

Request for Qualifications  
Middle and High School Social, Emotional and Behavioral Support

COVER SHEET

Organization Information:

Organization name: Youth Ambassadors

Organization address: PO Box 22231 Seattle, 98122

Describe your legal status and, if applicable, state of incorporation (for example, Washington State non-profit corporation, Washington State partnership, sole proprietorship):

Fiscal Sponsorship under Compassion Action Network

Application Components and Checklist (submit in this order)

- Cover Sheet
- Key People
- Previous Experience
- Tracking to Success
- Women and Minority Inclusion; Non-discrimination

Contact Information:

Contact person: Lori Markowitz  
(please print clearly)

Title: Executive Director

Mailing address: PO Box 22231 Seattle, 98122

Day/Work phone: (206) 910-9665 Email address: LORI@YOUTHAMBASSADORS.NE

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: 02/13/12

Additional information is provided in Attachment 3.

## **Request for Qualifications Middle and High School Social, Emotional and Behavioral Support**

### **Background Information**

In October of 2007 forty Seattle-area youth from diverse ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds were invited to participate as Youth Ambassadors in Seeds of Compassion, a five-day event to mark the arrival of the Dalai Lama to Seattle. The students were so transformed by their participation in the event that they wished to continue meeting after the Dalai Lama left. They envisioned becoming an organization of young people who would serve the community. They asked Lori Markowitz, who had been their adult adviser during the Dalai Lama's visit, to help them realize their goal. Thus, Youth Ambassadors (YA) began, a fledgling organization, owned, organized, and operated by young people.

From its inception, the primary focus of Youth Ambassadors was civic engagement in the form of voluntary community service and problem solving. During the school year Youth Ambassadors perform two to three community service projects a month, ranging from serving food to the homeless and visiting rehabilitation centers for recovering addicts to cleaning local schoolyards and painting homes in poor neighborhoods. Each of these service projects has been designed and implemented by students. In addition, YA members participate in a summer project and numerous holiday service projects such as Global Youth Service Day and Martin Luther King Day. Each year YA holds a training retreat and end-of-year celebration. YA members have created a civic engagement committee which met with legislators in Olympia to discuss youth violence; YA members also attended the Healthy Schools Summit, sharing problems and proposing solutions to educators from the Seattle School District.

In 2009, Youth Ambassadors received a call for help from the King County Prosecutor's Office, asking YA to assist with truancy workshops by having its members serve as peer counselors for truant students. In January 2010 YA partnered with the Truancy Office of Seattle Public Schools, facilitating Truancy Workshops on a voluntary basis and assisting the Truancy Office by holding peer-to-peer conversations with truants. In 2011, the United States Department of Education authorized a pilot program to establish YA-led truancy boards in four Seattle high schools: Cleveland, Rainier Beach, Chief Sealth, and Ingraham. In these schools Youth Ambassadors provide peer mentoring and support to students using truancy workshop principles and practices. This RFQ focuses on the current truancy prevention work of Youth Ambassadors, which has now become its primary focus. In conjunction with the City of Seattle, Seattle Public Schools, the Alliance for Education, and Get Schooled, Youth Ambassadors have joined the *Be Here Get There* campaign, which is designed to increase academic achievement through the improvement of citywide school attendance. We know that good attendance predicts academic success and graduating from high school on time; therefore, YA has joined in this collaborative venture, making school attendance a focus as they work with the truant mentees in their program.

### **Key People**

#### **Lori Markowitz, Youth Ambassadors Executive Director**

Lori Markowitz is the founder and executive director of the Youth Ambassador program. She earned her B.A. in International Business Administration from the American University of Paris and is a graduate of the University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs, where she was the recipient of the 2005 Daniel J. Evans

Leadership Award. Lori has eighteen years of NGO experience, which includes the design and implementation of international cross-cultural exchange programs with students from the Middle East and Africa. She has extensive experience in youth development. She chaired youth programs for the Seeds of Compassion conference where the Youth Ambassador program was born. Lori has remained passionately committed to the Youth Ambassador program; her mantra is *youth are part of the solution!*

Lori has served as the International Program Manager for the non-profit organization, Bridges to Understanding. She was a founding member of the Middle East Peace Camp, an organization committed to building bridges between the Jewish and Arab communities in Seattle. She is also a founding member of Find Common Ground, an interfaith coalition whose mission is to educate the public through events, presentations, and discussions on peaceful solutions to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Lori has previously served on the Montlake Elementary, Washington Middle School, and Garfield High School PTSA's, and was a member of the Board of Directors for the Amy Biehl Foundation Trust, dedicated to fostering education programs for disadvantaged youth in the townships surrounding Cape Town, South Africa. Additionally, Lori has been both a board member and group exercise instructor for the Austin Foundation, which serves disadvantaged youth in King County.

