



WE GOT THIS!

Youth Mental Health Summit



Documenting the Youth Summit Process and Lessons Learned

Prepared For:

Denver Public Health & Environment



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Guiding children's mental health strategy

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Introduction

In 2022, the City and County of Denver hosted its first mental health summit, *We Got This!* This summit series comprised two school-based pilot events as preparation and practice events before the main metro area youth-focused summit – by youth, for youth – which included informational sessions, music, mindfulness activities, and a keynote motivational speaker.

The objectives of the *We Got This!* youth summit events were to bring together teens and young adults from across the state to raise the awareness of the stressors teens face today; provide opportunities to explore a variety of coping mechanisms; increase knowledge of and increase access to mental health services; and to destigmatize the conversation around mental health and elevate the discussion within the community.

This guide was developed to promote replication through documentation of the summit, and identification of successful strategies, processes, and results.

“When we provide opportunity to talk about what is actually happening, to demonstrate vulnerability, to talk about what needs to get done, we get a lot further.”

-We Got This! Volunteer

How To Use This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help youth and their collaborating communities and schools understand the purpose, activities, outcomes, and logistics of implementation of a youth summit to achieve intended results. It documents the conceptualization, team development, planning, content development, next steps, and lessons learned from the We Got This! youth summit and can serve to help others identify the elements that need to be clearly defined and enable communities to be strategic in their adoption of this summit model.

The *We Got This!* youth summit approach was unique, and this documentation guide serves to inform the standardization and scaling of what worked in the planning and implementation of the summit, and provide lessons learned in the process.



What Makes *We Got This!* Unique?

Youth drove this. Youth asked for this. Youth made this happen. *We Got This!* was developed by youth, for youth following loss of teens in the community by suicide and the need for action.

The City and County of Denver teamed up with youth, schools from across the Denver metro area and other health, mental health, and community partners to provide a platform for teens and young adults to speak honestly and frankly about mental health and wellness. The *We Got This!* youth summit brought Denver's youth together to RAISE AWARENESS of the stressors teens are facing today, EXPLORE a variety of coping mechanisms through workshops, safe spaces, and conversations, ADVOCATE for accessible mental health services, and ELEVATE the discussion within the community.

We Got This! Was a robust event that brought together students, health, and mental health professionals, school personnel, and community partners to engage in thought-provoking conversations about ways youth and adults together can innovate and inspire action to achieve a culture where young people feel supported.

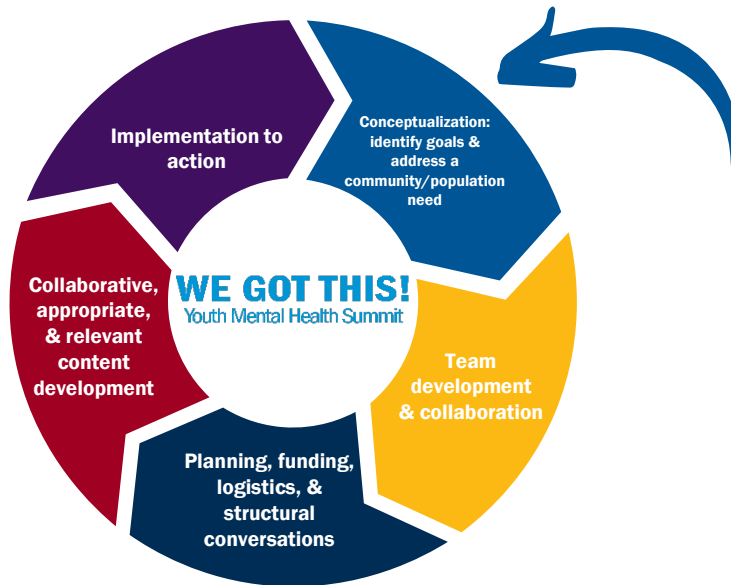


We Got This! Framework

The following framework is used throughout this document to guide the reader through conceptualization, team development, planning, content development, next steps, and lessons learned from the We Got This! youth summit.



Conceptualization: Identify goals and address a community/population need



We Got This! developed from focus groups with youth, with youth guiding each step along the way. Youth said they wanted more education on learning how to cope with a changing world, helping friends or family with mental health concerns, and how to build healthy relationships.

