

ABC's Guide to Starting & Implementing a Young Professionals Program



Win Work Future of ABC Educate
Industry Leaders Networking
Advancement Give Back Grow the Merit Shop
Mentor Leadership Development
Workforce Development Employee Satisfaction



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Introduction

What is ABC's National Young Professional Program?

Associated Builders and Contractors' (ABC) Nationals Young Professionals program aims to shape the future of our industry by supporting the growth of young professionals employed by ABC member companies. The program creates opportunities for young leaders to build relationships, expand their skills and advance their careers while continuing to promote open competition and the merit shop philosophy.

Why Start a Young Professionals Program?

- Adds value to an ABC membership.
- Increases the return on investment of ABC membership dues.
- Builds a more diverse membership.
- Increases the number of contacts within the chapter.
- Increases involvement within the Association among young leaders who have the potential to be ABC volunteers.
- Develops the next generation of business owners and ABC volunteer leaders.
- Gives ABC Member young professional employees the opportunity to network.
- Allow ABC to guide young professionals in building a community of industry peers.
- Offers employees career building opportunities.
- Assists in leadership development and brings fresh ideas into the chapter.
- Connect young professionals with mentors within the ABC community.
- Addresses the importance of young professionals within the construction industry.



Form a Committee

1. Recruit Committee Members

- Establish a point of contact within the chapter who will work with the Young Professionals Committee as the committee staff liaison.
- Ask 5-8 young professional employees of ABC member companies to form a Young Professionals (YP) committee or taskforce at the local chapter.
 - **Tip:** Ask active member companies or board members if they have any young professionals they would suggest for the committee.
 - **Tip:** Before creating a formal committee, the chapter and its members can create a taskforce in charge of recruiting committee members and program participants.
- The number of people assigned to the committee can vary depending on preference.

2. Assign Committee Member Roles

Each committee should have a chair and a vice chair/chair-elect. The remaining committee roles listed below are examples and suggestions for ways to divide duties among committee members but it is ultimately up to the chapter and committee to decide what roles should be assigned.

Chair: Reports to and works closely with the ABC chapter and oversees the health of the Young Professional group. The chair and the vice chair will also be in charge of membership growth and retention for the Young Professional program. The chair also should prepare and maintain the committee's agenda.

Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect: Acts as the chair's backup in case the chair is unavailable or unable to fulfill his/her duties. Will be the next chair for the committee the following year.

Treasurer
(If working with a budget) Makes sure any costs associated with events are within their budget and works with the chapter to determine event and program fees. Treasurer also should report monthly to local ABC chapter. As an alternative, this role can be rolled into the chair or vice chair's responsibilities.

Events Chair Plans regularly scheduled events. The events chair can delegate specific tasks to other but should make sure those events have the resources required and oversees the execution of all events.

- **Tip:** For large events, it is useful to create subcommittees. This encourages increased involvement from more young professionals who might not be on the committee.



Form a Committee

Advertising/Marketing Chair

Manages how events and the overall program are advertised to members and non-members. This can consist of website content, email marketing, newsletters and any other methods used to reach current members and potential members. This committee member should collect, organize and continually update the committee's marketing email list. This member also could organize a monthly YP publication or "YP Spotlight" article to incorporate in the chapter's newsletter/website.

Student Chapter Liaison

Keeps in contact with local universities and updates the Young Professional group on how to get involved with the student chapter. This also can be used to reach out to future members of the construction industry.

During this planning phase, the committee should create an outline of expectations for each participating volunteer. An example is [available on ABC's website](#).

3. Define the Committee's Mission and Goals

Once a committee has been formed and roles have been defined, the group should create a mission statement and goals for the Young Professionals program.

Mission Statement

The mission statement should answer the following questions:

1. What program is the mission statement for?
2. What is the goal of the program?
3. Who is the program for?
4. How is the program going to accomplish that goal?

ABC National's Young Professional Program's mission statement is as follows:

Associated Builders and Contractor's (ABC) National Young Professional program (**What**) aims to shape the future of our industry by supporting the growth of the young professionals that are employed by ABC member companies (**The Goal**). The program creates opportunities for young leaders (**Who**) to build relationships, expand their skills and advance their careers while continuing to promote open competition and the merit shop philosophy (**How**).

Goals

At the first committee meeting, the group should define their goals for the young professional program. Each goal should be measurable and set within a certain time frame. Under each goal, the committee should list tactics that will help accomplish them.

An example goal from the National Young Professional Program is as follows:

Create a pipeline of future leaders by engaging and developing young professionals within the industry and encouraging their involvement within the association.

