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BUILDING CITYWIDE SYSTEMS FOR QUALITY:

A Guide and Case Studies for Afterschool Leaders

By Nicole Yohalem, Elizabeth Devaney, Charles Smith and Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom | *The Forum for Youth Investment*

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5 Penn Plaza, 7th Floor | New York, NY 10001 | 212.251.9700 | www.wallacefoundation.org

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7064 Eastern Avenue, NW | Washington, DC 20012 | 202.207.3333 | www.forumfyi.org

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BUILDING A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

Imagine this scene – gathered around a table in an afterschool program in a mid-sized American city, five staff members and their manager discuss a challenge they face every day: offering the youth in their program enriching experiences that will help them learn and grow. What's working well, they ask. What's not? The trigger for this conversation is a slim report, well-thumbed by everyone at the table, offering a detailed assessment of their program. Based on that report and the ensuing discussion, the group devises a plan to improve the program, including changing how students are greeted at the start of the afternoon, building in periodic opportunities for participants to showcase projects they have finished working on, and holding a staff training on behavior management. The program's funders – city government, the school district and local foundations – also attuned to the importance of quality, will see a version of this plan in the program's annual request for funding.

This scenario is playing out in afterschool programs across the country, and is just one chapter in a larger story: the emergence of "quality improvement systems" across communities, cities, regions and multi-site agencies. A quality improvement system (QIS[1]) is an intentional effort to raise the quality of afterschool[2] programming in an ongoing, organized fashion. There are a number of reasons the QIS is gaining popularity (see box on p. 3). The main reasons community leaders are drawn to improving quality is that they know that 1) higher quality programs will mean better experiences for kids and 2) quality is uneven across and even within afterschool programs.

Identifying quality as a priority is an important first step, but addressing it in a systemic way is complicated; it requires research, planning, consensus building, resource development, managing new processes and sometimes redefining old relationships. This guide can help those working to create better, more coordinated afterschool programming get started building a QIS, or further develop existing efforts. It helps readers understand what constitutes an effective QIS, describes the tasks involved in building one, and offers examples and resources from communities whose work is blazing a trail for others.

[1] A Quality Improvement System (QIS) differs from a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in that in a QIS, the primary purpose is to improve quality. A QRIS provides a quality rating and aims to improve quality. For more information on QRIS systems see this **resource guide** from the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center.

[2] Throughout this report we use the term "afterschool programs" to refer to a broad range of opportunities for young people to learn and grow outside of the traditional school day and year, in a range of school and community settings.

WHY IS NOW THE TIME TO FOCUS ON QUALITY?

Over the past two decades, public and private investments in afterschool programs have increased dramatically. Programs once considered "nice but not necessary" now have a solid presence on local, state and national policy agendas. A growing research base demonstrates that participating in high-quality afterschool programs can advance child and youth development, but that not all programs are high-quality.

Increasing investments and an expanding evidence base have fueled the development of afterschool systems across the nation and have brought increased attention to program quality. These and several other factors make this an ideal time for afterschool organizations, systems, networks and funders to focus attention on quality improvement.

DEFINITIONS OF LEARNING ARE SHIFTING. Momentum to expand learning opportunities beyond the school day and school building is spurring dialogue about what, where, when and how children and youth learn. Schools face unprecedented budget constraints as they consider these questions, making this an even more pressing opportunity to rethink the learning infrastructure in communities. Afterschool systems have a short window of time to demonstrate they can be viable, accountable partners in community-wide efforts to support learning and development.

MUNICIPAL LEADERS ARE ENGAGED. Although citywide quality improvement systems are a relatively new phenomenon, quality has been embraced as a priority for the field by policymakers and funders at the national, state and local levels. Significant investments in quality improvement are being made by city and county agencies, United Ways, and regional and community foundations. Mayors and other public officials have invested in afterschool systems, with quality improvement a major focus. By investing in a QIS, local leaders help build the field and ensure a sound return on investments in service delivery.

THE FIELD IS EMBRACING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. Discussions about quality in afterschool mirror trends in human services and education. Professional development strategies based on continuous improvement are becoming more common and leading to measurable changes in teacher practice and student outcomes. Continuous improvement differs from traditional accountability approaches, where the incentives intended to drive improvement include publicizing ratings and making funding or funding levels contingent upon attaining certain levels of performance. In lower stakes approaches, organizations are required and held accountable for participating in a continuous improvement process rather than achieving certain performance scores.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE. In contrast to early efforts to expand youth access to programs, several public and private funders have shifted their focus to improving the quality of afterschool programs. This shift generated demand, and a range of tools and resources are now available for communities, systems and organizations wanting to build a QIS.

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The approach featured in this guide is based on what management gurus call "continuous improvement": the idea that organizations should regularly take stock of themselves against a standard; develop plans to improve based on what they learned; carry out those plans; and begin the cycle over again, so that the quality of their work is always improving. In our experience, afterschool programs – and more importantly, the children and youth they serve – benefit enormously when they agree to a common definition of quality and embrace continuous improvement.

Still, this work is not simple, as sustaining changes in practice requires work at multiple levels. Staff will need targeted support within organizations that are committed to effective practice, and those organizations must operate in a policy context that encourages continuous improvement.[i]

DEVELOPING THE GUIDE

This guide was developed by the Forum for Youth Investment (the Forum), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are Ready by 21® – ready for college, work and life. The writing team included senior staff from the Forum and from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, a division of the Forum that focuses on quality improvement, and a consultant who led QIS development for the Providence After School Alliance. The guide is based on decades of social science research related to child development, teaching and learning, and organizational management, as well as the Forum's experience working with over 70 afterschool QIS efforts around the country.

The guide also draws heavily on efforts in six communities to build quality improvement systems: Atlanta, Ga.; Austin, Texas; Chicago, Ill.; New York, N.Y.; Palm Beach County, Fla. and Hampden County, Mass. The QIS efforts in these communities are all based on a continuous improvement approach, but vary in terms of scale and tools. Within each stage of QIS-building described in the guide, artifacts and examples from these communities illustrate best practices. The second half of the guide features individual case studies of each community's QIS.

In developing the guide, we took an inductive approach that is sometimes referred to as grounded theory method. We drew upon a large body of research and experience to create a theoretical framework describing the components and stages of QIS building. We then conducted case studies of quality improvement systems in the six communities mentioned above, and used these cases to make adjustments to the framework. Experts in each case study community provided feedback that proved critical in adjusting the framework.

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE QIS

Although quality improvement systems vary, mature, effective systems share some common components and characteristics. The tasks described in this guide focus on helping you build toward the following components:

- **Shared definition of quality** – A QIS should be anchored in a research-based standard of practice that advances child and youth outcomes and which is aligned with the program model designed by local stakeholders. That is, there should be general agreement on what constitutes a high-quality program. Sometimes agreement is achieved during a community process of defining quality practice, developing standards, selecting a quality assessment framework or tool or identifying shared priorities.

- **Lead organization** – Setting the guidelines and incentives for participating in the system, managing the data infrastructure and overseeing the implementation of QIS components – such as assessment, training and coaching – are all important roles for the lead organization. Multiple partners can be involved, but without a clear leader a QIS runs the risk of becoming fragmented and disorganized. Lead organizations can be stand-alone technical assistance organizations, intermediaries, city agencies, funding entities or policy/advocacy organizations.

- **Engaged stakeholders** – A QIS is more likely to be effective, sustainable and scalable if a defined group of organizations is on board and supportive. Participating organizations may be defined by their relationship with a specific funder or agency (e.g., United Way funded agencies) or may reflect a diverse set of systems and networks. Other important stakeholders include those committed to funding the QIS, training and professional development agencies committed to servicing it, and champions committed to supporting it.

- **Continuous improvement model** – The combination of activities that participating programs experience is at the heart of a QIS. Effective models typically include a standard for high-quality performance, an assessment tool, and aligned improvement supports such as planning, coaching and training.

- **Information system(s)** – Quality improvement systems generate data, including observational assessment scores, administrative audits, tracking of QIS participation and engagement, and, sometimes, data about program attendance and/or child outcomes. To effectively inform program-level and system-wide improvement, the QIS needs to capture and store such information and generate user-friendly reports.

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- **Guidelines and incentives for participation** – An effective QIS includes rules or guidelines about inclusion, access and incentives. These do not always take the form of explicit requirements or policies, especially during the early stages, but the presence of such guidelines brings coherence and relevance to the system and distinguishes it from voluntary professional development opportunities.

- **Adequate resources** – An effective and sustainable QIS requires funding. The most significant costs revolve around ensuring the capacity to manage system logistics and data infrastructure, and to deliver specific supports including trainers, coaches and observers.

QIS SYSTEM-BUILDING STAGES AND TASKS

Every community enters the process of developing a QIS from a different starting place. Some already have the components described above fully or partially in place; their main challenge is to link the components into a system. Others might have begun a conversation about quality but are essentially starting from square one.

The guide describes a series of tasks organized into three broad stages. Not every place will need to tackle each task discreetly, and the specific order in which the tasks unfold will differ from place to place. Based on our experience and that of several successful QIS examples, the following stages and tasks represent a pathway to developing an effective system.

- **Stage one – Plan and Engage** – covers the initial work of developing a QIS. Specific tasks described in detail in the guide include assessing readiness, forming a work group, making the case, engaging stakeholders, identifying a lead organization, defining quality, clarifying purpose, considering information needs and determining costs and potential resources.

- **Stage two – Design and Build** – takes your process from the conceptual to the practical. Specific tasks include designing the continuous improvement model that programs will experience, developing system-level supports for the model, recruiting pilot sites and piloting the continuous improvement cycle.

- **Stage three – Adjust and Sustain** – involves adjustments, expansion and capacity-building to support an ongoing system. Specific tasks include refining the continuous improvement model and system supports, building capacity of the lead organization, engaging new programs and sectors, evaluating, and embedding and sustaining the system.

BUILDING A QIS: STAGES AND TASKS

1. PLAN & ENGAGE

- Assess readiness
- Form a workgroup
- Make the case
- Engage stakeholders
- Identify a lead organization
- Define quality
- Clarify purpose
- Consider information needs
- Determine costs and potential resources

2. DESIGN & BUILD

- Design the continuous improvement model
- Develop system supports for the model
- Recruit pilot sites
- Pilot the continuous improvement cycle

3. ADJUST & SUSTAIN

- Refine the model and system supports
- Build capacity of the lead organization
- Engage new sites and sectors
- Evaluate
- Embed and sustain

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STAGE ONE: PLAN & ENGAGE

Developing a quality improvement system for afterschool and youth development programs in your community is important, complex work. In this section, we cover the initial stages of development, including assessing need and capacity, forming a work group, identifying interested stakeholders and potential leaders, defining quality, and beginning to think through data collection and measurement.

We realize that no community is a blank slate. You may have already addressed some of the tasks in this stage or you may be starting from scratch. This is why we begin with a tool that will help you take stock of the current landscape and local capacity.

ASSESS READINESS

Before launching into building a QIS, it is important to assess how ready the system or community of providers is to tackle quality improvement and what capabilities exist to pursue this work. We recommend using the **QIS Capacity Self-Assessment Tool**, developed specifically for this guide. There are many ways to use the tool, and it can be used prior to identifying a lead organization for your QIS. Individuals interested in pursuing work on quality improvement can informally review its contents and reflect on the current state of affairs, or a small group of local stakeholders could fill it out and come together to discuss priorities.

Whatever process is used, it is important to assess the capabilities of local organizations and conduct some kind of inventory of resources available to get the work done, including:

- Existing and potential financial support for quality improvement, professional development, evaluation or accountability;
- Relevant state structures, such as a Quality Rating and Improvement System;
- Higher education institutions offering relevant coursework; intermediaries providing training or other professional development;
- State or local organizations focused on afterschool policy;
- Available data (i.e., organizations already using a quality assessment or improvement process);
- Overall demand for this type of system from youth-serving agencies.

TIP:

Don't start from scratch if you don't have to. Find out whether local organizations are using certain tools or frameworks, whether standards have ever been drafted, or if any related efforts are underway or have occurred in the past.

Don't start from scratch if you don't have to. Often, organizations have already piloted tools or processes, standards have been drafted, or statewide afterschool networks have surveyed providers or distributed relevant resources. For example, when planning got underway in Palm Beach County, Fla., stakeholders in the early childhood area had already done a lot of thinking about quality improvement. Thus, several QIS components were in place,

such as a definition of quality linked to child development, observational assessment, training and college-level coursework. The work group learned from those efforts and took advantage of assessment expertise early in its process.

The key is to look for gaps, identify strengths and understand how ready the community is to embark on this work. Building upon existing efforts will ensure you can learn from mistakes and capitalize on resources and momentum.

FORM A WORK GROUP

Quality improvement efforts often begin with a "champion" – an individual or an organization in the community committed to the idea of quality improvement and ready to move things forward. Champions can include local funders, staff at organizations focused on professional development and afterschool policy, or municipal personnel.

You may be a champion for this work in your community. Although champions are important for raising awareness about the importance of quality and setting a process in motion, they will typically need additional support from a planning or work group.

In successful networks, this group is representative of the youth-serving community and includes people with sufficient seniority and decision-making and/or advocacy power. Individuals from community-based organizations of all sizes and types, local government, the school district, parks and recreation, local funding agencies and higher education are all important constituents to consider involving. Government agencies can be key partners; they represent core resources that can be critical in sustaining a QIS, and should be engaged early. If there are state-level efforts afoot related to quality improvement or professional development – through the state education agency, a child care Quality Rating and Improvement System, or a statewide afterschool network – engage these actors early as well.

TIP:

Have members of your work group fill out and discuss the QIS Capacity Self-Assessment Tool — either individually or as a group.

LESSON FROM THE FIELD: HOW LOCAL LEADERSHIP EVOLVES

In Palm Beach County, a universal concern in the community about the low quality of some afterschool programs led a group of stakeholders to form the Out of School Time Consortium in 1996. This group consisted of public agencies and funders interested in addressing those concerns, including the Children's Services Council (the county-level authority dedicated to funding children's services), the School District of Palm Beach County, Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation, the Mary and Robert Pew Public Education Fund and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The consortium began as a means for these groups to share resources and discuss how to enhance programs through professional development and other supports, but their work evolved into a deeper conversation about systemic change.

At the time, the Children's Services Council funded most of the programs in the area and provided each with a contract manager who served as a monitor (monitoring attendance and compliance with grant requirements). The consortium believed this level of support was not sufficient; it wanted to go beyond compliance monitoring to improving the quality of services. The Children's Services Council provided a grant for the consortium to hire a consultant to help shape the role and function of a new organization dedicated to this topic. The consortium held monthly network meetings with providers and other interested stakeholders. In 2000, the nonprofit Prime Time Palm Beach County was created to support quality improvement in afterschool programs.

Over the course of five years, concerned stakeholders built a consortium, developed a strategy and created an intermediary dedicated to implementing it.

MAKE THE CASE

The work group will likely need to devote time early on to making the case for quality improvement and demonstrating the need for a system. An important part of making the case is helping the community, especially participating agencies, understand that investing in quality is critical to achieving outcomes. A growing research base demonstrates that high-quality youth programs can contribute to important developmental outcomes – both social and academic. However, not all programs deliver high-quality services.[ii] Quality improvement systems help ensure that investments made in service delivery pay off in the form of improved outcomes for children and youth. Make sure the work group has a shared understanding of these connections.

This connection was clear to the United Way for Greater Austin, which launched its focus on afterschool quality improvement just as it was transitioning to a Community Impact funding model in which organizations are funded to contribute toward a broad set of community goals. This reorganization meant the United Way needed to redefine its relationship with grantees, and according to Laura La Fuente, who directs the organization's high school graduation efforts, "The QIS opened the door for the United Way to strengthen

relationships and shift things in a different direction. I'm not sure where we would be without the quality work ... but we probably would not have the strong partnerships we have today."

Where sufficient resources existed, some communities have successfully kicked off a QIS planning process with a needs assessment. This can take the form of surveys and/or focus groups with youth and families about the quality of the programming in the community. This kind of process could reveal parental concerns about the safety of afterschool programs, for example, which could help get partners on board like the police department, recreation department and local funders.

Assessing organizations' interest in participating in the QIS as well as program participation levels can be useful in showing the range and size of organizations and delivery systems that could eventually participate in a scaled-up QIS. **Survey** tools are available for such inventories, although at a minimum the work group can rely on its members and colleagues to gather information, at least about their own organizations. Look to existing data sources such as the state 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) office, state child care licensing agency, city government, United Way or the school district. Consider opportunities to involve graduate students or partner organizations. Gathering this type of information helps you make the case for quality now and helps inform expansion over time.

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Another early consideration involves engaging multiple stakeholders from the youth-serving community. Even if the initial QIS is being implemented by a funder or agency with a specific group of programs, cultivating future potential users can inform plans for scale and sustainability. Your work group may already represent a diverse range of interests, but now that you have done some initial work to identify readiness and need, this may be a time to begin expanding that network.

You might start by conducting or reviewing a program inventory or by listing all the sectors in your community that reach youth, then contacting them: parks and recreation, arts organizations, schools, community centers, sports leagues, school- and community-based afterschool programs, workforce development programs, career and college readiness programs, youth mentoring and leadership programs, juvenile justice programs, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs and faith-based organizations. Early conversations typically cover the big picture goals of the system and are geared toward making the case and reaching agreement about the value of quality improvement. Some communities have engaged people through a large summit or conference early in the process to be sure everyone is invited to the table.

TIP:

Don't try to involve everyone at the start! Begin with a small group of supporters. This is the time to build momentum, not to convince naysayers. Later, as you engage additional stakeholders, you will bring more people into the conversation.

In New York, the Department of Youth and Community Development held a professional development institute early on in its planning. It was attended by representatives from 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the state Department of Education, the Parks Department and the Homeless Services Department's youth division. The goal of the summit was to come to a shared understanding of important elements of quality. Other organizers have held smaller community meetings to draw people in. Still others have formed membership groups, held regular meetings, hosted community forums and conducted focus groups. Whatever method you choose, keep in mind that understanding providers' interests and concerns is critical and can help make buy-in easier down the road.

Although outreach is important during the early stages, it is also important to determine who wants to remain at the table throughout the process of developing a QIS. Some will want to be sure they have a voice but might not be able to commit the time or have the need to participate in ongoing meetings. There are others who, if not involved throughout, may derail your process.

IDENTIFY A LEAD ORGANIZATION

It is important to begin thinking early about where the quality improvement system will be housed. A strong QIS needs institutional support to collect and manage data, oversee and coordinate trainings, hire and deploy coaches and data collectors, champion the cause, raise funds and generally keep the system running. It also needs the formal or informal authority to set guidelines and incentives for participation in the system. An independent intermediary organization might be a good option if your community has such an entity.[iii] Intermediaries are typically neutral agencies tasked with connecting afterschool stakeholders in a community. They often play a role in training and capacity-building, brokering relationships, research and evaluation, expanding services and promoting sustainability.[iv]

While an independent intermediary can be an ideal home for a QIS, this is not the only option. (Figure 1 shows lead organizations for each case study QIS.) Other candidates include training and technical assistance organizations, city or county children and youth departments, local 21st CCLC offices, large service providers, community foundations or United Ways, local colleges and universities and strong community-based organizations. The point is you need a fiscal agent and some staffing to get this off the ground. Because developing a QIS can involve a lot of work early on, adding this task onto an already burdened organization could backfire. Finding an entity with the capacity to take on this work is essential.

Figure 1

QIS LEAD ORGANIZATIONS				
	Intermediary	City Agency	Funder	Multi-Site Youth Serving Agency
Atlanta, Ga.				Boys & Girls Club of Metro Atlanta
Austin, Texas			United Way Capital Area	
Chicago, Ill.	Chicago Allies			
New York City DYCD		Dept. of Youth & Community Development		
Palm Beach County, Fla.	Prime Time Palm Beach County			
Hampden County, Mass.	Hasboro Summer Learning Initiative			

DEFINE QUALITY

Because organizations may define quality in different ways, it often helps to achieve a consensus definition early. Definitions provide high-level guidance for providers, families and other stakeholders; down the road, a shared definition of quality should drive what information the system will need and what measures should therefore be implemented.

The process of defining quality will vary from place to place. Many communities have had success involving providers in the creation of a full set of quality standards as part of building a QIS. This can be an involved process that can take from several months to a year. Others have focused on building broad support for the importance of quality programming and have simply adopted research-based standards, such as those developed by the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) or those embedded in assessments that have been developed to measure the quality of afterschool programs.

Whatever approach you choose, keep in mind that coming to a shared understanding about why quality is important and what constitutes high-quality programming requires a community-building process, and it is important that youth-serving organizations feel some ownership over the definition.

Once completed, the definition or standards can be rolled out to the community in a variety of ways. Some places have created colorful guidebooks and brochures that list the standards. Such publications are useful for quick dissemination of information, because community partners can post them on their websites and walls and distribute them to staff and parents. Sharing the definition or framework for quality practice that will anchor the QIS sends

TIP:

Don't adopt an existing definition of quality without engaging providers. Although it might make sense to select something developed nationally or borrow from another community, the process of developing consensus and buy-in is important.

a signal to the community and represents a concrete step toward system-building. Sharing with agencies posters that communicate the standards or definition is a great way for the lead organization to reach out and for programs to signal their support for the process.

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: DEVELOPING QUALITY STANDARDS

Prime Time Palm Beach County, an intermediary focused on quality improvement in afterschool, engaged a broad range of stakeholders in the process of developing quality standards. Individuals from the school district, parks and recreation, Palm Beach State College, multi- service agencies like Family Central, local afterschool providers and various funding agencies came together over 13 months to develop standards that drew upon national examples but reflected local priorities. The five standards that resulted (see below) were vetted by more than 1,800 parents and 200 local afterschool staff. Later, the group adapted a national assessment tool (the Youth PQA) to reflect these standards.

- *Administration, Program Organization, Procedures, and Policies*
- *Supportive Ongoing Relationships Between and Among Youth and Staff*
- *Positive and Inclusive Environment for Youth*
- *Youth Development and Challenging Learning Experiences*
- *Outreach to and Activities for Families*

TIP:

Don't assume everyone agrees on the purpose. Discuss the value of different approaches. Clarifying these nuances early will help generate consensus about the purpose of the system.

CLARIFY PURPOSE

Members of your work group and key supporters (e.g., funders) of the developing QIS will likely come to the table with some idea of its overall purpose. Although the term QIS itself conveys a single primary purpose (improving quality), stakeholders may have different ideas about how to achieve that goal or have additional goals in mind. Keep in mind that over time, system goals may evolve.

Several questions should be addressed at this stage.

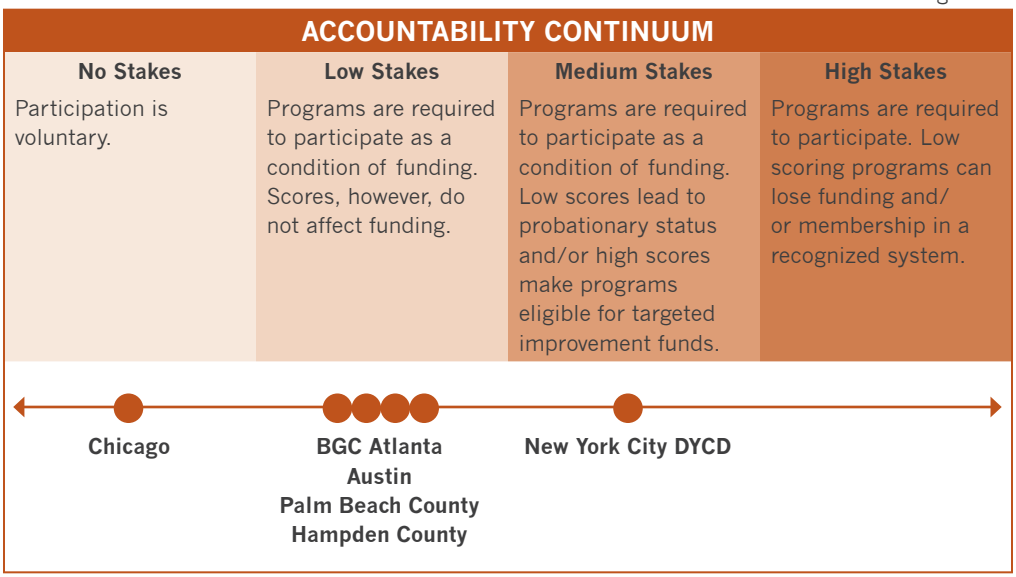
1. *What are the overall goals of the system?* If the QIS is primarily designed to support ongoing professional development, then less expensive forms of assessment (namely self-assessment) may be sufficient to support reflection on performance. If evaluating changes in program quality is a goal, then a more rigorous data collection strategy will be necessary. If the QIS needs to satisfy monitoring criteria for a funder or agency, then specific measures of organizational practices (e.g., adult-youth ratio, progress toward accreditation) may need to be incorporated as performance measures.

