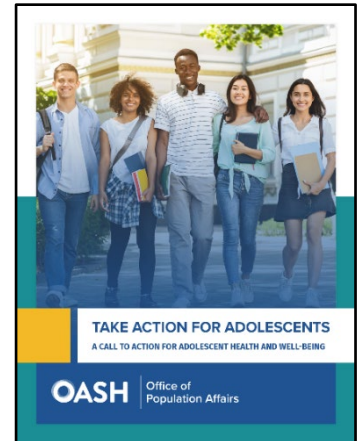# TAKE ACTION TOOLKIT

A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING *TAKE ACTION FOR ADOLESCENTS – A CALL TO ACTION FOR ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING*

Table of Contents

I. The Call to Action

The Office of Population Affairs (OPA) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) worked with federal and external partners to develop a call to action for adolescent health. *Take Action for Adolescents – A Call to Action for Adolescent Health and Well-Being* ("*Take Action for Adolescents*" or "the Call to Action") is a research-based approach that is designed to motivate, energize, and inspire anyone who supports adolescents. This Call to Action is the culmination of two years of primary grassroots consultation and research with multisectoral experts on a variety of areas impacting the health and well-being of young people, including brain development, mental health, physical health, and sexual/reproductive health. It is grounded in the key principles of access, agency, health equity, meaningful youth engagement, positive youth development, quality, and a whole-person approach. Call to Action serves as a catalyst to foster collaboration and innovation across sectors in support of adolescents.

II. What is the *Take Action Toolkit?*

The *Take Action Toolkit* is designed to support anyone – policy makers, health care and human services professionals, youth-serving organizations and professionals, parents, legal representatives, caregivers – who has a role in providing adolescents with the safety, support, and resources they need to thrive, be healthy, and have equitable opportunity to realize their full potential. This toolkit may be adopted as a guide by governments, organizations, caring adults, and professionals working to support young people, including you.

It is a guiding document that you can use to implement action(s) under the goals within the Call to Action. You should feel empowered to select action(s), tailor them to your specific community and system needs, and/or create your own plans to support *Take Action for Adolescents* implementation.

This Toolkit will help you:
- ✓ Select and customize actions to implement
- ✓ Determine the most robust and effective plan to implement the actions in your organization
- ✓ Design, launch, support, and evaluate your progress on your selected actions
- ✓ Complement any existing programs and systems to enhance your implementation efforts
- ✓ Use local and community expertise in conjunction with action planning techniques
- ✓ Equip you with strategies, resources, and user-driven approaches to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility

This Toolkit features:

- ✓ Worksheets for selecting actions
- ✓ A framework for planning activities
- ✓ Planning tools
- ✓ Tips
- ✓ Helpful links
- ✓ Appendices with resources, blank tools and templates, and glossary

> **OPA WANTS TO KNOW:** We encourage you to share success stories, lessons learned, challenges, and best practices. Contact OPA to share your journey to implementation with us.

III. Using the *Take Action Toolkit*

As you begin your journey to implementing the actions, the *Take Action Toolkit* will help you through three critical phases: Choose, Plan and Act, and Measure.

Vision
for Adolescent Health and Well-being

TAKE ACTION!

3. Measure
Determine exactly what you want to accomplish, and how you will measure success

Remember, successful implementation may require revisiting Step 2 based on the data from Step 3. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 until you achieve the desired outcome.

2. Plan and Act
Identify implementation activities, determine milestones, and mobilize resources

1. Choose
Select and customize the actions your organization desires to implement

> 💡 **TIP: Collaboration is Key!**
> Forge partnerships with schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to maximize impact.

Each phase will introduce a variety of practical planning tools and templates that may be beneficial to you as you begin your journey. The planning tools include selection worksheets, planning maps, checklists, and templates. You are now beginning your journey to implement the actions!

1.0 Choose

Choose one or more actions that you would like to implement and customize it to your needs and setting. The recommendations in this toolkit apply to both organizations and individuals (e.g., policy makers, health care and human services professionals). When selecting actions, it is important to consider your capabilities and bandwidth, who is implementing the action (e.g., new leaders, volunteers, or organization members), who needs to be involved for the actions to succeed, and what resources you need to implement the actions.

