

Our Team: The YETI

ALIYNA FANG

I am a senior from Oakland Emiliano Zapata Street Academy. I'm involved in youth programs that promote changes in the Oakland community. For example, the programs that I participate in are EBAYC, PASS-2, and Bay Peace, etc. In some of these programs we do sharing circles to learn about each other's experience in the community, our cultural background, and how to change this community to be a better place. As a participant of the YETI (Youth Evaluation Team) project, I've learned how the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) supports Oakland youth to succeed and I've extended my self-knowledge about the process of evaluating with Public Profit.

PRISCILLA HOANG

Hi! I am a senior at Met West High School in Oakland. For the past few years, I've been actively involved with a number of Oakland programs, including Core with Forward Together, Jr. Community Entrepreneurs of Oakland, and Sustaining Ourselves Locally. I came into the Public Profit Youth Evaluation Team with the intention of learning more about what criteria affects programs' funding from OFCY. The learning process has been amazing and I'm so humbled to be part of the team.



VANESSA IGLESIAS



Hola! I am a senior at Skyline High School. I am currently participating and have been part of numerous youth programs, such as Upward Bound at the University of California, Berkeley, which I've been a part of for the last two years. Being part of youth programs has allowed me to reach out to everyone in my community through community service. Being in the Youth Evaluation team at Public Profit has enhanced my public speaking skills, presentation skills, and taught me more about how to collect and analyze data. It has also taught me to be more responsible with my time, prioritize things, be more mature, and adapt to hectic situations. I learned how to create and lead a focus group, create surveys, collect and organize all of the participants' work and put it in a report to present to OFCY. This program has helped me cultivate excellence and I would recommend the experience to all youth.

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DILKI PATTIYAGE



Hey! I am a junior at El Cerrito High School in El Cerrito. I've been involved in many things since the time I was a toddler. I've always been interested in anything I can get my hands on, from sports, to volunteer work, to plays, to dances, or anything that will interest me, really. I love volunteering and doing anything I can to help others. I participated in an amazing program called CORO in the summer of 2012. One of the things I liked from my experience in CORO is that I had the chance to intern at the American Lung Association. I believe everything I've accomplished has helped me become a better person.

I've learned things I never knew before, things I couldn't have seen otherwise. Being a part of the Public Profit Evaluation team (the YETI) has definitely opened my eyes to things that should really be thought about. I am so very honored to be a part of this team, working with such amazing and talented people!!

MARTIN RODRIGUEZ-GONZALEZ

I am a sophomore at Life Academy of Health and Bioscience. I have been involved in many programs. For the last couple of years, I was involved with Alternatives in Action. This year, I got into a medical program called CHAMPS at Children's Hospital. I also am involved with Public Profit on the Youth Evaluation Team, to help figure out what I may learn from my community. I remember coming into Public Profit a bit shy, but now I'm more confident about being a part of the team. I've learned about what it takes to conduct an evaluation. It's been a very great experience since I've tried things I never did before. For example, I didn't know what a focus group was and its purpose. I also didn't understand the purpose of surveys until now - I see how useful they are and powerful they can be. This experience has given me support, experience, motivation when it comes to doing work such as evaluation so in the future I won't have any complications.

MICHAEL WONG

Hey! I am a junior at Skyline High. I have been actively involved in many programs in Oakland such as CORO Exploring Leadership Program, College Track, and the breakdancing club and study hall at the Skyline High School after school program. All of these programs help students strengthen their leadership skills by giving us experience in facilitation, public speaking, and working in groups. Without these types of opportunities, I would not have met some of the coolest people that I spend most of my time with, nor would I have gained the confidence in being the person I am today. I am fortunate to work with Public Profit in conducting a research with my youth evaluation team for OFCY because I was able to connect with my whole team through the learning process. I love how there were never any discouragements! I always had the sense



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of a safe learning environment during our team meetings. I really appreciate the support and patience my team has given me through the working and learning process. I am grateful for the experience!

