



YOUTH COUNCIL GUIDE

For local government leaders.



**A CIVIC
LEADERSHIP
PLAYBOOK**



FOR CITY STAFF AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

A practical roadmap for building a youth council

Young people are valuable—and often underused—voices in local government.

When cities create a formal pathway for youth to learn, advise, serve, and lead, they gain fresh perspectives while developing the next generation of civic leaders. A strong youth council also builds relationships across generations and helps young residents understand how local decisions are made.

This guide walks through the decisions and actions needed to establish and sustain a municipal youth council, from defining its purpose and structure to recruitment, meetings, programming, evaluation, and long-term support.

Build with youth—not just for youth

Invite young people into the planning process from the beginning. Their experiences, priorities, and ideas should help shape the council's purpose, structure, expectations, and first-year goals. Create clear opportunities for members to learn about local government, advise City leaders, and contribute to decisions and initiatives that affect young people. This approach builds ownership and ensures the council is shaped with youth, not simply for them.

DECIDE

Clarify purpose, authority, and the municipal home.

BUILD

Create the structure, budget, policies, and partnerships.

LAUNCH

Recruit, select, orient, and establish a strong first year.

SUSTAIN

Evaluate, report, celebrate, and prepare the next class.



Georgia examples and sample documents are online

Visit georgiaforward.org/youth-councils by clicking or scanning the QR Code. There are tons of examples of documents your council can use.

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Use the guide from beginning to end or move directly to the decision your city is working through.

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Resource callouts

Look for resource boxes throughout the guide. Each directs you to current Georgia examples and sample documents maintained online.



01 | START HERE

Start with the why.

Before deciding on applications or meeting dates, clarify what young people will be invited to learn, influence, and lead.



What is a Youth Council?

A youth council is a group of young people - typically high school students - who represent youth voices within their municipality.

Members learn how local government works, share perspectives on issues affecting young residents, participate in civic and service activities, and help design youth-led initiatives. Depending on the structure, the council may also research issues and make recommendations to elected officials or city departments.

More than a volunteer club

The strongest municipal youth councils create a structured relationship between young residents and local government. Service is valuable, but youth voice, civic learning, and meaningful access to decision-makers are central.

WHO BENEFITS?

01

YOUTH

Leadership, communication, civic knowledge, service experience, and a meaningful voice in the community.

02

THE COMMUNITY

More youth participation, stronger cross-generational relationships, and a pipeline of future leaders.

03

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Direct insight from young residents, stronger outreach, and better-informed youth-related programs and decisions.

Is your community ready?

A city does not need every detail resolved before it begins, but it does need shared purpose, committed leadership, and enough capacity to support youth well.

READINESS CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Leadership support**
The mayor, council, manager, or administrator understands the purpose and is prepared to champion the effort.
- ☐ **A clear municipal purpose**
The city can explain why youth input and civic learning matter locally.
- ☐ **A committed staff liaison**
A staff member has time, authority, and support to coordinate the program consistently.
- ☐ **Willingness to share influence**
Adults are prepared to listen, respond, and provide real opportunities for youth leadership.
- ☐ **Basic resources**
The city can provide meeting space, communication support, supplies, and a budget.
- ☐ **Community partners**
Schools, libraries, recreation programs, nonprofits, or other partners can help reach and support youth.
- ☐ **Administrative follow-through**
The city is prepared to address consent, transportation, records, safety, and other operational details.

GREEN LIGHT

Leaders agree on the need, a staff liaison is identified, and the city is ready to give youth meaningful access to civic learning and decision-making.

PAUSE AND PREPARE

The city is interested but lacks staff capacity, a clear purpose, reliable partners, or a plan for how youth input will be used. Resolve those gaps before recruiting members.

Leadership questions

- What problem or opportunity are we trying to address?
- What decisions or projects could youth meaningfully influence?
- Who will respond when youth make recommendations?
- What level of staff time can we sustain for more than one year?
- How will we remove barriers to participation?



Need help getting ready?

The Youth Council Accelerator helps cities move from interest to a workable launch plan.



