Like the Greater East St. Louis Youth Coordinating Council (YCC), a growing number of communities across the country are embracing a systems approach to ensuring access to quality out-of-school time (OST) experiences. Evaluations of these efforts indicate that this approach benefits students. In Providence, Rhode Island, for example, middle-schoolers who participated in the AfterZone for more days and took part in a wider range of activities, had better attitudes, behavior and performance in school than peers who did not participate. But, as one out-of-school time leader notes: “the biggest pay-off [in taking a systems approach] is [not in the outcomes but in] the consistent high-quality of the experiences…you don’t just get a patchwork of programs.”

And that is exactly what YCC aims to accomplish: access to consistently high-quality programming that is coordinated to ensure the training and professional supports are in place for youth to experience positive interactions with adults, thereby ensuring that all children and youth are supported, ready and well. By working together and aligning resources through the East Side Thrives initiative, OST providers in Greater East St. Louis have implemented shared activities to increase the physical, social-emotional, and academic outcomes for over 1,500 children and youth. This report describes how YCC progressed toward supporting these positive youth outcomes. I am offering my commentary on this report as a member of the Forum for Youth Investment team, which has a long-standing commitment to helping communities prepare young people for college, work and life.

This report reveals a story that mirrors three plot-lines that many other OST system-building efforts include: (1) cultivating youth voice doesn’t happen by chance; (2) access to quality programs matters, and (3) data and evaluation are central to improving and sustaining an OST system.

OST providers in Greater East St. Louis believe that young people should be active decision-makers in their programs and in their community. Therefore, from the outset of East Side Thrives, there was an intentional effort to cultivate youth voice. Specifically, the initiative provided program staff with youth voice coaching sessions focused on engaging youth voice and leadership in organizations. This led to the establishment of youth councils internal to those organizations. Across the providers, approximately 170 young people were engaged in decision making through site-based programs and organizational changes. Primarily made in 2016, these changes sustained through 2017, an early indication that East Side Thrives youth voice strategies are taking hold.

As noted in the report, Providers refuse to accept a common system trap that purports ‘access as a proxy for quality’. Therefore, YCC balanced the need for increasing program slots with a commitment and investment in shared quality supports such as professional development workshops and coaching to increase youth voice. This ensured that all program environments supported positive youth development. To support its continuous quality improvement efforts, OST providers utilized tools from the Weikart Center, a technical assistance youth development research center, to help implement and take to scale its evidence-based Youth Program Quality Intervention in 15 program sites. Providers put these results to work to focus professional development efforts in large part on youth voice and leadership.

Finally, a main part of the East Side Thrives story is around evaluation and shared measurement. As one recent report stated: “An [OST] system has many moving parts, but the oil that makes the gears turn smoothly is data.” East Side Thrives, from the outset, was a commitment to evaluation and shared measurement, collecting data from a variety of sources to use for continuous improvement and accountability. But having a commitment to shared measurement and actually implementing a shared measurement framework are two different concepts. Therefore, YCC has identified the Every Hour Counts Measurement Framework as a tool for providers to identify three levels of outcomes they would like to

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track as a network – youth, program and system-level outcomes. The use of this Framework will add to the growing number of OST systems across the country testing this tri-level approach and place Greater East St. Louis in the forefront of communities attempting to take a tri-level approach to outcomes measurement in OST. However, it will take time and resources to do well and it is heartening to read that funders are recognizing the importance of supporting this work moving forward.

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn’t note that the East Side Thrives evaluation included a component that is often talked about and seldom measured—capacity and community change. Understanding that OST systems operate in a dynamic community context, East Side Thrives used a tool to document the strategic changes made by a group of leaders and then the organizational or program changes that resulted from these efforts. At the Forum for Youth Investment, the Ready by 21 theory of change posits that change happens by the turning of three gears: **leaders taking shared accountability** for partnerships, data, goals and actions; that then affect the coordination, quality and accessibility of **settings where youth spend their time**, that then promote **children and youth who are developmentally on-track, productive, connected, healthy and safe**.

East Side Thrives has ably demonstrated that turning the leader gear (i.e. implementing an OST system) has positively affected access to quality settings where young people spend their time, and in doing so, aims to have a long-term impact on the children and youth in Greater East St. Louis.

