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Client Name: Forum for Youth Investment - Center for Youth Program Quality

21 October 2019

## Cover Page

### Description of Client:

The Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are ready for college, work and life<sup>1</sup>, and it is headquartered in Washington D.C.. Our client is a branch of the Forum named Center for Youth Program Quality, which is based in Ypsilanti and provides support for programs that help with the self-improvement for young people under the age of 21.

### Client Problem:

The project management of our client is not efficient enough because they use several-page-long protocols to outline the steps that staff have to do and very little technology is used to support the process. Staff work separately on the tasks without timely updating each other so that they often repeat the same information in different places. From the introduction provided at the beginning of SI 501, our client is hoping to “streamline the tasks related to project management and contract execution” to improve the efficiency by “leveraging workflow rather than word documents, spreadsheets, and lists of tasks.”

### Questions:

1. What is known about the industry that CYPQ belongs to?
2. What are the primary concerns of the industry?
3. What are the trends in the industry?

Word count: 2079 (excluding cover page and bibliography)

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<sup>1</sup> “The Forum For Youth Investment.” *The Forum For Youth Investment*, [forumfyi.org/](http://forumfyi.org/).

## Introduction to Youth Development Programs

Center for Youth Program Quality is a part of youth development programs which is a field that has been expanding rapidly over the decades. Youth development programs provide structured trainings and activities for children and young people during non-school hours to achieve four main goals, which are “improvement in the safety and health of our communities and our youth; improvement of student’s academic performance; development of their civic, artistic, and other skills; and provision of care for young people while parents work”.<sup>2</sup> The most common types of youth development programs and activities are clubs, troops, teams, after-school centers and community service projects, etc. The Center for Youth Program Quality could be labeled as an after-school center which expose the youth to project-based workshops of art and science to give them the opportunities to explore their identity, relationships and abilities through early adulthood.

Youth development is widely perceived as an essential part of improving the future well-being of the country and concerns about youth development issues are always in the center of political debates. However, the situation of youth development is never ideal enough. Based on a report published by the National Research Council, more than 25 percent of adolescents in U.S. could not achieve productive adulthood as expected. As great attention is given to the development of children and adolescence, the market of youth development programs is quite large and still growing. From *Inside the Black Box: Assessing and Improving Quality in Youth Programs* (Nicole Yohalem and Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010), about “6.5 million children are enrolled in after-school programs and that the federal government alone invested \$3.6 billion in such programs in 2002 (Afterschool Alliance 2004; Padgett 2003).”, and the number is still in rapid growth as there were 10.2 million children in after-school programs in 2014. (American After 3pm, 2014).

Fortunately, many reports have indicated that it is worth the investment for youth development projects because the outcomes are positive overall, such as the decline of crime rate and more adolescents have graduated from school and attended volunteer and community service. More effort and investment to control the bad behaviors and improve the well-being of the children and young people via youth development programs are clearly needed. Thus, youth development programs deserve more attention and assistance from the world to help more youth gain adequate skills before entering society to reach their full potential in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Granger, Robert C. Granger C. *Improving After-School Programs Quality. PsycEXTRA Dataset*, 2008, doi:10.1037/e693012011-001.

## **Primary Concerns**

### **Overparenting within youth development programs.**

Recently, there has been a scarcity of overparenting research guiding the practice of youth development programs. Overly involved or protective parenting is also known as overparenting. Research shows that many youth development programs were interfered by overparenting. In contrast to normative parenting that will lead to positive youth outcomes like adjustment and competence, overparenting can lead to variety of negative youth outcomes (Padilla Walker, & Nelson, 2012) such as poor self-regulation and childhood anxiety (Segrin, 2012; Sideridis, & Kafetsios, 2008)<sup>3</sup>. The interference of overparenting can have a direct influence on the programs implementation in many ways.

