



FOUNDED: 1988

CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET: \$301,157

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Investment Opportunity

Teen BLOCK seeks an investment of \$400,000 to strengthen its program model over the next two years by providing additional support to youth mental health wellness by increasing parent and family engagement and expanding outreach to populations of young people at particular risk. Funds will be used to hire a full-time social worker and a full-time bilingual youth re-engagement coordinator. Additionally, the funds will provide multilingual outreach materials to increase program visibility among youth, focusing on Lowell's Latinx youth community.

The City of Lowell is home to a diverse population of 110,000, close to half of which represent BIPOC communities and New Americans. Of more than 3,000 students at Lowell High School, 80% are students of color, a third of students are non-native English speakers, and 70% are low-income. The adverse experiences of immigration, poverty, and institutional racism — exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic — have resulted in increasing numbers of young people facing mental health challenges, social isolation, and engagement in risky behaviors, including violence, substance use, and early sexual activity. Of particular concern are the disparities seen among Lowell's Latinx youth.

Teen BLOCK (Building Leadership Opportunities in the Community) provides an inclusive and welcoming “brave space” for young people looking for a youth-centered space to connect with peers and caring adults during out-of-school hours. Through Teen BLOCK's drop-in center, workshops, and experiential learning opportunities, young people access the support, information, and resources they need to thrive. Ensuring all programs are youth-led and youth-informed, Teen BLOCK enables young people to explore their identity and role in their communities — inspiring them to create pathways for a successful future.

Two-Year Goals

- Achieve the pre-COVID number of youth served (80 annually)
- Increase the percentage of Latinx youth served from 5% to 25% of total youth served
- Increase the number of intentional parent outreach and engagement activities
- Increase support and services for youth within Teen BLOCK to support mental health wellness

Ways to Invest

FINANCIAL

- Hire a social worker
- Hire youth re-engagement coordinator
- Multilingual outreach for Latinx youth
- Parent/family engagement activities

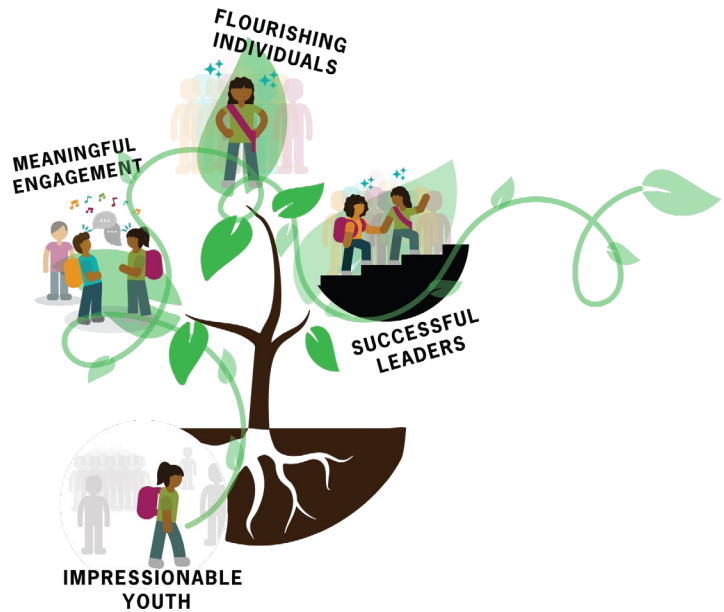
IN-KIND

- Donations of technology
- Volunteers to lead workshops on career options
- Donations of art supplies

Leadership & Governance

Ruth K. Ogembo, MPH, Director of Community Health Programs, began her work at Lowell Community Health Center (Lowell CHC) in 2012 as the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator and Community Health Worker. In 2015, she became the Program Manager for Teen BLOCK. Under the Adolescent Health Services Department, Teen BLOCK benefits from the leadership of Lowell CHC's seven-member Senior Management Team and the governance of the organization's 20-member Board of Directors.

TEEN BLOCK'S MODEL



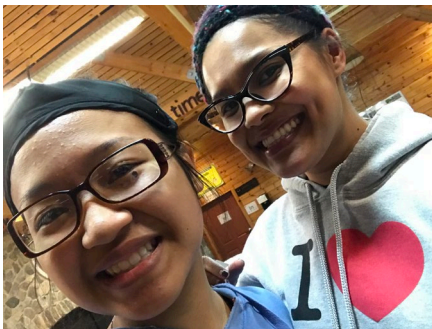
“

Teen BLOCK is truly a family to me, a place for us to be who we are. It's a safety outlet to me.

”

IRENA,

Teen BLOCK participant



PROGRAM COMPONENTS Using the Convene, Educate, Involve, Challenge, and Reward model of youth engagement, Teen BLOCK offers a range of program components to meet the diverse needs of the young people it serves. Teen BLOCK is youth-led and youth-informed. By elevating youth voices throughout all programs, Teen BLOCK creates a sense of belonging inclusive of all identities.

Convene

- **Brave Space** is a drop-in teen center located at the Lowell Community Health Center where youth can connect with peers, access youth programming, and seek support from a caring adult. There are group norms and values within the space, and youth are held accountable for their behavior. During pre-COVID times, Brave Space was operating Monday-Thursday 2 to 7 PM; currently, it is open Monday-Thursday 3:30 to 5 PM via Zoom.
- **Case Management** ensures youth needing mental health support receive referrals to Lowell CHC Behavioral Health Services.

