

Neighborhood Youth and Young Adult Council (NYYAC)
Planning Manual

Prepared for the International Youth Organization
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The Neighborhood Youth and Young Adult Council

The Neighborhood Youth and Young Adult Council (NYYAC) concept is fairly simple: it is a group of local young people who get together to act as representatives for the young people of their community. The NYYAC will act as an action-oriented advisory group that will identify the issues that members think need to be addressed and voice the youth positions on these issues. It will also give members a chance to learn important leadership and action skills and plan and direct the kinds of community service and recreational activities for themselves and other local community youth that *they* think are important.

The NYYAC Vision

The vision for the NYYAC is to create a mechanism for youth from the community to have a formal voice and direct involvement in the planning and implementation of programs for their community while also allowing them to express their feelings on all relevant matters. But the NYYAC needs to be more than just a way for local youth to voice their concerns. It must also be a learning tool, a vehicle for personal betterment for the individuals involved. As the NYYAC unifies the youth of the local community and gives them a voice in civic affairs, it will also instill principles of discipline and justice based on values for the individual members. As it functions as a valuable tool for teaching parliamentary procedures and acquiring the knowledge and skills of community organizing, it will provide leadership training for each individual. Personal responsibility and community development must proceed together. Therefore, the goal of the NYYAC will be to help the members achieve a greater understanding of citizenship opportunities and responsibilities and to realize that greater progress, through citizen participation, is possible.

Mission

The NYYAC will serve as a means for involving the youth in the events and decisions affecting their communities. It will introduce them to the concept of civic responsibility and the practice of civic participation, expose them to the resources and opportunities available to them in their city, and help them build leadership skills as they work to improve their communities. Specific aims and objectives of the NYYAC include the following:

- A. To provide an association which can give youth visibility, a sense of belonging, and a means of providing community service and positive impact on the quality of life in the community.
- B. To instill in youth a sense of commitment, service, and responsibility to their community.
- C. To practice and spread the principles of study, hard work, discipline and respect in order to bring about positive change in the lives of the members.
- D. To teach the basics of citizen participation, responsibility, and civic awareness to youth.
- E. To motivate urban youth to strive for academic excellence and the acquisition of skills, and to work with the entire community.
- F. To inform urban youth, and the community as a whole, of important issues, activities, opportunities, and resources through the collection and dissemination of information in the community.
- G. To build the capacity of each individual NYYAC member to succeed personally and professionally in society.

- H. To mobilize youth to actively participate in positive social, cultural, political, and economic projects, activities, and affairs in their community.
- I. To inspire urban youth to use whatever skills and knowledge they obtain for the continued improvement of the quality of life and the development of the community.
- J. To serve as a link between young people, adults, and the community.
- K. To serve as a collective body of opinion and to provide a forum for young people to express their feelings on pertinent matters.
- L. To organize activities and economic enterprises among urban youth that will supply them with their own resources, so they can provide valuable goods, services, and activities for themselves and the community as a whole.
- M. To review and evaluate current programs and projects planned for the area neighborhood and to suggest and plan new youth and community programs.
- N. To provide a setting to encourage youth and young adults to make positive decisions in their lives.

I. Recruitment and Retention

Probably the most important two pieces in the NYYAC puzzle are recruitment and retention: how do you get youth involved and, once they become involved, how do you keep them interested? It may be fairly simple to attract youth to a specific event or activity, but getting them to come back and commit to long term participation is much more complicated.

Recruitment

A regular recruitment process is essential to a successful NYYAC. Regularizing the way the organization builds relationships with local youth organizations, agencies, and schools, will create an environment in which young people look to the NYYAC for opportunities in civic involvement and personal and community betterment. Someone, most likely the Youth Coordinator (a position to be discussed later in this document), must be specifically responsible for regularizing and managing the recruitment process. In addition to placing someone in charge of recruitment, regularizing the recruitment process means holding annual events, major fund drives, or policy initiatives, establishing consistent relationships with other organizations (communities of faith, community centers, libraries, etc.), and maintaining close correspondence with people in positions of contact and/or influence with youths, such as volunteer coordinators, guidance counselors, sports coaches and other leaders in the community.

