

# **YEF 2024-2025 Annual Report**

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# What is the Youth Empowerment Fund?

The Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF) is a youth philanthropy grant program under Urban Services YMCA - Youth Workforce Development Department; YEF is funded by the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF). This program has been awarding and distributing over \$425,000 annually to youth-driven projects that fall under the following categories: Youth Trends and Needs, Youth Entrepreneurship and Community Improvement.

As a youth-led program, grant funding decisions are made by Community Funders, a team of high school aged youth from diverse backgrounds in San Francisco. They represent the population of young people in the city. As youth who live and go to school in San Francisco, Community Funders have first-hand experience to determine what their peers need and insight into what makes the city a wonderful place to grow up. They are the backbone of YEF.

YEF creates impact in multiple layers. Community Funders are empowered as resource allocators for our community. Grantees are empowered by the opportunity and responsibility to manage their grants and make their project ideas into real tangible things with successful and unsuccessful outcomes, and all the learning and confidence building that comes with that. The SF community benefits not just from the impacts of the funded projects, but also the inspiration of youth-led change.



# Urban Services YMCA, A Community Action Agency

Community Action Agencies are designated and funded to reduce poverty in the communities they serve. In 2018, the California Department of Community Services and Development designated Urban Services YMCA as San Francisco's Community Action Agency. Through this designation, the Urban Services branch joined a nationwide Community Action Partnership network focused on the elimination of poverty and the revitalization of low-income communities via the Community Services Block Grant.

As a part of the CAA network, programs track their impact through National Performance Indicators (NPIs) and include applicable supplementary documents so that the agency can generate a report to send to Sacramento. Being a part of the Urban Services YMCA, our work at YEF is included in our CAA mission to reduce poverty, and in the impact we are making as a larger organization.

In the 2024-2025 year, YEF tracked 6 NPIs:

SECTION	NPI CODE	DESCRIPTION	TARGET
Employment	1a	The number of unemployed youth who obtained employment to gain skills or income.	4
	1z	Number of youth who maintained employment for 90 days.	4
Education	2g	The number of individuals who obtained a high school diploma and/or obtained an equivalency certificate or diploma.	1
Civic Engagement	6a1	Number of Community Action program participants who improved their leadership skills.	5
	6a2	Number of Community Action program participants who improved their social networks	5
	6a3	Number of Community Action program participants who gained other skills, knowledge and abilities to enhance their ability to engage.	4

In 2024-2025 YEF has had...

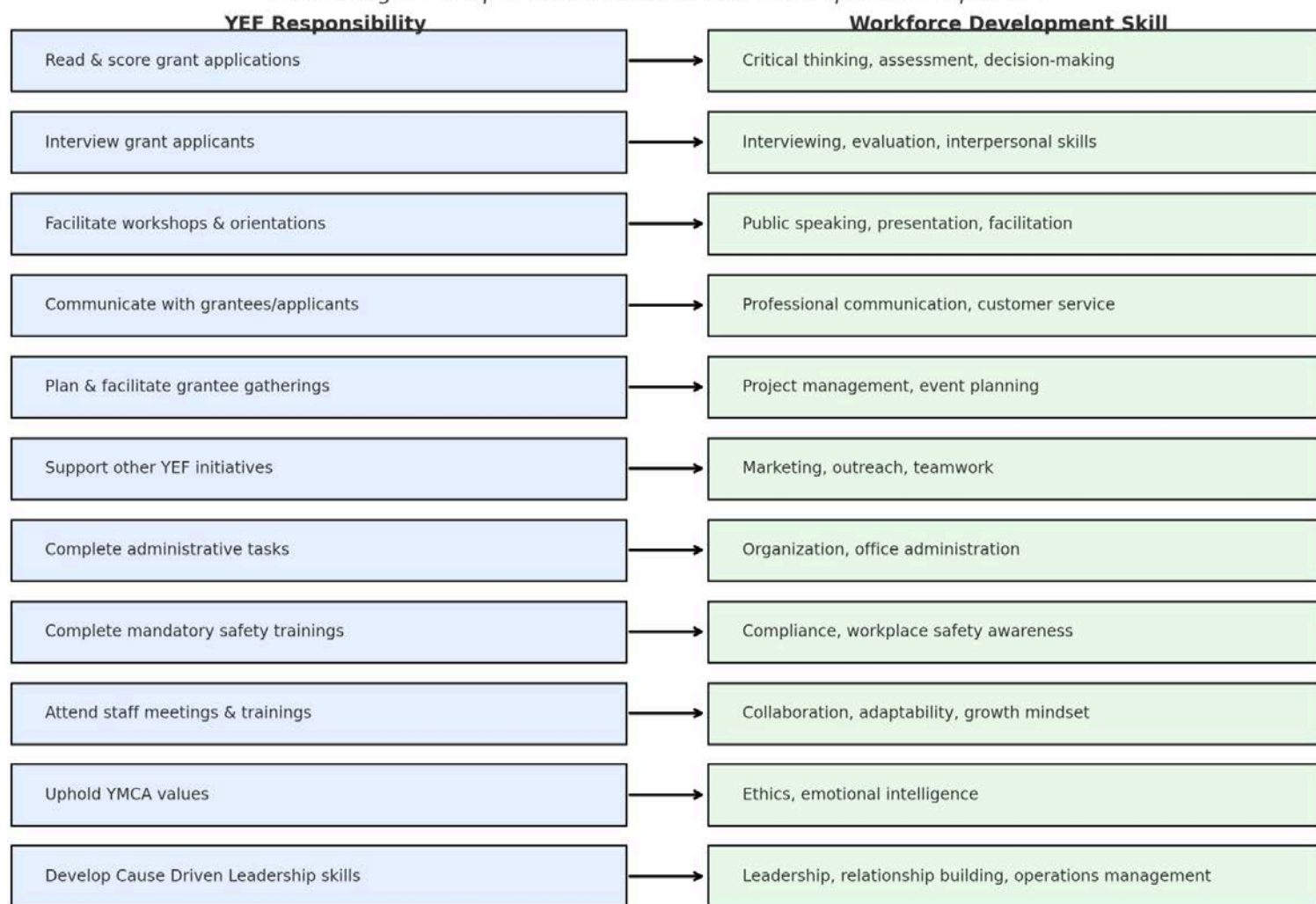


- **3** new youth obtain employment at YEF through the Community Funder position to gain skills and income.
- **6** Community Funders have maintained their position for over 90 days.
- **1** Community Funder obtained their high school diploma.
- **6** Community Funders improved their leadership skills and expanded their social networks through the YEF program.
- **6** Community Funders increased skills, knowledge, and abilities to enable them to work with Community Action to improve conditions in the community.

