

LIKE NOW

Changing the **Future** today
with **Youth Advisory Boards**



An Introduction to the

Ewing Marion
Kauffman
Foundation **youth
advisory
board**

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WHAT TO DO WITH \$200,000 A YEAR?

I never thought a multi-billion dollar foundation would be an important part of my life. I never thought I would travel across the United States and participate in conferences, give a Powerpoint presentation to a national executive board, or be the subject of a program on ABC's World News Tonight with Peter Jennings. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation has provided me with amazing opportunities, responsibilities and greater respect for youth service.

I applied for the Youth Advisory Board, interviewed and was selected in my sophomore year. The Youth Advisory Board (or YAB) is comprised of 25-30 high school students from the Greater Kansas City area. We transcend boundaries — inner-city, suburbs, rural communities and different racial, religious and ethnic backgrounds. YAB functions as a grantmaking board, which receives \$200,000 each year in funding from the Kauffman Foundation. We send requests for proposals to different area schools, organizations and church groups. These groups apply for up to \$10,000 to fund projects that are youth-led, youth-initiated, youth-involved and promote youth leadership.

The first Saturday of the month YAB reviews and discusses grant proposals. We read the proposals, decide if the project meets our requirements, fulfilling the mission statement of the Foundation. The Foundation gives me responsibilities and has confidence in my ability to make serious decisions. Grant requests cause fear, hope, doubt and promise because grants require risks. I have to consider the philosophy of the Foundation and my values and beliefs. These decisions reflect the board, myself and lives of youth. The support and trust of the Foundation and these years of experience has enabled me to make educated decisions.

One of my favorite grants was to the Stephanie Waterman Tennis Foundation, which is a program for inner-city kids. The children learn to play tennis and are tutored by high school students in reading and math. They complete the school studies before being allowed to play tennis. Six of these kids have flourished and now win USTA-sanctioned tournaments. They are thriving in school and have created lasting peer relationships.

The Kauffman Foundation has provided me with opportunities I never thought possible. Recently, the Youth Advisory Board was nationally recognized through an appearance on ABC's World News Tonight with Peter Jennings. ABC News also did a feature on youth helping other youth become involved in their community. My goal on the board is to help youth achieve the best and offer them the amazing opportunities I have been given. Perhaps one day, a girl from St. Vincent's Day Care who has played tennis and studied in school will sit in my chair and have the opportunity to participate in this amazing work, meet incredible people and help other youth to become powerful leaders.

Emily Jennings

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER
1998-2001

Emily Jennings (right) is pictured here with fellow Youth Advisory Board members Ryan McCord-Bey (center) and Jesus Chapa-Malacara (left) on National Youth Service Day, an annual day of service held each April.





LIKE Why ...

Offering Youth the Opportunity to Make a Difference

It all started with a few basic questions ...

What happens when you give young people real power to make positive changes? How do you channel the idealistic notions of youth into meaningful action? Do teenagers really want to become problem solvers in their communities? How can foundations and nonprofit organizations inspire leadership and responsibility among youth?

... and a fervent desire to get young people involved in community issues right NOW!

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation's search for answers led to a revolutionary concept — a unique forum to empower young people as philanthropists and promote opportunities for youth leadership. And so, in 1997, the Youth Development division of the Foundation established the Youth Advisory Board, or YAB, for short. At the time of conception, YAB was the only board of its kind that is part of a private foundation and operated only by youth.

At meetings held twice a month, energetic and committed young people gather together to engage in lively discussions about community needs and creating opportunities for youth in the metropolitan Kansas City area. But they do much more than talk ...

They ask. They listen. They learn. They become wiser, more sensitive and more tolerant. They act on their decisions by allocating thousands of dollars to community groups that strive to enrich the lives of urban youth. The idea is to involve young people in solving problems that affect their peers and to encourage other youth to give back to their community.

YAB is comprised of students, ages 14 to 19, representing 25-30 urban, suburban, rural, public and private high schools in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area. Their opinions and ideas reflect a rich diversity of experiences and lifestyles. These young people don't leave their differences at the door to the boardroom; they rely on them. A broad range of perspectives empowers the group to view people, issues and community needs in a new way. Especially when it's time to make decisions about the types of programs to fund.

