



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**
Celebrating 35 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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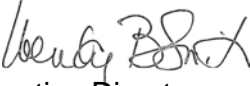

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Executive Director

December 4, 2019

TO: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Dr. Wendy B. Smith, Chair 
Dr. Tamara N. Hunter, Executive Director 
Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

SUBJECT: **REPORT BACK ON EXPLORING THE CREATION OF A COUNTYWIDE
YOUTH ADVISORY BODY (BOARD AGENDA ITEM 2, APRIL 16, 2019)**

This report is in response to the April 16, 2019 Board of Supervisors (Board) motion that directed the Commission for Children and Families (Commission) and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), working in consultation with the Probation Department, the Office of Child Protection, the Office of Diversion and Re-Entry, the Departments of Mental Health, Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services and Health Services, the Center for Strategic Partnerships, key organizations serving foster and probation youth, current and former foster and probation youth, and other relevant stakeholders, to report back in 120 days on the feasibility of establishing a permanent "Youth Advisory Body" in Los Angeles County. Your Board moved that the report include:

1. An assessment of all current youth engagement strategies (i.e. current youth advisory councils) provided by both our County departments as well as our foster and probation youth serving organizations to determine best practices to work with youth through a "Youth Advisory Body";
2. A recommendation as to where the "Youth Advisory Body" should be housed within the County, including the feasibility of making it a part of the Commission for Children and Families;

3. A recommended funding and staffing plan for the “Youth Advisory Body,” to include input from the Executive Office of the Board, in consultation with the Chief Executive Office;
4. Exploration of the feasibility of engaging a consultant to facilitate the development of the “Youth Advisory Body; and
5. A recommendation by the County Counsel as to how best to compensate youth for any and all work they conduct on behalf of the County, including reimbursement for transportation to and from County meetings.

An adequate response to your Board’s directives required development of the proposed YAB framework. A three-pronged approach was implemented: (1) engage stakeholders; (2) analyze the landscape; and, (3) develop informed recommendations through a working group process. A hallmark of the approach to this work has been recognition of the immense value of lived experience expertise, which resulted in a deliberate effort to incorporate youth¹ voice and leadership to the greatest extent possible. This report details these efforts.

CONSULTANT SUPPORT

In June 2019, the Liberty Hill Foundation (Liberty Hill) identified and funded Castillo Consulting Partners LLC (Castillo Consulting) to assist with exploring the feasibility of establishing a youth advisory body (YAB) in Los Angeles County. Castillo Consulting was onboarded to lead youth engagement activities, conduct a landscape analysis, and prepare the associated LA County Youth Advisory Body Data and Landscape Analysis Report (Data and Landscape Analysis Report), contained in Appendix B.

Drawing on their expertise in youth engagement and leadership development, Castillo Consulting facilitated deep, meaningful, and non-traditional collaboration with youth. For example, Castillo Consulting hired and trained six young people with lived experience to serve as Youth Engagement Facilitators specifically for this project. This small team of young people co-facilitated table discussions at the YAB stakeholder engagement convening; co-led focus groups, or *visioning sessions*, with other young people with lived experience; and assisted with the data analysis included in the Data and Landscape Analysis Report.

¹ For purposes of this report, ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ are used interchangeably.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A broad range of stakeholders was engaged through a variety of methods, with the goals of: (1) learning more about public sentiment regarding the proposed YAB; (2) conceptualizing the YAB, including where it should be situated within the County, potential areas of focus, and opportunities for strategic collaboration; and, (3) identifying effective engagement strategies and other best practices for success in this type of work with young people. See Appendix A for a full listing of stakeholders engaged.

YAB Stakeholder Engagement Convening

On July 18, 2019, more than 75 stakeholders, including 14 young people, attended the Exploring the Creation of a Youth Advisory Body Stakeholder Engagement Convening. Participants included young people with lived experience, representatives from youth-serving County departments, service providers, community-based organizations, and other advocates. Participants engaged in table discussions co-facilitated by youth and Commission for Children and Families Commissioners. Discussion topics included identification of structural and supportive components of the YAB that could ensure its success, strategies to address potential barriers to the YAB's success, and concrete and actionable ways for the YAB to collaborate with County departments and other organizations.

The convening served as a critically important opportunity to engage stakeholders with learned expertise and to facilitate insight into potential ways the YAB could improve the operations and outcomes of their respective organizations.

Youth Engagement

More than 170 young people with different levels and types of lived experience with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems were engaged through various avenues and presented with opportunities to provide input into shaping the proposed YAB. A core group has remained consistently and meaningfully engaged in all YAB-related activities throughout this process. In recognition of the value of lived experience expertise, Liberty Hill, Castillo Consulting, and the Los Angeles County Center for Strategic Partnerships funded stipends to compensate all youth who attended meetings as part of this effort.

Castillo Consulting engaged 125 young people in multiple visioning sessions during which they provided feedback on how the YAB should be designed, supported, and

utilized to transform the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The visioning sessions were conducted with a diverse cross section of young people ranging in age from 14 to 35, and affiliated with numerous community based organizations, including the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Arts for Incarcerated Youth, California Youth Connection, The LGBT Center, Penny Lane's Transitional Age Youth Drop-In Center, Youth Justice Coalition, and Brothers, Sons, Selves, as well as young people who were unaffiliated with any organization, and youth incarcerated at Central Juvenile Hall.

On July 19, 2019, two Youth Advisory Body Listening Sessions were held at the Los Angeles County 2019 Youth Development Summit. Approximately 22 youth attended the sessions and participated in table discussions, facilitated by young people with lived experience.

In an effort to receive input from as many young people as possible, an online informational survey was developed to obtain additional youth feedback on the proposed YAB. The survey was disseminated via Transitional Age Youth (TAY)-serving organizations.

Themes emerging in youth feedback are described in the "Key Themes in Stakeholder Feedback" section of this report, and all youth feedback is detailed in the attached Data and Landscape Analysis Report.

Countywide Youth Engagement Scan

A Countywide Youth Engagement Scan was developed and forwarded to youth-serving County departments, commissions, and specialized initiatives to learn about their efforts to engage current and former systems-involved youth in policy development and decision making, as well as to identify barriers to successful youth engagement, and strategies effective in overcoming such barriers. All 10 respondents reported engaging youth to varying degrees, with some having formal youth advisory councils and others engaging young people on an ad-hoc basis. Findings from the Countywide Youth Engagement Scan are included in the "Key Themes in Stakeholder Feedback" and "Youth Engagement Strategies and Best Practices" sections of this report.

Informational Interviews

Informational interviews were conducted with select stakeholders to learn more about their respective work to engage systems-impacted young people in an advisory capacity within their organizations. Interviews focused on the scope, format, and effectiveness of

their efforts; challenges and strategies for success with this type of work with young people; and opportunities for strategic collaboration with the YAB, should it be established. Findings from informational interviews are included in the “Key Themes in Stakeholder Feedback” and “Youth Engagement Strategies and Best Practices” sections of this report.

YAB WORKING GROUP

The YAB Working Group (Work Group), comprised of a broad range of stakeholders, was convened in August 2019 and charged with conceptualizing enough of the YAB framework to develop the recommendations included in this report. Recommendations developed by the Work Group were informed by stakeholder feedback, the work of Castillo Consulting, and the lived and learned expertise of its members.

During two months of work, the full Work Group met twice, and its Subcommittees on Structure and on Membership, which were co-chaired by young people with lived experience, each met twice. The Work Group’s conceptualization of the YAB framework resulted in the development of a comprehensive set of recommendations regarding the YAB’s scope, duties and responsibilities, structure, and member support that should inform the YAB’s ordinance and bylaws, should it be established. If the YAB is created, the Work Group should be reconvened to provide guidance during its implementation phase. See Appendix A for a listing of YAB Working Group participants.

KEY THEMES IN STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

There was significant alignment in the feedback received across stakeholder categories, from which clear and consistent themes emerged.

Stakeholder Enthusiasm

A striking feature of the work on the YAB has been the almost universal enthusiasm brought to the task by stakeholders across the board. Stakeholders were in general agreement that it is an idea whose time has come and hopeful about the possibility of Los Angeles County developing a gold star youth engagement model for the nation. Many stakeholders who have less opportunity for direct contact with young people described the process as refreshing and energizing.

Lived Experience Expertise

Stakeholders agreed that expertise derived from lived experience provides a unique and unmatched perspective that should be valued and respected. There was consensus about the fact that that policy, practice, and services informed by lived experience can be more effective. Further, compensating those with lived experience expertise for their work is an important way to convey its value.

Purpose of the YAB

Stakeholders believe that although the core objective of the YAB may be to improve the child welfare and juvenile justice systems by providing a platform through which policy, practice, and service delivery can be informed and shaped by the lived experiences of young people who have been impacted by these systems, its overarching mission must be more aspirational. Stakeholders expressed that the YAB should strive to improve outcomes and create opportunities holistically for youth, their families, and the communities in which they reside. The YAB should provide leadership in advocacy and action to effect transformative change in Los Angeles County.

YAB Placement in Los Angeles County

Stakeholders, including the Commission for Children and Families, strongly believe that the YAB should be established as a stand-alone commission that is youth-led and driven, and has parity with other County advisory bodies. To do otherwise, stakeholders expressed, would put into play the power imbalances that exist between lived experience expertise and learned expertise, as well as between older and younger individuals. The YAB's advisory role would be strengthened by having direct access to your Board.

Defining Youthhood

Stakeholders did not align in determining when "youthhood" ends. Services and supports for TAY typically end between ages 24 and 26. Some youth argued that this age range was arbitrarily selected; does not reflect when young people, systems-impacted or otherwise, are truly self-sufficient; and should not guide YAB membership criteria. Some young people expressed that the maturity and stability that develop in the mid- to late twenties could be a significant benefit of having older members on the YAB.

Distrust of the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

Deeply rooted distrust of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems was a recurrent theme when engaging youth. This distrust, a manifestation of systemic trauma, is based on negative experiences, and was both openly expressed and also appeared as an undercurrent. Young people were enthusiastic about the YAB, yet simultaneously verbalized their beliefs that the YAB would not be taken seriously or allowed to truly impact change. As an example, young people found the name “youth advisory body” to be indicative of the limitations of power of the proposed YAB. Youth and other stakeholders expressed the belief that greater inclusion and transparency among all parties could go a long way in building trust between youth and County departments. The significant apprehension young people shared about engaging with law enforcement in any capacity, presents another challenge, as well as an opportunity for the YAB.

Trauma

Stakeholders, particularly young people, suggested that YAB areas of focus and subject matter might be triggering to some members, and recommended that YAB programming and any training materials be trauma informed. Individuals with knowledge of trauma should be involved in the creation of YAB training materials, and staff hired will need to have an awareness of impacts and consequences of trauma on young people. It will also be important to develop a process for linking YAB members to community-based resources should the need arise.

Consistency in Youth Engagement

The most frequently cited issue in the Countywide Youth Engagement Scan and informational interviews is the challenge posed by inconsistent youth participation on advisory bodies. Stakeholders reported that even under the best circumstances, young people’s attendance at meetings and other activities is often negatively impacted by competing priorities, such as school and work. Stakeholders cited flexibility in meeting frequency, times, and locations, as well as providing compensation, as key strategies to facilitate ongoing youth engagement.

Collaboration with Existing Advisory and Oversight Bodies

Stakeholders noted the number of existing County advisory and oversight bodies with similar purpose and areas of focus and expressed concern about the likelihood of

redundancies. They recommended strategic collaboration with these entities whenever possible to leverage resources and strengthen efforts.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Castillo Consulting reviewed information on 27 foster care and juvenile justice-focused youth advisory bodies nationwide, and selected five for further analysis based on similarities in scope and areas of focus, membership, and structure with a potential Los Angeles County YAB.

