



In the summer of 2004, Youth Professionals and Regional Extension Educators in Community Youth Development were asked to prepare case studies regarding community efforts to coordinate out-of-school time programs. They examined how the coordination occurred and how it impacted availability of programs for young people. They also captured the lessons from the coordination efforts that could help other Minnesota communities work together to increase programs and opportunities for youth.

This is one in a series of ten reports.

About The Community

Duluth, located on the shore of Lake Superior, is Minnesota's fourth largest city. It is the largest community in northeastern Minnesota and is a regional center for health care, media, financial services, government services, and higher education. Duluth is a tourism destination and also an international port. The city is unique in that it is 27 miles long and 6 miles wide with many thousand acres of green space. The population is over 86,000, with an additional 40,000 in the immediate surrounding area. Three public high schools, one private high school, 13 public and eight private elementary schools, several public and private middle schools, and six charter schools serve the 13,800 students (grades K-12) of the Duluth school district.

What's Happening in Out-of-School Programming?

Duluth's young people have a variety of opportunities to choose from in their out-of-school time. Over 70 agencies and organizations offer summer and school year activities. There are three community children's theatre programs, numerous dance studios including the Minnesota Ballet, many structured music programs, active Scouting programs, and a youth volunteerism program. Community-based sports programs, teams, and clinics are plentiful and popular, as evidenced by the 3,700 youth enrolled in recreational soccer. Three downhill ski facilities, 27 miles of cross-country ski trails,

youth sailing and rowing programs, outdoor hockey rinks, and lots of green space provide variety in options. In site-based after-school programs, nine providers serve the community at 25 sites. These providers include non-profit agencies, Parks and Recreation, and Community Education. In a typical week 1,800 youth attend after-school programs at these sites across the city.

The high schools offer many opportunities including sports, music, leadership, service, and enrichment programs.

DATA FROM THE CENSUS

Population of city: 86,918
Population of school-aged youth: 13,826
Population under 18: 18,521 21.3%
Population 65 years and over: 15.1%
Average travel time to work: 17 minutes
Geographic size: 87.3 square miles

About the Coordination Effort

The Duluth Youth Agency Coalition includes 11 agencies and organizations: Boys and Girls Club of Duluth, Copeland Community Center, Lifehouse, Lutheran Social Services, Voyageur Council of Boy Scouts, Northern Pine Girl Scouts, Valley Youth Center, St. Louis County 4-H, Woodland Hills-Neighborhood Youth Services, YMCA, and YWCA.

Mission/Goals:

The mission of the Duluth Youth Agency Coalition (DYAC) is “a partnership of youth-serving agencies committed to establishing and maintaining a coordinated approach to shared resources, funding, and programming, and to providing a unified voice with youth in our community.” The group of agencies agreed on this mission and has worked together to develop a strategic plan that guides their work.

DULUTH YOUTH AGENCY COALITION STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 1. The Duluth Youth Agency Coalition will share resources.

- Objective 1. Create a coordinated training plan among membership agencies.
- Objective 2. Develop a means for agencies to find and access resources.
- Objective 3. Broaden DYAC staff involvement throughout individual membership agencies.

Goal 2. The Duluth Youth Agency Coalition will maintain and increase funding opportunities through coordinated efforts.

- Objective 1. Address DYAC funding needs.
- Objective 2. Secure funding resources to meet the changing needs of youth in our community.
- Objective 3. Increase public awareness of DYAC mission, goals, and successes.

Goal 3. The Duluth Youth Agency Coalition will provide coordinated programming among Duluth Youth Agency Coalition members.

- Objective 1. DYAC will be aware of existing youth programs in the community.
- Objective 2. Work together to strengthen current programs.
- Objective 3. Seek new ways to expand coordinated youth programming in the community.

Goal 4. The Duluth Youth Agency Coalition will be a unified voice with youth in our community.

- Objective 1. DYAC will provide programming that meets the needs of our youth community.
- Objective 2. DYAC will cooperatively address issues that impact youth in the community.
- Objective 3. DYAC will educate policy makers and community leaders about out-of-school time, issues, programs, and funding needs.

Leadership:

The group has an independent facilitator who is contracted through the YMCA and works 15-20 hours a week. The agency directors agree this role is critical because of the time that must be dedicated to accomplishing the tasks,

the fairness needed when working with the agencies, and the neutral representation of all member agencies needed when out in the community. The coalition members have also worked to get youth agency recognition and representation on key committees in the community such as the Family Service Collaborative.

Each agency signed a partnership agreement, making a commitment to mission, finances, resource sharing, level of involvement, strategic plan, and individual agency involvement (for example, see box below).

INDIVIDUAL AGENCY COMMITMENT

Each Partnership Agency will:

- Use best practices in program development.
- Select one staff member to act as the liaison between DYAC and home agency by bringing forth information and disseminating relevant DYAC information each month.
- Practice good business ethics when sharing resources.
- Annually evaluate the effectiveness and quality of existing programs.
- Not discriminate.
- Will not, given that individual agencies have defined areas of service, compete with other Coalition Partnership Agencies without first communicating and cooperating with current programs in service.

All 11 agencies have agreed to have staff members serve on each of the five DYAC operating committees (personnel, fund-raising, training, programs, and youth advocacy). Many agency directors also serve on community and school district committees, and the coalition has agreed that they do not speak on behalf of DYAC, but do transport information back and forth. These aspects of membership help strengthen the visibility of youth-serving agencies in the community and strengthen communication back through the youth organizations.

