

RISE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

YWCA Tri-County Area



Overview

YWCA Tri-County Area (YWCA) was founded as the Young Women's Christian Association of Pottstown, Pennsylvania in 1908. Its original focus was to provide safe housing for young girls and women who were homeless or came to the area to work in the town's factories. Over the years, YWCA adapted its programs and services to meet the changing needs of girls and women in the community and remains a strong advocate for girls, women, and families. Today, YWCA serves more than 1,500 women, children, and families in Montgomery, Chester, and Berks Counties through early childhood education, before- and after-school enrichment, youth/girls' development, adult education, and workforce development. YWCA is a hub of social services for the community, providing everything from grants to foster grandparents to emergency rent assistance to high school equivalency courses.

"We are really focused on girls of color," said Kelly Grosser, chief mission impact officer at YWCA. "We are really focused on empowerment. We are really focused on dignity for all. That's our mission."



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Kelly Grosser, chief mission impact officer at YWCA

YWCA is further enhancing its impact as one of 15 organizations selected to participate in the RISE Partnership's "Implementation" phase.

YWCA's work with RISE started with the organization's Youth Empowerment Program (YEP), a suite of educational programs that focus on academic enrichment, health and wellness activities, leadership, and social-emotional learning opportunities for youth and their families. YEP serves more than 500 youth annually and has significantly expanded its programming in the last few years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our numbers really shifted and our relationships really shifted, but we pivoted very quickly and created opportunities for learning for youth," said Grosser.

YWCA's work with RISE focused on YEP's STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) Enrichment Program. The first step was developing a logic model.

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Following the development of the logic model, YWCA used Hello Insight, a nationally vetted youth development evaluation tool, to begin assessing its programs. Although YWCA previously had access to Hello Insight, participating in RISE helped increase the tool's utility in terms of how it could be used differently to inform programs and benefit the organization and participants.

"RISE helped me think through how we are measuring growth and learning and opinions, attitudes, and beliefs," said Grosser.

RISE also helped YWCA think through the types and reasoning behind the data it collects. Questions like "why

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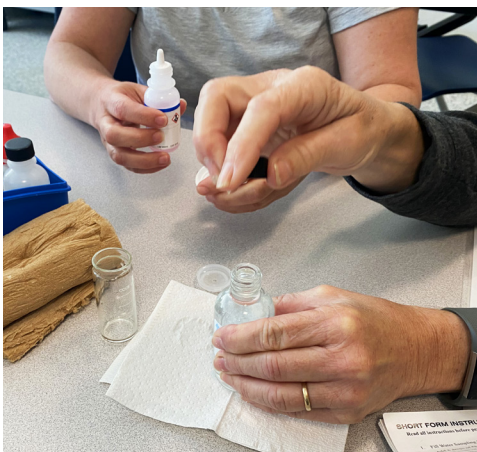
are we asking this specific question and what do we intend to do with it?” were eye-opening for YWCA.

“I think that one of the big takeaways for me was the simplification of the evaluation tool,” said Grosser. “RISE really helped us narrow in on what do we really want to know.”

As a result of YWCA’s evaluation journey, the organization has begun focusing more on participants who have the most potential for growth by examining their outcomes rather than the program outcomes as a whole. With a better understanding of these differences in outcomes and disparities, YWCA has prioritized the youth who need the most support and has made sure changes in programming are best suited to meet their needs.

“We were looking at the whole program, but we had kids who were already high-achieving, maintaining their high level of achievement and that was factoring in versus really looking at the kids that we aim to support and empower,” said Grosser. “RISE absolutely has impacted the way that we are empowering the youth we really seek to serve.”

What started with YEP’s STEAM program spread throughout the department – and eventually the entire organization. From developing an evaluation tool for an implicit bias training program to staff surveys on the organization’s equity climate work, YWCA has developed a more robust culture of evaluation. The organization even hired a designated data specialist – the first position



of its kind – to ensure evaluation is taking place properly and in a timely manner. YWCA is also in the process of hiring a software and quality manager to improve the organization’s data collection and analysis.

“I can take all that I’ve learned and impress it upon other portions of the organization,” said Grosser. “We kept evaluation at the forefront and embedded it in our practices.”

Grosser is convinced that improved evaluation is essential to the continued success of the organization.

“No one has to convince me that evaluation is valuable,” she said.

“No one has to convince me that we should have logic models and be able to tell the story. It’s not perfect. We have a long way to go, but I think that RISE brought it into the light in a way that people appreciate.”



Established in 2018, The RISE (Readiness, Implementation, Sustainability for Effectiveness) Partnership supports promising Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey nonprofit organizations. The RISE Partnership Evaluation Funders Learning Community is the first convening supported by a network of funders in the region. The Learning Community is a collaborative effort with the Barra Foundation, Campbell Soup Company, Horner Foundation, Nelson Foundation, Philadelphia Foundation, PropelNext/Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Scattergood Foundation, and United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, and a partnership with YaleEVAL of The Consultation Center at Yale. The Partnership provides nonprofits with resources and training to strengthen organizational effectiveness and ensure a greater impact on social, economic, health, and educational conditions in communities, including the effects of racism, intergenerational poverty and trauma.

For more information visit therisepartnership.org

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