



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

COMMUNICATE PURPOSE AND IMPACT

Y Voice and Messaging Guide
YMCA OF THE USA

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With the Y's revitalized brand, YMCAs across the U.S. are speaking in a unified voice to effectively communicate who we are, what we do and our impact.

As a result, increasingly today:

- Our members and participants realize the value we offer;
- Our donors know the impact of their gifts;
- Our volunteers better know our charitable worth;
- Our advocates support our work; and
- The general public is beginning to understand that we are a leading nonprofit strengthening community—often in their own neighborhood.

This updated version of the Y Voice and Messaging Guide builds upon our success, further demonstrating how to communicate as a cause-driven organization. We live our cause when we think, act and communicate in ways that strengthen community by nurturing the potential of children and teens, improving the nation's health and well-being and giving back and supporting neighbors. With this Guide, YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) offers additional tools and techniques for using our words to shape perception and drive action.

As before, our goal is to help you understand and comfortably use common Y messages with our voice characteristics. We've added many examples from Ys around the country to demonstrate how to bring our voice to life.

In the updated Y Voice and Messaging Guide you'll find:

- An overview of the Y brand strategy
- Guidance for using the Y voice in communications
- Standard descriptions for use in external communications
- Tactics for creating effective messages that make an emotional connection and share impact

The new information provided reflects requests from Ys—large and small—for more resources to help the Movement adopt our voice and messaging. Additions include:

- Extended descriptions of our offering categories that speak to impact
- Training exercises for individual or group practice
- Library of voice and messaging examples from across the country
- Glossary of terms, so we have a common understanding of brand-related terms
- Voice checklist to review communication

In addition, a **Technical Supplement to the Y Voice and Messaging Guide for Quick Reference** has been created. It is located on the Brand Resource Center.

BRAND OVERVIEW

Our brand is our essence – what we stand for, the benefit we provide and why our stakeholders should engage with us.

To use and manage it effectively, we must present ourselves as a unified cause with shared values and a common voice.

BRAND PROMISE DEFINED

The brand promise is our cause. It explains what we stand for and why people should care. The brand promise is not a tagline and is not intended for marketing collateral. It serves as our inspiration for building a strong, cohesive organization.

OUR BRAND PROMISE

The Y is a powerful association of men, women, and children of all ages and from all walks of life joined together by a shared passion: to strengthen the foundations of community.

With a commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living, and fostering a sense of social responsibility, the Y ensures that every individual has access to the essentials needed to learn, grow and thrive. Anchored in more than 10,000 neighborhoods around the country, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

Though the world may be unpredictable, one thing remains certain – the Y is, and always will be, dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities.

OUR VALUES

Our core values unite us as a movement. They are the shared beliefs and essential principles that guide our behavior, interactions with each other and decision-making.

The four values of the Y:

- **Caring:** Show a sincere concern for others
- **Honesty:** Be truthful in what you say and do
- **Respect:** Follow the golden rule
- **Responsibility:** Be accountable for your promises and actions

OUR VOICE

We use the word “voice” to describe the way our brand looks and sounds. The following terms describe the tone of all our communications:

- Determined
- Nurturing
- Genuine
- Hopeful
- Welcoming

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOICE

WHAT IS VOICE?

Brand voice is the distinctive tone, manner and style in which we communicate. It describes how the Y looks, sounds and is experienced by the public.

Voice is defined by a set of attributes which shape how we look, feel and sound – fusing language, design, content and experience.

These attributes help direct the personality of all Y experiences and communications. They also provide evaluation criteria that help us determine whether our communications “speak” to our audiences in a distinctly “Y” way.

OUR VOICE ATTRIBUTES

- **Nurturing:** To care for, support and help develop through encouragement

We recognize that everyone has personal strengths. We infuse every message with a degree of empathy, because we sincerely care for the well-being of others and are rooting for their success.

- **Genuine:** To be honest and open in relationships with others

We say what we mean in plain language and present realistic accounts of our capabilities and impact.

- **Hopeful:** To take an optimistic view of future outcomes

We believe the glass is half full, and we’re always thinking of new ways to fill it. We’re confident that we can make a real difference in the lives of the people and communities we engage.

- **Determined:** To devote our full strength and concentrated attention to strengthening community

We are passionate about our quest to help others, and we devote our full strength and concentrated attention to our cause. We’re motivated to achieve our mission and goals.

- **Welcoming:** To accept people eagerly, warmly, hospitably and as equal participants

We want people to feel comfortable around us. We address everyone with the respect all people deserve, and do not turn any person away for an inability to pay.

WHY VOICE IS IMPORTANT

A unified brand voice is one of the most powerful tools an organization can use to drive reputation and influence behavior. A clear, coherent and consistent voice conveys the authenticity and character of an organization.

A unified voice enables us to:

- **Differentiate** the Y from peers as a leading nonprofit strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility
- **Emphasize** the Y’s impact – not just the programs it provides
- **Influence** our stakeholders to join, renew, give, volunteer and advocate

WHERE WE USE VOICE

Everywhere. Use the Y voice across all touch points to all stakeholders: Y-USA, YMCAs, partners, vendors, etc. The Y voice applies to how we think, act and communicate, including training, social media environments, communication, websites and behavior.

The more consistently we use our voice, the more clearly we will express who we are, what we do and our impact.

Here are some examples of how style can make the Y sound determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful and welcoming.

OVERALL STYLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Speak like a person rather than an institution

When appropriate, the Y should have an accessible style of speaking when communicating with an audience. This means a personable voice that uses first- and second-person pronouns: use “we,” “our” and “us” when referencing the Y and the Movement, and use “you” and “your” when addressing an individual.

Use consistent terms and phrases

Don’t use two different ways to say the same thing. Determine the best word or phrasing and apply it consistently. Using different words to mean the same thing confuses the audience.

THINK THIS...	...NOT THIS
We count on the generosity...	The generous support of members...
Everyone is welcome.	Financial assistance keeps the Y open to those in need.
Together, we make a difference.	Our members make a difference.
You’ll find our staff...	Members find the Y staff...
Our focus on youth development...	The focus on youth development...

THINK THIS...	...NOT THIS
nonprofit	not-for-profit
children and teens	young people
community service	human service

Don't rely on the branded program name to explain a concept

The audience may not be familiar with the proper name of a program, so explain what it means and the benefits in plain English.

THINK THIS...	...NOT THIS
programs that build character	Character Development
outdoor camping for teens	Adventure Teen
child care for military families	Respite Child Care
programs for parents and children	Adventure Guides

Let math help you convey impact

Convey impact in numbers in a context that gives them meaning.

THINK THIS...	...NOT THIS
one in three children	1,647 children

EXAMPLES

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

- The nation's more than 2,700 YMCAs build strong kids, strong families and strong communities. YMCAs engage 21 million people each year – nearly half under the age of 18 – through programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening and health and well-being for all.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

Leads with statistics about our impact – the people we strengthen – not our facilities

Makes clear our cause and the outcomes of our programs; the benefit we offer

- This year, 21 million people – nearly half of them kids – will come to the Y to receive the support and resources they need to learn, grow and thrive.
Engaging 10,000 communities across the U.S., more than 2,700 Ys strengthen community by nurturing the potential of children and teens, improving health and well-being, and enabling people to give back and support their neighbors.

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

- Our association consists of five YMCAs serving communities in three counties.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

- Includes our cause
- Alludes to different characteristics of Ys

- We have five Ys in the surrounding counties—all strengthening community based on the unique needs of the children, families and individuals in those communities.

EXAMPLES

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

- Despite its name, the YMCA is not just for the young, not just for men and not just for Christians. It is, however, as our history illustrates, an association of members who come together with a common understanding of the YMCA mission and a common commitment to the YMCA's vision of building strong kids, strong families and strong communities. Across the U.S., 21 million members are part of more than 2,700 local YMCA associations. Each association is different, reflecting the needs of the local community. Your YMCA in your community may have a facility with a gymnasium, pool, child care center or even a school. It may be a storefront operation delivering community-based programs such as job training or youth and government. It may be a camp, or it may be a satellite program in a local school. It may be all of these things. Whatever the facilities, whatever the programs, what doesn't change are the people. What every YMCA has in common is a dedicated group of people: volunteers, staff, members and donors – all of whom are committed to our mission. It is the people of the YMCA who build strong kids, strong families and strong communities – and you can help.

WITH Y VOICE

AFTER

Speaks to what the Y is,
not what it isn't

Speaks with confidence

More explicit in the pitch
for involvement

- The Y is a diverse organization of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to strengthen community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.
- Our membership is 21 million strong, and spread across more than 2,700 Y associations nationwide. Since no two communities are exactly alike, no two Ys are exactly alike. We bring men, women and children – just like you – together to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve health and well-being and foster a sense of social responsibility—so everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.
- While our programs and facilities are always based on the unique needs and interests of our communities, every Y has one thing in common: our people. The volunteers, staff, members and donors of the Y are all united by a deep commitment to strengthening community.
- Join us—we could use someone like you.

EXAMPLES

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

YMCAs embrace and nurture the promise that lies in all of us. Our broad reach and impact have empowered us to change lives for more than 160 years. Collectively, the nation's more than 2,600 YMCAs are one of the largest charitable community service organizations in the U.S., uniting 21 million men, women and children of all backgrounds, abilities and income levels.

YMCAs meet the nation's most pressing needs in 10,000 communities across the country: nurturing and affordable child care for low- and middle-income children, drug prevention and anti-gang programs for disadvantaged and at-risk youth, support for the families of military service members deployed overseas and programs that promote a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Financial assistance keeps YMCAs open to those in need. The generous support of our members and partners ensures access to YMCA programs and services for millions of people each year.

WITH Y VOICE

- Articulates **what** we do and **why** it matters:
- Reiterates our cause and areas of focus
- States our impact
- Makes clear that we are a charity

AFTER

At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Through our focus on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, we embrace and nurture the promise that lies in all of us. The Y gives children, families and individuals the support and resources they need to be more healthy, confident, connected and secure.