Castillo Consulting found that few examples of functioning quasi-governmental youth advisory bodies exist. An internet scan revealed that many youth advisory bodies with websites are “ineffective” or “defunct” for a variety of reasons, including lack of funding and inability to compensate youth for their time; inadequate staff support; and a variety of barriers to youth engagement, including competing priorities, transportation challenges, homelessness, and untreated mental health issues.

Models that were found to be both functioning and effective tended to be youth-led and youth-driven, bolstered by youth-centered training and dedicated staff support, adequate funding, allocations for youth compensation, and direct access to policymakers.

Castillo Consulting noted that although the lack of successful youth advisory bodies raises concerns regarding the potential for success of a Los Angeles County YAB, there is much to learn from the failures of these models that can prove instructive in the design, resourcing, and implementation of a YAB in this County. See Appendix A for the full Data and Landscape Analysis Report.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES

An analysis of stakeholder feedback and the current national landscape resulted in identification of key best practices for engaging young people in an advisory capacity. Successful models typically include the following characteristics:

- *Youth-centered, -led, and -driven.* This includes holding meetings at non-traditional hours and in non-traditional locations that feel safe for young people.
- *Adequate staffing.* This includes having staff with subject matter learned expertise, as well as administrative support.

- *Adequate funding.* This includes a budget for administrative operations and youth compensation.
- *Provision of tools for success.* This includes trauma-informed and youth-accessible training materials, as well as mentoring to help young people thrive in their role.
- *Proactive attention to/resolution of barriers to successful engagement.* This includes providing assistance with transportation and childcare, as well as linkage to supportive resources in times of crisis.
- *Direct access to policymakers.* This is related to the advisory body's ability to actually impact the change that its members hope to see.

COLLABORATION WITH LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENTS

Discussions have begun with various County departments regarding support for the YAB. Engagement of other County departments will be ongoing, should the YAB be established.

The Department of Mental Health (DMH)

DMH has agreed to establish a YAB Liaison who will be responsible for navigating its TAY and adult systems of care to expeditiously connect YAB members to the appropriate program during times of crisis. The YAB Liaison will attend YAB meetings to provide immediate support to members, should the need arise.

DMH has also agreed to partner in the development of youth-centered, trauma informed programming and training materials through the DMH-UCLA Prevention Center of Excellence.

The Center for Strategic Partnerships

The Center for Strategic Partnerships has had initial discussions with several local funders who have expressed interest in learning more about YAB as the work progresses. As the YAB design and implementation develops, philanthropic partners could be engaged to provide financial support and thought partnership for the YAB.

Los Angeles County Library

The Los Angeles County Library has agreed to make available for the YAB meeting rooms in various libraries that are equipped with Spark Board video conferencing technology. This will afford youth across the County the ability to participate in YAB meetings.

Department of Children and Family Services

The Department of Children and Family Services and Center for Strategic Partnerships have provided lunch and other refreshments for YAB stakeholder engagement convenings and work group meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were informed by stakeholder feedback, findings from the landscape analysis, and best practices for engaging youth with lived experience in an advisory capacity, and reflect the general consensus of the YAB Working Group.

YAB Establishment

- I. It is recommended that the YAB be established as a stand-alone commission, named the Los Angeles County Youth Commission, and housed within the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors.
- II. The Youth Commission should be charged with the following duties and responsibilities:
 - a. Make recommendations to the Board and County departments regarding policies, agency budgets, budgetary processes, programs, and practices that impact children, youth, their families, and communities;
 - b. Propose to the Board and County departments new policy, programs, and services that will positively impact, children, youth, families, and their communities;
 - c. Annually, identify at least three focus areas for concentrated review, analysis, and, where appropriate, Youth Commission intervention;

- d. Consistent with Board policy, propose new legislation, advocate, and provide recommendations to the Board regarding legislation impacting children, youth, families, and their communities; and,
 - e. Provide an annual report to the Board apprising them of the Youth Commission's activities and achievements during the year and commenting on the state of County services impacting youth. This may include development of a "youth score card" for County departments.
- III. To carry out its duties and responsibilities, the Youth Commission should have the authority to:
- a. Monitor outcomes and the quality of services provided to children, youth, families, and their communities, and conditions of facilities, in collaboration with County departments and other bodies with similar responsibilities. This includes participation in site visits and conducting interviews with youth who are the recipients of these services;
 - b. Receive input from public, private, and community-based stakeholders regarding County administered or contracted services; convey information received to the Board of Supervisors and relevant County departments; and, where appropriate, make associated recommendations. This includes incarcerated youth and children in foster care; and,
 - c. Collaborate with County departments, other County bodies, and community-based organizations to strengthen existing youth-focused initiatives and create new ones, as necessary.
- IV. It is recommended that the Youth Commission consist of 19 commissioners; five of whom are nominated by your Board, in consultation with the Youth Commission, with remaining commissioners being self-nominated. Commissioners should have lived experience with the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems, and reflect the geographic profile and demographic characteristics, including racial/ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, of those involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

A determination must be made regarding whether the Youth Commission shall include commissioners who are minors. While permitting nomination of commissioners under age 18 allows for direct representation for a vitally important stakeholder group, inclusion of minors, particularly those under DCFS supervision,

raises concerns regarding supervision, confidentiality, and employment considerations.

- V. It is recommended that trauma-informed, youth-centered programming and training material be developed to facilitate Youth Commission Commissioners' ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities.
- VI. It is recommended that a Youth Commission mentoring program be developed to provide support for commissioners in this role.
- VII. It is recommended that each youth-serving County department identify a liaison to ensure that the Youth Commission has an opportunity to inform departmental initiatives during all phases of development and implementation.

Staffing

- VIII. It is recommended that the Youth Commission be staffed by a full time, dedicated executive director, who shall provide support and guidance to the Youth Commission and be responsible for its administrative management. The Youth Commission's executive director should have experience with promoting and facilitating healthy youth development and leadership with the target population.
- IX. It is recommended that the Youth Commission also be supported by a young person who has lived experience with the child welfare and/or juvenile justice system via the Career Development Intern (CDI) program. The CDI item was created to provide foster and Probation-supervised youth, as well as other at-risk populations, employment opportunities with Los Angeles County, while assisting them with developing transferable skills and work experience.
- X. It is recommended that the Youth Commission receive administrative support from the Commission Services Division of the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors (Executive Office).

Work with Chief Executive Office Budget and Operations Division (CEO) to identify the proper structure and position levels is underway. CEO will work with the Executive Office to finalize a staffing plan upon further direction from your Board.

Compensation, Including Transportation

- XI. Commissioners may be compensated for their work and reimbursed for related expenses such as mileage, or transportation costs, if an ordinance authorizes the compensation. The best way to compensate youth involved in this effort for any work they conduct on behalf of the County would be to enact an ordinance creating the Youth Commission and including a provision for compensation and transportation reimbursement in the ordinance.

County Counsel reviewed a random sample of over forty commissions and found that some ordinances are silent as to compensation, while others authorized cash or other methods of compensation, such as gift cards, for attendance at meetings, and/or travel expense reimbursement. The compensation range was zero to \$150 per meeting, and sometimes included necessary travel expenses incurred in the course of commission duties. Some commissions set monthly or yearly caps on compensation and reimbursement, such as \$5,000 per fiscal year.

Anyone serving on the Youth Commission should be advised that compensation received from Commission work constitutes income and could impact any public benefits.

There are also special employment laws that apply to minors. Minors can only work limited hours depending on their age and schooling. They also must have work permits and the minor's school controls the parameters of those permits. We recommend that Youth Commissioners who are minors be compensated on an hourly basis, as opposed to a flat fee. The Commission should also be informed of and comply with the employment laws that apply to minors to ensure that any Youth Commission work does not exceed the work time prescribed by law for the minor's age.

Funding

- XII. It is recommended that the Youth Commission be funded by the Department of Children and Family Services and Probation Department, and that other youth-serving County departments provide additional funding, and in-kind services, which may include meeting space and resources, as well as staff support to meet the Youth Commission's needs.

CONCLUSION

The Commission for Children and Families recommends establishment of the Los Angeles County Youth Commission as outlined above. The creation and implementation of the Los Angeles County Youth Commission is a matter for your Board's determination.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Tamara N. Hunter, Executive Director, Commission for Children and Families at (213) 974-8108 or huntet@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

Enclosures

- c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
- Chief Executive Officer
- County Counsel
- Auditor-Controller
- Chief Probation Officer
- Director, Center for Strategic Partnerships
- Director, Department of Children and Family Services
- Director, Department of Health Services
- Director, Department of Human Resources
- Director, Department of Mental Health
- Director, Department of Public Health
- Acting Director, Department of Workforce Development,
Aging, and Community Services
- Director, Office of Child Protection
- Director, Office of Diversion and Re-Entry
- Director, Los Angeles County Library
- Children's Deputies, Board of Supervisors
- Health Deputies, Board of Supervisors
- Justice Deputies, Board of Supervisors

APPENDIX A: ENGAGED GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance for Children's Rights	Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Justice Youth Advisory Council	Anti-Recidivism Coalition**
Architects**	Arts for Incarcerated Youth	Auditor-Controller, Los Angeles County**
Brothers, Sons, Selves	California Youth Connection**	Career Development Intern Forum, Los Angeles County**
Casey Family Programs National Foster Youth and Alumni Policy Council	Castillo Consulting LLC**	Center for Strategic, Partnerships, Los Angeles County**
Chief Executive Office, Los Angeles County**	Children's Law Center	City of Los Angeles – EWDD (P3)
Commission for Children and Families**	Community Coalition**	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Conservation Corps**	County-Wide Youth Networking Group	Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
Department of Children and Family Services, Los Angeles County**	Department of Consumer and Business Affairs, Los Angeles County	Department of Health Services, Los Angeles County
Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles County**	Department of Parks and Recreation, Los Angeles County	Department of Public Health, Los Angeles County
Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County	Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors, Los Angeles County	Foster Together Network
Hennepin County Health and Human Services-Children and Family Services	Homeless Initiative, Los Angeles County**	Homeless Youth Forum of LAHSA
Illinois Youth Advisory Board	Journey House	Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council

** Indicates YAB Work Group Participation

LA County Library**	LA Youth Uprising**	Liberty Hill Foundation**
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)	Los Angeles LGBT Center	Los Angeles Reproductive Health Equity Project for Foster Youth
Marin County Youth Commission	My Brother's Keeper Los Angeles**	National Foster Youth Institute
Oakland Youth Advisory Commission	Office of Child Protection, Los Angeles County**	Office of the County Counsel, Los Angeles County
Office of Education, Los Angeles County**	Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis**	Office of Supervisor Janice Hahn**
Office of Supervisor Kathryn Barger	Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas**	Office of Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Office of the Assessor, Los Angeles County	Office of Youth Diversion and Development, Los Angeles County**	Opportunity Youth Collaborative**
Penny Lane Centers**	Penny Lane TAY Drop-In Center	Pritzker Foster Care Initiative
Probation Department, Los Angeles County**	Probation Foster Alumni**	Probation Reform Implementation Team**
Public Counsel**	Ramsey County	Right Way Foundation
San Francisco Youth Commission	Seeds of Peace	Southern California Family Mediation
Southern California Grantmakers	Stepping Forward LA	University of Southern California
Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, Los Angeles County**	Young People with Lived Experience**	Youth Justice Coalition**

** Indicates YAB Work Group Participation

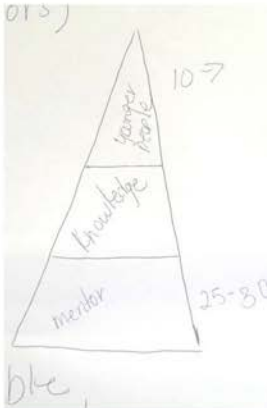
APPENDIX B: DATA AND LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS REPORT

It is important that the youth be apart of the program because they need to know how it can help them raise awareness for other youth

Handwritten notes on a page with a pen, discussing youth advisory roles and the importance of youth participation in programs.



