



Overview of the Ready by 21® Quality Improvement & Asset Building (Q&A) Challenge

In cities and states throughout the country, dedicated and passionate leaders are seeking practical, evidence-based strategies for improving young peoples' readiness for college, work and life¹. Interest in marrying data-driven precision with leaders' passion for improving youth well-being is common across youth-serving organizations and systems; unfortunately, progress is often stymied by rigid organizational boundaries, lack of coordination across providers, incomplete quality and performance data, and, frankly, limited know-how. This is particularly true in the out-of-school time (OST) sector where multiple factors have historically made it difficult to measure, modify and manage those aspects of program quality that are associated with positive developmental outcomes for youth.

The Ready by 21 Partnership wants to remove these barriers and help leaders more efficiently and effectively answer the questions: How good are OST programs in my community? Are they optimally organized to make a positive difference in the lives of the youth people they serve? Two partners in particular – United Way Worldwide and the National Collaboration for Youth – and their local affiliates – are intimately involved in OST programming in most communities and have a vested interest in building local capacity in this sector.

Thanks to generous support from Philip Morris USA, an Altria Company, the Partnership is pleased to announce the Quality Improvement & Asset Building (*Q&A*) Challenge – a research-based model designed to help communities systematically improve the quality of available OST programming to increase youth access to key developmental and learning experiences that help them build skills and reduce risky behaviors. The Ready by 21 *Q&A* Challenge offers leaders a low-risk opportunity to pilot a scalable, evidence-based continuous improvement system in OST and other youth-serving settings and to engage local providers in critical conversations about quality, planning and performance management. Specifically, the *Q&A* Challenge joins the Search Institute's Developmental Assets® measurement tools with the Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Intervention² to help schools, out-of-school-time (OST) providers, and other youth-serving organizations build Developmental Assets and increase youth engagement by systematically assessing and improving the quality of their programming.

The Ready by 21 Partnership is making 3 competitive *Q&A* Challenge awards available to mid-sized cities in the Southeastern U.S. that are interested in deploying this intervention across a broad spectrum of youth serving organizations. Each *Q&A* awardee will receive training and technical assistance from the Weikart Center valued at the equivalent of \$15,000-

¹ Learn more at: http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/files/RB21_Precision_to_Passion_Print.pdf.

² The YPQI is a continuous quality improvement approach that involves ongoing cycles of assessment, planning, training, and coaching. Forthcoming findings from a randomized controlled trial of the YPQI demonstrate it has a positive impact on management and instructional skills of staff in a wide range of youth-serving organizations. See details at www.cypq.org. Prior research as demonstrated relationships between youth assets as assessed by the Developmental Assets Profile and various child outcomes, including student achievement.

