



# *Sister Site* GUIDE

2019-2020



Maxine Platzer Lynn Women's Center



CURRY SCHOOL *of* EDUCATION  
*and* HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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## Brief History of YWLP

Co-founded in 1997 by Edith “Winx” Lawrence, Ph.D and Kimberley Roberts, Ph.D and sponsored by the University of Virginia’s Maxine Platzner Lynn Women’s Center and the Curry School of Education and Human Development, the Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) is an innovative mentoring program that is designed to empower middle school girls and college women to be leaders in their families, schools and communities. Recognizing that adolescence can be an especially difficult time for girls, the founders believed that with the support of faculty experienced in education and human development, college women and middle school girls could support and encourage each other in meaningful and memorable ways. Combining the benefits of one-to-one mentoring with targeted group activities, the program follows a research-based curriculum that addresses issues facing adolescent girls.

Over the last two decades, the YWLP program has expanded from serving four middle schools in Charlottesville, VA to including over seven fully functioning programs nationally and globally. Currently YWLP programs are operating in California, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, Virginia, Washington, DC and Cameroon!

In 2019 YWLP celebrated 21 years as a mentoring program and has been recognized by *MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership*, which is the nation’s leading advocacy and support organization for mentoring and mentoring programs. The Young Women Leaders Program was selected to be featured in the organization’s guidebook as an example program.

If you have received this guidebook you have either started a YWLP site in your area or are interested in starting a YWLP site in the near future. In either case, please be sure to visit our [website](#) for more information and we hope this resource will be useful for you going forward.

## Defining a YWLP Sister Site

### Sister Site Program Model

Prior to 2019, YWLP sister sites operated under three models which include the university/college model, the school-based model, or community model. As of June 2019, new YWLP Sister Sites **will operate under the university/college model only**<sup>1</sup>.

### University/College Model

Sister Sites operating in an academic institution, such as a university or college, can be housed in women's centers, student volunteer centers, or various academic departments (women's studies, education, psychology, etc.). This model provides the best opportunity to publicize YWLP to college women, as well as obtain funding from an array of sources. This model also allows for the possibility of incorporating Big Sister training into an academic service-learning class. University staff and faculty usually comprise the YWLP leadership team.

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<sup>1</sup> Existing sites that have operated under a different model will be grandmothers in with their current model.

YWLP's success at the University of Virginia has attracted interest from universities, schools, and communities across the world. In 2004-2005, a national outreach was launched to develop YWLP Sister Sites in other communities. Since then, YWLP has taken root across the nation and the world!

## **Getting Started**

Being a Sister Site takes commitment, dedication, and time. A successful Sister Site requires a team to implement and manage the program. The size and make-up of the team may vary but there are components essential to its success. Before deciding to start a Sister Site in your community, consider the following questions. As always, the staff of the flagship program, YWLP-Charlottesville, is happy to address your questions or concerns.

### ***Questions to Consider Before Starting a Sister Site***

#### **Who?**

*Who is your YWLP Leadership Team?*

The YWLP *Leadership Team* consists of the Director(s), Coordinator(s), and Program Assistant(s) who run the program on a daily basis. The *Leadership Team* is responsible for program logistics, funding, weekly training and mentoring group(s) schedules, group materials, Big and Little Sister recruitment, and other programmatic tasks. Depending on the size of your program, your team may consist of three to ten staff members and might also include graduate and undergraduate interns.

*Who are your Little Sisters/mentees?*

*Little Sisters* (or mentees) are typically seventh and eighth grade adolescent girls. However, the program can be adapted for 6th grade, as well as 9th-12th grade girls paired with college *Bigs* (or mentors).

*Who are your Big Sisters/mentors?*

At YWLP-Charlottesville, *Big Sisters* (or mentors) are college women. They are smart and dedicated women ready to provide their time and commitment to the program. *Big Sisters* should be willing to commit to a full year of participation. Finding the right women for the job is essential to the program's success.

### Who is/are your Facilitator(s)?

*Facilitators* are responsible for leading the mentoring group of Big Sister/Little Sister pairs. Additionally, they supervise the Big Sisters in their ongoing relationships with their Little Sisters. *Facilitators* must be able to work independently and with a team as well as think and interact in a creative and visionary manner. Importantly, the *facilitator* should also have a sensitivity regarding culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, and related issues. At YWLP-Charlottesville, *facilitators* are typically former Big Sisters who have been involved with the program for at least a year. Sister Sites may or may not have *facilitators*.

