



Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Announcement:

STRENGTHENING KENTUCKY'S YOUTH MENTORSHIP INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), **Strengthening Kentucky's Youth Mentorship Infrastructure for Substance Use Prevention**, is to strengthen Kentucky's capacity to prevent youth substance use by building the organizational, workforce, partnership, and community infrastructure necessary to ensure that young people have access to safe, supportive, and sustained relationships with caring adults.

Youth mentoring is an evidence-informed prevention strategy that strengthens protective factors associated with healthy development. Supportive relationships with trusted adults can promote resilience, social connectedness, positive identity development, school engagement, and healthy decision-making. As part of a comprehensive prevention framework, high-quality mentoring can contribute to healthier youth, stronger families, and more resilient communities.

The Commonwealth recognizes, however, that the primary barrier to effective mentoring is not always the absence of a mentoring program. In many communities, particularly those with limited resources, the challenge is a lack of the infrastructure necessary to establish and sustain high-quality mentoring opportunities. Communities may struggle to recruit and retain sufficient mentors; lack trained staff or organizational expertise; have fragmented systems for identifying and connecting youth with supportive adults; or lack the partnerships and community networks necessary to sustain mentoring over time.

Accordingly, this NOFO is intended primarily to support **infrastructure development and capacity building rather than routine expansion of direct mentoring services**.

This funding opportunity is not intended simply to fund additional mentor-youth matches or expand existing mentoring services without addressing an underlying organizational or community capacity challenge.

The Commission seeks proposals that identify and address the conditions that limit a community's ability to develop, support, coordinate, and sustain high-quality mentoring relationships. Applicants should demonstrate how the proposed investment will create lasting capacity that extends beyond the delivery of services during the grant period.

Projects may include direct mentoring activities when necessary to test, establish, or strengthen an infrastructure model. However, applicants should clearly demonstrate how direct service activities contribute to a broader strategy for building sustainable organizational or community capacity.



Using opioid settlement funds, the Commonwealth seeks to support innovative, evidence-informed approaches that:

- build mentoring capacity in communities where mentoring resources are limited or difficult to sustain;
- strengthen the ability of organizations and communities to recruit, prepare, support, and retain qualified mentors;
- develop shared infrastructure that can benefit multiple organizations or communities;
- establish stronger systems for identifying, engaging, and connecting youth with supportive adults;
- strengthen partnerships among schools, prevention providers, behavioral health organizations, youth-serving agencies, families, and communities;
- engage youth and families in the design of prevention and mentoring strategies;
- improve the quality, coordination, and sustainability of mentoring opportunities; and
- develop models, tools, and approaches that can inform implementation in other Kentucky communities.

The Commonwealth intends for investments made through this NOFO to generate sustainable, evidence-informed approaches that strengthen Kentucky's broader prevention system and increase communities' long-term ability to connect young people with supportive adults.

WHAT THIS FUNDING OPPORTUNITY IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT

The Commission is seeking proposals that address **mentorship infrastructure challenges**, rather than solely proposals to expand the routine operations of an existing mentoring program.

Applicants should begin by identifying the specific organizational or community challenge that limits young people's access to supportive adult relationships and explain how the proposed project will address that challenge.

Examples of infrastructure challenges may include:

- a limited supply of qualified or available mentors;
- difficulty recruiting mentors in rural or underserved communities;
- insufficient staff capacity or expertise to operate high-quality mentoring programs;
- fragmented mentoring resources across multiple organizations;
- lack of shared systems for mentor recruitment, screening, training, supervision, or evaluation;
- limited coordination between schools, youth-serving organizations, families, and community partners;
- ineffective pathways for identifying and connecting youth who would benefit from mentoring;



- limited opportunities for youth and families to shape local prevention and mentoring efforts; or
- lack of sustainable community partnerships or resources necessary to support mentoring over time.

Applicants are encouraged to propose solutions that respond directly to documented local needs.

Illustrative Types of Investments

The following examples are provided to stimulate innovative approaches and are not intended to limit the types of projects that may be proposed.

Shared Mentoring Infrastructure. Developing systems that allow multiple organizations or communities to share mentor recruitment, screening, training, supervision, evaluation, or other core functions.

Community Mentor Pipelines. Developing new and sustainable approaches to identifying, recruiting, and preparing adults who may not traditionally participate in formal mentoring programs through partnerships with employers, colleges and universities, retirees, civic organizations, faith communities, and other community networks.

Capacity Building in Underserved Communities. Building the organizational, workforce, and partnership capacity necessary to establish or strengthen mentoring opportunities in communities where formal mentoring infrastructure is limited or absent.

