Youth Service Capacity-Building Grants
Application Guidelines

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Program Overview

The Youth Service Capacity-Building Grants (YSCG) program supports activities to strengthen the organizational infrastructure of small nonprofit organizations in the five boroughs of New York City that provide direct services to young people ages 5 to 25.

The YSCG program is aligned with the Foundation’s broader focus on reducing inequality in youth outcomes. Inequality in New York City is multifaceted, reflected in racial and economic segregation across boroughs and neighborhoods, in inadequate services for Mexican-descent youth and LGBTQ youth, and in a lack of racial, ethnic, gender identity, and sexual-orientation diversity among executive directors and CEOs of youth-serving organizations. We seek to build the capacity of youth-serving nonprofit organizations that confront these challenges.

The long-term goal of the YSCG program is to help build stronger, more stable youth-serving organizations that tackle inequality in youth outcomes. These grants provide general operating support so that small nonprofits (operating budgets between $250,000 and $1 million) can determine the best way to address capacity-building needs that have been identified through a formal or informal assessment. Capacity-building needs may include: financial management, board recruitment and development, human resource management, staff training, fundraising, strategic planning, information technology, leadership development, communications, and evaluation systems. We welcome other compelling needs beyond this list. Strong proposals will make the case that addressing the capacity-building need will result in a strengthened organization that can yield stronger services for youth.
Eligible youth-serving, nonprofit organizations must meet at least one of the following criteria related to the Foundation’s focus on reducing inequality in youth outcomes:

— Currently provide direct youth services in one of the eleven community districts identified as having the highest community risk to child well-being by the Citizen’s Committee for Children, or;

— Have well-defined existing programming tailored specifically to Mexican-descent or LGBTQ youth, or;

— Have leaders (Executive Director or CEO) who are people of color and/or members of the LGBTQ community.
Awards

Awards are $60,000 each and provide general operating support to allow grantees the flexibility to allocate the funds for organizational capacity-building needs over a 3-year term that begins on March 1, 2022.

The award provides $30,000 in the first year to get the work off the ground, $20,000 in the second year, and $10,000 in the third year. In the third year, the grantee is required to obtain new matching funding of $10,000.

The Foundation will award three new Youth Service Capacity-Building Grants annually.

In addition to grant support, grantees will participate in technical assistance activities designed to help them meet their organizational capacity-building goals. We have partnered with Community Resource Exchange (CRE) to provide one-on-one support as well as learning community meetings over the three-year term of the grant. One-on-one support will allow each grantee to receive customized assistance that will help them achieve their capacity-building goal(s). The learning community meetings will focus on peer-based learning and coaching, allowing grantees to discuss challenges, seek advice from peers and colleagues, and collaborate across projects in a supportive space.
Eligibility

All YSCG applicants must be youth-serving community-based nonprofit organizations based in any of the five boroughs of New York City whose staff have direct programmatic contact with youth at the point of service. The applicant must meet at least one of the reducing inequality criteria and all organizational criteria.

Reducing Inequality Criteria

Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Currently provide youth services in one of the eleven community districts identified as having the highest community risk to child well-being by the Citizens’ Committee for Children:

   Bronx:
   - CD 1 – Mott Haven
   - CD 2 – Hunts Point
   - CD 3 – Morrisania
   - CD 4 – Concourse/Highbridge
   - CD 5 – University Heights
   - CD 6 – East Tremont
   - CD 7 – Bedford Park
   - CD 9 – Union Port/Soundview
   - CD 12 – Williamsbridge

   Brooklyn:
   - CD 5 – East New York
   - CD16 – Brownsville

Note: Organizational offices do not need to be based in one of these community districts, but organizations must currently provide youth programming in one of the districts. Organizations can identify their community districts on the New York City Department of City Planning’s Community District Profiles webpage (https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/).
2. Have existing well-defined programming tailored specifically to Mexican-descent youth or to LGBTQ youth

*Note: With New York City being a diverse metropolis, it is likely that many organizations serve young people that fit into these groups. However, if services were not specifically designed for these populations, then the organization is not eligible to apply under this criterion. Organizations must have existing well-defined services that are specifically designed for Mexican-descent or LGBTQ youth to apply under this criterion.*

3. Have leaders (executive directors or CEOs) who are people of color and/or members of the LGBTQ community

**Organizational Criteria**

Applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Serve youth ages 5 to 25. At least 80 percent of youth participating in the services must be in this age range.

