



COMMONWEALTH
SECRETARIAT

ESTABLISHING A PROFESSIONAL YOUTH WORKER ASSOCIATION

A **12-STEP GUIDE** AND MORE

BRIAN BELTON

Commonwealth Youth Programme
Asia Centre
Youth Work Education & Training Unit, 2012
Chandigarh, India

'ME' (ONE FINGER) 'WE' (A FIST)

"THE SHORTEST POEM EVER" – MUHAMMAD ALI

Commonwealth Youth Programme Asia Centre (2012)©
Sector 12
Chandigarh, India
Phone: 00 91 172 2744463
Fax: 00 91 172 2745426
Email: infoasia@commonwealth.int

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

Phone: +44 (0)20 7747 6500 (switchboard)
Fax: +44 (0)20 7930 0827
Email: info@commonwealth.int

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EDITED BY DHARSHINI SENEVIRATNE AND
RUBINA SINGH

Image courtesy: Commonwealth Images

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THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME'S MANDATE TO PROFESSIONALIZE THE YOUTH WORK SECTOR

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP)¹ took an important step in professionalizing youth work in member states when it initiated the Diploma in Youth Development in 1974. The Diploma and Certificate courses in Youth Development are now implemented by leading universities across Commonwealth countries to cater to youth service professionals. Since then, CYP has broadened its initiatives in the field of youth work by creating complementary programmes to strengthen mechanisms and procedures of professional youth work in Commonwealth countries, including setting up youth worker associations, developing competency standards and parallel qualifications for youth workers. These guidelines comprise inputs based on Brian Belton's own work in youth work practice and academia, inputs from youth work stakeholders in Commonwealth Asia member states gathered through Youth Work Country Consultations (Annex 1), and inputs from other stakeholders in the youth services. The objectives of these Guidelines are to support the emergence of democratic, responsive Professional Youth Workers' Associations that could drive the professionalizing process nationally and regionally in Commonwealth Asia, as well as ensure effective, rights-based youth service delivery in member countries.

1/ The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) is a part of the Youth Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, an inter-governmental membership organization of 54 member states that have come together to establish a spirit of democracy, human rights and good governance in the Commonwealth regions.

WHY YOUTH WORKERS' PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS?

THE GUIDELINES

Enhancing the impact of collective professional efforts to improve youth services is at the core of the CYP's mandate to professionalizing the youth work sector. At the foundations of a successful professionalizing process lies the collective strength of youth work practitioners participating in defining the parameters of their profession. This could include participatory decisions on required competencies for youth work, establishing parallel qualifications, and assuring the quality of training and practice. Such collective decision-making ensures the establishment of a vibrant and responsive youth service that serve young people optimally. In this sense, collective organization also precedes other decisions in the professionalizing process.

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WHY YOUTH WORKERS' PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS?

Professional associations provide a resource, a backup and a foundation for professionals who may share common interests and values. They are typically created to provide an organised structure for a group of individuals, usually from a specific range of employment backgrounds. Volunteers can sometimes also be members of a professional association. Professional associations also play a crucial role in defining and regulating the nature of practice, validation, qualification and certification, acting as a gateway to the profession.

Some examples of professional associations in Asia are the National Association of Professional Social Workers in India, The Malaysian Association for Education and the Management Association of Pakistan. Examples of active Youth Work Professional Associations include the Youth Work Association (YWA) of Australia and the Northern Ireland Voluntary Youth Workers' Association.

Professional associations are sometimes formed in order to allow members to reach a common goal whether for legislative, educational, social and/or economic reasons. Out of these bigger goals, professionals can also attain a higher status, influence and authority of the association and its membership.

Overall, the professional association prioritizes its membership through advocacy, capacity building, framing competency standards, establishing Codes of Ethics, and so on. This includes the representation of marginalized individuals and groups working within the profession.

Professional associations typically 'police' practice. However, sometimes they can take the role of 'deregistering', suspending or striking off those who

do not abide by ethical standards, professional codes of practice or cross the moral boundaries of public trust. This being the case, the professional associations is;

- **A source of authority** – defining the parameters (limits and extensions) of professional activity,
- **A means of ensuring integrity** – informing and guiding the character of practice,
- **An interpretative body** – promoting recognition and comprehension of what the profession does (its social function) how it operates and who might deliver practice.