Collaborative Community Models. Establishing coordinated partnerships among schools, prevention organizations, behavioral health providers, youth-serving agencies, families, and other community partners to create stronger systems of support around young people.

Shared Training and Technical Assistance. Developing training, coaching, communities of practice, or other support systems that strengthen mentoring quality and sustainability across multiple organizations or communities.

Innovative Supportive Adult Relationship Models. Testing evidence-informed approaches to connecting youth with caring adults in communities where traditional one-to-one mentoring models are difficult to implement or sustain.

Youth and Family Engagement Infrastructure. Using evidence-informed engagement approaches, including Parent Café and Youth Café models or comparable strategies, to elevate youth and family voice, strengthen social connectedness, identify local barriers, and build community networks that support healthy youth development.

Youth Identification and Referral Systems. Developing coordinated pathways that help schools, families, youth-serving organizations, and other partners identify young people who would benefit from mentoring and connect them with appropriate supports.

Applicants are not limited to the examples above and are encouraged to propose other evidence-informed and innovative approaches that address documented gaps in youth mentorship infrastructure.



POPULATION OF FOCUS

The primary population of focus for this funding opportunity is Kentucky youth ages 5 through 18, with an emphasis on promoting protective factors that reduce the risk of first-time substance use and support healthy development before substance use begins.

While mentoring is beneficial for all young people, applicants are encouraged to prioritize youth and communities experiencing conditions associated with elevated risk for substance use or limited access to supportive adult relationships. These conditions may include adverse childhood experiences, social or economic disadvantage, community disconnection, geographic isolation, or limited availability of mentoring and other supportive services.

The ultimate beneficiaries of this funding opportunity are Kentucky youth and the communities in which they live. The Commission recognizes that improving outcomes for youth requires investment not only in individual mentoring relationships but also in the systems, organizations, partnerships, and community networks that make those relationships possible and sustainable.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided to ensure a common understanding of the Commonwealth's expectations and to promote consistency in the design, implementation, and evaluation of funded projects.

Youth Mentorship Infrastructure means the organizational, workforce, partnership, and community capacities necessary to ensure that young people have sustainable access to high-quality supportive adult relationships.

Infrastructure may exist within a single organization or may be developed and shared across multiple organizations, institutions, and community partners.

It includes, but is not limited to:

- mentor recruitment, screening, training, coaching, supervision, and retention;
- youth identification, referral, engagement, matching, and retention;
- organizational leadership, staffing, governance, and operational capacity;
- collaborative partnerships and coordinated referral systems;
- community engagement and relationship-building;
- data collection, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement;
- shared training, technical assistance, and other support systems; and
- sustainability and long-term capacity development.



For purposes of this NOFO, infrastructure development may include building new capacity where formal mentoring services are limited or absent, strengthening shared community systems, or addressing structural barriers that prevent communities from recruiting and supporting sufficient numbers of qualified mentors.

High-Quality Mentoring means structured, intentional mentoring relationships supported by evidence-informed policies and practices that promote youth safety, mentor preparedness, relationship quality, ongoing supervision, continuous support, and program evaluation.

High-quality mentoring includes appropriate screening and training of mentors, regular and developmentally appropriate contact between mentors and youth, and organizational practices that support safe and consistent relationships.

Family and Youth Engagement Strategy means structured, evidence-informed approaches that actively engage youth, parents, caregivers, and community members in strengthening protective factors, building social connections, informing local prevention efforts, and facilitating access to mentoring and other supportive services.

Examples may include the Parent Café and Youth Café model and other approaches that elevate youth and family voice while fostering community resilience and ownership of prevention efforts.

Evidence-Informed Practice means policies, programs, or practices guided by the best available research, established prevention science, practitioner expertise, and ongoing evaluation to improve outcomes.

Primary Prevention means strategies designed to prevent or delay the initiation of substance use by reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors before substance use occurs.

Protective Factors means individual, family, school, and community characteristics or conditions that increase resilience and reduce the likelihood of substance use and other adverse behavioral health outcomes.

Youth at Elevated Risk means youth ages 5 through 18 who experience individual, family, school, or community conditions associated with an increased likelihood of substance use or other adverse behavioral health outcomes.

Examples may include exposure to adverse childhood experiences, family substance use, social isolation, economic hardship, school disengagement, involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice systems, or limited access to supportive adult relationships.

Mentor means a trained and appropriately screened adult who establishes a consistent, supportive, and developmentally appropriate relationship with a young person through a structured mentoring program or other evidence-informed mentoring model.