# Youth Workforce Development

## Youth Empowerment Fund - Workforce Skill Map

*Connecting YEF Responsibilities to Workforce Development Competencies*



Integrating our youth philanthropy program into workforce development creates a powerful pathway for young people to build the professional skills, leadership capacity, and civic engagement needed for lifelong success. Beyond technical skills, youth philanthropy fosters critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and a deep sense of social responsibility. It provides real-world exposure to budgeting, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement —bridging the gap between classroom learning and the professional environment. By aligning philanthropy work with workforce development, we equip young leaders not only to enter the job market with confidence but also to shape it with purpose — ensuring they are prepared to contribute meaningfully to their communities and beyond.

# COMMUNITY FUNDERS



# Community Funder Applicants

## Number of Applicants

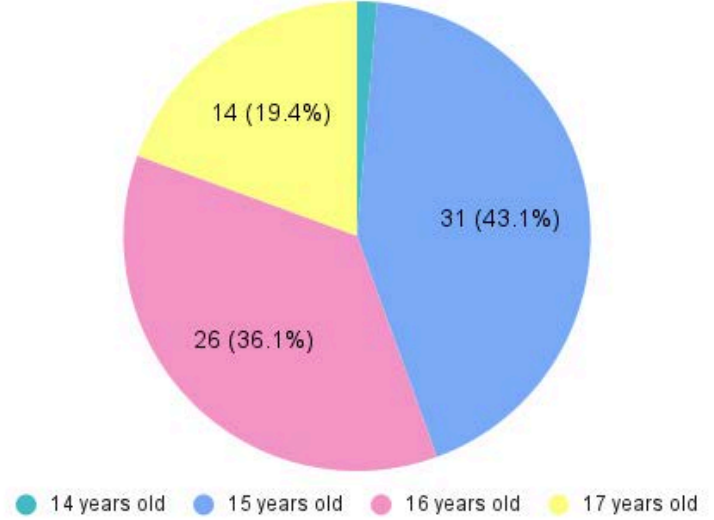
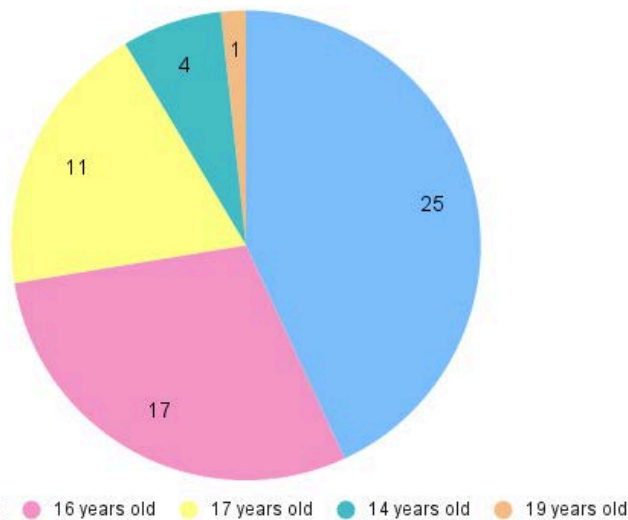
2023-2024 Community Funder Applicants: 58

2024-2025 Community Applicants: 73

## Age

2023-2024 Applicant Ages

2024-2025 Applicant Ages

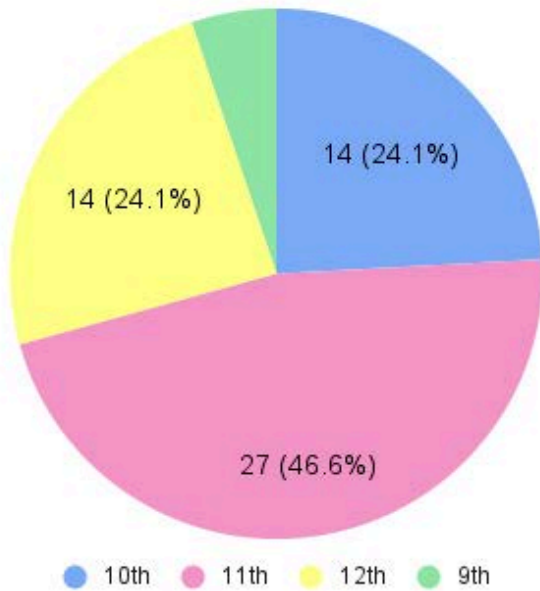


“I am immensely grateful for the experiences granted by YEF. Throughout the past two years, I’ve been given the opportunity to immerse myself in the San Francisco community and watch youth take on initiatives that they are passionate about. Simultaneously, watching my own community funder team grow throughout the past year was rewarding, especially watching from a new veteran perspective in comparison to last year as a new funder.”

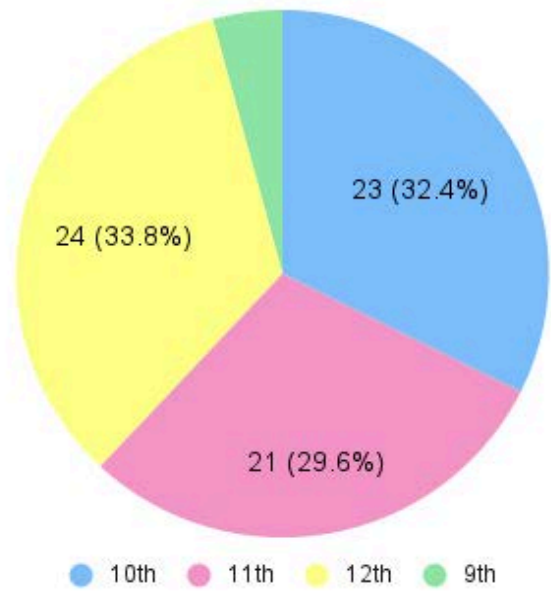
— Chanmolyta Kim, YEF Community Funder 2023-Present

