

YEF 2025-2026 Annual Report

1. Each project that provided a project folder, their emails to see if they received folders if you provided and if not in with Susy in the back!
2. Familiarize yourself with the folder, this folder will have examples of info you need to use to post on the report.
3. Begin plugging in information to the report.
4. Take a selfie and upload to the back room as if "To QY Report".

Program Director: Susy Dubon

Program Specialist: Amber Ly

Table of Contents

What is the Youth Empowerment Fund?.....	3
Urban Services YMCA, A Community Action Agency.....	4
Youth Workforce Development.....	5
COMMUNITY FUNDERS.....	6
From Our Community Funders.....	8
GRANTEES.....	12
Youth Engagement Ladder.....	13
Grantee Data.....	14
GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS.....	16
From Our Grantees.....	25
BEYOND OUR GRANTS.....	26
YMCA National Changemakers Summit.....	27
Bay Area Creative Award.....	29
HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YEF.....	26
OUR SUPPORTERS.....	27
THANK YOU!.....	28



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, Community Improvement, and Youth Entrepreneurship.

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 2025-2026 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.	2
	1z	Number of youth who maintained employment for 90 days.	2
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.	2
	6a2	Number of Community Action program participants who improved their social networks	2
	6a3	Number of Community Action program participants who gained other skills, knowledge and abilities to enhance their ability to engage.	2

In 2025-2026 YEF has had...

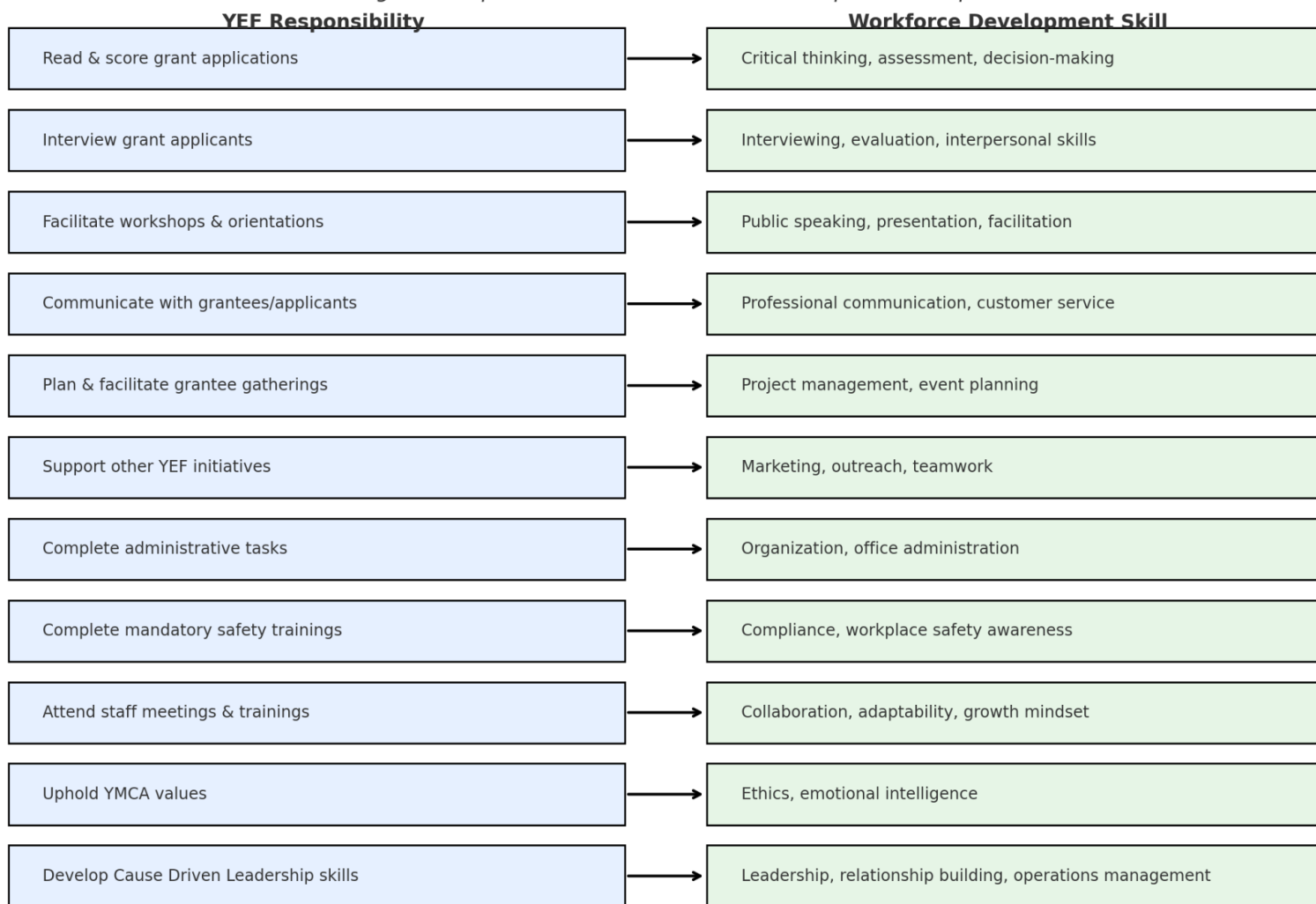


- 5 Community Funders have maintained their position for over 90 days.
- 3 Community Funders obtained their high school diploma.
- 5 Community Funders improved their leadership skills and expanded their social networks through the YEF program.
- 5 Community Funders increased skills, knowledge, and abilities 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



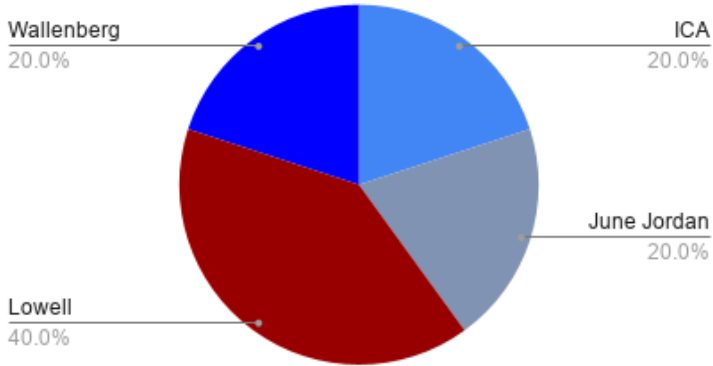
Integrating our youth philanthropy program into workforce development creates a powerful pathway for young people to build the professional skills, leadership capacity, and civic engagement needed for lifelong success. Beyond technical skills, youth philanthropy fosters critical thinking, ethical decision-making, 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.