LA County Youth Advisory Body Data & Landscape Analysis Report



Some thing I would want to learn is Why are young black man of color voices are not being heard

LYALTY
 Uniqueness
 Awareness
 organized

MARGINALIZATION
 Judgment of youth with
 * lived-experience
 * people/enforcing oppresion



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

System-impacted youth across Los Angeles County are eager to “have a seat at the table” where decisions about their lives are being made on a daily basis. Young people with lived experiences in foster care, probation, or both, often feel that their needs are not being met and that their perspectives, opinions, and voices do not matter within the systems that are intended to serve and support them. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (BOS) has heard the desires of young people and recognizes the need to create a space within the County for their voices to be elevated so that they can leverage their expertise through lived experiences to inform and improve programs and initiatives across the County. For this reason, the BOS passed a motion in the spring of 2019 that called for the exploration and feasibility of creating a Youth Advisory Body (YAB) comprised of young people with lived experience in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

This report provides insights and analysis of data collected from youth about their perspectives regarding the creation of a YAB within the County, as well as information gathered through a landscape analysis of YAB models across the country. Some key recommendations that emerged from meetings with system-impacted youth and other stakeholders who work with and support youth, are for the County to:

1. Select a name for the youth body that is in line with the names of other County commissions to ensure that the body is taken as seriously as others
2. Work in partnership with community-based, youth-centered organizations, and also be intentional about engaging disconnected youth and including them in the body
3. Develop a sustainable model that is youth-led, youth-driven and youth-centered. This type of model should:
 - Empower the body with the authority to assess departments, conduct audits, shape and inform new and existing programs and centers, make policy recommendations and oversee and inform relevant budgets;
 - Elevate the body by giving them direct access to the Board of Supervisors and County CEO offices, and granting them flexibility with their meeting times and locations;
 - Work to build trust between the body, County Departments and community based organizations through team building and training to ensure that all parties understand, value and respect youth voice;
 - Open membership to include a diverse array of young people with varied lived experiences; include youth in the selection process to ensure that selected commissioners truly represent their perspectives and desires; provide some flexibility in tenure;
 - Require the same training that other county commissions do; partner with departments and community based organizations to offer additional, optional training to enhance youth personal and professional growth and development;
 - Adequately compensate commissioners, giving consideration to their unique needs;

- Provide a budget allocation and dedicated staff that support and meet the needs of the Youth Commission.

ISSUE STATEMENT

Los Angeles County is comprised of 34 departments and related agencies, and approximately 200 committees and commissions that advise and make recommendations to the County's Board of Supervisors regarding initiatives, policies and practices that impact the lives and well-being of the County's more than 10 million residents. Despite having 30,000 youth in foster care (38% of all foster youth in the state of California),¹ and being home to the largest probation system in the country, with the department overseeing an average daily population of 7,750 youth across its 8 facilities and at-home placements,² Los Angeles County does not have a committee or commission comprised of system impacted young people who can leverage their expertise from lived experience to advise and make recommendations for meaningful policies and initiatives that impact the lives and experiences of young people who are currently in the child welfare and probation systems. The lack of voices within the County from individuals with lived experiences who are empowered to influence decisions regarding policies and initiatives across departments highlights a gap within the County that needs to be filled so that solutions to challenges impacting youth can be led and driven by young people who understand these issues from first-hand, lived experience.

CONTEXT

Community-based organizations that represent youth and families have long sought and proposed ways for Los Angeles County to include youth voice in decisions that impact the lives of young people. In 2016, the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC), a long time advocate of system involved youth, issued a report that recommended both the City and County of Los Angeles do more to invest in youth development. In this report, titled "Building a Positive Future for LA's Youth," one of YJC's recommendations was for Los Angeles County to "establish a County Youth Leadership Board to involve youth in the design and implementation of youth development in Los Angeles County, as well as to involve youth in funding decisions and program evaluation."³ YJC's report and recommendations, along with the history of countless other organizations and advocates that have pushed for meaningful engagement of youth within the County's decision making processes, has been instrumental in illuminating the need for youth to be empowered to use their voices and lived experiences to drive change.

In 2019, the call for deeper youth engagement and empowerment within the County was underscored by the work of Ms. Tiffany Boyd, a Commissioner for the County's Commission for Children and Families, and a young person with lived experience in the County's foster care and probation systems, when she and a group of system impacted young people known as "the

¹ Source: Alliance for Children's Rights: <https://kids-alliance.org/facts-stats/>

² Source: Office of Inspector General: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5724228-Pepper-spray-use-in-L-A-County-juvenile.html>

³ Youth Justice Coalition, Building a Positive Future for LA's Youth: Re-Imagining Public Safety for the City of Los Angeles With an Investment in Youth Development", pg. 5, (2016)

Architects” recommended that the County create a Youth Advisory Body comprised of system impacted youth.⁴ In April, 2019, recognizing that “young people are often their own best advocates and their voices can be leveraged to promote pathways to long-term success,”⁵ and responding to the call by these young people⁶ to do more than give them a seat at the table within the County, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors put forward a motion directing the Commission for Children and Families and the Department of Children and Family Services to explore the feasibility of creating a countywide Youth Advisory Body (YAB). The Commission was tasked with conducting a feasibility study to determine whether or not the County is able to effectively establish a formal and institutionalized youth advisory body for young people to help shape County initiatives and policies that impact them.

The Commission for Children and Families in conjunction with the 4th Supervisorial District, sought support from the Liberty Hill Foundation to help with this project. The Liberty Hill Foundation runs a Commissions Training Program for community leaders and has engaged youth leaders in a variety of policy-related campaigns and leadership development programs over the last decade. Building on this experience, the Liberty Hill Foundation decided to support this project. Specifically, they identified and funded a consultant team to assist with some aspects of the feasibility study and participated in the shaping of this report and its recommendations. The Liberty Hill Foundation contracted Castillo Consulting Partners, LLC, a Los Angeles based community-based consulting firm with years of experience working with system impacted youth and is dedicated to empowering diverse leaders to use their voices for change, to support with this work. Castillo Consulting Partners began working in partnership with the Commission for Children and Families in July 2019, leveraging their expertise in youth engagement and leadership development, as well as their credibility and trust among system impacted youth and community-based organizations, to support the Commission in its efforts to implement a youth-led and youth-driven model at each stage of the research and data collection process for this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Engaging young people with lived experience in the Los Angeles County child welfare system (foster care) and/or juvenile detention (probation) was a priority in the research conducted for this report. The consultants worked closely with the Commission for Children and Families to 1) develop a youth-centered engagement approach with discussion questions that would resonate with young people, 2) identify and engage with system impacted youth who are connected to youth serving community-based organizations and service providers, and 3) gain insights from

⁴ Los Angeles Sentinel, <https://lasentinel.net/supervisors-propose-la-county-youth-advisory-body.html>

⁵ Motion by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Janice Hahn and Sheila Kuehl, April 16, 2019

⁶ The Architects are a group of former foster and formerly incarcerated young people who proposed a plan for youth leadership within the County

disconnected youth who are not affiliated with youth serving organizations or service providers. Young people were engaged through the use of visioning sessions and convenings, including LA County’s YDD Summit.

Research Questions

Questions were developed for the visioning session and convenings, and were adjusted for the different sizes and natures of each group. In both cases, the questions were designed to elicit information to inform the desired outcomes outlined in the YAB Motion presented by Supervisors Janice Hahn and Sheila Kuehl. The following questions drove the data collection and analysis processes:

1. Scope and responsibilities - What should be the YAB’s areas of focus, its role, and members’ duties and responsibilities?
2. Structure - What structure would best ensure the YAB’s success?
3. Connecting the dots - How should we build and sustain strategic partnerships between the YAB, County Departments, Commissions, and CBOs?
4. Membership - How should we determine who should be a member of the YAB?
5. Training and other needs - What training and other resources do members need to facilitate the YAB’s success?
6. Compensation - How should we compensate members for their work?
7. Budget and staffing - How should the YAB be funded and staffed to ensure its success?

Data Collection Processes

In order to effectively answer the critical questions outlined above, the consultants worked with the Commission for Children and Families to obtain insights from a variety of stakeholders, actively engaging system impacted young people in each aspect of data collection. The following data gathering methods were utilized to achieve the project goals:

Method	Description	Participation
County Youth Engagement Scan	A survey shared with County departments to collect information about the barriers they face and best practices they employ with regards to effective youth engagement	Received responses from 18 departments & agencies across LA County and nationally
Stakeholder Convening	A convening of County Departments, service providers, and system involved young people to share about the motion for a feasibility study, and gather feedback and insights about the proposed YAB	Engaged 77 participants; 14 youth/young adults, 63 department and service providers reps
YDD Summit	Activities to engage probation youth in dialogue and solicit their feedback and insights about the	Engaged 25 participants; 15 youth,

	proposed YAB	10 organization reps
Youth Visioning Sessions	1 to 2 hour dialogues with young people to share about the YAB and solicit their feedback and insights (initially called focus groups, then renamed after receiving feedback from pilot focus group participants about the need and desire for a title that more aptly described what participants were asked to do in the sessions, which was share their vision for a YAB)	Engaged 125 participants representing 10 community based organizations, and youth in juvenile detention centers
Youth Survey	A countywide survey administered by the Commission for Children & Families to capture insights from system impacted young people	Received 45 submissions from young people
Landscape Analysis	A scan of youth-led, youth-centered, and youth-focused models across the nation to identify effective practices and lessons learned (including quasi-government and others) to inform the model that would be proposed for LA County's YAB	Collected information about models in 13 states, 11 CA municipalities, and 3 nonprofits

In addition to the youth engagement data collection process, the consultants also provided a landscape analysis of youth models across the nation. An internet scan of existing models was conducted, yielding information on 27 distinct examples of youth bodies. The consultants worked in partnership with the Commission for Children and Families to select models for further exploration, and conducted interviews to learn more about five models.

The County Youth Engagement Scan, conducted by the Commission for Children and Families, provided insight into existing youth engagement practices within LA County and among various departments across the nation.

A survey with similar questions to those asked in the visioning sessions and convenings was administered by the Commission for Children and Families. The Commission received responses from 45 young people. Though the sample size was small, survey responses aligned with insights that were captured using other methods (i.e. visioning sessions, landscape analysis).

Youth Engagement Facilitators

With a focus on prioritizing youth voice and employing a youth-led, youth-driven model for participant engagement and facilitation, the consultants hired six young people and a number of the “Architects” to serve as “Youth Engagement Facilitators” for the stakeholder convening, YDD Summit, visioning sessions and data analysis components of the research. Youth

Engagement Facilitators and Architects were trained to collect data using the consultant’s youth facilitator training model, which is designed to empower youth and young adults to leverage their lived experiences as the expertise necessary to genuinely connect with and draw authentic insights from participants in their research.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process was also mostly youth-led. Youth Engagement Facilitators and Architects were trained to analyze data using the Youth-Led Participatory Action Research “YPAR” model out of UC Berkeley. The YPAR model “is an innovative approach to positive youth and community development based in social justice principles in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them.”⁷ Using this model, the facilitators and Architects were trained in qualitative data entry and coding, as well as identifying and drawing out themes from their own research, which was the data collected through the visioning sessions and convenings. The YPAR method was used for analysis of qualitative data collected via the stakeholder convening, YDD summit and visioning sessions.

