

A Guide to Young Professionals Programs

Developed for and with the Support of Local Chambers of Commerce

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HOW

to improve and develop a Young Professionals program?

This best practices section provides insight on how to start or revive a Young Professionals (YP) program and includes:

- A review of the three important structural components to every YP program—an advisory council, a leadership team, and appropriate committees;
- A list of tips from directors of YP programs who have experienced both success and failure in YP programs; and
- A guide to engaging your YP program in advocacy, including FAQs, U.S. Chamber resources, and event templates.

Structural Components of a YP Program:

The following three structural components are designed to help your chamber plan and execute a successful YP program. The three components—advisory council, leadership team, and committees—are adaptable to your chamber’s needs. They are meant to assist you in structuring and continuously evaluating your YP program for growth.

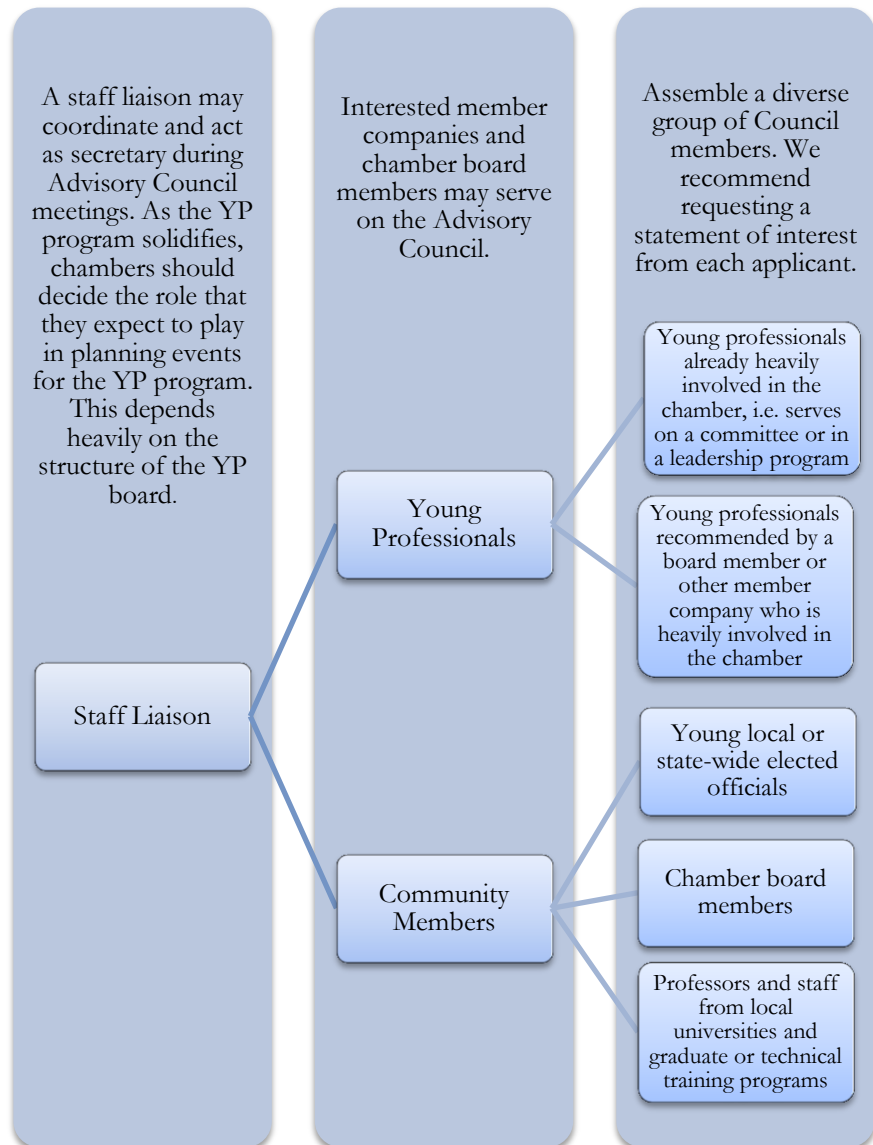
Structural Components: Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is a chance to raise the profile of your YP program before it even takes shape.

Chambers of commerce all have different needs and audiences, all sustained by varying size staffs and budgets. The key to creating a YP program that benefits your member companies and the young professionals in your area is involving interested parties from the beginning. This is how your chamber ensures a meaningful, long-term investment from multiple different business interests, all of which will benefit from a dynamic and responsive YP group.

