An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Youth Services Grant Scheme Reform

Findings of preliminary stakeholder engagement (consultation and survey) with national youth organisations

Contents

Abbreviations

DCEDIY   Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

UYS   Universal Youth Services

VFMPR   Value for Money Performance Review

YSGS   Youth Service Grant Scheme

Glossary of Terms

Term	
UBU: *Your Place Your Space*	*UBU: Your Place Your Space* is an out of school scheme a targeted at 10–24-year-olds experiencing marginalisation or who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. These supports offer a wide range of quality activities, which are mainly community-based.
Youth Services Grant Scheme	The YSGS scheme was designed to allocate funding to organisations providing universal services to children and young people. (A reform of various targeted youth work schemes was recently completed by DCEDIY and resulted in the launch in 2019 of a single/ streamlined targeted scheme entitled *UBU: Your Place Your Space* scheme).

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Executive Summary

Background

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is currently reviewing the Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS); with a view to proposing reforms for this scheme. The reform of the YSGS is a priority for DCEDIY, who in the first instance, sought feedback from the scheme's primary stakeholders (National Youth Organisations and young people), in order to facilitate meaningful reform of the scheme.

Stakeholder Engagement

In October 2021, to inform the reform of the YSGS, the DCEDIY commenced an engagement process with the National Youth Organisations currently in receipt of YSGS funding; in order to explore their views on this scheme, and its proposed reform.

The first stage of the stakeholder engagement was an online consultation which was attended by 42 individuals representing 28 organisations who are current recipients of the youth service grant. The online consultation explored five broad questions.

1. What works well in the YSGS?
2. How could we improve the scheme?
3. What reforms to the YSGS should be viewed as priorities?
4. What are the primary challenges to delivering universal youth services?
5. What should the vision statement for the reform project include?

The second stage of the engagement comprised of a follow-up online survey that explored discussion points raised during the online consultation in further detail. The questionnaire consisted of a combination of closed and open-ended questions capturing five broad themes:

1. Governance arrangements.
2. Assessing young people's needs.
3. The effectiveness of services and measuring outcomes.
4. The recruitment and retention of volunteers.
5. The YSGS funding (e.g., use of core funding, possible additions to core funding).

Combined overview of findings from online consultation and survey

What works well in the YSGS

Core funding was identified as one of the features of the YSGS funding that is working well. This was described as providing a level of security to plan (in the short term), to build physical infrastructure, to involve stakeholders, to fill the gaps from other schemes, to lever other funding resources, and to provide supports to smaller organisations.

The stability and reliability of the funding was appreciated by the organisations to provide security to the sector. Having a level of autonomy and flexibility on how the grant was used by organisations was appreciated by the grantees. This flexibility was described by some to allow for creativity, innovation, and collaboration.

Participants at the consultation talked about the breadth and the reach of the services funded by the grant, and the benefits of a universal service available to all young people rather than a targeted service offered to specific groups of young people.

The stability of the funding was viewed to help capacity building within organisations, allowing them to continually improve and learn. The grant was also considered important to build human capital among service users, with one participant describing the funded services as *'building leaders for the future generations'*.

Most respondents to the survey were happy with the governance and administration of the scheme, perceiving the Pobal administration to be working well. Opinions were mixed on the application and reporting systems, with over half (13/22) viewing them to work well. Over half the respondents felt the funding decision processes worked well.

Just over half of the survey respondents agreed that the needs of children and young people were being met by the scheme, and most were positive in their assessments of their organisation's ability to adapt to the evolving needs of children and young people.

What are the primary challenges to delivering universal youth services?

In both the online discussions and in the survey, organisations described the challenges they experience in recruiting and retaining volunteers, and in securing the staff to recruit, train and support the volunteers.

The perceived lack of value and recognition of the youth work as a profession was also identified as a primary challenge for the sector. Organisations talked about the importance of measuring outcomes to demonstrate the value of youth work.

The level of funding available to the sector was identified as a major challenge, with limited resources to invest in the welfare of the staff. The current rates of pay for the staff were viewed as uncompetitive (compared to other charitable sectors). One group felt the volume of work involved in youth work was not recognised, considering much of the work, particularly the training and support of volunteers, is done outside normal business hours (in evenings and weekends).

The Covid 19 restrictions created additional challenges for the sector. As well as the loss of volunteers, organisations talked about broken links with venues which resulted in shortages of venues for services. Organisations felt the lockdown had resulted in some people wanting more work/life balance, and the long hours and weekend work may no longer appeal. Some described the challenges of engaging some young people due to lack of technology and access to the internet.

Ways to improve the scheme

More security by way of multi-annual funding was identified in both the survey and the discussion groups as a possible improvement for the scheme. This would allow for long term planning and would help retain staff.

The challenges to retaining staff with security of funding was discussed, and the need to have parity of pay scales and pensions in the sector was raised in the consultation and survey. Suggestions included having a funding mechanism to create parity in salaries and terms of conditions. Having band increases rather than percentage increases would help smaller organisations. Other suggestions included having an additional targeted increase based on the value of the work, and another group suggested having the opportunity to apply for supplementary grants for events or specific challenges facing the organisation.

In one of the groups, participants suggested having a merit-based system for the funding. This might be based on the quality of the service. This group also suggested the option of having an award for innovation (e.g., organisations responding to innovating and creative ways to changing needs and circumstances).

Suggestions for improvements to the scheme included the development of a plan to expand the scheme. Others suggested having greater clarity on the metrics required for the funding with some participants seeking greater transparency on (a) the qualifying criteria and (b) who gets funding (and why). Other participants wanted further clarity on how the funding might be used for salaries and pensions etc.

In both the online consultations and in their responses to the survey, organisations discussed the importance of capturing and communicating the value of youth work. Several participants acknowledged that organisations would need help to measure and capture the outcomes to demonstrate the benefits of the services and the funding.

One of the discussion groups suggested linking the funding to broader Government strategies. One group suggested that a results-focused approach (not just value for money) might focus on the outcomes for the young people and for the services.

Related to the need to measure outcomes, participants suggested improvements to the application and reporting processes. Some called for a simplified online system to capture the relevant data. Another group suggested streamlining the reporting requirements from different Government Departments. This would reduce the burden for all organisations, particularly the smaller organisations.

One group cautioned against taking a 'one size fits all' approach to universal youth services, and another suggested that UBU funding for targeted youth services should be kept separate from the YSGS as it is overly prescriptive.

Additional suggestions

The importance of supporting volunteers was raised in both the consultation and in the survey. Suggestions of ways of improving organisations' ability to recruit and retain volunteers included: recognising and promoting the value of volunteering in universal youth services, training and support for volunteers, and training and support for staff to recruit and support volunteers.

The survey participants identified improved access to facilities as the top priority for improvements to services for young people over the next five years. This was followed by increasing young people's awareness of the services and improving online integration of services.

Among suggestions of measures to *'meet young people where they are'*, organisations wanted help to (a) identify young people's needs and (b) respond to these needs (e.g., flexibility, funding for staff to recruit volunteers, funding to deliver programmes/services, facilities/internet access, transport).

Priorities for reform

The priorities for the reforms echoed participants' suggestions for improvements and included:

- Core and multi-annual funding/security of funding.
- Greater clarity on the funding scheme/ Information on and support for the funding model and improve the application process and reporting processes.
- Opportunities for innovation and participation/ flexibility of funding.
- (Help organisations) Demonstrate the impact and the value of youth work/ Demonstrate the benefits of the services and evaluate of the YSGS funding.
- Ensure parity and equity across funded organisations/parity of pay scale and pensions.

What should the vision statement for the reform project include?

This question elicited key suggestions relating to (1) a vision for the sector and (2) a vision for the reform project:

- Vision for the sector.

  Taken together, the participants described several features important for the vision for the sector:

  a well-resourced youth service that has accessible and inclusive services for all young people

a vision that includes the voice of the child and young person

all stakeholders (including young people) have ownerships in the decisions that are made

a sector that supports young people as agents of change and gives them a social connection with their community

> *'All young people from any background living in any part of Ireland should have access to engage in well-resourced youth services with paid professional staff & well supported volunteers'*

- Vision for the reform project - planned, fair, equitable and transparent process.

  Most participants focused on the vision for the sector. However, one group envisioned a reform that is planned, fair, equitable and transparent that allows for the planning and allocation of resources.

> *'The reform will review multiple aspects of the scheme in a transparent fashion to reach a conclusion that is fair, equitable and transparent for all'.*

Section 1:
Introduction

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is currently reviewing the Youth Service Grant Scheme (YSGS); with a view to proposing reforms for this scheme. The reform of the YSGS is a priority for DCEDIY, who in the first instance, sought feedback from the scheme's primary stakeholders (National Youth Organisations and young people), in order to facilitate meaningful reform of the scheme.

1.1   Brief overview of the YSGS

The YSGS has been in operation for almost four decades. It originated within the Department of Education prior to coming under the remit firstly of the Department of Health. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) currently has responsibility for the grant. In 2021, 30 youth organisations received funding from the YSGS (See Appendix 1 for list).

The current guidelines for the YSGS funding are:

- The organisation's aims, objectives and practice are within the terms of the goals and philosophy of voluntary youth organisations.

- They operate and provide planned and ongoing programmes, activities, and services for young people under 25, focusing predominantly on developing the experiences and opportunities of young people between the ages of 12 and 21 years.

- They are national or major regional organisations.

- The organisation should be autonomous, democratic in structure and self-managing, and must provide for the meaningful participation and involvement by young people at all levels.