As you might be beginning to understand, professional associations can have a lot of influence and authority. But very straightforwardly, a professional association is a group of people, coming from similar practice backgrounds, under the auspices of maintaining and developing their shared interests, promoting and seeking to heighten the understanding of their common principles, values, perspectives and skills.

WHAT DO PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS DO?

Professional associations can:

- Look to preserve and advance standards of their vocation,
- Engender and sustain ethical practice, building codes of behaviour and professional standards informed by agreed ethical standards,
- Inform employers, government, trainers, associated and related fields, clients and the public in general about professional expectations and models of service delivery,
- Uphold and expand recognition and status of the profession,
- Generate and support relevant professional research,
- Provide multidimensional forums/platforms/ support networks to share and facilitate the preservation and advancement of best practice,
- Frame, influence, advance and inform members about policy, technical and theoretical innovation,
- Provide practicing professionals, students of professional practice and those in training with relatively easy access to a database which they can join and make their profession and personal contact details available to other people and potential clients/users/funders and employers,
- Offer career information, other learning opportunities,
- Offer in-service training and introductory courses/ promotional material for people wanting to begin a career in youth work,
- Provide a validating service for other training/ education providers and advice to organisations, regional and national government.

REPRESENTATION OF A MARGINALIZED GROUP AS PART OF THE WORK OF THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND HOW THIS ADVANCES THE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE ASSOCIATION

Liam is a youth worker and a member of a professional association. He was born and brought up within a minority faith culture, Catholicism, within a predominantly Protestant society.

After ten years of employment in the same post Liam applied for a managerial job within his organisation. He had never been promoted, but he was well qualified and had lots of experience, much more than any of his colleagues.

At the interview for the managerial post Liam was asked a number of very probing questions about his religion and culture. He answered these questions as best he could, but felt very uncomfortable when the subject began to dominate the procedure.

When he was informed he had not got the job and that it would be re-advertised Liam was disappointed, but began to feel he had been done an injustice, knowing that the organisation was committed to Human Rights and that the interview panel had been made up of three committed Protestants.

As such, Liam contacted his professional association asking for their assistance. The professional association was able to arrange for Liam to receive legal advice, but in the first instance the Director of the professional association contacted Liam's employers asking for an arbitration meeting to discuss the matter, which would include Liam, a representative from his organisation and someone from the professional association to support and advocate for Liam.

However, following this contact, the employer offered to re-interview Liam and this time, with a more culturally balanced interview panel. Subsequent to this unbiased interview, he was offered the managerial post.

The story on the previous page demonstrates how being part of a supportive organisation can be helpful to an individual, but also how professional associations can help organisations stay true to and remain consistent with their own values, principles and ethics. When viewed on a broader scale you can see that the effect of the work of professional organisations can have important social impact in terms of promoting best practice, equality and justice.

More generally a professional association may:

- Further the interests of its members while promoting public interest,
- Make the area of professional practice better understood and available to a wider constituency,
- Act as a means of promoting the security and protecting and promoting the position and status of professionals,
- Influence local, regional, national and international policy, professional certification, education and training,
- Endorse and uphold the integrity of the profession represented.

A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION STEERING THE QUALITY AND ETHICAL DIRECTION OF PRACTICE

In Victoria, Australia, The Youth Workers' Association (YWA) has recently embarked on a process of endorsing youth work training and education programs. The YWA is committed to ensuring that the best possible youth work education and training is available to prospective youth work professionals across Victoria. As such they will consult with their members about:

- What is appropriate, good quality youth work training and education?
 - What should be included?
- and
- What are the priorities?

This will assist YWA in establishing a process that is member-driven and reflects the needs of the profession to ensure that professionals have all the requisite skills.

Once more, from the above, you will see that a professional association can have a considerable reach and ability to build, strengthen and develop practice, far more than individuals working alone.

