

INTRODUCTION

Throughout Youth M.O.V.E. National's work over the years supporting and sustaining youth organizations across the country, meeting the needs of youth advocates has remained a constant focus. It has been found that the identification of Purpose Areas (the reason for which a youth organization offers programming for each youth organization) is an important step in strategic planning and supporting sustainability efforts. "Sustainability" is defined as the ability of a youth organization to continue meeting the needs of youth with lived experience through potentially changing circumstances by giving sources of support. In addition to supporting sustainability efforts, identifying a youth organization's purpose area(s) can guide the development of strategic plans, logic models, partnerships, programs and the evaluation of success.

Youth M.O.V.E. National recognizes and celebrates the individuality of each youth organization in the country. It is strongly believed that youth organizations formed to meet the needs of the local community will be the most successful in implementing services and creating systems change in that community. The collaboration of youth voice within a community-based organization should drive the organization's mission, vision, values and purpose.

The following information is not designed to define or dictate one right way to form or plan for a youth organization, but rather to provide a framework for guiding the development of a community-specific mission and aligning the organization's planned activities and programs with the intended organizational purpose area. With this in mind, it is important to note that the structure and purpose of youth organizations can vary greatly from one community to the next in order to best meet the needs of young adults in that area.

Generation NEXT™ is a concept developed by Youth M.O.V.E. National, which demonstrates that in order to sustain any youth MOVEMENT as Youth Advocates transition to Advocates for Youth, it is essential that the next generation of young people who will become youth advocates are continuously engaged. Key concepts in Generation NEXT™ are shared events and experiences, mentorship, leadership development and modeling authentic youth-adult partnerships. Youth organizations may use Generation NEXT™ and their identified Purpose Areas to plan for successful sustainability.

DOCUMENT AUTHORS & FUNDERS

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PURPOSE AREAS

The following six Purpose Areas are grounded in the scopes of work within the Chapter network of Youth M.O.V.E. National: Recreation and Peer Networking, Community Involvement and Advocacy, Social Marketing and Awareness Building, Youth Voice Development and Leadership Training, Personal Development and Empowerment, and Peer Service Delivery. As a result of several years of experience in logic modeling, strategic plan development and sustainability work within youth organizations, Youth M.O.V.E. National emphasizes the importance of identifying purpose areas in this field of work. It is recommended that Youth M.O.V.E. National Chapters and other interested youth organizations work to identify their purpose areas and utilize the determined purpose area in future planning and engagement.

1 Richardson, R, Sims, D., Bergan, J., Khan, C., Logan, B., Pender, V., Rariden, L. (2014). Rocking Your Youth M.O.V.E.ment: A Guide to RockStar Sustainability. Baltimore, MD: The Technical Assistance Network for Children's Behavioral Health.

2 Generation NEXT™ <http://www.youthmovenational.org/Pages/youth-leadership-development.html>

YOUTH-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE AREAS

RECREATION AND PEER NETWORKING

Positive social outlets and opportunities for young adults to engage with their peers are infused into every Chapter in the Youth M.O.V.E. National Chapter network. Peer Networking creates a safe space for young adults to come together to share resources, best practices, personal stories and to collaboratively discuss and hopefully find a resolution for common problems. Having the ability to network with other young adults provides positive youth development, builds healthy peer relationships for young adults and promotes self-expression. Young adults require a way to be individuals while also having their individual strengths and talents recognized. Participating in or developing Chapter-related recreational events provides young people with exactly this type of opportunity to express their individuality, discover their own strengths and leadership abilities, and to feel supported and empowered by their peers. Ultimately, **the goal is to strengthen the young adults' sense of self-efficacy, to expose them to new people, places, ways of life and ideas, and to build upon individual supports as a means for achieving successful life outcomes.**

Potential Outcomes:

- Get involved in something that has a personal meaning
- Identify and develop individual strengths
- Improve relationships and communication with professional allies and supportive adults
- Provide affordable access to recreational activities
- Develop a sense of self-worth
- Create and support a positive environment for peers to interact
- Develop informal peer supports
- Allow young adults exposure to peers who have diverse experiences and are a part of different demographic populations outside of their home community

Example Activities:

A chapter engaged in Recreation and Peer Networking might:

