

Common Grounds

Cynthia Davis, Ivan Huizar, Danny Jimenez, Gabriella Page, and Tania Perez Miranda

Introduction

Project Purpose & Description

Level Up: Resume Building and Interview Prep workshops were led by CSULB MSW students to equip Wilmington youth (90744) with employment and post-secondary education readiness skills, supporting financial stability, housing security, and reducing homelessness risk. The intervention included two 1.5-hour sessions: one on resume and cover letter writing, and another on interview prep, professional attire, and mock interviews. Pre- and post-test survey were administered to measure the effectiveness of the intervention. These workshops were held in partnership with You Run This Town Foundation and the Boys and Girls Club of Wilmington for high school students in the College Bound Program. We also raised \$800 in scholarships through GoFundMe, which were awarded to students who participated in the mock interview contest as an incentive and recognition of their effort.

Social Problem & Target Population

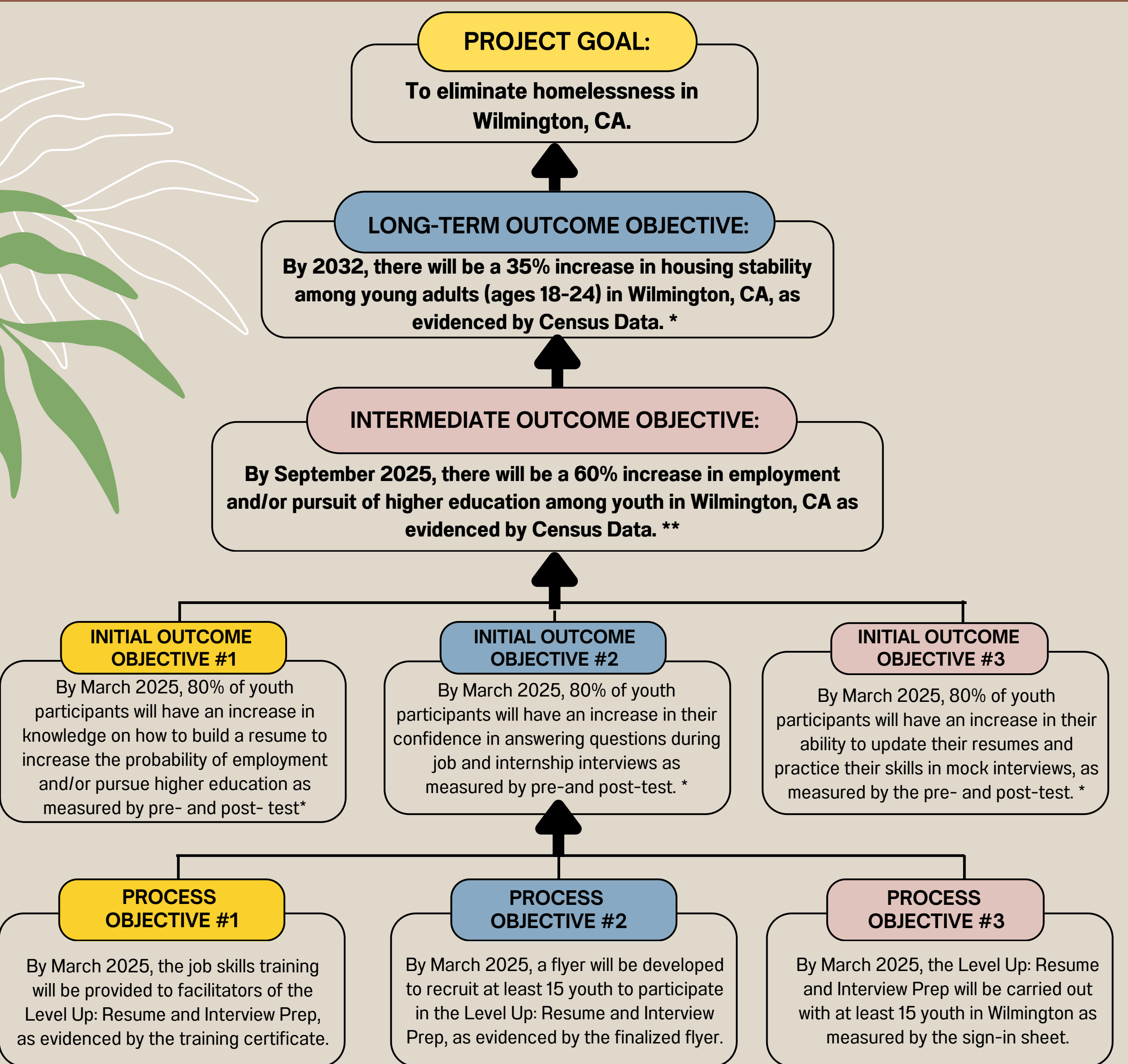
Through interviews, observations, and data analysis, CSULB MSW students identified homelessness as a significant issue in Wilmington, CA.

