

# California Youth Advocacy Network Regional Youth Engagement Workshops

## Summary Report June 2016

### **INTRODUCTION AND WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

In January and February 2016, the California Youth Advocacy Network (CYAN) hosted four Regional Youth Engagement Workshops. The purpose of the workshops was to provide resources, tools and networking opportunities to local tobacco control program staff and partners to strengthen youth engagement in tobacco-free advocacy initiatives. The workshops were held in Sacramento, Milpitas, Fresno, and Los Angeles.

A total of 72 people from various Local Lead Agencies (LLAs), school-based programs (e.g. Tobacco Use Prevention and Education [TUPE]), and community-based organizations attended the workshops. Participants had varying levels of experience in youth development and engaging youth in policy advocacy campaigns.

The workshops included a balance of presentations and discussion. Presentations were given on recruiting, retaining, and engaging youth partners. Discussion and brainstorming sessions were facilitated on how to successfully recruit youth, strategies for retaining youth, and overcoming barriers to effectively engaging youth partners in tobacco control.

Throughout the workshops, participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences in working with youth, learn new ways to enhance youth engagement and advocacy activities, and create action plans to strengthen their partnerships with youth advocates.



## WORKSHOPS SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

The findings presented in this report include outcomes from participants' discussions during small and large group sessions. Common themes emerged from the in-depth conversations that took place at all four workshops.

### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

All participants recognized that youth engagement is an integral part of tobacco control success. In addition to wanting strong youth-adult partnerships, workshop participants also desire youth to be active champions for change in their communities. Some of the common ideas include:

Adults should “partner with youth” through every stage of a campaign or activity instead of “using” youth when it is convenient.

**Partnership** – Adults should “partner with youth” through every stage of a campaign or activity instead of “using” youth when it is convenient. Youth make valuable partners who have connections to the local communities and youth population. Working together, youth and adults can learn new skills from one another. Adults can better understand youth and what

motivates and matters to them. Youth can gain new insights into tobacco control and how to be an advocate.

**Youth are Targets** –The tobacco and vape industries target young people with their marketing, products, and flavors. Because young people are more “exposed to tobacco”, they should have an integral role in working on solutions to address tobacco in their community, such as policy campaigns.

**Strong Voices** –Youth are insightful and possess a strong voice that has the ability to influence their peers, community members, and local leaders. Decision makers may not hear from youth as frequently as adults. Therefore, they may be more likely to pay attention to them at hearings than they would other community members. Young people’s passion for creating change can be contagious, inspiring others to want to do more.

**Opportunity** – Youth engagement provides opportunities for youth to: acquire leadership skills, serve their communities, become advocates for change, and learn about tobacco control and other public health issues.

## YOUTH RECRUITMENT

Common themes on successful recruitment strategies are as follows:

**Schools and Youth Groups** – It can be very effective to recruit youth from pre-existing groups, such as school-based classes and clubs, (e.g., health, science or leadership groups), faith-based programs, service clubs and youth-based community organizations and centers. Connecting with parents/guardians through parent groups is a great way to get adults involved and recruit their children. Building relationships with administrators, supervisors, teachers, school counselors, and youth coordinators can also be advantageous when trying to engage young people in tobacco control efforts.

**Events** – Youth-centered events such as back-to-school nights, health fairs, college fairs, youth conferences, career days, and other school and community events that attract youth are appropriate venues for recruitment. When attending these events, have a resource table or a space available to share information with youth and answer any questions. It is best to get contact information and follow-up immediately with more information and concrete ways to be involved.

Whether it is the beginning or end of the school year, during lunch periods or after school, weekend or weekday, no time is a bad time to recruit.

**Timing** – Whether it is the beginning or end of the school year, during lunch periods or after school, weekend or weekday, no time is a bad time to recruit.

**Incentives** – Offering incentives can be a good way to attract attention and recruit youth for your program. These incentives may come in the form of food, community service hours, letters of recommendation, and/or gift cards. In addition, youth may be looking for opportunities to gain useful leadership and advocacy experiences to bolster their college applications or resumes.

**Partner with Youth** – Work with engaged youth partners to recruit their peers. This is an effective way to get the word out about your activities. Youth advocates already involved in tobacco control or other public health issues are generally really passionate about the work they are doing and would love to have a friend do it with them...they may just need to know what activities their peers can get involved in.

