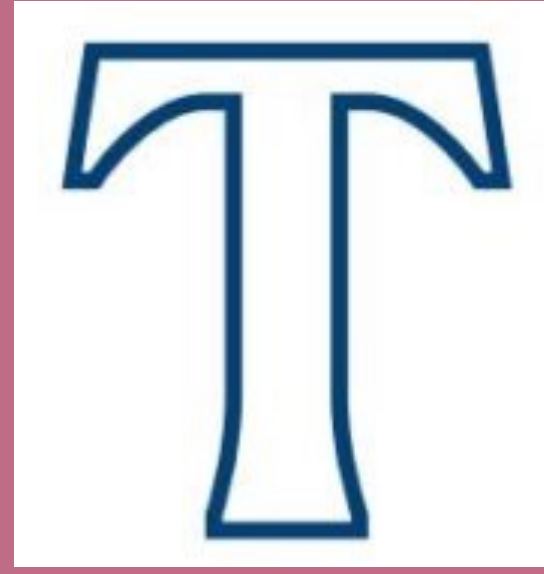


Student Engagement and Gender-Inclusive Language in the Young Women's Leadership Corps (YWLC)



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Introduction

- 63%** Of Black and Hispanic girls in Hartford use social media for 9+ hours a day
- The rate of high school graduation in Hartford is **74%**
- 86%** Of adolescent Latinas are expected to support themselves and their families while working in a full-time job

The YWLC program empowers participants by supporting development of interpersonal skills, career preparation, digital literacy, etc. This research centers on student engagement in the program, while offering recommendations surrounding recruitment, feedback and inclusion.

Background

YWLC is a free extracurricular program that aims to empower young women, ages 13-18, to identify and to achieve educational and personal goals.

- Who:** 9 teacher liaisons who establishing contact between schools and YWCA and leading classes themselves; middle and high school students; 79 student participants (2022-2023 academic year)
- What:** interpersonal skills, digital skills, financial literacy, leadership development, college and career preparation
- When:** YWLC Year-Round (weekly at lunch times or after school during the academic year); YWLC Saturday Academy (monthly during the academic year) Summer Institute (Mon-Thurs in July and August)
- Where:** 10 middle and high schools in the greater Hartford area

Research Questions

- 1) How do teacher liaisons perceive the YWLC's student engagement and recruitment process? What can be changed?
- 2) What mechanisms and systems are the most effective for the YWLC to utilize in receiving valuable and marketable feedback from current participants?
- 3) How can the YWLC incorporate more gender-inclusive language in its programming and advertising?

Methodology

Interview with Teacher Liaison

- Collaborated with Professor Provitola and YWCA to identify the aims and group of people for the interviews
- Constructed interview protocol based on themes and concerns expressed by the YWCA
- Conducted interview with teacher liaison about experiences with student recruitment for YWLC, as well as the gender-inclusivity of the program
- Identified aspects of the recruitment process that are effective and need improvement

Surveys

- Collaborated with YWCA to identify aims of surveys focused on YWLC evaluation
- Conducted a literature review to develop digital data collection practices aligned with the YWCA's principles of social justice
- Carried out an analysis of past surveys, past survey responses, and past analyses of survey data
- Coded these data by theme, concluding with relevant recommendations for the YWCA

Document and Literature Review

- Connected with YWCA to understand the motivations for incorporating gender-inclusive language in YWLC
- Reviewed literature recommended by Professor Provitola for suggestions on language adjustments
- Evaluated documents provided by the YWCA to determine where language use might be modified (flyers, website, application, program title)
- Provided annotated documents with recommendations as well as literary and theoretical findings to the YWCA

Implications

- ❖ Centering inclusion while still prioritizing those from historically marginalized communities — both in language and in practice
- ❖ Collecting feedback in accessible manners, including outside of strictly written formats
- ❖ Developing recruitment practices that can be both inclusive for past participants and accessible for students who did not have prior knowledge about the program

Limitations

- ❖ Research timeline limited to a single semester
- ❖ Small sample size of interviewees limiting ability to apply findings to all program sites
- ❖ Lack of program participant (student) insight and feedback
- ❖ Limited literature base specific to survey collection in targeted leadership programming