1.2   Rationale for reform

DCEDIY decided to review and reform the YSGS based on several drivers, including the need to:

- Modernise and strengthen the governance of the YSGS in line with best practice and current guidelines.

- Ensure the scheme is equipped to respond to the evolving needs of children and young people.

- Create a transparent entry and exit mechanism for the YSGS.

- Fully incorporate recommendations from an internal audit (a number of which have already been introduced).

1.3   YSGS reform project's goal and high-level objectives

The goal of this project is to reform the YSGS in order to deliver a scheme that is more responsive to the current needs of children and young people who may benefit from services delivered by universal youth work organisations. The DCEDIY project also seeks to improve the governance and oversight of the scheme and to modernise its administration.

The high-level objectives of the Reform Project

Prioritise and focus on the needs of children and young people.

Empower funded organisations to respond agilely to changing needs.

Enhance the levels of assurance and oversight with respect to Exchequer funding.

Reflect the vision, mission, values and strategic objectives of the Department.

Enable transparent access to the scheme, thus realising broader societal gains.

1.4   Engagement with stakeholders

As part of this reform the DCEDIY consulted with current recipients of the YSGS, as well as children and young people from across the country. This report presents the findings from the consultation and survey phases of the engagement with National Youth Organisations.[1]

- Section 2 presents the methodology and findings from the online consultation with representatives (42 individuals representing 29 organisations) YSGS recipients.

  > Section 3 presents the methodology and findings from an online survey of YSGS recipients.

  > Section 4 summarises the messages and suggestions from the online consultation and the survey.

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1   A separate report presents the findings from the consultation with children and young people.

Section 2:
The Online Consultation

Summary of feedback from the online consultation

- What works well?

  - › Core funding.
  - › Stability and reliability of the funding.
  - › Flexibility of the grant.
  - › Capacity building.
  - › Types of services funded.

- How could we improve the scheme?

  - › Multi-annual funding.
  - › Clarity on funding criteria and greater transparency.
  - › Demonstrate the value of youth work.
  - › Improve application process and reporting systems.
  - › Avoid 'one size fits all' approach for universal services.

- What reforms should be a viewed as a priority?

  - › Core and multi-annual funding and annual increases.
  - › Clarity on funding.
  - › Innovation and participation.
  - › Demonstrate the impact and the value of youth work.
  - › Ensure parity and equity across funded organisations.

- What are the primary challenges to delivering universal youth services?

  - › Recruiting and retaining volunteers.
  - › Demonstrating the value of youth work.
  - › Terms and conditions.
  - › Impact of the Covid 19 restrictions.

- What should the vision statement for reform project include?

  - › Vision for the sector - accessible and inclusive services for all young people.
  - › Vision for the reform project - planned, fair, equitable and transparent process.

2.1   Consultation Event

On October 18th 2021, the 30 organisations in receipt of YSGS funding were invited to participate in the first stage, an online consultation.[2] A total of 42 individuals representing 29 organisations attended.

Participants were welcomed to the event by Hilda Ó Riain (DCEDIY) before short presentations from Department Officials (Bernie McNally and Paul Fay) and from Mary Cunningham (NYCI). Minister Roderic O Gorman (DCEDIY) gave a short address (see Appendix 2). The Minister thanked participants for attending the event and reiterated the importance of their engagement to inform the plans to fund and provide the best quality services for children and young people.

The event was structured to include short presentations before breaking out into facilitated sessions to explore five consultation questions (see Box 1).

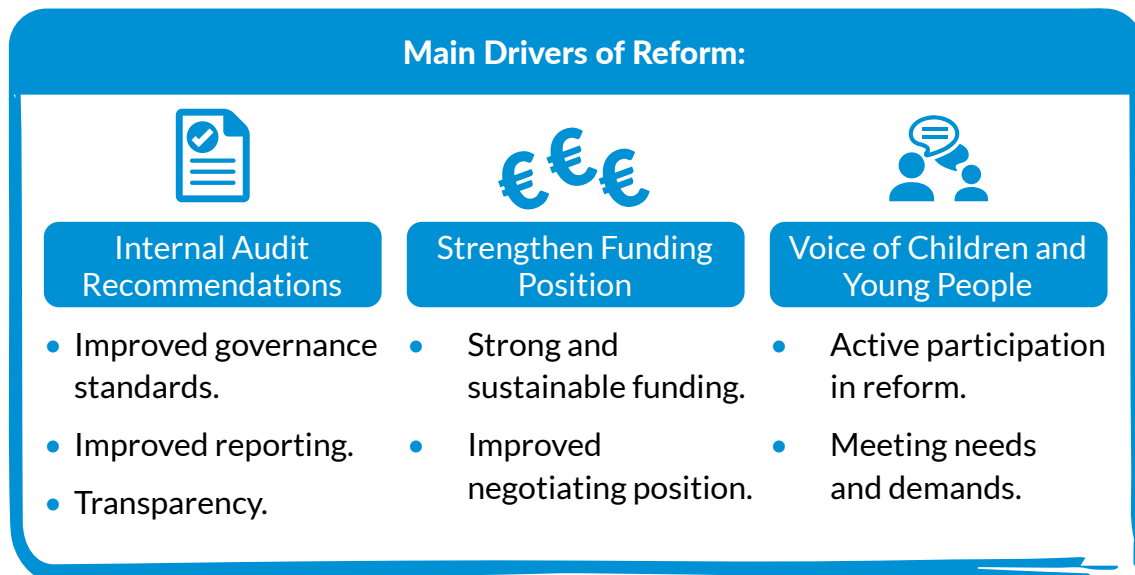**Box 1: Online Consultation Questions**

Online Consultation Questions
1.   What works well in the YSGS?
2.   How could we improve the scheme?
3.   What reforms to the YSGS should be viewed as priorities?
4.   What are the primary challenges to delivering universal youth services?
5.   What should the vision statement for the reform project include?

Before the consultation sessions, the DCEDIY project team outlined the process for the reform and the rational for this review (See Figure 1).

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2   The online conference was hosted on the Webex video conferencing software.

Figure 1: Rationale for Reform: Drivers of reform (DCEDIY perspective)

Main Drivers of Reform:

Internal Audit Recommendations

- Improved governance standards.
- Improved reporting.
- Transparency.

Strengthen Funding Position

- Strong and sustainable funding.
- Improved negotiating position.

Voice of Children and Young People

- Active participation in reform.
- Meeting needs and demands.

This presentation outlined the reform objectives (*which may be revised after the consultation)*. These include:

- Improved access to the YSGS.
- Empowering organisations to respond to evolving economic needs.
- Flexible and agile responses to changing environment.
- Enhancing governance and oversight standards.
- The grant process should be rooted in evidence and have a value for money component.
- The reformed YSGS enables organisations who are providing universal youth services with transparent access to the funding.

Acknowledging that all reforms can generate levels of anxiety among organisations, DCEDIY stressed that the reforms should not impact on the viability of services.

For the discussion, the participants were split into four breakout rooms to discuss the five questions. Each breakout room had a facilitator and note-taker

(See Appendix 1). During the first session the 4 groups were asked to discuss Questions 1 to 3 and to feedback their top three discussion points for each question. During the second session, the groups were asked to discuss the remaining two questions and to feedback their top three discussion points.

2.2   Question 1: What works well in the YSGS?

Five themes capture the participants' feedback on what works well in the YSGS scheme (see Appendix 3 Table 1a).

2.2.1   Core funding

Core funding, described as being used for programme delivery, administration, core services and salaries, was identified as one of the features of the YSGS funding that is working well. (see Section 3.6 for further information on how funding is used by the organisation). This core funding was viewed as important to:

- Provide a level of security.
- Plan ahead (but not long-term).
- Involve stakeholders (e.g., national organisations disbursing to regional organisations means that stakeholders are involved).
- Capacity building.
- Fill the gaps of other schemes.
- Lever other funding sources (being in the scheme opens up other opportunities including other grant opportunities).
- Provide supports to small organisations.

2.2.2   Stability and reliability of funding

In three of the four groups, the stability and reliability of the funding was discussed. The core funding was viewed as offering youth service stability '…*the funding engine that drives everything within youth services'.*

One group referred to the consistency and regularity of the administration with Pobal. The long-term annual funding was described as 'secure', feeding into the sustainability of the organisations, and providing access to capital funding and other grants.

The longevity and flexibility of the scheme was described by one participant as allowing for holistic supports at local levels.

2.2.3   The flexibility of the grant

The flexibility of the scheme was perceived as allowing for creativity, innovation, and collaboration. Having a level of autonomy and flexibility on how the grant was used by organisations was appreciated. One participant described the flexibility as '*nimble*', allowing organisations to deliver the services on the ground but also supporting organisations to operate efficiently and safely. This flexibility also allowed organisations to be responsive to local needs.

2.2.4 Types of services funded

The breadth of the reach, combined with the variety and diversity of the types of service funded by the organisations were viewed as strengths of the funding. The variety of services means diverse communities and groups of young people are reached. One group mentioned the ability of the organisations to attract local skilled volunteers with useful life experiences.

Access to the YSGS means that organisations can develop specialised and specific services. The services were described as 'broad spectrum', with different types of organisations, clubs, services, young people, and volunteers. The universal element of the youth services which meant that the services were available to all young people rather than targeted groups, was also considered important.

One participant commented that the fund has contributed to the unique way that youth work has evolved in Ireland with the diversity of youth work that is now available. Another participant referred to the how the funded services complemented other services (e.g., formal education).

