B. Utilizing a Team Approach to Assess Your Program

This guide will help you implement a team approach when assessing your program.

Why is a team approach helpful? Utilizing a team approach should:

- Provide a more accurate picture of program implementation and participant satisfaction.
- Provide a feeling of welcome and program ownership among stakeholders who provide input into program operation.

If your program has more than one site, you can implement this process at each individual site or observe the program as a whole.

This process may seem daunting, but this guide will make the process simpler for you and increase the likelihood for success.

The ideas in this guide are suggestions; revise and adjust the process to fit the needs of your individual program.

Assembling an Assessment Team

The first step in assembling an Assessment Team is to recruit members. Solicit volunteers for the team and consider including representatives from these groups:

- program administrative staff;
- non-administrative staff;
- parents/guardians;
- program youth, if they are in middle school or high school;
- board members, if this applies to your program;
- school principals/staff or other partners, if this applies to your program.

The team members should be viewed as genuine representatives of their group, by all stakeholders. The input of the team members should reflect the ideas of the people they represent and not solely their own opinions.

Note: the term "stakeholders" is being used to refer to people with an interest or concern in the program, its operation and success; for example, participating youth, parents/guardians/family members, partners, partnering schools, etc.

When assembling your Assessment Team, you should consider the following questions:

- Will there be a maximum number of team members or representatives from each group?
- Will everyone who wants to serve on the team be allowed to do so? Can anyone be turned away?
- Who will choose or appoint the team members?

Once your Assessment Team is set, it is a good idea to hold an introductory meeting. Make sure all team members are clear on how to use the Self-Assessment Tool/Rating Form and the role of the Assessment Team.

Note: refer to "Making Sense of the Findings" in this section for more information about the role of the Assessment Team.

Use your discretion in adding team members as you proceed through the rest of the process.

Obtaining Input from Others

Dedicating time to obtaining stakeholder input will provide you with the best sense of youth, family and partner satisfaction with the program. Program ownership of stakeholders may increase as you obtain additional input about their satisfaction with the program.

Appendices A, B, and C provide sample surveys and discussion guides to assist in the collection of stakeholder input.

The collection of tools in the appendices offers three levels of engagement with New Jersey's Quality Standards for Afterschool and the self-assessment process:

1. The basic survey and discussion guide in appendices A and B ask questions that relate to the standards, however they do not present the actual standards.

    - Use the survey and discussion guide to get a sense of stakeholder's thoughts about relationships, safety and health, activities and physical space at the program.

- The basic discussion guide may be appropriate for use with youth or parents/guardians.
- The basic survey is appropriate for parents/guardians who have limited time. It also may be good with youth at a higher reading level who may be hesitant about sharing their thoughts in a group setting.

2. Appendix C includes a tool that can serve as a survey or a discussion guide. It uses the actual standards(s), in a simplified explanation.

   - This guide may be useful with parents/guardians at a high reading level, are very engaged in the program, with older youth at a high reading level and with staff who may struggle with the full Self-Assessment Tool.
   - When discussing ratings using the bolded standards
     - Have the full Quality Standards, Self-Assessment Tool Rubric and Glossary available, in case people need additional details about any of the standards.
     - Offer the full Self-Assessment Tool to those who choose to complete the tool on their own, after the discussion.

3. The Self-Assessment Tool uses the entire standards, including the full explanation(s) or all the standard elements in each.

   - Distribute the full Self-Assessment Tool for stakeholders to complete on their own.
   - This may be a good option for program staff or board members. It may also be appropriate for parents/guardians at a very high reading level and who are engaged in the program. It may also be useful for the staff of the school(s) or other partners with whom you work.
   - Consider gathering the entire to team to use the Self-Assessment Tool. If you choose this approach it may be helpful to tackle one or two categories at a time.

You will need to determine the best method for your Self-Assessment Team to use. For example, you could reach out to:

- Youth who are shy about sharing thoughts in a group, but not able to fully express their thoughts in writing.
- Youth with special needs and/or their family members, to ensure you receive their input.
- Parents/guardians, staff, or other stakeholders that may have expressed concern with the program.

- The principal/administrator at the school where your program is located or youth you serve, if this applies.

A few ideas about logistics:

- Invite parents/guardians to observe the program during operational hours, to obtain their feedback.
- Encourage stakeholders who do not spend much time at the program to observe varying aspects of the program and at different days or times to get a full understanding of the program. Assist program staff and team members in scheduling the visits.

Making Sense of the Findings

If the Assessment Team has received an abundance of input from stakeholders, making sense of the findings will be the team's main role. The end goal is to agree on a single set of ratings on the Self-Assessment Tool.

Consider these steps as the Assessment Team examines the data:

- Discuss the survey results and choose an overall rating for the standards on the Self-Assessment Tool. Use the Self-Assessment Tool Rubric for clarification on each of the performance levels to assist in finalizing ratings.
- Review the results of any Self-Assessment Tools that were received. A scoring option is averaging the ratings for each standard, or adding more weight to the input of one group of stakeholders for a particular standard. An example is the input of program staff on professional development opportunities.
- Find areas where stakeholders did not agree. Did any of those areas differ significantly regarding how the program is operating?
- Discuss the areas where stakeholders did not agree. Why do you think there was disagreement? Does one group have more knowledge of the topic than another? How will the different perspectives impact the results? Why might each stakeholder have very different experiences with various parts of the program? After the Assessment Team discuss these questions, attempt to agree on a consensus about the best rating.
- Work together to arrive at a single set of ratings on the Self-Assessment Tool. It should be the team's best attempt to capture the findings from all of the stakeholder input. This is the set of ratings that the program should use when starting to develop its action plan.