

Things to look out for when joining a youth advisory council

Hoang Tuấn Nguyen

In the current era of globalization, many young people want to study and live abroad. To achieve this dream, young people often need to study diligently but should also seek extracurricular activities for personal growth and to create standout profiles to apply to universities. This blog post aims to help people in the same boat, providing some insights into participating in a youth advisory council for an international mental health research project, based on a survey of the Vietnamese youth participating in this extracurricular activity.

Who are we?

I am a member of the Vietnamese Youth Advisory Council (V-YAC) for the Y-PRIME study. Y-PRIME (Youth Promotion of Resilience Involving Mental E-health) is a collaborative research project between the Institute of Population, Health and Development in Vietnam and the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University in Canada. The main purpose of the study is to support Vietnamese youth in building life skills to improve their mental health and resilience and to improve their quality of life. As a part of this project, we also got to connect with Canadian youth from Foundry to share and discuss experiences with mental health and research engagement.

Potential problems that might occur while participating in a project

While participating in any project, sometimes you might encounter some problems that affect your capacity and how you participate. Everyone will have different solutions that fit their own situations. In this blog post, I will introduce some challenges that the V-YAC has encountered and things to consider to resolve them.

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- Overlapping schedules: Youth is a busy time! Especially with school. Sometimes, project activities can overlap with school time. For example, some of our members have classes on the weekend which is when monthly V-YAC meetings tend to happen.
- Potential challenges when working with people in other countries: Some extracurricular activities you may consider joining are those collaborating with international organizations or online projects based abroad. These kinds of projects are great opportunities to meet and interact with people around the world, and get exposed to their diverse cultures. However, two possible challenges should be considered:
 - Language barrier: if you want to interact with people in other countries, sometimes you will have to read or communicate in English. You should consider if your English is at an appropriate level to be able to communicate your ideas, or use Google Translate! Some projects are able to provide simultaneous translators or have access to translation machines, that is even better.
 - Time zone differences: before joining an international, online project, you should check the time differences between you and where the project is located. From there, see if the meeting times are suitable for your own schedule. Pay special attention to the time differences and when the meetings end so that you are not up too late.

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Joining any kind of project can be a meaningful experience. This also means young people need to be proactive in participation and learn something from the experience, but it is also important to take care of your health. If you do face challenges or questions about participation, please proactively communicate with the leads early so that they can give you the support you need.

