

Topic Spotlight

Through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), communities around the country are creating Youth Action Boards (YABs) that bring youth voice to the forefront of their YHDP planning processes.

YAB members are youth who have experienced homelessness and housing instability while under the age of 25. While many communities have yet to create one, YABs can now be found throughout the country. But no matter where they are in the YAB process, most communities making a coordinated effort to end youth homelessness are seeking best practices for fully incorporating youth and young adult leadership.

To help meet this need, in the fall of 2019, we interviewed YABs from a range of communities about different aspects of their operations. From the results, we have created a collection of [Community Fact Sheets](#) and a series of Topic Spotlights that offer insights on key elements of YAB implementation.

Beyond Pizza – Finding the Dough

All the communities TAC surveyed are committed to compensating YAB members for their time, but there are often barriers. For many, the first challenge is identifying funding sources that can be used for this purpose. A commonly used and allowed source is Continuum of Care (CoC) Program planning funds. Other sources include community foundations and flexible funding from local organizations.

Once the source has been identified, communities use various means to pay YAB members, such as cash, check, or gift cards. Several communities have worked towards paying members in cash, since youth have communicated that they prefer to receive payment quickly after each meeting.

This Topic Spotlight is part of a series compiled from the responses of seven community YABs surveyed by TAC with the help of consultant Lauren Leonardis: Those communities are Sacramento (CA), Columbus (OH), Boston (MA), Vermont Balance of State, King County (WA), Austin (TX), and Anchorage (AK). Thank you to each of these communities who so generously gave their time to this survey for the benefit of YABs across the country.

Setting Up a System that Works for All

YAB members in the communities we surveyed were compensated for several kinds of activities, such as

- Attending YAB meetings
- Attending professional development trainings
- Speaking at events on behalf of the YAB
- Creating media (art, photography, poetry)
- Reviewing material related to the YHDP planning process



The Gab on YABs ON COMPENSATION

The communities we surveyed pay their YAB members \$10 to \$25 per hour. Some also pay a flat rate for longer community meetings.

Communities have chosen frameworks that suit their own local needs. For instance, some have a tiered system in which YAB members who take on additional leadership roles as facilitators or co-chairs receive a higher hourly rate than general YAB members. In other communities, an agency hires a limited number of YAB members, paying them as they pay other staff, with payroll taxes removed.

Remember Who It's All About

It is important to consider the needs and preferences of your own community's youth in balance with your program and funding constraints. For instance, some youth prefer gift cards over a check because the turnaround time can be faster. Our survey suggests that youth in different parts of the country have different preferences, influenced by specific circumstances in their communities. **KEY TAKEAWAY:** Ask the youth in your community what they prefer! ■