

Alaska Afterschool Network Youth Program Quality Initiative 2024-25 Call for Applications

Out-of-school-time programs serving children and youth ages 5 to 18 years old in Alaska are invited to apply to participate in the Alaska Afterschool Network Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI) for the 2024-2025 school year. **Apply by May 1st, 2024**, online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MQC78BW>

The purpose of this Youth Program Quality Initiative is to engage out-of-school-time programs in continuous quality improvement that increases participating youth's access to positive development experiences, resulting in better youth outcomes.

Background

Research has shown that high-quality out-of-school-time programs can have positive effects on young people's social behavior, attitudes toward school, academic performance, and long-term success.¹ The YPQI process has been used in nearly every state and has shown to have a significant positive impact on management practices of supervisors and staff, and on the quality of staff and youth interactions. It has also shown to work across challenging staffing conditions and may increase staff tenure, adapts to different types of afterschool systems and policies, and is a sustainable, cost-effective, lower stakes model for continuous quality improvement.²

Youth Program Quality Initiative

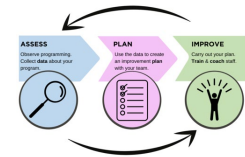
The Alaska Afterschool Network is seeking out-of-school-time program providers committed to improving program quality to participate in our third cohort of the Youth Program Quality Initiative, in partnership with the nationally recognized David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

The goals of the initiative are to:

- Increase the availability of high-quality out-of-school-time programs serving youth ages 5-18 in Alaska.
- Assist participating programs in developing a culture of continuous improvement.
- Learn about the supports programs need – and how best to provide those supports – to improve the quality of their programming.
- Foster a professional learning community among diverse youth-serving organizations.
- Support out-of-school-time programs in developing shared goals, common measures, and evaluation methods around increasing youth assets and skills.
- Inform the development of sustainable continual program quality improvement supports for Alaska out-of-school-time programs.

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

²Smith, C., Akiva, T., Sugar, S., Lo, Y. J., Frank, K. A., Peck, S. C., 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. The Forum for Youth Investment.



Participation Benefits

A maximum of 60 program sites will be selected to participate in the 2024-25 Alaska Afterschool Network Youth Program Quality Initiative. Organizations will receive 10 months of support, including:

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

Youth Program Quality Initiative Process

The YPQI utilizes assessment tools, resources, and trainings from the [Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality](#). It is designed with three key phases (*Assess, Plan, Improve*) and is not intended to be linear in design.

Assess:

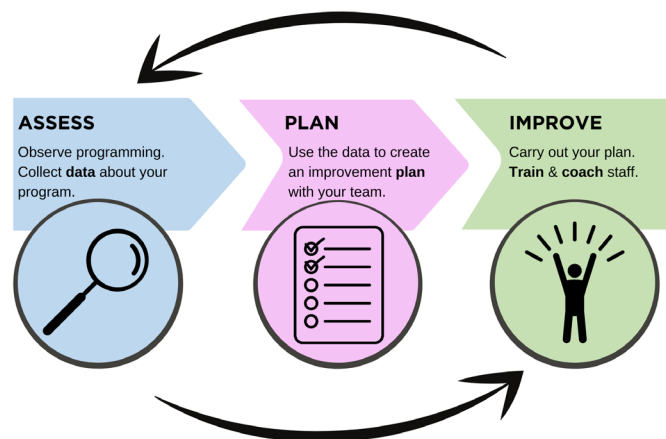
In the Assess phase, program staff collect data through observing and rating their own program and/or have an external assessor from the Alaska Afterschool Network observe and rate their program using the [Program Quality Assessment](#), a research-based observational assessment tool.

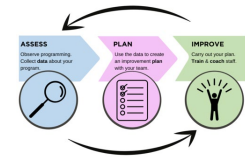
Based on the grade level of the students in their program, YPQI Teams will decide to use *the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)* tool (grades 5-12), or the *School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA)* tool (grades K-6). Organizations can also utilize the Organizational Quality Assessment tool, which focuses on program quality at the organizational level and helps assess program policies and practices, staff development, connection to families and schools, program access, and strategies for program improvement.

These Program Quality Assessment tools were developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality and have been utilized by programs across the country. These tools can be used to collect valid, reliable data on youth program quality, and provide a common language and national norms for reference. Applied in the context of the Weikart Center's *Assess, Plan, Improve* sequence, this process has been scientifically shown to improve youth program quality.

Plan:

In the Plan phase, program managers and direct service staff come together to identify program strengths and gaps, and develop 90-day customized goals based on the data collected through self-assessment and/or external assessment data.





Improve:

In the Improve phase, training and coaching support is provided as programs implement their goals. Attending two to three Youth Work Methods workshops that align with identified areas for improvement and with items on the YPQA and SAPQA may be part of implementation. Programs undergo a second assessment following the 90-day Improve period to measure change.