On the one hand, when parents have the tendency of overparenting, they would be concerned about their children's performance within the programs settings and associate children's performance with their own parenting skills. Therefore, overparenting parents are very likely to put extra pressure on the programs providers by altering the design and the frame of program to ensure their children's success. On the other hand, overparenting can influence the performance of the children and youth because their parents pass the anxiety on to them. There are some studies that have investigated this issue. For instance, Kingery, Peneston, Rice, and Wormuth (2012) found out that the homesickness of children during overnight summer camp was associated with the parents' concern about sending them to camp. Also, Thurber and Sigman (1998) found out that boys would experience more homesickness if their parents reported more anxiety over the separation with them. Even though both of the research haven't mention overparenting but the emphasis of parents' anxiety and expectations is consistent with what is known as overparenting. Since reducing overparenting behavior is one of the major points in the industry to guarantee the positive outcomes and effects, organizations are actively looking for ways to achieve the balance between parents' necessary communication with project leaders and overparenting during the implementation of youth development programs.

### **Debates over the value of youth development programs.**

The value of youth development programs has always been controversial. For example, in terms of academic performance, some research findings shows that such programs can improve children's and youth's academic performance while an evaluation of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which is one of the major sources of youth development programs indicates

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<sup>3</sup> Barry A. Garst, Ryan J. Gagnon, *Exploring Overparenting within the Context of Youth Development Programs*, 2015, <http://jyd.pitt.edu/ojs/jyd/article/download/416/402>.

that there was next to no impact on academic performance and behaviors. (U.S. Department of Education, 2003) Although it was pointed out by other paper that the methodology of evaluation was flawed (Jacobson, 2003; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005), the results have sparked another debate “over the value of these programs and their increasing emphasis on academic achievement.”<sup>4</sup> Many people consider these programs as school after school, rather than the opportunities to participate in “intrinsically motivating activities”<sup>5</sup> for children and youth.

The debates over the issue of the value of youth development programs keep raising the question of what kind of activities could best balance the needs of children and youth in the skill-building of their academic performance as well as physical and mental well-being, since most of the emphasis of the programs is still on the academic enrichment. Perhaps people should look more into other aspects like time consumption, levels of engagement as well as the feelings of participants during the youth development programs.

### **Unrealistic expectations for the programs.**

Often times people have high expectations for the youth development programs, many people not only hope that they can provide children and youth with basic skills that could help them behave properly but they also hope the programs could reduce youth crime rates and increase children's and youth's ability to achieve higher academic standards to get a more promising future. Although youth development programs help children and youth in those aspects to a certain extent, people's expectations are not “tempered by well-established knowledge about what youth programs can and cannot achieve and under what circumstances.” because they do not realize what kinds of challenges the programs face, such as finding adequate resources for housing and transportation.<sup>6</sup> For instance, many programs are only able to offer big classes infrequently, like once a week due to the limited funding, so the likelihood of the positive outcomes is lessened compared to those programs that able to offer one-on-one classes more than three times a week.

In addition, the children and youth who come from a low-income communities are highly likely to drop out early before benefiting from the programs. The programs could definitely be helpful but the positive outcomes that live up to people's dreams are most likely to happen for those who are able to maintain frequent and consistent participation in a program that has enough funding

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<sup>4</sup> David J. Shernoff and Deborah Lowe Vandell. *Youth Engagement and the Quality of Experience in Afterschool Programs*. 2008

<sup>5</sup> David J. Shernoff and Deborah Lowe Vandell. *Youth Engagement and the Quality of Experience in Afterschool Programs*. 2008

<sup>6</sup> Grossman, J. B., Walker, K., & Raley, R. (2001). *Challenges and opportunities in after-school programs: Lessons for policymakers and funders*. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

to provide all the necessary resources but obviously it is extremely hard to meet all of these requirements. Although the help from youth development programs can be limited sometimes, we cannot deny the fact that children and youth need to have access to more developmental opportunities that could nurture their well-being, especially since more effort and funds are invested in this industry, we may safely say that children and youth would have more access to those programs that could make a considerable positive contribution to their growth in the near future.