- 1 in 4 youth in Los Angeles County experiencing homelessness reported not being in school or working at the time they became unhoused, highlighting the need for earlier intervention and life skills training (Henwood et al., 2023).
- 90744 is a predominantly Latino (88.4%) and immigrant (38%) community in Los Angeles County facing language, education, and economic barriers that increase housing instability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).
- 32% of 90744 residents over the age of 25 lack a high school diploma, and only 12% hold a bachelor's degree. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023).
- Residents feel that the slow police response and lack of adequate housing or support services for homeless individuals have made the neighborhood unsafe. This affects residents' views of their city and public safety (Lizeth, personal communication, September 28, 2024).
- Critical Race Theory (CRT) shows how racism in systems like housing, schools, and jobs makes it harder for people of color to move up in society (Richard, 2023). These problems are even worse for non-citizens and Spanish speakers, who often face language barriers and are left out of public programs (Aiken et al., 2021).

Alignment to Specialization

The **Level Up: Resume Building and Interview Prep** workshop, led by Common Grounds, aligns with the project's specialization by equipping participants with essential employment and career readiness skills that support long-term stability and reduce the likelihood of future homelessness.

Project Overview, Objectives & Outcomes



*(Cedeño et al., 2021)

** (Horrillo et al., 2021)

Methods

- Non-probability, convenience sampling**, relying on voluntary participation from high school students enrolled in the Boys and Girls Club College Bound Program, using a variety of outreach strategies (e.g., announcements, flyers, social media posts, and word-of-mouth promotion facilitated by partner organizations).
- A **pre-experimental, mixed methods design** was used to evaluate the impact of the intervention, using paper-based 8 item pre- and post-test measuring participants' knowledge (1 item), attitudes/perceptions (2 items), and skills (1 item) using Likert Scale, related to resume building and interview prep, as well as to identify areas for program improvement and 4 demographic questions.
- Using SPSS, descriptive statistics** and a **Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test** was conducted to assess changes across both workshops. Qualitative insights were gathered through open-ended verbal responses capturing participants' experiences and perceptions.

Results

Resume Building Workshop Table 1. Participant Demographics (N=24)			Interview Prep Workshop Table 2. Participant Demographics (N=10)		
Gender	n	%	Gender	n	%
Male	16	66.7	Male	3	30.0
Female	8	33.3	Female	7	70.0
Non-Binary	0	0.0	Non-Binary	0	0.0
Age	n	%	Age	n	%
14	1	4.2	14	0	0.0
15	2	8.3	15	0	0.0
16	3	12.5	16	4	40.0
17	7	29.2	17	4	40.0
18	11	45.8	18	2	20.0
Grade	n	%	Grade	n	%
9th	1	4.2	9th	0	0.0
10th	4	16.7	10th	2	20.0
11th	1	4.2	11th	2	0.0
12th	18	75.0	12th	6	60.0
Race/Ethnicity (Select all that apply)	n	%	Race/Ethnicity (Select all that apply)	n	%
American Indian or Alaska	1	3.8	American Indian or Alaska	0	0.0
Black or African American	3	11.5	Black or African American	1	10.0
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	19	73.1	Hispanic or Latino/a/x	7	70.0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	7.7	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	10.0
White	1	3.8	White	1	10.0

*26 entries - 2 participants selected multiple races/ethnicities

A **Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test** was conducted combining knowledge, skills, and attitude items to assess overall intervention impact utilizing the overall mean scores of the pre-survey and post-test survey of the two separate skills labs with a lowest possible mean score of 4 and highest possible score of 20.