But regardless of how “regularized” the recruitment process is, it must be effective. It is clear both from experience and numerous research efforts that the best way to recruit youths is also the simplest and most straight forward approach: to personally ask them if they would like to be involved. Promotional materials such as posters and flyers, and public awareness events are helpful and important ways to gather support. But, nothing has proven to be as effective as personal connection. Therefore, any recruitment effort for the NYYAC must begin with and center around personal outreach to individuals. A number of strategies facilitate this approach:

1. **Involve Youths in Recruitment.** The best way to personally recruit youths is through their peers. Opening a dialog with youth who have influence with their peers paves the way for youth to work with youth.
2. **Assess the needs of local youth and the adequacy of youth resources.** Survey local youths to determine their interests, needs, goals, and fears. Find out what’s important to them and where resources supporting youths are lacking and why. Are there adequate sports and recreational facilities, library resources, academic supports, social activities, economic resources? What do the youths want, what would they like to support, what would they like to change?
3. **Craft a Clear Message.** When connecting personally with young people it is important to project a clear idea about the organization’s goals and objectives. This is called crafting a message, and the “right” message can make the difference between success and failure in the recruitment process. Based on the assessment of the needs of local youth, the message should explain how these needs connect with the mission of the NYYAC and how by participating in the NYYAC they will have the opportunity to address these issues and influence positive change.
4. **Reach out to youths.** To recruit members, the organizers must reach out to the young people where they congregate and through organizations and agencies that typically serve young people. Someone (the Youth Coordinator) should be sure to attend meetings of community groups, civic agencies, musical performances, and award ceremonies, as well as visit juvenile

detention and treatment facilities to find youths. Some good potential youth sources include the following:

- Foster care programs that discharge older adolescents to independent living.
 - Shelters for homeless and runaway youth.
 - Establishments that rent rooms to young people.
 - Community and religious organizations, and their leaders.
 - The school system, especially inner-city high schools and special education classes.
 - Drug rehabilitation programs.
 - Correctional Facilities or alternative programs.
 - Other agencies serving youth, especially those that don't offer the same services that you plan to provide.
 - "In the streets," where kids hang out.
5. **Be active and visible in the community.** In all activities the NYYAC will need to be sure to always let people know who they are and what they are doing so that potential members can see what the Council does and know that participation on the Council means participation in the community.
 6. **Hold an annual event.** In addition to day-to-day recruitment activities, a youth planned and centered event should be held each year. This event will serve as a learning and action activity for the youth already participating on the NYYAC, as an opportunity for non-member local youths to learn about community issues and to voice their opinions, and as a high profile event that will help raise the awareness of the NYYAC among local young people, and recruit new members.
 7. **Involve local colleges.** Colleges and universities increasingly allow work study students to fulfill their work requirements at community organizations. It might be possible to get work study students to participate on the NYYAC. This could increase involvement while also forging connections between the local community and institutions of higher learning.

Retention

Retention refers to the ability of the NYYAC to keep young people involved and interested once they have been recruited. How can the NYYAC be interesting? What will inspire young people to commit to the Council and take ownership in its efforts? How can the NYYAC be structured so that young people *want* to participate? There are no certain answers to these questions, but various research efforts have produced a numbers of strategies.

One early finding from focus group meeting run to date is that incorporating some types of sporting activities, such as basketball, football, track, tennis, etc. will help keep young people interested in the NYYAC. (See Appendix 2)

In general, other retention efforts can be divided into three components: program philosophy, organizational structure, and action.

- **Program Philosophy:** The idea behind having a program philosophy is to make sure council members understand, or at least think about, *why* they are participating. They need to know how participation in the NYYAC makes a difference and why the type of action being taken by the NYYAC is important, both for the individual members and for the community. The

program philosophy will help provide a focus and a reference point when discussing potential new projects or activities, allowing members to unite against those in opposition to their issues.