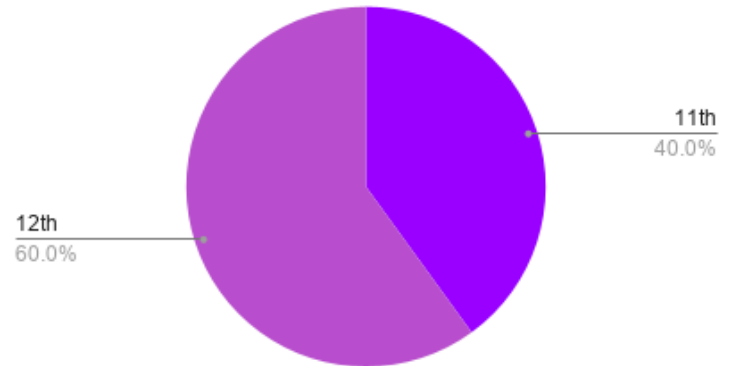
Community Funder Team 2025 - 2026

Demographics

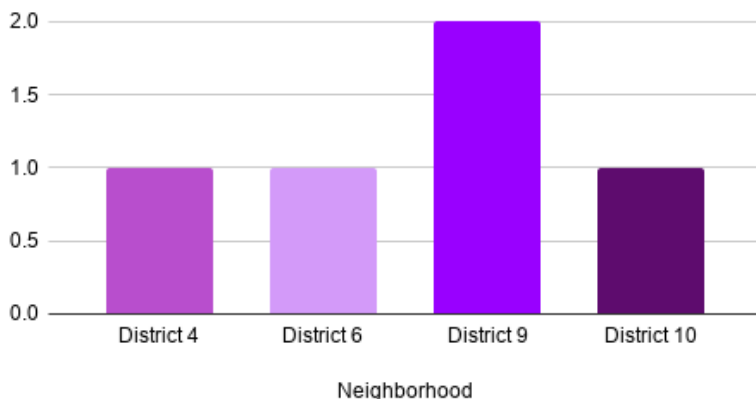
School



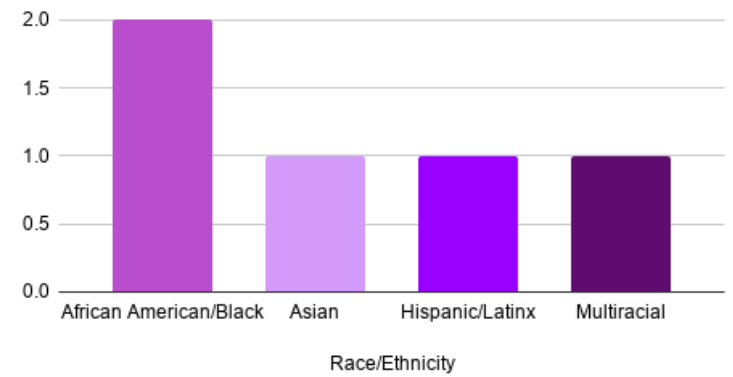
Grade



Neighborhood



Race/Ethnicity





From Our Community Funders

"YEF has taught me the importance of advocacy. By learning about the needs of young people and helping fund youth-led projects, I realized how powerful it is to use your voice to support others and create positive change. This experience has encouraged me to become a stronger advocate for my community and for issues that matter to me. Being part of the grantmaking process also strengthened my leadership, teamwork, and decision-making skills. Working alongside other youth funders helped me understand the responsibility that comes with making decisions that can impact others."

- LaNiyah Greer, YEF Community Funder 2023 – 2026

"I am immensely grateful for the experiences granted by YEF. Throughout the past three 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 together was rewarding, especially watching from a veteran perspective."

- Chanmolyta Kim, YEF Community Funder 2023 – 2026



“If I were to describe my experience as a Community Funder in a few words, it would be an opening of perspectives. I feel like I was exposed to so many communities and people throughout SF that I would not have been exposed to if it were not for my role in this program. I think the real impact on me has come from those connections, specifically the people I have met (fiscal sponsors, youth leaders, my fellow Community Funders, and the YEF adult staff). One of the biggest strengths of our Community Funder team is keeping an open mind with each other. Even when we have our disagreements we have always managed to find a common ground. In terms of a holistic team impact, I think our team of Community Funders as a collective have benefited from our friendship. I know it sounds a bit corny, but I think a large part of why I think this job has been so fulfilling is that the people I have gotten to work with have been more than just co-workers, but friends as well.”

— Ortwin Kollarz, YEF Community Funder 2024 – 2026

“I was a sophomore when I got this job. I feel that I'm a naturally outspoken person, but YEF has made me even more outspoken. I feel that YEF made me realize that I need to speak up on everything, even on the little stuff that you think no one cares about. YEF has definitely made me more social. It made me feel more comfortable talking to strangers and has even made me feel more encouraged to participate in my community. YEF has brought me to meet new people at every event we go to throughout all of our grant cycles. I've met people I'd never thought I'd meet and have talked to people I never thought I'd talk to. I really appreciate YEF for showing me new opportunities and new experiences. It's brought me to discover a new side of myself.”

— Keana Lara Gutierrez, YEF Community Funder 2024 – Present





“When I joined YEF as a sophomore, I had no idea how much the program would shape me over the next few years. Looking back now, I can honestly say that YEF has helped me grow in ways I never expected and has become a major part of my high school experience.

One of the biggest skills I've gained through YEF is public speaking. At first, speaking in front of groups was very intimidating, and I lacked confidence when sharing my ideas. Through hosting orientation, info sessions, and tabling at events, I gradually became more comfortable speaking in front of others. Over time, I developed not only stronger public speaking skills, but also greater confidence in myself.

YEF also taught me how the organization operates and gave me a deeper understanding of the work that goes into supporting youth programs and creating change in the community. Being involved in the grantmaking process and seeing the impact of our decisions helped me grow in leadership, teamwork, and critical-thinking skills that I will carry with me long after high school.

A huge part of my positive experience in YEF has been the people who have supported me along the way. Our Program Director, Susy, is truly amazing. She has been there every step of the way, encouraging us. Her guidance has played a major role in bettering my communication skills. I am also incredibly grateful for our Program Specialist, Amber. Since joining the team, she has helped us tremendously and has always been supportive, making sure we had the resources and encouragement we needed to succeed.

