



Kenosha County Youth In Governance Program Proposal

BACKGROUND

Youth leadership development is critical in building civic capacity and long-term community sustainability in Kenosha County. Programs that teach useful skills and build the self-confidence of young people ensure capable, effective leaders for the next generation.

In addition, recent national trends including an increase in youth civic service and new emphasis on civic education in schools indicate a growing need for leadership training to ensure young people are prepared to participate in political and civic life.

Data from a local Search Institute survey in 2006 documented that only 23% of youth perceive that their communities value youth and only 27% believe that youth are given useful roles in the community. These results were among the lowest of all the assets measured in the survey and were lower than similar assets measured at the national level.

Kenosha County and Kenosha County government value the youth of our community. In response to the lack of leadership opportunities for Kenosha County youth as reported in the 2006 Search Institute survey, the Kenosha County Extension Education Committee propose that the Kenosha County Board of Supervisors develop a Youth In Governance program.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Youth In Governance program is to create a model of youth empowerment within Kenosha County, through direct participation in local government, and community service. The overall goal is to bring the youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, independent, and motivated youth leaders.

Youth participating in Youth In Governance will be selected to sit on each of nine the Kenosha County Board Committees:

- Administration
- Building & Grounds
- Extension Education & Conservation
- Finance
- Highway & Parks
- Human Services
- Judiciary & Law
- Land Use
- Legislative

LENGTH:

The YIG initial launch will run from September 2007 through the April 2008 election. Youth would participate in the committee meetings on a regular basis. After the initial phase, the program will run from April 1 through the following April election.

TERM:

Youth members will serve a one-year term (April – March each year). There are no term limits, but returning members must follow the full application process in order to re-apply. *(Except for the initial phase which is 6 months)*

MEMBERS:

The proposed Youth In Governance program will consist of a maximum of 18 youth members. No more than two youth members will serve on a county board committee. The requirements to be on the Youth In Governance are:

- Must be a high school student between the ages of 16-18
- Must have a GPA of 2.5 or greater
- Must be a Kenosha County resident
- Must be able to attend the monthly meetings
- Must be able to attend additional committee meetings that are combined with other committees

Youth members will not be paid a stipend or mileage for attending meetings. Additionally, the Youth In Governance program will have two adult members, one from the County Board and one from Extension Education & Conservation Committee.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Prospective youth members will be required to fill out a short application. The application consists of basic contact information, school, GPA, and short answer questions about their intended objectives for the Youth In Governance program and how the program will increase their civic awareness and leadership skills. The application will include a written recommendation from a school staff member.

A committee convened by the Kenosha County UW-Extension office will do selection of youth members which may include an interview. This selection committee will consist of 1-2 county board members, 1-2 high school seniors, and UW-Extension staff. The Extension Education Committee will recommend youth members to the Youth In Governance program for appointment by the County Board Chairman to the selected county board committee.

FORMALITY:

County Board committee meetings are held in a professional, formal manner, based on Robert's Rules of Order. Each youth member will have a non-binding advisory vote on the committee. The youth members will be included in all open session discussions and votes at the committee level; however, they will not be provided an opportunity for participation in the debate on the County Board floor.

TIMELINE:

1. Applications will be sent to all Kenosha County high schools in winter. High School counselors will be encouraged to recruit students. Students may complete applications in early spring.
2. Youth will be encouraged to begin attending county board committee meetings to understand procedures and County Board meetings to understand processes.
3. Training will be held for all county board committee members and youth members (*see Training*). Continuous mentoring throughout the year is essential.

MENTOR ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES

One member from each county board committee will be asked to serve as a mentor to the Youth In Governance youth committee member.

Term: April – March each year

Role: The mentor's role is to offer support and guidance to Youth In Governance youth member throughout their tenure on the committee.

Responsibilities:

- Provide orientation of the history, structure, and purpose of the committee
- Provide equal access to materials & resources needed for equal participation as a committee member
- Provide appropriate guidance for a successful experience
- Act as the point of contact for the YIG youth member

YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Recruitment:** High school staff will encourage qualified students to apply.
- **Youth Selection:** Kenosha County UW-Extension will convene a selection committee. The Kenosha County Extension Education Committee will recommend youth members to the Youth In Governance program.
- **Appointment:** Kenosha County Board Chairman will appoint youth members and swear them in during a county board meeting.
- **Training:** Kenosha County UW-Extension will coordinate the training for youth members. Kenosha County Board of Supervisors will assist with training of adult mentors on each committee.
- **Mentor Recruitment:** The Kenosha County Extension Education Committee will coordinate mentor recruitment.
- **Recognition:** The Kenosha County Extension Education Committee will coordinate a recognition event each April during a county board meeting.

TRAINING:

Training will be held with both YIG members, YIG mentors and county board members on all county board committees.

Youth In Governance members:

- Length of Time: 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Training Conducted by UW-Extension staff
- Possible Topics to be Covered:
 - ♦ Position Description Overview
 - ♦ What is the County Board?
 - ♦ What does this committee do?
 - ♦ Who are the members of the committee?
 - ♦ How meetings are conducted
 - ♦ Voting and how it works
 - ♦ Roles and Expectations of Youth Committee Members
 - ♦ Resources and help
 - ♦ Questions?
 - ♦ Other Topics?

YIG members will meet quarterly with each other to share experiences and resources.

County Board Committee Members serving as YIG Mentors

- Length of Time: 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Training Conducted by UW-Extension staff
- Possible Topics to be Covered:
 - ♦ Position Description Overview
 - ♦ Encouraging Youth Participation
 - ♦ Voting and how it works
 - ♦ Roles and Expectations of Mentors
 - ♦ Resources and help
 - ♦ Questions
 - ♦ Other Topics?

County Board Committees:

This training will be part of the regular committee agenda and last between 20 – 30 minutes. (The majority of youth and adult members must have individualized trainings prior to a full committee training)

- Length of Time: 20-30 minutes
- Training Conducted by UW-Extension staff
- Possible Topics to be Covered:
 - ♦ Getting to know committee members
 - ♦ Position Overview
 - ♦ Encouraging Youth Participation
 - ♦ Resources and Questions
 - ♦ Other Topics

RECOGNITION:

Each April Youth In Governance members will be recognized for their contributions. (*National Volunteer Week is observed in April*).

The Kenosha County Extension Education Committee will recognize both youth and mentors by hosting a reception prior to a county board meeting and provide them with a certificate of appreciation and a letter of achievement from the County Board Chairman at a county board meeting.

Youth In Governance Planning Committee Members:

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Dan Hill, UW-Extension Local Government Center

Matt Calvert, UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development