A youth summit guided by youth provides an authentic forum for young people and their community partners to organize, learn, network, and build confidence, while addressing issues of importance to them. Youth have critical roles in addressing issues that impact them directly, and they can become some of the best leaders in envisioning solutions.

A youth-driven summit can benefit involved youth as well as the people in their communities and schools where they spend time by:

- Building stronger supportive networks
- Better connecting with allies
- Determining needed changes to make communities better
- Reinforcing personal commitments to their communities



Goals!

- Youth feel **EDUCATED** on how to live mentally healthy lives
- Youth have **RESOURCES** (e.g. coping skills, therapy options, suicide prevention resources, community help)
- Youth **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS** with their peers and find common humanity in others
Youth find **HOPE** and **INSPIRATION**
- Students and community members have access to **MEANINGFUL INFORMATION** to support youth suicide prevention and mental health

Team development & collaboration



We Got This! believed in the strength and power of partnership between youth and adults. Partnership that goes far beyond adults asking youth about their experiences, in which adults and youth work collectively together towards school and community improvement. Youth ownership of a summit can be one of the most important factors of success.

Organizers found it important to utilize current partnerships, and also to expand into opportunities for new partnerships. Planning involved youth, city/county government, health care, and education partners. Others who were involved along the way included nonprofit organizations, parents/families, the entertainment industry, professional athletes, and elected officials.

Collaboration occurred through multiple modalities, including online meetings, in-person, and sharing of documents online.

Having a community presence at the event was an important element, bringing community vendors, organizations, and nonprofits to join in to have informational tables at the event, provide giveaways, and offer resources for attendees.

Planning, funding, logistics, & structural conversations

Creating a planning committee for an event can reap real benefits rather than going it alone as a single agency or entity, including providing a broader variety of ideas, creating shared ownership, sharing responsibility, and wider recruitment strategies.

The *We Got This!* planning committee worked on the following decisions together:

- Location and date
- Goals/outcomes
- Budget and how to fund the event
- Invitations, including: ensuring youth participation, geographic areas served, and creation/design of invitations
- Recruitment and advertising/awareness
- Registration process and tracking
- Event agenda
- Session content



Organizers found it important to attend to the big picture (such as purpose and outcomes) as well as the details (such as run of show, session timelines, and data collection).

While utilizing an event planning expert can be valuable, it's important to ensure you make good use of your current human resources and balance the event planner's skillset with your own staff capacity.

The youth summit was a one day event, with two school-based pilot events occurring in the months preceding the summit to practice and learn before the main summit. The summit began with a gathering of the full group of attendees for a welcome from youth and city leaders, then offered entertainment and inspirational speakers before moving into breakout sessions. Students attended sessions as cohorts with a facilitator, so they moved through the day together as cohorts. The summit ended with raffles, musical entertainment, lunch, and spoken word and mediation/yoga practices. Full agendas for the summit and pilot events can be found in attachment B.

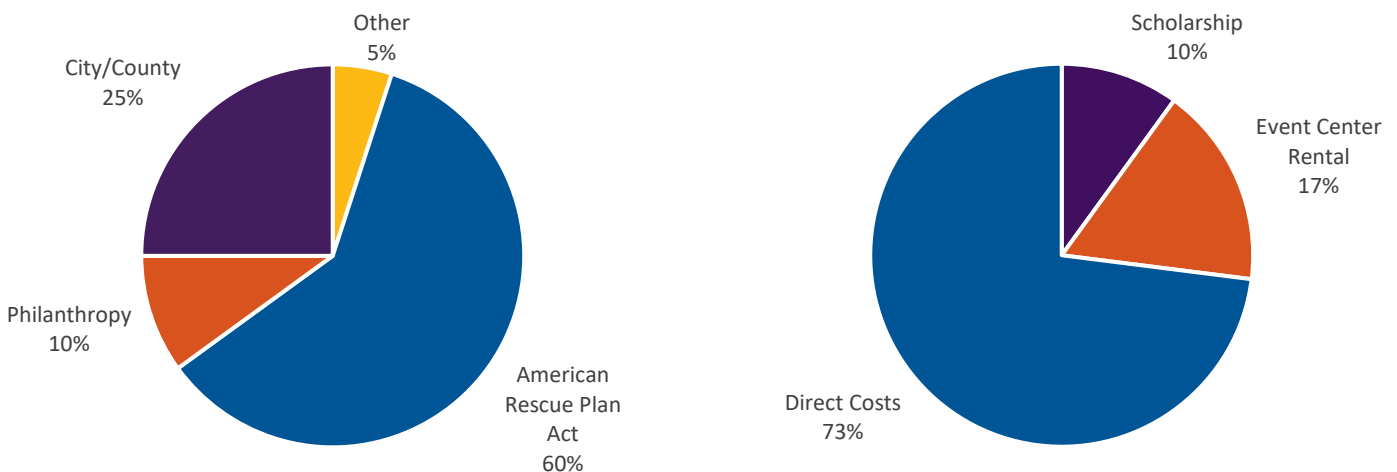
THERE WERE FOUR KEY SUMMIT ACTIVITIES:

