



NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH SERVICES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

OPERATION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM

Presented by Northspan on behalf of current program funders

APRIL 25, 2022



April 25, 2022

SUMMARY

A coalition of funders supporting the Neighborhood Youth Services (NYS) program seeks a new operator for NYS. The program was previously housed within The Hills Youth and Family Services, while Life House has served as its interim operator since July 2021. As stipulated by an agreement with Life House, the funders seek a new operator to begin on or before July 1, 2022. The funders are committed to finding an organization that can maintain the services NYS has provided to Duluth children for 30 years, providing a vital and welcoming environment for neighborhood youth. The new operator will serve as the program's fiscal agent, oversee its staff, and handle administrative duties related to its activity.

BACKGROUND

The following information has been adapted from program materials to provide an overview of Neighborhood Youth Services.

Mission & History: The NYS program was launched in 1992, thanks to the vision of juvenile justice and neighborhood leaders, as a means of strengthening families and reducing risks that contribute to juvenile delinquency. NYS's free after-school and summer drop-in center for school-aged youth is located in the Washington Center at 301 N 1st Avenue West in Duluth's Central Hillside neighborhood.

Community Need: NYS meets a significant community need through consistent, high-quality, no-cost, out-of-school time programming for at-risk youth and their families living in Duluth's urban core. Duluthians are much more likely to live in poverty compared to the state of Minnesota (18.2% vs. 9.7%, respectively). Northeastern Minnesota remains overwhelmingly of White European heritage (88.3%). The city's BIPOC households are twice as likely to live in poverty as White households.

Duluth's low income and youth of color demonstrate poor academic achievement, truancy, and school disciplinary referrals and interventions. District-wide, 75.4% of students graduated on-time in 2020, compared to 53.2% Black/African Heritage students and 45.2% of Native/Indigenous students. Schools most-attended by NYS youth report high rates of absenteeism, particularly at nearby Myers-Wilkins Elementary where 33.4% did not attend school regularly in 2020 (i.e., at least 90% of the time). Students of color comprise 54% of disciplinary referrals while representing 24.6% of students in the ISD 709 School District. Unemployment rates for people of color in Duluth are several times the rate of the white population, and are even higher among youth, underscoring the need for programs that help build job readiness skills.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disparately affected NYS's service population along multiple dimensions. When schools shifted to a distance learning format, participant families had limited access to the necessary resources to engage with the virtual learning environment. Moreover, NYS parents rarely have jobs that enable work-at-home options even if their household has internet service. Many NYS parents are essential workers and were left without a safe and supportive place to send their children during their workday. Job loss/reduction put families living on the edge at further risk of food and housing insecurity, which increased the stress level within households. At this time, the full social, emotional and mental toll of the pandemic on the children and youth of NYS is still unknown.

Background (continued)

Target Population: NYS serves 400+ at-risk youth annually. NYS primarily draws children and families from Duluth's inner-city neighborhoods where more than one-third (34.6%) of households earn income below the poverty line, 66.8% rent rather than own their homes, and 53.8% of renter households are cost burdened. Barriers to upward mobility in the Central Hillside include poor educational attainment (11.3% of adults over age 25 do not have a high school diploma/GED), lack of transportation (31.8% do not own a vehicle), and poor health (21.1% have a disability). NYS disproportionately works with underserved populations, particularly Indigenous, Black, and youth of mixed race. Most NYS children live in a single-parent household and virtually all are very low- to low-income based upon current HUD guidelines.

Community Impact: When not operating under COVID-19 guidance/mandates, NYS operates on a drop-in basis in order to maximize flexibility for families and youth to utilize services as needed and wanted. At present, the center operates Monday through Friday in order to provide youth who are only in school part-time (e.g., half day kindergarten, hybrid learning) a safe place to get off the streets and get help with schoolwork while parents are often at work.

Over the past two years, staff have witnessed how the pandemic has compounded any academic struggles NYS children and youth were already experiencing. Along with educational challenges, participants and their families experienced higher levels of food insecurity, domestic violence, lack of accessibility to available resources, and struggles with navigating the shift from in-person learning and services to virtual formats. During the initial phase of the pandemic when after-school programming was paused due to the governor's executive order, NYS adapted its hours to provide a full day of supportive programming (8:00 – 5:00) plus three meals per day for children and youth of essential workers. During the 2020-21 school year, NYS worked with Duluth Public Schools to live stream teachers into the conference room so teachers and students could see one another and interact. Academic enrichment activities continued over the summer to help youth catch up, and NYS has continued collaboration and coordination with the school district since. This level of support is just one example of how NYS staff has consistently striven to meet the acute needs of neighborhood youth, even amid the most difficult circumstances.

