



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

RFP Response Form

RFP for Teen Programming

PROPOSER INFORMATION

Proposer Name: SLB Radio Productions, Inc.

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Larry Berger

Address: [Redacted]

Telephone: [Redacted]

Email: [Redacted]

Website: slbradio.org

Legal Status: For-Profit Corp. Nonprofit Corp. Sole Proprietor Partnership

Date Incorporated: April 4, 2000

Partners included in this Proposal: No contractual partners are part of this submission.

Please note that SLB has agreed to be included as a subcontracted partner in applications other organizations plan to submit. The activities to be provided under those applications differ in scope to those in this proposal and would be conducted independently if concurrently funded.

How did you hear about this RFP? Please be specific.

- Allegheny County Department of Children’s Initiatives (Tylor Hart)
- APOST Quality Campaign
- Remake Learning
- A+ Schools

Does your organization have a telecommunications device to accommodate individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing? Yes No*

*We are committed to providing any necessary resources in this area.

REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Larry Berger	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
Contract Processing Contact	Chanessa Schuler	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
Chief Information Officer	Robert Gray	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
Chief Financial Officer	Mark Kuczinski	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
MPER Contact*	Susan Blackman	[Redacted]	[Redacted]

*MPER is DHS’s provider and contract management system. Please list an administrative contact to update and manage this system for your agency.

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BOARD INFORMATION

Provide a list of your board members as an attachment or in the space below.

- Larry Berger, Acting Chair, Executive Director, SLB Radio Productions
- Mark Kuczinski, Treasurer/Secretary, Director of Finance, Pittsburgh Penguins
- Rikki Berger, Executive Producer, SLB Radio Productions
- Ken Doyno, Senior Principal & President, Rothschild Doyno Collaborative
- Amber Farr, Senior Leader, Program & Provider Services, Allegheny County DHS
- Ryan Hizer, Art Direction, Sound Design, Animation; Sr. Creative Mgr., Patron Technology
- Elizabeth Birungi McBride, Outpatient Therapist, The Persad Center, Inc.
- Carol McCague, Senior Consultant, Renaissance Partners, LLC
- Bruce D. Mountjoy, Legal Support, Citizens Bank
- Matthew J. Nelko, Broadcast Producer, ABC News; Principal, Nelko Media Strategy

Board Chairperson Name & Title: Larry Berger, Acting Chair

Board Chairperson Address:

Board Chairperson Telephone:

Board Chairperson Email:

REFERENCES

Provide the name, affiliation and contact information [include email address and telephone number] for three references who are able to address relevant experience with your organization.

Please do not use employees of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services as references.

- Rosemary Anderson, Director, Afterschool Programs, Propel Schools,
[REDACTED]
- Mary Kay Babyak, Executive Director, Consortium for Public Education, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- Jennifer Snyder-Duch, Associate Dean of Humanities, Mathematics, and Social Sciences
Community College of Allegheny County, [REDACTED]

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PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted: March 2, 2022
Amount Requested: \$200,000

CERTIFICATION

Please check the following before submitting your Proposal, as applicable:

I have read the standard County terms and conditions for County contracts and the requirements for DHS Cyber Security, EEOC/Non-Discrimination, HIPAA and Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law.

By submitting this Proposal, I certify and represent to the County that all submitted materials are true and accurate, and that I have not offered, conferred or agreed to confer any pecuniary benefit or other thing of value for the receipt of special treatment, advantaged information, recipient's decision, opinion, recommendation, vote or any other exercise of discretion concerning this RFP.

Choose one:

My Proposal contains information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information and I have included a written statement signed by an authorized representative identifying those portions or parts of my Proposal and providing contact information.

OR

My Proposal does not contain information that is either a trade secret or confidential proprietary information.

ATTACHMENTS

Please submit the following attachments with your Response Form. These can be found at <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/solicitations>.

- Partner commitment letters, if applicable: NA
- MWDBE and VOSB documents: Attachment 1
- Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form: Attachment 2
- Audited financial reports or other financial documentation for the last 3 years: Attachment 3
- W-9: Attachment 4

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1. **Describe your organizational experience serving the target population, specifically teens from diverse communities and populations. Please include examples of ways in which your organization connects with teens.**

SLB Radio Productions (SLB) uses radio and audio to amplify the voices of youth – and members of other communities whose stories are often marginalized – to educate, empower, and build community. All people have the capacity to develop authentic voices and know that their voices matter – that they matter – and that their voices can be used for self-expression, inquiry, and change.

SLB honors youth voice by creating real-world learning opportunities that keep students deeply engaged as they sharpen academic skills (e.g., speaking, active listening, reading, writing), workforce readiness skills (interviewing, working in teams, meeting deadlines, following a process, sifting through data), technical skills (digital storytelling, editing), and life skills (creative expression, critical thinking, confidence, cooperation, respect for others, curiosity). While media-making is core to our methodology, our goal is not to create tomorrow's journalists or entertainment technology professionals. Rather, SLB programs are designed to use media-making as an engaging method of interacting with peers, adults, and the world at large.

It is also critical to our mission to provide youth with the equipment, skills, and encouragement to find, use, and hone their individual voices. We've supported teen writers as they read their original work. Teen musicians – whether jazz saxophonists, beatboxers, or classical trios – use SLB as a platform to share their work. Youth need to know that their authentic expressions are valued and respected. When youth realize that their voice matters – they realize that they matter.

