



# ELEVATE YOUTH CALIFORNIA PROGRAM EVALUATION

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

*This funding opportunity is provided by The Center at Sierra Health Foundation under contract with the State of California's Department of Health Care Services through Proposition 64, California Cannabis Tax Fund, Allocation 3, Youth Education Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment Account.*

*On November 8, 2016, Proposition 64 (Prop 64) was passed by voters, allowing adults aged 21 years or older to possess and use marijuana. Prop 64 created two new taxes, the revenues of which are deposited into the California Cannabis Tax Fund. Current law allocates, after other specified disbursements, 60 percent of the remaining California Cannabis Tax Fund be deposited into the Youth Education, Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment Account (YEPEITA). Funds are disbursed to the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) for youth programs aimed to educate and prevent harm from a substance use disorder.*

*The Center at Sierra Health Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization bringing people, ideas, and infrastructure together to create a collective impact that reduces health disparities and improves community health for the underserved living in California. For information about The Center, visit [www.shfcenter.org](http://www.shfcenter.org).*

## ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY

This is a request for proposals seeking submissions from consultants (or consulting groups) who can design and implement a three-year evaluation<sup>1</sup> of the Elevate Youth California (EYC) program to:

- Determine the extent to which EYC programming met its intended outcome.
- Inform planning, implementation, and sustainability of the EYC program.

The selected consultant would also support some project monitoring<sup>2</sup> activities to ensure data quality and consistency in reporting.

The duration of this contract is from November 2022 through February 2026. The total budget should not exceed \$575,000, inclusive of travel and expenses. We aim to select the most-qualified candidate(s), and welcome proposals that demonstrate creative, innovative approaches to address the full scope of our needs.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

[Elevate Youth California](#) is managed by Sierra Health Foundation: Center for Health Program Management ([The Center](#)) under contract with the State of California's Department of Health Care Services ([DHCS](#)). The Center was founded by Sierra Health Foundation in 2012 as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. With offices in Sacramento and Fresno, The Center is dedicated to health and racial equity and racial justice.

Launched in 2019, Elevate Youth California (EYC) is investing in a statewide movement to expand youth and young adult (ages 12-26) substance use prevention focusing on communities disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs. Elevate Youth California is grounded in social justice youth development,<sup>3,4</sup> which expands the concept of a positive youth development framework to support youth activism and leadership development and addresses social factors including racism, xenophobia, and other racial inequities youth face as they develop into adulthood. Social justice youth development recognizes these systemic forces and supports young people in developing skills (such as activism and leadership) to dismantle structural inequities and harmful narratives. This includes the criminalization

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluation: Systematic process used to collect information about a program's implementation and outcomes to inform learning, decision making, and action.

<sup>2</sup> Monitoring: The collecting of data and information from funded partners that is used to assess the performance and progress of their funded work.

<sup>3</sup> Ginwright, Shawn, and Julio Cammarota. "New Terrain in Youth Development: The Promise of a Social Justice Approach." *Social Justice*, vol. 29, no. 4 (90), 2002, pp. 82–95. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/29768150](http://www.jstor.org/stable/29768150).

<sup>4</sup> Social Justice Youth Work: Actualizing Youth Rights <http://jyd.pitt.edu/ojs/jyd/article/viewFile/488/462>.

of youth of color, the school-to-prison pipeline, housing insecurity/homelessness and inequitable education and economic opportunities.

Since Elevate Youth California's launch, The Center has awarded approximately \$130.6 million to 185 community-based and Tribal organizations across California through three funding tracks—Standard (3 cohorts), Capacity Building (2 cohorts), and Innovation (1 cohort). The focus of the Standard Track and the Innovation track is on expanding youth and young adult substance use prevention through youth activism, mentorship/relationship building, and/or peer-led support. The focus of the Capacity Building track is on supporting emerging grassroots organizations to build their operational, programmatic, financial, and/or organizational infrastructure to implement youth and young adult substance use prevention programs. Refer to appendix 2 for more information about all current and upcoming cohorts in each of the tracks.

## EVALUATION AND MONITORING OVERVIEW

### VALUE OF DIVERSITY

Diversity is one of our core values at The Center. Diversity encompasses a range of similarities and differences that includes individual characteristics, values, beliefs, and behaviors. It also includes lived experiences, thoughts, and perspectives. The Evaluation and Learning Department's staff at The Center has diverse cultural identities, professional backgrounds, and life experiences. Our evaluation practice is informed by the richly diverse perspectives and cultural backgrounds of the evaluation team members and is essential in helping the Foundation to advance its values and mission. Consistent with our values, the Center's Evaluation Team expects that the external consultants it retains make reasonable efforts to field a diverse evaluation team. We believe this diversity is key to meeting our evaluation goals in a way that is responsive to the communities we serve. As you consider your team, please keep this expectation in mind.

