



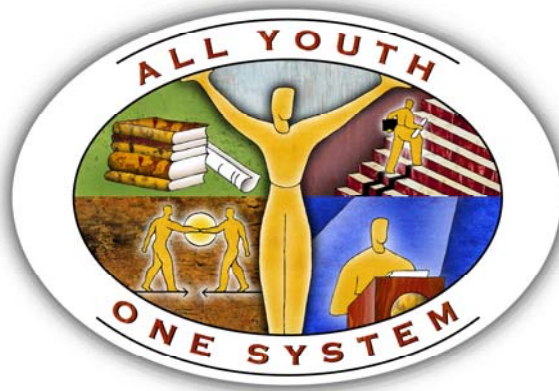
YCIDEAS

*A Compilation of Promising Practices from Youth Councils throughout California
2001-2005*

Youth Council Institute

Chapter One

Convening Local Leadership to Take Action



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Expanding Participation through RFP Process

Youth Council: The Youth Council of San Luis Obispo County

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Coordinating Youth Services

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The Youth Council of San Luis Obispo County faced two challenges. The first was that they wanted to ensure broader awareness of WIA services for youth, and expand participation by increasing the numbers of community organizations providing WIA services. In order to engage more agencies, they decided to create a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The challenge with the new RFP process was to create a system that would involve the Youth Council in designing and managing this process, yet ensure that those Council members who would be submitting a bid would not be included in either the development of the RFP or the review of the submitted bids.

The second challenge the Youth Council dealt with over the past year was the fact that their mission and goals needed to be broader than solely WIA.

The Practices, Details, and Evidence: In order to address the challenge of avoiding conflicts of interest, the Youth Council created a RFP design team that did not include Council members who were going to submit bids to provide services. To help promote a broader “buy in” and understanding of the RFP process, the design team included non-Council members.

Help with the challenge of expanding their mission and goals beyond WIA came from the Council’s outreach to other agencies and initiatives in San Luis Obispo County. Once the RFP process was in place and proposals were submitted, the RFP design team reviewed them. In the course of reading all the proposals, members were able to access a more global view of what needs to be in place for all youth in San Luis Obispo County.

Another experience helped Youth Council members clarify their ideas for expanding their mission and goals. The Youth Council became involved in the Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) process, an initiative designed to help counties strengthen the transition supports they provide for foster youth preparing to emancipate. Youth Council members were able to participate in the initial YTAT launch meeting in San Luis Obispo, which provided the opportunity to weigh in on ideas and discuss where to go from there. Through inclusion in these YTAT meetings, Youth Council members understood that the groups are all involved with attaining the same goals and by working together, they could align the mandated structures that exist (Youth Council, Youth Transition Action Team, and Children’s Services Council) to serve youth. This experience helped the Council members to come to an understanding of the All Youth One System (AYOS) perspective.

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Council members still feel as though they are in the fledgling stages of learning from and sharing with other groups. Through the Youth Council's involvement with the San Luis Obispo Youth Transition Action Team, however, there exists the strong possibility to learn from and share with other YTAT teams throughout the state of California and to join forces on policy and strategic planning issues that have an impact on the lives of youth. According to Wendy Wendt, WIB Consultant, by coming together at the Youth Transition Team Meetings, "We can begin to think consciously about how we can be maintaining a common conversation and moving forward in the same direction that is complementary to the efforts."

The RFP has proven to be a positive process because more youth will end up being served since the number of organizations that won a contract has increased, resulting in more players on the field and more youth being served.

The RFP process also opened the doors for Youth Council members (again, who were not applying for the funding) to take a leadership role in having new youth serving organizations access funding for services for youth.

Breakthrough Moment: Participation in the Youth Transition Action Team (YTAT) has become an activity that individuals and groups could mobilize around. "We were excited about the possibilities that exist to join forces, work together, and make connected strides to get to where we need to be for youth," said Wendt.

What's Next for this YCidea? Youth Council members will participate in monitoring and evaluating the programs that emerged or continued as a result of the RFP process over the year.

In terms of the second challenge, reworking their mission and goals, it remains to be seen what will happen. Wendt stated, "We will continue to identify ways to streamline and calibrate efforts with the Youth Council, YTAT, and the Children's Services Network with the ongoing goal of making life better for youth!"