02 | DESIGN THE COUNCIL

Create clarity before activity.

A clear purpose, defined roles, and an appropriate municipal structure give youth room to lead without leaving important responsibilities unresolved.



Define the Purpose

Start by deciding what the council will do for youth, for local government, and for the community.

LEARN

Civic education

Help members understand municipal services, budgeting, policy, public meetings, and civic responsibility.

ADVISE

Youth voice

Gather youth perspectives, research issues, and communicate recommendations to local leaders.

LEAD

Problem-solving

Design youth-led projects that respond to community priorities and strengthen local engagement.

CONNECT

Leadership pipeline

Build relationships, skills, and pathways for young people to continue serving their community.

TWO COMMON STRUCTURES

Municipal youth program

Flexible learning, leadership, and engagement model

- Usually housed within a city department or the manager's office.
- May focus on civic learning, service, events, and informal advice.
- Can be easier to adapt as the program develops.
- Still requires clear policies, adult oversight, and administrative planning.

Official advisory body

Formal role in advising the governing authority

- Often established through a resolution, ordinance, charter provision, or other formal action.
- May include formal appointments, terms, quorum, officers, and reporting responsibilities.
- May be subject to public meeting, public records, ethics, or other requirements.
- Requires early consultation with the municipal attorney and clerk.

A hybrid approach is common

Many cities combine civic education, service, and youth-led projects with structured opportunities to advise elected officials. The right model is the one the city can support consistently and explain clearly.

Determine youth needs when finalizing your youth council structure and goals. Decide which structure is best based on your communities' needs.

Pro Tip: If your city already has an existing youth program (i.e. Chamber Leadership or County-Wide Program) consider creating a youth council as a subset of this program, utilizing youth who are already in this existing program to be a part of the Youth Council.

ROLES FOR YOUTH

It will be important to determine the roles youth will play in the council.

EQUAL ROLES/GENERAL BODY

In some councils, youth all play equal roles and the council acts as general body.

ELECTED ROLES/SHADOW GOVERNMENT

In others, youth are elected for certain roles (mayor, mayor pro tem, city manager, etc.) and act in the roles as a shadow government to the main council body.

Make it Official

The establishing document should match the council's actual role, not simply copy another community's language.

CORE DECISIONS

- **Purpose and authority:** What is the council empowered to learn, advise on, or lead?
- **Municipal home:** Which office or department is responsible for the program?
- **Membership:** Who is eligible, how are members selected, and who appoints them?
- **Terms and vacancies:** How long do members serve, and how are openings filled?
- **Meetings:** How often will the council meet, and what procedures apply?
- **Leadership:** Will there be officers, committees, or designated youth facilitators?
- **Reporting:** How and when will the council communicate with the governing authority?
- **Funding:** What resources are authorized, and are donations or fundraising permitted?

DOCUMENTS TO CONSIDER

Resolution or ordinance

Formalizes the council and may define purpose, structure, appointments, terms, meetings, and authority.

Charter, bylaws, or operating guidelines

Explains membership expectations, officer duties, meeting practices, committees, conduct, attendance, and decision-making.

Administrative policies

Addresses consent, transportation, communications, records, supervision, travel, media, financial controls, accessibility, and risk management.

Build in an annual review

Revisit the establishing and operating documents after the first year. The city will learn what needs to be clarified, simplified, or strengthened.



Find Georgia examples online

Review charters, resolutions, ordinances, bylaws, codes of conduct, and oaths at georgiaforward.org/youth-councils.

Define the adult and youth roles

Youth leadership works best when adults provide access, continuity, safety and compliance, without taking ownership of the council away from young people.

01 Elected-official sponsor or liaison

Champions the council, opens doors to the governing authority, helps identify meaningful civic opportunities, and demonstrates that youth input is valued. This role should support rather than direct day-to-day operations.

02 Staff liaison or program coordinator

Coordinates logistics, schedules, communication, records, budget, consent, transportation, partnerships, and follow-through. The liaison also coaches youth leaders and connects their work to city operations.

03 Youth members and officers

Identify priorities, prepare for meetings, lead discussions, complete assignments, communicate with peers, research issues, design projects, and represent the council responsibly.

