

# WHAT IS THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FUND?

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In November 2000, San Francisco voters approved Proposition D - The Children's Amendment, which reauthorized the Children's Fund until 2016. The legislation also states that a minimum of 3% of the Children's Fund shall be for youth-initiated projects, and this initiative is called the **Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF)**.

The Youth Empowerment Fund was created to develop the capacity and leadership of young people to define their own programming, practice leadership and bring about sustainable community change. Through this fund, young people are in charge of granting funds to youth-led solutions to community problems and unmet youth needs, creating a clear opportunity to do something different with and for the youth of San Francisco. With youth in the driver's seat of grant-making, evaluating youth programs, and advising city-wide youth-led initiatives, the Youth Empowerment Fund offers young people leadership opportunities to make positive change in San Francisco.

## Youth Leadership of the YEF: The Youth Empowerment Fund Advisory Board

Youth leadership is incorporated at all levels of the Youth Empowerment Fund. The Youth Empowerment Fund Advisory Board (YEFAB) is made up of 13 youth leaders from all over the city, ages 14 - 24. Advisory Board members were chosen through a selective interview process, in which they demonstrated

leadership and commitment to making community change and supporting youth issues. In collaboration with the San Francisco Youth Commission, YEFAB has led the Youth Empowerment Fund through grant-making, conducting evaluations, and organizing events to build power with youth grantees and youth organizations across the city.

From 2005 - 2008, the Youth Empowerment Fund was implemented through three funding strategies:

### Strategy #1: Youth-led Philanthropy (\$430,000 for one grant per year):

Youth-led philanthropy provides youth with the opportunity to practice leadership through grant-making - funding programs and solutions to unmet needs in their community through projects that youth design and lead themselves.

### Strategy #2: Youth-Organizing (\$50,000 per grantee per year):

Through youth organizing, youth have the opportunity to identify issues of social injustice and build their collective capacity to win real improvements, while holding accountable the public institutions and systems that impact their lives and their communities.

### Strategy #3: Youth Entrepreneurship (up to \$35,000 per grantee per year):

Youth entrepreneurship provides the opportunity for youth in the city to increase their economic viability and strength by running their own business ventures.



# YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FUND GRANTEES

The following is a description of the Youth Empowerment Fund Grantees included from 2005 -2008.

**Center for Young Women's Development (Sisters Rising) CYWD's** mission is to empower and inspire young women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the underground street economy to create positive change in their lives and communities.

**Homies Organizing the Mission to Empower Youth [HOMEY] (Kalpulli Project) HOMEY's** mission is to transform the lives of high-risk youth and inspire them to choose a path of education, self-sufficiency and non-violence and strive toward physical, mental and emotional well-being.

**Chinese Progressive Association [CPA] & People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights [PODER] (Common Roots Program) CPA and PODER** work with low-income immigrant Latino and Chinese youth to build their skills and capacity for organizing, engage youth in social and environmental justice campaigns affecting their neighborhoods and ensure their participation in city-wide advocacy efforts so that their communities' voice is heard.

**Samoan Community Development Center (Pacific Islander Leaders of Tomorrow) SCDC's** mission is to improve the quality of life for Samoans and Pacific Islanders through self-help, economic self-sufficiency, community solidarity, and the preservation of Samoan customs and traditions.

**Chinatown Community Development Center (Adopt An Alleyway) CCDC's** mission is to build community and enhance the quality of life of all those they are most concerned about. Currently, they organize monthly programs for seniors in two low-income

housing sites and children that live in SRO housing, as well as the youth-led Chinatown Alleyway Tours.

**California Youth Connection (San Francisco Chapter) CYC** is a statewide non-profit organization with 23 county-based chapters that advocate for increased resources and the rights of youth currently in the foster care system as well as those who are emancipating.

**Communities in Harmony Advocating for Learning and Kids (Youth Funding Youth Ideas) CHALK** is a San Francisco project providing a range of youth services with a specific focus on transformative youth development and employment. Through Youth Funding Youth Ideas, young people conduct city-wide grant-making for youth-led projects with grants up to \$10,000.

