



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

TO: City Council **DATE:** April 13, 2026

DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office

PREPARED BY: Isaac Whippy, City Manager

PRESENTER: Isaac Whippy, City Manager

AGENDA TITLE: Consideration of Establishing the “Leading the Next Wave of Leaders” Youth Internship and Council Program

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution establishing the “Leading the Next Wave of Leaders” Youth Internship and Youth Council Program beginning Summer 2026, including a paid internship component and a Youth Council with a \$3,000 Youth Impact Fund, and authorize the City Manager to implement the program.

BACKGROUND

The City of Fort Bragg continues to prioritize workforce development, community engagement, and long-term organizational sustainability as part of its Strategic Plan. Investing in local youth presents a meaningful opportunity to advance these priorities while building a pipeline of future leaders and public servants.

Currently, the City does not have a formal internship or youth advisory program. Establishing a structured program will provide students with hands-on experience in local government while also creating opportunities for youth to engage directly in civic processes and decision-making.

The proposed program—Leading the Next Wave of Leaders—is designed to combine workforce experience with leadership development, positioning Fort Bragg as a forward-thinking and community-driven organization.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Program Overview

The Leading the Next Wave of Leaders Program is a two-part initiative:

1. Paid Summer Internship Program

2. Youth Council and Youth Impact Fund (Civic Engagement and Leadership Component)

Together, these components create a well-rounded program that introduces participants to public service while empowering them to contribute meaningfully to their community.

1. Paid Summer Internship Program

The internship program will provide students with direct, hands-on experience working within City departments, helping them build practical skills while supporting City operations.

A. Program Structure

- Duration: Summer 2026 (8–10 weeks)
- Hourly Rate: \$16.50/hour
- Total Budget: \$12,000 (General Fund and Asset Forfeiture Funds)
- Estimated Interns: 5-7 positions (depending on hours and scheduling)

Interns will be placed across a range of City departments, including:

- Finance
- Planning / Community Development
- City Manager's Office
- Public Works
- Police Department
- Information Technology (IT)
- Municipal Broadband (MCN)
- Parks & Recreation

Program Objectives

- Introduce students to careers in local government
- Provide workforce development and job readiness skills
- Support departmental operations during peak summer months
- Build a pipeline for future City employment opportunities

B. Leadership Development

Participants will engage in structured sessions led by City staff, including:

- Overview of local government operations
- Budgeting and financial decision-making
- Planning and development processes
- Public safety and infrastructure services

Each intern will be assigned a staff mentor and will participate in regular check-ins, as well as a final presentation summarizing their experience and contributions.

2. Youth Council + Youth Impact Fund

The Youth Council and Youth Impact Fund will operate as a collaborative, community-driven program that combines student leadership with broad youth participation designed to give participants both a voice in local government and real responsibility in decision-making.

Youth Council Selection

Students from both local high schools will participate in a student-led selection process to elect or nominate 3–5 representatives to serve on the Youth Council.

The Youth Council will:

- Serve as the primary student leadership body
- Observe City Council meeting
- Help facilitate the Youth Impact Fund process
- Represent the broader student voice in coordination with City staff

The program includes a \$3,000 Youth Impact Fund to support youth-driven ideas that benefit the Fort Bragg community.

Program Structure and Process

A . Open Idea Submission

- Students from both high schools—including interns and non-intern participants—will be invited to submit project ideas
- This approach expands participation and ensures broader youth engagement

B. Pitch Session

- Students (individually or in teams) will present their ideas in a structured setting
- Youth Council members will help facilitate the process alongside staff
- Proposals will be evaluated based on:
 - Community/Youth benefit
 - Feasibility
 - Alignment with Program priorities

C. Project Selection (Top Two)

- Through a structured and facilitated process, participants will narrow proposals to the top two projects

- The Youth Council will play a leadership role in guiding discussion and selection
- City Staff provides guidance to ensure feasibility and alignment with City policies

D. Presentation to City Council (Final Consideration)

- The top two selected projects will be formally presented to the City Council
- Youth participants will:
 - Present each project
 - Explain the selection process
 - Provide rationale for advancing the two proposals
- The City Council will provide feedback and determine final approval of one or both projects within the available funding

E. Implementation & Final Report Back

- Upon Council direction:
 - Youth participants will assist in implementation
 - City staff will provide oversight and logistical support
- Participants will present outcomes, lessons learned, and recommendations to the City Council at the conclusion of the program

Eligible Use Categories for Youth Impact Fund

Projects funded through the Youth Impact Fund may include, but are not limited to:

Category	Examples of Eligible Projects
Community Pride & Beautification	Public art, murals, or placemaking. Park or public space enhancements. Community cleanup initiatives
Youth Events & Programming	Youth-focused events, activities, or gatherings. Recreation, arts, or cultural programming
Downtown Activation	Pop-up events or temporary activations. Initiatives supporting local businesses and increasing foot traffic
Public Awareness & Education	Social media or outreach campaigns. Civic engagement or community awareness efforts
Health, Wellness & Recreation	Mental health or wellness initiatives. Fitness or outdoor programming
Innovation & Technology	Digital tools or engagement platforms. Technology-based community solutions
Environmental & Sustainability Initiatives	Coastal or environmental stewardship projects. Sustainability or climate-focused efforts

The Leading the Next Wave of Leaders Program represents a strategic investment in Fort Bragg's future. By combining paid internships with a Youth Council and a community-driven Youth Impact Fund, the City is creating a program that is both inclusive and impactful.

This initiative goes beyond participation. It empowers youth to contribute ideas, engage in decision-making, and present directly to City Council, creating a meaningful and lasting connection between the City and the next generation of leaders.

CONSISTENCY

The proposed program is consistent with the City of Fort Bragg's adopted Strategic Plan and organizational priorities, including:

- **Economic Development:** Supports workforce development and creates pathways for local youth to explore careers within the community, strengthening the local talent pipeline.
- **Organizational Excellence:** Advances succession planning efforts by exposing participants to municipal operations and cultivating future public sector professionals.
- **Community Engagement:** Enhances civic participation by providing youth with direct involvement in City processes, including engagement with the City Council and participation in decision-making through the Youth Impact Fund.
- **Quality of Life:** Promotes community pride, inclusivity, and opportunity by investing in youth leadership and supporting projects that positively impact the community.

Additionally, the program aligns with the City's broader goals of fostering a business-friendly, innovative, and forward-thinking organization by creating opportunities for mentorship, skill-building, and community connection.

FISCAL IMPACT

Included already in the FY 2025-26 Budget allocation:

- Internship Program: \$12,000 (existing allocation)
- Youth Impact Fund: \$3,000

Total Program Cost: \$15,000

No additional staffing costs are anticipated.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

- April–May 2026: Program development and outreach
- May 2026: Application and selection process
- Summer 2026: Program implementation
- Late Summer: Youth Council presentation to City Council

- End of Program: Project completion and final report

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Staff has coordinated with local school district counselors and principals to introduce the program and gather initial feedback. Through this collaboration, the City will actively engage high school students and ensure awareness of the opportunity across the student population.

Outreach efforts will focus on creating equitable access and encouraging participation from a diverse group of students. Recruitment will include direct engagement through schools, as well as promotion through City communication channels and community partners.

This approach is intended to build strong connections between the City and local youth while ensuring the program reflects the interests and needs of the Fort Bragg student community

ATTACHMENTS

Resolution

Program Framework Overview