

## **Young Professionals' Network Strategic Direction – Annual Plan**

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### **Introduction**

This report outlines the strategic direction of the Department of Finance's Young Professionals' Network (YPN) for 2021. Launched in January 2015, the YPN is a resource for young professionals at the Department of Finance Canada and is intended to help newer employees launch a successful career in the public service. The YPN has a membership of over 250 people,<sup>1</sup> ranging from new co-op students to mid-career employees with years of experience. The YPN sits on the Engagement Committee and the Management Advisory Committee.

The Network is active on many fronts from onboarding new employees to career development and networking. Over the past five years, the YPN has successfully integrated new employees with its buddy system, organized social and networking events, and assisted in engaging its membership with corporate commitments including the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC).

The COVID-19 pandemic put a pause on the YPN's work for much of 2020. As a result, the buddy system was paused and only a handful of social and professional development events were hosted. Given that remote working is likely to persist at least until June 2021, we believe the YPN can play a key role in helping our membership feel connected while working from home.

The YPN's mandate is especially critical during this time, given that the Fall 2020 Pulse Survey indicated that the YPN's membership, on a whole, is adapting to remote work more poorly than Finance employees in general. Compared to Finance employees as a whole, YPN members agree more strongly that they are looking forward to connecting socially with their colleagues, and disagree more strongly that they have been able to maintain strong working relationships while working from home (see Annex 3 for a more detailed comparison of the Fall 2020 Pulse Survey results for YPN members and FIN members).

Going forward, the 2020 strategic goal of the YPN is to transition to virtual events and to work more closely with the National Capital Region's Young Professionals Network (NCRYPN) to connect YPN members with resources and networks outside of the Department of Finance. While it is possible that we will return to the office in the latter half of 2021, our current planning focusses on virtual programming. We will continue to reassess our plans as the year progresses and we begin to plan for a return to work.

### **Portfolios**

#### **Professional Development**

Providing opportunities for professional development and connecting colleagues across the Department is a key function of the YPN. Ensuring YPN representation on all corporate committees, but especially the Employee Development Committee, will help the Professional Development committee streamline our efforts and coordinate with other internal initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Our official measure of membership is the number of people in our mailing list, which is currently over 250 people.

The YPN will take advantage of the remote working environment by inviting speakers from outside of the department to participate in virtual brown bag seminars and lunch and learn sessions. These brief sessions will serve to broaden the horizons of the YPN membership by introducing them to economic issues that they may not have considered previously.

In its sixth year, the YPN would like to expand the scope of its professional development activities by collaborating with internal and external resources to coordinate skills workshops for newer employees. A survey conducted by the YPN Executive Team in December 2020 indicated that workshops on advanced Excel functions and Outlook email management were in high demand.

Additionally, the Network will continue to support events that share expertise and provide networking opportunities within and beyond the Department. Steps to increase cross-departmental connectivity have already begun as the YPN has started to actively participate in the NCRYPN meetings and has connected with Renaissance, the TBS YPN. We plan to collaborate on virtual events with these groups where possible. For example, preliminary discussions have begun with TBS Renaissance on potential collaboration for a virtual speed mentoring event later in the year.

## **Onboarding**

An important function of the YPN is to support new employees as they launch their careers at the Department of Finance. Given the concerning results from the most recent Pulse survey, the onboarding committee and the YPN more broadly will make better integrating new employees a key objective.

To that end, the onboarding committee has three main priorities for the upcoming year: (1) re-establish the buddy program; (2) draft a new onboarding email for ECs and non-ECs that provides links to existing resources (e.g. the new employee handbook); and (3) develop and share best practices for managers who are onboarding new employees in the work from home context. The onboarding committee will also participate in the redesign of the Department of Finance InfoSite to ensure the information targeted at new employees is up to date and relevant.

## **Social**

YPN members lag far behind their colleagues in feeling connected with their colleagues in the remote work environment. This is particularly true for the sizable and continuously increasing number of employees that began at the Department after March 13 and have yet to work in the office, or even meet their teammates face-to-face. The YPN can play a valuable role in offering opportunities for social interaction between our members, which will hopefully alleviate feelings of isolation, and increase a sense of connection to colleagues and the department as a whole.

That being said, we face a unique challenge of executing diverse, engaging social events within the constraints of our virtual setting. A December 2020 survey of our membership found that there was limited interest in in-person events until after a return to work, so social committee plans to focus on virtual events for at least the first half of 2021, before beginning to consider in-person events during the second half of the year.

Social committee aims to execute two events per month throughout the duration of the work from home period. In early February, we will begin a series of monthly virtual board game

lunches that will continue for the foreseeable future. Additionally, we will seek to plan a range of other social events, with the intent of hosting one per month. Events will likely range from unstructured events like virtual pub nights, to more structured events like games nights and virtual lessons. Where relevant, we will seek to collaborate with other YPNs, including NCRYPN as well as the PCO and TBS YPNs, with the goal of connecting our members with more people across the Government of Canada. We are also considering opportunities for ongoing social engagement between members, such as a program to match up YPN members for coffee conversations. We have also created a YPN Facebook group, which we hope will be a valuable forum for YPN members to connect outside of the work context.