Each year, 21 million people of all ages and from all walks of life turn to one of the more than 2,700 YMCAs in the U.S. for programs that nurture the potential of children and teens, improve health and well-being and enable people to give back and support neighbors. In 10,000 communities nationwide, our child care, education and leadership, athletic and camp programs give kids safe, nurturing environments that help them realize who they are and what they can achieve. Our family time, fitness, sports, recreation and group interest programs improve health and well-being. And our social and global services, volunteerism, giving and advocacy programs enable people to gain the skills, abilities and mindsets they need to live their best lives.

As a nonprofit, this is our commitment. We count on the generosity of our members and partners to help us continue our vital work.

EXAMPLES

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

100,000 families, adults and youths were served through important YMCA programs, including child care, camp, senior programs, aquatics, teen development and family services.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

- Active voice
- Use of “us” and “our” fit voice attributes

Individuals in [name of community]—more than 100,000 of us—made the Y an important part of improving our lives this year, through child care, exercise, social programs, teen development and family services that help us learn, grow and thrive.

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

87 volunteers helped others by donating 2,872 hours of their time.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

- Use of “our” adds sense of community
- Elevates volunteer work as critical to the Y

Our volunteers, without whom little of what the Y does is possible, donated 2,872 hours of their time to helping the [name of community] be more healthy and connected.

EXAMPLES

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

- As a service to our valued members, Child Watch provides free, onsite babysitting for children ages three months to six years. Non-members pay \$3 per child, with a limit of three visits per month.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

- Articulates need the service is meeting and its value

- Find it hard to exercise with your kids at your feet? With Child Watch, the Y keeps an eye on your little ones—ages three months to six—while you focus on you. Free for Y members; \$3 per child for non-members with a limit of three visits per month.

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

- The Y provides a number of volunteer activities.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

- Explicit call to action
- Articulates benefit of volunteering

- Become a YMCA volunteer, get involved and create lasting memories while sharing your unique talents.

EXAMPLES

BEFORE

WITHOUT Y VOICE

The YMCA is proud that no one is denied membership or program participation based on the inability to pay. Last year the YMCA provided over \$100,000 to more than 600 children, senior and families so they could join our Y family. Applications are confidential and financial assistance is provided on a sliding scale based on household income.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

- Shares core belief of value of organization
- Articulates benefits of programs
- Creates sense of community

At the Y, we believe we have something special—a sense of community—and that everyone should have access to it, along with the programs and services that help us learn, grow and thrive. With your help, we were proud to share the Y with more than 600 children, seniors and families last year who otherwise might not have become part of our Y family.

BEFORE

WITHOUT Y VOICE

Our branches provided child care to more than 400 children at six program sites.

AFTER

WITH Y VOICE

- Qualifies the kind of child care the Y provides
- Connects numbers to impact

Our Ys provide quality, affordable child care to more than 400 children, giving them a safe and enriching start to learning while mom and dad are at work.

MESSAGING

Our messaging about our purpose, our programs and our impact is intended to both educate and inspire. Historically, we have told our story in terms of numbers of people served and products and services offered, not how lives are changed for the better and communities are strengthened.

The brand research told us that people don't know what we do or why we do it. We need to answer those questions in our messaging.

By communicating consistently, clearly and compellingly about why and how we do what we do, connecting programs to their value, painting a picture and telling stories of impact, we can make an emotional connection and influence people to join, renew, give, volunteer and advocate.

With practice, our messaging will become second nature and help sustain and build the Y.

With practice, our messaging will become second nature and help sustain and build the Y.

REASON FOR BEING

• OUR MISSION

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

PROMISE (long form)

• OUR CAUSE

The Y is a powerful association of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. We believe that lasting personal and social change can only come about when we all work together to invest in our kids, our health and our neighbors. That's why, at the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors in 10,000 communities to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

PROMISE (short form)

• OUR CAUSE

At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

POSITION

• WHO WE ARE

The Y is a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

WHAT WE DO

The Y makes accessible the support and opportunities that empower people and communities to learn, grow and thrive. With a focus on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y nurtures the potential of every child and teen, improves the nation's health and well-being, and provides opportunities to give back and support neighbors.

HOW WE DO IT

There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That's because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

- The Y is community centered. For nearly 160 years, we've been listening and responding to our communities.
- The Y brings people together. We connect people of all ages and backgrounds to bridge the gaps in community needs.
- The Y nurtures potential. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.
- The Y has local presence and national reach. We mobilize local communities to effect lasting, meaningful change.

OUR IMPACT

The Y is, and always will be, dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities. Every day our impact is felt when an individual makes a healthy choice, when a mentor inspires a child and when a community comes together for the common good.

AREAS OF FOCUS

• YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: NURTURING THE POTENTIAL OF EVERY CHILD AND TEEN

We believe that all kids deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. That's why, through the Y, millions of youth today are cultivating the values, skills and relationships that lead to positive behaviors, better health and educational achievement.

HEALTHY LIVING: IMPROVING THE NATION'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

In communities across the nation, the Y is a leading voice on health and well-being. With a mission centered on balance, the Y brings families closer together, encourages good health and fosters connections through fitness, sports, fun and shared interests. As a result, millions of youth, adults and families are receiving the support, guidance and resources needed to achieve greater health and well-being for their spirit, mind and body.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: GIVING BACK AND PROVIDING SUPPORT TO OUR NEIGHBORS

The Y has been listening and responding to our communities' most critical social needs for 160 years. Whether developing skills or emotional well-being through education and training, welcoming and connecting diverse demographic populations through global services, or preventing chronic disease and building healthier communities through collaborations with policymakers, the Y fosters the care and respect all people need and deserve. Through the Y, 500,000 volunteers and thousands of donors, leaders and partners across the country are empowering millions of people in the U.S. and around the world to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

OUR ARCHITECTURE

Masterbrand	<div><div>the Y</div><div>the Y</div><div>the Y</div><div>the Y</div><div>the Y</div></div>											
Areas of focus	FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT				FOR HEALTHY LIVING				FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY			
	Nurturing the potential of every child and teen.				Improving the nation's health and well-being.				Giving back and providing support to our neighbors.			
Offering categories	CHILD CARE	EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP	SWIM, SPORTS & PLAY	CAMP	FAMILY TIME	HEALTHY, WELL-BEING & FITNESS	SPORTS & RECREATION	GROUP INTERESTS	SOCIAL SERVICES	GLOBAL SERVICES	VOLUNTEERISM & GIVING	ADVOCACY
Programs & services	Afterschool Care Child Watch Corporate Child Care Extended Child Care (4-6am-6pm a/o weekend) Kid's Club School-age Child Care (5 days/week)	Academic Enrichment Abundant Assets Afterschool Academic Enrichment Programs Early Learning Head Start Homeschool Enrichment Classes Preschool School Readiness Programs Tutoring Arts & Humanities Filmmaking Leadership Development Campus Ys Mentoring Youth/Teens Leaders' Club Youth on Boards Post-secondary Education Prep Achievers College Goal Sunday College Preparation/Exploration Youth Employment Services Youth Civic Engagement Model UN Teen Councils/Youth Advisory Boards Youth & Government	Competitive Swimming & Sports Gymnastics Swimming/Diving (under 18) Recreation Dances Skateboarding Teen Clubs Y-Teen Zone Youth Sports Programs Adaptive/Inclusive Youth Sports Youth Baseball Youth Basketball Youth Fitness/Exercise Youth Flag Football Youth Gymnastics Youth Judo Youth Karate Youth Lacrosse Youth Soccer Youth Softball Youth Tennis Youth Track/Field Youth Swim Lessons Adapted Swim Lessons-Children w/ Disabilities Child/Parent Classes Splash Youth Lessons	Day & Resident Camps Day Camp Overnight Camp Summer Camp Specialty Camps Diabetes Camp Cancer Camp World Camp	Adventure Guides Family Camp Family Challenge Family Fitness Family Nights Family Wellness Programs Parent/Child Dance Prime Time Family	Group Classes Active Older Adults Aerobics/Dance Circuit Training Classes Indoor Cycling Martial Arts Strength Training Women Only Fitness Program Yoga Healthy Lifestyles Cardiac Rehabilitation Programs CPR/First Aid Diabetes Prevention & Self-management Health Screenings/Lifestyle Appraisals Healthy Family Home HIV/AIDS Prevention Injury Rehabilitation Lifeguard Training Obesity Programs Pre/post-natal Exercise Classes Stress Management/Relaxation Programs Personal Fitness Personal Training Starter Fitness Programs Water Activities Adult Swim Lessons Aqua Step Adapted for Adults with Disabilities	Adult Team Sports Adult Basketball Leagues Adult Competitive Swimming (18 & Over) Adult Golf Adult Hockey Adult Soccer Leagues Adult Softball Leagues Adult Tennis Adult Volleyball Leagues Recreation Cycling/Mountain Biking Hiking Running Clubs Skiing Snowboarding Walking Groups Wall Climbing	Life-long Learning Adult Arts & Humanities Healthy Cooking Sign Language Classes Spanish Classes Social Groups Book Clubs Group Trips (travel) Knitting Ladies Night Out Spiritual Development Bible Study Community Prayer Breakfast	Child Welfare Foster Care Gang Prevention/Intervention Housing for Runaway/Homeless Youth Programs for Suspended & Dropout Youth Community Health Military Outreach Initiative Urban Swim (outreach swim safety instruction) Employment/Vocational Training Adult Employment Services Adult Literacy Programs Computer Training GED Preparation Environmental Education Earth Service Corps iCare Family Services & Skills Development Counseling Programs Family Resource Centers Financial Education Transitional Housing for Families Quality of Life Food Banks Housing Permanent Low-income Housing Substance Abuse Programs	Global Education Events, Forums & Festivals Exchanges of Volunteers & Staff Global Leadership Development Service Learning Global Network Global Partners Hosting International Visitors International Y-to-Y Relationships Newcomer/Immigrants English as a Second Language Citizenship Preparation Legal Services Resettlement Services World Service Disaster Response Global Programming World Service Campaign World Week of Prayer	Financial Support Annual Support Campaign Youth Sponsorships Volunteers Managerial Volunteers Policy Volunteers Program Volunteers Grassroots/Community Organizing Civic Engagement Activities Healthier Communities PTO Collaboration Public Policy Legislative Action Center State Alliances	

Use our architecture not just as an organizational guide for programs on your website or in your program guide, but also as a message platform that helps connect programs to their larger purpose (the descriptions of the areas of focus) so that their value and impact is made clear.

