

Building Ecosystems Statewide for Thriving (BEST) Youth Initiative



An Initiative of the Forum for Youth Investment

Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ was updated April 10, 2024.

What can states expect to receive from this opportunity?

- A neutral convener and facilitator, bringing all stakeholders to the table in order to meet states where they are and support each state in achieving their goals.
- A dedicated team of expert Forum staff and consultants who will deliver tailored consultation, strategic solutions, and guidance in the development and implementation of vision and strategy across multiple systems.
- Participation in State Action Laboratories (Action Labs) that will be both structured and flexible – employing data driven, proven approaches to actionable strategy development.
- Networking opportunities with peers engaged in similar cross-systems change efforts nationwide.
- The opportunity to showcase innovations and systems change at the national level, influencing federal decision makers in Washington, D.C.
- Provides an intentional vehicle to build and strengthen the engagement of people with lived experience in this work. (Compensation, travel costs, and childcare for youth and family members/caregivers with lived experience to participate in state teams and national events.)

How should a state expect to engage people with lived experience (PWLE)?

The BEST Youth Initiative utilizes a youth and family-centered approach, engaging and amplifying the voices of youth and families with lived experience navigating multiple siloed systems. People with lived experience will be engaged in (at least) five significant ways: full participation in proposal development; as core members of the State Team; as part of the PWLE Advisory; participation in the Initiative-Wide Learning Community; and assisting with shaping state and federal policy. For more details, see both "[Partnering with People with Lived Experience In Systems Change](#)" and "[Roles for People with Lived Experience In BEST Youth Initiative](#)".

Who is eligible to apply for the inaugural cohort of the Building Ecosystems Statewide for Thriving Youth Initiative?

State applications must *include at least three agencies* within the youth-serving ecosystem (education, workforce development, human services, behavioral health, child welfare, and/or juvenile justice). And, at a minimum, there needs to be one upstream system that affects all

youth, such as education or workforce development. State Teams must also include at a minimum four individuals with lived experience, including at least one youth with lived experience from each represented system and a family member/caregiver from one of the systems.

What are the requirements of State Team System representatives?

System representatives must be state leaders who have decision-making authority directly or by proxy, as it relates to planning and implementing reforms/innovations being proposed.

When will the Invitation to Apply for states be available?

The application opens to states on March 26, 2024, at 11 a.m. EST.

When is the Application due?

The application deadline is Friday, May 3, 2024, at 8:00 p.m. EST.

Do States have to apply through the Forum’s website?

Applications may be filled out in the Forum’s BEST Youth Initiative [webform](#) (it is encouraged before submitting the application to complete each question in an external document) or submitted electronically to: BEStYouth@forumfyi.org.

Where can we find information about the BEST Youth Initiative and Invitation to Apply?

All materials related to the BEST Youth Initiative and the Invitation to Apply are posted on the Forum’s Cross-Systems Consulting site: forumfyi.org/BEST.

Was there an informational webinar?

Yes. The Forum for Youth Investment, Cross-Systems Consulting Team hosted an informational webinar for interested state applicants to ask questions and learn more about the Building Ecosystems Statewide for Thriving Youth Initiative and the Invitation to Apply on Monday April 8, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. EST. Please access the recording [here](#).

Can states submit more than one application to participate in the BEST Youth Initiative pilot?

No. Only one submission per state will be considered. State System leadership should coordinate and collaborate across the multiple systems (education, workforce development, human services, behavioral health, child welfare, and juvenile justice) ahead of time and present one unified application. To support your collaborative planning efforts in submitting only one state application, a list of states registered for the webinar can be found [here](#).

How do States apply to participate in the BEST Youth Initiative pilot?

1. Determine the lead state system and representative who will fill out and submit the application materials.
2. Review the Invitation to Apply, including eligibility and scoring criteria. (If you were not able to attend the informational webinar, it may be helpful to review the recording found [here](#).)
3. Determine who needs to be at the table to develop a competitive application, being sure to include people with lived experience and to coordinate among your state agencies, departments and with any additional partners, as applicable.
4. Applications must include a completed Cover Page, Narrative and Letter of Participation.
5. Direct any questions and requests for assistance to BEStYouth@forumfyi.org.
6. Submit the completed application by 8:00 p.m. EST on Friday, May 3, 2024.

Is there an award amount associated with the BEST Youth Initiative opportunity?

State Teams will receive in-kind support and customized technical assistance from the Forum Team and National Steering Committee subject matter experts throughout the Initiative. Costs associated with identified technical assistance needs will be covered by the Forum. In addition:

- Travel and lodging expenses will be covered for up to 7 members (including a person with lived experience from each system represented) to attend the National Launch on July 30-31, 2024, in Washington, D.C. and three additional in-person convenings of the Initiative Wide Peer Learning Community throughout the Initiative. (Additional State Team members are welcome to attend however, the State will need to cover their expenses.)
- The Forum will also provide compensation to participating youth and family/caregivers and cover childcare costs related to their in-person and virtual engagement.

How long is the application?

The application is designed to be simple and accessible. There are 5 core questions with 4-8 sub-questions under each. It is encouraged before submitting the application to complete each question in an external document before filling out the application online.

When will states be notified of their selection for the BEST Youth Initiative?

The Forum and its national public sector partners will invite up to five states to participate. States will be notified by June 28, 2024.

When will the BEST Youth Initiative pilot take place?

The BEST Youth Initiative is a three-year pilot. The Initiative will kick-off with a National Launch convening July 30-31, 2024, in Washington, D.C. and culminate in the summer of 2027.

Whom can I contact with questions?

Email BEStYouth@forumfyi.org with questions about the Building Ecosystems Statewide for Thriving Youth Initiative. The Cross-Systems Consulting staff will periodically update this Frequently Asked Questions and post on the Forum's [Cross-Systems Consulting site](#) through Friday, April 26, 2024.