

**YOUR  
VOICE  
YOUR  
POWER**

**ELEVATING THE VOICES OF BIPOC  
AND LGBTQ+ YOUNG ADULTS**

# project overview and goals

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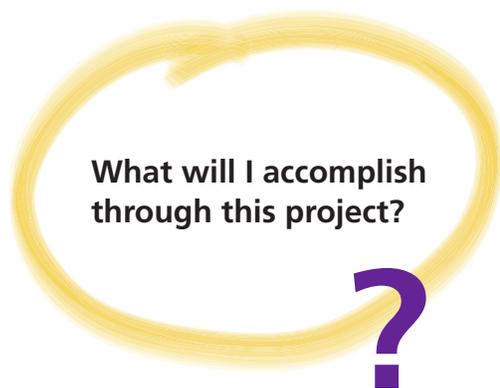
Mental health challenges among young adults are on the rise. The vast majority of mental health challenges will emerge among young adults in their teens and early 20s. Yet, culture changes to fully support them -- especially young adults who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) - are lagging behind.

Now, more than ever, it's vital that we work to center the voices of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities when we talk about mental health so that the lived experiences of young adults drive true and meaningful change towards a more equitable<sup>1</sup> and just society.

As you advocate for policy change to support the mental health of BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ students at your school, Active Minds is here for you every step of the way. You are doing incredible work and you are not alone.

## you might be wondering...

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Your goal with this project is to engage key stakeholders<sup>2</sup> in a meaningful conversation about the mental health of BIPOC<sup>3</sup> and LGBTQ<sup>4</sup>+ students in your school. Ultimately, you're working towards building a school coalition<sup>5</sup> that focuses on the mental health of students, and specifically, students who are BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+.\*

*\*A head's up that we're going to be using the words defined in the footnotes a lot in this project, so definitely check those out!*

<sup>1</sup> **Equity:** Fair and just access and opportunities for all students.

<sup>2</sup> **Stakeholder:** a person or organization with an interest in something; in this context, someone who has an interest in mental health among young adults, particularly BIPOC and LGBTQ+ young adults.

<sup>3</sup> **BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color. While this acronym is intended to be inclusive of many different identities, it is not intended to suggest that all people who identify as BIPOC have the same needs, cultural context, or perspectives.

<sup>4</sup> **LGBTQ+:** An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Sometimes, when the Q is seen at the end of LGBT, it can also mean questioning. For others, it means queer. The + conveys inclusion of all gender identities and sexual identities.

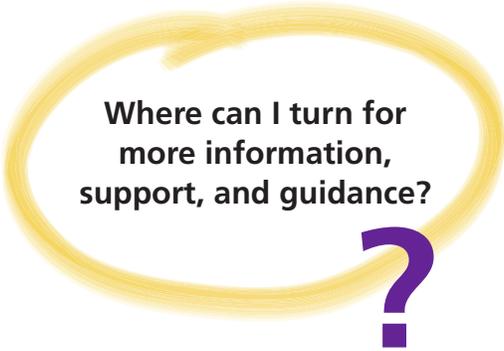
<sup>5</sup> **Coalition:** An alliance of people and/or organizations joined together to take action towards a common goal.



**What does success look like?**

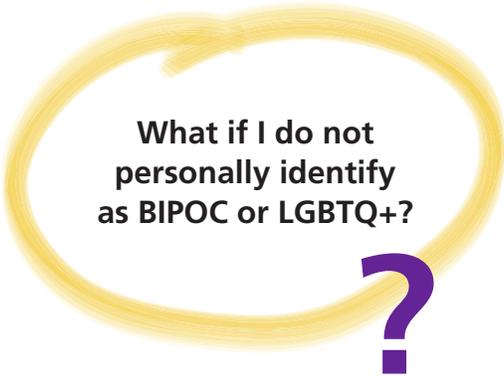
We're glad you asked! "Success" may look different at different schools. Whether you attend a big or small school, public or private, we will work with you to make a plan and ensure that you have the support you need to succeed in a way that fits the needs of your specific community. This workbook lays out the steps to success in the following pages.

