



PROGRAM PLANNING GUIDE

2018

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This guide is divided into three sections. The [first section](#) describes inter-dependent components every high-quality summer program should thoughtfully consider as the first step to a good program design. Use this to begin planning your framework.

The [second section](#) focuses on ideas, tips and local resources to consider as you develop the details of your summer program. Not all tips make sense for all programs. But, they may lead you to even better ideas.

The [third section](#) has tips about important infrastructure that significantly impact program quality.

GETTING STARTED: Building a Framework

Before scaffolding any fun or creative ideas, a high-quality summer program needs a smart framework. While you can sometimes positively impact youth through a few amazing staff, a great connection or a fun opportunity, success is much more likely within a stable framework. A good framework looks very much like all the quality elements necessary to prepare for and build a safe home. Basics are noticeably and logically in place. The plan is backed by solid investigation and held up by a solid foundation. Everyone understands the purpose. The front-end work builds confidence and trust in the final product.

Start by building a basic understanding and doing a self-assessment. Then, make some preliminary decisions.

1. **Use the *Summer Youth Program Fund (SYPF)* application as a framework-building guide.** Each section asks about important program components because together they form the basis of a strong program. Read through it. Think about how you can practically accomplish your vision.
2. **Read through the *Proposal Development and Program Planning Checklist* available on the [SYPF resource page](#).** This exercise will remind you of important considerations. Reference the ***Self-Assessment Guide*** found on the same resource page. Use either guide during summer checkpoints, too.
3. **Returning grantee? Last summer's *Final Grant Report* is a great review guide. Do you need to adjust your framework? Tip #1: In your proposal, make a direct connection between what you learned last year and what you intend to do this year.**
 - What worked best? What were the biggest challenges, overall and day-to-day?*
 - Did you raise your full budget? If not, was your program impacted? Based on past performance, is your budget realistic?*
 - How did your recruitment projection compare with actual enrollment? Based on past performance, is this projection realistic?*
 - Based on these answers, what will you do differently this year to improve your program and secure the necessary resources?*
4. **Educate yourself on your community, on models that work well and on your own capacity.** Don't assume you know. Ask for input from honest people. Uncover a different perspective.

A high-quality program framework includes good decisions in SIX key areas: 1) understanding *needs* and other players; 2) choosing an engaging *emphasis* that fits your abilities and resources; 3) setting service *hours* that match your emphasis and families; 4) defining *ages* you want to engage; 5) selecting *program dates* that fit your capacity, program emphasis and your target family needs; and 6) finding a *program site* that provides the best possible facilities to achieve your vision.

These decisions are interdependent. And, each has important implications for staffing, outreach and budget. Before outlining your framework, review the following tips and self-assessment questions in these six key areas.

#1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT and OTHER PLAYERS

There's unmet need all around. Many caring organizations and volunteers long to reach youth through a joyful summer experience. However, many first-time program planners make one rudimentary error: *They assume no one else is working with area youth and they think it makes more sense to create a new program than support an existing one.*

The reality? Quality opportunities exist. A group of caring adults can be instrumental in helping an existing program become great. It can offer access to its own youth. Or lead a rich 2-hour or full-day opportunity for an existing program. A worship center might register its own youth for a stellar program that struggles to recruit. Well-connected volunteers might create a high-quality drop-in experience for camps that no one else could design. Either approach saves limited resources, helps youth connect with a meaningful experience and brings a desire to serve or expertise to an existing, grateful summer program. A critical financial partner can help an existing local program focus on what it does best.

Does your idea have to be a program? What kind of summer experience do kids need? Before deciding:

- ❑ Define how widely to cast your net in terms of where youth live and the practicality of drawing them to your program.
 - ✓ *Will you really draw youth "county-wide?" It is more likely and potentially more impacting to target a smaller geographic area.*
 - ✓ *Do you want to work with a specific family type, school district, academic ability, culture, challenge? Do you want to appeal to a certain type of young person?*
 - ✓ *Could you be most effective with a narrower age group?*

- ❑ Deeply educate yourself on unmet needs of this population. *Are you making assumptions. Can you document what you've learned about needs and good solutions?*
- ❑ Learn about the area's demographics and youth population. *What about neighborhood conditions or access? Look at [SAVI](#) and the [Census](#). To discover the area's assets, take a walk or drive.*
- ❑ With data in hand, ASK youth, their parents, community leaders and those who work with similar populations. *What do they say? What type of summer program, service or experience matters?*
- ❑ Find out what other youth services exist in your area or serve the population you want to reach. Question this: *"There's nothing here!"* That's often a clue that little energy has gone into scanning the landscape. Meet others who serve youth. Learn about them. Call existing [SYPF grantees](#). Draw on these connections to design your summer experience.
 - ✓ *Want to impact academic success, what schools should you talk with?*
 - ✓ *What are others doing? If they can't serve in summer, why not? What sets your program idea apart? Can you provide a high-quality experience to their youth/the same population?*
 - ✓ *If you want to serve a specific population, can you help an existing set of services by offering a first-ever summer experience?*
 - ✓ *How can you work together? Are others at capacity? Can you help them expand capacity? Does another summer program want to increase its offerings but doesn't have the ability or facilities? Can you help? Can you help them create a better summer?*

#2: PROGRAM EMPHASIS

Before creating the program structure, find out the type of experience that 1) could be most beneficial to your target group, 2) fits with your own organizational capacity, and 3) marries well with your interests. The [National Summer Learning Association](#) is a great place to start. Talk with programs that offer different kinds of experiences to see what makes sense for you.

- ❑ Make an intentional decision about your emphasis. Align to that.
- ❑ What type of program makes sense? A few examples include:
 - ✓ A *traditional summer day or overnight camp* with varied activities that might include academic enrichment, physical activity, exploring new places and new talents;
 - ✓ A *short-term immersive experience* in outdoor education, transformative projects, leadership development, college-going activities, social justice or the arts;
 - ✓ Deep *focus on developing a specific skill* in drama, math, sports, music, technology, recovery, mental health, relationships, employment.
- ❑ Don't try to be all things to all kids. It is okay to do one or two things very well. *What does your target group need? What does your staff do best?*
- ❑ A great deal of attention has been given to achievement gaps. Not all summer programs need to focus on gains or remediation. If you must, enrichment should be high quality and far-afield from a school day experience.
- ❑ Many seemingly-unrelated summer experiences can have a very positive impact on school readiness, habits for academic success or graduation. Experiences might include quality mentoring or positive life messaging, building confidence and self-esteem, discovering new interests or exploring new ideas, practicing perseverance, developing healthy eating and sleeping habits or a good work ethic, serving others, even planting the seed of an attainable dream.

#3: LENGTH OF PROGRAM DAY

Choosing the right length of day can be tricky. This decision impacts your budget, staffing plan, and the choice parents may make.

Your program emphasis will guide how much time is needed to accomplish your plans. As an enhancement program, other camps may want you only in the mornings or they may only do off-site activities in the afternoon. If your program is designed around the outdoors, hot afternoons aren't the best time to take children on hikes.

Parents may need a full workday. Or not. A handful of youth may need early care, ten more may need late care, but 75 need care 9:30-3:30. Without an incentive, teens may not show up at 8:30, but might participate noon to 5:30. Evening or weekend hours may work best for your idea.

Program hours impact budgets. Be honest about the funds you can raise and your staff capacity. You may not be able to offer before/after care. In fact, a longer day may not be necessary given your emphasis.

- ❑ Will your program support daytime-working parents? This can affect hours, especially if parents work early shifts.
- ❑ The longer your day, the more expensive it may be to staff. *If many parents work full-time, can you extend the day with a skeletal crew for early and late hours?*
 - ✓ Many programs hire highly qualified staff to run key activities, but younger teens, inexperienced adults or retired volunteers for early and after care. Other programs divide 11-hour days into two overlapping shifts.
 - ✓ If you're off-site in afternoons, these might be partially supervised by off-site staff to ensure ratios, allowing most of yours to leave.
- ❑ Another local group can provide before and after care. Transport your youth. Or, share the cost of before and after care with a nearby group.
- ❑ A longer day impacts the food budget and director's time. *Is it realistic to expect your director to work five, 12-hour shifts each week, plus use evenings to prepare?*

#4: PARTICIPANT AGES

A common error: A team decides on a STEM career exploration or college readiness emphasis - perfect for teens when creatively and well-executed. To accommodate siblings, the camp lowers enrollment to age 5. Most registrations? Ages 5-8. Another team creates a cool community service camp requiring complex thinking and large blocks of youth-led planning time - perfect for ages 11-14. Instead, half the campers are ages 7-9 who aren't developmentally ready for long planning sessions and complex thinking. Neither program is likely to succeed.

With an eye on the budget, set limits in each age group or create an affordable staffing back-up. If you open your program to a wide age range, but do not balance these numbers when parents begin to register, you will have to scramble when 80% are ages 5-7, 18% are ages 8-9 and 2% are ages 11-15.