DEFINING THE MEMBERSHIP OF A YOUTH WORKERS' ASSOCIATION

Defining a professional association's "membership" in a context where youth work may not even be recognized as a profession, is a key question. This process of identification is important because many people, all over the world, practice youth work without local or national recognition. Sometimes, individuals do not even understand themselves to be youth workers, and fail to recognise or understand the complex skills and knowledge they in fact use for working with young people. This situation prevents individuals and groups from developing their skills, broadening their knowledge and understanding their work; how can one become better at something if one can't say what that something is?

Such circumstances almost immediately cut youth workers off from training and development opportunities. At the same time, the recognition of practice is curtailed and so career prospects, movement up salary scales and the potential political and social influence of youth workers become limited. Without the professional identity, an able and committed youth worker risks never being seen to be more than a sort of surrogate social worker, teaching assistant or a kind but relatively directionless 'do-gooder'.

To determine membership in such contexts, you may

- 1/ Identify the skills, attitudes, knowledge, clientele, principles and ethics that might together constitute youth work practice nationally, regionally and/or worldwide. At that point the association is in a position to begin to recruit from its designated target group.
- 2/ Identify the Constituency: A group of people will need to identify themselves as youth workers. This can be achieved by reviewing potential members' professional concerns, aims, client groups, ethics and principles against the agreed standards.

**“YOU HAVE TO PERFORM AT
A CONSISTENTLY HIGHER
LEVEL THAN OTHERS.
THAT’S THE MARK OF A
TRUE PROFESSIONAL”**

– Joe Paterno

STEP 1/ ESTABLISH RATIONALE AND CREDIBILITY

Before starting out on the long road to creating a professional youth work association, thought needs to be given to exactly why the creation of such an organisation might be a good idea and, connected to this, what it is trying to provide for and from its membership. Other helpful questions in terms of developing the initial architecture of a professional youth work association are:

- Why would someone join a professional youth work association?
- What would a professional youth work association aim to accomplish?
- Is this more about people furthering their careers or developing the profession as a whole?
- Will the professional youth work association have social objectives as well as professional objectives?

Such questions help establish clear objectives, but it might be best to look to address them prior to starting practical arrangements to build a professional youth work association. Many such projects have failed or been made much more trying because these questions arose well after laying an association’s foundations.

STEP 2/ RECRUIT MEMBERS

When starting a professional youth work association some initial questions need to be addressed;

1/ Who will serve as the first Board Members?

It might be useful to set a target number for this body; an odd number is best for voting purposes.

If the professional youth workers' association is to be taken seriously from the beginning, initial members will need to be recognized in the field. But at the same time, this founding group needs to represent different areas of what is identified as the youth work profession. This group need to have the time to give to the new association. Connections to funding, influence and authority are of course helpful.

2/ What is the function and title of a professional youth work association?

The rationale of the new association needs to be clearly defined and a name decided upon that will obviously link to the association's aims and purpose.

Bring individuals from the profession, and others who share the vision and objectives of the profession together to develop and promote the profession. The initial members of the professional association are sometimes known as 'charter members' (becoming members at the point the association developed its charter).

STEP 3/ GENERATE A VISION AND A MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the professional youth work association is the starting point for developing its vision and mission statements. The Vision would indicate what you aspire to become, and a mission statement would indicate how you work towards getting there.

The best mission statements incorporate the main benefits that members might gain from the association in relation to the association's vision. For example, advice and assistance with regard to professional development, legal support for work-related issues and even perks such as discounts for particular events or commodities. It is a broad declaration that, if required, can be modified with changing contexts.

A mission statement expresses the professional association's overall aims, purposes, goals and principles, but in an abbreviated form.

A good mission statement is effective and concise – perhaps as little as one or two sentences. For example, the British Medical Association's Mission Statement is;

“The professional membership body for family doctors in the UK and abroad. Committed to improving patient care, clinical standards and GP training.”

Although a mission statement is brief, it is often difficult to get right.



STEP 4/ GENERATE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference for a Youth Worker Association is a document that illustrates how the scope of the association will be defined, developed, and verified. It should also provide a documented basis for making future decisions and for confirming or developing a common understanding of the scope among stakeholders. In order to meet these criteria, success factors/risks and restraints should be established.

