IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

Y Voice and Messaging Guide
YMCA OF THE USA

REVISED 10.22.2015
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The Y brand gives YMCAs across the country a unified voice to effectively communicate who we are, what we do and the impact we make. Our voice is a rich palette that can be applied in myriad ways to create compelling messages about how the Y improves individual lives and advances the common good. Delivering Our Cause—YMCA of the USA’s (Y-USA) strategic plan for 2014-2017—and the national positioning phase of the Nationwide Campaign are two high-profile examples of using our voice in new ways to tell the Y story.

Based on the input of more than 1,700 Y staff and volunteers, Delivering Our Cause is a statement of intent for the entire Movement. It defines what we want to achieve collectively in each of the Y’s three areas of focus: youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

The national positioning phase of the Nationwide Campaign in 2016 will be a first-in-a-generation paid-media and digital advertising effort designed to create a deeper understanding of the Y and inspire action by people most likely to support us. The advertising will use new, bold language to describe the Y’s impact in communities.

To assist YMCAs in incorporating messaging from the strategic plan and national advertising into local positioning efforts, Y-USA has revised the Y Voice and Messaging Guide. In this version you will find examples that bring this messaging to life, along with new sample language you can use to describe how your Y strengthens community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

As before, the goal of the Voice and Messaging Guide is to help YMCAs understand and comfortably use the Y voice and voice-inspired messaging to bring new life to the story of how the Y strengthens community. Please send questions or requests to theYbrand@ymca.net.
Our brand is our essence—what we stand for, the benefit we provide and why our stakeholders should engage with us.

To use and manage it effectively, we must present ourselves as a unified cause with shared values and a common voice.

BRAND PROMISE DEFINED
The brand promise is our cause. It explains what we stand for and why people should care. **The brand promise is not a tagline and is not intended for marketing collateral.** It serves as our inspiration for building a strong, cohesive organization.

OUR BRAND PROMISE
The Y is a powerful association of men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life joined together by a shared passion: to strengthen the foundations of community.

With a commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility, the Y ensures that every individual has access to the essentials needed to learn, grow and thrive. Anchored in more than 10,000 neighborhoods around the country, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

Though the world may be unpredictable, one thing remains certain—the Y is, and always will be, dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities.

OUR VALUES
Our core values unite us as a Movement. They are the shared beliefs and essential principles that guide our behavior, interactions with each other and decision-making.

The four values of the Y:
- **Caring:** Show a sincere concern for others
- **Honesty:** Be truthful in what you say and do
- **Respect:** Follow the golden rule
- **Responsibility:** Be accountable for your promises and actions

OUR VOICE
We use the word "voice" to describe the way our brand looks, sounds and feels. The following terms describe the tone of all our communications:
- Nurturing
- Genuine
- Hopeful
- Determined
- Welcoming
THE IMPORTANCE OF VOICE
THE IMPORTANCE OF VOICE

WHAT IS VOICE?
Brand voice is the distinctive tone, manner and style in which we communicate.

Voice is defined by a set of attributes that shape how we look, sound and feel—fusing language, design, content and experience.

These attributes help direct the personality of all Y experiences and communications. They also provide evaluation criteria that help us determine whether our communications “speak” to our audiences in a distinctly “Y” way.

OUR VOICE ATTRIBUTES

• **Nurturing:** To care for, support and help develop through encouragement

  We recognize that everyone has personal strengths. We infuse every message with a degree of empathy, because we sincerely care for the well-being of others and are rooting for their success.

• **Genuine:** To be honest and open in relationships with others

  We say what we mean in plain language and present realistic accounts of our capabilities and impact.

• **Hopeful:** To take an optimistic view of future outcomes

  We believe the glass is half full, and we’re always thinking of new ways to fill it. We’re confident that we can make a real difference in the lives of the people and communities we engage.

• **Determined:** To devote our full strength and concentrated attention to strengthening community

  We are passionate about our quest to help others, and we devote our full strength and concentrated attention to our cause. We’re motivated to achieve our mission and goals.

• **Welcoming:** To embrace people eagerly, warmly, hospitably and as equal participants

  We want all people to feel comfortable and supported. We address everyone with the respect all people deserve and actively connect people to supportive communities.

WHY VOICE IS IMPORTANT

A unified brand voice is one of the most powerful tools an organization can use to drive reputation and influence behavior. A clear, coherent and consistent voice conveys the authenticity and character of an organization.

A unified voice enables us to:

• **Differentiate** the Y from peers as a leading nonprofit strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility

• **Emphasize** the Y’s impact—not just the programs we provide

• **Influence** our stakeholders to join, renew, give, volunteer and advocate

WHERE WE USE VOICE

Everywhere. Use the Y voice across all touch points to all stakeholders: Y-USA, YMCAs, partners, vendors, etc. The Y voice applies to how we think, act and communicate, including training, social media environments, communication, websites and behavior.

The more consistently we use our voice, the more clearly we will express who we are, what we do and the impact we make.
Here are some examples of how style can make the Y sound determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful and welcoming.

OVERALL STYLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Speak like a person rather than an institution
When appropriate, the Y’s style of speaking should be accessible. This means a personable voice that uses first- and second-person pronouns: use “we,” “our” and “us” when referencing the Y and the Movement, and “you” and “your” when addressing an individual.

Use consistent terms and phrases
Don’t use two different ways to say the same thing. Determine the best word or phrasing and apply it consistently. Using different words to mean the same thing confuses the audience.

THINK THIS... ...NOT THIS
We count on the generosity... The generous support of members...
Everyone is welcome. Financial assistance keeps the Y open to those in need.
Together, we make a difference. Our members make a difference.
You’ll find our staff... Members find the Y staff...
Our focus on youth development... The focus on youth development...

THINK THIS... ...NOT THIS
nonprofit not-for-profit
children and teens young people
community service human service
Don’t rely on the branded program name to explain a concept
The audience may not be familiar with the proper name of a program, so explain what it means and the benefits in plain English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THINK THIS…</th>
<th>…NOT THIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>programs that build character</td>
<td>Character Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outdoor camping for teens</td>
<td>Adventure Teen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child care for military families</td>
<td>Respite Child Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programs for parents and children</td>
<td>Adventure Guides</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let math help you convey impact
Put numbers in a context that gives them meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THINK THIS…</th>
<th>…NOT THIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>one in three children</td>
<td>1,647 children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXAMPLES

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

The nation’s more than 2,700 YMCAs build strong kids, strong families and strong communities.

YMCAs engage 22 million people each year—nearly half under the age of 18—through programs and services focused on the holistic development of children and youth, family strengthening and health and well-being for all.

AFTER

This year, 22 million people—nearly half of them kids—will come to the Y to receive the support and resources they need to learn, grow and thrive.

Active in 10,000 communities across the U.S., the nation’s 2,700 Ys strengthen community by nurturing the potential of children and teens, improving health and well-being and empowering people to give back and support their neighbors.

WITH Y VOICE

Leads with statistics about our impact—the people we strengthen—not our facilities

Makes clear our cause, the outcomes of our programs and the benefit we offer

BEFORE

Our association consists of five YMCAs serving communities in three counties.

AFTER

We have five Ys in the surrounding counties—all strengthening community based on the unique needs of the children, families and individuals in those communities.

WITHOUT Y VOICE

Includes our cause

Alludes to different characteristics of Ys

WITH Y VOICE

Includes our cause

Alludes to different characteristics of Ys
HOW THE Y SOUNDS: BEFORE AND AFTER

WITHOUT Y VOICE

Despite its name, the YMCA is not just for the young, not just for men and not just for Christians. It is, however, as our history illustrates, an association of members who come together with a common understanding of the YMCA mission and a common commitment to the YMCA’s vision of building strong kids, strong families and strong communities.

Across the U.S., 22 million members are part of more than 2,700 local YMCAs. Each association is different, reflecting the needs of the local community. Your YMCA in your community may have a facility with a gymnasium, pool, child care center or even a school. It may be a storefront operation delivering community-based programs such as job training or youth and government. It may be a camp, or it may be a satellite program in a local school. It may be all of these things.

Whatever the facilities, whatever the programs, what doesn’t change are the people. What every YMCA has in common is a dedicated group of people: volunteers, staff, members and donors—all of whom are committed to our mission. It is the people of the YMCA who build strong kids, strong families and strong communities—and you can help.

WITH Y VOICE

The Y is a diverse organization of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to strengthen community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

Our membership is 22 million strong, and spread across more than 2,700 Ys nationwide. Since no two communities are exactly alike, no two Ys are exactly alike. We bring men, women and children—just like you—together to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve health and well-being and foster a sense of social responsibility, so everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

While our programs and facilities are always based on the unique needs and interests of our communities, every Y has one thing in common: our people. The volunteers, staff, members and donors of the Y are all united by a deep commitment to strengthening community.

Join us—we could use someone like you.
YMCAs embrace and nurture the promise that lies in all of us. Our broad reach and impact have empowered us to change lives for more than 160 years. Collectively, the nation’s more than 2,700 YMCAs are one of the largest charitable community service organizations in the U.S., uniting 22 million men, women and children of all backgrounds, abilities and income levels.

