



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



WASHBURN COUNTY
WISCONSIN



Youth
IN GOVERNANCE
Washburn County

Program Handbook 2025-2026

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Table of Contents

Welcome!.....	3
What is the Youth in Governance Program?.....	3
History of the Washburn County Youth in Governance Program.....	3
Application & Selection Process.....	4
Program Structure.....	4, 5
Operating Guidelines & Expectations.....	5, 6, 7
Information about Washburn County.....	7, 8
Washburn County Board Committees.....	8
Parliamentary Procedure.....	8, 9
Basic Robert’s Rules of Order Motions Chart.....	9, 10
Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure Terms.....	10, 11
Frequently Asked Questions.....	11, 12
Tips for Youth Leaders.....	12, 13, 14
Resources.....	14
Extension Washburn County Contact Information.....	14

Information in this handbook was adapted from the Dane County Youth Governance Program Handbook 2020 - 2021 and the Racine County Youth in Governance Handbook 2021 - 2022. . [Racine County Youth in Governance Program \(wisc.edu\)](https://www.wisc.edu/racine-county-youth-in-governance-program)

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Welcome!

The Washburn County Board of Supervisors welcomes youth in grades 9, 10, and 11 that live in Washburn County and/or attend school in Washburn County to apply to serve as youth representatives on the County Board. This initiative provides Washburn County youth an opportunity to play a valuable and active leadership role in the governance of the county while enhancing their interest in the operation of local government and civic participation.

Youth involvement on the County Board will require not only enthusiasm, but also a commitment of time and energy to this important role. Youth representatives will be invited to join a committee and attend County Board meetings. Youth are expected to attend every county board meeting, unless excused.

What is the Youth in Governance Program?

The Washburn County Youth in Governance Program offers greater opportunities for youth leadership development and youth empowerment in Washburn County through direct participation in county government decision-making; provides real-life learning opportunities for youth in the functioning of local government; and brings a direct youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, capable and independent leaders for the next generation.

In other words, YIG has four major components that are beneficial to the youth representatives and the county as a whole. These components include:

- Youth Development: helping youth develop the skills they need to succeed in YGP and beyond
- Community Improvement: offering a unique opportunity for youth to positively contribute to their communities
- Civic Engagement: allowing youth to engage with and participate in local government in a meaningful, long-term capacity
- Youth Voice: providing a mechanism for the needs and interests of youth to be heard and understood

History of the Washburn County Youth in Governance Program

In 2004, the Washburn County Extension Education Committee and the County Board Chair spearheaded the effort to provide an opportunity for youth to be on the Washburn County Board of Supervisors. In August 2004, the County Board passed a resolution in support of this effort. Since April 2005, high school students have participated as youth representatives in the monthly county board meetings and have engaged in discussions with the adult supervisors on issues before the board. In 2008, youth representatives began serving on county committees as well.

The program was evaluated in the summer of 2008 and showed impact on youth, the county board and community.

Application & Selection Process

Eligible youth are Washburn County residents or youth that attend a school in Washburn county currently in grades 9-11. Term is one year (April 2025-March 2026).

Application Process

1. An application form and two references are due by March 31st, 2025.
2. One reference is to be from your parent/guardian and one from an individual in your school and/or community. Reference forms need to be sent directly by the individuals providing the reference.
3. Selections will be made on or around April 7, 2025.
4. Youth representatives will start their terms at the April 2025 County Board meeting.

Washburn County Extension staff and the County Clerk will review applications and conduct an initial screening.

Youth are notified of selection by email/call from the Extension Administration Assistant and must confirm acceptance of their appointment by contacting the Division of Extension-Washburn County.

Committee members who are immediate family to youth applicants shall excuse themselves from scoring, discussions, and voting on that youth's participation.

Program Structure

Consistent attendance of youth representatives at meetings is critical in maintaining the reputation of the program and presenting a positive image of youth. Youth representatives have to attend at least nine of the regularly-scheduled board meetings. They are expected to attend every meeting, unless excused. If a meeting will be missed, the youth must notify in advance the YIG facilitator (Emily Burger).

The minimum requirement is that youth must attend at least 75% of regularly-scheduled board meetings (in other words, at least 3 out of every 4 meetings) and have no more than two (2) absences without notice. An absence without notice is when a youth representative misses a regularly-scheduled committee meeting without notifying someone. If a youth representative does not meet the attendance requirement in the first four months, they must meet with a YIG

facilitator to discuss attendance improvement and reassess continued program participation. Youth receive all communications sent to committee members. Youth need to confirm that the staff member sending communications has the correct email address.

