

**America's Youth Councils Network
December 14, 2009, Call Notes**

Forum staff: Elizabeth Gaines, Thad Ferber, Danielle Evennou

Youth Councils:

- Phil Martin, John Verghese, DCYAC
- Patty McMahon, Boston Mayor's Youth Council (MA)
- Sherri Breaux, LA Legislative Youth Advisory Council
- Jose Rodrigues, Dahlia Bousaid, Statewide Youth Council (MA)
- Marina Finnegan, MD Youth Advisory Council
- Melissa Burwell, Susana Murillo, Keelin, MN YAC
- Emily S. Ryan, Multnomah Youth Commission
- Elana Graham, Nevada Youth Legislature
- Alex Wirth, Santa Fe Mayor's Youth Advisory Board (NM)
- Robin Stone, Youth Advisory Committee of Cuyahoga County (OH)
- Jacob Nieuwsma, State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council
- Colorado Youth Advisory Council

Additional participants: Jessica Collura, University of Wisconsin, Madison; Erin Scheel, Olympia, Washington

1) **Who's On the Line:** roll call, intros and what your council is up to.

- DC, Phil Martin - Recently had an open house to bring in parents and show them the Youth Council; getting all committees to meet effectively.
- MA, Jose Rodrigues - Annual report to the governor recently completed; meeting scheduled with the governor for Jan. 15.
- MN, Melissa Burwell - Have a proposal to formalize the youth council in legislation, with stronger ties to the legislature and governor; insights wanted.
- Santa Fe, Alex Wirth - Food drive provides 3,500 meals to community, developing a new teen center / working with an architect.
- Multnomah, Emily S. Ryan - Interviewing for a new advisor to the council. Working to promote school-based health centers, awareness week. Other projects, YouthPass bus passes for students.
- Boston, Patty MacMahon - Holiday toy drive and luncheon; working on new ideas for logos; youth designed PSAs for summer job program/planning for a summer job.
- Maryland, Marina Finnegan - In our 2nd year, held meeting on Saturday, made financial literacy mandatory.

2) **Success! 2nd Annual Youth Councils Convening: highlights and points of discussion**

Event Summary:

America's Youth Councils Network, made up of youth councils from across the country, met in Washington, DC on October 25 & 26 to share best practices and gain national attention for youth councils. Participants included youth council members and staff from the **states of Washington, Iowa,**

Minnesota, Massachusetts, Maryland and New Mexico, the counties of Cuyahoga and Arlington, and the cities of Philadelphia, Boston, Nashville and the District of Columbia. In addition to peer to peer networking, the event included a briefing by young people on Capitol Hill, *Engaging Youth in Policymaking Lessons from State and Local Youth Councils*. Following the briefing youth councils met with their Congressional Offices to discuss three key items: Congressional offices should tap into their existing state/local youth councils as a resource of insight on issues that impact young people; the federal government should help provide fiscal support for state and local youth councils; the creation of a body of young people to represent youth voice from around the country at the federal level. Throughout the year, America's Youth Councils Network will stay in touch through conference calls and webinars to continue to update each other on their work. Click [here](#) to access the WAMU 88.5 FM "Power Breakfast" story on the event featuring youth council member Thomas Senecal. If you are interested in learning more about America's Youth Councils contact Danielle Evennou, Policy Associate, the Forum for Youth Investment, at danielle@forumfyi.org.

Feedback & highlights from participants:

Melissa Burwell, Susana Murillo, MN - At the convening we could see from other councils what we could reach for. Got really excited about the toolkit, it's something we could use right away. A lot of learning and taking in, but also a chance to ask our questions and think about possibilities. Opportunities to talk with National Partners like United Way and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Jose Rodrigues, MA - Day 1: It was shocking to see exactly how many youth councils there are and how differently involved they are. Helped us to develop a plan for what we should do next and how we should structure our council in the time to come, learning how different councils go about different aspects. Day 2: Being on the panel at the briefing was a little nerve-wracking, but the audience was very engaged and interested. I enjoyed being on the panel and representing the Network.