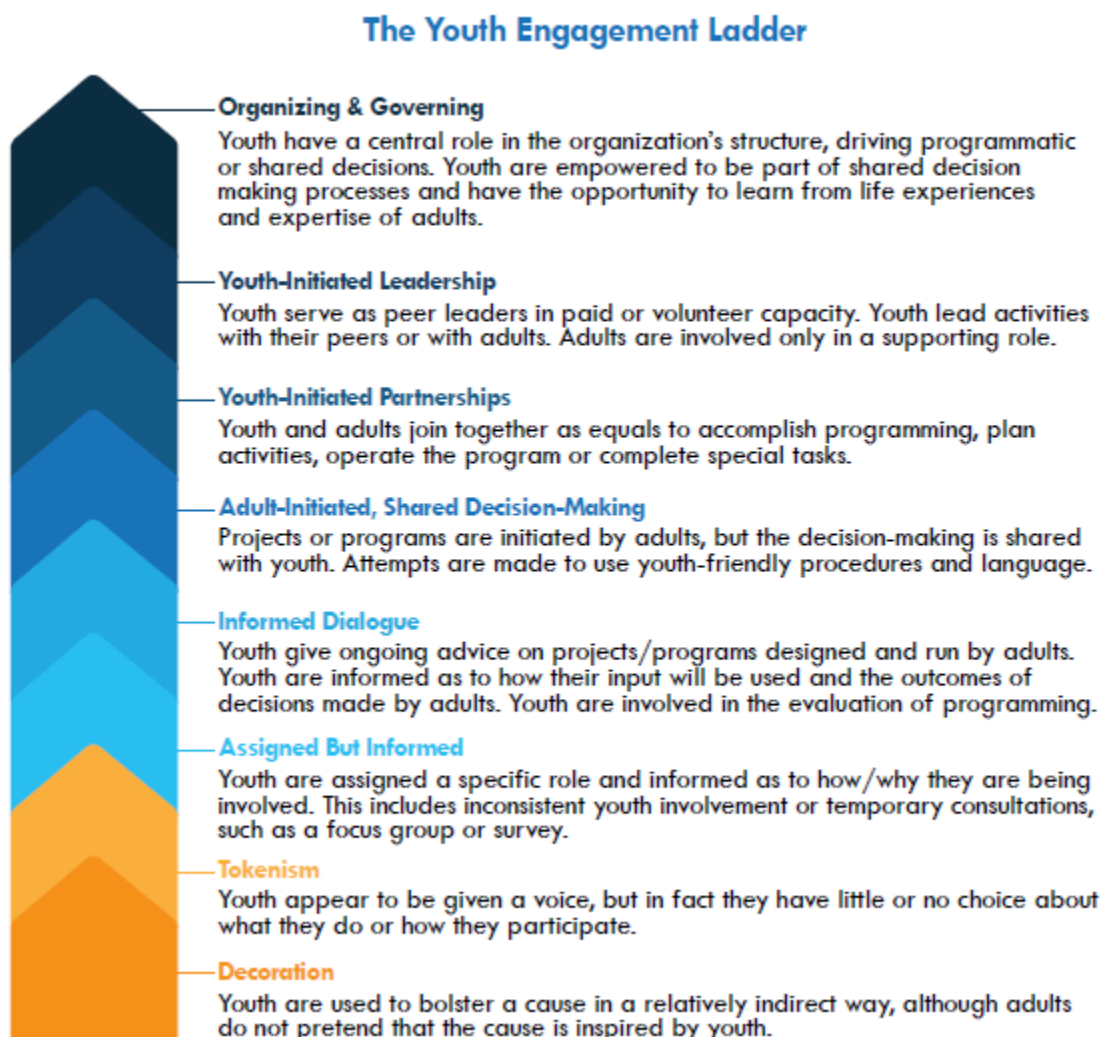
As I prepare for another year with YEF, I am excited to become a veteran member and help guide the newcomers. I remember exactly what it felt like to be in their shoes when I first joined as a sophomore. Being able to share what I have learned and help others grow is something I am really looking forward to. I am incredibly grateful to be a part of YEF and for all of the opportunities this program has given me. The confidence, leadership skills, and experiences I have gained will stay with me throughout college and beyond.”

- Journey Green, YEF Community Funder 2024 – Present

GRANTEES



Youth Engagement Ladder

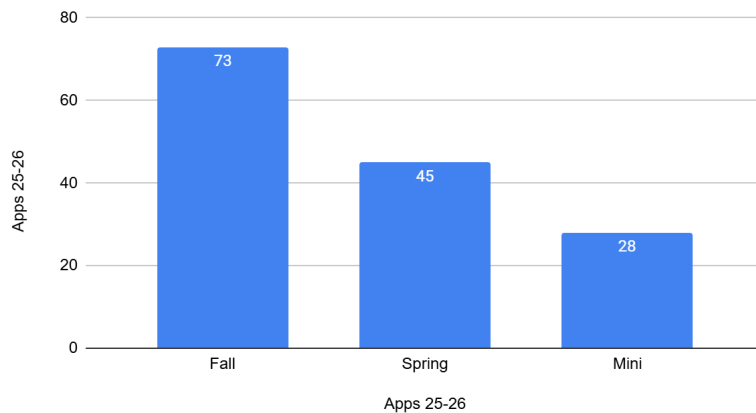


Young people benefit when they have a voice, role, and influence in their environment and future. Youth voice encourages academic and community engagement, fosters feelings of self-worth, and builds leadership skills that prime young people for civic life and proactive engagement.

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.

Grantee Data

Grant Applications 2025-2026

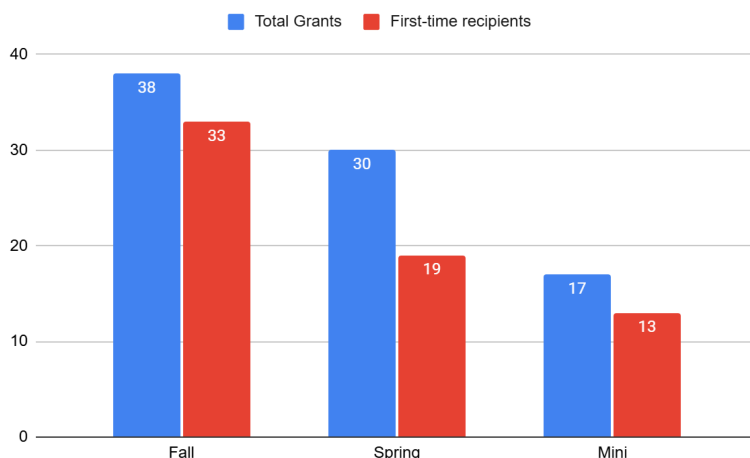


Number of Applications

- 73 Projects applied in Fall '25
- 45 Projects applied in Spring '26
- 28 Projects applied for a Mini Grant

"My Co-Founder, Matthew, and I grew up in low-income, food-insecure households in San Francisco's Tenderloin. His interests in science pushed him to solve this problem through urban agriculture, while my interest in policy guided me to legislative advocacy. After volunteering at the Academy of Sciences and leading the museum floor activities, we realized that we could combine our interests and use education to address climate inequities, especially as our neighborhood's underfunded classrooms limited students' access to environmental learning."

