

Enhancing Youth
Engagement in Asia-Pacific:

A TOOLKIT FOR CORPORATES



Prepared by



In collaboration with

Citi Foundation



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AVPN is the world's largest network of Social Investors active in Asia, with over 600 diverse members across 33 markets. AVPN enables collaborations between policy makers, family offices, foundations and the private sector to increase the impact and flow of capital deployed towards closing SDG gaps in Asia. AVPN's mission is to catalyse the movement toward a more strategic, collaborative and outcome focused approach to social investing, ensuring that resources are deployed as effectively as possible to address key social challenges facing Asia today and in the future.



Soristic Impact Collective is a social impact consultancy based in Singapore. The company was founded in 2015, and through its work in impact monitoring and evaluation, social sector research and capacity building, aims to help businesses, non-profit organisations and communities achieve greater social impact.

Citi Foundation



The Citi Foundation works to promote economic progress and improve the lives of people in low-income communities around the world. We invest in efforts that increase financial inclusion, catalyze job opportunities for youth, and reimagine approaches to building economically vibrant communities. The Citi Foundation's "More than Philanthropy" approach leverages the enormous expertise of Citi and its people to fulfill our mission and drive thought leadership and innovation. For more information, visit www.citifoundation.com.

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ayPact draws from the rich AVPN network to build a community of funders, capacity builders, and solutionists - with a focus on equipping the next generation of Asian youths with the capital and resources they need to drive impactful change.

ayPact's flagship initiatives are underpinned by the following principles: to advocate for youths as invaluable assets, and to facilitate partnerships with capital providers that harness these assets for impact creation.



Jugaad is a pioneering initiative of ayPact that enables purpose-led corporations to partner with young impact leaders to co-create impact innovations. At the same time, Jugaad is an opportunity for young impact leaders to acquire a sense of agency, and step into roles as responsible global citizens. It employs mechanisms like reverse-mentorship or youth advisory boards to enable such corporate-youth synergies, according to each corporate's needs.

Jugaad's founding consortium comprises the Citi Foundation, Social Value Hong Kong, Bridge Institute, and Social Enterprise Academy. The Young Impact Leaders who participated are Chee Zhi Kin, Kathleeya Richard, Marcus Wong, Natalia Vera Aw, Raynard Chai, Tay Tien Sing, Varden Toh, Vyshnavi, Weilee Yap.

INTRODUCTION

Youths are the next generation of economic leaders and consumers. However, in today's context, they face significant headwinds in their leadership development which, in the long-term, will likely impact their ability to maximise their potential.

By and large, the work of empowering young people has been performed by governments, as well as international and local non-profit organisations (NPOs). Likewise, the private sector, especially corporates, is seeing greater importance in investing in and harvesting the potential of young people for the future of work. In fact, the innate qualities of youth can benefit companies across a wide variety of corporate objectives and present new opportunities for mutually beneficial engagements.

Corporates may engage with youth for a variety of reasons, ranging from corporate social impact (CSI) agendas or sustainable development, or to bring a new valence of innovation into their overall business strategies. To realise this vision, AVPN has created this toolkit to support corporates as they develop and/or strengthen their youth engagement strategies and complement the work of governments and NPOs.

By underscoring the value of youth engagement, surfacing common internal organisational challenges and potential solutions, and outlining pathways of engagement grounded in successful case examples, this toolkit aims to enable corporates to deepen their engagements with youth and achieve win-win outcomes for all stakeholders.

Finally, to support the translation of knowledge to action, this toolkit also presents key principles and a framework of core questions to guide corporates on this journey from design to implementation.



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended to be relevant for corporate professionals across business units such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, human resources (HR), business innovation, and corporate strategy, looking to:



Expand their corporate social impact programmes to strengthen youth development both in the community and within the organisation.



Incorporate youth engagements as part of their employee engagement, business sustainability and strategy initiatives.



Empower youth by integrating them into their organisation and leadership as business solutions innovators.



Overcome organisational barriers and deepen their work with youth.

The toolkit draws on a methodology that combines in-depth desktop research, as well as insights drawn from both the business and youth communities. See **Methodology** for further information.

CORPORATE SOCIAL IMPACT (CSI)

AVPN

Corporate Social Impact, or CSI for short, is the deliberate and meaningful integration of social and environmental responsibility into an organisation's core business strategy and values. This could be socially, reputationally, or commercially motivated, and can cut across the financial, operational, and social aspects of the company. At its most basic, CSI is a lens that allows you to consider how social impact objectives can be incorporated within the assets and resources of an organisation.

CSI differs from CSR in that it is fully embedded in an organisation's management, ethos, and business operations. It can include approaches such as corporate giving, employee engagement, inclusive business models, and community programmes.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

AVPN

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to strategies that companies put into action as part of their corporate governance that are designed to ensure the company's operations are ethical and beneficial for society.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UNITED NATIONS

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are integrated - they recognise that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.

YOUTH

Although youth is commonly used to reflect a community aged 15 to 24 years old, youth as defined in this toolkit refers to those in the 18 to 35 year age range. They include:

Young Founders and Entrepreneurs. Young founders and/or entrepreneurs on the cusp of developing an impact organisation or business.

