

Appendix: Guidelines for digital youth work

Support for creating a digital youth work development plan

The goal of the strategic development of digital youth work is to enable organisations to examine the possibilities digital media and technology have to offer as a part of developing all aspects of youth work and activities. This requires that digitality is considered in as wide a context as possible.

One way of including digitality in the strategic process of a youth work organisation is to create a development plan for digital youth work. The development plan can include, for example, an assessment of how digitality is now realised in the organisation's youth work processes, which can in turn function as a base for selecting the focal points and practical methods of development. The principal idea is that the plan should define clear objectives and methods for digitality, and appoint persons in charge of monitoring and advancing those processes.

The following form was created as a tool to support creating these kinds of development plans in the context of Finnish youth work. The form can also function as a base for discussions about the guidelines of digital youth work in work communities. The form can be utilised, for instance, in the organisation's annual planning, team building exercises or more freely as a part of the daily planning and development of the work community. It is essential that the process leader understands the purpose the form is used for. When using this material in a context other than Finland, it is also necessary to take into account the different cultural, historical and other realities that the local youth work is based on.

Some of the principles are more clearly related to administrative and strategic planning; some are more focused on youth work practice. It is important that when going through the principles, it is considered thoroughly who are included in the planning process at each stage.

Guidelines for digital youth work



1. The operational culture encourages curiosity and experimentation

We have an open, flexible and unbiased attitude towards the opportunities that the digital media and technology offer for youth work.

Measures:

- In the work community, we acknowledge the digital media as a key environment for the growth and activities of young people, and the key role that digital technology plays in their everyday lives.
- We support and develop our work with the young, done with the help of the digital media and technology.
- We experiment boldly with various operating models and services that utilise the digital media and technology.

2. Strategic planning supports long-term development

The aims of strategic planning include the coordination, management and long-term development of digital youth work.

Measures:

- We take the goals, measures and division of responsibilities with regard to the digital dimension into account in the action plans and strategic guidelines of our organisation.
- We collect information on the way young people use digital media and technology, and use such information in support of planning.
- We utilise the competence and strengths of employees, young people and stakeholders in planning processes.
- In planning, we take account of the strategic programmes of our organisation and the regional, national and international programmes that have a major impact on our activities.

3. A goal-oriented approach and assessment improve the quality of activities

Digital media and technology are used in accordance with the goals set for youth work. Work and activities are developed on the basis of assessment results.

Measures:

- We define assessable goals for the use of digital media and technology in youth work.
- We encourage employees to use digital media and technology in line with the goals of the organisation, for instance by way of various guidelines and instructions.
- We assess activities and the achievement of goals together with the young.
- We share tried and tested assessment models with stakeholders.
- We use the assessment results in the development of our activities and making them visible.

4. Resources are targeted at digital youth work

The implementation of digital youth work requires various resources, including infrastructure, tools and equipment, working hours and other financial and human resources.

Measures:

- Together with employees and young people, we identify requirements related to infrastructure, tools and equipment and other resources.
- We offer employees access to various software and applications, and innovative digital technology.
- We take account of the digital dimension in employees' job descriptions.
- We encourage the sharing of resources within the organisation and with partners.
- We evaluate the use of resources and the need for them, on a regular basis.

5. We ensure the skills and competence of the work community

Whenever necessary, we know how to utilise digital media and technology in all of our work and activities with young people.

Measures:

- We assess the skills and competencies of the work community and the need to enhance them on a regular basis.

- We offer employees various ways of developing their skills and competencies.
- We encourage employees to strengthen their digital expertise independently and together with colleagues and young people.
- We share expertise within the work community and with partners.

6. Digital youth work is developed through cooperation

Cooperation ensures the accessibility, adequacy and quality of digital youth work and the compatibility of activities, and facilitates the development of new and innovative activities.

Measures:

- We cooperate with various stakeholders in the preparation, planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.
- We share experiences and best practices related to digital youth work.
- We acknowledge other organisations' best practices and utilise them in development.
- We seek new kinds of partnerships and forms of cooperation.

7. Digital youth work promotes the inclusion and equality of young people

Among young people, digital youth work facilitates new experiences of inclusion and ways of having an impact. Regardless of age, gender, background and other factors, the young have equal opportunities to participate and make a difference.

Measures:

- We encourage young people to influence issues related to them through digital media and technology.
- We take equality and accessibility into account in all digital youth work and our web services.
- We offer young people opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.

8. Youth work strengthens young people's media skills and digital skills

Media skills and digital skills are a must for acting in society. Youth work has the aim of encouraging and promoting critical understanding, self-expression, and other activities and having an impact via the media culture and digital technology.

Measures:

- We recognise the role and significance of media and technology education in youth work.
- We encourage our employees to handle media culture and digital technology content in partnership with young people.
- We promote the skills and preparedness of young people in using digital media and technology independently, actively and creatively.

Self-assessment: Filling in the form

The development plan form progresses according to the guidelines of digital youth work, and it includes eight themes:

1. Operating culture

2. Strategic planning

3. Goal-orientation and evaluation

4. Resources

5. Expertise

6. Cooperation

7. Young people's participation and equality, and

8. Young people's media competence and digital skills.

A principle that promotes digital youth work and three to five suggestions about methods are listed under each theme, and their aim is to help bring principles into practice.

