

YOUTH IN PHILANTHROPY:

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATION MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

Occasionally, community foundation youth advisory council (YAC) members have an opportunity to represent their foundation at a regional or national meeting or conference, or other event. Careful preparation and planning will ensure that the experience benefits the individual participant, the YAC and the community foundation, and that the time and resources involved is a worthwhile investment. To get the most out of such events:

- ✓ **Send more than one Youth Advisory Council member.** Not only can it provide a level of comfort and security to have someone familiar there, but it will also increase opportunities to participate with different knowledge, perspectives and experiences. It also allows for maximizing participation when there are concurrent sessions. After the event, sharing the learnings with the full YAC is easier when more than one person has experienced it. Determine the most appropriate YAC members to attend based on: the nature of the meeting or conference, and such factors as individual YAC member's knowledge, experience, commitment, involvement, availability, or age.
- ✓ **Ensure participants are prepared for the program.** Make sure that YAC members are aware of the purpose of the meeting or conference, and have a copy of the meeting details, agenda and all other related information. They should also be prepared with information on their own YAC and community foundation, and be able to speak knowledgeably about its grants, fund development and community leadership activities. Copies of YAC brochures and other print materials should be made available to take along, as well as any other handouts or information required for the meeting.
- ✓ **Make necessary travel arrangements and confirm budget provisions.** Prepare a budget that includes all expenses and revenues. Ensure that all costs are taken into account, including registration fees (if applicable), meals, transportation, and accommodation. To minimize costs, consider car-pooling, sharing rooms with members from other YACS, or billeting, where possible. Where travel subsidies are available, find out if they will be paid up-front or on a reimbursement basis. Make sure to keep receipts, tickets, boarding passes, etc. where required, and to complete all meeting registration forms, as directed.
- ✓ **Obtain all required approvals.** Ensure that the community foundation board is apprised of all plans for youth traveling to represent the foundation. Waiver and Release of Liability forms should be completed by youth over the age of 18, and by a parent or guardian for those under 18. Parental approval forms for youth under 18 should also be completed. Confidential Medical History forms should also be completed, and available throughout the travel period. (See samples.)

- ✓ **Clarify expectations of conduct.** Discuss relevant legal, ethical and moral issues and responsibilities, and develop a code of conduct. This discussion should be respectful and should include considerable opportunities for exploring issues in an interactive dialogue. Ideally, the guidelines or expectations will be reached by consensus, however all decisions must take into account the community foundation's "Duty of Care" and other relevant legal requirements. (Every organization working with children, youth or other vulnerable persons must take reasonable measures to protect and care for those participating in their programs. This legal and moral obligation applies to both volunteers and paid staff, and should be seen as part of the organization's approach to due diligence and risk management, and be incorporated into policies, guidelines and practice.)

Topics to discuss may include, but is not limited to: curfews, attendance at sessions, use of alcohol and drugs, leaving the meeting premises, noise levels in hotel rooms and halls, dress codes (where relevant) and consequences for violating the code of conduct.

- ✓ **Participate!** Once at the meeting, attend all sessions, contribute your ideas, knowledge and experiences, get to know members of other YACs, learn about other community foundations and YACs, and have fun! Use the meeting as an opportunity to gain new skills, ideas and information, as well as to make long-term connections with other youth grantmakers and community foundation staff and volunteers.
- ✓ **Bring it home.** De-brief with others attending the meeting, discussing highlights, learnings and potential follow-up or next steps. Bring back what you've learned and share it with those in your YAC that did not attend the meeting. Keep copies of all handouts received, and circulate to your YAC. Write an article about the event for your community foundation's newsletter, website or annual report, or for the CFC Youth in Philanthropy website, and include photos, if available. If possible, make a presentation at a meeting of your foundation's Board of Directors, or submit a report to them. Send thank you letters to funders or sponsors who provided support for you to attend the meeting.
- ✓ **Keep it going.** Maintain connections with other YACers you met at the event. Check the Youth in Philanthropy website regularly for follow-up ideas and activities. Continue to contribute news about your YAC to the website. Share useful resources, links and information about relevant events and opportunities. Mentor new YAC members and get involved in peer learning opportunities locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Volunteer to help plan the next event or to assist with planning or piloting new Youth in Philanthropy resources. Stay involved and connected!