In short, the three steps to success include *learning more about your school, engaging collaborators, planning and implementation.*



**Where can I turn for more information, support, and guidance?**

Check out the Active Minds Student Slack network to connect with peers and others who are working on changing the conversation about mental health at their school. As always, Active Minds staff are here for you.



**What if I do not personally identify as BIPOC or LGBTQ+?**

Excellent question. First of all, we believe fervently that social justice and working towards equity of access, health, safety, and justice are everyone's jobs. It's critical that we all work to build a more just world. That said, effective advocacy needs to be rooted with the lived experiences of the people we seek to serve. As the saying goes: *"nothing about us without us."* If you do not personally identify with the populations this project specifically seeks to serve (BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ students), aim to find a project partner who identifies with the population and ask if they are interested in joining the effort.

Where can I go to learn more about why this work is important, and to speak with others who are doing projects like this?



There are several ways to engage with fellow student leaders and Active Minds National Staff for additional support and insight.

- Check out the Active Minds Student Slack Network where you can connect and chat with student leaders through themed channels, direct messages, and more: [activeminds.org/slack](https://activeminds.org/slack)
- Head to the [Active Minds Blog](#) to learn how students (like [Ben](#) and [Anushka](#)) are making change in their schools.
- Contact Active Minds National Staff with your questions or just to let us know who you are and that you're doing this project: [chapters@activeminds.org](mailto:chapters@activeminds.org)



# steps to success

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## Step 1: Learn more about your school

The first thing you want to do is find out what already exists at your school that may be supporting and centering the voices and experiences of BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ students. Start by exploring the answers to the following questions as best you can. Your school's website or student handbook is likely a good place to start. (It's ok if the answer is "I'm not sure" or "I don't think that my school has that".)

*This step should take about one week to complete.*

**What, if any, clubs or student organizations does your school have that directly or indirectly support BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ students? List them here.**

**What, if any, policies does your school have in place that address mental health? Are there any mental health resources listed?**

**Does your school have a strategic plan<sup>6</sup>, plan of action, statements of intent, or mission statement? If so, does it mention student mental health? (Your district may have a strategic plan that your school follows so be sure to also check out the district website.)**

<sup>6</sup> **Strategic Plan:** A document used by an organization, business, or school /district to communicate their goals, ideas, and plans. Additionally, it focuses on what is needed to achieve those goals and ideas over a period of time.

**Reflect on Step 1:** Thinking about what you found (or just as importantly, what you did not find) in your school research, what do you think needs to change in order to center mental health among students at your school, specifically BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ students?<sup>7</sup> Feel free to think big.