Before finalizing your framework, walk through your ages. *Is the plan realistic for each age? Will you need to adapt? Do you want to?*

- ❑ If you serve multiple age groups, you need adequate break out space to divide for activities and physical games. Common age groups include 4-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-13, 14-15, 16+. Some mixed age groups work nicely with planned activities. Some designs need mixed ages.
- ❑ If you serve a wide age range, the majority will likely be younger, not older. Many parents leave older children and teens home, sending their youngest to summer programs. This can dramatically impact plans. Even if you say, "ages 6-16," most will likely be young.
- ❑ Age impacts staffing. Certain activities require more staff regardless of age. Younger ages demand more staff. Use floaters or volunteers during activities or with ages that require low staff: participant ratios.

- ❑ Indianapolis offers far fewer high-quality programs for older youth. To successfully serve middle or high school teens, create a strong program that attracts and retains them.
 - ✓ Teens often have a choice about coming to your program. You must consistently offer something fun, engaging and age appropriate. And have cool staff. Once you lose them, it's hard to get them back!
 - ✓ It is common to invite teens into a program whose emphasis is clearly build around young children. Parents may require a teen to attend with siblings, but the teen feels like an after-thought. And staff are miserable. This never works.
 - ✓ If you want them present, but don't have a great program for them, transport teens to great offerings elsewhere and hire one staff to stay with them. Or create meaningful, in-house leadership opportunities. Write a recommendation letter at the end of summer:
 - *How can teens be active, positive role models or assist with younger children, such as reading to them or leading sports activities? Young children respond well to teens! Let teens come up with ideas. Treat them like equals.*
 - *What incentives can you provide for attendance and leadership?*
 - *What mentoring and training do they need to help you in your program? What can they do - that is meaningful?*



#5: START AND END DATES

Pay attention to school calendars. *Where do the youth you hope to attract attend school? Not just public, but charter and private? Does your program emphasis work once you accommodate all these calendars? Is there only a 4-week overlap, but you've designed a 6-week program? Will it work better to target kids from one school system or school? Set dates based on those calendars.*

If you target a smaller area, you may have fewer calendars with which to contend. Some summer programs work with 10-20 different school calendar. This dramatically impacts attendance and activities.

- ❑ *How will school dismissal and start dates impact your framework?*
- ❑ *Remember summer school. Will many of the youth you want to serve attend summer school? If so, should you condense your program weeks? Can you work with schools to recruit their morning summer learners and make your program afternoon-only? You may adjust activities and staff accordingly by moving the bulk of both to a few key weeks. You may change your emphasis, program design or expectations.*
- ❑ Number of program weeks dramatically impact a program budget. *A budget for 9 weeks differs greatly from 5 weeks. Will your working parents need your program all summer? Can you raise enough funds to cover 8 weeks? If 50% of your campers go on vacation in July, can you keep your doors open?*
- ❑ *If 11 weeks is unrealistic or only a fraction of youth are likely to use the program all summer, maybe another group in the area can provide care on either end of your program dates. Can you transport them in early and late summer?*
- ❑ If you commit to set weeks and parents rely on those promoted dates, raise the necessary funds. Programs shortened by budget shortfalls can create major problems for working parents. If you do not raise the funds, help parents find alternatives.
- ❑ *If your program is only a few weeks, help parents connect with other opportunities so they are covered all summer.*

THE LAST WORD: REVIEW PLANS WITH STAFF

Quite often, the person writing and signing the proposal is not the person supervising the program. The proposal developer might be administrative staff, a fundraiser or an executive director. Then, the agency hires a summer program director in March. The agency provides a broad program overview but does not share the actual funded proposal with the summer director.

Many times, the summer director does not share the funded proposal with direct service staff. Evaluators often encounter summer staff who are unfamiliar with what the program specifically promised to provide. When all staff are clear on goals, outcomes and activities, they are more likely to ensure that the program rolls out as envisioned.

#6: PROGRAM SITE

Choose a program site based on your budget, access to your target population and the kinds of experiences you hope to provide. A free site is great. But it makes a terrible summer if it does not work for you! Ideas? Share space with other summer programs. Use social service centers, park facilities or public housing community centers. Schools and worship communities often open their doors, as do commercial buildings and campuses.

Common Error: Assuming a program space has been secured or arrangements were finalized only to find, weeks before opening day, that you are without or they weren't prepared. Stay in contact!

- ❑ *Is the site well-suited for reaching your target? Is it convenient? Would it be more budget-friendly to find a site near a bus line or within walking distance to outings or a summer lunch site?*
- ❑ *Is it well-suited for all ages you are serving? Does it work for your full range of activities?*
- ❑ *Do you have permission to use this site for this purpose?*
- ❑ *If you have a drop-in program, are you comfortable with the space being offered to you? Do you need to set parameters?*
- ❑ *Does it offer good break-out space to separate by age group or activity? If you have computer activities, do you have access to the tech center?*
- ❑ *Does the space work for meals and snacks? Do you need a state-certified kitchen or just a very clean kitchenette? Are you allowed to use it?*
- ❑ *Will you share the space with other programs? Can you barter?*
- ❑ *Are you expected to pay a fee or hold additional liability coverage?*
- ❑ *If you are not using your own space, have you clarified rules and expectations? Are you comfortable with them?*
- ❑ A written agreement should describe the space you may access, rules for use, fees and any potential charges for accidents.
- ❑ **The site must be safe.** *Is it free of hazards like outdated electrical systems, broken windows, dangerous playground equipment? Are all hallways and stairs in good repair? Do stairs have handrails?*
 - ✓ *Is there adequate ventilation? How will kids stay cool?*
 - ✓ *Are there adequate exits for an emergency evacuation? Staff should be aware of exit options. There should be multiple options.*
 - ✓ *Is entry and exit controlled and locked? Schools, churches and parks are great locations, but can you keep track of your children? Are visitors monitored?*
 - ✓ *Kids of every age need physical activity and fresh air! Is there lots of room for moving around? Is there large green space on-site or across the street? Is there room for wiggle breaks?*
 - ✓ *All staff should have access to first aid supplies and emergency contact numbers, including while off-site or outdoors.*
 - ✓ *Is there always an adult on-site trained in First Aid, choking recovery and CPR? Do all staff know which kids have life-threatening allergies? Health supplies should always be nearby.*
- ❑ If your existing site doesn't make the grade, consider moving for summer or find volunteer groups willing to update your facility or grounds. Many faith-based communities, social clubs, and school groups like this kind of project. Talk to nearby facilities. Others are often willing to let youth use their grounds for short periods of time.
- ❑ If your program is largely outdoors, have an indoor plan, both for emergency weather conditions and for ongoing weather conditions that greatly impact program plans.

GETTING INTO DETAILS: *Planning Your Program Days*



From a great framework, you can build a great program. This section provides tips around **four basics of high-quality summer programs**: 1) *starting with the building blocks* of positive youth development and excellence; 2) *covering basics*, like food, safety and recruitment; 3) being *intentional and purposeful* with the “what” and “how;” and 4) *including fun learning and exploration* experiences every day!

#1 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT and EXCELLENCE

When designing your experience, check everything (including facilities, communication, and staffing) against the latest thinking on what best helps positive youth development. Below are **three resources** we strongly urge you to review before further developing your program idea:

- ❑ Consult the [Indiana Afterschool Standards](#). These research-based standards, developed by the *Indiana Afterschool Network (IAN)*, are designed to ensure quality in all youth development programs. The *Standards* cover the following areas: *Human Relationships, Indoor Environment, Outdoor Environment, Programming and Activities, Administration, and Safety, Health and Nutrition*. Compare this great checklist against your own framework.
- ❑ If you’re unfamiliar with it, The [Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets](#) are the backbone of good youth programming. These assets are described in detail by age group (and also in Spanish.). Don’t try to be all things but do be thoughtful in your approach. Integrate as many assets as you are able and avoid undermining asset development through your design or camp culture.
- ❑ Use the [Summer Youth Program Fund Self-Assessment Guide](#) to plan a successful summer program. It was created from the IAN after-school standards.

Many previous SYPF grantees offer high-quality, deeply engaging experiences for youth of all ages. Some of these experiences are uniquely designed around best practices. Others mimic existing national models. Get to know your peers. Discover other excellent models for summer by visiting the [National Summer Learning Association \(NSLA\)](#). Attend either IAN’s or NSLA’s annual conference. Many websites showcase great models of all types but these are all good places to start.

