



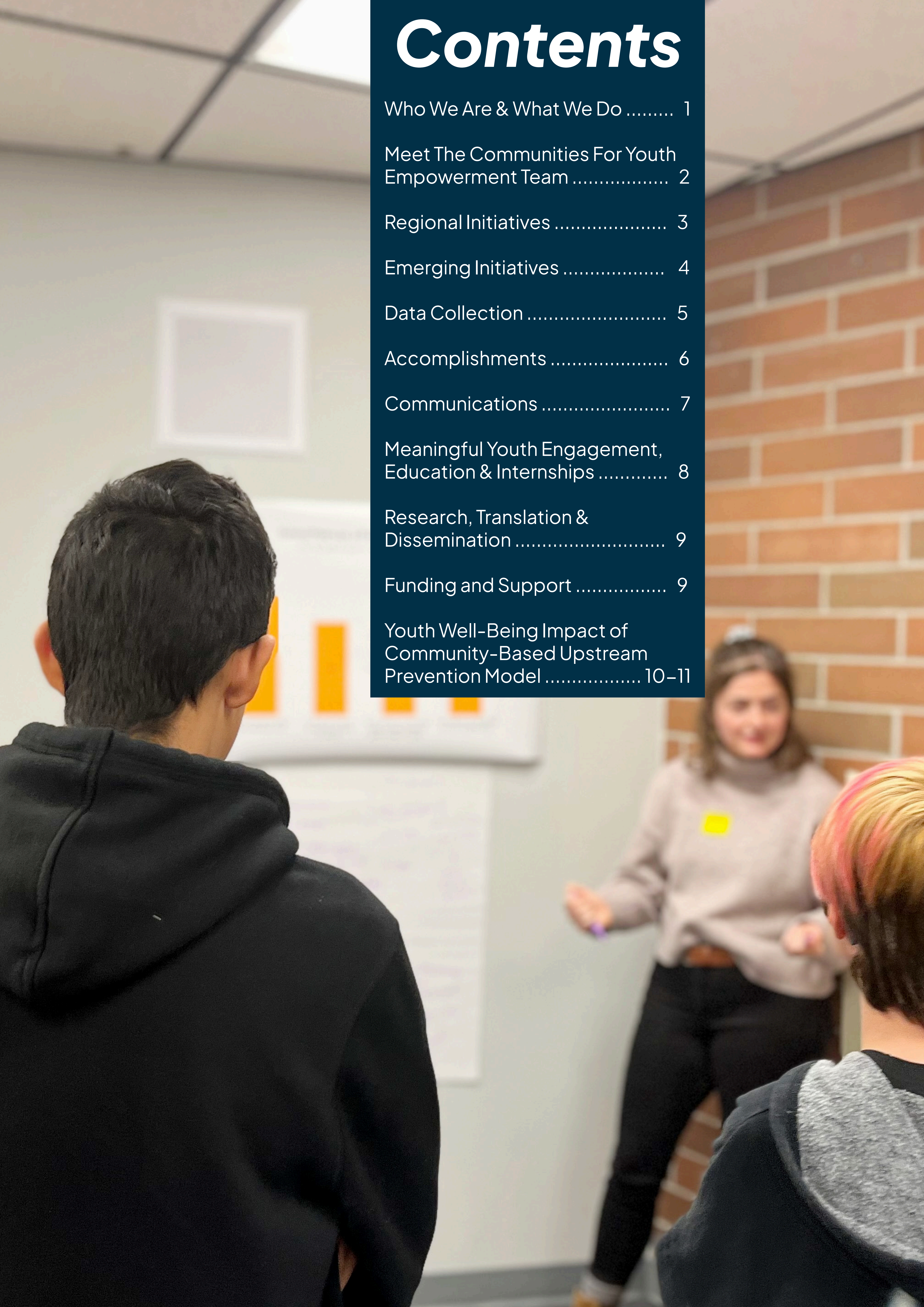
COMMUNITIES  
FOR YOUTH

# 2024 *Annual Report*



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# Who We Are & What We Do

Communities for Youth is an initiative of Boise State University's School of Public and Population Health focused on improving youth mental health and well-being in the state of Idaho. Our approach involves working with communities to move youth prevention "upstream" using a data-driven, community-engaged approach.

