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Creating Youth Advisory Councils

Lessons Learned By Youth And Adults



Youth Advisory Councils: Quick Start Guide



Creating Youth Advisory Councils

Lessons Learned By Youth And Adults

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A INTRODUCTION

This resource was developed by adults and youth to:

- Provide a “how to” guide for starting a youth advisory council.
- Share resources and lessons learned.
- Empower and inspire schools and districts to develop youth engagement opportunities.

This guide is for elementary, secondary, and district-level councils. We created this resource from the lessons we learned by facilitating youth advisory councils that are concerned with addressing school and community health.

We recognize that the ideas presented here are unique to us and our council's processes, but we know these ideas can be a springboard to creating, supporting, and improving leadership programs across Colorado.

Freely modify these ideas to create solutions for your specific circumstances.

Youth advisory councils create an opportunity to build leadership skills for youth and can focus on an endless number of topics. However, the topic of health can be a conduit to a broader experience to implement skills that go beyond the individual and the school. The council's impact could ultimately contribute to the health of surrounding communities.

We believe that youth can serve as agents of change for equity and affect community health by identifying a need or gap to be addressed.

We believe youth are resources to be cultivated, not problems to be fixed.

[See more information](#) about positive youth development and youth adult partnerships.



B PARTNERING WITH YOUTH

Adults are essential partners for the success of youth advisory councils. They should build relationships, help organize, provide coaching, and empower and inspire youth to lead.

Adult partners should:

Ensure youth have the skills and resources to be successful.

Create a safe, welcoming environment.

- This takes practice and time that must be honored. It is recommended to leave additional time in the first few meetings of the year/project for extra team building. See these examples:
 - Elementary [ReciPeace](#) Activities
 - Secondary [ReciPeace](#) Activities
- Focus on building authentic relationships.
- Remember, this is continuous work and requires team and self-evaluation.
- Consider that each person has a different way of building connections. However, sharing personal stories, honesty, and vulnerability are all activities and traits important for adult partners to model.

Set clear parameters for success (see [example](#)).

Let youth be experts in what they know and adults be experts in what they know.

Use evidence-based, best practices.

- *Positive Youth Development* should be the foundational approach to interactions with youth leaders – this approach is a proven public health strategy for prevention, intervention, and treatment of high-risk health behaviors in adolescents.

Be aware of how each youth participates and progresses.

- Be prepared to slow down the process so youth have the capacity and skills to be successful.
- If the group(s) seem “stuck,” consider co-creating meeting norms to help everyone be heard (e.g., Step Up / Step Back).

Develop and continually highlight youth leadership strategies, skills, and tools.

For example:

- Creativity
- Hope/Resiliency
- Self-advocacy
- Community engagement and service
 - Adults should recognize examples and moments when youth exhibit these characteristics during meetings.

Provide consistency.

- Manage organizational needs, including organizing documents, website oversight, funding, etc.

Serve as a liaison.

- Build partnerships between youth and other organizations, such as the school district, funders, and community partners (including nonprofits, local businesses, and government agencies).

Create continuity wherever possible.

- Select adult partners who can commit to the youth advisory council over a long period of time.



**MODIFY THIS GUIDE
TO FIT YOUR NEEDS!**

C GETTING STARTED

Here are some considerations.

1. COUNCIL CONSIDERATIONS

To help ensure the youth advisory council's success, here are some lessons we learned when building the team.

Obtain buy-in.

Get permission and support from building and/or district administration.

- Use [resources](#) from the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment to make the case for why a youth council is valuable.
- Ask youth to write a letter to the school administration outlining their needs (see an [example](#)).

Create partnerships.

If you are working with a community partner or funder, consider creating a letter of agreement to outline roles and responsibilities.

- Possible partners may include local public health departments, parks and recreation centers, municipalities, hospitals, etc.

Consider group size.

Choose the number of team members (this may be dependent on budget, but a group size of 10 to 15 allows for accountability and consensus for decision-making).



CONSIDER SIMPLIFYING THE FIRST YEAR.

Open the opportunity to one grade level instead of initially inviting all interested youth. Or consider identifying specific students to apply by invitation only.

Ensure inclusivity.

