



**American
Red Cross**

Young Professionals in the American Red Cross

Quick-Start Guide

learn first aid and CPR
play a round of golf for a club
volunteer to host a flood relief fundraiser
become a board member
high school connections
high new money
mentor a child
make from measles
change a life
help build successful corporate partnerships
meet a diverse group of new people
build the skills you need to become a better leader
team visit a veteran
action team
give
discover your passion
attend a lunchtime speaker series
work with other young professionals in your area
share your talents
concert join a disaster relief concert
build relationships
get certified in something new to you

The Case for Young Professionals Groups.

What are American Red Cross young professionals groups? Why are they important?

American Red Cross young professionals groups are a commitment to targeting and incorporating an important segment of the population—21- to 35-year-olds—in all aspects of the American Red Cross. This key demographic, herein referred to as young professionals or American Red Cross young professionals group members, may overlap in age with young adult volunteers, but are defined by their status as members of the working world, recent college graduates, and graduate students.

American Red Cross young professionals groups are assemblies of dedicated volunteers who support the Red Cross mission, generally through event-based fundraising activities. They build awareness for the Red Cross among young, civic-minded philanthropists, promoting opportunities for fundraising as well as service delivery, like disaster relief, blood services, and preparedness education. People from all industries and backgrounds and with differing levels of Red Cross experience join American Red Cross young professionals groups because of a common interest in the mission of the American Red Cross.

A great draw of American Red Cross young professionals groups is the opportunity to network with other young professionals. Young professionals may be living in a new city and looking for social activities to connect with their peers. American Red Cross young professionals groups capitalize on this need. Many large corporations encourage their employees to volunteer and give money, often matching their financial contributions and encouraging philanthropic endeavors in the workplace. This unique mix of social and career opportunities makes American Red Cross young professionals groups an attractive experience for young professionals across the country.

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Incorporating a commitment to young professionals at your unit can serve as a worthy tool for the retention and recognition of an already loyal volunteer base.

You may be wondering why the young professional demographic warrants a separate program, with different recruitment methods and activities. By understanding and catering to the needs of different segments of the population, like young professionals, you will help your volunteers and donors have a more meaningful experience with the Red Cross. American Red Cross young professionals groups present the opportunity to involve talented and generous young people on their terms, and encourages them to support the Red Cross throughout their lives.

What can a young professionals group do for my unit?

Young professionals can bring a number of things to your Red Cross unit, including diversity, expertise in new areas, and additional fundraising opportunities. Additionally, American Red Cross young professionals groups can be an important method for creating lifelong supporters of your chapter and the Red Cross.

Develop career paths for your young volunteers

Involving young professionals in the American Red Cross adds new skills and enthusiasm to your efforts, develops new leaders for your unit, and provides clear career paths for current youth and young adult volunteers. The Red Cross has developed solid and recognizable programs for young people age 24 and younger, and, as a result, thousands of youth and young adults volunteer for the American Red Cross through high school or college programs. Upon graduating, entering into a new phase of life, or transitioning to a new city, these young people may lose their connection to the organization. Incorporating an American Red Cross young professionals group within your unit can serve as a worthy tool for the retention and recognition of an already loyal volunteer base.

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Utilize the unique skills of young professionals

Young professionals can bring many skills and assets to your unit. Potential members include employees at local businesses who may help you tap into corporate networks for funds and in-kind gifts or to organize a blood drive partnership. At the same time, young professionals may have disposable income, which they may choose to donate to the Red Cross. By building a strong network of young professional volunteers, you will gain access to local businesses and new potential donors.

American Red Cross young professionals group members will also contribute valuable technical skills to your unit. During the week, young professionals hold a variety of paid positions at local organizations. As volunteers, they can bring those valuable services to your unit. Young professionals are likely to be technologically savvy and can help you integrate advanced technology into your operations. They could help you build a web site or use social media to promote the Red Cross.

American Red Cross young professionals group members can also help you mobilize the college and high school students in your area. As young professionals, they help bridge the gap between young and old. American Red Cross young professionals group members can serve as advisors to Red Cross Clubs or they can help your unit recruit additional youth and young adult volunteers. A commitment to American Red Cross young professionals groups will give your young volunteers a strong set of mentors and show students how they can remain involved with the Red Cross when they enter the workforce.

