

# Empowering Youth

Building Effective Youth Councils

# Oregon's First Youth Summit



# Walk thru for today's presentation.

## Today's Presenters

Steve Campbell, Happy Valley

Quin Brunner, Lake Oswego

Michaela Canete, Hillsboro

Stephani Hern, Happy Valley

## What are you going to learn today?

1. Purpose and benefits of having your own youth council
2. Different models of YC's
3. How to form your own youth council

# When, Why and Outcome

Youth advisory councils were formed to give young people a voice in local government decisions, promote civic engagement, and empower youth to contribute to their communities. These councils typically consist of youth representatives who advise city councils, mayors, or other local officials on issues relevant to young people, such as education, public safety, and recreational opportunities. They serve as a platform for youth to influence policies, lead projects, and gain leadership experience.

## When: Civic Engagement Movements (1990s - 2000s):

As civic engagement movements gained momentum in the 1990s and 2000s, there was a growing recognition that youth involvement was crucial for fostering long-term civic responsibility. Programs like youth councils and advisory committees were developed to give young people formal platforms to express their views and influence local policy.



# Why? Giving Youth A Voice

**Changing Demographics and Priorities:** As communities have become more diverse and interconnected, there has been a shift towards inclusive governance. Recognizing that younger generations are directly impacted by long-term decisions about housing, climate, transportation, and education, local governments have increasingly sought their input in these areas.





## Outcome: Youth Councils Formation across the State and Nation

**Institutional Support for Youth Voices:** Organizations such as the National League of Cities and the League of Oregon Cities began to provide frameworks and resources for cities to create youth councils and advisory committees. These efforts helped institutionalize youth participation in local government by establishing formal positions for young people to advise city leaders.

# In Oregon there are 17 known Youth councils

Beaverton

Clackamas County

Cornelius

Cottage Grove

Eugene

Gresham

Happy Valley

Hillsboro

*[Insert your City here]*

Lake Oswego

Multnomah County

Oregon City

Portland

Sherwood

Tigard

Tualatin

West Linn

Yamhill



# Discussion Question:

## Who were you in high school?

- *What activities occupied your time?*
- *What issues occupied your mind?*
- *Who was most important to you?*

# Why Would *"High-School You"* Join A Municipal Youth Program?

Your friends are in it

Chance to make new, like-minded friends

Interest in government

Opportunity to create change, travel, fun activities

Meet and work with elected officials

Bolster your college apps or resume

# Youth Programs are Mutually Beneficial

## Students Get

- Connections, with peers and elected officials
- Support creating change today
- Knowledge to enable effective change-making tomorrow
- Space to "try on" beliefs and positions

## Cities Get

- Improved policy effectiveness
- Address demographic gap in engagement
- Trickle-up engagement with parents
- Pipeline for civic leaders

Share-out:

What questions were you wrestling with in high school?

# Themes

Belonging  
Identity  
Collaboration  
Agency





EDUCATE



EMPOWER



INVOLVE



# Goals of Youth Council Programs

# Hillsboro

Youth Advisory Council





**HAPPY VALLEY, OR**  
**EST. 1965**



# Lake Oswego Youth Leadership Council





# Oregon City Youth Advisory Commission & Gresham Youth Advisory Council

# Where to Start

## Starting Your Own Youth Advisory Council: A Step-by-Step Guide

This guide is designed to help you establish a dynamic and effective YAC from the ground up that will benefit your organization and community.

### Define the Purpose and Goals

**Mission Statement:** Clearly outline the purpose of the YAC and how it aligns with your organization's mission.

**Goals:** Set specific, measurable goals for the YAC. For example, increasing youth involvement in community projects or addressing specific local issues.