Ensure inclusivity for all voices, schools within your district, populations, etc.; consider youth leaders who may not be the typical leader or who are inexperienced with formal leadership positions (e.g., National Honors Society, student government, athletics). Look for these characteristics:

- Community-minded
- Creative
- Passionate
- Dedicated
- Reliable

Youth can lead anywhere from any chair. Keep an open mind – anyone can be a leader. To foster meaningful engagement, leadership development, and significant community impact, the council must include diverse voices that reflect population demographics.

Plan intentionally.

Start with what you want to achieve by the end of the year. For example, create a plan to showcase your successes after making an impact (you'll be glad you did, it's great to share and highlight your hard work!).

- Work with administrators regarding data collection/evaluation methods (i.e., youth surveys).
 - Quantitative: number of youth applications, number of youth who regularly attend, activities completed, etc.
 - Qualitative: capture stories of how participation has impacted the lives of the participating youth and of people in the community, feedback from people affected by initiatives, etc.
- Create any necessary forms that youth council members must sign, including photo release forms and parent and/or school permission forms.

Create communication platforms.

- Sharing documents – use Google Docs or another platform supported by your school district that enables document sharing. Create an efficient and easy process to share documents with youth council members. For example, creating a Google folder to store documents, survey forms, etc., establishes a link that stays consistent over time and can be accessed anytime, anywhere.
- Creating webpages (see [example](#)).
- Using social media is an effective way to showcase initiatives and achievements. Youth should own this communication channel, but recognize that providing oversight and maintaining continuity requires a significant time commitment. Adult partners must know enough about the council's social media efforts to bridge gaps and provide knowledge between school years or changes in youth oversight.
- Enabling group texting – use apps that enable group texts, such as "Remind" or "GroupMe," to increase efficiency and ease of communication.



Consider a pre-recruitment meeting.

Host an "interest" meeting to hear ideas from youth before the youth advisory council is recruited. Show the Jeffco [SHAC recruitment video](#) and/or engage in a team-building activity to address the following:

- The purpose of a youth council.
- The benefits of participating in a youth council, such as leadership opportunities, skill development, networking, impacting the school/district/community, stipends, letters of recommendation, volunteer hours, etc.
- The youth council constitution – developed by youth council members, informs the council culture, policies, and norms.
- The most ideal meeting arrangements – consider what is most convenient for youth, such as days of the week, times, and locations (e.g., right after school, during lunch, Tuesdays at 6 p.m.). Identify the location and time of the first youth advisory council meeting.
- Transportation concerns – needs may vary, brainstorm with the community, families, and youth to reduce barriers and find solutions (e.g., carpool volunteers, bus passes, mileage reimbursement, rotating location of meetings, etc.).
- Topics of interest – brainstorm community health topics or other ideas to address as a youth council. Ask students what they think needs to change in their school or community; capture the ideas to explore later once the council is formed.



STARTING ON SOMETHING IS BETTER THAN STALLING OUT WHILE WAITING FOR THE PERFECT INITIATIVE!

2. SECURING RESOURCES

A youth council does not need to be an expensive endeavor, but consider the following possible expenses while planning.

Food at youth council meetings (especially evening meetings).

Youth compensation.

- This does not need to be monetary, but can be if dollars are available. Some youth councils consider membership a job and pay up to \$12 per hour. Emphasize the importance of community work when considering compensation.
- Non-monetary compensation may include educational credit hours for being a member, community service hours, letters of recommendation, college essay/resume/ scholarship application coaching, etc.

Marketing resources and supplies.

- Including printing costs, creation of videos, etc.
- Incentives to gather community input, increase focus group participation, solicit student survey participation, etc.
- Implementation dollars for youth-proposed projects.