Future Research

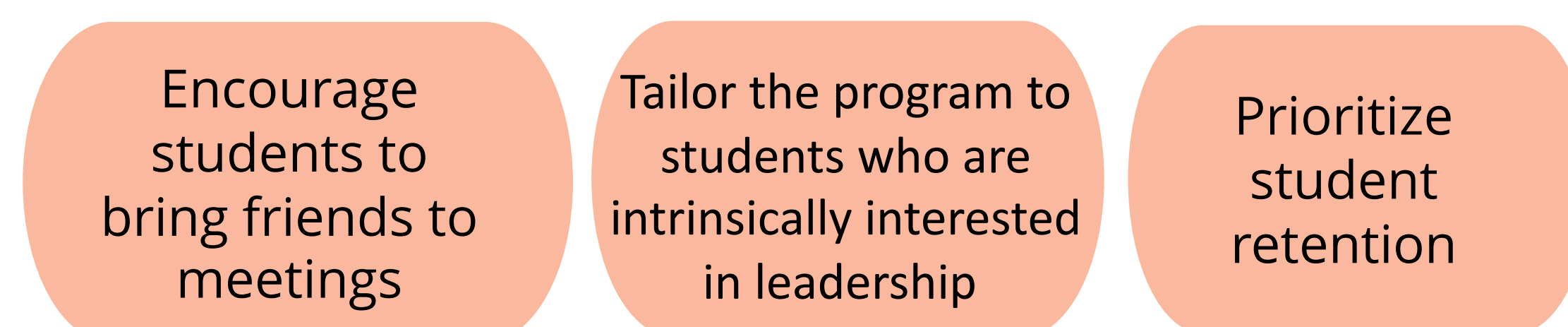
- ❖ Use feedback from current participants and alumni to make continual changes to recruitment and programming
- ❖ Incorporate parent/guardian perspectives into feedback collection, and accessibility of program marketing
- ❖ In-depth evaluation of the summer institute in serving a wider range of students
- ❖ Create, implement, and assess a new survey tool
- ❖ Extend research to past teacher liaisons about their program involvement

Acknowledgments

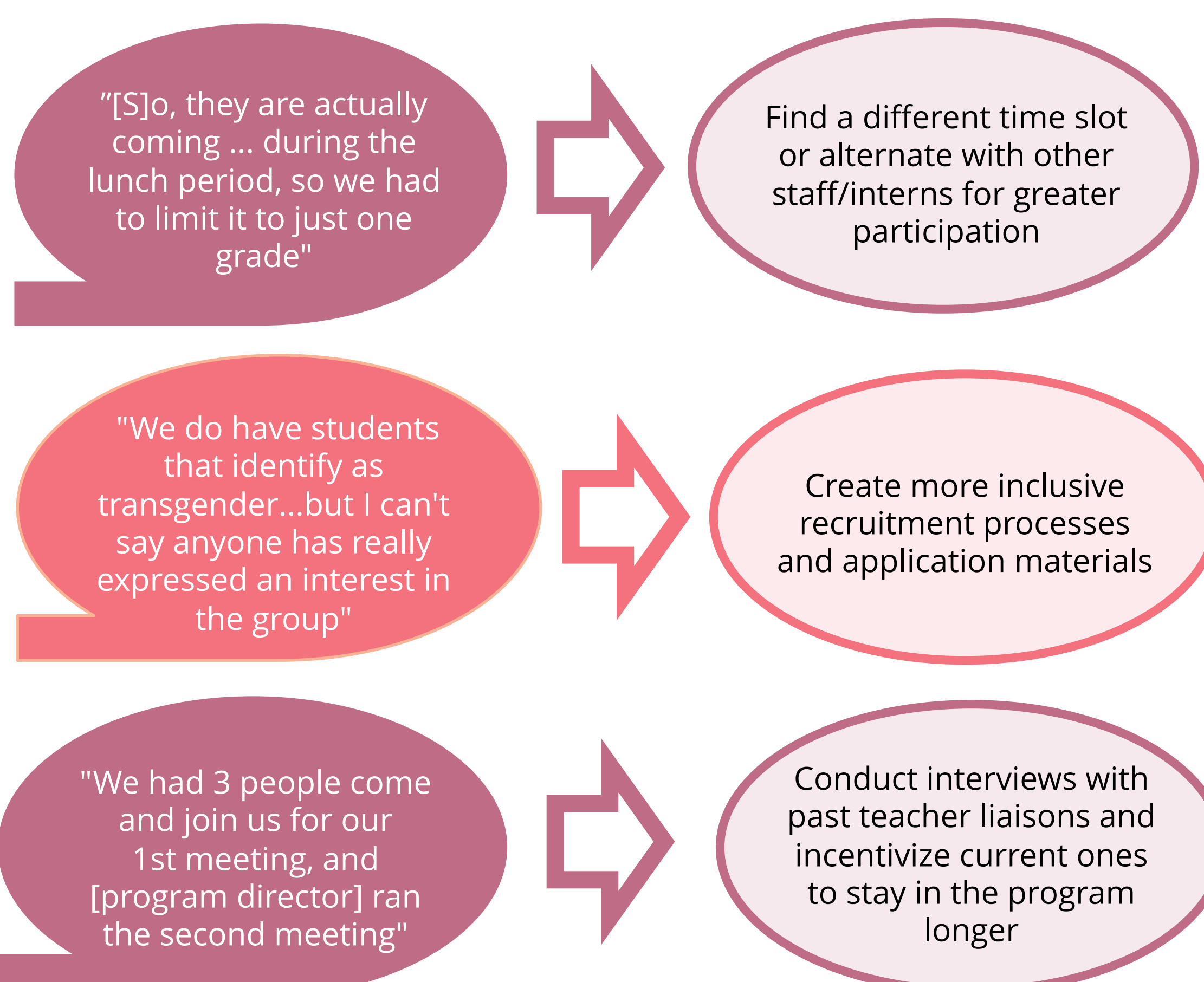
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Key Findings

