



Youth Advisor Model

Organizational Readiness Assessment

Introduction

The Youth Advisor Model provides organizations with the opportunity to hire young people (ages 16-21) onto their teams to gain expertise on youth culture as it relates to youth based programs and efforts. If your organization is interested in maximizing the efficacy of its programming, learning new skills and enhancing your work environment, the Youth Advisor Model is for you.

Use this assessment to gauge the readiness of your organization to adopt the Youth Advisor Model. Each item in this assessment represents an essential piece of the preparation, implementation and sustainability of the Youth Advisor model. Please complete this entire assessment, including the line item questions and group discussion guide.

Gaps in readiness found in this assessment should be addressed in whole prior to hiring Youth Advisors.

Suggestions for what to do with the results of this assessment and next steps are available at the end of this assessment.

Suggested participants:

- Youth Advisor's anticipated Direct Supervisor
- Youth Advisor's anticipated team

Components of the Youth Advisor Model:

- Supportive, youth-friendly supervisor and mentors available for youth advisors
- Inviting and adequate work environment
- Employee incentives such as reimbursements and travel opportunities
- The necessary tools to complete their work such as a workplan and clear goals
- Experiential learning opportunities
- Hiring more than youth advisor at a time

- Executive Team
- Human Resources
- Any others you feel would be helpful

Essential Definitions

- **Positive Youth Development:** a youth system building effort that aims to ensure all youth are safe, healthy, connected and contributing. An evidence-based, public health strategy that incorporates the development of skills, opportunities and authentic relationships into programs, practices and policies, so that young people reach their full potential. This approach depicts youth and young adults as resources to cultivate, as opposed to problems to fix and is dependent upon the use of the following guiding principles: Strengths-based approach, Inclusive of all youth, Engages youth as partners, Collaboration and Sustainability.
- **Supervisor:** staff member(s) to whom the Youth Advisor officially reports. The Supervisor provides Youth Advisor with annual evaluation and performs any duties outlined by company's protocol. This person is designated.
- **Mentor:** staff member(s) with whom the Youth Advisor(s) can organically develop a relationship, discuss and explore new professional skills and opportunities. This individual will have been trained in PYD and the Youth Advisor model while demonstrating an innate interest and capability in creating genuine relationships with young people. This person is not designated.
- **Ally:** staff member(s) able and willing to advocate for Youth Advisor(s) and engage in a genuine, mutually beneficial and organically developed relationship with Youth Advisor (s). This individual will have been trained in PYD and the Youth Advisor model while demonstrating an innate interest and capability in creating genuine relationships with young people. This person is not designated.
- **Integration:** the incorporation of Youth Advisor(s) as "typical" employees while recognizing their unique viewpoints and skills
- **Reciprocity:** the idea that Youth Advisor(s) contribute to your organization's growth just as much as your organization contributes to the Youth Advisor's growth.
- **SYN United:** "a community of youth advisors from across the Denver - Metro area whose goal is to improve work relationships and provide professional growth for young people. SYN-United is central in identifying solutions for building PYD principles in their workplace, and providing a support system for Youth Advisor needs within the network." SYN United contact information is listed at the end of this assessment.

Readiness Assessment

Discussion Questions
<p>Open discussion surrounding the Youth Advisor Model is essential to maximizing the planning and implementation process as well as future success of the model. Additionally, open discussion promotes a supportive and inviting culture necessary to succeed in adding young people to your team. Please discuss each of the following questions as a group. We encourage you to add any other discussion questions you find to be valuable, as well.</p>
<p>Open discussions will look different with each group but all should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A dedicated facilitator• Multiple sessions to accommodate ongoing discourse• Conversation without judgment• Participants who can recognize their own bias or are open to their bias being recognized by others• Participants who understand there is no right or wrong answer
<p>Why are you choosing to adopt this model?</p>
<p>How do you feel this model will be beneficial to your organization's work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why?
<p>Consider changes your organization has made before.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has your organization tried to engage young people before?• Which components of that process would you do the same this time?• What would you do differently?
<p>Perform a SWOT analysis (instructions attached).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What can current staff do to address the gaps found?• What additional support is needed to address these gaps?
<p>How will Youth Advisor(s) time, treasure and talent (hours, ideas and energy) be valued?</p>
<p>What is the plan for Youth Advisor(s) skill development?</p>
<p>How will feedback on the Youth Advisor Model be gathered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will be done with the feedback?
<p>Have you spent time discussing or viewing an established Youth Advisor Model? If no, please seek out this connection (listed at the end of the assessment) If yes, please discuss the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What have you learned?• Which components would work well for your organization?• Which components would not work well for your organization?

