Evaluating Investments in Out of School Time Programs
United Way of Chittenden County

Youth Development Programs Funded by UWCC in FY2012
Boys & Girls Club of Burlington: Youth Development programs
King Street Center: After School and Teen Futures Programs
Sara Holbrook Community Center: After School and Teen Programs

UWCC Impact Team Volunteers evaluate these programs using 3 basic performance measures:

1.   ***How much did the program do?***
# of youth served by the program; break down as relevant by # of core participants (e.g., those enrolled in afterschool programming) v. drop-in participants

2.   ***How well did the program do it?***
Program's use of best practice; results of any formal program review (e.g., STARS ratings, if appropriate); as well as less formal measures of program quality: Staff qualifications & training; Staff retention; Partnership with other agencies.

3.   ***Is anyone better off?****
Youth self reports of program experience and benefits, addressing 5 Outcomes:
1. SAFETY: Youth feel safe at the program/site.
2. ADULTS: Youth feel connected to caring adults who act as positive role models.
3. CONNECTION: Youth feel connected to their community.
4. VALUES: Youth develop a strong self of self and core values that shape their choices and interactions.
5. DECISIONS: Youth make healthy decisions that help them succeed.

The remainder of this document explains the types of outcomes data reported by youth development programs – these are the data the team will use to answer "Is anyone better off?"

* How do youth programs assess how youth are better off?
All youth development programs funded by UWCC use a common set of survey questions to get feedback from youth. These questions were designed in 2007 by UWCC's Youth Affinity Group – a program directors and staff working with UWCC to define and document 5 Common Outcomes all programs want to see among youth they serve. These are the youth outcomes for which the UWCC-funded programs hold themselves responsible.

Rationale: Out of school time programs funded by UWCC use an assets-based model of youth development. Through engaging in constructive activities and making connections with peers and caring, supportive adults, youth develop personal and social assets that help them success in school and in their communities, and avoid risky behaviors. Most program lack capacity to demonstrate long term outcomes for out of school time programming, and there is research showing that IF (a) youth have positive experiences during out of school time, THEN (b) they are more likely to achieve longer term, positive outcomes. UWCC holds program responsible for showing (a) – that youth are having positive experiences in their program. The 5 Common Outcomes developed by UWCC and its partners assess whether youth are experiencing (b) now, which is what they need to achieve (b) later.

The 5 Common Outcomes are listed below along with the *required survey questions* the group developed to assess these outcomes. The number of questions and the wording are different for "younger" v. "older" kids, with younger kids having fewer, more direct questions. Program staff decide what age groups will get the younger and older questions, and programs are free to include some "older" questions on the younger kids survey (and vice versa) if they feel it is appropriate and helpful.

Each program has its own survey, which may include any additional questions they want to ask. And different programs use different methods (e.g., paper/pencil v. on-line format). Programs are welcome to report data from additional questions, but no program should be penalized during UWCC review for not including optional questions. The survey questions were piloted in 2008, revised slightly in 2009, and all programs have used them at least once a year since 2009.

Survey Questions for Evaluating 5 Common Outcomes

Outcome #1   SAFETY   Youth feel safe at the program/site.
This outcome represents youths' experience of physical, social, and emotional safety when they are at the program/site. Each program has rules and practices designed to keep youth physically safe; however, this outcome goes beyond an objective assessment of physical safety and instead focuses on youth *feeling* safe and unthreatened with the program environment. Staff want youth to feel free being themselves in a safe, welcoming social environment.

Questions for younger kids
- Do you like coming to [program/site]?

Questions for older kids
- Do you feel comfortable being yourself at [program/site]?
- Do you like the way other kids treat you when you're here?
- Is this a good place for you to be [after-school, or in the evenings]?
- Do you see kids bullying other kids when they're here at [program/site]? Optional follow up question: If yes, what have you seen happening?

Outcome #2 ADULTS Youth feel connected to caring adults who act as positive role models.
This outcome represents the importance of youth's interactions and on-going relationships with program staff. Staff members act as advisors, mentors, counselors, and resources for youth. Relationships between staff and youth should be consistent, trusting, caring, supportive, and inspiring. Staff members encourage youth participation in healthy activities; they can model good choices and healthy relationships.

Questions for younger kids
- Do the [grownups/staff] at [program/site] care about the kids here?
- Do the [grownups/staff] at [program/site] help kids when they are scared or sad?

Questions for older kids
- Would you say the [grownups/staff] here at [program/site] *care about the kids* who come here?
- Can you *trust* the [grownups/staff] here at [program/site]?
- Are the [grownups/staff] here at [program/site] *good role models?*
- Are the [grownups/staff] here at [program/site] *helpful?*
- Are the [grownups/staff] here at [program/site] *easy to talk to?*
- Who do you talk to when you're upset or worried about something, or you need help making a decision?

Outcome #3   CONNECTION   Youth feel connected to their community.
This outcome represents the role of youth programs in helping youth feel connected to and part of their community. Connection happens when youth feel a sense of belonging to the group, program, or organization, and when they see themselves as having a place or role within that community. Youth develop connections to the larger community as the program helps them get involved with people and activities outside of the program, and when they learn about community resources and opportunities for recreation, information, and assistance.

Questions for younger kids
- Do you feel like you are part of the group at [program/site]?
- Would you be unhappy if you could no longer come to [program/site]?

Questions for older kids
- Do you feel you belong when you are at [program/site]?
- Would you be unhappy if you could no longer come to [program/site]?
- Does coming to [program/site] help you learn about people or places or things going on in your community?

Outcome #4   VALUES   Youth develop a strong sense of self and core values that shape their choices and interactions.
This outcome represents programs' goals of supporting youths' development of character and values. This does not mean simply taking on or be held accountable to the values of others; rather, this outcome describes youth's development of personal values to guide their behaviors and interactions with others. Character development is founded upon a strong sense of self, when youth feel confident and recognize their self worth. Youth establish personal values in part by understanding the values of the program and the larger communities to which they belong, and then by integrating this knowledge into their own sense of who they are and what they believe.

Questions for younger kids
- Are there good rules here to help kids know what they can or can't do at [program/site]?
- Do these rules help you make good choices even when you're not here?

Questions for older kids
- Have you done things here at [program/site] that make you feel proud?
- Does coming to [program/site] help kids figure out how to do what is "right" for them?

Outcome #5: DECISIONS   Youth make healthy decisions that help them succeed.
This outcome represents programs' goals of helping youth develop the capacity to make healthy life choices and to avoid unhealthy or risky behavior. This capacity is a longer-term, evolving outcome that continues to emerging or strengthening as youth grow into adults. This outcome is supported by the other 4 outcomes (safety, connections with adults, connection to community, and character and values), each of which contributes knowledge, support, or encouragement as youth face difficult decisions. This outcome also contributes to the other 4 outcomes when a youth's healthy decisions: help to create a sense of safety, allow them to form a connection with staff and/or the larger community; or foster their own sense of self worth or values.

Questions for younger kids
- Do the [grownups/staff] at [program/site] help you make good choices?

Questions for older kids
- Are you learning things at [program/site] that will help you make good decisions in your life?
- Does coming to [program/site] help you stay away from doing other things that aren't good for you?