Kauffman's YAB is showing the world and our community how young people can make positive things happen. Not only are they the leaders of tomorrow — they're already making a difference today! YAB was established:

- 1 To promote positive youth development by working **with** youth, not just **for** youth.
- 2 To help youth develop leadership, problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- 3 To strengthen positive perceptions about youth.
- 4 To foster community development.
- 5 To inform the Kauffman Foundation's Youth Development division.

“YAB not only gives me the opportunity to make a change in our community, it also gives me experiences that I will use throughout my life. There are lots of organizations for youth, but very few that are actually led by youth. We're unique because every grant we fund must be an idea planned and carried out by youth themselves.”

— Jermaine Reed



The good news is that today's youth want to become involved! According to research conducted by the National Youth Volunteer Corps, more than 40,000 students throughout our nation give more than 500,000 hours of service each year. And the number of young people seeking volunteer opportunities is steadily increasing. We also know that service leads to sustained civic engagement.

However, opportunities that cultivate leadership skills among youth are scarce. Research conducted by the Kauffman Foundation suggests that while teens are eager to become active in their communities, very few volunteer projects engage youth in sustained leadership roles. Teens polled in the annual Kauffman Teen Survey study said it was often difficult to find meaningful and challenging volunteer roles that enable them to make a lasting difference in their communities. And they're right — organizations seldom look to youth for guidance or insight on important community issues. The truth is that in our nation, only one-fourth of 1 percent of individuals who serve on nonprofit boards are younger than 21 years old, and only 2 percent are between the ages of 21 and 29.

The Kauffman Foundation values the voice of young people. And helping youth succeed in life is one of the Foundation's primary missions. By launching the YAB, the Kauffman Foundation was able to meet the needs of youth in a unique way. Not only does YAB present leadership opportunities for teens; it also helps the Foundation gain fresh perspective on the work we do. The voices, ideas and experiences of young people make it possible for our adult staff to better understand the issues and needs of youth. The Kauffman YAB does much more than talk about their ideas; they are entrusted with the power and responsibility to appropriate significant Foundation resources to community causes.

“I want to make a difference in our community today. As members of the Kauffman Foundation’s YAB, we have the opportunity to impact our peers in a new way.”

— Jill Bratt

By inviting young people to serve on a youth board, the Foundation is able to work with young people and for young people — it’s a dynamic partnership!

To be successful and effective, the Kauffman Foundation believes a youth board should:

- be made up of youth, with adult advisor(s);
- look like the community it serves;
- have access to training in leadership and grantmaking;
- have decision-making authority;
- have a voice among other young people;
- have respect and trust from its parent organization.

LIKE How... Getting the Kauffman YAB Up and Running

Forming a youth board is not a simple task. It took months of research, planning and fact finding. In the beginning, the challenge was to define our focus, develop a structure for the board and address operational issues. Again, we started by asking some important questions ...

- What do we expect the board to accomplish?
- Are there local or national models for youth advisory boards that may guide our efforts?
- Who will serve as Foundation advisors for the board?
- How will board members be recruited and what will be the criteria for selection?
- What types of training programs will be offered to help board members understand their role?
- How can we make the Kauffman YAB a meaningful experience for youth?

... and then, awesome things began happening! Here’s the story.

The Kauffman Foundation formed a research and planning team to learn more about the needs of the community, review other youth board models, identify best practices in using youth boards and identify some of the goals a youth-led board might pursue. By the end of this process, the team had created a vision for Kauffman's YAB and made specific suggestions for launching the board.



OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The team decided YAB would be based on five principles:

- **Diversity.** A number of factors including ethnicity, race, geography of residence and socioeconomic level are considered when selecting board members. Candidates are selected because they have demonstrated desire to make a difference and potential to succeed. The board should reflect the diversity of Greater Kansas City.
- **Mentorship.** It's important to foster positive relationships between YAB members and Foundation associates. Adult advisors allow youth to lead and yet provide guidance to move the board toward successful grantmaking.
- **Empowerment.** When adults share power, the outcomes for youth are more meaningful. Young people need to be heard, valued and given the responsibility for action. The grant-making process teaches youth to be responsible stewards of the Foundation's resources.
- **Leadership.** The exchange of ideas among youth and adults can be a powerful catalyst for community action. YAB introduces new approaches to thinking and problem-solving that youth can take into their communities.
- **Youth grantmaking.** The YAB identifies opportunities, defends their rationale for funding a proposal and ultimately, makes decisions that impact the community. This forum also provides valuable information to the Foundation about the ideas and opinions of young people.