Fresh Graduates. Young working adults seeking a career in and/or involvement with meaning and impact.

Student Leaders. Youths who actively participate in impact work through volunteerism or otherwise.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth engagement refers to the active and meaningful involvement of young people in various aspects of decision-making, problem-solving, and community or organisational activities. It goes beyond mere participation and involves empowering young individuals to contribute their perspectives, ideas, and skills to initiatives that affect them and the broader community.

ALIGNING CORPORATES & YOUTH

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Home to 55% of the world's youth (15-24 years), Asia-Pacific sits atop an immense demographic dividend that will shape its fortunes in the coming decades. As youths enter the workforce and mature, they are set to become the next generation of economic leaders and consumers. They will have an outsized impact on the future of Asia-Pacific's economies. Ensuring they are sufficiently resourced and supported to take on the roles available and fulfil their economic potential is essential. Doing so will require integrated, multi-stakeholder efforts involving governments, development agencies, and corporates.¹

However, in recent years, various mounting economic, social, and cultural challenges are threatening to stifle youth economic contribution and snowball into systemic issues. When poor access to education limits youth's employment options, their long-term economic potential also narrows.² This is further compounded by the impacts of economic shocks on job availability, just as cohorts of fresh graduates enter the workforce.³ In the long-term, young people will see their career prospects gradually erode, translating into further social or cultural problems.

Education, employment, and engagement are critical, though there has historically been more of an emphasis on the first two aspects.⁴ Across the private and public sectors, stakeholders typically focus on developing youth's essential skills – i.e., multi-disciplinary thinking, resilience, and creativity – with an eye towards fostering better employability.⁵

In comparison, there are significantly fewer initiatives focused on youth engagement, despite it being identified as a critical factor in generational development. There is a need for structures to enable key segments of society such as corporates and governmental bodies to engage with youth to tap into their potential.⁶ These engagements need to be a two-way street, where young people are thought of as partners in development, and co-creators who are empowered to contribute to and build the socio-economic future they want.⁷

This is starting to happen, but not quickly enough. Engagements to develop youths have so far largely revolved around approaches driven by governments, and local and international NPOs, with the private sector notably absent from the picture.⁸

The benefits of private sector-driven youth engagement go beyond the youths themselves – they also extend to companies by helping them become more sustainable, socially impactful, empathetic, and innovative. As you'll discover in the following chapters, working with youths can push corporates in many ways to solve real-world issues and generate creative solutions for clients. In deepening their understanding and engagement with youth, corporates are gaining co-creators in their journey towards a better world.

APPROACHES FOR ALIGNING ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES WITH YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES




Corporates engage with youth for a variety of reasons, ranging from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agendas, sustainable development, or to bring a new valence of innovation into their overall business strategies. However, the actual shape and design of these engagement programmes can vary quite significantly depending on each company's specific goals or approaches.

Below, we have set out three approaches that can help guide the overall design of corporates' youth engagement programmes, that align with particular organisational objectives (see Diagram 1).

Tip:

We recommend that you identify which approach best suits your organisation's objectives for youth engagement from an early stage. This helps set the tone for the type of engagement models your organisation could adopt and ensures they are able to meet impact outcomes.

Diagram 1

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES			
	 Nonmaterial Alignment	 Thematic Alignment	 Business Alignment
APPROACH	Corporate Social Impact (CSI)	Sustainable development, corporate sustainability	Business innovation and strategy
TYPE OF ENGAGEMENT	Occurs adjacent to the business, and could be unrelated to the business or industry	Aligns with broader national, regional, or global sustainable development, and are materially important to the company. Youths are recognised as agents of systemic changes	Essential to the business' long-term strategy, with the objective of developing groundbreaking business and/or social innovations for the organisation
RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS	Minimal mutual synergies, as benefits are clearly defined for each party	Some synergies and mutual recognition of responsibilities around broader themes	Highly synergistic, high touch, long-term with economic and social impact attributable to all parties
CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT	CSI and Human Resources (HR), including training, learning, and development	Corporate sustainability. Corporate development and strategy, innovation and transformation	Corporate development and strategy, innovation and transformation, senior management, business development

These categories are based on EVPA's guide for Corporate Social Investors and can help frame how engagements with youths may vary under different corporate settings.^{9 10 11}

CONTEXTUALISING CORPORATE ALIGNMENTS

To better understand how these alignments can shape youth engagement strategies, we provide context on them in the following sections, and showcase some examples of engagement models that have been previously adopted.



NONMATERIAL ALIGNMENT - CORPORATE SOCIAL IMPACT IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Corporate Social Impact (CSI) programmes are not unique or new to corporates. Starting in the 1950s, CSI was mainly implemented to negotiate societal tensions, which often arose from companies advocating for profit maximisation over human and labour rights.¹² Over time, CSI has evolved into a method for contributing to social change, and its activities have shifted in line with changing economic and social contexts.

Today, we can think of CSI in terms of how its impact activity aligns with “nonmaterial” areas of your business - e.g., its geographical presence or the local language of its community-with the aim of enhancing its ability to create social change.