Creating detailed Terms of Reference is important because they feature:

- i/ The vision, objectives, mission, scope, potential and possibilities (what can and has to be achieved) of the professional youth work association;
- ii/ Who the stakeholders are, their roles and responsibilities (who will be involved);
- iii/ Resources, financial and quality plans (how objectives will be met);
- iv/ An analysis of tasks, structure and schedule (when goals will be achieved).

The Terms of Reference should also include success factors/risks as well as possibilities and restraints.

The Terms of Reference provide a road map that can set out a clear route for the progression of the professional youth workers' association. It clarifies what needs to be achieved, by whom and when. There will be a range of desirable goals, aims and objectives which will need to be established with reference to the requirements, scope and constraints set out in the Terms of Reference.

The Terms of Reference should be generated during the early stages of the life of the professional youth work association. They should provide a clear definition of the potential of the association. It is advisable to review terms of reference periodically, bi-annually perhaps, to make necessary/desirable adjustments due to the evolving structure and role of the association

and changes in the professional environment. Annex II provides a template for a Terms of Reference.

Many of the following considerations can be included in the Terms of Reference.

Membership

As outlined above, a necessary first step is to establish what individuals and groups might be targeted for membership. Next, it is helpful to find out the number of people and/or organisations that could be potential members, and record their contact information for communication purposes.

Background Information

It is also desirable to obtain information about existing professional associations. Look at other associations, including those for related professions (social workers, nurses etc) and what member benefits they offer, and find out what fees are charged. If possible, investigate if the members of other associations, particularly those serving similar professional groups, are happy with the benefits and services they receive from their association.

Benefits

In order that the professional youth work association will attract members, and so be viable, it is necessary to provide straightforward information about the benefits and services provided through membership, and how these might be accessed by members. This might include publications, a group insurance plan, discounted registration fees to certain meetings/events throughout the year, bargain purchasing of certain products offered by corporate partners, lobbying efforts, etc.

It is useful to determine the services/benefits that members will be charged for to help generate additional income such as registration fees for seminars, meetings, meals, etc.

STEP 5/ ESTABLISH BYLAWS

The bylaws of the professional youth work association usually refer to its rules and guidelines, and they might be particularly required if the association decides to apply for tax-exempt status. They are the basic means of managing the affairs and actions of members.

Topics typically covered in bylaws include membership categories and qualifications; membership benefits and services; board members, their roles, qualifications and terms of office; election procedures, as well as other matters related to the members and board members.

Bylaws should address issues such as membership procedure, how meetings are conducted, outline duties within the professional youth work association and other guiding principles. But they also;

- a/ Define the structure of the professional youth work association
- b/ Serve as a guideline for procedures
- c/ Reflect the image of the professional youth work association

It is advisable to examine bylaws of other professional associations to determine how to draft them. Legal advice is valuable when drafting the bylaws.

STEP 6/ ESTABLISH PARLIAMENTARY LAW

This details the rules of order for the debate and deliberation of business among members in assembly. Often, professional associations worldwide use 'Robert's Rules of Order'² (or amended variations of this set of principles), a set of common rules and procedures for conduct at meetings. These allow each member to express their opinion while avoiding confusion. These procedures are implemented to facilitate informed decision making. See ?? for example.

2/ <http://nwt66.org/owl/Documents/Public/Presentations/Roberts%20Rules%20Presentation%20Handout.pdf>

STEP 7/ ORGANIZE MEMBERSHIP

The membership will need to be organized and managed. This encompasses everything from collecting membership fees to disseminating information and maintaining data and information. Often, this is the biggest and most time-consuming part of forming a professional youth work association. As such, it is important to put in place a membership management processes that will ensure everything is organized and runs efficiently.

Sub-committees and task forces might be organised to work on specific tasks such as membership, events or training programs. As the professional association grows, there may well be a need to coordinate volunteers, the people who will attend and facilitate the process of meetings, help organise and run events, deal with databases, fund-raising and so on.

STEP 8/ ELECT OFFICERS AND ESTABLISH DUTIES

It is important that roles and the duties attached to officers are clearly defined. There may also be benefits in instituting a Board of Directors to oversee the activities of the association. It will need to be determined if all members will be able to vote or if this is kept as the usual province of the Board of Directors.



