![William T. Grant FOUNDATION]

Youth Service Improvement Grants

2024 Application Guidelines
Updated January 2024

Application Deadline:
April 3, 2024, 3 PM EST

Contents

Program Overview

The Youth Service Improvement Grants (YSIG) program supports activities to improve the quality of direct services for young people ages 5 to 25 in the five boroughs of New York City. The goal is to strengthen existing services by helping youth-serving nonprofit organizations address challenges or remedy problems at the point of service, where staff and youth interact.

YSIG urges applicants not only to discuss their organizations' promise and potential, but to identify gaps or challenges in the services they provide. We ask applicants to be critical and reflective, to consider why and how complications exist, and to articulate how they intend to improve the ability of their programming to provide positive impact on youth.

Examples of problem areas for improvement include: inadequate curriculum, gaps in the service skills of frontline staff, or a limitation in current services that adversely affects participants' experiences. Beyond these examples, we welcome other compelling needs for service improvement.

Awards

- Awards are $25,000 each and support projects lasting one year, starting on September 1 of the award year.

- The Foundation aims to award six new Youth Service Improvement Grants annually.

> **ⓘ NOTE**
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> In addition to grant support, the Foundation also provides grantees access to technical assistance, including one-on-one support as your organization works toward successfully implementing the improvement project. In addition, three cohort-wide "learning community" meetings allow for peer-based learning and coaching, as well as opportunities to discuss challenges, seek advice from peers and colleagues, and collaborate across projects in a supportive space.

Eligibility

> **ⓘ NOTE**
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> The YSIG program awards grants only to youth-serving community-based nonprofit organizations physically located in any of the five boroughs of New York City whose staff have direct programmatic contact with youth at the point of service. Applicants must meet all organizational criteria to be eligible. Organizations previously funded under either of the Foundation's Youth Service Grant programs cannot apply again for at least 18 months after the end of their award.

Organizational criteria

*Applicants must meet **all** of the following criteria:*

- Serve youth ages 5 to 25 years.
  - At least 80 percent of youth participating in the direct service program targeted for improvement must be in this age range.
  - The applicant's staff must have direct contact with youth at the point of service.
- Have their own 501(c)(3) tax-exemption.
  - If operating under fiscal sponsorship, confirmation of fiscal sponsorship agreement is required.
  - 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 is part of the group.
- The applying organization (not the fiscal sponsor) must have an operating budget between $250,000 and $5 million in the prior year (e.g., 2023), if the organization serves youth only.
  - If the applying organization serves youth and other populations, its operating budget must be less than $20 million and its youth services budget must be between $250,000 and $5 million.
- Have audited financial statements or certified financial statements, ideally 2023 or 2022, from the applying organization or from the fiscal sponsor if the organization is operating under fiscal sponsorship.
- Have a 990 for the applying organization (or explain your exemption). Or, if operating under fiscal sponsorship, the fiscal sponsor much have a 990.

Additional considerations: Reducing inequality criteria

The YSIG program is aligned with the Foundation's broader focus on reducing inequality in youth outcomes. Inequality in New York City is 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 help improve the quality of direct service programs provided by youth-serving non-profit organizations that confront these challenges.

Meeting the criteria below is not a requirement for funding. However, applicants who fulfill at least one reducing inequality criteria in addition to all organizational criteria described above will receive priority consideration.

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

    CD 16 – Brownsville

    Any organization that fits the organizational eligibility criteria and has an established youth-serving program in one of the identified 11 community districts may apply for special consideration. Serving some youth from the 11 community districts in locations outside of the community districts does not meet the priority consideration.

2. Have existing well-defined programming tailored specifically to Mexican-descent youth or LGBTQ+ youth.

   Many programs serve Mexican-descent and LGBTQ+ youth, but only those organizations with programming specifically designed for these populations are eligible for consideration under this criterion.

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

What we do not support

The YSIG program does not support:

- General operations.
- Planning, needs assessment, and evaluation proposals.
- Program improvement activities not focused on changes at the point-of-service, such as board development or financial system updates.
- Capital fund projects, scholarships, endowments, lobbying, real estate purchases, or awards to individuals.
- Expansions or additions to programming, including changes that simply increase the number of slots in a program or result in new programming.
- Public and private schools.
- Organizations that are based outside the five boroughs of New York City.

Application Materials

All applications must include the following materials:

1. Background information on the organization (one page maximum)

- Describe the organization's overall mission and goals.
- Briefly describe the current services you provide for all populations served.
  - Describe the financial health of your organization, including major trends, challenges, or unusual developments that have affected the funding, staffing, or enrollment of your youth services over the past two years.

