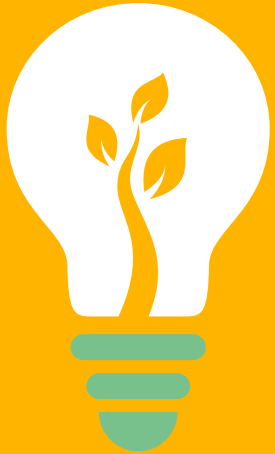




**CANNABIS &
MENTAL HEALTH**



Budding Projects Award

Growing good ideas together.

SUMMARY REPORT

cannabisandmentalhealth.ca

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Budding Projects Award Summary Report
2025

**This report was created by our team of Strategic Advisors*

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE



The Budding Projects Award (BPA) summary report was created to provide a straightforward, practical guide to help youth, youth allies, and youth serving organizations to successfully launch and manage a microgranting initiative aimed at engaging and supporting communities to:

- Create engaging community health promotion events
- Take action at a local level to create and share mental and substance use health harm reduction resources.

Please read on to learn about our journey launching our own microgranting initiative, and what we learned along the way. We hope you find it useful!



OVERVIEW

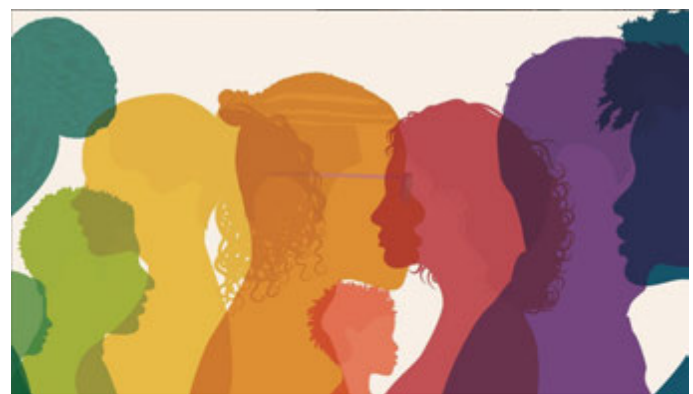
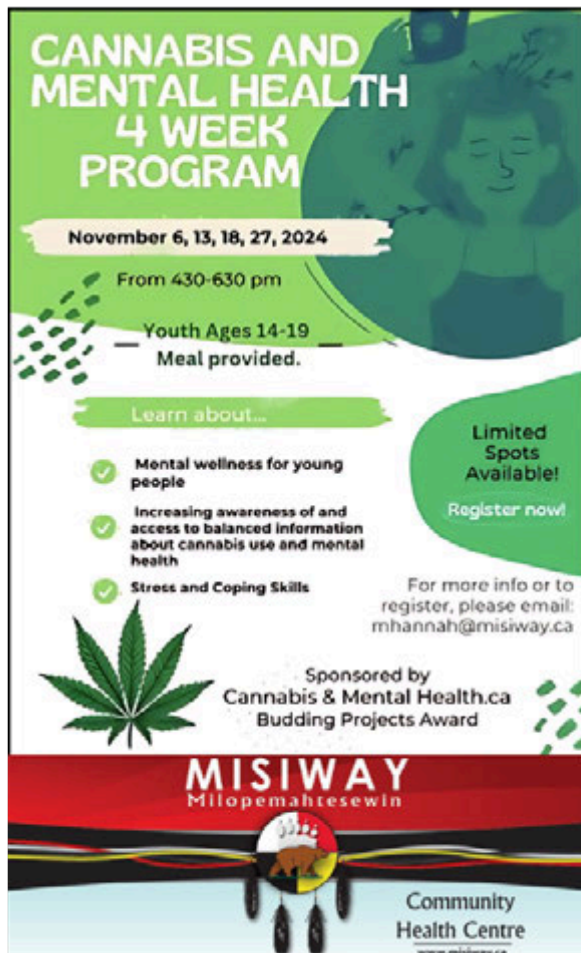


In September 2024, the Cannabis and Mental Health (C+MH) project launched the **Budding Projects Award (BPA)**. This microgrant/award provided funding of up to \$2,000 to support youth-led, community-based projects aimed at:

- Promoting mental wellness for young people and their communities;
- Increasing awareness of and access to balanced information about cannabis use and mental health, including harm reduction approaches; and
- Engaging diverse youth and voices of lived experience.

