



MEMORANDUM

Phone: 452-2834
Date: May 23, 2012
To: Parks & Community Services Board
From: Michelle Mattson-Hamilton, Adult Co-Chair, Youth Link Board
Jenny Kim, Youth Co-Chair, Youth Link Board
Subject: 2012 Youth Link Review and Youth Leadership Program and Funding Recommendations

Overview

Youth Link is a youth leadership program that is a partnership between the City of Bellevue and the Bellevue School District. Youth Link was founded in 1990 to give youth an active voice in the community. Youth work with adults and are empowered to identify and then implement youth priorities for Bellevue. Youth Link gives young people both the responsibility and ability to have their voices heard by elected officials and community leaders. Since its formation, Youth Link has engaged nearly 8,000 young people.

The Youth Link Board has completed its work of reviewing the Youth Link Program's governance model and recommending youth leadership programming and funding approaches for the 2013-2014 budget. We look forward to presenting recommendations made to the City Council Study Session on April 9, 2012. The presentation summarizes the Youth Link Board's work evaluating Youth Link's role, researching national best practices, developing governance proposals, investigating partnerships, and proposing next steps. The 2011-2012 Review and Recommendation of Bellevue Youth Link Report, including an Executive Summary is attached.

City Council Directive

In December 2010, as part of the budget review process, the Bellevue City Council requested the Youth Link Board to re-evaluate Youth Link's role and respond to two goals by early 2012.

- Goal 1. Governance Model: Review, evaluate and recommend an organizational structure or governance model for Bellevue's youth leadership program.
- Goal 2. Long Term Community Partnerships: Establish long term partnerships with the Bellevue community – dollars, resources, labor, or in-kind donations from businesses, individuals, schools, non-profits and other organizations.

Review Process of Youth Link/Youth Leadership Program

The Youth Link Board responded to the Council directive by creating a Youth Link Committee that conducted a year-long exploration of youth leadership models. Specifically, the Committee addressed:

- Why Bellevue should continue to be a "youth friendly" community?
- If and why City government should be involved?
- How youth engagement should be implemented?

The review process included a Governance and Community Partnership (funding) approach.

The governance model review process included the following youth development criteria:

- Foster a youth-driven approach
- Give youth a voice
- Represent all youth, including Bellevue's diversity
- Provide leadership skills

- Reflect current youth needs
- Provide mentor relationships
- Serve the larger community
- Secure sustained funding
- Survey of nearly 1500 Bellevue youth and adults.
- Research of youth leadership models and approaches and compare Youth Link's operations with 31 reviewed programs around the country.

The Community Partnership review included the following funding criteria:

- Reflection of community values and goals
- Connection with youth perspectives
- Increase Youth Link's name recognition

Youth Link also contacted more than 50 Bellevue businesses and corporations to gauge their initial interest in financial support for youth leadership in the City.

Recommendations

The Youth Link Review Committee reviewed and analyzed the collected data and found that Youth Link as compared with the 31 reviewed programs around the country that Youth Link is well aligned with national best practices.

Thus, Youth Link recommended the following changes for the 2013-2014 budget cycle:

1. An "enhanced" Youth Leadership model that transitions the current Youth Link Board to an eight-person youth leadership board (four youth and four adults, two-year terms of office) and maintains the current Bellevue Youth Council.

Responsibilities of the Youth Leadership Board would include:

- Continue to serve as the official "youth voice" for the community;
- Establish and provide oversight for a structured youth leadership curriculum to serve as a revenue generating program;
- Establish and oversee a separate fundraising entity that would consist of adults with interest and expertise in fund development; and
- Assume a proactive role in community initiatives, such as Eastside Pathways, Nourishing Network, and other related youth issues.

2. The Youth Link Board recommended that the City of Bellevue continue to fund youth leadership at the 2011-2012 budget allocation of \$230,000 for the annual operations of Youth Link as Youth Link transitions to a "Shared Fiscal Responsibility" (SFR) Model. The SFR Model demonstrates a sustained funding level in which the City of Bellevue would maintain funding for Youth Link at 2011-2012 budget levels. Increased funding for youth leadership would be secured through a fund development plan that includes an annual Partnership Campaign, foundation grants, and revenue-generating youth leadership programs.

Conclusion

To conclude, Youth Link appreciates the Parks & Community Services Board for your continued support of youth development and youth leadership as essential elements to the well-being of the Bellevue community. Such an investment in young people not only improves the quality of life, it also adds to the healthy development of Bellevue's future. Thank you for your continued support of Youth Link and all children and youth in Bellevue.

cc: Youth Link Board Terry Smith, Assistant Director
 Patrick Foran, Director Helena Stephens, Teen Services Manager

YOUTH LINK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE ROLE OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN BELLEVUE

Since 1990, Youth Link has made the City of Bellevue a national innovator in youth leadership and involvement. This has been significant because, as the National League of Cities notes, “Nothing is more important to the health of our democracy than the active engagement of young people in representative government at the local level.”

This report summarizes the Youth Link Board’s work evaluating Youth Link’s role, researching national best practices, developing governance proposals, investigating partnerships, and proposing next steps.

YOUTH LINK PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Youth Link is a youth leadership program that is a partnership between the City of Bellevue and the Bellevue School District. Youth Link was founded in 1990 to give youth an active voice in the community. Youth Link is unique because it provides leadership training by doing – essentially “on-the-job” training for teens. Youth work as equals with adults and are empowered to identify and then implement youth priorities for Bellevue. Youth Link gives young people the responsibility and ability to have their voices heard by elected officials and community leaders. Since its formation in 1990, Youth Link has engaged nearly 8,000 young people.