Examples of ways in which SLB has connected with teens in the target population include:

- **Neighborhood Summer and OST Programs (2005 to present)** – SLB has provided OST programming to Pittsburgh Public Schools since 2005 with service at 20+ locations. This experience includes serving as a provider for Summer Dreams Academy and B.O.O.S.T. programs since their inception (i.e., 10+ years in total) and support to multiple PPS Afterschool Academy sites. We also have designed and delivered programs at Manchester Academic Charter School, Propel Schools (multiple sites), Woodland Hills, Clairton, McKeesport, and other suburban districts. While each program is customized to the community, all have relied on our ability to (i) develop trusting relationships with students, (ii) providing weekly or daily sessions in ways that encourage student retention while also helping new students feel comfortable, and (iii) create atmospheres stressing positivity and growth.
- **Oral History Programs (2007 to present)** – SLB has supported teens as they learn more about their communities and elders through oral history collection since 2007. Between 2012 to 2018, we designed and carried out *Crossing Fences*, a major program designed to connect African American men and boys in communities often marginalized and misunderstood by the media and greater community. Youth learned skills related to interviewing, active listening, planning, teamwork, media creation and other 21st Century skills. They also learned about positive and inspirational stories from the men they interviewed as well as lessons in patience, overcoming obstacles, career opportunities, and perseverance. The project was conducted in Braddock, East Liberty, Garfield, Hazelwood, Hill District, Hilltop, Homestead, Homewood, McKeesport, Northside, Northview Heights, Sheraden, Sto-Rox, and Wilkinsburg. Eighteen volumes featuring 180 men and their stories were produced by over 200 boys and young men. A similar project for girls is underway in the Hill District.
- **Youth Radio Documentaries (2007 - present)**: SLB works with teens who create insightful and focused documentaries based on self-identified topics. Using rigorous production methods, they sharpen research, teamwork, empathy, media literacy and deadline compliance that support academic achievement and workforce readiness. Over 70 documentaries have been created with several airing nationally. Topics have included the school-to-prison pipeline, aging out of foster care, colorism, mental health, and other topics of

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strong interest to teens.

- **Pittsburgh Youth Media Corps (2012-present):** SLB trains teens to use the same journalistic tools, skills, practices, and technologies used in professional media outlets. This real-world experience enables them to participate thoughtfully while reporting on current events and issues of interest to them. The program has engaged teens from more than 20 school districts in Allegheny County; it provides youth with authentic experiences as they create short-form documentaries, commentaries, and editorials.
- **Youth Express (2004 to present):** From poetry to talk shows, hip hop to string quartets, political roundtables to editorials, Youth Express delivers authentic youth voices completely ad-free. SLB created this 24/7 streaming service to provide training, resources, and a platform for Pittsburgh-area youth to share writing, reflections, theater, journalism, and their own music. Content is available at youthexpress.org, aired on *The Saturday Light Brigade* radio program, and on the Youth Express app. Approximately 400 youth participate annually.
- **Youth Media Advocacy Program:** In collaboration with Carlow University, SLB supported teens from middle and high schools across Allegheny County as they identified issues of concern, opportunities for change, pathways to create change, strategies for advocacy, and – ultimately – persuasive media presentations to decision makers. Several hundred teens took part in the program between 2010 and 2019.

2. Describe your organizational experience working in high-need communities.

Working in high-need communities has been at our core since beginning to provide OST programming. After establishing studios on Pittsburgh's Northside in 2004, SLB was asked to design and deliver after school programs in Pittsburgh Public Schools as part of the ELECT Student Works after school program. We delivered these programs to Pittsburgh Miller (Hill District); Pittsburgh Lincoln (Lincoln-Lemington); Pittsburgh Greenfield (Greenfield); Pittsburgh Sunnyside (Stanton Heights); and Pittsburgh Manchester (Northside).

Our work has since expanded to include high-need communities throughout much of the county. As noted in Section 1, teen oral history programs have been conducted in Braddock, East Liberty, Garfield, Hazelwood, Hill District, Hilltop, Homestead, Homewood, McKeesport, Northside, Northview Heights, Sheraden, Sto-Rox, and Wilkinsburg.

Our OST work has included daily or weekly programs at Pittsburgh Langley, Pittsburgh Brashear, Wilkinsburg, Jr./Sr. High, University Prep at Pittsburgh Millionaires, Gateway School District, Hampton Area School District, McKeesport High School, Oakland Catholic, Manchester Academic Charter School, Pittsburgh Perry, Pittsburgh Schiller, Pittsburgh Spring Hill, Pittsburgh Westinghouse, Clairton City Schools, Propel Braddock Hills, Propel Homestead, Propel McKeesport, Woodland Hills. We also have conducted projects at multiple sites served by the Homeless Children's Education Fund and at BJWL-Glen Hazel.

3. Describe your organization's commitment to serving all individuals regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), intellectual or physical ability, English language proficiency or life experiences. Provide specific approaches used and examples of how they are reflected in your work.