Program and Youth Advisor Growth	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Do you have the financial capacity to hire more than one Youth Advisor?			
Do you have the time capacity to hire more than one Youth Advisor?			
Are there opportunities for the Youth Advisor(s) to interact with other youth within your organization and/or connect to SYN United?			
Are organization policies flexible to support varying needs, skills and goals of the Youth Advisor(s)? (Examples: a work schedule that is flexible around a school schedule, discussion of personal and workplace cultural norms, priorities and work/life balance)			
Are opportunities present for Youth Advisor(s) to practice skills? (Examples: presenting in a meeting, conflict resolution, crucial conversation, creating relationships with organizational partners)			
Have methods been developed for assessing and achieving both supervisor and youth advisor desired outcomes?			
Have methods been developed for communicating both organizational and Youth Advisor(s) needs prior to employment?			
Youth Advisor(s) Role, Scope and Influence	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Have clear roles, goals, and expectations been established for the Youth Advisor(s) at your organization?			
Has your organization identified sustainable work for the Youth Advisor(s) to complete and contribute to?			

Has a work plan been created for the Youth Advisor(s)?			
Have desired and needed Youth Advisor(s) skills been identified?			
Has a Youth Advisor(s) job description been written?			
Is the work slated for the Youth Advisor(s) embedded within or connected to larger initiatives and goals at your organization?			
Have connections to Youth Advisor(s) work been drawn to the broader community need?			
Will Youth Advisor(s) time, treasure and talent (hours, ideas and energy) be valued in the same way as adult employees?			
Is the current team prepared to hold the Youth Advisor(s) to the same employment expectations as adult employees?			
Is the current team prepared to accept Youth Advisor(s) work as a part of their team progress?			
Is the current team prepared for Youth Advisor(s) influence decision making on programs, practices and policies of your organization?			
Have plans for measuring how Youth Advisors have influenced your organization been created?			
Are processes developed for Youth Advisor(s) work to have a “warm handoff” to the next Youth Advisor(s) or adult team?			
Are methods created for supporting Youth Advisor(s) in voicing their opinion in public forum? Examples: Youth Advisor Ally present in the room, creating group norms in partnership with the Youth Advisors, not dismissing Youth Advisor contributions, discussion of aforementioned items			
Culture of Integration and Reciprocity	Not at	Partially	Completely

	all		
Has staff been trained in PYD approach including Youth Advisor partnerships?			
Does adult staff understand the role of Youth Advisors on their projects?			
Is adult staff prepared to work with Youth Advisor co-workers in the same capacity as adult coworkers?			
Is staff ready to build authentic relationships with young people?			
Is established staff ready to experience a potential shift in their working environment and methodology upon hiring Youth Advisor(s)?			
Have leaders, including the executive team, actively and outwardly committed to the Youth Advisor model?			
Have policies been created and communicated to staff related to youth-friendly work environments at your organization?			
Have procedures been established for adult mentors to provide training to colleagues to increase their knowledge of how to effectively engage young people?			
Do external partners and/or stakeholders support the Youth Advisor(s) model? If not, is a plan in place?			
Are adult employees willing to advocate for youth-adult partnerships?			
Do staff working in proximity with Youth Advisor(s) have buy in and demonstrate support for Youth Advisor(s) model?			
Processes	Not at all	Partially	Completely

Are strategies developed for recruiting youth?			
Have strategies developed for retaining youth?			
Have multigenerational workplace benefits and challenges been discussed with all staff and are plans in place to help with this transition?			
Have grant deliverables/external requirements been satisfied while maintaining your original motivation for implementing the Youth Advisor model?			
Has a strategic plan for youth engagement been developed?			
Are methods developed to ensure all adult staff are following same plan for support/working with Youth Advisor(s)?			
Have “get to know you” and personality assessments been worked into your training plan?			
Capacity/Resources	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Are all typical benefits available to the Youth Advisor(s) (insurance, travel reimbursement, building access, company car, etc.) per organization guidelines and policies?			
Is there dedicated space for a youth advisor to sit?			
Are all necessary supplies available for the Youth Advisor(s) (phone, computer, etc.)?			
Is Human Resources trained and prepared to discuss all benefits with younger employees?			
Have friendly and supportive supervisors and allies/mentors been identified?			
Do adult supervisors have adequate time to onboard, integrate new Youth Advisor employees?			
Do adult supervisors have adequate skills to onboard, integrate new Youth Advisor employees?			

Does your organization have the capacity to assemble a project team to work on findings from readiness assessment in order to best prepare for program adoption?			
Is the Youth Advisor(s) position incorporated into the annual budget at your organization?			

