



Youth in Governance



Continuous opportunities for young people to make choices have long been recognized as a critical step in the healthy development of youth. Only recently has genuine youth participation in decision-making bodies and processes become acknowledged as important in the building of stronger organizations and communities. Youth involvement in the issues that affect them is also becoming widely accepted as a basic right of young people. This practice of engaging youth in decision-making bodies and processes has become known as "youth in governance."

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"Linking Citizens of Louisiana with Opportunities for Success"

WHAT IS YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE?

Does youth in governance mean involving young people in county government? Yes! Is it including young people on the boards of community agencies? Yes! Is it youth getting involved as decision makers in any committee, organization, or board? Yes, it's all these things, and more!

For many, youth in governance is a difficult term to define and an even harder concept to implement. Youth in governance occurs in a variety of settings- government, businesses, organizations, civic groups, and more- and the role of both youth and adult board members changes for each unique group. However the basic definition remains the same.

DEFINING YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

Youth in governance starts with young people and adults forming partnerships to address needs in the community. Let's first look at a definition for youth adult partnerships, the basic element of youth in governance.

YOUTH-ADULT-PARTNERSHIP

- Are cooperative efforts between youth and adults;
- Usually begin with a mutual need that impacts both youth and adults;
- Benefit both members of the partnership and the community; and,
- Are built on respect, communication, investment (training and development), and meaningful involvement.

DEFINING YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE

Youth in Governance refers to those situations where youth work in partnership with adults to set the overall policy direction of organizations, institutions, and coalitions. Specifically, governance refers to the ability to lead and vote as a full, participating member in a board or governing structure. Young people may work on boards of directors, sanctioned committees, planning bodies, and advisory groups. The youth are voting members and equal stakeholder in all decisions that come before the group, including such issues as budget, staff, and strategic planning.

Youth in governance is also referred to as **YOUTH ON BOARDS** or **YOUTH AS DECISION MAKERS**. This includes a variety of efforts to engage young people in determining outcomes or decision making. Decision making can be related to an issue, a project, a program, or an organization.

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