



# City of Merced

## Youth Mentorship Pilot Program

### Proposition 64 Public Health & Safety

### Grant Program Cohort 2

### Local Evaluation Plan

Grant Period: May 1, 2021 – October 31, 2024

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## 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

### 2a. Project and Need

On January 29, 2021, the City of Merced submitted the Proposition 64 Public Health and Safety Grant Program Proposal package to the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) to provide prevention and early intervention services to at-risk youth for cannabis use. On April 8, 2021, the BSCC approved funding for the City's grant application, in the amount of \$885,546.

The proposal includes a three-year pilot program, in partnership with Merced County Probation and Behavior Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) departments, other public agencies, local businesses, non-profits, faith groups, local senior center, and members of the community to provide alternative recreational experiences and mentorship opportunities to youth identified through middle schools and high schools by an Early Intervention Deputy Probation Officer or a School Resource Officer.

The need for early intervention grows regularly as youth acceptance of cannabis becomes the norm. According to data from youth.gov, cannabis is the most abused illegal substance among youth (particularly ages 12–18, as identified in the data). By the time they graduate high school, approximately 46 percent of teens will have tried cannabis at least once. Students also believe that cannabis is not harmful, noting legalization and the use of it by people they know, as the reasoning behind their opinions and beliefs.

Merced youth show signs of falling into the national trends. In a 2019 California School Climate Health and Learning Surveys, nearly 30 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders in Merced reported believing that cannabis use was harmless. More disturbing is the change in this figure over the last five years — a 5 percent increase from 23 percent in 2013 (Chart 1). Additionally, roughly one-third of 9th grade students reported it was “very easy” to obtain cannabis. By 9th grade, 10 percent of students report using cannabis in the last 30 days, and 5 percent have used cannabis at school (Chart 2).

CHART 1

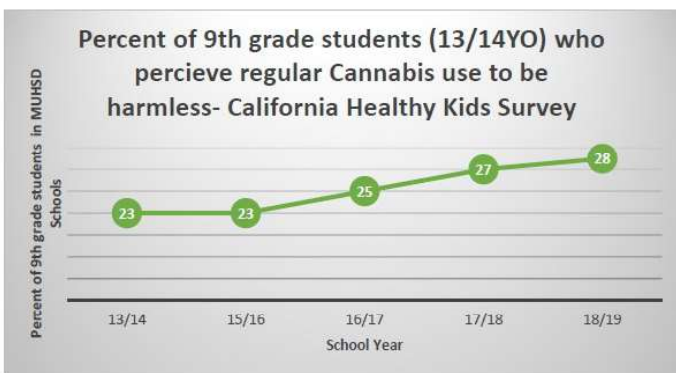
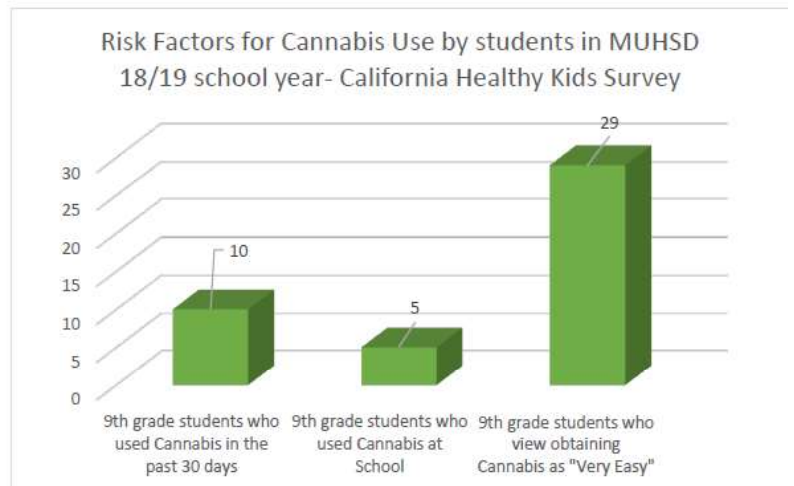


CHART 2



## **2b. Target Population**

The target population for the Youth Mentorship Program is youth ages 14 – 17. This target population was identified through evaluation by the Probation Department, who reported this age group needed alternative interventions to divert them from the criminal justice system. The 3-month program for at-risk youth, will serve ten participants in the program at time, allowing the program to intentionally serve up to 40 promising probationers each year.

