

Youth Volunteer Corps Network Evaluation Report

Summer 2018



Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership
Henry W. Bloch School of Management

Acknowledgements

This report was produced by the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership (MCNL) for Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC). The evaluation team included:

Dr. Scott Helm, Associate Director, MCNL
Andrea Clark, Research Coordinator, MCNL
Cindy Laufer, Program Coordinator, MCNL

David Battey, President and Founder, YVC
Tracy Hale, Chief Executive Officer, YVC
Amanda Moser, Director of Program Impact, YVC

About Youth Volunteer Corps

Youth Volunteer Corps is a program that creates quality team-based youth service opportunities in dozens of communities throughout the U.S. and Canada. Just one negative experience can turn a youth away from service, so YVC focuses on making every single project high-quality, with opportunities for learning, skill development, and fun. YVC projects allow youth ages 11 to 18 to make a difference in their communities while learning practical life skills.

About the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership

The Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership (MCNL) is a service and outreach unit of the Department of Public Affairs in the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. The mission of MCNL is to enhance the performance and effectiveness in the nonprofit sector through high quality community-oriented education, applied research, problem solving, and service. MCNL applies the resources and talents of the University and the sector to the problems and issues facing the nonprofit sector so its members are better prepared to serve their communities. MCNL creates opportunities for the leaders of this vital community to come together as colleagues to learn, network and support each other, and to encourage personal, professional, and organizational renewal and effectiveness.

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Executive Summary

Youth Outcomes

Youth volunteers reported improvements in life and career skills, and even greater improvements in community stewardship, after participating in YVC summer service.

When the pre- and post-tests of youth volunteers were compared to the pre- and post-tests of students who did not participate in YVC during summer 2017, youth volunteers reported statistically significant higher improvement in five of the 20 items:



67% higher

I can easily manage my time.



71% higher

I am able to complete tasks without direct oversight.



139% higher

I can easily handle changing priorities.



75% higher

I take action to meet the needs of my community.



98% higher

I understand the needs of my community.

Of the remaining 15 items, youth volunteers reported more improvement than students who did not participate, but the improvement was not statistically significant.

Methods

The research team developed a unique survey instrument based on the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning life and career skills and YVC's community stewardship mission outcomes.

Life and Career Skills

1. Flexibility and Adaptability
2. Initiative and Self-Direction
3. Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
4. Productivity and Accountability
5. Leadership and Responsibility

Community Stewardship

1. Awareness of Community Needs
2. Capacity to Address Needs
3. Preparedness for Work

Participation

At the end of their 2017 summer service, 917 youth volunteers from 22 YVC affiliates in the United States and Canada completed the survey.

At the start of the 2017-18 school year, 132 students who did not participate in YVC during summer 2017 were recruited from eight schools in YVC communities to participate in a comparison group.

Disadvantaged Youth

Disadvantaged youth showed greater improvement in life and career skills than their non-disadvantaged peers. Engaging disadvantaged youth in YVC programs will expand impact.

Life and Career Skills	% greater improvement
Initiative and Self-Direction	94%
Flexibility and Adaptability	110%
Leadership and Responsibility	88%
Productivity and Accountability	113%
Social and Cross-Cultural Skills	84%

Youth Advisory Boards/Councils

Youth volunteers who participate in youth advisory boards/councils reported greater improvement in life and career skills. Providing more leadership opportunities will expand impact.

Life and Career Skills	% greater improvement
Initiative and Self-Direction	15%
Flexibility and Adaptability	41%
Leadership and Responsibility	50%
Productivity and Accountability	4%
Social and Cross-Cultural Skills	50%



Volunteer Hours

The duration and intensity of a service-learning program impacts the amount of change observed in youth volunteers. Youth volunteers who reported positive change between the start and end of summer service were analyzed to determine the tipping point, or the median number of completed hours necessary, before a change occurred. The results indicate at 30 hours of service positive improvement is observed in a majority of youth volunteers in all skill areas.

Affective Learning

Reviewing youth volunteer observations, we see significant improvement in their perceived abilities to handle ambiguity, structure, and environments that demand performance. It is because of growth in these specific areas, research indicates, youth volunteer performance in academic domains will also increase (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 2009). YVC may bolster the academic ability of youth volunteers by providing programs that target affective learning and thereby better position youth for success in the classroom. Improvements in affective skills demonstrated through the YVC youth outcomes means youth volunteers are better prepared for academic coursework.

Affective Learning

Affective learning deals with the acquisition of values, meaning, and feelings.

Where cognitive learning asks, “Do I know something?” affective learning asks, “Can I accomplish this?”

Experts have identified important relationships between cognitive learning and affective learning.

Executive Summary

YVC Network

Affiliates find value in YVC programs and receive support from YVCHQ. Program and executive directors agree that YVC programs have a positive impact on their organizations, youth volunteers, and community.

96% of program directors reported YVC programming positively impacted youth volunteers.

100% of program directors believe youth volunteers develop job skills through YVC projects.

100% of executive directors said they would recommend affiliating with YVC to a colleague interested in starting a youth volunteer program.

Over **80%** of program directors have used at least 9 of the 16 services provided by YVCHQ.

Most Utilized YVCHQ Services	Least Utilized YVCHQ Services
Resource Library	Volunteer Insurance
Operational Technical Assistance	Customized YVC Website
Service Learning Library	Fund Development Assistance
YVC Summit	Funding from YVCHQ
Training Modules	Fundraising Materials

There are also opportunities to grow and strengthen the network. YVC maintains an extra-curricular service-learning model consistent with best practices, but there is variation in adoption of quality standards across the network.

12% of directors report service-learning activities are sometimes or never conducted.

12% of directors report meaningful reflection occurs half of the time or sometimes.

23% of affiliates report youth select volunteer projects sometimes or never.

32% of affiliates report youth help plan projects sometimes.

The greatest challenges affiliates face are staff retention, staff time and availability, and funding. To grow and strengthen the network, YVCHQ should develop strategies to address staff retention and funding issues reported by affiliates.

Methods

The network evaluation was conducted using mixed methods. Surveys, interviews, and project worksheets were collected.

Participation

27 program directors and 20 executive directors were asked to reflect on program operations, quality of programming, and support from YVCHQ.

Introduction

Youth Volunteer Corps has become one of the premier service-learning organizations in North America since its founding in 1987. With host sites in the United States and Canada, YVC serves youth from 11 to 18 years old. YVC affiliates traditionally operate as programs of organizations like the YMCA, United Way, and Boys and Girls Club.

YVC affiliates operate programs that vary in duration and design throughout both the school year and summer. Volunteer projects range from a couple of hours to one week. Programming is offered in the evenings, weekends, school holidays, in schools, after school, and as a day camp.

YVC consistently monitors program success to continually improve. In addition to annual program evaluations implemented by YVC Headquarters staff (YVCHQ), YVC hires independent evaluators to assess its programs periodically.

In 2017, YVC partnered with the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership (MCNL) to conduct an independent evaluation of YVC programs and youth participants, ensuring the YVC network remains current with the needs of youth across North America. The evaluation sought to answer two broad questions:

1. Does participation in Youth Volunteer Corps increase a young person's Life and Career skills?
2. Does YVCHQ support enable affiliates to better serve their communities?

About YVC

Mission

We create volunteer opportunities to address community needs and to inspire youth for a lifetime commitment to service.

Goals

1. To engage youth in service projects that are challenging, rewarding and educational.
2. To serve the unmet needs of the community and its residents.
3. To promote among youth a greater understanding and appreciation for the diversity of their community.
4. To promote a lifetime ethic of service among youth.

Program Standards

1. Conduct frequent, supervised, team-based service projects that address a variety of important community needs.
2. Recruit youth ages 11-18 who represent the diversity of the program's community.
3. Assign a program director responsible for managing the program.
4. Establish an integrated education and reflection process for participants.
5. Provide leadership opportunities for youth volunteers.
6. Use the trademark YVC name and logo prominently in close coordination with the name and logo of the YVC host.
7. Provide no financial inducement for youth volunteer participation.
8. Participate in the YVC program evaluation process.

