



Minneapolis Beacons Network Evaluation Plan

2013

“Evaluative thinking includes a willingness to do reality testing, to ask the question: how do we know what we think that we know. To use data to inform decisions — not to make data the only basis of decisions — but to bring data to bear on decisions...It’s an analytical way of thinking that infuses everything that goes on.”

--Michael Quinn Patton

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Beacons Network Evaluation Plan DRAFT 2013-2015

Introduction

Data driven continuous improvement is a core foundation for the Beacons Network to assess progress towards youth outcomes goals and ensure continued program quality. A data driven culture and collective vision are core components of the supports provided to partners through the Beacons collaborative partnership.

Beacons collect data at multiple levels (activity, Center, Network) with diverse stakeholders (youth, school staff, parents, staff, community) in a systemized process across the Network. A succinct data collection plan, defined roles, and consistent tools ensure timely and accurate data collection for nearly 4,000 youth in ten Beacon Centers managed by four lead agencies. Beacon staff and stakeholders are trained and supported to use evaluation data in an intentional planning process, informing program strategies and ensuring greater impact.

The following evaluation plan was developed by Minneapolis Beacons Network Director Jenny Wright Collins and Beacons Evaluator Angele Passe of Bluewater Associates. Collins and Passe will work with the Beacons Network Specialist Hayley Tompkins to coordinate across multiple lead organizational partners to ensure the timeline and data collection expectations are met for key evaluation components including:

- **Youth participation and demographic data collection**
- **Youth outcomes data including the Federal Teacher Survey, SAYO tool, and school attendance data**
- **The Youth Program Quality Assessment Tool and continuous improvement process**
- **Youth participatory action research**

Background and description

In 1998, four of the largest youth development organizations in Minneapolis worked with school district, city and national leaders to replicate the highly successful New York City Beacons model in response to identified needs of youth in low-income neighborhoods. The Minneapolis Beacons Network began and continues with leadership from those same partners; the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities, the YWCA of Minneapolis, the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities, and Minneapolis Community Education. Beacon Centers are located at 11 schools in Minneapolis where nearly 4,000 K-12th grade youth lead and learn afterschool and in the summer.

The Beacons Network has invested in a solid infrastructure for evaluation that allows Centers to consistently deliver data collection requirements and achieve program goals. Data collection is coordinated by the Beacons Network Director and is implemented by the Beacons Center Director at each location.

- The Network Director monitors the timeline for data submission and communicates any changes in grant reporting requirements to staff and the external evaluator. This is a critical role given the size, scope, and unique data-sharing relationship between the Minneapolis Public Schools and the youth serving organizations that manage the Beacon Centers.
- Center Coordinators collect unduplicated counts of youth and adult participants, participation rates, and activity data, and work with principals and teachers in the school to distribute and collect teacher and youth surveys.
- An external evaluator, Angèle Passe of Bluewater Associates, collects data and compiles results to determine whether goals for the program have been met. Passe works with the Minneapolis Public Schools Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment to centrally track students by Student Identification Number to obtain demographic information and assess trends in student attendance and academic achievement. Passe also compiles student and teacher surveys and program activity and participation data.
- Young people have been involved with evaluation as part of the quality assessment process and a qualitative evaluation conducted years ago. This plan will expand that role to include participatory action research and expansion of the use of youth as quality assessors.

The Beacons Network is working in partnership with the Youth Coordinating Board through a recent grant from Youthprise to develop a plan to replicate elements of the Sprockets model from St. Paul into Minneapolis with the intent of building a more cohesive system for out-of-school time learning in Minneapolis. Evaluation will be a key component of this effort. Through this project, a handful of Beacon Centers will be piloting the CitySpan database and all will pilot the SAYO tool to test out two data tools designed to help build the field of out-of-school time by developing shared strategies for measurement across jurisdictions and organizations. Beacons will also expand the use of Quality Action Teams (youth and adults partnering to assess quality using the YPQA) to additional Beacons partner organizations.