A recent quote from one of NYS's parents encapsulates the program's importance and impact in Duluth: *"NYS is the lifeblood for most Hillside families. If NYS was not available for my family that would mean more social isolation for my kids, no after school support when I am working. It is a place for my kids to go after school to hang out with friends, interact with outstanding staff, with access to nutritious food, healthy socializing, and help with the dreaded homework. It is a safe place and core of our Hillside neighborhood."*

The main objective of NYS's drop-in center is to engage youth, and to get them coming in the door day after day. Through regular visits to the center for meals, snacks, recreation, and one-on-one tutoring and mentoring, participants naturally develop trusting relationships with NYS staff. NYS embraces the developmental relationships framework advanced by the Search Institute, which views lasting relationships with positive adults as foundational to young peoples' success. When NYS staff engage youth from this perspective, enduring relationships that help young people grow and thrive are built.

Background (continued)

Program Operations: School-aged youth who are attending Kindergarten-12th grade are eligible to receive services at NYS. NYS is visited by 50+ children and teens each day and will serve a minimum of 400 youth throughout a calendar year.

To ensure underserved families are aware of NYS's services, staff regularly visit local schools (e.g., Denfeld High School twice/week, East High School once/week). NYS also frequently hosts community events like Trunk or Treat, Backpack Drives, and cultural gatherings. As a result of these activities, NYS enjoys a high level of community awareness. NYS accepts referrals from other programs, parents, schools and other agencies. Upon a child's first visit to NYS, parents complete an application (income verification, emergency contact information, etc.) and participants sign a behavioral agreement that details rules and expectations.

Space: NYS currently occupies a portion of the Washington Center, which is a City of Duluth-owned building located at 301 N 1st Avenue West. Its location provides access to many of the program's participating families, and stakeholders believe a central location in the Central Hillside and Downtown Duluth areas is an essential trait of NYS. The space totals 4,343 square feet exclusive to NYS, including two large classrooms (one with a non-commercial kitchen equipped for basic food preparation and service), a computer lab, office and storage spaces, and a bathroom. Its location in the Washington Center also provides access to the building's gymnasium, outdoor playground and adjacent spaces, and some additional facilities. The City of Duluth's intention is to retain and reinvest in the existing NYS facility in the Washington Center. A floor plan of the current facility is attached as **Appendix A**.

Over the past year, Life House has undertaken some investment in the facility's physical assets, including computer upgrades for tutoring stations, new furniture, and deep cleaning. The program also owns two Ford Econoline vans; Life House will transfer the title of the vehicles to the new operator.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

This RFP was developed with the input of a broad range of stakeholders, including funders, community partners, families, and current and former NYS staff. See **Appendix B** for an overview of these engagement efforts. All interviewees voiced a desire to see the program continue its operations.

BUDGET

The following two tables presents budgetary information for NYS in 2022. In the past, the program's operators have used cash basis accounting to track its revenues and expenses. As NYS receives grants with different start and end dates, the program often builds a large fund balance that it slowly draws down over time.

2022 Grants Committed and Calendar

The following table presents all current grants to NYS. Some of these grants were awarded in 2021 and were partially expended during that year, it does not reflect actual program revenue for 2022. We present this table as context for the size of grants awarded and the timelines of the grant cycles. Funding from the partners noted in the table has generally proven stable, and all have expressed commitments for continued support.

Budget (continued)

Organization	Commitment	Timeframe
Ordean Foundation	\$50,000	Annual; ends 6/30/22
Northland Foundation	\$30,000	Annual; ends 6/30/22
Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation	\$30,000	Annual; ends 6/30/22
State of Minnesota Office of Justice Programs	\$90,000	2-Year cycle of \$45,000 per year ending 12/31/23
City of Duluth Parks & Recreation	\$15,000	Renewal 1/1/23
Duluth Community Development Block Grant JET Food Program	\$30,500	Ends 3/1/23
Total	\$245,500	

2022 Budget

The following table presents existing, committed income for NYS in calendar year 2022, along with projected expenses, which have been annualized based on actual expenses for a 7-month period preceding the launch of the RFP. Actual expenses may vary based on unforeseen circumstances.)