The pilot program is designed to provide a continuum of care from the initial point of intervening in a youth's life the moment they are found to be experimenting with cannabis, diverting them away of the criminal justice system response , providing personalized individual and familial support, drug education and treatment, enhancing their strengths and skillsets through job training and a paid internship, providing for their social needs with other youth and caring adults, engaging them in their community, and promoting independence, building resiliency and healthy behaviors and decision-making, all leading to a potential for a lifetime of positive engagement with the community if the youth chooses.

## **2c. Participant Eligibility Criteria**

Participants, ages 12 – 18, who either are referred to probation or violate their probation for cannabis will be potential candidates for the program. If selected, participants will be referred from the Probation Department to Merced County Behavioral Health to be assessed for substance abuse needs (education or treatment) by Recovery Assistance For Teens (RAFT). RAFT is a multi-component, non-residential adolescent (ages 12–18) alcohol/drug treatment and recovery program that offers services ranging from drug education to more intensive outpatient treatment.

## **2d. Process to Determine Interventions**

The Mentorship Program implements standard intervention practices for participants, including RAFT education level counseling. RAFT educational services may include individual counseling, weekly small group counseling sessions, and case management that includes family support and/or guidance when needed. Some of RAFT's goals for youth include:

- Increasing knowledge and understanding about the nature of alcohol, drug use, and addiction
- Increasing perception of harm from alcohol and drug use
- Enhancing motivation to change behaviors
- Increasing decisional balance
- Providing tools for relapse prevention
- Increasing social and coping skills
- Strengthening commitment to positive life goals

As participants progress through the program, the interventions focus will shift to productivity and confidence building. Each participant in the program will be screened by the City of Merced Recreation Coordinator to develop a personalized mentorship and internship/job training program lasting three months. The model is designed to enhance civic-mindedness, community pride, promote healthy lifestyle choices, and build resilience, knowledge and employable skills.

## **2e. Process for Determining Service Area Activities**

For the High School-age cohort, best practices from the existing Summer at City Hall program will be utilized and expanded to every City department.

Participants will be assessed based on the following:

- Current level of skills and training
- Areas of potential interest as determined by individual surveys and personality/interest type tests

- One-on-one interviews with the Recreation Coordinator

Each participant will then be paired with a City mentor from a range of departments based on the appropriate area of interest and needs.

Available mentors and job training partners will be assigned from the following departments:

- Parks and Recreation
- Police and Fire
- Public Works
- Finance
- Information Technology
- City Clerk
- Human Resources
- Development Services
- Engineering
- Economic Development
- City Attorney
- City Manager

For the cohort of Jr. High-age group, the job training portion will also follow the best practices of the Summer at City Hall program. The program has served nearly 50 youth by educating them on the functions of city government and the opportunities available to them in the local workforce. Instead of one-on-one job training, the program will be group-oriented, and focus on one department, giving the participants an overview of each department in the City with opportunities for hands-on skills-building alongside their assigned mentor.

Throughout the program, each participant, in conjunction with their assigned mentor, will engage in social and recreational activities together as a large group. Activities include (but are not limited to):

- Eating out together
- Trips to the bowling alley
- Bicycle rides throughout town
- Encounters with the Merced Youth Council, University of California, Merced (UC Merced), and Merced Junior College
- An outing to Yosemite National Park

Recreational activities will start out slow and build as participants and mentors develop a natural relationship and progress through the program.

## **2f. Goals and Objectives**

The City of Merced Youth Mentorship Pilot Program consists of multiple goals and objectives that focus on participant well-being, healthy decision-making skills, as well as creating a sense of community. Goals and objectives are detailed in the table on page 5.

