

Assessing and Improving Youth Program Quality: Applying PEPNet's Tools

Mala B. Thakur, Executive Director, NYEC
Nancy Martin, Director, Capacity Building Initiatives, NYEC

June 5, 2009
Life Ventures Partnership
Manpower International Global Headquarters
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Network of over 250 organizations that improve the effectiveness of organizations that help youth become productive citizens

- Set & Promote Quality Standards
- Build Capacity of Youth Organizations & Programs
- Provide & Support Professional Development
- Track, Craft & Influence Policy

1. Discuss quality standards and continuous improvement for youth programs and implications for policy
2. Understand how to use NYEC's PEPNet Tools to find examples of successful practices and to improve programs
3. Identify initial steps you could take to utilize the NYEC PEPNet tools in your organization

- What is program quality?
- How do you recognize it?

PEPNet: Promising and Effective Practices Network

A system for enhancing the quality of youth programs that link young people (12-25) to work and education to promote a successful transition to adulthood

PEPNet Provides:

- up-to-date information about what works from research and field-based practice
- a practical framework and user-friendly tools

- Began with a working group in 1995
 - Response to perception that nothing works
 - Diverse professionals – Program Administrators, Practitioners, Policy Makers, Researchers, Funders, TA providers
 - Developed consensus on what works
- Periodically updated based on lessons from practice and research
- PEPNet Accreditation Pilot 2008-09

Uses of PEPNet

PEPNet tools & resources are used to:

- Assess program quality
- Learn about and implement quality
- Assess and document performance results
- Develop strategies for continuous improvement

Who uses PEPNet?

- Professionals in the fields of Youth Development, Workforce Development, & Education
- Programs & Practitioners, Policy Makers, Funders, TA Providers, others
- Communities and youth-serving systems

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PEPNet Since 1995

- **PEPNet Awardees** – From 1996 to 2003, 96 programs nationwide received the PEPNet Award sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor.
- **Online Index of Quality Practices and Profiles** – NYEC highlights over 1000 Awardee practices.
- **Working with Systems** – NYEC has been using PEPNet with youth-serving systems to help assess strengths and target technical assistance.
- **PEPNet Accreditation** – Based on the previous Award process and the work of major accreditation bodies, in 2008-09 NYEC piloted an initiative to accredit quality youth workforce development programs.

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PEPNet's Key Tenets

- Combine Research and Practice
- Continuous Improvement
- Self Assessment
- "Don't Reinvent the Wheel"

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NYEC PEPNet Quality Standards

1. Management for Quality
2. Programmatic Approach
3. Youth Development Competencies
4. Focus on Youth Results

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1. MANAGEMENT FOR QUALITY

Standards for program management that provide the foundation for program direction, systems, and operations:

- Mission	- Financial Management
- Leadership	- Information Management
- Staff	- Continuous Improvement
- Performance Accountability	- Sustainability

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2. PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH

Standards for program design that address how the program is shaped, how the young person experiences the program, and how the pieces work together:

- Target Youth	- Wrap-Around Support
- Environment and Climate	- Youth Engagement
- Instructional Approach	- Employer Engagement
- Collaboration	- Transition Support
- Individual Planning & Guidance	

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3. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCIES

Standards for program offerings based on what youth need to know and be able to do to successfully transition to work and adulthood and how to help them gain those skills:

- Working
- Academic Learning
- Connecting
- Leading
- Thriving

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4. FOCUS ON YOUTH RESULTS

Standards for program design that address how the program is shaped, how the young person experiences the program, and how the pieces work together:

- Working Outcomes and Progress Measures
- Academic Learning Outcomes and Progress Measures
- Productive Engagement Outcomes
- Program-Specific Outcomes
- Youth Development Progress Measures

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Connecting to Quality Standards

On your post-it note clearly write:

One thing your program is doing well.

Take your post-it note and assign it to one of the four PEPNet categories on the paper on your table:

1. Management for Quality
2. Programmatic Approach
3. Youth Development Competencies
4. Focus on Youth Results



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Table Discussion

- What are some best practices that stand out?
- Which categories do you find you think about most in the normal course of your work?

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Quality Self Assessment Activity

- Mini QSA: Paper Sampling of Online Assessment
- On your Own, Complete Standards
 - 1.1, 1.6
and
 - 2.2, 2.7 if your table # is even
or
 - 3.3, 3.5 if your table # is odd
- If you do not currently work for a program, think of a program you know for the Mini Assessment
- Use the rating scale on the second page

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Table Discussion

- What was your experience completing the mini QSA?
- Did anything surprise you?
- How can self-assessment be useful to your work?