Where to Go for More Information

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Youth Council Committee Structure Aligned to AYOS Elements

Youth Council: Tulare County Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: Although the WIB and Council had identified goals similar to those outlined in the YCi charts, the work had stalled because some of the tasks seemed overwhelming. After the Tulare County Workforce Investment Board (TCWIB) Youth Council team attended the YCi Strategic Planning Institute in January 2002, they determined that it was necessary to re-evaluate their governance and committee structure.

The Practice and Evidence: Working closely with the WIB and aligning with its goals, the Council shaped and unanimously approved a new committee structure around the YCi Elements of a Comprehensive System. The Youth Council has four primary committees, each focused on a quality element: Academic Excellence, Career Preparation, Youth Leadership and Development, and Support Services (Youth Development and Support).

Each of these committees is responsible for the functions of its work: coordinating services, convening the community, measuring quality, and promoting policy. The Chair of each committee is responsible for leading strategic planning efforts and reporting to the Council Executive Committee on a monthly basis.

The WIB and Council collaborated to further develop the WIB committees that affect youth and established standards ensure fair and consistent representation of Youth Council members on those committees.

The WIB Program Committee, comprised of WIB Directors and Youth Council members, now handles the procurement for the Council, reducing the potential for conflicts of interest and unfair advantage with providers who are also Council members. Providers now play a more prominent role in educating the Council by giving presentations at each Council meeting.

The new governance structure allows for greater focus as well as increased opportunities for informing and integrating the youth community.

Because community partners are more comfortable with the structure, relationships have blossomed. The County Probation Department has become more involved, which has resulted in a more integrated partnership for funding opportunities.

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The new system better embraces and integrates the key tenets of the two founding groups of the Council, School-to-Career, and the Tulare County Community Youth Coalition, and it provides a better environment for their work to blend. Above all, Youth Council and WIB meetings are more efficient, with committees that drive the work and support the system.

Members of the WIB and the Council are embracing the concepts of a comprehensive youth system. Already, the Council is seeing signs of better convening, linking services, and quality measurements. Youth Council members sit side-by-side with WIB members on WIB committees, creating a vital information and communications link that informs both the WIB and the Council. Because members are in committees for which they volunteered, they actively participate with natural interest.

Details: Aligning the Youth Council Committees to the Elements of a Comprehensive Youth-Serving System has been successful and sustainable. According to Eldonna Caudill, WIB Liaison and Senior Analyst, “The intent would be that most of the work would be done in committee rather than on the Council.” Streamlining activities to the targeted focus of each Committee allowed monthly Youth Council meetings to be focused on strategies, checking in on progress of the workplan, and hearing presentations from other youth programs. Caudill adds, “We didn’t want the Youth Council to keep growing in size, but we wanted to allow for community members to participate in an ad hoc sort of way. We get better input and broader buy-in without making the Youth Council grow too large.” Most of the work generally happens outside of the Youth Council meetings and reports are brought back to the larger group for approval or re-vamping.

The Committees for the Youth Council delegate specific details and issues to those most experienced in handling them. Listed below are the Youth Council Committees, their key areas of focus, and other details:

- **Academic Excellence Committee:** Tutoring, scholarships, after-school programs, and preparation for and knowledge of educational and career options. This Committee is linked to the county-wide education committee that operates out of a county-wide group already in place. Caudill explains, “They bring back information to the Youth Council specific to education. This allows us to discuss things in a different way because the education folks have a different perspective. Then the Youth Council members go back to these ‘big picture’ meetings and offer more input aligned with WIB, Youth Council, and workforce development strategies.”
- **Career Preparation Committee:** Career awareness and preparation, youth employment, job shadowing, and vocational training. The local School-to-Career Board adopted the Youth Council as their decision-making body and dissolved the previous board. This Committee also has the largest representation, including all of the local Chambers, the Economic Development Corporation, Regional Occupational Programs, community-based organizations, and local community colleges.

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- **Youth Leadership and Development Committee:** Leadership training and opportunities, mentoring, and service learning/community service. This Committee provides an interactive environment for youth engagement in Youth Council activities. They have conducted focus groups with youth and utilize youth to guide curriculum and trainers for youth programs.
- **Support Services Committee:** Child care, counseling, health care, housing, and transportation. Currently this Committee is focused on support for foster youth, and is working to develop partnerships with social service agencies. The committee members have also worked on resource mapping and strengthening partnerships and supportive services.