## YOUTH MENTORSHIP PILOT PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

<b>GOAL #1</b>	<b>ENGAGE YOUTH IN THEIR COMMUNITY</b>
Objectives	
A	80% of participants will engage in job training activities
B	80% of participants will volunteer in five or more community activities
C	80% of participants will attend one or more recreational outing
<b>GOAL #2</b>	<b>CREATE A COMMUNITY WHERE YOUTH FEEL ADULTS CARE ABOUT THEM</b>
Objectives	
A	80% of participants will complete four weeks of job training
B	80% of participants will attend three or more activities with a mentor
C	80% of participants will become mentors to new participants
<b>GOAL #3</b>	<b>REDUCE THE NUMBER OF YOUTH USING CANNABIS</b>
Objectives	
A	80% of participants report using marijuana five times or less over the course of the program
B	80% of participants are no longer in violation of cannabis use while at school
C	80% of participants will report increase their perception of harm from cannabis use
<b>GOAL #4</b>	<b>CREATE STRONG PEER GROUPS ORIENTED AROUND HEALTH BEHAVIORS AND DECISION MAKING</b>
Objectives	
A	80% of youth will attend two or more recreational group outings
B	80% of youth will report learning about expanded opportunities for 'things to do'
C	80% of youth will report connecting with another youth in the program
D	80% of youth will return post program to take part in at least one additional recreational outing
<b>GOAL #5</b>	<b>BUILD UP YOUTH COMPETENCIES NEEDED TO SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD</b>
Objectives	
A	80% of participants will report an increase in employable skills
B	80% of participants will report a desire to make healthy choices
C	80% of participants will engage in job training activities
<b>GOAL #6</b>	<b>INCREASE PERCEPTION OF HARM OF CANNABIS USE</b>
Objectives	
A	80% of participants will report increase their perception of harm from cannabis use

### **3. PROCESS EVALUATION METHOD AND DESIGN**

#### **3a. Research Design That Will Be Used for Process Evaluation**

The research design will include a mixed approach of both quantitative and qualitative data review on a quarterly basis. Quantitative data will include mentor training sign in sheets, youth assessments, participant referrals, participant registration forms for demographic data, and mentor session attendance sheets. RAFT education attendance records and field trip and recreational outing sign in sheets will also be used.

Observational data will be provided by RAFT counselors, the Recreation Coordinator, mentors, and youth to identify gaps in process' that may not be reflective in quantitative data gathered. This feedback will be used to provide additional context in our quarterly report narratives.

#### **3b. Documentation of Services**

Activities will be documented via a spreadsheet that is used specifically for progress and activity tracking. The spreadsheets will coincide with the quarterly report data required in the grant. Referrals, assessments, group attendance reports (RAFT), vocational screening forms, registration forms, mentor session attendance reports, and recreational outing attendance reports will all provide the documentation of service delivery. The City of Merced will obtain all documentation supporting such data on a regular basis from RAFT partners. Upon completion, retrospective surveys will be administered with will measure program completion as well as outcomes explained in section 4 (below). This data will be reviewed by staff and partners on a quarterly basis in preparation for submission of quarterly reports.

#### **3c. Participant Progress Tracking**

Program participants will complete registration forms with parents/guardian's permission upon referral to the program. Participant progress will be measured by regular attendance (quantitative) and participant satisfaction surveys administered monthly. These surveys will give participants the opportunity to provide feedback on their mentor, the vocational training they are being offered, and the outings attended. In addition, participants can identify any barriers to participation that staff can work to address collaboratively with RAFT. Substance Abuse Counselor and Recreation Coordination will meet on a monthly basis to discuss participant progress as well.

#### **3d. Non-Participant Activities Tracking**

All facets of the program center around the participant. However, when partner meetings are conducted, detailed notes will be taken and recorded by the host agency and shared with meeting participants (i.e. probation, RAFT, Recreation Coordinator). System and equipment updates and replacements are tracked by the agency's Information Systems departments.

#### **3e. Process Measures**

On a day-to-day basis, from the initiation of the pilot program, the Drug and Alcohol Counselor from RAFT and the Recreation Coordinator from the City Mentorship component will monitor the program's implementation, and their supervisors will in turn direct their activities and progress.

