

Our Children, Our Families Council

Summary of the Youth Empowerment Fund Advisory Board

(Last updated 6/4/15)

Goals of the Effort

The Youth Empowerment Fund Advisory Board (YEFAB) is a group of youth tasked with evaluating grant applications and distributing funds to youth-created projects across the city. YEFAB is an advisory board within the Youth Empowerment Fund, which is a project within the Department of Children, Youth, & Their Families. YEFAB's mission is to get funds *for* youth into their hands, and to put young people at the helm of decision-making.

The Youth Empowerment Fund has explicit guiding principles that YEFAB shares. The Youth Empowerment Fund's guiding principles are:

- Youth should be making decisions that affect their own lives
- Youth possess the knowledge and ability to be leaders in their communities
- Youth should have access to resources to define their own programs and opportunities

Focal Population of the Effort

YEFAB focuses on empowering high school students across San Francisco through mini-grants, with preference given to students from low-income and predominantly minority communities.

Impact

YEFAB's greatest strength is the experiences they bring to the evaluation process. Because the members of YEFAB have all grown up in diverse communities and schools across the city, they are able to use these perspectives when deciding which projects will be most beneficial for other San Francisco youth. YEFAB funds 15 to 20 youth-led projects across the city each year. Projects have included youth music festivals, community gardens, cooking competitions, youth-led art projects and workshops, and more.

Challenges

Each funding cycle YEFAB encounters a familiar but difficult challenge, trying to decide which of the many deserving youth grant applications they can fund. In the fall, for example, YEFAB receives between 25 and 40 applications for youth-led projects across the city, and the Board needs to narrow that list down to roughly 8 projects which they can fund. Moreover, because the students of YEFAB strive for consensus in funding decisions, deliberations often take many sessions before an agreement is reached.

Origins of the Effort

In the year 2000, voters approved the creation of a Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF), designated as at least 3% of the San Francisco Children's Fund. The Advisory Board was formed to help get the money to young people. Over the first five years since the YEF was formed, more staff members came on board to help distribute the nearly million dollars allocated for the YEF annually. For the past five years, YEFAB has been responsible for distributing \$100,000 of the YEF annually through mini-grants.

Leading the Effort

The YEFAB is led by Ms. Breanne Harris, the YEF Advisory Board & Mini-Grants Coordinator. She is one of three full-time staff members of the Youth Empowerment Fund and the only staff member responsible for the student members of YEFAB.

Members of the Effort

YEFAB is made up of 8-12 youth between the ages 15-20 from communities throughout San Francisco. YEFAB makes an effort to create a diverse team of students reflective of the San Francisco community. Below is a list of all YEFAB members for the 2014 – 2015 academic year:

Darlenne Santos, 19, San Francisco State
Loraina Marybelle Flores, 18, San Francisco State
Marissa Wong, 17, Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory School
Stacy Martinez, 17, John O'Connell High School
Audrey Weber, 17, The Bay School of San Francisco
Tahmaya Leslie, 15, George Washington High School
Audrey Shawley, 17, Lowell High School
Michelle Kong, 17, Galileo Academy of Science and Technology
Monica Flores, 20, City College of San Francisco
Matthew Kim, 16, Lowell High School
David Hu, 18, University of San Francisco
Chloe Chen, 18, George Washington High School

Structure of the Effort

YEFAB members convene twice a week to practice philanthropy and grant making, discuss social issues and diverse ways youth can create social change. Youth on the board are in charge of outreaching, reading and reviewing grant applications, interviewing applicants and making consensus-based group funding decisions. Every year, they are tasked with making grant recommendations for \$100,000 of the Youth Empowerment Fund during two different grant periods.

The Role of Data

At the end of each grant cycle, YEFAB administers surveys to each grant recipient, by which they document the outcomes from each project, including a breakdown of money spent as well as youth-centered “soft-skill” outcomes.

Related Documents

- YEFAB website, which includes membership requirements, information on current members, background information, and previous reports <<http://yefsf.org/yefab.html>>