A responsive, invested advisory team is essential as you begin to decide on the structure and mission of your YP program.

This advisory council is the initial mechanism through which your chamber may tailor the YP program to the needs of your region, based on economic interests and demographics. This council will decide preliminary committees and finalize the program's larger structure. As your YP program becomes more involved in advocacy, an advisory council of invested experts will be increasingly important as you seek advice about how to expand all areas of programming.

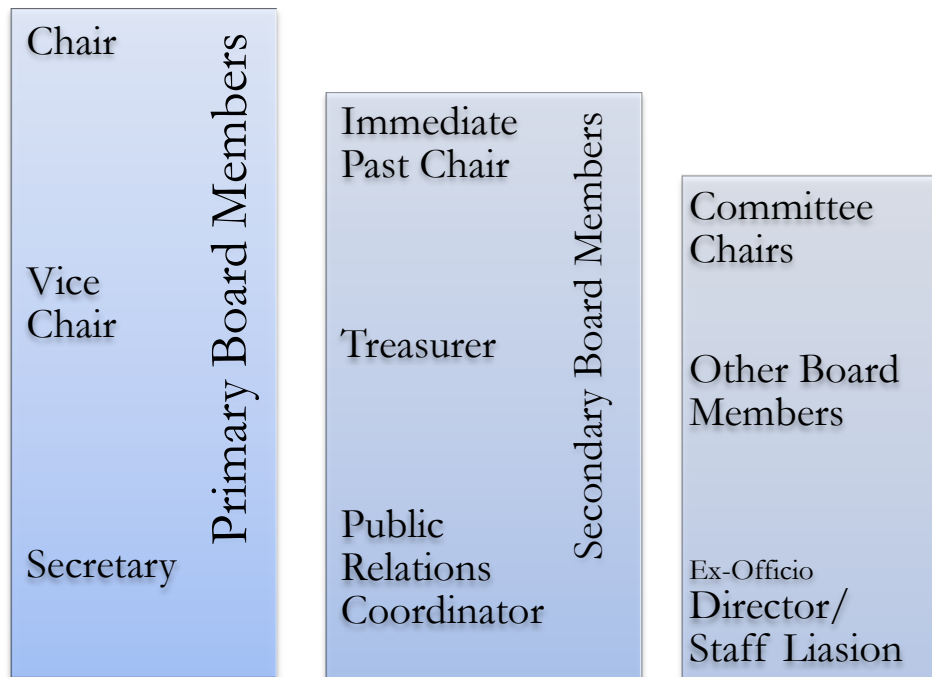


Structural Components: Leadership Team

The structure of leadership teams varies amongst Young Professionals (YP) programs; however, most are similar to a chamber's board of directors.

Quick Tips:

- Set a consistent schedule for board meetings. Keep this schedule on an online platform that is accessible for the full YP membership.
- Consider opening board meetings to full YP membership in order to encourage participation and interest in becoming a board member in the future.
- Treat your YP Leadership Team as a mini-board by setting guidelines and expectations for participation, bylaws, and details on term lengths and succession planning.



Structural Components: Volunteer Committees

Young Professionals (YP) programs depend on well-organized volunteer leadership. The suggested committees below may share responsibilities for the YP program, with or without the support of a staff member.

Events—

Responsible for planning YP program events; coordinating event, venue and food sponsorship requests; overseeing logistical matters for all signature events and events that begin in other committees.

Other common name(s): Programs, Social, specific committees or chairs for signature YP group events

Public Relations—

Responsible for creating and maintaining the YP program's online/social media presence; updating online/social media platforms regularly; drafting or giving final approval for event posters and event updates in full membership newsletters.

Other common name(s): Communications, Marketing, Social Media

Professional Development—

Responsible for integrating the YP program into other chamber activities; liaising with influential members of the community; identifying opportunities and cultivating relationships with organizations within the community that might be of interest to YP membership; planning luncheons and other professional/personal development seminars.

Other common name(s): Leadership

Membership—

Responsible for recruitment efforts; maintaining the member database and ensuring high retention rates; organizing outreach efforts to member companies, as well as other local YP groups and local universities; keeping track of attendance records.

