

CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Policy Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: 6/25/19 **Start Time:** 3:00 p.m. **Approx. Length:** 30 minutes
Presentation Title: Youth Engagement
Department: Public and Government Affairs
Presenters: Amy Kyle, Katie Wilson, Amber Harvey, and Noah Kurzenhauser
Other Invitees: Tim Heider, Interim Director Public and Government Affairs

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

Information report with recommendations to improve youth engagement in the County.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Public and Government Affairs staff have met with school representatives countywide, with neighboring agencies and hosted a series of youth workshops to learn how Clackamas County can better engage youth in our community.

School representatives express interest in working with the county to provide opportunities to their students but identify obstacles including staff and financial resources, time constraints, multi-lingual accessibility requirements, and transportation needs.

Youth were invited to attend workshops on April 6, May 4, and June 1. Participants were asked to share their knowledge about Clackamas County, where they get their news, what social media platforms they use, what issues they care about, how they would like to be engaged, what the county could do to encourage participation and what barriers keep youth from engaging. Recurring themes were:

- Youth are not aware of what the county does. Local government is not included in school curriculum and county programming is not currently being consistently promoted to youth.
- Youth are busy! Between school, family, jobs, and extra-curricular activities they have very limited time for new commitments.
- Transportation is a challenge. Many youth do not drive or have access to their own vehicle. This means they are dependent on others for transportation.
- Youth don't feel heard. They feel they are being asked for participation or feedback without seeing tangible results or knowing how their feedback was used in decision-making.
- Youth want to make a difference! Participants were excited about opportunities to get involved.

Multnomah County has a robust Youth Commission program. Their structure is designed to encourage diversity, equity and inclusion as well as engage a wide age range of youth. The annual budget for their program is \$30k and they have 2 FTE designated to the program. They have partnered with the City of Portland to maximize resources. Tools they use to overcome barriers include:

- Providing transportation passes or staff drivers to transport students to commission meetings and activities
- Providing food at all meetings and events
- Alternating meeting locations to accommodate youth from all over the county
- Online and social media tools
- Incentives such as extra credit at their schools, college credits, letters of recommendation, preference for internship opportunities, food, prizes, and gift cards

- One dedicated FTE focused on recruitment and engagement
- One dedicated FTE focused on managing commission project

What we are already doing:

- Youth are currently invited to serve on existing advisory boards and commissions.
- We have a youth resource guide on the new county website.
- Department of Transportation, Health, Housing, and Human Services, Department of Transportation, Department of Business Services, The Sheriff, and Water Environment Services have existing programming for children and youth.
- PGA is actively seeking out internship opportunities for youth here at Clackamas County.

Staff recommended next steps include:

- Establish an internal working group to identify existing youth programming, outreach, and communications. This will allow us to have a more unified message, leverage resources, and implement a “one county” strategy to alleviate confusion with young people.
- Online and remote access tools. A youth resource page similar to what the 2018 Leadership Academy recommended would be a great start. Additionally, youth were excited about signing up for online surveys, emails, and social media engagement. These efforts will support any other initiatives we implement.
- Dedicate resources for youth focused communications.
- A pilot task force. Engaging youth in a one-year program that would tackle a specific issue (suicide prevention or school based health centers) or other program the county is already supporting would allow us to see and address barriers. A successful taskforce would help us build the necessary programming to support a county-wide youth commission.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):

Paid for out of existing PGA budget.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

- Building trust through good government...
- Aligns with department goal of building awareness among residents of county services and programs and that Clackamas County residents will be aware of and engaged with county government.

LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

N/A

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:

PGA currently provides a staff member committed to community engagement. Additionally, two part-time youth interns contributed to the outreach and research for this presentation.

OPTIONS:

- Establish working group
- Establish online tools
- Establish youth-focused communications

- Establish pilot task force

RECOMMENDATION:

PGA recommends the Board allows PGA to do the following to improve youth engagement in the County:

- Establish working group
- Establish online tools
- Establish youth-focused communications
- Establish pilot task force

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Youth Outreach Workshop Summary Memo prepared by PGA
2. Youth Outreach Workshop Summary and Report completed by PGA Interns, Amber Harvey and Noah Kurzenhauser

SUBMITTED BY:

Division Director/Head Approval _____

Department Director/Head Approval _____ Tim Heider _____

County Administrator Approval _____

For information on this issue or copies of attachments, please contact Tim Heider @ 503.742.5911
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Memo

To: Gary Schmidt, County Administrator
From: Public & Government Affairs
RE: Youth Outreach
Date: 6/17/19

Background:

Public and Government Affairs staff have met with school representatives countywide, with neighboring agencies and hosted a series of youth workshops to learn how Clackamas County can better engage youth in our community between the months of April and June 2019. The first youth workshop focused on determining what attendees already knew about Clackamas County, where they go to find information, and what public services, programs and issues they were interested in learning more about.

