



Brooklyn Bridge
ALLIANCE
FOR YOUTH

Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth

Est. 2013



Brooklyn Bridge
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Our Partners:



ANOKA-HENNEPIN
SCHOOLS
A future without limit





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Our Mission

The BBAY is a backbone organization that coordinates the efforts of partners to build a system of high-quality, accessible, and fully resourced opportunities that address systemic disparities in graduation, pathways to college and career and youth safety and wellbeing.





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Our Goals:

1. Increase in partners' ability to respond and transform in response to youth needs & aspirations
2. Increase is youth leading community change while developing their skills.
3. Increase in BBAY partner results in eliminating predictable disparities in graduation, pathways to college and career, and safety & wellbeing.



BBAY Services to Partners & Community

Strategic Partners for Change

Coordination

- Mobilize and coordinate response to youth needs* (close the gap between youth and institutions that serve them)
- Sustainable asset-based resource development*
- Strategic planning
- Participatory facilitation
- Crisis response and thought partnership
- Grant writing and program partnership

Engagement

- Amplify youth voice and input
- Cultivate youth led Initiatives
- Youth leadership development
- Youth centered systems & policy development
- Capacity building for effective youth & adult partnerships

Research & Innovation

- Participatory evaluation & action research
- Youth participatory action research (YPAR)
- Youth program quality assessment (YPQA)
- Evaluation capacity building, development & training
- Continuous equitable quality improvement (M3)



Engaging Youth & Adults

to respond to the needs and aspirations of young people.

