

# Sustainable Young Adult Ministry

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# Sample Launch Plan for a Next Generation Leadership Academy

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*This working document was designed by Ministry Architects consultant Chris Sasser, who implemented it at Port City Community Church in Wilmington, North Carolina.*

**Purpose:** To help young adults develop their God-given potential for leadership and ministry in and through our congregation.

**Design:** The Next Generation Leadership Academy (NGLA) encompasses a variety of training components—informational, experiential, and relational. The program is designed to be implemented during the school year. Based on that model, the following types of tasks and responsibilities are assigned to specific months.

- BLACK = General
- RED = Launch Team Tasks
- BLUE = Mentoring Process
- GREEN = Marketing

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## Month 1 (December or six to eight months before launch)

- Prayerfully recruit a team of four or five people to serve as the initial planning and launch team for NGLA.
- Set an orientation meeting with this group to agree on the program's details. These people don't all need to be involved in

the hands-on implementation of the program, but they do need to have a heart for young adult leadership development.

### **Month 2 (January)**

- Have an initial meeting or two of the launch team to begin determining the following:
  - mission statement and program goals
  - program name
  - design elements of the program (meetings, mentoring, trips to Global Leadership Conference, etc.)
  - potential curriculum/teaching plan
  - facilitators/teachers
  - target audience
  - group size
  - possible leadership books to incorporate into the program

### **Month 3 (February)**

- Meet with the church's senior leadership to make sure they understand the scope and mission of NGLA and to get their blessing. (Don't underestimate the importance of this step!)
- Determine the best communication and marketing strategies, including:
  - branding/marketing plan
  - invitation plan
  - overall church awareness/buy-in plan

### **Month 4 (March)**

- Create an application process and set an application deadline.
- Continue working through items from the first meeting and any additional things that may have come up.
- Set the calendar for the first semester of NGLA.

- Make sure the application is clear about expectations of program participants.
- Allow three to four weeks for potential participants to apply.
- If applicable, create a logo and branding for NGLA to use in advertising and all print and media for the program.
- Begin advertising NGLA through the relevant channels and make applications available.

### **Month 5 (April)**

- Receive applications and make acceptance decisions.
- Continue meeting to track progress and readiness for launch.
- If involving mentors, begin building a potential mentor list from your church or community.
- Send an email or letter to potential mentors, inviting them to a mentor interest meeting to learn more.

### **Month 6 (May)**

- Have a mentor-interest meeting to share expectations and answer questions.
- Give potential mentors a few weeks to pray about whether they're willing to get involved.
- Solidify a final list of potential mentors and have them fill out a "mentor information sheet" listing job experience, hobbies, and family (for the purpose of matching with participants).
- Hold a launch team meeting to continue working through the process.

### **Month 7 (June)**

- Hold a final launch team meeting to finalize the curriculum, teaching plan, and calendar for the first semester, as well as to deal with any other issues.

### **Months 8-9 (July-August)**

- Build participant notebooks to hand out the first night of NGLA, including:
  - mission and vision of the program
  - student expectations sheet
  - semester schedule
  - any relevant curriculum handouts
  - blank pages for notes (10 to 20)
- Order the first leadership book for all participants.
- Send out welcome letter or email to participants, giving them the full fall schedule and reminding them about the first meeting.
- [Develop an NGLA mentor training manual.](#)
- [Complete the mentor training.](#)

### **Month 10 (September)**

- Hold the first meeting of the newly formed NGLA group (best done in a home or casual environment with a meal). Make sure it includes:
  - dinner and laughter
  - introduction of the people and program
  - review of expectations
  - review of curriculum (briefly)
  - prayer for the program
- [If using mentors, have students each fill out a “what I want in a mentor” sheet, either at a meeting or online.](#)
- [A few weeks into the meetings, hold a Mentor Match Night, where mentors are invited to join the Academy for one night. Have a meal and determine a fun way to reveal who’s matched together. After the meal, let student-mentor pairs spend the](#)

remaining time together, getting to know one another and planning their next time to meet.

**Month 11 (October)**

- Hold a meeting of the launch team (plus any new key players) to evaluate the program's launch and to make plans for the next semester.
- Transition the launch team into a more formal leadership team that can take ongoing ownership of the program.
- Schedule regular meetings to review progress and make changes as needed.

**Month 12 (November)**

- Review the Academy's progress and confirm a plan outlining the goals, curriculum, and calendar for the second semester.

**Month 13 (December)**

- For the last meeting of the semester, have a dinner to celebrate all that God has done. Pray together for next steps.
- Have students fill out evaluations, either at the meeting or online.
- Invite students to consider joining the program for a second semester.
- Create a monthly Preventive Maintenance Calendar for the leadership team to use in monthly meetings, helping to ensure the program is always moving on pace.

# Ministry Job Descriptions

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## *Young Adult Ministry Team Leader*

### **Job Description**

***Purpose:*** The purpose of the Young Adult Ministry Team Leader is to provide oversight, guidance, and shepherding to the church's Young Adult Ministry.

