

Local Government & Civic Engagement Education for Youth: Oxnard, Ventura County, & Camarillo SACH

Governments Engaging Youth Case Story

The Ventura County Civic Alliance (Civic Alliance) is part of a collaborative that brings together the Oxnard Union High School District (OUHSD), local governments and business leaders to prepare students for post-graduation by offering school- and work-based learning focused on career exploration. The **Civic Alliance** led the collaborative partners through the development and implementation of **Summer at City Hall programs** in the City of Oxnard (2016), County of Ventura (2017), and City of Camarillo (2018).

The Ventura County Civic Alliance was founded in 2001 for civic leaders with a shared commitment to the region to collaborate and identify strategies for mitigating the complex social, environmental, and economic challenges faced by the Ventura County region.

Summer at City Hall (SACH)

Summer at City Hall programs combine civic education with local government internships to teach youth about public service careers, community issues, and the importance of being civically engaged. Summer at City Hall programs:

- **Benefit youth** by providing professional development, work experience and opportunities to apply what they learn in the classroom, while increasing their understanding of local government.
- **Benefit school districts** by meeting the needs of diverse student populations, making education more relevant and valuable to students, and expanding the curriculum and learning facilities.
- **Benefit local governments** by investing in local youth and developing a skilled workforce from which to draw future employees, increasing awareness about the role of local government, and developing new projects with student assistance.

Program Outcomes

The **number of internships** provided through the City of Oxnard Summer at City Hall program **almost doubled** in three years – from 13 students in year one to 25 students in year three.

In 2018, the three Summer at City Hall programs combined **provided paid internships** for **48 high school students**.

97% of interns participating in Summer of City Hall in the City of Camarillo and City of Oxnard agreed that they “**feel better prepared to enter the working world**” because of their internship.

The Civic Alliance played **an instrumental role** in the formation of each program at the three sites, by facilitating strong partnerships between the school district and municipal partners, giving an active role to business leaders from the community, and leveraging funding to support the programs.

“This internship is **perfect for youth to gain experience...** I feel that it made me more mature. I had a key to the department which made me more responsible. My training was awesome. I love the meetings and learned so much. The city jobs here are really awesome.”

- Oxnard SACH Intern

City of Oxnard: Summer at City Hall

In 2007, OUHSD implemented a Linked Learning “academy” model of teaching that includes: (a) career technical education courses; (b) rigorous academics; (c) work-based learning opportunities such as guest speakers, field trips, job shadowing and internships; and (d) support services such as counseling, tutoring, and career guidance. In 2014, OUHSD received a California Careers Pathways Trust grant to expand their Linked Learning academy model and develop partnerships with community and business leaders. To assist with implementing the grant, OUHSD entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the Civic Alliance to serve as the business intermediary. The result is 22 academies across seven OUHSD high schools, and a partnership with the Civic Alliance, which has successfully engaged local governments and businesses to provide work-based opportunities that prepare students for college and career.

In 2015, the City of Oxnard (City) passed a resolution declaring the City as the first “Linked Learning City” in California. The resolution included a commitment to facilitating work-based learning opportunities at the City for OUHSD students. The resolution opened the door for the Civic Alliance to initiate conversations with OUHSD and the City about implementing a Summer at City Hall program. The Civic Alliance received support from the City at multiple levels, and from the OUHSD Career Technical Education (CTE) team. The Civic Alliance Project Director convened the partners to design the City of Oxnard Summer at City Hall (SACH) program for implementation in the summer of 2016.

Program Structure

The SACH is a five-week program that includes classroom instruction in the morning, internships in the afternoon, and a culminating civic project and presentation. In the morning, a teacher from OUHSD Law and Public Services Academy instructs students on the importance of civic engagement, local government, and the exploration of public service careers. Students also take worksite tours and hear from guest speakers. In the afternoon, the students spend three hours at their internships in a City department. The experience culminates with student presentations about their civic projects to elected officials, city and school district staff. Students who complete the program earn five high school credits and monetary compensation for the internship hours worked.

City of Oxnard SACH Internships

Department Placements

- City Manager’s Office
- City Treasurer
- Community & Economic Development
- Cultural & Community Services
- Development Services
- Finance
- Fire
- Housing
- Police
- Public Relations & Community Affairs
- Public Works
- Recreation Services

Projects

- Parklet pilot project
- Public service announcements
- Summer reading program
- Development of community flyers
- Development of social media pages
- Review of tax areas
- Code compliance review of businesses



Program & Intern Recruitment

To earn five-credits for completing the SACH program, the students enroll in a summer school class through their high school. The students apply for the internships through LaunchPath, an online tool that connects students to work-based learning opportunities. The Civic Alliance Project Director, and the OUHSD Work-based Learning Coordinator and Law and Public Services teacher review the LaunchPath applications and match the students with an internship position that aligns with their career interest. For example, students in the Youth and Education Services academy intern in the City Public Library to assist with the summer reading program for young kids. The SACH participants represent various high schools in OUHSD. According to the California Department of Education OUHSD is comprised of approximately 16,822 students, 84 percent of whom are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 53 percent are English Learners.

