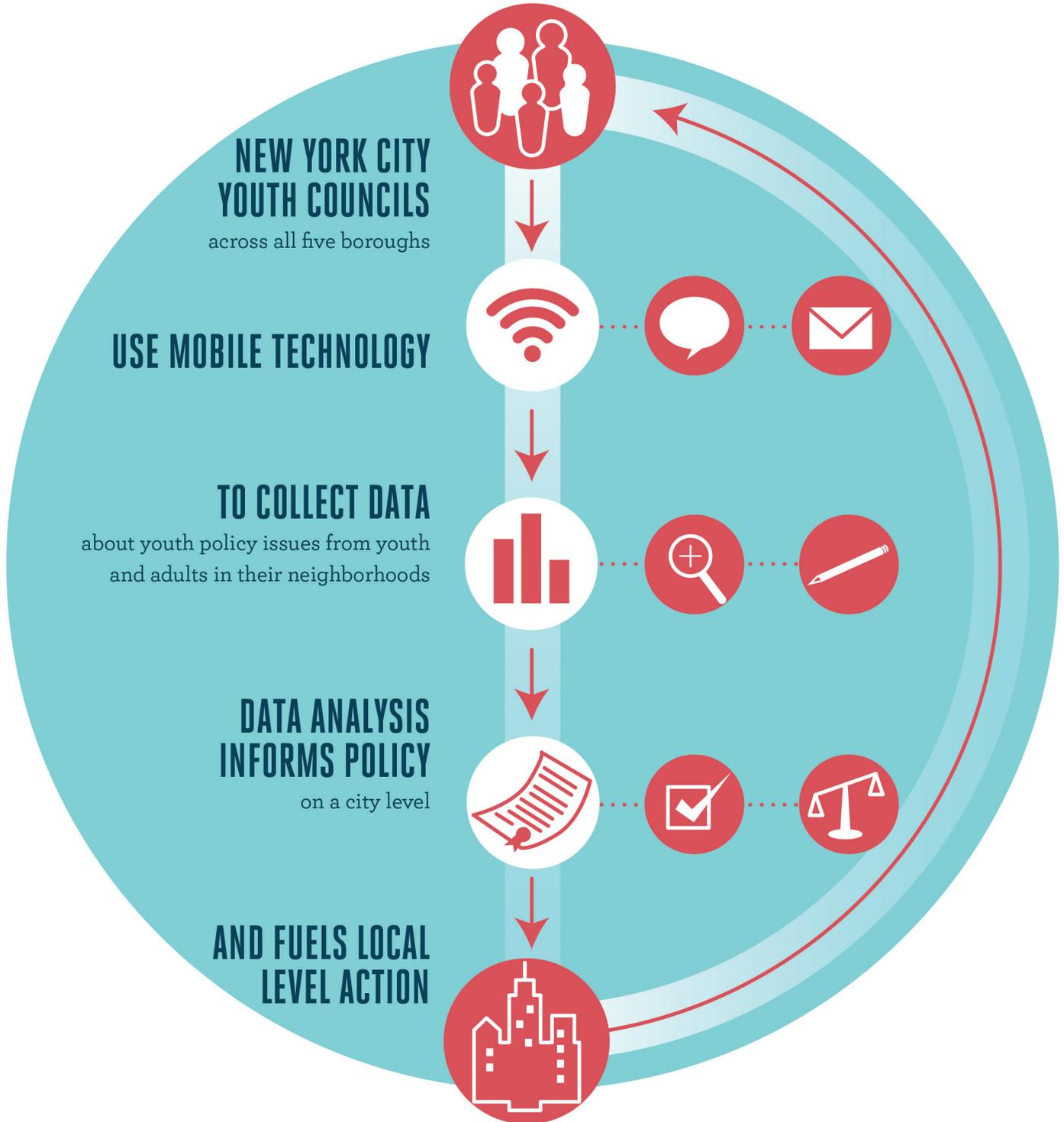


ROLLING THUNDER

The Collective Impact of Intergenerational Youth Policy Making in New York City



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Now is an opportune time to fortify New York City’s commitment to young people by including them, not just as beneficiaries, but as co-creators of youth policy. This concept paper explores the potential for implementing an intergenerational policy making approach that activates *networks of youth councils* around the city to use *mobile technology* to collect data about youth policy issues from community members of all ages. Youth and adult governing bodies will use the cross-city analysis to inform *city level youth policy making*. Data will also be analyzed by geographic location and funneled back to youth organizations, schools, community advisory boards, Council Members and Borough Presidents to *fuel local action*. The use of technology and data has the potential to drive both direct civic engagement at the local level and inform city level youth policymaking. By leveraging existing city infrastructures as well as university, private and corporate partners, this innovative model contributes to creating a rich, civic ecosystem in New York City.

INTRODUCTION

Mayor de Blasio has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to young people in New York City during his first year in office. From providing universal Pre-K and middle school afterschool for all, to expanding Community Schools, the mayor has introduced several initiatives that are already benefitting young people across the five boroughs. To advance his vision for NYC youth, de Blasio has charged Deputy Mayor Richard Buery with forming New York City’s Children’s Cabinet, a multi-agency initiative populated by 23 commissioners designed to bolster communication between city agencies and develop strategies for a holistic approach to children’s safety and well being. It is clear that our Mayor wants *all* young people to thrive, regardless of zip code or city agency that touches their lives.

This commitment by the de Blasio administration to young people is critical as youth are greatly impacted by our cities’ policies related to public education, housing, juvenile justice and health care. Although young people are primary stakeholders, there is a glaring absence of explicit participation in informing policies by a large and diverse cohort of youth. This absence may be one of the factors contributing to an alarming decrease of youth involvement in traditional forms of civic engagement (Circle, 2013; Levine & Youniss, 2006). In response to this trend, concerned politicians and academics have recommended an “institutional turn” (Levine & Youniss, 2006). This ‘institutional turn’ means that cities shift their institutions, political processes and cultures to be more inclusive of young people while also making direct efforts to enhance young people’s civic skills, knowledge, and behavior via civic education and opportunities for service.

