



CALDERA: AMPLIFYING YOUTH CREATIVE VOICES

Prepared For
*American Evaluation Association (AEA) U.S.
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Prepared By
SECC Case Subcommittee



Photo Courtesy of Caldera



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CALDERA: AMPLIFYING YOUTH CREATIVE VOICES

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The case in this document was developed for the 2024 American Evaluation Association (AEA) U.S. Student Evaluation Case Competition (SECC) solely for educational purposes. It does not entail any commitment by AEA, Caldera (the case organization), or any organization directly or indirectly associated with either AEA or Caldera or mentioned in this case.

We are indebted to Caldera for allowing us to feature their Youth Program in the 2024 AEA SECC and for collaborating with us on developing this case. We are also grateful to Kim Leonard and the Oregon Program Evaluators Network (OPEN) for their support with the recruitment and selection of the case organization.

The SECC Case Subcommittee prepared the case. The Case Subcommittee included Brianna Crumly, Rana S. Gautam, Meg Johnson, Gabriel Keney, Jonathan Morell, Steven W. Mumford, and Elena Polush. Other members of the SECC Committee included Asma Ali, Carolina De La Rosa Mateo, Dana Jayne Linnell, Julian Nyamupachitu, Kutia Swinney, and Jennifer Yessis.

WELCOME TO THE SECOND ANNUAL AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION (AEA) UNITED STATES STUDENT EVALUATION CASE COMPETITION!

For the 2024 competition, we are issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an evaluation of the Caldera Youth Program, which fuses arts, environment, and mentorship to inspire and support youth creative voices. **Caldera** is a nonprofit organization that serves the Portland Metro area and rural Central Oregon.

Your team is charged with proposing an evaluation for the Caldera Youth Program. This document describes

Caldera and its Youth Program and provides the RFP requirements. Please also refer to the **2024 SECC Pre-Read** for resources and complete guidance on the proposal requirements, submission format options, and judging criteria, all of which apply here. You must submit your proposal within seven hours of downloading these case materials.

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES HAS FORMALLY RECOGNIZED CALDERA WITH A NATIONAL ARTS AND HUMANITIES YOUTH PROGRAM AWARD, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES HAS ACKNOWLEDGED CALDERA AS ONE OF THE NATION'S PREEMINENT YOUTH ARTS PROGRAMS.



COMPETITION RULES

- 1. Time:** Your team must upload its submission **no later than 7 hours** after the initial case download.
- 2. Anonymity:** Do **not include** in your submission any information that might reveal the identity of your team members or your institution(s) to the judges, including any names or photos of your team members or university. Use your team's name you used when registering for the case competition.
- 3. Team Coach:** Coaches **must not** communicate with your team from the time when the case document has been downloaded and distributed to your team until your team's proposal has been submitted.
- 4. No consultations:** Under **no circumstances** should your team contact the case organization. In preparing submissions, your team is welcome to explore and refer to any public or library-based information source, such as books, articles, online resources, etc., as long as they are cited or hyperlinked in your submission.
- 5. Additional information:** More information on competition rules is available on the [AEA SECC website](#).

Submission Instructions

Submit a **single file** to the **designated Dropbox file request folder** shared with your team, saved as **[your team name].ext**, e.g., AIConsultants.pdf or AIConsultants.ppt or AIConsultants.mp4. Please do not submit a zipped file of multiple documents.

If you upload your video presentation to another service or if your submission is **larger than 2GB**, please submit a one-page document in which you provide a link to wherever it has been stored on the web (e.g., YouTube for video presentations, Google Drive). Ensure that the SECC Committee will have access to view the resource.

If you submit within the time when a member of the SECC working group is present in the Zoom meeting, we can verify that your submission has been received. Otherwise, you will receive a **confirmation email** within 72 hours

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Please email scc@eval.org if your team has questions or encounters technical difficulties. Additionally, your team or representative can join the Zoom room (link will be provided via email) on the day of the competition from **8 am to 8 pm Eastern Time** to ask SECC representatives questions regarding technical difficulties. Note that we will not answer questions about the case itself or provide individual guidance or feedback on the content of submissions.



