



How to Start a Youth Advisory Board

Overview

A YVC Youth Advisory Board, or YAB, is a group of exceptional youth volunteers that meets on a regular basis to offer the vital youth perspective on YVC program operation, develop members' leadership skills, increase ownership of the program, and more. YAB is a great way to recognize and appreciate your most committed youth volunteers by offering a chance to cultivate their personal and professional growth.

Getting Started

1. Identify a diverse group of youth volunteers who you and fellow YVC program staff believe would be willing and able to offer worthwhile input to your YVC program.
 - a. If you are a new program or have yet to get to know your youth, consider postponing your YAB until ongoing project participation allows youth a chance to stand out.
2. Membership criteria may include YVC project participation, leadership skills and/or potential, enthusiasm, ability to work well with others, respect, maturity, and passion for service.
3. Try to create a diverse group with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, and background so your board reflects the diversity of your program and includes a wide range of perspectives.
 - a. Start small with your YAB for a new YVC program. Try nominating just 6-10 youth volunteers to establish a workable group. Some will not accept the nomination and of those who do, not everyone will be able to attend each meeting.
 - b. Continued YVC service should be a determining factor in YAB consideration, but each YVC program can determine its own criteria for how much participation is required.
4. Nominate the youth volunteers you identified.
 - a. Nomination shows your youth that their efforts and qualities are recognized and valued.
 - b. Depending on your program structure, consider two nomination phases: once after the school year ends and again after the summer to include youth who may not have been able to participate in both.
 - c. Give nominees the opportunity to accept or decline their nomination to increase buy-in.
5. You may also consider accepting applications from self-nominating youth.
6. Outline clear expectations before asking youth volunteers to commit. Allow time and for them to ask questions and consider their commitment.
7. Plan your first meeting.

Objectives

It is essential to develop measurable goals each year for your YAB to help stay focused, hold everyone accountable, and teach members that important life skill. Use the following examples to spur ideas as you work with the board to devise their own YAB objectives. Continue to revisit the goals you set during each meeting to keep your discussions narrowed and focused.

1. Provide guidance and assistance to YVC program staff to plan at least four projects per month.
2. Secure donations for at least 50% of all food and supplies needed for summer recognition event.
3. Identify at least five new local agency partners and complete at least one project with each.
4. Plan comprehensive service-learning lessons for every YVC summer project.
5. Increase recruitment of new YVC youth by 30% by the end of the program year.
6. Create a new YVC recruitment video and air at the spring fundraiser.
7. Reach out to all former youth volunteers and collect 10 transformative YVC stories.
8. Ensure all YAB members receive at least three hours of professional development training during the course of the program year.
9. Submit a Letter to the Editor of the local newspaper articulating the difference being made by the YVC program once a month until it gets published.

Responsibilities

YAB members can be tasked with everything from advocating for YVC in the community, to spearheading fundraising efforts, to voting on project ideas. Other tasks include but are not limited to:

- Writing program policies
- Planning special projects (Global Youth Service Day, YVC Day, etc.)
- Developing and implementing new recruitment and retention strategies
- Securing in-kind donations for special events (dinner, silent auction items, etc.)
- Fundraising (joining you for funder meetings, writing grants, etc.)
- Project design (writing service-learning lessons, choosing team builders, leading reflection, etc.)
- Marketing (taking photos, creating videos, designing brochures and T-shirts, writing blogs, etc.)
- Developing new recognition ideas for program participants
- Public speaking (joining you for TV or radio interviews, giving school presentations, etc.)
- Updating and approving YAB By-Laws
- Presenting to your Board of Directors on the state of the YVC program

Establish general parameters for these in advance and allow board members to help decide responsibilities at the first meeting. *Note: Keep in mind any organizational constraints, for example, if you have a marketing department who must design all marketing items, don't offer that option to your YAB.*

Share a few options for structure, such as officer positions or committees within the board and how that could look so members can decide how they want to structure the board. Individual YVC programs can choose which structure works best, but officer roles have included the following:

- Chair/Co-chair: Lead elements of YAB meetings; work closely with team leaders on project planning; act as liaison between YAB and YVC staff
- Secretary: Take notes at YAB meetings and send them to YVC staff; send meeting reminders
- Tech Chair: maintain social media; collect quotes, stats and photos to update website and blog
- Recruitment Chair: Work closely with YVC staff to provide insight on how to reach youth; keep tabs on local youth events in the community and help YVC have a presence

- Current Events Chair: Find local, regional, national or world news to present to the board and make the connection between the YVC program's efforts and real issues.
- Middle School Representative: Younger youth are often passed up for elected officer positions so some Boards appoint a middle school student to serve as Co-chair.
- Special Projects Chair: Work closely with the YVC staff member in charge of special projects, or national days of service (Global Youth Service Day, MLK Day, YVC Day, etc.) to research project and kickoff event possibilities; work with local schools and agency partners; solicit donations for snacks and supplies.

Training

We recommend some sort of formal training for your YAB members above and beyond that of standard YVC project training. General topics should include YVC Program Standards and your host organizational structure, but you'll also want to offer more specific training related to the responsibilities they elect to undertake, such as how to write a grant, how to set up a project, public speaking, etc. Training will help members feel confident and prepared for their roles. Identify local experts on various training topics and ask them to share their knowledge. Possible topics include:

- Peer Leadership
- First Aid/CPR/AED Certification
- Mental Health First Aid
- Goal Setting
- Time Management
- Emergency Preparedness
- Project Planning
- Service-Learning
- Communication
- Facilitating Meetings (e.g. Robert's Rules of Order)
- Developing Committees
- Creative Problem Solving
- Public Speaking

Once again, let *youth* decide what they want to learn. One of the most important but often overlooked factors necessary for successful youth governance is that youth must be given *genuine* responsibility. As members develop their skills and learn more about their roles, their responsibilities can be expanded.

Best Practices for YAB

- Meet once a month or more frequently as events approach. YAB committees can meet before or during board meetings to make the most of meeting time. Some YABs have been known to meet as a group of peers outside of regularly scheduled meetings. This is a huge win! YVC should provide community and connection, but YVC program directors shouldn't feel a responsibility to join every 'extra' gathering scheduled by youth.
- Have an adult team leader at every meeting to sit in the back and answer questions, listen for/redirect ideas that may be too risky or inappropriate, etc., but otherwise keep quiet.

- Plan service projects to take place after YAB meetings. This gives members a chance to connect in a different way and remind themselves why they serve. Open up the project to all youth but give YAB members preference.
- Give members preference for opportunities for personal and professional development such as resume-writing workshops, leadership seminars, skill-building classes, service awards, etc.
- Nominate members for other leadership positions in the community, such as serving on boards of other youth-focused agencies and spokesperson roles.