**About Priscilla M. Little**

As a consultant for the Forum for Youth Investment, Priscilla M. Little supports the Big Picture Approach team and other multi-site efforts to promote positive youth development through partnerships. Prior to joining the Forum, she was Initiative Manager at The Wallace Foundation, leading a nine-city OST system-building effort to promote a coordinated approach to improving access to quality programming.

The Forum for Youth Investment is a non-profit, nonpartisan action tank dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are ready by 21 – ready for college, work and life. Ready by 21® is a set of innovative strategies developed by the Forum that helps communities and states make a measurable difference in the lives of children and youth. Ready by 21 is a registered trademark of the Forum for Youth Investment.
The Greater East St. Louis Youth Coordinating Council is an anchor coalition of East Side Aligned, a movement to ensure all children and youth are healthy, safe, and secure; ready to learn and work; and empowered to create change.
INTRODUCTION

Research shows that children and youth benefit academically, socially and emotionally from high quality out-of-school time (OST) programs. Out-of-school time is defined as any time a young person is not in school, including but not exclusive to after school hours and summer time. When communities align resources to create a system for out-of-school time, more young people gain access to programs that provide opportunities, such as recreation, arts and academic enrichment that supports their well being and readiness for school, work and life.

Establishing an integrated and aligned OST system is a key priority of East Side Aligned, a collective impact movement to improve outcomes and achieve equity for children and youth within Greater East St. Louis. East Side Aligned catalyzes stakeholders to align policy, practice and investment across sectors to ensure all children and youth are healthy, safe and secure; ready to learn and work; and empowered to create change.

The Greater East St. Louis Youth Coordinating Council (YCC) is an anchor coalition of the East Side Aligned movement comprised of diverse OST providers that work together to build the capacity of agencies to provide high-quality OST programs and increase the number of kids they serve.

In 2015, GSK, a global pharmaceutical company, awarded East Side Aligned with a GSK IMPACT Grant to help YCC members achieve their vision and create the conditions for kids to have healthy futures. This $500,000 investment launched East Side Thrives, a collaborative initiative of YCC and partner organizations to make progress in five goal areas:

- ACCESS TO QUALITY PROGRAMS
- YOUTH READINESS & WELL-BEING
- YOUTH VOICE & LEadership
- SHARED MEASUREMENT
- PUBLIC AWARENESS

Through the support of GSK, participating partners implemented shared activities to increase the physical, social-emotional and academic outcomes for more than 1,500 children and youth during out-of-school time. The planning, implementation and evaluation of these activities has propelled providers from programmatic efforts to system building. Partners have implemented change at the system and program level to ensure all children and youth are supported, ready and well.

METHODS

This report examines YCC’s efforts, specifically through East Side Thrives, to establish an integrated and aligned OST system that supports positive outcomes for children and youth. To accomplish this, providers and East Side Aligned backbone staff worked with the Forum for Youth Investment and two independent evaluators — Live Oak Evaluation Consulting and Informed Community Health — to collect data across the project period (January 2015 — May 2017). The evaluators led the collection of three primary types of data:

1. East Side Thrives output and outcome data (e.g., number of youth served, student surveys)
2. Capacity and community change data (e.g., decisions made by YCC, changes made to programs to increase impact)
3. Data on key accomplishments and lessons learned (gathered from provider interviews)

The data collected by providers and external evaluators is used in this report to demonstrate:

- ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TOWARDS THE FIVE GOAL AREAS OF EAST SIDE THRIVES
- PROGRESS TOWARDS ESTABLISHING AN OST SYSTEM
- WHAT’S NEXT FOR YCC’S EFFORTS TO ENSURE ACCESS TO QUALITY OST PROGRAMS THAT INCREASE CHILD AND YOUTH WELL-BEING

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME SYSTEM

Out-of-School Time (OST) Systems are multi-organization efforts to ensure access to quality OST programs for children and youth in a shared community. OST Systems share a vision for expanded learning, define what high-quality programming is, address barriers to program participation, collect and analyze data, advocate for resources and policy change and coordinate shared resources across programs.
ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over the course of 18 months, five OST providers implemented strategies to achieve five shared goals. The success, limitations and accomplishments achieved through these strategies are described in this report.

ACCESS TO QUALITY PROGRAMS

East Side Thrives’ first goal was to increase access to quality OST programming, specifically to serve an additional 1,000 children and youth. In order to increase the number of young people served, multiple strategies were used: increasing staff capacity, establishing new program sites, creating new transportation options and generating greater awareness of program opportunities.