Youth Outcomes

Methods

YVC service-learning programs are extracurricular, unlike many service-learning programs that occur in the classroom. For this reason, and YVC's desire to develop soft skills in youth volunteers, we sought evaluation instruments focused on career preparedness. Without a clear evaluation instrument for this, the research team developed a unique survey instrument based on the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning life and career skills and YVC's community stewardship mission outcomes. A total of 20 indicators were used to assess life and career skills and community stewardship.

Life and Career Skills

The survey included three indicators for each life and career skill:

1. Flexibility and Adaptability
2. Initiative and Self-Direction
3. Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
4. Productivity and Accountability
5. Leadership and Responsibility

Community Stewardship

Five indicators were included in the survey to assess the following outcomes of community stewardship:

1. Awareness of Community Needs
2. Capacity to Address Needs
3. Preparedness for Work

Participation

At the end of their 2017 summer service, 917 youth volunteers from 22 YVC affiliates in the United States and Canada completed the survey. Some youth volunteers were new to YVC and others had participated in YVC programs prior to summer service. They were first asked to respond on how they felt at the end of their summer service (post-test) and then to reflect on how they felt at the beginning of the summer (reflective pre-test).

Students who did not participate in YVC during summer 2017 were recruited at the start of the 2017-18 school year to participate in a comparison group. 132 students from 8 schools in YVC communities were given the same survey by YVC program directors and asked to respond in a similar fashion.

Partnership for 21st Century Learning

P21's mission is to serve as a catalyst for 21st century learning by building collaborative partnerships among education, business, community, and government leaders so that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in a world where change is constant and learning never stops.

The framework was developed with input from teachers, education experts, and business leaders to define and illustrate the skills and knowledge students need to succeed in work, life and citizenship, as well as the support systems necessary for 21st century learning outcomes.

Youth Outcomes

Key Findings

When the pre- and post-tests of youth volunteers were compared to the pre- and post-tests of students who did not participate in YVC during summer 2017, youth volunteers reported statistically significant higher improvement in five of the 20 items, highlighted below. Of the remaining 15 items, youth volunteers reported more improvement than students who did not participate, but the improvement was not statistically significant.



67% higher

I can easily manage my time.



71% higher

I am able to complete tasks without direct oversight.



139% higher

I can easily handle changing priorities.



75% higher

I take action to meet the needs of my community.



98% higher

I understand the needs of my community.

Youth Outcomes

Life and Career Skills

Youth volunteers reported improvements in all five life and career skills.

Each life and career skill is comprised of three indicators. The percent of youth volunteers who improved and the average amount of improvement is given for the skill overall and for each indicator. The amount of improvement was calculated by comparing the reflective pre- and post-tests of youth volunteers.



Initiative and Self-Direction
Manage goals and time; work independently; be a self-directed learner.

Initiative and self-direction, specifically the ability to reflect on experiences to better perform in the future, saw the greatest amount of improvement in the largest number of youth volunteers when compared to the other life and career skills.

Overall, **57%** of youth volunteers improved initiative and self-direction skills by an average of **18%**.





Flexibility and Adaptability

Adapt to change; be flexible.

Overall, **53%** of youth volunteers improved flexibility and adaptability skills by an average of **15%**.

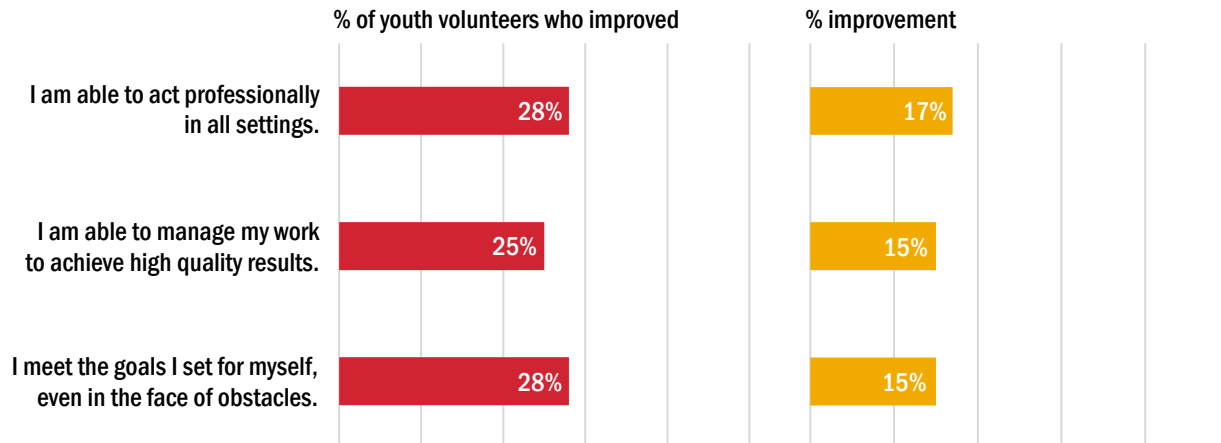




Leadership and Responsibility

Guide and lead others; be responsible to others.

Overall, **48%** of youth volunteers improved leadership and responsibility skills by an average of **16%**.

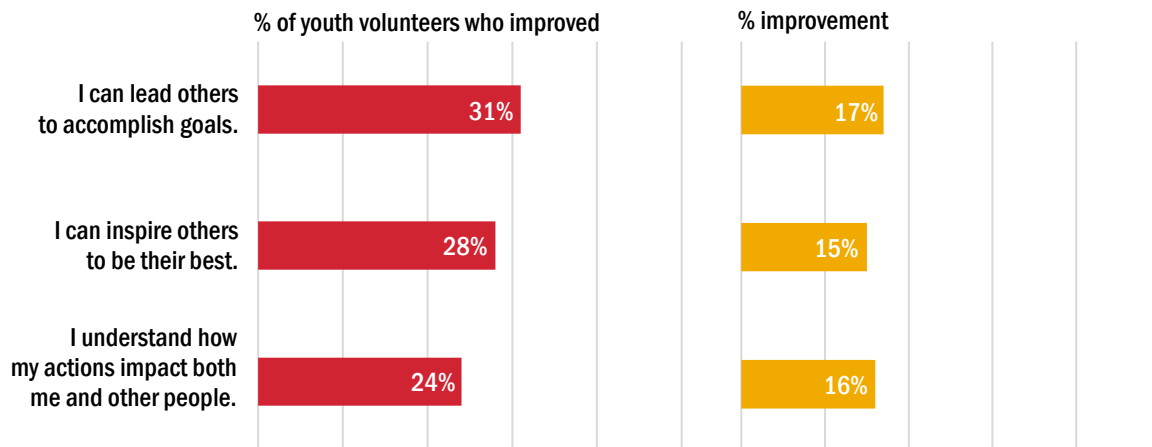




Productivity and Accountability

Manage projects; produce results.

Overall, **48%** of youth volunteers improved productivity and accountability skills by an average of **16%**.

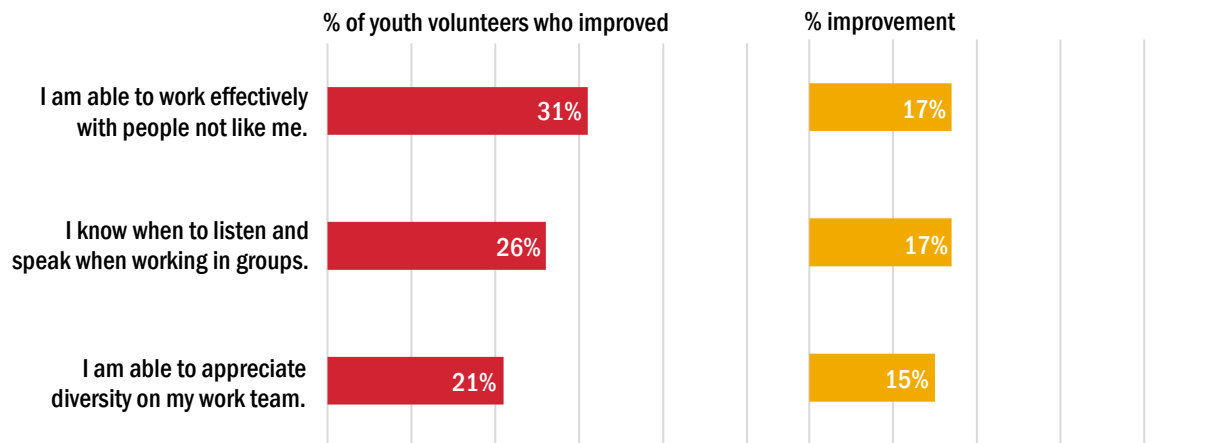




Social and Cross-Cultural Skills

Interact effectively with others; work effectively in diverse teams.