2. Have at least 80 percent of the service recipients be youth if the organization also serves adults.

3. Have their own 501(c)(3) tax-exemption. If an applying organization is separately incorporated but tax-exempt through a group ruling (religious institutions), the applicant should supply the 501(c)(3) letter of the parent organization and documentation that it is part of the group.

4. Have an operating budget between $250,000 and $1 million.

5. Have most recent financial statements reviewed by an auditor, per New York State law requirement. If the organization’s annual budget is under $750,000, then certified public accountant’s reviewed financial statements are required.

6. Have filed IRS Form 990.
What we do not support

The YSCG program does not support:

— Capital fund projects, scholarships, endowments, lobbying, real estate purchases, or awards to individuals
— Public and/or private schools
— National or international organizations
— Organizations that are based outside of the 5 boroughs of New York City
— Organizations that utilize fiscal sponsors/conduits
Selection Criteria

Applications for Youth Service Capacity-Building Grants are reviewed by a dedicated volunteer committee of Foundation staff once a year. Committee members have a diverse range of expertise, including finance, communications, and nonprofit administration. Thus, applications should be written to address an educated lay audience. If you use acronyms that may not be familiar to a lay audience, please be sure to spell them out the first time. If you use terms that are not commonly known, please provide relevant context and explanations.

The online application will be open on July 26, 2021. Proposals are due by September 15, 2021 (3:00 p.m. EST), for decisions in March 2022. Grantees will be selected according to the following criteria:

1. **Clear and compelling description of the organization’s mission and current youth services**
   - The applicant provides a clear, compelling explanation of how the organization and its current services create positive and meaningful experiences for youth.

2. **Compelling rationale for organizational capacity-building**
   - The applicant has already undertaken an initial assessment (informal or formal) to identify its organizational capacity challenge(s).
   - The applicant clearly identifies one or more organizational problems to be addressed, and explains how the problems have adversely impacted organizational functioning.
   - The applicant demonstrates a strong understanding of their capacity challenges and the underlying causes.

3. **Identification and strength of capacity-building plan**
   - The applicant clearly identifies a capacity-building project(s) and has a well-reasoned plan to implement the identified project(s). The plan effectively addresses the capacity problem: it is targeted at the causes of the problem, it is likely to be effective, and it is sustainable.
   - The applicant describes meaningful goals and proposed activities in the plan. The plan should cover three years of activities, although not every activity must last this long.
— The applicant identifies the key staff and/or consultants to be involved in the proposed activities and identifies a capable staff member or manager to oversee the plan and track progress across the three-year timeline.

— The applicant outlines how it will collect and use information to determine whether the capacity building project is successful.

— The applicant convincingly describes how the newly built capacity will be sustained operationally and financially.
Application Materials

Applicants must use the Foundation’s forms, which can be downloaded from the resources section of the YSCG webpage, or from within the online application. The forms include guiding questions from the background information and narrative sections below. Do not edit the forms or delete instructions from them. Only applications that use our forms will be reviewed. All documents should be uploaded to the online application.

1. **Background information on the organization (two pages maximum)**
   - Describe the organization’s overall mission and goals.
   - Describe which reducing inequality criterion you meet. If your organization provides youth services in one or more of the eleven community districts, please state what percentage of your organization’s overall work is carried out in each community district(s) you use to qualify for this criterion.
   - Describe the financial health of your organization, including major trends, challenges, or unusual developments that have affected the funding, staffing, and activities of your youth services over the past two years.

