YOUTH COUNCIL GUIDE BOOK

ADVOCATING FOR YOUTH VOICE

Version 3.0

U State | **Extension** **UtahState**University

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE SERVICES

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This guidebook is an index of resources for advisors to use to create and strengthen youth councils. Whether a 4H club, youth city council, community youth coalition, or highschool club, it will provide helpful insights into how to create, operate, and thrive as a youth-led council.

Being a youth advisor can be overwhelming. There may be limited resources, funding, and training. There may be questions about how to recruit more youth, how to keep them engaged, how to help them feel ownership and belonging, how to plan effective community events, or how to encourage the council to truly be youth-led. The goal for this guidebook is to answer these kinds of questions so that advisors can address challenges and overcome obstacles while creating a successful youth council.

This guide is meant to enable advisors to support youth in developing their voices and empowering them to enact positive change in their communities. "We are not just here to build the leaders of tomorrow, we are here to empower the leaders of today." Youth have the passion and energy to make a difference. Advisors can provide them with the skills and tools to effectively achieve those goals.

Supplemental materials, worksheets, and in-depth resources can be found on the website: **https://extension.usu.edu/utah4h/more/TLT**

MODEL, ENGAGE, EMPOWER

The skills youth need to run a council need to be *modeled* to them before they are slowly *engaged* in opportunities to practice, and eventually *empowered* to feel competent and confident running the council on their own. Applying this model to a program happens over time and is enacted in 3 stages:

The **modeling** stage will begin with advisors, youth officers, and youth from past years demonstrating best practices and behaviors. They will model things like how to create an agenda, run a meeting, make a presentation, or manage a group. Teach by example how to build belonging, equity, inclusion, and develop as a team.

Engagement is about allowing the younger less experienced youth to help run parts of the council. Give them opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the group allowing them to build confidence as they learn to lead in the same ways they have seen others lead before.

The final stage of **empowering** happens when adult advisors begin encouraging youth to take over and allow them to plan and run meetings, events, and projects independently. Remember, it is less about teaching youth how to be the leaders of the future and more about empowering them to be the leaders of today.

"You can't be what you don't see. We need to see people who look like us, to have the vision to say, 'if she can do it, I can do it." -Elysia Cook

GETTING STARTED

At the beginning of each year, creating a positive environment and nurturing youth development is essential. By modeling effective practices, young people are empowered to build confidence and achieve their goals.

In the initial months, it's crucial to establish clear expectations, emphasize growth, and foster a sense of self-assurance within the group. An organized council, guided by one or more mentoring advisors, holds regular meetings, elects its own officers, plans activities, and engages in various programs.

SAMPLE CALENDAR

JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
- Recruitment - Identify Officers - (Tail end of year - Host summer events/service)	- Officer orientation/planning - Kick off meeting (open house) - Establish expectations - Teach Equity and Belonging	- Host a fall retreat (Orientation) - Possible subjects to Teach: Team Building & Group Dynamics

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
- Possible subjects to Teach: Brainstorming & Planning an Event - Brainstorm Events & Service - Plan fall service	- Possible subjects to Teach: Delegation and Group Dynamics - Refine Service Learning event	- Possible subjects to Teach: How to Present & Facilitation Techniques - Host service event

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
- Possible subjects to Teach: Identifying a Need & Forming Partnerships - Reflect on service and planning process	- Possible subjects to Teach: Group Management - Plan outreach event	- Possible subjects to teach: Service learning - Refine outreach event - Plan service learning

APRIL	MAY	JUNE
- Possible subjects to teach: Near-Peer Mentoring - Host outreach event	- Possible subjects to teach: Conflict Resolution - Host Service Learning event - Plan for summer events	- Reflection, Celebration, & Recognition - Refine summer events

RECRUITMENT

Effective recruitment is crucial for the success of any youth council. By implementing inclusive outreach methods and fostering a welcoming environment, councils can ensure that they not only draw in passionate individuals but also cultivate a space where all voices are heard.

