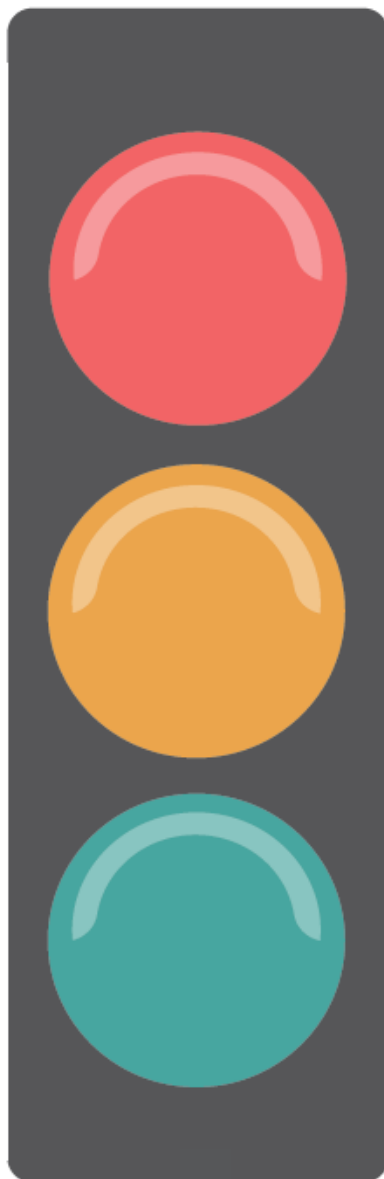




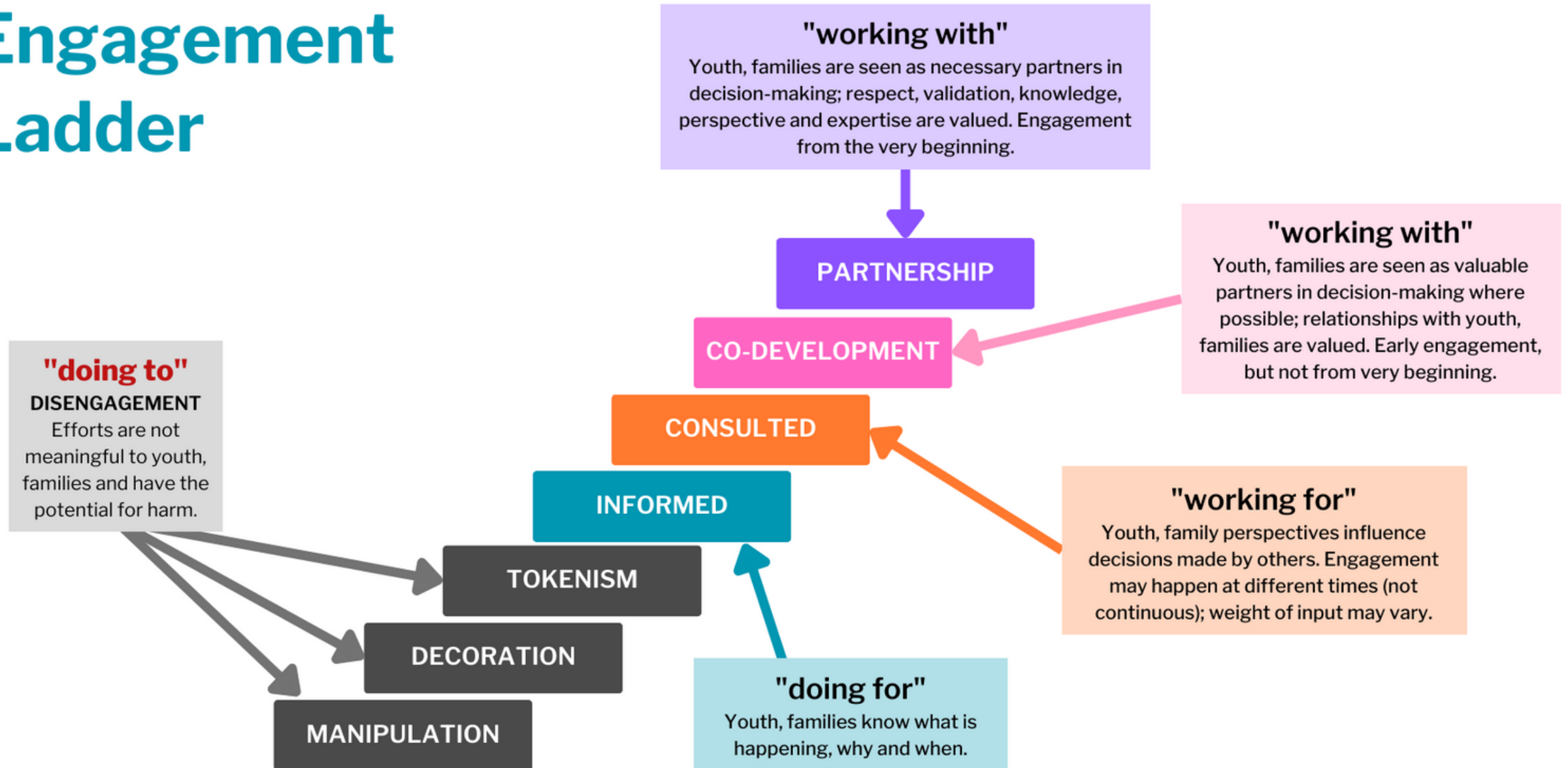
# Youth engagement traffic light

This resource will help guide conversations between adults and young people who are planning for organizational, community and system-level youth engagement.



