

# Young Voices, Future Choices



**Youth Engagement Strategy | February 2016**

**Oregon Metro**

## About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy, and sustainable transportation and living choices for people and businesses in the region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges and opportunities that affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to providing services, operating venues and making decisions about how the region grows. Metro works with communities to support a resilient economy, keep nature close by and respond to a changing climate. Together we're making a great place, now and for generations to come.

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*Youth Engagement Strategy and Toolkit researched, compiled, written and designed by Addie Shrodes.*

*Photograph on front cover, Zoo Animal Presenter teens visiting the Metro Regional Center.*

# Acknowledgements

Metro's regional partners, staff and young leaders have been integral to the co-creation of the Youth Engagement Strategy. The strategy arises in and reflects their experience and expertise.

We extend our enthusiastic thanks and gratitude to the 100-plus community and jurisdictional partners and Metro staff members who volunteered their time and energy throughout this process. Your excitement around and commitment to this project illustrates the powerful regional momentum for meaningful youth engagement.

We likewise thank the young leaders who have contributed their exceptional ideas, thoughts and feedback throughout the strategy development. Your interest and investment in regional decision making propelled this strategy forward.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the teams of projects we have worked in collaboration with as we co-created the strategy: The Innovation team, the Strategic Plan to Advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team, the Identity Project team and the Environmental Literacy Framework team. The expertise, engagement and strategic thinking that have gone into your reports have meaningfully informed and supported the Youth Engagement Strategy.

We also would like to express our acknowledgement and thanks to the Metro Council members, Chief Operating Officer Martha Bennett and departmental leadership for their interest and support of the strategy. The strategy and its implementation has benefited from and will continue to require your valuable leadership.

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## Youth Engagement Toolkit | Online at [www.oregonmetro.gov](http://www.oregonmetro.gov)

- Regional goals for youth engagement
- Best practices for building young leaders
- Regional resources and inspiration for youth engagement
- Helpful sources for youth engagement
- Inventory of work that involves youth at Metro
- Inventory of Metro regional partnerships with youth focus
- Strategy key terms definitions



## Introduction



**Youth make up  
30 percent of the  
population now.**

**They will be the region's  
stewards in the future.**

### Why engage youth?

As a regional governing agency, Metro's charge is to convene communities to support shared goals and shape the future of our diverse places. Metro's regional partners and constituents highlight that our communities' future is built by and for our youth. The agency's *Future Vision Report* mirrors this investment in youth and emphasizes the core value of creating opportunities for young people in every community to fulfill their potential and shape their future.

Metro now aims to better involve youth in the decisions that affect them and their communities.

### What is the youth engagement strategy?

The youth engagement strategy serves as an assessment and guide for Metro to better involve youth.

At the heart of the strategy is the shared vision to collaboratively build young leaders, in particular, from historically underrepresented communities, who have the knowledge, skills and capacity to shape their place in the region. The focus on youth from historically underrepresented communities, including youth of color and youth with low income, integrates principles of equity and reflects the changing face of the region.

The strategy looks five years forward and sets down goals across education, employment, civic engagement and collaboration focus areas that map this vision and objectives that serve as actionable steps to reaching it. The strategy also forwards guiding principles, recommended actions and best practices for accomplishing these objectives.

## Who can and should implement the youth engagement strategy?

The strategy reflects Metro-wide opportunities and goals for youth engagement, and it applies to staff and managers, projects and programs across the agency. Because the strategy also incorporates regional goals from our community and jurisdictional partners, it can be used as a guide and tool for improving youth engagement across the region.

## How was the youth engagement strategy developed?

Metro worked with Hatfield Fellow Addie Shrodes through Portland State University's Center for Public Service to co-create an inclusive youth engagement strategy with youth leaders, a task force of 25 staff members from across the agency and a network of 35 community and jurisdictional partners. The strategy was also developed in collaboration with a host of agency-wide projects at Metro, including the Innovation work, the Strategic Plan to Advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Environmental Literacy Framework.

