

UNITY YOUTH Can! Action Planning Process* **A UNITY Inc Curriculum**

INTRODUCTION

A community can be defined as a group of people living in the same place or having common characteristics. Among Native American tribes, there exists a special connection that creates a sense of community no matter where we are. There comes a time within every community when challenges arise and there is a need for action!

This action planning process will lead you and members of your youth council or group through the entire cycle of planning, designing, and implementing a community service project that addresses a specific challenge within your tribe or community.

ABOUT THE CURRICULUM

This action planning training manual is a condensed version of a chapter out of the “Preparing Native Youth for Life’s Journey” Curriculum, which was developed by UNITY for use by its youth councils. This manual can be used by Native youth groups that want to work as an effective team towards making positive choices that will result in safer and healthier communities.

The material in this manual will help you to:

- **Work smarter** not necessarily harder.
- **Build self-confidence** as an individual as well as a group
- **Gain knowledge** that will prepare you for leadership and professional roles.
- **Develop valuable skills** that will be beneficial throughout your life.

You and other Native youth will acquire new and improved skills. By progressing through the 10 action planning steps, you will address all aspects of planning a community service project. View this process as a growth opportunity and give it your best effort. Growth can be achieved through the development of essential **life skills**. The 10-step action planning process incorporates lessons that develop skills and abilities around **decision-making, creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal relationships and communication**.

As you improve your talents as a thinker, problem solver, communicator and decision maker, you are developing skills that will prepare you to take on more responsible and demanding roles. Developing your abilities using these skills will help you to face life’s challenges in a positive manner.

Benefits of Action Planning

Action planning helps an organization get work done in an efficient manner.

An effective action plan:

- **Motivates people to action**
- **Provides a decision-making**

- **Lays out a clear path to follow**
- **Helps generate**
- **Helps create a unified team spirit**
- **Improves communication and understanding**
- **Establishes accountability**
- **Helps youth councils establish and maintain a focus**

10 Step Action Planning Process

PLANNING

Step 1: Youth council members brainstorm a list of challenges in their communities, prioritize this list, and then select one of the higher priority needs to address through a community service project.

Step 2: Youth council members establish project criteria, generate a list of potential projects through which the youth council can focus its efforts on, and then choose one project that addresses the challenge selected in Step 1.

Step 3: Write the project objective and description.

DESIGNING

Step 4: Brainstorm a list of tasks required to complete the project.

Step 5: Organize the final list of tasks and assign them to youth council members.

Step 6: Write a budget.

IMPLEMENTING

Step 7: Carry out the project (monitor progress of tasks, hold the event)

Step 8: Close out the project.

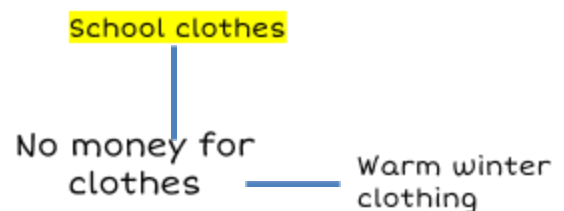
Step 9: Evaluate the project.

Step 10: Write a final report on the project and submit it to UNITY.

Step 1: Youth council members brainstorm a list of challenges in their communities, prioritize this list, and then select one of the higher priority needs to address through a community service project.

Your youth council may choose more than one need to focus on. This is fine as long as the project meets the criteria that you will generate in Step 2.

(NOTE: The “mind-mapping” exercise will be employed in this Step.)





Step 2a: Establish project criteria

This step **defines the standards** that your youth council will use to evaluate potential projects. Begin this step with a **brainstorming** session. List as many criteria as possible. Evaluate each idea and select those that are voted on and approved by your youth council.