2. *Which staff will the QIS ultimately target?* Some systems focus primarily on improving how frontline staff interact with children and youth. Others place a heavy emphasis on helping program managers build the skills to implement the continuous improvement model. Answers to this question have implications for the kinds of supports the QIS will need to provide and how these supports will be delivered. Also, some QIS designs focus primarily on the performances of individual staff or specific elements of afterschool programming, while others are designed to produce program-level scores.

3. *How will the QIS incentivize change?* Specifically, will the system be designed with higher or lower stakes for the participants? Will low scores lead to reductions in funding or other penalties? Will ratings be made public? The accountability continuum below (Figure 2) describes higher and lower stakes approaches[v] and depicts where the six QIS examples featured in this guide fall on this continuum. In lower stakes approaches, program managers are accountable for leading a program team through the continuous improvement process. The assumption underlying these approaches is that staff want to provide better activities for youth and, with accurate data and adequate supports, will be motivated to improve.[vi] Higher stakes approaches rely more on external incentives or the threat of sanctions to motivate improvement. Such approaches require a rigorous and defensible assessment process, because quality scores are used to trigger accountability rewards or sanctions.[vii]

Get these critical questions about QIS purposes on the table early; they have implications for your design work during stage two and will influence how organizations in the community feel about the system and respond to the opportunity to get involved.

Figure 2



TIP:

Don't reinvent the wheel! Creating tools and developing standards takes precious time and resources. Use tools in this guide, contact other communities and consider working with a consultant or TA provider with QIS experience.

CONSIDER INFORMATION NEEDS

Once you agree on the overall purposes of the system and what constitutes quality – that is, what specifically the system is designed to improve – it is important to turn to key measurement questions. What information must the QIS produce to help providers assess and improve quality, and what will it cost to collect, manage and analyze that information?

Think about the information the system will need to generate and the types of tools that could be used to collect that data. Consider questions like:

- What information will drive our continuous improvement process (e.g., data on attendance, staff practices, organizational capacity)?
- What capacity do we have to collect these types of data? What existing efforts can we build upon? Are some providers or individuals already trained on relevant tools?
- What kind of information about youth program participation do organizations already collect? Is there a management information system (MIS) already being used by a critical mass of organizations?[viii]
- What existing quality assessment tools or models might we adopt or adapt?
- What kind of data infrastructure can provide timely, meaningful feedback?
- How will we manage data once they are collected?
- How important is it for the system to generate objective data collected by external observers, as opposed to programs assessing themselves?
- Will you need to make comparisons to other cities or systems, to your own baseline, or across programs within your QIS?

You might not be able to answer all of these questions until you get deeper into your planning, but you should begin thinking about them early. Now is a good time to create a wish list of the types of information that would ideally inform the system and the type of data infrastructure that will require, knowing that initially the QIS might produce or connect to only one or two data sources.

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD: CONSIDERING THE STAKES INVOLVED

Several of the communities featured in this guide started with plans for a high stakes approach, primarily due to funder interests. Others designed low stakes systems believing they would help increase program engagement. These examples highlight how different places have thought about the purposes of their QIS, and some of the implications those decisions have had on QIS design.

A leadership group made up of chief program officers from five large Chicago city agencies met regularly to develop a QIS. (The agencies were Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Library, Chicago Public Schools, Department of Family and Support Services and After School Matters, a large program provider.) Based on experiences with past grant initiatives that focused on rating rather than improving programs, the team felt strongly about building an experience that would benefit frontline staff and be useful to administrators. Team members agreed that if the experience was not immediately useful, programs would disengage or fall into compliance mode and not benefit from the process. Therefore, the leadership group emphasized continuous improvement with a focus on training and coaching.

In Palm Beach County, QIS planners involved stakeholders in determining what role Prime Time, the new intermediary, and other entities would play, particularly in relation to local funders. Dominique Arrieux, director of quality improvement notes, "We had to be clear about the difference between the contract manager coming from the funder to monitor your program and the intermediary coming in to provide support." There were conversations early on about Prime Time taking on both roles, but stakeholders decided that separating them was important to maintain trust and that Prime Time should focus on capacity building. Initially, programs were to receive ratings and then work to improve those ratings to maintain funding. This would have allowed alignment with an emerging early childhood Quality Rating System. As discussions progressed, however, the focus shifted toward a lower stakes approach. There was agreement among the stakeholders that early in the process, programs would be more likely to engage in the QIS activities in a meaningful way if the stakes were low and funding was not threatened.

Even as the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) in New York City was developing a QIS, it had a robust process for monitoring program participation. This was a key component of its granting process, which it wanted to incorporate into its QIS. Although observational assessments are intended to be low stakes, youth attendance data are high stakes. Grantees are required to enter participation data for all programs supported through DYCD funds. The department can withhold 10-20 percent of grant funds to a program if there are concerns about participation levels. DYCD staff meet with programs to determine if structural issues (e.g., over-enrollment or poor location) are to blame and to coach programs on how to address those issues. Online data accessible by any city agency and monthly reports are sent to the Mayor's Office and the city's Department of Education.

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DETERMINE COSTS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Financing and resource development are challenges from the outset and they are ongoing. Consider what resources you have and identify prospects for more. Think big, but be honest about what you have the resources to accomplish in the short term. You'll need funding to start up the system, longer-term funding to sustain it and resources to expand it to more programs. Keep in mind that seed money is often easier to secure than longer term funds. Also, costs are likely to be more intensive during the start-up phase, when resources go toward building infrastructure and developing capacity.

Major costs that go into a QIS include[ix]:

- **Staffing.** At a minimum, you will need a director of quality improvement or the equivalent. That is, someone to oversee the process, move things forward, staff the work group, schedule trainings, etc. You will likely also need quality coaches/advisors, external assessors or observers, and trainers. These can be consultants or employees; they range from coaches with high levels of expertise in the field to lower-cost observers with less experience. You might find people and structures serving QIS-like functions that can be strategically integrated into your work. In New York City, for example, the decision was made to turn the contract monitors within the Department of Community and Youth Development into quality coaches.

- **Assessment and data management.** If you adopt an existing quality assessment tool, you might have to pay for the tool or for training in how to use it. Keep in mind that developing your own tool will also require significant resources, and you will not benefit from the scientific validation and infrastructure associated with established measures.

- **Data management.** You might also consider purchasing or developing a data management or broader information system; implementing such a system might create training costs. Existing assessment models like the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) and Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS) have built-in data storage and reporting systems, but their capacity to also house and connect to other types of data (e.g., program participation or child outcomes) varies.

- **Training.** Workshops and trainings that build the capacity of coaches, assessors and program staff can include a range of costs such as food, space and trainers.

Think early about both how to sustain the QIS and what resources might be available to support the involvement of different networks or sectors. Now is a good time to discuss the scale of your system and the resources that expanding to more programs will require over time. Some systems focus initially on one group or type of program, such as all parks and recreation programs. Often, a quality system is initiated by a funder interested primarily in supporting its own grantees. In Austin, for example, the United Way was the driver, looking for a way to support and improve its funded agencies. In Chicago, city-funded agencies were the initial target group for the system. Palm Beach focused its initial efforts on programs funded by the Children's Services Council, the county-level authority dedicated to funding children's services.

Each of these systems has since expanded beyond the initial group of programs and embedded the continuous improvement process into organizational routines. Embedding this work into organizational routines is important for financing and sustainability, because QIS efforts can often be funded through sources of income previously allocated to evaluation, professional development and other accountability or compliance efforts.

LESSON FROM THE FIELD: ANTICIPATING DATA NEEDS

Information and quality are two key pillars upon which Chicago's afterschool system-building work rests. At the outset, therefore, the five city agencies involved made data collection a high priority. They invested funds from The Wallace Foundation into the development of a data system they could all use to keep tabs on program enrollment and attendance.

Initially, the technology was designed just for this – tracking student participation in programs. But the partners were careful to select software they knew would be easy to customize as their work evolved. When they later adopted the Youth PQA to assess the quality of programming, the data system was able to incorporate the resulting quality data, so the system can now connect information about program quality to participation records. Because the agencies thought ahead about their needs, they built a system that is flexible and can grow as their QIS becomes more sophisticated.

PROGRESS DURING STAGE ONE

At this point you should have made significant progress on several important planning tasks, including assessing readiness, forming a work group, clarifying the purpose of the QIS, making the case for the focus on quality and identifying a lead organization. You should also have a better sense of your information needs, the costs of the system and potential resources for supporting it. With your planning well underway, you should now be ready to turn to the specifics of developing the continuous improvement model that programs will experience.

FEATURED RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT STAGE ONE TASKS

Below are links to field-tested resources that can be particularly helpful during this stage of work.

ASSESS READINESS
QIS Capacity Self-Assessment – Forum for Youth Investment
Sample market research study – Providence After School Alliance, R.I.
Sample readiness assessment – Austin, Texas

MAKE THE CASE
Research linking quality and outcomes in afterschool – J. Durlak & R. Weissberg
Municipal Leadership for Afterschool: Citywide Approaches – National League of Cities
Sample case statement: "Why Good Quality Youth Work is Important?" – Chicago Allies

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS
Sample recruitment flyer – Central Texas Afterschool Network
Sample QIS recruitment presentation – United Way for Greater Austin
Program Landscape Mapping Packet – Forum for Youth Investment

IDENTIFY A LEAD ORGANIZATION
Making the Connections: A Report on the First National Survey of Out-of-School Time Intermediaries – CBASS

DEFINE QUALITY
Sample quality standards – Chicago, Ill.
Sample quality standards – Palm Beach County, Fla.
Pyramid of Youth Program Quality – David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality
Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS) summary – NIOST

CONSIDER INFORMATION NEEDS
After-School Data: What Cities Need to Know – The Wallace Foundation
Measuring Youth Program Quality – Forum for Youth Investment
Building Management Information Systems to Coordinate Citywide Afterschool Programs – National League of Cities
Hours of Opportunity, Volume 2: The Power of Data to Improve After-School Programs Citywide – RAND Corporation

DETERMINE COSTS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES
Cost of Quality and Cost Calculator – The Finance Project and P/PV

STAGE TWO: DESIGN & BUILD

Now your process moves from the conceptual to the practical: designing the continuous improvement model that program sites will experience, thinking through the system supports needed to implement and scale that model, and trying it out. Proceed to this stage after the substantial work of the first stage and after at least one funder is involved or a strong local agency has dedicated resources.

By the end of this stage you will have completed a pilot of your QIS. Getting to that point requires developing the model, determining what data you need and how to collect and analyze it, and recruiting programs to participate in the pilot – programs that, if engaged effectively, will later serve as champions of the system.

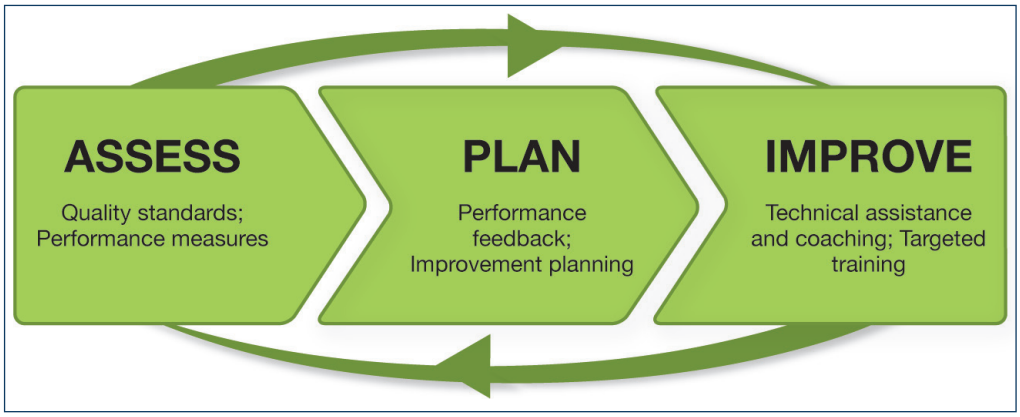
DESIGN THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

You have engaged stakeholders around a shared standard for quality, the goals and requirements of the system, and the scale you hope to achieve. It is now time to design the continuous improvement model that participating programs will experience, beginning with defining its core elements.

If a group of organizations has been using a quality assessment tool or process, either locally or within the state, consider adopting or building on that rather than initiating something new. If there is no existing work to build on, you'll need to design the model. A lot of work has been done, and you can benefit from lessons that other communities around the country have learned by reading the case studies in this guide and other descriptions of continuous improvement models.

Continuous improvement cycles are typically organized around assessment, planning and improvement (see Figure 3):

Figure 3



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Assess
- Quality standards
- Performance measures (e.g., program observation, administrative audit)

Plan
- Performance feedback
- Improvement planning

Improve
- Technical assistance and coaching
- Training

PLAN

Quality standards

An effective QIS rests on a standard of practice that is accepted by stakeholders. This ensures that you have general agreement on what constitutes high-quality programming and a clear articulation of the processes, structures and content that the system is designed to measure and improve. (See stage one for a more detailed discussion of defining quality.) Quality standards can address a broad range of program facets, including instructional practices (sometimes referred to as "point-of-service" quality), manager policies and practices, curriculum content, and attendance. There is growing emphasis in the field on point-of-service quality: where effects on child and youth outcomes are actually produced (or not) and staff have immediate control over their actions and the program processes that unfold.

LESSON FROM THE FIELD: HOW A PROGRAM EXPERIENCES THE QIS

A program based at a Palm Beach County middle school serves 100 students per day. Programming is delivered by a program manager, several frontline staff, teachers and contracted vendors. Program leaders decide to participate in the QIS in the fall. In September they receive training on the Youth Program Quality Assessment, and in October they asses all 10 of their activities. Frontline staff, teachers and vendors observe each other in teams of two. A few weeks later, an external observer comes in to observe three of the 10 activities. After the observations, an assigned quality coach sits down with the manager and assistant manager to discuss the results of the self-assessment and external observations.

Together they identify three major strengths and three areas for growth, and develop an action plan based on the growth areas. The quality coach returns in November to conduct training for all staff in one of the improvement areas and to work one-on-one with the program manager to develop a new policy related to the second growth area. For the third growth area, all frontline staff go to a workshop about incorporating reflection into their practices. They also decide that the assistant manager will enroll in the youth development certificate program at Palm Beach Community College to build her knowledge base. The program is reassessed by the external assessor in the spring and visited again by the quality coach to check for improvements and discuss areas for continued attention.

Performance measures

An increasingly popular way of determining a program's strengths and weaknesses is to have a trained person observe the program and rate various aspects using a detailed assessment instrument. Typical in the early childhood field and increasingly popular in education, such assessments give frontline staff and managers the data they need, including information about specific staff behaviors, to guide decisions about quality improvement planning, coaching and training.

Several assessment tools are available. A 2009 report reviewed 10 different observational assessments designed for use in afterschool settings.[x] Two of these tools are embedded within continuous quality improvement models that link assessment with planning, training and coaching. The Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) is part of the **Youth Program Quality Intervention**[xi] (developed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, which helped author this guide) and the Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool is part of the **Afterschool Program Assessment System**, developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time.[xii] Each has been adopted or adapted by numerous[3] systems, including several of the case study communities featured in this guide.

Selecting an assessment tool is an important step in developing the system. The communities featured in this guide took different approaches. In Hampden County, Mass., the community piloted an assessment process using one tool that proved unsatisfactory before settling on the APAS tool. In Austin, a grant that provided exposure to the Youth PQA led to an easy selection of that tool. Prime Time, the Palm Beach intermediary, put out a Request for Proposals to identify a tool developer. New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development began using a tool created by the New York State Afterschool Network then later commissioned an evaluation firm to develop a customized tool when it wanted something rigorous enough to use for monitoring programs. There is no one way to select a tool. Clarify the goals of your QIS, find out about existing **tools**, talk with other communities and look for a tool that measures those things your stakeholders have identified as important elements of quality.

Who conducts the assessments varies as well. Some systems rely solely on self-assessment – that is, the program assesses itself. Others engage outsiders to observe programs, providing a more objective perspective, which is especially important in higher stakes approaches. Still others use a combination of approaches. In New York City, grantees are required to conduct self-

[3] As of May 2012, YPQI was being implemented in an estimated 70 state or local afterschool networks, and APAS was being implemented in approximately 12 state or local afterschool networks. In our effort to identify QIS case study sites, we were unable to identify any other widely used models.

assessments using the New York State Afterschool Network's Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool. Program managers from the city's Department of Youth and Community Development then visit each program twice a year to conduct external observations using a newer tool developed in partnership with Policy Studies Associates, an independent research and evaluation company. Data from the former are used for ongoing internal continuous improvement and from the latter for decisions about what types of coaching and training support each program needs.

In addition to assessing the quality of instruction, many systems assess administrative practices: policies and procedures about youth-adult ratios, group size, staffing, family engagement, professional development, and sometimes implementation of the continuous improvement process itself. Many of these practices are the subject of state licensing requirements, so assessing them can be useful for licensed organizations as well as those considering applying to become licensed. Some quality assessment tools address this kind of information. Consider modifying an existing assessment of administrative practices or developing your own.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Three different observational assessment tools are used in the six case study sites. Those three tools are listed below, along with a list of common constructs that each tool measures. For more information about a range of quality assessment tools available in the field, see *Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Quality Assessment Tools.*

Quality Assessment Tool and Developer	Case Study Sites	Common Topics
Afterschool Program Assessment Systems *National Institute on Out-of-School Time*	Atlanta, Ga. Hampden County, Mass.	Youth Engagement Skill-Building Relationships Environment Routines & Structure Behavior Management Organizational Management Staffing/Staff Practices Family/Community Linkages
Youth Program Quality Assessment *Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality*	Austin, Texas Chicago, Ill.	
Youth Program Quality Monitoring Tool *Policy Studies Associates*	New York, NY	

PLAN

Performance feedback and improvement planning

Collecting data is not enough. For the system to be effective, programs need to get a report back in a timely fashion, make meaning of the information and take action to improve. An effective continuous improvement model includes improvement planning – that is, an intentional process typically guided by a template that produces specific strategies to shore up weak areas identified in the assessment. Sometimes coaches help programs interpret their data and develop a plan. Sometimes a funder monitors progress on the plan. Sometimes reassessments are conducted as evidence of change over time.

IMPROVE

Technical assistance and coaching

Advisors or coaches play an important role in many quality improvement systems. They have expertise in youth development and afterschool programming, and have been trained in how to provide guidance and support to organizations. Typically, these coaches spend a set amount of time onsite with programs, helping them develop a plan based on their assessment results, modeling high-quality instructional practice, and training staff or coaching managers on how to support staff through the continuous improvement process. In some systems the coaching function is differentiated by the needs of program managers (i.e., help with implementation of the continuous improvement model) vs. the needs of the frontline staff (i.e., help with delivering high-quality instruction).

Coaches are often employed by the organization overseeing the QIS. In Palm Beach, paid staff have a set of programs that they must visit at least twice a year. In Chicago, consultants are deployed as needed to programs that have conducted initial assessments. While this might require new staffing, keep in mind that existing positions and structures might be strategically integrated into the QIS. As described in the New York City, Chicago and Palm Beach case studies, staff that formerly focused on compliance monitoring have shifted into coaching roles with grantees in their portfolios.

Training

In addition to onsite coaching, most systems offer training – in single sessions or a series – to help staff develop specific skills related to elements of quality. In some communities (like Palm Beach), the QIS partners with higher education institutions that offer certificate or degree programs for youth development professionals. The critical issue is that training aligns with the elements of quality that are measured by the assessment tool. For example, in Austin, staff are trained in Youth Work Methods workshops that align directly with indicators in the Youth PQA. Following quality assessment, programs can then identify areas for growth and staff can attend specific workshops that target skills development in those areas.

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LESSON FROM THE FIELD: CONTENT MATTERS

In Hampden County, Mass., the QIS has an explicit focus on both instruction and content. Summer program staff struggled to fill the day with engaging activities and quality suffered as a result. So in addition to assessing and improving the quality of staff interactions and the program environment, system leaders identified high-quality curricula focused on literacy and designed for use in non-classroom settings, and provided coaching and support to programs for implementation. Because the lead organization did not have the funding to do intensive work in every program, it developed two levels of QIS participation. All programs are eligible for quality assessment and access to a library of theme-based curricula. Roughly half of the programs are selected to receive extras, including 20 hours of onsite coaching weekly from a curriculum specialist and a $3,000 quality enhancement grant.

DEVELOP SYSTEM SUPPORTS FOR THE MODEL

In order for it to be delivered efficiently and effectively, the continuous improvement model that programs experience needs to be surrounded by system-level supports. Your work team should ensure that the following supports are in place:

- **Data collection, storage, analysis and reporting.** Make sure you have capacity to capture the information you are collecting and to turn around meaningful reports in short order. Making sense of data in ways that will support site-level improvement and evaluation of the QIS over time is critically important. In some systems this capacity exists within the lead organization; other systems partner with external entities.

- **Participation monitoring.** Program attendance is sometimes considered an indicator of quality. Although it does not indicate *what* might be problematic about a given program, low attendance can be a useful warning sign, especially in programs serving older youth (because parents have less influence over teen attendance). Many networks use some kind of tracking system to monitor participation. Chicago built an information system that allows programs to enter both participation data and quality scores. The more data sources you have to draw from, the more valid the process. Although it can inform a QIS, participation tracking is typically considered part of a broader afterschool system.

- **Training and coaching.** Thinking about training and coaching as system-level responsibilities will help ensure efficiency and coherence. System-wide trainings can be organized to address common quality concerns that are emerging in multiple programs. Training and deployment of assessors and coaches should be centralized in order to facilitate scheduling and quality control.

- **Learning communities.** Creating periodic opportunities for those involved in the QIS to communicate, share and problem-solve – about such things as best practices and program improvements – will contribute to the development of shared language and a culture of quality. Some places have organized learning communities by role (e.g., program managers or executive directors), content (e.g., arts, sports, STEM programs), or ages served (e.g., elementary, middle, high). Groups vary in terms of formality and they can meet in person or online.

- **Overall management of the system.** Be sure you know who is doing what. There are a lot of logistics to overseeing a system, including communicating with partners, coordinating observations, hiring and overseeing staff and scheduling training. In New York and in Hampden County, Mass., one agency handles all of these functions. In Palm Beach, one organization oversees assessment while another handles quality coaching and training. As you raise funds to support coaches, tools and training, an entity also needs to manage grants and contracts.

- **Overall timeline.** You will need a timeline for the pilot and full rollout of your system. Consider things like identifying cohorts to go through the process, setting up an annual observation schedule, accounting for summer and other breaks, and staffing patterns.

TIP:

Don't put off sustainability planning. Identifying available and potential resources, thinking about the eventual scale of the system and looking for opportunities to align with or embed within existing structures such as government agencies are all steps to start early and continue throughout.

RECRUIT PILOT SITES

You should be ready to pilot your newly developed QIS. As tempting as it may be to just roll out the system to a wide network, skipping the pilot step could mean missing out on valuable feedback and the opportunity to make adjustments to the system before sharing it with a broader audience. The pilot also provides an important opportunity to develop champions for the process.

Based on the experiences of the communities featured in this guide, we recommend a pilot in 10 to 30 program sites. Some networks start with a wide variety of provider types to be sure the system is versatile; others take a more targeted approach. In Atlanta, a key goal was to link quality improvement to academic achievement, so the inclusion of school-based clubs in the pilot was considered important and strategic. In Chicago, programs were recruited from five diverse partners so that the work group could identify how the system worked in each different setting. In Palm Beach, several of the pilot sites were part of the planning process while others were recruited through a voluntary application process. Try to recruit from a system that has resources or policies already aligned with the QIS. Make sure pilot sites are excited about participating and are willing to dedicate staff and time to providing meaningful feedback.

TIP:

Don't forget the details. A lot of oversight and management goes into implementing a QIS. Be sure to think about who is doing everything, from ordering food for trainings to supervising coaches and assessors to creating an observation schedule.

