

PENNSYLVANIA

YOUTH JUSTICE



ADVISORY BOARD

# BEST PRACTICES TOOLKIT



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This publication stands as a testament to the collective efforts of all those involved. We are deeply grateful for the time, energy, and expertise invested in this initiative, and we hope it serves as a valuable tool in supporting ongoing efforts in youth justice improvements.

“

*To those walking alongside young people in Pennsylvania—this path isn't easy, but it's full of small lights of hope that keep us going.*

*When things feel heavy or dark, remember this:*

***Real change starts with tiny seeds.***

*They might seem small, but with care and perseverance, they grow strong roots beneath the soil—stronger than we sometimes realize.*

*- Keysla Rodriguez,  
Staff of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission*

”

# Dedication

# Introduction

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The “YJAB Best Practices Toolkit” project is a collaborative effort between the Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission (JCJC) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), aimed at creating a comprehensive Best Practices Toolkit for Youth Justice Advisory Boards (YJABs). This toolkit draws on the successes and lessons learned from the eight current YJABs in Pennsylvania. Throughout the project, the JCJC participated in monthly YJAB Community Calls, distributed surveys to both YJAB staff and youth members, analyzed collected data, and conducted site visits to each YJAB to gather first-hand insights. Additionally, staff interviews and youth focus groups were held to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by the YJABs. All the information, data, and observations gathered from these activities were used to develop a toolkit that offers practical guidance and best practices for establishing, operating, and strengthening YJABs across the state of Pennsylvania.

## TOOLKIT PURPOSE

The purpose of the YJAB Best Practices Toolkit is to provide communities with a clear, accessible resource to support the development and growth of YJABs. Built on real-world experiences and direct input from existing YJABs, the toolkit offers practical strategies, tools, and examples that communities can adapt to fit their unique needs. It is intended to make the process of establishing, operating, and strengthening YJABs more straightforward, while emphasizing the importance of youth voices in shaping local justice efforts. Through this toolkit, communities are equipped with the guidance needed to create meaningful spaces for youth leadership and collaboration within the juvenile justice system.

## VISION

The vision of this toolkit is to empower communities across Pennsylvania to establish their own YJABs and bring the youth voice to the forefront of decisions that directly affect their lives and the broader juvenile justice system.

## MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE YOUTH VOICE

System improvement has been around for as long as there have been systems to improve, and juvenile justice improvement is no different. Although there is still a lot of work to be done, many people throughout history have shared your ambition to pave the path toward a better justice system for youth.

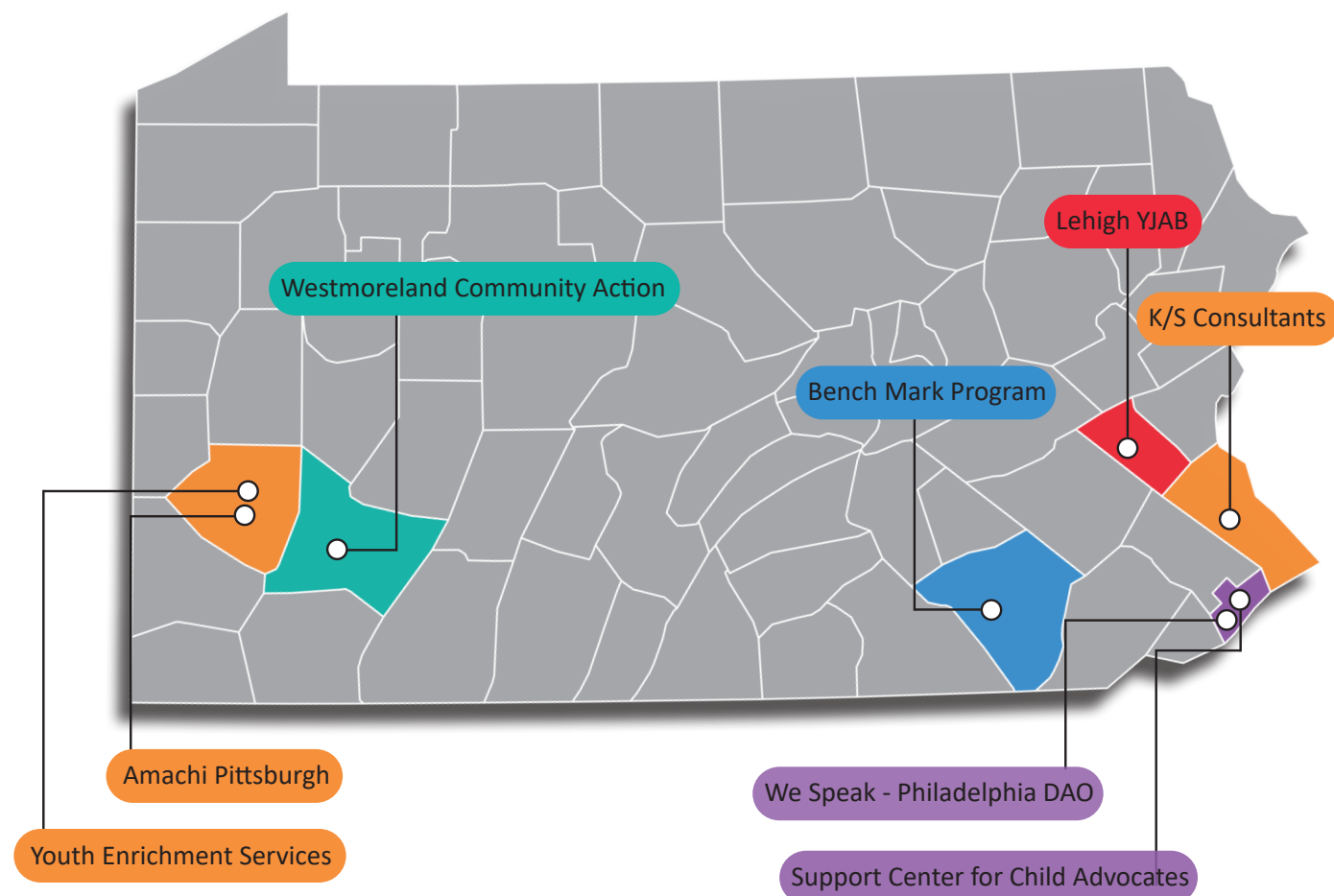
Since the late 20th century, advocates have recognized that youth have valuable insights into the system’s impact on their lives (Wagner, 2019). Over time, juvenile justice advocates increasingly emphasized the importance of youth engagement in shaping policy, ensuring youth are not just the subjects of system improvements, but active participants in it (Sentencing Project, 2023). Their efforts eventually led to laws such as the landmark Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, a 1974 act of Congress that planted the seeds for today’s juvenile justice systems to grow across the country. From there, youth voice

caught national attention as shown by the formation of programs like the Youth Voice in Juvenile Justice Program, which engaged youths with lived experience in juvenile justice on a national level, incorporating their thoughts and ideas in decision-making processes at every stage of system improvement (National Youth Leadership Council, 2021).

Support for these efforts continued to grow as researchers published studies showing that youth participation in juvenile justice reform leads to life-altering improvements for them like fewer reoffenses, improved mental health and educational outcomes, and more (Walker, 2017). Finally, the establishment of youth advisory boards and councils at local, state, and national levels gave justice-involved young people a direct platform to give their perspectives, influencing policies and practices affecting their lives.

## YOUTH JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARDS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Back at home, the PCCD announced a funding opportunity in 2022 that invited members of the Pennsylvania community to submit proposals for establishing the state's first YJABs. The creation of eight original boards followed this proposal. They vary in size, region, and focus, but are united in their ultimate purpose to use the youth voice to invoke change in their communities. In the present day, Pennsylvania has an ecosystem of YJABs continuing to pave that path for youth voices.



# 1. What Is a Youth Justice Advisory Board?

Before you can begin engaging young people in your piece of Pennsylvania’s juvenile justice system, you need to know what exactly a Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB) is. YJABs have a number of essential functions on the system and community levels. They are groups of advisors who include juvenile justice-involved youth who bridge the gap between youth in the community and juvenile justice system stakeholders like judges, probation officers, educators, and more. YJABs offer guidance, feedback, and recommendations on policies and programs, raise awareness about youth justice issues, and advocate for improvements. From hosting art classes to meeting with legislators, a YJAB’s work is meaningful, wide-reaching, and beneficial to any community.

**“NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US”**

Just like young people, **every YJAB is unique** and reflects their community in different ways. YJABs serve different populations, host different activities, and work with different partners, but they all should have in common these four operating principles that unite them in their mission to serve justice-involved youth and improve the systems they engage in:

## YJAB OPERATING PRINCIPLES

### Youth-Led Approach

The YJAB’s decision-making should be youth-driven, ensuring that young people take the lead in identifying issues and proposing solutions.

### Collaboration

The YJAB should collaborate with other community organizations, government agencies, and youth-serving groups to strengthen its impact.

### Transparency

The YJAB should regularly share board activities, decisions, and outcomes with the broader community.

### Inclusivity

The YJAB should include a diverse group of youth from various socioeconomic, racial, and cultural backgrounds.



***“We are clear, direct, and honest in our feedback. We don’t lie to our YJAB members, and we don’t mince words.”***

***- Will Kiefer  
Bench Mark***



Now that you understand the broader role of YJABs, it is important to know about each board member's individual roles and responsibilities within them. Because of the wide reach of juvenile justice systems, which impact people from all backgrounds and communities of all sizes, boards are most successful when they have a range of perspectives informing their activities and decisions.

## KEY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

### YOUTH MEMBERS



1. Provide feedback and recommendations on juvenile justice-related issues.
2. Participate in meetings and discussions.
3. Lead or support projects that align with the board's mission.
4. Advocate for youth voices in public forums.

Youth members are the heart of each board. They play an essential role within the broader group, providing feedback and recommendations on juvenile justice-related issues, participating in meetings, leading and supporting projects, and advocating for the youth voice in general in public forums. Their contributions are based on personal experiences that some juvenile justice stakeholders may not have, thus collaboration with youth members is essential. Without engaging with young people, boards would be unable to identify what justice-involved youth need from them.



### STAFF MEMBERS

1. Guide the board in its activities.
2. Mentor youth members.
3. Provide logistical support (e.g., meeting coordination, research, etc.).
4. Ensure that the youths' voices are taken seriously in decision-making processes.

If youth members are the heart of YJABs, staff members are the veins that direct their efforts where they need to go. Staff members act as mentors to the youth members, ensuring their voices are heard and taken seriously in the decision-making process, which could otherwise be an intimidating prospect. The staff/youth member relationship encourages openness, collaboration, and creativity among YJABs. Staff members also serve an administrative role, giving guidance to the board regarding activities and goals, and providing logistical support such as meeting coordination and research that keeps the board moving forward on the path to system improvements.



***“Being transparent with them about what is going on and setting realistic expectations, and NOT surprising them because these young people have interfaced with a lot of professionals in their healing, right? And they are used to people coming and they are used to people going and they don’t know who they can trust.”***

***– Liz Stein, Support Center for Child Advocates***



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

1. Help facilitate collaboration.
2. Provide support and guidance.
3. Advocate for change.
4. Ensure safe spaces.

Community partners serve many roles on the boards, but perhaps most important is the role they play in connecting YJABs to the people and areas they serve. They help build and strengthen each board's partnerships with organizations, agencies, and stakeholders and act as a liaison between the board and the broader community. Like other members, community partners can also provide mentorship to justice-involved youth and support system changes that benefit them. With the help of community partners, the reach of a YJAB is limitless.



# 100%

of PA YJABs agree  
that stakeholder  
engagement is vital  
to the success of a  
YJAB.



*"We advocate with them, share power, check ourselves, create open and transparent processes, and follow their lead."*

*- Ivy McClintock  
Westmoreland YJAB*

## 2. Creating a Youth Justice Advisory Board

The journey to creating a Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB) begins simply, with a dream to serve justice-involved youth in the best way possible, starting with engaging them in your juvenile justice work. The next step is making that dream a reality, which is not as simple. Creating a YJAB requires careful planning and focus on three essential elements: mindset, funding, and youth members. But there's no need to be overwhelmed; this chapter will walk you through how to adopt a youth-centered mindset, secure appropriate funding, and recruit committed youth members. Once these three elements are in order (with the help of this toolkit), your YJAB can effectively empower young people, foster collaboration, and drive meaningful change within the juvenile justice system.

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED



1. MINDSET



2. FUNDING



3. YOUTH MEMBERS

### MINDSET

The way we view the world and the young people ushering in its future is impacted by many factors: how we grew up, the youth we have personal relationships with, the media we watch and read, and so much more. We all had different experiences as young people, and so do youth today. That's why it's so important that before working with justice-involved youth, adults must take stock of their mindset and come to an agreement about what these young people have in common, what they represent, and all they are capable of. When making decisions on their behalf, adults must recognize that young people are not just recipients of services but active agents of change with valuable insights and experiences. Adopting a youth-centered mindset means listening to youths' ideas, respecting their perspectives, and empowering them to make decisions. When adults approach youth engagement with this attitude, it creates an environment where youth are heard and valued. The right mindset not only builds trust but also allows young people to recognize their potential and make a real, positive impact on the juvenile justice system.

### BEST PRACTICE

Regularly check in with yourself both mentally and emotionally. Ensure that your thoughts and actions align with the goals of the group, the well-being of the youth, and your personal health.



***"An effective YJAB should not make members feel like you are "mining" their trauma for lessons learned, and to share with you only as much as they feel comfortable."***

***- Will Kiefer, Bench Mark Program***

# KEY MINDSET TRAITS

Adjusting your mindset is an intentional process that requires attention to the key traits that will help you relate to justice-involved youth and collaborate with them appropriately and successfully. Part of what makes this work difficult is that young people are complex, each with different goals, fears, dreams, and experiences to consider. But that complexity is also what makes working with them so rewarding and is why being aware of the following traits and whether you practice them is crucial to the success of your YJAB. Adults working with justice-involved youth should practice:

## EMPATHY

**The ability to recognize and understand the experiences and feelings of others.**

Many youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system have faced serious challenges and distressing circumstances, as well as great achievements that make them unique and inform how they view and interact with the world. Having empathy for justice-involved youth means trying to understand their experiences and trauma through a compassionate — rather than judgmental — lens (Brown, 2018).

## PATIENCE & FLEXIBILITY

**The abilities to be even-tempered and willing to readjust your mindset when faced with challenging situations.**

Starting a YJAB and engaging with young people will require some trial and error. It's important for adults navigating this process to remain aware that change takes time. Be patient, adaptable, and supportive. Understanding that setbacks are part of the journey will prepare you to resolve any challenges that may arise as you do this important work (Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, 2014).

## CULTURAL HUMILITY

**The willingness to be aware of other cultures and reflective of the influences of your own.**

Culture encompasses the various traditions, social institutions, and ways of life of groups of people, and the juvenile justice system serves youth from many different cultures. YJABs are meant to reflect that cultural diversity. Being aware of the cultural, racial, and socioeconomic factors that influence a youth's experience in the justice system means approaching them with respect for their unique identity and circumstances, and practicing humility in the face of those differences (Hodge, 2017).

## TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

**A framework for understanding the impacts of trauma and using that understanding to inform engagement that affects others.**

Adults should understand that many justice-involved youth have experienced trauma events like hunger,

poverty, or abuse, which greatly impact their behavior and responses. A part of the trauma-informed approach includes having empathy for these experiences, but it also means creating a safe environment where the youth can heal from them (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019; Van der Kolk, 2014). Simple ways to do so include incorporating trigger warnings, pre-meeting support, and post-meeting debriefs, as well as changing the physical space to be more welcoming with private spaces and wellness rooms (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, n.d.).

## HOPE & BELIEF IN CHANGE

### The excitement for and expectation of something new.

Justice-involved youth have endless capacity to change, grow, and succeed, and this reality must be reflected by the adults who engage with them. Maintaining a belief that youth can change and hope that they *will* change helps instill motivation for transformation (Perry & Szalavitz, 2006).



## YJAB SPOTLIGHT



# SUPPORT CENTER FOR CHILD ADVOCATES

The Youth Survivor Advisory Board (YSAB) at Support Center for Child Advocates is a youth- and young adult-led board of survivors ages 18-26 who have experienced and survived trafficking.

## YSAB MISSION

The YSAB's mission is to engage with youth and young adult survivors to raise awareness about child trafficking and to engage in efforts that support eliminating trafficking and risks that make youth more vulnerable to trafficking.

