

ENGAGING YOUNG WOMEN IN THE YWCA - A TOOL KIT



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Engaging Young Women in the YWCA - A Tool Kit is available in both English and French, as well as in colour and black and white, online at <http://www.ywacacanada.ca>.

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All photographs were taken at YWCAs across Canada and internationally.

PREFACE



Encouraging young women to become involved is vital to the YWCA.

At the July 1999 World Council Meeting of the World YWCA in Cairo, Egypt, a resolution was passed regarding the engagement of young women in YWCAs. The World YWCA Council resolved that all World Council committees shall be composed of at least 25% young women aged 30 or younger when appointed. As a result of this, YWCA Canada created a Youth Engagement Task Force (YETF) in 2000 for the purpose of examining the issue and creating some tools for use by Member Associations.

A series of research activities was completed, including a scan of current engagement practices in Member Associations, an internal survey of young women currently employed or volunteering with Member Associations, an external survey of Canadian young women regarding volunteering, and a literature review. Using all resultant findings, this tool kit has been created for use by YWCA Member Associations, the National Office and those interested in engaging young women.

Encouraging young women to become involved is vital to the YWCA in Canada. Young women offer fresh energy and new perspectives and make Member Associations more representative of - and accountable to - their mission.

The YWCA is the largest women's service organisation in Canada and serves women of all ages in a variety of ways including shelters, housing, employment training, childcare, fitness and health programs. The YWCA is unique in its focus on women, but young women are generally not represented in leadership roles within the organisation. This tool kit suggests strategies Member Associations can use to get more young women involved.

Given the complexity and diversity of YWCAs across the country, we have chosen to focus on engaging young women in volunteer roles. However, please note that this tool kit can easily be adapted to help you engage young women in other roles within your association.



HOW TO USE ENGAGING YOUNG WOMEN IN THE YWCA - A TOOL KIT

Engaging Young Women in the YWCA - A Tool Kit is available through the national office and on the YWCA Canada website. The tool kit is intended for use by anyone interested in involving more women aged 18 to 30 in their YWCA, including staff, volunteers and board members.

Each tool will vary in usefulness, depending on how well your Member Association is currently engaging young women and what type of engagement activities you are interested in starting.

Some information and tools will be more relevant than others. Please modify and change the tools so that they apply to your YWCA.

The tools include:

- ▽ Self - Evaluation: Where are You Now?
- ▽ Ladder of Engagement
- ▽ Reasons Why Young Women Become Involved
- ▽ Stages of Engagement
- ▽ Strategies for Engagement
 - ▽ Initial Stage
 - ▽ Interest Stage
 - ▽ Involvement Stage
 - ▽ Commitment Stage
 - ▽ Maintaining Engagement
 - ▽ Marketing & Promotions
- ▽ Measuring Your Success

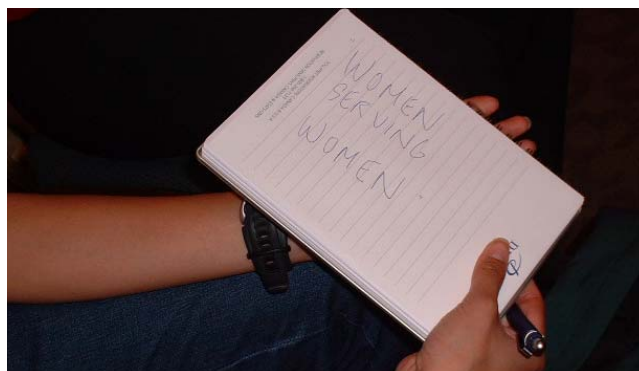


SELF EVALUATION WHERE ARE YOU NOW?



The first step is to look - honestly and critically - at how your YWCA is currently doing at attracting and keeping young women as volunteers.

It makes sense to complete the self-evaluation with women in a variety of roles at your YWCA - staff, board, young women, alumnae and others. Completing the process with input from a variety of people will give you a clearer picture of the current state of your association.



