

Anchorage Youth Development Coalition Youth Program Quality Initiative Pilot

Call for Applications

Youth development programs serving children and youth, ages 5 to 21 years old, in Anchorage, Alaska are invited to apply to participate in the Anchorage Youth Development Coalition Youth Program Quality (YPQ) pilot initiative for the 2017-2018 school year. Apply online at: <http://aydc.org/ypq/application>

The purpose of this YPQ initiative is to engage Anchorage youth programs in continuous improvement that increases participating youth's access to positive development experiences, and results in better outcomes for youth.

Background and Anchorage Context

Research has shown that high-quality out-of-school-time programs can have positive effects on young people's attitudes toward school, social behavior, academic performance, and long-term success.¹ AYDC coalition members have been involved in numerous processes that have pointed to improving program quality as a key driver to improve outcomes for youth in the areas of health and wellbeing, skill-building, academic performance, and youth voice.

Anchorage schools and youth development programs have long been champions for positive climate, meaningful youth-adult relationships, and experiences that help youth build the breadth of skills and mindsets critical to their readiness for life's challenges and opportunities. In recent years, organizations have worked toward a coordinated approach for measuring how effectively those program elements are delivered.

At the same time, across the country, networks of youth providers have found success in adopting a continuous quality improvement approach most commonly referred to as youth program quality improvement.

AYDC YPQ Pilot Initiative

Anchorage Youth Development Coalition is seeking youth program providers with a demonstrated commitment to improving program quality to participate in the pilot of a program quality improvement initiative being conducted in partnership with the nationally recognized David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.



The goals of the pilot initiative are to:

- Increase the availability of high quality programs serving children and youth in Anchorage.
- Assist participating programs in developing a culture of continuous improvement.

¹ Durlak, Joseph A. & Weissberg, Roger P. The Impact of Afterschool Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) 2007

- Learn about the supports programs need – and how best to provide those supports – to improve the quality of their programming.
- Demonstrate that the AYDC YPQ initiative can assist a diverse group of programs in improving the quality of their programming.
- Foster a professional learning community among diverse Anchorage youth serving organizations.
- Support youth-serving organizations to develop shared goals, common measures, and evaluation methods around increasing youth assets and skills.
- Inform the development of a sustainable YPQ initiative for Anchorage youth-serving organizations.

Participation Benefits

A maximum of six organizations, including up to two sites per organization, will be selected to participate in the AYDC YPQ pilot. Participating organizations will receive seven months of support, including:

- Participation in a professional learning community focused on youth program quality improvement
- Training in youth program quality self-assessment
- Access to an online data management system
- A structure for providing objective feedback to staff
- Professional development in youth development best practices and managing continuous program quality improvement.
- Support for program quality goal setting and implementation to support staff in delivering high quality programs
- A stipend of \$3000.

Youth Program Quality Continuous Improvement Process

All participants in the pilot will use the David P. Weikart Center for Program Quality Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment tool (SEL PQA). The SEL PQA is used to assess program quality features and create customized action plans to enhance the program. The SEL PQA focuses on key areas of quality at the point where staff and youth interact: a safe space, supportive environment, youth/adult and peer interactions, and youth engagement. The SEL PQA helps staff to objectively identify program strengths and gaps, and is linked to training modules that help address self-identified areas for improvement. More details on the process are explained in Appendix A.

Participation Requirements

Successful applicants will commit to the following:

- Commitment of Executive Director to support full participation of program staff in all YPQ components.
- Identification of a staff lead per participating site who is in a supervisory position and will participate in all YPQ components (approximately 40 hours over the



- course of the pilot)
- Participation of program staff in learning community activities, trainings, assessments, and improvement planning (2-5 staff per participating site, up to 36 hours each).
- Completion of two self-assessments using the SEL PQA.
- Entering SEL PQA data and program improvement plan in a timely manner into the online system
- Development and documentation of an action plan to enhance program quality using SEL PQA data
- Administer a brief youth pre- and post- survey for all participating sites to support pilot evaluation. This will be an internal evaluation for AYDC to learn the effectiveness of this pilot initiative to support youth outcomes and is not an evaluation of any programs.
- Consent to share program demographic data, SEL PQA data, and youth pre- and post-survey data for aggregate reporting (individual program data will be kept confidential)

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the YPQ initiative, applicants must:

- Be classified as a 501(c)(3) public charity or a 170(c)(1) government instrumentality by the Internal Revenue Service. Anchorage School District programs may apply.
- Have operated for at least three years
- Provide services in Anchorage, Alaska
- Provide services to at least 25 children and youth, ages 5-21, for at least three hours per week on a consistent basis for at least seven months per year (including October 2017 through April 2018)
- Have at least three paid staff who are responsible for program implementation
- Demonstrate an intentional program design, including organized group activities, that is grounded in the principles of positive youth development. For background on positive youth development, visit <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>
- Identify one or two program sites as the focus for the assessment process
- Demonstrate prior experience with data collection
- Willingness to administer youth pre- and post- surveys for all participating sites to support pilot evaluation.

Selection Priorities

A YPQ review committee will meet to score and award proposals based on the following priorities:

- Programs that meet all of the eligibility criteria described in this application.
- Programs with capacity to complete the full YPQ process
- Programs with high staff retention
- Programs that serve youth ages 12-15
- Diversity of program settings, content focus areas, types, sizes and neighborhoods served.