CSI activities tend to exist on a spectrum, with traditional donor-recipient relations at one end and value maximisation for an organisation and stakeholders at the other.¹³ With a nonmaterial alignment, a company might engage with its communities to produce social returns even when there are no explicit financial benefits in doing so. Some of these investments may also generate further impacts down the line, setting the stage for long-term social change.¹⁴



Case Study 1

Linklaters, a leading global law firm with a strong presence in London, engages thousands of young people aged 16 to 18 years-old in underprivileged areas to build their skills and behaviours.¹⁵ The capacity building activities are designed to help the youth succeed academically and professionally. They help youths develop career aspirations and awareness, build self-confidence, self-worth, and professional skills such as digital technology, presentation, and communication skills.

For Linklaters, these initiatives are driven by their long-term social objectives, to provide staff with meaningful volunteering opportunities, and forge new and closer community relationships.



THEMATIC ALIGNMENT - YOUTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

From a thematic perspective, a company would look to align its impact activity or core focus areas with specific social issues that have been deemed materially important. The chosen social issues can encompass either a company's core values or frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The explicit goal with a thematic perspective is to build a strong link between the goals of a company's social impact work and overall mission, making it an effective approach for organisations as it builds on an existing foundation.

We can already see how taking a thematic perspective can generate real progress, as evidenced by the work being done to advance SDGs focused on the themes of poverty, hunger, and inequality.¹⁶ Large numbers of youths still face numerous socio-economic challenges, which the private sector may be uniquely capable of addressing due to its innate dynamism and solutions-oriented nature.¹⁷ These qualities can be leveraged to contribute to youth development and tackle these systemic challenges.¹⁸

By addressing challenges at a systemic level, corporates can achieve win-win conditions for all parties, as Case Study 2 suggests. In helping disadvantaged youths overcome socio-economic barriers, companies complement public policy for youth development - at the same time, the organisations themselves benefit from a high-quality talent pool.

Corporate initiatives can be made even more impactful if the youths themselves are engaged and involved in the process, rather than being passive recipients or beneficiaries. Within the context of sustainable development, young people are not just next-generation consumers and economic contributors – they hold the potential to be partners in development.^{19 20}



Case Study 2

Tata Group, an Indian multinational conglomerate headquartered in Mumbai, has demonstrated commitment to bridge the digital divide for Indian youths. The conglomerate implements an “IT Employability” programme in engineering and science colleges across the country, training students in technical and business skills, including those from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

In this instance, the programmes not only generate social impact for their beneficiaries, but they also align with sustainability themes, such as developing a well-equipped talent pool that contributes to the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

“In multiple markets across APAC, youth unemployment, unequal access to social capital or upskilling opportunities is a significant problem.”

- Corporate Roundtable Participant



BUSINESS ALIGNMENT - YOUTH AND BUSINESS INNOVATION AND STRATEGY

While some might argue that youth engagement does not directly contribute to the achievement of business goals, there are in fact substantial benefits to be gained from collaborating with this dynamic demographic.

First, youths are an untapped source of innovation, and can be active co-creators in the development and dissemination of new products, services, and in the improvement of processes that produce economic and social change.²¹ Youth involvement can result in both incremental or radical change across a variety of environments ranging from developmental to commercial and services-driven spheres.²² As innovators in the commercial sphere, youths are a source for fresh ideas and renewed energy. The key to maximising their contributions is to create enabling conditions to harness their capabilities, such as digital literacy skills, disruptive thinking, resilience, and resourcefulness.²³

One form of youth-led innovation is in the form of youth impact entrepreneurship. Youth impact entrepreneurship models—especially youth-led ones—acknowledge that the creativity, resilience, and risk appetite of youths can be applied to simultaneously achieve and contribute to economic, social, and environmental objectives.^{24 25}

The Project Melo (see Case Study 3) example debunks mainstream notions that youths lack professional experience and skills and are not capable of contributing meaningfully in a corporate setting. Within a purposefully created environment, youths were able to support corporate innovation by providing their ideas, energy, drive, innovative ability, and perspectives.

The benefits of this type of engagement also drew support from two Corporate Roundtable participants who emphasised that corporates should leverage the forward-looking ideas of youths to better serve their clients.

Certain business processes – such as internal product or research and development (R&D) – can be more readily associated with youth-led innovation due to their inherently exploratory nature. Nevertheless, there are also significant opportunities to integrate young people into other processes such as culture transformation, technology adoption and business model reinvention. These areas maintain the potential to leverage youth-driven innovation while also lending more structure to support their learning.^{27 28}

Diagram 2 outlines some of the areas where youths can contribute to specific business areas as internal or external participants.²⁹