### EVALUATION APPROACH

At The Center, we are committed to equity-focused, culturally responsive and mixed-methods approaches to evaluation. We support evaluation activities that capture the culture and context of groups we work with, while maintaining the rigor necessary to measure results and adapt our work as necessary. In turn, findings from our evaluations inform improvements to our work and support broader, organization-wide learning goals. We believe that effective evaluation and learning ensure proper stewardship of our resources and hold us accountable for what we set out to accomplish.

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES TO DATE

To date, The Center has drafted an [EYC program logic model](#) that will be finalized with the selected evaluator and other stakeholders. Key stakeholders, including funded partners, will be engaged

throughout the entire evaluation and monitoring process as appropriate and feasible. To date, the focus has been on program monitoring and quality assurance through data collection as described in the Monitoring Overview. We hope to integrate the monitoring data into the evaluation. The Center planned to conduct an appreciative inquiry specific to the Innovation Track, but we are looking forward to working with the evaluator awarded this contract to develop a set of questions (to assess implementation) that support appreciative inquiry across all cohorts as part of the evaluation. We are interested in learning about the EYC program's strengths and weaknesses from the study of its successful or peak experiences.

## POTENTIAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Some potential overarching questions for the evaluation are listed below. These questions focus on implementation and outcomes and will be revised with the selected evaluator.

1. To what extent has EYC been implemented as intended? How has it been adapted?
  - a. How does the implementation of the EYC program vary across funded partners (including variables such as funding track, types of organizations and components of the intervention or program, including supports provided to the youth)?
  - b. Who is the EYC program reaching and serving? Are there any intended groups not being reached/served? Are there intended groups being reached who do not enroll in programming? Are there groups that were not intended but were reached? If so, what were the reasons?
  - c. What were the facilitators and challenges to implementation?
  - d. What were the innovative/effective implementation approaches/components, if any?
2. What are the differences in experience with the EYC program among groups?
  - a. What is the overall experience of youth participating in Elevate Youth California programming? Are there differences in experience among groups of youth?
  - b. What is the overall experience of the funded partners' staff engaging the youth? Are there differences in experience among organizations?
3. To what extent did the EYC program meet its intended outcomes for program participants?
  - a. To what extent did the EYC program contribute to changes in the social determinants of health in program participants?
  - b. What were the unintended benefits/consequences of participating in EYC program, if any?

4. To what extent did the EYC program meets its intended outcomes related to building organizational capacity for organizations (refer to [logic model](#))?
  - a. What were the organizational policies and/or practices (e.g., staff training), if any, implemented and continued by the funded partners to ensure the practices were culturally responsive, healing-centered, and trauma-informed?
  - b. What factors facilitated the changes in the organization that led to the intended outcomes?
5. What changes to prevent substance use disorder have occurred in the policy landscape since EYC was implemented, if any?
  - a. To what extent did the EYC program contribute to policy, systems, and environmental change<sup>5</sup>?

## MONITORING OVERVIEW

The activities to support project monitoring include:

- Reviewing the existing templates for the required reporting for funded partners, providing recommendations for changes, and revising templates.
- Reviewing the process for receiving reports, data aggregation, and review of the data from the required reports and providing recommendations for changes.
- Reviewing technical assistance materials for partners completing the required reports.

Currently, EYC-funded partners submit quarterly progress reports, an annual report and a final report at the end of their grant. Key data points covered in each report are listed in the table below. The Center reports to DHCS aggregated data from the quarterly progress reports and annual reports. The selected evaluator will work with The Center to revise the templates for the required reports. Changes to the reports will need to be approved by DHCS.

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<sup>5</sup> Policy, Systems and Environmental Change: Modification of larger structures to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members. Modifications or changes include intermediate outcomes such as increased community capacity for organizing and advocacy and built community power. These can happen at the individual, organization, community, or state level.

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<b>Current Reports for Funded Partners</b>	<b>Key Data Points</b>
<b>Quarterly Progress Report</b>  (Excel template)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and types of new partners</li> <li>• Demographics of new youth served and youth who completed the programs</li> <li>• Number and types of substance use prevention activities conducted and number of attendees</li> <li>• Participant outcomes and policy, system, and environmental change outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Annual Report</b>  (Online survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentorship and/or peer-leadership efforts (e.g., number of mentors)</li> <li>• Number of and highlights from youth listening sessions</li> </ul>
<b>Cumulative Report</b>  (Online survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress made towards work plan programmatic objectives policy goals</li> <li>• Successes, challenges, and lessons learned</li> <li>• Updates to organizational policies and procedures</li> </ul>

## WORKING WITH THE CENTER

The Center has a collaborative approach to working with external evaluation consultants. This involves regular communication to coordinate interactions with the funded partners, discuss evaluation activities, solve challenges encountered during the evaluation and generally work together so that the evaluation is useful and credible.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

The most competitive applications (inclusive of responses to narrative questions, evaluation plan, staff resumes, and other materials) will demonstrate:

- Commitment to racial justice and health equity, including a deep understanding of the social determinants of health.