YMCAs meet the nation’s most pressing needs in 10,000 communities across the country: nurturing and affordable child care for low- and middle-income children, drug prevention and anti-gang programs for disadvantaged and at-risk youth, support for the families of military service members deployed overseas and programs that promote a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Financial assistance keeps YMCAs open to those in need. The generous support of our members and partners ensures access to YMCA programs and services for millions of people each year.

At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Through our focus on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, we embrace and nurture the promise that lies in all of us. The Y gives children, families and individuals the support and resources they need to be more healthy, confident, connected and secure.

Each year, 22 million people of all ages and from all walks of life turn to one of the more than 2,700 YMCAs in the U.S. for programs that nurture the potential of children and teens, improve health and well-being and empower people to give back and support neighbors. In 10,000 communities nationwide, our child care, education and leadership, athletic and camp programs give kids safe, nurturing environments that help them realize who they are and what they can achieve. Our family time, fitness, sports, recreation and group interest programs improve health and well-being. And our social and global services, volunteerism, giving and advocacy programs enable people to develop the skills, abilities and mindsets they need to live their best lives.

As a nonprofit, this is our commitment. We count on the generosity of our members and partners to help us continue our vital work.
HOW THE Y SOUNDS: BEFORE AND AFTER

EXAMPLES

WITHOUT Y VOICE

BEFORE

100,000 families, adults and youths were served through important YMCA programs, including child care, camp, senior programs, aquatics, teen development and family services.

AFTER

Individuals in [name of community]—more than 100,000 of us—made the Y an important part of improving our lives this year, through child care, exercise, social programs, teen development and family services that help us learn, grow and thrive.

WITH Y VOICE

Active voice
Use of “us” and “our” fits voice attributes

BEFORE

87 volunteers helped others by donating 2,872 hours of their time.

AFTER

Our volunteers, without whom little of what the Y does is possible, donated 2,872 hours of their time to help the [name of community] be more healthy and connected.

WITHOUT Y VOICE

Use of “our” adds sense of community
Elevates volunteer work as critical to the Y

WITH Y VOICE

Use of “our” adds sense of community
Elevates volunteer work as critical to the Y
As a service to our valued members, Child Watch provides free, onsite babysitting for children ages three months to six years. Non-members pay $3 per child, with a limit of three visits per month.

Find it hard to exercise with your kids at your feet? With Child Watch, the Y keeps an eye on your little ones—ages three months to six years—while you focus on you. Free for Y members; $3 per child for non-members with a limit of three visits per month.

The Y provides a number of volunteer activities.

Become a YMCA volunteer, get involved and create lasting memories while sharing your unique talents.
The YMCA is proud that no one is denied membership or program participation based on the inability to pay. Last year the YMCA provided over $100,000 to more than 600 children, senior and families so they could join our Y family. Applications are confidential and financial assistance is provided on a sliding scale based on household income.

At the Y, we believe we have something special—a sense of community—and that everyone should have access to it, along with the programs and services that help us learn, grow and thrive. With your help, we were proud to share the Y with more than 600 children, seniors and families last year who otherwise might not have become part of our Y family.
Our messaging about our purpose, our programs and our impact is intended to both educate and inspire. Historically, we have told our story in terms of numbers of people served and products and services offered, not how lives are changed for the better and communities are strengthened.

Research has told us that people don’t know what we do or why we do it. We need to answer those questions in our messaging.

By communicating consistently, clearly and compellingly about why and how we do what we do, connecting programs to their value, painting a picture and telling stories of impact, we can make an emotional connection and influence people to join, renew, give, volunteer and advocate.

With practice, our messaging will become second nature and help sustain and build the Y.
Y-USA STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMES FOR ACTION

Y-USA developed frames for action as part of its Delivering Our Cause strategic plan for 2014-2017 in partnership with advisory committees made up of Y association CEOs and with input from more than 1,700 Y staff and volunteers. Frames for action articulate our goals as a Movement in the Y’s three areas of focus. Each frame defines:

1. The critical social issues we believe the Y can and should address. These are issues that affect all or most of the communities we serve.

2. Our shared intent: a vision of what we seek to achieve.

3. Key desired outcomes.

The frames also feature language that YMCAs can use to tell their story of impact.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Nurturing the Potential of Every Child and Teen

CRITICAL SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITIES:

- Erosion in social-emotional development leading to negative youth behaviors
- Increase in academic disparity among children and teens of different backgrounds
- Inadequate adult and community supports

OUR SHARED INTENT:

To ensure youth realize their potential to become active, engaged, and thriving members of the community, the Y will nurture their social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development through holistic youth programming, experiences, and supports.

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- Youth in Y programs demonstrate improvement in the skills needed for successful living.
- Youth in Y programs demonstrate improvement in academic proficiency—from birth to career.
- Ys incorporate a holistic approach to development in their youth-serving programs.
- Ys advocate to make youth development a priority at the local, state, and national levels.

MESSAGING EXAMPLES

- At the Y, we recognize that successful youth development requires a holistic approach focused on achieving certain social-emotional, cognitive and physical milestones. Youth need positive adult and peer role models, and they need to feel physically and emotionally safe to thrive. The Y puts caring people in children’s lives and nurtures them along their journey to adulthood, so they can become active, thriving and contributing members of society.

- At the [Name] YMCA, we help children and teens realize their full potential by nurturing their social-emotional, cognitive and physical development.

- The [Name] YMCA takes a holistic approach to personal growth in our youth-serving programs, so children demonstrate improvement in developing like skills and achieving academic proficiency.
HEALTHY LIVING
Improving the Nation’s Health and Well-Being

CRITICAL SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITIES:
- High rates of chronic disease and obesity (child and adult)
- Needs associated with an aging population
- Health inequities among people of different backgrounds

OUR SHARED INTENT:
To improve lifestyle health and health outcomes in the U.S., the Y will help lead the transformation of health and health care from a system largely focused on treatment of illnesses to a collaborative community approach that elevates well-being, prevention, and health maintenance.

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- People achieve their personal health and well-being goals.
- People reduce the common risk factors associated with chronic disease.
- The healthy choice is the easy, accessible, and affordable choice, especially in communities with the greatest health disparities.
- Ys emphasize prevention for all people, whether they are healthy, at-risk, or reclaiming their health.
- Ys partner with the key stakeholders who influence health and well-being.

MESSAGING EXAMPLES

- At the Y, we enhance the quality of life in our community by helping individual, kids and families improve their health and well-being. With a focus on prevention, we give people the resources and support they need, whether their goal is to maintain wellness, reduce the risk of chronic disease or reclaim good health.
- At the [Name] YMCA, we promote sustainable, healthy lifestyles and chronic disease prevention through a holistic approach: health in spirit, mind and body.
- The [Name] YMCA supports all people seeking a healthier lifestyle and greater well-being by making the healthy choice the easy, accessible and affordable choice.
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Giving Back and Providing Support to Our Neighbors

CRITICAL SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING OUR COMMUNITIES:

• Increasing social isolation and disconnection from communities
• Lack of community involvement and civic engagement (give, volunteer, and advocate)
• Community support systems not keeping pace with changing demographics and family structures

OUR SHARED INTENT:

To foster social connectedness, strengthen support networks, and encourage investment in our communities, the Y will activate resources and engage people from diverse populations for individual and collective action.

OUR DESIRED OUTCOMES:

People give their time, talent, and treasure in support of community needs.

Diverse, underserved, and isolated communities feel supported by Ys.

Ys support policies, laws, and regulations that strengthen the well-being of communities.

Ys convene and collaborate to develop local, state, national, and global solutions that address key issues facing communities.

Ys model the principles of diversity and inclusion in their leadership, staff, programs, and strategies.

MESSAGING EXAMPLES

• At the Y, we believe the desire to belong and help others is human nature, and everyone has something of value to contribute to the greater good. We serve as a catalyst for positive change in communities, bringing people together and giving them opportunities to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others and their own lives.

• At the [Name] YMCA, we are devoted to engaging and connecting all segments of our community, particularly those in underserved and isolated neighborhoods. Everyone is welcome here. We believe diversity enriches and enlivens our Y.

• The [Name] YMCA advocates for policies and solutions that address key social issues and strengthen communities. We know that investments in our kids, our health and our neighbors pay dividends for us all.
NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN NATIONAL POSITIONING

The Nationwide Campaign is a multi-year, Movement-wide effort to generate the financial and other resources needed to support the Y’s cause of strengthening community. The national positioning phase of the campaign, beginning in 2016, will seek to increase our pool of prospective donors and inspire action by people most likely to support us. We will employ television advertising, earned media, digital strategies and bold language to describe the Y’s impact in communities. The Nationwide Campaign slogan is The Y.™ For a better us.™ The national positioning effort features the slogan prominently. Though the focus of the campaign is donations, the slogan and related messaging can be applied broadly. Here are some suggestions for incorporating the slogan into your YMCA’s marketing and communications.

MANIFESTO (FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY)*
People need certain things to thrive. We need to eat well, stay safe, be active, spend time together, learn and grow. Sadly, in an increasingly technological and polarized world, it’s not always easy to get what we need. Playing outside has become a rarity. Face time happens through a phone. And instead of seeing the income gap shrink, it seems all we do is watch it grow.
But where society falls short, the Y steps in.
Because, after 160 years of serving communities, the Y knows what we need to be our best selves. So, it gives us a place to play, to learn, to be healthy, to eat well and give back. It gives parents child care, young adults job training and children a safe place to go. Everything the Y does is in service of making us better.