BAIT

- People want to be associated with credibility and are attracted to a good reputation
- Make the benefits of joining clear– resume boosts, scholarships, tangible skills, a network, unique experiences and belonging.
- Put the social benefits first (friends, fun) and advertise the subject matter as a secondary benefit (leadership skills, opportunities)

PROMOTE

- Advertise the group as a fun program that adds value to young lives. Use appealing pictures (Think Army Strong commercials)
- Combat misperceptions and emphasize interesting activities and concepts. Show that the group doesn't fall into negative stereotypes.
- Partner with other groups or organizations and collaborate on recruitment tactics.

TARGET

- Approach specific individuals that would be an asset, or who the program would be most helpful to. Communicate the benefit they would be to the group.
- Encourage current members to bring friends or people they feel would enjoy being a part of the council.

PREPARE

- Establish standard meeting times and locations
- Communicate purpose and goals, and then prepare activities that are related to and facilitate them
- Prioritize youth voice, "validating the ideas, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences of youth"

ACTION	REASON	EXAMPLES
Develop a Junior Program	9-12 graders often have established their preferred activities. Target 6-8 graders who may be more open to new programs	Provide opportunities for 6-8 graders. Pair older members with their younger peers as "senior" and "junior" officers to involve these younger members in leadership roles.
Recruit Excellence	Dedicated youth will build the program and others in it.	Start looking at middle schoolers, utilize near-peer mentoring, recruit from family members, host service projects and recruit from those who take initiative.
Engage the Teens	Teens look for fun relationships and knowledge-- in that order	Advertise active and adventurous activities, share incentives (trips, dances, skills for resume boosting, scholarships, etc.)
Engage the Parents	Parents need to know that the program is worth their time.	Provide an annual schedule so they know what to expect, be transparent about costs, outline skills that will be taught, provide examples of past success.
Recruitment Events	Showcase what you and your group are doing.	Provide food and time for members to network, share the purpose of your group and photos of past experiences, give an example training of what you would do in meetings.
Fun & Meaningful meetings	The teens that attend will share their experiences with friends.	Include fun elements in every meeting: ice breakers, games, snacks. Hold trainings and discuss business but facilitate meetings in a fun way.
Retreats, Conferences and Camps	The group needs opportunities to bond.	Provide time away from electronics, time outside, time playing games, food, or overnight trips. Enroll in established programs (Teen Winter Retreat, Teen Summit, etc.)

EQUITY AND BELONGING

Equality means that each individual/group is given the same resources and opportunities. *Equity* recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates the resources and opportunities necessary to enable an equal outcome.

It can be a challenge to recruit individuals that will benefit most from the program. Here are some strategies to recruit youth from at-risk populations and how to make everyone feel a sense of belonging in the youth council.

- Prioritize recruiting those who could benefit most from the program, encourage members to befriend and invite people they think would enjoy and benefit from the council.
- Identify places where you will be able to find those individuals: events, libraries, boys and girls club, high schools, afterschool programs, etc.
- Provide for social connections between the youth. Create an environment where everyone feels included and loved within a culture of mutual trust and acceptance
- Train group members to recognize and seek to get to know people who are different from them.

Some youth face obstacles in coming to meetings. They may not have access to a ride, a phone, or a recent meal. Plan meetings at a time and location that is accessible to those youth, and seek to provide snacks and an environment that makes them feel safe and welcomed.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Before any plan for the council can be made, the youth need to feel ownership and see how issues apply to them and their community. Setting expectations early on often determines youth retention and activity. The following is a suggested order of ideas to introduce:

Shared Vision and Purpose:
Clearly share the purpose of the program, and proposed skills/events the council will participate in. Facilitate a youth led discussion to determine the vision they have for the council and create a clear picture of a desired future. Determine who they are, what they hope to accomplish, and why.

