

# Engage Learners

## Overview

IkamvaYouth works with learners in grades 8-12 living in township communities. IkamvaYouth has no academic requirements for entry and each branch recruits learners from a number of schools. The learner must self-select for the programme. While their grades do not matter (the lower they are the more room for improvement there is!), it is more important that a learner is committed. The more committed a learner is, the higher their attendance and the greater chance they have of improving their grades.

What grade are you going to work with?  
How many learners are you going to have on your programme?  
What schools are you going to work with?  
What subjects are you going to tutor?



Consider the questions above very carefully as they will determine what you are going to do and how you are going to do it. Do not start recruiting learners until you have sat down with your team and answered these questions.



You can always try something out and change it after the first term but it will help you to decide on some set answers initially to guide your recruitment and make the first-term more effective.

There is a tendency to want to take every single learner that applies, but it is better to put learners on a waiting list, especially if they fall outside your catchment area or chosen grades. You can then decide at the end of the first term whether you want to expand your focus to include these learners.

IkamvaYouth has found that recruiting learners in grade 12 is a lot less effective. One year of tutoring simply isn't enough time to achieve the significant improvement in grades that most learners need, and grade 11 results impact post-school opportunities. The grade 12 mentoring programme also requires a lot of effort and work, and it's best to get the tutoring programme established in year one, so that you have some experience under your belt before getting the mentoring programme going.



## Tip

Having only one major feeder school limits your ability to recruit learners and the exposure of your programme in the community will depend on the relationship with that one school and unfortunately often with one principal. When selecting the venue for your programme bear this in mind and try to locate your centre in proximity to several high schools.

## Tip

You will get learners who have not applied, wanting to join the programme in the first couple of weeks. It is important to provide them with an application form and ask them to return it by a set date. **Do not let them access the tutoring programme until the application is complete.** It is not fair to other learners and will jeopardise the programme's success. If a learner is motivated they will fill in the application form and return it and then they can join.

## Tip

Recruit a lot more learners than the final number that you want as your first-term drop-out rate will be very high.

IkamvaYouth generally recruit 3 x the number of grade 8/9 and twice as many grade 10-12.



## Recruit Learners

Who needs to know about the tutoring programme?  
 Where will I find the learners that I need?  
 Will I hold an Open Day?  
 Will I use an application form?  
 How long does a learner need to fill in and return the form?



### Open Day

The first decision you need to make is whether you are holding an Open Day. One benefit of holding an Open Day is that it gives you the opportunity of involving parents from the beginning of the programme. You can read more about parental involvement in Section 3, however you must include parents in the conversation from as early as possible.

### Tip

Invite parents to the Open Day and engage with them. Find out about them, what they do, where are they from, and how many kids they have. Make sure that you have their correct contact details and that they understand what the programme is, when it runs and what the impact is. Many of our branches have a policy that learners are not able to sign up unless a parent/guardian/sibling has been physically met by the branch staff. This establishes a relationship that is necessary and will assist attendance, report collection, and general academic performance as there will be some level of home based support.

### How To Guide: Open Day How-To



## Application Process Part 1

The Open Day allows you to explain the programme and begin the application process. This is *extremely* important for getting learners to make a step towards commitment. An application process is actually very simple:

Download and design your application form. Check that the key information is correct; time of programme, expectations (75% attendance), name of learner, grade, school, parents contact details and your contact details for more information.



Print out as many posters as you can with the relevant information on; brief description of the programme and impact, venue, time, where to collect and hand in the application form, deadline for applications, contact number for more information



Take posters to schools, libraries, churches, community and youth centres, sports clubs, health clinics, and train and taxi stations near your venue.



Make a list of the schools in your catchment area. That is schools within 2-3 km from your centre.



Spend a day visiting each school on your list. Meet with the secretaries and try to arrange meetings with the principal, vice-principal or key staff.



Schedule an assembly with each school and ask if you are able to put posters up around the school advertising the programme. Take with you a stack of application forms.



## Application Process Part 2

Present the programme in the assembly. Tell them clearly; who can apply, where to collect and drop-off application form, how will they be notified if they are successful, what is the application deadline, are there any other documents needed? Repeat key dates.



It is best to give learners **1-2 weeks** from the assembly to return the application form. Keep checking in with the secretary and teachers to encourage learners to apply. If you can, visit the school during break times and talk to learners, it might be an idea to set up a small table where they can come and talk to you about the programme and ask any questions that they have.



