Young Professionals Networks (YPNs)

A Handbook for Boards and Associations 2022 Edition



The future of the Canadian real estate industry is dependent on the next generation of REALTORS®' ability to launch, build, and foster successful careers, while developing the skills and passion needed to become leaders and brand ambassadors.

To facilitate this trajectory, the REALTOR[®] community should provide a means for new and young REALTORS[®] to become better connected, tap into valuable resources, develop a passion for volunteerism and provide a structure for leadership development. Many real estate boards and associations across Canada recognize that Young Professionals Networks (YPNs) can be an effective tool for reaching out to new and young REALTORS®, fostering a culture of engagement, and propelling new REALTORS® forward with targeted support. This handbook is meant to guide boards and associations from the first steps of learning the value YPNs can bring to your members, all the way through to hosting your first event.

CREA's YPN Connection program aims to create a platform that unites and strengthens YPNs by promoting best practices and leadership. For more resources and to connect with the #REALTORypn community, visit <u>CREA.ca/YPNConnection</u>.

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INTRODUCING

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01 Introducing

02 Launching



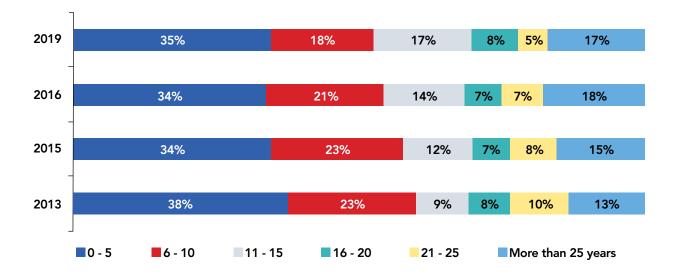


A Young Professionals Network is defined as an organized group of individuals, often associated with a specific industry or geographic region, focusing on building personal networks, developing professional skills, and getting more involved in their industry.

YPNs are designed to connect and engage young or new members of a specific profession, field or geographic area. They provide a voice for this demographic while fostering an environment for involvement.

Given that new and young REALTORS® are the future of the industry, it's important the REALTOR® community engage with this demographic to develop a positive relationship with them early in their careers. On top of this obvious need, demand is also there: according to the 2019 CREA Membership Survey, 30% of REALTORS® who do not currently belong to a YPN are interested in joining one.

Recent membership studies show that 35% of REALTORS[®] have five years of experience or less (CREA Membership Survey, 2019):





01 Introducing

02 Launching



There are three pillars at the foundation of YPNs: Connect, Educate and Lead. These pillars are the driving forces for YPNs and help identify focus areas, while creating valuable experiences for your members. They are what makes YPNs so desirable for young and new REALTORS[®] and should be considered when making any decisions about your network.

Connect

Building connections can be critical to kickstarting a career. YPNs give young and new REALTORS[®] the opportunity to engage with one another in a more casual, social environment, helping them build up their network. YPNs can also introduce these members to key association events you want them engaged in, such as your Annual General Meeting.

Educate

REALTORS[®] are lifelong learners, always staying up to date with the latest information and practices to better serve their clients. YPNs can help REALTORS[®] with the steep learning curve seen in the real estate industry. Workshops and mentoring are very common practices that help young and new REALTORS[®] learn, but YPNs can also give these members an opportunity to teach in their areas of expertise.

Lead

Opportunities to develop leadership skills early on in a career can be limited. YPNs fill this gap for REALTORS[®] by giving them opportunities, such as sitting on a committee or leading events and programs. These networks are the perfect place for boards and associations to develop the next generation of leaders.





As you become more connected within the YPN community, you'll quickly learn no two networks are the same. This may surprise some, but it makes sense for a very simple reason: **your YPN should be designed to fit your members**. To illustrate this variety, we asked active YPNs from the REALTOR[®] community to share.



The Lakelands Professionals Network (LPN) provides engaging networking events for all members of the Lakelands Association of REALTORS[®]. LPN does not have a formal board but is led by a group of three to four volunteers and a staff liaison. There are no firm requirements to join the volunteer group other than being dedicated to creating value for LPN

members. Each LPN event needs to have three aspects to it: fun, networking and learning. Events are well attended from members who range from young to old and new to veteran.