PARTNERS WITH YETI

The Public Profit evaluation team engaged the YETI in a 16-week participatory evaluation process, in collaboration with Practicing Freedom and the Institute of Sustainable Economic, Education, and Environmental Design. For more information on these organizations, see the websites below.



WWW.PUBLICPROFIT.NET



WWW.PRACTICINGFREEDOM.ORG



WWW.ISEED.ORG

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OUR RESEARCH METHOD

Oakland's duty to youth is to provide young people with a safe place to be, where students feel connected to their community in a positive way. Because of the violence in the community, youth do not feel safe. Oakland also has a large number of gang-related activities, so youth will search for safety and acceptance away from these negative influences. Therefore, there is a need for alternatives to occupy their time productively. Sometimes, youths' living situations are unstable, so it is also important for them to have a safe haven.

Oakland youth programs that promote community engagement lead people to be aware and create solutions to stop the violence in the community. Teenagers that participate in these youth programs tend to promote peace in the society more than the ones who didn't participate in any programs. As we know, violence is widespread in Oakland community, therefore if the community supports more youth to go to these programs, youth will get educated to promote peace.

When the community supports the program, this allows the program to grow and continue with their work even when violence is around them. During our focus group, one student at East Side Arts Alliance described an instance where youth in a program were faced with the types of violence that we are talking about when they went out into the neighborhood for a walk around the block:

“[The staff member] called it team building and we were screaming ‘East Side, East Side!’ The neighborhood gang took it the wrong way and we were looking like we were in trouble! One of the local store owners ran out and told the gang members, ‘Hey, leave them alone! They’re from East Side Arts Alliance!’”

Because the youth were involved in the program, and the community members knew them, they were able to step in and stick up for the youth. We feel stories like this need to be heard so that people are aware of what youth are going through.

OUR RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH GOAL

Our research question and the topic we wanted to know more about is:

What are the qualities of youth programs that successfully motivate people to improve Oakland communities?

We were asked to come up with a research question about any aspect of the OFCY-funded programs that interested us. Our research is important because we get to explore the quality of programs that work **for** Oakland youth, **by** Oakland youth. We first shared our own experiences on our team on what worked for us in our own experiences and started to work through what we were going to research. We decided our goal was to understand programs that motivate people to make their community a better place.

OUR RESEARCH METHOD

In order to conduct the research, we took specific steps to answer our research question of this project. Here below are the steps we took.

1. **Establish Agreements:** We first brainstormed new rules that YETI should follow in order to have a safe environment to work. We made up new rules because we all came from different schools; therefore, we needed common guidelines and agreements to follow.
2. **Secondary Research:** We also interviewed OFCY staff in order to get a better understanding of Oakland youth programs and how to craft our research goals and questions.
3. **Choose Main Issue:** Based on our secondary research, YETI came together to choose the main issue about understanding programs that motivate people to community engagement projects.
4. **Come up with the Main Question:** What are the qualities of youth programs that successfully motivate people to improve Oakland communities?
5. **Decide Research Method:** YETI explored different types of research tools-photo voice, theater, interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc.
6. **Decide Research Tool:** Based on our research and time, we selected focus groups and an online survey through Survey Monkey. Both the focus groups and survey were for youth in older youth programs funded by OFCY.
7. **Collect data:** We held focus groups of 6-10 youth in these programs and surveyed all youth who attended OFCY funded older youth programs- administering the surveys to program directors to then give to the youth to complete. The focus groups were with youth of East Side Arts Alliance, Youth Law Academy, and Life Academy.
8. **Organize data:** We transcribed interviews from focus groups and analyzed the survey results from youth programs, and all worked on one finding each from our data.
9. **Analyze data:** We spent time with Public Profit staff and other YETI team members to analyze data through discussion.
10. **Came up with recommendations for OFCY based on our findings.**
11. **Wrote report about our project, with findings and recommendations.**

OUR RESEARCH METHOD

The YETI's experience working with focus groups and using online surveys was critical in answering our research question. A focus group is a research tool that involves a group of people holding a conversation about specific topics. A survey is a questionnaire that gathers a sample of data that is a representation of a whole.