Here are some questions to get you started:

1. Who leads discussions around what age group your YWCA should attract?
2. Are young women kept well informed and up-to-date about your YWCA?
3. Who decides how young women will volunteer in your YWCA?
4. Do young women occupy volunteer leadership positions at any level of your YWCA? At all levels?
5. Are young women encouraged to evaluate and adapt programs and/or policies?
6. How many of your volunteers were involved in the YWCA in other ways (i.e. as a program participant) before volunteering with the YWCA?
7. How were those volunteers/board members previously involved? Advocacy programs? Child Care? Health and Wellness programs? Volunteers? Staff?
8. Of those that were not previously involved, how were the volunteers/board members recruited? Advertisements? Word of mouth? Referrals from other volunteers/board members?
9. Are new young women volunteers and board members matched with mentors?
10. Are young women volunteers routinely asked what their experience is/has been like within the YWCA?
11. Are your young volunteers/board members encouraged to bring forward ideas?
12. Are young women included in the discussions concerning the strategic directions of your YWCA?
13. Who initiates ideas within your YWCA?
14. Do the criteria for choosing new board members make it hard for young women to qualify? For example, do you need a certain number of years' experience in a position or do you need the ability to solicit a certain amount of funds?
15. How do you recruit young women volunteers and board members?
16. How many board members do you currently have who are young women?
17. How many of those board members were involved in the YWCA previous to becoming board members?



LADDER OF ENGAGEMENT

Based on YWCA of Aotearoa / New Zealand
Ladder of Engagement

Review the results of your self-evaluation. Using this information, decide where your YWCA currently fits on the Ladder of Engagement.

If your YWCA is low on the Ladder of Engagement, it is clear that some work will need to be done to increase the level of engagement of young women in your Member Association.

The next step is to consider - as honestly as possible - whether the engagement of young women is a priority for your YWCA and how much your YWCA is willing to adapt and change to attract more young women in volunteer roles. Each Member Association should be asking themselves: "Why do we want to engage young women as volunteers?" and "What are we willing to change (i.e. prerequisites/requirements, procedures, programs, etc?) to engage young women?"

If engagement of young women is a priority for your Member Association, this tool kit, which includes a variety of strategies, can be used to raise the level of engagement.





LEVEL	POSITIONING OF YOUNG WOMEN	EXAMPLES
8	Young women initiated, shared decisions with others	Young women have the ideas, set up the project, and invite others to join them in making decisions.
7	Young women initiated and directed	Young women have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Others are available but do not take charge.
6	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young women	Others have the initial idea but young women are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Their views are not only considered but they are also involved in making decisions.
5	Consulted and informed	The project is designed and run by others, but young women are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.
4	Assigned but informed	Others decide on the project but young women volunteer for it. Young women understand the project and know who decided they should be involved and why. Others respect their views.
3	Tokenism	Young women are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.
2	Decoration	Young women take part in an event, but they do not really understand the issues.
1	Manipulation	Young women do or say what others suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, OR young women are asked what they think, adults use some of the ideas but do not tell them what influence they have on the final decision.



REASONS WHY YOUNG WOMEN BECOME INVOLVED

Before beginning to create your strategy, it is helpful to know why young women become involved in the YWCA in Canada.

In 2002-2003, the Youth Engagement Task Force (YETF) worked with Vertex Consultants Inc. to collect information from current female YWCA staff and volunteers, aged 18 to 30, regarding their involvement with the YWCA and their suggestions as to how to attract and retain young women. A statistically representative sample of 118 young women responded from 31 Member Associations across Canada. 87 respondents were staff and 31 were volunteers. Their average age was 23.6 years.

Here are some of the results:

- ▽ Most became involved with the YWCA because it fit with their beliefs and values.
- ▽ Many believe the YWCA needs to raise public awareness and perceptions of its programs and services.
- ▽ About a third learned about the YWCA from family and friends.
- ▽ About 25% became involved through participating in programs.
- ▽ Most volunteers are either not voting members, or don't know whether they are voting members.

The respondents made many suggestions about ways to recruit more young women, which are included in this tool kit.



STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT



The following are the stages of engagement that young women volunteering at your Member Association will progress through. It is apparent that the higher the stage of engagement a young woman is at, the more committed she will be to the association. It is, therefore, advisable to use the strategies included in this kit to advance the level of engagement to ensure a higher level of commitment. This will also reduce the cost and effort required to continually recruit new volunteers.