- Gabrielle Listana, Young Leaders in Climate Action; Spring 2025 Youth Leader



Number of Grants

- 38 Projects awarded in Fall '25
→ 33 Projects were first-time YEF recipients
- 30 Projects awarded in Spring '26
→ 19 Projects were first-time YEF recipients
- 17 Projects were awarded a Mini grant
→ 13 Projects were first-time YEF recipients

Check out our 2025-2026 Grantee Directory!

Find a list of all our projects for the past year below.



Unique Projects Served
80
Unique Youth Leaders Served
186

Youth Engagement Ladder (grantees)	Organizing & Governing	Youth-Initiated Leadership	Youth-Initiated Partnerships
Fall	24	11	3
Spring	19	8	3
Mini	12	3	1

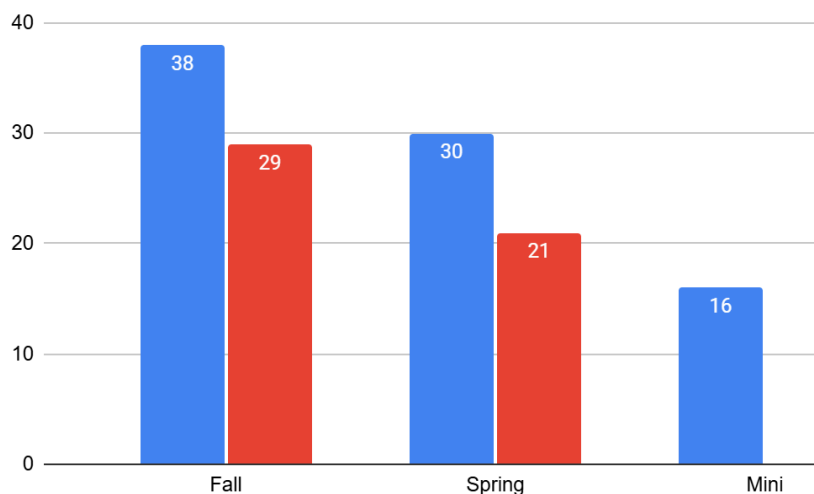
Pillars by grantees 25-26	Youth Trends and Needs	Community Improvement	Youth Entrepreneurship
Fall	30	28	7
Spring	20	21	4
Mini	6	12	6
Grand Total	56	61	17

"Once when I was house sitting at Noe Valley, I found myself becoming more active by going out to walk or by playing tennis at the court right across the street. It proved to me how your environment can affect how active you are. I felt safe in that neighborhood and I had access to all the necessary equipment to workout. Apart from making physical activities more accessible, I also helped other young girls understand the benefits exercise can have on our relationships. By having shared goals and support while working out, our participants have fostered unique friendships and bonds built off of our workshops."

- Daniela Ojeda, Bloom & Move; Spring 2025 Youth Leader

Number of Grants Distributed

2025-2026 2025-2026

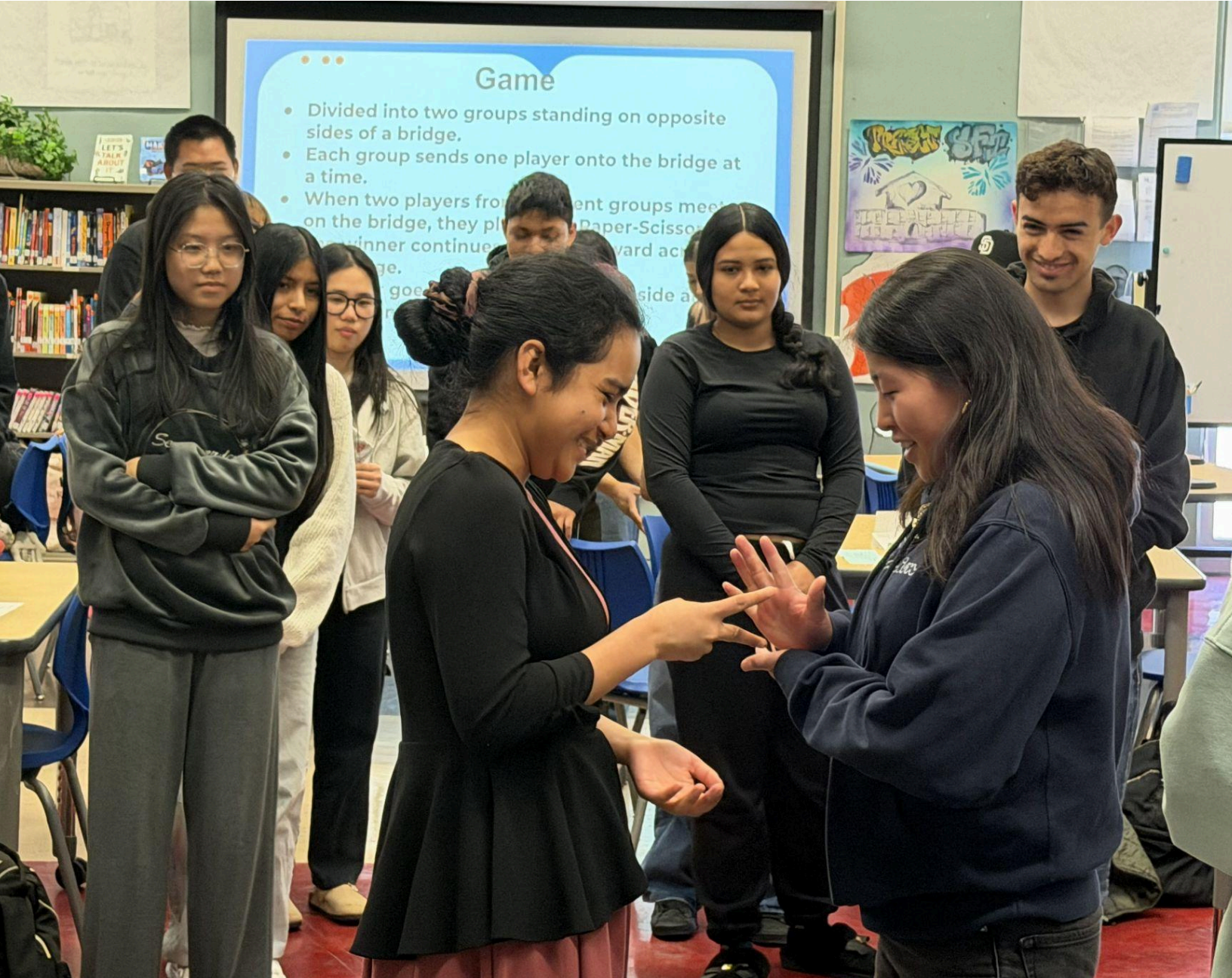


Number of Grants Distributed: Fiscal Year 202 vs. '25-'26

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GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Adaptive Tech Club

Fall 2025: \$8,000

Engagement: Organizing and Governing

Project Type:

- Youth Trends and Needs
- Community Improvement
- Youth Entrepreneurship

The Adaptive Tech Club combines technology modification and engineering innovation to create creative, low-cost solutions that improve the quality of life of children and adults with disabilities. By adapting existing technologies and designing new assistive devices, the club works to make everyday activities, play, and communication more accessible.