After discussing recruitment strategies, participants shared challenges they face regarding recruitment and brainstormed solutions to overcome these barriers (See Table 1)

**TABLE 1. RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS ( TABLE 1 )</b>
School personnel are difficult to access and/or are too busy or uninterested	Build relationships with various school personnel (coaches, health teachers, guidance counselors, and principal).
	Partner with TUPE and/or Friday Night Live (FNL) advisors.
	Work with school district leaders to provide supplemental assistance to schools.
	Invite TUPE coordinators, school administrators, and educators to the local tobacco control coalition. By getting involved with the coalition, school partners can see what opportunities exist for the youth they work with.
	Partner with private and/or charter schools.
	Highlight the connection between tobacco control work and class projects.
	Minimize workload of teachers by creating lesson plans or offering other assistance.
	Announce projects and opportunities at school events.
	Provide resources and support to schools so they can see that you are giving something back to them, not just asking for something (e.g., access to youth).
No community partners	Partner and connect with public health agencies, established clubs and groups, volunteer and non-profit organizations, community centers, and faith-based communities.
	Connect with both public health and non-public health agencies and organizations.
	Show support for other groups by attending their meetings and events.
Unclear how your agency can partner with youth	Assign or employ a dedicated person to coordinate the youth project. If funding is limited or does not exist, hire a college intern to coordinate youth activities. Work with faculty from a local college to offer course credit to interns.
	Determine what services you can offer to groups that you would like to partner with.
	Be specific about your request.
	Develop clear roles for youth and adults.

<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS ( TABLE 1 )</b>
Lack of funding	Request and receive local donations of food and prizes for recruitment activities.
	Ask the school to print flyers for distribution.
	If you partner with youth, solicit their assistance in recruiting their peers.
	Partner with existing youth groups. Provide training and opportunities to get involved in leadership (and tobacco control) activities.
Uncertain of the best time for recruitment	Schedule several recruitment days throughout the school year (e.g., hold one event in the fall and one in the middle of the school year.).
	Recruit during school events such as middle school and freshmen orientation, Club Rush and career days, back-to-school nights, and open houses.
	Recruit during lunch and afterschool. Host a lunch on campus and invite students to attend and learn more about the work you are doing.
	Recruit during class sessions. Students in health or political science classes may be interested because tobacco control is both a health and policy issue.
	Recruit regularly and consistently.
Lack of follow-through or participation from recruited youth	Regularly and consistently follow-up with youth using multiple forms of communication (text, email, letter, social media, or in-person meeting).
	If possible, go to the schools to meet and communicate directly with the youth regarding time-sensitive issues.
	Establish an accountability system.
	Once contact information is obtained, follow-up immediately with concrete ways to get involved.

CHALLENGES	SOLUTIONS ( TABLE 1 )
<p>Youth are uninterested in tobacco issues / difficulty making tobacco control appealing to youth</p>	<p>Make tobacco issues relevant by showing a connection between tobacco issues and youth interests and experiences (e.g., point out the impact tobacco has on the environment, pets, etc.).</p>
	<p>Offer attractive opportunities like leadership experience, professional development, community service credit, resume building, and letters of recommendation.</p>
	<p>Provide food during meetings. Make meetings fun and interactive with activities that have a tobacco-focus.</p>
	<p>Facilitate focus groups to gain insight on different youth perspectives in respect to tobacco and on how to best engage youth.</p>
	<p>Have a conversation with youth to learn how tobacco may impact them. Encourage them to share how and where they see tobacco in their communities and weave in how your work may positively affect them.</p>
<p>Difficulty gaining adult and parent buy-in</p>	<p>Educate and inform parents and other adults about your work and how their youth will benefit from getting involved. Attend PTA meetings, network with TUPE coordinators, staff at youth-serving organizations, coaches of sports teams, school advisors, and guidance counselors.</p>
	<p>Communicate with parents and other adults regularly to share the accomplishments and successes of your youth partners and organizations.</p>
	<p>Invite parents and adults to attend and support events, especially those led by youth partners.</p>
	<p>Give parents/guardians an opportunity to get involved in your work in order to see the benefits of what you are doing and the impact their youth are making in the community.</p>