Chapters who want help creating a strategic plan and goals for their young professional program can contact Donna Puglisi, puglisi@abc.org or Stephen Lewis, slewis@abc.org.

Create a Strategy

1. Define General Requirements

- Define what makes an individual eligible to either join the committee and/or be a part of the YP group. This may vary chapter to chapter.
 - **Tip:** Currently, 11 chapters who have existing YP programs limit their groups to 40 and under. Five chapters limit their groups to 35 and under and two limit their groups to 39 and under. Five chapters indicated that the age limit is not strongly enforced.
- Determine how often the committee will meet.
 - **Tip:** Committees are encouraged to have monthly meetings in person with the option to call into the meeting. Some chapters determine a set, recurring time each month that the committee will meet (i.e. 1st Thursday of every month). In addition, email or a file-sharing website such as Drop-box can be used to update each other on ongoing projects inbetween meetings.
 - **Tip:** Websites like [Doodle](#) make it easy to schedule meetings around all of the participant's schedules.
 - **Tip:** At the start of each meeting, assign someone from the committee to take minutes and distribute to the group after each meeting.

2. Recruit Young Professionals

- Create an incentive program for young professionals who come to events and/or bring others to events. Some chapters offer points for young professionals who participate in ABC events throughout the year. The young professional with the most points then receives an award or other type of reward such as a free trip to an ABC National Conference.
- Encourage active young professionals to bring others from their company to events.



Create a Strategy

- **Tip:** Offer a discount on events or free admission for YPs who bring others with them. This also could count toward points if you have an incentive program in place. Another option is to offer door prizes to the YP member who brings the most new members to a specific event.
 - **Tip:** Offer an incentive or implement a friendly competition for member companies who register the most YP's for the program or events.
- Share the young professional events with chapter board members and ask them to send a young professional from their company.
- Include information on the YP program in the chapter's new member packet.

2. Incorporate the Program With the Chapter

- Invite one member of the YP committee, most often the chair, to join the chapter's board of directors as either a voting or non-voting member. An alternate option would be to have a specific board member be the liaison between the young professional committee and the board of directors. If there is a board member working with the committee, be sure to invite them to all committee meetings.
- Appoint a chapter staff member involved with the committee to act as a liaison between the committee's work and chapter leadership. They can help to make sure the YP events fit into the chapter's overall schedule.
- Assign the young professional committee a task that will benefit the overall chapter. For example, some young professional groups are in charge of organizing and executing the chapter's community service project each year. Another option is to support the local ABC student chapter.
- Engage the YP group to get involved with other chapter or national committees and to attend overall chapter events.
- **Tip:** Try to plan at least one event per year in conjunction with an overall chapter event.
 - **Tip:** If there are other ABC chapters in your area, try to plan a joint event at least once per year.

3. Work With ABC National

- Chapters who register 10 or more young professionals for the National Young Professionals Program can do so at a discounted rate of \$25 per person instead of the regular \$50 per person rate.
- **Tip:** For chapters that charge an annual fee or tuition for their Young Professionals program, you can add on \$25 to the fee and add a year's participation in the national program as a benefit to joining the local program.



Create a Strategy

- Encourage your young professionals to get involved with the National Young Professional program to expand their network nationally and to learn about ABC on a national level.
 - **Tip:** *If a young professional joins the national program, they can participate in a peer group of YP's from across the country in similar job roles. There is also a peer group for the committee chairs of local YP programs, or chapter staff who run the chapter YP program, which discusses successes and challenges of local YP programs.*
 - **Tip:** *Participants of the national program also receive discounts to each ABC's national conferences.*
- Use the National YP logo for your branding purposes.

Learn more about ABC National's Young Professional Program at youngprofessionals.abc.org.

4. Build a Budget

The initial costs of a YP program are minimal to none at all. Many chapters sell sponsorships or cover their costs by charging a fee for each event they host; however, it's still important to remember to work with the chapter staff on budgeting. The committee should not have a separate budget from the chapter, but rather should work within the chapter's budget.