#2 Safety, Meals, Recruitment

Optimal Camper Safety

Follow these basic rules. Unfortunately, it is also wise to review procedures for unimaginable circumstances:

- ❑ Youth check in and out when they enter and leave the program. Ideally, guardians or caretakers do this.
- ❑ Buildings and grounds should be safe. (See above)
- ❑ All staff have first aid training. At least one is trained in CPR and on-site at all times. Train staff on off-site emergency procedures
- ❑ Keep parent-signed emergency medical releases on-site. Assign one staff and one back-up to collect this file in an emergency evacuation.
- ❑ All staff and volunteers know medical conditions of every youth, including medications, concerns and mental health.
- ❑ As an enhancement program at a program site, make sure your program partner has these releases and medical forms on file. Know any medical issues ahead of time.
- ❑ Keep a separate and secure file of medical forms, releases and emergency phone numbers for field trips. Make sure you have files whenever you are off-site!
- ❑ Have clear, written rules re staff/camper conduct. This includes conversation quality, discipline, sharing personal or contact information, communicating outside program hours, touching, being alone, transporting, and photography or “check-ins” sent to social media. Staff should indicate understanding of these rules and consequences.
- ❑ Review program safety rules with all youth. Youth are good at making sure staff follow the rules!

Transporting children

Transportation can be the most expensive line item in a budget. This is why programs use drop-in programs and take outings within walking or biking distance. To further reduce costs, some maintain their own fleet instead of renting. Others borrow vans and drivers from churches or share vehicles with other nearby programs, collectively paying for a transportation service that supports multiple nearby programs.

*Combine transport with building life-skills! Use **IndyGo!** To save even more money, buy **Summer Youth or College Passes.** IndyGo stops in front of most parks, major tourist attractions and museums, businesses, healthcare providers, the Central library and area shopping centers. It even heads to the Airport. *Tip for anxious staff? IndyGo's Outreach team can bring a bus to your program and teach everyone how to ride – including staff. For free.**

It would be great for youth to use their summer bus passes in evenings on weekends, especially teens who work or volunteer. But, you might hold all passes so each child has it during program hours.

We do not recommend asking staff, parents or volunteers to drive youth in personal vehicles, even when participants are middle or high school teens. Unless they have a CDL, it is never recommended that teens or university students drive any vehicle!

Transportation reminders:

- ❑ EACH CAMPER MUST HAVE A SEATBELT!
- ❑ Vans designed for 15 passengers should not hold 15+ children + a driver. While inconvenient for staff, this is never acceptable.
- ❑ All drivers, even volunteers, should have liability insurance.
- ❑ Parents should know when their children are being transported, exactly where they are headed and by what mode.
- ❑ All vehicles should be in good repair and safe.
- ❑ The driver should have a commercial van license.
- ❑ Drivers should be experienced. Drivers who have driven only a few years or who do not own a car may not be experienced enough.
- ❑ Drivers and passengers should follow expected behavior, even on IndyGo.

Parent permission

Tell parents about every field trip (location, expected time of departure/return, how to contact staff during, any requirements or costs associated with the visit.) Obtain signed permission slips during sign-out before each trip. Have a tablet? Ask for electronic signatures. No child should attend a field trip without permission.

Getting written permission can be a challenge. You might ask parents to sign a detailed permission slip at program registration. It would list every special program, plus the mode of transportation for any off-site trips. Give a second copy to the parent. Then, send a reminder and post upcoming programs, maybe even through a weekly or camp newsletter.

Meals and Snacks

Meals and snack can hit a budget hard. To avoid these costs, some programs end before or start after lunch. Other ask youth to bring their own snack or lunch. (This can be very challenging to manage without calling attention to youth who brings nothing or very little.)

The healthiest option is make both in-house. Sometimes, this is more expensive than buying bulk pre-packaged items, sometimes less. It might require use of a licensed kitchen. Extend learning and build life skills by incorporating food prep as an activity. Invite families to join you at day's end. Get help from partner organizations, companies or volunteers that have a licensed kitchen. They can prepare food or deliver leftovers.

Offer free breakfast, lunch and snacks through the Summer Food Service program. The SYPF website describes the [Summer Food Service Program](#). Greater detail can be found through the [Indiana Department of Education](#).

Overwhelmed with how to affordably manage food? Keep the following in mind:

- ❑ IndyParks will deliver box lunches. Its contact information is available in the Summer Food service Program document on the SYPF website.
- ❑ Some local parks and area schools serve as free meal program sites. Your program can eat lunch here. If your program is within walking or biking distance, youth receive an added health benefit!
- ❑ Any other summer programs near you? Share meal preparation or purchasing costs. Hire a cook to make meals for both sites. Look into hiring *Indy's Kitchen* to prepare simple, at-home-style lunches or snacks.
- ❑ Get creative! Reach out to groups around you – *IvyTech* or other culinary programs, *Gleaners*, *Second Helpings*, *Green Bean Delivery*, restaurants, universities, grocery stores or big box stores. Even service clubs might help.
- ❑ Commit to healthy meals and snacks even if others are donating them. That means low-fat, sugar and sodium, water instead of juice, fresh food when possible.
- ❑ Avoid soft drinks. Make sugary snacks a rare treat. Ask staff to role model during program hours.
- ❑ If children bring lunch, provide a safe and cool place for storing.
- ❑ Have clear policies about food handling, prep, storage, and clean-up.
- ❑ Staff and youth must wash hands. Keep a clean kitchen and kitchen tools. Contact the State Board of Health for guidelines.

Recruiting Youth

Here is the most common assumption of new programs: *Kids and their parents will flock to our great idea.* This is not true. Even the best model requires the heavy lifting of recruitment.

What happens when you miss your target? Programs designed for 100 typically don't work with 25 kids. Partners back out. Activities change. Trips are canceled. Staff are fired because program fee income is too low. **Consider these 20 recruitment tips:**

- ❑ Dedicate a lot of time to recruitment. Recruit early and assertively.
- ❑ By early April, distribute fliers to all schools, worship centers, neighborhood groups and local businesses. Ask for their help in promotion.
- ❑ Is your program free? Speak to TANF, SNAP or WorkOne offices, refugee services, housing communities, [IndyReads](#) and schools like [EXCEL Center](#) and [DORS](#).

- ❑ Offer savings to employees at nearby workplaces.
- ❑ Widely and repeatedly share scholarship info. (Most parents won't ask!) Send reminders through June.
- ❑ Connect with camp fairs and camp directories.
- ❑ Write short blurbs for neighborhood newsletters.
- ❑ Follow up with families you know.
- ❑ Ask board members to recruit through their own networks.
- ❑ Re-connect with families you have served before.
- ❑ Ask past and current participants to recruit friends, neighbors, classmates. Offer incentives!
- ❑ Encourage early registration. Early-bird savings, sibling savings, bring-a friend bonuses, pre-pay savings or repeat-camper savings can help.
- ❑ Recruit all summer. Offer new savings to families that stay the entire summer or bring someone in after the program begins.
- ❑ Reach out to other programs. Find groups that serve your target population. Invite them to send their youth to your program.
- ❑ Recruit through social media, bloggers, Twitter accounts, Instagram, LinkedIn. Ask friends to re-post on Facebook. Post it on your website so key words pop up in a Google search.
- ❑ Half-day or enhancement program? Recruit through other short-day programs.
- ❑ Send info to groups like Center for Leadership Development, Big Brothers Big Sisters, The Villages of Indiana.
- ❑ Trust that families are trying to find you. Make it easy. Banner? Yard signs?
- ❑ Tell other summer programs so they can make a referral. Think of this as *Business-to-Business Marketing*.
- ❑ Post in the [Indiana Afterschool Network](#) database, MCCOY Activity Directory or ACA database.

FILLING IN YOUR PROGRAM'S "WHAT" and "HOW" WITH INTENTIONALITY and PURPOSE (#3)

Your program is unique. However, most tips below apply to most programs. Consider them as you finalize your framework:

- ❑ Plan for family vacations or shared childcare between homes. Both can play havoc on program design, especially in July.
- ❑ Include age-appropriate activities for EVERY age group you serve. Many proposals focus on a core age group, putting little thought in the others. Youth see this. Be clear what each group will do all day, all week or you won't be prepared when doors open. Imagine it from every age!
- ❑ Walk through your program hour-by-hour and day-by-day, from a staff and child perspective. Fill your schedule with a good mix of activities. Create a good flow. Include short quiet breaks for everyone, including staff, to re-group.
- ❑ Invite youth to truly help plan or give feedback to your schedule.
- ❑ Include varied, interesting activities and give children choices whenever possible. Think like a child!
- ❑ Including academic support? Does it feel or look like school? Use FUN enrichment activities. Explore learning styles. Develop a love of learning.
- ❑ If transportation, space or expense limits you, create fair procedures so every camper gets a chance to do the most popular activities.
- ❑ Do not expect youth to stay focused for too long without a break. For most youth, 30-45 minutes seems ideal.
- ❑ Offer plenty of physical activity, time in nature, brief wiggle time and fun mental breaks.
- ❑ Have back-up plans for cancellations, miscommunications and delays, especially weather-related.
- ❑ Have CREATIVE leadership and employment activities for older youth. *Are you helping them stretch their potential? Do they like them? Are they bored? Are you intentionally and visibly building leadership skills? How high is your bar? What are your assumptions about middle school or teen capability?*
- ❑ Use meaningful rewards for positive behavior and risk-taking. Remember you're building life skills.
- ❑ Use field trips to expose youth to new people, places and activities. Talk about them. Avoid repeats from last year. If the budget is tight, invite groups in or co-sponsor a special activity with another summer program.