Social Contract:
Create an agreement for how the council will be governed. This will give individuals a sense of ownership and create a stronger desire to adhere to the contract. Encourage the group to create a list of rules or expectations they would like to enforce.
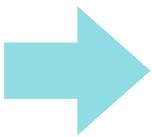
For example:
- Respect others: listen and be engaged, respect differences
- Be present: no cell phone use during meetings
- Make new friends within the council, help others feel like they belong
- Help recruit other youth to join the council

Goals and Objectives:
Implement specific, measurable steps that can accomplish the shared vision and purpose that was previously established. For Example:
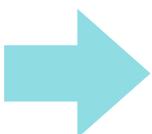
For example:
- Plan and implement outreach events (such as service projects or community activities) at least three times a year
- Attend at least one state youth conference each year (preferably more)
- 80% meeting attendance per person

ESTABLISHING COUNCIL OFFICERS

Creating a structure for council leadership provides organization and continuity. Every council should utilize officers to create a formalized environment where leadership skills can be developed and practiced regularly. Elect officers during one of the first council meetings.

The amount of officers instated will be dependent upon how many youth are in the council. The council may decide the duration of terms i.e. six months, one year, etc.

NOMINATION

Nomination From the Floor: Candidates may be nominated by those present at the meeting prior to the election. The outgoing president or adult advisor will keep track of nominations and close suggestions from the floor after documenting 2-4 nominees for each available position.

Nominating Committee: A small committee of members may be appointed to suggest candidates for each office. Members not on this committee should also be given an opportunity to make other nominations before the elections are held.

Officer Cards:
These are cards with the office title on one side (ex. "President") and a description of duties on the back. Officer cards help members understand each role and decide if they want to fulfill that position and should be provided prior to nomination/election;

ELECTION

Raise of Hand: The president will clearly state what is being voted on and explain that participants should raise their hands to indicate their choice. Call for the vote, asking those in favor to raise their hands and take a count. In this case when voting is not anonymous, candidates are asked to leave the room during voting.

*Written Ballot: P*rovide each participant with a notecard and instruct voters to write their choices confidentially on the card. Place votes in a designated ballot box or collection area. Once all ballots have been collected, count them carefully, ensuring accuracy and transparency.

OFFICER ROLES

Officer positions should be altered to meet the needs of each individual club/group. The following positions and their respective duties are provided as guidelines. Other officer/committee ideas include: activity facilitator, social media, clean-up supervisor, recreation chair, historian, contact committee, field trip committee, photographer, etc.

Delegation:
It is important for the advisors and the youth to know what their responsibilities are and how to delegate. Officers should delegate specific tasks to the youth council as they make plans for events. Advisors, officers, and members should know their responsibilities and feel ownership in what they are doing.

President: Council presidents exhibit good leadership qualities and serve as a role models. They should understand the functions and policies of the organization in order to guide meetings progressively towards their goals. Representing others is one of their most important responsibilities, especially outside of meetings.

Meeting Responsibilities
- Preside at all meetings
- Arrange meeting times and locations, with assistance from the advisor
- Work with other officers and advisors to develop an agenda for each meeting.
- Communicate meeting assignments and duties to members, and leaders.
- Remind and encourage each person who has been assigned a task at the meeting to come prepared.
- Arrive at least 30 minutes early

Other Responsibilities
- Appoint committees as needed, being impartial when delegating members
- Develop a yearly plan for meetings and programs (with advisors and officers)
- Coordinate the activities to ensure maximum member involvement
- Serve on committees when necessary
- Create a welcoming environment for all council members and visitors
- Be impartial when recognizing members who want to speak

OFFICER ROLES

<u>Vice President</u>: The Vice President of the council supports the President by assisting with meetings and stepping in when needed. They help create an inclusive environment, and are knowledgeable about the organization's goals and policies. The Vice President also manages specific tasks and represents the council both within and outside of meetings.

Meeting Responsibilities
- Preside in the absence of the President
- Know the purpose and objective(s) of each meeting
- Prepare activities for early arrivals
- Arrive at least 30 minutes early to help set up
- Introduce guests and new members

Other Responsibilities
- Collaborate with advisors to make announcements relevant to the club
- Assist committees as needed
- Be gracious and thank guests and volunteers
- Create a welcoming environment for all council members and visitors

<u>Secretary</u>: The Secretary should be a responsible member of the council. They keep track of membership and progress towards council goals. and play an important role in making yearly plans. They will be in charge of organization and documentation.