While access to programs is crucial, East Side Thrives’ partners refuse to accept a common system trap that purports “access as a proxy for quality.” Providing a space for young people does not make a positive difference in their lives if the programs and supports are not effective. Partners have committed to creating a culture of continuous quality improvement through implementing program quality assessments, improvement planning and professional development for program staff. Through this commitment and investment in shared supports such as professional development workshops and coaching to increase youth voice, partners work to ensure all program environments support positive youth development.

ACCESS

Through increasing or stabilizing 16 staff positions and opening three new program sites as well as attracting new youth to existing program sites. During the project period, 597 new program slots were created and 421 new youth were served leading to a total of 1,536 youth served during the 2016-2017 school year.

At the grant’s commencement, providers focused on utilizing strategies to increase access by opening new sites and expanding existing sites with more staff. Partners were quickly forced to shift from increasing capacity to stabilizing programs due to unexpected community events, namely a teacher’s strike and the Illinois state budget impasse. The GSK IMPACT Grant ensured that existing programs were able to stay open despite these limitations.

“\n
When we opened the Trinity Outreach Center site, there were 35 kids coming within a week. There was clearly a demand for services in the neighborhood."

— REONA WISE, LESSIE BATES DAVIS NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE
Providers observed that increasing the number of youth programs can serve does not mean participants will fill those program openings. Together, partners are addressing this in a few key ways:

- OST opportunities were shared with all East St. Louis School District 189 families in school enrollment packets in summer 2017
- An initial Geographic Information System (GIS) map was created to compare student residency to program location to ensure future program expansion are accessible to students currently not accessing programs
- An initial analysis of transportation needs was completed and a broader effort to address transportation is underway
- Continued work to increase authentic youth voice and leadership in program design and implementation in effort to create programs that attract more young people

**KEY EVENTS**

As in all community work, factors outside of the East Side Thrives Initiative have and will continue to impact the success of partners reaching their goals. The following key events have affected access to programs over the past two years.

**TEACHERS’ STRIKE**

A one-month teacher strike delayed East Side Thrives implementation and created an additional burden on organizations as they worked to support students while not in school, draining resources and time from partner organizations.

**ILLINOIS STATE BUDGET IMPASSE**

Illinois endured two years without a state budget. The impasse continues to impact individuals, organizations and communities throughout the state. One East Side Thrives partner was affected significantly as their budget for afterschool programming is primarily from the state.

**ALEXANDRA**

Investing in people is an important value of East Side Thrives and the broader East Side Aligned movement. With the investment of GSK, partners were able to better support their staff, in part by stabilizing or expanding their employment. At the Griffin Center, part-time site coordinator Alexandra, also known as Punkyn, was able to move into a full-time position. Part of her new responsibilities include helping program staff across five program sites implement Winning in Life, a character education curriculum (also supported by GSK), and supporting Educational Advocates who work directly with schools, building relationships with classroom teachers in order to best support after school participants.
SHARED SUPPORTS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT
Since 2014, OST providers have participated in a shared Summer Worker Training to prepare staff for summer camp. Building on this, throughout 2016 and 2017, providers have worked with the Wyman Center to utilize shared quality improvement supports to assess program quality and continuously improve program environments. Wyman Center is a local and national youth development organization committed to equipping adults and strengthen systems that support youth. Using the evidence-based Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI), developed by the Weikart Center, 15 program sites completed Program Quality Assessments and used these assessments to develop program improvement plans. Professional development opportunities throughout the past two years, attended by 86 OST staff, focused on areas programs wish to improve, including conflict resolution, building community and youth voice.

Partners have identified that while collective training opportunities are helpful, on-going coaching support specific to their organization is crucial to ensuring staff are supported in implementing new skills. Four organizations participated in six youth voice coaching sessions and 29 quality improvement coaching sessions over the past two years. Through future evaluation efforts, YCC will integrate on-going assessment of program quality.

“...I learned to relate to my students and my listening skills improved. I also learned how to make the environment conducive to learning by getting the students involved and active in their learning."

— OST PROVIDER

“YPQI has been a very positive experience for us that we use every day...We’ve also done a lot more training for our own staff, which they had been asking for.