#4 FUN SUMMER LEARNING and EXPLORATION

Under this heading, find tips, plus community and online resources to help. Use them to help kids tap into their own joy of learning. These lists might give you a great idea or inspire a better one. Young people you hope to serve will have great ideas, too!

*Great summer programs don't have to include academics. But, if they do, it should be fun and engaging! This is especially important when working with kids for whom academic study – or school – is challenging or feels hopeless. **Learning is Life-long.** Kids whose curiosity is nurtured, who ask questions, who take healthy risks and who learn new things become adults who do the same.*

- ❑ **Schools and teachers are limited by time, budgets and conflicting priorities.** Summer is a perfect time to enhance learning, especially with non-traditional approaches that are rarely possible during a school day. Summer programs excel at enrichment. (Most teachers love to creatively explore themes and learning styles over summer. Hire them!)
- ❑ **There are endless ways to design a joyful, interesting, engaging program that *also* builds academic skills.** Turn a creative or physical activity into a learning experience that helps prepare youth for next school year. Ask reflective questions. Explore uncomfortable “edges” with kids. Ask them to compare experiences. Let *students* design activities. Teach kids how to build a website.
- ❑ **Use arts programs and music lessons to improve academic skills and school readiness.** Connect students to a broad range of immersive arts experiences.
- ❑ **Leadership and community service help focus camper attention, build confidence, teach discipline and responsibility, and open eyes to a wider world.** Done well, they can also directly build academic and critical thinking skills. If you incorporate either, make sure they are substantive and intentional.
- ❑ **Many projects or outdoor adventures offer student practice in *organizing, grit, problem-solving, team work, creative thinking, writing, speaking, research or time management.*** Sneak this skill-building in. They are key to school success.
- ❑ Activities that **help kids eat healthier, improve fitness habits or intentionally reduce stress *also* improve learning and mental health. Good mental health helps learning.**

Finally, remember these general “joyful” summer learning tips:

- ✓ Lean on high-quality community resources or partnerships to enhance the program AND ease the budget. Some programs may be more successful and meaningful when they turn outward for content, using in-house skills to build relationships with youth. Or, a connection with an exciting entity in the larger community may offer your youth something fantastic while helping THAT entity reach a goal of its own.
- ✓ Before finalizing an idea, do the *IMAGINE IF* exercise. *Imagine* if you could snag a specific partner. *Imagine* various iterations of your idea. *Imagine* what it would take (money aside) to move the idea from good to great.
- ✓ If “worksheets” or “desk time” are on the schedule, hit pause. Try again.

Joy in place and ready to go? Check your plan against these 9 Tips:

- ❑ Use a wide range of age-appropriate learning activities to transmit a specific skill. *Not sure which skills to address?* Start with [Indiana Academic Standards](#).
- ❑ Set appropriate learning objectives for each child.
- ❑ Use high-quality, hands-on, interactive learning activities.
- ❑ Lead learning activities in segments that match student ages and attention spans. Children should not be doing school-like academic activities for several hours. With immersive activities, a few hours will pass quickly. *Does your activity sound fun to YOU?*
- ❑ Use space that promotes creative thinking and expression. It should not be set up like a traditional classroom.
- ❑ Change up your approaches to help youth learn skills in different ways.
- ❑ Using online tools? Expect staff to actively engage with students, not monitor from the sidelines. Great online tools like *VOYAGER MATH* allow learners to grow at their own pace through their own learning style. Watch the amount of time students spend on it.
- ❑ Canvas board members, parents, neighbors for special hobbies and interests. Find volunteer yoga instructors, nail technicians, bird house builders and gardeners. Manage risk. Use good safety policies. Ensure high quality.
- ❑ Invite local university or graduate school students to design and lead activities for you, on-or-off-site. These students are hungry to set their knowledge!

Any nearby companies or programs that might like to offer a cool learning experience

OR would pay for your youth to attend a special program?

In the Resources section, find tips for creating a positive experience with other organizations!

Still not sure? An online search will net hundreds of well-tested models to use. Here are 5 Resources to check out:

- ❑ [The Marian University Summer Learning Institute](#) builds capacity in out-of-school programs through *teacher training, research-based strategies that improve student learning and curriculum for discovery-oriented lessons that are practical and grounded in theory*. The Institute leads hands-on workshops to SYPF-funded program staff and can assist summer programs with pre-and-post student assessments. Contact Dr. Judy Bardonner at jbardonner@marian.edu
- ❑ Visit the [National Summer Learning Association](#) website to find a list of key elements of successful summer learning programs, best practices, publications and resources. The website is full of great ideas and models to replicate. NSLA offers an annual conference where programs showcase their methods and you can buy “*programs or training-in-a-kit*.”
- ❑ Call **local museums or resource centers**. They can help design themed weeks that incorporate their resource or simply use their resources more creatively.
- ❑ Try **CURRICULUM MAPPING**. This concept was successfully piloted with SYPF grantees and works well for summer programs. It helps staff think through activities, look for synergies and design *fewer, richer* activities.
- ❑ **Train staff on a program model or technique** at little to no cost, especially if you join forces with other summer programs to pay for the training. One good example is The Department of Natural Resources’ *Project Learning Tree* or *Project WET*. Another is WFYI’s *Scratch, Ruff* or other curriculum.

On the next pages are resources that enhance school readiness or academic skills. They include drop-in programs or toolkits, web-based tools and resources, field trips and a sample of camps for some or all of your youth.

Drop-In Programs and Ready-Made Resources

*Drop-in programs are offered through other groups or businesses. They can be pre-packaged or customized. They may have limited capacity. Due to high summer demand, you may need to schedule months in advance. They may be free, low-cost or fairly expensive. Good relationships matter. To ensure the best experience, read the [Resources](#) section of this Guide. The [SYPF website resource page](#) includes a list of SYPF-funded *enhancement programs*.*

[America Reads America Counts](#) is managed through IUPUI's Center for Service and Learning. Students tutor one-on-one at your program site. (*This website also outlines how to connect with over 40,000 volunteers, staff and faculty on the IUPUI campus.*)

[American Red Cross](#) offers service projects and opportunities to raise money, as well as classes for young people. It has additional curriculum.

[Art Reach / Indianapolis Art Center](#) provides arts education programs around the city, particularly for youth in underserved areas.

[Art with a Heart](#) offers customized arts education experiences that include both instructors and materials.

[Arts for Learning](#) can connect you to local musicians, visual artists, dancers, thespians, storytellers and more. It can create a customized camp or help you develop your own arts education ideas. Share costs for a special artist with other programs.

[BOKS](#) offers four free, 12-week fitness curriculum for all ages. They also have a "short burst" curriculum to get the wiggles out.

[Camp Invention](#) is backed by the *National Inventors Hall of Fame*. It has a customized PreK-12 STEM camp. It focuses on creative, real problem-solving and teamwork. It offers a counselor-in-training role for grades 7-12. Include the cost in weekly fees, fundraise or underwrite.

[Girls Incorporated](#) leads workshops for girls ages 6-18. Topics center around *Strong, Healthy Relationships, Smart College and Career Planning or Bold, Empowered Girls*.

[Girl Scouts of Central Indiana](#) can organize a troop, provide STEM and other small group activities, offer curriculum. Send girls to day camp on Indy's Westside or to residential camp. Older girls can be day camp volunteers.

[Indiana Humanities](#) offers free books and discussion guides for youth and teen book club through *Novel Conversations*.

[Indiana Department of Natural Resources](#) has *Go Fishin', Project WET, Project Wild, Project Learning Tree* teacher training and programs

[Indiana Repertory Theatre](#) offers a playwriting opportunity to Grades 6-12. If you commit to 5 youth submissions to its fall YPiP contest, IRT will provide a free artist visit. IRT can bring engaging programs aligned with state academic standards for a maximum group of 30, grades 3-12. Topics include writing, critical thinking, theatre arts, Shakespeare.

[Indianapolis Algebra Project](#) comes to your door. IAP trains and supervises Indianapolis area high school students to lead customized math literacy activities that connect to personal learning styles and individualized assessments. IAP can also train your own teens or staff.

[IUPUI Center for Earth and Environmental Science](#) explores and restores ecosystems in schoolyards and natural areas. It has an Environmental Science Education Trailer and curriculum for grades 5-12 in hands-on science education. It can customize learning.

[IUPUI School of Engineering and Technology](#) includes 14 websites for staff to explore topics and engaging activities. It organizes weeklong camps as well as other activities. Contact to explore ideas.

