



Shared Measurement Initiative

Project Update, July 2015

In December 2014, Youth Development Executives of King County (YDEKC) launched an 18-month project designed to bring together several strands of work on youth outcomes, and to move that work forward. The Shared Measurement Initiative, or SMI, evolved out of YDEKC's involvement in the Weikart Center's Expanded Learning Initiative and concurrent exploration of a common data system for member organizations. Both of these projects highlighted a need for a set of common evaluation practices, supported by common measures. The SMI approached this need by using a cohort-based shared learning model to develop and pilot common measures, and to document promising practices in measurement for continuous program improvement.

Goals for the Shared Measurement Initiative (SMI)

In 2014, YDEKC's advisory board established the following major goals for the initiative:

- Build member organizations' capacity to evaluate within a "Quality-to-Outcomes" framework, and use data for continuous improvement
- Help organizations leverage data for internal learning and external communication (including fundraising), while advancing knowledge of field-level impact

YDEKC's Shared Measurement Initiative (SMI) will achieve outcomes that benefit participating organizations and the youth development field more broadly. A draft logic model for the initiative is presented in [Appendix A](#).

Outcomes for participating organizations:

- Each organization has a theory of change, and access to measurement tools aligned to its theory of change
- Each organization has an evaluation plan for a program or initiative, and understands the process of evaluation planning generally
- Each organization has increased ability to make data-informed decisions, and can articulate how their practice has changed as a result
- Each organization has access to a pre-specified amount of technical assistance in some aspect of evaluation

Outcomes for the youth development field:

- The field can refer to a common theory of change based on the Quality-Engagement-Skills-Transfer (QuEST) Model (see [Appendix B](#))
- YDEKC members have access to a series of data trainings developed through the initiative



- The field has professional development aligned to the Statewide Quality Standards developed by School's Out Washington, and more specifically to the "Assessment, Planning and Improvement" section of the Youth Program Quality Assessment, Form B (see [Appendix C](#))

Cohort Selection and Participation

YDEKC recruited a cohort of participants by a process similar to a grant process. Prospective cohort members attended information sessions that explained project benefits, commitments and dates. Those who applied to participate in the cohort agreed to:

- Have at least two organizational representatives at all meetings
- Pilot youth outcome measures as appropriate
- Provide feedback to the project through meetings, interviews and/or surveys

Initially, Cohort 1 consisted of 15 programs from 13 organizations. Programs were located in Seattle, Shoreline, Kirkland, Burien, Tukwila, and Renton, and served over 1,000 young people aged 5 to 18 in activities ranging from homework help to music production to global citizenship. Of the 15 programs that began the initiative in December 2014, five had discontinued their participation by June 2015. In most cases, the reason given was staff turnover and/or lack of capacity. For the ten remaining programs, meeting attendance remained strong throughout the initiative. All programs were represented by at least one person at four of the six Phase 1 meetings.¹

SMI Core Activities

During Phase 1 of the project (held between December 2014 and August 2015), the primary mechanism was monthly meetings, led by YDEKC staff and evaluation experts from MEM Consulting. Each meeting had a specific learning and/or measure development objective and provided opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. Meeting topics included:

- Theory of change and logic model development
- Evaluation planning
- Data collection, management and use structures around the QuEST model:
 1. **Quality:** Mapping quality measures to desired outcomes
 2. **Engagement:** A multifaceted approach to measuring engagement
 3. **Skills:** Naming, defining, and measuring youth skills
 4. **Transfer:** Issues and challenges in accessing and using academic data
- Using data to inform practice

