



Allegheny County Department of Human Services

RFP Response Form

RFP for Teen Programming

PROPOSER INFORMATION

Proposer Name: Youth Opportunities Development

Authorized Representative Name & Title: Brandon Ziats; Executive Director

Address: 282 Saint Clair Ave Clairton, Pa 15025

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: brandon@yodpa.org

Website: www.yodpa.org

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

Date Incorporated: 2012

Partners included in this Proposal: [Click here to enter text.](#)

How did you hear about this RFP? *Please be specific.* Email release from DHS

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

REQUIRED CONTACTS

	Name	Phone	Email
Chief Executive Officer	Brandon Ziats	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Contract Processing Contact	Brandon Ziats	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Information Officer	Donna Hudson	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Chief Financial Officer	Brandon Ziats	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
MPER Contact*	Patricia Cain (AIU)	[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.

Board	Name		Position at Y.O.D.	
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]		

Chairperson Name & Title: Dr. Jon Lloyd

Board Chairperson Address: [REDACTED]

Board Chairperson Telephone: [REDACTED]

Board Chairperson Email: [REDACTED]

REFERENCES

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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.*

Jamilia Kamara M.Ed. – Program Officer For Education- The Pittsburgh Foundation,
[REDACTED]

Richard Garland MSW– Assistant Professor Behavioral and Community Health Sciences;
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Taili Thompson – Board Member Y.O.D./ Director of Violence Prevention Initiative-Operation Better Block, [REDACTED]

PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Date Submitted 3/2/2022

Amount Requested: \$150,000.00

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.

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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
- MWDBE and VOSB documents
- Allegheny County Vendor Creation Form
- Audited financial reports or other financial documentation for the last three years
- W-9

REQUIREMENTS

Please respond to the following. The maximum score a Proposal can receive is 100 points. Your response to this section should not exceed 12 pages. (Pages 1-3 are not included in the page count).

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Organizational Experience (20 points possible)

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

Youth Opportunities Development has served the youth population of Clairton since its founding in 2012. YOD's mission is to ensure peaceful, prosperous communities through the mentoring, education, and empowerment of youth. Executive Director, Brandon Ziats, began working in the Clairton community in 2009 with another organization. In 2012, Mr. Ziats began working on the establishment of YOD and two more integral individuals, Group Leaders Donna Hudson and Terri Britton, joined YOD staff (and are still on staff to this day). With the addition of these community adult leaders, Youth members began planning the first of several trips. Youth identified lack of opportunities for positive activities as an issue they wanted to address. Therefore, annual trips to locations that are both engaging and educational were chosen as an ongoing project idea. YOD's staff along with youth leaders worked to fund-raise for trips including trips to Washington DC, Baltimore, Niagara Falls, and New York City.

In early 2014, YOD began formalizing the Youth Leadership meetings in Clairton. Absent funding at this time, YOD focused on what they had for this project – enthusiastic youth, community support and innovative approaches.

At initial meetings, youth gave their own title to the project – Stay Positive Clairton (SPC) and participated in discussions about how they would like the group to function. They decided that, given the magnitude of their ambitions, all those wishing to participate would have to sign a mission statement committing to the following principles:

- **Reducing violence**
- **Academic achievement**
- **Avoiding drugs and alcohol**
- **Respecting each other and their elders**
- **Mentoring and teaching younger kids**

Youth leaders also decided that designing, planning, and implementing community “Leadership” projects based on these principles was the best avenue towards the community-wide change that the group seeks. Since 2014, YOD has served over 1,000 people through these projects. These projects included basketball camps and tournaments, drug awareness and black history projects with middle schoolers in the Clairton Education Center, Reading projects with kindergarten classes, health and fitness projects with a large portion of elementary students, and an air quality community project with residents. All of these initial youth “Leaders” subsequently graduated from High School.

In 2015, based on an explosion of parent, youth, and community interest in the program, YOD expanded its operations to include daily programming for male youth from 4th grade to 8th grade. This programming focused around giving the youth a safe, supportive environment that enabled them to improve their academic performance through homework assistance and prepared curriculum, pro-social recreational programming to

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enable them to relax and have fun, and various trips to locations outside of the Clairton area, including museums, sports events, parks, etc.

This programming has continued to the present day, with important adjustments being made. Whereas many programs begin to see reductions in attendance and youth leave the program when they reach middle school/high school age groups, YOD has shown to be effective in retaining youth for a longer period of time. In fact, most current members are in the 14-16 age range, have been a part of the programming for an average of 4 years, and attend programming at least 3-4 days per week. A key factor in youth retention has been an ongoing collaboration with youth members in shaping programming, learning topics, activity planning and trip destinations. Through this, youth have felt more connection with and ownership of the program. Also in recent years, Clairton has seen an uptick in violence and many of our youth attribute their continued regular attendance to the fact that YOD is a positive, safe, fun and educational environment. In many cases, our youth report that they do not feel safe going outside frequently due to increased shootings and violence in the area. They see the YOD program as a place where they can safely socialize with their peers, participate in fun activities, learn, expand their horizons, and have access to positive adult role models.

