

COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROJECT

**Aanya Goel, Brianna Zhang,
and Janelle Yao**



**Portage Central High School
8135 S Westnedge Ave,
Portage MI, 49002**

April 8th, 2025

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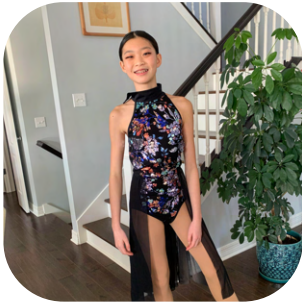
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Brianna Zhang
Co-founder

Growing up as a dancer, spending time in the studio was my favorite part of the week. I loved wearing ballet slippers, learning combinations, and bonding with teammates. But I'll never forget the feeling of sitting at the dinner table with my parents, adding up the costs of dance lessons, costumes, and shoes, only to realize I had to give up what I loved. Too ashamed to ask for help, I felt alone.

This is the heartbreaking reality many young athletes face today, where financial barriers block them from participating in activities that build character, teach teamwork, and develop leadership. No child should have to choose between pursuing their passion and their economic circumstances. That's why my team and I are committed to helping kids access sports—so every child has the opportunity to play, grow, and feel included.

Problem

Youth sports are a cornerstone of childhood. Whether that's playing tag on the playground or competing in soccer, physical activity is a need in adolescence¹. However, many children in Southwest Michigan lack access to these opportunities due to high costs and limited school-supported programs. As a result, thousands of children are excluded from a vital aspect of their development, leading to inequities that hinder their physical, social, and emotional growth.



60% of families report financial strain from youth sports

-2022 Lending Tree survey²

Project Mission: To make youth sports more equitable and build future leaders.

In 2023, we started Leaders for Youth Sports, a one-and-a-half-year-long project entirely led by youth volunteers. We would assist kids in Southwest Michigan by raising awareness about the importance of sports, hosting free sports opportunities, conducting research, advocating for sports programs in schools, and providing resources to families struggling to pay for these activities.

Project Goals

P

Participation

Raise \$10,000 in contributions to support youth sports initiatives, such as events and equipment donations.

L

Leadership

Create 15 leadership positions for teenagers and opportunities for local adults to get involved.

A

Awareness

Educate 10,000 community members about sports inequities and the benefits of sports participation.

Y

Youth

Support 500 children in sports participation by providing resources, free opportunities, and advocacy.

Evaluation of Gaps and Opportunities

Several prominent organizations in our community operate in sports equity, such as the YMCA, which provides inclusive physical activity facilities for people of all ages. While these organizations have made significant strides, there are still gaps that remain unaddressed. Few organizations support children in their critical **elementary-aged** years. These children face several barriers to sports, including high equipment costs, lack of transportation, and limited free opportunities. Even fewer have focused on **youth leadership**, which, as teenagers ourselves, is a major priority of ours. With Leaders for Youth Sports, sports equity for children meets youth leaders to make an impact. We also evaluated our strengths and weaknesses as a volunteer organization. Our strength as local students is that we have **connections** with schools and sports programs for collaborations. However, while youth leadership is energetic, a weakness is that we are **less professionally experienced** than other organizations.



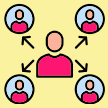
Quality Management

Schedule



Key metric: Adherence to timeline and deadlines
Month-by-month project timeline, individual event agendas, and weekly task lists

Delegation



Key metric: Completion of a range of responsibilities
Assigned work to student volunteers and Board of Directors according to skills

Financials



Key metric: Maintained financial health records
Regular calls with Treasurer for financial planning; recorded all income and expenses

Analysis of Potential Risks

Potential Risks

Response Strategy

Low Volunteer Retention

Risk: Low



Leveraged honors societies to invite students in need of volunteer hours
Exit surveys to get feedback and improve future opportunities

Limited Event Engagement

Risk: Moderate



Social media posts weekly
Media features such as radio, articles, videos, and live television news
Advertisements on school platforms

Failure to Meet Fundraising Goals

Risk: High



Multiple streams of income, including sponsors, grants, event registration
Realistic financial goals through thoroughly tracked finances

Project Budget

501(c)(3) Office Expenses	\$91.53
Miles 4 Smiles 5K 2023	\$1,444.74
Ugandan Sports Day with ECDC	\$1,648.48
2nd Annual Miles 4 Smiles 5K 2024	\$1,114.41
Lawrence Elementary School Sports Kits	\$525.00
Sports Equipment Drive 2024-25	\$24.50
Total	\$4,848.66

We created a detailed budget to plan expenses for each event. This helped us set realistic fundraising goals, track financial progress, and ensure the efficient allocation of resources to maximize the impact of our efforts.

Timeline of Events

Jun '23 - Oct '24
Fundraising



October 2023
Miles 4 Smiles 5K



Dec '23 - Jan '24
Sports Equipment Drive



February 2024
Ugandan Sports Day



March 2024
Funded by Project Play



Apr - Oct 2024
501(c)(3) Incorporation



Apr '24 - Feb '25
Sports Equity Survey



August 2024
Launched Website



October 2024
2nd Annual 5K



December 2024
Sports Kit Distribution



Dec '24 - Jan '25
Sports Equipment Drive



2025
Five More Events Planned



Monitoring

Meetings and Calls

We regularly held meetings (both in-person and virtual) with team members and collaborators, ensuring team bonding and smooth and concise event planning.

Emails

We frequently sent updates and other communications to the Board of Directors, Team of Advisors, and collaborators to keep everyone on the same page.

Google Classroom

We used Google Classroom to monitor the Team of Advisors and Branch Leaders as they managed event coordination, grant applications, and social media posts.

Controlling

Problem

Communication Issues

Transition to a Legal Enterprise

Limited Marketing Opportunities

Recruitment Issues

Solution

Responsibilities:

- Used to-do lists
- Delegated at least a month in advance

Timelines:

- Placed important dates placed in a Google Calendar
- Repeated communication about events and meetings

Legality Issues:

- Asked legal firms for lawyers to be our adult representatives

Funding:

- Made a single nonprofit associated bank account to consolidate our funds
- Managed by Treasurer and Secretary

Lack of Accessibility:

- Persistently reached out for opportunities
- Employed risk management strategy and used alternative methods
- Utilized our own social media
- Contacted local school districts

Board Members:

- Contacted a hospitality manager for more professional connections

Branch Leaders:

- Connected with classmates
- Advertised leadership on social media

Key Metrics

\$23,300

Total Value of Contributions

19

Team Members

105,000

People Our Mission Reached

775

Youth Helped

Lessons Learned

Initiating



Manage legal issues

Planning & Organizing



Increase event publicity

Execution



Prevent timeline delays

Monitoring & Controlling



Lead several projects

Recommendations for Future Projects

1

Branch Out

Expand the mission to involve teens and aid children in more communities.