**Vision:** Building the best possible communities for youth so that all may thrive.

**Mission:** We build capacity for upstream prevention by empowering Idaho communities to effectively address youth well-being.

## Goals:

1. Increase well-being for Idaho youth through building community capacity to employ upstream prevention.
2. Increase data collection, use, and literacy in Idaho in order to advance our understanding of key risk and protective factors for youth.
3. Bring communities together across sectors and backgrounds through building a shared understanding and supporting strategic, evidence-informed action.

## What We Do to Support Youth in Idaho:

- Advocate for Upstream Prevention, robust data collection, and Data Collection/Use, Youth perspectives
- Engage parents, community members, youth and org partners in the work
- Build self-efficacy at the individual and community level
- Increase cohesion and connection across these folks in community
- Share a sustainable UP process for communities to eventually completely own
- Analyze data and share with lay audiences in meaningful ways
- Facilitate data understanding and relevant action
- Support evidence-based communication tools for public campaigns
- Strategic planning
- Disseminate research on youth well-being



# Meet The Communities For Youth Empowerment Team



**Megan Smith**  
C4Y Director



**Matt Isbell**  
Deputy Director



**Anne Abbott**  
Communications Director



*Our team is dedicated to connecting schools, parents, youth, and the community at-large to build upstream prevention capacity for youth well-being.*



**Meredith Spivak**  
Operations Manager



**Taylor Neher**  
Research & Evaluation Director



**Melissa Rackley**  
Communications Coordinator



**Andrea Hill**  
Community Engagement Coordinator



**Heidi Jaerger**  
Youth Engagement Coordinator



**Libbie Luevanos**  
Hispanic Populations Engagement Coordinator



**Sydney Nickel**  
MPH Graduate Assistant



**Heather Terrall**  
PhD Graduate Assistant



# Regional Initiatives

Regional Initiatives are communities that have made a five-year commitment to:

- bring together key partners including the public school district, youth service providers, an organization or agency willing to host a staff person at least partially dedicated to implementing the Communities for Youth process, and others.
- implement the Communities for Youth data-driven community engagement model annually.
- work with the Communities for Youth Empowerment team to communicate with their community and build partnerships and collaborations.

The current Communities for Youth Regional Initiatives include Boise, Blaine County, and SW Idaho (currently focused in Marsing).

**Regional Initiative Community Leads (left to right):** Angie Gribble, Boise; Sarah Seppa, Blaine County; Tara Woodward, Southwest Idaho







