

## Developing the BYAEP Framework

*"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." – Albert Einstein*

For many of us in the youth arts field, evaluation strategies have felt particularly foreign. As artists, we have struggled with how to prove “success” that connects with the integrity, depth, and breadth of the work we do. Evaluation methods that “divide” and “attack” seem to do little and can even hinder us in understanding the relationships and wholeness we are often trying to create. Compare here the quote of the “evaluator” with the quote of the “artist,” Hans Hofmann:

*“Evaluation theories are like military strategies and tactics; methods are like military weapons and logistics... The good commander needs to know strategy and tactics to deploy weapons properly or to organize logistics in different situations. The good evaluator needs theories for the same reasons in choosing and employing methods.”* (Mark, 2005, p. 2)

*“We speak of the mood we experience when looking at a landscape. This mood results from the relation of certain things rather than from their separate actualities. This is because objects do not in themselves possess the total effect they give when interrelated.”* (Hofmann, 1967, p. 68)

As artists, we clearly see that most often, there are no truly separate parts in a whole. Things exist in relation to others around them and to try to separate, quantify, and analyze them often feels forced and untrue. There are often competing desires, philosophies, and strategies when one is asked to evaluate the arts and arts programs; finding a middle ground that can give justice to the complex relational work that we do has been quite difficult.

## The Sacred Bundle and The Logic Model

*“The goal of evaluating is getting the answers to the right questions.”* – H. Mark Smith, Massachusetts Cultural Council

Our first step in designing evaluation tools was to begin to discuss the questions themselves. In the Summer 2005 issue of the *Evaluation Exchange*, John Bare of the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation wrote an article entitled “Evaluation and the Sacred Bundle.” This article invited nonprofits to simply,

*“Measure what you value and others will value what you measure.”* (p. 6)

We found that the first step in exploring evaluation and developing the BYAEP Framework was figuring out our own “sacred bundle.” Bare describes the custom of North American indigenous tribes preserving their culture through items wrapped up in a pouch, or “sacred bundle.” When the bundle was unwrapped, stories were told that strengthened their identity, history, and core values. A sacred bundle can be thought of as the things that an organization values so dearly that it is willing to take the time to track, assess, and refine what is needed to understand them more deeply. If we were to invest three years in an evaluation project, we wanted to be sure that it would convey our values, help us to better understand our programs, and enable us to plan for our future by making better-informed decisions.

In order to transform evaluations from a measuring stick of accountability to a tool for learning and analysis, we started by asking the following questions:

1. What do we really value and how does this help us tell our story?
2. What information do we need to show we value this?
3. How can we assess how well we value it? How we can improve?
4. How do we show that our part of the world is a little better off because of our efforts?
5. How can we track this information in short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes?
6. Who is going to use this information and how?

To begin to answer these questions, we went to our logic models. Using the logic model is an efficient approach to understanding your program, planning your activities, assessing the indicators for your outcomes and seeing how you might evaluate them. For those unfamiliar with this tool, a logic model is a snapshot of how your program works. You create this picture by looking at the needs and goals of your constituents and at how your program produces the outcomes you want to achieve. It is important to note that many urban youth have particularly complex and challenging home and school lives. We recognize that in evaluating a program's impact, the logic model is a powerful tool; however, it is not meant to oversimplify cause and effect or to devalue other influences in a young person's life.

One of the requirements of becoming a BYAEP collaborator was that an organization have a history (at least eight years) of assessing its programs and that it employs a logic model as the basis of its evaluation plan. To help us discover our commonalities and some of our differences, we revised and compared logic models, finding remarkable similarities. It became clear that all collaborating organizations helped youth build success in three main outcome areas: their skills of expression and art (I Create), their ability to look at themselves (I Am), and their ability to form connections with the wider world (We Connect). The following page contains a template you can use to create a logic model. If this is new to you or you want further information, please see the list of resources at the end of this Handbook for great on-line planning tools that include logic models.

# LOGIC MODEL

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This is a template that can be used for your organization's logic model. It asks the questions: Why are you doing what you are doing, how are you doing it, and what do you want to have changed as a result of doing it? What will be changed because of your programs?

<b>Organization and Mission:</b>				
<b>Conditions</b> (The way it is now)	<b>Inputs</b> (What you invest in)	<b>Activities</b> (Your programs and services)	<b>Outputs</b> (Things that can be counted)	<b>Outcomes</b> (The way you want it to be)
Current conditions, challenges, and needs	Resources Constraints	Programs and services	Measurable products like... # of sessions held # of participants # of hours	Results showing increased skills, positive behaviors, knowledge, beliefs, improved condition and status <b>Short term:</b> What you expect to see during your program <b>Intermediate:</b> What you want to see <b>Long-term:</b> What you hope to eventually see
Theory of Change: <b>If</b> we do this... <b>then</b> we are looking for this change to happen...				

## The Need for a Youth Arts Development Framework

“...we are calling for the field to move beyond the current state of ‘dueling frameworks.’ We think we need an overarching structure within which all of us can find our place—within which we can each articulate what we can contribute to making meaningful change and learning from it, on the ground, in diverse communities.” (Corporation for Public/Private Ventures, 2000, p. 299)

During the first year of our project we researched many frameworks from the fields of out-of-school time, youth development, and social science, hoping that we could find a framework that fit our needs and values. After several months of research, we could not find a framework to adequately describe arts-based youth development programs. We decided that we needed to borrow from the fields of youth development, arts education, and out-of-school time, while drawing upon our own wealth of experience to give a voice to the youth arts development field.

