

A Message from Our Chair

May 2024

I imagine making data-driven decisions is a priority for all our Ys, but it's not always easy to gather the data we need. Our Alliance is fortunate to have two new sources of data that our Ys can leverage to increase our revenue, and more importantly, our impact: 1) return on investment of marketing dollars through a statewide pilot and 2) a new statewide YMCA brand perception study.

Our Alliance (the only Alliance, incidentally) was chosen to benefit from a Y-USA marketing-communications data pilot to:

- give associations more visibility into how their users engage and buy the Y's offerings online,
- utilize grant money from Google for free advertising (up to \$10K a month for each nonprofit), and
- recommend actionable tasks for associations to implement.

The Alliance launched the DataStrength® pilot in partnership with CGR Creative in Charlotte last fall, which included establishing Google Ad Grants accounts for any of our Ys that were not already accessing this opportunity and creating Google ad campaigns to be deployed based on Google searches related to our local Ys and their services.

Today, most of our associations have access to their own DataStrength® dashboard, and we have aggregate statewide data that allows us to see our collective return on investment. Between Nov. 1, 2023, and March 31, 2024, nearly \$16 million in revenue from the Ys in North Carolina was tracked on the DataStrength® platform, as the result of more than 140K purchases. Nearly 8.3K of those purchases were new membership sales, totaling more than \$182K in revenue across the state.

The Google Ad Grants campaigns have provided our Ys with \$200K in free advertising since the launch; these ad placements brought awareness to the Y as well as more than \$445K in revenue. We can see that these campaigns are extremely effective in generating revenue, notably, \$9 in revenue for every \$1. Remember, that \$1 didn't actually cost our Ys anything via the Google grants.

What the data also shows us, however, is that, as a state, we are not fully leveraging our Google Ad grants yet. Our Alliance staff team is working on some plans to help support our Ys in capitalizing on all the Google ad grant dollars. We are fortunate to have our own dashboards to explore what works well and where we can be more effective at our own Ys.

The second new data source we have is baseline data about statewide perception of the Y (See summary here. [INSERT LINK](#)) Our Alliance staff team worked with Triangle2 Solutions out of Nashville, TN, and our Ys to develop and deploy a statewide survey that resulted in 1,399 phone surveys and 9,550 online surveys. The study is part of our statewide Strategic Plan priority to Speak as one Y to elevate North Carolinians' understanding of the Y as a charitable partner to improve

their communities and lives. One of the strategies to get at that priority is gathering the baseline data we now have so that we can work collaboratively as a state, with our Alliance staff team and our MarComm leaders, to develop and implement a statewide public relations campaign to increase awareness of our work among community members, partners and stakeholders.

While there is a lot of data still to digest, and we may have more questions to ask before moving ahead with campaign development, we learned that 40% of online respondents and 22% of phone respondents said the Y doing very well in achieving its objective of being a charitable partner that improves communities and lives in NC. Yet 42% don't know enough to answer the question. So, we know we have work to do in educating our communities.

I encourage our Ys to dig into the data—and recommended actions—in the DataStrength® dashboards, as well as the data from the brand perception study. With our Alliance staff team guiding us, we have some great opportunities to strengthen further the work we are doing to support our Ys and communities.

Lynn Lomax,
CEO, YMCA of High Point
Chair, NC Alliance Board of Directors