Purpose and goal

There are multiple evaluation goals of the Beacons Network. **We evaluate in order to...**

- Gather data to **inform our practices** and programming for continuous improvement and to ensure responsiveness to youth and communities
- **Measure our impact** on youth and communities and prove our effectiveness and compliance to funders and stakeholders (are we doing what we said we would do?)
- **Tell our story through** credible evaluation to youth, staff, funders, and stakeholders so they know how we all make a difference
- Promote a **culture of reflection** and critical thinking among youth, staff, and decision-makers

- **Maintain a collective vision and common strategies** across partners and stakeholders that is guided by data and agreed upon measures

We try to adhere to the following principles when implementing evaluation:

- * Partner with and be respectful of **youth and community**
- * Define and work together towards **common goals** between multiple organizations and schools
- * **Align outcomes** in order to minimize the burden of data collection on staff
- * Connect **research and promising practices** with our work
- * **Use data to inform** our work, and our work to inform the data
- * Translate evaluation methods and results for **multiple audiences and purposes**

For these reasons, the Beacons evaluation plan is utilization-focused and formative, incorporating multiple methods and instruments. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are incorporated.

Limitations

There are two sets of limitations:

1. The Beacons' evaluation is a non- experimental design. Its primary purpose is documentation of services to youth with the goal of organizational learning and quality improvement. The evaluation relies on objective data such as program records and subjective data such as surveys. There is no comparison group. The results provide a good description of the work that Minneapolis Beacons do with youth, but they cannot be generalized to the overall value of other OST programs. The cause and effect relationships are described in terms of lessons learned for service implementation within the Beacons rather than basic research. The design is typically more short term rather than longitudinal due to resources available and its purpose of informing current programming.
2. Beacons operate within schools in the Minneapolis Public Schools system. Factors within the school system may affect Beacons program operations and outcomes in ways that cannot be controlled.

Audience and stakeholders

The Beacons audience and stakeholders are diverse and include:

- Beacons staff, including center directors and youth workers
- Beacons youth Leadership Team
- Beacons Management Team
- Executives and Board Members of the Beacons lead agencies: Boys and Girls Club, Minneapolis Community Education, YMCA, and YWCA
- Partner organizations (in 2012, there were sixty-three partners)
- School and school district leaders
- Beacons funders and policy makers

The evaluation results are compiled in an annual report that is shared with the Beacons lead agencies. Data and findings from the report are then used to inform reports prepared for funders including the Minnesota Department of Education administering the Federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grants and Youthprise. In addition to funders, information from the report is pulled out and put into formats that meet the needs of the Beacons Center Directors, Beacons management team and Beacons Leadership Team for decision making. The data is also shared with stakeholders in a variety of forms and settings including an annual Beacons principals breakfast where staff, partners, and school administrators reflect on the data and on research and best practices to help inform their partnerships.

Decisions

Decisions about the results of the evaluation are made on two levels: system and program.

1. System level decisions include the allocation of resources, the alignment with Minneapolis Public Schools, and the collaborations with community partners.
2. Program level decisions include strategies for partnering with families and community, the priorities for staff professional development, program offerings, and how to design meaningful leadership pathways for youth.

Questions

With this evaluation, the Beacons Network wants to answer the following questions:

- Who are the youth served by Beacons?
- Is Beacons effectively closing the “opportunity gap” by providing access for low-income youth and youth of color in Minneapolis?
- How often do youth participate in Beacons and why?
- What opportunities are being provided through Beacons for youth to practice 21st Century skills?
- Are youth connected to school and attending regularly?
- Are youth engaged in learning and succeeding academically?
- Are youth engaged as leaders and how are they contributing to their communities?
- How do teachers rate the academic and social growth of youth participating in Beacons?
- How do young people who participate in Beacons see their future?
- What do youth think of the quality of Beacons programs?
- What do parents think of the quality and impact of Beacons programs?
- What is the experience of youthworkers and staff in the program? ?
- How do school and community partners perceive the added value of Beacons and how can that be increased?

