Establishing
Youth in Government Programs

GENERAL RESOURCES

UW-Extension maintains a website of resources related to youth in government programs. It can be found online at: fyi.uwex.edu/wi4hcitizenship/yig/

DEVELOPING THE PROGRAM

1. APPROACH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

It will be essential for a successful program to have champions in the schools and local government entity (county board, city council, or village board). Extension educators will first want to meet with potential champions to make sure that each entity is interested in pursuing a program.

Resource

- YIG Impact Report.
  This one-page handout on the impacts of youth in government programs can be used to assist in approaching stakeholders.

2. PRESENT IDEA TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITY

The Extension educator and/or a champion from the local government entity or school district will need to make an initial presentation to the local board or council to begin the process of developing a program.

Suggested presentation format:

- Brief intro to what YIG programs are and their proven impacts, using the "YIG Impact Report" document as a handout.
  - o Emphasize that the community can tailor the program to meet its goals, needs, and comfort levels.
  - o Additionally, YIG programs do not generally reimburse youth participants for mileage or receive meeting stipends, so this program does not generally have a fiscal impact.
- Request that the board or council consider making a motion to pursue the development of a potential YIG program.
  - o If this passes, ask for 1-3 volunteers from the government to be part of a working group to help develop a framework for the program, with the

understanding that the working group will come back and present the framework to the government entity.

3. WORKGROUP DISCUSSIONS

The workgroup to develop the initial program framework should consist of program champions from the local government, the school district(s), and UW-Extension. This group can also include youth members, or get youth input into this program development process. Below please find the key decisions that the workgroup will need to consider and agree upon:

Ø Clarification of roles of the different stakeholders.

   Resource
   - Organizational Roles in YIG Programs.
     This sheet lays out some typical roles for organizations when developing a youth in government program and the necessary program partnerships. Note that it is partners really need to consider how to coordinate and promote recruitment and how to provide support for both the youth and the adult mentors in order to have a successful program.

Ø Eligibility requirements. Issues for discussion include:
   o Grade levels. Frequently applicants apply in their freshman, sophomore, or junior year of high school and serve while in their sophomore, junior, or senior year.
   o Geographic eligibility. Does the local government entity want to restrict eligibility to its jurisdictional boundaries, or enable students who attend the corresponding school district to apply? For example, the City of Monroe enables students who are either residents of the City of Monroe OR attending the Monroe School District to participate in its YIG program. This enables students in the school district who live outside of the city limits to participate, as well as homeschool students who live in the city limits.

Ø Terms. How long will the terms be? Will youth be able to re-apply for a second term? If so, will preference be given to new applicants, or to returning students? Will there be any expectations for returning participants? What will the program timeline be?

Ø Structure.
   o Will youth be involved on the main council/board only, only involved at the committee level, or both?
   o Will seats be created on the council or board? If so, how many? If a council wants to create youth seats on the board, the number of seats is frequently slightly over half the number of adult seats. This helps youth to not feel as intimidated.
   o Will youth be expected to participate in committee discussions? If so, how many? Which committees?
   o Will youth attendance count towards quorum?

Ø Voting. Will you have a vote? If so, how will their vote be counted? It is relatively common for youth to have a non-binding advisory vote in which the youth vote prior to adult votes; youth votes are recorded in the minutes and the adult members can take the youth vote into consideration. Adults then vote and the adult vote determines the decision.

Ø Closed sessions. Will youth participate in closed sessions? Some communities allow youth to participate in closed session. In this situation, youth are explained the guidelines for closed session and sign the same confidentiality agreements that adults sign. Other communities leave participation up to the discretion of the adult members on a case by case basis. Finally, some communities do not allow youth to participate in closed session discussions.

Ø Attendance. What level of attendance will be acceptable for the youth? If applicable, will attendance at committee meetings count towards the overall attendance rate?

Ø Conduct concerns. Who is the key contact for people to express concerns about attendance or conduct?

4. HANDBOOK DEVELOPMENT

Use the workgroup discussion to develop a handbook outlining the structure of the program.

Resources

- Sample Handbook – Brodhead YIG Handbook and Resources
  This includes the program structure as well as a number of resources that are helpful for program participants. The Brodhead City Council adopted the program structure outlined in the handbook.
- Sample Handbook – Monroe YIG Handbook 2016.
  This handbook includes both the program structure, as well as a variety of useful resources for YIG participants. The Monroe City Council adopted the program structure portion when developing the program.

5. COUNCIL APPROVAL

The drafted handbook will need to go back to the local government entity for council or board approval. The workgroup may want to ask the council/board to consider adopting a resolution that develops the program as per the drafted handbook. If so, examples can be found below.

