Youth Voice Agency Level Assessment (Y-VAL)

Eight Critical Themes

1. **Overall vision and commitment (8 items):**
   The agency has developed formal structures and policies for voice/participation
   - Clear roles for participation
   - Transparent assessment of efforts to promote participation

2. **Collaborative approach (5 items):**
   Young people are treated as valued partners in decision processes
   - Involved from the beginning, including decisions about what goals to focus on and how to address them
   - Respect and mutual learning, willingness to compromise, responsiveness
   - Youth-friendly meetings
   - Information/transparency about what will happen/has happened as a result of decisions

3. **Empowered representatives (5 items):**
   Young people are supported in a way that will maximize their potential to have an impact on decisions
   - Multiple young people participating consistently over time
   - Supported preparation, meeting happens as planned
   - “Pipeline,” opportunity to develop leadership skills

4. **Commitment to facilitation and support of Y/YA participation (3 items):**
   The agency invests resources to support participation
   - Dedicated staff time
   - Addressing barriers: meeting times, location, transportation, child care needs, etc.
   - “Point person” whose job includes managing logistics of participation
   - Incentives provided for participation (may be monetary or non-monetary)

5. **Workforce development (4 items):**
   The agency ensures that all staff are able to interact collaboratively with young people
   - Young people participate actively in hiring
   - Staff are trained about agency policies and commitment to participation
   - Job performance evaluation includes attention to staff competencies related to participation
   - Agency is developing peer roles

6. **Participation in developing programming/program policies (5 items):**
   Young people have an impact on how the program works with the population
   - Substantial and systematic involvement in decisions about program models/services
   - Efforts to improve services, retention, accessibility
   - Efforts to make the organization more youth friendly/responsive—communications, privacy, decor, etc.

7. **Participation in evaluation (4 items):**
   Young people are engaged in efforts to determine how well the agency is doing its work
   - Systematic efforts to gather feedback on services
   - Young people help decide on how efforts will be assessed
   - Young people are informed about findings from evaluation/CQI
   - Agency acts on data and reports on this to young people

8. **Leading initiatives and projects (3 items):**
   The agency supports young people to take the lead on projects they design
   - Provides tangible support to initiatives initiated by young people
   - Young people can make decisions about funding
   - Transparency about funding distribution