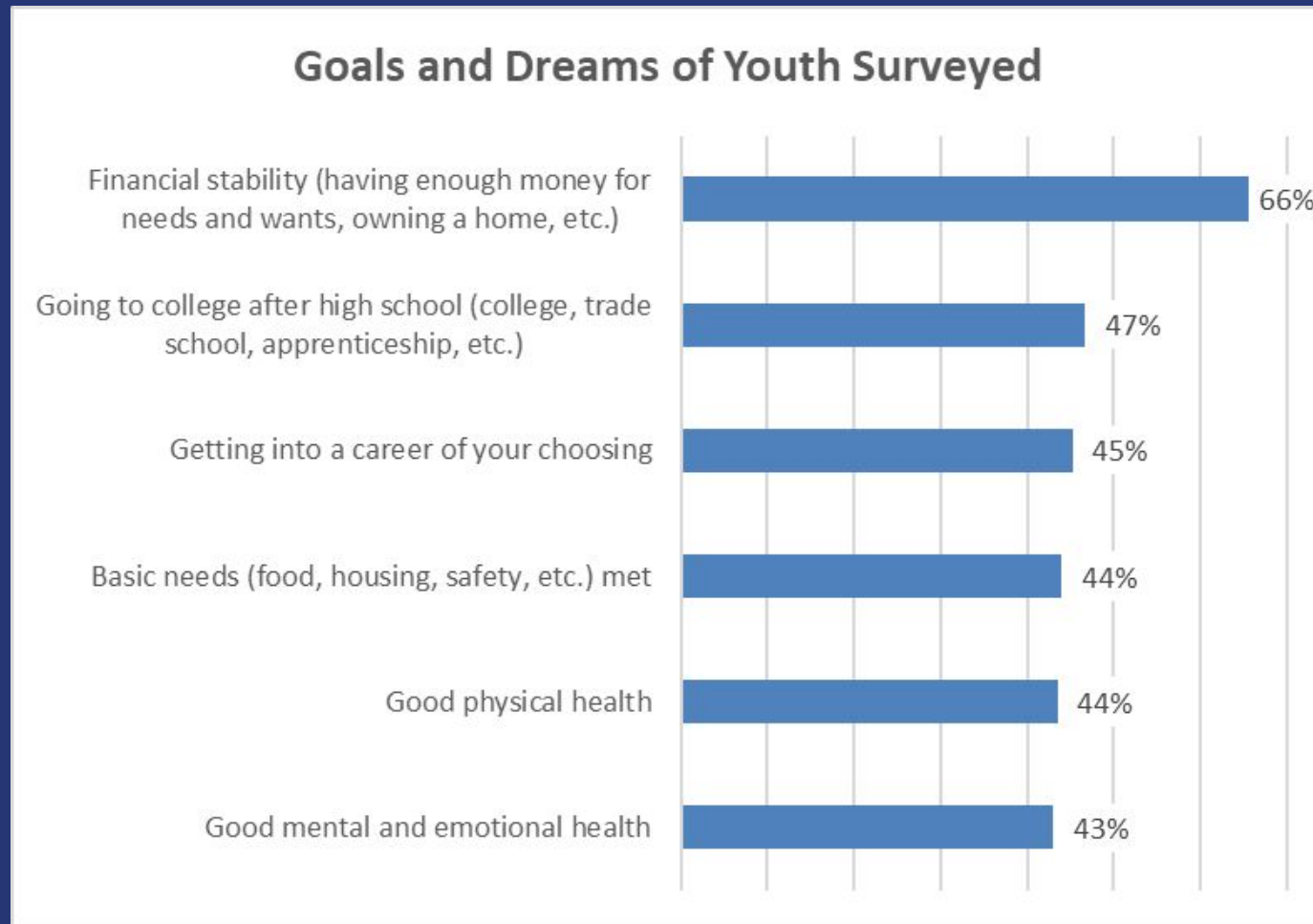
Engaging Youth

Biennial Youth to Youth Survey

- Youth Data Squad planned and implemented the survey - gathering insights from various youth in the Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, and surrounding areas.
- Summer of 2024, **411** youth were surveyed.
- What are youth needs and aspirations?
 - Goals and Dreams
 - Mental Health
 - Relationships
 - Safety
 - Technology
 - Interests
- **This data shapes ALL our programming efforts.**



Key Findings on Goals and Dreams



Comparison from past 2022 survey:

- Financial Stability both being #1 (higher % this year).
- Shift from physical, mental and emotional health towards financial stability, college, and career.
- The data aligns with BBAY's mission statement.

Key Findings on Key Themes

Mental Health

- “Having time for myself” top answer (87%)
- “Having positive relationships with others”(75%)
- “Feeling self love” (75%)