OFFERING CATEGORIES

We've enhanced some of the offering category descriptions to better connect **what** we offer with **why** we offer it.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: NURTURING THE POTENTIAL OF EVERY CHILD AND TEEN

- **Child Care** – Safe, nurturing environment for children to learn, grow and develop social skills **so that when children aren't in the care of their parents, they're still with people committed to their development and well-being**
- **Education & Leadership** – Knowledge, character development, guidance and encouragement **to help children and teens learn and realize their potential**
- **Swim, Sports & Play** – Positive, fun activities that build physical and social skills **that encourage a lifetime appreciation for active living**
- **Camp** – Exciting, safe community for children and teens to explore the outdoors, build confidence, develop skills and make lasting friendships and memories, **so they can grow as individuals and leaders**

HEALTHY LIVING: IMPROVING THE NATION'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- **Family Time** – Bringing families together to have fun and grow together, **so they can strengthen their relationships and build connections with other families**
- **Health, Well-Being & Fitness** – Resources and guidance to maintain or improve health and wellness, **so we can all lead our fullest lives possible at any age**
- **Sports & Recreation** – Healthy lifestyle activities that bring together people with shared athletic and recreational interests, **because the rewards of teamwork, friendly competition and exercise are life-long**
- **Group Interest** – Social networks and activities that bring together people who share common passions and personal interests, **engaging spirit, mind and body**

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: GIVING BACK AND PROVIDING SUPPORT TO OUR NEIGHBORS

- **Social Services** – Training, resources and support to empower our neighbors to make change, bridge gaps and overcome obstacles, **so that everyone has the chance to learn, grow and thrive**
- **Global Services** – Support systems that welcome, celebrate, educate and connect diverse demographic populations in the U.S., and around the world, **so that everyone can reach their full potential and our changing communities are united and strong**
- **Volunteerism & Giving** – Voluntary contributions that fund, lead and support the Y's critical work, **because as a nonprofit, we can only strengthen community with your help**
- **Advocacy** – Collaborations with policy makers, community leaders and private and public organizations **to develop youth, prevent chronic disease and build healthier communities, and encourage social responsibility**

FAST FACTS

- The Y is a leading nonprofit strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.
- The Y is a powerful association of men, women and children committed to bringing about lasting personal and social change. With a focus on nurturing the potential of every child and teen, improving the nation's health and well-being and providing opportunities to give back and support neighbors, the Y enables youth, adults, families and communities to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.
- In the U.S., the Y comprises the YMCA of the USA, a national resource office, and more than 2,700 YMCAs with approximately 20,000 staff and 500,000 volunteers in 10,000 communities across the country.
- The Y engages nine million youth and 12 million adults in 10,000 communities across the U.S.
- Worldwide, the Y serves more than 45 million people in 124 countries. Ys across the U.S. play an integral role in strengthening the leadership and youth programs of the Y around the world.
- Members, staff and volunteers of the Y include men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life.
- The Y offers programs, services and initiatives focused on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, according to the unique needs of the communities it engages.
- The Y is accessible to all people. Financial assistance is offered to individuals and families who cannot afford membership.
- The Y is guided by four core values: caring, honesty, respect, responsibility.

MESSAGING STRATEGIES

THE Y

- Refers to our collective presence and is used when writing about our cause, our brand promise, our voice, our values or our overall impact as a leading nonprofit.
- When we speak about our brand, our voice, what we stand for, i.g., the mission of the Y; the Y brand; at the Y, we speak in one voice.
- For informal reference to a location once the formal name has been used.

Join the Y.

Meet me at the Y.

Ys across the country have a new look.

Our Y's facilities are closed for the holiday.

YMCA

- As part of the formal name of locations, associations, branches and camps.
- In text only, to describe signature programs and events that we want people to immediately associate with the YMCA.
- Refers informally to a location once the formal name has been used. The YMCA of Greater Louisville welcomes you.

Participate in the YMCA's Healthy Kids Day.

**YMCA of Greater Syracuse members:
Renew your YMCA membership today!**

Y-USA

- An abbreviation for the national council, once the formal name YMCA of the USA has been used.
- For formal organizational names in joint communications to avoid confusion.
- Both YMCA of the USA and Y-USA stand alone and are not preceded by "the".

Neil Nicoll was hired as president and CEO of YMCA of the USA in May 2006.

He joined Y-USA following 14 years as president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Seattle.

PEOPLE REMEMBER PICTURES MORE THEN WORDS

Storytelling plays a powerful role in bringing the Y's brand to life and in demonstrating how the work we do connects to our Promise: Strengthening Community.

Stories focus on the impact our programs make in the lives of real people, and expand beyond our programs' specifications.

Stories illustrate the real-world, human benefits of the Y, and help make an emotional connection to what we do.

GETTING STARTED

To start crafting a compelling story about a Y program and or person/family/community segment, ask yourself the following questions:

- What important need did our program/staff help meet for this person?
- Who is this person? What are they like? What's special or relatable about them? Why did they come to the Y?
- How has this person, family or community segment's life changed for the better? What do they say about their progress or the value of the Y?
- How does this one person or family represent what's possible on a larger scale?

EXAMPLE

Sometimes teens need a little extra guidance when they are unsure of which career path to choose. For Victoria, Youth in Government gave her just that, with some added advantages.

Now a senior in high school, Victoria has been participating in the YMCA's Youth in Government Program since eighth grade. Created to prepare students for responsible leadership in the American democratic process by providing guidance, training and experience in the theory and practice of determining public policy, Youth in Government gives kids the support and opportunities to figure out who they are and what they can achieve.

"I love the program because it has given me so much insight about the world around me, especially within the government," Victoria says. "It also has helped me prepare for my future career in law, which I will begin pursuing shortly after graduation in May of this year."

Victoria credits the Youth in Government Program for helping her pursue and remain focused on her life goals. She, like so many youth who benefit from this program, feels more confident in her abilities, and is more independent and able to make sound decisions while she continues to develop a strong character and work ethic.

Proof positive of her hard work, Victoria was delighted to learn she has been accepted to five colleges, and each of them has offered more than \$10,000 in scholarships.

"Participating in Youth in Government is an opportunity of a lifetime," she explains. "I would encourage any young teen who isn't sure as to what career path to choose to join this program."

Ask yourself: If you didn't work for the Y, would you care about the point you're making? If not, try to think of a way to phrase the point that would resonate more with that member, donor or influencer.

PERSONALIZE THE AUDIENCE'S EXPERIENCE WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Target the communications and request based on who the intended audience is and what you know about him or her.

ANTICIPATE AUDIENCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWER THEM

Different audiences need different information (donors want to know where/how their money is being spent; members might be interested in community impact and new offerings). If something is available only to a certain audience, or meant for a unique segment of an audience, communicate that clearly.

CONVEY THE VALUE PROPOSITION FOR EACH AUDIENCE

While it's great to underscore the wealth of experience and programming the Y offers in its areas of focus, don't forget that each audience will have different interests, e.g., policy leaders will want to hear high-level information about the Y's impact, while parents want to know what their kids will learn at camp and how long they'll be away from home. Audiences should understand how the Y adds value to their lives and how it addresses their particular needs.

THE Y'S CORE AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

General public

General public, which includes potential members, donors, volunteers and former and nonmembers who may perceive the Y primarily as a service provider. Messaging should explain the breadth and depth of the Y story and convey the distinctive benefits of membership, giving and volunteerism.

Current members

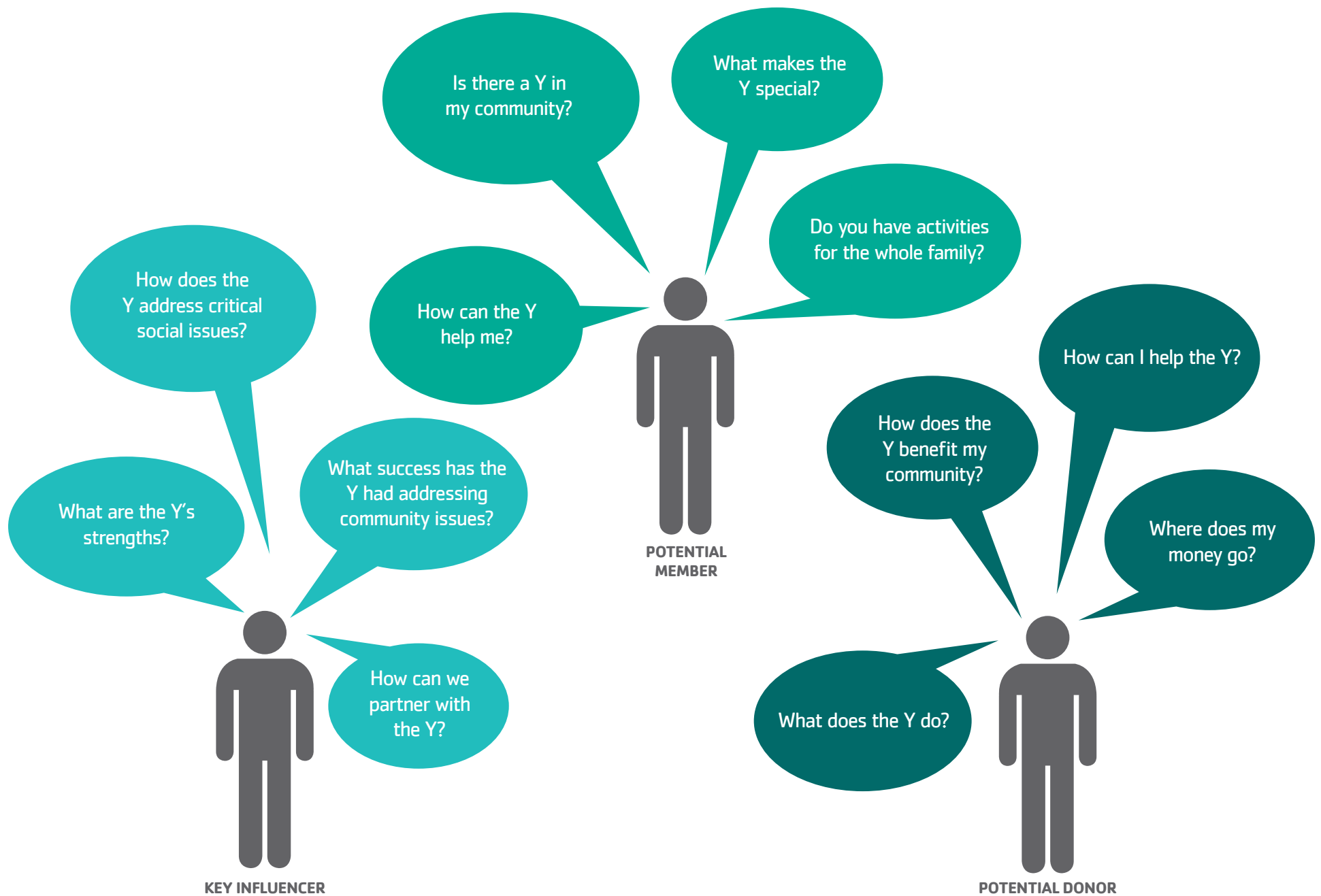
Individuals and families, with families as a critically important sub-segment. Messaging should expand engagement, as well as drive giving and volunteerism.

