

Youth Leadership Council: OAH Expectations*

The OAH Replication of Evidence-Based TPP Programs to Scale in Communities with Greatest Need (Tier 1B) grant requires Grantees to create a Youth Leadership Council (YLC) to engage with the community's youth and lead the community mobilization efforts. The YLC plays a vital role in community mobilization to make a long-lasting impact.

Key Definitions

Community, in public health, is defined as “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings” (MacQueen, 2001). Geographically, the community served is defined by the grantee and may be a neighborhood, city, county, etc.

Community mobilization is the process of engaging “all sectors of the population in a community-wide effort to address a health, social, or environmental issue. It brings together policy makers and opinion leaders; local, state, and federal governments; professional groups; religious groups; businesses; and individual community members. Community mobilization empowers individuals and groups to take some kind of action to facilitate change.” (CDC, n.d.).

Youth Leadership Council Role & Function

The YLC provides direct links to youth in the community being served for engaging, educating, and building youth support for the project. The YLC will also be critical for ensuring that programs and strategies for implementation are relevant and a good fit for the needs of the community. The YLC may also serve as a group of youth activists who do more than simply provide advice to the initiative.

- The YLC connects the project directly to the young people the project hopes to reach.
- The YLC links the project to other youth in the community who have the status and ability to influence even more youth to access the project's programs and services.
- As the “eyes and ears” within the youth community, the YLC provides the Grantee and the Community Advisory Group (CAG) with valuable youth feedback to improve the quality and reach of project services and programs.

Youth Leadership Council Members

There is no prescribed makeup or size of the YLC, but many communities involve six to fifteen diverse young people. The YLC should include members of the target population/community and represent the various settings that the program is being implemented in (e.g. alternative

* The content for this document was adapted from *Community Mobilization & Sustainability Strategies for Success: Youth Leadership Team made possible (in part) by a Cooperative Agreement (1U58DP002940-01 REVISED) with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*, © 2011, *Advocates for Youth*, Washington, DC.

schools, high schools, community centers, etc). Members should be representative of the target community.

The YLC members need to be “change agents.” They need to be a diverse group of young people from within the community who have the ability to engage, influence, and lead other youth. They need to be youth who have the connections within the community to bring other youth together. They need to be able to communicate about the project to other youth in a compelling, convincing, and authentic way in a language youth understand. They need to be comfortable asking others to make a commitment to participate in the project and reach out to others.

All YLC members may be asked to take on other responsibilities such as:

- Speaking to the media or at school board or other community meetings
- Educating other young people and the community about the project
- Questioning policy that creates barriers to programs and services for young people
- Trouble shooting barriers to programs and services
- Managing controversy
- Representing the YLC and other youth on the CAG
- Monitoring progress toward project outcomes
- Identifying connections to other youth as well as assets and resources
- Guiding and/or conducting needs assessment
- Leading or participating in the development of a sustainability plan

Youth Leadership Council Leader Roles and Responsibilities

The YLC leader is selected by other YLC members. The YLC leader needs to be able to attend all meetings, serve on the CAG, and work collaboratively with the Grantee Project Director to:

- Set the agenda of each meeting
- Facilitate meetings
- Identify the meeting’s action items and follow-up on them in the next meeting
- Hold members accountable for assignments, tasks, and responsibilities accepted
- Facilitate the creation of a YLC work plan (*if desired*)
- Review and monitor YLC work plan (*if desired*)
- Facilitate YLC member agreements
- Serve as a liaison to and facilitate communication and collaboration between the CAG and the YLC.

Relationship between the Youth Leadership Council and the Community Advisory Group

The project benefits from strong collaborative relationships among the Grantee, the CAG, and YLC. The YLC needs to collaborate with these others to ensure effective communication and collaboration for the purposes of coordination and planning. The YLC leader should serve on the CAG; additional representatives of the YLC may also be asked to also serve on the CAG.

Getting Started – Meetings and First Steps

In order to accommodate school and work schedules and commitments, carefully consider the frequency, length, location, type of meeting space, meeting amenities (food), and agenda content to maximize participation. The YLC may meet face-to-face as frequently as needed but you should establish a minimum number of times the Council will meet each year. Between meetings, the YLC needs to receive frequent and regular communication about project progress and opportunities to stay engaged.

The following steps will help create and establish an effective YLC:

1. Using trusted contacts within the youth community (e.g., guidance counselors, youth workers, youth in leadership, etc.) “network” to identify possible youth “change agents” to recruit for the YLC.
2. Develop an application form and process for recruiting and assessing YLC candidates.
3. Individually interview YLC candidates by phone or in person to assess interest, capacity, motivation, and willingness to serve.
4. Develop a YLC contract for members to sign upon final selection.
5. Plan the date, time and location for the YLC orientation meeting
6. Create the agenda for the initial YLC orientation meeting and include the following:
 - Introduce the Grantee project staff and YLC members
 - Introduce the Tier 1B grant project including an overview of the project goals and objectives, key activities, and anticipated outcomes
 - Explain why members were invited to join the YLC as well as the roles, responsibilities, and possible activities of YLC
 - Identify the benefits to young people for participation (e.g., opportunities to build networking and communication skills, to make a lasting contribution to their community, etc.)
 - Brainstorm with the YLC members about what they would like to learn (or gain) from their involvement with the YLC. Information from this activity can be used to identify possible activities and strategies for the YLC to accomplish.
 - Introduce a set of team building strategies that the YLC can use to become a high performing team
 - Identify the dates, times, and locations for subsequent meetings
 - Write a set of “team agreements” to identify how the group works together, how leadership is selected, how decisions are made, an accountability system for meetings, etc. that each member will sign
 - Identify tasks and assignments for the next meeting
 - Leave time for Questions and Answers

Additional resources

Advocates for Youth. *Strategies Guided by Best Practice for Community Mobilization*.¹

Available at

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/2398-strategies-guided-by-best-practice-for-community-mobilization>.

Advocates for Youth. *Resources for Fostering Effective Youth-Adult Partnerships*. Available at

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/workingwithyouth/910?task=view>.

Additional tools and resources were developed by Advocates for Youth to assist grantees in developing and supporting the YLC. Additional tools and resources may be available by contacting Advocates for Youth directly.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Community mobilization guide: A community-based effort to eliminate syphilis in the United States*. Retrieved December 7, 2010 from, <http://www.cdc.gov/stopsyphilis/toolkit/Community/CommunityGuide.pdf>.

MacQueen, K. (2001). What is community? An evidence-based definition for participatory public health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91, 1929-1938.

¹ *Strategies Guided by Best Practice for Community Mobilization* was developed by Advocates for Youth as one of five national partners funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under the Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Integrating Services, Programs and Strategies through Community-Wide Initiatives program. Advocates for Youth coordinated and provided leadership and support on the Community Mobilization and Sustainability component of the Initiative.