[Junior Achievement](#) offers engaging financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship lessons at your site or through interactive experiences. It also offers three online tools to use with youth.

[Keep Indianapolis Beautiful](#) can help support youth-led neighborhood service projects or efforts like an Adopt-A-Block program, planting 20 trees in your neighborhood, Graffiti-Free Indy or creating a grant-supported Pocket Park in a vacant lot near you. Your youth can sign-up online for existing KIB projects around the city. Your program may qualify as a Kids Club site.

[LearnMore Indiana](#) offers specific tools to K-12 students that help prepare for college and

career. Staff can help you: 1) create 21st Century Scholar sign-up campaign during summer, and 2) integrate meaningful and fun college-readiness activities in your summer program.

[Mad Science](#) can provide one-hour STEM activities for youth grades K-6, aligned with national and state standards. They can create a week-long summer camp with a minimum of 10 youth, provide teacher resource kits for brief workshops or lead special events for large groups. (Great for program partners with limited funds!)

[Math Pentathlon](#) is famous for competitive math contests, but summer is a great time to create a math club! With their tools, programs can engage youth in small groups working on problem-solving skills and strategizing possibilities using manipulatives and visuals

[Net Literacy](#) was the dream of a local middle school student who is now a *Top 10 Youth Changing the World*. Internationally recognized, this service group helps bridge the digital divide. Teens have: 1) re-built computers and set up labs at local nonprofits and housing communities, 2) trained folks on how to use computers and safely surf the Web, 3) volunteered with local senior programs to teach computers to seniors, 4) built websites and 4) implemented a financial literacy program designed by teens for peers that includes hundreds of games and videos.

[Naptown Chickens](#) is your go-to place to create a chicken coop at your program site, at student homes or let kids explore the world of urban farming.

[Nina Mason Pulliam Ecolab](#) offers a 55-acre living laboratory on the campus of Marian University. In addition to self-exploration, attend workshops and programs led by their professionals. The EcoLab can come to you or a nearby green space with workshops, interactive assemblies, even hands-on science festivals. Your youth can also attend their own one-week science camps.

[Purdue-Marion County Extension](#) can help create a 4-H club, Junior Master Gardener program, robotics club. Access enrichment programs and *learn-by-doing* curriculum with such fun topics as *Professor Popcorn*, *Now You're Cookin'*, *Nutrition on a Bookshelf*.

[Purdue University](#) offers opportunities to youth through various departments – from women and minorities in engineering to science outreach opportunities like ScienceScape through Women in Physics, and sports camps. Purdue also offers P-12 activities like forensics, Legos and paleontology.

[Ruth Lilly Health Education Center](#) offers science-based health information for all ages.

[Safe Sitter](#) can train your boys and girls on basic first aid and minor emergency care, youth development, child care and creating a successful babysitting business.

[St. Florian Center](#) runs its own summer program and provides its older “cadets” (teens) to your program as tutors or academic help.

[Storytelling Arts of Indiana](#) brings storytellers to your program plus lesson plans and state-aligned resources that put the art and process of storytelling into your program. It links youth

and staff to online activities and other web-based materials. Send staff to a workshop. In return, you'll get 50 hands-on activities.

[Take Charge Today](#) provides 75 free personal finance lesson plans for grades 7-12 based on multiple intelligences and active learning theories. Provides training and conversation for those who want the latest tips. Created by faculty at the University of Arizona, it includes assessment tools, step-by-step instruction and integrated web/tablet use.

[The National Endowment for Financial Education](#) provides free, award-winning curriculum to help you prepare high school youth (grades 8-12) in personal finance skills that lead to independence. The kit includes assessment tools and is set up in six, 45-minute modules.

[Writers Center of Indiana](#) not only offers its own SYPF enrichment program, but it has a Memoir Project you can offer your own youth.

Still looking? Send youth to another camp for an hour, a day or a week – even overnight.

- ❑ Look on the SYPF website Resource page for the most current grantee list for ideas. Ask about reduced rates or opportunities to barter.
- ❑ Explore the [IndyParks Summer Fun Guide](#). Some activities are free, but IndyParks offers hundreds of classes from dance to art to self-defense to outdoor education. Explore the city with your kids!

Don't let your qualifying 7th-8th grade campers miss out on a free college education

Conduct a 21st Century Scholar Program sign-up next summer
Summer is a great time to connect with each family, especially before the June 30 deadline. Show your commitment!

Income-eligible students receive free tutoring, help finding jobs and a 4-year scholarship to any public Indiana college or university.
Learn more at www.scholars.in.gov.

Web-Based Summer Learning Resources

Every day, the Internet explodes with more resources. All websites listed here provide fun or multi-day lesson plans. Some provide very specific learning support. But, the best place to start is the [National Summer Learning Association!](#)

[America Saves](#) is a free, online tool that encourages older youth to make a pledge to save. It gives them tips for taking smart steps toward financial responsibility.

[ArtsEdge](#) is the Kennedy Center's free, digital resource center. Use 150+ lesson plans or explore 25+ themed kits that are fully integrated with music, audio and video. Connect *arts education to baseball, Harlem 1930s street games, the Arabian world, Mexican culture, learning about adjectives*. Sort resources by academic subject or age group. Use 50 "how-to" manuals (...*build teamwork on an art project, incorporate dance when you aren't a dancer, expose kids to a culture without it being cliché and shallow.*) The media library has 150+ audio stories, performance clips and games.

[BAM! Body and Mind](#) is an online destination created by the Centers for Disease Control. Kids ages 9-13 can learn about their bodies, stress, physical fitness, disease, safety, bullying and nutrition. Standards-based, BAM has games, quizzes and tons of interactive features, along with 20 engaging off-line group activities, handouts, and links to other sites for kids to explore.

[Bill Nye, The Science Guy](#) offers dozens of fun experiments.

[Crayola](#) offers hundreds of standards-based, arts-infused lesson plans and activities for PreK-grade 12, covering all academic areas.

[Common Sense Media](#) has free educator tools and brief videos to teach digital literacy and jumpstart conversations in K-12 about cyber-bullying, online purchasing, advertising, online violence, self-image reputation, consent and safety. CSM reviews apps, online games, books for teens and websites. It has tools to teach your families how to support this at home.

[Education World](#) includes 500,000 lesson plans and creative learning activities by age group. Don't click the "*worksheets*" tab but do click the teen discussion guide that goes with the 2013 teen autobiography, *I Am Malala*.

[Practical Money Skills](#) is for everyone, but it also has lesson plans and games for K-12 and special needs youth. One example is [Financial Football](#) (or soccer), a fast-paced game that tests user finance knowledge as they try to score goals. The game has modules and resources for staff to use.

[History In Your Pocket \(HIP\) Pocket Change](#) is an interactive website for kids interested in coins around the world, U.S. history or the U.S. Mint. The U.S. Mint has an online K-12 toolkit for educators that covers many subjects.

[Indiana Landmarks](#) offers a resource library full of history, walking tours of downtown locations, including the Catacombs, and field trips to historic sites.

[Money Skills 101](#) is an online, standards-aligned reality-based personal finance course with 37 modules for Grades 6-12 + young college students.

[National Geographic Kids](#) helps young explorers of the natural world.

[PBS](#) is a great resource for K-12 lesson plans, ideas and activities. Content includes *the art and science of growing food* and *cyber STEM learning*. [PBS Kids](#) is great for younger children. [PBS Kids Play](#) offers 100 interactive, PreK-K online games that teach 35 *school readiness skills!* Games are individualized and match with 15-minute in-person lesson plans. [WFYI](#) community engagement staff can support this AND have more quality curriculum and staff training opportunities.

[Scholastic](#) is your source for thousands of literacy-related activities like *restaurant critic* or *debate team*, writing prompts and opportunities for youth to submit *book reviews*, a *press club* and book clubs – all connecting kids of all ages with reading, writing and comprehension.

[Teaching Tolerance's](#) digital library includes a magazine of creative ideas covering 14 K-12 tolerance themes in all academic areas plus activities and curriculum kits. Ideas include lunch-time 'mixers' that help kids integrate.

[TeenInk](#) is a teen magazine and portal written by teens (13-19) for teens. Teens publish their own works of fiction, nonfiction and poetry. It includes a writer forum, a writing workshop. Teens can request feedback. They can submit photographs, visual art and self-produced videos.

[ReadThinkWrite](#) has dozens of informal, interesting literacy-based summer activities for K-12 that cross many subject areas. The site includes activities, projects, games, tools and how-to tips for staff.

[Visit Indiana](#) for unique ideas on exploring the surrounding area. Many spots are free or offer discounts. Check out your library for other creative ideas like one listed in *Off The Beaten Path: Indiana*.

[You Are Here](#) is a virtual mall created by the Federal Trade Commission where kids in grades 5-8 'learn to be smarter consumers' by exploring advertising, targeted marketing, business competition and laws, critical thinking, identity theft and scams. The mall visit is complemented by off-line activities your staff can lead.