### When?

Most Sister Sites prepare and train *Big Sisters* in the fall and begin the pilot program in the spring. This timing allows enough leeway for the YWLP *Leadership Team* to select and recruit *Big* and *Little Sisters* and to prepare the necessary paperwork. Alternatively, YWLP programs can recruit Big Sisters in the spring prior to the start of the program in the fall. The Big Sister class will be used to train, prepare and educate the Bigs on mentorship while simultaneously mentoring their little sisters. Sister Sites need three to six months of preparation and collaboration with YWLP-Charlottesville before launching their program.

We recommend your Sister Site follow an academic schedule. Prepare for the first year of your program to have one or two mentoring groups of five to eight *Big/Little Sister* pairs. Growing the number of participants can happen once your Sister Site has secured funding and program staff.

### Where?

Consider which school, community, or neighborhood would benefit from YWLP. Begin your search by contacting local schools or community leaders. Any connections you have are always useful. Most Sister Sites begin with a specific school or community in mind, usually due to the YWLP *Leadership Team's* existing connections. Also consider where your Sister Site would be housed. It is crucial for the *Leadership Team* to have a space to plan and prepare!

### How?

Consider possible staffing and potential sources of funding. Finding the right YWLP *Leadership Team* is crucial. Sister Sites need a strong and dedicated staff to manage the logistics of the program and handle any last-minute crises. Founding a Sister Site with a group of dedicated

people is recommended rather than starting alone. Making connections with local community members, school officials, or fellow workers is vital.

**How much?**

Funding is always an important issue. Most Sister Sites need basic funding for staffing, materials, and supplies. Explore sources of grants or local funding to get started. Your community may also provide a good starting point for locating initial funding. Once you have established a connection with a local school or college, inquire whether they might provide funds as well as materials such as school supplies (paper, markers, snacks, etc.).

## Recruitment of Sister Sites

YWLP-Charlottesville does not actively recruit sister sites. The program is responsible for providing accountability and support. Potential university partners who wish to implement a YWLP program will begin with the following protocol which includes the proper steps for becoming and criteria for remaining a Sister Site.

## Protocol for Establishing a New Sister Site

1. Visit our [website](#) and use the link to contact YWLP-Charlottesville through a brief interest survey.<sup>2</sup> The form to complete will ask you to outline details about the proposed staff, organization, scope of the program, intended audience, and proposed budget;
2. Proposals will be reviewed by the YWLP Program Director and staff and a small committee of stakeholders;
3. Organizations will receive a phone call from the Program Director to discuss the establishment of the site and to collect more information if necessary;
4. Organizations will be notified of approval within 30 days of receipt of interest survey;
5. Once approved new sites will receive 1-2 informational sessions with YWLP-Charlottesville staff to assist with establishing the site;
6. New sites will be given access to our communication mechanisms and will be able to network with other YWLP sites for tips on getting started and sharing information;
7. Organizations must comply with the **Maintaining a Sister Site** requirements as outlined below.

## Maintaining a Sister Site

Below are the guidelines to assist with maintaining your Sister Site. The success of our partnership hinges on reciprocity, communication, and transparency. The items below outline 1) what you can expect from YWLP-Charlottesville and 2) what we need from your respective Sister Site.

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<sup>2</sup> Forthcoming



## What You Can Expect From YWLP-Charlottesville

- **Website Representation** - Each sister site is represented on the YWLP-Charlottesville website.
- **Regular Communication** - Regular communication YWLP-Charlottesville (and between fellow Sisters Sites) aids in keeping your program healthy and supported. Our communication methods are listed below in “Communication with Sister Sites.” YWLP-Charlottesville also uses a communication schedule to share important program information in a consistent and timely manner.
- **Use of YWLP Logo** - Every program has access to the YWLP logo and the choice to replace their current logo or continue with their own. “YWLP”, “Young Women Leaders Program”, and the current logo are in the process of being trademarked.
- **Access to the Charlottesville YWLP Curriculum** - the YWLP-Charlottesville curriculum is available each year since annual updates are made. The curriculum can be adapted to meet the needs of individual programs. However, proper citation and acknowledgement is required.
- **Access to a Community of Sister Sites via YWLP Website Portal** (See Communication with Sister Sites)
- **Access to future YWLP Conference** in Charlottesville or Summer Webinar Series.<sup>3</sup>

## What We Need From Your Sister Site

### **Annual Survey Report**

Each YWLP Sister Site can expect success and challenges throughout the year. In an effort to stay abreast of your program’s needs, growth, challenges, and successes, we request each Sister Site provide an annual report at the end of each program year. In lieu of a full-written report, Sister Sites will complete an electronic form. This will make reporting as smooth as possible. Links to the form are sent via YWLP-Charlottesville’s regular communication methods. Reports should be completed no later than June 1st.