## Applicants' Grade Levels

2022-2023

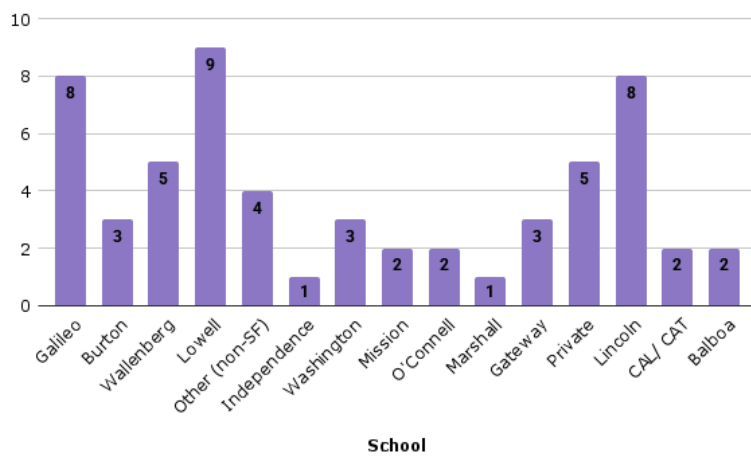


2023-2024

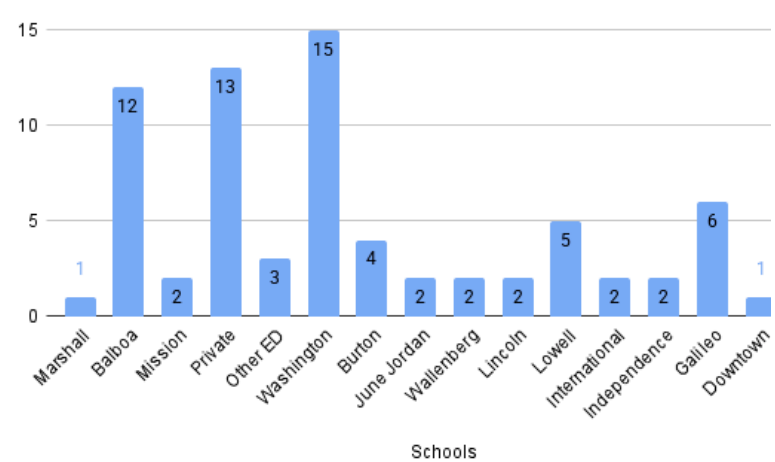


## Applicants' School

2023-2024



2024-2025



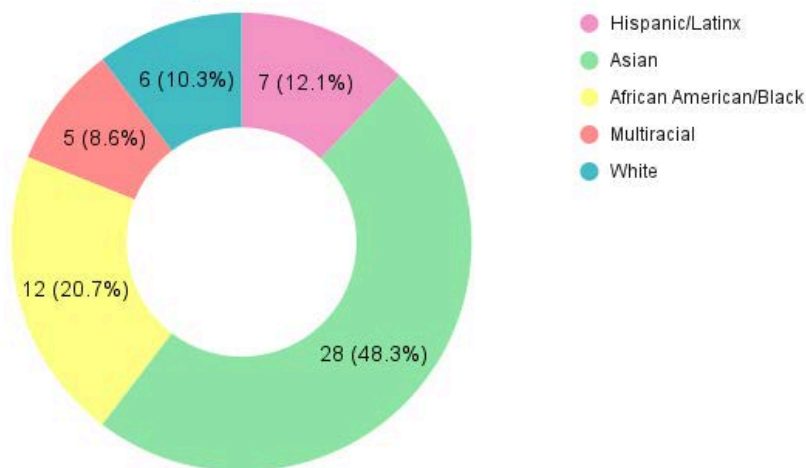


“I enjoy working as a Community Funder — I love getting to know the different grantees and seeing them helping their communities. I also enjoyed helping students bring their ideas to life.”

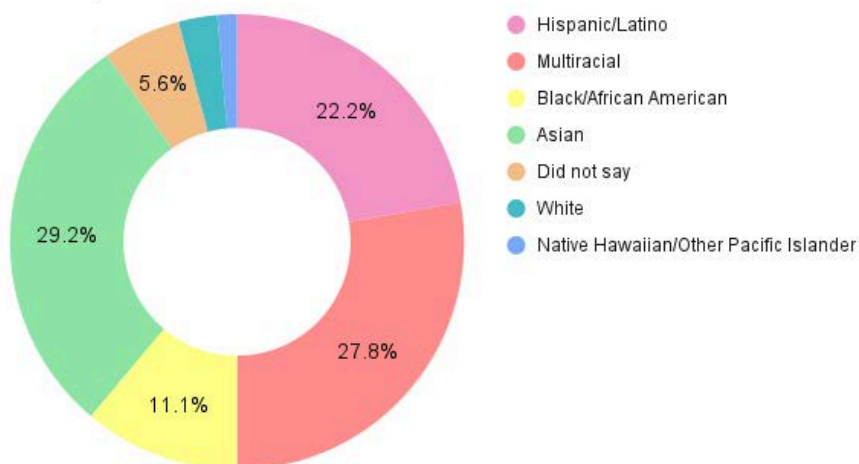
— Keana Lara Gutierrez, YEF Community Funder 2024-Present

