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YOUTH ELECTIONS AMBASSADORS

PROGRAM REPORT

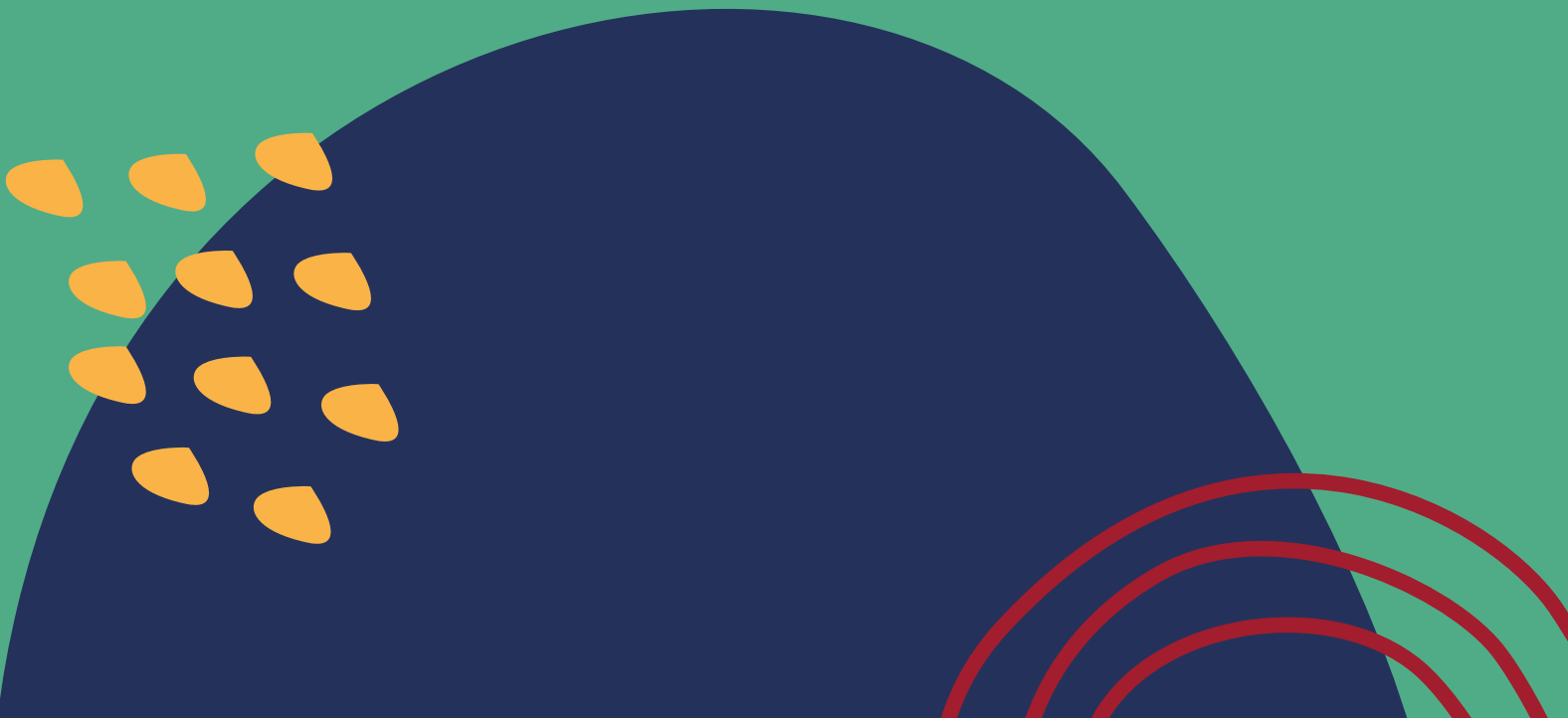


CityHive

Territorial Acknowledgement

CityHive is based on the unceded, ancestral, and traditional territories of the x̱w̱məθkʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaɫ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Through our programs we also work on the Coast Salish lands of the Katzie, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Qayqayt, Semiahmoo, S'ólh Téméxw (Stó:lō), Stz'uminus, and scəwaθenaʔɫ təməx̱w (Tsawwassen) peoples. We are grateful for their continued leadership and stewardship of these lands and waters.

