

# Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council

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## Collaboration Overview

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The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council is an interagency effort involving multiple state-level departments. Since 1999 the council has worked to coordinate its efforts and support [positive youth development](#) throughout Iowa.

ICYD’s structure includes

- a formalized council membership designated by legislation;
- a two-tier structure that includes a leadership council and a results team;
- a strategic plan outlining goals and annual reports providing status updates;
- youth involvement;
- regular meetings; and
- partnerships with national organizations, local communities, and programs.

ICYD’s promising practices include the following:

- Provide consistent representation for national opportunities and look for support from a variety of sources.
- Develop a unifying goal to bring together the support of various agencies.
- Generate awareness and focus on positive youth development within the state.
- Connect state agencies to support overlapping initiatives.

Throughout its tenure, ICYD has learned the following lessons:

- Ongoing education is essential due to turnover on council.
- Strategic plans with lofty goals may not provide enough direction.
- Over time the structure of the collaboration may need to be adapted.
- We don’t have to do it all right away.

## Collaboration Purpose

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Iowa's vision is that **all Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful and prepared for adulthood**. ICYD is focused on improving the lives and futures of youth (ages 6 to 21) in Iowa through interagency partnerships, collaboration, and coordination across ten state agencies.

Based on their vision and goals, ICYD has developed a [results framework](#) that focuses on four broad areas:

1. All youth have the benefit of safe and supportive families, schools, and communities.
2. All youth are healthy and socially competent.
3. All youth are successful in school.
4. All youth are prepared for a productive adulthood.

These areas are designed to guide youth policy, organize planning activities, and monitor youth development outcomes across state departments and agencies and at the community level.

## About the Collaboration

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The ICYD began in 1999 as an informal network of state agencies that came together to work on a positive youth development grant funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Family and Youth Service Bureau (FYSB). While there was not a specific crisis or problem that was an impetus for the collaboration, these agencies recognized that they could do a better job of supporting youth and youth-serving agencies through a coordinated effort. The group believed that a collaborative effort across state departments could provide a beneficial platform for aligning policies and programs at the state and local level and encouraging collaboration among multiple state and community agencies on youth-related issues. Ten years after the group began, in 2009, the state legislature formalized the council as an acting body that reports to the governor in the Iowa Code, Section [216A.140](#).

In addition to the work to align policies, coordinate youth-related efforts, and promote positive youth development, the council also supports the [State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council \(SIYAC\)](#). SIYAC is a youth advisory council made up of youth between 14 and 21.

## Collaboration Structure

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Key aspects of the ICYD structure include:

### **A formalized council membership designated in legislation**

The legislation not only formalized the council in 2009, but designated that it shall include the directors and chief administrators—or their designees—from the following state agencies and programs:

- [Iowa Child Advocacy Board](#)
- [Iowa Department of Education](#)

- [Iowa Department of Human Rights](#)
- [Iowa Department of Human Services](#)
- [Iowa Department of Public Health](#)
- [Iowa Workforce Development](#)
- [Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy](#)
- [Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service](#)
- [Early Childhood Iowa](#)
- [Iowa State University Extension - 4-H Youth Development](#)

Mandating the involvement of all these agencies ensures that ICYD is representative of a range of youth-related issues and creates a place for these agencies to work together in a united manner. In addition to the mandated members, the council is able to invite additional members to be involved. View the current list of ICYD council representatives [here](#).

### **A two-tier organizational structure**

ICYD benefits from a two-tier organizational structure. This structure includes a leadership team (or council) and a results team. The council is made up of each state department's director or designee, and is led by a chair who is elected by the group. While it is not mandated in the legislation, the director of the Department of Human Rights has been elected to chair the council since its inception. Because the members of the council, as directors of agencies, are appointed by the governor, council members recognized that it was important for them to elect their own chair. This ensures that the chair is a member who fully supports the goals of the council. The council acts as the decision-making body for ICYD.

The ICYD results team is made up of staff from different agencies represented on the council. The team assists with carrying out decisions made by the council and brings recommendations to the council. Members of the results team have staff time designated to ICYD from their agency. The results team has a lead staff member who helps to coordinate and keep the work of the team going in order to support the collaboration and the objectives set forth by the council.

### **A strategic plan outlining goals and annual reports providing status updates**

ICYD developed a strategic plan spanning from 2007-2010. In 2010 the strategic plan was reapproved and is scheduled to be revised in 2012. The plan includes four broad strategies and action areas that relate to those strategies:

- Align policies and coordinate resources and efforts to effectively address complex youth-related issues and achieve shared results.
- Build capacity of state, regional, and local youth-serving systems to improve their services and collective ability to achieve the shared results for youth.
- Ensure that youth have a voice in decisions that affect them.

- Mobilize Iowans to increase community demand for more and better supports and opportunities for youth.

