**Guiding Principles for Programming**

To achieve the goals of this grant program, funded programs are expected to incorporate the following principles into their operations and programming.

**Principle 1. Racial Equity**

**Principle 2. Trauma-informed service provision**

**Principle 3. Positive Youth Development**

**Principle 4. Intersectionality**

**Principle 5. Cultural Humility**

**Principle 6. Restorative Justice**

**Principle 7. Collective Impact**

**Principle 8. Build and sustain the leadership of people of color**

**Principle 1. Racial equity**

Using a social justice lens, applicants must weave racial equity efforts into all aspects of programming. To do this, programs must have an understanding of the complexities of substance use issues and its context within the lives of Massachusetts young people. Providing services through a racial equity and social justice lens means acknowledging that structural and institutional racism are root causes of inequities. Institutional racism refers to the policies and practices of organizations (education, transportation, housing, healthcare, etc.) that create different outcomes for different racial groups. Structural racism refers to a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing, ways to perpetuate inequities based on race. Racial trauma or race-based trauma often goes unnoticed. , , Without a clear and descriptive language to describe racial trauma, those who suffer cannot coherently convey their pain, let alone heal.

Programs that successfully design activities through a racial equity lens:

* Acknowledge racism as a root cause of inequities that lead to individual, family, and community traumatization;
* Use data related to social determinants of health to design programs and reach priority populations;
* Systematically engage individuals and communities of color in the planning, development, leadership, oversight, and quality improvements of services and service delivery;
* Have established partnerships with community-based organizations that enhance their ability to meet the needs of people of color and their families; and
* Address structural racism through policy, education, training, outreach, and community engagement and mobilization activities.

**Principle 2. Trauma-informed service provision**

Trauma is a personal experience that may result from such experiences as: having witnessed substance abuse, having a loved one with SUD, interpersonal violence including sexual and relationship abuse or physical violence associated with substance use; severe neglect; loss; the witnessing of violence, terrorism, racism and/or disaster. Trauma may also affect groups of people collectively through cumulative exposure to traumatic events that affect communities, and trauma may affect subsequent generations. Examples of community trauma include slavery, criminalization of substance use/waging a “war on drugs”, mass incarceration, neighborhood violence, immigration raids, school segregation, war, etc. Research suggests that the causes of community trauma lie in the historic and ongoing root causes of social inequities, including poverty, racism, sexism, oppression and power dynamics, and the erasure of culture and communities. , ,

Successful programs will embrace the concept that a trauma-informed approach:

* Is based on the understanding that any population selected for program activities will include people who have already experienced, witnessed, or been otherwise impacted by substance misuse or substance use disorder;
* Looks different based on what population is being served and the goal;
* Has an intentional assessment for trauma and appropriate services;
* Uses curricula appropriate for corresponding groups (priority populations);
* Includes on-going skills-building for staff;
* Considers a peer‐driven approach;
* Has the ability to assess the needs of the audience and to be mutually flexible and responsive;
* Understands the prevalence of the experience of violence/trauma/and substance misuse and is designed not to re-traumatize survivors or those in recovery, even and especially those that do not disclose; and
* Uses a person/community-centered approach (meets people/community “where they are”).

**Principle 3. Positive Youth Development**

All services must be provided through the framework of Positive Youth Development (PYD), which focuses on young people as resources (“youth-centered”), providing educational and cultural opportunities that develop self-confidence, self-efficacy, and the capacity for youth to contribute to their own, as well as others’, learning and development. Youth must be engaged at multiple levels within programs, agencies and communities, and should be provided with avenues for participation, such as making decisions and contributions, employment, and taking on challenging responsibilities. Adults must be trained to work with youth in ways that maximize youth participation and encourage youth to engage in meaningful decision-making and age-appropriate personal and social responsibility.

Successful programs must have strong and active collaborations and relationships with community stakeholders, in-depth understanding of social and cultural context, and the ability to deliver strategies and interventions.

Programs will successfully integrate Positive Youth Development approaches to their service provision by embracing the concept that PYD:

* Designs resources, services and programs to meet developmental needs;
* Is asset-based, focusing on building the strengths of youth and communities as a strategy for impacting risk;
* Allows opportunities for youth to form relationships with positive, caring adults who can help support them through their development;
* Is collaborative, recognizing that no one organization or institution can effectively address the developmental needs or issues of youth without enlisting the assistance of other local providers, programs and organizations (public and private). Integrated service delivery with public and private agencies and other concerned citizens maximizes the impact of youth development initiatives;
* Is culturally competent, utilizing culturally and linguistically appropriate services; and promotes diversity, recognizing that while most young people may share similar developmental needs, cultural issues can significantly impact service strategies;
* Utilizes youth as a resource, rather than a threat or a hindrance, to help strengthen and build their communities, involving youth in meaningful ways at all levels of program operation.

**Principle 4. Intersectionality**

Program staff must have deep understanding of the intersectionality of the Social Determinants of Health and how they affect program participants with relation to substance use. , , It is particularly important that applicants understand that some of the young people who are the focus of these strategies have experienced multiple challenges and have specific needs, especially those struggling at the intersection of poverty, trauma, violence, and oppression. In order to address this need it is imperative that the applicant utilizes a strengths-based approach.

