

Governments Engaging Youth

ILG seeks to raise local leaders' awareness of the importance of youth civic engagement as well as to identify and spotlight municipal efforts in California. We aim to offer technical assistance to support the growing interest and ability of municipal governments to authentically engage the next generation of active citizens and future public service workers.

The Need for Civics and Strong School-Municipal Partnerships

Instilling the importance of shared civic values and fostering youth development of civic skills is not only fundamental to the vitality of our democratic processes, but it also serves to prepare youth to succeed in college and careers by cultivating 21st century skills in critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration abilities.

However there is much progress to be made. As indicated in the California Task Force On K-12 Civic Learning Report, *Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning In California*, less than 50 percent of high school seniors in California believe that engagement with state and local government issues is their responsibility. The report also notes that less than half of eligible voters in California, aged 18 – 24, are registered to vote and less than 8 percent voted in the 2012 primary elections.

Partnerships between local agencies and schools are vital to ensure that youth are provided with skills and experiences they need to become informed and activated to participate in civic life including engaging with policy-makers and helping solve community problems. Exposing youth to municipal governments early will prepare a more informed and engaged citizenry and entice a more diverse group of young people to consider careers in public service.



The culminating event for Elk Grove Summer at City Hall was a mock council meeting. During the meeting, youth served as staff members and carried out duties and roles of the city manager, city clerk and city attorney or other professionals that they shadowed in their experience.

PARTNERS & MORE

- Sacramento County Office of Education
- Linked Learning Alliance
- Council for a Strong America
- *Endorsed by:*
 - *City Managers Department of the League of California Cities*
 - *California Chapter of the International City/County Managers Association (Cal-ICMA)*

OBJECTIVE

Communities and schools collaborate to prepare students for civic life and college/career readiness.

STRATEGY

Create strong partnerships between school districts and local government entities to offer students opportunities to gain 21st century work skills; build interest in public service careers; provide tools to become civically aware and engaged; and bring authentic youth voices to local government issues.

FUNDING PROVIDED BY

- **California Workforce Investment Board**
- **Stuart Foundation**

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Examples of Governments Engaging Youth:

Sacramento Summer at City Hall

Created in 2010, Sacramento Summer at City Hall (SACH) currently offers 80 high school students a six week summer program at city hall to learn about local government, careers in local government and how to advocate for community change. Students attend classes in the mornings at city hall and have internship placements in the afternoons. The classes include guest speakers from the city on what local government does and how the city operates, attendance at a city council meeting, field trips to city facilities, a day on voter registration and a simulated election, financial literacy and job readiness skill development. Students also present advocacy projects they develop over the summer to a panel of city council members and community leaders. The project is funded by a partnership among the City of Sacramento, Way Up Sacramento and Sacramento City Unified School District. During the school year a one day site visit to city hall hosts 60 11th graders to learn about local government and present advocacy projects developed during school to a panel of city council members. For more information, see: www.cityofsacramento.org/ParksandRec/Neighborhood-Services/Programs/Summer-at-City-Hall



SACH participants gather outside of Sacramento's City Hall for a tour and training with city staff.

Strides Towards Entering Public Service (STEPS) – West Sacramento

The City of West Sacramento offers a paid student summer internship program to provide students with practical work experience related to their field of study. The program provides the city with the opportunity to invest in its future workforce while students learn and experience public service careers. The eight week internship provides interns with positive examples of public service, hands on experience, and insight into how city government functions as interns have the opportunity to shadow employees. A digital badging system certifies that students have achieved certain skill sets and completed certain experiences. Students who achieve a badge are eligible to apply for school year round internship placements. For more information, see: www.cityofwestsacramento.org/civica/filebank/blobload.asp?BlobID=11807

Elk Grove Summer at City Hall

The City of Elk Grove and Elk Grove Unified School District, offer a two week program that includes classroom learning at city hall, afternoon job shadows and a student-run mock city council meeting.



Students interact with staff through work-based learning opportunities including job shadows such as a police ride-along. Graduation is an opportunity for students to thank mentors and acknowledge how the experience has opened them to new career possibilities.

Governments Engaging Youth Program Objectives & Benefits

ILG values efforts that schools and municipal agencies offer to provide all students a high quality civic education. Through GEY, ILG seeks to support and complement current efforts by helping municipal agencies and schools engage youth in local government. The objectives and benefits of GEY include:

Students:

- Learn how local governments (city, county, special districts, courts, joint power agencies) operate, their structure, function, roles, current issues and politics;
- Develop interest to become more civically involved in making their community a better place to live, work and play;
- Learn what it means to be an active citizen: voting, volunteering, advocating, leading and fundraising (philanthropy);
- Learn about the election process, election issues and how to vote;
- Advocate for a change in their neighborhoods, learn the steps and skills needed to do advocacy and reflect on how they can use advocacy skills in their daily lives;
- Find volunteer opportunities in the community, potentially complete a service project and reflect on its impact on themselves and their community; and / or
- Explore and experience careers in municipal government and gain work experiences that inform college and career choices.

Local Governments:

- Connect with youth in the community and better understand the community through the lens of youth and strengthen intergenerational relationships;
- Enhance awareness of youth focused concerns and impacts of municipal policies and practices on youth;
- Strengthen supervisory skills of staff managing interns and develop human resource skills in leading the next generation of workers;
- Create pipelines for future workforce that better reflects the diversity of the community;
- Expand the pool of the next generation of civic leaders and activists; and / or
- Build stronger relationships between local governments and schools (and districts).

Schools:

- Have access to work-based learning experiences to complement classroom instruction;
- Have opportunities to augment curriculum/instruction and increase student engagement in learning process; and / or
- Receive increased support for classroom activities.

“We have much to gain by revitalizing civic learning. The chief benefits of civic learning are a vibrant and informed civic life and democracy and a healthy society. High-quality civic learning also helps teach children skills they need for the 21st century workplace, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, initiative and innovation.”

Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning In California: A Blueprint For Action, A Report By The California Task Force On K-12 Civic Learning - August 2014

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Flexible Program Design

The timing, duration and intensity of Governments Engaging Youth (GEY) programs depends on the municipal government's capacity, and what works best for that jurisdiction. GEY can be a one day field trip to the municipal entity, a six week summer program or offered as a school year after school program format.

GEY type programs can also be accomplished independently by cities, courts, special districts or counties. However, a joint effort is preferred as it helps leverage funds and expertise from both entities. The schools and educators bring expertise in teaching students about civics and 21st century skills, they also have access to students for program recruitment; while local agencies bring expertise around the ins and outs of how government operates, access to internships or job shadows, and can advise students on how to address issues impacting local youth. GEY encourages municipal entities, school districts, private and non-profit agencies to partner together so that students experience the collaboration needed among entities to solve community issues and concerns.

I loved meeting all of the guest speakers from the Mayor to the Congressmember and more. They were passionate and motivating. I also enjoyed shadowing the police department, going on a ride along and getting to know a little about how the police system works.

I learned on how the city works, about the local government. I also learned how I can get involved with internships and volunteering. I learned on how to make a resume, interview tips and scholarships.

I encourage students to do it because although it might sound boring having to spend summer hours learning about the government, it really isn't like that. It teaches soft skills very crucial to getting a job or building a career. It gives a sense of the community and how one can be involved. You get to learn about many opportunities and meet the professionals. And have fun doing it all!

– Senior, Sheldon High School

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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