***Qualifications:*** Any leader of a ministry to the next generation should have experience building teams, creating relational ministry environments, developing leaders and coaching, and administering ongoing ministry—as well as a heart to engage the culture of the next generation.

### **Primary Responsibilities**

***Equipping a ministry team.*** The team leader regularly works toward equipping an array of volunteers to handle all aspects of the ministry, including administration and planning, relationship building, missions, service, leadership, and more. This person won't need to be the charismatic center of the ministry because they will have engaged many leaders throughout.

***Facilitating an environment for success.*** The team leader regularly evaluates the ministry, observes, and implements next steps needed for continued success. The team leader regularly

solicits feedback and is proactive about finding solutions to ministry roadblocks.

***Fostering a relationally connective environment.*** The team leader regularly fosters relational connections in the volunteer and leadership teams as well as in the overall ministry with young adults. The team leader's goal isn't to be the main relational connection but the connector from one person to the next. This person is always looking to connect young adults with other leaders and mentors.

***Ensuring effective ministry systems.*** The team leader ensures that all ministry systems are running smoothly, including the following:

- young adult database
- ministry calendar
- communications and marketing strategy
- volunteer recruitment and training systems
- visioning and goal setting
- discipleship, outreach, and missions strategies
- programming and major event strategies
- financial and compliance systems
- integration within the life and leadership of the church
- strategies for innovation and creativity



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## *Young Adult Ministry Team*

### **Job Description**

***Purpose:*** The purpose of the Young Adult Ministry Team is to be the first wave of people in our church in reaching and investing in young adults and college students.

- Collaborate to oversee the long-term development of a thriving young adult ministry in our church.

### **Primary Expectations**

- Invest in relationships. Spend time with young adults, inviting them for dinner and having coffee with them, all outside of structured programming.
- Facilitate friendships. Introduce young adults to people of other generations in the church.
- Take the long view. Be prepared to work this process with the team for at least three years.
- Show up. Become a regular presence at young adult ministry opportunities and events.
- Provide guidance. Engage with young adults in a way that helps them through this phase of life.
- Reciprocate. Be willing to learn and receive from young adults, not just teach and give. Move beyond a transactional top-down relationship into a reciprocal, side-by-side relationship.

# Creating a Sending Culture and Launching Rituals

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## *Celebrating a Sending Culture in Your Young Adult Ministry*

Healthy ministry leaders own the reality that most young adults (especially college students) who come through their ministries won't stick around for more than a few years.

Rather than treating this reality as an obstacle, it's possible to turn this challenge into a profound momentum-builder for your ministry. Well-chosen rituals powerfully mark young adults' transition from your ministry, not just as moves or losses but as launching points for them to step more faithfully into their calling in a different location. You can embed a *sending culture* into your church simply by intentionally celebrating young adults who are leaving and commissioning them into faithful service in their next calling.

Young adults will leave your church for all kinds of reasons you can celebrate. Here's how you can capture and commission these potential missionaries:

***Step 1. Determine the kinds of "leavings" your church will celebrate. Examples include:***

- students who graduate college and move
- those who take a job and move to a different town
- those who move into a new job in the same town
- those who spend the summer working at a camp or mission
- those who join a mission organization and move overseas
- those who get married and move away
- those who accept an internship
- college students who study abroad
- college students who transfer schools
- young adults who buy a first home and move to a new neighborhood
- those who join another church or ministry team

Celebratable transition points can include a wide variety of circumstances that might be cause for young adults to also transition out of your ministry. An appropriate celebration highlights the reality that the change can and should be seen as a calling for that person to serve in a new sphere of relationships.

***Step 2. Find a way to capture upcoming transitions.*** Periodically ask the congregation to submit any upcoming transitions to a particular email address. Note anytime you have a database change. Assign someone on your team to call church families with young adults to alert you to any upcoming transitions. But clearly, the easiest way to track transitions is for someone on your team to know each young adult in the church well enough to alert you to any upcoming transitions.

***Step 3. Publicly celebrate and commission young adults who are experiencing transitions.*** Make these rituals a regular practice in worship services, on your website, in bulletin announcements, or in other programs as appropriate. Use a simple, brief, and memorable way to publicly highlight young adult transitions, and name

those moves as callings into ministry and mission in the person's new context. Be sure to pray for the young adults being sent into the world.

***Step 4. Keep track of and tell stories.*** Collect, share, and archive the ministry stories of young adults who've left your church. You can share these through a sermon illustration, a minute for mission, a video, a newsletter article, or a personal testimony. By making this type of storytelling a natural part of your ministry, you establish a running tally of people you send. In addition, you periodically remind the congregation what a vital ministry focus the church has.

# United Church of Christ Young Adult Study

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*Faith Communities Today (FACT), 2015*

Does your congregation have any of the following groups, programs, or activities that are specifically intended for young adults?  
If yes, how much emphasis is given to each?

