

DISCUSSION:

In response to the evolving challenges faced by today's youth, Recreation Staff initiated a rebranding of Project B.R.I.D.G.E. in December 2023, with a renewed focus on teen programming. Recognizing that the challenges young people face extend beyond gangs and drugs, the rebranding aimed to broaden the program's scope to serve all teens. This includes addressing a wide range of needs such as mental health, education, family support, and providing a safe, welcoming space.

The YOC serves as the cornerstone of this reimagined program, offering Outreach Services, a teen drop-in afterschool program, the Volunteering club, and a variety of educational classes and events designed to support all aspects of a young person's life. By expanding its focus, the program continues to assist those at risk of gang involvement and substance abuse, while also offering essential support for teens facing mental health challenges, academic difficulties, food insecurity, housing instability, or those simply seeking a safe place to grow and thrive.

These services are made possible through partnerships with non-profits, funded to develop these programs, as well as through the efforts of center staff who create and implement additional programs and classes. The goal is to ensure that every teen has access to the resources they need to build a successful future.

New Mission Statement:

YOC staff participated in three planning meetings from December 2023 – May 2024, to outline the focus and goals of the YOC and its rebranding of the Project B.R.I.D.G.E. program. During these discussions, it was agreed to develop a new mission statement that reflected the broader needs of today's youth, moving beyond the program's original focus on gang violence. The outcome of these meetings was the creation of a new mission statement: "The Johnny Sotelo Youth Opportunity Center is committed to empower teens and young adults by providing support, mentorship and development in life skills. Committed to fostering hope and creating opportunities through equity, unity, and diversity."

#Empower/Mentor/Support

Program Goals:

To ensure the continued success and growth of the YOC and its programs specific to outreach, future goals focus on the following areas:

1. Expand Outreach and Community Engagement

Broaden Community Partnerships: Strengthen existing partnerships and establish new ones with local businesses, non-profits, and educational institutions to enhance the resources available to YOC participants.

Reintroducing the valuable partnership meetings including Riverside Police Department, Riverside Unified School District, Riverside Community College, Access Center, Operation Safe House, Neighborhood College, Public Defenders Office and Probation, etc. began in March 2024 and continues to grow and thrive each month since. The partnership meeting introduces new

partners that emerged during the pandemic, as well as those that have persevered and now seek ways to connect their resources with the teens and their families.

Increase Awareness: Launch targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness about the program in underserved neighborhoods, ensuring that more at-risk youth and their families can access the available services.

The rebranding campaign will focus on teen and young adult services, along with family resources provided through partnering non-profits. Given that many non-profits lack office space, the YOC can serve as a hub for these resources to host classes and meetings.

2. Enhance Program Effectiveness

Data-Driven Decision Making: Implement robust data collection and analysis to track participant outcomes, identify trends, and continuously refine intervention strategies based on evidence. Staff have developed internal performance indicators to better understand participant progress and determine the services needed once they complete the program.

Customized Intervention Plans: Expand the capacity to create more personalized, flexible intervention plans that adapt to the evolving needs of each participant and their family. The “Circle of Success” action plan will be key in tailoring programs to meet the specific needs of everyone.

3. Strengthen Educational and Vocational Support

Career Pathways Programs: Establish new partnerships with local businesses and educational institutions to provide comprehensive vocational training, apprenticeships, and career counseling tailored to the interests and strengths of participants. This effort could include collaboration with the Bourns Family Youth Innovation Center, Grow Riverside, College Corps, etc., sharing resources and partners already in place.

Academic Achievement Support: Enhance academic support services, such as tutoring and college preparation, to ensure participants not only stay in school but excel. Riverside Community College Extended College is a potential partner in creating these opportunities, and there is an interest in expanding John Muir Charter School’s currently leasing arrangement at the Solander Center in Bryant Park to the Eastside.

4. Increase Mental Health and Wellness Resources

Mental Health Services: Expand access to mental health professionals and services, including counseling, trauma-informed care, and substance abuse treatment, to address the underlying issues contributing to at-risk behaviors. These services will be offered through partnering agencies as part of a referral program and will be featured at events like the Young Men’s Conference and Young Girls’ Seminars.