## **Crosscutting Priorities**

### **Advocate for youth**

The YPN includes a membership of more than 250 employees, representing a diverse range of employees of different backgrounds, experiences, and positions across the department. One of the core roles of the YPN is as a representative and advocate for youth in the Department of Finance. Our members make up a large portion of the department's workforce, and face a number of unique issues and challenges throughout all areas of work life, from onboarding to wellbeing to promotion.

The YPN will continue to prioritize its advocacy role over the coming year. We will engage with our members to better understand the issues and concerns of youth in the department, and engage with the department to share those perspectives and work to develop solutions that can help improve the work experience of youth in the department. This priority underlies much of the other work we do, including many of the other cross-cutting priorities discussed below.

### **Promote diversity and inclusion within the YPN and the Department of Finance**

Diversity and inclusion are important issues that impact all facets of work life. Diverse workplaces are able to draw on the different backgrounds and experiences of their employees to work more effectively and creatively. Inclusive workplaces are critical to ensuring the wellbeing of all employees and enabling employees to maximize their potential.

The YPN will make a proactive effort to consider diversity and inclusion as we plan and execute our events and initiatives. This begins by making sure our events are accessible to all of our members, especially those who speak different languages, or may be differently-abled. But it also goes beyond that to making sure our events are welcoming and inclusive, and that they are representative of the diversity of the YPN – ensuring where relevant that our events include and elevate the voices of marginalized groups, including women, people of colour, and more.

Diversity and inclusion are also an important focus and lens for our advocacy. As issues that are directly relevant to our members, we have an obligation to highlight them in our interactions with the department, and work with the department to help advance work on them. Where relevant, we will also try to use an intersectional lens to our advocacy on other issues, seeking to better understand and address how the issues impact marginalized groups.

### **Ensure YPN representation on all corporate committees**

Departmental governance committees are key fora where departmental policies on workplace issues are developed. In the past, we have aimed to have YPN volunteers on each committee,

something we plan to continue going forward. YPN representation on departmental governance committees will advance the YPN's objectives in two main ways. First, they are important venues for the YPN to exercise its advocacy role, and share the perspective of young people. Second, representation will allow us to gain a better understanding of departmental planning, allowing us to more effectively coordinate our efforts with other events and initiatives within the department.

The YPN will also continue to engage in the Management Advisory Committee and other corporate governance committees where possible and relevant to represent and advocate for youth within the department.

### **Better understand the YPN membership**

In order to supplement the YPN's advocacy role, and in order to guide YPN events and initiatives, the YPN will seek to gain a better understanding of our members. Data from membership surveys will help us better understand the group of people that we represent, and also better understand the unique challenges and issues that they face. We will do this through two main channels:

- Continue to engage with the Corporate Services Branch to collect more information about our membership, through HR data, Pulse survey data, and more.
- Gather our own data about our members. We are planning to circulate a comprehensive survey in the first quarter of 2021 to better understand the makeup of our membership and their experience working at the Department of Finance. We have also created a pool of volunteers who are open to receiving smaller surveys on a more regular basis, which will allow us to quickly receive input from members as it relates to emerging issues (e.g. if there is a MAC meeting scheduled to discuss employee recognition, we could quickly send a survey on how our members feel about recognition issues).

### **Review and formalize YPN Terms of Reference**

Since the YPN was launched in 2015, it has operated without comprehensive terms of reference. Though a partial version was drafted in the past, it was not completed or formally approved. One of the YPN's goals for 2021 is to create and formalize comprehensive terms of reference for the YPN, in order to maintain organizational sustainability and ease future transitions.

Different YPNs across the Government of Canada include a diverse range of organizational structures. Our YPN has maintained largely the same structure since it began in 2015, so the review will include a consideration of whether the current structure remains fit for purpose, or whether a more effective structure could be created. Another critical component of the review will be to lay out a procedure for the selection of new co-chairs, a process that has historically been completed in an ad hoc manner.