Ontario Real Estate Association's (OREA) YPN is accountable to the OREA Board of Directors and is directed by a committee. There are currently 18 members on the YPN standing committee. This committee can be chaired by an OREA board member over 40;

however, the other committee members must be 40 or under. This is a conscious decision to ensure young REALTORS[®] are given the opportunity to experience a leadership role, to increase diversity among the professions' leaders and to ensure they have a say in determining the network's programming. OREA's YPN Leadership Award recipients must be 40 or under, but all other YPN activities are open to all members.



At the Ottawa Real Estate Board (OREB), YPN stands for "Your Professional Network" and is completely open to all members of the board. Their committee is made up of 12 members, with one being a director and the chair does not need to be a director. The committee is focused on engaging the board's community of REALTORS[®] with learning experiences and events that promote upholding the values

of professionalism and cooperation. On top of having a creative mindset and willingness to participate, committee members also must complete CREA's free, entry-level Leadership course: Leadership 100.



The Winnipeg Regional Real Estate Board's (WRREB) Member Engagement Committee has oversight of their YPN program. This committee is made up of 12 members and five staff. Their YPN events provide opportunities for camaraderie, professional networking and knowledge sharing. While

focused on young professionals, they don't define the word "young" and welcome anyone young in age, young in the business or young at heart. WRREB's YPN promotes committee participation and nurtures the future leaders of their board.



Benefits of a YPN

When new and young REALTORS[®] get involved, everyone reaps the benefits. Here are some reasons why boards and associations should consider starting a YPN:

REALTOR® professionalism: The actions of the individual reflect on the whole. This statement is no truer than in real estate. YPNs are a forum for teaching and encouraging the highest levels of personal conduct and professional values, as set out in the REALTOR® Code and expected by consumers.

Strategic communications: YPN-geared communication channels and events offer boards and associations an opportunity to communicate and engage directly with this demographic.

Member buy-in: YPNs educate new and young REALTORS® on the benefits they receive from their membership and the value local, provincial, and national boards and associations provide. This cements your relationship with them earlier in their careers. **Tomorrow's leaders:** YPNs bring together career-minded REALTORS[®] who are interested in taking on leadership roles and giving back to their communities. Identifying and engaging these REALTORS[®] early in their careers provides boards and associations with a greater pool of potential leaders who are capable of contributing long-term.

Fresh ideas: YPNs provide an opportunity for intergenerational information exchange, allowing all members to further their knowledge and learn from each other.



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YPNs provide a means for ambitious, hardworking REALTORS® to dive deeper into their careers and participate in the REALTOR® association community. By providing the necessary support and resources to help REALTORS® accomplish their professional goals, YPNs have a very meaningful impact on members. Working together, boards and associations can expand the reach of YPNs in the real estate industry and maximize value for new and young REALTORS®.

Community support: New and young REALTORS[®] face unique challenges. By belonging to a network of peers, they can access mentorship, learn from one another and receive support.

88%

of REALTORS® agree that it is important for REALTORS® to give back to their communities

(CREA Membership Survey, 2019).

39%

of members who haven't served as a real estate board or association's director, or volunteered on a committee are interested in doing so in the future

(CREA Membership Survey, 2019).

Leadership opportunities: YPNs act as springboards by propelling new, young members into positions of influence. They connect members with REALTOR® leaders and staff and encourage members to attend REALTOR® conferences, events and training.

Volunteerism: YPNs encourage members to get involved with charitable and volunteer initiatives in their communities. These actions contribute to members' personal brands, visibility, and reputation within their local and REALTOR[®] communities.

Connect with the REALTORS Care[®] community to find out how YPNs can get involved with local communities and make a difference, visit <u>REALTORSCare.ca</u> to learn more. To as cc ou <u>C</u>

To see if your local or provincial REALTOR® association has an active YPN, or to connect with the YPN community, check out the National YPN Directory at CREA.ca/YPNConnection.









James Milonas

Past YPN Chair of the Ontario Real Estate Association

"The Young Professionals Network was the catalyst for my career in the REALTOR[®] association community. I started volunteering at OREA's YPN and decided to get involved at my local board at the same time. After serving a year on the committee, I decided to run for the board of directors at OREA. YPN has given me so much. It's a mini mastermind with like minded people, it gave me the

opportunity to see how meetings are structured before going to the board table, and it also opened up connections across the province that I wouldn't have had before. I'm a big believer in the Young Professionals Network and that every board across the country should have their own charter!"