2

Diversify Events

Host new events to increase methods of assisting and educating youth.

3

Increase Publicity

Increase advertisements and social media presence to raise awareness.



II. INITIATING



A. Statement of the Problem

As reported by the research and advocacy organization **Project Play**³, physical activity in childhood offers many lifelong and community-wide benefits including:



1/10th as likely
chance of obesity



Up to 40% higher
test scores



15% greater likelihood
of going to college



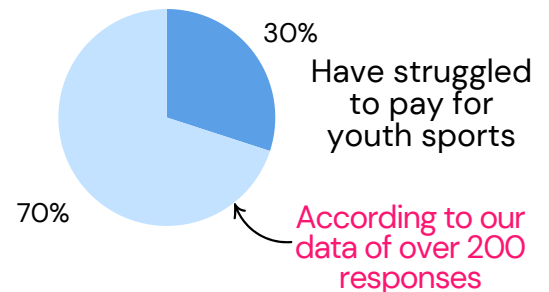
Lower levels of
depression



7-8% higher
annual earnings

As the **cost of playing sports rises**, families—especially those in low-income communities—are increasingly unable to provide their children with these vital opportunities. This has **created significant inequities**, preventing many youths from experiencing the physical, mental, and social benefits of sports. **Our statewide Elevating Sports with Equity survey**, conducted alongside a Western Michigan University professor, reveals that parents, coaches, and school administrators across Southwest Michigan are urgently calling for **more affordable youth sports programs** and resources to bridge this widening gap.

Sports Accessibility in Michigan



“You have no idea how much this means. My children outgrow equipment quickly, but getting new stuff is very costly.”

—A mom of two 4th grade students at our 2025 Sports Equipment Distribution Event

B. Project Scope

The first essential step we took during our project was to identify a purpose and outline a rationale to support it. To understand the effects of our idea and make sure we meet our outcomes, we identified several expected benefits.

Purpose

- Increase accessibility to youth sports for children facing barriers in Michigan
- Educate community members (specifically teenagers, parents, and school administrators) about the benefits of sports, inequities, and how they can get involved

Rationale

- Low-income families cannot participate in youth sports due to high costs
- Many kids are unable to enjoy the essential benefits of youth sports
- There is currently a limited number of youth sports programs available that are financially accessible

Benefits

- Healthier and happier communities in Michigan
- Encouraged school policy changes to prioritize physical activity
- Increased awareness about youth sports inequities to inspire teenagers, adults, and organizations to join us in this cause



III. PLANNING AND ORGANIZING



A. Project Goals

Before starting this project, we set a variety of ambitious quantitative goals to create measurable outcomes, maximize our impact, and motivate the team. Our goals centered around our mission.

Project Mission:

To make youth sports more equitable and build future leaders.

P

Participation

Raise \$10,000 in contributions for sports participation.

Our primary goal was to raise money to alleviate the stress of paying for sports. The money we raised would go toward providing resources such as sports equipment, affording administrative costs for collaborations, and funding for our own sports events. To reach this goal, we would advertise to community members to raise individual donations, connect with community businesses to secure sponsorships, collect in-kind and discount donations from businesses, and apply for appropriate grants.

L

Leadership

Provide opportunities for 15 community members.

A community project is only as strong as the people behind it. As high school students, we wanted to involve our entire community in this work. This included empowering youth to bring their fresh perspectives and energy to make a change. Too often do young people feel disempowered and excluded from leadership, so we provided teenagers with the tools to be leaders to help other youth. In addition, we encouraged adults to use their platforms and expertise to advocate with and join us.

A

Awareness

Educate 10,000 people about the benefits of sports.

In conversations about children's health, academic performance, and emotional well-being, sports are often left out. With 'hustle culture' being taught at an increasingly young age, society constantly overlooks the importance of physical activity in leading a healthy, happy, and successful life. We integrated awareness into each of our initiatives to ask individuals, organizations, and schools to teach sports to kids. Our project also brought attention to the outstanding barriers to sports participation families face.

Y

Youth

Support 500 kids to participate in youth sports.

We wanted to create a positive, fun, and inclusive environment for children to engage in sports they love and to try new sports. Through hosting a variety of events such as sports clinics, we give children exposure to sports they haven't tried yet, without any financial commitment on behalf of their family. We also promoted participation by providing resources such as free sports equipment to families to lower the large initial cost of enrolling their children in existing sports programs.

B. Human Resource Management Plan



Brianna Zhang
Executive Director

Responsibilities: Goal setting, working with Board of Directors
Skills and strengths: Strategic planning, analysis, finances



Aanya Goel
Director of Operations

Responsibilities: Managing student volunteers, day-to-day
Skills and strengths: Event planning, communication



Janelle Yao
Director of Marketing

Responsibilities: Facilitating media opportunities, campaigns
Skills and strengths: Graphic design, advertising, creativity

Board of Directors



Michael Bila
Chair
Attorney



Mark Cardwell
Treasurer
Retired Corporate Executive



Mandy Telgenhoff
Secretary
Election Coordinator



Erin Geschwendt
Board Member
Attorney



Rebecca Lillie
Board Member
YMCA Health and Wellness



Joshua Ryan
Advisor
YMCA Youth Coordinator

Student Leaders



Masha Canfield
Grant Advisor



Ellie Alleman
Social Media Advisor



Anniken Holm
Kalamazoo Area Branch Leader



Harini Manikandan
Grand Rapids Branch Leader



C. Schedule

i. Milestone



Milestone 1: Raised \$850 to fund first events

Date Completed:
October 23rd, 2023

Description: Before pursuing our first sports projects, it was important to host fundraisers to gain money and hone in on project management skills. By setting up restaurant fundraisers and planning our own bake sale, we raised \$850—an achievement that demonstrated our ability to organize and execute on a larger scale. This milestone was critical in giving us a solid foundation on which to build our project.



Milestone 3: Hosted three awareness events

Date Completed:
February 9th, 2024

Description: Conducting three new events, gathering community members to support our cause, and educating parents and children about sports equity was a big step. After hosting our Miles 4 Smiles 5K run, collecting and distributing sports equipment, and collaborating on an international sports day event, we built strong connections with our community to pave the way for future work.