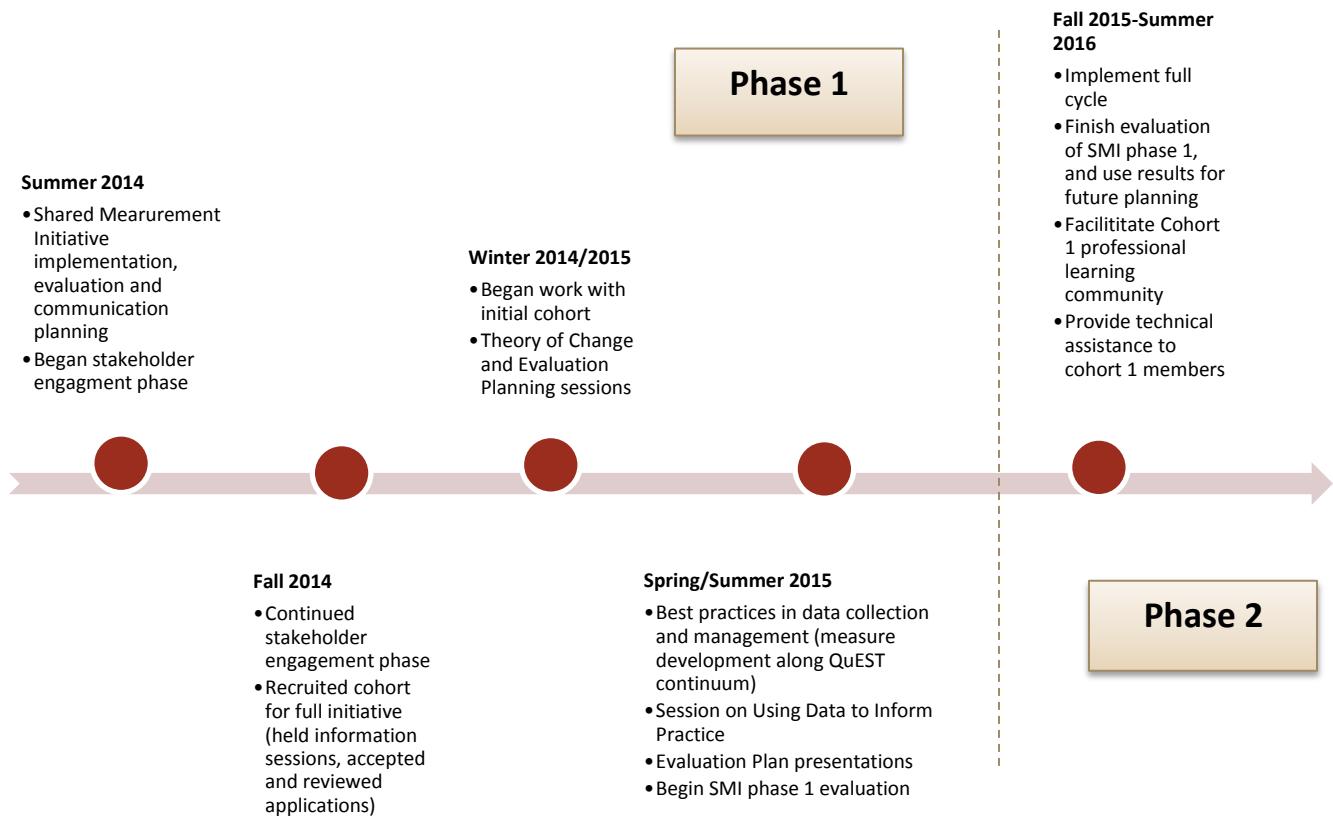
¹ Program-level attendance was 95%; individual-level attendance is more difficult to tabulate due to staff turnover at organizations.



In Phase 2 of the project (extending until August 2016), the initial cohort will continue to come together as a professional learning community. This will allow for a full school-year cycle of implementation with targeted support from peers and from the YDEKC/MEM team in the form of technical assistance.

SMI Timeline

The following shows a rough timeline of activities from summer 2014 to summer 2016. While this timeline shows the trajectory for the initial cohort, another cohort could run concurrently.



Next Steps

In August 2015, cohort 1 members will present their evaluation plans. This, along with an end-of-year assessment, will contribute to an evaluation of the project's first phase. The evaluation will serve two purposes: 1) It will help the YDEKC/MEM team to identify areas where ongoing support is needed, and 2) it will guide the design of Phase 1 activities for future cohorts.

For More Information...

All SMI materials can be found on the YDEKC website at http://ydekc.org/smi_2014/.



Appendix A: Logic Model for Shared Measurement Initiative (SMI)

Shared Measurement Initiative Outcome: Increased data driven decision making among youth development organizations

| Inputs | Outputs | | Outcomes -- Impact | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| | Activities | Participation | Short (Learning) | Medium (Action) | Long (Conditions) |
| Youth Development Executives of King County (YDEKC) staff support Leadership from the YDEKC board's data advisory group Consultants (potentially for measurement consulting, data visualization, research partnership) QuEST theory of change and associated research base Technology Existing measurement tools (YPQA, YDEKC survey measures) Pass-through funds for cohort members | Recruit a committed cohort of YDEKC member organizations to participate in an 18-20 month initiative. Conduct 7-8 shared learning meetings to bring cohort participants through a "real-time" Program Assessment, Planning and Improvement Cycle. Develop and disseminate shared measures as needed by the cohort to support program assessment. Generate reports for organizations on shared measures as appropriate, and work with cohort to refine both metrics and report templates. Fully document processes so that they can be made available to others | Initial cohort of up to 20 member organizations who agree to participate in all shared learning opportunities, and inform future iterations through feedback (composition TBD) | Increased knowledge of evaluation "best practices" in participating organizations Increased access to, and use of, common measures aligned to the QuEST theory of change among King County youth development organizations Improved ability for YDEKC to create and disseminate messages about field-level impact | Increased data driven decision making among youth development organizations Better recognition of the impact of youth development among funders, K-12 partners, and others | A stronger, more unified youth development sector in King County |