Responsibilities
- Call roll and check attendance at each meeting
- Keep complete and accurate minutes of all meetings including action items
- Review minutes from previous meetings
- Notify the President of any unfinished action items from previous meetings
- Arrive at least 30 minutes early to help set up
- Document goals and make yearly plans
- Keep a current roster of all council members and committees
- Record the clubs accomplishments.
- Handle council correspondence
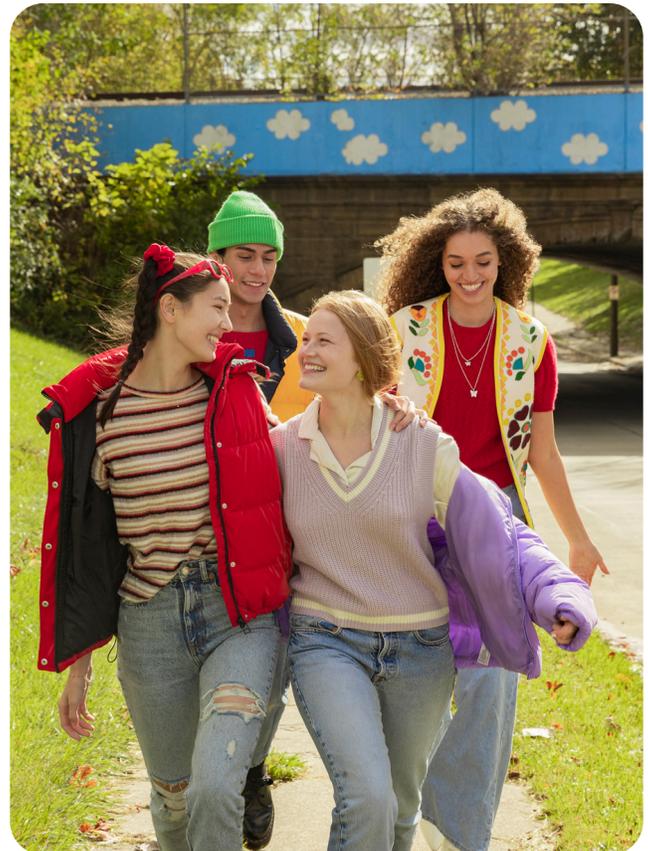
Treasurer: It is not necessary for all councils to have a treasurer, however, they may be useful if the council handles incomes and expenditures, or for giving youth opportunities to be exposed to financial literacy. Encourage youth to be involved in the club's finances and record keeping, but do not allow direct handling of money or managing accounts with financial institutions.

Responsibilities

- Report on the club's financial condition as requested by the president.
- Arrive 30 minutes early to help set up
- Keep accurate, up-to-date records of all funds (incl. receipts, expenditures, and account balances)
- Present bills to be approved and paid by the club
- Organize and participate in fundraising activities
- If a Finance Committee is formed, serve as the chair, working closely with members and the adult advisor to develop and present a budget to council members for approval.

Example:
Starting Balance: $_____
+ Income (fees, donations): $_____
- Expenditures: $_____
Current Balance: $_____

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

Each meeting should have some element of business, training, and social activity. All 3 elements should be incorporated, even when some meetings may necessitate more time towards certain elements than others (ex. planning for an upcoming event may allot more time towards business, guest speakers towards training, team building or other primarily social activities towards socialization.)

Example:
10 min: Icebreaker and agenda review
15 min: Brief training (utilize the website links for leadership curriculum)
25 min: Business (ex. brainstorming ideas for an upcoming community outreach event)
10 min: Socializing (interactive activity and snack)

PROGRAM BUILDING

Effective program building is essential for creating engaging and impactful experiences for youth. Start by identifying the needs and interests of the participants to design relevant and stimulating activities. Develop a structured plan that outlines goals, resources, and timelines to ensure smooth implementation. Build a sense of belonging in youth councils, focusing on helping the members feel connected to one another and see that their contributions are valued. Each person should feel like an essential part of the team.

GROUP DYNAMICS

This process describes the stages in which people will come together and become a collaborative group. Initially, people avoid clashing as they form a group. When they discuss ideas and become more comfortable different opinions will arise and compete for consideration. Eventually, the group will come to an agreement of ideas. This process will continue as new ideas and new group dynamics come and go.