Each youth is matched with a supervisor-mentor on the board. YIG mentors assist youth in becoming involved in county governance by providing information and resources for them to better understand the governance process, fully develop their ideas, and feel confident in sharing their opinions. They encourage and promote learning and skill development in areas such as communication, organization, and decision-making. Mentors also advocate for the youth and help create a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment. Mentors always meet Youth in Governance representatives in open, public places. When possible, at least three people are present when meeting face-to-face with Youth in Governance representatives. Mentors do not personally transport Youth in Governance representatives. Mentors will join the cohort meetings to go over the agenda, discuss what will be talked about and what will be rubber stamped, back stories on issues, answer any questions, etc.

In addition to county board meetings and optional committee meetings, youth representatives will attend bimonthly YIG cohort education meetings, which provide a space to connect with other youth representatives; deepen learning; and grow youth leadership, civic engagement, and other important professional skills. YIG members are expected to strive to attend at least four (4) YIG cohort meetings.

Operating Guidelines and Expectations

Term:

- One-year, (April 2025–March 2026)

Youth Representatives

EXPECTATIONS

- Attendance at least nine county board meetings, usually held the third Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. in the County Board Room, Government Service Center, Shell Lake. Meetings are between 1.5 - 4 hours long.
- Option to join a committee and attend and participate in those meetings every month. Once you choose a committee, you must follow the same rules and expectations as the board meetings.
- If you are unable to attend a board meeting, arrange for your alternate to attend the meeting in your place. If your alternate is unable to attend, contact Alicia Swearingen at 715-468-4600 or coclerk@co.washburn.wi.us or Emily Burger at emily.burger@wisc.edu, 715-416-8787. Also contact your mentor to let them know.

- While there is no official dress code, it is suggested that you dress neat and professional.
- Stay informed about county board issues.
- Be prepared for meetings; obtain and review materials prior to meeting.
- Understand meeting protocol and participate accordingly.
- Participate in training sessions.
- Be involved in recruitment of youth for the next term.
- Be involved in training new representatives and alternates.
- Provide feedback on your experience to help strengthen/improve the experience for others in the future. A pre and post evaluation will be conducted.
- Attend bimonthly YIG cohort education meetings, which provide a space to connect with other youth representatives

VOTING

- Because you are not an elected official, your vote is not counted for the official vote. You will, however, be called on to vote during roll call vote and your vote will be reflected in the minutes of the meeting. You are encouraged to participate in the discussions and express your position to the rest of the board members.
- Youth representatives may vote on all motions made at their committee meetings (or may choose to abstain).
- On roll call votes, youth votes are taken before county board members vote (this is done to avoid any unintended influence by adult members). Youth votes are recorded in the committee's minutes for public record.
- Youth representatives are not permitted to attend closed session meetings. If a meeting goes into closed session, youth representatives are excused from the meeting.

COMPENSATION

- Youth representatives will receive a per diem and mileage for attending county board meetings and assigned committee meetings.
- Per diem is \$50 per board meeting and varies from \$25-\$50 for committee meetings depending on length of the meeting

Alternates

Term: Two years (first year as alternate, April 2024 - March 2025; second year as main representative, April 2025 - March 2026)

EXPECTATIONS

- Attend county board meetings in the absence of a regular representative.
- While there is no official dress code, it is suggested that you dress neat and professional.
- Stay informed about county board issues.
- Be prepared for meetings; obtain and review materials prior to meeting.
- Understand meeting protocol and participate accordingly.
- Participate in training sessions.
- Be involved in recruitment of youth for the next term.
- Be involved in training new representatives and alternates.
- Provide feedback on your experience to help strengthen/improve the experience for others in the future.

OPEN MEETINGS:

County board and committee meetings are open to the public. Alternates are encouraged to attend meetings to stay informed of issues.

COMPENSATION

Per diems and mileage are available to alternates only when attending meetings in the absence of a regular representative.

Information About Washburn County

Washburn County has grown to an approximate population of 16,623. There are four school districts within the county which include Birchwood, Northwood (Minong), Shell Lake, and Spooner. Read about the history here

<https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/images/custom/departments/county-clerk/information-directory.pdf>.

The Washburn County Board of Supervisors is the legislative branch of the county government, and establishes policies for the County. There are 21 supervisors. A list of all the Washburn County Board Supervisors can be found here

<https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/meetings-officials/board-supervisors/supervisors>.

In addition to the County Board and County Executive, there are six elected County officials whose offices are established and governed by state statute and the Wisconsin State Constitution. These offices are the Clerk of Court, County Clerk, District Attorney, Register of Deeds, Sheriff, and Treasurer. These elected officials serve as the head of their respective agencies, and carry out the policies established by the State Legislature, the County Board and the County Executive.