Initial

This is the beginning stage of engagement. During this stage, the young woman has little knowledge of the YWCA and its programs, services and opportunities. She is being introduced to the YWCA for the first time.

Interest

At this stage, the young woman has limited knowledge and exposure to the YWCA, but is interested enough to learn more, or is receptive to more information. It is a stage where the young woman and the YWCA learn about each other, and the young woman begins to look at how the YWCA relates to her life.

Involvement

At this stage, the young woman has decided to become involved to some degree and see how the YWCA feels and fits her life.

Commitment

At this stage, the young woman decides to remain involved with the YWCA and grow with the movement, because she feels the YWCA is important, and fits with her values, needs and/or goals.

Just over 1 in 4 Canadian women (aged 18 - 34) volunteer with 1 or more charitable organisation(s). Most of these young women volunteer for an average of 1 - 3 hours per week.

Survey of Young Canadian Women Key Findings and Implications Prepared by Vertex Consultants Inc. February 2004.



INITIAL STAGE

▽ When young women first become involved, make them aware of what the YWCA is, why the YWCA exists, and how the YWCA is connected to young women, locally, nationally and internationally.

▽ Connect young women through other women already engaged with the YWCA such as staff, program participants, and volunteers.

▽ Encourage young women already involved in the YWCA to reach out to young women starting out in the initial stage.

▽ Create events and functions designed to engage young women. Focus on themes or topics relevant and of interest to young women. Show a connection between the YWCA and their lives.

Naturally, current volunteers are more likely to volunteer than those who don't. 41% of young women interviewed said that they were likely to volunteer for a charitable women's organisation. This means that there is a significant potential for the YWCA to attract young Canadian women, ages 18 - 34, as volunteers.

Survey of Young Canadian Women Key Findings and Implications Prepared by Vertex Consultants Inc. February 2004.

YWCA TORONTO | **YWCA TURNING POINT PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN** | **United Way** | **Girl JAM**
YWCA **JAM**
WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Special appearances by
 Michie Mee and Kayte Burgess

LANGFIELD

INTEREST STAGE



- ▽ Focus on the key benefits of being involved with the YWCA, including being with a YWCA that is "women-focused", and helping to make a difference in women's lives.
- ▽ Promote with enthusiasm! Recruit using volunteers and staff who are advocates of the YWCA and who can share personal stories about why they are committed to the YWCA.
- ▽ Make the message exciting and interesting. Have comprehensive answers for questions.
- ▽ Offer incentives and recognition. Some young women are motivated by incentives attached to the work they do as volunteers.
- ▽ Everyone wants to be recognised for their efforts. It validates their work, and shows appreciation. Recognition can also be noted on resumes and in portfolios.
- ▽ Keep an open mind. If a young woman is interested in getting involved and has specific interests, try to find an opportunity for her to explore those interests as a volunteer in a leadership capacity within the YWCA.
- ▽ Follow up. Stay in touch with the young women who show interest during active recruitment, at a YWCA function or event, or through other women involved in the YWCA. Dedicate resources such as staff and/or volunteer time to this effort.
- ▽ Ask again, and again, and again. Be flexible to the needs of young women. Value young women and be patient with them. This will help them choose the YWCA when the time is right for them.

The key motivators that make young women want to volunteer are: "issues they care about" and "helping people." Young women are personally motivated and want to "help others and make a difference in their lives".

Survey of Young Canadian Women Key Findings and Implications Prepared by Vertex Consultants Inc. February 2004.



INVOLVEMENT STAGE

▽ Create a specific role or function for young women within the YWCA. Young women want to have direct impact and responsibility. They want the ability to take action and make decisions. Young women need to understand why they are involved. It is not enough to volunteer to sit on a Board of Directors: they want to know how they are going to contribute and have impact as individuals.

▽ Designate a timeframe for completion of any role or function. This helps volunteers determine how to balance and manage the responsibility and to plan some degree of progress or completion with the time available. It also makes volunteers more comfortable if they are not committing themselves to an indefinite period of work.

▽ Give young women authority with responsibility. Young women want more than to be heard. They want to act on their ideas, and they want the authority to act. Young women need to challenge

their own fears and insecurities. Empowering young women by giving them authority with responsibility challenges them to grow stronger and more secure.