The process of co-creation brought together diverse expertise while leveraging shared strengths and supporting shared goals. Co-creation occurred through interviews, meetings and workshops:

- Interviews with 30 Metro staff to create an inventory of programs and projects that involve youth and their goals, identify agency vision for youth engagement and identify members for task force.
- Interviews with 35 regional partners and leaders in youth engagement to ensure the strategy supports the region's strengths, needs and goals.
- Workshops with youth advisory and leadership groups and young leaders.
- Workshops with the International Association for Public Participation, Metro's Public Engagement Review Committee and Public Engagement Network.
- Monthly workshops with task force of 25 continuously involved Metro staff.
- Strategy and regional goals review workshop with community partners.
- Individual meetings with involved department staff and program managers to develop objectives.

Throughout this process, the strategy received feedback from Metro leadership and advisors, including Chief Operating Officer Martha Bennett, the Council and the Equity Strategy Action Committee.

## What are the intended benefits of the youth engagement strategy?

Metro aims to harness the agency-wide and regional momentum for meaningful youth engagement with a strategy that can heighten opportunities for historically underrepresented youth to shape their place in the region. This shift will have numerous benefits, including:

- Bolster Metro's role as a regional convener by strengthening collaboration and coordination with jurisdictional and community partners around youth engagement.
- Enable Metro to make decisions that better reflect the diverse experiences, needs and goals of the region's present and future community members.
- Strengthen the diversity of Metro's workforce and applicant pool.
- Support Metro in its goal to build trust-based relationships with historically underrepresented communities by connecting with youth, their families and their communities.
- Support the regional goal to build youth leaders who will be champions of our vibrant communities and stewards of the environment.

# Strategy overview

## What is the Youth Engagement Strategy structure?

The Metro Youth Engagement Strategy starts with a **vision statement** that encapsulates the agency-wide and regional vision for youth engagement identified through engagement.

The strategy sets down **three focus areas** that show the primary ways Metro engages youth. These focus areas represent the expertise of the Youth Engagement Task Force made up of agency-wide staff. Focus-area intersections are ideal sites of collaboration and coordination. Each focus area sets an **age range** that engagement efforts should target.

The strategy articulates **guiding principles** for youth engagement that demonstrate the lessons learned from staff and partners around meaningfully involving youth and building young leaders.

The strategy forwards **four goals** that map the strategy vision and **22 objectives** that serve as actionable steps for achieving the goals and vision. **Best practices** for involving youth around each goal and set of objectives guide strategy implementation and support staff and partners.

Finally, the strategy recommends **28 actions** to accomplish agency-wide objectives. These actions directly build on the work going on across Metro and the achievable ideas put forward by the Youth Engagement Task Force. Objectives and actions align with those of the Innovation work, the Strategic Plan to Advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Environmental Literacy Framework.

## What informed the age ranges?

Metro staff and regional partners who work with youth informed the age ranges for each focus area.

Metro's **education** programs work with school-age youth through age 25. Education builds pathways for elementary-age youth to get more involved with Metro as they grow older.

**Civic engagement** sets its lower age boundary based on the age at which young people typically learn about government in schools and are ready to get involved in community decision making. The upper age boundary reflects the need for intentional involvement of voting-age young people in decision-making processes. All youth are affected by Metro decisions and should be meaningfully included in decision making. It remains important to provide space and support at the decision-making table for younger youth who have different levels of knowledge, skill and capacity than older youth.

**Employment** focuses on the typical age range at which young people start to build careers and can be hired in Oregon. Metro recognizes that young people may begin work and develop job experience before age 15, and the strategy looks toward collaboration among focus areas to address this need.

