



By Youth for Youth

Supporting Youth as Decision Makers in their Community

Situation: There is a need to connect youth programming to civic engagement efforts, in particular for youth to have opportunities to make tangible change in their communities. Additionally, youth need to be at the center of decision-making processes with adults, where youth are valued as key stakeholders and experts. The By Youth For Youth (BYFY) program addresses this need. BYFY is a youth committee composed of high school students across Dane County that make investment decisions for youth-led programming and initiatives. BYFY members identify critical issues impacting youth in Dane County, establish funding priorities, review grant proposals, and recommend funding to support projects developed and implemented by youth to serve youth.

Response: Each year, three sponsors provide funding for BYFY grant projects: United Way of Dane County, Dane County Youth Commission, and the City of Madison. Taylor Seale, Dane County Extension Community Youth Development Educator, provides administrative and programmatic oversight in partnership with the City of Madison and United Way staff. BYFY program activities included analyzing the most recent Dane County Youth Assessment Report to identify data driven youth-decided funding priorities. The BYFY staff team also organized site visits and guest speaker panels with community organizations so the youth could learn more about the funding priorities and opportunities for systemic impact. The youth then individually reviewed, evaluated, and ranked each proposal, deliberated the merits of each proposal as a group, and then recommended funding. In April, an Awards Ceremony was hosted to celebrate all the grant awardees and BYFY youth accomplishments. During the ceremony, it was announced that BYFY received a \$20,000 donation from the Madison Civics Club, as well as \$40,000 from Bloomberg Philanthropies to support youth-led climate action initiatives in the summer of 2024.



2024 BYFY Priorities

- Mental and physical health
- Immigration
- Sexual violence
- Poverty
- Climate change

Extension empowers young people in decision making directly in their community, preparing the next generation of civic leaders, and building systems in which youth voice is valued and prioritized.

32

Grant proposals received requesting \$87,000

11

Projects selected for funding

\$25,630

Awarded to selected grant applicants

100%

Of program funds allocated to grants

19

BYFY youth from 11 Dane County high schools

"BYFY is a great way to get involved in the community and voice your opinion. We do this by making funding recommendations based on what we learn through guest speakers and field trips. BYFY is great for resumes and getting a real life perspective on issues in our community."

- Past BYFY Member, 2024

Evidence: BYFY youth vocalize their personal improvements in leadership skills, critical thinking skills, facilitation, ability to work in a large group as well as gaining a better understanding of the issues youth face in Dane County and how to address them. When asked what skills youth members gained from participating in BYFY, youth said they gained "teamwork, leadership, and confidence building skills", "collaborative and communication skills in a professional setting and learning how local philanthropic funding works", and "being able to accept other people's opinions and learn new perspectives." And, when asked what youth members were most proud of from participating in BYFY, youth said they were proud "to give funds to people in need and make an impact", "to make new friends in different schools", and to "be a part of the whole process and feel like we made tangible, positive change in our county."

Celebrating 30 Years!

2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the By Youth For Youth program. Since the early 90s, \$924,753 has been awarded in grants to 496 youth projects from a total of 683 BYFY alumni. In an effort to quantify, celebrate, and highlight the impact that BYFY has had over the past 30 years, a survey is open to BYFY alumni: https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6PrGgOPHLTswSqi



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