Program Reports must include the following information:

- Current contact information
- Information about the people the Sister Site is serving, including
  - Mentors/mentees/facilitators (numbers)
  - Staffing (numbers, changes/additions)

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<sup>3</sup> Forthcoming

- Middle school partners (name and number of institutions)
- List of other partnerships (grantors, community partners, university-based collaborations, etc.)
- Operating budget
- List of programs and activities
- Current curriculum (as a PDF attachment)
- Recruitment strategies
- Pictures of activities, events, and/or groups

### **Annual Sister Site Agreement**

Each year, Sister Sites are asked to submit the **Sister Site Agreement** to inform YWLP-Charlottesville of your program's intentions. Agreements are requested at the end of each academic year (Appendix A) and are required before August 1, annually. All Sister Sites in agreement will be affiliated with a college or university (except grandmothers sites) and are committing to one year of operation.

## **Communication with Sister Sites**

All YWLP Sister Sites can expect the following communication from YWLP-Charlottesville.

### **Member Portal via YWLP Website**

YWLP Sister Site faculty and staff members have access to a Members Only portal on the YWLP-Charlottesville website. This portal includes username and password access to features, downloadable documents, and important information. The portal also houses YWLP Annual Agreements, the Annual Report Survey and responses, and links to social media platforms. \*

\*A note about social media: Sister Sites have access to a closed Facebook group to communicate with YWLP-Charlottesville and other Sister Sites. Only one form of social media will be used until other methods prove to be necessary. The Facebook group will be available through the Portal but also can be access [here](#).

### **YWLP Listserv**

Each YWLP Sister Site will have access to the YWLP Listserv to communicate with fellow YWLP Sister Site faculty, staff, and interns.

### **Innovative Mentoring Solutions Software**

YWLP-Charlottesville employs a client management system called Innovative Mentoring Solutions (IMS). This software keeps track of all mentors, mentees, and facilitators in our program. YWLP Sister Site contact persons will also be including in our records to ensure we have secure and verified methods of contacting your site.

### **YWLP Sister Brochures**

YWLP brochures are available for Sister Sites. They include information specific to your program as well as your contact information (email, phone, address, and website). Brochures will be created by YWLP-Charlottesville site and distributed at no cost to your program.

## **Annual Newsletter**

All sites and selected constituents receive an annual newsletter<sup>4</sup> with updates from each site, important announcements, relevant research, and other useful items. All program directors will have the opportunity share updates about their programming and accomplishments.

## **Monthly Email**

Reminders, updates, tips and best practices, requests for updates, pictures etc.

Email listserv for the sister sites that each can use to share updates and ideas or pose problems.

## **Meetings and Site Visits**

Sister Site program directors or coordinators can expect one video meetings (e.g., Zoom or Skype) with the Co-Director of YWLP in September of every year. The purpose of these meetings is to share ideas and foster a healthy partnership. If time and budgets permit, we would love to see your program up close and may schedule an on-site program visit at least once every two years. The visit will be at no cost to the Sister Site.

## **Protection of Minors**

The University of Virginia is undergoing significant changes to policies concerning our interactions with minors. These changes will profoundly affect the way in which YWLP-Charlottesville operates. And, because of our relationship with Sister Sites, this forthcoming information will be shared with you, who also work with minors. If your Sister Site is affiliated with a university, you may have a policy already in place. As we understand the changes at the University of Virginia more, we will communicate them to you. In the meantime, below are some cautionary measures<sup>5</sup>:

1. Sister Sites should collect and keep proper documentation for the contact information for all minors and their parents involved in their program.
2. All applicants to your programs should submit a form granting permission to use minor's picture for publications or it can be waived by parents. In the signed yearly agreement, it will, include a statement stating that "any pictures sent to YWLP-Charlottesville have gotten

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<sup>4</sup> (delete later - definitely, got approved for MailChimp or Constant Contact but Abby is checking to see if we already have something like this setup with communications.

<sup>5</sup> Special considerations will be developed for global sister sites

required consent from parents of minors.” We are happy to provide a version of the permission form for you to edit to meet your program’s needs.

## Closing or Suspending a Sister Site

Sister sites close or take breaks for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, insufficient funding, lack of staff, and/or lack of participants. If for any reason your *Leadership Team* deems your program is no longer viable please take the following steps to appropriately communicate and execute your closing.

### When to reach out to YWLP-Charlottesville:

1. **Funding Challenges** - We cannot provide funding for your program; however, we can help you strategize and network to locate potential financial support.
2. **Participant Challenges** - If your program is undergoing decreased participation (i.e., too few *Big and/or Little Sisters*), let us know as soon as you notice a consistent change in participation.
3. **Staffing Challenges** - If your program undergoes significant staff changes that limit your ability adequately provide oversight for your program, let YWLP-Charlottesville know about these challenges. Only your organization will be able to determine the capacity in which you move forward. However, if you choose to close or suspend, we will support you as you finalize your decision and your transition.