## CREATIVE PRACTICE

The YSAB employs a creative and collaborative approach by involving its youth members directly in the interview process for prospective members. This practice allows current members to engage with candidates, gauge their interest, and assess whether they would be a good fit for the group. The process begins with an initial interview involving the staff, current youth members, and the prospective member, where general questions are addressed. A separate interview follows, allowing the staff and the prospective member to discuss more personal matters and experiences in a safe and private setting. After completing both interviews, all current members have the opportunity to vote on accepting the new member, ensuring a collective decision-making process. Given the board's focus and its intentionally small structure, this practice fosters a strong sense of camaraderie and community that strengthens the board's unity and mission.

## MINDSET AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The YSAB is deeply committed to a trauma-informed mindset approach when engaging with its youth members. This approach recognizes the impact of trauma while prioritizing safety, empowerment, and healing. By blending lived experiences, lived expertise, and behavioral health support, the YSAB creates a supportive environment where youth members can thrive. The board serves as a platform for human trafficking advocacy, empowering members to draw strength and perseverance from their experiences without risking traumatization. Members are guided in recognizing the power of saying no, setting boundaries, and maintaining ownership over their stories and experiences. This approach not only fosters personal growth and resilience but also equips youth with the tools to advocate effectively for themselves and others impacted by human trafficking.





# FUNDING

As you can see, a lot of time and consideration goes into running a YJAB. You and your members deserve to be compensated for it, and the community deserves to know about it! For operations and outreach, funding is the second essential element for an effective YJAB because it provides the resources necessary for boards to fulfill their missions effectively. Funding supports the day-to-day operations of the board, such as staffing, organizing meetings, and facilitating communication among members and stakeholders, as well as any events or outreach in the community.

Securing multiple funding streams is especially important for letting the board do what it needs to do for as long as it's needed. By diversifying its funding sources—through grants, state and federal allocations, and community partnerships—the board can remain resilient in the face of budget fluctuations and continue to serve the justice system. Additionally, the flexibility that comes from having multiple funding sources allows for some creativity with the budget, like supporting innovative initiatives, piloting new projects, and monitoring their impact. Without proper financial resources and a variety of funding streams, the board's ability to drive meaningful change and advocate for the needs of youth in the justice system would be significantly more difficult.

## BEST PRACTICE

Cultivate a number of funding streams as part of the YJAB's financial budget to provide more flexibility in funding and create a safety net in case one funding stream were to end.



## FUNDING STREAMS

### GRANTS



Financial awards given by organizations, governments, or foundations to support specific projects, programs, or initiatives that do not need to be repaid, unlike loans. Grants are typically awarded based on a competitive application process. Grants can be used for a wide range of purposes, including research, community development, education, or social services.

### DONATIONS



Voluntary contributions of money, goods, or services for the purpose of supporting a cause, organization, or individual. They can be made by individuals, businesses, foundations, or other entities and are typically given without the expectation of receiving something in return.

### FOUNDATION FUNDING



Financial support provided by private, public, or community foundations to fund programs, initiatives, or organizations like YJABs. This type of funding typically comes in the form of grants, which may be one-time, multi-year, or renewable depending on the foundation's priorities and the YJAB's objectives.

### SPONSORSHIPS



A person or business provides money, products, or services to support an event or project in exchange for recognition. Sponsors often get their name or logo displayed at the event or in promotional materials, creating a relationship where boards can raise funds and sponsors can promote their brand.

### COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING



Involves local people, businesses, and organizations coming together to raise money for the board's work. This can include events like charity runs, auctions, or crowdfunding campaigns like GoFundMe and Kickstarter. The goal is to generate funds while building a sense of teamwork and support within the community.

# FUNDING PROS AND CONS

	PROS	CONS
COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increases board visibility through media coverage</li><li>No financial pressure to repay</li><li>Increases community outreach</li><li>Builds relationships in the community</li><li>Can improve the board's reputation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Time-consuming and resource-intensive events</li><li>Financial risk of not reaching goals at events</li><li>Donor fatigue (when donors become less engaged or willing to donate due to perceived excessive requests for support)</li></ul>
FOUNDATION FUNDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Greater flexibility in program implementation than grants</li><li>Foundations that align with social justice and youth empowerment are ideal partners for YJABs</li><li>Less restrictive than government grants, allowing for creativity and innovation</li><li>Additional perks like networking opportunities, mentorship, and other capacity-building resources</li><li>Can lead to long-term partnerships</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Often limited in duration</li><li>Highly competitive</li><li>Potentially strict guidelines for implementation</li><li>Often require additional administrative burdens like detailed reporting, impact assessments, and periodic check-ins</li></ul>
GRANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No financial pressure to repay</li><li>Ideal for targeted initiatives like research, community programs, or educational projects</li><li>Awards can enhance the board's credibility</li><li>Long-term support</li><li>Additional resources may be available for growth and innovation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Highly competitive</li><li>Difficult and labor-intensive application process</li><li>Strict reporting and accountability requirements</li><li>Specific purposes of grant may reduce flexibility for the recipient</li></ul>



	PROS	CONS
STATE-LEVEL GRANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher funding thresholds than local grants</li> <li>May offer additional support like technical assistance</li> <li>Applications may require collaboration with other programs, building the board's connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stricter conditions for awardees than local grants like intensive recordkeeping and reimbursement-based payments</li> <li>Boards are not allowed to supplant (reduce local funds specifically because state funds are available for that same activity)</li> </ul>
FEDERAL-LEVEL GRANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher funding thresholds than state grants</li> <li>May offer additional support like technical assistance</li> <li>Applications may require collaboration with other programs, building the board's connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly competitive</li> <li>Interested YJABs must be registered as an entity in SAM.gov which requires financial training</li> <li>Supplantation not permitted</li> <li>Funding may not allow straight continuation of activities from grant to grant</li> <li>Federal financial requirements</li> </ul>
DONATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases community outreach</li> <li>Builds relationships in the community</li> <li>Creates a sense of shared responsibility around the cause</li> <li>No financial pressure to repay</li> <li>Tax benefits for donating can incentivize giving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time-consuming and resource-intensive events</li> <li>Income can fluctuate</li> <li>Unpredictability makes it hard to plan budgets</li> <li>Donors may use their contributions to influence the board's decision-making</li> <li>Can be insufficient to cover all expenses</li> </ul>
SPONSORSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mutually beneficial for board and sponsor</li> <li>Builds relationships in the community</li> <li>Creates opportunities for future collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Withdrawal of support can lead to gaps in resources</li> <li>Sponsors may influence the board's decision-making</li> <li>High pressure to meet sponsors' expectations</li> <li>Sponsor values or branding may lead to conflicts of interest</li> </ul>

# YJAB SPOTLIGHT

## BENCH MARK PROGRAM

### YJAB MISSION

The mission of Bench Mark Program's YJAB is to empower each youth participant with the skills to share their life story, to articulate their unique experiences and lessons learned, and to positively influence the systems they have navigated.

### CREATIVE PROJECT IDEA

Bench Mark Program houses a podcast studio that was inspired by conversations with YJAB participants who wanted to amplify their voices. Podcasting stood out as an accessible and exciting medium that required little training, allowing students to immediately engage and share their ideas. Recognizing its popularity and versatility—including its potential use for recording music—students embraced the idea as something they wanted to actively participate in. The initial funding for the studio came from a YJAB grant extension, with additional contributions from workforce development grants and local corporate partners providing both financial and in-kind support, such as equipment and materials. To sustain the studio long-term, Bench Mark plans to rent it out to businesses and community members, fostering social enterprise development among students. When presenting the idea for funding, the focus was on creating a tangible, interactive project where supporters could witness its impact firsthand, ensuring long-term viability without recurring funding requests. Ultimately, the studio aims to be a platform for meaningful conversations between youth and local decision-makers, fostering discussions on system change while empowering young people to share their stories and influence their community.

### DIVERSE & CREATIVE FUNDING STREAMS

Bench Mark Program has worked extensively to establish a diverse and sustainable budget supported by various funding streams, including an unrestricted donation pool. This financial flexibility has allowed Bench Mark to allocate resources strategically, providing robust support for numerous YJAB projects and initiatives. The program's budget, consisting of grants and generous donations, reflects their commitment to fostering impactful change. Additionally, Bench Mark has cultivated strong community partnerships to secure vital funding and resources, benefiting both the YJAB and the organization's broader programs and initiatives. This approach ensures adaptability and the long-term success of their mission-driven work.





## YOUTH MEMBERS

Youth members are the heart and soul of a Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB). They are not just participants; they are the driving force that shapes the group's vision and direction. The board exists to amplify their voices, support their interests, and help them achieve their goals. By placing youth at the center, the group ensures that its work remains meaningful, impactful, and rooted in the experiences and aspirations of the young

people it serves. Their leadership and involvement lay the foundation for creating lasting change and building a more equitable justice system.

## TARGET POPULATION

YJABs identify justice-involved youth, including those with current or past family system involvement, who will help achieve their mission and vision. Boards consider demographic factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and age – typically 14-26 years, but there is flexibility. Community characteristics (e.g., urban, rural, cultural) are also considered to reach potential youth members who can ensure a diversity of perspectives.

## COMPOSITION

Diversity among youth members on the board is essential to ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the communities the YJAB serves. A diverse group brings varied thoughts, perspectives, and lived experiences, which are critical for crafting effective and inclusive solutions. Representation across different racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds allows the board to better reflect the landscape of the youth population and address unique needs. Research also indicates that diversity enhances decision-making and problem-solving by encouraging broader viewpoints and fostering innovation (Phillips, 2014). Additionally, inclusive representation makes it so the voices of historically marginalized groups are heard and prioritized, strengthening equity and fairness in the board's work (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2018). By embracing diversity, YJABs can create meaningful and impactful change tailored to the realities of all youth.

You always had the first and most important step to having a successful YJAB down: a dream to improve the juvenile justice system with the help of wise youth voices. It won't be easy, but starting a Youth Justice Advisory Board will enhance your community and the lives of the young people in them. Besides, now you understand how to reach youth, engage with them, and fund these crucial efforts. Keep going! Your next step is to get young people on board with *the* board.



***"It's [the YJAB] going to bring forth so much positive change the more that youth voice is heard."***

***-Kelsey Moyer  
Lehigh YJAB***

# 3. Recruitment & Retention

## YOUTH RECRUITMENT

Youth members are the heart of a Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB). They are not just participants; they are the driving force and leaders, shaping the group's vision and direction. The board exists to amplify their voices, support their interests, and help achieve their goals. By placing youth at the center, the board ensures that its work remains rooted in the experiences and aspirations of the young people it serves. Their leadership and involvement lay the foundation for creating lasting change and building a more equitable justice system.

### TARGET POPULATION

Just as adult advisors need to have the same mindset regarding justice-involved youth, they need to be on the same page about the board's target population. Before beginning the recruitment process, founders should establish what makes a young person eligible or ineligible to become a board member. Chapter 2 highlights common eligibility criteria, such as age and lived experience in the juvenile justice system, and other criteria may include the ability to commit a certain number of hours each month and geographic location, depending on the needs of each YJAB. There are also practical considerations for the target population, like the availability of public transportation, that may influence recruitment strategies. By carefully defining eligibility and addressing potential barriers for members, your YJAB can have a more inclusive and effective recruitment process.



*"Additionally, while lived experience is important in various communities, as adults we must be careful that we are not treating young people as if they are their experiences."*

*-Marcia Hopkins*

*Support Center for Child Advocates YJAB*

## SUCCESSFUL YOUTH RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Once you have decided who is eligible to become a youth member of the board, it's time to consider how to recruit them. The days of just putting an advertisement in the newspaper are behind us, and there are many strategies to replace that one. Like we discussed in Chapter 2 about having a mixed approach to funding streams, the board may be most successful in recruiting youth members by trying multiple strategies at once.

### BEST PRACTICE

Utilize multiple youth recruitment strategies at the same time to increase reach and potential for successful recruitment.



## TARGETED OUTREACH

Reach out to justice-involved youth through local community centers, schools, juvenile justice programs, and social service agencies. Consider leveraging existing networks, such as probation officers or youth organizations, to identify potential candidates (Narkewicz, McCaffrey, & Sudbrock, 2024).

## INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION

As mentioned in previous chapters, the juvenile justice system serves a diverse population of young people, and the board should likewise include a group of young people from various socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural backgrounds. Recruitment plays an essential role in ensuring that diverse perspectives and experiences are represented on the board, which, in turn, reflects the communities the board serves (National Juvenile Justice Network, 2020).

## ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PEER NETWORKS

Once you have youth members on the board, they may be able to identify other potential members among their peers. Not only is this an effective strategy for YJABs, but peer-to-peer outreach can help build trust and encourage participation among youth members (Ansell & Insley, 2013).

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Partner with local community organizations, schools, and youth-centered programs to promote the YJAB and recruit members. These organizations can help spread the word and encourage youth participation (Honeycutt et al., 2021). Justice-involved youth may even be the target population of some of these organizations like social service agencies and juvenile justice programs, so an easy way to identify eligible youth members would be to reach out to those groups in particular. Leveraging existing networks, such as probation officers, can also help narrow the recruitment pool and identify potential candidates (Narkewicz, McCaffrey, & Sudbrock, 2024).

## CLEAR COMMUNICATION OF PURPOSE

When potential members have been identified, it's important to clearly explain the mission and goals of the YJAB to them and emphasize how their involvement can make a difference in the justice system and their community. Information sessions and immersive orientations help set clear expectations while allowing potential members to experience board activities firsthand, fostering a sense of commitment and readiness. Serving on the



**97%**

**of PA YJAB youth  
would recommend  
the YJAB to other  
youth in their  
communities.**

### BEST PRACTICE

**Staff:** Be clear with youth members about time commitment.

**Youth:** Really consider the time commitment before agreeing to join a YJAB.



board is a time commitment that may be difficult for youth to make in this busy stage of their lives, so clear communication will also help them understand the value of their contribution and inspire them to join (National Youth Leadership Council, 2021). Outreach efforts might also emphasize that board membership is an opportunity to improve time management abilities - a competitive skill for young people to have as they navigate young adulthood and the jobs, schools, and other responsibilities that come with it.

## OFFERING SUPPORT

Aside from the time commitment, a youth member's contributions to the board also require a lot of energy, both physically via support with events and outreach, and emotionally by sharing their experiences in the justice system, which can be a vulnerable and taxing endeavor. Providing adequate support like mentorship will help youth members succeed in their roles (Jimenez et al., 2024). Support may look different for every young person, but YJABs can encourage "strategic sharing" which prioritizes intentionality, thoughtfulness, and safety when a person discloses information that is difficult to share. Strategic sharing training and mental health support may be offered to youth members to help prevent retraumatization before, during, and after sharing.

## OTHER RECRUITMENT METHODS IDENTIFIED BY PA YJABS

Overall, successful youth board recruitment requires a strategic and inclusive approach, combining clear eligibility criteria with creative outreach methods. Effective efforts in PA often leverage community events, like kickoffs at local venues, and digital outreach, like social media ads. When potential recruits have been identified, some organizations use formal applications shared via listservs and social media, followed by interviews and voting. Families also play a key role in PA YJAB recruitment by encouraging youth participation. Whichever methods you try, PA YJABs have noted that recruitment strategies can be further strengthened by incorporating youth feedback and addressing factors like safety, transportation, and accessibility.



***"Recruitment efforts were informed by feedback, focusing on factors like youth safety, transportation, and age-appropriate application processes. Information sessions were held to introduce potential council members to expectations and outcomes. Interested youth who met the criteria attended a 5-hour orientation, experiencing sample activities and undergoing interviews to gauge their commitment. They reviewed agreements, schedules, and potential barriers to participation."***

**- Cass Green  
We Speak YJAB**



# YOUTH RETENTION

Retaining youth in YJABs can be challenging, as young people naturally experience shifting priorities, busy schedules, and systemic barriers that may lead them to step away from participation (Kim, 2016). Many must balance leadership opportunities with responsibilities that support their households, making long-term involvement difficult (Smith et al., 2019). While engagement may fluctuate, the most important approach is to maintain an open-door policy, allowing youth to return when they are ready. Research suggests that fostering a welcoming and supportive environment, coupled with flexible participation options and mentorship, can encourage long-term investment even if youth take breaks (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Additionally, reinforcing a sense of belonging, incorporating youth voices in decision-making, and ensuring leadership opportunities remain accessible can help sustain commitment over time (Child Trends, 2021). Recognizing that youth will come and go, but will always have a place to return, strengthens the overall impact and inclusivity of the program.



