



This resource was developed to cover some of the key issues that Statewide Family Network Grantees face as they work to support the development of youth-run organizations. The information contained in this document comes from Youth MOVE National and from direct feedback from focus groups conducted to gather this information. While the guide provides suggestions, youth groups differ from community to community, and this guide may not contain all of the support your community needs. This document encourages creativity, innovation, and staying true to being youth driven.

Governance

How should youth organizations be established and operated – as part of the Statewide Family Network (SFN) grantee organization or as a separate 501(c)(3)?

Youth groups all start from the same place. Youth come together for a common goal or purpose. These youth may form a group and then aspire to expand their group into a youth organization, much like the family organizations they may stem from.

The decision of how to establish and operate a youth organization ultimately resides with the members of the youth group. Adult allies, however, can present various options to the youth group, based on the family organization's available resources.

Option 1: Operate as a program/group of the family organization.

This may be the best option while the youth group is developing. The group can count on the family organization to provide valuable resources, such as printed material, meeting space, and networking connections. The family organization is responsible for allocating finances to ensure the group has ongoing support.

Option 2: Operate as a subsidiary of the family organization.

With this option, developing youth groups that have chosen to have a board of directors maintain some

autonomy, while benefiting from the affiliation with the family organization. Family organizations house the group and manage its finances. The youth organization/subsidiary is responsible for the governance of their organization, as well as for ensuring that funding is secured to support staff and programmatic needs.



Option 3: Operate as an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Once a youth group has made the decision to be independent of the family organization, the family organization should offer assistance to the youth organization by establishing a strategic plan or business plan to guide the youth group through the process. Once the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recognizes the group as a nonprofit organization, the family organization no longer has any obligation to the youth group, fiduciary or otherwise. Youth groups should be well informed about this before submitting an application to become recognized by the IRS because the board of directors identified on the application will have legal responsibility for the organization.

What challenges may arise in establishing a youth-run organization?

As with any adult-youth relationship, challenges may arise. SFN grantees should keep in mind that although the family organization supports the youth group and helps it grow, the family organization is not entitled to make all decisions for the youth group

or determine its future. Some of the challenges that may arise are:

- Youth group wanting independence prematurely or without a plan
- Youth group cannot secure funding to continue functioning
- Youth in group may not recognize the needs for policies and procedures
- Adult or family organizations may be overbearing about how the youth group should be run
- Various disagreements between the family organization and youth group may arise

Take a proactive approach to addressing challenges by establishing a mediation process or memorandum of understanding for conflict resolution. This allows youth and family organizations to feel that there is a fair process in place to overcome obstacles that arise. Family organizations should bear in mind that if a youth organization is its own nonprofit organization, the family organization should not interfere with the youth organization, but rather be supportive, in a mentoring or advisory role.

Should a youth advisory board be set up when a SFN grantee is working with a youth-run organization, and, if so, how should the advisory board operate?

A youth advisory board may be beneficial to the SFN grantee because it allows the family organization to have authentic youth voice. It offers the youth group a way to help the family organization expand its work with youth. Bear in mind that a youth group and a family organization's youth advisory board are not the same. To form a youth advisory board, the family organization should draft a request that sets forth the duties, responsibilities, and other details. The family organization should then discuss the written request with the youth group to see if the group can provide members to serve on the family organization's youth advisory board. The family organization should consistently acknowledge individuals on their youth advisory board as members of the youth group.

How each youth advisory board functions depends on the needs of the family organization. Depending on the circumstances, the youth advisory board could represent a youth perspective in contacts with the community. At times, members of the youth

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advisory board may be voting members of the family organization. The youth advisory board and the family organization should proactively work out the details of their relationship.

Are there resources to share with SFN grantees that are working with youth leaders to set up and work with a youth organization (e.g., model bylaws, mission and vision statements, and memorandum of understanding)?