Consider the following resources for support to cover expenses:

- Local grants
- District wellness initiative donations
- Community businesses
- PTA/PTOs
- Family support



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- **Fundraisers**

- When asking for donations, start with smaller businesses that have ties to your community or that work with or employ youth. Think about businesses that might be interested in reaching your audience. Large companies often have a formal process to request donations and sponsorships and are looking for larger-scale exposure at a higher dollar amount.
- Be specific about your request and offer something in return.
- It's often easier to receive items in-kind than money (materials, food, etc.). If you ask for financial donations, have specific levels and benefits for businesses to consider. For example, donating \$50 a year may get them mentioned in a publicly distributed thank-you email or other communication. For \$100 they might have their logo on materials that are widely distributed. Think about how your request can help them market their business? Consider social media as a resource for benefits. Avoid saying something like, "anything you can offer would help," unless they simply cannot afford the lowest tier contribution.
- A sponsor is someone who contributes at a higher level or funds a specific project or event. Think about one or two benefits that you can give a sponsor that are extra special for their business. The sponsorship should be perceived as a coveted, honored opportunity. Also, do not seek sponsors and donors from the same types of business, as a business will want to stand out from their competition by supporting you.
- Make sure they know what your council does and how their donation will help. Make it personal.
- Letters and emails are easy to discard. Try calling or visiting a business and asking who you can speak to about supporting youth in their local community.

D BUILDING A TEAM

Here are some tips and thoughts for building your youth advisory council team.

1. DEVELOPING AN APPLICATION PROCESS

Applying to be a member of the youth council creates youth ownership, engagement, and dedication.

Create an online application.

- Save it to your electronic folder (Google drive).
- In subsequent years, this document can be created/edited by youth members.

An online application can be more efficient and easier to export data into spreadsheets.

However, if this leads to equity issues, ask advisors or counselors at schools to provide a convenient time for students to use a computer so they can complete an application. Alternatively, offer a paper version of the application.

Consider including the following:

- Personal information for the creation of contact sheets and emergency contact lists.
 - Don't be afraid to ask for more information than you may need, as it may be easier to request upfront. Requests for information may include dietary restrictions.
- Information about the council.
 - Goals, purpose, and eventually youth-developed mission.
 - Introductory video or other introductory information.
 - Past projects, photos, success, etc., if applicable.
 - Criteria for an eligible applicant.
 - Commitment expectations.
 - Youth council meeting dates, times, and locations for the upcoming year, if possible.
 - Interview dates, times, and locations, including the ability for applicant to select or "commit" to interview time.
- Clear instructions on how to submit a completed application and a deadline for submission.
- A Google Doc for your application, as the information can be easily exported into a readily accessible spreadsheet.



2. RECRUITING STRATEGIES

A solid group composition is foundational to achieving a positive culture and is imperative to the success of the youth advisory council.

Consider scheduling the appropriate time to plan and implement recruitment strategies.

Create recruitment messages.

- Use the following to highlight messages for youth:
 - Benefits of participating on the youth council.
 - Mission and high-level goals of the youth council ([see examples](#)).
 - Deadline for application.
 - Time commitment, meeting details, location.
 - Consider a promotional video.
- Use the following to highlight messages for adults (e.g., school leaders, teachers, parents):
 - Benefits of youth participation:
 - Increased academic competencies, 21st century skills, school and community connection/engagement.
 - Increased leadership qualities in youth: creativity, resiliency, self-advocacy and community engagement.
 - Connection to district/school vision:
 - Improved district and school goals, graduation outcomes, initiatives/programs, policy, major improvement strategies.
 - Purpose and high-level goals for youth advisory council.
 - [See examples](#) of flyers.

Spreading the word.

- Recruit students in a way that correlates with the culture and practices of your school/community.
- Offer several choices for school communication methods:
 - Ask schools what communication mode they prefer and/or whether they would be willing to provide email language, posters, morning announcement language, flyers, newsletter language, etc.
 - Communicate by letter, email, and/or phone with school administration/ leadership and counselors.
 - Reach out to personal contacts at each school for youth references, whenever possible.
 - Make personal visits to school/community organization with a “goodie bag drop” (e.g., flyers, posters, free giveaways, fruit baskets) to identified staff members and/or teams at each school.
- Youth should be part of the recruitment process:
 - Design a friendly competition between existing team members for achieving recruitment goals, and consider offering incentives.
- Some schools allow their students to tie their work to existing initiatives, courses, or programs such as a community service effort, club projects, or student council initiatives.
 - Determine if your district/school wants/ requires a permission slip for students to participate.



THIS STEP MAY TAKE SUBSTANTIAL TIME!

