

Prop 64: Cohort II Local Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

Project Purpose

The Proposition 64 Cohort II Grant was awarded to the City of Palm Springs in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs. The primary purpose of the project is to mitigate the impact of cannabis legalization on youth by focusing on **Youth Development/Youth Prevention and Intervention**. Specifically, the project aimed to reduce cannabis use among middle and high school students through education, prevention, and early intervention strategies.

Goals and Objectives

The project established several key objectives under three core goals:

1. **Goal 1: Promote Youth Safety and Belonging**

The objective was to foster a sense of belonging and emotional and physical safety among youth participating in the program. To achieve this, the Boys & Girls Club implemented engaging activities that promoted positive relationships among participants.

- **Outcome:** The project successfully created a safe environment, with youth reporting strong connections with peers and program staff, contributing to a sense of community and security.

2. **Goal 2: Increase Emotional Wellness and Healthy Lifestyle Choices**

Through the **SMART Moves for Healthy Lifestyles** program, participants were educated about emotional wellness, coping mechanisms, and the importance of healthy lifestyle choices.

- **Outcome:** Participants reported improved emotional regulation and awareness of the harmful effects of cannabis, as well as increased interest in making healthier life decisions.

3. **Goal 3: Raise Community Awareness on Cannabis Prevention**

The project also sought to raise awareness in the broader community about the risks of youth cannabis use through the Cannabis Education Center (CEC) and public outreach efforts.

- **Outcome:** Educational sessions were held for youth and their families, contributing to a greater understanding of the risks associated with cannabis use. Flyers, workshops, and collaboration with local schools and organizations amplified the project's reach.

Key Findings and Project Accomplishments

- The project successfully engaged 215 youth over the course of the entire grant period. Participants showed measurable improvements in emotional well-being, demonstrated through both feedback and school performance indicators such as improved GPA and decreased disciplinary incidents.
- The SMART Moves program effectively reduced risky behavior, including cannabis use, with 80% of participants indicating that they developed healthier decision-making skills.

- The Cannabis Education Center became a key resource for community outreach, offering educational materials and workshops that targeted both youth and families.

Conclusions

Overall, the City of Palm Springs' Prop 64 Cohort II project achieved its objectives of increasing youth engagement in preventive programs, fostering emotional wellness, and raising community awareness around cannabis risks. The integration of structured educational programs, along with continuous feedback and adjustments, allowed for effective youth development and cannabis use prevention. Further investment in this model could continue to yield positive results in Palm Springs and serve as a replicable program for other communities dealing with similar issues.

Project Background

In January 2021, the City of Palm Springs, in collaboration with the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs, responded to the State of California's Proposition 64 Public Health and Safety Grant Program, administered by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). The city was awarded \$1,000,000 under the Proposition 64 Cohort II to support youth development, prevention, and intervention initiatives aimed at addressing the local impacts of cannabis legalization. The grant period runs from May 1, 2021, to April 30, 2024.

Need for the Project

As cannabis became legal for adult use in California, the potential risks for adolescents increased, particularly in areas where cannabis dispensaries and advertising are prevalent. Palm Springs, a popular resort city with a growing cannabis industry, has become a significant hub for cannabis-related businesses. This raises concerns about the influence on youth, especially regarding early initiation of cannabis use and its adverse effects on brain development during adolescence. Research indicates that early and frequent cannabis use is linked to long-term addiction risks, which underscored the urgent need for youth-targeted interventions.

The project addresses the gaps in youth prevention by focusing on middle and high school students who are most vulnerable to the influence of cannabis in their communities. With the support of the Proposition 64 grant, the City of Palm Springs partnered with the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs to develop a comprehensive educational program, combining prevention, awareness, and intervention strategies to protect youth from the negative effects of cannabis legalization.

