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2026 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SEED GRANT

Request for Proposals

**Deadline to submit:
April 13, 2026, by 11:59 PM**

[Submit Your Proposal](#)

**Mary and Frances Youth Center
Division of Community Engagement**



The Mary and Frances Youth Center, within VCU's Division of Community Engagement, is excited to offer 10 seed grants of up to \$2,000 each to community partners interested in collaborating with the center.

Background

The **Mary and Frances Youth Center** is located on VCU's Monroe Park Campus. Since opening in 2007, the center has served thousands of youth and youth educators in the Metro Richmond area.

Mission

To foster the positive development and education of youth through innovative, sports-based programs that strengthen life skills, expand awareness and access to higher education opportunities, and empower adults to support positive youth development.

Vision

To become a national leader in university-community collaborations for positive youth development.

Purpose of the Seed Funding

To develop sustainable, community-driven partnerships that enhance and expand programs at the Mary and Frances Youth Center (MFYC). Seed Grants are meant to help create projects that last over time.

We encourage applicants to think big and plan for the future. This funding opportunity is meant to help organizations grow, gain momentum, and create ongoing change.



AWARDS

Ten seed-funding awards of \$2,000 each are available to promote youth development initiatives and/or training opportunities for youth educators.

FOCUS AREAS

- Empower youth to broaden their expectations in life
- Inspire youth to identify and engage their talents
- Support youth in strengthening their life skills through sports
- Engage youth and family in living healthy lifestyles
- Foster best practices in youth development
- Provide professional development for youth educators



TYPES OF PROGRAMS

Here are some ideas for proposals we are eager to fund, each integrating the Youth Center in meaningful ways:

Youth Workshops or Classes: Propose a series of workshops or classes for youth that take place at the Youth Center. These could range from arts and crafts to coding or science experiments. We'd love for these workshops to be interactive, engaging, and possibly culminate in a showcase event at the Youth Center.

Community Service Projects: Suggest a community service project that involves both the youth and community partners, with planning sessions or reflection meetings held at the Youth Center.

Sports-Based Program: We're particularly interested in sports-based activities that promote teamwork, health, and wellness among youth at the MFYC.

Mentorship Program: Launch a mentorship program where youth can be paired with mentors from the community and VCU. The Youth Center could serve as a meeting place for mentor-mentee pairs, providing a safe and supportive environment for meetings, workshops, or group activities focused on personal development, career exploration, or academic guidance.

Technology and STEM Initiatives: With the world moving towards more tech-driven solutions, we're eager to support programs that introduce or expand youth's knowledge and skills in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) areas.

Youth Educator Training and Professional Development: The Richmond Youth Development Network strives to be a regional hub for professional development that supports positive youth development. We are excited to hear from our partners what professional development opportunities would best support their staff and how the Richmond YDN can provide those opportunities.

Advanced Certificate in Youth Development: Support employees and staff towards achieving advanced training.

Family Engagement Programs: Develop a series of events or programs that provide opportunities for families to learn, play, and engage with one another.

Eligibility

Funding is limited to proposals that exemplify partnerships and program development with the MFYC and describe a vision for sustainability beyond one year.

Past Awardees

Past awardees are encouraged to submit proposals for a revised version of a previously funded program or a new program. Proposals for prior programming must explain why continued funding is warranted and provide evidence of the program's impact on the intended audience.

Deliverables

Successful applicants will submit a mid-term progress report at 6 months, attend a virtual grantee meeting and a final evaluative report at the end of the program period. Both the mid-term and final reports will be submitted via Google Forms.

Successful applicants will agree to have their selected program featured on the MFYC website.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

a.) Organizations applying for the Positive Youth Development Seed Grant 2026 must submit the completed application electronically by 11:59 pm on **Friday, April 13, 2026**. Please email the MFYC Executive Director, Misti Mueller, at Muellermr@vcu.edu with any questions specific to this grant opportunity. Applications will not be accepted after the deadline.

b.) The proposal should address partnership opportunities with MFYC and discuss specific ideas for continued programming.

c.) The budget and justification sections are reasonable and reflect the proposed project.