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: EVALUATION OF CALDERA'S YOUTH PROGRAM

1. Overview of Caldera

Caldera is a **nonprofit** organization with headquarters in Portland, Oregon, and a Center on 119-acres of land near Sisters in Central Oregon. Its **mission** is “to inspire and support youth from underserved rural and urban communities by awakening the potential of their creative voice.”

Dan Wieden and his family **established Caldera in 1996** to focus on the strengths of youth and their communities, under the **belief** that “when youth are given access to the explosive power of creativity, they can change their world, and even the world at large.” Caldera has since grown into an organization with almost **20 staff members, a 17-member board, and nearly \$4,000,000 in annual operating budget.**

Caldera provides **two types of programs:**

1. A no-cost, year-round **Youth Program** (consisting of both “mentorship” and “summer learning”) that fuses the arts, environment, and mentorship to cultivate a young person’s regular creative practice in a variety of artistic mediums and support their emotional and mental health

2. A Residency Program supporting about 50 artists, creatives, and cultural workers, which is **not included in the scope of this RFP for evaluation**, except in the fact that Residency Artists engage with Youth Program participants by teaching workshops and providing diverse representation of adult learners in Caldera’s creative ecosystem.

Since its inception, Caldera has engaged **over 15,000 youth** through direct work, summer camps, school-wide assemblies, performances, and exhibitions. Caldera has also built a community of Youth Program **alumni**, with plans to develop an alumni advisory board in the coming years. Alumni **testimonies** signify Caldera’s lifelong impact.

2. The Youth Program

Caldera views participants in the Youth Program as **“learners”** who are change agents in their families and communities. The program aims to aid learners in building a sustainable future through immersive creative learning experiences and the long-term support of dependable mentors. Caldera believes that learners thrive academically, develop socially, and become leaders among their peers when they have opportunities to **express themselves creatively**.

Caldera partners with **schools and other community organizations** across the Portland Metro area and Central Oregon to engage and mentor underserved **middle and high school youth (grades 6-12)** experiencing systemic opportunity gaps. School counselors help identify 6th-grade youth likely to benefit from creative learning opportunities in a mentor-led, supportive peer community and refer them for recruitment in Caldera’s Youth Program. Once enrolled, learners may participate throughout middle school and high school for a **total of seven years**.

Each year, **up to 350 learners** participate in as many of the following program components as they are able to, for a **total of 1000+ hours** of arts- and nature-based learning:

Mentorship

During the school year, Caldera’s adult professional mentors meet with middle school learners **once per week during school hours** at partner schools to implement a **student-centered curriculum** that uses creativity as a tool to explore identity, community, and the surrounding world. Learners continue the mentorship in high school via **after-school and weekend workshops** in which they build creative practice through unique **projects** with the mentor’s support.

Weekend Intensives

In the fall and spring, **up to four times per year**, Caldera brings middle and high school youth together for a **weekend learning experience**. Separately in Portland and Central Oregon, learners meet for community-building activities, environmental learning, and art workshops with professional artists, environmentalists, and mentors.



Camp Caldera

Caldera’s **summer learning** programming takes place in **8-10 day sessions during July and August** at its **Center** on the shores of Blue Lake in the Cascade Mountain Range. Each summer, **a total of 150 learners** from both Portland and Central Oregon come together to experience creative practice in the natural world. Each day during the summer, young people work with experienced artists, naturalists, and mentors and take **courses** on topics such as music/audio production, visual arts, photography, dance, theater, filmmaking, comics, drumming, and creative writing.

Learners become Youth Program alumni when they **graduate from high school**. Caldera continues to support program alumni by providing scholarships, inviting practicing artists to residency programming, and continuing to nurture a creative social network.

