COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

YOUTH PARLIAMENT TOOLKIT

EFFECTIVE PLATFORMS FOR FUTURE LEADERS

Developed in partnership with

UN DP

CPA COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

About the CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) connects, develops, promotes and supports parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA collaborates with parliaments and other organisations, including the intergovernmental community, to achieve its statement of purpose. It brings parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practices and new policy options they can adopt or adapt in the governance of their societies.

About UNDP

As the lead United Nations agency on international development, UNDP works in 170 countries and territories to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. It helps countries develop policies, leadership skills, partnerships and institutional capabilities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Its work is centred around six core development areas, known as our signature solutions: poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality.

Acknowledgements

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Have you used this publication?
If you have, let us know as we are always keen to hear how our products are being used. If you have feedback on this guide or would like to share your experience of establishing a Youth Parliament with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, please get in touch: programmes@cpahq.org.

Foreword

Article 13 of the Commonwealth Charter states that:

[We the people of the Commonwealth] recognise the positive and active role and contributions of young people in promoting development, peace, democracy and in protecting and promoting other Commonwealth values.

It is with these ideals in mind that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have developed this timely and worthwhile resource on Youth Parliaments, coinciding with the Commonwealth Year of Youth in 2023-2024 — a year dedicated to youth-led action for sustainable and inclusive development. As the publication will highlight, the shape and scope of a Youth Parliament or its equivalent youth engagement programme can vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, nevertheless whatever approach is taken, its need cannot be underestimated

Youth engagement has been an important long-term passion and commitment of the CPA. It is firmly embedded in our current Strategic Plan 2022-2025 which states that: *'We pledge to prioritise the role and interests of young people within the CPA's work and operations. We will uphold and promote youth participation in politics.'*

One of the many ways CPA seek to pursue this pledge is through our Commonwealth Youth Parliament programme. For over 27 years the CPA has been a leader in its field, with its first Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) delivered in 1997. The programme is aimed at young people aged 18 to 29 who gain experience being young parliamentarians. Participants experience life in the parliamentary spotlight and gain practical experience of the parliamentary system whilst learning how to approach politics. Formal parliamentary practice adapted from several Commonwealth countries is followed and the proceedings are observed under the watchful eyes of experienced parliamentary officials. The agenda includes debates, votes on Bills and government motions.

The approach has garnered success with a total of 7 participants (as of 2020) who have gone on to become parliamentarians in their own right, and a further 65% of participants now employed as public servants within their respective jurisdictions.

In line with its Strategic Plan (2022-2025), UNDP is committed to enhancing young people's political participation. This includes partnering with parliaments and supporting mechanisms such as Youth Parliaments as important platforms for meaningful and sustained youth engagement in all aspects of policy- and decision-making across the world.

While political participation of young people holds the potential for tremendous impact, there is a need to move beyond numbers and tokenism - young people's right to participation has to be taken seriously and the voices of young people must be heard. This is especially so in light of the alarming global trends towards democratic backsliding and shrinking civic spaces. Young people have a vital stake in the strengthening of democratic institutions to meet the social, economic, technological and political challenges of the future.

We trust that this toolkit will provide comprehensive advice and support stakeholders in establishing and strengthening Youth Parliaments as effective platforms for young changemakers and future leaders.

Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Sarah Lister, Head of Governance, UNDP

Introduction

Youth Parliaments are an effective way to introduce young people to their local and national political systems, whilst developing a range of skills for life; from leadership and decision-making to collaboration and public speaking.

Northern Ireland Youth Assembly members with the Speakers of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and UK Parliaments

Design a Youth Parliament that's right for you

Youth Parliaments come in all shapes and sizes. Activities range from annual one-day outreach and engagement events to youth-led democratic organisations with elected representatives discussing a range of issues of importance to a region or nation.

This guide recognises and celebrates the diversity of Youth Parliaments and offers comprehensive advice that you can draw from to suit the model you select. This includes outlining the challenges and opportunities offered by the various options available to help you select what will be suitable for your requirements and goals.

Alongside the options outlined are real-world examples from a range of existing Youth Parliaments, so you can explore successful approaches further.

This guide is divided into five steps. You can dip in at the point that suits your planning stage or read from start to finish to follow each step in turn, from membership selection to planning, management, marketing and evaluation.

Primarily designed for Parliamentary staff, this guide may also be suitable for civil society organisations, government departments, and other groups involved in Youth Parliament coordination. Members of Parliament themselves may also find this publication valuable in advocating for the development of a Youth Parliament within their jurisdiction.

Why Establish a Youth Parliament?

The main aim of a Youth Parliament is to provide a platform for young people to learn about and actively participate in a parliamentary process, whilst developing broader professional and social skills that will enable them to contribute to their community.

The overarching goals of a Youth Parliament can be broken down into the following five themes:

1. **Strengthening Civic Knowledge:** By familiarising participants with a Parliament's structure, functions, and procedures, participation in a Youth Parliament serves as a hands-on education for democratic governance. Through their participation, young people gain first-hand experience of parliamentary proceedings, including debates, voting, the formulation of policies, and the principles of democratic decision-making.
2. **Embedding Democratic Engagement:** At a time when turnout amongst young people in democratic activity is often low, Youth Parliaments prepare and encourage young people to continue to engage as they move to adulthood. Providing a Youth Parliament programme also sends a message more broadly that engaging young people in our democracies is vital for representation.
3. **Providing Members with Youth Insight:** When a Youth Parliament involves Members from the jurisdiction's legislature, it can provide those Members with valuable insight into the needs, concerns and perspectives of young people in their jurisdiction. Just as the Youth Parliament provides knowledge and skill building for the young participants, they in turn can provide insight to parliamentarians.
4. **Developing Leadership and Advocacy Skills:** Youth Parliaments serve as training for aspiring young leaders, equipping them with essential skills such as public speaking, critical thinking, research, negotiation, and teamwork. Within a parliamentary environment, participants learn how to effectively communicate their ideas, engage in constructive debates, and collaborate with their peers to find common ground on issues relevant to their society and communities.
5. **Building Social Cohesion and Understanding:** By working together towards common goals, participants of a Youth Parliament can learn to appreciate and respect differences and build productive and positive approaches to debate and discussion, even when views or perspectives differ.

It is important to stress that establishing and delivering a Youth Parliament should not be an ad hoc random undertaking. Rather it should form part of a wider strategy by the Parliament to promote youth and public engagement. Such a strategy should be high-level, either part of the overall parliamentary strategic plan or a bespoke department level engagement and outreach strategy. Undertaken alone, the Youth Parliament may provide limited value and achievement. Therefore, a strategy should be developed with clear goals, outcomes and outputs which align with youth engagement. Such an approach should be tied to wider parliamentary policies and approaches, such as identifying sufficient resource allocations, risk management, safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation, much of which is covered in more detail throughout this Toolkit.

YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY: FOSTERING YOUTH-INCLUSIVE POLITICAL PROCESSES

As part of the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, UNDP as Co-Chair, published in 2024, a guide to enhance the political participation of young people in the youth, peace and security agenda. The Guide focuses on key stakeholders and tools for enhancing young people's political participation. It highlights the role of Parliaments, detailing methods to increase youth representation. Information is provided on the role of Youth Parliaments, caucuses, Parliamentary Committees, local governance institutions, and political parties, including mentor programmes, youth party wings, outreach programmes, broader leadership approaches, the security sector, and the media. Download a copy here. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-02/undp-youth-peace-and-security-fostering-youth-inclusive-political_processes-2.pdf
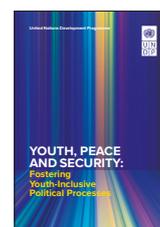
Who Can Host a Youth Parliament?

Broadly, there are three entities that own and host a Youth Parliament programme: Parliaments, Government departments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

The below outlines the key strengths and challenges of each approach:

Type of Ownership	Key Strength	Key Challenge
Parliaments: At either a national or sub-national level.	**Institutional Support and Resources:** The backing of a Parliament can provide substantial financial, technical and logistical support which can significantly enhance the scale, quality, and impact of the project. This can also contribute to the legitimacy of the event and attract a broader spectrum of participants, experts and stakeholders.	**Access Requirements:** Bringing young people into the space where Members of Parliament carry out their daily work can provide a powerful experience for participants, however gaining and managing access can be challenging. Support from all those involved in providing venue access from the start – both logistical teams and security – is needed.
Government departments: Ministries, or government agencies, (particularly those that oversee youth affairs).	**Access to Political Figures:** This type of programme is more likely to involve senior political figures and an opportunity for participants to engage with policymakers and legislators, to learn about governance and to advocate for the cause of youth engagement first-hand.	**Perception of Political Bias:** Participants and external observers may perceive the programme as a platform for promotion of the views or agenda of the Government. This requires careful management and communications to ensure impartiality is maintained.
CSOs: non-governmental organisations, youth groups, development partners and/or community-based organisations.	**Independence and Impartiality:** CSOs commonly operate independently from government entities, allowing them to create a platform free from political influence. This independence enhances the credibility of the project and may allow participants to feel they can express diverse viewpoints more openly.	**Resource Limitations:** CSOs may have financial and logistical resource limitations. This can impact the scale of the programme, affect the number of participants and the diversity of perspectives represented, limiting the overall impact of the event.

EXAMPLES: YOUTH PARLIAMENTS BY ORGANISER

The Welsh Youth Parliament:
Run by Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament with participants aged between 11-18. More information can be found here: www.youthParliament.senedd.wales/

India's National Youth Parliament Scheme:
Run by India's Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, this comprehensive programme offers a range of projects and events. Find out more on the website: https://nyps. mpa.gov.in/

The St Kitts National Youth Parliament Association:
A non-profit, non-governmental, non-partisan youth organisation in St.Kitts geared towards being the voice for youth of the Federation of St.Kitts & Nevis: https://www.facebook.com/sknypassociation/

The European Youth Parliament:
Established as an independent charity, this programme provides youth representation through participants, organisers and even charity trustees: www. eyp.org/

Step 1: Establishing Your Youth Parliament: Membership Selection

The first step in establishing a Youth Parliament is to plan and run a fair and transparent membership selection process.

The composition of a Youth Parliament plays a key role in shaping both the dynamics between participants and the activities offered in your programme.

Consider the following areas to ensure you select a membership body to fit your plans and ambitions.

Equal Opportunities for All

A diverse and inclusive membership ensures that a range of perspectives and voices are represented and that the Youth Parliament reflects the diversity of the local jurisdiction.

Inclusivity should be at the forefront of establishing your programme from the membership selection process onwards. This involves considering and embracing diversity of participants' backgrounds, including (but not limited to) ethnic background, socioeconomic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, geographic spread, disability and religion.

To run a programme that truly reflects the voices of young people, it is crucial to provide equal access and equal opportunity when recruiting participants and to identify and remove barriers to participation where possible. This includes:

- **Setting the scene:** Make it clear on all selection information that you are seeking diverse membership. This shares upfront your goal for inclusivity and reassures those who may otherwise believe they are not suitable for the programme.
- **Publicising the opportunity:** Publicise the programme widely to ensure a broad audience is reached. Consider partners you could utilise to reach hard-to-reach groups or locations based on your local knowledge. This could include communicating the membership opportunity through places of worship, academic institutions, youth community networks or regional bodies.
- **Ensuring geographic spread:** Ensure geographic location does not create a barrier for participation. This may include offering a wide range of venues for the selection process and the Youth Parliament activity itself, providing funding for participation where travel is necessary, or providing virtual interviews and convenings.
- **Removing financial constraints:** Identify, and where possible remove, any financial constraints. This could include covering costs for all participants or considering paid scholarships or other funding arrangements for participants that meet certain criteria.
- **Considering language needs:** Identify and allow for different language or dialect requirements specific to your area. This could include provision of language tutoring, translation or multilingual promotional materials and proceedings.
- **Offering application support equally:** Provide freely available guidance and support to all prospective participants throughout the application process. This could include providing open workshops, recorded information videos, webinars, or could simply be sharing one written set of steps and a clear point of contact to assist all applicants in preparing their

applications. The key consideration is ensuring the same support package is available to all and that every potential participant has the same level of knowledge at the outset.