Relationships with Adults

- Being respectful, supportive, and understand how they feel

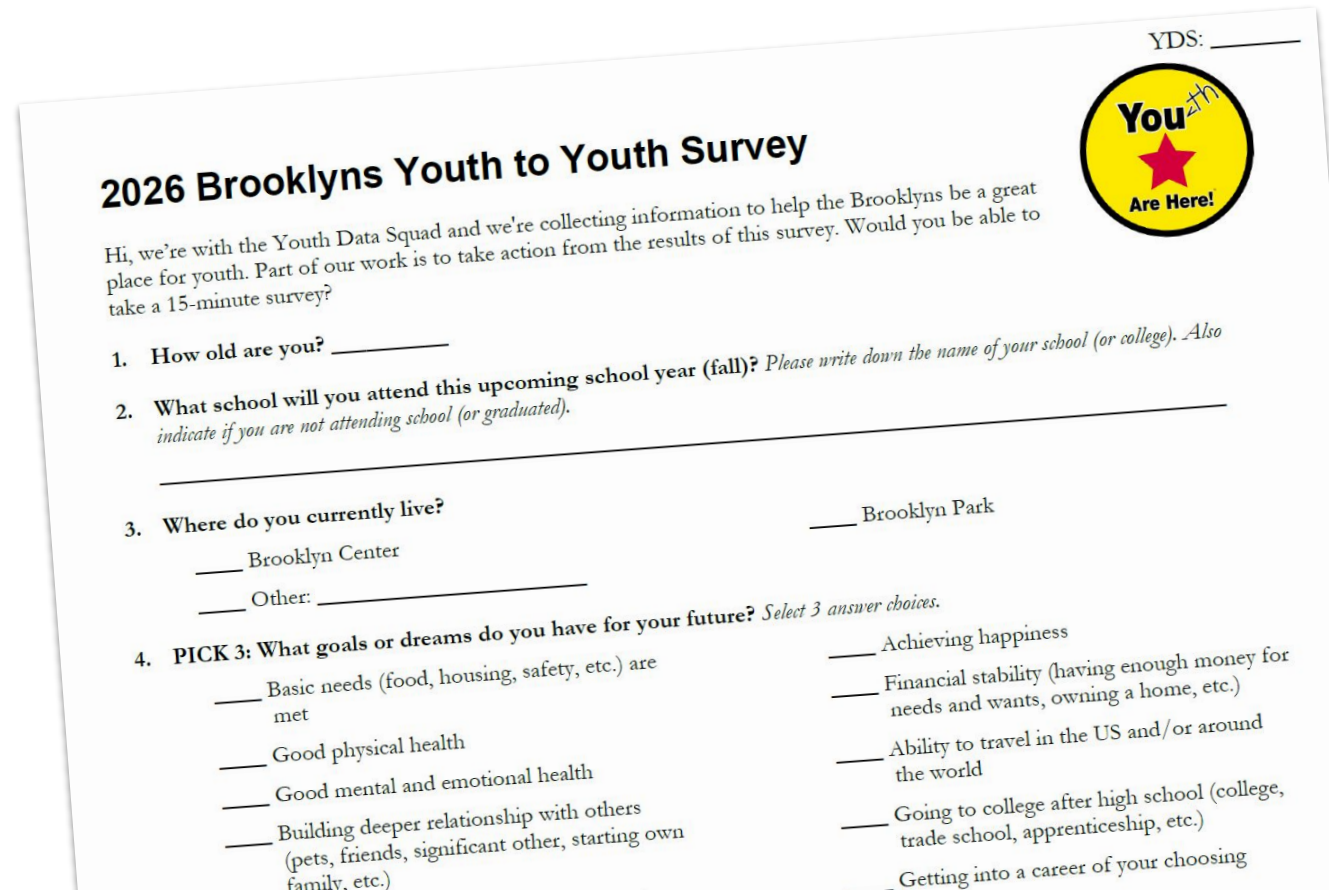
Safety

- 1 in 5 youth indicated they have been a target of hate or bullying based on their identity at school within the last school year
- Only 53% of youth indicating they would likely report if it happened to them

2026 Survey Themes

- Goals & Dreams
- Worries & Blocks
- Activities
- School System
- Safety
- Impacts on Mental Health
- Drugs/Substance Use
- **New finance questions to understand “low-income”*

*Surveys are: Anonymous; Voluntary;
Rewarded/Incentives



YDS: _____

2026 Brooklyn Youth to Youth Survey

Hi, we're with the Youth Data Squad and we're collecting information to help the Brooklyn be a great place for youth. Part of our work is to take action from the results of this survey. Would you be able to take a 15-minute survey?

1. How old are you? _____

2. What school will you attend this upcoming school year (fall)? *Please write down the name of your school (or college). Also indicate if you are not attending school (or graduated).*

3. Where do you currently live?

_____ Brooklyn Center _____ Brooklyn Park

_____ Other: _____

4. PICK 3: What goals or dreams do you have for your future? *Select 3 answer choices.*

_____ Basic needs (food, housing, safety, etc.) are met	_____ Achieving happiness
_____ Good physical health	_____ Financial stability (having enough money for needs and wants, owning a home, etc.)
_____ Good mental and emotional health	_____ Ability to travel in the US and/or around the world
_____ Building deeper relationship with others (pets, friends, significant other, starting own family, etc.)	_____ Going to college after high school (college, trade school, apprenticeship, etc.)
	_____ Getting into a career of your choosing

Next Steps

Finished the Summer Strong!

- ❑ # of surveys
- ❑ Representation from
- ❑

Fall:

- ❑ Sept/Oct: Data Analysis
- ❑ Oct/Nov: 2026 Youth-to-Youth Report
- ❑ Nov: Data Party!
- ❑ Dec 1: Joint City Council Meeting



Abdulahi Dahir
Park Center HS

Luna Yang
Park Center HS



Reimagine Black Youth Mental Health Initiative est. 2023

- ❖ Federal Grant from Office of Minority Health
- ❖ Shift the narrative by how we engage young people around mental health
- ❖ Strengthen the ecosystem of support by convening our Advisory Council
- ❖ Change the conditions that are causing unwellness by saturating young people with protective factors and advancing youth-centered policy

POLICY PRIORITY: “Keep Black Youth Safe At All Times”.

Reimagine + Osseo Highlights:

- Representation on our Advisory Council - thank you Michael Walker
- Park Center and BMS participation in the Digital Well-Being Demonstration project in 2024, input on District Cell Phone policy
- 3 Osseo students Hired as Interns responsible for co-leading
- Staff presence and student participation at Reimagine Summits.