**(PEER)<sup>2</sup>**  
: positively influence, protect,  
empower, enrich, encourage, engage,  
represent, respect

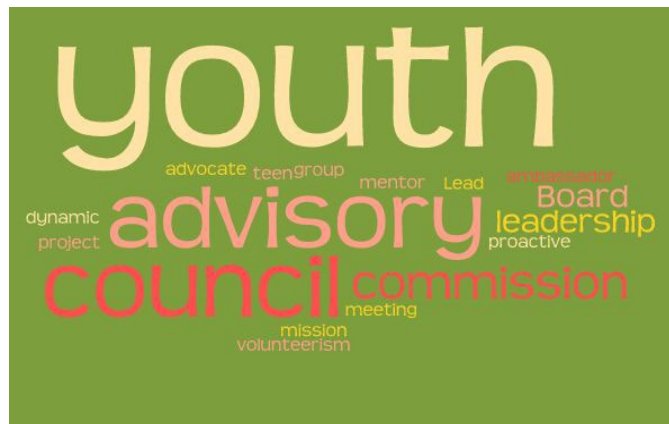
### *Our Mission*

*The purpose of the Happy Valley Youth Council is to serve the youth of the city in such a manner that their lives might be joyous, fulfilling, respectful and just, and to behave in such a way as to provide a role model of good citizenship and conduct.*

# Create a Council Handbook

Develop a handbook that will guide the council's operations and provide clarity to its members. The handbook should include:

- **Council Name:** Choose a name that reflects the council's mission and values.
- **Background and History:** Explain why and when the council was formed.
- **Membership Requirements:** Define age, grade, residence, GPA, and any other criteria.
- **Application Process:** Describe how members are selected and the length of their terms.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Outline the roles, including officer positions, and their duties.
- **Agenda Setting:** Provide guidelines for setting meeting agendas and identifying goals.



# Oregon Youth Summit

6th annual event hosted by HV Youth Council to further student discussions on health and wellness



In 2023, over 75 Youth Council representatives, advisors, and City Council members from eight cities throughout the state united at the Oregon Youth Summit. Be sure to check out the next issue of HV News for a recap of 2024's event.

Stay tuned for updates regarding 2024's Oregon Youth Summit as Happy Valley's Youth Council gears up for its 6th annual event on Feb. 2.

The Summit, to be held at Willamette University, will bring together Youth Council representatives from various cities across Oregon. This gathering serves as a platform for these

young leaders to share insights and collaborate on outside approaches to address the challenges faced by Oregon's youth.

This year, the focus is on youth wellness and mental health, building on the success of their Youth Town Hall event last November which offered a platform for local experts and speakers to delve into these critical issues alongside concerned

high school students.

Happy Valley's Youth Council, established in 2010, comprises student leaders from local high schools who work closely with city government representatives.

The council advocates for giving teenagers a voice and a stake in their community. Beyond the Oregon Youth Summit, the Youth Council

coordinates such initiatives as the Rx Drug Take Back program and teen driver safety events and throughout the year.

Aspiring youth leaders interested in joining the Youth Council can submit applications during the open period in April/May. For additional information, visit [www.happyvalleyor.gov/youth-council](http://www.happyvalleyor.gov/youth-council).

## YOUTH VOICE

### Youth Council Re-Emphasizes Focus on Teen Wellness Through Town Hall on Mental Health

Student journalist gives insider take on Youth Town Hall



Finuala Christensen-McElroy

On Nov. 15, Happy Valley's Youth Council held their annual Youth Town Hall, the focus of which (tobacco, vaping, drug use, alcohol consumption, mental health, and suicide prevention) mirrored their overarching theme for the year: youth health and wellness.

The town hall began with a pizza dinner, giving teens the opportunity to eat and discuss the subjects highlighted in the evening's program. Shortly after, the Council welcomed and introduced every one to the event. This was followed by a round of introductions, led by council member and La Salle Catholic College Preparatory student, David Sharyan. The activities allowed people to become more comfortable with the environment and engage with the council.

"We're discussing heavy topics," co-chair Thames said. "So, we wanted to start with something light."

