



## YOUTH IN PHILANTHROPY: MAKING GRANTS

There are many different types of **Youth in Philanthropy programs**: community-based, school-based, partnered with other organizations, and hybrids of various models. But whatever the version, grantmaking is common to all of them, and youth grantmakers can be a powerful agent for positive change in their communities.

Typically, community foundation youth advisory councils (YACs) operate as a committee of their foundation, and work to the roles and practices outlined in the CFC document ***Explorations: Principles for Community Foundations***. These roles include:

### 1) Fund Development 2) Grantmaking, and 3) Community Leadership

Although all three roles are important and dependant on each other, grantmaking is at the heart of what YACs are all about. Good grantmaking is a comprehensive process that includes:

- understanding the community
- identifying priorities
- developing grant guidelines and application procedures
- soliciting and assessing grant proposals
- awarding grants
- monitoring funded projects
- evaluating the impact of grants on the community
- communicating results.

Many different approaches and tools are used in grantmaking, and every YAC will determine what is most suitable to their own council, community foundation and local area. But the best grantmakers will regularly evaluate their own activities, and make a commitment to continuous learning and improvement. (See the evaluation resource “YIP Matters” on the YIPCanada website)

A good place to start is by considering the **Roles and Principles for Community Foundations** and thinking about how they apply to grantmaking, and how they can be integrated with the other roles of fund development and community leadership.





Excerpted from CFC's *Grantmaking Tool Kit for Canadian Community Foundations* 1998 revised 2003.

Understanding these 10 basic principles can enrich your grantmaking. Think of these as a philosophical pedestal that community foundations are built upon.

More information can be found in ***Explorations: Principles for Community Foundations, 2nd Edition***, a discussion guide published by Community Foundations of Canada, and ***Discoveries: Bridging Principles and Practice***.





## Getting Ready: Granting Approach

The next step is to take a look at your **approach to granting**. The following section describes different granting approaches including Reactive, Pro-active, and Interactive grants. Each has its merits and it is up to your YAC to decide on the best method to create change in a positive and meaningful way.

### **Reactive, Proactive, Interactive Grants:**

#### **Reactive Grants**

A reactive grant is the most commonly used approach. For a newly formed foundation, it is a good way to initiate grantmaking. Based on a predetermined set of criteria, it involves putting out a call for proposals to the community. Once received, these requests for funds are judged on their own merit and in competition with one another. The most obvious advantage is that foundations receive direct feedback from community organizations about current community needs.

#### **Proactive Grants**

A proactive grant is created when a foundation identifies a specific area of interest or concern and takes a leadership role in identifying projects to be funded. This kind of grantmaking may be easier for large organizations, but foundations of any size can practice this approach. But why would a foundation get involved in proactive grantmaking? Perhaps they aren't receiving the quality of proposals they want. Or they might be looking for innovative responses to community needs and decide to act as the catalyst in getting a number of organizations or individuals together.

#### **Interactive Grants**

Interactive grants occur when a foundation works with a grant applicant to help strengthen a proposal. For example, the foundation might bring in other community resources; provide budget advice; identify gifts-in-kind; or invite other community organizations to explore a collaborative approach to a project.

*Excerpted from CFC's Grantmaking Tool Kit for Canadian Community Foundations - 2003.*





Pro-active and interactive grantmaking will lead to broad and effective granting experiences.

Community foundations often bring local knowledge, experience and a network of community relationships to their grantmaking. Using their broad view of community needs and opportunities, community foundations make grants to a wide range of registered charities, primarily in their defined geographic area, to address short-term and long-term priorities across many fields. They are able to see “the big picture” and build on community strengths.

Other important things to consider in deciding on your grantmaking approach-should we:

- fund many small grants or a few larger grants? (i.e. should we "scatter" or "target" funding?)
- be a lead funder or wait for other partners to commit?
- act as a resource, linking groups to other funding sources?
- mobilize other funders to pool resources to address a priority issue?
- fund technical assistance?
- encourage excellence through awards and other recognition activities?





Here's an example of proactive grantmaking and leadership from the London Community Foundation YAC:

Like many YACs, **London Community Foundation's Youth in Philanthropy program** has evolved over time since it first started over five years ago, and has used its experience to move to more focused strategies in its grantmaking. It has recently embarked on a neighbourhood grants program that is making small, but effective grants, as well as offering new opportunities for community leadership. Their report:

“Since London Community Foundation was already focusing on granting to neighbourhoods in need, we decided to concentrate on youth in these neighbourhoods. We sent out our application form to youth workers, youth councils, and youth clubs in seven different neighbourhoods identified by LCF.