The second workshop was a brainstorming session. Attendees shared ideas for topics they would want to focus on if offered a platform to effect change. These included teen suicide prevention, school based health centers, environmental protection, school safety, climate change, young voter registration, and equity, diversity and inclusion. The group decided to focus on young voter registration. The group discussed how a voter registration drive and candidate forum focused at engaging young people would look at each of their schools. From this, we learned that, without previous instruction, young people had a hard time conceptualizing different formats for how they could be engaged.

At the final workshop, we presented them with examples of what their involvement could look like - including a youth council, a task force, county staff attending youth-led club meetings, county staff attending school lunches or assemblies, an online user group and more. We discussed the barriers and advantages to each of these options and they completed a survey at the end.

In addition to the workshops we also engaged school leaders to learn more about how we can partner on projects and leverage resources to better serve youth. We also met with neighboring agencies to learn more about how they serve youth- specifically Multnomah County, City of Happy Valley, and City of Lake Oswego to learn more about their youth councils.

Summary:

Young people are not a homogeneous group. Their needs and interests are diverse. A “one size fits all” approach will not achieve the goal of engaging youth countywide. Participants in the workshops were already involved in all kinds of activities including athletics, drama, music, speech and debate, horticulture, hiking and camping, fishing, clothing design, art, gaming, computer science, cooking, volunteering, robotics, and part-time jobs. This information speaks to the range in interests as well as the busy schedules these young people have.

Participants were excited about many of the options we shared for how we could engage them and they gave valuable feedback about how we can better reach them.

Top contenders for methods of engagement included:

- A youth council or taskforce
- Internships or job shadow opportunities

- County presence at school clubs, lunches, or assemblies
- Remote options such as a survey listserv, online toolbox, and social media takeovers

Participants indicated they use social media, school resources, and their guardians to get information. Feedback included:

- **Social media:** Instagram and Twitter are great for sharing information with young people but we need content they are interested in to get them to follow.
- **Schools:** Morning intercom announcements, reader boards, bulletins, parent newsletters, and school email are tools youth are already accessing to find out what's going on.
- **Guardians:** youth often look to their parents or guardians to help them prioritize their commitments and understand current events. This can be problematic as sometimes they do not feel their interests or values are always aligned.

While youth were excited about many of the engagement opportunities, they shared a lot of concerns about barriers that could prevent them from participating. Common concerns included:

- **Time.** Between family commitments, jobs, and extracurricular activities, young people have demanding schedules. Participants suggested providing incentives such as internship opportunities, resume support, food, prizes, and gift cards to encourage participation. They also wanted to know in advance how their participation would be turned into action.
- **Transportation.** Most of our participants did not have access to a car to drive themselves to activities and commitments. Few were familiar with public transit. Most of our participants were from rural or suburban areas so they did not commonly bike or walk. Most were reliant on school buses, guardians, friends, or other family to get them where they need to go. Participants suggested providing transportation or offering remote participation opportunities.
- **Awareness.** Most participants had no idea what the county does, who the commissioners were, where to get information, or why what we do might matter to them when they started. Participants were very clear- we simply need to invest in communicating with young people to share with them what we do, build a relationship with their community, and establish trust. This has to happen before we can expect them to prioritize our programs and activities.

School representatives expressed interest in collaborating with the county on programming to better serve their students. They expressed interest in better understanding county goals so we can be better aligned. They also identified obstacles including staff and financial resources, time constraints, multi-lingual accessibility requirements, and transportation needs.

Other agencies who have established youth programming and/or a youth council were more than willing to share about their programs, the challenges they have faced and solutions they have found. We spoke with staff at City of Happy Valley and the City of Lake Oswego, and Multnomah County. After learning about each program, it became clear our needs were most closely aligned with Multnomah County.

Multnomah County has a robust program that has taken years of relationship building, considerable resources, and skilled support to establish. A quick overview of their program:

- Annual budget of \$30k
- They collaborate with the City of Portland to pool resources for the program.
- They employ two full time staff with expertise in youth engagement and regularly contract with non-profits to expand their reach.
- They offer programming and support to youth ranging from junior high to post-high school.