Evolution of SACH

In the past three years, the program partners have made various improvements to the SACH program based on partner feedback and a commitment to grow the program. Several of these enhancements are described below.

Almost doubled the number of internships: In year one, the program provided internships for 13 students from the Law and Public Service Academy. In year three, the number of internships increased to 25 and students from all the OUHSD Career Education Academies were encouraged to apply.

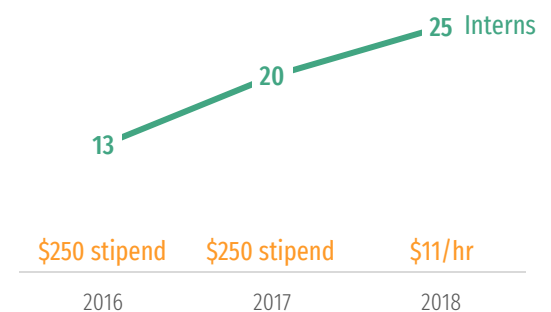
Added a professional skills training: In year one, the Civic Alliance received verbal feedback from the intern supervisors that professional conduct was a challenge for interns. In response, the Civic Alliance and OUHSD partnered to develop and implement a professional development training to prepare career academy students for work-based learning. Students received instruction on soft skills such as professional conduct and attire, effective communications, time management and office ethics. Data obtained from a survey administered by the Civic Alliance to Oxnard Chamber of Commerce members about the skills students need to succeed in college and/or the workforce informed the professional development training curriculum. The survey also ascertained employers' interest in participating in work-based learning programs. The Civic Alliance drew upon those employers that expressed an interest to recruit guest speakers for the training. Students must complete the professional skills training to be eligible for an internship through SACH; in 2017, 400 students completed the training the first year it was offered, and 700 students completed the training the following year.

Improved the internship matching process: In year one, matching students with an internship was arbitrary, and the resulting placement was not always a good fit for the student or the City department. In year two, the Civic Alliance Project Director in partnership with OUHSD staff, decided to develop a process that matched students with an internship based on their skills and interest. City staff observed improved outcomes after implementing the strategic matching process, as students displayed more motivation in internships that better aligned with their career interest.

Increased the monetary compensation for interns: For the first two years, SoCalGas provided a grant to support each participating student with a \$250-dollar stipend. In year three, the City paid the interns \$11 an hour.

City of Oxnard SACH Expansion | 2016-2018

of interns and monetary compensation



The Strength of Partnership

Since SACH was developed three years ago, there has been turnover with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Education Services, and CTE team members at OUHSD; and with the City Manager's Office, and City Council members at the City of Oxnard. Despite the turnover with two of three SACH partners, the program has continued because of the consistent involvement of the Civic Alliance Project Director, and the program's continued expansion and successful track record. The program is mutually beneficial to the students, OUHSD, and the City, which makes it easy for decision-makers to support the continuation of SACH. Program survival in the face of high-level administrative staff changes is also a testament to the Civic Alliance building a strong collaboration that keeps the partners connected to and engaged in the program.

County of Ventura: Summer at the County

After successfully launching the City of Oxnard SACH, the Civic Alliance was interested in expanding the program to another jurisdiction. The County of Ventura (County) had completed a strategic plan that prioritized workforce development, which aligned with providing a SACH program. The Civic Alliance met with the County Executive Officer and Human Resources Director to present their proposal and received immediate buy-in to launch a program in the Summer of 2017. An employee from the County's Human Resources Department, Training and Development Division assisted the Civic Alliance with developing a program structure (i.e., duration and content of the program) tailored to the County's needs and resources.



While the program does not include a classroom component, participating students receive civics education by touring government facilities; meeting with and attending a County Board of Supervisors meeting; and meeting with other high-level department officials. Like the City of Oxnard program, the County program includes student projects and paid internships.

In the summer of 2017, OUHSD students that had completed the professional development training offered through the OUHSD Career Educations Academies, were encouraged to apply for eight (8) intern positions with the County that paid \$10.50 an hour. In 2018, the second year of the program, the County offered 15 internships that paid \$11 an hour, and recruitment was expanded to countywide high schools. This may have resulted in non-OUHSD students participating in an internship without completing the professional development training required in year one.