Our YIP grants are small - typically \$1,000 or less - so we dramatically simplified our application form, asking three questions only and for a budget. We wanted to get as many applications as possible and hopefully have the forms filled out by the youth themselves. We emphasized that we give preference to programs where youth help youth, youth help their community or where the community helps youth. We also arranged a few site visits to these neighbourhoods before the grant deadline to explain what we were all about and to encourage applications.

After the first granting cycle we have funded the following:

**South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre**, \$320, Westminster Youth Council (an amazing group of 10 to 12 year olds) - For art supplies to run activity days for their school on teacher professional development days. We were considering a further \$700 grant to buy a popcorn maker when LCF's executive director found a private donor from the Foundation who heard about the group and gave them a major grant.

**London Urban Services Organization Inc/East London Community Services**, \$1265 – for a program called Youth Speak created by five youth, collecting and publishing poems about the experience of immigration, multiculturalism and racism.

**Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre**, \$1,000 - To run a community kitchen for teenage single moms. This is a program we are very interested in and will probably fund a second program.

We are just starting our second and last cycle of the year. We have several site visits planned to encourage new applications and to follow up on our old ones. One neighbourhood has invited us back for a second visit even though we haven't funded them yet. It's an immigrant community, public housing - the young Muslim women have organized a program but need role models to encourage the young men to come out. They want to hold a meeting with YIP male members to talk to their young men about community service and volunteerism in Canada - a great example of how Youth in Philanthropy is about more than money!”





To get yourself ready for pro-active granting, an inventory of the assets your community has to offer is a great place to start.

## Mapping the Assets in Your Community

### 1. What do we mean by 'assets'?

Think about the strengths of your community: its positive attributes, resources, talents, skills. This could be organizations, individuals, activities, facilities, or even things like its cultural make-up, climate, or relationships.

### 2. What is asset-based granting?

Asset-based granting is looking to see what is available in the community already and what people use or are excited about. It appreciates what is already there, rather than thinking of everything as a problem. Knowing a community's assets, granting can be used to build on and/or improve these resources.

### 3. Why do an 'asset assessment' instead of (or in addition to) a needs assessment?

It's about opening up opportunities and possibilities, and helping people to see themselves as part of solutions, not problems. As a 'mapper', you have the opportunity to interact with others in your community – which can improve your communication skills, build confidence and develop leadership skills. You can create a survey to identify the exciting things happening for youth in your community, such as:

- places to go
- things to do
- opportunities, such as leadership training or advisory councils, and
- services, information and other resources for youth in the community

### 4. Getting started

Identify a convening organization, or take the lead yourself (one of the CF's roles is as a community convener).

Or... this may be an opportunity to partner with other community youth organizations.

- Advisory Group: you may want to recruit an advisory group of youth and adults to provide input to your survey questions and analysis
- Collect information: start with your own group, then identify other youth organizations to meet with. Survey by telephone or in person, focus groups, tap into existing sources of current, relevant information.
- Analysis: Once you have your information, it will need to be analyzed and then made accessible to the public
- Report info to the CF Board and other committees





### 5. When you know what youth have...

- You know what organizations are available to support or work with
- You can also see where there are gaps or duplications
- You can better identify priorities
- You can encourage partnerships
- You will better understand the context you are operating in
- It leads to informed grantmaking
- It can help you improve your community

#### **Two Great Ideas!**

The **Campbellford/Seymour Community Foundation YAC** surveyed people at their local community Boat Races event. While the questions were based on 'needs' versus 'assets', this was a great venue to survey a cross-section of the community and to raise awareness of their Community Foundation.

At an Ontario Youth Workshop, representatives from **The Community Foundation of Greater Kingston YAC** committed to doing a "Walk-About" in their community as a way to determine the community's youth assets.

When you do a walk about, walk around your community like it's your very first time there. Pay close attention and make note of things like the tennis courts or other sports venues you always walk by, but don't really notice. Take a different route, which may take you by a community centre. Note the opportunities for youth to volunteer there. Is there an empty store-front with potential for a safe place for youth to gather and jam? Just keep your eyes and your minds open! Now take this information back to the YAC and your community foundation to raise everyone's awareness of all the great stuff going on in your community and to help decide on the types of projects to which your YAC would like to make grants.