For a better you. For a better community.
For a better country.
For a better us.™

ELEVATOR PITCH
Everything the Y does is in service of building a better us. From athletics to education to health services to safe spaces, the Y fills the gaps where society falls short. Because we believe every person and every community deserves the chance to thrive.

CALLS TO ACTION
Donate: Give for a better us. Donate at ymca.net/give
Learn More: A better you makes a better us. Learn more at ymca.net/join
Volunteer: Donate your time for a better us. Volunteer at ymca.net/volunteer

SAMPLE BENEFIT STATEMENTS AND SUPPORTING COPY—SOLICITATION
TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD A BETTER US
From safe spaces to academic achievement to family well-being and more, when you donate to the Y, you’re giving those in need the opportunity to thrive. Give for a better us.

GIVE THE GIFT OF POSSIBILITY
When you donate to the Y, you’re giving kids the mentorship and guidance they need to thrive. Give for a better us.

GIVE THE GIFT OF BELONGING
When you donate to the Y, you’re supporting programs and services that help strengthen your community. Give for a better us.

SAMPLE BENEFIT STATEMENT AND SUPPORTING COPY—MEMBER ENGAGEMENT
A BETTER YOU MAKES A BETTER US
• Everything the Y does is in service of making us—as individuals and a community—better. Learn more today.
• Learn how your membership can make us—as individuals and a community—better.

LONG COPY—SOLICITATION
GIVE FOR A BETTER US
Every day, the [YMCA NAME] gives our community the support it needs to learn, grow and thrive. From advocacy to food security, disease prevention to athletics, football to dance classes, everything we do helps strengthen our neighborhood and the people who live here.
But keeping [CITY/AREA] great is a full-time job. Every day, our community faces news challenges that create a greater need for the work we do. And we need your help to do it. Your gift can help [CITY/AREA] and everyone in it shine.
For a better you. For a better community.
For a better country.
For a better us.™

*The campaign manifesto is an internal asset created to frame the spirit of the new creative direction for our national positioning campaign. It should not be used in its entirety for external or consumer-facing purposes. Although the copy can be used as a reference for messaging, a verbatim extract of the manifesto language for fundraising, positioning or general communication purposes is discouraged.
STANDARD DESCRIPTIONS

REASON FOR BEING

OUR MISSION
To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

PROMISE

(long form)

OUR CAUSE
The Y is a powerful association of men, women and children joined together by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. We believe that lasting personal and social change can only come about when we all work together to invest in our kids, our health and our neighbors. That’s why, at the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors in 10,000 communities to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

PROMISE

(short form)

OUR CAUSE
At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

POSITION

WHO WE ARE
The Y is a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.
WHAT WE DO
The Y provides the support and opportunities that empower people and communities to learn, grow and thrive. With a focus on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y nurtures the potential of every child and teen, improves the nation’s health and well-being, and provides opportunities to give back and support neighbors.

HOW WE DO IT
There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That’s because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

• The Y is community centered. For more than 160 years, we’ve been listening and responding to our communities.

• The Y brings people together. We connect people of all ages and backgrounds to bridge the gaps in our communities.

• The Y nurtures potential. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

• The Y has local presence and national reach. We mobilize local communities to effect lasting, meaningful change.

OUR IMPACT
The Y is, and always will be, dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities. Every day our impact is felt when an individual makes a healthy choice, when a mentor inspires a child and when a community comes together for the common good.
AREAS OF FOCUS

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: NURTURING THE POTENTIAL OF EVERY CHILD AND TEEN
With holistic support, children and teens can develop the skills they need to be successful in life. The Y believes that youth development is the social-emotional, cognitive and physical process that all youth uniquely experience from birth to career. A successful development process fulfills children’s and teens’ innate need to be loved, spiritually grounded, competent and healthy. The Y nurtures youth through the development process, helping them realize their potential to be active, thriving and contributing members of society.

HEALTHY LIVING: IMPROVING THE NATION’S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
At the Y, we believe that being healthy means more than simply being physically active. It is about maintaining a balanced spirit, mind and body. The Y is a leading voice on health and well-being issues—and a leader in fighting chronic disease—and is committed to empowering people to lead fuller lives. We bring families closer together, promote healthy living and foster connections through fitness, sports, fun and shared interests. As a result, millions of youth, adults and families receive the support, guidance and resources they need to become and stay healthy.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: GIVING BACK AND PROVIDING SUPPORT TO OUR NEIGHBORS
The Y has been listening and responding to our communities’ most critical social needs for more than 160 years. Whether developing skills or emotional well-being through education and training, welcoming and connecting diverse demographic populations through global services, or preventing chronic disease and building healthier communities through collaborations with policymakers, the Y fosters the care and respect all people need and deserve. Through the Y, 600,000 volunteers and thousands of donors, leaders and partners across the country are empowering millions of people in the U.S. and around the world to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.
STANDARD DESCRIPTIONS

The MASTERBRAND strategy uses a single name and logo across all entities.

AREAS OF FOCUS elevate our core purpose, reinforce the brand strategy and serve as an organizing principle.

OFFERING CATEGORIES outline the types of programs and services we offer, and how they support each area of focus. Include these in communications to help external audiences understand the breadth of programs and services we offer.

PROGRAMS & SERVICES This architecture shows where many common YMCA programs and services align within the areas of focus and offering categories. All programs and services that Ys offer must fit within this structure.

We use our architecture not just as an organizational guide for programs on your website or in your program guide, but also as a message platform that helps connect programs to their larger purpose (the descriptions of the areas of focus) so that their value and impact are made clear.

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Nurturing the potential of every child and teen.

FOR HEALTHY LIVING
Improving the nation's health and well-being.

FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Giving back and providing support to our neighbors.
OFFERING CATEGORIES

These descriptions connect **what** we offer with **why** we offer it.

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: NURTURING THE POTENTIAL OF EVERY CHILD AND TEEN**
- **Camp**—Fun and safe community for children and teens to explore new environments, build confidence through accomplishments, make lasting friendships and memories, and belong, so they can grow as individuals and leaders.
- **Child Care**—Safe environment for children to learn, grow and develop social-emotional, cognitive and physical skills, so that parents can go to work knowing their kids are with trained professionals who care about their development and well-being.
- **Education & Leadership**—Knowledge, character development, guidance and encouragement to help children learn and achieve their full potential.
- **Swim, Sports & Play**—Positive, fun activities that build athleticism and friendships while helping children feel a part of something great.

**HEALTHY LIVING: IMPROVING THE NATION’S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**
- **Family Time**—Bringing families together to have fun and grow, so they can strengthen their own relationships and make connections with other families.
- **Group Interest**—Social networks and activities that bring together people who share common passions and personal interests, engaging spirit, mind and body.
- **Health, Well-Being & Fitness**—Resources and guidance to maintain or improve health and wellness, so we all can live our best lives at every age.

**SPORTS & RECREATION**—Healthy lifestyle activities that bring together people with shared athletic and recreational interests, because lifelong rewards come from teamwork, friendly competition and exercise.

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: GIVING BACK AND PROVIDING SUPPORT TO OUR NEIGHBORS**
- **Advocacy**—Collaborations with policymakers, community leaders and private and public organizations to advance the Y’s cause of strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.
- **Global Services**—Support to welcome, celebrate, educate and connect diverse demographic populations in the U.S. and around the world, so that all people can reach their full potential and our changing communities are united and strong.
- **Social Services**—Training, resources and support to empower our neighbors to make positive change, bridge gaps and overcome obstacles, so that everyone has the chance to learn, grow and thrive.
- **Volunteerism & Giving**—Voluntary contributions of time and treasure that fund, support and lead the Y’s critical work, so that we can reach more people and do more good.
• The Y is a leading nonprofit strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

• The Y is a powerful association of men, women and children committed to bringing about lasting personal and social change. With a focus on nurturing the potential of every child and teen, improving the nation’s health and well-being and providing opportunities to give back and support neighbors, the Y enables youth, adults, families and communities to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

• In the U.S., the Y comprises YMCA of the USA, a national resource office, and more than 2,700 YMCAs with approximately 20,000 staff and 600,000 volunteers in 10,000 communities across the country.

• The Y engages nine million youth and 13 million adults in 10,000 communities across the U.S.

• Worldwide, the Y serves more than 45 million people in 119 countries. Ys across the U.S. play an integral role in strengthening the leadership and youth programs of the Y around the world.

• Members, staff and volunteers of the Y include men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life.

• The Y offers programs, services and initiatives focused on youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, according to the unique needs of the communities we engage.

• The Y is committed to making sure all people feel welcome and supported.

• The Y is guided by four core values: caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.
THE Y
• Refers to our collective presence and is used when writing about our cause, our brand promise, our voice, our values or our overall impact as a leading nonprofit.
• When we speak about our brand, our voice, what we stand for, e.g., the mission of the Y; the Y brand; at the Y, we speak in one voice.
• For informal reference to a location once the formal name has been used.

Y-USA
• An abbreviation for the national council, once the formal name YMCA of the USA has been used.
• Both YMCA of the USA and Y-USA stand alone and are not preceded by “the”.