The majority of YOD members are African American and YOD seeks to be welcoming to diverse populations and backgrounds. Effort is made to connect to other cultures through programming. Since 2020, YOD has conducted programming focusing on learning about different cultures. This project features in-depth learning about cultures and countries and introducing our members to authentic food from that culture.

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

YOD's staff has extensive experience working in high-need communities. Executive Director, Brandon Ziats has worked in the violence prevention and youth development field for 15 years, including managing mediation efforts and outreach staff in the communities of Clairton, Mckees Rocks, Hill District, and South Pittsburgh as well as consulting for youth programs in Bronx, NY. YOD's other staff members have extensive experience working in the Clairton community, including within the Clairton Education Center and have worked for YOD for over 9 years.

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.

YOD's program model emphasizes diversity and seeks to celebrate members' differences. Through our programming, we seek to respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are valued and heard. YOD dedicates a significant amount of programming time to expanding the horizons of our members and teaching our members to lead with respect and tolerance. Through our cultural awareness and current events curriculum, we aim to develop our youth into truly global citizens.

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Program Design (55 points possible)

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.

YOD's programming was implemented with the goal of maximized participation and consistent programming. In talking with our initial Leadership group of teens, we found that there were many programs in the past that seemed to come and go with great regularity. Programs would receive funding and begin operations in Clairton but just as quickly close when that piece of funding was exhausted. Also, there was great turnover in staff of these programs, not allowing for a quality connection with youth. Especially for youth that had instability in their home lives, this was very triggering. Among the youth in our programming, there are those that have incarcerated parents, lack of father involvement, parents who have been murdered, parents with substance abuse issues, etc. so the concept of stable programming became a central component to YOD. Therefore, YOD is open daily Monday-Friday year-round, except on major holidays. As stated above, YOD has been able to continue to achieve regular participation from our (mostly) teenage group members, whereas many other programs experience an attendance fall-off whenever youth reach middle school. In surveying our youth, they state that they continue to attend because it is fun and a safe place to socialize with their friends but also because they enjoy the topics in the educational sessions, and they feel a connection with staff. In short, it is a true team environment where they can collectively work on self-improvement while learning and having fun.

YOD's programming begins each day with healthy snack prepared by Nutrition Inc, followed by a one-hour educational group session. These educational groups focus on several topics including current events, history, world cultures, reading, and Spanish. Learning topics are also proposed by youth members and lessons are shaped by youth input. For example, if youth are particularly interested in a certain topic, our group may do a deeper dive into the material. This was the case with Spanish. We completed an introductory lesson and then, based on input received, made it a regular weekly component. Occasionally, guest speakers or programs will be brought in during this time. In the past we have had guests with lessons on various topics including healthy eating, fitness, decision making etc. This is a key component of our program and in surveys many of our youth state that they enjoy the educational programming because the lessons are more enjoyable and involve topics that they feel they are not learning enough in school. We also believe that, by modeling a thriving classroom, this helps our youth learn proper classroom behavior and increases their attention span for school instruction.

A central part of our programming also involves recreation. During the recreation time following the educational lesson, youth are free to participate in pro-social recreation including basketball, dodge ball, or utilize computers, IPADs, or Playstation. This time allows the youth a chance to unwind and have fun. During warmer months, we utilize outdoor park space in Clairton as much as possible to include games like soccer, volleyball, flag football, and more. During recreation time, a healthy, hot meal is also served through Nutrition Inc.

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Mentoring by program staff is also a central component to our participants success. We have not had any turnover in staff throughout our work in Clairton. Therefore, our daily contact with participants and the everyday mentoring that goes with that to help them improve academically, behaviorally, and socially is an ongoing effort and YOD staff remains a consistent presence in their lives.

A close connection with the Clairton Education Center and program parents is also key to our success as a program. YOD maintains a partnership with Clairton Education Center and works closely with School Board, Administrative Staff, Teachers, and Security in helping to make sure our group members are on track to succeed within the school. The connection with program parents may be even more important. Throughout our history, we have seen the best impact and success with program participants when we have an ongoing and open dialogue with their parents. Importantly, we have adapted from large scale parent meetings to the more convenient text message, phone call, or in-person meeting when necessary. Thus, we have been able to achieve a greater level of everyday contact with program parents that has been more effective than our efforts in the past. This has enabled program staff and parents to collectively work together through any issues that program participants may be having and amplify their successes on a more regular basis.