- They provide transportation to all participants ranging from transit passes to staff drivers who drive county vehicles to pick up participants.
- They provide funding to school programs to build a presence in local schools and establish relationships.
- Time commitments for participants range by participant age and opportunity.

Recommendations

- Establish an internal working group to identify existing youth programming, outreach, and communications. This will allow us to have a more unified message, leverage resources, and implement a “one county” strategy to alleviate confusion with young people.
- Online and remote access tools. A youth resource page similar to what the 2018 Leadership Academy recommended would be a great start. Additionally, youth were excited about signing up for online surveys, emails, and social media engagement. These efforts will support any other initiatives we implement.
- Invest in youth focused communications.
- We recommend testing out a pilot program of a Youth Commission with a task force. Engaging youth in a one-year program that would tackle a specific issue within a program the county is already supporting would allow us to see and address barriers on a small scale. A successful taskforce would help us build the necessary programming to support a county-wide youth commission.

Attachments:

Youth Outreach Memo

Youth Outreach Workshop Summary and Report completed by PGA Interns, Amber Harvey and Noah Kurzenhauser

Youth Workshop Report (Prepared by PGA Interns, Amber Harvey and Noah Kurzenhauser)

Summary:

- ❖ There are as many ways to be a young person as there are young people - youth all have unique life experiences and subsequently differing interests.
- ❖ The structures for engagement that students liked most were a youth council, county staff attending club meetings at their schools, and options for attending meetings online.

What Barriers exist?

- ❖ The more barriers that are in place, and the fewer the resources provided to address them, the harder it will be for marginalized young people to participate. This becomes an equity question of **“whose voice do we want to center?”** The biggest barriers we face to engaging young people are:
 - Time commitment. Almost 2/3 of the students surveyed are committing 10 hours per week or more on responsibilities outside of school.
 - Transportation. Only one student surveyed said they could drive themselves. Students rely on rides from other people and frequently see their peers miss events because they do not have transportation.
 - Outreach. For all options, distributing information to young people is a decentralized and difficult process.

What Structures do Youth Prefer?

- ❖ County staff attending school clubs or classes. Youth liked that it would not require them to travel and is targeted toward their interests. This would require a significant amount of ongoing outreach.
- ❖ Youth Commission. Youth liked that this could build their resume and offer them opportunities for internships or letters of recommendation. They identified significant transportation and time commitment barriers.
 - As an example, the Multnomah County Youth Commission has a \$30,000 budget and two full-time staff members to teach and facilitate their commission.

Recommendations

- ❖ We recommend assembling a youth web resource and email listserv for ongoing survey opportunities. This will support any other youth initiatives moving forward.
- ❖ A one-year task force addressing a specific issue within a program the county has already developed. This task force could address an issue already identified by youth as important such as school-based health centers, young voter registration, equity, or teen suicide prevention. This could serve as a pilot program for a larger youth commission in the future, showing the challenges and successes we face to prepare us for a sustainable youth program.
- ❖ An internship/job shadowing program with short and longer-term opportunities.
- ❖ Establish an internal working group of county staff to identify all the existing ways we are serving youth and more efficiently utilize resources.

Full Report

What did we do the last 6 months? How did we get here?

- ❖ As a team, PGA hosted three workshops with youth from across the county. At the first workshop we found out what they already know about Clackamas County and the public services provided and what issues they were interested in.
- ❖ At the second workshop we brainstormed what addressing one specific issue would look like. We focused on voter turnout and the youth discussed how a voter drive would look at each of their schools. From this, we learned that, without previous instruction, young people had a hard time conceptualizing different formats for how they could be engaged.
- ❖ At the third workshop, we presented them with examples of what their involvement could look like - including a youth council, a task force, county staff attending club meetings, county staff attending lunches or assemblies, an online user group and more. We discussed the barriers and advantages to each of these options and they completed a survey at the end.

What do young people want?

- ❖ There are as many ways to be a young person as there are young people.
- ❖ Lots of different things - in the first meeting, we asked “what issues do you pay attention to” and almost every student had a different response: public transit, suicide, racism, money in politics, car safety and intoxicated driving. Each young person, just like each adult person, has unique life experiences that inform their interests.
- ❖ That’s why we saw that they’re involved in so many different types of clubs and activities: horticulture, queer and trans equity, video game production, drama, volunteering, and more.

What are the barriers to engaging them?