The Kauffman Foundation's YAB is composed of 25-30 students, enrolled in grades 9–12. They come from 25-30 urban, suburban and rural high schools located throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area. Board members are encouraged to serve for at least two years so they can gain exposure to a wide range of philanthropic endeavors. The Board meets at least twice each month — one weekday after school and one Saturday. Throughout the year, members also participate in service projects, site visits, training sessions and conferences.

“Historically, many organizations have worked for young people. Our focus is to work with young people so they're empowered to help themselves.”

— Bridget Hardgree, Program Associate, Kauffman Foundation

STAFF ADVISORS

“A good adult advisor must be the type of person who is content to coach and resists the impulse to do the work for the youth board.”

— Lynn Leonard, Senior Program Officer, Kauffman Foundation

Most YAB members come on board with plenty of passion for community causes. But to become fully prepared for their responsibilities, young people need coaches and mentors. At the Kauffman Foundation, two adult advisors provide resources and create experiences that promote understanding and unity among YAB members. The staff advisors don't direct the board's decision-making processes, but they do act as liaisons between the YAB and the Foundation's Youth Development division and Grants Administration department. Advisors facilitate the meetings by asking key questions as YAB members review grant proposals. They also coordinate meeting schedules and transportation arrangements. Staff advisors also travel with YAB members who are invited to speak at national conferences.

Kauffman's YAB is all about youth making decisions! Like athletes on a playing field, members of the YAB rely on the skills, instincts and experiences of their teammates to formulate a winning strategy. But sometimes it's easier to stay on track when a trusted coach is standing on the sidelines.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Getting the word out about opportunities to serve on YAB is a job shared by current board members, teachers, counselors, community organizations and Foundation staff. Our goal is to reach young people — as many as possible — who are looking for a chance to make a difference — today! In addition to word-of-mouth, our extensive database makes it possible to send posters, brochures and YAB recruitment kits to every high school in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area. We team up with youth-serving agencies, churches and neighborhood groups to deliver the message to potential candidates. Appealing recruitment tools are designed to spark curiosity among teens from all over the city.

“I learned about YAB from an older board member who attended my high school. Once I found out how involved YAB was in the community, and that teens were the ones making decisions, I was eager to apply.”

— Natalie Modzelewski





“I first found out about the Youth Advisory Board from a colorful poster in my school counselor’s office. There were also pamphlets with more information. In the pamphlet was an application to fill out. I wanted to be involved because I wanted my voice represented in my community, especially in deciding which programs to fund.”

— Elizabeth Hornbeck

Interested students are asked to complete an application. After a preliminary screening, YAB members and Foundation associates interview applicants and work together to select new YAB members. Throughout this process, the focus is on finding enthusiastic, action-oriented candidates who represent a variety of perspectives and show a desire to become involved in issues facing urban communities. Consider the following guidelines during the selection process:

- New members should be recruited from ninth and tenth grades.
- New members should be appointed for a term of two to four years.
- A mix of ages and grade levels among members provides leadership continuity. Older students can mentor new members.

- Maintaining diversity on the board is an important consideration so that the board continually reflects the greater metro area.

TRAINING

After new board members are selected, they participate in orientation and training programs to prepare them for the work that lies ahead. Team building activities and weekend retreats cultivate solidarity and help new members feel connected to the group’s mission. The Prudential Youth Leadership training materials offer countless ideas on fun ways to build trust and understanding.

It’s also critical to provide information and background on the Kauffman Foundation, and the role of philanthropy in today’s society. Further training covers more specific topics such as how the board functions and how grantmaking occurs.

There are even opportunities for YAB members to strengthen personal skills such as leadership, critical thinking, negotiation and decision making — skills that enhance their abilities as grantmakers, community stewards and future leaders. YAB is a perfect forum to help older students move beyond high school and begin thinking about new venues for serving the community as young adults.

“My YAB experience has been valuable because I’ve learned so much about myself and my peers. I feel more comfortable sharing my opinion and approaching others.”

— Kizwana Daniel

LIKE What...

The Experience Young People Gain as Members of YAB

A young person's passion and idealism can be a persuasive force and a powerful catalyst for positive change. In the beginning, we weren't sure what to expect...