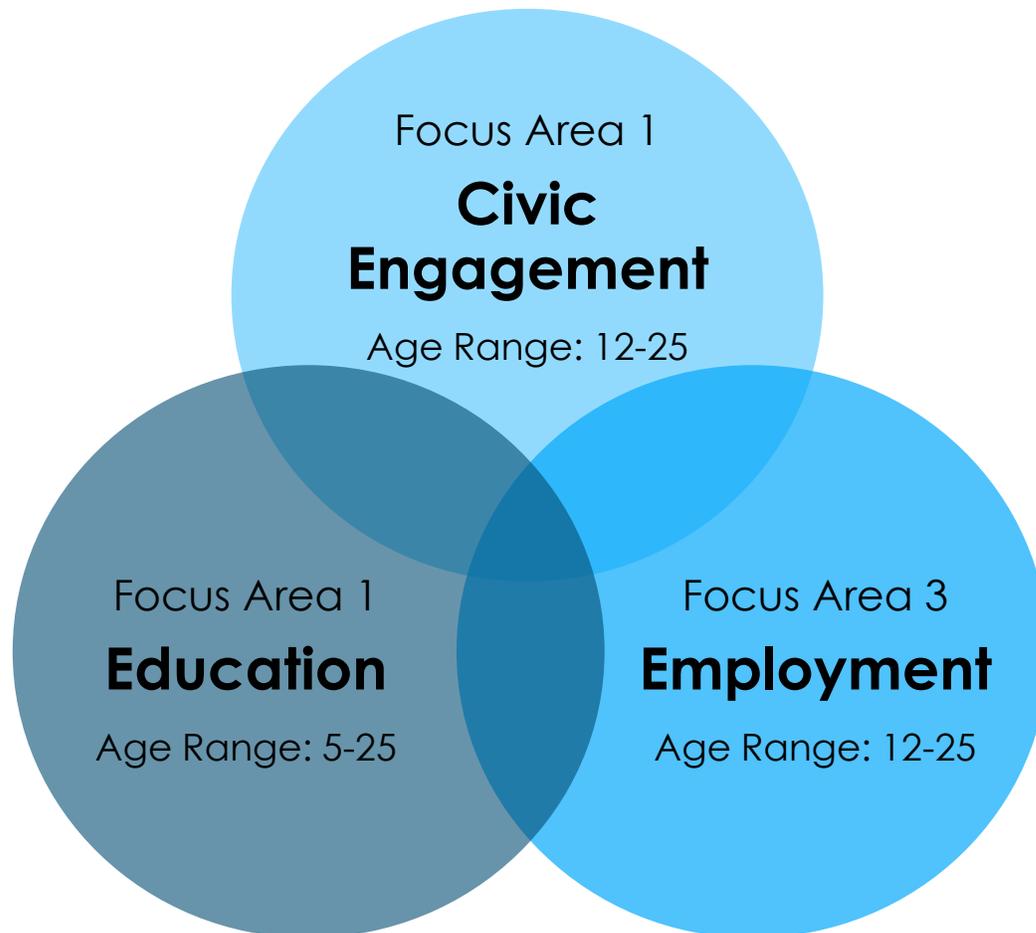
## What are the building blocks for success?

The Youth Engagement Strategy builds on a wealth of projects and programs at Metro and across the region that successfully involve youth and build young leaders. These projects have built momentum for a strategy that can look across all of this good work to forward regional best practices and support strengths and goals. To recognize this work, the strategy calls out projects and programs at Metro and our regional partners that are 'building blocks for success' for each focus area.

# Metro Youth Engagement Strategy

## Five-Year Vision

Metro builds diverse young leaders who have meaningful opportunities to shape their place in the region by collaborating with and supporting community organizations and jurisdictions.



**5 Guiding Principles**

**4 Goals**

**22 Objectives**

**50+ Best Practices**

**28 Actions**

# Vision and guiding principles

## What is Metro's vision for youth engagement?

Metro's vision statement looks five years down the road and anticipates a future it aims to realize: **Metro builds diverse young leaders who have meaningful opportunities to shape their place in the region by collaborating with and supporting community organizations and jurisdictions.**

The vision for youth engagement arose in the informed contributions of agency-wide staff, community partners and jurisdictional partners. The vision statement reflects the common goals to support the good work happening in the region and collaborate with Metro's community and jurisdictional partners. Metro aims to build young leaders in historically underrepresented communities who are the civically and environmentally engaging stewards of the region now and in the future.