<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS ( TABLE 1 )</b>
Determining the right age for youth recruitment	Base the age of the youth recruited on the level of advocacy and education involved in the project/activity/campaign. Long-term or high-level advocacy or education projects should be assigned to older youth such as high school students.
	Consider youth availability and flexibility: middle school-aged youth may be more available to participate in activities and have more flexible schedules than high school-aged youth.
Recruiting youth who are not typically involved	Encourage active youth to recruit their peers.
	Recruit in “non-traditional” settings like art classes and at youth-focused community organizations that are unaffiliated with health.
	Create a relationship with adult partners from continuation high schools. Offer opportunities for youth to get involved in activities and campaigns that can strengthen their leadership skills.
	Conduct focus groups with youth tobacco users to learn what products youth are using, why they started to use tobacco, and what suggestions they have for preventing their peers from using tobacco.
Marketing or advertising youth opportunities	Create brochures, posters, and flyers and distribute them at schools, events, and other youth venues.
	Advertise during announcement time at school or at school events.
	Use social media as a platform to update youth on opportunities, projects, and events. Associate your content with current social media trends to attract more attention.
	Brand your project or group. If possible, distribute materials with your coalition’s “brand” or logo (e.g., t-shirts).

## YOUTH RETENTION

Common themes on successful retention strategies are as follows:

**Regular Communication** – Meetings and communication (emails, texts, etc.) should occur on a regularly scheduled basis and increase when events are approaching. Use apps or online programs (i.e. Dropbox, Google Hangouts, etc.) to connect and share information with youth. Have explicit expectations and commitments from both the youth and adults. Check for progress on projects regularly and maintain accountability. Be open to answering and asking honest questions that can strengthen the team. Discuss successes and challenges within the group.

**Meetings** – Meetings should be held at a time, location, and setting convenient for youth attendance. Examples of appropriate meeting locations include schools and community centers. Conducting meetings during school hours, lunch time, or after school are convenient times for youth. During the meeting, youth should feel that they have a “safe space” in which they can express their thoughts, ideas, and build relationships. The “meeting structure should be casual with set goals.”

**Positive Reinforcement** – It is important that personal connections are made between youth and adult partners. Adult coordinators should support and validate youth throughout their projects/activities and celebrate their progress and successes. Participation can be reinforced by providing youth opportunities to present at trainings, be media spokespersons, attend adult coalition meetings, speak at city council or board of supervisor meetings, attend conferences, and get other hands-on experiences. Always “promote, highlight, and celebrate successes.”

Meetings should be held at a time, location, and setting convenient for youth attendance.

**Ownership** – While adult coordinators should provide guidance and instruction, youth should develop a sense of ownership over the group or coalition, meetings, and projects. “Delegating responsibilities and agendas,” creating group rules, and facilitating meetings are some ways youth can cultivate a sense of ownership. Moreover, youth should facilitate and present during meetings, plan events, and have leadership roles.

As with recruitment, workshop participants also discussed retention challenges and possible solutions (see Table 2).



**TABLE 2. RETENTION CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS (TABLE 2)</b>
Keeping youth engaged during down times (summer, breaks, etc.)	Before long down times (e.g., summer), create a plan with youth for activities and ways to keep youth engaged.
	Regularly check-in with youth and update them on tobacco issues.
	Create short-term projects.
	Start social media campaign. Youth may have more time to be active on social media. This is an excellent way for youth to utilize a popular tool for advocacy and educating peers.
	Invite youth to attend coalition meetings so that they can become familiar with other tobacco control advocates within their community.
	Invite youth to attend meetings with elected officials to learn more about how to address decision makers and how local government operates.
	Host youth trainings, summits, conferences, and retreats.
Limited funding	Partner with established youth groups.
	Work with youth to host fundraising events and receive donations that can be used to keep youth activities going.
	Offer non-monetary (e.g., letters of recommendations, community service hours, etc.) incentives to keep youth involved.
Transportation	Schedule meetings where youth are at (e.g., having meetings during lunch break or after school).
	Utilize technology for meetings (teleconferences and video conferencing).
	Reimburse youth or adult drivers for gas or mileage if youth have to travel beyond a certain distance.
	Recruit adult partners to transport youth such as teacher, TUPE coordinators, and other adults who are approved to transport youth.