1. Inspirational Activities
2. Session Workshops
3. Formal Information Transfer & Networking
4. Informal Networking



Funding and budget

The youth summit had a budget of \$125,000 (excluding the school-based pilots). The following provides a summary of where the funds came from, and how they were spent. This income and expense information can be used to model a budget for a summit.



Collaborative, appropriate, & relevant content development



Workshop/session content was informed by focus groups with youth. Planners then worked with several clinical community partners to develop a list of behavioral health categories that could be addressed. Planners developed a survey around these, rated by youth as high/med/low, then worked with Colorado's suicide prevention office to get the survey disseminated approximately 6 months prior to the summit. The survey closed after 10 days with 2400 responses. Factor analysis was completed on the responses to identify 3 major themes and subcategories. Planners then recruited 15 youth - 12 under age 18, 3 over age 18 - paired with clinicians to develop breakout sessions. Youth developed the focus of the sessions, in consultation with clinicians, reviewed by clinicians and educators, and approved by the City and County of Denver in consultation with the core planning committee. Sessions were reviewed for evidence base as well as relevance/appropriateness for youth.

Implementation to action

Sometimes there are one-time events for students centered around a specific topic. A youth summit can be developed with the intent to spark action and have a lasting impact. Participants can engage in action planning during the event, keeping notes on new ideas they might want to try, or at the end of the day through group or individual thinking about how to turn what they got from the day into action. As youth go into the summit, they can be encouraged to think about action after the summit. However, this should feel like a safe request to youth. Students told us that it's important during implementation of the summit that they shouldn't feel pressured to have an action step after the summit or like there is an overwhelming ask of them.



We asked youth if the information hit the mark, and youth provided feedback which will inform future work, and identify what can make the impact of the summit last.

They came up with the following **ACTION IDEAS**:

- Continue this event every year
- Expand to younger grades
- Have conversations about follow up actions
- Debrief in classrooms

Student Reflections



What brought students to the event?

- ▶ Recommended by family, teacher, or school staff
- ▶ A teacher saw students' level of stress and recommended it
- ▶ "It was mandatory"
- ▶ "Teachers/school staff brought us"
- ▶ "Wanted to miss a day of school"

Hey,
whatever
works!

What did students take away from it?

- Concrete takeaways (cards from the Liv Project)
- Knowing how to better support friends
- Knowing the questions to ask (from QPR)
- That I am "not the only one"
- "You're worth it!"
- "It's ok to not be ok"
- "Eye opening"
- "I learned about myself"

What did students hope to get out of it?

- Hoped to get a better outlook
- Emotional understanding
- Learning different

"It was interesting to see how bigger people, with big jobs, have mental health problems too"

Overall, students gained a greater understanding of the shared experiences they have with others regarding mental health.

Student Reflections (continued)

What went well?

Sessions that shared the personal experiences of others

Hearing each other's voices

Presence of youth voice in discussions

"Having people our age talk"

Music

Building connections with peers

What could have been improved?

- Students reported that they had little knowledge or understanding of expectations of the event; some expressed having difficulty with the opening session and the focus on suicide
- A student remarked they were stressed when talking about suicide rates
- Students requested to have been better prepared for the topic
- Increase listening to students' perspectives of mental health
- "More people my own age speaking"
- "More opportunity to talk among one another"

Student Reflections (Continued)

"Ensure connections are made that can extend beyond the event itself."

"Have follow-up and spin-offs to continue to push the narrative."

"Make sure presenters listen to and understand students."