Resume Building (N=24)

Pre-test: M = 13.78 (SD = 2.81)
Post-test: M = 13.64 (SD = 3.32)
Z = -0.08, p = .94

Interview Prep (N=10)

Pre-test: M = 13.78 (SD = 2.81)
Post-test: M = 13.64 (SD = 3.32)
Z = -0.08, p = .94

Table 3. Resume Building Pre-Test and Post-Test Means

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Q1: I have a well-structured and professional resume.	3.70	3.70
Q2: I know how to tailor my resume for different job or college applications.	3.70	3.70
Q3: I can describe my skills and experiences in a professional and engaging way.	3.50	3.50
Q4: I feel prepared to submit my resume for a job or college application.	3.30	3.30

Figure 1. Resume Building Pre-Test and Post-Test Means

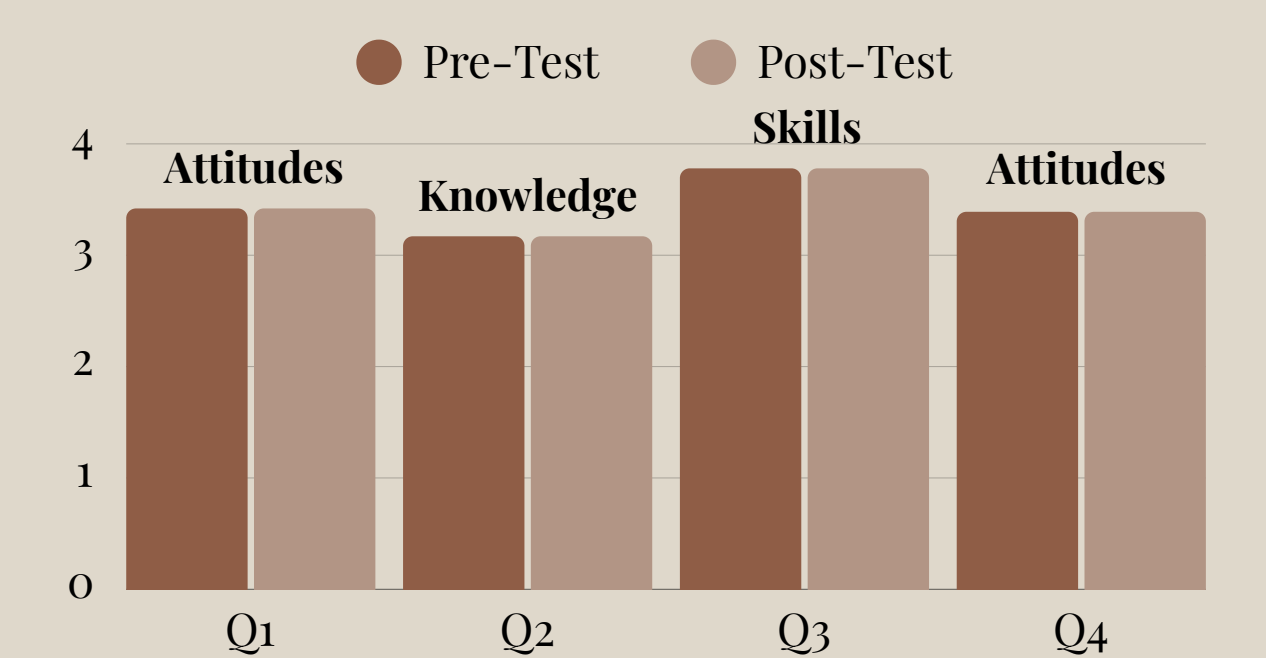
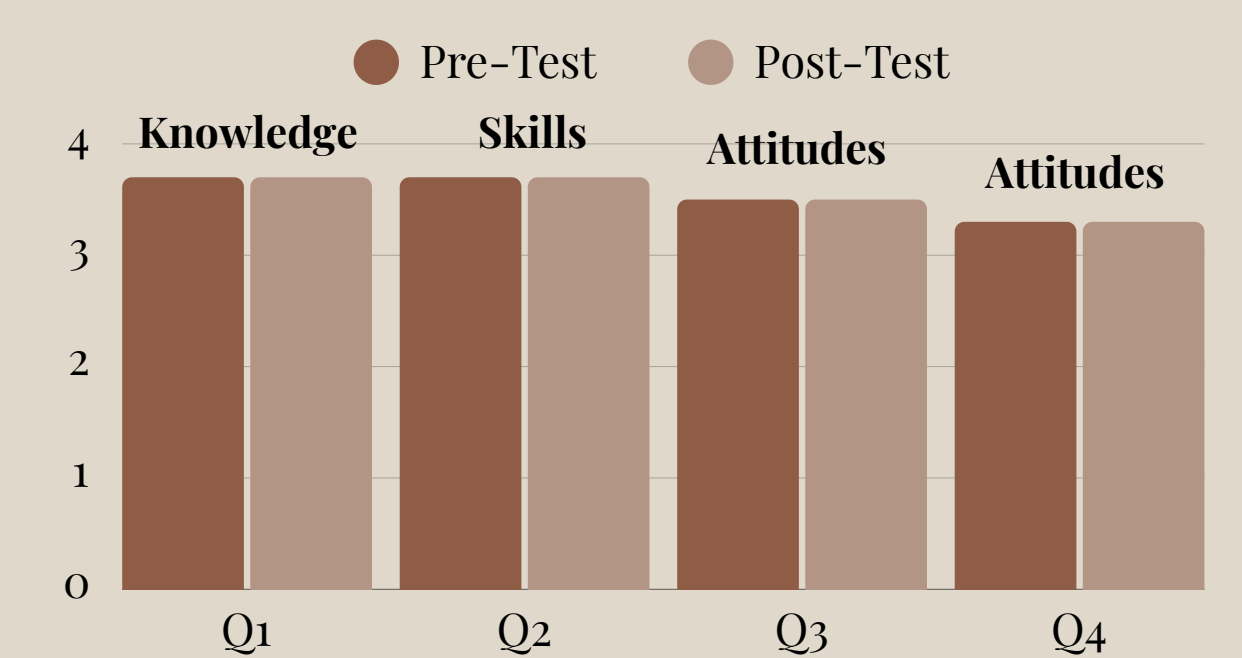