As noted above, all project partners will form a committee that meets monthly to evaluate what is working, what is not, whether or not goals are being met, and determine how to address anything in the program that needs adjustment. These meetings will help to inform the quarterly reports and any program revisions that may be required to reduce barriers to participation/success for participants. Data that will be part of this review process include, referrals to the program, assessments for risk by RAFT, assessments for vocational aptitude by Recreation, mentor session attendance reports, mentee satisfaction

surveys, and results from retrospective surveys completed at the culmination of the program. Lastly, if youth in the program cannot complete the program due to regular and escalating drug use, they will be referred to the Community Initiative program operated by the Probation Department for more intensive wrap around services.

### **3f. Process Data**

As indicated, data used to measure process will include:

- Referrals to RAFT
- Assessments conducted by RAFT that identify appropriate candidates for the program
- Educational group attendance reports
- Referrals to City Recreation Department
- Training of City staff to serve as Mentors
- Assessments of vocational aptitude
- Mentor session attendance records
- Mentee satisfaction surveys
- Mentee retrospective surveys
- Referrals to external service providers as required upon early exit of the program

### **3g. Project Oversight and Decision-Making Process**

The City of Merced is the lead agency responsible for project oversight of the Youth Mentorship Pilot Program. The identified partner agency to address the youth cannabis use is RAFT (recovery Assistance for Teens). Staff of both agencies will meet on a monthly basis to determine adjustments needed, success and barriers, as well as participant outcomes. This partnership is founded on the desire for offering a resiliency-based approach to youth cannabis use and that approach will serve as the agreed upon function of the partnership. Should complications, difference of opinion on directions, amenities, aspects or budgeting related to the program, the City of Merced will have the ultimate decision-making authority and will make all final decisions based on their understanding of the best interest for the youth involved in the program.

Within the City of Merced, the Parks and Recreation Department will serve as the lead agency with Day-to-Day Program operations being conducted by Recreation staff and overseen by the Department Director. City Manager of the City will serve as the Project Director, with the support of the Finance Department for fiscal reporting and concerns.

### **3h. Project Component Monitoring**

The City of Merced will monitor component effectiveness utilizing monthly, and quarterly meetings, mentees reports, and referral processes. The City reserves the right to request revisions to any project components that requires adjustment in order to meet the scope of work called for by the goals set forth through this grant.

### **3i. Documentation of Activities Performed by Staff and Contract Providers**

Activities performed by staff and contractors will align with funded grant proposal. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with partner agency will detail grant scope and expectations. Activities performed by staff and providers will be entered into database or on a spreadsheet, following a grant-based format for ease of recording and records maintenance.

### **3j. Procedures to Ensure the Project will be Implemented to Fidelity.**

Project partners will form a committee that meets monthly to evaluate what is working, what is not, whether or not goals are being met, and determine how to address anything in the program that needs adjusting. These meetings will help to inform the quarterly reports required of the

grant. Quantitative measures set forth by the State, or specific numbers reflected in program data (attendance, mentor participation, outings conducted, RAFT sessions attended) will be used to ensure that the strategies laid out in program design are being followed. If City staff find any program component to be lacking, formal communications will be submitted to the internal or external partners that identify modifications that may be required to realign the program to intended fidelity.

### **3k. Quantitative and Qualitative Process Data Analysis.**

Quantitative and qualitative data is required of all phases of the program (mentor meetings, outings, and RAFT sessions). Thresholds of mandatory participation will be determined in order to monitor trends in attendance that might indicate more than isolated attendance issues but more programmatic barriers to participation. Qualitative data will be provided by partner agency staff and internal staff that provide direct service. This data will be collected regularly and reviewed during monthly meetings to troubleshoot potential issues with referral, assessment, implementation, data collection and program evaluation.

## **4. OUTCOME EVALUATION**

### **4a. Outcome Evaluation Research Design**

The outcomes desired from the program are outlined as goals (#1- #6). These goals will be met if gains are reported by participants in the areas outlined by each goal. Several questions will be used to determine if goals are considered met, failed, or in progress. The method of measurement will be a retrospective survey provided to students upon program completion that requests them to rate their knowledge, skills, and abilities prior to program referral against program completion. This survey will be given at the end of participation. Each Objective below will be measured by growth reported by participants in the questions associated with each. Questions within the survey will read, "Before Mentoring I felt prepared to enter the workforce if needed" and participants will rate their agreement or disagreement on a Likert scale. Then they will be asked to rate themselves on the same scale but in relation to "Since being in the program I feel prepared to enter the workforce if needed".

