



The QYDTM Manual

*The Recipe to Becoming a Quality
Youth Development CommunityTM*

Acknowledgements

The design and implementation of the **QYD Project™** has been made possible through the vision and collaboration of youth, staff, AmeriCorps members, and the Board of Directors at Essex CHIPS, Inc (Essex Junction, VT) The project would not have been envisioned without the robust model of youth engagement demonstrated by Essex CHIPS for the past 3 decades.

The **QYD Project™** has benefited from the careful review and comments by members of the Essex (VT) Healthy Youth Coalition. It has also benefited from the consistently generous support of the Essex, Vermont community, the Vermont Youth Development Corps, area private foundations, the Essex (VT) Rotary, and the Vermont Department of Health.

Inspiration for **QYD™** was also derived from an earlier groundbreaking effort by DIAL/SELF Youth & Community Services (Greenfield, MA) in collaboration with the Franklin County (MA) Youth Services Roundtable. Lastly, the “positive youth development” framework as embodied by the Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets™ is the backbone of this effort to promote and acknowledge a community’s Quality Youth Development efforts.

Thank you all!

David Voegele
Executive Director , National QYD™ Project

July, 2018

*40 Developmental Assets™ is a trademark of the Search Institute, MN
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A Quick QYD™ Summary

Essex CHIPS has been serving Vermont youth since 1986. It has served as a model for robust youth engagement, particularly with its organizational structure which encourages youth 13-18 years old to serve on the Board of Directors. The **QYD Project™** represents CHIPS' commitment to broaden and deepen the positive impact communities can have on youth. With this goal in mind, CHIPS has drawn on the Search Institute's *40 Developmental Assets™* model to design a community certification process that establishes substantive - but not onerous - benchmarks to be achieved by a neighborhood/village/town/city in order to obtain the **Quality Youth Development (QYD) Community™** credential. Achievement of this certification will demonstrate that a community is actively promoting youth engagement and youth empowerment - which have been proven to be essential elements necessary for youth to thrive.

After designing and launching the **QYD Project™**, Essex CHIPS separated itself from the management of the project in order to ensure an objective and unbiased credentialing process for communities throughout Vermont and beyond. A new non-profit entity, called **Quality Youth Development Inc.**, (aka **QYD Inc.**) was formed and has contracted with CHIPS since 2019 to manage project operations, including the promotion of the project and coordination of the certification process for interested communities. The **QYD Credentialing Committee (QCC)**, the certification authority within **QYD Inc.**, is comprised of non-profit, education, and community professionals, as well as older teens from all over the United States. The QCC reviews and acts upon **QYD Community™** applications. Essex CHIPS continues to support the project through resource development efforts and technical assistance to applicants.

We define **Quality Youth Development** as "*substantive, measurable and sustainable community actions that support, engage, inspire, and empower youth*". **QYD Community™** Certification is intended to encourage and measure concrete efforts to promote the health and development of youth. We believe that the attainment of this certification will become a quality standard that other communities will seek to achieve in order to not only help youth thrive, but also attract businesses, employees, and residents. **QYD™** is believed to be the first credentialing effort in New England (and possibly in the nation) that measures and acknowledges a community's commitment to youth in this manner.

The achievement of the **QYD Community™** certification will benefit local youth by more actively engaging the broader community in a discussion about positive youth development principles and the value of promoting the *40 Developmental Assets™*. The resulting higher level of community support will enable youth to succeed in school and as adult members of the community. The community as a whole will benefit through the success of its young adult residents and the greater likelihood that the youth – whose education has been paid for by the community – will become productive members of the community after the completion of their education. Youth in the **QYD Community™** will also:

- better realize they are valued and respected
- be offered more meaningful opportunities
- demonstrate increased resilience and self-confidence
- be more inclined to remain in, or return to, the community after school graduation

The **10 QYD Benchmarks** that a community will seek to achieve so it may receive **QYD™** certification are based upon a community's commitment to:

1. Welcoming, inclusive, and accessible space in the community for any youth (including LGBTQ+ youth, youth of color, disadvantaged youth) to gather safely when out of school.
2. Funding by the community in support of youth programs.
3. Professional youth-mentoring program(s) within the community.
4. An elected community youth council, consisting of middle-high school age students that will advise the community on issues directly and indirectly related to youth – and will promote community service by youth.
5. Posters displayed by downtown businesses that indicate “Youth Are Welcome!”
6. The engagement of youth as members of the Board of Directors of local non-profits providing services to youth.
7. Youth access to social service resource information outside of a school setting.
8. An annual youth conference or legislative forum for middle/high school age students.
9. Effective recruitment of young people for local government committees.
10. Internship/employment opportunities for youth in local government and businesses.

QYD™ Logic Model

What is the need?