Other common name(s): Recruitment

Community Outreach—

Responsible for integrating a service component into the YP program; finding opportunities for members to serve on non-profit boards; coordinating with local non-profits; keeping abreast of important functions in the community (volunteer based or otherwise) for members to attend.

Other common name(s): Community Service, Community Relations, Volunteer, Non-Profit

Public Policy—

Responsible for maintaining contact with influential elected officials in the region and cultivating a positive, transparent relationship between advocacy groups and key players in state politics and YP membership; staying abreast of regional policy issues; leading any advocacy-oriented YP events.

Other common name(s): Governmental Relations, Education, Advocacy Engagement, Civic

Activating a YP Program: Tips & Best Practices

Integration & Implementation

- **Marketing Materials**— Add a limited number of memberships to the YP program to all of your marketing materials as a premier chamber benefit. As soon as your chamber approves the YP program, promote its development as a top priority for your chamber. Generate curiosity about the program by making it accessible to all interested parties.
- **Flow Chart**— Create an interactive graphic or flow chart to illustrate how involvement in the YP program translates into involvement in the larger chamber. Describe the chain of command for several YP program projects, including:
 - The origin of advocacy efforts and the relationship between the larger chamber and advocacy education for YP members
 - How professional development programs work within the YP program and what type of access to senior level executives that entails
 - Draw connections between the structure and programming for the Board of Directors and the YP leadership team
- **Your Chamber Network**— Utilize your network of fellow chambers to garner additional insights on YP programs.
- **Intern/Temporary Staff**— Consider making use of interns or temporary staff to assist in programming. This is an opportunity to strengthen ties to students at local universities and show willingness to bring in YPs at all levels.
- **Dedicating Chamber Resources**— The possibilities for size and scale of your program will depend on the amount of time your chamber dedicates to its programming. Do not underestimate the importance of having one or more full-time staff members dedicated to a YP program. While keeping volunteers invested in the program through a leadership team is an essential piece of the YP program, chamber staff bring institutional memory. An intern or a strong volunteer leader can somewhat offset this need.

