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Central Valley's Mobilizing Youth to Nix Tobacco (MYNT) Youth and Young Adult Coalition

2-E-6 Brief Evaluation Report 2019-2024

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The Mobilizing for Youth to Nix Tobacco (MYNT) would like to thank the youth coalition members for their continued support and work to improve the health and wellbeing of all Central Valley residents. Program staff would also like to recognize policy champions Fresno County Department of Public Health, Madera County Department of Public Health, Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency, Equality California, American Cancer Society – Cancer Action Network, Fresno Street Saints, Madera Unified School District, and many more.

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Aim and Outcome

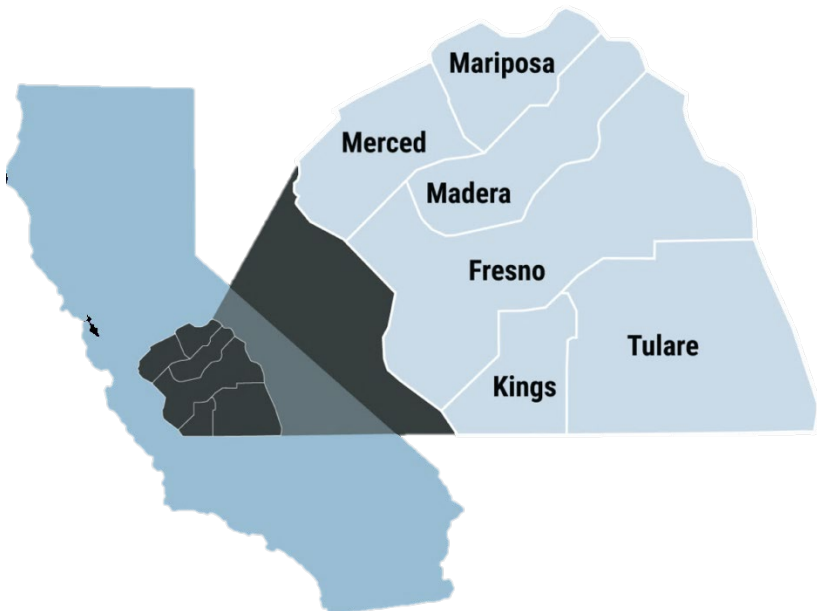
The primary purpose of this objective was to provide the space and structure necessary for effective youth coalition member engagement, so that African American/ Black youth and young adults in the community are trained in tobacco control advocacy and participate in activities that further tobacco control in the Central Valley. To limit youth access to flavored tobacco products, the Youth Leadership Institute's MYNT Program set the following objective:

By February 29, 2024, recruit, train, and engage a minimum of ten youth and young adults who are motivated to reduce tobacco related health disparities among people who are African American/Black to form a Mobilizing Youth to Nix Tobacco (MYNT) Youth and Young Adult Coalition in three jurisdictions (e.g., Fresno County, Madera County, Merced County, Tulare County). Youth and Young Adult Coalition members will annually participate in a minimum of three tobacco control activities (e.g., community education activities, outreach events, evaluation efforts).

By the end of project year 5 (February, 29, 2025), the objective was partially met. YLI established two youth/young adult coalitions in Fresno and Madera County and is composed primarily of Hispanic youth .

YLI's original target populations were West Fresno County (Kerman), and East Fresno County (Selma). However, Madera County was added as a target population in year 4 as momentum and interest around tobacco control work was starting to form.

In each target jurisdiction, the objective was to recruit, train, and engage a minimum of ten youth and young adults advocate for the reduction of tobacco related health disparities among people who are African American/Black to form and serve on the Mobilizing Youth to Nix Tobacco (MYNT) Youth and Young Adult Coalition.



Background

The mission of Youth Leadership Institute (YLI) is to build communities where youth and their adult allies come together to create positive social change. For 27 years, YLI's work has been based in the conviction that, if we invest in young people and help them uncover their authentic leadership style,

the entire community will prosper as a result. This work has resulted in 120 concrete policy reforms across the state, the formation of numerous youth advisory bodies that give young people a permanent voice in policy making, and generations of civically engaged Californians.