Building young leaders requires Metro to look across focus areas to create clear pathways for young people to step into leadership. It means building young people's knowledge, skills and capacity so they can be comfortable and effective participants in decision making. It means giving young people the support and tools to build a career. It requires Metro to work collaboratively and identify connections among opportunities so that youth can shape their careers, their communities and their government.



## What are Metro's guiding principles for building diverse young leaders?

To help guide Metro staff and partners in reaching the five-year vision, the strategy identifies five guiding principles for building diverse young leaders.

**Commit:** Acknowledge that youth engagement is not a single event but is instead an ongoing process that requires organizational commitment to long-term engagement and promotion of young voices' value.

**Collaborate:** Collaborate with multiple stakeholders, including those with expertise in diversity, equity and inclusion, youth leadership and youth-adult partnership for successful youth engagement projects.

**Connect:** Connect with the specific communities to which young people belong and attend to the intersections of their experience to foster a sense of ownership and pride.

**Support:** Support community-based and youth-led organizations that build young leaders in historically underrepresented and marginalized communities.

**Trust:** Build youth trust in the agency, process and people by genuinely listening to and valuing their unique contributions and by building long-term relationships.



# Education

Age Range: 5-25

## Goal

Historically underrepresented youth acquire the environmental literacy and support to lead in decisions that benefit the environment and their communities.

**Challenge:** Lack of consistency around education objectives and ways of talking about Metro. Gap in programs that foster environmental justice in the region.

**Opportunity:** Strengthen education outcomes and grow connection to Metro and the region's communities.

## Objectives

1. Metro education programs provide age and context appropriate information to youth participants about the role Metro and its jurisdictional partners play in the community.
2. Metro education programs provide age and context appropriate information to youth participants about opportunities for engagement, decision making and career information.
3. Metro identifies core environmental literacy outcomes for youth and develops a suite of education programs designed to build environmental literacy.
4. Metro builds connections with institutions of higher learning to support education and career development goals for historically underrepresented youth.
5. Metro develops strategic partnerships and culturally responsive youth leadership programs to foster environmental justice in the region.

## Best Practices

1. Expose youth to a world of opportunities to connect with their passion.
2. Allow youth to make mistakes.
3. Get youth outdoors to see their place in the natural world.
4. Create edge experiences to push youth outside their comfort zones to heighten awareness.
5. Create a space for youth to have their own learning experiences.
6. Value input from youth and meaningfully involve them in program development.
7. Connect to youth strengths and interests.
8. Involve youth in peer-to-peer application and interview process for new members.
9. Facilitate service-learning opportunities to connect young people to their community.
10. Build trustful and long-term relationships.
11. Facilitate positive peer-to-peer relationships.
12. Create an environment where youth feel safe and comfortable to participate.
13. Provide learning challenges that grow skills.
14. Build relationships with schools, teachers and organizations that connect with youth.
15. Align goals with those of school curricula and update programs to meet educational objectives and standards.
16. Stay dynamic and up-to-date with technology.

# Actions

1. Develop a Metro primer for youth in partnership with Communications with a focus on age-appropriate communications.\*
2. Create common objectives for what Metro aims youth to leave education opportunities with in order to get further involved in the agency.
3. Develop an environmental literacy steering group in coordination with youth task force.
4. Ensure the Environmental Literacy Framework assesses and addresses outcomes around civic engagement.\*
5. Develop a method to collect, compile and distribute agency-wide feedback from community-based organizations around the role of educational programs in meeting community needs and fostering a sense of environmental justice.\*

\*Top 15 actions prioritized for year one.



