

\$1.9m for institutes to aid social projects

National Youth Council funds to help youth remain engaged in community

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STUDENTS at six institutes of higher learning will be given more money and help to work on community projects and research.

The National Youth Council (NYC) will pump in \$1.9 million to support them through partnerships with their schools, said Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Lawrence Wong.

The institutes are Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic, the National University of Singapore and the Singapore Management University. Other universities and polytechnics are welcome to form partnerships with the council.

The funding will go towards youth projects that benefit local and overseas communities. These

include existing programmes such as the Youth Expedition Project, which promotes volunteering.

The initiative aims to encourage polytechnic and university students to remain engaged in the community after they graduate.

Mr Wong said yesterday: "We want to show them that there are many more options that they can pursue, many more opportunities for them to make a difference in society.

"There are more and more young people now interested to do social enterprise projects, non-profit projects. That's a very good sign, but it's still not mainstream. They are still a minority."

In 2010, 72 per cent of 15-to-19-year-olds were involved in at least one community group, NYC statistics show. In contrast, the rate among people aged from 20 to 24 was just 59 per cent.

Mr David Lee, community service manager at Singapore Polytechnic, said: "The funding allows the school to have greater flexibility in planning and scheduling our overseas projects, as we are certain on the amount of funds that are available."

Mr Wilson Ang, 42, deputy director of student development at Ngee Ann Poly, added: "Through this partnership, we want to reach out to more students and engage them in meaningful and curricula-linked service projects.

"This is so that they can be part of the answer to a societal issue, and it's not through textbooks or in the classrooms."

Yesterday's announcement follows a new partnership between the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and the Ministry of Education. Secondary schools will be linked with youth-sector organisations and come up with initiatives to engage students in the community.

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