Now is an opportune time for the Mayor to fortify his commitment to greater equity for young people in NYC as well as create a culture of democratic engagement, by including young people, not just as beneficiaries, but as co-creators of policy. By utilizing the infrastructure of the newly formed Children’s Cabinet, along with youth councils in programs and schools, the de Blasio administration has a rare opportunity to democratize youth policy-making. New York City has the potential to become a national leader in creating an intergenerational policy agenda—with processes and practice that would create a more equitable city for and **with** young people.

A truly intergenerational and participatory policy-making approach for New York City would include the following critical components:

1. A youth governance structure that works with the NYC Children’s Cabinet and/or the City Council on youth policy agendas.
2. A network of youth councils at city-funded youth programs such as Beacons, Cornerstones, Community Schools, COMPASS as well as other DOE, CUNY, city agency or CBO youth councils around the city that is equipped to garner youth input via youth participatory action research (YPAR).
 - Young people would be trained by PAR researchers to collect data with other young people and adults in their neighborhoods—using simple web accessible mobile that offer quick data collection and quick analysis. A cross-city analysis would highlight the issues that are most pressing for young people and collate ideas for possible solutions.
 - An analysis of the most commonly articulated youth issues and potential solutions across this data set would then be used to inform city-level policy-making for the Mayor’s Youth Council members in partnership with the NYC Children’s Cabinet and other government entities.
 - The analysis at the local level will be funneled back to youth organizations, schools, community advisory boards, Council Members, participatory budgeting districts and Borough Presidents to be used to fuel local problem solving.

This concept paper gives historical background on youth participation in governance locally and nationally, outlines in greater detail the core components of this intergenerational model, and offers recommendations to the de Blasio administration about how to leverage young people and youth programs around the city to maximize the impact of the youth policy making process.