FINDINGS

Through the various methods utilized in the research, data collection and data analysis processes, we identified themes that have informed findings related to the key research questions previously listed in this report. Findings are organized into two categories:

1. Youth engagement findings, which include insights from the stakeholder convening, YDD Summit and visioning sessions
2. Landscape analysis, which highlights findings from the internet scan of YAB models across the nation, and provides insights from interviews focused on the models selected for further exploration

Youth Engagement Findings

Questions asked at the stakeholder convening, YDD Summit and visioning sessions sought to gather insights and feedback from stakeholders that would assist in answering the key research questions for the overall YAB feasibility study. The findings from this qualitative data collection process are as follows:

Scope and Responsibilities

When asked what the YAB’s areas of focus, its role and members’ duties and responsibilities should be, four key themes emerged as the most common responses among participants across the convening, summit and visioning sessions. These themes, in order of frequency of interest expressed by young people, are:

1. Create programs and service centers
2. Make policy recommendations

⁷ <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/>

3. Oversee budget for youth advisory body and inform relevant Department budgets
4. Assess department effectiveness by auditing policies, practices and programs

“It is important for there to be a youth advisory body because youth are largely the ones impacted by decisions made in LA County. Young people are far too often excluded from making decisions about the world we live in and a youth advisory body would be the first step toward that.”

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

Creating programs and centers emerged as a top YAB priority for participants in the visioning sessions, particularly among younger participants. The creation of programs and centers was mentioned as a top priority for the YAB in 38% participant comments. Young people expressed that the YAB should have the ability to recommend the creation of programs and centers to better meet the needs of youth, especially as a measure by which to prevent youth from becoming systems involved, or recidivating. Programs and centers to address homelessness, education, jobs, and mental health needs were discussed as desired focus areas for the YAB. LGBT support services and programs were also identified as a need among system impacted youth.

The focus on programs and centers was most prevalent among younger participants (under 24), and might be attributed to the fact that many are currently in the process of utilizing centers and the services they provide to meet their immediate needs, which would put these topics at the forefront of their recommendations for the YAB scope and responsibilities.

Youth engagement in making policy recommendations was of interest to representatives from County departments, service providers, and young people. Overall, having the ability to influence policy was mentioned as a top priority for the YAB in 27% of participants’ comments. When we take a deeper look into who was particularly interested policy, we find that participants who were 22 years or older, and a little further removed from their direct experience within the system, were most interested in using the YAB as a vehicle for policy change, while younger participants (those currently in the system) wanted the YAB to prioritize programs and services. For example, the discussion among participants in the Architect’s pilot focus group/visioning session (comprised of young people who have already aged out of the system) was centered on the desire to drive systemic change through policy recommendations. This is in contrast to the discussion among participants in the Brother’s, Sons, Selves⁸ visioning session, comprised mostly of teens who were more focused on programs and services than policies.

⁸ Brothers, Sons Selves is a coalition of ten community-based organizations across Los Angeles and Long Beach whose mission is to end the criminalization of young boys/boys and men of color by creating and influencing public policy that invests in young people and their future. https://www.innercitystruggle.org/brothers_sons_selves

Given the distinction of scope and responsibility prioritization expressed among age groups with varying proximity to experience within the system, membership age may be an important consideration as the County determines age range for membership and focus areas for the YAB. There may be difficulty getting YAB members to align on their roles and areas of focus depending on their age and proximity to system involvement as younger youth tend to have an interest in focusing on programs and direct services to meet their immediate needs, while older young people desire to influence policy for longer-term change.

Another area of focus that was raised consistently among participants was budget, which manifested in two distinct ways: 1) having a budget allocation to fund the work of the YAB and 2) giving the YAB access to departmental budget information so they can make recommendations for reallocation of funds to more effectively serve the needs of youth. A budget allocation for the YAB was raised as a critical need in every discussion, with 100% of participants agreeing that having a budget will help ensure the sustainability of the YAB. Additional insights regarding the budget allocation are provided in the compensation section below. Discussions about departmental budget access centered around the desire of young people, not to dictate budgets, but to audit and ensure that resources are equitably and effectively allocated to meet the needs of youth in the system, and youth who are receiving resources and services, such as those made available to transition age youth. 18% of participants identified departmental budget audits as the top issue that the YAB should prioritize.

Finally, both child welfare and probation systems impacted young people want the ability to assess the effectiveness of the departments that oversee their system experiences. 14% of participants named department audits as the first issue that the YAB should prioritize to determine if they are serving the needs of children, youth and families as intended. Such assessments might include an audit of policies, practices and programs to determine their effectiveness and make recommendations for improvements or elimination. Several young people identified a direct tie between assessing departments and budget allocations.

The frequencies above highlight prioritization based on which factors came up most frequently as top priorities for the YAB within the discussions, but it is worth noting that, in general, the majority of participants were in agreement that each factor is critical for the YAB to have within its scope and responsibilities. While young people are not a monolith, participants in the visioning sessions and convenings had many shared lived experiences because of their involvement in the system, and tended to agree on the factors that the YAB should prioritize in order to effectively drive change. Overall, young people expressed interest in having a youth body that not only represents the interests of system impacted youth, but is also empowered to assess departments, audit policies, practices and programs, and has power to recommend policies, shape programs and influence budget decisions in a way that will lead to substantive and sustainable systemic change.

Youth were particularly concerned with ensuring that the YAB has power to make real change within the County's child welfare, probation and other departments and systems that impact youth. Young people raised concerns that members of the YAB would be tokenized and/or exploited because of their lived experience and the image and credibility that their experiences might lend to the County through their participation in the YAB, while their voices and expertise because of their lived experiences would not be taken seriously or result in substantive change. These concerns led to in-depth discussions about what it would look like for the YAB to have "real power". Examples of what real power could look like include:

- Direct access to the Board of Supervisors - the young people want the advisory body to be able to make recommendations directly to the board of supervisors; they prefer direct access to the BOS rather than reporting to another commission or committee that will then share their recommendations with the BOS
- Moving beyond advisory - there was push back on referring to the YAB as an advisory body because the young people do not believe that there is power in advising. Moreover, there were concerns raised regarding the fact that, although many County Commissions act in an advisory capacity, few have the word 'advisory' in their names. Young people therefore question the rationale and motivation behind giving this youth-centered body an advisory title and believe that the name of the body should be in line with the name of other commissions.
- Ability to influence departments - the young people are interested in having the ability to influence departments through budget reviews, audits and other means.

Structure

Structure emerged as a key component of the successful implementation of the YAB, one that is intricately tied to the YAB's scope and responsibilities. Young people expressed that a sound structure is necessary in order to ensure that members of the YAB can effectively impact systemic change through the scope of work and responsibilities previously outlined. Key themes related to structure include youth empowerment and "real power," equitable representation within membership, meeting times and locations, and support services.

"The YAB will not work unless we have real power. We don't want to be tokenized, we want to have a space to make real change."

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

Part of having real power includes having an equitable representation of voices from youth with a variety of lived experiences. While youth overwhelmingly supported having a YAB that includes youth who have been impacted by child welfare and/or probation (emphasis on the and, as many young people acknowledged that they had personally been impacted by, or knew someone who was impacted by both systems, thus expressed a desire to include both populations in the same body), there was a desire and urge for the County to consider expanding the YAB's reach by including young people who were not systems involved, but have

been impacted by other or similar challenges, such as through homelessness, LGBTQ experiences, and mental health challenges among others.

Other structure-related ideas and suggestions included YAB meeting times and locations. The primary suggestion regarding timing was to schedule meetings when youth are available. The general sentiment was that traditional midday meetings during the week will not work for the YAB. In order for YAB to be successful and accessible to YAB members and the young people they represent, meetings must be scheduled on evenings and weekends. Along these lines, meeting youth where they are was an important component of discussions about structure. Centralizing the meeting location in one location, such as the Hall of Administration, was also raised as a potential barrier to access. Young people recommended that the YAB consider rotating the meetings and hosting them in various locations across the County, including within County facilities, and in youth-serving community-based organizations with which young people are familiar and comfortable.

Finally, there was much discussion about the need for the YAB to include support services for its members. Young people recognize that members of the YAB, while representing the interests of youth who are in the system, are themselves youth who have been or are currently being impacted by the system. The expectation is that YAB members will need support services to help them navigate their own potential challenges at the same time that they are being empowered to address challenges on a systemic scale. Some of the suggested services that young people highlighted were housing, transportation, education, career and mental health supports.

“Mental health is important, if you're not healthy mentally you can't move forward”
 - Youth Participant in Visioning Session

The general sentiment pertaining to the YAB’s structure was that if members of the YAB possess “real power” and access to key decision makers such as the BOS, have equitable representation of youth with varied experiences, are able to meet during times and at locations that are accessible to youth, and receive support services to address their personal needs, the County will experience success with the model.

Connecting the Dots

Beyond discussions about leveraging partnerships with youth serving community-based organizations to identify potential members for the YAB, there was little discussion during the visioning sessions on the topic of how the County can build and sustain strategic partnerships between the YAB, County Departments, Commissions, and CBOs. Instead, the consultants looked to information gathered through the County’s Youth Engagement Scan to get a better sense of what County Departments are currently doing with regard to youth engagement. We considered what they are doing well and areas where they can improve.

Information in the scan indicated that most departments are engaging youth in some way, mostly to provide services, and in some instances in an advisory capacity to solicit feedback from youth. There were clear barriers and successes with youth engagement that emerged across the 18 departments and agencies that responded to the request for information. Some of the barriers and successes include:

Barriers	Successes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth lack of safety in their environments (i.e. in group homes and detention centers) ● Youth don't feel like individuals who matter, but rather like just a number in the system ● Difficult to determine the role and function youth can/should play in leadership and decision making ● Youth distrust of the County, its departments and staff ● Limited staff capacity and lack of designated person who is responsible for ongoing youth engagement ● Lack of staff with youth development training or expertise ● Staff schedules don't align with youth schedules/availability ● Lack of resources to provide youth incentives for participation ● Lack of youth friendly spaces within County ● Lack of technological support to effectively engage youth ● Youth follow-through ● Competing priorities for youth ● Reliance on private partnerships for funding to support youth development work ● Inability to provide food and transportation to youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Youth organizing ● Youth governance (i.e. advisory councils or boards) ● Positive relationships with adults ● Positive, flexible and safe environments for youth ● Experiential learning opportunities for youth ● Skill and asset development opportunities ● Staff that are well trained to work with traumatized youth ● Providing food, transportation and stipends ● Partnerships with youth serving organizations to support with recruitment, training and other supports ● Intentional internal coordination to prepare youth to lead ● Involving youth as co-creators in program design ● Visioning sessions with youth ● No requirements for youth involvement ● Planning meetings and events around youth schedules ● Providing mentorship to youth ● Listening to youth, understanding their needs and supporting them

As evidenced by these lists of barriers and successes, there are several obstacles to successfully engaging youth, as well as many practices that departments are employing to successfully

engage youth. A review of the information gathered through the scan suggests that key factors that drive the success of a youth body include:

- Providing financial resources to adequately fund the work and meet specific needs (i.e. transportation, meals, support services, incentives, etc.)
- Staffing the body with individuals who are trained in youth development
- Working to establish safety and trust between youth, staff and County Departments
- Equipping youth with the skills and supports they need to lead effectively

Digging deeper into these factors, looking for innovative solutions to the barriers and finding ways to scale successes through partnerships between the YAB, County Departments, Commissions and community-based organizations is key to creating a network of support that will be necessary for the YAB to be successful.