SLB grounds our practice in audio because we believe – and research and experience validates – that **audio is a tremendous equalizer that encourages and streamlines participation by all**. The absence of cameras allows youth to be their authentic selves without concerns as to race, appearance, body image, wardrobe, and other visual identifiers that may impede a willingness for genuine self-expression and – as important – the willingness of listeners to actually hear the message conveyed. Moreover, audio can easily be edited and embellished by youth, thus providing (i) a sense of ownership and control of their story, (ii) opportunities to proceed at their own pace and style, and (iii) privacy as they work.

Examples of our approaches and commitment include the following programs and work examples:

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- **Brashear Brings You the World** – Brashear High School in Pittsburgh serves about 1,300 students, 22% of whom are immigrants or former refugees who are learning to speak English. SLB designed a project called “Brashear Brings You the World” to help give voice to immigrant and refugee public school students. The project ultimately showcased 58 students from 21 countries, including Tanzania, Yemen, Rwanda, Nigeria, Somalia, Kenya, Syria, Iraq, Nepal, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala and more. Eighteen languages and dialects were represented. When appropriate, we retained translators to provide descriptions in real time. With help from Global Wordsmiths, we provided students and families with documents in native languages.
- **From There to Here** – The “From There to Here” series is a project-based learning activity that is part of a social studies unit in which students interview immigrants and refugees who now live in Pittsburgh. Since 2010, 230 students have interviewed 80 Pittsburghers from countries including Ukraine, Israel, Argentina, Russia, Brazil, Afghanistan, China, Japan, Germany, Bhutan, Nepal, and 50+ other countries.
- **Student Documentaries** – Three SLB-trained teens created a documentary about Somali-Bantu families in Pittsburgh. The documentary was conceived by a Somali-Bantu student who wanted to describe his experiences after his family relocated to the Pittsburgh area. Assisted by two Pittsburgh-born suburban students, the trio completed the documentary which subsequently earned national recognition.
- **Dyslexia and Other Language-Based Differences** – SLB created a program for 7th graders at Provident Charter School (Northside) in which students interviewed adults with dyslexia and other language-based differences.
- **LGBTQ+** – SLB has long encouraged students to express their authentic selves in all areas, including sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Examples of teen work in these areas include (i) a broadcast commentary by a trans-male Pittsburgh Carrick student on his experiences at Pittsburgh Carrick and (ii) an award-winning teen-produced documentary called *Advocating Acceptance*, about a Johnstown trans-male student who transitioned during his senior year.

Our experience working with a wide range of teens is critical for a number of reasons:

1. We are situated in a community with a substantial population of children and youth who live in low-income families, and centrally located from thousands of similar families;
2. Youth need neutral space outside of school;
3. Pittsburgh routinely demonstrates fear of the “other” and systemic xenophobia, brought about in large part by cloistered neighborhoods and lack of socioeconomic mixing;
4. Media-making leads directly to a recognition of and an improvement in media literacy;
5. Our work with youth supports the development of important 21st Century skills.
6. Media-making can simply be fun while it also teaches a variety of life skills;
7. Youth need a safe space to be exposed to new ideas—as well as to new people, organizations, and career opportunities—and then develop their own ideas and life goals;
8. Youth need a safe space to meet people from beyond their own neighborhoods, in any direction on the socio-economic scale;
9. Access to mentors as trusted adults who really listen to youth can begin to stimulate their trust for adults in general; and
10. Engagement with such a program can literally prevent or reduce youth involvement with the criminal justice system.

Our staff and board include people of color and others who are LGBTQ+. We feel it is important for teens to see themselves reflected in the organization that is providing them with programs and services.

4. **Provide an overall description of your proposed Programming and how it will provide teens with the opportunity to engage in enriching and interesting activities. If applicable, include how input from teens and/or best practice research was/will be taken into consideration in the design of the Programming.**

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Simply stated, we believe that successful OST programs require:

- A trusted, inclusive space in which youth can feel at home as their authentic selves.
- Resources and opportunities to learn and grow.
- Caring adults serving as reliable guides and mentors.

These three factors are based largely on the teachings of Fred Rogers, including *Something Worth Giving* (Fred Rogers, 2002). Each is discussed below. Section 5 (physical and emotional safety) also identifies aspects relevant to this question as these factors are a significant part of our work.

Trusted Inclusive Space. Activities will take place in our new Youth Media Center. Opening in March 2022, this brand new facility includes 3,500 sq. ft. of space and was designed by SLB based on years of experience as well as resources described in Section 5.1. Key features include:

- Adult-scaled work spaces designed for use by teens and young adults.
- 12 large work tables that can be flexibly used for individual work, small group collaboration, classroom instruction, and virtually any other purpose.
- Studio and production facilities that can be used privately (i.e., by one person) or by teams.
- A student lounge and pantry for recharge and relaxation.
- Ample space for group or individual work.

For teens, SLB also believes that it is paramount to provide access on their terms. Part-time jobs, family responsibilities, and competing activities make it imperative that program design considers the hours and frequencies that work best for teens. We know from experience that some teens may want to take part daily, while others can only participate sporadically. We intend to level this playing field by being open to all. Our operating plans include:

- Wide-ranging “drop in” hours for youth as opposed to rigid “attendance” requirements.
 - Core hours will be Monday through Thursday (3 to 7 pm), Saturday (10 am to 4 pm), and by appointment
- A transportation fund for youth requiring this support.
- Monetary stipends and fellowships to support lost part-time job hours.
- Regular review of core hours in collaboration with Youth Advisory Council.