Accessibility Considerations

To ensure that all elements of your Youth Parliament are accessible and inclusive, consider the following key points both during membership selection and as your programme takes place:

- **Reasonable adjustments requests:** Offer clear lines of communication upfront to all participants so they can speak with the relevant colleague(s) about any reasonable adjustment they may require. Do not make assumptions as to what will support a young person with a specific disability or need. Support should be individually discussed and agreed.
- **Clear language:** Use simple, jargon-free language in all communications to make sure information is accessible to everyone.
- **Multiple formats:** Be prepared to provide information in various formats, such as written text, Braille, large print, or audio, to accommodate different needs. This might include providing assistive technology should it be requested (e.g. screen readers and speech-to-text software). Ensure you know your local provider of all options ahead of time, so needs can be met quickly when identified.
- **Sign language interpreters:** Offer sign language interpretation during sessions or meetings for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. For video content, ensure captioning is included, with real-time captioning produced for live video if used.
- **Accessible websites:** Ensure that the programme's website is accessible, with 'alt' (alternative) text for images, keyboard navigation, and compatibility with screen readers put in place.
- **Accessible venues:** Should your membership process require face-to-face meetings, ensure venues are accessible to those with mobility requirements and/or other disability needs, for example by checking ramps, elevators and accessible restrooms are available.
- Transportation assistance: Provide information about accessible transportation options and consider offering transportation support to participants with mobility needs.
- **Virtual participation:** Where possible, provide virtual participation options for those who cannot attend in person, using accessible and secure online platforms.
- **Feedback and improvements:** Establish a feedback mechanism to gather input from participants and continuously improve accessibility. It is important to view this process as an opportunity to learn and improve as organisers and conveners – inclusivity and accessibility should never be seen as a burden!

Gender balance considerations

Organisers of a Youth Parliament should strive to achieve a gender balance amongst programme participants. Ensuring a fair representation of genders creates a more inclusive and representative environment for participants.

If you are finding it challenging to reach a specific group, consider putting in place policies or activities to increase representation from that group. If you are finding you have fewer representatives from a specific gender, you could consider:

- **Reviewing publicity materials:** Have you ensured equal representation in your publicity materials? This avoids creating impressions of a singular 'typical programme participant' and demonstrates you are actively supportive of participation from all groups.
- **Partner engagement:** Can you engage with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that focus on gender equality or who regularly communicate with your underrepresented group? Organisations with experience reaching this group can help publicise your activity by speaking to your target audience through their trusted voice.
- **Removing barriers:** Consider any specific barriers that may exist within your programme that may disproportionately impact one gender. For example, if you are running Youth Parliaments with young adults, you may want to consider Family-Friendly Policies for young parents, such as offering childcare solutions, or selecting times for activities that will better suit those with caring responsibilities. In this example, whilst anyone can have caring responsibilities and it is important not to engage in or exacerbate stereotypes, it is often the reality that childcare needs may disproportionately exclude women.

Geographic representation considerations

Young people from different areas or regions within a jurisdiction may have radically different priorities and experiences. Ensuring a good geographic representation will improve the quality of discussion and bring together these differing views.

If your Youth Parliament is based on a constituency model, then regional spread should be covered. For those who need to more proactively ensure geographic representation, you can consider:

- **Regional seats:** Allocating a certain number of seats in the Youth Parliament for representatives from each geographic region. You could either offer one or two representatives per region or use a system of proportional representation with more representatives for larger regions.
- **Quotas:** Implementing quotas or minimum requirements for the representation of underrepresented geographic areas (quotas are also suggested in case of gender and other under-represented identities like disability and indigenous people as well).. For example, you could set a requirement that a certain percentage of Youth Parliament seats are to be reserved for rural areas if these are traditionally underrepresented. This will also help you identify where to focus your publicity to reach certain areas.
- **Rotating leadership:** Putting in place actions that ensure different regions are represented once the Youth Parliament is established. Leadership roles, such as the Presiding Officer(s) or Committee Chairs, could be rotated each year/term between regions.

Membership Size

The size of your Youth Parliament can greatly impact both the running costs and number of activities you can offer, as well as the diversity of views and perspectives represented within your cohort.

Whether you consider a membership large or small will differ in relation to your resources and funding, as well as the size of your jurisdiction. For the purposes of this comparison, we are suggesting a small programme may engage 30 participants or under, with a large programme engaging over 30. Note that some larger programmes engage participants in the hundreds.

Below, the key strengths and challenges when determining the ideal number of participants for your Youth Parliament are addressed in brief.

Size of Participant Group	Strengths	Challenges
Small (30 participants and under)	• **Increases Collaboration:** Easier to create a close-knit and cohesive group, where participants can connect and collaborate. • **Simplifies Logistics:** Manageable within smaller staffing and/or budget resources. • **Encourages Inclusivity:** Engagement from all members is easier to achieve, providing opportunities for everyone to have a meaningful and impactful role.	• **Limits Activity Choices:** Can place constraints on what activities can take place, for example dividing into committee groups. • **Challenges Inclusivity:** May not offer wide diversity or representation for impactful discussions and debate. • **Increases Individual Engagement:** Requires high engagement from all involved to offer a meaningful experience or outcome.
Large (over 30 participants)	• **Increases Views:** Brings a wider diversity of perspectives and experiences to debate and other activities. • **Increases Diversity:** Offers a higher likelihood of including people from more varying backgrounds, cultures, and regions. • **Increases Scope:** Offers the chance to provide a range of additional activities or roles to all/the most engaged participants, such as committee sessions.	• **Increases Complexity of Participant Management:** Brings the risk of quieter individuals feeling marginalized or overshadowed, requiring more careful participant management. • **Increases Costs:** Costs can easily increase, particularly for Youth Parliaments meeting in person. • **Increases Logistical Demands:** Coordination, such as accommodating schedules, and logistics becomes more demanding and time-consuming as numbers grow.

EXAMPLES: YOUTH PARLIAMENTS OF DIFFERENT SIZES

The Cayman Islands Youth Parliament:
The Cayman Islands Youth Parliament (CIYP) is an example of a smaller Youth Parliament.

With 22 Members, including the Speaker of the Parliament, the Youth Parliament is roughly the same size as the jurisdiction's actual Parliament, providing a true-to-life example of parliamentary process to participants.

The CIYP provides the opportunity for young people aged 15-25 to learn about the practices and procedures of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands and to use their voices to bring about social change through meaningful representation and debate.

"It is designed to demonstrate to future young parliamentarians the role and purpose of Parliaments as institutions for democracy and good governance."

Further information on the Cayman Islands Youth Parliament can be found here: www.parliament.ky/commonwealth-parliamentary-association/youth-parliament-programme/

The Malaysian Youth Parliament

The Malaysian Youth Parliament engages a larger cohort of participants, with around 120 young people taking part in the programme.

The Members of the Malaysian Youth Parliament undergo an orientation session for four days ahead of the programme.

Once the Parliament commences, each participant has an opportunity to participate in additional activities beyond debates, including being assigned to committees.

An overview of a previous Malaysian Youth Parliament, including example committee groups and topics, can be found here: www.parlimen.gov.my/persidangan_belia_sidang_3.html?&lang=en

Participant Age Range

Youth Parliaments around the world have cohorts that vary substantially by age. The age range you select will impact further decisions, such as the way you organise your programme and the issues you cover.

The table below outlines the strengths and challenges of three different age ranges (whilst a variety of age ranges exist across different youth parliaments, the below have been selected for illustrative purposes and to allow you to make informed decisions about your own approach).

Age range	Strengths	Challenges
Younger age range (11–18)	• **Earlier Engagement:** Participants in this age group develop their understanding of democratic principles, governance, and policymaking at a formative stage, with active citizenship encouraged from an early age. • **Fresh Perspectives:** Younger participants may bring fresh ideas and innovative proposals, unhindered by older learnings or bias. This can enrich debates, leading to the uncovering of new ideas and providing well-rounded proceedings. • **Supplementing Political Education:** As most of these participants will still be in education, the Youth Parliament will provide experiences that complement the education that they are receiving in school. • **Support for Membership Selection:** Formal education institutions can be utilised for membership publicity and selection as most or all potential participants will still be in education.	• **Developmental Variability:** This age range of participants encompasses a wide developmental spectrum, from early to late adolescence. This variance in maturity may pose added challenges when ensuring an equal playing field. Addressing varying needs and interests of participants across this age range will require a tailored approach and potentially additional support for younger participants. • **Maintaining Interest:** Designing parliamentary activities and discussions that are both engaging and age-appropriate for participants across this age range can be challenging. Ensure that the content is accessible and relevant to all to maintain interest and active involvement. • **Age-Appropriate Content:** With this age range, organisers must be mindful of discounting certain inappropriate policy areas (i.e. legislating on drug use or other adult thematic topics).

Mid age range (14–25)	• **Expanded Life Experience:** Participants in this age range are more likely to bring a range of life experiences, educational backgrounds, and professional expertise. This diverse life experience enriches discussions and decision-making processes, allowing for a broad understanding of social issues. • **Sharing Ideas Across Ages:** Older participants can be encouraged to share views and perspectives that can benefit younger participants. • **Wider Content Choice:** By beginning the age range at an older point, issues and themes to be explored can be widened, with participants having a broader existing life knowledge.	• **Increased Safeguarding Considerations:** By hosting an event with those considered children alongside young adults, safeguarding risks should be further considered, particularly if groups are meeting in person. Guidelines for all participants should be shared ahead of time to set expectations. • **Balancing Differing Time Constraints:** Older individuals in this cohort who have left education will have additional commitments, including higher education, employment, and potentially caring responsibilities. There may be conflicts between the most suitable times to engage those in education and those who are not. Offering flexible ways to engage may support participation.

EXAMPLES: YOUTH PARLIAMENTS BY AGE RANGE

If you are considering which age range is right for your Youth Parliament, take a look at some from around the Commonwealth to see how they are run and learn from others:

The Welsh Youth Parliament:
Participants of The Welsh Youth Parliament are aged 11-18. Participants are selected through elections and partner nominations. Find out more here: www. youthparliament.senedd.wales/

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)
Participants of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) are aged between 14 and 25. These participants join the SYP following elections held regionally across the country. Further information can be found here: www.syp.org.uk/

The Kenya Youth Parliament
The Kenya Youth Parliament has participants aged between 18 and 35. Further information about this programme can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/YPK254/

Older age range (18–35)	• **Higher Political Awareness:** Young adults in this age range are likelier to have a higher level of political awareness and engagement than younger age groups (though this will not always necessarily be the case). Engaging participants who can also participate in wider democratic actions, such as registering to vote, can offer tangible next steps for participants to take. • **Mentoring Opportunities:** Older members can transition into mentorship or advisory roles ensuring knowledge and experience is passed between cohorts of Youth Parliamentarians. • **Transition to Public Office:** Participants in this age range could more readily transition from the programme towards running for or even being elected to public office, should they be inspired to do so.	• **Decreased Availability:** All individuals in this cohort will be highly likely to have varied commitments, including further or higher education, employment, or caring responsibilities. Balancing these commitments with active participation in the programme can be demanding, potentially leading to reduced engagement or limited availability. As above, offering flexible ways to engage may support participation. • **Potential for Age-Related Apathy:** There is an increased risk of age-related apathy, where some older members may start to disengage from the programme as they approach the upper age limit. Some may not identify with the 'Youth' label and a different naming convention may be needed for older participants.

Participant Selection

There are various approaches to sourcing participants, from direct selection to holding elections, or involving third-party organisations in the process.

Understanding the implications of each approach can help you source high-quality, engaged and committed participants to suit your programme needs.

Method of Recruitment	Strengths	Challenges
Participant elections	• **Empowerment:** Holding elections empowers young people to have a direct say in the parliament's composition. • **Ownership:** Encourage a sense of ownership and accountability among elected participants, as they are chosen by their peers to speak for them. • **Authenticity:** Mirrors democratic processes for both participants and young voters. • **Engagement:** Engages those beyond direct participants with the election process.	• **Complex Logistics:** Requires substantial planning, logistics, and resources both for the organisers and the candidates (see further support in this pack). • **Management of Fairness:** Could create unfair advantages for those with pre-existing networks and resources. Organisers must ensure a fair and transparent election process, including candidate nominations, campaigning, and voter registration.