Key influencers

Policymakers, business and community leaders, and the media. Messaging should inspire influencers to invite the Y to the table when addressing the most pressing social issues facing our communities.

Partners

Peer organizations or any for-profit. Messaging should identify commonalities and highlight opportunities for collaboration.



JOIN THE Y

This message matrix provides practical examples of how to apply messaging to drive membership recruitment and renewals.

AUDIENCE	TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE
Potential members	<p>When you join the Y, you’re coming together with men, women and children from your community who are committed to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.</p> <p>Note: For membership renewals, replace “join” with “renew.”</p>
Potential members with children	<p>Join the Y and become a member of a community that’s committed every day to helping you and your kids learn, grow and thrive.</p>
Children	<p>Ask your parent(s) about joining the Y, and become part of a community that encourages fun, friendships and endless possibilities.</p>
Adults	<p>Join the Y and become part of a community committed to help you learn new things and make new friends at any stage of your life.</p>

TAILORED SECONDARY MESSAGE

We know firsthand how difficult it can be to find balance in life. That's why we're here with you every day, making sure that you, your family and your community have the resources and support needed to learn, grow and thrive.

With a focus on developing the potential of kids, improving health and well-being, and giving back and supporting our neighbors, your membership will not just bring about meaningful change in yourself, but in your community too.

Find out more: Stop in at your local Y and experience how we empower our 21 million members to be more healthy and connected.

With the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility as our guide, we work with you every day to help your children have fun while realizing their potential.

With the Y, you can be assured that whatever activity your family or your child engages in – from child care to family time to sports to camp – you'll have a safe, positive environment to play, learn and grow.

Because the Y is for everyone, we bring together parents and kids like no other organization can. From family camps to game nights, we provide many opportunities for families to spend quality time together.

At the Y, kids have the opportunity to make friends, have fun, get active and discover who they are and what they can achieve.

Our activities, which range from leadership development to sports and arts, give you the opportunity to become a confident kid today and a healthier, happier grown-up tomorrow.

With the Y, you're not just a member of a facility; you're part of a cause. With a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, improving health and well-being, and giving back and supporting our neighbors, your membership gives you and your community the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

We are a community with an everyday mission to helping you achieve a balance of spirit, mind and body. We do that by encouraging good health and fostering connections with new and old friends through sports, fun and shared interests.

CUSTOMIZABLE PROOF POINTS

- Statistics that illustrate needs/interests
- Impact of the Y
- Statistic/Testimonial showcasing an area of focus: Youth Development, Healthy Living or Social Responsibility
- Breadth/Depth of offerings
- Examples or stories of impact
- Quotes and testimonials

- Statistics that illustrate needs/interests
- Impact of the Y
- How children and teens benefit from Youth Development
- Third-party awards or recognition for Youth Development offerings
- Examples or stories of impact

- Impact of Y on children and teens
- Statistics on need to nurture potential
- Breadth/Depth of opportunities for children and teens
- Examples or stories of impact

- Statistics that illustrate needs/interests
- Impact of the Y
- Statistic/Testimonial showcasing need for what Y offers
- Breadth/Depth of offers
- Examples or stories of impact

GIVE TO THE Y

This message matrix provides practical examples of how to apply messaging to promote giving to the Y.

AUDIENCE

TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE

Current members and donors

When you give to the Y, you strengthen our community and move us all forward. As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y uses your gift to make a meaningful, enduring impact right in your own neighborhood through: (add proof points)

Potential members and donors

The Y is in your community to give everyone opportunities to learn, grow and thrive. When you give to the Y, your gift will have a meaningful, enduring impact right in your own neighborhood through programs like...

Key influencers in the community

When you give to the Y, you make (name of community) stronger. As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y uses your gift to nurture children and teens, improve community health and well-being and support those in need, right in your own neighborhood.

TAILORED SECONDARY MESSAGE

The Y works to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.

Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

We believe that lasting personal and social change can only come about when we all work together. That's why, at the Y, strengthening community is our cause.

At the Y, no child, family or adult is turned away. We recognize that for communities to succeed, everyone must be given the opportunity to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

We believe that lasting personal and social change can only come about when we all work together. That's why, at the Y, strengthening community is our cause.

With a focus on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y works to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and give back and support neighbors.

At the Y, no child, family or adult is turned away. We recognize that for communities to succeed, everyone must be given the opportunity to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That's because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. In partnering with the Y, you can feel confident your contribution is making a meaningful and lasting impact.

The Y works to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.

Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

When you give to the Y, you help to move people forward.

CUSTOMIZABLE PROOF POINTS

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of the Y
- Dollars received from public and private donors
- Efforts gifts support
- Recognition and rankings received
- Examples or stories of impact

- Stats that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of the Y
- Dollars received from public and private donors
- Efforts gifts support
- Examples or stories of impact

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of the Y
- Dollars received from public and private donors
- Efforts gifts support
- Recognition & rankings received
- Examples or stories of impact

VOLUNTEER AT THE Y

These messages provide practical examples of how to apply messaging to encourage volunteerism.

AUDIENCE

Potential volunteers

TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE WITH CALL TO ACTION

The Y is a cause for strengthening community, committed every day to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. When you volunteer at the Y, you take an active role in bringing about meaningful, enduring change right in your own neighborhood.

Key influencers in the community

We are a cause for strengthening community, with each of our Ys working tirelessly to nurture the potential of kids, improve the nation’s health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors. When you volunteer at the Y, you take an active role in bringing about meaningful, enduring change right in your own neighborhood.

TAILORED SECONDARY MESSAGE

There is no other volunteer organization quite like the Y. That's because in 10,000 communities across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

Each of our volunteers helps deliver the benefits of good health, strong connections, greater self-confidence and a sense of security to all who seek it.

As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y provides kids, adults, families and communities with vital support and opportunities to learn, grow and thrive.

We work tirelessly every day to nurture the potential of kids, improve the nation's health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.

There is no other volunteer organization quite like the Y. That's because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

Each of our volunteers helps move people and communities forward, delivering the benefits of good health, strong connections, greater self-confidence and a sense of security to all who seek it.

As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y provides kids, adults, families and communities with vital support and opportunities to learn, grow and thrive.

We work tirelessly everyday to nurture the potential of kids, improve the nation's health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.

CUSTOMIZABLE PROOF POINTS

- Number of volunteers
- Statistics and stories of need/impact
- Opportunities the Y offers volunteers
- Showcasing of an area of focus:
Youth Development, Healthy Living or
Social Responsibility

- Number of volunteers
- Statistics and stories of need/impact
- Opportunities the Y offers volunteers
- Showcasing of an area of focus:
Youth Development, Healthy Living or
Social Responsibility

ADVOCATE WITH THE Y

These messages provide practical examples of how to apply messaging to encourage volunteerism.

AUDIENCE

TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE

Key influencers in the community

The Y is a cause for strengthening community, committed every day to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. When you advocate with the Y, you take an active role in bringing about the policies and community support needed to make meaningful, enduring change right in your own neighborhood.

Key influencers in policy making

The Y is a cause for strengthening community, working tirelessly to nurture the potential of kids, improve the nation's health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors. When you advocate with the Y, you help more people receive the opportunities they deserve to learn, grow and thrive.

Partners

When you advocate with the Y for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, you have a partner that has the long-standing track record and on-the-ground presence to address the nation's most pressing social issues.

National leaders

With the Y, you have a partner that has the long-standing track record and on-the-ground presence to address the nation's most pressing social issues related to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

TAILORED SECONDARY MESSAGE

We know that when we work as one, we can move people and communities forward. That's why we are committed to providing support to our neighbors and opportunities for kids, adults and families to learn, grow and thrive.

We are a powerful ally and advocate for our communities. Our experience, strong relationships and presence in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation mean that we can organize grassroots efforts and influence public policy around a range of social issues, such as child welfare and public health.

Together, we can have a meaningful and tangible impact in our community.

There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That's because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation we have the presence and partnerships to deliver lasting personal and social change.

We believe that real change can only come about when we all work together. That's why, we work every day, side-by-side with our neighbors and community leaders to help move people and communities forward.

With the Y as your national and community partner, you're ensuring that every person, irrespective of age, ability or income, has the opportunity to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

We know that when we work as one, we can move forward. That's why we are committed to providing support to our neighbors and opportunities for kids, adults and families to learn, grow and thrive.

We are a powerful ally and advocate for our communities. Our experience, strong relationships and presence in 10,000 communities across the nation mean that we can organize grassroots efforts and influence public policy around a range of social issues, such as child welfare and public health.