This report details the various stages of creating, delivering, and evaluating this award program.

Below are some of the BPA Projects funded



Youth Mental Health Resource Fair



PLANNING



To ensure the award would meet community needs and provide a range of options for engagement, we created two application streams: 1) Community Event and 2) Knowledge Translation and Mobilization.

1) The Community Event Award focused on bringing people together to:

- Have fun, raise awareness, build skills, and promote harm reduction approaches; and
- Support a range of activities to promote youth engagement, mental health and harm reduction, such as a community fair, arts-based initiative, or skill development workshop.

2) The Knowledge Translation and Mobilization Award focused on:

- Empowering youth to create resources sharing the project's key messages with their peers about cannabis and mental health; and
- Supporting informed decision making, choice, and the development of resources created by and for youth.

All BPA-related information was communicated through a concise Call for Proposals, which was shared during the outreach stage of our recruitment process. To maintain transparency throughout the process, we created resources for applicants, including a scoring rubric and resource guide, which we provided to all interested parties.



OUTREACH



LEVERAGING OUR NETWORK

As a national project supported by a small team, being on the ground in every community is a challenge. We rely on the assistance of our diverse network of partners to mobilize our project and its resources. To widen our reach, we leveraged our partner's networks to spread the word about the BPA, circulating our Call for Proposals to the communities they engage with. This approach proved effective, as one of our award recipients learned of the opportunity through one of our key partners.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

We started our outreach with a call to action asking youth and community members within our current network to send in suggestions to help us name the award. We incentivized engagement with a \$50 gift card for a virtual retailer. Our second post included the call for proposals introducing the award and submission deadline. It also included a link to the Award page on our website for more information. The third post included a reminder and last call for proposals, and directed people to our website for more information.

Our social media recruitment strategy focused primarily on LinkedIn and Instagram. We decided to focus on these two platforms because they generally yielded the greatest uptake and engagement throughout the project. All outreach posts were cross-posted on both platforms.



REVIEW & SELECTION



We developed a rubric to assess each submitted application in preparation for the selection process. The rubric helped guide reviewers in scoring all of the BPA applications by providing a standard framework to help assess the strength of the applications against the goals of the BPA. It helped ensure that each reviewer had consistent tools to guide their assessment and ensure an equitable approach to scoring.

Applicants were also invited to attend a mandatory drop-in information session as part of the application process. In cases where applicants weren't able to attend due to scheduling issues, we offered to meet individually to address questions. We received 16 proposals in total.

The review committee, composed of nine strategic advisors and six Youth Action Committee (YAC) members, was assembled to review each proposal. To ensure rigorous assessment, proposals were randomly assigned to reviewers, reviewed by four separate reviewers, and assigned a score out of 50. Potential conflicts of interest were noted and reviews assigned to ensure conflicts were mitigated. Out of the 16 applications received, 10 were selected for funding.

Successful proponents were notified and provided with a funding agreement for review and signature following the selection process. This agreement held both parties accountable for the project's duration by outlining the expectations, timelines and deliverables of the award. Those who were not selected were also notified and offered feedback on their proposal if desired.