04 Attorney, clerk, departments, and partners

Provide legal and procedural guidance, civic learning, technical expertise, meeting support, risk management, and access to youth-serving networks. Partners add capacity but should not replace city ownership.

ADULT GUARDRAILS

Set clear expectations, protect youth, manage public resources, document decisions, and ensure the council operates within municipal requirements.

YOUTH OWNERSHIP

Shape priorities, ask questions, lead meetings and projects, offer recommendations, and reflect on what they are learning and changing.

Continuity matters

Whenever possible, designate both a staff liaison and an elected-official sponsor. The staff role provides day-to-day stability; the elected role reinforces access and visibility.

Resolve the administrative questions early

The council's structure and activities determine which requirements apply. Do not wait until after recruitment to address youth safety, records, meetings, transportation, or financial controls.

Meetings and records

Determine whether open meeting, public notice, agenda, minutes, quorum, public comment, records retention, or official communication requirements apply. Establish how agendas, minutes, applications, and electronic communications will be stored.

Youth safety and consent

Review supervision ratios, background checks, emergency contacts, medical information, parent or guardian consent, photo releases, conduct expectations, mandatory reporting, and incident procedures.

Communications and technology

Decide which email, text, group messaging, website, and social media channels may be used. Avoid relying on personal accounts when official records or youth privacy may be involved.

Transportation and travel

Clarify who may drive, vehicle requirements, permission forms, insurance, accessibility, overnight travel, reimbursement, and how transportation barriers will be addressed.

Money and partnerships

Confirm budget authority, purchasing, donations, sponsorships, fundraising, use of city logos, vendor relationships, and who may enter agreements or handle funds.

Access and inclusion

Plan for disability accommodations, language access, dietary needs, scheduling, technology access, transportation, and other barriers that could prevent eligible youth from participating fully.

Open government reminder

Whether Georgia Open Records Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et seq.), Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), ethics rules, or related requirements apply depends on the council's structure, authority, and function. Consult the municipal attorney and clerk before establishing procedures or adopting another city's documents.



Sample operational documents

The online library includes consent forms, liability waivers, travel policies, codes of conduct, agendas, minutes, and schedules.

Pro Tip: Ask the City Attorney and/or Risk Compliance Officer to review the policy before implementation.



03 | PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Make the first year achievable.

A strong launch is intentionally small, visible, and supported. Build the capacity to deliver one meaningful year before adding complexity.



Budgeting for Success

The largest and most frequently overlooked cost is the time required to coordinate people, meetings, communication, records, transportation, projects, and follow-through.

#1

STAFF CAPACITY

Before approving a launch, identify who will do the work, how much time is realistic, and what responsibilities may need to be shared across departments or partners.

Operations

Meeting space, food, supplies, printing, technology, name badges, apparel, and recognition.

Participation

Transportation, accessibility, translation, travel, registration, and other barriers to inclusion.

