

What is a Mayor's Youth Council?

A Mayor's Youth Council is a group of young people working toward the common purpose of developing their individual leadership skills to strengthen their communities through volunteer service and increased communication with municipal leaders. Youth develop and lead initiatives with the support of adult mentors. A Mayor's Youth Council is more than just a service club because members determine to train and involve their peers in service leadership. They also provide valuable insight on issues affecting youth and the community.



What do Mayor's Youth Councils do?

- Raise youth related issues with community leaders
- Event management grant writing/giving
- Training for peers
- Practice public speaking
- Recruiting volunteers
- Volunteer newsletters
- Youth forums
- Training for teachers/organizations
- Speaker bureaus-Bringing in experts on a subject
- Service Projects
- National Day of Service
- Advice Sharing

What do Mayor's Youth Councils look like?

- They can represent cities, communities, regions, schools, organizations, and states
- They are hosted by many different groups, including cities, offices of volunteerism, governor's offices, state commissions, volunteer centers, schools, United Ways, non-profits, etc.
- They generally have 15-25 members
- They meet weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly
- Members serve 1-2 year terms or until they are out of high school



Five Steps to Building a Mayor's Youth Council

1. Build a Framework

To begin, gather a group of young people and one or two adults. This group should start to define the structure of the Mayor's Youth Council. They should cover all of the logistics of the Council, including length of term of service and criteria for membership such as age, geography, and experience in service.

2. Find the Money

With your structure in mind, consider what funding will be needed to cover expenses, such as training, travel, materials and supplies. You may also want to assign a staff person for your Mayor's Youth Council.

3. Recruit Broadly

It is often very easy for a city to draw from students who have been involved in the past and are very visible in their community. It is also beneficial to send applications to all junior high and high schools in the area. Your application will be unique to your city and what you want to accomplish with your Mayor's Youth Council. Make sure to include a section that asks for a thorough description of the applicant's service experience and lets the young person demonstrate their creativity, energy, and commitment.

4. Orient and Train

Once you have formed your Mayor's Youth Council, consider bringing them together for a long weekend of orientation and training. Training may include listening skills, group facilitation, problem solving, and public speaking to help to prepare them for their work. Team building exercises also help to build a sense of community and purpose. You may also want to set aside a time when adults and youth can do teambuilding exercises together.

5. Hurry up...

Although it takes time to set goals and develop a mission statement and structure, a balance between process and outcome must be struck. Let your group establish a pace at which it can work effectively. Everyone is busy and if it moves too slowly they may lose interest.

Tips for Involving Teens:

1. Include food at your meetings
2. Give them an opportunity to serve the community, through a service project or by serving on a commission
3. Provide an opportunity for them to learn
4. Make use of their opinions, skills and abilities
5. Hold them accountable and follow-up when they commit to something
6. Have them work in teams on projects
7. Keep the meeting moving forward but realize that meetings with teens may require redirection and nonlinear discussion
8. Keep their parents and guardians informed as to what is going on with the group through phone calls, newsletters and open meetings
9. Get to know the youth as individual people
10. Have FUN!!

Tips for Involving Youth in Local Government

The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow and it is vitally important to train and educate our youth at a young age as they move into leadership roles in the community.

1. Create a shadow council – who work with an individual City Council or Board member or city administrator and does a job shadow.
2. Start a youth advisory council – that serves as an advisory board to the city council on issues involving youth.
3. Appoint young people to local boards and commissions
4. Have an official youth seat on the city council
5. Hold a youth summit – where issues that effect youth are highlighted
6. Hold a shadow city election
7. Have a City Day – where municipal leaders meet with the youth in the community and learn what it is that the municipal leaders do and discuss issues in the community

Questions to Keep in Mind

A Mayor's Youth Council works to coordinate, advise, and activate peers and elders in issues affecting youth. The Council acts as a positive, influential, and energetic voice in affecting policies, and solutions to Mississippi's problems. Youth Councils are found in many segments of society. To be successful, a Mayor's Youth Council must be carefully thought out in everything from its purpose, to its role in city government, to its membership. Every city is unique and the Mayor's Youth Council must be tailored to fit your community's need. Below are questions to keep in mind when creating a Mayor's Youth Council.

General Considerations

- Will a Mayor's Youth Council support the mission of your city council?
- What is the purpose of the Mayor's Youth Council with in the City they serve?
- What kind of activities will the Mayor's Youth Council undertake?
- What will the Mayor's Youth Council be called?
- What are the goals of the Mayor's Youth Council?

Membership

- What benefits will youth representatives receive from serving on Youth Council?
- How many youth will serve on the Council?
- What age ranges will be represented on the Council?
- What is the Commitment expected out of youth representatives?

Recruitment

- What is the timeline for recruitment and selection?
- What is your plan for recruitment?
- How will you recruit diversely? (Culturally, socio-economically, geographically)

Application and Selection

- What will the application look like?
- Is the application accessible for young people with learning or other disabilities?
- What are your criteria for selection? (Skills, background, experience, residence)
- What is the selection process?
- Who will make the selections?

Host City

- Does the Mayor's Youth Council have a decision-making or advisory role with the host city?
- Are there specific responsibilities of the Mayor's Youth Council to the host city?
- Are there specific responsibilities of the host city to the Mayor's Youth Council?
- Will the Mayor's Youth Council have any staff to support it? What is there role?
- Will any money be budgeted for the Mayor's Youth Council and its goals?

Glossary:

Mission – A brief description of what you will do and how you do it.

Vision – The reason you exist. Something short and sweet that captures people's imaginations.

Goals – the things you will be known for doing. Even though your specific strategies may change from year to year, three or four primary goals will be pretty constant.

Long range or overall Plan - Sets the community's vision for the future and covers all kinds of issues a community has to face.

Strategic Plan – Done to get everyone in the community focused on three or four really important things it needs to do to solve a crisis or make some big changes.

Comprehensive Plan – every city is required to have one of these to determine land uses and how the city will grow. Most do not include a youth component.

Accountability – doing what you've agreed to do, when you've agreed to do it.

Active Citizen – is a person who works with others to create change, or improve the world around them.

Allies – people who can help you reach your goal.