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PEPNet Tools and Resources

PEPNet Guide to Quality Standards for Youth Programs

- Descriptions, indicators and practical examples of all PEPNet standards
- P. 4: What's in This Guide and How to Use It
- P. 5: Index of Frequently Asked Questions
- P. 18: List of PEPNet Quality Standards



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PEPNet Tools and Resources

PEPNet on NYEC Website:

www.nyec.org/pepnet

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PEPNet Tools and Resources

PEPNet Online Index to Quality Practices

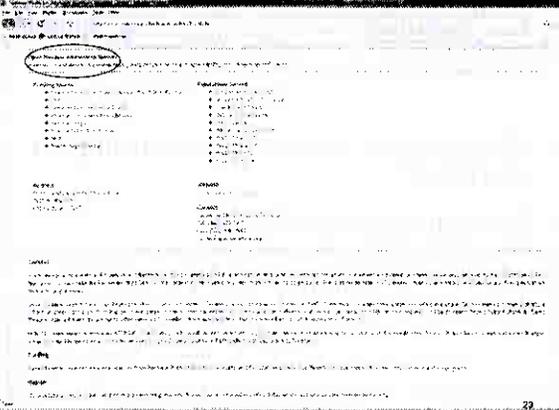
Search the Index Database by:

- Quality Standard
- WIA Element
- Funding source or model
- Population Served
- Awardee Program Name ("Awardee Profiles")
- Any Keyword

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PEPNet Tools and Resources

From Data to Results: The PEPNet Guide to Measuring and Improving Performance in Youth Programs

- Basics on Program Measurement and Data Collection and Use
- Guidance for Funders and Policy Makers
- User-friendly exercises walk users through the concepts



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PEPNet Tools and Resources

Online Results Assessment Tool

Programs can:

- Identify outcome and progress measures they currently or would like to collect
- Compare outcomes to outcomes from WIA programs for similar youth populations in similar-sized geographic areas

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PEPNet Tools and Resources

Online Results Assessment Tool provides comparative data (benchmarks)

Benchmarked Outcomes:

- Placement in Employment
- Placement in Post-Secondary Education/Advanced Training
- Retention in Employment
- Retention in Post-Secondary Education/Advanced Training
- High School Diploma/GED Credential Attainment

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PEPNet Tools and Resources

Sample Youth Program Results

Placement in Unsubsidized Employment: 75%
Locality: Milwaukee, WI

Population	National Average	National Percentile	Density-Specific * Average	Density-Specific * Percentile
Youth Overall	70%	60	64%	76
Youth with Basic Skills Deficiencies	66%	69	62%	82

* Compared to the 10% of Local Workforce Investment Areas most similar to Milwaukee in population density.

All data from the 2000 U.S. Census and U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Investment Act performance information from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2003.

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PEPNet Tools and Resources

Online Quality Self Assessment

- Programs can assess themselves on the PEPNet standards, to identify areas of strength and improvement
- Organization identifies Assessment Team (may include staff, youth, stakeholders)
- Completed online; report generated
- Team debriefs results, identifies areas of strength and areas of improvement
- Identifies and implements improvement plan; can use PEPNet's online tool

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QSA Roll-Up Report

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Improvement Action Planning Tool

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Table Discussion

What are your organizations and youth programs already doing (formally or informally) in the area of continuous improvement?

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PEPNet Continuous Improvement Process

The Cycle of Continuous Improvement

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PEPNet Continuous Improvement Process

Self-Assessment

- Build an Assessment Team
- Complete the QSA
- Debrief from the QSA

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PEPNet Continuous Improvement Process

Improvement Action Plan

- Identify Priority Improvement Areas
- Build an Improvement Team
- Complete an Improvement Action Plan
- Implement Improvement Action Plan

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PEPNet Continuous Improvement Process

Celebrate Success

- Set Benchmarks to Reaching Your Goal
- Identify Achievements
- Involve Stakeholders in Celebrating Success

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PEPNet Continuous Improvement Process

Lather, Rinse, Repeat!

- Identify New Improvement Goals
- Make New Action Plans
- After One or Two Years, Complete the QSA Again

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 **PEPNet Improvement Process**

Depending on the plan, may consult PEPNet's tools for assistance during improvement – Index, Results book or Assessment, training, NYEC connections, others.

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 **PEPNet Improvement Process**

- When improvement is completed, reflect and celebrate!
- Then move on to next improvement in priority order.
- Suggest doing self assessment again periodically. Helps track growth, identify new successes and improvement areas, and inform strategic planning.

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 **Table Discussion**

- What have you learned today? Have there been any “ah-ha moments?”
- What one action will you take when you return to your organization to utilize your new knowledge?

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 **NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COALITION**

For More Information:

Mala B. Thakur and Nancy Martin

National Youth Employment Coalition
1836 Jefferson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel. 202-659-1064
www.nyec.org