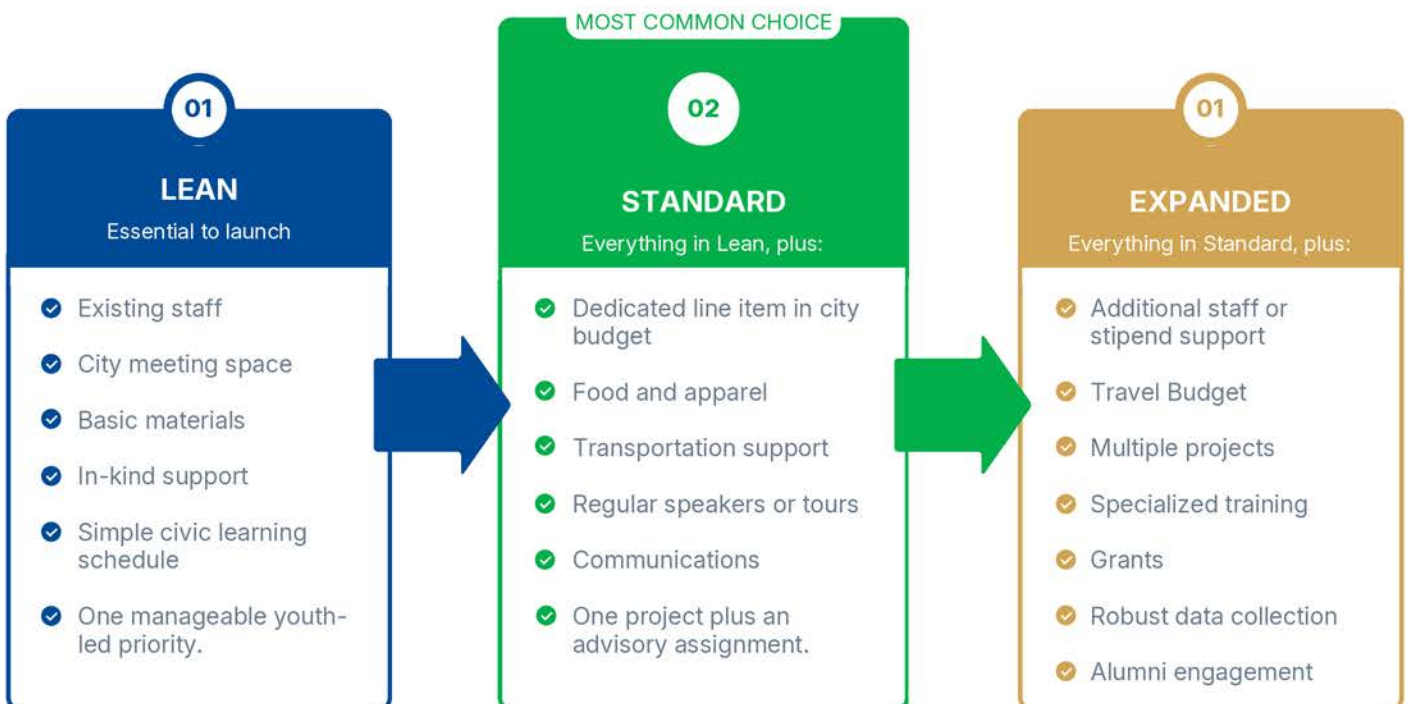
Programming

Orientation, speakers, training, facility tours, civic education, and leadership development.

Projects

Event materials, outreach, permits, data collection, communications, and evaluation.

THREE OPERATING LEVELS



Common funding sources

Municipal operating budget, a recurring line item, in-kind city support, grants, donations, sponsorships, or fundraising where authorized by local policy.

Sample Budget + Template

Scan for a sample youth council budget and editable template.



Statewide Convenings

As you develop your annual budget, plan to attend the two annual statewide convenings hosted by GMA and GeorgiaForward for Youth Councils. The Youth Forum is held in the first quarter of each year in Atlanta, Georgia (Approx. \$150/pp registration fee). The Youth Symposium is held in the fourth quarter of each year in a different host community (Approx. \$50/pp registration fee). Lodging and Transportation are in addition to registration fees.

A practical first-year roadmap

Here is a 10-step process you can utilize to plan, execute, and evaluate your youth council program.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>01 Explore and listen
Discuss the need, hear from youth and partners, and identify the civic opportunities the council could address.</p> | <p>02 Confirm leadership
Identify the staff liaison, elected sponsor, municipal home, and internal support team.</p> |
| <p>03 Choose the structure
Define purpose, authority, membership, meetings, reporting, and the appropriate approval process.</p> | <p>04 Build the infrastructure
Prepare the budget, policies, application, recruitment plan, consent materials, calendar, and evaluation approach.</p> |
| <p>05 Recruit broadly
Use multiple partners and channels, explain the commitment clearly, and remove barriers to applying.</p> | <p>06 Select and communicate
Use consistent criteria, notify all applicants respectfully, and provide and review applications in a timely fashion.</p> |
| <p>07 Orient and connect
Build relationships, teach city government basics, review expectations, and prepare youth to lead.</p> | <p>08 Launch the work
Set priorities, begin regular meetings, connect with departments, and define one signature assignment.</p> |
| <p>09 Deliver and report
Complete the project or recommendation, share progress with elected officials, and document outcomes.</p> | <p>10 Evaluate and transition
Celebrate, gather feedback, update procedures, recruit the next class, and transfer knowledge.</p> |

Keep the first year focused

A realistic first-year target is: one well-run orientation, a consistent meeting rhythm, meaningful exposure to city government, one advisory or problem-solving assignment, and one clear year-end report.

