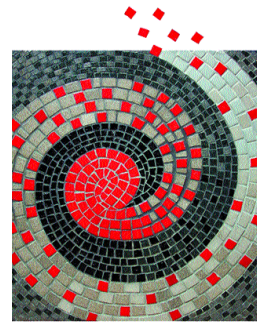


Provide Incentives



Chris Butler
Westside YMCA

“Ask yourself what it is your organization needs, then think outside the box. An essential component is investing in the staff and forming partnerships with them so they feel connected to the organization and each other.”

RETURN INCENTIVE

Since many of Westside YMCA’s camp, aquatics, and after school programs are seasonal, their hiring efforts are focused on college students who might be looking for jobs during their breaks from school. After evaluating the staffing needs of their programs, they began working with the employment centers at the local community colleges, universities, trade schools, and other vocational institutes to recruit staff for those programs. At the end of a program cycle, staff members are offered an incentive to return for the next cycle (\$25 on the first paycheck of the new cycle and \$25 in 90 days). Westside YMCA believes using this incentive offers several advantages. For the organization, having staff return has provided proven program leadership over the years and has increased continuity in the program. The presence of a familiar face signifies the level of trust that has already been established between the organization, the staff, and the program participants. This improves the overall program experience for the youth and makes parents feel more comfortable as they enroll their children in the programs. Having staff return also reduces the time and cost of having to recruit, hire, and train new staff each program cycle.

For the staff, the incentive approach reduces the stress of having to look for a job during their breaks from school. The return incentive has proven to be a great way to keep staff for

several years, with some working for Westside YMCA for the duration of their college careers. Over the last 5 years they have experienced an 85% staff retention rate, which they largely attribute to their return incentive program.

Westside YMCA also believes that qualified and competent staff members tend to have friends of similar background and work ethic. In an effort to hire “like-minded” staff, they offer a \$50 incentive to current staff members who refer new candidates. When referred candidates are hired and again when they have worked 90 days, the referring staff members receive a \$25 referral incentive on their check.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the incentive programs, Westside YMCA places a large emphasis on staff training and career development. They offer courses and certifications that staff are required to have to work with youth, as well as training throughout the year to keep staff updated on program changes. The emphasis on training and career development has helped several staff members transition from part-time to full-time professionals. Through the career development training, part time staff have the opportunity to accumulate credits towards certifications such as the YMCA Director Certification. Westside YMCA believes that investing in staff, being flexible and understanding the “gray areas”, and taking an individualized approach to staff management are important to staff sense of connectedness and decision to continue working for the organization.

***Westside YMCA** serves 3,000–4,000 youth in the Fort Worth, Texas metropolitan area. They employ two full-time and 25–30 part-time staff. The ethnicity of the staff is as follows: 32% African-American, 28% white (non-Hispanic/Latino), 30% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Bi-racial or multi-racial, 2% Asian-American, and 2% other. They offer flexible hours, free individual branch membership, health benefits, paid time off, reduced childcare rates, infant and toddler program, and \$250 college scholarships.*