*David Allen, Youth Ambassadors Advisory Board*

David Allen is Senior Program Officer, HIV/AIDS, TB, and Reproductive Health at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in the USA. His responsibilities include supporting Gates Foundation country programs in India and China and HIV/AIDS related prevention advocacy in the United States. David received his MD degree from the New York University School of Medicine and Master of Public Health degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. He worked as a pediatrician in Washington, D.C. before joining the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for a twenty-year career. At CDC, he worked in a variety of public health areas including infant mortality, homeless health, community health, epidemiology training and HIV and AIDS. Prior to joining the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, David served as an adviser to the South African Department of Health, the Director of the CDC Global AIDS Program for South Africa, the Regional Director of the Global AIDS Program for Southern Africa, and the Director of the Global AIDS Program, Caribbean Regional Office.

*Leslie K. Breitner, Youth Ambassadors Advisory Board*

Leslie Breitner was a principal lecturer of public affairs at the Evans School until fall 2010, when she joined the Desautels Faculty of Management at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. At the University of Washington Evans school she taught courses in the Master of Public Administration program; she was the 2004 recipient of the Evans School Teacher of the Year Award and the Dean's Award for Teaching Excellence. Leslie also served as the faculty director for Cascade Executive Programs and faculty co-director of the Executive Master of Public Administration (Executive MPA) program, where she taught courses in financial statement analysis, financial management, and performance management. Prior to joining the Evans School, Leslie taught graduate-level financial management and public sector budgeting courses at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. She was also involved with the Kennedy School's Senior Executive programs for those working in federal, state, and local government.

Leslie holds a DBA (doctorate in business administration) from Boston University's Graduate School of Management, an MBA from Simmons College Graduate School of Management, and a BA in French studies from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She also holds a certificate from Harvard University's Institute in Arts Administration.

*Macklemore (Ben Haggerty), Youth Ambassador Advisory Board and Partner*

Macklemore, Seattle's hip-hop sensation, was originally Ben Haggerty, growing up on Capitol Hill and attending both Garfield and Nathan Hale high schools. While he was a student at Nathan Hale, he invented Macklemore as a superhero for one of his art projects. After graduation, Ben (aka Macklemore) attended college for one year in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and then returned to Washington to earn his bachelor's degree from The Evergreen State College. Even before graduation from Evergreen, Ben was interested in reaching young people through music. He took a job at the juvenile-detention facility in Chehalis, working in a program called Gateways, which was organized around rap, and bringing his beats to jail settings, where he occasionally facilitated writing workshops. He is the author and artist of one of the region's classic Hip-Hop records, *The Language of my World*. Macklemore has recently committed to a full-fledged partnership with Youth Ambassadors, meeting with YA mentors at their schools; this spring he will hold a concert for all YA mentors and mentees and for students across the Seattle School District who have improved their attendance.

*Janine Fraser, Youth Ambassador Program Evaluator*

Janine Fraser received her bachelor's degree in history from the University of Pennsylvania, working for a time at a nonprofit long-term managed-care organization in NYC doing data analysis, research, and writing. Currently, Janine is enrolled at the UW Evans School, working on research design, data collection, and data analysis. She has also worked for the King County Police Activities League, setting up data collection instruments as the initial stage of the program evaluation process. Her interest is program evaluation and data analysis for organizations that address issues of at-risk youth.

**Previous Experience**

1. Describe the demographics and characteristics of the population(s) you have worked with in the past most aligned with the focus students discussed in the Background section.

Youth Ambassadors are a diverse group of students: regardless of the particular characteristic—whether it be race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, academic achievement, or some other factor—YA members form a wonderfully diverse group. Because YA members come from the student bodies of the Seattle high schools in which they work, their demographics mirror the demographics of the school as a whole. For instance, at Cleveland and Rainier Beach members of YA are exclusively students of color: Native American, Latino/a, African American, Filipino/a, and immigrant students from both Asia and Africa. This is the diverse mix of the YA mentors, and it is the diverse mix of their truant mentees.

2. Describe the experience and results (not just activities) within the past two years that you consider relevant to the Outcomes and Indicators described in the Background section. Include information about both direct service delivery and your effectiveness in partnering with schools and other organizations to achieve results relevant to the Outcomes and Indicators.

Experience: The experiences conducted in the last two years that are relevant to the Outcomes and Indicators are (1) YA's participation in Seattle School District's truancy workshops and (2) YA's launch in four Seattle High Schools of its peer mentoring pilot program. YA participation in the workshops has been in effect for two years. However, the peer mentoring pilot program, called STAY (Seattle Teens Advising Youth) is new this year. In STAY, Youth Ambassadors serve as peer counselors for truant students and guide them through a truancy reduction plan. In doing so, Youth Ambassadors became powerful peer role models and improve the overall effectiveness of truancy workshops. The connection formed between Ambassadors and truants is essential to the success of the program. Youth Ambassadors provide the touch point for truants returning to their high schools, helping to provide an atmosphere of acceptance and enthusiasm within the school.