Sample Annual Meeting Schedule

DATE	MEETING TOPIC
September 3	Orientation including Introduction on Local Government
September 10	City History Lesson with former elected officials and longtime residents
October 1	City and Schools Partnership Discussion + Attend Youth Symposium
November 5	Public Works including clean energy & environmental sustainability
December 3	Equity and Public Speaking
January 14	Annual Project Planning Session + Attend Youth Forum
February 4	Affordable Housing and Taxes Introduction
March 4	Fire Department Tour
April 1	Park and Parks & Recreation Department Overview
May 4	End of Year Presentation
May 6	Graduation Celebration

All meetings will be held at City Hall from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. unless otherwise specified.

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04 | RECRUIT AND SELECT

Build a council that reflects the city.

The strongest council is not simply the most accomplished group on paper. It is a group with varied perspectives, reliable commitment, and room to grow.



Design membership for representation and commitment

Set clear eligibility and expectations, then examine whether those rules help the council reflect the community and accomplish the goals of the program.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Age or grade range

Most councils focus on high school students. A wide age range can work, but activities and leadership opportunities must be appropriate for all members.

Residency and school eligibility

Clarify whether members must live within city limits, attend a school in the city, or meet either standard.

Council size

Choose a size large enough for varied perspectives but small enough for every member to participate meaningfully.

Term length and continuity

One-year school-cycle terms are common. Consider staggered terms or returning-member roles to retain experience.

Academic criteria

If a GPA or attendance requirement is used, explain the purpose and provide an exception process. Do not use academics as the only measure of leadership potential.

Diversity and representation

Aim to balance the council with youth from a broad spectrum who can offer a variety of perspectives, backgrounds, strengths, and interests.

Use a broad lens

Recruit beyond the students who already hold formal leadership roles. Consider whether the final council includes a broad range of:

- Neighborhoods
- Public schools
- Private schools
- Charter schools
- Home schools
- Alternative programs
- Racial and ethnic identities
- Gender identities
- Economic experiences
- Abilities and access needs
- Academic experiences
- Interests and talents

Representation is not a one-time selection goal. It also requires meeting times, transportation, communication, and a culture that allow every member to participate.

Sample member expectations

- Attend orientation and required meetings.
- Come prepared to contribute ideas and complete assignments.
- Communicate promptly about absences or barriers.
- Act as an ambassador in school and community settings.
- Respect differing perspectives and follow the code of conduct.
- Present possible solutions with concerns.
- Participate in at least one committee, project, or advisory assignment.
- Use approved communication channels.

Recruit through relationships, not one announcement

A diverse applicant pool requires repeated outreach through trusted adults, youth networks, city channels, and places where young people already gather.

SCHOOLS

Civics and social studies teachers, counselors, principals, clubs, school websites, announcements, and assemblies.

FAMILIES

Parent letters, city newsletters, utility communications, community associations, and multilingual outreach.

COMMUNITY

Libraries, recreation programs, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, faith communities, nonprofits, businesses, and youth organizations.

YOUTH PEERS

Current youth leaders, student ambassadors, short videos, peer-to-peer invitations, and youth-friendly social content.

SIX-WEEK RECRUITMENT CYCLE EXAMPLE

WEEK 1

Launch website, application, press release, and partner toolkit.

WEEK 2

School and community presentations; direct outreach begins.

WEEK 3

Hold an interest session and share youth testimonials.

WEEK 4

Target gaps in geography, schools, and representation.

WEEK 5

Reminder campaign; offer application assistance.

WEEK 6

Final reminder, close applications, and confirm next steps.