Overall, **47%** of youth volunteers improved social and cross-cultural skills by an average of **17%**.



Youth Outcomes

Community Stewardship Skills

Community stewardship skills saw the greatest amount of improvement among youth volunteers out of all the skills.



Community Stewardship

The ability to understand and take action to meet the needs of the community is part of community stewardship.

The strong connection to YVC's mission could be why community stewardship skills, particularly understanding and taking action to meet needs of the community, saw greater improvement than the life and career skill areas.

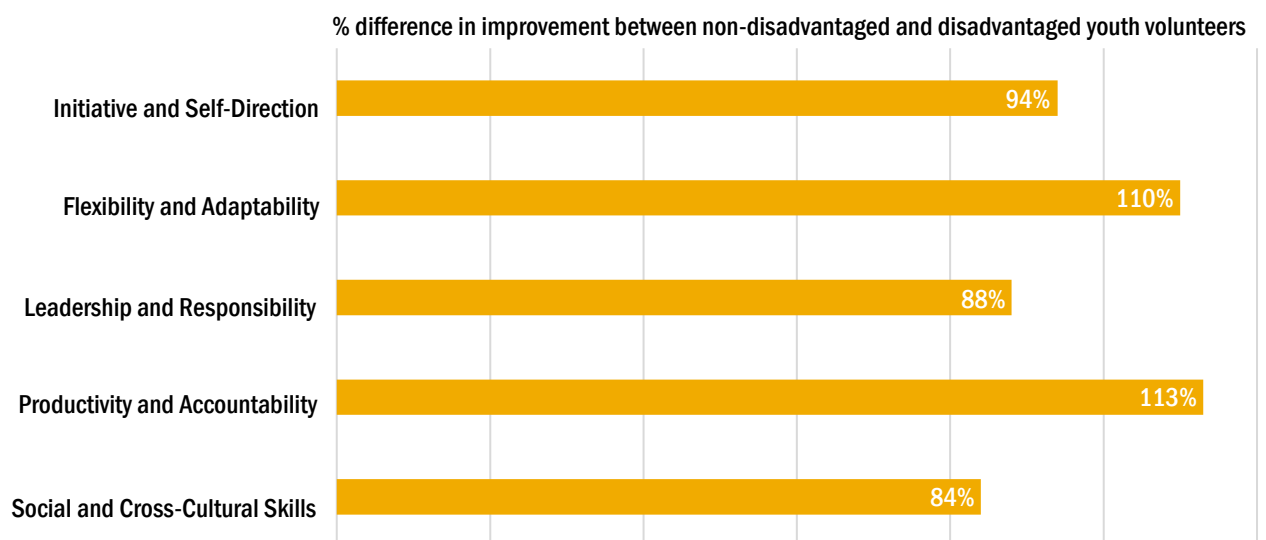


Youth Outcomes

Disadvantaged Youth

YVC summer service had a greater impact on disadvantaged youth than their non-disadvantaged peers.

While nearly 39% of youth volunteers in the 2016-17 program year were disadvantaged, only 7% of the youth volunteers surveyed were disadvantaged. Improvement observed in disadvantaged youth volunteers was greater than improvement observed in their non-disadvantaged peers. It is clear that summer service has a greater impact on disadvantaged youth, especially with flexibility and adaptability as well as productivity and accountability.



Disadvantaged Youth

YVC defines “disadvantaged youth” as youth who are any one of the following:

- Economically disadvantaged eligible for free or reduced school lunch or enrolled in a school where the majority of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.
- Are completing court-ordered service or are former juvenile offenders.
- Are living with a disability.
- Are not currently enrolled in school.
- Are at risk to leave high school without graduating.
- Are in or aging out of foster care.
- Have limited English proficiency.

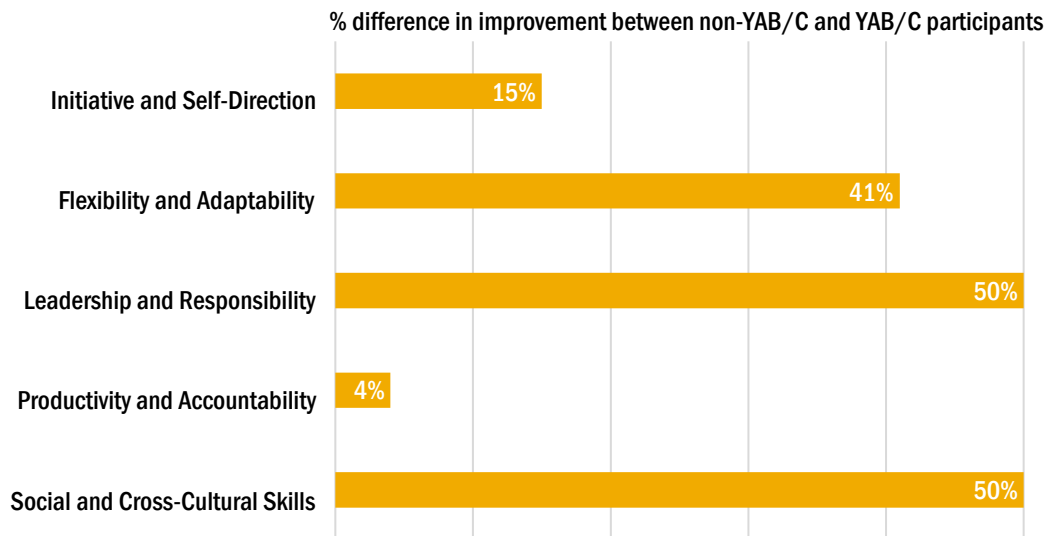
Youth Outcomes

Youth Leadership

Youth advisory board/council participants reported higher percentages of improvement in life and career skills.

Youth volunteers have the opportunity to participate in youth advisory boards or councils (YAB/C) through YVC programming. YAB/C are structured differently throughout the YVC network and allow youth to serve in a variety of leadership roles.

YAB/C participants reported 4% to 50% higher improvement than youth volunteers who had not participated. The greatest difference in improvement was seen in flexibility and adaptability, leadership and responsibility, and social and cross-cultural skills.



Youth Outcomes

Volunteer Hours

30 hours of service appears to be the tipping point for positive change.



The duration and intensity of a service-learning program impacts the amount of change observed in youth volunteers. Youth volunteers who reported positive change between the start and end of summer service were analyzed to determine the tipping point, or the median number of completed hours necessary, before a change occurred. To determine the tipping point, a three step data analysis process was used. First, differences between youth volunteer responses on pre- and post-tests were calculated. Then, based on that calculation youth volunteers were placed in two groups, those who improved and those who did not improve. Finally, a descriptive analysis of service hours was conducted for students who reported improvement. The results indicate at 30 hours of service positive improvement is observed in a majority of youth volunteers in all skill areas.



Youth Outcomes

What We Learned

YVC positively impacts youth volunteers who participate in summer service, especially disadvantaged youth.

To assess impact of summer service on youth volunteers, the research team analyzed retrospective pre- and post-test responses from youth volunteers, retrospective pre- and post-test responses from the comparison group, and responses from program directors. Of the 21st Century Learning life and career skills, youth volunteers observed significantly higher improvements in five items when compared to the comparison group:

1. I can easily manage my time. (Productivity and Accountability)
2. I am able to complete tasks without direct oversight. (Productivity and Accountability)
3. I can easily handle changing priorities. (Flexibility and Adaptability)
4. I take action to meet the needs of my community. (Community Stewardship)
5. I understand the needs of my community. (Community Stewardship)

When examining youth volunteer responses, community stewardship skills observed the greatest improvements when compared to life and career skills. In addition, two of the five statistically significant items were community stewardship skills. Not surprisingly, community stewardship is fundamental to the mission and values of YVC.

