



Allied Youth Newfoundland & Labrador



So You Want to Start an AY Post?

The first (and luckiest) thing you should know about starting an AY Post is there are a thousand different ways to go about it. There are no “right” or “wrong” ways to get it up and running, as long as you reach your goal!

However, the thought of starting an AY Post, especially if you’re a one-man show at the beginning, can be intimidating for even the most enthusiastic volunteer. So, why not take all the help you can get? That’s exactly what this document is hoping to do – help you out in whatever way we can. It will start by giving you a quick review of **who you can turn** to when you have questions. From there it will **give you the secrets** to what we believe are the crucial steps that you should consider (if you haven’t thought of them already)!

Before we begin, it’s important to remember that although we will provide you with a few tips that you can use, keep in mind that just because we haven’t done it before doesn’t mean it’s wrong. Feel free to try new techniques or mix up the order that we suggest things. Just like every AY’er is a little different from another, in the end **they all learn how to become a leader** – even though your method might be different from ours, the important thing is that **YOUR** new post gets off the ground!

So Who Can Help You Out?

If you feel like you are stuck with the responsibility all by yourself or you’re beginning to feel helpless, then it is time to turn to others for help. Starting a post is quite a bit of work, but it shouldn’t be an overwhelming or frustrating process. So if all seems lost, or if from the beginning you want all the help you can get, here is whom you can turn to:



Provincial Program Coordinator:

This individual is the sole employee of Allied Youth NL, who works with the Board of Directors and Provincial Executive in the overall coordination of the Provincial AY program.

This person can be a great resource and are like a “one stop shop.” If they do not have the answers to your questions, they can help you find who can help!

Allied Youth NL is currently without a coordinator until further review. In the interim, you may contact our Chairperson of the Board of Directors, Kate Hodder, through email at contact@alliedyouth.ca



So You Want to Start an AY Post?



Provincial Executive:

The Provincial Executive is elected at the annual AY Provincial Conference. The President and Vice President represent the organization provincially, and the Youth Directors are in charge of organizing the region he/she represents. This means keeping in contact with Post Presidents, organizing regional activities and events, and encouraging spirit in their region.

The Provincial Executive is your best choice when wondering how to draw in the youth to your post. They should be actively working with you to get the post off the ground and assist you through the first couple of meetings. They will also be your first line of contact to the Provincial Program once you get off the ground.

Provincial President	Provincial VP	Youth Director
Thomas Barry thomas_m_barry@outlook.com	Jenna Hennebury jennahennebury@gmail.com	Mackenzie Burgess mackenzieburgess@icloud.com

Secrets to Success

Alright, so now it's time to begin the goal you have set out to achieve! Although we've broken down the next couple of "secrets" into almost a step-by-step guide, remember our advice in the first section. By no means is this a guaranteed or perfected mission. Each time you start a new post the amount of work and way to go about things will never be identical. You will need to adapt and figure out what you need to focus on to reach the ultimate goal: being able to step back and watch your new post! So, feel free to jump around steps, add your own flavor to them, or even come up with a brand new strategy.

Decisions, Decisions

Before you plan your first meeting, e-mail your first members, or stick up your first poster, you need to make sure you have some basic choices made so you will know how to approach everything else!

1. Why do you want to start an AY Post?

Seems obvious right? Well... not exactly. You have to know why you're doing something before you do it to ensure the effort is worth it. If wanting to give back to **your community**, your **passion for AY**, or **providing opportunities** for youth are among your answers then you are starting off at the right place! However, if adding another notch to your resume is among the top of your reasons, you might want to reconsider what you're doing. Starting a post takes drive and a passion for working with youth, which does not always come when you're trying to spice up your own portfolio.



So You Want to Start an AY Post?



2. Is your Post going to be school or community related?

This is not always as simple as it first appears. We've highlighted some important point to consider below:

School

- Location is taken care of. Whether it is the school gym or library, if you're connected then you shouldn't have a problem (remember to always book as far in advance as possible!) for meetings
- A teacher must be at all AY Post functions, including meetings and activities. Limited by school rules
- Funds raised and money collected will normally have to go through school administration (can be good or bad!).
- Can conflict with other school group activities OR can merge with other groups (ie. Student Council becomes AY Post)

Community

- Location must be arranged. Many times AY Posts can find a location that can be booked for free because we are a charity.
- Teachers are not required, outside parents or adults can be sole advisors
- Will need your own bank account (or something similar) to handle funds.
- Can promote within the school (P.A.s, posters, etc) but not as big of a 'connection
- If your post members live in various communities, it may be hard to get them together in evenings – better for one town groups`

3. Where can we have our meetings?

Sometimes, this question can be answered simply. For example, if you have decided to be a school post, then generally your meetings will happen in the school. However, this is not always the case! We discuss this in more detail in a later section.