Ensure future leadership for your unit

American Red Cross young professionals groups will also help ensure strong future leadership for the American Red Cross. Many outstanding young volunteers find few volunteer opportunities targeted toward them once they become young professionals. American Red Cross young professionals groups will give young professionals the social networking and professional development opportunities required to get or keep them involved with the American Red Cross. And by recruiting and retaining volunteers during this stage of life, the American Red Cross will be guaranteed strong leadership now and in the future.

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There are no set boundaries for age or for the scope of activities associated with the young professionals market. Together with your American Red Cross young professionals group leaders, you can organize outreach based on the interests and needs of your community. This guide provides basic information, assistance on getting started, and examples of American Red Cross young professionals groups already up and running at units across the country.

Sounds great. Where do we start?

This guide will help you organize a successful program. In order to thrive, a program for young professionals must be run by young professionals themselves. If you don't already have a few young professional leaders in mind, start out by recruiting from groups already supported by your unit. You could hold a recognition event for graduating seniors from college Red Cross clubs in your area. While you're thanking them for their contributions, you can also find out who would like to keep volunteering as a young professional.

You may also want to approach local large- and medium-size companies with advertising materials for your American Red Cross young professionals groups. And don't forget to recruit from professional schools, like local law schools, medical schools, and business schools. These students are often looking for easy ways to stay involved with community service and add to their resume. Your current board members may also have ideas for how to reach young professionals, and may have connections at local companies or universities.

When a few young professionals offer their time to organize an American Red Cross young professionals group, use the info sheet in the appendix of this guide to gauge their interest. If they are on board, use specific advice in the following section to set up the program. Together, you can discuss the goals and structure of the program, potential activities, and set up your first recruitment event.

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Getting Started.

Structure

You may choose to set up your American Red Cross young professionals groups as a membership-based group, where volunteers make a tax-deductible gift to your unit to become an official American Red Cross young professionals groups member. Consider offering different levels of membership with special benefits associated with each level. For example, the National Capital Region offers memberships at the bronze level for \$35, silver level for \$50, gold level for \$200, and platinum level for \$500. The funds can enable your group to plan service projects and events. Work with your unit and see the budget guidance for details on how to manage funds.

A young professionals group can be a major fundraising force at your unit.

Alternatively, your American Red Cross young professionals group can put on events like fundraisers and days of service throughout the year, without a formal membership structure. Either way, your American Red Cross young professionals groups should have a leadership structure, like a leadership committee, that provides opportunities for young professionals to take ownership of the program and thus be more engaged in the Red Cross mission and gain useful leadership skills.

Programming

Fundraising

American Red Cross young professionals groups can be a major fundraising force at your unit. Many young professionals work at high-profile companies and can help bring in major gifts, establish corporate partnerships, and multiply the value of their individual gifts through matching programs at work. Asking young professionals to make personal contributions, even in small amounts, sets the stage for major giving later in life.

Social networking events, like happy hours, at local bars and restaurants are often the perfect mix of socializing and philanthropy that young professionals are looking for. And since many companies are

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interested in marketing to young professionals with new disposable income, they are likely to sponsor your American Red Cross young professionals group events. Developing relationships with beverage vendors and event venues will bring in members as well as resources. Check out the best practices section at the end of this guide to see how happy hour fundraisers have worked for other units.

If you'd like to diversify your event calendar, consider these fundraising ideas and think about what might work at your unit. Take note of other profitable fundraisers in your community and try to replicate their success.

- Fashion show, partnering with local designers/design schools
- Date auction
- Wine tasting
- Concert
- Speaker series with networking reception
- Leadership training seminar
- International Humanitarian Law training
- Silent auction
- Golf tournament
- Midnight cruise
- Celebrity chefs
- Oscar night
- Masquerade ball
- Speed networking/dating
- Comedy night
- Sporting event
- Bar or restaurant night
- Red Cross themed event: Red Cross Month, World Red Cross Day
- Sponsor a Red Cross group at another widely publicized event, like a marathon
- Or, co-sponsor an existing event like a film festival!

Don't forget: Once you have active young professional volunteers, you can invite them to other

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events, including fundraisers, at your unit. They can even help you increase attendance by reaching out to a diverse and often overlooked segment of your community.