Holistic Wellness Programs: Introduce programs that promote overall wellness, including physical health, nutrition, and mindfulness, to build resilience and healthy lifestyles among participants. These can take the form of monthly classes, family events, or be integrated into special events.

5. Foster Family and Community Involvement

Family Support Programs: Collaborate with non-profits to offer additional resources for families, such as parenting classes, family counseling, and support groups, to strengthen the support network for youth, particularly for young mothers without access to county services.

Community-Based Programs: Increase opportunities for participants and their families to engage in positive community activities, fostering a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for community well-being. This might include partnered job fairs, health and wellness classes, an after-school drop-in program, life skill classes, camps, and other community-focused events.

6. Sustain and Grow Funding

Diversify Funding Sources: Seek additional funding through grants, private donations, and fundraising events to sustain and expand program offerings. This includes applying for grants that help offset the costs of providing these resources through the General Fund.

7. Leverage Technology and Innovation

Digital Literacy Programs: Introduce digital literacy and technology training to equip participants with essential skills for the modern workforce. This effort will build on the resources available at the Bourns Family Youth Innovation Center, extending services throughout the various community centers.

Virtual Support and Outreach: Develop online platforms and tools to provide virtual support, mentorship, and resources, making services more accessible to those who may face barriers to in-person engagement. These services are currently available to participants who lack transportation or cannot afford alternative options.

8. Measure and Share Impact

Program Evaluation and Reporting: Regularly assess program effectiveness and impact, sharing success stories and outcomes with stakeholders to build support and continuously improve practices.

Focusing on these goals will help the YOC and similar initiatives continue to make a meaningful impact on at-risk youth and their families and communities, adapting to changing needs and challenges over time.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The work contributes to **Strategic Priority 1 – Arts, Culture and Recreation**, which aims to provide diverse community experiences and personal enrichment opportunities for people of all ages; and **Strategic Priority 5 – High Performing Government**, which aims to provide world class public service that is efficient, accessible, and responsive to all.

Arts, Culture and Recreation **Goal 1.1** - Strengthen Riverside's portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior and lifelong learning programs and amenities through expanded community partnerships, shared use opportunities and fund development.

Expanding Community Partnerships: The YOC's renewed focus on outreach and collaboration with local businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions, and community partners like Riverside

Police, Riverside Unified School District, and Operation Safe House strengthens its portfolio of teen and young adult services. These partnerships are key to providing diverse, enriching experiences and services such as vocational training, academic support, and family engagement programs.

Shared Use Opportunities: The center is positioned as a hub for community services, offering space for nonprofits to conduct classes and workshops, allowing for expanded use of the facility by community organizations that lack office space. This approach strengthens shared resources and expands the reach of arts, culture, and recreational programs.

This action aligns with each of the Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – By creating a safe, supportive space for teens and expanding programs to address mental health, education, and family support, the YOC builds trust within the community. The center’s role as a partner to families, schools, and other agencies positions it as a reliable resource for at-risk youth and their families.
2. **Equity** – The rebranded YOC offers services to a broader range of teens, not just those involved in gangs, addressing various challenges from food insecurity to mental health. The focus on inclusion, diversity, and creating equitable opportunities for all youth aligns with the city’s commitment to providing services to underserved and disadvantaged communities.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – By seeking partnerships and external funding (such as grants and sponsorships), the YOC enhances its financial sustainability without solely relying on the General Fund. This aligns with responsible fiscal management while expanding the center’s capabilities.
4. **Innovation** – Programs like Digital Literacy and Virtual Mentorship reflect innovative approaches to delivering services in an increasingly digital world. Leveraging technology and online platforms allows the YOC to extend its reach, particularly to those who face barriers to physical attendance.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The YOC’s focus on holistic wellness, mental health, and community engagement ensures long-term sustainability by addressing the root causes of at-risk behaviors. By empowering youth and supporting families, the program promotes community resiliency, contributing to broader efforts in maintaining a strong, healthy community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

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Attachment: Presentation