General Framework for Addressing Community-wide Concerns in YSI

I.   Introduction

YSI is a platform open to anyone wishing to pursue new economic thinking. We provide tools and resources to help young scholars conduct their projects of interest together with peers. In allowing young scholars to contribute their ideas to the community, we continuously hope to widen the spectrum of new economic thinking and thus deliver on our vision.

In order to do so, we need to:
- Provide a welcoming learning environment that helps every individual feel safe to express their views ('playground of ideas')
- Provide adequate tools and resources to help young scholars better pursue their interests, and identify new ones
- Ensure everyone's access to community tools and resources, taking full account of possible constraints faced by members in our community.[1]

As we grow, we need to continuously reflect on how well we deliver on these goals. Wherever we may fall short, we should have ways of speaking to such concerns. Sometimes, such concerns can be handled within a specific working group or project, but often they can only be addressed if the community acts together.

In those cases, we need an inclusive and transparent process to ensure everyone's voices are heard. What seems to be an obvious concern to one person may be perceived very differently by another. Some issues faced can be very ostensible, others very subtle. They may differ widely depending on context. An inclusive and transparent process must account for these particularities to ensure both that the proposed solutions address real issues, and to give legitimacy to their implementation.

This document outlines such a framework, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the different constituencies in it. It provides a general, actionable framework with which different types of deficiencies can be handled as they arise. This framework follows the way YSI has formed community positions in the past, from writing our *Guiding Principles*, to creating the *Minimum Standard of Operation for Working Groups*. This document provides a transparent codification of this framework. It is part of our ongoing effort to formalize YSI's governance structures ahead of our next YSI Plenary in 2019.

We believe this will help us further operationalize our YSI Guiding Principles of being inclusive, respectful, collaborative, non-partisan, and humble, and in turn, strengthen the work of YSI.

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[1] Examples of constraints could be the feeling that YSI is a closed group, or not knowing where to start when getting involved. It could be the worry that the research happening in YSI is not relevant you, or it could be a set of practical concerns around time zones, visas and funding. It could also be the sense that you do not belong in YSI because of your background or beliefs.

II.   Individual Initiatives vs Community-wide Concerns

YSI is a learning and research platform which affords its members as much freedom as possible to pursue the projects of their academic interest. The organizers take full authorship for the content of their projects, as is customary in academia. Thus, projects do not reflect the viewpoints of anyone but the authors themselves.

When addressing community-wide concerns, we may have to develop a consensus, or a position that is representative of the whole community. In order to arrive to such community positions, a transparent, inclusive, and thorough process is necessary.

III.   Existing Structures for Community-wide Concerns

The Community Report Committee (CRC) is an elected advisory committee to the community. Its responsibilities include:
- Ombudsman for concerns from coordinators, organizers, and members
- Assessing the overall health of the community
- Advising working groups and management on administrative and strategic issues in YSI
- Drafting a report on the overall activities and developments of the community
- Ensuring the *General Framework for Addressing Community-Wide Concerns is upheld*

When addressing community wide concerns and developing recommendations, the CRC ensures the *General Framework for Community-wide Concerns* is followed. This may happen in one of two ways:
- The CRC takes responsibility to investigate and address the concern (for instance when developing the *Minimum Standard of Operations for Working Groups*).

- The CRC may also designate an associate, or a group of associates (an associate body), to follow that same process. For instance, to address internal communications concerns; the CRC designated an Internal Communications Advisory Team. This associate body has likewise been following the first steps in the *General Framework Addressing Community-wide Concerns* outlined in part IV. this document.

As we identify more areas of concern, more associates can be involved to handle the issue working within the framework described in part IV.

Just like the CRC, associates and associate bodies act in service of the entire community. Associates do not necessarily represent their personal viewpoints. It is their primary task to follow the process outlined in this document to reveal the full extent of the issues, and to ensure that the recommendations are helpful and credible for all.

IV.   General Framework for Addressing Community-Wide Concerns

We have developed this process to be comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive in order to form a representative viewpoint that fully accounts for our members' concerns. The CRC and its associates are responsible to ensure that the issues are fully explored, a comprehensive involvement of the community takes place, and a consensus view is formed. The recommendations that are developed on this basis will have the legitimacy for community-wide implementation.

STEP 1: Uncovering the Full Range of Needs and Constraints within the Area of Concern
Within a specific area of concern, young scholars' needs and constraints can be of a wide variety, and can differ depending on the context. In order to uncover the full range, CRC or its associates must make every effort to listen to the community in all its variety, and keep detailed account of points raised. Formats of inquiry should include, but need not be limited to:

- **Listening sessions** with different members of the community. Sessions may need to be broken down by role, region, career stage, and area of research to identify particular institutional constraints.
- **A survey.** Questions should not be leading, and, if possible, surveys on different areas of concern should be combined.
- **Individual interviews**. To avoid hearing only from young scholars who enjoy speaking out on the specific area of concern, CRC or its associates must actively seek out the voices of those constituencies that might otherwise go unheard.

STEP 2: Identifying Specific Concerns and Constraints
After having made a comprehensive effort to listen to the community in Step 1, CRC or its associates conducts a systematic analysis of the concerns that were voiced, identify patterns, and document insights.

STEP 3: Drafting Action Points
The CRC or its associates draft their recommended action points in detail. The Action Points can detail a new structure to be implemented, or describe a recommended adjustment to an existing structure.

STEP 4: Feedback Round
The CRC or its associates present their suggested action points to members of the community for feedback, in order to verify whether the proposed action points will indeed serve the identified needs. After receiving feedback from the community, the proposed Action Points are revisited, and the necessary adjustments are made.

STEP 5: Assessment of Feasibility and Implementation
The CRC certifies that the associate or associate body followed the general framework. The CRC or its associate body then submits its action points to Management, who then assess their feasibility.

Management then sets up a meeting with the CRC and any associates involved to discuss any potential issues with the proposed action points. Once the feasibility of the action points are ensured, they are announced to the community, and YSI Management helps implement them.

STEP 6: Testing
A few months following implementation, a round of feedback is solicited to determine what is working and what is not. If a considerable issues are observed that arose out of the action points, a round of adjustments is made.

STEP 7: Completion
The CRC closes the process after steps 1-6 have been completed. The associate body's mandate is complete, and it steps down.