The Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) is a comprehensive system for improving program quality, built around the research-validated Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA).

A YPQI site team—a team of youth workers, led by a site manager—engage in the assess-plan-improve sequence, which is designed to be a repeating, cyclical process. The sequence includes the following four components:

**ASSESS:** First, in program self assessment, youth professionals observe and rate their own program using the Youth or School-Age Program Quality Assessment (PQA), a research-based observational assessment tool. Meanwhile, outside observers use the Youth or School-Age PQA to conduct an external assessment for the next step.

**PLAN:** Second, site leaders and staff engage in improvement planning, using both self-assessment and external ratings. This step produces a set of goals for the aspects of program quality that site managers and staff have decided to work on improving.

**IMPROVE:** Third, after target improvement areas have been identified, managers are trained to provide instructional coaching for staff, and staff members attend Youth Work Methods training, workshops aligned with the practices in the Youth and School-Age PQA.

Fourth, technical assistance coaches support site leaders to implement each step in the assess-plan-improve sequence. Additional data sources may also be added in order to deepen the intervention.

![Figure 1: Assess-Plan-Improve Sequence](image)

The Weikart Center conducted an experimental investigation of the Youth Program Quality Intervention. To learn more about the findings from the YPQI study, visit www.cypq.org/ypqi. In sum, the YPQI study produced the following findings:

1. The YPQI improves program quality.
2. The YPQI works across policy contexts.
3. The YPQI works across challenging conditions
4. The YPQI is cost-effective, sustainable, and scalable.
YPQI Theory of Action

The YPQI targets three levels of setting: policy, organizational and instructional (represented in diagram to the right). In the policy context, networks adopt YPQI elements and commit their resources to the process. In the organizational setting, managers implement a set of continuous improvement practices focused on the quality of instruction. In the instructional setting (or “point of service”), staff in a high quality program provide youth with opportunities to meet important developmental needs. Thus, while the YPQI is designed to produce change at the policy and organizational setting levels, the real goal is to improve quality in the instructional setting—the quality that youth experience.

YPQI Roles and Responsibilities

Below are brief descriptions of all key roles within the YPQI process. On the following page, you can see the YPQI responsibilities for each of these individuals.

The Network Lead is involved in supporting the entire quality improvement system work and does all coordination for the YPQI, including:
- communicating important information,
- scheduling,
- coordinating external assessment,
- providing youth program personnel, with access to supports.
Most importantly, Network leads send signals to program staff that the improvement work is important.

The Site Lead is responsible for leading a program (or programs) through the YPQI. He or she is usually a site manager, supervisor, or director, but could be anyone at the site. It is important that this person has sufficient time to coordinate the process and attend all trainings. The activities of the site lead include:
- managing assessment,
- managing improvement planning,
- supporting the enactment of improvement plans.

Program Staff are primarily responsible for working directly with youth and enacting improvements in the quality of youth experience available at the program. They are likely to be observed for program self or external assessment and may join the assessment or improvement team.

External Assessors visit programs in a network and prepare independent assessments to be used for network analysis and for program improvement. External Assessors must achieve 80% accuracy with expert scores on a video of youth practice. External assessors can also support sites with improvement.

Network Consultants, Trainers, and/or Coaches help program directors and staff experience success in the YPQI. This can involve:
- guiding program self assessment,
- helping with improvement planning,
- working with individual staff,
- facilitating trainings.
These individuals may attend the Weikart Center’s Youth Work Methods Training of Trainers, Youth Work Management Training of Trainers, or Coaching for Continuous Improvement workshops.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network Leader</th>
<th>Site Leader</th>
<th>Program Staff</th>
<th>External Assessors</th>
<th>Network Consultants, Trainers, and/or Coaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSESS</strong></td>
<td>Plan trainings</td>
<td>Attend PQA Basics (live or online)*</td>
<td>Attend PQA Basics (live or online)*</td>
<td>Attend External Assessor Reliability Training</td>
<td>Support site team through program self assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinate external assessments</td>
<td>Train staff and lead team program self assessment (Form A and B)</td>
<td>Participate in program self assessment</td>
<td>Conduct external assessment (Form A and B)</td>
<td>Attend Youth Work Management Training of Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage program self assessment</td>
<td>Attend Scores Reporter Webinar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attend Youth Work Methods Training of Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enter data into Online Scores Reporter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attend Coaching for Continuous Improvement Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLAN</strong></td>
<td>Plan trainings</td>
<td>Attend Planning With Data</td>
<td>Attend Planning With Data</td>
<td>Attend Planning With Data</td>
<td>Support site team improvement planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activate network consultants, trainers, and/or coaches</td>
<td>Lead team improvement planning</td>
<td>Participate in improvement planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitate Planning with Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manage improvement planning</td>
<td>Attend Improvement Planning Webinar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enter plan into Online Scores Reporter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMPROVE</strong></td>
<td>Plan trainings</td>
<td>Attend Quality Coaching</td>
<td>Attend Youth Work Methods workshops</td>
<td>Conduct external assessment (Form A and B) upon request</td>
<td>Support team in improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activate network consultants, trainers, and/or coaches</td>
<td>Lead staff in improving point-of-service</td>
<td>Improve point-of-service</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deliver Youth Work Methods workshops to program staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support sites in improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deliver Quality Coaching workshops to program managers and staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Assess-Plan-Improve Roles and Responsibilities
ASSESS Products and Services

