



## Youth Advisory Commissions

Every city, regardless of its size or location, shares a common resource—arguably its greatest resource—its youth. Creating safe and enriching environments that our children can thrive in is really what it is all about. Moving beyond satisfying these core needs, your city can also tap into youth perspective, creativity, and energy by creating a youth advisory commission (YAC).

There are dozens of YACs operating across the state, each with their own personality. Some focus on community service, others concentrate on peer involvement, and some operate as mini-city councils that deliberate issues and make recommendations. All give youth a voice and a stake in their city government. YACs provide cities with energetic volunteers for civic projects, give city leaders a fresh viewpoint on issues challenging our cities, and create a sense of accomplishment for our youth.

### **Benefits**

The benefit of YACs works both ways. Youth have an outlet to affect change in their community and have a place to interact with their peers and adults on issues of importance to their community. On the flip side, the city creates an outlet to not only engage youth but to harness their energy and ideas.

### **YAC Projects**

Many YACs are involved in projects or programs that are geared toward civic engagement and community service. Examples of these projects include presenting to the city council, interning with city departments, fundraising to help local charities, volunteering at city events, discussing important teen issues, organizing career fairs, volunteering at local schools, and more.

### **How to Form a YAC**

**Get buy in and feedback from your youth.** Talk with the youth in your community. Ask them if a youth commission would be an appropriate forum for their participation.

**Back it up on paper.** Work with your youth to develop YAC bylaws. These bylaws should outline the duties and responsibilities of the commission. Several YACs have also been established by city ordinance as well.

**Keep it going.** Maintaining your YAC requires an enthusiastic champion within city hall and a plan for recruiting new members. Your adult leader/cheerleader will need to take an active role in recruitment—whether it is reaching out to local schools, holding an open house at city hall, or tapping current members to recruit their peers.

### **How the Texas Municipal League Can Help**

The formation of youth advisory commissions in cities across the state is a priority of the Texas Municipal League (TML) Board of Directors. In 2003, then TML President Jackie Levingston championed the issue, and today many Texas cities have programs that involve youth. This initiative provides cities with energetic volunteers for civic projects, gives city leaders a fresh perspective on issues challenging our cities, and creates a sense of accomplishment for our youth. A great way for adult leaders and youth to connect to new ideas and spark innovation is to meet with other youth groups. TML has two terrific outlets to do just that.

1. Attend the annual Texas Youth Advisory Commission (YAC) Summit. This event is a two-day statewide event sponsored by the Texas Municipal League and hosted/organized by a city and its youth advisory commission (YAC). While the summit has a serious mission of educating, inspiring, and empowering, it is also built for fun. Visit [www.yacsummit.org](http://www.yacsummit.org) to find out more.
2. Reach out to TML! Share feedback, get connected with other YACs, and more. Visit [www.tml.org](http://www.tml.org) or call 512-231-7400.

**Texas Municipal League**

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