



Amplifying Youth Voice in Mental Health

Background

We are facing a growing mental health crisis, especially among our youth. Mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people. In recent years, we have seen significant increases in certain mental health disorders in youth, including depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation.

PreventionFIRST!'s Student Survey of over 26,000 7th through 12th-grade students in Hamilton, Butler, Warren and Clermont counties shows that more than half of them (53%) report having high levels of stress. One in 10 said they have suicidal ideation. And 60% struggle to pull themselves out of a bad mood. In addition, 39% responded that they felt nervous or anxious all or most of the time. Just over 24% responded feeling depressed, sad, or hopeless most of the time and 29% said they desired to be alone all the time.

[We heard from young people](#) that they benefit enormously when they have a voice in shaping their environment. Interact for Health is working to build resources and support that allow young people to be more engaged and empowered in improving youth mental health.

RFP Goal

To support youth-serving organizations to increase youth voice in strengthening mental health services.

RFP Overview

Interact for Health is embarking on a new strategic plan and hopes to work with new and existing partners to discover best practices and innovative approaches to improve youth mental health. The purpose of this RFP is to help organizations develop their organizational capacity to amplify youth voice in mental health services. We hope to identify partners that will join us in increasing youth voice and better addressing their mental health needs.

To improve the lives of those who experience the greatest injustices in health, Interact for Health has prioritized the following populations: Black communities, Hispanic communities, children in families with low incomes, rural communities, and, for the mental health strategy, the LGBTQ+ community. For this RFP, we will prioritize efforts to engage and raise youth voices from these populations.

We welcome funding requests from youth-serving nonprofit organizations, schools and other youth-focused community organizations that deliver age-appropriate mental health well-being programs for young people in their communities. Examples include, but are



not limited to, schools, treatment providers, summer programs, mentoring programs, after-school programs, and organizations with social-emotional development programming.

Interact for Health will be looking for ways applicants integrate their commitment to youth voice and engagement throughout their work. An array of youth engagement programming will be considered, such as (but not limited to):

- Feedback sessions
- Focus groups
- Youth board leadership opportunities
- Developing youth-led programs
- Training youth as community researchers
- Engaging youth to lead the strategic direction of youth mental health strategies
- Engaging youth in curriculum development

Our goal for this RFP is to elevate and amplify youth voices in mental health in the region. Examples of the impact we hope to see include:

- Youth-serving organizations change their policies and practices to formally embed youth voice and participation in their work
- Youth-serving organizations improve their programs based on youth feedback
- Increase youth engagement in funded programs, especially in our priority populations
- Increase adults' positive perceptions of youth, especially in our priority populations
- Increase sense of agency among youth, especially in our priority populations

Interact for Health is investing \$400,000 for the Amplifying Youth Voice in Mental Health RFP in 2023. Grants may be awarded for **planning, project-based or general operating support depending on the proposed efforts**. Grant size and length will vary based on the scope of the project. We anticipate they will **range from \$25,000 - \$50,000 for 6-12 months**. In line with the goal of the RFP, youth will be involved as community reviewers in the grant review process.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Be a public or private nonprofit or governmental organization
- Provide services in at least one county of Interact for Health's 20-county service area (see [map](#))

Organizations that are not nonprofits or governmental entities may still seek funding through fiscal sponsorship. A fiscal sponsorship is a relationship between a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization (the sponsor organization) and charitable project that does not have a tax-exempt status (the sponsored organization).



Grantee Requirements

Depending on the project, awarded grantees may be expected to:

- Participate in grantee meetings up to three times per year to share their work and learning with other grantees and Interact for Health
- Participate in [evaluation and learning activities](#) for the grant as well as part of the overall initiative

Proposal Selection Criteria

The most competitive applications will:

- Focus on people and communities who are:
 - Black
 - Hispanic
 - Children in families with low incomes (200% or less of federal poverty level)
 - Rural
 - LGBTQ+
- Authentically center youth in the project by seeking their input, acting on their feedback, elevating their leadership and/or sharing decision-making power with them
- Work to improve health outcomes by reducing disparities and advancing health equity
- Have goals for the grant period that are clear, feasible and aligned with the goal of the RFP
- Demonstrate that the organization can achieve the goals outlined in the proposal with the budget, timeline and staff capacity indicated

Timeline

Proposal Webinar (Mental Health Equity and Amplifying Youth Voice in Mental Health RFPs will both be discussed)	March 16, 2023, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.
Proposal deadline	May 23, 2023, 5:00 p.m.
Site visits	June 13-22, 2023
Notification of grant award	June 27, 2023

Proposal Webinar

A proposal webinar will be held to answer questions about the RFP concept and application process on **March 16, 2023, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.** Attendance is optional and not required in order to submit a proposal. Please register for the webinar [here](#). If you



cannot participate in the webinar, the recording will be posted to the [Open Funding page of our website](#) shortly afterwards.

Community Information Sessions

Program staff will be available during the times below to answer any questions related to the RFP or your proposed project. For in-person sessions, please join us for a cup of coffee at the location listed. For virtual sessions, the link to join can be found on the [Open Funding page of our website](#).

Interact for Health (8230 Montgomery Rd Ste 300, Cincinnati, Ohio 45236)	March 21, 2023, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Virtual	March 27, 2023, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Alreddy Coffee & Café (11083 Reading Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45241)	April 4, 2023, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Virtual	April 14, 2023, 10:00 a.m. – noon
Velocity Bike & Bean (7560 Burlington Pike, Florence, KY 41042)	April 18, 2023, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Proposal Submissions

Completed applications must be submitted no later than **May 23, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.** via Interact for Health's online grants management system. To begin the application process or to access a PDF of the required application questions, please visit the [Open Funding page of our website](#). If you have an open grant or have received a grant from Interact for Health in the past two years, your email address may already be registered in the system. For assistance with the application process, please contact Director of Grants Management Kristine Schultz at kschultz@interactforhealth.org.

Site Visits

Before selecting projects for funding, Interact for Health staff will conduct a site visit, either virtual or in person, with the potential grantee. Representatives from collaborating organizations are required to attend the site visit. This meeting allows Interact for Health staff to hear more about the proposed project and ask any clarifying questions. Site visits will be conducted **June 13 – 22, 2023**. Applicants will indicate their preferred timeslot during the application process. Site visit topics will include:

- General discussion of your proposed project and budget
- Population of focus for the project
- Any disparities that exist and how this project plans to address them
- Community engagement tactics
- Collaborating partners and organizations or those you plan to engage
- Your organization's journey around diversity, equity and inclusion



Questions

For any questions regarding the process, please contact Program Manager Deanna Hillard at dhillard@interactforhealth.org or 513-458-6615.

Definitions

Mental Health & Well-Being: Mental health *is* health. It shapes how we cope with stress, overcome challenges, build relationships and enables us to value and engage in life. Simply put by someone in our [focus groups](#), it means being good with yourself. For Interact for Health, we define mental health broadly to mean the promotion of mental health, resilience and wellbeing; the treatment of mental and substance use disorders; and the support of those who experience and/or are in recovery from these conditions, along with their families and communities.

Social-Emotional Learning is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

Youth: Interact for Health defines youth as anyone between the ages of 0 and 24 years old.