STEP 9/ LEGAL OPTIONS/CONSIDERATIONS, FINANCE AND TAX

From the beginning, it is crucial to ensure that rigorous financial routines and records are in place.

Membership Fees

Membership fees are a primary consideration; will there be one consistent fee for all members or different options based on income, size of organisation etc? Will there be discounts etc? Remember the fee structure probably needs to be related to professional structures and salaries.

Non-Fee Income

Non-fee Income could include sponsorships, grants, registration fees, and partnerships with funding partners, contributions from Board Members or government etc. This is very important in terms of an association as membership numbers are likely to fluctuate from year to year and reflect economic and social conditions/changes.

Annual Budget

Once the income and expenses have been understood, it is crucial to establish an annual budget premised on the projected income and expenses in order that the Board and its members might know how much money is available for each of the association's activities.

Tax

It is possible that not-for-profit organisations will be Tax-Exempt Status, but so might associations that engage in activities to promote the common interest of members and to improve employment conditions. A professional youth work association may also be able to provide members with information about potential tax exemption for scientific or educational groups they are connected with, which are sometimes treated in much the same way as charities or schools.

It is of course helpful to find out about this as, amongst other things, fees might be tax-deductible.

Financial Responsibility and Legal Structures

The youth workers' association will need to find out its financial responsibilities, for example file for a tax ID number, open bank accounts and obtain the necessary insurance policies.

A professional youth work association needs to establish a legal and financial structure. This is because fees are usually charged for membership as well as other services such as processing the professional validation of qualifications, organisational and state consultancy. The professional youth work associations may also be involved in the provision of legal and occupational insurance for members, usually via association with requisite specialist organisations, often with negotiated reductions in premiums etc. Less commonly (outside the USA for instance), professional associations use their bargaining power to negotiate other financial services for their members (medical and legal cover, mortgages, funeral services etc.).

A professional youth work association may sometimes seek limited company status (become incorporated). This provides the means to lock any 'profits' (surplus) into the association for use by members and/or promote the interests and influence of members. It also limits liabilities of board members and/or trustees.

The process would usually mean registering for tax as no one would be benefitting i.e. most professional associations involved with educational and caring professions are considered non-profit making and therefore eligible for tax exemptions.

STEP 10/ CREATE IDENTITY

A board to head the professional youth work association needs to be put in place. This will be made up of people who are willing to take on the overall management.

National laws sometimes require not-for-profit companies to hold an annual meeting and take minutes, and perhaps follow other guidelines. It is always advisable to obtain legal advice on such issues, and it is also helpful to have a legal expert involved in the association's management.

Identity plays a key role in the image the Association presents to the public, and becomes readily recognizable. In order to create this identity, it is useful to:

- a/ design a logo
- b/ determine the mailing/office address
- c/ design and print letterhead, envelopes and other marketing materials



Image courtesy: YMCA Sri Lanka

STEP 11/ PREPARE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Any responsible and workable professional youth work association should include measures that ensure sustainability, funding and membership criteria as well criteria for the sanctioning and removal of members. This requires operating within a clear and accessible ethical framework. How these considerations are met will differ according to place and time, but in the main, associations should look to be self-funding and as such self-sustaining.

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STEP 12/ AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethical codes of practice need to be generated and consistently reviewed in the light of political and humanitarian concerns, but broadly be in line with national and international conventions. A brief template/example of a code of ethics is provided in Annex 3.



Image courtesy: Commonwealth images

MANAGEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

As indicated above, many professional associations rely on volunteer staff; board members and officers giving up their time. However, as associations grow, it is often common for them to employ part-time and full-time officers and administrators. An alternative to this is to hire an association management company so the professional youth work association doesn't have to pay employee benefits and payroll expenses or have the expense of a central office.

NETWORKING AND LOBBYING

One of the main benefits of professional youth worker association membership for the individual professional is the networking possibilities it offers. Out of this comes the potential for lobbying and so changes and developments in not only the policy of the association, but influence over national and regional concerns.