INCOME	
Organization	Commitment
Ordean Foundation (carryover from grant awarded in 2021)	\$39,106
Ordean Foundation (commitment for July-December 2022)	\$50,000
Northland Foundation (carryover from grant awarded in 2021)	\$23,777
Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation (carryover from grant awarded in 2021)	\$22,580
Head of the Lakes United Way (carryover from grant awarded in 2021)	\$15,970.44
State of Minnesota Office of Justice Programs (half of 2-year allocation)	\$45,000
City of Duluth Parks & Recreation	\$15,000
Duluth Community Development Block Grant JET Food Program 2021-2022 (now fully expended)	\$19,859.61
Duluth Community Development Block Grant JET Food Program 2022-2023 (pro-rated to include only the 9 months in calendar year 2022)	\$22,875
Total	\$254,168.05
EXPENSES	
Line Item	Amount
Salaries & Wages	\$186,887
Payroll Taxes & Benefits	\$15,367
Direct Costs (Rent, Activities, Internet, Food, Supplies, Van Insurance/Fuel/Maintenance)	\$44,806
Administration	\$32,788
Other (Fees, Dues, Supplies, Marketing, Copier, Repairs and Maintenance, Staff Development)	\$5,159
Total Expenses (Estimated)	\$285,007
2022 Funding Gap	\$30,838.95

Budget (Continued)

Administrative Costs Note

The annual administrative costs, as outlined in the table, reflect the existing arrangement between NYS funders and Life House. This figure may change based on the budget proposed by the selected operator.

The figure listed is based on a one-year agreement between Life House and NYS funders and may not necessarily reflect the full scope of work outlined in this RFP. Respondents should recognize that assuming the administration of NYS is a large-scale undertaking and may require additional commitments and/or additional fundraising from the selected operator.

Funder Notes

- In addition to the funds outlined above, the Ordean Foundation is committed to granting \$50,000 for calendar year 2023 and could provide additional resources with supporting funding from other organizations.
- While it cannot guarantee funding, the Northland Foundation anticipates continuing to support NYS after its current grant expires on June 30, 2022. Application materials and instructions will be provided to the selected operator.
- The Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation Board commits to reviewing a Letter of Intent for NYS programming for \$30,000. Letters of Intent for the July 15th grant deadline will be due mid-June and Letters of Intent for the October 15th deadline will be due mid-September. While it cannot guarantee funding, the Foundation affirms its long history of support for NYS.
- Head of the Lakes United Way invites the new operator to apply during its next funding cycle, which will begin in September 2022. While it cannot guarantee funding, HLUW affirms its longstanding support for NYS.
- The Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation has supported NYS in the past, and while it cannot guarantee funding, it invites the selected operator to apply to the next round of funding from its Community Opportunity Fund (scheduled for October 2022) or other potentially relevant funds.
- The City of Duluth is committed to NYS's continued operation in the Washington Center facility and is open to discussions about potential building improvements.
- In the past, operators of the program have generated additional revenue through a series of smaller grants and charitable donations. Lists of potential funders will be made available to the selected operator.

Some additional financial information is available upon request. However, due to the abrupt closure of The Hills in 2021, applicants should be aware that historical financial information for the program is lacking and may not provide full context.

SCOPE OF WORK

- Management of all financial and fiduciary responsibilities of the Neighborhood Youth Services program, including grant applications, reporting, and management on established timelines
- Funding development for the program to close its gap and fund any proposed expansion of programming or updates to facilities
- Management of Neighborhood Youth Services staff (5.5 FTE, including manager, coordinator, and 5 youth workers)
- Provision of NYS programming through its dedicated staff
- Management of space needs for program, including negotiation of lease and any desired improvements with the City of Duluth at Washington Center and/or a different location. (As noted above, the City of Duluth is supportive of the program remaining at its current location at the Washington Center.)

PROPOSAL CONTENT

- Background information on the proposing firm
- Organization's qualifications to complete the scope of work
- Demonstration of proposing firm's familiarity with and commitment to the Central Hillside neighborhood and the population served by NYS
- Proposed expansion of programming or potential crossover services with other functions of the proposing firm that may prove beneficial to NYS
- Information on key staff
- Schedule for transfer of program operations
- Proposal of fees

TIMELINE

The funders seek an operator to assume management of the program on or before July 1, 2022. Ideally, the new operator would be available to begin coordination of the management transfer with Life House immediately upon the awarding of a contract to ensure a smooth transition period. Proposals should detail any extenuating circumstances if this timeline is not feasible. Program funders will meet after the proposal deadline and select an operator for NYS in early June. Life House and the funders recognize the timeline may require some flexibility ensure a smooth transition.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Applicants should send one electronic PDF of their responses to Amanda Vuicich at avuicich@northspan.org.