Youth need an array of external supports, from family, school, and the community, in order to develop the internal attitudes and attributes that will enable them to thrive as students and community members.

What resources are used to address this need?

A youth development framework (*40 Developmental Assets*), a community mobilization strategy (**QYD™**), youth and adult volunteers, business and municipal support, a core coordinating group (**QYD Steering Committee**), a place to meet, and lots of pizza.

What activities result from these resources?

Recruitment of youth & adults as members of the local **QYD Steering Committee**, submission of a Letter of Intent and Understanding to the **QYD Credentialing Committee**, meetings to educate and recruit a broad array of community members, achievement of at least 7 of the **10 QYD benchmarks**, celebration of **QYD™** certification, and evaluation of the **QYD™** process and impact.

What products result from these activities?

Training of **QYD Steering Committees/Benchmark Work Groups**, technical assistance to committee and work groups, and participation in evaluation design and implementation regarding **QYD™** process and impact.

What achievements are the result?

Youth feel valued and validated within their community, exhibit increased confidence and resiliency, and are more likely to make healthy decisions.

What is the Impact?

Youth are less likely to engage in risky behavior, more likely to succeed in school, and more likely to become productive adult community members.

The Top 10 Questions About QYD™

1. What does QYD™ mean?

QYD are the initials for **Quality Youth Development**. It can be spoken as individual letters (Q-Y-D) or pronounced phonetically as “quid”.

2. What is the definition of Quality Youth Development?

We define the term **Quality Youth Development** as “*substantive, measurable and sustainable community actions that support, engage, inspire, and empower youth.*”

3. What is a QYD Community™?

This is a city, town, village, or neighborhood (or other geographically defined ‘community’) that has successfully completed a 6-9 month process through which it has achieved at least 7 of the **10 QYD Benchmarks** to demonstrate their support of youth, and as a result has been certified as a **QYD Community™**.

4. Why would a community seek the QYD™ certification?

The **10 QYD Benchmarks** are aligned with the Search Institute’s *40 Developmental Assets* which are embraced by youth-serving agencies throughout the nation. By achieving these benchmarks, a community is demonstrating its support for youth, which will help youth to thrive. This commitment to youth may then attract residents and businesses to the community, and may encourage youth to remain in or return to the community after graduation from high school or college.

5. How can my community become a QYD Community™?

The “How to Become a QYD™ Community” section of this manual describes the step-by-step process that a group of residents can follow to galvanize other community members in support of the project.

6. Is there a fee to become a QYD Community™?

Currently, there is no fee for the first six communities in Vermont to begin the **QYD™** process, receive technical support from CHIPS, and become certified. However, there may be a fee for additional Vermont communities – or those outside of Vermont – wanting to undertake this process.

7. How long does it take to become certified?

This process has been designed to take 6-9 months for a community to achieve. It may be possible to achieve in less than 6 months, and extensions beyond 9 months are possible, depending upon the progress being made.

8. Will the QYD Project™ support us during this process?

QYD™ technical assistance providers are available to guide and support a local **QYD Steering Committee** through the certification process. This could involve up to 12 hours per month of support by phone, video conference, or in person as needed. The QYD Project™ will provide up to 25 free copies of this manual, benchmark resources, and numerous templates for various documents required by the certification process.

9. Who decides if we have met the QYD benchmarks?

An independent **QYD Credentialing Committee (QCC)** will review, score, and rate your application to become a **QYD Community™**. The **QCC** is appointed by **QYD Inc.**, and consists of 3-7 Youth Development/Education professionals and older teens from outside the community under review. Each member of the **QCC** will score your application separately and, if needed, the group as a whole will decide as to whether you have met the **QYD Benchmarks**, and what star rating you have achieved. The decision by the **QCC** can be appealed in writing within 30 days by the community.

10. Can we get an extension on the time period to complete the process?

Yes, 3-month extensions (up to a total of 15 months for an application process) are possible, depending on the progress being made by the community.



QYD Benchmarks and Evidence of Achievement

Benchmark #1

Inclusive, welcoming, and supervised free space in the community for youth – including LGBTQ+ youth, youth of color, financially disadvantaged youth, and special needs youth to gather regularly, safely, and comfortably when out of school.

Important: *The space (or spaces) must be available for usage at least 2 days a week, and for at least 2 hours each day. Examples of appropriate space include teen centers, after-school programs, accessible parks/playgrounds, recreation centers & programs, and skate parks, open during after-school hours or on weekends. The program must have policy embracing racial equity.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Space usage agreement, and
- B. Statement of policies, and
- C. Confirmation letters from two local youth serving agencies, or
- D. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #2

Funding by local government/businesses demonstrating meaningful support of non-school programs embracing positive youth development values, as articulated by the Search Institute.