Service Projects

Summer is a perfect time for youth to dig into a **meaningful, creative service project**. Designed well, it can be a deep learning experience that builds a love of caring. Several programs listed under *Summer Learning* could offer opportunities to serve. **Here are 8 Tips:**

- ❑ **Many local nonprofits welcome youth volunteers. Service through some of them will connect youth to brand-new cultures.** Some are more open if you have a perfect suggestion for service!
- ❑ Take ideas from the book "*52 Weeks*" by organizing a *different* volunteer opportunity each week of your program. Think creatively about local groups that might benefit from a service project.
- ❑ Look through the short set of "philanthropy-related" books on the SYPF website Resource page. Better yet, have youth serve through reading!
- ❑ Connect with [Youth Philanthropy Initiative of Indiana](#) to find resources for developing philanthropy in young minds. You can also buy conversations cards, take a quiz, use a 24-module philanthropy curriculum, and find age-based tips to grow lifelong philanthropists.
- ❑ Search Google for international and domestic service club formats. Four examples: **Kiwanis K-Kids/Key Clubs, United Nations Kids, Roots and Shoots, and Green Teams**.
- ❑ In Week 1, have youth asset map your area to discover nearby places of service, then let them work in food pantries, community gardens, police stations, fire houses, even local businesses.
- ❑ [Learning To Give](#) offers no excuses! With 1600+ K-12 lesson plans, teach *civic engagement, service and character* and connect youth to online links. A section for *youth workers and faith communities* lists best practices, web resources and themed activities that work well in nonprofit settings.
- ❑ Create a [Kids Care Club or Teen Service Club](#). [generationOn](#) provides tools, resources, newsletter, training, lesson plans and mini-grants to help build a spirit of philanthropy. It even has a Disney Park reward program for family volunteering!

- ❑ **Organize a “pop-up” experience** that connects youth to neighbors in play or a shared experience like a mural, a chalk “fill-in-the blank” wall, trashcan painting, game night, public dance, unusual sidewalk games. *Growing a garden? Grow flower seedlings and distribute them to infirmed neighbors.*

Build a culture of service outside program hours.
Fundraising events often welcome youth volunteers. So does IndyHumane. A few other ideas for youth under age 18:

- ❑ **Teen Court** may be a great fit if you encourage individual service or suggest service as a resume-builder. Local teens are trained and serve as jurors and advocates in this diversion court.
- ❑ **Wishard VolunTEEN Program** offers meaningful service and career exploration to teens ages 14-18.
- ❑ **IU and Methodist Hospitals** also provide a Summer of Service volunteer program for teens ages 14-17.
- ❑ **The Lord’s Pantry at Anna’s House** welcomes youth of all ages. In particular, Saturday mornings, Thursdays and for meals.
- ❑ **YouthPower Indiana** is a youth-led climate stewardship and civic leadership program. Staff mentor any age youth.

Field Trips

Take a look around the city. Everything is a potential field trip - opportunities for extended learning, reflection and curiosity-building. To make a better trip, separate them by age group or share a fieldtrip with another nearby group. Ask for a reduced fee or schedule on a “free admission” day. A number of organizations can design creative field trips – just ask. Here are three unusual spots you may not have considered:

- ❑ **FreeWheelin’ Bikes** where youth work on bikes, learn bike maintenance, learn to ride and go home with a helmet, lock and bike. Your kids might collect old bikes to donate or enjoy local bike trips organized by FreeWheelin’. Go one step further and help your youth raise money over summer to buy a gently-used bike from FreeWheelin’.
- ❑ **Felege Hiywot Urban Gardening Program** provides a half-day gardening camp but can also create a field trip for you. Felege Hiywot teaches gardening, nature awareness, environmental preservation, nutrition, recycling, compost and STEM.
- ❑ **Center for Leadership Development** provides self-discovery experiences that encourage minority youth to strengthen personal leadership, create high expectations of themselves and work toward college-going success. CLDs College Prep Institute is open to middle school and high school students, their parents and community organizations all year.

Good field trips build a sense of curiosity. Be creative with your ideas-build in a scavenger hunt with prizes! Some spots offer their own summer programs. Others may design a special activity for you or connect to your summer theme. Nearly every museum has interactive online resources, activities and engaging activity kits.

- ❑ All IndyParks-at Eagle Creek, kayak, crew or fish
- ❑ Arts Garden – free concerts
- ❑ Big Car’s Tube Factory
- ❑ Burmese American Community Institute
- ❑ Butler University’s Planetarium
- ❑ Butler University High Ropes-available for youth ages 12+ when open to public
- ❑ Children’s Museum of Indianapolis
- ❑ Conner Prairie
- ❑ Clowes Hall
- ❑ Crown Hill Cemetery - bike rides, picnic at Indy’s highest point
- ❑ Eiteljorg Museum - try southwestern fare!
- ❑ Exodus Refugee Center
- ❑ Tour various Farmer’s Markets
- ❑ Fountain Square duckpin bowling or swing dance lessons
- ❑ Branch library programs
- ❑ Geo-caching - locals can even help you design an adventure
- ❑ Historic Landmarks of Indiana building
- ❑ Horse farms or Therapeutic Riding Centers - Morning Dove, Agape
- ❑ Ice Skating
- ❑ Indiana Black Expo
- ❑ Indiana History Center
- ❑ Indiana Medical History Museum
- ❑ Indiana State Police Youth Education Center
- ❑ Indiana State Museum and other Sites
- ❑ Indiana State Parks-include Ft. Ben and outdoor educators
- ❑ Indiana Supreme Court and Indiana Statehouse - Court in the Classroom may be able to bring a judge to your program
- ❑ Indianapolis Zoo
- ❑ Newfield’s (IMA) + 100 Acres. Hike, bike or IndyGo!
- ❑ IndyParks Movies in the Park (at night)
- ❑ Interactive field trips to local businesses
- ❑ International cafes– try Peruvian, Cuban, Thai, Korean, Ethiopian
- ❑ Junior Civic Theatre’s annual youth production in June
- ❑ Local universities- cool activities with faculty or college students
- ❑ Marion County Fair
- ❑ Morris-Butler Home and Benjamin Harrison home have interactive history programs
- ❑ Morning movies at area theatres
- ❑ National Institute for Fitness and Sports
- ❑ NCAA Museum
- ❑ Neighborhoods youth have never visited
- ❑ Pogue’s Run Cooperative Grocery Store
- ❑ Any international grocery store
- ❑ Traders Point Creamery
- ❑ Trail Walks - Canal, Monon, Tow Path, Cultural Trail
- ❑ White Pine Wilderness Academy (survival skills, outdoor fitness, immersive education)

Take your group (or one age group) out of town for a day or overnight.

Camps may offer affordable options. Sometimes fees may be negotiated if you send staff or visit at the start or end of summer.

If that doesn’t work, find sponsors - folks love to support affordable overnight programs when asked! Teach financial literacy; let youth collectively raise all or a portion of their overnight fees.

Many faith-based groups, as well as Boy Scouts (Crossroads) and Girls Scouts, have retreat facilities with affordable public rates, even if only for a day or weekend.

- ❑ [Camptown](#) leads backpacking trips, day trips, service learning experiences and outdoor education. Youth read topo maps, build community, read a compass and learn planning. Staff are trained to work well with youth living with challenges.
- ❑ [Happy Hollow](#) is especially designed for urban youth ages 6-16.
- ❑ [Jameson Camp](#) is close to home. It offers many possibilities.
- ❑ [YMCA](#) has several residential camping programs in Central Indiana. All with scholarship applications.

RESOURCING YOUR SUMMER PROGRAM: *Human, Financial and Community*

HUMAN RESOURCES

Creative Sources for Summer Staff

A successful summer program relies on a high-quality and sufficient number of staff. Good news: 1) your budget size does not have to limit the quality of your staff or staff training; and 2) low budgets can surface fantastic ideas for building a great staff team and better program design.

No matter what: **Don't hire to fill a slot; hire those who are qualified.** To find them, cast a very wide net.

Use the networks of friends, program families, board members and other affiliations to spread the word. Use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media. Ask folks via email to forward postings to anyone they could recommend.

