

RESOURCE: Leveraging Youth Voice to Effect Change

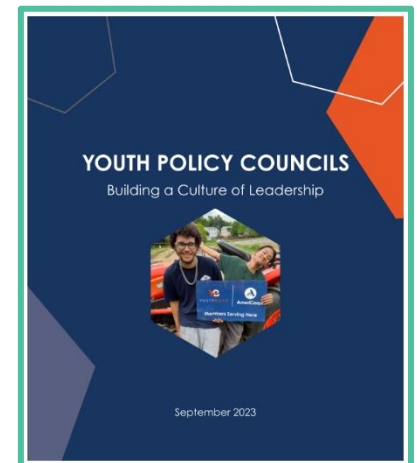


"What would you do to improve your community if you had adult support?" In 1978, young people in East Harlem, NY, were asked this question, which sparked the YouthBuild movement.

Since then, young people have been demonstrating an aspect of their leadership by leveraging their personal experience and expertise to effect change.

YouthBuild is often the first place participants practice using their voices and can see their recommendations implemented in their role on a **YOUTH POLICY COUNCIL**. This council can be a stepping stone for young people to join external committees and councils (sometimes in a paid capacity) to make the world work better for themselves, their peers, and their community.

This document includes local and national advisory councils and committees that YouthBuild participants and alumni can consider joining. The councils/committees focus on topics that may align with their interests, identities, and experiences in the youth workforce, community impact (e.g., community violence or climate issues), registered apprenticeships, LGBTQIA+, and/or STEM areas.



We hope this information inspires you to develop or strengthen your youth policy councils and explore local, regional, and national advisory council opportunities for our young people.

Youth Policy Councils: Sample Responsibilities

- Provide input in staff hiring, policy/program changes, program management/services, annual budget
- Advocate for what they need, like more mentoring/emotional support
- Make decisions that inform all aspects of the program
- Plan events like community service projects, leadership activities, field trips, and even proms
- Solve problems as needed (restorative circles)
- Lead program tours
- Impact/drive program culture

How YouthBuild Newark and the New Jersey Coalition Activate Youth Voice

The New Jersey Opportunity Youth Coalition is a statewide advocacy group¹ that includes existing YouthBuild programs, community-based organizations, and advocacy organizations. YouthBuild Newark’s participants, alumni, and staff members attend the coalition events.

In collaboration with the New Jersey Opportunity Youth Coalition, YouthBuild Newark’s Youth Policy Advisory Council led and facilitated a citywide community listening project to learn about the educational experiences of youth who have been pushed out of traditional academic settings. 170 youth across the City of Newark participated in these small group conversations.

Two additional examples:

City of Newark Workforce Development Board: YouthBuild Newark alumni are Youth Investment Council members who analyze WIOA programs, provide feedback on youth services/programs, and build capacity for community-level leadership through professional development opportunities, public speaking, and youth-focused program development.

Measure of America: An advisory panel of key stakeholders, including YouthBuild Newark participants and alumni, assembled to provide recommendations and feedback on a [Portrait of Newark](#) report.



WHAT’S AN ADVISORY BOARD? A structured and collaborative method for organizations to engage with external advisors as a sounding board.

A well-structured advisory board with best practice principles allows people in the organization to test their strategic thinking and access expertise or connections that may not be readily available via other means.

¹ **NOTE:** You can NOT use your DOL grant funds for advocacy purposes.

National Opportunities for YouthBuild Participants



The Collective for Youth Empowerment in STEM & Society (CYESS) aims to elevate youth voices, provide them with the STEM experience and civic training they need, and prepare adults in organizations to listen and engage.



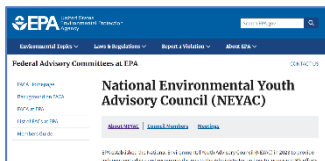
It Gets Better Youth Voices is a Youth Ambassador Program that funds unique stories from young people ages 13-18 to other LGBTQ+ youth.



New Ways News: Youth Workforce VOICE facilitates the voice of the youth workforce by looking for youth-written articles for its "Youth Workforce VOICE" news section.

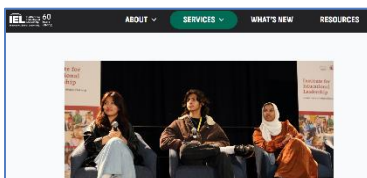


Apprentice Trailblazer Initiative is a network of apprentices and apprenticeship graduates who share stories and perspectives to demonstrate how Registered Apprenticeships increase opportunities for underserved populations and bring awareness to career seekers.



National Environmental Youth Advisory Council (NEYAC) Provides independent advice and recommendations to the Administrator on how to increase EPA's efforts to address environmental issues related to youth, emphasizing communities below 29 years of age.

Other Resources



Institute for Educational Leadership

The guide improves understanding of how to create opportunities for youth leadership. It captures youth stories and insights to help illustrate how to build more inclusive decision-making and activate the next generation of leaders in our communities.



Urban Institute: Elevating Youth Worker Voice Toolkit

Focus: Young people face unique challenges in using their workplace voice as they embark on careers.