Evaluation and Data Collection Methods

Goal	Indicator	Data Source	Data Collection Responsibilities
<p>Ensure Access to Regular Participation in High Quality Out-of-School Time Opportunities for youth from low-income communities.</p>	<p>OST Opportunities: Ten Beacon Centers will each provide a minimum of four days a week school year and summer programming, totaling a minimum of 420 hours per year each.</p>	<p>Beacon Center and Activity Information : Federal 21st Century PPICS Data Base center and activity information and State Activity Reporting Forms.</p>	<p>Beacons Network Specialist and Evaluator set timeline for data collection with each center and compile and enter overall results annually.</p> <p>Network Director sets and communicates target goals for recruitment and retention for each center.</p>
	<p>Regular Participation: 70% of K-8 and 50% of 9-12th of the total number of unduplicated youth (year 1 2500; year 2 3500; year 3 3850) participate on a consistent, ongoing basis</p>	<p>Regular participation is defined as attending 30 days or more. Individual participant program attendance records from each site are coded for less than 30 days and 30+ days, 60+ days, and 90+ days.</p>	<p>Center Coordinators submit program attendance records for all participants including Student ID numbers.</p> <p>External evaluator compiles all center data to assess whether recruitment and retention goals were met, and works with MPS REA Department to pull demographic data.</p>
	<p>Access: 80% or more of Beacons youth are low-income.</p> <p>85% are youth of color.</p>	<p>Student ID numbers for participants link to district demographic data.</p>	<p>Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQAS) is administered</p> <p>Youth-adult Quality Action Teams provide quality assessment data and recommendations at the center level based upon a modified YPQA tool. External evaluator makes an annual observation of each site with the YPQA and compiles the results for each center and the Network overall. The external evaluator uses both sets of data for the final recommendations.</p>
	<p>Quality: Programs demonstrate high levels of quality with an average score of 3.0 or above.</p>	<p>Youth Program Quality Assessment tool data. Each center is assessed by a reliable assessor annually and youth also conduct an observation using a modified YPQA tool.</p>	

<p>Youth have opportunities to develop 21st Century Skills to prepare for college, work, and life.</p>	<p>Each center will offer a minimum of 10,000 individual youth hours of program opportunities focused four key 21st Century skill areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking and problem solving • Communication and collaboration • Social and cross-cultural skills • Leadership and responsibility 	<p>All Program Activity data is collected for each site, based on program records.</p> <p>21st Century skills are defined and activities that teach these skills are coded accordingly.</p>	<p>Coordinators assemble activities report and then code the activities to identify the hours explicitly focused on 21st century skills. The complete a spreadsheet prepared by the Network Specialist and the overall data for the network is compiled by external evaluator .</p>
	<p>50% or more of youth surveyed through the Survey on Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO) will indicate that they have opportunities to lead and take on responsibility in the program and in the community.</p>	<p>SAYO-Y Pre and post participation survey is administered to all students in 6th-12th grade in attendance during the weeks of survey administration.</p>	<p>SAYO-Y is administered on Survey Monkey in computer labs Center Coordinators ensure rate of survey return meets expectations. The National Institute for Out-of-School Time provides support and easy to produce summary reports. Results are analyzed by external evaluator.</p>

Youth increase their school and community connectedness.	Regular attendees to Beacons will attend school 90% or more.	School attendance data is collected from school district records using Student ID tracking.	See process above for obtaining district data (demographic section above).
	75% or more of youth surveyed through the Survey on Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO) will report that they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of competence as a learner • Striving towards future goals through effort in school 	SAYO-Y Pre and post participation survey is administered to all students in 5 th -12 th grade attending 60+days	SAYO-Y is administered on Survey Monkey in computer labs Center Coordinators ensure rate of survey return meets expectations. Results are analyzed by external evaluator
Youth increase their academic achievement and are on track for high school graduation.	80% of teachers surveyed will indicate that participating youth have increased or maintained academic skills and behaviors.	Federal Teacher Surveys are administered to teachers of students in grades 5 th to 12 th who attend 30+ days	The external evaluator will distribute bubble sheets for teacher surveys to center coordinators to distribute to school teachers. These are collected and returned to the external evaluator to have them scanned and analyzed for results.
	85% of 6 th -12 th graders surveyed using the SAYO tool will report that they expect to graduate high school and attend college.	SAYO Tool	See above for SAYO administration.

	<i>TBD: Participating high school students demonstrate they are on track or making gains towards credit attainment and graduation.</i>	<i>Grade Point Average and/or Credit Completion data for 9-12 grade students is collected as supplemental information, if available</i>	<i>As appropriate the external evaluator will collaborate with MPS Research and Evaluation Department to assess academic performance data using student ID numbers and determine whether goals for increased performance are met.</i>
Schools, community partners, and stakeholders work collaboratively and coordinate resources to respond most effectively to the needs of youth.	Youth advisories at ten centers and the citywide youth advisory will engage youth to make schools and communities more responsive to issues identified by youth.	Youth Advisory and Beacons Leadership Team meeting notes and project summaries.	The Beacons Network Specialist will review data from youth advisory groups and the citywide Beacons leadership team and reflect with youth to determine lessons learned.
	Surveyed stakeholders will articulate specific added value of Beacons as an individual and/or to their organization or agency.	The following stakeholders are surveyed and/or are conducted annually or bi-annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beacons staff ▪ Beacons Principals ▪ Beacons lead and partner agencies ▪ Beacons parents 	The Beacons Network Specialist and Beacons Evaluator will work together to develop, administer, and interpret the results of stakeholder surveys and focus groups.
	Youth leaders from Beacons will have an annual opportunity to identify an issue area related to Beacons around which to engage in a participatory action research project in partnership with Beacons staff.	To be determined through partnership with youth and adults.	The Beacons Network Specialist will work with the evaluator, citywide Beacons Leadership Team, and Center Coordinators to determine a process for partnering with youth to provide this opportunity.