Worship service(s) specifically for young adults	No	89.5 percent
	Some Emphasis	7.1 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	2.6 percent
	Specialty	0.7 percent
Prayer, meditation groups, or spiritual retreats	No	86.4 percent
	Some Emphasis	11.5 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	2.1 percent
	Specialty	0 percent
Scripture study groups/ classes	No	77.4 percent
	Some Emphasis	17.2 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	4.8 percent
	Specialty	0.7 percent

Theology of contemporary issues study groups/classes	No	84.6 percent
	Some Emphasis	12.3 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	2.8 percent
	Specialty	0.3 percent
Fellowship groups	No	71 percent
	Some Emphasis	19.9 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	7 percent
	Specialty	2.1 percent
Singles groups	No	97 percent
	Some Emphasis	2.4 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	0.3 percent
	Specialty	0.2 percent
Pre-engagement dating groups/classes	No	98.4 percent
	Some Emphasis	1.4 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	0.2 percent
	Specialty	0 percent
Engagement/premarital groups/classes	No	84.6 percent
	Some Emphasis	10.5 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	4.2 percent
	Specialty	0.7 percent
Marriage groups/classes	No	92.5 percent
	Some Emphasis	5.9 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	1.4 percent
	Specialty	0.1 percent
Parenting groups/classes	No	90.2 percent
	Some Emphasis	7.8 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	2.0 percent
	Specialty	0 percent

Recreational, sports, or other physical activity groups	No	84.2 percent
	Some Emphasis	12.5 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	2.8 percent
	Specialty	0.5 percent
Community service activities	No	62 percent
	Some Emphasis	25.5 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	8.7 percent
	Specialty	3.7 percent
Mission trips/travel groups	No	76.4 percent
	Some Emphasis	16 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	5.8 percent
	Specialty	1.7 percent
Social justice engagement	No	78.9 percent
	Some Emphasis	15.0 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	4.5 percent
	Specialty	1.5 percent
Web or social media sites	No	69.7 percent
	Some Emphasis	21.0 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	7.6 percent
	Specialty	1.8 percent
Other	No	93.6 percent
	Some Emphasis	0.9 percent
	A Lot of Emphasis	1.1 percent
	Specialty	1.7 percent

# Change-the-World Missional Laboratory Launch Plan

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**Overview:** The *idea* of creating a Missional Laboratory for young adults can feel overwhelming for churches that have never tried it. And the complexity is enough to keep most churches from ever trying it.

This approach is, of course, radically different from the “start a young adult fellowship group and announce it to the congregation” method that’s been the normal starting point for almost every church with a failing young adult ministry. This approach begins with mission and allows any age-specific programming for young adults to be driven by young adults themselves.

This document breaks the process into achievable benchmarks that let your church, over time, have a space that not only attracts young adults but also multiplies their investment, creativity, and passion back into your community and the larger world.

***Step 1. Start small.*** As you begin, focus on a single project with a group of young adults rather than multiple projects at the same time.

***Step 2. Define the unique characteristics of your Missional Laboratory.*** You’ll need to answer the following questions about the laboratory you’re creating:



- How will young adults be selected?
- What are the minimum and maximum size for a team (e.g., at least three people, not more than eight)?
- What does the laboratory provide—mentors, a collaborative meeting space, training, resources?
- What are the expectations of the church? For example, will the people leading this enterprise come from the current membership or be involved in church life?
- How long does the relationship last? How does it start? How does it end?
- Will any funds from the church be required, and if so, how much? (We recommend keeping this number as low as possible in the start-up phase. You don't want your laboratory to go out of business before it starts because the church doesn't have the money to sustain the venture).
- What's the plan for managing the incubation process? At first you'll need to beta test an approach and iterate from there. You may start with monthly check-ins and find that's too much or too little. You may start with mentors taking a hands-off approach and find the process requires more guidance.
- How will mentors be trained into the foundational DNA of the Missional Laboratory?
- What will the orientation include? For example:
  - how the laboratory fits into the church's mission
  - introduction of mentors
  - schedule of reports and meetings
  - use of shared space
  - what's expected of each young adult in the program
  - how the various social entrepreneurs will collaborate

- how new young adults will be engaged through each enterprise
- what bridge will invite laboratory participants (and the volunteers they recruit to be involved in their enterprises) into church life

**Step 3. Build a launch team with young adults.** Once you have a sense of the passions and callings of young adults around you, it's time to assemble a team of people who are interested in helping to launch a missional venture with young adults. This team will invest for the next year, supporting young adults in the process of incubating a missional initiative of their own.

Recruit a group of three to seven young adults to join your existing team in developing a new missional venture. Also recruit the following volunteers with the understanding that their responsibilities won't begin until the launch of the Missional Laboratory:

- mentors to provide support for the young adults incubating their own change-the-world ideas
- people with expertise in law, accounting, financial projections, entrepreneurship, business management, project management, social enterprise, sales, and marketing who are willing to be called on by these young adults
- someone connected to the official structure of your church who can help interpret and offer progress reports to the church's leadership team

**Step 4. Determine your project.** Before launching a Missional Laboratory, determine the specific first project you'll focus on. Ideally, it will have grown out of the passions of one or more of the young adults you've invited to be part of the Missional Laboratory.