***"Never stop  
inviting the youth."  
- Lehigh YJAB  
Youth***

## BEST PRACTICE

Consistently uphold an open-door policy with youth members to provide a welcoming and supportive environment. This ensures they always feel comfortable returning for guidance, support, or conversation.





## YJAB SPOTLIGHT

# AMACHI PITTSBURGH

### YJAB MISSION

To equip and empower young people with lived experience as leaders to champion change and leverage their voices, power, and innovative ideas in contribution to PCCD's efforts to improve the juvenile justice system.

### CREATIVE PROJECT IDEA

Recognizing the significance of civic engagement, Amachi Pittsburgh's YJAB implemented a voter rights and education initiative designed specifically for its youth members. YJAB participants explored the historical context of voting in marginalized communities, engaging in discussions about the Voting Rights Act, gerrymandering, and redlining and examining how these systems have been used to suppress constitutional rights and limit access to the ballot box.

While most YJAB members were not yet of voting age, the goal of the series was to help them begin developing their political voice and sense of civic identity. The experience connected historical learning with present-day relevance, encouraging youth to understand the power of their future vote and their role in shaping equitable systems.

To put their learning into action, YJAB youth partnered with the League of Women Voters to distribute over 100 voter registration packets to residents throughout Pittsburgh. This outreach gave members a meaningful opportunity to contribute to their community, while reinforcing the importance of civic responsibility and collective impact.

### CREATIVE & TARGETED RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

The organization focuses on certain neighborhoods in Pittsburgh to find participants, especially areas with lots of people but few resources or youth programs. They visit places where kids already spend time, like the library. They are working on ways to offer more personalized support, beyond group activities. This includes having office hours and one-on-one mentoring sessions. The group follows the Sanctuary Model, and posters of its principles are displayed on the walls. To recruit members, they ran ads on buses and followed up with interested people with phone interviews and then an interview process. Newsletters also keep people informed.





# STAFF RECRUITMENT

As YJABs grow and evolve, the need to hire additional staff may arise to meet the increasing demands of day-to-day operations and ensure the program's effectiveness. Staff are critical to providing guidance, support, and mentorship for youth members, as well as ensuring the board operates smoothly and continues to engage participants. Recruiting staff for a YJAB requires a balanced approach that prioritizes both qualifications and personal attributes to ensure effective mentorship, youth engagement, and board operations. While formal education and experience are valuable, many organizations emphasize lived experience, adaptability, and commitment to the mission. Staff vacancies can impact youth recruitment and retention, making it crucial to hire individuals who embody the right mix of skills and values. When looking to hire additional staff, it is essential to consider a range of criteria to ensure that the new team members align with the organization's mission and goals. This involves assessing both the soft and hard skills necessary for effective collaboration and engagement, as well as meeting logistical requirements to ensure smooth operations.



***“Workforce shortages presented many challenges beyond our control, but we reached out to partners for recommendations in addition to utilizing traditional hiring channels. To retain staff, we increased the salary level and offered additional benefits. Provided various trainings and professional development. Offer flexibility in designing programming and activities that work best for youth and staff.”***

***- Chalét Allen  
Amachi Pittsburgh YJAB***

## SOFT SKILLS

*Soft skills are personal attributes that speak to a candidate's ability to interact with others harmoniously and effectively. They align more with personality than education and work experience - and are just as essential.*

- Strong communication skills (both oral and written)
- High emotional intelligence
- Ability to set boundaries
- Experience making quick decisions and using sound judgment
- Ability to reason and work independently
- Flexibility and adaptability to juggle multiple responsibilities
- Commitment to the mission and vision of the organization
- Sensitivity towards individuals experiencing homelessness or instability
- Authenticity and relatability, particularly through lived experience



## HARD SKILLS

*Hard skills relate to abilities that candidates have achieved formally through training, education, and/or work experience. These skills are measurable and technical in nature.*

- Experience working collaboratively with staff and other organizations
- Strong organizational skills
- Computer literacy, including proficiency in Microsoft Word and Excel
- Ability to develop and implement programs to support youth engagement

## LOGISTICAL CRITERIA

*A candidate with the right soft and hard skills may still not be the right choice if they don't meet the logistical criteria needed to perform the role.*

- Valid driver's license and reliable transportation
- Ability to travel independently within a designated geographic area
- Required background clearances
- Flexible schedule to accommodate youth meetings and events

By considering these criteria, YJABs will be able to hire staff who are not only capable and experienced but also fully invested in creating a supportive, engaging environment for young people.

## SUCCESSFUL STAFF RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Like youth members, staff won't appear out of thin air. A YJAB must invest time and effort into recruitment strategies to identify and get their message out to potential candidates. Some of these strategies are similar to youth recruitment; boards can consider combining efforts to save time and resources.

### IDENTIFY KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

YJABs will likely need to fill different types of positions, making it important for them to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each member on staff. Positions may include facilitators, mentors, administrative support, and subject matter experts – all of which require different skills and abilities to perform successfully. Identifying these roles and being transparent about what is needed from potential candidates to succeed in them helps focus the recruitment efforts for specific needs and eliminate hiring mistakes further down the road (Casey Family Programs, 2022).



**78%**

**of PA YJABs thought they were successful at recruiting both YJAB youth members and staff.**

## TARGET INDIVIDUALS WITH RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

The work of a YJAB can be highly specific, underlining the need to recruit individuals with experience in juvenile justice, youth development, and/or social work. Staff members with backgrounds in these areas are best equipped to understand the challenges justice-involved youth face and can provide the necessary guidance and expertise to support them (Cramer et al., 2019).

## EXPAND OUTREACH FOR DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT

Chances are, every YJAB works in a community with members of different backgrounds. To best reflect the diversity of the youth they serve, boards must consider different races, genders, cultural backgrounds, and experiences with the juvenile justice system when recruiting staff. Aside from being more representative of the community and, therefore, more knowledgeable about how to serve its diverse members, having diverse staff helps build trust and create a more inclusive environment for youth participants (Honeycutt et al., 2021).

## OFFER TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Providing staff with training in areas such as trauma-informed care, restorative justice, and youth engagement strategies is beneficial to both the board and the recruit. Specific training ensures that staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support YJABs and create a positive, safe environment for youth to thrive (National Juvenile Justice Network, 2020). Training and professional development opportunities also help members gain skills, which is a benefit that increases the appeal of joining the board to those targeted for positions.

### ***Restorative Justice:***

*An approach to dealing with crime and conflict that focuses on identifying and repairing the harm caused to the victims.*



## ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Work smarter, not harder by collaborating with local community organizations, schools, and juvenile justice professionals to identify potential staff candidates. Being particular when choosing partnerships can help bring in individuals with relevant expertise and a deeper understanding of the local climate.

## OTHER RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES FROM PA YJABS

The Pennsylvania YJABs have implemented various creative recruitment strategies to address staffing needs and ensure the program's success. Some YJABs have turned to online job boards and workforce partners for recommendations to overcome staffing shortages. One innovative approach included scenario-based interviews and asking job applicants to volunteer for a few weeks before being considered for permanent

positions. Youth participation is a value that all YJABs practice, even in the recruitment process. The feedback of youth members has played a crucial role in some recruitment processes, with youth members helping create job descriptions and actively participating in interviews and decision-making, including interviewing new candidates alongside existing staff. Flexibility in designing programming and activities that suit both youth and staff needs has also been emphasized. These strategies reflect a comprehensive approach that prioritizes both effective recruitment and staff retention.

## STAFF RETENTION

Adult staff may be more reliable than youth members who are in very transitional phases of their lives, but it's still important for YJABs to invest time and effort in retaining them.

### PROMOTE STAFF SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Advocacy-oriented positions like being a board member can be tiresome and emotionally draining to staff who don't have proper support and supervision from the broader organization. Boards should ensure staff have access to support and supervision throughout their involvement with the YJAB via regular check-ins and professional guidance from experienced leaders. This can help prevent burnout and ensure staff remain motivated and effective in their roles (Cramer et al., 2019).

### CREATE A SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Foster an environment where staff feel valued, supported, and motivated to engage with youth. A positive, inclusive workplace culture contributes to better outcomes for both staff and youth participants (Gauthier, 2016). One approach even combines efforts with youth retainment strategies: involve staff in some of the more fun youth retainment strategies like throwing parties and giving gifts. These opportunities are rewarding and can remind staff who and what their efforts are for.

### OTHER RETAINMENT STRATEGIES FROM PA YJABS

To retain staff, some YJABs have increased salary levels, offered additional benefits, and provided opportunities for professional development and training. Flexibility in designing programming and activities that suit both youth and staff needs has also been emphasized. One YJAB supports staff well-being by holding meditation sessions a few times a week, offering a space for relaxation and stress relief. Another YJAB fosters a highly collaborative work environment, with frequent meetings and a lack of siloed roles, which helps prevent burnout and ensures a shared understanding of the organization's goals. To further support staff, one YJAB has implemented a robust supervision structure that allows supervisors and team members to step in and provide assistance when needed, whether staff are out, in crisis, or require additional support.



***"We create a sense of belonging. A space where we do not require perfectionism, and where the collective is more important than the individual. No system changes by one person, and we understand that all of us are needed."***

***- Ciarra Johnson,  
Westmoreland YJAB***

Supervisors maintain an open-door policy, enabling staff to provide feedback and receive guidance on project or case management. This structure also encourages staff to consult and assist one another on cases, fostering teamwork. Additionally, staff have worked together to ensure both union and non-union employees have access to the support they need. The YJAB also emphasizes creating a sense of belonging, where perfectionism is not required, and the collective effort is prioritized over individual achievement. This culture reinforces the understanding that system change requires the involvement of everyone.

# 4. Onboarding

When you find the right people for your cause, you'll be ready to start working with them as soon as possible to see all the amazing things they can do as part of a Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB). But a little patience is required. Proper onboarding of new members is crucial to aligning goals, strengthening the team, and getting everyone excited to contribute.

Onboarding involves welcoming and introducing new people to the board and the ins and outs of their new roles. You've probably done some onboarding yourself – attended orientation for a new job, followed a senior around the new high school, or read a handbook after signing on to a new project. No matter the specifics, onboarding is generally about setting people up to succeed as they tackle a new experience. Making newcomers feel welcome, giving them the tools to be effective and “ramp up” more quickly, clarifying roles, and the board's culture are aspects of onboarding that help build relationships and ensure everyone is on the same page. Onboarding can even be designed to help discover a youth's interests, which sets the foundation for future activities.

## ONBOARDING ELEMENTS

Depending on who signs on and which communities you serve, your board's onboarding process may look a little different from the next. Onboarding typically lasts for weeks to several months and may never completely end; there is always more to learn! Use the following key onboarding elements to inform the process and trust your team to make needed adjustments along the way.

### YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Engaging youth in the policies and processes of the justice system begins with involving youth YJAB members in the policies and processes of the board. Young people also need to be comfortable working or volunteering with board members, so they should play a big role in creating, improving, and participating in the onboarding process. Their contributions might include creating materials, such as applications and job descriptions, defining goals and objectives, and planning events, such as orientations and trainings (NYSOCFS, 2022). These materials should be accessible and transparent, meaning applications are able to be submitted both online and through mail, have age-appropriate language, and are easy to find. (NYSOCFS, 2022).

### APPLICATIONS

YJABs do sensitive, and important work for courts and communities, so having qualified people on the board is a must for carrying out its mission. An application process can be the first milestone of the onboarding process and is a great way to recruit talented, passionate youth for your YJAB. Not only does an application process help ensure the recruitment of successful board members, but it can foster a sense of “ownership, engagement, and dedication” in the youth who apply (Colorado Education Initiative, 2018). It's also a good idea to have volunteers fill out an application to assess who is truly interested in the work and collect consistent information from everyone participating.

The application items themselves may look different from board to board depending on needs, resources, culture, etc. Generally, application items will include personal information for contact lists such as name,

phone number, and address. Be sure to also communicate the roles, responsibilities, and levels of commitment of accepted applicants. That can mean including information like the board's goals, mission statement, some kind of introductory information like a short video, summaries of past projects and successes, and photos. For example, one PA YJAB segmented their application into two parts; the first assessed background and skills, and the second gathered thoughts and perspective on juvenile justice improvements. Clear instructions and deadlines for the application process – Google Docs is a great, free tool for this – will also help applicants be confident and comfortable with their submissions (Colorado Education Initiative, 2018).

To communicate expected levels of commitment, consider including criteria for eligible applicants and dates, times, and locations of events and meetings for the upcoming year (Colorado Education Initiative, 2018). If commitment can vary among members, it could be helpful to establish tiers of participation (e.g., low, medium, and high commitment), explaining in detail what each level looks like in application materials (NYSOCFS, 2022). As always, consult with your team to narrow in on specifics that will best serve your individual board's needs.

## CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS

Who is the right choice for your board among the applicant pool will depend on many factors, but every YJAB can ensure fairness and transparency by standardizing the application process. Standardization means creating a consistent, uniform set of application procedures, forms, and criteria – and using it in the same manner for every applicant. This ensures that all applicants are assessed in the same way and that those making the selection have consistent information to consider for all candidates. One way to standardize would be to use a matrix or rubric for interviews that provides a score or ranking of each applicant (Colorado Education Initiative, 2018).

# ADDITIONAL ONBOARDING ACTIVITIES

## CHECK-INS

The need for boards to be thorough and exhaustive in their selection process creates an additional need to check in with applicants throughout it, especially youth advocates who are likely to have to provide difficult or sensitive information regarding their qualifications and court involvement. YJABs should offer opportunities for young people to check in with board members. That might look like allowing requests for 1-on-1s with established board members and facilitating peer-to-peer dialogue spaces like group chats (NYSOCFS, 2022). Whether or not applicants take advantage of these opportunities, board members should schedule check-ins with every board member at dedicated times, allowing them space to be creative, gauge their interest in upcoming activities, and assess how content they are with their roles (NYSOCFS, 2022).

## POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND GUIDELINES

Expectations can be communicated to applicants and board members by formal policy, procedure, and guideline documents that cover areas such as history and intentions, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination;



creating and maintaining an equitable space; and continuous quality improvement (NYSOCFS, 2022). One PA YJAB even included policies on how to handle crises after working hours. As usual, make sure youth members have a say in the creation and content of these documents!

## FORMS

Certain forms may be required of members depending on the board's activities, like media release, parent/guardian permission, medical consent, etc. Forms are helpful for collecting information and required permissions – as long as they are transparent and accessible like other board materials.

## YOUTH MEMBER TRAINING

Training youth members should be an engaging, interactive, and empowering experience that gives young people a full set of skills needed to serve on a YJAB. Youth members will need to be able to effectively communicate the board's message to a variety of audiences, as well as regulate their emotions and maintain a sense of safety and comfort while advancing the board's mission. For well-rounded training, activities may include public speaking workshops, storytelling exercises, and lessons on how to navigate systems of power, as well as skill building on how to manage stress, set boundaries, and practice resilience while engaging in justice work. By combining these trainings, which can be locally developed or based on a curriculum, YJABs can equip youth with both the knowledge and confidence to step into leadership roles and advocate for meaningful change.

## STAFF MEMBER TRAINING

Like youth members, staff should receive high-quality training that helps develop the skills needed to serve on a YJAB, understand the board's background and culture, and maintain an "equitable, youth-inclusive environment (NYSOCFS, 2022)." Their training should include additional education about how to collaborate with youth members by cultivating their leadership, uplifting their voices, and including them in the decision-making process (OJJDP, n.d.). Additionally, some PA YJABs recommend training staff in communication and relationship-building.

The most important thing to remember about onboarding new board members is to be patient. Onboarding could take up to a year and, like we said before, there is always more to learn and room to grow.

### BEST PRACTICE

Be courageous and talk about what is working and what is not working.





# TUCKMAN LADDER MODEL

## 5 ADJOURNING

The final stage occurs when tasks are completed, and the group can step back and feel proud of their work. Although a YJAB's work is ongoing, this stage is good for recognizing accomplishments and celebrating the members who made them happen.

## 4 PERFORMING

At this stage, the group has matured into a well-functioning, high-performing team. Members can focus on achieving the team's objectives and perform tasks with little friction or need for oversight.