PROJECT EVALUATION



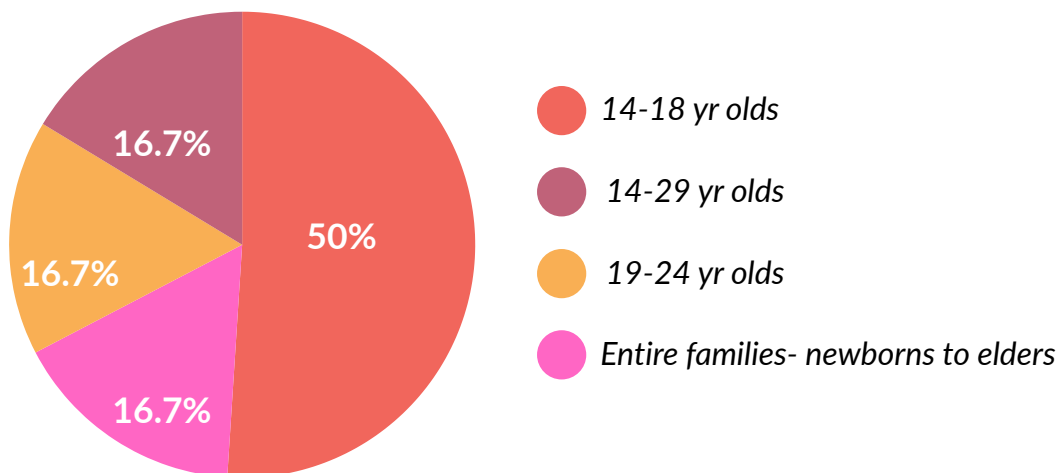
To assess the impact of the awarded projects, we created an evaluation form for the project leads to complete at the end of their projects. To maintain our low barrier approach, the evaluation form was limited to several key questions to capture reach (e.g., number of participants), participant demographics (e.g., age, identity, etc.), participant feedback, and any challenges that were encountered during the project.

Quantitative Evaluation

Of the ten projects funded, six completed the evaluation survey. The following findings were reported (n=6):

- Half (50%) of the projects engaged with youth aged 14-18 years old, while two other projects predominantly engaged with youth aged 19-24 years and 14-29 years old.

What was the predominant age of those who engaged with your BPA project?

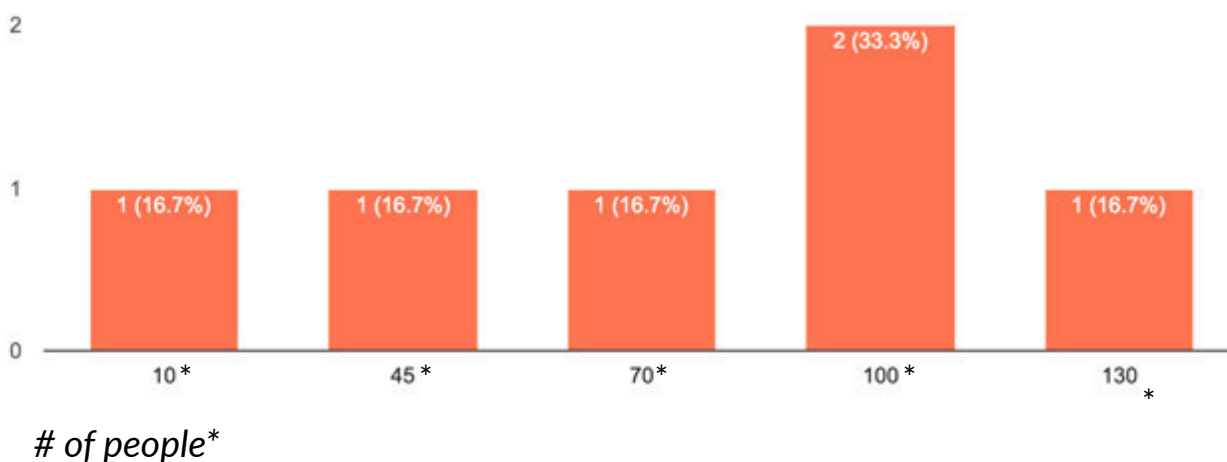


The BPA-funded projects directly engaging over **455 individuals**, with each award recipient's project reaching 10-130 individuals.