**Mission Community Financial Assistance (Youth Credit Union Program) MCFA** empowers youth with financial literacy and financial investment in a youth-run credit union. Youth learn life skills, run the credit union, and develop business plans to reach more youth in the community.

**GIRLS 2000 (Somethin' Fresh and Bread Me Out) GIRLS 2000** empowers youth in the Hunters Point housing developments through entrepreneurship and skill building. Through their two youth-led businesses, youth are helping to bring fresh produce to the Bayview Hunters Point community as well as empowerment through hip hop.

**Shih Yu Lang Central YMCA (Y-Projects)** Youth in San Francisco's Tenderloin area develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills through music. By making and marketing their own music album, youth create positive change and awareness of youth issues in the community.



# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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There are seven YEFAB researchers that meet 2 days a week for 2 hours a day. This project started in October 2007 and ended in May 2008.

In October, we developed a research question that would be broad enough to explain the impact and significance of all three strategies of youth-led projects that we fund: youth philanthropy, youth organizing, and youth entrepreneurship.

Our research topic was:

**“How has the Youth Empowerment Fund’s youth-led projects impacted youth and communities, and in what areas could they use more support?”**

The major questions we wanted to answer were:

- What were the personal benefits participating in a youth-led project had on youth?
- How did youth perceive their impact on the community through their project?

Now that we have this information we hope to inform future funding strategies of the Youth Empowerment Fund and create more awareness around the benefits of youth-led projects.

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

We chose surveys to help us reach youth who were not able to attend focus groups. Surveys also helped us obtain quantitative data.

In addition to surveys, we conducted focus groups to collect personal experiences and stories. Focus groups gave us a sense of the youths’ connectedness to their projects and how inspired they are. Furthermore, we checked to see if our focus group data would match with our survey data.

## OUR SAMPLE

Our main purpose was to focus on the organizations funded by the Youth Empowerment Fund. Core youth participants from each organization were required to fill out surveys; however, those that participated in our focus groups were selected by their respective organizations.

Our distribution of the surveys included every Youth Empowerment Fund Grantee. Participants filled surveys out online.

60 surveys were collected:

- 12 - Youth Philanthropy
- 33 - Youth Organizing
- 12 - Youth Entrepreneurship

4 youth focus groups were conducted:

- 2 focus groups - Youth Organizing
- 1 focus group - Youth Philanthropy
- 1 focus group - Youth Entrepreneurship



## DATA ANALYSIS

We examined our survey results for any specific trends or statistically significant data, as well as information specific to each funding category. From the focus groups, we gathered quotes that supported our findings and numerical data. From there, we formed our recommendations.

Here are some of our thoughts about the data analysis process:

"The process was long but a learning experience..."

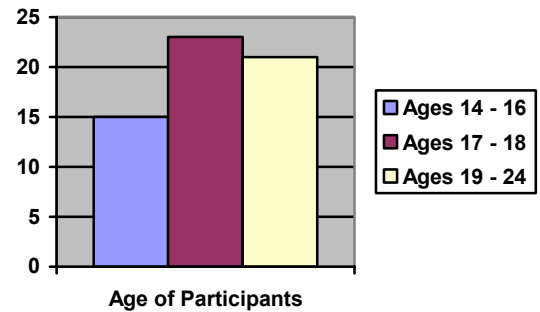
"At first we did not know what were good questions, but after receiving the surveys back we were able to see which questions were effective and which ones matched up with our expectations."

"We had to keep going back over the focus group tapes to make sure we had the exact words. Within the focus groups, most of the youth were well-spoken about their projects. It was interesting to hear what everyone had to say."



