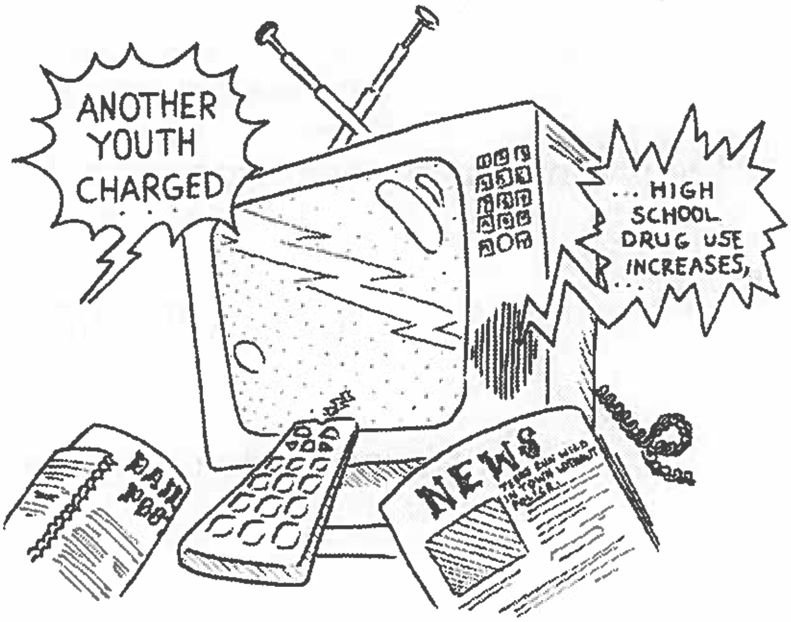


Media

"I think that people our age are portrayed by the media as violent, lazy and uneducated. I've held down two jobs, I'm going to high school full time, and I take classes on the Internet as well. I would like to see, for once, something put forward to the public to let them know that we're not lazy people."

— Speak Out, *Media Awareness Network online discussion group for youth.*

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS:

- What Is News?
- Getting The Media Interested In You
- Planning Your Communications Strategy
- Interview Tips
- Knowing Your Rights
- Getting Your Stories Printed

WHAT'S ON THE DISK?

- Communications Strategy Worksheet
- News/Press Release Template

Ever notice how the mainstream media focuses on negative coverage of youth? It seems as if every day, we see the same images and read the same headlines:

"Teens run wild in town without police"

Ottawa Citizen, August 19, 1995

"Youth killed 82 year old to prove 'toughness'."

Ottawa Citizen, June 19, 1997

"Violent crime by females on the increase."

Vancouver Sun, July 23, 1998

We see reporting like this every day – on TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and on the Internet. Ask yourself; do these types of stereotypes make you frustrated?

While many young people are active, contributing members of their communities, that's not how we are reflected in the media. Our images of youth include many misconceptions and stereotypes, such as viewing young people either as powerless victims and outsiders or as gang members and criminals.

Journalists fall into using stereotypes when they want to quickly establish an identity for a person in their story. Because stereotypes are fixed images, people feel they know someone's character and can make an immediate judgment. For example, it is often a misconception that any young person who lives in 'the projects', and collects welfare, will inevitably become a hardened criminal. This is a stereotype.

Stereotypes can creep into the news as a side effect of the pressure of tight deadlines. Reporters for daily newspapers or news shows often have to research, write and present a story in one working day. Because of this crazy schedule, the journalist may only have time to interview two sources instead of six, or to spend only ten minutes with a source instead of an hour. They need a quick, convenient, pre-packaged image, and a stereotype can provide that.

If young people know how to access the media, they begin to raise awareness of negative images of youth. By changing media perceptions, young people can hope to affect the perceptions of society and the perceptions of the decision makers.

What is news?

News must be two things: It has to be NEW (like the name) and it has to MEAN SOMETHING to people. The objective of news is to inform the audience.

A story about the environment, a story about a land mines treaty and a story about the Oscars can all be newsworthy, for different reasons. They represent different types of news stories. News stories can be divided into two types: hard news and soft news.

Hard news is...Politics, war, economics, and crime.

Soft news is...The arts, entertainment and lifestyles.

But these definitions are beginning to blur. When we see a story about the private life of a politician, is it a politics story or entertainment?

The real difference between both styles is that hard news usually takes a FACTUAL approach. This means that the reporter must focus on questions like: What happened? Who was involved? Where and when did it happen?, and Why?

Knowing the difference between hard and soft news can help you to develop a sense of how news is covered. This can be important when you want to influence the media yourself.

The job of the news media is to tell people what's going on in their community – whether its local, national or global.

The Objective of News Media

The job of the news media is to tell people what's going on in their community, whether it's local, national or global. In this sense, the media functions as a PUBLIC SERVICE...this is supposed to mean that they work to serve US. However, the media is also a BUSINESS and like all businesses, they have to keep the money rolling in to keep things going.

The media depends very heavily on their audiences. As the audience, we attract the ADVERTISERS who sponsor the newspaper or the station. The larger the audience, the more advertisers. This also allows the paper or the station to increase what they charge for advertising space or time. Ever notice how many commercials come on during a TV show? The next time you are watching TV, listen to how the volume increases about two notches when the commercial comes on? Coincidence? We think not.

So then, the media tries to cater to us, the audience. And every station and paper competes with each other to provide what they believe their "customers" want: shorter, more exciting stories; flashy, sexy images; violent confrontations. In other words, more soft news stories.

Who does what?

Large news organizations like CBC, CTV, Globe and Mail (oops, we just gave free advertising), have many employees doing specialized jobs. But the KEY CONTACTS you need to know about are REPORTERS and EDITORS.

Reporters

Reporters are responsible for coming up with story ideas, researching and interviewing and presenting the story. Reporters are often assigned to a "beat" – this is a field or a subject on which to report, such as Politics, Entertainment, Health, etc. Some media outlets may have what is called a "Youth Beat". If there isn't one, take a note of who usually covers youth-related issues. It may be the reporter for the city, education or social issues beat.

Reporters are always on the lookout for story ideas and they depend on good, reliable sources. They may well be interested in hearing about some youth issue or project that you are involved with, so DON'T BE SHY ABOUT PHONING THEM.

Editors

Editors oversee reporters and they're responsible for the newspaper or news show over all. It's their job to keep track of what's being covered and how. They assign story ideas to reporters and tell them what angle to take and who should be interviewed. Editors also evaluate what their reporters write.

Most newspapers, magazines and radio/television stations have assignment editors who decide what gets covered and what doesn't. These editors may not be identified in a newspaper or news show, so you may have to do some research to find out who that person is. You can do this by simply picking up the phone and dialing the number of the station or paper and asking for the assignment editors direct line.

The assignment editor is the best person to call or send your news release to, since he or she is the one who orders reporters into stories.

Deadlines

Tight deadlines are a fact of life in journalism, since newspapers and news shows are generally distributed daily. A TV or radio reporter may be handed a story idea (or two) at 9 a.m., which must be ready to be aired by that day's 6 p.m. newscast. So the reporters must interview their sources and write their stories by mid-afternoon, to allow time to review and edit their taped interviews and footage into a story.

This timing is something that you should keep in mind if you plan an event and hope for media coverage. For instance, if you were to hold a rally at 4:30 p.m., there's not much of a chance that it will appear on that evenings 6 o'clock news. (However, it may appear on the late night news show at 11 p.m., or in next mornings newspaper.)

Of course, not all stories are written and produced in the course of a working day. Features –in depth pieces that cover an issue or an event from different angles – can take days and even weeks to research and write.

GETTING THE MEDIA INTERESTED IN YOU:

Assessing Your Media Outlets

GET TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL MEDIA. Read your local newspapers and watch/listen to local news broadcasts. Get to know which stations and newspapers report on the types of issues you want to draw attention to – these outlets will most likely be more willing to listen to you. Some media outlets even have young people on their editorial board or a youth advisory council to address the coverage of young people and youth related issues. If your community media doesn't have such a board or council, contact the news director or editor and suggest it. Get to know the journalists who report on the issues you are interested in.

Building relationships when calling reporters...

Don't be intimidated when calling reporters – remember, they're always on the lookout for ideas. Remember to identify yourself and your organization or network. Give the reporter some background or history of the network and talk about some of your current activities. If you have a potential idea or 'slant' for a story in mind, mention it.

As a young person, you will be able to offer a youth perspective on a current news story. For instance, if a reporter has covered a youth related topic, i.e., changes to the Young Offenders Act, but not actually interviewed any young people, you can provide that missing link...particularly if you are a former offender.

Remember, building a relationship with the media takes time and patience. The initial contact – perhaps a ten minute call – may not result in a story on your project or in care experience on that particular day. But once the reporter knows you and your network, they'll be more likely to approach you in future.

Planning Your Communications Strategy

After you get to know your local media, the next step is to plan your COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. This takes a lot of work and persistence, but will definitely pay off if you do it well. Once you're ready to communicate your message, your strategy will act as your guideline.

The following example gives the essential parts of an effective communications strategy and is based on a hypothetical situation.

Elements of a Communication Strategy

Possible Situation: What is the issue?
Answer: The City wants to pass a by-law that will require all group homes and foster homes to post signs on their front lawns to notify neighbours of their presence. They might also be expected to inform the community that a child welfare home exists in their neighbourhood. The home would not be licensed (meaning it could not open) until all those living in the neighbourhood approve it.

Perspective: What is your opinion?
Answer: The youth in care network believes that this by-law is potentially damaging to youth because it could further stigmatize youth, take away the little privacy they have and put them in danger of ridicule or loss of housing.

Objective: What do you want to accomplish?
Answer: The network wants to ensure that this by-law does not go through and hopes to raise awareness around youth in care issues.

Audience: Who are you trying to reach?
Answer: The community, the child welfare system, the government and youth in care.

Messages: What points do you want to get across?
Answer: The impact this decision would have on youth in care is both short and long term. It takes away our rights as human beings to privacy and protection and puts us in potential danger of ridicule and re-victimization either from biological family members or sex offenders by announcing to the public, where we live.

Strategy: How are we going to deliver these messages to the audience?
Answer: By sending a letter accompanied with a signed petition of youth in care, child welfare authorities, workers and members of the community to the Mayor's office, and provincial ministry. This letter will also be sent with a press release to the media, inviting them to an event staged outside of city hall to protest against the passing of this by-law.

(a copy of this worksheet is saved on disk)

> News releases should be short (never more than 2 pages) and should contain all the vital facts; the name of your organization, its purpose, background, key contacts, etc.

Your strategy will usually include a news release (or press release) which is a brief summary giving reporters information on your event or cause. News releases should be short (never more than 2 pages) and should contain all the vital facts; the name of your organization, it's purpose, background, key contacts, etc.

A news release that isn't addressed to a specific person will usually end up in the recycling bin. Call your media contacts first and invite them personally to your media event and let them know that you will be sending additional information. Then, when you've faxed or e-mailed your news release, call them again to make sure they've received it and to answer any questions that they may have.

Your plan should also include a media event. This event should be about a potential story. The most common type of media event is the news conference, but if you really want to grab attention from the media, your network might want to host something more original like a play about being in care. Sometimes organizations stage demonstrations on Parliament Hill or in front of City Hall or Town Hall to protest a new piece of legislation.

Media events are usually short, simple and visual. They should be designed to highlight your cause and should be held in time for the reporters attending to make the deadlines.

The following is a template of a news release, and explains itself. To customize this news release, take the information you compiled in the communication strategy worksheet and plug it into the appropriate place. This template is saved on the disk.

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Youth organization rallies against by-law

PODUNK – A local organization for youth in care is fighting a proposed by-law that will endanger and violate children in the care of the child welfare authorities.

The Podunk Youth In Care Network Youth has organized a rally on October 1 to protest Bill 123, also known as the "Group Home Licensing By-law". Youth in care, foster parents, social workers, and other members of the community will attend. The rally will occur in front of City Hall at 9:00 am.