1.1 Assess your Environment

Start broadly by reviewing *Take Action for Adolescents* so you may have a comprehensive look at the actions. Then, use the SOAR Analysis technique presented below to assess your environment and help you determine which actions may be most suitable for implementation.

SOAR stands for:

- **Strengths**: Represent what your organization or broader system does best
- **Opportunities**: Identify areas for potential growth or that may present obstruction
- **Aspirations**: Focus on what the organization or system wants to achieve and who it wants to serve
- **Results**: Address how the organization or system will identify desired outcomes and track progress on an action

1.2 Choose the Action(s)

Use the planning tool below to assist you in choosing action(s) from *Take Action for Adolescents* to implement. The Choose Worksheet poses a series of pertinent questions to guide your decision-making process. You should use one worksheet per action. Note the relevant goal for tracking purposes only. After completion, the questions should help you narrow down your choices to 1 to 10 action(s) that are most suitable for your desired outcome and resources.

> ☀ **TIP: Combine!**
> For a more comprehensive approach, consider combining actions
> if two or more seem related.

Choose Worksheet

The Customize Action Worksheet will pose a series of pertinent questions to guide your decision-making process. You should use one worksheet per action.

Action: Click or tap here to enter text.

Goal: Click or tap here to enter text.

Relevance:
How closely does this action align with your mission and objectives?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Cost-Benefit:
What are the estimated costs of implementation and does the expected benefit outweigh the cost? Is the implementation short term or long term?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Collaboration:
Are there opportunities to collaborate with partners to implement this action more effectively?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Risks:
Are there any potential risks or challenges that could halt progress?
Click or tap here to enter text.
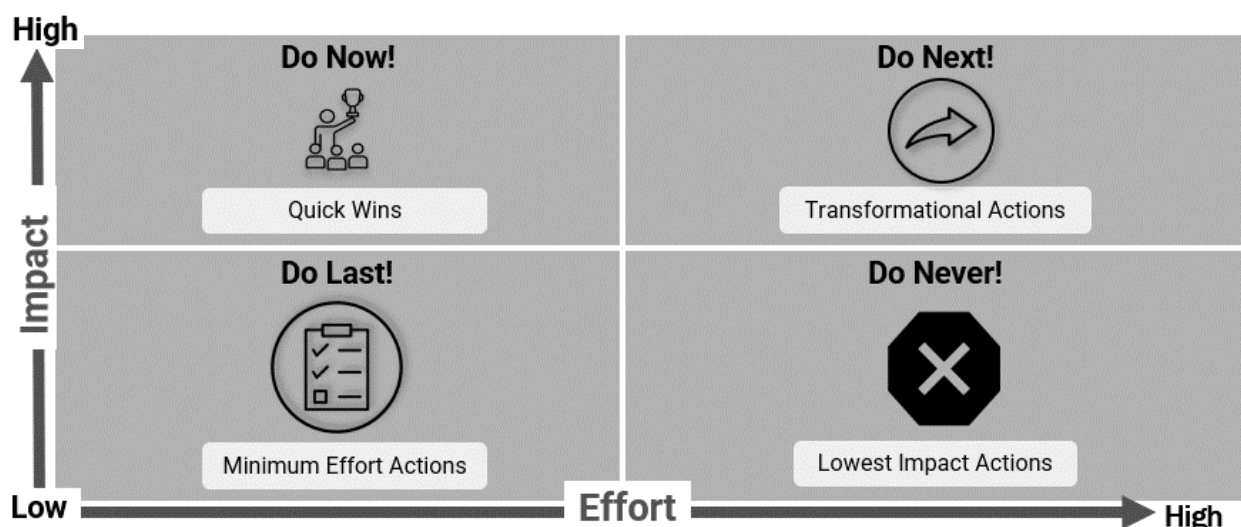
1.3 Prioritize the Action(s)

After you have selected and narrowed down your action(s), you will prioritize them to determine which ones to tackle and in what order. Consider the diagram below for some simple but important sample criteria to support your decision making:

Prioritization – Impact and Effort Criteria

Criteria	Definition	Examples
Impact	The degree to which the action will help you meet your program objectives or those of the organization or overall system	• Delivery of organization or system mission • Enhancement of young people's health and well-being • Promotion of positive youth development • Reduction of harm • Removal of barriers
Effort	The degree to which the action requires resources, time, coordination, or funding to accomplish the action	• Personnel numbers • Specialized skill sets • Time for execution • Coordination with internal or external groups • Financial investment

This exercise is important to do with your colleagues, team, and even allies and partners. This step will help you to identify action(s) to do now, next, and last, as well as those that you should not attempt.

