

## YOUTH IN PHILANTHROPY:

### THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ROLE

Community foundation youth advisory councils (YACs) ideally operate as an integrated part of their foundation, and understand and adhere to roles and practices as outlined in the document *Principles for Community Foundations*. Thus, their roles include:

1. Fund development
2. Grantmaking
3. Community leadership

In their **fund development** activities, the primary focus is on building a permanent youth endowment; however, most youth councils must also raise a small amount of operating funds, as well as funds to cover travel costs to community foundation regional meetings and conferences. In some cases, youth councils also obtain flow-through funds, which are particularly important in the early stages when the endowment fund doesn't generate significant funds for granting. Although the focus is on fund development, some YACs undertake fundraising events when appropriate opportunities arise.

Most youth councils focus their **grantmaking** on supporting youth projects, however, a few YIP programs are more general in their granting. Granting activity includes a range of pro-active, inter-active and reactive granting, community mapping and needs assessments, project monitoring, and special initiatives, such as mini-grants programs. YACs are often consulted on grant applications relevant to youth that are under review by other grant committees of the community foundation. In some cases, they may co-fund youth projects with other grants committees of the foundation.

Youth councils are beginning to understand the importance of their **community leadership** role, and how it relates to their grantmaking and fund development. They are increasingly seen as a resource to other youth organizations beyond the financial support they provide through their grantmaking. Their knowledge of community and youth issues, projects, and organizations that they obtain through their needs assessments, granting and other activities can be helpful to other groups, and is shared both formally and informally. For example, some YACs provide workshops in grant and proposal writing to other youth organizations. Others have convened local forums on youth issues, while others have undertaken special projects to promote youth volunteerism or support capacity building. Such activities serve many purposes: they help to raise the profile of the youth council, build relationships, establish credibility, and inform their grantmaking. Further, they can keep YACs motivated and involved at times when they are not making grants. For newer YACs who have few or no funds to grant with, this can be critical to keeping YAC members engaged.

With an increased focus on youth citizenship and social responsibility coming from many quarters, and a growing movement to engage youth in their schools, communities and voluntary sector organizations, community foundation YACs are well positioned to use their community leadership role more strategically. They provide a model for others, and can play a bridging role between youth organizations, and between youth and other organizations, or between school and community. Through their grantmaking and community leadership roles, they support and promote youth volunteerism. Some YACs are already taking a proactive approach to partnering with other organizations to promote youth citizenship, leadership, volunteerism, and inclusion, but there is much more potential in this area. As other organizations that support youth action expand their programs, communication and, where appropriate, coordination and collaboration can be important to maximizing effectiveness and avoiding confusion and duplication.

In British Columbia, the Canada Volunteerism Initiative is seeking to develop opportunities to promote youth volunteerism in BC and increase awareness of and involvement in Global Youth Service Day. Since these activities are consistent with or could complement those of CF YACs, a collaboration has been launched to initiate and support such efforts of CF YACs. Their primary activities will focus on promoting youth volunteerism and Global Youth Service Day, building relationships and capacity building. For example, YACs might provide workshops on project planning, grantwriting or fundraising to other youth groups, and sessions on youth engagement to other voluntary sector organizations interested in youth. They might convene forums on youth volunteerism, or, in conjunction with CFC initiatives, on specific topics such as the environment, social justice or diversity. Ideally, this will serve as a model for such partnerships in other provinces.

Other organizations that are implementing school-based activities are also interested in linking with CF YACs to share or disseminate information about their programs, access information or funds or partner on local events. For example, Free the Children, the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition and the Jane Goodall Institute work through schools to promote youth taking action on social or environmental issues. In some cases, when youth exposed to such programs are motivated to create a project to address an issue or opportunity, YAC grants or mini-grants programs can be helpful if financial resources are required. In other cases, YACs can play a role in connecting the youth and their project with other organizations in the community.

Like their adult counterparts, youth involved in community foundations have an important role to play in building social capital and supporting civic engagement. This role is closely linked to their fund development and grantmaking roles, and is developed and supported through their parent community foundation, the community foundation network at local, regional and national levels, training and resource materials, and peer and experiential learning. By understanding this role, and by being intentional in the activities they undertake and in their capacity and relationship building, community foundation youth councils will significantly contribute to their own success and that of their community foundation and the community they serve.