Bill 123 will require all group homes and foster homes to post signs both within the homes and on the front lawns of the homes. It also requires that group home and foster home operators obtain the written consent of all those living in the immediate neighbourhood. Bill 123 passed first reading at last week's City Council meeting.

Steven Spindoctor, spokesperson for the Podunk Youth In Care Network, is concerned that identifying foster and group homes will violate the privacy and safety of the children who live there. "Children are put into foster and group care to protect them from neglect and abuse," Spindoctor says. "Are we protecting abused children by identifying them and their backgrounds to the community?"

The Podunk Youth In Care Network believes that this by-law endangers and violates children in care because:

- it immediately stigmatizes us and invites ridicule;
- it takes away our privacy in terms of where we live, who we are, and what our histories have been; and
- it put us in danger of re-victimization from biological family members and sex offenders.

In addition to the rally on October 1, we will be sending out a petition to be signed by as many supporters as possible. We have already sent a letter to the Mayor requesting that this by-law be stopped immediately.

For further information, contact:

My Name	Work	(123) 555-1234
Local Development Worker	Home	(123) 555-2345
Podunk Youth In Care Network	Pager	(123) 555-3456
Your Name	Work	(123) 555-4321
Board Member	Home	(123) 555-5432
Podunk Youth In Care Network	Cell	(123) 555-6543

Podunk Youth In Care Network

The Podunk Youth In Care Network is a non-profit organization run by and for youth aged 14 to 24 who are in or from government care. We exist to support and advocate for ourselves and our peers when the system can't, and to educate the public, service providers, media and government about our concerns and issues with the system.

Education, Advocacy, and Support – BY youth, FOR youth.

Some tips on your media event...

- Remember that morning (between 9 and 11 am) is the best time for reporters as it gives them time to prepare their stories for the evening's newscast or the next day's paper.
- Give the media people at least 1 day's notice of the event.
- Have extra copies of your news release on hand. If you have the time and resources, you can even put together a Press Kit. This could include the news release, one or two pages of information on the network and some previous articles that have been written about you and contact information such as business cards or brochures.
- If television cameras will be there, try to have something visually appealing for the cameras like people demonstrating, putting on a play, etc. For a more traditional press conference things like graphs, charts, tables or posters will do.
- Start your event on time – no later then five minutes past schedule. Reporters have tight deadlines and they may have other events to cover that day. If you keep them waiting they may simply leave.
- Make sure that your spokesperson is prepared to answer questions both during and after the event.
- Always remember to follow up with reporters. Reporters may ask for information that you don't have on hand. Be sure to send this material to them as soon as possible (like, that day).

Interview Tips

Well, here we are at the reason for why you started reading this chapter in the first place. Before you rush off to the first available camera, there are some things that you should prepare yourself for.

Before the Interview

1.) Know your rights. Always remember – you do have a choice about being interviewed. If you are very uncomfortable, you CAN say no. You can also discuss options with the reporter, like identifying someone else or asking for a break to gather your thoughts.

2.) Think about why you are doing this interview. Your reason for speaking to the reporter should stay fixed in your mind. Think about your main message and weave it into every answer you give. That way, even if your answers are cut and spliced during the editing process, your message should still come through.

3.) Be prepared. Make sure you know your subject inside and out. Avoid writing everything down or memorizing statements. A successful interview should never be rehearsed and reporters generally dislike using prepared statements because they sound stiff and unnatural.

4.) If you can, find out what the reporter wants to ask you, and what the take on the story is. In other words, what kind of a message is the reporter trying to send? It gives you the chance to think of what you want to say before you agree to do the interview and before you are asked any on air questions.

During the Interview

1.) Stay calm. Being interviewed is a golden opportunity for you and the network to get your message out.
2.) Treat the interviewer with respect. Remember that when you speak to a reporter, you're potentially speaking to hundreds or thousands of people (no pressure).
3.) Be honest. If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say that you don't know but that you will try to get the information. Make sure you keep your promise.
4.) Remember that no reporter has the right to bully you into answering a question if you don't want to. If you're uncomfortable answering a question, just say firmly that you don't think you're the appropriate person to comment.
5.) Be helpful. Suggest other sources a journalist should interview. Mention anything you think might be helpful; offer approaches the reporter may not have thought of.

When on TV...

Remember that television interviews are different from newspaper or radio. In TV interviews, your appearance can be just as important as your words (gross, but true). Here are some general tips...

- Avoid wearing clothing that is brightly coloured, busy patterns or big chunky jewelry (unless, of course, it is a part of your religion or culture). This is because your choice of clothing could distract your audience from what you are saying.
- Always maintain eye contact with the person you are speaking to. This could be one reporter, several reporters or a studio audience. Avoid looking into the camera. Pretend it's not even there.
- Speak in short and to-the-point sentences. If you answer reporters clearly, they are less likely to edit your statements and cut out important points.
- Sit or stand still. Try not fidget in front of the camera. Small movements such as nail biting or foot tapping are magnified on screen. Sit with your hands folded on your lap and both feet planted on the ground.

If the media approaches you, its important to remember that you do have rights.

Knowing Your Rights...

If the media approaches you, it's important to remember that you do have rights. Like everyone else in our society, journalists are bound by federal and provincial laws. They also have to follow a set of journalistic codes and ethics.

Here we have outlined what your rights are under the law and under common journalistic standards, what your options are when the law doesn't protect you and what to do if your rights are violated.

- There is no law as of 1999 requiring the media to seek the permission of parents or school authorities before interviewing children and young people. If you speak to a reporter and you're giving an interview for a newspaper, magazine, radio or TV, then that is all the consent that is required.

- There are laws governing trespassing. If a reporter comes to your school, group home, foster home or even network and asks you for an interview, you can decline. If the reporter persists, your principal, worker, or you should ask the reporter to leave. If they don't, she or he can be charged with trespassing.
- There is no law requiring a photographer to get permission to photograph a person – even a very young person (unless during court proceedings). However, most media will ask permission of the parents or guardians when photographing children (under age 18.)
- A reporter must ask your permission before broadcasting a telephone interview with you, whether it's live or recorded. It is illegal for a reporter to play an interview with you on the air if she or he has not received your permission. However, consent is not needed if you phone the station to participate in a broadcast such as a talk show.
- Reporters should identify themselves as such, and state their purpose in speaking with you. While the law does not require reporters to disclose their occupation, it's generally considered ethical or professional to do so.
- You NEVER ever HAVE to give an interview to a reporter. You always have the right to decline. If you have something to say but want to protect your identity, there are options you can explore with the journalist. You could have your name left out, be interviewed off-camera or have your voice or appearance altered.
- You have to be careful about what you say in an interview. Freedom of speech is protected but making statements that could cause harm to others is against the law. For instance, claiming that a fellow student was involved in a violent fight could be a defamatory (untrue and slanderous) statement.
- Revealing something sensitive "off the record" to a reporter is generally not a good idea. It's generally considered unethical for reporters to publish such statements – but ethics are voluntary guidelines, and there's no law protecting "off the record" comments. It is best to avoid making such statements.

Revealing something sensitive "off the record" to a reporter is generally not a good idea.

Filing a complaint

If you feel that your rights were violated during an interview, or that you were misrepresented in a news story, there are ways to address this.

Outline your concerns to the appropriate media person(s). For example, you could address it to the news or assignment editors. You may also want to send a copy of the letter to the person in charge of your local newspapers "Letter to the Editor" section. If the organization has an internal ombudsman, you could also send a copy of the letter to that person.

If you don't receive a satisfactory reply within a week, your next step could be to contact what is called the "regulatory bodies". These are systems that were established by both broadcast (TV and radio) and print (newspapers, magazines...) media that will respond to such concerns. You can call the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council at 613-233-4607 or on line at wwwcbsc.ca. You can also contact your provincial press council (which may or may not exist in your province).

Getting Your Stories Printed

Responding...on your terms

Maybe you saw something on last night's news or read something in yesterdays' paper that you want to respond to. You've got a great idea for a story or perhaps you have identified a mistake in the reporters facts. How do you go about getting your message published?

There are three ways.

1.) You can write a letter to the editor and have it published in the Letters to the Editor section of the newspaper.

2.) You can write your story first and then try to find somebody to publish it. The advantage to this method is that you'll have a concrete product to pitch.

3.) The other way, which most professional freelance writers use (writers who are self-employed and are hired by TV/radio stations or newspapers to cover specific stories), is to first pitch a story idea to an editor. You write a brief outline of your topic, your proposed angle and the people you might interview. Based on this, the editor can determine if your idea suits the needs of the publication.

There are other sources that you can contact aside from the mainstream media. Your network may want to get in contact with Youth Media. One of the biggest youth media outlets is located in Toronto, Ontario. It's called Young People's Press (YPP) and its contributors include young people from all over Canada. YPP journalists research and write their own stories, which are edited by experienced journalists and editors. These stories are then posted on the YPP web site and sent to most daily and weekly newspapers in Canada.

YPP offers young writers tips on writing including a crash course in news writing. If you have an idea for a story, contact YPP at:

Young People's Press
110 Eglington Ave. West, Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario M4R 1A3
Phone: (416) 486-4570 Fax; (416) 484-8173
E-mail: yppto@planeteer.com

Other on-line outlets for young writers are...

TG Magazine

TG Magazine is written mostly by Canadian teens, but it also accepts stories from young people around the world. See TG's Writers Guidelines for information on how to submit articles at http://www.tgmag.ca/.

Children's Express

Children's Express, in New York City is a youth-produced news service. Young people from bureaus around the world report on issues that affect their lives. Contact them at http://www.ce.org.

National Youth In Care Network (NYICN)

The NYICN publishes three different types of publications throughout the year. The first is the monthly newsletter called The Networker. This can be found on line at www.youthincare.ca or received by mail. This newsletter is written by and for youth in and from care across Canada.

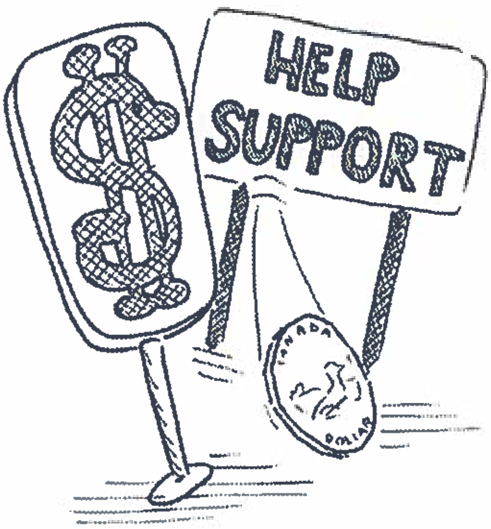
The second is funk'd, which comes out twice a year and is a longer, more detailed version of The Networker. Also written by youth in and from care, funk'd is an in-depth look at youth in care and networks across Canada. Contact the Development Worker to find out how to get your stories or poems in either publication at 1-800-790-7074.

Lastly, the Bi-Focal, a semi-annual newsletter written primarily for adults to give them the youth perspective and update them on the network's projects, etc. Youth can also contribute to Bi-Focal by contacting the National Director at the NYICN at 1-800-790-7074.

Encouraging your local newspaper to cover the youth angle

Some newspapers and news shows pay attention to youth issues, and some even allow young people to tell their own stories. If your local media outlets don't give space to young writers, encourage them to do so. Media outlets respond to the needs of their audiences – so if enough youth ask for more and improved coverage of youth issues, then sooner or later the editors and reporters will listen and act.

Want more information on what you just read or other related topics? Check out the Media Awareness Network Web Site at www.media-awareness.ca. Have a look at their on line Media Tool Kit for Youth – and give them your feedback, they'd love to hear from you!!!



Fundraising

FINDING THE CASH...