Consider incentives. Systems that offer financial rewards to participating programs might find more organizations willing to take part in a pilot. Even a modest incentive (e.g., $500.00) acknowledges that participating takes valuable staff time. That said, tapping people's intrinsic desire to provide effective programs is the key. A powerful motivator for many organizations is getting a detailed report on the quality of their program along with follow-up support. Regardless of whether you can offer monetary incentives, be sure to emphasize the non-monetary rewards: performance feedback, free training and coaching on how to improve.

PILOT THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Once you've refined your model and identified pilot sites, it is time to try everything out to see how it works. Some communities pilot only some components of their QIS, then expand to include other elements when there is additional time for training, additional data collection capacity, or more momentum for the system. Others have piloted all of the elements from the outset. Either way can work, but be clear with the pilot sites about what you expect of them and what additional components may be available in the future.

Before adopting the model, participating programs need some training. For example, you might hold an orientation to help familiarize senior-level staff with the process, then hold smaller trainings for selected staff on issues like how to use the self-assessment tool (for staff conducting observations), how to do coaching (for quality coaches), how external assessments are conducted, etc. If you select an existing model, training might be included in an overall technical assistance package. If some or all of your pilot sites were involved in the process of defining quality and developing the continuous improvement model, they can take on the role of local experts in the process and feel empowered to lead.

Keep records of how things are going. Monitor participation in the various components. Talk to the quality coaches, external assessors and staff at the programs. Gather feedback (both formal and informal) throughout implementation. Be sure to capture what is working and what isn't so you can make adjustments before going to full-scale implementation. Don't be discouraged if not every pilot site is successful or if some sites complete only some components. This is not necessarily a sign that the system doesn't work, but it is an important reminder to figure out what went wrong and use that information to improve the model.

Encourage participants to think of themselves as part of a learning community. Consider bringing teams from participating programs together – ideally at the outset, in the middle of the pilot and toward the end – to talk about what they learn and how the process changes their practice. Allowing programs to process what they are experiencing will make their learning more powerful and will provide valuable information about which components of the system are most successful.

PROGRESS DURING STAGE TWO

By this point you should have completed one or two pilot QIS cycles, which means you have defined the core elements of the continuous improvement model and have a core group of organizations involved in the process. You should have identified, developed or adapted a measurement tool and begun to build local capacity on its use. A learning community has begun to grow out of the pilot. If you use them well, these early participants are becoming champions and advocates as they continue the process and help you to refine and improve the system.

LESSON FROM THE FIELD: LEARNING FROM THE PILOT

In Austin, Texas, reflecting on the pilot led to changes in what programs experience and in system-level supports.

Program level - During the pilot, recruitment efforts targeted the leaders of participating organizations. This helped establish relationships, but for the quality improvement process to lead to real change, it became apparent that the program sites – the places where the actual assessment, planning and improvement would take place – needed to be recruited and engaged directly from the beginning. This realization resulted in a shift: Now, memoranda of understanding are signed with individual program sites, leading to deeper engagement in the entire process.

System level - Initially, participating organizations were required to send only one staff person to participate in trainings related to assessment and data-driven planning. During the pilot it became clear that it mattered which staff attended the Planning with Data workshop, because programs were more successful when the leader of the improvement planning process was someone with decision-making responsibility and direct influence over the program.

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RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT STAGE TWO TASKS

Below are links to field-tested resources that can be particularly helpful during this stage of work.

DESIGN THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Measuring Youth Program Quality – Forum for Youth Investment
Overview of the Afterschool Program Assessment System – NIOST
Overview of the Youth Program Quality Intervention – Weikart Center
Sample technical assistance provider RFP – New York City DYCD

DEVELOP SYSTEM SUPPORTS FOR THE MODEL

Sample program improvement pilot project manual – Chicago Allies
Sample parameters and **tips for coaches** – Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta
Sample external assessor instructions – United Way for Greater Austin
Sample job description for quality advisor – Prime Time, Palm Beach County
Sample job description for literacy coach – Hasboro Summer Learning Initiative

PILOT THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Sample program improvement plan – Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta
Sample program improvement plan – Prime Time, Palm Beach County
Sample implementation timeline – Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta
Sample QIS pilot report – Chicago Allies

STAGE THREE: ADJUST & SUSTAIN

After one or two successful cycles, you can focus on adjusting the system, expanding to new programs and building the capacity of the lead organization to support the system. Below we discuss ways to embed quality improvement into local and state infrastructure and policies, a strategy that should flow out of work you did during stage one to identify relevant opportunities and resources. You also may want to consider different ways to evaluate the system's impact during this stage.

REFINE THE MODEL

During the pilot you gathered data and heard feedback to help you make adjustments before expanding to additional programs. Press pause toward the end of your pilot to sit down and think about what worked, what didn't and what you want to change. This doesn't mean you have to stop everything, especially if the pilot has gained momentum and funding, but rushing into expansion can mean losing the chance to make important adjustments.

Now that you have developed the model and have a sense of what it costs, who wants to participate and what kinds of resources are available, you are in a much better position to determine how intensively and on what timeline to roll it out. Adjustments may range from process details (deciding the administrative assessment should happen before the program observation instead of vice versa) to more substantive matters related to the system's overall goals (deciding to shift the focus from frontline staff to program managers). These adjustments should be made carefully and with input from the community, the work group and engaged stakeholders.

Another important set of adjustments to consider over time, as opposed to immediately following the pilot, has to do with targeting resources. As systems mature, they may not need to do all activities at each program every year. Variations in dosage and frequency of things like assessment, coaching and training can be explored as a way to inform resource development and scale-up.

BUILD CAPACITY WITHIN THE LEAD ORGANIZATION

The organization leading the QIS might have to expand its capabilities in order to perform its role successfully. Building such capacity can take on a variety of forms, but staffing will be the biggest investment as your system grows.

The lead organization might add new trainers, assessors/observers and quality coaches, or it might provide additional training for existing observers and coaches. The lead organization might add new staff, depending on the pace of growth, to support the overall system. This could include more administrative

TIP:

Don't lose momentum after the pilot. Although it is essential to regroup and make adjustments, it is also important to be sure that a pause doesn't turn into a stop. Momentum from the pilot can help propel the system forward and engage new users right away.

support to coordinate training or data collection. Finally, the lead organization might still be developing the capacity to collect and turn around performance data in a timely manner. Depending on the level of sophistication, these systems can take significant time to customize and refine. Lead organizations can partner with university-based or other organizations with data expertise to perform or enhance these functions.

External partners might be important at this stage in several respects. Communities can bring in expertise to help conduct the pilot and provide supplemental training capacity for the local intermediary. In Austin, the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality was brought in to conduct initial program observations and deliver training associated with assessment. After the pilot, the United Way, which was leading the system, brought the Weikart Center in again to train external assessors and trainers to deliver workshops focused on youth work principles and practices. The community now has a cadre of expert assessors, trainers and coaches and no longer relies on external support to perform those functions.

The pilot provides a time to figure out what supports your system will need. Now is the time to develop and adjust those supports, which will probably have time and cost implications.

TIP:

Don't rely on a single champion. Be sure that there is not one person driving the system forward or upon which the system depends. Build champions from your pilot sites, coaches and assessors so that the effort will continue beyond any one person's tenure.

ENGAGE NEW PROGRAMS AND SECTORS

During the pilot you most likely worked with organizations that were highly engaged and enthusiastic about participating, and that even helped develop the system they were testing. As you expand to new programs, some of them might not have been involved in the planning and might not be as engaged. You can use a variety of strategies to involve new programs and spread your quality improvement work to a broader audience.

Use pilot sites as advocates

Assuming several of the programs that participated in the pilot had a good experience, ask them to help spread the word. They might be part of a larger network (such as the YMCA or Boys & Girls Clubs) or other peer groups (e.g., local associations, content-related work groups) and can advocate for the initiative with their colleagues in other organizations. You can also ask for quotes about their experiences to include in a recruitment brochure or flier. Lastly, you can hold an informational meeting for target programs and ask some of the program leaders from the pilot to speak about the process and its benefits.

Build on existing activities and systems
Is there an established network, association or group in your community seeking new direction or working to identify a purpose? Are there local funders looking for a way to support grantees? This is the time to revisit questions about the local landscape that you asked during stage one. Around the same time that a coalition of Austin providers was turning to the issue of quality, the local United Way shifted from investing in individual organizations to participating in and helping to lead community-wide change under the Community Impact model. Because it considered a systemic effort to improve quality across youth-serving organizations a fit with this shift, the United Way committed to the quality improvement work and agreed to lead the QIS. The confluence of these interests allowed the QIS to take off, and the quality improvement work in turn helped spur a broader set of changes in the provider community.

Consider all sectors
The most obvious programs for your QIS will probably be traditional afterschool programs, either in stand-alone centers or at schools. Consider other sectors as well. Does your parks and recreation department have programs that need support? Could workforce development and training programs for older youth benefit? A network of summer learning programs? Does your juvenile detention center have educational programs? Are there group homes or independent living facilities serving young people in your community? A network of community schools? Think about the range of organizations serving youth, as interest in continuous improvement is growing across education and human services sectors.

Engage new programs by sharing positive experiences from the pilot, explaining how you are adapting the system to meet their needs and underscoring the benefits. Monetary incentives can help with recruitment but are not critical. Be sure to outline the non-monetary benefits discussed earlier. You might place a dollar value on the technical assistance that programs will receive as part of their participation in the system so they can see what they are getting.

EVALUATE

Evaluation means different things to different people and can range from simple surveys to complex research projects. Here is what you might want to evaluate and ways to go about doing it:

Evaluating satisfaction with the system
You want to regularly collect feedback from those who are part of the system to get a read on how satisfied providers are and to inform ongoing adjustments. You can continue gathering the same kind of data you collected during the pilot – using focus groups and surveys with providers, evaluation forms for training participants, and participation levels in the QIS activities.

TIP:
Don't skip the feedback loops. Although you don't want to lose momentum, use feedback from the pilot to make adjustments and tell people what you have fixed so they know you are creating a reflective system that meets the needs of providers.

Evaluating the impact of the QIS
As more programs go through the continuous improvement cycle, you should find out whether and how the system is improving program quality. This kind of evaluation is more complicated and might require hiring an outside evaluator. You can use scores from observations made over time as well as interviews and surveys with staff and managers from each program. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative data can provide useful evidence of program improvement (or lack thereof) as well as an understanding of the types of changes that staff and managers are making in order to improve practice.

Consider looking at the impact of improved programs on the children taking part in them. Rigorous evaluation is expensive and the questions and methods should be determined locally, based on needs and available resources.

EMBED AND SUSTAIN

Of course, sustainability planning doesn't begin now. You've been looking for opportunities for strategic alignment and thinking about funding from the outset. It is not uncommon for a community to get a big outlay of funds for the development of a QIS; many funders are interested in quality and capacity-building as a way to provide a solid foundation for their grantees. However, start-up grants are not intended to sustain a system. Although up-front costs are greater than maintenance costs, you should also work to identify a long-term funding strategy to cover such costs as:

- **Ongoing management of the system** – including overhead, a staff person to run the system, and expenses such as copies, office supplies and materials;

- **Coaches** – quality coaches are an ongoing cost that can vary depending on who they are and whether they are independent consultants or employees;

- **Trainers** – an ongoing expense of the system. You need people to deliver training so that programs can improve once they have identified areas for growth during their assessment and improvement planning process.

LESSON FROM THE FIELD: CREATIVE WAYS TO REDUCE COSTS

Some communities have gotten creative with how to run their quality improvement systems in ways that require fewer resources. In Austin, for example, all external assessments are conducted by volunteers and coordinated by the local United Way. Volunteer assessors are all program staff, recruited from local youth-serving organizations that have been trained in the assessment system. Rather than get paid for their time spent observing and assessing organizations participating in the QIS, they trade their services for an assessment of their own programs. Do an observation, get an observation.

The communities featured here and others around the country have tapped the following sources to support their QIS efforts:

- **21st Century Community Learning Center set-asides for monitoring, assessment and evaluation.** In Rhode Island, Michigan, and many other states these funds support quality improvement systems.
- **City funding.** In New York City, the Department of Youth and Community Development's QIS is built into the agency's operating budget, with a capacity-building unit within DYCD responsible for implementation.
- **County or state child care funding.** In Palm Beach County, the QIS is funded in large part by the Children's Services Council, a county government funder of licensed child care programs.
- **Local and regional foundations.** In Palm Beach, Atlanta, Austin and Hampden County such funders have played critical roles.

As these examples suggest, embedding the QIS or elements of it into existing regulations and policies is an important sustainability strategy to consider. That's why getting the lay of the land during stage one is crucial. Explore opportunities to connect or embed your QIS into existing regulations, policies and systems. Is there a statewide afterschool network whose work on policy issues, for example, could connect to your efforts? Here are three other possibilities:

- *Find out whether your state has a quality rating system (QRS) for school-age programs and explore connecting with it.* Even if the state uses a different assessment tool or measures slightly different things, it is likely that some of the indicators of quality match those in your system. You might offer your system as a way of supporting programs seeking to improve their QRS rating. Eventually, you might even push for the state to require programs to participate in your system to receive their state rating. By joining forces, you might be able to pool resources that benefit both systems and create a true quality rating and improvement system.

- *Consider links between your system and regulations for licensed childcare.* Most states include school-age programs in their licensing regulations. Some of your participating organizations might be licensed and others might hope to become licensed. Identifying which aspects of your system will help organizations monitor their compliance with licensing standards can gain their buy-in as well as overall support from the state funding community. Some quality standards documents flag which standards mirror state licensing requirements so that participating organizations can easily identify how the QIS aligns with licensing.

TIP:

Keep exploring opportunities to align and embed. Talk to local funders about what they require of grantees. Connect with the state quality rating system. Don't miss an opportunity to encourage adoption of the system.

- *Look into embedding the QIS into requirements of government and private funders. F*or example, the United Way in Austin requires that grantees participate in the local QIS in order to receive funding. In several states 21st CCLC programs are required to participate in a QIS and the state education agency funds an intermediary to administer the system. In Palm Beach, the county government requires all its grantees to participate in the QIS, and it funds Prime Time, to administer the system. Getting funders to support the system, ideally through direct funding but also by requiring their grantees participate, increases its sustainability and engagement.

PROGRESS DURING STAGE THREE

By the conclusion of stage three, you should have a quality improvement system that is being used by a group of organizations and supported by sustainable funding sources. You have refined your model based on feedback, conducted some type of evaluation of the system to determine its effectiveness, identified long-term funding opportunities, and embedded or connected to other relevant efforts in the community.

Running a QIS and generating the momentum and resources to support it is an ongoing job. The same focus on continuous improvement that you have built into the participating programs should be embraced by the system leaders as well, so that you continue to seek feedback and refine the system. Moving through the three stages of building a QIS gives you the foundation to support high-quality practices across a range of organizations in the community.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT STAGE THREE TASKS

Below are links to field-tested resources that can be particularly helpful during this stage of work.

REFINE THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL AND SYSTEM SUPPORTS

Sample QIS pilot report – Chicago Allies
Sample QIS levels – Prime Time, Palm Beach County
Sample QIS implementation study – Providence After School Alliance

ENGAGE NEW PROGRAMS AND SECTORS

Sample welcome letter to new programs – Prime Time, Palm Beach County
Sample course descriptions for youth studies degree/certificate – DCYD & CUNY
Sample brochure for youth studies degree/certificate – DCYD & CUNY
Sample RFP – Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative

EVALUATE

Sample QIS summary report – Texas State University School of Social Work
Sample evaluation – Texas State University School of Social Work
Sample evaluation – Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative
Sample evaluation – Prime Time Palm Beach County
Sample QIS implementation study – Providence After School Alliance
Youth Program Quality Intervention study – Weikart Center

EMBED AND SUSTAIN

Sample grant application for programs – United Way for Greater Austin
Sample QRIS requirements – Rhode Island

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QUALITY IMPROVEMENT CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

Six case studies were conducted to inform and illustrate the stages and steps involved in building a quality improvement system (QIS). They were developed through in-depth leader interviews, document review, and a formal vetting process involving multiple stakeholders in each community. The cases were selected to represent a variety of approaches to building a QIS.

Each story is organized by the three-stage framework featured in the guide, to illustrate how different communities have approached different steps. Not every community engaged in every step, and no two communities pursued the process in exactly the same order. The cases illustrate that in reality, these processes are not as linear as this guide may imply.

Use the case studies to learn more about a particular step in the larger vision or to get examples of how others have handled a challenge you are facing. Share the stories with policymakers, youth-serving organizations and others in your community who may want a better understanding of what this process looks like in a community of a similar size or with a similar political landscape or population. Link to the various resources highlighted throughout for hands-on materials you can use right away.

Several common themes run across all six case studies. For example, the process of building a quality improvement system had a unifying effect, bringing organizations together into powerful new, lasting relationships and in some cases, changing relationships between funders and grantees. Also, all of our case study sites grappled with the question of stakes at some point in their process. Among those who started out with plans to implement a higher stakes system, one where low scores could have negative financial consequences, most moved to a lower stakes approach because they felt organizations would participate more deeply in the process. Another common theme is the importance of some kind of onsite coaching, which leaders report helps participating programs feel supported, gain access to expertise and improve at a faster rate. Five of the six communities have implemented coaching models that vary widely in in purpose, intensity and modes of delivery.

In addition to illuminating these common themes, each community also has a unique story to tell. Below we highlight some of the lessons from each case.

Look to Atlanta for information on:

- How a large multi-site agency can address quality improvement at scale
- Kick-starting a process after initial efforts lose traction
- Gaining staff buy-in and changing organizational culture
- Focusing QIS efforts at the executive and program director level

Austin has lessons to share on:

- How early buy-in from local funders speeds policy development
- Cost-effective coaching and assessment strategies
- Starting small and expanding capacity
- Providing targeted technical assistance
- Building quality improvement into the United Way Community Impact approach

From Chicago you can learn about:

- Engaging several large city agencies in a common approach to quality
- Finding ways to build on a long history of related efforts
- Integrating quality improvement with a larger data management system
- Engaging stakeholders at the administrative, management and frontline levels

Hamden County's story provides insight on:

- Building a QIS that defines quality in terms of both staff practice and curriculum content
- Using incentives productively to support continuous improvement
- Implementing a QIS with a focus on summer programs
- Creating effective partnerships with schools and teachers

From New York City you can learn about:

- Fostering a culture shift from compliance monitoring to continuous improvement
- Launching a full-scale pilot across a large system of providers
- Building strong partnerships with higher education
- Creating a sustainable infrastructure within a public system

Finally, Palm Beach County's story offers lessons on:

- Structuring funder, provider and intermediary relationships
- Developing a shared definition of quality among key stakeholders
- Determining the stakes involved and the ultimate purpose of the QIS
- Growing a QIS over time to support more sophisticated users
- Evaluating a QIS early in the process and as it matures

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF METRO ATLANTA

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta (BGCMA) is the third-largest affiliate within the Boys & Girls Clubs of America network. It serves over 4,000 children and youth per day at 25 programs across the city. It is a larger delivery system than many networks

LEAD ORGANIZATION
Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta

YEAR INITIAL QIS DEVELOPMENT BEGAN
2005

KEY PARTNERS
National Institute on Out of School Time (NIOST)
United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta

FUNDING SOURCES
Whitehead Foundation

CURRENT SCALE
25 programs

STAGE ONE: PLAN AND ENGAGE

BGCMA's quality improvement work began in 2005 when Atlanta and three other communities participated in a 16-program pilot of the **Afterschool Program Assessment System** (APAS) developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST). The APAS pilot involved three Boys & Girls Club sites along with the YMCA, Girls Inc. and other local programs. The effort concluded after two years when the seed funding dried up and regional priorities shifted. A handful of programs continued to use APAS, including two Boys & Girls Clubs. Although the initial effort didn't take hold, it did plant the seeds for BGCMA's current efforts and helped lay the groundwork for a commitment to program quality improvement in the region.

KEY LESSONS

- **How a large multi-site agency can address quality improvement at scale**
- **Kick-starting a process after initial efforts lose traction**
- **Gaining staff buy-in and changing organizational culture**
- **Focusing QIS efforts at the executive and program director level**

Making the case and identifying a lead organization

The Boys & Girls Clubs re-engagement in quality improvement began in 2010 when Missy Dugan, then the organization's chief operating officer, approached BGCMA leadership about improving alignment between the organization's culture and mission. She wanted to send a message that clubs were going to do business differently and that quality needed to be a top priority. Laureen Lamb, vice president of strategic programs and outcomes at BGCMA, had experience with the earlier quality improvement system (QIS) pilot and was among those who embraced the emerging focus on continuous quality

improvement. Lamb recalled, "For a long time, the Boys & Girls Clubs had been brainwashed into the mentality that more kids is better. But having huge numbers didn't always translate to quality. Staffing ratios often didn't support quality interactions and experiences for young people. That was huge to acknowledge organizationally."

Lamb credits Dugan, who was named president and CEO in June 2011, with demonstrating an early vision for getting quality measures in place. Accountability across the organization – from the corporate office to affiliate clubs – was the key driver for launching the QIS initiative. Dugan's emphasis on impact sent a clear signal that the organization was shifting its focus from inputs to results.

Determining costs and potential resources

A major investment from the Whitehead Foundation in 2010 added a $4.4 million, multi-year investment to the effort that Dugan was launching. The size and length of this gift provided the resources to build the quality improvement system and the time to work on some of the underlying culture changes that would ultimately help institutionalize the commitment to quality within the Boys & Girls Clubs system, as well as position BGCMA as a leader in continuous quality improvement citywide.

Engage stakeholders

As a self-contained system, BGCMA had a ready-made network in which to pilot the QIS. Though the common obstacle for many community-wide efforts – forging a common vision across different organizational perspectives – was not present, leaders still needed to create buy-in across the clubs. "Our first challenge was to find the 10 clubs that would join the pilot, and get buy-in from staff about what this was going to mean," Lamb explained.

Lamb and others knew that for many clubs, the culture shift would be challenging, "We had to ask hard questions that we never asked before about staff-to-kid ratios and scheduling – things that ultimately influence quality," she said. "There was a definite culture shift to work through." Managing the culture shift required both hand-holding and honest conversations as clubs began to digest the new organizational focus.

Buy-in wasn't universal, but as the initiative began rolling out, the majority of club staff saw it as a positive opportunity for a new conversation. According to Lamb, early discussions allowed staff to acknowledge that "while they were committed to the brand of Boys & Girls Clubs, they weren't doing as good a job as possible of keeping kids safe." That early process laid the foundation for the clubs to embrace the quality improvement system not as punitive, but as a signature component of the Boys & Girls Clubs brand.

Buy-in wasn't universal, but as the initiative began rolling out, the majority of club staff saw it as a positive opportunity for a new conversation.

Clarifying purpose
BGCMA planned the QIS with a few key goals in mind. The first goal was to increase the capacity of local clubs to support academic performance – a central interest of the Whitehead Foundation. A second goal was to use quality as a lens for re-examining the allocation of resources with an emphasis on improving safety and participation. This reexamination started with a shift in what gets counted. Rather than reporting 15,000 members system-wide regardless of frequency of attendance, clubs would be asked to demonstrate engagement of fewer youth with more frequency.

Defining quality and considering information needs
Because it was familiar with the APAS system and tools based on participation in the earlier pilot, BGCMA did not go looking for potential models when it began planning its QIS initiative. The definition of quality embedded within APAS fit with the organization's philosophy and agency leaders liked the focus on observational assessments of staff-student interactions, program content delivery and program structure.

An important goal of the emerging emphasis on quality was to reexamine the number of students served. BGCMA decided to set a 1:15 staff/youth ratio, with quality and safety as key drivers for that target. This gave some clubs permission to develop waiting lists when ratios got too high, rather than enroll as many kids as possible without regard for the quality of the youths' experiences. For other clubs, this focus on staff/youth ratios and quality would help them get to the root of why their services might be underutilized. In each case, they could begin to hone in on the quality of interactions between staff and youth, and the experience youth were receiving in the clubs. Lamb reported, "We have been working on getting our staffing model where it needs to be in support of quality."

STAGE TWO: DESIGN AND BUILD

By selecting APAS, BGCMA had a ready-made model it could customize to meet its specific needs. In short order, it was able to identify programs to participate in a pilot.