Additional data:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional academic performance data may be collected as needed including credit attainment and graduation data. ▪ School climate data or the MN Student Survey data may be utilized as available.
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Instrumentation

- Enrollment report from each site on Excel
- Attendance report: 30-60-90 days on Excel
- Student academic data (when available from Minneapolis Public Schools MPS)
- Survey of teachers on bubble sheets to be distributed to teachers individually
- Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) for program quality by independent observer
- Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) for program quality modified to be used by youth
 - Crosswalk between the two tools conducted by program evaluator
- Pre-participation and post-participation Survey of After School Youth Outcomes (SAYO-Y) measuring youth’s experiences in the program, youth’s sense of competence, and youth’s future planning and expectations. This research-based tool is administered by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time and more information is available on their website.
- Youth participatory action research project annually with to be determined focus and instrumentation
- Survey of staff on Survey Monkey
- Survey of Collaborating agencies on Survey Monkey
 - School principals
 - Youth serving agencies staff
- Focus groups of parents led by external facilitator
 1. Parents of youth K-3
 2. Parents of youth 5-8
 3. Parents of youth 9-12

Logistics and Timeline

Logistics	Timeline
SAYO-Y training	October-December 2012
Finalize SAYO-Y survey design	November 2012
Record keeping on enrollment and attendance	On-going
Collaboration with MPS Research and Evaluation	On-going

Preparation of site coordinators for data gathering and administration of surveys	February 2013
Administration of student surveys- SAYO-Y	November 2012 & April 2013
Administration of YPQA	March-May 2013
Administration of teacher survey	April 2013
Final data gathering and analysis	May-July 2013
Final report	September 2013
Youth Participatory Action Research Project	May-August 2013
Report to sites	September-November 2013
Administration of staff surveys	November 2013
Administration of principal surveys	November 2013
Administration of parent surveys	November 2013
Administration of community partner surveys	November 2013
Parent focus groups	March 2014

Budget

The primary funding sources for evaluation in the Beacons Network are the federally funded 21st Century Grant Cohort 5 administered through the Minnesota Department of Education and Youthprise. In-kind resources for evaluation are also leveraged through the schools and lead partners.

Budget expenses include:

Staff time for data collection	In-kind from partner agencies and schools (key funders include United Way, Cargill, General Mills)
Data collection systems—Kid Trax, CTK, Minneapolis afterschool data base	In-kind from partner agencies and schools (key funders include United Way, Cargill, General Mills)
Evaluator and MPS REA time for data analysis and reporting	15,000 (21 st CCLC)
Network staff time for convening and coordination	10,000 (Youthprise)
Youth stipends for participatory action research and Quality Action Teams	2,000 (Youthprise)
License Fees, staff training and technical assistance for use of SAYO, YPQA, and CitySpan	5,000 (Youthprise)
Total	32,000 total budget (15,000 21 st CCLC) not including in-kind contributions

Appendix-tools

SAYO-Y

The questions for the SAYO being used are available as an addendum to this plan.

21st Century Skills

The Beacons Network defines 21st Century Skills using the Partnership for 21st Century Skills' framework. The four key outcome areas the Beacons Network will focus on from within that framework are Critical Thinking & Problem Solving, Communication & Collaboration, Social & Cross-Cultural Skills, and Leadership & Responsibility. Staff will code each of their activity offerings from the state activity reporting forms and total the number of individual youth hours of programming that is intentionally and explicitly focused on one or more of these four 21st Century skill areas. Staff will complete a spreadsheet provided by the Network Specialist to track these hours to determine that the desired dosage of opportunities related to Beacons 21st Century Skills framework were implemented.

SAMPLE SURVEY FOR PRINCIPALS

What does the Beacon bring to your school?

- What more could the Beacon do for your school?
- On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), how do you rate the quality of collaboration between the Beacons staff and the school staff?
1 2 3 4 5
- Please give examples of collaboration:
- If you think collaboration could get better. What would it look like?
- Please finish the sentence: *Without the Beacon, my school would...*
- Beacon students have high attendance and positive behavior. However academic achievement is not improving at a high rate. In your opinion, what is the problem?