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF A PROFESSIONAL YOUTH WORKERS' ASSOCIATION LOBBYING TO PROFESSIONALIZING THE SECTOR

Sandra Leventon's contribution to Youth Service and youth work in the UK and historically worldwide, is hard to overstate. In the late 1950s, her lobbying under the banner of the Youth Service Association, United Kingdom, prevented the near termination of the Youth Service. This lobbying led to the formation of the Albemarle Committee (which gave rise the Albemarle Report, that set the parameters for youth work firstly in Britain and, by example, provided a template for the profession throughout the world). This led to the subsequent resourcing of the service and its professionalisation through the Joint Negotiation Committee (JNC) for the first time in 1961.

Once this work had been done to establish the infrastructure, youth work began to gain respect and recognition as a profession. This made it possible not just to improve pay terms and conditions for the workers, but to assert the value of the work to the point where statutory funding on par with schools could be contemplated.

Building on this, Sandra not only led the negotiations which resulted in the mid-1970s in at least 25% pay rises for youth workers, but she also inaugurated the first concerted Parliamentary efforts to create a legislative base for the Youth Service. Parliamentarians of all parties were lobbied and persuaded by the arguments that Sandra so effectively expressed and in fact formulated. These were based on the idea that *youth work uniquely would put young people first*. This was a vital educational and political perspective.

The case study opposite demonstrates the potential reach and influence of a professional youth workers' association, although it has to be said it is more usual that they will be part of wider consultations about policy and legislation (also taking account the views of employers, members of the public, including young people, police, trade unions and so on).

Like any other professional group, youth workers should always look to build professional networks, seek career advice and learn about new resources. Professional association can be helpful in these respects. However, membership must not only provide a value to the individual, but should enhance or maximize the performance of the person to ultimately benefit their organization, the profession as a whole, and so the social context of professional practice (the village, the town, the region or the nation).

Some professional associations have thousands of members, and size affects how successful members can be in making meaningful contact at an event of congress. But getting the most out of membership of a professional youth work association is much like anything else in life; ***members are going to get out of it as much as they are prepared to put into it.***

Website and Newsletters

A website is a useful way to keep members informed and provide information for potential members as well as other interested parties (clients, government, researchers, funders). A newsletter is also useful (hard and/or online). Committees tasked with specific areas of the professional association's functioning can be set up.

Professional Association Software

Professional association software can be utilized. For example 'Wild Apricot'³, amongst other capacities, will:

- Create a custom online member application form in 15 minutes - no paper, PDF downloads or faxes
- Define rules and renewal policies for different member categories within your association
- Setup recurring payments for monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual memberships
- Automatically send e-mail renewal reminders and let members renew online

Another example of this type of facility is 'in1touch'⁴. Its membership management feature alone enables:

- Peer review on initial application, turn it on or off
- Member self-register and renew online
- The creation, update and search of member profiles anytime, anywhere
- Complete control of data visibility
- The generation of custom labels and member cards
- Members to view, print and pay invoices at any time
- The auto-generation of invoices and email invoice reminders
- The configuration and sharing by membership groups (e.g. board, sub-committees, other)

- The setup of auto emails, notification of members of important news, events etc.
- The location and analysis of members via Google Maps
- The creation of membership rosters or a directory
- Unlimited number of rosters for different purpose
- The making rosters public or private. Or have different rosters for public and private

This sort of software can be helpful in terms of effectively and efficiently managing the many aspects of the professional youth work association, from routine administrative jobs to membership applications.

Meeting Schedules

The professional youth workers' association can usefully arrange for a certain number of general membership meetings each year. However, the Board of Directors or officers generally meet more often. A professional youth work association can increase attendance at membership meetings by holding them in conjunction with a conference.

3/ <http://www.wildapricot.com/professional-association-membership-software>

4/ <http://www.in1touch.com/index.jsp?p=professional&mp=home2>

THE ADVANTAGES TO INDIVIDUALS OF PROFESSIONAL YOUTH WORKER ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

If you have read the above material carefully, you can probably understand that while there is an appreciable amount of work involved in creating a professional youth work association, it is likely to provide a number of advantages as well as being a process that is self-developmental. However, it is worth saying, and it is a main selling point of membership, that professional membership confers social status and the potential to heighten professional recognition. This helps develop more sophisticated thinking, specialisms, and employment opportunities, motivating a wider application of skills, principles and ethical practice.