Next Steps

Congratulations on completing this assessment! Are you exhausted? It's a good indicator of how resource intensive adopting the Youth Advisor Model can be. *Gaps in readiness found in this assessment should be addressed in whole prior to hiring Youth Advisors.* The more you can do to bring each item above to the "completely" column prior to hiring your first YOUTH ADVISOR, the better off your organization will be! If the current staff does not have the capacity to change what is needed (which is very common), hiring a Project Manager is recommended.

During your journey to preparing for taking on the Youth Advisor Model, don't reinvent the wheel. The Youth Advisor Model has been implemented at many organizations; reach out to Audra for support, ideas and discussion:

- Audra Bishop: audra.bishop@state.co.us

PYD Training Resources:

- www.co9to25.org/pyd/positive-youth-development-pyd-trainings/

Progress Evaluation documents are attached to this document. Use these evaluation forms to assess the developments within your organization as a result of adopting the Youth Advisor Model.

Youth Advisor Model Organizational Progress Assessment

Use this assessment to determine the progress made in your organization after implementation of the Youth Advisor Model. Engaging the same staff that participated in the readiness assessment is recommended, adding any new, appropriate staff. This evaluation should be used every 3 months for 1 years post implementation and then every 6 months in the years following.

Discussion Questions			
Open discussion surrounding the Youth Advisor Model is essential to maximizing the sustainability of the model. Please discuss each of the following questions as a group. We encourage you to add any other discussion questions you find to be valuable, as well.			
Why did you initially choose to implement the Youth Advisor Model? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have these motivations been upheld? • Have these motivations changed? 			
Consider this implementation process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What worked well? • What would you do differently in the future? 			
Perform a SWOT analysis (instructions attached). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn? • What is different compared to your initial Readiness Assessment? • What can current staff do to address the gaps found? • What additional support is needed to address these gaps? 			
Program and Youth Advisor Growth	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Are there Youth Advisor(s) interacting with other youth within your organization and/or connected to SYN United?			
Are policies allowing teams to meet the varying needs, skills and goals of the Youth Advisor(s)?			
Have Youth Advisor(s) had the opportunity to develop professional skills?			
Have Youth Advisor(s) had the opportunity to practice professional skills (experiential learning opportunities)?			

Have outcomes desired by the Youth Advisor(s) and supervisors shown progress?			
Youth Advisor(s) Role, Scope and Influence	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Has the Youth Advisor(s) work plan been followed?			
Do the Youth Advisor(s) role, goals and expectations continue to be clear to all?			
Does the work slated for the Youth Advisor(s) continue to be connected to larger initiatives and goals at your organization?			
Are Youth Advisor(s) time, treasure and talent (hours, ideas and energy) be valued in the same way as adult employees?			
Is the current team holding the Youth Advisor(s) to the same expectations as adult employees?			
Is the current team accepting Youth Advisor(s) work as a part of their team progress?			
Is Youth Advisor(s) work influencing decision-making on program, practice and policies of your organization?			
Have Youth Advisor(s) voiced their opinion in public forum?			
Have Youth Advisor(s) felt support in voicing their opinion in public forum?			
Culture of Integration and Reciprocity	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Is adult staff working with youth advisor coworkers in the same capacity as adult coworkers?			
Are adult staff and Youth Advisor(s) building authentic relationships?			
Is active and outward support of the Youth Advisor Model evident at your workplace?			

Have policies related to youth-friendly work environments at your organization been upheld?			
Have additional youth engagement training needs been identified?			
Are the needs of the organization being met?			
Are the needs of the Youth Advisor(s) being met?			
Processes	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Are there any issues in retaining Youth Advisor(s)?			
Are multigenerational workplace challenges present?			
Have you been able to meet external requirements (grant deliverables, etc)?			
Has the strategic plan for youth engagement been upheld?			
Are all adult staff are following same plan for support/working with Youth Advisor(s)?			
Capacity/Resources	Not at all	Partially	Completely
Are all typical benefits being offered to the Youth Advisor(s) (insurance, travel reimbursement, etc.)?			
Have mentor and ally relationships been organically created between Youth Advisor and adult staff?			
Do adult supervisors feel the resources available to them (time, training, etc.) are adequate for wholly supporting Youth Advisor staff?			
Is the annual budget allotted for the Youth Advisor(s) position proving to be sufficient?			
Have the logistical resources (desk space, phones, etc.) provided been sufficient for the Youth Advisor(s) to complete their work?			
Do you anticipate this program will be sustainable?			

Congratulations on completing your progress evaluation! Similar to the readiness assessment process, now you should take the successes you found and celebrate! Next, take the gaps you found and discuss ways to address them. You may consider hiring a project manager to complete this work. Don't worry, you have help outside of your organization in addition to the support you've proven to have within your organization. Reach out to Audra with questions and ideas!

- Audra Bishop: audra.bishop@state.co.us