2.2.5   Capacity building

The stability of the funding was viewed as being beneficial with respect to helping the organisation is continually improve and learn. The grant was also considered important to build human capital among service users, with one participant describing the funded services as '*building leaders for the future generations*'.

2.3 Question 2: How could we improve the scheme?

The feedback from the four groups to this question focused on 6 areas (see Appendix 3 Table 1(b):

- Multi-annual funding.

- Clarity on funding criteria and greater transparency.

- Value of youth work.

- Demonstrate the value of youth work.

- Improve application process and reporting systems.

- Avoid 'one size fits all' approach for universal services.

2.3.1 Multi-annual funding and annual increases

All groups identified multi-annual funding as a possible improvement to the scheme. This was viewed as being important for longer term planning and the retention of staff (e.g., latitude to create a little more parity).

One group discussed the need for the funding mechanism to create parity in salaries and terms of conditions. Participants discussed the challenges of retaining staff without security of funding.

Two groups mentioned the limited value of percentage increases for smaller organisations. Suggestions for improvement included having bands rather than flat percentage increases. In one group, the participants suggested having an additional targeted increase based on the value of the work, and another group suggested having the opportunity to apply for supplementary grants for events or specific challenges facing the organisation.

2.3.2 Clarity on funding criteria and great transparency

Suggestions for improvements to the scheme included the development of a plan for how to expand the scheme. This plan might agree a set of criteria on what the scheme wants to achieve. This would provide an improved understanding of what underpins the funding. Specific suggestions for improvement included greater clarity on the metrics required. (Notably, one group cautioned that the metrics for Early Years sector, which was mentioned in one of the presentations, may not be applicable to the youth services).

Participants felt it would be helpful to have greater transparency on (a) the qualifying criteria and (b) who gets funding (and why). Some felt it would be useful if the Department could provide feedback on how organisations scored on the application. Other participants wanted further clarity on how the funding might be used for salaries and pensions etc.

In one of the groups, participants suggested having a merit-based system for the funding. This might be based on the quality of the service. This group also suggested the option of having an award for innovation (e.g., organisations responding with innovating and creative ways to changing needs and circumstances).

2.3.3   Demonstrate the value of youth work

In relation to the concept of a merit-based system of funding (linked to the quality of the service), two groups discussed the importance of capturing and communicating the value of youth work. One group proposed linking the funding to broader strategies (e.g., Better Outcomes Better Futures and new strategies). It was suggested that such a results-focused approach (not just value for money) might focus on the outcomes for the young people and for the services. Participants acknowledged that organisations would need help to measure and capture outcomes.

2.3.4   Other suggestions

One of groups discussed the limitations of taking a 'one size fits all' approach to universal youth services, and another suggested that UBU funding for targeted youth services should be kept separate as it is overly prescriptive.

2.4   Question 3: What reforms should be a viewed as a priority?

Five suggestions were made in response to this question (see Appendix 3 Table 1(c)):

- Core and multi-annual funding.
- Clarity on funding.
- Innovation and participation.
- Demonstrate the impact and the value of youth work.
- Ensure parity and equity across funded organisations.

2.4.1   Core and multi-annual funding

The response to this question reflected the suggestions for improvements to the scheme. Core or multi-annual funding was considered a priority in all four groups. Multi-annual funding was suggested to help longer term planning but also to reduce the administrative burden for organisations.

2.4.2   Clarity on funding

In two groups, greater clarity on the funding was identified as a priority. One group prioritised the development of a clear vision and purpose for the funding. Some participants wanted greater transparency on the purpose of the scheme.

2.4.3   Innovation and participation

The importance of recognising innovation in services responses to young people's evolving needs was raised in two groups. One group advised that the scheme has a process for organisations to apply for funding to diversify and evolve.

2.4.4   Demonstrate impact and value of youth work

Measuring impact was discussed in three groups. One participant felt that organisations should not *'shy away'* from demonstrating the impact of their work and should endeavour to show they are making good use of tax payers' money. There was a strong message that agreeing ways to demonstrate impact should be a priority. Another felt it was important to capture the value of youth work, but it was also important to communicate such benefits. Another group suggested that impact measures should not problematise young people and should look for evidence of empowerment and social change.

Notably, in a later discussion, one group expressed some anxiety about not being able to provide the evidence or 'meet the bar' and wondered how the organisation would manage *'there has to be a process to let us meet the bar rather than pull the rug from under us'*.

2.4.5   Parity and equity between organisations

The importance of securing parity and equity between organisations was raised in one of the groups. This group felt that smaller organisations should not be expected to report at the same level of larger organisations.

2.5   Question 4: What are the primary challenges to delivering universal youth services?

The groups identified 4 primary challenges (See Appendix 3 Table 1(d)):

- Recruiting and retaining volunteers.
- Demonstrating the value of youth work.
- Terms and conditions.
- Impact of the Covid 19 restrictions.

2.5.1   Recruiting and retaining volunteers

In response to this question, all four groups identified the recruitment and support of volunteers to be a primary challenge facing universal youth services. Participants described how Covid 19 restrictions resulted in a reduction in volunteers. This reduction of volunteers, coupled with the challenges in attracting core staff to recruit, train and support volunteers has resulted in the pressing need to build up the cohort of volunteers by re-engaging volunteers who have dropped out of the system and/or by recruiting new volunteers.

2.5.2   Demonstrating the value of youth work

In one group the participants talked about the need for the universal youth services to fill the gaps that statutory services (e.g., education or health) are failing to provide. Reflecting the discussions in Question 3, on the importance of measuring impact, participants discussed the lack of recognition of youth work as a professional service. This perceived lack of value in youth work was considered to pose primary challenges for the delivery of universal youth services. Participants felt that there was a need to collect data to demonstrate and share the impact and value of universal youth work. One group suggested that the informal education that youth work provides should receive equal value as formal education.

2.5.3   Terms and conditions

The level of funding available to the sector was identified as a major challenge, resulting in limited investment in the welfare of the staff. Rates of pay are viewed as not competitive compared to other charitable sectors. One group felt the

volume of work involved in youth work was not recognised, and much of the work, particularly the training and support of volunteers, is done outside normal business hours.

2.5.4   Impact of Covid 19 restrictions

Three of the groups described how Covid 19 restrictions impacted the delivery of universal youth services. As well as the loss of volunteers (described above), participants talked about the broken links with venues which resulted in shortages of premises (e.g., health and safety concerns for schools and parish halls). Participants felt the lockdown had resulted in more people looking for work/life balance, and the long hours in evenings and weekend may no longer appeal. The move to online services created the challenge of doing this safely and responsibly. One group discussed the challenges of engaging young people from the traveller community due to the lack of IT and Wi-Fi.

2.6   Question 4: What should the vision statement for reform project include?

This question elicited 2 key suggestions:

- Vision for the sector - accessible and inclusive services for all young people.
- Vision for the reform project - planned, fair, equitable and transparent process.

2.6.1   Vision for the sector - Accessible and inclusive services for all young people

Accessibility of the services emerged in all four groups. Participants would like to see improved accessibility for all young people regardless of background. There was also discussion about the importance of choice of informal and inclusive services. One group outlined a vision for a well-resourced youth service with well-paid professional staff and well supported volunteers.

'All young people from any background living in any part of Ireland should have access to engage in well-resourced youth services with paid professional staff & well supported volunteers'

The age range for the services was mentioned by one group who suggested widening the age range to reflect the younger and older ages of uniformed service users. Another group spoke of a vision that included the voice of the young person. Two groups discussed the importance of developing young people as agents of change, and the role youth services play in providing young people with social connections. Related to this is the importance of providing young people with the opportunity to express their opinions, and for all stakeholders, including young people, to have ownership of the decisions made.

2.6.2   Vision for the reform project - planned, fair, equitable and transparent process

Much of the discussion around this question focused on the vision for the sector rather than the vision for the reform project. That said, one group envisaged the reform to be a planned, fair, equitable and transparent process that allows for the planning and allocation of resources.

> *'The reform will review multiple aspects of the scheme*
> *in a transparent fashion to reach a conclusion that*
> *is fair, equitable and transparent for all.'*

One group felt it is important that the vision has clarity of language to allow all to understand and is owned by all stakeholders including the young people.

Section 3:
Follow-up Survey

Summary of survey findings

The questionnaire was completed by 22 organisations with representation from each of the categories of organisations.

Views on current structure and governance

- There was a high level of agreement on the positive impact the funding has on the operation of the organisation.

- Most respondents viewed the Pobal administration to be working well and were happy with the current feedback procedures. While just over half of respondents felt the reporting systems were working well, some were neutral in their assessment and 2 perceived them to be working poorly.

- More than half respondents felt the current reporting requirements are overly burdensome.

- Over half (13) viewed the funding decision process to be working well and 16 were happy with the spending verification process.

- There were mixed views on the suggestion of admitting new youth serving organisations to the scheme with 14 agreeing with this idea, and 8 having neutral responses.

Analysing and meeting children and young people's needs

- Over half (12) organisations agreed that the needs of children and young people are being meet through the YSGS (6 were neutral and 4 disagreed).

- Most respondents were more positive in their assessment of their organisation's ability to adapt to the evolving needs of children and young people.

- Respondents described a variety of methods and approaches to assess young people's needs. Many described using formal processes such as surveys, focus groups, regular needs assessments. A smaller number reported using some type of formal structure (e.g., advisory groups,

councils etc.) to secure young people's views. Informal feedback processes featured in several responses.