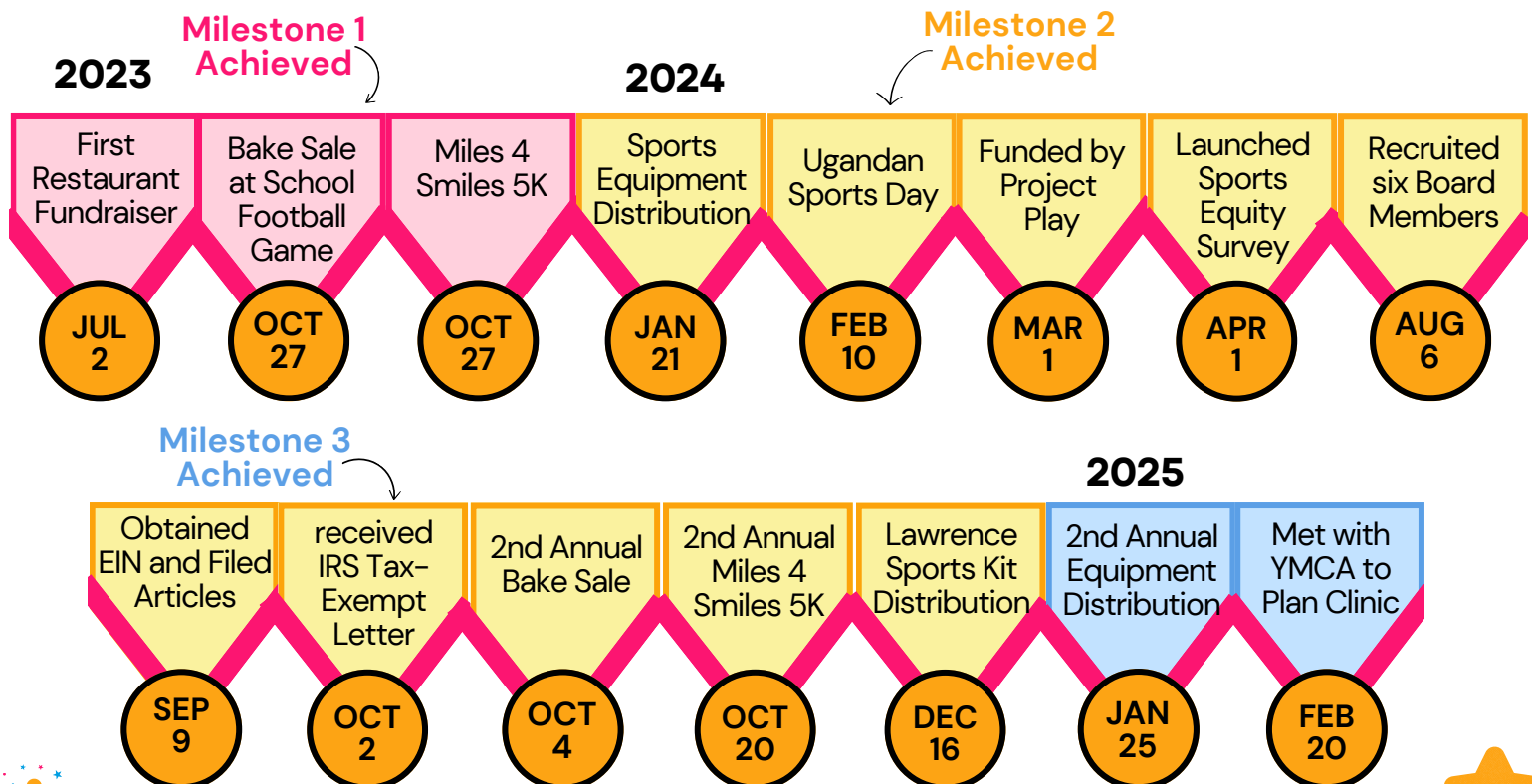


Milestone 3: Received 501(c)(3) status

Date Completed:
October 2nd, 2024

Description: For Leaders for Youth Sports to receive 501(c)(3) status was a huge milestone. It gave our organization credibility for partnerships, ease in applying for grants, and improved financial management through a bank account. After the Board of Directors was selected, our legal team filed with the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, and through the IRS, we received our EIN number and tax-exempt status.

ii. Timeline to Reach Each Milestone



D. Quality Management Plan

We used these parameters to ensure the quality of our project, and key metrics to assess our compliance to these standards.

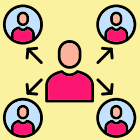
Schedule



Key metric: Adherence to timeline and meeting deadlines

At the start of each year, we created a monthly timeline, including proposed event dates. In addition to this larger timeline, each event had a week-by-week breakdown of expected progress. Based on these schedules, we prepared weekly task lists for our team. This schedule held us accountable to our goals while still allowing breathing room for adaptability.

Delegation



Key metric: Completion of a wide range of responsibilities

We split work between team members to progress toward goals. We took on broader responsibilities such as budgeting, event planning, and advertising, while our student leaders were assigned work in accordance with their interests and strengths. We also utilized the expertise of our Board of Directors for certain tasks. Catering work to our skills increased our efficiency and teamwork.

Financials









Key metric: Maintained financial health and accurate records

We carefully tracked income and expenses from various sources. Our Treasurer, a former corporate executive and stock analyst, created a detailed financial spreadsheet and updated it regularly, which we called periodically to review. We stored receipts and invoices in a digital folder. Accurate finances helped us set realistic financial goals and ensure we were never at risk of a spending deficit.

E. Risk Management Plan

We anticipated these risks and created a plan to mitigate them before they occurred. By identifying challenges in advance, we implemented strategic solutions and were prepared to handle them.

Issue	Impact	Response Strategy
 Low Volunteer Retention Risk: Low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent delivery of quality services and programs • Reduced capacity for organization growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveraged high school honor societies to invite students in consistent need of volunteer hours • Created feedback surveys to improve future volunteer opportunities
 Limited Event Engagement Risk: Moderate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased impact and awareness raised about sports inequities • Falling short of fundraising goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted on social media each week to reach new community members • Sought and secured media features such as radio, articles, and live news • Advertised by community organizations
 Failing to Meet Fundraising Objectives Risk: High 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations on the types and number of events we hold • Restricted nonprofit growth to new regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensured multiple streams of income, including sponsorships, grants, event registration, and individual donations • Saved money through in-kind donations, discounts, tax-exemption

F. Proposed Project Budget

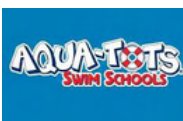
*Green indicates a discount and/or donation toward that expense.