3. INTERVIEWING YOUTH

Interviewing youth applicants allows for greater insight, personal connections, and an excellent learning experience.

General planning.

- Ensure interview times and locations are accessible to all applicants.
- Provide the interview schedule to all interviewers.
- Confirm scheduled interview with applicants.
- Provide expectations to all applicants including:
 - Attire – applicants should be notified ahead of time about preferred attire. This creates a sense of professionalism and increases the commitment level to the youth council. Youth rise to the standard you provide.
 - Consider using an ice-breaker at the beginning of the interview to make the youth feel comfortable.
- Interviews are two-way; encourage applicants to prepare questions ahead of time and allow time for them to ask their questions.
- Provide general categories of questions (e.g., “you will be asked about your leadership experience, personal assets, etc.”)
- Remember, this could be the first time an applicant has interviewed for anything; consider it a learning opportunity for them.
- Vet interview questions.
 - Youth interviewers create their own questions, which may include topics about leadership skills, assets, and personality strengths.
- Consider using an activity as part of the interview.
 - Youth interviewers may create an activity to see how the interviewee would respond to a real-life scenario of the youth council.
- Create a process with youth for decision-making prior to interviews. This may include items such as a matrix, score, waitlist option, etc.
- Create a matrix or rubric that is used by all interviewers that provides a score/rank for each applicant. These rubrics and associated applicant scores can be used during a debrief conversation with all youth interviewers and adult leaders.
 - For example, have each interviewer score applicants from a 1 to 5 (5 being the highest) and write down thoughts that justify the score they chose.
 - Ensure the membership criteria includes youth council needs and gaps so that the decision is not made based on a popularity contest, fashion, etc.
 - Also consider criteria that promotes different perspectives on the team and that informs the work, such as grade level, diversity of background, experience, and voice, etc.
- Adult partners should facilitate the process and meet with youth interviewers prior to interviewing the applicants to coach them on confidentiality, questions, and professionalism.



AFTER THE INITIAL YEAR, INCLUDE YOUTH MEMBERS IN THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS.

Interviewing time.

- Meeting Structure:
 - Consider speed-dating rounds – divide interview into topics handled by 3 to 5 groups (depending on the number of youth and adults available).
 - Rotate the applicant through the different groups/rooms every 5 to 10 minutes.
 - This system allows up to 5 youth to be interviewed during each interview time slot, rather than scheduling only one person per interview slot. Also, the candidate meets more than one interviewer and may ask questions in a more intimate setting. We have learned these shorter, more intimate interviews seem less daunting to a youth than one long interview.
 - Make sure that youth conducting interviews work in teams of 2 to 3.

Interviewer roles.

- Greeter – consider an adult or youth to greet applicants when they arrive and provide instructions on where to go and what to do.
- Timekeeper – be sure to track time and set the pace (can be one of the interviewers).
- Youth interviewers:
 - Provide an overview of projects and year-at-a-glance.
 - Ask the main leadership interview questions.
 - Take notes/score on rubric.
- Adult interviewers:
 - Provide general council overview: why the youth advisory council exists and the goals, what is the youth-adult partnership model, outline new or past initiatives, explain other opportunities that come from participating in a youth council.

- Provide commitment expectations:
 - Confirm ability to attend all/almost all meetings.
 - Review the process and consequences for missing a meeting.
 - Confirm transportation to meeting.

Interviewer debrief.

- Debrief with youth interviewers immediately following each day of interviews and convene again after all interviews are complete to determine which applicants will be accepted.
 - Use scored rubrics to discuss each applicant and why they received the score they were given. Remind youth interviewers of the acceptance criteria.
 - Reach a consensus on scores and applicants that will be accepted.
 - Ask youth interviewers to identify one strength and one area of improvement for each applicant. Provide this feedback constructively to the applicants.
- The youth adult partner should contact all applicants to inform them of the results.
 - Wait list. If there are late applicants or more applicants than available positions in the council, consider creating a wait list. Reach out to them if spots become available.
 - Remind interviewers that these interviews should be strictly confidential.



YOUTH INTERVIEWER GROUPS DO NOT NEED TO INCLUDE AN ADULT; WE FOUND IT'S MUCH BETTER THAT WAY.