*Adapted from CFC Manual: Engaging Youth in Philanthropy*

Once your asset-mapping has been completed and you have a better idea of where you want to allocate your funds to, the next step is to develop a specific protocol for *how* you allocate your funds.

### **Grantmaking Process: Guidelines, Applications, Assessments and Monitoring**

Important questions to consider include:

- Who will grants be available to?
- Will decisions be made independent from your parent Community Foundation? Normally, grant decisions must receive final approval from the Foundation's board of directors.





- How often will you offer grants?
- How long will your granting cycle be?
- What will your application process be like? One step or two?
- What does your timeline look like? How promptly will you respond to the applications? When will the project need to be completed by? When are the deadlines for the grant? (It is often helpful to create a timeline of events and for your YAC and Community Foundation and as much as possible to coordinate your grantmaking activities with the community foundation's.)
- How will you ensure accountability for the grants awarded and check on their progress? Will you require reports, evaluations, site visits, financial reports, receipts?
- Will you regulate how the money is to be spent (requiring receipts, detailed budget, etc) or will you simply grant the money and allow flexibility with its spending?
- How will you resolve matters in which there are potential conflicts of interest between the project in question and members of the YAC?

Expanding on the above points, the following information might be useful to take into consideration.

### **Granting Cycles:**

**Number of grant cycles per year** — Should you have one cycle a year? two? three? Or continuous intake? This decision will be influenced by various factors, including the amount available for distribution, demand for funding, administrative capacity, and consideration for applicants. There are pros and cons to each choice:

#### **One cycle?**

- + easiest to administer if granting activity is minimal
- limits applicants by requiring such advance planning

#### **Two cycles?**

- + breathing room between cycles; adequate time for both grant review and committee planning; evenness in competition
- requires a degree of planning and organization that often rules out less sophisticated applicants





### **Three cycles?**

- + suits foundations with moderate to strong funding activity; offers applicants the opportunity to apply during the most active times of the year; gives foundation time for planning/other activities in summer
- applicants that miss the spring cycle may have to wait up to six months for the next opportunity to apply
- can be difficult to budget appropriate amounts for each cycle, as demand may vary at different times of the year

### **Continuous intake?**

- + optimal for applicants
- difficult for foundation to manage; meetings scheduled ad hoc.

### **One-Step or Two-Step Applications**

Many foundations use a two-stage process, in which the applicant first submits a letter of inquiry (letter of interest or intent). If the project seems suitable, the foundation then invites an application, or requests further information.

By screening projects through the preliminary letter of enquiry, foundations are able to spend more time on the projects that have the best chance of receiving funding. Applicants with little chance of success are also spared the effort of completing a more rigorous application.

**Letter of Inquiry:** The letter of enquiry provides a vehicle for the applicant to indicate interest in applying, and for the foundation to screen for basic eligibility. It should be a short outline of the project only, with enough information for the foundation to decide whether to invite an application or not.

Generally, a letter of enquiry answers the following questions:

1. Who are you (the applicant organization)?
2. What is your charitable registration number?
3. What do you propose to do? What is your good idea that needs funding?
4. How much money are you requesting from the foundation?
5. When will the project take place?





*Here is a sample of the Granting Policy adopted by the **Community Foundation of Greater Kingston YAC.***

**Guidelines:**

1. The Youth Advisory Committee shall consider all applications on merit and in light of funds available. The Board may accept, refuse, defer or amend the Committee's recommendations.
2. The Youth Advisory Committee shall establish a procedure to ensure that the program is carried out as proposed in the application.
3. The Youth Advisory Committee shall seek proposals from the applicant as to how the Foundation will be recognized in its advertising, program or media as a funding agent and these should be included in the conditions of the grant.
4. The Youth Advisory Committee shall obtain, as a condition of the grant, the applicant's agreement to provide a written report, including full financial disclosure, within 90 days of the conclusion of the program, and for the repayment of any unused portion of the grant.
5. The Youth Advisory Committee upon receipt of the above notes shall evaluate the report and/or program.

**Conflict of Interest:**

Members of the Youth Advisory Committee shall disclose as soon as possible for any potential for a conflict of interest including:

- a. membership in any organization applying for the grant
- b. the presence of any related person within an application organization, such as a family member. Any other circumstance that might appear to constitute a Conflict of Interest.

In such cases, the member shall not participate in any voting and shall only take part and be present during consideration of the application if requested by the Chair.