2. Narrative (six pages maximum)

Background on direct service program you want to improve (two pages maximum)

- Describe the current youth services you want to improve, including participation in the programming:
  - State how staff engage with youth at the point of service and the intended benefit of the program.
  - Comment on what percent of youth participating in the direct service program targeted for improvement fall within the age range of 5-25 years.
  - What does a participant experience on a day-to-day basis in the program?
  - How often do youth attend and for how long do they stay with the services?
  - How many youth participate in an average session?
  - If there is a recruitment or selection process, please describe it.

- Which and how many staff are involved with the services (state names and titles) to be improved? What is the training and experience of staff, including front-line staff who have direct contact with youth?

- Describe the degree to which you have fulfilled your program goals and produced the intended youth outcomes. Please give examples and, if available, data.

Rationale for improvement (two pages maximum)

- Clearly identify and explain the problem in the program's direct services that you are seeking to improve. Describe how this problem has adversely impacted your program's ability to serve youth and/or enhance youth outcomes.

- State how you identified the problem. What information derived from your program (e.g., data, surveys, observations, or discussions with youth and staff) brought this issue to your attention? How long has this issue existed? What are the likely underlying causes?

- Given your understanding of the problem and your investigation of its causes, explain why addressing the problem would address its impact on your program and youth outcomes.

Improvement plan (two pages maximum)

- Describe the plan (include specific goals and activities) for addressing the problem and the cause(s) of the problem that you have identified.

- Clearly detail how the proposed improvement will change your existing services and participants' experiences.

- Provide a detailed timeline for the improvement plan that demonstrates the improvement activities can take place within a one-year grant period, beginning on September 1 of the award year.

- Identify a staff member to manage the improvement plan and describe how this person will track progress against the timeline. Also identify staff members or consultants who will implement the changes.

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

- Describe how the organization will sustain the improvement financially and programmatically, accounting for challenges such as ongoing training needs or staff turnover. If the improvement activities will result in an increase in program costs, state how the organization will ensure financial sustainability after the grant period ends.

3. Improvement project budget

- The improvement budget numbers will be entered into text boxes online. All applicants must also prepare and upload a budget justification using the Improvement Project Budget Justification Form (available in the online application).

- All items included on the budget must be directly related to the improvement.

- Identify any portion of the budget that will be funded by sources other than this grant, including support from the organization (e.g., in-kind or support from unrestricted funds) and support from third parties.

4. Total organization budget

5. Total youth services budget (required for multiservice organizations)

- If the applying organization serves only youth, simply state that. No additional budget is required beyond *File 4: Total Organization Budget*.

- Multiservice organizations (i.e., those not exclusively focused on youth) must upload a separate youth services budget in this section. The youth services budget must include all services to children and youth provided by the organization, not only the budget for services targeted for improvement.

6. List of institutional funders of the organization

- Upload a list of institutional funders (foundations, corporations, etc.) that contributed more than $10,000 in the current fiscal year. (In the case of multiservice organizations, a list of supporters of youth programs should be submitted.) The Foundation wants to understand where you are in achieving your fundraising goals.

7. List of board of directors

8. Most recent audited financial statement

- Upload the most recent audited financial statement or certified public accountant's reviewed financial statements (most recent year) for the applying organization or fiscal sponsor if the organization is operating under fiscal sponsorship. Drafts are not accepted.

9. IRS Form 990

- A copy of the 990 (ideally from 2022 or 2023) must be uploaded by the applying organization for the applying organization or fiscal sponsor if the organization is operating under a fiscal sponsorship.

10. 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).

Review Criteria

Applications will be reviewed against the following criteria:

Clear description of the organization's mission and current youth services

- The applicant provides a clear, compelling explanation of how the current program with direct point-of-contact services create positive and meaningful experiences for youth.

Compelling rationale for improvement

- The applicant clearly identifies a problem at the point of service and explains how the problem has adversely impacted the experiences of participants.
- The applicant details how they identified the problem and clearly articulates its likely causes.
- The applicant makes a strong case that the quality of services to youth would significantly improve if the problem were addressed.

Strength of the improvement plan

- The improvement plan effectively addresses the problem: it is targeted specifically at the causes of the problem, it is likely to be effective, and it is sustainable.

- The improvement activities can feasibly be implemented within the one-year grant period, which begins on September 1 of the award year.

- The applicant identifies a capable staff member or manager to oversee the improvement plan and track progress across the timeline. This is different from staff working to implement the improvement.

- The applicant outlines a compelling plan to collect and use information to determine whether the improvement project is successful.

- The applicant makes the case that the improvement can be sustained operationally and financially.

- If additional funds will be required to continue the improvement after the grant period, the applicant provides a feasible plan to achieve sustainability.

Appendix A: Ask the Grants Administrator

Must my organization fit the Foundation's priority considerations focused on reducing inequality?

No. Any organization that fits the organizational eligibility criteria may apply. Organizations that meet the organizational criteria AND any of the three reducing inequality criteria will receive priority for funding.