- A smaller number mentioned research and evaluation. Some conduct formal evaluations of programmes, and others described using the findings from regular evaluations of programmes (at the end of sessions) within their needs assessments.

- In their rankings of possible barriers facing young people to participate in youth services low volunteer/staff numbers emerged as the highest, followed by poor access to facilities, low awareness of available services, and poor travel options to services.

Measurement/accessibility/performance

- Over half (12) of the organisations agreed with the statement that sufficient attention is given to on increasing diversity among participants within YSGS funded organisations. Just under a third (7) were neutral, and the remaining three disagreed with this statement.

- In response to an open-ended question on how they measure the effectiveness and outcomes of the YSGS funding, they described four approaches: Monitoring and performance data; Progress reports/ Reviews of strategic planning; research and evaluations, and feedback from users or staff/volunteers.

Funding

- Organisations described the core funding as essential to their existence and functioning, to support clubs and volunteers, to deliver programmes, to explore the best people, and to maintain high standards.

- Organisations use of core funding included: management and governance, salaries and staff costs, overheads, supporting core functions (e.g., recruiting volunteers, resources to allow volunteers to operate), training, delivering services and programmes, youth participation.

Suggestions of measures to improve youth service provision

- Suggestions of measures to assist organisations 'meet young people where they are' and to reduce the possible barriers to participation included:

  › Helping organisations to identify young people's needs (e.g., flexibility, funding, staff, time) and to respond to these needs (e.g., flexibility, funding for staff to recruit volunteers, funding to deliver programmes/services, facilities/internet access, transport).

  › Recognise and promote the value of volunteering in universal youth services.

  › Provide training and support for volunteers and training and support for staff to recruit and support volunteers.

  › Funding to support administration undertaken by volunteers and reduce burden of compliance.

- Priorities for improvements for young people over the next five years.

  › Improve access to facilities.

  › Increase awareness of services among children and young people.

  › Improve online integration of services.

  › Improve access for disabled young people.

  › Improve access in terms of travel.

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Suggestions for the reform

- Suggestions for improvements to the funding model

  › Simplify the processes (application and reporting) and have the reporting structure reflect the application.

  › Transition to online system.

  › Provide information about the scheme and support with application and feedback on application and progress reports.

  › More flexibility on how funding is used (e.g., governance and compliance costs and to cover core staff).

  › Involve young people in decision making.

  › More security of funding.

  › Ensure parity of pay scale and pensions for the sector.

  › Demonstrate the benefits of the services and the value of the YSGS funding.

  › More inclusivity.

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3.1 The online survey

The second stage of the engagement was a follow-up online survey exploring the discussion points raised during the online consultation in further detail. The DCEDIY Research and Evaluation Unit designed the questionnaire on EU Survey software using a combination of 22 closed (attitudinal) and 8 open-ended questions. The survey link was distributed to YSGS grant recipients who were requested to consult with colleagues and complete one response per organisation. The link to the survey along with some introductory information was sent to on 12th November 2021, with a final deadline for submissions 26th November.

The questionnaire consisted of a combination of closed and open-ended questions capturing five broad themes including those discussed in the online consultation.

- Structure and Governance.
- Analysing needs.
- Measurement/Accessibility/Performance.
- Reporting.
- Funding.

All closed-ended questions were analysed using Microsoft Excel software and presented in Figures and summarised into tables.

The report writer analysed the eight open-ended questions using inductive thematic analysis whereby codes were assigned to the responses and then grouped into emergent themes. The qualitative responses were grouped by organisation type to check if any were any specific patterns in the responses.

3.2   Profile of respondents

Just under three quarters (n=22 73.3%) of organisations completed the questionnaire (see Table 1), with representation from all but one of the categories of funded organisations. The questionnaire was completed by senior management/staff from the organisations.

Table 1: Category of organisation

Which category do you feel best describes your organisation?	%	N
Youth Services: Targeted[3] youth services for specific groups.	27.3%	6
Faith-based: Faith based youth services.	18.2%	4
Scouts and Guides: Personal development and outdoor activities.	13.6%	3

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3   In this context, targeted means that these organisations have a 'targeted' cohort of young people; such orgs still comply with the ethos underpinning the YSGS (personal and social development), rather than evincing a deficit-reduction type model of youth work

Which category do you feel best describes your organisation?	%	N
Volunteering: Local, national, and international volunteering opportunities.	13.6%	3
Irish Language: Youth services through Irish.	9.1%	2
Umbrella: Representing, campaigning, developing and providing youth services.	9.1%	2
Arts and Culture: Filmmaking and theatre.	4.5%	1
Travel: Hostel accommodation and travel.	4.5%	1

3.3   Structure and governance

3.3.1 Organisations' views on how well current systems work

The first section of questions explored organisations' views on different aspects of the current scheme (Table 2a).

- Most organisations (n=17 77.2%) agreed that they had sufficient opportunity to provide feedback to the Department, one was neutral but four (18.2%) disagreed with this statement.

- There was a greater spread of responses to the statement that current reporting requirements are overly burdensome. Over half (n=13 59.1%) the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, and the remainder were either neutral (n=4 18.2%) or disagreed (n=5 22.7%) with it. In the open-ended questions one organisation provided additional information for their response to this question.

'Changes to application each year adds burden to workload for organisation'

- Organisations were less positive in their level of agreement with the statement that funding is currently fairly distributed between recipients. Whilst just over a fifth of the organisations strongly agreed (n=1 4.5%) or agreed (n=4 18.2%) with it, over a third (n=8 36.4%) were neutral, and the remainder disagreed (n=4 18.2%) or strongly disagreed (n=5 22.7%) with the statement. One organisation explained their response.

'Fairness of funding - I have answered neutral for the fair distribution of funding question as I am unaware of what funding other organisations receive'

- All but one of the organisations strongly agreed (n=18 81.8%) or agreed (n=3 13.6%) with the statement that YSGS funding level has had a huge impact on the operation of their organisation. Only 1 organisation provided a neutral response to this question.

Table 2a: Organisations' attitudes to the current scheme (Reporting and Funding)

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
We feel that there is sufficient opportunity to provide feedback to the Department	18.1% 4	59.1% 13	4.5% 1	13.6% 3	4.5% 1
Current reporting requirement are overly burdensome	22.7% 5	36.4% 8	18.2% 4	22.7% 5	

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Funding is currently fairly distributed between the YSGS recipients	4.5% 1	18.2% 4	36.4% 8	18.2% 4	22.7% 5
YSGS funding level specifically has a huge impact on the operation of our organisation	81.8% 18	13.6% 3	4.5% 1		

3.3.2   Organisations' view on the current governance of the YSGS

The second set of questions focused on the current governance of the YSGS. Respondents were asked their opinion on current governance procedures (see Table 2b).

- Most organisations viewed the Pobal administration to be working very well (n=7 31.8%) or well (n=13 59.1%). Only one respondent was neutral on this question, and one judged the Pobal administration to be poor.

- Views on the application and progress reports were mixed. Whilst over half (n=13 59.1%) viewed the application process to work very well (n=3 13.6%) or well (n=10 45.5%), the remainder were neutral in their assessment (n=7 31.8%) or viewed it to be poor (n=1 4.5%) or very poor (n=1 4.5%). A similar proportion viewed the reporting process to work very well or well (n=13 59.1%), just under a third (n=7 31.8%) were neutral, and two organisations viewed the report process to be working poorly.

- Views on the funding decisions had a wider spread of views with just over half (n=13 59.1%) viewing them to work very well or well. Five organisations (22.7%) were neutral in their assessment and four (18.2%) organisations viewed them to work poorly.

Table 2b: Organisations' views on how well current governance procedures are working (n=22)

Governance procedures	Works v. well	Works well	Neutral	Poorly	Very Poor
Pobal administration	31.8% 7	59.1% 13	4.5% 1	4.5% 1	
Application process	13.6% 3	45.5% 10	31.8% 7	4.5% 1	4.5% 1
Progress report process	13.6% 3	45.5% 10	31.8% 7	9.1% 2	
Funding decisions	13.6% 3	45.5% 10	22.7% 5	18.2% 4	
Spending verification process	9.1% 2	63.6% 14	8.2% 4	9.1% 2	

3.3.3 Organisations' views on possible changes to the scheme

Six questions explored organisations' views on possible changes to the scheme (Table 3).

- The first question explored organisations' views on having closer links with the UBU Your Space Your Place targeted scheme. Half of the organisations were neutral in their response (n=12 54.5%), and two disagreed (n=1 disagree and n=1 strongly disagree). Eight organisations strongly agreed (n=3 13.6%) or agreed (n=5 22.7%) with closer links with the UBU scheme.

Later in their response, two organisations clarified their reasons for their neutral responses to the statement on *UBU Your Space Your Place.*

'I have very little information or understanding of UBU so therefore could not answer the question related to UBU with any degree of accuracy and left them neutral.'

'A comment on UBU Your place your space. I am not sure if this is because we are based in the North, but I had to google this today to realise what it was, so raised awareness of this among YSGS funded organisations would be useful. I cannot comment on the reporting format for UBU because I am unaware of it'

- The second question explored organisations' attitudes to admitting new youth service organisations to the scheme, over half the respondents (n=14 63.6%) agreed with this suggestion and the remainder (n=8 36.4%) were neutral.

'For clarification while we agree with accepting new organisations into the YSGS scheme, they should be voluntary in nature and new funding needs to be sourced for this.'

