Position Guide

Chief Executive Officer

www.youthopportunity.org
MISSION

Y.O.U. is a youth development agency that provides services and leadership to meet the emerging needs of young people and their families in our community.

“BIG GOAL”

Y.O.U. closes the opportunity gap by preparing youth for post-secondary and life success.

CORE VALUES

We believe all youth are capable of high levels of academic, social and emotional success. We strive to expand their sense of what’s possible and help them realize their fullest potential.

We build meaningful, trusting relationships. We collaborate with our partners, friends, families and one another to provide equitable opportunities for youth.

We are committed to ongoing learning for youth and our organization. We are never idle or satisfied and believe that ongoing adaptation and improvement is essential to personal and organizational success.

We embrace diversity and treat all people with respect and dignity. We are inclusive and supportive of all identities and seek to understand and address systemic injustices in our communities.

ABOUT Y.O.U.

Youth & Opportunity United is a comprehensive youth development organization located in Evanston, Illinois, a north suburb of Chicago. Established in 1971, Y.O.U. works to ensure every young person has the opportunity to succeed by working with families, schools, and community partners to provide a wholistic level of support where it is most needed, closing the gap between youth and opportunity. Y.O.U has an annual budget of approximately $4.5M, and a full- and part-time staff of approximately 80 people, of which about 25 are hired annually through Americorps. Y.O.U. is governed by an active, engaged, 24-member Board of Directors, and also benefits from its Associate Board, which consists of individuals appointed
to serve in an advisory capacity, as well as from the advice and counsel of community members who serve on standing committees and work groups.

The last five years have been exciting at Y.O.U. as it has grown the scale and strategy of its core programs to meet the needs of young people in our community. Y.O.U. now serves over 1,600 youth and reaches over 4,000 family members through three integrated strategies:

- Advance youth success through after school and summer learning programs
- Build youth resilience through clinical counseling and supports
- Catalyze parent networks and engage families in their children’s learning

**Advance Youth Success**
Y.O.U.'s Out-of-School Time (OST) Program offers a “high expectations, high support” pathway to post-secondary and life success. The Program is offered at the eleven public schools across Evanston and Niles Townships. Students in grades 3–12 can attend daily for 36 weeks during the school year and eight weeks during the summer. Y.O.U. provides free, high quality learning, social-emotional and academic enrichment, and trauma-informed support services that help youth grow in four areas: skills and knowledge, self-regulation, mindsets, and values.

Y.O.U. supports students in their current academic work and encourages youth to explore new outlets for creativity and learning. In an ever-changing and increasingly technology-based world, science, technology, engineering, and math are key areas for exposure and skill development. At Y.O.U., youth are introduced to STEM learning through fun and engaging programming and partnerships with science-based organizations. For example, the Museum of Science and Industry provides robust curriculum for elementary age programs, and LEGO League, EvanSTEM, and Northwestern's Science in Society Program have all established a presence in Y.O.U. elementary and middle school programs. High school students experiment in the innovative Makerspace in Y.O.U.’s main building in the 5th Ward.

Recognizing the pivotal transition from middle to high school in determining post-secondary and life success, Y.O.U. supports rising ETHS freshmen through the PEER summer bridge program. Cohorts meet for eight weeks, increase their knowledge and expectations of high school, build critical time management and study skills, improve their financial literacy, and develop aspirational goals for high school and beyond.

Across our programs, Y.O.U. youth participate in activities that build healthy relationships, communication and teamwork skills, and social-emotional coping strategies. For example, in Future Outdoor Explorers (FOX), elementary and middle-schoolers learn outdoor education skills while building social-emotional competencies. Y.O.U. utilizes an age-appropriate curriculum to teach healthy boundaries and healthy relationships, and increase youth awareness and access to other resources, such as health care providers.

**Build Youth Resilience**
Y.O.U.’s Clinical and Outreach Team provides integrated, trauma-informed mental health counseling, case management, and 24-7 housing crisis intervention to build the resilience of youth.
The Y.O.U. clinical and outreach team meets youth in all their environments, delivering integrated, trauma-informed services within our OST Program and linking disconnected youth to local resources and agencies. Y.O.U. does not limit these practices to individual counseling, but instead incorporates them into every aspect of programming.

Y.O.U. clinicians create a safe, informal environment for youth to engage in trauma-informed and equity-based practices. Weekly Safer Space meetings provide an opportunity for LGBTQ youth to discuss the unique issues they face with the support of trained staff. In addition, staff leads discussions on adolescent health and safety both as part of our OST programming and in the broader community.

The Street Outreach Program is a year-round support for homeless, runaway, and disconnected youth. The purpose of the Street Outreach Program is to directly connect with youth who are in unstable or unsafe environments. Y.O.U. clinicians counsel youth and work collaboratively with community partners, such as Connections for the Homeless, The Moran Center, Curt’s Cafe, City of Evanston, and the Youth Job Center, who are helping to connect youth to housing, education, employment, and healthcare.

**Catalyze Parent Networks**
Y.O.U. supports strong parent networks through quarterly family nights, parent educational opportunities, and caregiver support groups. Caregivers have a chance to learn about their child’s social-emotional learning in Y.O.U. programming and ways to best support that development in the home. Family nights are supplemented by site-specific support groups and parental networking opportunities that allow parents to meet others and establish a support network that benefits their children.

Y.O.U. also supports parent leaders through an eight-week leadership training program and employs parents as outreach specialists who support programming that encourages parental involvement at two Evanston middle schools.

**Closing the Opportunity Gap**
The impact of Y.O.U. is reflected in the achievement and improved self-confidence of youth it works with every day.