4. How are we going to recruit our members?

There are very few "wrong" methods to recruit members, if the end result is your Post being chocked full of youth then you've chosen the right method for your Post! We will give you some of our suggestions also in a later section.

5. Is this the right time?

The answer to this question is always YES! Beginning at a certain time of year can always give an extra boost to your efforts. For example, trying to recruit members to join a School Post in June may not be the best idea. However, if you have made plans with a teacher or principal to try and start a Post for September in June, and did all the background 'work' over the summer then that might be a successful idea!

Another more effective time to start a post is at the beginning of the school year (September). If you have interest from youth and a Post Advisor you may be able to attend our Leadership Training Weekend in September which will provide you with all the tools to help run a Post (and it is free!). Following that,



So You Want to Start an AY Post?



in October, is our Leadership Kick-off Weekend, our largest Provincial AY event of the year. Offering travel to a huge Conference to potential members is always a great way to draw them in and get 'em hooked. Also in September, teachers and students are still refreshed from their summer break, so it may be easier to convince them to get involved in a new organization.

Just like travel can help draw your members in during September & October, April is when we host our annual Provincial Conference. If you're trying to get some members to become excited about AY for the following year, attending this Conference is an awesome way to get them to fall for the program. For information about any of our conferences, feel free to contact any of the people listed in Section 1.



If you're beginning to feel like poor ol' Charlie Brown already, don't sweat it. Making these initial decisions upfront and weighing out the pros vs. cons of each will make the rest of your journey so much easier!

Location

As we mentioned earlier sometimes securing this is easier than others!

For example, if you're a School Post then you can probably contact your principal or your teacher advisor about booking a classroom, the gym or the library to hold your meetings.

That hint doesn't help you if you are not going to be a school post. However, all is not lost yet! Normally, every town has some areas that can be rented to youth groups & charities – always try to find one that has no charge for renting.

Some things to consider when thinking about what kind of place you would like for your A.Y. meetings are:

- **How spread out are your Post members?** Remember if you're not meeting during the school day you may have members driving long distances to get to a meeting. You always want to try and choose a "central" location based on where your members are coming from!
- AY meetings include business **and** fun, so you want to make sure you have room for both. Sometimes a fair sized room will have chairs for a meeting, and then they can be pushed to the side for other activities. Just make sure you have enough room for your starting members, if your numbers increase later you can always move to a different location





So You Want to Start an AY Post?



Once again it comes back to what is going to work for YOUR post. However, here are some suggestions that may work in any town:

- **Your school!** (Yes.. we know we've said this before). Even if you are not a "School Post", schools will often book out their libraries, cafeteria, or gyms for non-school charities at no cost.
- **Try contacting your local town council.** They may have some ideas for you – or the local recreation or youth center are all places that could work!
- **Does your community have a grocery store?** Many stores have community rooms, which can be booked by charities like A.Y.

Getting the Word Out

So after making all these decisions, what's left to do you might ask? Well let's see:

- ✓ Have a Post Advisor
- ✓ Contacted Provincial AY to tell them you are interested in forming an A.Y. Post
- ✓ Found a meeting location
- ✓ Set the date and time for your 1st meeting and planned an agenda
- ✓ Showed up for the first meeting.... But no one else did? **Uh oh!**

It seems like we missed a step. So how can we make sure that the youth show up to that first meeting? The secret is **advertising**. So, our new checklist should be:

- ✓ Have a Post Advisor
- ✓ Contacted Provincial AY to tell them you are interested
- ✓ Found a meeting location
- ✓ Set the date and time for your 1st meeting and planned an agenda
- **Get the word out about your first meeting with lot's of notice**
- Convince every member how **awesome** AY is!!

How can we get the word out about your new Post? Luckily, there are already several resources to help you with this! Posts, or prospective Posts, can contact the Provincial Coordinator (remember from Section 1?) and can request AY promotional materials.

Posters may be great for getting an initial "image" of AY out to the world, and the pamphlets may be best to give out at your first meeting. Don't worry about being greedy when requesting them! Just let the Coordinator know how many you would like and they will mail them out in no time!

We know that taking the initial steps or trying to convince people why they should give up their time to come to a random meeting can be difficult at best. However, here are some suggestions that we have to get those new members to your first meeting:



So You Want to Start an AY Post?