— LASHONDA HUBERT, LESSIE BATES DAVIS NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE
YOUTH READINESS AND WELL-BEING

Through access to quality programs, East Side Thrives aimed to ensure children and youth are physically healthy, academically successful and socially-emotionally well. Programs within YCC provide a diverse range of programs to children and youth of different ages, interests and needs. While changing youth outcomes across the community is a longer-term goal, key activities such as character education, youth led mini-grants, and summer reading supports, were used in effort to ensure readiness and well-being.

JACKIE JOYNER-KERSEE’S WINNING IN LIFE

Winning in Life (WIL) is a character education curriculum developed by East St. Louis native and Olympic Gold Medalist, Jackie Joyner-Kersee. WIL teaches self-discipline, self-respect and determination in effort to support youth in reaching their highest potential in all areas of life.

With GSK’s investment, the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Foundation completed the creation of a locally developed curriculum. 28 staff were trained to facilitate WIL and implement the program with 796 youth across the community. In 12 afterschool program sites, youth are learning the same lessons, or “principals in life,” while being physically active and building their own social-emotional skills.

 Providers implementing the WIL curriculum have reported positive feedback on the impact of the curriculum on students, staff and overall programming. From increasing physical activity to improving behavior, implementation of WIL is providing staff with the tools to create an overall culture shift in their organizations. Pre- and post-surveys administered to students participating in WIL show incremental improvements in key skill areas. Two OST programs provided data for students that completed their program. Results reflect these incremental changes, with the largest improvement being in the ability to think critically in social contexts. Further research and assessment is still needed to determine the full impact of participation.

“WIL has been significant. One 6-year-old was kicked out repeatedly and stayed long enough to do WIL and he loved it. He finished out the rest of semester with no problems. Another teen started with our second cohort and was very shy. He became engaged with WIL, started playing basketball, and gave a speech about how WIL made a difference.”

OST PROVIDER

YOUTH WELL-BEING

- 796 children and youth participated in Winning in Life
- 28 participated in Winning in Life training
- 566 youth participate in city-wide field day
- 2 healthy eating mini-grants awarded
- 3 built environment mini-grants awarded
While the implementation of WIL’s intent is to influence physical activity and character development, it has propelled the conversation of providers towards determining what social-emotional learning they hope to see through their programs. Over the next year, YCC will determine the appropriate social-emotional indictors and measurement tools to use across the OST system.

SUMMER READING
YCC organizations, regardless of program activities, seek to impact academic outcomes of young people in their programs. Through East Side Thrives, providers purchased a shared reading assessment program and increased summer reading supports.

Three organizations have reading specialists within their programs who work one-on-one and in small groups with students in reading. One organization expanded their summer programming to include a literacy camp for youth with lower reading scores. Using a shared reading assessment, Renaissance Learning STAR Reading, providers administered pre- and post-reading assessments to 437 participants. Across the five providers, the average STAR Reading Grade Equivalent Scores increased from 2.43 to 2.76, with the largest individual grade equivalent increase being +1.01 and the smallest being -0.10. Across providers, young people demonstrated improvement in their reading scores over the course of 10 months.

PHYSICAL HEALTH
A cross-organization youth council has managed and allocated $16,000 in mini-grant awards to projects developed by youth participating in OST programs. Awarded grants were for projects that aim to increase healthy eating, encourage more physical activity and create built environments where young people can be physically active.

LESSIE BATES DAVIS NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE (LBDNH)
At the LBDNH Mary Brown Center, youth from kindergarten through 12th grade participate in WIL. The basketball team has embraced the lessons, even talking about the “principles in life” amongst themselves. Over the past year, staff have seen their positive mindset as a team grow, whether they win or lose.

“...The most valuable data we have is the reading data. It tells us where our kids are at so we know where to move the needle. If we can accurately identify a reading level, then we know where they are at and where to move them to. This is important especially with our younger kids, because of all the research shows the importance of reading on grade level by 3rd grade.”

– Scott Thompson, Christian Activity Center

GRiffin CENTER
Through the support of GSK, the Griffin Center extended their summer camp services to include a reading camp for youth with lower test scores. 75 young people across five program sites participated in additional reading supports, including a reader’s theater program that culminated with performances by students.
YOUTH-LED MINI-GRANTS

HEALTHY EATING
Two projects started community gardens and provided cooking lessons.

FITNESS ROOMS
Three projects supported new after-school physical fitness opportunities.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT
Three projects supported creating physical environments that are safe for physical activity.