## These are your goals for getting started!

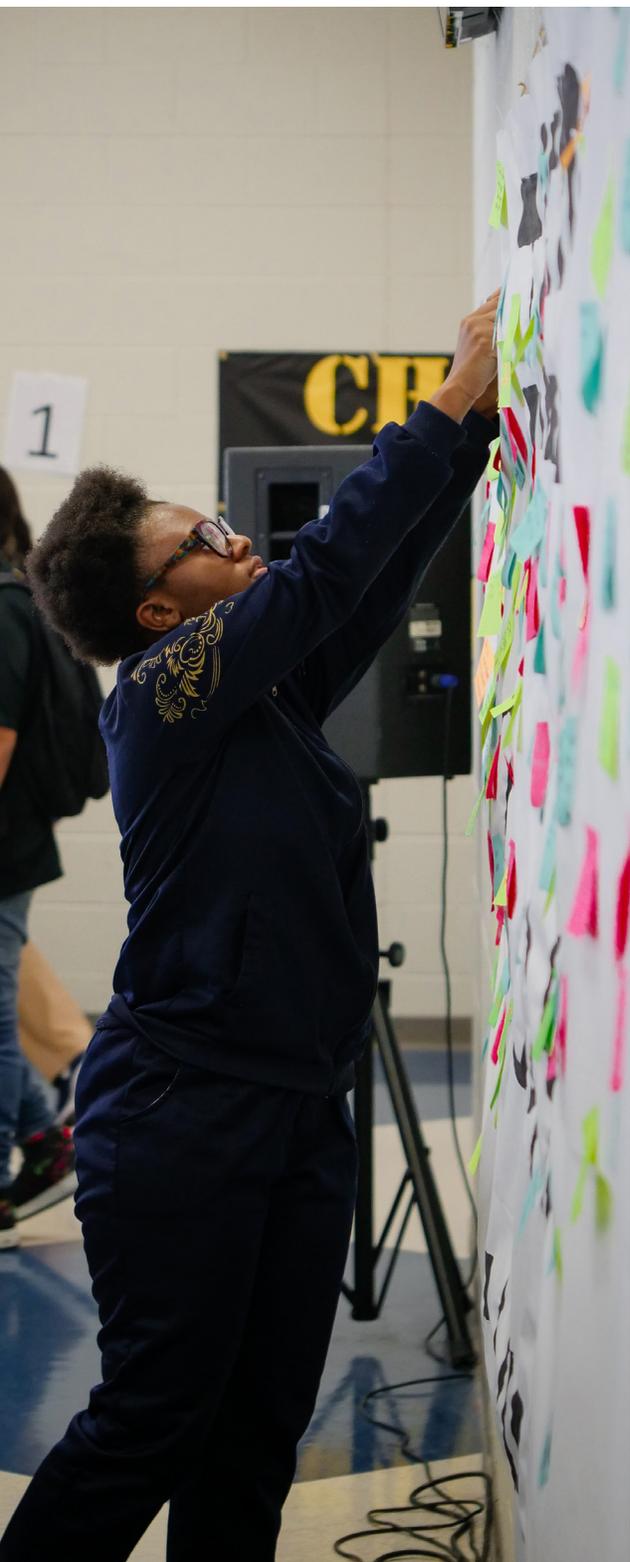
Now let's further clarify your goals. Start by thinking about the big picture changes you laid out above. Then, zoom in on one idea that really stands out to you as important. With this project, the ultimate goal will be to take at least one step (doesn't have to be a big step) towards the change you would like to see happen.

**What's the one idea that you would like to zoom in on for this project?**

Great, now let's break it down into some small, attainable steps. Remember, small, achievable steps is the name of the game with this project. Keep it "SMARTIE" (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable).

E.g. The big change that I would like to see happen at my school is that mental health of students is included in the school's stated mission and values. My first few steps towards that will be to 1) find out what the mission statement and values are right now, 2) find out who is involved in the design of the mission statement and values, and 3) send an email or call one person who may be able to help.

<sup>7</sup> Explore Active Minds' Transform Your Campus resources for ideas about what kinds of policies are possible and supportive of mental health in your school: [activeminds.org/transform](https://activeminds.org/transform).



**What are 1-3 small steps that you can take towards this goal?**

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

## Step 2: Engaging Collaborators

You've learned about your school and thought about your goals, now let's get other people involved in the work!

You may or may not already have a partner involved in the conversation, which is a great starting point. Ultimately, you are working towards establishing a coalition around this conversation. A coalition does not have to be any specific number of people, but you want it to be broadly representative of your key stakeholders.

When working to engage allies, it's a good idea to share why you are passionate about a topic and express why you value the input of the individual and/or group that you seek to engage. You can let them know about the goals that you have established alongside your partner, and find out if that is of interest to them.

**Who are some individual stakeholders that you think may be interested in engaging with this conversation? (Think: students, leaders, student groups, teachers, administrators, etc.) List a few ideas below.**

**List 3-4 of the above stakeholders who you will contact about this project. Aim to reach representatives from each stakeholder group, i.e. at least one student leader, at least one teacher or administrator, etc. Below, write their names and how you plan to contact them.**

1.

2.

3.

4.

## When engaging potential collaborators, you can ask questions such as:

- Does this project sound interesting and relevant to you?
- Would you or a representative from your group be interested in being a part of a coalition with me to elevate the mental health conversation? Our goal is to specifically elevate mental health conversations among BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ students at our school.