Calibration of the space and our programs will be the Youth Advisory Council and its recommendations. As operations take hold throughout our first year, the role of the Youth Advisory Council will grow.

We recognize that the “space” associated with our program also includes the neighborhood. Our facility is within walking distance from multiple schools and community centers as well as accessible by multiple bus lines. By virtue of its location within the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh campus, the space includes access to restrooms, Buhl Community Park, Allegheny Commons Park, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh’s Allegheny Regional Branch, and other outdoor areas for a safe change of scenery.

Resources and Opportunities to Grow. Our new Youth Media Center includes:

- 5 fully-equipped studios (including ADA-compliant facilities) for youth to use and explore.
- Eight “creation stations” (four PC-based, four MAC-based) with software and hardware for creation of music, beats, commentaries, documentaries, and more.
- Portable recorders, microphones, and laptops that can be used off site for interviews and other projects.
- A library of 100+ engaging books centered on media, music, and self-expression.
- An infrastructure to distribute youth work across social media, Internet radio, podcast, FM radio, and more.

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SLB knows from experience that teens will have different interests and that these interests also will likely change as they grow. We need to make certain that youth have access to interesting, relevant, engaging activities at the right time – not just at the right place. While students will be welcome to pursue appropriate personal projects, SLB also will have a variety of SLB-honed real-world projects for youth without specific ideas of their own. These include:

- Researching and creating public service announcements for nonprofits.
- Writing and voicing editorials and commentaries.
- Creating short-form documentaries by conducting face-to-face interviews with community leaders.
- Profiling career opportunities by interviewing members of the workforce.
- Collecting oral histories from others.
- Sharing original writing and music.
- Hosting a podcast.
- Focusing deeply on technical skills (editing, mixing, publishing, etc.).

All of these activities are designed to encourage community engagement, learning, and self-exploration. While youth will sharpen communications and technical skills, we're primarily focused on helping them engage with and feeling comfortable in an increasingly complicated world by providing a method to engage (i.e., through media creation).

Caring adults serving as reliable guides and mentors – As discussed in Section 5.1, our staff is grounded in values that are critical for successful programming of any type. As we carry out programs, we take care to use these practices:

- Consistent staff scheduling so that teens know who will be onsite and have the opportunity to develop a relationship with the person.
- Diversity of staff mindsets, backgrounds, and life experiences, recognizing that some teens will feel more comfortable with certain adults than with others.
- A mentoring approach (i.e., providing guidance and tailored support as opposed to “grabbing the mouse and doing the work”).
- Caring about personal challenges and triumphs while also maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- Recognition that we must behave as if we may be one of the only caring adults in that person's life.

Our staffing practices include:

- Hiring the right people. SLB hires OST staff based on empathy, lived experience, and a passion for our mission over technical skills. We can easily fill technical gaps; it is nearly impossible to create a sense of empathy in an adult without the interest, aptitude and desire to serve others. While our staff have strong media skills, they are at core people who create atmospheres of inclusion, know how to relate to people, recognize the importance of listening, understand and respond to trauma, and have cultural competence.
- Mentor consistency. SLB recognizes that OST programs achieve their potential when youth and adults develop a sense of comfort and trust with one another. Our programs are staffed with full-time employees and are scheduled such that the same adults work at the same sites consistently. We believe it's paramount to be a reliable adult.
- Working from a growth mindset with tangible outcomes. For example, in weekly sessions, we frequently would record youth conversation around a particular theme (perhaps “If I Were Mayor...”) during Week 1. We then would return in Week 2 with an edited montage of youth recordings that we created in-between sessions. This method reinforced several principles:
 - We take youth seriously. In the week between Session 1 and 2, SLB took the time to carefully listen to, edit, and showcase the initial student recordings.
 - You sound better than you might have thought: many students are reluctant to participate initially out of concern for how they'll sound. Our “Week 2” playback session usually eliminates these concerns and also

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allows us to begin teaching about ways to sound even better, often infusing STEM principles around microphone use, modulation, and other factors.

While we're eager to support students with ideas for self-identified projects, we also know that it's helpful to have meaningful structured programs that provide a sense of accomplishment and transferable skills. Finally, we celebrate outcomes. Culminating celebrations with family engagement are included in nearly all of our programs.

5. Describe how your Programming will provide a physically and emotionally safe space for teens.

5.1 Underlying Research

Providing a physically and emotionally safe space has always been fundamental to our work. Simply stated, youth require these conditions to be their authentic selves, grow, and thrive. We've spent years honing methods to help youth feel comfortable and self-actualized in individual and group settings. These principles were affirmed by our staff and board in our current Strategic Plan (2019) through joint development of an updated mission statement (emphasis added):

SLB uses radio and audio to amplify voices of youth – and members of other communities whose stories are often marginalized – to educate, empower, and build community. *Our work is based on the principle that all people have the capacity and right to develop their authentic voice and know that their voice matters – that they matter – and that their voice can be used for self-expression, inquiry, and change.*

This is amplified further through the following core values as determined by staff and board:

- Respect: We listen and appreciate all voices.
- Authenticity: We support creation of genuine work and act with humility.
- Collaboration: We encourage teamwork and partnerships to leverage our impact.
- Welcoming: We foster diversity and create a safe and trusted environment.
- Positivity: We bring joy to the community by showcasing creativity and ideas for a brighter future.