YMCA
• As part of the formal name of locations, associations, branches and camps.
• In text only, to describe signature programs and events that we want people to immediately associate with the YMCA.
• Refers informally to a location once the formal name has been used.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Join the Y.
Meet me at the Y.
Ys across the country have a new look.
Our Y’s facilities are closed for the holiday.

The YMCA of Greater Louisville welcomes you.
Participate in the YMCA’s Healthy Kids Day.
YMCA of Greater Syracuse members: Renew your YMCA membership today!

Kevin Washington became president and CEO of YMCA of the USA in February 2015.
He joined Y-USA following four years as president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Boston.
PEOPLE REMEMBER PICTURES MORE THAN WORDS
Storytelling plays a powerful role in bringing the Y’s brand to life and demonstrating how the work we do connects to our promise: strengthening community.

Stories focus on the impact our programs make in the lives of real people, and expand beyond our programs’ specifications.

Stories illustrate the real-world, human benefits of the Y, and help make an emotional connection to what we do.

GETTING STARTED
To start crafting a compelling story about a Y program and or person/family/community segment, ask yourself the following questions:

• What important need did our program/staff help meet for this person?
• Who is this person? What is he/she like? What’s special or relatable about him/her? Why did he/she come to the Y?
• How has this person, family or community segment’s life changed for the better? What do they say about their progress or the value of the Y?
• How does this one person or family represent what’s possible on a larger scale?

EXAMPLE
Sometimes teens need a little extra guidance when they are unsure of which career path to choose. For Victoria, Youth and Government gave her just that, with some added advantages.

Now a senior in high school, Victoria has been participating in the YMCA’s Youth and Government program since eighth grade. Created to prepare students for responsible leadership in the American democratic process by providing guidance, training and experience in the theory and practice of determining public policy, Youth and Government gives kids the support and opportunities to figure out who they are and what they can achieve.

“I love the program because it has given me so much insight about the world around me, especially within the government,” Victoria says. “It also has helped me prepare for my future career in law, which I will begin pursuing shortly after graduation in May of this year.”

Victoria credits Youth and Government for helping her pursue and remain focused on her life goals. She, like so many youth who benefit from this program, feels more confident in her abilities, and is more independent and able to make sound decisions while continuing to develop a strong character and work ethic.

Proof positive of her hard work, Victoria was delighted to learn she has been accepted to five colleges, and each of them has offered more than $10,000 in scholarships.

“Participating in Youth and Government is the opportunity of a lifetime,” she explains. “I would encourage any young teen who isn’t sure as to what career path to choose to join this program.”
Ask yourself: If you didn’t work for the Y, would you care about the point you’re making? If not, try to phrase the point in a way that would resonate more with a member, donor or influencer.

PERSONALIZE THE AUDIENCE’S EXPERIENCE WHENEVER POSSIBLE
Target the communications and request based on who the intended audience is and what you know about him or her.

ANTICIPATE AUDIENCE QUESTIONS AND ANSWER THEM
Different audiences need different information (donors want to know where/how their money is being spent; members might be interested in community impact and new offerings). If something is available only to a certain audience, or meant for a unique segment of an audience, communicate that clearly.

CONVEY THE VALUE PROPOSITION FOR EACH AUDIENCE
While it’s great to underscore the wealth of experience and programming the Y offers in our areas of focus, don’t forget that each audience will have different interests, e.g., policy leaders will want to hear high-level information about the Y’s impact, while parents want to know what their kids will learn at camp and how long they’ll be away from home. Audiences should understand how the Y adds value to their lives and how we address their particular needs.

THE Y’S CORE AUDIENCE SEGMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General public</td>
<td>A broad audience that includes potential members, donors, volunteers and former and nonmembers who may perceive the Y primarily as a service provider. Messaging should explain the breadth and depth of the Y story and convey the distinctive benefits of membership, giving and volunteerism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current members</td>
<td>Individuals and families, with families as a critically important segment. Messaging should expand engagement, as well as drive giving and volunteerism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key influencers</td>
<td>Policymakers, business and community leaders, and the media. Messaging should inspire influencers to invite the Y to the table when addressing the most pressing social issues facing our communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>Peer organizations or any for-profit. Messaging should identify commonalities and highlight opportunities for collaboration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How does the Y address critical social issues?

What are the Y’s strengths?

What success has the Y had addressing community issues?

How can we partner with the Y?

Is there a Y in my community?

What makes the Y special?

Do you have activities for the whole family?

How can the Y help me?

How can I help the Y?

How does the Y benefit my community?

Where does my money go?

What does the Y do?

POTENTIAL MEMBER

POTENTIAL DONOR

KEY INFLUENCER
## DRIVE MEMBERSHIP

### JOIN THE Y

This message matrix provides practical examples of how to apply messaging to drive membership recruitment and renewals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Potential members               | When you join the Y, you’re coming together with men, women and children from your community who are committed to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.  
Note: For membership renewals, replace “join” with “renew.”                                                                                                                                 |
| Potential members with children | Join the Y and become a member of a community that’s committed every day to helping you and your kids learn, grow and thrive.                                                                              |
| Children                        | Ask your parent(s) about joining the Y, and become part of a community that encourages fun, friendships and endless possibilities.                                                                     |
| Adults                          | Join the Y and become part of a community committed to helping you learn new things and make new friends at any stage of your life.                                                                        |
TAILORED SECONDARY MESSAGE

We know firsthand how difficult it can be to find balance in life. That’s why we’re here with you every day, making sure that you, your family and your community have the resources and support needed to learn, grow and thrive.

With a focus on developing the potential of kids, improving health and well-being, and giving back and supporting our neighbors, the Y will help you bring about meaningful change not only for yourself, but also for your community.

Find out more: Stop in at your local Y and experience how we empower our 22 million members to be more healthy and connected.

With the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility as our guide, we work with you every day to help your children have fun while realizing their potential.

With the Y, you can be assured that whatever activity your family or your child engages in—from child care to family time to sports to camp—you’ll find a safe, positive environment to play, learn and grow.

Because the Y is for everyone, we bring together parents and kids like no other organization can. From family camps to game nights, we provide many opportunities for families to spend quality time together.

At the Y, kids make friends, have fun, get active and discover new interests.

Our activities, which range from leadership development to sports and arts, give you the opportunity to become a confident kid today and a healthier, happier grown-up tomorrow.

With the Y, you’re not just a member of a facility; you’re part of a cause. With a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, improving health and well-being, and giving back and supporting our neighbors, the Y gives you and your community the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

We are a community with an everyday mission to help you achieve a balance of spirit, mind and body. We do that by encouraging good health and fostering connections with new and old friends through sports, fun and shared interests.
**GIVE TO THE Y**

This message matrix provides practical examples of how to apply messaging to promote giving to the Y.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current members and donors</td>
<td>When you give to the Y, you strengthen our community and move us all forward. As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y uses your gift to make a meaningful, enduring impact right in your own neighborhood through: (add proof points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential members and donors</td>
<td>The Y is in your community to give everyone opportunities to learn, grow and thrive. When you give to the Y, your gift will have a meaningful, enduring impact right in your own neighborhood through programs like...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key influencers in the community</td>
<td>When you give to the Y, you make (name of community) stronger. As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y uses your gift to nurture children and teens, improve community health and well-being, and support those in need, right in your own neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Y works to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation’s health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.

Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

We believe that lasting personal and social change can only come about when we all work together. That’s why, at the Y, strengthening community is our cause.

At the Y, no child, family or adult is turned away. We recognize that for communities to succeed, everyone must have the opportunity to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That’s because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but also to deliver, lasting personal and social change. In partnering with the Y, you can feel confident your contribution is making a meaningful and lasting impact.

The Y works to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation’s health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.

Every day, we work side-by-side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

When you give to the Y, you help to move people forward.
### VOLUNTEER AT THE Y

These messages provide practical examples of how to apply messaging to encourage volunteerism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential volunteers</td>
<td>The Y is a cause for strengthening community, committed every day to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. When you volunteer at the Y, you not only enhance your personal well-being, but also take an active role in bringing about meaningful, enduring change right in your own neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key influencers in the community</td>
<td>We are a cause for strengthening community, with each of our Ys working tirelessly to nurture the potential of kids, improve our community’s health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors. When you volunteer at the Y, you take an active role in bringing about meaningful, enduring change right in your own neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is no other volunteer organization quite like the Y. That’s because in 10,000 communities across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but also to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

Each of our volunteers helps deliver the benefits of good health, strong connections, greater self-confidence and a sense of security to all who seek them.

As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y provides kids, adults, families and communities with vital support and opportunities to learn, grow and thrive.