Project Criteria –Brainstorming Results (EXAMPLE)

| |
|--|
| List the criteria a potential project must meet before it is accepted as a youth council sponsored project. This exercise results in information that your youth council can adopt as a policy or guidelines to use in making decisions about any project it may consider. |
| Before a project is accepted, it must meet the following requirements: |
| 1. A project must be safe for all participants. (It is recommended that a risk assessment be conducted prior to any project activity). |
| 2. A project must benefit the members of an elders group, a youth group, a local charitable organization, or a local school. (Name the beneficiaries according to the priorities that your youth council has established in its mission statement or goals). |
| 3. A project must involve at least 20 youth council members. (It is recommended that as many youth as possible be given the opportunity to participate in a youth council project). |
| 4. A project should not involve missing more than one day of school. (Remember that school comes first!) |
| 5. Project events should not take place more than 10 miles from the youth council’s school. (Take in to consideration the transportation needs of youth council members). |
| 6. A project should be completed within two months and not require more than 12 hours from each youth council member involved. (It is recommended that an overall project deadline be established ahead of time). |
| 7. A project should not cost the youth council more than \$250. Any amount beyond this must be raised from other sources. (Know what amount of money your youth council can afford to dedicate to the project). |
| Continue adding to the list until all desired project criteria are listed. |

Step 2c: Choose one project from the “Potential Projects” list.

Now you will call on your **critical thinking skills** to reduce the items on your “brainstorm” list to one project. Compare each project to the criteria established in Step 2a. Practice your **problem solving, decision-making, and communication skills** to help make a decision that will be supported by your youth council.

Be sure to consider the following when choosing a project:

1. Is the project achievable given the resources available – include a discussion of the availability of volunteers, special requirements, and the availability of other resources such as transportation, facilities, tools, and equipment.
2. Is the project worthwhile? Will the benefits meet or exceed the cost, time, and energy required to complete the project?
3. Will the project further your youth council’s mission and goals?
4. Is there a better alternative?
5. Other considerations?

A decision does not have to be made in one meeting. It may require the gathering of new information or the need to continue the discussion so everyone has an opportunity to participate. After all thoughts are taken into account and the deliberative process has been completed, make a decision and move forward. Once made, be sure that the decision gets **recorded** in your **youth council minutes**.

Once a decision has been made, complete the **Benefits and Outcomes Form** to identify who will benefit from the community service project, describe how they will benefit, and discuss how the project outcomes will further the goals and objectives of your youth council.

Benefits and Outcomes Form (EXAMPLE)

| |
|--|
| PROJECT: Back to School Clothing Drive |
| WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM YOUR SELECTED PROJECT? (This may be an organization, a group of elders, a youth group, etc.) |
| The members of the youth council have decided that their project |
| will benefit youth who attend the UNITY School District. |
| |
| (Note: As the process continues, your group may choose to make changes to this form as |

| |
|--|
| they see fit.) |
| Describe how the project will benefit those listed above. |
| The Back to School Clothing Drive will provide school clothes to |
| youth who's families cannot afford to buy clothes for the |
| upcoming school year. |
| |
| |
| Describe how the project's results will further your youth council's goals. |
| A major youth council goal is to address needs that affect the |
| community's youth. This project will provide youth with clothes. |
| Another youth council goal is to get involved in the community |
| and to conduct service projects. The project being considered |
| meets this goal. |

Make additional copies as needed.

Step 3: Write the project objective and description.

Objective

An **objective** is a valuable communications aid and a good reference point that can be used by your youth council to measure its success and determine if the group did what it set out to do.

A **clearly stated objective** states what is going to be attempted or accomplished. Writing a good objective requires an understanding of what an objective is and what it includes. When writing an objective, use the **SMART** guidelines.

An objective should be:

S = SPECIFIC – State precisely what is going to be done.

M = MEASURABLE – Whenever possible, quantify the objective. If the intent is to provide clothes to youth, state how many youth you will collect clothing for.

A = ACHIEVABLE – Is it doable? This should have been determined during the deliberative process preceding the selection of the project.

R = RELEVANT – Is the objective consistent with your youth council’s purpose? This should have been determined during the deliberative process.

T = TIME LIMITED – State when the objective will be completed.

Example of a SMART objective: By the end of July 2018, the _____ youth council will collect and distribute school clothes to 25 school-aged youth who live in the _____ community.

