



# Youth Activation

How to plan it & put it into practice

**How to obtain a sense of ownership and future stewardship for the sustainable management of World Heritage Sites in the younger generation? How to encourage the active participation of youth? How to make the youth voice heard on how they could be involved and contribute to World Heritage and its conservation?**

## Summary & Additional Information

OWHC Northwest Europe and North America, Workshop in Berlin,  
March 18-20, 2024

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## Levels of Participation

We discussed different levels of possible activation of young people. We found that educating young people about WH should always be a common element. Ideally, this should not only address the site itself but include the universal idea of WH and the need of preservation as well as an international and inclusive perspective.

As “Co-Creators”, young people get more involved and have a more active role in the work of WH. They want to be consulted and/or actively involved in the design of activities. Thus, they can make sure that those educational programs meet their interests and are meaningful to them.

In addition, young people could actively get involved as ambassadors of WH to communicate the meaning of heritage or in the preservation of heritage.

Participation level	Goals
<b>Learners</b>	Young people learn about WH.
<b>Co-Creators of formats</b>	Young people are deciding on how to learn about WH and what programs are offered.
<b>Ambassadors</b>	Young people inspire others to learn about WH.
<b>Preservers</b>	Young people are involved in the preservation of WH.

For a closer analysis of different levels of participation, please consult the [“Ladder of Participation” \(Arnstein \[1969\]\)](#).

## Ideas on how to involve young people

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**To develop successful programs for young people, it is necessary to speak to their interests.**

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In the following, we listed the ideas that the participants of the workshop developed together:

### How young people want to be involved

- **Young people want to learn.** Offer activation formats that meet their interests and/or that enable them to learn new skills.

- **Young people want to be heard.** Implement their work, their perspectives & feedback into your work.
- **Young people want transparency.** Make sure the young people know what to expect from you and the limits of their participation.
- **Young people want to see a long-term effect.** Make sure that the participation of young people is not a flash in the pan, but a principle of your work.

## What young people want to learn

- Learn about more than the site itself: UNESCO & WH
- Stories about people, nations, cultures, relations, habits, beliefs, rituals, social life
- Cuisine
- Nature
- Art, architecture, artefacts
- Science

Social media can be an important tool for direct communication with young people. But: it cannot replace the real life experience of getting involved on-site.

## How to develop a Youth Activation Strategy

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**First decide on your goals before you're thinking about measures!**

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### 1. Set your overarching goal(s)

Before you start to plan a concrete activation program, the first step is to decide on the overarching goals and the level of engagement of young people: do you want to have more visitors, do you want young people to create programs together with you, or to get involved in the preservation and future development of the site? If you have made this fundamental decision, you'll analyze the status quo in relation to your overarching goal. Only after, you'll specify your overarching goal into a SMART goal.

### 2. Evaluate your Status Quo: SWOT Analysis

First, you need to analyze the status quo of youth activation at your site. Assess, what your heritage site can offer, and what challenges you face due to budget/personnel reasons etc.

The SWOT analysis is a tool for a strategic evaluation of the status quo. It is intended to identify the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieving the objectives of the venture or project.

<b>STRENGTHS</b> (internal factors that are beneficial)	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> (internal factors that are problematic)
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> (external factors/conditions that are beneficial)	<b>THREATS</b> (external factors/conditions that are problematic)

- Examples for strengths: interesting site, ...
- Examples for weaknesses: low budget, not enough personnel, experience, ...

- Examples for opportunities: school curricula, nearby university, good relationships to local educational NGOs
- Examples for threats: budgets for extracurriculars declining, new theme park (competition), ...

### 3. Define SMART Goals

*Now that you have identified your strengths and weaknesses and got a realistic picture of the status quo, it's time to set specific goals!*

The aim of setting specific goals is to get a realistic picture of what can really be achieved considering the SWOT analysis (e.g. budget and time restrictions, ...). Setting goals also depends on experience: I need to know what budget I need to achieve x, how my measures translate into outcomes etc. Setting goals and analyzing the success then helps to improve future activation programs.

