

Creating Stronger Workforce Pathways Through Program Quality

At the Forum for Youth Investment, we believe that **all young people deserve high-quality experiences that prepare them for success in work, life, and leadership.** Our Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) approach is a proven strategy that supports continuous improvement in the spaces where young people learn and grow—now expanding to workforce development settings.



What Is the YPQI Approach?

The Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) approach is a research-based, data-driven process designed to improve how programs support young people. Anchored in the Prepare–Assess–Plan–Improve cycle, the YPQI approach equips youth-serving organizations with practical tools, training, coaching, and assessments to strengthen adult practice and youth experience, especially at the point of service.



Prepare

Establish **system** goals, roles, and timelines.

Assess

Observe and collect **data** about your program.

Plan

Create an improvement **strategy** with your team.

Improve

Provide training and coaching **support**.

"The Youth PQA is a really awesome guidance tool of how to make your workforce development program more than just a work site for youth" – Astrid Berger, Cook Fresh Program Manager, Urban Roots

As more young people engage in career readiness, employment pathways, and credentialing programs, we must ensure those programs are high quality and developmentally supportive. When programs invest in quality, young people gain the skills employers are looking for, like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and self-management.

The same principles that improve afterschool programs and community-based learning environments also apply in workforce settings.

By adapting the YPQI approach for workforce development, we're helping:

- **Young people** gain meaningful opportunities, guided by adults who are supported to show up at their best.
- **Frontline staff, program leaders, and employers** build stronger relationships and coachable moments with young people.
- **Organizations and systems** embed continuous quality improvement into their infrastructure.



Piloting Program Quality in Workforce Settings

In 2024, the Forum launched a **Workforce Development YPQI Pilot** in partnership with local programs and municipal networks to explore how program quality tools and strategies can enhance employment-focused services for young people. The pilot focuses on:



Adapting YPQI tools, such as the Youth Program Quality Assessment, to the unique needs of workforce settings.



Training and coaching site staff to foster supportive, engaging, and safe environments.



Generating learning and insights to inform broader system improvements.

Our goal? To ensure **young people's workforce experiences are not just accessible—but excellent.**

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Join us in transforming workforce systems to work better for young people and the adults who support them.