It is expected that not every youth volunteer will improve over the course of summer service. There are many reasons youth volunteers may not experience intended growth. First, it is possible (but not probable) youth volunteer improvement in the 15 non-significant items are due to influences outside of YVC. We do not believe this to be the case for two principal reasons. One, the average improvement was greater among youth volunteers. The only thing we know for certain is that the difference in improvement was not large enough to reduce the level of type I error sufficiently (type I error is what statistical significance measures). Two, statistical significance is highly influenced by sample size. The comparison group only had 132 respondents, which is relatively small. The same difference in improvement with a larger comparison group would likely be statistically significant.

Second, the composition of the comparison group did not control for previous participation in other youth development programs. This comparison group was designed to help clarify impact from the 2017 summer service program. Ideally, future evaluations will also collect information on comparison group member participation in youth development programs with similar goals to YVC. If this additional information can be collected, we can control for additional factors in the analysis.

Programs such as YVC are often asked to demonstrate influence on GPA, graduation rates, and other education outcomes referred to as “cognitive learning.” The ability to link YVC participation directly to GPA and other outcomes lies outside the organization’s theory of change. That said, experts have identified important relationships between cognitive learning and affective learning that eliminate the demand for a direct link. More specifically, affective learning enables cognitive learning. Affective learning deals with the acquisition of values, meaning, and feelings. Where cognitive learning asks, “Do I know something?” affective learning asks, “Can I accomplish this?”

Reviewing youth volunteer observations, we see significant improvement in their perceived abilities to handle ambiguity, structure, and environments that demand performance. It is because of growth in these specific areas, research indicates, youth volunteer performance in academic domains will also increase (Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 2009). YVC may bolster the academic ability of youth volunteers by providing programs that target affective learning and thereby better position youth for success in the classroom. Improvements in affective skills demonstrated through the YVC youth outcomes means youth volunteers are better prepared for academic coursework.

Affiliate program directors were also asked about YVC’s impact on youth:

96% of program directors reported YVC positively impacted youth volunteers.

100% of program directors reported YVC programming helped develop job-related skills.

For youth, participation in the YVC program provides opportunities for development of affective skills and career readiness. As a result, participants are better positioned for future education pursuits and career competitiveness. Local affiliate leadership can view affective skills development, demonstrated through youth outcomes, as a building block for continued and deeper relationships with area schools.

Youth Outcomes

Recommendations

Despite program success, evaluation results provide indicators for how programing can be improved. The recommendations that follow are directed principally at YVCHQ, with the goal of increasing strength across the network. Affiliates can also reflect on the following points to identify areas of growth and improvement.

1. The YVC network needs to identify strategies to engage more disadvantaged youth. YVC programs positively impact all youth volunteers, but impact is even greater for youth identified as disadvantaged. The value of YVC for disadvantaged youth should be expanded by recruiting more youth in this category. This is especially true when considering only 7% of youth volunteers who participated in the survey were classified as disadvantaged.
2. Results indicate YAB/C members experienced greater improvements in all five life skill areas than youth volunteers not involved. To grow the impact of YVC, the network should consider creating more leadership opportunities for youth volunteers.
3. Evaluation results indicate YVC can increase impact by focusing on skill development in existing youth volunteers. For each life skill area, a percentage of youth volunteers did not report improvement:

Life and Career Skills	% of youth volunteers who did not improve
Initiative and Self-Direction	43%
Flexibility and Accountability	47%
Leadership and responsibility	52%
Productivity and Accountability	52%
Social and Cross-Cultural Skills	53%

Using the retrospective research design mitigates the influence of different experience levels in youth volunteers at the start of summer service. Because each youth volunteer was asked to assess themselves against a previous version of themselves, length of time in the program should not account for lack of change. Program leaders may need to explore changes to program processes in order to more positively impact more youth volunteers.

For example, program directors cited staff retention as a key challenge. Significant staff turnover can lead to differential program implementation and thus differential results. A second explanation may be differences in the YVC program experience because affiliates can design their own service-learning projects. Thus, projects differ in goals, duration, and intensity. It is reasonable to conclude some projects are more effective than others. Identifying, diffusing, and eliminating barriers to high-quality service-learning projects should be a priority of YVCHQ moving forward.

YVC Network

Methods

The network evaluation was conducted using mixed methods. Pre-interview surveys and program worksheets, collected after each volunteer project, provided quantitative data. Quantitative data explored network processes and affiliate satisfaction.

Qualitative data was collected through pre-interview surveys and phone interviews. Responses were examined for major themes to identify opportunities for improvement and areas of excellence.

Participation

27 YVC program directors completed a brief survey and a one-hour phone interview about their experiences with YVCHQ. In addition, 20 executive directors of YVC affiliates were asked to participate in a one-hour phone interview with the research team. Both program directors and executive directors were asked to reflect on program operations, quality of programming, and support from YVCHQ.

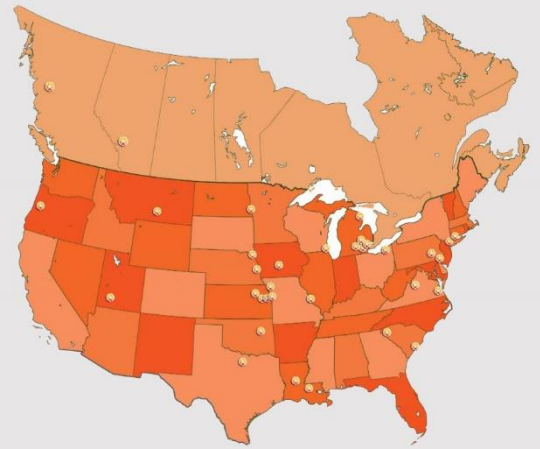
The list and map of YVC affiliates in the sidebar reflect the current affiliates in the YVC network. Since the data collection process in summer 2017, the YVC network has changed. The following 29 YVC affiliates provided information for the network evaluation:

Alexandria, LA • Alpena, MI
Anderson, SC • Ann Arbor, MI
Baton Rouge, LA • Billings, MT
Calgary, AB • Cedar City, UT
Charleston, SC • Cleveland, OH
Colombia, MO • Corvallis, OR
Danbury, CT • Des Moines, IA
Detroit, MI • Grand Prairie, TX
Hampton Roads, VA • Kansas City, KS/MO
Madison, WI • Manhattan, KS
Muskogee, OK • Omaha, NE
Philadelphia, PA • Plymouth, MI
Portland, OR • Racine, WI
Reading, PA • St. Joseph, MO
Staunton, VA • Terrace, BC

YVC Affiliates

YVC is an international network of youth-service programs with over 30 affiliates throughout the United States and Canada:

Alexandria, LA • Alpena, MI
Anderson, SC • Ann Arbor, MI
Baton Rouge, LA • Billings, MT
Calgary, AB • Cedar City, UT
Charleston, SC • Colombia, MO
Corvallis, OR • Danbury, CT
Des Moines, IA • Fargo, ND
Farmington Hills, MI • Hampton Roads, VA
Jefferson City, MO • Joplin, MO
Kansas City, KS/MO • Kirksville, MO
Manhattan, KS • Muskogee, OK
Omaha, NE • Philadelphia, PA
Plymouth, MI • Queens, NY
Racine, WI • Reading, PA
Southgate, MI • Springfield, MO
St. Joseph, MO • St. Louis, MO
Staunton, VA • Terrace, BC