TRAININGS AND SUPPORTS

- **Youth Program Quality Intervention Kickoff/Quality Matters Presentation** Quality out-of-school time experiences yield positive outcomes for young people across the developmental continuum – from personal and social to academic life. Across the nation, the youth development and out-of-school time fields are focusing on quality by rallying around approaches that build both improvement and accountability. This session introduces the importance of program quality and overviews how the Youth or School-Age PQA, together with the practices of the Youth Program Quality Intervention can impact your youth programs. *Also available as a webinar.*

- **Youth or School-Age PQA Basics Workshop** This interactive workshop prepares participants to lead the program self assessment process, and familiarizes participants with the Youth or School-Age Program Quality Assessment instrument. *Also available online.*

- **Youth or School-Age PQA Plus** This training has been crafted for organizations that are in their second or third year of the Youth Program Quality Intervention. Participants will share ideas about using the Youth or School-Age PQA to extend staff members’ learning beyond program self assessment.

- **Youth or School-Age PQA External Assessor Workshop** This challenging workshop gives participants practice using the Youth or School-Age PQA and increases their accuracy in observing and scoring. Participants who reach 80% reliability are able to collect research quality data and conduct external assessments.

- **External Assessor Refresher Workshop** Refreshes Endorsed Assessor status. *Also available at a distance.*

- **Program Self Assessment Check-In Webinar** During this webinar, participants review the step-by-step process of program self assessment and share successes and challenges that they have faced. This interactive webinar provides a safe place to get questions answered and to share ideas.

- **Online Scores Reporter** The online Scores Reporter provides a useful way to store, track, and report on your data and program improvement plans. We host webinars to demonstrate the major features of the Scores Reporter and how it complements the improvement cycle. [learn more]
MEASURES

Program Quality Assessment (PQA) These research-based observational instruments are used to measure program quality and identify staff training needs. [download PQA free]
- Youth PQA (appropriate for youth in grades 4 – 12)
- School-Age PQA (appropriate for children in grades K – 6)
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) PQA
- Arts PQA
- Academic Climate PQA
- Health & Wellness PQA
- Camp PQA

Leading Indicator Surveys
- Youth Surveys. Examples include, but are not limited to: socio-emotional learning, academic efficacy, degree of engagement during activity
- Staff Surveys. Examples include, but are not limited to: job satisfaction, organizational climate, degree of youth worker training, support from management
- Parent Surveys. Examples include, but are not limited to: satisfaction with program, perceived changes in child behavior, degree of communication with program staff

Ready Youth Gallup Student Poll The Gallup Student Poll is a nationally established measure that goes beyond achievement and risk indicators to provide positive indicators of how youth are doing. Communities that use Ready Youth receive a data report by school, grade and gender plus data aggregated by zip code, age, race/ethnicity and free-reduced lunch status. This reduces the risk of unproductive comparisons between schools, and allows for better comparison with other youth and community data.

Ready Communities Program Mapping Survey This survey collects data from identified youth development sites (e.g., schools, libraries, youth centers, out-of-school time sites, and religious youth programs) regarding access, services provided and capacity. These settings and the survey data are added to an online mapping system. Where relevant and available, public data may be added to the map as overlays. The Weikart Center supplies the technical back-end to make your mapping process as simple as possible. We provide a simple framework with the tools you need for data collection, then compile your data and produce data visualizations to support the next step.