## OUR FINDINGS

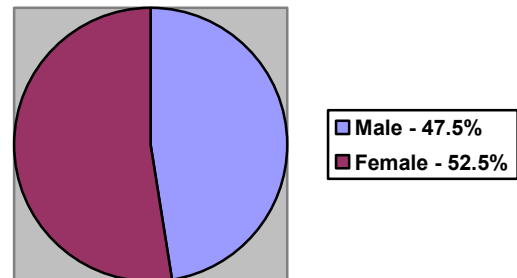
### DEMOGRAPHICS



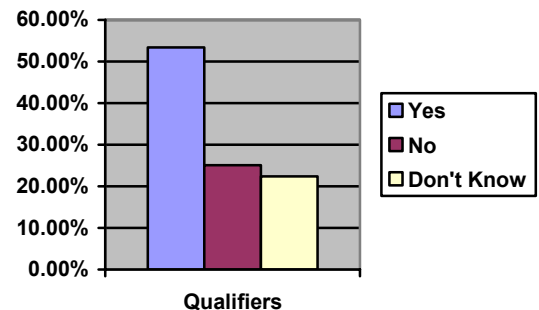
### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Lesbian	3.5%
Gay	0%
Bisexual	1.8%
Queer	1.8%
Questioning	1.8%
Heterosexual	91.2%

### GENDER



### QUALIFY FOR FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH



## OVERALL RESPONSES

### **Finding #1: Youth-led projects are preparing youth for the future**

#### Supporting Data:

- 94% of youth agree or strongly agree that their youth-led project has helped them focus on their future goals
- 86% of youth said they gained skills they can use in their future career because of their youth-led project
- 100% of youth organizers feel that they are better at making life decisions as a result of their youth-led project
- 83 % of youth entrepreneurs said they gained skills that are useful to their future career
- 100% of youth philanthropists said their youth-led project helped them with their future goals

#### Interpretation:

A lot of success in life is based on the decisions one makes and the skills one possesses in order to carry out those decisions. All of the youth surveyed felt that they are gaining both skills for the future and are making better decisions, thus they are becoming more adequately prepared to make positive and healthy choices that are going to impact their lives.

### **Finding #2: Youth are passionate about their youth-led projects**

#### Supporting Data:

- 70% of youth said that they like their youth-led project
- 27% of youth said that they "can't live without" their youth-led project
- 60% of youth felt that they are inspiring others through their youth-led project

- 78% of youth felt that they get to make important decisions in their project all or most of the time
- 90% of youth like that they get to make a difference in their community

#### Interpretation:

When youth feel like they are contributing to something they believe in, making a positive difference and are being involved in important decision making, they gain a sense of pride and enthusiasm for the projects they are involved in. Youth are dedicated, passionate, and engaged!



### **Finding #3: Youth care more about their community because of their youth-led project**

#### Supporting Data:

- 90% of youth respondents said that they care more about what happens in their community because of their youth-led project
- 72% of youth said that they gained a sense of responsibility for their community through their project
- 60% of youth gained a vision of themselves as future community leaders

#### Interpretation:

Youth often live in the communities that they serve and as a result they are directly impacted by the issues affecting their communities. They understand what issues need to be addressed and implement programs and activities to elicit change within their neighborhoods. This in turn shows a dedication and

responsibility to the communities in which they live and serve.

Examples:

- GIRLS 2000 delivers fruit to Bayview Hunters Point, a community which has low access to healthy produce
- Common Roots conducted youth-led toxic tours of San Francisco's Southeast Sector to create awareness on the environmental justice issues facing those communities
- HOMEY is organizing with youth to fight against repressive policies such as the gang injunctions - and is promoting positive youth programming instead
- CHALK performed a city-wide youth needs assessment and funds youth-led projects

**Finding #4: Youth are making a significant and positive change in their community**

Supporting Data:

- 96% of youth strongly agree or agree that their youth-led project has positively impacted a significant percent of people in their community
- 86% of youth are helping other youth become leaders in their communities
- 79% of youth said that because of their youth-led project, people are becoming more aware of youth issues

Interpretation:

GIRLS 2000 has over 40 clients all over the Bayview that receive fresh fruits because of them.

HOMEY youth have done over 20 workshops and educated 250 youth on the gang injunctions.

Shi Yu Lang Central YMCA young music entrepreneurs have performed their music in front of over 1000 people.

450 youth have accounts with Mission Community Financial Assistance's youth credit union.

CHALK's youth philanthropists have funded approximately \$300,000 over the last two years in youth-led projects across the city

Chinatown CDC's Adopt an Alleyway youth surveyed over 2000 students in SFUSD and are advocating for better school food. They found that eating right is an essential ingredient to being able to learn.

