



Youth Engagement Project Description - 2013



Overview

The East Bay Regional Park District (District) is comprised of over 112,000 acres in 65 parks. There are 1,200 miles of trails commonly used for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The District, spanning more than 75 years of service to the Bay Area, is dedicated to increasing representation of park users, enhancing the experience across cultures, and providing awareness and exposure of career options for young people. Nature study and environmental education are also valued and encouraged.

The District has been serving youth through various programs and activities as a more contemporary trend. The aim of the youth programs is to introduce young people to the benefits and various adventures provided across East Bay parks. These are unique opportunities exposing these kids (and often their families) to new outdoor experiences close to home thereby staying within their relative “comfort zone.”

The Youth Engagement Project, in progress, will specifically focus on development of a

comprehensive plan to reach and engage a more diverse continuum of youth. Incorporating existing District plans and programs currently in operation, and exploring a sample of other agency youth development plans (statewide and nationally) will be vital ingredients for the final youth engagement plan. In general, District materials, programs, and activities are intended to reach as broad a spectrum of youth as possible with an aim of tapping into community organizations, schools, and other partners serving the area’s growing ethnically diverse communities.

Given current issues and new opportunities, the District is seeking to move beyond the surface to a deeper level by developing a comprehensive, in-depth strategic plan revolving around youth development through community engagement intended to cultivate a diverse workforce over time. This proposed final strategic plan will provide staff with new ideas and directions for consideration and recommended actions for future.

Project Methodology

A mixed-method approach is being employed during a two-phase project occurring through Dec. 2013:

Phase I ~ Data collection: (a) Review current youth-related and ‘diversity driven’ outreach and programming efforts across the District; (b) Review a sample of statewide and national level organizational youth development plans to harness innovative ideas; (c) Interview select District staff members at various levels, from the field staff to senior managers; (d) Conduct focus groups with local teens to determine their involvement, desires, and recommendations for enhancing connections of young people to the parks; and (e) Develop and administer brief online questionnaire with a convenience sample of partner organizations.

Phase II ~ Data analyses, reporting and creation of final plan, and presentation of results and findings.



Research Team

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“We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.”
~ Mary McLeod Bethune