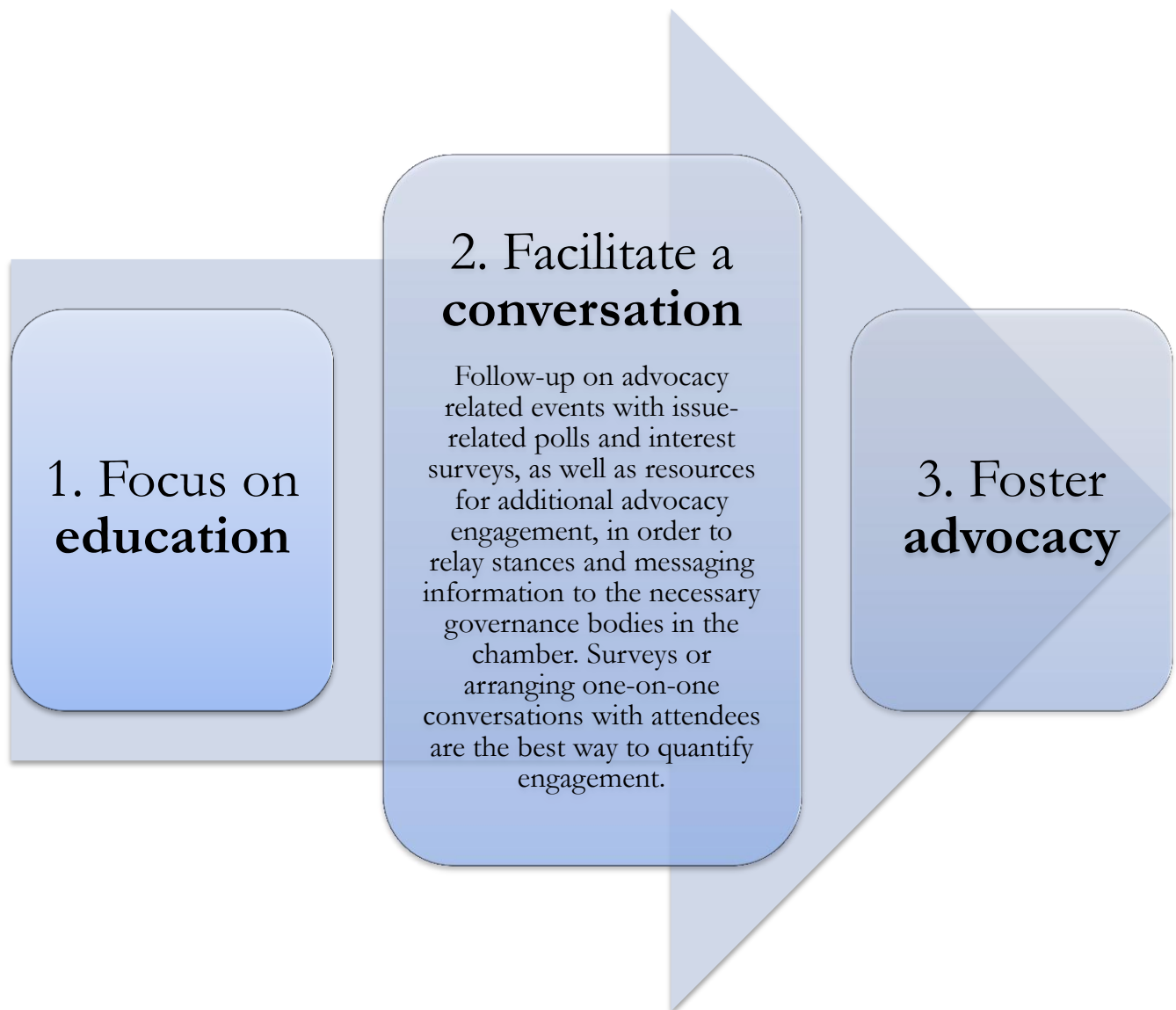
Programming

1. **Creative Title**— A catchy title or abbreviation is often helpful in sparking initial interest and provides some extra visibility to your program!
2. **Scheduling**— Plan events when most of your members are available. For instance, long lunches may not always be feasible for young professionals. Pay attention to when you get the highest attendance or send out surveys/polls asking when works for the majority of your membership. Keeping an easily accessible calendar of events online and constantly reminding members of the YP program's signature events will increase attendance.

3. **Combining Audiences**— There are often discrepancies between the young professionals involved in YP programs and those who are in the same age range but are already extremely involved in the chamber on a higher governance level. It is important to integrate both groups and bridge the gap between business-focused individuals and those that are more interested in the networking. Involvement in both is not a requirement, but it's certainly a logical partnership. As your YP program evolves, these two audiences should coexist and grow cohesively.
4. **Co-Promotion**— Co-promoting an event with a discount or an additional programming/seating/networking option for young professionals is cost-effective and less resource heavy and time-consuming. Especially in the first couple years of your YP program, co-promotion assists you in discerning the most well-attended events. Partnering with chamber members whose consumers are YP program's audience lowers cost and increases the program's reach.
5. **Membership Sign-Ups**— Have a mobile device or a sheet of paper and payment mechanism available for new members to sign up at each event.
6. **"Email Tree"**— Direct contact is the best way to get members engaged and feeling appreciated. Create an "email tree" action alert network between board members and the full YP membership. Give each board member a small list of new and old members to reach out to personally for coffee or just to exchange personalized correspondence. That board member is now responsible for keeping their network engaged.
7. **Demonstrate Relevance**— Young business leaders often times judge a program's success by Facebook likes or Twitter followers. Make sure that you upload photos from events with numerous engaged attendees. Use Facebook events to highlight your attendance numbers! Encourage board members to like and share Facebook posts, attend Facebook events, retweet tweets and post pictures.
8. **Be Brief**— Use short summaries and eye-catching formatting to keep your members engaged. Don't make newsletters or update emails overly lengthy. Consider setting up a text alert system to keep your members up-to-date and use for raffle prizes at events.
9. **Signature Events**— Structure your events so that young people who have participated in other YP programs will recognize them. Below is a list of common events from YP programs across the country:
 - Leadership Roundtables or Lunches with Leaders
 - Networking Happy Hours
 - Annual Formal Event & Awards Ceremony
 - Leadership Program
 - Annual Sporting Event Outing

Driving Engagement

Sustaining a Young Professionals (YP) program isn't only about happy hours and networking. To engage young professionals, the key is to provide participants with the educational resources and involvement opportunities that encourage them to take agency in advocacy efforts. Energize young professionals by promoting civic engagement through education. We encourage local chambers to experiment with messaging around issues that suit their region and YP program. That is why we provide customizable resources and advocacy tools to support your efforts.



