

# Research in Brief



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## Issues and Recommendations for the Establishment of a National Youth Policy Delivery System: A Look at Seoul's Case

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### Introduction

The government revealed its First Basic Youth Policy Plan last December, after the Framework Act on Youth was enacted in February and implemented six months later. The task of establishing a “youth-friendly policy delivery system” falls under “Youth Participation and Rights”, one of the five areas the First Basic Youth Policy Plan is set up for. The establishment of a youth-friendly delivery system is largely about revamping the current “Online Youth Center” into “Youth Hanaro”, an expanded online platform that links local youth policies to national youth policies and setting up within every lower-tier municipality at least one “Youth Madang” to provide functional space for youth activities and participation.

In its third meeting held on March 30, the Youth Policy Coordination Committee reviewed and decided on action plans for various issues, including those concerning youth participation in government committees, ways to get youth employment policy measures to take hold, and a plan of activities for non-government members of the Committee. As for Youth Hanaro, the Committee decided that the online-based youth policy platform would be established by a task force team consisting of members from relevant ministries and non-government stakeholders. The Committee also decided that it would

designate sites for a total of 12 new Youth Madang centers and set up standard operation procedures for them.

As of now, there are 278 youth employment service centers, 152 of which being managed by the national government and the rest by local governments. Also, the Ministry of the Interior and Safety has of late helped several lower-tier municipal governments build and manage Active Youth Centers, with a view to helping young people with their activities and self-reliance.

With such circumstances in mind, this brief looks at the example of Seoul City's own youth policy delivery and discusses its implications for the proposed youth policy delivery system.

## The development and delivery of Seoul City's youth policy

Over the past 10 or so years, Seoul City has firmly positioned itself as a leader in developing and implementing youth policies. The decade of the city's youth policy development can be divided as shown in Table 1.

[Table 1] The development of Seoul City's youth policy

	Legislative and institutional changes	Key youth policies	Changes in the delivery system
<b>Policy formation period</b> (October 2011 ~ June 2014)	Basic Youth Employment Ordinance enacted	-Future "innovative" jobs creation -Youth employment education and training	-Youth Jobs Team set up -Youth Hub established -Youth Policy Network launched
<b>Policy institutionalization period</b> (July 2014 ~ June 2018)	Seoul Basic Youth Ordinance enacted	-2020 Seoul Youth Guarantee Program -Youth Allowance	-Youth Policy Department (3 teams) -Youth Council established -Youth Activity Support Centers, "Zero-Gravity Youth Zones", Youth Network Centers, etc.
<b>Policy advancement period</b> (July 2018 ~ present)	Framework of Act on Youth enacted; Ordinance on the Promotion of Youth Participation enacted	-Youth Self-Government -Youth-Led Budgeting	-Youth Service established (7 teams) -Expanded Youth Council into Youth Citizen Council -Local District Youth Centers established

Note: Author's construct

Source: Cheong, Se-jeong et al., Ways to Improve the Implementation of Seoul City's Youth Policy (2020), Seoul Metropolitan City and KIHASA

