

Personnel Committee - Advance Document - Summer Sessions 2018

The Personnel Committee is proposing a change in staffing structure that we believe would help the Yearly Meeting live into our vision of nurturing our children, youth and young adults. The Personnel Committee and the General Services Coordinating Committee are bringing the proposed change to the entire Yearly Meeting body because this plan would mean a substantial increase in expenses.

History

A year ago we had an open staff position for a half time Young Adult Field Secretary which was being filled on an interim basis while the committee and staff worked through the hiring process. We received very few applications. When we wondered why, we discerned that it was because there were no benefits; lots of weekend work; lots of travel, and, as a half time position, it is not attractive to people who need full time work. A few months later, the part time position of Children and Youth Field Secretary also opened up. Quite a few people asked about combining the two part time positions into a single full time position with benefits. Further testing led to some concerns.

Concerns about combining the positions

- Working with young adults needs a significantly different skill set than working with children and youth. Could we find somebody who could do both?
- Could any one person, even one with all the varied gifts needed, do this extensive job?
- Young adults will lose out because the focus will end up on children & youth
- Children and youth will lose out because the focus will end up on young adults
- One person cannot be two places at once on a Sunday or weekend
- Paying benefits would mean that staff cost would increase

Addressing the concerns

We could address most of the concerns by following the model that is working for the Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) program. A person (Callie) in a full time position anchors the program while local coordinators, working on a monthly stipend, carry out the work in closer connection to more monthly meetings than one person possibly could. Local coordinators could be hired to balance the skills (children and youth vs. young adults) of the full time person. Having more people would allow us to be multiple places at once on a Sunday or weekend. Further, Coordinators will have a reduced need to travel long distances.

The big remaining concern

The main concern not addressed by adding local coordinators is finances. The NYYM budget has had approximately \$38,000 in the budget for the two part time Field Secretary positions (one was additionally partially funded by a grant.) The hourly rate we have been paying the Field Secretaries is too low. Raising that to a better level, adding health insurance and retirement benefits for a full time position would add about \$25,000 per year more than the total cost of the two part time positions. Hiring a sufficient number of local coordinators to make this

work effective would add another \$25,000 per year. That is a total addition to personnel expenses of \$50,000 per year.

Is that possible?

The short term is definitely possible. Due to gaps in budgeted staffing during 2017 and 2018, and other one-time unspent budgeted expenses, our Yearly Meeting is currently in good shape for cash reserves. As a result of those reserves, the additional costs of this staffing plan can be covered for at least 2018 and 2019 without any increases in our current income. It would create a difficult situation for lots of people if we hire staff only to find that we can't sustain that in a couple years. If we want to sustain this plan, we would need increases in income starting in the next fiscal year.

Where could that income come from?

Our yearly meeting has several primary sources of annual income. Monthly meeting covenant donations, by far the largest source, as a whole have remained flat for several years and not recovered to their pre-recession levels. In the last couple of years, we have had increases in annual income as NYYM Trustees redesignated income from trust funds for use in the operating budget. Trust fund income is expected to continue, but not increase significantly. While we have received grants in the past to try new programs such as both field secretary positions, we cannot count on that source because grantors typically do not fund ongoing staff expenses. Another option would be to start spending our trust fund principal. This would reduce our future trust fund income. Support for that plan varies with how much one thinks our current situation is a crisis. The committee does not detect unity among the wider body on that. The remaining option for increased income is individual donations. We understand that the Development Committee is optimistic about this prospect and will be making a presentation at Summer Sessions.

Does having staff in this capacity foster a "consumer" mentality in meetings?

In other words, will people think "staff is doing it so we don't have to." That could happen but the general idea is that staff help support volunteer efforts. If nobody steps forward to coordinate a youth or young adult program at Spring or Fall Sessions then there is no program. If staff coordinate, then volunteers can use their gifts to lead particular parts of a program. People who might have stepped forward to coordinate as a volunteer can step forward in another way.

What's it been like without anyone in these roles?

When the Yearly Meeting office receives notice of something that would interest young adults, we can send it out to the young adult email list compiled by our previous Young Adult Field Secretaries. However, email is not the best way to reach young adults and there is nobody to follow it up with a personal contact. Nobody is adding to the list. Besides Summer Sessions, no events have taken place at the yearly meeting level for young adults in the last year. The network of people with gifts working with children and youth that Melinda started developing still exists but it is not building. Something all three people who have held these two field secretary

positions have found in common is that besides helping their target age group, they need to help everyone else see the things we do, mostly inadvertently, that discourage participation.

How many local coordinators?

This isn't clear yet. Probably between four and ten. The number would depend on need, effectiveness, budget and would likely vary over time. We could also explore internships and short term jobs. At Spring Sessions a few people noted that it was an AFSC internship that helped them find their way in the Quaker world. These Local Coordinator positions would offer NYYM something similar.

What about Outreach?

The work of engaging with children, youth and young adults is inherently about outreach. Most of our local meetings have so few young people that we all benefit by working together to attract more.