## Applicants' Ethnicity/Race

2023-2024



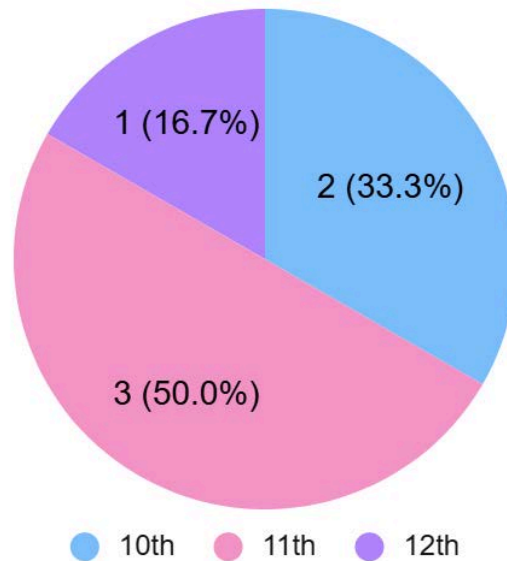
2024-2025



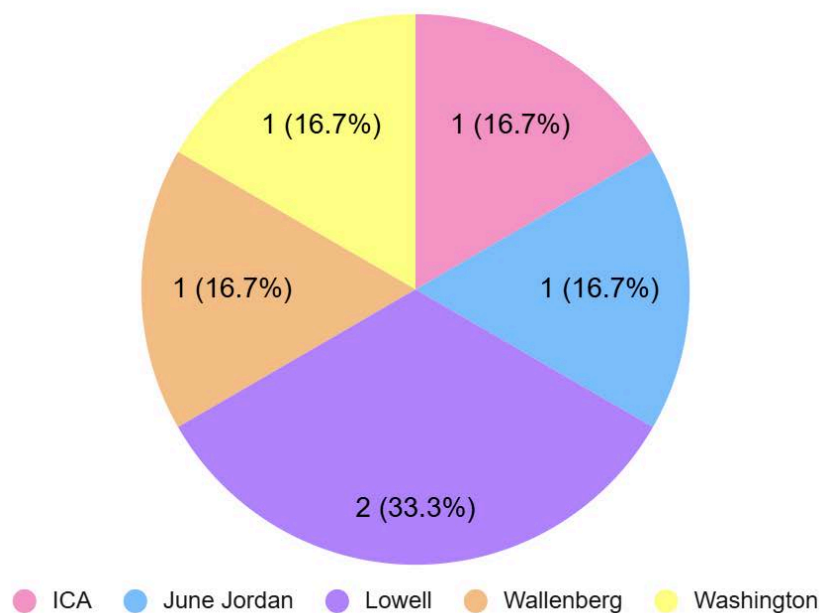
# Community Funder Team 2024 - 2025

## Demographics

### Grade



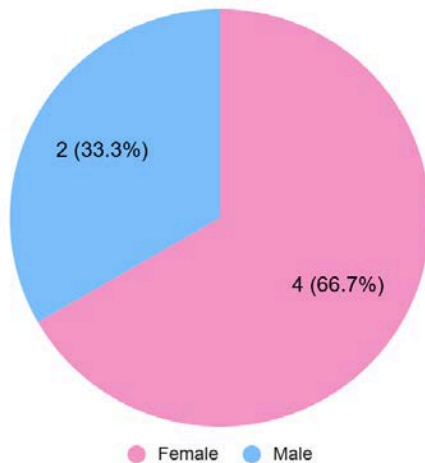
### School



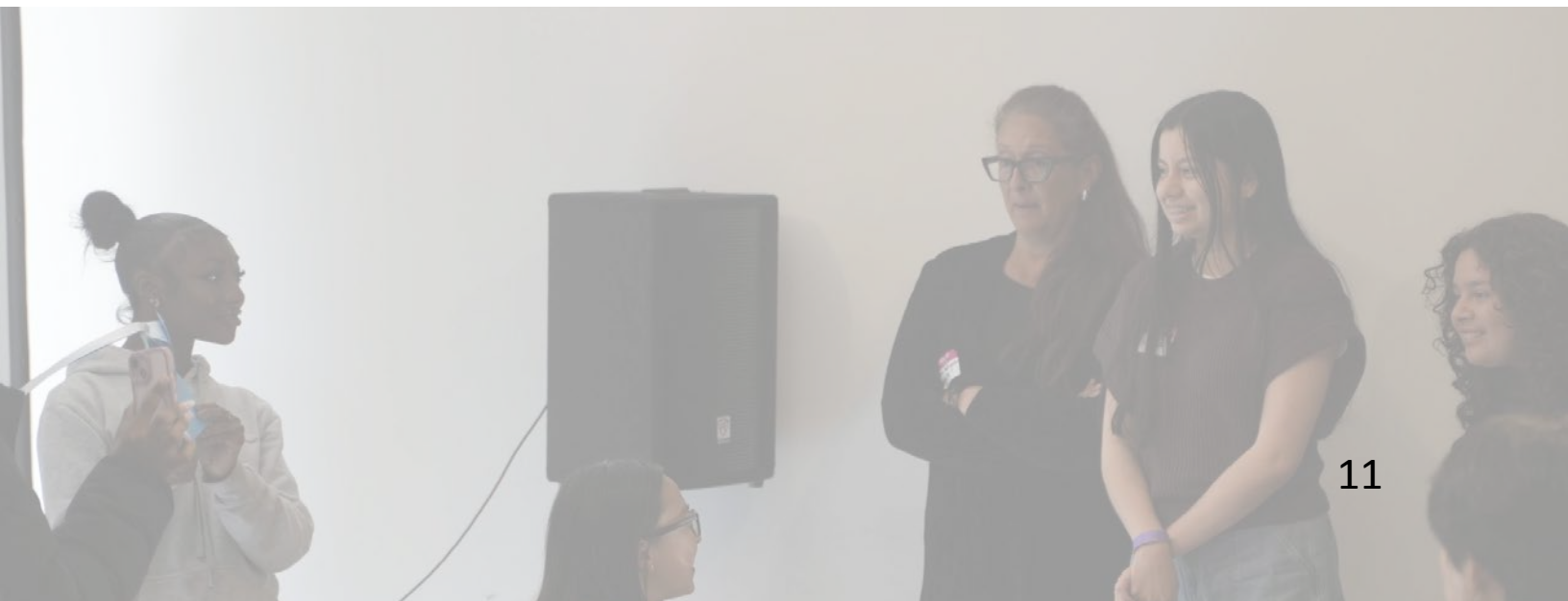
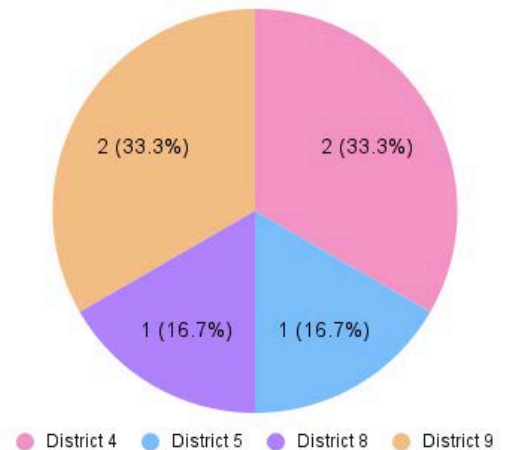
“Working at YEF has greatly enhanced my public speaking skills by pushing me to engage with diverse groups of people and communicate confidently in a professional setting. One of the aspects that I enjoyed the most was conducting Grantee Orientations — giving me experience with meeting my peers face-to-face and hearing their ideas directly. It's exciting to welcome others into the program while learning to speak clearly, listen actively, and build connections through conversation.”