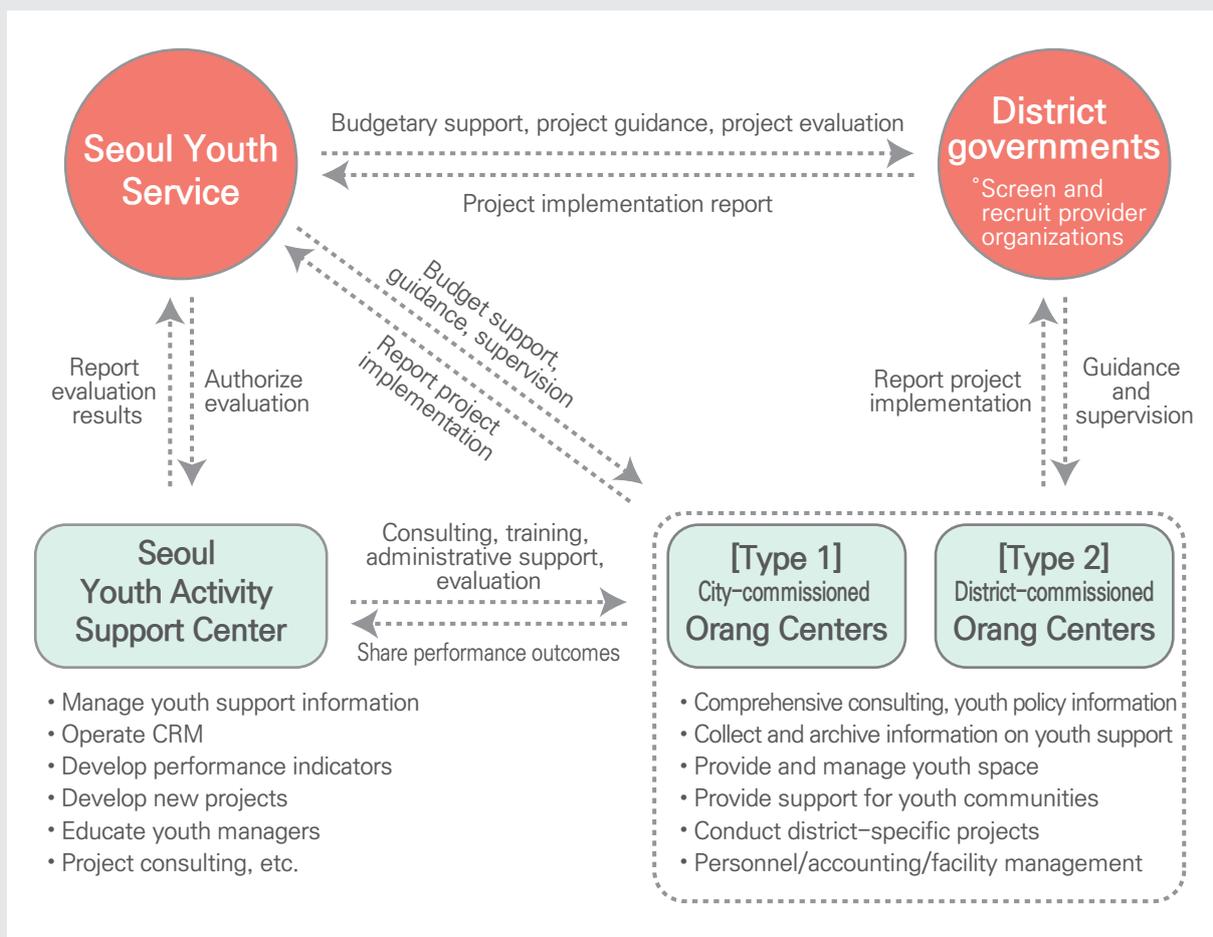
The policy formation period (October 2011 ~ June 2014) was when the scope of youth policy was demarcated and new departments were set up in the city government to manage youth policies. It was also during these years when the Youth Hub was created as a venue for networks concerning youth policies including youth employment policies.

During the period of youth policy institutionalization (July 2014 ~ June 2018), Seoul City established its Basic Youth Ordinance, the first-ever of its kind in Korea. The city announced the Youth Guarantee and other programs intended for young people, which in time were incorporated into the framework of youth policy. Also, this period saw considerable improvements in infrastructure capacities for the implementation of youth policies.

In the policy advancement period spanning from 2018 onward, the city embarked on the “Youth Self-Government” initiative whereby the involvement of youth was promoted in decision-making in, among other things, budget allocation. In 2020 the Seoul City government established in its municipal districts an Orang Center, a community facility with its operation entrusted to private providers, to promote youth networking and improve ease of access to key services and public resources for young people.

Seoul City’s youth policy delivery can be illustrated as shown in Figure 1.

[Figure 1] The composition and role of Seoul City’s youth policy delivery system



Note: Circles mean “administered by the city government”; rectangles mean “entrusted to private providers”

Source: Cheong, Se-jeong et al., Ways to Improve the Implementation of Seoul City’s Youth Policy (2020), Seoul Metropolitan City and KIHASA

The Youth Service, an administrative division under the direct jurisdiction of the Mayor's Office, administers budgetary support for the city's municipal districts and oversees and assesses programs run by district governments. Seoul City's Youth Activity Support Centers provides consultation, human resources training, administrative support for the municipal districts in the city.

Orang Centers, run by district governments, classify their clients into four categories and link them to services that are relevant to their needs. Those of Type 1 are young people to whom the district Orang Center delivers youth policy information and services. Type 2 represents those who are in need of expert consultation on, for example, psychological issues, work, housing, and livelihood finance. Young people deemed at risk for mental issues and thus fall under Type 3 are linked via Orang Centers to professional services at public institutions like the Seoul Mental Health and Welfare Center and the National Mental Health Center. Those seeking youth allowance belong to Type 4, for whom Orang Centers arrange services from the Seoul Youth Service or the Seoul Youth Activity Support Center. As of March 2021, there were nine districts with an Orang Center in Seoul, with Seong-Dong District on track to open one this year.

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## **Policy recommendations for the development of a national youth policy delivery system**

The national government needs to further make out a case for the need for a national youth policy delivery system. What the proposed system will consist of remains unclear as yet, but it may well be that it will involve more than a specific benefit program. The need for a national youth policy delivery system may be justified from the perspective of universal human rights and commons.

A youth policy delivery system may serve as a basis for the guarantee of universal social rights. In this connection, Bruno Palier has emphasized at a recent symposium the importance of increased access to quality essential goods and services in the age of “new normal.”<sup>1)</sup> A youth policy delivery system can serve, especially in these times of pandemic, as a basis for nurturing commons as a democratic, collective identity, as a democratic practice where community members, seeing themselves as political subjects, engage themselves in taking control over public sphere and effecting changes in it. An offline policy delivery system predicated on universal social rights, in comparison to an online one, can be more effective in detecting and addressing vulnerabilities among young people. Seoul City's youth policy delivery system has thrived off of the momentum of solidarity where individuals sought to look after each other linked in shared space.