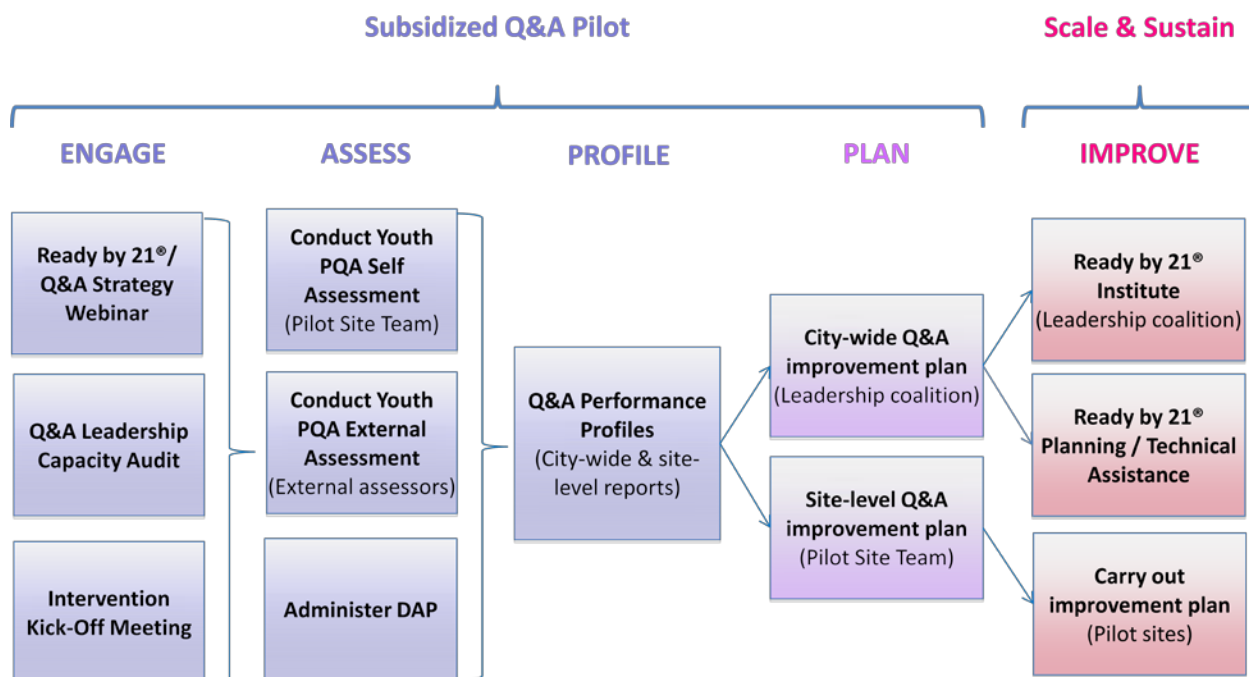
\$20,000 to: (a) build momentum and implement the Q & A model in 10 pilot sites that serve youth age 10 and older; (b) build capacity in a local intermediary organization to support the work; and (c) develop a community-level plan to scale and sustain the intervention. Lead intermediaries and pilot organizations will also have opportunities to participate in other Ready by 21 activities designed to help them position and leverage this work.

The Q&A Challenge model is being co-sponsored by multiple Ready by 21 partners, including United Way Worldwide (<http://www.unitedway.org>), National Collaboration for Youth³ (<http://www.collab4youth.org/>), Search Institute (<http://www.search-institute.org/>), American Association of School Administrators (<http://www.aasa.org/>), and the Forum for Youth Investment (<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org>). These partners will support each Q&A city's efforts by engaging their local affiliates, members and champions in discussions about the importance of quality improvement, sustainability, and Developmental Assets, as well as linkages between Q&A work and community outcomes.

Q&A Intervention Services

The Weikart Center will provide participating cities with training and technical assistance (T&TA) to help them implement and manage a local Q&A Challenge. Q&A T&TA will be delivered between July and December 2010. Figure 1 represents the major elements of the intervention. These elements are described in greater detail below.

Figure 1 – Q&A Intervention⁴



³ The National Collaboration for Youth's membership includes over 50 national, not-for-profit youth development organizations.

⁴ Q&A Start-Up Awards cover the "Engage" through "Plan" elements of the intervention

A. Q&A Leader Engagement Services

Once selected into the *Ready by 21 Quality Improvement and Asset Building Challenge*, the following elements will be enacted:

- **Ready by 21 / Q&A Strategy Webinar**
 - Consultants from the Forum for Youth Investment, Weikart Center and Search Institute will host a 60 minutes webinar for each city to discuss Ready by 21 and how the Q&A Challenge fits into it.
- **Capacity Audit**
 - Consultants from the Weikart Center will conduct 60 minute interviews with up to two project “leaders” in each city to determine baseline “capacity” to implement and sustain the Q&A intervention;
 - Ten pilot site leaders will complete a 15 minute on-line survey regarding organizational capacity for quality improvement⁵
- **Kick-Off Meeting**
 - Senior staff from the Weikart Center will lead a full day in-person kick-off meeting for pilot site managers, data collectors and local leaders to launch the Q&A Challenge. The event will be particularly appropriate for leaders who fund and/or are responsible for building the capacity of OST programs.
 - The meeting will include:
 - A keynote presentation describing relevant research and recent policy innovation related to quality improvement and asset building, as well as an introduction to the broader Ready by 21 initiative.
 - A brief overview of the results from the capacity audit and how these findings align with Q&A tools from the Weikart Center’s quality improvement work and Search Institute’s Developmental Assets work.
 - For pilot site staff: Youth PQA Basics for pilot site managers and local data collectors (see below)
 - Participants will also receive an implementation guide for the Q&A Intervention, including a list of training and technical assistance resources available from the Weikart Center and Search Institute.

