

# **A Guide to Starting a National IPY Youth Steering Committee**

Prepared by the IPY YSC for internal use  
Last updated September, 2006

## **What is the IPY YSC?**

The International Polar Year (IPY) Youth Steering Committee (YSC) was founded in July of 2005 to ensure that the goal set out by IPY for the involvement of youth in all aspects of the IPY was met. Since that time the membership has grown to include Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, RAIPON, Russia, UK and the USA. To increase infiltration at a national level, each country involved with YSC has founded their own national level youth steering committee to plan more country-specific activities. At the international level the YSC has planned a series of activities which include the International Youth Conference on the Poles (IYCP), an educational website, the Students on Ice-IPY Expeditions, the Polar Contests, a project bringing together youth and past polar explorers ultimately resulting in a book and documentary, a project documenting youth opinions on what the legacies and outcomes of IPY should be and Tales of the Wonder Zone (a science fiction compilation based on a international polar year occurring 50 years in the future). Each of these major programs is addressed by a YSC Working Group who reports directly to the YSC. These working groups are run through Google groups and are open to everyone. To find out more about the YSC and its programs please see our website at: [www.ipyyouth.org](http://www.ipyyouth.org).

## **What does a national level IPY YSC do?**

A national level YSC focuses on country specific programs. This work can take many forms. For example the New Zealand YSC focuses their energy on the New Zealand portion of the Polar Contests program while in Canada the national level YSC has developed a series of programs distinct from those being undertaken by the international YSC. Essentially national YSC's tailor their work to what is most appropriate within their country. This tailoring goes beyond programs. For example Portugal focuses most of their efforts in the kindergarten through high school age group whereas the United States and Germany work more with university and post-docs.

No matter where your national YSC decides to focus its energy the important part is to spread the word about IPY as much as possible and get as many youth involved from your country as possible. This involves a lot of outreach work. Many national YSC's take care of this outreach through websites, presentations in schools, community presentations and connections with polar organizations within their countries.

## **What's involved in being my country's national representative?**

As your country's representative to the international YSC you will be responsible for participating in web forum discussions, attending a monthly meeting via conference call, reporting to the YSC on the progress of your national level YSC, and aiding the international YSC in their programs (this could involve leading or participating in YSC working groups, helping with YSC administration, commenting on YSC reports and proposal and helping to make decisions surrounding major programs and funding). You may be further asked to represent YSC at meetings/conferences in your area.

Most international YSC reps are also the chairs of their national level committees (allowing them to be well informed for their reporting) but not all are. We leave this decision up to you. Also remember that once your national YSC is running you can change who your international representative is.

## **What do I do first?**

- Make sure your country doesn't already have a YSC. If they do we can put you in touch with your national rep and you can get involved that way.
- Contact us and tell us a bit about yourself and let us know you're interested in starting a YSC.
- We'll get you set up on our web forum. This is how the international YSC communicates. Please introduce yourself to the group with an initial post.
- If your country has an IPY Secretariat (you can check at [www.ipy.org](http://www.ipy.org)) contact them and let them know that you are representing your country on the YSC. They may be able to make suggestions, offer guidance or support and can bring you up to speed on where your nation stands in regard to IPY.
- Get up to speed on YSC activities. Browse the website and the web forum. If you'd like more details on some of the programs let us know. Some of the major programs (the website, IYCP, Polar Contests) have proposal that you can look through to learn more.
- Investigate the YSC working groups and see if you would like to participate or lead any of them. Let us know and we'll get you signed up. Again please introduce yourself to these groups when you begin working with them.
- Start talking....make posts to the web forum and on working groups.
- Start brainstorming for yourself some things you think you might want your national YSC to do. This list will grow as you get new members with new ideas.
- Start recruiting members!

## **How do I recruit more members?**

It's amazing how many motivated, creative, dedicated and truly energetic youth there are out there who really want to get involved. Your job is to find them. Here are some recommendations of things that have worked in the past:

- Introduce yourself to your national IPY Secretariat and any national polar organizations. Tell them that you're trying to form a national level YSC (and what that means) and ask them to distribute your message to help recruit members.
- Do the same with universities (dean's of science and social science often have their email addresses available online and are usually more than willing to help you spread the word).
- Start talking about IPY wherever you go.

### **Ok, I've got members, now what?**

First off you need to get people doing something right away so that they don't lose interest. As a starting point you can get them involved in YSC working groups. Next you need to sit down as a group and brainstorm what you think is most appropriate for your group to spend their time on. Most likely you have some ideas already. Start with these and see where it takes you. You can also get inspiration from other national YSC's and what they've done.

Some questions to decide upon:

- Do you want to have everyone work on one project contributing to a larger YSC project (Polar Contests, IYCP)?
- Do you want to develop your own set of country specific programs? What are these? Once you have these try and expand upon them as a group so you have a good starting point to work from.
- How will you organize? Directors for different areas (communications, specific programs, website, etc)? Traditional committee structure (chairs, secretary, treasurer, etc.)? Something else completely?

First Steps:

Once you've come up with a vision and direction for your national YSC it's time to start doing things. Here are a few first steps to get you going if you are unsure:

- A website is always a good thing. It helps you get the word out about your committee and your programs, it provides somewhere for people to get more information and it helps you recruit more members. The international YSC may be able to help you with this.
- Are you designing a new program? Then your first step should be a proposal outlining it in greater detail. This serves to keep your committee organized (since you all know where you're heading and hopefully have some idea what your next step might be) and it will help you secure necessary funding.
- Funding brainstorming. Unfortunately everything eventually comes down to money. Now is a good time to start brainstorming potential funding sources for your committee and making initial contacts with those potential funders.

## **Money?**

YSC does not have a budget, nor are any of our members paid. Absolutely everyone involved in YSC is a volunteer. At the moment the funds we receive are on a project by project basis. We do not therefore have administration funds (we are however continually working to alleviate this problem). We do receive some in-kind support from the IPY International Program Office for our meetings. Our website is funded by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and there is good potential for support for IYCP, Polar Contests and our legacy program. We are constantly looking for new sources of funding and welcome any suggestions you might have.

## **Who do I ask for help?**

The YSC Co-Chairs:

Amber Church (Arctic Chair): [amber@alkhemedia.com](mailto:amber@alkhemedia.com)

Melanie Raymond (Antarctic Chair): [melianieraymond@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:melianieraymond@yahoo.co.uk)

The Webmaster:

Tyler Kuhn (webmaster and past chair): [tyler@alkhemedia.com](mailto:tyler@alkhemedia.com)