Forming:
Individual behavior is driven by a desire to be accepted by others and avoid conflict. In this stage, serious issues/feelings are avoided, as individuals are gathering information – about each other, about the scope of tasks and how to approach those. This is a comfortable stage to be in, but the avoidance of conflict and threat means that not much actually gets done.
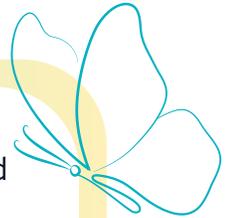
Storming:
The storming stage begins when different ideas compete for consideration. The team addresses issues such as what problems they want to solve, how they will function independently and as a group, and what leadership model they will accept. Team members open up to each other and confront each other's ideas and perspectives. Some groups may struggle to leave this stage and some may resolve it quickly, but it is necessary for the growth of a team.

Performing:
This is when the team begins moving towards harmonious working practices, agreeing on rules and values by which they operate. Not all teams make it to the Performing phase, which is essentially an era of high performance. Performing teams are identified by high levels of independence, motivation, knowledge and competence. Decision making is collaborative and dissent is encouraged because of a high level of respect in the communication between team members.

Transforming:
This unique stage of a group's development signals a change in its membership; individuals may leave while others enter the group. These elements change the group's dynamics, creating a natural flow back to the first stage of Forming. This stage may also emerge from a change in the group's formal purpose. Or while a group maintains all of its members and transitions to a new project or endeavor. A shift in needs for knowledge, skills, and expertise can also cause transformation.

PLANNING AN EVENT

A central part of teen councils is exposing the youth to leadership opportunities. Events are the perfect way to serve the community and give youth chances to organize and lead. Start with smaller, realistic events where achievable goals can be set, then continue building confidence until the council is ready to take on bigger tasks. Allow the youth to experience planning and execution first-hand, and to learn from their success and failures.

Focus on some of the basic elements: Why, What, Who, When, Where and How:

WHY:
Why is the event being held? What need does it serve? What goal and objectives exist? How will this event/activity help reach these needs and goals?

WHAT:
What is needed to accomplish these needs and goals? What will happen at the event? What activities will need to be planned? What resources are available? What resources need to be acquired?

WHO:
Who is on the team? Who is available to help? What are their strengths? What roles will they fill? How many volunteers will be needed? Who could be a collaborator for the event? (ex. Library, health department, local businesses or schools)

WHEN:
What is the preferred date for the event? What are restraints on the timeline? What are benchmark dates for when tasks need to be completed beforehand?

WHERE:
What are the needs for an event location? What are the options? Will they fit the projected attendance?

HOW:
How much money is needed for the event? What is the budget and projected costs?

Monitor the progress of event planning and execution. Keep good records and spend time in a council meeting after the event assessing what went well and what can be learned from what didn't go as planned.

1. P*roposal:* Ask the youth council about community problems they have noticed. Suggest that the council think of some ideas focused on a specific cause. (E*xample: helping younger kids)*

2. *Discussion:* talk through some issues the council members have noticed, then discuss the pros and cons of potential solutions for each idea. (E*xample: kids are on computers too much and aren't getting enough exercise)*

3. *Decision:* Allow the youth to vote and decide which issue they would like to focus on and choose specific ways they can help. Establish a shared goal and vision for the event to fulfill. (E*xample: helping improve younger kids health through hiking)*

Seek to meet these criteria:
- Youth choose the activity and self-assigned positions (with some mentor guidance)
- Youth learn about one or more topics during their planning and preparation. (hiking practices, healthy snacks, leave no trace, natural resources)
- Youth serve directly as mentors. (hiking with and teaching the youth)

4. *Planning*: Conceptualize a specific event to fulfill the shared vision. Discuss the Who, What, Why, When, Where and How. (E*xample: plan a family hike for four months from now)*

5. Delegation: The youth delegate specific individuals/groups to fulfill needs in preparation for the event. (Example: Self-assign some to scout out a location, plan healthy snacks, teach about fueling our bodies or "leave no trace" and plant identification.)

6. *Follow up*: Every council meeting before the event, designate time to let each assigned member give updates and decide next steps.

Allow the youth to lead as much as possible on the day of the activity. Provide supplemental support but allow them to be in charge of the day.