If after reaching out to YWLP-Charlottesville, you are still unable to sustain your program, we have a few requirements and recommendations for your site:

### Requirements:

1. Email Director(s) and Mentoring Coordinator(s) of the YWLP-Charlottesville and include the following information:
  - Reason for suspending or closing site;
  - Effective closing date (approximate);
  - Name and email address of individual to contact for exit survey; and
  - If suspending, date when you expect to resume the program.
2. Brief Exit Survey - The exit survey is sent within two weeks of your effective closing date and would be due within two weeks of receipt.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Communicating with Constituents** - We encourage you to provide open and transparent communications with your constitutions about the status of the program.
  - Prepare *Big Sisters*, *Little Sisters*, and parents of the closure and, in doing so, support intentional closure practices. We can help you craft these communications. However, there is language in the YWLP Curriculum that can be adapted to program closures.
  - Communicate with the Faculty and Staff involved with YWLP prior to closure. Prepare them to be able to speak honestly and compassionately about the reasons for the closure if asked by parents or *Big Sisters*.
  
2. **Notify Funders** - If your Sister Site receives funding from a grant or other funders, and your suspension/closing is unrelated to financial matters, inform your funders of your status. They may have specific protocols for you to follow.

## **YWLP-Charlottesville Staff Contact List**

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### **Sarah Tucker Jenkins, M.A., M.Ed.**

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## Appendix

### Appendix A - YWLP Annual Sister Site Agreement (content)

Each year, YWLP-Charlottesville requests that Sister Sites that wish to remain affiliated with the program sign an agreement reaffirming their commitment to, and understanding of, the parameters of YWLP affiliation. To be an official YWLP Sister Site, a program must:

- **Reference and correctly cite YWLP curriculum:** All Sister Sites has access the YWLP curriculum. If curriculum is used and adapted, correct citation of the original author must be visible in the curriculum. What follows is our suggested wording:

*“This curriculum has been adapted from the University of Virginia, Young Women Leaders Program. The Young Women Leaders Program was founded in 1997 by Edith “Winx” Lawrence and Kimberley Roberts at the University of Virginia. The program is co-sponsored by the Curry School of Education and Human Development and the Maxine Platzer Lynn Women’s Center.”*

- **Fulfill requests for information:** All YWLP Sister Sites agree to submit to timely requests for information which may include staffing updates, surveys, and annual report documents. In addition, if your program has any significant changes (e.g., staff changes, program status, etc.) prior to any requests for information, please notify YWLP-Charlottesville as soon as you are able.
- **Prioritize use of the official YWLP logo:** YWLP has a new logo that Sister Sites are welcome to use. If you are using the old YWLP logo, we will work with you to phase out its use within the next three to four years. If you have your own logo and wish to keep using it, please continue using it! Be sure to share it with us, as well.
- **Authorize use of their materials on the YWLP Charlottesville website:** It is important to the YWLP-Charlottesville site to share Sister Sites’ development and progress. Pictures, staff information, and various other forms of media may be shared on our website.

## Appendix B - YWLP Annual Report Survey (forthcoming)

1. Sister Site Information
  - a. Current Contact Information
    - i. Name of Institution
    - ii. Name of Program
    - iii. Current Logo (upload)
  - b. Information about the people the Sister Site is serving, including
    - i. Mentors/mentees/facilitators (numbers)
      1. Demographic data? Race/ethnicity? Grade Level?
    - ii. Staffing (numbers, changes/additions)
      1. How many Full Time Equivalents (FTE) professional staff?
    - iii. Middle school partners (number and name of institutions)
    - iv. List of other partnerships (grantors, community partners, university-based collaborations, etc.)
2. General Operating Budget
  - a. File upload (excel)
    - i. Or write in
3. List of Programs and Activities, aside from mentoring, your *Bigs & Littles* participate in (e.g., ice cream fundraiser, food & supply drive, orientations)
4. Did you make modifications to the YWLP-Charlottesville Current curriculum
  - a. Y/N
    - i. If Y: upload PDF of curriculum

Reminder to upload artifacts in the portal

**Appendix C - FAQs - (Forthcoming)**

## Appendix D - Communication Schedule & Deadlines

	<b>Delivered to Sister Sites by</b>	<b>Due to YWLP-Charlottesville by</b>
Annual Report	April 15	June 1
Annual Agreement	April 15	July 1
Sister Site Guidebook	April 15	n/a
Portal Access	Renewed July 1	n/a
Annual Newsletter	June 15+	n/a
Annual Video Meeting	September	n/a
Individualized Email Check-In	November, March	n/a
Listserv	ongoing	n/a
Facebook Group	ongoing	n/a



Young Women  
Leaders Program



Maxine Platzner Lynn Women's Center



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