Description:

Now that you have written an objective, you have a clear picture of the job ahead and must be able to communicate information to members of the community who may be asked to contribute their time and resources to your project. It is important that your council knows what they are setting out to accomplish and can clearly convey this message to others.

People are more likely to help out when they have a clear understanding of what they are being asked to support. The project description should clearly and quickly provide them with information. In writing the description be sure that it includes information about *who, what, when, where, why and how*.

Writing a project description is your opportunity to practice **communication skills**. Assign the responsibility for writing the first draft to a small committee of two or three members who have been involved in the process up to this point. After completing the draft, distribute it to your team for review and comment. The committee makes the edits and presents the final draft for review and comment. The project description must accurately describe what will be done.

The project description will come in handy when you:

- Draft a news release
- Write a funding request
- Write volunteer recruitment letters
- Request other kinds of assistance such as tools, equipment, supplies, or facility space.

Project Objective and Description (EXAMPLE)

| |
|---|
| PROJECT: Back to School Clothing Drive |
| PROJECT OBJECTIVE: |
| By the end of July 2015, the UNITY Youth Council will collect and |
| distribute school clothes to 25 youth in grades K-12, who attend |
| school in the UNITY School District. |
| |

| |
|--|
| |
| (Does this objective meet the SMART criteria?) |
| |
| Briefly describe the community service project your youth council plans to conduct. |
| The UNITY Youth Council plans to conduct a Back to School |
| Clothing Drive during the months of June and July 2015. The |
| clothing drive will take place |
| |
| |
| |
| (Note: The description may be changed as other decisions are made and the final plan |
| comes together.) |
| |

Continue description on back of this form if additional space is required.

Step 4: Brainstorm a list of tasks required to complete the project

At this point your youth council has identified a project. Now your group must determine what needs to be done to carry out the project. It is important to identify as many tasks as possible, so there is no question about whether or not the project can be completed. Consider each task carefully. If a task is necessary for the project's completion, but cannot be done due to expense, lack of time, or any other reason, it may be necessary to look for alternatives.

List of Tasks - Record of Brainstorming Results

| |
|---|
| PROJECT: Back to School Clothing Drive |
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|--------------------------|
| List of ideas generated: |
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**Make a copy of this form to use each time you participate in a brainstorming session.
 Step 5: Organize the final list of tasks and assign them to youth council members.**

To complete this step you will need to apply your **critical thinking** as well as your **creative thinking** skills.

Evaluate each task on the list to determine whether or not it is needed to complete the project. If a task doesn't further the objective, eliminate it. Explore other ways of getting the job done that may be more efficient.

As you proceed, you may have to add other tasks that were initially overlooked. This is a normal part of any planning process and is to be expected. After identifying the tasks necessary to complete the project, your next step will be to:

- Assign each task to a particular person or work group
- Assign a date for starting the task
- Set a task completion date
- Make sure team members with assignments are aware of their responsibilities

The **Task Organizer Form** is provided for you to record this information.

Make sure that all tasks that have to be completed before moving on to the next are identified and dates are assigned accordingly. If you fail to recognize these critical events, you risk unnecessary time delays and costs.

Task Organizer Form (EXAMPLE)

| TASK | PERSON RESPONSIBLE | TIME PERIOD START FINISH | PROGRES S/PROBLE MS ENCOUNT ERED/ RESOURC ES NEEDED | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Advertise event | Kelly Kopresident | 4-1-15 | 7-15-15 | Flyer is currently be to get printing quot |
| Arrange for clothing collection | Will Bethere | 5-25-15 | 7-31-15 | Identifying location donation boxes. |
| Select youth to receive clothes | Marge Giver | 6-1-14 | 7-21-15 | Only 5 youth have b UNITY district. Need others. |
| | | | | |
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Make additional copies as needed.

Step 6: Write a budget

A budget is a tool used to plan for the expenditure of the funds needed to pay for the goods and services required to achieve an objective. Budgeting is an important step because a project cannot be completed if costs are not met. Make sure to devote the time and effort required to develop a

good budget. It is good to follow a set of budgeting procedures so your project can be completed successfully and avoid a situation where additional costs may have to be covered by your youth council.