2. **Narrative (six pages maximum)**

   **Description of current youth services (two pages maximum). Do not mention the capacity-building project in this section.**
   - Describe current youth services, including participation in the programming: What does a participant experience on a day-to-day basis? How often do youth attend and for how long do they stay with the services? How many youth participate in an average session?
   - Which and how many staff are involved with the services? What is the training and experience of staff, including frontline staff who are involved with youth services?
   - If you have existing services for Mexican-descent or LGBTQ youth, please state that and provide an in-depth description of those services. Describe how programming is designed and implemented to meet the particular needs of that group.
   - Describe the degree to which you have fulfilled your organization’s goals. Please give examples and, if available, data.
Rationale for organizational capacity-building (two pages maximum)

— Clearly identify and explain the organizational problem that you are seeking to address. Describe how this problem has adversely impacted your organization and your ability to serve youth.

— Discuss how you identified the problem. What information derived from your informal or formal assessment (e.g., data, surveys, observations, or discussions with youth, staff, or Board) brought this issue to your attention? How long has this issue existed? What are the underlying causes?

— Given your understanding of the problem and your investigation of its causes, explain why addressing the problem is necessary to strengthen your organization and youth services.

Organizational capacity-building plan (two pages maximum)

— Describe the capacity-building goal(s) and plan (include proposed activities) for effectively addressing the organizational problem and its cause(s) over the 3-year term of the grant. If you are proposing a strategic plan, please clearly explain how it relates to your capacity-building goals.

— Clearly detail how the proposed plan will change your organizational capacity and services.

— Identify a staff member to manage the capacity-building project and describe how this person will track the project’s progress. Also, identify staff members and/or consultants who will implement the proposed project and discuss how they will be involved in implementation.

— Describe how the organization will determine whether the project is addressing the problem: What information will be collected to assess short-term results?

— Describe how the capacity that the grant develops will be sustained financially and operationally, accounting for challenges such as ongoing costs, training needs, or staff turnover.
3. **Total organization budget**

4. **List of institutional funders of the organization**
   - Upload a list of institutional funders (foundations, corporations, government, etc.) that contributed more than $10,000 in the current fiscal year. (In the case of multi-service organizations, note which of the funders earmarked support for the youth services.)

5. **List of board of directors**

6. **Most recent audited financial statement or certified public accountant’s reviewed financial statements**
   - Upload the most recent audited financial statement or certified public accountant’s reviewed financial statements (most recent year). The audit or certified public accountant’s reviewed financial statements must be uploaded with the application on the due date. Drafts are not accepted.

7. **IRS Form 990.**

8. **501(c)(3) tax-exempt letter from the IRS**
   - Upload the organization’s 501 (c)(3) Tax Exempt Letter. Please make sure that the EIN or FIN number is listed on the 501 (c)(3).
Must my organization fit the Foundation’s reducing inequality eligibility criteria?

Yes. Applicants must meet at least one of the reducing inequality criteria in order to be eligible. Applicants must also meet all organizational criteria for eligibility.

Our organization is not located in any of the ten community districts identified as having the highest community risk to child well-being, but we provide youth services in one of the districts. Are we eligible to apply for the YSCG program?

Yes, an organization that fits the YSCG organizational eligibility criteria and has an established youth-serving program in one of the identified 11 community districts may apply for the YSCG program. Applicants will need to demonstrate that a significant portion of the organization’s overall work is carried out in the community district(s).

Many Mexican and/or LGBTQ youth participate in our programs, but our programming was not intentionally designed to serve these populations. Would we qualify to apply to the YSCG grant program?

A: No, your existing programming must be tailored specifically for Mexican and/or LGBTQ youth. If you meet either of the other two reducing inequality eligibility criteria, though, you would still be eligible to apply.

My organization meets more than one of the reducing inequality eligibility criteria, does that improve my organization’s chances of receiving a grant?