BACKGROUND

“If, as a nation, we are to join with all humankind in achieving a more democratic world, we must harness the energy of our youth and provide them the necessary positive support to be heard and to contribute in meaningful ways to their communities.”

—VILLARUEL, F. A., PERKINS, D.F., BORDEN, L.M. AND KEITH, J.G, 2003, P. 3

The call for youth participation in governance has been made in the name of everything from promoting youth rights to creating the utmost efficiency in policies and services that directly impact young people (Farthing, 2013). There are cities around the United States that use youth councils, commissions and congresses to approach complex youth policy issues—an approach that views young people as assets in well-informed governance (see appendix A). In addition, there are international models that demonstrate the important work that happens at the intersection of youth rights and youth development (see appendix B). Research demonstrates that when young people partner with adults to create positive change there are benefits for young people, adults, organizations and communities (Checkoway, 1998; Checkoway, B., & Richards-Schuster, K. 2003; Fiscus, 2003; Klindera & Menderweld, 2001; Tolman & Pittman 2001; Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes & Calvert, 2000).

New York City has a growing interest in capitalizing on youth participation in governance. In the summer of 2014, the city and state legislatures passed a law allowing 16- and 17-year-olds the right to serve on local community boards. Supporters from across the city and state lauded the fact that local governing bodies were finally allowed to utilize young people as assets in local decision-making and creators of youth informed policy.

Using web accessible mobile technology in an intentional way could help the city activate *more* young people as assets and creators of youth informed policy. The use of mobile technologies is an idea that is being used to improve democratic governance by connecting citizens directly with their governments across the world. Mobile technology has been used to facilitate two-way communication between traditionally marginalized and hard to reach people, poll citizens on their priorities, and report the conditions of service delivery. The use of this type of technology makes sense given that in 2012, 95% of youth 12-17 use the internet, 78% have a cell phone, and 3

in 4 access the internet through their cell phone. Youth of lower socio-economic status are just as likely, if not more likely, to use their cell phones to access the internet ¹

Although, the use of mobile technology in data collection is a newer methodology, the use of a participatory research design is not. PAR was developed in the United States in the 1940's and has lineages in Latin America and across the world that have been active since the 1960's (McTaggart, 1997; Torre et al., 2012; Zeller-Berkman, 2014). New York City is fortunate to have a hub of PAR researchers at the Public Science Project (PSP) located at the CUNY Graduate Center. These researchers, as well as a network of activist groups across NYC, have a history of working with schools and youth groups on developing research capacity and policy analysis with young people. This administration has a unique opportunity to harness a growing momentum for youth civic engagement, use the latest in civic technologies as well as leverage partnerships in the CUNY system to develop a 21st century approach to intergenerational participation in city governance.

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CORE PRINCIPALS/COMPONENTS OF INTERGENERATIONAL AND PARTICIPATORY POLICY-MAKING

- Establish a youth governing body that partners with other governing bodies such as the NYC Children's Cabinet to design a set of policy priorities to guide the City's annual budget process as it relates to young people, offer comments and recommendations on pieces of propose legislation that would affect New York City young people, and potentially co-construct legislation.
- Use the existing network of youth councils across the city to conduct research with other youth and adults in local communities to inform city-wide policy decisions.
- Quickly collect and analyze data using cutting-edge mobile technology
- Share the data with the same network of youth councils and use idea-exchange software to generate a series of city level policy recommendations
- Use youth generated data to inform city level policy agendas as well as fuel local action

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¹ (http://www.pewinternet.org/files/oldmedia/Files/Reports/2013/PIP_TeensandTechnology2013.pdf)

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

This model of youth governance calls for the Mayor's Youth Council to work in partnership with the NYC Children's Cabinet or the City Council to construct policies and plans.

The basic infrastructure for implementing this model of intergenerational participatory policy making already exists in the network of youth councils and city agency councils working across the city. These groups will be activated, trained and equipped to collect input from young people and adults across the city according to the following timeline.