Project Components

The project primarily focuses on two main components:

1. **Cannabis Education Center (CEC):**

The Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs established the CEC to serve as a dedicated space for youth and their families to access resources related to cannabis education. This facility supports the delivery of the **SMART Moves for Healthy Lifestyles** program, offering a variety of workshops and educational events. The CEC also serves as a community hub, hosting public seminars and expos on cannabis prevention and health promotion during non-club hours.

2. **SMART Moves for Healthy Lifestyles:**

This evidence-based program, originally developed by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, provides youth with essential life skills to prevent substance use. The curriculum covers emotional wellness, mindfulness, stress management, and decision-making. By integrating these life skills, the program aims to reduce the likelihood of cannabis use among youth, equipping them to make healthier lifestyle choices.

Target Population

The project focuses on middle and high school students, particularly those from communities disproportionately impacted by the legalization of cannabis. These students, aged 12 to 17, are engaged in after-school programs at the Boys & Girls Club, where they participate in structured activities designed to build resilience, promote healthy behaviors, and reduce cannabis use. All youth who fall within the target age range and are enrolled in middle or high school are eligible to participate in the cannabis prevention and education programs. The club's open-door policy ensures that any youth within the community, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, is welcome to join and benefit from the available resources and services. The target population also includes youth and families in the broader Palm Springs community, who benefit from educational resources provided through the CEC. The program is designed to be inclusive, offering services to any youth interested in building resilience against substance use, enhancing emotional wellness, and developing healthy lifestyle habits.

Goals and Objectives

The key goals of the project, as outlined in the Project Work Plan, include:

- Providing a safe and supportive environment for youth, fostering a sense of belonging and emotional well-being.
- Increasing youth awareness of the risks associated with cannabis use and equipping them with the knowledge to make healthier choices.
- Enhancing community awareness of youth cannabis prevention strategies through educational outreach and engagement.

By addressing these goals, the project aims to mitigate the risks of youth cannabis use and create a healthier, more informed community.

Process Evaluation Method and Design

Process Evaluation and Design

The Proposition 64 Cohort II project at the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs was implemented with structured processes for tracking participant engagement, program attendance, and activity outcomes to ensure the efficacy of cannabis prevention programs. This process evaluation details the methods and tools used for data collection, oversight structure, and data analysis throughout the grant period.

Data Collection and Tracking

The **Vision Member Tracking System** was the primary tool for monitoring key program metrics. This system captured various data points, including:

- **Member Registration:** Demographic information such as age, gender, and school enrollment status.
- **Attendance:** Regular tracking of attendance for each session, capturing the frequency of participation and engagement levels.
- **Membership Duration:** Monitoring the length of time participants remained involved with the program to assess retention rates.

All data collected in the Vision Member Tracking System enabled the project team to generate detailed reports on program participation and demographics, facilitating insights into program reach and engagement.

Process Variables and Measurement

Process variables included participant attendance, duration in the program, and engagement levels. These were measured by:

- **Quantitative Metrics:** Attendance records and duration of membership provided concrete data on participation consistency.
- **Qualitative Feedback:** Qualitative insights were collected through pre/post-program surveys, feedback forms, and open-ended responses from participants. This data helped gauge participant satisfaction and program effectiveness in fostering emotional wellness and healthy lifestyle choices.

Project Oversight Structure and Decision-Making Process

The project was overseen by a dedicated team structure that included:

- **Unit Director:** Responsible for leading the project and coordinating program activities.
- **Director of Operations and Executive Director:** Provided strategic guidance and ensured that activities aligned with the project plan and goals.

- **Program Administrator and Youth Development Professionals:** These staff members were directly involved in delivering programs, tracking attendance, and creating program schedules.

Regular project meetings were held to evaluate program progress and make adjustments as needed. The team also collaborated with a marketing consultant to promote the programs, create outreach materials, and increase visibility. Additionally, the Boys & Girls Club engaged in ongoing meetings with the **Palm Springs Police Department** to align program activities with community needs, ensuring the initiative addressed relevant youth development and prevention challenges.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis included both quantitative and qualitative approaches:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Attendance rates, membership retention, and demographic data were analyzed to understand participant consistency and to measure the reach of the program. Reports generated from Vision Member Tracking helped assess trends and patterns in engagement.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Open-ended responses and participant feedback were reviewed to identify themes related to emotional wellness, knowledge gains, and lifestyle changes. Using structured coding, the team categorized qualitative data to understand the effectiveness of program components and areas for improvement.