Service projects and other ideas

Offering a wide range of training and volunteer opportunities can be mutually beneficial as incentives for young professionals to stay involved with the Red Cross and become teachers and mentors. Though American Red Cross young professionals group programming tends to center around fundraising, you may want to try these service delivery activities to keep people engaged. This is also a great opportunity for young professionals to learn more about the Red Cross mission.

- Offer First Aid and CPR classes
- Provide preparedness information to local companies
- Hold a networking event with a guest speaker, like one of your prominent board members
- Spotlight a young professional in your Heroes Campaign
- Sponsor a marathon or cycling team
- Conduct a donation drive (i.e., for comfort kit materials)
- Host a thank-a-thon to thank donors by phone
- Sponsor a blood drive
- Holiday Mail for Heroes
- Team Firestoppers

Leadership opportunities

Developing a plan to retain the volunteers you recruit through American Red Cross young professionals groups is essential. Make sure you are prepared to offer additional meaningful opportunities to your young professional volunteers, including leadership positions. American Red Cross young professionals groups may become a feeder program for the Board of Directors and this could open the door to other roles at the regional or national levels. Take a look at the committees and leadership positions at your unit and make sure that young professionals are represented. The opportunity to move upward with increasing responsibility in the Red Cross organization is one of our



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best built-in marketing tools.

Recruitment

Getting the word out to your target audience is crucial to the success of your American Red Cross young professionals groups. Look through these ideas and figure out what will work best for your community.

Word of mouth

Inviting your friends and coworkers is an easy way to grow your American Red Cross young professionals groups. Explain what your group does, be enthusiastic and ask them to join the effort. If they can make it, they will check out at least one event. Start by asking at least five people to bring a few extra friends with them to the next event. If you get a chain of people recruiting before the event, you will be very happy with the turnout. Asking young employees at your unit to invite their friends can be a great way to get started. Once you have a core group, ask the members what they would like to see in their American Red Cross young professionals groups.

Asking young employees at your unit to invite their friends can be a great way to get started.

Online

You may also advertise your American Red Cross young professionals group online and via e-mail. Your methods may vary depending on your budget and your technical expertise.

Create a position called “young professionals group member” on Volunteer Connection. Consider creating a listing on VolunteerMatch.org that specifically requests young professional volunteers (include an application link to Volunteer Connection). That way, young professionals will know there are service opportunities tailored to their needs.

Keep track of your members’ e-mail addresses so you can send them updates and invitations to events, items they can easily forward to their friends and coworkers. Consider e-mailing other

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groups, like other young professionals networks, to spread the word about your opportunities.

Young professionals will find your American Red Cross young professionals group to be more credible if it has a professional-looking page on your unit's web site. Use this page to explain what an American Red Cross young professionals group is, promote upcoming opportunities and highlight past events.

Advertising on Facebook can be easy and inexpensive. You can create a group and event invitations to connect with young professionals for free. If you're willing to pay for advertising, it costs as little as \$5.00 to put up an ad that will be viewed 10,000 times.

Craigslist.org is also worth considering. Advertise your events for free in the Community section under "Volunteers."

Many publications run an online calendar of events or spotlight different organizations that need volunteers. Take a look at your local newspapers and magazines to see what advertising opportunities exist.

Print

Distributing flyers and posters in public areas is another way to tell people about your American Red Cross young professionals group. Depending on your location, the people you target, and the resources at your disposal, challenge yourself to think of other interesting ways to catch eyes. Bulletin boards, chalk writing on sidewalks, t-shirts, billboards, stickers...if you think it'll work, try it!

Use the young professional materials that are available on Brand Central, including a one page flyer template and business card sized flyers.

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Best Practices.

There are many ways to involve young professionals at your unit. Below you will find a compilation of best practices you can use for guidance and inspiration. All of these ideas can be tailored to meet your needs and goals.

Best Practice | Chicago, IL

The American Red Cross of Greater Chicago raised \$10,000 through two American Red Cross young professionals group happy hour events. They partnered with local beverage companies to offer a free drink and appetizers for three hours at a local bar. Attendees paid a flat entrance fee of \$20-30.

Best Practice | Arlington, VA

The National Capital Region sold bracelets at the door of a local brewery and raised \$1,600. In exchange for buying a bracelet, donors enjoyed \$2 drinks all night. On another evening, the American Red Cross young professionals group in Arlington collected donations at the door and received 20 percent of the bar's proceeds for that night, raising more than \$1,000.