YEAR ONE

- Map the constellation of youth councils around the city (this work is currently being conducted by NYC Service)
- Work with the Mayor's Youth Council, app developers and researchers to design the survey and user interface.
- Introduce a pilot project involving 50 youth councils at city-funded programs such as Community Schools, Beacons, Cornerstones and COMPASS, as well as other DOE, CUNY, city agency or CBO youth councils across the city. These groups will be activated to collect input from more than 10,000 people across the city (50 councils with approximately 10 young people each collecting data from 10 youth and 10 adults). The city may want to consider aligning this data collection effort with the Community Schools Asset mapping process.
- The pilot group of the same 50 councils would be invited to participate in an online idea exchange that would culminate in policy recommendations
- The Mayor's Youth Council and the NYC Children's Cabinet would use the cross-city analysis and recommendations from the field to construct and agree upon 2-3 policy recommendations or pieces of legislation relevant to young people in NYC.
- Analysis of the data at the local level would also be funneled back to youth organizations, community advisory boards, participatory budgeting districts and Borough presidents to be used to stimulate local problem-solving practices.

YEAR TWO

- Expand the pilot to 100 youth councils, which would collect input from more than 20,000 young people and adults in NYC.

YEAR THREE

- Use the infrastructure mentioned above in addition to the expanded network of youth councils across NYC that are being scaled up by NYC Service to increase the breadth and scope of the project

COORDINATION

The NYC Service and Deputy Mayor’s office are ideal candidates for coordinating this city-wide effort. Once launched, this coordinating entity would bring together stakeholders such as the City Council, the Children’s Cabinet, the Mayor’s Youth Council, city agencies (DYCD, DOE) community based organizations, and university researchers.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building for multiple stakeholders will be required to ensure the success of this initiative. This capacity-building support is currently happening under the purview of NYC Service in its effort to scale up youth councils within CBO’s, schools and city agencies. NYC Service would need to add in data collection and its use in policy-making to its capacity-building efforts. Youth-adult partnership training is advised for those partnering with the youth governing body.

DATA

The creative and effective use of data, using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, is a key component to this model. The CUNY Graduate Center has a premier Participatory Action Research institute² that has a long history of partnering with young people to design and enact research locally, nationally and internationally. The CUNY Graduate Center could partner with the city to bring the following research design to fruition:

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² The Public Science Project, www.publicscienceproject.org

- The survey will be designed in partnership with young people from the Mayor’s Youth council, policy makers, technology consultants and academic experts using a participatory approach. Questions related to education, juvenile justice, health, policing practices, public space, and safety are examples of topics that will be included. There will also be a space for open-ended feedback.
- Data will be collected by young people and staff from youth councils across the city during an annual data collection week. Youth council members will be charged with collecting and entering data from at least ten other young people and ten adults using mobile apps or tablets. Intentional sampling can assure the data set is as inclusive as possible.
- An analysis of the data will be shared with the network of youth councils. Members of these councils will be invited to begin to find solutions to the most pressing issues identified in the cross-city analysis using an online platform using cutting-edge crowd-sourcing methods.
- The analysis and recommendations report that emanates from this crowd sourcing process can be used by the youth governing body in conjunction with the NYC Children’s Cabinet or the City Council to inform city-level policy making.
- A local analysis would be funneled back to youth councils, community boards, participatory budgeting districts and borough presidents to inform local policy making and action. Analysis by content area can also be sent to city agency councils (i.e. education related data could be aggregated for DOE’s youth council).

FUNDING

A partnership between the city government, corporations and private foundations could be used to support this innovative approach to policy making.

