



YLC STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2021

Planning Committee

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Mission

Young Leadership Council (YLC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civic organization created to develop leadership through community projects.

Vision

Our vision is to be the platform for young leaders to build strong communities and create social change.

Statement of Core Values

The Young Leadership Council (YLC) is a member-driven organization focused on leadership development through community projects that work in the interest of the public good. The values by which we operate are:

ACCOUNTABILITY
BENEVOLENCE
COLLABORATION
EQUALITY
EQUITY
FIDELITY
GIVING
INCLUSION
INDUSTRY
INTEGRITY
LEADERSHIP
PROFESSIONALISM
RESPECT
TEAMWORK

Planning Process and “Lay of the Land”

A committee led by the president-elect was appointed by the board to engage in our strategic planning process. This committee conducted a SWOT analysis survey sent to the board, project leaders, and key stakeholders within our membership. Once the results were compiled, the committee reviewed and discovered similar themes throughout. From these results (included in the appendix of this document), the committee felt the need to get a baseline on what the community needs were and how YLC can build the plan from there. Thus, the “lay of the land” process was born.

The committee selected a group of around 10-12 people to interview the same set of questions. This group included past presidents, who were both from the government sector and business sector, community leaders within city government, business leaders, and non-profit leaders. All of these stakeholders have had some involvement with YLC or know our organization. These interviews were one-on-one interviews conducted by members of the committee and then compiled. The questions and highlights of the conversations can be found in the appendix of this document. Armed with lots of data and suggestions, the committee then narrowed the information down to the initiatives set forth in this plan.

Young Leadership Council Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Key Issue 1 – Projects

Establish Project Pillars for YLC projects that focuses of sustainability and youth development in the New Orleans Community

- Youth Development
 - o College Admissions Project (CAP)
 - o Power Ties
 - o Recreate
 - o Inspire STEM
- Sustainability
 - o YLC Recycles
 - o Where Y'rack
 - o YLC Assists & VITA
- Leadership Development
 - o Leadership Development Series
 - o Toastmasters

Measurement and evaluation of project impact on quality of life for NOLA as well as developing leaders

- Continue to expand on current evaluation methods and create a policy document for the organization

Key Issue 2 – Leadership Development

Membership – Ensure membership programming and events are mission aligned and reflect and attract diverse races, industries, and neighborhoods of our community.

- Developing civic and professional leaders: integrate professional development and civic engagement/education opportunities within membership programming.
 - o Some suggestions might be - educational programming surrounding: municipal finance, criminal justice, infrastructure, and the public education system.
 - o These sessions could be: issue briefings, tours, meetings with civic leaders, or “coffee with a councilperson.”
- Education surrounding diversity, race, and inclusion in the workplace – making the commitment to diversity.
 - o Utilize partner organizations to provide educational opportunities
- Partner with diverse organizations to host programming that appeals to a more diverse audience.
 - o For example, partner with Hispanic Young Professionals of Louisiana (HYPLA) and/or The Urban League of Greater New Orleans
- Engage members with professional development training with the help of YLC Alumni and/or leaders of a particular topic.

Development of Board, Committees, and PL’s – Ensure all board and staff are well versed in non-profit governance and have the tools to inspire and activate their peers to make a positive impact in the community.

- Board Governance Training
 - o Yearly survey of board members to identify governance education gaps and determine specific training for the year
 - o Utilize Greater New Orleans Foundation for non-profit board training opportunities
 - o Create comprehensive board and project leader orientation programming
- Engage YLC Alumni as subject matter experts & chances for the board to network with them
 - o Board or member only intimate gatherings with high profile alumni or business leaders.
- Leadership Continuum: Create a model of leadership recruitment and growth within YLC to ensure the sustainability and growth of the organization.

Key Issue 3 – Development & Communications

Development – Establish a sustainable, multi-year fundraising strategy that maximizes revenue, while minimizing expenses by optimizing fundraising events, maximizing membership revenue, and building capacity and resources for a new revenue system.