These core values are routinely discussed by our team; they are touchstones underpinning all we do.

Program design at SLB also is informed by our work beyond our organization. We are active with APOST, Remake Learning, and other OST affinity groups, and make use of training in areas such as cultural competence, trauma-informed practice, adolescent brain development, and boundaries management, so that we can develop and implement best practices.

On the national level, SLB visited 14 peer facilities across the United States to review best practices. We also have made use of research findings, including:

- Youth Voice Best Practices, A Toolkit for Centering Youth Voices in Educational Programming, Remake Learning Youth Voice Working Group, 2017-8.
- Youth-Driven Spaces Theory and Practice, Neutral Zone, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Simple Interactions, Adolescent Brain Development, University of Pittsburgh.
- Growing with youth: A lifewide and lifelong perspective on youth-driven partnership in youth programs, Thomas Akiva, et al, Children and Youth Services Review.
- Preparing education for the information society: the need for new knowledge and skills, Tjeerd Plump, Int. J. Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2013.
- Measuring and Understanding Authentic Youth Engagement, The Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric, Heng-Chieh Jamie Wu, Mariah Kornbluh, John Weiss, and Lori Roddy, Afterschool Matters, 2016.

5.2 Practice

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Section 4 establishes the basis for our culture and approach. This section describes the equipment, methods, and practices we use to provide a physically and emotionally safe space for all. Simply stated, we believe that successful OST programs require:

- A trusted, inclusive space in which youth can feel at home as their authentic selves.
- Resources and opportunities to learn and grow.
- Caring adults serving as reliable guides and mentors.

Trusted Inclusive Space – Activities will take place in our new Youth Media Center. Opening in March 2022, this brand new facility includes 3,500 sq. ft. of space and was designed by SLB based on years of experience as well as resources described in Section 5.1. Key features include:

- Adult-scaled work spaces designed for use by teens and young adults.
- 12 large work tables that can be flexibly used for individual work, small group collaboration, classroom instruction, and virtually any other purpose.
- Studio and production facilities that can be used privately (i.e., by one person) or by teams.
- A student lounge and pantry for recharge and relaxation.
- Ample space for group or individualized work.

For teens, SLB also believes that it is paramount to provide access on their terms. Part-time jobs, family responsibilities, and competing activities make it imperative that program design considers the hours and frequencies that work best for teens. We know from experience that some teens may want to take part daily, while others can only participate sporadically. It is imperative that we level this playing field by being open to all. Our operating plans include:

- Wide-ranging “drop in” hours for youth as opposed to rigid “attendance” requirements.
- A transportation fund for youth requiring this support.
- Monetary stipends and fellowships to support lost part-time job hours.
- Regular review of core hours in collaboration with Youth Advisory Council.

Calibration of the space and our programs is supported by a Youth Advisory Council and its recommendations. As operations take hold throughout our first year, the role of the Youth Advisory Council will grow. By virtue of its location within the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh campus, the space includes access to restrooms, Buhl Community Park, Allegheny Commons Park, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh’s Allegheny Regional Branch, and other outdoor areas for a safe change of scenery.

Resources and Opportunities to Grow. Our new Youth Media Center includes:

- 5 fully-equipped studios (including ADA-compliant facilities) for youth to use and explore.
- Eight “creation stations” (four PC-based, four MAC-based) with software and hardware for creation of music, beats, commentaries, documentaries, and more.
- Portable recorders, microphones, and laptops that can be used off site for interviews and other projects.
- A library of 100+ engaging books centered on media, music, and self-expression.
- An infrastructure to distribute youth work across social media, Internet radio, podcast, FM radio, and more.

SLB knows from experience that teens will have different interests and that these interests also will likely change as they grow. We need to make certain that youth have access to interesting, relevant, engaging activities at the right time – not just at the right place. While students will be welcome to pursue appropriate personal projects, SLB also will have a variety of SLB-honed real-world projects for youth without specific ideas of their own. These include:

- Researching and creating public service announcements for nonprofits.
- Writing and voicing editorials and commentaries.
- Creating short-form documentaries by conducting face-to-face interviews with community leaders.
- Profiling career opportunities by interviewing members of the workforce.
- Collecting oral histories from others.

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- Sharing original writing and music.
- Hosting a podcast.
- Focusing deeply on technical skills (editing, mixing, publishing, etc.).

All of these activities are designed to encourage community engagement, learning, and self-exploration. While youth will sharpen communications and technical skills, we're primarily focused on helping them engage with and feeling comfortable in an increasingly complicated world by providing a method to engage (i.e., through media creation).

Caring adults serving as reliable guides and mentors – As discussed in Section 5.1, our staff is grounded in values that are critical for successful programming of any type. As we carry out programs, we take care to use these practices:

- Consistent staff scheduling so that teens know who will be onsite and have the opportunity to develop a relationship with the person.
- Diversity of staff mindsets, backgrounds, and life experiences, recognizing that some teens will feel more comfortable with certain adults than with others.
- A mentoring approach (i.e., providing guidance and tailored support as opposed to “grabbing the mouse and doing the work”).
- Caring about personal challenges and triumphs while also maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- Recognition that we must behave as if we may be one of the only caring adults in that person's life.

6. Describe how your Programming will provide teens with opportunities to make positive connections to peers, adults and their community.