There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That's because in 10,000 communities across the nation we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but deliver, lasting personal and social change.

We know that when we work as one, we can move people and communities forward. That's why we are committed to providing support to our neighbors and opportunities for kids, adults and families to learn, grow and thrive.

CUSTOMIZABLE PROOF POINTS

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of Y
- Number of social issues addressed through collaborations with law makers and community leaders
- Recognition from local leaders and legislators
- Opportunities for influencers

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of Y
- Number of social issues addressed through collaborations with law makers and community leaders
- Recognition from local leaders and legislators
- Opportunities for influencers in policy making

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of Y
- Programs, services or initiatives addressing needs
- Opportunities for partners

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of Y
- Number of legislative and policy changes affected by your efforts
- Percentage of the nation's engaged children and teens, families, seniors, etc.
- Opportunities for national leaders

VOICE & MESSAGING RESOURCES

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EFFECTIVELY SPEAKING IN THE Y VOICE MEANS:

- exhibiting our voice characteristics: welcoming, genuine, hopeful, determined, nurturing
- connecting what we do with why we do it
- talking about the impact of our programs and services
- making emotional, human connections
- telling stories

Like learning any new skill, using our Y voice takes practice. Here are some things to think about—and some scripts—for different Y settings:

THE FRONT DESK

Conversations at the front desk, whether in person or on the phone, tend to start with participant questions—the specific, “When do swim lessons start?—and the more open-ended, “Can you tell me more about your Achievers programs?” These conversations are ideal opportunities to demonstrate, our voice characteristics. Even the most casual visit or inquiry should result in people understanding that the Y is a welcoming, nurturing, special place. As we learn more about the wants and needs of people—in initial or subsequent conversations—we can share more about the Y’s larger purpose and impact.

Person visiting the Y: “Can you tell me about your sports programs for kids?”

Y Staff: “Sure, we have loads of youth sports programs. We focus on making sure the kids have fun, learn the fundamentals of the game, make friends and like being active.”

Person on the phone: What is the Achievers program?

Y Staff: It’s a terrific program. Young people are connected with mentors, get academic support, visit colleges and businesses—all with the goal of being able to see a future after high school and begin taking steps to make that happen.”

THE TOUR

The tour is as much about listening to people’s wants and needs as much as it is about talking about the Y, making the tour an important opportunity to connect what we do with why we do it.

Mix the facts of your Y – square feet, pool hours, programs equipment, child watch—with the benefit to the participant and our larger purpose in offering these programs.

“This is our teen center where kids can get help with homework, be active and play games, and relax in a safe, supervised environment with adults who care about them. We’ve got our eye on a whole group of young people who we think have real leadership potential.”

“Here’s our warm-water pool which is really beneficial for our members with arthritis or mobility issues. It gives them an environment to be active without high impact or stress on their joints.”

“This is our afterschool area. We just started a program where we send the kids home with fresh fruits and vegetables every other Friday, so families have more nutritious options and can save some money.”

Where you’ve made specific decisions because of community needs, share that. It demonstrates the Y’s responsiveness to the community.

“Some of our female members really wanted an option to exercise in modest, single-sex surroundings so we’ve arranged for special classes on Wednesdays and Saturdays.”

“We have a large number of older adults who wanted more social programs to connect with people who share their interests, so we’ve added quarterly field trips and guest speakers. They love it.”

“We offer a number of special-needs youth sports groups, including our baseball team, which just won the city championships.”

THE ELEVATOR/PARKING LOT/COFFEE SHOP

Every interaction is an opportunity to communicate the value of the Y. Think about how to convey our purpose and impact whether you sit down with a prospective member or share a short elevator ride with a prospective donor.

The Y strengthens communities in our three areas of focus by supporting people in living healthier, fuller, more connected lives.

When people ask about the Y, remember our **position** and **areas of focus**. “The Y is a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.” In regular conversation, you don’t need to worry about getting every word right—make it your own. But what we want people to come away with is that we exist to strengthen community and our work focuses on three main areas. Then share your role in making that important work happen.

"The Y is about strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Every Y does that a little differently because we serve different communities with different needs. Our Y focuses on encouraging healthy lifestyles, helping kids succeed in school and providing support to new immigrants."

"I only just started my job at the Y but I love it. I knew the Y did swim lessons and camp, but our programs really focus on three main areas—youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. We help kids get to college, provide special wellness programs for cancer survivors and help families with special needs."

THE FUNDRAISER

Fundraisers are about thanking your existing donors, showing them the impact they've had and adding other people to the cause. Numbers are part of our impact, but need to be connected to meaningful examples of lives changed. Whenever possible, have the people who've benefitted from your program tell their stories.

"We want to thank each one of you here this afternoon for making the Y available to so many who otherwise might not be able to be part of the Y family. Through your vision and generosity, we've provided \$120,000 in scholarships this year. That means you have enabled kids to experience nature, independence and lasting friendships at camp. You've helped parents provide a stable, nurturing environment for their children while they work. You've helped families stay active and maintain their health even when faced with the stress of a job loss. You've allowed a mother whose only time for herself is bible study, to continue to connect with scripture and her friends in the group."

"Your contribution makes a difference, and it has a ripple effect. Because as so often happens at the Y, when someone is able to achieve or succeed at something, or is helped by a program, they want other people to experience the same thing. That's the case with Larry, who's going to share his experience at the Y and how he's now helping others ..."

THE "CAN WE MEET?" COLD CALL

When we're introducing our Y and its work to community members and potential partners, it's again important to stress our position as a leading nonprofit that strengthens community and our areas of focus to reorient the perception that we're just "swim and gym". Whether we have a track record in an specific areas or are new to it, we're calling on someone, or speaking to a group, because we think together we might be able to address a problem or take advantage of an opportunity to help the community.

School Superintendent:

"Mr. Superintendent, I'm wondering if I might get some time on your calendar to share with you the Y's successes in afterschool programming, and see if there might be opportunities to expand our partnership ..."

The Rotary President:

"I'd really like to talk with your members about the Y's work with junior high and high school students in our leadership programs. We've found that with a corporate mentor and the chance to visit community workplaces, these young people become more engaged with their education because they can start seeing a future for themselves ..."

THE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT COLD CALL

When talking with members, we want to remind them that they're part of our cause. They can be part of sharing the Y experience with individuals and families who would not otherwise be able to manage their health, send their kids to camp, keep an aging parent active and social or be part of the larger Y community. Maybe they'd like to help support a specific program or program area that's making a difference in the community.

"We know how much your Y membership means to you and your family, and we're hoping you'd be willing to make a contribution toward our scholarship fund to bring the Y to more families who might not be able to afford a membership."

"You may know that this year, our partnership with **LIVESTRONG** has helped more than 200 cancer survivors reclaim their health after treatment. Would you consider a donation to the Y to fund enhancements to that program so we can serve more people?"

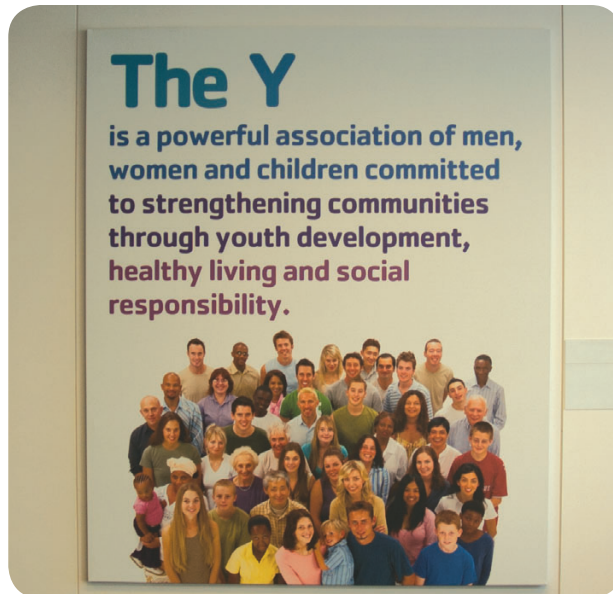
SHAPING THE Y EXPERIENCE

VOICE AND MESSAGING

VOICE LIVES EVERYWHERE.

We communicate by the environments we create and the tone and spirit of our actions. We want our spaces and behavior to convey our cause, our voice and our values. Making sure we have inviting places in our facilities for people to gather and talk helps create community and conveys that we're welcoming. Talking about and measuring impact demonstrates our determination and genuineness. Working respectfully with a family on financial assistance shows that we're inclusive, nurturing and for all.

So think about voice on your Web site and marketing materials, but also in your lobby, your membership policies and your staff training.

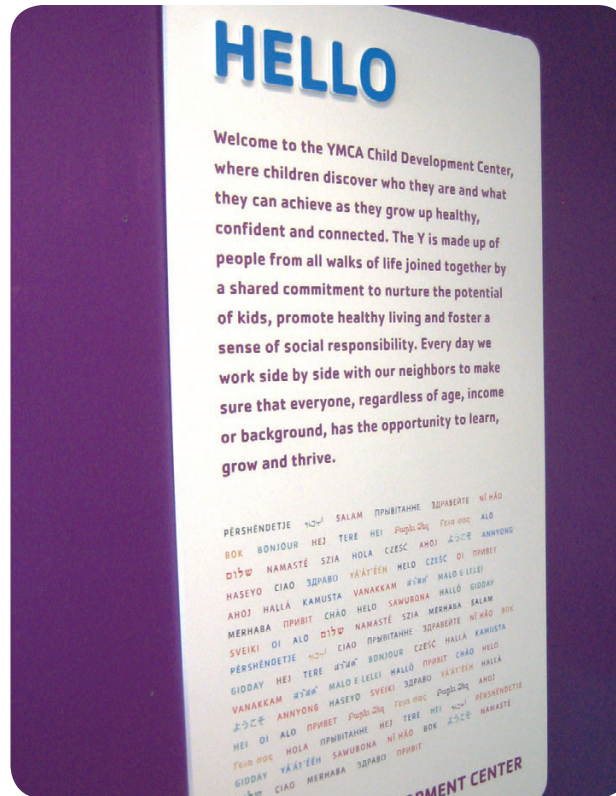


Photos of Y-USA space



VOICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

An individual's perception of a brand is shaped by his or her overall impression of and experience with that brand. An organization's environment is a very important influence. For the Y, strategically and intentionally infusing the Y's promise, core values and voice into our spaces, signage, bulletin boards and other areas where people experience the Y, we can help them better understand what the Y stands for and why they should be engaged. From the lobby and front desk, to gathering areas, kitchens, gyms and locker rooms, we can manage the experience the people have of our Y.