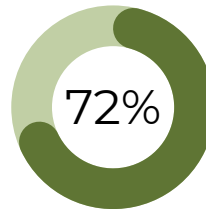


Photo Courtesy of Caldera

3. Youth Program Participant Characteristics

Caldera’s Youth Program engages underserved middle and high school youth in the Portland Metro area and rural Central Oregon, with an **emphasis on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and under-resourced rural residents**. Caldera strives toward **racial equity and inclusion** by cultivating an “inclusive creative community that welcomes marginalized voices and historically excluded people and groups.”

In recent years, Caldera’s youth participants have had the following characteristics:



72%
of youth identify as BIPOC

Racial demographics: 72% are **BIPOC**, including Multiracial (20%), Latino (18%), Indigenous American (16%), African American (13%), Asian (4%), Pacific Islander (1%). 28% are White



Gender identity: female (64%), male (22%), non-binary (9%), and gender fluid/self-described (5%)



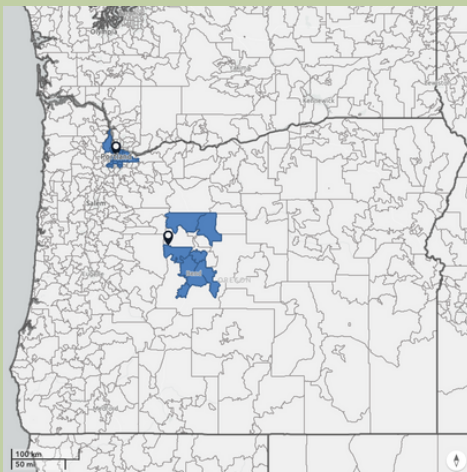
70%
from underserved populations

Underserved populations: 70% are from **underserved populations**, including youth who are eligible for free and reduced lunch, from low-income families, or in the foster care system



Geography: 60% are from Central Oregon, and 40% are from the Portland Metro area.

INTERACTIVE MAP



The interactive map linked below highlights the communities served by Caldera. The map is broken down by zip code area. Follow the instructions below and then click on each highlighted area to learn some demographic information from 2023.

To use the **map**, follow these instructions:

1. When prompted to login, select “OK”
2. Return to the page with the map
3. Keep the login page open or minimized while using the map feature.

4. Youth Program Outcomes

Through the Youth Program, Caldera aims to provide learners with **creative space and voice**. Caldera believes regular creative experiences and intercultural connections through **prolonged engagement** can boost resilience, develop perspective, and lead to an overall sense of flourishing. The program seeks to nurture a **sense of belonging and connection** within an inclusive creative community.

In addition, the Youth Program intends to help learners thrive academically, gain confidence and self-efficacy, persevere, and become leaders among their peers. The program focuses on bolstering the following **21st-century skills** among learners:

- **Learning Skills:** critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity
- **Life skills:** flexibility, initiative, social skills, productivity, leadership
- **Literacy skills:** information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy

Caldera staff **surveyed** Youth Program participants in recent years and found that:

- **81%** report feeling connected to **nature and the environment**
- **81%** reported feeling connected and supported by **at least one adult** at Caldera
- **74%** report feeling connected to **other youth** at Caldera
- **72%** report that Caldera challenged them to **understand the experiences of others**

Interview testimonials gathered from Youth Program participants and alumni provide additional support for these outcomes. Caldera prepared an **Impact Report** in 2021-2022, and Caldera's Executive Director, Kimberly Howard Wade, summarized their impact in a **closing statement** at the 2023 Caldera Hearth Festival.



Photo Courtesy of Caldera

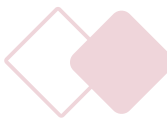


Photo Courtesy of Caldera

5. Where Things Stand Now

Since the socioeconomic disruption caused by the **COVID-19 pandemic**, Caldera has been engaged in a **comprehensive rebuilding effort** that entails restoring programming and participation to pre-pandemic levels and strengthening the organization over the next three years. Caldera's expansion of its programs and operations is also driven by meeting the **increased requests to partner** from community organizations.

