

How to run a Political Hotseat

What is a Political Hotseat?

A Political Hotseat is an event that puts politicians or experts in the hotseat to answer questions led by the public, and to hear from key stakeholders on actions they'd like to see on a range of issues. Through Hotseat events, children, young people and community groups (the stakeholders), lead the discussion. Because the voting age is 18 in Aotearoa, hotseats can provide the opportunity to allow people under 18 years to share their voice, and seek discussion and commitments from politicians on issues that they want to see action on.

A Hotseat is a panel discussion where stakeholders, including children and youth, ask questions to political candidates on issues youth believe are important and are keen to see political action on. The stakeholders decide the speaking format, the issues they want to raise, and politicians they'd like to invite to participate.

Hotseats can be held in-person or online. Both formats have strengths and challenges, so determining your goals on the audience you'd like to reach, and the format you best think people can engage with this event, can help decide which approach to take.

For example, hosting with the support of a school as an in-person event enables many community members to attend and learn about an issue and challenge MPs to take action on important issues. In-person events can be valuable community strengthening opportunities and are a great way to engage with local politicians.

Hosting online can include a more geographically diverse range of people as they can watch anywhere, from their device and reduces costs or time required to attend an event in person. An online event may be more likely to enable Members of Parliament to attend, or experts from a wider geographic area. Recording the event can also mean that it can be watched again at a later date.

It is important to consider how to make your event inclusive - this could be through captions, a sign language interpreter, and ensuring the event is culturally inclusive.

Case Study: Y-Vote Hotseat

For youth week 2023, Save the Children NZ and Make it 16 partnered to run a political hot-seat to discuss changing the voting age to 16. By using an online platform, a wide audience was reached across the country, and politicians from all over Aotearoa were able to attend. This is an affordable option for wide engagement. Watch this hotseat [here](#) to learn more about the format we used.

The host, Lola, is a young person and directly impacted by the issue being discussed. The panelists are passionate young people who are engaged in the cause. The panelists developed their own questions and were supported, not directed by Save the Children, this is essential to ensuring authentic youth voice.



Watch the Y-Vote panel [here](#)





1. Decide on a date for the event, leave enough time to invite participants to be on the panel, both young people and politicians.
2. Decide on a location. Schools and community centre's are great options for in-person events.
3. If online, decide on online tools such as Zoom or a webinar app. Zoom has a webinar tool.
4. Invite participants to be on the panel, youth and politicians or experts. You can contact politicians and experts directly via their listed email addresses. Don't be intimidated, they love to be included in these events!
5. Secure a facilitator to lead the event and facilitate the discussion – if it is a youth discussion, we suggest this role is filled by a young person.
6. When the panel members have been appointed, take time to decide on the issues the Hotseat will focus on and the questions the panelists are keen to ask.
7. Decide on the speaking format, and use this to shape the event.
8. Develop a run-sheet so all participants know what to expect.
9. Promote the event to your audience - reach out to partners to share the event with their supporters too. Give as much time as possible for promotion.
10. Decide if you'll invite media to an in-person event.
11. Considering running a practice session with panelists and to allow them to meet each other.
12. During the practice session, test sound, lighting and tech elements.
13. After the Hotseat, follow up and thank participants. Young panelists may appreciate a certificate for their contribution.

COP27 Hotseat

In the lead up to COP27, Save the Children NZ invited Minister for Climate Change James Shaw to speak with young people about their climate concerns and questions, ahead of the delegation's travel to the summit.

Watch this hotseat [here](#).



Youth Week 2022

Inspired by the theme “Taringa Whakaarongo ki te reo o ngā taiohi” our Youth Panel asked questions on a range of topics that matter to them and their peers, such as climate change, housing, poverty and health.

Watch this hotseat [here](#).