Being part of a greater whole gives the individual member and the profession a more informed, and therefore authoritative, and therefore influential voice, and can play a part in protecting minority interests and establishing equality of treatment. Membership can link professional youth workers at regional, national and international levels, creating access to educational and political forums.

Other advantages of membership include:

- Wider and more intimate organizational connections,
- Access to the leadership, change makers and stakeholders,
- The opportunity to develop research and publications (electronic and otherwise),
- Be part of local, regional, national and international seminars, workshops, and symposiums,
- Professional certification opportunities,
- Web sites and other resources relating to the profession,
- Published and Internet Job Listings; services for members to post their resumes, review resumes for new employees, or look for a new job; jobs are

typically posted for free as a service to members,

- Programmatic accreditation and validation for colleges and universities,
- Member Services Centre including legal and psycho-social support; sometimes via a toll free number,
- Educational Grants for members,
- Health and Life Insurance Programs,
- Video Library,
- Discounted merchandise rates,
- Apprenticeship and Intern Programs,
- Access to resources such as profession related manuals and handbook.

However, *the true impact of membership of a professional youth work association comes from individual participation within the association.*

This will enhance its growth and so its recognition and influence. The member, by helping the association achieve its mission, will immediately see benefit directly from the fruits of his/her labours. This is an educational activity in itself, but it produces professional leaders and those who can steer professional objectives in a way that keeps the profession relevant and current, being able to change when the context calls for adaption, but at the same time being able to maintain the integrity of the profession⁵.

**“A PROFESSIONAL IS
SOMEONE WHO CAN DO
HIS BEST WORK WHEN HE
DOESN'T FEEL LIKE IT”**

- Alistair Cooke

5/ For further guidance, see <http://www.acycp.org/project%20outreach/acycp%20handbook.pdf>

Name

Official name of the professional youth workers' association.

Members: Names

Contact information, roles/responsibilities e.g. chair, secretary, treasurer, report to the board.

Goals and Primary and Secondary Objectives

Scope / Jurisdiction

(What is the extent of responsibility and authority of the professional youth work association? What needs to be addressed? What can be decided and acted upon by whom?)

Guidance from the Board

Initial direction and suggestions from the board.

Resources and Budget

Equipment, materials, space, available finance.

Governance

Decision-making/governance procedures (consensus, 2/3 majority vote or chair's authority, etc.), relationships of authority within the professional youth workers' association and with other organizations/ministries etc.

Additional Notes

- Where and how shared information, such as plans and contact information, will be stored.
- Related policies/by-laws.
- How reporting back to the associations business will be conducted and communicated (and to whom).
- History of the professional youth work association.
- Schedule or meetings and/or other timelines.
- Information about specific projects.

The direction, purpose and tenor of the main document has been informed and shaped by complex and committed discussion within the above countries during national consultations on youth work. However, a number of salient points arising from national discussions need to be highlighted separately, given unique and interdependent priorities of the various professional contexts concerned, which relate to both the autonomy of the region and particular states, but also shared aspirations, principals and values.

Principles around which professional youth work associations should be based

It was agreed that professional youth work associations should be built around and organized according to the principles of democracy, human rights, good governance and other Commonwealth values. It was thought that the same should be reflected in any professional standards youth work associations generate or comply with.

There was consensus that social dialogue and solidarity in and between professional youth work associations would be the basis of their strength and so should be embedded in their aims and purpose.

Ownership of professional youth work associations

There was agreement that from the outset it is essential that professional youth work associations should be committed to democratic processes and that they are established as independent, autonomous organizations.

It was thought that professional youth work associations should not just operate at the national level, but look to build connected and cascading representation beginning from the local level. This will promote an inclusive rather than an exclusive model of organization.

There was a feeling, given the profile of youth work across Asia (being a diverse field with heterogeneous stakeholders), that youth work practitioners both with and without recognized qualifications might be welcomed into professional youth work associations. It was recognized that professional youth work associations, region wide, would have multi-sector membership and representation.