Since its founding in San Francisco in 1991, YLI has sparked the leadership of more than 90,000 young people to solve pressing social issues and serve their communities. Across 70 cohorts throughout California, YLI reaches 1,700 youth leaders ages 12-26 each week, 90% of whom are youth of color, and 67% of whom qualify as low income. 9% of YLI youth identify as African American/Black, and another 10% identify as multi-racial; YLI has served this population since its founding. With seven offices throughout California in Fresno, Los Angeles, Marin, Merced, Riverside, San Mateo, and San Francisco Counties, YLI has long been established as one of the premier youth development agencies in the state. YLI recently merged with YouthWire, acquiring its two Southern California offices (Long Beach and Eastern Coachella Valley), as well as its deep expertise in digital strategies and youth media.

YLI has particularly strong experience in alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) prevention, which has been at the heart of YLI's work throughout its 27-year history. For nearly three decades, YLI has designed, implemented, and evaluated programs and other initiatives that engage youth, families, schools, and communities to prevent ATOD use. YLI is a nationally recognized expert in environmental prevention, with particular emphasis on school- and community-based youth-adult partnerships to reduce tobacco access and availability.

Smoking is the single greatest avoidable cause of disease and death in the United States.¹ Exposure of adults to secondhand smoke (SHS) can have immediate adverse effects and can cause coronary heart disease and lung cancer.¹ The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to SHS.¹ Exposure to SHS can have immediate health consequences to children, including eye, nose, and throat irritation, and can cause asthma attacks and breathing problems for people with chronic lung disease.² Also, children exposed to SHS are more likely to suffer from bronchitis, asthma attacks, eye irritation, coughing, ear infections, pneumonia, and colds.³ However, tobacco related health disparities among people who are African American/Black continue to be an issue in many Central Valley communities.

In 2021, an estimated 8.2% of non-Hispanic Black youth currently used any tobacco product, compared with 11.0% of non-Hispanic White youth and estimated 3.1% of non-Hispanic Black youth currently used cigars, compared with 1.4% of non-Hispanic White youth.⁴ Despite starting to smoke cigarettes later in life, African American people are more likely to die from smoking-related diseases (e.g. heart disease, diabetes) than Hispanic people and Non-Hispanic, White people.⁵ Products like the use of electronic nicotine delivery devices (ENDD) and flavored tobacco products pose a new threat to youth as well. Whereas the side effects electronic nicotine delivery devices (ENDD) among youth has become a growing concern as well, the long-term risks associated with ENDD use is not currently known. However, flavor products are attractive youth and are known to promote youth tobacco experimentation.⁶ It is important for youth in diverse racial and ethnic groups to be educated and become advocates for their communities as they may more commonly experience biased structural practices and social conditions, discrimination, poverty, and stress, which can increase commercial tobacco use.⁷ The work of MYNT youth coalition members and their adult allies serves as a prime example of youth led efforts to advocate for local health equity and social justice in marginalized communities.

The brief evaluation report will summarize the progress made towards an active and engaged Youth Coalition and it will outline areas of improvement and suggest specific action steps to further enhance the youth and young adult's efficacy to support tobacco control efforts in the Central Valley region. The evaluation findings will be disseminated to project staff, youth coalition members, and local partners.

Evaluation Methods and Design

The program implemented a non-experimental evaluation design with process evaluation components to evaluate progress with the development of youth leaders. The theory of change for this project was Youth-Led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and Positive Youth Development (PYD) principles, both of which are grounded in numerous peer-reviewed studies. Most of the process data was collected from a total of four (4) evaluation activities. An asset mapping meeting with youth coalition members was conducted to guide identify coalition priorities. Program staff conducted a post survey satisfaction survey after a formal training was conducted. A focus group was convened in year five (5) to obtain feedback and overall satisfaction with coalition activities. Finally, a member participation record was completed in year 5 to quantify what activities coalition members participated in. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequency counts; qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis to identify key themes and patterns. Table 1 provides detailed information on the key process and outcome evaluation activities.

Limitations

The major limitations in the evaluation design are that there were limited process evaluation activities completed to support definitive project success. This was a result of staff turnover which resulted in missing training evaluation data and a late start to conducting evaluation activities. Secondly, the target community consisted of African American/Black youth in the Central Valley Communities. However, there were only a few youth meeting this description that joined MYNT. This was also a result of staff turnover. However, the project was successful in recruiting and engaging a diverse group of mostly Hispanic youth and young adults and their engagement in tobacco control efforts drove several projects forward during the funding period. Table 1 represents the key process evaluation activities used to monitor objective 2 completion.