Custom Research Services Our research team provides several routine and custom services for clients, including: standards development, customized assessment instrument formation, data planning and collection, network program quality reports and process surveys.
PLAN Products and Services

TRAININGS

**Planning with Data** This hands-on workshop is for program managers and their teams who have self and/or external assessment Youth or School-Age PQA data available for their program. Participants consider the realities of change initiatives, learn how to read and interpret their data, and make improvement plans based on their program quality data. *Also available online.*

**Planning With Data Webinar** This interactive webinar provides a foundation for leading a team of staff through the creation of a program improvement plan. During this webinar, participants learn how to use the online Scores Reporter to review their program self and/or external assessment data, and step through a goal-setting process.

**Advanced Planning with Data** This hands-on workshop is for program managers who have additional data beyond Youth or School-Age PQA data (*e.g.*, Leading Indicators Surveys and Reports, SEARCH Institute’s Developmental Assets Profile, etc.). Participants consider the realities of change initiatives, learn how to read and interpret their data, and prepare to guide a team of staff through a planning process.

**Community Catalyst Conversation** These conversations are designed to generate action to address specific findings from the Ready Youth Gallup Student Poll or the Ready Communities Program Map. The lead organization may choose to involve citizens, students, business owners, teachers and others. The process is designed to increase school-community communications and ultimately to lead to coordinated action to improve settings available to youth. The community conversation helps community leaders become more intentional about the kinds of experiences they want to be available for children and youth.

REPORTS

**Planning with Data Reports** These reports include Youth or School-Age PQA mean scores and graphs. They are targeted toward program staff for use in improvement planning and are the focus of the live Planning with Data training.

**Leading Indicators Reports** The Leading Indicators are a compilation of composite measures consisting of program quality data derived from multiple sources, and organized into overarching “domains” or contexts including Organizational Context, Instructional Context, External Relationships, Youth Characteristics and Family Satisfaction. Leading Indicators are designed to:

- Allow organizations to compare their data with similar programs and statewide averages;
- Facilitate internal discussions around areas of program design and delivery that may warrant additional attention from a program improvement perspective.

What is critical to keep in mind is that the leading indicator system is *not* designed to provide network leaders with information about individual organizations that will be used to evaluate compliance, assess impact, or rank organizations in terms of performance. The leading indicator system’s sole purpose is to support program improvement efforts at the organization and site-level. [Learn more]

**Ready Communities Asset Map** This online map is generated with data collected using the Ready Communities Asset Mapping Survey. The Ready Communities Asset Map is designed to equip coalitions of leaders that work in the out-of-school time and schooling sectors with accurate, targeted information about youth development resources in their locale. The focus is on making data accessible and easy to understand.
IMPROVE Products and Services

TRAININGS

- **Quality Instructional Coaching** This interactive workshop prepares program managers to support direct staff in improving instruction through one-on-one consultation. The idea is to maximize productivity in the manager-staff relationship by starting with a foundation of respect, taking time to observe staff at the point of service and then supporting staff to develop professionally.

- **Youth Work Methods** The workshops in the Youth Work Methods series are aligned with the items of the Youth PQA found in the pyramid. After gathering data from a Youth Program Quality Assessment and creating a plan for improvement through participation in a Planning with Data training, program managers can choose to offer trainings to program staff that are aligned to the Improvement Plan. These interactive and hands-on courses provide participants with practical skills that are geared to improve the quality of interactions with youth. Also available online. [learn more]

  - **Introduction to the Active-Participatory Approach** Youth programs can be optimized for youth needs, motivation, and engagement. The Active-Participatory Approach to youth work was designed to address these goals. This youth-centered approach is the foundation for the Youth Work Methods Series.

  - **Active Learning** Do you know the difference between active learning and “hands-on” learning? Giving youth materials is just the beginning. This interactive workshop introduces strategies for incorporating active learning, and helps participants create more powerful learning opportunities for youth.

  - **Ask-Listen-Encourage** Do you communicate with youth in a way that makes them feel supported and heard? This workshop introduces communication techniques that help you build more supportive, youth-centered relationships. Participants learn how to ask effective questions, to listen actively to youth, and offer youth encouragement rather than praise.