3) The Results Are In: hear what youth councils have to say about the future of the Network

"America's Youth Councils Networks" as the official name of the group, feedback?

- It does represent everything, "America" gives more of a home feeling than just the "U.S."

Subgroups - would meet on specific topics, would meet more often than the full group, and report back on full network meetings.

- Suggested groups:
 - Federal Youth Council Development,
 - Funding Youth Councils,
 - Communications,
 - Engaging All Youth, and
 - Online Toolkit Development.
- Dahlia Bousaid, MA - Would there be an opportunity to define the purposes of the subgroups before determining their purpose before outlining the meeting plan?
- Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - We would need to have some clear guidance for the people who break down into the subgroup and carryout the work.
- Patty MacMahon, Boston - Communications could be broken down into 2 groups -> 1) how you get word out about youth councils and 2) to the media; and communications, like social networking, etc. among the youth council itself.

- Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - It could be the task for the group to take on one communications' issue and then the second.
- Patty MacMahon, Boston - Maybe they could have targeted goals, sure it will be a popular group.
- Robin Stone, Cuyahoga - Would really like to focus on the Federal Youth council Development as well as the Toolkit.
- Alex Wirth, Santa Fe - Definitely interested in the federal youth council.
- Patty MacMahon, Boston- federal youth council interested, identify one young person (probably Ashley) to work on communications.
- Melissa Burwell, MN - Interested in funding youth councils group. Looking at how we fund based on whether we sit in a nonprofit or in governor's office.
- Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - My sense of the funding group would first be to get a sense of what the different funding models that are out there for this work, what are potential funding streams to tap into. Wondering if University of Wisconsin has looked into funding for these groups?
- Jessica Collura, Univ. of Wisconsin - The issue of funding has come up, but we have not yet looked into creating a list of resources.
- Signing up for groups: Ashley Ducrepin, Boston to be part of Communications; Dahlia Bousaid, MA, for Engaging Youth Outside the Council; COYAC to be part of the Communications group; Susana Murillo, MN, would like to the Communication group and Engaging All Youth too.
- Emily S .Ryan, Multnomah - can present the subgroup info to our new hire. (Danielle send email with details).
- Elizabeth, The Forum - We definitely want a point person for each group by the end of the call.
- Jose Rodrigues, MA - Interested in Federal Youth Council Development and can present the range of options to their full council.
- Robin Stone, Cuyahoga - Will be the lead on the Federal Youth Council Development subgroup.
- Susana Murillo, MN - Will be the lead on the Communications subgroup.
- Dahlia Bousaid, MA - Will be the lead of the Engaging All Youth subgroup and will identify a young person to serve this role as well.
- Melissa Burwell, MN - Funding subgroup(?).
- Need to identify lead on the Toolkit subgroup.

"Skype Pals" - checking in on how other Youth Councils do their meeting. Youth councils pair up, Skype in folks to see how places run their meetings. Testing ground. Anyone interested?

- John Verghese, DCYAC - We actually talked about this at our full council meeting, full council took a vote and would love to participate in that.
- Robin Stone, Cuyahoga County - Would definitely be interested in this.
- DC and Cuyahoga County will pilot this idea. Danielle to contact both following the call.
- Sherry Breaux, Louisiana - LYAC meetings are streamed on the Internet, so if member's can't attend can watch and text or email in comments. We are using technology to reach out around the state, meetings are also archived. Would like to look at Skype too.

Youth Councils will regularly report back to their individual councils about their involvement in the Network and maintain connections to the Network throughout council turnover.

- Robin Stone, Cuyahoga - We're already doing that, and want to follow through to get everyone on board in the coming year.

- Melissa Burwell, MN - Susana did a great job updating the youth council on the convening, we're going to continue to integrate into what we're doing, part of our January retreat is how we might support a federal youth council.

