

A GUIDE TO YOUTH RECRUITMENT

DOCUMENT AUTHORS & FUNDERS

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LET'S GET TO WORK!

STEP 1: REFLECT ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF YOUR GROUP

Where are you now?

The answer should detail the number of youth; type and frequency of programming; and number of active partners.

**** NOTE:** For definition's sake, a **Partner** is an organization or individual who is actively referring youth participants and/or resources to your youth group and/or is a partner in events. *For example:* A partner would be an agency that invites your group in to do youth story/provider education/advocacy panels for staff on an ongoing basis.**

Where do you want to be?

This answer should also state the number of youth; type and frequency of programming; number of active partners you're looking to get. Make sure to gather input from all of the youth at this point, as it is important that youth drive the process to reach a shared vision!

Once the group has provided answers on the above question, it's time to take a moment to make sure your whole group is on board with the answer to this question. If they're not, now is the time to work together as a group to create this shared goal. Then continue with the remainder of this guide.

Who are you recruiting?

Make a list of who you need to recruit to get to where you want to be, including youth participants and partners. Be specific! *Make sure to include any requirements related to funding in this answer. For example: Recruit youth between 10 – 15 years of age so there is time for each of them to obtain training and growth experiences towards future group leadership.*



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PERFECT YOUR MESSAGE!

STEP 2: REVIEW YOUR GROUP'S PURPOSE STATEMENT

Your group's purpose statement should clearly communicate your group's mission and focus area along with a description of group activities. Make sure that your purpose statement includes input from group members.

If you don't currently have a purpose statement, it's time to create one with the help of the following questions:

What is the purpose of your youth group?

This should be a statement that can be made in 90 seconds or less. Keep it brief and to the point.

What does your group DO? (aka how does your group support the neighborhood, state or world?)

This information needs to be reflected in your purpose statement.

Elevator Speech: Does your group have one?

This is the 90 second statement mentioned above. You should be able to give a 90-second version of your group's purpose and to make sure that all members know this elevator speech and how to give it. If they don't understand, create space and time to work on this as a group. Give opportunities for all youth to practice the elevator speech both with one another and with an audience. Include time to debrief and reflect afterward.

FIND YOUR AUDIENCE!

STEP 3: IDENTIFY YOUR GROUP'S AUDIENCE AND BEST PRACTICES FOR AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Who should hear your purpose statement and how does your group benefit that audience? Create a list of current and potential audiences to include:

***Partners:** Current and potential partners who hear your purpose statement can learn more about your work and how it can greatly increase their own visibility via a partnership with your group. Seek out community partnerships, which can be an effective way to further your work. Become familiar with your local doctor's offices, schools, annual conferences, drop-in centers, libraries, LGBT groups, foster care alumni networks and advocacy organizations. All of these organizations can serve as a great networking opportunity in your community and they will also enhance your group's outreach abilities, as your community partners often become referral partners. Potential partners want to understand how your group is a benefit to services already being provided, a benefit to their organization AND a benefit to each youth.

***Supportive Adults:** These are adult allies who support young adults in utilizing their voice in systems change.

***Youth Members:** You should also be searching among your intended youth populations for those who hear your group's purpose statement and can make a decision about whether or not they want to become or stay involved in your Chapter. Community partners who also serve youth populations can often play a large role in supporting outreach and recruitment efforts by directly or indirectly referring new youth to your group and becoming referral partners.



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Partners

Supportive Adults

Youth Members

Does your message reach the intended audience below? (Yes/No)

Partners: _____

Supportive Adults: _____

Youth Members: _____

Now that your group has collectively identified your current and intended audiences, it is time to evaluate whether or not you group is effectively communicating its message to those audiences and brainstorm ways to improve your outreach strategies.

Do your audiences understand your purpose statement, mission and vision?

When members of your group present your purpose statement or give their “elevator speech” to partners or youth populations who are not currently involved in the group, does your audience receive a clear understanding of your mission and how your group fulfills that mission? Consider this: Have you noticed certain types of audiences (individuals/organizations) responding to different points of your purpose statement more enthusiastically than others? If this is the case, you should create different versions of your elevator speech for each specific audience. Tailor your elevator speech to highlight the ways in which your group’s work benefits the specific audience that you are speaking to.

