



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A STRONG BRAND A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Brand Messaging Guide

Language to steward and strengthen the Y Brand

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USING THIS GUIDE

Our brand strategy gives us a roadmap to turn the public's goodwill toward the Y into action. Through our shared purpose, values and personality, the brand provides Ys—large and small—with a platform to protect our reputation, drive interest in engaging with us, and encourage support of our work through donations, volunteering and advocacy in communities across the nation.

This guide is intended to help you create clear and engaging communications that bring our brand to life for all of our audiences.

Here you'll find:

- Details about refinement to our Y brand strategy
- Standard descriptions for use in external communications
- Guidance for infusing the brand personality into communications
- Strategies and tactics for creating programmatic messages
- Strategies and tactics for creating audience-centric messages

RESEARCH-GUIDED REFINEMENTS

It is important to note that our brand strategy, and all components of our Y brand architecture, have been informed by national research, with a statistically significant and demographically representative sample. This ensures it is credible for the Y, as well as clear and compelling to consumers, donors, partners and Y staff.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

If you work for, with or represent the Y in any way, then this guide applies to you. To be effective, we must be credible, and credibility requires consistency when telling our story.

Today and every day, the Y strengthens communities by connecting people to their potential, purpose and each other. In every interaction—from a face-to-face conversation to an email to a brochure—we work not just as individuals, but as part of something larger. That something larger is the “why” of the Y: “Why is this organization in my community? Why should I join, support or take action with this organization? Why should I believe or trust them?”

This guide will help you answer the question of “why?”

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help express what the Y stands for, how we are different and why audiences should join with, support and champion our work.

The messaging guide explains what we say (brand strategy and messaging), how we say it (personality) and to whom (audience mapping) to drive awareness, interest, engagement and action.

This guide is a reference, not a rule book—creating consistency while respecting the diversity of our many audiences and partners across the nation and around the world.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Our brand is a guide for the way we think, act and communicate. To manage our brand responsibly, we must present ourselves as having a shared purpose, values and personality.

OUR BRAND FOUNDATION

Our brand is our essence—what we are about, the benefit we provide and why our stakeholders should engage with us. It guides the way we think, act and communicate. To use and manage it effectively, we must present ourselves as having a shared purpose, values and personality.

MISSION

Why we exist

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

VISION

What we seek to achieve in the future

The Y's Commitment to America is developing new generations of changemakers who will create communities we all want to live in. We envision communities where all people achieve health, gain confidence, make connections and feel secure at every stage of life.

PURPOSE

What we stand for, how we're different and why audiences should engage with us

Our brand purpose crystallizes what we stand for, how we're different and why audiences should engage with us.

If you have a minute...

The Y is the leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other.

If you have a minute more...

Working locally, we focus on empowering young people, improving health and well-being, and inspiring action in and across communities.

If you have a little bit longer...

By bringing together people from different backgrounds, perspectives and generations, we ensure that we all have access to the opportunities, relationships and resources necessary to learn, grow and thrive.

VALUES

What essential principles guide us in everything we do

Respect

Treat each other as we'd all like to be treated

Responsibility

Be accountable for your promises and action

Caring

Show a sincere concern for others

Honesty

Be truthful in what you say and do

OUR BRAND FOUNDATION (CONT'D)

PERSONALITY

How we show up across experiences and communications. It reflects our voice, tone, manner and style, as well as our actions and interactions.

Welcoming | We're open to all and create spaces where you can be, belong and become

We believe our communities are stronger when everyone feels valued. We bring people together, inviting them to share their diverse perspectives and discover their shared passions.

Genuine | We value who you are and encourage you to be true to yourself and others

We are approachable, down-to-earth and real. We foster environments where you feel comfortable being yourself and confident connecting with others.

Nurturing | We're with you on your path to reach your full potential

We recognize that everyone has personal strengths and challenges. No matter where you are on your journey, we offer encouragement, guidance and support.

Hopeful | We believe in your ability to inspire a brighter tomorrow

Together with you and your neighbors, we can make a meaningful and measurable difference in the lives of people and communities. We motivate people to join in, get involved and take action for the greater good.

Determined | We work relentlessly to strengthen communities, starting with you

We believe that every person, family and neighborhood has the potential to bring about positive change. And together, we have the power to do so much more.

OUR BRAND FOUNDATION (CONT'D)

AREAS OF IMPACT

How we strengthen community is captured in our areas of impact, in very clear and concrete terms, and in how we evaluate our positive benefit to individuals and society.

Irrespective of which programs are offered, from branch to branch, we all share these three primary areas of impact, which support our ultimate goal of strengthening communities.

Below, you will find our areas of impact, together with their definitions and associated offering categories. Collectively, they help audiences understand the breadth and depth of the positive impact we make, and find clear avenues for engagement and support. They should be communicated consistently and, where possible, jointly to demonstrate how we strengthen community.

Areas of impact	FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT			
	Empowering young people to reach their full potential			
Offering categories	CHILD CARE	EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP	SWIM, SPORTS & PLAY	CAMP

Areas of impact	FOR HEALTHY LIVING			
	Improving individual and community well-being			
Offering categories	FAMILYTIME	HEALTH, WELL-BEING & FITNESS	SPORTS & RECREATION	GROUP INTERESTS

Areas of impact	FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY			
	Providing support and inspiring action in our communities			
Offering categories	FAMILY & COMMUNITY RESOURCES	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	COMMUNITY ACTION	GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

SHARING OUR STORY

The Y is a 175-year-old organization whose work is needed now more than ever. Our nation is increasingly divided. Places where common ground is found are a rarity, and digital bubbles further separate us. We are polarized, lonely, and craving real human connection.