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- Experience with conducting high-quality evaluations of complex, multi-site initiatives, and experience with conducting evaluations that utilize mixed methods. .
- Experience working with community-based organizations with a range of capacities for monitoring and evaluation activities and with the State of California.
- Experience presenting findings in multiple formats that appeal to a variety of audiences (including policy makers) and facilitating learning/sense-making sessions.

Strongly preferred: Expertise evaluating youth substance use prevention programs and youth development programs, expertise in culturally responsive evaluation.

## SELECTION PROCESS

Applications submitted by the deadline and meeting the application guidelines will be evaluated by the degree to which the criteria above are met, as well as the qualifications of the staff, completeness regarding the required elements and feasibility of the proposed plans. Applicants who submit the proposals that are most highly ranked based on the selection criteria will be invited for an interview with the review team, which will include representatives of EYC-funded partners as well as The Center program and evaluation staff. The final selection will be based on the results of the interviews and approval of The Center and DHCS.

## PROPOSAL NARRATIVE GUIDELINES

The proposal narrative should be no longer than 12 pages, 8.5x11 page size, 1" margins, 12pt font and should include the elements below. **The evaluator who is selected will work with The Center to finalize a detailed plan, schedule, deliverables, and budget during the first two months of the contract.**

## EVALUATION, MONITORING, AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The Center welcomes evaluation designs that use the most appropriate evaluation and learning methods and tools to conduct these activities, though preference will be given to proposals that apply a mixed-methods, culturally responsive, equity-centered, community-centered approach. The evaluators who apply to this opportunity are asked to present their best thinking about design and methodology, including any further elaboration of the evaluation questions, within the constraints of funding and the evaluation guidelines.

Describe the proposed activities for the evaluation, including:

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- Data collection sources and methods, and (1) the alignment of data collection plans with evaluation questions and (2) potential limitations of the data (e.g., data quality, completeness, and standardization) or design.
- Describe how you plan to support the monitoring components, including (1) reviewing the data processes, including data aggregation, existing reporting templates and technical assistance materials, and (2) providing recommendations and revised templates to ensure an efficient and accurate data collection process. Discuss how these activities fit into the evaluation.
- Describe how you plan to support learning with The Center’s staff and key stakeholders, including leading formal learning events that can assist staff with determining areas for improvement and sharing program data and information.

### SCHEDULE AND POTENTIAL DELIVERABLES

Provide an overall schedule of key evaluation activities and deliverables. The table below lists potential deliverables.

Final deliverables and budget are to be determined after the evaluator is selected.

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Revised monitoring report templates	Revised report templates including progress report, annual report, cumulative report with a review of the resources for partners to complete progress reports.	One time
Evaluation Plan	Written evaluation plan, including evaluation questions, data sources and a timeline of activities and deliverables.	One time
Biannual Progress Report	Written report on progress made in the program evaluation and monitoring activities. The report may include data collection updates, key learning takeaways, findings and recommendations.	Biannually
Annual Evaluation Report	Narrative report summarizing evaluation findings to date, including data from the quarterly reports submitted by funded partners. Report to include an updated EYC logic model based on the findings.	Annually

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Final Evaluation Report	Final narrative evaluation report of findings, lessons learned and recommendations.	One time
Logic Model	Revised logic model based on the findings.	Annually

**BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE**

The budget and budget narrative are not included in the 12-page limit for the proposal narrative.

**ITEMIZED BUDGET**

The total budget should not exceed \$575,000, inclusive of travel and expenses. Submit the proposed budget using your own Excel budget template and upload it into the application portal.

**BUDGET NARRATIVE**

In no more than two pages, please describe the bases for the estimated costs for the design and the implementation phases of the evaluation and the monitoring support. Identify the proposed staff and their roles for the evaluation and monitoring activities. Include the hourly rate of each member of the evaluation team and their respective time requirements for this project, estimated travel expenses and other operational expenses required to complete the proposed design and the implementation plan for the evaluation project.

**OTHER REQUIRED APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS**

In addition to (1) the proposal narrative, (2) the proposed budget, and (3) narrative for the proposed budget, applicants must include the following attachments:

- 2–3-page resumes for proposed evaluation team members.
- 2–3 work products that demonstrate qualifications. Links to products may be provided instead of the work products themselves.

**APPLICATION TIMELINE**

At The Center’s discretion, the timeline below is subject to change to best meet programmatic needs and funder requirements.