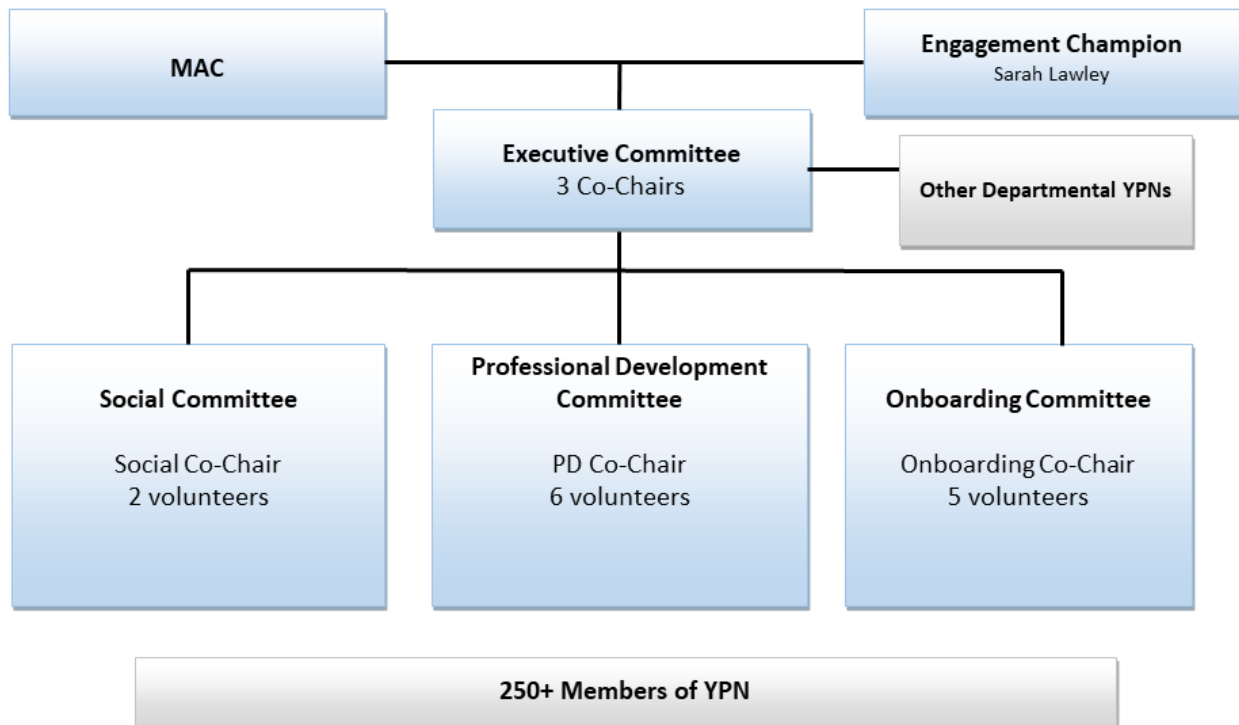
### **Collaborate with other YPNs**

We will aim to collaborate with our fellow YPNs across the Government of Canada. Foremost among those will be those at PCO and TBS, with whom we have organized a number of events in the past. We will also plan to take advantage of the National Capital Region YPN (NCRYPN) network as a forum where we will be able to develop connections with other YPNs, plan collaborative events, and share ideas about how to improve the work lives of young people within the Government of Canada.

**Annex 1: List of Events by Month**

January	<b>Social:</b> Virtual Mixer (Jan 26)
February	<b>PD:</b> Budget Panel (Tentatively February 10) <b>Social:</b> Board Game Lunches begin (ongoing, first Thursday of every month) <b>Social:</b> Video Game Social
March	<b>Social:</b> Virtual Fiscal New Year Pub Night (possibly with TBS/PCO)
April	<b>PD:</b> Economic Policy in a Biden Administration <b>Social:</b> Virtual Dance Lesson
May	
June	<b>PD:</b> Webinar on pension and retirement planning
July	
August	<b>PD:</b> Panel Discussion on moving around in the public service with Finance employees that have worked in multiple departments
September	
October	<b>PD:</b> Advanced Excel Skills Webinar
November	
December	<b>PD:</b> Info session on think tanks and their relationship with government

NB: Social committee will continue with monthly events throughout the year (in addition to the monthly Board Game Lunches), but events from May onwards will not be determined until later in the winter.

**Annex 2: YPN Organization Chart**

**Annex 3: YPN Fall 2020 Pulse Survey Data Summary**

	<b>Non-YPN</b>	<b>YPN</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>414</i>	<i>120</i>	
I am happy working at the Department of Finance.	93%	90%	-3%
I feel that my work makes a difference.	89%	83%	-7%
I am able to balance the demands of work with my personal life.	71%	70%	-1%
I feel supported at work when faced with challenges that impact my wellbeing (mental and physical).	79%	77%	-2%
I have energy at the end of my workday.	53%	53%	0%
I am getting the support and feedback I need to develop as an employee.	73%	71%	-2%
I am satisfied with the support I have received from my manager.	87%	78%	-9%
I feel that I am well set up to work remotely (e.g. monitor, keyboard, mouse, chair).	88%	81%	-7%
I am looking forward to : a. Connecting socially with my colleagues	67%	81%	13%
I am looking forward to : b. Innovating (process improvements, tools, collaborations/partnerships)	62%	62%	0%
I am looking forward to : c. Focusing more on my work-life balance	70%	66%	-4%
In the remote work environment, I feel that I have been able to : a. Work effectively with team members	76%	69%	-7%
In the remote work environment, I feel that I have been able to : b. Maintain strong working relationships	59%	42%	-17%