Try a few proactive steps some summer programs have taken with success:

- ❑ **Hire staff who are already *savvy youth development experts*.** *Who might already possess skills in working with your age groups or gender?*
 - ✓ School teachers and teaching assistants. Recruit directly in schools.
 - Look at public, charter and private schools.
 - *Too costly?* Create block schedules. A creative, part-time teacher can lead the block while mentoring staff. Staff learn age-group facilitation skills to use when teachers aren't present.
 - ✓ College students pursuing related degrees. Ask professors for recommendations. Look statewide. Remember IvyTech and Martin University. Seniors and grad students across the U.S. look for rich summer internships that showcase leadership.
 - ✓ Retired teachers or professionals with experience in your program area.
 - ✓ Religious youth leaders, counselors or coaches.
- ❑ Explore pools that are informed by your program ideas.
 - ✓ Organizations, hospitals or universities with staff who want to partner with community groups. A health care provider serving a particular population may offer a nurse or health educator to lead an essential part of your weekly program. University faculty may mentor students or offer their own time to create and lead curriculum.
 - ✓ Post at any university's internship, service learning or job placement office. Start locally, expand statewide or send notices nationally.
 - ✓ Recruit through Federal Work Study offices at any university. Hire summer students or hire a student for spring semester to help you set up your program. [IUPUI](#) has an additional option - you pay 25% of wages.
 - ✓ Hire high school students. Teens want resume-builders. They can make great aides, teaching assistants or mentors. Some grantees rely heavily on skilled teens as senior counselors, teachers, facilitators and staff supervisors. Ask for recommendations. Ask teen programs to recommend a former participant.
 - ✓ Share staff with other programs. One skilled staff whose time is split between two neighborhood summer programs may be superior to one full-time, poor candidate or an empty slot.
 - ✓ Post flyers in common places where young people work and congregate. Offer a more meaningful summer experience than typical jobs they seek!

- ❑ **Use skilled volunteers or adults willing to work for a small stipend in exchange for an excellent letter of recommendation or introduction.** Respect their time. Don't expect long days. But, many young adults, retired persons and underemployed adults are seeking meaningful opportunities. The right candidates may net strong competencies in areas that matter most to you.
 - ✓ Look online. [Volunteer Match](#) is one resource. If recruiting is new to you, many online support tools have recruitment ideas. Ask donors and board members to volunteer.
 - ✓ Explore [Americorp](#) or [Vista volunteers](#). Some agencies loan or share. With enough pre-planning, you can secure your own.
 - ✓ Surround one highly-skilled staff with reliable volunteers from groups that recruit their own volunteers. Some examples include [OASIS](#), [ReadUp](#) and young professional groups like **Indianapolis Ambassadors**, **YNPNindy**, **IndyHub**, or **Active 20-30 Club of Indianapolis**. Worship communities, civic groups and businesses often provide volunteers.
- ❑ **The best staff are often former staff and participants!** Offer former staff or volunteers an “early sign-on” bonus for coming back this summer. Offer sign-on bonuses to impressive former campers. Want to clone last year’s great staff? Offer recruitment bonuses to current and former staff for successful referrals to quality applicants they know.

Job training programs are under-explored as a staffing source. Many job training programs match candidates to positions and provide support to that match. These candidates might not fill key roles, but they could fill important, ancillary posts.

One example? Women who receive [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#) participate in a set of activities. This can include 8-20 hours of weekly volunteer work in local nonprofits (called CWEP.) Currently, this is true for SNAP and Medicaid, too. Neighbors or parents near your program might benefit from your willingness to be a site. They might help with office work, facility care or maintenance, before/after care, recruitment, logistics, meal help or as floaters and aides. Some may have professional skills. It may also support your program’s family goals.

Training + Professional Development Resources

Before you can train and supervise great staff, find the support you need to be a great trainer and model. [Nine ideas to try](#):

- ❑ *Insightful Executive Field Trips:* What local programs can you learn from before and during summer? Most welcome peer visits and love to share their “secrets to success” or problem-solve. Some offer year-round programs you can observe. *What can you adapt?* Gain fresh perspective. See your program through their eyes. You might imagine new scheduling or hit upon good training and mentoring ideas. Get a tip for balancing management tasks or last-minute challenges. *Not sure where to start?* A list of 2018 grantees is on the SYPF website.
- ❑ The [American Camp Association](#) is a fantastic resource, fully dedicated to summer. Not only can summer day programs become accredited, but you and your summer staff can access unlimited viewing of over 400 online training videos. ACA has online courses for both program directors and counselors. Access evaluation tools, a program improvement toolkit and a camp magazine full of tips for every element of program planning, staff support and implementation.
- ❑ [Indiana Afterschool Network](#) has a world-class list of standards you can trust when designing a high-quality summer experience. IAN has a list of training opportunities. You can join the [After School Coalition of Indianapolis](#) (includes summer!) At ACI gatherings, hear about best practices and resources. Find partners. Join the IAN email list to learn about grants.
- ❑ [Indiana Youth Institute](#) sends weekly emails re upcoming training, grants and new reports. It offers a wide array of trainings and webinars. IYI offers small grants to help with training cost and provides low-cost consultants. It has an excellent library with hundreds of books of program ideas and activities plus tools for staff training and supervision.

- ❑ The [Marion County Commission on Youth](#) organizes free SYPF training. Meet other youth service staff at provider council meetings, attend other workshops. Participate in a *Youth Program Quality Assessment and Improvement Process*. Several grantees have found YPQA helpful in improving program quality and staff competencies. You can post your summer program on MCCOY's Youth Directory App.
- ❑ Focus core staff training on building the *Five Core Competencies of Youth Development* or steer staff toward an Indiana Youth Worker Credential.
- ❑ [Indianapolis Peace Learning Center](#) is well-known for its youth programming, but it can lead executive and staff training on topics like communication, conflict resolution, healthy staff relations and effectively leading organizational change.
- ❑ The [Indianapolis Neighborhood Resource Center](#) can connect you with neighborhood organizations and grassroots leaders working to improve their neighborhoods through programs, collaboration and leadership development. Through INRC you can connect with workshops and others in your area.
- ❑ [United Way of Central Indiana Nonprofit Training Center](#) provides occasional executive training to any nonprofit organization in the community.

New to summer program management?
Here is a common scenario:

Strangers of different ages, communication styles, stress management skills, personalities and abilities come together a week or two before the program begins. They must quickly grasp schedules, activities and their own responsibilities. They work long hours for little pay under what may feel like organized daily chaos. As a team, they are expected to work well together, communicate well, manage conflict and quickly build a sense of community among a group of youth that neither the adults nor other youth know, while simultaneously working through program objectives. Change is constant, parents have questions, kids melt-down and activities may change at a rapid pace.

There is no such thing as too much training for staff, especially if new. From Day 1, staff need to be prepared. You need to be skilled at making adjustments and supporting continuous learning. *Strong organizational skills, patience, encouragement and a great sense of humor will help you build a strong team!*

The *American Camp Association*, *Indiana Afterschool Network* and the *Indiana Youth Institute* offer access to a full cadre of excellent staff training tools including pre-made sessions and web-based training modules for staff review. Send high school and college staff to the one-day SYF training MCCOY hosts. A Google search will net training outlines, including some on building youth worker competencies. Here are six other methods:

- ❑ *Did you hire passionate, hard-working, but inexperienced staff?* **Ask highly-regarded youth agencies or summer programs if your staff can participate** in some of their training. Or join forces and train staff together.
- ❑ *Have returning staff or more experienced facilitators?* **Pair a well-seasoned “expert” or “mentor” with younger staff** to stretch staff dollars while providing excellent on-the-job training.

- ❑ Don't think training ends when the program starts. **Carve out time each week (or day) to problem-solve, read and discuss articles, review webinars or teach one another strategies** for debriefing, leading activities, managing conflict or dealing with personal stress. Provide daily mentoring and positive feedback. Ask reflective questions. **This is training.**
- ❑ **Ask staff to teach their peers what they need to learn themselves.**
- ❑ Ask peer directors **to show you their staff training schedule.** If you are using junior counselors, ask to see details of this training and mentoring program.
- ❑ **Use other training resources:** *Not confident in training?* Ask other organizations to train your staff. Some examples:
 - ✓ [AYS](#) provides CPR and First Aid training to staff plus customized options.
 - ✓ [Adult and Child Center](#) sometimes helps camps think through ideas for improving common challenging camper behaviors. They might help you create simple strategies to incorporate when working with youth who have learning disabilities or neurological challenges.
 - ✓ [Purdue-Marion County Extension](#) can train on youth development topics.
 - ✓ SYF grantees may be willing to fold a staff into their training or provide support to your own training. Examples include *Girl Scouts, Girls Inc. Indianapolis Boys and Girls Clubs* or *Indianapolis Algebra Project*. The YMCA has several highly-skilled site directors who train dozens of their own summer staff each spring.

Is your program working to improve academic skills?

[Marion University's Summer Learning Institute](#) can train staff in how to do this well. To make gains real, SLI can work side-by-side with staff to practice customized, fun and engaging learning activities.

