

# WD2023 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SPEAKER GUIDE



*Young Leaders attending the Youth Pre-Conference at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference*

Young people are leading the way in shaping a gender-equal future. The Women Deliver 2023 Conference (WD2023) will serve as a platform for young people, and those working on youth issues, to advance their advocacy goals. In order to ensure young people's leadership and meaningful engagement in co-creating WD2023, Women Deliver is engaging Women Deliver Young Leaders, Young Leader Alumni, youth advocates, adolescents, and partner organizations working on youth issues in all aspects of planning the Conference.

Meaningful youth engagement is a transformative, intentional process in which young people are in positions of power and leadership alongside other stakeholders who may be traditional powerholders. This includes the power to design and create policies, programs, and initiatives, to make decisions and set agendas, and to hold leaders and decision-makers accountable. Meaningful youth engagement is predicated on the creation of an enabling and inclusive environment, where young people are recognized as experts and respected as equals. Consistent with this approach, WD2023 will center the voices of youth, in all their intersecting identities, in all Conference programming, from plenary sessions to side events. While each WD2023 session is required to have at least one youth speaker, true engagement goes beyond tokenistic involvement and offers young people agency in shaping the session in which they will speak. It involves creating opportunities for young people to express their views, participate in leadership roles, and work collaboratively with adults and peers to address issues that matter to them.

# RECOMMENDATIONS: SPONSOR, CO-CREATE, ENGAGE

## 1. Sponsor Youth to Attend

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90% of all WD2023 scholarships were awarded to youth applicants. Additionally, Women Deliver is directly sponsoring an additional 300 youth advocates from the Women Deliver Young Leaders Program, Alumni Committee, and WD2023 Youth Planning Committee to attend the Conference.

## 2. Co-create your WD2023 Session with Youth

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Co-created and co-led programming is at the heart of WD2023. Youth speakers will be represented in all plenary sessions and compensated youth representatives sit on all planning committees, including the WD2023 Advisory Group and the WD2023 Youth Planning Committee.

## 3. Engage Youth in Your Session

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Interested in engaging youth experts in your programming, but do not work directly with youth? Email your topic and speaker criteria to [SpeakersBureau@WomenDeliver.org](mailto:SpeakersBureau@WomenDeliver.org) and Women Deliver can connect you with relevant youth advocates who are attending WD2023, including Women Deliver Young Leaders.

# RESOURCES

- Partnership Principals
- Youth Engagement at WD2023
- Child and Young Person Safeguarding Policy
- Women Deliver's Community Agreement, "How We Roll"

# DO'S AND DON'TS OF MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

## DO'S

- Recognize youth as experts in their own right, understanding that their expertise may extend beyond “youth.”
- Listen, learn, and integrate issues that are important to youth into your programming.
- Include youth in all stages of your programming – from conception, to delivery, to follow-up. That is the crux of true co-creation.
- Make your programming approachable, understandable, and digestible.
- Compensate youth for their time and work. Create a safe space – whether virtually, hybrid, or in-person – and ensure robust safeguarding practices are in place before engaging with adolescents and youth.
- Co-create ways of working together, including shared agreements. Ask about anticipated barriers, including around technology. Be flexible about planning your sessions to respond to the needs of all speakers.
- Provide resources and materials in advance to ensure all speakers have adequate time to prepare and have the same foundation of knowledge.

## DON'TS

- Tokenize youth by giving them bit roles that do not allow them to authentically collaborate, contribute, or advocate.
- Expect youth to provide labor for free or for “exposure.” Youth are often expected to donate their time, insinuating that it is less valuable.
- Use youth for a photo opportunity, and then relegate them to the sidelines.
- Invite youth to a space, only to minimize their role in lieu of a figure perceived as “more important.”
- Reinforce power dynamics that marginalize youth under patriarchal, colonial, or racist systems.
- Use technical jargon or inaccessible language.

## CONTACTS

- Youth Speakers: [speakersbureau@womendeliver.org](mailto:speakersbureau@womendeliver.org)
- General Conference: [wd2023@womendeliver.org](mailto:wd2023@womendeliver.org)
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