Photos of YMCA of Central Kentucky

In addition to our communication and environments, our voice attributes should **guide our organizational decision-making and day-to-day operations** along with our promise to strengthen community. Being welcoming, determined, nurturing, genuine and hopeful influences our Ys from the front desk to the board room, including:

- How we hire, train and cultivate staff
- How we evaluate and set our Y's priorities
- With whom and how we partner
- The sense of community we create in our programs and in our facilities
- Our membership practices and policies
- Our diversity and inclusion practices
- Our outreach and work outside our facilities
- The community issues for which we advocate
- How we approach set-backs and obstacles
- How we celebrate our achievements and set new goals

Making sure our behavior aligns with our voice attributes and values goes a long way in ensuring that we are being true to our cause. Consensus among Y leaders in research conducted as part of Y-USA's strategic plan also identified **nine organizational competencies** that effectively drive results in advancing our cause. They became the basis for our strategic plan, to help Ys better do the following:

- 1 Promote and protect the brand
- 2 Advocate to influence public policy
- 3 Promote sustainability and philanthropy
- 4 Address community needs through programs
- 5 Measure impact
- 6 Collaborate with others
- 7 Develop passionate, cause-driven leaders
- 8 Ensure access, inclusion and engagement
- 9 Develop relationships with and among members

Y-USA has begun sharing tools and trainings to help Ys further build these competencies, so we can be successful in making our communities stronger.

Visit Living Our Cause on Exchange for resources on Telling Stories, Deepening Relationships, Collaborating and Demonstrating Impact.

Visit **Living Our Cause** on Exchange for resources on Telling Stories, Deepening Relationships, Collaborating and Demonstrating Impact.

PROGRAM NAMING AND REFERENCES

Part of having one voice as a movement means referring to our programs in similar ways.

Extensive brand research showed that people don't fully understand what the Y does or why. When naming and referring to programs, we want to be as clear as possible.

Programs should be referred to as part of the Y but not use the "Y" in their official name. For instance, we do not offer Y Camp, Y Group Exercise or Y Youth and Government. We offer camp, group exercise and Youth and Government. Particularly within a Y context—in a facility, on a Y website, in a program guide, it simply becomes redundant and/or devalues our brand by overuse of the Y (see below).

When referring to programs in narrative—press releases, program guides or annual reports—we refer to the YMCA's child care programs or the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program, but the names of the programs themselves remain child care or Diabetes Prevention.

Use the philosophy of our visual system as a guide for program naming and referencing. The Y is prominent and at the top, below is the name of program, without further reference to the Y. Similarly, in an environment where the Y is firmly established—within a facility, on a Y website, within a program guide, there is no need to attach the YMCA name to a program. (Attaching the Y logo to a program is prohibited by the graphic standards).

Here's an example of three references for the Anytown YMCA's "Little Tumblers" beginning gymnastics program:

Program flyer



Headline of Press Release -

Kids Get Active in YMCA's Little Tumblers Program

Annual Report Highlight -

Our (or The Y's) Little Tumblers class has seen a 20% increase over last year, with parents saying they love the chance to relax and connect while their kids are running, playing and laughing together.

Naming Physical Spaces in Your Y:

Studios, rooms and centers in your Y can be special places with a designated purpose and/or value. Unless named in recognition of a donor or partner, however, you're encouraged to keep the names of spaces generic—aquatics center, dance studio, computer lab, Pilates center—without giving them names that could inadvertently brand them as something other than the Y. While "Studio 360" may have a nice ring to it, it should always be associated with the Y.



SAMPLE PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS – BEFORE AND AFTERS

The following “from/to” program descriptions, adapted from Y samples, make small changes to lead with impact or value, infuse more voice attributes, sound less institutional or highlight a particular Y way of doing things.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Afterschool Program

FR: This supervised program is available to children in grades K–5. They’ll have fun at the Y afterschool under the guidance of caring adults. Activities include wellness, educational enrichment, and arts and crafts.

TO: Come to the Y afterschool! Homework help, arts and crafts, games and sports—all under the guidance of caring adults—are available in the Y’s afterschool program, open to children in grades K–5.

Achievers

FR: Youth Achievers programs connect kids to each other and to the community with leadership and volunteer opportunities.

TO: We believe that kids should be involved with positive activities from an early age. And that’s exactly what our Youth Achievers program does. Kids ages Kindergarten through 7th grade develop social skills and confidence while making new friends through educational field trips, workshops on a variety of topics, our spring break trip and more.

Gymnastics

FR: Gymnastics is offered for all ages and abilities from toddlers through teens. Our highly experienced and certified coaches identify strengths and help students excel with emphasis on fun. Participants work on the mats, balance beam, parallel bars, uneven and vaults.

TO: Your active youngster will learn core movements on mats, balance beam, parallel bars, uneven bars and vaults from a certified coach. Our goal is to identify strengths and help students excel with an extra emphasis on fun. Gymnastics is offered for all ages and abilities from toddlers through teens.

Camp

FR: Founded in 1947, YMCA Camp (Name) has provided children in our community with a camp that keeps them laughing and learning all summer long. We offer eight one-week sessions for campers entering grades 1 – 6.

TO: Enroll your child in magic. YMCA Camp (Name) has been giving kids the summers of their lives since 1947, adding laughter, leadership and lifelong memories to a host of activities including sailing, archery, horseback riding and hiking.

HEALTHY LIVING

First Aid

FR: First Aid is a two-year certification class providing hands-on, first aid learning. Learn about burns, cuts, scrapes, bleeding, illness and injury.

TO: You can approach life’s accidents—big and small—with confidence and calm when you take our First Aid certification class. From burns and scrapes to illness and injury, this hands-on class will leave you well equipped to handle emergencies large and small.

Parent/Child Swim Lessons

FR: You and your child will enjoy this 30-minute aquatics class. Children between the ages of 2–4 will learn basic water safety and skills to get them ready for swimming, such as kicking and blowing bubbles.

TO: Get ready to swim with baby or toddler! Enjoy special time with your little one as children ages 2–4 learn the basic water safety and skills—blowing bubbles and kicking—to get them ready for more advanced swimming.

Arthritis Aquatics Class

FR: Participate in this low-impact exercise class that takes place in the warm water pool. Increase flexibility and have fun!

TO: Increase your flexibility and have fun in our warm-water arthritis aquatics class. This low impact exercise provides high impact benefits.

Get on the Ball!

FR: All fitness levels welcome! This 30-minute class uses stability balls to stretch, tone and strengthen the entire body.

TO: All fitness levels welcome! This 30-minute class uses stability balls to stretch, tone and strengthen, increasing flexibility and firming muscles for a stronger you all over.

Step up your Game!

FR: Improve your cardiovascular fitness through step aerobics!

TO: Have fun and improve your cardiovascular fitness and coordination through step aerobics. You'll leave with an elevated heart rate and a skip in your step.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

FR: Wired Adults is a free Computer Basics program for those over 50 years old.

TO: If you find yourself just a bit intimidated by today's technology and "social media", we've got the class for you. Wired Adults connects those 50+ with straightforward instruction to turn your computer or cell phone into your best friend.

FR: Healthy Time is a childhood obesity prevention program for under-served, at-risk children.

TO: Helping our kids eat right and stay active is an ongoing challenge, but you have a partner with the Y. Healthy Time is designed to instill healthier habits and a fun approach to physical activity that will set kids, particularly those at risk for weight gain or obesity, on a better path.

FR: The YMCA Literacy Initiative offers a family literacy program that provides book-based activities for children while their parents participate in ESL classes.

TO: Families can learn and improve their English speaking, reading and writing skills in our family literacy program where children engage in book-based activities while parents take ESL classes.

FR: Volunteer at the Y! There are many volunteer opportunities at your YMCA to help strengthen your community, including: welcoming and introducing members, prospective members and program participants, assisting with facility tours, assisting with mailings, bulletin boards and special events, coaching youth sports and more! All prospective volunteers must fill out an application. After that, call or stop by your local branch to find out more about getting involved.

TO: Share your time and talent at the Y, and change a life or two, including your own. From helping with special events to coaching or mentoring, your skills and interests can make a difference here.

FR: The YMCA's Strong Kids Campaign is an impressive volunteer effort, with many volunteers who share the YMCA's story and encourage friends, family and colleagues to invest in the children of our community.

TO: Too many young people don't experience the kind of opportunities for growth, leadership and a sense of community that come from being part of the Y. With your support, the Y's Strong Kids Campaign can change that, making sure more kids learn, grow and thrive.

With an amplified voice that exhibits our attributes of determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful, and welcoming and messaging that leads with impact to highlight why we do what we do and make an emotional connection, we can more effectively communicate the value of our work and drive engagement.

The following examples of voice and messaging have been collected from Y websites, annual reports, program guides and marketing collateral. They provide strong examples of how to use tone and language to shape perception of the Y and influence people to join, renew, give, volunteer and advocate.

Statements and descriptions are intentionally anonymous. They are by Ys – large and small – across the U.S., that are communicating with purpose and impact.

To share your Y's work, send examples of the Y's voice and messaging in action to theYbrand@ymca.net.

PROGRAMS: sample copy

YMCAs strive to meet community needs through organized programs. YMCA programs promote good health, strong families, confident kids, solid communities and a better world.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: sample copy

Child/Preschool

The Y provides youth development programs because young people need caring adults to provide support, guidance and encouragement as they grow.

By helping children and teens learn values and positive behaviors through holistic development of leadership, service learning, and healthy actions, the Y helps youth grow to be confident, connected and secure today—and engaging, contributing citizens tomorrow.

