

Youth for Community Improvement (YCI)

2026–2027 Request for Proposals

Youth for Community Improvement (YCI), an advisory committee of the Greater Worcester Community Foundation composed of high school students, requests proposals from Worcester County nonprofit organizations for projects and programs that address the priorities identified by the 2026–2027 YCI cohort.

1) Education & Opportunity

Expanding access to education, careers, enrichment, and supportive spaces, particularly for youth facing barriers.

- **Education:** Tutoring, ESL, student aid, educational resources, and academic support.
- **Career & Employment:** Career exposure, internships, job shadowing, job fairs, and pathways to teen employment.
- **Enrichment & Civic Engagement:** Out-of-school programs that help youth explore interests, build skills, understand their communities, and engage in civic life.

2) Culture & Belonging

Supporting programs that help young people connect, access resources, and celebrate Worcester County's diverse cultures and identities.

- **Connection & Belonging:** Programs that foster cultural connection, inclusion, and belonging, including those supporting LGBTQ+ communities.
- **Language & Cross-Cultural Connection:** English-language classes and programs that connect youth and families across backgrounds.
- **Culture & Community:** Events and programs that celebrate diverse cultures, identities, and community.

3) Youth Enrichment & Connection

Supporting opportunities for young people to unwind, explore, form friendships, and build social skills.

- **Sports & Recreation:** Community-based, out-of-school access to youth sports and recreational activities.
- **Interests & Passions:** Community-based clubs and activities that help youth pursue and discover interests.
- **Connection & Exploration:** Welcoming, out-of-school spaces where youth from different backgrounds connect, build friendships and social skills, and explore new experiences.

4) Youth Food Security & Access

Supporting programs that help youth and families access nutritious food and address food insecurity.

- **Food Access:** Food pantries and community food distribution serving youth and families.
- **Food Recovery:** Initiatives that reduce food waste and redirect nutritious food to those who need it.
- **Fresh Food Access:** Youth-focused community gardening and programs creating access to healthy food.

5) Mental Health & Wellbeing

Supporting youth mental health awareness, connection, and access to meaningful support.

- **Mental Health Education:** Youth-focused awareness and education featuring youth voices, advocates, and speakers.
- **Youth-Informed Support:** Mental health groups and peer support initiatives shaped by young people's needs and priorities.

- **Accessible Support:** Discreet or anonymous opportunities to express concerns, seek support, or connect with resources.

Youth Voice

All applications must speak to youth voice in their proposal.

Youth voice is the empowerment of young people through leadership roles, holding decision-making power, and/or involvement of youth in program organization.

YCI seeks projects in which young people have an authentic role in shaping, organizing, leading, or evaluating the proposed work. Applicants should describe how youth will participate and what opportunities they will have to influence decisions related to the project.

Eligibility, Scope & Limitations

- Grants will not exceed **\$5,000**.
- Total project budgets may not exceed **\$40,000**.
- Proposals must prioritize **youth voice**, meaning the project is designed by youth, led by youth, and/or requested by young people. Young people should have meaningful opportunities for decision-making within the project.
- Projects must be led by organizations that are a **501(c)(3)** nonprofit or have a fiscal sponsor.
- Organizations must be based in **Worcester County**.
- Projects must benefit **residents of Worcester County**.