
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>