



Leadership Opportunities for Youth Volunteers

A study by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development states the numerous positive effects that youth can have on adults and organizations by being included in decision-making roles. Another study found that benefits for youth include increased self-esteem, sense of personal control, enhanced identity development, greater development of life skills including leadership, public speaking, dependability, job responsibility and higher academic achievement.

1. Organize a Youth Advisory Board (YAB)
 - a. YABs provide YVC programs an invaluable youth perspective on recruitment, project design and selection, promotion, recognition, and other areas of program management.
 - b. Members may be nominated from your pool of active youth volunteers.
 - c. Members may be selected for their leadership potential, enthusiasm, ability to work well with others, passion for service, and any other criteria you deem important.
 - d. Members may be given an option to accept or decline their nomination.
 - e. Members may be charged with, among other things, acting as advocates for YVC among their peers and networks, evaluating project opportunities, spearheading fundraising efforts, and continuing to serve on a regular basis.
 - f. Members may be offered additional leadership roles within YAB, such as President, Vice President, Secretary, etc. or as committee members.
 - g. Search “YAB” on the YVC website’s Affiliate Portal for more.
2. Offer your youth volunteers opportunities for personal development such as resume-writing workshops, leadership seminars, skill-building classes, conference attendance, etc.
3. Ask youth to serve as Junior Team Leaders.
 - a. This is a great way to recognize the efforts and potential of your most committed and competent youth volunteers. Assisting adult team leaders with their duties not only develops leadership skills in the youth but can boost your program’s capacity too.
 - b. Responsibilities can include providing additional supervision, taking attendance, planning and/or leading project activities like service-learning lessons, reflections, icebreakers and team builders, soliciting feedback from agencies, and welcoming, orienting, and training new volunteers. Communicate the importance of this leadership role.
4. Nominate youth for leadership positions in the community, such as serving on boards of other youth-serving agencies, acting as volunteer spokespeople for agency partners, and participating as attendees, volunteers or presenters at conferences like the YVC Summit.
5. Become a certifying organization for the President’s Volunteer Service Award and ensure eligible youth receive the award and are encouraged to achieve it.
6. Seek and plan projects with excellent learning and job skill development potential and take advantage of every opportunity to utilize that potential during and after the project.

- a. Plan unique, interactive service-learning lessons that encourage creative thinking about the issues being addressed and how the youth can have an impact.
 - b. Consider asking agency representatives to share about their careers and the types of skill enhancement afforded by each project task.
7. Create an ongoing volunteer opportunity for a Youth Social Media Manager.
 - a. A strong social media presence is not optional for youth programs; it is essential if you want to effectively communicate with current youth volunteers and attract new ones.
 - b. Most youth are more tech-savvy than adults and they are certainly more in tune with the best way to communicate with their peers. Since most of them utilize social media anyway, they are prime candidates for this role.
 - c. Several YVC programs collect blog posts and social media content from youth on a regular basis and a few have even put a youth volunteer in charge of their entire YVC website.
8. Create an ongoing volunteer opportunity for a Youth Community Outreach Manager.
 - a. Allowing youth to assist the YVC Program Director in reaching out to local agencies to plan projects improves intergenerational, interpersonal, and at times even intercultural communication skills. It also exposes them to issues and organizations outside of school and home to gain an increased level of community awareness.
9. Involve youth in fund development.
 - a. Offering youth volunteers a chance to see what it takes to make a program like YVC possible and even assist those efforts can be a valuable learning opportunity.
 - b. Youth can write or lend perspective to grant proposals and in-kind donation requests, organize a fundraising special event like a dinner or “Serve-a-Thon”, and accompany you to a meeting with a current or potential funder.
10. Develop an alumni network to keep past youth volunteers aware of program developments, channel them toward other service experiences, and offer any opportunities they are eligible for.
11. Recruit team leaders, interns, and AmeriCorps members from past youth volunteers whenever possible.
12. Create a scholarship competition for graduating seniors and/or nominate youth for national youth service-based scholarships and awards. Many awards include leadership training as well.
13. Organize a leadership retreat complete with special trainings and teambuilding activities.