The deadline for proposal submissions is 5:00 PM Central Standard Time on Monday, May 23, 2022.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Current NYS funders will collectively review and score responses to the RFP using a rubric developed for this process. Evaluation factors include:

- Completeness of response to RFP requirements
- Demonstrated knowledge of or experience with populations served by NYS
- Demonstrated cultural fluency and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Experience with and capacity to manage program budget
- Innovative approaches to support NYS while maintaining its core services
- Cost
- Any additional criteria deemed necessary

NYS funders reserve the right to interview potential firms and negotiate with respondents over the addition or deletion of tasks from the scope detailed in this RFP. The funders reserve the right to accept or reject any or all of the responses to the RFP.

Joint proposals are welcome but must identify a primary fiscal agent and demonstrate a long-term commitment to a partnership model. The funders welcome innovative proposals to help ensure these critical services remain available for the community. Northspan is available to discuss any of these prospective arrangements and answer questions regarding the RFP.

QUESTIONS OR MEETINGS REGARDING THE RFP

NYS funders recognize this is a unique process with a tight timeline and are open to dialogue over potential creative solutions. Direct any questions or requests for a meeting regarding the RFP via email to:

Karl Schuettler
Research Director & Senior Consultant, Northspan
kschuettler@northspan.org

Please submit all questions by Wednesday, May 18.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Non-discrimination statement: The NYS funders do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, marital or veterans' status, sex, national origin, disability, or any other legally protected status.

Proposal cost: Northspan and NYS funders assume no liability for costs associated with the preparation or submission of any proposals in response to this RFP.

Withdrawal of proposals: Proposers may submit written requests to withdraw their proposals.

Rejection of proposals: NYS funders reserve the right to accept or reject any or all of the responses to the RFP.

Washington Center

NYS Exclusive Space:
4,343 square feet ("SF")