STANDARD MESSAGING FOR USE IN PUBLIC-FACING COMMUNICATION

TAGLINE

Succinct expression
of our brand purpose

For a better us.®

BOILERPLATE

Digestible snapshot
of the organization

Driven by its founding mission, the Y has served as a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community for more than 175 years. The Y empowers everyone, no matter who they are or where they're from, by ensuring access to resources, relationships and opportunities for all to learn, grow and thrive. By bringing together people from different backgrounds, perspectives and generations, the Y's goal is to improve overall health and well-being, ignite youth empowerment and demonstrate the importance of connections in and across 10,000 communities nationwide.

ELEVATOR SPEECH

Short description of
what we do and why
it matters

At the Y, we take immense pride in our work to strengthen communities and help all of us be our best selves. We provide a place to play, to learn, to be healthy, to eat well, and to give back. We give parents childcare, young adults job training, seniors a way to connect and children a safe place to go. We believe that everyone—no matter who they are or where they're from—deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. Everything the Y does is in service of making sure people and communities thrive.

USING THE BRAND ARCHITECTURE

Our brand architecture—a critically important component of the Y’s brand strategy—is designed to help us organize our programs and services so that external audiences understand how we deliver on our purpose of strengthening community.

BRAND ARCHITECTURE OVERVIEW

The Y’s brand architecture is a research-based hierarchy of information that ensures we are collectively presenting our positive impact rather than focusing on the services we provide.

The graphic below includes the key elements of our brand architecture and the hierarchy for how they’re used when we present ourselves. This approach helps audiences to better understand our positive impact on communities and be more inclined to engage with us as a member, program participant, volunteer, donor, advocate, partner, etc.

For a more in-depth look at brand architecture and how to categorize your Y’s programs and services, please refer to the Technical Supplement to the Y’s Graphic Standards for Brand Architecture on the Brand Resource Center.

BRAND ARCHITECTURE

AREAS OF IMPACT

Elevates our core work, positive impact and key differentiators; reinforces our brand strategy and serves as an organizing principle.

OFFERING CATEGORIES

Another level of information to help audiences understand our positive impact and the breadth of programs and services we offer.

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

The **MASTERBRAND, AREAS OF IMPACT AND OFFERING CATEGORIES** may not be changed or altered in any way. Their uniformity throughout the **MOVEMENT** helps audiences better understand who we are, what we do and our charitable impact.

Masterbrand												
Areas of focus	FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT Empowering young people to reach their full potential				FOR HEALTHY LIVING Improving individual and community well-being			FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY Providing support and inspiring action in our communities				
Offering categories	CHILD CARE	EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP	SWIM, SPORTS & PLAY	CAMP	FAMILY TIME	HEALTH, WELL-BEING & FITNESS	SPORTS & RECREATION	GROUP INTERESTS	FAMILY & COMMUNITY RESOURCES	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	COMMUNITY ACTION	GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT
Programs & services	After-school Care Corporate Child Care Extended Child Care (6-11 days/week) Kid's Club School-age Child Care (5 days/week)	Academic Enrichment Abundant Assets After-school Academic Enrichment Programs Early Learning Headstart Homework Enrichment Classes Preschool School Readiness Programs Tutoring Arts & Humanities Filmmaking	Competitive Swimming & Sports Gymnastics Swimming/Diving (under 18) Dances Team Clubs V-Tee Zone Adaptive/Inclusive Youth Sports Youth Baseball Youth Basketball Youth Fitness/Exercise Youth Flag Football Youth Gymnastics	Day Camp Overnight Camp Summer Camp Violator Camp Cancer Camp World Camp Resident Camp	Adventure Guides Family Camp Family Challenge Family Fitness Family Nights Family Wellness Programs Parent/Child Dance Private Time Family	Active Older Adults Aerobics/Dance Circuit Training Classes Indoor Cycling Marital Arts Strength Training Women's Only Fitness Program Yoga Healthy Lifestyles Cardiac Rehabilitation Programs CPR/First Aid Diabetes Prevention & Self-management Health Screenings/Lifestyle Assessments	Adult Basketball Leagues Adult Competitive Swimming (18 & Over) Adult Golf Adult Hockey Adult Soccer Leagues Adult Softball Leagues Adult Tennis Adult Volleyball Leagues Recreation Cycling/Mountain Biking Hiking Running Clubs Skiing Snowboarding Walking Groups	Adult Arts & Humanities Healthy Cooking Sign Language Classes Spanish Classes Social Groups Book Clubs Group Trips (snow) Knitting Ladies Night Out Bible Study Community Prayer Breakfast	Foster Care Gang Prevention/Intervention Food Banks Housing Permanent Low-income Housing Substance Abuse Programs Military Outreach Newcomer/Immigrant Outreach and Integration Vocational Training Adult Employment Services Adult Literacy Programs Computer Training GED Preparation	Interfaith Programs Welcoming Week Outreach Programs Community Bridge-building Multicultural Education Multicultural Observances Newcomer/Immigrant Outreach and Integration Civic Engagement Activities Fundraising	Volunteers Managerial Volunteers Policy Volunteers Program Volunteers Public Policy Legislative Action Center State Alliances Grassroots Organizing Civic Engagement Activities Fundraising	Global Education Events, Forums & Festivals Exchanges of Volunteers & Staff Global Leadership Development Global Service Learning Global Network Global Partners Hosting International Visitors International Y-to-Y Relationships

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

To help reinforce the positive impact of a program or service on individuals and a community, each one is categorized and communicated in the context of an area of impact and offering category. All programs and services that a Y offers must fit within this structure. For help determining their placement, Ys should refer to the Technical Supplement to the Y’s Graphic Standards for Brand Architecture.