B. Assessment and Profiling Services

- **Local Capacity Building**
 - The Weikart Center will build local capacity to collect data on the Youth Program Quality Assessment (High/Scope, 2005) and the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Profile⁶. Awardees will receive:

⁵ Survey will include elements of the Youth Program Quality Assessment system. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. 2005. *Youth Program Quality Assessment, Forms A and B*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press

- Youth PQA Basics Online: Each of 10 pilot sites (organizations that serve youth) will receive 2 log-ins to Youth PQA Basics Online. Youth PQA Basics Online is a 4-6 hour web-based course that supports program self-assessment efforts using the Youth Program Quality Assessment, a standardized assessment of quality. This online training should be completed by pilot site staff members that are not able to attend the kick-off meeting.
- Youth PQA Reliability Training: The Weikart Center will train up to 5 PQA External Assessor in each city using our “reliability by mail” methodology. In addition to attendance at the Youth PQA training or completion of an on-line PQA Basics course, each reliable assessor must complete and additional 6-8 hours of training and pass a reliability check.⁷
- DAP Survey: Search Institute will provide a DAP Survey Introductory Pack to each pilot site, including a User’s Manual, 50 surveys and 50 self-scoring profile forms.

Data Collection and Reporting

- Ten pilot sites from each city will participate in *Q&A* data collection. After several hours of distance technical assistance, awardees will assume responsibility for managing data collection and submitting the following information to the Weikart Center:
 - Youth PQA program-self assessment scores (1 score per pilot site)
 - Youth PQA external assessment scores (2 PQA scores per pilot site; collected by reliable local data collectors)
 - DAP survey data (up to 50 surveys per pilot site)
- The Weikart Center will use data from the capacity audit (city and organization level data), the self-assessment (organization level data), the external assessments (classroom levels data) and the Developmental Assets profile (child level data) to prepare site- and city-level *Q&A* Performance Profiles that will be used in subsequent Planning with Data workshops.

C. Planning Services

- ***Planning with Data Workshops***
 - The Weikart Center will conduct 2 half-day Planning with Data Workshops for each city using the *Q&A* Performance Profiles.
 - PWD Workshop #1 will convene stakeholders from each pilot site to draft comprehensive, site-level *Q&A* improvement plans.
 - PWD Workshop #2 will convene leaders from each city to: (a) review performance profiles, improvement plans and customer satisfaction data from the sites; (b) develop a plan to support *Q&A* implementation in pilot sites; and (c) strategize about what would be required to expand and sustain the *Q&A* work.

⁶ Search Institute has established qualification guidelines for users of the DAP to ensure its appropriate use by professionals who are trained and experienced in the use of individual and small group assessment instruments. Data collection qualifications and procedures will be negotiated with each site prior to award.

⁷ Reliability is defined as 80% perfect agreement with gold standard scores for a 45 minute video segment.

D. Improvement Services

- **Ready by 21 Institute**
 - At the conclusion of the *Q&A* sequence, two leaders from each city will receive a scholarship to attend a Ready by 21 Institute in Washington, DC⁸. This training's main objectives are to: (a) expand participants' understanding of the rationale, thinking and research that underpin the Ready by 21 approach; and (b) provide attendees with practical and conceptual tools to help them introduce the approach to their communities. Participation in the institute will help each city's team position and leverage the *Q&A* Challenge work within the broader child and youth policy context in their community.
- **Ready by 21 Training & Technical Assistance Services**
 - The Forum, Weikart Center, Search Institute and other Ready by 21 partners offer training and technical assistance products and services (T/TA). T/TA is available to support *Q&A* work as well as a numerous other Ready by 21-affiliated initiatives. Most T/TA supports are available on a fee-for-service basis and at substantial discounts when part of a broader Ready by 21 Challenge.