GARDENING
At the Griffin Center, gardening and cooking classes bring youth together to learn and try new foods. Young people help build and tend gardens throughout the year. With the support of a mini-grant, two additional program sites started a garden, giving young people new opportunities to learn and lead.

FITNESS ROOMS
Playing basketball is a go-to physical activity at the LBDNH Mary Brown Center, but not all youth enjoy basketball. To meet the needs of more participants, a group of young people, with the support of a mini-grant, created new fitness rooms where they can lift weights, run on a treadmill and do yoga.

SMART GROWTH
Youth employees of Sinai Family Life Center were awarded a mini-grant to support rebuilding the center’s damaged playground. Their proposal included lessons learned from the national Smart Growth™ Conference about the importance of learning through play for young children. With the support of the mini-grant, youth are now helping the center improve the conditions where younger children in the program play outside.
YOUTH VOICE AND LEADERSHIP

Providers believe that young people should be decision-makers and leaders within the programs they participate and in their broader community. Research shows that engaging youth in leadership and decision-making roles leads to positive outcomes for youth development, including but not exclusive to an increased sense of personal and social identity, increased personal efficacy, stronger leadership skills, stronger sense of belonging and importance and greater empathy for others. In addition to outcomes for youth, the participation of young people in decision making and leadership roles of youth-serving organizations and collective impact efforts has demonstrated better program retention, better outcomes for youth and increased awareness of youth needs to stakeholders.

Youth from every YCC organization have experienced increased opportunities for leadership, both at the program level through site-based changes to increase youth input and at the system level through the implementation of a cross-organization youth council.

SITE-BASED CHANGES
In programs, youth were intentionally engaged in day-to-day decisions. They chose field trips or free-time activities, recruited a new basketball team, created a programming calendar and designed a weekend meal-take-home program. Across the providers, approximately 170 young people were engaged in decision making through these site-based program and organizational changes. These changes — made primarily in the first year of GSK — remained in place in 2017.

NINE LAB
A cohort of youth from two YCC organizations participated in Nine Network’s Nine Lab to learn technical skills in videography and develop their own short films. Program participation was on average 9-10 students per week and lasted six weeks.

Lean on youth. Get them around the table so there’s ownership and buy-in. And when you have that, movement happens a lot faster.

– SHAVON WILSON, JACKIE JOYNER-KERSEE FOUNDATION

They are chaperones on field trips. They have stepped up and lead activities in the center daily. Now that they feel like they are leading or setting the example we are getting a lot more participation from them. More older students are coming, they are coming more often than they used to, and the ones that are here are more engaged.

– LASHONDA HUBERT, LESSIE BATES DAVIS NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE
CROSS-ORGANIZATION YOUTH COUNCIL
A cross-organization youth council convened 11 times over the course of implementation. 15 youth participated regularly in monthly meetings. They supported the successful implementation of three youth-led mini-grant cycles. In October 2016, the group chose to focus on a priority goal of East Side Aligned: increasing safety.

SHARED MEASUREMENT
In order to ensure continuous quality improvement of both individual programs and the collective efforts of YCC, providers made it a priority to establish shared measurement across programs. With the support of two independent evaluators (Live Oak Evaluation Consulting and Informed Community Health), a data management partner (Goshen Education Consultants) and backbone support, providers accelerated their efforts to establish shared youth, program and system-level data sharing and evaluation. The following accomplishments demonstrate this progress:

- For the first time, providers reported data each month for 1) program attendance and 2) participation in WIL
- Providers utilized the STAR Reading Assessment allowing student academic growth to be assessed over time by program staff and evaluators
- Providers now receive weekly academic data on program participants from the East St. Louis School District 189
- The Illinois Youth Survey was used to measure OST student participation in nutrition and physical activity behaviors for standardized comparison between programs and to the district and state. Five Illinois Youth Survey questions were selected for a survey that was administered to the youth three times. Additional support is needed to ensure complete data from this survey is reported in the future
- Providers, East Side Aligned backbone staff and evaluators documented capacity and community changes to demonstrate efforts made towards long-term, system development

DATA SHARING
In 2015, East St. Louis School District 189 and OST providers entered into a data sharing agreement that would allow providers to use individual student data from the school district to better support children and youth in their programs.