Ventura County SACH Internships

Department Placements

- Area Agency on Aging
- Agricultural Commissioner
- County Executive Office
- Fire
- General Services Agency
- Health Care Agency
- Human Resources
- Information Systems
- Public Works

Projects

- Update IT department website
- Elder fall prevention outreach
- Digitizing documents
- Organizing Human Resources documents
- Update County website for accuracy and make suggested improvements
- Review County CODE
- Resource Management Agency

City of Camarillo: Summer at City Hall

The Civic Alliance initiated SACH program discussions with the City of Camarillo (City) Mayor in 2017. While the Mayor was interested in SACH, the City had recently hired a new City Manager and the timing was not right for implementing a new program. In early 2018, the Civic Alliance Project Director approached the Mayor and City Manager about moving forward with SACH and they agreed to launch a program in the summer of 2018.

The City of Camarillo implemented a SACH model like the County's program: paid internships with a civics component. The first day of the program, the City conducted an internship orientation where the City Manager and Department Directors gave a presentation about their role and the function of their respective department. During the remainder of the program students received civic education through touring city facilities; shadowing their mentors; and participating in meetings convened by the City Manager with senior staff members, where students were encouraged to ask questions.

To recruit students for the program, the Civic Alliance posted the internship positions online using LaunchPath. Eligible students were required to reside in the City and to have completed the professional development training offered through OUHSD. The City selected eight students out of 46 applicants. These eight students worked in the City Clerk's Office; Public Works Department, Sanitary District and Streets/Landscape and Water Divisions; the Administrative Services Department, Information Systems Division; and the Community Development, Planning Division. The City paid the students \$15.60 an hour from the General Fund for 60 hours worked over a three-week period.

From Classroom to Real World Application:

"In Camarillo, one student working in the wastewater department stated that she had an opportunity to utilize the same equipment as in her classroom. This gave her the opportunity to implement her classroom learning in a workplace environment. This provides useful experience for career exploration"

- The Civic Alliance Project Director



The City's SACH program ended with the interns presenting their culminating projects. The students were offered a unique opportunity to sit on the City Council dais and conduct a five-minute presentation about their project, what they learned through SACH, and the impact the program had on them. In a video produced by the Civic Alliance about the City of Camarillo SACH program, the students discussed how the program gave them a deeper understanding of local government's impact and the amount of effort that goes into running the City. This same video depicted Mayor Charlotte Craven describing the importance of keeping connections with youth in a constantly changing work environment, and program mentors noting the optimism that arose from investing in a high-quality, hard-working future workforce.

Summary

The Civic Alliance is committed to providing work-based learning opportunities for youth through enhancing the existing three Summer at City Hall programs and expanding the SACH model to the other cities and providing internship opportunities with the 35 special districts in Ventura County. Below is a summary of program strengths to propel this work forward.

- The Civic Alliance **Project Director has a breadth of knowledge** about work-based learning programs and how local governments function, a high-caliber skill set, and is committed to building partnerships that have led to increased opportunities for youth as evidenced by: (1) implementing and expanding the Oxnard program from 13 to 25 interns, while increasing intern compensation from a \$250 stipend to an \$11 hourly wage over the course of three years; (2) growing the Summer at the County program from 8 to 15 students and increasing the wage from \$10.50 to \$11 an hour over two years; and (3) starting a SACH program in the City of Camarillo.

Governments Engaging Youth SACH Programs | 2016-2018

SACH Program	Program Year					
	2016		2017		2018	
	# of students	Compensation	# of students	Compensation	# of students	Compensation
City of Oxnard	13	\$250	20	\$250	25	\$11/hr
Ventura County	-	-	8	\$10.50/hr	15	\$11/hr
City of Camarillo	-	-	-	-	8	\$15.60/hr
Total Impact	13	\$3,250	28	\$16,100	48	\$47,288

- SACH and Summer at the County **partners are guided by a set vision** and clearly defined outcomes;
- The SACH and Summer at the County **programs are supported by champions** at the Civic Alliance, OUHSD and each municipal office via the backing of elected officials, department heads, and district CTE staff;
- Oxnard SACH is supported by the Linked Learning Resolution, a City Council-adopted policy stating that the City will take action to support work-based learning experiences;
- The Civic Alliance **used partner feedback** to inform program development and improvement, and is continuing to **incorporate evaluation** and data into the program, through a recently implemented mentor survey and student survey;
- Program partners are **committed to providing opportunities for a diversity of students**, as demonstrated by recruitment efforts and a commitment to offering professional skills training to hundreds of students within OUHSD.
- Through the survey administered by the Civic Alliance, Camarillo and Oxnard, SACH students relayed that through the internship they **gained job skills and increased their knowledge about city government**. 88% agreed that they would “**consider working with the City in the future**” because of completing their internship.