In order for role of the NYYAC members to be meaningful, it is absolutely essential that members understand the importance of the work they are being asked to do. This means that the philosophy of the organization must connect directly to young people's experiences and concerns. In the same way that crafting a good message helps with the recruitment process, weaving this message into an overall program philosophy that connects actions with goals can help sustain participation and interest levels.

- **Organizational Structure:** The structure of the organization refers to how members are welcomed into the organization, who is "in charge", what is expected of them, how they are treated, and what they are asked to do.
 - a. **Orientation.** Many potential problems can be addressed through a thorough orientation process. There is no substitute for clarity of roles and expectations, and a good orientation will ensure clarity among all participants. At first, the NYYAC will undoubtedly be an awkward, unfamiliar situation for new members. A successful orientation will help new members adjust comfortably to this new situation. Some suggestions:
 1. Welcome Young People. Make sure all newcomers have the opportunity to learn about the work being done by the NYYAC; become informed about programs, policies and procedures; meet key staff members and other stakeholders; and learn about their rights and responsibilities as new members of the team.
 2. Outline specific duties and be clear about expectations. Orientation is the right time to explain both office policies and specific duties for new members. Taking young people seriously means setting clear expectations and holding them accountable, as well as being clear about the NYYAC's responsibilities to them. The orientation can be a time to set out accountability procedures--both what is expected of the young person and what he or she can expect from the NYYAC. Having written materials and letting young people ask questions is very important.
 3. Regularize the orientation process. It is important to have in place an ongoing and regular orientation program. As orientation becomes more formalized it becomes easier to get quality feedback from young staff and volunteers. If possible, the NYYAC should prepare written materials that young people can take away with them. This will ensure that they get all the information they need, even if they miss an important point during the orientation.

Most importantly, the orientation must make clear not only what young people can expect to get out of participation on the NYYAC, but also what will be asked/expected of them. They need to know exactly what they are committing themselves to and then be held accountable to that commitment.

- b. **Training.** The NYYAC will need to have a regularized training program to teach members, especially new members, how to participate on the NYYAC and its activities. For example, members need to be trained on the requirements and responsibilities of NYYAC officers, how meetings are conducted, and how to act as representatives of their communities. NYYAC members can decide for themselves exactly what should be included in the orientation and initial training program. [Writing, citizenship, or local politics training are possible additions to the initial training program.]

c. Recognition. Designing a policy for recognizing the contributions made by members of the NYYAC will likely be one of the most complicated tasks in designing the Council. Recognition generally revolves around some type of incentive for participation, be that in the form of recreational activities, educational opportunities, or direct payment. The following are some possible rewards for participation:

- The chance to get special training (computer, writing, phone, etc.)
- The chance to strengthen leadership skills (strategic planning, public speaking, etc.)
- The chance to be heard--to represent the organization
- The chance to coordinate activities and events
- The opportunity to “hob nob” with local leaders
- Use of office space, computers, and other equipment
- Help with transportation costs (bus fair, tokens, etc.)
- The chance to go on trips
- Free meals

However, from experience, the unique environment of Newark may require more than the above incentives, such as a direct payment, for example.

- Action: Young people have expressed the desire for the NYYAC to be an activist organization, as opposed to a forum simply for the purpose of discussion. Researching some of the problem areas for local youths and then targeting strategies for how the youths of the Council can actively contribute to finding solutions to these problems will need to be a central activity of those involved with the Council. For example neighborhood youth could be asked to consider solutions to youth violence, research how much of Newark's budget is being spent on young people, visited the city’s recreation centers to assess their adequacy, condition, funding, etc. They could present their findings to various other youth organizations and policy-makers throughout Newark and then try to work with officials to get their interests addressed publicly and to raise interest and support from other residents and voters.