Note: The programs and services listed here are for illustrative purposes only. This section will be unique for each Y.

MESSAGING OVERVIEW

WHAT WE SAY

To get people to rally around our important work, it is essential to craft compelling messages that are clear, credible and concise.

BEST PRACTICES IN MESSAGING

Here are a series of best practices that will help turn our strategies into actionable stories.

SAY THIS... INSTEAD OF...

	Say this...	Instead of...	Why?
STYLE	Together, we make a difference...	The Y makes a difference...	Shows that the Y is part of—and responsive to—the communities we're in
	You'll find our staff...	Members find the Y staff...	Addressing readers in first person showcases our personality
FRAMING	Empower young people to reach their...	Empower young people...	Shows how the Y supports people to take action, instead of taking action for them
	We are a leading nonprofit...	We are a cause...	Uses language that has been tested as convincing and relevant for our current audiences. External audiences do not see us as "a cause" so using this word to describe our organization creates a disconnect
WORD CHOICE	Outdoor camping for teens builds confidence...	Adventure Teens builds confidence...	Clearly describes the activity itself, avoiding a special program name which doesn't tell people who may not know the program what it is and what the teens will be doing
	One in three local children...	Many local children...	Uses easy-to-understand data to emphasize our positive impact
	Making communities stronger...	Capacity building...	Communicates our approach in plain English, rather than jargon

BEFORE/AFTER EXAMPLES

MEMBERSHIP

Before

You Belong at the Y: The Y is here to help you get fit, live healthier, try new activities and get stronger. When you join the Y, you'll find more than a gym. You'll improve your health, meet new friends and support your community.

After

When you join the Y, you'll discover new ways to connect with your potential, purpose and community. No matter where you are on your journey, the Y is where you can be, belong and become. Join us.

Why this works:

- Ties membership to the Y's purpose, not programs
- Balances the individual and the community

PROGRAMS

Before

The Y is dedicated to offering a variety of fitness programs, sports leagues, swim lessons and everything in-between to get every member of your family staying active and feeling great. Take a look below to get started today!

After

Our programs empower young people, improve health and well-being, as well as provide support and inspire action in our communities today and every day. Explore our offerings below to discover new ways to connect to your purpose, potential and each other.

Why this works:

- Clearly states all three areas of impact, not just healthy living
- Applies to both families and individuals
- Describes program benefits in an inspiring, inclusive way

BEFORE/AFTER EXAMPLES (CONT'D)

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

CAMP

Before

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.

After

Give your kids a life-changing summer experience! Since 1947, YMCA Camp (Name) has inspired kids with countless opportunities to laugh, lead and make lasting friendships. Together, our proven programs and trained counselors deliver meaningful and memorable camp experiences that keep families coming back year after year after year.

Why this works:

- Focuses on camp's positive impact
- Moves away from the Y as a service provider ("has provided children" vs. "has inspired kids with countless opportunities")
- Language that reflects our personality

ACHIEVERS

Before

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

After

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

Why this works:

- More conversational tone
- Clearly shows how the program "empowers young people"

BEFORE/AFTER EXAMPLES (CONT'D)

HEALTHY LIVING

ARTHRITIS AQUATICS CLASS

Before

Participate in this low-impact exercise class that takes place in the warm water pool. Increase flexibility and have fun!

After

Increase your flexibility and have fun in our warm-water arthritis aquatics class. This low-impact exercise provides high-impact benefits.

Why this works:

- Begins, rather than ends, with the program's benefits

GET ON THE BALL!

Before

All fitness levels welcome! This 30-minute class uses stability balls to stretch, tone and strengthen the entire body.

After

Increase your balance and enhance your well-being in this 30-minute class that uses stability balls to stretch, tone and strengthen. Everyone is welcome to join in!

Why this works:

- Benefits are tied to overall wellness, not just building muscle
- Inclusive language that goes beyond "fitness level"

BEFORE/AFTER EXAMPLES (CONT'D)

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

VOLUNTEERING

Before

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, 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.

After

Share your time and talent at the Y, and change lives and communities, including your own. From volunteering to help with special events to coaching or mentoring, your skills and interests will make a difference here.

Why this works:

- Shifts focus from options and process to positive impact and benefits
- Emphasis on a volunteer's unique skills makes them feel valued
- Concise, clear and compelling

LITERACY INITIATIVE

Before

The YMCA Literacy Initiative offers a family literacy program that provides book-based activities for children while their parents participate in ESL classes.

After

Through our family literacy programs, family members of all ages and life stages can learn and improve their English speaking, reading and writing skills.