- ❖ 1. Time Commitment (7/11, 64% of students identified this)
 - They’re already doing a lot
 - When asked, students had a median of 4 and an average of 5.5 commitments. They are all in clubs, volunteering, in leadership, responsible for household duties, creating art, spending time with friends, most of all being kids.
 - [Insert pie chart of hours spent on different things] About 27% of the students surveyed spend 16-20 hours/week and about 36% of students spend 10-15 hours/week. So, in addition to going to school full time, almost 2/3 of these students are working at least 10 hours/week on other responsibilities.
 - So what does that mean for us?
 - In our survey, one young person said “I am on lots of boards and clubs and even if you find participants, kids constantly drop out, don't show, or can't commit. It's usually because they are so busy or they don't have support at home.”
 - Because they are busy, when presented with a new opportunity they are going to have to choose between it and something they’re already doing. The more time we ask from them, the less likely we are to get them involved.
 - Some Solutions
 - Give incentives: making sure to clearly line out how interacting with us can play a part in their larger goals. For people looking to get involved in government, we heard lots of interest in internships or job shadowing opportunities. For people looking to go to college, lots of interest in letters of recommendation and things they can put on their resume. Anywhere we go having food or gift cards to offer them.

- ❖ 2. Transportation (6/11, 55% of students identified this)
 - Students are relying on rides from others
 - Of the students who took our survey, only one was able to drive themselves to meetings and 2 students said they would not be able to attend if it was not at their school. When we asked if their friends frequently don't attend things because they don't have a ride, everyone said yes.
 - We didn't have any students attend from Canby, Colton, Milwaukie, Sandy, West Linn, Wilsonville, or homeschooling/private schooling networks.
 - So what does that mean for us?
 - If we were to do something that required students to come to us, that would significantly limit the amount of students that were able to participate, especially if we need them to participate consistently or make a long-term commitment.
 - We're going to have to offer transportation support and that means even more county resources.
 - Some Solutions
 - In order to mitigate some of the transportation barriers, we can rotate the location of the meetings around the county. We also found that young people were really interested in some form of remote options for participation, such as a skype meeting.

- ❖ 3. Awareness and Outreach (5/11, 45% said it's a barrier)
 - Even with all the outreach we've done, people don't know about these events
 - For outreach on this final event, Noah and Amber put in about 40 or more hours just researching who to contact at the schools, sending emails and calling trying to get participants. And with all that we had 18 people attend.
 - There isn't one centralized method of distributing information to young people. Each school has different ways of sharing information, and you have to contact individual counselors, teachers, club advisors, students etc. at each school to get the information out. That's a lot of contact points to make and maintain relationships with.
 - So what does that mean for us?
 - A lot of the labor and resources for this project that will go into reaching out to all these individual schools
 - This is going to be the biggest consumer of time for whatever program we do, and it has the potential to be HUGE. The more we can limit this, the more **sustainable** the program will be.
 - Some solutions
 - Consistency: building relationships with clubs by coming to them at the same time of the year, re-introducing ourselves every year as there is turnover, and establishing a tradition and a culture of interacting with the county within the club. This is a slow building process.
 - Tangible results: students want to know and see what real life changes will happen because of their input and actions

- ❖ The way we evaluate these barriers impacts who will be able to participate and the demographics they represent. The more barriers that are in place, the less likely it is for the most marginalized people with fewer resources to access us. This is an equity issue.
 - For example, young people from lower income families are much less likely to be able to get rides if their family members are working more or don't have flexibility in their work hours. These youth are also more likely to be working, or working longer hours, so something with a longer time commitment is inaccessible.
 - Youth who are caretaking for disabled family members or elders have less access to rides and time availability.

- Ultimately, Clackamas County is committed to serving everyone equitably, and if we're creating opportunities without providing the necessary support for everyone to access them, then we're not doing our job.

What are the best ways to engage youth?