Running a network takes money. You don't need to have millions in the bank (although it would be nice), but if you want to have meetings and offer programs, you'll need funds. You'll need access to things like computers, printers, fax machines, photocopiers, stapler, telephone and meeting space. Some of the people that were mentioned in the adult support section like social workers, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, United Way, etc. may be interested in letting your network use some of these things or even offer you a space in their building. Before asking for money or donations, your group should figure out exactly what it is you need and how you are going to use it.

THE BUDGET

A budget is a plan expressed in terms of money that shows how much it will cost to get the things needed to make your project happen. These costs are known as "project expenses". You'll use your budget for three main purposes:

- to understand how much money you will need for your project or network,
- to explain your project to potential sponsors and how their money will be spent, and
- to be accountable for the money you're spending on the project.

What to include in your budget:

A budget can be broken down into categories of expenses (things you will spend your money on). Depending on the needs for your network, you may need money to cover some of the following:

- Administrative costs: office space and furniture, office supplies, (i.e., pens, paper, stapler, etc.) telephone, long distance calls, fax machine, computer and photocopier.
- Publicity materials and costs: things that will help get the network name out there and provide information and attract attention such as: bristol board, markers (when you're just starting out) printing services to make posters, flyers and newsletters (see the Newsletter chapter) special events locations (for media events or other), photocopies, etc.
- Merchandise costs: things you purchase (i.e., hats, T-shirts, buttons, mouse pads, key chains) in the hopes of selling these things to make a profit for your network and projects.
- Travel costs: some networks have development workers. It is quite common for these people to travel within their city, sometimes their province and occasionally, across the country. Travel costs include : bus, plane, train fare or gas for your vehicle, accommodation or lodging, and meals.
- Program or Meeting Costs: food or refreshments for meetings or focus groups, odds and ends (extra supplies, photo developing, etc.)

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Finding The Cash
- The Budget
- Funding Sources
- Letters
- Proposals
- Reports

WHAT'S ON THE DISK?

- Sample Request For Funding Letter

A budget is a plan expressed in terms of money that shows how much it will cost to get the things needed to make your project happen.

Making your budget

1.) List the goods, services, equipment and facilities you will need for your project.
2.) For items or services that are being donated or borrowed, write down the source and estimated value of this in-kind-support. It's important to keep track of who you have already gone to for assistance. You don't want to overload anyone. And even if you are getting something for free, it's costing somebody money to get it for you.
3.) Check to see how much the things on your list would cost to buy. For example, if you need to buy a computer, call a few different places that carry them to get the best deal or find out what the average cost is. Always ask for the total cost, tax and delivery charges so you can include this in your budget.
4.) Write the budget items and their costs, and group them under the appropriate categories (you can use or modify the ones listed above).
5.) Remember you don't need cash for everything. Many businesses or other non-profit organizations may be willing to donate stuff instead of money, which is referred to as "in-kind". "In-kind" means goods or services that are donated. An organization or business that gives you the paper and use of a photocopier to make flyers, for example, is offering their in-kind support. Or a volunteer who spends their time developing the network or organizing a project is also offering in-kind support.

Who's Going to Manage the Budget?

Choose someone who is:

- competent and comfortable with numbers,
- organized, responsible and attentive to detail,
- willing to speak up. The person drawing up the budget may have to tell your team or group that what you want to do may not be entirely possible because of a low budget.

This person could also become responsible for financial management, such as handling bank deposits, writing cheques, and so on.

Who's Going to Find The Money?

Now that you know what you need and what it will cost you, the next step is to start asking. The people you choose to do fundraising should:

- know the project and network well,
- be committed to it and want to fundraise because they are the ones who'll be selling your project to members in your community,
- be outgoing: they should feel comfortable talking to and meeting with different people.

Of course, previous funding experience will help. That does not mean that you need to rush straight off to the adults to do it for you. Try finding some adults who can pass on some of their skills to the youth in your network. This way, your group will be represented by youth members both on paper and in person. (See Adult Support for more tips.)

Securing donations is usually easier if you are a charitable organization. For this, you will need to become incorporated as a non-profit charity, which has benefits but also has draw backs (see Boards and Committees for more information).

If your network decides that it doesn't want charitable status, or if you are in the process of applying for it, what can you do in the meantime to secure donations? If your network is presently housed or sponsored by a non-profit charity, then you may be able to raise donations. If your sponsoring organization is willing to act as a "flow" by managing your finances, and their mission is in line with yours, they could accept donations on your behalf and use their charitable status in order to give charitable receipts to donors. ALWAYS remember to get permission before doing this to avoid conflict and an embarrassing situation.

FUNDING SOURCES

Where to go to get what you need...

Local Businesses: From grocery stores, to banks to sporting goods stores, you may find people who would gladly support your ideas with cash or an in-kind donation.

Service Clubs and Organizations: There are clubs that serve the community such as Rotary Clubs, The Royal Canadian Legion, Shriners, Kinsmen, The Elks, The Lion's Club, and Optimists. You can find these listed in the phone book.

Child Welfare, Social Services, CAS, Foster Parent Association: These organizations may have a budget (although small) for youth programming.

Associations and Societies: People who have joined together because of common interests may be of help to you, such as the Chamber of Commerce or Boards of Trade.

Religious Organizations: Churches, synagogues, temples, etc, often have youth committees or groups that want to get involved in community support.

These are the main sources of funding that we suggest you check out when trying to find the cash. Keep in mind though, that these groups will usually only fund short-term projects or in-kind donations. Because we want to build networks that last, it's a good idea to look into government, corporate and foundation funding.

Government: Federal, provincial, municipal governments and band councils often have departments and committees in areas which may be related to your project.

Foundations: These are institutions that administer funds given to them by corporations and individuals to support the institution's interests. If your group's ideas or mandate are similar to the Foundation's, you may be able to secure funds from it. For example, the Children's Aid Foundations often provide funds to youth in care-driven projects or networks because their interests

It's good to Keep in mind the one-in-ten rule while you are fundraising: chances are that one in ten people will support you.

are similar – basically, networks and the Children's Aid serve the same people. Be sure to leave six months for a decision when dealing with foundations…it can take a while!

Corporations: Businesses (large or small, local or multi-national) are also good places to approach for donations, especially if your organization or your sponsor has charitable status and can issue charitable tax receipts in return. Even if you can't do that, many businesses are interested in increasing their profile in the community, and are always looking for worthy causes to donate to.

Tip: It's often easier to get people to donate a product or service than it is to get them to donate cash.

LETTERS

You will need to write a letter requesting sponsorship or in-kind support. Make sure you are clear about what you're asking for. If you're asking for money, enclose a copy of your budget. Some tips…

- Phone them first and explain who you are and that you're planning an event for youth in/from care in your community. Ask them who to address the letter requesting sponsorship or in-kind support to and where to mail or fax it.
- Keep track of when you initially called each person, when you sent or faxed the letter and other correspondence you've had since then. When you speak to a lot of people, it's easy to forget who's who if you don't write everything down.
- Follow up with a phone call about a week later if you haven't heard anything.
- Thank, in writing, the organizations that have donated something. Remember to include your name and logo in the report (or other materials if you don't write a report).

When writing your letter…

- Type it! If you don't have access to a computer where you live, your school, library, or community social service center may have one that you can use. If not, ask your social worker.
- Include their contact person's name and position on the letter.
- Sign each letter personally.
- Make sure to include your contact information (If you're not available during the day, give an alternative number of someone who is.)
- Include the donation deadline for when you need to have received all donations.
- Decide what you want from them – then just ask for it. Tell them why you need it.
- Let someone else look at the letter and ask them for feedback.

Here's a sample request for funding letter. You will want to adjust this letter each time you send it out so that it reflects what (specifically) you are asking from that person or organization. Try to avoid sending out all-purpose ask-for-it-all request letters, as this could seem impersonal and uncaring. This letter is also saved on disk. Remember to sign your letters before sending them!

Name and address of potential funder
Street
City/Town, Province postal code

Dear Mr. or Mrs. ,

I am writing you today to tell you about an exciting opportunity to support a grassroots youth-for-youth initiative. The (name of your network), is a non-profit group that is run by and for youth (age 14-24) in and from care here in (name of your city or town). "In care" means any young person who is in care of the state or government, for example, foster homes and group homes and can also apply to young offenders, and street youth. Many of these youth have been put into these situations due to no fault of our own. Often, it is a direct result of abuse and or neglect that we suffered as children.

The purpose of our network is to provide a safe place for youth in care to meet and discuss the issues that are important to us; to learn skills that will eventually support us to become truly independent; to receive support from our peers and create trusting, healthy relationships with adults; to gain a sense of self worth and dignity through the work we do and the skills we learn; and to provide us with the opportunity to heal.

We are requesting your support to assist in the donation of either funding or in-kind support with one of the following:

- a space in your organization where youth can meet on a regular basis during reasonable hours,
- the use of office equipment, i.e., photocopier, computer, printer, postage metre,
- paper for faxing, photocopying, and/or
- the use of a phone line.

If you are not able to provide any of the above items, may we request a small, negotiable donation of $500 that would go directly towards the network's programming? This could help us with the production and mail out of our monthly newsletter or (name a project that you are working on).

To document the needs, issues, ideas and recommendations of our youth members, a report will be produced that will be available to the government, service providers, community members and youth in care. Recognition of your donation would be acknowledged in this report.

Thank you for considering our request for a contribution to our network. We are available to make a presentation to your organization/company to provide further information. You can contact me at (your number here with area code.) We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Contact name here
Network name

> Try to avoid sending out all-purpose ask-for-it-all request letters, as this could seem impersonal and uncaring.

Don't feel as though you need to use this letter word for word...in fact try not to. Use the basics until you get used to writing these types of letters and you'll eventually develop your own style. Stick to the above tips and you'll do fine!

The above letter was fairly informal and could be used for most requests. That is until you are looking for the big bucks. Let's say your network is ready to hire staff, or you want to become independent by renting your own space, owning or leasing your own office equipment and phone line – that's when your costs get a lot heftier.

PROPOSALS

Most independent networks did not start out that way. Eventually, after they had made some mistakes and had learned how to stand on their own feet, these networks broke away from the agencies that once housed them or offered use of their office equipment and adult support.

This is a big move and you should seriously consider the pros and cons of becoming an independent organization. Sit down with your group and discuss how you can ensure the survival of the network. Consider things like :

- cost of renting an office space,
- cost of purchasing or renting equipment, phone line(s), e-mail account(s),
- staffing, supervision, salaries, and/or
- project costs.

It's useful to know that when applying for money to start an independent network or hire staff, most youth go to the Ministry or Department of Social Services. As networks serve the youth in care of these departments, applying for funding from them is totally appropriate and usually successful, especially if you are starting a provincial youth in care network.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PROPOSAL

Some of the following examples written in italics were taken from a proposal written by a former youth in care to the National Crime Prevention Center on behalf of the Nova Scotia Youth In Care Network. Thanks, Gretchen!

The type of funding proposal that we are about to get into is different than the "one-page request" example that we gave earlier. It is much more in-depth and includes:

- **History:** You will need to include some background material of your network or other provincial networks across Canada. When writing your proposal, do it as though you are writing for someone who doesn't know anything about youth in care or networks. Some networks use the history of the NYICN in their proposals, and you can refer to the Youth In Care Networks Contact List to get in touch with other networks who have also raised their own money.
- **Purpose:** A detailed explanation of why networks are important and how a network would benefit the community is essential. You want the funder

to understand how supporting your network will benefit them as well as youth in care. You may want to add any research that you have done on this like focus groups, feedback from youth members, comments from adult supporters or members of the community. Adding quotes from youth in care is also very powerful and makes the proposal much more personal. For example:

There are approximately 50, 000 young people in care in Canada. In Nova Scotia there are 1, 767 children in care. Of these, the majority are youth aged ten plus (March 1997, Department of Community Services). Most of these youth have been traumatized and abused (sexual, physical, neglect), and go into care stigmatized, isolated and distrustful. Too often, their futures are compromised by lack of support services, a high level of early school drop out, and chronic unemployment. Dealing with these issues on top of existing issues of abuse can often lead to negative expressions of their frustration, and in some cases, desperation to provide for themselves. This negative expression and depression often translates into crime, a difficult lifestyle to break out of. Informal sources indicate that 50% of these youth come into contact with the law and or social assistance later in life.