*Those goals should be SMART:*

**S – „Specific“**

How can we define our target state in concrete terms?

**M – „Measurable“**

Is it a measurable goal?

**A – „Achievable“**

What can we realistically achieve?

**R – „Relevant“**

Do the communication goals work towards our target state?

**T – „Time-Bound“**

In what time can we achieve the goals?

An example of a smart “learners” goal could be: Until the end of 2024 (*time bound*), 500 high school students (*measurable*) from our region will have used our new student package and learned about our heritage site and the World Heritage Idea (*specific, achievable, relevant*).

An example of a co-creation goal could be: Until the end of 2025, 100 high school students have participated in our new youth program that has been created together with young

people, speaks to their interests, and makes them learn about our site and the World Heritage Idea.

#### 4. Defining the Core Message/Topic/USP

The core message answers the question of why someone should be interested in participating in your activities. It is a 30-second elevator pitch and is based on the key strengths and opportunities (SWOT analysis) of the project and should relate to the interests of young people. It is your USP!

**Your Core Message/Topic/USP should fulfill the following criteria:**

1. **relevance:** Does my message address topics that are of interest to my target group? *The core message should relate to the topics that young people mention to you.*
2. **offer added value:** What benefits does our target group gain from participating?
3. **plausibility:** Is the message unambiguously clear and unambiguously formulated?
4. **arouse emotions:** How strongly do I reach my target group on an emotional level?
5. **comprehensibility:** Can the message be easily understood by my target group?

#### 5. Target Group & Multipliers

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**To find our multipliers, we need to first think of our target group and their needs, habits, interests and secondly about the multipliers' needs and interests.**

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In our case, the target group is already more or less defined: young people. If our goal is to reach young people between 12-22, the aim of defining a target group is to think about whether we can reach those people directly or whether we rely on multipliers and how to reach them. Multipliers are very important in the case of bound resources.

Examples: If our goal is to reach high school students, we can think about reaching out to schools/teachers or local youth organizations as multipliers that interact with those

young people. If our goal is to reach young people who are not in school anymore, we think of other possible multipliers: maybe universities, places of professional training, ....

We can define those multipliers more narrowly. The aim is to find multipliers who can reach as many people as possible but who are also the most likely to help us in our mission. E.g.: Teachers might be too broad, it might be helpful to address history, geography or political science teachers that can connect WH to their teaching curricula. Or there are different kinds of youth organizations: Maybe in your town, there are many football clubs, and they could reach a lot of young people. If the football clubs are however not very likely to engage with the heritage site, it might be a better strategy to work with a cultural youth organization that has fewer members but is more likely to be interested in world heritage. However, if the organization only has 10 members, it might not make sense to work with them as multipliers.

If several target groups and multipliers are interesting to you, try to evaluate how many you can reach considering time & budget restrictions and who are the most important.

There exist several possibilities to get a clearer picture of the target group. It can also be helpful to work with “personas” - you imagine a prototype student, teacher, employee of a youth organization as if it was a character in a movie/play. It can help to imagine their interests and needs better.

### Template for Target Group Description

<b>Target Group</b>	
<b>Age</b>	
<b>Education/Work</b>	
<b>Relation to heritage site</b>	
<b>Where do they live</b>	
<b>Hobbies/Interests</b>	
<b>other</b>	

## Possible multipliers / cooperation partners

Several possible cooperation partners were named during the workshop:

- Youth Clubs & Groups
- Youth-led initiatives (e.g. Fridays for Futures, YouPan, ...)
- [UNESCO associated schools](#)
- Universities
- Ambassadors
  - o “Famous people”: well-known personalities that lend a photo/a statement to your cause to attract attention.
  - o Young people get resources to work on WH and share their stories.
- Influencers
  - o E.g. travel, culture, ....
- School book editors
- Platforms for teaching material
- NGOs
- Environmental movements
- Local professional associations
- Parents
- World Heritage Trainers (training format by the German Commission to UNESCO)

## 6. Activation

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**Young people want to learn through entertaining, engaging & unique activities.**

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Now it's time to put everything together and develop a proper strategy! **Offer valuable and informative content and unique experiences** that address the interests of young people. What connections between your heritage site and the life of young people do you see? How does it fit into their curricula or speak to concerns that are common to young people? Ensure that your strategy reflects **diverse perspectives and experiences**.