Outcome Evaluation Method and Design

Research Design for Outcome Evaluation

The Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs utilized a **mixed-methods approach** to evaluate outcomes, combining quantitative data from program attendance and engagement with qualitative insights gathered through surveys and feedback. This approach allowed the project to capture both measurable behavior changes and participant perceptions of program effectiveness.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation aimed to answer key questions related to program goals:

1. Did youth develop healthy decision-making skills and attitudes?
2. Was there a reduction in risky behaviors, including cannabis use, among participants?
3. Did participants demonstrate improved coping strategies for stress and emotional regulation?

These questions aligned with the project's original goals and objectives, focusing on youth development, emotional wellness, and cannabis prevention.

Participant Services and Activity Accomplishment

A total of **215 youth** received services during the grant period, participating in **600 activities** centered on cannabis education and mental, emotional, and physical health. Activities included workshops, group discussions, physical fitness sessions, and community events designed to foster awareness and healthy lifestyles.

Criteria for Determining Participant Success

Participant success was determined based on survey results collected each semester. Surveys assessed:

- Development of healthy decision-making skills,
- Reduction in risky behaviors, including cannabis use, and
- Building of positive coping strategies to manage stress and self-regulate emotions.

These surveys provided a recurring snapshot of participants' progress and enabled the team to gauge long-term impact on attitudes and behaviors.

Criteria for Determining Activity Completion and/or Success

Activities were deemed successful if they met the following criteria:

- Attendance by at least 75% of targeted participants,
- Positive feedback from participants, indicating increased knowledge or skill development, and
- Observed engagement during sessions, as recorded by Youth Development Professionals and the Program Administrator.

Outcome Variables and Data Collection

Outcome variables included participant attendance, reported behavior changes, and emotional wellness metrics. Data was collected using:

- **Vision Member Tracking System:** This system documented attendance, demographics, and program duration.
- **National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI) Survey:** Administered through the Boys & Girls Club of America, this survey provided insights into members' mental health, perceptions of safety, and exposure to risky behaviors.

The NYOI survey was crucial for gathering qualitative data that allowed for continuous program improvements, tailored to members' evolving needs. Survey results highlighted areas where participants felt secure and those where further support was required, guiding modifications to enhance program impact.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data, such as attendance and activity participation, were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends in engagement and consistency across sessions. Qualitative data from the NYOI survey and participant feedback were examined using content analysis to identify recurring themes, such as emotional resilience and coping skill development.

Strategy for Attribution of Outcomes to the Project

To ensure that observed outcomes were attributable to the project and not external factors, the evaluation incorporated pre- and post-surveys specifically focused on cannabis knowledge and decision-making attitudes. For example, youth who reported reduced cannabis use and improved self-regulation were often those who actively participated in SMART Moves sessions, linking the program content directly to observed behavior changes. This strategic approach allowed the project team to conclude that improvements in youth behavior were largely due to project activities rather than unrelated influences.

Evaluation Results

Throughout the grant period, the Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs demonstrated a commitment to adapting program activities to meet the evolving interests and needs of youth participants. By maintaining an open-door policy for feedback, the program fostered an environment where youth felt comfortable sharing their experiences and suggestions, enabling staff to make real-time adjustments. For instance, in response to requests for more interactive, hands-on sessions, the Club introduced monthly workshops focused on practical life skills, including managing stress through art and physical activities. These adjustments, driven by feedback, reflected an understanding that youth benefited from relatable and practical content.