- The suggestion to have greater continuity of format across application forms and progress reports to simplify the reporting process was supported by all the organisations (n=14 63.6% strongly agreed and n=8 36.4% agreed with the statement).

- The next suggestion was to transition to an online application process. Again, there was a relatively high level of agreement with this statement (n=9 40.9% strongly agreed and n=8 36.4% agreed) but five were neutral (n=5 22.7%).

The next statement explored organisations' views on a move to a reporting format similar to those used by the *UBU Your Place Your Space.* Only two organisations agreed with this statement, with the majority (n=16 72.7%) of organisations selecting the neutral option. Notably, four organisations strongly disagreed with the adoption of this format.

As noted above, two organisations indicated they had little knowledge on the *UBU Your Place Your Space* model. One organisation was strongly opposed to the *UBU Your Space Your Place* approach.

'We would be very strongly against any UBU model, that values/ principles believe that young people are the 'Sole' problem, which need to be supported/fixed, without looking at the societal, environmental and structural oppression experienced by that young person. Youth work has historical foundation in social justice, and challenging the systematic oppressions experienced by young people'

Table 3: Organisations' views on suggestions for the future of YSGS

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
We would be in favour of closer links to UBU Your Place Your Space	13.6% 3	22.7% 5	54.5% 12	4.5% 1	4.5% 1
We would be in favour of admitting new Youth Service organisations to the YSGS	22.7% 5	40.9% 9	36.4% 8		
Greater continuity of format across application forms and progress reports would simplify the reporting process	63.6% 14	36.4% 8			

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Transitioning to an online application and reporting system would be an improvement	40.9% 9	36.4% 8	22.7% 5		
We would be in favour of the adoption of a reporting format similar to that currently used by UBU Your Place Your Space	4.5% 1	4.5% 1	72.7% 16		18.2% 4
We would be in favour of a performance-based funding model	13.6% 3	22.7% 5	40.9% 9	13.6% 3	9.1% 2

3.3.4   Suggestions of measures to improve the YSGS governance

In the open ended questions, organisations were offered the opportunity to share their views on measures that **might be introduced as part of the YSGS reform that would improve governance most**. The analysis of the responses to this question generated 9 (sometimes overlapping) themes (see Appendix 4 for further information).

- Simplify the processes (application and reporting) and have reporting structure reflect application form.

- Information, support, and guidance on the scheme and application process and feedback on the application and progress reports.

- Compliance with Charities Governance Code.

- Involve young people in decision making.

- Use of funding and types of services funded.

- Other.

Simplify the processes (online systems) and have reporting structure reflect the application form

Echoing the discussions during the online consultations, one of the dominant messages for improvement as part of the reform was a call to simplify the application and reporting processes, with six organisations recommending online systems to streamline reporting process. This was considered important to remove duplication of reporting to different government department structures and to avoid duplication of administration.

> *'An online application and reporting process with the possibility of providing hyperlinks to key documents, governance requirements etc. '*

Two organisations recommended having a system to ensure the quarterly reports reflect the application form.

> *'The progress report needs to be aligned to the new application process.'*

Information, support and guidance on the scheme and application process and feedback on application

Reflecting the discussions during the online consultation, three respondents suggested providing information about the scheme, clarity on the purpose and objectives of the scheme and the metrics on how the application is assessed. One wanted further information on how to secure additional funding.

*'Clarify the metrics / targets which the department
need to support additional funding to the sector.'*

Related to the suggestions for further information, organisations suggested having more guidance and information on what can be applied for and more information sessions.

*'Appropriate Guidelines for the YSGS form to ensure
knowledge is available to all organisations applying for
funding, what is and what is not applicable under the fund.'*

One organisation suggested having completed examples of Section 5, and another suggested having a designated person in the DCEDIY to support organisation e.g., to answer queries etc.

*'A completed sample section five on the YSGS
form to help organisations with completing the
key performance indicators section.'*

Suggestions included improvements on the feedback provided to organisation on the application and progress reports would be helpful e.g., open up funding decision process, feedback from YSGS on what to progress.

*'Opening up of the funding decision process, 'New
Youth Service Funding Stream, Research Funding
Stream, Innovative Funding Stream' etc'*

One suggested that DCEDIY staff visit the organisation during project work, and another suggested a return to NQSF style model with observations on practice.

Compliance with Charities Governance Code

Four organisations made suggestions about the Governance procedures of the funded organisations. One suggested that funded organisations could be asked to provide evidence of compliance with Charities Governance Code in the

Annual Progress Report. Another suggested that If all funded organisations are compliant with the Charity Governance Code and fully implement policies and procedures, no further action should be needed.

'A connection to compliance with the Charity Governance Code. If an organisation can prove compliance to the Code, it could reduce the number of requirements the YSGS would need to verify/check'

One suggested that the Governance requirements should reflect the size of the organisation, and another proposed having online portal for updating governance of organisations.

'There needs to be an online portal for updating governance of organisations on the YSGS scheme.'

Involve young people in decision-making

Two organisations suggested having youth panels or advisory groups to involve young people in the decision-making process. Another suggested having more feedback from young people.

'Active participation of young people in all decision making which affects them, maybe have a youth panel as the original YSGS Guidelines'

'Put more youth volunteers on the committees'

One respondent recommended having feedback from young people as part of the process.

'Feedback from Young People - allow YP from orgs to discuss the benefits of the work in support of the application.'

Use of Funding and types of services funded

Two organisations suggested having a proportion of funding set aside for governance and compliance costs and having funding to cover core staff funding (to meet need for additional staff and to retain current staff).

> *'Maybe DCEDIY should look at the new proposed funding model for GYDPs which is in development with IYJS/ Sean Redmond.'*

Having a common understanding of what a youth service is was viewed to be an important first step in order to ensure the correct governance for the scheme. One organisation suggested having services that are responsive to local needs, and another suggested having an integrated youth service model.

> *'This means that every young person who comes to us has access to a whole range of other services when needed. This is our vision of what a youth service is. The clue is in the name of the grant. We can only get the governance right if we have a common understanding of what a youth service is.'*

Other suggestions

Other suggestions reflected some of the online discussions and included having the application and reporting in January to help planning and acknowledge the impact of Covid 19.

3.4   Analysing and meeting children and young people's needs

3.4.1 Organisations' views on YSGS and organisations' ability to meet evolving needs of children and young people

The questionnaire included two attitudinal questions on the needs of children and young people (Table 4).

- Just over half (n=12 54.5%) of respondents strongly agreed (n=3) or agreed (n=9) with the statement that the needs of children and young people are being meet through the YSGS. Six organisations were unsure about this and 4 disagreed with the statement.

- Respondents were more positive in their assessment of their organisation's ability to adapt to the evolving needs of children and young people. Over three quarters (n=18 81.8%) agreed with the statement (n=12 54%% strongly agreed and n=6 27.3% agreed). Only three organisations disagreed with the statement.

Table 4: Meeting the needs of children and young people.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The needs of children and young people are being adequately met through the YSGS	13.6% 3	40.9% 9	27.3% 6	9.1% 2	9.1% 2
Our organisation is able to adapt to the evolving needs of children and young people	54.5% 12	27.3% 6	9.1% 2	4.5% 2	4.5% 1

3.4.2 Organisations' approach to identifying the needs of young people

Two open-ended questions explored organisations' approach(es) to identifying children and young people's needs, and measures that might be taken to assist organisations to *'meet young people where they are'*.

In response to the first question on the organisation's approach to identifying children and young people's needs, the responses fell into 6 (sometimes overlapping) themes (see Appendix 6 for more detail).

- Formal structures within the organisation or engagement with external formal organisations.

- Formal processes (e.g., surveys, focus group, participatory approaches).

- Evaluation and research.

- Informal feedback.

- Working in partnership with other youth serving organisations.

- Other.

In response to this question, many of the respondents described using more than one approach to assess needs.

Formal structures

Formal structures were used to identify children's and young people's needs by eight organisations. This included using youth advisory groups, youth fora, or member's council. One of the organisations reported that they support formal structures such as Dail na nÓg and Comhairle na nÓg consultations.

Formal processes

Formal processes were described by 15 organisations. These processes included using surveys, focus groups and participatory activities to identify the children's and young people's needs. Some organisations described conducting regular needs assessments with young people, practitioners / volunteers, and parents. One organisation reported that they have a dedicated staff member who consults with children and young people.

Research and evaluation

Research and evaluation were identified by a smaller number of organisations to assess the needs of young people. One organisation reported using research updates together with national and local statistics as part of their assessment of needs. Some conduct formal evaluations of programmes, and other describes using the findings from regular evaluations of programmes (at the end of sessions) within their needs assessments.

Informal feedback

Informal feedback processes from young people and leaders/practitioners were used by several organisations. Reaching out to unattached young people provided one of the respondents with insights into their needs. Using youth led practices and having weekly engagement to listen to youth voices were identified as part of practice. One respondent gave the one-word *'listening'* in their response.

Working in partnership with other youth organisations

Engaging and networking with other youth serving organisation provided organisations with information on the evolving needs of young people.

Other

Other ways of identifying needs included:

- National events/Annual events.
- Monitoring service engagement with Salesforce database.
- Safe space to meet.
- Focus on training of volunteers and promotion of services.
- Social media.

3.4.3   Organisations' views on measures that would assist them with *'meeting young people where they are'*.

Participants' views on measures that would assist them to 'meet young people where they are' encapsulated two approaches.