- 93% of youth report greater confidence
- 85% of youth are improving or maintaining their academic achievement
- 88% of caregivers feel more involved in their child’s learning
- 96% of youth report strong academic motivation
- 91% of youth demonstrate strong leadership skills
- 94% of Y.O.U. youth report knowing how to make healthy choices

**THE OPPORTUNITY**

Y.O.U. has experienced significant growth over the past 5 years, expanding to serve schools outside of Evanston and deepening its impact across all program areas. The past several years have been focused on strengthening the impact and quality of Y.O.U. programs to ensure the dual goals of creating a more cohesive and collaborative program model that integrates the core strategies (Advance, Build, Catalyze) across Y.O.U. while ensuring the organization’s capacity and systems are aligned to produce consistent and quality results for the children Y.O.U. serves.
The CEO of Y.O.U. will have the opportunity to build a more comprehensive strategy for implementing the core programming in its effort to Advance, Build, and Catalyze. As Y.O.U. strengthens its programming and further integrates academic achievement, social-emotional enrichment, and mental health wellness, the CEO will help the organization define its core impact and outline key evaluation methods to ensure each child engaged in programming is advancing Y.O.U.’s “Big Goal”.

As a thoughtful, creative, engaged community leader on the issues confronting youth in Evanston and Niles Township, the CEO will have the opportunity to play a critical role in shaping the broad, systemic conversations required for children and youth to thrive. The CEO will work with civic, non-profit, education, and community leaders to not only carefully implement the programming of Y.O.U. but to serve as a voice on the issues of equity, inclusion, and achievement for youth in Evanston and the North Suburban area.

The new leader of this historic, nearly 50-year-old community organization that continues to evolve and change, will have the unique opportunity to engage Board, staff, donors, participants, and partners in a broad discussion about the vision for Y.O.U. in its next era of service to the community. Strategizing, communicating and executing the new ways in which Y.O.U.’s strong mission will be delivered in the future will be a primary goal of the organization in the years ahead.

POSITION SUMMARY

The CEO is responsible for the overall leadership of the organization, ensuring delivery of the highest quality services while safeguarding its financial stability. As the leader of the organization, the CEO reports to the Board of Directors and is responsible for: implementing a sound strategic plan to address the growing needs of Y.O.U. and its community; representing the organization as its key spokesperson and chief fundraiser; developing and managing the organization’s overall finances; collaborating with other leaders and decision makers in the broader civic, education, business, youth development and human services community of Evanston, Niles Township, Chicago and the region; providing the vision to address future challenges and opportunities; managing and leading the staff and fostering an organizational climate to develop and build staff competencies and equitable policies and practices; and supporting innovation and strengthening community.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

Leadership Characteristics
We seek a proven leader whose passion for service is demonstrated by a genuine dedication to improving the lives of children and youth. She/he/they will approach the work in an inspirational, visionary, passionate manner that is authentic, trustworthy, innovative and resilient. Driven by relationships and building meaningful connections across multiple groups (youth, families, staff, donors, partners, communities), the ideal candidate will have an effective, transparent and direct communication style with a culturally competent, equity mindset grounded in a deep understanding of the challenges experienced in marginalized communities.

Leading with respect and active listening, the ideal candidate will be a dynamic, high-energy partner with experience in, and an enthusiasm for, community engagement. A confident, non-hierarchical leader who is also flexible and humble, and views all involved in the organization through an asset/strengths-based lens, will be important. She/he/they will be a strong strategic thinker with a collaborative, engaging approach to decision making that reflects the core values
of Y.O.U. and the communities it serves. The ideal candidate is a responsive and accessible leader, capable of connecting with all aspects of the organization through strong interpersonal skills.

Professional Skills
We seek a leader who has experience working with youth and encouraging their achievement through community engagement, programming, and support. The ideal candidate will have experience in education, youth engagement, social-emotional learning, restorative justice, and/or services benefiting positive development for children. Direct experience with the age group Y.O.U. serves is preferred. She/he/they will have deep strategic planning experience, with proven leadership in assisting an organization to fulfill its mission.

The candidate will have strong comfort with and proven experience in fundraising and resource development on behalf of a non-profit institution. Exceptional candidates will exhibit fundraising experience with individual donors, institutional grantmakers, as well as resource generation through public agencies. Financial management experience of a complex budget with significant diversity in revenue streams, as well as experience in forecasting and long-term financial planning, is required.

As a team-building, inspirational internal leader, she/he/they will have significant staff management experience, with a focus on values-based leadership and professional development. Experience engaging, supporting and energizing younger staff and nurturing their development as professionals is highly desired. Experience working in a collaborative and transparent manner with an active, committed Board of Directors and/or Associate Board is preferred.

Experience with public speaking in multiple venues with diverse audiences is highly desired. The ideal candidate will have experience building positive relationships with public agencies and officials, and effectively communicating the mission, values and impact of youth engagement in the civic community. Excellent written and oral skills are required.

Additional Attributes
An understanding of the history and dynamics of the Evanston and Skokie communities is a plus, but not required. A desire to enthusiastically engage with communities in which Y.O.U. is involved is essential. Understanding of trauma-informed care is a plus; the ability to connect with the experiences of youth Y.O.U. serves is highly desired.

Education
A bachelor’s degree from an accredited academic institution is preferred. Evidence of continuing education, certification or training is desirable.

Y.O.U. is committed to creating a diverse team environment and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, or veteran status.

To apply, please submit a current resume and letter of introduction to Kittleman & Associates, LLC at https://ww2.kittlemansearch.com/Jobs

For more information about Youth & Opportunity United, visit www.youthopportunity.org