

AYDC Youth Program Quality Initiative

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 our AYDC Youth Program Quality (YPQ) initiative for the 2018-2019 school year. Apply online at: <http://aydc.org/ypq/application>

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

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, networks of youth providers across the country have found success in adopting a continuous quality improvement approach, referred to as "youth program quality improvement."

AYDC YPQ Initiative

AYDC is seeking youth program providers with a demonstrated commitment to improving program quality to participate in the second cohort of a program quality improvement initiative, in partnership with the nationally recognized David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

The goals of the initiative are to:

- Increase the availability of high quality programs serving youth in Anchorage.
- Assist participating programs in developing a culture of continuous improvement.
- Learn about the supports programs need – and how best to provide those supports – to improve the quality of their programming.



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



- Foster a professional learning community among diverse 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 sustainable YPQ supports for Anchorage youth-serving organizations.

Participation Benefits

A maximum of four organizations, including up to two sites per organization, will be selected to participate in the 2018-19 AYDC YPQ initiative. Organizations will receive 7 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 \$3,000.

Youth Program Quality Continuous Improvement Process

All participants in the initiative will use the David P. Weikart Center for Youth 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 for each participating site who is in a supervisory position and will participate in all YPQ components (approximately 40 hours over the course of the initiative).
- 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.
- Enter 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 the SEL



PQA data.

- Administer a brief youth pre- and post- survey for all participating sites to support initiative evaluation. This will be an internal evaluation for AYDC to learn the effectiveness of this initiative to support youth outcomes and is not an evaluation of any organization's 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 (October-April at least).
- 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 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 initiative evaluation.

Selection Priorities

AYDC will convene a YPQ review committee to score and award proposals based on these priorities:

- Programs that meet all of the eligibility criteria described in this application.
- Programs with capacity to participate fully in all components of the initiative.
- We encourage applications from organizations of diverse program settings, content focus areas, types, sizes, and neighborhoods served.

Application Timeline and Procedures

Thursday, March 29, 2018	Applications open
Friday, May 4, 2018 - 5 pm	Online application submission due. Apply online at: http://aydc.org/ypq/application .
Monday, May 21, 2018	Participating sites selected and notified
October 2018 – April 2019	YPQ sessions occur. See below for dates.

Please direct questions to AYDC Projects Director Ciara Johnson (Ciara@aydc.org, 907-562-4186). For reference, the application questions are provided in Appendix B.



YPQ Schedule

To support organizations in planning for full participation in the initiative, we have provided training and meeting dates and times below. Sites will be notified by May 21st if they are selected to participate. **Please reserve the following dates in the case that your organization is selected to participate:**

Oct 11, 2018 - 9:00-4:00	Initiative Kickoff and Program Quality Self-Assessment Basics Training
Oct – Nov 2018	Self-Assessment using the Social and Emotional Learning Youth Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA) tool
Nov 1, 2018	Youth pre-survey data submitted
Nov 8, 2018 – 10:00-11:30	Self-Assessment Check-in & Scores Reporter Webinar
Nov 29, 2018	Data entry completed in online data management system
Dec 12, 2018 – 9:00-3:00	Quality Coaching workshop for Site Leads
Dec 13, 2018 – 9:00-3:00	Planning with Data workshop
Dec 13, 2018 – Jan 10, 2019	Sites develop Program Improvement Plan; 90 min Improvement Plan Check In Webinar will be scheduled during this period
February 2019	AYDC offers 10 Youth Work Methods professional development workshops to support program quality improvements based on Program Improvement Plan target areas (2 hours each – staff each participate in two or more workshops).
Mar – Apr 2019	Second self-assessment using the SEL PQA
Apr 25, 2019	Celebration and reflection meeting; youth post-survey data submitted

This opportunity made possible with support from Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc., the Alaska Division of Behavioral Health, and AYDC Contributing Members.



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.



Source: Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Staff engage 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 set priorities as a team 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.

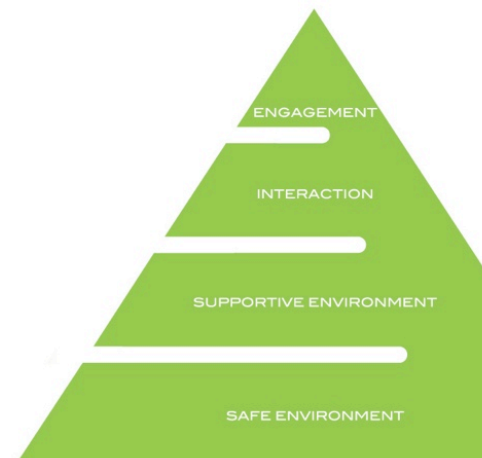
The Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA)

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, Choice
- **Interaction:** Belonging, Collaboration, Responsibility, Leadership, Empathy
- **Engagement:** Planning, Reflection, Problem-Solving, Mindfulness



All participants in the initiative will use the SEL PQA to assess program quality features and create customized action plans to enhance their programs. 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: AYDC Youth Program Quality Application Questions

Apply online at: <http://aydc.org/ypq/application>.

- Organization, mailing address, and website
- Contact person, title, phone number, and email
- Executive Director, email (if different from contact person)
 - Does the Executive Director support full participation in this initiative?
- 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 (approximate)
- 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 (if different from contact person provided earlier)
 - 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 focus of activities, program design, staffing structure, demographics of program participants, 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?