In addition to the core intervention services, Challenge communities will have the opportunity to participate in other regional and national Ready by 21 activities.⁹ If additional local match resources are available, Challenge communities are encouraged to consider implementing a broader or more intensive *Q&A* pilot.

Grantee Responsibilities

In exchange for receiving the *Q&A* services described above, awardees are expected to provide the resources necessary to (a) engage network leaders and pilot sites in intervention activities; (b) complete local *Q&A* data collection; and (c) support *Q&A* improvement planning. Selected cities will agree to:

- **Identify and convene an existing coalition of community leaders to learn about and buy into the *Q&A* project.** Leaders should represent multiple sectors interested in improving the quality of youth services and building youth assets.
- **Identify and recruit 10 youth serving organizations that offer OST programming to participate in a *Q&A* pilot.** Each participating organization will enroll one site in the pilot intervention. Pilot sites should be drawn from, if possible, United Way funded- and local affiliates of national youth-serving organizations (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, Camp Fire USA, YMCA). Pilot sites will:
 - Attend the kickoff and send staff to Youth PQA Training (live or on-line).
 - Complete a Youth PQA Self-Assessment for their program (1 score per pilot site): Assure time for one manager and one staff member from each pilot site to complete Youth PQA Basics Online and lead program self-assessments.

⁸ We will provide free registration and a \$1,000 subsidy to defray travel costs for 2 leaders from each grantee city to attend a Ready by 21 Institute in Washington, DC.

⁹ See www.forumfyi.org/readyby21 for more information.

- Schedule and assure time for pilot site managers and their staff teams to participate in a 1/2-day Planning with Data workshop with Weikart Center and Search Institute staff.
- **Host a Q&A Kick-Off Meeting for Local Leaders, Pilot Site Managers, and data collectors.** Provide meeting space and supports for Q&A stakeholders, pilot site managers and data collectors to participate in a 1-day Kick-off event led by Weikart Center staff.
- **Provide adequate staffing¹⁰ to collect Q&A performance data.** Identify and assure time for up to 5 individuals (preferably not affiliated with the pilot sites) to:
 - Complete the Youth PQA External Assessor workshop and conduct up to three external assessments using the Youth Program Quality Assessment in each pilot site.
 - Administer up to 50 DAP surveys per site to youth in attendance on one day when the external observation is conducted.
- **Host a Planning with Data Workshop for Pilot Sites.** Provide meeting space and supports for pilot site managers to participate in a 4 hour planning with data workshop led by Weikart Center staff.

Time Commitments for Grantees and Sites

We estimate that the value of T&TA services provided by the Weikart Center will be equivalent to between \$15,000 and \$20,000, depending on the size of the project. However, awardees and participating pilot sites will need to provide a match (in the form of human resources for stakeholders to participate in trainings and collect data). Local commitments of human resources will include:

For each pilot site we estimate that full participation in the Q&A Intervention will require approximately 30 hours of total staff time to complete the several elements. We recommend that recruited sites be given the opportunity to replace planned professional development during the project period with Q&A elements.

For each participating leader we estimate that full participation (attending the kick off and Planning with Data meeting) will be approximately 3 hours.

For each lead organization, network, intermediary or coalition (one per city) we estimate that full participation will require substantial coordination time. For this reason, we recommend the Q&A Challenge for medium sized cities with intermediary organizations already in place that might adopt the Q&A Challenge as a part of their routine service set.

¹⁰ This requirement can be accomplished in several ways. However, we recommend engagement of an established local intermediary organization that already provides training and technical assistance to education or human services related organizations.

