

The cover art features a close-up of vibrant pink flowers, possibly peonies, with lush green ferns and leaves in the background. The composition is split vertically, with the flowers on the left and the foliage on the right. A white horizontal line is positioned near the top of the page, and another is near the bottom.

**Trailhead Institute's
Youth Sexual Health Program Board:**

Lessons Learned and Recruitment Process

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COVER ARTWORK BY

Aves (He/It) a young person from Inside Out Youth Services

FEBRUARY 2023

This document captures the process used to develop recommendations for the State of Adolescent Sexual Health (SASH) report, lessons learned, and survey feedback.

Process for Recruitment

The SASH report has relied on professionals and state or coalition staff to serve on the advisory board to develop recommendations and the SASH report. This approach has value; however, it also excludes many perspectives and voices from the development of the report. As a result, Trailhead intentionally focused on centering an anti-oppression framework in this iteration of the development of the youth sexual health recommendations and framework development for the SASH. This resulted in recruiting differently and more intentionally focusing on people of color with lived experience, who are not paid as a part of their work to sit on boards and committees.

Consulting Within Your Context was hired to develop a process and facilitate meetings. Consulting Within Your Context initially focused on developing an email with a specific ask and shared with trusted partners to help get the word out for recruitment. Partner conversations were held to share the vision and to get their ideas for people to connect with using this frame of recruiting members.

Sample language used in emails to potential partners:

I was recently hired by Trailhead to support the development of statewide recommendations for the SASH report (State of Adolescent Sexual Health). Adrienne Wall is the Trailhead project lead and cc'd on this email. Trailhead is centering an anti-oppression framework and as such is looking to recruit more diversely and inclusively for the board who will be tasked with developing statewide recommendations. This means that the board will be composed of folx who are traditionally not at the table (i.e., not state folx, not statewide coalitions, essentially not folx who are paid to go to meetings). We are starting from a place of acknowledging that any and all sexual health recommendations must be situated in creating an inclusive context - because we know our systems and laws are operating as they should, we need to address racist/sexist/ableist systems in order for sexual health to be impactful for all. This is a relatively short time period (September - January 2022) and Trailhead will be providing stipends (\$1,000 total) to folx for their participation. We are not tied to a set way to convene partners (i.e., monthly meetings) and want to meet people where they are at to access perspectives that have been missing or silenced in the youth sexual health space.

Several partners missed the focus on non-traditional/non-compensated folx for the board and required follow up to clarify the priority and focus of the board recruitment. For example, one executive director offered to serve on the board; however, upon follow up to clarify that lived experience was prioritized over professional experience, she recanted and offered to identify a more appropriate person. Additionally, partners misunderstood the intentional outreach and offered to post the advisory board position on listservs. Our team clarified that we were asking for their expertise and relationship skills in identifying folx that would align with the purpose and values of the board rather than using traditional mechanisms (i.e., listservs, email blasts) to recruit board membership.

Consulting Within Your Context and Trailhead staff met with all potential board members to discuss the project and answer questions. This process took approximately two months, and this time was crucial to the successful recruitment of a diverse board representing varied intersectional experiences.

Meetings varied from 30 minutes to an hour and consisted of potential board members sharing their experience of sexual health and asking lots of questions about the project. In many ways it felt more like an interview for the project idea rather than an interview for a board member role. This is important to note because it created transparent conversations and demonstrated power sharing by making it less about “hiring” a board member and more about the individual being interviewed assessing the fit for the project, pressing on issues like trauma-informed spaces, consensus in decision-making, and identification of the audience for the project. A key discussion item was asking potential board members what they needed to feel safe within the board space. This will be a continual check in question, acknowledging that lived experiences may be traumatic and that building trust takes time.

A total of eleven adult board members were recruited with an intentional focus on racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, different abilities, and immigration experience.

A limitation of this approach was the absence of experiences representing the healthcare system and the juvenile justice system, making recommendations for those sectors particularly challenging. A further challenge was the broad swath of areas that intersect with youth sexual health. Future iterations of the SASH report may want to consider prioritizing sectors and thus informing recruitment based on what is possible for Trailhead to implement themselves and/or advocate with partners.