EXAMPLES: YOUTH PARLIAMENTS BY MEMBERSHIP SELECTION PROCESS

European Youth Parliament (EYP): Election Only

To decide membership of the European Youth Parliament (EYP), participants, known as 'delegates', are elected by their peers to represent their schools, regions, or countries.

Delegate elections are typically held within schools, youth organisations, or at EYP national committees and conferences. Elections follow democratic processes, where candidates are encouraged to campaign and compete for votes from their fellow peers.

You can find out more about the comprehensive programme of activities run for EYP members here: www.eyp.org

Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP): Selection Only

The Commonwealth Youth Parliament brings together participants aged 18-29 representing the nine CPA Regions – Africa; Asia; Australia; British Islands and Mediterranean; Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic; Canada; India; Pacific; South-East Asia.

Membership is selected by the organisers, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretariat.

Branch Members of the CPA put forward up to two nominees for the programme and the Secretariat selects these participants based on criteria and ensuring that the limit of 66 participants is not exceeded.

Find out more about the 2024 CYP event here: https://www.cpahq.org/what-we-do/our-cross-cutting-themes/youth-engagement/

Sri Lanka's Youth Parliament: Elections and Selections Combined

The National Youth Parliament of Sri Lanka was established under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth Affairs of the Government of Sri Lanka. The National Youth Service Council of Sri Lanka provides facilities. It aims to empower young people (aged 18-29) politically in the nation.

The Youth Parliament consists of 225 members, with 165 elected through an island-wide democratic election campaign. The election process involves voting by members of youth clubs, with candidates representing youth clubs of their respective districts.

65 additional members are selected through a highly competitive interview process based on their academic, leadership and other extracurricular qualifications and skills.

You can find out more here: www.pmd.gov.lk/news/the-third-session-of-sri-lankas-fifth-youth-Parliament-kicks-off-at-the-main-auditorium-of-the-presidents-office/

Direct Selection by Organisers	• **Diversity and Balance:** Allows organisers to ensure diverse and balanced representation, as they can directly select individuals based on a set of criteria. • **Simplification:** Easier and faster to organise and undertake as under the control of the organisers.	• **Risk of Negative Perception:** Potential perception of bias can lead to reduced trust. Transparency in the process, selection criteria and decisions made is key. • **Reduced Ownership:** A lack of election may reduce the sense of ownership from those involved. • **Reduced Participation:** Lack of voting process reduces wider participant numbers.
Selection by Outside Bodies (youth charities, academic institutions etc.)	• **Specialist Support:** Leverages a specialist organisation's expertise and outreach capabilities. • **Shared Resource:** Shares the resource needs, including cost, with a partner organisation. • **Increase Diversity:** Can increase representation from marginalised communities, for example youth organisations often have established communities to approach.	• **Collaboration Needs:** Requires strong coordination between the organisers and partner organisations both during planning and while selection takes place. • **Partner Management:** Requires provision of clear guidelines and criteria to ensure consistency and adherence to the Youth Parliament's objectives. • **Reduced Participation:** As above, lack of voting process reduces wider participant numbers.

Holding a Youth Parliament Election

Youth Parliament elections allow young people to participate in an important democratic process right at the start of your Youth Parliament programme. However, they can be time-intensive and require careful planning.

The exact process you take will depend on whether you run the election yourself or through the support of partners. The below guidance offers a starting point for establishing your election plan:

Define who your members will represent

Consider whether your members will be elected to represent a constituency (or similar area), or if they will represent a school, youth group or another body. This will affect the nomination and voting processes, the partners you might choose to engage with, and the number of members you will have. Information to support participant inclusivity is available on page 5.

Select partners to support the election process

Most elections will require the support of a partner or partners to promote and/or run elections in different locations. This is often schools, other educational institutes or youth groups. Approach partners well in advance, being clear what the requirements are in order to ensure consistency and how you will support them. Be mindful of the limited time they may have to provide the support you need and plan accordingly.

Partners running election activities should be provided with clear guidance, including your guidelines on inclusivity, safeguarding, your timeline of activities (see below) and steps to take to ensure a fair vote, such as clear criteria for selecting candidates.

Create an election timeline of key activities and coordinate the process

Plan out key dates for your election with a central team or partner contact ensuring everything stays on track:

- **Nomination period:** Define the window for candidates to submit their nominations either to you or their local organiser.
- **Campaign period:** Establish a timeframe during which candidates can campaign to their peers, this may include speeches, debates or presenting written proposals.
- **Voting period/election date:** Decide whether voting will take place on a single day or over a period of time, such as a week. A longer period can provide flexibility for partners, such as youth organisations, to hold a vote at a time they usually meet.
- **Count and submission of results:** Ensure a fair process is in place to count votes either centrally or locally. Assign a final day by which results must be submitted to you.
- **Results announced:** If you have local organisers, they may want to hold an event or assembly to announce their election winner initially. Ensure at a minimum each winner is contacted by you to share the good news and next steps. Ideally, those who weren't successful should be thanked for their participation and congratulated on taking part.

Produce supporting resources

Producing the necessary resources ahead of time will help ensure a smooth election. These will usually include:

- **Nomination forms:** These should request confirmation that a nominee fits the agreed criteria (such as age, location, or examples of participation in civic action) and a space for a candidate's statement of suitability to support their selection.
- **Candidate guidelines:** Candidates will need guidance on what is expected during campaigning (e.g., negative campaigning is not allowed, campaigning must happen in a specific time period, tips for effective speeches etc.).
- **Voting slips or online space:** Most Youth Parliament elections are paper based, and voting slips will need to be printed centrally and delivered, or shared digitally for partners to print. Alternatively, online votes placed via a form or secure space can be provided. Ensure your chosen route is accessible, secure and confidential.
- **Voting instructions:** Provide clear instructions on how to vote. This can be shared via posters at the 'polling stations' or in the online space.

Follow up with all those involved in the elections

Whether local partners have been involved only in promoting the election, or have been running elections themselves, make sure you follow up with all involved after the members have been selected.

Thank partners for their support, confirm who has been selected from their area, and share information about how they can get involved further. This could include following your social media channels, watching debates live streamed if relevant, or discussing the issues selected by the Youth Parliament with their own youth group.

By ensuring you update and engage with those who have helped in the election process once your membership has been determined, not only will you be demonstrating your thanks, you will also increase the likelihood that those same partners will engage in and support future programmes.

Include any election partners in your evaluation process to learn for future programmes too (see Step Five in this pack for more information on evaluation and feedback from page 42).

Step 2: Planning Your Youth Parliament: Organisation and Logistics

The effective planning of a Youth Parliament is crucial to developing a programme that meets its objectives within your budget and timeframe. From selecting your programme duration to involving political parties, your planning process should run through each key element of logistics to ensure you are ready for anything.

Pakistan Youth Parliament

Programme Duration

The duration of a Youth Parliament can vary depending on the specific demands and objectives of the programme, with Youth Parliaments lasting from one day to several months and beyond.

Shorter Youth Parliament programmes are often designed as intensive workshops focusing on immersive parliamentary activities, such as debates, and key skill-building.

Longer programmes, extending from weeks to several months, allow for a deeper exploration of procedures, policy, and advocacy. These can include regular sessions, committee work, research, and ongoing collaboration.

Still longer programmes can span many months to a year, offering in-depth legislative understanding, policy analysis, and leadership development. The longest programmes can also offer opportunities for participants to engage in community service, interact with established policymakers, and work on projects that have a lasting impact.

The table below outlines in more detail a range of different options:

Programme Duration	Strengths	Challenges
One-day event usually focused on a core debate	• **Focused Discussions:** With limited time available, participants are encouraged to engage in focused discussions and debate one or more critical issues. The time constraint prompts concise arguments and robust debates, promoting efficiency in decision-making and resolution drafting (if applicable). • **Simplified Event Logistics and Planning:** Hosting a one-day Youth Parliament significantly simplifies logistics and planning. Compared to longer-duration events, the coordination of venues, resources, and schedules becomes more manageable and streamlined. • **Cost Savings:** a shorter event can remove costly elements of longer programmes, such as overnight accommodation or repeat travel.	• **Limited Time:** A compressed programme can limit the depth of discussions on complex issues, and the extent to which following parliamentary procedures can be included. It can risk neglecting the broader context of policy making or rushing activities and decision making. • **Fewer Networking Opportunities:** Opportunities for networking and bonding can be limited, reducing the potential for lasting connections with other likeminded young people. • **Risk of Reduced Impact:** One-day events must be managed carefully to ensure they end with concrete actions agreed. Without doing so can lead to dissatisfaction and limit impact. Similarly, a shorter event provides fewer opportunities for meaningful interaction and dialogue between young people and policymakers, limiting the transfer of knowledge and impact on real-world decision-making.
A one-week event usually featuring debates, committee meetings and/or caucus meetings	• **Deeper Learning Opportunities:** A week-long Youth Parliament allows participants more time to thoroughly explore topics, conduct research, and engage in thoughtful debates. This extended duration can create a deeper understanding of an issue and democratic processes, furthering the learning opportunities. • **Networking Opportunities:** A week-long programme can provide further opportunities for networking and bonding, potentially providing a more enjoyable experience. • **Greater Impact:** Increased time can lead to more lasting impact by allowing participants to develop concrete action plans, build momentum for initiatives, and establish networks for future collaboration. Liaison with policy makers is also more likely given the time available.	• **Potential for Reduced Participation:** The longer duration of a week-long Youth Parliament may deter some individuals from participating due to other commitments. Maintaining high levels of engagement throughout the week can also be demanding. • **Resource-Intensive and Complex Planning:** Organising a week-long Youth Parliament requires significant resources, including funding, staff, and time commitments from all involved. Coordinating schedules and accommodating the needs of young people and policy makers over a week can be challenging. • **High Follow-Up and Implementation Expectations:** With increased engagement, youth expectations for follow-up and implementation tends to rise. Ensuring impact and implementation from recommendations made during the programme requires greater commitment from participants, organisers and policymakers.

Programme over the course of a year (or longer) usually with a range of activities at separate intervals	• **Comprehensive Skill Development:** A longer Youth Parliament provides an extended period for participants to receive comprehensive training and to participate in a wider range of activities over time. • **High Networking Opportunities:** Long-term commitments foster stronger relationships between those involved. This both increases networking and ownership of initiatives by the young people, as well as building long-term relationships with peers and mentors. • **Continuous Policy Advocacy and Follow-up:** With a longer duration, a Youth Parliament can engage in debates on policies that develop in real time in the jurisdiction. This offers an experience closer to real parliamentarians. It may be the case that public debates over the theme evolve over the programme's duration and participants can incorporate these discussions. • **Higher Likelihood of Sustained Impact:** the deeper engagement throughout the parliament can support clear outcomes, recommendations and actions at completion, increasing the likelihood of longer-term impact.	• **Participant Turnover and Engagement:** Sustaining participant engagement over a year can be challenging, especially for participants who have other commitments, such as moving away for further studies or starting a job. The turnover of participants may lead to alterations in the dynamics of the programme. • **Increased Resource Demands and Commitment:** A year-long Youth Parliament requires substantial financial support, dedicated staff, and ongoing logistical planning. The commitment can be challenging, as it may clash with other responsibilities that can be more easily managed during shorter Youth Parliament programmes. • **High Follow-Up and Implementation Expectations:** As above, with a longer programme, expectations for follow-up and implementation will rise again. Ensuring impact and implementation from recommendations made during the programme is imperative to maintain trust and build a legacy from the programme.

Venue Selection

If the programme is affiliated with your jurisdiction's parliament, then the chamber(s) of the parliament (as well as the wider parliamentary precinct/estate) is one potential venue, which would lend the programme prestige. However, an actual parliament chamber is not always possible or suitable to use.