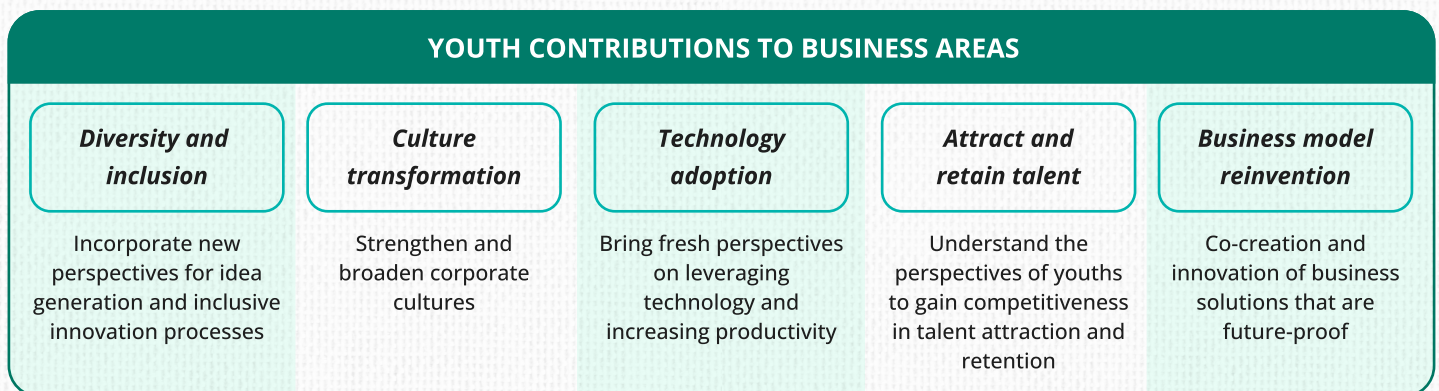


Case Study 3

Project Melo is a corporate youth engagement programme initiated by Social Value Hong Kong (SVHK).²⁶ Since 2019, the programme has matched university students with CEOs of leading companies to embark on a journey of joint discovery and co-creation. Students are tasked with solving a problem provided by the CEO. At the end of the programme, they present their solutions to the problem.

A key aspect of the success of this programme is how the CEOs were able to put aside prior preconceived notions and assumptions about working with youths, and actively involve themselves to learn from the perspective and experience of youths. An example of this model of co-creation is the collaboration between a student group and McDonald's Hong Kong's CEO, Randy Lai. Together they developed a Happy Meal climate booklet with the aim of affecting sustainability-related behavioural changes in young children.

Diagram 2



“Youths have forward-looking ideas for us to better deliver our services to our clients, and we need new ideas to avoid thinking in the same old-fashioned way.”

- Corporate Roundtable Participant

CHALLENGES AND ACTION PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In this section, we outline some potential challenges in deepening your organisation's engagement with youths and recommend action pathways. Partnering with intermediaries could support in overcoming some of these challenges, for example in capacity building, programme design, implementation, and stakeholder communication.

The challenges you'll face will vary depending on how far along you are in your efforts and the approach you've chosen that most closely aligns with your impact objectives.



Nonmaterial



Thematic



Business



SILOED PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENTS

Youths comprise a variety of stakeholder groups. Through a corporate lens, they could be viewed as employees or customers or - in CSI contexts - as programme beneficiaries. Whatever the case, ensuring clarity from the get-go is essential. For example, if youth groups are viewed as employees or customers, engagement with them would naturally be commercially driven. On the other hand, if they are perceived as beneficiaries, it would be key to define the nature of engagement and clarify impact objectives from the onset.³⁰

It is important to define your organisation's intended relationship with youths to ensure that the expected outcomes from your youth engagement efforts are achieved. Failing to establish their value proposition could complicate how the company views these initiatives and result in its de-prioritisation internally.^{31 32}

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

IDENTIFY A WIN-WIN APPROACH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

One of the ways to gain clarity on the target youth groups is to view young people as both internal and external stakeholders. This dual-perspective approach will enable you to discover the mutual benefit to both the organisation and the youth by achieving both business sustainable and social impact.^{33 34}

“Engaging youths allows us to learn from them, guide the ethos around our work, and be informed by the next generation.”

- Corporate Roundtable Participant

EXAMPLE 1

HOW HILTON TRAINS ITS YOUNG EMPLOYEES

Recognising that “people are the core of their business”, Hilton supports a number of initiatives to connect young people to economic opportunities. Partnering with the International Youth Foundation (IYF), Hilton has trained over 20,000 of its young employees globally in life skills. In Africa, Hilton launched the “Big Five” for Sustainable Travel and Tourism, contributing to training and apprenticeships programmes for youth in the region. The Big Five focuses on building a strong talent pipeline and tackling identified challenges for youth, including underemployment.

EXAMPLE 2

GAP'S 'THIS WAY ONWARD' PROGRAMME

Since 2007, Gap’s “This Way Onward” programme has supported young people with new life skills and confidence, contributing to their overall growth and employability. Gap employees connect with community partners and provide youths with training and skills development to attain and retain employment. The selection and employment processes are also geared towards identifying potential, rather than credentials. Upon employment with Gap, these high potential employees also receive ongoing coaching from their store manager and community partner.



