

RISE PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

Girls Inc. of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey



Overview

Girls Inc. of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey (Girls Inc.) was founded in 1961 as Teen Aid. The organization serves girls in kindergarten through twelfth grade year-round with developmentally appropriate in-school, afterschool, weekend, and summer programming and currently reaches over 3,000 girls. Its mission is to inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold through education, outreach, and advocacy.

Girls Inc.'s programs focus on an array of topics from leadership, sports, and health and wellness to academic enrichment, postsecondary readiness, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The organization has a strong internship program, corporate and college partnerships, and recently received funding to build an alumni program to continue mentoring girls beyond high school into college and even into their early careers.



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Cherice Arrington, associate director of programs and advocacy at Girls Inc.

“We really take a holistic approach,” said Cherice Arrington, associate director of programs and advocacy at Girls Inc. “We believe that all of these components will help the girl grow up into a healthy, educated, independent young woman.”

Girls Inc. is further enhancing its impact as one of 15 organizations selected to participate in the RISE Partnership’s “Implementation” phase.

Girls Inc. recognized the need to build a more structured and formalized evaluation process to better collect and use data, and their work with RISE began with the creation of a logic model for the in-school Operation SMART (science, math, and relevant technology) program. The goal was to develop a survey to measure students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes, with the hope that it would become a model for other in-school programs.

“We collected our data very informally and were in need of more structured protocols,” Arrington said. “[RISE] opened my eyes to some of the inconsistencies that we were doing and also really put a fire under our team.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Girls Inc. was unable to pilot the evaluation plan guided by the logic model for the in-school Operation SMART program and eventually adapted the plan for its afterschool programs. The organization made the most out of the challenge.

“We used it as a chance to take a step back to really help us assess – where are the gaps in our evaluation? What do we need to improve? What documents do we need to get? And what are some other ways that we can collect data to inform our funders and partners of the work that we’re doing?” said Arrington.

Girls Inc. took full advantage of RISE’s professional development workshops, specifically the trainings on data collection and feedback. Through pre- and post-surveys and interviews with participants, parents, and partners, the organization collects the information and creates a story about the overall program and impact on the girls. Girls Inc. shares this data on its website, in newsletters to board members and partners, and in presentations to funders.

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Feedback from different constituents at different levels also informs how the organization makes key decisions about programming, including what program would be the best fit, for whom, and how often.

“RISE was really helpful in helping me to understand the different ways that data can be collected, and how you can use your data and use your results to tell a story,” Arrington said. “From the results, we’re able to paint the picture that the girls have grown as a result of being a part of Girls Inc.”

Evaluation has become so valuable for the organization that Girls Inc. hired a part-time evaluation outcome specialist whose sole responsibility is to ensure data on programs is collected, reviewed, and managed. This new staff person makes sure the program team submits their survey results and that the database is organized and up to date.

“RISE really taught me to advocate and make a case for why it’s important to hire someone and bring in other resources,” said Arrington, who also oversees the evaluation and outcomes



department. “That person is helping to drive our goals and I feel like we’re definitely in a place where we can grow.”

With the help of RISE, Girls Inc. has become a more data-informed organization.

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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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