We needed a framework that encompassed our whole identity. We required:

- o Easy access for directors of youth arts development programs
- o Availability on the web with links, tools, research etc., giving the potential and encouragement to build the field through contribution
- o A common language
- o Usable evaluation tools for assessing:
  - Youth’s perceptions of themselves
  - Program quality and youth satisfaction with the programs
  - Longer-term outcomes through alumni evaluations
  - Creative evaluation tools for youth self-expression and demonstration of our program’s results

We spent the first year formulating our short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes based on our collective experience working with youth. We also created side-by-side comparisons with other models. We were able to find ten strong youth development frameworks and we were particularly inspired by *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* by the National Academies of Sciences (2002) and the comprehensive longitudinal study entitled *Finding Out What Matters for Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development* (Gambone, Klem, & Connell, 2002). Additionally, The Protective Risk Factors, the 5C’s Youth Development Framework, the Forum for Youth Investment, and the Search Institute’s Internal Assets all played a role in inspiring the development of the BYAEP Framework. The following chart gives one example of these comparisons.

## How the BYAEP Model Compares to Four Other Models

BYAEP FRAMEWORK: Short-Term Outcomes	The Protective Risk Factors	The 5 C's Youth Development Framework	The Forum for Youth Investment Ready by 21 - Outcome Areas	Search Institute's Internal Assets
I CREATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Value on achievement</li> <li>•Liking and perceived competence in activity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Competence</b> Positive view of one's actions in specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational</p>	<p>Ready for College: Learning</p> <p>Ready for Work: Working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Achievement motivation</li> <li>•School engagement</li> <li>•Planning and decision making</li> </ul>
I AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Positive attitude toward the future/future expectations</li> <li>•Models for conventional behavior</li> <li>•Controls against deviant behavior</li> </ul>	<p><b>Confidence</b> The internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy, identity, and belief in the future</p> <p><b>Character</b> Respect for societal and cultural rules...a sense of right and wrong</p>	Ready for Life: Thriving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Integrity</li> <li>•Honesty</li> <li>•Responsibility</li> <li>•Restraint</li> <li>•Personal power</li> <li>•Sense of purpose</li> <li>•Self-esteem</li> <li>•Positive view of personal future</li> </ul>
WE CONNECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sense of acceptance and belonging</li> <li>•Neighborhood resources</li> <li>•Interested and caring adults</li> <li>•Ability to work with others</li> <li>•Ability to work out conflicts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Connection</b> Positive bonds with people and institutions</p> <p><b>Caring</b> A sense of sympathy and empathy for others.</p> <p><b>Contribution:</b> <i>This 6th C is present when the above 5 are present</i></p>	<p>Ready for Life: Connecting</p> <p>Ready for Life: Leading and Contributing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Caring</li> <li>•Equality and social justice</li> <li>•Interpersonal competence</li> <li>•Cultural competence</li> <li>•Peaceful conflict resolution</li> </ul>

The BYAEP Framework shares similarities with youth development frameworks that assess programs that aim to provide a safe, supportive environment to highly-engaged youth, helping them to build strong relationships with adults, peers, and their community. However, these frameworks do not consider how the arts particularly engage youth or the wealth of skills teens can develop through the arts. Additionally, there has been little development of evaluation tools that enable the creative voices and visions of youth to be expressed. Finally, few frameworks have adequately spelled out what the short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes look like, and very few are able to provide the tools by which to measure the intermediate and long-term outcomes.

All of the collaborating organizations honor the process of creating as well the artistic product of creation, wanting each to be of high quality. We were informed and inspired by the findings of the report *Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education* (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2008) that embraced the concept that quality is “personal, passionate, and persistent.” The search for quality in the journey from process to product resonated with us, and we began to assess quality through their following four lenses:

- Students are engaged, real, open to taking risks, and are able to take pride in their creations.
- Teachers model artistry, inquiry, and work to make sessions relevant and intentional, as well as flexible.
- The culture (community dynamics) is one of respect, challenge, openness and willingness to collaborate.
- The environment (space, materials, time) is aesthetic, with high-quality materials in a functional space where youth have enough time to deeply engage in the work.

While understanding that a quality program is multidimensional, subjective, and tied to one’s values, we feel that all of our programs share the capacity to provide the following three required inputs of the BYAEP Framework:

1. **OPPORTUNITIES:** Challenges and experiences that increase innovation, expressive skills, self-efficacy, and fun in the lives of youth.
2. **POSITIVE CLIMATE:** Meaningful structure that is youth-centered, safe, inclusive, engaging, and challenges youth to see, reveal, and strengthen who they are.
3. **CONNECTIONS:** Opportunities to belong, contribute, and build supportive relationships with peers, adults, and community.

Youth participating in programs where these inputs are reflected in the core mission are much more likely to strengthen their ability to artistically express themselves (I Create), strengthen their identity (I Am), and build their connectedness (We Connect).