Why this works:

- Emphasizes benefits for all
- Describes the program without using the branded name (YMCA Literacy Initiative), which could be confusing for some readers
- Avoids jargon and acronyms like ESL

HOW WE SAY IT

The way we communicate is just as important as what we say. Speaking and writing in a consistent style helps people know instantly that they're interacting with the Y, and our brand personality will help you bring communications to life in an authentic and accessible way.

HOW WE SHARE OUR PERSONALITY

WHAT IS BRAND PERSONALITY?

The personality of a brand is the distinctive tone, manner and style in which we communicate. Personality is defined by a set of attributes which shape how we look, feel, sound and show up.

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

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

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

A unified personality enables us to:

- Differentiate the Y from peers as the nation’s leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities
- Emphasize the Y’s positive impact—not just the services it provides
- More strongly influence our audiences to engage with the Y—join, renew, give, volunteer and advocate

OUR PERSONALITY:

- WELCOMING
- GENUINE
- NURTURING
- HOPEFUL
- DETERMINED

WHERE DO WE USE IT?

Infuse the brand personality across all touchpoints for all audiences: Y-USA, associations and branches, partners, vendors, etc. Our personality applies to all Y experiences—at our national office, association offices, branches and programs in the community.

Additionally, it applies to all of our expressions, including advertising, marketing, press materials, newsletters, emails, web copy and employee communications.

The more consistently we show up as one Y, the more clearly we will express the positive impact we make, who we are and what we do.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

From tweets, which encourage us to believe our “dreams can come true,” to our experiences with “cast members” at Disney World, we know that every Disney experience will be imaginative, playful, family-friendly and unquestionably Disney.

Likewise, when we think of Virgin—whether it’s their airlines, mobile phones or space shuttles—we think of boldness, audacity and a little cheekiness.

For Ben & Jerry’s, which is now owned by Unilever, there is still a spirit of ice cream-loving hippies from Vermont, with ice cream flavors like “Save Our Swirled,” “Phish Food” and “Cherry Garcia.”

From theme parks to space shuttles to frozen dessert decadence, there is no doubt each of these brands has a distinctive persona that transcends any one product, project or person. It’s their undeniable spirit, their way of life, their unique personality.

It’s how they show up every day and express themselves across audiences and channels. And, whether they whisper or decide to occasionally shout, they’re always the same person. That’s the power of a strong brand personality.

BEFORE/AFTER EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1

Without Y Personality

The nation's more than 2,600 YMCAs build strong kids, strong families and strong communities. YMCAs engage 21 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.

With Y Personality

This year, more than 21 million people—including 8 million kids—will come to the Y to connect with the resources, relationships and opportunities they need to learn, grow and thrive. Active in thousands of communities across the nation, the Y builds strength on a local level by empowering young people to reach their full potential, improving health and well-being, and providing support and inspiring action in our communities.

Why this works:

- Reframes statistics to demonstrate scale of our positive impact, rather than number of facilities
- Elevates our purpose (“why”) and areas of impact (“how”)
- Balances our on-the-ground presence with our positive impact nationwide

EXAMPLE 2

Without Y Personality

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

With Y Personality

Through the Y, more than 100,000 people in our community connected with the resources, relationships and opportunities necessary to learn, grow and thrive.

Why this works:

- Uses active voice
- Leads with the benefit to our community, rather than the services we deliver
- Infuses our personality attributes (welcoming, nurturing) through words like “our community”

EXAMPLE 3

Without Y Personality

Our branches provided childcare to more than 400 children at six program sites.

With Y Personality

While parents and caregivers are at work, our Ys provide quality affordable childcare to more than 400 children, giving them a safe and enriching start to learning.

Why this works:

- Clarifies what makes the Y's program special
- Connects statistics to positive impact, rather than facilities

GUIDES AND TOOLS

On the following pages, you'll find resources to help you speak and write in a way that is easy to understand and strengthens the Y brand.

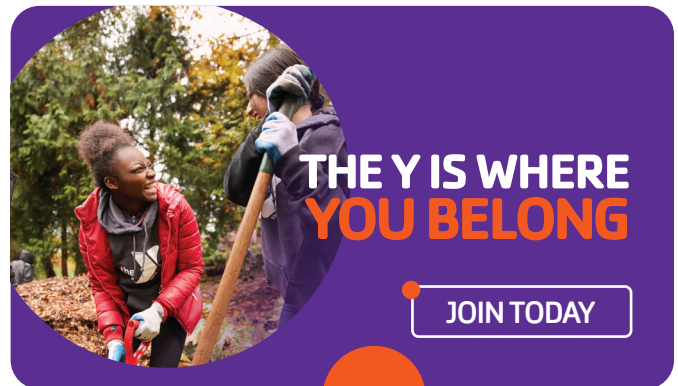
WHAT WE CALL OURSELVES

In 2010, we adopted our nickname—the Y—as our brand name because it suggests a closer, friendlier relationship with everyone that is engaged with us. Of course, YMCA is still our organizational name and it's important to use YMCA in specific circumstances. Here are some helpful rules to guide you.

THEY

The Y is our brand name that we most commonly use because it aligns with how people commonly refer to our organization and captures our values and personality. Use “the Y”:

- As a general reference for your association/branch(es) once your formal name has been used (e.g., The YMCA of Anytown has served our community for 100 years. Stop by the Y today and learn more.).
- When referring to our collective organization, especially what we stand for and our overall impact as the nation's leading nonprofit (e.g., the Y brand; the Y's values guide our actions; the Y strengthens community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility; at the Y, we are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion).