CityHive is committed to decolonization and working through the tensions that exist between that commitment and working within colonial systems of governance. We acknowledge that municipal governments are colonial structures that not everyone sees themselves represented in. In seeking to make existing systems of governance more accessible to youth, we are committed to centering Indigenous voices, and engaging youth who are under-engaged and youth who have been traditionally/continually excluded.



Executive Summary



Over the past several decades, we have continued to see a steady decline in voter turnout in local elections, especially by young voters. The 2022 Youth Election Ambassadors program set out to engage youth and young voters ages 18–30 in the upcoming municipal elections and support municipalities to build stronger relationships with local youth.

The program was run by CityHive in partnership with three Metro Vancouver municipalities: the City of New Westminster, the City of Vancouver, and the District of West Vancouver, and was partially funded by the United Way's Future Leaders program. While CityHive coordinated the logistics and program flow, municipal staff contacts offered insights into elections, messaging local context, and invaluable resources & support to make the program a success.

Four (4) youths between the ages of 18–30 were recruited in each municipality (total = 12) to hold the role of Youth Election Ambassadors. Ambassadors represented diverse social, racial, and cultural perspectives and lived experiences, though the majority identified as women. Out of the twelve youths recruited to take part in the program, ten completed the full program.

Ambassadors were provided 8 training sessions in June and July where they learned about local governments, elections, facilitation, event planning, and more. They were then supported to deliver two youth engagements each.

By the end of the program in October 2022, the Youth Elections Ambassadors had hosted 19 engagements, connected with 637 community members, including 300 local youth. In addition to engaging their peers and the broader community, the Ambassadors themselves became more engaged in the elections and started to engage their networks as well. The Ambassadors also gained important knowledge and skills that will help them become leaders and advocates in their local communities.

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About CityHive

CityHive is a Metro Vancouver-based non-profit organization on a mission to transform the way that young people are engaged in shaping their cities: in city planning, decision-making processes and urban sustainability issues. As a youth-led and youth-run non-profit, we harness the energy, experiences, and perspectives of youth to create projects and solutions to make our cities more sustainable and resilient. We work with civic institutions to make their youth engagement more meaningful and inclusive.

Developing the Ambassadors Program

In Spring 2022, with the municipal elections just over 6 months away, we reached out to Metro Vancouver municipalities with a proposal: a collaboration to recruit and train Youth Elections Ambassadors who would conduct youth outreach in support of the municipality's elections messaging. Based on years of youth engagement experience, we designed a program that would support 12 Ambassadors to learn about municipalities, build their own skills, and ultimately engage other youth across the region in the upcoming elections and beyond.

We were grateful to work alongside the City of New Westminister, the District of West Vancouver, and the City of Vancouver in delivering the 2022 Youth Elections Ambassador program.



About the 2022 Youth Elections Ambassador Program

”
"This program taught me how important cities are in affecting our day-to-day lives. I feel more connected to my city and feel a greater sense of responsibility in making sure my voice is heard. "

- 2022 Youth Elections Ambassador

The Ambassadors

City of New Westminster



Jessica Leung



JR Candelaria



Julia Mosi



Krisztina Fulop

District of West Vancouver



Alp Cetinakinci



Dorsa Khormali



Emily Gaudette



Majka Hahn

City of Vancouver



Geneva Calder



Nathalie
Adriana Funes
Serna



Kile Zhou
(dropped out)



Sayemin
Naheen
(dropped out)

Program Overview

Recruitment (June 2022)

Four Youth Elections Ambassadors were recruited from each of the target municipalities. The opportunity was disseminated through local community partners, youth-serving organizations, and widely on social media. Applications were reviewed to ensure that Ambassadors represented a wide range of lived experiences and communities.