## Building Block for Success

### NAYA's Youth Education

The Native American Youth and Family Center invests in its youth with a wide variety of education programs and learning

opportunities for K-12 students. Programs range from classes in cultural arts to academic mentoring to educational youth advocacy focused on issues. The NAYA Learning Center provides one-on-one tutoring, Mac computers, daily dinner and recreational opportunities for regular attendees. NAYA prioritizes intergenerational support and provides community resources to youth as connectors to their families. The organization also hosts family nights and events to foster family involvement and strengthen Native communities.



## Building Block for Success

### Resource Conservation and Recycling School Education Program

Metro's Resource Conservation and Recycling school education program serves thousands of students in Kindergarten through high school across the region

each year. The program works directly with schools to support instructional goals and uses age-appropriate techniques to teach young people how to protect the environment by making choices to recycle, reuse and use less. The program partners with Milagro Theater and the Thinking People's Theater to create culturally responsive presentations aimed at fourth and fifth graders. With Metro's support, Milagro Theater produced "El Tesoro," a bilingual comedy presentation with free performances and conversations for the whole family in community spaces throughout the region, from Hillsboro to Gresham. The Resource Conservation and Recycling program supports community partners to grow the knowledge, skills and capacities of the region's youth to make informed choices about the environment and their communities.

# Civic Engagement

Age Range: 12-25

## Goal

Historically underrepresented youth become civic leaders with the knowledge, skills, capacity and support to comfortably and effectively participate in and shape the decisions that affect their lives and communities.

**Challenge:** Lack of youth awareness of, inclusion in and access to decision-making processes.

**Opportunity:** Meaningfully involve youth in decisions that affect them and their communities and build youth leaders who will be advocates for and connectors to their community.

## Objectives

1. Metro's organizational culture prioritizes youth involvement in decisions.
2. Metro staff build the coordination, capacity and systems to engage historically underrepresented youth as leaders, connectors and advocates for decisions.
3. Metro communications are youth-friendly, accessible and transparent.
4. Metro grows strong collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations that involve diverse youth and build youth leaders.
5. Metro grows strong collaborative partnerships with jurisdictions to share knowledge, involve underserved youth and build youth leaders.
6. Metro grows the knowledge, skills, capacity and opportunities for historically underrepresented youth to participate in and shape decision-making at Metro and be advocates in their communities.

## Best Practices

1. Create an environment where youth feel safe and comfortable to participate.
2. Present information in youth-friendly ways.
3. Coach and guide youth through decision-making process and spaces.
4. Build leaders in their own lives and community.
5. Connect with strengths, interests and goals.
6. Ensure decision-making meetings are youth friendly with clear expectations and guidelines.
7. Educate and prepare youth on the issues.
8. Build trustful and long-term relationships.
9. Be accessible, honest and transparent.
10. Create a connection to young people's community, place and culture.
11. Structure multiple ways to participate and give youth choices on how they get involved.
12. Aim for 2-4 youth on a committee, and never place just one young person in the room.
13. Establish youth leadership groups to build knowledge of issues and peer support.
14. Provide compensation with stipends, transit passes, food in meetings and school credit.
15. Involve youth in shaping the decision-making process.
16. Acknowledge and celebrate youth success.

*See Youth Engagement Toolkit for full set of best practices for building young leaders.*

# Actions

1. Update the Public Engagement Guide to include innovative and culturally appropriate engagement practices for historically underrepresented youth.\*
2. Create supported and stipended youth seats on advisory boards and committees.\*
3. Compile best practices and attend agency-wide youth-oriented meetings to learn from other departments about how their culture supports youth.
4. Develop civic engagement leadership cohort to engage youth in decisions and program development across focus areas.\*
5. Develop in-person and online communications tools to inform, engage and involve youth and increase youth understanding of Metro’s roles and responsibilities.\*
6. Develop forums for community members and groups, including youth and youth organizations, to come together and share information, opportunities and get feedback from the community to inform programs and practices.
7. Convene a network of youth leaders from jurisdictional youth advisory groups, community youth leadership programs and school youth leadership to advise Metro and facilitate participation in engagement.
8. **Seek out opportunities to partner, collaborate with and build capacity for jurisdictional and community partners around youth engagement.\***

\*Top 15 actions prioritized for year one.