YMCA

YMCA remains our organizational name. Use “YMCA”:

- As part of the formal name of associations, branches or camps (e.g., The YMCA of Greater Houston offers newcomer integration programs; The Irving Park YMCA is a part of the YMCA of Metro Chicago; YMCA of the Pines is located in New Jersey).
- When referring informally to a location once the formal name has been used (e.g., The Alexander Family YMCA is located in Raleigh, NC and this YMCA offers after-school programs).
- To describe programs and events in text, that we want people to immediately associate with our organization (e.g., The YMCA's Healthy Kids Day® event is open to all).



VOICEMAIL AND EMAIL USAGE

These descriptions help Y staff share essential information about the Y and themselves, including who we are and our purpose. All Ys are encouraged to follow the examples below.

VOICEMAIL GREETING

“Thank you for calling the Y, the leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community [followed by information of individual staff member].”


EXAMPLE

“Thank you for calling the Y, the leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community. You have reached George Williams, Founder of the Global YMCA Movement. Please leave a detailed message and I will get back to you.”

EMAIL SIGNATURE

Format all in Cachet Pro or Verdana fonts.

EXAMPLE SIGNATURE WITH Y LOGO



FIRSTNAME LASTNAME
Professional Title
ANYTOWN YMCA Address, City ST 00000
123.456.7890 | Firstname.Lastname@ymca.net | ymca.net

For a better us.®

EXAMPLE SIGNATURE WITH NO Y LOGO


FIRSTNAME LASTNAME
Professional Title
ANYTOWN YMCA Address, City ST 00000
123.456.7890 | Firstname.Lastname@ymca.net | ymca.net

The Y. For a better us.®

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OPTIONS

- Include pronouns in parenthesis in lowercase.
(he, him, his) (she, her, hers) (they, them, their)
- Add your local organization social media handles;
Facebook, Twitter, etc.

EXAMPLE WITH ADDITIONAL OPTIONS



GEORGE WILLIAMS (he, him, his)
Founder, Global YMCA Movement
YMCA OF THE USA 101 N Wacker Drive, Chicago IL 60606
312.419.XXXX | FirstName.LastName@ymca.net | ymca.net

Facebook | Twitter

For a better us.®

STANDARD MESSAGES AND TIPS

AUDIENCE

When developing communications, whether written or spoken, always consider your audience and desired action(s). The following questions can be a useful guide when creating tailored messages.

Who are they?

Where do they work? What is their role? How do we know them? How has our relationship changed over time?

What action(s) do we need them to take?

Given who they are, how can we work together to make a better world possible?

What do they need to know?

What obstacles keep them from partnering with us? What information would help them overcome these obstacles?

How should we connect?

Given what they need, how should we tailor our message and delivery to reach them most effectively?

WEB

- Keep writing for the web short, between 100 and 400 words
- Remember that many of your readers will be using their phones to access the web
- Consider how images or infographics might help you tell your story
- Brainstorm words people might use to search for your webpage, and try to work them into your writing

VIDEO

- The best length for web videos is no longer than 2–3 minutes—even shorter is better
- Put the most important or interesting information at the beginning
- Add subtitles for accessibility and for social media
- If you're filming outside, be aware of wind and bright light
- Keep your camera steady and level—use a tripod, if you have one



GENERAL MESSAGING CHECKLIST

As our name suggests, The Y should always convey its purpose—or its “why.” As the leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community, our purpose and areas of impact should always be clearly communicated.

Remember, as individuals, we may whisper or shout depending on our context or company, but we’re always the same person. Likewise, our personality is welcoming, genuine, nurturing, hopeful and determined. We may emphasize certain attributes depending on the circumstance, but should always be true to who we are.

As a nonprofit, it’s important that we aren’t positioning ourselves as a service provider alone. Our communications should always be purposeful, including the “what” and “why” of our programs and services, together with their positive impact or benefit to individuals and community.

As an organization committed to strengthening community, we should always be sure to invite people to take action. Ensure that every piece of communication has a clear call to action.

- ☐ The benefit and positive impact of offerings should be clearly articulated.
- ☐ Tailor your communications by audience, where appropriate.
- ☐ Stories, testimonials or examples can be 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”).
- ☐ Show our positive impact through compelling design.
- ☐ Numbers should always be used in the context of our positive impact.
- ☐ Make sure we always represent ourselves as a nonprofit with a shared purpose.
- ☐ Remember to always include reasons to believe or proof points to support claims.
- ☐ Where possible, avoid jargon, internal language and branded program names (e.g., capacity-building, association, respite child care, Adventure Guides, mission impact), so that the language we use is understood by everyone without explanation.



GLOSSARY

Audience

The specific group(s) of people you want to reach through communications.

Benefit-driven Headline

A headline-style statement of positive impact that describes what an audience gains from the Y and/or its programs.

Framing

The presentation of ideas and principles so as to encourage one interpretation over another.

Jargon

Specialized language, often particular to an industry or organization.

Key Influencers

People in positions of leadership and influence at corporations, foundations, government and public policy organizations.

Messaging

The crafting of clear, impactful language meant to drive reputation, awareness or action from specific audiences.

Mission

A statement that captures an organization's reason for being. Mission does not take into account what is differentiating or compelling.