LACK OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE IN SUCCESSFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENTS

Lack of experience or unsatisfactory prior engagements can make you wary of exploring ways to expand and deepen youth engagement despite the evident benefits. This hesitation is commonplace, especially when it involves concerns about resource allocation, leveraging employee engagement, or the viability of achieving meaningful impact outcomes.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

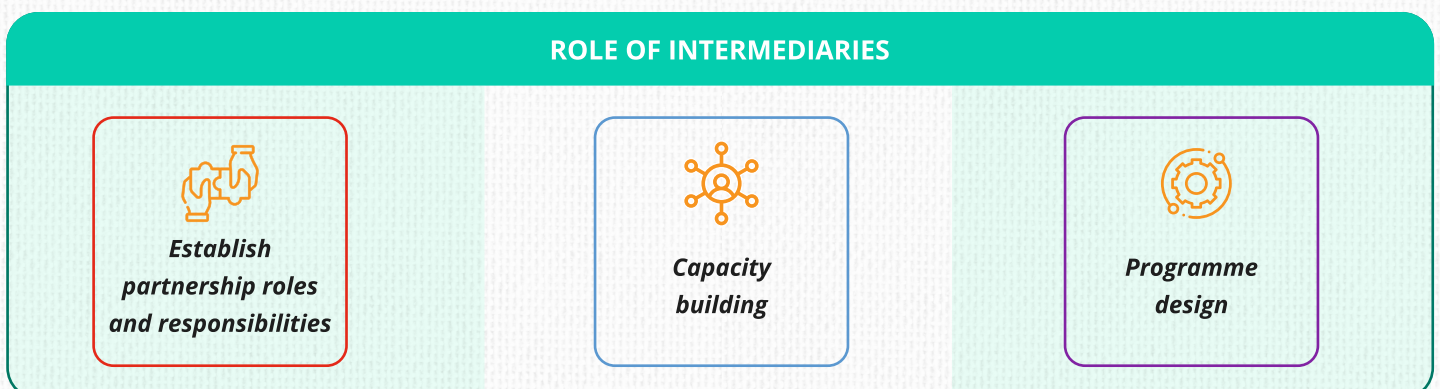
PARTNER WITH INTERMEDIARIES

Relevant to both previously mentioned challenges, you could consider engaging with youth-focused NPOs or intermediaries. They bring institutional knowledge around effective ways of engaging youths and are well-equipped to guide your organisation in addressing key concerns and defining parameters and objectives that fit within the company's wider goals.

For example, youth-led or youth oriented intermediaries can design philanthropy campaigns or employee volunteering programmes that suit your organisation's objectives and resources,³⁵ while optimising interventions that meet the needs on the ground by utilising their experience in programming for the marginalised youths.³⁶

Where possible, it would also be advantageous for such initiatives to cut across organisational units to ensure that engagements are not isolated to CSI teams and allow different departments to benefit from experience in youth engagements.

Diagram 3





COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

Despite the clear benefits, youth engagement initiatives are often resource-intensive, even in the preparatory phase. For example, you may have to allocate resources to identify the right youth partner, onboard and integrate them into ongoing organisational processes and programmes, and sometimes simultaneously build their capacity to be able to contribute at their highest potential. This high degree of engagement could result in youth programmes competing with other CSI - or sustainability-linked initiatives that are more straightforward or immediate.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

OBTAINING BUY-IN FROM YOUR KEY INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Gathering support - especially among senior management and from other business units - is important to ensure allocation of resources towards youth-focused CSI or corporate sustainability programmes.

One Jugaad Corporate Partner shared that they were able to obtain management buy-in very quickly because their organisation already had an established platform for youth engagement and a track record of employee volunteering with youth-related causes. Over time, the organisation has been able to escalate the intensity of its youth engagement efforts quickly and easily.

Another Corporate Roundtable participant noted that in order to sustain organisational buy-in it is essential to build continuous internal engagement by incorporating dedicated periods of interaction between senior management and youths. Having this structure would provide youths with a safe space and platform to showcase their ideas and voice concerns, while also providing a learning opportunity for senior management, helping to seed buy-in from the wider organisation.

“There is a need for an internal platform or programme that is really dedicated to youths in order to stand out against other programmes and day-to-day tasks.”

*- Social Purpose Manager at a Bank
and Corporate Roundtable Participant*



LACK OF INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Without organisational champions, your youth engagements could lose momentum, especially those that are longer-term and require more corporate resources. This is where champions can play a role in building consensus and sustaining momentum. Accumulating support can help you overcome any potential organisational resistance related to youth engagement efforts.³⁷

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

FOSTER NEW SOURCES OF SUPPORT

One approach for bolstering awareness and fostering support is to identify opportunities for organisational leadership to recognise, showcase, and celebrate success stories from youth engagements across the organisation.³⁸ To develop and eventually grow a base of champions, you could also consider broadening organisational involvement beyond traditional corporate CSI functions. Approach teams that aren't usually focused on CSI – e.g., operations, marketing, or public relations – or even consider tapping into other initiatives like employee volunteering, where staff from different teams can dedicate volunteering hours to youth engagement initiatives. Involving other teams in a systemic way can help embed youth engagement within the very bones of the organisation in the long-term.^{39 40}



FINDING WAYS TO MAXIMISE THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTHS

Without many regional examples or benchmarks to draw from, it can be daunting to design youth engagements from the ground up.