501(c)(3) Office Expenses	Subtotal: \$91.53
Nonprofit filing cost	\$20.00
Website plan	\$64.58
Finance processing system	\$6.95
Miles 4 Smiles 5K 2023	Subtotal: \$1,444.74
Park rental	\$667.99
Event insurance	\$140.12
T-shirts	\$480.50
Megaphone, raffle tickets, goody bags, other supplies	\$156.13
Refreshments, flagging, prizes, timing	\$0.00
Uganda Sports Day with ECDC	Subtotal: \$1,648.48
Location and transportation	\$500.00
Food and water	\$250.00
Equipment and banner	\$250.00
Funding for future events	\$648.48
2nd Annual Miles 4 Smiles 5K 2024	Subtotal: \$1,114.41
Park rental cost	\$632.00
Event insurance	\$140.12
Banner	\$55.00
T-shirts	\$258.75
Posters, stakes, bins	\$28.54
Refreshments, flagging, prizes, timing	\$0.00
Lawrence Elementary Sports Kits	Subtotal: \$525.00
Baskets	\$90.00
Water bottles	\$95.00
Sidewalk Chalk	\$48.00
Hacky Sacs	\$59.00
Footballs	\$90.00
Playground balls	\$99.00
Jump ropes	\$44.00
Stickers and water bottle decals	\$0.00
Sports Equipment Drive 2024-25	Subtotal: \$24.50
Equipment collection boxes	\$22.00
Wrapping paper	\$2.50
GRAND TOTAL:	\$4,848.66

We are grateful to receive support from the following organizations:



Southwest Michigan Timing



IV. EXECUTION

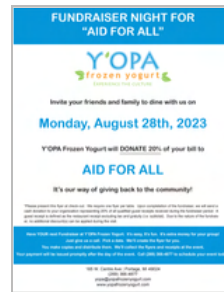


Phase 1: Preliminary Events

We conducted a series of initial events to raise funds for our project, assess our organizational impact, refine team collaboration, and build community support.

1. Fundraising events

We partnered with four local restaurants, where a percentage of the proceeds from meals purchased by customers we bring in on a specific day would be donated to our project.



July 2, 2023 -
November 21, 2023

TOTAL RAISED:
\$510

We partnered with a Bert's Bakery to hold a bake sale at a Portage Central High School football game.



October 23, 2023

TOTAL RAISED:
\$346



McCamley-Knight Field

2. Miles 4 Smiles 5K

We hosted 35 participants and several volunteers during our first Miles 4 Smiles 5K. Fourteen sponsors donated flagging, prizes, food, and financial support. This 5K was a huge milestone for our organization's community awareness. Planning this event independently, we gained experience with finding sponsors, navigating liability, purchasing insurance, covering operational expenses, designing merchandise, coordinating volunteers, and advertising. We received several individual and business donations, and secured three local media features, including two articles and a live news segment.



October 27, 2023

TOTAL RAISED:
\$1,576



Spring Valley Park,
Kalamazoo, MI



3. Sports Equipment Drive & Distribution

We wanted to address a large issue that families faced in our community: the high cost of sports equipment. Many people also had equipment and clothing that their children had grown out of to donate and repurpose. We coordinated with six community locations, including local schools and fitness centers, to gather gently used equipment. Then, we hosted three distribution events at our local City Hall, where we invited families to come in and pick up any equipment they wanted for free.



**December 1, 2023 -
January 21, 2024**

TOTAL EQUIPMENT GIVEN:

461 items

TOTAL PEOPLE HELPED:

58 people

4. Ugandan Sports Day

We decided to branch out internationally with the nonprofit Every Child Deserves a Chance to pilot how our local initiative could make an impact on a larger scale. By donating \$1650, we provided sports equipment, transportation, and food to hundreds of kids who rarely get opportunities to play sports.



February 10, 2024

TOTAL HELPED:

500+ kids

 **Luwero,
Uganda**



Phase 2: 501(c)(3) Status

After holding several successful events, fundraising, and positively impacting our community, we pursued incorporating our organization as a nonprofit. Receiving 501(c)(3) status would provide tax-exempt status, ease in grant applications, and increase our credibility to take the work to the next level.

1. Aspen Institute Project Play Grant

A representative from the Project Play reached out to us about the Service Learning through Sports Program. After submitting essays and a video, out of many candidates, we were chosen to receive mentorship, resources, and a workshop at their headquarters in Washington D.C. This support helped us incorporate our organization, fund projects, and increase community awareness.



March 1, 2024

TOTAL RAISED:

\$2,000

2. Incorporation and Board Meetings

In the spring of 2024, we researched the nonprofit incorporation process in Michigan and learned that we needed adults to be affiliated with our organization. Recognizing the importance of diverse expertise, we connected with personal contacts, community organizations, tax firms, and law firms, inviting individuals interested in contributing to our Board of Directors. By the summer of 2024, we had assembled a dedicated group of six qualified and committed professionals from various backgrounds, including law, finance, government, fitness, and youth development. With this strong foundation, the attorneys on our Board led the legal process of filing paperwork and creating bylaws. Once we received nonprofit status, we organized monthly board meetings to strengthen internal communication.

Leaders for Youth Sports Board Meeting Agenda				
Date: 12/10/24				
Location: Michigan Township Law Office				
Start Time: 3:00 pm				
Last Meeting: 1/15/24				
Agenda Item	Lead by	Scheduled Time	Time	Action
1. Welcome and Introductions	BJZ	3:00 pm	5	
2. Call to Order and Roll Call	MT	3:05 pm	3	
3. Approval of (revised) Previous Meeting's Minutes	MT	3:10 pm	2	Discussion
4. Approval of Agenda	MT	3:15 pm	5	Discussion
5. Treasurer's Report	MC	3:25 pm	10	
Financial Status Corporate Bank Account				Information
6. Executive Director's Report	BJZ	3:25 pm	10	Informational
Aspen Institute Grant Sports Kits Equipment Drive Sports Equity Study				
7. Director of Operations' Report	AGD	3:35 pm	10	Informational
Sports Kits Equipment Drive				
8. Approval of Upcoming Plans	BJZ	3:45	15	Discussion
Sports Kits Equipment Drive				
9. New Business & Comments	MT	4:00 pm	10	Discussion
10. Set Next Meeting Place and Date	MT	4:10 pm	5	Discussion
11. Adjournment	MT	4:15 pm		