When choosing an alternative venue, consider the following factors:
• **Accessibility:** Venues should be wheelchair accessible, with ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. Ensure venues are accessible to those with mobility requirements and/or other disability needs. See the previous sub-section on accessibility at page 6.
• **Capacity:** Venues must be able to hold all your participants, plus your staff and other stakeholders if applicable. You may also require breakout rooms with smaller capacities for party caucusing and/or committee sessions.
• **Technological capability:** Consider what you require in relation to technology, such as screens for presentations, broadcasting facilities if you are looking to livestream and suitable broadband connectivity. These considerations will be particularly important if you are looking to incorporate hybrid modalities into your programme.
• **Layout options:** Seating arrangements will impact your activities and the overall atmosphere for debates specifically. Ensure you can lay out your space(s) as needed.
• **Location and related transportation needs:** Selecting a location that is well connected to public transportation may allow for participants to make their own arrangements. If you are covering travel costs, consider the flight, train, shuttle bus or similar costs that your choice of location may demand. A low-cost option may end up being expensive if participants all require flights (or otherwise lengthy journeys) to take part.
• **Venue staff:** Open and proactive communication and coordination with a venue's owner,

manager or team will be essential, so ensuring you are provided with the right support in terms of venue staff and support may influence your decision.

Your options will depend on the venues available in your local area, but the following are a list of possible locations to consider for your Youth Parliament hosting:

Venue Type	Key strength	Key challenge
University Auditoriums	**Designed for Youth Participants:** There is a likelihood that the space will have been designed with young people in mind. For example, with clear signage, suitable restrooms and accessibility considerations.	**Perception:** Hosting in a university or college auditorium may create a perception of exclusivity, potentially deterring participants who are not associated with the institution or have not taken part in higher education previously.
Local Community Halls	**Open and Inclusive:** Community halls are often at the heart of the community and provide a warm and inclusive environment.	**Resource Limitations:** Community halls may lack advanced resources, such as audiovisual equipment and technology necessary for presentations or live streaming.
Council Chambers	**Suitable Layout:** Local government chambers can be suitable venues, as their purpose and layout are not far from that of a parliament.	**Availability Restrictions:** Availability of the venue would be dependent on whether the council is sitting, limiting your timing options.
Conference Rooms	**Resources and Staff:** Conference facilities are usually well staffed and resourced, for example for Audio Visual requirements.	**Expensive:** Conference rooms will usually incur a cost for hiring. You could secure programme sponsorship to cover the fee, or alternatively, some venues reduce or waive fees for a youth project, so always ask.

Tonga Youth Parliament

Digital or In-Person Options

Organisers may choose to utilise digital platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams to remove (or at least mitigate) geographical or other barriers for participants. This enables increased voices from across a jurisdiction to contribute to debates and other activities.

Many online platforms offer interactive features to mirror physical events, such as virtual breakout 'rooms' for team working and live polling to mirror voting. However, some benefits, such as authenticity and networking opportunities may be lost.

The below table provides comparisons between online only, hybrid or in-person only options:

Format	Strengths	Challenges
Online only	• **Wider Pool of Participants:** A fully online Youth Parliament removes geographical and other barriers, allowing participants to engage without the cost and logistical challenge of transportation and accommodation. • **Flexibility and Convenience:** Online platforms offer flexibility in terms of scheduling and participation, accommodating different time zones, accessibility needs and personal commitments.	• **Digital Access Disparities:** Not all participants may have equal access to reliable internet connections, digital devices, or the technological literacy required for seamless online participation. If this is the case, can you provide funding to support those who need it, or partner with organisations who can help? • **Loss of Interaction and Networking:** The absence of face-to-face interactions may result in reduced personal connections, spontaneous discussions, and networking opportunities. The authenticity of the event as mirroring parliament may also feel reduced.
Hybrid (elements of online and in-person activities)	• **Programme Flexibility:** An in-person event can be supplemented with online elements to increase engagement and reduce costs. For example, briefings can be held online before participants have travelled to the location of the programme.	• **Finding the Right Balance:** Hosting the programme with a mix of in-person and online engagements requires careful planning and responding to feedback of participants to ensure that you choose the right format for the right parts of the programme.
In-person only	• **Physical Presence and Engagement:** Youth Parliaments are often hosted in the jurisdiction's legislature. Being present and in-person for the programme can give participants a sense of occasion and enhance the authenticity of key events. • **Enhanced Networking:** Spontaneous interactions will be more likely from an in-person programme as participants seek to capitalise on the opportunity that being in the same place can provide for their participation.	• **Environmental Impact and Sustainability Concerns:** In-person events often involve travel, accommodation, and the consumption of resources, contributing to environmental impact. Sustainability concerns may arise, particularly for large programmes. • **Travel and Other Logistical Hurdles:** It may be very expensive and complex to plan and cover travel or accommodation costs. This will either drive up the cost of the programme or, worse still, prevent participant involvement.

Safeguarding Considerations and Procedures

Safeguarding must be considered from the beginning of the planning stages of your Youth Parliament and managed carefully throughout to ensure the safety and well-being of young people involved.

Below is a set of key considerations and procedures to help you establish a robust safeguarding framework for your Youth Parliament. Liaising with specialists in your area to develop your safeguarding plans and policies is also recommended:

1. Policy Development

- **Create a safeguarding policy:** Develop a comprehensive Safeguarding Policy that outlines your commitment to keeping young people safe. This should be easily accessible to all participants, staff, parents and carers, as well as volunteers.
- **Undertake regular testing and reviews:** Testing your plan, for example by role-playing scenarios as a team, can prepare team-members to respond should an issue arise and expose shortcomings in the policy itself. Your policy should also be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it aligns with current legislation and best practice.

2. Designated Safeguarding Lead

- **Appoint a lead:** Designate a person responsible for safeguarding within the project. This person will oversee safeguarding processes, manage concerns, and act as a point of contact for staff, volunteers, and young people.
- **Provide support:** Ensure the designated safeguarding lead has the appropriate, requisite training (see below) and access to support from external safeguarding agencies if needed.

3. Background Checks and Training

- **Ensure safe recruitment practices:** Implement a robust recruitment process that includes background checks relevant to your region or nation, reference checks, and interviews. Ensure all staff and volunteers working with young people are suitable for the role.
- **Provide regular training:** Provide regular training for all staff and volunteers. This should cover topics such as identifying signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and promoting a safe environment. Working with a local specialist to offer training is advised.
- **Provide ongoing monitoring:** Continuously monitor and evaluate staff and volunteers to ensure safeguarding training is maintained, information is shared, and guidance is upheld.

4. Code of Conduct

- **Establish a Code of Conduct:** Create a code of conduct for staff, volunteers, and participants, including expected standards of behaviour. This should include a simplified extract from your Safeguarding Policy to embed the guidance further (see following page).
- **Distribute and discuss guidance:** Ensure everyone involved in the project understands and agrees to the code of conduct. Provide training sessions to discuss its importance.

5. Reporting Procedures

- **Establish clear reporting channels:** Establish and share widely clear procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns or incidents. Provide multiple reporting channels, such as direct communication with the safeguarding lead, anonymous reporting, or a dedicated email.
- **Ensure confidentiality:** Ensure confidentiality is maintained when dealing with safeguarding issues, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis.

6. Handling Safeguarding Concerns

- **Deliver a robust response:** Respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding concern or incident. Follow legal requirements for reporting to authorities when necessary.
- **Support and follow-up:** Offer support to the young people and others involved in safeguarding incidents. Arrange follow-up meetings to ensure well-being.

Participant Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct will establish expectations for the behaviour of all participants. It should explain the standards participants are expected to uphold, providing a clear reference point for ensuring that interactions are positive, and conflicts are prevented.

It should be made clear that the Code applies for the duration of the programme, not just behaviour in the chamber.

A Code may also have more authority/weight with the participants if there is a mechanism of consultation and input from the participants themselves in adding suggestions. As this may generate ownership by everyone as opposed to the Code being imposed arbitrarily.

Organisers can refer participants to this document should rules be broken. As such, participants should be briefed on the contents and may even be asked to sign the code to establish commitment to the guidance.

Consider including the following areas:

1. Respect at all times:

Emphasise the importance of respectful and courteous communication and active listening among participants at all times, regardless of differing opinions or perspectives. This is particularly important when participants are assigned to parties and may be role-playing differing views to their own. All participants should actively participate in discussions and debates, as well as ensuring peers can also contribute and be heard.

Emphasise that personal attacks are not appropriate at any point in the programme. You can reference relevant Standing Orders from your own parliament, and where relevant the role of the Speaker in dealing with any instances of personal attacks appropriately.

2. Professional Behaviour:

Define the expectations for appropriate conduct in relation to your programme, emphasising that this is an opportunity to experience parliamentary procedure as close to reality as possible.

You may want to provide specific guidance, such as appropriate clothes to wear in the chamber. This should not unnecessarily restrict participation or self-expression, but rather ensure expectations are clear for all.

3. Inclusivity and Diversity:

Establish how the Youth Parliament programme embraces and celebrates the diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and viewpoints. Set out that discrimination based on race, gender, religion, ethnic background, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic is strictly prohibited within the Youth Parliament activities.

4. Time Management:

Stress the importance of adhering to the agreed time schedules to ensure the flow of the event is not disrupted. Encourage participants to be punctual and respectful of allocated time for speeches, debates, and discussions. This can be further protected within the Rules of Procedure (further information is provided in this toolkit on page 33).

5. Use of Technology:

Establish clear guidelines for the responsible use of devices during and following the programme. This should include reminding participants to refrain from engaging

in harmful or disrespectful digital conduct, for example on social media, during the programme in relation to other participants.

6. Wellness, Support and Safeguarding:

Acknowledge the importance of individual well-being and mental health at all times in the programme. Ensure it is clear who can be approached should support or advice be required, including referencing the Safeguarding procedures in place.

This is an opportunity to reassure participants that the safety and well-being of all those involved is of high importance to organisers and any concerns will be taken seriously.

Financial Management

Identifying funding

Securing external funding can provide crucial support to cover your programme costs. Funding can be sourced from various avenues. Some options to consider include:

- **Government or parliamentary funding:** The most viable route to funding is from an appropriate Government or Parliamentary fund, particularly where a budget for outreach or engagement exists. Identify the most suitable departments and contact them to identify opportunities to apply for funding.
- **Corporate sponsorship:** Negotiating sponsorship from a corporate entity can help offset costs and has the bonus of enhancing the visibility and reputation of the programme, given the brand value and channels that can be utilised. However, ensure any sponsorship opportunities are from appropriate organisations and brands that will not risk the reputation of the programme itself and suit your objectives and values. If in doubt, refer to the CPA's recommended Due Diligence Checklist for support:
- **Delivery partnerships:** Forming partnerships with universities, youth organisations, or community groups that can be involved in delivering parts of the planning or activities for the event (e.g. sourcing participants or providing a venue) can also support funding of your programme indirectly through sharing tasks and costs.
- **Participant contributions:** In some instances, participant contributions may also be appropriate, such as requesting a registration fee or encouraging fundraising activities. However, this must not undermine the accessibility of the programme or selection process. As such, it may be most suitable as an optional contribution only, by requesting confidential voluntary donations only from those who can afford to do so.

Allocating budget

Budgeting for the programme involves carefully allocating the resources available, and ensuring there is transparency and accountability in its management.

Ownership for budget allocation should be assigned to a responsible and experienced person within the team, with oversight from a wider group or project board at all times.

Some examples of costs to include in your budget would be the following:
- **Venue rental:** If the Parliament itself is not organising and/or hosting the programme, costs associated with renting a suitable venue are often one of the largest budget lines for running the programme.
- **Supplies:** Expenses for event supplies, such as signage, banners, name tags, badges, stationery, printing, and rented equipment (e.g. sound systems) should be included.
- **Travel and accommodation arrangements:** If the programme is taking place far from where many participants (actual or potential) live, accommodation and transport should be factored into the budget (e.g. reimbursement of participants' travel expenses and hotel accommodation) Similarly, organisers may require travel and accommodation. Seeking cost-effective solutions such as carpooling can limit costs and environmental impact.
- **Catering:** Provision for catering services to provide meals and refreshments for participants, staff, and volunteers throughout the event is important to keep energy up.
- **Staffing:** If the programme is not organised within salaried staff time, the budget should include these costs (e.g. hiring coordinators, facilitators, technical support and security).
- **Insurance:** Provision for event insurance to protect against potential liabilities or unforeseen situations. Check the insurance already provided by a partner if relevant.
- **Contingency:** Reserve funds set aside for unforeseen expenses or emergencies that may arise during the planning and execution of the event if possible. A typical contingency budget will range from 5-10% of a project's overall budget.