Driving Engagement: FAQs

1. *“Our local chamber does not endorse candidates and rarely takes issue stances. How do we reconcile that purposeful distance from politics with promoting advocacy amongst our young professionals?”*

Your local chamber’s role in advocacy should focus on education and providing resources that catalyze engagement. Provide an inside-out, informative approach to advocacy that stresses awareness of key policy issues that may impact businesses, whether the legislation is taking place in the city council meeting room, state capital building, or Washington, DC. In some instances, your bylaws may provide clarification.

2. *“What are some ways our local chamber can encourage young professionals to be involved in our larger policy and government relations committees?”*

There are multiple ways to demonstrate opportunities for involvement, including: diagram the opportunities to be involved in larger chamber activities through participation in the YP program, make it possible for leadership in a YP program to pave the way for further influence and mentorship from important chamber members, constantly ask young professionals for their opinions on issue-related advocacy and provide opportunities for them to have a say in the chamber’s stance, and consider giving the chair of the YP public policy committee a place on the chamber’s policy committee.

3. *“Young professionals in our area engage in advocacy however they do not seem particularly interested in business issues. How do we show young professionals that critical issues such as transportation and regulation impact them and the community?”*

Empowering young professionals to become involved is often key in setting the standard for engagement. The U.S. Chamber provides issue toolkits to help you. Decide on a branding/messaging strategy for critical issues with your leadership team and customize everything your chamber puts out so that it focuses on engaging young professionals.

4. *“How can our YP program encourage advocacy without dedicating specific programming to it?”*

Take a look at our minor engagement events in the ‘Driving Engagement: Event Templates’ (pg.14) section. Often times, adding YP programming or positions to events and committees that are already dedicated to public policy in advocacy is the best way to integrate the young professional perspective at first. Providing opportunities or resources that guide young professionals to the chamber-affiliated advocacy groups is also a great option.

5. *“The audiences for our past YP programs have been more interested in the program as an outlet for casual networking and attendance at advocacy or civic education events tends to be low. How do I expand our YP program’s mission and incorporate an attractive advocacy program?”*

It is important to brand your YP program as all-encompassing and broadly active. If you offer a variety of events, advertise a variety of events. Include all of the engagement options in your membership brochures and encourage people to become involved in the areas of the YP program that interest them most. Post pictures and testimonials and add your advocacy program to all YP program pamphlets. Present YP advocacy engagement as an integral part of your overall program.

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6. *“How are other YP programs encouraging advocacy?”*

Every YP program has a means of exploring individual methods for advocacy engagement. Throughout this HOW section, we provide a short list of the many different types of events and communications tools that have proved useful for chambers of commerce around the country. Start by creating a network among programs that already exist.

Driving Engagement: U.S. Chamber Engagement Resources



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Issue Toolkits

<https://www.uschamber.com/issue-toolkits>

An up-to-date, one-stop-shop for customizable documents, fact sheets and talking points on important business issues.



FRIENDS *of the*
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Friends of the U.S. Chamber

<http://www.friendsoftheuschamber.com/>

Join the U.S. Chamber's grassroots advocacy network and you'll be able to:

- Receive personalized information on issues you care about.
- Contact your Member of Congress about issues important to you.
- Help the Chamber develop pro-growth, pro-business policies.
- Invite and recruit other pro-business advocates to join our network.



Free Enterprise Network

<http://chambers.freeenterprisenetwork.com/>

A customizable advocacy website that allows your Chamber to have a comprehensive online resource center for members and young professionals alike. Features include voter resources, legislative tracking, advocacy communication tools and the ability to manage your own content.

Driving Engagement: Event Templates

The below list, compiled with the support of contributing member chambers of commerce, offers suggestions for events and programs to consider for your Young Professionals (YP) program. We encourage you to customize and build as these events may best suit your chamber. Choose the level of engagement that best fits your chamber and consider varying your events in size and topic.