## 3 NORMING

During the norming stage, the group begins to find its rhythm after better understanding everyone's differences. Roles become clearer, and team members start to collaborate more effectively.

## 2 STORMING

As team members get to know each other a bit better, they start to express their opinions and ideas more freely. Differences in personality, working styles, and approaches become more apparent and may naturally lead to conflict.

## 1 FORMING

This is the initial stage where the group comes together. Team members are polite as they become acquainted and get to know more about each other's roles, responsibilities, and personalities.

*The Tuckman Ladder Model is a tool that summarizes how teams or groups of people evolve as they try to reach their goals. Bruce Tuckman created the model in the 1960s and its five-phase structure (forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning) highlights the stages of development that most groups experience before reaching their full potential. This model helps individuals and teams anticipate what's ahead and build stronger, more effective collaborations (Tuckman, 1965).*

# YJAB SPOTLIGHT

## WESTMORELAND YJAB

### YJAB MISSION

The Eastern Pennsylvania Continuums of Care (CoC) Homeless Action Boards, Housing Coalition of Western Pennsylvania, Westmoreland Community Action, and Youth Action Board, collectively known as the WEastern PA Persons With Lived Experience and Expertise (PWLEE) Committee, collaborate to end homelessness while prioritizing victim restoration, community protection, and redemption. Their mission is to expand services for individuals experiencing housing instability or homelessness by developing and maintaining support systems that meet people where they are, ultimately increasing housing stability. Within this framework, the YJAB focuses specifically on addressing issues related to juvenile justice and the connection between the justice system and homelessness.

### CREATIVE PROJECT IDEA

As part of its ongoing commitment to meaningful change, the YJAB is currently engaged in Effective Advocacy training held twice a month. This initiative is designed to equip members with the tools and knowledge needed to confidently advocate for their ideas and effect positive transformation within their communities and the CoC. Rooted in collaboration and lived experience, this training will culminate in the development of an advocacy agenda created alongside other PWLEE committees. This shared agenda will identify a targeted goal centered on juvenile justice—one that the YJAB and the broader CoC network aim to achieve in 2026, reinforcing their collective pursuit of systemic progress.

### MEMBER TRAINING

Westmoreland Community Action's members helped create the board member job description and participated in interviews and decision-making. The board also writes policies and procedures, such as how to handle crises after hours while maintaining boundaries. They teach power-sharing—how to share power with someone by offering it. This practice echoes a recommendation to listen, learn, and share power within the board: "Everyone is learning from one another in this work, and it's important to be open to adapting. Treat youth-led groups with the same respect as you treat other organizations or partners you work with. It's important to be upfront about power dynamics in this work and acknowledge that these dynamics never simply disappear, no matter how youth-inclusive we are. By acknowledging the various power dynamics at play, you can create more honest spaces that lend themselves to more accountability (NYSOCFS, 2022)."



# 5. Meetings

## PROJECT PLANNING

Once you've assembled the dream team, you'll want to have a high-level framework in place to guide the board and ensure everyone has what they need to perform their duties. So, before we dive into the nitty gritty of how to run meetings and talk with partners, let's figure out some basics, such as the board's structure and purpose.

A youth justice advisory board's (YJAB) structure guides how it functions and progresses towards its goals. Structure involves the number of members and their roles, the organization of meetings and events, designation of leadership, and more. Thus, each board's structure depends on factors like the input of youth members, project needs, and number of members. Some YJABs may be structured with elections for leadership, subcommittees for specific issues, and/or assignment of advisors or coaches for youth members. For example, one Pennsylvania YJAB (PA YJAB) has an executive committee, which is a smaller group within the larger board responsible for keeping operations running smoothly. Staff members serve as meeting facilitators for some boards while founders work on more big picture items in others. However it makes sense for your YJAB, a well-defined structure will encourage productivity and limit confusion during meetings and events.

These additional steps can help make meetings productive and keep everyone engaged:

### IDENTIFY THE YJAB'S PURPOSE

When starting a new YJAB, it will likely take a few meetings to figure out the board's purpose, also known as a vision or mission. The purpose will be a strong foundation for building goals, objectives, and activities, informing members on how to best serve the board and the community on what the board is all about. From a practical standpoint, a descriptive and engaging purpose is often required of grant applications and can be a great recruitment tool and guiding star for evaluating the board's processes and outcomes (OJJDP, n.d.).

#### BEST PRACTICE

Revisit these living documents at least annually to gauge relevancy and document progress.



### SET CLEAR AGENDAS AND OBJECTIVES FOR EACH MEETING

An agenda is a list of the main topics to discuss and accomplish during meetings. It doesn't have to be complicated to keep everyone focused; just a bulleted list shared before a meeting helps members prepare, form questions, and inform their input. Clear objectives in an agenda, such as discussing specific juvenile justice changes or planning community outreach activities, help guide the conversation and ensure the board covers all the important points and stays on track. (Center for Justice Innovation, 2002).

#### BEST PRACTICE

Come with a plan but be prepared to be flexible. Be especially adaptive to the youth and their needs throughout the meeting.





## ENCOURAGE OPEN DISCUSSION AND MAKE SURE EVERYONE'S VOICE IS HEARD

We can't emphasize the importance of open and comfortable dialogue in a YJAB enough. Boards should always foster a space where all youth and staff feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas. When engaging youth during meetings, some might be shy or unsure about speaking up. It helps to invite youth members to share by asking open-ended questions. Getting different viewpoints is critical and helps a YJAB grow, so leaders should also check in with quieter members now and then, giving them a chance to speak in a supportive and friendly environment. To get everyone on the same page and reinforce this ideal within the group, set some ground rules for respectful communication, like:

- Actively listening to each other
- Not interrupting when someone else is speaking
- Making sure everyone gets a chance to talk
- Having a space for anonymous input, like a survey or suggestion box
- Encouraging everyone to listen to each other and recognize different perspectives

Once establishing these rules, make them visible and accessible (Kraner et al., 2014).

One board focuses on power dynamics and avoiding circumstances where youth must request power from an adult. For example, instead of having young people ask adult members if they can participate in certain events, adults should offer them the opportunity instead. Transparency is key; when information is readily shared and accessible, everyone has what they need to move forward and have agency in the board's operations.

## HAVE A MEETING FACILITATOR TO KEEP THINGS RESPECTFUL AND ORGANIZED

A facilitator is a person assigned to lead or run a meeting or discussion. A big part of their job is to balance structure and openness, keeping meetings running smoothly and productively while still letting members express their ideas openly. An effective facilitator guides the discussion in an organized way, making sure each topic gets covered in the time set for it, and stopping the conversation from going off-topic while encouraging everyone to give their input. There are additional considerations when facilitating discussions between adults and youth: "Often, adults sharing professional space with youth may not know how to create room for youth leadership and empowerment. They may revert to being a lecturer rather than an instructor or, even better, a facilitator. Young people are incredibly perceptive and recognize condescension even if the intent is well-meaning (OJJDP, n.d.)." An effective facilitator is conscious of the dynamics between justice-involved youth and staff and deliberate about letting youth be authentic and communicative. Adult staff members may benefit from training on navigating youth-led programs (OJJDP, n.d.). A well-organized meeting that's both respectful and flexible lets everyone talk

productively while cutting down on distractions or side conversations.

Expect some trial and error as your board settles into its new structure. Here are some examples of structural and organizational choices that have worked for PA YJABs:

- One board shows family values by washing hands and cleaning up after meals during meetings.
- Another board gives members two chances to redeem themselves if they didn't take a presentation seriously. Youth are not allowed to slack off or goof off during meetings or presentations, showing they understand their impact and responsibility. However, some resources caution that young people are used to receiving only a few chances and may respond positively to having more chances.

## THE WHERE AND HOW OF MEETINGS

As with any relationship, keeping in touch regularly is key to maintaining closeness and comfort with one another. Frequent chats with board members make everyone feel informed, important, and heard. It builds community and trust. Regular check-ins through emails, messages, or social media keep goals progressing and members engaged. These communication tools also help keep members active and accountable with the board's plans through shared updates, meetings, and progress. Consistent communication fosters belonging and inclusion, especially with youth who might not have other ways to express themselves or connect with decision-makers.



Most boards have found that a mix of in-person and online meetings works best. Meeting face-to-face is great for building connections, but life can get in the way of some meetups. When board members get busy or feel under the weather, or maybe there is just not much to cover on the agenda, plenty of online communication platforms are available to help you keep in touch and host meetings conveniently.

### BEST PRACTICE

Ask young people what their most active communication tool is (text, email, phone call, social media, etc.). If needed, use a variety of communication tools to reach the most youth members.





## VIDEO CONFERENCING

Youth often have busy, unpredictable schedules. That's why accessible and convenient video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom and Google Meet, are crucial for holding virtual meetings that can help bring everyone to the table regardless of these barriers. Video conferencing platforms allow real-time discussions to occur online, giving members who can't attend in-person meetings a chance to still participate and contribute.

## SHARED DOCUMENT PLATFORMS

Shared document platforms, such as Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive, let board members work together on documents, agendas, and meeting notes, making sure everyone is on the same page. Plus, members can easily give feedback and make changes, and these secure documents can be password protected.

## APPS

Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and X are casual ways to keep the board connected and share real-time updates. These are especially effective for keeping youth involved in ongoing conversations. Plus, they're probably on these apps already! Board members can use social media to communicate updates, share interesting news articles, and discuss various topics, fostering continuous engagement and connection, even beyond formal meetings. Using these digital tools ensures streamlined and accessible communication, particularly for youth with different tech needs or preferences (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). For other board needs, apps like Whatsapp and TeamReach are more streamlined for group communication, offering more customization and moderation of discussions.

## NEWSLETTERS, PODCASTS, AND BLOGS

Just as important as communication between board members, communication with the community is crucial for a YJAB's credibility and impact. Sharing board projects and achievements with the public broadens the board's reach in the community and can even help with member and donor recruiting and retention.

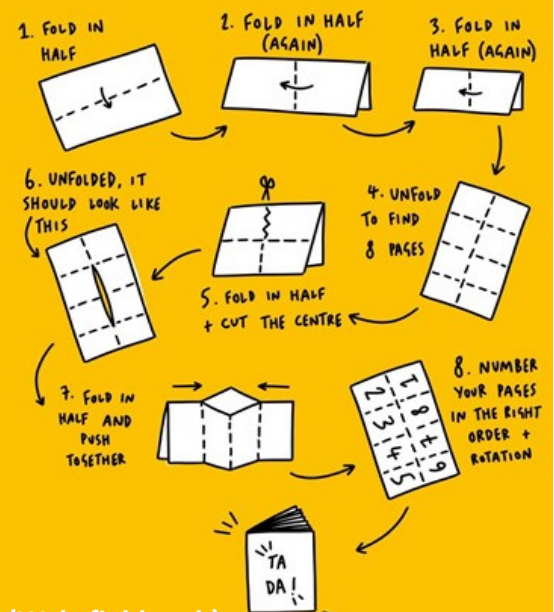
A great way to engage the community is by having youth create regular newsletters or blogs that share updates on the board's work, highlight achievements, and inform the public about policy changes, events, or initiatives in the youth's voice. Newsletters or zines (a self-published, small-circulation

## BEST PRACTICE

Do not share private information online. Youth members especially may not feel comfortable sharing certain information online where their data may be recorded and stored. Your board may consider using secure communication platforms like Signal for online discourse.



## HOW TO MAKE A ZINE



(Wakefield, n.d.)

publication), whether digital or printed, efficiently deliver information to youth, community partners, parents, and others. They can be shared via email, websites, or social media to reach a wide audience—always with attention to consent.

Podcasts offer in-depth discussions and interviews on niche topics, and just about everyone listens to them these days. A podcast with youth members, staff, or experts on juvenile justice topics provides YJABs with a dynamic and engaging way to connect with a broader audience and spread the board's message. One board even built a podcast studio with partners, giving youth another way to share their stories and voices.

## MEETING TOPICS

Have you ever left a meeting and thought to yourself, “that could’ve been an email”? You certainly don’t want board members to think that, so it’s important to be intentional and thoughtful about setting up meetings and writing agendas. Meeting topics should advance the board’s goals in a concrete way and address specific items that impact the board and its members. Relevant and engaging content keeps current members interested and attracts new ones by word of mouth about the opportunities. Topics can be identified in a variety of ways. One PA YJAB sends out a survey to elicit ideas for events while another surveys youth to assess their interests.

Make sure you’re consulting youth members when planning meetings and selecting topics; this is a place for them to develop skills and have a voice. Making meetings a valuable experience for youth members can even be a lot of fun. One PA YJAB youth member said that at YJAB meetings, “We have a good time, legitimately. Our meetings are not boring. We don’t just sit and listen the whole time. We get up and have interactions with our guests. We talk like real people. We learn leadership skills that actually help us navigate the business world. We eat a meal together.” Meeting topics can range from developing skills like public speaking to planning fun outings like museum tours.

When you’re just getting started, one PA YJAB staff member advises, “At the first couple of meetings, just assess, listen, and ask some questions, get to know them, what they want to do, how they see themselves achieving their goals.” Then, when meetings are more structured and productive, board members will be more engaged and better able to assess how they can contribute. Don’t be surprised if creative ideas branch off topics on the agenda; sometimes the agenda is just a stepping stone to a new and brilliant idea that the group forms on the spot. Trust the process, be open to these moments, and lean into the spontaneity. This will also help keep the interest of youth members (OJJDP, n.d.).

One PA YJAB staff member said, “Kids have a right to feel human. Staff can say to youth: ‘You are not in the mood to watch this movie and not engaged. Tell us what you want out of the program.’” Boards must be prepared to adapt based on youth needs and input. If youth are not engaged, have them teach the adults about something they are interested in. Curriculums cannot be one-size-fits-all.



***“Kids have a right to feel tired. Staff need to be relatable and flexible.”***  
- Chalét Allen  
Amachi Pittsburgh

## MEETING TOPIC EXAMPLES

- How to use your voice to prevent problems and be productive
- What the “real world” is like
- What the government is doing about youth justice
- “Dress up day,” a professional dress contest
- “Speed dating” with different generations
- Career research
- Writing a letter to yourself
- Roger Hart’s Ladder of Youth Engagement
- Young people’s rights
- Current juvenile justice issues
- Mental and physical health
- Professional development
- College readiness
- Project-focused topics



## MEETING LOGISTICS

A fun, engaging, and productive meeting will seem effortless to attendees, but a lot of work goes into it. One PA YJAB leader advises boards to set up as much as possible before the meeting so that you can focus on the youth once the meeting begins. Meeting logistics to sort through ahead of time include the following:

### FOOD

Most meetings are held on weekday evenings, right around dinnertime, and we all know that food is a big deal for this age group. Some boards like to serve crowd-pleasing foods like pizza during meetings, while others try to offer more nutritious options. The best strategy may be to let youth choose the menu and order the food themselves, giving them real responsibility and decision-making power, which is what the YJAB is all about. One PA YJAB board did caution that having youth handle food might not be as simple as it sounds since it involves navigating different dietary needs and preferences. But, aside from some hurdles, this is an intentional way to help youth build their skills.

### TRANSPORTATION

Transportation issues can come up for any sort of gathering. Virtual meetings can help, but for meetings that are best hosted in-person, one PA YJAB that covers an enormous geographical area arranges for an agency partner to pick up and drop off youth located in other counties. Another provides the youth bus fare. Making sure youth members can engage meaningfully in the board means eliminating barriers for them to do so.





## SPACE

Where meetings take place can set the tone for how they will go. If possible, try to book locations that youth may already be comfortable with or aware of, like libraries and schools. There may be community centers in your area that you can reserve, as well. Wherever it takes place, do what you can to make the space “safe, neutral, and accessible (OJJDP, n.d.).”

## FEEDBACK

It is important to have a feedback loop to make meetings as engaging and responsive to the needs of young people as possible. Gather feedback from members whenever possible by sending out short online surveys after meetings, asking for input frequently, or keeping a suggestion box.

## MEETING TIME, FREQUENCY, AND LENGTH

We’ve established that young people lead busy and unpredictable lives. Be mindful of potential scheduling conflicts like extracurriculars and academic deadlines, and be open to meeting after school or on weekends to accommodate them (OJJDP, n.d.). Boards may consider starting with more frequently held meetings, like once a week, to get everyone in the groove, then settling into a monthly or quarterly schedule once progress has been made and everyone understands their role (OJJDP, n.d.). Periodic in-person meetings may be supplemented by more casual virtual meetings in between.