Access check

- ✓ Is the application mobile-friendly and available on paper?
- ✓ Is the time commitment stated before youth apply?
- ✓ Are transportation and accessibility addressed?
- ✓ Do outreach materials reach youth outside traditional school leadership groups?

City-limits reminder

If eligibility is based on residency, make sure school partners understand that not every student in the district lives within the city. Provide a clear way for youth to confirm eligibility.



Recruitment samples are online

Find applications, a sample recruitment flyer, roles, codes of conduct, and other Georgia materials in the resource library.

Pro Tip: Use technology like websites, local news, social media, local radio stations to advertise the council.

Use a fair, transparent selection process

Evaluate commitment and perspective—not only polished resumes. Use consistent questions, a common rubric, and a selection committee that understands the council's representation goals.

01

DESIGN THE APPLICATION

Collect only information needed to determine eligibility, interest, availability, and fit.

02

BUILD THE COMMITTEE

Include staff, an elected representative, and after year one, returning or alumni youth where appropriate.

03

INTERVIEW CONSISTENTLY

Ask the same core questions, make accommodations available, and document ratings.

04

COMMUNICATE RESPECTFULLY

Notify every applicant, explain next steps, and encourage future participation.

SAMPLE SELECTION RUBRIC

CRITERION	WEIGHT	WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Commitment and reliability	25%	Understands the time requirement, communicates responsibly, and can follow through.
Interest in community and local government	25%	Shows curiosity about city issues and a desire to contribute, even without prior experience.
Perspective and lived experience	20%	Brings viewpoints, experiences, or connections that broaden the council's understanding of youth needs.
Collaboration	15%	Listens, respects differences, shares credit, and can work through disagreement.
Communication and growth potential	15%	Can explain ideas or shows the potential to develop confidence with coaching.

After selection

Complete consent, emergency, media, medical, transportation, conduct, and other required forms. Confirm the orientation date and annual calendar before families commit.

Pro-Tip: Celebrate new members with a post on social media, local news, and websites to spread the word about the council.

For applicants not selected

Send a timely, respectful message. Consider a waitlist, open events, volunteer opportunities, or an invitation to apply again. Avoid language that makes youth feel their voice is not valued.



05 | LAUNCH AND LEAD

Turn meetings into momentum.

Youth councils thrive when meetings build civic knowledge, relationships, and a visible path from ideas to action.



Orient members before asking them to lead

Orientation creates a shared foundation: who the city serves, how decisions are made, what the council is authorized to do, and what members can expect from one another.

Orientation agenda

- 1 Welcome from the mayor, council, or city leadership.
- 2 Introductions, team building, and accessibility check-in.
- 3 Youth council purpose, authority, and annual goals.
- 4 City government 101: departments, budget, services, and decision-making.
- 5 Member, officer, staff liaison, and elected sponsor roles.
- 6 Attendance, conduct, communications, media, transportation, and safety.
- 7 Open meetings, public records, ethics, or other required training where applicable.
- 8 Annual calendar, major events, and expectations for projects or recommendations.
- 9 Youth priorities: what members want to learn, influence, or improve.

First meeting priorities

- ☐ Review and adopt group agreements.
- ☐ Confirm the meeting schedule and communication channels.
- ☐ Elect officers or assign youth facilitators if the structure uses them.
- ☐ Discuss community issues affecting youth.
- ☐ Identify learning needs and potential department speakers or tours.
- ☐ Select a manageable first assignment or planning question.
- ☐ Assign next steps with names and deadlines.
- ☐ Close with reflection: what members learned and what they need next.

Swearing-in or public recognition

A swearing-in ceremony can reinforce visibility and commitment when it fits the city's structure. Do not describe the council as an official advisory body unless it has been established that way.



Find agendas, schedules, roles, and oaths online

Use Georgia examples for inspiration, then adapt them to your city's structure and requirements.

Build a meeting rhythm youth can lead

Most youth councils meet on a monthly-basis during the school year including attending annual statewide convenings, but what is most important is finding a rhythm that works best for your community.

A consistent agenda helps members know when they will learn, discuss, decide, work, and reflect.

