



A WEEKEND IN DALLAS: THE 2023 TEXAS YOUTH ADVISORY COMMISSION SUMMIT

By **Ricardo Corpus**, Chairman, Dallas Youth Commission

Friday, February 3, marked the start of the 2023 Texas Youth Advisory Commission (YAC) Summit that took place in Dallas. The YAC Summit is an annual, weekend-long event sponsored by the Texas Municipal League and hosted by a city and its youth commission. The Summit is for Texas cities to share their YAC program's experiences and the positive impact the programs have had locally. It also serves as an opportunity for youth participants to network and exchange ideas regarding projects, engagement, local policy, and anything that might encompass the work that YACs engage in within their respective cities.

The Dallas Youth Commission was tasked with organizing this year's Summit. Our main goal was to equip youth participants with practical tools and skills to use back in their hometowns, ensuring their council's success and increasing their overall influence. We figured the best way to accomplish this goal was to create workshops that addressed a particular skill or tool essential to the success of youth commissions. Workshops were created, led, and organized entirely by the Dallas Youth Commission. In each room, three to four Dallas youth commissioners facilitated the activities, short lessons, and speakers.

The workshops that were available to attendees included:

Branding and Outreach Workshop: Attendees learned from marketing and communication specialists about the importance of branding and outreach for their youth commissions. They acquired the necessary skills to develop a good brand, maximize outreach to teens in their community, and engage teens through social media platforms by keeping up with the newest trends. Additionally, attendees had the opportunity to practice creating a marketing campaign for an initiative of their choice by using tools such as Canva to create flyers and media posts.

Professionalism Workshop: Attendees had the opportunity to learn about professionalism and how it applies to teens and youth commissions. Workshop speakers, who included career advisers from top Texas universities, taught youth attendees about important factors of professionalism such as attire, communication, and digital footprints. Additionally, participants were able to create and practice their own "elevator speeches" which is an excellent way to pitch themselves to future employers or collaborators.



Civil Discourse Workshop: In this workshop, attendees participated in several activities including a communication-based argumentative task and a game that emphasized the importance of clear speaking and effective listening. The workshop aimed to share tips on successful discourse and enhance participants' abilities to communicate and listen.

Initiative Development Workshop: Attendees were given an issue and tasked with creating a hypothetical initiative to overcome the problem. There were restrictions and obstacles added to the exercise to simulate challenges that they might encounter in real life when creating a similar initiative in their own hometowns. This workshop ended up being the favorite for the youth who attended the Summit.

Although these workshops were all different, they carried the same goal of teaching participants valuable skills to take back to their towns. These workshops were the 'meat' of the YAC Summit, but of course, we wanted attendees to be as entertained as engaged, which is why there were a variety of activities.

The Dallas Youth Commission hosted a welcome dinner to formally begin the YAC Summit on Friday, February 3, and elected officials from the City of Dallas stopped by to wish everyone well during their time in Dallas. After the dinner, a mixer took place which served as an overarching icebreaker and allowed youth participants to connect in a more personal and fun manner, anticipating the professional work they would be engaged in over the next two days. The Saturday general session included a warm welcome from the Dallas Youth Commission which was followed by

a competition between YACs to create skits that related to the workshop topics. The goal of the skits was to wake participants up and jump start their critical thinking for the activities and discussions within the workshops. The social event at Bowl Games was another opportunity for attendees to socialize in a more relaxed setting. After the final workshop, everyone attended the closing session where participants were given the stage to present on their youth commissions. Afterwards, the winners of the Initiative Development Workshop were announced, a Kahoot! game was played to demonstrate what attendees learned, and everyone went on stage to take a big group photo to close out the Summit.

The Dallas Youth Commission is extremely grateful for the opportunity to plan such an incredible event. From the mixer to workshops to the closing session, every minute of this Summit was one to remember. We hope the youth who attended were able to use the activities and lessons presented to improve the impact of their youth council in their local communities. ★