FREE RESOURCE FOR COUNCIL YOUTH OFFICERS

Youth Advisory Council Health Check

A 15 minute self-assessment for the group you run. Find out where your youth council is losing momentum, and which of four areas to fix first.

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YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY AUSTRALIA
INSPIRING YOUNG LEADERS, IGNITING CHANGE

Built from conversations with council youth teams across Australia. Use it, copy it, share it.

Most youth councils don't fail. They drift.

The first meeting of the year has a full table. By winter it has half that. You send the reminder, you wait, and you start to wonder whether the group is worth running at all.

When we talk with council youth officers, the same four causes come up again and again. None of them is about young people losing interest. They are about how the group is set up.

1. Purpose

The group meets "as things come up" and gives advice when asked. There is no goal it is working towards, so there is no reason to make space in a busy week.

2. People

The same confident few. Captains, student leaders, one friendship group. The young people in the middle never apply, and the group never hears from them.

3. Rhythm

Meetings clash with rosters, sport and exams. Nothing happens between meetings because there is no group chat, no shared inbox and no roles.

4. Return

Members give advice and never hear what happened to it. After a few rounds of silence they decide nothing changes, and they stop coming.

How to use this check

- Do it on your own first, honestly. It takes about 15 minutes.
- Then run the same 16 statements with two or three members and compare. Where your answers differ is where the conversation is.
- Score each statement 0 (not yet), 1 (sometimes) or 2 (yes, reliably).
- Add up each area, then the total. Page 4 tells you what the numbers mean.

This check works for youth advisory councils, youth advisory groups, youth squads and junior councils. If your council doesn't have a group yet, read the "People" and "Return" questions as a planning list before you recruit.

The health check

Score each statement: **0** not yet, **1** sometimes, **2** yes, reliably.

	Purpose	Score
1	Every member could tell a friend, in one sentence, what the group is for this year.	**/2**
2	The group has one project or goal with a finish date inside the next six months.	**/2**
3	The project sits inside something council can act on or influence.	**/2**
4	Members wrote the group's ground rules themselves.	**/2**
	People	
5	At least half the members are not captains or student leaders.	**/2**
6	Members come from more than two schools, or from outside school (work, TAFE, uni, home school).	**/2**
7	There are enough members that two or three absences don't stop a meeting.	**/2**
8	There is a plan for when the oldest members age out or finish their term.	**/2**
	Rhythm	
9	Members chose the meeting day and time, and it is checked each term.	**/2**
10	There is a way to talk between meetings that doesn't rely on your personal phone or email.	**/2**
11	Every role (chair, minutes, socials) has a deputy.	**/2**
12	Members run part of each meeting: an agenda item, the welcome, a decision.	**/2**
	Return	
13	Within two weeks of giving advice, members hear what happened to it.	**/2**
14	Members have presented to councillors or the mayor in the past year.	**/2**
15	Members get something back for their time: a skill, a reference, training, a certificate.	**/2**
16	Members could name one thing that changed in the community because of the group.	**/2**

Purpose	People	Rhythm	Return	Total
/8	/8	/8	/8	**/32**

What your score means

The total tells you how much work is ahead. The lowest area tells you where to start.

25 to 32
STRONG

The group has a reason to meet and members see what their work does. Your job now is protecting it: plan for members ageing out, write down how the group runs so it survives you moving on, and give the strongest members a role in recruiting the next intake.

15 to 24
WOBBLING

Most councils sit here. Something works, often the people, but one area is pulling attendance down. Fix the lowest area first and leave the rest. A group with a clear project and a report-back habit usually lifts in one term.

0 to 14
RESET

Patching meeting by meeting won't hold. Pause openly, tell members why, and restart around one goal with a short, high-energy start such as a one day summit to bring new faces in or a retreat to set the plan. Page 5 shows how councils usually get there.

If one area is lowest

Lowest area	What it usually means	Start with
Purpose	Members don't know what they are working towards, so meetings feel optional.	One project, one finish date, written with members.
People	You hear from the same voices, and losing two members stops the group.	An open event that recruits from the middle, then applications.
Rhythm	The group only exists in the room, and everything between meetings lands on you.	A group chat on a work phone, a shared inbox, a deputy for every role.
Return	Members have given advice into silence and decided nothing changes.	A "you said, we did" report within two weeks, every time.

Compare your score with your members'

If you scored a statement 2 and members scored it 0, believe them. The gap between what staff think is happening and what young people experience is the most useful thing this check will show you.

Your score is the start. Here's the next step.

If you scored under 25, you are in good company. The gaps are usually the same: no shared goal, the same few voices, and nothing visible coming back to young people. Those are hard to fix one meeting at a time, which is why most councils reset the group in one go.

Youth Council Retreat

Two days with your group, run by young facilitators. Members leave with a purpose they wrote, their own ground rules, roles with deputies, and one project with a date they'll present to councillors. For groups scoring low on Purpose or Rhythm.

Youth Summit

One day, 100 to 200 young people from every school in your area, pitching ideas to the mayor. Youth council applications open at the end. For groups scoring low on People.

Book a free health check review

Send us your score and we'll talk through your results with you: what's driving them, what has worked at councils in a similar spot, and which option fits your budget and calendar. No obligation, and you keep the advice either way.

BOOK YOUR REVIEW AT YLAAUS.COM/PROGRAMS/ENQUIRY

97%

of young people in our programs feel more empowered to create change in their community

2 days

to give a youth council its purpose, roles and first project

Planning ahead? Popular dates book out first, so get in touch early.

Email **info@ylaaus.com** or visit **ylaaus.com/programs/community**. If you need anything else, reach out.