Involving teens in "meaningful discussion about important topics affecting them" was one of the main goals of the event, and though a Q & A took place once the presentations were over, questions were asked and welcomed by presenters

#### YOUTH VOICE

We are pleased to announce that this article is featured in the HV News as part of an exciting partnership between the City of Happy Valley, People's Media, and our local high school journalism program. This collaboration aims to amplify the student voice and provide residents with a unique opportunity to gain insights into the interests and needs of our talented local high school students. We encourage readers to stay tuned for future issues as HV News continues to bring a variety of compelling student pieces to the forefront in the months to come, fostering a deeper connection between our residents and the vibrant student community.

as they spoke. Statistics and Oregon Student Health Surveys—like those shared by Jamie Zeebren, a senior program planner from Clackamas County Health—were informative and helpful in gauging the scope along with the overlap of mental health and tobacco/drug use. But what was most impactful about the event were the personal stories shared by two NAMI volunteers, Jen and Nicole.

When hearing information about complicated issues like mental health and drug abuse, it's easy to distance yourself from it. Yet as I listened to Nicole and Jen open up about their own mental health journeys, from middle school, to treatment, to where they are now, I connected with what they shared, as their experiences reflected those of myself and my peers.

"No one talked about mental health," Jen said, expressing how

the lack of discussion combined with social pressure were some of the biggest challenges she faced in getting treatment, along with talking to her family and friends about what she was going through. These discussions are difficult to have, and although it's easier to overlook their importance, to myself and the people around me, both Jen and Nicole emphasized how crucial it is to reach out, even if it seems hard or awkward, because you never know what's going on in someone else's life.

"Success looks like a lot of different things," Jen said, sharing the message that stuck with me the most from the Youth Town Hall: "It gets better. That's cheesy, but true."

Finuala Christensen-McElroy is a Sophomore at La Salle Catholic College Preparatory and staff writer for The Falconer.



HAPPY VALLEY YOUTH COUNCIL APPLICATIONS OPENS 4/17 - CLOSES 5/12



ARE YOU INTERESTED? VISIT [WWW.HAPPYVALLEYOR.GOV/HV-YC](http://WWW.HAPPYVALLEYOR.GOV/HV-YC)

EMAIL COMPLETED APPLICATION TO: [STEPHANIH@HAPPYVALLEYOR.GOV](mailto:STEPHANIH@HAPPYVALLEYOR.GOV) DEADLINE: FRIDAY, MAY 12



# Recruit Members

Diverse Representation: Ensure the council reflects a range of perspectives and backgrounds.

Recruitment Channels: Reach out through schools, community centers, social media, and local newspapers. Host open houses or town hall meetings to attract interested youth.

Selection Committee: Form a committee to review applications and select members.

# Operational Logistics – Go Time!

**Meeting Schedule:** Decide on a regular meeting time and location. Ensure it's accessible for all members. And always provide food. Pizza is a staple!

**Staff Support:** Determine the level of staff involvement needed. This might range from part-time support to full-time oversight, depending on the council's size and activity level.

**Budget:** Create a budget for supplies and project funding. Seek grants, sponsorships, or other funding sources. Involve council members in grant writing and fundraising to provide them with valuable experience.

**Define Council Member Responsibilities:**

**Attend Meetings** - Regularly participate in council meetings.

**Contribute Ideas** - Share and develop ideas with the group.

**Act as Ambassadors** - Promote and embody the organization's mission.

**Exhibit Leadership** - Show professionalism and leadership in their roles.

# Initiating Projects and Activities

Encourage the council to brainstorm and initiate projects that address community issues. Examples include:

Annual Rx Drug Take Back Events

Social Media Responsibility

Community-Wide Clean-Ups

These projects not only contribute to community well-being but also engage more youth in service and volunteerism.





# League of Oregon Cities - City Day at the Capitol

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Salem, OR



Questions ?