Once you have decided which action(s) will be your priority, plot the prioritized action(s) on the Prioritization Matrix below:

High / **Low** — **Impact**

Do Now! — Quick Wins

Do Next! — Transformational Actions

Do Last! — Minimum Effort Actions

Do Never! — Lowest Impact Actions

Effort — **Low** / **High**

2.0 Plan and Act

Once you have customized your chosen action(s), you can start planning. When developing a plan from start to finish, clearly define the scope of the effort, assign roles and responsibilities, and develop a plan for engaging allies and partners.

A checklist can be found at the end of this section to help you stay on track.

2.1 Write a Purpose Statement

A purpose statement is a narrative description that includes:
- The organizational need that the action(s) will address
- The value of action(s) to your organization and the young people you serve
- What the action(s) is/are meant to accomplish

> 💡 **TIP: Keep It Simple and Easy!**
> The purpose statement should be short and simple enough
> for the project team to remember by heart.

It is critical to clearly articulate why the project is being initiated and its intended outcome. Write a clear purpose statement to keep the end in mind, and make sure the whole team agrees with the project purpose. This will help ensure team alignment and reduce confusion.

2.2 Describe the Scope of the Effort

After clarifying the purpose, define the full scope of the initiative. The scope is a detailed description of the products, services, capabilities, and results the initiative is designed to deliver over a given timeline. The scope statement should be clear, unambiguous, and easy to understand.

The description should be SMART:
- **Specific:** Who? What? When? Where? Why?
- **Measurable:** How much? How many? What percentage?
- **Achievable:** What skills and tools will accomplish this initiative?
- **Relevant:** Does this scope fit within an overarching objective or plan?
- **Timebound**: What are the intermediate and final target dates?

> 💡 **TIP: Define the Scope!**
> It is helpful to also identify what will not be part of the initiative. It is okay if there is more text describing what is out of scope than what is in scope. For a well-defined action, there should be more that the project is not doing than it is delivering.

2.3 Identify Roles and Responsibilities

The action(s) require collaboration with others inside or outside an organization to achieve a successful outcome. Whether a few volunteers or a large network of people and other organizations, it is important to define roles and responsibilities for each person on the implementation team. Clarity brings focus to the tasks, defines expectations, prevents duplication or confusion, and improves productivity.

Having predefined roles within the organization will also help lead to success. Below are some ideas about roles and responsibilities. Depending on the size of your organization, some of these roles can be combined or divided.

Role	Description
Champion	- Act as a champion for the program. - Support it, communicate about it, and attend pertinent meetings. - Select a leader for the effort. - Ensure leader and staff has enough time to devote to pursing the action(s) and empower them to make decisions regarding the action(s). - Message the organization about the new action(s) that are being pursued and why. - Describe the purpose of pursing the action(s) and how it/they aligns/align with the organization's vision, mission, and values. - Provide a timeline. - Refer staff to the leader over the action(s). - Speak about the action(s) often.
Leader	- Identify staff who will be involved in enacting the action(s) and meet with them to establish their role. - Work with staff to create a project plan and communicate this project plan within the organization and with funders. - Schedule regular check-in meetings to discuss progress. - Help staff work through challenges and remove barriers as needed. - Relay progress and success to external funders, advocates, and representatives, including OPA (so OPA can share your successes more broadly, when appropriate).
Staff	- Be available to administer the new action(s). - Review this toolkit (including resources at the end) for helpful tips and lessons learned before starting. - Create a plan at the beginning on how progress will be evaluated and how success will be measured.

Role	Description
	• Plan to spend a significant amount of time at the beginning (e.g., 15 hours a week for 2-4 weeks) to structure the effort. After the initial phase, estimated time depends on the magnitude of the action and the number of participants involved. • Schedule regular check-ins with external allies and partners to hear their experiences and adjust as needed.
External Allies and Partners	• Be available and keep appointments. • Be open and honest. • Remember that your input makes a difference, not only to you, but also to many others.