### **4b. Evaluation Questions**

Goal #1: Engage youth in their community

Retrospective Survey Questions:

1. I engaged in community wide activities
2. I volunteered with community partners
3. I knew about volunteer opportunity in my community
4. I attended one or more recreational outings
5. I feel connected to my community/peers
6. I enjoyed the recreational outing
7. I know how to make my community a more positive place



Goal #2: Create a community where youth feel adults care about them

Retrospective Survey Questions:

8. I spend time with adult/mentor in a positive way
9. I believe there are adults in my life that care about me
10. I received job training experience
11. I received adequate training during vocational opportunity in field of interest
12. I attend three or more activities with an adult/mentor
13. I felt adult/mentor cared about me during our outings
14. I feel there are adults in my life that believe I will be a success

Goal #3: Reduce the number of youth using cannabis

Retrospective Survey Questions:

15. I decreased my cannabis use
16. My violations of cannabis use while at school decreased or stopped
17. I often used cannabis?
18. I learned refusal skills
19. I understand the reasons why I used/use cannabis
20. I have a support system to assist with my recovery
21. I am confident and socialize with others
35. I have an understanding about the harm of cannabis use
36. I have shared my knowledge on the harms of cannabis use with people outside of the program
37. I have discouraged cannabis use among friends/family
38. I have shared harmful effects of cannabis use with family

Goal #4: Create strong peer groups oriented around healthy behaviors and decision making

Retrospective Survey Questions:

22. I take opportunities to make new friends
23. I am committed to doing well in school
24. I am committed to staying involved in my community
25. I learned about expanded opportunities for 'things to do'
26. My voice was heard when I gave feedback or suggestions to adults/mentor
27. I connected to other youth in the program

Goal #5: Build up youth competencies needed to successfully transition to adulthood

Retrospective Survey Questions:

28. I have increased my employable skills (critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, adaptability, teamwork/collaboration, time management)
29. I have applied for a job or created a resume using the skills I've learned
30. I've learned about job fairs/resources in my community
31. I have a desire to make healthier lifestyle choices (not using cannabis, volunteering in my community, hanging out with positive friends, practicing healthy coping mechanisms, exercise regularly, drink more water, get a good night's sleep, read more)
32. I believe that my choices lead to better choices in other areas
33. My choices positively influence someone else (parents, siblings, neighbor, friend, co-worker, mentor, adult)
34. I skip school or cut class

#### **4c. Estimated Number of Participants to Receive Intervention/Service**

The Youth Mentorship Pilot Program will serve up to ten participants every 3 months, ultimately serving 40 youth each year. At the conclusion of the three-month program, additional participation activities will be offered for the length of the 3-year pilot program for all participants, allowing them to remain in the program as long as desired.

The potential number of participants served during the life of the program is below.

Year One – January to March –	10 youth
April to June –	10 youth, plus up to 10 youth from 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter
July to September –	10 youth, plus up to 20 youth from 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarters
October to December –	10 youth, plus up to 30 youth from first 3 quarters

Years Two and Three follow the same matrix, with the addition of the youth from prior years, ultimately having the potential to serve up to 120 if all participants return post program.

#### **4d. Success Criteria**

The City of Merced Youth Mentorship Pilot Program can be deemed a success if a majority of the goal outcomes are met:

##### **Goal #1 Objectives:**

80% of participants engage in job training activities, volunteer in five or more community activities and attend one or more recreational outings.

##### **Goal #2 Objectives**

80% of participants will complete four weeks of job training, attend three or more activities with a mentor, and become mentors to new participants.

##### **Goal #3 Objectives**

80% of participants report using marijuana five times or less over the course of the program and are no longer in violation of cannabis use while at school.

##### **Goal #4 Objectives**

80% of youth will attend two or more recreational group outings, will report learning about expanded opportunities for 'things to do', will report connecting with another youth in the program, and will return post program to take part in at least one additional recreational outing.

##### **Goal #5 Objectives**

80% of participants will report an increase in employable skills, will report a desire to make healthy choices, will engage in job training activities.