- **Utilize your school P.A. system.** Even if you're not a School Post, most principals have no problem adding volunteer opportunities to the morning announcements. Remember: announcements are not the time to overload with information, instead give them the details of your first meeting, a quick summary of what it'll be about and maybe entice them to come (ie. There will be ice cream sundaes for everyone who comes to the first meeting!).
- **Play the friend card.** We know that no matter what "clique" you may be in, everyone has a couple of friends who they can drag along. AY Posts do not have to have 30 people starting off, if you can aim for 5 people at your first meeting you're doing fantastic! A post of 5 can be stronger than one of 30 ☺
- **Everyone loves a vacation.** If you are planning to start your Post around when there is a Provincial AY event then tell potential members about it far in advance! If they join the post they have the chance to travel, stay in a hotel, meet 100+ new friends & best of all: **escape their parents for a weekend!**
- **Final step, bribery.** There was an extremely active post that got its first group of members by going around the school, handing out suckers and telling people about the first meeting. It may seem desperate, but hey – getting those first few members is all you need, it will expand on its own from there!

Finally, be creative! ☺ We cannot stress enough that every post gets members by adding their own spin on things – your new post is no different. Feel free to contact any of the people listed in Section 1 to give you more ideas to assist in recruiting new youth.

Let the Show Begin

Alright so the big day is here, it's time for your first AY meeting of your new post! However, before this point there were a couple of big choices you have to make – let's review some of them:

Timing – The timing of your meeting can alone determine how many people you will have show up to your first meeting. There are a couple of approaches to take:

School Post: You can either have a meeting at lunch or afterschool. Lunchtimes can be great for "initial" meetings and getting the word out! But as your post grows and you try to take on more activities, you may have to expand into after school or evenings. Other factors should be considered are which days of the week are easiest for everyone (including the Post Advisor!).

Community Post: Generally, lunchtimes are out of the question for you. Which leaves you to either right afterschool or in the evening. Ultimately this is the decision as the founding person of your Post that you have to make and it will come down to what will allow the majority of people to be able to make it and what works best for the Post Advisor.

*Advisors – It sounds like a basic concept but so many people overlook this aspect. Just a reminder to make sure your advisor(s) is at **all** AY Post Functions. However, that doesn't mean you can't have more than one! Having multiple advisors and let them share the load and not burn out as quickly is an asset to any Post.*



So You Want to Start an AY Post?



Agenda – This is the most important planning tool to have prepared before your meeting. You need to go in to this first meeting with a game plan of exactly how you are going to convince these members to come back a second time. You want the first meeting to be fun and informative. Here is your opportunity to hand out pamphlets and explain what AY is and why they should get involved. It's a great opportunity to reach out to those contacts in Section 1. Getting your Youth Director into these first couple of meetings is important. They can share their experience and they may have more practice selling the "AY pitch". Your Youth Director may also have lots of ideas about what else to do at this first meeting. Some suggestions are:

- Plan games. Contact your Rep (director) for suggestions on "mixer games" or "icebreakers." You don't want any games that will bring people out of their comfort zone too much, but just fun, upbeat, interactive activities.*
- More food. It's true what they say, people think through their stomachs. Don't go all out on buying gourmet products, but it may help your cause if you sweeten the sound of joining an AY post by appealing to the members sweet teeth.*
- Don't overwhelm these potential members with information at the start. The acronym KISS works very well here, it stands for: Keep It Simple, Silly. Otherwise you will leave members with a headache they will not want. Excite them with all the fun things that could happen but don't overkill.*
- Have membership forms ready! Have copies of the provincial registration form at the meeting and provide a copy to everyone who shows up. It's important that if they sign it they bring it back to the next meeting they attend. **All** members who are active in AY must have the form signed and pay the \$30.00 registration fee. Full explanation if the registration process can be found in the AY Manual.*

Finally, have your 2nd meeting planned! Don't let the members wonder when another meeting will be happening. At the end of the meeting, when all your members are hyped up on sugar and full of AY energy, let them know when the 2nd meeting will be and ask everyone to bring a friend! Before you know it, you will have doubled your numbers ☺



So You Want to Start an AY Post?



So what now? What do you do once you get through the first meeting? Well,



You now have an AY Post and this is when the fun part will begin! ☺ Although, you still have work ahead to keep the Post off the ground. Just remember the basic rule of an AY post: let your members guide what you do. If you're following what they want and you are remaining active, then it's hard to go wrong!

Finally, never be afraid to ask questions, to get new ideas or reach out for help, no matter how long you have been with a Post – it's never too late to learn new things!