## Emerging Initiatives

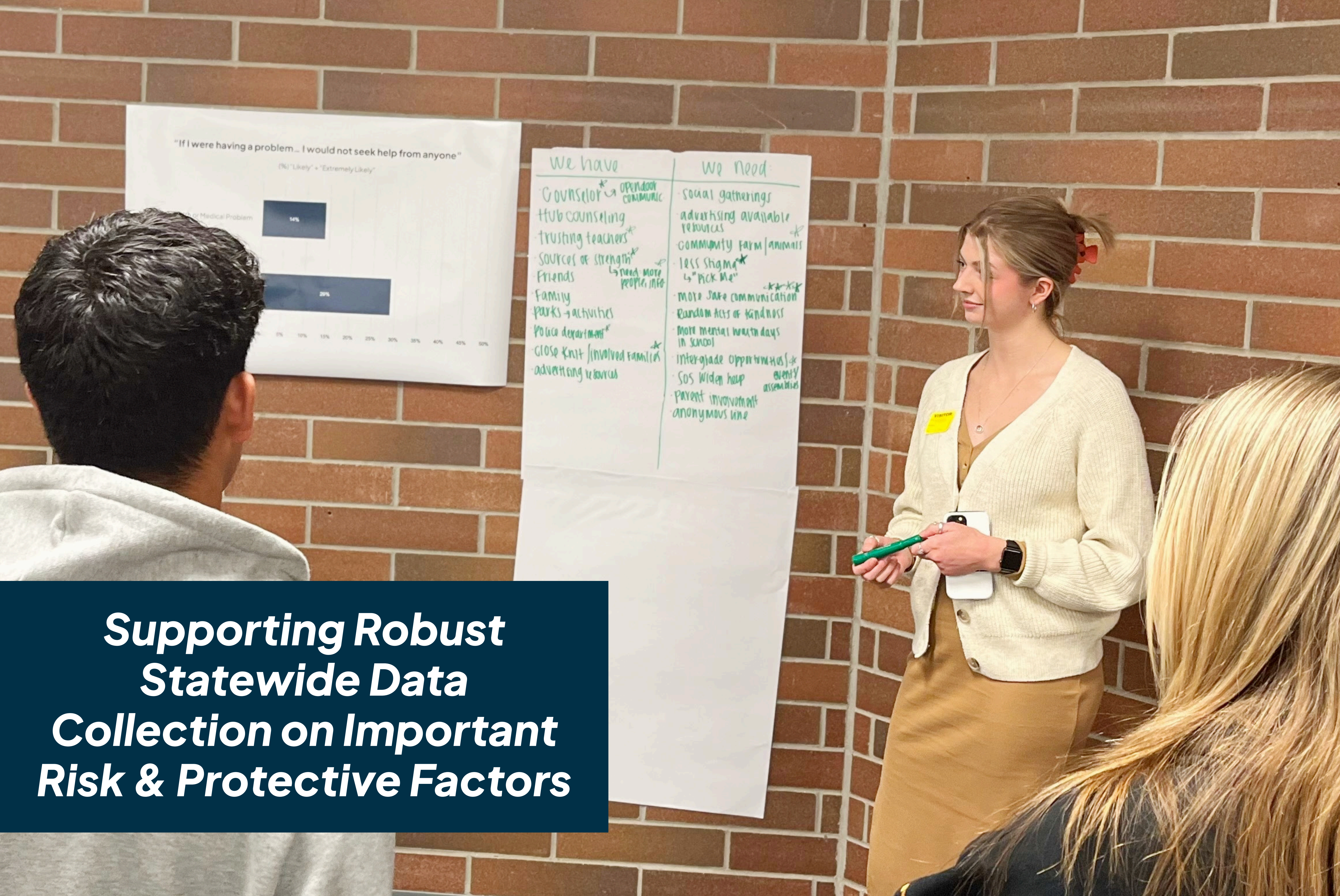
### Emerging Initiatives

In some cases, communities want to learn more before they engage in a full regional initiative or engage in other work. These emerging initiatives work to engage leaders and community members in conversations about the possibilities of upstream prevention and determining next steps to make their communities the best possible place for kids. Communities with emerging youth well-being initiatives include the cities of Nampa, Eagle, Meridian, and Star, Idaho.

### Leadership and Capacity Building Around Upstream Prevention

Communities for Youth actively seeks out and engages in opportunities across Idaho to educate members of the public, youth-serving organizations and agencies, the business community, philanthropy and many others on the benefits of moving youth prevention efforts “upstream” and the importance of focusing on youth mental as part of a comprehensive approach to youth well-being.





**Supporting Robust  
Statewide Data  
Collection on Important  
Risk & Protective Factors**

During the past year, Communities for Youth has secured a contract with the Idaho State Department of Education to administer the Idaho Youth Well-being Assessment. There are 9 school districts that have signed up for this assessment, and an additional 9 school districts who are considering signing up. Communities for Youth will be offering schools who sign up additional opportunities to work with our team to maximize their data and build capacity for upstream prevention for youth well-being.



# Accomplishments

## Promoting Upstream Prevention through Statewide Community Outreach

We have hosted and presented at more than 20 community outreach meetings and events in 2024. We estimate our community reach at over 3,000 individuals across the regional initiative and emerging initiative communities. In 2024 we were able to hire a Community Engagement Coordinator to expand our work in this area. Public presentations included:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Idaho State Prevention Conference</li><li>• Idaho Business for Education</li><li>• Idaho School Board Association</li><li>• Stronger Together Conference</li><li>• Strengthening Families Conference</li><li>• Professional Development events at many schools in our Regional Initiatives</li><li>• Idaho Superintendents Network</li><li>• Energize Neighborhoods</li><li>• Community Health Impact Forum</li><li>• Idaho Funders Network</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NAMI Statewide conference</li><li>• Idaho Association of School Counselors</li><li>• College of Western Idaho and College of Idaho</li><li>• Faith groups across Idaho</li><li>• Community Youth and Prevention Coalitions across the state</li><li>• Connection is The Cure Events</li><li>• Idaho Public Television Documentary “The Unaltered State”</li><li>• Blue Cross of Idaho Board of Directors</li><li>• Meridian City Officials</li></ul> |
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# Communications