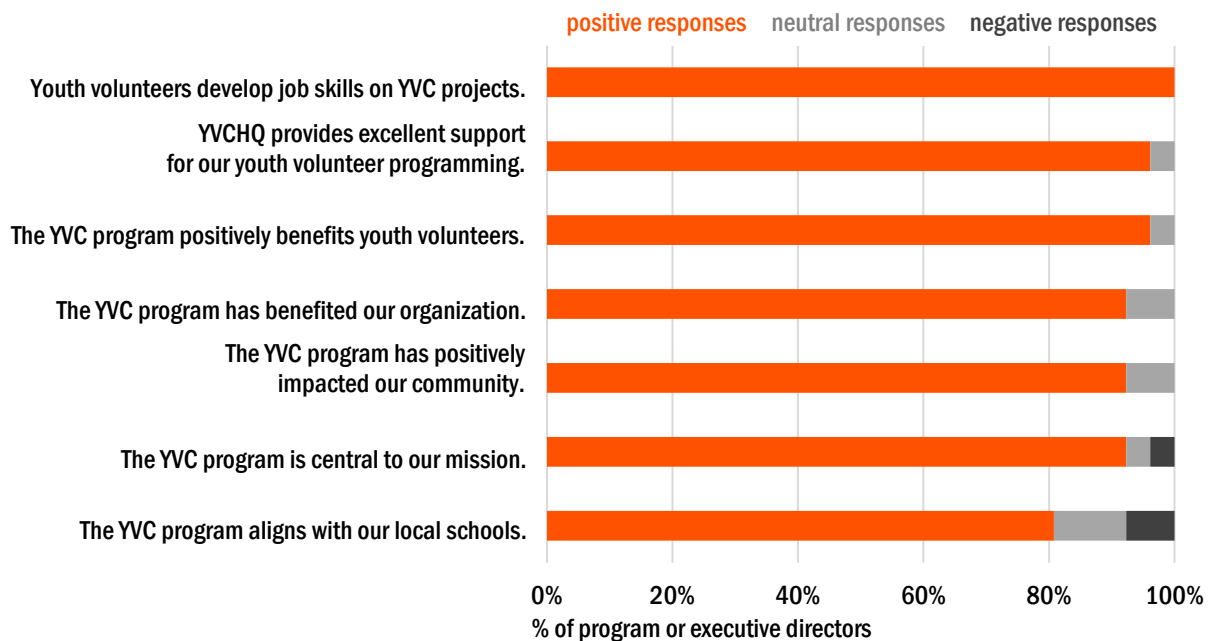
YVC Network

Value of YVC

Program directors agree that YVC programs have a positive impact on their organizations, youth volunteers, and community.

All program directors believe youth volunteers develop job skills through YVC projects. Two of the statements received a small number of negative responses with regard to how well YVC programs align with the mission of their own organization and local schools. However, the overwhelming response from program directors was positive.

In addition, **100%** of executive directors said they would recommend affiliating with YVC to a colleague interested in starting a youth volunteer program.

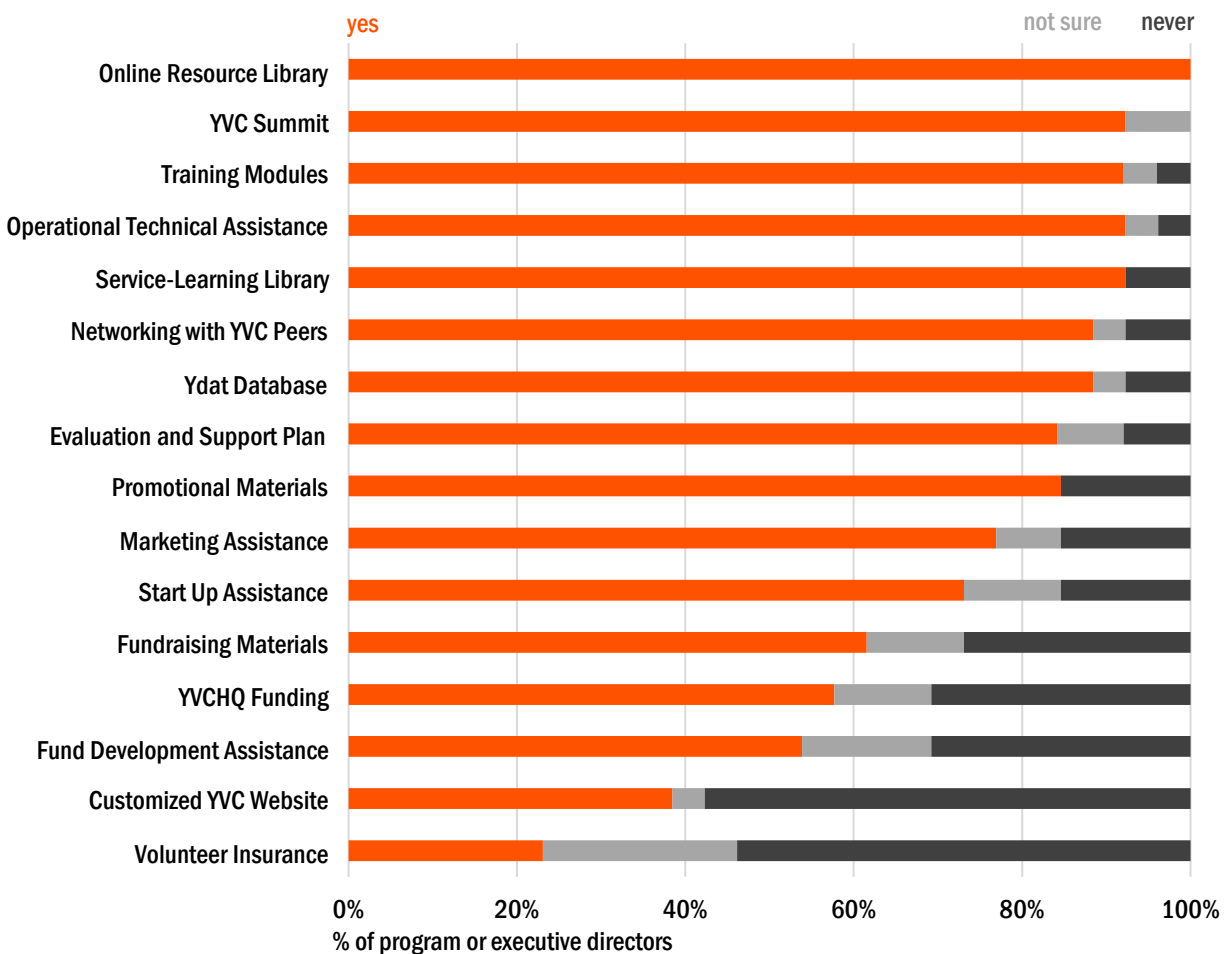


YVC Network

Affiliate Support

Over 80% of program directors use 9 out of 16 YVCHQ services.
At least 50% of program directors use 14 out of 16 services.

YVCHQ offers a variety of assistance and resources to program directors. Operational technical support, online resources, and networking opportunities were the most used service areas. Funding and fundraising materials were used by a little more than half of program directors. Volunteer insurance and the customized YVC website were the least used services.



YVC Network

Quality Practice

**Over 80% of directors report engaging in quality practices
half of the time or more in 9 out of 11 practices.**

Although the pre-interview surveys reveal many quality practice standards are being met most of the time, very few are being met all of the time. While 77% of directors reported that youth volunteers select service projects half of the time or more, only 19% reported that youth volunteers always select volunteer service projects. While 68% of directors reported that youth volunteers help plan service projects half of the time or more, only 16% of directors reported that youth volunteers help plan service projects.



YVC Network

What We Learned

Affiliates find value in YVC programs and receive support from YVCHQ, but there are opportunities to grow and strengthen the network.

The National Youth Leadership Council identifies eight K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice:

1. **Duration and Intensity:** Projects are of sufficient intensity and duration to meet community needs and learning goals. Projects include investigation, planning, action, reflection, demonstration, and celebration.
2. **Link to Curriculum:** Service-learning goals are clearly defined and linked to outcomes for both those providing the service and those being served.
3. **Partnerships:** Partnerships are reciprocal, collaborative, ongoing relationships that are mutually beneficial and address community needs.
4. **Meaningful Service:** Activities are personally relevant, age appropriate, and result in a tangible outcome for all service-learners.
5. **Youth Voice:** Participants are included in planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects.
6. **Diversity:** Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.
7. **Reflection:** Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.
8. **Progress Monitoring:** Service-learning engages participants in the evaluation of progress towards goals.

The NYLC standards are linked to common core standards and assume classroom implementation of service-learning, but YVC service-learning programs are typically implemented in an extra-curricular setting. YVC has adapted the NYLC standards to stay in alignment with them while maintaining a distinct approach. The question is, then, whether or not affiliates are meeting the standards for quality practice

To evaluate the quality of practice, quantitative data from program and executive director pre-interview surveys and youth volunteer surveys was used. Qualitative data from pre-interview surveys and phone interviews with program and executive directors was also used.