Rules of order of the Washburn County Board of Supervisors -

<https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/images/custom/departments/county-clerk/county-board-rules-part-1.pdf>. This link provides information about how county board members are elected, their duties, terms, voting, typical agendas, etc.

List of county board committees

- AGRICULTURAL AND LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
- EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
- EXTENSION EDUCATION COMMITTEE
- FINANCE COMMITTEE
- FORESTRY AND PARKS COMMITTEE
- HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BOARD
- HIGHWAY COMMITTEE
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
- LAW ENFORCEMENT AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
- LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE (LEPC)
- PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
- PUBLIC PROPERTY AND LAND SALE COMMITTEE
- SOLID WASTE
- VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
- ZONING COMMITTEE

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary Procedure is one of the most effective means by which individuals can take orderly action as a group. It is an organized system where the smallest minority (even just one person) can be heard, while preserving the right of the majority to prevail. Parliamentary Procedure helps make meetings be easier, shorter, and more productive. One of the oldest and most popular set of rules in Parliamentary Procedure is Robert's Rules of Order. It is the set of rules used by most legislative bodies. The following information will help you to better understand the process of adhering to Robert's Rules of Order.

Order of Business in Parliamentary Procedure

1. Call to order

2. Roll call
3. Reading minutes from the previous meeting
4. Approving minutes from the previous meeting
5. Committee reports
6. Accepting the committee reports
7. Unfinished business
8. New business
9. Adjourn

Steps in Making a Decision in Parliamentary Procedure

1. Motion – A motion is a request that something be done or that something is the opinion or wish of the group. Only one motion should be placed before the group at one time. It is debatable and amendable. When making a motion, one should say “I move that...” instead of “I make a motion that...”
2. Second – Someone from the group must “second” the motion, or agree to the motion, so that it can be discussed.
3. Discussion – The motion “on the floor” is discussed by all members, addressing the pros and cons of the issue.
4. Re-state the motion – The chair re-states the motion before the group votes.
5. Vote – The group votes by saying “aye” for yes/approval or “no” for disapproval.

Basic Robert’s Rules of Order Motions Chart

The motions below are intended to be a basic primer of commonly used motions*. They are listed in order of common use – not in order of precedence. Some motions take precedence over other motions.

You want to:	You say:	2nd?	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?
Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that (or “to”)...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify the wording of a motion	I move to amend the motion by...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Lay aside	I move to lay	Yes	No	No	Majority

temporarily	the question on the table				
Take matter from table	I move to take from the table...	Yes	No	No	Majority
Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to...	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Take a break	I move to recess for...	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Make assembly follow the agenda	I call for the orders of the day	No	No	No	None
Request more information	Point of information	No	No	No	None
Enforce rules	Point of Order	No	No	No	None
Demand a rising vote	Division	No	No	No	None
Close the meeting	I move to adjourn	Yes	No	No	Majority
Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	No	No	No	None

Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure Terms

Adjourn – to end the meeting

Chair – the presiding officer

Address the chair – to rise and say “Mr./Ms. Chair”

Quorum – the number of members necessary to carry on business

Amend – change or modify a motion

Minutes – the record of report of each meeting’s work

Majority Vote – the vote of more than half of the members

To Obtain the Floor – receive from the chair the right to speak. No one speaks unless recognized by the chair.

* Developed by Annie Jones, Extension Kenosha County Community Development Educator

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if I can’t attend a committee meeting?

Youth are expected to attend all committee meetings, but we understand that conflicts may arise. If you will be unable to attend a committee meeting, notify your alternate, mentor, committee chairperson, and YGP facilitator, as soon as possible. Following this protocol will assign your absence as an absence with notice.

As a youth representative, how many committee meetings may I miss?

To maintain a position in the program, all youth must attend at least 75% of their regularly scheduled committee meetings and have no more than two (2) absences without notice.

Where and when are my committee meetings held?

Committees meet in the County Board Room in the Washburn County Services Center building at 304 2nd Street Shell Lake WI 54871. Committees generally meet at the same place and time every month, but dates and locations may change. You will receive email communications about the dates and locations of meetings. Talk to your mentor or the chair of your committee if you have any questions or concerns about meeting schedules or locations.

Is there a dress code for committees?

Each committee is unique and committees may differ on this issue. In general, wear business-casual attire to your committee meetings (no jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc.). If it is clear that your committee is casual, it is okay to dress more casually. Just remember, it is important to make a good first impression and to maintain that impression throughout the year.

Do I really get to vote?