Nomenclature

A system for creating organizational names or terms.

Personality

Captures how an organization shows up across expressions and experiences. It conveys the distinctive tone, manner and style in which we communicate and interact with others.

Positioning

How you present your organization/work in relation to other organizations or industries (e.g., the leading nonprofit).

Proof Points

Examples of positive impact that support a statement. Important in communication to establish credibility.

Purpose

Crystallizes what an organization stands for, how it's different or distinctive from peers, and why audiences should engage.

Stakeholders

People or organizations with a legitimate interest in a given situation, action or enterprise.

Tone

Manner in which speech or writing is expressed.

Touchpoints

All the programs, places and points of interaction where a brand is encountered.

Value Proposition

The tangible usefulness and meaning a product/service or organization brings to the customer.

Values

Conveys the shared beliefs and essential principles of an organization.



PROGRAM MESSAGING

OVERVIEW

HOW TO USE THIS MESSAGING

Our program messaging applies the central ideas, strengths and priorities of the brand to concrete offerings.

These messages help us explain the unique value of our programs and make the case for why audiences should choose our offerings over those of our peers.

PROGRAM MESSAGING STRUCTURE

At the Y, we strengthen communities by connecting people to their potential, purpose and each other. Our programs, together with our people, are the essential ingredients in making a positive impact.

To convey our unique approach to strengthening community, our program messages embrace the following structure:

ACCESS

We ensure that we all have equitable access to the resources, relationships and opportunities necessary to learn, grow and thrive.

OPPORTUNITY

Working locally, we focus on empowering young people, improving health and well-being, and inspiring action in and across communities.

IMPACT

Today and every day, we build strength within individuals and communities.

SAMPLE PROGRAM MESSAGES

Day Camp

Our day camps welcome kids of all backgrounds to discover who they are and imagine who they can be, with programs that foster lifelong skills, build self-confidence and create lasting friendships.

Overnight Camp

Our overnight camps engage, encourage and empower all young people with the life-changing experiences necessary all to grow as individuals, friends and leaders.

After-School

Our after-school programs bring together physical activity, study time and a safe, supportive environment to help all young people succeed in school, at home and throughout their lives.

Youth Sports

Our youth sports programs use friendly competition as a way to unite young people around a shared goal and help them thrive as part of a team.

Health and Fitness

Our health and fitness programs connect everyone to the knowledge, resources and community they need to lead active, vibrant lives at every age.

AUDIENCE- SPECIFIC MESSAGING

HOW TO USE THIS MESSAGING

The audience messaging is meant to serve as a guide to help you build strong, clear and impactful communications, from newsletters to social media posts. The language in this guide is meant to serve as a starting point, and should be modified or supplemented as needed to fit your purpose.

DEFINITIONS

Lead Message: This is the main point we would like to get across to the audience in all of our communications. Everything you say to an audience should reinforce the key message.

Supporting Messages: Phrases that support the key message. Depending on your needs, you might find that these sample messages are a good fit, or you might need to write some new language to achieve your communication goal.

Reasons to Believe: Provide examples of concrete information that will help you make your point. Choose details as necessary to reinforce your communications, and fill them in with your own numbers and statistics.

Calls to Action: Provide a clear next step for your audience. Sometimes these are broad ("Support the Y today!") and other times very specific ("Enroll in Summer Camp before May 31st").

When taken together, a communication should follow this formula:
Lead Message + Supporting Message + Reasons to Believe + Call to Action = Finished Communication

AUDIENCES AT A GLANCE

Audience Name	Who They Are	What We'd Like Them to Do
Donors/Volunteers (pages 31–33) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who have donated to a nonprofit in the past and are likely to donate again • High-propensity prospects skew slightly female and ages 25–54 • Mix of Y members and non-members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate to the Y • Volunteer their time with the Y • Champion the Y in their social and professional circles as a nonprofit of choice
Community Leaders and Partners (pages 34–36) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy-makers • Corporate partners (e.g., corporate foundations, CSR decision-makers) • Foundations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite the Y to the table to address critical social issues • Select the Y as a partner of choice • Fund/invest in the Y, its areas of impact and/or programs • Champion the Y in their social and professional circles as a nonprofit of choice
Parents of Youth Program Participants (pages 37–39) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents interested in sports, youth-based enrichment, leadership, out-of-school or early education programs for their children • Parents whose children have enrolled in youth programs in the past or plan to in the near future • Parents with children ages 2–18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll their children in a Y youth program • Champion the Y in their social circles as their preferred youth program provider
Parents of Campers (pages 40–42) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents interested in day or overnight camp for their children • Parents whose children have gone to camp in the past or plan to in the near future • Parents with children ages 6–18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll their children in a Y camp • Champion the Y in their social circles as their preferred camp provider
Health, Wellness and Fitness Participants (pages 43–45) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults who are interested in health and fitness • Adults who have belonged to a fitness center in the past or plan to in the near future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a member • Champion the Y in their social circles

DONORS/ VOLUNTEERS





WHO THEY ARE

- People who have donated to a nonprofit in the past and are likely to donate again
- High-propensity prospects skew slightly female and ages 25-54
- Mix of Y members and non-members

WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO ENGAGE

An organization that has...