  - **Building Community** Do you know what it takes to build an emotionally and physically safe space for youth? Building an emotionally safe community of peers and adults is essential for youth to learn and develop as individuals. This interactive workshop will introduce participants to a variety of activities designed to support the community building process.

  - **Cooperative Learning** Do the youth in your program have opportunities to work together in groups, teaching and learning from each other? Cooperative learning is an excellent way to nurture youth leadership, build community, and keep things fun. This interactive workshop will equip participants with grouping strategies and ways to think about building cooperative learning into any program offering.

  - **Homework Help** This course focuses on making homework help time effective by helping youth get organized, by providing an atmosphere that helps youth focus on their work, and by building a supportive relationship with youth. These elements help participants reconsider Homework Help as an opportunity to build relationships and nurture positive growth, beyond getting the work done.

  - **Planning and Reflection** Are you engaging youth in the critical life skills of planning and reflection? Are you ready to be more intentional about including planning and reflection strategies into your daily activities but not sure where to start? This workshop introduces participants to powerful and easy to use methods that promote youth engagement in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities and projects.

  - **Reframing Conflict** What role do you play in conflict situations in your program? Do you know how to turn a conflict situation into an opportunity for growth? This interactive workshop introduces participants to a step-by-step model for reframing conflict as well as general principles of conflict resolution.
- **Structure and Clear Limits** How do you prevent chaos in a youth environment without stifling the positive energy of youth? Youth need structure and clear limits in order to feel safe. This interactive workshop helps participants analyze the level of structure in their programs and practice identifying and maintaining clear limits.

- **Youth Voice** Are you providing young people with authentic, meaningful choices throughout your program? Does your program reflect the input of the youth involved? Research shows that quality programs incorporate youth input at both activity and organizational levels. This workshop will emphasize the importance of offering real choices and meaningful participation to youth, and nurturing youth leadership. This interactive workshop is focused on providing meaningful choice within activities and opportunities for youth input within the youth program itself.

**Teen Advisory Council** This course is a collaborative project of the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality and the Neutral Zone teen center. It emerged from an exciting two-year venture called the Youth Driven Space initiative (www.youthdrivenspace.org). A goal of this initiative was to learn about the key ingredients for creating dynamic youth-driven programs for teens. We learned that one of the best ways to make a space youth-driven is to support a teen advisory council!

**Custom Trainings** The Weikart Center has staff and consultants who are experts in many areas of youth development and education. We can work with you to develop trainings or professional development experiences that meet the unique needs of your staff.
**Additional Supports and System Capacity-Building Trainings**

To further support the YPQI process, we offer comprehensive Technical Assistance and Coaching services to YPQI participants.

**TRAININGS**

- **Youth Work Methods Training of Trainers (TOT)** Our most intensive training prepares participants to lead the 10 item-aligned Youth Work Methods workshops. The Methods TOT consists of four weeks of distance learning and three days of live training. Graduates of the Methods TOT can become key network and organization supports during the improvement phase of the quality intervention process. As groups complete the Planning with Data Training and create improvement plans, they can request Methods workshops for targeted professional development.

- **Youth Work Management Training of Trainers (TOT)** This Training of Trainers is targeted at managers and site leaders who wish to be able to support their sites throughout the quality improvement cycle. The course consists of three weeks of distance learning and two days of live training. Graduates of the Management TOT can facilitate the Planning with Data and Quality Coaching workshops as well as provide comprehensive logistical and professional development support to staff who are involved in the process.

- **Coaching for Continuous Improvement Training** System leaders and coaches are invited to attend a two-day live training to examine the structure and philosophy of Coaching for Continuous Improvement, build skills for coaching including the Weikart Center’s observation and reflection technique for providing feedback, and learn how to maximize data sources to support the Continuous Improvement Process within their organization.

- **Youth Work Methods Experience** Participants explore the Active-Participatory Approach in-depth, experience three key Youth Work Methods, and strengthen coaching and observational skills. The two-day workshop improves participants’ ability to provide comprehensive support to staff to help them improve their practices. In addition to the core content, participants will have an opportunity to practice their coaching and leadership skills in scenarios designed to emulate actual program situations such as staff meetings, coaching sessions, and professional development trainings.
**NETWORK LEADER SUPPORTS**

**Consultation** Weikart Center consultants are available to offer technical assistance that includes:
- Just-in-time phone and email technical assistance to support the design, implementation and sustainability of the quality assessment and improvement system.
- Guidance on and troubleshooting of Youth or School-Age PQA, Leading Indicators, and SEARCH Institute’s Developmental Assets Profile data collection.
- Guidance on integration of quality data into city, county and statewide evaluation/data collection systems.
- Phone and email coaching and support for local trainers delivering YPQI trainings.
- Access to a comprehensive quality improvement artifact library, including templates, project manuals, promotional materials, etc.
- Access to a comparative database of national Youth and School-Age PQA Form A and Form B scores.