In addition to the Youth Council Committees, the following WIB committees conduct work for both the local board and Youth Council and have at least one but more often several representatives of the Youth Council on them:

- Evaluation and Oversight Committee
- Program Committee (Procurement)
- Marketing Committee
- Employment Connection Council
- WIB Executive Committee

Breakthrough Moment: Caudill says their breakthrough happened when the “School-to-Career folks developed a Committee and they had met some, but [the STC Director] still had a separate board. But after a couple of meetings, they decided to dissolve their School-to-Career Board through the local Office of Education and adopt the Youth Council as the board.”

Another breakthrough occurred when they figured out how to engage youth, notes Caudill. She explains that creating a Youth Leadership Committee allowed them to “to bring youth in a decision-making capacity that is more focused on work and results rather than ‘brown act committee stuff.’ That was really big to me. And that’s the place where we go to engage youth in special projects, allowing them to drive the design with adult staff in a role as mentors and guides.”

What’s Next for this YCidea? The Council members feel that with a solid, efficient organizational structure with good communication channels, they can now tackle their many program, operational, and administrative priorities. Ongoing evaluation and fine-tuning of their new governance structure is planned.

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Where to Go for More Information

Tulare County Workforce Investment Board Youth Council

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SNIPPET

Engaging the Community and Youth Leaders as Members of the Youth Council

Youth Council: The Teen Employment Network of the Carson/Lomita/Torrance Investment Network Board

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The vision for youth that the Teen Employment Network (TEN) has adopted is “Every young person shall have access to the resources needed to successfully transition into a productive and meaningful working adulthood.” Their mission is to “establish a collaborative network for local organizations and educational institutions that support the well being of youth, promote lifelong learning, and offer opportunities for young people to conduct wide-ranging explorations of career and educational options.” TEN members were pleased to have pooled their perspectives and knowledge, but wanted to include more members of the community, including youth, in order to be more effective.

The Practice and Evidence: TEN strengthened the leveraging power of their membership by building and leaning upon the expertise of their community and its youth. The Council understands that all youth-serving partners bring something to the table when they can, and when it’s needed, so Council members make a point to give credit to the organizations they engage. As a result, partners and individuals are willing to fully support the TEN. The Council has also increased the number of active youth members from four to seven.

This extended collaboration has resulted in new, youth-focused projects:

- The City of Torrance, the City’s Parks and Recreation Department, and the TEN are partnering to create a satellite Work Source/One-Stop Center for teens. It will be the first such office solely dedicated to youth in the region.
- The Marketing and Outreach Committee is leading the effort to reconstruct the youth web site to make it more user-friendly for young people.

The Details: A few strategies have emerged that have worked especially well for the TEN:

- Both the WIB and the Youth Council have intentionally engaged local elected officials who have a genuine desire to help youth as members. This includes mayors, council members, and legislators, all of whom have been invaluable, going to bat for the TEN and unifying the area’s diverse, three-city community.

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- Regional city leaders, EDD, Parks and Recreation, and in particular, school districts have been critical partners, resulting in countless programs, linkages, and leveraging resources.
- The TEN's two subcommittees, Research and Development as well as Marketing, are chaired by youth and mentored by adults. Although the youth are not paid for their service, they do receive school credit.
- The TEN impresses upon the youth that they are needed and that they are the future.
- The TEN recruits youth from a variety of backgrounds to get different perspectives on how to better serve young people. Because of this strategy, the TEN assures itself that it will receive unique, qualified viewpoints on what it's like to be a youth in the area and the types of services/programs that are needed.
- The TEN utilized the local Youth Employment Opportunities Program (YEOP). The interaction with this agency has been essential to the success of local youth programs, especially in engaging youth and youth leadership.

Where to Go for More Information

The Teen Employment Network of the Carson/Lomita/Torrance Investment Network Board

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Tools

Program information, links and resources available at
<http://www.careerzone.torrnet.com>

SNIPPET

Enhancing Youth Council Participation in Rural Areas

Youth Council: Golden Sierra Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The Golden Sierra Youth Council is a sub-committee of the Golden Sierra WIB. This Youth Council is made up of members from five counties that are very spread out: Placer, Nevada, El Dorado, Alpine, and Sierra. The main problem that has inhibited the work of this Youth Council over the past year is the distance Council members must travel for meetings. The least distance traveled is one hour, with the majority traveling two to three hours each way in order to attend a one- or two-hour meeting. This distance inhibits consistent member engagement with one another. The Youth Council members are dedicated and want to work together, but they had not been able to come up with a solution to adequately address the problem of distance.

