



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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