- Emphasis on data management of projects and impact for future funding.
- Alumni engagement strategy that cultivates donors and continues the YLC leadership continuum.
- Develop a more strategic annual fund program and build an individual donor program

Communications – Create a diversified communications strategy that tells the story of our projects and volunteers through various methods of messaging.

- Establish a consistent narrative across all parts of the organization
 - o Develop a message grid and talking points for board, staff, and Project leaders
- Create an annual media outreach plan
 - o Engage board president and other members with the media via editorial boards or short stories to share what our projects and teams are currently working on.
 - o Hold an annual board engagement project with the City as an opportunity to engage the press and gain organizational visibility in the city.

YLC Profile and History

Through volunteer-led community projects, YLC recruits and retains young professionals to New Orleans and has a positive impact on the quality of life in the region. The oldest independent YPO (young professionals' organization) in the country, YLC has raised more than \$25 million to support community projects in and around the New Orleans area since 1986.

YLC has more than 600 members and is led by a 24-member board of directors and four staff members. Each community initiative is led by one or more volunteer project leaders.

History

In the spring of 1986, a handful of young New Orleanians came together to tackle problems facing the community. They were a few years out of college and didn't think existing civic organizations would afford them opportunities for hands-on involvement. So, they formed their own organization and called it the Young Leadership Council. Their unique and primary focus was leadership development through community projects.

The YLC lives on more than 30 years later in the same tradition with more than 600 members and numerous community projects.

YLC is credited with:

- 1988: Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation which recruits major sporting events to the city
- 1989: Raising \$500,000 to light the Crescent City Connection (formerly the Mississippi River Bridge) in 1989
- 1994: "New Orleans Proud to Call It Home" civic pride campaign to renew residents' enthusiasm about the city. This campaign is known for its bumper stickers.
- 2000: Festival of Fins, the largest art display to ever hit the streets of New Orleans. An auction of the fish sculptures raised more than \$550,000 for 65 local non-profits.
- 2004: partnering with Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans to highlight issues of adult literacy and bring people together across cultural lines by reading one book at the same time. This project was dubbed: [*One Book One New Orleans*](#), and it continues today with an eight-week reading period and a new book every year.
- 2006: YLC took over the management of YLC Wednesday at the Square, a free, spring concert series in Lafayette Park.
- 2008: A Street Car Named Inspire was the second public art display, serving as a tangible sign of New Orleans post-Katrina Recovery
- 2013: partnered with the City of New Orleans to renovate the New Orleans Terminal Railroad Bridge and add decals to welcome Super Bowl XLVII attendees and other tourists to the city
- 2016: Rebranded Proud to Call It Home as a means to reinvigorate the community in the aftermath of Katrina and highlight the resiliency of the New Orleans
- 2020: Revitalizing the Proud to Call It Home campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic to reinvigorate the city as it is impacted by the pandemic.

Appendix:

Strategic Planning Committee – Edited SWOT Results

Strengths

History: One of YLC's greatest strengths is its longevity, and the ample network, clout and respect that affords. While people may not be able to name YLC's current projects, they know and respect the organization's name, its brand, and its leaders (past and present).

Members: YLC has more than 600 members, and those members stay engaged once they become involved on the project level. As young professionals, YLC's members tend to be motivated, engaged, innovative and flexible. This is an in-demand audience that other organizations and businesses are looking to attract. Diversity of YLC's current board and member base is debatable, but it has significantly improved in the last five years.

Range of Projects/Events: YLC offers a broad range of projects from youth development to recycling, as well as social events including happy hours and luncheons. The volume and variety of opportunities to engage with YLC contributes to the organization's accessibility.

Endowment: While operating budgets vary from year to year, YLC is in a solid fiscal position thanks to its endowment.

YLC Wednesday at the Square: YLC Wednesday at the Square provides ample publicity opportunities.

