Foundation for Social Connection

CASE STUDY

The Lonely Hearts Club

Promoting Youth Social Connection in a Tech-Driven World

PARTNER YOUNG FUTURES

ADVISORY SERVICE PROGRAM DESIGN & TOOL DEVELOPMENT

The Opportunity

Young Futures wanted its first $1 million funding challenge to support early-stage solutions that help (pre)teens and teens build meaningful connections and a sense of belonging in a tech-driven world. To translate that goal into a strong selection process, Young Futures partnered with F4SC to define how promising solutions would be identified and assessed, drawing on research and young people's perspectives.

Our Approach

To ground the program in youth voice, F4SC surveyed 188 middle and high school students about how they experience disconnection and define strong relationships. Their perspectives shaped the language Young Futures used to engage applicants and young people throughout the challenge. Building on those insights, and drawing on input from our **Scientific Leadership Council**, we then **designed the core tools** that structured the challenge's selection process: **eligibility criteria** to define the applicant pool and an **evaluation scorecard** that gave reviewers a **consistent, evidence-informed framework** for assessing 195 applications and identifying 12 semifinalists.

The Impact

The challenge ultimately selected 10 YF Innovators spanning school-based, media, and community-based organizations serving youth across a range of genders, races, ages, and backgrounds. Together, the criteria and scorecard translated a broad vision for belonging into a clear, consistent method for identifying strong candidates. The process also helped bring teen perspectives into decision-making and expanded Young Futures' network of organizations working to strengthen social connection among young people. Young Futures now has a selection framework it can adapt for future challenges.



> "F4SC helped us turn our vision for the Lonely Hearts Club into a clear framework for evaluating promising solutions. They connected the research on social connection with what young people were telling us about their own relationships. Their expertise helped us ask better questions and choose our first YF Innovators with confidence. That gave us a strong foundation for supporting leaders who are helping young people find connection and belonging in a tech-driven world."
>
> **— Katya Hancock, CEO and Co-Founder, Young Futures**

Explore More

Meet the inaugural cohort of YF Innovators **here**. Contact us to learn more about this project and explore how F4SC can support your work below.

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