The final component of our programming involves educational and fun field trips. YOD began its work in Clairton by planning annual large-scale educational trips to places such as Washington DC, Baltimore MD, Niagara Falls NY, and New York City. This component was strengthened during the pandemic, when a group vehicle was purchased with the help of US Steel. This enabled more frequent trips to a greater number of places throughout the year, including to various local museums and parks, national parks such as Gettysburg, Harper Ferry, and Antietam, and fun activities such as sporting events, bowling, skating, etc. During the pandemic, YOD closed for only a short time and resumed full-time operations in June 2020. (This was another key factor in retaining our youth in our group.) During this time, YOD expanded its outdoor activities/trips significantly to include horseback riding, kayaking, rafting, fishing, hiking, biking, rock climbing, and paintball. This has been key to our development as a group as well as member retention.

In adapting to an aging group of teenagers, (most members joined 4+ years ago), our group has had to make a number of key adaptations to best fit their needs. Many of our students also participate in sports activities, with a rising commitment level needed as they age. Therefore, we have adapted our schedule and increased our flexibility with their program participation. For example, in the summer we schedule our programming to encompass the time prior to football practice. During the school year, this means even greater flexibility is needed. At different times, some youth will be going to football practice, basketball practice, weightlifting, track practice, baseball practice, etc. A number of our youth also take part in other non-sports activities during the school year. During these days, youth attend YOD programming and YOD staff facilitates transportation to these various activities at the different times needed. Therefore, they still receive the benefit of daily contact with YOD programming/staff and YOD serves as sort of a central hub with youth departing and returning after practice/games.

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

Providing a physically and emotionally safe space is one of the highest priorities for YOD programming. Currently the Clairton community is going through a challenging period of time with respect to community violence. Our youth report frequently hearing gunshots at night and the number of shootings within the neighborhood as well as the age of shooters has seemed to get younger in recent years. Furthermore, some of our youth have been outside in the area when violent situations have occurred. This makes it even more important to focus on establishing a safe space for our participants. The principal way that we accomplish that is through consistency. Our youth always can always rely on the structured routines and consistency of our program as a stable part of their lives. Group sessions often-times are utilized to process events that take place in the neighborhood/world. YOD's staff frequently consults with YOD Board members on this subject, one of whom is a mental health therapist, and another is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh and an expert on the life course development of serious delinquency and evidence-based practice for young people with severe behavioral problems and delinquency. Having a mentally and physically safe space to socialize, learn, and have fun is an ongoing focus when designing or adding any new aspects of programming.

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

YOD plans to make a renewed focus on involving our members with more community projects as the pandemic eases. These will include having our members serve as role models for younger youth during school literacy and fitness projects, having more frequent interaction with city and school officials in the planning of new initiatives, and engaging with more in-person guest speakers. We believe that our members already serve as key leaders for their peers within the Clairton community, being positive examples and sharing positive values in school, neighborhood, and sports settings.

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

YOD prides itself on its history of offering relevant programming to the Clairton community. As described above, YOD offers a variety of components that are designed (with heavy youth input) to be fun, educational, and uplifting. Ultimately youth vote on the efficacy of a particular program with their attendance. Out of the 25 current members of YOD, 16 of them have been members for over 4 years. Currently, about 90% of enrolled participants attend at least 4 days per week. We believe that this consistency in program attendance reflects program relevance and will project into the future with any new members.

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

YOD has a strong link with Clairton Education Center, other local non-profits such as Gwen's Girls, The Family Center, Kindred Culture, and the Clairton Mayor and City Council. Referrals typically come from these sources as well as word of mouth referrals from parents and other community members. YOD programming highlights are constantly featured on our Facebook and Youtube pages for community members, parents, and others

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to keep updated on our current projects. YOD works closely with the Clairton Education Center, parents, and YOD Board Members (depending on the situation) to determine proper referral pathway for any of our members.

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.

As described above, YOD staff has remained stable throughout the last 8 years. YOD staff members are racially diverse and have extensive experience working in the Clairton community and violence prevention field. For any future hires, these same qualities will be highly valued and sought after.

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).

YOD's programming is designed to offer participants not only a safe space but a place for skill building and self-improvement. YOD's educational curriculum is designed to improve self-esteem, and promote increased academic performance and attendance. The additional components of YOD's programming also promote personal, social, and leadership skills such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, and positive youth-adult relationships and mentorship. Furthermore, YOD's programming promotes a reduction in behavior problems and drug use.