A community. At the Y, we're more than a gym, we're a community. When you join us, you are a part of something bigger than yourself. Twelve hundred staff are ready to teach, coach, care and instruct you and the kids of this community through schools, youth sports and school-age child care. Twelve hundred staff who are active, dedicated and inspired.

Every day, more than 2,000 children are in the care of our YMCA. It is an amazing demonstration of trust by their parents. As the largest and leading provider of child care [in our area], the Y knows that earning this trust requires caring, trained staff and a commitment to excellence in service and administration. This is why we participate in quality initiative programs which promote the ongoing development of safe,

affordable, accessible and high quality educational programs to give your children the best start in life. We are committed to working with families to create a support system for healthy development. The YMCA's Child Care program is more than just care for children; it's an opportunity to learn, create, play, empower and grow.

At the Y, child development starts early and lasts long. As others follow our lead, more children are assured a lifetime of good health and high achievement.

Our teachers will welcome your child in a warm, safe and caring environment. With a wide range of activities to stimulate your child's creativity, self-esteem and independence, our values-based program will help young children learn essential social, physical and intellectual build blocks.

Healthy child development starts early. That's why we offer Preschool programs that help children learn the essential skills they'll need later on. Our trained, supportive staff work to help everyone have the best possible start in their education—and arrive at their first day of Kindergarten ready to learn.

Camp/Swim, Sports and Play

The Y is the starting point for many youth to learn about becoming and staying active, and developing healthy habits they will carry with them throughout their lives. The benefits are far greater than just physical. When kids play sports or learn to swim, they can build confidence, discover their personal best, have fun and be a part of a team.

Day Camp provides youth with supervised activities that teach core values, conflict resolution and leadership skills. Kids have fun while building self-confidence, appreciating teamwork and gaining independence. Day Camp activities allow kids to create arts and crafts, explore science and technology, swim, participate in field trips, appreciate nature, and better understand our many cultures.

YMCA summer camp programs will give you peace of mind while you are at work. The program will assure the learning, fun and character-building experienced during the school-year continues into the summer months. The activities are designed to keep your child's mind and body active while nurturing the Y's core values: caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

Live, Learn, Pass it On! With every new experience comes a chance to learn and grow. At the Y, we strive to give every child and teen opportunities to test their own limits and explore their potential. Every summer, YMCA camps are home to thousands of kids, building leadership skills, taking on new responsibilities and experiencing independence. In fact, all of our youth programs work to develop leaders and pave the way for future generations.

Grab your glove and let's play ball!

It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you learn the game. At the Y, kids develop all of their skills, from catching and dribbling to teamwork and sportsmanship. Just as important, they learn firsthand the benefits of being healthy and active—and that virtual games just can't compare to the real thing.

Swimming is a great form of exercise for children with primary cognitive and physical disabilities. Focusing on stroke development, endurance, and fun, this class will help children gain the confidence and skills necessary to be safe and have

fun in the water. Lots of one-on-one attention from trained instructors and volunteers ensures that everyone will learn skills appropriate for their abilities in a safe environment.

Youth Sports teach sports skills to make it more fun and exciting for emerging athletes. Each program utilizes the Y's seven principles: everyone plays, safety first, fair play, positive competition, family involvement, sports for all and sports for fun.

Afterschool/Education & Leadership

At the Y, we believe that all children and teens deserve a safe place to go after school to explore the arts, engage in physical activity, get help with homework and learn the importance of giving back to their community.

Youth & Government is a national YMCA Program for high school students. The program enables young people to prepare for moral and political leadership through training in the theory and practice of developing public policy.

Working in collaboration with educators, business leaders and local governments, we are creating better learning environments that close the academic achievement gap between our children.

Teens are a great resource in our community. They have talents and energy. They care about others. The Y has always depended upon teens to provide leadership with younger kids. Teens participate in leadership development classes and volunteer in their communities. Some choose to work on special projects while others coach basketball or teach swim lessons.

HEALTHY LIVING: sample copy

Health, Well-being and Fitness

The Y provides healthy living programs because wellness in spirit, mind and body strengthens our very being and enhances our interactions with others.

At the Y, we have the facilities, equipment, programs, and staff to support you. Make new friends, increase your self-confidence, and improve your spiritual, mental and physical health.

Women's Wellness Weekend Designed for women 18 and older, this rejuvenating two-night getaway will re-energize your spirit, mind, and body. Encompassing all of the facets of total wellness, this weekend is the ultimate escape to recapture the balance of life with abundant sessions such as yoga, Zumba®, nutrition, massage, canoeing, crafts, theme meals, and campfires.

Personal Training is all about you finding your strength within. We are just here to bring that strength out. Our PT staff partners with you to help launch and sustain a smart exercise program. It's not about the big gains, it's about the development of better habits over time. We'll make sure you go home with a new sense of knowledge and accomplishment after every session!

Yoga Stretch This class is designed to physically and mentally engage with a variety of safe and fun yoga postures and breathing exercises. Using a chair for support, participants work at their own pace to build flexibility, balance and endurance while learning to relax and think more clearly.

The Y offers fitness programs for older adults like water exercise, yoga and stretching classes, and walking clubs. But, we know that older adults are seeking more than physical benefits when they exercise. They also want a sense of community and to strengthen social ties. The Y has several activities to encourage older adults to take action and get involved. Socializing and volunteering have positive effects on the health of older adults, and exercise has proven to promote mental agility in addition to longevity and good health.

Join our Knitters Circle and learn the basic knitting stitches of garter stitch, stockinette stitch, ribbing and more. Learn how to read a pattern along with the techniques need to create beautiful hand-made items to enjoy and share. Enjoy this lifelong skill and socialize with individuals with similar interests.

Family Time

We know parents want the best for their kids and kids want to have fun. That why, at the Y, our mission is centered on balance. We bring families closer together, encourage good health and foster connections through fitness, sports and shared interests. Millions of youth and adults all over the world turn to the Y for support, guidance and the resources they need to strengthen and maintain their healthy, happy families.

Today, all families can find their second home together at the Y.

YMCAs have long been a place where families come together. Our family and parent/child programs promote intergenerational bonds and community socialization. Relax in the pool with your neighbors on a family float night or explore creative movements with your toddler.

Through the quality time spent together in Adventure Guides, participants reinforce their awareness of nature, community and family.

Swimming gets the heart pumping, the blood flowing and the muscles working—plus it's much easier on joints than high impact exercise. As our population ages, working out in the water will provide older men and women with an excellent fitness alternative. Between our swimming programs, pool aerobics and other water fitness classes, our members can stay active all their life at the Y.

Parent/child movement exploration is the heart of First Bugs. Spend time with your toddler introducing activities that will build hand-eye coordination, strength, motor skills and social development through the use of songs and activities.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: sample copy

The Y provides opportunities for social responsibility because we truly are in this together, and together we can harness our individual strengths and bring about positive change around us.

We know real progress is only possible if we work together. We're counting on the generous support of community organizations, donors and volunteers to ensure that every youth has the opportunity and resources to navigate through life's challenges to become a successful adult.

Volunteering is more than just sharing your time and passion, it's about the satisfaction of knowing you are helping people become stronger, giving back to your community and gaining valuable work experience that will enhance your career opportunities.

Champion our cause. Tell others about the Y's work to create lasting change in our community through nurturing the potential of our youth, improving our community's health and giving back to our neighbors.

Some organizations shy away from serving economically challenged communities. Not the Y. After all, we exist to strengthen communities. All communities. Especially the ones that need us most.

The Y knows that bringing about positive change starts with bringing the right people to the table. As others learn to embrace the opportunities created by public-private partnerships, making the world a better place will become everyone's responsibility—as it should be.

Well-being for many of our neighbors is all too frequently limited by poverty and social isolation. In low-income communities, the Y offers opportunities for every child, teen or adult to achieve his or her potential regardless of economic status. To continue and expand programming where it is needed most, we must reaffirm a commitment to Y work in low-income communities and provide a place of safety and hope for the most vulnerable youth and families.

The Y is more than day camp, child care, sports, fitness or youth programs. It is a worldwide family of more than 120 autonomous national movements committed to building a positive future for youth and families. The Y, founded in London, England, in 1844, is one of the largest social service organizations in the world, responding to the diverse needs of individuals in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. The Y currently serves over 45 million youth and families worldwide. In countries throughout the world, Y programs respond to local needs identified by each national Y movement. The Y is open to all faiths, races, abilities, ages and incomes.

We ask you to follow in the footsteps of the visionary leaders who built the Y — we ask you to give generously for our common future.

All children have the potential to succeed in life and contribute to society. However, not all children get the support they need to thrive. Be the change you want to see in the world. Become a youth mentor. As a mentor, you'll be helping young students soar to new heights—and blossom with creativity, character and confidence. You can provide one-on-one homework assistance, share a talent or skill, provide career and college guidance and mostly show care and support that will last through a child's life. Youth mentoring only takes one hour a week. Whatever your background, experience or interest, mentoring at the Y is an ideal place to make a difference in a child's life.

For many children, families and adults, the Y is a family. It is a place to come where they can learn, grow and thrive. But many need your help to benefit from this opportunity.

You know the faces of need in our community as well as we do: children in need of safe care and educational support; teens in need of positive role models and activities; and families who need a place to spend time together where they can grow in spirit, mind and body. The Y is committed to meeting these needs and others through such programs as child care, camp, youth sports and health and wellness. Your gift improves a life. It keeps the Y open to all, making sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive through the Y.

As an advocate of the Y, you can help:

- Influence policies and initiatives that help youth develop healthy behaviors, values and life skills
- Prevent and combat chronic disease
- Build trust and understanding among community groups and decision makers
- Positively impact societal issues of importance to the nation and your community

Each fall, as school gets closer, parents take their children on what has become a ritual — back-to-school shopping trips. Many of us take this for granted as something we have to do in order to prepare our children to excel academically. But all over our region there are families who cannot afford the school's list of required supplies or keep up with the clothing needs of growing children. This August, the Y is committed to helping these families by taking 2,300 children back-to-school shopping and ensuring they have a backpack filled with the supplies so they can feel prepared and confident on the first day of school. You can join us in taking an active role in giving back and supporting our neighbors. Read below about others' experiences and then get involved and make YMCA Bright Beginnings part of your fall ritual.