KNOWLEDGE TO...

Training (June-July 2022)

Over the course of three weeks in late June to early July, 2022, the Ambassadors met twice weekly for training workshops. Workshops included modules on: cities 101, elections messaging, group facilitation, event ideation and planning, and problem solving. Sessions were led by the CityHive program staff, and featured guest staff speakers from our partner municipalities.

ACTION!

Events & Support (July-Sept 2022)

Following the intensive onboarding sessions, the Ambassadors were supported directly by the program coordinator to continue their event planning, coordinate logistics, and successfully deliver their events.

Participants met additionally for a mid-point check-in and a final celebration with the full Ambassador cohort and program coordinators to brainstorm, give & receive feedback, and celebrate together.

Reporting & Sharing Out (Oct-Nov 2022)

Upon the completion of their events, the Ambassadors shared event reports summarizing their experiences, challenges, wins, and impact. These reports have been summarized within this Program Report.

AMBASSADOR EXPERIENCE BY THE NUMBERS

70%

made important new connections to municipal staff and elected officials

85%

made new friendships with other residents

85%

learned new ways for young residents to participate in local government

85%

gained new skills

100%

would recommend the program to a friend

100%

feel more involved in their community

Challenges & Lessons Learned



Momentum & Support

A key reflection shared by both participants and the program facilitators was the need for additional training and regular check-in meetings throughout the duration of the program. When working with youth, peer-to-peer accountability and feedback can be extremely supportive to the success of their work. Additional training and check-in sessions would have enabled more of that learning and collaboration.

Setting Clear Expectations

In an effort to provide the Ambassadors with flexibility, we avoided provided concrete deadlines by which event plans and logistical coordination tasks had to be completed. Instead of being a supportive decision, this resulted in a lack of clarity about the timelines they should be adhering to, and resulted in several Ambassadors falling behind in their planning early on. Several Ambassadors also expressed that they would have appreciated learning more about the municipality's goals for the engagement events to help them in planning. Early on in training, Ambassadors were guided through a process to identify which demographics of youth they were hoping to reach (UBC undergrad students, LGBTQ2s+ youth, Muslim youth, etc.) Unfortunately, we found that over the course of their event planning many opted for more general youth audiences instead of focusing in on those initially identified target groups. Ideally we would have like to see more focus to reach those audiences with unique approaches.



Youth Engagement Activities & Outcomes



**“Many youth were unsure
where to start and being at
community events,
reaches them.”**

- 2022 Youth Elections Ambassador



Engagement Events

City of New Westminster

- Play the Parks
- Roaming Band for Votes
- K-Pop Voting Booth
- Sno Cones in the Park
- Picnic in the Park
- Dinner Party (x2)



City of Vancouver

- Run to the Polls YVR
- Bubble Tea & Trivia at UBC AMS
- Dining for Elections
- Picnic Meetup

District of West Vancouver

- Art of Voting
- CapU Street Fest
- Ambleside Music Festival
- Elections 101 in the Park
- Dinner Parties (x4)



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

10 YOUTH
AMBASSADORS

3
CITIES

19
EVENTS

LOCAL YOUTH
ENGAGED **300+**

630+
COMMUNITY
TOUCHPOINTS

Successful Strategies for Youth Engagement

Focus on equitable, diverse, and inclusive engagement

Bringing Ambassadors from different lived experiences together really helped set the tone for the program. Recognizing the exclusionary history of Metro Vancouver, we worked to specifically engage youth from under-engaged and traditionally/continually excluded communities (i.e. racialized, Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, low-income, living with disabilities). We feel that giving youth who hold these intersecting identities the resources and support to engage

their peers is a critically important step towards a healthier, and more representative democracy. We also put an emphasis on equity, diversity, and inclusion training. Ambassadors learned about historical voter turnout, barriers to voting, high and low voter turnout demographics, and how incorporating equity can help increase participation.

