



County of Monterey – 2025 CSAC Challenge Awards

Executive Summary Monterey County Young Supervisors Program

OVERVIEW – The Monterey County Young Supervisors Program is a first-of-its-kind in California and consists of a 4-week summer leadership institute for local county youth.

CHALLENGE – Young people have limited access to government programs that build leadership skills, prepare them for civic engagement and introduce them to county careers.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION – Preparing the next generation of leaders in county government was the primary reason why the Monterey County Young Supervisors Program was created in 2017. We wanted a method to utilize our elected offices to provide the young people of Monterey County with an opportunity to develop skills in leadership, problem solving, critical thinking, and networking, and to better understand the important role that county governments play in providing essential services to its residents, visitors and businesses.

We wanted to take advantage of the summer when local high school students are looking for opportunities to build their resume, gain experience, fulfill their high school community service hours, and make the most of their time out of school. We opened the program to high school and first and second-year college students. Participants go on an initial 2-day leadership development training to sharpen and learn leadership skills, and they also hear from a variety of speakers on topics, such as the professional networking and reputations, the news media, small businesses, non-profits, law enforcement, and homeless services. The students also visit historic Colton Hall in Monterey where the California Constitution was drafted in 1849. A highlight of the program is taking the students to the Monterey Bay Aquarium and O’neill Sea Odyssey to learn about ocean conservation and go out into the Monterey Bay waters, most who have never had that opportunity despite living close by.

Legislative Mock Hearing: The main project is having the participants research a hot policy topic and then conduct a mock legislative hearing in the Supervisors’ Chambers debating both sides of the issue to

encourage critical thinking. These topics are often controversial topics that the Board of Supervisors later votes on, such as a homeless navigation center, farmworker housing, ocean plastic pollution, and our battery energy storage facilities. They conduct the hearing in front of their parents and family members as part of a final graduation ceremony. By completing the program, our offices aim to also empower the students, many who come from low-income households, by strengthening their resume and providing recommendation letters as they prepare to apply for college or scholarships.

Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders: Above all else, we hope to spark an interest in these young adults about becoming civically engaged and take part in the decision making in their own communities. When we started, there were no other such youth government programs in our county, but today, we have now inspired more opportunities. The City of Salinas, Speaker Robert Rivas and Senator Anna Caballero conduct their own youth programs. Overall, this program receives positive reviews from the community, especially from the parents who appreciate their child being closely connected with a county supervisor. We are proud to have younger siblings of graduates later join also.

RESULTS AND REPLICABILITY – Over 350 students have completed the curriculum, with alumni attending prestigious institutions such as UC Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford, West Point, Harvard, among other prestigious universities. Today, most of the graduates are young professionals working in numerous fields. YSP has now inspired our County Elections Office and Health Department to conduct similar institutes. Other County Supervisors have also utilized our curriculum for creating their own programs, including Supervisor Eddie Valero in Tulare County and Supervisor Felipe Hernandez in Santa Cruz County. We are in the process of assisting Supervisor Josh Pedrozo in Merced County.

Funding and Staffing: The program is led and sustained by Supervisor Alejo and Lopez's Office budgets and through partnerships with local donors and organizations. Primary staffing for the program is conducted by Supervisor Alejo's and Lopez's dedicated staff along with volunteer guest speakers from county departments and the community.

CONTACT

Javier Gomez, District 1 Policy Analyst
(831) 755-5011 | GomezJ@countyofmonterey.gov