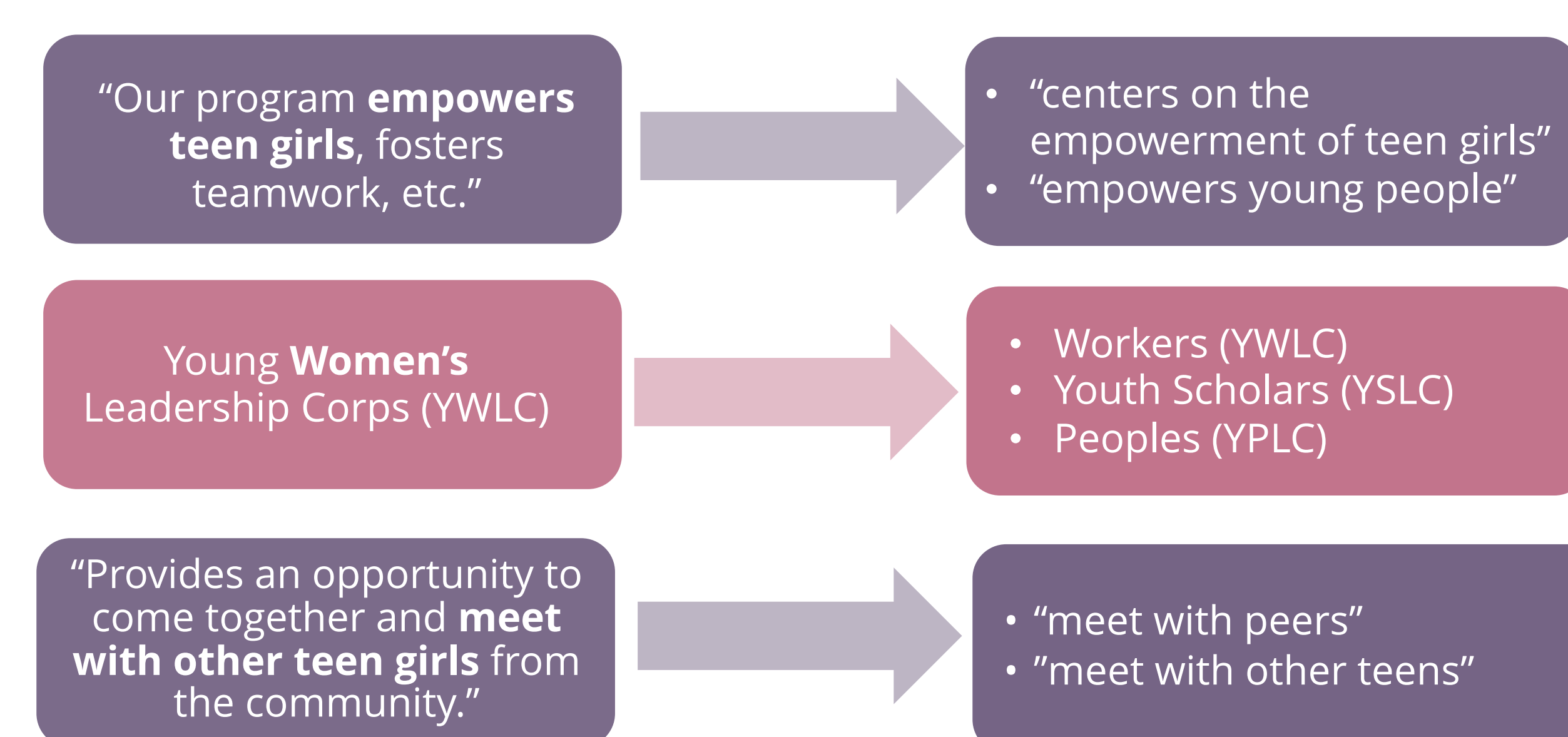
Teacher Liaison Ideas for Effective Engagement Strategies of Engagement



Proposed Adjustments to Recruitment and Engagement Strategies



Examples of How to Reduce Gendered Language in YWLC Documents



Proposed YWLC Survey Adjustments Based on a Review of Existing Documents and Best Practices