Weaknesses

Retention of Members: Model of developing young leaders, who will eventually move on; Getting more members involved so they become committed

Internal/Procedural: Lack of consistency, procedures; lack of metrics; reporting

Staffing: Staff retention; Stretched too thin on projects; Turnover

Mission Alignment: Projects may not align with YLC mission; Perceived mission drift; Tying projects back to YLC as a whole; Lack of clarity on selling our elevator pitch; no uniformity; Project brand awareness; Using our history to our benefit

Board Related: Board orientation; Inexperience of young board members; Lack of accountability

Fundraising/Alumni Relations: Diversified fundraising; Reliance on YLC Wednesday at the Square and YLC Role Model Awards Gala; Staying in touch with Alum & spotlight on their stories; Data management; Professional networking with past presidents etc.

Diversity – All around

Multiple collective networks but lack of cohesion

Opportunities

Fundraising: Individual giving; Holding workshops in different areas and using our board members to do this with a suggested donation; for example a workshop on buying a home and attendees are encouraged to make a donation to attend; Setting concrete goals and duties for board members to keep role models and donors engaged and informed (quarterly emails or handwritten notes); Cross pollinating projects/mission with membership and fundraising events; Breaking into new un-tapped industries for membership and donors; Connecting with alum and maintaining relationships

Identify YLC as THE young professional leadership non-profit: Communicating our value to young professionals; Increasing population of young professionals moving into the area; Access to thought leaders; More professional development; Job fair type events/or job board; Engage the 35-42-year-old members; Connecting talent with opportunities across the city

Internal things to do: More advertising and social media presence; improve our language; Connect our marketing/define our brand and define our message; Collaboration with other YPO's; Technology; Board evaluation; Project evaluation; Project leader orientation; pl commitment

Threats

Competition with other non-profits and young professionals' groups

Rising cost of operations

Tendency to over-extend beyond our core competencies

Lack of engagement as members age and change lifestyles

Need for diverse and sustainable funding

Loss of institutional knowledge and staff turnover

YLC Strategic Plan – Lay of the Land Conversation Highlights

What are the biggest challenges our community faces?

- Quality of city government and city services
- We have been numbed to accepting a low level of quality in this regard
- Lack of education, poverty, and lack of **equal** access to resources
- Only one fortune 500 company in New Orleans
- Not enough jobs
- Businesses looking for entry level jobs that require basic soft skills are having a difficult time finding people with those skills
- Talent Employers desperately need talent – there may be a role for YLC to add value in a clearing function re: opacity in the talent pool

Tale of Two Cities:

- Many residents feel that the New Orleans progress has come at their expense or that they are being ignored / left out of the process
- While we have made progress, some individuals haven't seen the benefits
- We have a very fragmented city – the disunity makes it very difficult to make big steps
- Have to ask as a city, are we being fair to our people? Is the investment we make equal to the returns
 - Ex. in hospitality, is the investment we make appropriate to the wages citizens are receiving and the percentage of revenue the city receives?

Still dealing with the basics of city government:

- Clean up the city
- Have streets that work
- When people call 311, they need to know their issue will be addressed within a year
- People need to know how 311 and other government processes work – certain neighborhoods are over-represented in 311 cases and other processes. Suggesting they have knowledge that other neighborhoods may not have.

Dramatically improve education system:

- We cannot be the city we want to be if we do not improve our education system
- The future will be won by the educated
- Access to early childhood; quality public education; all the way through community college and tech schools and universities
- YLC / YLC members particularly stand to gain / lose from how the city addresses this problem

What Skills and information do leaders need to address those challenges?

