



SNIPPET

Utilizing a Youth Interest Survey and Report to Analyze Needs and Gaps in Services

Youth Council: Fresno County Youth Council

Elements: Youth Leadership, Comprehensive Approach

Function: Measuring Quality and Impact of Local Efforts, Coordinating Youth Services

Subjects: Resource Mapping, Youth Involvement

The Challenge: The mission of the Fresno Youth Council is “To serve as a catalyst to mobilize and integrate all private and public partners to effectively educate, train and place youth with the necessary resources and skills to fulfill employer needs.” Recent demographic data indicate that Fresno County has the highest percentage of under-eighteen residents in the State, and that the unemployment rate for youth ages 16-19 is 22.9 percent. Given their mission and the conditions youth were facing in their County, the Fresno Youth Council members found their first task was to identify priorities. When they first approached the question of what services to support, Council members realized they did not know what youth in their community wanted or needed.

The Practice and Evidence: One of the first activities of the Fresno Youth Council was to conduct a Youth Interest Survey in September 2000. The purpose was to gain an understanding of what youth wanted in terms of services and the priority of those services. Nine hundred thirty-three youth, primarily non-WIA, completed a questionnaire asking what they felt their interests were, based on existing services. In July 2001, five focus group sessions were conducted, attracting 100 participants. These sessions provided youth with an opportunity to discuss whether current services were effective and how the delivery of those services could be improved.

The following were results of the Council’s efforts to survey their youth:

- The two processes, the survey and the focus groups, helped to activate the voice of youth for Fresno County.
- The information from the Youth Interest Survey motivated the Council to reevaluate provider contracts. They augmented funding to expand work experience, occupational training, and leadership, and now require that 65 percent of the funds are to be used in those areas.
- The Council saw an increase in activities for youth. One thousand seven hundred youth were involved in work experience last year, up 36 percent from 1,089 in 2000, and 1,200 in leadership activities, up 60 percent from 719 in 2000.
- The results of the summary helped the Council and youth leadership to enhance and directly market those services that youth seemed to need the most.
- The Council has recognized the invaluable benefit of engaged youth contributing to and sometimes taking lead on projects and management of the Youth Council.

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The Details: Once the survey and focus groups were completed, a document titled Voice of Youth Needs Assessment Report was developed from an analysis of the collected data. The report indicated the five areas of identified need: jobs, education, guidance and support, personal community development, and individual services for all youth.

It also showed that, with the exception of schools, youth felt they had no consistent place to go in the county for information they need. In general, young people responded that they felt that services were not coordinated.

Next, the Voice of Youth Needs Assessment Report was used to develop a Youth Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire. The two youth representatives on the Youth Council were very instrumental in crafting the draft. A draft was then introduced to youth in seven focus sessions conducted throughout the county. In these sessions, youth had the opportunity to review the questionnaire draft and comment on content, relevance, and language used, ensuring that the tool would be effective for young people. The tool was then distributed to 133 youth.

Where to Go for More Information

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