Lower-tier municipalities on their part could consider, as did Seoul City, pursuing “duplication of services” as a way to highlight the youth-friendliness of the youth policy delivery system. The duplication of services as a strategy can involve constructing a new system with which to foster competition with the

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1) Palier, B. (2021). Social Policies in Times of the Post-Covid19 New Normal. Proceedings of the Symposium on Health and Welfare Policies in Times of Covid-19, KIHASA

existing system. Such a new system can also help foster a “separatism” that bears sociopolitical values concerning youth.<sup>2)</sup>

The services young people receive via the new youth policy delivery system should be substantive and delivered in a professional, coherent, accountable manner. If the proposed youth policy delivery system is to, focusing on “youth” as a collective identity, pursue a goal of helping young people overcome marginalization and accumulate social capital, it also has to become a medium that catalyzes disparate individuals to interact in a way that they can attain increased access to resources.

If the policy delivery system focuses overly on the delivery of policy information, there might well arise questions about its public responsibilities. The fundamental premise that needs to be agreed upon is one about the scope and role of the delivery system. Also, detailed discussions should follow as to how to educate and train the workforce for the delivery system.

There is a salient tendency of depressive symptoms and anger, associated with wariness toward covid-19, among youth. It is important to understand that the problem of loneliness and care can be lessened through relationship and community and, most of all, through what Peter Baker called “shared emotion.”<sup>3)</sup> In the rapidly changing socioeconomic landscape, the transition of youth to adulthood has become increasingly postponed, diversified and stratified, making it difficult to define youth as a target group of social security. In light of these circumstances, the proposed youth policy delivery system should be able to function as a universal social protection system responsive to the needs of youth until the existing social security programs will have been evolved into a cohesive and permanent system able to respond to a whole range of social changes and risks. In that regard, decisions on what services to deliver, and with what to compose them, should be carried out by local governments in a concrete fashion in accordance with their own youth policy implementation plans. Decision-makers may consider making reference to the French example of the PACEA (“contractual pathway to support employment and autonomy”) and even remodeling it to an approach that better fits the Korean context. Another case in point would be Hilary Cottam’s framework that highlights “the four capabilities that all people need to flourish: the capability to work/learn; to be healthy; to be part of the community; and to nurture relationships within the family and beyond.”<sup>4)</sup>

## What to do to improve the sustainability of the youth policy delivery system

To make the youth policy delivery system sustainable requires revamping the legal bases in which to ground policy implementation. It is necessary for the smooth and sustained implementation of youth policies that roles and functions of the entities involved in the delivery system be clearly defined and made widely known. Also, local governments would need to set up a division dedicated to supporting the

2) Gilbert, N. & Terrell, p. (2012). Dimensions of Social Welfare Policy. Pearson.

3) Backer, C. P. (2020). We can't go back to normal: how will coronavirus change the world?. The Guardian (March 31, 2020).

4) Cottam, H. (2019). Radical Help: How we can remake the relationship between us and revolutionize the welfare state. Virago.

youth policy delivery system.

If the implementation of the youth policy delivery system is entrusted by lower-tier municipalities to private entities, as is the case with Seoul, it is necessary that terms of contract conditions, service provision guidelines include provisions that allow service providers to secure increased employment protection and financial incentives based on their performance outcomes. It would be best if local governments had intermediary support mechanisms, much like Seoul's youth activities support centers, that are tasked to design youth guarantee programs, identify community resources, educate and train the youth policy delivery staff, and provide full-time supervision.

Discussions have been under way concerning the potential need for a qualification system for youth policy delivery professionals. But what should precede this is a process of agreeing upon and characterizing what the proposed system will consist of, a crucial first step in the course of deciding what qualifications to require of youth service professionals. The licensing of specific service providers should remain on the long-term agenda, as this is an issue tied with whether it is possible to foster a youth policy delivery environment competitive enough to attract and retain qualified individuals. One option that may be considered for now is requiring additional training for licensed professionals—mental health professionals, counselling practitioners, clinical psychologists, and social workers—to work as professionals in the field of youth policy delivery.



## Concluding remarks

Arising as a response to needs voiced by youth, Korea's youth policy has seen its realm of operation reach from youth activists and local governments into the national government, from private-sector activities into the public realm. Now, youth policy stands as a key means by which to change Korean society. Ways should be sought to keep youth participate in the making of youth policies and programs and to keep and harness the momentum and innovations offered by private-sector activists. To do this requires listening to and understanding the voice of youth activists. Also, it is important to keep up in detail on the youth policy environment and seek ways to improve the quality of life for community youth and promote the growth of youth activists.