- DYCD already supports the Mayor’s Youth Council or other youth governing bodies, as well as youth councils at DYCD funded youth programs across the city. This money would need to be reinvested in supporting the youth council annually but will not necessitate an additional expenditure.
- NYC Service supports the network of youth councils in capacity-building. NYC Service is already invested in and starting to implement capacity building support for youth councils across the city.
- Foundations would support the university collaboration and technology development and implementation. Foundations would also support the development of non-financial incentives, such as digital badges that can be earned by councils across the city for participating in

data collection and policy creation. Private foundations could support the city to partner with University researchers to enact and evaluate the success of this initiative and insure sustainability moving forward.

- Corporate donation of iPads or Android tablets to any participating council that can be used (in addition to personal cell phones) for data collection. Cell carriers may also incentivize participation by donating a month's worth of data plans to those tasked with data collection. Corporate partners can also be supportive in developing the technology to be used in this initiative.

CONCLUSION

There is great potential for collective impact (Kania and Kramer, 2011) when city agencies, universities, corporations, CBOs, youth and adults work together to improve the experiences of **all** young people in NYC by collectively shaping the policies that influence their lives. Using this innovative and intergenerational policy-making model reaffirms the Mayor's commitment to greater equity, democratic engagement and representation of large numbers of NYC youth and adults.

This model, in conjunction with the expansion of youth councils around the city, the promotion of leadership in out of school time, civic classes in schools and participatory budgeting processes, creates a rich civic ecosystem in New York City. Our city has the opportunity to have policies generated by evidence coupled with a commitment to broad and diverse participation in both the process and product. The use of data in this model forms a bridge connecting direct engagement of local groups in civic problem solving to city level policy making. Lastly, activating councils around the city to use technology to collect and disseminate data creates an infrastructure for rapid response to respond to any crisis that may arise in our city. New York City can lead the nation in using technology and the infrastructure of youth councils to amplify the power of its citizens of all ages. Like rolling thunder, the reverberations of our successes would echo far and wide.

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YOUTH COMMISSION MODELS

	HAMPTON YOUTH COMMISSION	MINNEAPOLIS YOUTH CONGRESS	PHILADELPHIA YOUTH COMMISSION	SAN FRANCISCO YOUTH COMMISSION
HISTORY AND STRUCTURE	<p>The Hampton Youth Commission was founded in 1997. The Commission is appointed by the City Council and made up of 20-30 young people that serve 2 year terms.</p>	<p>The Youth Congress was founded in 2007. The MYC includes 55 members, with 5 young people from each of the 11 planning districts. Members serve one to two-year terms, and are typically active on one or more committees.</p>	<p>The Philadelphia Youth Commission was founded by Philadelphia voters in 2007. The Commission consists of 21 young people between the ages of 12 and 23. Each City Council member appoints one Youth Commissioner and the Mayor appoints four.</p>	<p>Established in 1995 by a voter amendment to the City Charter, the Youth Commission is a body of 17 San Franciscans between the ages of 12 and 23.</p>
PURPOSE AND DUTIES	<p>The Hampton Youth Commission affects city policy in the areas of youth leadership, civic preparedness, and youth activities. The HYC meets three times a month from September to May.</p> <p>Commission members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, address and resolve issues affecting youth • Create open lines of communication between youth and local government • Ensure youth voice is heard in planning processes • Promote youth leadership throughout Hampton • Partner with adults and other City boards and Commissions 	<p>The MYC influences policy decisions relevant to young people and that positively impact the welfare of Twin Cities youth. MYC committees meet twice monthly to problem-solve around issues of housing, safety, education, employment, transportation and health. In full Congress bimonthly meetings, MYC committees share opinions and propose solutions to the Minneapolis mayor, school board members and other elected officials.</p>	<p>The Commission represents Philadelphia’s youth in public hearings and gives testimony that reflects the youth perspective. The Commission works with the City, CBOs and private entities to develop strategies to improve the lives of Philadelphia’s youth.</p> <p>Youth Commissioners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment on legislation and policies that impact youth • Create public service programs that improve the lives of youth • Monitor and measure the effectiveness of youth programs and policies • Partner with neighborhood youth organizations on shared issues. • Prepare youth for leadership roles 	<p>The Youth Commission is responsible for advising the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the children and young people of San Francisco.</p> <p>The Youth Commission provides comments and recommendations on all proposed laws that primarily affect young people.</p> <p>The Youth Commission is charged with identifying the unmet needs of San Francisco’s young people by researching existing government and private programs and sources of funding, holding public forums and cooperating with existing advocacy organizations.</p>
THE YOUTH COMMISSION ADVISES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor of Hampton • Hampton City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Minneapolis • Minneapolis Public Schools • Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board • Hennepin County • Hennepin County Library • Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor of Philadelphia • Philadelphia City Council • Philadelphia Public Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor of San Francisco • San Francisco Board of Supervisors