# 6. Youth Member Stipends & Incentives

Participation on a Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB) can be time consuming and labor intensive for youth members. For many youth, participating in a YJAB requires balancing responsibilities like jobs, family commitments, and schoolwork—all of which come with competing demands on their time. It's important that YJAB leadership recognize the value of their time and contributions while helping to offset the costs of involvement. Stipends and incentives acknowledge these sacrifices, making participation more accessible and equitable for all youth, regardless of their financial circumstances. By providing these supports, YJABs not only demonstrate respect for the youth's efforts in a way that will make them more likely to stick around, they also help to build a more sustainable and inclusive foundation for the board's ongoing work.

## BEST PRACTICE

Create a stipend and incentive program for YJAB youth members.



***"Must pay a generous stipend to participants. If your YJAB members are not texting you to ask you when the next YJAB event is, then you're doing something wrong."***

***- Will Kiefer  
Bench Mark Program***

## FINANCIAL PLANNING

Incorporating a stipend and incentive program into the budget early in the planning process is a strategic decision that enhances financial efficiency and program sustainability. Stipends are a necessary expense, so accounting for them from the outset prevents unexpected financial challenges down the line, reducing the need for last-minute budget adjustments or reallocation of resources (Bryson, 2018). A well-structured compensation plan also fosters transparency and consistency among the board, fostering trust between youth members and program organizers.

Planning ahead also helps YJABs secure the funding needed to sustain youth engagement over time, reinforcing long-term commitment and stability (Hart, 1992). What is required for your board to sustain itself may vary from others; your board may cover travel, meals, staff salaries, etc. in a different manner, but a stipend program is a must. Hopefully you're going to be doing this work for a long time, and ultimately, proactive financial planning supports the YJAB's mission and sustainability. It all goes back to doing everything we can to put youth voices at the center of decision-making—without financial barriers to hold them back.



## TYPES OF STIPENDS

Stipend programs are essential for any YJAB, but there are some options for how the board can implement the program.

## FIXED AMOUNT STIPENDS

Some YJABs offer a fixed amount stipend: a set stipend amount for each youth participant, typically paid monthly or quarterly. This method may allow for more accurate budgeting, especially for boards with very regular and consistent meeting and project schedules.

*In practice, this program type could look like youth members receiving \$50 for each meeting they attend, or \$200 for completing a specific project, such as drafting a policy recommendation.*

## HOURLY COMPENSATION

In some cases, stipends are structured as hourly compensation, where youth receive payment based on the number of hours they work on the advisory board's activities (Walker, 2017).

*For instance, a youth member could be paid \$15 per hour for attending meetings, conducting research, or participating in community outreach.*

## REIMBURSEMENT FOR EXPENSES

Instead of a flat stipend, some programs offer reimbursements for specific expenses incurred during participation (Wagner, 2019). Reimbursements mean that youth pay for expenses up front and the board repays them later.

*This could include transportation costs (e.g., bus fare or mileage reimbursement), meals, or childcare costs, which help ensure that youth can engage in meetings or events without financial burden. However, youth tend to have less stable income than older adults and less savings, so covering expenses up front may not always be an option for them.*

## PERFORMANCE-BASED STIPENDS

In some programs, additional stipends are provided upon the completion of specific tasks or deliverables (National Youth Leadership Council, 2021).

*For example, a youth who contributes to a community report on juvenile justice may receive an additional stipend based on the number of hours worked or the quality of their contribution to the final report.*

## DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

When planning stipends and incentives for YJAB members, it is important to carefully consider how these funds will be distributed. Options such as checks, money orders, gift cards, or cash should align with the needs and capabilities of the youth members. For instance, not all youth may have access to bank accounts or the ability to cash checks easily, which could delay their access to funds. Gift cards or cash might be more accessible alternatives, but they require careful tracking to ensure accountability and accurate bookkeeping. Additionally, establish clear guidelines on how quickly funds need to be used or cashed to maintain accurate financial records for the YJAB. These considerations ensure the process remains efficient, equitable, and in compliance with financial management practices.

### BEST PRACTICE

Have clear guidelines on the dissemination and spending of stipends.



# 7. Youth Voice

## ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This chapter is a unique addition to this toolkit, developed directly by the youth of the Pennsylvania Youth Justice Advisory Boards (YJABs). In 2025, YJAB members convened to create their very own youth voice chapter, ensuring that their perspectives, experiences, and insights were authentically represented. Youth members generated the content ideas, shaped the chapter's focus, and took the lead in visually designing its layout. Every element within this chapter stems from their input and vision, making it a true reflection of their voices. This chapter stands as a message from today's youth to future YJAB youth and staff, fostering a lasting legacy of youth-driven advocacy and empowerment.

## HOW WE WANT TO BE ENGAGED

We want to be treated with respect and supported in a way that helps us do our best—without being judged for our past. Our experiences don't define who we are. Instead, we want to be recognized for who we are now and who we're working hard to become. It's vital to us that we're in a warm, welcoming environment where we feel safe to be ourselves—without fear of being ignored, dismissed, or looked down on.

We want to be part of a community where people truly care, where we're not just heard but listened to, and where our voices and opinions are valued. When we speak up, we want others to take us seriously, not just nod and move on, but really consider what we have to say. Feeling like we belong, like we're included and wanted, makes all the difference. No one wants to feel like an outsider, especially when they're putting in the effort to change.

Teamwork is a big part of that. We want to build strong, real connections—not just with each other, but with the adults who support us. That means having plenty of team-building experiences where we can work together, learn from one another, and just have fun. These moments help us grow trust and unity. They turn us from a group of individuals into a team. We want to feel like we're part of something meaningful—where we're encouraged to grow, persevere, and take pride in the difference we're making together.



**97%**

**of PA YJAB youth believe the work of the YJAB is important and valuable to the Pennsylvania juvenile justice system.**

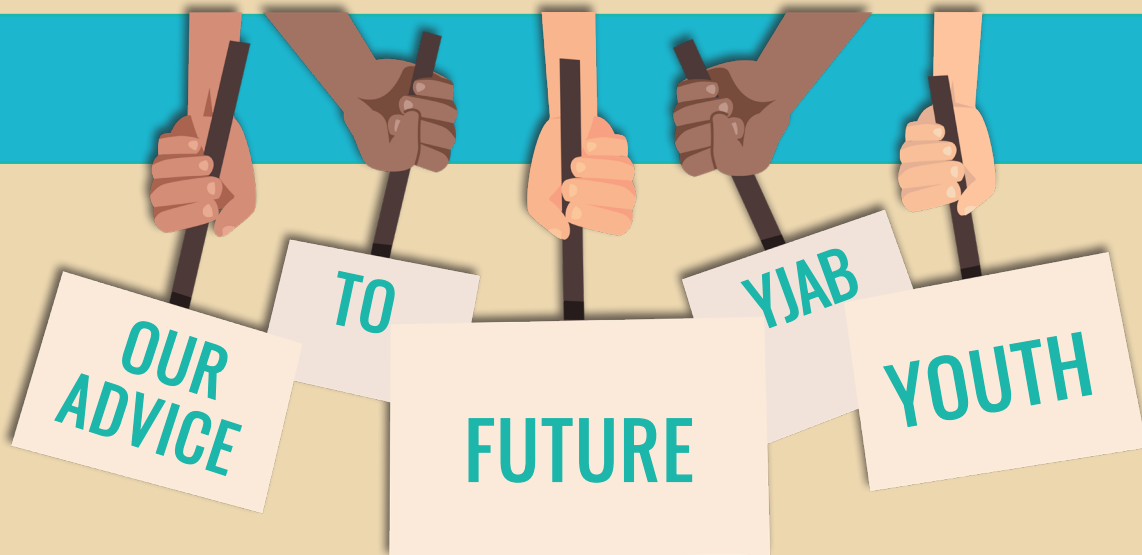


We understand the numbers. We know the statistics—that too many young people get caught in a cycle they can't break. We don't want to be another number in the recidivism rate. We want to be the ones who prove that change is possible. That with the right support, people can break the cycle and build something better. We're working toward a future where we can enjoy real freedoms—freedom from judgment, from fear, from old patterns that held us back. A future where we're empowered, educated, and equipped to lead lives we're proud of.

At the end of the day, it's about creating a space where people are learning, growing, and pushing forward—even when it's hard. We want to be part of that. We want to feel the power of community, the strength of teamwork, and the hope that comes with real opportunity.



**THE GRASS IS GREENER  
ON THE YJAB'S SIDE!**



## OUR ADVICE TO FUTURE YJAB STAFF



Break down what we are doing in more common language so everyone can understand.



Remember that it's not a business, it is relational.



Make room for activities to build connected community.



Build relationships with the youth.



Do thorough background checks on staff hires.



Practice effective communication with youth and staff.

## OUR STANDARDS FOR YJAB SUCCESS

For a YJAB to truly support us, it needs to be a space where we feel heard, valued, and excited to participate. First, we need a warm and welcoming environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts. Our time and voices matter, so we should always be paid for our participation. Food should be provided at meetings because having a meal together helps build community. Transportation should never be a barrier—whether it's bus passes, money for rideshares, or other support, we need reliable ways to get there. To stay engaged, we should take trips often—whether it's for learning, community work, or just to have fun. Meetings should also include activities that keep us interested and make being part of the YJAB an enjoyable experience. When all these things are in place, we can fully participate, stay engaged, and make a real difference in our communities.



**88%**

**of PA YJAB youth  
believe the YJAB  
staff value their  
thoughts and  
opinions.**



## OUR PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

As members of the YJAB, we've been part of some projects that let us give back to our communities while also learning new skills and having fun.

Here are some of the things we've done that we really enjoyed:

### COMMUNITY FOOD & TOY DRIVES

We worked together to collect and give out food and toys to families who needed them, especially during the holidays. It was a meaningful way to give back, and it showed us how even small efforts can make a big difference in someone's life.

### GO-KARTING & TEAM BONDING

Sometimes, we just needed a break to have fun and build friendships, and activities like go-karting helped us stay connected. It gave us a chance to relax, laugh, and bond outside of our usual routines, which made our group feel even stronger.

### PRESENTATIONS FOR SYSTEM PARTNERS

We used our voices to share our experiences and ideas with people in power, making sure they heard directly from us. It felt good to know that our perspectives mattered and that we had a real chance to influence change by speaking up for ourselves and others.

### CREATING PODCASTS

We are learning how to record and share our own podcasts to tell our stories and talk about the things that matter to us. By using our voices, we can help teach others about what youth are going through, what we care about, and how we're working to make a difference. Our goal is to inspire people in our schools, neighborhoods, and communities by showing that young people have powerful ideas and real experiences worth listening to.

### PEER MENTORING

As part of our YJAB project, we completed a peer mentorship program where we learned how to support other youth by listening, sharing advice, and using our own experiences to help. It taught us how to be better leaders, build trust, and create safe spaces where everyone feels heard and understood. Now, we're ready to use what we learned to make a difference in our schools, communities, and YJAB boards.



**94%**

**of PA YJAB youth  
stated the YJAB was  
making a positive  
difference in their  
lives.**



*"The youth program inspired me with the way the law works and how I can use it to my advantage so I can never incriminate myself, and to be a leader, not a follower. Not only did they feed us, because not all programs provide food for youth or give them the chance to earn money while in the program, they take you on trips to learn about different things in different cities, like the politics, mayors, governors, the president, and other people who work with them! I [went] to Harrisburg and Washington, D.C to speak with [the] senate [and] house as a young black male growing up in this world today meant a lot to me, and I think it would be a great opportunity you won't want to miss out on from my experience!"*

*- We Speak YJAB Youth*

## OUR SUCCESS STORIES

**"I am in school to study to be a judge."**

*- Lehigh YJAB Youth*

**"I am graduating from high school."**

*-Westmoreland YJAB Youth*

**"I spoke to my high school principal and three teachers as an advocate for more individualized mentoring programs."**

*-Bench Mark YJAB Youth*

**"I interned at the mayor's office and am in school for law."**

*-Lehigh YJAB Youth*

**YJAB is an important part of my life daily. When I'm in conflict, I think about the opportunity I have to be in We Speak and all the other things I have going for myself. The reason I know I have grown with the help of We Speak is because of the way I handle situations outside."**

*-We Speak YJAB Youth*

**"YJAB has caused me to expand into my more intelligent side and embrace myself despite racial stereotypes."**

*-We Speak YJAB Youth*

**"I am headed to college to study psychology."**

*-Lehigh YJAB Youth*

**"I am headed to the Navy."**

*-Lehigh YJAB Youth*

**"I am graduating college from Community College of Philadelphia with a behavioral health and human services associate degree in applied sciences. I will also be starting my degree at West Chester University in fall of 2025."**

*-SCCA YJAB Youth*

**"I worked with police to raise awareness about mental health."**

*-Westmoreland YJAB Youth*

**"YJAB has given me an outlet to be productive."**

*-We Speak YJAB Youth*

**"I am attending the Honors College of the University of Pittsburgh and double majoring in computation social sciences and public policy."**

*-YES YJAB Youth*

**"I shared my life story and perspective with more than 40 community members at a gun violence prevention event in Lancaster."**

*-Bench Mark YJAB Youth*

**"I am in school and I am working with YJAB to help the community."**

*-Lehigh YJAB Youth*

**"I'm a mom of 3 children and currently in Community College of Philadelphia."**

*-SCCA YJAB Youth*

**"I hosted my first professional podcast, interviewing experts in juvenile justice."**

*-Bench Mark YJAB Youth*

**"I have been invited to the the City of Pittsburgh Mayor's Youth Advisory Board and the Worlds Affairs Youth Council."**

*- YES YJAB Youth*



# YJAB SPOTLIGHT

## LEHIGH YJAB



### YJAB MISSION

The mission of the Pennsylvania Youth Justice Advisory Board is to educate, advocate, and form partnerships to create positive change in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as bringing young people together for activities and provide opportunities for them to share insight about their experiences and thoughts on the things that affect them. It is also a great opportunity to provide them with experiences that they may not have had the ability to do.

### CREATIVE PROJECT IDEA

One of the standout projects for the Lehigh YJAB was their holiday toy drive, where youth members wrapped and prepared gifts for children who were less fortunate during the holiday season. For some of the youth involved, this project was deeply personal. Some of them had experienced receiving such gifts themselves during their own involvement with the justice system, and this created a powerful "full circle moment." Giving back in this way allowed them to connect with their past and make a real difference in the lives of other children. The experience had a lasting impact on the youth members, as they reflected on how something as simple as a toy could bring joy and hope during difficult times. This project not only helped those in need but also gave the YJAB members a sense of purpose and pride, reinforcing the power of giving back.

### YOUTH-LED APPROACH

The Lehigh YJAB is a great example of how to put youth experiences at the forefront of leadership and community impact. They excel at allowing youth members to take charge by creating a functioning Youth Executive Board within their YJAB. This executive board is led by their president, who not only takes the lead in developing the board's agenda but also plays a significant role in communication between members. What's even more impressive is that the president and the board members have relied on their own justice system experiences to recruit new youth members, ensuring the board remains truly youth-led. The youth members use their personal experiences to assess engagement and guide the direction of their projects and community initiatives, ensuring that everything they do remains relevant and meaningful to the young people they represent. This approach makes the Lehigh YJAB a strong, youth-centered organization where young voices drive the work being done.



# HART'S LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

At the 2025 convening, we talked a lot about how important it is for young people to have a real voice in the decisions that affect us. One method we mentioned was Roger Hart's Ladder of Youth Participation. It helps show the difference between adults just telling youth what to do and actually working with us. The ladder has eight steps, and the higher you go, the more youth are truly involved. We agreed that youth should be at the top of the ladder—making decisions and sharing power with adults. This model helps us explain what real youth engagement looks like and why it's so important.

