

## Project Overview

The Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) is convening a **COVID Youth Response Board (CYRB)** to promote youth leadership and civic engagement. The CYRB will provide selected Sacramento youth/young adults (5-10 members, ages 14 to 25) with opportunities to acquire leadership skills while responding to community mental health, wellness, and social-emotional development needs related to the challenges presented by COVID-19. The CYRB will be responsible for the development of a grant proposal process and the Request for Proposal (RFP). They will review and evaluate grant applications received from community members and organizations to select grant recipients. The CYRB will also provide identified program support and follow-up for the Grantees. This initiative is funded by a donation of \$25,000 from Intel.

## Background

The CYRB addresses and connects several critical areas of concern resulting from the pandemic. The first area of concern is the need to respond and adapt to the impact of COVID-19 on our daily lives which has been, and continues to be, a source of stress and trauma within our communities. Another major concern for educators and parents has been the potential for major gaps in academic progress resulting from extended periods of distance learning. Of equal importance are the missed opportunities for children and youth to develop strong social-emotional skills that are normally provided by group settings and varied personal peer interactions. The ability of students and youth to learn to manage their emotions and relationships is critical in enabling them to emerge from stressful situations and trauma with the strength and resilience to push forward to achieve their goals. Finally, educators and community leaders are continually challenged to identify sustainable opportunities for youth to meaningfully engage in civic leadership as they develop and strengthen their voice and leadership skills.



## Goals

1. To respond positively to the challenges associated with COVID-19 that affect youth, schools, and communities through mini-grants offered, led, and monitored by youth leaders.
2. To provide opportunities for meaningful engagement that encourage and support youth as they
  - demonstrate and build upon a strong personal sense of purpose,
  - extend their voice,
  - demonstrate their ability to respond effectively to unique and challenging situations, and
  - strengthen their civic leadership skills and develop 21st century communication skills.
3. To develop a shared understanding and commitment to promote “positive climate,” “youth civic engagement,” “youth leadership,” and “social and emotional skills” that facilitate the development of and support for innovative strategies to address areas of community need and concern.
4. To showcase youth and adults working in partnership and to share the impact of their work.



## CYRB Summary

The COVID Youth Response Board will empower youth to assess and respond to community needs related to the mental health, wellness, and social-emotional learning challenges stemming from COVID-19 in the Sacramento Region. Youth members of the CYRB will create a mini-grant RFP/RFA process, then review and evaluate grant applications received from community members and organizations through a virtual format. The CYRB will then recommend proposals for funding. In January 2021, they will host a grant award ceremony, and the implementation period for the grants will begin. During the grant implementation period, the CYRB members will provide support to the grantees. The CYRB might provide support by facilitating communication among project stakeholders, serving as technical advisers, conducting “check-ins”, and/or assisting grantees in addressing implementation challenges they encounter. At the close of the grant period, the CYRB will host a showcase to honor and celebrate the grantees and their contributions to the community.

SCOE will collaborate with the **Sacramento Youth Development Network (YDN)** to implement and support the COVID Youth Response Board. The YDN has worked throughout the state since 2003 to empower youth and provide opportunities that engage and empower youth to

- recognize and build upon their personal assets and strengths,
- build relevant leadership skills,
- recognize the value of engaging in meaningful challenging activities, and
- contribute to their communities.

The CYRB will receive staff guidance as they build and extend their skills and enhance their ability to guide youth-developed and youth-led initiatives. Through interaction with and guidance from adults, CYRB members will build their capacity to work with others (adults and youth) to address challenges and concerns in their communities through this project and beyond. Communication between and among the CYRB, the grantees, and staff will occur through virtual or approved in-person settings that provide emotional and physical safety, promote healthy relationships, and facilitate opportunities for youth leadership and decision making.



The importance of social and emotional competence will provide a strong foundation for the activities of the CYRB. The youth leaders participating in the CYRB will understand the importance of promoting and encouraging the development of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making among their peers and throughout the community. Through their leadership and the support they provide to the grantees, the CYRB will model and reinforce these foundational skills.

The CYRB will be positioned to recognize and highlight the critical connections between 21st Century communication skills, effective crisis response capacity, and social-emotional well-being. As they work to identify and support the grantees, the CYRB will also be well-positioned to identify the systemic and policy barriers that limit student access to youth civic leadership opportunities. They will provide insight that will be useful in ensuring that more youth have access to the skills and opportunities that the CYRB has experienced and will build upon as a result of their participation in this project.

## Data Analysis and Next Steps

The graphic below identifies the key milestones of the CYRB process, from identification of Board members to grant application development to youth showcase. These activities will be conducted primarily by youth with adult guidance and support at each stage.

### Key Milestones of CYRB Process



The CYRB will collaborate with appropriate staff to develop surveys for both CYRB members and grantees. These surveys will document participants' experiences throughout the process. The CYRB will also review any evaluative information the grantees gather from participants in their community initiatives. The summary of feedback from youth will inform the development and refinement of new youth-led initiatives in Sacramento County. A summary of the funded projects, impact, and summary of youth surveys will be shared with the Sacramento County Board of Trustees.



## For More Information

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