

EXHIBIT M

RFA FY25 Community Coalition Partnership Strategic Focus Areas and Menu of Strategies

According to SAMHSA, “improving access to behavioral health care, promoting quality behavioral health programs and practice, and reducing persistent disparities in mental health and substance use services for underserved populations and communities, recipients can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible.”¹ All Community Coalition Partnership programs should work towards improving behavioral health services in their community. Advancing behavioral health services will allow for a positive impact on substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery in communities and create a healthier environment.

Strategic Focus Area #1

Increase social and community connectedness

Justification: In 2023, the United States Surgeon General, reported that lacking social connection is as dangerous as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.² Extensive research has also shown that prosocial involvement and community connectedness are protective factors against substance use for youth and adolescents.^{3,4} Valente, Chou, Pentz, in their 2015 study reported that “social network analysis has shown how social network properties affect the adoption of health-related behaviors,” affecting behaviors like smoking.⁵ Creating opportunities to strengthen and increase social and community connectedness will have a positive impact on communities and substance use prevention. Additionally, bringing together or developing social networks, community involvement and integration of citizens to make a joint effort in improving quality of life are inherent in coalition work.

Examples

- Support, develop, or implement school initiatives that promote long-term social and community engagement opportunities
- Reclaim and improve public spaces to make them safer, more appealing to residents, reflective of community culture, and a source of pride that can contribute to a sense of community worth
- Create a system of social and organizational networking opportunities for individuals to gather for entertainment and positive interactions

¹ Behavioral Health Equity. (2022, July 29). SAMHSA. <https://www.samhsa.gov/behavioral-health-equity>

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General, Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community. Washington, DC: HHS, May, 2023

³ Jacobs, W., Goodson, P., Barry, A. E., McLeroy, K. R., McKyer, E. L., & Valente, T. W. (2017). Adolescent Social Networks and Alcohol Use: Variability by Gender and Type. *Substance use & misuse*, 52(4), 477–487. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2016.1245333>

⁴ McCarthy, K., & Wu, S. (2020). The roles of neighborhood social cohesion, peer substance use, and adolescent depression in adolescent substance use. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 112, 104931. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104931>

⁵ Valente, T., Chou, C., Pentz, M. (2005). Community Coalitions as a System: Effect of Network Change on Adoption of Evidence-based Substance Abuse Prevention. *American Journal of Public Health*. <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2005.063644>

Strategic Focus Area #2

Reduce access to alcohol, commercial tobacco and nicotine, marijuana and other cannabinoids, prescription drugs, and other drugs and substances⁶

Justification: Reducing access to substances is a proven environmental strategy that is effective for substance use prevention.⁷ Restriction or limitation of the number of substances available in the community can lead to decreased consumption of substances which in turn will affect the negative outcomes associated with substance use. For example, limiting the availability of tobacco in communities or passing a smoke-free ordinance can reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and can help reduce pro-smoking norms within the community.

Examples

- Create, develop, or support strategies to address enforcement such as sobriety checkpoints, open containers laws, lowering (<0.08) blood alcohol concentration limits, etc.
- Create, develop, or support strategies to address retail availability such as limiting and restricting the location and density of alcohol retail outlets, community prevention trials, alcohol sales restrictions, etc.
- Create, develop, or support strategies to address community norms such as graduated driver's license policies, college campus policies, supporting clean indoor air laws, etc.
- Champion and support, advocate for businesses to create equitable hiring practices to increase opportunities for special populations such as partnering with Chamber of Commerce to explore more inclusive hiring practices for business owners and Human Resource offices

Strategic Focus Area #3

Increase access and availability of economic support and opportunities, while promoting policies and practices focused on increasing individual and community resiliency.

Justification: Risk and protective factors influence the likelihood that a person will use a substance. Prominent risk factors for health-risk behaviors, including substance use, are adverse-childhood experiences (ACEs) and ⁸ trauma, which are associated with non-medical drivers of health.⁹ Addressing these risk factors, along with their effects, through prevention strategies can effectively reduce the negative outcomes associated with substance use. Factors such as living in under-resourced neighborhoods, food insecurity, and frequently moving can be the catalyst for prolonged or extended stress.¹⁰ This stress impacts decision-making and learning which can often lead to substance-focused coping skills/mechanisms. By adopting a collective healing approach that encompasses trauma (often referred to as healing-centered and trauma focused), stressors and resilience substance use can be effectively and meaningfully addressed, resulting in an improved quality of life and healthier behaviors amongst individuals.

⁶ *Environmental Strategies Tool*. (2022). Wyoming Prevention Department.
<https://www.wyomingpreventiondepot.org/strategies/causal-domain/retail-availability/>

⁷ Johnson, K., Courser, M., Holder, H., Miller, B., Ogilvie, K., Moore, R., Collins, D., Saltz, B. (2008). A Community Prevention Intervention to Reduce Youth from Inhaling and Ingesting Harmful Legal Products.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2443954/>

⁸ *The Role of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Substance Misuse and Related Behavioral Health Problems*. (2018, June). SAMHSA. <https://mnprc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/aces-behavioral-health-problems.pdf>

¹⁰ *Fast Facts: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences*. CDC. (2022, April 6).
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html>

Examples

- Work with school systems to create more supportive and less punitive policies regarding substance use
- Provide direct services in the form of non-clinical resources and support services that may include but are not limited to community or school-based wellness centers, innovative peer services, peer and cross-age mentorship programs, and peer helper/leadership programs
- Promote workforce-development strategies that improve employment opportunities and readiness among community members for employing formerly incarcerated individuals
- Champion and support equitable hiring practices to increase opportunities for special populations such as partnering with Chamber of Commerce to explore more inclusive hiring practices for business owners and Human Resource offices