Governments Engaging Youth: Readiness Assessment Guide for Starting or Scaling Up a Youth-Civic Engagement Effort

**Is your organization ready? Assessing your organization’s readiness to create authentic youth-civic engagement and work-based learning experience.**

A strong commitment and openness to changes in organizational workflow are needed to successfully ensure quality youth-civic engagement and work-based learning experiences. It is important to assess your organization’s readiness before taking any major steps to implement or scale up a program .

In the broadest sense, readiness means being prepared. Here, readiness can be defined as:

* Having the right conditions, norms, structures and resources in place to plan and implement the youth-civic engagement and work-based learning experience,
* Having a clear vision, including a set of youth and adult outcomes and program objectives in place
* Having staff and leadership motivation, buy-in and attitudes needed to ensure a successful youth-civic engagement and work-based learning set of experiences.

**The readiness assessment is a diagnostic and planning tool; it is not a measurement tool.** This tool is intended to provide diagnostics information, help you plan for action, and initiate a robust dialogue between relevant stakeholders about how to proceed. It is not a prescription for how to operate a quality program, nor is it a formal evaluation exercise. This readiness assessment is a ‘living’ document. We plan to update it and make revisions based on input from the field.

Using the tool will not guarantee a successful and sustainable program on its own; careful and deliberate implementation is crucial to ensure success. Use of this tool is the beginning of a process and not the end.

You are taking an important first step on the journey to create a vibrant and meaningful youth-civic engagement and work-based learning experience. Done well, your program will provide for your participants the skills and competencies critical to being an informed citizen and prepared for entry level careers in the public sector

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Starting or Scaling Up a Youth-Civic Engagement Effort