Youth Facilitator

Consulting Within Your Context proposed hiring a youth facilitator to support and elevate youth voice within this project. Partners that work with youth were engaged to get the word out about the position. A short job description was developed and shared, and interviews were conducted. Consulting Within Your Context prioritized hiring a student still in high school rather than someone just out of high school. Once hired, this person was charged with developing a recruitment plan and outreach approach to recruit a youth-specific board.

The youth facilitator developed a description of the youth board member role and intentionally connected with partners that work with youth to get the word out. This effort resulted in a total of four youth board members, recruited with intentional focus on racial identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Further three of the young people recruited are current students at high schools in Colorado and one person is currently enrolled in college. The youth facilitator met with each board member to discuss the project, share goals, hear what interests board members had in the space, and to inquire about what was needed to feel safe. Initially the youth board met separate from the full board to allow trust to be built and upon agreement by the youth board members, the two groups merged and had collective meetings.

One area of confusion was the permission requirements for middle and high school youth to participate on a Trailhead board. The project manager met with HR to clarify requirements around this. As a result, a permission to participate form was developed by Consulting Within Your Context. A final version of this document can be accessed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ymoe5UIEW3iXHR707wbHnvK04fVgEGSJ/view?usp=sharing>

The team decided to ask all members to sign the permission to participate form. Young people under 18 must also have their parents sign the form.

In the future, Trailhead may want to consider whether parental permission is necessary, paying particular attention to barriers that may be created for young people in accessing parental permission. If it is not a requirement, there may be merit in removing the requirement for parental permission to participate.

Barriers to Recruitment

Compensation

An interesting problem arose in recruiting staff who work for a nonprofit organization related to payment. The organization created an internal policy that requires any payment (i.e., speaking fee, stipend, etc.) be paid to the organization rather than the individual directly. This means that the approach Trailhead used to compensate individuals for their lived experience/expertise rather than their professional experience would not work for this organization. After conversation with staff at the nonprofit organization, Consulting Within Your Context sent the following email to support staff in speaking with their Executive Director to ask for an exemption to the policy.

Email sent to individuals:

I wanted to send you both a follow up email regarding each of your participation on the advisory board. As you know, Trailhead has been funded to develop statewide recommendations for the SASH report (State of Adolescent Sexual Health). Trailhead is centering an anti-oppression framework and as such is looking to recruit more diversely and inclusively for the board who will be tasked with developing statewide recommendations. This means that the board will be composed of folx who are traditionally not at the table (i.e., not state folx, not statewide coalitions, essentially not folx who are paid to go to meetings).

We are starting from a place of acknowledging that any and all sexual health recommendations must be situated in creating an inclusive context - because we know our systems and laws are operating as they should, we need to address racist/sexist/ableist systems in order for sexual health to be impactful for all. This is a relatively short time period (September - January 2022) and Trailhead will be providing stipends (\$1,000 total) to folx for their participation. We are not tied to a set way to convene partners (i.e., monthly meetings) and want to meet people where they are at to access perspectives that have been missing or silenced in the youth sexual health space.

We are interested in individual's lived experiences rather than their professional roles, though we recognize that they often overlap. Thus, we would like to invite you both to participate on the advisory board as individuals rather than staff. This is what we are asking of all members of the board to ensure intentional engagement and development of recommendations led by lived experience, particularly experiences that have been silenced and excluded in the youth sexual health space. We hope you both are able and interested in participating. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Staff shared this email with leadership at their organization and were able to get an exemption from the organization's policy and participate on the board.

Stipend Barriers - IRS Policy: \$599 per year

In conversation with staff from Voces Unidas for Justice, the consulting team was asked how we were addressing the barrier created by offering the \$1,000 stipend in one lump sum. Consulting Within Your Context learned that you must report any income over \$599 each year to the IRS and that this had the potential of impacting an individual's benefits.

Consulting Within Your Context emailed board members to let them know about this barrier and offered two options to receive the stipend:

- Option 1: receive the full \$1,000 this year
- Option 2: receive \$500 this fiscal year and an additional \$500 next fiscal year. Option 2 avoids penalties for those receiving benefits

Board members selected which option worked best for them. Trailhead staff ensured that their fiscal team was onboard with this approach and tracked internally folx preferred payment.

Childcare Support for Board Members

One of the young people on the board was pregnant and inquired about childcare support during meetings. The member mentioned that this would be helpful. This childcare question was sent to Trailhead to see what was possible to support folx who both are taking care of children and working, particularly in a pandemic environment when doing multiple roles is acceptable and expected.