Risk and Crisis Management

Your team will be responsible for running a high-profile programme which includes young people, and as such risk management should be prioritised to ensure smooth running and participant safety and well-being.

Although crisis incidents are rare, they can have devastating consequences and must be considered carefully and planned for.

Some key areas to consider are:
- **Producing a risk register:** Producing a comprehensive risk register ahead of time and updating throughout is the best way to identify and plan for crises and record the details in a document that can be accessed by all who need it. You can find more details on producing a risk register on the following page and this includes core risk management activities such has identifying specific risks and their likelihood, assigning owners of risks and crisis communications planning.
- **Considering training:** Training in crisis management itself is a great way that organisers of a Youth Parliament can develop their skills in project management, risk assessment and responding to incidents. Such training would ensure that team members are familiar with emergency protocols and know how to respond effectively to different types of crises. You may be able to book local training providers to support with this.
- **Undertaking drills:** Role playing the response to a crisis while in a shared room can help identify issues or decisions that should be made ahead of time, this is sometimes called 'red-teaming'. Bringing in external stakeholders to participate with the central team can identify areas of weaknesses and help with agreeing suitable shared responses.
- **Putting security measures in place:** Ensuring that the programme is run as securely as possible is critical. Liaise with relevant security support services, such as those at the venue of the event, to minimise any unforeseen external influences on the programme. Local security staff should be aware of your programme and any security risks you've identified, so they are prepared and know how they can assist you if required.
- **Fire safety and first aid:** Ensure you are aware of the fire safety arrangements at your venue, such as the sound of the alarm, the location of exits and meeting points. Similarly, ensuring you are aware of the first aider within your team and/or at a venue is important

for a fast response should someone become unwell or have an accident. This should not be limited to the chamber or main event location only, consider the support at any other related locations, such as accommodation. Share this information with all involved, including participants.

Creating a Youth Parliament Risk Register

A risk register is a useful tool for identifying, assessing, and managing risks in a Youth Parliament project.

There are different approaches to producing a risk register, and you may want to utilise a process already in place in your team. However, below are the key steps that can be considered for those new to risk management:

1. Identify Risks

- **Brainstorm potential risks:** Gather the project team and stakeholders to brainstorm all possible risks related to the project. Consider risks across various categories and scenarios, including safety (such as a fire incident), operational (such as losing chamber access) reputational (such as a protest), and technology (such as audio-visual issues).
- **Consider input from stakeholders:** Include input from others involved in the running of your programme, including where possible the young people involved in the project to capture risks from a range of perspectives.

2. Define Risk Parameters

- **Define severity and likelihood:** Define a scale for assessing the respective severity and likelihood of each risk. For example, a 1-5 scale, where 1 is low and 5 is high. Combine the two scores to assign an overall score to each risk. It may be that a risk is unlikely but has extremely serious consequences and repercussions should it nonetheless happen. Equally it may be that there are risks that are highly likely but will not have such serious consequences. It should be obvious that any risks that are both highly likely and carry sever consequences will carry a high risk score and should have robust mitigation strategies put in place from the earliest planning stages. This approach helps with identifying a range of different risks and in the prioritisation of planning.
- **Add risk descriptors:** Provide brief but clear descriptions of each risk to add detail. Approach this task through the eyes of someone who might be picking up the risk register with very little background and context to the programme and consider what is the most important information for them to have in order to be able to contribute to risk mitigation.

3. Assign Risk Owners

- **Designate responsibility:** Assign a person or team responsible for each identified risk. This risk owner will monitor, manage, and report on the risk.
- **Ensure accountability:** Ensure that risk owners understand their roles and have the necessary resources to address risks effectively.

4. Develop Risk Mitigation Strategies

- **Mitigate:** For each risk, outline the actions to reduce its impact or likelihood. This could include safety measures, training, contingency planning, or providing additional resource.
- **Assign timeframes:** Define when mitigation actions should be taken and identify specific actions that require immediate attention. Ensure you follow through on all plans.

5. Establish Monitoring and Reporting Processes

- **Regularly review:** Schedule regular reviews to assess the current risks and identify any new risks. Include this as part of regular project meetings or dedicated risk meetings.
- **Document and report:** Keep the risk register up-to-date and ensure all changes are documented. Provide periodic reports to project stakeholders.

6. Plan for Risk Escalation

- **Establish escalation procedures:** Define the process for escalating risks that become critical or require immediate intervention. Specify who to contact and the actions to be taken in such cases, ensuring everyone involved understands their own and other roles.
- **Maintain emergency contacts:** Maintain a list of emergency contacts for quick response in case of high-risk incidents. Ensure they are saved securely and can be accessed by the appropriate people as needed.

7. Ensure Transparency and Ongoing Communication

- **Share the risk register:** Make the risk register available to all relevant stakeholders, ensuring transparency and fostering a proactive risk management culture.
- **Communicate changes:** Communicate any significant changes or developments in the risk register to the wider project team and stakeholders promptly.

Commonwealth Youth Parliament

ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH HANDBOOK FOR COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS

In 2021, the CPA published its Engagement, Education and Outreach Handbook for Commonwealth Parliaments to guide legislatures on how to increase public engagement and outreach, to ensure the public get a greater say in how they are governed. In particular, it focuses on offering considerable practical support in how to engage with young people and tailoring engagement with a targeted audience. Download a copy here. https://www.cpahq.org/media/sbif14kt/engagement_education_outreach-handbook_final.pdf

Step 3: Running Your Youth Parliament: Activity and Participant Management

The following section of the toolkit addresses what you may want to include during your programme and how you can manage activities whilst it is taking place, from participant training to running productive debates and selecting additional activities.

Participant Training Subjects

The hands-on nature of your programme will in itself provide a range of learning opportunities for participants. However, you can also include a range of additional learning activities to support specific knowledge and skill building; from mastering parliamentary procedures and effective communication to managing stress.

The programme team can provide the training themselves, or you could bring in guests to provide specific elements, for example a Clerk to cover parliamentary procedures.

Consider the following areas for training activities:

- **The role of Parliament and the Separation of Powers:** Usually the first topic covered, participants should understand the role and function of parliament within the separation of powers, as well as the role of the other branches of government where relevant.
- **Parliamentary procedures:** Training in the rules of parliamentary procedure should include understanding the passage of a bill, learning how to conduct meetings, learning how to present motions and how to engage in debates effectively. Select procedures relevant to your programme to cover in training.
- **The role of a parliamentarian:** Participants should understand the complex roles of a parliamentarian, including their responsibilities in relation to legislation, checking and challenging Government, advocating for their constituents' interests and effectively lobby for policy changes through various activities and routes.
- **Optional role-specific training:** If participants will be taking on specific roles throughout the programme, such as Presiding Officer, Committee Chairs, and Whips, consider providing training tailored to each role. This could include matching the individual up with someone who has experience in the role for a briefing or question and answer session.
- **Optional citizen engagement:** Young people who participate in constituency-level exercises may engage directly with their local communities to understand their specific needs and concerns. Ensuring participants are confident engaging directly and appropriately with the public should be considered during training.
- **Soft skills:** Identifying and teaching the soft skills required for the programme, such as communication, teamwork, negotiation and public speaking, is crucial for supporting positive collaboration with peers and contributing to debates. This may be best taught through hands-on practise, however initial discussion and the opportunity to see or try-out core skills will help set participants up for success.

- **Inclusivity:** Provide a time to address topics related to diversity and inclusion, as well as cultural and gender sensitivity to ensure a welcoming and respectful environment. Support participants to identify and escalate any concerns to adults running the programme.
- **Safeguarding and well-being:** Ensure all participants understand safeguarding procedures and know who to contact with any concerns (this is covered further in this pack on page 21). Sessions on emotional well-being and stress management may also be suitable, particularly for longer programmes.

Options for Training Delivery

Consider a variety of training delivery options to provide comprehensive support and offer variety.

You can build your plan to incorporate different approaches, such as:

1. In-Person Workshops:

Interactive in-person workshops allow participants to engage in hands-on activities, discussions, and role-playing exercises.

You can invite experienced facilitators, such as current or former parliamentarians (being mindful of party representation), parliamentary staff, or civic educators, to provide insights and guidance.

2. Online Training and Webinars:

Virtual learning sessions and webinars can ensure you can accommodate participants who may not be able to attend in person. These can be particularly useful to provide basic training ahead of in-person events. However, as with all digital activities, be mindful of digital inclusion and language diversity, ensuring all participants have access to the technology and skills needed to participate online. Consider funding or partnerships if needed.

Should it be suitable, online training can be provided live via a platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams or be delivered as pre-recorded training sessions hosted on a website. This also allows participants to revisit key topics or catch up at a time that suits them.

For live online sessions, use interactive features such as live polls and breakout rooms for smaller discussions about the topic at hand to maintain engagement during the session.

3. Printed or Digital Guides:

Don't forget the traditional training options, including simple printed or digital guides. These are particularly effective if provided as one-page crib sheets of important information, as participants can keep the guidance with them at all times to refer to should they need a quick reminder of procedural rules, their own role or language used.

As above, ensure any guides are available in a variety of formats and languages, including providing Braille options if required. Hosting guidance online, as well as providing in print for those without online access, is advised.

4. Guest Speakers and Mentorship:

Inviting guest speakers to provide seminar style sessions, such as internal staff or experts in civic engagement can provide additional insights to your training. Ensure they have been clearly briefed on the age of your group and their level of knowledge for suitability.

Mentorship programs, where experienced participants or external mentors guide new participants through their roles and responsibilities, can also add an extra level of learning.

5. Personal Development Plans:

You could encourage participants to develop their own plans for their goals in participating in the programme. These can be discussed and set at the outset of the programme.

Ask participants what they might want to learn and achieve by the end of the project. By encouraging participants to set and aim for their own objectives, you can share ownership with the participants, as well as being able to monitor and celebrate growth by revisiting participant goals at the end of the project.

Representing Political Parties (Real and Fictional)

Involving real political parties

Involving political parties can increase advocacy for the establishment of Youth Parliaments and support the provision of resources, expertise and networks to the initiative. Moreover, political parties often have 'youth wings' who could be approached for participation.

If utilising a youth wing, be wary of the Youth Parliament becoming a proxy for tensions between political parties. This could be addressed by having mentors from across different parties working collaboratively to role model this behaviour while supporting the participants. This approach, when done well, can support a culture of cooperation and constructive dialogue between young people of differing views.

However, involving political parties can also bring potential challenges. Mechanisms must be in place to ensure that the Youth Parliament operates independently, guided by its own mission and vision, with the influence of political parties limited to advocacy and support.

Engaging young people who are already part of a 'youth wing' or similar also risks predominantly reaching young people with a pre-existing knowledge of politics and parliament. Their participation may not have as great an impact on their development as engaging young people with more limited political experience.

If there is a desire to take an approach that includes young party members, it is advisable to limit the number of places that are open for political party nominations and to ensure equal numbers are included from each party.

Creating fictional political parties

Creating fictional political parties for a Youth Parliament is a creative way of involving the concept of different ideological or practical views whilst maintaining distance from political parties themselves.

This approach of 'role playing' within a fictional party model can offer participants the opportunity to explore different ideologies and completely new policy positions in a non-partisan environment.

Fictional parties, when devised by organisers of the event, can be designed to reflect a diverse range of perspectives, representing various interests and views with each fictional party taking its own unique policy-perspective. Views on pressing issues, such as climate change, education reform or social justice can be set for each party. This can encourage participants to consider political viewpoints that differ from their own, which in turn can help bridge any real-life political differences there may be between the groups involved.