Membership

Visioning session participants were asked how membership of the YAB should be determined, what qualifications and characteristics members should possess and whether or not there should be an age limit placed on membership. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that a mix of young people with diverse lived experiences is going to be critical to the success of the YAB.

A wide variety of qualifications and desired characteristics were identified. They fall into the following five categories:

Advocate	Growth Mindset	Communication Skills	Lived Experience	Ally
Passionate about changing the system, but doesn't necessarily have to have a history of advocacy before joining the YAB.	Willing to learn and grow; listen to and learn from others; believe that change is possible.	Must be a good listener, visionary and critical thinker; okay to be in a place where still developing written and oral skills.	Can be either be personally systems impacted or have a connection to systems (i.e. incarcerated loved one).	Caring, compassionate, and empathetic; supports LGBTQ and other youth; willing to be an ally for issues not their own.

The primary objective with selection criteria based on these qualifications and desired characteristics, according to the majority of participants, should be to ensure that there are no barriers to access for young people who would like to become members of the body. Placing education and/or job requirements in the list of qualifications was raised as a concern. Similar concerns were raised regarding having requirements that individuals be affiliated with an organization or have a certain number of years of advocacy experience. Participants were less interested in having YAB representatives who “have it all together” and more interested in

having YAB members who are genuinely interested in representing the voice of the youth and effecting change. As such, the desire expressed by youth is that any criteria that could potentially act as a barrier to entry (i.e. must be enrolled in college or working) should not be considered in member selection.

“People should be selected by how they got impacted by the system and what they did to change their life around and are willing to advocate for children, and also choose youth coming out of camp and prisons.”
 - Youth Participant in Visioning Session

While there was a general consensus regarding selection criteria, it was more difficult to identify a specific selection process. Whereas some participants felt strongly that YAB membership selection should mirror the same process as other commissions (i.e. BOS appointed), others were opposed to this idea and preferred that selections be made through a more democratic process that allowed for youth to be involved in an election with a vote by their peers. Still others were interested in having youth be nominated by community based organizations for membership. From these varied selection models emerged a fourth model, which is a hybrid of the three alternatives that were most commonly suggested (BOS appointment, youth election and community based nominations).

There was also a wide span of suggested age requirements for member selection. The youngest recommended age was 13 and other oldest was 35, with most suggesting a range between 16 and 25 years. The rationale for 13 being on the lower end of the age continuum was that 13 is the average age when youth become involved in the juvenile justice system. The rationale for why 35 is a good age for the upper end of the continuum was because many systems impacted youth, namely those who have aged out of foster care, continue to struggle with challenges and require support well into their 30s. Not everyone agreed to these suggested lower and upper age limits. In fact, concerns were raised about involving youth who are too young to understand the bigger picture and meaningfully engage in the range of desired scope and responsibilities, as well as about including individuals in their 30s who are further removed from the experiences of young people who are currently in the system.

Aligning on membership criteria and a fair selection process might be one of the more challenging aspects of building the YAB. Looking to other models for guidance will be key to the success of this aspect of the work.

Training & Other Needs

Considering the broad range of ages and experiences along with the expansive scope of work and responsibilities that young people would like the YAB to take on, participants acknowledged that it is inevitable that training will be necessary to help shore up the skills of YAB members. The type of training they feel would be most valuable include:

- Systems education - training to help them understand how County departments and how everything within the County works
- Commission education - training to help YAB members understand the breadth and depth of LA County commissions and the unique roles & responsibilities of the YAB; this training should not be distinct from other commissioner trainings
- Mentorship - staffer mentor/support from County staff; mentorship for role and life in general; and training for how to be a mentor to others
- Political education - political and community organizing education in partnership with and provided by community organizations that address child welfare and juvenile justice issues

As with selection criteria, there were concerns raised about requiring specific training in order for individuals to be eligible for membership. Training, they expressed, should be offered to “promote and support the development of the emotional intelligence of those impacted by the system to ensure that real stability and success is achieved.” Furthermore, young people expressed that any training made available to members should be in line with training offered to other commissioners, as they do not want the YAB members to be treated or made to feel that they are not at the same level with their expertise and value add as other commissioners within the County. In other words, they would like their lived experiences to be treated with, and valued as expertise on the same level as professionals and scholars, and do not want training requirements that suggest that they are not. Along these lines, the overall sentiment about trainings that are not related to the scope and responsibilities of their role as members of the YAB, but will enhance their personal and professional growth (i.e. professional development, education, etc.) should be offered, but not required for selection or member participation.

“There should be a menu of trainings and youth can decide which ones they want to strengthen their skills.”

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

Compensation

There was unanimous consensus across participants in the convening, summit and visioning sessions that members of the YAB should be compensated for their time, expertise and contributions to the work. Compensation was discussed as the right thing to do (people should be paid for their time and expertise), but also a necessary thing to do in order to ensure sustainability of the YAB. Session participants shared that lack of financial resources and a strong support network are often barriers to access and engagement for young people who would otherwise be fully engaged in bodies like the YAB. Moreover, young people have competing priorities such as work and school, and are also struggling to find affordable housing, and gain access to transportation. Adequately compensating YAB members for their time and expertise will help ensure that the YAB remains a priority for members.

When asked what “adequate pay” would be, a range of \$25 to \$200 per meeting was shared. Hourly compensation and a flat rate fee were both suggested as reasonable options for compensation. The main takeaway from discussions about compensation are that youth are experts in their lived experiences and should be compensated as experts (like consultants), and that any compensation for YAB members must be sufficient and worthwhile, as young people will be expected to prioritize the work of the YAB, which might be in direct conflict with other priorities.

“Just like consultants are paid for their expertise, youth are experts in their lived experience. So, youth should get paid for their expertise.”

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

Budget & Staffing

The YAB budget was a hot button topic of discussion among participants. Budget discussions were divided into two categories:

1. YAB budget - everyone agreed that the commission itself needs a budget to do its work and compensate members
2. YAB access to County budgets - many young people felt strongly that the YAB should have within its powers the ability to review and give input on County budgets for programs and initiatives related to young people

While questions about where funding for the YAB should come from were not asked in the qualitative data collection process, insights from the Youth Scan and landscape analysis indicate that there is heavy reliance on partnerships with outside entities to fund youth engagement and leadership initiatives such as the YAB. Furthermore, the information gathered through these data collection methods made it evident that without a budget to adequately meet the financial and other needs of young people, little, if any, success is found with the youth bodies. Identifying internal, and potentially external funding sources should be prioritized as the model for the YAB is developed.

As for staffing, young people welcomed the idea of having a County staff person designated to support the YAB. Young people shared a preference for staff with lived experience and/or a deep understanding of the experiences of system impacted youth. The most important quality that the youth want in staff is that they are trustworthy and committed to youth empowerment.

Challenges & Concerns

Although mentioned throughout this report, it is worth calling out that several challenges and concerns were flagged during discussions among convening, summit and visioning session participants. These challenges and concerns largely fell into two distinct categories: 1) youth engagement and 2) distrust of departments.

Youth Engagement	Distrust of Departments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Competing priorities ● Ongoing personal challenges, including housing insecurity, limited access to transportation, mental health challenges, etc. ● Different ages and varying experiences with the system might pose challenges with alignment on scope and responsibilities ● How will people with criminal records be included? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Traumatization from system experience fuels a distrust of County departments and staff ● Current and former foster youth expressed distrust of some social workers and mental health providers ● Probation youth, in particular, expressed distrust and fear of law enforcement; they are uncomfortable with the role that sheriffs will play in YAB work

Other challenges and concerns included youth not being taken seriously, the presence of racism, and discrimination toward members of the LGBTQ community, among others. Policing, the presence of law enforcement at meetings, and the potential for discrimination and profiling by law enforcement was also a concern that was raised specifically by young people who have been involved in the probation system. Addressing these challenges and concerns early on will be critical for setting a strong foundation for the YAB; one that involves mutual respect and works toward building trust between departments/people who work within the system, and the youth who have been impacted by the system.

Landscape Analysis Findings

The consultants were also asked to conduct and report on a landscape analysis of youth advisory bodies across the nation. The goal of the landscape analysis was to identify models that LA County could look to for examples of successes, challenges and lessons learned as it works to create its own YAB.

The landscape analysis was comprised of two parts:

1. Internet scan - a broad internet search to identify and collect information about various models across the country
2. Interviews - semi-structured interviews with a select group of individuals who are leading or supporting youth advisory bodies that include components that are of interest to LA County as it develops its YAB.

The following elements were identified as useful to the county's effort to develop its own model and served as the bases for the interviews and the analysis:

- Structure and authority
- Membership (age, selection criteria, etc.)

- Scope and responsibilities
- Compensation
- Budget
- Relationship between youth and staff
- Successes (what has worked well and outcomes of the work)
- Challenges (what hurdles they are currently working to/have had to overcome)
- Lessons Learned

The types of structures, authority, administrative oversight, membership selection, scope & responsibilities, compensation and budget varied significantly:

Element	Models
Structure, authority, oversight	Legislature; State senate; Nonprofit; Other commission; Department; Board of Supervisors; District Attorney’s Office;
Membership (age)	Age range of 12-25 (<i>note: age ranges varied among models</i>)
Membership (selection)	Appointment by elected; Appointment by other commission; Application process; Election
Scope & responsibilities	Identify needs of youth and make recommendations to legislature; Submit annual reports on the state of youth; Propose legislation; Advise on proposed and pending legislation; Advocate for policy; Provide direct services to youth; Uplift voice of underserved populations; Represent youth voice in government; Recommend youth services programs; Develop policy priorities based on the lived experience of members, surveys of peers, and consultation with field experts and research
Compensation	Members not compensated; Members compensated for meeting attendance in the same manner as legislative members; Members entitled to the minimum salary per diem and reimbursement for travel expenses; Members entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard state travel regulations;
Budget	Grants and donations from public and private sectors; Funded through appropriations; Funded through department budget; Funding based on cost of operations; Funded by community foundation

After collecting information on 27 models, we selected five models to explore further, because their focus, membership, or structure offered valuable learning:

Entity/Organization	Rationale for Further Exploration
Illinois Youth Advisory Board	Focus on youth with lived experience; oversight by commission; advises commission; includes learning & development opportunities for youth
Marin County Youth Commission	Focus on youth empowerment; youth are a commission that advises BOS, advocates for policy and provides direct service; emphasis on uplifting voices of underserved youth; interesting partnership with Youth Leadership Institute; age range 12 -23
Oakland Youth Advisory Commission	Focus on authentic youth engagement and empowerment; oversight by local government (city); involvement in policy (lobbying); includes learning & development opportunities for youth; selection process similar to LAC commission process
Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Justice Youth Advisory Council	Juvenile Justice advisory body; focus on national juvenile justice reform; age range of 18-25; required lived experience; members review materials, contribute to drafting and editing reports and presentations, conduct field research, attend and present at conferences and meetings and participate in professional development activities; national model
Casey Family Programs National Foster Youth and Alumni Policy Council	Foster Youth advisory body; focus on national foster care reform; requires lived experience; age range 16-25; members advise federal policymakers and departments on child welfare policy; also analyze effectiveness of programs and policies

To verify information retrieved from the internet scan, consultants scheduled interviews with representatives from the youth bodies listed above. We were able to have interviews with four of the five. Through the semi-structured interviews, we learned that although there are countless efforts to create and maintain youth advisory bodies that include young people as advisors in decision making processes within government, maintaining momentum and ongoing involvement is a challenge. Lack of funding, limitations of staff, youth not being taken seriously, inconsistency with meeting times, inability to provide compensation, models that are not truly youth-led, and challenges facing youth (i.e. homelessness, lack of transportation, mental health challenges, etc.) were all identified as barriers to success.