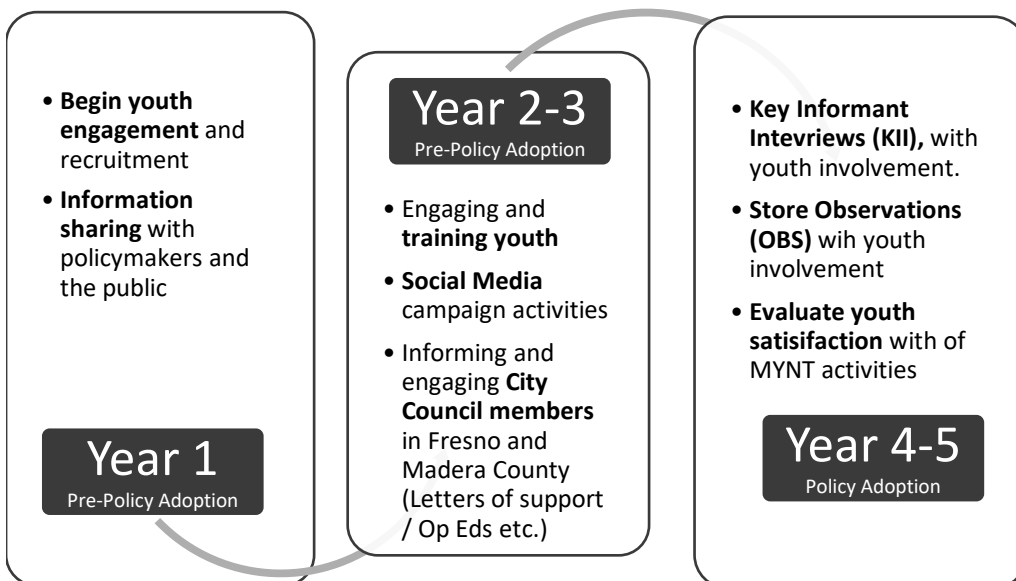
Table 1: Key Process Evaluation Activities

Evaluation Activity	Purpose	Sample	Instrument Source	Analysis Method	Timing
Process					
2-E-3 Education Participant survey	To measure the degree of knowledge and/or skill gained during the training, satisfaction with the training content, and suggestions for ways to improve the training.	Convenience sample of 15 MYNT members	Tobacco Control Evaluation Center	Qualitative Analysis / Quantitative Analysis	Year 4
2-E-2 Youth Coalition Focus Group	To obtain feedback from youth on their overall satisfaction with youth coalition activities, development of new skills and advocacy abilities.	Convenience sample of 13 MYNT Coalition members	Evaluation Consultant	Content analysis	Year 5
2-E-9 Asset Mapping	To guide future coalition efforts, identify coalition priorities, needs and available resources/skills/connections relevant to project efforts.	Convenience sample of 6 MYNT Coalition members	Evaluation Consultant	Qualitative Analysis	Year 4
2-E-7 Member Participation Record	To track tobacco control activities that youth coalition members participate in.	Convenience sample 13 of MYNT Coalition members	Evaluation Consultant	Qualitative Analysis / Quantitative Analysis	Year 5

Implementation and Results

YLI focused on engaging youth and their adult allies as agents of change. In partnership with schools and local nonprofits, YLI recruited one cohort of at least 8 youth/young adults from Fresno and 15 youth/young adults from Madera. YLI targeted Edison High School, Gaston Middle School, and Computech Middle School in Fresno County alongside Madera South High School in Madera County with historically high populations of African American/Black youth and low-income students. These efforts included collaborating alongside school faculty such as Stephanie Hamblan, Madera South HS Dean of Curriculum to identify those who might benefit most from the program. YLI also recruited adult allies to support the youth advocates in their work from local business and community members such as Stephanie Nathan, Madera County NAACP Branch President and Nicole Hutchings, Fresno Street Saints Associate Director. YLI, youth, and their adult allies then conducted a range of public education activities to seed an authentic discussion of tobacco policies within the community. Some of the public education activities included but not limited to: Great American Smoke-out 2022 and 2023. YLI and its MYNT coalition members also collaborated with other local tobacco coalitions to develop tobacco control policies and to obtain letters of endorsement from community leaders in support. YLI youth also presented these materials and educational packets to decision makers. Fresno City Town Hall at Edison High School with our local LLAs hosted a Madera Community Forum for Sugar Pine Apartments to talk about the dangers of tobacco use among youth. With model policy in hand and endorsements, YLI hopes the targeted communities will adopt a comprehensive tobacco retail license policy to curb tobacco use and reduce youth smoking initiation rates. Figure 1 provides an overview of the project timeline and includes key intervention and evaluation activities.

