

# A Manual for Youth Advisory Council Members

*Best Practices are operational standards for Community Foundation Youth Advisory Committees updated in 2012 by the Arkansas Community Foundation YAC team. ARCF expects each YAC group to adhere to all Best Practices below and to supply this knowledge to each YAC member upon member orientation. ARCF intends for Best Practices to provide YAC members and YAC Advisors with specific strategies to use to work toward Best Practices. Please use this manual to assess and identify specific areas in which the YAC can improve.*

## Best Practice 1: Advisors

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***Has two trained YAC advisors who are knowledgeable and supportive of youth development and leadership.***

**Explanation:** Two YAC advisors allows for greater flexibility and accountability. YAC advisors should be skilled in the area of youth development, be familiar with legal issues associated with youth work, and understand the operations of the local community foundation. The advisors should take advantage of training and technical assistance offered by the Arkansas Community Foundation in their area and others to increase their understanding of philanthropy and youth leadership.

### **Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Advisors should relate well to youth, be flexible and be comfortable with ambiguity.
2. Advisors should provide support rather than leadership. It is recommended that YAC members organize, plan and run YAC meetings.

## Best Practice 2: Membership

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***Has a minimum of 10 members grades 9-12 who are reflective of the many forms of diversity found in the local youth community.***

**Explanation:** The YAC should strive to annually recruit new diverse members to become an integral part of its activities. A diverse YAC has members who vary in age, race, ethnic background, school, socio-economic level, personal/family history, interests and academic/physical abilities. The size of the YAC can vary to fit the local community it serves, but a core group of at least 10 is recommended to insure stability and longevity as well as diversity. (The median size of AR YACs is 10).

### **Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Assess the diversity of the local youth community to insure that the membership of the YAC is representative of that community.
2. Come up with new and creative approaches to recruitment to expand diversity. (See materials from ARCF/YAC website).
3. Develop an application form for new members. Once a member, each individual will sign a commitment form.
4. Target 13-15 year-olds for recruitment. A multiple year experience has the greatest impact on members and improves their ability to contribute as grant-makers.
5. Keep a roster of members/advisors with contact info.

## Best Practice 3: Meeting Frequency

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***Meets a minimum of 7 times a year for at least 1 hour.***

**Explanation:** The YAC program has many different facets, and the best way to explore them all is to meet regularly. This way, YACers are able to stay fully engaged and be active participants in the fund development, needs assessment and grantmaking process.

### **Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Have an agenda for each meeting. YAC members should develop the agenda and run the meetings. (ABP1)
2. Have food available at each meeting.
3. Decide on a YAC calendar, and stick to it.
4. Have a consistent meeting place, time and location.
5. Remind members about up-coming meetings or events through email, a phone tree or facebook.

## Best Practice 4: Orientation and Training

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**Holds an annual orientation for all new members and encourages all members to participate in training opportunities that will strengthen their skills in philanthropy.**

**Explanation:** Orientation is critical in providing context for new youth grant-makers. It introduces the key concepts of philanthropy, endowment, foundations, grants and non-profits.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Current YAC members should plan and lead the new member orientation. However, if no current YACers return/are available, advisors can plan and lead the first orientation.

2. Include a grant-making simulation in your orientation.
3. Provide a “cheat sheet” of the acronyms and phrases that new YACers/grant-makers must know.
4. Be sure to explain the YAC’s relationship with the community foundation and role as a grant-making committee, and the importance of the needs assessments, community service, and evaluation

## Best Practice 5: Establishing Officers/Committees

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**Establishes officers and committees that will be in charge of running meetings and reporting important news at each meeting. All students should vote on the officers/leaders of the committee.**

**Explanation:** While each YAC looks different, it is important to develop some sort of leadership structure that will lead meetings and encourage students to take the wheel on all YAC activities.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Basic officers should include, but are not limited to: President, Vice President (or two co-chairs), Secretary, Historian (in charge of photography).

2. Examples of Committees are: Communications, Fundraising/Service Projects, etc.
3. Examine what roles will suit your YAC best. For example, if your YAC needs publicity, install a Communications Chair who can start a public facebook page and contact local newspapers/tv stations for upcoming service projects/activities.
4. Responsibility guidelines should be studied by current office holders.

## Best Practice 6: Assessment of Youth Issues (Needs Assessment)

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**Assesses critical issue of area youth at least every three years.**

**Explanation:** An understanding of the local youth community allows youth grant-makers to make informed decisions. Assessing the status of local youth may impact how proposals will be solicited (responsive or pro-active), which grants will be funded or the types of community service in which the YAC engages.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Consider the pros and cons of different approaches to collecting info, including conducting surveys, focus groups, individual interviews, using existing data from other sources or other means.

2. Consider partnering with other local youth-serving organizations to gather info.
3. Make sure that you are gathering info from youth who represent the many kinds of diversity found in the local community. (Don’t just interview your immediate circle of friends—get out there and ask peers you don’t know as well!)

## Best Practice 7: Participation in Community Projects

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*Participates at least twice a year in a community youth project.*

**Explanation:** Participation in community service is a cornerstone of YAC. It is a learning experience that allows YAC members to support the community and increase the visibility of the YAC and community foundation.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Consider doing a service project with a grantee (it's a good way to evaluate the grant at the same time!).
2. Use information from the needs assessment to select community service efforts.
3. Share opportunities for community service involvement with information from websites like [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org) and other organizations in your community.
4. Let the local TV station or newspaper know when you are working on a community service project. It could be great publicity.