## YOUTH ORGANIZERS' RESPONSES



**Finding #1: Youth Organizers are becoming skilled community leaders.**

Supporting Data:

- 91% of youth organizers gained public speaking skills
- 91% of youth organizers gained teamwork skills
- 78% of youth organizers are being more pro-active and are speaking up and out

Interpretation:

Youth organizing puts youth in a positive environment where they have to interact and deal with diverse groups of people. They also, as a result of being organizers, go up against people in power who may or may not support their cause. This in itself takes a certain amount of courage and leadership, not to mention it empowers youth organizers to make their voices heard and stand up for themselves.

**Finding #2: Youth Organizers are becoming more invested in their education**

Supporting Data:

- 63 % of youth organizers report that their youth-led project has made them more serious about their education

Interpretation:

Youth organizers see the inequalities of our system and realize that it is through education that one can make the biggest change in an unjust society. They further understand that education is power and see the value in higher education.

## YOUTH PHILANTHROPISTS' RESPONSES



**Finding #1: Youth philanthropists are fully invested in their communities**

Supporting Data:

- 100% said that they make a positive impact in their community
- 100% said that they like their youth-led project because they get to make a difference in their community
- 100% said that they care more about their community because of their youth-led project

Interpretation:

Youth philanthropists are required to have a basic understanding of the needs that are

facing San Francisco communities. This understanding is essential for young philanthropists because they distribute money out to these communities and they must do so in an effective and responsible manner.

**Finding #2: Youth Philanthropists are learning to be more responsible and "handle their business"**

Supporting Data:

- 100% of youth philanthropists said they increased their time management skills through their youth-led project
- 100% of youth philanthropists said that they are more responsible in their community because of their youth-led project
- 75% of youth philanthropists said they learned to be more top of their work

Interpretation:

In a field that requires making such heavy decisions that affect thousands of people, it is essential that youth philanthropists have a deep understanding of the work they are doing. They must approach their work in a professional manner and with the understanding that the decisions they make have long reaching effects.

## YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS' RESPONSES



**Finding #1: Youth entrepreneurship pushes youth to be courageous and always seek new opportunities.**

Supporting Data:

- 82% of youth entrepreneurs stated that that they are more willing to take on a challenge because of their youth-led project
- 73% of youth entrepreneurs said that they are more open-minded because of their youth-led project.

Interpretation:

In an era where it is becoming increasingly more difficult to be financially and economically sound, creating a business from the ground up is a challenge all in itself. It requires taking on risks, being self-reliant, networking, and above all else having an amazing sense of self and the belief that what is being done is worthwhile. It is from challenges and adversity that the most inspirational leaders of our time have emerged.

**Finding #2: Youth entrepreneurship projects create positive social networks of value to youth in the community.**

Supporting Data:

- 75% of youth entrepreneurs said they like their youth-led project because they get to meet and network with their community.
- 73% say they have gained relationship-building skills in their youth-led project.

Interpretation:

Youth entrepreneurs are doing something out of the ordinary; they are creating connections and as a result they are providing a vision and inspiring a whole generation of young people.



## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation #1: Support more direct opportunities for youth to learn conflict resolution skills through their youth-led projects**

Violence has touched many young people's lives- whether it is street violence, school violence, or domestic violence. With the government spending billions of dollars each year promoting war, young people lack positive role models that deal with conflict peacefully. In order to find peaceful solutions to the world's conflicts, it is essential for young people to learn the important life skill of conflict resolution.

- Only 25% of youth overall responded that they learned conflict resolution skills in their youth-led project

We urge adult allies and supporters of youth-led projects to find more ways of incorporating conflict resolution skill building into their curriculum.

**Recommendation #2: Prioritize funding to assure that all organizations have adequate space, facilities and materials to support and engage youth in their projects.**

Better space affects how youth see the value of their work. The more resources that are in a space, the more youth will want to get involved. Youth can get work done faster and better if they have the appropriate access to space to do that work.

- 36% of youth said that "better space" was the main thing that they would improve about their youth-led projects.