Results: Following the Truancy Workshops in which Youth Ambassadors participated, 60% of the truant students returned to school. This return rate compares quite favorably to the 25% return rate that existed before Youth Ambassadors became involved. What accounts for this significant improvement? One explanation is that while any workshop would be helpful--the Seattle Public Schools Truancy Office holds them in an attempt to reintegrate truant youths back into the school system—many of the truant youth have “checked out” and no longer buy into the system. That’s where YA comes in; these young ambassadors serve as peer counselors, providing a source of support for the truant youths. Meeting with students individually, youth ambassadors provide encouragement and, importantly, a meaningful connection for a truant youth. Reentry into the mainstream school environment can occur without the added difficulty of struggling to find social acceptance; the result is that truant students are encouraged, even excited, to attend school again.

Based on the improvement in the school return rate for truant students (from 25% before to 60% following YA involvement in workshops), a pilot program was designed for the 2011-2012 school year. While data from the pilot program is not available until the end of the school year, anecdotal accounts indicate that return rates will once again show significant improvement. The head of the Seattle School District Truancy Office, Ruth McFadden, reports that the presence of YA mentors increases a workshop's effectiveness by over 60%, a colossal improvement. She calls YA a “godsend,” stating that without the YA mentors, the Truancy Office has no hope of meeting individually with every truant youth. During a typical school year as many as 325 students will have truancy petitions filed against them, but as many as 150 others will avoid the courts entirely by engaging in a truancy workshop and the YA mentor program. The participants are given a new opportunity to better their own lives, while saving the state millions of dollars in court costs.

3. Please list contact information of funders, school staff, and community-based or other organizations that you've worked with in the past two years that you consider relevant to the outcomes described in your response to the last question.

- Funders

John and Nancy Sabol Foundation: johnsabolaol@aol.com

- School Staff.

Susan Enfield, Superintendent, Seattle Public Schools: [saenfield@seattleschools.org](mailto:saenfield@seattleschools.org)

Princess Shareef, Principal, Cleveland High School: [pshareef@seattleschools.org](mailto:pshareef@seattleschools.org)

- Community-based Organizations

Rick DuPree, Operations Manager, Rainier Vista Boys & Girls Club: [rdupree@positiveplace.org](mailto:rdupree@positiveplace.org)

4. What are the challenges and barriers your intended focus students face? Describe what your organization has done within the past two years to address the challenges and barriers to serving your intended focus students.

The challenges and barriers that truant youth face are many. Behind in school work, often disengaged from school, lacking school friends who can provide positive support, the truant faces seemingly overwhelming odds when he or she returns to school. What YA mentors do is provide a positive model and one-on-one, peer-to-peer support during this crucial time. In other words, each mentor-mentee relationship addresses the specific challenges by tailoring support to the individual truant's needs.

### **Tracking to Success**

1. Within the last two years, what data points have you tracked with regard to the experience described in response to the questions in the Previous Experience section above?

Truancy Workshops, held in partnership with the Seattle Public Schools Truancy Office, have become the focus of Youth Ambassadors during the last two years. Therefore, returns to school by truant youth and their subsequent attendance are the two data points YA has tracked.

2. Has your organization used data to track, report, and continuously improve student outcomes? Please describe these efforts and whether/how they have improve student outcomes.

As stated above, YA is tracking attendance and truancy data. Records of the data are attached at the end of this RFQ. YA is sharing data with the Seattle School District, and when asked, Youth Ambassadors present their findings to the public. They presented to the Washington K-12 Education Committee in March, 2011, invited by Chair Rosemary McAuliffe. They were honored by the Seattle School Board in June, 2011, for their truancy retrieval efforts.

3. In the last two years, have you used daily or weekly academic, grade and/or attendance data to improve student outcomes? Please describe these efforts and whether/how they have improved student outcomes.

YA mentors hold weekly meetings to assess the progress and challenges of each student with whom they meet. This personalized attention is, perhaps, the single most compelling factor in explaining the success experienced with the truancy intervention that has occurred thus far. These meetings allow for review of both academic and attendance data, the data YA is currently tracking. While the focus is on the truant students, we are noticing that there are significant benefits to the YA mentors as well. The pilot study on truancy intervention, when completed at the end of the 2011-2012 school year, will provide data not only on the changes of attendance behavior for truant youth but also rich data on the academic and attendance growth of the YA mentors.