Submission Guidelines

Use this [link to submit your proposal](#) through Google Forms by 11:59 pm on Monday, April 13th.



Required Application Components

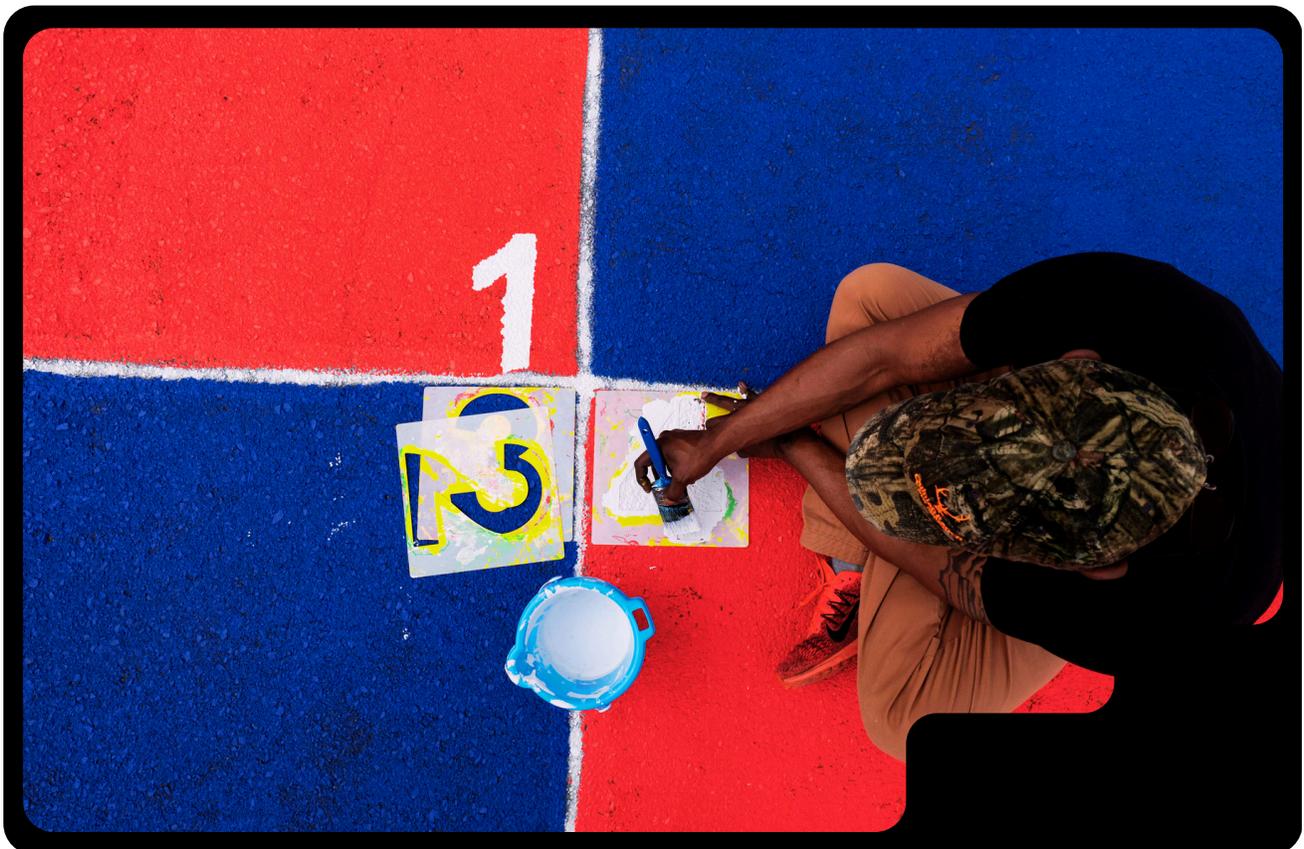
1. **Abstract:** In 150 words or less describe your project that includes an overview of the goals, objectives, and anticipated outcomes you anticipate after program implementation.
2. **Project Title:**
3. **Project Director/Leader:** Contact information (address, phone number, email) and Organizational Leader/Institutional Authority for accepting the award. Identify the contact person who will be the primary liaison with MFYC regarding the grant activities.
4. **Background of Organization:** Describe your organization. Highlight relevant partnerships, collaborations, or achievements.
5. **Previous Collaboration:** Describe any current or previous collaborations or partnerships with VCU departments, units or individual researchers and or staff.
6. **Program Goals and Objectives:** What are the program goals and objectives, and how do they align with the Mary and Frances Youth Center?
7. **Expected Outcomes:** What are the specific, measurable changes or benefits anticipated by the proposed project?
8. **Target Audience and Community:** Who is the target audience(s) for your project and why?
9. **Program Design:** Describe the planned program. Use this section to describe your idea for creating or expanding on a program that supports positive youth development. Your program should focus on youth programming or youth educator programming at the Mary and Frances Youth Center.
10. **Future Collaboration with MFYC:** Describe your vision for how the proposed program will be sustained in the future, specifically at the MFYC.
11. **Budget and Budget Justification:** Include a detailed explanation of how you will use the funds. Links to external documents (table with budget outline) are welcome and encouraged. Proposals that allocate the majority of their budget to facilitator compensation may receive lower priority in the review process.

