



**2026 YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS
RECRUIT, RETAIN, REST AND RECUPERATION (4R)
GRANT PROGRAM**

Background

The Youth Mental Health Providers Recruit, Retain, Rest and Recuperation Fund (4R) was established in 2023 by Carrie Towbes in partnership with the Santa Barbara Foundation, with a vision to ensure support for mental health providers delivering direct behavioral healthcare to children, youth and their families and caregivers. Grants will provide resources to organizations that provide direct support to youth and their families in order to support and improve young people's social emotional health.

The youth mental health crisis has been building for years, with the COVID-19 pandemic revealing its scale and urgency. While these challenges have affected all communities, young people have been disproportionately impacted. Global and political events, technological advances, and increased strain on schools and families have exacerbated long-standing gaps in care, leaving many youth without the social-emotional support they need. Educators, mental health professionals, parents, and young people themselves are clear: youth mental health is at a crisis point and requires immediate action.

An October 2022 survey of mental health providers and stakeholders in various settings across Santa Barbara County sought to help understand the mental and behavioral health staffing shortages that plague mental health care across the county. Key findings included a substantial number of vacancies, as well as wage disparities among positions and organizations. These shortages lead to burnout and high turnover, which compromise care for our youth at schools, healthcare facilities, and community-based organizations.

The following is guidance for organizations who are applying for this grant opportunity. If your organization would like to apply, please review the information below to submit your application.

Focus

In partnership with local funders, the 4R Grant Program supports organizations' staffing needs as they work to improve youth social emotional health and mental wellness in Santa Barbara County. Applicants must have mental health professionals providing direct services to youth, families and caregivers in Santa Barbara County. Funds may be used for the following, including but not limited to:

- Attracting and retaining youth mental health professionals (licensed clinicians and those earning hours toward licensure)
- Providing youth mental health providers with support for secondary trauma related to their work in the Santa Barbara County community.

We are particularly interested in effective recruitment and retention strategies that are innovative and collaborative.

Priorities and Definitions

Priority will be given to organizations and programs that:

- have clearly defined goals and outcomes, and a strategy and timeline in place for achieving the stated goals
- have worked to evaluate their pay structures and professionalized their compensation strategies
- have identified and plan to utilize some assessment and evaluation tools to measure grant performance and program/client outcomes

For the purposes of this grant, youth mental health providers are trained professionals dedicated to diagnosing, treating, and aiding individuals who struggle with mental health issues, trained in psychological theories, therapeutic techniques, and an empathetic approach to patient care, including licensed clinicians and clinicians in training. This work may take place in a variety of settings, including hospitals, private practices, schools, and community organizations.

Important Note: *The Foundation aims to ensure in its grantmaking a balance of geographic spread, population served, and organization size. As such, these characteristics will also be considered at the committee level when prioritizing grant awards.*

Funding Amounts and Duration

Grants amounts are up to \$10,000 and will be for a one-year period.

Submittal Procedures

Applications must be submitted through our SmartSimple grant application, which includes the following documents:

- Organizational profile (may have already been completed if organization has applied to any SBF grant programs in 2023)
- Program Budget Form
- Narrative answering the following questions:
 1. What are your goals for this grant and how will the funds help you recruit, retain, or support mental health professionals on your staff? Please include your implementation timeline and describe your organization's capacity to execute this strategy. If the funding is for staff salary, how will the position be sustained, or if not sustained, why isn't it a permanent position?
 2. Describe the planned scope of impact of this grant, including the number of youth served annually, geographic spread of service, and gap addressed.
 3. How will you evaluate the impact of these funds at the program/client level? Please explain:
 - a. How will data be collected and analyzed – this can include specific tools, documents, databases, budgets/financials, etc.?
 - b. How will you use these findings to inform decisions or improvements?
 4. Please describe what steps, if any, you have taken to evaluate your pay structure and how you plan to ensure a standard system of equitable pay.
 5. Is there any other pertinent organizational information you feel we should know?