Membership:

Six agency directors formed DYAC in May 2000. That fall, invitations were sent to 30

youth agencies to join them around parameters defined by the original six. Five joined. These groups represent the major after-school programs and youth organizations in Duluth, and together they provide programming to 5,000 young people annually. The keys to membership are defined common work, perceived benefit to the member agencies, and willingness to invest at the required level. Missing are the school district and the extra-curricular programs they represent, Community Education and their unique programs, the faith community, Parks and Recreation, and the many community-based youth sports and arts programs. The current members recognize that there must be intentional efforts to communicate with these other youth-serving programs.

Structure:

The facilitator's work on behalf of DYAC, monthly meetings, the five committees, email communication, and a sense of accountability to the mission and partnership agreement assures accomplishment of the work. Critical to follow through and success is the facilitator. There are only four policies: the Partnership Agreement, procedures for membership, process for using the DYAC name, and guest-speaker attendance at meetings. The strategic plan guides meeting agendas and keeps the work focused, as many requests come to the group for youth organization involvement in the community.

Cost:

The annual operating budget is about \$12,000. This pays for the facilitator's salary and for a 300-hour Americorp worker. Printing, mailing, and facilities are provided in-kind by member agencies. The total budget is about \$20,000 annually and consists of the operating funds plus money that moves through the budget as training revenue and expenses and event donations and expenses. The \$12,000 annual operating budget comes in part from \$250 per year dues from each member agency. Over the years the additional \$9,000 has been a combination of a Northland Foundation grant, a donation from Cellular One, Spelling Bee revenue, and donations from Kiwanis and Rotary clubs.

The impetus for coordination:

Two issues were perceived as primary barriers to coordination over the years: the competition for Community Development Block Grants, United Way, and other funds on both the local and state levels; and competition for youth participants. Prior to the formation of DYAC, the only time agencies saw each other was when they were competing for local funds.

In 1996, the community administered Search Institute's *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey and reported the results to the community. The Ordean Foundation invited about 60 representatives from community and youth agencies to address the results. "Mentor Duluth" was the result; growing the YMCA's 60-year old mentoring program into an intentional community-wide mentoring program based at after-school programs. The six agency directors who hosted Mentoring Duluth began to see the benefits of ongoing, focused coordination that went beyond mentoring. They eventually started DYAC. There had been an informal youth agency networking effort for the previous eight years, and experiences and momentum from this provided ideas and a readiness for the development of a more formal structure. The watershed event that jumpstarted the coalition was substantial funding cuts from multiple sources to all youth-serving agencies.

What else has happened in the community to impact availability?

There are not high numbers of school-sponsored after-school programs for 6th-8th graders. There are multiple providers of after-school and youth programs in this community, making it difficult for parents to access information. Continued cuts in program dollars to nonprofit youth programs has decreased hours of operations and number of sites available.

There have been several positive initiatives that have helped increase the availability of out-of-school time opportunities for youth. The Northland Foundation convened community members through America's Promise. Duluth, as a Community of Promise, worked to increase access for youth to facilities, communication, volunteerism, and

transportation. One example of success from this effort was development of a youth-friendly bus schedule. The Duluth Transit Authority also began promotion of a reduced fare summer pass for youth.

“The Yellow Book” is an awareness campaign that lists all summer opportunities for youth in grades K-6. It is produced by the University of Minnesota Extension Service in cooperation with St. Louis County, the local school district, and the Duluth News-Tribune. Eight thousand copies are printed through private donations and distributed to all youth in grades K-6, and the News-Tribune also prints it in a Sunday edition.

What could stimulate more local action?

- Base money to fund the facilitator position.
- Tools on developing a formal coalition for this size of community, including sample mission statements and strategic plans.
- A clearinghouse, similar to the Minnesota Mentoring Partnership, for out-of-school-time partnership ideas. This could include activities to garner youth engagement, ideas to build awareness with decision-makers, and cooperative projects for coalitions.

Implications for other communities:

- **Leadership makes the difference in success.** The neutral facilitator is critical, despite the coalition having an institutional home (YMCA).
- **There must be a critical mass of organizations with similar focus and program delivery method.** Agency directors recognize the common work and the logical reasons for working together in new ways.
- **Each member agency must make an investment through the partnership agreement.** Agencies, not just programs of an agency, are the members. The executive director and board must be supportive of the time spent in coordination.
- **The decision makers from each agency must sit at the table.** To sustain the coalition efforts, each agency director must be active and must be able to articulate benefits of the coalition to their organization.

- **There needs to be community readiness and a cause.** The agencies saw each other only at funding times. “Mentor Duluth” forced them to work together and see success. It is considered the turning point in communication. The funding cuts directly impacted kids, and agency directors felt cooperative action was needed for survival.
- **The mission must be larger than the work of one agency.** Because of coordination, there is more visibility of programs so youth and families learn more about opportunities. One example is an increase in numbers of youth seeking mentors. Because of coordination, there is joint effort to build public will. DYAC hosted a political forum where mayoral and city council candidates were asked to address youth out-of-school time issues. This committee is now drafting an 18-month plan to educate decision makers. The annual Spelling Bee is a way to educate the business community about youth programs. Because of coordination, agencies have a plan for a peer-review process and have implemented a city-wide evaluation tool.
- **Increased communication between agencies is the biggest impact.** Coordinated training opportunities, shared funding opportunities, and ideas that the group can work on to benefit the whole community are now part of meetings and communication. Between 2000 and 2003, 89 training opportunities for youth professionals were offered or co-sponsored by DYAC, totaling 268 hours for 1015 participants.
- **This formal coalition works great in a community of Duluth’s population size and location.** Duluth is a community with many youth programs. It is self-contained because of location, and it is the regional center for many helping services and cultural and recreational opportunities for youth.

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Sources: Duluth Parks and Recreation; Duluth Youth Agency Coalition; ISD #709; U.S. Census Bureau; www.factfinder.census.gov