School district data for students enrolled in OST programs was shared with OST service providers for the first time in December 2015. Providers now receive weekly attendance, grades and test scores for students participating in their programs, allowing more intentional intervention to ensure student success. In addition, this allows for comparison of program participation and academic outcomes. Goshen Education Consulting has supported this data sharing and in the fall, service providers will have access to District 189’s internal data system, allowing streamlined, easy-to-use access to student data on a daily basis.
PUBLIC AWARENESS

In addition to supporting OST efforts within Greater East St. Louis, East Side Thrives set the goal of increasing public awareness throughout the region of the promise to achieve better outcomes through effective collective action. Progress towards this goal has been accomplished through the production of four content pieces by the Nine Network of Public Media (the local Public Broadcasting Service), two videos providing an overview of the East Side Thrives’ work and two messages on the importance of OST. The commercials are currently being aired locally in effort to increase awareness of OST and the work of providers in Greater East St. Louis.

East Side Aligned backbone staff and YCC leaders will convene and facilitate strategy training forums to highlight the accomplishments and share lessons learned through the GSK IMPACT Grant. Forums will be held for three key audiences from across the region – funders, organizational leaders and youth service providers – in 2018.
Through implementing programmatic strategies such as shared curriculum, increased reading supports and coordinated professional development, YCC is improving outcomes for children and youth while also making progress towards developing an OST system.

OST systems across the country work to provide high quality OST learning opportunities for children and youth across multiple organizations within a community. Through aligning resources and supports, more young people can be successful in school, work and life.

**CAPACITY AND COMMUNITY CHANGE DATA**

To demonstrate YCC’s efforts to create systems change, the evaluation team utilized the Community Check Box (CCB) system to document key events and community changes supporting East Side Thrives goals. The evaluation team conducted bi-monthly interviews with each OST provider and the East Side Aligned backbone staff to document these accomplishments. CCB, developed by the University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development, is an online tool used to demonstrate the relationship between strategic changes made by a group of leaders and organizational or program changes that result from these efforts. This process allowed East Side Thrives partners to examine how their collective efforts are leading to community change.

Using the CCB, the following types of data were documented and analyzed:

- **Capacity Changes** are new or modified participants and relationships, structures, skill sets and planning products that position the collaborative to achieve its goals. These changes were facilitated amongst providers and backbone staff. Instances of Capacity Changes are aligned strongly with work that is needed to generate system level outcomes.

  For example, in support of creating a system of coordinated training and technical assistance across providers, the first WIL training provided for staff of OST service providers was documented as a capacity change.

- **Community Changes** are instances of new or modified policies, procedures, practices and programs for which the collaboration has provided influence and resources.

  Instances of Community Changes are aligned strongly with work that is needed to generate program and youth level outcomes. These change measurements were taken to understand if capacity or system-level change, did in instances where appropriate, also resulted in program and youth level outcome changes.

  For example, in support of ensuring intentionally designed programs, each time a new program began facilitating WIL after training was provided, it was documented as a community change. Although the data is not available to fully demonstrate the youth level impact of WIL, in the future this community change example could be tied to changes in the social emotional outcomes of participants.

The data captured in this category does have limitations. OST providers did not input data directly in CCB themselves but rather reported changes through bi-monthly interviews to the evaluators. This made it difficult to accurately capture all the changes happening at the site level and may have led to incomplete data.

**PACE OF CHANGE**

Capacity and community changes captured in CCB are compared to each other using a Pace of Change graph. The graph on the following page shows the number and types of changes in a time period accumulating across time. A flat line represents periods of time when no changes occurred. A steep line indicates a more rapid pace of change.

A Pace of Change graph demonstrates numbers and timing of changes. Pace of Change creates an easy standard by which to visualize the progress a community is likely making or not in creating the desired impact.
Pace of Change can be utilized by partners to determine if change is happening as expected. If the pace is slow, the group can reflect on why this might be and if course corrections need to be made. If the pace is fast, the group can reflect on how long they can or need to maintain that level. Always, the group is asking whether adjustments need to be made to improve the process, and thus improve the likelihood that they are impacting long-term outcomes.

**EAST SIDE THRIVES PACE OF CHANGE**

East Side Thrives partners documented 66 Capacity Changes and 114 Community Changes from October 2015 to June 2017. The content of these changes were largely described in the prior sections of this report.

Observations

The data demonstrated that more Community Changes occurred than Capacity Changes, which was anticipated. One Capacity Change facilitated by the partners could result in multiple Community Changes. For example, the first training for program staff on the WIL curriculum (one Capacity Change) resulted in five Community Changes, each time a unique organization began implementing the program.