**Step 5. Launch the first cohort for your Missional Laboratory.** Now that you have your first class, you're ready to launch. We

suggest beginning the first year with just one project, but eventually you may be able to incubate multiple projects at the same time.

- Hold an orientation and introduce the process, the participants, and the mentors.
- Begin to work the laboratory process your team has designed.
- Remember that the mission, not a specific young adult program you create at church, is the magnet.
- It's possible that one of the first initiatives may focus on creatively engaging young adults in church life, but this isn't necessary for the launch of a successful laboratory.
- Once your first class of social entrepreneurs has completed the process, launch the next laboratory cohort, integrating all you've learned from the beta testing with the first group.
- Identify volunteer needs for the mission(s) you're incubating in the laboratory. Reach out to young adults in the community to invite more to participate. (Hands On is a program in many cities that serves as a clearinghouse for young adults who want to volunteer and serve in the community.)

# Case Study for Next Generation Leadership Academy

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*The Leadership Journey*  
By Chris Sasser

I remember the first time I walked into the room. It was filled with college students gathered for a night of worship and teaching at my new church, Port City Community Church in Wilmington, North Carolina. I'd been hired as the director of student ministries, and this was a group I'd get to work with.

As I watched, I couldn't help but think of the unbelievable potential in that room. I had already met some of the students and was very impressed. The ministry was full of natural leaders who were waiting for someone to take them farther down the leadership path.

During the next year or so, the college director and I began brainstorming ways of investing in this group in a different way. We gathered a small group of adults to talk, and after months of dreaming, planning, and praying, the Leadership Journey was born.

The following is a description of what it looks like:

We start the Leadership Journey by asking students to go through an application process. It happens in the spring before the program begins, and we accept only rising juniors and seniors.

The application process lets us know about each student's life, faith, and leadership ambitions. The process not only helps us get to know young adults better but also helps us discern whether they're ready and able to live out the required commitments of the Leadership Journey. When a student isn't accepted into the program, we commit to walking with them in different ways and to helping them hopefully apply again in the future.

Once our group is set, we spend the summer preparing for the launch of the Journey in the fall. We tweak the curriculum, line up presenters, and pray for the new group.

In August, we kick it all off with a casual dinner, taking time to build relationships and share more details about the program. It's a great way to set a relational tone for the entire process.

In September, we begin meeting weekly on Sunday nights. Meetings start with a meal and table conversations. Adults within the church who love serving college students provide the food. Afterward, we jump into the content for the night and spend about an hour and a half in leadership development.

For the first several weeks, we have students look back at their life, which helps them discern more about the kind of leader God is molding them to be. They each build a time line and identify key moments in their spiritual journey. This powerful exercise helps students see a clearer picture of their own leadership journey. For the remainder of the school year, we cover key Bible passages and read great leadership books to help students discern their own leadership style and potential.

Early in the process, we link each student with a mentor. At the beginning of the semester, we spend several weeks identifying

adults in our church who might be ready and willing to invest in the life of a college student.

We invite a slate of potential mentors to an interest meeting and share with them the program's vision as well as expectations for mentors. Many of these people are older church members who have much to offer. We give them a few weeks to pray about whether or not this is a good fit for them.

At the same time, we ask students to write about the type of mentor they desire. Once we choose our mentors, we do our best to match them with students (males with males, females with females).

On one of our first Sunday nights, we have fun unveiling the student-mentor pairs. The whole thing feels like a combination of the dating game and the sorting hat in *Harry Potter*. We ask mentors to meet with students a minimum of once every two weeks, simply listening, encouraging, and challenging. Many of these relationships grow into much more as students and mentors live into the powerful surprise of different generations connecting deeply.

Throughout the Journey, students have many practical leadership opportunities. They lead within the college program as well as in different ministries of our church. We coach them and help them navigate the ups and downs of leadership.

Students who've been part of the Journey for their junior year of college have the opportunity to return for year two as a senior. These students get to help *lead* a program as well as dive deeper into the church and learn more about what it means to be in vocational ministry.

The Leadership Journey has had a tremendous impact—not only on college students but on our entire church family. Young adults are launching into the world with a better understanding of what it means to lead out of a clearer sense of God's calling. They're also more prepared to navigate the difficult waters of life and leadership ahead of them.

The Journey has energized our church as well, infusing energy from young leaders into various ministries and bringing greater vitality to mentors. More often than not, mentors end their Journey year acknowledging how much *they* have grown as leaders through the process.

The Journey has become essential to the fabric of our church. Every year we look forward to the new young leaders who will be molded to serve in the next chapter of God's mission.

# Young Adult Intentional Relationship Plan Tracking Sheet

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**Rationale.** A key factor in reaching young adults is understanding the world they live in. This requires other generations to think and work like foreign missionaries, engaging this new culture with an attitude of curiosity and wonder. The first step requires your team to engage young adults and college students intentionally.

