



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

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REQUEST FOR INTEREST — Programming for Families and Youth at Stephen Leonard Youth Center

Youth Leadership Institute

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- Population(s) to be served
 - yli Merced engages over 120 youth in programming every year and served an additional 900+ through drop-in services at our Healing Generation Center last year. These are all young people ages 14-24 and over half are Latino. About 14% identified as Black, 10% as Asian and 7% identified as either multiracial or Indigenous. These young people are overwhelmingly from South Merced and low income neighborhoods and communities and we collected this data through sign-in sheets at the Healing Generation Center and our intake and exit surveys that participants take.
- Days and hours of operation
 - Monday thru Friday 9:00am to 6:00pm, with some youth meetings or community events happening in the evenings and on weekends.
- Goals and Objectives for program participants
 - The Healing Generation Center will provide a restorative environment for youth whose lives have been severely disrupted because of inequitable access to behavioral healthcare services. Services include, but are not limited to; suicide prevention, housing navigation, linkage to vocational training and educational support services, peer support services, and linkage to treatment for substance use disorders. This center was created in partnership between Youth Leadership Institute and Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services and seeks to engage and expand services for justice-involved individuals, low-income people, children of migrant workers and immigrants, youth within rural communities, non-English speaking youth, youth experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness, and youth in foster care ages 14-24.

The goal of the wellness center is to provide youth across Merced County with the resources and services on mental health barriers and wellbeing. The center partnered with 5 local organizations/partners in order to bring comprehensive, holistic resources to the youth of Merced County for the duration of the contract. This provides a space for youth to access expansive mental health services, resources and youth opportunities.



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yli also operates several other programs throughout the Merced community which focus on providing holistic leadership development opportunities, researching the challenges in their communities, learning storytelling skills to amplify youth voices and run campaigns to boost civic engagement among young people while making communities more just and healthy.

- Experience operating similar facilities
 - Currently, yli operates the Healing Generation Center as a place that is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. for young people to be able to access services and resources during the week. Services have included, but are not limited to; suicide prevention, housing navigation, linkage to vocational training and educational support services, peer support services, and linkage to treatment for substance use disorders. The Healing Generation Center aims to continue providing these services to youth in Merced.

yli and Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services were awarded \$750,000 in FY2425 to scale Merced Youth-Led Discovery Clubhouse, launching the clubhouse (which he called the Healing Generation Center) in July 2024. In determining award amounts and practice models selected for funding, the funding agency considered a variety of factors including, but not limited to, demonstrated need as indicated by the Healthy Places Index, ability to meet outcome objectives for populations of focus (POF), ability to provide culturally relevant and responsive services to POF, overall estimated impact of the award, statewide geographic distribution of grants, practice model type, populations served, and sustainability pathways. As such, this award reflects the broader needs of the State of California. Merced Youth-Led Discovery Recovery Clubhouse

The program is co-operated under the Clubhouse model and members will have access to services and support towards recovery. This program will provide a restorative environment for youth whose lives have been severely disrupted because of inequitable access to behavioral healthcare services. Services to include, but not limited to, suicide prevention, housing navigation, linkage to vocational training, linkage to educational support services, peer support services, and linkage to treatment for substance use disorders.

- Description of financial capacity to cover facility-related costs
 - yli is a financially stable organization, with a budget built on diverse revenue sources that practices strong fiscal oversight. As a statewide organization with eight offices across California and a budget of over \$9M annually, yli manages more than 35 government contracts each year (45% of income) and more than 60 contracts with private foundations and organizations (35% of income). The remainder is contributed through other fundraising activities (5%) and earned



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from yli's Training and Consulting Services (TCS) arm (15% of income).

Finally, yli's audits have no major findings, and yli maintains clear fiscal reporting rules to ensure strong financial management as the organization continues to grow. As of the January 2025 audit, yli has cash reserves of \$1.95M. yli's board includes finance professionals whose organizational oversight includes review and approval of the budget, a mid-year revised budget, regular updates with the CFO and the finance committee, and an annual audit.

Our Merced office is our second largest with an annual budget of just over \$1.2M this fiscal year, managing 18 contracts. This means that there is significant room for covering facility-related costs and many grants have lines for rent, which can be used for facility costs.

- Alignment with known or anticipated community needs and interests
 - yli serves young people that align with the focus populations identified by the California Reducing Disparities Project as outlined above. These populations are selected by analyzing data that shows that these focus populations face barriers to accessing mental health care and health care, housing stability, economic prospects and more.

Specific focus populations beyond those identified by the California Reducing Disparities Project that this program will seek to engage and expand services for are justice-involved individuals, low-income, children of migrant workers and immigrants, youth within rural communities, non-English speaking youth, youth experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness, and youth in foster care.

yli's program participants surveyed over 250 Merced youth, most from South Merced and the findings demonstrate the gaps in services for Merced young people: 50% never have received help from county resources, 57% reported that they experienced stigma about mental health and 60% said that they do not seek mental health help despite having mental health challenges. This demonstrates that our systems are not working in accessing young people who need care and in providing them care and resources that promote health. yli participants have also been repeatedly talking to city council and other community leaders about their desire for more parks and better parks. Placing a youth-serving organization in a park would allow for young people to feel welcome and also be engaged in articulating their desires for more public green space to city officials.

The Stephen Leonard Youth Center is located in a neighborhood in South Merced that yli Merced already serves. We have programs at Tenaya Middle School, which is half a mile away and makes it more accessible for them to get to



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programs if there is no reliable transportation. A significant number of youth that yli Merced serves also reside in the neighborhoods that surround Stephen Leonard Park and are part of populations that are not provided as many resources as those in other parts of the city. There are not a lot of physical spaces or programming for young people, especially young people in South Merced so our Center will fill a community need.

- Any anticipated tenant improvements
 - We anticipate furnishing the kitchen to be a more fully operational kitchen for programming and events and potentially adding carpeting/rugs to the general spaces of the youth center. We also would like to explore signage on the exterior of the building. For now, those are our only anticipated tenant improvements.