- Collaborate with other youth groups
- Plan and attend group trips
- Allow young adults to choose or design recreational events
- Promote peer to peer communication
- Attend conferences and community events
- Hold game nights
- Engage young adults in event planning and programming

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ADVOCACY

Young adults who become active in a Youth M.O.V.E. Chapter bring voices of experience to the wider community while also raising awareness about the larger, universal message of Youth M.O.V.E. National, which states that, in order for effective change to take place, young adults must be viewed as equal partners in developing a solution to the problems facing young people, instead of being viewed as the source of these problems. When young adults work with their peers, they have unique insight into their actions and behaviors as well as a better understanding of the trials and triumphs of young adults in their communities.

It makes sense that campaigns created and championed by young adults can do more to effectively reach and impact their peers and community. Young adults desire to create change in surrounding environments by developing partnerships between youth-focused organizations and community development agencies. This **creates new opportunities for young adults to serve communities while developing personal leadership abilities and skills.** Advocacy happens on multiple levels and looks different for every individual, group and initiative. Allowing for creativity in this process enables young adults to customize the message to address the individualized needs that are identified among their peers within their communities. Whether advocating for individual, peer or systems rights, the advocacy efforts of young adults are impacted by the community's readiness to value and incorporate youth voice and input. Communities can most effectively be improved by the voices of their people, and youth voice is a critical piece of the bigger picture of community improvement. While it is crucial for youth advocates to have the support of youth-serving systems in their communities, it is also essential that community stakeholders and local businesses recognize the importance of and become invested in maintaining the wellness of young adults in their communities and nationwide.

Potential Outcomes:

- Build community partnerships
- Outreach to the community
- Young adults feel invested and have sense of ownership in community
- Help young adults to heal by sharing their story to educate others and further their cause
- Promote healthy peer to peer relationships
- Tackle stigmas placed on young adults by the larger community
- Strengthen personal leadership skills
- Provide an opportunity for young adults to give back

Example Activities:

A chapter engaged in Community Involvement might:

- Advocate on the local, state, and or national level
- Provide advocacy trainings
- Host mentoring programs
- Hold community service events
- Participate on advisory boards or committees
- Identify policy priorities
- Build partnerships with local organizations & businesses
- Sponsor community events

YOUTH-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE AREAS

SOCIAL MARKETING AND AWARENESS BUILDING

Advertising and promoting your message through social marketing does more than sell the features of the message; it represents a societal change that your group is striving to achieve. The audience perceives a social message as spreading awareness and providing a means to a desired outcome rather than a promotional message. Social marketing weaves these benefits throughout its messages, strategies and tactics to allow youth voice to be more appealing and introduce a vision to organizations outside of the immediate community. Social marketing techniques will **naturally spread awareness of a youth group's mission, vision and values and build partnerships within the community**. Social marketing should be tangible, fun, creative and individualized. Developing a variety of social avenues of expression allows your message to be utilized in multiple systems, breaking down barriers associated with those systems and captivating a larger audience. The power of creative expression and awareness can serve as a pathway to healing, program development and social change.

Potential Outcomes:

- Allow a group's message to be heard both within and beyond its immediate community
- Educate young adults who are interested in safely sharing their story
- Create opportunities for creativity and self-expression
- Build an audience to support and share the group's message
- Learn effective strategies that have been effective in other communities
- Identify partners who believe in the group's message
- Bring community and national attention to the group's presence

Example Activities:

A chapter engaged in Social Marketing might:

- Host a rally
- Hold awareness walks/events
- Write press releases
- Maintain a blog
- Manage social media sites and campaigns
- Create and manage websites
- Create newsletters

YOUTH VOICE DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Youth Voice refers to the ideas, opinions, knowledge and actions of young people as a collective body. The term youth voice often describes a collective body of young adults with diverse perspectives and experiences, regardless of system involvement, identities and cultural differences. Youth voice is frequently **associated with the successful implementation of a variety of youth development activities, including positive service delivery, authentic youth engagement and various levels of leadership training**.

Research has shown that incorporating youth voice is an essential element of effective organizational development among community- and youth-serving organizations. Opportunities to develop leadership skills are critical for young adults. By leading a campaign for youth voice and choice, young adults are able to practice and model these critical leadership skills, including teamwork, research, creating partnerships, presenting information, evaluation and planning. Groups that promote youth voice and are strongly committed to youth development often provide young adults with political education, training in educating policy makers, writing and storytelling strategies, and professional skills training.