Agenda Prepared By: Brianna Zhang Announced By: Mandy Tegenhoff

Leaders for Youth Sports Board Meeting Minutes	
22 November 2024 / 3:00 PM / Michigan Township Law Office	
Attendees	
Mandy Tegenhoff, Mark Cardwell, Michael Bita, Erin Geschwendt, Brianna Zhang, Anya Goei, Janelle Yao	
Not in attendance: Ashley Sailer	
I. Start of meeting: called <u>meeting</u> to order at 3:13 PM by Michael Bita	
II. Cardwell moved to approve the consent agenda. Geschwendt seconded. The motion carried.	
III. Geschwendt moved to approve the previous meeting's agenda. Cardwell seconded. The motion carried.	
IV. Treasurer's Report by Mark Cardwell	
Account set up at PNC complete. The Cover POS system has been implemented (free trial period) for financial transactions.	
Cardwell and Zhang will set up a Venmo account.	
Plan to set up Option Cards (credit cards) through PNC and give one to each of the three officers (Zhang, Yao, Goei) with a \$50 limit (to be increased as needed for events), with the Treasurer managing these cards.	
Geschwendt moved to approve report. Tegenhoff seconded. Motion carried.	
V. Executive Director's Report by Brianna Zhang	
A. Aspen Institute Grant	
Would like to hold an event, and put some toward sports kits with funds not already allocated.	



3. Growing our Team

After obtaining nonprofit status, we aimed to amplify our impact by engaging teens in our initiatives. We created the roles of Grant and Fundraising Advisor, Social Media Advisor, and Branch Leaders to bring specialized expertise to key areas. We reached out to peers and personal connections and advertised leadership opportunities through social media. Numerous motivated young leaders were excited to join our nonprofit. After meeting with them individually, providing training on basic tasks, aligning assigned roles based on strengths and interests, and hosting team-building events, we were ready to launch our new team. Adding additional people to our team assisted us in expanding our mission. We experienced increased efficiency, broader reach to a wider audience for awareness, a wider network, higher quality work, and a collaborative spirit that made the process more rewarding for everyone.



team get-together

Phase 3: Sports Equity Survey

While researching sports accessibility to support our cause, we noticed a lack of data about sports equity at the elementary level, with most statistics focusing on high-school-level sports. In the spring of 2024, we launched a sports equity survey to gain insights into the needs of families in Michigan to make sports more accessible. These insights would help shape the approach to combating sports inequities and provide a data-backed basis to demonstrate the need for sports accessibility. This evidence would enhance our advocacy efforts to school administrators.

1. Finding a Mentor and Research Preparation

We contacted local university professors to guide us through this process. Dr. Whitney DeCamp, a sociology professor and researcher at Western Michigan University, mentored our research. He facilitated the submission of our research to an Institutional Review Board and advised us to take an ethics course through the CITI program to meet research requirements. We operationalized our outreach, revised our survey, and created a project schedule.



2. Execution

We compiled a comprehensive list of all public schools in Michigan. Throughout the fall and winter of 2024, we contacted school representatives via email, distributing our survey using the flyer above. In addition to gathering survey responses, we conducted interviews with superintendents, sports coaches, and parents from all around Michigan. These conversations and our data provide valuable insights into the needs of local communities, which have informed the direction of our work.

The image shows two documents side-by-side. On the left is a flyer titled 'ELEVATING SPORTS WITH EQUITY' by LEADERS FOR YOUTH SPORTS. It includes a 'Sports Equity Survey: Adults' section with a brief description and a list of student investigators: Aanya Goel, Brianna Zhang, and Janelle Yao. On the right is a 'Sports Equity Survey Contact Form' with fields for Name, Contact information, and a checkbox for 'Are you a school official?'. Handwritten blue text with arrows points to the flyer and form, stating 'surveys for both adults and minors' and 'survey form for those interested in participating in interviews'.

**April 1st, 2024 -
February 15th, 2025**

**200+
responses**

We collected helpful quantitative and qualitative data. Some responses are shown below:

"My children play many sports and some of them are on travel teams so it is very expensive so I have to work 3 jobs to afford it."

"I am super shocked how much it costs. We pay \$30 for a 30-minute group swim class per week. This is a basic life safety skill that every kid in Michigan needs since water here is everywhere, and that is a lot of money just to keep a kid safe."

"It's just too expensive. For example: ice hockey is \$700 for the season, football is \$200, and cheerleading is \$250 with prices only going up."

Our survey found that a lack of equipment, transportation, affordable programs, and awareness are key concerns. These findings were taken into account when planning our 2024 and 2025 events. We are currently drafting a research report, with the potential for publication in a scientific journal.

Phase 4: 501(c)(3) Events

After gaining nonprofit status, we developed a detailed event initiation process. Before each event, we created and presented a proposal to our Board of Directors and asked for their approval and feedback.

1. 2nd Annual Bake Sale

We decided to make our bake sale an annual event to raise awareness of our mission within our school community and among our DECA chapter. At the 2024 High School Homecoming football game, we sold homemade baked goods made from ingredients purchased with a gift card donation from Meijer. We also partnered with Bert's Bakery, a local business that generously donated cakes for us to sell.



**October 4, 2024
TOTAL RAISED:
\$387**



2. 2nd Annual Miles 4 Smiles 5K

After the success of our first 5K, we decided to bring it back as an annual event. Using the second and third phases of our Risk Management Plan, we launched a robust advertising campaign, garnered strong community support, and organized a high-quality event for participants. The event was a tremendous success: we nearly doubled registrations compared to our inaugural 5K, secured 10 new business sponsors in addition to the previous ones, and exceeded our revenue projections by \$1,000.



October 20, 2024

TOTAL RAISED:
\$2969

 **Spring Valley Park,
Kalamazoo, MI**

3. Lawrence Elementary School Sports Kits

To keep kids active over winter break, we created sports kits for the entire 4th and 5th grade classes at Lawrence Public Schools, a district where nearly 75% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. We visited Lawrence Elementary School to meet the children in person and distribute the kits.