The Practices or Evidence: Council members were made aware of the potentials of using a “bridge line” which allows for conference calling among members. The line would be purchased and “sited” at Placer County and the Youth Council members would dial in on a stated date/time and hold their meeting. Agenda would be distributed prior to the Youth Council meeting with all members having input regarding the agenda. The Golden Sierra Youth Council feels their capacity to meet regularly, identify areas of concern and connection, and work towards identified goals can be accomplished by adding a bridge line.

This phone conferencing method will make it possible for the Youth Council to meet monthly to work on targeted areas of concern.

Where to Go for More Information

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SNIPPET

Engaging Diverse Council Members from throughout the Community

Youth Council: Merced County Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach, Youth Leadership

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: Merced County has the youngest median age in the country, creating a unique challenge for its Youth Council. The Merced County Youth Council feels it is their role to build community-wide consensus to promote and support an integrated youth service delivery system that ensures each youth receives the needed support. In order to create that consensus most effectively, Council members saw that they needed to engage community leaders from throughout the community and create a Council structure and process that would maximize each member's contributions.

The Practices, Details, and Evidence: The Council increased its effectiveness through various collaboration and engagement strategies. First, the Council worked toward a diverse Council membership by providing collaboration opportunities that also meet the needs of potential members. For example, it offered to link its future website to faith-based organizations in exchange for sharing their extensive databases. The faith-based groups, pleased with the opportunity, agreed. In addition, the Council teamed with the local ROP youth committee and asked them to recruit youth to the Youth Council. Youth on the Council were assigned two adult members to support them with transportation, follow-up, and leadership opportunities. Furthermore, the Council provided them with the same full training as Workforce Investment Board members receive, including training in Robert's Rules of Order. The Council also highlighted youth as public speakers, getting them out into the community.

Another key engagement strategy was to place the power of the Council in the committees; recommendations flow from the committee level up to the Council for action. This structure ensured that each member has valuable and engaging work, and each committee has its own goals, enabling them to move quickly and efficiently. The five active committees are 1) Executive, 2) Planning and Quality Assurance, 3) Operations, 4) Marketing and Leadership, and 5) Outreach and Education.

The diversity of members and their high levels of engagement resulted in growth and expansion of the Council and its capacity to leverage resources and serve the community's youth. The committees have been especially effective. For example, teamwork between the Youth Leadership Committee and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program resulted in the marketing and presentation of a teen pregnancy video at no cost to the community. The Outreach and

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Education Committee members and the Council developed a Statewide Conference for Youth on Youth Councils.

Development of leadership skills among youth members of the Council also expanded their capacity to participate in civic activities. For example, a Merced youth was selected as one of 14 national finalists to attend a conference in Washington D.C. to discuss national issues.

Where to Go for More Information Although these practices were instituted early on, information is still available:

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SNIPPET

Engaging the Community to Plan for New Two-Year Plan

Youth Council: Sacramento Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The WIA authorization cycle was coming to a close in June of 2005, and the incoming Department of Labor Strategic Vision for Delivery of Youth Services and California's corresponding Two-year plan put greater emphasis on special populations. The Sacramento Youth Council was faced with the challenge of planning its strategies to address the new WIA reauthorization.

The Practice and Evidence: In order to prepare for working with the new DOL Strategic Vision and California's Two-Year Plan, the Sacramento Works Youth Council engaged the community in a youth planning process during 2004-2005 to address the upcoming WIA reauthorization. The Youth Council conducted several public meetings to engage the current and potential providers, community stakeholders, youth, and parents in this process.

In addition, the Sacramento Community Services Planning Council (CSPC) provided analysis and maps identifying high-risk factors for youth in the Sacramento community. From these risk factors, CSPC identified the top 20 high-risk neighborhoods. Results of these findings were published on both the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) and CSPC websites and were used to determine the 2005-2006 funding recommendations.

Where to Go for More Information

Sacramento Youth Council

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Tool

[High-risk factors for youth in Sacramento](http://www.seta.net/pdfs/cspc_setapresentation_110404.pdf)
(http://www.seta.net/pdfs/cspc_setapresentation_110404.pdf)

SNIPPET

Engaging Community Partners to Join the Youth Council

Youth Council: San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council is about all youth, regardless of funding sources. Their mission is “To build a universal access workforce development system for youth.” “What do we want for our youth?” was the primary question driving their strategic planning. A crucial follow-on question was “How can the Youth Council function best in order to create the supports we want for our young people?”.

