

Evaluation



How does a community foundation evaluate the work of its YAC? Ongoing evaluation questions can provide foundation staff with information needed for both immediate and long-term operations of the YAC.

Reasons that justify evaluation include:

- Providing feedback on the need for midcourse corrections in the YAC's activities, such as training — all of which can help members have a more powerful learning experience
- Strengthening collaborative efforts in grantmaking, particularly with other youth-serving agencies
- Justifying staff time and foundation resources committed to the YAC

Many YACs are using a combination of evaluation tools that meet the goals of providing information for modifications of YAC activities as well as measuring the impact of YAC grants and youth involvement. There are three target audiences for the information from these tools: YAC members and advisors, foundation staff and trustees, and donors and the public.

The following questions address key evaluation points for these target audiences:

Are YAC members being exposed to meaningful experiences in philanthropy?

Have the YAC members work with their advisor in developing two brief survey questionnaires. The first survey should be done at the end of the orientation session and provide an opportunity for the YAC members to comment on their expectations for the YAC.

The second survey should be completed at the end of the school year. It should provide the members and the foundation with an opportunity to measure the success of the activities during the school year. These surveys should include information about the YAC advisor to help give him or her feedback on areas for possible change.

Is the training being provided useful?

As mentioned in the chapter on training, there should be an opportunity for YAC members to evaluate every training opportunity. The results of these evaluations can help measure YAC members' understanding of both the foundation and work of the YAC as well as key youth needs in the community.

What has the impact been on graduating YAC members?

Conducting an exit interview with graduating seniors is another helpful evaluation step. These students have hopefully been involved with the YAC for several years and will provide constructive comments on needed changes. Use these interviews to ask if the YAC experience has changed their level of community involvement and how they plan to continue being involved in service learning and philanthropy. This [Alumni Survey](#) can be used alone or in addition to the exit interview.

Are grants effective in addressing the top youth priorities set by the YAC?

The grant agreement letter, discussed in the chapter on grantmaking, should require at least one progress report. It is important to suggest in the letter that this report needs to focus on the objectives accomplished by the grantee in addressing the identified issue. YAC members should discuss the results from progress reports received as an agenda item for meetings in the next year. Several YACs make site visits to grantees and used this as an opportunity to interview youth being served by the grantee, as well as the organization's staff. Other YACs have grantees attend a YAC meeting to report on their accomplishments. Such a session can also be a helpful planning tool for the YAC in determining the grantmaking strategy for continuing to address the priority issues of concern to youth.

Is the youth endowment fund growing?

Many community foundations use the involvement of the youth grantmakers and their grantmaking as part of the marketing effort to attract new donors to the endowed youth fund and other scholarship and field of interest funds affecting youth. Foundation marketing materials will want to encourage new gifts to the youth fund in addition to highlighting the work of the YAC.