



Youth Development
Resource Center

GUIDES TO QUALITY PRACTICES

Virtual Facilitation and Youth Engagement

High quality programs are more likely to engage and retain youth. As many organizations shift their programs to virtual settings, ensuring quality facilitation and high levels of youth engagement is imperative.

Integrating the following quality practices into the planning and facilitation of virtual programs will provide safe, supportive, interactive, and engaging environments in which youth participants may thrive.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL SUGGESTED INDICATORS

Use this checklist when designing and implementing your program.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS: Practice online boundaries, security, and emotional safety.

- Having more than one adult facilitator is ideal for supporting a high-quality youth experience. As one adult facilitates, another can communicate with youth in the chat box and handle other logistical and security matters.
- Adults should join breakout groups for a short period of time to see if youth need support. Depending on staff availability, assign an adult to each small group. Let youth know they can leave their small group and rejoin the main group if need be.

SAFE & SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE: Assign staff roles and responsibilities to support youth.

- Be mindful of your digital and physical space. Close any tabs or websites that youth might see, even if by accident. Consider what is within view of your camera.
- While having everyone on camera is ideal, having the option to turn one's camera off may be needed to promote the emotional safety of participants and viewers.
- Several online platforms have safety measures in place to protect the privacy and emotional safety of you, your colleagues, and your youth. This includes using a password for entry and removing and blocking any uninvited guests.
- Co-creating and regularly revisiting [Group Agreements](#) is a powerful way to promote a safe emotional and psychological space for youth and adults in your program.

ACTIVE, ENGAGED LEARNING & SKILL BUILDING: Provide opportunities for collaboration and belonging.

- ❑ Allow youth to facilitate icebreakers or other collaborative activities. This can create a sense of belonging and promotes leadership and peer mentoring skills in partnership with adult facilitators.
- ❑ Make sure that the size of breakout groups is in alignment with the amount of time allotted for the task. For example, if the groups have five minutes, limit the small group to two or three participants so that everyone has an opportunity to share.
- ❑ To ensure that everyone participates, assign or provide interdependent roles for youth to choose from, such as time keeper, note taker, facilitator, and the spokesperson who will share small group work back to the full group.

YOUTH VOICE, CHOICE & LEADERSHIP: Provide opportunities for planning, choice, and reflection for youth.

- ❑ Before, during, or after meetings, give youth space to plan for projects, tasks, responsibilities, and how they will spend their time. For example, use the whiteboard (or another annotation feature based on the platform) to have youth brainstorm steps, materials, or ideas for a project they will be working on. Providing structured planning opportunities for youth affords them the chance to make authentic process choices.
- ❑ Provide time for youth to reflect throughout the session and at the end. Reflection strategies include, but are not limited to, sharing thoughts in the chat box, responding to debrief questions in the whole group and/or small groups, written reflection, drawing, audio and/or video recording, vision boards, etc. Providing youth with several choices and tools for reflection will better enable youth to communicate their thoughts and feelings.
- ❑ Youth should also have an opportunity to provide feedback to you as the facilitator. This can be done by using polling features within the online platform, or sending out surveys using alternative systems.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How to create Group Agreements

- ▶ <https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/groupagree>

Virtual icebreakers and reflections

- ▶ <https://involved.unl.edu/rsobook/Virtual%20Teambuilding%20Resource.pdf>

Zoom safety and interaction features

- ▶ <https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Comprehensive%20Guide%20to%20Educating%20Through%20Zoom.pdf>
- ▶ <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2020/04/security-tips-every-work-from-homer-needs-to-know-about-zoom-right-now/>

Free virtual collaboration tools

- ▶ <https://jamboard.google.com/>
- ▶ <https://Miro.com>

How to use Google Meets for e-learning

- ▶ <https://teachercenter.withgoogle.com/first-day-trainings/welcome-to-google-hangouts-meet>
- ▶ <https://ditchthattextbook.com/google-meet-elearning/>

YDRC's [Quality Standards](#) are informed by local provider and youth input, as well as the work of others in the field.