- Determine what the committee will need in order to accomplish its goals and plan its events.
- Reach out to local ABC members or local businesses for sponsorships. Chapter programs also can reach out to the ABC National YP committee for assistance in writing sponsorship opportunity packages and/or proposals.
 - **Tip:** *Sponsorships can be for the entire program year or on an event-by-event basis.*
- Consider charging a fee to cover costs.
 - **Tip:** *Make sure to work with chapter staff to avoid conflict and coordinate what companies are being contacted.*
 - **Tip:** *Consider catering and rental fees when determining event fees.*
 - **Tip:** *Include some type of incentive within the fee structure at the time the event is announced (i.e. 1 free event registration if a company registers 5 or more people for the event.)*

5. Brand the Program

- ABC National has created a logo that chapters are encouraged to use for their YP programs. Other chapters have created their own logos. If you wish to use the National YP logo, contact puglisi@abc.org.
- The chapter and YP committee should create marketing materials to promote their young professional program. These can include:
 - Flyers
 - Direct mail postcards
 - Website banners
 - Page on the chapter's website and/or newsletter dedicated to the YP program
 - Infographics
 - Brochures
 - PowerPoints
 - Social Media
 - Email signatures
- Create a social media presence including Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn groups so that your audience can stay involved with the brand. The more you get the brand image and name in front of them, the more likely they are to remember it.
 - **Tip:** Make sure you customize your social media URLs when you can so they are easy to search and recognizable.
- Promote your brand at every available opportunity and be consistent. Use your logo on every document and all marketing materials. Link to your social media sites on your website and in your email marketing. The more people see the brand, the more likely they are to remember it.

6. Develop Events

- Before planning begins, the Young Professional Committee should determine how many events per year they want to hold and what types of events should be offered.

Scheduling Events

- Coordinate with chapter staff to determine when events are scheduled to ensure that other chapter events are not scheduled at the same time as YP events.
 - **Tip:** Look to host a networking event before or after a scheduled chapter event where other members can attend and interact with YP members.
- Survey the attendees to determine what they value in a YP program and to make sure the events are meeting their needs. (i.e. networking, resume building, career development, getting involved with the association).
- Space out the events evenly throughout the year.

Create a Strategy

- **Tip:** Initially, plan at least six months of events. Also, try to mix up the types of events throughout the year. It can be beneficial to plan events at different times of the day to gauge the participation levels and see what works best for your members.

Advertising the Events

- Use a variety of marketing tactics to promote the young professional events, including direct mail, email and website marketing and cold calls.
- Reach out to active ABC members to pass the information along to peers and colleagues.
- The Young Professional Committee should interact with members at other chapter events to spread the message about the young professional events.
- Encourage members to advertise the events at their offices and to bring a peer to the events.
- Use the chapter's social media accounts to promote the events.
 - **Tip:** Remember that each social media platform has different audiences and purposes. Make sure that you are being strategic about your social media messages and that they are getting to the right people.
- Add a page or tab dedicated to the Young Professionals program to the chapter website. The committee should work with chapter staff to put all young professional events, flyers and additional information on the website.
 - **Tip:** Use this section of the website to highlight upcoming events and ways to get involved. Chapters also can have a young professional spotlight where they complete a Q&A with a different person each month.
- If your chapter has monthly or bi-monthly publication, ask chapter staff if space can be allocated regularly for the Young Professional group.

Event Best Practices

- Have a sign-in sheet on the day of the event to capture names and emails of attendees.
- Be sure there is clear signage so attendees know where to go.
- Create name tags for attendees to wear during the event including their company name.
 - **Tip:** Identify who is a committee member, a board member, or a sponsor with ribbons or clearly-marked name tags.

Create a Strategy

- Offer opportunities for attendees to get involved beyond the events.
- Allow event sponsors the opportunity to speak or introduce themselves at the event.
- A YP from the committee or someone involved in the planning of the event should welcome attendees at the beginning of the event.
 - **Tip:** During the event, have a bowl at the registration table for people to drop their business cards in so you have their current and correct contact information. You also can use those cards for a door-prize drawing.
- Email the participants after the event thanking them for attending and survey them to determine if the event met their expectations. Use this opportunity to promote upcoming events.
- Analyze attendee demographics to assist in future marketing.
- Capture testimonials of YPs during or after the event to use in marketing materials.

Types of Events

Below are sample types of events that chapters can hold for their Young Professionals programs.

Networking and Social Events

Social events provide an opportunity for young professionals to get together and network with peers in an informal setting. These events are typically offered to dues-paying members for little to no cost in an effort to encourage attendance and participation. These events can be used as a recruitment tool by offering non-members the opportunity to attend and see what the group is all about. Social events also offer the opportunity to bring all chapter members together. For example, some chapters hold a kickball game that is young professionals vs. industry veterans.

- Sports tournaments (i.e. golf, skeet shooting, cornhole, kickball, bowling)
- Holiday & seasonal events (ugly sweater parties, costume parties)
- Brewery tours
- Chili cook-off
- Happy hour
- Attend local sporting events

Educational Events

Educational events provide an opportunity for YP members to learn from experienced industry professionals and possibly earn CEU's or certifications. Depending on the speaker, certification, etc., these events may have a cost associated with them.

