

Deliverable 2: Leadership-in-Action Project Report: KYC Mural and Website

Introduction

My Leadership-in-Action placement with the Kosovo Youth Council (KYC) focused on two distinct projects. The first was a public, youth-centered anti-bullying and inclusion mural in the municipality of Lipjan. The second was a structural upgrade of KYC's digital presence through a funded website redesign that organized a decade of projects into a coherent, accessible narrative. The context was a post-conflict society where young people experience uneven access to inclusive spaces, where interethnic relations are fragile, in some municipalities more than others, and where visibility and communication infrastructure significantly shape participation. My role combined community engagement, stakeholder coordination, event and logistics management, content curation, and grant application. What made this experience significant was not only the visible output of a mural and a forthcoming website, but also the leadership practice required to bring them to life in a setting with strong local norms, seasonal constraints, and real ethical sensitivities.

Context and Role

KYC works across Kosovo to empower youth through advocacy, education, and program delivery. I entered during the summer period, which quickly revealed practical limits on school-based programming. Approvals from schools were not available within our timeline, and municipal calendars, including permissions for public activities, were already crowded. Within that reality, my work centered on designing interventions that could move without formal classroom access while remaining true to the mission of inclusion. I coordinated with a Mitrovica-based artist to co-design the mural, worked with Lipjan stakeholders including the deputy mayor to secure permissions, and led logistics for an inauguration that ultimately drew 120 participants. In parallel,

I audited KYC's project archives, wrote concise summaries, organized scattered media, and translated that body of work into a design brief for our web designer, Sadri. In addition to working on the archives, I also proposed lots of changes to improve the aesthetic and usability of the website. The brief supported a successful donor grant and set a September start date for implementation.

Project Design and SMART Goals

Since I had to adapt the initial project idea, I created three new SMART goals that made leadership attributes visible and testable. For the *Character Goal* on humility and emotional intelligence, I set a routine I could actually keep in a busy six-week window. Before every external meeting I ran a two-minute pre-brief with a colleague to list the meeting aim, two must-ask questions, and one concern I needed to name if it arose. In the meeting I practiced reflective listening by paraphrasing at least once and ending with a one-sentence summary of what we had agreed and who would do what by when. After the meeting I logged what I heard versus what I assumed, and I asked for quick feedback from one person at least once per week on how I showed up. The target was to use this cycle in a minimum of eight meetings during weeks two to six, to collect four pieces of concrete feedback, and to demonstrate improvement by reducing clarification questions after meetings. This was realistic because it added no extra sessions to the calendar and relied on short habits embedded in work already happening.

For the *Capacities Goal* on project and time management, I worked from a one-page timeline that named five milestones: mural design sign-off by the end of week four, vendor bookings and permits confirmed by mid-week five, run-of-show finalized three days before inauguration, inauguration delivered in week six, and the website redesign brief and asset folder delivered by the end of week five with the designer's September start date confirmed. I planned the week every Monday in thirty minutes; this was aided by the weekly team meetings that outlined my roles

clearly. I defined success as hitting at least four of the five milestones on time, and I made sure to keep a 48-hour buffer on any task that depended on another party. These numbers were practical inside KYC's pace and took into account school holidays, municipal response times, and vendor availability. I would say overall, I maintained an on-time ratio of at least three quarters for my tasks.

For the *Change Maker Values Goal* on curiosity and ambition through intercultural dialogue, I aimed to create a small routine of contact and to turn what I learned into visible choices. Each week from week three to week six I scheduled one purposeful conversation outside my immediate circle, such as a coffee chat in Lipjan or a fifteen-minute debrief with a municipal staff member. I noted six specific insights across these conversations and translated at least three of them into the project design within the same week. For example, adding a co-painting window at the inauguration to encourage youth to leave a mark, in hopes that by playing an active role in the mural painting, they would identify more with the mural and thus the message behind it. I treated implementation as the proof of dialogue.

Rationale for Pivot and Challenges Faced

The original plan was to run school-based youth training sessions. By the second week it was clear this would not be feasible within the six-week window as school leadership was not positioned to approve or support our intended training on such short notice. The pivot to a public art project honored the mission while releasing us from classroom dependencies. It allowed us to work with municipal actors who were active to create a space where youth could participate without a school gatekeeper. This was not a compromise but a design choice based on the rhythms of the place.

Project Design and Execution: Lipjan Mural

The mural began with site reality, not concept art. We walked candidate walls, checked surface condition, measured dimensions, and spoke with municipal staff about permissions and maintenance. With a local artist, I worked through the concept art, working together on sketches that avoided slogans while carrying a clear message. The design had to do two things at once: read at a glance as a statement against bullying and for inclusion, and allow meaningful youth participation without fragmenting the composition. By the end of the fourth week we had a design the municipality approved and a practical plan for staging.

