

Contact: Jodi L. Schwartz, Executive Director
jodi@lyric.org / 415-793-3220 (cell)

"Mitch dreads going to school each and every day. At his middle school, he is made fun of and shunned because of his sexual orientation. Sometimes he skips school to avoid the bullying he is frequently subjected to. 'I don't understand why people look down on us. I am still the same person whether I am LGBT or not.'"

"LGBTQ youth participants in focus groups expressed that a safe learning environment free from harassment is something all young people should be able to rely on at school. LGBTQ youth are particularly vulnerable to bullying and harassment and need safe spaces to learn."

[DCYF 2016 Community Needs Assessment Excerpts]

FUNDING REQUESTED: \$175,885 for Middle School Q Groups @ 10 Schools

LYRIC's QGroup program successfully engages vulnerable LGBTQ youth in SFUSD middle schools (MS), especially those who are trans/gender non-conforming (TGNC)—a population LYRIC has been serving for ~30 years. In the 2015 SFUSD MS Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, 4% (~367) students identified as LGB, 15% (~1469) were "questioning" their sexual orientation, and 1% (~97) identified as T.

Many LGBTQ youth have violent or harmful school experiences—70% of SFUSD MS students report hearing homophobic/transphobic slurs, 52% of LGBT MS students report being bullied at school, 43% of LGBT MS students have been in a physical fight.

In late FY1516/FY1617, LYRIC and SFUSD partnered to pilot a new format for LYRIC's middle school engagement based on the success of the Q Group model in high schools. Adapted for the developmental needs of a younger population, Q Groups in middle schools were enthusiastically embraced by LGBTQ students and school site staff. **In 2016, 87% were students of color and 73% were TGNC. Pre-/post-test evaluations show impressive improvement in sense of safety at school (69% vs. 92%), closeness with people at school (69% vs. 100%), and LGBTQ identity pride (83% vs. 100%).** As a result, SFUSD asked that we expand from three middle schools to five middle schools in FY1718. Participation levels from FY1617 to FY1718 have more than doubled (to 34 enrolled students) and demand for new groups to be added has created a waiting list.¹ Of the 34 youth enrolled in Q Groups as of the mid-point FY1718, 100% are LGBTQ, 85% are students of color and 47% are trans/gender non-conforming.

LYRIC is the only QGroup provider in SFUSD MSs.

¹ While we were able to add a second group at Vis Valley MS, three of our other school sites have requested a second group with a combined list of 20 additional students interested in joining a Q Group as of January 2018, and an average of two new students asking to be enrolled each month.

QGroups are confidential, school-based social support groups that address barriers to positive identity formation and connection to supportive LGBTQQ peers/adults, and connect students to external resources to support their health & wellness. Groups increase awareness of cultural and gender diversity through topics such as coming out/healthy relationships/intersectional identity development. A QGroup student reported: "I liked being able to be open about myself and my identities."

Trans/gender non-conforming middle school age students in particular are at a critical developmental point in their identity formation, and the intersectionality embedded in the identity formation of trans/gender non-conforming students of color demonstrate an even greater need for community connection and belonging. In addition to important connections made with LYRIC's trans POC identified Q Group Coordinator and Q Group peers, Q Group participants take significant steps in sharing their true identities with key people in their lives. 100% of school social workers and counselors have fostered connections to Q Group participants, linking students to psychotherapy and gender affirmative health clinic services, and 50% of Q Group participants have come out to close friends and family after enrolling in a Q Group. Youth now enrolled in Q Groups had previously skipped school, but now are reconnecting specifically because they come to school to attend Q Group. **Without the Q Group, these students likely would have remained isolated and invisible to school staff, peers, and family, and started down a path of disconnection from school, family, and community.** In engaging with LGBTQQ youth across the age spectrum, we see the devastating effects of isolation and invisibility in our Disconnected LGBTQQ TAY who struggle through layers of trauma as we work to support their reconnection to school, work, and community. Funding the Middle School Q Groups would go a long way towards mitigating this form of trauma.

SFUSD provided LYRIC a Letter of Support for our Middle School Q Groups and has shared its excitement about expanding the Q Groups to more of SFUSD middle schools. When LYRIC shared with SFUSD staff that the Middle School Q Group proposal was not funded, staff from SFUSD's School Health Programs/LGBTQQ Support Services were extremely disappointed, stating that no other community program exists to serve LGBTQQ middle school students.

LYRIC submitted for continued funding for MS Q Groups from DCYF, received a 96 point score including points for meeting DCYF's "equity" definition, and statements that the proposal aligned with the DCYF strategy, demonstrated ability to reach target population, and that LYRIC experience and past performance indicates an ability to perform proposed services and has a "strong" fiscal rating. DCYF Director Maria Su agreed that LYRIC's Q Group proposal was strong, our program working with LGBTQQ middle school students important yet DCYF did not have enough funding to cover all needs but is supportive of funding being used for this purpose if more funding could be secured through dialogue with the City leadership.

September 21, 2017

Maria Su, Psy.D
Executive Director
San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and their Families
1390 Market St – Ste 900
San Francisco, CA



Re: RFP - DCYF 2018-2023 Funding Cycle

Dear Director Su:

The purpose of this letter is to offer my full support of **Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center (LYRIC)** in their application for **Identity Formation funding** to support the continuation of **Q Groups in SFUSD Middle Schools**.

School Health Programs of San Francisco Unified School District (SHP/SFUSD) has worked in partnership with LYRIC for over 25 years. The delivery of Q Groups in SFUSD middle schools began in FY1516 and developed out of a blend of two program models. One model is the middle school social justice course component of LYRIC's School-Based Initiative launched in January 2011. The second model is Q Groups in SFUSD High Schools supported through a SHP/SFUSD-CBO partnership, including LYRIC, launched in August 2013 as part of SFUSD's *Strategy 4 HIV Prevention* work in collaboration with the CDC.

Through our partnership with LYRIC, we have witnessed LYRIC's staff meaningful connections to San Francisco's diverse youth community and deep experience delivering curriculum centered on gender identity and sexuality. The positive experience that LGBTQQ middle grade students have as a part of the Q Groups is demonstrated by the impressive >90% retention rate. This is particularly exciting given that 92% of Q Group participants are youth of color and 73% are transgender/gender-questioning.

We look forward to our continued partnership with LYRIC to deliver this critical support to middle grade LGBTQQ students – youth who struggle with stigma, depression and academic and family challenges. SHP/SFUSD will support the partnership with LYRIC by: (1) identifying middle grade sites that are most in need, (2) ensuring school site readiness and implementation coordination, (3) ensuring that school site staff are prepared to support student selection and retention, and (4) leading evaluation efforts.

LYRIC is well-suited to lead the Q Group work in SFUSD middle grade schools. Due to LYRIC's long history serving vulnerable youth in San Francisco in school-based and community-based settings, its reputation as a leading service provider and community partner, we are confident that LYRIC's middle grade Q Group proposal will have a positive and lasting impact on SFSD LGBTQQ students' academic success and sense of school belonging.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at gogin@sfusd.edu to further discuss my support of LYRIC and this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads 'Kevin R. Gogin'.

Kevin R. Gogin
Director of Safety and Wellness
School Health Programs, SFUSD
San Francisco Unified School District