## 8. CHILD-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH ADULTS

*Example: "We started it, and we're working with adults who respect our leadership."*

## 7. CHILD-INITIATED AND DIRECTED

*Example: "This is our idea, our project, and we're making it happen."*

## 6. ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH CHILDREN

*Example: "We started this idea—but we want your leadership to shape where it goes."*

## 5. CONSULTED AND INFORMED

*Example: "We value your experience, and here's how your ideas will impact the program."*

## 4. ASSIGNED BUT NOT INFORMED

*Example: "Just write your story—we'll take it from there."*

## 3. TOKENISM

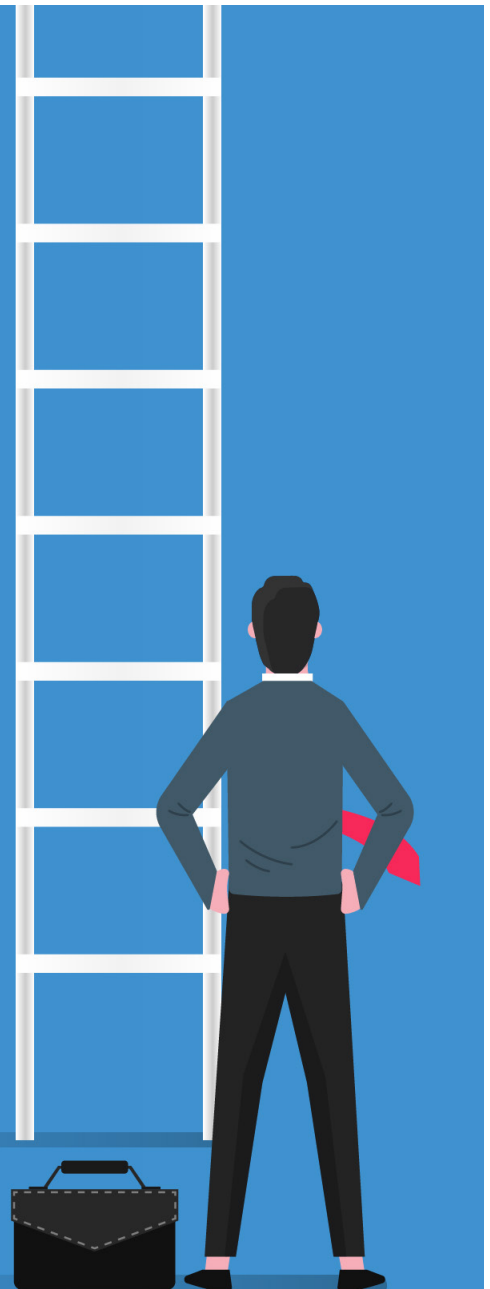
*Example: "We want to include youth, so we saved you two seats—just speak from your heart."*

## 2. DECORATIVE

*Example: Youth perform at the event, but are not included in any discussions or sessions.*

## 1. MANIPULATION

*Example: "You're leading this, but just read what we wrote and follow the script at the press event."*



(Hart, 1992)

## 8. Monitoring and Evaluating Impact

A Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB) puts in a lot of hard work to serve its mission and achieve its goals. Monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of all your efforts is key to making sure that your time and labor amount to what the board is trying to accomplish. Oftentimes, these exercises are seen as just “compliance monitoring” or “checking the box” that a task was completed, but it’s much more than that. Monitoring and evaluation are about ensuring your YJAB stays true to its mission to improve the justice system for young people by highlighting their voices, making your community and juvenile justice system a little better than how you found it. Here are some other benefits to monitoring and evaluating a YJAB’s impact:

- **Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement:** Key stakeholders will want to be informed about the board’s progress and successes. Keep them in the loop of the monitoring and evaluation processes to promote transparency in these relationships and build trust.
- **Ensuring Accountability:** Some YJABs have a lot of moving parts – members, partners, projects, etc. Keeping track of them all via monitoring and evaluating will maintain accountability among the group, ensuring all stakeholders and efforts align with the board’s goals even if things get chaotic.
- **Assessing Impact:** Monitoring and evaluating will also help you understand the tangible effects of the YJAB’s actions on juvenile justice policies and practices. Being able to describe the board’s impact in a concrete way is also a great tool to have when trying to secure funding.

### BEST PRACTICE

Every YJAB should consider developing a strategic plan that is reviewed on at least an annual basis.



Monitoring and evaluating impact can be a big undertaking. Clearly articulating what you want your YJAB to accomplish, how you want to accomplish it, and the ultimate impact you hope to have are essential steps that can also ease the burden. Oftentimes, boards might know what their destination is (e.g., use the youth voice to decrease violence in the community), but they do not know how to get there. That’s why we’ve provided a roadmap with items your board needs to address before being able to monitor and evaluate impact, using the example of a YJAB focused on reducing teen violence in your community.

The exercises on the next page will take you through the roadmap, visualizing the steps needed to ensure your board achieves the impact you desire. After, Tables 1 and 2 show what a detailed plan for monitoring and evaluating impact might look like.

# IMPACT ROAD MAP



## ESTABLISH THE MISSION OF THE YJAB

- The first step on your destination is to establish your Mission. Imagine you are leading a YJAB in its goal to reduce teen violence in the community.
- Your **Mission** is the reason why the YJAB exists. It explains what the board and its youth want to do and why it matters in a broad sense.
- A potential mission statement for our example YJAB could be:

*“The Youth Justice Advisory Board is dedicated to empowering young people to take an active role in preventing violence within our communities. By elevating the voices of youth, fostering collaboration with local leaders, and advocating for positive change, we strive to create safe and supportive environments where all young people can thrive.”*



## DETERMINE THE GOALS OF THE YJAB

- After you have identified your Mission, it is time to establish your Goals.
- **Goals** are the “big things” the YJAB wants to accomplish. These are broad ideas that show **what** the board is focusing on and what is important to the youth. There are different ways to identify a need that will become one of the board’s goals. You might ask board members, partners, and people in the community what is important for the YJAB to accomplish to identify themes and narrow in on the most relevant mission. Maybe a need will come to you without any outreach at all. Regardless, youth should be a part of the process, leading the efforts to identify goals that matter most to them.
- Examples of goals include:
  - **Policy Advocacy:** Influence local or national juvenile justice policies.
  - **Community Engagement:** Improve relationships or increase awareness between youth, the justice system, and the community.
  - **System Improvement:** Propose improvements to juvenile justice programs or services.
  - **Youth Empowerment:** Provide young people the tools and support to actively participate in decision-making and influence policies or practices that directly affect them within the justice system.
- For our example YJAB, the board and its youth members may set goals related to policy advocacy, community engagement, and system improvement, all with a focus on reducing violence in their community.



## IDENTIFY OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE GOALS

- Your objectives still need some refining—after identifying goals, you’ll want to break each goal down into more specific objectives and concrete activities that need to be completed to achieve



them. Think of these items as boxes to check off in a to-do list. They signal to everyone exactly how the board and its youth are going to do the work.

- **Objectives:** Specific things a board needs to do to reach each goal.
- **Activity:** The actions or tasks that are done to achieve the objectives. These are the things that tangibly make progress.
  - Each objective may have multiple activities.
- For our hypothetical YJAB, here are examples of an objective and activities that could advance their Goals:
  - **Objective:**
    - Raise awareness about youth violence prevention.
  - **Activity:**
    - Organize community forums and social media campaigns on the impact of youth violence.
    - Meet with legislators regarding current issues concerning youth violence.

Once the board has these key components driving it forward, the rest of the work will focus on collecting data and information to demonstrate that you and your team have achieved what you all set out to do. If data collection is like a bogeyman to you, you're not alone. Data and information collection can be complex, so we wrote the next section to demystify the process and provide you with easy steps to follow.



## TRACK OUTPUTS

- The fourth step of the data and information collection journey is to identify outputs of the Activities you mapped out.
- **Output:** A countable task or product that shows that the board has been active in completing an Activity. Without outputs, it will be difficult to know when to “check off” an Activity on the to-do list. Outputs are the culmination of each activity. They happen right away or as soon as the activity is done.
- For our YJAB example, outputs might include:
  - Notes and comments from community forums
  - The number of social media posts in each campaign
  - The number of legislators that attended youth violence meetings



## EVALUATE IMPACT

- The fifth step of this exercise is to evaluate impact. Evaluating impact means checking to see if the things you did made a difference. To do this, you'll need to assess any outcomes regarding activities.
- **Outcome:** The longer-term result or the change that happens as a result of the work the board did in the previous steps. Outcomes are about what happens after your work is done and whether it leads to a positive change in the justice system and/or community. The activities in this roadmap get narrower and more detailed as you progress, until it comes to outcomes; these are about the bigger picture.
  - If our example YJAB was successful, they might expect outcomes like:
    - Fewer violent crime arrests
    - Fewer firearm-related arrests
    - Fewer violent crime-related youth injuries and fatalities



- Look for evidence of these outcomes. It could be in surveys, from feedback from people, or comparison of numbers before and after completing an activity.
- The Impact of those outcomes will not always be numerical. It could be abstract and address more general questions like, *What changed?* and *Was the change lasting?*
- From our example, the Impact the YJAB would like to see could include:
  - Improved youth health and wellness
  - Increased community perception of safety
  - Increased public safety
  - Increased community unity
  - Increased youth skills



## ESTABLISH FEEDBACK LOOP

- The final step of this journey is to establish a feedback loop.
- It is important to share your findings with all partners (youth, staff, community partners, funders, etc.) and request feedback on them, creating a loop of communication and progress that keeps the blood of the board pumping. A feedback loop makes sure that everyone understands the program's progress and can contribute areas for improvement. Establishing a feedback loop may include:
  - Delivering reports or presentations summarizing the data and changes made.
  - Hosting regular check-ins or meetings to discuss progress.
  - Providing informal updates or newsletters to keep everyone informed.

You can also use the information you have collected to refine future objectives and activities. For example, after delivering the information, you may ask questions of stakeholders like:

- What aspects of the YJAB need improvement?
- Are there any unforeseen challenges or barriers that need to be addressed?

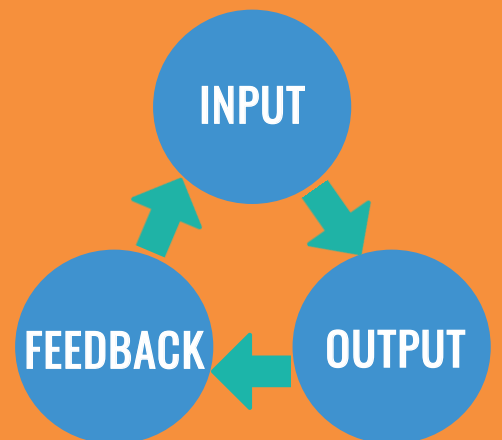
The feedback loop is meant to be continuous. After making adjustments, the monitoring and evaluating process begins again. This cycle ensures the YJAB is always improving, and it helps to:

- Refine strategies to increase effectiveness.
- Ensure that goals are being met or updated if needed.
- Incorporate new feedback as the YJAB evolves.



### **Feedback Loop:**

*A feedback loop occurs when the results from a process (i.e., outputs) are used to inform future inputs for the process. In other words, it is when “lessons learned” and experiences from the original process are used to refine and adapt future occurrences of the process.*



**TABLE 1: VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

Goals	Objectives	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
<b>Goal 1:</b> Champion violence prevention policies and laws	<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Develop advocacy strategies	<b>Activity 1.1:</b> Form an advocacy team to lead efforts	<b>Output 1.1:</b> Policy recommendation drafts	Fewer violent crime arrests	Improved youth health and wellness
	<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Implement advocacy strategies	<b>Activity 1.2:</b> Research and write policy recommendations	<b>Output 1.2:</b> Policy adoptions	Fewer firearm-related arrests	Increased community perception of safety
		<b>Activity 1.3:</b> Meet with local and state legislators and others	<b>Output 1.3:</b> Meetings <b>Output 1.4:</b> Meeting attendance	Fewer violent crime-related youth injuries and fatalities	Increased public safety
		<b>Activity 1.4:</b> Submit editorials to newspapers	<b>Output 1.5:</b> Published editorials	Fewer firearm-related youth injuries and fatalities Stronger collaboration with policymakers	Increased community unity Increased youth skills
<b>Goal 2:</b> Engage the community in preventing violence	<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Teach community members about youth violence	<b>Activity 2.1:</b> Start social media campaigns on the impact of youth violence	<b>Output 2.1:</b> Social media campaigns	Increased community engagement	
	<b>Objective 2.2:</b> Partner with local organizations	<b>Activity 2.2:</b> Hold community events	<b>Output 2.2:</b> Community events <b>Output 2.3:</b> Stakeholder attendance	More violence prevention programs and initiatives	
	<b>Objective 2.3:</b> Empower youth to lead the way	<b>Activity 2.3:</b> Create mentoring programs and youth leadership councils focused on conflict resolution	<b>Output 2.4:</b> Youth-led programs and initiatives	Increased awareness of youth violence	
<b>Goal 3:</b> Improve the system	<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Make mental health services easy to use and find	<b>Activity 3.1:</b> Advocate for mental health programs in schools and community centers	<b>Output 3.1:</b> New mental health programs <b>Output 3.2:</b> Mental health service use	Improved program evaluation and conflict resolution skills	
	<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Support youth-led evaluations of juvenile justice services and programs	<b>Activity 3.2:</b> Secure program funding <b>Activity 3.3:</b> Create tools to rate service providers based on direct youth experiences	<b>Output 3.3:</b> Program funding <b>Output 3.4:</b> Rating matrix	More mental health services Fewer conflicts	
	<b>Objective 3.3:</b> Implement school-based violence prevention programs	<b>Activity 3.4:</b> Partner with local schools to teach conflict resolution skills	<b>Output 3.5:</b> Conflict resolution programs	More effective services and programs	
				More leaders	

**TABLE 2: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

Goals	Objectives	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
<b>Goal 1:</b> Engage youth in violence prevention	<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Increase meeting attendance	<b>Activity 1.1:</b> Keep track of how many youth join and participate in YJAB	<b>Output 1.1:</b> Attendance	Fewer violent crime arrests	Improved youth health and wellness
	<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Inspire youth to participate and share their ideas	<b>Activity 1.2:</b> Create a welcoming space	<b>Output 1.2:</b> Youth ideas, opinions, and suggestions	Fewer firearm-related arrests	Increased community perception of safety
	<b>Objective 1.3:</b> Make sure youth feel valued and happy to be involved	<b>Activity 1.3:</b> Use surveys and group discussions to check whether youth feel heard and valued	<b>Output 1.3:</b> Satisfaction participation	Fewer violent crime-related youth injuries and fatalities	Increased public safety
			<b>Output 1.4:</b> Feedback	Fewer firearm-related youth injuries and fatalities	Increased community unity
				More violence prevention programs and initiatives	Increased youth skills
<b>Goal 2:</b> Empower youth to take action	<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Teach skills to help youth feel confident and empowered	<b>Activity 2.1:</b> Train youth on advocacy skills	<b>Output 2.1:</b> Training sessions	More leaders	
		<b>Activity 2.2:</b> Train youth on conflict resolution	<b>Output 2.2:</b> Training session attendance	More students reaching educational and vocational goals	
		<b>Activity 2.3:</b> Mentor youth	<b>Output 2.3:</b> Mentor/mentee relationships	Less involvement in the juvenile justice system	
		<b>Activity 2.4:</b> Tutor youth	<b>Output 2.4:</b> Tutoring sessions	Stronger peer relationships	
		<b>Activity 2.5:</b> Provide vocational training	<b>Output 2.5:</b> Employed students	More civic engagement	



*“We collect data and conduct research because it is the life blood of our program. After every program, we measure the outcome. Each program has multiple data points that are analyzed. The data results are used to iterate and calculate what needs to be adjusted, modified, and improved for the next program implementation. We also have funders and stakeholders who want to see the return on their investment.”*

**- Dr. Dennis Floyd Jones**  
Executive Director, YES



## YJAB SPOTLIGHT



# YOUTH ENRICHMENT SERVICES YJAB

## YJAB MISSION

Youth Enrichment Services (YES) provides socially and economically at-risk youth opportunities to achieve success through mentorship, education, and enrichment programs.

YES has been a staple for youth in Allegheny County for some time. For the last 30 years, YES has been designing and implementing educational opportunities for minority and underserved children who live in public housing, and economically disadvantaged communities in the greater Pittsburgh area. Most of their programming focuses on mentoring models. In fact, the heart of YES is Mentoring Partnerships, a community-based program that incorporates academic and workforce exposure, peer mentor certification training, life skills development, cultural and social enrichment, and wellness initiatives that address at-risk behavior among adolescents.

## IMPACT EVALUATION

YES has developed robust practices to provide their stakeholders and community at large with accurate, data-based, and reliable information that demonstrates the impact of their programs. They do this in the form of research publications, conference presentations, annual reports, and symposiums and workshops. YES routinely tracks the impact of their programming and services using a variety of methods, including:

### 1. Conducting youth satisfaction surveys

- Example: As part of their Summer Learn and Earn program, youth participants were assigned to a work site. To be sure that youth were provided valuable experiences, YES distributed a survey assessing their perspectives on the work site and their overall satisfaction.