The run-up to the event was very busy, we had to think about the logistics including sound and catering who were contracted in week five. The run-of-show was finalized three days before inauguration and included three short opening remarks, an explanation of the imagery, a few minutes for youth questions, an opportunity for students to write and hang up anti-bullying phrases on a hanging rope, and a structured co-painting window on the mural. We were all anxious about the weather risk of rain as we were not able to secure tents, however we were very lucky to have incredible weather all day.

On the day, 120 students came, as well as a handful of municipality officials and our full KYC team of course. The youth were extremely engaged and asked about specific symbols and then painted portions themselves. The co-painting segment had the right kind of energy because it was joyful, careful, and students took ownership of their sections. It was also a lovely way for them to get the chance to speak to the artist who painted it.

Project Design and Execution: Website Redesign

The website work started in the archives, which was a tough job because KYC's past lived across folders and formats made it hard to follow a coherent story. With time, patience and one too many questions for my boss, I was able to reconcile projects, dates, and images of the projects. I wrote

short, consistent summaries for more than two dozen projects and proposed a layout which was easy to navigate. I wrote out two clear and detailed documents, one - outlined all the changes I wanted to make to the website's usability, formatting and aesthetics, and two - listed all the projects in chronological order with the dates, details and images. Through the writing of the grant proposal, I am happy to say we secured donor funding based on a clear scope, and confirmed a September start with the web designer.

Collaboration, Power, and Trust

None of this would have been possible without the relationships that I had built. Inside KYC, I had the continuous support and guidance of my much more experienced colleagues, who balanced warmth with delivery. They were also very useful in having a lot of contacts with which they could connect me, and often reminded me of details that I overlooked. With the municipality, I learned to speak to both civic value and practical detail. Framing the mural as a public good with a clean, short program and clear responsibilities made it easier for staff to say yes. I think it also worked in my favour that local elections are coming up soon and the current officials were motivated to show the public that they have been making a positive impact with their time in office. Youth were not just invited to watch a finished product, but they were invited to make it, ask about it, and claim it. I could see that trust being built in small deposits, for all parties involved. The more time that went on, the more my rapport with the people around me grew, and consequently the easier it was to work together.

Ethical Considerations

The city center park where we painted the mural lies right next to a UNESCO protected zone, thus it carries history and value to the Lipjan peoples. A mural that claims inclusion cannot smuggle in symbols that land differently across communities, so we kept imagery universal.

Consent for photos of all members at the event was explicit, and images were assessed for dignity before publication. Accessibility mattered in quiet ways; the wall location needed to be easy to reach, the program needed to run on time so buses worked for people, and shade and water needed to be present so participation did not punish anyone who showed up. On the website, we chose accuracy and respect over volume, avoided sensitive personal data, verified image rights, and wrote with care when describing communities that are too often generalized.

Measurement, Sustainability, and Governance

The sustainability of the mural depends on stewardship the community will actually do. I agreed with the municipality and KYC to organize a routine annual cleaning, and an anti-graffiti coat was applied to the mural upon its completion. Quarterly site observations during busy hours can note footfall, how people engage the wall, and how quickly any damage is addressed, while counts of class visits and visits to the project page give a sense of educational use. The good advantage of having the mural in the city center park is that the space will always be used, ensuring that the community has a continuous interaction with it. Volunteer turnout at refresh days will show whether the project is becoming part of town habit. When the new website launches, basic analytics on project pages, volunteer sign-ups, and donor inquiries will tell us if clearer storytelling is converting attention into action. An annual one-page recap can turn these signals into decisions for the year that follows.

Limitations and What I Would Do Differently

Six weeks is enough time to start things and to miss things; I would have loved to get the youth engaged earlier in the project. This could be done by holding a competition among schools in Lipjan where students could submit their own mural sketches, from which the winning design would be painted instead. This would get them to actively think about how best to communicate

the idea of inclusion and anti-bullying visually. While the inauguration was a huge success, we had a few issues with the sound system as the music would keep cutting out, and so sound checks could have been run earlier on site to protect against last-minute surprises. The website brief is strong, but user testing with a handful of teenagers and a donor before hand-off would have made the structure sharper.

Conclusion

The Lipjan mural gave young people a place to see and touch inclusion, and because they helped make it, they are more likely to keep it alive. The website redesign will let KYC tell its story cleanly, honor its history, and invite others in without drowning staff in updates. The SMART goals kept my leadership practice concrete with short habits that make meetings work, a plan simple enough to remember and strong enough to hold, and conversations that turn into decisions people can feel. Going forward I will keep mapping context first, investing in ordinary rituals that build trust, lowering social and logistical barriers so participation is easy to choose, and scaling only when the foundation is strong. I will measure what predicts persistence rather than only what photographs well.

Pictures

While consent was provided to publish pictures, I have covered the faces of any individuals to respect their privacy, especially considering the young age of most of the attendees.