**Another great example is the granting guidelines of Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council:**

**What we fund:**

- projects that are youth involved
- program related projects (i.e. time-limited activity or series of activities designed to meet certain goals)
- capital projects (i.e. construction, renovation or equipment purchases)

**Eligibility:**

- Applicants must have charitable status.
- Grants are not made to individuals or businesses.

**Guiding Principles:**

- Where appropriate, those affected by the initiative should be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of the project.
- The organization should demonstrate a commitment to the project through a contribution of human and/or financial resources.
- Significant and appropriate support from other sources (including the community) should be evident
- There should be evidence of collaboration with the community and/or other agencies in the field
- The organization should demonstrate inclusiveness and respect for diversity, and
- Projects that will be ongoing after the grant's end should provide realistic plans for longer-term funding

**Ineligible Requests:**

- 100% of a project's costs
- an organization's operational or core expenses
- retroactive funding, or any project expenses to be incurred prior to the Foundation's decision date
- office equipment and furniture (eg. computers)
- activities of religious organizations that serve primarily their membership and/or their direct religious purposes, unless the community at large will benefit significantly
- sabbatical leaves, student exchanges
- medical equipment
- amateur sports teams

**After grant has been awarded:**

Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council expects the following from grant recipients:

- approval prior to any alterations in plans
- proper fiscal management
- well-planned project evaluation
- interim and/or final reports (financial and descriptive), and
- public recognition of the support received from Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council

The Council appreciates the opportunity to make site visits, if time and location permits.





The most effective grantmaking is that which best fits the community and addresses the strengths and needs of all those involved. Other considerations that need to think about:

**1. “Are we raising barriers?”**

Barriers against...

- Literacy/Levels of education? Can we have an interview process instead of (or as well as) a written application?
- Socio-economic situations? Are we accessible by public transit?
- Ethnicity? Consider ASKING different ethnic and cultural groups in our community to apply, instead of expecting groups to come to us.
- Culture/Language? Does our application use jargon or acronyms? Can we make it clearer to understand? Can it be translated into other languages?
- Belief and value systems?
- Does our YAC represent the diversity in our community?
- Is our grant application user-friendly?
- Is it age-appropriate? Why not TEST the application?

*Note: We can ask these same questions when it comes to recruitment: Are we inclusive or exclusive?*

**2. Connecting the dots for effective grantmaking**

Listed below are some questions to consider in making the most effective grants possible.

a) Are we diverse?

Whose voices are being considered– and which ones are missing? Can we reach out to involve the ‘target audiences’ of our grants? Do we ask for their opinions with a sense of dignity and respect? Can we get their ‘buy-in’?

b) How do we focus our grants? When did we last conduct a needs assessment?

When did we last identify (with asset-mapping) the strengths already existing in our community? Have any of our grants been used to strengthen the already-existing assets? Do the grant applicants know what our focus areas are? Do we have clear, workable definitions of what our focus areas really mean? Could we use other youth (in focus groups) to help define those issues?

c) What do we really know about the focus areas?

What programs/projects are currently addressing them? How could we take advantage of opinions from experts and/or people affected by those issues?





- d) How can we educate grant-seekers?
- What do they need to know about us? Our focus areas?
  - What amount of money would we likely grant?
  - Can we help them obtain advice/opinions of youth or target audiences?
- e) Does our grant application ask the right questions?
- What do we really need to know about the grant applicant and his or her proposal? Can we use a one-page grant summary as the first step?
- f) What does our grantmaking process look like?
- Does our community foundation have grantmaking guidelines and application forms we can use and/or adapt?
  - Do we have cycles? Or are grants reviewed whenever they appear?
  - Do we work with applicants to refine the proposal? Or simply react to their submission?
  - Do we conduct applicant interviews? Or go on site visits?
  - How do we determine who is awarded grants?
  - Do we use a committee structure to review applications? Or is each member expected to review them?
  - How do we evaluate the success of our grants?
  - How do groups know that we make grants?
  - How are the grants awarded?
  - Does the general public know of these awards?

**Focus areas:** Some YACs identify a particular area where they want to focus their efforts for deeper impact, or call attention to an important issue in their community.

For example YACs in Hamilton, Richmond, Squamish and Kamloops have combined their grantmaking and community leadership activities on environmental initiatives, convening student environment forums and offering environmental mini-grants. Hamilton's POET program (Protecting Our Environment Together) has involved hundreds of students over the last few years at city-wide annual forums that result in dozens of great projects that are making a positive difference and getting more youth involved in environmental awareness and action.