-
- On a scale of 1-5, please rate these items: Low high
 - Value of Beacon to you, as the principal 1 2 3 4 5
 - Value of Beacon to teachers 1 2 3 4 5
 - Value of Beacon to students 1 2 3 4 5
 - Value of Beacon to families 1 2 3 4 5

SAMPLE SURVEY FOR STAFF AND COORDINATORS

Write in your job title _____

- Please answer these questions based on the 5 point scale : 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)

Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Not sure 3	Strongly agree 4	Strongly agree 5
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- I am satisfied with my job 1 2 3 4 5
- I want to continue to work with Beacons for the next 3 years1 2 3 4 5
- I enjoy my work with youth 1 2 3 4 5
- I am compensated fairly for the work I do 1 2 3 4 5
- Morale in the Beacons Network is high 1 2 3 4 5
- Morale in my home organization is high 1 2 3 4 5
- My work in Beacons is generally respected
- by my home organization 1 2 3 4 5
- The coordinators of the different Beacons get along well 1 2 3 4 5
- All Beacons follow the same standards 1 2 3 4 5
- Meetings of the coordinators are productive 1 2 3 4 5
- Rumors are heard frequently 1 2 3 4 5

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-----The Beacons' director...

- Is interested in the well-being of staff 1 2 3 4 5
- Administers policies consistently 1 2 3 4 5
- Knows who I am 1 2 3 4 5
- Is interested in my welfare 1 2 3 4 5
- Understands my challenges with the school 1 2 3 4 5
- Helps me to problem solve issues at my site 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Not sure 3	Strongly agree 4	Strongly agree 5
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- Communication with the Beacons' director is easy 1 2 3 4 5
- I am satisfied how my concerns are addressed 1 2 3 4 5
- I worry about the future of Beacons 1 2 3 4 5
- The training provided by the Network is useful for my work1 2 3 4 5
- My daily work is manageable 1 2 3 4 5

- Meetings with my own team are productive 1 2 3 4 5
- My staff respects me 1 2 3 4 5
- My staff is well trained 1 2 3 4 5
- Youth leadership efforts (Camp, BLT, Ladders to Leadership)
- have influenced the work at my site 1 2 3 4 5
-
- My job with Beacons is respected within my home organization
1 2 3 4 5
- My performance evaluation relates to my work with Beacons
1 2 3 4 5
- My home organization is inclusive of diverse staff
1 2 3 4 5
- My staff reflects the diversity of the students 1 2 3 4 5

Please rank the strengths of partnerships (1: low to 5: high)

- | | Low | | | | High |
|---|------------|----|----------|---|-------------|
| • With youth | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • With families | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • With the school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • With the home organization | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • With other Beacons | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • The 21 st Century evaluation is useful for the work of my own team | | | | | |
| | YES | NO | NOT SURE | | |
| • This is how I have used the results of the 21 st Century evaluation: | | | | | |
| • The YPQA evaluation is useful for the work of my own team | | | | | |
| | YES | NO | NOT SURE | | |
| • This is how I have used the results of the YPQA evaluation: | | | | | |
| • My home organization conducts a separate evaluation | | | | | |
| | YES | NO | NOT SURE | | |
| • This is how we use the results of this evaluation: | | | | | |
| • The two biggest challenges of my job as Beacons coordinator are: | | | | | |
| • The two biggest successes of my job as Beacons coordinator are: | | | | | |
| • I wish I would get more: | | | | | |
| • I wish I would get less: | | | | | |
| • If I was the Beacons Network director, I would... | | | | | |

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES REPORT

Program activities report from each site on Word document. Below is the chart describing the types of information that will be collected.

- Documenting the activities provided during the reporting period (see table below)
- Describing the student populations targeted by the activity
- Listing the activity subject areas (see table below)
- Describing the amount of time activities were provided
- Identifying the number of youth participating in activities

Activity Categories	Subject Areas
academic enrichment learning programs	reading/literacy
Tutoring	mathematics
homework help	science
Mentoring	arts and music
recreational activities	entrepreneurial education
career/job training for youth	telecommunications and technology
drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, and character education programs	cultural activities/social studies
expanded library service hours	health/nutrition
supplemental educational services	other subjects
community service/service learning programs	
activities that promote youth leadership	

THEORY OF CHANGE

Please see the attached draft of a Beacons Network theory of change that is being developed currently through a participatory process with the lead partners. Once final this will guide some of our future evaluation efforts.