ENGAGEMENT TYPE	WHAT THIS MEANS	EXAMPLE	POSSIBLE EFFECTS
STOP!	<b>Manipulation</b> Young people are directed by adults, without genuine opportunities to provide input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A young person is given a script to speak on behalf of an organization but has little to no understanding of the issue at hand.</li> </ul>	<b>DISENGAGING AND NEGATIVE</b>  Young people may feel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>anxious</li> <li>uninformed</li> <li>belittled</li> <li>pressured</li> <li>drained</li> <li>frustrated</li> <li>unheard</li> <li>purposeless</li> </ul>
	<b>Decoration</b> A young person is invited to the table, but given little to no purpose, influence or decision-making power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A young person is asked to join a team of adults, but not given space or tools to contribute meaningfully. The adults may occasionally ask for the youth's ideas but do all the actual planning and implementation themselves.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Tokenism</b> A young person is included for the sake of saying youth are included—especially those with diverse identities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A young person with a diverse identity (e.g. a queer youth or indigenous youth) is asked to sit on an advisory committee and is expected, by default, to speak for all young people that share their identity.</li> </ul>	
PROCEED WITH CARE	<b>Informed</b> Young people are kept aware of programs, services or policy changes without contributing to the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people receive information about changes via newsletters, presentations or emails.</li> </ul>	<b>POSITIVE OR NEUTRAL</b>  Depending on how they're engaged, young people may feel heard and valued, or only selectively heard and under-used.
	<b>Consulted</b> Young people have roles, provide input and are told how their input impacts adult decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult staff write a document and send to young person to review and make suggestions for changes. Adults provide feedback on how and why young people's suggestions were or weren't used.</li> </ul>	
GO!	<b>Co-development &amp; partnership</b> Young people jointly develop all projects, services and processes that impact or interest them. They have the opportunity to lead activities, share in decision-making and work as equal partners with adults. Young people and adults have authentic relationships (genuine, trusting, collaborative) in which youth expertise and experience is respected and valued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults support young people to co-facilitate meetings or events or to co-create a safe, inclusive and accessible space</li> <li>Multiple young people sit on a board, providing advice, direction and input on strategic plans, policies and programs alongside adults.</li> </ul>	<b>POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, BETTER SERVICES &amp; OUTCOMES</b>  Young people may experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased abilities</li> <li>sense of purpose</li> <li>confidence</li> <li>motivation to contribute meaningfully</li> </ul>

# Engagement Ladder



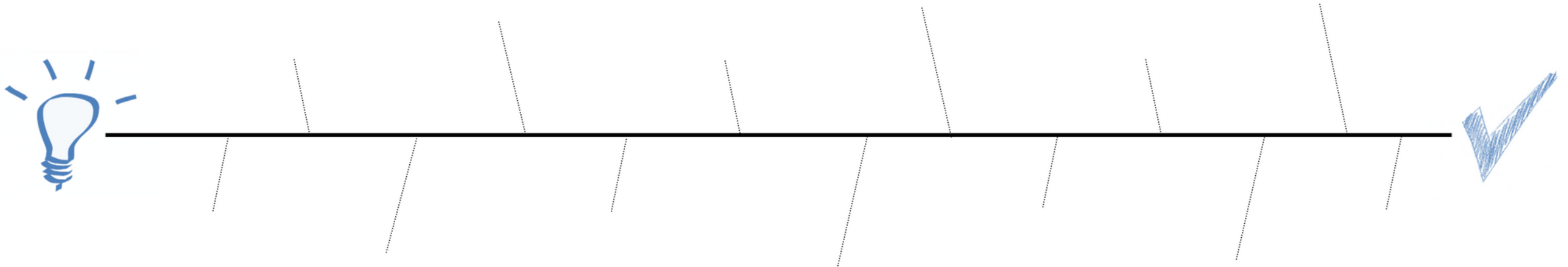
Adapted from Hart, R. A. (1997). *Children's participation: The theory and practice of involving young citizens in community development and environmental care*. UNICEF/Earthscan, London.

Produced by EEnet's Youth and family mentorship, engagement, and co-design community of interest, June 2023. <https://kmb.camh.ca/eenet/communities/youth-and-family-mentorship-engagement-and-co-design-community-of-interest>

# Connecting Hart's Ladder of Engagement with Decision-Making Processes

What are you working on? \_\_\_\_\_

Right from the point that an idea is forming to when an action plan is completed, there are opportunities to meaningfully engage children, youth, families, providers and partners to ensure the end result works. This tool can help identify: 1) decision-making points and connect them with actions or activities, and 2) where they fit along a continuum of engagement.



## Things to think about:

- What is the timeline? (from idea to completion of the action plan)
- What decisions need to be made and when?
- What decisions have already been made? Who was part of those decisions?
- What tasks or actions are connected to each decision?
- What level of engagement could be achieved at each step? (ex. Inform, Consult, Co-develop, Co-create)
- How could youth and families be part of decisions and planning in meaningful ways?
- What will you do to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, justice?
- Are you aware of what you don't know? Are you prepared to do your 'homework'?
- Who could help you bring youth and families into this process?
- Where is the space for doing things differently? For getting comfortable with discomfort?
- How flexible can you be? What things are "off the table"?
- Do any of the engagement opportunities reflect manipulation, decoration or tokenism?