Another important adjustment involved increasing the frequency of physical wellness sessions. Initial evaluations indicated that youth were more engaged when physical activities were included in the weekly schedule. As a result, the Club incorporated additional fitness-focused sessions and integrated them with mental health discussions, creating a more holistic wellness approach. This adaptation not only improved attendance rates but also enhanced participants' overall well-being, as noted in follow-up surveys.

Demographic Overview

Across the grant period, the program engaged **215 youth** participants, broken down as follows:

- **Gender Distribution:** 90 Female, 125 Male
- **Age Distribution:** 45 youth aged 12 years or younger, 170 youth aged 13-17 years
- **Ethnicity Distribution:** 80 Hispanic/Latino, 35 Black/African American, 45 White, 10 Asian, 5 American Indian/Alaska Native, 40 Other/Multiple Ethnicities

Services and Activities Provided

A total of **600 activities** were provided throughout the grant period. These activities targeted various aspects of youth development, including cannabis education, mental and emotional health support, and physical health. Each activity was designed to foster healthy decision-making, reduce risky behaviors, and support overall youth wellness. The programming was tailored to the unique needs and interests of participants, with activities that encouraged youth to explore and develop positive coping strategies and healthy lifestyles.

Achievement of Goals: Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The Proposition 64 Cohort II project largely met its primary goals of fostering healthy decision-making, reducing cannabis use among youth, and supporting mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Both quantitative and qualitative data highlight the program's effectiveness in promoting behavioral change and raising awareness about cannabis-related risks.

Quantitatively, the project offered **600 structured activities** to **215 youth**. Surveys conducted each semester revealed a **70% improvement in decision-making skills** among participants

and a **50% reduction in risky behaviors**, such as cannabis use. These metrics demonstrate that participants internalized and applied the skills for healthier choices. Additionally, the **National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI)** survey collected qualitative feedback that underscored improved stress management and emotional resilience, further supporting the impact of the program's mental health components.

Qualitative feedback from youth reinforced these findings, with many participants reporting that they felt better equipped to handle stress and peer pressure, and that the program's coping strategies and self-regulation techniques were highly beneficial. Many participants expressed that the program created a supportive community that empowered them to make healthier decisions. Community members and parents also recognized the Club's role in addressing cannabis-related concerns through education.

Factors Positively Impacting Progress

Several factors contributed to the success of the program:

- **Community Partnerships:** Collaborations with local organizations, including the Palm Springs Police Department, enhanced the program's credibility and reach, helping families and youth feel connected to a larger community effort focused on health and safety.
- **Staff Adaptability:** The dedication of Youth Development Professionals, the Program Administrator, and the Unit Director was essential to meeting participants' needs. Their flexibility in adjusting schedules and adapting program content in response to participant feedback kept engagement levels high.
- **Feedback-Driven Adjustments:** The open feedback policy encouraged continuous improvement. Incorporating youth suggestions helped tailor activities to resonate with participants, thereby increasing satisfaction and participation.

Challenges and Solutions

One primary challenge encountered was the delay in completing the Cannabis Education Center, which initially limited access to a dedicated educational space. Staff addressed this by using alternative spaces within the Club, allowing programming to proceed without interruption. This adaptability ensured the program maintained its momentum and fostered consistent participation, underscoring the team's resilience in overcoming logistical obstacles.

Outcome Analysis Results

Outcome analysis focused on evaluating participants' decision-making skills, cannabis use behaviors, and emotional resilience, using both quantitative metrics (e.g., attendance, reduction in risky behaviors) and qualitative feedback (e.g., surveys and NYOI results).

- **Decision-Making and Risk Reduction:** By the end of the grant, **70% of participants reported improved decision-making skills**, and **50% reported a reduction in risky behaviors**, including cannabis use. Pre- and post-program surveys indicated that youth

felt more confident in making healthier choices and understood the consequences of cannabis use.

- **Emotional Resilience and Stress Management:** NYOI survey results indicated increased participants' ability to self-regulate and manage stress effectively. Youth highlighted group discussions and mental health workshops as significant contributors to their development of positive coping strategies, with many noting these sessions as key in managing peer pressure and stress.
- **Additional Outcomes:** Survey responses showed that **85% of participants felt more connected to their peers and Club staff**, which fostered a supportive community and reinforced healthy behaviors. This positive sense of belonging was an indirect outcome that further contributed to the program's success.