Elevator Speech For:

Partners: _____

Supportive Adults: _____

Youth Members: _____

Outreach Strategies

Elevator Speech

Intended Audiences (ex: after school programs)		
Potential Partners (ex: public libraries)		
Potential Youth Members (ex: populations identified by grant)		



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THINK LIKE A MARKETER!

STEP 4: REVISE YOUR GROUP'S OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The Rule of Seven: A prospective member needs to see or hear your message at least seven times before they will decide to take action and join your group.

Once you have your elevator speech defined for each audience, it's time to also adapt your purpose statement for each audience. Make sure that it has a light bulb moment that will resonate with the intended audience. NOW is the time to take action and ensure that you have the best communication possible for your target audience the next time you speak with them. Knowing the best way to communicate with your target audience will help to ensure that your intended message is understood and well received.

• **A Potential Youth Member:**

• **A Supportive Adult or Potential Partner:**

Don't assume

What assumptions are you making when you communicate your purpose?

- *Don't assume that your audience knows anything about mental health (or any other system).*
- *Don't assume that your audience believes that youth should be heard and valued.*

Why should I partner with you?

Think about what you can say to show organizations how partnering with you will benefit them? For example: Can your group help infuse the voice of the youth into agency? Can you provide ongoing adult/provider education/engagement?

Obtain Buy-In

As a group, brainstorm about the most effective way to get buy-in for your group from other youth organizations. For example: If multiple groups work together and pool their funding and resources, they can put on a larger event and reach more youth than they would by working on their own.

Collectively review the key steps for partnership in the *Youth M.O.V.E. National Rocking Your Youth MOVEment: A Guide to RockStar Sustainability* to determine if a local organization or a potential community partner is a good fit for partnering with your group.



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GET YOUTH INTERESTED

STEP 5: REVIEW YOUR GROUP'S YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

What are your follow up steps after a youth is referred to your group or expresses interest directly?

What's the process? How do you involve youth from your group in communication and follow-up with new members? Remember that youth in leadership roles during communication and follow-up can promote stronger peer to peer bonds and increased investment (of the new youth) in the group.

Consider the typical first meeting experience for a youth. Does this experience need to be adapted or improved? When a youth is attending their first meeting, program, or activity put on by your group it is important that they feel physically safe, emotionally safe, and are fully orientated to group norms and guidelines.

Safety First

Make sure that you've asked youth members to define what safety means to them in order to create and maintain group guidelines that meet the group's collective safety needs. Keeping youth engaged in this process makes sure that your group guidelines and atmosphere reflect youth culture. Remember, the only way to authentically create a safe environment for youth members during your programming is to ask the youth members for their input!

Why Should I Join?

As a group, discuss what current or potential youth members get out of coming to your group. When you've brainstormed a list of benefits that young adults might get from attending your group's programming, it is also important to ask yourself and your group: Would you continue attending programming to receive the benefits that you've listed? Are these benefits clearly marketed in your outreach to current and potential members as well as referral partners? Are potential members likely to express interest in joining the group because they understand and identify with the benefits of becoming members, or are the benefits not clearly stated?

It's so important to discuss why each youth member chooses to continue participating in your programming and activities, as this will help you see exactly how your group benefits the youth to help in bringing in new members. Take some time to collectively brainstorm reasons why youth keep coming back to your programming. It is very important to engage current youth members in this discussion and to collect their input in answering the above questions. Also, keep in mind that capturing this information can be a useful tool when communicating to partners, funders, community members and youth about why groups like your group are so beneficial for and to youth.



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KEEP YOUTH ADVOCATES COMING BACK: THREE PRONG APPROACH

STEP 6: SUSTAINING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMING

How are Youth Advocates engaged in FUN?

If your current activities aren't fun, how can your group work to make programming and activities more worthwhile?

What methods/strategies will you use to ensure that Youth Advocates continue to enjoy your group programming and activities?

Do Youth Advocates recognize and understand the VALUE of their work with your group?

Does each Youth Advocate feel heard and listened to within the group?

How else can you show appreciation for youth attendance, participation and sharing of voice?

Do you provide opportunities for Youth Advocates to see the local impact youth voice?

How does your group demonstrate to Youth Advocates that their individual and collective Youth Voice is being heard, understood and used in making positive change in their communities?