> *"My perception of right and wrong was just really warped...I've been trying to get out of this cycle that I've been stuck in for a long time, but man its hard by myself..."*
>
> — Youth Participant, Into the Hands of Youth (NYICN publication)

> *"There's been lots of times in my life that I tried really hard to get out of the drugs and shoplifting but until recently, when I starting meeting you guys (other youth in care), I didn't think someone like me (a youth in care) could shake it..."*
>
> — Youth Participant speaks on Youth In Care Networks, Network Buffet (NYICN conference held in Nova Scotia, June, 1998)

OUR PURPOSE

Youth in care networks provide peer support (among other things) which deter and/or discontinue involvement in criminal activities. Through peer support and adult supporters, youth in care are exposed to alternative forms of expression and learn to recognize and reach out to the support available to them. These networks provide young people with an opportunity to re-direct negative energies in order to help themselves and their peers to heal and grow as members of a community and society. We plan to

1.) hire a Provincial Development Officer who, with guidance from the partnered organizations, will be able to provide stable support and resources to youth in care and their care providers across Nova Scotia, so that many youth in care networks can be developed in communities by youth in care in that community.

2.) offer community-based solutions that can stop problems before they start.

- **Goals:** Remember to add your goals, proposed outcomes, and activities. A goal is something that you plan to reach and proposed outcomes are what you hope to achieve as a result of your goals. With each goal that you highlight, give three or four points of how these will be met. For example:

> *GOALS AND ACTIVITIES*
>
> *In order to engage youth in the network and our projects, we will hire a Provincial Development Officer who will work towards achieving the following goal:*
>
> GOAL # *1:*
>
> *To support the development of local youth in care networks, in each of the four regions of Nova Scotia and to encourage and enable groups around the province to communicate and become aware of this development. The activities to achieve this goal are:*
>
> - *Contact and visit communities across the province,*
> - *Facilitate network development workshops for youth in care,*
> - *Produce a monthly provincial youth in care newsletter,*
> - *Support youth in care to access the internet and e-mail, and*
> - *Educate youth in care about their rights and how to exercise them.*

- **Rationale:** This explains why you chose specific goals and how these will benefit youth in care. For example:

> *RATIONALE*
>
> *By supporting the development of local youth in care networks in Nova Scotia, youth will have more access to other youth in care who have successfully made it through the system and whose advice they are more likely to take because they can trust it. This is an opportunity not otherwise available to youth in care, one which increases their capacity to deal with crime (both as offenders and victims) by having the support of their peers – people who have "been there".*
>
> *By enabling youth in care to keep in touch, not only within their communities but around the province, these people will have less of a sense of isolation and more of a sense of responsibility to people who care about them, their happiness, and their safety.*

- **Sponsoring Organizations and Partnerships:** Include the names of organizations or agencies that are or have committed to supporting your network with a breakdown of the services they are offering. By doing this you are showing that the community supports your idea, and this will add credibility to it. For example:

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION

The Nova Scotia Council for the Family (NSCFF) is a province-wide network of over 40 groups and individuals dedicated to the well-being of children, youth, and their families. The Council, a non-governmental not-for-profit association, brings together representatives of community based organizations, voluntary services, government, private child welfare agencies and the corporate sector, in a unique partnership which provides action, advocacy, research, program initiatives, communication and public education. The Council is governed by a Board of Directors and utilizes an extensive committee structure to carry out its work. The organization is funded through membership fees.

The Youth-in-Care Committee (a sub-committee of the Nova Scotia Council for the Family) is composed of youth in/from care of the child welfare system, as well as adult supporters who are involved in various ways by providing services to young people. The goals of this Committee are:

1.) *To ensure active youth participation in the work of the Youth In Care Committee.*
2.) *To assist youth in care in starting peer support groups in their communities.*
3.) *To assist youth in care to find ways of increasing youth representation in decisions affecting their well-being and life goals.*
4.) *To provide advocacy re: preparation for independent living, and the provision of after-care services.*
5.) *To link youth with other youth-related groups and organizations, both provincially and nationally.*
6.) *To establish a nurturing and respectful environment which values youth as full partners.*

Through its general mandate and, more specifically, through the work of the Youth In Care Committee, the Council has in the past years taken a number of important initiatives to address the concerns and aspirations of youth in and from care. A major research project was completed in 1996 on the current circumstances for youth in care, highlighting the lack of services, all of which have a direct affect on their quality of life, while in care.

In November 1997, a provincial conference was organized for youth in care, social workers and foster parents to focus on the above issues providing the opportunity to discuss ways and means for addressing them. As a result, recommendations were made to the Provincial Government in the Spring of 1998 to hire four youth in different locations around Nova Scotia who would, in various ways, take action to address these same issues.

- **Evaluation:** Explain how evaluations will be written and what information will be included. You may want to ask your sponsoring or supporting organizations to include an evaluation of their own. Give an approximate date for when funders can expect an evaluation of the project.

The Council will provide regular progress reports on the achievement of outcomes, specifically the successful organization of local youth in care networks in each county of the Province.

As well, surveys will be conducted periodically with youth participants and adult supporters in this project to assess satisfaction with the project's activities and strategies.

The accounting and financial resources will be conducted by the Council according to standard practices and will be included in the Council's annual audit.

- **Work Plan:** Give a breakdown of the work plan schedule. For example, start by showing what will be accomplished within the first 3 – 6 months of the project, then a 7 – 9 month plan and finally a 10 – 12 month plan. This will show that you are organized and have a clear understanding of how the project will unfold. Following our previous example:

WORK PLAN SCHEDULE

Provincial Development Officer – Nova Scotia Youth in Care Networks

1 – 6 MONTH PLAN

- *Initial meetings with partners and Provincial Development Officer (PDO) to finalize specific roles in the varying stages of network development.*
- *Meet with the Department of Community Services to outline the work plan, and clarify how the department can support network development in the province.*
- *Develop a strategy to create a database of youth in care in Nova Scotia, which will maintain the strictest confidentiality.*
- *Contact agencies with request to seek out mature youth in/from care who demonstrate interest in working to develop a youth in care network in their community.*
- *Begin scheduling meetings in four regions of Nova Scotia with youth in care, their care providers and staff agencies.*
- *Develop a strategy to assist youth in care in their efforts to develop local networks.*
- *Develop and distribute age and language appropriate information packages for youth who are developing local networks and a second for adults who have shown interest in supporting the network.*
- *Develop a monthly provincial youth in care newsletter. This will keep developing networks and supporters across the province up-to-date on current projects, issues, events and will keep these groups connected.*
- *Facilitate interactive training seminars for youth in care (Group Development Workshops) and adults supporters (Support Workshops).*
- *Develop a media strategy by contacting media sources throughout the province and informing them of the network and the positive efforts of youth in care. This will help raise the profile of the group to the public and reduce negative stereotypes.*

7 – 9 MONTH PLAN

- *Work with partner and sponsoring agencies to determine a "youth involvement strategy" within their programs.*
- *Feature information and updates from developing networks in monthly newsletter, to show how far we have come.*
- *Compile the database of youth in care in Nova Scotia. This information will have been collected by way of training seminars, newsletter sign-up sheets and development trips.*
- *Develop a survey for youth in care and adult supporters to measure the progress of local and Provincial networks.*
- *Facilitate a second round of workshops for local development workers which will focus on project development and management. Meetings will also be scheduled with adult support people/groups to ensure that support for local networks is adequate.*

10 – 12 MONTH PLAN

- *Implement the "survey" and prepare results and recommendations based on feedback.*
- *Provide partners/sponsoring organizations with an outline of progress of local youth in care networks in Nova Scotia, the benefits and results.*
- *Implement "youth involvement strategy" with partnering/sponsoring organizations.*
- *Provide on site support to local youth in care networks with their local projects and meetings. Assess these projects and implement the results in final report.*
- *Submit final report to funders.*

Throughout the first year, regular progress reports will be submitted at 3 month intervals to all project partners. We will also maintain on-going contact with media sources to ensure that the larger community is aware and has the opportunity to offer their support.

- **Budget:** You will need a clear and easy-to-read budget that includes all of your costs. If some of these costs are already covered by another organization, show this in the budget. Example given:

YOUTH IN CARE NETWORK PROJECT	
Budget Proposal – Proposed Expenditures	
Salary (Provincial Development Worker)	$30, 000
Benefits (10%)	$ 3, 000
Transportation	$ 4, 000
Professional Development	$ 1, 000
Administration (materials, postage, phone)	$ 2, 000
Equipment (office computer)	2, 500
Youth In Care Workshops	$ 2, 000
Total Expenditures	$44, 500
In-kind contributions (Nova Scotia Council for the Family)	
Rent/Utilities	$ 3, 000
Office equipment	$ 1, 000
(photocopier, fax, audio/visual, furniture)	
Total In-Kind	$ 4, 000

Support Letters: It's often helpful to include support letters with your proposal. These usually come from other non-profit organizations and can be written by people like the director of child welfare, provincial child advocate, Boys and Girls Clubs, John Howard Society, etc. This shows that there are known organizations who support your ideas and believe in the need for a youth in care network in their community. You can also try calling the National Youth In Care Network for a support letter, and they can also help by reviewing and editing your proposal.

Tips

1.) As we mentioned earlier, it's a good idea to add an approximate date in your proposal for when you will require a response, otherwise you could be waiting forever. Don't demand a response, but be sure to give a reasonable amount of time from when you submit the proposal and plan to start your project. For example, if you want to start a project or hire staff by September 1, don't send your proposal on August 20. Funders don't like being rushed so if you aren't sure, ask the funder approximately how long in takes for their agency or organization to review a proposal, then base your schedule around this.

2.) Another tip is to fax and mail a hard copy of the proposal, to ensure that they receive it. Keep a copy for yourself on disk and hard copy and make a note of when it was sent and when you are to receive a response by.

3.) Some networks decide that in addition to sending a proposal, facilitating presentations on the project idea are often helpful. This helps build a relationship with the potential funders and allows you the time to give more detailed examples of the project idea and your goals.

4.) NEVER start a project or hire staff before you get it in writing! This means that unless the funder has confirmed this on paper or the money is already in the bank, you don't have anything to work with. Many of us have learned this the hard way…even though we were pretty sure that the money was coming, we lost time and energy working on a project that never received the money to be able to complete it.

5.) Once you have the money or written confirmation, some funders may have some expectations of the project. For example, they may want updates throughout the project, especially if they have never worked with your network before. They may want to see how the money is being spent from time to time and most, if not all, will require a written report at the end of the project. If you are not asked for this from the start, you may want to ask some of your own questions, just to be safe!

REPORTS

…have an Evaluation Meeting with all those involved in the planning and facilitation of the project.

Most sponsors will ask that a report be submitted to show how the money was spent and whether or not you reached your goals. A good report that is submitted on time will often impress your sponsor and encourage them to give you money for future projects.

Before you put anything on paper, have an Evaluation Meeting with all those involved in the planning and facilitation of the project.

Ask the following questions…

1.) Did we reach our goals?
2.) If we did, did our project or network effectively address the issue or need that we wanted to? If not, why not and what have we learned?
3.) Will our project have a lasting impact on our members and/or the community? If so, how?
4.) What parts of our project were most successful and why?
5.) What could be improved to make our project run more smoothly?
6.) What knowledge and skills did the people who were involved in the project gain from their participation?
7.) How well did our team or project coordinator solve problems during the project?
8.) Did our project have any positive side effects? Any negative ones?
9.) In general, what were the strengths and weaknesses of your project?

Asking these questions within your group first will ensure that everyone is heard and all opinions are considered. It can also help decide who should author this report, and it will help with the planning and implementation of future projects by allowing us to learn from our mistakes and build on our strengths.