- Positive impact and measurable results
- The ability to mobilize community and effect social and economic change
- Personal, positive impact, peer preference and reputational strength

WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM ENGAGING

- Lack of understanding of nonprofit status and need
- Lack of concrete metrics on positive impact
- Lack of clarity on organizational breadth and depth

WHAT WE'D LIKE THEM TO DO

- Donate to the Y
- Volunteer their time with the Y
- Champion the Y in their social and professional circles as a nonprofit of choice



LEAD MESSAGE

Today and every day, the Y strengthens the fabric of our communities by ensuring that we all have access to the resources, relationships and opportunities we need to lead, learn, grow and thrive.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- When you support the Y, you help give young people a chance at a brighter future, inspire healthy lifestyles and build vibrant communities right where you live.
- Our experience in communities across the country has shown us that when we work together on a local level, we can produce long-term, positive change nationwide.
- In your community and across the country, we have the presence and partnerships to not just promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. In partnering with the Y, you can feel confident your contribution is making a meaningful, positive impact.
- Now more than ever, we need places and programs that are open to people of all generations, backgrounds and perspectives. At the Y, we welcome everyone, because we believe our communities are stronger when we come together. With your help, we expand access to the resources, opportunities and relationships that everyone needs to thrive.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- Amount of financial aid awarded in the last year
- Stories of impact from Y and community members
- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs in the community
- Total number of volunteer hours in the last year
- Total number of volunteers
- Testimonials from volunteers about their experience

CALLS TO ACTION

- Join us to work together in strengthening our community
- Your contribution today will make a positive impact right where you live
- Volunteer with the Y and help build up your community

FAQS FROM THIS AUDIENCE

- Can I choose where my donation goes?
- I'm already a member. Why do I need to donate?
- What types of volunteer projects does the Y offer?
- Who does my donation help?
- Why should I donate to the Y?
- Why should I volunteer with the Y?

COMMUNITY LEADERS AND PARTNERS





WHO THEY ARE

- Policy-makers
- Corporate partners (e.g., corporate foundations, CSR decision-makers)
- Foundations

WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO ENGAGE

An organization that has...

- The ability to connect families and communities across backgrounds and generations
- The scale and influence to address critical social and health issues
- Peer preference and positive community impact
- Innovative programming and approach

WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM ENGAGING

- Lack of concrete metrics on positive impact
- Lack of organizational focus

WHAT WE'D LIKE THEM TO DO

- Invite the Y to the table to address critical social issues
- Select the Y as a partner of choice
- Fund/invest in the Y, its areas of impact and/or programs
- Champion the Y in their social and professional circles as a nonprofit of choice



LEAD MESSAGE

The Y inspires people from different backgrounds, perspectives and generations to come together to build and support the foundations of community.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- The Y effects global change from the ground up. Together, we help young people develop into tomorrow's leaders, we help everyone improve their well-being, and we create strong, vibrant communities for all.
- Now more than ever, we need places and programs that are open to people of all generations, backgrounds and perspectives. At the Y, we welcome everyone, because we believe our communities are stronger when we come together. With your help, we expand access to the resources, opportunities and relationships that everyone needs to thrive.
- When you partner with the Y, you make a meaningful contribution on a local level that helps create measurable change nationwide.
- The Y makes a commitment to the communities we serve to elevate, empower and inspire everyone today and every day. We are partners for good.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- Statistics that demonstrate the Y's positive impact nationwide
- Statistics that demonstrate how the Y makes a positive impact in your community
- Total number of communities the Y is in
- Total number of Y members
- Stories of impact from Y and community members
- Statistics that illustrate unmet needs in the community
- Spotlight on areas of impact: youth development, healthy living, social responsibility
- Recognition and awards from leaders and legislators

CALLS TO ACTION

- Your contribution will help close gaps and forge connections in communities across the country
- By partnering with the Y, you will have a direct and positive impact on your community
- Together, we can make local changes with a positive impact nationwide

FAQS FROM THIS AUDIENCE

- What are the Y's strengths?
- Why should I partner with the Y?
- What successes has the Y had in this area in the past?
- How can we partner with the Y?
- How does the Y scale their positive impact?

PARENTS OF YOUTH PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS





WHO THEY ARE

- Parents interested in sports, youth-based enrichment, leadership, out-of-school or early education programs for their children
- Parents whose children have enrolled in youth programs in the past or plan to in the near future
- Parents with children ages 2-18

WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO ENGAGE

An organization that has...

- Personal, positive impact, peer preference and reputational strength
- The ability to connect families and make a positive impact on the local community
- Innovative, fun programming

WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM ENGAGING

- Lack of demonstrated connection to the community
- Lack of emotional connection
- Real or perceived gaps in program quality or price

WHAT WE'D LIKE THEM TO DO

- Enroll their children in a Y youth program
- Champion the Y in their social circles as their preferred youth program provider



LEAD MESSAGE

The Y connects kids to their potential, purpose and each other so they can shape the communities of tomorrow, today.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- We're a national leader in youth sports and out-of-school programming, with a proven track record of engaging, encouraging and empowering kids.
- The Y opens access to opportunities, relationships and resources for kids to be who they are and become who they want to be.
- At the Y, we welcome all children and their families, because our communities are stronger when everyone can take part in equitable programs where they can learn, grow and thrive.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- Amount of financial aid awarded in the last year
- Percentage of children and teens the Y engages
- Statistics that demonstrate the benefits of youth programs
- Testimonials from parents, teachers and children

CALLS TO ACTION

- Share how the Y's programs have made a difference for you and your family
- Give your children the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive at the Y
- Help your child connect with your community by enrolling today

FAQS FROM THIS AUDIENCE

- Why should I choose the Y?
- Are programs only for members?
- What if I can't afford the program?
- What qualifications do program staff have?
- How does the Y give back to my community?