## Best Practices 8: Fund Development

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*Engages in fund development activities to assist with the continual growth of the Endowment Fund and the community foundation.*

**Explanation:** New sources of gifts for the Endowment Fund insure that additional grant funds will be available, allowing future YACs to be responsive to youth needs in the community. This is not fund raising necessarily. A fund development program will provide a more accurate view of the various strategies to grow a community foundation.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Identify and implement a fund development strategy: Why should someone support YAC? Who in your community might support YAC? How should the YAC approach prospective donors?
2. Get all YAC members and community foundation trustees to contribute to the Endowment Fund.
3. Help out at receptions and fund-raising events for community foundation donors.

## Best Practice 9: Grantmaking

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*Annually engages in a grant-making process that is responsive to the critical issue of area youth.*

**Explanation:** The grant-making process includes development of grant-making priorities (based on the results of the needs assessment), soliciting grant proposals, reviewing grants, making grant recommendations to the Board of Trustees and evaluating the impact of grants on the local youth community.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Review and update the grant-making process and materials each year.
2. Proactively seek grantees that involve youth in the development, implementation and evaluation of projects and offer volunteer opportunities for youth in the project.
3. Encourage site visits by YAC members to potential grantees.
4. Consider making mini-grants in addition to large grants. (Sometimes small grants can stretch your YAC's ability to give other grants)
5. YACs that have no grant funds available can use their assessment of critical issues to guide engagement in community service projects or other community activities.

## Best Practice 10: Evaluation of Grantees

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*Evaluates the effectiveness of each grant.*

**Explanation:** An internal evaluation effort will help the YAC analyze its grant-making to determine how the grants are impacting youth needs, assets and priorities. A self-evaluation provided by grantees can insure accountability and help inform future grant-making decisions.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Develop an evaluation process that helps determine the community-wide impact of grants made by the YAC.
2. Require grantees to submit oral or written reports so you can better understand how grant funds were used as well as the impact the grant had on the community. Sound like too much paperwork? Use a website like <http://www.surveymonkey.com/> to send out via e-mail.
3. Encourage site visits to evaluate the effectiveness of the funded program.
4. Seek feedback from young people who were directly involved in the funded program.

## Best Practice 11: Youth on Board of Trustees

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*Has at least one YAC member serving as a voting member on the Community Foundation Board of Trustees.*

**Explanation:** A young person on the Board of Trustees of a community foundation provides adult members with a valuable perspective and the young person with a valuable and unique leadership opportunity.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Community foundation trustees, staff, and young people must be accommodating and flexible in terms of openness, training, meeting times, etc.
2. Try a mentoring or “buddy” system partnering adult and youth trustees to increase understanding and allow for a greater comfort level.
3. If possible, two youth trustees are ideal. If only one youth trustee is possible, create a “shadow” trustee: a youth member who attends all the meetings without a vote, who will take over the trustee position after a period of time.
4. Have the young person present the agenda items of the BOT meeting in your next YAC meeting.

## Best Practice 12: Communications and Publications

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*Has activities highlighted by the community Foundation’s annual report, website, newsletters, public presentations and other communication tools.*

**Explanation:** Communications provide increased understanding of the YAC and youth as resources to the broader community.

**Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Develop and maintain a YAC website, facebook, or the YAC page on the community foundation website.
2. Offer to speak to community groups on the issue of youth leadership and philanthropy.
3. Prepare press releases about requests for proposals and grants that your YAC awarded.
4. Prepare and present public service announcements on local TV and radio about youth leadership.
5. Encourage partnerships with other youth organizations around the community to broaden knowledge about different services YAC offers.

## Best Practice 13: YAC Self-Assessment

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*Conducts an annual self-assessment to reflect upon its strengths, challenges, use of Best Practices and opportunities for improvement.*

**Explanation:** A self-evaluation allows members to reflect individually and as a group on membership, diversity, and recruitment issues, training needs, grant-making, YAC structure and group dynamics. The relationship with the community foundation and with the adult YAC advisors should also be assessed.

### **Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Develop a process for identifying how the YAC could improve its activities.
2. Consider different methods for evaluating your YAC: surveys or discussion in large or small groups.
3. Survey YAC alumni to find out how their YAC experience has impacted them after leaving.

## Best Practice 14: Annual YAC Attack! Conference

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*Participates in and attends the Annual YAC Attack! Conference.*

**Explanation:** YACers from around the state have different experiences and it is important they learn from their peers. The Annual YAC Attack! Conference connects YACers to each other and enables them to collaborate in grantmaking and community service.

### **Recommendations for YACers:**

1. The Spring Youth Philanthropy Conference is usually in February, so keep your calendars open.
2. Require at least two of your YACers to come in order for your YAC group to be represented.

## Best Practice 15: YAC/Community Foundation Relationship

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*Interacts with Community Foundation Board, Staff, and Donors at least twice a year on a formal and informal level.*

**Explanation:** Establishing relationships between YAC members and trustees, staff and donors increases understanding of the various roles in the community foundation. It can also generate discussion about the ways in which youth and adults can work together for the benefit of the community as a whole.

### **Recommendations for YACers:**

1. Ask to attend the annual meeting and other special events of the community foundation.
2. Encourage formal recognition of YAC members by trustees and staff.
3. Work together on a joint community service project.
4. Ask about opportunities for youth to volunteer within the organization.