## Building Block for Success

## Momentum Alliance Discussion Group

In 2015-16, Metro partnered with youth-led organization Momentum Alliance and the MultiCultural Collaborative to facilitate two youth discussions to inform the Strategic Plan to Advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Community Relations. Momentum Alliance mentors and empowers youth from historically underrepresented communities to become social justice leaders through the Student Alliance Project and Leveraging Momentum. MA youth discussed the issues and inequities they face and their vision for the region.

## Building Block for Success

**APANO ALLY** The Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon’s youth-led and youth-developed program ALLY empowers youth to lead in community organizing and advocacy. Program organizer Karn Saetang supports youth through mentorship, education and leadership training. Youth set the goals for the program and take turns planning and running meetings, while the adults serve in support. Youth step into leadership opportunities, such as public speaking and rotating paid internships. In Fall 2015, ALLY launched its youth-led campaign “Missing Pages of our History” to teach ethnic studies in all Portland Public Schools within four years.



# Employment

Age Range: 15-25

## Goal

Historically underrepresented youth acquire the job awareness, skills, experience, connections and support to access careers in the region relevant to Metro's work.

**Challenge:** Lack of organizational consistency around internships. Barriers within hiring practices and workplace culture for historically underrepresented youth.

**Opportunity:** Diversify Metro and the public service applicant pool. Ensure mutually beneficial internships. Heighten youth awareness of careers at Metro and the region.

## Objectives

1. Metro hires a diverse workforce that reflects the demographics of the region.
2. Metro actively cultivates an inclusive environment free of barriers and supports historically underrepresented youth and young adults.
3. Metro provides opportunities for youth through well-constructed, thoughtful and intentional internships developed with youth.
4. Metro heightens career education and exposure for historically underrepresented youth.
5. Metro ensures that its hiring practices are equity-based, accessible, culturally responsive and provide opportunities for interns to advance within Metro.

## Best Practices

1. Develop youths' belief in their ability for growth.
2. Place interns and supervisors in teams for support.
3. Teach hard skills that demonstrate soft skills.
4. Assign an advisor or mentor to support youth in setting and managing goals.
5. Provide space for youth to be self-directed and develop their job interests and career path.
6. Give youth the responsibility and tasks to grow.
7. Create peer-to-peer application and interview process for new hires.
8. Build skills that are relevant and connected to youth lives and interests.
9. Build skills around workplace communications and culture.
10. Be honest about expectations and requirements for career development.
11. Train employers to work with diverse youth.
12. Make it clear what success looks like, but also listen to what success looks like for each young person.
13. Personalize each internship to young person's level of experience and interest.
14. Set internship goals, ground rules and expectations with youth to be mutually beneficial and educational.
15. Do group orientations and activities to establish a team and set the tone with youth.
16. Aim for long-term experiences.
17. Invest in youth development and mentorship.

# Actions

1. Assess and address barriers to employing and supporting historically underrepresented youth.\*
2. Conduct an assessment of internship expectations and practices at Metro.
3. Assess and develop internship expectations and practices with youth partners.\*
4. Build online tools to create awareness of and connection to Metro jobs.
5. Assess requirements for entry-level positions.
6. Create a coordinated process for proposing new internships that is vetted and follows best practices in youth development and equity.
7. Partner with and support community organizations that recruit and employ historically underrepresented youth.\*
8. Identify and develop paid and mutually beneficial opportunities for historically underrepresented youth.
9. Identify and develop entry-level and assistant-level opportunities.

\*Top 15 actions prioritized for year one.

