



YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN DECISION MAKING FRAMEWORK



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Youth Leadership in Decision
Making Framework
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Youth Leadership in Decision Making Framework

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Youth Leadership in Decision Making Framework

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Leadership in Decision Making (YLiDM) framework contributes to building a Movement of and for young people by implementing processes and mechanisms to ensure their full, effective, and meaningful engagement in the different decision-making structures at every level of the organisation, from the local (Scout group) and national levels to the regional and world levels.

While this document provides the National Scout Organization/National Scout Association (NSO/NSA) leadership with a framework to adopt Youth Leadership at the national level, the concept of Youth Leadership is consistent throughout the Movement at every level.

This framework comes as a result of the decision adopted by the World Scout Committee in March 2023, based on extensive research and discussions by the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) Youth Engagement in Decision Making Task Force Operational Framework 2021-2024. The content of this framework is also aligned with the World Scout Youth Involvement Policy.

PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The YLiDM framework complements the existing understanding of how young people engage in NSO/NSA structures, from the group to the national level, beyond the understanding of Youth Leadership and its development in the Youth Programme that is implemented at the team and section levels.

This document provides NSO/NSA leadership with the following:

- An understanding of what Youth Leadership is, why they need to develop it, why now, and how they can support it.
- A holistic approach to Youth Leadership that can be easily adapted to the individual needs and context of the NSO/NSA.
- A framework to understand the steps they can take to develop and maintain Youth Leadership.

DEFINITIONS

Youth Leadership

As part of the youth development process, Youth Leadership is a sustained and long-term practice through which young people in Scouting acquire competencies and agency to identify their strengths and weaknesses. They can then steer their own lives to lead others on a course of action to positively influence and implement changes in the institutions and communities to which they belong. On an individual level, Youth Leadership is the practice where young people exercise responsibility and authority to make decisions.

Decision Making

In Scouting, decision making is a process by which leadership structures within an NSO/NSA plan and deliver strategic outcomes. Decision making should be an evidence-informed process that takes into account the needs and contexts of the NSO/NSA. It happens at every level in Scouting, from the section and local levels to the national and international levels. Decision-making bodies in NSOs/NSAs typically include the General Assembly, the Board, and other branches that steer the development of the organisation. Decision making may happen as a collective action or an individual one, depending on context and resources.

Youth Leadership in Decision Making

YLiDM is the mechanism to support Youth Leadership across all structures (group, territory, national, regional, and world) of Scouting. It is about meaningfully engaging and supporting young people to lead in the decisions of the organisation and beyond. It is about ensuring that structures have the disposition, mechanism, and process to make young people a full, effective, and meaningful part of the decision making of the organisation. As the world's largest educational youth organisation, YLiDM is a core function of what we do in Scouting.

Young People

For YLiDM, young people refers to members of Scouting aged between 16 and 26; however, some NSOs/NSAs have different age ranges depending on their local context. Depending on their age, a young person can participate in the Youth Programme and be an adult leader in a section or NSO/NSA structure supporting its delivery.

Target Audience

Youth Leadership is for all young people who participate in Scouting, beginning with their involvement in the Youth Programme and increasing in responsibilities and complexity while growing up.

As young people grow, so should their opportunities in leadership structures within the NSO/NSA. As their participation in Scouting increases, so will their opportunities to participate in decision making at different levels. This might include being involved with section leadership, and also local and national decision-making structures.

In Scouting, we expect that, at minimum, young people aged 16 and over are invited to explore leadership opportunities beyond the opportunities offered in the Youth Programme at a section level. They should have opportunities to develop their competencies in preparation for future decision-making positions. YLiDM should offer young people aged 18 and older, if they are interested, opportunities to be involved in any decision-making structure from the local level (Scout group) to the territorial and national level in the NSO/NSA and on the regional and world levels in WOSM. Depending on the cultural and legal context of the NSO/NSA, these ages can be younger or have no minimum age.

Principles of Youth Leadership in Decision Making

Principle 1: All levels included

Youth Leadership in Decision Making should exist at all levels of Scouting. As a Movement of and for young people, YLiDM should be supported at all levels of Scouting. From the section level to the NSO/NSA to WOSM, and governance and operational levels, if something relates directly or indirectly to young people, they must be a meaningful part of the decision-making process.

Principle 2: Continuous

Youth Leadership in Decision Making is an ongoing process. YLiDM does not exist as a singular event but rather as an ever-changing process that needs deliberate and continuous attention. As the world and the needs of young people continue to change, so must our approach to YLiDM.

YLiDM should be present at different stages of any process and be continually reviewed in partnership with young people to ensure meaningful contributions are present at all stages and levels.

Principle 3: Context adapted

Youth Leadership in Decision Making looks different for different young people and contexts. As part of Scouting, each NSO/NSA will have different structures, processes, and cultures in their decision making. YLiDM should adapt to the different realities in which it develops. Young people should be supported to take on leadership

responsibilities that work for their needs and interests and be allowed to define what YLiDM looks like for them. This might include reviewing and adapting existing structures, such as rules, procedures, and platforms, to best suit the specific context of the NSO/NSA to enable young people to have leadership in decision making.