**Reflect on Step 2:** Why do you think it is important to engage collaborators? What do you think the power of a coalition-based approach to elevating the conversation about mental health is? What do you hope to accomplish with your coalition efforts?

Aim to identify the people you would like to include in your upcoming coalition meeting. Consider how you will invite them to join the conversation.



## Step 3: Planning and Implementation

Now that you have your goals of the conversation laid out and allies engaged, it's time to convene. This may be a virtual meeting or in-person. There is no set number of people that you want to have in this meeting, but ideally, you will have several or all of your key stakeholders represented: students who are BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+, students representing relevant organizations and leadership, and staff and/or administrators from your school.

**Consider the goals of the meeting. Are you presenting your thoughts and ideas to the group? Are you aiming to facilitate a discussion to learn more? What would you like the participants to think about and/or learn and/or plan as a result of this meeting?**

**Now that you have the goals of the meeting in place, who will you invite to join? How will you invite them? Email? Phone call? In-person invite?**

**Consider the logistics of the meeting: exactly when will it take place (keeping in mind busy schedules), will it be in-person or virtual?, etc. Set the date, time, and location and share that out with your intended participants.**

### Tips for an effective meeting<sup>8</sup>:

- Set an agenda (consider sharing the agenda with participants ahead of time)
- Stay on time (start and end at the times that you planned as best as possible)
- Share context (why do you think this is so important? Why now? Etc.)
- Take notes (have someone who is not actively facilitating take notes)
- Plan a call to action, including next steps (what is a reasonable next step for participants to take action towards positive change?)
- Follow up with a summary of the takeaways (via email or otherwise)

**Reflect on Step 3:** List three things that stood out to you in the meeting. What worked? What, if anything, will you do differently when you plan a meeting again?

1.

2.

3.

**Reflect on the project, overall:** What are your main takeaways from this project? What do you hope was accomplished? What do you feel most proud of, having completed this project?

<sup>8</sup>See more tips and a sample agenda in appendix

# tips for planning and hosting a successful coalition meeting

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## Find the ideal date, time, and location:

- Some people may have tight schedules so it might be best to ask them if there is a certain day of the week or time of day that is most flexible for them before asking other coalition members to share their availability (you can use online tools such as doodle).
- Depending on your school guidelines, an in-person meeting may be impossible or difficult to have this spring. Consider using online tools like Google Meet or Zoom.
- Designate someone to take notes.

## Set the agenda:

- Start your coalition meeting with introductions and an icebreaker question to get people comfortable. For example, please share your name, pronouns, the organization you're a part of, or your role at the school, and what your favorite thing to do for self-care is.
- Give some background about the Your Voice is Your Power program and your role as a Student Ambassador with Active Minds. Provide information or statistics and invite testimonials of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students relating to mental health and why you're focusing on this topic.
- Summarize who you spoke with, what you learned, and places where you see an opportunity for more resources or support of mental health for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students.

- Facilitate a discussion:
  - You may want to set ground rules such as “speak up (for those who tend to be quieter), step back (for those who tend to speak out more)”, “respect each person’s experience as their own, even if you have a different experience”, or “challenge yourself to let others speak and to listen intently”.
  - Prepare three to five questions ahead of the meeting to prompt discussion between coalition members. These might include questions like:



- What’s going really well and should be amplified so students know about the mental health resources available to them?
- What barriers do BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students face at our school around mental health and feeling supported?
- What else should we learn more about?
- Who should be in this room that isn’t?

## Determine next steps:

- This might be doing research, planning more conversations and meetings, developing a program, or evaluating policies, to name a few.

