



REGION 7 YOUTH COLLABORATIVE



Digital Media Storytelling Contest

Contest Rules

What is Project Open Air?

Project Open Air is a youth-centered digital media storytelling project created to elevate the voices, insights, and experiences of young people across Region 7 in North Carolina. The project invites youth in middle and high school to create original multimedia messages about tobacco and vaping prevention.

These messages help shed light on the realities youth face in their communities and amplify their role in creating healthier, tobacco-free & vape-free environments.

Suggested Topics to Explore:

Media submissions use data, community insight, and creativity to explore tobacco prevention topics relevant in North Carolina, including (but not limited to):

- Tobacco/Vaping advertising and price promotions
- Menthol and flavored tobacco product exposure
- Tobacco retailer proximity to schools
- Youth use of e-cigarettes/vapes
- Tobacco-free housing or school environments
- Intersection of tobacco with mental health
- Cultural Narratives on health

Why it Matters

- Youth exposure to retail marketing and flavored products remains high
- Menthol cigarettes and flavored vapes are still disproportionately used in Black communities
- Smoke-free policies, when paired with youth leadership, improve public health outcomes
- Giving youth a creative voice builds health equity, community accountability, and leadership skills





STORYTELLING

Who Can Participate?

- Students (Middle and High School level)
- Youth participating in local youth programs (community based organizations, health departments, etc)
- Adult allies may only participate as support for youth in producing quality content

Participation is flexible—groups may work independently or in partnership with the Regional Tobacco Prevention & Control Program.

Types of Media to Submit

Select one or more digital storytelling medium:

Short Video Interviews

Youth-led interviews, storytelling, PSA (Public Service Announcement), or documentary-style videos sharing real experiences or awareness on tobacco marketing, access, or health impact.

Spoken Word Performance

Original spoken word, poetry, or personal audio reflections tied to tobacco use or vaping, industry influence, or public space norms.

Photo Essays

A sequence of original images with captions that highlight how tobacco/vaping shows up in everyday environments—especially in or near schools, stores, homes, or youth-centered spaces.

Digital Art or Animated PSA Shorts

Creative posters, animated messages, or illustrated stories centered on youth resistance, reclaiming breath, or promoting tobacco/vape-free spaces.

Updated: July 2026



Eligibility

- Youth must reside or attend school in one of the 8 counties in Region 7: Franklin, Granville, Johnston, Nash, Vance, Wake, Warren, Wilson.
- Group submissions allowed (up to 3 people per group)
- Participants may submit work that was also submitted elsewhere, such as school projects or other competitions.

How to Participate

Sign Up Directly to Project Open Air

- Youth - Directly volunteer to participate

Choose Your Format

- Decide which content type you/your group will create.

Schedule an Workshop *(Optional, and for Schools and Community programs only)*

- A brief orientation and messaging workshop can/will be provided by the Regional Tobacco Prevention & Control Manager.

Create & Submit Your Entry

- Youth project entry will be submitted for public digital showcase/Contest ***Participants and interview subjects must complete basic release forms.***

Celebrate & Showcase Youth Voices

- All youth who participate will be showcased on official social media platform - YouTube

Submission Guidelines

- To be eligible for judging and inclusion in the regional showcase, your project must:
- Be original, youth-led, and created by you or your team
- Directly address tobacco or vaping-related harm, access, or prevention in your NC county, city, or neighborhood
- Be free of copyrighted material unless clearly protected by “Fair Use” [U.S. Copyright Fair Use Guidelines](https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html)
<https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-fairuse.html>

Use of AI Tools

- Students are welcome to use AI tools (e.g., for editing, design, audio mixing, or idea generation) in most categories. However, Short Interview Videos and Spoken Word pieces must be live-recorded — meaning they must feature the real voices and/or images of actual people and cannot be generated using AI avatars or text-to-speech tools.
- Projects in other categories (Photo Essays and Digital Art/Animated PSAs) may include AI-assisted visuals, as long as they are clearly student-directed and relevant to the theme.

Format & Quality Requirements

- Video Submissions must be 1–3 minutes long
- Include clear audio, stable footage, and good lighting
- Must be submitted in .mp4 or .mov format (720p minimum, 1080p preferred)
- Photo Essays must include 4–6 high-quality, original images (.jpg or .png)
- Each image should be captioned and tell a visual story
- Spoken Word may be submitted as video or audio with transcript
- If audio-only, please provide a .mp3 or .wav file
- Digital Art/Animated PSAs must be original creations submitted in .mp4, .gif, .jpg, or .png format



ENTRY CRITERIA

Required Info (Include in Submission)

Be sure to include the following with your submission:

- Full Name
- Age
- Grade Level / College Year
- School
- County
- Project Title & Media Category
- Short description (2–3 sentences) of your project

Consent & Release Forms

If your submission includes any other people (voice or image), each person must complete a Media Consent/Release Form provided by our team or your school/partner organization.

Important Notes

1. Submissions with inappropriate language, violent imagery, or unrelated content will be disqualified.
2. Projects must be submitted by the posted deadline to be considered.
3. Group entries must include no more than 3 people.

How to Submit

- Submit your project via the link provided once you sign up.



How Entries Will Be Judged

All eligible submissions will be evaluated by a panel of community judges using the same set of clear, fair criteria. Our judges are educators, public health professionals, and youth advocates — they'll be looking for heart, creativity, and clarity, not technical perfection.