- ❖ Youth Commission: here's the full scope of what we would need to make a **successful** and **sustainable** council work
 - Young people were excited about this option because it would build their resume for jobs and college and offer them opportunities for letters of recommendation
 - Overview of the Multnomah County Youth Commission (MCYC)
 - The MCYC was started in 1996 and currently has 42 youth commissioners. To support these youth commissioners, both the County and City of Portland provide one full time, dedicated staff member and \$15,000. This means the MCYC has a budget of \$30,000 and two full time staff.
 - They meet as a full commission twice per month, within their committees once per week, attend a yearly 3-day retreat, host listening/focus groups and events throughout the year as necessary, and conduct interviews for new members March through May. They are working on three different projects right now.
 - We need full time, dedicated staff
 - Young people are a unique demographic, with unique barriers to engagement that need unique solutions.
 - Any staff member tasked with a youth council would need youth-specific training, like the youth-adult partnership model that proactively addresses power dynamics that occur along age lines. That staff member will also need to know how and why marginalized youth have been historically left out. That means knowing the barriers for youth of color, youth who have dropped out of school, young parents, poor youth, youth who don't live with their family, or the ~10% of Clackamas County youth that are houseless or housing insecure. We currently don't have anyone dedicated to that skill set.
 - They'll be responsible for teaching young people a lot of foundational skills that we forget need to be taught, like writing an agenda, staying on task at a meeting, writing professional emails, making phone calls, understanding how government and business structures operate, and how to plan an event. In order to teach those skills well, the staff would need experience teaching and time to adequately teach those lessons. Because the turnover for the youth commissioners are about every 2-3 years, a large portion of the beginning of each youth commissioner's time will be spent learning these new skills.
 - This staff would also be working a lot of hours outside a 9-5: after school or weekend meetings, retreat, giving rides, etc.
 - In order to help all youth, from all different backgrounds, find success and meet their goals in this program, we will have to invest resources long-term. Talking to one of the MCYC staff members, Erika Moina-Rodriguez, it was clear that they have seen programs fail when that staff is underprepared, underpaid or does not have the capacity.
 - Other logistics
 - Where will this program be housed? What department is prepared to listen to the youth voice? Who can provide long-term commitment?
 - Ex: when MCYC was housed under the mayor the turnover every four years made staffing, budgeting unstable.
 - Budget: the \$30k they get goes to mileage for staff giving rides, food, supplies, space, printing, interpreters, childcare, potential stipends or paying these young people as a way to reduce barriers.

- Our budget is the first reflection of what we value, so if you value youth input, we will need to reflect that in the budget.

- ❖ Staff attending clubs or classes

- What would that look like? Some examples
 - One student from Youth Workshop focus group is on an equity club that is always looking for speakers, so County staff could lead presentations at clubs about the services we provide
 - A partnership between a green club and WES that helps provide resources and connections for a project the club is already working on - watershed clean-ups or rain-gardening.
 - Field trips out to county facilities
 - Going to where young people are already organizing themselves and asking what are you doing? How can we help?
- Cons: this doesn't have a peer-to-peer aspect that can really get them to open up
- Pros: guaranteed participation, already committed and interested in this area, could be a stepping stone to figuring out a more specific plan for youth engagement in the future

Communication

- ❖ The best ways to communicate and get the word out is to go to where they are.
- ❖ Social media: Instagram to get news, twitter
- ❖ Other: word of mouth, getting parents to communicate with them

Recommendations

- ❖ There are some online tools we can create - like a youth page on the website and online skype meetings. These will support any other initiatives we implement.
- ❖ The two ideas young people said they like best were the youth council and county staff attending club meetings. At our third youth workshop, we had youth rate their interest in each idea, which they thought would get the most participation from their peers, and which they thought had the most barriers. The young people identified that they had the most interest in a youth council, but also saw it having the most barriers to participation. They were also interested in staff attending club or class meetings and thought this would have more participation. No student identified barriers to club or class meetings.
- ❖ We suggest testing out a pilot program of a Youth Commission that looks like a task force. Engaging youth in a one-year program that would tackle a specific issue within a program the county is already conducting would allow us to see and address barriers on a small scale. If that goes well, it could be a great stepping stone to a Youth Commission.
 - To figure out where that youth involvement will be most useful, consider: Where exactly do you want youth involvement/ in what department? Where is youth input most needed?
 - At the first workshop, youth identified possible topics and areas of interest that they were passionate about. These would be a great starting point for a task force. Some ideas include teen suicide prevention, school based health centers, young voter registration, environmental protection, equity, and school violence.
- ❖ A youth council would be great if Clackamas County is willing to invest the resources. If a youth council is the eventual goal, some questions to think about are: What are the tangible results you're hoping to achieve with youth involvement? Where exactly do you want youth involvement/ in what department? What department is prepared to listen to the youth voice, especially when it contradicts something that is already in process?
- ❖ In our survey, one student said, "I think maybe you need to start off easier and build a presence at our schools so we know who you are and what we can count on you for before you can expect us to choose your council over other stuff and even then it will be hard. You need to have workers to come out and meet us and hang out at our schools so we can get to know them and trust them. We have other groups that do this and kids like it."