



Where to start?

Youth Participation Kit: Young people

Resource 2

There are so many different ways to get involved in your community that it can be hard to decide where to start! This sheet has some ideas to get the ball rolling.

First things first

Before thinking about how you want to get involved in your community, you should ask yourself about the reasons **why** you want to get involved. Figuring out the 'why' is the best place to start, as it gives you a better chance of choosing the right 'what'.

Some common reasons why young people want to get involved, are to:

- meet new people
- help others
- stimulate and influence change
- find a new hobby or activity
- learn or develop skills
- build confidence
- gain experience for your resume.

Once you've thought about the 'why', you can start to think about the ways you would like to participate. This will depend on your 'why', as well as your personality, likes and dislikes, and the skills you already have. For example, if you're into sports, computers, animals, teamwork or anything else, there's probably a way to participate that involves putting this to use. If you choose something you're interested in, you'll probably have a more successful and enjoyable experience.



Where to start?

What's out there?

There are opportunities to get involved in a range of different ways. We've listed a lot here, but this isn't the whole list!

Help provide a service

This category is what most people think of as 'volunteering' - giving your time or services for free to help others. Some examples include:

- Be a mentor for someone in need (e.g. Youth Focus Mentoring Program, [AIME, YMCA WA YMentoring](#))
- Help people with gardening or household tasks (e.g. [Volunteer Task Force](#))
- Work in a wildlife shelter (e.g. [Native ARC](#))
- Provide tutoring for struggling students (e.g. [The Smith Family](#))
- Help at a community entertainment station (e.g. [RTR FM or Northern Suburbs Radio](#))
- 'Microvolunteering', where you do small online tasks for others (e.g. [Volunteering WA](#)).

Give advice or have your say

There are also lots of opportunities to share your ideas on how to improve your community. Some of these include:

- joining your local Youth Advisory Council (more details in Resource Sheet 3)
- getting involved with organisations who advocate for young people, such as the [Commissioner for Children and Young People](#) or [Youth Affairs Council of WA](#)
- applying to represent young people in the [WA YMCA Youth Parliament](#)
- becoming a board member in an organisation that helps the community (see Resource sheet 3)
- being part of one-off consultations and events hosted by various organisations from time to time (see 'Finding an Opportunity' below).

Help with community activities

Every community has lots of activities and events that are only possible with the help of volunteers. For example, you might:

- organise youth events as part of your local Youth Advisory Council
- help out a [local sporting club](#) as a scorer, runner, coach or committee member
- be part of a [Cadets WA](#) unit in your local area
- join the Young People's Planning Committee for [Youth Week WA](#)
- volunteer to help at a specific event (see the [Volunteering WA database](#)).



Where to start?

Advocate for a cause

If there's an issue or cause you're really passionate about, you might like to become an advocate for it in the community. Some ideas include:

- finding an organisation who supports the cause and helping them with their work
- starting your own organisation or social enterprise to support the cause
- running community events to raise awareness or fundraise
- starting petitions
- writing an online blog or 'letters to the editor' of your local newspaper.

Lend a hand in emergencies

When something bad happens, there are lots of people who help out—and many of them are ordinary people who volunteer with emergency services. These include:

- [organisations who deal with community threats](#) such as fire brigades, the State Emergency Service and marine rescue services
- organisations who support people who have been affected, such as the [Red Cross](#).

Finding an opportunity

Once you have an idea of what you'd like to do, you need to find out where and how you can do it. [Volunteering WA](#) has an online database of opportunities, or you could consider visiting your local youth centre or [Volunteer Resource Centre](#) to talk to someone about where you might be able to get involved. And of course, doing an online search can help once you've got an idea of what you're looking for.

If you're interested in youth issues and opportunities, there are also a couple of organisations who often share articles, ideas and opportunities through their channels. You might like to follow some of these groups on your social media platform of choice:

- Youth Affairs Council of WA ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#))
- Foundation for Young Australians ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#))
- ABC Heywire ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#)).



Where to start?

Case study: Marcus Wong

Marcus is the 2019 WA Youth Volunteer of the Year who has served others volunteering with various organisations including Mt Pleasant Baptist Church, Curtin University, Willetton Senior High School and Rafiki Africa Ministries. He is a documentary and advocacy filmmaker, with his documentary work illuminating the stories of marginalised people in Ugandan and Ethiopian communities. Marcus works to raise awareness of social, cultural and economic differences and similarities between us all. This work has led him to present stories, films and photographs at schools and various community groups in Australia to raise funds to support small grassroots charities in developing countries and help fight against social injustice.

"I would never have imagined getting into the career I am currently working in, and it all started because of volunteering. It was through volunteering I found what I was passionate about, and that turned me from a young, awkward teenager, into someone passionate about local and global community development, and able to public speak in front of other young teenagers to inspire them." – Marcus Wong