II. Eligibility

Generally speaking, any and all youths are eligible for membership in the NYYAC. However, better stated is that membership is open to any youth of the designated target area who is in agreement with the aims, purposes, and principles of the Council, and is willing to accept its Constitution, By-laws, and discipline. While the NYYAC will be in existence to assist all youths, especially disadvantaged youths or youths experiencing problems, it must maintain order and discipline. If the NYYAC hopes to build a respectful body to represent the young people from the area, then only those willing to abide by the rules and set a positive example for other youths should be allowed to participate on the Council.

That being said, it is essential to note that the rules of conduct for the NYYAC will be subject to change by the members of the NYYAC. Therefore, while new and old members alike will be required to abide by the established rules of conduct, additions and/or amendments to these rules may be made through official NYYAC decision making procedures.

One requirement is that all NYYAC members invest in themselves, as the members themselves are their most important resource. Therefore, members are accountable for making themselves the best they can be. During their time with the NYYAC they will be provided with an opportunity to prepare themselves to be resourceful citizens for the community and for their families. They will be challenged to prepare for the rigors of adulthood and to assume a leadership role in their communities. The councilmembers development component will assist them in learning values, self-discipline and practical lessons that they will need to achieve their personal and professional goals

There will be three separate NYYAC age groups: those who are between the ages of 8 and 12 will be eligible for membership in the Jr. NYYAC; those between the ages of 13 and 17 years old will be eligible for membership in the Sr. NYYAC; and those who are between the ages of 18 and 25 years old will be eligible for membership in the Young Adult Council.

Each new member of the NYYAC will be required to agree to a set of rules and regulations (which are subject to change) and to sign a contract of commitment. The following is an example of a potential contract:

NYYAC Contract

I, _____, fully understand the conditions for my enrollment in the NYYAC and accept the opportunity to improve my ability to be successful in my goals.

I further agree to do my best in trying to establish a new beginning as I represent the youth of my community. I promise to put forth a sincere effort and cooperate, respect the rules and regulations, build positive work and learning habits, and be dependable while endeavoring to rebuild my community.

I fully understand the performance standards and will endeavor to abide by them. I understand the consequences if I am unable to uphold the performance standards.

I fully understand the concept of “Community Service” and understand that staff members at IYO will assist me in producing proper work habits and attitudes as I work to rebuild my community.
I thoroughly understand all policies and procedures for the governance of NYYAC activities.

I understand the goals of the NYYAC and am committed to giving 100% as I help myself and my community.

I have fully read the IYO NYYAC Handbook and am prepared to assume my role as a Councilmember with the IYO NYYAC.

Councilmember Signature

Date

Youth Coordinator Signature

Date

III. Education

Education is the foundation of the NYYAC. Be it focused on school, work, family, the community, the city, nation, or planet, the ultimate objective of the NYYAC is to educate people, to help them learn how to better themselves and their communities. NYYAC education will not be focused in any one direction or on any one career, but will follow the needs and interests of the Council members and centered around the themes of neighborhood development, community development, and leadership development. In general, members will learn by doing. They will be exposed to a range of educational opportunities and then be encouraged, either individually or as a group, to select certain areas of interest for further exploration. The specifics of the NYYAC educational program will be worked out between organizers, the Youth Coordinator, and NYYAC members. The following are some educational issues and areas to be considered:

1. Not everyone goes to college. Somehow, the NYYAC needs to strike a balance between encouraging the highest possible level of academic achievement and recognizing that college isn't for everyone and so accommodating other interests. At a minimum, all members should be strongly encouraged to finish high school and where appropriate, to enter college. In all cases, the NYYAC will emphasize the benefits of learning, which, again, does not necessarily mean going to college. General learning can be facilitated through seminars on how to study, how to take a test, and other topics to further skills, and fostered by pointing out that education opens doors that will otherwise remain closed, and that without an education career tracks may dead-end at entry level.
2. Citizenship and Service. As an action oriented organization, the NYYAC must have a strong citizenship component. Citizenship training means providing members with substantive knowledge of important societal issues, and practical skills directed at how to address community problems, organize groups for social action, plan programs at the local level, and participate in the decisions that affect their lives. This instills in members a sense of social responsibility and civil competency for participation in a diverse democratic society, and it enables them to learn about their own social values, collaborate with others who are different from themselves, analyze the root causes of important social problems, and represent their viewpoints on important issues in society.