Resources

- Monroe YIG Resolution
- Waupaca YIG Resolution

Managing
Youth in Government Programs

SAMPLE CALENDAR

Month	Tasks
January	*Youth check-in with mentor.*
February	Nomination period open. *Youth check-in with mentor.*
March	Application period open. Invite nominees to apply. *Youth check-in with mentor.*
April	Interviews. *Youth check-in with mentor.*
May	Celebrate end of term and "graduation" from program. Council approves the youth participants for next year.
June-July	Summer break. Prepare for orientation sessions
August	Orientations
September	Swearing In Ceremony
October	*Youth check-in with mentor.*
November	*Youth check-in with mentor and with UW-Extension staff.*
December	*Youth check-in with mentor.*

YOUTH SELECTION

1. ## NOMINATION PROCESS

   Some communities have found it to be beneficial to have adults nominate youth to be invited to apply for the program. Being nominated by an adult can help increase youth confidence in participating in the program. This nomination process also elevates the prestige of the program and helps increase interest in youth.

   ### Resources

   - Monroe Youth in Government Nominations Open PRESS RELEASE
   - 2015 Monroe YIG Nomination Form

2. ## APPLICATION PROCESS

   Once nominations are submitted, invitations to apply to the program are sent to the student's home address. These invitation packets included:

   - A letter inviting the youth to apply to the program
   - An application form
   - A pre-addressed stamped envelope for application submission
   - Business cards of program contacts

   This brings the invitation to apply to the attention of the student's parents or guardian and helps to encourage the youth to apply for the program.

   It can be helpful to put the orientation dates on the application itself.

   Programs that involve participation on committees may want to include a listing of the committees that students may join. The application can then ask the students to rank the committees in order of interest. This can help in determining committee assignments. If this approach is taken, it may be helpful to include committee descriptions and their meeting schedule along with the application materials.

   ### Resources

   - Monroe YIG Application Form 2016-2017
   - Invitation to Apply Letter

3. ## INTERVIEW PROCESS

   ### Invitations to Interview & Scheduling

   Green County UW-Extension sends invitations to interview on behalf of the City of Monroe Youth in Government program. These letters are sent via email and contain information on interview expectations, as well as a Doodle link so that invitees can self-schedule their interview. This Doodle helps confirm that invitees have received the invitation to interview. It is set up so

invitees can only choose one interview time and so no one invitee can see the names of the other participants.

Resource:

- Invitation to Interview Email Language
- Preparing for Your YIG Interview
- Reminder of Interview Email

Interview Format & Decision-Making

Different communities conduct the interviews in different ways.

Setting Up An Interview Panel

Different communities use different structures for their interview panels. Racine County's interview panel consists entirely of County Board Supervisors. The City of Monroe's panel consists of a representative from the City, a representative from the school district, and a representative from UW Extension. Another UW Extension educator serves as a "greeter" to welcome youth as they wait for their interview.

Resources

- 2016-2017 Monroe YIG Interview Rating Form
- 2015 Monroe YIG Interview Schedule
- Monroe YIG Interview Script

If the youth will also be serving on committees, it can be helpful to have a calendar of the committee meeting schedule available.

Notifying Participants

It will be necessary to notify participants of the interview results.

The comments from interviewers can be shared with youth as an opportunity to help them hone their interview skills.

Resources

- Congratulations Letter

ORIENTATIONS

Orientation sessions are key to establishing a successful program year. Different programs handle this differently. Different structures include:

- A youth-only orientation followed by a joint youth/adult orientation
- Bringing together youth from different youth in government programs for a general orientation, followed by youth/adult orientations in the respective community.

Sample agendas are available below:
- Joint Orientation Agenda with Brodhead and Monroe
- Brodhead Orientation Agenda
- Monroe Orientation Agenda

SWEARING IN CEREMONY

The swearing in ceremony is a great opportunity to celebrate the program. Here are some ideas to help make the ceremony special:

- Encourage youth to invite their friends and family.
- Take lots of pictures!
- Consider coordinating with the local government entity to have a little reception/meet and greet following the local government meeting, perhaps with snacks.
- Invite the state and federal offices to attend and ask them to present congratulatory letters or certificates to the participating youth.

Be sure to follow up with a press release.

Resources

- Language Inviting Political Offices to Swearing In Ceremonies
- Monroe Youth Sworn in to Serve on City Committees

PROGRAM YEAR

Encourage the mentors to meet with the youth on a regular basis. These check-ins provide an opportunity to:

- Review issues being discussed in meetings and answer any questions
- Build the mentor/mentee relationship

The UW-EX educators may also want to schedule some check-ins over the course of the year.

Additionally, if UW-Extension has a locally-based adult leadership program, consider looking at ways to leverage that program to engage the youth. For example, some leadership programs include a trip to the state capitol – perhaps it is possible for the youth to join the group for that trip.

"GRADUATION" CEREMONY

Similar to the swearing in ceremony, a program "graduation" ceremony at the end of the program year is also an opportunity to celebrate the program. This can be structured in a similar way as the swearing in ceremony. This could also be a good opportunity for the youth in government committee to propose the youth participants for next year and for the government entity to vote on participants.

It can be beneficial to invite the next year's participants to attend the meeting and encourage them to invite their friends and family. This allows the next year's participants to see a local government meeting and also encourages engagement with their friends and family.