Capacity Changes occurred slowly through Quarter 3 (Q3) 2016, and then at twice the rate afterwards. The content of these changes are primarily associated with shared measurement and collaborative decisions by the providers to improve infrastructure and access. Community Changes began at a higher rate than Capacity Changes in Q4 2015 and continued rapidly throughout the initiative.

Capacity Change was anticipated to be faster at the start of the project, and then slow and steady after. Community Change, because it first requires capacity change, was anticipated to have a delayed start and to pick up pace over time. The program sites began making community changes upon word of receiving the grant, and before the evaluation and shared measurement system was in place. This pacing resulted in several lessons learned about intentional time for planning and effective implementation of a group process.

The fastest months of Community Change occurred in Q1 and Q2 in both 2016 and 2017. This timing coincided with the start of the second semester of after-school programming and beginning of summer programming. The strong pace in Q1 2016 was attributed to the launch of new programming such as WIL. This theme is also attributed to the fact that making programmatic changes is easiest for providers at transition points in programming, in particular between semesters and before summer.

A clear pause in Pace of Change occurs in Q3 2016. This reflects several roadblocks in the change process, including incomplete data collection and changes in staff. However, the restructuring and decisions made that occurred because of roadblocks can be seen by Q4 2016 with a faster pace of change overall.

Through community and capacity changes, YCC is creating the conditions needed to reach more children and youth, leading to healthier lives throughout Greater East St. Louis.
EVERY HOUR COUNTS FRAMEWORK

While student level data was collected throughout East Side Thrives, it was always with the intention of telling the holistic system-level story of the initiative’s success. Providers learned that evaluating the OST system without solid program-level evaluation in place is incredibly difficult. Over the next year, providers will work to develop individual program evaluation plans in addition to a system evaluation plan.

To begin this effort, providers are using the *Every Hour Counts Measurement Framework: How to measure success in expanded learning systems* (EHC) to identify youth, program and system level outcomes.

EHC was developed by a coalition of citywide organizations throughout the United States that have similar goals to East Side Thrives – ensuring access to high quality out-of-school time programming to young people. EHC is grounded in the principle that in order to achieve positive youth outcomes, high-quality programs are needed, and ensuring high quality programs requires a systems level approach.

**THE EHC UTILIZES THREE OUTCOME AREAS:**

1. **Systems Level** – characteristics of well-coordinated systems that lead to improved quality, scale and sustainability
2. **Program Level** – characteristics of high-quality out-of-school time programs
3. **Youth Level** – educational, social and emotional skills likely to drive student success

Outcomes within each level of EHC align with the goals and activities of East Side Thrives and YCC.

YCC is utilizing EHC with the acknowledgement that further research of its effectiveness is still underway and may result in changes to the framework. With support from The Wallace Foundation, three cities are currently engaged in a two-year pilot to better understand how cities are implementing and using the framework. With RAND as the developmental evaluator working with Boston, Providence and St. Paul, the final report will help inform other efforts to use the framework, as well provide an updated framework based on the experiences of the cities.

The use of this framework has propelled YCC’s conversation by providing shared language for system building. In addition, it has guided the development of a set of youth outcomes that are shared across the diverse programs within the Greater East St. Louis community.

While EHC does not include any specific physical health outcomes, it does include a number of suggested social-emotional outcomes. Through the development of program and system evaluation plans, providers will determine what physical and emotional health outcomes are the most appropriate to measure moving forward.
East Side Thrives began as an effort of diverse partners to impact the lives of young people through multiple programmatic strategies including but not exclusive to implementing the WIL curriculum, increasing supports for youth voice, expanding summer reading programs, and improving the built environment of places young people spend their time.

The planning, implementation and evaluation of these activities have propelled the partners from programmatic efforts to system building. They have learned key lessons about what it will take to build an integrated OST system that improves the health, readiness and well-being of children and youth in the Greater East St. Louis community.

Providers know that not one of them on their own can meet the need of all children and youth, but together they can. Through the GSK IMPACT Grant, OST providers have accelerated building connections that scale quality programs, identified efficiencies that help serve more kids, continued to develop their ability to implement effective programs and observed how collective action can help generate sustainability. In the coming year, YCC will continue the collaborative work needed to ensure readiness and well-being through a strong, integrated OST system with significant focus on the following areas:

**YOUTH VOICE**

Ensuring young people have the tools and opportunities to utilize their power and voice requires significant time and investment. It has also been learned over the past 18 months that despite their best intentions, site level staff are stretched for time and implementing youth voice efforts at the program level without additional support is not practical.