There is a host of information that SFN grantees may find helpful in this area. For example, Youth MOVE National (YMN) developed a *Chapter Tool-kit* and a *First Year Road Map* for youth groups accepted as chapters but still in development. YMN encourages youth groups that would like to become YMN chapters to apply for chapter status so that they can benefit from multiple guides on governance and functioning. The guides include: *Developing Bylaws*, *Creating Awareness*, *Fundraising*, *Establishing a Speaker's Bureau*, *Starting a Writing Team*, and *Peer Support*.

Financial Issues

What are best practices in addressing fiscal issues for youth-run organizations working with SFN grantee organizations?

When a youth-run organization is a part of a SFN grantee, it may not have its own operational budget, and its operations may be a part of the family organization's larger budget. This could mean that the youth group fits within one line-item or that resources for the youth group are included in several sections of the budget.

Youth leaders need to know what funds are available to the youth group. We recommend that SFN grantees help the youth to set up a budget to properly plan for revenue and expenses. This allows youth groups to practice sound fiscal procedures, so that if they are interested in becoming independent, they some experience with fiscal issues. The youth need to be aware of the financial resources needed to operate their group.

Youth groups that depend on an SFN grantee as their fiscal agent should have a memorandum of understanding or written policy regarding the management of funds. When a SFN grantee provides fiscal management for a youth group, the family organization may be responsible for receiving revenue, approving expenditures, conducting audits, and all the other responsibilities of a fiscal agent. The SFN grantee should, however, develop a monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual reporting system so that the youth group can be involved with the financial activity that affects it. Any income generated directly by the youth group should be revenue that the youth group decides how to spend, as long as the funds are within a pre-determined budget approved by the youth group.



Some tips to assist in the development of a fiscal relationship between the youth group and the family organization include:

- Assign a family organization manager to oversee check approvals, budget approvals, audits, and similar measures and be responsible for reporting to youth group on a regular basis.
- Invite youth to be a part of fiscal and reporting procedures to introduce and mentor them in appropriate financial processes.
- Inform the youth group of their ability to make financial decisions, including changes in budget items, based on the agreement between the youth group and the SFN grantee.

How can SFN grantees best support youth groups in getting their financial footing to grow into financially secure organizations?

Once a youth group is established and has a core base of members, the responsibility for its maintenance should be gradually assumed by the group. This will relieve some of the strain on the family organization

in these tough economic times. In the same manner that the SFN grantee mentors the youth on financial issues as they develop their group, advising and planning for the youth group's independence should take place from the start. Independence does not necessarily signify that the youth group will move on and no longer be a part of the family organization. Independence could mean that the youth group, with mentoring, writes its own grant applications; seeks its own funding; or brings in revenue from their own fundraising activities, consulting, and/or product development.

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Again, an agreement between the SFN grantee and the youth group should include detailed information on the financial arrangements between the two organizations. The SFN grantee should let the youth group know not only how much financial assistance, if any, is allocated to them, but also how long that support will be available. Even on a national level, Youth MOVE National planned for its independence, knowing that financial support from the parent organization was only guaranteed through a certain date.

How can SFN grantees best make the financial condition of both organizations strong and achieve a win-win?

If the SFN grantee and its affiliated youth group can come to fair terms for partnership, both organizations may financially benefit. Here are some ideas to consider:

- **Grants:** By partnering, both organizations can expand their ability to apply for grants. Family organizations may have the financial expertise and track record needed to obtain a grant, while youth groups may be knowledgeable about the work to be performed. The SFN grantee could help the youth group to apply for grants under its nonprofit status and benefit by charging overhead or an administrative fee for managing the grant.

- **Consulting:** The youth group could agree to partner with the SFN grantee as part of both organizations' consulting or provision of technical assistance, enabling youth to reach a wider audience of potential engagements. The SFN grantee could benefit by charging a fee for managing the logistics and financial aspects of the consulting process.
- **Contracts:** SFN grantees can choose to manage contracts for a youth group if that youth group does not have 501(c)3 status with the IRS. Overhead or administrative fees may be charged to these contracts.