Selection Process and Timeline

Online applications will be available beginning on June 1st and will be due on June 18th. Potential applicants must attend an informational webinar on Thursday, June 10 or Friday, June 11, 2010. To register, please visit:

- Thursday, June 10th at 2:00 p.m. EDT: <https://forumfyi.ilinc.com/register/cyvpzmf>
- Friday, June 11th at 10:00 a.m. EDT: <https://forumfyi.ilinc.com/register/ywcxjvf>

Visit <http://forumfyi.org/content/ready-21-quality-improvement-asset-building-qa-challenge> or call 734.961.6900 ext. 202 to learn more about the Q&A Challenge and selection process.

Applications will be reviewed by representatives from the Weikart Center, Search Institute, Forum for Youth Investment, United Way Worldwide and National Collaboration for Youth. Preference will be given to communities that have engaged funders, existing intermediary capacity to provide training and support to a range of providers, and a network of providers interested in quality improvement. Applications will be scored on a 100 point scale as follows:

- **A core group of interested leaders.** Applicants must identify a diverse, cross-sector group of leaders who will support and engage in the Q&A work. We encourage applicants to identify and engage existing coalitions working on youth issues. *Preference will be given to communities that have engaged their local United Way, the mayor's office and/or school superintendent(s).* (30 pts)
- **A lead organization.** Applicants must identify a lead organization, formal partnership or coalition that will be responsible and accountable for championing the challenge and/or coordinating the formal engagement of other entities. *Preference will be given to communities that identify an existing capacity-building intermediary, local United Way, or provider coalition as the lead organization.* (20 pts)
- **A network of providers.** If applicable, applicants must describe the history, functional state, and capacity of any cross-sector provider networks operating within their community. *If no such network exists, applicants should describe recent efforts to build such a network as well as barriers to success.* (20 pts)
- **A group of pilot sites from the OST sector.** Applicants must identify 10 local provider organizations that will be engaged in the Q&A pilot. The provider organizations must serve youth aged 10 and older. *Preference will be given to communities that include a combination of United Way funded programs, 21st CCLC funded programs, local affiliates of national organizations such as Camp Fire USA, and other school-based (including Title I funded) programs.* (30 pts)

About the Weikart Center (www.cypq.org)

The David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality is a joint venture between the Forum for Youth Investment and the HighScope Educational Research Foundation. The Weikart Center is charged with positioning point of service quality as a powerful public idea that drives the out-of-school time field toward higher levels of understanding, expectation and action about the quality of experiences available to children and youth. In recent years, the Weikart Center has worked with managers and staff in nearly 2,000 youth-serving programs to improve their positive youth development and asset-building skills using a set of evidenced-based quality improvement practices.

About Search Institute (www.search-institute.org/)

Search Institute® is an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization committed to helping create healthy communities for every young person. Because we believe that “all kids are our kids,” we create books and other materials that welcome and respect people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, genders, religions, economic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and abilities. Over the past two decades, we have helped more than 500 communities evaluate and initiate efforts to improve the Developmental Assets and trajectories of young people. Our Mission: To provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities.

Ready by 21® National Partnership (<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/readyby21/partners>)

An unprecedented coalition of organizations representing government, education, non-profit, business, research and philanthropy is taking Ready by 21 into states and communities around the country. A “dream team” of the country’s most effective agencies, it works with trailblazing leaders who are shaping youth and community development policies and best practices. Its combined reach is over 650,000 state and local leaders who impact the lives of more than 1 million children and youth.

The Forum for Youth Investment is the creator of Ready by 21, and the founding and managing partner. *United Way Worldwide* is the signature partner, joined by mobilization partners that engage core stakeholders to help today’s youth be ready for college, work and life:

- American Association of School Administrators
- Corporate Voices for Working Families
- The National Collaboration for Youth
- The National Conference of State Legislatures
- The Search Institute

The National Partnership also includes technical partners who can offer community leaders packages of cutting-edge and competitively priced services and tools; these organizations include Child Trends, Community Systems Group, Spark Action, David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, The Finance Project, The Gallup Organization, nFocus Software and Results Leadership Group, LLC.