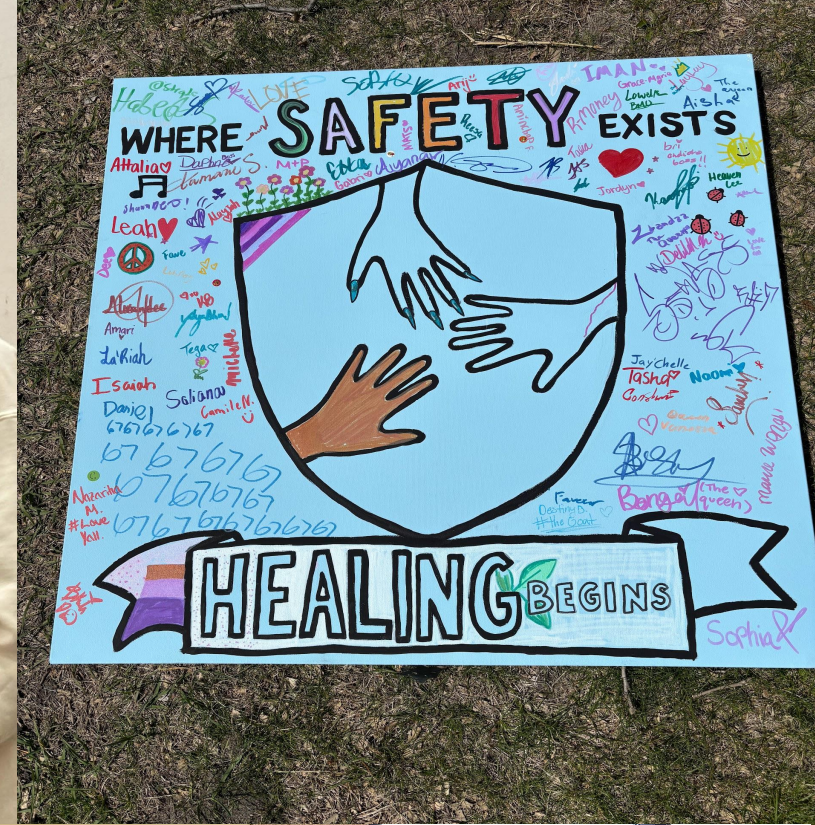
Engaging Youth

RBVMH SAFETY SUMMIT

- ❖ May 8th, 2026
- ❖ Roughly 120 youth and adult partners attended from all school districts
- ❖ 97 responses to the risk and protective factor survey that will help us shape further data collection and action

Purpose of Summit:

- ❖ Space for young people to share their experiences related to violence
- ❖ Envision the changes they want to see
- ❖ Participate in healing activities and collective support
- ❖ Give input on the risk & protective factors that matter most to them