We decided to use these research tools because focus groups aim at capturing people's personal stories, while surveys capture more of the statistical data. During the focus group sessions, we were able to get a better sense of where Oakland youth come from and hear their stories. Our focus groups were different compared to other focus groups because they were led by youth. This allowed us to avoid things like generation gaps with the interviewees, allowing them to be more honest and open about their experience.

Three OFCY funded programs participated in focus groups with our evaluation team. Each location had youth representation from their respective programs and had a great time answering our questions.

The three programs we conducted focus groups with were program participants from East Side Arts Alliance, Youth Law Academy, and Life Academy High School. They were all high school-aged students.

East Side Arts Alliance has various programs that include free art workshops for youth, public art projects, festivals, performances, town hall meetings, forums, and exhibitions. Their programs employ a cultural empowerment model that is centered on social justice.

Youth Law Academy provides career exploration, college readiness, and leadership development for low-income, minority, immigrant, or first-generation college bound youth in Oakland. They provide services such as academic support, mentoring, and mock trials to develop leadership skills to work for social justice.

Life Academy Youth and Family Center engages all youth, with an emphasis on vulnerable youth, in comprehensive programming focused on leadership, career training, arts, health/wellness, and civic engagement. Life Academy supports youth to be agents of change and prepare for successful transitions into adulthood.

FINDING 1

When students feel connected, accepted, engaged and welcomed by excellent staff, they are motivated to attend their youth program.

Before youth in programs can go out and create an impact in the community, they need to be engaged and they need to feel a connection between their peers, as well as the adult staff. Without programs creating a sense of welcome or providing chances for youth to bond with one another, students will not feel as motivated to go out there and work together on changing the community. There needs to be an interest not only with the work being presented, but with one another as well. Having a sense of connection in your program with your peers and adult staff means experiencing an easy-going environment where students feel welcomed and interested to work with one another, as well as reaching out to their community or with each other. One example of this is when asked in the survey what improvements can be made in this program to motivate you to work more in the community, a reply was that the program should “Make more group projects so everyone is motivated to work together.”

SUPPORTING DATA

- 46% of students in an OFCY funded older youth program said a quality of their program that motivates them to come is that they can be themselves.
- When asked about their connection to the program and feeling inspired to help make changes in the community:

A student at East Side Arts Alliance reported, “...[the program] allowed me to get closer to those that I would see around - it made me want to talk to people even more. East Side is close knit - everyone knows each other, and what they are going through.”

A Life Academy student said, “In this school, teachers have a personal connection with the school work, but also students’ personal life.”

One in three (32%) students reported that one quality that motivates them to attend their program is "being able to participate within a community project."

- When asked what program qualities motivate youth to come, over 80% of the students we surveyed said that good staff motivates them to attend their program.

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- In response to a question about what motivates youth to come to the program, a student in Youth Law Academy said, “There’s a lot of adults who expect a lot from you, and that kinda motivates you too, to meet their expectations... We have goals and here there are people to help you reach these goals.”
- When asked what qualities motivate youth to come, over 55% of students said emotional, personal, and physical support motivate them to attend their program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that OFCY prioritize programs that foster strong student and adult connections, acceptance and have welcoming and excellent staff. Students should also be able to decide what the program qualities are that they like- if there are good qualities, youth will obviously attend and the programs work with students will increase engagement. The program should also be a warm and safe place for students and do community action projects, all while being in a fun environment. A sense of connection with one another will motivate students to attend the youth program. Students want to feel comfortable at their programs. These qualities describe the type of criteria that OFCY should be prioritizing when deciding what programs to fund.

FINDING 2

Programs that offer mentorships give youth direction, support, and motivate them to improve their community.