*Check out **YIP: Going Green** for all the stories...*





### 3. Consider giving grant writing workshops to youth organizations

Grant writing workshops also serve as an effective form of promotion for the community foundation and your YAC.

It is important to make the workshop interactive; asking participants questions, having discussions about the attendees' previous grant experiences and what they hope to learn from the workshop are good ways to do this.

The following is an example of an agenda that may be used for a **grant writing workshop**:

- a. Welcome and introductions
- b. 'Finding the Fit' – *An overview of granting sources*
- c. Writing an effective grant proposal
- d. Budgets
- e. Break
- f. Group activity – *Writing a sample grant proposal in small groups*
- g. How a funder assesses a grant application
- h. Final questions, other information and resources

#### **A Great Idea!**

YAC members at the **London Community Foundation** are integral to the J. Allyn Taylor Community Service Award decisions.

The youth interview the candidates, make the recommendation and present a \$500 award toward the recipient's education and \$500 to a charity of the recipient's choice. The whole process is youth-driven!





### **Another Great Idea!**

The **Youth Advisory Committee of the Community Foundation of Greater Kingston** has been extremely creative in creating and sustaining three distinct granting initiatives.

#### **The Youth in Arts Fund**

Supported by Corus Entertainment Kingston

Awarded to innovative projects that support youth in the arts organization.

This fund was first established in 1998 and marked the launch of the YAC program. Two local radio stations, Oldies 960 and 96.3 JOE-FM through their parent company Corus Entertainment, donate a flow-through amount of \$6000 each year. Flow-through literally means just that. We receive \$6000 at the Foundation and grant the whole amount back out again.

#### **Youth Endowment Fund**

Supported youth-driven endeavours in the Greater Kingston area. Designed for broad-based impact.

In 2000, the Committee set out in its strategic plan to have raised \$10,000 for a Youth Endowment Fund to broaden our grantee options by 2003. In just a year and a half, YAC secured a matching donor, Gregg & Marla Beth Rosen, who pledged \$1 for every dollar raised for a maximum of \$10,000. By mid-2002, the endowment sat at \$20,000 and the first grant was awarded with the help of Jayna Hefford, who scored the winning goal in Canada's Gold Medal game at the 2003 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Jayna made the first donation to the fund in 2001.

#### **YAC Investors Group Kickstart! Mini-Grants Program**

The innovative and highly successful mini-grants program kicked off in 2003 with 12 grants of no more than \$250 to elementary school projects all over the Greater Kingston area, to teach children about community and philanthropy. Students, with the help of their teachers, design projects they could do to be philanthropists.

## **Developing Your Application Form**

Now we get down to the details of how to develop your first grant application form— the actual document that is going to be sent out to the public.

You may have encountered many applications in your life, whether they have been for scholarships, bursaries or maybe even project grants. As a grant seeker, which applications have been the easiest to complete? What elements make them the clearest? And as a grant evaluator, what elements do you want to include in your grant to ensure that your applicants are best meeting the goals of your Foundation and needs of the community?





The best grants are those that are clearly written and easy to read by the target applicants. Often having a bit of history to familiarize the applicant with your YAC is helpful.

In the same way that you research the companies you approach before asking for endowments, your future applicants would also like to research your YAC to understand where your focus lie. By including an introductory section at the start of your grant application, it can encourage a better match between your YAC and the prospective applicant from the very beginning.

Some common elements of YAC grant guidelines and applications:

- requests information about the target beneficiaries of the project i.e. Projects funded must benefit youth in the community aged 12-18
- Requests a detailed description of the project
- Requests a clear statement of some need or opportunity in the community and how the project will address this
- Requests that project has significant volunteer participation
- States groups (if any) that are excluded from applying for the grant  
Eg. Political parties, businesses, organizations in debt, religious groups, groups that undertake discriminatory activities  
some grants require that the organization is a registered charity
- States what proportion of the project the YAC is willing to fund, i.e. 100% or a portion thereof
- States how much money is available for granting
- Requests a copy of current budget or latest available budget
- Requests how much the group needs (with a detailed budget included)
- Requests an explanation of how the project will be evaluated

**TIP:** Once your grant application form is complete, to assess the effectiveness of it, try filling it out yourself.

Think of a project that could be implemented in your community that meets **ONLY** the criteria outlined on your application. Fill out the application then have someone else read and assess it.