2.4 Mobilize Funding Resources

Use the table below for ideas about funding resources, organized by primary implementation partner. As this table is not intended to be an exhaustive list of resources and implementing partners, you are encouraged to apply any of these resources that are helpful to you and/or your organization, as well as pursue funding resources not mentioned here.

If You…	Funding Resources
Have funding or a steady revenue stream	• Consider how to allocate your current resources according to your prioritized actions.
Are a policy maker	• Align action(s) to appropriate budget funds. • Allocate resources to match the planned work and timeline. • Determine if you will engage outside consultants or contractors.
Are a community organization	• Connect with your state and local governments or partner with other similar organizations to share resources or jointly implement action(s).
Are a researcher or organization that does research	• Explore government grants at the local, state, and national level. • Collaborate with public and private entities to create partnerships to provide financial support for research initiatives with mutual interests.
Are a health care professional or organization	• Consider how to allocate your current resources according to your prioritized actions and/or coordinate with similar partners to optimize financial resources.
Are a human services professional or organization	• Consider how to allocate your current resources according to your prioritized actions and/or coordinate with similar partners to optimize financial resources.
Are a state adolescent health coordinator	• Consider how to allocate your current resources according to your prioritized actions and/or coordinate with similar partners to optimize financial resources.
Are a national organization	• Consider how to allocate your current resources according to your prioritized actions and/or coordinate with similar partners to optimize financial resources.

2.5 Identify Implementing Allies and Partners and Plan for their Engagement

Allies and partners are critical to your success, and all play different roles. Engaging them in a meaningful and consistent manner can pave the way for a relevant, impactful effort that is most likely to be accepted and supported by implementing partners of all varieties.

As you categorize your allies and partners, it may help to think about which ones will:


Upon categorizing allies and partners, plan to engage with them at regular intervals, depending on how closely they need to be informed, included, or involved and how much influence they will have on your efforts. In addition, consider the ways in which allies and partners need to be engaged, including informational updates (emails, briefings, website updates, blog entries, etc.) and more intimate engagements (feedback sessions, decision-making meetings, real-time briefings, etc.).

Informed. Allies and partners who are kept up-to-date but are not actively involved in the decision-making process.

Included. Allies and partners whose input is directly considered during the decision-making process.

Involved. Allies and partners who are responsible for making the decision.

Informed

Allies and partners who are kept up to date but are not actively involved in the decision-making process

Included
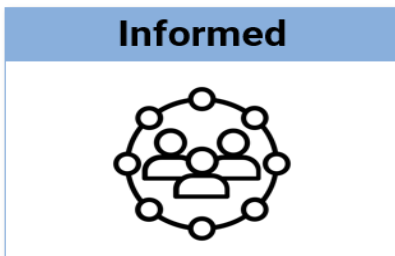
Allies and partners whose input is directly considered during the decision-making process

Involved

Allies and partners who are responsible for making the decision

💡 **TIP: Include Everyone's Voice!**

It is important to conduct outreach to allies and partners who have historically been underserved and underrepresented by the health care and human services systems ecosystem and involve them in planning efforts.

Leader Checklist

Below you will see a succinct Leader Checklist of actions to help you choose, plan for, and evaluate the action(s) your organization is/are incorporating:

	Task	Date Complete
Choose	Review *Take Action for Adolescents*	__/__/__
	Consider the needs of those you serve; those who will benefit from this effort	__/__/__
	Select action(s) you would like to implement	__/__/__
	Engage allies and partners to design/review and give feedback on the effort	__/__/__
	Include young people in decisions	__/__/__
	Get buy-in from colleagues, allies, and partners before proceeding	__/__/__
Plan and Act	Write a purpose statement	__/__/__
	Define the scope of the effort	__/__/__
	Plan for engagement of allies and partners; get buy-in where needed	__/__/__
	Outline roles and responsibilities	__/__/__
	Mobilize financial resources for the effort	__/__/__
	Kick off the effort	__/__/__
	Schedule regular check-ins with the project team	__/__/__
	Engage with allies and partners at regular intervals	__/__/__
Measure	Define success	__/__/__
	Create an evaluation plan	__/__/__
	Measure progress	__/__/__
	Report on results to the champions leading the action	__/__/__
	Document/incorporate feedback and lessons learned	__/__/__
	Repeat "Plan and Act" and "Measure" until you achieve your desired outcome	__/__/__

3.0: Measure Progress

In the Measure phase, revisit the desired outcomes and results you set at the beginning of the process. Now, determine how well the implementation did against the targets you set. You may also consider these questions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health:

- What will be evaluated? (i.e., What is "the program" and in what context does it exist)?
- What aspects of the program will be considered when judging program performance?
- What standards must be reached for the program to be considered successful?
- What evidence will be used to indicate how the program has performed?
- What conclusions regarding program performance are justified by comparing the available evidence to the selected standards?
- How will lessons learned from the inquiry be used to improve program effectiveness?