Each year ICYD develops an annual report that is submitted to the governor and the legislature. The annual report discusses the work that the ICYD has accomplished during the past year and its goals for the following year. Data are included in the annual report to measure the progress of its efforts and to identify areas of need.

While the strategic plan has been helpful, the council recognized that the lofty goals presented in the strategic plan did not provide enough direction for its work. As a result, the council recognized it was important to establish a tangible goal that they could work toward.

## Youth involvement

Since its inception, ICYD has been a champion of positive youth development. ICYD recognizes the importance of youth involvement and including youth voices in its work. As one of the four strategies in the strategic plan, ICYD supports youth leadership development, provides more opportunities for youth to be involved in state government, and encourages and supports youth leadership opportunities at the community level.

The SIYAC, a youth advisory group supported by ICYD, is one example of the importance that ICYD places on youth involvement. Youth involved in SIYAC participate as part of the council meetings in order to share the youth voice with the governor and legislature. Involvement in ICYD meetings allows these youth to work closely and make connections with individuals who are leaders in the government. The council supports an [AmeriCorp Vista member](#) to help coordinate SIYAC and provides funds to support travel expenses.

One of ICYD's upcoming goals is to provide youth leadership training to encourage youth throughout the state to be involved at the state and local level.

## Regular meetings

The leadership team of ICYD meets on a quarterly basis. While they originally met monthly, a lack of participation due to competing commitments led them to alter the schedule. At the meetings, the council approves the minutes from the previous meeting, shares issues, and operates under [Robert's Rules of Order](#) for decisionmaking purposes.

The results team and SIYAC meet once or twice between these meetings to fulfill ongoing work and develop recommendations for the council. Because the council meets less frequently, the results team is responsible for ensuring that the council is provided with all necessary information prior to the meetings to ensure that decisions are made in a timely manner.

## Partnerships with national organizations and local communities and programs

The results team reaches out to other partners at the local, state, and national level to support their work. These partners may not always be involved but are brought in on an as-needed basis. Some examples of state and local partners that have supported the work of ICYD are

the [Youth Policy Institute of Iowa](#), [Youth and Shelter Services](#), [Iowa Afterschool Alliance](#), and [Community! Youth Concepts](#).

ICYD has also benefited from partnerships with national organizations such as the Forum for Youth Investment and their [Ready by 21](#) initiative. Through its work with Ready by 21, ICYD partnered with local communities and the United Way to implement Ready by 21 practices. In addition, ICYD has been able to help support local communities and programs in its efforts to support youth. Over the years of its existence, ICYD has been able to funnel money that has been received through grants to communities to support their youth development efforts. ICYD reaches out to the local level to determine communities' needs and the local level looks to ICYD for support as needed.

## Promising Practices

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The following practices are examples of practices that have helped the ICYD work collaboratively to achieve results.

### **Providing consistent representation for national opportunities and looking for support from a variety of sources**

Since its inception ICYD has acted as a hub or clearinghouse for a number of youth-related initiatives. Creating a common entity that works on youth-related issues has enabled ICYD to present a united front for federal and national opportunities. ICYD has also recognized that it is important to look for support from a variety of sources. For example, it has worked with the Department of Labor's [Shared Youth Vision](#) (PDF, 4 pages), [Ready by 21](#), [FYSB youth development grants](#), [National Crime Prevention Council](#), [National Governors Association](#), and others. While some other states have different representatives for different initiatives, by having one group that represents Iowa for all youth related initiatives, ICYD has found that it can more easily make connections between overlapping initiatives. Having a single entity has also been helpful in the grant application process.

### **Developing a unifying goal to bring together the support of various agencies**

Once the legislation passed to formalize the ICYD, members recognized that the council would be held accountable to the governor and legislature for its work. While all of the agencies agreed to the goals in the strategic plan, the goals were too lofty to provide enough direction. When making decisions, the members of the ICYD council not only thought about the benefits of a certain activity for ICYD and the youth of Iowa, but also how it would affect their agencies. In establishing the goal, that by **2020 Iowa would increase the graduation rate from 89 percent to 95 percent**, the council found it was a unifying objective that led to action. Members could see how their individual agencies played a role in achieving this overarching goal and began to think about what their agencies were doing or could do to increase the graduation rate.

## **Generating awareness and focus on positive youth development and evidence-based practices within the state**

Since the development of ICYD, there has been a focus on [positive youth development](#). Prior to the work of ICYD, people in Iowa were not widely familiar with positive youth development. The ICYD has been able to educate and disseminate information from a number of different positive youth development models. In addition, the Department of Public Health now provides grants that focus on positive youth development and mandates the inclusion of evidence-based practices.