"At times, topic/presentations felt overwhelming or stressful, particularly related to the topic of suicide."

"Allow and provide opportunity for the "strong" students to be vulnerable."

"Have discussion in classrooms to have meaningful conversations after the event."

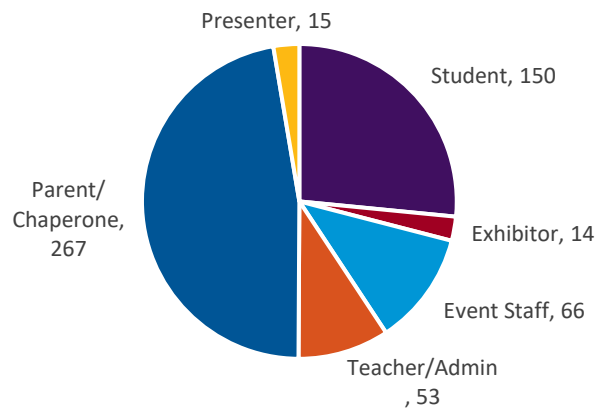
"Be thoughtful about triggers when doing an event like this; identify supports and ensure it's staffed with mental health professionals."

"Have cohorts or leaders assigned to student groups."

Data Highlights

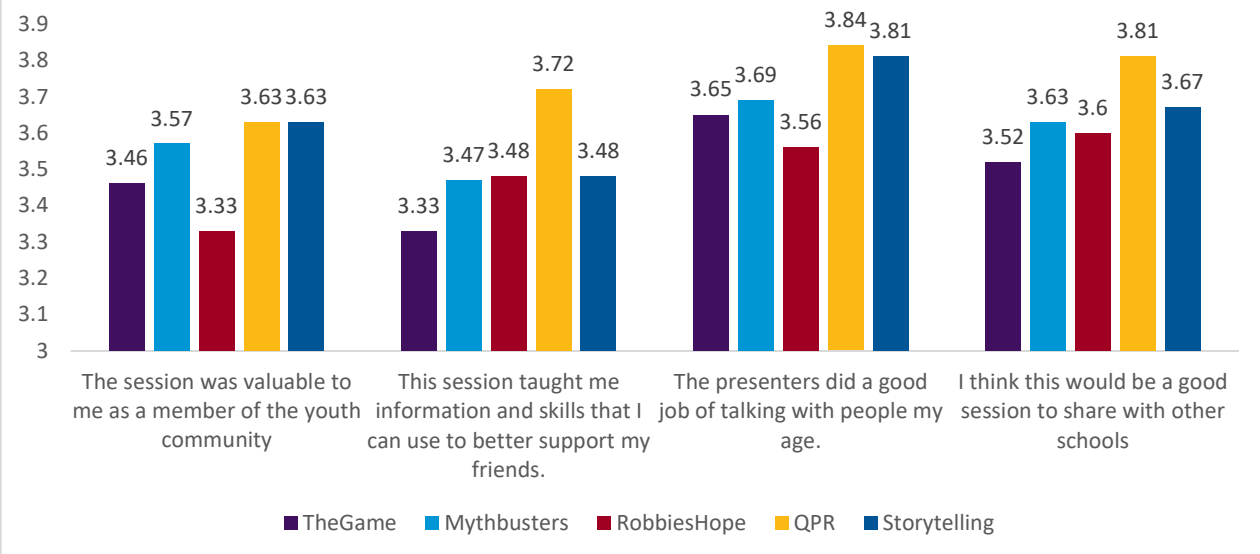
Data were collected during the youth summit to understand who the participants were in attendance, the satisfaction with individual sessions, and pre and post event learning. Of the 325 attendees at the main summit, 150 of these were students.

Youth Summit Attendees (n=35)



Students expressed overall satisfaction with the summit sessions, with no ratings below a 3 out of 4.

Average Youth Satisfaction of Ratings of Individual Sessions
(4 = Maximum Rating)



Youth Pre- and Post-Scores

There was a significant increase from youth pre-scores to their post-scores in the following categories:

- Knowledge about signs and symptoms of mental health concerns
 - Confidence in the youth's ability to seek mental health support for either a friend or themselves
 - Motivation to improve their mental health
 - Knowledge of mental health supports and resource
-

We Got This! Video

Please scan the QR code below to visit the youtube video of the We Got This! Summit video