These questions are designed to be asked and answered at the beginning of a program and revisited throughout its implementation. This framework can be used for evaluating large programs and smaller initiatives.

3.1 Milestones

It is helpful to set milestones or markers to track your progress towards the desired outcome of the implemented action. Milestones represent significant progress after completion of major phases of work.

A Milestones Tracker, shown below, is a visual planning tool that divides your project into phases over time. Milestones help your team maintain focus and provide a reason to celebrate once they are achieved.

Milestones Tracker		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	Action 1				
	Action 2				
	Action 3				

Appendix A: Federal Government Resources by Goal

This section provides resources and other guides organized by goals in *Take Action for Adolescents*.

Call to Action Goal	Resources
Goal 1: Eliminate disparities to advance health equity	- HHS Children and Youth Resilience Prize Challenge - NIMH Strategic Framework for Addressing Youth Mental Health - SAMHSA's Moving Beyond Change Efforts: Evidence and Action to Support and Affirm LGBTQI+ Youth
Goal 2: Increase youth agency and youth engagement	- ListenUp! Youth Listening Session Toolkit - Toolkit for Implementing Authentic Youth Engagement Strategies Within State Advisory Groups - Youth Engagement Blueprint - Principles for Youth Engagement - Eight Successful Youth Engagement Approaches - Youth Engagement Tips for Professionals - Youth Engagement at the Federal Level: A Compilation of Strategies and Practices - Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience - What Does it Look Like to Equitably Engage People with Lived Experience - Strategies to Equitably Identify People with Lived Experience - Recruiting Individuals with Lived Experience - Raising Voices: Youth Participatory Action Research to Explore Experiences and Strategies for Improving the Well-Being of Youth with Incarcerated Parents - Nothing About Us Without Us: Amplifying the Perspectives of Youth with Experiences of Parental Incarceration Through Youth Participatory Action Research - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Youth Engagement Model Programs Guide - Youth Engagement in Development: Effective Approaches and Action-oriented Recommendations for the Field - Youth and Family Partnerships Resource Library - Youth Adult Partnerships

Call to Action Goal	Resources
	• Involving Youth in Positive Youth Development • Integrating Positive Youth Development into Programs
Goal 3: Ensure access to safe and supportive environments	• Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community • Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package • Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's Classrooms • Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment in Our Nation's School Buses • What Works in Schools • Embracing a "Youth Welfare" System: A Guide to Capacity Building • A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities • StopBullying.gov • School Safety
Goal 4: Increase coordination and collaboration within and across systems	• Youth Advisory Councils • Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience • HHS CDC Overview of the Framework for Evaluation • HHS CDC Summary of the Framework for Program Evaluation • HHS CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health
Goal 5: Expand access to health care and human services	• HRSA's Bright Futures Guidelines • HRSA's Pediatric Mental Health Care Access • HRSA's Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (LEAH) Program • Preventing and Reducing Youth and Young Adult Substance Misuse: Schools, Students, Families	U.S. Department of Education • Substance Use Prevention: A Resource Guide for School Staff
Goal 6: Strengthen training and support for caring adults	• A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children • Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health

Call to Action Goal	Resources
	• Building Student Resilience Toolkit • Addressing Human Trafficking in America's Schools: Staff Development Series • Get Smart. Get Help. Get Safe. • Aftercare: Staying in Touch with Youth After They Have Left the System
Goal 7: Improve health information and health literacy	• Social Media and Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory
Goal 8: Support, translate, and disseminate research	• Raising Voices: Youth Participatory Action Research to Explore Experiences and Strategies for Improving the Well-Being of Youth with Incarcerated Parents • Nothing About Us Without Us: Amplifying the Perspectives of Youth with Experiences of Parental Incarceration Through Youth Participatory Action Research • Tips for Inclusive Community-Engaged Research

Appendix B: Choose Worksheet

The Customize Action Worksheet will pose a series of pertinent questions to guide your decision-making process. You should use one worksheet per action.