<b>CHALLENGES</b>	<b>SOLUTIONS (TABLE 2)</b>
Conflicting priorities	Create a calendar of youth activities to identify days/times that works best for youth to meet.
	Familiarize yourself with schedules of other activities that youth may be preoccupied with.
	Partner with adult leaders of other youth groups and become familiar with their schedules. Collaborating with these groups or scheduling your activities around theirs will create opportunity for youth to participate in other activities without sacrificing tobacco control commitments.
	If possible, identify a meeting time that is clear of conflicting activities. Maintain a consistent meeting time.
Lack of commitment	Set short and long-term goals with youth partners.
	Frequently revisit goals and discuss progress.
	Expose youth to other youth advocates by attending statewide meetings and/or regional and national conferences.
	Conduct focus groups with youth to determine how they can improve their level of commitment.
	Provide incentives to youth based on their participation. Offer levels of incentives, varying in size or amounts.
	Celebrate successes to re-energize youth partners.
Getting adult buy-in	Invite parents and other adult partners to youth-led events.
	Create newsletters to update parents and other adults on youth progress.
	Educate parents and adults on the relationship between youth and tobacco and why youth involvement is critical.
Roles and incentives for youth at various ages	If you recruited middle school students, have high school students interact with them and guide them. Younger students tend to admire older students.
	For high school students offer awards, certificates, and graduation regalia (stoles, chords, pins, etc.) as incentives for completing projects and consistent involvement.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the four regional workshops, participants identified common successes and challenges in engaging youth. The strengths and weakness in working with youth were common among participants, regardless of location. Despite challenges, workshop participants are dedicated to strengthening their youth engagement efforts within their tobacco control work. Through discussions and activities, those who attended the workshops shared and received insight into various ways to effectively recruit and retain young people as partners in public health. CYAN encourages continued dialogue and collaboration among tobacco control professionals, school leaders, and community partners in order to strengthen and enhance work with youth advocates.

*CYAN encourages continued dialogue and collaboration among tobacco control professionals, school leaders, and community partners in order to strengthen and enhance work with youth advocates.*

CYAN is committed to strategizing new ways to best serve our partners based on the feedback and insight received from the regional workshops. Suggestions and ideas will be used in the development of educational materials, webinars, trainings, and other resources for our partners in an effort to support youth engagement in tobacco control.

## APPENDIX

A. Workshop Agenda

B. Handouts and Worksheets

- a. Assignment 1 – Youth engagement: Self-Assessment
- b. Youth Engagement: Partnerships
- c. Youth Engagement: Recruitment and Retention
- d. Youth Engagement: Action Plan

# Youth Engagement Workshop

## WORKSHOP AGENDA

- 9:00am – 9:30am Welcome and Picture Discussion
- 9:30am – 10:15am Presentation and Discussion: Youth Engagement
- 10:15am – 10:30am Break
- 10:30am – 12:00pm Presentation and Discussion: Recruitment, Retention, and Engagement (Part 1)
- 12:00pm – 12:30pm Lunch
- 12:30pm – 1:30pm Presentation and Discussion: Recruitment, Retention, and Engagement (Part 2)
- 1:30pm - 2:15pm Small Group Activity
- 2:15pm – 2:30pm Self Assessment Activity
- 2:30pm – 2:45pm Action Plan
- 2:45pm – 3:00pm Closing and Evaluations

# Youth Engagement: Self-Assessment

1. What does youth engagement mean to you?

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2. Why do you want to engage with youth?

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3. What do you want to accomplish with your youth partners?

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4. What strengths do you and your agency have to support youth engagement? (check all that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible staff schedules                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Convenient meeting space                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation for youth                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Funding for food, supplies and incentives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Connections to existing youth groups           | <input type="checkbox"/> Connections with schools                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strong agency support                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong support in the community           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment plan                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Training and orientation plan             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retention plan                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Diverse group of youth advocates          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dedicated staff with experience engaging youth |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Action plan to engage youth in tobacco control |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify:                         |  |

5. What obstacles have you and your agency faced when engaging youth in your program?

- Lack of youth interest in tobacco control
- Lack of understanding of youth engagement and advocacy
- Lack of action plan to engage youth in tobacco control
- Difficulty with recruiting youth
- Difficulty with retaining youth
- Not enough activities for youth to engage in
- Time constraints for agency staff
- Time constraints for youth advocates
- Lack of connections in the community
- Transportation issues
- Lack of diversity
- Insufficient funding to support youth engagement
- Other, please specify:

6. List 5 strengths you have for working with youth:

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) \_\_\_\_\_

7. List one way you can improve in working with youth:

# Youth Engagement: Partnerships

Please list 2-4 partners per category you can reach out to, what you can provide them, what you want from them, and considerations when partnering with them:

## **YOUTH-FOCUSED AGENCIES:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_



**SCHOOLS:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

What you can provide them: \_\_\_\_\_

What you want from them: \_\_\_\_\_

Considerations: \_\_\_\_\_

# Youth Engagement: Recruitment and Retention

**PLEASE LIST 5 NEW STRATEGIES FOR EACH CATEGORY:**

**Recruitment:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Retention:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