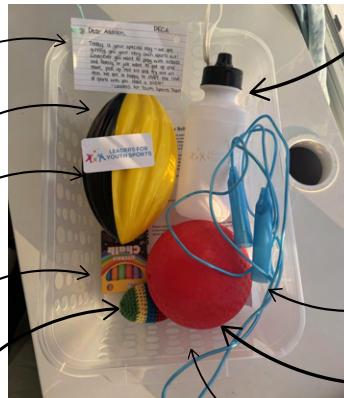
personal
note

LYS
sticker

football

sidewalk
chalk

hacky
sack



LYS logo water bottle

parent note
(underneath)

jump rope

playground ball

December 16, 2024

TOTAL HELPED:
60+ kids

4. 2nd Annual Sports Equipment Drive & Distribution

We began our branch program in early October, where we took a more remote role and guided a group of Kalamazoo high schooler students who ran their own event: the 2nd Annual Sports Equipment Drive & Distribution. By following our Equipment Drive Toolkit (see Appendix) with our guidance, they secured seven donation sites, five of which were new and located in Kalamazoo. They organized two distribution days at Kalamazoo Christian High School and Portage City Hall to broaden their reach, enabling us to assist a diverse range of individuals from both Kalamazoo and Portage.



**December 9 -
January 25, 2025**

TOTAL EQUIPMENT GIVEN:

223 items

TOTAL PEOPLE HELPED:

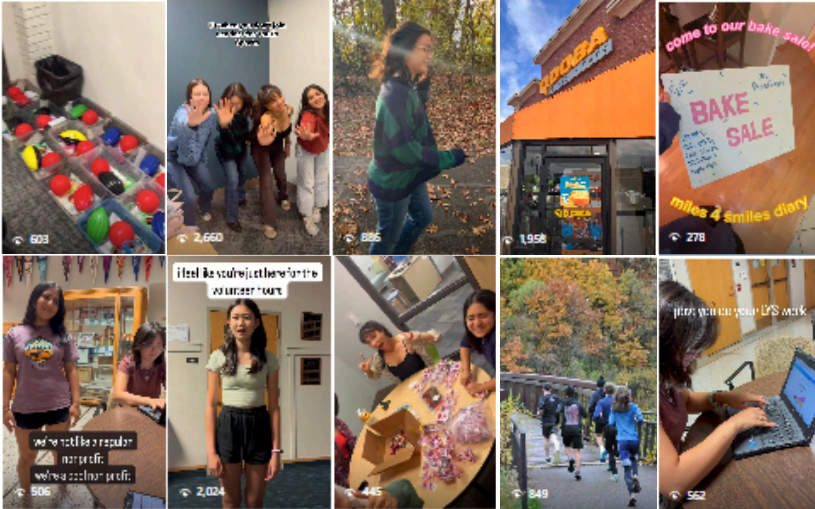
35 people



Advertising

1. Social Media

We used social media to connect with teen leaders, promote events, and raise community awareness. Collaborating with our Social Media Advisor, we posted weekly across Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X, and Facebook, featuring short videos, story updates, and photos.



TOTAL REACHED:
40,000

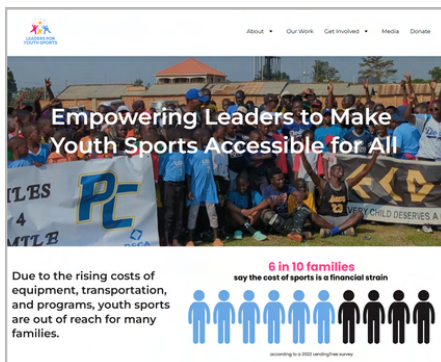
@leadersforyouthsports



2. Website

A website is vital for nonprofits, offering credibility, marketing, and fundraising opportunities. We purchased a domain and built a website to showcase our mission, sports programs, and leadership opportunities. We also launched an email newsletter to keep our community informed. As awareness of our organization has increased, so have website traffic and donations.

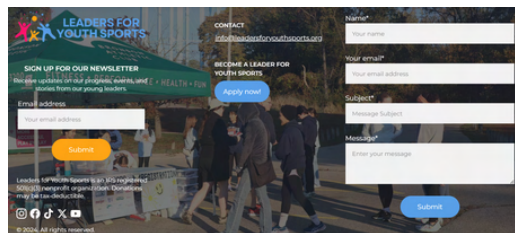
leadersforyouthsports.org



Making change around the globe.

We were recently joined forces with Every Child Deserves a Chance to host a sports day for over 500 kids in Uganda.

[Learn about our events](#)



Become a Leader today!

Represent Leaders for Youth Sports in your community by starting a project with our support.

As a Leader, you will have access to:

- **curated event toolkits** so you don't have to start from ground zero on any event
- **personalized advice** and involved support from our experienced Branch Advisors
- **nonprofit resources** such as our 501(c)(3) status, marketing leverage, and connections
- **financial grants** for your branch's service work
- **a network** of young leaders who are passionate about fighting sports inequality

Leaders have the opportunity of applying to become a Branch Leader to host more complex events such as run/walk events and sports clinics.

12+
communities

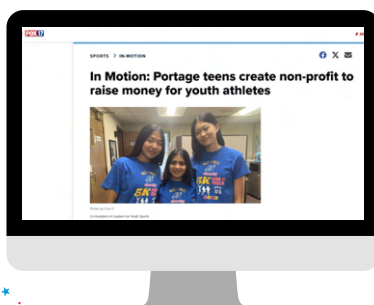
700
kids helped

You can make an impact.

[Start a project](#)

3. Local Media

We connected with various media companies and **secured 8 features**: MLive, Midwest United FC, WWMT Channel 3, Project Play, NowKalamazoo, the Ken Lanphear Show, and Fox17, which helped us reach community members and raise awareness.