What makes a good report?

Most funders will send you an outline for the report they expect from you. The specific questions and structure of the report may depend on the funder's expectations. Below are some basic things you will need to cover in any report.

1.) A title page with the name and dates of your project and the name of your network. Adding colour or photographs to the cover is impressive and will grab attention.
2.) A "special thanks" page which lists the names of organizations or individuals who donated their time or money to the project or network.
3.) A section that explains the project and its purpose. Refer to your proposal when writing this as it will help you stick to a theme.
4.) A section that presents the goals listed in your proposal and, based on your evaluations, an explanation of how you reached them and how the project enabled your network to meet the needs of youth in care. Be concrete and use statistics and other data collected through your project to demonstrate what it accomplished. You could also use quotes from those that were involved with the project. If you were unable to reach some of these goals or if the project changed somehow along the way, explain this and highlight what you learned from it.
5.) A section that shows how youth were involved in the project by outlining the responsibilities and the skills they may have gained because of it.
6.) A section that shows how partnerships developed. If one of your goals was to work with adults or the community, show how this was made possible. Perhaps you were able to build new relationships or partnerships that will better the network in future.
7.) A financial statement report which clearly shows how all the money you received was spent. Most funders will also request a separate statement which explains how you spent their money. Make sure that this statement is reviewed by someone knowledgeable in financial management, like an accountant. Making mistakes on a financial statement may be misconstrued as an attempt to hide how the money was really spent, landing you in a lot of trouble.
8.) Future plans. Explain how this project has enabled your network to take things to the next level. Perhaps this project sparked an idea for a new event. Explain what this event is and document any interest from organizations or individuals who want to be involved.

You may also want to add photographs, not just on your cover page but throughout the report. If there was any media coverage, list this under a "media section" and add any newspaper clippings that may have come out of it.

Sometimes funders or sponsors like the personal touch. By inviting them to a presentation on the project, you will:
1.) Build relationships,
2.) Increase profile and credibility of the network, and
3.) Show that youth can follow through and accomplish great things! (But we already knew that, didn't we?)

Boards and Committees

Who's going to make the decisions?

For the first little while, your network will probably focus on things like finding your peers, having your first few meetings and figuring out, as a group, how the network can best meet the needs of youth in care in your community.

With time you will probably start to feel as though you want to take on more responsibility and open up the network to as many youth in your region or province as possible. You may even want to become a more formal and independent organization.

Most organizations have what is known as "a mission statement". Basically, a mission statement is one or two sentences that express the mandate of your organization or group, that is, what your organization exists to do. Your group needs to decide what it wants to tell people things about your organization like:

- Your vision of what the organization is all about (the vision statement),
- What it's purpose is (why it exists),
- What values, beliefs and principles your organization holds, and
- What the organization does (the projects or services)

It's a good idea to get the answers to this down on paper, like in a brochure or pamphlet, so that when anyone is asking about your group they can refer to it.

Get your group together and have a brainstorming session. Look at what your needs are and talk to younger youth in care at one of your meetings or at a focus group in a group home. Ask them what is going on in their lives? What would help make care a little easier? What will help them move out on their own when it's time to leave the network? And so on...

Once you have some ideas, it's time to figure out who will have the final say on what your network looks like, what it plans to do and how these things will be carried out. When you get to this point, you are ready to look at options like Boards of Directors and Committees. But before your board or committee jumps into work, it's important for everyone to agree and be clear on how decisions will be made.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Making Decisions – The Five Steps
- What Is A Board?
- Roles And Responsibilities Of Board Members
- Recruiting And Informing Potential Board Members
- Ethics Of Being A Board Member
- Voting
- Adults And Your Board
- Becoming Incorporated

MAKING DECISIONS

There are five basic steps to decision – making...

1.) Examine the problem or issue...

Everybody involved in making a decision must clearly understand the topic or problem. This may take some time and might force you to look at the problem in many different ways so that everyone understands.

2.) Consider alternatives

Get ideas flowing, look at different options and what may happen if you choose one way over another such as the consequences or benefits to the network.

3.) Make the decision

Decide how decisions are to be made. Will the final decision be made through voting in which majority rules, or will a decision require consensus of all board members?

4.) Implement the decision

Simply deciding what to do is not actually enough to get it done. You must also decide on who is responsible for doing what, how it is to be done and when it has to be done by. Then you have to actually do it and make sure others are doing their part.

5.) Evaluate the decision

It is helpful to a review decision after a while to make sure it is still the best decisions you could have made. This allows you to change them if the circumstances have changed.

WHAT IS A BOARD?

Basically, a Board of Directors is a bunch of people who join together to provide direction, supervise senior staff, and monitor financial matters. With non-profits, charitable or voluntary organizations, such as networks, board members are volunteers, they are not paid. They're there because they care about the purpose and work of the organization.

A Board of Directors is chosen or elected to oversee the organization and to decide how it will best meet the needs of its members. How this is done depends on the kind of Board you want. There isn't any blue print of the perfect Board which everyone must follow. Some networks have Boards that are all youth in and from care. Others have a mix of adult support people and youth in care. Some decide that although they have a youth Board, an Adult Advisory Committee helps when they are stuck on an issue and need some advice.

A Board decides the direction of the organization like how will the network's money be spent (or raised if there is none), how staff will be hired, how much staff will be paid, etc. When starting out, your network may not have any staff and so, this might mean that Board members will not only make decisions, but they might also carry out a lot of the work. This is a lot of responsibility and can be difficult as we all have our own lives, jobs, school and priorities which are hard to meet when all of our time is spent volunteering. That's where the staff come in. (See Hiring, Training, and Evaluating Staff .)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARDS MEMBERS:

1. The duty to be loyal and honest, to act in good faith and in the best interest of the organization. This means you do not allow selfish interests, especially financial, to influence your actions.
2.) The duty of care and skill. This means you were chosen because you have certain experience and expertise. You must consider all information available when making a decision, you must attend meetings and actively ask for information about the affairs of the organization. Lack of knowledge or participation will not take away your legal responsibility as a Director.

ROLES OF BOARD MEMBERS

The structure of your Board is very important as it will keep things organized, avoid confusion, and help get the work done. Some members of the board have specific roles.

The President or Chairperson

- Shows overall leadership to the Board and network staff.
- Makes sure that the Board sticks to it's constitution, by-laws, and mission.
- Calls meetings and guides discussion.
- Drafts or sets up the agenda with the staff.
- Delegates work tasks to other Board members.
- Works closely with the staff and must be easily contacted so that the decisions can be made when they have to be.
- Responsible for or is consistently aware of the general and active management of the affairs of the organization, which means the President is really, in the end, responsible for everything that the network does.

Vice President or Vice Chairperson

- Assumes all the duties and responsibilities of the President in the absence of the President as well as any other duties imposed upon them by the Board.

Secretary

- Records all votes and minutes of all discussion at all meetings.
- Responsible for letting everyone know beforehand of all meetings of the Board of Directors.

Treasurer

- Controls the money of the organization and must keep accurate accounts of how this money is spent (this is often done with the staff).
- Handles withdrawals, deposits and payments that the staff are not authorized to make, for example, writing cheques over a certain amount that the Board has decided upon.
- Provides, develops or explains financial statements (like budgets, audit statements, balance sheets) at Board meetings or to other Board members (again, this is often done with staff).

These board members make up the executive board or the executive committee.

Other board members are called "Members at Large" and their responsibilities include:

- attending board meetings,
- giving input at meetings (new ideas or feedback on existing ones),
- voting on decisions at board meetings,
- making sure they are up to date and informed by the staff and or Executive Committee so that they can help make good decisions,
- volunteering their time (when possible) to assist on committees within the Board and basic Board responsibilities, for example, hiring staff, deciding on projects, etc.

RECRUITING AND INFORMING POTENTIAL BOARD MEMBERS

You may already have a really strong group of youth who are involved and ready to take on more responsibility. Or your group members may be too busy to make the kind of commitment your network needs. They may feel that they are not at a point in their lives where they are ready to meet as often as you require or interested in making these kinds of decisions. How many 14 year olds do you know who want to sit down and read a financial statement?

Some tips for recruiting potential board members:

- Never pressure anyone into taking a seat on the Board.
- Make sure that all potential Board members are aware of their responsibilities before they take it on.
- If you are having trouble finding Board members, try putting a "Call for Board Members" in your newsletter or putting it on the agenda of your next network meeting. Try posting flyers around your local agency and asking that agency to send out an inter-office memo to social workers who can pass this out to youth.
- When asking youth to apply for a Board seat, you may want them to present their ideas or their interest in the position on paper or at a Network meeting. You may also ask them to submit a resume and letters of reference from some youth in care who know them and would be comfortable with that person as a network leader.
- Never appoint yourself as a Board member. This must be done by a group of your peers to make sure that your network is represented fairly. For example, imagine if our Prime Minister appointed himself into office instead of being elected. It wouldn't be a very fair or democratic process would it?

Remember, it's very important to make sure that the youth who sit on your board are aware of the responsibilities and what this means.

As a youth-run organization, it is difficult to gain credibility and respect within an adult-run system...we must work extra hard for others to take notice and take us seriously.

ETHICS OF BEING A BOARD MEMBER

If a person you know lied to you, said one thing but did another, wasn't true to the values or beliefs he/she said they were about, didn't keep their word, or never followed through on an obligation, what would you think of that person? You might think that this person was unreliable or untrustworthy.

Well, organizations that say one thing and do another are not living up to their mission statement with their actions. Examples of this would be, breaking promises made to members, funders, staff or not following through on obligations. These organizations would lose credibility, legitimacy, the respect of it's members and other organizations, and generally lose face.

These are especially important things to keep in mind when running a network. As a youth-run organization, it is difficult to gain credibility and respect within an adult-run system. That doesn't mean that your network will never gain these things, but as youth we must work extra hard for others to take notice and take us seriously.

This brings up the subject of ethics. What is the appropriate behaviour and what is the right thing for Board members to do? To answer these questions, we must look at what it means to be accountable and responsible and what terms like "conflict of interest" and "confidentiality" mean.

Accountability translates into understanding, accepting and honouring your obligation or responsibility to: funders, members (youth in and from care), board members, staff, and government.

What this means is...

a) Don't make promises you can't keep. If you are asked to do something on behalf of the network as a Board member, don't agree to it if you aren't 100% sure that you can do it. This may be things like attending meetings with funders, the agency, government, and MOST importantly, youth in care. Don't feel like you can't say NO to something. At least that way, someone else can volunteer to do it.

b) Admitting when you haven't followed through on a promise or obligation. Let's say you are the President and didn't show up for a meeting or the Secretary and didn't get the minutes in on time? Rather than making excuses, or laying blame on someone or something else, take responsibility for the mistake. Show your fellow Board members how you will make efforts to prevent this from happening again.

Acting responsibly is as important as accountability. Acting responsibly means:

- attending meetings,
- being on time,
- not staying up all night and partying before a meeting if you know that it means you won't be able to function at the meeting,
- being prepared for a meeting or event by reading the materials that are sent to you,
- being prepared when you are facilitating a meeting or event,
- responding promptly to telephone calls, letters or faxes,
- being on time for trains, planes or automobiles when traveling on behalf of the network.

Remember that you have been asked to sit on the Board for a reason. You are seen as someone who has something to offer as a leader. You are setting an example and will be watched by youth members and adults. No pressure!

People are trusting you to lead them. They are relying on you to do what is best for the network, rather than what is best for you. If your personal interests come first when making decisions (for example the , "what's in it for me?" attitude), this is not acting in the best interests of the organization. That is why it is best to learn about your Board candidates before voting them in. This will give you a good idea about who they are and why they want this responsibility.

Board members are entrusted with a great deal of authority in decision making. This authority can obviously be misused for personal gain. Conflict of interest refers to using information obtained through your position for personal benefit, specifically, for the direct financial benefit of yourself or any family member. When you are establishing your Board of Directors, ensure that you have a conflict of interest policy, and that each board member signs off on the policy and declares their conflict of interest whenever the situation arises and removes themselves from the decision-making process on that situation.

