Director of External Affairs

POSITION TITLE: Director of External Affairs

STATUS: Full-Time

LOCATION: Berwyn, IL - Hybrid

REPORTS TO: Executive Director

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START DATE: January 2027

SALARY: $80,000 - $90,000

Youth Crossroads, founded in 1974, supports youth, guiding them through life's challenges, and inspiring them to discover new opportunities for personal development, healthy relationships, and positive community involvement. We seek to provide youth with a comprehensive system of support, positive structures, and role models to help them navigate the personal and academic challenges they face in their daily lives, including counseling services, mentorship, tutoring, after-school enrichment programs, youth leadership training, college and job readiness, and community service. All YC services are provided with a culturally affirming and trauma-informed approach.

Position Summary

The Director of External Affairs is responsible for strengthening Youth Crossroads' external relationships, advancing its fundraising efforts, and elevating the organization's visibility and community presence. Working in partnership with the Executive Director, Board of Directors, and internal leadership, the Director will develop and execute strategies that cultivate philanthropic support, deepen corporate and community partnerships, and communicate the organization's impact.

This role will focus on building sustainable donor relationships, expanding contributed revenue, strengthening external engagement, and aligning fundraising priorities with Youth Crossroads' mission and three-year strategic plan. The Director will manage a defined portfolio of donor and stakeholder relationships while collaborating with organizational leadership and Board members to advance fundraising and external engagement goals.

Key Responsibilities

1. Executive Partnership and Strategic Alignment

- Partner with the Executive Director and leadership team to align external engagement and fundraising priorities with organizational goals and the three-year strategic plan.
- Inform leadership on relevant community developments, emerging partnership opportunities, and external factors that may affect the organization's reputation or relationships.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director and Board of Directors to cultivate and steward a defined portfolio of key donors and strategic stakeholders.
- Prepare briefing materials, talking points, and stakeholder communications to support executive engagement and external relationship-building.
- Track and communicate progress toward fundraising and external engagement goals, providing regular updates and recommendations to leadership.

2. Fundraising and Revenue Development

- Develop and implement an annual fundraising plan focused on individual giving, major-gift cultivation, corporate and foundation partnerships, and donor stewardship.
- Identify, qualify, cultivate, solicit, and steward prospective and existing donors in collaboration with the Executive Director and Board of Directors.
- Manage a defined portfolio of donor relationships and maintain an active pipeline of prospective supporters.
- Identify opportunities to expand corporate partnerships and sponsorships that align with Youth Crossroads' mission and funding priorities.
- Support annual giving campaigns and targeted fundraising initiatives designed to strengthen donor engagement and contributed revenue.
- Monitor fundraising performance, maintain accurate revenue projections, and recommend adjustments based on pipeline development and results.
- Maintain accurate donor records and oversee timely gift acknowledgment, stewardship communications, and donor relationship management practices.

3. External Relations and Community Engagement

- Serve as a visible ambassador for Youth Crossroads within the philanthropic, corporate, civic, and community sectors.
- Build and maintain relationships with community leaders, businesses, foundations, civic organizations, and other stakeholders across Berwyn, Cicero, and surrounding communities.
- Represent the organization at selected networking events, community gatherings, speaking engagements, and donor cultivation opportunities.
- Identify and pursue strategic partnerships that expand organizational visibility, strengthen community relationships, and support mission-aligned opportunities.
- Collaborate with program and organizational leaders to identify opportunities for external engagement that demonstrate the impact of Youth Crossroads' work.

4. Communications and Organizational Visibility

- Collaborate with internal staff and leadership to ensure consistent, compelling communication of Youth Crossroads' mission, programs, and impact.
- Translate organizational priorities and program outcomes into clear narratives that support donor engagement, fundraising, and external relationship-building.
- Contribute to the development of donor-facing materials, presentations, organizational updates, and partnership proposals.
- Identify opportunities to elevate organizational visibility through strategic partnerships, community engagement, and relevant external platforms.

5. Board Engagement and Accountability

- Partner with the Executive Director to engage Board members in donor cultivation, relationship-building, and fundraising activities.
- Provide Board and leadership updates on donor pipeline development, fundraising performance, partnership activity, and progress toward established goals.
- Establish measurable annual objectives and participate in periodic performance reviews to assess progress and identify opportunities for improvement.

- Participate in organizational meetings, professional development, and required training.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree or relevant professional certification preferred.
- Five to seven years of progressive experience in nonprofit fundraising, external relations, development, communications, or partnership management.
- Demonstrated experience cultivating and sustaining donor, corporate, community, or philanthropic relationships.
- Demonstrated initiative, proactive in identifying what needs to be done and taking ownership to move work forward.
- Experience supporting fundraising initiatives, donor stewardship, and revenue development.
- Strong written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills, including the ability to represent an organization effectively to external audiences.
- Experience collaborating with executive leadership and supporting Board engagement in organizational priorities.
- Ability to develop and execute strategies, manage multiple priorities, and use data to monitor progress and inform decisions.
- Strong organizational, project management, and relationship-building skills.
- Familiarity with the Chicago-area philanthropic and community landscape preferred.
- Commitment to Youth Crossroads' mission and a culturally responsive, youth-centered approach to community engagement.

Featured Benefits

Youth Crossroads, Inc. offers generous benefits, including employee medical/dental coverage, vacation and sick leave. Click here to view the full list of benefits.
This role provides strong opportunities for professional advancement and the potential for salary growth based on successful performance and results.

Youth Crossroads, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will be considered for employment without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military status, prior record of arrest or conviction, or current employment status.