- How can we let go and learn from youth?
- Will the YAB experience continue to influence young people as they move into adulthood?
- Are these young men and women really capable of making such big decisions?
- Can we expect youth to break through the barriers that often separate adults?

But our hesitancy was short-lived. We quickly learned Kauffman's YAB members were up to the challenge and eager to get to work.

The business of grantmaking can be arduous and intense, but according to YAB members, their work is also very rewarding! Board members define grant guidelines, distribute requests for proposals and discuss the merits of hundreds of requests. Decisions about funding are made at meetings held twice a month.

Approval of a request for funding is just the beginning of the YAB's involvement in a community program. Board members visit each grantee's project to evaluate fiduciary responsibility, progress toward goals and overall effectiveness. And not surprisingly, YAB members often invest lots of extra hours in projects and causes funded by the board. Getting involved and volunteering with peers is the best part of the YAB experience!

Through Kauffman's YAB, young people connect with each other and our community ... building links that can last a lifetime.

Here's what board members say about their YAB experience:

"YAB is an eye-opening experience. I've made new friends and learned a lot from listening to their views."

— Nick Murguia

"I've learned that I can make a difference. Our board is about showing the city that young people care about the community."

— Dana Burns

“Until I became a member of YAB, I didn’t know very much about how different life could be for people who live in other areas of our city. Although each member’s experiences are different, it exciting to be able to work together as a team for a common goal.”

— Daniel Meek

“We learn about leadership, decision-making and what’s going on in our community. But mostly, we learn from each other. We’re all so different, but yet we’re a team.”

— Candice Davenport

“I’ve matured a lot from my experience on the YAB board. I’ve also gained confidence, become a better speaker and discovered friendships that will last a lifetime.”

— Tham Vo



“I’m better able to analyze unfamiliar situations. The work we do influences the lives of many people so it’s important to make informed decisions.”

— Demetrus Maxwell

“I’ve learned a lot of problem-solving skills. More importantly, I’ve gained tremendous respect for the people who try so hard every day to improve their surroundings.”

— Andrew Gnefkow



LIKE What...

The Rewards of Involving Youth in Community Concerns

Passing the power of philanthropy to young people encourages teenagers to become valuable contributors now, and lays the foundation for them to become leaders in the future. Unfortunately, our society doesn't usually invite youth to taken on significant leadership roles.

The idea behind Kauffman's YAB is to start including youth in our decision-making processes (especially when issues regarding young people are at stake) and stop limiting their potential to contribute to community causes. This process begins when we:

- Relinquish some of our adult power to youth.
- Share responsibility and decision making with youth.
- Leave behind stereotypes of youth behaviors and attitudes.
- Become more open and willing to listen to new ideas.
- Resist making assumptions about the abilities of youth.
- Take risks and show confidence in young peoples' capabilities. Define the role of youth boards and provide appropriate training. Offer support.
- Expect great results!

When given the opportunity to contribute to community decisions, young people begin to recognize the impact every individual has on building a strong community. When we empower youth to influence their community's future, they begin to expect more from themselves and their peers. Their experience as a young philanthropist increases volunteerism and often triggers life-long dedication to civic concerns.

“The best part about being on the board is getting to meet other youth who want to make a difference in their community.”

— Eric Lowe

LIKE **Wow**...

Starting a Youth Advisory Board

Successful youth philanthropy programs such as YAB make it possible for amazing things to happen — for youth and for the community. Making a difference ... like NOW, like WOW!

TOP 10 REASONS TO START A YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

- 1 Youth feel needed and useful.
- 2 They get to take on new roles and responsibilities.
- 3 Young people learn first-hand about the importance of giving back to their community.
- 4 They learn to work effectively with people who think, look, sound and act differently.
- 5 Young people develop ownership and pride in their community.
- 6 They become role models for other youth.
- 7 Youth learn about community investment, philanthropy and fund development.
- 8 Young people gain confidence and learn life-long skills in leadership, conflict resolution, team-building and communication.
- 9 They get to work in partnership with adults who are their allies.
- 10 They have a lot of fun!

The challenge of establishing a Youth Advisory Board and engaging youth in philanthropy has taken the Kauffman Foundation on a remarkable and exhilarating journey through uncharted territory. Although we've encountered some unexpected obstacles and hit a few bumps in the road, we've managed to stay the course and continue toward our destination.