Increasing the quality of our internal (e.g., staff, partners within regional initiatives) and external (e.g., parents, general community members) communications has been a strategic investment area for Communities for Youth as we have expanded the dedicated hours of our Communications Director and hired a Communications Coordinator. Some highlights of accomplishments and growth in 2024:

- Refreshed communitiesforyouth.org homepage, navigation, and sub-pages for increased usability, information seeking, and functionality
- Implemented new blog/news functionality and calendar/RSVP system on communitiesforyouth.org as well as internal processes for content creation/updates from C4Y staff and regional initiative community leads
- Implemented new Regional Initiative Landing and sub-pages (data, partners, goals/focus areas) for Blaine County, Boise, and SW Idaho Initiatives and integrated with new blog and calendaring systems to create community-specific versions of each.
- Designed and implemented new monthly newsletters for each regional initiative
- Continued to professionalize C4Y branding and design of informational one-pagers, handouts, event flyers, small and large format print media, social media graphics and other products.
- Provided campaign materials for social connection campaign ("Let's Connect Boise) and sleep promotion materials.



# Meaningful Youth Engagement, Education, and Internships



Communities for Youth is working to build and pilot a Teen Action Team to deepen youth engagement in our Regional Initiatives. Our Youth Engagement Coordinators, Lexi Cole and Heidi Jaerger, with the help of other young adult volunteers, have been helping to coordinate regional Teen Takeovers with JUMP, working with the City of Boise to connect teens to leadership opportunities and a Teen Clubhouse at Fort Boise, and collaborating with partners and schools across the Treasure Valley to meaningfully engage middle and high school aged teens in upstream prevention. Plans are in the works for Teen-led Data Walks, Event Planning, and working to build out the Teen Action Team as a youth advisory board to our engaged partners.

- Communities for Youth is a team that cares deeply for the development and growth of young people in our community, this extends through the college years. Since our founding we have proudly provided opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students at Boise State University to get involved in the Communities for Youth work and learn about community engagement.
- In 2024, we expanded our reach and now serve students across College of Western Idaho, College of Idaho, and Boise State University. We have delivered guest lectures at all of these campuses and have students engaging in the Communities for Youth work through their participation in our Community Engagement Internship Program.
- Communities for Youth began a Community Engagement Internship Program and accepted eight interns in the Fall 2024 semester. Our interns became part of our community outreach and community facilitation and represented Communities for Youth at various events. They were also an integral part in bringing data back to our communities and helping build trust among community members. In total, our interns logged over 250 community engagement hours.



# Research, Translation & Dissemination

We strongly believe that the work we do should be rigorously measured, evaluated, and disseminated to the public. We also aim to add to the evidence base around “what works” for addressing community-level youth mental health and overall youth well-being.

