

## Hamilton's Child and Youth Network – Standard Operating Procedure

**Title** **Community Engagement Procedure**

**Approval Date** **September 11, 2025**

### 1. PURPOSE

This document outlines the principles, process, and levels of community engagement with local children, youth, families, and caregivers to assist with planning and decision-making through Hamilton's Child and Youth Network (CYN) and its workgroups. This procedure is informed by the [IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum](#) and aligns with the CYN's guiding principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB)<sup>1</sup>, consultation and collaboration<sup>2</sup>.

### 2. SCOPE

This SOP applies to Hamilton's Child and Youth Network, its Work Groups, and all activities involving direct engagement with children, youth, families, and caregivers on behalf of the CYN.

### 3. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

#### 3.1 "Community Engagement"

The process by which individuals, groups, and organizations actively participate in shaping decisions and actions that affect themselves and their community. For the purposes of this SOP, engagement focuses on children, youth, families, and caregivers within Hamilton.

#### 3.2 "Guiding Principles"

Core values and beliefs that inform decision-making and guide action.

### 4. RESPONSIBILITY

#### 4.1 Backbone Support Staff

- Provide guidance and support for all CYN-related community engagement activities to ensure alignment with this SOP.

<sup>1</sup> Members are encouraged to share diverse perspectives and draw on the experiences of their participants, community, and staff. This helps ensure that principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) are promoted and reflected in the network's plans, guidance, and decisions. Workgroups and members will use an EDIB lens during decision making and developing initiatives.

<sup>2</sup> Partners are committed to consulting with children, youth and families/caregivers and sharing these insights with the network to support planning and decision making. This consultation ensures awareness and coordination of system priorities and players to increase alignment, reduce duplication, enhance integration, and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families/caregivers.

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### 4.2 Network Members and Work Group Participants

- Apply the SOP consistently in all CYN-related engagement activities.

### 4.3 Network Co-Chairs

- Present Network Members with notice of community engagement requests from individual Members and Work Group Participants.
- Monitor progress of engagement activities and follow up with Backbone Staff, Network Members, and Work Group Participants, as needed.

## 5. PROCEDURE

### 5.1 Define Purpose and Level of Engagement

- Identify the purpose of the engagement, such as validating information, identifying issues, or seeking ideas and solutions related to a decision or action.
- Review the CYN's Guiding Principles to inform the process.
- Determine the appropriate level of engagement using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (see appendix).
- Discuss expectations, limitations, and participation considerations, addressing potential barriers and solutions.

### 5.2 Identify Relevant Communities and Groups

- Map relevant children, youth, families, caregivers, and community groups by demographics and geographic areas.
- Apply an equity lens to ensure inclusion of underrepresented populations (e.g., youth with disabilities, LGBTQ+, newcomers, etc.).
- Identify Network Members and partners to involve in or support the engagement process.

### 5.3 Submit Engagement Request for Review and Approval

- Network Members and Work Group Participants will inform backbone support staff of all instances whereby direct engagement with children, youth, families, and caregivers on behalf of the CYN is requested.
- Network Members and Work Group Participants must identify in their request the:
  - Engagement purpose
  - Appropriate level of engagement using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum
  - Targeted communities and groups
- Backbone support staff will present engagement requests to the Network Co-Chairs.

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- Network Co-Chairs will determine the approval process based on timelines and request complexity.
- Requests may be presented at a Network meeting or via email with a 14-business day review period.
- Approval will be determined by Network Co-Chair consensus.
- Feedback and decisions will be communicated to the requesting parties with the 14-business day review period.

### 5.4 Engagement Design Requirements

- Ensure that targeted children, youth, families, and caregivers are provided with appropriate information and context to meaningfully shape or inform decisions, priorities, and/or outcomes.
- Select engagement methods appropriate to participant age, accessibility, and cultural context (e.g., storytelling, forums, digital platforms, etc.).
- Plan for supports such as interpretation services, transportation, and honorariums, where appropriate.
- Integrate knowledge exchange and evaluation components, where possible.
- Accurately document and evaluate participant input and insights.

### 5.5 Post-Engagement Requirements

- Share engagement progress and solicit feedback during quarterly Network meetings or through relevant communications, where appropriate.
- Present engagement outcomes to the Network within one year of engagement activities.
- Inform participants how their feedback was incorporated, including any resulting actions or outcomes.

## 6. Review and Revision

This document will be reviewed and updated biannually to ensure clarity, relevance, and efficiency. The document may be used in conjunction with other operating procedures.

This document will be reviewed for approval at the September 11, 2025, Network meeting. Once approved, a copy will be made available to members for their reference. By approving this Standard Operating Procedures, the Network agrees to void past iterations of procedures by the same name.

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### Appendix: Engagement Levels (Based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation<sup>3</sup>)

IAP2 Engagement Level	Application in CYN Context	CYN's Promise
<b>Inform</b>	Share information on the CYN, its workgroups, decisions, and activities through accessible channels (e.g., website, partners' newsletters, community events, etc.).	<i>"We will keep you informed in ways that make sense to you."</i>
<b>Consult</b>	Seek validation and collect input on decisions such as priority areas, workplan activities, and resource allocation through surveys, focus groups, school, and youth councils, etc.	<i>"We will listen to your input and ideas and let you know how it helped influence decisions and actions."</i>
<b>Involve</b>	Engage children, youth, and families/caregivers throughout the process (e.g., co-design sessions, co-developing surveys, workshop content or evaluation tools, and other collaborative processes).	<i>"Your input will directly shape the options and solutions we develop."</i>
<b>Collaborate</b>	Partner with family and youth advisory groups at every stage of planning and evaluation to co-create policies, services, or events. Support through existing advisory groups or develop a new advisory specific to the network to advise and collaborate on solutions.	<i>"We will work together as equals to co-design solutions and shape outcomes."</i>
<b>Empower</b>	Enable children, youth, and families/caregivers to lead decision-making processes, including priorities, funding areas and program design. This can be done through support to child, youth, and family-led initiatives, granting decision-making power to family or youth boards, or enabling direct voting on ideas, activities, and projects.	<i>"You will decide our direction and/or activities. We will support and act on your decisions."</i>

<sup>3</sup> International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). N.D. *IAP2 Spectrum Evolution*. Website. Accessed on August 7, 2025, via <https://www.iap2.org/page/SpectrumEvolution>