Youth are permitted to vote on all motions made at committee meetings. On roll call votes (which means each person's name is called and votes are recorded individually), you will vote before county board members vote, to avoid any unintended influence by adult members. The youth vote is recorded in the minutes for the record, but is a non-binding advisory vote.

What if I don't understand what's going on?

If you find yourself confused or unsure, you can ask clarifying questions during the meeting. You are not expected to be an expert on the topic and it's okay to ask questions. If you don't feel comfortable speaking up during the meeting, talk with your mentor outside of the meeting and ask him/her to explain the situation. It is far better to ask questions right away than to go through a meeting confused and not contributing.

What do I call the committee members?

You can address the committee members as "Supervisor" or "Supervisor (last name)." When addressing the Chair, you can call him/her "Mr./Ms. Chair" or "Chairman/woman (last name)."

Tips for Youth Leaders from Youth Leaders

These 13 tips are helpful to young people who serve on boards or other governing bodies with adults. They were developed by young people who have been in these positions and know the pressures involved*.

1. You belong in leadership

You might feel inexperienced at first, or you may think that the adults don't want to hear what you have to say. Remember that your opinions are key to the work the group is doing. As a young person, you have a right and responsibility to be there. Young people are part of their communities, and organizations need to hear from them.

2. Find allies

Find people on the staff and the governing bodies who seem to take young people seriously. Sit next to them at meetings, have lunch with them, or talk to them during breaks. When you forget that your role in the group is important, they can help remind you.

3. Ask questions

If you don't understand something, make sure to ask someone. Your questions are important. You need to understand what's going on, and it won't help anyone if you sit quietly without understanding certain discussions. There will be times when you will feel shy or not interested in what's going on. No matter how you're feeling, it's important to ask questions so you can stay involved.

4. Build a support base for yourself

Find three young friends who are interested in what you're doing with the group. Talk to them openly about what frustrates you, excites you, or bores you about your work. Choose good listeners who can help you think things through and get some of your feelings out.

5. Get the word out about your leadership

You have a responsibility to get the word out about the importance of youth leadership to as many young people as possible. It's not just about serving on your board of committee. It's about giving other young people information they can use to take charge. If you're on a foundation board, or any kind of board where you can influence grant policies, encourage the board to fund those organizations that have young people in their governance structures.

6. Know that you are not alone

There are many young people out there on boards, advisory boards, student councils, etc., working to make a difference in how things are done. You may sometimes feel that the work of your group isn't important. Connecting with other youth leaders can help remind you that there is a youth voice movement going on and you're part of it.

7. If you're feeling bored, take responsibility for making the work interesting

Learn the language of the board or of the organization (e.g., acronyms and jargon). Ask the questions you need to ask. Say at least two things at every meeting, so you always stay engaged in what's going on. If you feel that meetings need to be jazzed up, suggest something different to do, like brainstorming or small group activities. Chances are other people will also be more engaged if meetings are more interactive.

8. If you don't like how something is going, change it

You are a member of the group. If you don't think the agenda is interactive enough or you don't like your committee assignment, speak up and work with people to make changes. This may not be easy. You may have to talk it through with people a few times to win them over.

9. Don't get discouraged

If it feels like people aren't listening or are disrespectful, keep trying. Change usually takes time. Take notice when adults do listen and try to understand your thoughts. If you feel like someone is talking down to you, don't be quiet about it. Bring it up. The group needs to deal with the issue.

10. Go to all meetings

Find out the dates and write them all down in your calendar. Be prepared for meetings. Read the materials and learn about how things work. Refer to the County Board website for information regarding committee agendas and minutes.

11. Take on leadership

Get involved in the work that happens outside of committee meetings, and make your presence known.

12. Relax, have fun, and be yourself

If you are someone who tells a lot of jokes, then tell jokes. You are a member of the governing body, and you should show who you really are. Think of the other people in the group as your peers.

13. Appreciate adult allies

Recognize that adults are trying their best, even if things aren't going well. Resist the temptation to criticize.

* Taken from the book Youth on Boards. 15 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision-Making

Resources

Dane County Youth Governance Program Handbook 2020 - 2021

Racine County Youth in Governance Handbook 2021 - 2022

UW Extension Youth in Governance

<https://youth.extension.wisc.edu/article-topic/youth-in-governance/>

Washburn County Website <https://www.co.washburn.wi.us/>

Extension Washburn County & Washburn County Government Contact Information

Address: 304 2nd Street Shell Lake WI 54871

Phone: (715) 635-4444

Extension: Emily Burger - Community Youth Development Educator

email: emily.burger@wisc.edu 715-416-8787

Alicia Swearingen - Washburn County Clerk

Phone: (715) 468-4600 email: aswearin@washburncounty.wi.gov