Trailhead determined that it could support childcare costs for board members. This option was offered to all board members; however, no one requested this support.

Bank Barrier

One of the youth board members notified our team that they were racially profiled at the bank while cashing their \$1,000 check from Trailhead. This young person was with their mother at the bank and the cashiers accused them of stealing the check. The cashier went as far as to call Trailhead to see if the cash was stolen. Trailhead told the bank the cash was not stolen, and the cashier finally cashed the check.

This story was relayed to the Trailhead team and elevated to both the finance team and the Executive Director. The Executive Director called and emailed the bank to say that this is not how their partners will be treated and she is requiring that the bank evaluate their processes to ensure that this is prevented in the future. The bank is reviewing this information and will get back to Trailhead once it has done an internal investigation.

Touch Points

"Touch Points" rather than monthly meetings.

Consulting Within Your Context staff quickly realized that having a formal, singular monthly meeting was not going to achieve the desired results for this project. Instead, the requirement for board members was to participate in six "touch points" over the next five months. Touch points looked different based on individual needs, interests, and capacity. For example, they included written feedback, emails, individual calls, small groups, and large group discussion. Touchpoints created the flexibility to meet people where they are at and support authentically engaging partners in ways that are comfortable and easy for them. Notes were shared to ensure everyone can connect and learn about one another.

Touch Points were structured around three themes: getting to know one another, sharing experiences and hope for youth sexual health, and translating experiences into recommendations.

Consulting Within Your Context led the board through a community agreements process to ensure clear expectations of participation. These agreements are included on every agenda and reminders are provided at the beginning of each touch point around the space agreements.

Community Agreements (adopted from AORTA: Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance)

1. One Mic, One Voice - One person speaks at a time.
2. No One Knows Everything; Together We Know a Lot - Our questions and curiosity have as much value as our knowledge.
3. Move Up, Move Up -
 - If you're someone who tends not to speak a lot, please move into more of a speaking role.
 - If you speak often, please move into a listening role.
4. Do not fear "messing up" - We aren't always going to say it just right and that's okay. We want everyone to feel comfortable participating, even if it doesn't sound exactly like you hope.
 - Apologize if/when you mess up.
5. Be curious - Try to approach challenges and problems with questions.
6. Keep conversations confidential.
7. We acknowledge that we live on stolen indigenous land, and this directly ties to our work when thinking about the statistics related to sexual violence against indigenous women. We agree to center and honor this truth in all our conversations.

A critical Touch Point agenda component was the ask at the beginning of each meeting for members to share their name, pronouns, and any of their personal identities that impact how they show up in this space. The latter part of this created space to acknowledge current events and how they impacted individuals' identities. And it gave individual's autonomy to talk about what parts of their identity were showing up for them, rather than the group making assumptions.

The following outlines the Touch Point meeting schedule. In addition to these meeting times, 1:1 conversations were held and written communication was used to engage members each month.

1st Touch Point

- September 24, 2021, 11:00-12:30pm
- September 29, 2021, 5:30p-7:00pm

2nd Touch Point

- October 20, 2021, 5:00-6:30pm - Youth-specific board meeting - decision to join full board made at this meeting.
- October 25, 2021, 4:00-5:30pm
- October 29, 2021, 11-12:30pm

3rd Touch Point

- November 15, 2021, 4-5:30pm

4th Touch Point

- December 10, 2021, 9-10:30am
- December 14, 2021 4-5:30pm

5th Touch Point

- January 14, 2022, 12-1:30pm
- 1:1 discussion
- Written feedback

6th Touch Point

- Survey Monkey - feedback on the experience and process used for this project.

A key aspect of this whole project was coming from a place of understanding that this project would not always be a priority for folx and that their health and well-being mattered more than attending a meeting. This was consistently communicated by the Consulting Within Your Context team and board members appreciated the flexibility. It should be noted that the work still got done, without arbitrary expectations of timeliness and participation.