**Recommendation #3: Have opportunities for youth grantees to celebrate victories and reflect on accomplishments. Create more opportunities for grantees to connect with other youth organizations and build community.**

Low-income youth and youth of color face many issues today, for example - violence, lack of quality

education, and criminalization. Youth need to have hope for the future in order to create a better society and fulfill their dreams. In our survey, we discovered that youth reported low results in terms of what optimism they gained through their youth-led project. By celebrating accomplishments and bringing youth together more often to support each others efforts, youth gain more hope and optimism in the future.

- Only 18% of youth entrepreneurs reported that their youth-led project has made them more optimistic
- Only 33% of youth philanthropists report that they have become more optimistic
- Only 50% of youth organizers report that they have become more optimistic



## **QUOTES FROM FOCUS GROUPS**

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**Here's what Youth Organizers had to say about their work:**

"It channels our energy, youth energy towards positivity. I love that we get work

experience and gives us a sense of ownership and pride. We are the first of our kind."

"I like how the program threw so many opportunities at us."

"My youth-led project gives youth a reason and place to realize why their experience and voice matters."

"Our population is struggling a lot in school... [our youth-led project] gives them something to look forward to that's for them and that'll help them so that they don't feel like outcasts because they're such a small number."

**Here's what Youth Philanthropists had to say about their work:**

"Youth get the chance to be a leader and make their ideas become reality and from there they can make a difference in their communities even if they're only teenagers. "

**Here's what Youth Entrepreneurs had to say about their work:**

"My youth-led project taught me how to do things for myself and be able to teach other youth. It's like how they say 'give a man a fish and you'll feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime.' Being a youth entrepreneur gave me skills I could actually apply into my life."

## **LIMITATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

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Some things we could have done to give us better data was that we could have asked particular questions for each funding category. In addition, we could have refined our survey questions - taking out ones that were similar, asking more diverse questions, and not repeating ourselves.

In order to eliminate bias, we could have followed up on the mandatory survey to make sure all participants filled it out. Those who filled it out could have felt more strongly and were more likely to spend time completing the survey.

Some of our lessons learned are that as researchers, we have to be really specific about the questions that we are asking in order to get at clear answers. We also learned that time management and patience are important in designing and conducting a good evaluation. Communication and working well under pressure were important, as well as being aware of the backgrounds of the organizations and the participants.



## **THANK YOU AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank...

Alicia and DCYF for their support and belief in us as youth leaders, Cadelba from Youth In Focus, the YEFAB Movement Builders, and the grantees for being open and honest, participating in our events and trying to spread the word about what YEFAB is doing.

## MEET THE YEFAB EVALUATORS:

**Talivaimaila Amataga Seumanutafa (age 19)** is here to fully represent the Pacific Islander population through YEFAB and help prove that Samoans are more than just friggin' entertainers.



Talivaimaila

**Marisol M. Murguia (age 24)** is a senior at San Francisco State University and has seen so much injustice and indifference directed toward young people in her lifetime and wanted to be a part of something that was supporting the ideas and dreams of young people.



Marisol

**Keshia Evans (age 19)** is a student at Thurgood Marshall High School. She joined YEFAB because she wants to make a change in her community and to work with other youth in other communities and see what they go through.



Keshia

**Kevin Tham (age 17)** is a 1<sup>st</sup> generation Chinese American and is an entering freshman at UC Berkeley studying computer science. He joined YEFAB to be involved in the grant-making process and the evaluation of youth-led projects. He wishes to support youth who want to make a difference in our city.



Kevin

**Ivan Tham (age 15)** is a sophomore at George Washington High School. He is a part of YEFAB because he wants to make a difference in his community and wants to find out more about youth in SF who are involved their community.



Ivan

**Madeline Ing (age 16)** is a sophomore at Washington High School who has continually been involved with multiple roles in her community that help her communities improve. She is also representing Oasis for girls down in the South of Market (SOMA) as a youth staff and also representing a youth in San Francisco.



Madeline

**Erika Cespedes Kent (age 20)** is a first generation Colombian-American artist and youth organizer. She has been involved with numerous Bay Area arts education and youth organizations including Precita Eyes Muralists, and Brava! For Women in the Arts. Erika currently attends CCSF full time, and is proud to rep all things SPOKES related while working as Program Associate for Youth Speaks.



Erika