▽ Create an environment of openness and support. Allow young women to bring forward new ideas, approaches and concepts. Take their suggestions and insights seriously. Allow for discussion and action. Allow young women to seek their own resources, make mistakes if necessary, and take full ownership of their role.

▽ Offer mentorships, but don't force them. Create an environment in which young women can access as much or as little support as they need.

▽ Keep time commitment to 1-3 hours per week. Time is at a premium for young women: too great a commitment, or unreasonable expectations, may deter them from becoming involved.

The key reasons for not wanting to volunteer are time related. Therefore, a message designed to attract young women should also address their time limitations. The likelihood that they will volunteer will be increased if women understand that 1-2 hours per week is sufficient to make a difference.

Survey of Young Canadian Women Key Findings and Implications Prepared by Vertex Consultants Inc. February 2004.

COMMITMENT STAGE



▽ Continue empowerment. Stay true to the values, environment and openness that created the commitment from young women to the YWCA in the first place.

▽ Continue recruitment. Young women who have reached this stage are the best advocates to recruit other young women.

▽ Don't overwork your volunteers! Stay connected to the needs and available time of young women. Don't overload them or depend too heavily on them. They need flexibility to be as involved as much as they want and can comfortably manage. Don't let young women consistently take on too much work and/or responsibility, or they will burn out.

▽ Involve but don't depend on the young women at this level to increase the involvement of other young women on their own. Engaging young women is a continuous process, and must be the responsibility of all.

The most popular reasons Canadian young women gave for wanting to volunteer were "helping others" and "being associated with a women's cause". This leads us to believe that "helping women and children and making a difference in their lives" will be a strong and motivating message to recruit young women to volunteer.

Survey of Young Canadian Women Key Findings and Implications Prepared by Vertex Consultants Inc. February 2004.



MAINTAINING ENGAGEMENT

It requires less effort, time and resources to retain the young women currently engaged in your YWCA than it does to continually recruit and train new volunteers. The following are some strategies to encourage long term maintenance of the engagement of young women as volunteers.

▽ Change constitutions and by-laws to require that there be young women on your boards of directors or governing committees.

▽ Create formal policies and philosophies for engaging young women, involving them in a meaningful way. Work with the young women in your YWCA to come up with and implement these policies.

▽ When developing programs and strategic directions, focus on issues important to the young women in your community. Find out what concerns young women by asking them.

▽ Create an inviting environment. In buildings and offices, the environment and design should be open, fresh and inviting. Young women will want to be associated with a place that is creative and bright. Offering a reason to return to your office or building, such as a resource library, workshops or events will encourage repeat visits.

▽ Before beginning to encourage the involvement of young women, ensure your YWCA can offer significant volunteer opportunities. Young women must be given the chance to be involved in substantial activities such as workshops, research, program development, speaking engagements and voluntary committees. Young women do not want to be seen solely as advisors to a YWCA - they want to DO something.

▽ By offering young women opportunities to participate at the local level of a YWCA, you make national and international involvement more appealing, and young women become interested in committing more of their time to the greater cause or the YWCA on a larger scale.

▽ Promote the tangible benefits. Offer opportunities for skill development, certification and networking. Link level of volunteer involvement to incentives, such as discounted memberships at YWCA fitness facilities, t-shirts or other freebies, local or national recognition events (i.e. Young Women of Distinction Award) and others that you may come up with.

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS



Young women are bombarded with dozens of messages throughout the day. They have become experts at filtering out unwanted information, as well as absorbing a great deal of useful information, from the choices presented to them. Choosing the right medium for marketing and promotion of volunteer opportunities and involvement in the YWCA is important.

The following are some ways to promote and market opportunities within your Member Association.

Television

▽ Television is effective, though studies show that the Internet has reduced most young women's television viewing.

▽ The most effective television messages are ones that use non-traditional, non-linear methods, i.e. humour, a storyline, surprises.

▽ Stations such as MuchMusic have a virtual lock on the market that includes most young women.



Internet

▽ Chat groups provide young women with unprecedented freedom of expression and access to information. As with other media, it is easy to present information but not always easy to bring young women to it.