Figure 1: Key Intervention and Evaluation Activities in Chronological Order and Evaluation Activities in Chronological Order



Once a core group was recruited, YLI conducted an asset mapping activity to assess coalition priorities. Asset Mapping is a process used to identify individual, group, and community assets that can be put to work on a project. Ultimately, the goal of asset mapping is to understand the self-interest and motivation of the individual members of a group working together and individuals and organizations located in the larger community, and then to mobilize community members' gifts, talents, expertise, and knowledge. This process also helps identify where the needs are to accomplish objectives and set for the action plans to start on activities.

A major limitation was that the asset mapping activity took place in 2023 which was in year 4 of the project. The asset mapping activity took place late in the project because an external evaluator was hired at that time. Despite a late start to the asset mapping activity, the results yielded results and key areas of focus that the project focused on for the remainder of the funding period. The most noteworthy recommendations are displayed in table 2 and were met by MYNT for the rest of the progress report. Table 5 further describes findings from the asset mapping activity.

Table 2: Asset Mapping Results

2 Asset Map Findings	MET?	How MYNT met those needs
Participate in more Health Fairs/School Events	Fully Met	Staff participated in the Alpha Elementary School Health Fair, and at the Hispanic Heritage Month @ Madera South High School
Create more educational materials	Fully Met	Staff created the Bilingual Tobacco 101 & Environmental Protection PowerPoint Presentation, Tobacco Radio PSA Development Activity



Photo 1 Youth coalition members during the Asset Mapping Activity in 2023

Increase Social media usage	Partially met	Social media promotion of MYNT activities declined in the last remaining progress reports due to staff changes.
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Youth Leadership Trainings

Throughout the grant period, YLI provided leadership development and data collection trainings for the youth cohorts and their adult allies. Some of the trainings included but not limited to: Key informant interview, spokesperson training, etc.

Youth coalition members and youth advisors received formal training by program staff and the external evaluator and a training satisfaction survey was used to evaluate learning outcome and satisfaction achievement. The survey results provided information about participants' feedback on the training content, presenter, and the style of presentation so that program staff can gauge learning outcomes and improve the training content. See below for key results.

Youth Coalition satisfaction feedback

Youth coalition members also participated in an annual focus group to obtain information on the program's progress on supporting youth in becoming trained community advocates. Key themes, challenges, and successes assisted program staff with making adjustments to strategies used for youth coalition members. The findings were also used to improve the young adult internship program in order to better engage young adults in public health/tobacco control related careers in the Central Valley. Overall, MYNT recruited 23 youth in tobacco control activities. See table 3 for further breakdown of overall coalition numbers.

Member Participation Record

MYNT staff conducted a member participation record (MPR) to assess their youth coalition participation. The MPR showed that most youth were members of the coalition for 1-2 years. The average age of youth coalition members is 18 and most members at the time were from the city of Madera. Table 4 shows the activities that most participated in as part of the coalition.

TABLE 3: Counties	# of youth recruited	# of youth retained
Fresno	8	2
Tulare	0	0
Kings	0	0
Madera	15	15