Although our programming is housed in our Youth Media Center, our mission is not to train the media professionals of tomorrow. Rather, we use media-making as a method to support youth as they engage with peers, adults, and the community. By providing a context for this engagement, we've learned that teens will get involved. Here are examples of actual SLB projects that demonstrate this and that – based on teen interest – can be offered under this program.

- Documentaries and Public Service Announcements. This program is based on showcasing agencies and people working to improve community life. While media creation occurs, the program is far deeper. Key elements include:
 - A peer-facilitated town hall meeting during which teens develop a list of issues that concern them (e.g., gun violence, aging out of foster care, transportation equity, police violence, etc.). While a planning session on one level, teens are also sharing their thoughts, fears, and needs with one another in a non-threatening way, often realizing that other teens share their passion.
 - Identifying and interviewing people and agencies working to address these concerns. Students seek out nonprofits and agencies (i.e., Voices Against Violence) that address the issue they've selected. This provides a project-based introduction to people and agencies working to make a better Allegheny County. Students will have an important reason – and authority – to reach out to the organization and speak with them as they develop their media piece.
 - Creating a public service announcement or documentary showcasing the individual or organization addressing the identified issue. This provides a sense of accomplishment (a completed project), impact (the project is distributed to the community), and family engagement (as we celebrate the project).

The impact of the above is breathtaking. Teens realize that they are not the only ones who worry about issues. They learn that the region is full of agencies and people working to improve the quality of life. Further, they learn that there are even career opportunities in these areas. Finally – when the work of all teens is considered – they have created a youth-curated library of resources and knowledge that may be helpful in the future.

- Cultural and Arts Programming – Youth take part in a project designed to showcase Pittsburgh's cultural assets by visiting them and creating a review or documentary. Key steps of the program include:

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- Creating a list of possibilities. This entails creating a youth-informed list of places to visit, e.g., experiencing a production at Pittsburgh Opera or the August Wilson Center; taking a behind-the-scenes tour of the Pittsburgh Zoo or National Aviary; learning first-hand about the Afro-American Music Institute or Focus on Renewal.
- Taking on an assignment. Teens take on an assignment – ideally to visit an organization they know little about – and conduct the visit and interview to learn more.
- Publishing a final review or commentary. Teens create and publish their final piece. The net result is that youth have had a context for community engagement, have learned from the process, and have created a work that will inform others.

There are other examples, such as our oral history programs that connect teens with adults from their communities. The teens record, publish, and reflect upon these stories using a well-honed process that is [1] **authentic**, as the adults share their personal paths as they navigated obstacles, leveraged opportunities, and arrived at their life's work; [2] **transformational**, as teens become more at ease interacting with adults and more confident with technology, while the adults deepen their empathy and understanding of today's youth; and [3] **impactful**, as the project goes well beyond the teens and adults who participate directly, with the adults' stories and the teens' reflections shared with the wider community. It is never too early to start building a network; we know that the connections between the adults and teens often continue after the project wraps up.

7. Why do you think teens will want to participate in your Programming?

Our responses to Questions 4 through 6 have incorporated our philosophy for teen programming and – above all – the tangible ways that youth engagement has been “baked into” our program design. While details are provided in those sections, key points include the following:

- Flexible hours that take teen schedules into account and include hours by appointment
- Trusted, caring adults
- An exciting, new Youth Media Center with facilities based on national research and visits to peers and a space unavailable anywhere else in the region
- Opportunities to pursue self-directed projects, meet people from different neighborhoods, and learn
- A safe space with opportunities to grow.

Above all, perhaps, our long record of successful recruitment and retention is what led us to expanding our facility and submitting this proposal. This success has been based on listening to youth and we intend to continue doing so.

8. Describe how you will market your Programming and open referral pathways.

SLB is accustomed to using “any and all means necessary” to recruit and retain teens for our programs. We envision a combination of the following methods:

- Emails to more than 600 teens we have previously worked with. These emails will also invite recipients to share the information with peers.
- Twitter, Instagram and other social media posts.
- Collaboration with Pittsburgh Public Schools, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Remake Learning, Consortium for Public Education, Center for Urban Education, and other organizations who can reach middle and high schools teachers and administrators who may wish to reach out to particular students.
- Outreach to specific teachers and program leaders we've worked with in the past.
- Outreach to Pittsburgh Black Media Federation, Assemble, YMCA Lighthouse Program, Center of Life, 1Hood Media, and other like-minded organizations.
- Publicity through the *Northside Chronicle*, *The New Pittsburgh Courier*, *Kidsburgh*, *Pittsburgh Brown Mamas*, and other publications that reach parents and caregivers of potential participants.

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- Distribution of program materials through Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh teen librarians.

Additionally, and as important, our Youth Advisory Council will be asked to develop ways to make our recruiting most effective, especially with regard to reaching under-served students. Based on preliminary discussions, these ideas might include posters, creation of a “street team,” incentives for making a first visit, etc.

9. Describe how you will staff your Programming and the strategies you will use to recruit, hire and retain racially diverse staff, staff with relevant lived experience and staff that reflect the population served.

SLB has a history of being deliberate with respect to hiring practices. While existing media technology skills are helpful, requiring a specific and exact set of skills can inadvertently limit our pool of applicants. We long-ago concluded that our programming staff should ideally be hired based on (i) empathy, (ii) proven ability to connect with teens, (iii) passion for our mission and values, (iv) community knowledge, and (v) the qualities they bring to enhance and broaden our team. For most programming positions, these qualities matter more than media skills since the latter are far easier to learn, especially using our guidance.