## Funding and Support

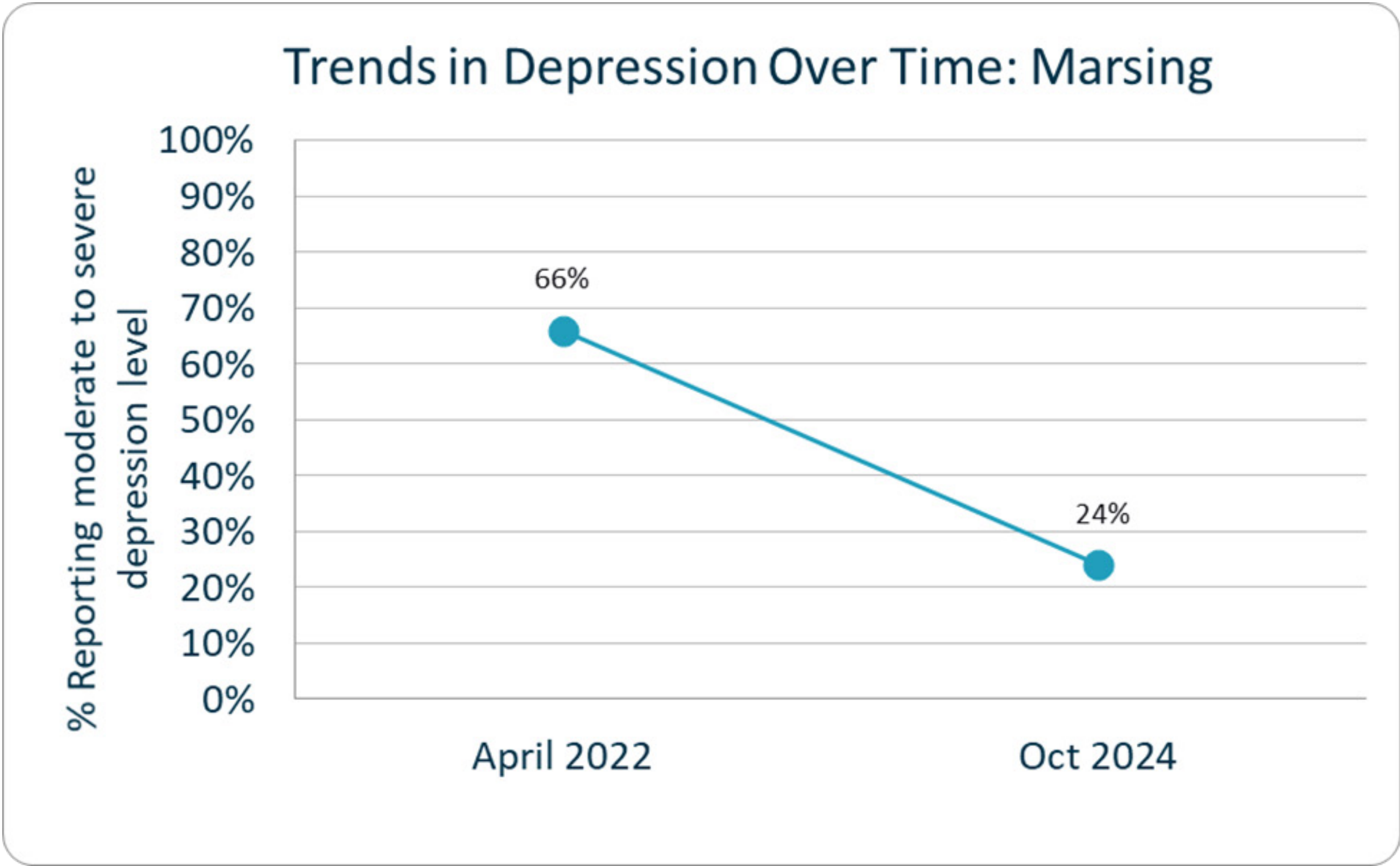
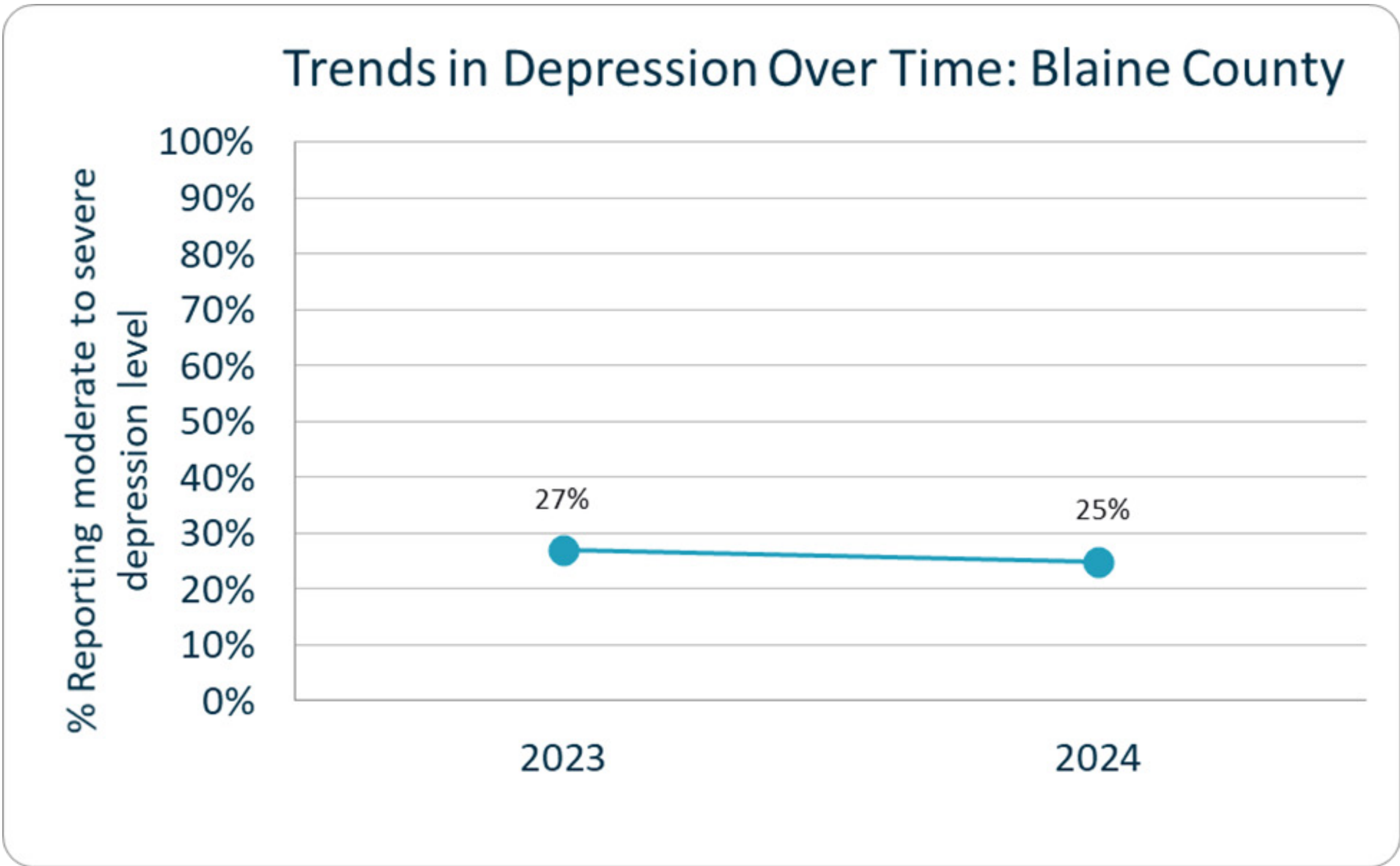
We rely on the generosity and support of our partners that continue to step up and contribute financially to increase the capacity of our communities to effectively carry out upstream prevention. Our major donors this past year were the St. Luke’s Health and the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation. We also received contributions from Intermountain Health and several small private donations last year. If you are interested in how you can support expanding this work to meet the need that exists across the state, please visit our [donation page](#).