Assumptions

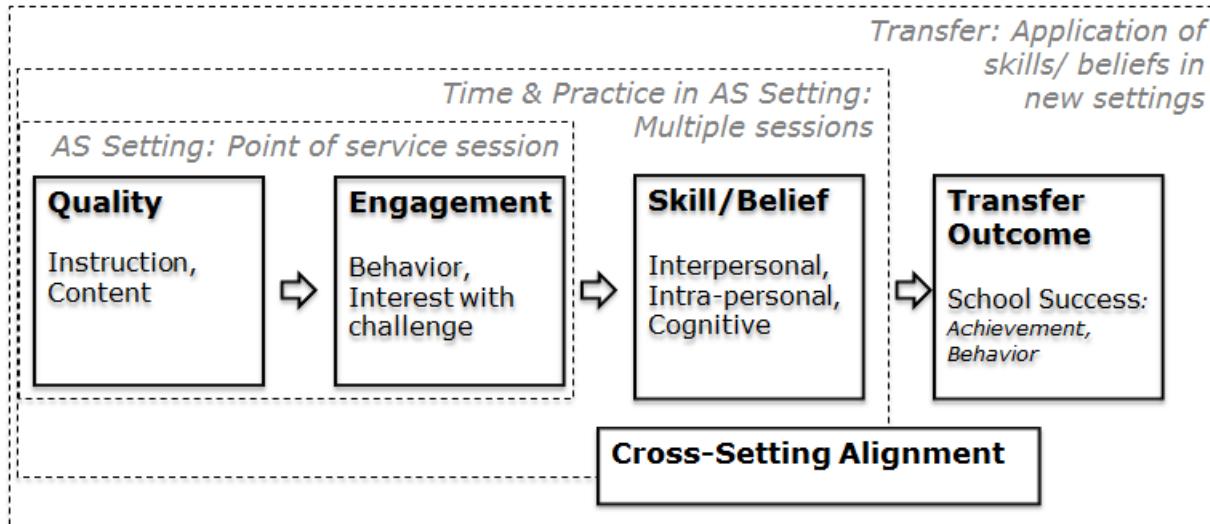
Better evaluation practices will lead to higher-quality programs
Higher-quality programs will lead to better youth outcomes
Youth development programs can be described by common measures

External Factors

Constantly shifting funding strategies and funder priorities
Strong emphasis on academic outcomes
High staff turnover in the youth development sector



Appendix B: Quality-to-Outcomes (QuEST) Theory of Change



Source: Smith C., Hallman, S., Hillaker, B., Sugar, S., McGovern, G., & Devaney, E. (2012). *Development and early validation evidence for an observational measure of high quality instructional practice for science, technology, engineering and mathematics in out-of-school time settings: The STEM supplement to the Youth Program Quality Assessment*. Forum for Youth Investment. Washington DC.



Appendix C: Assessment, Planning and Improvement Items from the Youth Program Quality Assessment, Form B

| Quality programs have policies and procedures in place that promote continuous improvement | | |
|---|--|---|
| (1) | (2) | (3) |
| The administration formally solicits verbal or written feedback from fewer than two types of stakeholders | The administration formally solicits verbal or written feedback from two or three types of stakeholders | The administration formally solicits verbal or written feedback from four or more types of stakeholders |
| <i>From whom do you solicit written or verbal feedback?</i> | | |
| There is no mission statement | A written mission statement sets forth the program's philosophy, goals, and related outcomes, but staff members do not know and/or support it. | A written mission statement sets forth the program's philosophy, goals, and related outcomes, and staff members know and support it. |
| <i>What is your mission statement?</i> | | |
| Organization does not employ strategies for program improvement. | Organization employs strategies for program improvement, but they are not based on assessment of youth feedback, youth outcomes, staff performance, or program quality OR organization does not share the results with stakeholders. | Organization employs strategies for program improvement that are based on assessment of youth feedback, youth outcomes, staff performance, or program quality and shares the results with stakeholders. |
| <i>How do you work to improve your program? Is what you do based on youth outcomes (e.g. school grades, test scores), staff performance (e.g. staff evaluations, observation/reflection), or program quality (e.g. YPQA, youth surveys, etc.)? How is the information shared with stakeholders?</i> | | |

Source: David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality (2014). Youth PQA, School's Out Washington: Form B – Organization Items. Ypsilanti, MI: The Forum for Youth Investment.