If citizenship training teaches members how to be good citizens, community service can be seen as the practice of that citizenship, reinforcing through action the concepts of unselfishness, civic responsibility, and personal accountability. A successful community service project is designed with specific goals in mind, having a beginning and an ending and a set of benchmarks to encourage the learning of employability and other life skills, to impart some vocational aptitude in line with the individual councilmember's interest and aspirations, to learn responsibility, leadership, teamwork, to reinforce a common moral value system, and to demonstrate that serving the community is as important as serving oneself. In this way, councilmembers will gain valuable work skills that will prepare them to find a job and keep that job until they are ready to leave. This connection between community service activities and the development of personal and professional skills for the individual councilmember should be an important component of the citizenship and service educational program.

3. Vocational Training. The NYYAC will be neither a job-training nor a job-placement organization. This needs to be made very clear in all outreach efforts. However, it is expected that the NYYAC will do much to both prepare members for employment and expose them to employment opportunities. This also must be made very clear in all outreach efforts. The NYYAC will help members build the personal skills needed to find, get, and keep a job. Some professional skills that the NYYAC should expect to develop among its members include computer literacy, phone etiquette, meeting facilitation, grant writing, program development and management, fundraising, and resume preparation, critical thinking, and problem solving.
4. Grants & Scholarships. The NYYAC should be active in helping members understand how to research what's available and for what purposes - high school, college, technical schools, vocational programs, union training programs, etc. The research, organizational, planning, and writing skills needed to submit grant and scholarship applications can be applied in a number of useful ways.
5. Mentoring. Young people at IYO have expressed interest in mentoring, in being matched up with an adult who works in the career that a youth finds interesting. As mentoring is an individualized program, getting matched up with a mentor could be one more incentive to retain youth participation. Mentors can offer NYYAC members trusting, consistent relationships with adults and provide perspective on the challenges of a career and the ingredients of success. Mentors are friends, confidants, advisors, counselors, teachers, and role models. They are another person to offer acceptance and assistance to members in their struggles. They can push members to tackle difficult tasks, and they teach the importance of going for the positive and building on strengths. Mentors can expose members to new experiences, new ways of thinking, new ways of living, and new attitudes towards work and education.
6. Leadership. The NYYAC will serve to develop and foster leadership among its members. This means taking the time to teach the basic professional and leadership skills young people will need to effectively carry out their work on the Council. Teaching these skills likely take place “on the move,” as learning by doing is the best way to understand what it takes to be a leader. Common characteristics of leaders that the NYYAC should expect to develop among its members include strategic planning, public speaking, constructive criticism, conflict resolution, politics, event planning, and community organizing.

IV. Action

As mentioned previously, the NYYAC is to be an action-oriented organization. The following are a number of arenas in which the NYYAC could engage.

1. **Youth Advocacy.** The point of the NYYAC is to represent youth and provide a forum for youth issues. Once NYYAC members establish their positions on specific issues, they should be arranging meetings with local youth-oriented organizations, city and county officials, police chiefs, the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and other policy makers to advocate their positions on their issues of concern. Advocacy can enable the NYYAC to serve as bridges between local youth, elected officials, and policy makers.
2. **Political action.** Youth programs often operate in an imbalanced political arena in which adults are well organized but youth lack resources or face obstacles to participation. The NYYAC should seek to become a vehicle for community organization and youth political participation. This includes mobilizing young people and developing their organizational capacity for action, reaching out to diverse groups, strengthening their capacity in their community, and bringing youth together annually to identify their issues and set priorities for the year. To do this, the NYYAC must establish its members' credibility as public speakers, experts on issues, and advocates for youth interests in ways which are reciprocal with political power holders.
3. **Adult Advising.** Consistent with its youth advocacy and political action efforts, the NYYAC will look to advise adults who are planning programs and services for youth, such as after-school programs, teen centers, and summer camps. They will provide advice on how to get information to young people and how to develop the programs that young people will attend.