Can you create a project that fulfills all the criteria as listed on your application, but yet is still something you would not want to fund? If so, perhaps your criteria is too vague. It might need a bit more refining.

On the other hand, be sure that your application is not so specific that it may squelch creativity. Somewhere in between you will find a balance of just enough guidelines with just enough wiggle room!





Here is an example of the **Surrey Community Foundation Youth Council's** Grant Application:

*Name of Group*

- Contact name of youth in group
- Contact name of Adult Advisor

*Tell Us About Yourself*

- How many people are in your group?
- How long has the group been around?
- Who started the group?
- Please tell us about any projects which your group has completed

*Describe your project*

- What is the amount you are seeking?
- What are the objectives/goals of the project?
- What are the expected start and completion dates?
- What are the proposed benefits to youth?
- What is the role of youth in the project?

*References*

Please give the name, address, and telephone number of two people outside of your organization who know of your idea and the need it addresses.

Please take note that if we think your project should receive a grant from the Foundation, you may be called back to answer some more questions from our Board.

If we do select your project for a grant, the Foundation will track the progress of your work. At any point, you may be called upon for a report on your progress.

Also, by submitting this application, it is in the understanding that your project may be used for promotional purposes by the Foundation.





Here's another example from the **Calgary Youth Foundation**:

Please answer the following questions:

- What is the name of your group?
- Please give the name of one person in your group that we may contact
- Please provide this person's mailing address, telephone number, and a fax number if possible
- Please give the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two people outside of your organization who know of your idea and the need it addresses (e.g. teachers, parents, etc.)
- Also, please tell us your project title, and the amount of money you are requesting

Please answer the following questions about your project:

- Describe your project in 500 words or less:  
What do you hope to do?  
Who will benefit from the success of your project?  
What need is being filled?  
What will be the length of time of this project?  
Describe the involvement of youth in the operation of the project
- How does this project satisfy the Foundation's vision and goals?
- Why do you think the Foundation should support this project?
- Has your group been involved in similar projects? If so, please explain.
- Are other groups addressing the same needs that this project addresses? Please provide the name of the group(s). Are you working with those groups? (Please explain)
- How much funding is your group providing independently? (Please include a brief budget)

## Assessing Grant Applications

Sometimes assessing grant applications can be the most stressful as well as the most enjoyable part of this whole experience. This is the point at which you get to see how the community has responded to your granting program. As you sift through the grant applications received, there are a number of things to look for:

### Assessing the organization

- What is its mission? Does the foundation support this type of organization?
- What is its track record? Has it previously received funding from the foundation?
- Who is on its board of directors? Is the composition appropriate? How strong is the board/senior management?

#### Remember

☞ It is impossible to be totally objective. But it is possible to be fair.





- Does the organization support diversity through its programs, board/committee composition, work environment, etc.? Does it engage youth in meaningful ways?
- What do the financial statements reveal? Is there a deficit? If so, how large, and is there a deficit reduction plan in place? Is there a surplus? If so, how large, and what is it for? Does the group really need this funding? (Be careful not to make false assumptions. Often a surplus is earmarked for a capital purchase. Or it may constitute an operating reserve — a sign of good management.)
- What is the staff/volunteer ratio? Does it seem to use volunteers effectively?
- How is the organization perceived in the community? Does it have broad support?
- Does the organization have the capacity to take on this project?

### **Assessing the project**

- Is the project consistent with the organization's mission?
- Does the project address priority issues (as identified by our YAC)?
- Will it meet a demonstrated need?
- Are the goals and activities described clearly, and the plan viable?
- How are youth involved? Are the project beneficiaries involved in the planning?
- What will be the benefits to the community? How many people will be served? What will be the long-term impact?
- If it is a pilot project, how is it demonstrating a new approach? What makes it different from similar initiatives?
- Is there a well-designed plan for evaluation? (See YIP Matters!)
- Do the people involved have the necessary qualifications and experience to undertake the project?
- Will there be significant volunteer participation?
- Does the project have the support of other organizations and funders?