Trailhead Expectations

Consulting Within Your Context developed an expectations document for Trailhead as both an organization and its leadership. This document outlines expectations that board members can have of Trailhead in this process and ensure that power dynamics are addressed from the beginning. The goal of the document is to ensure bi-directional partnership, autonomy, and respect. This agreement acknowledges and disrupts the status quo relationship between organizations and boards and is recommended as a best practice for Trailhead to consider across all its boards. This document, accessible below, was shared with members and discussed at the October board meeting. Members acknowledged that they had not seen a document like this before.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iuQrPr5H8elRaVaJIQC_GLfHMdnr3XC9/view?usp=sharing

Youth Sexual Health Program Board Feedback Summary

In January, board members received a survey monkey link requesting feedback on their experience on the YSHPB. The survey consisted of five total questions.

1. What was helpful about the approach used to develop the Youth Sexual Health recommendations? Or what did you like/value about this space?
2. In what ways could this space/process have been improved for you?
3. Were harms caused by this space and/or process that need to be addressed? If so, how would you like for them to be addressed?
4. What advice do you have for Trailhead going forward, as it continues to center community in its work? Specifically, do you have any advice for Trailhead on how to better engage communities impacted by a lack of awareness of sexual health resources?
5. Anything else you would like to share?

A total of five people responded to the survey. Feedback is below.

What was helpful about the approach used to develop the Youth Sexual Health recommendations? Or what did you like/value about this space?

I enjoyed hearing from others in a group setting. Really helpful to brainstorm and a great way to learn.

I really appreciated the intention to make this space and the recommendations inclusive and representative of minoritized populations in sex/education. There was a lot of space left for people to speak on their mental statuses and racialized experiences, which I thought was really helpful in getting to some of the root issues with sex Ed now and how it can be better.

I appreciated all the ways I could give feedback from virtual meetings, emails, and surveys. It made it easier to fully participate in a way that fit my schedule.

Everyone's unique perspectives and opinions were equally taken into consideration always.

I really appreciated the flexibility and how understanding everyone was with scheduling conflicts and the complications that came up in everyday life. I valued how all the members and leaders were respectful of individual experiences and triggers.

In what ways could this space/process have been improved for you?

Although different perspectives were seen and captured by the data collected, I feel we had missed perspectives from other groups that were not included such as parents and healthcare professionals.

I think I would have liked a couple more meetings to discuss the draft. I did like the building and sharing and feedback sessions along the way as well.

I think this process was great. I feel a lot of our feedback will have to be implemented and improved by the schools in question but I very much feel like we did our part.

I don't believe that this space needs improvement.

I honestly have no suggestions for improvement as the space was functional for me and I had no issues with it.

Were harms caused by this space and/or process that need to be addressed? If so, how would you like for them to be addressed?

I saw none.

I can't think of much. Obviously execution and intention sometimes have dissonance, but clear intention matters more to me personally, so it seemed like the space existed from a really good place.

I did not experience any harms.

No.

I didn't have any harms with this space at all, everyone was really respectful.

What advice do you have for Trailhead going forward, as it continues to center community in its work? Specifically, do you have any advice for Trailhead on how to better engage communities impacted by a lack of awareness of sexual health resources?

I think a great way to hear from different perspectives could come in the way of a town hall.

I would place more emphasis on getting more diverse perspectives in terms of finding more medical professionals, Colorado residents/students, and people from low income communities to share their perspectives and feedback. Also I think engaging less abstract notions of community can help too, start with who you know and who you care about and move from there. If you're not finding the communities that may need more attention, then make sure you're calling on people who already have connections to those communities. Overall, I think trailhead is doing a good job. I haven't been in a lot of spaces that are at least TRYING to do equity work.

Outreach and education are needed for the community. Our suggestions will fall on deaf ears if they don't understand why/how to implement and the importance of implementation.

I think trailhead is taking the right steps in community work. I like how there is diversity and equality when it comes to our inputs.

I'm not sure if Trailhead already does this kind of stuff, but releasing informative resources that can be used in public spaces like schools, recreational centers, etc. An example would be simple informational packets with basic information on sexual health, safety, and resources, as well as websites with more in depth information for different audiences and experiences.

Anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

Not at this time.

Thank you for this opportunity. I really enjoyed being able to contribute to the shaping of sexuality education in CO.

I enjoyed being apart of this and am very grateful for the opportunity!

I think the way this was formatted was wonderful. The discussions were really enlightening and showed me not only other people's experiences but helped me inform myself on other issues going on with sexual health. I enjoyed being able to share my thoughts, ideas, and experiences in such a respectful space.