You will develop a detailed and accurate cost estimate, considering as many costs as possible and including them in the budget. Be sure to consider costs associated with the tasks listed in Step 4. If it becomes necessary to add a new task, such as printing and distributing the announcement of an event, then you must add this to the budget. You will have to raise the required funds or find another way to meet project needs, perhaps using in-kind services.

Note: Not all costs require the actual outlay of money, some may be met through “in-kind support” from your volunteers, such as preparing and printing an event program. This type of support has a monetary value and should be included in the budget. When you have an accurate estimate of your costs, it is easier to create a plan for raising funds to meet overall project costs.

The budget keeps your project moving forward. If you discover that funds will not be available when you need them, you will have to make some important decisions regarding funds. Challenging questions will require you to draw on your **creative** and **critical thinking** skills to support your **decision making** skills. Do you come up with a creative solution that allows you to complete the task in question or do you move funds from tasks of less priority? To be successful requires a balanced approach that meets the project needs without affecting the ability of your team to complete other tasks.

Budget (EXAMPLE)

Step 7: Carry out the Project

This step is critical to the project’s success. To make sure your project is completed efficiently and on time, you will need a process in place for monitoring progress, coordinating project activities, and making changes to the plan if and when it is required. To guarantee the effective “management” of your project, you may wish to:

1. Establish a project committee to oversee the project.
2. Assign project oversight responsibilities to specific individuals. Assignments may be made to one or two youth council members, the council’s officers, or adults who team up with designated members.
3. Put procedures in place that will:
 - work without burdening the responsible individuals
 - are flexible
 - allow decisions to be made without undue delays
 - provide effective control over project quality
 - facilitates the timely and orderly progress toward successful project completion

The following forms will help you with this step. The **Contact Information** form allows you to keep track of everyone who has a task responsibility. Record information and distribute the list to team members.

The second form, **Task Tracking and Progress Reporting**, is used by those responsible for completing a project task. This information helps the coordinating team track progress, provides additional resources when needed, and ensures that the project is progressing in a timely manner.

Contact Information

| | | |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| ADVISOR(S): | | |
| Name | Tele. No. | E-mail Address |
| | | |
| | | |
| PROJECT CHAIRPERSON: Youth council member who has responsibility for overall project coordination. | | |
| Name | Tele. No. | E-mail Address |
| | | |
| | | |
| TASK AND WORK GROUP COORDINATORS: Youth council members who have responsibility for completing a specific task as noted on the Project Action Planning form. | | |
| Name | Tele. No. | E-mail Address |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| TASK FORCE MEMBERS: Youth council members (not coordinators) assigned to work on a specific task. | | |
| Name | Tele. No. | E-mail Address |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| WORK PARTY: Those who are not youth council members, but have volunteered to work on a specific task. This may include adult and youth volunteers. | | |

| Name | Tele. No. | E-mail Address |
|------|-----------|----------------|
| | | |
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| | | |

Make additional copies as needed.

Task Tracking and Progress Reporting

| | | |
|---|------|---------------|
| TASK/ACTIVITY: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Due date: | | Date |
| Notes: | | |
| Task related work performed: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Give time and date for next scheduled task activity: | Time | Date |
| Notes: | | |
| Percentage of task now completed: _____% | | |
| Notes: | | |
| What remains to be done to complete? | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Problems encountered? | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| How problem was solved or recommendations for solving the problem: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Changes to expected due date: | None | Expected date |

| | | |
|---|------|-------|
| | | |
| Time spent on this task/subtask: | | |
| Name | Date | Hours |
| | | |
| | | |

Note: Be sure to include this information for advisors and adult volunteers.

Step 8: Close out the project

When the goal has been achieved, there is still the important close-out process to be completed. The **creation and maintenance of good interpersonal relationships** is an important life skill. Closing out a project helps develop this skill and build these relationships. What you do during the project close-out process can create **good will** among those who have helped or supported your efforts. Carefully documented efforts provide the incentive needed to secure participation of volunteers and supporters in future youth council projects.