YOU HAVE THE OPTION OF WRITING A CONTRACT/LETTER OF AGREEMENT WITH THE STUDENTS.

E UTILIZING COUNCIL MEETINGS

There are many ways to structure youth advisory council meetings. Here are some tips that may help.

1. PRE-MEETING PLANNING

Planning is required to ensure the meetings run smoothly and cover structure, agenda, and youth preparation. The role of the adult partner is to ensure youth have the skills to be successful. If this is the council's first meeting, model the following and determine as a group what roles youth will play in the subsequent meeting.

Planning.

- Meetings should be co-facilitated by youth and adults and allow youth to learn leadership skills.
- Prepare and coach youth facilitators before the meeting so they can be successful.
- Invite school and/or district-level administration/ leadership to youth council meetings whenever possible.



- Agendas should be planned by youth and adults:
 - Order food (if applicable).
 - Ensure meeting space has the necessary audiovisual equipment (e.g., projector/ screen).
 - Print tracking/sign-in sheet for attendance (this can double for payroll and incentive payout).
 - Consider tracking attendance and/or incentives electronically (e.g., Google Docs, Excel spreadsheet, Smartsheet). This may help reduce the chance of losing/misplacing pieces of paper and decrease the time necessary for youth leadership administrative work.
 - Create, complete, share the agenda online (consider using Google Docs).
 - Create an action plan template for the work outlined in the agenda.
 - Youth facilitator distributes the agenda, meeting reminder, and any tasks to be completed before each meeting.
- Determine a process and/or electronic platform for open/transparent communication between meetings.



PLAN AHEAD.

Save documents that will become valuable for grants, reports, and storytelling.

2. CLARIFYING ROLES AND ESTABLISHING MEETING STRUCTURE

The meeting structure and roles of youth and adults can vary depending on the needs of the group. Here are some suggestions to start out.

Facilitation.

- Choose a Youth Facilitator who will:
 - Send out the pre-meeting reminder.
 - Maintain control of the meeting, keeping things moving and on time.
 - Select a notetaker, consider asking them to facilitate the next meeting.
- Plan and conduct team building activities during the meeting. See examples of teambuilding activities created by youth for their peers:
 - Elementary [ReciPeace](#) Activities.
 - Secondary [ReciPeace](#) Activities.

Notes.

- The notetaker should:
 - Take notes directly into the online agenda (this will save time so they don't have to type notes later as homework).
 - Become next meeting's facilitator.

Agenda (see examples).

- Maintain a monthly online agenda (use Google Docs) and make it a regular practice for all meetings.
- An online agenda helps locate information, allows for easy search functions for documentation, reporting, notes, etc.; it's also an accessible, historical document when there is a change in team members.
- Reserve time during the meeting to work on the agenda and include a notes section and action plan tables for each team/subcommittee.

Action planning document.

- Create an action planning document once project(s) have been vetted and selected.
- Use this document to help structure meetings. It can be used as a guide for the direction of projects and to track and organize the work.

Example of an Action Planning Document

Action Team: Education			
Members: Emily, Juan, Allie			
Action steps to achieve GOAL	Timeline (by when)	Who	Action Step Completed?
Develop hashtags	During team conference call (October 8)	Whole team	Yes
Receive feedback from group	By November 17 meeting	Nadira will introduce	No

Meeting structure.

1. Welcome.

- The Youth Facilitator should call the meeting to order and conduct a team-building activity.
- Review the agenda and meeting objectives.
- Include a brain break – something designed as team-building.

2. Team Time.

- Provide time for the full group and small group/ action teams to meet.
- Potential topics for large group time during the meetings:
 - Announcements and opportunities.
 - Share-out of what has been accomplished.
 - Group Discussions
 - Team updates and feedback.
 - Coordinating work logistics.
 - Update from each small group.
 - Discussion of topics and issues important for understanding the current work.
 - Presentations from community experts.
 - Opportunity to have everyone on the same page and determine possible adjustments to work plans and ideas (model agility and collaboration).
- Potential topics for small group/subcommittees/ action teams during the meetings:
 - Break into small groups or action teams around a large action item or small project that requires a deeper dive.
 - Set goals.
 - Make action decisions.
 - Plan next steps.
 - Assign tasks to move work forward between meetings.
 - Seek feedback from other teams when work overlaps or there is a need for new voices.