Designing a programme that provides the necessary conditions for young people to perform and harness their assets requires deep understanding of youth needs. Without effective and impactful engagement methods, there is a risk of isolating young people and relegating them to the role of passive beneficiaries. However, giving them a birds-eye view can transform their perspective on where and how they can bring value by bringing into focus how their efforts can contribute to the growth and success of a company.

As one Corporate Roundtable participant from a family office noted, effective youth engagement requires a deep understanding of youths and application of impactful methods. Without effective engagement methods, there is a risk of isolating youths to the role of passive beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

ENGAGE YOUTH IN LEADERSHIP

Consider where you can provide opportunities for youth to engage with leadership structures that can allow them to experience new elements of the organisation and inform decision-making.^{41 42} Some of these leadership models have already been adopted by NPOs, through the establishment of youth advisory committees. Although such models are less prominent in the private sector, it is a model that can be replicated within your organisation. By bringing in youth on your advisory boards, you can tap on their fresh insights and perspectives in areas such as business strategy, product, and business development.

EXAMPLE 3

PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

Plan International's Youth Advisory Board (YAB) comprises youths who vocalise the needs of their peers to enhance the organisation's work. YAB members co-design youth programming, advocacy campaigns, and support their execution. They are also involved in influencing activities, such as engagements with policymakers and private corporations.

"The process really started from positioning youths as assets and leaders, and with the right combination of empowerment and cultivation, they are able to provide very innovative solutions."

*- Corporate Roundtable Participant and
Jugaad Corporate Partner*



DISCONNECT BETWEEN SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND YOUTHS

Due to a myriad of differences, there is often a natural disconnect between most youth and the senior management of the organisation that engages them. This can make it challenging for senior management to fully understand the potential that youths can bring to the business, whether as internal employees or external solutions generators. However, where there are opportunities for connection, there is room for surprising and fruitful exchange.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION

It is essential that these opportunities for interaction do not happen by chance but are purposefully created to provide a constant rhythm of engagement. One potential avenue is “reverse mentoring” that can provide a forum for connection between junior and senior employees. Reverse mentorship also creates a range of other benefits for both mentor and mentee beyond that of traditional mentoring, such as bilateral knowledge sharing and skills transfer, the challenging of ideas, and the generation of new approaches to problems and solutions.⁴³

While reverse mentoring programmes would largely occur between existing employees and senior management, there are ways to apply this approach to youths that are external to the organisation. The Estee Lauder (see Example 4) reverse mentoring programme and Project Melo are good examples of initiatives where youths bring fresh perspectives to real-world business challenges and surface organisational blind spots.

EXAMPLE 4

ESTEE LAUDER'S REVERSE MENTORING PROGRAMME

Estee Lauder's President and CEO, Fabrizio Freda, founded the Global Reverse Mentor Programme in 2015 to empower and engage young talent within the Estee Lauder companies globally to connect with leaders' priority topics. Since its inception, there have been more than 600 reverse mentor participants, 300 senior leadership participants, and 40 programmes in different countries. The young participants were able to develop their problem-solving skills by tackling business problem statements. Conversely, Estee Lauder's executives had the opportunity to engage in continuous learning, develop their skills, gain critical perspectives in their day-to-day work, and develop new approaches to problem-solving.

PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING YOUNG IMPACT LEADERS

Every organisation has a different set of challenges and objectives, which would likely have a bearing on the design of its youth engagement programme.

In this section, we have set out eight principles to serve as signposts to guide the design and implementation of youth engagement programmes, that can be applied to all types of businesses. Considering the multi-stakeholder nature of youth engagement, these principles – curated from multiple sources – help to align the priorities of all stakeholders involved. They are not intended to be exhaustive.^{44 45}

While incorporating all eight principles can introduce rigour into your programme, we are cognisant that this must be balanced with practicality. We suggest that you select the principles that best align with your values and objectives depending on the phase of the journey you are in. We also recommend incorporating them progressively over time.

“We tried to understand them as individuals, and after the programme, the youths highlighted that it felt more like a personal engagement, which made them feel positively different.”

*- Corporate Roundtable Participant and
Jugaad Corporate Partner*

PRINCIPLE 1

PROVIDE VALUE-ADDED EXPERIENCES

Youth engagements should provide opportunities that go beyond what is already available in school or work contexts. Before designing an engagement programme, consider speaking to youths to identify the types of opportunities that they are seeking but may not be exposed to.

PRINCIPLE 2

BE INTENTIONAL IN BUILDING CAPACITY

As a complement to providing value-added experiences, engagements should be deliberately designed to build the capacity of youths. This can range from equipping them with professional and industry relevant skills, to building core soft skills such as leadership, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

PRINCIPLE 3

EMPOWER AND INVOLVE YOUTHS

Empowerment is a multi-faceted concept and could include giving youths opportunities to share their ideas or involving them in co-creation or decision-making processes. For example, youths involved in co-creation could be offered an opportunity to present their findings to corporate decision-makers.

PRINCIPLE 4

DESIGN PROGRAMMES WITH CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Programmes should be designed and implemented with the objective of creating positive and measurable impact for all parties involved. There should be processes in place to measure the achievement of objectives for both parties, and to review and make improvements for future programming.