We work tirelessly every day to nurture the potential of kids, improve our community’s health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAILORED SECONDARY MESSAGE</th>
<th>CUSTOMIZABLE PROOF POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is no other volunteer organization quite like the Y. That’s because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but also to deliver, lasting personal and social change.</td>
<td>• Number of volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each of our volunteers helps move people and communities forward, delivering the benefits of good health, strong connections, greater self-confidence and a sense of security to all who seek them.</td>
<td>• Statistics and stories of need/impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a leading nonprofit for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, the Y provides kids, adults, families and communities with vital support and opportunities to learn, grow and thrive.</td>
<td>• Opportunities the Y offers volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We work tirelessly every day to nurture the potential of kids, improve our community’s health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors.</td>
<td>• Showcasing of an area of focus: youth development, healthy living or social responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ADVOCATE WITH THE Y**

These messages provide practical examples of how to apply messaging to inspire advocacy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE</th>
<th>TAILORED PRIMARY MESSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key influencers in the community</td>
<td>The Y is a cause for strengthening community, committed every day to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. When you advocate with the Y, you take an active role in bringing about the policies and community support needed to make meaningful, enduring change right in your own neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key influencers in policymaking</td>
<td>The Y is a cause for strengthening community, working tirelessly to nurture the potential of kids, improve the nation’s health and well-being, and give back and support our neighbors. When you advocate with the Y, you help more people receive the opportunities they deserve to learn, grow and thrive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>When you advocate with the Y for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, you have a partner with the long-standing track record and on-the-ground presence to address the nation’s most pressing social issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National leaders</td>
<td>With the Y, you have a partner with the long-standing track record and on-the-ground presence to address the nation’s most pressing social issues related to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TAILORED SECONDARY MESSAGE

We know that when we work as one, we can move people and communities forward. That’s why we are committed to providing support to our neighbors and opportunities for kids, adults and families to learn, grow and thrive.

We are a powerful ally and advocate for our communities. Our experience, strong relationships and presence in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation mean that we can organize grassroots efforts and influence public policy around a range of social issues, such as child welfare and public health.

Together, we can have a meaningful and tangible impact in our community.

There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That’s because in 10,000 neighborhoods across the nation we have the presence and partnerships to deliver lasting personal and social change.

We believe that real change can only come about when we all work together. That’s why every day we work side-by-side with our neighbors and community leaders to help move people and communities forward.

With the Y as your national and community partner, you’re ensuring that every person, irrespective of age, ability or income, has the opportunity to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

We know that when we work as one, we can move forward. That’s why we are committed to providing support to our neighbors and opportunities for kids, adults and families to learn, grow and thrive.

We are a powerful ally and advocate for our communities. Our experience, strong relationships and presence in 10,000 communities across the nation mean that we can organize grassroots efforts and influence public policy around a range of social issues, such as child welfare and public health.

There is no other nonprofit quite like the Y. That’s because in 10,000 communities across the nation we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but also deliver, lasting personal and social change.

We know that when we work as one, we can move people and communities forward. That’s why we are committed to providing support to our neighbors and opportunities for kids, adults and families to learn, grow and thrive.

CUSTOMIZABLE PROOF POINTS

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of the Y
- Number of social issues addressed through collaborations with lawmakers and community leaders
- Recognition from local leaders and legislators
- Opportunities for influencers

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of the Y
- Number of social issues addressed through collaborations with lawmakers and community leaders
- Recognition from local leaders and legislators
- Opportunities for influencers in policymaking

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of the Y
- Programs, services or initiatives addressing needs
- Opportunities for partners

- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs
- Impact of the Y
- Number of legislative and policy changes affected by your efforts
- Percentage of the nation’s children and teens, families, seniors, etc. engaged by the Y
- Opportunities for national leaders
VOICE AND MESSAGING RESOURCES
EFFECTIVELY SPEAKING IN THE Y VOICE MEANS:
• exhibiting our voice characteristics: welcoming, genuine, hopeful, determined, nurturing;
• connecting what we do with why we do it;
• talking about the impact of our programs and services;
• making emotional, human connections; and
• telling stories.

Like learning any new skill, using our Y voice takes practice. Here are some things to think about—and some scripts—for different Y settings:

THE FRONT DESK
Conversations at the front desk, whether in person or on the phone, tend to start with participant questions—the specific, like “When do swim lessons start” and the more open-ended, like “Can you tell me more about your Achievers programs?” These conversations are ideal opportunities to demonstrate our voice characteristics. Even the most casual visit or inquiry should result in people understanding that the Y is a welcoming, nurturing, special place. As we learn more about the wants and needs of people—in initial or subsequent conversations—we can share more about the Y’s larger purpose and impact.

Person visiting the Y: “Can you tell me about your sports programs for kids?”

Y staff: “Sure, we have loads of youth sports programs. We focus on making sure the kids have fun, learn the fundamentals of the game, make friends and like being active.”

Person on the phone: What is the Achievers program?

Y staff: It’s a terrific program. Young people are connected with mentors, get academic support, visit colleges and businesses—all with the goal of helping them see a future after high school and begin taking steps to make that happen.”

THE TOUR
The tour is as much about listening to people’s wants and needs as it is about talking about the Y, making the tour an important opportunity to connect what we do with why we do it.

Mix the facts of your Y—square feet, pool hours, programs equipment, child watch—with the benefit to the participant and our larger purpose in offering these programs.

“Here’s our warm-water pool, which is really beneficial for our members with arthritis or mobility issues. It gives them an environment to be active without high impact or stress on their joints.”

“Here is our afterschool area. We just started a program where we send the kids home with fresh fruits and vegetables every other Friday, so families have more nutritious options and can save some money.”

Where you’ve made specific decisions because of community needs, share that. It demonstrates the Y’s responsiveness to the community.

“Some of our female members really wanted an option to exercise in modest, single-sex surroundings, so we’ve arranged for special classes on Wednesdays and Saturdays.”

“We have a large number of older adults who wanted more social programs to connect with people who share their interests, so we’ve added quarterly field trips and guest speakers. They love it.”

“We offer a number of special-needs youth sports groups, including our baseball team, which just won the city championship.”

THE ELEVATOR/PARKING LOT/COFFEE SHOP
Every interaction is an opportunity to communicate the value of the Y. Think about how to convey our purpose and impact whether you sit down with a prospective member or share a short elevator ride with a prospective donor.

When people ask about the Y, remember our position and areas of focus. “The Y is a leading nonprofit dedicated to strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.” In regular conversation, you don’t need to worry about getting every word right—make it your own. But what we want people to come away with is that we exist to strengthen community and our work focuses on three main areas. Then share your role in making that important work happen.
“The Y is about strengthening community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Every Y does that a little differently because we serve different communities with different needs. Our Y focuses on encouraging healthy lifestyles, helping kids succeed in school and providing support to new immigrants.”

“I only just started my job at the Y but I love it. I knew the Y did swim lessons and camp, but our programs really focus on three main areas—youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. We help kids get to college, provide special wellness programs for cancer survivors and help families with special needs.”

THE FUNDRAISER
Fundraisers are about thanking your existing donors, showing them the impact they’ve had and adding other people to the cause. Numbers are part of our impact, but they need to be connected to meaningful examples of lives changed. Whenever possible, have the people who have benefitted from your program tell their stories.

“We want to thank each one of you here this afternoon for making the Y available to so many who otherwise might not be able to be part of the Y family. Through your vision and generosity, we’ve provided $120,000 in scholarships this year. That means you have enabled kids to experience nature, independence and lasting friendships at camp. You’ve helped parents provide a stable, nurturing environment for their children while they work. You’ve helped families stay active and maintain their health even when faced with the stress of a job loss. You’ve allowed a mother, whose only time for herself is bible study, to continue to connect with scripture and her friends in the group.”

“Your contribution makes a difference, and it has a ripple effect. Because as so often happens at the Y, when someone is able to achieve or succeed at something, or is helped by a program, they want other people to experience the same thing. That’s the case with Larry, who’s going to share his experience at the Y and how he’s now helping others ...”

THE “CAN WE MEET?” COLD CALL
When we’re introducing our Y and its work to community members and potential partners, it’s again important to stress our position as a leading nonprofit that strengthens community and our areas of focus to reorient the perception that we’re just “swim and gym.” Whether we have a track record in a specific area or are new to it, we’re calling on someone, or speaking to a group, because we think that together we might be able to address a problem or take advantage of an opportunity to help the community.

School Superintendent:
“Mr. Superintendent, I’m wondering if I might get some time on your calendar to share with you the Y’s successes in afterschool programming, and see if there might be opportunities to expand our partnership ...”

Rotary President:
“I’d really like to talk with your members about the Y’s work with junior high and high school students in our leadership programs. We’ve found that with a corporate mentor and the chance to visit community workplaces, these young people become more engaged with their education because they can start seeing a future for themselves ...”

THE MEMBER ENGAGEMENT COLD CALL
When talking with members, we want to remind them that they’re part of our cause. They can be part of sharing the Y experience with individuals and families who would not otherwise be able to manage their health, send their kids to camp, keep an aging parent active and social or be part of the larger Y community. Maybe they’d like to help support a specific program or program area that’s making a difference in the community.

“We know how much your Y membership means to you and your family, and we’re hoping you’d be willing to make a contribution toward our scholarship fund to bring the Y to more families who might not be able to afford a membership.”

“You may know that this year, our partnership with LIVESTRONG has helped more than 200 cancer survivors reclaim their health after treatment. Would you consider a donation to the Y to fund enhancements to that program so we can serve more people?”
**VOICE LIVES EVERYWHERE**

We communicate through the environments we create and the tone and spirit of our actions. We want our spaces and behavior to convey our cause, our voice and our values. Making sure we have inviting places in our facilities for people to gather and talk helps create community and conveys that we’re welcoming. Talking about and measuring impact demonstrates our determination and genuineness. Working respectfully with a family on financial assistance shows that we’re inclusive, nurturing and for all.