MEETING AGENDA EXAMPLE

10 Minutes WELCOME Check-in, group agreements, attendance, and agenda review.	15 Minutes LEARN City update, department speaker, issue briefing, or civic skill.	20 Minutes DISCUSS Questions, youth perspectives, recommendations, and decisions.	30 Minutes WORK Project teams, research, outreach, planning, or presentation practice.	10 Minutes REFLECT Action items, deadlines, learning, barriers, and next meeting.
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MEETING PRACTICES THAT BUILD OWNERSHIP

- **Send the agenda in advance**
Include decisions needed, background materials, assignments, and who is leading each item.
- **Step up and step back**
Encourage frequent speakers to make room and quieter members to contribute in ways that feel accessible.
- **Document actions**
Record what was decided, who is responsible, the deadline, and what will be reported back.
- **Use committees carefully**
Create them only when they have a defined task, authority, deadline, and reporting process.
- **Use youth facilitators**
Rotate opening, discussion, timekeeping, and reflection roles so leadership is practiced, not just discussed.
- **Ask for proposed solutions**
When a concern is raised, help members identify options, evidence, partners, and a realistic next step.
- **Connect to city work**
Use real municipal questions, projects, departments, and decision timelines whenever possible.
- **Close the feedback loop**
When youth offer input, tell them what happened, what was adopted, and why a different decision may have been made.

THE ADVISOR COACHES

Prepare, connect, clarify, protect, document, and follow through.

THE YOUTH COUNCIL LEADS

Ask, listen, research, decide, present, serve, reflect, and improve.

Balance learning, advice, engagement, and action

A strong annual program gives members several ways to contribute. Do not make community service the council's only purpose.

01 Learn local government

Build the knowledge needed for informed participation.

Examples: department tours, budget simulation, city charter overview, mock council meeting, meeting observation, career conversations.

02 Advise decision-makers

Invite youth to research and respond to real municipal questions.

Examples: youth survey, park plan review, communication campaign feedback, transportation input, recreation program recommendations.

03 Engage peers and community

Help the city hear from young residents beyond the council membership.

Examples: youth forum, school listening session, civic education event, city-service video series, community resource fair.

04 Lead service and problem-solving

Design projects that respond to a youth-identified need and connect to city priorities.

Examples: neighborhood improvement, mentoring, literacy initiative, public space activation, environmental project, safety campaign.

PROJECT DECISION FILTER

NEED

Is the issue informed by youth and community input?

ROLE

Is there a meaningful connection to municipal work?

SCOPE

Can the council complete it with available time and resources?

LEADERSHIP

Will youth make real decisions and own visible work?

RESULT

Can the council describe and measure the intended outcome?

Move beyond participation to influence

One of the most valuable assignments is for elected officials or a city department to ask the youth council to research a question, gather peer input, and present options or recommendations. This makes civic learning tangible and demonstrates that youth voice has a place in local decision-making.



COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITY

Pro tip: Partner with the Mayor's Reading Club

A youth council can collaborate with the Mayor's Reading Club on literacy events, read-alouds, puppet shows, and other creative activities that bring books to life. Youth Council members can help plan, promote, perform, and volunteer while supporting early literacy and community engagement.

Sustain the council through systems, not personalities

The council should be able to continue when elected officials, staff liaisons, school partners, or youth leaders change.

Build continuity

- Maintain current governing documents, applications, calendars, rosters, agendas, minutes, budgets, and project records.
- Create a recurring municipal budget or other authorized funding plan.
- Use an annual recruitment, orientation, meeting, reporting, and recognition cycle.
- Develop strong relationships with multiple schools and community partners.
- Give returning members or alumni appropriate mentoring and selection roles.
- Document recurring contacts, vendor information, transportation arrangements, and lessons learned.
- Provide a formal transition between youth officers and between staff liaisons.
- Establish and maintain website, social media, and other communication methods

Measure what matters

Participation	Attendance, retention, completion, and barriers to participation.
Representation	Schools, neighborhoods, identities, experiences, and perspectives reflected.
Learning	Growth in civic knowledge, leadership, communication, and confidence.
Influence	Questions researched, recommendations presented, responses received, and actions informed.
Engagement	Peers reached, partners involved, events held, projects completed, and community feedback.
Operations	Budget performance, staff capacity, schedule reliability, and completion of required records.