3. Closure.

- Allow each small group to report on what they will do by next meeting while the notetaker fills out the action plan in the online agenda.
- Each team member reports on what they will do by the next meeting.
 - This simple activity of “We will...” and “I will...” creates both accountability and buy-in from the team.
- Set a goal for what the next meeting should entail/accomplish.
- Closing Conversation – allow time to close the meeting as a group.
 - For example: Stand up in a circle formation and ask each person to say one word they feel about the work, life, the day or any other prompt, to foster unity and communication.

Adult role during meeting.

- If a grant is funding this work, be upfront with youth about grant requirements and parameters, build the requirements into the work from the beginning.
- If there is a partner(s) involved, take time to discuss and prioritize agreed upon deliverables, including the needs of youth, partner(s), community, etc.
- Support youth meeting facilitators so they are successful in moving the meeting forward and ensuring all voices are heard at some point during the meeting.
- Maintain communication as needed to work toward goals, and continue to fulfill parameters.
 - Remember that the work can move and change fast between meetings!



**MODIFY THIS GUIDE
TO FIT YOUR NEEDS!**

F ACCOMPLISHING THE WORK

Here are ideas for strategies and structures that might be helpful to accomplish the work.

1. ESTABLISHING WORK AGREEMENTS

Establishing work agreements and norms allows for accountability, continuity, and clear expectations. As a group, use the first meeting each year to establish these agreements and revisit them often.

Suggested work norms.

- Build and maintain a safe environment where all voices are heard.
 - Step Up and Step Back: If you feel like you have something to say and have been quiet, Step Up. If you feel like you have done the majority of talking, Step Back so others have the space to talk.
 - Welcome all ideas and opinions – consider all angles, talk through opinions, and entertain suggestions.
- As a team, define council's commitment and create expectations for attendance.
- Complete assigned work dutifully and on time. If you say you're going to do the work, do it. And if something comes up, reach out for help; don't leave the team hanging.
- Only commit to a task when you have capacity.
- Be aware of what you contribute as a team member. If you have a lot going on one month, it's okay to take on less, but know you'll need to step up once you have more time.
- Be proactive in your communication about absences, scheduling conflicts, etc.
- Agree upon a group communication platform and emphasize the expectation that the team will consistently use the platform and respond in a timely manner.
- Consider making a visual aid of the work norms.

Strategies for adult facilitators.

- Build and maintain a safe environment where all voices are heard. Ensure that all youth are participating and acknowledge all ideas and suggestions by validating them and then providing an explanation/justification if an idea is not selected.
- Having youth be accountable to each other is key! Build this by reporting what each youth completed to move toward a goal, and offer specific action steps for keeping the team on track to achieve that goal.
- The team should be an equal partnership between youth and adults. The adults are not "in charge" and should also have roles and assigned tasks.
- Adult facilitators should highlight and spotlight when youth members are modeling the norms well. Work this into a conversation so that it feels natural.
- Stay observant to what is going on in your school and community and ask students to reflect often.

Not every idea/project needs to be developed and implemented in one school year.

Consider drawing out your cycle over 1 to 2 years: gathering data and developing an idea during one year and implementing it the next. For example, after developing a school-wide campaign during a school year, sending a classroom resource to schools/teachers in May might not be optimal.

Consider policy-type work. Youth councils can have an impact on state- and local-level policies. Advocacy, informing policy, reviewing, updating, and strengthening current policies, or creating new policies can have a widespread and lasting impact.

See project ideas from Jeffco SHAC.

2. SELECTING AND IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS

You made it! Let the fun begin. Designing projects and initiatives to impact your community gives a sense of purpose to the youth advisory council. Remember to leverage existing partners, work, and resources.

Use these tips.

- Use available data to drive decisions (instead of starting “pet” projects).
- When possible, leverage existing partners, work, and resources. Don’t reinvent the wheel.
- Brainstorm, brainstorm, brainstorm!
 - During “project brainstorming,” encourage personal stories of how an issue affects each member and their connection with a current project idea.
- Vet ideas about project parameters and identify desired outcomes through an idea/work planning checklist.
- Think about sustainability, feasibility, and timing. Is the idea realistic, measurable, and attainable?
- Gather information and vet ideas with fellow students, school staff, community members, and families.
- When a potential project is brought to the group from a partner, let the youth vote on participation to ensure group buy-in.