Our job descriptions are written to embrace a larger applicant pool, including people with non-traditional career paths, students, and adults. This gives us a better opportunity to cultivate a diverse team.

The bottom line requires that we focus on making certain that our opportunities are announced to as many people as possible and – with deliberate intention – announced in ways that increase the likelihood of applicants that help make sure we have a balanced team. To this end, we distribute job opening information through *The New Pittsburgh Courier*, Nonprofit Talent, our own networks (including those listed in Section 8), and word of mouth. Given our size, we also are usually able to have prospective employees meet all staff members; this helps us make sure we hire not only the best person, but the right person to diversify our staff.

10. Describe how your Programming sets teens on a positive trajectory toward adulthood and any skills you expect teens to gain (e.g., socioemotional, leadership, workforce-related, conflict resolution skills).

SLB Radio Productions (SLB) uses radio and audio to amplify voices of youth—and members of other communities whose stories are often marginalized—to educate, empower, and build community. We believe that all people have the capacity to develop authentic voices and know that their voices matter—that *they* matter—and that their voices can be used for self-expression, inquiry, and change.

SLB honors youth voice by creating real-world learning opportunities that keep students deeply engaged as they sharpen academic skills (e.g., speaking, active listening, reading, writing), workforce readiness skills (interviewing, working in teams, meeting deadlines, following a process, sifting through data), technical skills (digital storytelling, editing), and life skills (creative expression, critical thinking, confidence, cooperation, respect for others, curiosity) – all of which lead to a positive trajectory. While media-making is core to our methodology, our goal is not to create tomorrow’s journalists or entertainment technology professionals. Rather, SLB programs are designed to use media-making as an engaging method of interacting with peers, adults, and the world at large in a positive way.

11. If your Program experiences low attendance, how will you engage more teens?

SLB knows that teens have dozens and dozens of choices – some positive, some otherwise – for spending their time. Nonetheless, we’ve learned a lot from recruiting for past SLB programs as well as encouraging sustained attendance for programs we’ve carried out for others (e.g., PPS Summer Dreamers Academy, BOOST, etc.). Strategies include:

- Ongoing Feedback. The best way to ensure attendance is to get authentic feedback from participants. This can help us revise and improve programs for better experiences and engagement.
- Personal Follow Up. Our staff are trained to reach out directly to teens who seem to have dropped out of programming. This act alone often results in their returning as it demonstrates that we noticed; it also helps us learn about things we may need to change.

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- Marketing. We'll review marketing efforts summarized in Section 8.
- Stipends. It's often the case that students benefiting the most from our programs are unable to sustain attendance due to their need to work a part-time job. While we do not wish to operate as an employment program, we've learned that offering modest stipends (e.g., \$50 for a completed project) can be a great incentive.

Feedback on programming and marketing will also be sought from the Youth Advisory Council.

12. If one of the teens in your Program experiences behavioral or mental health issues, what will you do?

SLB has occasionally experienced issues that are – or appear to be – related to mental or behavioral health, especially given our efforts to create safe, trusted space and relationship. While every situation is unique, certain common practices apply:

- Preparation. We keep individual records for youth with whom we work. These records include caregiver emergency contact information that must be reliable and, as possible, include two independent sources. We also strive to obtain appropriate information about strategies that may be important to understand if a student has a particular special need. We take care not to expose ourselves to HIPAA or similar medical-related information for legal reasons as well as factors that might bias our work with each student. However, we encourage caregivers to let us know if their student may respond best to frequent breaks, prefer not to discuss certain subjects, etc.
- Training. Staff meetings include regular discussions about these issues (in general terms), including early detection, recognizing when “fixing an issue” is beyond our skill set, and when de-escalation, Mental Health First Aid, calming/isolation, and referral are the best we can do. Because our staff are caring by nature, we also discuss boundary issues. Our training includes Simple Interactions, Recognizing and Reporting Signs of Child Abuse, and basics of Trauma-Informed Practice. All of our staff carry full state and federal clearances.
- Communications. Issues that rise to the level of contacting a caregiver are referred to our Director of Programs or Executive Director in order to make sure we are consistent and maintain proper perspective. When deemed necessary, we contact the designated caregiver and work to support the student to the best of our ability. Unless the student is in danger of harming himself or another, we work directly with the family before making any outside contact (e.g., to the police, Childline, etc.).

Beyond safety of each student and peers, we do not make judgments with respect to mental health diagnosis or behavioral labels. We have learned that all people have good days and bad days, and that all people deserve the opportunity to flourish.

13. If a parent of a teen in your Program expressed the family's need for support outside of what your Program can provide, what will you do?

SLB has developed relationships with hundreds of agencies and organizations in the social services sector through radio program features, youth programs, and other interactions. As a result, our staff is often able to make referrals to the appropriate organizations or individuals who can provide support. In addition to referrals to specific agencies, we also recommend contacting clearinghouse sites such as bigburgh.com and 311. We stress to our staff that we cannot position ourselves as agents of direct support, no matter how tempting or feasible it may seem.

14. In the space below, provide a detailed one-year, line-item budget that reflects a realistic estimate of the costs associated with implementing and sustaining the Programming.