The Practice and Evidence: The Youth Council identified several practices that helped them work towards accomplishing their mission.

First, they found that a diverse membership of a wide variety of community leaders to be critical to building a system for all youth. Business leaders were especially valuable participants. Members from the businesses sector helped move the work of the Council along, and without them, Council processes became stalled. They also found that staff members who had experience in the business sector added a real bonus.

Second, they incorporated a powerful partnership that already existed. Using the School-to-Career partnership as the Council core, they transferred School-to-Career activities to the Youth Council and held an intentional focus on education.

Third, they recognized that having an effective Council committee structure would help them carry out their work. In the system they created, the full Youth Council meets every other month and the executive committee, a small, highly engaged group of five, meets monthly. Meetings then started to be focused on progress and action.

Fourth, they saw that the executive committee had to provide strong leadership. Their executive committee has not been afraid to acknowledge needed improvements, which has proven to be highly beneficial and has resulted in accelerated progress of the Council’s work. They embraced the idea of adapting their plans. Periodically, they found it necessary to dismantle and re-build the strategic plan is necessary. They reported that it felt like they were starting over, but that is part of the process.

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Where to Go for More Information
San Diego School-to-Career Youth Council

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SNIPPET

Forming Subcommittees to Address Practitioner Challenges

Youth Council: Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The mission of the Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition (VSTCC) is “To foster community collaborations among Verdugo area schools, youth service organizations and business as partners for planning policy, programs and support services that respond to changing workforce needs.” However, the VSTCC found that issues arise while practitioners are implementing the work of WIA. When the entire Verdugo Coalition tries to resolve these issues, their discussions tend to stall.

The Practice and Evidence: The Verdugo Coalition has developed an Ad Hoc Advocacy Subcommittee to address the providers’ implementation issues. The Subcommittee avoids dealing with local management issues. Rather, it articulates program implementation difficulties that are embedded in the enabling legislation and regulations of the youth workforce program funding sources, including WIA.

By forming the Subcommittee, the Verdugo Coalition intends to keep certain issues from stalling the progress of discussions at regular Coalition meetings.

The Details: The Coalition assigns issues to the specialized group of practitioners who really understand the details of WIA and who are dedicated to researching the complex system of interactions.

The Subcommittee creates statements that articulate identified problems so that the Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition can request and recommend advocacy positions to be taken by members of the Verdugo Workforce Investment Board.

Where to Go for More Information

Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition

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SNIPPET

Supporting Buy-in from Community Decision-Makers

Youth Council: Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition

Element: Comprehensive Approach

Function: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

Subject: Convening Local Leadership to Take Action

The Challenge: The Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition is committed to “Preparing tomorrow's workforce.” Their mission is to “foster community collaborations among Verdugo area schools, youth service organizations and business as partners for planning policy, programs and support services that respond to changing workforce needs.” Coalition members established that it is important to convene the right people in order to create a solid foundation for the Coalition’s future. Their ability to function effectively as a clearinghouse, Coordinating services, and maneuver through WIA regulations depends on buy-in and support from a diverse group of community decision-makers. The challenge was how to best engage the most effective partners.

The Practice and Evidence: The Coalition conducted an initial Youth Summit, an important, focused, televised panel designed to gain the attention of the highest level representatives in their community: business leaders, city council members, community college trustees, government agency officials, district administrators, and so forth, as well as the larger community. A key method was to produce a program on the local cable television network in which youth explained the benefits they gained through participation in jobs programs; also, the Coalition Chairman introduced the organization and local youth jobs programs.

This strategy is not yet fully implemented; however, it responds directly to the identified youth-serving system needs of the region. Information and feedback collected through the Youth Summit process are discussed at Coalition meetings. The strategic plan, programs, and priorities of the Coalition have been influenced as a result of the initial Summit. Follow-up with the local leaders continues to be important, as has been developing strategies to keep leaders engaged in an ongoing way.

What’s Next for this YCidea? Related future goals include discussion of how key youth organizations might coordinate services, address gaps in services and resources, and how the Coalition can maximize impact. By opening the pathways of communication between the Coalition and powerful community representatives, the Coalition hopes to broaden the knowledge of its work as well as enhance its potential to influence community policy and to stimulate more local job opportunities for youth.

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Where to Go for More Information

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