USE A DATA/WORK CYCLE.

Show progress in a fun, interesting, quick view – until your project/task is complete and sustainable. Repeat the cycle for other projects/tasks or when you need to update existing work.

Project work cycle.

Find or create a visual representation of the youth advisory council’s work.

1. Gather information, collect data.

- Data examples: Youth-to-youth surveys, youth conducting interviews, data already collected by school/district – Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, Colorado Healthy Schools Smart Source, student, parent, or teacher climate surveys, etc.

2. Develop the idea.

- Vet ideas with student body votes, engaging the school staff, community, and families.

3. Set goals and objectives.

- Remember S.M.A.R.T goals – is the project or goal Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timebound?

4. Create an action plan.

- Allow students to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the goal/mission of the project/initiative and encourage *any idea as a good idea*.

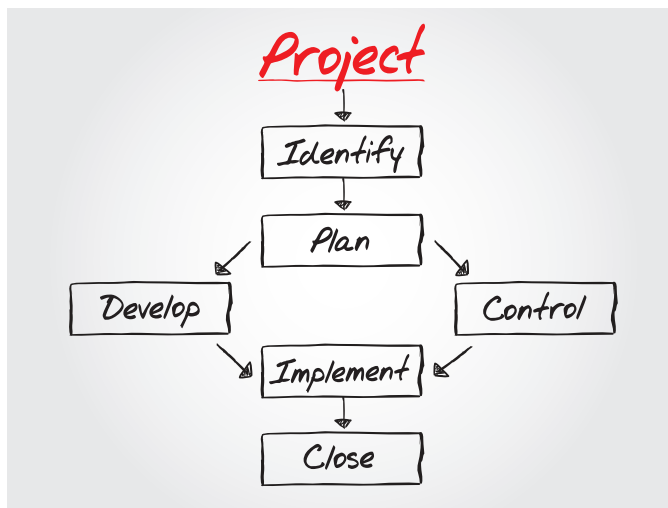
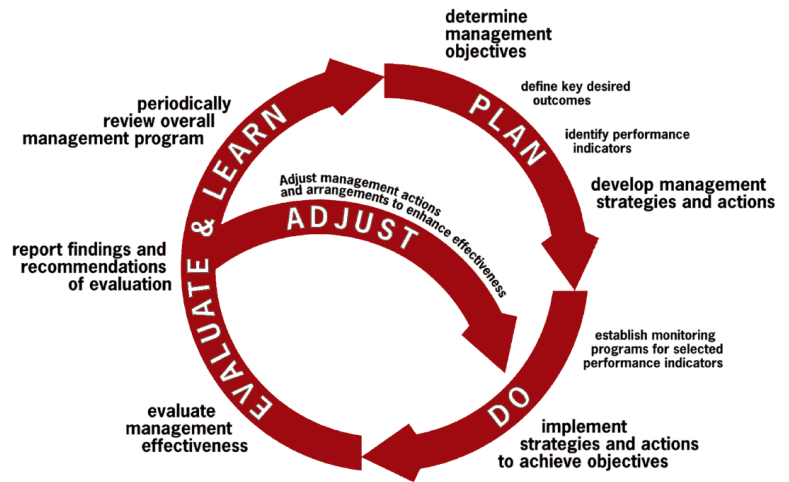
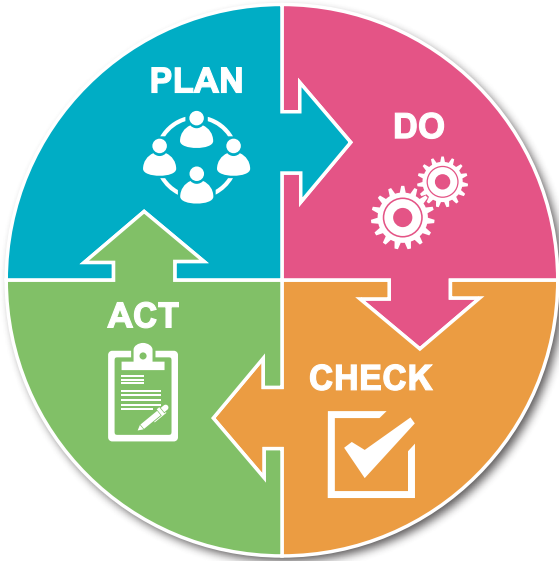
5. Implement initiatives and work plans.