Mentorship programs are a key factor in mobilizing youth to come to community programs. We believe a good mentor is someone older who relates to the youth in a variety of ways, is trustworthy and dependable, and allows opportunities for learning and growth. Youth in the focus groups we conducted indicate that these relationships are clearly important. When asked what additional resources their program wanted, a focus group participant from Youth Law Academy said, “Maybe have some kind of mentor to guide us through it, because some high schools are just too big for a counselor to be able to spend time with you individually. So you especially need other people to help, like other adults.” In addition, 80% of surveyed youth think good staff members motivate them to come to the program while 45% of youth have a mentor or another staff member they come to see.

We focused our research on how mentorship motivates youth to work in the community. We found that having these mentors inspired youth to be leaders and participate in community engagement project within their programs.

SUPPORTING DATA

- In response to the question, “What inspired you to make changes in your community?” an East Side Arts Alliance focus group participant shared, “My mentor Eden was at Skyline... I was hungry one day. And they were giving out free food if you signed up for after school programs... I went there, saw this lady who was acting crazy and wild, but she taught us theatre, and what was going on around the community through the perception of youth’s eyes. So I started working with her more and I was like, wow! She makes me want to actually get up and go do something, she makes you want to just go out to the street and yell at people to wake up... She really inspired me to start working at East Side to be a leader to some of the people I want to inspire.”
- 71% of surveyed youth who had a mentor/staff person in their program participated in community work.
- 84% of students who had a mentor/staff person feel like they can make a difference in their communities while 77% of the students who don’t have a mentor don’t feel like they can make a difference.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Programs should provide youth with an adult mentor they can trust and confide in. OFCY should fund programs with a mentorship component. This can be achieved by offering support to programs to develop a mentorship program, or by looking for a mentorship component within programs during the funding process.

FINDING 3

Community action projects benefit youth by introducing a bigger and better future for themselves and their community.

Community-based action projects are events organized by young people coming together to make a difference in their community and themselves. Action projects are not just about having something fun to do, it's about using your creativity and finding the person inside you and letting that person shine through. One example of a community action project that was shared by one of the participants at Youth Law Academy was hanging up posters in the community and explaining the services that they offer and how they can be used. At another one of the amazing focus groups we interviewed, Life Academy does a health fair. The youth that are involved in the program come together as one and organize a health fair to inform their peers who are not in the program to give them a glimpse of what they learn in their program. This way, youth who aren't in the program understand what is being taught and how they can benefit from it.

Reflections from a YETI member on their experience with community engagement:

During summer of 2012, I participated in an amazing program called Coro, which is a leadership program for rising 11th graders. In the program we learned to advocate and become a leader in our community and schools. I was given an internship to work at the American Lung Association and my task was to get funders, donors, volunteers and participants for their annual Fight for Air Walk! Before that project, I didn't have the thought I could talk to people and get what I needed to get done. It turns out that I am good at speaking to people, and that I have my own opinion about things. If it weren't for those five weeks I worked on that fundraiser, I may not have discovered this.

Introducing a bigger and better future are not just words. It is the gateway to many things. Community-based action projects introduce young people of all ages to new things about themselves and their future, leading to a door full of opportunities. One door can open a million.

SUPPORTING DATA

- The youth that we talked with during the focus groups reported similar experiences of being inspired to help themselves and community from participating in their program:

“In my first program, I learned how vital it is to bring the community together for the [presidential candidates] that we held, and by then they got to learn about so much more research that people don't usually know about and they got to see what the politicians

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had to offer, and to make more informed choices.” *Focus Group Participant from Life Academy*

- Survey respondents who have done work in the community tended to report higher instances of feeling like they could make a difference in their community, 77% versus 56%.
- One in three (32%) students reported that one quality that motivates them to attend their program is "being able to participate within a community project."

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that OFCY fund programs with community-based action projects, and offer funding for programs that don't currently do them. We believe that doing this will allow more programs to have more hands-on community projects so the youth are actually doing something instead of just learning about it.

FINDING 4

Programs that promote community awareness motivate young people to be emotionally engaged in the community and to take action.