4. Please provide a sample data report that includes data points included in the Outcomes and Indicators listed in the Background section. Note that the data report will not be included in your five-page response limit.

This is attached at the end of the report. Please see pages that follow.

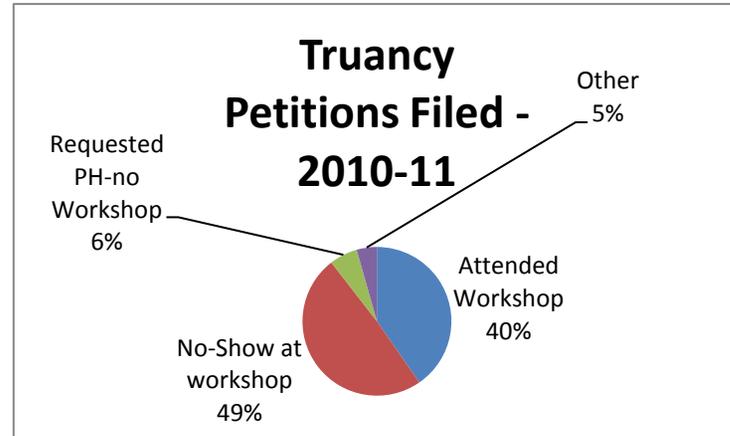
### **Women and Minority Inclusion; Nondiscrimination**

Youth Ambassadors does not plan to subcontract.

**Seattle Public Schools  
Results of Truancy Petitions Filed  
2010-2011**

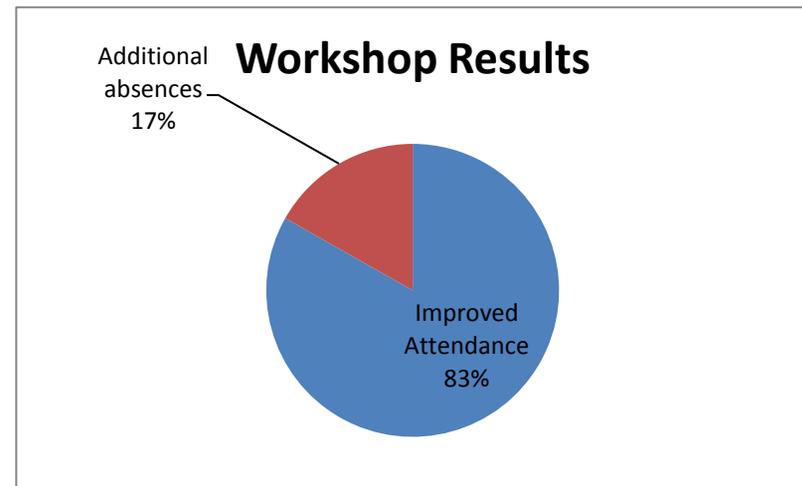
**Petitions Filed**

Attended Workshop	40.34%	119
No-Show at workshop	49.15%	145
Requested PH-no Workshop	6.10%	18
Other	4.41%	13
<b>Total Petitions Filed</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>295</b>



**Workshop Results - Plan Developed**

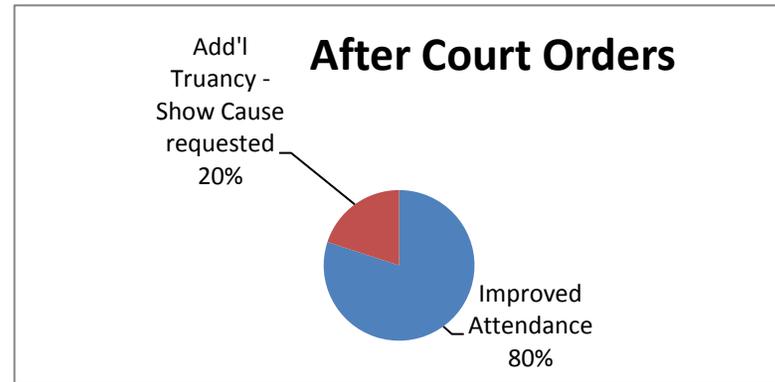
Improved Attendance	83.19%	99
Additional absences	16.81%	20
<b>Total agreeing to a plan</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>119</b>



**Seattle Public Schools  
Results of Truancy Petitions Filed  
2010-2011**

**After Court Orders**

Improved Attendance	80.00%	32
Add'l Truancy - Show Cause requested	20.00%	8
<b>Total Court Orders</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>40</b>



**First Workshop Non-Attendees**

Rescheduled Student Attended	17.61%	31
Rescheduled Did not attend	18.75%	33
Did not attend Planned to ask for PH	37.50%	66
Did not attend Scheduled PH	26.14%	46
<b>Total First Workshop Non-attendees</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>176</b>