Timeline

Aug 2, 2017	Applications open
Aug 22, 2017 - 5 pm	Online application submission due
Sept 13, 2017	Participating sites selected and notified

To support organizations in planning for full participation in the pilot, we have provided training and meeting dates and times below. Sites will be notified by September 12th if they are selected to participate. **Please reserve the following dates in the case that your organization is selected to participate:**

Oct 13, 2017 - 9:00-4:00	Initiative Kickoff and Program Quality Self-Assessment Basics Training
Oct – Nov 2017	Self-Assessment using the Social and Emotional Learning Youth Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA).
Nov 1, 2017	Youth pre-survey data submitted
Nov 8, 2017 – 10:00-11:30	Self-Assessment Check-in & Scores Reporter Webinar
Dec 1, 2017	Data entry completed in online data management system
Dec 15, 2017 – 9:00-3:00	Planning with Data workshop
Dec 18, 2017 – Jan 11, 2018	Sites develop Program Improvement Plan; 90 min Improvement Plan Check In Webinar will be scheduled during this period
February 2018	Youth Work Methods professional development workshops to support program quality improvement based on Program Improvement Plan target areas (2 hours each – staff each participate in two or more)
Mar – Apr 2018	Second self-assessment using the Social and Emotional Learning Youth Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA) & youth post-survey data submitted
Late Apr or Early May 2018	Celebration and reflection meeting

Application Procedures

Applications must be submitted online at: <http://aydc.org/ypq/application>

For reference, the application questions are provided in Appendix B.

Please direct questions to AYDC Project Manager Ciara Johnson (Email: Ciara@aydc.org, Phone: 562.4186)

Appendix A: Youth Program Quality Continuous Improvement Process

The purpose of a youth program quality improvement initiative is to build a “professional learning community” where each individual is engaged as a change agent in developing

- Strong Lines of Communication
- Capacity Around Data
- Continuous Improvement Feedback Loop in a low stakes accountability environment.”
(Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality)



An organization engages staff in three phases of a continuous improvement cycle: *Assess, Plan, and Improve.*

In the *Assess* phase staff observe each other at work, taking objective notes on aspects of the environment, interactions and youth engagement. In the *Plan* phase, program managers and frontline staff come together to look at the data collected and, as a team, set priorities and create goals for improvements they will make. The final *Improve* phase is about implementing the Program Improvement Plan, which could include professional development or changes in curriculum.

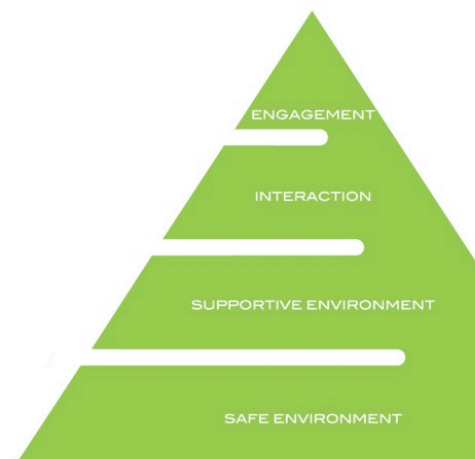
The Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA)

Networks of youth programs have used a variety of instruments to assess program quality. One such instrument, the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, has been utilized by dozens of communities across the country. This tool can be used to collect valid, reliable data on youth program quality, and provides a common language and national norms for reference. Applied in the context of the Weikart Center’s *Assess, Plan, Improve* sequence, it has been scientifically shown to improve youth program quality.

After years of experience with the instrument across the country, the Weikert Center has built a next-generation tool that is being used by communities this year. It removes items that organizations found unnecessary in an observation-based tool. It also incorporates new items based on research into what best supports youths’ social emotional learning (SEL), which we know is one of the key supports youth programs provide.

This improved instrument, called the Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA) provides support in assessing:

- **Safe Space:** Warm Welcome, Emotional Safety, Interaction with Adults
- **Supportive Environment:** Session Flow, Emotion Coaching, Skill Building, Encouragement, Active Learning and Choice
- **Interaction:** Belonging, Collaboration, Responsibility, Leadership, Empathy
- **Engagement:** Planning, Reflection, Problem-Solving & Mindfulness



All participants in the pilot will use the SEL PQA to assess program quality features and create customized action plans to enhance their program. The instrument helps staff to objectively identify program strengths and gaps, and is linked to training modules that help address self-identified areas for improvement.

Appendix B: Application Questions

- Organization
 - Name, mailing address, and website address
- Contact person
 - Name, title, phone number, and email
- Executive Director
 - Name, phone number, and email (if different from contact)
- Number of staff who provide programming to children and youth ages 5-21 during the school year
 - Full time, part time
 - Have the majority of these staff been employed less than 1 year, 1-3 years, or more than 3 years?
- Number of youth served annually in the program
- Program site(s) (up to two) identified for the assessment process
 - Name and address
 - Supervisor who will serve as lead for the initiative at each site
 - Name, phone number, and email
 - Estimated number of other program staff who will participate at each site (2-5)
 - For each site, describe the specific program identified for this initiative, including the community need it meets, the focus of activities, demographics of program participants, program design, staffing structure and program outcomes.
- What do you hope to achieve as a result of your participation in the initiative? What difference will participation in the initiative make in your program?
- Describe your organization's capacity to take part in the initiative. How will you meet the expectations?
- Describe any current assessment or evaluation process used to understand the quality or impact of your programs. What data do you track and how do you use that data?
- Describe your approach to professional development and training for staff, ongoing learning, and continuous program improvement.