In the sections Strengths and Weaknesses, you are asked to assess the current realisation of the guidelines in question. Strengths are things that function well in the organisation or existing resources which especially support performing that method. Weaknesses are flaws or issues that require development and need to be improved to perform that method better.

Focal points of development are things that are considered to be primary points of improvement based on, for instance, plans and lines of development for the coming year.

In the plan of action, you are asked to write a short list of the details of the details of the central development procedures: how, when and by whom? All sections are not required to be filled in if it can be decided, based on common agreement, that there is no need for developmental procedures.

Because technological advancement and changes in the use of digital media and technology are rapid, it is advised to return to the development plan regularly – annually, for example – and assess the status of how the procedures have been realised and in which direction the activities should head in the future.

The Digital Youth Work Guidelines and the development plan form can also be found in electronic form at <https://www.verke.org/materials-2/?lang=en>.

1. Operational culture

The organizational culture encourages curiosity and experimentation. We have an open, flexible and unbiased attitude towards the opportunities that the digital media and technology offer for youth work.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
1.1. In the work community, we acknowledge the digital media as a key environment for the growth and activities of young people, and the key role that digital technology plays in their everyday lives.				
1.2. We support and develop our work with the young, done with the help of the digital media and technology.				
1.3. We experiment boldly with various operating models and services that utilise the digital media and technology.				

2. Strategic planning

Strategic planning supports long-term development. The aims of strategic planning include the coordination, management and long-term development of digital youth work.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
2.1. We take the goals, measures and division of responsibilities with regard to the digital dimension into account in the action plans and strategic guidelines of our organisation.				
2.2. We collect information on the way young people use digital media and technology, and use such information in support of planning.				
2.3. We utilise the competence and strengths of employees, young people and stakeholders in planning processes.				
2.4. In planning, we take account of the strategic programmes of our organisation and the regional, national and international programmes that have a major impact on our activities.				

3. Goal-orientation and evaluation

A goal-oriented approach and assessment improve the quality of activities. Digital media and technology are used in accordance with the goals set for youth work. Work and activities are developed on the basis of assessment results.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
3.1. We define assessable goals for the use of digital media and technology in youth work.				
3.2. We encourage employees to use digital media and technology in line with the goals of the organisation, for instance by way of various guidelines and instructions.				
3.3. We assess activities and the achievement of goals together with the young.				
3.4. We share tried and tested assessment models with stakeholders.				
3.5. We use the assessment results in the development of our activities and making them visible.				

4. Resources

Resources are targeted at digital youth work. The implementation of digital youth work requires various resources, including infrastructure, tools and equipment, working hours and other financial and human resources.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
4.1. Together with employees and young people, we identify requirements related to infrastructure, tools and equipment and other resources.				
4.2. We offer employees access to various software and applications, and innovative digital technology.				
4.3. We take account of the digital dimension in employees' job descriptions.				
4.4. We encourage the sharing of resources within the organisation and with partners.				
4.5. We evaluate the use of resources and the need for them, on a regular basis.				

5. Expertise

The skills and competence of the work community are ensured. Whenever necessary, we know how to utilise digital media and technology in all of our work and activities with young people.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
5.1. We assess the skills and competencies of the work community and the need to enhance them on a regular basis.				
5.2. We offer employees various ways of developing their skills and competencies.				
5.3. We encourage employees to strengthen their digital expertise independently and together with colleagues and young people.				
5.4. We share expertise within the work community and with partners.				

6. Cooperation

Digital youth work is developed through cooperation. Cooperation ensures the accessibility, adequacy and quality of digital youth work and the compatibility of activities, and facilitates the development of new and innovative activities.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
6.1. We cooperate with various stakeholders in the preparation, planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.				
6.2. We share experiences and best practices related to digital youth work.				
6.3. We acknowledge other organisations' best practices and utilise them in development.				
6.4. We seek new kinds of partnerships and forms of cooperation.				

7. Young people's participation and equality

Digital youth work promotes the inclusion and equality of young people. Among young people, digital youth work facilitates new experiences of inclusion and ways of having an impact. Regardless of age, gender, background and other factors, the young have equal opportunities to participate and make a difference.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
7.1. We encourage young people to influence issues related to them through digital media and technology.				
7.2. We take equality and accessibility into account in all digital youth work and our web services.				
7.3. We offer young people opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation and assessment of digital youth work.				

8. Young people's media competence and digital skills

Youth work strengthens young people's media skills and digital skills. Media skills and digital skills are a must for acting in society. Youth work has the aim of encouraging and promoting critical understanding, self-expression, and other activities and having an impact via the media culture and digital technology.

Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses	Focal points for development	Plan of action
8.1. We recognise the role and significance of media and technology education in youth work.				
8.2. We encourage our employees to handle media culture and digital technology content in partnership with young people.				
8.3. We promote the skills and preparedness of young people in using digital media and technology independently, actively and creatively.				