| **STARTING OR SCALING UP A YOUTH-CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EFFORT** |
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| **FOCUS AREA** | **BEGINNING/NOT IN PLACE INQUIRING AND EXPLORING****“AGENCY IS STARTING AT THE BEGINNING”** | **EMERGING (IN PLANNING)****“PLANNING TO PLAN”** | **PROFICIENT****(PARTIAL/****MATURING)****“BEGINNING OPERATIONAL”** | **ADVANCED** **(SUSTAINING AND EXCELLING)****“FULLY OPERATIONAL”** |
| **PUBLIC/ POLITICAL/ ORGANIZATIONAL WILL** | No demonstrable public, political, or organizational will.Driven by interest of one staff member | Driven by the interest of a few staff members.High-level leaders in the organization and community are aware of the planning effort but have not formally endorsed it.One political champion drives the work, without formal endorsement by other political leaders. | Champions at the political and organization level exist. Governing board has adopted budget or policy to support the effort. Community partners are engaged as part of the effort.Some limited press about the youth-civic engagement partnership.Resolutions have been passed endorsing the work by one entity but not both. | Similar resolutions stating support for GEY are adopted by both entities. Champions include educational and municipal elected officials, municipal managers and department heads, school superintendents, and key staff. GEY is noted in language, action, and practices; student internship, and work-based learning experiences are a routine part of the organization's culture; multiple community leaders are committed to partnering with the municipal entity. Formal MOUs exist, media and newspaper articles about the effort occur several times a year and the public is engaged in the effort. |
| **TEAM CAPACITY** | No staff identified to work on this effort. Staff time is a volunteer or based on one person’s passion.No or very limited knowledge or skills of action civics, youth development, work-based learning, or municipal-school partnerships, and working with disconnected youth. | A part of a person’s time is allocated to work on civic engagement or work-based learning. No or little support or buy-in from others in the organization.Person has limited knowledge of the key competencies needed – youth development, disconnected youth, civics, municipal-school partnership and work-based learning, but an interest to learn more | Adequate staff time is formally allocated to work on municipal-school partnership and youth-civic engagement and public sector career pathway efforts.There are a team of people in the organization and partnership focused on a common goalStaff person/team has knowledge of key competencies to be achieved by youth as well as familiarity with best practices in youth development, disconnected youth, civics education, work-based learning, and the existing municipal-school partnership. | Staffing is part of a department or division in the organization that is dedicated to youth-civic engagement and public sector career pathways or pipeline.A team of staff/partners are formally assigned to support this work.The team has the knowledge and skills to carry out this work in a quality manner with funding to increase their capacity. |
| **POLICIES & STRATEGIES** | No policies related to this work.Strategic plans do not mention municipal-school partnerships, civic education, working with disconnected youth/equity/youth development, or public sector career pathways. | Draft policies in development.Strategic plans of at least one entity speak to municipal-school partnerships, civic education and engagement, equity or engaging disconnected youth/youth development, and public sector career pathways or pipelines. | Board/council adopted policies that support this work exist, but not adopted by both governing bodies.Agency strategic plans include references and objectives around municipal- school partnerships, civic education and engagement, equity/youth development and disconnected youth, public sector career pathways or pipelines. | Joint resolution that both entities adopt( school board and municipal government),Joint strategies adopted by both municipal entity and school districts around municipal-school partnerships, civic education, and engagement, equity and youth development/ disconnected youth, and public sector career pathways or pipelines. |
| **MUNICIPAL-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP** | Municipal agency and school district staff and/or leaders do not talk to or even know each other.There are sporadic cases where municipal agency and school staff work together. | Joint use agreements or other formalized partnerships exist or are in development.Board chair/mayor or chief executive/ manager and school superintendent meet together a few times a year. Meetings can be informal or formal. | Joint use agreements or other formal MOUs exist.No mutually agreed upon vision statement approved by board or city council or even approved by Supt and CM existsThere are regular meetings to coordinate, that are mostly attended by both partnersThere is joint programming going on, but no comprehensive plan or approach. | Clear vision, agreed upon student and program outcomes, structures in place to coordinate the work, clear and shared roles and responsibilities, joint funding, good communication structures in place, understand each other’s language and organizational culture/processes,and shared decision making, For GEY there are common applications across municipal agencies and schools, joint student selection process, shared unified program policies jointly developed. |
| **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT** | None to very few students currently engaged with their local entities or in their schools. The diversity of students who are engaged is very limited, with few to no disconnected youth engaged; little to no knowledge or ideas about how to get them engaged exists. | Students are sometimes asked for input in the planning process or have some limited voice/choice in the classroom. There are some existing roles for students to volunteer at the municipal agency/school. No students are involved in decision-making roles; students are not engaged in policy level work.The diversity of students who are engaged is still limited and does not reach the broad cross section of youth (ethnicity, income, academic performance, struggling students, English language learners, foster youth, homeless youth, etc.). | Students are asked for input, students have a say in program design/classroom learning, students can volunteer, there are some internships/job shadows for students, students not really engaged as decision-makers or as advocates for change.More diverse cross section of youth engaged, but done more ad hoc based on adult relationships with diverse groups, rather than a systemic effort to engage all types of youth.  | Students are asked for input, students have a say in program design/classroom learning, students can volunteer or design project based learning /service learning projects, there are internships for students, students are engaged as co-decision makers on program elements and in youth commissions or student advisory boards, and youth know how and have opportunity to advocate for changes in programs and in the municipal agency/school district. Diverse cross sections of youth are engaged |
| **EXISTING PROGRAMS** | No formal program existsCivic engagement is not explicitly taught in the schools.A plan for civic engagement programming does not currently exist. | A program plan exists but is not being implemented.The plan does not have standards of practice, an evaluation component or an annual review/ reflection by the staff and partners.Some level of civic engagement or career awareness programming/ teaching exists. | Program(s) exists, has some standards of practice, at least an annual evaluation, clear program objectives, clearly stated student outcomes.The program includes a limited opportunity for internships and volunteering.The program includes some focus on career exploration.Program includes some levels of civic knowledge and engagement activities | A program exists that has clearly articulated standards of practice, clear goals and ongoing evaluations and reflection components that result in program improvements. The agency provides an array of opportunities for student internships and other work-based learning experiences and also civic education and civic engagement activities (volunteering, serving as leaders on boards, student advocacy, and municipal government basics, how to register to vote etc.).Strong career focus throughout program and experiences.The program is evaluated and certified as high quality via a third party. |
| **SUSTAINABILITY/ FUNDING** | No funding, any work done is from volunteers or in-kind department contribution | Minimal funds allocated to this effort- mostly in-kind but by both entities (municipal agency provides facilities, the school district provides teacher or a bus, and one entity may pay more of the costs.) on time grant funds used to fund the program | Municipal agency and school district are clear about program costs, funds/in-kind services are contributed by both entities to cover most of the costs- one entity may bear more of the burden, various funding sources used but not from one time grant sources. | There is a clear combined budget that reflects school district and municipal agency expenditures.Funds/in kind allocated by both sides. No one entity is responsible for the majority of the costs, multiple non-grant based funding sources are used to pay for the program |
| **PROGRAM LANDSCAPE** | Don’t know who is working on youth-civic engagement or work-based learning (WBL) in the community. Little is known but the desire to start emerges. | Initial landscape review complete or in the process. Assessment reveals sporadic programs or opportunities for youth-civic engagement and work-based learning. The assessment looks at the types of youth engaged. No formal relationship exists between municipal-school partners for the purpose of youth engagement in civics or WBL. There is awareness of personnel or community-based organizations pursuing youth-civic engagement and WBL Career pathways may exist at schools, but little to no offsite WBL is occurring. | Schools and municipal agency are working in partnership with each other to initiate or expand opportunities for youth. There are career pathways in place at schools, and various levels of WBL ongoing, including offsite job shadows and internships. Civic education is taught in some classrooms, across grade levels (exposing students to voting, current events, simulations, volunteering and community service, service learning, leadership) and/or in the after-school programs. There may be a youth advisory board or leadership council at the city, county or special district, but it does not have a full range of diverse youth represented and very limited ability to impact agency decisions. | Municipal agencies have prepared and are implementing a youth master plan.Diverse cross-sections of youth serve on well-developed and well-supported advisory boards and councils that impact municipal and school district decisions.Agencies are evaluating and expanding youth programs as resources allow.The schools and agency work in partnership. A formal agreement outlining relationship and shared responsibilities exists.Robust civic education is taught across all grade levels. There is a strong WBL component between school pathways and public sector agencies.  |

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| **About Governments Engaging Youth** |
| The goal of Governments Engaging Youth is to create strong partnerships between school districts and municipal governments 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.For more information, visit: [www.ca-ilg.org/GovernmentsEngagingYouth](http://www.ca-ilg.org/GovernmentsEngagingYouth).  |