It is essential to understand that the approach to YLiDM must exist within an organisation but will look different based on the existing people, resources, cultures, and historical context present in the spaces in which it operates.

Principle 4: Dedicated support

Youth Leadership in Decision Making needs to have support. Young people in decision-making spaces should be provided with dedicated opportunities to learn and grow throughout their leadership experiences, as well as have access to information, mentorship, financial resources, and opportunities to develop the leadership structures they are part of.

Support should be integrated at an institutional level to ensure YLiDM is continuously supported within the organisation and not reliant on individuals. This can be done in a variety of different ways, such as peer-to-peer mentoring, dedicated committees, task forces, and training opportunities. Some examples of this can be found in Guidelines for Implementation of Youth Leadership in Decision Making or on the Treehouse website, wherever our information goes eventually.

Principle 5: Meaningful

Youth Leadership in Decision Making must be meaningful. Scouting believes in young people and takes their contributions seriously. Scouting refuses to position young people in decision-making spaces without power or for decorative purposes (e.g., Tokenism). We believe in the potential of young people, and we actively support them to be self-fulfilled global active citizens who can impact their teams, sections, NSOs/NSAs, communities, and beyond, and can make informed decisions.

Young people in decision-making positions must be empowered to make meaningful and impactful decisions that create positive change and are supported by NSO/NSA structures.

Principle 6: Holistic

Youth Leadership in Decision Making exists and progresses beyond the Youth Programme. Youth Leadership begins in the Youth Programme through the implementation of the different components of the Scout Method within young people's teams and sections. As young people age, and if it interests them, Scouting provides safe spaces to experiment and expand their leadership skills as part of different decision-making structures.

The age group and role of young people, whether as young people within the Educational Programme of Scouting or as adults in Scouting, does not limit the possibility of them being part of a decision-making structure.

Principle 7: Intergenerational

Youth Leadership in Decision Making is strengthened by intergenerational collaboration. Scouting recognises the value of intergenerational collaboration and encourages the creation of mechanisms to ensure this can be safe, sustained, and beneficial for fulfilling our Mission. This needs to happen; in every process in Scouting, Safe from Harm and Diversity & Inclusion are highlighted at all times in a way that ensures the qualitative elements, such as mental health and the values of Scouting.

Intergenerational collaboration is a process by which different generations recognise their contexts and strengths and work in partnership with each other towards a common goal. Through this process, they share knowledge and develop inclusive and relevant solutions.

Intergenerational collaboration should be in place in every process, and be supported to encourage intergenerational dialogue and understanding that incorporates a variety of viewpoints and contexts.

Characteristics of an NSO/NSA with Youth Leadership in Decision Making Implemented

An NSO/NSA that has successfully implemented YLiDM looks like this:

- It provides equitable access and opportunities for anyone of legal age to fully participate in the National Board or government bodies.
- It provides equitable access and opportunities for young people to fully participate and lead any operational team at the national, territorial, or local level.
- It has processes in place for capacity building for young people to ensure the development of effective competencies in leadership and governance in decision making. These are accessible in different formats and adapted to the cultures and particularities of the country.
- It has developed a culture where young people feel safe, respected, empowered, and listened to.
- It has reflected on Youth Leadership practices within different levels of the organisation and includes the relevant content in educational practices for all age sections, with special emphasis on those aged 16 and older.
- It includes the concept of YLiDM in all the areas of the organisation (Organisational Development, Youth Programme, Adults in Scouting, etc.).
- It has a clear understanding that young people who are part of the organisation, regardless of age, are active participants and agents for change, rather than simply beneficiaries.
- It has adequate processes to develop competencies among adult volunteers and staff to comprehend and support YLiDM.
- It has a permanent, continuous evaluation process that seeks feedback from young people and partners with them to review and improve the approach to YLiDM.
- It has clear structure and support mechanisms in place to ensure all young people are kept safe from harm in leadership roles.
- It has meaningful and democratic YLiDM that is free from favouritism or tokenism.
- It has identified clear goals on how to strengthen YLiDM across all levels of the organisation.
- It has created an awareness among members of the importance of mainstreaming Youth Leadership.
- It has developed a communication strategy to ensure young people have accessible and relevant information on the leadership in decision-making opportunities available to them.
- It has developed a communication strategy to ensure adults in Scouting at all levels are familiar with YLiDM practices and opportunities, and how to support them.

Structures and Responsibilities

National Level

The NSO/NSA is responsible for the following:

- Revising and adapting the NSO/NSA policies, rules, and procedures, and any other guidance document.
- Regularly reviewing the relevant policies, rules, and procedures in partnership with young people to ensure they are up to date and reflect their needs.
- Involving different strategic areas of the NSO/NSA (e.g., Organisational Development, Adults in Scouting, Youth Programme) to ensure the mainstreaming of YLiDM and increase accountability and transparency for the implementation of Youth Leadership.
- Selecting and implementing specific mechanisms suited to their reality, culture, and needs to ensure effective implementation of YLiDM in the NSO/NSA.
- Communicating implementation, best practices, and success stories to the World Scout Bureau Regional Support Centres.
- Ensuring all adult development opportunities (Training, Wood Badge, in-service support, etc.) include:
 - Training content that supports participants to understand the purpose and principles of YLiDM and how to support its implementation in a practical context.
 - Dedicated support for young people to attend, as participants, facilitators, trainers, and/or course leaders.