It may also be possible to provide formal training for adult-run youth service agencies and health departments on how to increase youth involvement in program planning, or provide other services such as consultation and technical assistance to jail officials on strategies for increasing information to young people on prevention issues for incarcerated and non-incarcerated youth.

The NYYAC will seek to change adult attitudes toward youth. Youth must be seen as informed and active citizens and valuable resources for developing the community and achieving positive change, as opposed to past views of youth as threats to be feared, pathologies to be cured, problems to be solved, clients to be treated, victims to be protected, or incomplete adults in the making. They must challenge past perspectives, alter relationships between youth and adults, and open opportunities for increasing involvement in the community.

- II. **Other activities.** The range of possible actions to be taken by the NYYAC are unlimited, and the Council members will need to decide for themselves what additional activities interest them. Other goals might include efforts to improve education in the schools, generate awareness of health issues among youth and policy makers, organize youth from diverse backgrounds to increase their involvement and advocacy around youth issues, use the media to increase awareness about the consequences of and alternatives to violence, and to change the negative perceptions of youth in society.

V. Youth Coordinator

Central to the success of the NYYAC will be finding an appropriate Youth Coordinator. The importance of the Youth Coordinator position cannot be overstated. It is a big job, not just in terms of what the Youth Coordinator will do, but also what that person will represent: a connection between youths and adults, an advisory presence but not a managing force. The Youth Coordinator *coordinates*, and as such will need to strike a balance between taking charge when charge is needed and relinquishing power and control to the youths when this is appropriate.

The Youth Coordinator should develop an infrastructure to support youth action, to spread information on activities and opportunities, and to participate with decision-making boards and commissions to make decisions that positively affect young people. He/She should be a conduit for information and opportunities for activism and advocacy related to the goals of members, perhaps pointing out contradictions or injustices in society and providing members with the information on the issues that can encourage them to take action. He/She should seek to motivate members to action and advocate for them when appropriate. But in all cases the Youth Coordinator should set and maintain high expectations, establish professional standards, and provide encouragement or guidance for members to reach them. Youth must be expected to act in a responsible manner as it is a disservice to shield members from the consequences of their actions.

There is no specific background or degree that a Youth Coordinator *must* have. But proven ability and/or demonstration of the ability and vision to successfully serve in this position must be a requirement. An unskilled and/or unprepared Youth Coordinator could harm the NYYAC and detract from members' experience.

VI. Getting Started

This document has focused on discussing how to establish the NYYAC and how it should look. Now it is necessary to look at how to begin, how to get it all started. How is it possible to go from nothing to something?