YOUTH COUNCIL MODELS

	FRANCE	PHILIPPINES	CATALONIA	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
HISTORY AND STRUCTURE	<p>Youth Councils were first introduced in France in 1979 and have since spread autonomously throughout the country. France has separate Children's and Youth Councils that include young people 7-25. Children are elected from schools to the municipal children's council.</p>	<p>Sangguniang Kabataans (SKs or youth councils) were founded in 1975 to engage 15-18 year olds. SKs are composed of a chair, a secretary, a treasurer, and seven members. SKs operated at the barangay (neighborhood) level and were federated at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. SK members held 3 year terms</p>	<p>Children's Councils began in Catalonia in 1998 and have since spread to 50 cities throughout the region. Children's Councils involve 20 students in 5th and 6th grades who are either chosen through a lottery, or elected as school representative to the city's Children's Council after going through their school's election process.</p>	<p>Since 1997, Municipal Youth Councils have been set up independently throughout the Dominican Republic, and there are approximately 14 that are active. Children 6-17 participate in extensive general elections to elect child councilors aged 12-18 to sit on the Municipal Youth Councils.</p>
PURPOSE AND DUTIES	<p>Municipal Children's Councils are set up as a way to co-produce policies on, and facilitate communications between elected officials and professionals regarding local issues and services such as transportation, housing, urban planning, and youth centers. The principles, operation, and support offered to the Children's Councils are discussed between children and Municipal Councils during their establishment. Children are supported by professional youth workers who work with children on public speaking, provide advice and tools for decision-making, and facilitate dialogue with adults.</p>	<p>The SK's duties are to formulate policies, co-ordinate with appropriate organizations and agencies, and initiate and implement programs and activities designed "to enhance the social, political, economic, cultural, intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical development" of the youth. SKs also managed the 10% of the municipal budget allocated towards SK activities and projects, although this budget often requires the approval of the municipal government that prioritizes certain projects over others.</p>	<p>Children's Councils mostly serve an advisory role to City Councils, providing feedback on policies and plans affecting children. Some cities are more open to receiving proposals initiated by children themselves. Barcelona is the only city in Catalonia that does not currently have a Children's Council. Up till now, children in Barcelona have been engaged in a Public Hearing process which is a year-long civic education and action program that works with youth to develop a statement around a theme chosen by educators to be presented to the Barcelona City Council for consideration.</p>	<p>Each Municipal Youth Councils prepares its own program of work, and receives separate funds from the Municipal Council to apportion to projects of their choosing.</p> <p>The Municipal Youth Councils members meet with Municipal Council members and regulators to have their issues heard and responded to. In some municipalities, one or two representatives from the MYC were involved in municipal planning.</p>
THE CHILDREN'S COUNCIL ADVISES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Council • Most Youth Councils have joined the National Association of Children and Youth Councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Barangay Council (The SK Chair is automatically an ex officio member of the Council and chair of the Committee on Youth and Sports) • SK Chairs represent their Barangay at the federated municipal and city SK Federations. Representation continues through provincial and national levels. The elected national federation president holds a seat on the National Youth Commission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Council • Catalonia is now creating a National Children's Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Children and Adolescents • Child Sponsor elected from the Municipal Council • Municipal Council • Mayor