Implementation Challenges (15 points possible)

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

Thankfully, throughout our entire program history, we have never yet had to deal with low program attendance. We believe this is because we have been operating within the community for so many years and have cultivated a close connection with the Clairton community. Furthermore, our close link with the Clairton Education Center teachers, administrative staff, and school board allows us to receive referrals directly from the school district. Referrals also come from other local service providers, coaches, and other community members. Additionally, we believe that our program was strengthened by the fact that we continued operating in-person programming throughout the pandemic from June 2020-present. This really allowed our program to continue to build continuity with program attendees and families amid a traumatic situation. Being that our program had become a central part in their lives, we believe that this was very important for their mental and physical health. Thankfully, we were able to do this as safely as possible and all our program attendees remained healthy. If low attendance ever becomes a factor, we plan to lean on our community connections and support to help increase attendance and gain new members.

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

YOD takes behavioral and mental health very seriously. YOD staff have extensive experience dealing with a variety of behavioral issues. With more serious issues, YOD staff follows the Behavioral Policy that is provided to parents/participants upon joining the group. At Executive Director's discretion, the matter could also be referred to the YOD Board of Directors. On the Board of Directors, there is a retired surgeon, mental health therapist, a Psychiatry professor who specializes in the life course development of serious delinquency, and a specialist in the Violence Prevention field. These individuals are utilized in more serious cases to develop a plan of action. Furthermore, at the Director's discretion, our team would look at what outside resources were available and consult with our Family and Youth Specialist and/or the School Age Youth Manager at DHS in order to make a referral to the appropriate program.

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?

As described above, YOD would utilize the experience of YOD's staff and Board in order to make the appropriate referral to outside resources. YOD would also consult or Family and Youth Specialist and/or the School Age Youth Manager at DHS to help make the appropriate referral.

Budget (10 points possible)

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.

EXPENSES	
Salaries	\$94,000.00
Executive Director	\$54,000.00
Program Coordinator	\$20,000.00
Youth Specialist	\$20,000.00
Payroll Taxes	\$9,400.00
Fringe Benefits	\$3,070.00
Consultants and Professional Fees (Grant Writer, Development Consultant, Motivational Speaker) <i>(Itemize type(s) of consultant(s) and fees)</i>	\$0.00
Travel and Vehicle Expenses	\$5,000.00
Liability Insurance and Workers Comp	\$7,719.00
Equipment & Technology (upgrade website, web host fees)	\$0.00
Office Supplies (new QB software, paper, pencils, pens, markers, highlighters, erasers, ink, printing copying, mailing)	\$500.00
Rent and Utilities	\$10,516.00
Maintenance (included above)	

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Accounting and Audit Expenses	\$5,000.00
In-Kind Expenses <i>(Should match in-kind support)</i>	
Participant Stipends	
Program Supplies (t-shirts, books, laptops/ tablets, camera, software licenses)	\$10,000.00
Participant Activities (experiential learning activities: field trips, museum/ movie tix)	\$10,000.00
Postage and Delivery	\$0.00
Evaluation	
Staff Development	
Clearances	
Refreshments/Food	\$3,000.00
Other	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$158,205.00

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

Category/Explanation	Amount
Personnel	
Executive Director -40+ hours per week Maintains program data, management and supervision of program staff, management and supervision of daily operations, accounting and payroll, community engagement,	\$54,000.00
Youth Development Specialist I - Assists with daily program operation, manages parent outreach, assists with meal/snack distribution, community outreach. 5 hour per week x 52 weeks x 15.45/hr	\$20,000.00
Youth Development Specialist II - Assist with daily program operation, manages activity planning, assists with meal/snack distribution, - 5 hours per week x 52 weeks x 15.45/hr	\$20,000.00
Payroll Taxes Total payroll x .1	\$9,400.00
Fringe Benefits	\$3,070.00

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Health Insurance 255.74 x 12 months	
Travel and Vehicle Expenses Gas and transportation costs for drop-off after programming and field trips	\$5,000.00
Liability Insurance and Workers Comp Amtrust General Liability, Commercial Package, Property, Automobile, Umbrella, Directors and Officers = \$7,017.00 Workers Compensation = \$702	\$7,719.00
Office Supplies- software, paper, pencils, pens, markers, highlighters, erasers, ink, printing copying, mailing	\$500.00
Rent and Utilities Programming space= \$600/month x 12 mos= \$7,200 Utilities (Internet service)= 276.30 x 12= \$3,315.60	\$10,516.00
Accounting and Audit Expenses Payroll= \$105.93x12mos= \$1,271.16 Audit/Accountant/Tax Filing= \$4,728.84	\$5,000.00
Program Supplies - t-shirts, books, laptops/ tablets, camera, software licenses/ subscriptions, food/snacks supplies,	\$10,000.00
Participant Activities -experiential learning activities: field trips, museum/ movie tix	\$10,000.00
Refreshments and Food -Prepared Food for programming and field trips	\$3,000
Total	\$158,205.00