Youth centered policy

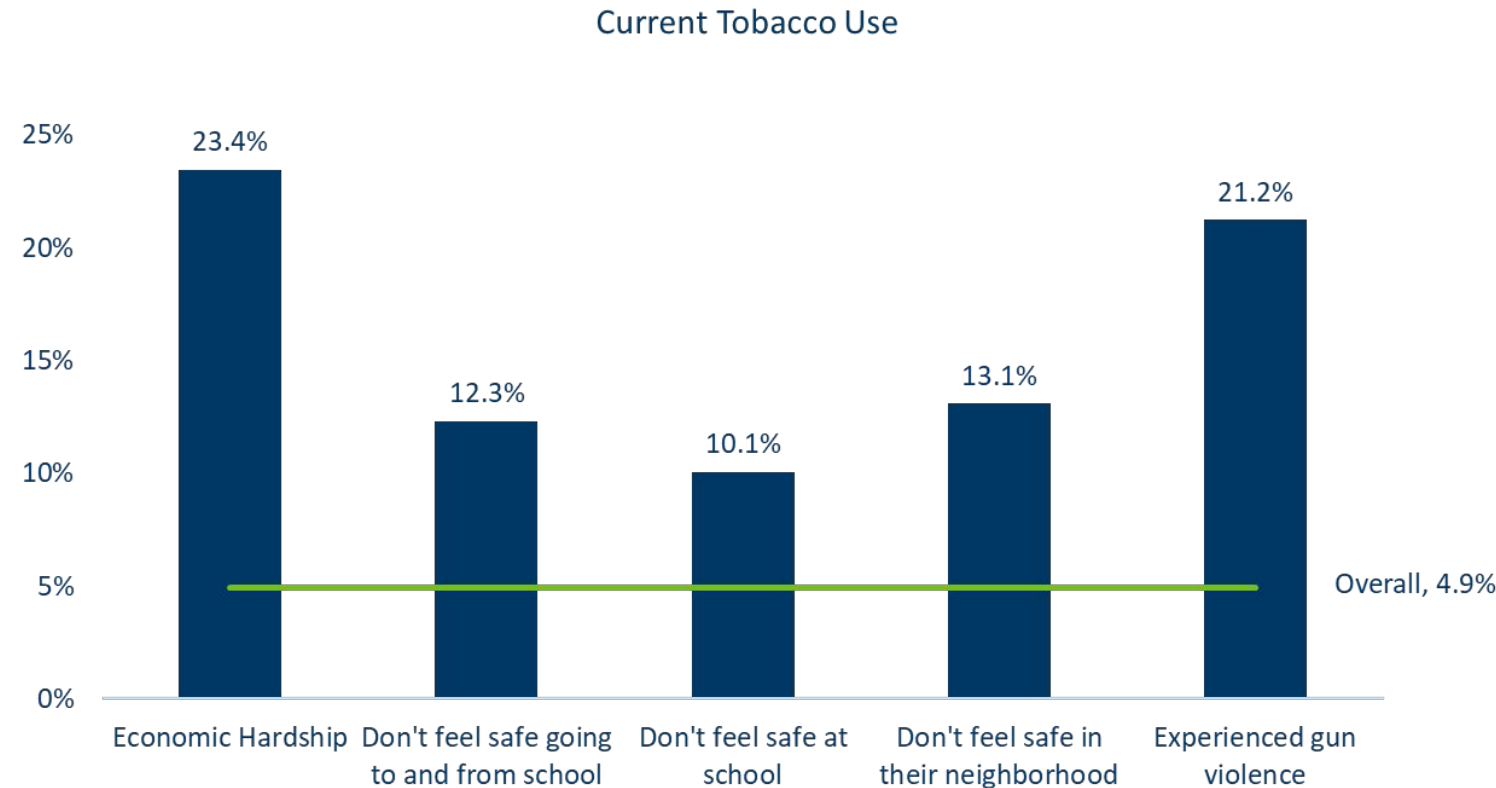
Reimagine Black Youth Mental

- ❖ **Strengthen the ecosystem** by saturating young people with protective factors and advancing youth-centered policy related to tobacco
- ❖ Issue: exposure to VAPE and tobacco
- ❖ Exploring the impact and intersections of Tobacco, Vape and other chemicals on Mental Health & experiences of violence.
- ❖ Goal: Understand the policies that would work in protecting Black youth and families in the Brooklyns from intergenerational harms

Next Steps

- ❖ Youth Review of data from MN Student Survey, proximity to tobacco, policies from other cities (Summer), Youth to Youth Survey Summer 2026
- ❖ Prepare recommendations for program, policy and process actions that protect youth. (Fall 2026)

Commercial tobacco use among students Economic Hardship, Safety, and Gun Violence



- Commercial tobacco use is higher among students who have experienced economic hardship or gun violence.

Afterschool Programming

- Minnesota Dept. of Education 3 year grant 2024-2027
- Focus on students who are underserved
- 4 sites & Unduplicated youth
 - Cooper
 - Champlin Park
 - Brooklyn Center HS
 - Park Center
- Outreach & Youth involved in Evaluation
- 6 week summer program



Culturally Responsive Tutoring

- After School study and homework space catered to the needs of young people.
- Employing both adult lead and peer tutors to support academic success and excitement for learning.
- *Launching at Park Center HS fall 2026.

Affinity Groups

- Groups that foster belonging, peer connection and leadership development.
- Sites identify student groups that need support and belonging.
- We are supporting a Latino Affinity group
- Exploring ways to support the Prism group in 2026-2027



Youth OnBoard (YOB)

- YOB helps young people gain leadership skills and connect them to incredible opportunities.
- Prepares and matches students to apply for school, city, county, statewide advisories, boards and commissions that impact their lives.
- Provides coaching and training for adults to prepare them for youth who join their table.
- **Currently 12 youth seated**
- **92 youth engaged across 4 sites**
- Operated at Park Center for the last 2 years.