When developing the policy stances of the fictional parties, consider the potential that participants will hold personal views that do not align with the assigned party view. To navigate this, it is important to encourage participants to immerse themselves into the role-playing aspect of the programme and recommend that discussions around their personal stances on politics take place in the margins of the programme in a respectful manner. It will also be necessary to give consideration to the fact that broadcasting participants who are sharing views they do not in fact hold, but who are nonetheless trying to engage with the fictional elements of the programme, may cause those participants particular discomfort. It may, therefore, be necessary to include disclosures in the publicity and broadcasting of your Youth Parliament to clarify that views shared by participants within the programme may not actually reflect their "real-world" convictions.

To brief participants on the fictional parties they will represent, provide materials that offer a simple overview of who the parties are and what they stand for. These can be presented as a table of differing views or in the form of fictional manifestos.

Below is an example table briefing of two parties that could be formed for a Youth Parliament. Each column outlines the policy stances of the two fictional parties.

Policy Issue	Party One (Conservative)	Party Two (Liberal)
Defence	• Believes in strong national defence and increased spending. • A large defence budget is justifiable as the current geo-political situation requires a stronger army specifically with counterterrorism capabilities. "No expense should be spared when safeguarding the lives of the public."	• Supports reduction in defence spending. Believes in reducing the armed forces' role in the economy and advocates the privatization of all military economic enterprises. • Supports increased oversight in the national security sector, such as an increased role for civilian defence ministers, publishing of military budgets and debating military finances in parliament.

Energy Policy	• Believes focus should be on eliminating circular debt and privatising power generation and distribution companies to tackle the current energy crisis. • The priority is industry and the domestic consumer. "Nuclear energy is a safe and fruitful option for boosting the production of electricity."	• Supports the re-structuring of state-owned institutions, introduction of tariffs on higher end domestic consumers and conservation practices. "These are key in developing and sustaining our natural resources". • The dangers of nuclear energy should be considered carefully before the construction of new projects.
Industry	• Believes the state should not interfere in the workings of the industrial setup. • A business-friendly environment should be striven for. "We trust our business minds to take the lead in industry with little government involvement".	• Strict enforcement of labour laws and environmental laws should be undertaken. • The Government should guide and help key industries. "A mix of public and private ownership is the best combination for economic growth."
Labour rights	• Supports a steady minimum wage which should be given to all wage workers.	• The minimum wage should be revised on a regular basis to maintain the wage worker's buying power in the face of inflation.
Privatisation	• State industries should be privatised after careful and guarded assessment of bidders who can operate the company most efficiently thereby stimulating the national economy.	• The sale of public sector industry to foreign bidders is detrimental to the economy. The state should move to create standards and best practices without resorting to mass-privatisation. "A mix of private and public sector ownership is more viable."
Taxation	• Tax reform should be undertaken to ensure collection and enforcement of tax laws while maintaining a business-friendly environment.	• Progressive taxation for individuals and businesses is paramount in the fight against inequality and to create a strong state/government.
Trade	• While trade liberalisation is preferred, indigenous industries and agriculture need to be protected. All factors need to be carefully looked at before complete trade liberalisation can be considered.	• Supports trade liberalisation and removal of most trade barriers. Special moves should be made to create a free trade zone in neighbouring countries.

Selecting Suitable Issues or Topics

Your Youth Parliament activities, including the all-important chamber debate, should be underpinned by inspiring topics to engage your participants.

Providing participants with high-quality information and background reading relating to these activities at the outset of your programme will ensure they can hit the ground running on day one.

The selection and framing of laws or motions for debate should provide participants with topics that both cover contemporary challenges and resonate with young people.

Depending on the duration of your Youth Parliament, and capacity permitting, a balance of smaller-scale and larger-scale issues will allow participants to engage both with subjects that have tangible impacts on their own communities, and those that have national or even international importance.

To select a topic, you could also put the power in your participants' hands, allowing the group to make their own proposals around which topics the programme should address at the beginning of the programme or prior to meeting.

What will inspire young people in your jurisdiction will vary by location and current local issues, however a selection of those successfully used in previous Youth Parliament programmes include:

- Environmental issues, either local or international
- Transport provision for young people
- Voting age restrictions
- Issues related to social media
- Education provision
- Issues related to mental health and well-being

Top Tip

Selecting the issue or issues to be explored by your Youth Parliament can provide an opportunity to engage young people beyond your direct participants.

Consider asking young people through social media if appropriate (see page 37 for more guidance on using social media with young people) or via schools or other educational institutions what topics they would like to see covered. This can raise the profile of your programme and engage a wider pool of young people.

UK Youth Parliament

Providing a Mock Bill

Once the topic has been selected, Youth Parliament organisers often provide a mock bill that can be debated by the participants alongside briefing notes.

When drafting the mock bill consider:
- Avoiding making the mock bill too long or technical, particularly if you are running a shorter programme. Young people should be able to pick up and understand the bill fairly quickly, to focus attention on debate and amendments.
- Ensuring the mock bill includes several clear points suitable for discussion, and redrafting by participants in language that they can understand. This ensures it can be amended and ideally improved through the debate and discussion undertaken over the course of the Youth Parliament.
- Ensuring consideration of the age demographics amongst participants, for example it is usually advised to avoid very dry topics (such as complex tax policy) that may not inspire debate amongst young people. For lower age groups avoiding topics that may require extensive explanation or may prompt inappropriate discussions is advised.
- Including details that will offer substantive disagreement between individuals, or your 'parties' based on the views you have set to prompt discussion and debate.
- Conversely, providing details that will inspire consensus, such as specific details that it can be assumed both sides would want to change. This can promote positive discussion and consensus setting a positive tone for debate before more complex discussion may take place.
- Referencing real-world policy differences and disagreements between government and opposition to connect your activity to current or past events.
- Providing a briefing document to support young people to debate confidently. Briefings could include real-world or mock statistics, reports, quotes from experts and additional information. This enables participants to develop informed opinions, build stronger debates and mirrors the briefing information provided to real parliamentarians.

Providing Rules of Procedure

Youth Parliament participants may have varying levels of experience and understanding of parliamentary proceedings, and the Rules of Procedure serve as a guide for all involved.

Together with the Code of Conduct, the rules of procedure should ensure positive and orderly conduct during sessions.

A thorough understanding of the rules should be encouraged and facilitated in advance of the programme through briefings or training.

Interpreting Parliamentary rules for young people

When drafting your Youth Parliament's Rules of Procedure, a helpful starting point is to look at your own parliament's rules or Standing Orders and identifying the most relevant and necessary elements for inclusion.

Your Rules of Procedure should be considerably shorter than those for parliament itself, with simple language and concise instructions.

To adapt your parliamentary rules of procedure or Standing Orders for young people, consider the following steps:
- **Remove:** Identify any rules or guidance not directly related to the structure of your programme and remove all those you find to leave just the elements that are suitable.
- **Review:** Read through each remaining rule and keep only those points that are of most importance, remove any other details to streamline each rule further.
- **Redraft:** Write the remaining rules again but using plain language suitable for your age group. Avoid and replace overly technical terminology or outdated language wherever possible.

- **Explain:** If you can't remove specific words or phrases, or have decided that for learning purposes some should be kept, ensure you explain the terms clearly in context. Consider providing a glossary of any more complicated terms to each participant.
- **Support:** As well as providing the rules to your participants, ensure all staff are familiar with the document and are briefed to be able to answer questions that participants might have about the Rules during the programme.

Alongside your Rules of Procedure, you may want to provide a description of the expected steps or actions that take place within a specific parliamentary activity, such as a debate or a committee sitting. An example of this is included on the following page.

Nevis Youth Parliament, Commonwealth Day, 2016

Running a Productive Debate

At their best, Youth Parliament debates can address issues in a productive, pragmatic and positive way, giving space to young people to express opinions and consider others.

However, there is also the risk that a topic can divide participants and lead to conflict.

Ahead of time, steps can be taken to mitigate against tensions between participants in the programme and run productive debates that will leave participants feeling empowered and inspired.

Some considerations and steps to take include:
- **Promoting a positive culture:** Establishing a culture of collaboration prior to a debate puts participants in a positive mindset. Encourage teamwork through group activities and icebreaker exercises early in the programme to build camaraderie and create a sense of shared purpose despite potential ideological differences. For longer programmes, ensuring space for social activities across the group, including mixing up parties if relevant, can be helpful in breaking down any 'party lines' that might be forming.
- **Providing a Code of Conduct:** Ensuring your Code of Conduct (covered earlier in this pack on page 21) covers respect, active listening, and the concept that personal attacks will not be tolerated, will help everyone understand the boundaries in place. Prior to each sitting, participants should be reminded of the rules.
- **Establishing consequences:** Putting in place clear consequences if a rule is broken, such as one initial warning, followed by being taken out of the debate for a period of time, can establish expectations and offer organisers a clear next step should it be needed.
- **Providing an effective Speaker:** Putting in place a Speaker to lead proceedings provides a role to immediately step in to manage issues, end unproductive exchanges or identify unruly behaviour. This could be an adult, or one of the participants. If the latter, ensure they are clearly briefed on their role and have support to call on if a debate gets out of hand.
- **Select debate topics carefully:** Considering avoiding 'wedge issues' if this is relevant to

your jurisdiction (i.e. issues that historically follow party lines) can reduce the risk of hostile debates. If you decide to select one of these issues, or your participants have done so themselves, be aware of the heightened possibility of confrontations between participants and provide a more robust briefing before a debate takes place. You could also frame just one specific element of the issue for debate to limit confrontation and focus discussion.

- **Provide support:** Having trained and experienced facilitators and/or mentors available to lead and moderate the event provides invaluable support for productive debates, as well as other discussion opportunities (such as in intra-party/caucus meetings).

Maintaining Participant Attention and Avoiding Exhastion

A robust selection/election process for participants should provide engaged and committed participants from the outset. However, maintaining an interested and enthusiastic audience across your entire cohort should be considered, including for longer days or programmes ensuring participants aren't exhasted due to the demands of the programme.

It's important that staff planning and managing the event are mindful of the impact that a challenging programme can have on participants. Exhastion can present as overwhelmed, stressed or emotional participants and if identified should be managed appropriately.

Some considerations to avoid exhastion and fatigue and manage participants positively include:

- **Offer variety:** Offering a mixture of formats for activities adds variety and helps sustain interest throughout the programme, these can range from quiet research activities to more physical warm-ups, and of course debate and discussion. Moving spaces, if possible, can also help maintain focus or bring new energy.
- **Select relevant topics:** The issues and themes discussed during the event should be relevant to participants and ideally be based on a policy area that is currently affecting young people in your jurisdiction. Some ideas have been provided on page 32.
- **Bring in external energy:** Having guest speakers visit to speak to the group during the programme can provide not only additional learning opportunities, but the chance to reinvigorate a room and bring a different voice and energy to the day.
- **Provide balance and breaks:** The programme schedule should be well balanced, with activities spread across the day and regular breaks planned. For younger participants in particular, regular food provision will also be required to maintain energy. Avoid too many back-to-back intensive sessions across your programme.
- **Offer Support:** Ensure participants know who to go to if they are feeling unwell or overwhelmed (see safeguarding guidance on page 21). You may also want to consider peer-to-peer support, in the form of older mentors available during the process. These past participants can be assigned to one or multiple current participants to provide a range of support and advice should the participant experience stress or burnout. Ensure mentors are fully trained and briefed to support in this way.
- **Check in regularly for feedback:** This is vital when addressing participant well-being, as without feedback you can only guess when there might be an issue. Emphasise from the beginning that you are open to honest, constructive and, where necessary, confidential dialogue from participants, explaining how to feedback confidentially.

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT FOR COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTS

In 2022, the CPA published its Mental Health Toolkit for Commonwealth Parliaments to guide, advise and educate parliaments on how to improve their response to mental health issues experienced by Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff. Download a copy here. https://www.cpahq.org/media/cczlingr/mentalhealth_toolkit_final_web.pdf

Optional Additional Activities

For longer programmes in particular, providing additional activities alongside the core parliamentary debate event can add value to participants and offer the chance to share a well-rounded view of the role of parliamentarians.