So think about voice on your website and marketing materials, but also in your lobby, your membership policies and your staff training.
SHAPING THE Y EXPERIENCE
An individual’s perception of a brand is shaped by his or her overall impression of and experience with that brand. An organization’s environment is a very important influence. For the Y, strategically and intentionally infusing the Y’s promise, core values and voice into our spaces, signage, bulletin boards and other areas where people experience the Y can help them better understand what the Y stands for and why they should be engaged. From the lobby and front desk to gathering areas, kitchens, gyms and locker rooms, we can manage the experience the people have with the Y.

Examples of enviromental design, including customizable files, can be found on the Brand Resource Center at theYbrand.org

Photos of YMCA of Central Kentucky
MORE ON NAMING

PROGRAM NAMING AND REFERENCES
Part of having one voice as a Movement means referring to our programs in similar ways. Research has shown us that people don’t fully understand what the Y does or why. When naming and referring to programs, we want to be as clear as possible. Programs should be referred to as part of the Y, but “Y” should not be in their official name. For instance, we do not offer Y Camp, Y Group Exercise or Y Youth and Government. We offer camp, group exercise and Youth and Government. Particularly within context—in a facility, on a Y website, in a program guide—using “Y” in program names becomes redundant and/or devalues our brand through overuse (see below).

When referring to programs in narrative—press releases, program guides or annual reports—we refer to the YMCA’s child care programs or the YMCA’s Diabetes Prevention Program, but the names of the programs themselves remain child care or Diabetes Prevention. Use the philosophy of our visual system as a guide for program naming and referencing. The Y is prominent and at the top, below is the name of program, without further reference to the Y. Similarly, in an environment where the Y is firmly established—within a facility, on a Y website, within a program guide—there is no need to attach the YMCA name to a program. (Attaching the Y logo to a program is prohibited by the graphic standards.)

Here’s an example of three references for the Anytown YMCA’s “Little Tumblers” beginning gymnastics program:

**Program Flyer**

**Headline of Press Release**
Kids Get Active in YMCA’s Little Tumblers Program

**Annual Report Highlight**
Our (or The) Y’s Little Tumblers class has seen a 20% increase over last year, with parents saying they love the chance to relax and connect while their kids are running, playing and laughing together.

**Naming Physical Spaces in Your Y**
Studios, rooms and centers in your Y can be special places with a designated purpose and/or value. Unless named in recognition of a donor or partner, however, you’re encouraged to keep the names of spaces generic—aquatics center, dance studio, computer lab, Pilates center—instead of giving them names that could inadvertently brand them as something other than the Y. While “Studio 360” may have a nice ring to it, it should always be associated with the Y.
SAMPLE PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS—BEFORE AND AFTER
The following “from/to” program descriptions, adapted from Y samples, make small changes to lead with impact or value, infuse more voice attributes, sound less institutional or highlight a particular Y way of doing things.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Achievers
FR: Youth Achievers programs connect kids to each other and to the community with leadership and volunteer opportunities.

TO: We believe that positive activities and influences from an early age help youth develop and achieve their potential, so they can grow into healthy adults. Kids in kindergarten through 7th grade make new friends and develop social skills and confidence through educational field trips, workshops and more.

Gymnastics
FR: Gymnastics is offered for all ages and abilities from toddlers through teens. Our highly experienced and certified coaches identify strengths and help students excel with emphasis on fun. Participants work on the mats, balance beam, parallel bars, uneven and vaults.

TO: In gymnastics, kids from toddlers to teens learn core movements on mats, balance beams, parallel bars, uneven bars and vaults from a certified coach. Our goal is to identify strengths and help young gymnasts excel with an emphasis on friendships and achievement.

Camp
FR: Founded in 1947, YMCA Camp (Name) has provided children in our community with a camp that keeps them laughing and learning all summer long. We offer eight one-week sessions for campers entering grades 1 - 6.

TO: Give your children the best summer ever! Since 19XX, YMCA Camp (Name) has been invested in developing youth through laughter, leadership and lifelong memories. Our trained counselors help foster a sense of belonging and deliver fun experiences that keep families coming back year after year.

HEALTHY LIVING

First Aid
FR: First Aid is a two-year certification class providing hands-on, first aid learning. Learn about burns, cuts, scrapes, bleeding, illness and injury.

TO: You can approach life’s accidents—big and small—with confidence and calm when you take our First Aid certification class. From burns and scrapes to illness and injury, this hands-on class will prepare you to handle any emergency.
Parent/Child Swim Lessons
FR: You and your child will enjoy this 30-minute aquatics class. Children between the ages of 2-4 will learn basic water safety and skills to get them ready for swimming, such as kicking and blowing bubbles.
TO: Get ready to swim with baby or toddler! Enjoy special time with your little one as children ages 2-4 learn the basic water safety and skills—blowing bubbles and kicking—to get them ready for more advanced swimming.

Arthritis Aquatics Class
FR: Participate in this low-impact exercise class that takes place in the warm water pool. Increase flexibility and have fun!
TO: Increase your flexibility and have fun in our warm-water arthritis aquatics class. This low-impact exercise provides high-impact benefits.

Get on the Ball!
FR: All fitness levels welcome! This 30-minute class uses stability balls to stretch, tone and strengthen the entire body.
TO: All fitness levels welcome! This 30-minute class uses stability balls to stretch, tone and strengthen, increasing flexibility and firming muscles for a stronger you all over.

Step Up Your Game!
FR: Improve your cardiovascular fitness through step aerobics!
TO: Have fun and improve your cardiovascular fitness and coordination through step aerobics. You’ll leave with an elevated heart rate and a skip in your step.

Social Responsibility

FR: Wired Adults is a free computer basics program for those over 50 years old.
TO: If you find yourself just a bit intimidated by today’s technology and “social media,” we’ve got the class for you. Wired Adults connects those 50+ with straightforward instruction to turn your computer or cell phone into a helpful friend.

FR: Healthy Time is a childhood obesity prevention program for under-served, at-risk children.
TO: Helping our kids eat right and stay active is an ongoing challenge, but you have a partner with the Y. Healthy Time is designed to instill healthier habits and a fun approach to physical activity that sets kids, particularly those at risk for weight gain or obesity, on a better path.

FR: The YMCA Literacy Initiative offers a family literacy program that provides book-based activities for children while their parents participate in ESL classes.
TO: Families can learn and improve their English speaking, reading and writing skills in our family literacy program, where children engage in book-based activities while parents take English as a Second Language classes.

FR: Volunteer at the Y! There are many volunteer opportunities at your YMCA to help strengthen your community, including: welcoming and introducing members, prospective members and program participants, assisting with facility tours, assisting with mailings, bulletin boards and special events, coaching youth sports and more! All prospective volunteers must fill out an application. After that, call or stop by your local branch to find out more about getting involved.
TO: Share your time and talent at the Y, and change lives, including your own. From volunteering to help with special events to coaching or mentoring, your skills and interests will make a difference here.
With an amplified voice that exhibits our attributes of determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful and welcoming, and messaging that leads with impact to highlight why we do what we do and make an emotional connection, we can more effectively communicate the value of our work and drive engagement.

The following examples of voice and messaging have been collected from Y websites, annual reports, program guides and marketing collateral. They provide strong examples of how to use tone and language to shape perception of the Y and influence people to join, renew, give, volunteer and advocate.

Statements and descriptions are intentionally anonymous. They are from Ys—large and small—across the U.S. that are communicating with purpose and impact.

To share your Y’s work, send examples of the Y’s voice and messaging in action to theYbrand@ymca.net.

**PROGRAMS: sample copy**

YMCAstrive to meet community needs through organized programs. YMCA programs promote good health, strong families, confident kids, engaged communities and a better world.

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: sample copy**

**Child/Preschool**

- The Y provides youth development programs because young people need caring adults to provide support, guidance and encouragement as they grow.
- By helping children and teens learn values and positive behaviors through holistic development of leadership, service-learning and healthy actions, the Y helps youth grow to be confident, connected and secure today—and engaging, contributing citizens tomorrow.
- A community. At the Y, we’re more than a gym—we’re a community. When you join the Y, you are a part of something bigger than yourself. Twelve hundred staff are ready to teach, coach, care for and instruct you and the kids of this community through schools, youth sports and school-age child care. Twelve hundred staff who are active, dedicated and inspired.
- Every day, our YMCA cares for more than 2,000 children. It is an amazing demonstration of trust by their parents. As the largest and leading provider of child care [in our area], the Y knows that earning this trust requires caring, trained staff and a commitment to excellence in service and administration. This is why we participate in quality initiatives that promote the ongoing development of safe, affordable, accessible and high-quality educational programs to give your children the best start in life. We are committed to working with families to create a support system for healthy development. The Y’s child care program is more than just care for children—it’s an opportunity to learn, create, play, empower and grow.
- At the Y, child development starts early and lasts long. As others follow our lead, more children are assured a lifetime of good health and high achievement.
- Our teachers will welcome your child in a warm, safe and caring environment. With a wide range of activities to stimulate your child’s creativity, self-esteem and independence, our values-based program will help young children achieve essential social-emotional, cognitive and physical milestones.
- Healthy child development starts early. That’s why we offer preschool programs that help children learn the essential skills they’ll need later on. Our trained, supportive staff work to help everyone have the best possible start in their education—and arrive at their first day of kindergarten ready to learn.