Elevate Youth! Summer Program

- FREE - Six-week, theme-based summer program for middle and high school youth.
- Five Sites this summer;
 - Robbinsdale Middle
 - Brooklyn Center Community School
 - Park Center
 - BBAY (Youth Data Squad)
 - Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Middle (Credit Recovery Tutoring)
- **Focus:** Wellness, leadership, youth voice, and skill-building.
- **Approach:** Youth-centered sessions with trusted adults and community partners.
- **Engagement:** Daily creative activities, hands-on learning, field trips.
- **Impact:** Builds confidence, connection, and readiness for the school year ahead.
- Learning: To improve belonging - celebrate each youth's culture.



Youth-reported experience	Agree / positive
Overall program experience rated 4 or 5 out of 5	96%
Positive experience with adult staff	94%
Program provided a safe space to be themselves	91%
Positive experience with youth/peer staff	91%
Developed skills useful for school	89%
Gained leadership skills	82%
Felt a sense of belonging	76%

Engaging Adults

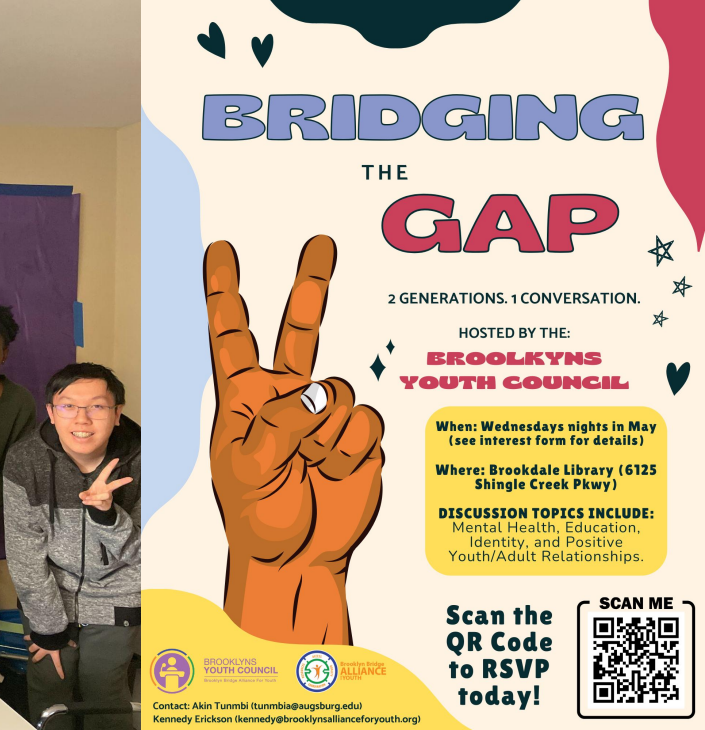
Governance Structure: Roughly 90-120 people collaborate to shape our work

- 13 adult, and 4 Youth Directors on our Board
- Executive Leadership Team (9)
- Strategy Team (9)
- Brooklyns Youth Council (12)
- Community Engagement Team (38)
- Reimagine Advisory (20)
- Community & funding partners: CAPI, ACER, NorthPoint, Three Rivers, Intentions, Girl Scouts, Graves, Medica, MDH etc.
- Special events:
 - BPPD at Safety Summit
 - BBAY Board members at Community Engagement Series
 - BC Mayor at Youth Day at Capital
 - County Commissioner at Youth Day at the County



Engaging Youth

- **Brooklyns Youth Council**
 - The mission of the Brooklyns Youth Council (BYC) is to represent youth in Brooklyn Center and Park by providing a voice in collaboration with the community and local government in order to positively raise awareness of problems facing youth.
 - Culminates in an annual leadership project





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Whats next?

1. Continue to strengthen youth leadership and adult capacity building.
2. Continue to leverage resources from state, philanthropic and others to benefit our young people, partners and broader community.
3. Affirm our Joint Powers & use data to shape our new Strategic plan in 2027.



Thank you

Rebecca Gilgen, Executive Director