## **Trends in the field**

### **Sports**

I notice that sports have been mentioned most often by providers and researchers among the types of youth development programs and there are several reasons for this attention. First, sports have always been the most common organized activity among American youth (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005) and also the type of activities American youth spend most time on (Mahoney, Harris, & Eccles, 2006). Second, lots of researches indicate that sports offer a chance for young people to gain some valuable work and life skills like teamwork, conflict solving, persistence, risk-taking and self-control. (Hansen & Larson et al., 2007; Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991) Also, participation in sports is connected to the development of psychology and academic performance of the youth like those who are active in sports tend to have higher GPA in high school and more likely to attend college. (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001). And lower use of drugs and lower rates of mental illness are also linked to the participation in sports as well (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006).

Although the positive outcomes of participation in sports is quite obvious, overintense sports participation might do harm to the well-being of children and youth because it has been linked to engagement in risky behaviors like getting drunk (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Garry & Morrissey, 2000; Winnail, Valois, & Dowda, 1997) as well as possible “impediments in prosocial and identity development” (Larson, 2006; Shields & Bredemeier, 2001). Even though there are some follow-up studies indicate that these negative associations might not be as obvious after high school<sup>7</sup>, it is still important for program providers to control the amount of sports to a proper

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<sup>7</sup> Mahoney, Joseph & Vandell, Deborah & Simpkins, Sandra & Zarrett, Nicole. (2009). *Adolescent Out-of-School Activities*. 10.1002/9780470479193.adlpsy002008.

level or adjust the participation of sports by changing intensity, type, and frequency to suit different children and adolescence groups.

### **Youth development programs in low and middle income countries**

Youth development programs have been conducted in developed countries for more than twenty years and demonstrated developmental benefits. Currently, many researchers shift their attention to the impact of youth development programs in low and middle-income countries since nearly 90 percent of the world's adolescents live there, where they encounter more life adversities and have limited access to educational opportunities compared with youth in high-income countries.<sup>8</sup>

There is a research paper published in the Journal of Adolescent Health in 2019 indicates that there is promising evidence that youth development programs are effective in low and middle income countries.<sup>9</sup> The research team conducted investigation of “over 21,500 articles and over 3,700 evaluation reports published between 1990 and mid-2016.” And “94 youth development programs with evaluations in low and middle income countries were identified, of which 35 had at least one experimental or rigorous quasi-experimental evaluation.”<sup>10</sup> Based on the chart provided below, improvements related to children and youth's behaviors, social competence, academic engagement and life skills, etc, have been recorded.

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<sup>8</sup> Patton GC, Coffey C, Sawyer SM, et al. *Global patterns of mortality in young people: A systematic analysis of population health data*. Lancet 2009;374:881e92.

<sup>9</sup> Catalano, Richard F., et al. *Positive Youth Development Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Conceptual Framework and Systematic Review of Efficacy*. Journal of Adolescent Health, vol. 65, no. 1, 2019, pp. 15–31., doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.01.024.

<sup>10</sup> Catalano, Richard F., et al. *Positive Youth Development Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Conceptual Framework and Systematic Review of Efficacy*. Journal of Adolescent Health, vol. 65, no. 1, 2019, pp. 15–31., doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.01.024.