- Implementation needs support – make sure your implementation plan is well thought out and the time commitment is reasonable. Be realistic and prioritize the work.
- Include awareness materials (including youth created videos and handouts).

6. Assess and monitor the impact, success, and progress.

- Collect feedback during and after projects from people impacted by the work. Consider facilitating events to collect the feedback. Discuss the feedback to determine if the council was successful. Ask questions like: Did the council reach the impact they wanted? What needs to change?
- Evaluate new projects that come along, but don’t drop the current task at hand. It’s important to maintain consistency.

Examples of work cycles you might adopt for your team



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G ORGANIZING ACTION TEAMS/ SUBCOMMITTEES

When the team's work is complex, break the group into action teams and/or subcommittees to complete different parts of the work. This allows the workload to be shared, youth to build a variety of skills, and engage in areas of interest. Spreading out the work will make it more manageable.

Create action teams and subcommittees.

- Include a video team, curriculum team, social media team, data collection team, etc.
- Include youth and adults on all teams.
- Teams should choose their own strategies to accomplish their tasks.
- Hold members accountable by using the youth council's online agenda (Google Doc) where each action team/subcommittee updates their action plan; see an example in the "establishing meeting structure" section.
- Allow teams to change over time and allow team members to switch to different action teams/subcommittees.
 - Some teams may only run for a short period and disband once the work is complete.
 - Other teams will continue for the entirety of a project or even be ongoing, due to their assigned task.
- Utilize large-group time to report out and keep teams connected.
- Take an inventory of youth members' talents and skills and incorporate them in every way possible.

H MAKING IT FUN AND CELEBRATING!

Having fun is the most important aspect of any high-performing team. Celebrate success, big and small, and celebrate each other to build camaraderie.

Make it fun.

- Consider hosting the first youth council meeting, if resources allow, at an off-site location that builds teamwork and relationships (i.e., a laser tag or mini-golf facility, a group hike, ropes course, etc. In planning this, just remember to be conscientious of varying interests and abilities).
- Plan a celebration mid-way through the year and at the end of the year.
 - A winter party is a fun way to give students a much-needed break around finals.

Document achievements.

- Make videos and take photos to document successes.
- Seek feedback from youth, including exit interviews, intent-to-return surveys, etc., with a "why they are on the council" section.
- Quotes and videos are great to have for later inspiration.
- Publicize your work with staff, students, families, and the school community using:
 - Youth Councils one-pager
 - District newsletters or websites
 - Weekly Thursday folders
 - Morning announcements
 - School letters to families
- At meetings, point out the work you've accomplished at different times during the year.
 - Lift up the impact you're having.
 - Explain why the impact matters.
 - Explain how the youth are making a difference.

I CREATING SUSTAINABILITY

Transitions are inevitable and there may be changes in staff and youth membership during the school year or year-to-year.

Tips for building a sustainable youth advisory council.

- Include the youth council as part of a district or school job/position description.
- Develop an online platform as a repository for communications, information for all projects (current and past), and history of the council.
- Recruit and ensure the youth council includes high school freshman, sophomores, and juniors in addition to seniors.
- Take on policy projects as a youth council.
- Document success and impact of youth council projects and impact/behavioral changes of youth council members.
- Share success often with district/school and community leadership. Have the youth council present to the board of education and/or at city council meetings.
- Consider integrating the youth council into the school day as a credit-earning course or advisory, or modifying the master schedule to allow time for youth groups to meet.

Tips from the YOUTH.

- Youth leaders create other youth leaders.
- Involve the entire school community.
- Have an end goal.
- Mix it up for better solutions.



**MODIFY THIS GUIDE
TO FIT YOUR NEEDS!**





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