Networking and Fundraising

Speaker Series

Invite a few prominent people to speak about a topic that will intrigue young professionals. Recruit high-profile people like diplomats, corporate executives, and major donors to speak or to attend the events. Host a networking reception before or after. You may charge an entrance fee and give the proceeds to the preferred cause at your unit.

Happy Hour

Partner with a local bar, restaurant, pub, or lounge to organize a American Red Cross young professionals group networking happy hour with exclusive discounts. Charge a flat entrance fee for everyone or a fee for non-members. This is a low-pressure environment where young professionals can learn about the American Red Cross and network with peers. Have a series of happy hour events with a goal to build the number of people who attend each time. Try partnering with local companies or consider organizing a holiday-related event. Also try collaborating with a social organization (for example, Asian American Professionals) that already has an audience and is looking to make a group donation to a non-profit. Be sure to highlight and thank the organizations that helped with your event!

Mentorship

Red Cross Club Mentors

American Red Cross young professionals group members can mentor youth and young adult volunteers in your Red Cross Clubs. As young professionals, American Red Cross young

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Best Practice | Los Angeles, CA

The young professional volunteers at the American Red Cross of Greater Los Angeles serve as youth advisors to nearby Red Cross Clubs. They coordinate communication between the clubs and the chapter and also attend major club events and meetings. The use of young professionals has been particularly beneficial because there is a small age gap. Many of the American Red Cross young professionals group members previously started Red Cross Clubs at their high schools and colleges and therefore have a lot of practical experience to pass along.

Best Practice | Austin, TX

When the American Red Cross of Central Texas started its American Red Cross young professionals group, staff wanted to be sure there was enough interest in the community. They began by conducting market research, bringing in groups of recent graduates and older young professionals to talk about potential goals for the program. With these opinions, the chapter launched an American Red Cross young professionals group that integrated young professionals from all backgrounds into existing chapter activities.

professionals group members can relay valuable information about the college admissions process, potential careers, and future volunteer opportunities with the American Red Cross. You could even create a more personalized big brothers/big sisters program to match individual students with American Red Cross young professionals group members who share similar interests.

Diversity

Youth and young adult volunteers are the most diverse segment of the American Red Cross volunteer base. Similarly, young professionals come from all walks of life and work in various fields. Use your unit's statistics from the Volunteer Satisfaction Survey to analyze your volunteer demographics before and after recruiting more young volunteers.

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Make It Your Red Cross Experience.

This info sheet is brought to you by American Red Cross National Young Professionals Council. We strive to represent young professional volunteers between the ages of 21 and 35 and work to engage our peers in the humanitarian mission of the American Red Cross. We invite you to reach out to the Council and use this Quick-Start Guide as resources to make a difference in your community.

Young professionals have no shortage of talent and energy to give to the Red Cross. We provide relief to victims of disasters, organize fundraisers, mentor young volunteers, teach lifesaving training courses, and serve on boards of directors. And in exchange, our Red Cross experience offers us valuable networking and skill-building opportunities, opening doors to new people and leadership positions.

As a young professional volunteer with the American Red Cross, you can:

- Gain useful leadership skills
- Organize or attend networking events at local restaurants or bars
- Raise money to support the Red Cross mission
- Mentor high school and college youth
- Initiate meaningful corporate partnerships
- Contribute your talents and technical skills to

- community projects
- Earn certifications in Disaster Services courses, First Aid, CPR and leadership
- Gain respect in your workplace by promoting volunteer activities

If you're interested in establishing more Red Cross opportunities for young professionals in your area, use these 5 simple steps to get started.

1. Visit your local chapter

Set up a meeting with staff at your local Red Cross chapter. Introduce yourself and talk about your ideas. Ask questions! Find out what you need to know about how the Red Cross serves your community.

Spend some time assessing the chapter's current programs and needs. Think about how young professionals could add the most value by contributing time and resources to the Red

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About the National Young Professionals Council

The American Red Cross National Young Professionals Council builds the capacity of the American Red Cross by engaging and supporting volunteers and donors between the ages of 21 and 35. Led by young professional volunteers committed to fulfilling the Red Cross mission, including national youth leadership alumni, local young professional Red Cross leaders and members, and subject matter experts, the council leverages the work experience and broad skill sets of young professionals to further the mission of the American Red Cross and provides strategic advice to the President & CEO, the Vice President of Volunteer Management and other senior leaders.



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