One-page year-end report

Include the council's purpose, member roster, meeting and attendance summary, civic learning activities, projects or recommendations, outcomes, budget, lessons, and priorities for the next year.

Celebrate and transition

Recognize members publicly, thank partners, share outcomes with the governing authority, and transfer documents and responsibilities before the next class begins. Highlight the council's accomplishment for the year.

Pro Tip: Create and adopt a local policy to ensure the youth council will continue, even when local leadership changes.

Frequently asked questions

Concise answers to the questions city leaders most often ask when considering a youth council.

1 What is a youth council?

A youth council is a group of young individuals who represent the voice of youth within their municipality. Members have the opportunity to participate in community service projects, advise government officials on youth-related issues, and help facilitate civic engagement in their community. Youth councils can create youth-driven initiatives within their community.

2 Why create a youth council?

Young people represent around one-fourth of Georgia residents. Youth councils promote civic engagement, encourage collaboration between municipal government and young residents, and develop future community leaders. Cities that consistently invest in their young residents create more successful communities, as a result.

3 How do youth councils promote civic engagement?

Youth councils give youth a formal role in local government, offer hands-on learning experiences with elected officials, help develop leadership skills, and increase communication between youth and adults. Councils also facilitate young residents' participation in community initiatives and events.

4 Who benefits from a youth council?

Youth benefit because their voices are heard in local government, they understand the value of public service. Elected officials and city staff benefit because they build relationships with youth and receive input about youth-related initiatives. The community benefits by building future leaders for their municipality through the council's community projects.

5 Is my community ready?

Indicators on whether a community is ready include local leaders recognizing the need for youth insight in community decision-making and whether they are willing to create programs or adopt ordinances to promote youth involvement in local government.

6 Do we need City Council approval to start a Youth Council?

Yes, most cities adopt a resolution or ordinance to formally establish the youth council, granting it as an official standing within the local government. This document outlines the council's structure, membership, and funding. If your community has an existing youth leadership program, consider utilizing youth in those programs to form a youth council to serve as an advisory council to local elected officials on all matters concerning youth.

7 How is a youth council funded?

The most successful youth councils have various sources of funding that usually include dollars from the city's general fund along with contributions from the community.

8 What if I have more questions?

GeorgiaForward offers resources and support for cities interested in starting a youth council including our guidebook and the Youth Council Accelerator. Visit GeorgiaForward.org for examples, templates, and more resources.

Georgia youth council resources

Keep this guide as the implementation road map and use the website as the living library for current Georgia examples, editable ideas, and launch support.

Youth Councils Resource Library

georgiaforward.org/youth-councils



The library includes materials submitted by Georgia communities and is updated as new resources become available.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ Charters, resolutions, and ordinances | ■ Bylaws and operating |
| ■ Application forms and recruitment flyer | ■ Codes of conduct and oaths |
| ■ Agendas, minutes, and annual schedules | ■ Youth roles and officer positions |
| ■ Consent forms, waivers, and travel policies | ■ Project examples and placemaking ideas |

Youth Council Accelerator

georgiaforward.org/ycform



The Accelerator is designed for cities that are exploring a youth council or are ready to move toward launch. The interest form is the first step toward connecting with GeorgiaForward for guidance and support.

Use the Accelerator when:

- ✓ Your city needs help clarifying the model.
- ✓ Leaders want a practical launch sequence.
- ✓ Staff need examples and planning support.
- ✓ The community wants to move from interest to action.

GEORGIAFORWARD

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LeadershipNext

a GeorgiaForward  Youth Leadership program

Build the next generation of civic leaders.

Give young residents a meaningful place to learn, contribute, and help shape the community they call home.



LeadershipNext

Georgia examples, sample documents, project ideas, FAQs, and Accelerator information.

georgiaforward.org/youth-councils

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