No, meeting more than one eligibility criterion does not improve your organization’s chances of receiving a grant. As long as your organization meets at least one of the eligibility criteria, then you are eligible to apply.
What are some examples of eligible organizational capacity-building projects?

Financial Management
— Development of financial systems and improvement of accounting practices
— Software upgrades and staff training

Board Development
— Plans to recruit new board members and/or train existing board members
— Board retreat
— Creation of board policies

Human Resource Management
Personnel policy development
Staff training

Fundraising
— Development and implementation of fundraising strategy

Organization/Program Planning
— Strategic planning
— Staff retreat
— Branding exercise

Information Technology
— Software upgrade for office, database, website, etc.

Leadership Development
— Leadership succession planning
— Creation and implementation of volunteer management/recruitment plan
— Management, leadership training for staff

Communications
— Development of communications strategy
— Design and staff training for newsletter, brochure, annual reports, etc.

Evaluation and outcomes systems
— Organization or program evaluation
Recent Youth Service Capacity-Building Grants

Made in Brownsville/Youth Design Center: Communications

**Background**
Made in Brownsville provides services to youth ages 14-24 from the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Brownsville and East New York. Made in Brownsville’s Creative Apprenticeship program is a 12-week program that trains youth in foundational art, media, design, and technology skills. The apprentices are paired with professional design mentors from the East Brooklyn community. The apprentices and their mentors plan and implement projects that creatively address problems faced by their communities. Made in Brownsville’s outreach and services has grown beyond Brownsville, especially to East New York.

**Need**
The Board and Executive Director decided that the organization required a rebranding to reflect its expansion of scope, so the name of the organization was recently changed to the Youth Design Center. The Youth Design Center lacks sufficient communications capacity to successfully rebrand the organization.

**Capacity-Building Plan**
Youth Design Center will hire a communications manager to spearhead the re-brand and expand the organization’s web presence. The communications manager will begin by conducting an audit and use the results to create and implement internal and external action items. This will include strategies for the organization’s social media and web presence.

Marcy Lab. Inc: Fundraising

**Background**
Marcy Lab provides recent high school graduates ages 18-24 from East New York and Brownsville, Brooklyn with an alternative pathway to high-growth technology careers in software engineering. The Software Engineering Fellowship is a year-long program that teaches the fundamentals of programming and computer science, paired with a project-based curriculum that applies these fundamentals in a real-world context. The classroom-based training is followed by a three-month paid apprenticeship where fellows apply their skills,
Awarded Grants

either as part of a real engineering team or by working on an open-source software project.

Need
Marcy Lab lacks the internal capacity to scale up its program to serve more youth. Currently, each staff member performs multiple tasks, and they are stretched too thin to provide the same high-quality programming to greater numbers of youth.

Capacity-Building Plan
Marcy Lab will hire a development associate to manage all aspects of fundraising, including researching prospective funders, writing proposals, and overseeing administration and reporting for grants. This will allow the executive director to use his time to focus on programming and revenue strategies that will allow the organization to diversify its finances, grow, and serve more youth.

Educational Video Center: Strategic Planning

Background
Educational Video Center (EVC) provides media arts programs to youth ages 15-25 from under-served areas. EVC’s flagship program is Youth Documentary Workshops, an after-school and summer program that offers media arts instruction and mentoring where participants learn how to produce and edit films. A second program, New Media Arts, teaches participants how to remix youth-produced documentaries from EVC’s archives and how to create an interactive website that addresses a social justice issue.

Need
EVC is at a critical juncture, as they have hired a new, female executive director of color and have intentionally increased and diversified their board after 30 years with the same leadership in place. EVC also wants to scale up its programming and be more responsive to its students’ needs.

Capacity-Building Plan
EVC will hire consultants at Velocity Vision to help them build a strategic planning process for the organization. The Board, Executive Director, and the consultant will work to finalize and implement a 3-year plan of goals and strategies.