Designing the model
In order to develop the continuous improvement model, the planning group at BGCMA had to think about the level at which it would target the effort. The group decided to focus QIS resources primarily on full-time staff, which meant

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF METRO ATLANTA QIS TIMELINE

2005
United Way Metropolitan Atlanta partners with NIOST to pursue QIS pilot

2006 - 2008
APAS tools and process piloted by six Atlanta area youth-serving organizations; initiative does not continue beyond the pilot

2009
BGCMA begins internal discussions about program quality

mostly directors and program managers. This decision was practical: Full-time staff tend to stay with the organization longer, and training and professional development efforts are easier to design around their schedules. The decision was also strategic, because managers and directors have the authority to implement continuous improvement practices while engaging frontline staff in their work with children and youth.

The group also had to take existing processes into account. "The national organization has an assessment tool that affiliates already use. But the tool focuses heavily on the physical environment and regulatory issues," Lamb noted. "Clubs lacked a process to link assessment with professional development to develop staff skills, training on how to interpret data, and support for managing data-informed change, from programming to operations." The new QIS process would include all of these components, in addition to an observational assessment focused on the quality of what youth experience within programs.

The model developed includes external assessment, a youth survey about program experiences, manager training in leading a continuous improvement process, onsite coaching, additional network-wide training and action planning. These were to be implemented in the following sequence:

- Club managers attend training on the APAS tools and leading a quality improvement process.
- Clubs undergo an external assessment conducted by staff from the BGCMA central office.
- Clubs administer the Student Afterschool Youth Outcomes survey.
- Clubs work with an assigned coach throughout the assessment process, to plan for data collection, interpret results, plan for improvement and implement improvement strategies.
- Clubs develop **action plans** in consultation with the coach and work over 3-4 months to implement the plan.
- Club staff members participate in targeted coaching and network-wide trainings throughout the implementation period.
- At the end of the improvement plan implementation period, clubs undergo a second round of observations.
- Clubs receive a second report, noting progress and areas for continued growth.

2010
Whitehead Foundation awards BGCMA 3-year, $4.4 million grant focused on academic success, professional development and quality improvement; QIS pilot with 10 clubs.

2011
Second of three cohorts brought into QIS

2012
All 25 clubs come online to participate in QIS in fall

BGCMA designed a model that includes elements of both high and low stakes accountability. Individual clubs are accountable for undertaking a quality improvement process and making progress against submitted action plans. Participation is mandatory (beginning in the fall of 2012), and data derived from the process is used to drive overall performance measurement goals and directives. While the central office tracks performance data, the emphasis is on clubs participating in the full process, with negative consequences for failure to do so. Implementation of APAS is a specific deliverable in each club's staff performance goals. Ultimate accountability sits with the executive director at each club; failure to implement APAS to its fullest results in a disciplinary write-up in their file. This has been particularly important as the central office makes network-wide decisions about staffing, resource allocation and branding.

The central office uses the QIS tools to determine what needs to improve across the entire organization.

Recruiting sites to pilot the model

Participation in the QIS will be required for all 25 clubs in the Atlanta region by the fall of 2012, but only 10 clubs were invited to participate in the pilot launched in May 2010. This first cohort intentionally included a mix of traditional clubs with strong community leadership and non-traditional clubs based in schools (one high school, two elementary and two middle schools). A key goal for the organization is to link quality improvement with academic achievement outcomes, so the inclusion of school-based clubs in the pilot was strategic. Staff members from these 10 clubs participated in two-and-a-half days of training to introduce quality improvement and understand how to engage with the various components of the QIS.

Each club was assigned a **coach** who worked closely with staff before, during and after the assessment process. Engagement began with scheduling an initial visit early in the program year, in which the coach conducted an observation in conjunction with staff. This external assessment process culminated in a **report** that included composite assessment scores and recommendations for improvement. Once the report was submitted, coaches and staff met to identify two priorities for improvement.

Four coaches, two from the central office and two long-time community-based specialists, worked with two or three clubs each during the pilot. The clubs received customized support as they tackled various issues within their organizations. Lamb stated, "We wanted to avoid a cookie cutter approach. Each club is a bit different in terms of staffing and staff skill levels. It was important to align coaching with those variables." The clubs developed action plans in consultation with their coaches, and worked over four or more months to implement strategies within their plans, coming together at least once a month to review progress and troubleshoot persistent areas of concern. At the end of that period, each coach returned to complete a second round of observations. A second report was submitted, noting areas of progress and opportunities for continued growth. Additional supports included network-wide training and targeted coaching throughout the year on topics that emerged from the reports or that were directly requested by staff.

Data from the pilot proved useful to BGCMA in addressing its overall strategic objectives. Lamb explained, "We are using the QIS tools to make assumptions about what needs to improve across the entire organization. For example, an overall trend we found is that many staff did not know how to handle disciplinary problems in the clubs. Staff-to-youth ratios – ratios from 1:30 to 1:40 – came up again as a central part of the problem. So we worked on training around using positive discipline. Staff couldn't engage youth because they were spending time on behavioral issues. We have used APAS to inform our larger global professional development needs."

Developing system supports

The major investment from the Whitehead Foundation has enabled the organization to develop and launch all of the coaching and professional development supports that surround the program observation process. For example, $1 million has gone toward professional development, including a 2.5-day institute that has been attended by over 300 full-time and part-time staff. Additional professional development modules have been added in the past year to address discipline, youth voice, project-based learning and program efficacy.

In the **2011-2012 program year**, a second cohort of six programs began a pilot of the continuous improvement process. The two cohorts now meet as learning communities supported by the central office. The second year cohort is learning how to implement the process and support changes in club culture, and the first cohort has continued on a second year of continuous improvement with a focus on refining the processes put in place last year. Additionally, the central office has begun investing more resources in developing the capacity of local club leaders. For example, the central office launched an executive directors' learning network that meets on a monthly basis for eight hours. The directors develop their leadership skills, with a focus on helping them use data in ways that inform club operations and allow them to keep their eye on the prize: better outcomes for the youth they serve.

Boys & Girls Clubs plans to embed responsibility for continuous quality improvement in executive director job descriptions, seeing this as a core competency for club leaders.

STAGE THREE: ADJUST AND SUSTAIN

With two-thirds of all clubs engaged after the pilot, BGCMA turned to planning the full engagement of all sites and supporting individual clubs with additional training and data collection. As the system becomes more embedded in local clubs, BGCMA hopes to focus more energy on citywide discussions about quality that include but extend beyond their organization.

Refining the model and system supports

BGCMA plans to embed responsibility for continuous quality improvement in executive director job descriptions, seeing this as a core competency for club leaders. The expectation is that directors will eventually oversee observation, surveying and action planning at their individual clubs.

The central office recently introduced a "Masters in Mentoring" training to enhance onsite leadership capacity to oversee quality improvement and coach staff. The training schedule was adjusted so that trainings occur more frequently and at varying times to accommodate a wide range of schedules.

BGCMA hired three new system-level managers to support the network in each of the organization's core impact areas: Academic Success, Healthy Lifestyles and Character/Leadership. These positions will guide the organization's strategic direction in each of these areas and support more customized club coaching and training.

MOVING FROM A PILOT PROJECT TO AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM

PILOT PHASE	POST-PILOT ADJUSTMENTS
Selected pilot sites participate in the APAS process, which includes initial training followed by an external assessment conducted by central office staff in conjunction with local club staff. Clubs also administer youth and staff surveys.	As of the fall of 2012, participation by all clubs in the BGCMA system is mandatory. Clubs are evaluated on implementation of the full process, with negative consequences for failure to do so.
Each club works with an assigned coach throughout the process and develops an action plan. They then participate in network-wide training and work with the coach over a four-month implementation period. Individual clubs are expected to participate fully in the process and make progress against submitted action plans. At the end of the implementation period, clubs undergo a second round of observations and receive a second data report.	Coaching support continues as all clubs come online. The system is moving toward working with all executive directors to embed responsibility for continuous quality improvement in their job descriptions. Club directors will oversee observation, surveying and action planning at their individual clubs. The system invests in additional training and support to bring selected club staff online as coaches.
Clubs participate in professional development offerings, including a 2.5-day institute and ongoing professional development sessions on topics such as discipline, youth voice and project-based learning. Manager cohorts meet in professional learning communities, and executive directors participate in a monthly learning network.	Professional development investments continue with additional offerings (e.g., Masters in Mentoring) to further enhance leaders' capacity to support quality improvement. Trainings are spaced to occur more frequently so that both full- and part-time staff can participate.

Finally, the organization adopted the **Efforts to Outcomes** (ETO) system to manage data related to club outcomes. ETO allows clubs to track which youth attend, what they do and how long they engage in a given activity. It helps link member records with baseline data and student survey data that are collected as part of the APAS process. In the fall of 2011, as it rolled out the new system, the organization collected baseline data on all youth across 13 outcome areas. Now individual club and organization-wide data can be used to make programmatic and policy decisions to produce better outcomes for club members.

Engaging new sites, embeding and sustaining

The BGCMA is confident the QIS has achieved enough support to become an embedded part of their operations. "We were able to do this because of the $4.4 million investment," Lamb asserted, "but the key force besides money has been that when we embarked on this path, the decision was backed by board members and the senior staff that really got it. It was not business as usual. Anytime someone said, 'But that's the way we've always done it,' that attitude was countered and redirected." Strong support for quality improvement has translated into an institutional commitment to embed the process into organizational budgets beginning in 2013.

With the last 10 Clubs scheduled to be integrated into the QIS this year, the process is going to scale. For now, the QIS described here will remain within the Boys & Girls Club system. However, BGCMA hopes to be a key player in any future roll-out of a regional quality improvement effort – something it expects will be on the table in the near future. "We already know we will affect other systems like Parks and Recreation, because our programs are embedded there," Lamb explained. "But there are other policy initiatives coming down the line, like Ready by 21, that will encourage quality improvement to move front and center."

For more information about the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta's Quality Improvement System, contact Laureen Lamb at llamb@bgcma.org.

"Anytime someone said, 'But that's the way we've always done it,' that attitude was countered and redirected."

-Laureen Lamb, Vice President of Strategic Programs and Outcomes, BGCMA

AUSTIN, TEXAS

Austin area civic and community institutions have a long history of working to help young people grow and thrive. Like most cities, Austin boasts a range of partnerships and collaborations. Until recently, however, many community leaders would have characterized these efforts as fragmented. Developing a quality improvement system for afterschool programs has contributed to greater community cohesion and collective action.

LEAD ORGANIZATION
United Way for Greater Austin

YEAR INITIAL QIS DEVELOPMENT BEGAN
2007

KEY PARTNERS
Ready by 21 Coalition
United Way for Greater Austin
Central Texas Afterschool Network

FUNDING SOURCES
United Way for Greater Austin
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

CURRENT SCALE
58 programs, including 32 school-based

KEY LESSONS

- **How early buy-in from local funders speeds policy development**
- **Cost-effective coaching and assessment strategies**
- **Starting small and expanding capacity over time**
- **Providing targeted technical assistance**
- **Building quality improvement into the United Way Community Impact approach**

STAGE ONE: PLAN AND ENGAGE

The early stages of developing a quality improvement system (QIS) in Austin involved work on multiple fronts: engaging stakeholders, forming a work group, identifying an intermediary to lead the work, assessing need, mapping existing capacity, creating a shared definition of quality, identifying resources and beginning to think through data needs. These efforts sought to increase the community impact of many disparate efforts to support children, youth and families.

The commitment to align community investments with shared goals for children and youth paved the way for a systemic approach to quality improvement. An early milestone was the creation of a first-of-its-kind coalition of youth service providers.

Engaging stakeholders

In 2003, a broad-based group of more than 30 youth service providers, educators, government agency representatives and community members formed an informal coalition to support more intentional collaboration to improve services to area children and families. The coalition, now known as the **Ready by 21 Coalition for Austin/Travis County**, initially focused on four areas: youth engagement, mapping the youth services infrastructure, ensuring safe places for youth, and college access. This group provided both a foundation and the eventual leadership team for Austin's QIS.

Making the case

In 2005 the coalition developed a **Youth Services Mapping system** to identify where youth-serving programs are located and whether the distribution of supports and opportunities reflected demographic realities and needs. As more organizations became a part of that system – raising awareness among school counselors and other practitioners about local afterschool programs and services – the coalition recognized the importance of understanding more about the quality of those services and supports.

Forming a work group

An opportunity to address program quality came in late 2007, when the Ready by 21 Coalition for Austin/Travis County formed a quality committee and applied to participate in the Ready by 21 Quality Counts initiative (Quality Counts). This multi-site initiative – funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and led by the Forum for Youth Investment – helped intermediaries in communities and states across the country strengthen or build quality improvement systems in afterschool settings.

Several local organizations, including the **Central Texas Afterschool Network**, had been exploring program quality and professional development on their own. Existing efforts often involved a single champion within an organization piloting an internal quality improvement effort. Most of these champions – from organizations like the Austin Independent School District 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program, Boys & Girls Clubs and Communities in Schools – were involved in the coalition. Thus they became early collaborators in creating the QIS, along with United Way and the Central Texas Afterschool Network.

Assessing readiness

As part of its inclusion in the Quality Counts initiative, Austin participated in a **readiness assessment process** that revealed areas of strength as well as gaps to address in the development of a QIS. The assessment included an examination of existing leadership, professional development and intermediary capacities.

"The focus on the QIS opened the door for the United Way to build and strengthen relationships in the broader OST field."
-Laura La Fuente, Director, Target Graduation, United Way for Greater Austin

Defining quality

Although the local coalition had brought youth-serving organizations together around a common cause, the group had not defined "quality" for the community. The Quality Counts opportunity put that process on a fast track. The quality committee of the Ready by 21 Coalition and the lead partners decided to adopt the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) and its embedded definition of quality, which is based on young people's access to key developmental experiences in program settings. Local leaders were exposed to this tool and its accompanying improvement intervention as part of the Quality Counts Initiative. The group determined it was a good fit and that using a research-based tool was important given that assessment would anchor the quality improvement system. The decision to adopt the Youth PQA represented a major step in engaging stakeholders around a common vision.

Identifying a lead organization

During this same period, the local United Way adopted the Community Impact model, which marked a shift from funding individual programs to supporting community-wide change. Given the fit between the QIS effort and where the organization was moving, the president of the United Way announced a commitment to the emerging QIS and agreed to take on the role of lead intermediary for implementation. According to Laura La Fuente, director of Target Graduation at the United Way, the confluence of these efforts allowed the quality improvement work to take off, which, in turn, helped spur a broader set of changes in the provider community. "This focus on the QIS opened the door for the United Way to build and strengthen relationships in the field," La Fuente said.

Clarifying purpose

Determined not to frame the QIS as an effort to "endorse" certain programs as high-quality, the planning group emphasized the importance of the continuous improvement process and using assessment to drive planning and improvement. Programs funded by the United Way and 21st CCLC were the target audience for the QIS because they were easy to identify and together represented most afterschool programs in the area. **Recruitment events** and the prominent role played by the United Way, a major funder of many local organizations, reinforced these messages and were important in terms of getting the system underway.

AUSTIN QIS TIMELINE

2003
Ready by 21 Coaltion forms to focus on educational & social supports for children, youth and families

2005
Coalition leads the development of the Youth Services Mapping system

2007
Coalition forms a committee; United Way launches Community Impact

STAGE TWO: DESIGN AND BUILD

The Quality Counts initiative allowed Austin to move quickly from planning to action. With a definition of quality in hand, a ready work group and a clear purpose, the planning group moved forward to define the continuous improvement model, recruit programs and pilot the system.

Designing the continuous improvement model

As with adopting a definition of quality, the articulation of the continuous improvement model that programs would participate in came fairly quickly. The committee decided to adopt the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI), which links training and coaching with the Youth PQA tool that it had already selected. That streamlined some decision making about the continuous improvement model. The planning team worked with an external consultant to flesh out the nuts and bolts and get up to speed quickly. "We were figuring out what the basic elements of the QIS would be – what doing an assessment involved, how to communicate about program quality improvement and adapting parts of the YPQI model to work for our system," La Fuente said. "We prioritized the main components of assessment, planning for improvement and training, with a vision to incorporate other elements like coaching once we had the basics down."

The core components of the QIS in Austin include training, external and self-assessment, and improvement planning, implemented in the following sequence:

- Program conducts a self-assessment or signs up for an external assessment to generate a baseline for program improvement.
- Program selects a staff member, typically a manager, to participate in a Planning with Data training designed to help them interpret and use the program quality data collected.
- Program creates a quality improvement plan based on data.
- Program selects from an array of targeted youth work methods trainings held throughout the year that align with identified areas for improvement.
- Program conducts a second assessment to gauge improvement.

2008
Austin joins the Ready by 21 Quality Counts Initiative & pilots QIS

2010
United Way funding is tied to participation in components of QIS

2011
Texas joins Mott State Afterschool Network; QIS expansion planned

Participating programs conduct two assessments annually – using a team-based self-assessment approach or engaging an external assessor – in order to support programs' engagement in the full cycle. The second assessment helps programs stay focused on continuous improvement throughout the year. Assessment is coordinated with professional development and looks equally at frontline and management staff. Training focuses largely on frontline staff, with targeted supports for managers to effectively guide the quality improvement process.

In signing on for the pilot, programs agreed to identify at least one person from their staff to be trained as an external assessor, participate in the Planning with Data workshop, and conduct a quality assessment of the organization.

Recruiting programs and piloting the model

The Ready by 21 Coalition and the Central Texas Afterschool Network took the lead in recruiting programs, primarily through word-of-mouth testimonials and by promoting the value of the process during network meetings. In order to build interest and buy-in among those considering or getting started with assessment, the coalition offered various training workshops in areas that align with the Youth PQA. Workshops were introduced before programs were trained in the assessment process, sending a signal that there was a commitment to capacity-building and improvement as opposed to just evaluation. These practical trainings designed to build youth worker skills are offered frequently and are available at minimal cost to organizations.

The planning work described above came to fruition during 2008, when 22 programs got together as a learning community and participated in a quality improvement pilot. In signing on for the pilot, **programs agreed** to identify at least one person from their staff to be trained as an external assessor, participate in the Planning with Data workshop and conduct a quality assessment of the organization. The 22 programs then launched into the continuous improvement cycle, including conducting baseline assessments; participating in Planning with Data workshops designed to help them interpret and use the information to develop an improvement plan; participating in an array of professional development workshops; and conducting a second assessment. The second assessment provided comparison scores that programs could use to determine whether they had improved. The **early results** of the pilot suggested that improvement in at least one area was the norm for each program.

Developing system supports for the model

To support this process, the United Way began to manage a calendar of trainings throughout the year and coordinate the scheduling of external assessments. More recently, it designed a data system that tracks the number of trainings individual youth workers attend and the number of programs that have been assessed. In the future, the United Way plans to recognize individuals and organizations that have invested heavily in quality improvement (e.g., providing certificates to individuals who have attended all 10 youth work methods workshops). Similarly, it maintains a database of active external assessors.

Today, a VISTA AmeriCorps volunteer organizes the assessment process and manages data related to participation in the QIS. As part of that work, the United Way can analyze participation patterns and organizational investments in quality improvement.

STAGE THREE: ADJUST AND SUSTAIN

Near the end of the first year, all 22 programs remained actively engaged in the process and a cadre of external assessors had been recruited and trained. Generating buy-in through offering low-cost training opportunities and building the external assessor ranks from within the practitioner community created a set of early champions who touted the benefits of the quality improvement process for organizations and youth. Being part of a national learning community of other cities undertaking similar approaches further strengthened the work and helped lay the foundation for the QIS to grow and become embedded in the overall social service infrastructure.

External Assessment

External assessors have become an integral part of sustaining Austin's QIS; the community has more than 30 individuals trained as external assessors. The external assessor ranks were built from within the provider community. These individuals were required to complete three days of training on the Youth PQA in addition to several debriefing meetings for assessors. The training qualified them to reliably assess any program in the network.

Assessors commit to observing at least four program offerings (pre- and post-) per year on a volunteer basis. Each assessment takes three hours to complete (one hour to observe and two hours to complete a written assessment). Assessors work in teams. The assessors turn their data in to the United Way be analyzed, and the program receives a report. Programs can use the information to select areas for improvement, then request a second external assessment after they have had time to implement change strategies.

Recruiting assessors from local programs was an intentional strategy. When Austin seized upon the funding opportunity to build a QIS, it was important to the planners that the people who were going to participate in the system would also help build it. The participation of community professionals in external assessment training was one way of ensuring that. "Having many individuals become external assessors, each volunteering a few hours to visit another program, has been an effective strategy," La Fuente notes. "It couldn't be the United Way showing others how the system was going to work. The very nature of the process has encouraged people to volunteer, and has increased connections to and investment in each other's programs."

With a positive initial experience under their belt and an engaged group of providers, the United Way and its partners turned to learning from the pilot, tweaking the design, and strategizing about how to expand and sustain the QIS.

Refining the model

During the pilot, memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were established with the leaders of parent organizations (such as the YWCA), which helped to establish initial relationships. But in order for the quality improvement process to lead to sustained change, it became apparent that the "unit" that needed to be recruited and engaged directly was the program where the actual observations and assessment takes place. This shift has allowed the QIS to touch more organizations at a greater level of depth than during the pilot.

Initially, organizations were required to send only one staff person to participate in training related to improvement planning. During the pilot it became clear that it mattered *which* staff attended the Planning with Data workshop, and that the leader of the planning process needed to be someone with decision-making responsibility and direct influence over the direction of the program.

The United Way also changed how organizations request external assessments, and identified two windows a year during which external assessments are conducted. The latter change allowed the system to operate more smoothly and has made it easier to establish plans that meet the improvement needs of the entire network.

Engaging new programs and sectors

Many organizations engaged in the quality work have decided to include their vendors – contractors who provide pieces of their overall programming – in trainings and the quality assessment process, recognizing that this investment is as important as the professional development of their full-time staff. For example, La Fuente commented, "Many organizations partner with Parks and Recreation, and what's been great to see is that they have been willing to pay for Parks and Recreation staff to attend trainings. They've seen it as important to their overall improvement strategy."

The QIS has engaged another important sector – the Austin Independent School District – in program quality improvement. The school district has been using the Youth PQA in its 21st Century Community Learning Center programs, and is looking to integrate it more deeply into its work. The hope is that this partnership will make it possible to evaluate linkages between quality, student participation and academic achievement. Austin is also working to bring the QIS into other sectors, including adolescent health-focused organizations.

In a key step toward institutionalization, the **United Way began requiring** a self-assessment prior to programs applying for funding in 2010. Upon receiving funds, organizations also agree to continue with assessment, improvement planning and training in subsequent years. From the United Way's perspective, this addition changed the nature of the contract management process for the

BECOMING MORE INTENTIONAL AND TARGETED	
PILOT PHASE	**POST-PILOT ADJUSTMENTS**
Organizational leaders agree to participate in all elements	Recruitment involved site-level actors. It became apparent that in order for the QIS to lead to real change, sites needed to be recruited and engaged directly.
Programs conducts two assessments annually (either self-assessment or external assessment) at any point throughout the year.	External assessments take place during two specific windows, in the fall and the spring, to make scheduling and joint activities more manageable.
Programs select staff to attend a Planning with Data workshop, designed to help sites use data to develop an improvement plan.	Planning with Data is now targeted to site managers in order to ensure that staff with the authority to advance an improvement process and plan takes tools back to the site.
Training offerings are linked to assessment with programs selecting trainings for staff to participate in based on targeted areas for improvement.	This has continued. The United Way tracks site participation in training and other aspects of the QIS, and recognizes organizations that have invested deeply in the process.

better. "It's created more engagement in the entire process," La Fuente said. "There is not just someone looking through the numbers to see change. It has not replaced anything – it has added something new." This change in the depth and nature of engagement between programs and the funder was not insignificant; it has allowed the United Way to better understand the workings of programs on the ground, and ultimately how to drill down far enough to influence quality in a sustained way.

Building capacity of the lead organization

While the United Way serves as the official intermediary for the QIS, it has been intentional about spreading the influence and leadership of the system among several entities in order to build capacity. The Central Texas Afterschool Network has played a significant leadership role in training, and several large youth-serving organizations have developed additional in-house expertise that has enabled them to respond to internal questions about the quality process. La Fuente explained, "Though the United Way holds the lead intermediary function, the capacity is actually spread across several organizations."