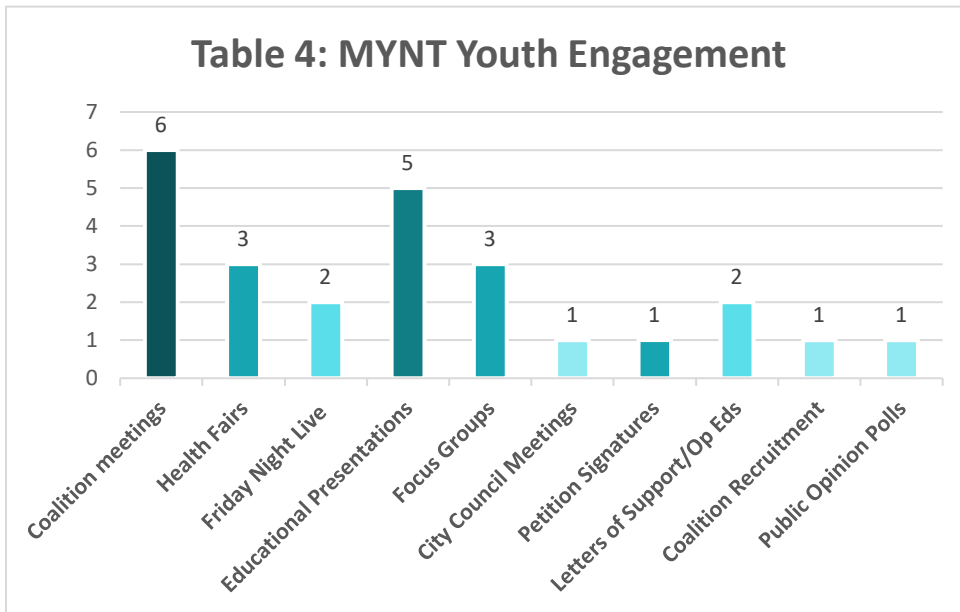


Table 5: Asset Mapping Objective 2 results

Asset Mapping Key Theme results	ASSETS	NEEDS	NEXT STEPS
Individual skills and talents	2 youth like to do presentations and public speaking	-Best practices for connecting with you -Access to a network of youth, work is very adult focused.	- Participate in more outreach events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Health fairs o School events
Relationships/networks	-School connections -Youth development trainers -Adult allies	-Student Government	- Create materials (pamphlets or infographics about effects of health and people of color - More program promotion via social media
Organizational/programmatic	-Gift cards -Youth space	-Transportation and carpooling youth	
Cultural competency	1 youth speaks Spanish	-More people of color and LGBTQ participation	

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through the establishment of the two MYNT Coalitions in Fresno and Madera, YLI has partially achieved its goal of engaging youth in tobacco control activities. Despite staff changes throughout the years, YLI was able to provide various opportunities for youth to become involved in local policy efforts to reduce tobacco influence in their local communities. Several key factors helped build momentum to continue these efforts. The following table shows a list of key lessons learned.

In 2024, MYNT has refocused its efforts to pass a comprehensive TRL in the City of Madera. Efforts are focused within Madera County because staff have an established relationship with the local LLA, who have a robust team of staff and community health workers that are committed to protecting youth from the dangers of tobacco use. MYNT experienced several staff changes throughout the course of the project term. When the former MYNT Project Director announced their departure, YLI was able to hire a new and passionate Project Director who brought together various community partners to educate and lead TRL efforts. In the next coming months, the youth coalition members will continue to tackle tobacco control efforts with support from other partners such as the Madera County Department of Public health.

MYNT will continue to recruit, train, and involve Youth Coalition members to present to the city council members not just to support tobacco control policies but other important public health issues affecting the local communities. MYNT will continue to be a strong partner that aims to improve community health by reducing youth access to harmful tobacco products.

The strategies and activities that have been **most helpful** have been the:

- ▶ Forming strong collaborative partnerships with LLAs such as the Madera County Department of Public Health and the Jakarta Movement
- ▶ Bringing on board project staff with a passion for public health and understanding of program planning and implementation.

A few things that the program would **do differently** would be to:

- ▶ Conduct a SWOT analysis in year 1 and 2 of the project to identify key partners and target communities.
- ▶ Increase social media efforts to increase onboarding of new youth.
- ▶ Attend more school events to recruit new youth.

Recommendations for other projects hoping to take on the adoption of a comprehensive TRL policy objective.

- ▶ Provide opportunities for youth to not only be involved in tobacco control but for the social aspect among their peers as this was something that youth greatly appreciated being a part of coalition.
- ▶ Continue to involve youth coalition members to present to the city council as they are uniquely positioned to speak on the issues of age group targeting by Big Tobacco.
- ▶ Collaborate strategically with other tobacco control projects in the area to increase support and community involvement in efforts.

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