



Request for Proposals to Address Youth Mental Health and Digital Overuse

Proposals Due by 4:00 p.m. (ET) on Thursday, July 16, 2026.

About The New York Community Trust

Established in 1924, The New York Community Trust advances innovative philanthropy across New York City, Long Island, and Westchester by leveraging the expertise of its staff and partners to support donors' priorities. The Trust leads competitive grantmaking through donor legacies, manages donor-advised funds, and convenes collaborative initiatives addressing critical regional needs. In 2025, it awarded nearly 11,000 grants totaling approximately \$230 million. This Request for Proposals (RFP) is a one-time opportunity as part of The Trust's competitive grants program to address youth mental health and digital overuse by people under age 21.

Background and Funding Opportunity

We live in an increasingly digital world where technology, online platforms, and connected devices are deeply embedded and necessary in all our lives. Digital tools provide meaningful benefits to people under age 21, including needed access to information, academic support, creativity, and social connections. But growing evidence indicates that high levels of digital media use among children, adolescents, and youth contribute to negative mental health outcomes. For example, in young children, digital media addiction poses significant developmental challenges, including impaired brain development, sleep deprivation, and increased risks of anxiety, depression, and attention disorders. And, about a third of adolescents say they use social media almost constantly; many report difficulties disengaging from their devices and losing track of how much time they spend on them. Youth of all ages increasingly engage with emerging technologies like artificial intelligence chatbots; some report a preference for digital interactions over in-person connections. Experts agree that compulsive screen use leads to irritability, emotional regulation issues, and poor social-emotional skills.

Despite the many recognized societal benefits to the digital age that we live in, many digital media platforms are designed to encourage compulsive use. Through scrolling options, notifications, personalized algorithms, and gratification rewards (such as likes and shares), platforms encourage users to return frequently. Studies show such constant engagement activates the human brain to release dopamine, a "reward" chemical that creates a pleasurable feeling like that gained through gambling and drug addiction. People under age 21 are particularly susceptible to this as their prefrontal cortex, the area of the brain that manages self-control, is not fully developed. It is no surprise that overuse or excessive digital media consumption is thought to lead to social media addiction, body image issues, eating disorders, gambling and gaming addiction, sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, and even self-harm or suicidal ideation.

New York State has started to reduce digital addiction risks and support healthier digital lives for young people. For example, in 2025, the state introduced regulations known as the "bell to bell ban" which bans the use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices on K–12 school grounds during the school day. And the Stop Addictive Feeds

Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids Act, signed into law in 2024, requires social media platforms that offer addictive feeds, auto-play, or infinite scroll to post warning labels on their platforms.

While these are good starts, we know that they are insufficient to meet the burgeoning challenges faced by families and communities in New York's eight downstate counties. A century of experience tells us that nonprofits are well-equipped to bring expertise, ideas, and solutions to emerging crises. Nonprofits are integral to address mental health impacts associated with unhealthy or addictive digital engagement for people under age 21.

This one-time funding opportunity will support nonprofits to carry out projects that seek to address youth mental health as it relates to digital overuse.

Projects can include prevention or education efforts, public awareness campaigns, system-level strategies, and/or advocacy for legislative or regulatory changes. Priority will be given to projects that promote healthy digital habits, strengthen protective factors, foster environments that support youth well-being, and advance policies to support these changes. Strong proposals will center youth voice and leadership to address harmful digital use, advance viable policy efforts that promote evidence-informed standards, and fortify accountability and protections related to digital design, use, and wellness. Finally, projects that seek to strengthen systems, use cross-sector responses, and/or contribute to long-term change by aligning practice, policy, and community engagement will receive strong consideration.

Grant Award Amounts, Eligibility Standards, Geographic Priorities, Other Information

- The Trust expects to award three to five grants as part of this RFP. Each award will be up to \$150,000 for a two-year project period.
- The Trust anticipates awarding at least one grant to a nonprofit based in and serving each of the following regions:
 - New York City
 - Long Island (Nassau and/or Suffolk County)
 - Westchester County

Applicants are **not required** to serve The Trust's full eight-county service area. Applicants must, however, serve within at least one of the areas listed above. Nonprofits working on policies at a New York State regional or statewide level are encouraged to apply.