Potential Outcomes:

- Develop a youth-driven MOVEment
- Build future leaders
- Affect local, state, and/or national policy changes
- Improve outcomes of service delivery
- Build on skills of young adults through various trainings
- Create and model authentic youth engagement
- Improve professional and youth relationships and partnerships
- Build and model positive peer relationships
- Allow opportunities for trained and paid peer support roles

Example Activities:

A chapter engaged in Youth Voice and Leadership Development might:

- Provide opportunities and support for young adults to lead meetings
- Train in Robert's Rules of Order
- Assist young adults in co-creating organizational programming
- Model authentic youth engagement by allowing young leaders to develop organizational by-laws
- Implement policy change
- Incorporate young adults as "experts" in planning at all levels
- Train youth on how to participate on boards & advisory panels
- Provide youth with Strategic Sharing, advocacy, spokesperson, and leadership training

YOUTH-DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE AREAS

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Activities that promote positive life skill development are essential to the success of young adults. When young adults have opportunities to develop new skills by participating in a chapter's activities, they are able to see the value of further participation in that chapter. These chapter activities can build on and support what young adults are working on in other learning environments, such as school and afterschool programming. Youth development is the ongoing growth process all young adults are engaged in while striving to meet their basic personal and social needs to be safe, feel cared for, be valued, be useful and be spiritually grounded.

A group that seeks to enhance the personal development and empowerment of young adults helps to build skills and competencies that allow young adults to function and contribute in daily life. Goal setting is one of the essential skills for young adults to develop. Providing young adults with the opportunity to set and achieve goals by participating in chapter programming encourages them to think about the future. Young adults who have experience achieving personal goals are able to view future obstacles as tasks to complete rather than as barriers preventing them from achieving success.

A great deal of personal skill development can occur within peer groups and allows for modeling between the young adults. Participation in a group of peers all working towards a common goal creates room for personal growth and confidence-building, which can change a young adult's life. When young adults gain a sense of ownership over the group they belong to, they also develop a sense of leadership and belonging, which increases their level of commitment to the group's mission and success. By becoming committed leaders within the chapter, young adults are able to practice and further develop skills including teamwork, research, creating partnerships, presenting information, evaluation and planning.

Potential Outcomes:

- Ability to apply what is learned in a group to the rest of life
- Develop confidence, commitment and self-worth
- Help young adults reach their fullest potential
- Provide young adults with the ability to identify accomplishments through participation
- Develop self-advocacy skills
- Build resiliency
- Individual skill development
- Place past trauma and current behaviors in context

Example Activities:

A chapter engaged in Personal Development might:

- Offer resume writing, interview and life skills trainings
- Provide creative expression activities
- Teach SMART goal writing
- Promote vision boards
- Encourage healthy relationship building
- Offer personal trainings based on individual needs

PEER SERVICE DELIVERY

Peer-delivered services for young adults facing various obstacles originated with the idea that an individual with a lived experience is uniquely able to contribute to the healing and success of a person needing services. The concept of peer-delivered services has grown greatly over the past decade to the point where they are now an accepted component of mental health services and programs in many states across the country. Peer-delivered services work in parallel with the youth voice MOVEment, which emphasizes that mental health policies and services should embrace a philosophy of "nothing about us, without us" and that there should be dignity, equity and empathy in all helping relationships. Peer services, whether formal or informal, are **proving to be an asset in bettering outcomes for young adults**. Slowly but surely young adult peer supporters are being validated by other professionals in their role as lived experience experts and are being incorporated throughout various programs, services and systems.

Potential Outcomes:

- Support from youth leaders to providers
- Youth group support staff
- Youth Engagement Specialist positions
- Improved engagement of young adults in programming
- Relationships built on trust
- Modeling professional youth leadership
- Youth-driven programming

Example Activities:

A chapter engaged in Service Delivery might:

- Offer youth peer to peer services
- Incorporate services at drop-in centers
- Facilitate Wraparound meetings
- Hire young adults
- Provide mentoring
- Partner with providers to improve services
- Hold support groups