##### **Goal #6 Objective**

80% of participants will report understanding the harm of cannabis use.

#### **4e. Estimated Number of Activities/Services Accomplished**

Program partners will track activities attended and services rendered and provide monthly, quarterly and annual reports.

Counseling goals/services include:

- Increasing perception of harm from alcohol and drug use
- Enhancing motivation to change behaviors
- Increasing decisional balance

- Providing tools for relapse prevention
- Increasing social and coping skills
- Strengthening commitment to positive life goals
- Increasing knowledge and understanding about the nature of alcohol, drug use, and addiction

Activities include:

- Job skills training
- Recreational outings
- Mentoring trips, outings, one-on-one time
- Group classes

#### **4f. Criteria for Determining Activity/Service Completion and Project Success**

Activity and service completion and project success will be determined by the following criteria:

- Regular attendance and completion of counseling sessions during program period (3 months)
- Consistent participation in activities and outings with mentors during program period
- Post program evaluation questions are answered positively and supporting data exists
- Objective percentages are met post program
- Participants return post program

#### **4g. Outcome Variables and Defined and Measured Criteria**

Program participants will fill out a retrospective program survey designed to assess their progression through the program. Surveys will ask questions to assess some of the following: knowledge of the harm of cannabis, connection to a caring adult, connection to the community, level of self-confidence, level of job skills, connection to peer group via the recreational activities offered, etc. Additionally, the RAFT counselor will work with the Recreation Coordinator to further develop other survey metrics that can assist with evaluating whether program goals were met (see 4d).

#### **4h. Collection, Timing and Sources of Outcome Data**

Outcome data will be collected via post program surveys, counselors' case notes, coordinators' notes and data regarding job placement, recreational activity participation, and mentors' input.

Program surveys will assess participants' understanding and engagement in program goals. RAFT counselors' and coordinator's notes will define recreational activity participation, community engagement, connection to peer group and family support system. Mentors' data will include job skills development and connection to community.

Outcome data will be compiled throughout the program and partners will meet regularly to discuss and evaluate. The lead agency will collect and house program data. A final outcome report will be produced by UC Merced by October 31, 2024.

#### **4i. Quantitative and Qualitative Outcome Data Analyzation**

Quantitative: Determined by Retrospective survey results compiled by Park and Recreation staff. Data will be compiled from each quarter into annual reports to be shared with data review team made up of Recreation Coordinators, RAFT Counselors, and UC Merced Researchers (if available). Data will be reviewed Goals and objectives used to accomplish goals on an annual basis. If data points to gaps in service delivery program adjustments will be requested for approval to BSCC.

Qualitative: Determined by feedback offered by youth formally through program exit interviews or informally when observed by staff at either RAFT, Parks and Recreation or parents/caregivers of youth in the program. Qualitative data will be reviewed in detail at quarterly meetings between RAFT and Park and Recreation.

#### **4J. Outcome Determination Strategies (Program or Other Factor)**

The City of Merced will continue a vigilant effort to scan the environment (local, state, national) for trends, policies or other factors that could lead to outcomes observed by program participants. One way to do this is to present reported outcomes to the Parks and recreation Commission on an annual basis to ensure that various community perspectives are used to scan data and provide insights on any potentially confounding variables that exist in schools, community, or the greater society at large that could explain the program outcomes. The measures of the outcomes of this program are directly tied to individual knowledge, skill, and behaviors which are reported through program participants.

#### **4k. Outcome Variables for Each Intervention**

Multiple interventions will be employed during the program. Each serving the participant at different phases of the intervention.

Initial implementation will begin with drug education (RAFT), creating a sense community (City), and enhancing their strengths (City).