Action: Click or tap here to enter text.

Goal: Click or tap here to enter text.

Relevance:
How closely does this action align with your mission and objectives?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Cost-Benefit:
What are the estimated costs of implementation and does the expected benefit outweigh the cost? Is the implementation short term or long term?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Collaboration:
Are there opportunities to collaborate with partners to implement this action more effectively?
Click or tap here to enter text.

Risks:
Are there any potential risks or challenges that could halt progress?
*Click or tap here to enter text.*

Appendix C: SOAR Analysis Technique

Use the planning tool below to assist you in choosing action(s) from *Take Action for Adolescents* to implement.

Strengths
- What do we excel at?
- What are the strengths of our community, staff, and leadership?
- What makes us unique?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Opportunities
- What partnerships would lead to greater success?
- Are there any barriers that could affect implementation?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Aspirations
- What do we want to achieve in the future?
- How can we make a difference?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Results
- Do our current resources make this action achievable now?
- What measures will help us define success?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendix D: Prioritization Matrix

Plot your prioritized actions on the matrix below:

High

Do Now!

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do Next!

Click or tap here to enter text.

Impact

Do Last!

Click or tap here to enter text.

Do Never!

Click or tap here to enter text.

Low   **Effort**   High
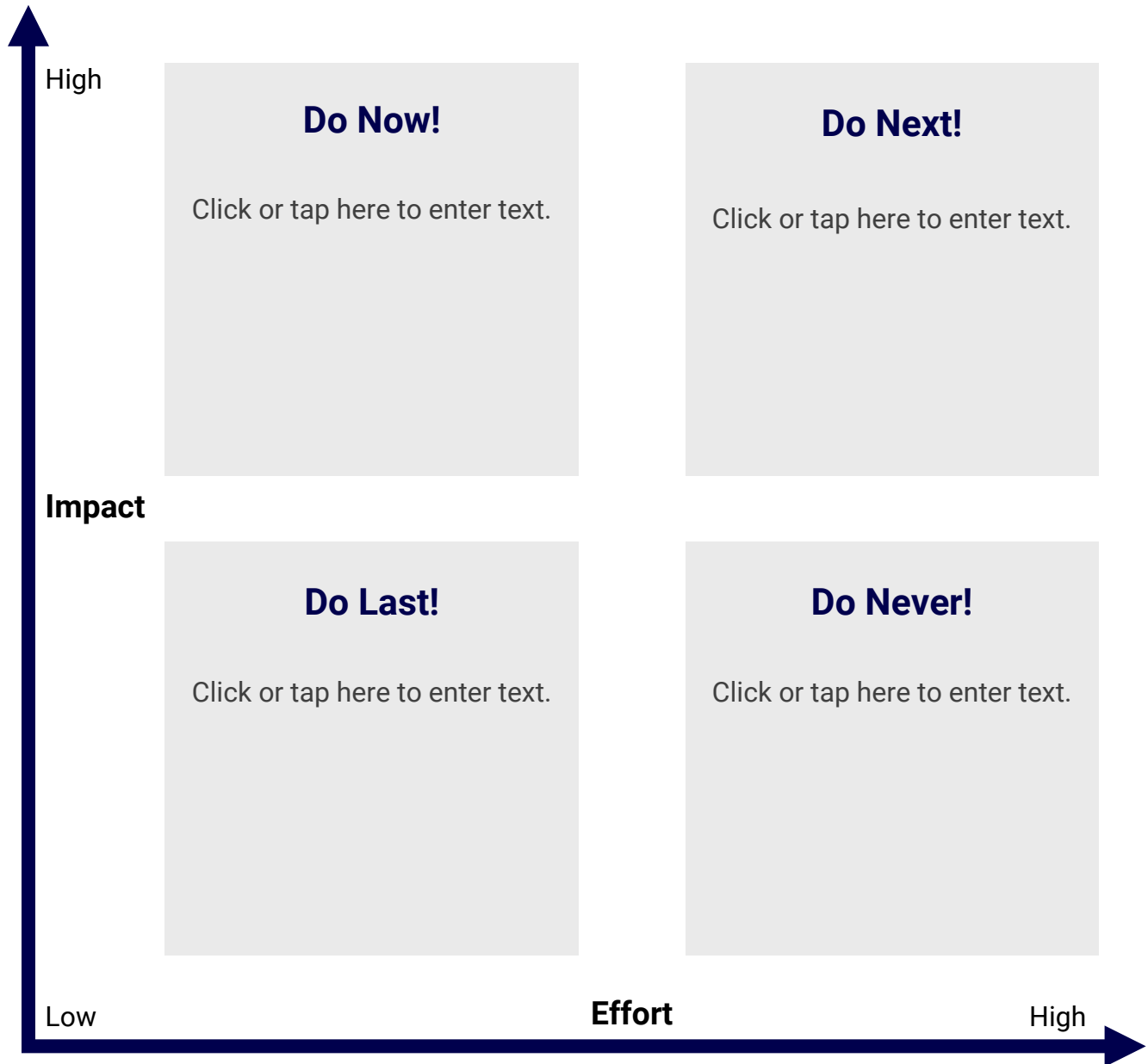
Appendix E: Leader Checklist