One *Corporate Roundtable* participant highlighted the importance of adopting clear measurement standards to benchmark youth engagement efforts against the organisation's wider sustainability initiatives. This could mean setting clear organisational key performance indicators (KPIs) or including youth engagements as a pillar in your company's Environmental-Social-Governance (ESG) or sustainability goals. In doing so, you are explicitly tying organisation-wide goals to the outcomes of your youth engagement programme which could prompt the participation and buy-in from other business departments.

PRINCIPLE 5

CREATE ENABLING, DIVERSE, AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS

It's essential that youths can participate effectively without fear of prejudice and judgement.⁴⁶ You should embrace principles of diversity and inclusion with respect to programme design and recruitment, ensuring that youth from a variety of backgrounds and experiences are engaged. The activities within the programme itself could also intentionally acknowledge and celebrate the diverse lived experiences among participants. This approach has a dual outcome of helping corporates address a wider range of societal issues and reach underserved or marginalised communities as well as bringing a range of perspectives, experiences, and ideas to the table. This can lead to more innovative and effective solutions whilst having a broader and lasting impact on the communities in which the engagements take place.

PRINCIPLE 6

BUILD EFFECTIVE ADULT-YOUTH PARTNERSHIPS

Adults play an important role in maximising the potential of youths by creating an environment for them to innovate.⁴⁷ Partnerships between adults and youths should be intentionally incorporated into a programme, where the relationship is reciprocal and equal, and adults are encouraged to adopt a "clean slate" mindset, participating without any preconceived notions.⁴⁸

PRINCIPLE 7

COMMIT AND ALLOCATE APPROPRIATE RESOURCES

Youth engagements should be adequately resourced with sufficient financing and human capital, physical facilities, and other in-kind support. You should strive to commit and allocate resources based on the needs of the youths and intensity of the programme. Where human capital is involved, it could also be worth considering preparing or training in-house participants with skills to engage with youths.⁴⁹ Consider dedicating resources towards external youth-led or youth-oriented intermediaries which could also inject crucial knowledge and experience and provide support in programme design.

PRINCIPLE 8

UPHOLD ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Engagements with youths should be guided by ethical considerations and a spirit of openness and transparency. If youths and corporates are involved in co-creation and business innovation, it should be disclosed to the youths how these ideas will be used by the corporate.

QUICK REFERENCE: FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGNING YOUR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MODEL

CATEGORY	KEY QUESTIONS
VALUE PROPOSITION	<p>Youth engagement initiatives offer a range of benefits to companies beyond the social and environmental good they achieve. These programmes can create a positive feedback loop where societal and corporate interests align, while fostering mutual growth and sustainability. To maximise these benefits, companies need to align their youth engagement initiatives with their core values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What kind of organisational benefits are you expecting? (e.g. enhanced reputation, customer loyalty, retaining talent, access to new markets, etc.)• Is there potential to integrate the programme into core business operations? (e.g. where youths are your primary stakeholders, as employees, clients/ consumers, suppliers, etc.)• What are the potential corporate social impact benefits, where youth can contribute towards improving your social, environmental impact programmes?

CATEGORIES

KEY QUESTIONS

IMPACT OBJECTIVES

It is important to clearly articulate the impact objectives you aim to achieve through youth engagement and ensure that these objectives align with your overall corporate social responsibility (CSR) or sustainability goals.

- What are the specific social or environmental challenges affecting youth that align with your corporate values and mission?
- Have you conducted thorough research and needs assessments to understand the specific needs and aspirations of the youth in the targeted communities?
- What measurable outcomes do you want to achieve through your youth engagement initiatives, and how will you assess the success of these outcomes?
- Are your youth engagement initiatives aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or other relevant global frameworks?

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Empowering youth within the corporate environment encourages them to express their ideas which can lead to innovative solutions to business challenges. When young employees feel heard and valued, they're more likely to contribute novel insights.

- How are youths being empowered during the programme?
- How can you develop the leadership qualities of youths in this programme?
- How can you measure the level of empowerment and development of leadership skills in youths?

CO-CREATION

Co-creating solutions with youth is a collaborative approach where corporations work together with young individuals to address various challenges and create innovative solutions. This approach has several benefits and can be a powerful strategy for companies seeking to tap into the energy, creativity, and fresh perspectives that young people bring.

- Is there an opportunity to introduce elements of co-creation?
- Does your organisation have a culture of inclusivity that would be conducive to such collaboration and idea-generation?