— Journey Green, YEF Community Funder 2024-Present

Gender



Neighborhood





## From Our Community Funders

*"I've been involved with YEF since my sophomore year. And now, as a senior, I can honestly say the experience has been transformative. Over the past few years, I've not only learned more about the needs and strengths of my community. But I've also discovered a lot about myself — what I care about, how I lead, and the kind of impact I want to make. Being part of YEF has pushed me to step outside of my comfort zone, speak up, and think critically about real-world issues. It's helped me grow more confident, compassionate, and committed to creating positive change — not just in my neighborhood, but in whatever space I step into next."*

- LaNiya Greer, YEF - Community Funder 2023-Present

*"YEF has been a culmination of two years for me. From signing my onboarding paperwork on my first day to giving out my cycle of grants — it has been a journey alongside my fellow community funders. I can remember the first time I stepped into the workspace: I was timid and quiet. And now, I've come full circle as a veteran. I know that with my parting steps, I can be confident in the community funder team we've developed. And I believe the youth we've worked with have done wonderful and incredible things — one that will leave a lasting footprint in San Francisco and our community."*

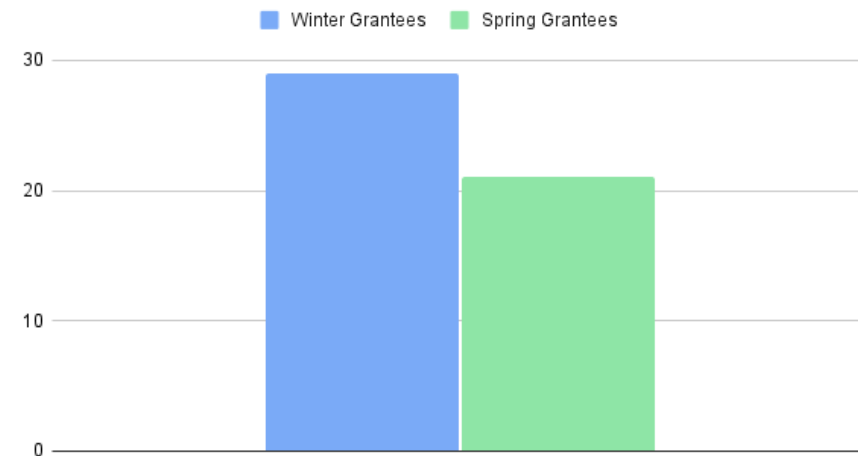
- Elijah Arrington, YEF - Community Funder 2023-2025



# GRANTEES



## Projects in 2024-2025

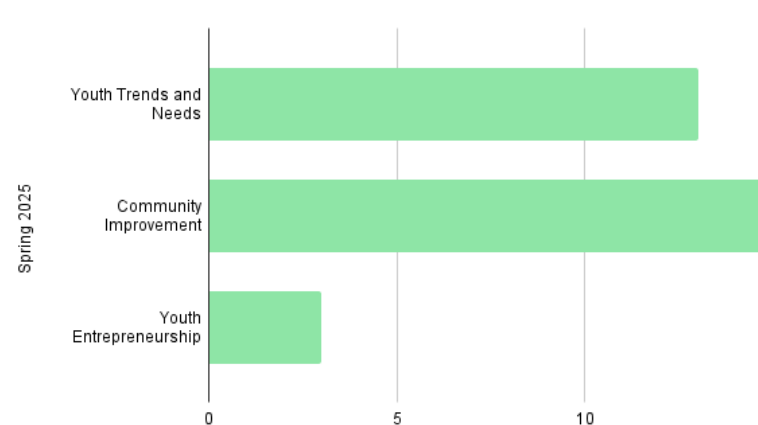
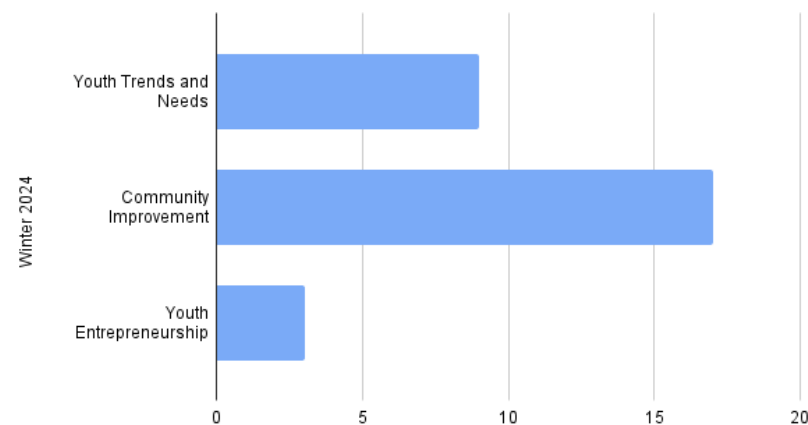


## Number of Projects

- 29 Projects funded in Winter '24
- 23 Projects funded in Spring '25
- \$425,000 awarded to youth

*"I would say that the most impactful part of this project was most definitely being able to see how many young people of color were interested in civic engagement. I think that I have also realized how important communicating with adults is ... not being afraid to say "I need help" is super essential — especially if you want to grow as a person."*

- Adriel Oyagata, District 9 Youth Council - Spring 2025 Youth Leader



## The Youth Engagement Ladder



Young people benefit when they have a voice, role, and influence in their environment and future. Youth voice encourages academic and community engagement, fosters feelings of self-worth, and builds leadership skills that prime young people for civic life and proactive engagement.

Whereas many programs can treat youth as participants or service recipients to benefit from engaging in educational activities, the Youth Empowerment Fund establishes youth as vital partners in decision-making around programming itself, as well as broader goals taking aim at community projects. This foundational recognition of youth as partners in programming opens the door for youth to exercise their voice, grow skills and strengthen their sense of self while transitioning into early adulthood.

