



Elevate Youth California: Building Youth Capacity for Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Leadership

March 19, 2026



Disclaimer

- Elevate Youth California (EYC) is a program of the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) funded through Proposition 64 California Cannabis Tax Fund, Allocation 3, YEPEITA. Sierra Health Foundation: Center for Health Program Management (The Center) is contracted to support the implementation of EYC. This statewide program provides funding and technical assistance for organizations that are developing or increasing community substance use disorder (SUD) prevention, outreach, and education focused on youth.



Land Acknowledgment

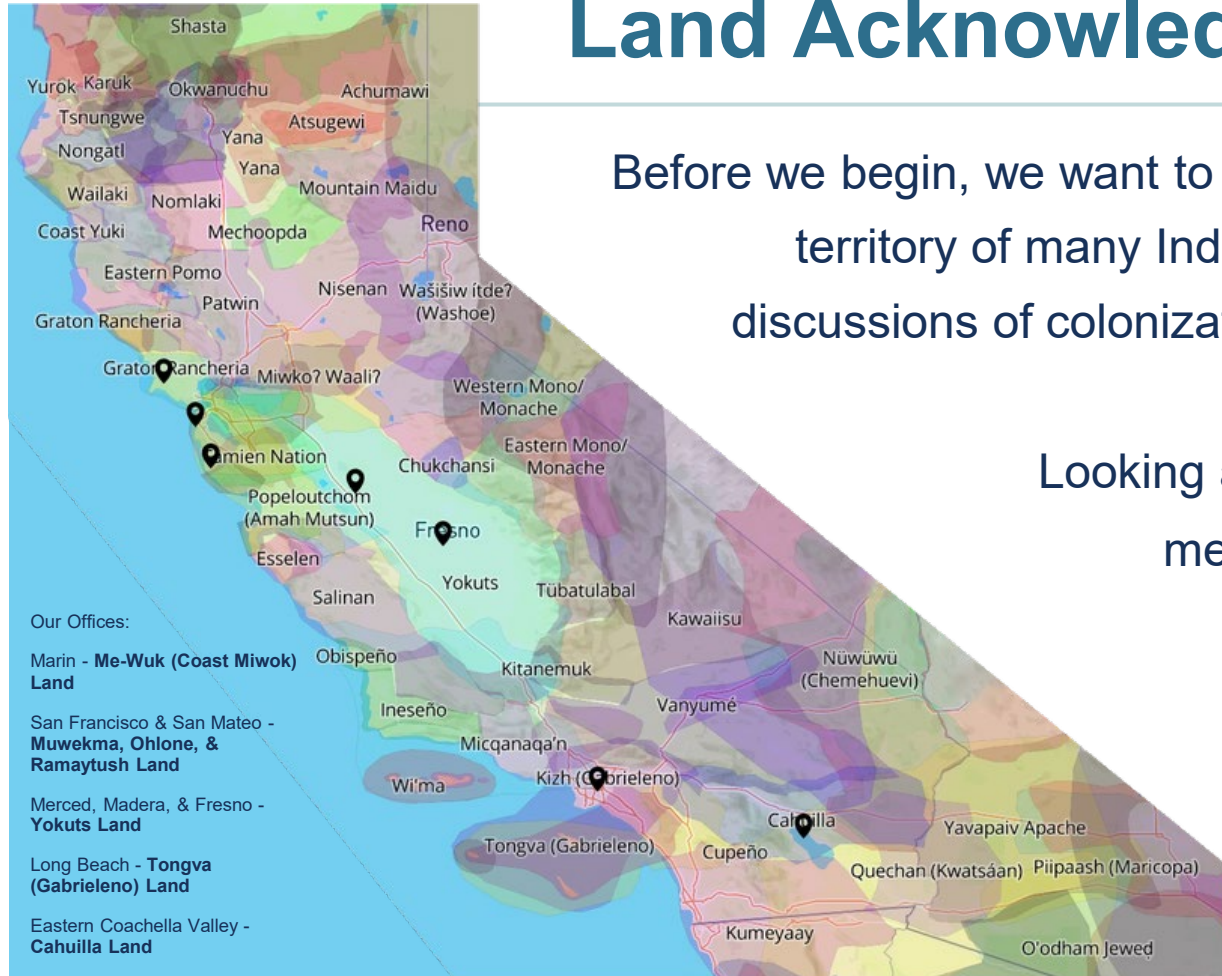
Before we begin, we want to acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. Native Land brings about discussions of colonization, land rights, language, and Indigenous history tied to our personal histories.

Looking at the land from an Indigenous perspective means acknowledging that the land is a living being - this understanding both gives us insight into and increases our awareness of how we

treat and interact with the land.

via **Native-Land.ca**

yli.org



Community Agreements:

- Take care of yourself and your family.
- Embrace the awkwardness.
- Keep an open mind.
- Be present.
- Participate in discussion and breakout rooms.
- Take space, make space.
- Have fun!



Benefits of Learning Communities

- (1) Sense of belonging.
 - (2) Interdependence or reliance among the members.
 - (3) Trust among members.
 - (4) Shared purpose of that community.
- We hope that this is an open and generative space. It may feel exploratory or even messy in some ways, but that is part of the work, so let us lean in!



Objectives

- Revisit positive youth development frameworks and practices that support increasing the capacity of adult allies and youth participants to lead PSE change.
- Dive deeper into public speaking as an essential skill needed to lead successful PSE work for adult allies and youth participants.
- Understand how popular education frameworks can support building critical consciousness and cross-cultural empathy needed to lead PSE work.



Learning Community Structure

Today's topics include the Positive Youth Development Framework, Standards of Practice, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Principles; Public Speaking: A Foundational Skill; and Popular Education and Building Critical Consciousness.