A **Project Close Out Check List** form is included to help you complete this step. Read through the list and add your own ideas as they occur. This is another place where a brainstorming session may be beneficial to make sure everything needed to close out the project is taken into consideration.

Project Close Out Check List - EXAMPLE

| | |
|---|---|
| Place a check in the left column when the item is completed. Add other items to this check list as needed to ensure that the project has been completed. | |
| ✓ | All project related bills have been paid. |
| ✓ | A final accounting of the project budget has been completed. |
| | All borrowed items have been returned in good condition to owner. |
| ✓ | Unused supplies and unused project related materials have been collected and stored for future use. |
| ✓ | Thank you letters have been sent to those who contributed funds, their time, tools and equipment, or otherwise assisted in the project. |
| ✓ | All work areas (offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.) have been cleaned and returned to pre-project conditions. |
| ✓ | A project evaluation has been completed. |
| ✓ | A project report has been written. |
| | Other: List other items that should be included to ensure that the final details have been completed. |

| | |
|--|--------|
| | Other: |
| | Other: |
| What remains to be done to finish those items that have not been checked? | |
| A table used at the fair was broken and will be returned after it is repaired. | |
| | |
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| | |
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| | |

Make additional copies as needed

Step 9: Evaluate your project

This step will help you make an honest assessment of your efforts. Here you are able to communicate your observations and analysis by providing written responses to questions posed on the evaluation form.

You've completed the project! How well did you do? Were there mistakes? Could tasks have been done better or faster? Did you stay within budget? Did you achieve your objective? The information you generate will guide you in implementing future projects. This information will also be valuable to other youth councils that decide to carry out a similar project.

A **Project Evaluation Form** is provided to document your experience. Don't be limited to the information requested on the form. If you have other information to add that will strengthen the evaluation, add it. The completed evaluation form is a good tool to use when completing the final step.

PROJECT EVALUATION

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| PROJECT NAME: | |
| Project Objective: | |
| | |
| | |
| Date Project Began: | Date Project Completed: |

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| Accomplishments: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Was the project completed? | Yes | No |
| Did the project meet the stated objective? | Yes | No |
| How many youth council members were involved? | | |
| How many volunteers were involved? | | |
| Was the project completed within the established budget? | Yes | No |
| If not, how much over budget? | | |
| or how much under budget? | | |
| Was the project completed within the established timeline? | Yes | No |
| Suggestions for improving the project: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Did the project meet the youth council's expectations? | Yes | No |
| If No, why not? | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Would you recommend that other youth councils carry out a similar project? | Yes | No |
| If Yes, is your youth council willing to share information with other interested you councils? | Yes | No |
| Additional Comments: | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Make additional copies as needed.

Step 10: Write a final report on the project and submit it to UNITY

The final report includes your **objective statement**, list of **project tasks**, a **narrative description** of your project and **details** of accomplishments. A more detailed narrative of some of the responses given on the evaluation form would be helpful to others who may be interested in a similar project.

Include pictures, as they are helpful for recording the progress of your project. They also provide memories of an event in which you played an important role as you contributed your time and effort.

The final report is a **historic document** that will be useful to those who will follow your lead in the future. Make sure to copy your report and save it for future reference. The model you've worked through can be adapted and used in a number of situations when there is a need for planning a course of action.

We encourage your youth council to provide written project reports that will be uploaded to the UNITY and TYP Websites for use by other youth councils who may want to plan a similar activity.

Photographs

At a glance pictures can give the viewer a sense of a project's nature. Therefore, to record/document your youth council's project, consider taking a series of before, in progress, and after photographs.

BEFORE:

IN PROGRESS:

AFTER:

Please feel free to design your own photo pages and include as many pictures as desired to adequately illustrate the nature, scope, progress, and outcome of your youth council's project.

Make additional copies as needed

*UNITY acknowledges its past partnership with the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) through the Today's Native Leaders' program, which condensed and utilized the above curriculum.