



Nayad Abrahamian
Youth Empowerment Fund Program Manager
(415) 554-3509, nayad@dcyf.org

www.yefsf.org

THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FUND

In November 2000, San Francisco voters approved Proposition D, the Children's Amendment, which reauthorized the Children's Fund through June 2015. As a part of the amendment, the Department of Children, Youth and their Families (DCYF) is required to use a minimum of three percent of the Children's Fund for youth-initiated projects, effectively establishing what is now known as the Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF). Since its inception, YEF has supported youth-led projects and programs to enable young people to define their own services and address issues that their communities face.

The Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF) supports the role and leadership of young people by providing them with resources to define their own programming, practice leadership, and to bring sustainable community change. In order to meet these goals the YEF works with DCYF to fund community-based organizations in addition to administering its own mini-grants programs, facilitating the Youth Warrior Awards and Fellowship program, sponsoring citywide events such as Youth Advocacy Day, and convening a youth advisory board for the YEF and a youth advisory council for DCYF.

By providing and funding youth empowerment programs in San Francisco that give youth authentic power, YEF challenges traditional youth development agencies and programs that see youth purely as receivers of services with limited voice and power. The core beliefs guiding YEF are the following:

1. Youth should be making decisions that affect their own lives.
2. Youth possess the knowledge and ability to be leaders in their communities.
3. Youth should have access to resources to define their own programs and opportunities.

THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FUND PROGRAMS

Youth Leadership & Engagement

Youth Empowerment Fund Advisory Board

The Youth Empowerment Fund Advisory Board (YEFAB) is made up of 8-12 youth from throughout San Francisco and provides leadership and oversight to the Youth Empowerment Fund. YEFABers develop their leadership skills and have the opportunity to learn about and engage in philanthropy by providing mini-grants to youth-led projects. YEFAB meets every Wednesday and Friday at DCYF.

Youth Warrior Award and Fellowship

The annual Youth Warrior Award and Fellowship is bestowed on 12-16 young leaders who have made a commitment to using their knowledge, skills, and talents to bettering themselves as well as the community around them. Nominated by community-based organizations, Youth Warriors take part in a ten-month leadership fellowship focused on bringing youth voice to government. Youth Warriors meet every other Tuesday at DCYF.

DCYF Youth Advisory Council

As a part of the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (DCYF), the YEF engages youth in decision-making within the entire department through the Youth Advisory Council (YAC). The YAC is comprised of youth representatives from formal youth leadership bodies throughout the city to create space to share and support

each other's projects and identify points of collaboration. YAC meets every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month at DCYF.

Initiatives & Projects

Youth Advocacy Day

While grant-making is a large part of our work, YEF's Youth Advocacy Day (YAD) highlights and supports the leadership of San Francisco's amazing youth. Held each spring, Youth Advocacy Day is a historic day of civic engagement where approximately 150 high school students from all over San Francisco meet with elected and city officials to discuss the issues they care about. Youth Advocacy Day has been scheduled for March 19, 2014. YAD youth leaders are also taken to Sacramento to learn about the State Capitol and meet with state representatives from San Francisco.

Trainings for Adult Allies

Traditional youth programs have often struggled to find meaningful ways for youth to lead programs. This series of trainings will help adult allies learn how to better engage youth, and provide instructions on supporting young people to develop their own voices, their own solutions to community issues, and their own programming. YEF provides a six month training cohort that leads participants through an in-depth course on youth leadership and engagement including support in developing or strengthening a youth-led initiative. YEF also provides a series of individual trainings focused on providing capacity building and support for agencies leading youth-led organizing projects.

YouthVote (Currently in 6mo. evaluation. Relaunch is planned for Spring 2014)

YouthVote is a civic engagement initiative that strives to make elections and governance relevant and accountable to young people. The program is made up of three components: The Student Survey, Student Leadership Elections and the Mock Election. Participants simultaneously learn about the elections and civic issues while directly shaping youth perspective on current policy issues.

Mini-Grants

YEF Mini-Grants total \$100,000 available

YEF Mini-Grants support small-scale projects initiated and led by youth. YEF offers grants up to \$10,000 to fund projects that support youth leadership and youth's ideas for how to address important community needs. There are two grant cycles each year: Summer-Fall and Winter-Spring. YEFAB is responsible for decision-making, administering, and evaluating the mini-grants program.

Gatherings For Change Mini-Grants total \$30,000 available

The Gatherings for Change Youth Summits Mini-Grant was created to foster coalition and community building among youth within San Francisco's highest need neighborhoods. By bringing together youth from various backgrounds and encouraging collaboration between youth organizations, youth can work together to be agents of change for issues facing the communities they live in. The YAC leads the decision-making for the Gatherings for Change Mini-Grants.

YEF Poster Contest and Mini-Grants total \$10,000 available

YEF is committed to uplifting the voice, leadership and vision of young people in San Francisco. We believe that young people have a fresh perspective on issues and have the creativity to guide us to a better future. We also believe that visual art via posters is a medium that is both pleasing to the eye and stimulating to the mind. YEF's Poster Contest invites young people to design a 16 in x 11 in poster that conveys a specific message of empowerment. First, second, and third place winners in two age groups (12-14 year olds & 15-17) are awarded scholarship stipends and are given the opportunity to nominate a local non-profit for a matching mini-grant. First prize winners receive an award of \$1,000, second place receives \$750, and third place is \$500. The Youth Warriors lead the decision-making for the Poster Contest and Mini-Grants.