The young people we talked to repeatedly stated that WH should be “less boring”. What they find boring:

- Long texts
- Guided tours where young people are just listeners

**These are the ideas that the participants developed during the workshop:**



**Concentrate on activities:**

- Games & Quizzes
- scavenger hunt,
- Immersive experiences: How was it to live in those times? E.g., cooking events, costume shows, music.
- Festivals
- Walking, biking, exploring

**Combine skills, technology and heritage:**

- Young people can try out new gadgets while learning about WH
- Acquire new skills: e.g., combining a video-production workshop with education about WH
- Learn about ancient traditions: learning how to use ancient handicraft methods, cooking, ....

**Make it a social activity:**

- Group activities: possibility to spend time with friends or to make new friends
- From youth to youth: Young people organize formats for young people

**Involve ‘new’ media:**

- Use short movies as educational material
- Make the experience “Instagrammable”: integrate a communication aspect into your activities 📱 how can young people share their activities on social media (see also p. 10)?

**Partner-bound activities:**

- **Schools:**
  - Include teachers in the development of formats
  - Offer teacher training in WH related topics
  - Students could contribute to or test formats
  - Workshops, extra-curriculars, field trips
- **Universities:**
  - Lectures/site visits
  - Hands-on workshops
  - Students can develop educational formats for the site as a practical experience, e.g. an exhibition for Open Monument Day, World Heritage Day

Engage in **Two-Way Communication**: Foster open and transparent communication with young people by actively listening to their feedback, comments, and concerns. Engage in conversations, ask for input, and involve young people in co-creating content and campaigns.

**Iterate and Improve:** Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the youth activation and make necessary adjustments.

## 7. Communication

**Communication Channels:** Identify the most effective channels to reach the target audience. There's an array of possible communication channels: Press, Newsletters, Websites, Social Media, On-site information, and flyers,...

Also decide: Who are the partners that can help you in getting the information out?

**Choose the right communication channel for the right audience:** While social media is most often the right medium to engage directly with young people, it might be better to use traditional media to reach teachers, e.g. reach out to school book editors, use newsletters, reach out to platforms that provide educational material for teachers etc.

“Brand consistency” is important: Stick to a slogan, colors, and hashtag and make sure it's easy for people to recognize your communication quickly across channels.

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**Pro Tip:**

**Create content that your partners can share.**

**Send them a picture/share pic & text that they can easily share on their communication channels. If you have enough resources, create content for different channels (newsletter content, social media platforms etc) for them to use. Make sure it includes all the important information! The less work it's for your partners, the more likely it is they will share your content.**

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## Website

Make sure that there is a central place where important information is easy to find, clear and short. What needs to be there and what's really interesting to your target group? Try to take the perspective of a young person/teacher who wants to engage in youth activities and imagine what's important for them to know.

Tip: Ask a family member/friend to go on your website and give you feedback on whether they found the information they needed easily.

## Social Media

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**Learning about WH is hard to fit into the quick & simple formats of social media. Social media should thus be a communication tool, but it should not replace other youth engagement formats. Moreover, printed information is still valuable. [Science tells us](#) it has cognitive advantages: people can concentrate better on paper than on a screen - and therefore understand texts on paper better.**

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The easiest way to develop a good social media presence is to have a look at how others do it and learn from them. How do they engage people? What kind of images/videos/language are they using?