Kate Philpott

YPN Chair of the Vancouver Island Real Estate Board

"I became involved with REALTOR[®] YPN in 2018 after hearing about the program from a member of my real estate board. The Vancouver Island Real Estate Board has always struggled holding a strong YPN based on our vast geographical challenges, as we range all the way from Tofino to Duncan. I felt very strongly about creating a sustainable program for younger agents to get involved in and

the board supported this idea. Since then, we have hosted several events that range from educational, to community give backs and fun happy hours. The number of attendees has been growing, and our YPN community is off to the races! This program has affected my career in many positive ways: the great, new relationships with other agents and YPNers all across North America, as well as seeing everyone come together to give back to the community has been extremely rewarding. If YPN is something you are considering, reach out and get involved!"



Lisa Patel

Past President of the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board

"I will never forget my first YPN experience five years ago at a CREA event. I was so fascinated with the whole experience and meeting so many amazing REALTORS® from across the country, whom I still call friends to this day. I've enjoyed my years serving on YPN Committees: from being a past Chair for TRREB's YPN, to a member of OREA's YPN and a past YPN Leadership Award

Recipient. I am a volunteer on OREA's YPN. YPN kept me engaged in wanting to do more for an industry we all love and has led me to stay active in the REALTOR[®] association community. It's all about the experience, engagement, learning and connections. In the words of Kamala Harris, 'Dream with ambition, lead with conviction and see yourselves in a way that others may not simply because they've never seen it before, but know we will applaud every step of the way'. I will continue to applaud my fellow YPNers as I believe in you!"



03 Operating

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LAUNCHING

Starting up Structure of Your Network First Committee Meeting Awareness and Recruitment

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Before launching a YPN, you should take tangible steps to understand how a YPN will bring value to your members, gain a better understanding of how YPNs work, and properly set yourself up for success.

Look at current member feedback

Boards and associations are constantly receiving feedback from their members on a number of topics. Look into feedback you've recently received: Are members asking about YPNs? Are members raising issues or requests that YPN-related activities could potentially solve? Your network will serve your members, so building your network based on their feedback is a great place to start.



You may also want to investigate YPNs outside of real estate (such as your local Chamber of Commerce).

Review available resources

CREA has worked closely with the National Association of REALTORS®, as well as existing YPNs across Canada, to provide a variety of resources designed to help local and provincial boards and associations start their own YPNs. Visit <u>CREA.ca/YPNConnection</u> to take advantage of these resources.

Reach out to local YPNs

Ask active YPNs in your area about their experience starting, growing and adapting their YPN to meet their members' wants and needs. This can provide valuable insight into the opportunities and challenges associated with organizing a network. Here are some sample questions to get you started:

- How do you define your YPN?
- Do you have a YPN committee?
- What is your governance structure?
- What challenges have you faced?
- How have you overcome these challenges?
- What type of events do you host/organize?
- How do you communicate with your YPN members?

Proposal

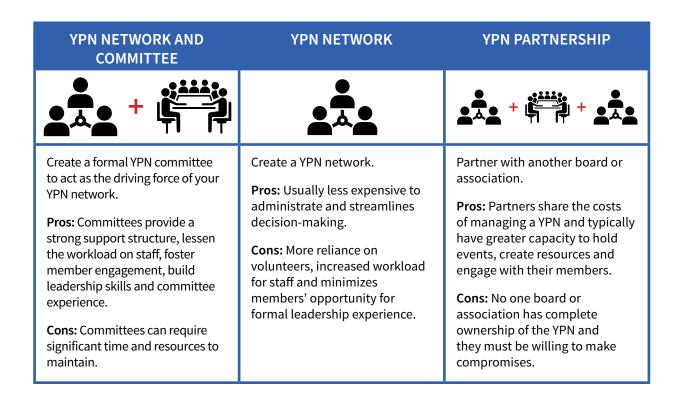
You've looked internally, you've gathered all the relevant information from outside sources, now it's time to put pen to paper and get official approval to launch your YPN. When crafting your proposal, follow the standard approach for your board or association. You want to ensure your YPN is recognized as a standard association program, so it's important to approach it in the same manner as all other initiatives.



If you initially don't receive full support on your proposal, offer to conduct a survey or organize a pilot event to demonstrate the value of your potential YPN.