Even with signs of an improving economy, high unemployment and budget cuts to health and education make for difficult conditions for many families and individuals. Every day, we see the faces, hear the stories and work to create a caring environment to inclusively support all our neighbors.

JOIN/BECOME A MEMBER: sample copy

Membership in the Y is about the connections, support and inspiration people give and receive through interactions with staff, other members, programs and volunteer opportunities.

Through membership you are connected to opportunities, resources, and programs that align with your needs and wants to support your well-being journey.

Who are Y are members? They are people just like you, with different careers and skills, hopes and dreams, desires and needs. And the Y's here for all of you.

This is your YMCA, it belongs to you, indulge it, become part of it, contribute to it in some way.

It's our members who make the Y a special place. Their goals, their accomplishments, the kindness and support they show one another. That's the essence of the Y and that essence makes people feel comfortable, valued, and at home at the Y. That essence makes people say, "This is My Y."

Be Part of the Y Cause

As a cause-driven organization, the Y is able to strengthen community because of the dedicated youth, families and individuals who share our passion. They give their time, resources and talents—every day and in thousands of ways—because they know they can improve the lives of others while enhancing their own through the Y.

By joining the Y, you can experience all of the benefits and privileges of membership. Join our community family, create meaningful change in your life and others. Make new friends.

Congratulations! You're one step closer to becoming part of a leading nonprofit organization for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

When you join the Y you belong to a place where:

- Parents find a safe, positive environment for children to learn good values, social skills and behaviors.
- Families come together to have fun and spend quality time with each other.
- Children and teens play, learn who they are and what they can achieve, and are accepted.
- Adults connect with friends, pursue interests and learn how to live healthier.
- Communities thrive because neighbors support each other and give back.
- We all build relationships that further our sense of belonging and purpose.

The Y is a nonprofit like no other. **Be a member of something special.**

MISCELLANEOUS: sample copy

Our Cause is You: finding balance
 Our Cause is You: unplugging this summer
 Our Cause is You: conquering the scale
 Our Cause is You: not acting your age

The YMCA is committed to helping prevent chronic disease by giving individuals of all ages tools for healthy living.

All. Together. Better. This is not an advertising slogan. This is a core belief at the heart of our YMCA.

Extend compassion. Keep your promises. Respect other people's feelings. Take responsibility for your actions. These values are encouraged and exemplified 365 days a year at the YMCA. More than a gym or a child care center, the YMCA is a deeply rooted non-profit organization committed to changing lives in the communities we serve. Caring, honesty, respect and responsibility guide all that we do and make us who we are.

VISION/ANNUAL REPORTING: sample copy

Dear Friends,

Picture this: A community where every child becomes a healthy, successful adult. Imagine if kids had a passport for life that would give them a safe passage to be free from obesity and diabetes. They wouldn't use drugs. All would graduate from high school and with skills beyond academics including swimming, sports and the arts. Kids would respect and appreciate people from other backgrounds. And beyond being personally responsible, kids would be socially responsible and committed to giving back to their communities. In our dream, every kid is free from obesity and diabetes, and they don't use drugs. They all graduate from high school with skills beyond academics, such as swimming, sports and the arts. And not only do they get along with and respect each other, they give back to their communities.

A positive outlook, backed by positive actions, is what sets a personal transformation into motion—and what is our community but the sum total of our individual transformations?

All of us have mentors and had moments in our lives which shaped our sense of who we are. I am proud to say that the Y is filled with staff and volunteers who truly believe that every kid is of promise and who work hard to help kids reach their potential. Our self image can become a self fulfilling prophecy. We need more leaders and kids of character in the world and your Y is helping to develop them.

Jeremy has had a profound effect on everyone who has the opportunity to work with him. He has taught us patience and compassion. He reminds us that each person has a story that has shaped them into the individual they have become. We cannot change some aspects of the lives of our students, but with passion, commitment and the removal of judgement, we can enhance and enrich the lives of the students we serve at the Y in a significant way.

It's said the more things change, the more they stay the same; this is certainly true of the YMCA. Throughout the decades, social challenges have changed dramatically and our community needs to continue to change: the lifestyle health and obesity crisis; the constant depletion of family time that results from parents have to work to survive. Military families coping with loved ones overseas. The need to serve more people in ever more meaningful ways to stay confident and secure. The challenges will change—the programs and services will continue to evolve, but our unwavering willingness and ability to support our communities will always be at the core of the Y. We're for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

Use these exercises individually or at staff or department meetings to refresh and practice using our voice attributes, and communicating with clarity and impact.

EXERCISE I

More than a Facility, Job or Program

- 1) Write down your job title and two of your responsibilities.
- 2) Now, thinking about your role and our cause, write down how you help your YMCA strengthen community.

I don't just _____;

I _____

Example:

I don't just do marketing and communications; I help the Y communicate its value as a nonprofit, to drive the membership, donations, volunteers and advocacy we need to help our community thrive.

EXERCISE II

Benefit statement practice

Pick a program at your Y. Write down a benefit statement, using five words or less, that describes the program's impact. (Building Strong and Bright Futures, Safer in the Water, Conquering Diabetes)

EXERCISE III

Program Descriptions – Practice Makes Perfect

Pick three of the following programs and write short descriptions for your online program guide. Concentrate on being clear, expressing the benefit and any special Y approach to the program.

Older Adult Walking Club
Afterschool Program for Middle Schoolers
Family Nights
English as a Second Language (ESL) Courses
Food Bank
Camp
Service Learning Trips
Group Exercise
Bible Study
College Prep/Leaders' Clubs
Diabetes Prevention

EXERCISE IV

Voice in Action

For each of our voice attributes—determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful, welcoming—identify an example of a Y policy, staff or member action you witnessed, or a physical area of your Y, that reflects that value. Discuss. Which attribute was the easiest to find examples of? The hardest? How can your Y engage your community in a way that better aligns with our voice attributes?

EXERCISE V**“What I’d like you to know about the Y” – Five-Minute Speech**

1. Choose an audience (potential donor, new school superintendent, parent, etc.)
2. You’ve managed to get five minutes of this person’s time to tell him/her about the Y or a program at the Y, and ask them to take an action—support, partner, involve their child.
3. Individually or in groups, identify the following:
 - what you want this person to know about the Y or the program
 - how you’re going to paint them a picture of the program’s value, and back up what you’re saying—e.g., numbers, stories, quotes, community perspective, etc.
 - what action you want this person to take
 - benefit the person receives by taking that action

Now put these items together in a five-minute speech, or role play. This can be done as a meeting or phone conversation.

EXERCISE VI**Our Cause-Driven Y**

1. Divide into groups of 4–6. Give each group a piece of paper and some markers. Have each team draw a picture of what they think a cause-driven Y looks like. Participants may not talk to each other while planning or drawing. After 10 minutes, have each team share their drawing with the group.

Tips

Groups can communicate through drawing or body language.

Give a one-minute warning before time is up.

Discussion

What do the drawings have in common? Are there any things in these drawings you feel we already do? What things came up that you think we need to work on?

Alt. Use The Big Picture Deck instead of drawings.

Stakeholders – people or organizations with a legitimate interest in a given situation, action or enterprise.

Key influencers – people in positions of leadership and influence in corporations, foundations, government and public policy organizations.

Brand promise – what an organization stands for to its stakeholders. The Y's cause is to 'strengthen community'.

Mission – an organization's reason for being. The Y's mission is "To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all."

Voice – the distinctive tone, manner and style in which we communicate.

Values – the principles that govern how people behave and make decisions. The Y's values are caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

Touchpoints – junctures/places/experiences where people encounter our brand.

Nomenclature – a set of names and terms (the Y, the Movement).

Value proposition – the tangible usefulness and meaning a product/service or organization brings to the customer.

Jargon – specialized language, often particular to an industry or organization.

Messaging – the crafting of clear, impactful language meant to drive reputation, awareness or action from specific audiences.

Voice attributes – communication style that shapes how we look, feel and sound. The Y's voice attributes are determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful, welcoming.

Active voice – sentences where the subject of a verb carries out some action. "Sally now attends college."

Passive voice – sentence where the subject is acted upon. "College has now become a reality for Sally."

Proof points – examples of impact that support a statement. Important in communication to establish credibility.

Tone – manner in which speech or writing is expressed.

Benefit statement – the declaration of purpose or benefit that should accompany most YMCA marketing, communications or positioning pieces.

Audience – the specific group(s) of people you want to reach through communications.

Positioning – how you present your organization/work in relation to other organizations or industries (leading nonprofit).

A Y VOICE & MESSAGING CHECKLIST

All communications are different and have a different goal. Ask yourself what you're trying to achieve with your piece, then go through the checklist (all items won't apply)

- ☐ The Y cause is stated, reinforcing our purpose and areas of focus as a leading nonprofit.
- ☐ Tone is determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful and welcoming (at least three out of five).
- ☐ The piece includes "what" and "why" for Y programs and services, connecting what we offer and its benefit.
- ☐ The piece includes a call to action: join, renew, give, volunteer, advocate.
- ☐ Numbers are used in context of our impact.
- ☐ Benefit and impact of program/offer/event are clearly articulated.
- ☐ Piece includes proof points to support claims.
- ☐ Audience-specific messages are used where appropriate.
- ☐ Stories, testimonials or examples are used to paint a memorable picture (to bring to life our words) and make an emotional connection (e.g., "One of our second graders had this to say about swim lessons)..."
- ☐ Design (imagery) that supports the message.
- ☐ It's clear the Y is a nonprofit.

- ☐ The piece avoids Y or industry jargon, internal language and branded program names, so that the language we use is understood by everyone. Without explanation (Movement, capacity-building, association, Activate America respite child care, Adventure Guides, mission impact).

CONTACT INFORMATION

All artwork and imagery used in this document are for visual reference only and should not be extracted from this PDF file.

For questions regarding these standards, please e-mail **theYbrand@ymca.net**.