

CALIFORNIA CITY YOUTH COUNCILS

August 3, 2015
Merced City Council

WHO ARE THEY?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Berkeley | 13. Lafayette |
| 2. Brentwood | 14. Lathrop |
| 3. Burbank | 15. Monrovia |
| 4. Burlingame | 16. Palm Desert |
| 5. Ceres | 17. Salinas |
| 6. Chula Vista | 18. San Carlos |
| 7. Danville | 19. San Mateo |
| 8. Dublin | 20. Tracy |
| 9. Folsom | 21. Turlock |
| 10. Foster City | 22. Union City |
| 11. Fremont | 23. Vista |
| 12. Gilroy | 24. Walnut |
| | 25. West Covina |
| | 26. Yuba City |

- **Master list of 87 California city councils provided by Institute for Local Government**
- **26 youth councils responded to telephone and email surveys [30%]**
- **Sizes of youth councils range from 5 to 63.**
- **The selection process and formal roles varied.**

Why Do We Need a Youth Council?

- To represent the voice of youth in city decisions
- To promote youth civic engagement

What Are Other Youth Councils Doing?

- Hosting social events (32%)
- Volunteering and community service (31%)
- Raising money for events and scholarships (28%)
- Organizing youth leadership summits and forums to identify youth needs and priorities (27%)



YOUTH COUNCILS AND CITY OFFICIALS INTERACTION

- Report on projects
- Presentations about community service
- Attend community events
- Some of the Youth Council and City Council have liaisons who attend each others meetings.
- Some of the Youth Council and City Council members sit on planning committees together.

Noteworthy Accomplishments

- Burlingame, Palm Desert, and City of Walnut have made anti-bullying campaigns.
- Corona had youth community service to help victims of domestic violence.
- Folsom built a teen center.
- San Carlos aided with banning plastic bags. They also held a forum called “Schooling the Schools” to discuss achievement gaps.
- San Mateo wrote a comprehensive transgender and gender non-conforming policy for the school districts.



How to Be a Better Representative for Youth

- We suggest that the youth council members take advantage of local volunteer opportunities to perhaps foster service-based learning and community engagement.
- Also the YC could organize their own teen summits and discussion forums to outreach and engage with other youth in the city.



Training

- 77% of the Youth councils in our study received some formal training
 - Training is mostly by a city staff or liaison or through direct experience.
 - The Brown Act and bylaws of the City Council.



How Youth Councils Increased Participation and Interest

- Community Outreach
 - Reached out to middle schools, sporting events and educational events
 - Gave surveys at schools and talk about issues in groups
 - Post flyers and posters in schools
- Incentives
 - Fundraise for scholarships
 - Free food
 - Field trips
 - Conferences
 - Events and Entertainment



How did they create more cohesion among the youth council members

- Youth have formal supervision
- Create group activities (ice breakers)
- External efforts of friendship
- 75% City Youth Councils that responded say they had problems with group cohesion.
- The main issues dealt with:
 - Punctuality and Attendance
 - Getting to know one another
 - Lack of commitment and disinterest of students
 - Lack of leadership



Challenges for Youth Councils

1. Not focusing on serious issues
2. Lack of community partnerships
3. Lack of decision making authority
4. Lack of group cohesion
5. Difficulty mobilizing youth and participation
6. Lack of youth representation
7. Limited staff and training
8. Lack of funding



Key Lessons

- There are discrepancies between what Youth Councils do and what Youth Councils are meant to do [Mission].
- Youth Councils should have more support to serve as a better voice for the youth.



Recommendations for Youth Council

- Support youth council to serve as a better voice for youth
- Youth council can get involved with issues such as environmental sustainability, health, and safety.
- Provide incentives for youth council members as well as city youth to increase participation.
- Reinforce team building for youth council, the need for commitment to full participation, and leadership

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Thank you for your time and attention.

For more information contact:
mercedyouthfund@gmail.com