Programs promoting community awareness of issues that affect people's life can lead young people to pay attention more of what is going on in the community and people tend to be motivated to take action to make improvements. Emotional engagement is when a person feels the situation in their heart from personal experience or another connection, not just words from the textbook. When you feel more awareness about the community, you'll have more empathy with your heart. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. If youth have empathy about their surroundings, they tend to take actions to better the community.

SUPPORTING DATA

Based on our focus group sessions, we found the following quotes to support our finding:

- During the focus group with the youth from East Side Art Alliance we asked, "Do you feel inspired or motivated to help make changes in your community?" A couple students' responses were:

"I signed up for the theatre program. I went there and saw this lady who was acting crazy and wild, but she taught us theatre, and what was going on around the community through the perception of the youths' eyes. So I started working with her more and I was like, 'Wow!' She makes me actually want get up and go do something, she makes you want to just go out to the street and yell at people to wake up! Look what's going on..."

"East Side kinda saved my life. Because I was down the wrong path, due to some wrong affiliations. So, East Side really opened my eyes to what was really going on. When you grow up around bad people, they don't like the police. But you notice what [bad people] are doing. Some are doing it to survive, some for the money. But as soon as you get caught, the 1st person you blame is the police. Because you're not really educated about [the community and] what's really going on. Police are nice depending on what you're doing."

- At Youth Law Academy, a participant responded to the question, "Before you joined this community, what were you doing?" stated:

"Before, I really didn't know about my community, I didn't know what was going on...Now I'm involved in more programs and now I've been helping my church."

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that youth programs teach awareness about the community, so that youth can be more alert about their surrounding community. OFCY should put more funding in training mentors and youth programs that promote awareness of the community.

FINDING 5

Leadership opportunities in programs motivate young people to make a difference in their community.

Leadership training increases youth’s confidence in becoming a leader, which can potentially put these youth on the front line of making a difference in their community by building their communication, facilitation, group interaction, and other social skills.

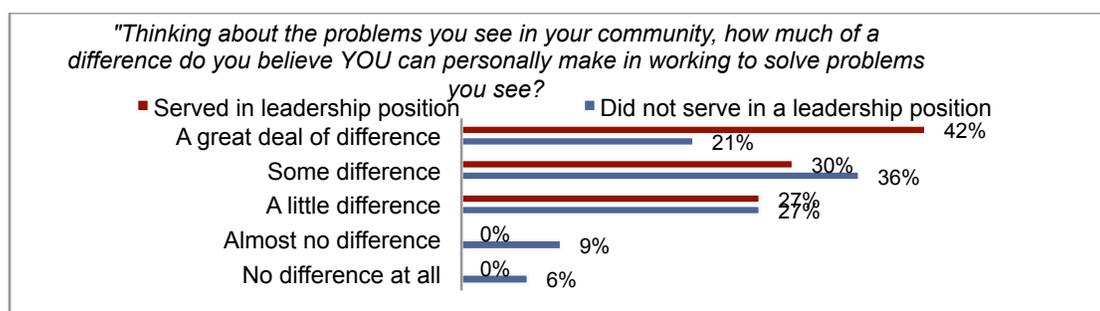
For example, one Life Academy student stated that their program has increased their social skills, by stating, “Also throughout this program, I’ve grown in confidence, since I am more of a leader. During middle school, I was shy. Now, I can socialize with others I didn’t even know.”

The following supporting data shows how leadership opportunities can also affect students’ mindsets in whether they believe or do not believe they can make a difference in their community, which is key for motivating youth to make change.

SUPPORTING DATA

- Of those that were involved in leadership, there were **no youth** who believed they *couldn’t* make a difference vs. 15% who were not involved in leadership.
- Digging deeper, we asked youth about programs offering leadership opportunities, and we found a clear distinction between those who had the mindset of being able to make a difference and with those who thought they could not make a difference, based on this quality:

Of the youth who reported that they had **leadership roles** in their program, a total of 72% reported that they **can** make a difference in their community. Those who reported that they were leaders less frequently reported that they believed they could make a difference, about 57%.