Remember: Adapt your content to the platform. Don't use the same language that you are using in press releases but get more **personal and authentic**. In addition, Social Media is not Social Media. Each platform requires a specific kind of communication and reaches a different audience. If you are using different platforms, you need to adjust your communication for each platform. Since social media use/etiquette is changing fast and is country-specific, each site needs to do its own research about the users/reach/etiquette of platforms.

**Encourage young people to create and share their own content related to your heritage site.** User-generated content not only fosters a sense of community but also amplifies your reach through organic sharing. Feature user-generated content on your social media channels and website to showcase the diversity of your audience.

### *Interaction:*

- Social Media is interactive, so the most important thing to keep in mind is to interact with the communities!
- Always tag your partners, it makes it more likely that they will reshare your post.
- Like content that individuals post about your site.
- Reshare content from others. Ideally, add your comment on the share to show that you're valuing their post.
- React fast to comments & messages: social media is way faster than email. If you decide to be on social media, you need to be able to respond timely.

### *What platforms to use?*

- Don't underestimate the work it needs to manage a successful account. Concentrate on those platforms that are the most important for your work/your audience.
- Be aware of the ethical and legal difficulties of using platforms such as X (Twitter) or TikTok. If you are using those platforms, keep in touch with the discourse to evaluate whether the number of followers outweighs the image problems that might be associated with their use.
- If you identify platforms that are important to reach your target audience, but you don't have resources/legal possibilities to use those platforms, think of partners and ambassadors that are active on those platforms and send them communication material they can use or ask them to create content that includes your activities.

### *Hashtags:*

- Have a look at what hashtags are most popular in posts relating to your work and use them. □ This can help people who are interested in those topics find you on social media. Different platforms use different hashtags, so do the research for each platform individually.
- Create your own hashtags for youth activation/campaigns.
  - Stick with hashtags: Don't make too many different hashtags. The specificity of hashtags depends on the size of your site/the reach of your communication. If you are a small site that has little reach in social media, stick to a few hashtags: one that is central for all your activities and only add a new one for major campaigns – if any. If you have very little outreach, it's more important to use popular hashtags of your community (see above).
  - Ask your ambassadors & partners to use the hashtags.
  - Print out your hashtags and inform your visitors on-site about your hashtags so that they can use those hashtags in their own posts.

## 8. Structural Integration of Youth in the Development of WHS and Municipal Development

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**For a long-term participation of young people in the preservation and future development of WHS, youth needs to be integrated at a structural level.**

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On the [homepage of UNICEFs Child Friendly City Initiative](#) you find several resources and handbooks on how to include voices, needs, priorities and rights of children and youth in public policies, programmes and decisions.

Further information:

[UNESCO \(2023\): Because youth perspectives matter: UNESCO toolbox for youth policy and programming. Toolbox](#)

[Göttler, M., & Ripp, M. \(2017\). Community Involvement in Heritage Management Guidebook. City of Regensburg and Organization of World Heritage Cities, Regensburg.](#)

[Ripp, M., & Hauer, S. \(2017\). Communication model for built heritage assets going from knowing to identification. Built Heritage, 1\(4\), 1-10.](#)

Of the cities represented at the OWHC regional meeting, Berlin (districts of Pankow and Marzahn-Hellersdorf), Kraków, Quebec, Regensburg, Vienna and Vilnius are either registered or candidate cities. In each city, you can contact a local spokesperson to learn more about what is already happening in your city.

### Additional Information in German

Das Österreichische Komitee für UNICEF hat 2022 das Handbuch [Kinder- und Jugendpartizipation in Gemeinden. Räume für wirkungsvolle Partizipation schaffen](#) herausgegeben, das viele praktische Tipps enthält.

Das Deutsche Kinderhilfswerk bietet regelmäßig [Weiterbildungen](#) zur/zum Prozessmoderator:in für Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung oder auch zur Einbindung von Kinder- und Jugendbelangen in Verwaltungshandeln an.