- YLC could play an important role in instilling a recognition of the importance of paying attention and asking questions
- Opportunity: Boards and volunteer committees / commissions at the municipal level
- Grooming people for these and fostering participation in them
- Often a similar cast of characters, new and informed perspective would be beneficial
- Real lack of understanding around municipal finance
- The ability to understand municipal tax structure and a fluency in municipal finance
- Charter school boards seem to be a place where many people get their sea legs
- Facility and comfort with people of diverse backgrounds
 - a skill set that is critically important for our community
 - we are a majority minority city; by 2024 we will be a majority minority nation
- Leaders need to know how to build community in diverse places and embrace and navigate that new reality
- Nurturing civic ambition is a great thing – it’s cool to want to make your place great
- The world is a battle between hope and cynicism – hope needs nurturing – calling people to their higher purposes - growing businesses, growing a non-profit – keeps hope alive. these are big important things. Nurturing the ambitious about what they can create for the future.
 - Encouraging sense of civic pride and that making your home a better place
 - Hope is what gets you up in the morning, cynicism is that no progress will ever happen – we want to keep hope alive
 - Call people to their higher purpose, regardless of what it is or how it manifests
 - **This is a particularly important area for YLC to focus and keep that responsibility**
- Must have honest and solutions-oriented conversations about the challenges and problems
- Being mad won’t fix the problem
- Ability to articulate the end game
- Willingness to delegate tasks a little above others skills level
- Have “mistake” tolerance
- It takes a healthy ego to not be the story
- Need to be able to ask provocative questions
- The ideal assertive person is one who seeks truth, not one who wants to win the argument

If YLC didn’t exist, where would the holes be?

- YLC is at its best when it tackles issues with children as evidence through our projects. Without YLC you would also not have the Bridge Lights, Proud campaign, and no clear pipeline of leadership that has become key stakeholders in the city. The YLC is a good experimental training ground for younger leaders to learn the hard way by making mistakes. You can fail as a leader at YLC without having a large negative impact on a large amount of people.
- Some of our more engaged leaders came through YLC
- YLC captures and catalyzes engagement
- There is not another organization that nurtures a young professional community
- YLC channels a lot of people who want to make a difference

Based on your experience with YLC and what you know about us, where do you think YLC fits in the community and what areas could we/should we consider?

- YLC is struggling to figure out where it is in the community currently. Are we a service-oriented organization or are we a “fun” organization? The organization is good with kids and has a history (although not a recent history) of taking on policy issues that are safe (ex: roads in the city). A lot of alums believe that YLC was responsible for their personal growth.
- Reinvesting in our community around the building – Central City
- Engaging the school board to see what programming they need and if our programs can help
- YLC does a good job making sure leadership is diverse by design – strongly encourage you to maintain and enhance that
- YLC’s strength is that you have a wide net – keep that net wide. Ok to tackle difficult issues, but stay out of political issues / politics.
- Remember, whoever helps define what is reasonable, rational or possible frames the policy. Need fresh perspective to broaden the horizon of what is possible. YLC / YLC members could play a role here.

What areas are not being tackled by other organizations?

- Helping people find a landing spot after their first board. What does the YLC do to help board members find their next board? Can we be a good pipeline for people to find better boards to be on?
- Early childhood education (opportunity to have a tremendous impact)
- Green Infrastructure. Opportunity and feel good issue. Important to our resilience and community buy-in is important.

What problems (opportunities) do you see on the horizon? Thought Provoking issues/questions? And Misc. thoughts.

- We still battle the idea that we are an organization filled with rich white kids
- YLC needs to get better at tooting its own horn. We have a very impressive group of alumni
- It can be hard to get the public interested in the idea of leadership development even though it is such a critical aspect of a person’s personal growth
- Need to address the LT funding source problem of the YLC
- Can do a better job of engaging alumni and the current board. Joe would invite former board members to meetings periodically to help inspire.
- The Mayor’s Transition Document is incredibly comprehensive and informative
- Forward New Orleans Agenda
- Street maintenance funding issues
 - Failure of the city to budget for preventative maintenance
 - \$30 M a year if we did it right
 - Roads are a key element of a successful city – you cannot pretend to be making progress if the streets aren’t working
- Housing and Housing Policy

- Sewerage and Water Board
 - Dealing with drainage
 - Urban Water Plan
 - Resilience
 - Economic development opportunity
- BioMedical industry and growth
- Water and Water Management –
- Complete Streets and the Office of Transportation
- Building a diverse, robust economy:
- Building a more robust and diversified economy in New Orleans – Andy feels most optimistic about this
- The good jobs of the 21st century are knowledge based
- Employers want to attract the best employees, the best knowledge-based employees want to be in walkable urban places – Proud to Call It Home – there is a lot to be proud of here
- Ways to re-engage Alums
- Connecting with past-presidents and the current board