Each entry will be scored out of 100 points, based on the following five categories:

- **Relevance to Theme (20 points)**
- **Clarity of Message (20 points)**
- **Creativity & Originality (20 points)**
- **Effort & Presentation (20 points)**
- **Community Impact Potential (20 points)**

Entry Age Groups

Each submission will be judged separately within these three age-based groups:

1. **Middle School (Grades 6–8)**
2. **High School (Grades 9–12)**

Each age group will have its own pool of winners across the four submission types. (see “Storytelling” Section)

Prize Opportunities^{*/**/**}

	Middle School	High School
Short Interviews	1	1
Spoken Word	1	1
Photo Essay	1	1
Digital Art/Animated PSAs	1	1

**Depending upon overall participation, prize opportunities may increase to include 2nd Runner up places*

*** Prizes for group entries may default to gift card per group member.*

**** Categories must have at least 3 entries to activate top tier prizes.*



HOW TO ENTER



Sign Up First

Entries will be accepted on a rolling basis

Complete the Project Open Air Sign-Up Form to let us know you're participating. Once you sign up, you'll have until November 13th to submit your project. The earlier you sign up, the earlier you can be featured!

- Contest Opens: September 8, 2026
- Final deadline to submit projects: November 13, 2026

Submit Your Project

After you sign up, you'll receive a confirmation with your personal deadline and submission link.

All projects must:

- Follow the contest rules and media guidelines
- Be submitted no later than November 13, 2026
- Media consent/Release forms for participants and interviewees (if applicable) must be submitted in order to be entered.

NOTE: Submitting early gives you the opportunity to be featured/showcased on our official channel longer!!

NCALHD
Region 7



GET IN TOUCH

REGION 7

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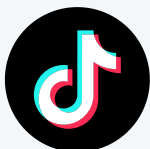
*Serving: Wake,
Johnston, Franklin,
Wilson, Nash, Granville,
Vance, and Warren
Counties*

**Call/email for questions and
assistance**

Social Media Channels



@ProjectOpenAir



@ProjectOpenAir



@ProjectOpenAir



@ProjectOpenAirNC



Contact Information

Interview Question Guide

Here are sample questions are meant to help with interviews and other content. They are not mandatory, yet should serve as a starting point for interview questions and/or deeper discussion...

Topic: Youth Access & Retail Environment

1. Have you noticed how close tobacco or vape shops are to your school or neighborhood?
2. What do you think about stores displaying tobacco products next to candy or toys?
3. Do you think flavored products like menthol and vapes make it easier for teens to start smoking?

Topic: Mental Health & Nicotine Addiction

1. Why do you think some teens turn to vaping or smoking to cope with stress or anxiety?
2. What do you think schools or communities can do to support mental health instead of normalizing nicotine use?

Topic: Media Influence & Misinformation

1. Have you seen influencers or ads promoting vaping? How do you think this affects young people?
2. What are some common myths you've heard about vaping that you want to correct?

Topic: Cost & Consequences

1. How do you think the price of cigarettes or e-cigarettes impacts teens?
2. If you had to choose between spending \$10 on a vape or something else, what would it be?

Free Tools & Resources

Here's a curated list of free, beginner-friendly tools students can use to create, edit, and polish their contest entries. These can be compiled into a downloadable resource sheet or listed on the contest website.

AI & Writing Support Tools

- ChatGPT (OpenAI): Ideal for brainstorming, outlining, scriptwriting, and refining ideas. Free version available.
- Microsoft Copilot: Great for editing, rewriting, summarizing, and improving tone — integrated with Microsoft apps and Bing.
- Grammarly: Provides grammar checks, clarity suggestions, and writing enhancements — free basic version available.
- QuillBot: Useful for paraphrasing, summarizing, and rewording — limited free use.
- Gemini (Google): Google's AI assistant, perfect for research, writing prompts, scripting, and brainstorming — accessible with a free Google account.

Video Editing & Creation Tools

- CapCut: Mobile-friendly app for editing videos, adding captions, transitions, and effects — widely used for TikTok.
- InShot: Simple app for cutting, trimming, adding music, and overlay effects — ideal for social media videos.
- Canva (Video Editor): Offers pre-made templates for intros, slideshows, PSAs, and reels — easy to use and free for students.
- Kling.ai: AI video creation tool that turns prompts into animated or realistic short clips — check site for free access availability.
- Veed.io: Online video editor with tools for subtitles, trimming, and audio — free version has limited exports.

Media & Copyright-Free Resource Tools

- Creative Commons - (ccsearch.creativecommons.org) A safe way to find images, audio, and other media that are free to use with proper credit. Great for backgrounds, soundtracks, or supporting visuals.

Art & Design Tools

- Canva: All-in-one platform for designing posters, flyers, slides, thumbnails, and more — student-friendly and free.
- Photopea: Free browser-based editor similar to Photoshop — great for layered digital art and image manipulation.
- Pixlr: Simple and quick editor for photo enhancement or creating graphics.
- Kleki: Easy browser drawing tool — great for basic sketching and painting digitally.

Audio Recording & Editing Tools

- Audacity: Desktop app for recording and editing audio — excellent for podcasts, narration, or sound design.
- Anchor.fm / Spotify for Podcasters: Record and publish audio projects with ease — beginner-friendly and free.
- Vocaroo: Super simple voice recorder in your browser — no signup or download needed.