Youth Leadership Cohort

Introduction

YLabs is a global design and research organization working to improve health and economic opportunity for young people aged 10–24 years. Our priority areas are sexual and reproductive health, HIV, mental health, and economic opportunity. Our offices are based in Rwanda and the US, and we have additional staff in Kenya, Ethiopia, India, and Uganda.

YLabs’ mission is to design, test, and advocate for youth-driven solutions that address the biggest challenges to young people’s health and economic opportunity worldwide. As we all know, adolescence is a critical window of opportunity to influence behavior, growth, and development, yet young people are systematically excluded from the design of health and economic solutions meant for them. At YLabs, we seek to address this through a process of youth-driven design: a creative problem-solving process that draws from HCD, but puts young people’s voices and perspectives at the center of decision-making throughout the design process.

YLabs works at the nexus between data, design, and public health, and we combine these diverse disciplines to develop and measure innovative solutions with young people and their communities. Our team, including young people among the 16 countries where we work, brings expertise in adolescent health, behavioral science, epidemiology, program evaluation, digital product design and development, marketing, and brand design.

As YLabs continues to grow, we are proud to be creating a 2022 Youth Leadership Cohort that will allow youth leaders to shape the vision of our global projects while creating paid opportunities for them.

Background

Around the world, young people are being left out of decision-making conversations that directly impact their lives and futures. Programs that have the potential to measurably impact their health and economic future are being created without their ideas, vision, and innovation.

Our mission at YLabs has always been to meaningfully and measurably put young people at the forefront in every phase of our projects, from conception and design to implementation to evaluation. As a youth-driven organization, we strive to put the voices of young people at the center of our work.

Impact

The Youth Leadership Cohort is a group composed of four youth from around the world aged 18 to 24 years. As YLabs continues to grow, they will provide essential expertise and feedback on projects and strategic planning that will directly affect young people and their communities. After all, lived expertise is the best and most accurate form of feedback when it comes to designing for youth. Our 2022 Youth Leaders will have a platform to share their voice, gain valuable job and mentorship experience, be paid for their time and expertise, and work on solutions to the challenges that matter most to them.
Goals and Objectives

- Center the voice of youth in the decisions and direction of YLabs’ global work;
- Provide youth with work experience and career readiness skills;
- Have youth provide expertise and feedback on youth engagement and communication for YLabs’ project teams;
- Provide youth with professional mentorship and guidance from designers and researchers;
- Create paid opportunities for young people.

Timing and Structure

The 2022 Youth Leadership Cohort will be active from January 2022 - December 2022, for a total of 12 months. Over the course of their time at YLabs, participants will commit up to 12 hours per month or 3 hours per week to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities listed below:

- Communication Skills (~30 hours)
  - Write a well researched and thought out blog post;
  - Complete a Social Media Takeover for one day;
  - Draft a social media post to be used across all platforms;
  - Complete a design task;
  - Co-lead a B4D on a topic of your choosing with 1-2 other YLC members.

- Consulting (~30 hours)
  - Each participant will be assigned a project team based on their interests and familiarity with a region. They will sit on occasional team meetings to provide expertise and input on youth engagement and communication.
  - Participants may be asked to occasionally review project materials and deliverables such as interview guides, prototypes, and marketing materials.

- Trainings and Career Readiness (~30 hours)
  - Safeguarding, How to Talk about YLabs, Intro to Human-Centered Design (HCD), SRHR 101, Data 101, Org Tools, Working with Donors, Branding 101.
  - Career Skills Workshop e.g. resume and cover letter preparation, interview tips, LinkedIn workshop, networking, guidance on internships.
  - Links to networking events and external training opportunities.

- Mentorship and Meetings (~30 hours)
  - Bi-weekly YLC check-ins;
  - Monthly check-in with YLabs mentor;
  - YLabs Team Meetings (optional).

- Project Design and Proposal Development (~30 hours)
  - Training session on proposal writing and pitching;
  - Individually, identify a challenge youth are facing in your community/ a community you are familiar with and write a one page project proposal to address this challenge.
  - Collectively, identify and choose the strongest project proposal to work on together as one team.
  - Over the duration of the YLC program, Work together with other YLC members to research and design a detailed 10-12 page proposal.