunity. |
| Co-designed / Reviewed with Youth | Indicates that young people were actively involved in creating or providing feedback on materials like the concept note, selection criteria, or outreach plan. |
| Decision areas reserved for adults | Specific decisions that must, for legal, fiduciary, or organisational policy reasons, be made by adult staff rather than shared with youth participants. |

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| Decision-lines | Clearly defined points of authority regarding who can make specific decisions related to the engagement. |
| Decision-space | The scope and limits of influence or decision-making power granted to youth participants within the specific engagement opportunity. |
| Dispute-resolution pathway | A defined process for fairly addressing disagreements or conflicts that may arise between youth participants and staff, or among participants. |
| Engagement coordinator | The named staff member(s) formally assigned lead responsibility for planning, implementing, and overseeing the specific youth engagement activity. |
| Focal point (safeguarding) | A designated staff member, whose contact details are shared, whom youth can contact directly with any safeguarding concerns or reports. |
| FTE (% full-time equivalent) | A way to measure staff time allocation; e.g., 10% FTE means a staff member is expected to dedicate roughly 10% of their working hours to this engagement. |
| Inclusivity | Proactive measures taken in planning and design to ensure young people of diverse identities and backgrounds can participate fully, meaningfully, and safely. |
| Intersectionality (analysis) | Examining how intersecting aspects of a young person's identity (e.g., gender, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) can combine to create unique barriers or experiences. |
| Level of Effort (LOE) | The amount of time (e.g., days, % FTE) estimated for staff to dedicate to coordinating or supporting the engagement. |
| Lived experience | Personal knowledge and understanding gained from direct, first-hand involvement in specific circumstances or issues relevant to the engagement. |
| Meaningful participation | Ensuring youth engagement is more than tokenistic; young people have genuine opportunities to influence processes and outcomes, and their contributions are valued. |

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| Media release (form) | A consent form detailing how a participant's image, voice, or contributions might be used publicly (photos, videos, quotes) and seeking their permission. |
| Mitigation measures (risk) | Specific actions planned to reduce the likelihood or impact of identified risks (e.g., providing chaperones for travel, using secure online platforms, planning wellbeing check-ins). |
| MHPSS (mental health and psychosocial support) | Services addressing psychological and social needs; includes support ranging from basic emotional comfort to specialised clinical care. Referenced in referral planning. |
| Orientation session | A mandatory introductory meeting for selected youth participants covering key information about the engagement (process, roles, safety, rules, contacts, rights). |
| Pfa (psychological first aid) | A humane, supportive response to someone suffering distress, involving non-intrusive practical care and support, assessing needs, and helping access information/services. |
| Power dynamics | Awareness of and attention to the inherent imbalances of power that can exist between adult staff and young participants, and among youth themselves. |
| Psychosocial risks | Potential threats to participants' mental or emotional wellbeing arising from the engagement (e.g., stress, exposure to sensitive topics, online harassment). |
| Recognition package | The set of planned non-financial and/or financial acknowledgements for youth participation (e.g., certificates, stipends, public thanks, references). |
| Referral services / pathway | A documented list and process for connecting youth participants to external support services (health, MHPSS, legal, protection) when needed. |
| Remuneration / compensation | Financial payment (stipend, fee) or equivalent provided to youth for their time, expertise, and contributions. |
| Ring-fenced Budget Line | Funds specifically allocated for youth engagement costs that cannot easily be re-purposed for other activities without formal approval. |

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| Risk assessment | The process of identifying potential harms (physical, digital, psychosocial) related to the engagement and evaluating their likelihood and potential impact. |
| Safeguarding policy | An organisation's formal statement and procedures aimed at protecting children and young people from harm, abuse, and exploitation. |
| Selection rubric | A defined set of criteria and scoring guidelines used to evaluate applications and select participants fairly and transparently. |
| Stretch activity | An opportunity within the engagement designed to challenge youth participants and support their leadership development (e.g., co-facilitating, presenting). |
| Supervision arrangements | The planned structure for how staff involved in the engagement will be supported and overseen by their managers or mentors. |
| Survivor-centred response | An approach to handling safeguarding disclosures or incidents that prioritises the rights, needs, safety, and choices of the person who experienced harm. |
| Technical support | Assistance provided to the coordinator or participants related to specific tools, platforms, or methodologies used in the engagement. |
| Unconscious bias | Implicit attitudes or stereotypes that can affect understanding, actions, and decisions without conscious awareness; training aims to mitigate its impact. |
| Youth advisory group / board | A formal or informal group of young people providing advice, feedback, and strategic input to the organisation or specific projects. |
| Youth-friendly language/format | Communication (written, verbal, visual) designed to be easily understood and engaging for young people, avoiding jargon and complex sentence structures. |

The **RAYE Suite of Tools** was created under the **Y!Participate Initiative** – a multi-phase initiative led by the [MHPSS Collaborative](#) with funding support from **UNICEF**.



The initiative was co-developed with young people, with the aim of facilitating an environment where their contributions are not only valued but are instrumental in shaping decisions that impact their lives and wellbeing.

For further information, or to share feedback from your own use of the tool, get in touch with us: info@yparticipate.global

To learn more about Y!Participate, visit the website – www.yparticipate.global