This year, the Adaptive Tech Club continued expanding its impact through two primary initiatives: adapting toys and developing custom assistive devices. Members modify toys by installing accessible switches that allow children to activate them using alternative inputs such as blowing, biting, or pulling. The club also designs new devices by collaborating directly with teachers and community members, using CAD software, 3D printers, laser cutters, and electronics to create solutions tailored to specific needs. Through this hands-on engineering process, students gain experience in design, manufacturing, problem-solving, and user-centered innovation.

To date, the club has adapted more than 200 toys, developed an interface that enables children who cannot use traditional keyboards or controllers to play video games, and built a bidet system for individuals without arms. These projects provide practical solutions that increase independence, accessibility, and inclusion for people with disabilities.

In the future, the Adaptive Tech Club plans to continue adapting toys and creating impactful inventions designed around the unique needs of individual users. By combining technical skills with empathy and community partnership, the organization strives to make assistive technology more affordable and accessible for all.



“Every project begins with a real need. By working directly with teachers, families, and individuals with disabilities, we create solutions that make everyday activities more accessible while showing students how engineering can have a meaningful impact on people’s lives.” - Adaptive Tech Club Youth Leader



Dear Sibs

Spring Cycle: \$5,485

Engagement: Organizing & Governing

Project Type: Youth Trends & Needs



Dear Sibs supports youth who have siblings with disabilities. Their mission is to ensure resources are accessible to youth and foster a community where youth can share their voices, stories, and lived experiences. They strive to make siblings feel understood and empowered in a space where their unique challenges or needs are recognized and valued.

A major milestone for Dear Sibs during this grant cycle was publishing their book, “Dear Sibs,” a collection of voices telling stories about what it’s like to grow up as a sibling of brothers and sisters with disabilities. This book offers an honest window into a role rarely discussed but deeply felt: the sibling who loves fiercely, adapts constantly, and often grows up faster than expected.

“Growing up with a brother with autism, I’d wake up early for school to make my brother peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and get him dressed. And I’d calm him down when he had meltdowns. Like any sister, I took care of him. But the constant focus on my brother often made me feel unseen or that my needs were less important. Dear Sibs is an initiative I’m passionate about because it directly supports people who have gone through similar experiences as I did.” — Ila Duong, Dear Sibs Youth Leader

Math Mail

Fall 2025: \$6,000

Engagement: Organizing & Governing

Project Type: Youth Trends and Needs



MATH
MAIL

Math Mail is a youth-led educational initiative that introduces elementary and middle school students to creative and engaging mathematical concepts through free hands-on learning kits. Designed by high school students, each kit contains puzzles, challenges, and materials that allow youth to explore math independently while discovering that the subject can be fun, interactive, and accessible.



Created by students who attend a specialized math school in the Bay Area, Math Mail was inspired by a desire to share the excitement of mathematics beyond the standard classroom curriculum. The team believes that many students only experience math through memorization and arithmetic, which can discourage curiosity and confidence. Through hands-on activities and real-world problem-solving, Math Mail helps students develop a deeper appreciation for mathematical thinking.

This year, Math Mail focused on expanding its reach throughout the Bay Area by increasing kit production and strengthening partnerships with community organizations. The team collaborated with the San Francisco Public Library and Concord Public Library to distribute free kits to local families and donated learning materials to children receiving long-term care at UC Davis Hospital. They also participated in the Bay

Area Maker Faire, where students and families engaged with interactive math activities and learned about future opportunities to receive kits.

In addition to distributing educational materials, Math Mail provides high school students with opportunities to develop leadership, curriculum design, and community outreach skills. Team members research mathematical topics, create original activities, test new concepts, and gather feedback from students and educators to continuously improve each kit.

"We know firsthand how exciting math can be when students are given the chance to explore it creatively. Through Math Mail, we want young people to see that math is more than formulas and worksheets—it can be challenging, fun, and full of discovery. Our goal is to make those experiences accessible to as many students as possible." – Math Mail team

Bloom & Move

Spring 2026: \$6,000

Engagement: Organizing & Governing

Project Type: Youth Trends and Needs

Bloom & Move empowers young women, particularly upper middle school and high school students, to discover forms of exercise that they genuinely enjoy. The organization believes that every young person deserves access to physical activities that help them feel strong, confident, and authentically themselves. Rather than focusing on appearance or achieving a specific body type, Bloom & Move promotes exercise as a tool for personal growth, self-expression, and overall well-being.



Through a variety of events hosted at fitness studios and in outdoor settings, Bloom & Move introduces participants to diverse styles of movement and exercise. Activities may include fitness classes, walking groups, hikes, and other opportunities that encourage girls to explore what feels right for them in a supportive and welcoming environment.

Bloom & Move aims to break down barriers that often prevent young women from engaging in physical activity. By providing access to new experiences and fostering a positive mindset around movement, the organization shows participants that limited resources or fear of trying something new should not stand in the way of pursuing a healthy and active lifestyle. Through community-building and encouragement, Bloom & Move helps young women gain confidence, develop lifelong wellness habits, and discover the joy of movement.



“Many young women feel intimidated by exercise or believe they don't belong in fitness spaces. Through Bloom & Move, we create opportunities for girls to try new activities, build confidence, and discover forms of movement that make them feel strong, empowered, and supported.”

- Daniela Ojeda, Spring 2026 Grantee: Bloom&Move Youth Leader

Carnaval Float Project

Spring 2026: \$10,000

Engagement: Organizing and Governing

Project Type:

- Youth Trends and Needs
- Community Improvement
- Youth Entrepreneurship

The Carnaval Float Project combined art, culture, and youth leadership through the design and construction of a float for the San Francisco Carnaval Parade.

Led by youth leaders Glade Cuentos and Octavio Pacifico Dunn in partnership with the Beautiful Beginnings Arts Collective (BBAC), the project provides hands-on arts education while celebrating the diverse cultures that make up the Bay Area.