Table 4. Interview Prep Pre-Test and Post-Test Means

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Q1: I understand how to answer common interview questions.	3.42	3.42
Q2: I know how to communicate my skills and experiences effectively.	3.17	3.17
Q3: I feel confident in my ability to introduce myself in an interview professionally.	3.78	3.78
Q4: I feel ready for a real job or college interview.	3.39	3.39

Figure 2. Interview Prep Pre-Test and Post-Test Means



Acknowledgements

Common Grounds extends our heartfelt gratitude to our incredible partners and participants: **You Run This Town Foundation** and the **Boys & Girls Club of Wilmington** for your unwavering support and shared commitment to this project.

We are also deeply grateful to our **family, friends, and colleagues** whose generous contributions made this work possible and impactful for the youth of Wilmington, CA.

A special thank you to **Dr. Joanna Barreras** for her invaluable support, guidance, and belief in the work we are doing.



Conclusion

Analysis of Findings

- While no statistically significant changes were found, high pre-test scores suggest that participants entered the program with a solid knowledge base, likely due to their prior involvement in the Boys and Girls Club's College Bound program.
- Qualitative feedback revealed that the workshops were more informative than expected, helping participants uncover areas they hadn't previously considered, despite initially feeling confident.
- Students described the experience as engaging, motivating, and valuable, with several noting that the interactive activities and incentives helped boost participation.
- Although quantitative change was minimal, qualitative data underscored the meaningful impact the intervention had on participants' perceptions, preparedness, and skill refinement.

Limitations & Improvements

The project was limited to Boys and Girls Club students, reducing diversity and reach. Time constraints also limited how deeply resume and interview topics were covered. Future programs could partner with local schools and organizations to engage a broader range of youth and consider expanding the skills lab beyond two sessions to allow for deeper learning, more practice opportunities, and individualized support.

Future Recommendations & Implications

Practice

- Hands-on, youth-led workshops empower young people in underserved communities by building confidence and preparing them for college and careers. Interactive formats boost engagement: students reported enjoying the sessions.
- Social workers should integrate these approaches into youth services and build partnerships to reach more participants.

Policy

- Systemic barriers often limit access to these programs. Schools, especially in underserved areas, should embed life and job readiness skills into their curricula.
- Sustainable funding streams, such as grants and school partnerships, are essential to support these initiatives beyond short-term, student-led efforts.

Research

- There is a need for more evidence on the long-term impact of career readiness workshops.
- Mixed-methods longitudinal studies with follow-up surveys or interviews 3-6 months post-workshop can assess behavior change, inform program improvements, and address systemic inequities.

Community Partners



The **Boys and Girls Club of Wilmington (BGC)** is a trusted community agency dedicated to supporting youth development. Its **College Bound** program promotes academic success and increased the graduation rate of members from under 50% in 2002 to 99% in 2022.

Karina Dorado, College Bound Director

Contributions: Provided the venue for workshops, led recruitment, and offered exclusive scholarships and gave hands-on support during sessions.



You Run This Town Foundation (YRTTF) is a nonprofit that empowers vulnerable youth through workshops, scholarships, and campaigns that promote career readiness, higher education, and leadership.

Esther Choi, Associate Director
Martha De La Torre, Finance Director

Contributions: Provided materials, logistical support, and training to ensure smooth workshop execution. Offered exclusive scholarships and gave hands-on support during sessions.

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