The United Way has continued to build its capacity as well, training more external assessors and maintaining a strong cadre of trainers for Youth Work Methods and Planning with Data workshops.

"Implementation of the Youth Program Quality Intervention in the afterschool community of Central Texas has truly been transforming. ... For the first time, afterschool is being viewed as a true link to learning and development."
-Lauri Celli, Director of Community Services Bastrop Independent School District

Embeding and sustaining

With more than 100 external assessments and 70 trainings completed, Austin's system has served over 50 organizations and delivered training to over 460 individuals. Of the organizations currently involved, 32 are schools. Lauri Celli, director of community services at the Bastrop Independent School District in Travis County, noted, "Implementation of the Youth Program Quality Intervention in the afterschool community of Central Texas has truly been transforming. ... For the first time, afterschool is being viewed as a true link to learning and development."

A voluntary core of more than 30 trained external assessors ensures that the QIS can continue to provide support to programs. That the coalition has been able to start up and maintain this level of support based on volunteers is notable. One provider remarked, "I believe it is important to assert how much the local youth workers and managers believe in the system by volunteering their time and energy for the trainings and facilitation of workshops for continuous improvement."

Austin is in the midst of strategic planning to sustain the system. In addition to requiring prospective and existing grantees to participate in the QIS, the United Way has established out-of-school time as a core strategy, with an emphasis on middle school youth. Austin is one of several local United Ways that have received support from United Way Worldwide to share information about their experience in building a QIS for afterschool programs. The United Way for Greater Austin hopes to leverage this national recognition and engage more deeply in state-level work.

Opportunities for alignment and expansion within the state are emerging, as Texas recently received Mott Foundation funding to support the launch of the Texas Partnership for Out of School Time. As that network grows, there may be ways to expand the QIS or build upon work at the state level to support afterschool programs.

On the local front, the Ready by 21 Coalition, which helped get the quality work off the ground, is still involved and ensures that those committed to quality receive public recognition through the Breakfast of Champions Awards hosted by the Central Texas Afterschool Network. For Austin, celebrating and **honoring success** is important, particularly since local leaders are still writing their story.

For more information about Austin's Quality Improvement System, contact: Laura Garcia La Fuente, United Way for Greater Austin, at Laura.LaFuente@unitedwaycapitalarea.org

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

There has been no shortage of efforts to improve the quality of afterschool programming or promote citywide collaboration in Chicago over the past two decades. Professional development and supports for programs in Chicago have a long history that predates the current quality improvement system. Chicago's story is one of bringing city agencies together, building infrastructure and fostering a systems perspective.

LEAD ORGANIZATION
Chicago Out of School Time Project
Chicago Allies

YEAR INITIAL QIS DEVELOPMENT BEGAN
2006

KEY PARTNERS
AfterSchool Matters
Chicago Area Project
Chicago Office of Children and Youth Services
Chicago Park District
Chicago Public Library
Chicago Public Schools

FUNDING SOURCES
The Wallace Foundation
Office of Children and Youth Services

CURRENT SCALE
Approximately 125 programs

KEY LESSONS

- **Engaging several different large city agencies in a common approach to quality**
- **Finding ways to build on a long history of related efforts**
- **Integrating quality improvement with a larger data management system**
- **Engaging stakeholders at the administrative, management and frontline levels**
- **Building quality improvement into the United Way Community Impact approach**

STAGE ONE: PLAN AND ENGAGE

As early as the 1990s, Chicago set aside Community Development Block Grant funds each year to support afterschool and youth development organizations. Several private investments also laid the foundation for current efforts, including:

- The Children, Youth and Families Initiative, a $30 million effort by the Chicago Community Trust and the Chapin Hall Center at the University of Chicago to support and integrate social services in urban neighborhoods.
- Mayor Daley's Youth Development Task Force, formed in the mid-1990s in response to a perceived surge in youth violence.
- MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time), a Wallace Foundation-funded initiative that provided over $2 million to support program improvement, facilities support, training and program-level investments between 1995 and 2001.

- Youth Nets, created in the late 1990s with funding from the Office of Children and Youth Services to "weave together" providers through coordinated planning, program quality improvement and supplemental funding.
- After School Matters (ASM), launched in the 2000s to expand a successful teen arts apprenticeship model, Gallery37, into new content areas (sports, technology, communications) under one umbrella.

Afterschool system-building and quality improvement efforts in Chicago have unfolded along multiple paths. While many of the above initiatives achieved notable successes, they did not produce sustained infrastructure for coordination, shared standards or large-scale improvements. They did help lay the groundwork for broad receptivity to system-building and a common approach to program quality across the city.

"We felt confident starting the quality conversation ... because we had been convening the partners for some time."
-James Chesire, Director, Chicago Allies

Making the case

Chicago's eventual success in building a quality improvement system (QIS) came with the growth of After School Matters (ASM) and the Chicago Out of School Time Project. Prior to ASM, system-building efforts focused primarily on community-based providers. While most of these efforts also sought to influence quality in public sector agencies, community-based providers were not well-positioned to establish systemic impact or a permanent infrastructure within those agencies. In contrast, ASM had mayoral backing and unmatched access to public sector resources.

Meanwhile, local intermediaries built significant muscle over decades. In the area of quality improvement, the Chicago Area Project (CAP) partnered with other agencies to form the Chicago Youth Agency Partnership, which focused in the 1990s on standardizing youth worker training. This led to a partnership with the city's Children and Youth Services office to offer Advancing Youth Development training to staff at all city-funded agencies, and a collaboration with local community colleges to support youth worker certification. Although the Chicago Youth Agency Partnership was unable to establish a sustainable model, CAP continued offering professional development to Chicago-area youth workers.

In 2003 CAP convened a group of stakeholders to develop quality standards for afterschool programs. With detailed input from nine representative community agencies, the stakeholder group created 20 standards across four categories: relationships, environments, programming and administration.These **standards** were intended as a program development tool to support staff, participants and families.

The standards effort was still active in 2006 when another major system-building opportunity emerged. While the early work on standards informed how quality improvement was framed in the city's proposal to The Wallace Foundation, and a **quality self-assessment tool** was in use across some organizations, on the whole, professional development supports aimed at advancing the standards were not deeply embedded in existing systems. There was no mechanism for programs from various city departments and community agencies to engage in conversations about quality improvement.

Clarifying purpose

The Wallace Foundation's system-building initiative provided Chicago with an explicit opportunity to build a city-wide afterschool system. Chapin Hall wrote the grant with guidance from a steering committee led by the **Chicago Department of Family and Support Services**, and additional partners included After School Matters, the **Chicago Park District**, **Chicago Public Schools** and **Chicago Public Library** system. The proposal addressed five main strategies or "pillars" of a system: information, communication, innovation, quality and sustainability.[xiii] The grant facilitated communication and coordination among five city-funded agencies that had been limited and uneven, and laid the groundwork for building a collaborative quality improvement strategy.

This new system-building effort – the Chicago Out of School Time (OST) Project – was designed to improve communication and coordination among the partners across all five strategy areas. While this work was getting off the ground, cuts to the Community Development Block Grant funds resulted in less professional development. In a sense, the Wallace grant filled a void in an ongoing effort to advance quality improvement. That system-building focus also took the work in a new direction.

Forming a work group and identifying leadership capacity

It is difficult to pinpoint a single lead agency in a collective initiative that built upon so many early efforts. Wallace funds went to the Chicago Office of Children and Youth Services in the Department of Family and Support Services, with a small staff housed there to coordinate the Chicago OST Project. Initially, grant monies focused on the areas of information, communication and innovation, but 18 months in, priorities shifted and funds were made available for quality improvement. Determined to build upon previous efforts, the partners formed a program improvement team and OST project staff began convening senior-level leaders from each of the five partners on a monthly basis to discuss specific action steps for building a QIS.

CHICAGO QIS TIMELINE

2003

Chicago Area Project leads process to develop quality standards for youth programs

2006

Office of Children and Youth Services and ASM receive Wallace system-building grant; initial focus on data lays groundwork for QIS development

2007

QIS plan is developed & approved by senior leadership from partner organizations

CAP, already positioned to deliver training to youth workers, was initially tapped to provide training connected to the QIS. However, funding and organizational constraints made it increasingly difficult for CAP to provide professional development supports at the necessary scale. The Chicago OST Project staff recognized that they could facilitate various aspects of the quality work, including professional development, without going through another organization.

Assessing readiness

The QIS planning process immediately built up good will among the five partners, aided by the early provision of much-needed resources – such as new computers for each partner organization – to support implementation of a management information system (MIS). In addition to creating a way for each organization to better understand who was in its system and what was being offered, the MIS allowed the partners to move forward more quickly on other system-building strategies.

James Cheshire, the OST project director at the time, reflected on the impact that the meetings and early good will had on QIS development: "The only reason we felt confident starting the quality conversation sooner than we might have otherwise is because we had been convening the partners for some time and everyone had a track record – everyone said they could play nice together and be productive and learn a lot from one another."

Chicago planners agreed that if the experience was not authentic and immediately useful, participants at would stop engaging or fall into compliance mode and not benefit from the process.

STAGE TWO: DESIGN AND BUILD

Although the initial focus of system-building work was building the MIS, OST Project staff worked from the outset with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to think about developing a quality improvement system. By 2007, local leaders were meeting regularly to begin developing the model.

Designing the continuous improvement model

The Chicago OST Project team began looking for strong QIS examples that emphasized continuous improvement, and not assessment or ratings. "Harold Richman at Chapin Hall brought us an appreciation for this, having watched several large grant initiatives in Chicago not really reach their promise and leave a bunch of people pretty unhappy, in part because they had a focus on rating rather than improvement," Cheshire said. "So we were looking for something that had a lot of authenticity and success at building what we were calling at the time 'the currency of good will' for everyone participating."

2008
QIS piloted with 38 sites; monthly managers' roundtables begin

2009
QIS expands to new sites

2011
QIS continues to expand Chicago Allies incorporates as a 501(c)3

2012
Youth Work Methods training offered to all QIS participants; system expands to non-municipal partners like YMCA

In addition, team members had a strong philosophical orientation toward an experience that would benefit frontline staff and be useful at the administrative level. They agreed that if the experience was not authentic and immediately useful, participants would stop engaging or fall into compliance mode and not benefit from the process.

Chapin Hall had been deeply involved in the evolution of Palm Beach County's QIS and recommended it as a model. After researching Palm Beach's approach and seeking advice from other leaders in the field, the group members agreed to adopt the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) model used in Palm Beach. They liked the combination of self- and external assessment, the strong orientation toward continuous improvement, and the coaching and professional development to support that improvement. The **core components of the process** would be implemented in the following sequence:

- Team members from each program participate in Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA) Basics training on the quality framework and on conducting self-assessment. Trained external assessors complete two observations of two different offerings at each program.
- Members of site-based assessment teams, led by a program manager, observe multiple offerings and meet to reach consensus on a final program self-assessment score.
- Team members attend a Planning with Data Workshop where they review the data collected from both the external and self-assessments. After interpreting the data, team members build a program improvement plan to address specific areas.
- Programs can access optional support from a coach to guide the implementation of their program improvement plans.
- Team members attend training sessions from the nine-module Youth Work Methods series on areas identified in their program improvement plans.

In 2007, staff from the OST project met with the five partner agencies to explain the proposed model and win agreement – which came easily. "We had this huge, long thoughtful process planned and were ready for a difficult conversation," Cheshire recalled. "And it was probably one of the shortest, easiest conversations I've had. We got the green light to start operationalizing the plan to do the pilot."

Recruiting programs and piloting the model

In 2008, the Program Improvement (or **Pi system**) was piloted in Chicago at 38 programs: 14 from city agencies, four from ASM and 20 from among agencies designated by Youth and Family Services. Each partner agency enacted its own selection process based on its goals for advancing quality within its network. (For example, After School Matters choose two park-based programs and two-school based programs; Youth and Family Services focused on programs around the city for older youth.) Chicago Public Schools chose to join the QIS later.

During the pilot, the Chicago Area Project served briefly as the intermediary, hiring and training external assessors and coaches. The planning team incorporated lessons from CAP's history of supporting OST professional development. Eventually, capacity and resource constraints led the Chicago OST Project to take on the role of lead intermediary for quality improvement.

Developing system supports

Early on, the program improvement team introduced an innovation that quickly developed into a central component of the improvement process: a monthly managers' roundtable. This arose in response to obstacles faced by city agencies where, for example, external assessors were finding it difficult to schedule external assessments. But the focus quickly shifted. The more that staff from the parks department talked with staff from the library system and ASM, the more clear the need became for monthly conversations across these large systems about quality improvement.

Attendance and Quality – What's the Connection?

The Chicago OST Project and its QIS involve fairly intensive data collection efforts. As described above, one of the first system-building tasks Chicago tackled was to create a robust MIS for all partner organizations and their participating programs to track youth attendance. The Wallace grant enabled them to invest significant funds into building out the **Youthservices.net** software, developed by **Cityspan Technologies**, in a way that allows partners to share information across the system and manage program quality data in the same system. Although youth attendance data and quality scores are not directly connected in the current system, this functionality exists and the partners plan to pursue this kind of analysis in the future.

The Chicago Allies team cautions against placing too much stock in attendance data as an indicator of quality. "We have seen really high scores and really wonderful programs that are off the charts but don't have high participation," Csontos said. "And on the other hand, we have seen high participation, high youth retention with really, really, really low quality scores." Despite these complexities, the team sees an opportunity to pursue careful analyses of the relationship between the two, in order to increase their understanding of what makes for a quality program.

This development addressed a shortcoming in the initial pilot structure: the lack of a mechanism for cross-agency, management-level support for implementing and sustaining improvements in youth work practice, particularly in large, change-resistant government agencies. This group met roughly once a month throughout the pilot period (December 2008 through June 2009), attracting 15 to 20 participants per meeting.

"A real community started and all of a sudden programs were talking the same language. They had scores they could look at and they were recognizing needs and interest in each other's work that the city hadn't' experienced before."

-Sally Csontos, Project Director
Chicago OST Project

The monthly managers' roundtables facilitated a shift toward a peer learning and consultation model, with programs advising each other in addition to receiving centralized supports. The leadership team was pleased to find that rather than meeting with resistance or critique, the process was embraced by the partners. Though the plan had been to conduct an 18-month pilot followed by refinements and attention to scale, six months into the process the partners were anxious to expand the system.

The satisfaction seemed to stem from agencies having a common conversation. "A real community started, and all of a sudden they were talking the same language," recalled Project Director Sally Csontos. "They had scores they could look at and they were recognizing needs and interest in each other's work that the city hadn't experienced before."

The project team felt that in addition to cost savings, embedding a sense of ownership of the process by internalizing the coaching function was essential to sustainability.

STAGE THREE: ADJUST AND SUSTAIN

Refining the model

Moving from the pilot phase to expansion included a fundamental shift from a more uniform and "textbook" implementation of the YPQI process to a highly customized one that varied according to the needs, priorities and constraints of participating organizations. Toward that end, monthly roundtable meetings continued as did additional sessions within individual systems to discuss these shifts. Meetings were held at multiple levels: with deputy-level leadership, managers, project coordinators and program staff.

The Program Improvement (Pi) team worked with each participating organization to develop a roll-out plan that could be adapted to each one's organizational conditions. Pi team members made themselves available for bimonthly coaching sessions called Pi Support Clinics. As this transition evolved, advisors from Chapin Hall suggested that the intensity of the coaching was important to the fidelity of the quality improvement model and should not be lost. Based on its experience with Palm Beach County and other maturing QIS systems, Chapin Hall advocated that some form of site-level coaching support remain within each participating system. As the QIS moved from pilot to roll-out, the Pi team felt that embedding a sense of ownership of the process by internalizing the coaching function was essential to sustainability.

The approach of embedding the coaching function within organizations developed over subsequent years as a central mechanism for providing strategic support to participating agencies. Pi team leaders led extensive (sometimes year-long) manager-level trainings in nearly all of the partner agencies. The Pi project coordinator maintained regular contact with site managers in several of the agencies. These efforts and the managers' roundtables laid the foundation for a sustainable QIS. Whereas some efforts gradually expand participation as intermediary resources and staffing increased, these steps enabled the Chicago effort to expand without significant resource growth.

Along with that expansion, the project team began to sift through the large amounts of data collected on program quality and participation in different elements of the QIS. Cheshire noted, "We did not limit how sites or partners could access the experience, so you did not have to have all the elements of what we believe is the optimal process." Given that decision, the team was interested to see whether level of participation had anything to do with changes in quality. Chapin Hall conducted a small study showing that program sites that were more deeply invested in the process demonstrated greater improvement in their scores.

EVOLVING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS

PILOT PHASE	POST-PILOT ADJUSTMENTS
Programs follow the YPQI model, which includes training on the Youth PQA followed by two program observations by external assessors and self-assessment. After baseline data are collected, site teams participate in a Planning with Data workshop and use the data to build an improvement plan to address areas of lower quality.	Uniform participation shifts to a customized process that varies according to the needs, priorities and constraints of participating organizations. Some organizations continue only with training, dropping observations and planning, while others embrace the full process. While uptake varies, all organizations maintain some commitment to quality.
Programs are offered optional support from an external coach to guide the process and the implementation of the program improvement plan. Staff attend relevant training sessions from the nine-module Youth Work Methods training.	Due to financial constraints and other considerations, external coaching is no longer offered. Managers' roundtables provide a structure that helps embed the coaching function within each system/organization. The intermediary shifts from providing external coaching to supporting organizations as they embed coaching within their own structures.
Managers' roundtables, initially created to address operational logistics, morph into peer learning and consultation meetings, addressing the group's expressed needs for cross-agency, management-level support for sustaining improved youth work practice.	Managers' roundtables continue as peer learning and consultation meetings, and are further supported by the new function and goal of the intermediary to support ongoing institutionalization of the quality improvement process within each patner.

Expanding to new programs and sectors

Expansion to new programs took place over several waves, each involving variation across organizations. Not all partners implement the model to the same degree, but most of the original partners are advancing plans for a scaled continuous quality improvement process of some kind.

The Chicago Park District and participating community organizations maintained the basic structure of the YPQI as they expanded to more programs. The Park District has embraced even more aspects of quality improvement. It has bolstered support to managers by developing a quality leadership team that ensures that every area manager in the parks system is fully supported to do assessments, lead a quality improvement process, facilitate Planning with Data and support staff through the process. The quality leadership team recently attended regional quality training for consultants, and by spring 2012, training in Youth Work Methods had been offered to every area manager in the Park District.

The Office of Children and Youth Services is moving toward having all 186 youth-funded programs participate in the YPQI, although it has adopted a less intensive version of the model than has its Park District counterpart. On a different front, the Office of Children and Youth Services is also integrating, alongside the Youth PQA, an observational assessment tool for evaluating individual youths' employment-based competencies.

The Chicago Public Schools participated only minimally in the pilot but subsequently realigned itself energetically with the quality improvement effort. In the past two years it has identified strategies for implementing a quality improvement process at programs that are ready to do assessment. ASM developed a highly customized approach that included methods training and coaching but not assessment and other program-level process elements of the YPQI. The Library system implemented the YPQI process until this year, when budget cuts forced a scaled-back approach.

Expansion to non-municipal partners is underway, including the YMCA of Metro Chicago, which conducted a YPQI pilot last year. One goal is to bring other organizations similar to the YMCA into the system so that a broader spectrum of youth-serving agencies are thinking about and measuring quality in the same way.

Embeding and sustaining

In 2010 the Chicago OST Project spun off from city government as an independent 501(c)3 organization called **Chicago Allies for Student Success** (Chicago Allies). Cheshire, who now serves as the organization's executive director, reported that "in some ways, this is the opposite of how we thought this would end when we began this project. We thought we were all doing this to put ourselves out of business. But the need continued to grow as the learning grew and implementation of tools like the Youth PQA expanded."

In tandem with its commitment to quality, Chicago Allies has cultivated other complimentary roles and is shifting from project-based work to advancing data-driven, integrated planning related to quality improvement and strategic communications. The organization is also establishing ties with Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, who has signaled commitment of city funds to allow system-building work to continue.

Several partners – including the Park District, the Office of Children and Youth Services and the YMCA – are committed to embedding and sustaining quality work within their own systems and across the city. The Chicago Public Schools has written language into a recent Request for Proposals to establish quality coaches to support use of the Youth PQA framework. Interest in quality is also emerging at the state level and alignment with the Chicago QIS work is a real possibility, although no specific tools or processes have been recommended state-wide.

For more Information about Chicago's Quality Improvement System, contact Jim Cheshire at jim@chicagoallies.org.

HAMPDEN COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS

In Holyoke, Mass., only 21 percent of third-graders are proficient in reading. In the neighboring county seat of Springfield, the rate is two-in-five. Add to that a climate where programs operate in silos and there is little funding or support for professional development and exchange. Then in 2003 along came the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation with a plan to invest in improving out-of-school opportunities in order to help turn around these and other dire statistics.

LEAD ORGANIZATION
Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative,
Regional Employment Board of Hampden County

YEAR INITIAL QIS DEVELOPMENT BEGAN
2004

KEY PARTNERS
WestMOST
NIOST
United Way of Pioneer County

FUNDING SOURCES
Hasbro Corporation
United Way of Pioneer Valley
Davis Foundation

CURRENT SCALE
43 programs

KEY LESSONS

- **Building a QIS that defines quality in terms of both staff practice and curriculum content**
- **Using incentives productively to support continuous improvement**
- **Implementing a QIS with a focus on summer programs**
- **Creating effective partnerships with schools and teachers**

STAGE ONE: PLAN AND ENGAGE

Before 2003, when the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation approached Susan O'Connor, director of 21st Century Community Learning Centers for the Hampshire Educational Collaborative, about investing in the afterschool field, few professional development opportunities were available to practitioners unless they traveled to Boston, nearly two hours away. There was no clear entity in Hampden County to organize the development of local infrastructure.

Identifying a lead organization

The Davis Foundation's interest and commitment to afterschool and summer programming was the catalyst for the creation of the Western Massachusetts OST Network (WestMOST), an intermediary that piloted a quality improvement process with a subset of providers in the Springfield area. WestMost simultaneously built an overarching professional development network for programs in four western Massachusetts counties.

The quality improvement system (QIS) that now supports programs in these counties was developed in two distinct but connected phases. The first phase began in 2004, when O'Connor was tapped to conduct focus groups with community providers to determine the investments that funders should make in afterschool programs. The focus groups surfaced two priorities: a) improving the quality of local programs and b) establishing a network to promote a shared vision and voice to advance OST issues.

In response, WestMOST recruited 10 organizations from its fledgling network to participate in a quality improvement pilot based on the Advancing School-Age Care Quality (ASQ) tool, developed by the National Afterschool Association (then NSACA) in partnership with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST). This effort, which ran for three years, was a forerunner to the current QIS.

Engaging stakeholders and assessing readiness

During the three-year pilot, participating programs used the ASQ self-assessment tool to identify areas of program strength and areas that needed improvement, and to develop action plans and an accountability system for tracking progress. Additionally, providers were awarded $10,000 per year to enhance the quality of their programs in whatever ways they thought beneficial, and were provided with a quality improvement mentor who provided support. The mentors had afterschool experience, received training on delivering technical assistance and participated in a peer support network over the course of the three-year project.

Over three cycles between fall 2004 and spring 2007, the pilot yielded improvements in all 10 programs, but changes were slow and modest. The evaluation yielded three key lessons: a) the quality of adult-child relationships, while central, showed only modest gains over three cycles; b) the quality of program content and the staff's ability to deliver that content effectively was uneven; and c) program leaders faced significant challenges around quality during the summer, when programs expanded and unseasoned staff were brought in to cover the expanded hours.

As network leaders distilled these lessons, improving program content emerged as an important element of the quality discussion. One of the barriers identified was the lack of time and staff expertise to develop high-quality activities from scratch. Reducing the struggle to develop content could free programs from "trying to fill the hours" and allow them to focus more on implementing activities in an engaging way and supporting student learning. Improving adult-child relationships to be consistently warm and respectful was an additional priority that emerged from the initial effort.

"People were interested because they saw it as an opportunity to get their needs met."
-Susan O'Connor, Director, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Hampshire Education Collaborative

Forming a work group

In 2006, WestMOST was involved in discussions about how to advance quality improvement efforts in light of emerging lessons from the pilot. The network knew it needed to retool the quality improvement process before building and rolling out a quality improvement system across the entire network. It also knew that introducing individual programs to an assessment tool and providing resource enhancements would be insufficient. "We felt as if we were missing something, so we began looking deeply at the lessons from the first effort," O'Connor stated.