## BeYOUty

**Winter Cycle: \$5,000**

**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Youth Trends and Needs**



BeYOUty strives to empower young women and girls to embrace their best selves and reclaim their dignity by creating a safe and supportive space for practicing wellness together and using beauty as a tool for self-expression.

During the Spring 2025 Grant Cycle, BeYOUty hosted a series of three workshops. For the first one, Reach Your Northern Star, youth leaders facilitated activities such as creating vision boards and patchwork that reflected each participant's childhood values and hopes for their future self. The second, Healthier, Happier you: a guest speaker led the youth participants in self-compassion yoga. The third workshop was a collaboration with another youth organization, StressLess. There, they engaged their participants in practicing mindfulness by painting, journaling, and sculpting clay. The community of girls had the opportunity to sit down, listen to each other's stories while sharing their own.

"At our third and final workshop, we gave a special gift for the girls who came to every single workshop of our spring series! It was so fun to bond, connect, and share our first initiative with them. The girls showed so much love for BeYOUty ... and we were so excited to celebrate with them."

— Sophia Chen, BeYOUty Youth Leader







## Junior Economic Club of San Francisco

**Spring Cycle: \$2,630**

**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Youth Entrepreneurship**



Founded in 2020, the Junior Economic Club of San Francisco (JEC SF) is a student-led non-profit with a mission to expose high school students to the business world through networking events, workshops, and community outreach initiatives. JEC SF hosts quarterly events which connect its members with leading business figures in San Francisco.

On April 10, the JEC SF hosted their Spring Forum — an event dedicated to innovation, leadership, and community-focused economic solutions. The event kicked off with a panel of four keynote speakers. They offered insights on entrepreneurship, sustainability, fintech, and professional development. After the panel, student teams presented their original proposals for the Local Economic Impact Study Challenge. Their proposals addressed key regional issues such as affordable housing and support for small business. And the evening concluded with a special presentation of awards signed by Senator Scott Wiener, to the JEC SF Board Members in recognition of their service and commitment.

## Jing Shao Nian

Winter Cycle: \$8,100



京少年

Youth Chinese Opera

**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

### Project Type: Youth Trends and Needs

Jing Shao Nian is a youth-run Peking and Cantonese Opera company. Its mission is dedicated to engaging Chinese-American youth to preserve Chinese Opera in the younger generation. In its program, students not only learn the technical skills of stage movements and vocal technique, but also learn about the deeper cultural history and Chinese Opera as a form of activism.

Jing Shao Nian's program directly trains young people from both public and private schools for free — offering them an immersive experience in Chinese Opera and culture at no cost.



“We have witnessed the deep joy and sense of pride that older generations feel when they see children perform. It’s as if their legacy is being carried forward. At one of our performances, a woman was moved to tears, sharing that she hadn’t heard a particular song since she was a little girl. We want to encourage this kind of inter-generational connection through the performing arts and bring SF Chinatown together.”

— Jing Shao Nian Youth Leader



## ***Little Free Library By Lick Wilmerding's City Bookworms Club***

**Spring Cycle: \$10,000**

**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**



**Project Type: Community Improvement;  
Youth Trends and Needs**

The Little Free Library Project is an extension of City Bookworms, a club at Lick-Wilmerding High School. The project's mission is to build, paint, and design Little Free Libraries and install them throughout San Francisco to provide easy access to books for families.



The students recycle books they love and stock them at Little Free Libraries to share their love of reading. Public and school libraries are the first source for access to physical books. But Little Free Libraries (public book-sharing boxes) can play an important role too. They can improve access to books — increasing reading time and encouraging children to build their own home libraries.

Unfortunately, in many cities, including San Francisco, Little Free Libraries are not distributed equally. They are costly to build and take time to install when many families do not have a lot of time. This project helps fill the gaps and strategically locates new Little Free Libraries where they can have the greatest impact.

The young people behind this project believe that books should be accessible to everyone. Spreading the magic of literature is essential to increasing literacy. And together, we can make a difference — one little library at a time.



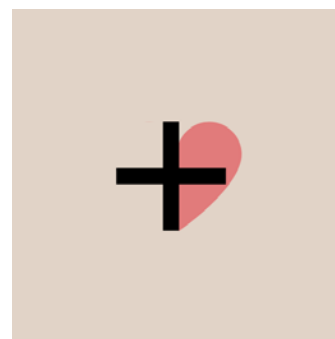
## Medical First Aid for Youth

**Winter Cycle: \$10,000**

**Additional Funding: \$5,000**

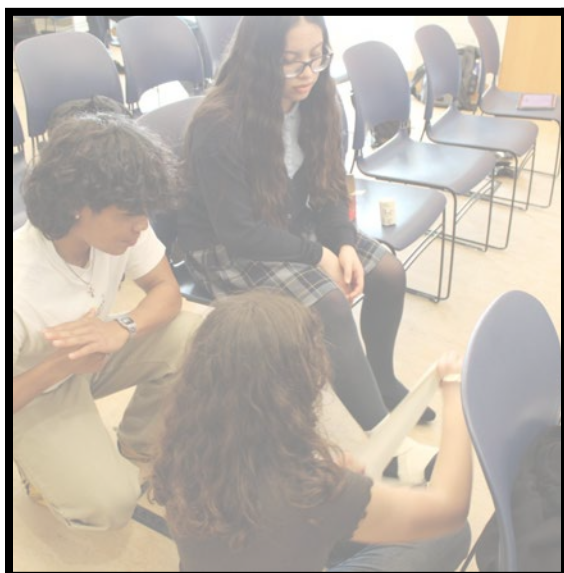
**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Community Improvement**



Medical First Aid for Youth (MFAFY) is a youth-led nonprofit organization that aims to provide free hands-on CPR and first aid training and medical education to middle and high school students of all backgrounds in order to better prepare the community for first aid emergencies.

Students walk away from MFAFY with the knowledge, training, and confidence to take action in life-threatening emergencies such as choking or life-threatening bleeding. MFAFY runs classes at schools through MFAFY clubs, where they teach the curriculum over the course of the year through short, fun, and engaging classes involving skits, scenario questions, and hands-on activities. They also offer longer city-wide classes. These classes are open to all middle and high schoolers in San Francisco, but are specifically catered towards underrepresented students and students from families who may not be able to afford such classes.