## Send a thank-you note or summary of your meeting:

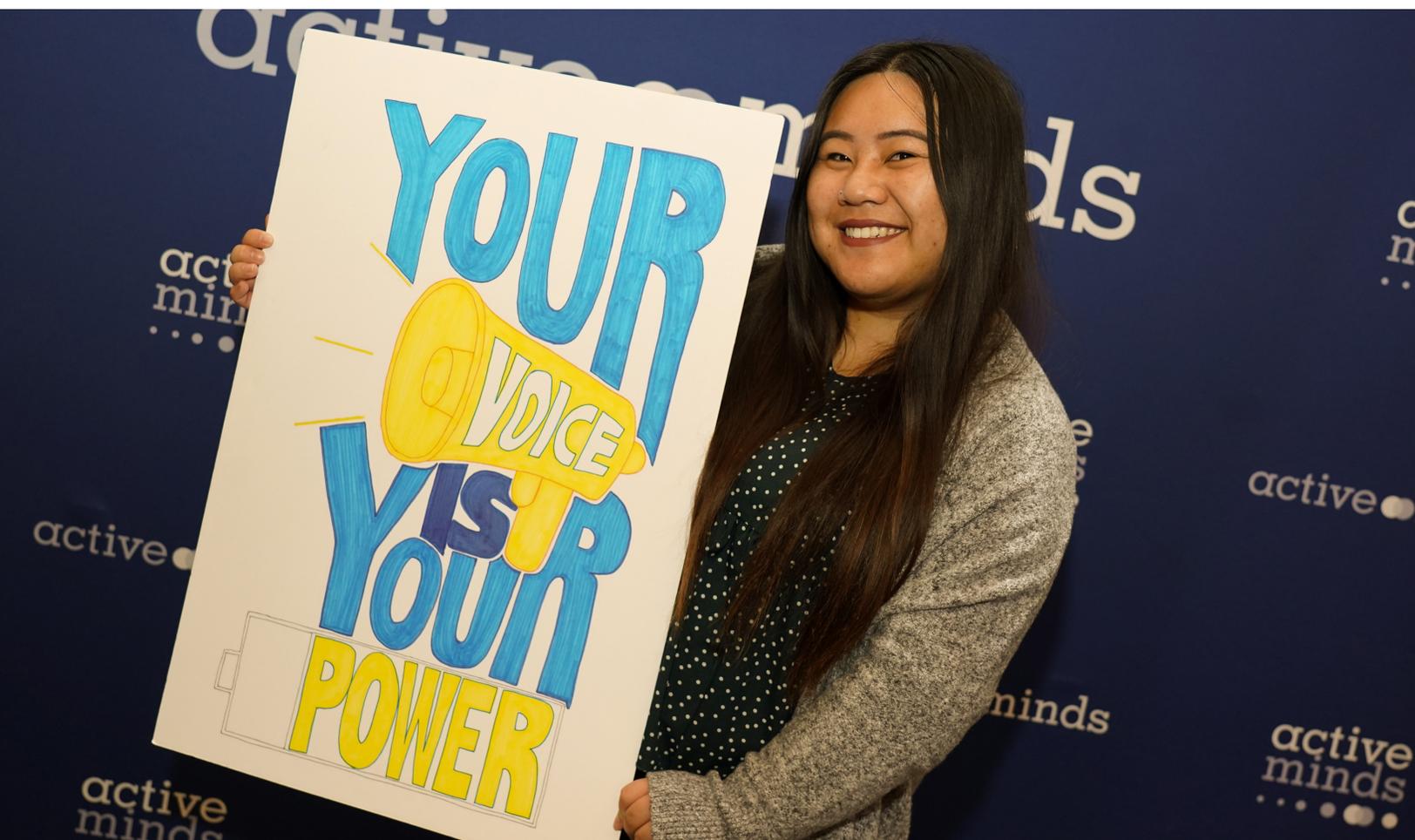
- These can be hard conversations and often involve a great deal of emotion, focus, and intentionality. Thank the coalition members who participated as a group, or individually.
- Compile notes from the meeting and key takeaways to share.

# above & beyond

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You've convened a group and completed the project! We hope you feel proud of yourself. We certainly are proud of you. These conversations can be difficult, and we are grateful that you chose to engage with this project. If you are interested in continuing this work, feel free to reach out to Active Minds and explore next possible steps in school policy work, mental health advocacy work, and/or the work of building a more equitable and just community. Know that you made a difference, no matter what, and that is important and valuable. Conversations are life-changing and you launched an incredibly powerful one.

*From all of us at Active Minds, congratulations! We appreciate you!*



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