### 2. Tracks program outputs

- Example: Also, as part of the Summer Learn and Earn program, YES tracked total hours worked, total wages earned, total training hours completed, and total apprenticeships completed for youth, which informed the board and stakeholders on the tangible effects of the program.

### 3. Track program outcomes

- Example: YES tracks the number of youth who attend college, vocational training, or certification programs after leaving one of their programs, which are positive life experiences that can speak to the board's impact.



# 9. Sustainability

Whether you are just starting a Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB) or looking for ways to strengthen an existing one, this chapter will help you navigate the challenges of maintaining momentum, fostering youth leadership, and engaging key stakeholders. From building a strong foundation to being willing to pivot, there are plenty of actionable steps your board can take to stay on the pulse and continue to thrive and make meaningful youth justice improvements.

## BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION

To sustain a YJAB over time, a strong foundation must be established by its leaders. A foundation provides infrastructure to the board and all its goals, activities, and the chaos that can come with it, ensuring that resources, partnerships, and community engagement are strategically aligned. When a strong foundation is in place, the board is more likely to stay focused and maintain momentum, even throughout membership and leadership changes. Please review earlier chapters of this Toolkit to learn more about the fundamentals necessary for building a strong foundation, such as recruiting the right staff, investing in youth members, and optimizing diverse funding options.

## ESTABLISH A CLEAR MISSION AND GOALS

Like we covered in Chapter 8, it's important to set specific objectives for the board to focus its efforts and track progress. Without a mission and goals, even the best ideas can lose direction. Having a clearly defined mission and goals ensures every action taken by the YJAB is purposeful, aligned, and focused on making a meaningful impact.

## ESTABLISH STRONG GOVERNANCE

Governance describes the roles, guidelines, and practices that direct the board and provide oversight on its activities. Creating a clear governance structure means outlining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes and defining the leadership within the board. A strong governance framework ensures accountability from members and partners, and it's foundational because of the stability it provides during membership changes. As members come and go during the lifetime of a YJAB, strong governance will help new people fill those roles with ease and continue with improvements to the justice system.

## DEVELOP STRONG YOUTH - ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

Youth members are the heart of any YJAB, but they can't run the show on their own. Collaboration between youth members of the YJAB and adults who lead it is foundational. Part of effective collaboration includes having adults guide and support youth while knowing when to step back to allow youth to take the lead. Chris Neal from the Coro New York Leadership Center describes this as "leading from behind," where adults provide resources and frameworks but let young people shape the direction. This framework distinguishes mentorship from authority and direction from dictation.



**Sustainability:**  
*Sustainability refers to an organization's ability to maintain its operations, services, and impact over the long term, despite changes in funding, leadership, or external conditions.*

## KEEP A PULSE ON ISSUES OF CONCERN IN THE COMMUNITY

In order for a board to continue over time, its work should remain relevant and applicable to the needs of its community. Members should be adaptable and willing to pivot when a critical issue emerges that needs attention. This does not mean that the board should completely reinvent itself. Rather, it means that the board should be willing to pivot when necessary, as long as the new issue is still within the overarching mission of the board.

## FIND YOUR NICHE

Collaborate with local juvenile justice stakeholders to identify gaps in their service continuums, then integrate those missing services into your YJAB programming. For instance, if the local juvenile justice system lacks youth workforce development opportunities, your YJAB can address this need. While amplifying youth voices to drive change may be your primary goal, a complementary objective could be to invest in youth as future leaders and members of the workforce. Build activities into your program that support skill-building, leadership development, and career exploration. Additionally, as your YJAB develops a clear focus or niche, you can also explore grant opportunities and funding streams aligned with that specialization.

## STAGGER MEMBER TERMS

In order to ensure continuity with your YJAB, stagger member terms so that no more than one-third of your YJAB membership is transitioning off the YJAB at any given time. This will ensure that there is always a mix of veteran members, mid-level members, and new members.

## SHARE SUCCESSES

Share successes often with community leadership and other partners. Have the board present to key partners – such as juvenile probation, judges, district attorneys, and schools – in order to showcase the achievements of the board and to demonstrate the value of the YJAB. Promote achievements online via LinkedIn and Facebook to share services and success stories.

## PRESERVE HISTORY

Develop an online platform as a repository for communications, information for all projects (current and past), and history of the council. There may come a time when all original members from the board have transitioned off the YJAB. It is important to have a plan in place to preserve all of the work and efforts from those groups.

## KEEP YOUTH VOICES CENTRAL TO THE WORK OF THE YJAB

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, keep youth voices central to the work of the YJAB. The work and activities of the YJAB should be driven by the interests of young people. Youth leaders have the most insight into youth justice and bring diverse perspectives that staff may not consider. Keeping their voices central to the board's work also signals to youth members that they are valued and respected, fostering confidence and encouraging more contributions from them.



# 10. Community Partnerships



Like roots need soil, Youth Justice Advisory Boards (YJABs) need community partnerships to nourish their growth. The roots of a YJAB's efforts extend far beyond the youth members themselves—reaching families, schools, neighborhoods, and systems around them. Engaging the community, or enriching the soil, allows YJABs and youth justice improvements in general to be successful and sustainable (Epstein, 2011). This chapter explores more about the benefits of community engagement, how starting in the home can lead to the most growth, and ways to build strong partnerships.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement means involving all kinds of community members—families, schools, local organizations, and professionals—in the board's decision-making processes. All of these partners increase the board's network and influence, making it easier for youth members to be heard by policymakers and decision-makers across various sectors (Putnam, 2000). They can also help the board in general by offering resources, expertise, and mentorship (Bryson et al., 2006). For example, partners can provide meeting spaces, funding, and expertise (Kania & Kramer, 2011); schools, government, and advocacy organizations enhance systemic influence (Warren, 2005). As the saying goes, there's strength in numbers.

Community engagement also involves incorporating what's known as "wraparound services" for justice-involved youth. The wraparound approach is holistic and family-centered. It requires attention to multiple areas like mental health, education, and community involvement. Strong community engagement also amplifies youth voices by connecting young people with supportive adults who can provide them with the various resources, guidance, and support they need to succeed (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Warren, 2005). Simply put, justice involvement extends beyond the courtroom, and so should YJABs.

## CULTIVATING NETWORKS FOR SUCCESS

Like gardening, cultivating a network in the community begins on the ground level with intentional outreach and relationship-building. YJABs should aim to cultivate partnerships that align with their goals and values, while still leveraging the unique strengths of each stakeholder to enhance their collective impact (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006).





# YJAB SPOTLIGHT



## K/S CONSULTANTS YJAB

### YJAB MISSION

The mission of the K/S Consultants YJAB is to elevate and empower youth voices within the community by centering their lived experiences with the local juvenile justice system. Through advocacy, collaboration, and leadership, the YJAB strives to influence meaningful change that reflects the needs and perspectives of youth directly impacted by justice involvement.

### CREATIVE PROJECT IDEA

The K/S Consultants YJAB believes in the power of youth voices grounded in lived experience and research. One of its most impactful creative projects was a youth-led panel discussion shaped through a liberation psychology approach. Youth participants identified themes that reflected their experiences within the juvenile justice system and connected those themes to existing research and literature. The final presentation was shared with local and state-level justice representatives, creating space for open dialogue and mutual understanding. This effort helped repair relationships between youth and juvenile justice professionals, fostered a sense of empowerment among participants, and provided compelling evidence to support ongoing juvenile justice reform, demonstrating the potential of youth-led advocacy to drive meaningful and lasting change.

### CULTIVATING NETWORKS

The K/S Consultants YJAB recognizes the power of looking within its own community to identify opportunities for collaboration, growth, and resource sharing. By cultivating strong relationships with local juvenile probation departments, service providers, and fellow YJABs across Pennsylvania, the board has been able to expand its reach and deepen its impact. These community-based partnerships have opened doors to valuable resources such as meeting spaces, guest facilitators, and joint programming efforts. For example, a recent collaboration with the Lehigh and We Speak YJABs led to a “Know Your Rights” session—an initiative that empowered youth with critical information about navigating the juvenile justice system. These efforts highlight the importance of leveraging local networks to create meaningful, sustainable change.



# STEPS TO CULTIVATE COMMUNITY NETWORKS

## MAP THE COMMUNITY

Your community likely already has a structure for engaging with justice-involved youth. Identify key stakeholders in this structure like social services, law enforcement, educational institutions, advocacy groups, and local government for potential partnerships (Kania & Kramer, 2011). For example, your board could create a directory of local youth-serving organizations and reach out to leaders for potential collaboration.



## OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

Don't wait for the community to come to you. Develop clear communication channels for reaching potential partners like formal invitations, event participation, and social media (Honadle, 1981). One strategy would be hosting a community forum where local organizations and families can learn about the board's mission and find ways to get involved.

## INVOLVE STAKEHOLDERS EARLY

Partners can make your work a lot easier (and better), so engage partners early to ensure their investment in YJAB goals, using the communication channels in Step 2 for input (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Your board could engage partners as early as the planning process. For example, invite school administrators and nonprofit leaders to strategy sessions for their early support of youth-led initiatives.

## STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships require work. Maintain strong relationships with partners through consistent engagement, recognition, and opportunities for collaboration (Bryson et al., 2006). This could be achieved by regularly acknowledging community partners in newsletters or hosting appreciation events for engaged stakeholders.

## LEVERAGE EXPERTISE

Once you've mapped out potential partners in the community, be sure to reach out to professionals in education, law, mental health, and juvenile justice. They are great for mentorships and resources (Warren, 2005). For example, a local attorney might offer free workshops on youth legal rights, while a social worker could provide guidance on mental health resources.



**97%**

**of PA YJAB youth  
believe their YJABs  
are making a  
difference in the  
community.**

## CAST A WIDE NET

Community partnerships could extend to programs and services in other counties. If your board has the capacity, casting a wider net for community partners can expand a YJABs' reach, influence, and resource sharing to build a stronger statewide community.

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: THE FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

When building community partnerships, remember that young people have their own little communities that can shape youth justice – their families. Families shape the daily lives of youth members, and their involvement fosters that supportive, wraparound environment that is so beneficial (Epstein, 2011). Emotional and psychological support from family is empowering and can make youth more confident in their advocacy (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). By cheerleading for young people as they tackle the responsibilities of being on a YJAB, or holding them accountable for enforcing the values of leadership and responsibility the board encourages, family members can be an amazing resource (Blank et al., 2003; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). Partnering with them is the foundation for creating real change for youth members and the community at large.

## STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



### **REGULAR COMMUNICATION**

Inform families about YJAB activities via newsletters, meetings, and social media (Epstein, 2011). For example, a monthly newsletter can highlight youth successes and upcoming events, keeping families informed and involved.



### **OFFER SUPPORT SERVICES**

Provide resources such as parent education workshops and mental health support (Blank et al., 2003). For example, a YJAB could partner with a local counseling center to offer free sessions for families in need.



### **INVOLVE FAMILIES IN DECISION-MAKING**

Provide families with opportunities to contribute to YJAB planning (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). A family advisory board can be created to provide feedback on YJAB initiatives.



### **CREATE FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS**

Host inclusive events such as open houses, workshops, and family days (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). An annual "Family Night" could feature interactive sessions where parents learn more about youth justice efforts.

Just as roots need soil to thrive, YJABs need community partners to help them grow and make lasting improvements to the juvenile justice system. A strong network of families, professionals, and community members will empower youth and amplify their voices so that YJABs can expand their influence and create enduring change beyond individuals and into the systems that impact young people.

# YJAB SPOTLIGHT

## WE SPEAK YJAB

### YJAB MISSION

The We Speak Youth Advisory Council was created by the Philadelphia District Attorney's office to address the need for more youth feedback and involvement in diversion programs. The goal is to better understand what worked, identify gaps, and find areas for improvement in how young people are diverted from the justice system. The council provides a structured way to capture youth voices and respond to their input.

We Speak offers young people who have completed diversion programs the opportunity to stay involved, connect with peers, learn new skills, and share their insights to help make these programs more effective and holistic across the city of Philadelphia.

### CREATIVE PROJECT IDEA

We Speak recently participated in a Youth Summit, where young leaders were given the opportunity to develop innovative projects to support youth in Philadelphia. With a \$5,000 upfront reward to fund their ideas, the YJAB proposed the creation of a Youth Portal—a digital platform that allows Philadelphia families to search for programs and initiatives available to their youth based on their geographical location. This initiative aims to expand access to essential services, ensuring that more young people and their families can easily connect with resources that support their growth, well-being, and success.

### HOLISTIC FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

We Speak collaborated with parents to establish the Guardian Empowerment League. With a strong emphasis on holistic family engagement, the program goes beyond supporting youth alone, recognizing that lasting change requires involvement from their entire family and support system. The Guardian Empowerment League provides resources and mentorship for families, helping them navigate challenges alongside their children. By addressing root causes and environmental factors, this initiative ensures a more comprehensive approach to diversion, leading to sustainable outcomes and stronger, more resilient families.



# Resources

The Resources section of the Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB) Best Practices Toolkit is designed to support both staff and youth involved with Pennsylvania's YJABs. This section serves as a practical guide, offering a variety of templates to assist with common board activities and operations. Additionally, it includes a curated list of electronic resources linking to other organizations and materials that can help expand upon the topics covered in this toolkit. By providing these tools, we aim to foster a growing, interconnected community of knowledge, collaboration, and shared best practices across youth justice initiatives in Pennsylvania.

## ELECTRONIC RESOURCE LIST

### Funding Resources

- [grantwatch.com](http://grantwatch.com)
- [Pennsylvania Care Partnerships](#)
- [Pennsylvania Council of Children, Youth & Family Services](#)
- [Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency](#)
- [Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [U.S Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs](#)

### Member Training Resources

- [Commonwealth Prevention Alliance](#)
- [Creating and Sustaining Youth Advisory Boards \(YABs\)](#)
- [Juvenile Court Judges' Commission](#)
- [Juvenile Law Center](#)
- [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges](#)
- [National Mentoring Resource Center](#)
- [Pennsylvania Academic, Career and Technical Training Alliance](#)
- [Pennsylvania Department of Human Services](#)
- [Pennsylvania Youth Advisory Board](#)
- [Pennsylvania Youth Advocacy Network](#)
- [Prevention Learning Portal](#)
- [YouthMovePA](#)

### PA YJAB Websites

- [Amachi Pittsburgh](#)
- [Bench Mark Program](#)
- [K/S Consultants](#)
- [Lehigh- JusticeWorks](#)
- [Support Center for Child Advocates](#)
- [We Speak Philadelphia DAO](#)
- [Westmoreland Community Action](#)
- [Youth Enrichment Services](#)

# YJAB BUDGET TEMPLATE

Overall Budget		
	Budget	Actual
Revenue (grants, donations, etc.)		
Operational		
Expenses		
Staff Salaries		
<b>Grand Total</b>		

Operational Budget		
	Budget	Actual
<i>Meeting Space Rent</i>		
<i>Youth Stipends</i>		
<i>Youth Transportation</i>		
<i>Insurance (program, vehicle, etc.)</i>		
<i>Facility Utilities</i>		
<i>Recruitment Initiatives</i>		
<i>YJAB Online Communication Platform (Teams, Zoom, etc.)</i>		
<i>Annual Application Fees (Adobe, Microsoft, etc.)</i>		
<b>Grand Total</b>		

Expenses Budget		
	Budget	Actual
<i>YJAB Conference Attendance</i>		
<i>YJAB Event Travel</i>		
<i>YJAB Event Overnight Accommodations</i>		
<i>YJAB Programming</i>		
<i>YJAB Food</i>		
<i>Gas</i>		
<i>Vehicle Costs (repairs, registration, etc.)</i>		
<b>Grand Total</b>		

Staff Salaries	
Budget	Actual
<i>YJAB Site Leader</i>	
<i>YJAB Facilitator</i>	
<i>YJAB Program Manager</i>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	



# YJAB YOUTH APPLICATION TEMPLATE

Thank you for your interest in joining the Youth Justice Advisory Board (YJAB). We value your voice and are committed to creating a supportive, inclusive environment where young people like you can have a meaningful impact on the juvenile justice system. This application is designed to be respectful of your experiences and ensure you feel comfortable throughout the process.

Please take your time to complete this application. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, feel free to leave them blank or note that you prefer not to answer. If you need assistance with the application, please let us know, and someone will be happy to help you. Responses will be read by *(insert individual or group)*.