- Is the organization collaborating with other community agencies?
- Does the project complement existing services, or will it create competition and unnecessary duplication?
- In capital projects, what is the status of building and development permits? What will the effect be on on-going operating costs? Will maintenance or replacement costs be budgeted for?
- Is the budget realistic? How does the cost compare to other similar projects?
- If we do not fund the full amount requested, will it compromise the project? Are there adjustments the organization could make?
- Will our support provide leverage to bring other funders in? Are we playing a lead funding role?
- Are there other funding sources, or is the organization "putting all its eggs in one basket"? Is any other funding confirmed?
- Should we attach specific conditions to the funding? (e.g. making the award conditional upon the organization receiving the balance of required funding)
- Will this grant provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the foundation or increase partnership with a population that we have wanted to reach?
- Will the project increase community resilience? How does this project build community capacity?

*Adapted from CFC's Grantmaking Manual*

In addition to answering the above questions when viewing the application, **site visits** can be extremely informative and a great way to connect with the project and people on a more personal basis. Try to arrange a small group of you to go, with some questions decided on beforehand that have been discussed with the rest of the YAC. Having your Adult Advisor attend is also handy. Arranging a smaller group of students, perhaps two to three, creates a less threatening atmosphere for the applicant and will likely promote a more participatory site visit.

After the grant applications have been reviewed and site visits made, the time comes for **making decisions**. Many YACs operate on a consensus basis; others make grant decisions by voting. Either way, each application should be discussed thoroughly so that everyone understands the project and can determine how well it fits the grant guidelines and its priority relative to other applications received. The Chair should ensure that everyone has an opportunity





to comment or ask questions about each application, but should also keep the discussion on track so that there is time to adequately deal with each application.

*Please refer to the Working Together section in the Getting Started Module for more information about working by consensus and parliamentary procedure.*

### **Here is how one YAC approaches decision-making**

YAC members who have been on the site visit present their information and impressions of the project and applicants to the rest of the YAC. This is followed by a discussion, and generally a decision is reached by consensus. However, if members cannot reach agreement about whether to support the project, the chair will call a vote with a show of hands. Members may vote for, against or abstain.

### **Balancing the grants budget...**

When there are a lot of applications and the total amount of requests exceeds the funding available, it can be helpful to do an initial sort into three categories: “no”, “maybe”, and “probably”.

This can usually be done by consensus. Applications in the “no” pile would be those that are not eligible, do not fit the funding guidelines, or have other significant problems with the request. The “maybe” pile would consist of the applications that seem to be a good fit, but there are unanswered questions or some concerns about. The “probably” applications would be those that are a clear fit with the guidelines and eligibility requirements, are well-written, and in an area of focus or priority to the YAC. The discussion can then be spent mainly where it will most contribute to making good decisions.

After discussing the applications, if there isn't enough funding available for all the applications the YAC would like to support, it is time to make some tough decisions. Generally, there are two options:

1. prioritizing the applications and approving them in order of priority until the funds run out; and
2. examining the budgets to see if there are ways that less funding than the amounts requested can be given to some or all of the projects.

This can be a complicated process, and you will want to ensure that giving a much smaller amount doesn't jeopardize the whole project. But by looking at each application carefully, it can often become clear where grant amounts can be cut back, while still providing valuable support to the project.





Sometimes, when YACs don't have enough funds available for all of the projects they would like to support, the community foundation's grants committee may be willing to consider the application through another of the foundation's granting areas. Or other potential funding sources can be suggested to the applicants. In any case, all applicants will need to be notified in a timely and courteous way about the YAC's decision on their grant application, and will need to work with the foundation staff or board to prepare approval and decline letters.

Another concept that is important to consider is **conditional granting**. Conditional granting is a helpful tool for grant makers if the grant seems to cause a lot of debate among the Council members, or if the council is generally supportive of the project, but has some concerns about it.

There are many situations when putting conditions on the grant is appropriate; for instance, Vancouver Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council has had applications for projects that are partly underway. In their granting criteria, they cannot fund aspects of projects that have already happened, so they attach a condition to the grant that the money given must be used for aspects of the project that have yet to begin. Many projects that Councils grant have components that are not youth driven; since the Council can decide how much money to grant to a project, the Council may only grant to the aspects of the project that are youth driven.

Another type of conditional granting works on the basis of the applicant getting sufficient funds from other sources to proceed with the project. This allows the Council to provide support to projects and it may also help them obtain funds from other sources.

### After the decision...

**Notification letters** must be sent to all applicants to advise them whether their application was approved or declined. The community foundation will have copies of letters that can be adapted for use by the YAC. It is important to provide reasons for being declined to those whose requests will not be funded. For the approved applications, you will need to provide information about the amount of the grant, any conditions that must be met, and how payment will be made. Sometimes YACs will also ask the grant recipient to send a press release about the grant, or invite them to a grant awards ceremony.