There are a number of different ways you can structure your YPN. Not all YPNs have a formal committee. What works best for you will depend on the size of your board or association and the resources you have available. YPNs grow and evolve over time, so start with what you can manage now and grow from there. Here are a few examples:







Structure of your committee

If your network includes a committee, you may want to start by developing Terms of Reference. This document contains clear and specific information on how the committee is organized, what the committee is trying to achieve, who the members are, and when, where and how often they meet. This document can be used to steer decisionmaking and protocol on the committee, keeping it on track. Consider the following:

- Name—gives an identity and the general objectives;
- Type—standing or ad hoc;
- Purpose—can be taken from the purpose stated in your proposal;
- Responsibilities and limitations—specific directives that define goals or tasks, and the relationship to any other overlapping activities;

Unless the purpose of a committee can be stated in writing, the committee is probably unnecessary.

- Accountability—who the committee reports to (such as board of directors), how and when;
- Composition and membership criteria process for selecting members and filling vacancies;
- Voting—how motions are passed (such as majority vote) and the role of the chair and staff in voting; and
- Resources needed—staff, budget, expenses, etc.



Robert's Rules of Order is a helpful guide designed to help conduct meetings and make decisions as a group. Check it out at <u>CREA.ca/YPNConnection</u>.



Select committee members

When selecting committee members, you may want to consider the following:

- Are members appointed or elected? If appointed, by whom? If elected, what is the process?
- How many positions are available on the committee?
- What is the composition of the committee? Is representation based on geography, real estate focus, experience, etc.?
- What skills, knowledge and experience does each candidate bring to the table? How well will they work with the other members? How well will they contribute to the committee as a whole?

Select a staff liaison

This position is responsible for providing operational support to the committee. The following are examples of the key responsibilities of a staff liaison:

- Maintain ongoing contact with the chair and ensure that the chair executes his or her administrative duties.
- Work closely with the chair and committee to establish and coordinate meetings and events around the network's mission and objectives.

- Manage the YPN budget.
- Prepare agendas, monitor and take notes for YPN committee meetings and events.
- Attend local, provincial, and national YPN meetings.
- Prepare a YPN summary report as needed by the board or association.
- Ensure committee is up to speed on committee policies and procedures.

Depending on the available resources, some of these responsibilities can be allocated to committee members or other staff.

Create a group chat

Your committee members are REALTORS[®], so inherently they're always on the go. It's important to keep them engaged outside of meetings. There are so many apps you can use for creating group chats, but make sure you use something that committee members are familiar with to make it as seamless as possible.



Consider using social media as a tool to promote elections and gather nominations. For example, you can have nominees post a video with a unique hashtag that can be used across multiple social media platforms as part of their election campaign.



What to do without a committee

Whether a committee is a viable option for your YPN or not, there are still ways to effectively execute and maintain a YPN. Consider the following tips to help organize a YPN without a committee:

- Use staff members for the administrative tasks and volunteers when additional resources are required.
- Set up YPN social media groups, mailing lists, websites, and surveys in order to establish and develop a sense of community within your YPN.
- Recruit volunteers to facilitate the organization and execution of events.
- Use the help of influential people to promote events.
- Use social media to gain insight on YPN members' wants and needs.

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First Committee Meeting

Once the structure of the YPN is established, the next step is setting up a meeting with the committee. The first meeting is a steppingstone to align ideas, perspectives and establish expectations. Some suggested topics to cover in this first meeting include:

Terms of reference review: Review the YPN terms of reference and/or submitted proposal. If no terms of reference have been established by the board of directors, you may want to take this opportunity to create an initial draft.

Committee purpose: Review the purpose of the YPN. This will set member expectations.

Roles and responsibilities: Split up tasks between the committee and staff liaison. Assign roles to create accountability.

Financial resources: Many YPNs have limited, if any, budgets allocated from their board or association. Discuss the allocated budget, financial resources, and ideas for fundraising and sponsorship.

Member feedback: Communication is key within a YPN, so it's important to establish a forum for member feedback.

Event planning: Start brainstorming potential YPN events and a YPN calendar.

Remember, you don't have to host in-person meetings; virtual meetings can be a great alternative. Not only does this provide flexibility, but it also helps save money. There are plenty of options for web conferencing software, so ensure you use something that your committee members are familiar with.