	Task	Date Complete
Choose	Review *Take Action for Adolescents*	__/__/__
	Consider the needs of those you serve; those who will benefit from this effort	__/__/__
	Select action(s) you would like to implement	__/__/__
	Engage allies and partners to design/review and give feedback on the effort	__/__/__
	Include young people in decisions	__/__/__
	Get buy-in from colleagues, allies, and partners before proceeding	__/__/__
Plan and Act	Write a purpose statement	__/__/__
	Define the scope of the effort	__/__/__
	Plan for engagement of allies and partners; get buy-in where needed	__/__/__
	Outline roles and responsibilities	__/__/__
	Mobilize financial resources for the effort	__/__/__
	Kick off the effort	__/__/__
	Schedule regular check-ins with the project team	__/__/__
	Engage with allies and partners at regular intervals	__/__/__
Measure	Define success	__/__/__
	Create an evaluation plan	__/__/__
	Measure progress	__/__/__
	Report on results to the champions leading the action	__/__/__
	Document/incorporate feedback and lessons learned	__/__/__
	Repeat "Plan and Act" and "Measure" until you achieve your desired outcome	__/__/__

Appendix F: Milestones Tracker

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Action 1				
Action 2				
Action 3				

Appendix G: Glossary

This glossary elaborates on and provides examples about key ideas presented in the Call to Action and Toolkit.

Background, identity, or characteristics: Age, race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status, socioeconomic status, geographic location, immigration, etc.

Meaningful inclusion of young people at all phases of work: Research, proposals, planning, implementation, evaluation, program improvements, etc.

Whole person health: Biological, behavioral, social, environmental, physical, mental, intellectual, sexual, and social health

Opportunities to collaborate on the SDoH: Climate change, housing, food insecurity, join community groups or interagency groups, etc.

Supportive schools: Physical, mental, and behavioral health services including crisis services, providing differentiated support for academics and career planning and mental health counseling, safe pedestrian routes to school, multigenerational community activities, etc.

Early intervention and primary prevention programs: School-based health centers, after school recreation, mentoring programs, etc.

Intergenerational learning and collaboration: Tutoring in reading, writing, math, and technical skills, community gardening, etc.

Healthy romantic relationships: Open and respectful dialogue, freedom of expression to be oneself, mutual trust, consent, etc.

Skills training programs: Assessment, behavioral change, literacy, speaking in a developmentally appropriate way, strength-based communication, etc.

Evidence-based programs that foster positive youth development: Supportive adult relationships; emotional support; opportunities for skill-building and making a contribution to the community; strong links among families, schools and broader community resources

Expanded options for mental health services: Telehealth across state lines, group therapy, online forums, texting, apps, use of peer mentors/supporters, etc.

Delivering health messages to young people: Short, casual, colorful videos, in varied social settings and social media platforms

Health literacy topics: Good nutrition and exercise, promoting sleep hygiene and stress management strategies, building supporting relationships, finding safe and fun recreational opportunities in their communities, connecting with job training programs, enrolling in affordable health insurance, choosing a doctor, navigating health insurance websites, requesting accommodations (IEPs, 504s), assessing the impact of climate on the environment and adolescent physical and mental health, identifying marketing and advertisements identifying misinformation, using online diagnosis platforms and artificial intelligence language models responsibly for health information, etc.