NEAR PEER MENTORING

A near-peer mentoring relationship is when a senior learner (1 year or above) provides guidance and support to a new junior learner, enabling the newer student to be guided through their learning.

Near-peer mentoring targets students' social identities, helping them develop a sense of belonging by connecting to role models from similar groups. Such role models help alleviate negative stereotypes, because students are able to see that others "like them" can be successful in their field. Beyond role models, developing friendships with peers increases academic performance in underrepresented demographics who face uncertainty about belonging in a group.

-Allow officers to be responsible for mentoring younger, less experienced council members.
-Partner with Jr. High or Middle School after school programs
-Host day camps that give opportunities to mentor other youth

SERVICE LEARNING

Service learning is when youth learn and apply knowledge and skills to serving their community. This can be facilitated through identifying, planning, implementing, and reflecting on personally relevant community service.

Service learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities. This provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating experiences with guidance from adults. It incorporates multiple ongoing reflection activities that prompt deep analysis of oneself and one's relationship to society. Service learning promotes diversity and mutual respect among all participants, engaging them in an ongoing process to assess progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.

"Because of my Youth Council meetings..."

.... I know how to examine service through reflection.

.... I know how to reach out to others for more help during service activities

.... I know how to identify different points of view to understand others.

.... I have new knowledge and skills to lead a service activity.

7 CONCEPTS FOR HIGHLY EFFECTIVE COUNCILS

Helping a group self-actualize requires empowering individuals to reach their full potential and fostering a thriving community. The concepts in this section help to nurture an environment where each member feels valued and encouraged to express their unique strengths and ideas. When individuals are supported in their personal growth, the entire council, and community benefits, leading to a dynamic, innovative, and resilient environment where everyone can thrive together.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Positive Youth Development is a framework that helps young people succeed by focusing on their strengths and potential rather than the problems they may be facing. PYD seeks to engage youth within their communities, schools, peer groups, and families. It recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and establishing support. Similar to other living things, youth need nourishing, supportive, and protective environments where they can grow. Every young person needs to:

- Know they are cared about by others
- Feel that they are competent
- Know they have the ability to influence people and events.
- Practice and exercise these beliefs

"**B.I.G.M.**" is an acronym that outlines the necessary concepts for cultivating positive youth development:

BELONGING
Positive relationships with caring adults. An inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging in all members. A safe environment (emotional and physical)

INDEPENDENCE
Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future. Opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility and influence over one's choices, as well as the consequences of those choices.

GENEROSITY
Opportunity to value and practice service for others; Finding oneself often begins with losing oneself in the service of others.

MASTERY
Engagement in learning and reflection. Opportunity for mastery by building knowledge, skills, wisdom, and attitudes, then demonstrating their use.

"Youth Spark" is defined as "a passion for self-identified interest or skill; A capacity that metaphorically lights a fire in a young person's life, providing energy, joy, purpose, and direction." Youth who have a spark have purpose, a sense of direction, and may be better at goal setting.
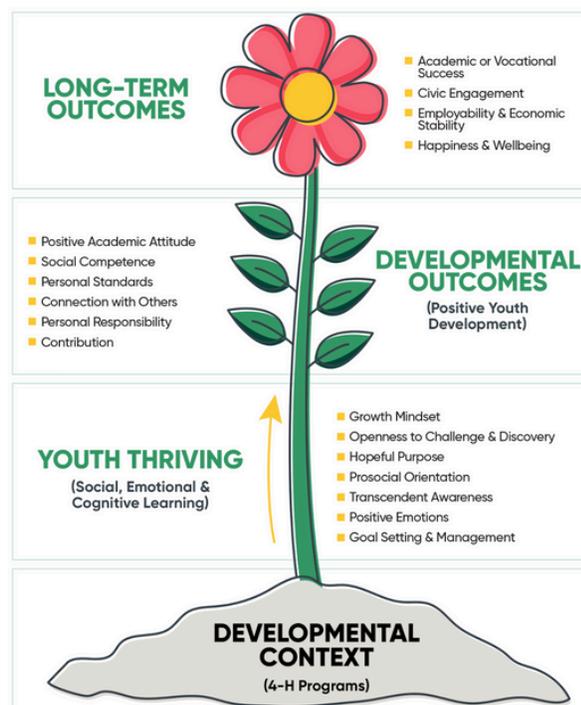

-Sparks lead to tangible actions that contribute to individuals and society
-Sparks provide the intrinsic fuel that encourages youth to develop more knowledge in a skill set.
-Sparks enhance a young person's networks through interacting with others who have similar sparks.