BBAC works to inspire artistic expression and appreciation for multicultural traditions through education, teamwork, and community engagement. Through this project, youth participants will gain experience in large-scale art production while developing leadership, collaboration, and creative problem-solving skills.

This year, the project will focus on designing and building a float inspired by Afro-Futurism and the power of children's play. Youth participants will work alongside mentors, artists, and community members throughout every stage of the process, including planning, fundraising, material sourcing, construction, and final presentation. Community build days will provide opportunities for participants to learn new skills while engaging with the public.

The float will serve as a platform for youth voices and cultural representation during the San Francisco Carnaval Parade. Participants come from neighborhoods including Excelsior, Bayview, Visitation Valley, and Crocker Amazon. By creating a large-scale public artwork, the project will showcase the creativity and leadership of young people while encouraging cultural pride and community connection.

"This project was about more than building a float. It gave us young people the opportunity to lead, create, and celebrate their communities while showing how art can bring people together and inspire positive change." - Carnaval Float team



Bay Area Youth Climate Summit

Fall 2025: \$10,000

Engagement: Organizing & Governing

Project Type:

- Youth Trends and Needs
- Community Improvement



The Bay Area Youth Climate Summit is a local environmental non-profit run entirely for youth by youth. Through solution-based climate justice organizing, we cultivate a community that empowers youth to become educators, activists, and leaders.

One of their biggest milestones during this grant was hosting their second annual MLK Day Climate Rally. But BAYC also launched climate health care kits in Bayviews-Hunter Point, policy-writing workshops, and climate action demonstrations.

“In March, we hosted a workshop in collaboration with Youth Power Climate Action. It was a smaller workshop than we usually host, but that allowed for attendees to ask individual questions about the Make Polluters Pay bill ... Teams from cities/counties that had already passed resolutions in support of MPP were able to give advice on how to frame the legislation for different audiences. We are also forever grateful to youth activist, Freyjaa Singh Kirti, for leading the workshop and sharing her own experience with environmental policy such as the MPP bill.” – Bay Area Youth Climate team



Slavic Voice

Fall Grant Cycle: \$5,100

Engagement: Organizing & Governing

Project Type: Youth Trends and Needs



Slavic Voice is a San Francisco-based, youth-led nonprofit that connects Slavic American youth with peers in Slavic countries through storytelling, cultural exchange, and civic advocacy. Through a collaborative bilingual newspaper, Slavic Voice creates opportunities for young people to share their experiences, celebrate their heritage, and build meaningful connections across borders.

This year, Slavic Voice focused on transforming its online publication into a printed newspaper distributed throughout schools, libraries, and cultural centers in San Francisco. Each issue is entirely youth-created and features personal essays, interviews, cultural spotlights, artwork, and language exchange sections that highlight the diverse experiences of Slavic youth. The project aims to strengthen cultural identity, preserve language and traditions, and provide a platform for youth voices that are often underrepresented.

In addition to publishing the newspaper, Slavic Voice engages youth in civic advocacy efforts. The organization works with local cultural institutions and community leaders to promote initiatives such as Slavic Heritage Month and the expansion of Slavic language education opportunities. Through writing, organizing events, and participating in advocacy campaigns, youth gain leadership, communication, and community-building skills while creating positive change.



Slavic Voice also provides youth contributors with opportunities to develop their writing, editing, and leadership abilities. Through workshops, cultural events, and collaborative projects, participants learn how to tell impactful stories, connect with their communities, and amplify the voices of others.

"As young people growing up between cultures, we know what it feels like to search for a sense of belonging. Slavic Voice gives youth a space to share their stories, connect with others who understand their experiences, and take pride in their heritage. Through storytelling and advocacy, we're building a stronger and more connected community for the next generation."

— Slavic Voice team

Lowell Scientific Research

Mini Cycle: \$5,000

Engagement: Organizing & Governing

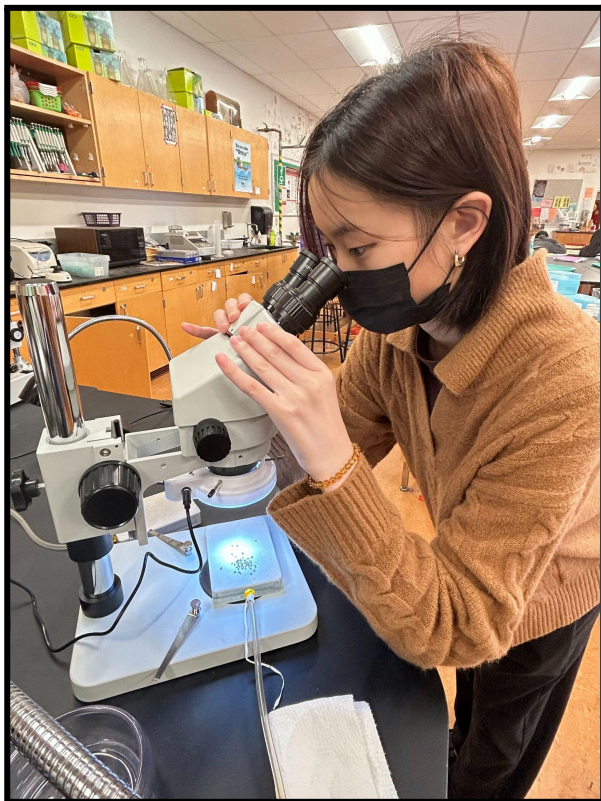
Project Type: Youth Trends & Needs



Scientific Research Methods in *Drosophila melanogaster* is a research course at Lowell where students engage in a year-long project studying fruit flies. This includes lab work, managing stocks, dissections, etc. The course ends with a presentation at Stanford and students being named contributors to the Kim Lab publications on fly research.

“In April, we traveled down to Stanford to attend a conference and present our research in the form of slideshow presentations and a poster panel. Other conference attendees asked us questions as well about the research, and we had the opportunity to learn and ask about their research at their respective schools. It was an exceptional opportunity to have a space like this to be able to learn more about what other schools are doing as well have a space that simulates something we may pursue in the future. Additionally, learning and receiving feedback directly from Stanford researchers and peers from other schools enhanced our own learning and furthered our interest in this field.”

