



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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