Without dedicated support for youth leadership at the organization and cross-organization level, it is easy to fall into the trap of tokenizing youth input and providing leadership opportunities that are more disempowering than not. Partners believe that there should be “nothing about us without us.” As such, young people must lead this work in order for it to be successful. Adults that support this work will continue to develop additional skills and dedicate additional time to ensure there are equitable voices supporting the OST system.

**EVALUATION**

The evaluation process of East Side Thrives required a substantial portion of backbone and provider time over the course of 18 months. This evaluation, though focused on evaluating the initiative’s process, propelled YCC’s understanding of support needed for program and system evaluation. Simultaneous to this evaluation, YCC made progress sharing school data that has also contributed to lessons learned.

It is not straightforward to measure the impact of OST programs or systems on individual children and youth. While student level data was collected throughout East Side Thrives, it was always with the intention of telling the holistic system level story of the initiative’s success. YCC learned that evaluating the OST system without solid program level evaluation in place is incredibly difficult. Without program evaluation, the true impact of programmatic strategies supported by the GSK IMPACT Grant is difficult to measure and demonstrate.

Moving forward, local evaluation support that works directly with providers will ensure program and system evaluation. This support will build the evaluation capacity of each organization in addition to facilitating an OST system evaluation that promotes continuous quality improvement. A shared evaluation team from the Brown School Evaluation Center at Washington University in St. Louis will work in partnership with YCC to develop evaluation plans, provide technical assistance to program staff and implement evaluation activities. Using the Every Hour Counts Measurement Framework created by OST systems across the country as a guide, this partnership will support YCC to ensure and demonstrate the impact of collective action on positive outcomes for children and youth.

"We’ve learned the importance of really making youth voice opportunities experiences that allow young people to use their knowledge and power. We’re continuing to learn how to do that better and how to support young people to lead in their community."

— HANNAH ALLEE, UNITED WAY OF GREATER ST. LOUIS
SUSTAINABILITY
In addition to propelling YCC’s efforts through programmatic strategies and system building, the efforts of East Side Thrives have attracted additional resources to Greater East St. Louis.

The GSK IMPACT Grant was a significant investment in YCC, providing the opportunity to implement multiple strategies as well as identify what would be needed to support an OST system moving forward. The lessons learned and progress made through East Side Thrives has led to diversified resources for this collective effort. East Side Thrives has greatly contributed to the appreciation and understanding of the importance of OST amongst East Side Aligned stakeholders, leading to increased commitment to generate additional resources.

CULTIVATING TRUST
While the strategies and activities of providers are key to collective success, developing a foundation of trust through East Side Thrives has lead to better outcomes for children and youth.

OWNERSHIP
In any collaborative work, ownership is integral to success. Throughout East Side Thrives, progress often was not as efficient or effective as possible due to differing organizational commitments, lack of clarity about who should make decisions and varying levels of understanding of activities across partner staff. OST providers and East Side Aligned backbone staff have learned the importance of ensuring buy-in at all levels of staff before implementation. Ensuring early ownership for all OST activities in the future will improve collaborative efforts.

DECISION-MAKING AND BUY-IN
Decision-makers and implementers must be fully informed and part of the process to ensure effective intervention and change. Convening staff across providers based on responsibilities for cross-organizational learning and communication, and increasing backbone support to communicate with staff at all levels of leadership and programming helped address this throughout East Side Thrives. Continued attention to ensuring shared decision-making power and buy-in will be needed to ensure success.

YCC will continue to cultivate the conditions needed to ensure access to quality OST programs that ensure all children and youth are physically healthy, academically successful and socially-emotionally well.

"The biggest lessons learned... is really getting all staff on board. So, for this go around, this year, we’re doing better by taking it a step at a time and making sure that all staff are properly trained before really jumping into something."

— GRIFIN CENTER LEADERSHIP STAFF
The Greater East St. Louis Youth Coordinating Council is an anchor coalition of East Side Aligned, a movement to ensure all children and youth are healthy, safe, and secure; ready to learn and work; and empowered to create change.