Detailed Explanation of Findings

The outcome analysis highlighted the program's success in achieving its goals and revealed additional benefits for participants. The project effectively reduced cannabis-related risks, fostered emotional resilience, and empowered youth to make healthier life choices. The supportive environment created by the Club played a major role in these outcomes, providing youth with a safe space to express concerns, share feedback, and feel connected to a community dedicated to their well-being.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the project not only met its intended goals but also delivered additional positive impacts on participants' social and emotional development. The integration of community partnerships, staff adaptability, and data-driven adjustments throughout the grant period maximized the program's effectiveness, establishing it as a valuable model for future youth-focused prevention initiatives.

Discussion of Results

The Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs' Proposition 64 Cohort II project succeeded in establishing a safe, supportive program space that fostered a strong sense of belonging for youth—mentally, emotionally, and physically. This approach has been central to promoting youth well-being, as it allowed participants to feel secure and valued within their community. For many, the Club served as a home away from home where they could explore complex topics, such as the risks of cannabis use, in an environment designed for learning and personal growth. This sense of belonging is crucial for young people, as it not only strengthens their emotional resilience but also increases their engagement and commitment to the program. A welcoming and inclusive atmosphere helped participants feel confident in sharing their challenges and personal stories, enriching their program experience and deepening the impact of each activity.

The Club effectively leveraged existing youth development practices, rooted in the principles of positive reinforcement, skill-building, and mentoring, to cater to the interests and needs of each participant. Staff were not just teachers; they served as mentors and role models, a relationship that was instrumental in creating a safe space for discussing sensitive topics. This mentor-mentee dynamic encouraged open conversations, allowing youth to ask questions and express themselves without judgment. This supportive environment was essential for addressing sensitive subjects, such as drug prevention and emotional well-being, in a way that felt respectful and relatable to participants.

Recommendations for Future Grantees

For future grantees, one key recommendation is to invest in staff training, specifically in trauma-informed practices. Given that many youth face various forms of adversity, it's crucial for staff to understand how trauma can impact behavior and learning. Trauma-informed training equips staff with strategies to support youth who may struggle with trust or emotional regulation, ensuring all participants feel secure and understood within the program. Building a team that is both compassionate and informed in this way enhances the program's capacity to address individual needs and increases overall engagement.

Another recommendation for program design is to ensure the curriculum not only meets project goals but is also interactive and enjoyable. As an after-school program, the Club recognizes that youth often arrive having already completed a full day of school. While educational content is essential, it is equally important to make sessions exciting and interactive, allowing youth to engage fully without feeling that they're merely continuing their school day. Hands-on activities, such as workshops on stress management through art and fitness challenges, provided practical life skills in a fun, engaging way. Future programs should strive to create experiences that balance educational objectives with activities that capture the interest of youth, enhancing participation and allowing key messages to resonate more deeply.

In addition, we recommend developing staff as both educators and mentors, focusing on the significance of the role they play in shaping youth perspectives and behaviors. When staff are

equipped to connect personally with participants and build trusting relationships, youth are more likely to seek guidance on challenging issues. Such relationships add an invaluable dimension to the program, fostering a community atmosphere that supports not only the goals of the project but also the broader developmental needs of each participant.

Finally, it is essential to regularly incorporate participant feedback into program adjustments. An open-door feedback policy was instrumental in refining our approach and ensuring the activities resonated with youth. By creating opportunities for feedback, programs can remain responsive, allowing them to continually evolve in ways that are meaningful and effective for those they serve. This adaptability is key to long-term success, as it ensures that programming remains relevant, impactful, and able to address the shifting needs and interests of youth.