The models that appear to be experiencing the greatest success are those that include the following key factors:

- Youth-led and youth-driven with adult guidance and dedicated staff support

- Adequate funding, compensation and training
- Direct access to policymakers
- Partnership with foundations and/or nonprofits

Youth-led and youth driven with adult guidance and dedicated staff support

The Marin County Youth Commission, Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs have each found success in allowing youth to lead each aspect of their commissions with staff support. Decisions about policy focus areas, programs and other scope and responsibilities of the commissions are driven by young people. In some cases, the young people suggest ideas, and in other cases, the staff present the young people with a list of options. In either case, the young people have control over the policy issues, topics and programs they would like to address through their work.

In the Marin County Youth Commission, young people also drive the membership selection process. Individuals who are interested in membership submit an application, which is reviewed by the current membership. The members interview applicants and make selections without staff influence. The only role of staff in this process is to provide logistical support with scheduling times and securing venues.

One challenge that staff have come up against is when the issues that youth want to focus on are not in alignment with the issues that their government body are currently focused on. Often, this has to do with the tension between young people's focus on addressing issues that impact their immediate needs, rather than seeing the greater impact that they might be able to have on policies that can have long-term, broader reaching impacts. For example, when new legislation around congregate care was being introduced at the federal level, Casey Family Programs saw an opportunity for its National Policy Council to weigh in on what new standards for congregate care could look like for foster youth in group homes. However, the policy council members were interested in focusing their efforts at the time on addressing sibling rights, as many of the members were immediately impacted by policies that separated them from their siblings. Both issues were important to address, and the members had experience with each. However, there was a unique window of opportunity to influence policy that was being considered on a large scale, so the staff encouraged the council to consider temporarily shifting their focus from their sibling rights efforts toward congregate care. The council agreed and found that their experiences in group homes were invaluable in shaping the direction of the new legislation. Examples like this show the importance of having dedicated staff who can guide the young people by using their policy expertise to make recommendations, while respecting that decisions about how to proceed are ultimately up to the young people.

Adequate funding, compensation, and training

Funding, compensation and trainings were each raised as necessary to the success of the various youth bodies. The Illinois Youth Advisory Board has experienced several challenges with maintaining consistent youth engagement, and attribute much of their struggle to a lack of funding and an inability to compensate their members, "One of the biggest challenges we have

encountered is that because the Commission is funded through federal dollars, compensating youth for their time is not an allowable cost. This means that we can only reimburse them for travel” (Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission representative). The staff have attempted to overcome their inability to compensate members by providing professional development training, but continue to see inconsistency in participation and believe that compensation would address this challenge.

The Marin County Youth Commission has found that providing training for young people and county department staff has helped ensure a mutually beneficial relationship between the commission and the county. They had initially faced difficulties getting the county departments to take the youth commission seriously, so decided to provide youth development training for the departments that the commission works with to help the staff understand the value of young people’s contributions, “People are not used to youth leadership and engagement, so we’ve had to train people to value young folks, their voices and ideas” (Marin County Youth Commission Representative). In addition to staff training, YLI also provides ongoing training for its members and organizes an annual retreat that all members are required to attend. The training provided in the retreat focuses on social justice, youth organizing and the power of youth voice within government. YLI also partners with other nonprofit organizations to provide various policy and advocacy oriented trainings at the retreat, as they have found that “connecting with community based organizations has been the greatest driver of real policy change for the youth commission” (Marin County Youth Commission Representative).

Direct access to policymakers

In each model, the intent is for commissioners to have direct access to policymakers. In Illinois, commissioners are appointed by the governor’s office, but because the commission has not been functional since it was started, young people do not yet have full access to policymakers, which seems to be one of the barriers to the commission’s success.

In Marin County, commissioners have direct access to the BOS. In fact, BOS attendance at commission meetings is required when policy recommendations are being made by the commission - this is written into their bylaws.

The Annie E. Casey and Casey Family Programs commissioners all have direct access to federal policymakers and their staff. They are able to advise policymakers on proposed legislation and make suggestions for policies that the elected officials can introduce.

Overall, having direct access to policymakers appears to be necessary for the success of these youth commissions.

Partnership with foundations and/or nonprofits

Annie E. Casey and Casey Family Programs are both foundations that manage their youth commissions. These organizations work in partnership with government entities, but their commissions are housed within the foundations rather than within government. Having

dedicated funding and staff, as well as being intentional about building partnerships with government entities have contributed to the success of these models.

The Marin County Youth Commission has a unique model of governance. While the commission is an official commission within the county, staffing for the commission is provided by the Youth Leadership Institute (YLI), a statewide nonprofit that supports quasi-government youth commissions across the state of California. Marin County provides YLI with an annual budget to cover the cost of a staff person and the activities associated with the work of the commission. The YLI staff serves as a liaison between the commission, the county (including departments and BOS), and the community, coordinates logistics for all commission activities, and supports the young people in their policy and advocacy work.

LA County can learn from the challenges and barriers that have prevented other models from experiencing success, and employ key factors that have resulted in the success of other models to ensure that the desired YAB also sees success.

LIMITATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Although the consultants, County staff and Commissioners who collaborated on this research worked diligently to minimize limitations in this study, there were several challenges that arose, which created barriers as we sought to gather meaningful feedback and insights to inform the feasibility of a YAB for LA County. The following limitations have been identified as challenges to this research, but we also want to lift up opportunities to do things differently as the YAB is being implemented, to help strengthen the model and work moving forward:

Time constraints

The consultant team was brought on board for a three-month engagement to design and facilitate visioning sessions, complete a national landscape analysis, and develop a comprehensive report of the findings. In the future, we recommend allowing more time for data collection, meaningful youth engagement and the inclusion of other key stakeholders across the county, including foster youth in high school, youth in juvenile camps and youth in group homes.

Budget constraints

Budget constraints were also a limitation of the research. Because the research and data collection processes were intentionally youth-led and youth-centered, the consultants hired young people who served as facilitators, data collectors, and analysts. In an effort to honor their time, work and expertise, facilitators were paid \$20 per hour for their work. Additionally, all convening, summit and visioning sessions participants who identified as youth were paid \$15 per hour for their time and participation. Our commitment to paying a living wage to all participants helped demonstrate our value of their time and appreciation of their expertise and insights, as well as modeled what it might look like for YAB members. However, paying this rate meant that a limited number of young people could participate if everyone was to be compensated. A lesson from this experience that should be considered in the development of

the YAB is that budgeting for the will need to take into consideration providing a living wage for participants while also allowing for broad participation and representation from young people on the YAB.

Survey data collection challenges

One of the data collection methods employed by the Commission for Children and Families was the administration of a countywide survey. The intention with the survey was to include the insights and feedback of as many young people as possible in the feasibility study. However, the survey yielded a small number of participants (45), over 50% who were above age 30. If survey administration is utilized as a data collection method in future research, we recommend that a more comprehensive outreach approach be employed to yield increased participation and stronger results. There is also an opportunity to involve youth in survey design and administration using youth participatory action research methods and compensating them for collecting data.

Distrust of Los Angeles County departments

In order to gain access to system-involved young people who would be willing and available to speak with us, the consultants relied on community-based organizations and service providers to open their spaces and transfer their trust of us to their constituents so that we would be able to have candid discussions with them about the YAB. Although the consultants have positive relationships and trust among the organizations, the affiliation of this particular research in partnership with the County raised concerns with some partners because of their distrust of LA County departments (namely child welfare and probation) and the staff that represent them. The presence of distrust resulted in hesitation to invite youth to participate in the visioning sessions for fear of the potential retraumatization and harm that interacting with the County might cause for young people. There is an opportunity for the County to meaningfully engage with community-based organizations and the youth they serve to develop an understanding of the root of this distrust. Working to address concerns and build trust will be critical for effectively moving the YAB forward.

Limited information about effective quasi-government YAB models

The landscape analysis internet scan produced great information about various youth advisory models across the country and throughout the state of California. However, we quickly learned that much of what was discovered in the online research was not being implemented in practice. Many of the models were described as “ineffective” or “defunct” by individuals we’d interviewed, and did not accurately represent the level of youth engagement that is truly happening on the ground. Overall, models that appeared to be youth-led and youth-driven through websites were determined to be ineffective in practice, based on insights from interviews with representatives for those entities. The presumed lack of effective models raises concerns about the ability to develop and implement a YAB, but also highlights the opportunity for LA County to develop a model that works and become a youth-led, youth-driven leader for others to follow. LA County can and should seize the opportunity to set an example of what it means to give youth the power to truly lead.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on insights and feedback from the youth engagement data analysis, landscape analysis and countywide youth engagement scan, it is the view of the consultants that with authentic youth engagement and leadership, it is feasible, and desirable for Los Angeles County to successfully create and maintain a youth body that includes equitable representation of system impacted youth who would like to improve outcomes for their peers. In order to effectively develop a model that meets the needs and desires of young people who are the primary intended beneficiaries of this body, the consultants offer the following recommendations, based on the data obtained:

Select a name for the youth body that is in line with the names of other County commissions.

As it stands, the current name used to refer to the youth body, “Youth Advisory Body,” has not been well received by young people that have been involved in the data collection process to date. Despite their excitement to have a youth-centered body within the County, young people are concerned about having the term “advisory” in the body’s name. Given the strong feedback in opposition to including the term “advisory,” and considering the fact that most County commissions serve in an advisory capacity, yet do not have “advisory” in their title, we recommend that the County remove advisory from the name of the proposed body, and replace it with the term “commission.” The name of the body could then be something like, “Los Angeles County Youth Commission” or “Los Angeles County Commission for Youth,” which aligns with the titles of other County commissions. Selecting a name that is in line with the names of other County commissions will help appease concerns that the youth body is not taken as seriously as other commissions. The consultants will refer to the youth body as the “Youth Commission” for the duration of the proposed recommendations.

Work in partnership with community-based, youth-centered organizations, and also be intentional about engaging disconnected youth and including them in the body.

Los Angeles County has many community-based organizations that regularly interact with system impacted youth. These organizations provide direct services, training and education, mentorship and other important offerings to the County’s young people. Working in collaboration and developing formalized partnerships with these organizations will be important and necessary for the County to establish trust and credibility, as well as actively engage and include system impacted youth in the Youth Commission.

“The Youth Advisory Body should engage in community outreach to [facilitate] peer group sessions, [visit] drop-in centers and help raise awareness.”

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

Equally important is finding ways to include disconnected youth in the Youth Commission. Many young people who are in foster care, group homes, shelters, detention centers or camps, or on probation are not connected to youth serving organizations. Disconnected youth are

among the County's most vulnerable young people. To effectively serve them, their insights and voices are needed within the Youth Commission, but are difficult to include if they are not intentionally sought out and brought in. The recommendation here is to get these young people connected with Youth Commission members and community based organizations as soon as they are in the County's custody so they are made aware of the resources available to them and can plug in. Additionally, informing disconnected youth of the existence of the Youth Commission and encouraging them to consider joining the commission might be the push they need to overcome the barrier of feeling like their voices do not matter. A list of organizations that have engaged youth in the data collection process for this report is listed in Appendix E as a starting place.

Develop a sustainable model that is youth-led, youth-driven and youth-centered.

Whichever model the County decides to employ for the Youth Commission must be youth-led, youth-driven and youth-centered, with adequate staffing and support to ensure its success. Youth-led, youth-driven and youth-centered looks like young people leading their meetings, driving their decisions and centering youth voices. Support from staff will be important, but staff voices and perspectives should not take precedent or carry more weight than those of youth.

Scope and Responsibilities

Empower the Youth Commission with the authority to assess departments, conduct audits, shape and inform new and existing programs and centers, make policy recommendations and oversee and inform relevant budgets.