Responses from both program and executive directors indicated affiliates value the program model and relationships with YVCHQ staff. It should be noted these responses are consistent with previous network wide evaluations, a positive sign regarding the stability of YVCHQ.

Responses during phone interviews indicate the greatest challenges affiliates face are staff retention, staff time and availability, and funding. It is likely staff turnover, time, and availability are responsible for funding issues and the lack of use of fundraising resources. New staff report developing their program knowledge as a top priority, compared to fundraising. Once engaged in programming, the same staff report they have little time to access all resources available to them, including fundraising support. To grow and strengthen the network, YVCHQ should develop strategies to address staff retention and funding issues reported by affiliates.

In terms of quality of practice, the results of the evaluation identified two important findings:

1. YVC maintains an excellent extra-curricular service-learning model consistent with best practices identified in service-learning by NYLC.
2. There is variation in adoption of quality standards across the network.

The research team attempted to collect data project-by-project, but the project reports from affiliates were unreliable. Thus, the evaluation of quality practice across the YVC network was assessed from program director responses. On key standards of quality practice, affiliates reported varying levels of fidelity to the model prescribed by YVCHQ.

12% of directors report service-learning activities are sometimes or never conducted.

12% of directors report meaningful reflection occurs half of the time or sometimes.

23% of affiliate report youth select projects sometimes or never.

32% of affiliate report youth help plan projects sometimes.

There are multiple factors hampering full affiliate fidelity to YVC quality practice standards. First, projects are not always uniform in design, duration, and intensity. Program directors report projects varying in duration from one-day to week-long. Program directors also report project intensity variation from one to eight hours. Projects with extremely short duration and intensity limit opportunities for youth planning, service-learning integration, reflection that are ideal for quality fidelity.

Second, despite the efforts of YVC to provide training, affiliates have staff turnover and staff time and availability is limited. Additionally, YVCHQ provides significant direct service through technical assistance with limited staff resources. Efforts to increase program fidelity are already consistent with quality practice standards, and short of YVCHQ staff growth, it may be difficult to remedy structural issues at the affiliate level.

YVC Network

Recommendations

YVC enters its fourth decade of service seeking to grow and strengthen the network. Due to staff and financial constraints at the affiliate level, YVCHQ may want to consider a multi-brand project model to preserve the quality of core service-learning projects while expanding service.

In a multi-brand project model, affiliates could select between a core service-learning project, which meets all quality practice standards, and a YVC “lite” version. While outcomes for “lite” version projects would be less robust, YVC would protect its strong core brand. The multi-brand model may also add value to network growth and strength by:

- Providing quality, manageable “lite” project standards for affiliates struggling with staff turnover and/or funding.
- Providing a pathway to onboard new affiliates without the pressure of a fully developed year-round program plan.
- Not comingling and thus diminishing results of affiliates with high quality fidelity by treating all projects as the same.
- Directing limited YVCHQ staff resources to affiliates implementing high quality projects.
- Strengthening evaluation and reporting of outcomes by only including service-learning projects consistent with the YVC model in the most rigorous evaluations.

This recommendation is only one possible solution. The intention is to minimize added stress on affiliates with financial and staff challenges while growing and strengthening the YVC network.

Appendix A

Literature Review

Because YVC views service-learning as central to their theory of change, we set out to establish a deeper understanding on service-learning. Literature reviewed for this evaluation focused on two topics. First, we explored the current state of service-learning, exploring empirically validated models and impact on middle school and high school youth in YVC's age demographic. Second, MCNL examined approaches to assessing impact. Because service-learning programs intend to alter the perception of youth through knowledge acquisition, response shift bias becomes a significant concern when estimating impact.

Service-Learning

Today service-learning differentiates itself from other experiential learning such as volunteerism or internships by providing benefit to the recipient and the provider and by being comprised of equal parts service and learning. Key elements of service-learning include utilizing youth voice, designing meaningful volunteer projects that attend to community needs, incorporating reflection and fostering a sense of caring for others and a value in diversity.

Robert Sigmon, in 1979 first defined service-learning “as an experiential education approach that is premised on reciprocal learning, where both sides gain. In his view it was only service-learning if both the provider and recipient benefited.” In 1990, the Corporation for National Service suggested a narrowed definition of service-learning “as a method under which students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experience that meet actual community needs that integrate into student curriculum or provide structured time for reflection.” In 2014, the U.S. Department of the Interior Service-Learning Toolkit defined “service-learning as a teaching strategy that integrates community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, introduce possible careers, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.”

Service-learning and volunteerism are being increasingly used as interchangeable terms. Service-learning programs are distinguished from other forms of experiential learning (i.e., community service, volunteerism) by their intention to benefit students and recipients of service equally (Sigmon & Pelletier 1996; Simons & Cleary, 2006). According to Furor (2010), volunteerism is the engagement of students in activities where the primary emphasis is on the service being provided and the primary intended beneficiary is clearly the service recipient. Although the participants-volunteers may receive some benefits from the experience (e.g., feeling pleased with themselves) as well as learn something in the process, these outcomes are clearly serendipitous and unintentional. Service-learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. To do this, service-learning programs must have some academic context and be designed in such a way that ensures that both the service enhances the learning and the learning enhances the service. If we take this distinction into account, volunteerism and service-learning are different.

Tomkovick et al. (2008) attempted to see if learning enhanced service by studying the implications of the learning experience of service-learning participants on future volunteerism. Their study found that past

volunteerism was the most powerful determinant of future volunteerism behavior. Even though service-learning programs foster a higher level of future volunteerism, one must not discount the individual's previous experience with volunteer activities. Service-learning differs from generic community service in that it has specific academic goals, is organized through schools, and involves reflection activities for the participants (Bridgeland et al., 2008). In addition to this, compensation also plays a role in the distinction - some participants receive direct economic rewards and others do not, thus not all service-learning is and can be considered pure volunteerism and vice versa (Tomkovick et al., 2008).

Service-learning use has been bolstered by the movement to utilize innovative experiential education modalities. Service-learning has been increasingly popular among youth, especially those attending American educational institutions - from elementary schools to colleges (Lundy, 2007). While varying definitions of service-learning are currently found within the literature, three common themes are used to define it. First, the experience involves a reciprocal relationship that meets an identified need within the community. Second, academic content is integrated into the service experience. Finally, participants are encouraged to reflect and connect the experience and content to their personal perspectives (Novak, Murray & Scheuermann, 2009).

Service-learning is also integrated into academic courses across many disciplines as a teaching and learning strategy wherein students learn important curricular objectives by providing service that meets authentic community needs (Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005). It refers to a method under which students apply particular course concepts to real-life situations (Simons & Cleary, 2006). This method places teaching and learning in a social context, facilitating socially responsive knowledge (Conway, Amel & Gerwien, 2009). Effective service-learning is integrated into the curriculum, involves cognitively challenging reflection activities, incorporates students' voices in decision making, fosters diversity, includes monitoring of progress, has a significant duration, develops reciprocal partnerships with community organizations, and requires students to participate in meaningful service (Weah, 2007).

Research on the beneficial effects of service-learning has been accumulated over the years. This includes studies of impacts of service-learning experiences among middle school students. Middle school students struggle with significant issues unique to early adolescence involving physical, psychological, and social changes. They have been characterized by their need to (a) explore a variety of interests; (b) connect learning to practical life and work; (c) release energy through activity coupled with frequent fatigue due to rapid growth; (d) develop personal identity found through peers' affirmation; (e) separate self from parents; and (f) rely on friends to provide comfort, understanding, and approval (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], n.d.). Stott and Jackson (2005) state one pedagogical method that middle school counselors can use is service-learning since it gives middle school students an opportunity to apply what they are learning in the classroom by performing acts of service that benefit the community. Their research found that middle school students who participated in service-learning activities demonstrated measurable increases in personal/social development, civic responsibility, academic learning, and career development.