The game plan outlined here provides a structured process for how your team can deliberately invest time getting to know, praying for, and tracking contact with the young adults in your world.

**Step 1. Build a contact list.** Each person on the team writes down the names of ten to fifteen young adults and college students they can make regular contact with. These can be family members, workplace connections, church acquaintances, and more. Think creatively about where young adults are present in your life. Though each person starts with ten to fifteen people, the goal is that each month more names are added to the list as new young adults cross the path of team members.

**Step 2. Pray through the list.** Every team member makes a habit of praying for the young adults on this list at least weekly. They seek to discern through God's eyes the next most faithful step in connecting with each person.



**Step 3. Create a regular habit of connection.** Make a goal to connect with at least two young adults or college students per week. These contacts can be quick check-ins, such as an encouraging text message (e.g., “Just wanted you to know I’m praying for you today”) or a more formal meeting you set up (e.g., “I’m in a group at church that’s working on young adult ministry, and I’d love to pick your brain about a few things”).

**Step 4. Learn about young adults through their eyes.** Ask questions of your young adult friends. Work hard to get a sense of the world through their perspective, listening for ways you might support and encourage them. Often you’ll want to take notes on what you learn. Almost everyone enjoys being an expert, and young adults are the world’s greatest experts when it comes to their own experience and viewpoint.

**Step 5. Compare notes.** Each time you meet as a Young Adult Ministry Team, share what you’ve learned from your young adult friends, and use those learnings as prompts for prayer together.

**Step 6. Maintain regular accountability.** Keep a regular rhythm of accountability on your team, spending time in each meeting checking in on everyone’s contacts, tracking those contacts on the tracking sheet, and sharing plans for who each team member will contact in the coming month.



# Volunteer Recruitment and Training

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Volunteer recruitment season typically opens each February. By this time, it's also ideal to have a skeleton ministry calendar (at least with major events) nailed down for the following ministry year.

Our experience is that working on a September through August calendar fits with the natural rhythms of the lives of most young adults, though a January through December calendar may work just as well or better in your context. If you choose January through December, begin your recruitment season in June.

Here are several reasons to start recruiting seven months before you need volunteers:

1. You want volunteers nailed down a couple of months before they are to begin serving. So with a September through August calendar, you'll want all volunteers in place by July 1. This allows time for communicating expectations, setting up one-on-one meetings, and giving team members time to get to know each other.
2. A longer lead time for recruiting assumes you'll have quite a number of people who say no, giving you time to regroup and talk to a variety of prospects.
3. By recruiting early, you communicate that the role is important and is the kind of job no one should try to take on without prayerful discernment.

We recommend the following process:

***Step 1. Review current volunteer positions and job descriptions.***

- Update your list of all current volunteer positions based on needs for the coming ministry year.
  - small-group leaders
  - mentors
  - event coordinators
  - food coordinators
- Get feedback from current volunteers on whether the job description fits accurately.
- Update the specific volunteer job descriptions to reflect the current reality of what each job entails.

***Step 2. Create the fishing pond.***

- Gather key leaders in the ministry areas to brainstorm new potential volunteers and create an overall fishing pond of potential volunteers.
- Avoid eliminating anyone who might be a good prospect. For example, don't say, "Well, maybe we shouldn't ask Jane because she's already involved in so much at church." Even if she says no, you'll get on her radar that you'd like her to consider working in the young adult ministry at some point.

***Step 3. Organize your list of potential volunteers.***

- First, divide the names on your list into three categories: hands-on weekly volunteers, behind-the-scenes volunteers, and people who could do both.
- For each list, categorize the volunteers into groups A, B, and C.
  - A = your top choices
  - B = people who could do a fine job
  - C = people who might do in a pinch

***Step 4. Merge your lists of needs and names.***

- Take the list of needs (step 1) and create a blank for each role to fill.
- Using the list of names (step 3), place one name in each blank, starting with people you've categorized with an A.

***Step 5. Smile and dial.***

- Generally, we recommend that a single person run point on all the recruiting. Others can make follow-up calls, but it usually takes longer (and is less effective) if a committee of callers does the recruiting.
- Gather the most recent contact information for all prospective volunteers.
- Have the volunteer job descriptions handy for any roles you're inviting people to fill.
- When someone says no, ask if they are interested in serving in a different capacity or at a later time.
- If the answer is still no, say you'll call back in about six months with an update on the young adult ministry and to see if the person might be willing to partner with it another way then.
- If someone says yes or maybe, let them know you'll send them a copy of the job description draft for their input.
- Follow up with each yes or maybe with a face-to-face meeting to launch the process.
- Track progress on your master needs list. As the process continues, you should have fewer and fewer blanks and more names of volunteers.

***Step 6. Continue the follow-up work weekly.***

- At least weekly, go through the list of master needs (created in step 4). Remove the names of people who've said no and

add the name of a new prospective volunteer into each slot on the needs list.