▽ Although most YWCAs cannot afford to spend millions on the internet in the hope of reaching young women, YWCAs also cannot afford to ignore the web. In fact, the most successful campaigns are those that are a combination of online and offline media.

Radio

▽ While some urban stations specialize in attracting young women, many smaller centres do not have this range of choice.

▽ A new alternative is "Web Radio". According to an online survey by Young Womenography, a marketing-consultancy, "42% of Canadians aged 16 to 24 had tapped into an online radio channel" in one month. YWCAs should consider web radio as a vehicle for promotions. It has the distinction of offering a call-to-action, via a click through to coupons, information, or the ability to register to participate (or volunteer) online.



MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

Print Media

- ▽ Canada has a limited range of advertising options in young women-targeted print media.
- ▽ Magazines are still a popular choice among teens and young adults. For the 18-24 age group, student publications such as Campus.ca, Agent and Student Body, as well as local university newspapers or independent publications are positive vehicles for reaching university populations.
- ▽ Creating Zine Clubs for young women may be one way to reach and empower young women.

Zine Clubs

Though we may think of 'Zines' as a recent phenomenon the fact is that these non-commercial, non-professional small run publications were first published in the 1920s as 'Fanzines'. They are creative outlets for people with a specific interest who take advantage of the accessible inexpensive publishing technologies of the day - in the 1920s it was the mimeograph, today it is the web.

Stephen Perkins. 'Works in Progress'. Plagiarist Press, 1992.

Non-traditional Media

- ▽ Non-traditional media, though often unexplored, have a high potential for raising awareness among young women (i.e. Flyers, bus/subway ads, product samplings, unusual giveaways, pager advertising).
- ▽ Teens involved in a YWCA of Vancouver focus group cited washroom flyers and bus/subway ads as ideal places because "you have to wait so you might as well read stuff."
- ▽ Choose non-traditional venues such as movie theatres or night clubs.
- ▽ Form partnerships with corporations and media outlets for funding, promotional and philosophical support. These partnerships help with resources for the program but also give added appeal to young women due to endorsements by businesses and media entities perceived as being young women-friendly. In addition, establish programming partnerships with organisations, agencies and educational institutions where young women work, seek services or study.
- ▽ Use young women to speak to young women. Use current volunteers, staff and directors and local celebrities. Young women are more likely to listen to, and respond to, other young women.
- ▽ Offer mentorship programs, internships and peer education to help young women discover your YWCA.



VOLUNTEER @ YWCA TORONTO



Each year, YWCA Toronto serves nearly 50,000 people in the Toronto community and 277 volunteers give 16,372 hours of their time to fulfill our mission.



You can volunteer at YWCA Toronto in our programs and services, on our board of directors or events.



Contact the YWCA Volunteer Co-ordinator 416.961.8100



* This flyer is a marketing sample created for Engaging Young Women in the YWCA - A Tool Kit. Photo: Helen Papas

YWCA Toronto is an association of diverse and caring women dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls through dynamic leadership, advocacy and a range of unique and essential services that promote personal growth and economic independence.



MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Evaluation is an important way to identify whether you have achieved your goals and reached the desired outcomes. You should use evaluation when you want to know whether the strategies you have developed for engaging young women are working, when you want to learn from what is not working and to ensure that the time, effort and resources you have invested in the engagement of young women are worth it.

An evaluation tool can be developed at any time, although the best time is at the beginning of the planning process. As you identify goals or desired outcomes, you can also develop ways to measure the accomplishment of those goals or outcomes.

The following is an example of an evaluation tool that can be used and adapted by your YWCA. This sheet is a simple activity to assist you in charting your progress in engaging young women. Complete this sheet for each activity or initiative. Keeping these sheets as a reference point will help you see how you are progressing along the Ladder of Engagement presented on page 6.

Self-Evaluation Tool

Activity Description:

Goal(s): (make these specific and measurable. For example, your goal is not to get young women on your Board of Directors. Your goal is to get 25% of your Board as young women, or to get 3 young women on your Board of Directors.)

Timeframe for Activity:

Results:

What worked well:

What did not work well:

Suggestions for future:

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