- There will be three sessions consisting of a mini-presentation.
- In the first session, we will discuss at-large, and the remaining discussions will occur in small breakout rooms.





Positive Youth Development, Standards of Practice, and SEL Principles



Positive Youth Development

- The ongoing process in which young people are engaged in building the skills, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences that prepare them for the present and the future. Youth development is an ongoing, inevitable process in which all youth are engaged, and all youth are invested. Youth and adults achieve better results working together versus apart.



Youth Leadership Institute (2000)



Standards of Practice

- A safe environment, and opportunities for:
 - Caring and meaningful relationships with peers and adults.
 - Community engagement.
 - Interesting and relevant skill development.
 - Leadership and advocacy.



Youth Leadership Institute (2000)



SEL

- The process of young people and adults acquiring and applying the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2023)



SEL Core Competencies

- **Self-awareness:** Involves understanding one's emotions, personal identity, goals, and values.
- **Self-management:** Requires skills and attitudes that facilitate the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors.
- **Social awareness:** Involves the ability to take the perspective of those with the same and different backgrounds and cultures and to empathize and feel compassion.



SEL Core Competencies

- **Relationship skills:** Includes the tools needed to establish and maintain healthy and differing relationships, and to effectively navigate settings with differing social norms and demands.
- **Responsible decision-making:** The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behaviors and social interactions across diverse situations.



Building the Skills of Youth

- Team building
- Research
- Storytelling
- Critical consciousness
- Cross-cultural empathy
- Working with decision makers
- Community outreach
- Advocating
- Coalition building



At-Large Discussion (15 minutes)

- Which of these skills resonates with your work the most and why?
- What are some skills that you are building with youth to lead long-term community change?
- What skills are missing from the list that you are practicing with your youth to build their capacity to lead community change?







Public Speaking: A Foundational Skill



Principles of Communication

- Body language
- Tone
- Content



Goal and Audience

- What do you want your audience to do or remember? You can change your goal, but not your audience.
 - Be clear about your goal.
 - Modify your goal to appeal to your specific audience.
 - Understand who your audiences are.



Managing Anxiety

- Acknowledge what your body is doing and fuel your body.
- Anticipate and prepare: know your topic, get organized, and practice.
- Practice anxiety-reducing exercises, such as deep breathing.



Public Speaking Tips

- **Physical Communication:** Take up space, make eye contact, be confident, avoid defensive postures.
- **Verbal Communication:** Be aware of your volume, pitch rate, and avoid filler words.
- **Prepare:** Lean into your method of preparation, such as creating a script, practicing, timing yourself, etc.



Breakout Room (11 mins)

- Why is public speaking important for the work we do?
- What are you doing to support youth in preparing for public speaking?
- How can you create more opportunities for youth to feel confident in public speaking?
- What is something your organization is doing well to support you and youth participants in public speaking?



At-Large Debrief

- Share reflections from your time in groups.





Break





Popular Education and Building Critical Consciousness



Popular Education

- The objective of popular education is for people to have more control over their own lives. As such, the educational method should not contradict this by treating participants as passive learners who require input of knowledge or information from a teacher or expert.

(Freire, P. (1970) Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Seabury Press)



Popular Education Continued

- Popular education values and respects people as their own experts and challenges the notion that the educator or organizer's role is as an expert who works "for" people.
- Based on the belief that people themselves have sufficient knowledge and can work out solutions to their own problems.
- An approach to education that focuses on content may increase an individual's knowledge, but this does not thereby enable them to take action.



Popular Education Principles

- **Education for liberation:** Popular education is essential in developing new leadership to build a bottom-up movement for fundamental social change, justice, and equality.
- **Accessible and relevant:** We begin by telling our stories, sharing and describing our lives, experiences, problems, and how we feel about them.



Popular Education Principles

- **Interactive:** We learn by doing; we participate in dialogue and activities that are fun, including cultural arts such as drama, drawing, music, poetry, and video.
- **Education with an attitude:** We are not neutral: through dialogue and reflection we are moved to act collectively—creating change that will solve the problems of those at the bottom in our communities, those of us who are most oppressed, exploited, and marginalized.



Popular Education Principles

- **Egalitarian:** We are equal. All of us have knowledge to share and teach. All of us are listeners and learners, creating new knowledge and relationships of trust as we build for our future.
- **Historic:** We see our experience within the context of history, indicating where we have come from and where we are going.



Popular Education Principles

- **Inclusive:** We see ourselves in relation to all people, including those of different ethnic groups and nationalities, social classes, ages, genders, sexualities, and abilities.
- **Consciousness raising:** We critically analyze our experiences, explaining the immediate causes of our problems and discovering the deeper root causes in the structures of the economy, public policy, and culture.



Popular Education Principles

- **Visionary:** We are hopeful, creating an optimistic vision of the community and global society we want for ourselves and our families.
- **Strategic:** We are moved to collective action, developing a plan for short-term actions to address the immediate causes of our problems, and long-term movement building to address the root causes of our problems.
- **Involves the whole person:** We use our head for analysis, reflection, and consciousness; our heart for feeling and vision; and our feet for collective action for the short term and the long haul.



Breakout Room (11 mins)

- How is your organization utilizing popular education practices to build the capacity of youth leaders to work on prevention?
- What are some ways that you are building critical consciousness and cross-cultural empathy with youth participants?
- What are some tools that you can share with each other on how to support youth in learning about their PSE topic and efforts?



At-Large Debrief

- Share reflections from your time in groups.



Evaluation

- Please take a moment to fill out this evaluation form.



Closing:

- Share one word in the chat that captures your experience in this workshop today.





Questions?





Thank You!