- At least weekly, follow up with people who haven't yet responded to your calls or emails. Realize that with some people, as many as eight contacts might be necessary before you hear back.

# Preventive Maintenance Calendar

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**Purpose:** After you've established a ministry with young adults, it's important to identify the regular patterns and rhythms in the year that keep the trains running on time. A Preventive Maintenance Calendar is a tool that prompts ministry leaders to tend to foundational issues regularly.

This working document is intended to serve as a reminder of routine tasks to be accomplished at basically the same time each year by the staff and key volunteers. Like a document you might use for preventive maintenance on your house (e.g., clean the gutters every August, change the HVAC filters every quarter, etc.), this document provides a quick glance at which tasks need attention in any given month. In fact, once a year, you'll want to schedule "update the Preventive Maintenance Calendar" into the Preventive Maintenance Calendar!

Here's a sample you can adapt to your own ministry:

## January

- Finalize details for any Lenten promotions, groups, or mission activities.
- Update the game plan and time line for implementing a Next Generation Leadership Academy. Finalize the summer young adult mission and program calendar.

- Identify and schedule short-term discipleship opportunities for young adults through June.
- Adopt a draft of the young adult ministry calendar sixteen months out (through May of the next programming year), including:
  - a volunteer orientation event
  - a volunteer thank-you event
  - Young Adult Ministry Team meetings
  - young-adult-friendly mission initiatives
  - Next Generation Leadership Academy
  - short-term discipleship opportunities
  - transition rituals (graduations, new jobs, etc.)
  - integrate the young adult ministry calendar with the church's ministry calendar

## **February**

- Begin recruiting volunteers for the young adult ministry (to begin serving in September).
  - Identify all volunteer needs for the ministry from September to the following August.
  - Invite current volunteers to return in their role next year, as appropriate.
  - Develop a “fishing pond” of potential volunteers.
  - Begin the recruitment process.
- Update the curriculum template for young adult ministry and select specific curriculum resources for August.

## **March**

- Continue the volunteer recruiting process.
- Begin planning a volunteer thank-you event, giving special recognition to honor those volunteers ending their responsibilities in May or June.



- Review job descriptions for all paid church-staff positions related to young adult ministry. Each job description should prominently include the role of building volunteer teams.
- Complete performance reviews for all staff related to young adult ministry.

### **April**

- Continue the volunteer recruiting process.
- Complete promotion and final details for the volunteer appreciation event.
- Recruit a fall kickoff team. Share details and provide copies of last year's schedule and evaluation as a starting point.
- Update the processes and opportunities to help young adults innovate new ministry in the church and community.
- Process applications for the Next Generation Leadership Academy.
- Identify and schedule short-term discipleship opportunities for young adults through September.

### **May**

- Offer an encouraging volunteer thank-you event.
- Complete volunteer recruiting for the young adult ministry, filling all volunteer roles needed through the following August (sixteen months from now).
- Update the curriculum template for young adult ministry and select specific curriculum resources for December.
- Update this Preventive Maintenance Calendar.

### **June**

- Work has begun on mission partner event notebooks. Update the notebook template as needed and collect information on each event.

- Establish clear processes for collecting updated contact information for all young adults and stakeholders in the young adult ministry database.
- Review, adjust, and schedule Launching Rituals for the coming ministry year.
- Finalize calendar, curriculum, promotion, and leadership for the Next Generation Leadership Academy.
- Update and refine the young adult ministry calendar eighteen months out, through December of the next programming year.

## **July**

- Check in personally with any missing-in-action young adults from your church whom you haven't connected with in the past year.
- Complete updates to the young adult database.
- Schedule a Leadership Launch for August and send a "save the date" card or email to all volunteers who are beginning in September.
- Finalize details of Sunday school curriculum for the fall quarter (September through December).
- Identify and schedule short-term discipleship opportunities for young adults through December.

## **August**

- Review the process for tracking and recording attendance in all programs. Make any improvements as needed.
- Complete a Leadership Launch for all young adult volunteers.
- Update the connections strategy, ensuring that team members are pursuing regular, intentional contact with young adults.

- Update the list of young-adult-friendly mission opportunities and communicate it.
- Update the curriculum template for young adult ministry and select specific curriculum resources for May.

### **September**

- Update the young adult ministry communication plan. Make changes, as needed, to improve the processes, including:
  - website and other electronic communication
  - print marketing
  - social media
  - video and verbal marketing

### **October**

- Identify opportunities to help young adults innovate new ministry options during the next six months.
- Draft a young adult ministry budget proposal to be submitted to the finance committee for review and approval.
- Draft all volunteer job descriptions for the young adult ministry.

### **November**

- Complete a first-quarter check-in/evaluation/update for the Next Generation Leadership Academy.
- Identify and schedule short-term discipleship opportunities for young adults through March.

### **December**

- Update the ministry's operations manual.
- Draft a young adult ministry annual report for church leadership.