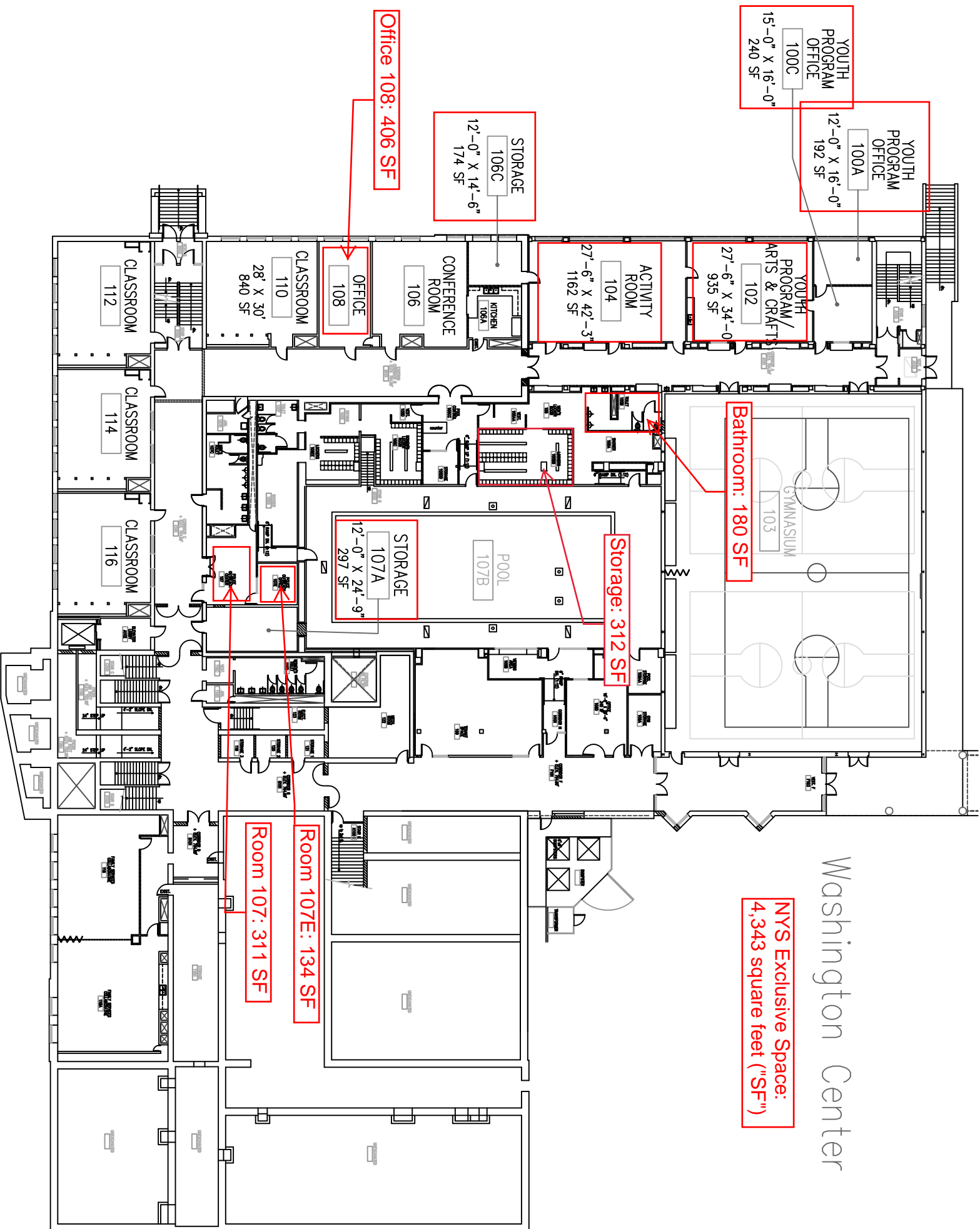
Bathroom: 180 SF

Storage: 312 SF

Office 108: 406 SF

Room 107: 311 SF

Room 107E: 134 SF



BACKGROUND

Between March 10 – April 18, 2022, Northspan staff conducted **17 interviews** with Neighborhood Youth Services (NYS) program funders, stakeholders, staff, volunteers, previous users, and others in the youth services sector. In total, **over 35 individuals** representing a variety of perspectives were able to share feedback about NYS’ past, present and future as part of the development of a request for proposals for a new program operator.

INTERVIEW RESPONSES

First, interviewees were asked to share **what words or phrases jump out when you think of NYS?** Responses highlighted the service to youth and families in the Central Hillside neighborhood, providing a safe and welcoming space within the community.

Top 5:

- Kids
- Central Hillside
- Neighborhood
- Family
- Community



Participants were asked to identify any **key values being emphasized by NYS**. Many responses highlighted NYS’ role as **safe** place, integrated with the **community** that provides youth an opportunity to interact with staff and others who look like them. Interviewees underscored the importance of having a welcoming, inclusive space for youth of color and the value NYS serves in this capacity.

Next, examining current operations, interviewers asked **what functions/programming is key at NYS or appeals to you the most?** Nearly everyone interviewed discussed the opportunity for youth to have help with homework and development of positive, supportive relationships.

- Safe place for kids
- Positive interactions with adults, 1 on 1 connections
- The staff
- Homework help
- Operation as a drop-in
- Reliable food
- Welcoming, free place to go after school in the neighborhood
- Building life and social skills

Those interviewed were next asked to **share any concerns related to NYS programming, as well as NYS operations and finance**. Many inquired about the sustainability of funding and the administrative capacity required to operate the program successfully. All organizations and individuals interviewed expressed strong advocacy for NYS and recognize the value of the program. Participants also shared concerns about the program not losing its core culture serving families in the Central Hillside.

What are you concerned about related to NYS programming?

- Ensuring a smooth transition to a new operator
- Retaining the culture/heart of NYS
- Staff retention key to building positive relationships
- Ensuring academic support stays part of programming
- Safety of youth always top of mind
- Providing access to mental health supports
- Challenges with hosting all ages programming

What are you concerned about related to NYS operations and finance?

- Sustainable funding
- Physical long term home for NYS
- Program moving out of Central Hillside - critical to keep NYS in the neighborhood
- Keeping transportation available
- Administrative capacity of new operator
- Keeping program free for families
- Tracking and reporting for grant funding
- Providing staff with competitive wages/benefits for retention

Finally, participants were asked to consider **what they would like NYS participants to experience or discover that might not be currently included in the programming?** Many responses included an element of retaining and expanding existing programming, with particular emphasis on food skills classes. Another key focus was providing youth with opportunities to have new experiences – be it a hike in Duluth or a trip to the Twin Cities. Other ideas include:

- Finishing/upgrading kitchen area to expand cooking/food skills programming
- Teams for youth to participate in sports or dance for free
- Field trips – both within Duluth & outside of town
- Sharing entrepreneurial resources, opportunities
- Behavioral health support without having to have a diagnosis or insurance
- Programming to support young families and/or multi-generational families
- More parent engagement on an advisory or programmatic level
- Elevating leadership roles for youth