PRIORITY CONSIDERATIONS

While all complete and eligible applications will be reviewed, the Commission intends to prioritize projects that demonstrate one or more of the following:

1. Addresses a Documented Infrastructure Gap

Projects that clearly identify a significant organizational or community barrier limiting young people's access to high-quality mentoring or supportive adult relationships.

Applicants should describe:

- the current mentoring resources available in the community;
- the specific capacity gap or challenge being addressed;
- why existing resources are insufficient;
- why routine expansion of existing services alone would not adequately address the challenge; and
- how the proposed project will create new or improved capacity.

Priority may be given to projects serving communities where mentoring infrastructure is limited, fragmented, difficult to access, or difficult to sustain.

2. Builds Sustainable Organizational and Community Capacity

Projects that create lasting improvements in the ability of organizations or communities to support high-quality mentoring.

Examples may include strengthening mentor recruitment and retention systems, building staff expertise, developing shared infrastructure, improving data and evaluation systems, strengthening governance or leadership capacity, or establishing sustainable partnerships and community networks.

Applicants should clearly describe **what capacity will exist at the conclusion of the grant that does not exist today**.

Projects should also describe how the proposed infrastructure will be sustained or incorporated into ongoing community systems after opioid abatement funding is no longer available. Supplanting funds already allocated to this work is not allowed.

3. Uses Collaborative and Innovative Approaches

Projects that demonstrate meaningful collaboration among mentoring organizations, schools, prevention providers, behavioral health organizations, healthcare providers, child-serving agencies, families, youth, and other community stakeholders.



The Commission is particularly interested in approaches that move beyond a single organization's traditional service model and create new ways of sharing resources, developing mentor pipelines, coordinating services, or connecting young people with supportive adults.

Applications should include documentation of meaningful partner commitments, such as letters of commitment, memoranda of understanding, memoranda of agreement, or other appropriate documentation.

4. Strengthens Community Engagement and Access

Projects that meaningfully engage youth, parents, caregivers, and community members in identifying local needs and shaping solutions.

Priority may be given to projects that use evidence-informed community engagement approaches, including the Parent Café and Youth Café model or comparable strategies, to:

- elevate youth and family voice;
- strengthen social connectedness;
- identify local barriers to accessing supportive relationships;
- engage new community partners and potential mentors; and
- build sustainable networks that support substance use prevention and healthy youth development.

Projects that improve access to mentoring opportunities for youth and communities with limited mentoring resources or documented barriers to participation will also receive priority consideration.

5. Develops a Replicable Model

Projects that are intentionally designed to generate knowledge, tools, processes, or approaches that can inform implementation in other Kentucky communities.

For purposes of this NOFO, **replication is distinct from expansion or scale**. Applicants are not required to demonstrate how they will serve a larger number of youth or expand into additional communities during the grant period.

Instead, applicants should describe how another organization or community could understand, adapt, and implement the proposed approach.

Applicants should identify, as appropriate:

- the core components of the model;
- the problem or infrastructure challenge the model is designed to address;
- the partnerships and capacities necessary for implementation;
- the resources and expertise required;
- the community conditions that support successful implementation;



- elements that must remain consistent to maintain quality; and
- elements that may be adapted to meet local needs.

Funded projects should document implementation processes, lessons learned, and practical resources that can inform future efforts across Kentucky.

6. Demonstrates Data-Driven Quality Improvement

Projects that incorporate meaningful performance measurement, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement to strengthen implementation and demonstrate progress toward infrastructure, youth development, and prevention outcomes.

Applicants should propose measures appropriate to the project's goals and should not rely solely on the number of youth served or mentor-youth matches as indicators of success.

Measures may include improvements in organizational capacity, mentor recruitment and retention, partnership strength, community engagement, access to mentoring opportunities, implementation quality, youth protective factors, and other outcomes relevant to the proposed model.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

KYOAAC grants are open to any registered entity, including for-profit or nonprofit organizations in good standing with the Kentucky Secretary of State, as well as counties, cities, towns, other government entities, institutions of higher education, and eligible collaborative partnerships.

Applicants are **not required to be an existing mentoring provider**.

Applicants must demonstrate the organizational capacity, community relationships, and expertise necessary to successfully implement the proposed project.

Applicants that do not currently operate a structured mentoring program should demonstrate how they will access appropriate mentoring expertise and ensure that proposed activities reflect evidence-informed practices and appropriate standards for youth safety and program quality.

Collaborative applications are encouraged, particularly when partnerships can combine mentoring expertise with prevention, behavioral health, education, youth engagement, workforce development, or other relevant community capacities.