Awareness and Recruitment

Recruitment is an important aspect for maintaining and growing a YPN; however, it's not always the easiest thing to do. It often requires a lot of human resources, time and ongoing messaging. Here are some methods that YPNs across the country are using to build their networks:

New member orientation: If your board or association offers orientation or onboarding sessions for new REALTORS[®], have YPN added to the agenda.

Surveys: If your board or association conducts a member survey, include a question that gauges members' interest in YPN, and add anyone who indicates they are interested to your YPN mailing list.



When communicating with YPN members make sure you remove any corporate jargon and ensure that your messaging answers the question: what's in it for me? #WIIFM

Make cold calls: Call and email local brokers or members to inform them about the YPN, its value, and how they can get involved.

Post on social media: Post regularly on your social media channels. Some YPNs have been successful creating closed Facebook groups dedicated to YPN. This forum provides an opportunity for members of the group to post amongst peers, ask questions and share information. This channel can help boards and associations engage in twoway communication with members, create a sense of community and a source for identifying members' wants and needs. Be list me

Be sure to maintain an email mailing list so you can track recruitment and member interest as your YPN grows.

Attend industry events: Send volunteers or committee members to real estate conferences and tradeshows where they can network with potential YPN members.

Handouts: Design a pamphlet or brochure that educates new and young members on the benefits they gain from joining a YPN.



Create a generic YPN business card. They are easy to hand out to interested members and fit perfectly in a wallet.



OPERATING

Events Registration Promotion Sponsors

Post-Event

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Events are a great way to foster engagement and can help build a sense of community amongst members. Events should focus on creating a fun environment for members to meet, socialize, and network, while at the same time, getting new and young REALTORS[®] excited about the real estate industry and community.



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to consult local health guidelines when planning events. As public health guidelines ease, it may still make sense to host virtual events.

Sessions

If you're planning a professional-development type event, you may have a series of sessions scheduled. YPN members typically prefer sessions that are engaging and have a high degree of member participation. Most YPN members don't enjoy being "talked at," but would rather be included in the discussion. Some formats other YPNs have had success with include:

- Roundtables (one large or several small tables run simultaneously);
- Fishbowl (rotating panel where attendees can take a seat and weigh in on topics they know);
- Workshops (hands-on application of topics being discussed); and
- Pecha Kucha/Ignite Talks (five minute talks and 20 slides per presenter)



Need help keeping track of the finances? Check out the event budget template available at <u>CREA.ca/YPNConnection</u>.

Speakers

Having a good speaker can really make an event, so it's important to have subjectmatter experts presenting on topics that are relevant to YPN members. Speakers can be experts from outside the industry or inside, such as veteran REALTORS® or local YPN members who have a unique skill set (such as video, drone photography, niche marketing or excellent client relations). Local speakers may be able to provide more relevant and personalized presentations.

With today's technology, speakers don't have to be physically present at your event. Web conferencing tools and video can help you land a great speaker at a fraction of the cost.



CREA has many speakers available to talk to your YPN about various topics of interest for young and new REALTORS[®]. Head to <u>CREA.ca/YPNConnection</u> to find the YPN Connection Speakers' Bureau.



02 Launching



Setting up a registration page—either on your website, social media or through a third partyis the primary way you're going to share more information with potential attendees, collect data and payment, and begin to generate the mailing list for the event (so you can follow-up before, during, and after the event). Registration pages don't have to cost money, there are several free online options you can choose from.

When setting up your registration page, you should include a description of the event, the cost, your registration form, and any associated social media hashtags or event pages. Use your attendees as a channel for promoting your event; word-of-mouth is one of the best forms of advertising.

Consider charging a small registration fee to ensure attendees honour their RSVP; people are more likely to attend if they have to pay a nominal fee.

After an attendee registers, take the opportunity to say thank you with a pop-up message (typically part of online registration platforms) and encourage them to share the event on social media.

They should also receive an auto-response email, once again thanking them for registering. This is their proof of purchase. You can choose to add logistical information about the event such as where to park, what to wear, and what they can expect in this email.







The date is set. The venue is booked. Now you just need to get YPN members to show up. There are several resources you can use to generate buzz for your event that won't require a ton of spending.

Emails: If you have a YPN mailing list set up, email marketing may be your best channel. If you don't, you can send a broadcast email to all members of your board or association.

You may also be able to appeal to brokers who have REALTORS[®] in their offices who could benefit from attending a YPN event. Ensure the content of your email matches the audiences.