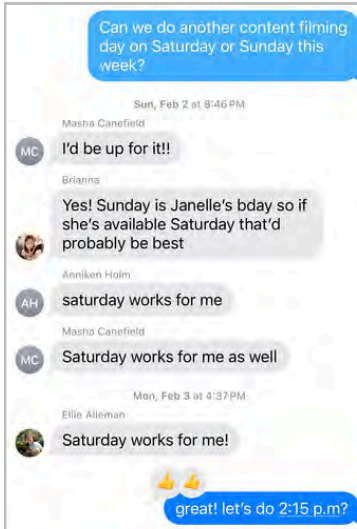
TOTAL REACHED:
50,000

interview at
our first 5K



A. Monitoring

i. Schedule



In-person meetings and virtual calls

In addition to our board meetings, we scheduled weekly calls to discuss the status of our responsibilities and talk about upcoming events. We also planned periodic meetings with our Team of Advisors to stay on track with our event schedules. Every month, we would get together and film social media video content, which was a consistent team-bonding opportunity. Additionally, we utilized in-person and virtual meetings with special guests from different community organizations to discuss, plan, and schedule possible future events.

texting to plan a content filming day with Team of Advisors

Email

We sent several emails leading up to 501(c)(3) status, such as project updates. After achieving status, we sent weekly updates to the Board of Directors and Team of Advisors. These emails contained event updates, upcoming meetings, agendas, and legal information. To coordinate events, we used email to finalize schedules with collaborators and to manage our advertising.

update email for Board of Directors

Brianna Zhang <brianna.zhang@portageps.org>
to Mark, Michael, Mandy, geschwendt, Ashley, Joshua, Janelle, me

Tue, Sep 10, 2024, 8:00 AM

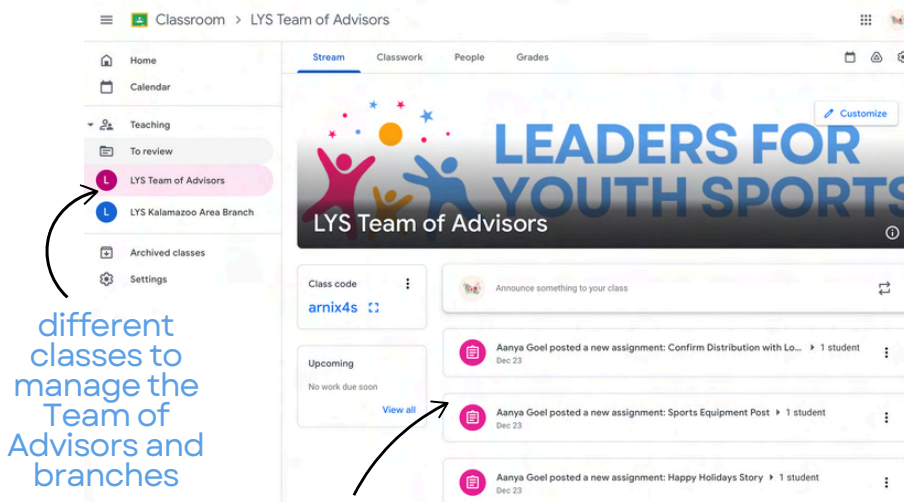
Hello everyone!

I hope you all are doing well. Thank you all for your enthusiasm and dedication to be part of this team! We are super excited to get started with this nonprofit. I have some updates to share.

- Our Board Member, Attorney Michael Bila, has been working diligently on our nonprofit applications. He has helped us obtain an Employer Identification Number from the IRS and has filed our incorporation documents with Michigan's Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. To see those documents, you can visit the [Google Folder](#). I will be updating this Folder with other materials moving forward.
- Attorney Bila is working on obtaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS and submitting our information to the Michigan Attorney General. After that, we will complete the bylaws and hold our first BOD meeting to adopt the bylaws and set goals. He and his law firm have also been generous enough to donate and cover the 501(c)(3) filing fee of \$275.
- Please join me in welcoming Joshua Ryan to our team! Mr. Ryan works as the Youth Sports League Coordinator of the Portage YMCA and is a men's basketball coach and the recruiting coordinator of KVCC. We need an odd number of BOD members, so Mr. Ryan will be another advising adult for now. We've already been learning from his grant writing experience and other expertise.

Google Classroom

Another tool we used was Google Classroom to monitor our Team of Advisors and branches. Each week, we posted assignments and provided an update that included general information, a weekly overview, details about the check-in (see Appendix) due that week, and a fun icebreaker question. Assignments covered both individual and group tasks such as event coordination, grant applications, and social media management.



different classes to manage the Team of Advisors and branches

weekly assignments for the Team of Advisors

ii. Budget

When we had financial updates, income, and expenses, we met with our Treasurer immediately to update our financial spreadsheet and store the receipts digitally. All purchases that were made by Leaders for Youth Sports were cleared with the Board of Directors.

Expenses		
Baskets	\$	90.00
Water Bottles	\$	95.00
Jump Rope	\$	44.00
Mini Playground Ball	\$	99.00
Foam Football	\$	90.00
Stickers	\$	43.00
Chalk	\$	48.00
Hackey Sacks	\$	59.00
Stress Balls	\$	33.00
Tax	\$	37.00
Total Projected Expenses	\$	638.00

budget for Lawrence Elementary School Sports Kits event

Fundraising Return on Investment:

108.57%

This calculation includes money spent on fundraising and funds raised in return, not including non-monetary donations, or the services that these costs provide. This ROI appears high because of volunteered human resources and donated supplies not included.

iii. Project Quality

We continuously checked in with our Team of Advisors, Branch Leaders, and volunteers, using bi-weekly progress check-ins and monthly well-being check-ins (see Appendix). Our goal was to ensure that each team member's workload wasn't overwhelming and that their work was continuing smoothly. This was key to ensuring high-quality events and projects in all departments.

To ensure professionalism, we sought out the help of our Board of Directors to receive their expertise in specific areas. For example, our board members who work in fitness help us organize professional sports events. We also utilize sponsorships and collaborations to increase the authenticity of each event. For example, at our second annual Miles 4 Smiles Charity 5K, we invited several well-known athletic businesses—such as Orange Theory— to host pop-up stands.

B. Controlling

Problem

Communication Issues



Growth led to more miscommunication

Transition to a Legal Enterprise



Limited by age as minors

Limited Marketing Opportunities



Lack of access due to age

Recruitment Issues



Unsure of how to formally set up

Solution

Responsibilities:

- Used online to-do lists (Google Docs) to monitor tasks
- Delegated tasks a month in advance

Timelines:

- Placed important dates in a shared Google Calendar
- Communicated consistently and sent reminders about upcoming events/meetings

Legality Issues:

- Asked legal firms to be our legal adult representatives

Funding:

- Made a single non-profit associated bank account to consolidate all funds gathered
- Managed by adults – our Treasurer (Mark Cardwell) and Secretary (Mandy Telgenhoff)

Lack of Accessibility:

- Persistently reached out to news organizations
- Employed risk management plan and used alternative methods
- Utilized our own social media and school platforms
- Contacted neighboring school districts for publicity and outreach

Board Members:

- Reached out to a hospitality manager to network
- Utilized various personal connections

Branch Leaders:

- Connected with classmates to share opportunity
- Advertised leadership positions on social media account



VI. CLOSING THE PROJECT



A. Evaluation of Key Metrics

Having successfully conducted this project for over one-and-a-half years, it is important for us to reflect on our progress and evaluate what went well and what we can improve.