Source: Youth surveys, administered February 2013. n=66

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is crucial for programs to find connections or offer workshops to teach and to expose students to leadership opportunities that actually make a difference in the community.

We recommend that OFCY programs offer leadership opportunities to bring out the true leadership potential for shy, unconfident, or inexperienced students, to make them believe they can make a difference in their community. OFCY should increase funding for leadership workshops to teach and to expose students of leadership opportunities.

CONCLUSION & FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AROUND YOUTH EVALUATION

We are proud to be part of the youth evaluation team, looking at qualities of youth programs that motivate youth to take action in the community. The results we are sharing in this report are based on the focus groups and surveys of youth in OFCY-funded older youth programs. The program qualities that we discovered motivate youth to be more involved in the community are programs that have adult connections, mentorship opportunities, community action projects, community awareness activities, and leadership opportunities.

We value these findings because the data we gathered from the surveys and focus groups showed us that the majority of youth cherished these qualities in their programs. Therefore, from these findings we recommend that OFCY focus their efforts on these qualities that motivate youth to engage in the community. Overall, we are grateful to be a part of the OFCY evaluation project, contributing our self-knowledge to accomplish this report

SOME LIMITATIONS WE ENCOUNTERED

We encountered a few constraints while conducting our research. Our first constraint was the sample size within the online surveys. We sent out an online survey via Survey Monkey to a list of older youth OFCY funded programs, but the majority of survey respondents were from College Track and may have influenced our data more than other youth programs. This is partly due to other programs having limited Internet access. We also had time constraints. We couldn't do site visits to every program to explain the survey because site visits were based on program's availability within our timeframe.

According to a Public Profit evaluation of community-based programs, College Track received high program quality ratings overall which suggest that they are an effective older youth program. Because we're looking for best program practices, we feel that their large presence in our survey data may or may not have accurately represented what Oakland youth feel like in their programs.

We also had minor constraints when it came to conducting focus groups. We would have liked to conduct more focus groups, but conflicting schedules from programs and the teams' availability allotted time for three. We had two other programs in mind, but they kept getting rescheduled and/or didn't have time for a meeting.

Next time, to make our findings stronger, we would allow ourselves more time to do site visits and have more interaction with the programs themselves. We would also reconsider our methodology, and choose one that is more engaging to students. Given our constraints, we still feel like we have an accurate representation of Oakland youth programs and still answer our research question of "What are the qualities of youth programs that successfully motivate people to improve Oakland communities?"

CONCLUSION & FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS AROUND YOUTH EVALUATION

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO OFCY AROUND YOUTH EVALUATION

While we believe our findings to be strong and solid, we also recognize that this project could be made even stronger in future years. Thinking about another OFCY youth evaluation team to come, we recommend the following considerations for OFCY:

- **More than 5 youth evaluators:** it would be nice to have a larger group than 5 youth, to get more perspectives of youth and where they come from.
- **Longer period of time:** if we were able to start earlier in the year and meet more often than once a week, this would allow us time to spend collecting data from different programs.
- **Ability to evaluate OFCY:** for some on our team, it would've been stronger to evaluate OFCY in the ways they establish funding, which would help programs to understand what is being asked from them
- **Funder relationship:** evaluating OFCY would have helped avoid the “funder relationship” where programs might've been telling us what we wanted to hear.
- **More integration into OFCY:** more communication with OFCY would have made this project stronger, as we could have checked in on the progress of the project and get feedback from them on an ongoing basis. They could have helped with the framing to programs as we collected data that we were a part of OFCY and that the youth team was there in a supportive way to tell their stories.
- **More resources:** it would've helped to have transportation available (like a van to get us to focus groups) and incentives for groups that were participating in our evaluation, for the focus groups and also for programs participating in the surveys. This would have helped facilitate and encourage more participation from programs.