Our organization is not located in any of the eleven 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 priority consideration?

Yes. Organizational offices do not need to be based in one of these eleven community districts, but the service targeted for improvement must currently operate in one of the districts.

Organizations can identify the community districts in which they serve youth on the New York City Department of City Planning's Community District Profiles webpage (https://communityprofiles.planning.nyc.gov/).

Appendix B: Recent Youth Service Improvement Grants

Drive Change: Substance Dependence Training for Staff

Background

Drive Change serves justice-involved youth ages 18 to 25 in New York City's community districts that experience high rates of justice-system involvement.

Need

Drive Change's programming allows participants to serve as Fellows and gain professional experience in the hospitality sector and eases their transition back into society through several program offerings to reach youth with diverse lived experiences. Staff have noticed that some Fellows may struggle with substance-abuse disorders, which hinders their progress and can interfere with other Fellows' development.

Improvement Plan

With this grant, Drive Change will hire an external consultant to train staff on how to approach Fellows struggling with substance abuse. Staff will work with the consultant to create an annual organization-wide training plan that includes compassionate care for Fellows with substance-abuse issues.

LGBT Live out Loud: Strengthening the Live Out Loud School Program

Background

LGBT Live Out Loud partners with schools, parents, and community organizations to provide programs for LGBTQ+ youth to foster community and learn LGBTQ+ history and advocacy. Their School Program partners with Gender Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in over 32 New York City middle and high schools.

Need

Live Out Loud representatives attend GSAs on a monthly basis to facilitate a comprehensive, identity-affirming curriculum focused on LGBTQ+ topics. Feedback from students and staff indicates that the organization's curriculum requires additional development concerning behavioral theory framework and incorporate additional modules focused on social justice and action.

Improvement Plan

With their grant, staff will work with an external consultant to create a curriculum that reflects what students are most interested in learning.

Opening Act: Culturally Responsive and English as a New Language (ENL) Training for Opening Act's Teaching Artists and Staff

Background

Opening Act provides theatre education to New York City youth in low-income, marginalized communities. Serving primarily youth of color, Opening Act offers a free year-long theatre program with a trauma-informed curriculum. Students practice improvisation, acting methods, and writing exercises in a safe and inclusive environment.

Need

Opening Act staff have observed that their student demographic is changing, with an increasing number of youth participants who speak languages other than English.

Improvement Plan

To retain the inclusive environment and better serve their changing participant pool, Opening Act will use this grant to provide training for staff to be more culturally responsive. Staff will attend Lincoln Center Theatre's two-day training, "Learning English and Drama Project (LEAD)."

New York State Youth Leadership Council: Developing Training Curriculum on Intersections Between Race and Immigration

Background

As the first undocumented-youth-led organization in New York, New York State Youth Leadership Council (NYSYLC) provides enrichment programs for immigrant youth that center on leadership development, community organizing, and college access workshops.

Need

NYSYLC seeks to improve their Leadership Pipeline program, which includes workshops on college access, life skills, and general support from a multilingual staff. NYSYLC has noticed lower recruitment and retention rates among Black, Asian, and Middle Eastern immigrant program participants, which they anticipate could be addressed by providing racial sensitivity and cultural competency training for staff, as well as updating their curriculum to acknowledge racial differences.

Improvement Plan

NYSYLC will use this grant to advance their improvement plan and hire a Curriculum Developer to create educational workshops to train staff on the intersection of race and immigration.

Epic Theatre Center: Alumni Leadership of Epic's REMIX Afterschool Program

Background

Epic is an artist-run organization dedicated to bringing theatre education with a social justice focus to New York City youth in Title I schools. Epic's after-school program, REMIX, is a five-month program focused on studying a classic play and producing a reinterpretation to be performed for hundreds of community members.

Need

After hiring three REMIX alumni, Epic seeks to support their professional development to prepare them for executive positions in the future.

Improvement Plan

The professional development will include leadership training workshops such as Options Institute at Goddard Riverside for training in college access and The Leadership Program. An onboard consultant will assist with project goals and youth reflection protocols.

Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls: Enhancing Tech-Based Skill-Building in the Arts

Background

Willie Mae Rock Camp is a Brooklyn-based organization dedicated to providing music education to more than 600 girls and gender-expansive youth annually within the five boroughs of New York City.

Need

Willie Mae seeks to improve the use of technology in their Out-of-School-Time Intensives, including their Summer Camp, After-School Digital Mentorship, and In-School Music Education programs. Although Willie Mae provides a breadth of programming in music production and has purchased extensive music production software, staff have expressed feeling insufficiently trained to properly incorporate the software into the curriculum.

Improvement Plan

With this grant, Willie Mae Rock Camp will provide staff with training in three different music production software programs, curriculum development to incorporate the training into their current programming, and the purchase of a laptop for staff to continue using the software

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