Another study by Simons and Cleary (2006) conducted quantitative surveys to measure changes in students' personal and interpersonal development, academic learning, and civic knowledge. They also used qualitative research methods to explore the processes linked with students' reduced stereotyping and increased community involvement. This was one of the first studies to use an exploratory methods design to demonstrate that participation in service-learning affects academic learning and personal and social development. Their study showed that service learners increase their political awareness, diversity

attitudes, civic engagement, community self-efficacy, and affiliation preferences for community involvement. Almost all the respondents (96%) reported academic learning as a benefit of service-learning and career development as a second benefit, consistent with previous research suggesting service-learning is a vehicle for confirming and modifying students' career decisions. Almost all (97%) of the coded data identified self-efficacy or self-knowledge as a third service-learning benefit and personal development as a fourth benefit of service-learning.

In their research, Tannenbaum and Brown-Welty (2006) state the problems facing American K-12 education have been well documented – including that programs proposing to solve these problems are numerous and varied. They argue that while there is no shortage of studies suggesting a variety of independent strategies that improve the academic performance and social behavior of students, there is a lack of scholarly research that examines the combined effects of strategies. For this reason, their study focused on two of the most widely used strategies in American K-12 education – service-learning and after-school programs. Preliminary results of this study suggested that students participating in the service-learning component of the after-school program had greater improvement in their grade point averages and conduct grades and were less likely to be suspended than students who did not participate in the service-learning component (Tannenbaum & Brown-Welty, 2006). Scales and Roehlkepartain (2004) reported on a longitudinal study that more validly suggests the contribution that service might make to higher grades. They found that consistent or "emerging" volunteers (those who started volunteering in grades 7 to 9 rather than in grades 6 to 8) had significantly higher grade point averages (GPAs) in high school than those who never volunteered or "faded" in their volunteering (served in grades 6 to 8 but not afterward).

Another large-scale study conducted to assess the relationship between high school students' participation in community service and performance in mathematics, reading, history, and science using student panel data from 1988-2000 National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) showed positive although limited effects in subject-matter achievement from participating in service-learning (Davila and Mora, 2007). Although this study concluded students' engagement in community service was related to positive but small gains in scholastic achievement in mathematics, science, and history, no statistically significant relationship was found between community service participation and students' reading development. Furco (2010), however, has referred to a number of other well-designed studies demonstrating significant improvements in reading and language arts among service-learning participants when compared to similar students not engaged in service-learning in his research on the value of service-learning.

Service-learning has also been found to be an effective method to deal with the drop-out rates among youths in the country. Duckenfield and Drew (2006) conclude service-learning is one of the best research-based dropout prevention strategies along with other strategies such as school/community collaboration, family engagement and early literacy development. Another survey of 807 high school students between the ages of 14 and 18 studied whether service-learning can play a major role in keeping students engaged in school and on track to graduate by addressing some of the principle causes of dropping out (Bridgeland et al., 2008). While the teachers who participated in the focus groups said that they could not numerically show that service-learning had prevented students from dropping out of school, they did agree that it could have a positive effect on graduation rates.

Service-learning has tremendous potential in the lives of marginalized youth – those who typically do not participate in community activities, sometimes described as vulnerable, disadvantaged, or at-risk youth, as per the research of Scales et al. (2006). Their research found service-learning may be an especially valued strategy for student engagement and achievement for principals in schools that are urban, majority

nonwhite, or high poverty. Kahne and Sporte (2008) studied the effects of family, neighborhood, and school characteristics, as well as exposure to best practices in civic education and service-learning, on the development of commitment to civic participation among Chicago high school students, the majority of whom were low-income and minority students. Results showed service-learning and exposure to effective strategies for civic education were the strongest predictors of commitment to civic participation, having markedly stronger effects than school, neighborhood, or family factors.

Using a national sample of classrooms of students participating in service-learning matched with classrooms of students of similar demographic and achievement background not participating in service-learning, Billig, Root, and Jesse's (2005) investigated the effect of service-learning participation on students' academic engagement, valuing school, attachment to school, and civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and activities. Their results showed that although service-learning students scored higher than comparison students on several outcomes, most differences were not statistically significant. Service-learning students had significantly higher scores on enjoyment of school overall than comparison group peers. No differences were found in enjoyment of specific content areas. Service-learning students were significantly more likely than comparison group members to report that they intended to vote.

In another quasi-experimental study, Billig et al. (2008) assessed pre-post changes in values development among 840 middle school and secondary school students over a three-year period. Students who participated in service-learning character education programs had significantly less diminution in value attainment, which suggests service-learning may help students retain their character assets as they mature. One of the most important sources of variation in students' experience with service-learning and service-learning effects was the quality of implementation. Not all service-learning designs were considered equal which has led researchers and practitioners to seek and identify elements that are fundamental to high-quality service-learning practice, resulting in the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice (Billig and Weah 2008).

Novak, Markey, and Allen (2007) conducted a meta-analysis to evaluate the cognitive outcomes of service-learning in higher education. They examined nine studies and found an overall positive relationship between service-learning and learning outcomes. However, there were some limitations to this study. One, it only included published data and two, it didn't take into consideration self-reported learning. Warren (2012) conducted another meta-analysis to reduce these two gaps. This study focused on further clarifying the relationship between service-learning and student learning outcomes by considering unpublished literature and distinguishing between self-reported and concrete measures of learning such as exams and other assignment scores. This meta-analysis examined studies comparing service-learning and non-service-learning students' learning outcomes. The results once again suggested that service-learning has a positive effect on student learning outcomes.

Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) suggest that service-learning in young adults has demonstrated increase in self-esteem and self-concept, more highly internalized moral standards, more positive attitudes toward school and education, greater interest in, commitment to, and sensitivity toward their communities and their needs, and stronger beliefs that one can make a difference in the world. These are qualities that employers generally look for in job seekers. A study by Lester et al. (2005) found that campus recruiters who worked for companies that promote corporate social responsibility as a key part of their overall mission were more inclined to see the value of job applicants with service-learning experiences.

One of service-learning's biggest limitations, admittedly, is that it induces students to ask only, "How can we help these people?" instead of the harder question, "Why are conditions this way?" (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). While Simons and Cleary's (2006) study found several beneficial impacts of service-learning, the same study also found that the service-learners decrease their interests in the course and social competence from the beginning to the end of the course.

Survey Instrument

When evaluating groups or individuals over time one of the most respected instruments is the pre and post-test (Campbell, 1966). The inclusion of a control group further increases the power and validity of results (Marshall, et al., 2007). With both of these models, participants rate their knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors before participating in the program or intervention. Then, after the program or intervention, the same questions are asked again. The participants' responses are analyzed together to determine if a statistically significant change occurred.

Despite its widespread use, there are several limitations to the pre-test/post-test design. First, in its most powerful form with a control group, costs and time increase and ethical challenges develop (Brooks & Gersh, 1998). An even more pressing concern, especially with measures of perceived knowledge, is the chance of participants overestimating their responses on the pre-test (Howard, 1980). Overestimating is likely if participants do not have a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills, attitude or behaviors the program is targeting. (Spangers & Hoogstraten, 1988), or the response is of a subjective nature.

In many programs, such as YVC, participation educates. Education leads to a change of reference known as response shift bias (Kaplan, 2005). A response shift bias is program produced change in the participant's understanding of the construct being measured, (Spangers & Hoogstraten, 1988) and is most pronounced when the program is designed to change the knowledge, skill, attitude or behavior (Howard & Daily, 1979).

To address the problem of response shift bias, evaluators tested a design utilizing reflection rather than comparison. The post and retro-pre design asks participants to think back to before the program or intervention and rate their skills at the previous time and in the present. The participant uses the same frame of reference and the same knowledge to answer both questions thereby eliminating response shift bias (Howard, 1980).

Appendix B

Methodology

MCNL employed mixed methods to assess YVC outcomes and processes. Program outcomes were principally assessed through quantitative methods. Process evaluation focused primarily on qualitative methods. Data was not collected for the 2016-2017 school year. Thus, this report provides a detailed explanation the evaluation design and evaluation results for summer programming.

The summer volunteer program is implemented differently throughout the network. The most common model enrolls youth in week-long volunteer projects, with many participants engaging in multiple weeks of programming. Other affiliates have more sporadic projects throughout the summer. Participants complete a day-long program or a project spanning more than one week.