Based on feedback and insights from youth regarding their desired scope and responsibilities for the youth body, the consultants recommend that the County include the following key areas of focus within the activities for which the Youth Commission is responsible:

1. Assess department effectiveness
2. Audit policies, practices and programs
3. Shape programs and service centers
4. Make policy recommendations
5. Weigh in on specific aspects of the relevant departmental budgets

Department effectiveness should be measured by the number of young people who are successfully served through programs and initiatives. The Youth Commission should have access to data and evaluation rubrics that they can use to assess effectiveness.

Given their direct personal experiences within the County's systems, Youth Commissioners will have keen insight into the policies, practices, procedures and programs offered. One of their responsibilities should include reviewing and auditing various policies, practices and procedures and making recommendations for improvement, elimination, and creation, as needed.

Young people know what they need to thrive, and often rely on programs and community/service centers to meet their needs. The Youth Commission should have the ability to shape and inform new and existing programs and centers that better meet the needs of young people.

Additionally, the Commissioners should have the power to make policy recommendations, including suggested changes to departmental budgets, especially as they pertain to funding for programs that are intended to serve the needs of youth within the system. Having the ability to weigh in on specific aspects of the budget will truly empower young people to effect the change that is needed to improve outcomes for system impacted youth.

Structure

The Youth Commission should have direct access to the Board of Supervisors and County CEO offices, and be given flexibility with their meeting times and locations.

The key to a sustainable structure is to ensure that the Youth Commission has the same access and power that other County commissions possess, has a mix of young people who represent the vast range of lived experiences of young people across the County, and is accessible to the young people it is intended to represent.

Like other County commissions, the Youth Commission should have direct access to, and be able to share their concerns, insights and recommendations with the Board of Supervisors. Having the Youth Commission advise another commission, such as the Commission for Children and Families, diminishes the power of the Youth Commission and keeps the voice of young people one step removed from the ultimate decision makers that they want and need access to. Using the structure to give the Youth Commission the same level of access to the BOS and Chief Executive Offices as other commissions ensures that the Youth Commission's insights and expertise are seen on the same level and valued in the same way as other commissions.

In order to truly increase access and give young people the opportunity to share their voices, it is recommended that the Youth Commission be enabled to hold its public meetings during evenings and weekends to accommodate school and work schedules, and that the Commission have the flexibility to host meetings at County facilities and community organization spaces across the County. Rotating meeting locations will increase access and ensure that young people in various parts of the County, from Long Beach to Lancaster, can serve as members, as well as participate in critical discussions that impact them. Meetings should be held monthly to maintain consistency.

“Schedule meetings when youth are available. Evenings & weekends work best.”

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

“[Meetings should be held] in community orgs, public spaces, LA county buildings.

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

Connecting the Dots

Work to build collaboration and trust between the Youth Commission, County Departments and community based organizations through team building and training to ensure that all parties understand, value and respect youth voice.

County Departments, Commissions and community-based organizations will be pivotal to the successful creation and sustainable implementation of the Youth Commission. As will be discussed in the next few recommendations, the County will need to rely on these entities to support with the youth commissioner selection process, provide training, mentorship and other services for youth commissioners, and potentially allocate resources toward compensation and a budget for the Youth Commission.

Given the current distrust of County Departments among youth and community based organizations, prioritizing building trust is the first step that must be taken to begin “connecting the dots.” Sustaining strategic partnerships between these entities starts with actively working to maintain an amicable and productive relationship between them, which requires intentionally working to build trust, ensuring that all parties understand, value and respect youth voices, and providing ongoing communication to prevent confusion, frustration and fatigue.

Building trust should include team building exercises between youth, departments, commissions and community based-organizations. Building trust must also include training for County staff that will work with the Youth Commission to ensure they are equipped with the skills necessary to support a youth-centered model of leadership. Youth serving community-based organizations are a great resource for designing and facilitating these trainings.

Membership

Open membership to include a diverse array of young people with varied lived experiences; include youth in the selection process to ensure that selected commissioners truly represent their perspectives and desires; provide some flexibility in tenure.

The most important factors to consider when determining membership for the Youth Commission are age range, selection process, selection criteria and tenure. We recommend that the age range for commissioners be 16 to 25. Although it can be difficult to get the proper permissions to include youth under age 18 to participate in programs, young people overwhelmingly expressed a desire and need to include these voices and insights in the body. Moreover, many youth advisory bodies across the country have found success and value with including minors in their leadership. We recommend that the County look for ways to get the permissions necessary to include these important voices in the commission.

“We need to incorporate current foster youth, dropouts, college students, queer youth, black youth, A.P.I. (Asian Pacific Islander) youth, pretty much anyone who wants to speak on their lived experiences impacted by the system.”

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

In the same light, while we are aware that the trauma and barriers that system impacted young people face influence their lives well beyond the age of 25, data gathered via feedback from youth and our landscape analysis suggests that young people in this transitional age range are closer to and more familiar with the current policies, practices and challenges within each system, thus are able to make recommendations that are informed by their recent experiences.

The voices and lived experiences of young people over age 25 are still important and have a valuable role to play in informing the County’s work. After age 25, young people should be encouraged to consider appointment to one of the County’s roughly 200 committees and commissions. In this way, the Youth Commission can be leveraged as a commissioner development pipeline that prepares young people with lived experience to take on leadership within other commissions as they move into different stages of their lives and careers outside of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Creating opportunities for system involved young people who are over the age of 25 to be appointed to other County committees and commissions will also help the BOS ensure that the voices and expertise of people with lived experiences are not confined to the Youth Commission. Commissioners who age out of the commission at age 25 should also be invited to serve as mentors to younger commissioners.

The Youth Commission membership selection process will be tricky, as the County seeks to have equitable representation of young people who truly represent the voices and experiences of the young people that the commission seeks to serve. While traditionally, County commissioners are appointed by supervisors, given the concerns that were raised regarding selection criteria and process, we recommend that the BOS employ a hybrid model that includes traditional appointments that are informed by departments, agencies and community based recommendations, along with youth selected commissioners that are identified through a self-nomination and interview process.

With the hybrid model approach, each district would have three youth commissioners, for a total of 15 commissioners, and up to 5 alternatives (1 per district). Districts will have two commissioners appointed by their Supervisor, and one commissioner selected through an interview process by past commissioners. At least one of the three commissioners in each district must have lived experience with the child welfare system, and at least one must have lived experience with the juvenile justice/probation system. Supervisors should solicit recommendations for appointees from departments, agencies and community based organizations that serve constituents in their district, and the third representative in each district will be identified through self-nomination and selected by past commissioners (the first set of selected commissioners will be determined by the current YAB working group).

Whether appointed or elected, commissioners should possess the qualifications that young people have identified as being necessary to effectively represent their voices and interests. These include:

- Advocate
- Growth Mindset
- Communications Skills
- Lived Experience
- Ally

As previously discussed, criteria should not act as a barrier to entry and should not be used to “cream” or select young people who are considered to be more “professional”, “refined”, or “have it together.” Young people who are struggling, but are passionate and want to use their voices and expertise from lived experiences to support change should be given the same opportunity to join the commission as young people who have overcome many of their obstacles and are finding success in their education and career. Along these lines, although the motion put forward by Supervisors Hahn and Kuehl expressed that membership for this particular body would include young people impacted specifically by foster care and/or juvenile justice, young people strongly expressed a desire for the membership to be more inclusive. They would like to see the membership be open to any young people who may not have direct lived experience, but have a connection to and understanding of these systems (i.e. a loved one who has been incarcerated, or placed in foster care), and are passionate about being an advocate and ally on behalf of system impacted youth. Finally, it is important to ensure that intersecting experiences and identities such as youth who are/were homeless, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ community, have a disability, and so forth are considered and represented on the commission.

Like other County commissions, the Youth Commission should have a standard four year tenure for members. However, considering the life stage of youth in the 16 - 25 year old age range, offering flexibility in the tenure commitment will be important for the success and sustainability of the commission. One recommendation is to offer two options for tenure: one for two years, and another for four years. The two year option can accommodate youth who join the commission at age 16, while they are in high school, and move on to college after a couple of years, or those who begin their tenure as community college students, then transfer within a couple of years. The four year option will ensure that the Youth Commissioners’ tenure is the same as that of other commissioners, and provides some stability and longevity for the commission.

Training & Other Needs

Require the same training as that required of other commissioners and partner with departments and community based organizations to offer additional training as a bonus for members to enhance their personal and professional growth and development.

Training will be critical for the success and sustainability of the Youth Commission. Striking the right balance between required training and optional training is especially important with the Youth Commission, as young people do not want to feel like they are being patronized or required to complete training that other commissioners do not have to complete. The framing of trainings and the reasons they are required can help young people understand the value add of the trainings to their personal and professional growth.

Required training can and should include all training that other commissioners complete for their participation in County commissions. Requiring trainings that help young people understand the inner workings of LA County and their role as commissioners within the County is reasonable and expected. A budget for trainings will need to be provided to ensure adequate resources are available for effective implementation.

“Young people should learn their county laws and local bills...youth should learn how to pass a bill... and how to set meetings with politicians to talk about the issue...and what certain cities need to do [to address the challenges of system impacted youth].”

- Youth Participant in Visioning Session

Supplementing these required trainings with additional, optional offerings that respond to the unique needs that many system impacted youth have will go a long way to support youth in their personal and professional growth and development. Leveraging partnerships with community based organizations to provide these trainings (i.e. inviting commissioners to existing training) will help young people view these offerings as a benefit rather than a barrier.

Considering that the members of the Youth Commission will be system impacted young people, providing support services and trauma informed care, as needed, will be essential to the success of the membership. Service needs and care can be identified through the inclusion of an optional mentorship opportunity for all Youth Commission members. Mentors can be County employees from various departments that are trained in trauma informed care, and whose work is related to youth support and leadership development. Youth Commissioners should not be required to have a mentor in order to be eligible for membership, but should have the option to receive this additional support and guidance for their own personal development, as desired.

Compensation

Adequately compensate commissioners, taking into consideration their unique needs.

Compensation should consider the unique needs and challenges of system involved youth, and how those needs and challenges can create barriers for young people who want to participate, but cannot afford.

We recommend that the County seek outside resources, if needed, perhaps through partnerships with foundations and/or community-based organizations, to be able to adequately compensate commissioners for their time at commission meetings and for work related to the commissioners' responsibilities outside of meetings.

Mileage and/or travel reimbursement should be provided. Other compensation offerings to consider include certification for training completion by members on the commission; partnership with a local college or university to provide college course credits for membership; compensation for childcare, and any other compensation that will remove barriers of entry for members.

**"We would like if the department would give scholarships as an incentive for those [YAB] members who are still in school or who desire to go to school."
- Youth Participant in Stakeholder Convening**

Budget & Staffing

Provide a budget allocation and dedicated staff that support and meet the needs of the Youth Commission.

At minimum, the Youth Commission should receive a budget allocation for member transportation to meetings and travel for work related to their responsibilities on the commission. However, considering the unique needs of the young people who will be involved in the Commission, it is recommended that the County provide additional funding for this specific commission to remain sustainable and be able to effectively engage in the scope and responsibilities previously discussed. One option for consideration with the budget is to have each department that does work related to youth allocate a percentage of their budget to the Youth Commission to support its work. Another option is to seek outside resources through public-private partnerships to ensure adequate resources to fund the commission's important work.

Outside of the mentorship offering for commissioners, which should be managed by County staff, the Youth Commission should be staffed in the same way as the Commission for Children and Families, with strong preferences for staff with lived experience and/or youth development training.