All young people have the potential to find things that they are passionate about. Our programs are youth driven, which means youth have the opportunity to explore different interests and be supported in exploring varying subjects. Facilitating these sparks supports youth in growing and overcoming obstacles. Additionally, youth with sparks are more likely to help make their communities a better place and to stay out of trouble.

Example: On its own, something like fly fishing would classify as a hobby. Utilizing that interest could develop it into a spark by encouraging the youth to teach others, seek out resources or attend events, or receive instruction/coaching. This interest could develop into a passion for adjacent interests such as wetland ecology or pollution control. From this spark, a child who originally had only an interest in fishing may go on to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This passion and potential is what youth development is all about.

"The Thrive Model" helps professionals implement programs that are beneficial for youth. Following this model can ensure that more youth benefit fully from state funded programs. It includes helping youth find or enhance sparks, creating positive environments, and building healthy youth-adult relationships,

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
- Academic or Vocational Success
- Civic Engagement
- Employability & Economic Stability
- Happiness & Wellbeing

- Positive Academic Attitude
- Social Competence
- Personal Standards
- Connection with Others
- Personal Responsibility
- Contribution

DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES
(Positive Youth Development)

YOUTH THRIVING
(Social, Emotional & Cognitive Learning)

- Growth Mindset
- Openness to Challenge & Discovery
- Hopeful Purpose
- Prosocial Orientation
- Transcendent Awareness
- Positive Emotions
- Goal Setting & Management

DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT
(4-H Programs)

RESILIENCY AND SELF-EFFICACY

Resiliency is the capacity to withstand or recover quickly from setbacks or challenges. Lacking resilience leads to dwelling on problems, feeling victimized, becoming overwhelmed or turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms, but there are ways that resiliency can be developed:

Get Connected: building strong, positive relationships with loved ones can provide support, guidance, and acceptance. Important connections can come from family circles, work, volunteering or spiritual community.

Make Every Day Meaningful: do something that brings a sense of accomplishment and purpose every day. Set clear, achievable goals to help look toward the future with meaning.

Be Proactive: don't ignore problems. Figure out what needs to be done, make a plan and take action. It takes time to recover from major setbacks, traumatic events and loss, but situations can always improve.

Remain Hopeful: the past can't be changed, accepting and even anticipating change makes it easier to adapt and view new challenges with less anxiety.

Take Care of Yourself: tend to personal needs and feelings, participate in enjoyable activities and hobbies, include physical activity into daily routines. Get plenty of sleep, eat a healthy diet and learn stress management techniques.

Learn From Experience: think of how hardships have been coped with in the past and the skills/strategies that helped. Consider writing about past experiences in a journal.

SELF DETERMINATION THEORY

Self-Determination Theory suggests three that Choice, Competence, and Connection help create internal motivation. If youth can be provided as many choices as possible, experiences to develop competence, and a community of meaningful connections, it will foster motivation and engagement, leading to greater resiliency, and creativity.

Youth are motivated by external and internal factors. Reliance on external motivators (i.e. parent pressure, snacks, etc.) won't be as effective as strengthening internal motivators (i.e. sense of belonging, making a difference) Seek to implement a culture where internal factors are the foundation to youth involvement.

DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

Developmental relationships are close connections with adults, and peers that help young people cultivate the ability to shape their own lives, build resilience, and thrive. These close connections are critically important for young people, especially those growing up in challenging circumstances. Here are five key elements to cultivating Developmental Relationships:

1. Express Care: value individuals, be trustworthy, help youth feel known/ valued.

2. Challenge Growth: push youth to progress, maintain and communicate high expectations, insist they take responsibility for actions.