**Grant payment procedures** will vary from one YAC to another. How your YAC disburses funds will usually be determined by the systems your community foundation has in place. To maintain financial control, some prefer to reimburse grantees once receipts for project expenses are submitted. Others may decide to give out the grant in installments. Still others may give out the entire grant and monitor use of the money through letters, e-mails and/or site visits. Procedures





for grant payments should be clearly stated in the application or at the time of granting.

A written **contract or grant agreement** that both parties sign is an effective way to avoid confusion and to have something to fall back on in case things go awry.

Things to include in the contract are:

- conditions of the grant
- amount of money to be granted
- period in which money must be used
- project outline
- intended purpose of the money
- how the money will be distributed to the applicant
- signature of both parties
- agreement to use project and grant for promotional purposes
- acknowledgement of grant by applicant in any promotional material

**Publicizing the grants** can help spread the word about your YAC. YACs benefit from marketing themselves and communicating the effects of their grantmaking to the community. People get to know about the YAC through the grants it makes. Not only do well-publicized grant stories raise the YAC's profile, but they also contribute to successful fund development. They let current donors know the tangible results of their giving, and they inspire potential new donors with real life success stories.

Some ideas:

- have grant recipients prepare media releases about their grant
- your YAC can prepare a media release about all of its grants each granting cycle
- hold a grant presentation event and invite the media
- post grants awarded on the YAC or community foundation website, and ask grantees to post information about the grant on their website
- offer to speak or have displays at events held by grantee organizations
- collect grant stories and keep a log book or archive with reports, photos, and other grant details that will demonstrate the difference your YAC is making in the community. These can be used when talking to donors and other funders, in media interviews, and reporting to community foundation board members or other interested groups.
- Submit your YAC's grant stories to the YIP Canada website





## Grant Monitoring and Evaluation

Good grantmaking is not only about *making* grants. It also involves monitoring progress and learning from individual projects.

**Monitoring** grants is about accountability. It is keeping track of grants to ensure that funds are spent as intended, and that activities are progressing in a satisfactory manner. At the project conclusion, you will want to ensure that a final report is submitted.

Monitoring activities include: visiting the organization, attending funded events, reviewing interim and final reports, receiving verbal or written project updates, having telephone contact with organizational representatives, negotiating modifications to project plans, and attending receptions, ground-breakings, and social events.

**Evaluation** is about learning, for both the grant recipient and the foundation. It helps build capacity and effectiveness by learning from experience. Formative, ongoing program evaluation permits the grantee (and the foundation) to make improvements as a project progresses. Such mid-course corrections enhance opportunities for success, and contribute to greater program effectiveness.

It is helpful to provide grantees with some questions to guide their evaluation activities. **YIP Matters!** provides an on-line questionnaire for grant recipients and a system for collecting data and stories from all of the projects your YAC funds. [http://www.yipcanada.org/resources\\_YIP\\_matters\\_e.cfm](http://www.yipcanada.org/resources_YIP_matters_e.cfm)





### Evaluation Tip

Here is a simple but creative evaluation tool that shows how evaluation can take many forms.

- Send selected grant applicants a disposable camera.
- Ask them to take photographs and to submit them to the YAC.
- Request that they provide the “project story” by writing several sentences with anecdotal and descriptive details for each picture.

The photographs can serve other purposes beyond project evaluation. They can be used in the foundation’s annual report, made into slides for an annual meeting, assembled into a story board for presentation to the board or grants committee, blown up into posters, or simply posted around the office as reminders of the results of the YAC’s grants.

By collecting consistent information from your grantees, you will be in a good position to evaluate your YAC’s overall granting activities. By stepping back to look at your YAC’s overall granting activity on a regular basis, you will be able to answer some important questions: What difference are we making? What are the best ideas? Are we achieving what we set out to do?

**YIP Matters!** also includes tools and resources for YACs to evaluate their own activities, including granting. By incorporating evaluation into your YAC’s activities, you will be in a good position to make a really good thing even better!

***Good luck and good granting!***

Be sure to check out the “Making Grants” and “YIP Resources” section of the **YIP Canada website** for other information and ideas about grantmaking, and more samples of grant guidelines, application forms and reports.

And if you’re new to this and need inspiration, just take a look at the “Grant Stories”!