As a Board member, there are issues of confidentiality that you must deal with. That means keeping confidential all information you may come across within the network. For example, if a board or staff member needs to leave their position or take a leave of absence because of personal problems, you don't make this personal problem public to anyone outside of the Board. Or issues regarding personnel (staff), such as interviews or dismissals, should be kept between the staff and the board, and not made public to others. This includes youth members, funders, the public, government, media, or anyone else including other staff members if it isn't necessary for them to know the details.

If this information is shared with others, it is considered a breach of confidentiality. Basically, it's about TRUST and RESPECT. If we don't have either of these things within our networks, then what do we have?

As you can see, being a Board member is a big responsibility. But it is also a wonderful opportunity for youth to make sure that they are being heard, are making decisions on behalf of their peers and helping to make things better. As a Board member, you will also learn many new skills that you will carry with you through life...and it looks darn good on a resume!

VOTING

When deciding on Board members, it is absolutely necessary to make sure that it is a fair process. You can do this by taking a vote or, as a group, appointing someone to fill a certain seat on the Board. This person, of course, must agree to this appointment.

Make sure that all those involved in the voting process (like youth members or present board members) are informed about the person or people they are voting on. As well as having written information like a resume, cover letter and reference letters from peers, it's also good to ask candidates to give a short speech explaining why they want the position.

Once everyone is clear, it's time to make a decision. Two ways to do this are…

- Ask that each person write their choice on a piece of paper and put this into a hat, bowl, etc. These votes will then be counted and a decision will be announced to the group. It's often a good idea to have two people counting these votes, just so everyone knows that it was a fair process. This is called a "silent ballot".
- If there is only one candidate for the Board seat, it is still wise to ask them to explain why they want that particular position. After they have done this, you can still have a silent vote by writing "yes" or "no" on a slip of paper. However, the group can also ask someone to make what is known as a "motion" to elect that person onto the board. This motion should be backed up by the majority of the group or present Board. If it is, then your motion has been passed and you have just elected a new board member!

There are several methods of voting in that you may prefer. Try consulting other youth in care networks with Boards (refer to Contact List) or ask to sit in on a Board meeting of an agency or organization to get a better understanding of how these work.

ADULTS AND YOUR BOARD

Most network boards are youth only. BUT, there are a few that have adults on their board. The reason for this is that the youth in these networks decided it was in their best interest to have certain adults with certain expertise to help make the decisions, like:

- **Lawyers** – They can help your network become incorporated, teach you about legal responsibilities and what these mean.
- **Child welfare directors** – They may be able to help the group have a better understanding of why the system works the way it does, it's limitations, funding and any other aspect of the system that you may want to know about.
- **Journalists or public relations people** – These are people who can help your network with things like media strategies, funding contacts, connecting your group with other non-profit organizations and donations.
- **Fundraisers** – They are also good for funding contacts and donations and can help your network draft it's first funding proposals.
- **Accountants** – They can teach your Board and staff how to budget your money and keep the books up to date.

Although adults can be very useful on your board, you should consider just how much adult influence you are comfortable with. For example, if there are 8 people on your board and 5 of those members are adults, how will you ensure that your network is fairly representing youth? OR, you may only have 1 or 2 adults on your board, but those two are always influencing youth to make certain decisions. (see Adult Support). In other words, try to keep a youth majority on your board. Even if you have this youth majority, make sure that the adults you elect fully understand their role and that they have been elected to help guide youth when asked to do that. You should also remember that all board members have the right to a vote, including adults.

Having adults on your board can get tricky. How can we involve adults in our decisions without losing the control?

Adult Advisory Committees

Some time ago, the National Youth In Care Network decided to seek out adults who could volunteer their time as Adult Advisors. A committee of these adults were formed to act as advisors to the Board and staff when asked. They did not have voting authority on the Board and were not involved in the actual decision-making process of the network.

To ensure that everyone was clear on what was needed in order for these two groups to work together, the youth board established the following Expectations of Members of the NYICN Adult Advisory Committee (AAC):

1. The AAC will act in an advisory capacity only. AAC members will respect the fact that all decision-making authority rests with the Board of Directors of the NYICN.
2. The NYICN requires that Board members of the AAC will have regular, on-going contact with the Executive Committee and staff of the NYICN.
3. The NYICN will undertake to keep the AAC informed of developments and activities on a regular basis.
4. AAC members have an obligation to respond to requests for information or feedback on selected issues.
5. AAC members have an obligation to provide advice to the Board of Directors regarding the direction of the NYICN.
6. AAC members will be required to provide their individual expertise on matters discussed at meetings and information provided in updates.
7. AAC members are required to maintain confidentiality on matters discussed at meetings and information provided in updates.
8. Members of the AAC will be asked to resign from the committee after the third absence from the scheduled meetings.
9. AAC members have an obligation to raise the profile and promote the development of the NYICN.
10. AAC members will be elected annually by the Board of Directors by the NYICN.

BECOMING INCORPORATED

Now that you have your mission statement, your Board, and possibly your Adult Advisory Committee, you can start looking into things like Incorporation and Charitable Status.

Incorporation: Before you can become a charity, you first have to become incorporated. Becoming incorporated is a complicated process and one that your network decides it may not be ready for. Incorporation means your organization is a separate legal entity, and as such is responsible for things like paying income tax and gst/hst, according Revenue Canada regulations. You set up a corporation by filling out an article of incorporation, and filing it with the appropriate provincial, territorial, or federal authorities. A provincially incorporated company is a legal entity only in the province in which it's incorporated. Its shareholders are not protected by limited liability if it does business outside of its home province. A federally incorporated company is considered a legal entity anywhere in Canada, and therefore, its shareholders are protected by limited liability anywhere in Canada.

A lawyer is a really good person to talk to when considering incorporation. They can help walk you through the legalities of all that. Other people to consult with are incorporated youth in care networks, non-profit organizations and boards. You can also contact Revenue Canada to get more information on incorporation.

Charitable Status: Charities have different regulations and conditions than corporations or non-profit organizations. Revenue Canada defines charities under four categories: those that relieve the poor, advance religion, advance education or those whose purposes benefit the community. A charitable organization has permission from the government to give tax receipts to donors, which means that in return for giving your organization money, the donor doesn't have to pay as much tax to the government.

Charitable organizations also have to meet a whole bunch of criteria before they can get charitable status and have to follow a lot of rules, once they actually get it. To qualify for registration as a charity, an organization must be established and operated for charitable purposes, and it must devote its resources to charitable activities. The charity must be resident in Canada, and cannot have any income payable to benefit its members. A charity has to meet a public benefit test. To qualify under this test, an organization must show that:

- its activities and purposes provide a tangible benefit to the public;
- those people who are eligible for benefits are either the public as a whole or a significant section of it in that they are not a restricted group or one where members share a private connection, such as social clubs or professional associations with specific membership; and
- the charity's activities must be legal and must not be contrary to public policy.

The decision to become a charity is very complex and relies on a lot of technical and legal information. If your network is thinking about becoming a charity, it's a good idea to talk to a lawyer, preferably one who will work for free (see Adult Support). Below is a basic "Pros " and "Cons" list that can help you to think of questions to ask when considering charitable status.

The decision to become a charity is very complex and relies on a lot of technical and legal information.

▶ **PROS**

Tax receipts: When a person or company gives money to a charity they get a tax receipt, and don't have to pay as much income tax to the government. This is especially useful if you want to raise money from corporations, because they usually won't donate money unless they can get a tax receipt.

Income Tax: Once the organization is registered as a charity, it is exempt from paying income tax (under Part I of the Income Tax Act).

Credibility: Becoming a charity will give your network more credibility in the eyes of the government, funders and the public.

Funding from Foundations: Foundations have to follow a lot of rules too. One of these rules is that foundations have to give at least half of their money to charities and other "qualified donees". It's a lot easier for a foundation to give you money if you're a charity, which means you're more likely to get funding from them.

▶ **CONS**

Political activity: There are many limitations on how much political activity a charitable organization can do. Political activity includes lobbying the government, trying to get laws and policies changed, etc. If your network wants to be involved in any of these things, you may decide that becoming a charity is too limiting.

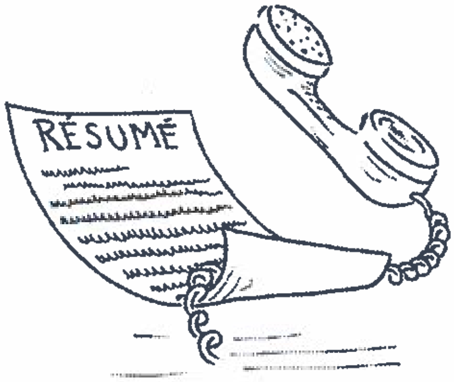
Goals and Activities: To become a charity, an organization has to meet very specific criteria on their goals and activities. If you don't meet these criteria right off the bat, you'll need to make changes. Your network may decide that becoming a charity isn't worth changing who you are and what you stand for.

Resources: Besides costing money (to file the papers and to pay for the lawyer's fees if you can't get someone to donate their time), applying for incorporation and charitable status requires a lot of board and staff time. You will need to spend a lot of time establishing roles and objects and by-laws, etc. You will also need to spend a lot of time reporting to the authorities (not just funders, but Revenue Canada). As a charity, you must devote your resources to charity; continue to meet the other requirements of registration; and file Registered Charity Information Return every year. If you do not meet these obligations, the charity may lose its registered status. You may feel that given your limited resources you would rather put your effort into actually running projects for youth in care, rather than running an organization. You will have to weigh the costs of being a charity against the amount of money you can raise solely by having charitable status to decide whether it is worth it for you or not.

Remember that you don't need to do all of this alone. There are many organizations that have been around for a long time and can help you to avoid making some of the mistakes that they have in the past.

Taking the time to create your Board, committees and your mission statement will help keep things organized, legit and make your ideas become realities.

Hiring, Training and Evaluating Staff



My name is Nicole Herbert (many know me as Spanky) and I am not only a former youth in care but also a former Local Development Officer with the Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks. I have worked at the FBCYICN for about four years and was a member and Executive member for about two years prior to becoming a staff.

My experiences with the FBCYICN have included the development, implementation and evaluation of the hiring, training and evaluation of new staff (and volunteers). As well, I've been involved in the support, supervision, discipline and dismissal of staff.

Because the FBCYICN became a registered non-profit society with by-laws, and its staff are members of a union, this chapter will probably be pretty formal to most of you. In our network, we've learned from a lot of mistakes, that it's better to try to do the right thing the first time, than to try to fix stuff that goes wrong later! Take what you need and feel free to add your own ideas!

Networking can be extremely difficult and frustrating and it requires a lot of time devoted to it. So many of us are struggling just to keep our lives on track that no matter how much we want to help, we just can't volunteer as much time as it takes. And sometimes we have the time but we don't have the resources to get to where we need to go or buy the things we need to keep the network going.

Hiring, training and evaluating is all about getting the work done. By asking people about their knowledge, skills and abilities, we get to know them better. And, the better we know someone, the better we know what they're good at.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Job Descriptions
- Eligibility Requirements and Criteria
- Posting the Position
- The Hiring Committee
- Telephone Interviews
- Short Listing
- In-Person Interviews
- Selection of Successful Applicant
- Orientation
- Training
- Evaluation

WHAT'S ON THE DISK?

- Job Descriptions
- Job Posting
- Staff Evaluation

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job descriptions are important so that everyone knows what to expect. The job description should be realistic and combine specific duties as well as general direction. The job description is a framework or guideline for day to day responsibilities.

When developing the job description, it is important to know what the group's goals and needs are. Think about questions like what do we want to do as a group and in the future, what do we need to make these things happen? Once the goals have been decided on, you're ready to talk about how to achieve them. Don't be afraid to be creative (just don't dream things up from a fantasy world where money grows on trees and young people stay in one place)! A good job description will clearly describe what the person does and how they are accountable to the group.