A selection of activities you could add to your programme are included below:

- **Warm-up and energiser activities:** Short, engaging activities are important to break up the intensity of programme events such as debates. At the outset of the programme, they can also be used to introduce participants to one another. Keep a range as back-up should you feel the energy is dropping in the room.

  Some examples include:
  - **What do we have in common?** Divide the group into pairs, set a two-minute timer for each pair to speak. They must find out as many things they have in common (pets, favourite TV show, hobbies etc.). At the end of the time, ask each pair to present back their commonalities to the group. How many are the same around the room?
  - **Parliament Pictionary:** Write down words from your Youth Parliament activities on to paper (debate, amends, party, chamber etc.). Cut out and fold up the words and place in a bowl. Ask a volunteer to come up and select a word. Set a one-minute timer for the volunteer use drawings on a whiteboard or paper attached to the wall to describe the word. The group must call out answers until they get it right. This can also be fun if you ask the volunteer to act out the word rather than draw.
  - **Stand up/sit down energiser:** Call out statements as quickly as possible. Individuals must stand up if they agree or sit down if they disagree. As an icebreaker you can use fun statements, such as 'Rap music is better than pop music!' Alternatively, you can ask questions related to the issue you are focused on, or the facts the group has learnt, with standing up meaning 'true' and sitting meaning 'false'. This can test learning in a relaxed way. Be mindful of accessibility needs. You can replace standing up with hands up if needed.
  - **Research activities:** If you are running a longer programme, including space for participants to quietly research an issue individually or as teams provides a learning opportunity and deeper understanding of the issue. Access to a library, computers, briefing papers or even library staff to answer questions can showcase the depth of knowledge needed to debate and make decisions on key issues through parliament.
  - **Intra-party/Caucus meetings:** If your participants are representing parties, intra-party meetings, where they meet to discuss the programme and the issues up for debate, should take place regularly. Meetings can cover their approach to debates and completing tasks that the organisers or Clerks of the Youth Parliament may have given them (e.g. agreeing motions to be raised, orders of speakers, etc.). Consider these meetings when choosing your venue to ensure parties have equal access to space.
  - **Panels and guest sessions:** Having guest speakers present, or hosting panel discussions for participants to watch, provides participants with live examples of experienced public speakers to apply to their own activities. Guests can talk about the issue being investigated, or their own parliamentary experience sharing insight into process and procedure. Allowing time for participants to ask panel members or guests their own questions can add further value to these sessions.
  - **Committee sessions:** Committee sessions as part of a Youth Parliament provide participants with a different experience of parliamentary procedure. You can set a theme for a small group to explore in depth, and organise witnesses to attend, such as experts and those affected by the issue. Assign a Clerk to support the group and ensure smooth running sessions. Consider producing a professional-looking committee report at the end of the programme, printed and branded. This can be shared with participants, parliamentarians and wider stakeholders as a tangible result from the programme.

Step 4: Promoting Your Youth Parliament: Media Engagement

Social Media

Social media channels can engage, inspire and mobilise young people for the programme, both your participants and a wider community online. This can greatly increase the profile and reach of your project.

Communicating with communities on various platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn, can connect you with a diverse audience who might not otherwise engage.

Social media's interactive nature encourages an open dialogue between users, enabling participants to voice their opinions, contribute ideas and connect with like-minded peers.

Some considerations when planning social media activity, including example posts, are outlined below:

Young People and Social Media

If you are using social media to communicate about or with young people, your safeguarding plans should consider the risks involved. For example, this may include:

- Identifying platform age limits and following them. Note that if you are working with younger participants, social media may not be a suitable route to engage with them and instead should only be used for stakeholder engagement.
- Ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations regarding online data protection. This will usually include never sharing any personal information about young people (e.g. name, home or school information, photos etc.) without a clear reason to do so, and the proper consent.
- Never proactively or reactively communicate privately with a young person through a social media platform. Alert your Safeguarding contact if you have any concerns for yourself or a young person.
- Ensure you have strict anti-bullying policies that relate to online activity and respond quickly to any reports of inappropriate behaviour from or directed at your participants.

Reputational Risks and Mitigations

Although social media can greatly increase your reach, be mindful that it can also lead to reputational risks for the programme. Consider:

- Educating anyone posting on your channel about the need for positive, careful communications, with clear guidelines of what can be shared.
- Monitoring comments made on any of your posts and being ready to remove if needed.
- Avoiding engaging in discussion on social media that may negatively impact reputation.
- Carefully managing social media passwords and access to your channels to avoid any hostile takeovers or unintentional posts.
- If in doubt, don't post. Information on social media cannot be removed completely.

Hashtags

Creating a hashtag for the programme is a common way of maximising engagement, by tagging all related posts and content to your programme. This helps social media users find all posts related to your events.

The title of the hashtag can either follow the name of the programme (e.g. - *#SouthAfricaYouthParliament*), a theme of the event or activity taking place (e.g. *#ClimateChangeDebate*) or simply a tagline of the programme (e.g. *#YouthPoliticalVoices*).

Example Social Media Activity

A range of posts planned and released across your programme will create a drum beat of activity for interested followers to check in on regularly.

The tone of your posts should be considered to ensure they appeal to a young audience, building a positive and aspirational character from the start to inspire engagement and promote your event positively.

Example social media activity includes:

- **Pre-event teasers:** Teaser posts can be shared even before the programme begins to build interest and link to more information: "Exciting news! The [Youth Parliament Name linked to website] is just around the corner! Get ready to make your voice heard and be part of the conversation. Stay tuned for more details! #YouthPoliticalVoices"
- **Countdown series:** Countdown posts are a way to regularly promote the event in the run up: "Only 7 days left until the [Youth Parliament Name] begins! Are you ready to join us and shape the future? Mark your calendars and get ready to make a difference!"
- **Spotlighting participants:** Participant Spotlight posts can be shared to highlight the range of individuals involved, including guests, and can be used to 'tag' the user to spread the reach further. Be extremely careful when posting about young people, and ensure you have permission from them and their caregivers. "Meet [Participant Name], a passionate advocate for [Issue]. They'll be joining us as a Member of the [Youth Parliament Name] to represent their community. Follow their journey and get inspired! #YouthPoliticalVoices"
- **Gathering views:** Call to action posts requesting follower views are a great way to gather wider opinions from young people and feed into participant debates. They also further demonstrate to your participants how understanding the views of citizens are important to productive parliamentary discussion and decision-making: "We want to hear from YOU! Share the ideas, opinions, and concerns you wish to see addressed at the [Youth Parliament Name] using *#YouthPoliticalVoices.*"
- **Polling:** Some platforms allow polling integration, and these can also be used to quickly gather opinions, drive engagement and provide speedy feedback to participants:

  "What issues are most important to you?:
  - ▫ *Education*
  - ▫ *Climate Change*
  - ▫ *Healthcare*
  - ▫ *Something else?*
  Cast your vote and let us know! #YouthVoicesMatter"

- **Question and Answer (Q&A) events:** Q&A Sessions can also be promoted on social media, with the session itself either run on that channel or on your own site. Q&As could relate to the programme itself or be hosted with one of your guests to increase learning opportunities beyond your cohort: *"Got questions about the [Youth Parliament Name]? Ask away! We'll be hosting a live Q&A session with our organisers to address all your queries. Stay tuned for details! #YouthPoliticalVoices"*
- **Social media challenges:** Young people will be familiar with challenges on social channels, calling for followers to share or do something to participate: *"Ready for a challenge? Share a short video explaining why youth participation in democracy is important to you and tag three friends to do the same. Let's spread the word and amplify #YouthPoliticalVoices!"*
- **Influencer collaborations:** Collaborating with established influencers with a high level of engagement (followers, likes and shares) can be a great way to draw attention to your

programme. Identify potential collaborators well in advance of your event and approach them to share information or activity at the time. Emphasise to them the importance of the programme for youth engagement and how the activity would fit with their own follower interests. For example, is the issue being explored, youth engagement, or democracy in general, a topic the influencer already engages with?

- **Corporate partnerships:** Coordinating posts with organisations or companies can also draw attention to the programme, whilst enhancing its credibility and formal recognition. For example, if a local business or media outlet posts about the programme, it can help translate the reasoning for, and impact of, the event for a wider audience.
- **Stories:** Instagram, Facebook, or Snapchat stories offer the chance to provide behind the scenes glimpses and highlights of the programme in real-time to help users follow the programme as it progresses and gain an understanding of what is involved.

Top Tip

Consider **branding** your Youth Parliament. If you have a form of standing Youth Parliament this may remain consistent. But if you are having a bespoke annual Youth Parliament you might want to design or commission a logo every iteration. Perhaps run a competition to get broader engagement. Perhaps you might want to incorporate elements from the actual parliament. Likewise having a consistent and engaging overal style of visual branding for the entire Youth Parliament can make it stand-out. The image included is from the 11th Commonwealth Youth Parliament which took place in Trinidad and Tobago and incorporated the national bird as well as colours of the national flag.

Live and 'On Demand' Coverage

If you have the technology in place to do so, filming key elements of your event, such as a chamber debate, can greatly increase engagement and reach. If the decision is taken to film and broadcast the programme (and has already been alluded to), this does add another dimension to the importance of safeguarding your young participants and making sure they are (as far as possible and can be expected) confident and comfortable with such levels of publicity.

For example, if schools or youth organisations tune in to a debate, the young people watching can then be encouraged to host their own discussion afterwards. This offers a powerful learning experience outside of your own programme that can be reflected in your evaluation figures. Streaming platforms will record the number of viewers for you to monitor.

If you take this approach, consider providing some supporting materials on your website to help facilitators run a discussion following your own event. Also ensure you communicate early on if parliamentary sessions will be publicly available.

When considering sharing coverage from your event, compare the two options to select what's suitable for your programme:

- **Live streaming:** This describes broadcasting key parts of the event live for others to view. You can cover activities live from start to finish, providing an in-depth experience for viewers. Platforms like Facebook Live, Instagram Live, YouTube or even a public television channel can be utilised for the streaming, reaching a wide audience.

  Although streaming offers an exciting, live experience, it does come with challenges, for example live content can't be edited as it is broadcast to remove unexpected issues. Ideally you should build in a short delay, but this isn't always possible depending on the platform chosen. You also cannot limit those who watch the broadcast if that is desired.

- **On demand coverage:** In this scenario, you can film elements of the programme, making edits before uploading content either to your preferred platform or your own website as embedded videos.

  This approach may not offer the same level of instant excitement, but it does give you more control over the content, allowing for any unexpected issues. Viewers can also choose when they watch the proceedings to suit their timings. If desired you can also host the content on your website password protected, sharing the details only with groups you want to engage, which provides some level of security.

Welsh Youth Parliament
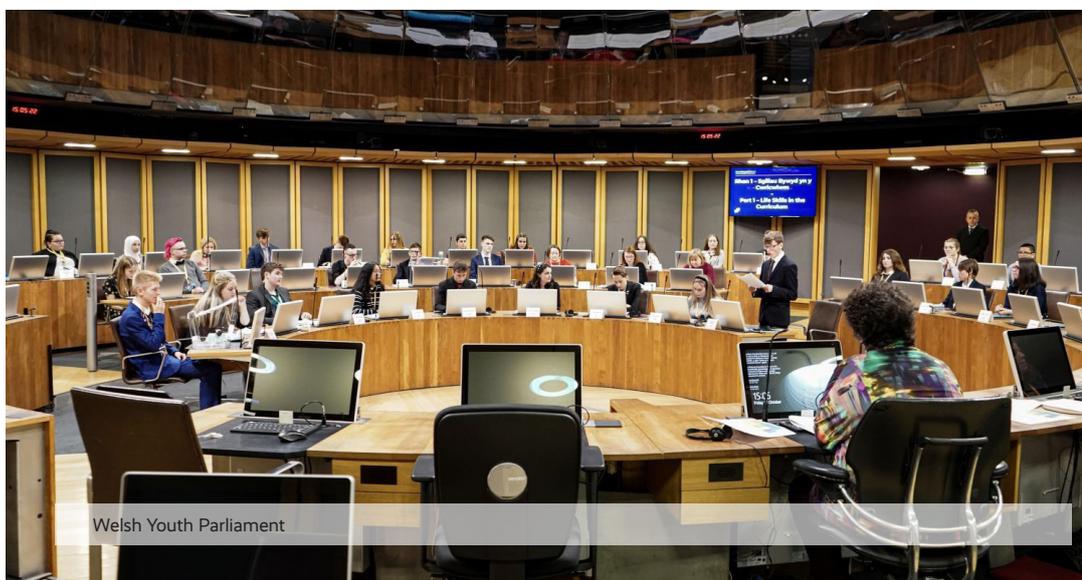
Top Tips

Live posting alternative: If you do not have the expertise or equipment for filming, you can instead 'post live' on your preferred social media channel to widen the reach of the activity. These posts could include snippets of speeches, quotes from participants, and summaries of key points raised during debates. You can encourage attendees or schools to follow and respond, using a designated event hashtag to facilitate further engagement.

