**Understanding Y-Voice**

Y-Voice is a chance to influence decisions that affect young people.

In the initial stages, the team will have the purpose of providing guidance and opinion on programs and initiatives within the Youth Services Department of YMCA Victoria. After six months however, the team will be fully functional and will meet with YMCA staff to evaluate how the group should move forward into the future, discussing opportunities to expand the role of group.

## Y-VOICE EXPLAINED

Here we explain the nuts and bolts of how Y-Voice will function in the beginning to get the ball rolling:

## GROUP SELECTION

The initial selection of team members will be carried out by YMCA Victoria Youth Services staff. Within 6 months, the group will take on the responsibility for this role itself.

## YOUTH SERVICES STAFF

There will be two or three representatives of Youth Services staff who will be additional members of Y-Voice, but their role is purely to support, advise and mentor the Youth Members and not to lead or direct the group (unless specifically requested to do so).

## COMMUNICATION

In the beginning, Y-Voice will provide advice and act as a forum for ideas and discussions around young people. This will mean ongoing communication with key bodies and people within YMCA Victoria including: Youth Services Managers, the Youth Services Strategic Group, the Strategic Development Team for Young People and the Marketing Manager for Statewide Projects.

## TEAM MEETINGS - THE BASICS

For the first 3 months the team will meet at least once a month. Meeting dates will be made clear in advance. It is expected that the meetings will last for between one and a half and two hours (but may go for longer). The venue will be Youth Services at College Square on Lygon Street in Carlton.

The first get-together is likely to be on a Saturday, and will be at least a full day and will allow the group to get to know one another and set things up for future team meetings.

After this initial 3 month period, it will be up to the group to decide if they would like to change any of the basic logistics mentioned above. A policy around teleconferencing may be decided, but it is expected that the group meet in person at least once or twice every two months after this point.

## AUTHORITY

It is important to note that Y-Voice is not a decision-making body outside of the group. Whilst it offers important advice and recommendations, it does not have the authority to enforce this advice or to advocate independently outside of Youth Services or externally. The group can expect, however, their recommendations to be carefully and respectfully considered within the organisation and to receive a thoughtful response. The group can also expect the freedom to create and implement projects that are related to the group’s role and purpose.

## BUDGET

The Y-Voice team will be provided with a budget which they will control. This will cover direct expenses, such as catering, travel and administrative costs. But the group can also apply to the Youth Services Innovation Manager for further funds to support activities and proposed projects. Appropriate technology and access to office supplies and equipment will also be provided.

## THE FUTURE

As previously mentioned, the goal is, in time, to expand the team’s role and purpose to advise more widely within YMCA Victoria and to invite input generally into a broad range of issues, not just those with a “youth” focus. It is also intended that a line of communication will be developed with the CEO and with the YMCA’s Global Change Agents. In time, there may well also be a role for public advocacy for youth perspectives beyond the YMCA and consultation with other youth reference groups and peak bodies. However this is a function that is likely to develop over time and not in these initial stages.

**More information**

We have attempted to cover all the immediate information in this document and on the [www.vicyouth.ymca.org.au/yvoice](http://www.vicyouth.ymca.org.au/yvoice) webpage, but any further questions can be directed to [andrew.mellody@ymca.org.au](mailto:andrew.mellody@ymca.org.au).