APPLICATION EXPECTATIONS

Applicants should clearly address the following questions in their proposal:



1. What infrastructure problem are you trying to solve?

Describe the specific organizational or community challenge that limits young people's access to high-quality mentoring or supportive adult relationships.

2. Why does this problem exist?

Describe the current resources, barriers, gaps, and conditions contributing to the challenge.

3. Why is routine program expansion not sufficient?

Explain why simply adding more mentors, staff, or mentor-youth matches would not adequately address the identified problem.

4. What capacity will this investment create?

Describe the organizational, workforce, partnership, or community capacity that will exist as a result of the project.

5. How will the proposed approach work?

Describe the evidence-informed strategy, activities, partnerships, and implementation plan.

6. How will youth and families be engaged?

Describe how youth, parents, caregivers, and community members will inform, shape, or participate in the proposed effort.

7. What will remain after the grant ends?

Describe how the infrastructure, partnerships, systems, tools, knowledge, or other capacities developed through the project will be sustained.

8. What can another community learn from this project?

Describe how the project will document its model, implementation process, challenges, lessons learned, and conditions necessary for replication or adaptation.

AWARD INFORMATION

- **Funding Mechanism:** Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission by and through the Kentucky Office of the Attorney General.
- **Award Ceiling:** \$1,000,000.
- **Project Period:** 24 months, with an anticipated start date of July 2027.



- **Cost Sharing/Match Requirement:** None. Applicants are encouraged to report additional available funding or matching resources that demonstrate sustainability efforts.
 - **Service Delivery Start Date:** Projects must begin implementation no later than 90 days following receipt of contract.
 - **Reporting Requirements:** Awardees must adhere to all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, including KRS 15.291, KRS 15.293, KRS 15.295, KRS 17.160, 40 KAR 9:010, and 40 KAR 9:020, and must participate in required financial reporting, program evaluation, and monitoring activities.
 - **Continuation Funding:** Awarded applicants may be eligible to apply for continuation funding in the second year of the award. Decisions regarding continuation funding will depend on demonstrated results, progress toward sustainable infrastructure development, potential for replication or adaptation, and the availability of opioid settlement funds.
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AWARD PARAMETERS

- Funds cannot be used to purchase land.
- Funds cannot be used for construction or to secure any kind of permits related to construction or renovation.
- Funds cannot be used to purchase Naloxone, as it is available at no-cost through <http://findnaloxone.ky.gov/>
- Funds cannot be used to purchase these curriculums: Too Good for Drugs or Sources of Strength, as they are available at no-cost through Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services.
- Funds cannot be used to purchase vehicles, but Commissioners will consider innovative transportation models such as voucher programs, operational costs of vehicles, or other transportation support costs.
- No indirect costs may be requested as a lump-sum general operational expense. If expenses typically included in indirect costs are requested, they must be requested as specific, individual budget line items for the Commission to review.
- Proposals should reflect the most effective and sustainable use of funds.
- The review committee may request budget modifications be made prior to award.
- Recovery housing projects must comply with state accreditation requirements.
- Multiple agencies can partner in the application process but only one agency may serve as fiscal agent on the application. If there are contractors or sub-grantees, documentation to explain the partnership is required.



- Applicants may request salary and personnel costs necessary to implement the proposed project, such as Peer Support Specialists, Prevention Specialists, Project Coordinators, and other project-related positions. Salary requests should reflect reasonable and competitive market rates for the position, taking into consideration the position's responsibilities and time dedicated to the proposed project. Applicants should provide sufficient justification for proposed salary costs.
 - Only one application per Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) may be submitted by a fiscal agent. Exceptions will be made for university institutions with multiple departments, where one application per department may be submitted.
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MULTI-TIERED REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be screened to ensure that minimum eligibility requirements have been met, and all required documentation has been submitted. Proposals that are complete and meet minimum eligibility requirements will be reviewed by Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission members. Awards will be made based on a majority of votes cast by the Commission's voting members.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- NOFO Announcement Release: October 5, 2026
- Application Window: October 12, 2026, to December 17, 2026
- Application Deadline: **December 17th, 2026, at 6 PM EST**
- Award Decision Notice: Spring 2027
- Contract Execution: July 2027

APPLICATION SUBMISSION:

The online application will be available October 12, 2026, via <https://kyoaaac.intelligrants.com/> and will close **at 6 PM EST on December 17, 2026**. All applications must be submitted using the Intelligrants system (IGX).

NOTE: If your organization does not already have IGX user credentials please e-mail KYOAAAC@ky.gov. This will be the first step in requesting a new user account. Upon completion of the new user registration, the account will need to be validated and associated with the proper organization prior to accessing the application.

QUESTIONS?: Email KYOAAAC@ky.gov.