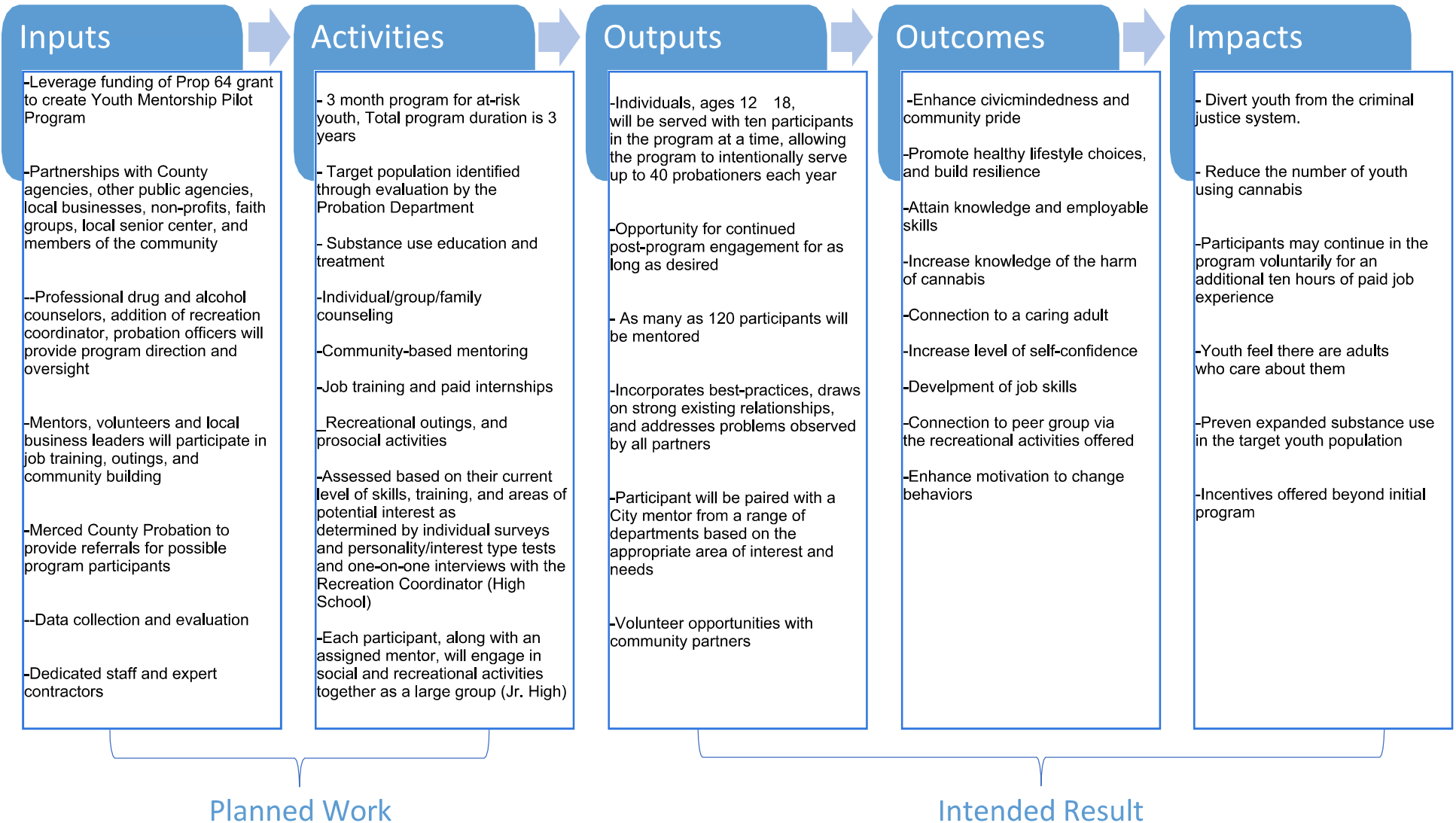
Once the initial steps have been implemented, the participants will focus on diverting them out of the criminal justice system, providing personalized individual and familial support, building resiliency and healthy behaviors and providing for their social needs with other youth.

Finally, the program shifts to enhancing skillsets through job training and engagement in recreational outings, foster community engagement, promoting independence, and building strong decision-making skills.

# Logic Model Part 1

## Project Goals:

Goal 1: Engage youth in their community
Goal 2: Create a community where youth feel adults care about them
Goal 3: Reduce the number of youth using cannabis



## Logic Model Part 2

### Project Goals:

**Goal 1:** Create strong peer groups oriented around healthy behaviors and decision making

**Goal 2:** Build up youth competencies needed to successfully transition to adulthood

**Goal 3:** Increase perception of harm of cannabis use