To accomplish its goals, Caldera acknowledges the **necessity of evaluation** to tell its story of the impact of its programs and inform decisions about improvements and future directions. In 2024, Caldera was awarded a **grant to enhance its evaluation capacities by hiring a full-time Research and Learning Specialist**. Your team's Youth Program evaluation proposal could support a crucial aspect of this new hire's work and serve as a springboard for implementing your team's proposed evaluation and continuing to build Caldera's evaluation capacity.



6. Caldera’s Evaluation Needs

Your task is to propose an evaluation for the **Caldera Youth Program** informed by your understanding of Caldera and the Youth Program and the organization’s needs for evaluation described in this section. To facilitate its programming and organizational growth, Caldera is interested in understanding **Youth Program participants’ engagement and outcomes**.



Caldera’s overarching strategic question is, **“What can creativity do when applied in everyday life to solve our community’s most pressing challenges, one learner at a time?”** To gain insights on important aspects of this larger question, Caldera wishes to evaluate the following:

<p>Youth engagement: Caldera wants to better track learner recruitment and participation across the components of the Youth Program to understand how and why learners participate in certain components within and across years and what obstacles may prevent deeper and continued learner engagement through middle (6th grade) to high (12th grade) school graduation.</p>	<p>Effective program components: To improve the Youth Program, Caldera hopes to identify the Youth Program’s most effective processes, components, and activities for achieving desired youth outcomes and meaningfully integrating the arts, environment, and mentorship.</p>
<p>Short-term/mid-term outcomes: Caldera seeks a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes learners experience from the Youth Program, especially hard-to-measure outcomes such as increased creativity, self-efficacy, confidence, and belonging, and how they may connect with gains in more measurable 21st-century skills.</p>	<p>Long-term outcomes: Caldera wants to better track Youth Program alumni’s experiences into adulthood, the degree to which their experiences in the program shaped their life choices and outcomes (including but not limited to post-secondary education, career choice, job attainment, continued engagement with Caldera, and community leadership), and by extension, the program’s impact on community transformation.</p>

As you create your proposal, be sure to align the evaluation with the following **VALUES:**

- **Data Justice:** Caldera embraces data justice as a lens for evaluation. According to Portland's Coalition of Communities of Color, "The **fundamental premises** of data justice are that data should (1) make visible community-driven needs, challenges, and strengths, (2) be representative of the community, and (3) treat data in ways that promote community self-determination."
- **Inclusion:** Caldera views Youth Program learners and alumni as **partners**; their **voices** are critical in designing and implementing the proposed evaluation through an **asset-based approach**. In addition, Caldera is interested in participatory evaluation that **engages** Caldera's staff members and diverse array of partners to appropriate degrees.
- **Creativity:** As a Creative Youth Development and connected arts learning organization, Caldera is pushing the boundaries of youth programming. Caldera similarly wants to consider **novel and emerging approaches to evaluation** that are compatible with their values and can be **seamlessly integrated** within the Youth Program to further advance desired outcomes.



Photo Courtesy of Caldera

Additionally, your team's proposal should meet the following **practical requirements:**

- **GENERATE CREDIBLE EVIDENCE** that could be used in two respects: (1) **internally** to improve the quality of the Youth Program and build Caldera's organizational evaluation capacity; and (2) **externally** to help Caldera tell its story to multiple audiences, including partners and funders.
- **BE REASONABLE TO IMPLEMENT** in two respects: (1) **within one full year** of the Youth Program (**Fall 2024 - Summer 2025**), with the intent of **sustaining** critical aspects of the evaluation in future years to track participants' continued engagement and outcomes with the program (grades 6-12) and then into early adulthood ; and (2) **making maximal use of limited resources** allocated to evaluation by **prioritizing** Caldera's most relevant evaluation questions and information needs.

Finally, your team's proposal should meet the **technical requirements** detailed in the pre-read provided to your team earlier.

WE WISH YOU A FULFILLING JOURNEY INTO THIS EVALUATION!