Social media: Consider posting on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and other social networking platforms. If you have speakers who are active on social media, include and encourage them to engage with posts to expand your reach and tap into their networks. **YPN Connection:** Consider promoting your event on the CREA's YPN Connection web page by contacting **ypnconnection@CREA.ca**.

Word of mouth: One of the biggest selling points of your YPN is the community itself, so have your community members help spread the word! Challenge your YPN committee members to bring two colleagues to your event. At the event, extended that challenge to all attendees for the next event.

Blogs, magazines, newspapers: There's no shortage of online real estate blogs or local newspapers, so don't be afraid to take advantage of them. They allow for targeted advertising, often at a marginal cost. Most boards or associations have regular newsletters or blogs you may leverage to promote your event.

> Encourage your committee members to like, share and retweet your posts using the appropriate hashtags, including #REALTORypn.





Money can be tight, and running an event may not be cheap. Sponsors can be a great way to connect your network with local companies that offer useful products and services, while also covering the costs of your event.

Sponsorship can come in different forms, including financial, services, equipment, promotions, door prizes and more. It's important to consider what you want from a sponsor, as well as what you are able to provide in exchange. Are you going to provide them an exhibitor's booth at the event? Print their logo on promotional material? Let them speak briefly at the event? Make sure you have an agreement documented with the sponsorship terms. This will help prevent any confusion between both parties.

Presenting sponsorship options

A sponsorship package is a great document to have handy, so you can engage prospective sponsors at a moment's notice. There are many ways to present sponsorship options, depending how your events are organized:

Sponsorship levels: Levels are created to distinguish the amount of support sponsors are giving to an event. The higher the sponsorship level, the higher the price tag, as well as an increase in sponsor benefits. For example: a bronze sponsorship may cost \$500, and the sponsor would be thanked in digital and print promotional materials, whereas a gold membership could cost \$2,000 and include those benefits, as well as a presence at the event and a two-minute pitch on the sponsor's product or service before the event's presentation.

Item-based sponsorship: You may also want to itemize a list of products or services needed for your events. Sponsors can then either provide that product or service in-kind or pay for it. For example: your table sponsor may pay the catering bill for the event, and have their logo at every table, while being thanked during the meal portion of the event.

Calendar of events: If your YPN plans out all of your core events at the start of the year, you may want to present sponsors the opportunity to reserve sponsorships throughout the year. This gives you an operational advantage when it comes time to plan out all the details of your event, as sponsorship will already be taken care of.

Sponsor engagement

Working with sponsors is a great opportunity to build stakeholder management skills. This practice is all about relationship building, as happy sponsors are more likely to return time and time again. Make sure all of your sponsorship benefits are being fulfilled. Come event day, you may be overwhelmed, but make sure your sponsors are not neglected as they will be less likely to return to your next event. Keep up with your sponsors even after the event is done: send periodic updates about your YPN, keep up to date with what's happening with their business, and send them thank you notes at the end of year.

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For a draft sponsorship package, check out the template on <u>CREA.ca/YPNConnection</u>.



Be willing to negotiate. A sponsor may want to negotiate the price and benefits. Be realistic about what you are offering and determine the minimum sponsorship you'll be willing to accept. Consider repackaging the proposal for certain sponsors who seek other benefits.



02 Launching



The event is over. Now what?

Just because the event is over doesn't mean your job is done. Post images of the event or write a blog post about how it turned out; this is a great way to publicize future events and build the awareness for your network. Even if the event did not go as planned, take note of what worked and what didn't so you can avoid similar issues in the future.

Post-event survey

Following an event, one of the most important things to do is collect feedback. It gives attendees the opportunity to evaluate their overall impression of the event and the effectiveness of speakers, topics, training sessions, product demonstrations, accommodations, etc. To ensure the highest participation rate, send your post-event survey to attendees as soon as the event has ended while their experience is still fresh in their minds. You can either have the survey with you in person, or email it out after the event. There are many free survey tools available online.

Did you have a successful event? Do you

REALTORS[®]? Write a blog post to share your experience on CREA Café, CREA's

realtors-corner.

official blog. Learn more at CREACafe.ca/

have tips or tricks for running a successful YPN? Have you created a resource you'd like to share with other YPNs and

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For an example of a standard postevent survey, check out our services on <u>CREA.ca/YPNConnection</u>.



To get in touch with CREA's YPN Connection team, send an email to **ypnconnection@CREA.ca**.



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