Eligibility Requirements

- Be a certified 501(c)(3) non-profit or use a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor. Applications that do not contain a valid EIN (Tax ID) number will not be considered. Organizations using a fiscal sponsor must review the [Eligibility Criteria & FAQs](#) for additional information and instructions. The Foundation accepts applications from public entities such as schools, universities, and libraries through an affiliated or supporting 501(c)(3) organization. Please see the [Eligibility Criteria & FAQs](#) for additional qualifying information and instructions.

Important Dates

January 27, 2026	Application Launch
March 3, 2026	Application Deadline
June 2026	Award Notification

Contact Information

For questions about the Santa Barbara Foundation’s Youth Mental Health Providers R4 Grant and funding eligibility, please contact Jamie Perez, at (805) 880-9395 or jperez@sbfoundation.org.

For questions regarding technical assistance and support, please contact Hazel Naftzger, Community Engagement Data and Administrative Associate, at (805) 880-9377 or hnaftzger@sbfoundation.org.

4R Scoring Rubric Structure

Scale: 5 (Highest) to 1 (Lowest) | Maximum Score: 20 Points

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Strategy to recruit, retain, or support youth mental health professional staff positions	Clearly demonstrates a well-documented strategy with compelling rationale as an effective response for attracting, retaining, or supporting youth mental health professional staff position(s). Shows strong organizational capacity to implement the strategy. If funding staff salary, includes clearly articulated plan for sustaining the position or clear explanation of why the position is temporary.	Demonstrates solid strategy with adequate supporting rationale. Strategy aligns well with grant focus, and application shows good organizational capacity for implementation. If funding salary, provides plan for sustainability.	Describes strategy with some supporting rationale, but response is less comprehensive. Moderate organizational capacity. If funding salary, provides answer to the sustainability question.	Vaguely describes strategy with minimal reasoning of effectiveness. Limited organizational capacity to implement strategy.	Does not clearly demonstrate the strategy or strategy is not aligned with youth mental health professional services.
Scale of Impact in the Community	Demonstrates substantial reach and impact serving a significant number of youth or addressing a critical gap (in service access, expansion of reach or specialization needed). Clear articulation of the specific gap being addressed and how services will meet community needs.	Shows notable impact serving a considerable population or addressing important needs. Good explanation of gap and service response.	Demonstrates moderate impact with adequate reach. Describes gap and service with some detail but less comprehensive.	Impact is minimal or unclear. Limited reach and/or vague description of gap being addressed. Services touch few community members or have shallow effect.	Negligible or no demonstrated impact. Unclear how services benefit youth mental health or address community gaps.
Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning	Provides a detailed, feasible plan with specific data collection methods and tools clearly identified (e.g., databases, surveys, tracking systems). Describes clear, realistic processes for analyzing data and demonstrates understanding of how findings will inform decisions and program improvements during the grant period.	Presents a solid plan with defined data collection methods, tools, and analysis approaches. Includes how findings will be used to inform decisions, though some elements may lack specificity.	Provides a basic plan with some identified data collection methods and general analysis approaches. Limited detail on how findings will inform programmatic decisions or improvements.	Plan is vague, lacking specifics on data collection tools, analysis methods, or how findings will be used. Feasibility is questionable or connection between evaluation and learning is unclear.	No plan provided or plan is entirely inadequate with no clear methods, tools, or process for using findings to inform decisions.

Pay Structure Evaluation	Confirms completion of a clear, comprehensive pay structure evaluation and actionable strategies implemented to ensure a standard system of pay.	Provides a solid pay structure evaluation and efforts to standardize the system of pay, though may lack specificity or long-term perspective.	Describes a completed pay structure evaluation but lacks depth OR identifies a plan for upcoming pay structure evaluation.	Description of pay structure evaluation is vague.	No pay structure evaluation completed or system of equitable pay implemented.
--------------------------	--	---	--	---	---

Scoring Guide

- **18-20 Points = Priority for Funding:** Exceptional applications that strongly meet all criteria
- **15-17 Points = High Consideration for Funding:** Strong applications meeting most criteria well
- **12-14 Points = Consider for Funding:** Solid applications with some areas for improvement
- **8-11 Points = Low Priority, May Fund if Resources Allow:** May fund if resources allow; significant gaps in one or more areas
- **0–7 Points = Does Not Meet Criteria for Funding:** Insufficient alignment with program goals