
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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