- Grantees will be required to participate in up to four day-long, Trust-led, in-person, learning sessions/convenings during the grant award period (two per year) to share information about their projects and learn from each other. Costs to participate in these learning sessions (travel, staff-time) should be included in the project budget.
- Grant awards are expected to be made in December 2026 and will cover 24 months of a project. (For administrative ease, the projects will start on January 1, 2027.) Grant funds cannot be used to cover project costs incurred prior to the start of the grant.
- The Trust is open to proposals that enhance existing collaboration among nonprofits. A collaborative project is not a requirement for this opportunity.

- Applicants seeking grants must meet one of the following criteria:
 - A 501(c)(3) public charity recognized by the Internal Revenue Service, or
 - An unincorporated coalition that uses a New York State-based 501(c)(3) funds administrator/fiscal sponsor.
- Grants will be contingent on confirmation of independent board governance (at least five independent board members) and good financial practices and status.
- Grants **will not** be made for general operating support, research projects, contributions to capital or endowment campaigns, or deficit financing/replacing government funds. Funds **may not** be used for political activity, lobbying, legal actions, or electioneering.

Submission Materials

A complete proposal includes a narrative, project budget, board-approved 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 issue related to digital overuse that you plan to address, including ages of young people your project will focus on, if any (reminder, all projects must target people under the age of 21), and in which of The Trust's geographic areas the project will focus.
 - c. The proposed project, including:
 - Planned activities: what activities will the organization undertake to accomplish the project goals? Describe specific actions (using bullet points) and timeline.
 - Collaborating organizations, if any, and the role they will play in the project. If this is a collaborative project, the project budget may include a line item for partners.
 - Expected results: what specific outcomes do you expect to see because of the project? (Bullet points are fine.)
 - Measuring success: what information will the project gather and analyze to measure success?
2. An itemized **project budget** that reflects all necessary expenses to carry out the activities in the proposed project (as opposed to just the amount requested from The Trust). The budget should list pending and/or confirmed income to support the project, as well as any in-kind contributions (if applicable). Please round up to the nearest thousand for all line items. Expenses may include, but are not limited to, the following categories:
 - a. personnel (staff and fringe, consultants, and/or stipends);
 - b. program costs related to carrying out the proposed grant activities (e.g., materials, supplies, travel, technology); and
 - c. administration/overhead (this RFP allows 15 to 20 percent of a project budget for administration/overhead costs).

3. Current board-approved annual **organizational operating budget** (income and expenses).
4. **List of board members**, including professional/non-board affiliations. The Trust requires that the board has at least 5 independent members. No more than one board member should be a paid staff member.
5. Submissions that are using a fiscal sponsor/funds administrator should provide a board list as well as an operating budget for the fiscal sponsor/funds administrator.

The project budget, operating budget(s), and board list(s) do not count toward the 5-page narrative 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 “**Request for Proposals to Address Youth Mental Health and Digital Overuse.**”
3. Complete a cover sheet for your proposal and then upload your single PDF and submit it.

Application Deadline

Proposals must be submitted through The Trust’s [Grantseeker Portal](#) no later than **4:00 p.m. EST on Thursday, July 16, 2026**. This will be a competitive process, and not all applicants will receive a grant. Applicants may not receive the full amount requested. The Trust may request additional information ahead of any grant award.

Virtual Information Session

The Trust will hold an optional virtual information session via Zoom for interested applicants on **Tuesday, June 16, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. EST**. If interested in attending the session, [please register here](#). Applicants are not required to attend the session to submit a proposal, which is intended to answer questions applicants may have about the RFP. Please limit participation to no more than two people per nonprofit. A recorded version will be posted on our [YouTube Channel](#).

Questions

Please direct all questions about the RFP content to Melissa Greenberger, Program Director—Long Island at mgreenberger@thenytrust.org.

For assistance to navigate through the Grantseeker Portal, please contact Marc Schell, Program Department Manager at mschell@thenytrust.org.