Professional production: If you film your event, ensure that live coverage maintains high-quality production standards, including clear audio, good lighting, and stable camera work. Ideally work with a professional who can provide advice. This enhances the viewing experience and reflects positively on the programme.

Traditional Media (TV, Radio, Print, Online)

Social media is not the only option for marketing and communication, and you may feel due to the age of your participants that it is not suitable for your event.

However, you can also utilise established traditional media channels such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and websites to widen your reach and promote the great work delivered through your programme.

These channels have the benefit of targeting a wider demographic, including parents, academia, professionals, and community leaders, whilst offering a level of credibility for many that can enhance the legitimacy of the Youth Parliament with the public.

Positive reinforcement and profile raising of your programme will also increase interest from potential participants and supporters in the future.

To engage journalists working on these platforms effectively, consider:

- **Providing a press release prior to the event:** Drafting a compelling press release promoting your event, ideally with quotes from high-profile supporters, to set a positive note with the media. Share your press release with outlets to provide information in a familiar form that can be easily used for blogs and articles. Include details of interview options and your contact information, should the outlet want to build on the information you have shared, and ideally provide imagery to support its use.
- **Hosting a press conference:** Inviting representatives from local media outlets to learn more about the event at a press conference can increase media support. Consider inviting participants and stakeholders to speak alongside you as the organiser. Participants in particular can share their excitement about the programme and express the importance of the Youth Parliament for engaging young people in democracy. Note that hosting the conference in a space at your national parliament, and providing refreshments, may increase attendance.
- **Sharing success during and after the programme:** Identifying success stories throughout the programme and sharing them live with the media provides new angles for traditional media to talk about your Youth Parliament activity. You can share the outcomes of Youth Parliament sessions, key quotes and findings from your activities, and highlight the positive impact of the programme on participants and the communities they represent.
- **Staying in touch:** Communicating with the media, particularly those who have shown an interest in the programme while it took place, can extend beyond the duration of the event itself. Media coverage can return to the outcomes of the event to build a longer dialogue about the programme and the thematic areas it addresses. For example, if a debate hosted during the programme is then discussed by parliamentarians, or if a participant goes on to have an impact in local politics, these can all be opportunities to gain further coverage and promote the longer-term impact of the programme.

Step 5: Evaluation: Learning for the Future

As the curtains draw on the Youth Parliament, the journey continues in securing a lasting impact and legacy for the programme. A positive legacy is key to empowering a new generation of engaged young leaders.

St Kitts National Youth Parliament

In this step, the toolkit covers post-event considerations you can put in place to ensure the momentum of the programme extends beyond the programme dates, and that any learnings are taken forward for future events.

Gathering Participant and Stakeholder Feedback

Gathering feedback from participants and stakeholders involved in the running of your Youth Parliament is crucial to assess the event's strengths, areas for improvement, and overall impacts, such as steps the participants might have taken to encourage peers to engage with democracy or any further engagements with the local parliament that participants may be undertaking (such as placements or internships).

Feedback can help to refine future activities and enhance the event's effectiveness.

When collecting and collating feedback it is best practice to request it as soon as possible after the conclusion of the programme and then again up to six months after that date if you are assessing longer-term impact.

Feedback gathering can include:
- **Participant debriefing sessions:** Arrange debriefing sessions where participants can reflect on their experiences together, share insights gained, and discuss the significance of the

event. These sessions encourage critical reflection and provide a platform for participants to articulate their takeaways, as well as providing valuable learnings to you for future programmes. Sessions can be held in person, online or a combination of both.

- **Stakeholder post-event interviews:** Undertaking short interviews with stakeholders, such as partner organisers, venue hosts, volunteers and event guests, will provide invaluable feedback for future activities. These should cover logistics, communication methods, what went well and what did not go so well. Be open to feedback and making changes in the future.

- **Print or digital surveys:** These can be used both for participants and for stakeholders. The benefit of a digital survey is that it creates a private space for people to share feedback in their own time. You can also include standard questions you ask each year to produce benchmark scores and compare quantitative data received to monitor your success over time, for example 'Would you recommend participating in the Youth Parliament to others?' with a five-point scale for answers. If in your first year you average 4.2, you may want to maintain or increase this score in following years.

Once this feedback is collected it should be analysed for patterns and trends. This allows you to make iterative improvements to the programme. For example, participants might highlight a need for additional time for intra-party meetings but did not value a panel discussion you ran highly. You can then consider adjusting the time spent on each activity in the future.

Top Tip

Diversity monitoring
If you are actively looking to diversify your reach, you may want to include diversity monitoring questions in your feedback mechanism. These can be based on local standard monitoring categories, for example by referring to categorisations used on the national Census.

Reporting to Stakeholders

Reporting serves not only as a means of accountability and transparency but also as a valuable tool when advocating for continuing your Youth Parliament programme.

Through comprehensive reporting, you can ensure key discussions, debates, and decisions made by participants are captured, providing a record of the event's impact and significance and ensuring any relevant actions are taken forward.

A report should include, at minimum, the following information, in order to give a comprehensive overview of what took place and what should happen next:

- **Executive summary:** A concise overview of the main highlights, outcomes, and recommendations from the programme, including the number of participants engaged, the location and dates the programme took place, and the key outcomes. Be mindful that readers without the time to review the entire report may only read this summary, so it needs to be holistic but also concise in capturing what took place.

- **Introduction:** More detailed background information about the programme, including its objectives, participant details, and the thematic focus outlined in more depth.

- **Programme activity overview:** A detailed description of the agenda and activities undertaken, including training, debates, guest speakers and other activities held, such as committee sessions and learning and development opportunities.

- **Debates outcomes:** As a core activity of the programme, information should be provided on any debate sessions and any votes that took place as part of them.

- **Committee reports:** If there have been committee sessions during the programme then reports from these sessions should be included, detailing the inquiries, findings, and recommendations.

- **Coverage and marketing reach:** Share examples of programme coverage that may have taken place (such as TV coverage and newspaper reports), together with social media statistics. This can include reach metrics, such as impressions, likes, shares and comments. This data gives an overview of the wider reach and profile of the programme.

- **Participant and stakeholder feedback:** Share feedback from your evaluation activity to evidence the positive impact it has had on participants, as well as any changes and/or improvements you may need to put in place for future iterations.

- **Case studies:** If the programme has had a specific impact on individual participants, or in relation to legislation (such as outcomes being shared in the chamber), providing an engaging narrative supported by images and testimonies can bring the impact of your programme to life.
- **Resolutions:** Compiling any resolutions adopted by the Youth Parliament allows organisers and participants to pursue/follow up on those outputs and turn them into lasting outcomes.

You may also be required to report on your financial position at the end of a programme, which can be included in this report as needed.

Remember to follow any local data protection legislation when producing publicly available reports, such as GDPR in the UK and Europe. This usually includes not sharing personal details about a young person without the appropriate consent.

Legacy and Sustainability

The legacy and sustainability of a programme is a consideration that organisers must bear in mind to ensure wider impact, and support future running of the programme.

This stage in the process is particularly important for programmes that take place over the course of just one day annually. Longer-term impact can be provided by undertaking further activities following the day itself from the list below.

Note that any follow-up activities will require staffing resource but could be passed to an existing education or outreach team if possible.

The following are ways that the programme's legacy and sustainability can be ensured:
- **Dissemination of outcomes:** Share the Youth Parliament's outcomes, resolutions, policy recommendations, and key discussions with relevant stakeholders, policymakers, and (where appropriate) the media and wider public. This ensures that the event's impact can reverberate beyond its immediate participants.
- **Publication of proceedings:** Compile the proceedings, resolutions, and key insights from the Youth Parliament into a comprehensive report. Distribute this report to participants, stakeholders, partners, and the public (where appropriate) and the media to ensure the event's legacy.
- **Integration into policy processes:** Taking outcomes from the programme and pursuing them at a provincial or national level is ideal for ensuring that the programme has a long-term impact. This could be achieved by presenting findings to parliament or briefing government agencies. One example of a Youth Parliament that does this in practice is the Youth Parliament of Sri Lanka, where participants have been given the opportunity to participate in sectoral oversight committees of the parliament itself.
- **Engaging Parliamentarians and Parliament:** Long-term impact relies on garnering the active involvement and support of parliament. Reporting ongoing outcomes and updates regularly to parliamentarians, including groups within parliament who have a special interest in democratic engagement or youth engagement will help build the programme's profile and ensure continued commitment from your advocates.
- **Continued contact with participants:** Staying in touch with participants is crucial for the programme since it allows for continued engagement, tracking of progress and showcasing lasting impact. By maintaining communication channels with former participants through simple activities, such as a short monthly e-newsletter, organisers can establish and develop long-term connections with a strong alumni network and cultivate a sense of community.
- **Youth Parliament alumni network:** Establishing a network for past Youth Parliament participants to stay connected to one another can ensure their ongoing engagement. This community can serve as a resource for mentoring, networking, and providing ongoing support both for your next cohort of Youth Parliamentarians and for young people involved in civic and political initiatives more broadly. The network could have its own Facebook group or shared email group to keep in touch (age and social media rules, and guidance permitting).
- **Showcasing success stories:** Highlight the achievements of individual participants or collectives who have implemented projects or initiatives inspired by the Youth Parliament discussions. These success stories inspire others and demonstrate the event's practical impact and can be shared via the media to raise the profile of your programme.

SAMPLE PARTICIPANT EVALUATION SURVEY

Full Name: [   ]

Gender: [   ]   Age: [   ]

Email Address: [   ]

City/Region: [   ]

How did you hear about the Youth Parliament?   {Multiple choice options}

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
How highly would you rate the organisation of the Youth Parliament?	☐	☐	☐	☐
How satisfied were you with the overall experience?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Would you recommend participating in the Youth Parliament to others? **Yes** ☐ **Unsure** ☐ **No** ☐

	Extensively	Yes, to some extent	Barely	Not at all
Did the Youth Parliament enhance your understanding of parliamentary procedures?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did the Youth Parliament improve your skills in public speaking?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Did the Youth Parliament improve your skills in critical thinking and research?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Were the workshops and training sessions helpful in building your knowledge and skills?	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Yes	Unsure	No
Did you have the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with fellow participants?	☐	☐	☐
Were you able to connect with mentors, guest speakers, or experts during the event?	☐	☐	☐
Did the event foster networking and collaboration with other participants?	☐	☐	☐

What was the most valuable aspect of your experience?
[   ]

Were there any areas you think the programme could be improved for future participants?
[   ]

	Yes	Unsure	No
Do you feel empowered to advocate for the issues discussed during the event in your community?	☐	☐	☐
Have you been involved in any initiatives or projects inspired by the Youth Parliament discussions?	☐	☐	☐
Have you shared the outcomes and recommendations of the Youth Parliament with your peers or community members?	☐	☐	☐

If you responded yes to either of the above, please share further details.
[   ]

	Yes	Unsure	No
Are you interested in participating in future editions of the Youth Parliament?	☐	☐	☐
Would you be interested in joining an alumni network or mentorship programme related to the Youth Parliament?	☐	☐	☐

General comments:
[   ]