**Camp/Swim, Sports and Play**

- The Y is the starting point for many youth to learn about becoming and staying active, and developing healthy habits they will carry with them throughout their lives. The benefits are far greater than just physical. When kids play sports or learn to swim, they can build confidence, discover their personal best, have fun and be a part of a team.
• Day camp provides youth with supervised activities that teach core values, conflict resolution and leadership skills. Kids have fun while building self-confidence, appreciating teamwork and gaining independence. Day camp activities allow kids to create arts and crafts, explore science and technology, swim, participate in field trips, appreciate nature and better understand our many cultures.

• YMCA summer camp gives you peace of mind while you are at work. The program assures that learning, fun and character-building experienced during the school year continues into the summer months. The activities are designed to keep your child’s mind and body active while nurturing the Y’s core values: caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

• Live, Learn, Pass it On! With every new experience comes a chance to learn and grow. At the Y, we strive to give all children and teens opportunities to test their own limits and explore their potential. Every summer, YMCA camps are home to thousands of kids who build leadership skills, take on new responsibilities and experience independence. In fact, all of our youth programs work to develop leaders and pave the way for future generations.

• Grab your glove and let’s play ball! It’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you learn the game. At the Y, kids develop all of their skills, from catching and dribbling to teamwork and sportsmanship. Just as important, they learn firsthand the benefits of being healthy and active—and that virtual games just can’t compare to the real thing.

• Swimming is a great form of exercise for children with primary cognitive and physical disabilities. Focusing on stroke development, endurance and fun, this class helps children gain the confidence and skills necessary to be safe and have fun in the water. Lots of one-on-one attention from trained instructors and volunteers ensures that everyone learns skills appropriate for their abilities in a safe environment.

• Youth sports teach sports skills to make it more fun and exciting for emerging athletes. Each program utilizes the Y’s seven principles: everyone plays, safety first, fair play, positive competition, family involvement, sports for all and sports for fun.

Afterschool/Education and Leadership

• At the Y, we believe that all children and teens deserve a safe place to go after school to explore the arts, engage in physical activity, get help with homework and learn the importance of giving back to their community.

• Youth and Government is a national YMCA program for high school students. The program enables young people to prepare for moral and political leadership through training in the theory and practice of developing public policy.

• Working in collaboration with educators, business leaders and local governments, we are creating better learning environments that close the academic Achievement Gap for children from low-income enviroments.

• Teens are a great resource in our community. They have talents and energy. They care about others. The Y has always depended upon teens to provide leadership with younger kids. Teens participate in our leadership development classes and volunteer to strengthen our community. Some choose to work on special projects while others coach basketball or teach swim lessons.
HEALTHY LIVING: sample copy

Health, Well-being and Fitness

- The Y provides healthy living programs because wellness in spirit, mind and body strengthens our very being and enhances our interactions with others.

- At the Y, we have the facilities, equipment, programs and staff to support you. Make new friends, increase your self-confidence and improve your spiritual, mental and physical health.

- Women’s Wellness Weekend, designed for women 18 and older, is a rejuvenating two-night getaway that will re-energize your spirit, mind and body. Encompassing all of the facets of total wellness, this weekend is the ultimate escape to recapture the balance of life with abundant sessions such as yoga, Zumba®, nutrition, massage, canoeing, crafts, theme meals and campfires.

- Personal training is all about you finding your strength within. We are just here to bring that strength out. Our PT staff partners with you to help launch and sustain a smart exercise program. It’s not about the big gains—it’s about the development of better habits over time. We’ll make sure you go home with new knowledge and a new sense of accomplishment after every session!

- Yoga Stretch is designed to physically and mentally engage you with a variety of safe and fun yoga postures and breathing exercises. Using a chair for support, participants work at their own pace to build flexibility, balance and endurance while learning to relax and think more clearly.

- The Y offers fitness programs for older adults like water exercise, yoga and stretching, and walking. But, we know that older adults are seeking more than physical benefits when they exercise. They also want a sense of community and strong social ties. The Y has several activities to encourage older adults to take action and get involved. Socializing and volunteering have positive effects on the health of older adults, and exercise has proven to promote mental agility in addition to longevity and good health.

- Join our Knitters Circle and learn the basic knitting stitches of garter stitch, stockinette stitch, ribbing and more. Learn how to read a pattern along with the techniques needed to create beautiful hand-made items to enjoy and share. Enjoy this lifelong skill and socialize with individuals with similar interests.

Family Time

- We know parents want the best for their kids, and kids want to have fun. That why, at the Y, our mission is centered on balance. We bring families closer together, encourage good health and foster connections through fitness, sports and shared interests. Millions of youth and adults all over the world turn to the Y for the support, guidance and resources they need to strengthen and maintain their healthy, happy families.

- Today, all families can find their second home together at the Y.

- YMCA have long been a place where families come together. Our family and parent/child programs promote intergenerational bonds and community socialization. Relax in the pool with your neighbors on a family float night or explore creative movements with your toddler.

- Through the quality time spent together in Adventure Guides, participants reinforce their awareness of nature, community and family.

- Swimming gets the heart pumping, the blood flowing and the muscles working—plus it’s much easier on joints than high-impact exercise. As our population ages, working out in the water will provide older men and women with an excellent fitness alternative. Between our swimming programs, pool aerobics and other water fitness classes, our members can stay active all their life at the Y.

- Parent/child movement exploration is the heart of First Bugs. Spend time with your toddler, introducing activities that will build hand-eye coordination, strength, motor skills and social development through the use of songs and activities.
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: sample copy

Access for All

• Well-being for many of our neighbors is all too frequently limited by poverty and social isolation. In low-income communities, the Y offers opportunities for every child, teen and adult to achieve his or her potential regardless of economic status. To continue and expand programming where it is needed most, we must reaffirm a commitment to work in low-income communities and provide a place of safety and hope for the most vulnerable youth and families.

• You know the faces of need in our community as well as we do: children in need of care and educational support, teens in need of positive role models and activities, and families in need of a place to spend time together where they can grow in spirit, mind and body. The Y is committed to meeting these needs and others through programs such as child care, camp, youth sports, and health and wellness. Your gift improves a life. It keeps the Y open to all, making sure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive.

• Some organizations shy away from serving economically challenged communities. Not the Y. After all, we exist to strengthen communities. All communities. Especially those that need us most.

• The strength of our communities is linked to the overall prosperity of the nation. With more than 40 million foreign-born individuals currently living in the U.S.—more than at any other point in history—it is imperative that newcomers and immigrants have access to integration support and opportunities to contribute back to their communities.

• Across the U.S., Ys offer newcomers and immigrants the integration support they need to transition well into their new communities. While services may vary from Y to Y, our shared goal is to help all people reach their full potential and be connected to their community.

Coming Together for Good

• We know that when we work together, we move individuals, families and communities forward. For more than 160 years, the Y has responded to society’s most pressing needs by developing innovative, community-based solutions and uniting people from all walks of life to participate in and work for positive social change. Whether providing job training to a newly single parent, advocating for affordable, healthy food options for underserved communities or helping newcomers transition well into their new neighborhoods, the Y is committed to empowering people with the resources and support to live healthy, connected and secure lives.

• With our doors open to all, the Y works every day to connect people from all backgrounds and support those who need us most. We take on the most urgent needs in our communities and inspire a spirit of service in return. Our participants, volunteers, donors and staff demonstrate the power of what we can achieve by giving back together.

• At the Y, strengthening community is our cause, and our volunteers, members, staff, donors and partners play a critical role in helping to nurture the potential of every child and teen, improve the nation’s health and well-being and give back and provide support to our neighbors. We gratefully acknowledge all of our friends for their continued dedication, generosity and support of the Y’s mission, programs and services, across the United States and around the world.

• Communities are rapidly changing. Neighborhoods are more diverse, cultural attitudes— influenced by national and global factors—are evolving, and technology is making our world smaller and more accessible. In the midst of this change, the Y is committed to engage, advocate for, connect and serve all, so that our communities are united and strong.

• Volunteering is more than just sharing your time and passion—it’s about the satisfaction of knowing you are helping people become stronger and giving back to your community. You’ll also gain valuable experience that contributes to your personal and professional well-being. We ask you to follow in the footsteps of the visionary leaders who built the Y and give generously for a better us.

• You may have joined the Y as a place to improve your well-being, help your kids learn and grow, or connect with others who share your interests. Now, your membership can mean even more. As a part of the leading charity committed to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility, you can play a role in making our community stronger through the Y’s member- led volunteer program, called Togetherhood™.

• All children have the potential to succeed in life and contribute to society. However, not all children get the support they need to thrive. You can change that by becoming a volunteer YMCA mentor. As a mentor, you’ll help young students soar to new heights—and blossom with creativity, character and confidence. You can provide one-on-one homework assistance, share a
talent or skill, offer career and college guidance, and give care and support that will last through a child’s life. Youth mentoring only takes one hour a week. Whatever your background, experience or interest, mentoring at the Y is a great way to make a difference in a child’s life.

- We know real progress is only possible if we work together. We’re counting on the generous support of donors and volunteers to ensure that every youth has the opportunity and resources to navigate through life’s challenges to become a successful adult.

- As an advocate of the Y, you can help:
  - influence policies and initiatives that help youth develop healthy behaviors, values and life skills;
  - prevent and combat chronic disease;
  - build trust and understanding among community groups and decision makers; and
  - positively impact societal issues of importance to the nation and your community.