PARENTS OF CAMPERS





WHO THEY ARE

- Parents interested in day or overnight camp for their children
- Parents whose children have gone to camp in the past or plan to in the near future
- Parents with children ages 6-18

WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO ENGAGE

An organization that has...

- Personal, positive impact, peer preference and reputational strength
- The ability to connect families and make a positive impact on the community
- Fun, values-driven programming in a safe and trusted environment

WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM ENGAGING

- Values that do not align with their own
- Lack of emotional connection
- Perceived gaps in program quality or price

WHAT WE'D LIKE THEM TO DO

- Enroll their children in a Y camp
- Champion the Y in their social circles as their preferred camp provider



LEAD MESSAGE

Camp at the Y is a time for kids to explore, discover and create in a place that encourages confidence and community.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- Our camps open opportunities for kids to experience new hobbies, interests and adventures while learning what it means to be a good friend and leader.
- The Y's camps grow and change with your kids, offering fresh ways for them to connect to their potential, purpose and each other.
- At the Y, we welcome all children and their families, because our communities are stronger when everyone can take part in equitable programs where they can learn, grow and thrive.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- Amount of financial aid awarded in the last year
- Stories of impact from Y and community members
- Percentage of children and teens the Y engages
- Statistics that demonstrate the benefits of camp programs (day, overnight, etc.)
- Testimonials from parents and campers
- Statistics related to camp facilities (number of acres, features, etc.)

CALLS TO ACTION

- Share how camp at the Y has shaped your child
- Learn, grow and thrive at Y camp
- Our camps are some of the longest-running in the country—experience Y!

FAQS FROM THIS AUDIENCE

- Why should I choose the Y?
- Are programs only for members?
- What if I can't afford the program?
- What qualifications do program staff have?
- How does the Y give back to my community?
- Who is camp for?
- How safe are overnight camps?
- What is the camp's focus?

HEALTH, WELLNESS AND FITNESS PARTICIPANTS





WHO THEY ARE

- Adults who are interested in health and fitness
- Adults who have belonged to a fitness center in the past or plan to in the near future

WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO ENGAGE

An organization that has...

- Peer preference and an excellent reputation
- Personal, positive impact and measurable results
- The ability to connect individuals to each other
- Innovative, fun programming

WHAT KEEPS THEM FROM ENGAGING

- Lack of demonstrated positive impact
- Inconvenient location or hours
- Lack of emotional connection
- Perceived gaps in program quality, innovation and/or price

WHAT WE'D LIKE THEM TO DO

- Become a member
- Champion the Y in their social circles



LEAD MESSAGE

At the Y, you will find new opportunities and the resources you need to tap into your potential, discover your purpose and connect to a community that shares and supports your health and wellness goals.

SUPPORTING MESSAGES

- As a Y member, you're doing even more than meeting your health and wellness goals—you're part of a nonprofit that is strengthening your community. From youth development to health and well-being to social responsibility, the Y creates positive change on a local level.
- The Y opens opportunities for all to improve their well-being—from youth sports to fitness to yoga, there are options for every level and every body.
- We expand access to wellness and fitness options that boost your body and mind, while our supportive community lifts your spirit.

REASONS TO BELIEVE

- Stories of impact from Y and community members
- Statistics that illustrate the benefits of an active lifestyle
- Amount of membership financial aid awarded
- Stories that showcase the Y's innovative programs
- Total numbers of health/fitness/wellness participants

CALLS TO ACTION

- Connect to your potential and your community—join the Y today
- Build community by sharing the Y with a friend
- Become a Y member and achieve your wellness goals

FAQS FROM THIS AUDIENCE

- Why should I choose the Y?
- Are programs only for members?
- Why is it so expensive?
- What if I can't afford a membership?
- What can my family do here?
- Is there a Y in my community?
- What else do you offer beyond health and fitness?

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY: WRITE YOUR OWN PROGRAM MESSAGES

Put yourself in the shoes of a decision-maker (e.g., donor/volunteer, partner, program participant, member) and imagine they're trying to choose between a Y program and one from another service provider. From this perspective, consider the features or attributes that would most influence your decision.

Some tips to consider:

- Who is my audience?
- What benefit or value does the program deliver?
- How is the Y uniquely able to meet the audience's needs?
- What are the reasons to believe our promise?
- How does the program strengthen communities?
- What action(s) do I want my audience to take?

Create your own message below...

ACTIVITY:

FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS

With the influx of social and mobile tools, platforms and applications, we are often required to reduce a message to 280 characters.

In this context, consider how you would tell the Y story in only one sentence.

To get you started, we've provided a sentence structure, which includes a prompt for explaining "who" the Y is, "what" it stands for, "how" it's different and "why" people should care.

The Y is a (what it is)...

...that (what it does)...

...by (how it does it better/differently)...

...so that (benefit) ...

CONTACT INFORMATION

All artwork and imagery used in this document is for visual reference only and should not be extracted from this PDF file.

For questions and more information, please contact **theybrand@ymca.net**.