CATEGORIES	KEY QUESTIONS
<p>SCALE OF PROGRAMME</p>	<p>Larger-scale programmes often have broader impact potential, affecting a larger number of youths and communities. However, targeting a smaller group allows for deeper engagement and flexibility in programme delivery to adapt to changing circumstances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would your impact objectives be better achieved with a large-scale community engagement or a small one?
<p>TIME HORIZON</p>	<p>Short-term programmes may yield immediate results, but they can also lack deep and lasting impact. In comparison, long-term programmes can generate enduring, transformative change, though they often face greater uncertainty e.g., changing societal and environmental conditions, regulatory shifts, evolving stakeholder expectations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long should the programme be sustained to ensure impact objectives are achieved?
<p>RESOURCE ALLOCATION</p>	<p>Effective corporate youth engagement requires a strategic allocation of resources, which demonstrates a company's commitment to the development, support, and empowerment of young individuals. The allocation of resources should align with the company's goals and values, as well as the specific needs and opportunities related to youth engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of resources are required? (e.g., financial, human capital, physical assets) • What kind of resources are available? (e.g., financial, human capital, physical assets) • Are you able to sufficiently meet the resource requirement needs of the youth engagement programme?
<p>POTENTIAL ROLE OF INTERMEDIARY</p>	<p>Intermediaries play a vital role in facilitating corporate youth engagement initiatives. These intermediaries can be non-profit organisations, educational institutions, community groups, or specialised youth-focused organisations that bridge the gap between corporations and young individuals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a role for intermediaries in the engagement process in delivering training and development for both corporates and youths, programme implementation, knowledge exchange between corporates etc.?

METHODOLOGY

The toolkit draws on a methodology that combines in-depth desktop research, as well as insights drawn from both the business and youth communities.

DESKTOP RESEARCH

A comprehensive review of existing literature and models was undertaken around youth engagement and development, corporate stakeholder engagement and corporate social innovation, to lay the foundation for grounded insights gathered as part of the Jugaad pilot.

JUGAAD PILOT PROGRAMME

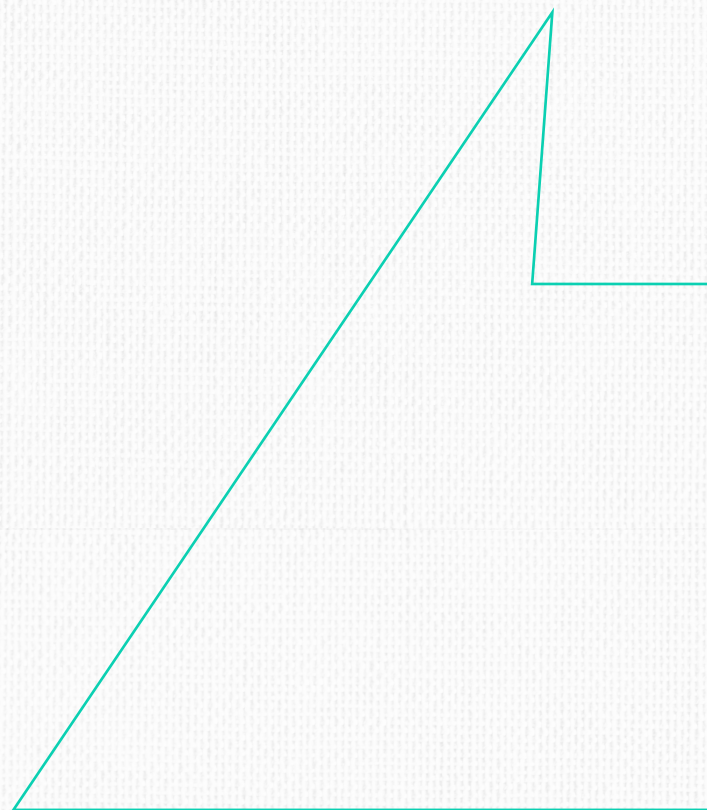
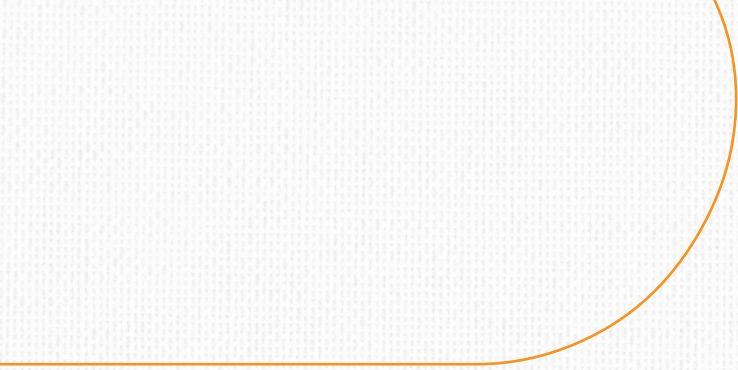
During the early stages of the Jugaad pilot, ethnographic methods were used to track the co-creation process of youth engagement programmes, to ensure that any insights presented in this toolkit are firmly rooted in practical application. Through weekly check-ins with the implementing partners (Social Value Hong Kong, Bridge Institute, Social Enterprise Academy, and NeoUprise), we acquired timely insights on key considerations, programme adjustments, and challenges encountered by all stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the programmes. We supplemented this with selective interactions with the corporate partners (WhatIf Foods and Prudential Assurance Malaysia Berhad) and youth impact leaders to ensure that their perspectives were also effectively incorporated into our insights.

CORPORATE ROUNDTABLE

In the concluding phase of the research, we convened a corporate roundtable aimed at validating the insights distilled from stages 1 and 2. This roundtable sought to further elucidate the fundamental perceptions, motivations, and intended outcomes of corporates that are either already involved in youth engagement or contemplating such involvement.

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