It was hoped that professional youth work associations within the Commonwealth might stand for an inclusive model of organization that will have the means of evaluating competencies prior to membership in a context that in some areas does not recognize youth work as a profession.

The role of professional associations

There was agreement that validated forms of assessment should be jointly undertaken by academic institutions and professional youth work associations. However, it was generally understood that while professional youth work association should be a watchdog of the profession's standards they cannot and should not be mistaken for unions (which have a distinct role of their own).

Professional youth work associations need to work alongside government and within national policy to develop, assess and if necessary disallow qualifications that look to provide gateways to and within the profession.

It was thought that certification of professional organizations is an important area for professional youth work associations to consider.

Youth and Community work is a field of professional practice constituted by practice in a number of fields and contexts. While practice and the constituencies served may differ, there is a common commitment to constituents as primary clients, and to influence of youth work to transform situations, structures, communities and individuals.

Education is a prerequisite for democracy and citizenship. Youth work seeks to extend the reach of effective democracy, particularly by seeking to work with young people and communities to develop their own direction and ambitions. The following principles are informed by this core position.

- 1/ **Primary Client:** Our primary client (our 'constituent') the young person.
- 2/ **Social Context:** Our work is not limited interaction with individuals, but extends to their social context and environment. It recognises the impact of ecological, political and structural forces on people.
- 3/ **Equity:** Our work promotes equality of opportunity and outcome. Our practice is equitable and inclusive
- 4/ We seek to enhance constituents' **capacity for personal expression** though:
 - Enabling them to clarify and pursue their chosen priorities,
 - Working with them to build skills of decision-making, engagement and collaboration,
 - Realising their influence and authority,
 - Facilitating disengagement from the professional relationship.

Our starting point is that constituents are capable of assessing and acting on their own interests.
- 5/ **Duty of Care:** We will avoid exposing our constituents to the likelihood of harm or injury.

6/ **Corruption:** We will not seek to advance ourselves, our organisations or others, personally, politically or professionally, at the expense of our constituents.

7/ **Transparency:** Engagement with the young person and the resulting association will be open and truthful. Potential conflicts of interest will be openly declared.

8/ **Confidentiality:** Constituents should be made aware of the limits to confidentiality and the demands of the 'need to know'. Wherever possible they should be consulted before disclosure.

9/ **Co-operation:** We will actively seek to co-operate with others in order to secure the best possible outcomes for our constituents.

10/ **Professional Development:** We will work thoughtfully and considerately, identifying and using the information, resources, skills, knowledge and practices needed to improve our capacity to meet our obligations to constituents.

11/ **Self-awareness:** We should be conscious of our own values and interests, and approach cultural and other differences respectfully. While the need to question may arise, we must first try to understand.

12/ **Boundaries:** The Youth Worker's professional association with constituents is intentionally limited to protect the constituent and the purpose of our work. These limits should be clarified, established and maintained. The association with an individual constituent is based on respect of the individual and is not available for sexual engagement.

13/ **Self-care:** Youth work practice should be consistent with preserving the health of Youth Workers.

14/ **Independence of the Association:** The association will be independent and not vulnerable to adverse external influence.

The Author

Dr. Brian Belton is a Senior Lecturer at the YMCA George Williams College in London, England. His areas of responsibility include Professional Practice and Supervision Studies. Coming from an East London/English Gypsy background, Brian entered youth work partly as an escape from the hooligan/gang life of the late 1960s/early 1970s docklands. He has worked in youth work related situations around the world, including Israel, the Falkland Islands, the USA, Thailand, Hong Kong, Zambia, South Africa, China, Canada and most recently, through the Commonwealth Youth Programme, in Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

He publishes on subjects ranging from youth work and cultural identity to sport and he is an international authority on gypsy identity. His youth work-related publications include *Developing Critical Youth Work Theory* (2009), Sense; *Radical Youth Work: Developing Critical Perspectives and Professional Judgement* (2009) Russell House; *Differentiated Teaching and Learning in Youth Work* (2010); *Supervision – Praxis and Purpose: a critical reassessment of reflective practice in work with young people* (2010) Russell House (with John Peaper and Tina Salter); *Youth Work and Islam: A Leap of Faith for Young People* (2011) Sense (with Sadek Hamid).



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