Participation Requirements

Successful applicants will commit to the following:

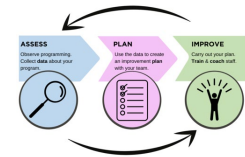
- \$75 per site fee to pay for the online data management system, to be invoiced after signing the Memorandum of Agreement. Please contact us if this fee is participation prohibitive for the possibility of the fee being alternatively sponsored.
- Commitment of Executive Director to support full participation of program staff in all YPQI components.
- Identification of a program manager who will be the primary contact for the YPQI process (approximately 35 hours over the course of the initiative).
- Engagement of a YPQI Team comprised of a program manager, site director, program staff, and may also engage youth, parents, or community members.
- Participation of program staff in learning community activities, trainings, assessments, and improvement planning (2-5 staff per participating site, approximately 25 hours each) including 2-3 Youth Work Methods workshops.
- Completion of two assessments using the YPQA or SAPQA, self and/or external:
 - Self-assessments involve program staff observing program, taking objective notes, and scoring notes on the PQA tool. Training is provided in the PQA Basics course.
 - External assessments involve an external assessor from the Alaska Afterschool Network, or another certified external assessor on your team, observing program, taking objective notes, and scoring notes on the PQA tool.
- Enter PQA data and program improvement plan into the online system by due dates.
- Develop an improvement plan based on PQA data.
- Engage in coaching and training program staff.
- Provide the Alaska Afterschool Network feedback on how to improve the YPQI through an evaluation at the conclusion of the YPQI cycle.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the Youth Program Quality Initiative, applicants must:

- Be an Alaska out-of-school-time program that meets with students a minimum of 3 to 5 times per week, for an average of 2 to 3 hours per day, on consistent basis for at least eight months (September-April).
- Provide services to at least 10 children and youth.
- Have at least two staff who are responsible for program implementation.

Any programs interested in the YPQI, but unable to commit to the full Initiative cycle are invited to participate in aspects of the Initiative such as attending Youth Work Methods workshops. For questions or more information, contact Erin Moriearty, Program Specialist at the Alaska Afterschool Network, emoriearty@alaskachildrenstrust.org (907)-202-9347.



To support organizations in planning for full participation in the initiative, we have provided training and meeting dates and times below. **Please reserve the following dates in the case that your organization is selected to participate: (Subject to change)**

YPQI Phase	Date	Activity	Audience
	4/3/2024, 12-1 PM, virtual	Informational Session	Perspective applicant program leads
	5/1/2024	Applications due	
Assess	8/7/2024, 12-1 PM, virtual	Kickoff Meeting	Program Manager, Site Leads
	9/5 & 9/6 2024, (2 days) 9 AM - 12 PM, virtual	Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) Basics Training (Grades 5-12)	YPQI Team members that have not attended a PQA Basics training before: manager, site director, staff, etc.
	9/12 & 9/13 2024, (2 days) 9 AM - 12 PM, virtual	School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) Basics Training (Grades K-6)	
	9/18/2024, 12-1 PM, virtual	PQA Basics Essentials	Returning YPQI participants wanting an assessment refresher, new staff unable to attend a full Basics training
	Sept - Nov	Conduct Fall Program Quality Assessment (Self or External Assessment)	YPQI Team
	10/9/24, 12-1 PM, virtual	Organizational Quality Assessment (OQA) Training	Program Manager
	Oct, Sign up for time, 2 hrs, virtual	OQA Interview	Program Manager
	10/31/2024	Assessment data due in online data management system	Program Manager, Site leads
Plan	Nov, 6 hrs, live at Pre-Conference (TBA) OR 12/5 & 12/6, 9 AM-12 PM (2 days), virtual	Planning With Data Workshop: sites set 90-day improvement goals based on data	YPQI teams who have not attended Planning With Data previously, returning teams wishing to take the full workshop again
	Nov, 2 hrs, live at Conference (TBA) OR 12/2/24, 11 AM- 1PM, virtual	Planning With Data Essentials: sites set 90-day improvement goals based on data	Returning program teams who have attended Planning With Data previously
	12/19/2024	Goals due in online data management system	YPQI Team
Improve	1/14/25, 12-1 PM, virtual	Improve - Professional Learning Community	YPQI Team
	Jan - Mar 2025	Goal implementation and check-ins	YPQI Team, Program staff
	3/4/2025	PQA Basics Essentials	Returning YPQI participants wanting an assessment refresher, new staff unable to attend a full Basics training
	Jan - Mar 2025 virtual or live	Youth Work Methods: professional development to support program quality improvements based on goal target areas (2 hours each - staff each participate in two or more workshops).	YPQI Team, Program staff
Assess	Mar - Apr 2025	Conduct Spring Program Quality Assessment (Self or External Assessment)	YPQI Team
Plan	4/15/25, 12-1 PM virtual	Celebration and Reflection Meeting	YPQI Team