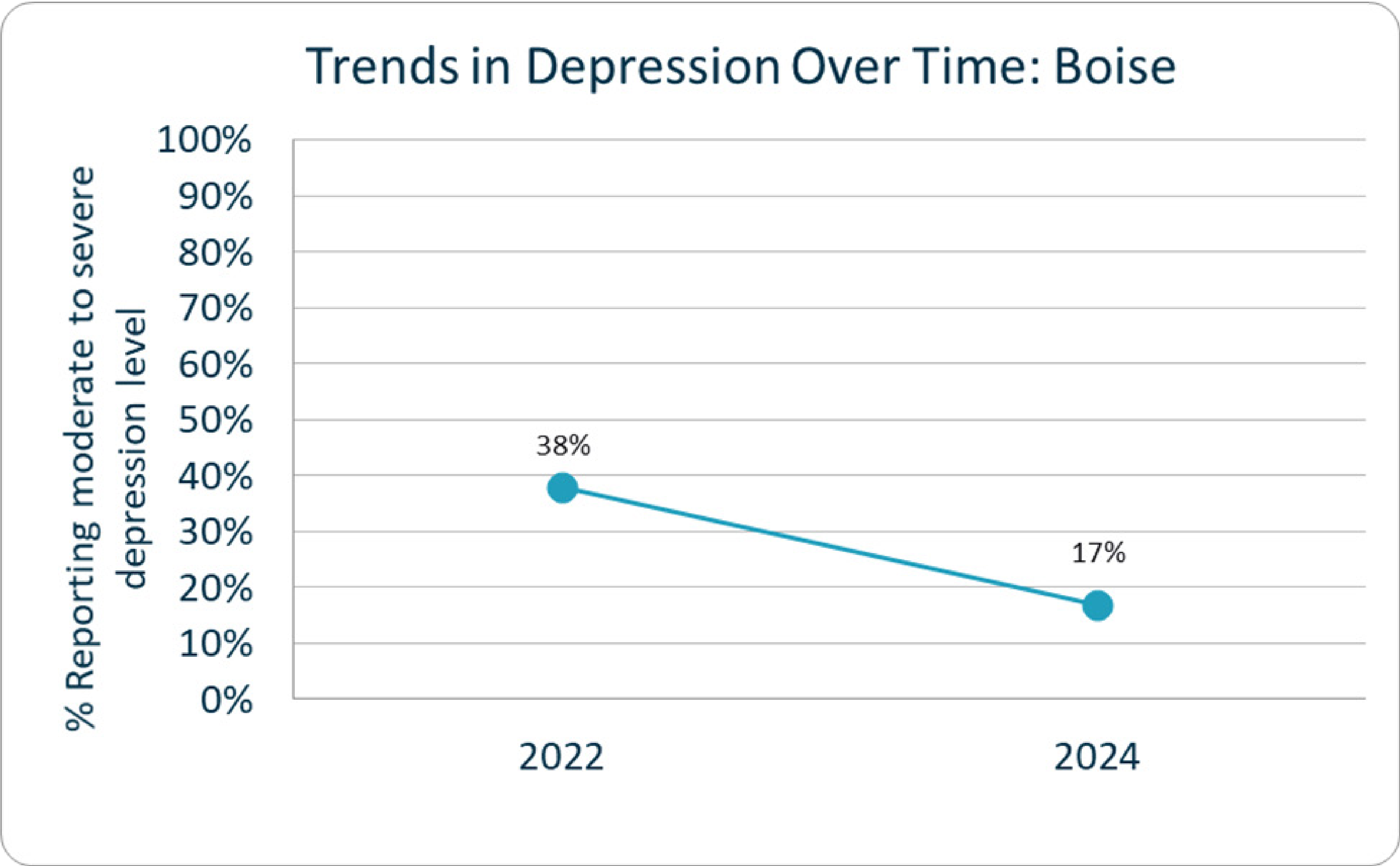


# Youth Well-Being Impact of Community-Based Upstream Prevention Model

We are excited to report that all three of the current C4Y Regional Initiatives are currently seeing excellent forward progress on their goals around improving youth mental health and more specifically reducing the number of young people that experience moderate-to-severe symptoms of depression. The graphs below show the progress that has been realized over two years of community collaboration in the City of Boise, four years of data collection in the City of Marsing, and one year of focus on this outcome in Blaine County.







These outcomes are the result not of Communities for Youth itself, but of folks across each of these communities working on things within their power to change and adapt for the good of local young people. We have worked with schools and districts changing their policies and practices as well as mayors and other local leaders working to ensure institutional and structural support for upstream prevention. We have seen youth serving organizations and local businesses build social connection opportunities for teens. We've also worked with local philanthropy to ensure funding is directed on the issues that matter most. We have witnessed SO many examples of parents and extended family, and even individuals like faith leaders, take part in creating the shared understandings of what is needed to support teens and build community environments that protect against mental health and other challenges to youth well-being. Each of these contributions are vital to the upstream prevention successes that are emerging in each of the C4Y Regional Initiatives.

To be clear, there is still work to be done. This is true in each of the C4Y Regional Initiatives as well as in communities across Idaho where the need to address youth well-being has not yet been recognized as an essential piece of building up young Idahoans. However, we can close the year with the true knowledge that when communities come together around upstream prevention, we move ever closer to building the best possible community for kids. And this contributes to well-being for all of Idaho.