PROJECTS

Members of the Youth Link Board, Youth Council, and Youth Link Action Teams have completed more than 70 projects since 1990, including Ground Zero Teen Center, Bellevue Skate Park, Community Leadership Awards, Youth Involvement Conference, Bellevue Youth Court, Teen Talk Radio Program, Safe Rides Program, and Youth Wall of Fame. Many of these projects have been successfully spun off to local non-profits. Others are still operated by Youth Link members.

CITY COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

In December 2010, as part of the budget review process, Council asked the Youth Link Board to reevaluate Youth Link's role and respond to two goals by early 2012.

Goal 1. Governance Model: Review, evaluate, and recommend an organizational structure or governance model for Bellevue's youth leadership program.

Goal 2. Long-Term Community Partnerships: Establish long-term partnerships with the Bellevue community – dollars, resources, labor, or in-kind donations from businesses, individuals, schools, non-profits, and other organizations.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP BEST PRACTICES

The Youth Link Board responded by conducting a year-long exploration of youth leadership models, addressing why Bellevue should continue to be a "youth-friendly" community, if and why City government should be involved, and how youth engagement should be implemented.

The Board began its work by holding a planning retreat focused around key questions related to youth involvement. Following the retreat, the Board established a "Youth Link Committee" consisting of board and community members that was divided into two working sub-committees, one on Governance and one on Partnerships (Funding). The committees reviewed national data on youth leadership best practices; met with experts in the field of youth leadership and development; wrote, distributed, and analyzed a survey on Youth Link's impact that received nearly 1,500 responses and indicated that 90% of youth felt that youth should be actively involved in the community; researched a list of potential community partners; prepared a partnership presentation; and then began meeting with potential partners to solicit their involvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the Youth Link Board/Committee researched successful models and approaches, and compared Youth Link's operations with the 31 reviewed programs around the country, committee members concluded that Youth Link is well-aligned with national best practices.

Governance

The Board, after reviewing the strengths and challenges of Youth Link, recommends an "enhanced" Youth Leadership model that transitions the current Youth Link Board to an eight-person youth leadership board (four youth and four adults, two-year terms of office) and maintains the current Bellevue Youth Council.

Responsibilities of the Youth Leadership Board would include:

- Continue to serve as the official "youth voice" for the community;
- Establish and provide oversight for a structured youth leadership curriculum to serve as a revenue generating program; and
- Assume a proactive role in community initiatives, such as Eastside Pathways, Nourishing Network, and other related youth issues.

Responsibilities of the Youth Council would include:

- Host the Youth Involvement Conference (every two years);
- Host the Annual Community Leadership Awards; and
- Implement Action Teams. Current Action Teams include:
 - **Communications**, which focuses on marketing, Bellevue Patch “*Youth Connect*” column, YouthLink.com, Facebook Youth Link Alumni Group, etc.
 - **Special Events**, which includes the Youth Involvement Conference Planning Committee and Community Leadership Awards Planning Committee.
 - **Social Services**, which includes teens working on the Teen Closet Clothing Bank, Bellevue Youth Court, and Kids Care Coat Drive Project.
 - **Arts Education**, which focuses on the Youth Link Arts Project.

Partnerships

Members of the Partnerships Committee devoted careful attention to the possibility of attracting support from local business and philanthropic partners.

From August through October 2011, the Partnerships Committee contacted more than 50 Bellevue businesses and corporations to gauge their initial interest in financial support for youth leadership in the City. Based on those findings, the Partnerships Committee created their **2012 Partnership Campaign for Youth Link**. Committee members developed a partnership plan, which included several levels of proposed partnership levels in which business could contribute and support Youth Link.

To implement the Partnership Campaign, the Board recommends that the Youth Link Board establish and oversee a separate fundraising entity that would consist of adults with interest and expertise in fund development. The fundraising entity would report to and be overseen by the Youth Link Board. This entity would:

- Secure funds for the Youth Leadership program through the implementation of the “Shared Fiscal Responsibility” model;
- Implement the Partnership Campaign;
- Invite interested youth to sit on the fundraising entity (optional);
- Engage youth to be a part of the annual Partnership Campaign; and
- Evaluate fundraising efforts in two years.

Funding

The Youth Link Board recommends that the City of Bellevue continue to fund youth leadership at the 2011-2012 budget allocation of \$230,000 for the annual operations of Youth Link as Youth Link transitions to a “Shared Fiscal Responsibility” (SFR) Model. The SFR Model demonstrates a sustained funding level in which the City of Bellevue would maintain funding for Youth Link at 2011-2012 budget levels. Increased funding for youth leadership would be secured through a fund development plan that includes an annual Partnership Campaign, foundation grants, and revenue-generating youth leadership programs.

The SFR Model reflects a community’s fiscal response to providing youth leadership development in Bellevue. When asked who is primarily responsible for providing youth leadership in Bellevue, 45.2% of the survey respondents listed the City of Bellevue as “highly responsible,” while 49% and 41% respectively listed community groups and schools as “somewhat responsible.”

As the chart below shows, the SFR Model builds from a steady base of City support, with a public/private fundraising effort that is planned to grow over time to support Youth Link activities and programs.