It's our hope that the lessons we've learned along the way may help other organizations more easily discover the path to success. Let's take a look at these important lessons:

- 1 It's difficult for adults to "let go" and trust teens with tough decisions. Resist the impulse to make choices for youth and let them take the lead on decision making.
- 2 Relevant training is essential. It's not enough to simply form a board and host regular meetings. Youth, like adults, need relevant training to prepare for their role.
- 3 A full-time staff advisor position is essential, dedicated to youth board development and oversight.
- 4 It's important to clearly define the YAB's accountabilities. Board members need to understand their role and their relationship to the organization. Staff advisors should discourage involvement in organizational politics.





- 5 Obstacles to success appear in unexpected forms. Time and distance can hinder effectiveness. Address issues regarding reliable transportation and conflicts with work and school schedules early on.
- 6 Youth-led boards are an effective tool for bringing together a diverse city. The energy and enthusiasm of youth is contagious. Young people find comfort and strength in belonging to a unified group.
- 7 Adult leaders have much to learn from their young counterparts. Direct communication and clear agendas make it possible for young people to tackle new ideas and issues with expediency.

Without a doubt, bringing youth on board is a powerful means for an organization to gain fresh perspective on their work. It's also a great way to introduce a new generation of philanthropists to the tremendous value of community involvement and altruism.

“If you really want to accomplish something big, ask a young person to champion your cause. Their vision is fueled by determination and unclouded by skepticism. There’s very little that can stand in their way.”

— Manomay Malathip
member, Kauffman Foundation Youth Development Board

Today’s youth are ready, willing and able to help organizations discover new approaches to fulfilling their mission. But getting things started takes time and resources. As organizations across the country begin exploring the possibility of bringing youth on board, the Kauffman Foundation offers these recommendations and questions to ask:

- ***Start with a purpose in mind.*** Why do you want to involve young people at this level? What do you hope to achieve?
- ***Think about the results you hope to achieve.*** Are the desired outcomes beneficial to youth, your organization and your community?
- ***Gain support from your organization’s leadership.*** Will the appropriate resources (human and financial) be available?
- ***Define the responsibilities of the youth board.*** What role will this board play in your organization?
- ***Design a training and development plan for the youth board.*** What information will board members need to fulfill their role?
- ***Determine recruitment, selection and operation of the board.*** What criteria will be used to appoint board members and how will you find these young people? How will the board function?
- ***If the youth board is involved in grantmaking, determine guidelines for giving.*** What is the focus of the youth board’s grantmaking activity?
- ***Identify potential obstacles to success and develop strategies to overcome these challenges.*** What might keep the youth board from fulfilling its mission? Is there a way to eliminate or avoid these barriers?
- ***Remember to have fun.*** How will you create a setting where friendships among peers flourish?



LIKE **Now...**

Changing the **Future Today** with
Youth Advisory Boards

If your organization would like to find out more about starting a youth advisory board, visit the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation website at www.emkf.org. Go to the website's Children and Youth section page and click on to the Healthy Neighborhoods/Youth Involvement section.

You can also contact us directly for more information. Direct your questions to: Lynn Leonard, Senior Program Officer and YAB staff advisor at: 816.932.1030 or e-mail her at lleonard@emkf.org. We would love to hear from you!

ABOUT US...
THE EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

Ewing Marion Kauffman, best known as Mr. K, grew up poor and learned at a young age how to work hard for what he wanted. He started Marion Laboratories, which grew to become a multibillion dollar pharmaceutical firm, employing thousands of people. He created the Foundation as a way for his giving to continue long after his death. Mr. K had two areas of interest when he established the Foundation: youth development and entrepreneurship.

Grants from Youth Development focus on many things that children and youth need to develop to their full potential, including strong families, innovative schools and thriving communities. The Youth Development division believes that youth are fully prepared for their futures if they have received a good education, participated in positive activities during their out-of-school hours, and gained a sense of "giving back" to the community.

The Youth Advisory Board, created by the Youth Development division, was inspired by a belief that the positive development of youth requires involvement in programs affecting their lives. Since its inception, YAB has granted hundreds of thousands of dollars to youth-led community programs and the involvement of its members has touched thousands of lives in a positive way.



E W I N G M A R I O N
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