Current Logic Model

Project Goals:

Goal 1: Youth will feel a sense of belonging and safety (physical and emotional).
Goal 2: SMART Moves will increase youth knowledge of emotional wellness and will increase the interest and practice of healthy lifestyles by children/teens.
Goal 3: CEC will provide resources that increase community awareness on cannabis and prevention in youth.

Inputs/Resources →	Activities →	Outputs →	Short-Term Outcomes →	Medium-Term Outcomes →	Impacts
Trained staff (Unit Director, Youth Development Professionals, Program Administrator)	Weekly SMART Moves sessions for youth	600 total activities conducted	Increased youth knowledge of cannabis risks and emotional wellness	70% of youth demonstrate improved decision-making skills	Reduced cannabis-related incidents in Palm Springs among youth
Financial support (Proposition 64 grant)	Monthly public education events on cannabis prevention and mental health	Attendance of 215 youth across all activities	Enhanced sense of belonging among participants	50% decrease in risky behaviors such as cannabis use	Improved community health through sustained cannabis prevention efforts
Facilities, including Club spaces used as alternative program spaces during CEC construction	Summer SMART Moves series	125 males and 90 females reached	Positive coping strategies developed among youth	Community demonstrates increased awareness about youth cannabis prevention	Increased access to mental health and substance use prevention resources
National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI) Survey	Case management and continuous assessment of participant needs	Demographic diversity: 80 Hispanic/Latino, 35 Black/African American, 45 White, 10 Asian, 5 American Indian/AN	Improved ability to self-regulate and manage stress	85% report greater connection to peers and mentors	Long-term reduction in cannabis use and improved quality of life among youth
Collaborations (Palm Springs Police Department, local health organizations)	Public access to CEC resources, including educational materials	Community events with local organizations and law enforcement	Greater community engagement in prevention discussions	Enhanced community trust and youth engagement in health discussions	Establishment of the CEC as a lasting resource for cannabis prevention and mental health education across Palm Springs

Grantee Highlight

The Boys & Girls Club of Palm Springs embarked on the Proposition 64 Cohort II project with a clear goal: to provide local youth with the tools to make healthier choices, reduce risky behaviors like cannabis use, and strengthen their mental and emotional resilience. Through dedicated programming, collaborative community partnerships, and a supportive team, the Club achieved lasting impacts on both youth participants and the broader community.

Key Project Accomplishments

- **Youth Engagement and Empowerment**

Over the course of the grant cycle, the Club engaged **215 youth** in **600 activities**, focusing on wellness education, life skills, and cannabis prevention. Through the **SMART Moves** program, youth learned about healthy decision-making, with 70% reporting improved choices and 50% demonstrating a reduction in risky behaviors. The program fostered a sense of belonging that empowered youth to take ownership of their wellness.

- **Flexible Program Delivery**

Although construction delays impacted the opening of the **Cannabis Education Center (CEC)**, the Club's team adapted by repurposing available spaces within the Club. This flexibility allowed programs to continue uninterrupted, ensuring that youth received consistent support in a safe, welcoming environment. The completed CEC has since become a hub for community education and resource-sharing on youth cannabis prevention and mental health.

- **Building a Safe, Supportive Environment**

By combining structured sessions with a safe, supportive atmosphere, the project fostered a strong sense of community. Participants were encouraged to share feedback, which staff used to tailor programming to better meet their needs. Group discussions, stress management workshops, and hands-on wellness activities fostered emotional resilience, with 85% of youth reporting stronger connections to peers and mentors.

The **Cannabis Education Center (CEC)** will continue its mission to serve the Palm Springs community and its surrounding areas as a vital resource for cannabis education, prevention and mental health education. With its welcoming space and access to up-to-date information, the CEC offers workshops, resource materials, and open community events focused on wellness and informed decision-making. As the Club looks to expand its reach, the CEC plans to engage more youth, families, and community members through partnerships with local organizations and schools, ensuring that critical prevention and health resources remain accessible to all. This continued effort aims to empower the broader community, fostering healthier choices and resilience well beyond the grant period.