## Building Block for Success

### UNO and ZAP Programs

Metro's Urban Nature Overnight and Zoo Animal Presenter programs connect historically underrepresented youth to

nature and build leadership experience and skills for careers in the environment.

UNO partners with organizations that work with historically underrepresented youth in third to fifth grade to provide outdoor experiences and skills to youth who often have not had access to them.

ZAP provides three-year paid internships that train culturally and economically diverse youth in the natural sciences and education. Teens start at ages 13-17, and in the first year they present at community centers that serve low-income families and children. In the second year ZAP teens serve as UNO camp counselors. The teens focus on nature conservation in Metro natural areas in year three.



## Building Block for Success

### SummerWorks

Work Systems started SummerWorks in 2009 to address the steep decline of employment opportunities for youth, and it now connects around 1,000 low-income youth with jobs in

the region each summer. WorkSystems also offers year-round internship placement, often in cohorts. Thanks to federal funding, the program matches the costs of placement sites to expand opportunities. In addition to placing teens at job sites, SummerWorks provides work-readiness training, job coaching, career advising and an intern supervisor. It also provides supportive cohort experiences at sites that place more than a few interns. Metro places multiple SummerWorks interns each year and has worked to grow its partnership with Work Systems to expand young people's access to job experience and skills.

# Collaboration

Age Range: 5-25

## Goal

Metro staff and regional partners collaborate to provide pathways for historically underrepresented youth to get involved in and become leaders at Metro across education, civic engagement and employment focus areas.

**Challenge:** Lack of coordination among Metro staff and regional partners and lack of pathways for youth to move through programs.

**Opportunity:** Create pathways for youth to become young leaders by heightening coordination and collaboration of opportunities across staff and regional partners.

## Objectives

1. Metro develops clear pathways for youth engaged in Metro programs to get increasingly involved in opportunities across focus areas.
2. Metro develops clear pathways for youth in Metro education and leadership programs to access decision-making within programs.
3. Metro staff across departments communicate, connect and collaborate to achieve goals and objectives and build youth leaders.
4. Metro staff coordinate knowledge of and communication with community and jurisdictional partners who involve youth.
5. Metro leverages partnerships to support strategy goals and objectives.
6. Metro grows strong partnerships with community organizations and jurisdictions to co-create a process to develop and review programs with strengths across focus areas.
7. Metro evaluates its success at implementing the Youth Engagement Strategy.

## Best Practices

1. Give youth the responsibility, roles and tasks to grow as they get involved.
2. Focus on the unique strengths, assets and passions of young people.
3. Leverage connections to educational programming to build relevant skills and relationships.
4. Invest in youth development and mentorship.
5. Assign a point person to guide youth as they progress through program pathways.
6. Incorporate collaborative, multi-stakeholder planning process for new education, engagement and employment efforts.
7. Align practices and principles with those of regional schools, jurisdictions and community-based organizations.
8. Create connections to youth community, place and culture.
9. Structure multiple pathways and ways for youth to become involved over time.
10. Employ an evaluation framework for evaluating Metro's success at implementing the strategy goals and objectives and achieving its vision with partners.

# Actions

1. Institutionalize an agency-wide structure to strategize and coordinate youth work across departments and program areas.\*
2. Conduct consistent and ongoing review of youth recommendations and best practices to incorporate into short-term and long-term strategy.
3. Develop consistent 'Metro 101' training and materials for young interns, staff and community participants getting involved in Metro.\*
4. Conduct an audit of how education programs can support other focus areas.
5. Grow mentorships and relationships with historically underrepresented young people.
6. Develop an evaluation toolkit and apply it to youth engagement programs in coordination with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.\*
7. Train staff on how to involve and support historically underrepresented young people.\*

\*Top 15 actions prioritized for year one.