– Lowell Scientific Research team



From Our Grantees

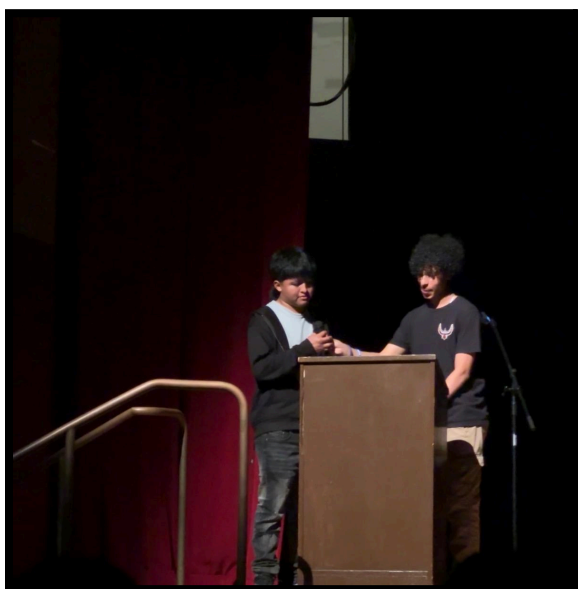
District 3 Youth Council (Fall 2025 Grantee)



"In March 2026, we completed three weeks of our Civic Sprout workshop for elementary and middle school students. We also completed four sessions of our Hear District 3 Youth workshops, where we hosted a workshop with YouthMOJO, a workshop with Campaign Academy, and two workshops with Chinatown YMCA. All of these experiences were very rewarding, but it was especially moving to hear young students from Civic Sprouts voice their ideas about politics and their thoughts on how to make San Francisco (especially District 3) a better place for all."

– Winnie Liao, Youth Leader
Fall 2025 Grant Cycle

Latinos with Purpose (Mini Grantee)



"One of the goals we achieved this year was uniting the Latino community at one of our recent events, 'La Noche Multicultural.' This achievement inspires us, as a community, to continue creating more projects where we can bring together diverse communities — such as African Americans, Asians, and Filipinos. We also saw participation from students who previously did not feel comfortable performing on stage."

– Latinos with Purpose Team
Mini Grant Cycle



BEYOND OUR GRANTS

YMCA National Changemakers Summit: Charlotte, North Carolina June 16 – 18, 2026

From June 16 – 18, 2026, Youth Empowerment Fund staff had the privilege of accompanying Plain Policy, a San Francisco-based youth-led initiative, to the YMCA National Changemakers Summit in Charlotte, North Carolina. The three-day experience brought together young leaders from across the country to showcase innovative solutions addressing challenges in their communities.

The summit schedule was packed from morning to evening with keynote speakers, networking opportunities, leadership development activities, and youth presentations. Upon arrival on June 16, Changemaker grantees checked into the hotel and had time to settle in before the opening dinner and welcome program.



The evening featured inspiring remarks from Suzanne McCormick, CEO of YMCA of the USA, and Sue Glass, CEO of YMCA of Greater Charlotte. Following the keynote addresses, participants engaged in an interactive creative experience led by Michael Fletcher, CEO of The Odyssey. Youth were each given a pair of brand-new white Nike Air Force 1 sneakers and invited to personalize them through a series of maker stations that included markers, taping techniques, circuitry elements, and airbrushing. The activity created an energetic and welcoming atmosphere, allowing young leaders to express their creativity while connecting with peers from across the nation. The excitement and joy on the participants' faces reflected the spirit of innovation and community that defined the summit.

The second day focused on presentations and interviews. After breakfast and preparation time, participants were organized into presentation groups to begin sharing their projects. According to YMCA of the USA staff, this was the first year that presentations were structured back-to-back, allowing Changemakers to observe and learn from one another's work. The format highlighted the breadth of ideas being developed by youth nationwide and created an environment of mutual inspiration and support. During the lunch session, finalists were announced. While the original plan was to select a Top 5, judges were so impressed by the quality of the projects that they expanded the field to a Top 8. Plain Policy advanced to the semifinal round, earning the opportunity to refine and strengthen their presentation for the final day of competition.

What made this experience particularly meaningful was the opportunity to see a Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF) grantee compete on a national stage. Plain Policy has previously received support through the Youth Empowerment Fund and continues to demonstrate how local youth-led initiatives can grow into impactful civic engagement efforts. The competition was exceptionally strong, with participants presenting polished solutions and compelling pitches that often felt reminiscent of a "Shark Tank" presentation. Most importantly, the summit showcased the passion young people have for creating positive change in their communities.

On the final day, all eight finalists presented their projects before judges and attendees. Although Plain Policy was not selected for the grand prize of \$5,000, the team was recognized with a \$1,500 award and gained invaluable experience, connections, and national exposure. Plain Policy made YMCA of San Francisco History by being the first time that San Francisco Youth picked for Changemakers have placed and ranked!

Spotlight on Plain Policy

Founded by Leah M. and team member Rahel Y., Plain Policy aims to increase civic engagement, voter turnout, and public understanding of legislation. Their innovative app translates legislation from local governments and all 50 state legislatures into clear, plain-language summaries that are accessible to everyday users. Recognizing concerns around artificial intelligence and political bias, the team has built safeguards into the platform to ensure that generated content remains bipartisan, factual, and accessible.

The funding awarded through the Changemakers Summit will support the continued development of the platform, including launching the application in app stores and expanding language translation and accessibility features to better serve youth and adults from diverse backgrounds.

The inspiration behind Plain Policy stems from the founders' lived experiences. Leah's vision for the platform emerged after participating in a Sojourn experience where she visited the home of civil rights leader Medgar Evers. Learning about his work organizing voter registration drives, advocating for school integration, and fighting for civil rights inspired her to create tools that make civic participation more accessible. Rahel draws inspiration from her role as Co-Chair of the League of Women Voters chapter in San Francisco. Through her work, she has witnessed the challenges many communities of color face when it comes to civic participation and voting, often due to fear, misinformation, or lack of access to understandable information.

Together, Leah and Rahel transformed their experiences into a powerful solution designed to strengthen civic engagement and empower communities. Their participation in the YMCA National Changemakers Summit serves as a testament to the impact youth can have when given the opportunity, resources, and support to lead meaningful change.