4) **Youth Voice on the Federal Level:** how do we build support

Danielle Evennou, The Forum - On October 26th America's Youth Councils Network hosted a briefing on Capitol Hill with over 80 attendees including congressional staff, executive policymakers at the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as leaders from national youth organizations. The event set the stage to test the waters on creating a federal youth council. The feedback was very positive. There was no clear opposition and many folks on the hill were receptive. Individual youth councils met with their Members of Congress on the issue.

Thad Ferber, The Forum - There is a clear sense that a "win" on this is possible. What's needed is a strong, dedicated coalition of folks to push it through. The question is whether there is a group or groups passionate enough to push it through? We want to determine what the interested level of America's Youth councils Network is to take this on, with the Forum serving as a supporting role. Another possibility is that another youth voice organizations, such as Rock the Vote. There's a possibility that there's no group to push it at this time that we'd wait for a group to emerge.

Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - Another possibility is that America's Youth Councils Network could connect with other groups like Rock the Vote and Mobilize.org, etc. to push the legislation together.

Patty MacMahon, Boston - Question: Some national groups look at college and older, we would have to decided on the target age. Most folks involved [in youth councils] seem to be high school and early college.

Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - Have noticed a DC presence of "older" young people; 25-year-olds.

Robin Stone, Cuyahoga - Is this something that the Forum is invested in? We would need guidance.

Thad Ferber, The Forum - We are happy to play a supportive role. We have a certain amount of time to spend on the Network, if the Network says that this is what you want to have the time and energy spent on we can then use our expertise and support your interests.

Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - There are 3 elements that the Forum is particularly interested in terms of federal youth council: 1) connects to state and local youth councils and drills down deep into communities, 2) emphasis on authentic youth engagement of a diversity of youth voices, 3) consistent with where we want to go with Ready by 21 in terms of a broad based, comprehensive youth agenda.

Alex Wirth, Santa Fe - Phenomenal idea of getting youth involved, something that 's going to involve a wide range of organizations. I belong to DoSomething and organizations like the National Youth Leadership Council. I think it's something that's achievable and that we should all be working towards.

Robin Stone, Cuyahoga - I agree.

Danielle Evennou, the Forum - Could we have a strong presence of America's Youth Councils Network at a meeting with national youth voice organizations?

Alex Wirth- Organizations, like DoSomething, have connections around the country to tap into to create a whole national movement.

Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - Sounds affirmative.

Thad Ferber, The Forum - Very exciting, we work very closely with those other national organizations and would hate to go it alone. Probably looking at hosting a meeting after the holidays (February). We will convene the national youth voice organizations to gauge their support for a federal youth council.

Let us know (Danielle@forumfyi.org) if you/your council connects to any youth voice organizations that would be interested in pushing for a youth council at the national level. Let us know what national efforts or groups, like Mobilize.org, that you are a part of and pass on any relevant contact information.

5) **New Year's Resolutions:** identifying the Network's priorities for 2010 (e.g. Toolkit, Virtual Meetings, Federal Policy)

Danielle, The Forum - Toolkit update: basic profile template set up so that each youth council can create accounts. There will be 2 accounts per council, 1 adult staff and 1 youth representative. The username template could be firstname.lastname.place. Accounts to be rolled out in early 2010. Long term goal setting and strategic planning came up as of interest on the survey, are there any topics would be a good to take on in 2010?

Elizabeth Gaines, The Forum - To recap: If the Forum was to go off and assist you all in pulling together some subgroups, getting national folks to support the creation of a federal youth council, and getting the toolkit up and running. Would we be missing things?

Robin Stone, Cuyahoga - That would be a huge help.

Patty MacMahon, Boston - I think it would be great if there 's some way for someone to send something or post something on what each place is doing, in terms of reporting back and staying informed.

Danielle Evennou, The Forum - We are capable putting this in our current system.

The next call will be late January!