1. The first step should be to hire a Youth Coordinator, which could prove to be the most important decision made in the planning of the NYYAC. Hiring a Youth Coordinator *before* assembling the core groups will make it possible to use the Youth Coordinator as a resource in getting the NYYAC off the ground and it will help make the experience of the core group members more focused and positive. *Someone* needs to be responsible for getting the NYYAC started and it would be best to have that be the same person who will be in the role of Youth Coordinator once the NYYAC is in place. This will also demonstrate to the youth involved from the beginning that someone is in charge, not in charge of them, but in charge of working towards the success of the Council.
2. Next, a steering committee of adults and/or youths should be put together to critique the literature on the NYYAC concept (this document) and solidify the mission, goals, and vision of the Council. In other words, a message needs to be crafted and everyone involved needs to understand and agree to support this message. This will make it possible to present a solid, unified idea of the NYYAC to the young people approached for NYYAC membership.
3. Once the message has been crafted, a core group of youths from the target population should be assembled: three core groups of five youths in each age bracket to take on the task of getting the NYYAC off the ground. The adult organizers must reach out to youth, be that through street corner “rapping”, home visits, and/or phone calls, in order to enlist natural leaders as part of an initial “Organizing Committee” (OC). Inevitably, these leaders will be joined by the self-chosen who want to be part of “what’s happening”. The OC should be trained in the basics in the NYYAC Handbook and should plan two or three initial activities (at least one primarily educational and one primarily recreational), designing a recruitment strategy, and, ideally, planning a kick off event somewhat similar to UNITY JAM but on a smaller and more focused scale.
4. Conduct a needs assessment. Meet with focus groups of local young people to get feedback regarding what they would like to see in a NYYAC. These meetings should continue until there is a clear understanding of the goals and interests of the local young people. This effort also includes being alert to local youth with natural leadership abilities. The adult advisor(s) must first do some “homework” to learn who the natural youth leaders are. Neighbors, business people, school personnel, ministers, and police can be called upon for input and general observation can also be utilized.
5. Start thinking of a kick-off event. Once all of the above have been addressed, the young people who have cooperated with the needs assessment should be invited to cooperate with the adult organizers in planning a one-day event that will attract local young people to come learn about the NYYAC. This event could have popular and/or inspirational speakers come to discuss the value of NYYAC participation, musicians playing popular music, serve food, etc. The activities of the kick-off event should be designed according to the interests of the local young people. It will simply be important to ensure that all attendees receive information about the NYYAC and how to join and participate.
6. After the kick-off event, an informal meeting should be held with the Youth Coordinator and those who have expressed interest in being a part of the NYYAC to discuss in detail the functions of a NYYAC. An enthusiastic presentation should be made regarding the

contributions the Council can make in serving the community and the benefits, regarding service that can be derived (youths with negative attitudes should not be invited at this time). At the next meeting the Youth Coordinator should make a brief but spirited talk about the functions and importance of the NYYAC, and the duties of the "Executive Committees" and the "Steering Committee." In this and subsequent meetings members should begin to propose manageable projects to be undertaken in the near future that will establish a bond between the members and bring a sense of achievement to the group.

7. Be patient. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, organizers need to be patient. It cannot be expected that a large, active, flawless NYYAC can be established overnight that is ready, willing, and able to take on youth issues and community challenges. Establishing a successful NYYAC takes time. At the very least, the young people who serve as the core group that assists with planning will need some training and orientation on the NYYAC concept, goals, and mission. Starting slowly and building a solid foundation will do much to establish a successful NYYAC.

Appendix A

Focus group meeting 7/16/99, 8 kids, ages 14-20.

Suggestions for what would make youth want to participate/stick with a NYYAC :

- Help them find a job
- Help them find an after school job
- Take after school and weekend trips
- Schedule a lot of activities, which should be fun, and can be educational, but no strictly educational trips, like to museums, etc.
- Experience a day in the life of someone working in the profession that someone/everyone wants to learn about or is hoping to make a career in.
- Set up a mentoring program whereby the youth can get advice from people in the careers that the youth want to follow.
- The meetings cannot be boring, cannot be just talk. The meetings and the YC must be active.
- Setup sporting activities and teams.
- Have dances.
- Hold debating competitions, both within the YC and with other YCs. But essential here is that the youth choose the subjects to be debated.
- Have the YC plan and put on a block party, but it must be a project OF the YC, not just have the work done by the YC.
- Have the YC do a block clean-up. Doing this it isn't always necessary to have food. Just music could be enough. The kids were against the idea of always bribing youth into doing things.
- Re: paid positions, paying some people (officers) but not paying others will discourage non-paid members from participating. If some people are paid but not everyone, then those who are not paid will not come. Alternatively, if everyone is paid a little, but officers are just paid more, then that could work.
- T-shirts and hats could be enough incentive, IF the members themselves get to design them.
- The YC must be active.

Focus group meeting 7/20, 10 kids, ages 10-16.