Overall, to ensure the success of the Youth Commission, each aspect of the commission's formulation and implementation must be youth-centered, recognize the unique needs of the diverse population of young people who will be involved, and work toward removing all barriers that would prevent young people from being empowered to use their voices to effect change that will improve the systems and the outcomes for youth who are impacted by them. LA County has a unique opportunity to develop and implement a model of authentic youth engagement within a quasi-government setting that truly empowers young people to drive

systemic change. Continuing to engage youth in the process of building the model will be key to its success.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP & VISIONING SESSION PROCESS

LA County YAB Focus Group Process July 2019

Castillo Consulting Partners recommends that the LA County YAB feasibility analysis and data collection process include a combination of traditional focus groups and more interactive visioning sessions. The use of either a traditional focus group or more engaging interactive visioning session will depend on the number of participants, their ages and experiences with advocacy and activism,

This proposal explains when and why a focus group vs. an interactive visioning session should be used, and offers a list of activities that participants would engage in during a visioning session to gather similar insights and feedback to those that will be collected in a traditional focus group. Note that the questions for both the focus groups and the visioning sessions are the same, but the process for engaging participants and collecting data is different. All participants will be compensated with a \$30 gift card.

Questions

1. Why is a Countywide Youth Advisory Body made up of young people who have been in the system necessary and important in Los Angeles County? Why is it important to you personally and to youth across the county?
2. What should this Youth Advisory Body do? What should it focus on?
3. What do you think are the benefits of a Youth Advisory Body that focuses on both child foster care and juvenile justice issues? Is it a good idea to combine the two for the YAB? What challenges might we have in combining the two?
4. Describe an ideal member of the Youth Advisory Body? What personal characteristics should they possess? How old would they be? Would there be an age limit?
5. What should young people who are on this Youth Advisory Body learn to be able to be effective members?
6. What kinds of things might get in the way of this Youth Advisory Body being successful?
7. How should people be selected and who should have the power to select them?
8. When should the Youth Advisory Body meet?

Process Options

	Traditional Focus Group	Visioning Session
Description	Discussion based	Interactive Activities
Number of Participants	11 or fewer	12 or more

Audience	A small group OR youth and young adults who have been actively involved in activism and advocacy, have processed their experiences in the system and are eager to share recommendations for change.	A large group OR youth and young adults who are less engaged in activism and advocacy, haven't processed their experiences in the system, but want to share their stories and learn more.
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Process Models

Traditional Focus Group	
Duration	2 hours
Setup	Medium size room with one table and enough chairs for all participants.
Staffing	2 facilitators - one to moderate, one to take notes (can alternate)
Process	Focus group will consist of 11 or fewer participants and will be facilitated by one or two facilitators. Focus group facilitators will ask questions and take notes as participants share responses.
Materials	Paper and pens or pencils for note taking; food & drinks, gift cards

Interactive Visioning Session	
Duration	2 hours
Setup	Table rounds or squares for up to 4 people in each group
Staffing	Ratio of 1 facilitator per 4 participants
Process	Visioning sessions will include 12 or more participants and will be facilitated by multiple youth facilitators. Facilitators will engage participants in a series of interactive activities that include time for personal reflection, small group discussions, large group share outs and voting. A different activity will be used to draw out different insights for each question.
Materials	Personal reflection worksheets, chart paper, post-its, circular stickers, magazines, glue, markers, pens, pencils, calendar, food & drinks, gift cards

Question	Activity	Materials
<p>1. Why is a Countywide Youth Advisory Body made up of young people who have been in the system necessary and important in Los Angeles County? Why is it important to you personally and to youth across the county?</p>	<p>Post-It Responses & Gallery Walk Participants are asked to write their responses to these questions on small post-its. When they are done, they will post them up on a wall, white board or large chart paper for everyone to see. They will do a gallery walk to see what others have written, discuss with a partner, then share reactions in the large group.</p>	<p>Post-its, pens, large chart paper, white board or blank wall</p>
<p>2. What should this Youth Advisory Body do? What should it focus on?</p>	<p>Small Group Ideation & Sticker Vote Participants will get into groups of 3 or 4 and discuss these questions. Each group will have a facilitator who takes notes on large chart paper to capture everyone's ideas. After about 10 minutes in small groups, each group will share out their ideas. A facilitator will create one consolidated list with all ideas (combining common ideas). All participants will be given three circular stickers and given a few minutes to "vote" by putting their stickers next to the items that they feel are the most important.</p>	<p>Chart paper, markers, circular stickers</p>
<p>3. What do you think are the benefits of a Youth Advisory Body that focuses on both child foster care and juvenile justice issues? Is it a good idea to combine the two for the YAB? What challenges might we have in combining the two?</p>	<p>Personal Reflection, Small Group Discussion & Large Group Share Out Participants will be given a few minutes to write down their responses to these questions on a worksheet that will be provided to them (we will collect these at the end of the session). After that time, they will go back into small groups to discuss, and a facilitator will take notes on chart paper. One person from each group will be asked to share three key points from their small group.</p>	<p>Reflection worksheet, pens, chart paper, markers</p>

<p>4. Describe an ideal member of the Youth Advisory Body? What personal characteristics should they possess? How old would they be? Would there be an age limit?</p>	<p><i>Illustration & Symbols</i> Small groups will be given chart paper and asked to draw a person who is a member of the YAB. They will be asked to draw symbols that represent the qualities and characteristics that this person has (can use magazines for images and symbols) and use text to explain why.</p>	<p>Chart paper, markers, pens, magazines, glue or tape</p>
<p>5. What should young people who are on this Youth Advisory Body learn to be able to be effective members?</p>	<p><i>Personal Reflection & Large Group Share Out</i> Participants will be given three prompts to respond to and asked to write their reactions on their worksheets. Facilitator will then invite people to share their responses out loud. Prompts will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If I were on the youth advisory body, something I could contribute is... ● If I were on the youth advisory body, something I would want to learn is... ● If I were on the youth advisory body, a new skill I'd like to develop is... <p>Worksheets will be collected at the end of the session so we have all of their thoughts.</p>	<p>Reflection worksheet, pens, chart paper, markers</p>
<p>6. What kinds of things might get in the way of this Youth Advisory Body being successful?</p>	<p><i>Small Group Discussion & Large Group Share Out</i> Participants will be put back in small groups to discuss this question. Small group facilitator will take notes on chart paper, and a large group facilitator will ask each group to share 2 or 3 things from their list.</p>	<p>Chart paper, markers</p>
<p>7. How should people be selected and who should</p>	<p><i>Small Group Discussion & Large Group Share Out</i></p>	<p>Chart paper, markers</p>

<p>have the power to select them?</p>	<p>Participants will be presented with a few options and will be put into small groups and asked to list the pros and cons of each. The options will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appointed by County Supervisors ● Recommended by non-profit organization ● Application process ● Election process ● Other <p>Small groups will be asked to share their recommendation.</p>	
<p>8. When should the Youth Advisory Body meet?</p>	<p>Large Group Calendaring & Vote Facilitator will ask for people to share their thoughts in the large group, will write them up on a large calendar and take a vote for the best times</p>	<p>Large calendar, markers</p>

APPENDIX B: LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS INTERNET SCAN & INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Landscape Analysis Internet Scan Research Focus Areas

- Location
- Body name
- Administrative oversight
- Enacting legislation
- Purpose defined by legislation
- Selection process
- Legislative connection & communication
- Legislative authority
- Frequency
- Outreach/communications strategies
- Membership
- Staffing
- Funding & funding stream
- Compensation
- Data source

Youth Advisory Body Landscape Analysis Interview Questions

1. What was the impetus behind the decision to create your local government's youth body? Where did the idea arise (for example, governmental body, nonprofit, other community group)?
2. What process was used to create the body? How was oversight of the body determined?

3. What kind of authority/power does the body have? Policy formulation? Implementation? Evaluation? Budget? Does it have specific, designated responsibilities related to these, such as reports?
4. What is the governance structure of the body? How are youth selected? Are they appointed (if so, by whom?), elected (by whom?), or is another selection method used?
5. What criteria are used for selection? How were age requirements determined? Experience requirements? Other criteria for participation?
6. What are the term limits (if any)? How were these determined and how are they working out?
7. What role does staff play, especially with regards to support with meetings, training and other supports for the youth?
8. Which aspects of the body have members found to be most successful?
9. What challenges have the youth members experienced with the body?
10. Any recommendations for us as we consider developing a youth advisory body? Lessons learned?

APPENDIX C: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FACILITATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

The Company

Castillo Consulting Partners, LLC, is a community-based consulting firm that is dedicated to empowering diverse leaders to use their voices for change. We have over two decades of experience in strategic planning, design thinking, grassroots community organizing, youth engagement, leadership development, diversity, equity & inclusion, policy advocacy and systems change.

The Position

Castillo Consulting Partners is working in partnership with the Commission for Children & Families to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of the creation and implementation of a Youth Advisory Body (YAB) in Los Angeles County. We are hiring up to 6 people for temporary, part-time positions, who will engage youth and other stakeholders across LA County in focus groups, visioning sessions, and convenings to gather thoughts and feedback about the YAB.

The Location

The youth engagement events and activities will take place throughout Los Angeles County.

Compensation

Youth Engagement Facilitators will be compensated \$20 per hour for their work.

Why You Should Apply

The Youth Engagement Facilitator position gives young people a unique opportunity to be involved in making history. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is considering the possibility of creating a first of its kind Youth Advisory Body, and facilitators will play a key role in determining the feasibility of a YAB, and make recommendations to the County. Facilitators will be on a dynamic and diverse team of bright change agents, will receive training in youth engagement and facilitation, and will play a critical role in ensuring that the voices of young people across LA County are included in this historic process.

Responsibilities

Youth Engagement Facilitators will be responsible for facilitating discussions and activities with large and small groups of people in various settings. Primary responsibilities will include: youth outreach, engaging participants in interactive discussions and activities, collecting data through skilled note taking, synthesizing findings and presenting insights.

Desired Qualifications

We are looking to hire individuals who are passionate about youth outreach, engagement and empowering youth to lift their voices. Strong applicants are individuals who have experience with advocacy and/or activism, are strong communicators, open to learning new skills and pushing themselves outside of their comfort zones. Must be reliable and available to attend events on nights and weekends. Involvement in foster care and/or juvenile justice/probation are preferred, but not required.

Job Type: Temporary; Part-time (*benefits not included*)
Timeframe: July 2019 - September 2019
Pay Rate: \$20/hour
Application Deadline: Applications must be received by 5pm on Friday, July 12th
How to Apply: Email resume, cover letter and any references to CastilloConsultingPartners@gmail.com
Contact Information: If you have questions contact us at CastilloConsultingPartners@gmail.com

APPENDIX D: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SCAN

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SCAN			
Department/Agency:			
Name and Title	Telephone	Email	
Department/Agency Lead:	Number:	Email:	
Does your department/agency engage current and former foster and probation youth in the decision-making process regarding services, policies, and protocols that impact them?			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, please describe these efforts.			
Engagement Activity	Description (ex: scope, frequency, status of participants, etc.)	Contact Person (name and email address)	

What barriers to successful youth engagement has your department/agency encountered?

What best practices does your department/agency employ to successfully engage youth?

Please return the completed form to Tamara Hunter at huntet@dcfs.lacounty.gov and ccfcommission@lacbos.org
Commission for Children and Families

APPENDIX E: LIST OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

1. Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC)
2. Architects
3. Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network (AIYN)
4. Brotherhood Crusade
5. Brothers, Sons, Selves (BSS) Coalition
6. California Youth Connection (CYC)
7. Los Angeles LGBT Center
8. Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI)
9. Youth Justice Coalition (YJC)
10. Penny Lane Centers