



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Evaluation of the YMCA's Quality Improvement System in Early Learning Programs

Prepared by: YMCA of Metro Chicago Department of Learning and Evaluation

RFP Release and Due Date: RFP release date: Monday, June 17, 2019. Application due date: Monday, July 29, 2019

Budget: \$200,000 over two years

Work Timeframe: August 15, 2019 to August 14, 2020 with extension for one additional year (August 15, 2020-August 14, 2021) based on contract completion and quality in Year 1.

The YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago is seeking an evaluation partner for a one-year evaluation partnership, with the opportunity for an additional year extension based on performance. The partner will support and lead several analyses under the Y Quality (Y/Q) Initiative, a program that seeks to enhance student outcomes among children age 0-5 (~80% of which are in Head Start programming) through a unique professional development system for educators.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The Y's mission is to develop strong children, families and communities across Metropolitan Chicago through academic readiness, character development, violence prevention, and fitness & healthy living. For more than 155 years, the Y has been an active partner in supporting communities across five counties in Illinois. Today, 3,000 Y employees develop and nurture the potential of 60,000 youth and their families. The expansive Y network of 22 membership centers, 5 camps, and 140 program sites across the city and suburbs provide Y communities with safe and supportive environments, health and wellness opportunities, and educational programming for all ages, ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses. Y programs span the developmental continuum, targeting early education and extended-day enrichment for school-age youth and teens.

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM TO BE EVALUATED

Across the Y/Q Initiative, over 900 students, age 0-6, are served in Early Head Start, Head Start and non-Head Start programming. Approximately 440 children are served in Early Head Start/Head Start programming across 10 sites in Chicago. Those neighborhoods include: East Garfield Park, Englewood, Humboldt Park, Little Village, Logan Square, Lower West Side, North Lawndale, Pilsen, Rogers Park, South Chicago, and Woodlawn. The populations of these communities are primarily Latino and African American and have high rates of poverty, crime and negative health and educational outcomes. In several of these communities, the unemployment rate is above 20 percent, at least 40 percent of residents live below the poverty level, and over 29 percent of residents do not receive a high school diploma. There is a tremendous unmet need for early learning programs in these areas.

In addition, children are served in early learning programs across 7 suburban locations, from DuPage County in the west to McHenry County in the north. The programs are primarily fee-based and range from three-, four- and five- days a week, part or full-day programming.



The vision of the Y/Q Initiative is to be an example of “reverse model” quality, where culturally appropriate practices build enduring academic and social emotional learning skills for all children.

The primary goal of the initiative is to further advance child-level outcomes to ensure children in low-resourced settings are school ready and developed within language, literacy, social studies, math, and social-emotional domains. This is done through a Professional Development model whereby educators are a part of the Professional Learning Communities, which feed into site-specific Communities of Practice.

The Y/Q Initiative Theory of Change states:

If we apply the latest science and research in child development, adult learning, and family and community engagement

And we improve the learning climate for staff through professional learning communities, coaching, reflective supervision, and embedded evaluation,

Then we will improve the learning climate for children that will ultimately achieve the desired outcome for all children within our reach to achieve school readiness.

The Theory of Change supports improvement in child outcomes through the Y’s continuous improvement pathways. High quality classroom spaces and environments and instructional quality are important drivers in affecting a high-quality learning environment. In addition, a professional development system for educators as well as a unique anti-bias approach provides additional supports for furthering academic success for some of our youngest learners. Lastly, family engagement and the role of the home environment create a holistic viewpoint of all potential levers of change.

All outcomes will flow into two main data processes. The first enables a robust continuous quality improvement cycle for educators, leaders, and other stakeholders, in addition to allowing the research team to track outcomes in real-time to gauge progress towards outcomes. The other feed will facilitate advanced methods and full-scale integration of all endpoints, specifically within the Y microcosm of early education and care.

3. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, & KEY QUESTIONS

The Y/Q team seeks an external evaluation partner to aid in ongoing analyses of all pathway outcomes from the time frame of August 15, 2019-August 14, 2020, with the option for extension based on performance in Year 1 for an additional year (August 15, 2020-August 14, 2021).

3.a. CURRENT OR PROPOSED DATA COLLECTION EFFORTS & INSTRUMENT/TOOL ASSOCIATED

The Y’s continuous improvement pathways guide all data collection efforts and subsequent analyses. They include 8 primary pathways for continuous improvement, which are viewed, in tandem, as key outcomes in this work. The pathways and their corresponding data assessments include:

Classroom Practice Outcome Pathways:

- Student Outcomes: Teaching Strategies Gold, Desired Results for Children and Families, benchmarked across and to the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (new addition this year)
- Physical Environment: ECERS/ITERS, ROSIE
- Curricular Content (Y’s anti-bias framework): Anti-Bias Quality Tool (to be developed), Child-created storybooks for Inquiry data



- Instructional Quality: CLASS guided by the Framework for Teaching Evaluation (new addition this year)
- Family Engagement: Early Education Essential Parent Survey (new addition this year), Family Engagement Survey

Organization Climate & Conditions Outcome Pathways:

- Organizational Climate: Organization Equity Assessment (new addition this year), Early Education Essentials Teacher/Staff and Parent Surveys (new addition this year), Program Administration Tool (new addition this year)
- Professional Identity: Surveys (i.e. Administrator Role Perception survey), Focus Groups
- Fidelity: Fidelity Tool (implemented, but enhancement to take place)

All new tools are in exploratory phase and subject to change. Assessment use, utility, and analysis plans will be solidified with the evaluation partner and an assessment partner, who will be leading data collection efforts.