These strategies are needed to ensure the structural elements presented in the YLiDM framework are integrated and institutionalised.

Regional Level

The Regional Committee and the Regional Support Centre are responsible for the following:

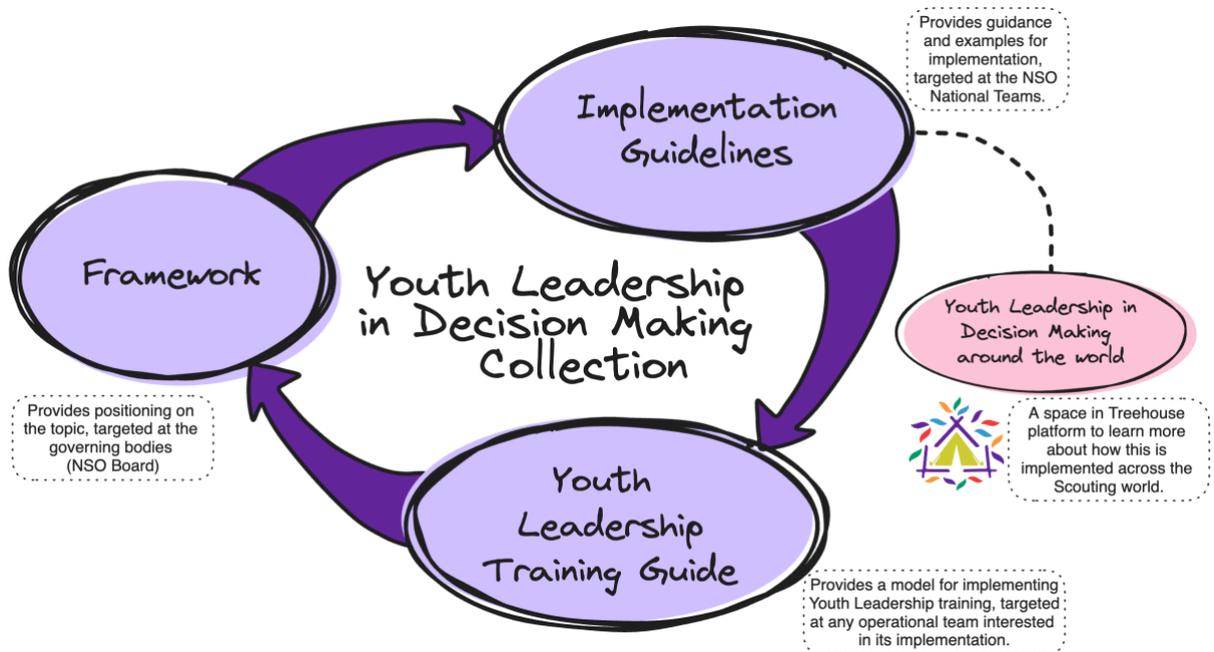
- Supporting NSOs/NSAs in adopting, establishing, improving, and reviewing their Youth-Leadership-related documentation (policies, rules and procedures, guidelines, etc.).
- Offering competent implementation support through volunteers/consultants/staff for NSO/NSAs if needed.
- Identifying, distributing, and promoting expertise, tools, success stories, and best practices to support and/or inspire NSOs/NSAs to improve their approach to YLiDM.
- Encouraging NSOs/NSAs to establish regular regional networks to share their experiences on Youth Leadership.
- Collecting NSO/NSA recommendations, good practices, and initiatives on YLiDM for research and development.
- Sharing best practices around YLiDM within NSOs/NSAs and in regional events.
- Evaluating the implementation of YLiDM in the region.

World Level

The World Scout Committee and the Global Support Centre are responsible for the following:

- Promoting the YLiDM framework and its continuous improvement based on world-level research and regional and national recommendations.
- Ensuring that WOSM, as the leading youth organisation dedicated to creating a better world, shapes the next generation of global leadership by empowering young people to lead in decision making at all levels of the organisation.
- Developing and coordinating the production of general tools and materials to support NSOs/NSAs in the implementation of YLiDM. Generic tools shall constitute a standard system of reference for WOSM members.
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the YLiDM framework in harmony with the World Scout Youth Involvement Policy and updating it when necessary.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN DECISION MAKING COLLECTION



REFERENCES

- [WSC Report on Youth Engagement in Decision-Making 2023](#)
- [21st Century Youth Leadership](#)
- [The Essential Characteristics of Scouting](#)
- [World Scout Youth Involvement Policy](#)
- [World Scout Youth Programme Policy](#)
- [World Scout Adults in Scouting Policy](#)
- [Youth Involvement Report 2011-2021](#)
- [2021 Youth Engagement Strategy \(ConfDoc 10\)](#)
- [Youth Involvement at World and Regional Levels Reports](#)
- [National Youth Forum Guidelines](#)



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