Minor Engagement

1. Annual Legislative Awards Luncheon + YP Programming
Include additional invitation-only programming before or after your Annual Legislative Luncheon that allows young professionals to network with influential policymakers. Make this event exclusive and interactive. It is a great way to introduce your new advocacy goals/program to not only local young professionals but to local elected officials.
2. Voter Registration Drive & Get Out The Vote (GOTV) efforts
In the months leading up to an election, register voters at your signature events and launch a social media campaign with photos and testimonials from members about why voting is important. This is a simple way for you to let young professionals know you appreciate their civic engagement. It also makes for an easier transition into education, conversation and advocacy.
3. Leadership Series + Civic Engagement Session
Add a civic engagement session to a leadership series or mentoring program that is already popular at your chamber. This virtually guarantees an engaged audience and is an easy way for you to introduce new programs and offer leadership positions to young members that are already engaged.
4. Tailored Advocacy Education Webinars and Pamphlets
If low attendance is a concern, the easiest way to provide accessible information to members is creating webinars and online resources. These are particularly useful as members reference the advocacy program to interested friends or colleagues. In the age of social media, creating infographics and videos that champion advocacy is often times more important than events that can only reach physical attendees.
5. Happy Hour + Elected Officials
Invite elected officials and their staff to signature events like Happy Hours to attend as special guests or speakers. This may be a particularly attractive event for elected officials who also want to engage this age group.

Moderate Engagement

1. Pair with Policy Groups
Work with policy organizations to bring special events and conferences that encourage civic engagement to your area. Negotiate a discount for your members, find ways for your public policy committee to get directly involved in panels or even co-sponsor the event.
2. Happy Hour + Political Trivia
Trivia and board game themed nights at bars are trendy and a great way to get your attendees

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engaged. Research mobile apps that allow you to personalize quizzes and try to integrate them into the event using technology already at the bar. You can decide what information you want to focus on, how to integrate the game and if you want to include prizes.

3. Advocacy-Related Monthly Newsletter
 Have your public policy committee compile a newsletter of current events and important legislative accomplishments in your state that affect the business community. This is also a great opportunity to advertise opportunities for young professionals to get involved in larger policy discussions. Make sure this update is brief and includes a call to action of some kind to sign up for an event or fill out a survey or take a poll. This can also be a simple addition to your current newsletter. If your chamber already sends out a similar newsletter to the larger policy committee, simply modify that newsletter to fit the YP program.
4. Expert → Leadership Team/Policy Committee → Full YP Membership
 Plan a meet and greet with your full YP membership that centers around an introduction to the YP program's advocacy efforts. Invite an organization that specializes in issue-education in a particularly important field for the chamber to speak with the leadership team. This will allow the policy committee or larger leadership team to be extremely effective in conveying the advocacy message to the full membership. A more intimate conversation about topics better facilitates dedication to important causes and engagement, especially when a knowledgeable and familiar party can provide both the pros and cons of an issue.
5. YP Recognition at Annual Awards
 Honor a particularly active member of your YP program with an award at your annual ceremony. This will demonstrate your chamber's awareness of the value of young professionals in the area and incentivizes young people to expand their advocacy through your chamber's YP program.

Major Engagement

1. Trip to State Capitol or Washington, DC Fly-In
 Plan meetings with the elected officials that represent your region on the federal, state or local level in Washington, DC, at your state capitol, or city hall. Be sure to provide talking points and background information on important officials and policy positions, in addition to answering any questions attendees may have about how to represent the YP program and what to expect. The U.S. Chamber provides its members a free customized policy briefing during Washington, DC visits. If your chamber already plans an annual event like this, be sure to provide some additional YP programming or separate invitations for the young professionals.
2. Elected Official Reception
 Invite multiple elected officials to speak with your YP program at your local chamber in an informal setting.
3. Advocacy Boot-Camps with Panels
 Plan an advocacy event that focuses on giving members the background and resources to participate in the legislative and electoral process. Invite career government servants and advocacy groups to inform your membership about how they have organized behind the

issues that matter most to them and the most feasible way to actually create change within the government. This boot-camp is designed to provide some variety/choice for participants to learn about the area of advocacy that interests them most.

4. Candidate Conversations—Questionnaires & Meet and Greets

Invite competing candidates to separate or joint meet and greets with members. Consider working with the full YP membership to create a candidate questionnaire for YP members to access. These questions can range from career advice and interesting tidbits to real policy concerns. Make sure that it is explicitly clear how you plan to use this questionnaire—not as a scorecard but as a vehicle for the full membership to get to know each candidate and better inform their vote.