1. Help to identify young people's needs.
2. Help to respond to these needs.

Both approaches require additional funding.

Help to identify young people's needs

Suggestions of ways to help to identify the young people's needs included:

- Flexibility to meet people where they are.
- Funding.
  › Staff (e.g., for more outreach via detached workers).
  › Additional time for staff to build relationships with young people.

Help to respond to these needs

Respondents' suggestions on ways the organisations can address young people's need and to meet them *where they are* included:

- Funding for staff to recruit volunteers (to meet needs).
- Support capacity building of organisations.
  › Funding and support to train staff and volunteers.
- Funding to deliver programmes/services to meet needs.
- Facilities to deliver services to accommodate needs.
- Internet access to reach marginalised young people.
- Improved transport for young people to access facilities and specialised support.
- Flexibility to meet young people where they are.

Other suggestions:

- Address social inequalities.
- Realistic expectations of what small organisations can deliver.
- Funding for monitoring of services and for research and evaluation to identify if services are meeting need.

3.4.4   Perceived barriers to the increased participation of young people

Respondents were asked to indicate their views on the five possible barriers to the increased participation of young people (5 points for biggest barrier - 1 point for smallest barrier) (see Table 6).

- Over half (n=14 63.6%) of the organisations identified *(Low) Volunteer / staff numbers* identified as the biggest barrier to increased participation. *(Poor) Access to facilities* was ranked first by 4 (18.2%) organisations to pose the biggest barrier to young people's participation, and three (13.6%) selected *Raising awareness of the services* as the top barrier

- Eight organisations selected *Raising awareness of services* as the second biggest barrier, and six described *(Limited) Access to facilities* as the second biggest barrier to increased participation.

- *(Poor) Internet access* was identified by two fifths (n=9 40.9%) of respondents to be the smallest barrier to increased participation, and *Travel to facilities* was identified to be the smallest barrier for eight (36.4%) organisations.

- When the overall scores given to each barrier are accumulated, *Volunteer/ staff numbers*, followed by *Access to facilities* are the top two barriers to increased participation of children and young people. The order of the ranking of barriers facing young people participating in services:

  - › (Low) Volunteer / staff numbers.
  - › (Poor) Access to facilities.
  - › (Low) Awareness of services.
  - › (Poor) Travel to facilities.
  - › (Poor) Internet.

Table 5: Organisations' ranking of barriers to increased participation (1 indicates biggest barrier - 5 indicates smallest barrier).

	Volunteer/ staff numbers n (points) %	Access to facilities n (points) %	Raising awareness of services n (points) %	Travel to facilities n (points) %	Internet access n (points) %
First Pref (x5 points)	14 (70) 63.6%	4 (20) 18.2%	3 (15) 13.6%		1 (5) 4.5%
2nd Pref (x4 points)	3(12) 13.6%	6 (24) 27.3%	8 (32) 36.4%	3 (12) 13.6%	2 (8) 9.1%
3rd Pref (x3 points)	2(6) 9.1%	5 (15) 22.7%	4(12) 18.2%	6 (18) 27.3%	5 (15) 22.7%
4th Pref (x2 points)	0	7 (14) 31.8%	5(10) 22.7%	5(10) 22.7%	5(10) 22.7%
5th Pref (x1 points)	3 (3) 13.6%	0	2(2) 9.1%	8 (8) 36.4%	9 (9) 40.9%
Total points	91 *****	73 ****	71 ***	48 **	47 *

3.4.5 Organisations' view on how YSGS could be adapted to improve the ability to recruit and retain volunteers

In an open question, organisations were asked how the YSGS might be adapted to improve their ability to recruit and retain volunteers (aside from an increase in funding). Their responses fell into six categories (see Appendix 5)

- Recognising and promoting the value of volunteering in universal youth services.

- Training and support for volunteers.

- Training and support for staff to recruit and support volunteers.

- Funding to support administration undertaken by volunteers.

- Reduce burden of compliance.

- Other suggestions.

Recognising and promoting the value of volunteering in universal youth services

Recognising the value of volunteers in universal youth services and the promoting the value of volunteering (for the volunteer and for society) was one of the dominant messages. Suggestions on ways of doing this was providing funding to increase public awareness of the contribution of volunteers. Some suggested having formal recognition awards and events.

Training and support for volunteers

Training and support for volunteers also emerged as a dominant message in the responses. Most called for funding to train, upskill, and mentor volunteers. Some suggested having standardised and accredited training for the sector. One respondent suggested sharing information on the training available for volunteers.

Training and support for staff to recruit and support volunteers

In addition to having training and support for volunteers, respondents called for support for organisations to promote and advertise voluntary positions, funding and training to recruit and retain volunteers. One respondent suggested providing organisations with a volunteer recruitment managers and advisors.

Funding to support administration undertaken by volunteers

Even though the question asked for suggestions other than funding that might improve recruitment and retention of volunteers, many of the responses mentioned required funding. This included funding to help with the paperwork that is required as part of the compliance procedures (e.g., Garda Vetting) as well as the paperwork undertaken by the volunteers. Practical suggestions within this theme included the reduction of compliance and governance burden on volunteers and providing a Garda Vetting passport for all organisations funded by YSGS.

Other suggestions

Other suggestions included partnering with other organisations to recruit volunteers, encouraging inter-organisation volunteer exchanges and training.

Other comments

One organisation commented that Covid 19 restrictions are challenging for volunteers coming together, and that young people are tired of Zoom and online gatherings.

3.4.6   Priorities for improvements for young people over the next five years

Respondents were asked to prioritise five improvements for young people over the next five years (5 points for highest priority and 1 for lowest priority) (see Table 6).

- *Increasing awareness of service among children and young people* emerged as the most important priority for over a third of organisations (n=8 36.4%). This was followed by *Improved access to facilities* which was prioritised by just under a third of organisations (n=7 31.8%).

- When the overall scores are accumulated, *Improved access to facilities* emerged as the top priority, closely followed by *Increasing awareness of service among children and young people,* as the top two priorities of children and young people's needs over the next five years.

Participants' order of overall ranking of priorities of children and young people's needs over next 5 years

1. Improved access to facilities.

2. Increasing awareness of services among children and young people.

3. Improved online integration of services.

4. Improved disabled access.

5. Improved access in terms of travel.

Table 6: Participants' order of priority of needs of children and young people over the next five years

	Improved access to facilities	Increasing awareness of services among children and young people	Improved online integration of services	Improved disabled access	Improved access in terms of travel
	n (points) %	n (points) %	n (points) %	n (points) %	n (points) %
First Priority (x5 points)	7(35) 31.8 %	8(40) 36.4 %	4(20) 18.2 %	1(5) 4.5%	2(10) 9.1%
2nd Priority (x4 points)	9(36) 40.9%	6(24) 27.3%	4(16) 18.2 %	2(8) 9.1%	1(4) 4.5%
3rdPriority (x3 points)	3(9) 13.6%	4(12) 18.2 %	4(12) 18.2 %	8(24) 36.4%	3(9) 13.6%

	Improved access to facilities	Increasing awareness of services among children and young people	Improved online integration of services	Improved disabled access	Improved access in terms of travel
	n (points)	n (points)	n (points)	n (points)	n (points)
	%	%	%	%	%
4th Priority (x2 points)	1(2)	3(6)	1(2)	10 (20)	7(14)
	4.5%	13.6%	4.5%	45.5%	31.8 %
5th Priority (x1 points)	2(2)	1(1)	9(9)	1(1)	9(9)
	9.1%	4.5%	40.9%	4.5%	40.9%
Total points	84*****	83****	59***	58**	46*

3.5   Measurement/Accessibility/Performance

3.5.1   Organisations' agreement on recording data on the children and the young people participating in the organisation

Five questions explored organisations views on recording the diversity of the children and the young people participating in the organisation's activities (Table 7)

- Most (n=11 86.4%) strongly agreed or agreed that it is possible to accurately record the **age, gender and location** of the children and young people participating in activities. Only 3 (13.6%) organisations disagreed with the statement.

- Over half of the organisations either strongly agreed (n=4 18.2%) or agreed (n=8 36.4%) that with the correct consent protocols, they would be in favour of recording the **ethnicity of children and young** people participating in

their organisation. Three (13.6%) were neutral, and 7 (31.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

- The question on recording the LGBTI+ status of the children and young people generated a spread of responses. Nine organisations strongly agreed (n=4 18.2%) or agreed (n=5 22.7%) with the statement that with *the correct consent protocols, we would be in favour of recording, for reporting purposes, the LGBTI+ status of children and young people participating in our organisation.* Approximately one fifth (n=5 22.7%) were neutral in their response, three (13.6%) disagreed and 5 (22.7%) disagreed strongly with the statement.

- More than half (n=14 64.5%) of the organisations strongly agreed or agreed that with the correct consent protocols, they would be in favour of recording the **disability status** of children and young people participating in their organisation. Three were neutral, and the remaining fifth (n=5 22.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

- Half (n=12 54.5%) of organisations agreed with the statement that sufficient attention is given to increasing diversity among participants within YSGS funded organisations. Just under a third (n=7 31.8%) were neutral, and the remaining three disagreed with this statement.

One organisation explained their reasons for the not agreeing with the statements on gathering and recording diversity information.

"We try to gather data on numbers, gender, location, age. We find it nearly impossible to get accurate data and some areas just don't respond at all despite our hard work. My concern with adding more diversity questions is that it will make it even less likely that volunteers will respond when they see the long list of questions. We endeavour to be an inclusive church, therefore we don't ask some of the questions you are suggesting."