Meeting Youth Where They're At

The events with the broadest reach were in high-traffic areas that were frequented by many youth (ie. students spaces, parks/beaches) or coincided with other events (ie. festivals). Ambassadors who set up outside festivals and community events had some of our biggest engagement reach. This approach served the dual purposes of both meeting youth where they are and using our resources in the most efficient and effective way possible. Going to high traffic areas such as parks and beaches was also key to our strategy of meeting youth where they're at.



Making Information Easy To Access

A particularly helpful tool that Ambassadors came up with was a QR code that, when scanned, took the scanner to a webpage on the Elections BC website where they could register to vote. Easy to access information like QR codes, postcards, and small brochures make it easy for youth who are in a hurry to take information on the go with them and access on their own time. The Ambassadors also utilized social media reference landing pages (like LinkTree and Ink.bio) as a way of tracking how many people accessed the registration webpage through their QR code. These reference landing pages could also be used to help capture demographic information through the use of online surveys attached to links in the future.

Incentives

While the Ambassadors themselves were compensated for their participation in the program, many of them also found that providing food, prizes, and other incentives helped get youth in the door, especially at their private, dinner table conversations. Due to caution around potential violations of the election laws prohibiting the inducement of or compensation for voting, most Ambassadors did not offer prizes during their events. Underlying the offer of incentives is the understanding that youth's time is valuable, limited, and in-demand. Providing incentives for initial engagement or interaction is a proven strategy that those wishing to get youth civically engaged should adopt. Research shows that relying on messaging around civic responsibility and guilt has proven ineffective, while positive social pressure and incentives are promising.



Social Media

Ambassadors relied on social media and word of mouth for marketing. Utilizing existing social media channels with large followings (as Ambassadors did with CityHive's Instagram account) and promoting new channels through word of mouth and promotion (like Ambassadors did with the program-specific Instagram accounts they set up) are both important tools to reach youth who spend their time online.

Youth Engagement: Key Issues & Reflections

In July through September 2022, the Youth Elections Ambassadors planned, coordinated, and delivered a total of nineteen (19) youth outreach engagement events. Whether hosting a running tour of Vancouver, tabling outside a music festival in Ambleside, West Vancouver, or handing out sno cones to youth at a local park, they spoke with hundreds of local youth to build excitement for the 2022 municipal elections, support new voter registrations, and answer questions. Through their conversations some key questions and themes emerged.

Key Issues for Youth

- **Civic Education & Outreach:** Most youth that the Ambassadors spoke with were not aware of upcoming elections the role of local government, or where they could go to learn more. They appreciated having the opportunity to learn from a peer and that local governments were clearly making an effort to reach them.
- **Local elections:** Youth appreciated learning how to register, where and when to vote, and were excited to learn that they could vote at any location around their municipality. They were also eager for more information on who was on the ballot, and how to decide who to vote for. Accessibility of voting was a key recurring topics, including understanding ID required, proof of address, and some youth expressed a wish that transit should be free on election day.
- **Housing:** Youth shared their frustrations with a lack of affordable rental housing options, as well as options for young families (missing middle housing)
- **Parks and recreation:** Issues like public safety, alcohol use in parks, etc. came up repeatedly. Youth in Vancouver were interested in learning more about the role of Parks board.

"People seemed grateful that the election was being promoted to them as many had not heard it was happening."

- 2022 Youth Elections Ambassador

- **Schooling:** Given that these elections also involved the election of school trustees, many youth raised concerns they had over the school system, including inequities between different school districts, teacher salaries, and the role of schools in teaching students about social justice and equity issues.
- **Transportation & mobility:** Ambassadors spoke with many youth who raised traffic and congestion concerns, spoke about public transportation options (especially for post-secondary students), including frequency and availability, sustainable transportation options (buses, bike lanes), and roads, bridges and construction.
- **Community & Culture:** Youth brought up challenges of limited library hours and community study spaces for students, spaces and community hubs for young people (other than the mall and restaurants), and belonging – many expressed a love for their community but recognized the challenge as their friends move away. Youth also brought up reconciliation and decolonization as key topics for local governments to prioritize.

