



## Youth Civic Engagement in Westchester

### Request for Proposals

#### Overview

Civic engagement is essential for a healthy democracy and a just and inclusive community. Westchester can benefit from the energy, innovation, and participation of young people who bring fresh ideas and work together to act on issues they care about. No matter the issue area—environmental sustainability, social justice, affordable housing, misinformation in the media—young people’s voices can make a difference.

At the same time, participation in civic activities helps young people develop emotional resilience, self-awareness, and a sense of agency. [Research](#) also suggests that young people who engage in civic activities are more likely to experience better mental health, higher educational attainment, greater financial stability in adulthood, and are also more likely to remain civically active throughout their lives.

#### The Opportunity

The Trust-Westchester’s [youth development](#) grants program has funded initiatives that empower youth, build their confidence, help them form supportive relationships with mentors and other adults, and prepare them to become active changemakers in their communities. Recent New York State Senate laws adopted in 2023 and 2024, promote [student voter registration and pre-registration](#), expand opportunities for youth participation in [student government in secondary schools](#), and empower them to [serve as ex officio members of school boards](#). These efforts reflect the growing consensus that young people’s participation is essential to a healthy democracy.

This request for proposals (RFP) seeks proposals for civic engagement projects that inspire, equip, and mobilize young people (up to age 24) in Westchester to actively participate in civic life. Grants will support youth-led projects that promote democracy and social equity. Successful proposals will clearly outline the project design, activities, and expected results. Projects must be nonpartisan. Grants will be up to \$100,000 each, for a total term of up to two years. (Grants will not exceed \$50,000 per year.)

#### ***Examples of youth civic engagement projects may include, but are not limited to:***

- Youth involvement in local government through youth councils, advisory boards, and other mechanisms that create opportunities for young people to engage in decision-making processes.
- Voter engagement efforts, including youth-led voter registration drives, education campaigns, and efforts to increase youth participation in elections.
- Local journalism projects that encourage young people to investigate and report on issues that matter to their communities.

- Media literacy initiatives that help young people critically evaluate information and combat misinformation.
- Advocacy campaigns led by young people to raise awareness of issues, mobilize peers, and engage with policymakers at local, county, state, and/or national levels.
- Youth-led research and policy analysis to provide recommendations to local officials on topics affecting their communities.
- Community organizing, including petitioning and participation in public forums that address local, county, state, and/or national issues.

**Grants will not be made for general operating support, contributions to capital campaigns, or for political advocacy, lobbying, legal actions, or electioneering.**

Nonprofits seeking grants must be incorporated under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or have a 501(c)(3) funds administrator. Grants to nonprofits will be contingent on a review to confirm independent board governance (at least four independent board members) and good financial practices. Localities seeking grants must be incorporated, and Indigenous Nations must be recognized by New York State.

**Request for Proposal Requirements & Application Deadline**

Proposals must be submitted electronically no later than **5:00 p.m. EST on Friday, February 14, 2025**, on [The New York Community Trust’s Grantseeker Portal](#).

**Submission Materials**

A complete proposal includes a narrative, project budget, organization operating budget, and a board list. Organizations should submit only ONE proposal that includes:

1. Up to a 5-page narrative (in 12 pt. font) that describes the following:
  - a. Your organization’s background (history, mission, main activities) and credentials for carrying out the project for which you are requesting funding.
  - b. The specific community issue you plan to address and how this issue affects the community your work serves. If the project will not address a specific issue, describe how the project will engage young people in a process of identifying the issue(s) that the project will address.
  - c. The proposed project, including:
    - Goals—what do you aim to accomplish with grant funds?
    - Planned activities—what activities will you undertake to accomplish the project goals? Be specific and describe specific actions and timeline.
    - Collaborating organizations, if any, and the role they will play in the project.
    - Expected results—what specific policy or systems change do you expect to see because of the project? (Bullet points are fine.)
    - Measuring success—what information will the project gather and analyze to generate evidence of success?

2. An itemized project budget that reflects all expenses for the project (as opposed to just the amount requested), including:
  - a. projected personnel, programmatic, and administrative costs; and
  - b. any other sources of confirmed and/or expected sources of revenue including grants, individual donations, and in-kind support (not included in 5-page limit).
3. Current organizational operating budget (not included in 5-page limit).
4. List of board members, including professional/non-board affiliations. Submissions that are using a fiscal sponsor should provide a board list for the fund administrator/fiscal sponsor (not included in 5-page limit).

### **Submission Instructions**

1. Combine items 1, 2, 3, and 4 (listed above) into a single PDF file no larger than 25 MB in size using the file name and format "Applicant Organization Name.pdf".
2. Go to The Trust's [Grantseeker Portal](#) and scroll to the "Additional Requests for Proposals" heading. Click on the "Apply" button next to "Westchester: Youth Civic Engagement."
3. Create a cover sheet for your proposal, upload your single PDF, and submit.

### **Information Session (virtual)**

The Trust will hold an optional virtual information session via Zoom for interested applicants on **Tuesday, January 14, 2025, from 1:00-2:00 p.m. EST**. If interested in attending the session, [please register here](#).

Applicants are not required to attend the session before submitting a proposal. The session is intended to answer questions applicants may have about the RFP. Please limit participation to no more than two people per organization at the session. **The session will be recorded and made available upon request.**

### **Award Notification**

Applicants are not guaranteed an award and may not receive the full amount requested in their proposal. Applicants will be notified by email if the submission is of interest to The Trust may be asked to provide additional information. Grant decisions will be announced in June 2025.

*Please direct all questions about this solicitation to Lauren Perkins, Program Officer - Westchester, at [lperkins@thenytrust.org](mailto:lperkins@thenytrust.org).*

*(RFP issued December 10, 2024)*