19

People in Team

Success: ★★★★★

Our goal was to transform Leaders for Youth Sports into an inclusive organization that involved 15 people. We formed a diverse Board of Directors and recruited young leaders passionate about leading branches and volunteering. In total, our team comprises 19 members, exceeding our target. In the future, we will network with schools to engage a wider audience across Michigan and increase involvement.

775

People Helped

Success: ★★★★★

We exceeded our goal of assisting 500 children participate in youth sports by a significant amount. This number consists of the kids we helped at our sports events (such as the Ugandan Sports Day), yearly sports equipment distributions, and more. However, we can continue to have an even larger impact on children in our community by scaling our efforts, and we plan to do so in our future events.

\$23,300

**Total
Contributions**

Success: ★★★★★

We greatly surpassed our initial goal of raising \$10,000 in contributions. This is a total of several key components: in-kind donations (5K prizes, sports equipment, etc.), monetary donations (such as the 5K and fundraisers), grant money, sports equipment donations, and other contributions since 2023. We will use these funds for our future endeavors and to support our growth.

105,000

People Reached

Success: ★★★★★

We successfully reached a large audience through several outlets. In addition to kids who were assisted, we also reached parents who assisted us in event planning, donated sports equipment, attended our 5K, participated in our Sports Equity Survey, and saw our social media posts and flyers. We were largely successful due to social media; in fact, one of our Instagram reels received 2,700 views.

Evaluation of Goals

**Raised
\$10,000**



**15 People In
Our Team**



**Reached
10,000 People**



**Assisted
500 Kids**



Overall, we successfully met and surpassed all of our goals that we laid out at the beginning of our project. We believe we can continue to increase our success and have a larger impact on not only the local Southwest Michigan community but also in new areas in Michigan and possibly across the United States, through the power of teen leadership, volunteering, and community service.



B. Lessons Learned

Throughout this project, we learned several key lessons in some challenging ways. However, we value these experiences and will use them to assist our future projects and branches.

Initiating



Lesson: How to overcome legal issues with adult support

Our initial goal was to obtain 501(c)3 status by September. Although we met this deadline, it was very difficult to secure board members and a pro bono lawyer. We learned that persistence and teamwork are key to overcoming legal issues to maintain growth and increase impact. Additionally, we realized how essential it was to have a strong team of adults who could support us.

Planning & Organization



Lesson: How to increase event publicity

An issue we faced for some of our events, especially in the beginning, was a lack of participation due to a lack of community awareness. We learned several key tactics to combat this. In addition to using social media, we utilized our school and connections with other organizations to spread the word. We learned that we needed to consistently publicize the event at least two months before.

Execution



Lesson: How to prevent delayed events

Occasionally, we would struggle with timing and miscommunication between ourselves and collaborators. We learned that constant communication, even with simple updates, would help us stay on schedule and reduce possible misunderstandings.

Monitoring & Controlling



Lesson: How to manage several projects

It was difficult to manage several projects (our Elevating Sports with Equity Survey, sports events, and non-profit-based expansion) simultaneously. We learned that once we were assigned distinct job roles, we were all able to contribute equally to initiatives through our specialized parts and produce high-quality projects.

C. Recommendations for Future Projects

1 Branch Out

We plan to expand our impact and continue to branch out to school districts and locations all throughout the state of Michigan. This will increase the number of in-need children we are able to help and communities we can reach with our mission.

2 Diversify Events

In the future, our goal is to develop and implement new events through our branches depending on the need in their communities and through trial-and-error. This will increase the methods through which we assist youth and raise awareness for our cause in more ways.

3 Increase Publicity

We hope to increase our advertisement and social media presence to raise awareness among as many people as possible. Additionally, our goal is to expand our current network and do more outreach. This will improve the effectiveness of our advocacy efforts and create change.

We will continue to work on Leaders for Youth Sports and take a more remote role as we become a branch-focused nonprofit in the future. Our Kalamazoo Area Branch is thriving, planning the upcoming 3rd Annual Miles 4 Smiles 5K. We have a group of high school students in Grand Rapids who are forming a branch and holding a sports equipment drive in May. We are just getting started.



VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY



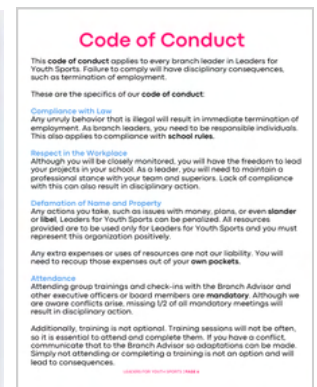
1. Center for Disease Control. "Health Benefits of Physical Activity for Children." *CDC Physical Activity Basics*. www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/health-benefits/children.html
2. DeMarco, Jacqueline. "Sports Fans Will Shell out an Average of \$664 This Fall, and 33% May Take On Debt." *Lending Tree*. www.lendingtree.com/debt-consolidation/sports-fans-survey.
3. Project Play. "Youth Sports Facts: Benefits." *Project Play*, Aspen Institute, 2023, projectplay.org/youth-sports/facts/benefits.

VII. APENDIX



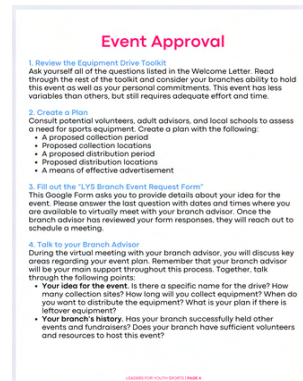
Nonprofit Handbooks

We created handbooks for every nonprofit position, Board Member, Director, Advisor, Branch Leader, and Volunteer, to read before joining. They included organization background information, our mission, vision, values, conflict of interest policy, whistleblower policy, anti-harassment policy, code of conduct, and other procedures.



Event Toolkits

To assist new high school students in their local Leaders for Youth Sports branches, we created toolkits to outline the steps of coordinating common events. These toolkits were detailed, with our 5K Walk/Run toolkit being over 30 pages long. Our student leaders use these as a textbook and have seen success following them.



Check In's

We utilized bi-weekly progress check-ins and monthly well-being check-ins to assess the status of our Team of Advisors, Branch Leaders, and youth volunteers. These provided valuable insight in several areas, such as task delegation and rigor as well as branch decisions.