**Network Leader Symposium** Quality improvement systems will vary, but mature, effective systems share some common components and characteristics. A cohort of peers from out-of-school time systems nationwide will convene at the Network Leader Symposium to focus on strengthening the delivery of their Quality Improvement Systems. Participants answer challenging questions about structures, plan to communicate important ideas to stakeholders, and engage with strategies to sustain momentum.

**Network Leader Pages** Whether a network is just getting started or already has a year under its belt, this web-based user manual provides leaders with resources to support the management of quality improvement work. The welcome page introduces the Weikart Center team and provides some of the technical details regarding delivery of the contract. The other five pages are specific to each of the phases of the Assess-Plan-Improve sequence, including preparation and capacity building. Users can also join the online community to ask questions and share lessons learned with others who are implementing YPQI.

**YPQI Network Leader Learning Community Calls** These quarterly calls bring together quality improvement leads from out-of-school time networks and systems to discuss successes and challenges, and to share lessons learned. Topics may include:
- Strategies for building buy-in from funders, sites, local community leaders, etc.
- Low stakes accountability policy conversations; Connection to state QRIS systems
- Linking youth outcome data or community indicators to the Youth or School-Age PQA
- How to use distance learning and online resources to accommodate a large geographic spread of participants
- How to make a program sustainable, considering costs and challenges
- How to make effective connections to the school day; How to use quality data in schools

**Youth Program Quality Intervention Report** This report documents the specific aspects of the Youth Program Quality Intervention in which the grantee engaged, describes patterns of program quality data over the course of the intervention, summarizes staff and manager satisfaction with the program improvement intervention process, and offers grantee-specific recommendations regarding implementation improvement and resources for building capacity in the next round of quality improvement.
Youth Driven Spaces (YDS) Project
The Youth Driven Spaces Project is designed to support out-of-school-time programs that serve older youth implement a range of structures and strategies that foster 21st Century skill-building and meaningful civic engagement.

**TRAININGS**

- **Youth Driven Spaces Kickoff Webinar** This one-hour webinar prepares programs for activities and guides them through a self assessment to begin considering their capacity, readiness and initial goals.

- **Youth Driven Spaces Institute** The goal of the two-day Institute is to help teams of teens/adult staff from participating youth-serving organizations 1) better understand the principles of youth-driven practice; 2) learn program and organizational strategies that support youth-driven practice; and 3) to make plans for organizational and program changes that they will apply in their setting to support youth-driven practice. The Institute is designed to model and foster youth-driven practice and to provide both teens and adults new skills and ideas that can be applied in their settings.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

- **Youth Driven Spaces Coach Supports** Experienced YDS coaches provide technical assistance to youth/adult site teams in the form of webinars/ conference calls, individual emails and check-in calls. Technical assistance will be tailored to the needs of the site teams.

- **Youth Driven Spaces Coaching Visit** Follow-up visits are coordinated such that experienced YDS coaches debrief progress with site teams, lead mini-trainings or review of content covered at YDS Institute, and work to plan for development of the Teen Advisory Council. During the visit, an assessment is conducted to measure progress of the Teen Advisory Council.

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

- **Youth Driven Spaces Coaches Training** This training builds sustainable, local capacity and includes the following content in a minimum one-day live training:
  - Understanding Youth Driven Space and Teen Advisory Council stages of development
  - Reviewing YDS and/or Teen Advisory Council specific training & coaching protocols
  - Observation/Feedback method
  - Making plans for supporting site(s)

Additional advanced training on the following topics may be covered in an additional half-day to one-day Teen Advisory Council Advanced Skills Training, for up to two total days of training for the coaches.

- Frameworks and strategies for a successful youth-facilitated Teen Advisory Council meeting
- Strategies for growing and sustaining a Teen Advisory Council
- Participatory Action approach for youth-led research
- Service Learning
- Fundraising
- Grant Making
- Evaluation
- Strategic Planning