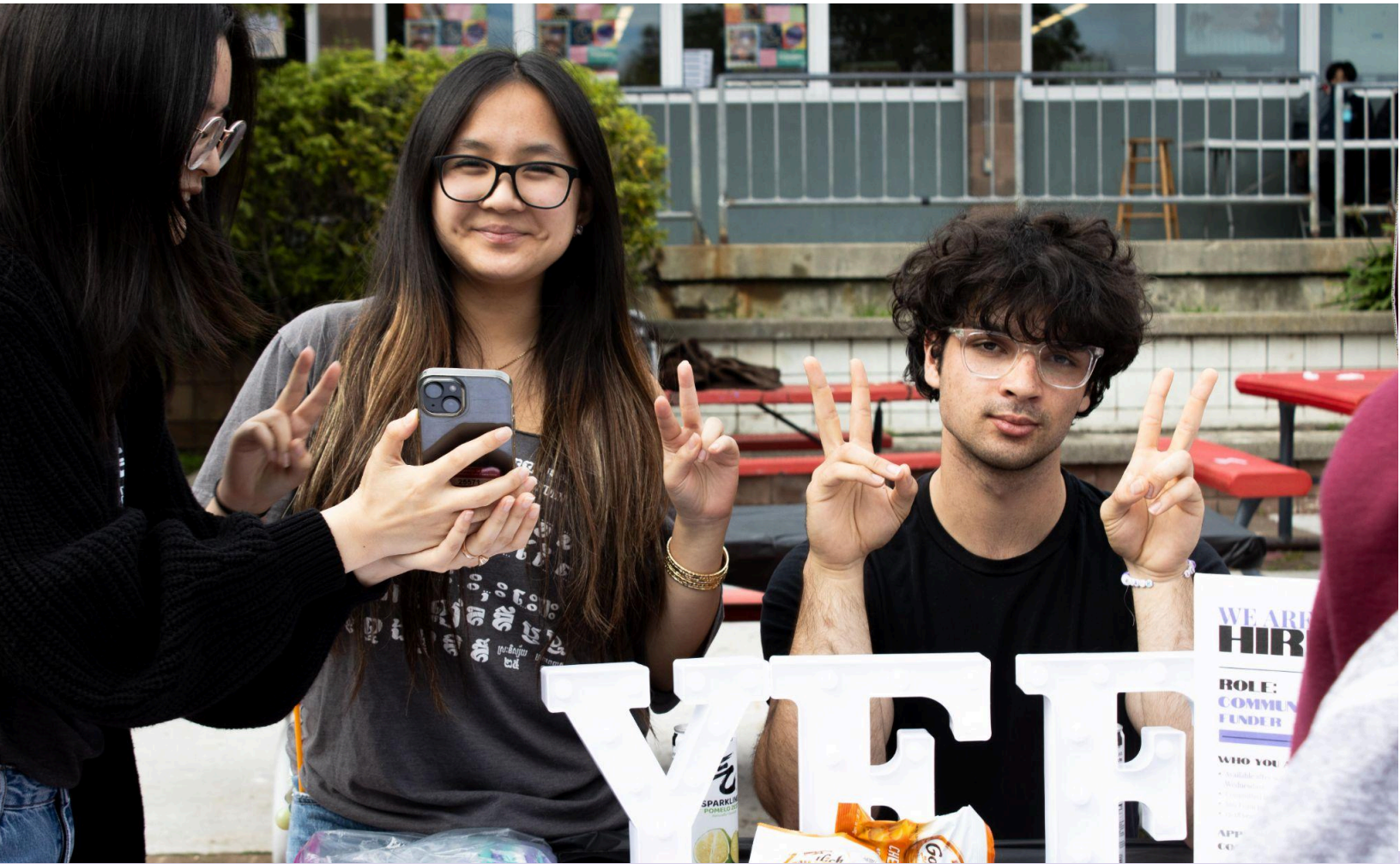
Bay Area Creative Award

YEF was selected as a Winner for the **2026 Positive Force for Change Award** hosted by **Bay Area Creative**. This award recognizes people and organizations who are creating real impact in our communities through creativity, leadership, and a genuine commitment to others. BAC selection committee is made up of teaching artists, board members, and leadership staff who chose the Youth Empowerment Fund for this award for putting real financial decision-making power in the hands of young people from communities that are rarely given that trust. All YEF members received a recognition award:



- **Susy Dubón** - YEF Program Director
- **Amber Ly** - YEF Program Specialist
- **LaNiyah Greer** - YEF Community Funder
- **Ortwin Kollarz** - YEF Community Funder
- **Chanmolyta Kim** - YEF Community Funder
- **Keana Lara Gutierrez** - YEF Community Funder
- **Journey Green** - YEF Community Funder





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



With Deep Gratitude

The Youth Empowerment Fund has always been about more than grants—it is about believing that young people deserve to be trusted with the opportunity to lead, solve problems, and shape an inclusive future for San Francisco. Every project funded, every idea nurtured, and every young leader empowered shows the collective efforts of an incredible community that believes in this vision. As we reflect on another remarkable year, we are reminded that YEF exists because so many people continue to invest not only in this program, but in the unlimited potential of our youth.

That journey commences with our Fiscal Sponsors (listed on page 32), whose firm commitment has made this work possible year after year. While you provide the financial foundation that allows youth-led projects to flourish, your impact extends far beyond fiscal stewardship. Thank you to **Crankstart, William Blair and Alaska Airlines** for supporting our YEF youth workforce development strategies. We are especially grateful to **Alumni & Friends of Ruth Asawa School of the Arts** and **HER IDEA SF**. Your trust, honest feedback, and support have been instrumental in strengthening our program. It is an honor to partner with two organizations led by exceptional women whose leadership continues to generate lasting change throughout San Francisco. That same spirit of partnership continues through our Adult Allies. By choosing to lead rather than direct, youth remain at the center of every decision.

Our Community Funders are the heart of YEF. This year was filled with growth and countless moments of learning, yet each of you embraced every challenge with resilience, curiosity, and joy. To our graduating seniors: **Laniyah G., Chanmolyta K., and Ortwin K.**, thank you for your compassion, leadership, and service. Never underestimate the impact you have made on your peers and your community. To our returning Community Funders, **Keana L.G. and Journey G.**, we look forward to watching you lead and mentor the incoming community funders. You represent the absolute best of what San Francisco's young people have to offer. We are equally grateful to your families, friends, and mentors, whose encouragement made this journey possible.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to the incredible YEF team—**Susy Dubon, Amber Ly, Nancy Hernandez, Jenifer Toyomura, and Precious Ogbonna**—whose compassion, creativity, and unfaltering commitment have created a setting where young people feel seen, valued, and empowered. We are equally grateful to our administrative and accounting teams—**James Odom, Becky Chen, Cynthia Pun, and David Lopez**.

We are deeply thankful to the **Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF)** for believing in youth philanthropy and continuing to invest in this work. A special thank you goes to our program officer, **Monica EO'Mailani Flores**, whose patience, wisdom, and willingness to listen have helped us reimagine what YEF can become.

Finally, to every YEF grantee: **We see you.** We see your courage, your creativity, and the numerous hours you dedicate to serving your communities. Most importantly, we see the future reflected in each of you—a future that is compassionate, innovative, courageous, and community-centered. You remind us every day that investing in young people is not simply important—it is essential. As we look ahead, our mission remains unchanged: to ensure every young person in San Francisco has the opportunity to lead, create, and make meaningful change. If you share that vision and would like to support YEF programming, we invite you to connect with **Program Director Susy Dubon** at sdubon@ymcasf.org.