Sustainability

What are some of the best practices for long-term sustainability?

Develop a sustainability plan while you are developing the youth group. Discuss and decide the activities the youth group will be involved in, how the group will support itself financially, when it will become independent, and in what capacity that independence will function. SFN grantees should work with youth to build relationships and a mutually beneficial partnership that will persist after the youth group becomes an independent youth organization.

What does sustainability mean? It means keeping the youth organization's doors open, even after the SFN grantee organization can no longer support it. Youth MOVE National used the time they spent with the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health to develop their own portfolio and expand its products and services to attract funding. Any youth group could do the same while under a SFN grantee. Once the youth group secures funding to sustain themselves, the SFN could continue to benefit as their fiscal agent.

Activities

Below is list of activities undertaken by selected youth-run organizations around the country. This list may help you to learn more about opportunities to work with youth in a meaningful way:

- concert series
- open mic/poetry slam
- flash mob
- balloon release
- art show

- "Photovoice"/photography show
- public service announcements
- rallies
- bracelet/wristband campaign
- resource fairs
- newsletters
- webinars
- visits to legislatures

Examples of the work that Youth MOVE Chapters and members have done can be found on the Youth MOVE National website at <http://www.youthmovenational.org>.



While it is up to the organization, many youth-led organizations may choose to become Youth Move Chapters. Below is a list of the benefits this would offer:

Youth MOVE National provides the following benefits to its chapters:

- *Chapter Toolkit*, includes a dozen guides and the *First Year Road Map*
- Reduced fee in-person engagements/trainings/consulting
- On-demand telephone-based technical assistance
- Inclusion in quarterly newsletter
- Option to be involved in National Subcommittees
- Members-only access to website intranets
- Exclusive invitations to participate in national work groups, conferences, advocacy days, and more

How can SFN grantees best support the work of youth-run organizations, while allowing the chapters to grow and thrive on their own?

The role of the SFN grantee is to mentor and advise the leadership of the youth group during the group's development. The best way to achieve a balanced relationship between the SFN grantee and the youth organization is to establish clear, agreed-upon boundaries that are documented in writing.

Adults who attend or chaperone youth group meetings should bear in mind that the youth should be given the opportunity to conduct their groups as they see fit to achieve their mission and vision.

Youth MOVE National recommends adopting bylaws, policies, a code of conduct, and any other procedure to ensure the safety of all youth and ensure the family organization is also protected. SFN grantees should then trust the youth groups to make their own operational decisions, run their own meetings, and plan their own events, as long as they are within the established parameters. Adults who attend or chaperone youth group meetings should bear in mind that the youth should be given the opportunity to conduct their groups as they see fit to achieve their mission and vision.

SFN grantees have raised some issues and concerns related to working with youth organizations – parental involvement and contact, confidentiality, safeguards related to social networking and what is disclosed publicly on the Internet and more. Is there an effective way to address these issues?

It is important that all parties have conversations to address these issues as early as possible. Confidentiality contracts for youth and adult allies are recommended. Media releases are important if the youth group plans to develop a website or highlight their work on social networking sites. We recommend establishing a written code of conduct that describes the consequences of violating confidentiality or other essential rules or policies.

If all youth group participants sign a document acknowledging they understand and agree to abide by these rules or policies, issues can be dealt with in a fair manner for all parties involved. Parents should be invited to read, experience, and witness the positive work that comes from the SFN grantee and youth group relationship, while keeping in mind that youth desire a safe and private environment in which parents are present only when the group decides to welcome them.

More information about how to support youth organizations can be found by contacting Youth MOVE National, youthmove@ffemh.org, or (240) 403-1901) or the Statewide Family and Consumer Networks Technical Assistance Center at <http://www.policyresearchinc.org/fcnhome/> or 518-439-7415 Ext. 5243.

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