Table 7: Organisations' agreement on recording data on the children and the young people participating in the organisation.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is possible to accurately record the age, gender and location of children and young people participating in our organisation	36.4% (8)	50.0% (11)		13.6% (3)	
With the correct consent protocols, we would be in favour of recording, for reporting purposes, the ethnicity of children and young people participating in our organisation	18.2% (4)	36.4% (8)	13.6% (3)	9.1% (2)	22.7% (5)
With the correct consent protocols, we would be in favour of recording, for reporting purposes, the LGBTI+ status of children and young people participating in our organisation	18.2% (4)	22.7% (5)	22.7% (5)	13.6% (3)	22.7% (5)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
With the correct consent protocols, we would be in favour of recording, for reporting purposes, the disability status of children and young people participating in our organisation	22.7% (5)	40.9% (9)	13.6% (3)	13.6% (3)	9.1% (2)
Sufficient emphasis is put on increasing diversity among participants within YSGS funded organisations	13.6% (3)	40.9% (9)	31.8% (7)	13.6% (3)	0.0%

3.5.2   How organisations measure the effectiveness and outcomes of the YSGS funding

An open-ended question asked organisations to identify how they measure the effectiveness and outcomes of the YSGS funding. Five (sometimes overlapping) themes emerged in the organisations' responses (see Appendix 7 for further detail).

- Monitoring and performance data.

- Progress reports/Reviews of strategic planning.

- Evaluations.

- Feedback from users or staff/volunteers.

- Other.

Monitoring data

Many responses made some reference to monitoring and performance data. Some simply mentioned monitoring data or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Three referenced software and specific frameworks for the collection and analysis of the monitoring data e.g., use of Outcomes Star[4], Upshot[5], Capturing the Magic[6] or Salesforce Homes[7] software. These approaches and software tools were described as helping to measure performance by recording involvement of volunteers and young people and collecting data on outputs.

Progress reports/Review of strategic plans

Related to monitoring data, several organisations referred to formal reporting and reviews (e.g., quarterly reviews). Some described reporting on the outputs and outcomes identified in their operational plans. One detailed how their operational plan reflects the outcomes from the National Youth Strategy to allow the Board to see the effectiveness of the organisation.

Evaluations

A small number mentioned evaluations and surveys.

Feedback (service users /staff/volunteers)

Reflecting organisations' responses to ways of assessing the needs of children and young people, some organisations identified feedback from service users and from staff/volunteers, as well as improvements introduced by the Board, to contribute the evidence of the effectiveness and outcomes of the YSGS funding.

Other ways of measuring effectiveness

- National Executive Oversight.

- Management of accounts.

- Uptake of services.

- Growth of service (club's numbers maintained or increased).

- Brand awareness.

- Outcomes for young people.

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4   https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/
5   https://www.upshot.org.uk
6   https://www.youth.ie/documents/capturingmagic-2017-acc/
7   https://www.salesforce.org/blog/author/salesforce-com-foundation/

Additional Comments

Some of the organisations provided additional information or provided some suggestions to DCEDIY.

- YSGS grant quite small and goes to employing a worker.

- Measurement needs to follow on from the aims and objectives of the scheme.

- YSGS should support the infrastructure of strong and well-functioning Youth Services which deliver according to national policy such as BOBF.

One organisation suggested that DCEDIY should design a measurement tool to achieve this action. Another described some of the challenges capturing the longer-term outcomes of their work with young people, and how the emphasis on reporting can act as a barrier to engaging and retaining volunteers for the services.

'While there is a need for performance to be measured - the outcomes for young people can sometimes take a long time to materialize and is not evident within the life cycle of a programme/ project. Too much emphasis on performance /governance/ reporting within clubs is one of the reasons why volunteers are not willing to get involved in youth work. There needs to be a balance between measuring outcomes and overwhelming volunteers. We should remember that most youth clubs are run by volunteers and not paid professional youth workers.'

3.6 Funding

Define what 'core' funding means to your organisation and how you utilise core funding to support your organisation?

3.6.1 What core funding means to the organisations

Some organisations expanded on what the YSGS core funding means to their organisation (see Appendix 8). Below is an example of some direct quotes (grouped by the key message).

- To exist and to function.

  'Tá muid buíoch don Core Funding; gan é ní bheadh muid ann. (We are grateful for the Core funding; without it we would not be there).'

  'Most of the organisation's core budget goes towards staff salaries which is necessary as this is the only source of funding that covers employing staff. Without paid staff the organisation would not exist, volunteers would not continue their work without support and training from paid staff members. We would not have the infrastructure to register members, to organise or run programmes or activities.'

  'The YSGS is used by {name removed} to fund critical aspects of the services which are not and, in most cases, could not be funded from other funding sources (ether statutory or private).'

- To support clubs and volunteers.

  'Core funding ensures the organisation constantly has someone available to support clubs, as many of our clubs are evenings and weekends, the support can be needed during unsociable hours.'

- To deliver programmes.

  'Core means being able to apply for funding that covers salaries, facilities, insurance, admin provision. This is hugely helpful because without this we would struggle to provide the direct programmes we provide.'

  'It is the people employed in this industry that drive outcomes, the core funding should be used to enable people to deliver.'

  'Primarily core funding means (1) staff needed to operate services; and (2) the resources necessary to allow our volunteers to continue operating.'

- To maintain high standards.

  'YSGS also provides for governance, compliance and safeguarding costs and ensures that our boards are supported, trained and equipped to perform their duties to the highest standards.'

  'Core funding for us enables us to provide a safe, stable, evolving and effective service to the young people we serve.'

- Employ the best people for the organisation.

  'Core funding means that we have money to put towards salary costs to get the best people for our organisation that otherwise we would struggle to find, as well as assisting with general staff costs and essential programme & key events.'

  'Core funding to our organisation means we continue to exist and deliver services. It means we can plan for the future with confidence and retain quality staff within the organisation.'

Other comments

- Our core funding does not support all staff costs.
- Covid 19 impacted on funding available and highlighted the need for funding to ensure staff costs are covered and a staff retention policy.
- (Funding should support) Salary for staff salaries and T&S., office costs (e.g., rent, heating electricity to help with admin, compliance etc.).

3.6.2 How core funding is used by the organisations

In answering this question, most described using core funding for more than one activity, covering both direct and indirect activities associated with the delivery of the services.

- Management and governance.
  - › Funding for the national office.
  - › Management and administration.
  - › Facilities management.
  - › Governance and safeguarding.
  - › Administration support.

- Salaries.
  - › Staff to help with compliance e.g., administration, compliance etc.
  - › Core staff delivering programmes.
  - › Staff to deliver training and provide support.

- Overheads.
  - › Rent and building costs (e.g., electricity, heating etc).
  - › Organisation running costs (e.g., HR, auditor fees, health and safety, legal costs, insurance, and communication).

- Supporting core function.
  - › Recruiting volunteers.
  - › Resources to allow volunteers to operate.

- Training.
  - › Training for volunteers.
  - › Training & staff development.
  - › Training & support of board.
  - › Training & vetting & safeguarding.
  - › Training e.g., keep up to date with relevant policies and procedures.

- Delivering services and programmes.
  - › Contributing to programme support – development of programme materials.
  - › Delivery of programmes.

- Youth participation.
  - › Special interests projects e.g., SDGs, climate justice, Gaisce awards etc.
  - › Youth participation.

Other

- Evidence and outcome recording.
  - › Recording and measuring outcomes.

3.6.3 Categorisation of respondents' suggestions of measures that improve the funding model (other than funding)

One of the closing open-ended questions asked respondents for suggestions of measures that would improve the funding model **(other than increasing funding)**. Many of the responses featured suggestions raised in other open-ended questions. The responses reflected many of suggestions raised during the online consultation and are captured in 8 themes (see Appendix 9 for further detail).

- Provide more security of funding.

- Greater flexibility in the funding model.

- Ensure parity in pay scale and pensions for the sector.

- Information on and support for the funding model and improve the application process and reporting processes.

- Demonstrate the benefits of the services and the value of the YSGS funding.

- More inclusivity.

- Other suggestions for the model.

Provide more security of funding

Despite the question's focus on suggestions other than funding, many of the organisations suggestions related to the funding, specifically security of funding. Suggestions within this theme feature in previous responses and included multi-annual funding to allow for longer term planning. One organisation suggested funding similar to the UBU funding and having a compliance cost allowance like the GYDP model of funding.

> *'Multi-year/ 3-year cycle similar to UBU, these funding commitments*
> *would really help with planning services, Compliance costs*
> *allowance similar to the new proposed GYDP model of funding.'*

Some suggested having a reward for good governance and compliance or rewarding organisations for securing funding from other agencies.

More flexibility in the funding model

Some of the organisations suggested greater flexibility in how the funding was used to fit different types of youth services. One respondent suggested an agreed percentage of funding for innovation and research. Others called for one-off funding for special projects.

One respondent suggested creating opportunities for organisations to grow their services outside the usual allocations, and another suggested encouraging and recognizing inter-organisation co-operation (e.g., volunteer exchanges, shared training, and support for volunteers).

Ensure Parity in Pay Scale and pensions for the Sector

Echoing the messages from the online consultation, two respondents to the survey iterated the need for parity in terms and conditions for staff working in universal youth services (similar to CDYSP).