Collect the application forms by the deadline given. **Don't give leeway on this.** It is your only chance to make a first and lasting impression regarding the rules you set and whether you are serious about them



Select the number of learners you want for each grade. If there are too many in a grade and you really can't take more for capacity reasons you can select learners randomly using names in a hat. IY have found that this is the fairest way of selection when demand exceeds the number of spaces. .



SMS successful applicants and invite them and their parents to attend the first session; time, date/day. If possible send a reminder the day before as well and if you have built strong relationships with the schools you could ask if you can make another announcement in school or send a letter out to parents.



When looking at application forms, the key indicator for motivation is the amount of effort learners have put into their forms. Forms with one-line answers or responses that haven't been clearly copied or not well considered should be put aside. . Disregard spelling or writing competence; remember the importance of not selecting learners based on already-achieved academic performance. You're looking for the learners who've thought about what they're saying and are taking the time and effort to communicate their motivation, even if it is badly written.



## Tip

You must set a clear deadline for ALL applications to be in. After this deadline you can put learners on a waiting list for the following term. Not enforcing this deadline will weaken learner's commitment, adherence to deadlines, and threaten the effectiveness of your programme.



## Note

Previous learners keep their place on the basis of their commitment the previous year. They do not need to go through an additional enrolment processes.

**Templates/resources: Learner application form; Indemnity Form; Presentation for Learner Recruitment**



## Introduce Learners

You have done the hard part if you have successfully received completed application forms from learners and you have invited them to the first session. However, there are a few more basic steps to take right at the beginning that will make your life much easier in the long run.

Use the first tutoring session to establish relationships between the learners and tutors. Play ice-breaker games, develop a code of conduct, discuss expectations, play more games. Use this time to create a safe space between the learners, tutors and staff. Doing this step right will aid the implementation of both peer learning and tutor pedagogy.

### Preparation Checklist

- Printed sheet of learner and parent's names and contact details
- Flip chart paper
- Koki pens

### Templates/Resources: Ice-breakers

Begin the session by playing an ice-breaker game with the learners and tutors. You can find some suggested games in the ice-breaker and game pack. This will help everybody to relax and get to know the each other.

Then introduce the tutoring programme – why are you doing it? What are you doing it for? How are you doing it? What impact do you hope to achieve? The most important thing to stress the 75% attendance requirement.

i.e. 75% attendance means that if a learner misses 1 session every week for the term they will be kicked off the programme – they must attend ALL sessions. Explain that you will take attendance at every session and will let the learner and parent know if attendance is falling below 80% - so they have a chance to improve before being kicked-off the programme.

Remind learners that they have been selected and it is now their responsibility to show up, not the tutors'. You must also explain that parents can excuse their children if they call ahead of time or submit a signed letter outlining their reason for absence afterwards.



Create a 'Code of Conduct/expectation contract' with the learners and parents which will be the first step towards getting their ownership and buy-in and if they are part of creating the rules they are more likely to follow them! It is also a great chance for you to hear from them what they expect and it may challenge some of your assumptions.

How-To Guide: Code of Conduct/expectation contract how to guide

Example: Expectations



## Tip

Before everyone leaves make sure you have reminded them of the next session of tutoring and get every parent and learner to check their contact details on the sheet



## Note

Attendance will not be great in the first term but **Don't panic!**

Learners often sign up but then forget, or realise that there are clashes with other clubs. Regardless of this absence it is extremely important that you stay consistent. Show up on time every time. Whether you have 2 or 20 learners remember that you can make a difference to those present. You may find that you need to do another round of reminders and calling of parents or visiting schools before you really see attendance being high and consistent. Word of mouth is the greatest of all marketing strategies so as long as the learners who show up are getting what you promised than just persevere and news will spread.

At the first tutoring session after the introduction it is important to establish a structure. Learners come in, register, and specify what they are studying. Establishing a culture of learning where learners come in and self-organise into effective study groups, get their books out, work quietly together and raise their hands to ask questions is a long-term vision. Do not expect this to happen overnight.

To begin with it will be your responsibility to group learners. There are numerous ways to do this and it is really up to you to find out what works for your group. You will probably want to test a couple of different ways and observe the dynamics of the group.

Most branches and organisations generally group by grade and then subject. However, you will sometimes find it is beneficial to mix grades so as to facilitate peer-learning. You may also find that if learners are not focusing they will need to be separated from their classmates.

If you are dealing with learners from different schools it is advisable to try to mix them as far as possible. This is beneficial from a social and academic development perspective. Learners will often resist this at first and there can be conflict so keep a careful eye.