Educate

- **Cultural Programming** such as Journey to Healing, AfroFusion, and LatinX programs address issues of race, ethnicity, and culture, with a focus on coping strategies, assistance with immigration status, and opportunities for civic engagement.
- **Creative Arts** expression is woven into all Teen BLOCK programs.
- **Healthy Teens, Healthy Relationships** - Through the Making Proud Choices curriculum, teens are provided with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to make healthy reproductive health choices; they learn about adolescent development and healthy relationships.
- **Violence Prevention** program offers a series of at least six workshops that explore the root causes of violence and other risk behaviors (i.e., substance use, early sexual activity). Teen BLOCK uses the Valuing Our Insights for Civic Engagement (VOICES) curriculum to help youth explore their identities and who they are in the community.

“

Teen BLOCK taught me that being involved and engaged can make a difference in whatever situation.

”

ASHLEY,

Teen BLOCK participant



PROGRAM COMPONENTS (CONTINUED)

Involve

- Teen BLOCK plans and hosts an annual youth-led community-wide violence prevention awareness event (Dance 4 Peace) that serves more than 800 youth and adults each year.

Challenge

- Teen BLOCK provides opportunities to challenge the way participants think about themselves and the world around them. As a result, youth become agents of change.

Reward

- Experiential learning opportunities include a three-day retreat in New Hampshire where youth participate in team-building activities, build community, and get a different perspective. Other outings may include field trips to amusement parks and beaches.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

As a program of Lowell Community Health Center, Teen BLOCK receives operational and infrastructure support as well as space within the health center. The program has received government support and donations from private philanthropy to maintain its key components. Teen BLOCK is seeking investment funding for salaried positions, which the organization will sustain through fundraising and institutional commitment.

Key Investors

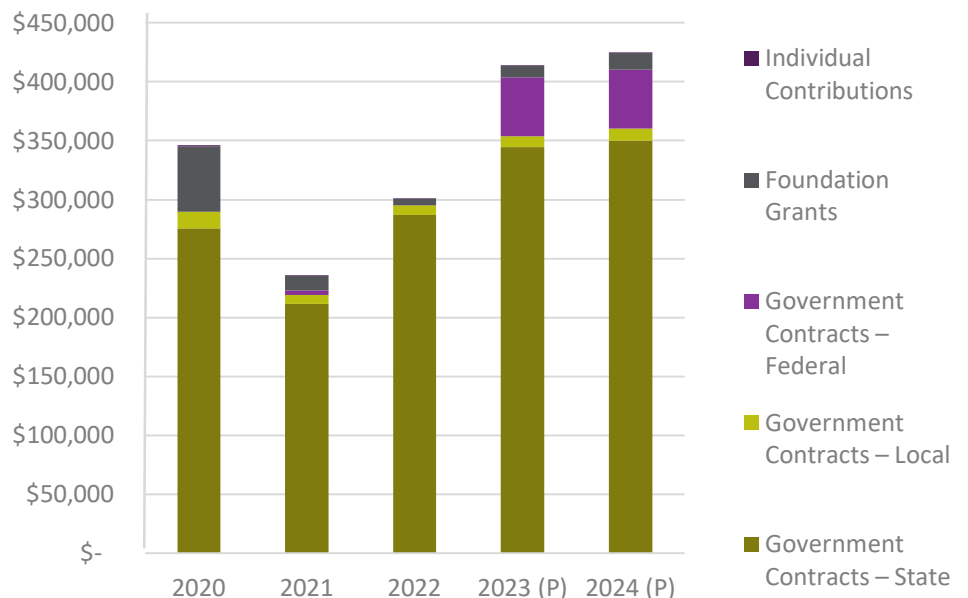
- CITY OF LOWELL
- DCU FOR KIDS
- DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
- SHARPE FAMILY FOUNDATION

Partners

- BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER LOWELL
- CENTER FOR HOPE AND HEALING*
- GIRLS INC. OF GREATER LOWELL
- YWCA LOWELL

* NOTE: A CURRENT FELLOW INNOVATOR

Revenue by Source



Success Story: Jamal

When Jamal first came to Teen BLOCK, he was quiet and kept to himself. He described himself as “socially awkward and didn’t make friends easily.” After a year in the program, Jamal grew from a quiet observer to an active participant. Jamal became a peer ambassador who led and facilitated afterschool programming focused on substance use prevention at a local middle school, and planning and performing at Dance 4 Peace. He says, “Teen BLOCK to me is the coming together of our community to help fight against the issues within it. It is helping me find the confidence that I never knew I had.” Jamal graduated high school, enrolled at a local community college, and continued working in the program as a young adult.



PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Below is a summary of the key measures that Teen BLOCK will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

	FY 2022	FY 2023 (P)	FY 2024 (P)
PROGRAM PERFORMANCE			
Number of youth served	20	40	80
% of Latinx youth served	5%	15%	25%
Parent engagement activities	3	5	7
ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING			
Number of staff members	4	6	7
Board members	20	20	20
Formation of Youth Advisory Board	Explore best practices	Recruit youth and establish the Advisory Board	
Total revenue	\$301,157	\$413,684	\$425,000

SOCIAL IMPACT

Through Teen BLOCK, youth receive skills, knowledge, and support that help them create pathways to higher education or training in a trade, as well as a commitment to community service. Youth develop strong peer relationships and build trust in adults and peers.

Below is the summary of the social impact that Teen BLOCK aspires to have in the next two years.



INDICATOR	2022	2024
Teen BLOCK youth participating	20	80
% of Latinx Youth Involved	5%	25%
Teen BLOCK youth who receive clinical mental health support	0*	30
% of Teen BLOCK youth who graduate high school	- **	90%
% of Teen BLOCK youth who pursue college or a trade after high school	- **	90%

• Clinical Mental Health Support is a new program component
 ** Due to COVID, we were unable to track participant outcomes. Anecdotal evidence suggests more students were dropping out of school or not pursuing college.