Top Questions from Youth & Young Voters

Local Elections:

- When is the upcoming election/election day?
- When do I have to register/update my voting information by? How do I register to vote? Do I have to register beforehand or can I do it day of?
- Am I eligible to vote? Which municipality should I vote in? (I've only lived here 5 months; I'm a permanent resident; I recently moved here from another place in BC for school, etc)
- Can I vote by mail-in ballot? Locations to vote?
- Where and when can I get more information about candidates? Who is running? Are people affiliated with parties? Who are we voting for and what do they do? Who to vote for? How do we get to know them?
- Does my vote matter if youths are the minority demographic anyway? What can we do to get more involved/have our voices heard?
- Is the election happening all across BC?

"Does my vote matter if youth are a minority demographic anyway?"

– Young Voter

Civics, generally:

- What kind of issues do municipalities deal with?
- How can youth participate more in municipal government?
- How can we make municipal elections/government more accessible to youth?
- Roles of mayor, council, park board, school trustees?



Looking Ahead

We are excited to say that the 2022 Youth Elections Ambassador program was a huge success. We would be thrilled to see municipalities adopting this model of youth engagement for elections to come.

More than anything though, this program highlighted **the urgent need for civic education and youth engagement year-round** – not just during election years. The overwhelming lack of civic literacy among youth the Ambassadors spoke with indicates a wide-reaching need for improved civic and democratic learning and participation opportunities.

Here at CityHive, we are eager to continue supporting municipalities across Metro Vancouver as they work to engage youth meaningfully in decisions that affect all our futures.

THANK YOU!

A special thanks to our program partners:



We would also like to thank the following individuals for their time and energy that went into making this program happen:

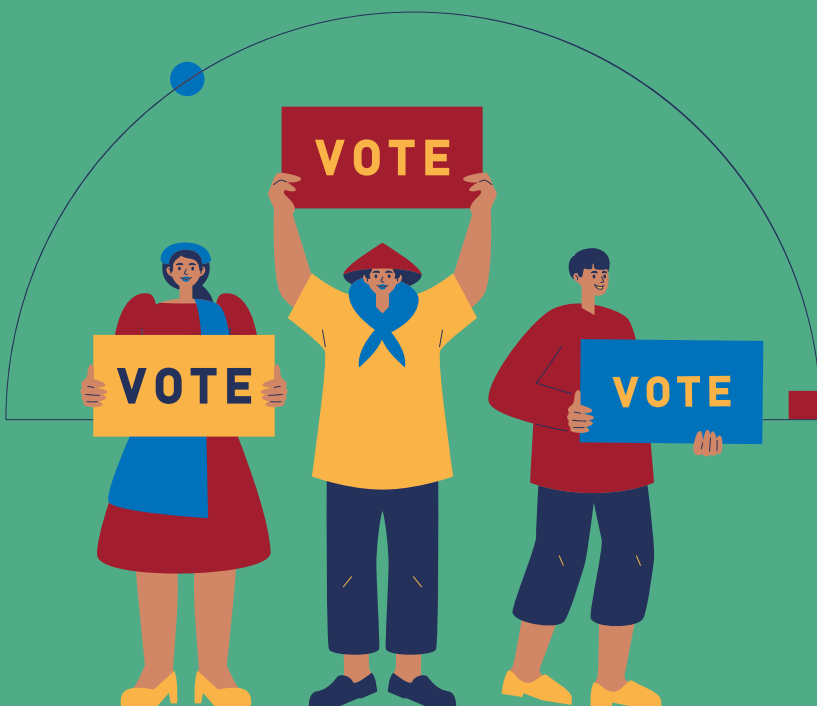
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