## Building Block for Success

### Lents Youth Initiative

Rose Community Development Center and OPAL Environmental Justice partnered in 2015 to build youth leaders in Lents. The

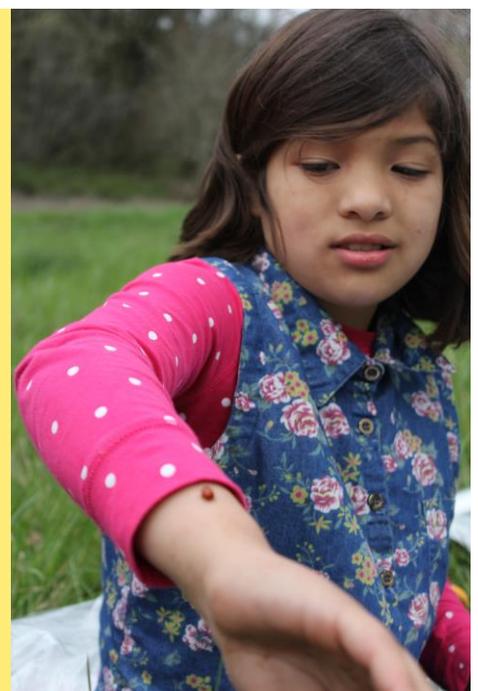
initiative focuses on educating youth ages 13-21 in environmental justice issues and building skills through hands-on learning. It aims to strengthen the Lents community by creating youth-adult partnerships on equity, health and sustainability. The initiative first trained 25 youth in leadership skills, environmental justice and civic engagement. It then partnered with other local organizations to hire and place 12 youth interns who worked on projects related to the environment and community livability.

## Building Block for Success

### Partners in Nature Latino Greenspaces

Metro's Partners in Nature program works in collaboration with culturally specific groups to connect communities of color to nature and co-create programming, much of which focuses on youth. Community Partnerships Program Manager Sheilagh Diez emphasizes that program goals arise within the communities that programs serve.

Partners in Nature developed Latino Greenspaces programming with the Latino Network and Hacienda Community Development Center to connect 200 youth to Metro parks and natural areas. The community-based partners developed culturally appropriate programming with Metro to build skills and experiences with nature and introduce youth to conservation careers. Bilingual, hands-on approaches integrated natural science, music, storytelling and art.



## Next steps

The Youth Engagement Strategy is not the starting point nor the finish line for successful youth engagement at Metro. Rather, the strategy builds on the momentum of good work happening across the agency and the region to set forth a road map that charts where Metro is now, where we want to be and how we will get there. Youth engagement is an ongoing journey that requires Metro to commit to long-term engagement and the value of young voices.

What steps should Metro take now in order to successfully and intentionally embark on this journey?

- 1. Metro leaders, councilors and managers commit to creating the culture, capacity and structures to prioritize youth engagement.**

Successful youth engagement requires dedicated resources and staff time for the long haul. While many staff at Metro are formally or informally dedicated to working with youth, Metro will need the active support of leaders for an agency-wide commitment backed with resources and staff.

- 2. Metro managers and staff heighten cross-agency collaboration and dialogue.**

Managers and staff must actively communicate and collaborate beyond project or departmental silos to create pathways for youth to grow skills and access opportunities across the agency, its partners and the region.

- 3. Metro staff and managers align their time and tasks to support informed youth engagement recommendations and build knowledge for working with youth.**

In order for Metro to reach its vision for youth engagement, managers and staff must carry forward the strategy by carefully considering how they can build knowledge around involving youth, align their work to implement actions and take new actions to support the strategy's goals and objectives.

- 4. Metro builds mutually beneficial jurisdictional and community partnerships.**

Building youth leaders requires Metro to connect with and support young people's communities by growing trust and capacity among the agencies and organizations that support youth directly.

- 5. Metro and its partners continue to identify short-term and long-term actions that work toward the strategy vision and goals.**

The actions recommended in the Youth Engagement Strategy are starting points; Metro and its partners need to continue to develop supportive actions, ideally in partnership with young leaders.

## Partners in co-creation

### Youth Engagement Strategy Project Team

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