- Art club--general art, drawing
- Music--learning, playing, singing (Talk w/Lee re: Beverly Mckenzie)
- Learning other languages (Spanish)
- Bring in special speakers--people the kids know/care about, i.e celebrities/sports figures
- Go places--sports games
- Get people to stop selling drugs
- Clean up blocks, tear down buildings
- Go to movies
- Give classes--math (algebra), college prep, technical, career training
- Make videos--learn how to make rap videos
- Have clean up crews
- Learn how to flip--go to "flip city"
- Newspaper--learn how to produce a local newspaper; write about the good side of Newark
- Learn how to cook
- Have a pet shop
- Get an after-school job

- Money--if only officers are paid, non-paid members would still come if there are good activities
- Give a block party
- Have a dance
- Visit the cookie factory--or other bakery/food producer, taste product and learn how it's made
- Go to the aquarium
- Go to "six flags" amusement park
- Have computer classes
- Get/give tutoring
- Bring in motivational speakers
- Better the neighborhood
- Set up scholarships--academic
- Have safe-sex classes/learn about safe sex

Sports:

Basketball, baseball, football, tennis, track, wrestling, swimming, golf, bowling, boxing.

Feedback for the 1991 UNITY JAM regarding what is needed from a NYYAC:

1. Be made up of inner city youths, appointed by local government without political favoritism, who are outraged at injustice and committed to positive constructive changes.
2. Meet on a regular basis with local small business and corporations to discuss mutual interests and community development action plans.
3. Work with local government and organizations to publish a list of "customer friendly" businesses (i.e. job training and placement programs, colleges/universities, technical institutes, small businesses and companies). Evaluations of businesses must include the following areas:
 4. Investment of time within community affairs, and neighborhood association
 5. Investment of money or in kind contributions toward youth leadership and job skills development
 6. Entry level employment opportunities for Newark residents
 7. Length of commitment to doing business in Newark
 8. Work to encourage local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to rigorously recruit more black and Latino Newark/urban residents for law enforcement positions.
 9. Work to push policy makers and law enforcement personnel to be quizzed on their sensitivity to community concerns.
 10. Work to encourage Prosecutors, Public Defenders, Judges, and private Law Firms to invite youth/community leaders to plan alternative sentencing options that can keep the neighborhoods safe and rehabilitate criminals.
 11. Work to link up with counterpart youth organizations in the US and overseas to convene forums to network and share ideas on community building, economic development, the fight against crime and drugs, multicultural appreciation, entrepreneurial enterprises, travel, environmental concerns, educational exchanges, and youth civic responsibility.
 12. Work to reevaluate youth training and employment programs for greater inclusion of small business development and entrepreneurial training for highly motivated African American and Hispanic youth.

13. Work toward a Newark/Essex County 24 hour toll free youth crisis intervention hotline. The hotline would focus on youth issues and concerns (crime prevention, homelessness, substance abuse, physical abuse, parenting, conflict resolution, health, family planning, jobs, crisis intervention, stress reduction, nutrition, etc.)
14. Encourage public officials and service providers to make the effort to work with youth rather than for them; talk with youth rather than at them; give up the adult traditional roles as service provider, teacher, board member, or community leader and start SHARING these roles, and all the accompanying power and responsibility, with young people.
15. Push for the adoption of a youth column to run in each of the major newspapers; produce an “urban youth beat” show, with a youth host on t.v., with editing controlled by an independent producer chosen by Newark/urban youth.
16. Create a campaign to stop using the terms thug, hoodlum, youth at risk, wolfpack, minority, or other negative or inaccurate terms when referring to African American or Latino Youth.
17. Create a campaign to give equal respect and coverage to all people regardless of their age, race, sex, religion, physical ability, or economic status.
18. Work to assure that for every youth crime covered by the media there is a positive youth event or action also covered in the same time slot or in the same section.
19. Work with media advertisers in the funding and support for the training of students in print and broadcast journalism in low-income neighborhoods across Newark and Urban Essex.
20. Work with the media and advertisers in the funding of neighborhood based youth literacy campaigns, in order to give youth the skills and understanding necessary to access resources and opportunities through the media.