## **Connecting state agencies to support overlapping initiatives**

In addition to the common goal of improving graduation rates in Iowa, the collaboration among agencies allows them to work together on other initiatives in the state. For example, about half of the agencies involved with ICYD, including the Department of Public Health, the Department of Human Rights, Office of Drug Control Policy, Department of Human Services, and the Department of Education, came together to establish a statewide survey of youth. The Iowa Youth Survey is a self-report survey taken every two years by about 95-98% of youth in sixth, eighth, and eleventh grades. The survey focuses on respondents' perception of life (e.g., family, school, and community) and their behaviors and attitudes. Data from the survey are used by ICYD, state agencies, and communities.

## **Lessons Learned**

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The following are the lessons that the ICYD has learned while working collaboratively.

### **It is important to have a way to educate members due to turnover on the council**

While director-level leadership can be helpful for ensuring that the highest level of leadership supports and understands the value and benefit of ICYD, turnover at the director level can impact the sustainability of the group. Because directors are appointed by the governor, political changes can impact the stability of ICYD. For example, when a new governor was elected in 2010, the council membership changed dramatically with new directors being appointed to six of the ten ICYD agencies. To ensure that the work of ICYD continues despite these changes, ongoing education has been essential. The lead staff member of each respective agency who supports the work of the ICYD results team has had to spend time one-on-one with the new directors to educate them about the importance of the collaboration, how their agencies' work fits into the work of the collaboration, and how the collaboration can support their interests. Developing a core goal of having all youth in Iowa graduate high school by 2020 has provided a clear message that can be translated to—and unite—all new directors.

### **A strategic plan with lofty goals may not provide enough direction**

The strategic plan that was established for ICYD provided four strategic goals to drive the effort. These goals were very broad and included aligning policies, involving youth, building the capacity of youth-serving organizations, and mobilizing Iowans to increase the demand for

better community supports for youth. All of the members on the council agreed that these goals were important, but they found that getting something done toward any of them was difficult. Over time, ICYD came to the conclusion that it needed to find a common goal that all of the agencies were able to embrace. Members also recognized that it had to be a tangible goal—one they could act on and hold themselves accountable to.

### **Over time, it is important to adapt the structure of the collaboration**

In the early years of the collaboration, individuals who worked in youth development from across the state were invited to participate in quarterly meetings to support the council. While the youth development specialists provided a wealth of knowledge, the format lost energy over time and did not involve a standardized group of members. The results team was established to provide a consistent team carrying out the work of the collaboration. Despite the addition of the results team, youth development specialists continue to be invited to provide input and participate in the work of ICYD.

The collaboration also recognized that having monthly meetings for the leadership council led to low attendance. They decided to switch from monthly meetings to quarterly meetings. While this can result in a more lengthy decision-making process, it helps to ensure that more members are in attendance and able to participate.

### **You don't have to do it all right away**

One of the key lessons that ICYD has learned over its tenure is that you don't have to do it all or try and do everything at once. Through its efforts, the council realized that, as the collaboration becomes more established, there are opportunities to expand the focus of the work. Members found it is important to get started in an area where there is interest and expand as time and energy allows. Rather than trying to do everything at once, small victories and accomplishments can lead to more investment and success.

For example, in working toward the goal of increasing graduation rates by 2020, ICYD found that for youth placed in juvenile courts and the child welfare system, a lack of communication with schools can negatively influence their opportunities and become a barrier for graduation. Therefore the council is working to enhance communication between schools and placements to make sure that when changes occur all relevant parties are informed right away and the youth are able to transition more positively with fewer obstacles.

## **Accomplishments**

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During its tenure, the ICYD has:

- Established, and continues to support the SIYAC
- Grown from an informal entity to a formalized council recognized in legislation
- Initiated and sustains the Iowa Youth Survey, which collects perceptions and self-reporting behaviors of 6th, 8th, and 11th graders.
- Supported ongoing infusion of positive youth development principles in state agencies.

## Resources

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Learn more about the ICYD:

- ICYD Website: <http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/>
- ICYD Youth Development Philosophy:  
[http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/ICYD\\_Prod/about\\_us/YD\\_philosophy.html](http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/ICYD_Prod/about_us/YD_philosophy.html)
- Members of ICYD:  
[http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/ICYD\\_Prod/about\\_us/agencies\\_organizations.html](http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/ICYD_Prod/about_us/agencies_organizations.html)
- ICYD Strategic Plan: [http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/index\\_files/ICYDStrategicPlanfinal.pdf](http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/index_files/ICYDStrategicPlanfinal.pdf)  
(PDF, 8 pages)
- ICYD Results Framework:  
[http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/Planners\\_GrantWriters/ICYD\\_results.html](http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/Planners_GrantWriters/ICYD_results.html)
- State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC): <http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/SIYAC/index.html>

Learn more about [Positive Youth Development](#) by viewing the Youth Topic on [www.FindYouthInfo.gov](http://www.FindYouthInfo.gov).