3.b. COLLABORATIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

The Y/Q work is guided heavily by an internal Evaluation Team in the Department of Learning and Evaluation (L&E) at the YMCA of Metro Chicago. They will coordinate all data collection efforts and will be responsible for data cleaning, processing, and overall preparation of ~90% of data. In tandem, they will work with an additional partner (the *assessment partner*) who will aid in data collection efforts. The L&E evaluation team will work with the external evaluation partner during this evaluation period.

3.c. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The external evaluation partner will aid the YELQI team in answering the following questions within the 2-year timespan.

1. What does fidelity to the Professional Development (PD) system look like in regards to dosage, approach, and buy-in to professional learning experiences?
2. Within these systems, what is the amount of individualization and differentiation that needs to occur for adults learners (i.e. adult staff) to motivate improved outcomes?
3. What is the relationship between professional identity and classroom quality? How does professional identity and classroom quality affect student outcomes?
4. How does fidelity to an anti-bias approach affect a teacher's practice? Student outcomes?
5. How does the use of an anti-bias approach and organizational equity framework affect family engagement?]

3.d. METHODS AND APPROACH

The exact methods and approach for the Y/Q analyses will be heavily guided by the external evaluation partner. **Analyses will require both qualitative and quantitative methodology.**

3.e. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

Items of Work and Corresponding Deadline	Year 1				Year 2			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Evaluation Partner finalized	X							
Evaluation Retreat (will aid in alignment and a inclusive plan for optimal evaluation and processes for Year 1)	X							
Enhancement of existing Fidelity Tool (Deliverable due at end of Q2)		X						
Development of Anti-Bias Quality Tool (Deliverable due at end of Q2)		X						
Data Collection: Focus group of PLC participants				X				
By end of Q3: Research Question 3, Phase 1, research question 2			X					
By end of Q4: Analyses on fidelity to PLC, fidelity to anti-bias approach, ongoing analyses from Yr1Q3				X				
Year 1 External Evaluation Report due				X				
<i>Extension for an additional year will be based on evaluation performance and completion of contractual deliverables in Year 1 of partnership. Performance will be evaluated and determined in late Q3/early Q4 of Year 1.</i>								
Evaluation Retreat (will aid in alignment and an inclusive plan for optimal evaluation and processes for Year 2)					X			
Data Collection: Focus group of PLC participants							X	
Continued analyses from Year 1 based on findings					X	X	X	X
Year 2 External Evaluation Report due								X

***Timeline is subject to change based on final analysis plan and use of assessment tools.*



4. PROPOSAL PROCEDURES

4.a. PREFERRED EVALUATOR(S) QUALIFICATIONS

Individuals, firms, and consortia are encouraged to submit proposals for this work. Preferred competencies and experience include:

- Track record leading evaluation for early education and childhood programs, specific knowledge of local level early learning operations, policies, procedures highly preferred;
- Extensive experience working with many different data areas in tandem for overall analyses;
- Extensive experience in qualitative analyses;
- Experience in quantitative analyses;
- Knowledge of family engagement practices and assessment highly preferred;
- Must be located in the Chicagoland area OR be available for regular (monthly) in-person meetings;
- Ability to maintain own licenses for data analyses software (ie. SAS, Stata, SPSS, R) and additional softwares to execute analysis plan;
- Experience with professional learning communities for educators highly preferred

4.b. EVALUATION BUDGET. \$200,000 in total funds over the course of two years. Ideally, \$100,000 is allocated for each awarded year of work. Each evaluation budget should be accompanied by a budget justification outlining fund allocation. There are no restrictions to what can be added to the budget.

4.c. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS. The Full Proposal should include:

- Cover Letter, including organization/individual names who would complete the evaluation, brief introduction to background of qualified partner(s);
- Statement of the Organization/Individual's qualifications (Max. 3 pages single spaced, Ariel font, size 11);
- A description of utility of the evaluation partner to the proposed methodology for implementation of the evaluation plan given what is stated above (Max. 4 pages single spaced, Ariel font, size 11);
- Sample(s) of relevant work (may submit up to 3);
- Three contact for recommendations (we will not contact before speaking with the candidate);
- CVs of key personnel who will be involved; and
- Detailed budget and budget justification (no requirements for format, just please ensure that these documents are clear and as detailed as possible, especially as it pertains to the budget justification)

Completed proposals must be received by Jen Cooper, MPH, Director of Measurement and Evaluation at YMCA Metro Chicago no later than Monday, July 29th, 2019 at 12:00AM CST. Please submit the materials via email by sending directly to Jen Cooper at jecooper@ymcachicago.org. **Please ensure all materials are in PDF format. Submissions are encouraged to be in one PDF upload, instead of separate attached files.**



5. PROPOSAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- **Alignment to Evaluation Objectives**
 - Ability of partner to support and lead large-scale research questions for overall Y/Q Initiative
 - Ability of partner to juggle several different data elements at once and synthesize into a cohesive analysis plan
 - Alignment and experience with Chicago-specific local policies and procedures for Head Start early childhood programming
- **Alignment to Proposal Requirements**
 - Realistic budget and justification
 - Quality of evaluation example(s) provided
- **Methodological Experience**
 - Significant experience utilizing quantitative analyses
 - Experience utilizing qualitative analysis techniques
- **Preferential Experience**
 - Experience with Professional Development for Educators
 - Experience with Family Engagement
 - Experience developing tools for internal use such as tools that measure fidelity to program areas
 - Experience working with multi-site teams
 - Experience managing projects with varying data elements at once
 - Availability of resources such as softwares and appropriate materials to conduct efficient and impactful evaluation
 - Logistically accessible to the Y team