Create a Strategy

Types of Events

- Industry speakers
- Jobsite tours
- Technology demonstrations
- “Lessons Learned” - Invite industry veterans to share their story
- Roundtable discussions
- Meet & great with board members
- Panel discussions
- State legislative speakers

Topics for Discussion

- Cross-generational management
- Team building and communications tactics
- Understanding contractual language
- Time management
- Legislative actions
- Technology trends
- Leadership skills
- Negotiation best practices
- Professional speaking
- Productivity
- Business development & sales

Community Service Events

Volunteer events are an opportunity for ABC members to give back to the industry and community in which they work. Volunteer events can be a one-time project at some point throughout the year, or an ongoing effort of the committee. Many young professional groups take the lead on organizing their chapter’s community service efforts.

Types of Events

- Habitat for Humanity
- United Way events
- Can-struction competitions
- 5Ks
- Bowl-a-thons
- Mud runs/Tough Mudders
- Raffles

Other Events

Many young professional groups combine educational and social events. In addition, many chapters organize fundraisers as social events to support their community service projects. Another option is to get involved with the local ABC student chapter to offer them industry guidance and help them fundraise for their program.

Maintain/Grow Your Program

1. Growing Membership & Participation

- Reach out to local ABC member companies to increase awareness of the Young Professionals program and to encourage their young employees to participate.
 - **Tip:** Ask each member company to submit a list of current YP employees within their company and reach out to them directly for recruitment.
 - **Tip:** Keep track of information on employees that attend other events who might be interested in the Young Professionals program.
- Talk with younger co-workers and peers from other companies and appoint them as ambassadors for their company. Encourage them to share YP news and upcoming events with others they think might be interested.
- Set up meetings with mid-level managers in local ABC member companies to explain the benefits of the YP group so they offer contact information for their YP's and new hires.
- Advertise the program to non-ABC members as a membership recruitment tool.
- Visit local colleges who have ABC Student chapters and encourage their involvement.
 - **Tip:** If the local college does not have an ABC student chapter, reach out to local colleges and universities to see if they are interested in starting one.
- Divide the chapter's membership list list up among current YP committee members for recruitment to split up the responsibilities of recruitment.
- Encourage current YP members to write blog posts, answer Q&A's or provide testimonials on the benefits of the program to use in marketing materials.
- Pitch events to the local media whenever possible before, during, and after your events.
 - **Tip:** ABC National can provide assistance with this if needed. Contact Jeff Leieritz at leieritz@abc.org.
- Share marketing materials with current YP members so it can be displayed somewhere at their respective firms.
- Reach out to other organizations (i.e. AIA, SMPS, etc.) to take part in or host an event together.
- Take part in an ABC National peer group to discuss best practices and share ideas to increase participation in the local YP programs. Visit youngprofessionals.abc.org to sign up for the National YP Program and to find out more about the national peer groups.

Information

ABC National Young Professional Committee

Zak Wolpert
2015 Committee Chair

Kinsley Construction; York, Penn.
ABC Keystone Chapter
zwolpert@rkinsley.com

Brandon Mabile
2015 Committee Vice-Chair

Performance Contractors; Houston, Texas
ABC Greater Houston Chapter
brandonm@performance-contractors.com

Scott Cox
2015 Committee Member

Cox Fire Protection; Tampa, Fla.
ABC Florida Gulf Coast & Florida First Coast Chapters
scott@coxfire.com

David Turcios
2015 Committee Member

Nielson, Wojtowicz, Neu & Associates; Tampa, Fla.
ABC Florida Gulf Coast Chapter
dturcios@nielsonbonds.com

Ryan Glynn
2015 Committee Member

Starcon, a Cianbro Company; New Lenox, Ill.
ABC Illinois Chapter
rglynn@starcon.org

Jake Williams
2015 Committee Member

CPM Construction; Indianapolis, Ind.
ABC Indiana/Kentucky Chapter
jdw@cpmconstruction.com

Charity Hughes
2015 Committee Member

ABC Utah Chapter; N Salt Lake, Utah
charity.hughes@abcutah.org

Donna Puglisi
Committee National Staff Liaison

ABC National; Washington, D.C.
puglisi@abc.org

Tiffany Brightwell
Committee Chapter President Liaison

ABC North Alabama Chapter
tiffany@abcnalabama.org

Vance Fulkerson
Committee Executive Committee Liaison

Lithko Contracting, Inc.; Nashville, Tenn.
ABC Executive Committee Southeast Region Vice Chair
brandonm@performance-contractors.com

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