MFAFY's mission is to ensure life-saving first aid skills are available to all youth, not just those that can afford it. Their second program is their Mentorship Program. Groups of around 1-3 students shadow a professional in the medical field — learning about their jobs, networking, and forming connections.

The MFAFY members believe it is extremely important for all youth to have the skills they need to take action in the event of an emergency — enabling them to save lives and improve the well-being of countless members of the San Francisco community.



## SF Bay Cycle

**Spring: \$6,000**

**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Youth Trends and Needs;**

**Community Improvement; Youth Entrepreneurship**



SF BayCycle is a youth-led initiative to promote bicycling as an environmentally friendly mode of transportation in the San Francisco Bay Area. Their mission is to make biking more accessible to everyone in the city by breathing new life into donated bikes and putting them back on the streets. They also host free pop-up workshops, where they connect with people about bicycle repairs and upkeep. SF BayCycle's ultimate goal is to help their community by reducing carbon emissions and encouraging folks to live a more active lifestyle.

"We built our first bike in Golden Gate Park where there was heavy bike traffic. We had music playing and stood out, which made many people come up to us — curious about our organization. It was extremely informative to talk to daily bikers, who showed a lot of appreciation [for our project's mission] ... By people approaching me and having a conversation on their bike's maintenance, I feel that I get closer to my community." — SF BayCycle Team



## Peace Club

**Winter: \$9,000**

**Additional Funding: \$4,945.21**



**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Community Improvement**

San Francisco International High School is a school for students who recently immigrated to the U.S. from all over the world. And the mission of Peace Club is to celebrate diversity, understand different cultures, and help all newcomers!

Along with their mission, some of the goals of Peace Club are for their youth leaders to improve their English, learn how to be role models for other students, and gain insight into more cultures to combat discrimination. Mentors learn about time management, how to be responsible, and how to tutor and support youth leaders. For other student participants, they also have the opportunity to attain new knowledge about different cultures and even share their own culture. The club is also a great way to make new friends and keep their English conversational skills sharp.

Peace Club organizes several events and festivals for International High School throughout the school year — including the End of the Year International Night. For the year's International Night event, youth created and facilitated an activity connected to the topic of "Cultivating a Culture of Peace." They taught emotional literacy and peaceful communication through a game of charades, with feelings vocabulary translated into seven languages.





## Project PAW

**Spring Cycle: \$8,000**

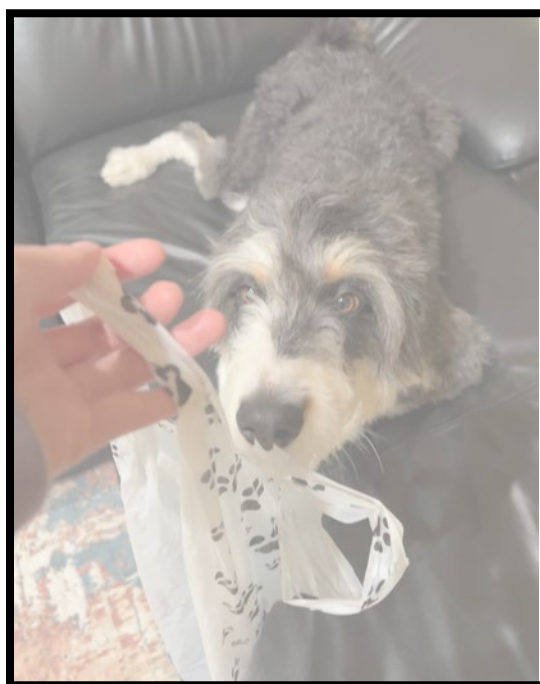
**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Community Improvement;  
Youth Entrepreneurship**

Project PAW (Pet Assistance Welfare) is a youth-led organization dedicated to supporting underserved families with pets and animals across the San Francisco Bay Area. Their mission is to ensure every animal receives the aid, healthcare, and nutrition they need, regardless of their owner's financial situation.



Project PAW focuses on providing essential care and resources to pets in shelters, low-income households, and unhoused communities. To achieve this, Project PAW members create care packages filled with food, treats, hygiene supplies, and toys, which they donate to shelters and families in need. Their team also volunteers regularly, assisting with cleaning, feeding, and socializing animals in shelters to improve their quality of life while they await adoption. Beyond their hands-on efforts, they maintain a strong online presence to advocate for animal welfare and challenge the negative stereotypes often associated with vulnerable animals. Through both direct action and digital outreach, Project PAW strives to build a compassionate community where every pet can thrive.



## uCreate

**Spring Cycle: \$10,000**

**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Youth Entrepreneurship**



uCreate serves as a community where young artists can thrive through collaboration and artistic growth. Their mission is to empower youth by offering accessible programs and opportunities to enhance creativity, develop entrepreneurial skills, and gain the confidence they need as they explore their creative passions and career paths.

This year, uCreate launched their Summer Program for San Francisco youth to further develop their craft and learn more about art entrepreneurship. At the end of the program, the students created a Capstone Project, which they presented to community members at uCreate's Summer Showcase during the Art Gallery Walk. The Gallery Walk gave their students the opportunity to gauge community interest in their potential art-focused business ideas. At the event, the team celebrated the students' hard work, connected with other youth organizations, and helped other young people tap into their creative side.





## Youth Policy Initiative

**Spring: \$5,000**

**Engagement: Organizing & Governing**

**Project Type: Youth Trends and Needs**



The Youth Policy Initiative (YPI) promotes civic engagement in underserved youth communities. They hold a free week-long annual summer camp, the Civics and Leadership Camp, which is open to all middle school students from across the San Francisco Bay Area. They specifically target their outreach towards low-income students of color and prospective first-generation college students.

This year marked YPI's 10th summer hosting the Civics and Leadership Camp. YPI teaches students about current events and local and national issues through workshops, group discussions, debates, guest speakers, lessons, and engaging simulation activities. The organization aims to inspire students to take action to solve problems in their communities and support them towards a future in political activism.

YPI also gives high school aged Teaching Assistants an opportunity to work with younger students. Through the presentations and curriculum they create, the Teaching Assistants have the opportunity to gain knowledge and do extensive research on social issues they are passionate about.