The following is an example of what's included in some of the job descriptions out there. You can use whatever pieces work for you and come up with the rest as it relates specifically to your own communities. You will find this and other job descriptions saved on the disk.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER:

- Initiates and supports the development of local youth in care networks.
- Identifies the needs, issues and ideas of youth in and from care through consultation with youth in and from care (and some adults), and incorporates them into the work of the organization.
- Establishes and maintains effective relationships with members, government officials, service providers, caregivers and the community, representing and promoting the organization's programs/services, value to the community and resource needs.
- Strives to create a fun and informative environment through planning, developing and implementing social, recreational and educational activities.
- Provides support, information and referrals to youth, parents, service providers, caregivers and the community, on a wide variety of issues regarding youth.
- Systemically advocates the views of youth in and from care and participates on various task forces (appointed to research, report and recommend on specific issue), working groups (formed to work on parts of a specific issue) and on other project committees as a representative of the organization.
- Prepares or oversees the preparation of reports, proposals, presentations and press releases and assists in the development of organizational communication strategies (sharing of information and tasks between staff and the membership i.e. newsletters, memos and staff reports).

Hiring, training and evaluating is all about getting the work done.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS/CRITERIA

When determining the eligibility requirements for a position, you need to be very careful about discrimination (age, gender and culture are common factors for discrimination). The criteria you use should be justified by your membership base or target group and the expectations of the position, and always be in the organization's best interests.

There are three main areas to think about when developing the eligibility requirements for a position: age, education and experience. With these three things in mind, develop criteria based on knowledge, skills and abilities needed to do the job.

Age Considerations:

- Your network's membership guidelines (for example, the FBCYCN's members are between the ages of 14 and 24 (retirement age is our 25th Birthday!)
- The duties and expectations of the position (for example, if the person will be required to travel extensively or have cheque signing authority).

Educational Considerations:

- Education becomes important in terms of demonstrated skills and to some extent, knowledge. Reading and writing and a high level of comprehension are important to most networking jobs. Because things change so fast and all sorts of people want input and feedback from networks, a staff person needs to be able to read and understand lots of different kinds of information. And writing letters, proposals and reports is also a fundamental part of our work, so the staff need to be able to construct language appropriately on paper. (Generally, these basic tools can be obtained through completion of Grade 12 or its equivalent.)

- Depending on the position you are trying to fill, post secondary education or specialized courses may be required. (For example, someone may be required to do specific things like fundraising, supervising other staff, working with computers, project management, or conflict resolution.)

Experiential Considerations:

- It is very important to decide what life experiences are required to do a good job in each position. Relating to and understanding the needs, issues and ideas of youth in and from care is the key.
- Because networks believe that by sharing our experiences about our care we grow past them on our life long journey towards healing, it is important to have come from a place of understanding. Although youth in and from care have diverse experiences, they also share a common bond unlike no other – we've all been through it and by coming together we are not alone. (Most networks talk about being run by youth for youth in and from government care, but some hire youth and/or adults with no care experience. This is a difficult situation to explain, so your best bet is to make a decision amongst your group and be able to justify it.)

Anyone who is going to be working directly with children and/or youth (may also be required of volunteers) must also have a criminal records check done (preferably prior to beginning the position) to protect your network and the young people involved. A criminal records check is a process where past charges and convictions are referenced and a determination is made as to whether or not any of the offenses give reason why the applicant cannot work in a specific position. You can obtain a records check through a community police station for a fee.

POSTING THE POSITION (Call for Applications):

Get the word out…tell as many people as possible that you're hiring, so you have lots of potential applicants to choose from. And send out the information early enough for potential applicants to put together their resume, cover letter and references (as well as any other information you require them to include).

Circulation is one of two factors to consider. Send a clear and informative document out to your members, support people and funders. Also send the information to organizations or agencies that work with youth in and from care, foster care organizations, child welfare offices, universities, colleges and community centers. Ask these organizations to both post the information where potential applicants will see it and to circulate the information internally (give a copy to all staff with a note to distribute it to their clients or include it in their newsletters).

The second factor is the time frame of posting to hiring to starting. It is important to give applicants enough time to put together all of the information you require of them and hopefully for them to take the opportunity to find out more about what the network does and what the job may entail. Our experience has taught us that sending the posting out one month prior to your desired interview date(s) and then re-sending the information out about 1 to 2 weeks prior to the desired interview date(s) is reasonable.

ALWAYS have a back-up plan. Decide on how many applications you need to do a hiring process and if you don't receive enough to compare between, or what you receive just barely qualifies, you will probably need to re-post.

Make sure that someone is available to answer questions during the application process. This person needs to be able to describe what the organization does and what the position will be responsible for doing. Quite often, this will help weed out people who aren't eligible before they apply. It will also give you a brief introduction to some of the applicants (first impressions are important in our work).

Sample Job Posting/Call for Applications (this is saved on disk):

Job Posting/Call for Applications

Title: Office Assistant, Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks

Term: Starts January15th, 2000 (regular, full-time)

Location: New Westminster, British Columbia (Canada)

Primary Duties:

- Performs telephone and reception duties.
- Prepares and processes standard documents.
- Provides typing support to other members of the team.
- Maintains accurate information on database.
- Operates a variety of office equipment.
- Maintains office space, equipment and supplies.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must have successfully completed grade 12 or equivalent.
- Must be no younger than 16 and no older than 24 years.
- Must have "in care (of government)" experience.
- Must have demonstrated computer skills on applicable software.

Please send resume with cover letter and references to:
(include contact name, address, phone, fax and e-mail)

Deadline for application packages is:
(include the full date and time of day that the process closes)

Immediately following the closing date, weed out any of the applicants that don't meet your eligibility requirements. It is a good idea to contact these people to let them know that they are not being considered for the position, based on the eligibility criteria. (That way, these people don't pester you later on.)

At this time, you also need to contact any applicants who didn't submit all of the required information, ask them why they haven't submitted the piece(s) and determine whether or not you are willing to accept it late. (Sometimes good applicants have had difficulty getting their references to follow through on time etc.)

THE HIRING COMMITTEE

Selection of the Hiring Committee is a very important part of legitimizing the process. Participants selected for the hiring committee should be easily justifiable. In our experience, we have had at least two staff members – representing the actual work requirements and experience, at least one member – representing the board (youth membership) and an "outside of the office" perspective, and one adult from the Advisory Committee – to assist and support the youth hiring committee members and provide another outside perspective.

Also important to remember in this process is to keep a record of each stage. The application package, telephone interview questions and answers, in-person interview questions and answers and any other related information, should all be kept together for each applicant. Hiring Committee notes should be as objective and clear as possible. As well, it is very important to maintain a high level of confidentiality. (You must be able to justify your decisions – sometimes unsuccessful applicants, or others, ask for a review of the process.)

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Once you have identified all of the eligible applicants, you are ready to develop telephone interview questions. The purpose of the telephone interview is to clarify any information included in their application package, get more information about their experience and ensure they are aware of what they are applying for. It is also an opportunity to let your instincts go to work.

During the telephone interviews, you should clearly record the questions you've asked and the answers given by the applicant. This is important because you need to share this information with the rest of the Hiring Committee, so that it can be used to help in the decision-making process. It is also important to describe the hiring process to the applicant at this time. Let them know what's happening, and if they get an in-person interview, when can they expect the interview to take place. Be sure to answer any questions the applicant may have at this time and assure them they will be contacted regardless of the outcome.

Sample Questions:

- How long were you in care for?
- What kinds of care were you in? (i.e. foster care, group homes, custody centers, mental health)
- Do you feel you are in a stable situation and function well independently?

- What leads you to believe this? Please explain.
- Have you attended any post secondary education or courses? Please list.
- Tell me about your last two jobs. (i.e. how long you were there, full or part time, reason(s) you left, what did you like and dislike about it, do you think they would they hire you again, your duties & responsibilities while there etc.)
- Tell me about your volunteer experience. (i.e. where, for how long, what were your duties, reason(s) for doing it.)
- References. (i.e. how long have you known them, what is the relationship.)

SHORT LISTING

After the telephone interviews, it's time to narrow down your choices. The idea behind this first short listing is to determine who is qualified for the position. Any applicant who meets all of the eligibility requirements and handled the telephone interview appropriately should be scheduled for an in-person interview.

For those whose experiences or attitudes don't mesh well with the principles and values of the organization, exclude them from the running at this time. Similarly, an applicant that was clearly unable to communicate effectively during the telephone interview, should also be disqualified.

Now, you are ready to call the applicants and either inform them they are regrettably out of the running at this time or that you would like to schedule them for an in-person interview.

IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

The purpose of the in-person interview is to determine whether or not the applicant has the fundamental knowledge, skills and abilities to do the job. It is also to determine whether or not the applicant's values and beliefs fit well with the organization's own principles.

When designing your in-person interview questions, it is important to incorporate the following three parts: values and beliefs, knowledge and process skills, and practical abilities.

Developing questions and tests for the in-person interview is very, very important to the success of the process. Both the questions and tests need to clearly reflect the expectations of the position and the experiences of previous (or current) staff.

As well, if the applicant is known to any member(s) of the Hiring Committee, questions regarding their experience of the applicant(s) may be required. For example, if a member of the Hiring Committee has any concerns about an applicant, those concerns need not only to be addressed but also tested fairly and compared to other applicants.

Therefore, any questions developed specifically for one applicant, must be asked of all of the applicants. This will help to prevent favoritism and/or personal judgments from interfering in the objectivity of the process.

Before getting into the questions, it is important to set out the ground rules. The Hiring Committee needs to have decided on the process for the interview and must explain it to the applicant. (i.e. How will the questions be asked, what types of questions there are, how long the interview will take etc.) It is also really important to let the applicant know that they are welcome to ask questions for clarity during the interview, but that the Hiring Committee will NOT give any tips or hints about how to answer.

In our experience at the FBCYICN, breaking up the in-person interview into the following four parts has been quite effective: preview questions, basic questions, scenarios and practical tests.

Preview Questions:

- Please tell us about your care experience.
- To work in this position, you must pass a criminal records check. Can you think of any reason(s) why you may not pass a records check?
- Is there anything about your past, present or future that you think COULD in any way, interfere with your work here?

Basic Questions (Based on a Development Position):

- What life and work experiences have you had that you think have helped prepare you to take on this job?
- What do you think are the most pressing issues facing youth in and from care today?
- We all have gifts and roadblocks. Please give us three examples of each of yours.
- Please describe your "triggers" and how you deal with them.
- Please give us some examples of how you might try to get more youth participation in the Network.
- What do you do when you're stressed and/or overwhelmed? How do you balance work and the rest of your life?
- How do we know you will be a positive influence on the youth and adults we work with?

Scenarios:

- This position is about 1/3 time in the office and about 2/3 time on the road. If you were on your way to Saskatoon to help a small group of youth get a local network started, what would you do? (Who would you meet with and what would you organize?)
- You're the only representative of the Network at a conference in Seattle, when another youth becomes angry and aggressive towards you after a workshop you both participated in. How do you handle the situation?
- We've hired you on and you're about 4 months into your 6 month probationary period. Since you've been hired, it's pretty clear that you and another staff member aren't getting along for some reason. Both of you are getting more and more frustrated with each other and it has started to effect the rest of the team. What do you do?

- You're facilitating a focus group of about 13 youth. Each person is sharing a little bit about why they think they came into care. One of the participants talks about her brother sexually abusing her. She gets really upset and starts to cry. You try to console her, but the tears just keep on coming. How do you handle the situation?
- You're in Ottawa at a child welfare meeting to give input on youth issues. You are the only obviously young person in the room and it's clear that your opinions are not only not being valued, but they're practically ignoring you. What do you do?