Preference will be given to proposals that strengthen and expand opportunities for long-term, meaningful partnerships.

Award Information and Terms:

MFYC Seed Grants 2026 will award up to 10 \$2,000 projects for the stated one-year (2026 to 2027) grant period. All awards are dependent on the merit of the project and the strength of the submitted application.

- The official start date of the award and the release of funds will begin after a letter of agreement between MFYC and the community partner has been signed.
- Acceptance of funds implies a firm commitment to provide an email check-in progress report 2 times over the one-year grant period.
- The expectation that the grantee will completely utilize the full amount of funding during the term of the award.



TIMELINE

Date	Activity
March 2, 2026	Application Release
March 17, 2026	<u>Informational Zoom Session 12:00 - 1:00 PM</u>
March 18, 2026	<u>Informational Zoom Session 4:00 - 5:00 PM</u>
March 25, 2026	<u>Informational Zoom Session 9:00 - 10:00 AM</u>
March 26, 2026	<u>Grant Writing Session 1:00 - 2:00 PM</u>
April 13, 2026	Proposals Due by 11:59 PM link to submit
May 2026	Awardees Announced
July 1, 2026	Project Start Date
December 4, 2026	Six-Month Progress Report and Grantee Meeting
May 31, 2027	Project Completion Date
July 18, 2027	Final Written Reports Due

Applications must be submitted electronically via [Google Form](#) by 11:59 pm on Friday, April 13, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Review Panel and Criteria

The MFYC will review applications for eligibility and completeness. A review committee composed of members of the division of community engagement, the MFYC Youth Advisory Council, MFYC staff, and at least one community organization/member will review the merit of the proposals based on specific criteria.

The review panel will use a standardized rubric to score all proposals to ensure the following:

- All components of the application are complete.
- Proposed programs support positive youth development or youth educator training.
- Proposed programs clearly identify a partnership with the MFYC.
- Proposals include a vision for the program's sustainability at the MFYC.
- Proposed budget items support the intended program and do not exceed \$2,000.

Applications will not be accepted from private foundations, individuals, political, or lobbying organizations.

Applications will not be accepted from VCU or VCU Health units, departments, or individual staff.

Collaborative projects with VCU/VCU Health that clearly demonstrate the community partner as the lead may be submitted.

Applicants requesting funds for event sponsorships, book publication, conferences, one-time events, dinners, fundraisers, capital campaigns, or endowment funds will not be considered.

For questions, contact us.



Misti Mueller, Executive Director
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mfyc.vcu.edu

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