# Communication Game Plan

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**Purpose:** To provide robust, magnetic communication and marketing about the young adult ministry to young adults in the church and community, as well as to key internal stakeholders in the church, including staff, the congregation, church leadership, the mission team, and the finance team. The result of these efforts is increased participation of young adults in the church's mission and deeper investment from the congregation in the young adult ministry.

**Process:** The young adult ministry has two layers of communication and marketing that sometimes overlap—communicating with young adults in an effort to connect them with the church's ministries, and communicating with a broader audience of stakeholders in the congregation. Your ministry must target communication to each group rather than assuming that communication that reaches one will effectively reach both.

**Pace:** As you start this process, remember that consistency in doing a few things is much better than a complicated plan that gets ignored.

## **Part 1: Communication to Young Adults Themselves**

**Step 1.** Start building a database of key stakeholders in the young adult ministry, including

- Young adults already connected to our church.
- Young adults connected to families in our church.

- Young adults who might consider being involved in a mission of our church if asked.
- Determine how, if at all, the young adult database will be integrated with the church's master database.

**Step 2.** Begin designing and customizing your communication plan for reaching out to and connecting with young adults—both those already involved and those not yet involved. Ask these key questions:

- How will we determine who receives which communications (e.g., Do we send the same invitations with the same frequency to the Starbucks barista who's never participated in the church or ministry as we do the young adult who grew up in the church and still attends every Sunday)?
- What are the most effective communication media (print, oral, electronic, social media, etc.) for building the enthusiasm and involvement of young adults?
- How will we harvest and communicate the good-news stories about what's happening in the young adult ministry?
- How often will young adults on the database hear a good-news story about the missional engagement of young adults in and through our church?

**Step 3.** Determine the rhythm of electronic media communication to the young adult database, asking these questions:

- Regarding your young adult ministry website:
  - Who is the point of contact for the church website?
  - How will the young adult ministry website be linked to the church website?
  - Who will take responsibility for building the pages of the young adult ministry website?
  - What's our deadline for completing the young adult ministry website?

- What content needs to be included?
- Where are the opportunities on the website for young adults to respond with questions or to express interest in getting involved? Which parts of the site will address young adults specifically, which will address stakeholders specifically, and which will provide content for both?
- Who will be the website manager, taking responsibility for managing and updating the website?
- Will the young adult ministry take advantage of any of the following content-marketing strategies?
  - video introduction to the young adult ministry
  - a young adult ministry blog
  - a young adult ministry podcast (audio or video)
- Which young adults will receive the church's e-newsletter (if it has one), and how often will young adult ministry information be included?
- What social media outlets will the young adult ministry access—Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, other?
- Who will be responsible for posting pictures and content to social media?
- How often should new pictures be posted to the ministry's website and social media outlets?

**Step 4.** Determine the rhythm of print communication to the young adult database, asking the following questions:

- Church Newsletter and Bulletin
  - How many times a year would you like to have news about the young adult ministry in the church newsletter?
  - When should the content added to the website also be added to the church newsletter?

- How many times a year would you like to have news about the young adult ministry in the church bulletin announcements?
- Who is responsible for providing these updates to regular church publications?
- Posters or Bulletin Boards
  - How often, if ever, should information targeted to young adults be posted in the church hallways via bulletin board or poster?
  - Who is responsible for designing and placing posters or bulletin boards?
  - Who in the church needs to approve placement of posters and availability of bulletin boards?
- Publications, Postcards, and Fliers
  - What, if anything, should we have in the way of a flier or publication to introduce this ministry to young adults who visit the church?
  - How often should this flier or publication be updated, and who will take responsibility for those updates?
  - How can we make sure the flier and website contain the same introductory information?
  - How can the flier provide an opportunity for readers to respond if they're interested in getting involved in ministry initiatives?
  - Who is responsible for designing, compiling, printing, and distributing these fliers?
  - Where will these print resources be available or distributed?

**Step 5.** Determine a rhythm for verbal communication about young adult ministry to young adults.

- Young Adult Gatherings
  - Are there any current gatherings of young adults who should receive verbal updates and announcements about opportunities to engage in the mission and life of the church?
  - Who's responsible for sharing this information in an engaging way?
- Video Content
  - What sort of video communication should be used to connect with young adults (e.g., introductory video on the website, video blog posts, video highlights of young adult missional events, etc.)?
  - How can we make sure to share with young adults in our database stories of young adult engagement through the mission and life of the church?

**Step 6.** Finalize a communication game plan specifically targeting young adults based on responses to the questions outlined above. Build into the cadence of the young adult ministry calendar the review and updating of this plan at least every year.

**Step 7.** Implement this game plan.

## **Part 2: Communication to Internal Stakeholders**

**Step 1.** Develop a communication plan for the ministry's internal stakeholders, asking the following key questions:

- Who are the key stakeholders in young adult ministry in our church (e.g., staff, leadership team, young adult ministry volunteers, congregation, mission team, finance team)?
- How often will key stakeholders receive an update about the church's young adult ministry efforts?
- What are the most effective communication media (print, oral, electronic, social media, etc.) for building enthusiasm and prayer support with key stakeholders?