PROJECT EVALUATION



Q: Please tell us how many people were reached through your BPA project (i.e., # number of participants at the event, engaged in planning, etc.):



Qualitative Evaluation - Participant Feedback

In addition to quantitative data, we also collected qualitative data to better capture and understand the impact on individual and community levels.

Through the qualitative questions, we heard from many projects about how the BPA promoted reflection and learning in their communities:

"The information presented inspired them to rethink their current cannabis use or motivated them to remain cannabis-free"

"This project really opened some of our Youth's eyes when it comes to the impact of cannabis on our community and its use in their daily lives. Not only that, but it has really opened up more comfortable, confident relationships to ask real questions about what is happening in their daily lives."

PROJECT EVALUATION



The BPA also fostered conversations and strengthened the sense of community among many participants:

"Strengthening connection with families. Creating a connections so there is trust being in a role where were helping take care of their children. Within my role I am connecting students to doctors, mental health professionals, specialists, etc. Many parents are unable to attend these appointments in person and having a trusted community member assisting them ensures services are being accessed by our youth. My primary pathway focuses are health, mental health, safety and basic needs. [Our school] acts as a bridge between our school community and our local indigenous communities."

"The project positively impacted the target population by equipping participants with practical strategies to address mental health concerns and fostering a supportive community that encourages help-seeking behaviours. Through workshops and events, participants gained tools to manage anxiety, ADHD, distress tolerance, and depression, helping them build resilience and enhance their overall well-being."

"I think the sharing of knowledge was great, so not only did we share information but we were also able to have a comfortable conversation about the things that they are experimenting with, and without the judgement we were able to have some insight into that."

A common theme among the award recipients is the need for ongoing mental health and substance use education designed for youth:

"Growing up on a reserve is difficult for a lot of our youth out here. Substance abuse starts young from generational trauma and learned behaviors. Having programming like this to ensure we educate our youth at a young age will allow them to have the ability to confidently choose not to partake in substances due to learning from a young age."

"I think this is something that needs to continue. Especially in our community where cannabis is so readily available."

LESSONS LEARNED



Challenges	Lessons Learned	Recommendations
Virtual outreach & engagement	It can be challenging to engage communities directly using virtual methods. It is crucial to leverage your networks to spread the word about the award. Host 'get to know you & your project' sessions to engage with groups/areas that are outside of the usual partners you typically engage with.	Make sure to provide several virtual, drop-in sessions for award applicants during all stages of the award program. This can help boost engagement and foster a sense of community among participants.
Meeting folks 'where they are at'	As we developed this award, we learned that creating multiple streams for programming (e.g., community building or knowledge translation) widens the scope for the types of projects.	Create options for engagement that align with the interests and needs of youth and their community members/allies.
Budget	The BPA was C+MH's first award program, so it was started on a small scale. In the future, we would budget more time and funds towards the program.	Allocate a generous budget to accommodate longer projects and/or greater number of projects.
Timelines	Some award recipients had to reschedule planned events due to unforeseen circumstances. It is important to anticipate these delays and plan accordingly.	Arrange a longer timeline for projects to be completed in the event that projects encounter a delay.

To learn more about the awarded projects, [click HERE](#).



IMPLEMENTATION TIPS



Use your networks

- Reach out to people you know who are connected to their communities and ask them to help you spread the word. Doing so helps ensure your outreach is equitable and reaches diverse voices and communities.

Build your relationship with the awardees

- It is important to prioritize relationship and community building, especially when working with marginalized populations.
- We attributed our successful engagement to ensuring our processes were non-hierarchical (e.g individuals and organizations could apply), and low barrier (simple application and evaluation form).

Ensure transparency between your organization and the award recipients

- Make sure application and budget forms are clear and comprehensive before sharing the opportunity. Share timelines, key milestones, and any additional resources (e.g., grading rubric).
- If you are a youth ally, make sure you are engaging in moral and meaningful youth engagement and participation. To learn more, check out [this resource](#).
- To learn more about best practices for engaging with Indigenous peoples and communities, check out [this resource](#).



CONTACT



For more information, please connect!

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