

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Annual Conference, Orlando
June 24 - 28, 2016**

Topic: Evolving Member Engagement Opportunities

Background: Associations across the world are re-thinking existing member engagement models, all of which were developed before virtual engagement opportunities were prevalent and with a traditional conference cycle. With the new organizational plan and activity realignment, YALSA can consider different member engagement models and structures, specifically those that engage members with supporting and carrying out the work of the association. Chris Shoemaker has provided the document below for the Board’s consideration.

Action Required: Discussion

Association engagement has been buffeted by a number of factors in recent years: increased dues costs, decreasing employer support, changing information links, shifting concepts of engagement and volunteerism. Associations are moving away from product sales, face to face meetings, and conference participation as measurements of member engagement, as rigid frameworks limit responsiveness, and member opportunities. The challenge in moving from those frameworks is that the association must have in place tolls to continue to support member to member engagement and professional development, two key factors in member recruitment and retention.

In the 2014 member survey ([summary](#) and [full results](#)), members indicated a strong preference for YALSA to place a higher emphasis on providing networking opportunities, providing volunteer opportunities, and disseminating best practices. Members also rated highly member participation opportunities, learning opportunities, and virtual networking opportunities as important YALSA activities. Virtual networking opportunities were rated slightly higher than face to face opportunities. Finally 60 percent of members rated YALSA as good at networking opportunities and member opportunities.

Also in 2014, the Association Library released a report title “[The Future of Association Engagement](#)” which started research in 2007 and continued through 2013. The report lays out the implications of economic, market, and societal changes on association engagement, which has critical implications for YALSA’s members and the work of the association. The white paper outlines the shifting nature of engagement, the decrease in volunteer time, the value proposition of personal membership, and the added pressures of members and associations alike.

In order to thrive, associations must be a space to foster relationships, to support learning and problem solving, and to rapidly adapt to changes and challenges from members and the larger environment.

Within the context of engagement, associations are also evaluating how members do the work of the association. As association membership continues to change, YALSA must consider new approaches to engaging members in the work of the organization. The YALSA board approved a

pilot for the Fall 2016 juries (Doc 16) which allows members to opt into a shorter term limit with no formal appointment process. Shifting from a formal engagement structure that only provides limited opportunities and strategies for engagement has boosted member engagement and retention rates in other associations, and allows members to utilize skills sets that association leaders may not have identified.

Micro-volunteering opportunities, or adhocracies, where interested parties gather together around a need and work for a short period of time to deliver timely, relevant resources are growing increasingly common in associations. These volunteer experiences can impact a member community much more quickly than the standard model, increase the number of leadership opportunities, and allow members with similar interests to connect with one another. Volunteers are also able to give time as their schedule allows, stepping back and returning to projects as time frees up or is needed in other areas.

Micro-volunteering opportunities could take the form of:

- Short term service: such as the experimental model being implemented for juries this year, where jury members serve only a three month term.
- Resource retreats: where a small group of members is assembled to complete a task in a short amount of time. For example, a group of 7-10 members could come together on the Friday before Midwinter to create a toolkit about library/community partnerships. This model could replace the old model of taskforces that take between 18 – 24 months to create the same type of resource
- Crowdsourcing: YALSA could leverage a tool such as Google docs to enable any interested members to provide content for a specific resource. This model could replace the old model of taskforces that take between 18 – 24 months to create the same type of resource
- Other: what other ideas or strategies do board members have?

YALSA can adapt processes from other organizations, such as helpfromhome.org and womenoncall.org, to promote and manage these flexible, short term volunteer opportunities. Once Higher Logic has been implemented, this could be used as the platform for creating and promoting these opportunities.

Questions for discussion:

- How is member engagement described or defined under the new organizational plan? How is it different from past models?
- How could the board and staff be leveraged to better support a micro-volunteering model of member participation in association work?
- What processes and supports need to be put in place to shift to a new model for member participation in the work of the association?

Recommendations

- Better leverage the YALSA symposium and YALSA's presence at Midwinter, Annual and state conferences as an opportunity for members to participate in micro-volunteering opportunities
- Adopt new models for members and projects, shifting to a strong, project based focus as identified by members

- Create a pathway(s) for members to self-identify what type of association work they are interested in supporting
 - Explore the potential for Interest Groups to do this
 - Explore the idea of creating sections within YALSA to do this: having members opt-in to free sections on the member form creates an easy mechanism for identifying which members may be interested in certain volunteer opportunities. The Board could use the Organizational Plan to identify section topics/focuses
- Identify what type/kinds of association work truly warrants a year round standing committee and what type of work could be shifted to a micro-volunteering approach

Proposed Next Steps

That The Leading the Transformation of Teen Library Services board standing committee:

- Evaluate the success of the [jury appointments change \(Doc 16\)](#) and develop a Board proposal for adapting the model structure for all member groups that will be supporting the work of the organizational plan implementation
- Draft a proposal for the board’s consideration to remove award committees from the ballot so that all positions on these committees are appointed, not elected. Having two processes for service on the same committee is inefficient and makes unnecessary demands on member leader and staff time. Having a single path to committee service also levels the playing field for members.
- Flesh out a vision for implementing and maintaining a micro-volunteering model for certain types of association work, including how members can self-identify interests so that YALSA can target them when matching opportunities arise. Submit to the board for their consideration.
- Determine a pilot project that could test drive the ‘resource retreat’ approach to association work as well as another for a crowdsourcing approach, and submit to the board for their consideration

Additional Resources

- 2014 Member survey - ([summary](#) and [full results](#)),
- Association Laboratory – [The future of Association Engagement](#)
- Association Mavens – [Association Volunteers Models](#)
- Associations Now – [Finding the middle ground on member engagement](#)
- Associations Now – [What engagement means now for associations](#)
- Demand Networks – [When member community is your core business](#)
- How to Set up a Micro-volunteering Project <https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-set-up-a-microvolunteering-project>
- Wild Apricot - [Understanding and working with mobile and virtual volunteers](#)
- YALSA – [Get Involved](#)
- YALSA – [Jury appointments change](#)