## Personal Information

**Full Name:**

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**Preferred Name:**

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**Preferred Pronouns:**

**(e.g., he, she, they, etc.)**

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**Phone Number:**

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**Date of Birth:**

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**Email Address:**

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**Mailing Address:**

**(Street Address, City, State, ZIP Code)**

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**Current Physical Address:**

**(Street Address, City, State, ZIP Code)**

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## Why do you want to join the YJAB?

Please take a moment to tell us why you are interested in becoming a part of the Youth Justice Advisory Board. *(If you feel comfortable, feel free to share any personal experiences or issues you care about related to youth justice.)*

## Personal Experience and Background

- 1. Have you ever been involved in the juvenile justice system?** Circle one response. If yes, please explain briefly in the box below. This question is optional. We understand if you would prefer not to answer. **YES or NO**

- 2. What strengths or qualities do you bring to the board that would help you support other youth and make a difference in the juvenile justice system?** *(Examples: leadership, empathy, problem-solving, communication, etc.)*

- 3. Can you share a time when you were able to help someone else or work with others to solve a problem?** *(This could be in your community, school, or a personal experience. We are looking to understand your collaborative and leadership skills.)*

## Involvement and Commitment

- 1. How do you currently engage with your community or school?** *(Optional, but can include any volunteer work, community activities, or advocacy involvement.)*

- 2. Are you available to attend monthly meetings and participate in board activities?** Circle one response.  
**YES or NO**

*(Please provide an estimate of how much time you can commit to YJAB activities.)*

## Emotional Well-Being and Support Needs

We understand that youth who apply to the Youth Justice Advisory Board may have had different experiences with trauma or difficult circumstances. Your well-being is important to us. Please let us know how we can best support you during this process and throughout your involvement with the board.

- 1. Do you currently receive any type of support, such as counseling or mentorship?** Circle one response. *(Optional, this information helps us understand how we can better support you on the board.)*

**YES or NO**

- 2. Is there anything that we should be aware of to make your experience with YJAB comfortable and supportive?** *(Examples: specific triggers, accessibility needs, preferred communication style, etc.)*

- 3. If you need emotional or mental health support during your time with the board, are there any resources or services you would like us to connect you with?** *(Optional, we are here to provide support if needed.)*

### References

Please provide two references who can speak to your character, skills, and potential for involvement in the Youth Justice Advisory Board. These could be teachers, mentors, coaches, family members, or community leaders.

**1. Reference 1:**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Relationship to You: \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone Number/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Reference 2:**

- Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- Relationship to You: \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone Number/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# YJAB YOUTH INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

## Prior to interview

Share the interview questions with youth ahead of time to give them a chance to reflect and prepare thoughtful responses. This helps reduce anxiety and ensures they feel more confident going into the conversation.

## Interview Structure

1. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
  - Introduce yourself and any other interviewers present.
  - Explain the purpose of the interview and the YJAB's role.
  - Assure the applicant that their responses will be kept confidential and that they should feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.
  - Provide an overview of the structure of the interview.
2. Applicant Background and Motivation (10 minutes)
  - Ask questions to learn about the applicant's background, interest in youth justice, and motivation to join the YJAB.
3. Leadership and Community Engagement (10 minutes)
  - Explore the applicant's leadership experience, involvement in the community, and ability to contribute to the YJAB's work.
4. Commitment and Availability (5 minutes)
  - Discuss the applicant's ability to commit to the board's activities and meetings.
5. Closing and Questions (5 minutes)
  - Allow the applicant to ask any questions.
  - Explain the next steps in the selection process and thank the applicant for their time.

## Interview Questions

1. **Welcome and Introduction**
  - Brief introduction to the interview process.
  - Warm-up question: "Can you tell us a little about yourself and what interests you about joining the Youth Justice Advisory Board?"
2. **Applicant Background and Motivation**
  - **Why do you want to be a part of the Youth Justice Advisory Board?**
    - *Goal: Assess the applicant's understanding of the YJAB's mission and their motivation to get involved.*
  - **What do you think is the biggest challenge facing youth in the justice system today, and how would you like to help address it?**
    - *Goal: Understand the applicant's perspective on current youth justice issues and their passion for solving problems (Schaleben, 2020).*
  - **How have your personal experiences influenced your desire to work in the field of youth justice or with at-risk youth?**
    - *Goal: Explore any personal experiences that motivate the applicant's involvement and their empathy for others in similar situations.*

- **What do you hope to achieve by joining the YJAB?**

- *Goal: Gauge the applicant's expectations and how they envision their role on the board (Youth Leadership Institute, 2017).*

### **3. Leadership and Community Engagement**

- **Can you describe a time when you've taken on a leadership role or been part of a team project? What was your role, and what did you accomplish?**

- *Goal: Assess the applicant's leadership skills and ability to work with others in a collaborative environment (Blanchett, 2020).*

- **What are some skills or qualities you have that would help you be an effective member of the Youth Justice Advisory Board?**

- *Goal: Identify the applicant's strengths, such as communication, problem-solving, or conflict resolution.*

- **How do you currently engage with your community, and what role do you play in community-based activities?**

- *Goal: Understand the applicant's level of involvement in the community and any experience that could be relevant to their work on the YJAB.*

- **In your opinion, how important is it for young people to have a voice in shaping the juvenile justice system?**

- *Goal: Assess the applicant's understanding of the importance of youth advocacy and their commitment to elevating youth voices (Schaleben, 2020).*

### **4. Commitment and Availability**

- **Being part of the YJAB requires a commitment of time and energy. Are you available to attend monthly meetings and participate in board activities?**

- *Goal: Assess the applicant's commitment to the responsibilities of being on the YJAB.*

- **How much time per week can you realistically commit to board activities, such as meetings, events, and outreach efforts?**

- *Goal: Understand the applicant's capacity to balance their YJAB responsibilities with other commitments (Youth Leadership Institute, 2017).*

- **How do you stay organized and manage your time, especially when juggling multiple responsibilities?**

- *Goal: Gauge the applicant's time management skills and their ability to prioritize their tasks (Blanchett, 2020).*

### **5. Closing and Questions**

- **Do you have any questions for us about the Youth Justice Advisory Board or the work we do?**

- *Goal: Provide the applicant with an opportunity to learn more about the YJAB and clarify any concerns.*

- **Is there anything else you would like to share with us about why you believe you would be a good fit for the board?**

- *Goal: Allow the applicant to share any additional information that may support their candidacy.*

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION & MEDIATION GUIDE

Conflict is an inevitable part of any collaborative group, including Youth Justice Advisory Boards (YJABs). As a board composed of youth and adult stakeholders, the potential for disagreements or misunderstandings is high. However, it is essential to address conflicts in a constructive way to maintain a positive, productive environment and further the goals of the YJAB. This guide provides strategies for conflict resolution and mediation to assist in maintaining healthy communication and teamwork within the YJAB.

## Key Elements of Mediation:

- **Neutrality:** The mediator does not take sides but ensures each party feels heard.
- **Voluntary Participation:** All parties must agree to participate in the mediation process.
- **Confidentiality:** Information shared during mediation should remain confidential to foster trust.
- **Collaboration:** The goal is to encourage collaboration to reach a win-win solution.

### Step 1. Acknowledge the Conflict

Recognizing that conflict exists is the first step in addressing it. It's important that all members involved acknowledge the issue and agree to work together to find a solution.

**Example:** Acknowledge differing views about a proposed policy recommendation. Each member should explain their perspective calmly and respectfully, avoiding blame or accusations.

### Step 2. Define the Issue

Clearly define the conflict. Discuss what the core issue is and what each party hopes to achieve from resolving the conflict. This step ensures all members are on the same page and that the conflict is not exaggerated or misunderstood.

**Example:** If a disagreement arises over how to allocate the board's resources, the members need to clarify whether the issue is about fairness, priority setting, or the process itself.

### Step 3. Active Listening and Understanding

Ensure that all parties feel heard. Active listening involves:

- Listening without interrupting.
- Summarizing the other person's points to ensure understanding.
- Expressing empathy by recognizing the other person's feelings.

**Example:** Each person involved in the conflict should take turns to express their views while others listen attentively. This step helps to reduce emotional tension and promote understanding.



#### Step 4. Identify Common Ground

After understanding the perspectives, the next step is to find shared goals or values. Focusing on mutual interests allows for a more collaborative approach to conflict resolution.

**Example:** If there's a disagreement about program priorities, common ground might be the goal of reducing youth recidivism or improving community engagement.

#### Step 5. Explore Possible Solutions

Generate possible solutions that address the needs of all parties involved. Encourage creativity and flexibility in thinking. Ensure that proposed solutions are fair, respectful, and realistic.

**Example:** Brainstorm solutions for how to divide program funding, ensuring that each member's interests are considered. Explore options that balance the needs of the group while achieving the board's mission.

#### Step 6. Agree on a Solution

Once a solution is found, ensure that all parties are committed to implementing it. Agreement should be reached based on compromise and collaboration.

**Example:** If members agree on a budget allocation, they should also discuss how they will track and evaluate its success, making adjustments as needed.

#### Step 7. Follow-Up and Review

After the conflict is resolved, it is important to monitor the situation and ensure that the solution remains effective. If the conflict resurfaces, the mediation process can be revisited.

**Example:** After a solution is implemented, review its effectiveness in the next YJAB meeting, ensuring that all parties are still satisfied with the resolution.

# YJAB DATA COLLECTION METHODS

## Surveys and Questionnaires

**Why it matters:** Surveys are a quick and efficient way to gather feedback from youth members, stakeholders, and community partners. They help you learn what's working, what isn't, and how to grow.

**How to do it:** Use tools like Google Forms or SurveyMonkey, or hand them out after meetings or events. Ask about youth engagement, program satisfaction, and suggestions for improvement (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

**Example:** A post-meeting survey where youth rate how involved they felt in discussions or whether their ideas were respected.

**Bonus:** Easy to distribute, analyze, and can provide both numbers and narratives.

## Attendance Tracking

**Why it matters:** Showing up matters. Tracking who attends meetings, events, and workshops gives you a snapshot of how engaged your members and community really are.

**How to do it:** Use a sign-in sheet or digital tracker to log attendance and participation trends over time.

**Example:** Tracking how many youth consistently attend monthly board meetings or special events.

**Bonus:** Helps identify strong points of engagement and areas where outreach might be needed.

## Case Studies and Success Stories

**Why it matters:** Numbers are important, but stories move people. Highlighting real experiences shows the human side of your work.

**How to do it:** Collect and write up stories from youth impacted by your initiatives. Focus on growth, change, and leadership development (Zehr, 2002).

**Example:** A youth who, after joining the board, became a peer mentor or advocated at a city council meeting.

**Bonus:** Inspires others and makes your board's work more relatable and fundable.

## Interviews and Focus Groups

**Why it matters:** Sometimes the best insights come from real conversations. Interviews and group discussions offer deeper, more personal reflections from youth and other key voices.

**How to do it:** Set up one-on-one or small group discussions with youth members, staff, or community partners to explore impact, challenges, and suggestions (Zehr, 2002).

**Example:** Asking youth how being on the board has changed how they see themselves or their community.

**Bonus:** Offers rich, detailed feedback that's hard to capture in surveys.

## Program and Event Evaluation

**Why it matters:** Not every event will hit the mark—but evaluation helps make the next one better. Post-event evaluations can help gauge what participants took away and how it impacted them (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

**How to do it:** Use short feedback forms with rating scales and open-ended questions right after the event.

**Example:** After a youth-led town hall, ask attendees what they learned and how the session could be improved.

**Bonus:** Offers targeted data to refine programming and prove success to funders or partners.

## Observation

**Why it matters:** Sometimes just watching and listening tells you a lot. Observing meetings or events helps assess group dynamics, participation, and the use of youth voice (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

**How to do it:** Have a neutral observer attend and take notes on youth participation, power sharing, and overall engagement.

**Example:** Observing a youth-led meeting to see if youth are making decisions and leading discussions.

**Bonus:** Real-time, non-disruptive insight into how your board operates.

## Social Media and Online Engagement Tracking

**Why it matters:** Your digital presence can be just as impactful as in-person work. Tracking online engagement helps you understand what’s resonating with your audience.

**How to do it:** Look at likes, shares, comments, and views on posts, campaigns, or online events. Use platform analytics when possible.

**Example:** Monitoring reactions to a “Know Your Rights” campaign on Instagram or TikTok.

**Bonus:** Shows reach and visibility—especially for youth who prefer digital spaces.

## Youth Feedback on Board Processes

**Why it matters:** If you want to build youth power, you have to check in on how youth feel about the process. Feedback helps shape a board culture that is transparent, responsive, and empowering (Zehr, 2002).

**How to do it:** Hold reflection sessions or check-ins at the end of meetings, or send out periodic feedback forms just for board members.

**Example:** A quick round where youth share what went well in the meeting and what could change for next time.

**Bonus:** Builds trust and helps improve internal decision-making and leadership development.

## Tracking Long-Term Outcomes

**Why it matters:** Real change takes time. Tracking long-term progress helps you see how YJAB involvement affects youth and the community beyond the boardroom.

**How to do it:** Follow up over time with past members or participants—track things like leadership roles, school engagement, or recidivism rates (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

**Example:** A youth who participated in a peer court program later returns to mentor new members.

**Bonus:** Long-term data supports the case for continued funding and systemic change.

# YJAB KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI) TEMPLATE

## Youth Engagement and Participation

KPI	Description	Target/Goal	Actual Performance	Notes
Youth Attendance at Meetings	Percentage of youth members attending YJAB meetings regularly.	80% of scheduled meetings	[Insert Data]	
Youth Participation Rate	Percentage of youth actively contributing to discussions and decision-making processes in meetings.	75% active participation	[Insert Data]	
Diversity of Youth Members	Percentage of youth members from diverse backgrounds (ethnic, social, and geographic).	100% inclusion from diverse groups	[Insert Data]	

## Program Development and Implementation

KPI	Description	Target/Goal	Actual Performance	Notes
Number of Programs/Initiatives	Number of youth-led programs or initiatives developed and implemented by YJAB.	4 new programs per year	[Insert Data]	
Program Participation	Percentage of youth members engaged in specific YJAB-led programs or activities.	70% of members engaged	[Insert Data]	
Program Satisfaction Rate	Average satisfaction rating of programs by youth members (using surveys or feedback).	80% or higher satisfaction	[Insert Data]	

## Impact and Outcomes

KPI	Description	Target/Goal	Actual Performance	Notes
<b>Recidivism Rate Among Participants</b>	Percentage of youth involved in YJAB programs who show reduced recidivism or criminal activity.	10% reduction in recidivism	[Insert Data]	Use post-program tracking for follow-up.
<b>Youth Leadership Development</b>	Percentage of youth members who report increased leadership skills (via self-assessments or surveys).	80% of youth report improvement	[Insert Data]	
<b>Community Impact and Awareness</b>	Measure the public's awareness of YJAB efforts (e.g., media coverage, social media reach, community involvement).	3 media mentions per quarter	[Insert Data]	

## Collaboration and Partnerships

KPI	Description	Target/Goal	Actual Performance	Notes
<b>Partnership Growth</b>	Number of new community organizations, agencies, or stakeholders partnered with YJAB.	3 new partnerships per year	[Insert Data]	
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	Percentage of partner organizations actively engaged in YJAB initiatives (through events, meetings, etc.).	80% partner engagement rate	[Insert Data]	

## Advocacy and Policy Influence

KPI	Description	Target/Goal	Actual Performance	Notes
<b>Policy Recommendations Made</b>	Number of policy recommendations or advocacy campaigns developed and presented to local or state policymakers.	2 policy recommendations per year	[Insert Data]	
<b>Policy Change or Influence</b>	Number of changes or influences made to local or state policies as a result of YJAB recommendations.	1 policy change per year	[Insert Data]	

## Youth Board Development and Sustainability

KPI	Description	Target/Goal	Actual Performance	Notes
<b>Youth Board Retention Rate</b>	Percentage of youth board members who remain active on the board for a full term or multiple terms.	90% retention rate	[Insert Data]	
<b>Board Member Training Hours</b>	Total number of training or development hours received by YJAB members (including leadership, policy, and advocacy training).	15 hours of training per year	[Insert Data]	
<b>Sustainability Funding Secured</b>	Amount of funding or grants secured to support YJAB activities.	\$50,000 per year	[Insert Data]	

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