Two things happened that shaped the next steps. One was the release of ***The Learning Season: the Untapped Power of Summer to Advance Student Achievement***, a report highlighting summer as a critical time for learning. That report, coupled with community-wide concern about the continuing achievement gap and literacy rates, contributed to an increasing desire to improve summer programming. At the same time, the Hasbro Corporation, a longstanding contributor to the local United Way, was looking to shift its annual gift toward a project for children that would result in outcomes, and became interested in the findings from *The Learning Season* report.

Through ongoing discussions with the Hasbro Corporation, other potential funders and members of the network, high-quality summer programming emerged as a pressing challenge and opportunity. When Hasbro asked how its investment might make the most difference, O'Connor responded, "We need to make summer matter." **The Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative (HSLI)** was born. O'Conner became the director.

Since WestMOST members were involved in designing the initiative, obtaining buy-in to begin a new quality-focused initiative was not difficult. Several programs were already familiar with the elements of a quality improvement process and were ready for more. "People were interested because they saw it as an opportunity to get their needs met. Because people felt we were already advocating for them, the tone of the initiative was aligned with the sentiment that we are doing this for ourselves," O'Connor explained. The new initiative hired staff and was housed at the United Way of Pioneer County.

HAMPDEN COUNTY QIS TIMELINE

2003
WestMOST Network forms

2004
Davis Foundation funds initial QIS effort

2005
QIS piloted for three cycles from fall 2004 to spring 2007

2006
Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative begins

Clarifying purpose

The providers involved in shaping HSLI felt they were making gains in the afterschool hours but were concerned about summer. At least one-third of staff hired in summer programs are inexperienced, and the window for getting them up-to-speed is short. As one provider pointed out, "The summer days are long and hot and hard. We often don't have the time and capacity to fill the days with really meaningful activities."

The planners emphasized three priorities for the Hasbro initiative: a) skill development and support for program managers to lead quality improvement efforts; b) effective implementation of engaging learning activities; and c) increasing the quality of staff-youth relationships. The goal was to engage most if not all summer providers, especially in the urban centers of Springfield and Holyoke, and to continue to strengthen and institutionalize local professional development opportunities.

Defining quality and considering information needs

With the purposes of the new QIS getting sharper, WestMOST turned to considering how to measure quality most effectively. In 2005, the ***Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS)*** was completed, which examined the connection between afterschool program quality and student outcomes. This study marked the early development of the **Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT)**, which was built from a large set of 130 quality factors identified during the research and is now part of the Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS).

A small committee of those involved in HSLI worked with a research associate at NIOST and participated in a series of training and working group sessions to clarify objectives and needs. That group articulated six quality program elements, all derived from the APT:

- Organization and nature of activities
- Staff promote youth engagement and stimulate thinking
- Staff positively guide youth behavior
- Staff build relationships and support individual youth
- Youth participate in activity time
- Transition time

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Initial QIS ends as new effort gets underway and expands to more sites	*Intermediary functions move from WestMOST*	*Reading assessment added to QIS; excellence award from NSLA*	*Reading intervention positions piloted at three sites*	*QIS becomes part of larger collaboration focused on specific neighborhoods*

Identifying a lead organization … again

Although the idea of quality improvement was not new in Hampden County, the process of rolling out a QIS involving a majority of providers was. By 2008, additional realities were at play. While WestMOST was a central player in launching the initial quality improvement work, its capacity diminished with the economic downturn. As new funding kicked in for HSLI, many of the intermediary functions WestMOST had been playing migrated over to HSLI and were housed at the United Way of Pioneer Valley. Though an organizational shift took place, most of the individuals working to advance quality improvement played significant roles in both initiatives, and HSLI is seen largely as a continuation of the work begun by WestMOST.

STAGE TWO: DESIGN AND BUILD

The Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative's ambitious goal of improving summer program quality and increasing summer learning was a tall order. Designing a quality improvement system that used summer as a lever for change would be a challenge as well. Fortunately, the planners had a blueprint informed by the early quality improvement effort upon which to build.

Coaches spend up to 20 hours a week working alongside staff. Coaches support staff in planning the summer program, ordering and organizing materials, and conducting model activity sessions.

Designing the continuous improvement model and system supports

After the working group decided to use a modified version of the APT to assess the quality of programs, it quickly moved to develop a set of supports for program improvement. The group developed a continuous improvement model that included these components:

- Programs select one or more thematic curriculum models designed to facilitate delivery of high-quality content.
- Programs participate in a series of training events on thematic curriculum, quality improvement and literacy interventions.
- Programs conduct a self-assessment using the APT.
- Programs can apply for the "enhanced model" (about 50 percent participate) to receive 20 hours a week of onsite coaching from a curriculum specialist and a $3,000 quality enhancement grant. Programs using the enhanced model receive external assessments and a report showing scores for each of the six quality program elements (above) as well as overall program quality.
- Programs create quality improvement plans based on their self-assessments and external assessments (if applicable), and that target school-year programming and/or summer programming during the following year.

Quality and content are linked in the HSLI. Programs choose from among several **pre-selected curricula** designed to help them meet the initiative's literacy objectives. HSLI purchases existing curricula or develops curricula with local partners on topics that the provider network suggests. These include nature exploration, outdoor adventure, career exploration, the arts, and health and life skills such as fitness and nutrition. With training, the curricula provide

consistency within the system and support summer staff in implementing hands-on activities that meet content standards. These curricula anchor each program's activities, allowing those programs to spend more time improving staff-youth relationships and instructional quality and less time planning and designing curricula from scratch.

Assessment is a second major component of the QIS. Each year all programs conduct a self-assessment; being observed by an external assessor is optional. During the self-assessment, program staff observe each other and use their observations to facilitate full staff discussions about each of the six quality program elements.

About half of participating programs receive additional funding through the "enhanced model," which includes external assessment. With the goal of providing a fresh set of eyes and a more objective perspective, trained afterschool professionals contracted from a neighboring state conduct these external assessments. Observers score each program across the six quality elements, resulting in a composite score at the end. Programs receive their scores and a report outlining suggested improvements. Programs must meet a 2.7 average composite score (out of a possible 4) to remain in the initiative. Programs falling below that average complete a remediation plan that must be implemented within a year. For all programs, the findings from both external and internal assessments are summarized and used to create site-specific action plans for improvement.

Another important component of the enhanced model is onsite coaching that selected programs receive throughout the summer. The **coaches**, who are certified teachers and content experts on the various thematic curricula, spend 20 hours a week working alongside staff.

Coaches are hired, in part, to address the lack of experience among many summer staffers in literacy development, curriculum implementation and content knowledge. They support staff in planning the summer program, identifying and organizing appropriate materials, conducting model activities and implementing the curriculum. They also deliver onsite training to frontline staff and troubleshoot specific areas such as how to structure groups, making displays attractive and accessible for children, and providing choice within activities. A program can have one coach for 20 hours a week with expertise in both literacy and curriculum implementation, or two 10 hour-per week coaches, one focused on literacy and the other on curriculum content.

Coaches often spend the initial weeks directly involved in implementation – modeling by delivering technical lessons within the curriculum – and gradually release responsibility to frontline staff. "It helps address the fact that staff have a wide range of ability in terms of carrying out a curriculum – for example, varying skills in what to do if an activity is not working," O'Connor explained. "The coaches help with problem solving when challenges come up."

The last component of the enhanced model is the $3,000 enhancement grants. These funds can be applied in any way that enhances the quality of the summer program: space improvements, staff training, field trips or special supplies, for example. Enhancement grants are awarded through a yearly application process and are limited only by funding. Ideally, the initiative would offer these additional supports to all participating programs.

AN EVOLVING FOCUS ON CURRICULUM AND COACHING

2004-2007	2006-PRESENT
WestMOST forms and launches a quality improvement pilot involving 10 programs that deliver afterschool programming during the school year. Programs conduct a self-assessment and develop an action plan. Each program receives $10,000 to enhance program quality.	The Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative pilots a new QIS focused on summer learning and literacy. Sixteen programs participated in 2006; by 2011, 39 programs were participating (20 in the enhanced model).
Programs develop or adopt curricula on their own.	Programs select one of several high-quality curricula and receive training on curriculum implementation, quality improvement and literacy skill development.
Improvement supports consist primarily of training events and 10 hours per month with a quality mentor.	In addition to training for frontline staff and targeted training for managers, onsite coaches are introduced in 2009 and spend 20 hours a week over the summer working alongside staff.
Quality is measured via self-assessment.	All programs conduct self-assessment; "enhancement" programs are assessed externally as well. In 2009, as HSLI increases the focus on literacy, child-level reading assessments are introduced into the system.
Data are confidential and used for internal planning only.	Programs scoring below a certain level on quality and reading assessments must complete and enact a remediation plan to remain eligible for the initiative.

Piloting the model

During the summer of 2006, HSLI piloted the new quality improvement process with 16 programs. The 10 programs that participated in the original quality improvement effort were folded into this new effort right away, with recruitment of additional programs occurring by word of mouth and through school-age care and youth development networks. The original 10 programs were important early champions of the system. They understood the importance of focusing on quality from the outset and articulated how the new system improved upon past work.

As the pilot sites began implementing the continuous improvement cycle, they had access to a variety of training about curriculum implementation and strategies for engaging children. The goal of the training was to help participants deliver balanced programs that met learning and literacy objectives and that offered a varied and well-paced menu of activities throughout the day.

STAGE THREE: ADJUST AND SUSTAIN

Because HSLI's effort represented a second phase in an evolving quality improvement effort, it was informed by the earlier evaluation and many refinements were made as the new model was rolled out. The majority of the adjustments centered on addressing low literacy rates of youth.

Evaluating and refining the model

In 2009, HSLI strengthened its **focus on literacy** in response to increased concerns about lags in reading proficiency. The initiative increased training for program staff on universal literacy strategies, embedded more literacy activities into the thematic curricula, hired literacy coaches to work in programs, and introduced a pre-post reading assessment. In terms of assessment, programs receive site-level reports with data aggregated by school to support broader analysis. The goal during the summer is to maintain or increase scores on the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), so children return to school without the typical 2-3 months of reading loss.

HSLI also piloted a new "reading interventionist" position in 2011 at three programs. These coaches spend 8-10 hours per week at a program providing one-on-one or small group reading intervention support with children. The same three programs also piloted use of Fountas and Pinnell, an assessment system used by the Springfield and Holyoke schools.

In another important shift, the initiative targeted training for managers, recognizing the critical role that managers play in influencing program change. While some program leaders have been in the field a number of years, others are emerging leaders within their organizations who come into their positions with little to no management training. The training series for managers includes conducting quality assessment, facilitating a quality assessment process and linking the assessment process to targeted professional development for staff. In addition, HSLI staff meet with and provide ongoing support to program directors throughout the summer.

Engaging new programs and building system capacity

Not surprisingly, school-year programming was influenced by the lessons and successes of the summer learning initiative, as staff brought what they learned during the summer into their school-year efforts. Program directors report they are striving for more alignment between summer, afterschool and school-day programming.

The initiative's success garnered notice at the state level, including a visit from the governor and seed funding from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to extend the model into the 2010-2011 school year. Eleven programs in Hampden and Worcester counties received training, eight hours of weekly coaching during the academic year and evaluation funding.

Since 2006, the Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative has grown from 16 to 39 programs. It now involves nearly three-quarters of the providers in Hampden County as well as programs in adjoining counties, and is housed at the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County. In addition to increasing the number of programs involved, the initiative's capacity to influence literacy has expanded significantly. HSLI and its embedded quality improvement system is part of a larger collaboration, Reading Success by Grade Four, (RS4G) a Springfield citywide effort led by the Davis Foundation (a continuing HSLI funder). The RS4G has a goal of doubling reading proficiency from its current levels to 80 percent of children by 2016. In addition, HSLI is part of the state-wide Summer Literacy and Learning Promotion Initiative, which is a partnership with United Ways of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, United Way of Pioneer Valley and United Way of Central Massachusetts.

Embedding and sustaining the effort

Currently, programs apply to be part of the initiative, with an emphasis on the Hampden County cities of Springfield and Holyoke. Additional funds have made it possible for HSLI to serve the rural communities of Franklin County and the city of Worcester. The project is supported by a diverse portfolio of funders that are each contributing to its sustainability, including the Hasbro Corporation, the United Way of Pioneer Valley, the Davis Foundation, the Cox Charitable Trust, the Nellie Mae Foundation and the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Looking forward, the initiative has set its sights on replication. Receiving a 2009 Excellence in Summer Learning Award from the National Summer Learning Association opened doors to conversations about expansion to other communities. Initiative leaders are working to figure out which pieces of the model are most appropriate for and amenable to replication in other systems, and what roles they might play in the launching of initiatives that are modeled on HSLI.

For more information about Hamden County's quality improvement efforts, contact: Brian King at bking@rebhc.org.

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In October 2003, when The Wallace Foundation awarded the **New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)** a one-year planning grant to develop a comprehensive afterschool system with a focus on quality, the seeds of the current quality improvement system (QIS) were planted. From there, the department developed a robust QIS at an impressive scale, drawing upon many existing resources within New York City and the state.

LEAD ORGANIZATION
Department of Youth and Community Development

YEAR INITIAL QIS DEVELOPMENT BEGAN
2003

KEY PARTNERS
The Afterschool Corporation
City University of New York
New York State Afterschool Network
Partnership for Afterschool Education
Policy Studies Associates
Ramapo for Children
Youth Development Institute

FUNDING SOURCES
The Wallace Foundation
Dedicated city funding

CURRENT SCALE
452 programs

KEY LESSONS

- **Fostering a culture shift from compliance monitoring to continuous improvement**
- **Launching a full-scale pilot across a large system of providers**
- **Building strong partnerships with higher education**
- **Creating a sustainable infrastructure within a public system**

STAGE ONE: PLAN AND ENGAGE

In 2002, New York City had a wide array of afterschool programs operated by a host of agencies, with few mechanisms for coordination. Within city government, multiple agencies funded afterschool programs, each with their own monitoring protocols. Quality and access were uneven across programs.

While different aspects of a full-scale quality improvement system existed under the auspices of different intermediary organizations, leadership across the city related to strengthening program capacity was dispersed. Different pieces of such a system rested with many different organizations, including The After School Corporation, Partnership for After School Education, the City University of New York and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).

Making the case and identifying a lead organization

A major planning grant from The Wallace Foundation came at a good time for the city, dovetailing with Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg's education reform efforts. The planning grant was a catalyst for bringing diverse entities together in a more coordinated way and allowed DYCD to reorganize its capacity-building activities for grantees to better support program quality improvement. "Systems are about people and mechanisms coming together," noted Denice Williams, assistant commissioner of out of school time at DYCD. In order to build a more systematic quality improvement strategy, the city focused on getting stakeholders on the same page and getting DYCD's internal systems in order.

Shortly before the Wallace investment in DYCD, Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav bolstered DYCD's ability to oversee the quality of programs across the department's seven units by naming an assistant commissioner for capacity-building. At the same time, DYCD released a **Request for Proposals** seeking supports for technical assistance and evaluation. While DYCD always conducted capacity-building activities in support of programs, the creation of a dedicated department-level unit was significant and marked the city's first public investment in youth program quality improvement using its own dollars. This capacity-building unit would eventually take on oversight of the developing (QIS).

Forming a work group and engaging stakeholders

As a first step in the planning process funded by The Wallace Foundation, the mayor established six working groups charged with building a comprehensive system of afterschool programming in the city. Two of the six were dedicated to quality and professional development.

The working groups kicked off a series of summits and cross-sector leadership meetings among city agencies, providers, community leaders and funders. Meetings took place over the better part of a year and included hundreds of people from a wide range of perspectives in order to get the most buy-in and engagement for the eventual plan. The first summit occurred in October 2003, and included over 200 community leaders and representatives from city agencies, parent groups and foundations.

A vision statement that emerged from these planning meetings:

> *A quality OST system offers safe and developmentally appropriate environments for children and youth when they are not in school. OST programs support the academic, civic, creative, social, physical and emotional development of young people and serve the needs of the city's families and their communities. Government, service providers and funders are partners in supporting an accountable and sustainable OST system.*

The planning process paid off when, a year later, The Wallace Foundation invested $12 million over five years. Energies turned from planning to implementation in September 2005.

Clarifying purpose and assessing readiness

While DYCD had monitoring systems in place, the planning process revealed that the city overall and DYCD in particular had no centralized way to monitor the quality of programming.

Various pieces were in place, but the infrastructure to connect them did not exist. For example, in 2003, an advisory group created to support the planning and implementation of the state's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program formally became the New York State Afterschool Network (with private funding) and was managed by The After School Corporation (TASC). This network (NYSAN) was charged with supporting policy development at the state level and providing tools to a growing network of organizations. In 2003, NYSAN created a set of quality standards and an accompanying assessment tool called the **NYSAN Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool**, or QSA, which all 21st Century Community Learning Center programs in the state were subsequently required to use. In addition, TASC and the Partnership for After School Education (PASE) both served the city and had strong reputations for providing training and professional development.

The Wallace investment allowed for alignment of these and other activities. With private support in hand, a plan that highlighted the importance of quality improvement, strong partners (TASC, NYSAN and PASE) and an internal commitment to capacity-building, the ground was ripe for DYCD to begin building a comprehensive quality improvement system.

NEW YORK CITY QIS TIMELINE

2003
DYCD receives planning grant from Wallace Foundation to develop an OST system

2004
Several DYCD units begin using QSA tool for monitoring and capacity-building with their grantees

2005
Wallace invests $12 million over five years; asst. commissioner for capacity-building named; OST unit launched within DYCD

2006
DYCD promotes use of QSA tool with all grantees

Defining quality

The planning process honed in on several goals, including the following that pertain specifically to quality improvement:

- Establishing quality standards
- Creating a report card system to rate programs on their level of quality
- Developing a web-based enrollment and tracking system
- Providing training and professional development for staff
- Using research to inform quality supports

DYCD initially adopted the NYSAN standards and the QSA to monitor grantees in its newly formed OST unit, launched through new city tax levy dollars and further supported by the Wallace grant. Assistant Commissioner for OST Chris Caruso had been part of the development team for the QSA and brought it to DYCD so that various units could adapt and use it for their own monitoring and capacity-building purposes. By 2006, the NYSAN tool was being used for self-assessment in several units including OST, Beacons and Teen Action. DYCD used the tool to anchor its monitoring activities during site visits.

Even with the QSA in use by several DYCD units, expectations of local programs remained uneven, and no common definition of quality governed the relationship between DYCD and its community-based grantees. "At that time, we had as many definitions of quality as there were units in DYCD or people," recalled Williams, who came on in 2005 as assistant commissioner for capacity-building and took on oversight of the OST unit in 2011. "In addition, while we were investing heavily in capacity-building, it wasn't grounded in an agreement on competencies or essential skills needed by site coordinators." Community-based organizations (CBOs) receiving funding from more than one of DCYD's seven units could receive conflicting messages and experience different kinds of monitoring. DCYD engaged in several different strategies to bring cohesion to the system, beginning with an effort in the spring of 2006 to promote the professionalization of the workforce.

DYCD convened an internal workgroup to map out what professional development opportunities were available to **youth workers** in New York City. When it became clear that there was no universally accepted set of competencies, the department set about developing a set of core competencies for both youth workers and their **supervisors**. This collaborative process began in 2007 and took two years to complete. The work involved representatives from many units within DYCD, CBO partners (frontline staff and

"While we were investing heavily in capacity building, it wasn't grounded in an agreement on competencies or essential skills needed by site coordinators."
-Denice Williams, Assistant Commissioner of Out of School Time, DYCD

2007
Professional Development Institute begins; core competencies for youth workers and supervisors developed

2009
Development of new assessment tool begins

2010
DYCD introduces the Program Quality Monitoring tool across all units

2011
Training on the PQMT expanded to DYCD adult programs, workforce programs

supervisors), other city agencies and the Mayor's Office, and higher education. It was facilitated by National Institute for Out of School Time (NIOST).

While the competencies were being developed, DYCD funded, helped design and participated in its first Professional Development Institute. The institute brought together different agencies responsible for funding and monitoring programming to better understand what each was doing and to develop a common lens and approach for monitoring. The multi-session institute was attended by DYCD staff, representatives from 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the state and city Departments of Education, and New York State Office of Children and Family Services. It was facilitated by NYSAN and other trainers.

STAGE TWO: DESIGN AND BUILD

A coordinated quality improvement system that built on early efforts involving the Beacon, OST and Teen Action units within DYCD gradually emerged out of the developments described above.

The program quality assessment process was coupled with a coordinated set of professional development supports.

Designing the model and developing system supports

DYCD's goal was always to expand the system-building work beyond the OST unit to create a uniform quality improvement system for the entire agency and its nonprofit partners. Thus it made good sense to align with NYSAN's QSA tool, which the OST, Beacons and Teen Action units were already using. The internal planning team developed a process where all programs were required to conduct a self-assessment using this tool and received 2-3 site visits per year from program monitors.

Observations conducted during site visits were intended to be low stakes. Low scores did not jeopardize funding and programs received a report, scores from their completed observation and support for change. In areas where they received a rating of "poor" or "unsatisfactory," agencies worked with their program managers to develop a corrective action plan. These documents outlined expected changes, with managers either supporting the programs in making the necessary improvements or connecting them to DYCD's capacity-building unit for referrals to technical assistance providers such as the **PASE**, **Ramapo for Children** and **TASC**. Programs could receive onsite technical assistance or register for a wide range of workshops and training focused on everything from good instructional practice to how to use the OST online system for data management.

The quality assessment process was coupled with a coordinated set of professional development supports. The agency formed partnerships with TASC, PASE, the **Youth Development Institute (YDI)** and local colleges, among others, to create coaching and training opportunities for providers.

TASC created a **Coaching for Quality program** for DYCD grantees, with selected multi-site providers receiving intensive onsite coaching each year. PASE developed ongoing single and series-based professional development sessions on a variety of topics. DYCD used Wallace funds to support the City

University of New York (CUNY) to develop **certificate programs** for youth workers. The CUNY-wide Consortium, as it is called, was convened to oversee the development and expansion of a multi-disciplinary curriculum in youth studies. The consortium developed a series of individual courses as well as the opportunity for students to pursue a **Youth Studies major** through a B.A. in Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies, and to have access to courses offered at all CUNY campuses. Coursework is available at both the graduate and undergraduate levels and ranges from A Cultural History of Adolescence to Management of Youth Serving Agencies to Youth Action and Agency.

The core elements of the emerging QIS included:

- Programs were assessed by DYCD using an adapted version of the QSA.
- Programs conducted a self-assessment using the QSA.
- Programs received feedback based on DYCD's observation, with recommendations for improvement.
- Programs used a centralized tracking and reporting system (OST Online) to report program participation levels.
- Programs received subsequent observation visits from DYCD.
- Programs selected training and technical assistance through onsite coaching and/or a range of professional development contractors (e.g., TASC, PASE).

Although the process was designed to be low stakes, scores from all observations were aggregated and entered into a vendor exchange system and could be viewed by any city staff. So while funding would not be pulled for low scores, the city comptroller might view performance data and ask why DYCD is investing in a program that is not performing well. This accountability mechanism remains in place today as the system has evolved and grown. At the same time that DYCD was developing supports for programs, it was also building a data infrastructure to further advance its monitoring and improvement goals. From the outset, program participation data was a key component of the granting process. Through a locally developed web-based tracking system, grantees are required to enter participation data for all programs supported through DYCD funds. If attendance data are not entered within 14 days of the program session, the provider is locked out of the system and must contact its program manager before it can access the system again.

In addition, DYCD can withhold 10-20 percent of grant funds to a program if there are concerns about participation levels. (Elementary-age programs are required to demonstrate an average participation rate of 80 percent, while older youth programs must show a 75 percent rate.) DYCD staff meet with programs to determine whether structural issues (e.g., location, principal support) are to blame, and coach programs on how to address those issues. Although the quality assessment process is intended to be low stakes, participation monitoring is decidedly higher stakes given the explicit links to funding.

