

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Chicago
January 30 – February 2, 2015**

Topic: Addressing Member Capacity

Background: At the Board’s meeting via conference call in Sept. 2014 and the Executive Committee’s meeting in Oct. 2014, discussions arose around member capacity. Concerns were raised about members having limited abilities to contribute to volunteer work due to the demands of personal and/or professional lives. Another concern that arose was the organization’s ability to identify and recruit qualified individuals for specific volunteer opportunities. Current and Past Presidents in particular have struggled with this issue as they seek to appoint to committees and new taskforces, and Board Liaisons see firsthand the issues that can arise when too busy or underqualified individuals are appointed to groups. The Executive Committee concurred that this issue warranted further exploration. Candice Mack and Krista McKenzie have provided some information below for the board’s consideration.

Action Required: Discussion

Successful member engagement directly impacts an association’s ability to survive and flourish. Associations that report higher rates of engaged members also report higher renewal rates. In addition, YALSA relies heavily upon volunteers to do important work for the organization, such as create new guidelines, develop toolkits, vet grant applications and more. This matter was important enough to YALSA leaders to include in the last round of strategic planning:

- Goal #5 states “YALSA has the resources it needs to fully support and fund projects relating directly to its mission and strategic plan.
 - Objective 5a: “YALSA’s human resources support YALSA’s programmatic and organizational initiatives at a high level of efficiency, quality and effectiveness. Strategy: Strategically expand and manage YALSA’s human resources (e.g. staff, consultants, interns, volunteers).”

However, there is no shortage of examples from Board Liaisons about the difficulties many committees and other groups faced due to inadequate member capacity. Based on internet research it seems that this is a typical concern across the nonprofit and association industries.

Challenges for YALSA to Address:

- **Identifying qualified, capable volunteers:**
 - Clearly articulating the requirements of committee service or other volunteer opportunities

- Effectively identifying and vetting those members who have the expertise we need to help reach the organization’s strategic goals
- **Training volunteers**
 - Helping underqualified members build the expertise/skills needed to effectively serve on a committee
 - Strengthening the support system for volunteers throughout their volunteer experience
- **Creating appropriate volunteer offerings**
 - Creating a process to determine what types of activities should be accomplished by staff, volunteers and/or hired experts
 - Creating a variety of opportunities in order to accommodate members with varying capacities

What Might Next Steps Be?

Task a group or groups with working on the following:

- Provide more detailed information for the web site about committee service and volunteering
 - Cover topics like: Project management, time management, having the emotional and intellectual capacity to serve
 - Create basic requirements and/or a job description for reach appointed group
- Compile and/or create training materials for committee members on critical topics, like time management, project management, etc.
- Create a vision for what an on-going support system for volunteers should look like and share that with the Board
- Explore the possibility of creating micro-volunteering opportunities and provide a recommendation to the Board

These tasks could be handled by a single existing YALSA group or a new taskforce, or delegated to a few different groups or individuals

Additional Resources:

- Building Full Capacity Locals, <http://www.mea.org/bfcl>
- Capacity Building, YALSA Board of Directors Meeting, ALA Annual 2013, www.ala.org/yalsa/sites/ala.org.yalsa/files/content/CapacityBldg_AN13.pdf
- “I Don’t Have Time,” <http://www.energizeinc.com/hot/2006/jul06.html>
- Skill Based Volunteering, www.pointsoflight.org/skills-based-volunteering
- Skilled Volunteering 101, www.commonimpact.org/pdf/Skilled-Volunteering_101_Handbook.pdf
- Volunteer Management: Capacity in America’s Charities and Congregations, www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/vol_capacity_brief.pdf
- What are the Top 7 Skilled Volunteering Organizations? www.goodnet.org/articles/627