> *'Create parity in the sector regarding pensions, salary scale etc.*
> *Eliminate the current percentage increase until this is realised.'*

Provide information and support on funding model and improve the application and reporting processes

Respondents called for further information and clarity on the funding model e.g., what practices and activities are eligible under the funding. One wanted better communication and PR, and another suggested having a designated DCEDIY staff member to work closely with organisations.

Suggestions also included simplifying the application process, including making changes to the application form. Two respondents suggested making the language clearer (particularly the Irish Language version), and one recommended reducing the duplication on the form. Other suggestions included having online tools for the application to DCEDIY, and early notification of allocations.

Echoing the recommendations for the application process, respondents also called for more effective reporting model for all organisations and using online tools for reporting. One suggested the reporting level should depend on the size of the grantee organisation.

Demonstrate the benefits of the services and evaluate the YSGS funding

Reflecting the responses to the question on the measurement of effectiveness or outcomes of the funding, some respondents asked for support to demonstrate the value of the work undertaken by the funded organisations, and to examine the ripple effect of supporting young people. Another suggested looking at the benefits and outcomes of volunteer led youth work compared to staff led youth work.

One organisation suggested that YSGS scheme be evaluated according to performance/impact of the organisation in areas of stability, safety, governance, supervision, financial control and reporting, compliance, training, staff development, volunteer support, evidence and outcome recording, reflective practice, and facilities' management.

One respondent cautioned that performance indicators are better suited to direct engagement funds such as UBU etc (targeted youth projects). Some organisations asked for a balance between NQSF and performance-based funding models.

More inclusivity

Three respondents recommended increased inclusivity in the types of services and service users. One called for the prioritisation of the most marginalised, and another asked that new youth services and new cohorts of young people e.g., LGBTI+, migrant YP, refugee / asylum seekers are acknowledged in the scheme. One organisation suggested that action is taken, like the approach given to promote LGBTI+ rights, to prioritise the inclusion of traveller youth within all services.

Other suggestions

- Develop a national understanding of what youth services are and what the essential elements of the services are.

- More promotion of work of the grantees.

- Child and youth participation in the decision part of funding requirement.

- More holistic approaches.

Comments

- Current way of allocating funds is very unhelpful.

- Some orgs continue to receive funding despite appearing to have outlived their usefulness.

- Funding should not be allocated to organisations outside 11-24 age group.

3.6.4   Organisations' concluding comments

Many of the other comments shared by survey respondents in this final question have already been incorporated into the responses raised by specific questions. However, some additional points were raised in the final comments about the potential and value of a robust youth sector (see Appendix 10 for further detail).

The potential and value of a robust youth sector

The potential value and added value of a robust youth sector featured in many of the responses to the open-ended questions. Reflecting these sentiments, one organisation proposed that the YSGS could be *'pivotal in providing organisations with the resources to build a robust, transparent sector that prepares young people for transitions to adulthood'.* They added that this would require a significant investment from the State.

In their comments, respondents emphasised the importance (and the value for money) of the cross-cutting nature of youth services in providing a preventative approach and supporting an early intervention approach. As youth services have local knowledge and connections they are valued by young people and different stakeholders. They reach into areas where other state services are absent and have the potential to provide a *one stop shop* for young people. One respondent argued that this can be more efficient that several uncoordinated (and competing) services and referred to the VFM report that showed how projects delivered by local youth services provided best value for money.

One organisation raised concerns about adopting a UBU model for universal youth services that views young people as the problem, who need to be supported or fixed, without looking at the societal, environmental, and structural oppression experienced by that young person, rather than a youth work model with a foundation in social justice, which challenges the 'systematic oppressions experienced by young people'.

Section 4: Summary of Suggestions for the Reform of the YSGS

The aim of the YSGS reform project is to:

- **Prioritise** and focus on the needs of children and young people.

- **Empower** funded organisations to respond agilely to changing needs.

- **Enhance** the levels of assurance and oversight with respect to Exchequer funding.

- **Reflect** the vision, mission, values and strategic objectives of the Department.

- **Enable** transparent access to the scheme, thus realising broader societal gains.

The findings from the engagement with the funded organisations provide several suggestions on ways the YSGS can be reformed to meet these objectives.

4.1. Prioritise and focus on the needs of children and young people

- The current breadth of reach, variety and diversity of services was viewed as working well.

- Flexibility and autonomy of the funding allowed for creativity, innovation, and collaboration.

- Child and youth participation in the decision should be part of the funding requirement.

- Help organisations to identify young people's needs.

  › Funding, flexibility, staff, and time to do this.

- Support organisations to respond to identified needs.

  › Flexibility and funding (e.g., funding to deliver programmes).
  › Funding for staff to recruit and support volunteers.
  › Facilities, internet and transport.

- Improve access to facilities.

- Increase awareness of services among children and young people.

4.2 Empower funded organisations to respond agilely to changing needs

- More security of funding.

  › Core and multi-annual funding.

- Greater flexibility in the funding.

  › Introduce an award for innovation (i.e., innovative and creative responses to changing needs).

- Admit new youth services to the scheme.

- Support organisations to recruit and retain staff.

  › Greater parity in pay scale and pensions in the sector.

- Support organisations to recruit and retain volunteers.

  › Recognise and promote the value of volunteering.
  › Training and support for volunteers.
  › Support with the administration undertaken by volunteers.
  › Reduce the burden of compliance.

4.3 Enhance the levels of assurance and oversight with respect to Exchequer funding

- Core funding was described as essential for the existence of some organisations.

- The DCEDIY to provide more information and support with YSGS.

  › Clarity on funding criteria and metrics.[8]
  › Feedback on applications (who gets funding and why).

- Have greater continuity between application process and progress reporting.

  › Transition to online system.
  › System to link reporting from different funding streams (to minimise administration).

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8   One group cautioned against using the metrics used by Early Years Sector as this is not applicable to youth services).

- Provide support to organisations to measure and capture outcomes.

  › Support to demonstrate the benefits of the YSGS (i.e., measure the effectiveness / impact of the funding).

- More flexibility on how the funding is used e.g., governance and compliance costs and to cover core staff.

4.4 Reflect the vision, mission, values and strategic objectives of the Department

- Link the funding to broader Government strategies (e.g., Better Outcomes Better Futures and other new strategies).

- Results based (but not just value for money) to focus on the outcomes for young people.

- A preventive approach supporting an early intervention approach.

- A coordinated approach offers better value for money (VFMR report).

4.5 Enable transparent access to the scheme, thus realising broader societal gains

- Some *(but not all)* organisations would like to see the scheme expanded to reach younger and older age groups (e.g., to reflect the age range of the young people using their services).

- Avoid 'one size fits all' and overly prescriptive approaches.

- There were mixed views on the suggestion of admitting new youth service organisations.

- Greater inclusivity.

  › Prioritise the inclusion of the most marginalised e.g., LGBTI+, migrant YP, refugee / asylum seekers.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Online Consultation Team

Online Consultation Speakers	
DCEDIY	Minister O'Gorman
DCEDIY	Bernie McNally
National Youth Council Ireland	Mary Cunningham
Youth Reform Strategy and Participation Unit (DCEDIY)	Hilda Ó Riain
Youth Affairs Unit (DCEDIY)	Paul Fay
Youth Reform Strategy and Participation Unit (DCEDIY)	David Behan

Appendix 2: List of YSGS funded organisations who participated in the phases 1 & 2 of the preliminary engagement process.

Participated in online consultation

Participated in survey

An Óige	Foroige	National Youth Council of Ireland
BeLonG To	Girls Brigade	Youth Work Ireland
Catholic Guides of Ireland	Girls Friendly Society	No Name Club Ltd
Church of Ireland Youth Development	Involve	Ógras
Community Creations / SpunOut.ie	Irish Girl Guides	Order of Malta Cadets
Confederation of Peace Corps / Localise Youth	Irish Methodist Youth and Children Department	Scouting Ireland Ltd
Crosscare	Junior Chamber Ireland	The Boys Brigade
ECO – UNESCO	Macra na Feirme	Voluntary Services International
Experiment in International Living / EIL Intercultural Learning	National Association of Youth Drama / Youth Theatre Ireland	Young Irish Film Makers Ltd
Feachtas Óg - Ghluaiseacht Gaeilge	National Federation of Arch Clubs	Young Men's Christian Association

Appendix 3: Agenda for online consultation

Consultation for the Reform of The Youth Services Grant Scheme (YSGS)

Agenda

Monday 18th October 2021 13:00-16:00

Webex

13:00   Welcome (and housekeeping) from Chair
– Hilda O Riain (DCEDIY)

13:10   Bernie McNally, DCEDIY
– (Welcomes Minister to meeting and delivers address)

13:20   Address from Mary Cunningham, NYCI

13:25   Address from Minister O'Gorman

13:35   Address from Paul Fay, DCEDIY

13:40   Project update – David Behan, DCEDIY

13:50   Q&A on project update

14:00   Breakout Session *1-45 mins*
Discussion topics 1-3 to be deliberated (see below)

14:45   Input from breakout session 1 fed into plenary session *(15 mins)*

15:00   Break *(10 mins)*

15:10   Breakout Session *2-30 mins*
Discussion topics 4 & 5 to be deliberated (see below)

15:40   Input from breakout sessions fed into plenary session *(10 Mins)*

15:50   Wrap up and confirmation as to next steps

Breakout Rooms Discussion Topics:

1. What works well in the YSGS?

2. How could we improve the scheme?

3. What reforms to the YSGS should be viewed as priorities?

4. What are the primary challenges to delivering universal youth services?

5. What should the vision statement for the reform project include?