Citation	Evaluation design	Sectors	Country	Recipient age	Setting	Clusters	Sample size	Brief description	Outcomes	Follow-up period	Null or opposite findings
Child Resilience Psychosocial Structured Activities program Ager et al., 2011 [26]	Quasi-experimental	PYD	Uganda	7- to 12-y-olds	School	8 schools	Tx = 203 C = 200	15 structured 1-h sessions delivered in school by trained teachers and periodic meetings with parents and research and agency staff	Increased child- and parent-reported child well-being: social competence, academic engagement, respectful, open/honest, happy and healthy	12 mo	None reported
Life Skills Training for suicide prevention Jegannathan et al., 2014 [27]	RCT	Mental health	Cambodia	Secondary school	School	2 schools	Tx = 168 C = 131	Weekly 90-min participatory sessions with discussions, activities, and home assignments	Boys with high-risk behavior improved on relationship, purpose in life, and life skills Girls improved relationships, health maintenance, and life skills	6 mo	No effects on mental health overall or for low-risk men or any women Some life skill dimensions not effected
Violence prevention Ekhtiar et al., 2012 [28]	RCT	Violence prevention Gender equality	Iran	High school	School	10 schools	Tx = 255 C = 255	Life skills training specific to domestic violence with focus groups for girls, training for school counselors in prevention and facilitating parent involvement	Reduced favorable attitudes toward domestic violence Improved violence preventive behaviors, communication strategies related to domestic violence among girls	2 mo	None reported
Girls First Leventhal et al., 2015 [29]	RCT	Mental health	India	11- to 15-y-old girls in rural area	School	69 schools	Controls = 706 Girls First Resilience = 1,681	Weekly group soft skills training, work in groups to design and implement projects for peace in their own lives and those around them	Improved emotional resilience, self-efficacy, social-emotional assets, psychological well-being, and social well-being	5 mo	No impact on depression or anxiety
The Life Skills and HIV/AIDS Education Program James et al., 2006 [30]	RCT	SRH/HIV	South Africa	12- to 21-y-olds	Schools	22 schools	Tx = 513 C = 628	20 weekly lessons delivered by teachers in health education classes	Improved HIV knowledge	6, 10 mo	No effects on condom use, sexual activity, or attitudes
Focus on Kids (adapted) school-based, peer-led HIV/AIDS prevention for children of migrant workers Li et al., 2010 [31]	RCT	SRH/HIV	China	13- to 15-y-old children of migrant workers	School	12 schools	Tx = 1,140 C = 1,097	Eight 90-min sessions delivered by trained medical students	Increased SRH knowledge, attitude, and self-efficacy	3 mo	None reported

“Positive youth development (PYD) programs in low- and middle-income countries with experimental or rigorous quasi-experimental evaluations” Table 3 from [10]

The result shows that 60 percent of the programs demonstrated positive outcomes including the reduction of “substance use and risky sexual activity, and/or more distal developmental outcomes, such as employment and health indicators.” Although this might sound comforting, the author of the research paper admits that more evaluation with long-term follow-up research is still necessary to see whether these programs could offer similar benefits to what they could offer in high income countries.

## Education for children and youth with disabilities by technology

Nowadays, technology has become an important part of every aspect of our daily life. Access to technology promotes the positive outcomes for the education field as it supports both teaching and learning. Technology infuses classrooms with digital learning tools, such as computers and handheld devices, expands course offerings, experiences, and learning materials, supports learning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, etc.. However, the potential of technology in education can only be fully realized if individuals with disabilities can benefit from it. It is a critically

important issue because children and youth with disabilities are less likely to achieve their career goals compared to their peers without disability<sup>11</sup> Since the employment rate for individuals with disabilities is closely associated with the level of education as the employment rate could double for those who complete high school, and could reach to 50.3 percent with four years of college (Yelin & Katz, 1994a, 1994b), many youth development programs begin to explore how to utilize technology to empower children and youth with disabilities learn necessary skill sets.

A research published in the Journal of Special Education Technology<sup>12</sup> shows how technology can be used by children and youth with disabilities. One of the examples provided in the paper indicates that technology can “maximize independence in academic and employment tasks” as children and youth with mobility impairment can use a hands-free keyboard and mouse to operate the computer to take notes, access to library resources and complete assignments. Another example shows how technology can help those who cannot speak participate in discussions via a computer-based communication device to deliver speeches and participate in class discussions. However, there are still barriers on the way like how to assure the fundings for the implement and maintenance of the devices, and how to select appropriate technology and provide ongoing support for students with disabilities at various levels. The group of children and youth with disabilities are still underserved in terms of education and more efforts from the society are needed, but the situation will definitely be better and better.

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<sup>11</sup> The Role of Technology in Preparing Youth with Disabilities for Postsecondary Education and Employment

<sup>12</sup> Burgstahler, Sheryl. *The Role of Technology in Preparing Youth with Disabilities for Postsecondary Education and Employment*. Journal of Special Education Technology, vol. 18, no. 4, 2003, pp. 7–19., doi:10.1177/016264340301800401.



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