Youth Outcomes

Considerable time was spent during evaluation design considering the metrics best suited to measure outcomes. Unlike many service-learning programs connected to classroom learning, YVC service-learning is extracurricular. For this reason, and YVC's desire to develop the soft skills of youth volunteers, we sought instruments focused on career preparedness. Without a clear evaluation instrument for this programming area, YVC identified the life and career skills of P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning as an apt model to build instruments. The life and career skills construct are divided among five areas:

1. Flexibility and Adaptability
2. Initiative and Self-Direction
3. Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
4. Productivity and Accountability
5. Leadership and Responsibility

These areas were treated as separate constructs when developing the instrument and analyzing data. For each of the five areas, P21 descriptive statements were developed into instrument items. Consistent with standard instrument development practices, three items were developed for each of the five areas – for a total of 15 items measuring life and career skills.

In addition to the life and career skill items, five items focusing on traditional YVC mission outcomes were also included. These items, identified as community stewardship, assess youth volunteers on awareness of community needs, their preparedness for work, and their capacity to address needs. While not included in the P21 framework, our review of literature provides substantial support for their inclusion as outcomes to service-learning and volunteerism.

The quantitative portion of the outcome assessment involved a pre-experimental and quasi-experimental design. The pre-experimental design assessed youth volunteers against themselves using post-test/retro pre-test design. Nonparametric related samples tests analyzed youth volunteer qualities before and after service. The results of this analysis also allowed network-wide analysis and provides YVC with the ability to determine affiliate performance differences. The quasi-experimental design was conducted at eight schools

within the YVC network. The quasi design employed a comparison group of students from the same schools as the youth volunteers who did not participate in summer service. Nonparametric independent samples test was used to analyze responses from youth volunteers and comparison group students.

The evaluation instrument was provided to youth volunteers at the conclusion of their summer service. Utilizing a post-test/retro pre-test design, youth volunteers were prompted to respond to items twice. They were first asked to respond to items based on how they feel at the conclusion of their summer service. They were then asked to respond to the same items from their perspective at the beginning of the summer. Students in the comparison group were identified at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. Comparison group students were provided the same instrument. They were asked to respond to items based on how they felt at the moment and at the beginning of the summer.

In total, 917 youth volunteers completed youth surveys. All students were expected to complete surveys, but survey completion was disrupted on a few occasions when a youth volunteer parted before surveys were provided. 132 students from 8 schools in YVC communities were recruited for the comparison group.

All responses were analyzed using similar sample nonparametric tests. This type of analysis is examining three questions. First, do youth volunteer self-ratings differ from pre- to post-test? Second, what is the direction of any change (meaning does the change show a student improved)? Third, is the change statistically significant; or stated differently, is the finding likely not the result of error?

The scales youth volunteers evaluated were reverse coded (Very True equals “1” and Not at all True equals “2”). If a youth volunteer shows improvement in any area their score will decrease. Further, a change score (pre-score minus post-score) demonstrating youth volunteer improvement will be negative.

In the previous sections of our outcome evaluation, we have reported the percent of youth volunteers who have improved. It is expected that not every youth volunteer in the summer program will improve. There are many reasons a youth does not experience the intended growth through the program. Some of these reasons like personal life disruptions are out of the control of YVC. Other reasons for lack of improvement are very much in control of YVC.

For all 20 items and the 21st Century skill areas, differences between pre- and post-test indicate youth volunteers improved and were statistically significant. Thus, our analysis moving forward highlights the magnitude of improvement.

We next explored whether or not YVC summer service impact disadvantaged youth differently than non-disadvantaged youth. As discussed in the review of literature, previous studies have found service-learning has a bigger impact on disadvantaged youth. Our analysis of YVC youth volunteers supports this claim.

The Youth Advisory Boards/Councils (YAB/C) are a unique leadership opportunities for youth volunteers. The point of this analysis was to determine if providing additional leadership opportunities for youth increases outcomes.

There is significant evidence that the length and intensity of a given service-learning approach impacts the amount of change in the youth. YVC participation is voluntary and attendance can be consistent or episodic, it became desirable to identify what level of duration best positioned a youth volunteer for success.

To determine how many hours of service a youth volunteer needed to complete to demonstrate an impact youth volunteers were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of youth volunteers who reported no change between pre-program and post-program. The second group consisted of youth volunteers who reported a positive change between pre-program and post-program. Next, we assessed how many hours were necessary to complete before a change took place. To conduct this analysis, we executed a nonparametric survival analysis for each of the five 21st Century skill areas.

We provided one final analysis to contextualize outcomes of youth volunteering with YVC during the summer. On criticism of pre-experimental evaluation designs deals with the lack of a control. Without a proper control, it is not possible to untangle what amount of change in a person occurs from the program. Because nonprofit programming does not take place in a vacuum, program participants can be influenced from interactions outside of the program.

In an attempt to clarify the change resulting from a program, evaluators seek control or comparison groups. If a group not experiencing the program changes equally (or near equally) to the group experiencing the program, we infer the change was due to factors other than the program. The only true way to isolate program impact is through a control group. Unfortunately, control groups are difficult to organize outside of laboratory settings. When a control group is not possible, the next best solution is a comparison group, which we employed in this evaluation.

Both youth volunteers and comparison group members completed the same survey. We first calculated nonparametric independent samples tests for each of the five 21st Century areas. Youth volunteers reported more improvement in four of the five areas (the comparison group reported more improvement on productivity) but none of the differences were statistically significant.

Next, we examine the two groups on each of the 20 items in the survey. For 15 of the 20 items, we once again found improvement favoring the youth volunteers but not differences between groups that were statistically significant. However, on five items, we found youth volunteers improved more than the comparison group, and the difference between the groups was statistically significant at a .05 level.

Appendix C

Affiliate Youth Outcomes

Affiliates

(n=number of survey responses)

	Initiative and Self-Direction	Flexibility and Adaptability	Leadership and Responsibility	Productivity and Accountability	Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
Alpena, MI (n=28)					
% youth volunteers improved	54	57	46	64	61
% improvement	19	18	19	21	27
Anderson, SC (n=7)					
% youth volunteers improved	43	43	43	43	57
% improvement	17	16	26	25	25
Ann Arbor, MI (n=201)					
% youth volunteers improved	45	41	35	38	36
% improvement	13	11	10	10	11
Billings, MT (n=10)					
% youth volunteers improved	90	80	70	70	60
% improvement	32	37	27	35	26
Calgary, AB (n=42)					
% youth volunteers improved	79	76	74	62	60
% improvement	31	25	26	22	20
Charleston, SC (n=40)					
% youth volunteers improved	63	53	50	60	55
% improvement	19	7	12	17	17
Corvallis, OR (n=96)					
% youth volunteers improved	53	40	33	39	38
% improvement	16	11	11	11	11
Danbury, CT (n=35)					
% youth volunteers improved	69	57	54	46	54
% improvement	23	16	18	13	18
Hampton Roads, VA (n=53)					
% youth volunteers improved	53	57	60	51	53
% improvement	19	18	20	20	18

Affiliates

(n=number of survey responses)

	Initiative and Self-Direction	Flexibility and Adaptability	Leadership and Responsibility	Productivity and Accountability	Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
Kansas City, KS/ MO (n=189)					
% youth volunteers improved	49	43	43	41	45
% improvement	14	12	13	13	13
Manhattan, KS (n=5)					
% youth volunteers improved	60	100	60	40	40
% improvement	23	25	20	16	14
Muskogee, OK (n=47)					
% youth volunteers improved	79	87	77	75	66
% improvement	31	28	31	31	34
Philadelphia, PA (n=21)					
% youth volunteers improved	95	91	91	81	76
% improvement	31	29	32	27	33
Portland, OR (n=9)					
% youth volunteers improved	67	78	67	67	56
% improvement	24	25	21	28	21
Racine, WA (n=69)					
% youth volunteers improved	64	62	49	54	41
% improvement	21	18	15	18	16
Reading, PA (n=12)					
% youth volunteers improved	92	83	67	67	67
% improvement	57	53	48	48	47
St. Joseph, MO (n=24)					
% youth volunteers improved	46	42	33	38	46
% improvement	12	11	7	9	10
Terrace, BC (n=4)					
% youth volunteers improved	75	75	50	75	100
% improvement	22	14	21	29	27

Appendix D

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