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Intent to Apply Email: Please submit a brief Intent to Apply email (including your organization type (e.g., research institution, consulting firm) to <a href="mailto:eval@sierrahealth.org">eval@sierrahealth.org</a> by this date if you plan to submit a proposal.	September 23, 2022
Optional Applicant Webinar: We have scheduled an applicant webinar to review this Elevate Youth California program evaluation request for proposals, discuss the application process, and answer questions. The webinar will be recorded and made available for viewing afterward. Please review the application materials prior to registering for the webinar. <a href="#">Register on Zoom here.</a>	September 19, 2022 2:00 pm–3:30 pm PT
Application Deadline	Friday, October 21, 2022 1:00 pm PT
Review of Applications	October 2022-early November 2022
Interviews with Finalists	Week of November 14, 2022
Contractor Selection	November 2022

## IMPORTANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

To help us process your application, please follow these submission guidelines:

- Incomplete applications or applications received after the due date/time will not be reviewed.
- Submission before the deadline date is advised in case you experience technical difficulties with submitting your application through the portal. For technical assistance in submitting the application or using the online portal, contact us at [eval@sierrahealth.org](mailto:eval@sierrahealth.org) with the subject line: Application Online Help.
- Submit the application via our online portal through [this link](#). You will use the link that you will receive via e-mail to continue working on your saved application.

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- When working on your application in the portal, use Microsoft Edge (formerly known as Internet Explorer) as the browser when working on a PC, and Safari as the browser when working on a Mac.
- Respond to all required fields (marked with an \*).
- Upload all attachments listed under “Application Checklist” below.
- On the portal, you may click “Save my progress and resume later.” You will receive an e-mail with a link to return to your in-progress application.
- Click “Save my progress and resume later” any time you will not be working in your application for a few minutes.
- You may submit your application only once. Be sure your application is complete and accurate, including required documents, before submitting it. Revised applications will not be accepted.

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ✓ Initiate the funding application online.
- ✓ Required application attachments:
  - Proposal narrative, (no more than 12 pages)
  - Brief resumes (no more than 3 pages each) of proposed staff (not included in 12-page limit)
  - Proposed budget
  - Proposed budget justification/narrative (not included in 12-page limit)
  - Sample work products (may be submitted as links with brief descriptions in an attachment to the proposal, not included in the 12-page limit)

**Send questions and inquiries related to this funding opportunity to**  
[eval@sierrahealth.org](mailto:eval@sierrahealth.org) **with the subject line: Elevate Youth California RFP Question**

**Appendix 1: APPLICATION (FOR REFERENCE ONLY  
SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION USING THE ONLINE PORTAL)**

*If you are unable to submit your application online or need help, please contact us at [eval@sierrahealth.org](mailto:eval@sierrahealth.org) with the subject line: Application Online Help.*

**Elevate Youth California Evaluation Application**

APPLICANT ORGANIZATION INFO

Organization name

Address street

City

State/Province

Zip/Postal Code

County

Phone

Website/URL (optional)

Director/CEO contact name

Director/CEO contact title

Director email address

Director phone

Application contact

Application contact email address

Application contact phone

Applicant organization Tax ID #

Amount requested: \$\_\_\_\_\_

APPLICATION NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. **Racial justice and health equity:** Describe your organization's experiences or other evidence demonstrating commitment to racial justice and health equity, including an understanding of the social determinants of health and culturally responsive evaluation. (250 words maximum)
2. **Content knowledge/expertise.** Describe your organization's knowledge and experience evaluating programs related to youth development; organizing and policy change; and substance use disorders. Provide relevant examples, if possible. (300 words maximum)
3. **Evaluation expertise:** Describe your experience/expertise evaluating complex, multi-site initiatives and using mixed methods. Provide examples that reflect experiences working with community-based organizations, youth, and the state, if possible. (300 words maximum)
4. **Monitoring:** Describe your experience designing data collection systems for community-based organizations. (200 words maximum)

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**Appendix 2: List of cohorts and their reporting periods**

Track	Cohort	Funding start and end date	Number of funded partners
Standard	1	March 2020–November 2022 <i>(33 months)</i>	26
	2	November 2020–November 2023 <i>(36 months)</i>	32
	3	November 2021–November 2024 <i>(36 months)</i>	61
	4	<i>November 2022–November 2025 (Tentative) (36 months)</i>	<i>TBD</i>
Capacity Building	1	August 2021–August 2023 <i>(24 months)</i>	18
	2	May 2022–November 2024 <i>(30 months)</i>	36
	3	<i>May 2023–November 2025 (Tentative) (30 months)</i>	<i>TBD</i>
Innovation	1	February 2022–November 2024 <i>(33 months)</i>	12
		Total Number of Funded Partners to Date	185