Substance use can best be prevented and addressed by working across systems, which requires acknowledging factors and circumstances such as racism, domestic violence, community trauma, and socioeconomic status. To support participants, program staff will take a comprehensive approach to meet the multi-faceted needs of participants, including those needs that do not directly relate to substance misuse but might impact opportunities for success.

Programs that successfully put intersectionality into practice:

* Acknowledge systemic discrimination due to race, sexual orientation and identity, gender and gender identity, economic status, immigration status, national origin, and ability, among other aspects of one’s identity, and that this systemic discrimination impacts access to opportunity.
* Focus on the unique challenges that those who sit at the intersections of overlapping systems of discrimination face, such as Black immigrants (who face both racial discrimination and discrimination because of their immigration status).
* Recognize the voices of those most directly impacted, who are frequently excluded from mainstream conversations. Valuing voice means lifting up, promoting, and supporting the leadership and storytelling of those most affected by policies and practices and centering their substantive suggestions and values into any given project and media advocacy.
* Recognize the importance of family, and that families are defined by those creating and sustaining them. Assessing whether there are unique impacts on the family allows for policies that ensure that those they care for the most are protected. It is important to recognize all family structures and kinds of parents regardless of sexual or gender identity, marital status, age, or biological connection to children (in the case of adoptive families, grandparents raising kids, step-parents, etc.) in making this assessment.
* Recognize the multiple challenges and needs facing the service population including but not limited to: impacts of sexual and relationship abuse and violence, suicidality, substance use disorder, pregnancy and parenthood, etc.
* Encourage cross-community, cross-sector, and cross-issue collaborations, investing equally in each other’s issues, narrative goals and policy agendas. Organizations should engage with a wide range of stakeholders who will work with each other collaboratively alongside those directly impacted. These types of collaborations encourage innovative solutions, expand networks, and encourage transformative change.

**Principle 5. Cultural Humility**

Program staff must exhibit cultural humility as they work intimately and intensely with individuals to assess their needs and provide appropriate services. The American Psychological Association has defined cultural humility as an “ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person].” This approach is essential to providing effective support to program participants.

Programs that successfully integrate cultural humility approaches into service provision:

* Embrace the complexity of diversity with the understanding that in our day-to-day existence we occupy multiple positions with related identities and statuses, and these identities operate together (intersect) to distinguish us as individuals;
* Are accepting of individual differences and the social experiences due to these differences;
* Relate to others in ways that are most understandable to them;
* Consider cultural humility as a constant effort to become more familiar with the worldview of the youth and families we serve and the agency staff and community partners who serve them;
* Encourage staff and community partners to offer help that demonstrates familiarity with the living environment of young people and families being served, building on their strengths while reducing factors that negatively affect the goals of safety, permanence, and well-being;
* Acknowledge the ways in which biases interfere with an ability to objectively listen to or work with others, including children, youth and families, agency staff, and community partners; and
* Are culturally competent, utilizing culturally and linguistically appropriate services, and promote diversity, recognizing that while most young people share similar developmental needs, cultural issues can significantly impact service strategies.

**Principle 6. Restorative Justice**

Restorative Justice is considered both a process and a value and is a mechanism for communities to establish a culture and come together around any issue in a way that allows emergent wisdom to surface and to guide decision-making. It is based on a process for repairing harm that has been done through the use of circles, conferences, mediation, and community reparative boards. Successful implementation of the practice includes the following:

* Utilization of a facilitation model that will hold the space together as equals to have honest exchange about difficult issues and painful experiences in an atmosphere of respect and concern for everyone (i.e. circle model).
* Strategies that help young people learn how to solve problems on their own and to respond to conflict nonviolently and without the use of potentially harmful coping mechanisms.
* Dealing with the underlying issues that cause one to offend in the first place (i.e. behavioral health, social capital, unemployment, disenfranchisement, gender norm conformation etc.).
* Emphasis on restoring a sense of well-being not only to those who were harmed, but to the individual who committed the harm and to the surrounding community members.
* Recognition of the role of the community as a prime site of preventing and responding to social disorder.

**Principle 7. Collective Impact**

The aim of a collective impact (CI) approach is to change highly complex systems. Successful implementation of this approach will demonstrate:

* A strong understanding of institutional racism and how certain communities in the Commonwealth are more impacted by health disparities than others.
* Collaboration and consistent and open communication among nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders in youth substance use prevention.
* A Backbone Agency who will be responsible for coordinating activities and collecting data supporting youth in their programming
* Use of multiple activities, programs, and initiatives, all of which are coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
* Use of data and research to understand how to improve the education experience for students.
* Coordination across sectors.
* The ability to mobilize formal and informal community leaders towards the common goal of youth substance use prevention.
* A shared vision for change, including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
* Shared measurement, including collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants, ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.

**Principle 8. Build and sustain the leadership of people of color and other marginalized communities**

It is the intent of this RFR that organizations that work directly with people of color will engage people of color in leadership roles within and beyond an advisory capacity. Creating meaningful ways to bring people of color people into the work of an organization goes beyond being “service” oriented; people of color in leadership means that people of color who directly benefit from programs are engaged in shared and meaningful decision-making about the programs that impact their lives. Organizations should systematically engage people of color in the planning, development, leadership, oversight and quality improvement of the program’s services using the “Nothing about us, without us” philosophy. Engagement and leadership of people of color values people’s lived experiences without exploiting or tokenizing them and can help dismantle racism in the process.