Practical Tests:

- Choose one issue from your own in care experiences and draft a letter to the Director of Child Welfare. The letter should describe why the issue is important to you and what you think can and/or should be done to change this issue for other youth in care.
  1. Start up computer.
  2. Compose and type document.
  3. Edit and format document.
  4. Save document.
  5. Print document.
  6. Close and shut down computer.

The purpose of this practical test is to look for the following skills:
-computer program knowledge
-typing speed and accuracy
-writing ability (spelling, grammar, clarity of the message, flow, tone, appropriateness, etc.)

This test should be timed from start to finish and graded as all questions have been graded.

SELECTION OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT

Once all of the applicants have completed their in-person interviews, it's time to grade their answers, check their references and determine who is best-suited for the position. To grade their responses to each of your questions, be objective, be fair and know what you expected from them. Each basic question, scenario and practical test should be graded as well as their suitability for the position.

The instincts of those on the Hiring Committee is very important. Based on our involvement with them Network and our experiences of the work to be done, we need to rely on our intuition. Therefore, our impressions of the applicants need high consideration.

Now that you have figured out who's in the lead, check their references. Ask their references to describe their relationship with the applicant, how long they have known each other and what the reference considers the applicant's strengths to be. Also ask if there are any areas that the reference believes the applicant still needs to work on and if appropriate, ask if they would hire the applicant again.

If the applicant's references check out, it is time to give them the good news! Draft a Letter of Appointment to the successful applicant, stating that you wish to hire them for the position at this time. The letter should include the start date, term of employment, probationary period, pay increments, and any pre-employment conditions (for example; successful completion of records check, obtaining a driver's license etc.).

It is also time to inform the remaining unsuccessful applicants. This is a very delicate task, as the goal should be to keep desired applicants involved in the Network, even though they didn't get this job. In our experience, it is best to inform the unsuccessful applicants in person (or over the phone when doing so in person isn't possible). Some may require this in writing as well.

Try to keep this on a positive level. Describe the qualities that you were looking for and the general areas where the applicant didn't provide enough information to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, abilities or experiences. Be honest without being cut-throat. (Helpful areas to consider: communication skills, problem-solving/conflict resolution skills, planning and preparation skills, follow-through, personal development and boundaries.)

ORIENTATION

Orientation is very important when bringing on new staff and/or volunteers. It is their opportunity to familiarize with their work space, their Network and its supports, available resources and their co-workers. It is also your opportunity to learn about the new person's learning and working styles.

The orientation should be an introduction process. A tour of the work space should occur immediately, including: step by step information on office equipment, delegation of personal work space, introduction to the filing and information storage system. As well, a new person should receive an introduction to the structure and mandate of the organization, and an introduction to staff policies (rules... claiming hours/expenses), procedures (how to... open/close the office) and/or protocols (what to do if... you or a youth get hurt on the job).

Policies, procedures and protocols are useful tools for guiding the work of staff and for keeping those staff and volunteers accountable not only to each other, but also to the board, membership and employer.

The introductions need to include who the contacts are in varying circumstances, where relative information can be found, and some historical information about the development of the organization. Basic direction in case of emergencies is also important at this time. (Please remember that you're dealing with a person – someone who gets overwhelmed with lots of information, who forgets stuff sometimes and who will need lots of patience and support if they're going to fit in and get the work done!)

The key to a good orientation process is lots of talking! Constantly remind the new person to ask questions and don't be afraid to ask them questions right back. Try to get to know them so that you can figure out what they may need in terms of training and support. Ask them what they're good at, what they enjoy doing and what they think they need to get better at.

The Key to a good orientation process is lots of talking!

...the most important training a Network can provide is hands-on experience.

TRAINING

Once you have had some time to figure out what the strengths and areas needing improvement are, find the training that fits them best. The new person's learning style should be taken into consideration if you don't want to waste time, money and energy on them.

Training should be tied directly to duties and responsibilities of their position. The hiring process should have taken care of the basic or fundamental skills, so training should really be focused on specialized knowledge and skills required to do the job, or as a means to refresh specific abilities. Examples of common training areas include:

-conflict resolution	-communication
-fundraising	-project management
-public relations/media	-publishing/design
-first aid/self defense	-computers

-issues (aboriginal/multicultural, sexuality, literacy, etc.)

Training doesn't necessarily have to be formal either. It can be anything from university or college programs or courses, workshops, seminars, lectures or one-to-one meetings.

But perhaps the most important training a Network can provide is hands-on experience. Get the new staff person into their position and doing the work as quickly as possible. Not everything at once, but piece by piece. Whether it's in the office answering phones and typing documents or out in a community meeting with adults and interacting with young people, it's all going to get them to a place of independence a lot faster. Provide lots of opportunities to test out and share what they're learning.

Keep in mind that the key ingredient to a successful start and productive work within a Network is support! Be available to answer questions and give feedback. Taking the time to talk about what's happening, why the Network is involved the way it is, who the players are and what the desired outcome is, will help the new person to develop an understanding of the work a Network does. Feedback, whether positive or negative should be constructive or helpful. Give the new person opportunities to succeed rather than fail. And when they make mistakes, turn it into opportunities to learn and grow.

EVALUATION

After you've hired someone to do a job, you need to determine how well they're doing that job. Regular evaluations will help to protect the Network and/or the person who was hired. Evaluating someone's performance will identify their strengths and areas needing improvement. Ultimately, the evaluations can be used to design a training program for each staff person or volunteer, motivate that person to achieve improved performance or give justifiable cause for dismissal.

Evaluations should be conducted by the Team Leader/Director (or senior staff person). Each member of the team that works directly with the staff person or volunteer being evaluated should be included in the process. All of the

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When developing the evaluation tools, it is very important to design questions that directly relate to the employee's actual performance, as expected in their job description. Marking the evaluations is key in terms of objectivity and fairness. The FBCYICN has found that a scale model of grading each question has been effective and that a pre-determined minimum passing grade must be obtained at each stage of the probationary period.

The probationary period may vary depending on the position within a Network. The FBCYICN has a standard probationary period of 6 months for all positions. An evaluation occurs at 3 months, 6 months, 9 months and 1 year (then at a minimum of every year). Pay increments depend on successful completion of each evaluation.

As it is important to be objective in the evaluation process, the person conducting the interviews must get clear justification for each mark, from all those being interviewed. The FBCYICN marks answers based on the following scale:

Most of the Time (consistently) = 3 points
Some of the Time (inconsistently) = 2 points
Rarely (very problematic) = 1 point

In soliciting comments for the evaluations, it is also important to get as much information as possible. Specific examples will go a long way in terms of justification. As well, there needs to be a comments section following the questions piece to allow for remarks that may not have fit into any of the areas already covered by the evaluation.

On the next page is an example of an evaluation form used by the FBCYICN for the Local Development Officer.

Local Development Officer Evaluation: ____________________

Interviewee: ______________________ Date: ______________

Questions	Marks	Comments
1. Manages time and prioritizes tasks effectively and efficiently.	_____	____________________
2. Generally communicates clearly and effectively and is able to articulate the mandate.	_____	____________________
3. Takes direction and feedback well from other members of the team.	_____	____________________
4. Demonstrates adequate planning skills in preparation for meetings, presentations and development trips.	_____	____________________
5. Makes well-informed and logical decisions based on not only what's best for the team but also for the organization.	_____	____________________
6. Manages crisis situations appropriately.	_____	____________________
7. Manages work-related stress appropriately.	_____	____________________
8. Demonstrates an ability to make others comfortable and encourages their participation.	_____	____________________

This constructive feedback needs to include both the positive and negative and should directly but anonymously reflect the comments of the team.

After completing all of the evaluation interviews, it is imperative to give both oral and written feedback. This constructive feedback needs to include both the positive and negative and should directly but anonymously reflect the comments of the team.

The purpose of oral feedback is to answer questions, clarify any outstanding issues and determine the next steps. Written feedback acts as a record of the process. The person being evaluated must have the opportunity to agree or disagree with the feedback they're given and should also utilize space provided for their own comments about the process and/or outcomes. The original document should remain in their personnel file, and a copy given to the person being evaluated.

From this feedback a plan of action should be developed that addresses the strengths and areas needing improvement. The plan should have measurable outcomes tied directly to the job description and should cover the period of time specifically leading up to the next evaluation process. (Use the feedback as an opportunity to reward improvement and further motivate staff!)

So, there you have it… a step by step guide to hiring, training and evaluating staff and volunteers. What is here is pretty formal, so feel free to tone it down to what you and your group need. Because Networks change with the youth in and from care involved in them, this process must also change to meet your group's needs.

Final words...

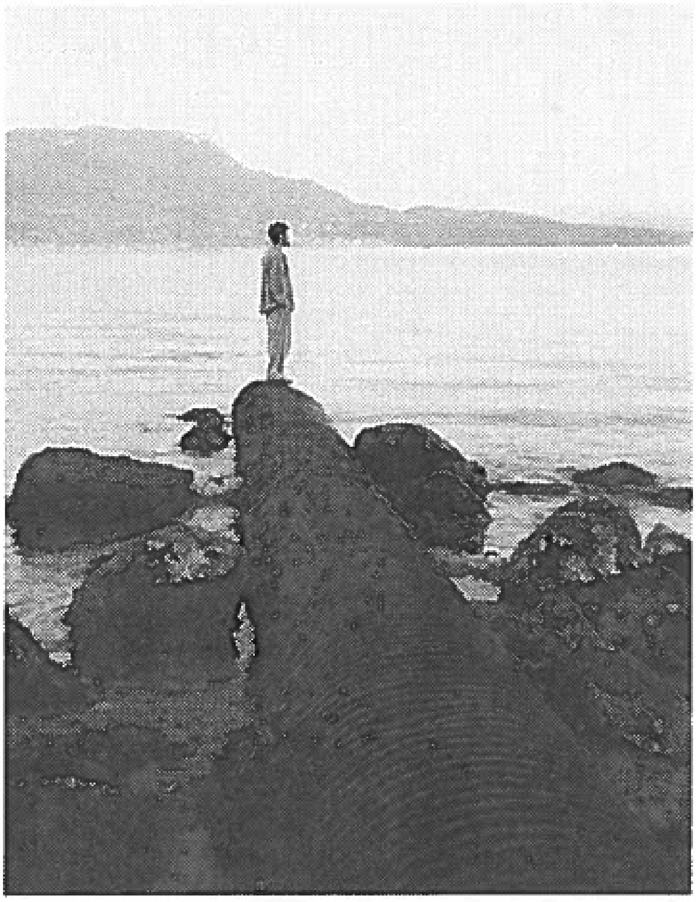
Welcome to the finish line! Congratulations on getting through it all. Now get out your H2 pencils so we can test you...kidding. The real test will be putting this knowledge to work, but don't fret. Expect to make some mistakes. Expect to get frustrated when things don't move as fast as you want them to and expect people to let you down now and than. But you can also expect so many more rewards.

Just recently I read Ernest Hemingway's novel, "A Moveable Feast". The very first quote in the book reads:

"If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris...then wherever you go, for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast."

That is what the network has been for me. I didn't actually realize it until just before it was time for me to leave the network. That's when all of the memories came flooding back and I was reminded of just how amazing it has all been. I know that no matter where I go in this world, I will always carry these experiences and memories that I have gained through working with my peers. It has made me a stronger person and someone I can be proud of.

If you take one thing from getting involved as many others are, you will learn that you are worthy of things like trust, being trusted, responsibility, and respect. These are things that we all need in order to grow. These things may not come from our birth or adoptive families, but they can come from other people. This does not make them substitutes or less important. It makes them special, because we have chosen each other to care about and look out for.



Never doubt your potential or worth. Never limit yourself because of what others say. Never settle for less because of where you come from. Always be true to yourself and your convictions. Keep these things in mind and you will find your way, like those before you.

And remember to stay in touch with other networks across the country. Lean on one another for support and advice. We may be miles away and living under different rules, but we're all doing this for the same reasons. To make life better for ourselves and each other.

Good luck, and thanks for the memories...

Yvonne (Yve) Andrews