- How will we harvest and communicate the good-news stories about what's happening in the young adult ministry?

**Step 2.** Build a database of key stakeholders in the young adult ministry.

**Step 3.** Determine the rhythm of electronic media communication to key stakeholders, asking the following questions:

- If you don't yet have a young adult ministry website, ask these questions:
  - Who is the point of contact for the church website?
  - How will the young adult ministry website be linked to the church website?
  - Who will take responsibility for building the pages of the young adult ministry website?
  - What's our deadline for completing the young adult ministry website?
  - What content needs to be included?
  - How can the website provide an opportunity for readers to respond if they're interested in getting involved?
- When the young adult ministry website is completed, ask the following questions:
  - Who will be our young adult ministry website manager, taking responsibility for managing and updating the website?
  - What content will be on the website introducing key stakeholders outside the young adult community to the good work happening in the ministry?
- Will the young adult ministry take advantage of any of the following content-marketing strategies?
  - video introduction to the young adult ministry

- a young adult ministry blog
- a young adult ministry podcast (audio or video)
- If the church has an e-newsletter, how often will young adult ministry information be included?
- What social media outlets will the young adult ministry access—Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, other?
- Who will be responsible for posting pictures to social media?
- How often should new pictures be posted to the ministry’s website and social media outlets?
- When, if ever, should we send an email to key stakeholders in the young adult ministry—pastors, church leadership, potential volunteers or donors, young adult leaders, etc.?

**Step 4.** Determine the rhythm of print communication to your stakeholders, asking the following questions:

- Church Newsletter and Sunday Morning Bulletin
  - How many times a year would you like to have news about the young adult ministry in the church newsletter?
  - When should the content added to the website also be added to the church newsletter?
  - How many times a year would you like to have news about the young adult ministry in the church bulletin announcements?
  - Who’s responsible for providing these updates to regular church publications?
- Posters or Bulletin Boards
  - How often, if ever, should information be posted in church hallways (via bulletin board or poster) about the young adult ministry?
  - Who’s responsible for designing and placing posters or bulletin boards?

- Who in the church needs to approve placement of posters and availability of bulletin boards?
- Publications and Fliers
  - What, if anything, should we have in the way of a flier or publication to introduce young adult ministry to the congregation?
  - How often should this flier or publication be updated, and who will take responsibility for those updates?
  - How can we make sure the flier and website contain the same introductory information?
  - How can the flier provide an opportunity for readers to respond if they're interested in getting involved in the ministry?
  - Who will be responsible for designing, compiling, printing, and distributing these fliers?
  - Where will they be distributed or made available to members of the congregation?

**Step 5.** Determine a rhythm for verbal communication about young adult ministry to key stakeholders.

- Leadership Team Reports
  - Are there any leadership teams in the church (staff, committees, boards) who should receive an update on the young adult ministry on an annual or more frequent basis?
  - How does the young adult ministry fit into the church's larger leadership structure?
- Verbal/Video Announcements in Worship
  - How often should the young adult ministry be included in the spoken or video announcements for worship?
  - How can we make sure stories about the young adult ministry and the ministries of young adults themselves

are shared regularly in worship—either as sermon illustrations, testimonies, or a “minute for missions”?

- How often should these kinds of stories be shared in worship?

**Step 6.** Finalize a communication game plan specifically targeting young adult ministry stakeholders, based on the responses to the questions outlined above. Build into the cadence of the young adult ministry calendar the review and updating of this plan at least every year.

**Step 7.** Implement this game plan.

# Meeting Agenda Template for a Young Adult Ministry Team

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Gathering**

## **Opening Prayer**

## **Check-in Question**

This opener allows team members to each identify a celebration, dream, or way this mission intersects with their own story and call. You can include time for storytelling of how multiple generations are connecting with young adults.

## **Sharpen Your Expertise**

Pay attention to your ministry target and learn something new about interacting with young adults through specific assignments distributed at the previous meeting. As a starting point, use the discussion questions in this book to help the team engage the new reality of working with young adults.

## **Relational Check-in**

Go around the room and let everyone update their progress in making relational connections with young adults. For example:

Since the last meeting, which young adults has each team member connected with and how?

Use the Young Adult Intentional Relationship Plan Tracking Sheet to provide gentle accountability for people who are letting this key component fall by the wayside.

Between now and the next meeting, what contacts with young adults would you like to make?

### **Updates**

Check in on in-process items. Give progress reports and help the team avoid getting stuck.

Upcoming events

Deadlines and assignments from the last meeting

Old pressure points: Have we addressed the pressure points in our ministry from last month?

New pressure points: Has something new popped up that we need to tackle?

### **Focus**

Identify the single most pressing or strategic need that requires attention. It could be recruiting, database update, or next steps in a project. What big thing on our radar needs to get moved along?

### **Decisions**

Who is taking what assignments from this meeting?

Does the team need to make any other decisions?

When will we meet next?

### **Closing Prayer**