Recruiting programs and implementing the model
DYCD did not pursue a typical pilot involving a small number of programs, but rather implemented a full-scale test run with all programs for a short period of time. After the trial run, it took time to reflect on and adapt the model before continuing. According to Williams, the process has been iterative, allowing for continuous feedback from programs between the original launch and the adapted model that emerged.

STAGE THREE: ADJUST AND SUSTAIN

Because the pilot took place at scale and was brief, DYCD began refining the system even while implementing it. Refinements took place continuously to get to the system the city has today.

Refining the continuous improvement model
Although the QSA offered a logical place to start, unit directors across DYCD were all using it somewhat differently. The department wanted to develop a tool that would meet the needs of all units and was designed explicitly for program observation. To come to consensus, DYCD hired Policy Studies Associates to facilitate a development process that began with a review of what various units were using as well as tools outside of DYCD, with the goal of developing one tool for both self-assessment and observation purposes.

When DYCD introduced the **Youth Program Quality Monitoring Tool (PQMT)** to its grantees in 2010, all seven units committed to using it. It covers eight areas and took nearly two years to develop. Having been piloted with a subset of program managers, the PQMT was accompanied by a letter outlining a process for using it along with new expectations for how programs would be monitored – a term that was being re-defined within DYCD.

Focus of the DYCD Youth Program Quality Monitoring Tool
Administrative requirements
Facility and environment
Effective staffing
Relationships
Structures and partnerships
Quality of implementation
Quality of program content
Overall quality rating

The tool represented a shift in the original continuous improvement model DYCD had developed. Instead of self-assessment combined with a compliance monitoring site visit, the new tool focused more on continuous improvement. The PQMT requires less in terms of paperwork and documentation and more program observation time. As Williams reported, “The new tool is about 25 percent input of information and 75 percent review of what the kids are doing in the program.” This helped concretize a cultural shift from program visits that were primarily about paperwork and monitoring to a focus on continuous quality improvement.

FROM COMPLIANCE MONITORING TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	
Before	**After**
Quality was measured using a modified version of the NYSAN QSA tool. Each unit within DYCD defined and assessed quality in a slightly different way.	DYCD worked intensively with Policy Studies Associates to develop the Program Quality Monitoring Tool (PQMT), which is used across units. Each unit can customize approximately 5 percent of the tool.
DYCD staff were called contract managers and the emphasis for site visits was on compliance monitoring.	DYCD changed contract managers to program managers and shifted its culture to focus on continuous improvement and support.
DYCD units worked independently and did not necessarily discuss strategies for supporting shared grantees.	DYCD hosts cross-unit professional development for all project managers and directors on usage of the PQMT as well as on specific topics addressed within the tool.
Professional development was offered across the city by a variety of organizations (e.g., TASC, PASE).	Professional development continues to be a strong component of the system with support from organizations like TASC and PASE. Partnership with CUNY has led to youth development course work and a certificate.

Providers noticed the shift. In the past, many of them focused on managing paperwork and producing what was needed to make site visits successful. Under the new approach, providers have noted that observers are much more concerned about what is happening with young people in the program than with the paperwork. DYCD had to be intentional about changing its point of view when visiting programs. Rather than staff serving as "monitors," they became coaches. According to Williams, "We bring strategies, and coach, and try to make improvements." DYCD even changed staff titles from contract managers to program managers to reflect their new role – a change that led to adjustments in hiring practices. DYCD now looks to hire individuals from the field with program level expertise and the ability to serve as coaches.

The seven units within DYCD are more in sync than they were prior to the introduction of the new tool and process. Because they helped to develop the PQMT, unit staff have a shared commitment to it. Also, DYCD began hosting cross-unit professional development for all project managers and directors around using the tool as well as specific topics addressed within the tool. This approach has paid off. "Our CBOs are finally getting a common message," Williams noted. "Now we look across units to see if new grantees are involved with any one of the other units, to make sure we are supporting them across the system."

Building capacity of the lead organization

As this work was evolving, Denice Williams and other DYCD leaders paid attention to the internal culture that was building around quality improvement. Attending to culture and working through the organizational inertia that can block change proved essential. "We had to work through the tension points. There was some sentiment that we had tried this kind of thing before and it had gone nowhere," Williams recalled. "We were very inclusive in this process and worked through each department's special priorities. What resulted was a tool that is 95 percent the same for everybody but 5 percent is unique in order to respond to the differing needs of the department." Allowing for these modest variations was important to achieve buy-in from unit staff.

Although the goal was to develop a tool and process to support grantees, Williams is quick to note that one of the most important outcomes of this work was internal. Over the course of designing a quality improvement model, DYCD staff spent a lot of time coming to consensus, getting training and building their own skills.

In tandem with DYCD's internal developments, other OST resources around the city became more coordinated and more visible, in order to address the following issues: a) while many training resources were available in New York, there was no centralized place to find them; b) most organizations' investments in training staff did not add up to a tangible benefit for workers (i.e., recognized certificates); and c) most CBOs did not have the human resource capacity to support in-house career and professional development. One result was the development of the Afterschool Pathfinder website, funded by DYCD with support from The Wallace Foundation. Hosted by NYSAN (and initially by TASC), the site helps youth professionals navigate resources that help them build their careers. Employers can post jobs and youth workers can search for training to help them develop the core competencies expected within the profession.

Evaluating

DYCD continues to reflect on how to improve its QIS. One change under consideration is whether and how to use performance data collected as part of the system during the proposal review process. In the past, when CBOs applied for grants, they were asked to report on their previous experience and could receive extra points for strong past performance. Under that model, reviewers had no way to validate that information. Going forward, DYCD may take past performance data into consideration when a program applies for funding.

DYCD might also explore linking quality assessments with data on program participation. Both types of data are available through DYCD Online and a new web-based tool that allows program managers to enter observational data on site using iPads. Discussions are underway about what it would take to connect these two systems. Although the introduction of this technology is new, Williams anticipates that it will allow the agency to use data in a more timely and thorough way.

DYCD considers evaluation an important component of its work, and contracts with Policy Studies Associates (PSA) to conduct an external evaluation of its programs. PSA's impact evaluation includes a student survey that assesses social-emotional development, satisfaction with programs, future aspirations, homework completion and the transition to high school. DYCD would like to combine all of this information – about participation, quality and outcomes – to generate a clearer picture of what is happening for youth in DYCD-funded programs and what approaches best achieve desired effects.

Expanding, embeding and sustaining

Although it evolved out of a patchwork of existing tools and training, DYCD's quality improvement system really began at scale, because all grantees were required to participate from the outset. The Wallace Foundation's investment, as well as a strong commitment from the mayor, Commissioner Mullgrav and senior-level DYCD staff, made this possible. They have tweaked the system over time, adding and modifying tools and changing how they approach professional development and onsite coaching, but the overall system has been in place at scale since 2006. With the Wallace grant now over, the quality improvement system is supported by city funds. According to Williams, the capacity-building work is completely embedded in how DYCD does business. In other words, sustainability of the QIS is completely linked to the sustainability of DYCD and the OST system in general.

For more information about New York City's Quality Improvement System, contact Denice Williams, Department of Youth and Community Development, at dlwilliams@dycd.nyc.gov.

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

The conversation about improving programs began more than a decade ago in Palm Beach County, when afterschool stakeholders came together around a shared concern about the quality of programming and a lack of shared standards for afterschool services. That informal group soon turned concern into action, planting the seeds for the robust quality improvement system in place today.

LEAD ORGANIZATION
Prime Time Palm Beach County Inc.

YEAR INITIAL QIS DEVELOPMENT BEGAN
2000

KEY PARTNERS
Family Central
Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County

FUNDING SOURCES
Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County
The Knight Foundation
Picower Foundation

CURRENT SCALE
113 programs

KEY LESSONS

- **Structuring funder, provider and intermediary relationships**
- **Developing a shared definition of quality among key stakeholders**
- **Determining the stakes involved and the ultimate purpose of the QIS**
- **Growing a QIS system to support more sophisticated users**
- **Evaluating a QIS early in the process and as it matures**

STAGE ONE: PLAN AND ENGAGE

Forming a work group and making the case

Step one was creating the Palm Beach County Out of School Time Consortium in 1996. The consortium consisted of public agencies and funders interested in building a system to address concerns about quality, and included the county-funded Children's Services Council (CSC), the School District of Palm Beach County, the Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department, the Mary and Robert Pew Public Education Fund and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The consortium began as a means for these groups to share resources and discuss how to enhance existing programs through professional development and other supports; it soon spurred a deeper conversation about systemic change.

At that time, the Children's Services Council funded most afterschool programs in Palm Beach County and assigned each a contract manager who monitored attendance and compliance with grant requirements. The consortium members believed this level of support was insufficient. They aspired to move beyond monitoring to actually improving the quality of services.

Identifying a lead organization

The consortium knew it needed a lead organization to manage the planning and implementation of a quality improvement system. A grant from the Children's Services Council allowed it to hire a consultant to help shape the role and function of an intermediary organization that could play that role. In 2000, informed by monthly network meetings with providers and other interested stakeholders, the consortium created **Prime Time Palm Beach County**, a nonprofit intermediary organization to support quality improvement in afterschool programs.

Engaging stakeholders

Prime Time moved quickly. It continued holding the monthly provider network meetings begun by the Out of School Time (OST) Consortium. One early task was determining Prime Time's role, particularly in relation to the Children's Services Council.

While there were early conversations about Prime Time taking on both quality improvement and compliance monitoring (the latter role filled at the time by Children's Services Council contract managers), it was agreed that those roles needed to be separate in order for each to be successful. According to Dominique Arrieux, Prime Time's director of quality improvement, "Here we had CSC responsible for monitoring and evaluation, but we were building a quality improvement system where organizations would have a whole team of support. We had to be clear about the difference between the contract manager coming from the funder to monitor your program and the intermediary coming in to provide support around program quality."

Defining quality

Once it was clear that Prime Time would focus on technical assistance and support for continuous improvement, the next step in building consensus was to develop program standards that would serve as a shared definition of quality. Prime Time opted to engage stakeholders in this process rather than adopt existing standards like those created by the National Afterschool Association or other localities around the country. Individuals from the School District of Palm Beach County, Palm Beach State College, Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation, Family Central (a nonprofit service provider), local afterschool providers and various funding agencies came together over 13 months to develop a set of standards that drew upon national examples but reflected local priorities. The group developed **five standards** (see page 16) that were vetted by more than 1,800 parents and 200 program staff.

"We had to be clear about the difference between the contract manager coming from the funder to monitor your program and the intermediary coming in to provide support around program quality."

Dominique Arrieux, Director of Quality Improvement, Prime Time Palm Beach County

Clarifying purpose

Questions arose throughout the standards development process about whether the standards were designed to drive program ratings or a focus on improvement and capacity-building. Initially, some pushed to develop a higher stakes approach where programs would get rated and work to improve those ratings in order to maintain funding. This would have allowed Prime Time to align its model with an emerging early childhood Quality Rating System (QRS). However, as discussions progressed over the better part of a year and a half, the focus shifted toward a lower stakes approach based on support for continuous improvement. Stakeholders agreed that early in a process of this kind, programs would be much more likely to engage in a meaningful way if the stakes were low and their funding was not threatened.

Prime Time also had to decide what level the quality improvement system (QIS) would target for improvement – management or frontline staff. Initially, it focused on both. There was a feeling that frontline staff really needed support and guidance given they were working directly with youth. But working with directors was important for embedding a culture of quality improvement within the organization. By working at both levels, Prime Time believed it would be most effective in sustaining shifts in practice within organizations. Over time the balance shifted slightly toward managers, a change discussed in greater detail below.

Determining costs and potential resources

The process of developing quality standards proved useful in attracting funders. Shortly after the standards were developed in 2004, the Knight Foundation provided a five-year, $4.2 million grant to support the development of and provide incentives for middle school programs to participate. The Picower Foundation was also attracted by the emerging system and agreed to fund further development of Prime Time's professional development department (which is separate but linked to the quality improvement department) and its overall role in the QIS.

Considering information needs

Although the process of developing standards was important in terms of buy-in and stakeholder engagement, it was clear from the outset that standards alone would not be sufficient to facilitate quality improvement. Programs would need the support of a quality infrastructure in order to meet those standards.

PALM BEACH COUNTY QIS TIMELINE

1996
Palm Beach OST Consortium forms

1998
Community needs explored (1997-99)

2000
Prime Time forms and becomes intermediary; stakeholders convened

2002
Prime Time grows, begins work (01-04)

To build that infrastructure, the planning group honed in on two issues: 1) identifying or designing a tool for assessing quality, and 2) professional development and technical assistance to support the system.

As they began to design the QIS, planning committee members researched existing models and brought in speakers from local organizations using different tools and frameworks. They debated whether to adopt an existing tool or develop one to align explicitly with the new standards. It was not an easy conversation. There were a lot of partners at the table representing different sectors with different needs. The committee had to consider child care licensing standards and how they overlapped with this process, tools currently being used by programs, requirements from other funders and relevant school district regulations (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs). Given these competing priorities and needs, the committee concluded that the county needed to develop its own tool. It put out a Request for Proposals seeking a developer, and selected the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (which at the time was the youth development division of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation) to develop a customized version of the Youth Program Quality Assessment (Youth PQA).

STAGE TWO: DESIGN AND BUILD

The preliminary work to define quality, engage stakeholders and clarify the purpose of the QIS paid off and allowed Prime Time to develop a well-defined model quickly.

Designing the continuous improvement model

Over the course of roughly a year, the consultants talked with the committee and other local practitioners, drafted ideas for their review, and adapted the Youth PQA for Palm Beach. The resulting Palm Beach County Program Quality Assessment (PBC-PQA) was created in 2005 and includes two components. Form A is a program observation component that includes most of the items in the Youth PQA; Form B is a completely customized administrative assessment that involves an interview with program managers and a thorough document review.

While the tool was being developed, a parallel discussion unfolded about the continuous improvement model that would surround it – a set of activities aligned with the standards and the assessment tool. Eventually the committee came up with a set of QIS elements that addressed the needs and concerns

2004
Standards developed; Family Central takes on monitoring

2006
Development of PBC-PQA (2005)

2008
QIS pilot with 38 sites

2010
QIS implementation begins with 64 sites

2012
Programs can request 1-on-1 coaches; QIS roll-out continues; 113 sites engaged

of practitioners and met their expectations about a robust continuous improvement process. The core components of the process would be implemented in the following sequence:

- Programs receive an external baseline assessment that includes three observations using Form A of the PBC-PQA and a Form B assessment that includes interviews and review of program documents.
- **Programs are assigned a quality advisor**: a Prime Time employee with expertise in youth development, afterschool programming and coaching.
- Advisor trains staff in how to conduct self-assessments.
- Programs conduct a self-assessment.
- The quality advisor and program leaders use self-assessment and externally collected data to create a **quality improvement plan** (within 90 days of the external assessment) that includes recommendations for training or other supports and resources.
- Programs access onsite training and technical assistance from quality advisors and participate in county-wide professional development opportunities.
- Programs receive an external assessment with new plans, specific suggestions for **improvement**, and links to additional resources and technical assistance every year.

Developing system supports

During the development of the continuous improvement model, Prime Time decided not to conduct external assessments. It preferred to supply and manage the quality advisors and professional development to support the model, and believed that taking on the role of assessor would conflict with its ability to provide those services without bias. In 2004, the Children's Services Council closed its youth development department; Family Central, the local child care resource and referral organization, took over compliance monitoring and, eventually, external assessment for the QIS. That freed Prime Time to focus on quality improvement and created **distinct roles** for the three main partners in the QIS: Children's Services Council (funding), Family Central (compliance monitoring) and Prime Time (quality improvement support).

Prime Time maintains two departments: one for **quality improvement** that oversees the PBC-PQA and associated assessment and quality advising, and one for professional development. The second department plans and implements training and coaching related to the QIS, as part of an extensive menu of opportunities for practitioners in the county. The outreach of the professional development department is broader, because its offerings are not limited to participants in the QIS. The department does, however, offer many trainings that explicitly align with the PB-PQA, such as the Youth Work Methods trainings developed by the Weikart Center.

Prime Time also developed a strategy for strengthening program content. It launched an **"enhancements" program** in 2004 with a grant from the Children's Services Council. Prime Time now partners with 13 content experts in the community (e.g., the Science Museum) to develop 6-8 week curriculum

modules. Programs can request that enhancement providers come into their programs to deliver this content in partnership with their staff. From the outset, it was determined that enhancement providers would participate in the QIS as well. "That way, whatever adult is going into the afterschool program to work with these kids, they are all using the same language," Arrieux said.

Recruiting programs and piloting the model

By the end of 2005, the standards and assessment tools were developed, the system elements had been identified and roles and responsibilities were clarified. It was time to conduct a pilot to see how the newly developed QIS would work in reality. Prime Time easily recruited 38 programs to volunteer for a pilot beginning in January 2006. Many were part of the initial planning process and had sat on the standards and tool development committees, so they were eager to participate. The Children's Services Council funded the pilot while the Knight Foundation provided additional funding for incentives for middle school programs to participate.

"One thing that worked beautifully," Arrieux said, "was to have Weikart Center staff come down to conduct initial external assessments for the pilot and while they were here, train Prime Time staff in how to do assessments and train others on the tool." This approach helped Prime Time build local capacity to administer the system from the outset.

STAGE THREE: ADJUST AND SUSTAIN

The QIS in Palm Beach County has grown significantly. After the success of the pilot, Prime Time set to work expanding the system to many new programs, adding new professional development opportunities and embedding the system into existing funding structures and statewide work.

Evaluating and refining the system

Prime Time contracted with **Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago** and the Weikart Center to evaluate the pilot in order to understand what worked well and what needed refinement. Evaluations validated the concern that programs would be deterred from engaging in a high stakes improvement model, and early participants overwhelmingly favored the decision to pursue a lower stakes QIS[xiv]. This input affirmed the direction Prime Time had taken; going forward, funders would require programs to participate fully, but their scores would not affect their funding.

Staff at Prime Time also used feedback from the evaluation to tweak the process. For example, they improved scheduling of observations and further clarified the roles of contract monitor and **quality advisor**, but made no major shifts. The pilot demonstrated that the overall process and core elements were sound.

A SYSTEM THAT MATURES AND EVOLVES WITH ITS PARTICIPANTS	
BEFORE	**AFTER**
Professional development offerings relied on national curricula such as Advancing Youth Development and Bringing Yourself to Work.	Prime Time developed a set of core competencies and used that framework to revise and refine the design of local training and certificate programs.
Quality advisors worked with each program to support its improvement process.	Starting in 2010, practitioners were able to access one-on-one coaches to help them apply what they learned through professional development courses and workshops.
The QIS supported participating programs via external and self-assessment, quality coaching, onsite training and technical assistance, and county-wide professional development training.	Prime Time created a three-tiered system to support advancement for organizations that have been participating in the QIS and associated professional development for several years.
Prime Time offered grants to programs to support the implementation of improvement plans, and then to provide bonuses to staff.	When programs seemed challenged to spend funds well, Prime Time shifted to giving funds directly to practitioners who commit to attend trainings and improve practice. Incentive grants covered their time, enrollment fees and materials.

Engaging new programs and sectors

During the same year as the Palm Beach QIS pilot, the Weikart Center began its Youth Program Quality Intervention study in four communities around the country, including Palm Beach. Prime Time developed a partnership with the Palm Beach School District to select 30 school-based afterschool programs (separate from those in the pilot) to participate in the QIS as part of the study. This opportunity resulted in an immediate post-pilot expansion of the system.

In 2007-08 Prime Time rolled out the QIS with 65 programs, 23 of which were part of the pilot the previous year. The system has since scaled up, with 113 programs are involved and roughly 85 percent participate fully in the various aspects of the process. Programs are grouped into **three tiers**: new programs; those in the system for a few years; and "maintenance programs," that is, those that have been involved over several years, have overall scores of 4.1 and higher for two consecutive years, and can largely implement the QIS process on their own.

Building capacity of the lead organization

Prime Time has invested a great deal in developing local capacity to support program quality. In 2008 it spearheaded a process to develop a set of core competencies for afterschool professionals, which have since been used in the design of training and certificate programs with the local community college. All professional development opportunities offered locally now link to specific competencies, so that practitioners trying to move from one level to the next can map out a training plan.

Early on in Prime Time's development, it formed a relationship with Palm Beach Community College to expand the college's offerings to afterschool professionals. This relationship evolved to the point where practitioners can earn the Palm Beach County Afterschool Educator Certificate (a noncredit certificate); the Youth Development College Credit Certificate (30 credit hours); an Associate's degree in Human Services with a Youth Development Concentration (65 credit hours); and a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Supervision and Management with a Youth Development Concentration.

In addition, the professional development department has created a three-tiered system to support advancement for organizations that have participated in the QIS and associated professional development for several years. More advanced programs can take intermediate-level trainings that tend to focus more on directors and managers than on frontline staff. Since 2010, individual practitioners have been able to access one-on-one coaches to help them apply what they learn through professional development courses and workshops.

Finally, Prime Time created incentives for staff who take advantage of professional development opportunities. In the early days, Prime Time gave small grants to programs involved in the QIS to support implementation of their improvement plans. But programs seemed challenged to spend the money well. Prime Time shifted to giving programs restricted money to be used as bonuses or incentives for high-performing staff. This proved difficult as well, because organizational boards were not comfortable providing staff bonuses. Today, Prime Time provides the funds directly to practitioners; those who commit to attend professional development and improve practice are eligible to receive incentive grants to cover their time, enrollment fees and materials. These grants come through the national T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program and a similar statewide initiative called Wage$ for Afterschool.

Connections to Quality Improvement at the State Level
Although the Palm Beach County system was ultimately designed as a QIS rather than a QRS (Quality Rating System), Prime Time did stay connected to a statewide effort to develop an early childhood QRS in Florida. That system does not include school-age programs but Prime Time remains engaged as a partner.

In addition, the Florida After School Network (FAN) created a set of **quality standards** for afterschool programs in 2010 and a corresponding checklist that is being disseminated statewide. Prime Time sits on an advisory committee that is reviewing the standards and determining how they should be used.

FAN also created a set of **core competencies** for afterschool professionals statewide. As was the case with standards, Palm Beach created its own local competencies, which complement and reinforce those of the state.

Embed and sustaining
A mandate from the Children's Services Council that all grantees must participate in the QIS in order to receive funding was critical to expanding participation, sustainability and funding of the Palm Beach system. Part of Family Central's role in monitoring contracts is to keep track of whether programs are fully engaged in the QIS – meaning they receive an annual external assessment, create an improvement plan within 90 days of that assessment, and attend ongoing professional development or receive onsite technical assistance from a quality advisor. Prime Time submits quarterly reports to the CSC about participation levels in the QIS, further encouraging programs to fully engage.

Prime Time is also developing a sustainability plan. The CSC supports a large part of the QIS budget, and given the pressure on municipal and state budgets, Prime Time considers it essential to diversify funding for the system. One strategy being considered is the creation of a fee-for-service training and technical assistance package for other cities or counties that are working to develop a QIS.

For more information, contact Dominique Arrieux, director of quality improvement at Prime Time Palm Beach County, at dominique@primetimepbc.org.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Capacity – Throughout the guide we refer to the capacity of a lead agency or intermediary to manage a QIS. In this context, capacity refers to the ability to manage the logistics involved in a QIS, from coordinating training to supervising and managing coaches to creating an observation schedule, as well as the ability to manage the fiscal aspects of the system; identify and recruit organizations to participate in the system; and collect, store and analyze data and communicate about the system to the broader community.

Coaching – We use coaching to refer to a process whereby trained individuals with high levels of expertise in the afterschool and youth development fields visit programs to provide guidance, advice and sometimes training for staff. Coaches are typically trained in whatever assessment tool is part of a quality improvement system and are familiar with what it measures. Often they help programs develop a quality improvement plan based on assessment results and offer guidance and support for improvement. Coaching can be focused on helping managers implement continuous quality improvement practices, helping frontline staff implement high-quality instructional practices, or both.

Continuous Improvement Model – The continuous improvement model is the set of activities that program sites experience and engage in as part of the QIS. Such models typically center on program observation or assessment, and include processes like quality improvement planning, coaching and training.

Assessors – Assessors are individuals who observe activities or program offerings using a quality assessment tool. Assessors can be staff from within an organization (internal) or outside individuals (external), and should be trained to conduct observations. If you have selected a validated quality assessment tool, external assessors can be trained by the developers so that scores can be used for high stakes purposes if desired.