"As 16-18 year olds, we share a close connection with the middle schoolers. The conversations and activities we hold help youth who are struggling to find a way to meaningfully learn about or interact with politics. Our camp also offers a small yet inclusive community in which students feel empowered to use their voice."

– Youth Policy Initiative team



## From Our Grantees

*"I'm proud to have played a key role in an initiative that directly supports communities in San Francisco. Managing a \$10,000 budget at 16 - 17 [years old] taught me not only financial responsibility but also how to problem solve under pressure. I'm proud of the critical thinking and arithmetic skills I've sharpened through my experiences with Create To Donate SF."* – **April Zhang, Create to Donate - Winter 2024 Grant Cycle Youth Leader**



*"My project has allowed me to grow as a leader by improving my ability to multitask and time manage. I learned how to face new challenges and how I can ask support from my team members when I need it most. Especially as an artist, my project has allowed me to once again view art entrepreneurship as a path I can take in the future, whether in a professional setting or for personal sake."*

*Hearing feedback from community members and my summer program students have also shown how much this project has impacted them positively — allowing them to express themselves more freely and being able to showcase their creative skills."*

– **Susanna Zhang, uCreate – Spring 2025 Grant Cycle Youth Leader**

*"We learned that our passion — our love of building things, combined with our love for books — powers this project. As freshmen, we were new to our high school, Lick-Wilmerding, and this project pushed us out of our comfort zone. We had to get to know the ins-and-outs of our school's administration. We needed to find mentors among the faculty. We have created partnerships with other student clubs on campus that we never knew existed. And maybe the biggest lesson of all: We learned that, thanks to YEF's support, our idea to build these Little Free Libraries mattered. It had life. And our community is rallying around it."* – **Frankie Lemieux, Little Free Libraries - Spring 2025 Grant Cycle Youth Leader**

*"A memorable moment was when we were stuck on our logo. We were trying to figure out how to portray the exact message we wanted to spread. This was difficult, especially since at the time we weren't able to have our full group together. We were able to make mock ups and discuss with one another about the message being portrayed. Then it clicked when we were discussing. We all had a different idea/suggestion that we were able to bring together to finalize the logo/slogan. This is so important to us because this represents our community and the impact we want to make. Being able to look back on it and feel proud is great."* – **Elena Angulo, Power Youth Movement - Spring 2025 Grant Cycle Youth Leader**

# HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YEF

## BE A FISCAL SPONSOR FOR YOUTH!

Support a youth-led project with \$10,000! A fiscal sponsor is a non-profit organization or a for-profit company that will front the money for a grantee project's purchases and be reimbursed by YEF. The organization must have eligible insurance that will cover the project. Check out our website for exact requirements for YEF fiscal sponsorship.



## TAKE PART IN PHILANTHROPY THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE FOR THE FUTURE.

Here's how it works:

1. A youth-led project is chosen for a YEF grant up to \$10k.
2. Your organization fronts the money for the youth project.
3. YEF reimburses your organization for the full grant by the month.

### Contact YEF staff for more information!

📷 @yef\_sf

✉ yefstaff@ymcasf.net

🌐 ymcasf.org/yef

## THANKS TO ALL YEF SUPPORTERS



**CRANKSTART**





## THANK YOU!

We want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has stood with the Youth Empowerment Fund during this time of transition. The success of YEF would not be possible without the unwavering support of our incredible communities.

To our 2024–2025 fiscal sponsor partners—Friends of SOTA, Her IDEA SF, The Richmond Neighborhood center, Lowell Alumni Association, Mission Graduates, Mission Cultural Center, St. Ignatius Preparatory, Bay Area Community Resource, Gum Moon Residence Hall, Abraham Lincoln PTSA, Mission High Foundation, Vanida Thai Kitchen, Peninsula Custom Construction Inc., Bayview YMCA, Gateway Public Schools, San Francisco Study Center, Teen Tech SF Global, Enliven Partners, Alaska Airlines, William Blair and Crankstart Foundation —thank you for your steadfast commitment to empowering San Francisco’s youth to lead, innovate, and create lasting change. To our adult allies, your mentorship, guidance, and encouragement have been vital in helping youth bring their visions to life.

A special acknowledgment goes to Friends of SOTA for their tireless dedication to helping youth bring their projects to life. As a volunteer-run nonprofit and one of YEF’s longest-standing partners, they have worked alongside us for over five years, facilitating more than \$200,000 in support for youth-led initiatives this year alone. Our deepest thanks to Suz Dehne and Anne Yanow for their generosity, advocacy, and unwavering belief in young people’s ideas. Your impact does not go unnoticed.

To our YMCA Adult team this year, (Susy Dubon, Amber Ly, Precious Ogbonna Nancy Hernandez,& Jenifer Toyomura) a special-shout goes to the incredible womxn whose dedication and vision have been essential to building and sustaining this space. Your leadership and unwavering commitment have shaped YEF’s success but have also created a supportive environment where youth feel seen, valued and empowered. To our administrative and accounting teams—and in particular Kay Cooper—we are so grateful for your behind-the-scenes expertise that keeps our operations running.

We are also deeply thankful to the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF) for your ongoing investment in YEF. Your support has a profound and lasting impact on the lives of young people in our community. We are especially grateful for Monica EO'Mailani Flores, our program officer, whose patience, understanding, and deep knowledge of youth philanthropy have made our work stronger and more meaningful. Having Monica as a thoughtful partner to exchange ideas with has been truly invaluable.

To our 2024–2025 Community Funder team—Journey, Keana, Ortwin, Elijah, LaNiya, and Chan—we celebrate you. It is inspiring to see youth from across San Francisco represented in this group, each bringing unique perspectives, creativity, and innovation to the table. This year, we have grown together—leading with empathy, understanding, and a shared commitment to equity. You are a shining example of what San Francisco has to offer. Thank you as well to your families and friends for cheering you on as you took on this important role while balancing the challenges of being a teenager in a changing city.

As we look ahead, our shared mission remains clear: to ensure YEF remains accessible to youth across San Francisco. We believe in their voices, their visions, and their leadership. If you would like to join us in this work or make a contribution, please reach out to program Director Susy Dubon ([sdubon@ymcasf.org](mailto:sdubon@ymcasf.org)).

Together, we are creating opportunities, fostering leadership, and building a brighter future for San Francisco’s youth. We are excited to continue this journey with you in the years to come.