Our proposed budget is provided in Exhibit 1 on the following page and totals \$200,000.

15. In the space below, provide a budget narrative that clearly explains and justifies all line items in your proposed line-item budget.

The budget provided in Exhibit 1 is based on the following key assumptions:

- Core operating hours of Monday through Thursday (3 to 7 pm) and Saturday (10 to 4 pm), i.e., 22 hours/week

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- Operations of 46 weeks/year, i.e., 1012 hours/year
- Contingencies for after-hours appointments
- Service to approximately 200 teens/year
- SLB labor rates including wages and fringes

Notwithstanding these assumptions and as noted on Exhibit 1, SLB recognizes that the Teen RFP we are responding to represents a new DHS program. We therefore stand ready to revise our envisioned scope upward or downward based on DHS needs and the final portfolio of programs it funds.

Budget Line I (Personnel, \$122,958). High-quality OST programs require strong adult staff and, as such, this line item represents approximately 61% of the total budget. As detailed in Exhibit 1, we have identified six different staff positions that will contribute to this program. Each is a full-time SLB employee. Titles and roles are as follows:

- Staff Educators 1 and 2 will be present during all Youth Media Center hours of operations with responsibilities including greeting, recordkeeping, coaching, and overall logistics. These are the staff that will provide key continuity throughout the program's operation. As shown in Lines Items I.c and I.d, their labor represents \$78,936 of the budget.
- While Staff Educators 1 and 2 have significant teaching and media experiences, we recognize that they will require support from other SLB staff, including people with more tenure or different skills. Hours have therefore been included for support by a Senior Staff Educator as shown in Line Item I.b (\$8,096) and Manager of Production and Distribution as shown in Line Item I.e (\$11,385).
- Overall project management will be the responsibility of our Director of Programs. Labor for this task – as well as periodic teen support – is shown in Line Item I.a (\$6,831).
- Finally, SLB believes that the success of this program will require significant outreach, partnership and community engagement. Accordingly, we have established a budget for our Community Engagement Coordinator for outreach to youth and other youth-serving organizations, family engagement, coordination of open houses, and similar activities. This is shown in Line Item I.f (\$17,710)

Budget Line II (Materials and Supplies, \$10,717). This includes allocations for materials we expect students to keep such as Reporter's Notebooks, name badges, USB memory sticks, cables, headsets and other gear. A modest amount has also been included for purchasing replacement items that may break during the course of the project (cables, microphone stands, etc.).

Budget Line III (Facilities and Operations, \$20,125). This line item includes pro-rated cost for Youth Media Center space and equipment based on the assumptions noted at the beginning of this section.

Budget Line IV (Contracts and Services, \$46,200). The most significant portion of this section is an estimated \$40,000 in youth stipends as shown in Line IV.c. We've based this budget item on an average stipend award of \$200/student across 200 students. While we are not proposing to pay students a wage, we have learned that stipends can provide an excellent incentive for continued engagement by older youth. Other line items here include advertising (Line Item IV.a, \$5,000) and Internet bandwidth (Line Item IV.b, \$1,200).

Exhibit 1 -- Proposed Teen Programming Budget
Allegheny County Department of Human Services
March 2, 2022

Organization Name SLB Radio Productions, Inc
Contact Name (Full) Larry Berger
Business Address P O Box 100092, Pittsburgh 15233 (mail); 10 Children's Way, Suite 21, Pittsburgh, PA 15212 (physical location)
Business Phone 412 586 6300 x 1
Business Email larry@slbradio.org

Item Category		
I. Personnel	Cost	Notes
a Director of Programs	6,831	
b Senior Staff Educator	8,096	
c Staff Educator 1	36,432	
d Staff Educator 2	42,504	
e Manager of Productions and Distribution	11,385	
f Community Coordinator/Associate Producer	17,710	
		Labor mix assumes:
		> Core hours of Monday through Thursday (3 to 7 pm) and Saturday (10 to 4 pm) = 22 hrs/week
		> Operations of 46 weeks/year = 1012 hrs/year
		> Contingencies for after-hours appointments
		> Service to approximately 200 teens
		> Inclusion of wages and finges
Total Personnel Costs	\$122,958	
II. Materials and Supplies	Cost	Notes
a Reporters notebooks, paper, pencils, badges	3,500	Required for student use and attendance record-keeping
b Technical consumables (cables, USB memory, headphones)	7,217	For supplies teens keep
Total Material Costs	\$10,717	
III. Facilities and Operations	Cost	Notes
a Youth Media Center	20,125	Pro-rated use based on day rates applied to 22 hrs/week, 48 weeks/year yielding 230 days/year
Total Facilities Costs	\$20,125	
IV. Contracts and Services	Cost	Notes
a Advertising and promotions	5,000	Purchased advertising, posters, social media boosts
b Internet bandwidth	1,200	Pro-rated at \$100/month
c Youth stipends	40,000	Assume 200 youth with average \$200 stipend
Total Services Costs	\$46,200	
TOTAL PROPOSED BUDGET	\$200,000	

Note:
This budget has been prepared with due care based on the indicated assumptions and accompanying proposal. In that the Teen RFP we are responding to represents a new DHS program, SLB stands ready to revise our envisioned scope upward or downward based on DHS needs and the final portfolio of programs it funds.