Scale – Going to scale refers to expanding QIS participation to engage more organizations within the system (e.g., all 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs) or to engage additional sectors (such as afterschool programs, workforce development programs and juvenile justice programs) in your community.

Information Systems – Information systems can be used to store and report on data that are collected as part of a QIS. Examples of the types of data you might store in an information system (sometimes referred to as a management information system, or MIS), include scores from program quality observations, scores from an administrative audit, youth attendance/participation data, and participation of programs in the various components of the QIS.

Intermediary – An intermediary is a coordinating entity – typically a neutral organization tasked with connecting afterschool stakeholders in a community and playing a role in training and capacity-building, expanding services, promoting stability, and brokering relationships, research and evaluation.[xiii] Once identified, it might serve as the lead fiscal agent and/or coordinating or managing organization for the QIS.

Point of Service – The point of service is where instruction takes place or where adults and youth interact in program settings. In an effective QIS, quality assessments include a focus on the point of service.

Learning Community – This refers to the cross-organization and sometimes cross-sector sharing that can take place as organizations participate in a QIS. Through means both formal (trainings, group coaching sessions) and informal (phone calls, impromptu conversations), participants in an effective QIS begin to create a shared culture of continuous improvement that carries beyond an organization to the broader community.

Quality Improvement System – A QIS is a systemic approach to improving the quality of afterschool and youth development programs. A QIS is rooted in the belief that continuous quality improvement happens at the program level but must be supported by a system or infrastructure. An effective QIS is built around a definition of quality that is shared by the community and actualized through a continuous improvement model.

Quality Rating System – A QRS is similar to a QIS in that it involves assessing the quality of programs using a defined rubric. It differs in that the QRS emphasizes ratings that are communicated to the public in order for families to identify high-quality child care programs. Quality Rating Systems exist in 33 states and are designed to rate licensed child care and school-age child care programs. Many states have shifted to a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), to emphasize the importance of improvement.

Systems-Building – This term is increasingly used to describe work being done in cities around the country to grow community-level supports for afterschool programming. The Wallace Foundation, a major funder of afterschool systems-building, identified these key components: "A system is the overarching city-level infrastructure that supports and helps sustain quality among a diverse set of afterschool programs. It involves six building blocks: committed leadership; a public or private coordinating group; multiyear planning; collection and use of reliable information; a focus on participation; and a commitment to quality."[xiv]

QIS CAPACITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

ASSESSING YOUR CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

DIRECTIONS: As your community explores strategies to build system quality, this planning tool can help you reflect on what is already in place and where you may need to target your efforts. The tool has three sections, addressing the capacity of the lead organization(s), the system or network of organizations that will participate, and the community more broadly. To complete the assessment, read through the questions in a given row and choose the answer (0-2) that best represents how true you feel the statement is. Where there are multiple statements for a single row, give the answer you think most accurately reflects that area overall. If useful, make notes where indicated to help you capture a full assessment of your community's capacity. After you have rated each row in a section, add up the numbers from each checked box and note the sum at the end of the section. Directions for interpreting your self-assessment are provided on the last page. We recommend having multiple stakeholders from your community or team fill this out and compare notes.

COMPONENT 1: What is the capacity of your lead organization?

Note: Most successful QIS efforts have a lead organization. However, sometimes a QIS may be led by a coalition or by more than one organization. Consider your overall leadership capacity as you score the following items.

	Not True (0)	Partially True (1)	Mostly True (2)
1. Stability The lead organization is stable and well-established. That is, it is well-staffed, financially stable, and likely to remain stable for the next several years. Notes:	❑	❑	❑
2. Buy-in Key staff members at the lead organization believe a quality improvement system is needed, that it has value, and that it is feasible for the lead organization to successfully run it. Notes:	❑	❑	❑
3. Learning organization The lead organization has a willingness to try new things and a climate and culture of flexibility and openness to learning. Notes:	❑	❑	❑

4. Experience The lead organization has demonstrated the ability to successfully lead a community-wide planning process and has a commitment to children and youth services. Notes:	❑	❑	❑
5. Communication & convening The lead organization has established mechanisms for communicating with staff from youth organizations in the community staff (e.g., newsletters, regular meetings). Notes:	❑	❑	❑
6. Cross-sector reach The lead organization has worked with and facilitated communication across more than one youth-serving sector (e.g., afterschool, education, prevention, service-learning, etc.). The organization has worked with individuals in multiple roles (e.g., practitioners, funders, researchers). Which sectors has the lead organization engaged? _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
7. Dedicated staff capacity There are one or more staff members in the lead organization with sufficient time available to lead the development of the QIS who have knowledge of the field, relationships in the community and the ability to convene people. What people might be dedicated to this work? Name Role % time available	❑	❑	❑
8. Data collection There is capacity (in the lead organization or elsewhere within the system or network) to coordinate data collection across programs. Capacities exist for collection of multiple types of data including survey, interview, and observation. Notes:	❑	❑	❑
9. Data analysis and reporting There is capacity for data aggregation, analysis, and reporting – either by the lead organization or some other entity (e.g., higher education partner). What entities could support data collection and analysis? _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑

Score for Lead Organization Capacity: _____
(Add up the numbers from the checked boxes above; range 0-18)

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COMPONENT 2: WHAT IS THE CAPACITY OF YOUR PROVIDER NETWORK?

Note: A successful QIS can involve a broad range of youth-serving organizations that represent different sectors (e.g. education, afterschool, prevention) or they can target a specific system or set of programs or sites that are defined by a common funding source, agency or policy (e.g. United Way grantees, 21st CCLC grantees). In this case, "provider network" refers to those organizations targeted for participation in the QIS.

	Not True (0)	Partially True (1)	Mostly True (2)
1. Buy-in There is a core group of providers who believe a QIS is needed, that it has value, that it is feasible and that it can produce intended improvements. List providers to target for participation in the QIS: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
2. Shared definition of quality Providers have engaged in conversations about defining quality programs or standards. Multiple providers – within but preferably across sectors – use common language or frameworks for communicating about effective practice. Describe common language that is being used: _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
3. Quality improvement tools Multiple providers already use some kind of quality assessment tool or continuous improvement process at the program level (e.g., program observations, administrative audits, onsite coaching) What tools are already in use? _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
4. Data collection Providers are willing to participate in data collection facilitated by the lead organization or other intermediary. Providers have the capacity to collect multiple types of data including surveys, interviews and observations. *Notes:*	❑	❑	❑

5. Professional development Organizations and/or individuals provide training for youth-serving organizations on youth development principles and practices as well as administrative policies and procedures. List existing professional development and who delivers it: _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
6. Coaching and technical assistance Organizations and/or individuals currently provide or can be trained to provide high-quality technical assistance and coaching to support youth programs in program improvement, operations and evaluation. Write the names of key individuals: _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
Score for Provider Network Capacity: _____ (Add up the numbers from the checked boxes above; range 0-12)			

COMPONENT 3: WHAT IS THE CAPACITY OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

	Not True (0)	Partially True (1)	Mostly True (2)
1. Community vision The community has a documented vision or "big picture" agenda related to expanding learning opportunities for children and youth that is shared across stakeholders and shared with the public. Notes:	❑	❑	❑
2. Decision-maker support Key decision-makers see the value of quality improvement within youth organizations. Support exists at multiple levels including executives (mayor, county commissioner); leaders of state or county agencies (director of HHS, of 21st CCLC); and local funders (United Way, local foundations). List leaders that have shown support or expressed interest: _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
3. Financial resources There are financial resources (public dollars, foundations, donors, grant writers) available to launch and potentially sustain a QIS. At least one funder is committed to providing support to the QIS. List funders who have shown support: _____ _____ _____ Note other financial resources that exist to support a QIS (e.g., grant for training, school-age QRIS, statewide afterschool network, etc.) _____ _____ _____	❑	❑	❑
4. System resources *Some resources or capacities exist that could support a QIS (e.g., existing professional development opportunities; an MIS in use by some agencies).* Is there an MIS in use by multiple agencies? If yes, which one? _____ What other components of a QIS exist that might be expanded or built upon? _____	❑	❑	❑

Score for Community Capacity: _____
(Add up the numbers from the checked boxes above; range 0-8)

TOTAL SELF-ASSESSMENT SCORE

Score for Lead Organization Capacity (0-18): _____

Score for Provider Network Capacity (0-12): _____

Score for Community Capacity (0-8): _____

TOTAL SCORE (0-38): _____

The primary purpose of this self-assessment is to identify strengths and areas to focus on as you begin planning and implementing your quality improvement system (QIS). Hopefully you've made lots of notes that will help you hone in on the areas where you need to focus.

Note individual items or broad categories where you scored low. If you scored lower in the provider network area, for example, but relatively high on lead organization capacity, then one of the early activities of your lead organization may be to galvanize the provider community. If you scored relatively well in terms of provider network capacity but weaker on community capacity, you may want to focus on engaging more local decision-makers before moving forward.

Note that this assessment and guide refer to cross-sector reach. Eventually, a wide range of stakeholders across sectors and programs can come together around a common definition of quality and be highly engaged in a shared QIS. However, many successful systems begin within a single sector or even a single program or funding stream within a sector (e.g., 21st CCLC programs within the afterschool community). Keep this in mind as you interpret your results and develop your own goals.

Here are some rough guidelines for interpreting your total score:

0-10	You might want to step back and identify a few key areas to shore up before launching a full-fledged QIS building process. Building a QIS requires significant planning and resources. Having a strong lead organization and some existing resources – financial or otherwise – to build on is critical. Look to these as places to start.
11-24	You have a foundation upon which to build as you grow your QIS. You are most likely past the initial planning and engagement stage and are well into designing the system. Use the assessment to figure out where to target your energies next.
25-38	You are in good shape to move forward. At this point, you have probably already designed or piloted a QIS and are in the process of adjusting and working toward sustainability. Now may be the time to shore up your strengths, refine your model and consider reaching out to new sectors and funding sources.

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ENDNOTES

[i] Smith, C., Akiva, T., Sugar, S., Lo, Y. J., Frank, K. A., Peck, S., Cortina, K. S., & Devaney, T. (2012). *Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study*. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

[ii] Durlak, J.A., and Weissberg, R.P. (2007). The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills. Chicago, IL: *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.*

[iii] National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families. (2011). *Municipal Leadership For Afterschool Citywide Approaches Spreading Across the Country.* Washington, D.C.: The National League of Cities.

[iv] The Collaborative for Building Afterschool Systems (September 2007). *Shaping the Future of Afterschool: The essential role of intermediaries in bringing quality afterschool systems to scal*e. New York, N.Y.: The Collaborative for Building Afterschool Systems.

[v] Smith & Akiva. (2007.) Quality accountability: Improving the fidelity of broad developmentally focused interventions. In Shinn and Yoshikawa eds., T*oward positive youth development: Transforming schools and community programs*. Oxford University Press.

[vi] Smith, C., et al., (2012). ibid.

[vii] We are learning a lot right now about what constitutes a "defensible process" for determining quality levels in a higher stakes model, but much is still unknown in terms of the validity of these systems. See summary discussion in: Zellman, G.L. & Fiene, R. (2012). *Validation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems for Early Care and Education and School-Age Care, Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief OPRE 2012-29*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[viii] Russell, L., and Little, P. (2011). *Collecting and Using Information to Strengthen Citywide Out-of-School Time Systems*. Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities.

[ix] Grossman, J.B., Lind, C., Hayes, C., McMacken, J., and Gersick, A. (2009). *The Cost of Quality Out-of-School Time Program*s. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

[x] Yohalem, N., and Wilson-Ahlstrom, A. (2009). *Measuring youth program quality: A guide to assessment tools – Second Edition*. Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment.

[xi] Youth PQA citation

[xii] Surr, W. (2012). *A new approach to accountability: Creating effective learning environments for programs*. Wellesley, MA: National Institute on Out-of-School Time.

[xiv] Spielberger, J. and Lockaby, T. (2006). *The Prime Time Initiative of Palm Beach County, Florida QIS Development Process Evaluation: Year 2 Report*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

[xv] The Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, ibid.

[xiv] The Wallace Foundation. (2009). *Investments in Building Citywide Out-of-School-Time Systems*, a Wallace Foundation webinar.

[xvi] McCombs, J., et al. (2010). *Hours of Opportunity: Volume 3, Profiles of Five Cities Improving Afterschool Programs Through a Systems Approach.* Washington, D.C.: The Rand Corporation.

HYPERLINK APPENDIX

p. 4,"resource guide"
http://qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/resources/gscobb/2011-12-15%2006:10/QRISResourceGuide.pdf

p.10, "QIS Capacity Self-Assessment Tool"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/QIS%20Capacity%20Self-Assessment%20Draft%204%2010%2012.docx

p. 13, "Survey"
http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/collecting-and-using-data/Documents/After-School-Data-6-Tip-Sheets-on-What-Cities-Need-To-Know.pdf

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ASSESS READINESS

QIS Capacity Self-Assessment
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/QIS%20Capacity%20Self-Assessment%20Draft%204%2010%2012.docx
Sample market research study
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/PROV%20-%20Providence%20needs%20assessment.ppt
Sample readiness assessment – Austin, Texas;
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/AustinReadiness%20profile%20final.pdf

MAKE THE CASE

Research linking quality and outcomes in afterschool
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/Durlak&Weissberg_Final.pdf
Municipal Leadership for Afterschool: Citywide Approaches
http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/coordinating-after-school-resources/Documents/Municipal-Leadership-for-Afterschool.pdf
Sample case statement: "Why Good Quality Youth Work is Important?"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/CHI%20-%20Overview%20of%20Chicago%20quality%20standards.doc

ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

Sample recruitment flyer
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/AUST%20-%20Get%20involved%20flyer.doc
Sample QIS recruitment presentation – United Way for Greater Austin
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/AUST%20-%20Recruitment%20powerpoint.ppt
Program Landscape Mapping Packet
http://www.readyby21.org/sites/default/files/Program_Landscape_Mapping_Packet.zip

IDENTIFY A LEAD ORGANIZATION

Making the Connections: A Report on the First National Survey of Out-of-School Time Intermediaries
http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/coordinating-after-school-resources/Documents/Making-the-Connections-Report-First-National-Survey-of-OST.pdf

DEFINE QUALITY

Sample quality standards
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/CHI%20-%20Overview%20of%20Chicago%20quality%20standards.doc
Sample quality standards
http://primetimepbc.org/for-afterschool-providers/quality-improvement-system/quality-standards-afterschool
Pyramid of Youth Program Quality
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/youthpyramid9%2026%2012.pdf
Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS) summary
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/APAS%20graphic%206.29.12-1.pptx

CONSIDER INFORMATION NEEDS

After-School Data: What Cities Need to Know
http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/collecting-and-using-data/Pages/After-School-Data-What-Cities-Need-To-Know.aspx

Measuring Youth Program Quality
http://www.forumfyi.org/files/MeasuringYouthProgramQuality_2ndEd.pdf

Building Management Information Systems to Coordinate Citywide Afterschool Programs
http://www.nlc.org/Documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/IYEF/Afterschool/building-management-information-systems-afterschool-toolkit.pdf

Hours of Opportunity, Volume 2: The Power of Data to Improve After-School Programs Citywide
http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1037z1.html

DETERMINE COSTS AND POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Cost of Quality and Cost Calculator
http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/key-research/Documents/The-Cost-of-Quality-of-Out-of-School-Time-Programs.pdf

p. 25, "Youth Program Quality Intervention"
http://cypq.org/content/youth-program-quality-intervention

p. 25, "Afterschool Program Assessment System"
http://www.niost.org/Active-Projects/afterschool-program-assessment-system-apas-project

p. 25, "tools"
http://www.forumfyi.org/files/MeasuringYouthProgramQuality_2ndEd.pdf

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DESIGN THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Measuring Youth Program Quality
http://www.forumfyi.org/files/MeasuringYouthProgramQuality_2ndEd.pdf

Overview of the Afterschool Program Assessment System
http://www.niost.org/Active-Projects/afterschool-program-assessment-system-apas-project

Overview of the Youth Program Quality Intervention
http://cypq.org/content/youth-program-quality-intervention

Sample technical assistance provider RFP
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/NY%20-%20OST%20TA%20RFP.pdf

DEVELOP SYSTEM SUPPORTS FOR THE MODEL

Sample program improvement pilot project manual
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/CHI%20-%20Program%20Improvement%20Pilot%20Project%20Manual%202008-2009.pdf

"Sample parameters" and "tips for coaches"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/ATL%20-%20APAS%20Coaching%20Parameters.pdf
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/ATL%20-%20Quick%20tips%20for%20APAS%20Coaches.pdf

Sample external assessor instructions – United Way for Greater Austin
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/AUST%20-%20External%20Assessor%20instructions.doc

Sample job description for quality advisor – Prime Time, Palm Beach County
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/PB%20-%20Quality%20Advisor%20job%20description.doc

Sample job description for literacy coach – Hasboro Summer Learning Initiative
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/SPR%20-%20HSLI%20Literacy%20coach%20job%20description.doc

PILOT THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Sample program improvement plan
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/ATL%20-%20Sample%20Club%20Improvement%20Action%20Plan.pdf

Sample program improvement plan
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageThree/PB%20-%20Sample%20QI%20Plan.pdf

Sample implementation timeline
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/ATL%20-%20Implementation%20timeline%20cohort%202.pdf

Sample QIS pilot report
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stageone/QIS%20Capacity%20Self-Assessment%20Draft%204%2010%2012.docx

HYPERLINK APPENDIX

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REFINE THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT MODEL AND SYSTEM SUPPORTS

Sample QIS pilot report
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/Pi%20Pilot%20Report%20from%20Weikart%20Center%20Nov%20%202009.pdf
Sample QIS levels
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/PB%20-%20QIS%20Levels.doc
Sample QIS implementation study
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/PASA%20-%20Final%20Implementation%20Study.pdf

ENGAGE NEW PROGRAMS AND SECTORS

Sample welcome letter to new programs
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/PB%20-%20Welcome%20letter%20for%20new%20programs.doc
Sample course descriptions for youth studies degree/certificate
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/NY%20-%20CUNY%20Consortium%20Courses%20%28status%20as%20of%20August%202010%29%20ext%20cab.doc
Sample brochure for youth studies degree/certificate
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/NY%20-%20Youth%20Studies%20Certificate%20Brochure.pdf
Sample RFP
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/SPR%20-%20HSLI%20request%20for%20proposals.doc

EVALUATE

Sample QIS summary report
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/AUST%20-%20FALL%202011%20what%27s%20working%20report.pdf
Sample evaluation
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/AUST%20-%20STATE%20OF%20THE%20DATA%20sept%209%202011.pptx
Sample evaluation
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/SPR%20-%20Evaluation%20of%20summer%202006.doc
Sample evaluation
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/CYPQ%20Palm%20Beach%20Report%20Final_0.pdf
Sample QIS implementation study
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/PASA%20-%20Final%20Implementation%20Study.pdf
Youth Program Quality Intervention study
http://www.cypq.org/content/continuous-quality-improvement-afterschool-settings-impact-findings-youth-program-quality-in

EMBED AND SUSTAIN

Sample grant application for programs
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagethree/AUST%20-%20United%20Way%20Grant%20application.pdf
Sample QRIS requirements
http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-12/42-12-23.1.HTM

ATLANTA

p. 42, "Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta"
http://www.bgcma.org/

p. 42, "Afterschool Program Assessment System"
http://www.niost.org/Active-Projects/afterschool-program-assessment-system-apas-project

p. 45, "action plans"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/ATL%20-%20Sample%20Club%20Improvement%20Action%20Plan.pdf

p. 46, "coach"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/ATL%20-%20APAS%20Coaching%20Parameters.pdf

p. 46, "report"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/ATL%20-%20Sample%20APAS%20Report.pdf

p. 47, "2011-2012 program year"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Guide/Stagetwo/ATL%20-%20Implementation%20timeline%20cohort%202.pdf

p. 49, "Efforts to Outcomes"
http://www.socialsolutions.com/Public-Sector-Software.aspx

AUSTIN

p. 51, "Ready by 21 Coalition for Austin/Travis County"
http://www.readyby21austin.org/

p. 51, "Youth Services Mapping System"
http://www.ysm-austin.org/

p. 51, "Central Texas Afterschool Network"
http://ctanweb.org/

p. 51, "readiness assessment process"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageOne/AustinReadiness%20profile%20final.pdf

p. 52, "Recruitment events"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageOne/AUST%20-%20Recruitment%20powerpoint.ppt

p. 54, "programs agreed"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/AUST%20-%20MOU%20-%20Youth%20Program%20Quality%20Assessment.doc

p. 54, "early results"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/AUST%20-%20STATE%20OF%20THE%20DATA%20sept%209%202011.pptx

p. 55, "Assessors"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/AUST%20-%20External%20Assessor%20instructions.doc

p. 55, "Recruiting assessors"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/AUST%20-%20Assessor%20Application.doc

p. 56, "United Way began requiring"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageThree/AUST%20-%20United%20Way%20Grant%20application.pdf

p. 58, "honoring success"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageThree/AUST%20-%20FALL%202011%20what%27s%20working%20report.pdf

CHICAGO

p. 61, "standards"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageOne/CHI%20-%20Overview%20of%20Chicago%20quality%20standards.doc

p. 62, "quality self-assessment tool"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageOne/CHI%20-%20Chicago%20quality%20self-assessment%20tool.pdf

p. 62, "Chicago Department of Family and Support Services"
http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/fss.html

"Chicago Park District"
http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/

"Chicago Public Schools"
http://www.cps.edu/Pages/home.aspx

"Chicago Public Library"
http://www.chipublib.org/

p. 64, "core components of the process"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/CHI%20-%20Program%20Improvement%20Pilot%20Project%20Manual%202008-2009.pdf

p. 64, "Pi system"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/CHI%20-%20Program%20Improvement%20Poster.pdf

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p. 65, "Youthservices.net"
http://youthservices.net/

p. 65, "Cityspan Technologies"
http://www.cityspan.com/default.asp

p. 68, "Chicago Allies for Student Success"
http://www.chicagoallies.org/

HAMPDEN COUNTY
p. 72, "The Learning Season: The Untapped Power of Summer to Advance Student Achievement"
http://www.nmefoundation.org/getmedia/17ce8652-b952-4706-851b-bf8458cec62e/Learning-Season-ES?ext=.pdf

p. 72, "Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative (HSLI)"
http://www.rebhc.org/literacy-initiatives/hasbro-summer-learning-initiative/

p. 73, "Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS)"
http://supportunitedway.org/files/MARS-Report.pdf

p. 73, "Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT)"
http://www.niost.org/Training-Descriptions/the-assessment-of-afterschool-program-practices-tool-apt

p. 74, "pre-selected curricula"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/SPR%20-%20Curriculum%20Description.doc

p. 75, "coaches"
http://www.forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/SPR%20-%20HSLI%20Literacy%20coach%20job%20description.doc

p. 77, "focus on literacy"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageThree/SPR%20-%20Literacy%20Supports%20for%202009.doc

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
p. 80, "New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)"
http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/home/home.shtml

p. 81, "Request for Proposals"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageOne/NY%20-%20OST%20TA%20RFP.pdf

p. 82, "NYSAN Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool"
http://www.nysan.org/userfiles/file/nysan/

p. 83, "youth workers"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageOne/NY%20-%20Youth%20Work%20Professional%20Core%20Competencies%20-%20full%20document%20%28June%202009%29.pdf

"supervisors"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageOne/NY%20-%20Supervisor%20Core%20Competencies%20-%20full%20document.pdf

p. 84, "PASE"
http://www.pasesetter.com/aboutPase/index.html

"Ramapo for Children"
http://www.ramapoforchildren.org/

"TASC"
http://www.tascorp.org/

p. 84, "Youth Development Institute (YDI)"
http://www.ydinstitute.org/

p. 84, "Coaching for Quality program"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/NY%20-%20OST%20Program%20Manager%20Learning%20Series%20%28w%20dates%29.docx

p. "certificate programs"
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p. "Youth Studies major"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageTwo/NY%20-%20Youth%20Studies%20Certificate%20Brochure.pdf

p. 86, "Youth Program Quality Monitoring Tool (PQMT)"
http://forumfyi.org/files/QIS/Case%20studies/StageThree/NY%20-%20Program%20Quality%20Monitoring%20Tool-OST%20HS.pdf

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA
p. 91, "Prime Time Palm Beach County"
http://www.primetimepbc.org/

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