TRAINING TOPICS

Every staff and volunteer should know

organizational culture - child safety and managing behaviors, risk management, emergency preparations, logistics and staff expectations

Before the program begins, every staff should

*practice the schedule, facilitation and debriefing
role play behavioral management strategies
build trust and authentic team with other staff
create a personal toolkit of quick games and energizers*

Your topics will fit your own framework, program design and staffing plan. Below is a list of common ones. A review of IAN standards will net more ideas:

- ❑ Developing an engaging daily summer schedule with **structure, clear limits, and age-appropriate activities.** As a team, create a *curriculum map* that links goals with specific activities and specific changes you hope to create
 - ✓ *Age-group social, emotional and academic learning activities, that invite self-expression, meaningful participation and for campers to define themselves*
 - ✓ *Ideas for informally building reading, financial literacy and math skills in fun, effective ways*
 - ✓ *Incorporating college access and career exploration*
 - ✓ *How to explore new talents, skills, and experiences*
 - ✓ *How to incorporate fun messages and modeling about daily physical activity, good health and nutrition*
- ❑ Creating the culture you want
 - ✓ *How to create a welcoming space that includes all youth*
 - ✓ *Communicating with youth, partnering with parents*
 - ✓ *Caring, appropriate relationships between staff and campers*
 - ✓ *Discipline/problem-solving (staff to youth, youth-to-youth)*
 - ✓ *Summer safety – emergencies, transportation, meal prep*
 - ✓ *Understanding gender, personality, cultural and learning differences*
 - ✓ *Consistent and safe staff-to-camper ratios*

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Budget Development

A poorly-crafted budget wreaks havoc on a summer program. Keep the following in mind:

- ❑ Don't make vague guesses. Contact vendors for cost estimates.
- ❑ When calculating staff costs, include employer share of taxes and benefits like the cost of covering a day off.
- ❑ Income and expenses always match - \$15,000 of *in-kind* expenses means \$15,000 of *in-kind* income.
- ❑ **Everything in your budget is in your proposal. And vice versa.**
 - ✓ *Does your proposal mention stipends, materials, t-shirts, an event or five field trips?* Account of each in the budget as a cash or in-kind item.
 - ✓ *Does your proposal mention a \$100 program fee for 80% of your kids + 15 scholarships?* Show \$100x 45 children as program fee income. Show \$100x15 as scholarships being covered by some other source.
- ❑ **Every group manages in-kind gifts/costs differently.** Just be consistent in your proposal and budget. If some in-kind costs are listed, include all meaningful ones. If your parent agency lists your director as a cash expense, the underwritten cost of space is, too. Any borrowed staff is an in-kind expense/income. Free lunches? In-kind gift/expense.
- ❑ **Be realistic.** *Is your summer budget 80% of your annual budget? Does your fundraising plan show \$65,000 in cash gifts outside SYPF grants (assuming you receive 100% of that request)? If you have never raised \$10,000 before, is it likely you'll raise \$65,000? Can you rely on that \$25,000 in program fees if 80% of your children will pay on a sliding scale? If yes, great. If not, adjust.*
- ❑ **If, after drafting your budget, you question the feasibility of your program design, step back.** *Is this the best design? Can you grow into this design? Can a partner cover some costs, reducing your reliance on cash? Is there a safe, but creative way to staff? Can you create the same model using community partners for part of it? Use creative - but realistic -- thinking.*

A Note About SYPF Requests

Your grant request should not cover most of your budget. This raises questions about your ability to implement the program without receiving the full request. Take these tips to heart, whether a new or returning applicant:

- ❑ SYPF partners announce their average grant size and maximum percentage of request against program budgets. **If you continually request far more than either of these and annually report poor fundraising results, re-evaluate your budget. Make SYPF requests fall within guidelines.**
- ❑ **Before your SYPF proposal is due, submit other proposals and requests for funds.** Add these efforts to the SYPF budget page.
- ❑ Reviewers especially like to see commitments. Listing a source as "*requested funds*" is better than showing it as "*potential funds*." The latter does show some thought but does not necessarily build confidence in an applicant's capacity to raise cash.
- ❑ **Show diversity in your fundraising plan.** SYPF should not be the only *cash* source for the program outside program fees.
- ❑ Once the SYPF proposal is submitted, **start raising funds as if the grant request will be denied.** Grantees should never report staff or program changes because *they did not receive their full request from SYPF partners. It is your responsibility to raise all the funds you need.*

Help With Fundraising 101

The *American Camp Association, Indiana Youth Institute, Indianapolis Neighborhood Resource Center, United Way, Indianapolis Marion County Central Library* and many other groups offer tools, ideas and training on fundraising.

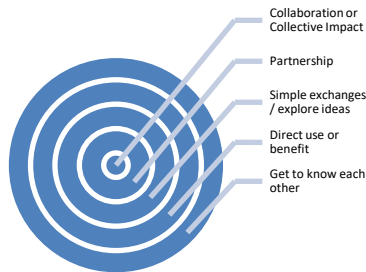
One tool is well-worth its subscription (\$39) - *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*. The *Grassroots Institute of Fundraising Training* is passionate about helping community-based groups. Its online repository offers hundreds of free tips, articles, webinars and forums.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Collaborations and Partnerships add value to programs

This *Guide* promotes the use of community partners and expertise. Both reduce expense and often improve program quality. Over time, many community resources have the potential to become meaningful partnerships.

Connecting with the community is like a series of concentric circles.



When networking, remember: everyone benefits from *making connections*, not just you. No one benefits from passing out a card and seeing who bites. Take time to learn about others, then give your card. Be curious. Make a friend. Follow up with an emailed idea for them.

The first step: *get to know others and let others get to know you*. Natural affinities and opportunities may emerge. Now or later. Information-sharing helps you do your work. Another group knows you exist.

One transactional connection that may result is *direct use*. A tangible, one-way service. IndyParks delivers free meals. You say yes to feed your youth. An arts program wants to reach youth in your area. You say yes because it meets your arts goal. Both cost little to nothing. These are clean, specific and limited relationships. Little conversation outside logistics.

You might proactively advance the relationship by *exploring simple ways to exchange with or support each other*. You might make referrals back and forth. You send a participant to their program. They send a volunteer to you. You connect with a third party that you introduce to this new “friend.”

Partnerships begin when two or more organizations start *planning together, innovating together, putting some of their own resources into a shared pot*. It might involve some risk. Partners perceive themselves as co-investors. They might not invest the same resources, skills or time. Communication is more complicated.

A collaborative relationship works toward a collective impact bigger than any one member could achieve. The group works together to impact a neighborhood, population or challenge. They might create something brand-new or a one system they all use. They all lead. Each takes more uncomfortable risks.

Each of these relationships can positively effect program, outcomes and budget. One is not better than another.

Here is what can happen in a good partnership:

- ❑ Brings unique skills or exposes youth to new experiences that go beyond your own expertise or budget.
- ❑ Open access to resources like staff, space, transportation, training or food. A new connection that dramatically improves an activity. Invitation for your youth to attend an inaccessible event. Access to pieces of their own summer program or your youth are invited to their special activity. Divided costs let you offer something you never could.
- ❑ Supports your inexperienced staff. Free use of compelling curriculum. Mentors your staff. Reduces planning time. Provide great advice.
- ❑ Non-traditional partner changes perspectives. Organizations that don't normally interface with youth see them as hungry to learn. Groups see youth as tremendous volunteers. Local business sees youth as an interested asset. Youth appreciate assets in the neighborhood and feel more connected to their community.

Whether you want a few special partners to lead core content or you simply need to supplement your budget through a handful of community resources, remember the following:

- ❑ Don't delay – good enhancement programs fill up quickly.
- ❑ In your proposal, don't list a partner as "potential" if they need to be the cornerstone of your program design.
- ❑ Don't list potential partners until you have done your homework on availability or program fit. Even if you have partnered before.
Confirm in writing even if via email.
 - ✓ *What services will be provided? When? How often?*
 - ✓ *Where will the services be provided?*
 - ✓ *What are your staff expectations?*
 - ✓ *Is there a fee? If they are an SYPF applicant, will the cost show up in their budget, yours or both?*
 - ✓ *Who is their current contact?*
- ❑ Re-confirm arrangements by early May.
- ❑ Read *Radical Rules of Positive Partnership Etiquette* on the SYPF website. These guidelines were written by SYPF enhancement program grantees with input from evaluators.

Your reputation is affected by how you manage partnerships.

- ❑ Don't say "yes" without thoughtful consideration and vetting.
- ❑ Don't commit, then cancel in May or June because you did not raise funds or because you over-booked the program schedule.
- ❑ Commit to raising funds you promised. If you can't gather the funds in time, consider adjusting your program in order to honor this commitment.
- ❑ Partners rely on each other. Stay in communication so the partner can prepare for any potential change, including any change in the number of youth you will provide or that can be served.

While many summer partnerships flourish, others end in altered or failed programs. Often because the partnership was sloppy, grounded in bad assumptions or plagued with poor communication.

This guide is full of community resources. Head to the SYPF website for many others. Ask your peers for ideas! For example, *EmployIndy* and the *Eskenazi Health Violence Prevention* department both welcome partners!

For more help and ideas, Explore **COMPANION DOCUMENTS** on the [SYPF website](#)