3. Provide Support: offer help in completing tasks and achieving goals, build the confidence needed to take charge of outcomes.

4. Share Power: treat youth with respect and credit their opinions, create opportunities for them to take action and lead.

5. Expand Possibilities: connect the youth with people and places that can broaden their worlds, inspire them to see possibilities for their future.

TEAM BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP

Team building is a continual process that helps groups of people evolve into a cohesive unit. Team members share expectations, trust and support one another, and respect differences. In any team there will be a learning curve; Everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, and individuality can be used to progress the goals of the team.

Some people view leaders as charismatic, well spoken individuals. While this is sometimes true, the ability to communicate effectively, share a vision, organize talents, and bring people together is more important to true leadership. Regardless of position, youth are able to learn and practice leadership skills within councils. Everybody has a place on the team and each youth should feel like a valued member of the team.

GROUP ASSESSMENT

G.R.A.B.B.S.S. is an acronym that can be used as an assessment tool to evaluate groups as they evolve. Primarily, it is meant to help appropriately adjust and adapt a program to create the most positive and beneficial experience for all participants.

GOALS: What are the goals/objectives of the group? Are individual goals aligned with the team? Do all members of the team know/understand the goals? Are people committed to them? How does the activity relate to the goals that have been set?

BODY: How is the group acting? Are they enthusiastic, disruptive, agreeable? Are they more self-involved or team focused? What interactions are affecting the group, positively and negatively? Are they communicating openly and honestly?

READINESS: Is the group ready for planned activities? Will they endanger themselves or others? What skills and abilities does the team have? Are they using the skills effectively or enough to attempt/complete tasks? What can be changed to compensate for lack of readiness? What level of motivation exists on the team? Are people engaged and involved, or are they resistant and apathetic? What new skills do they need to learn in order to improve?

STAGE: What developmental stage is the group in? What developmental stage(s) are the individuals? Are the behaviors consistent with an assessment of the stage? What stage does the group think it's in?

AFFECT: What is the overall feeling of the group? What kinds of behaviors are observable? Are behaviors and actions different from statements? What is left unspoken? What is the level of empathy/caring in the group? What is the level of trust and support? What kinds of sensations are they having?

SETTING: What cultural factors may be affecting this group? What do facilitators need to understand about who they are (race, gender, ethnicity, economics, etc.) in order to effectively communicate and interact with them? What impact do these factors have on the group's behaviors and on this experience? Also, what aspects of the physical location may impact the program and the participants? Are groups in the right setting or space to best facilitate the exercise? What is available vs. what is needed (indoors, outdoors, dry, wet, cold, warm, sunny shady, windy)

BEHAVIOR: How is the group acting? Are they enthusiastic, disruptive, agreeable? Are they more self-involved or team focused? What interactions are affecting the group, positively and negatively? Are they communicating openly and honestly?

REFLECTION, CELEBRATION, AND RECOGNITION

Reflecting as a group at the close of a successful year allows opportunities to discuss what went well, what could have gone better, and what can be improved upon for next year. It's important to showcase and celebrate what has been accomplished during the year and to recognize successes. These celebrations can come in the form of certificates of completion, personal awards specifying individual strengths and improvements, or a going away party for outgoing seniors.

Participation:
Recognizing participation in educational experiences acknowledges involvement as a first step in building a positive self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Recognition programs emphasize the importance of acknowledging young people who have been involved in educational experiences.

Progress Toward Self-Set Goals:
Recognizing progress toward personal goals enables youth to gain experience in goal setting and realistic self-assessment. Parents and other adults can help youth set realistic goals and communicate that progress toward self-set goals, no matter how small, is an integral part of growth.

Achievement of Standards of Excellence:
Celebrating the achievement of generally recognized standards of excellence gives youth an external, predetermined target for their learning experiences. By measuring personal progress against standards of excellence, youth can gain insight into their own efforts and abilities.

Cooperation:
Recognizing cooperation helps youth learn and collaborate, preparing them for living in today's interdependent, global society. Learning and working together promotes high achievement. Cooperation can take advantage of all the skills represented in the group, as well as the process by which the group approaches the task/goal. Everyone is rewarded.