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**Global Reach and Impact**

- Founded in 1844 in London, England, the Y has grown into one of the largest volunteer organizations in the world, serving more than 45 million people in 119 countries. Often operating in challenging social, economic and political environments, Ys worldwide deliver innovative solutions to meet community needs and empower people with the skills and opportunities to create a better future for themselves and their families.

- The Y is more than day camp, child care, sports, fitness or youth programs. It is a worldwide family of 119 autonomous national Movements committed to building a positive future for youth and families. The Y, founded in London, England, in 1844, is one of the largest social service organizations in the world, responding to the diverse needs of more than 45 million people across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Europe and North America. The Y is open to people from all backgrounds, regardless of faith, race, gender, ability, age or income.

- An investment in people is an investment in strong communities around the world. When you give to the Y’s World Service campaign, you’re helping Ys in some of the most impoverished communities around the world to reach more people with life-changing programs and services. Every gift, regardless of size, makes a difference in helping people to build a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

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**JOIN/BECOME A MEMBER: sample copy**

- Members are the heart of the Y and our most valuable asset. People just like you make the Y a special place. We help kids, adults and families from all walks of life reach their goals and contribute to solutions that improve communities. Through programs and services like diabetes prevention, afterschool tutoring, volunteering, vocational training and more, we provide people with endless opportunities to achieve more. By joining the Y, you are connected to opportunities, resources and programs that align with your needs and wants and support your well-being journey.

- Membership in the Y enables you to have a lasting effect on your community. Staff, volunteers and members are joined together by a shared commitment to nurture the potential of children, adults and families; promote healthy living; and foster a sense of social responsibility. The support our members show one another is what makes people feel comfortable, valued and at home at the Y.

- As a cause-driven organization, the Y is able to bring together people of all ages and backgrounds to bridge the gaps in community needs. We are able to strengthen community because of the dedicated youth, families and individuals who share our passion. They give their time, resources and talents—every day and in thousands of ways—because they know they can improve the lives of others while enhancing their own through the Y.
Jeremy has had a profound effect on everyone who has the opportunity to work with him. He has taught us patience and compassion. He reminds us that each person has a story that has shaped them into the individual they have become. We cannot change some aspects of the lives of our students, but with passion, commitment and the removal of judgment, we can enhance and enrich the lives of the students we serve at the Y in a significant way.

It’s said the more things change, the more they stay the same; this is certainly true of our YMCA. Throughout the decades, social challenges have changed dramatically, and our community needs to continue to change: the lifestyle health and obesity crisis. The constant depletion of family time that results from parents who have to work to survive. Military families coping with loved ones overseas. The need to serve more people in ever more meaningful ways to stay confident and secure. The challenges will change and the programs and services will continue to evolve, but our unwavering willingness and ability to support our communities will always be at the core of the Y. We’re for youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

Our Cause is You: finding balance
Our Cause is You: unplugging this summer
Our Cause is You: conquering the scale
Our Cause is You: not acting your age

The Y is committed to helping prevent chronic disease by giving individuals of all ages tools for healthy living.

All. Together. Better. This is not an advertising slogan. This is a core belief at the heart of our YMCA.

Extend compassion. Keep your promises. Respect other people’s feelings. Take responsibility for your actions. These values are encouraged and exemplified 365 days a year at our YMCA. More than a gym or a child care center, the Y is a deeply rooted nonprofit organization committed to changing lives in the communities we serve. Caring, honesty, respect and responsibility guide all that we do and make us who we are.
VOICE AND MESSAGING EXERCISES

Use these exercises individually or at staff or department meetings to practice using our voice attributes and communicating with clarity and impact.

**EXERCISE I**
**More Than a Facility, Job or Program**

1) Write down your job title and two of your responsibilities.

2) Now, thinking about your role and our cause, write down how you help your YMCA strengthen community.

I don’t just _____________________________________________;
I _______________________________________________________________________

Example:
I don’t just do marketing and communications; I help the Y communicate its value as a nonprofit and drive the membership, donations, volunteers and advocacy we need to help our community thrive.

**EXERCISE II**
**Benefit Statement Practice**

Pick a program at your Y. Write down a benefit statement, using five words or less, that describes the program’s impact. (Building Strong and Bright Futures, Safer in the Water, Conquering Diabetes)

**EXERCISE III**
**Program Descriptions—Practice Makes Perfect**

Pick three of the following programs and write short descriptions for your online program guide. Concentrate on being clear, expressing the benefit and any special Y approach to the program.

Older Adult Walking Club
Afterschool Program for Middle Schoolers
Family Nights
English as a Second Language (ESL) Courses
Food Bank
Camp
Service-Learning Trips
Group Exercise
Bible Study
College Prep/Leaders’ Clubs
Diabetes Prevention

**EXERCISE IV**
**Voice in Action**

For each of our voice attributes—determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful, welcoming—identify an example of a Y policy, staff or member action you witnessed, or a physical area of your Y, that reflects that value. Discuss. Which attribute was the easiest to find examples of? The hardest? How can your Y engage your community in a way that better aligns with our voice attributes?
EXERCISE V
“What I’d Like You to Know About the Y”—Five-Minute Speech
1. Choose an audience (potential donor, new school superintendent, parent, etc.)
2. You’ve managed to get five minutes of this person’s time to tell him/her about the Y or a program at the Y, and ask him/her to take an action—support, partner, involve their child.
3. Individually or in groups, identify the following:
   • what you want this person to know about the Y or the program;
   • how you’re going to paint a picture of the program’s value, and back up what you’re saying—e.g., numbers, stories, quotes, community perspective, etc.;
   • what action you want this person to take; and
   • benefit the person receives by taking that action.

Now put these items together in a five-minute speech, or role play. This can be done as a meeting or phone conversation.

EXERCISE VI
Our Cause-Driven Y
Divide into groups of four to six. Give each group a piece of paper and some markers. Have each team draw a picture of what they think a cause-driven Y looks like. Participants may not talk to each other while planning or drawing. After 10 minutes, have each team share their drawing with the group.

Tips
Groups can communicate through drawing or body language.
Give a one-minute warning before time is up.

Discussion
What do the drawings have in common? Are there any things in these drawings you feel we already do? What things came up that you think we need to work on?

Alternative
Use The Big Picture Deck instead of drawings.
**Stakeholders** – people or organizations with a legitimate interest in a given situation, action or enterprise.

**Key influencers** – people in positions of leadership and influence in corporations, foundations, government and public policy organizations.

**Brand promise** – what an organization stands for to its stakeholders. The Y’s brand promise is our cause of strengthening community.

**Mission** – an organization’s reason for being. The Y’s mission is “To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.”

**Voice** – the distinctive tone, manner and style in which we communicate.

**Values** – the principles that govern how people behave and make decisions. The Y’s values are caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

**Touchpoints** – junctures/places/experiences where people encounter our brand.

**Nomenclature** – a set of names and terms (the Y, the Movement).

**Value proposition** – the tangible usefulness and meaning a product/service or organization brings to the customer.

**Jargon** – specialized language, often particular to an industry or organization.

**Messaging** – the crafting of clear, impactful language meant to drive reputation, awareness or action from specific audiences.

**Voice attributes** – communication style that shapes how we look, feel and sound. The Y’s voice attributes are determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful, welcoming.

**Active voice** – sentence where the subject of a verb carries out some action. “The Y strengthens community.”

**Passive voice** – sentence where the subject is acted upon. “Community is strengthened by the Y.” Avoid passive voice when possible.

**Proof points** – examples of impact that support a statement. Important in communication to establish credibility.

**Tone** – manner in which speech or writing is expressed.

**Benefit statement** – the declaration of purpose or benefit that should accompany most YMCA marketing, communications and positioning pieces.

**Audience** – the specific group(s) of people you want to reach through communications.

**Positioning** – how you present your organization/work in relation to other organizations or industries (leading nonprofit).
A Y VOICE AND MESSAGING CHECKLIST
All communications are different and have different goals. Ask yourself what you’re trying to achieve with your piece, then go through the checklist (all items won’t necessarily apply).

____ The Y cause is stated, reinforcing our purpose and areas of focus as a leading nonprofit.

____ Tone is determined, nurturing, genuine, hopeful and welcoming (at least three out of five).

____ The piece includes “what” and “why” for Y programs and services, connecting what we offer and its benefit.

____ The piece includes a call to action: join, renew, give, volunteer, advocate.

____ Numbers are used in context of our impact.

____ Benefit and impact of program/offfer/event are clearly articulated.

____ Piece includes proof points to support claims.

____ Audience-specific messages are used where appropriate.

____ Stories, testimonials or examples are used to paint a memorable picture (to bring to life our words) and make an emotional connection (e.g., “One of our second graders had this to say about swim lessons…”)

____ Design (imagery) supports the message.

____ It’s clear the Y is a nonprofit.

____ The piece avoids Y or industry jargon, internal language and branded program names, so that the language we use is understood by everyone without explanation (capacity-building, association, respite child care, Adventure Guides, mission impact).
All artwork and imagery used in these guidelines are for visual reference only and should not be extracted from this PDF file.

For questions regarding these guidelines, please contact the Y Brand at theYbrand@ymca.net.