General Information:

- Program Standard 5 requires Affiliates provide leadership opportunities for Youth Volunteers, and most programs achieve this in part by establishing Youth Advisory Boards. There’s some wonderful research that proves that adults, youth, and the organization as a whole can improve in several ways as a result of meaningful youth involvement.

- We know from our own experience with last year’s Summit that youth really want a more active role in program management. Capitalizing on this not only gives your youth a chance to develop leadership skills and ownership of the program, but to share some of your workload and increase capacity.

- YAB is a group of active Youth Volunteers, nominated by Team Leaders, Program Directors, the youth themselves, their fellow youth, or any combination of those parties. They are typically youth who have proven themselves on projects to have leadership potential, enthusiasm, ability to work well with others and any other criteria you feel is important. You don’t just want the overachievers though. The group should be diverse with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, what part of town they’re from, etc. to get a variety of perspectives.

- Boards meet on a regular basis (at least monthly) and are charged with recruitment, project design and selection, promotion, recognition, fundraising and many other areas of program management. Some YAB by-laws require a minimum project attendance as well.

- YABs can be in charge of special service projects like GYSD, developing their own recruitment strategies, updating the host organization Board on YVC progress, taking photos, etc. There’s an endless number of things your YAB can do, so it’s crucial to get their input from the beginning. This board is about gaining youth voice, and it should start with their first meeting. But 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.

Examples from the Field:

- Dave in Grant County advised not to underestimate how much work it takes to have a strong Youth Advisory Board. They have found success structuring the board like a program, with a defined start and finish. They use a 12-month cycle with recruitment, start-up, training, goal setting and an end-of-year celebration. They meet monthly to follow-up on action items, plan and implement projects, etc.

- Anna from The Capital Area has a newer YAB. Members are required to attend at least one project a month. They recruit volunteers, offer project feedback, and create three projects on
their own. They use an officer structure with a president, vice president, secretary and web master. They started meeting monthly but increased that to twice a month, rotating between a Monday and a Thursday to allow for different youth schedules. They stay in constant contact with their board through a Facebook group. The board lacked some basic leadership and communication skills are were offered training accordingly.

- Laurie from Hampton Roads has 15-20 YAB members who meet monthly to give feedback on project activities and explore career fields. The youth voted not to have officers. They brainstorm projects in small groups who then report to the whole group.

- In Corvallis, Deb explained that all YAB members are nominated from either the summer program or past YABs that the staff invites to apply. They choose a focus for the year (this year the focus is disaster-preparedness) and she always seeks their input on major program changes. They meet twice a month but vary the times to work with everyone’s schedule.

- In Kansas City, Chris shared that his YAB meets monthly and follows a committee structure. They invite guest speakers to focus on professional development and they offer YAB-specific projects that members get preference on sign-ups.

More Best Practices:

- Develop measurable goals each year with your YAB to help them stay focused, hold everyone accountable, and understand that important life skill. Examples:
  
  a. Develop and implement a recruitment strategy to increase participation by 5% this year.
  
  b. Secure donations for at least 50% of all food and supplies needed for summer recognition event.
  
  c. Identify at least five new agency partners and plan at least one project with each.

- We recommend some sort of formal training for your YAB members above and beyond that of standard YVC project training. General topics may include things like YVC Program Standards or your organizational structure, but you’ll also want to offer more specific training related to whatever tasks they choose like how to write a grant, how to set up a project, public speaking, Roberts Rules of Order (for meeting governance), etc.

- Offer your YAB members ongoing opportunities for personal and professional development such as resume-writing workshops, leadership seminars, skill-building classes, extra responsibilities on projects, etc. Nominate members for scholarships, media appearances, leadership positions in the community, spokesperson roles and conference participation.

- 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.
• Log on to the Affiliate section of the website and click Project Planning. There’s an entire section Youth Advisory Board resources.

**YVC International Youth Advisory Board**

• YVC Headquarters is forming an International YAB to incorporate youth voice into our programming and stay connected to youth throughout the YVC network.

• The board will launch in October at the Summit, but most meetings will take place remotely.

• The aim is to have 12-15 members to represent a variety of Affiliates.

• We are looking for youth who are natural leaders of their YVC program and contribute new ideas to the program.

• We are in discussions with State Farm about their very successful YAB ([http://sfyab.com/](http://sfyab.com/)). They encourage authenticity above all else, emphasizing the need for members to have real power.

• Some of the projects we have in mind for this board include:
  
  o Create and oversee a mini-grant or contest between Affiliates or Youth Volunteers.
  
  o Discuss strategy on expanding YVC to new communities.
  
  o Play a large role in planning and leading the Summit.
  
  o Recruit Youth Volunteers to attend the Summit.
  
  o Explore the idea of a corporate sponsorship for YVC.
  
  o Plan Road Trips between YVC programs where available.
  
  o Write spotlights on their YVC program for the blog ([www.yvc.org/blog](http://www.yvc.org/blog)).
  
  o Underclassmen can help review the Don and Jean Sloan Scholarship each year.
  
  o Discuss ways they can grow their individual YVC programs.
  
  o Discuss marketing and review promotional materials.