Important: *This may include program funding, donated space, equipment, and/or services, but it must have an annual cash value of at least \$25 per youth under the age of 18 living in the community. For example, a community with 1,000 youth under the age of 18 must invest at least \$25,000 annually in non-school youth programs. This support may be current, or pledged to occur within 12 months. The funding must reflect a commitment to racial equity.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Confirmation letter from the municipal administrator, and
- B. Confirmation letter from a local non-profit youth serving agency, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #3

Youth mentoring program(s) serving a meaningful number of youth (in relation to community demographics/need), and aligned with the professional standards set by MENTOR (the national mentoring network).

Important: *Mentoring opportunities must be available for at least 5% of the number of youth eligible for the free and reduced fee meals at local schools. For example, a community with 1,000 children receiving free/reduced fee school meals needs to be offering mentoring slots to at least 50 youth (although not necessarily the same youth receiving the free/reduced lunch benefit). Mentoring programs can be community or school based, and must include a policy embracing racial equity.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Confirmation letter from a local mentoring program, and
- B. Confirmation letter from the State mentoring association, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #4

A Community Youth Council, consisting of local youth (ages 13-19 elected by their peers, to meet on a periodic basis to discuss issues impacting youth, to communicate with community officials and the public about these issues, and to promote service by youth in support of the community.

Important: *The election must be public, and sponsored by a non-school group (so that it is not confused with a school-based student council). For example, a youth serving non-profit agency and/or a municipal entity partner could host the Council, by designing and managing a nomination and election process. After the initial election of Council members, all discussions and projects of the Council should be youth directed. The Council must have a policy embracing racial equity.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Confirmation letter from the Chair of the Community Youth Council, and
- B. Minutes from the first 3 meetings of the Council, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #5

Youth-friendly signs/posters displayed by at least 10% of appropriate downtown street-level businesses, which convey the message “Youth are welcome!”

Important: *Appropriate businesses would not include those that primarily sell alcohol, tobacco, or other age-restricted products.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Letter from either a municipal official, a business association, or the Steering Committee that defines a downtown district, lists the current businesses in that district, and identifies which ones are displaying the sign/poster, and
- B. Photos of the storefronts in the designated downtown district that are displaying the signs/posters, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #6

Action by the Board of Directors for at least 10% of local non-profit youth serving organizations, which embraces and recruits meaningful youth participation on their Board of Directors.

Important: *The number of non-profit youth service organizations will be determined by the listing of local organizations on the www.guidestar.org database, whose description includes service to children, youth, or teens. For example, a community with 20 local non-profit youth service agencies would require at least 2 of those organizations to “embrace and recruit” youth 13-19 years old for their Board of Directors. In addition, the Board must have a policy embracing racial equity.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Letter from a municipal official or non-profit agency which states the number of youth-serving organizations in the community, and which ones have taken the action described above, and
- B. Minutes from a meeting of the Board of Directors for those organizations, that confirms youth serve on the Board, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #7

Youth have access to social service information and resources outside of a school setting.

Important: *This requires a meaningful public display (in multiple locations) of youth-targeted posters for Vermont 2-1-1 and/or other information & referral services for youth. There should be at least 1 such poster displayed for every 100 youth in the community under the age of 18. For example, a community with 1,000 youth under the age of 18 must have at least 10 posters visible from the street or in public spaces, in various parts of the community.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Confirmation letter from a local non-profit youth serving agency, and
- B. Photos of at least 10 posters as displayed, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #8

A local Youth Conference or Legislative Forum, to be designed as an annual event, for middle and high school age students.

Important: *A Youth Conference would involve a variety of speakers/activities related to topics chosen by youth, and would last for at least 3 hours. A Legislative Forum would involve students meeting with local and state elected officials to discuss issues of importance to them, and would last for at least 2 hours. Either event would require the participation of at least 35 youth, and must include a discussion of racial equity.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Notice, agenda, and photos of the event, and
- B. Letter from a local non-profit confirming the event occurred or has been scheduled, and the number of youth in attendance (or projected to be in attendance), or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #9

Recruitment and participation of youth on community and/or municipal committees.

Important: *These should be community wide-groups, such as an education task force, or a steering committee for a public event, or a municipal government committee. At least 2 such committees must embrace and recruit the participation of youth 13-19 years old, and must have a policy that embraces racial equity.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Recruitment notice/flyer for youth to participate on such committees, and
- B. Minutes from a meeting of the municipal or community committee which acknowledges the recruitment of youth for the committee, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

Benchmark #10

Internship opportunities for youth, in local government and business.

Important: *For a community without a formal internship program, this Benchmark requires the creation of at least five new opportunities that particularly target, recruit, and engage young women, youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, financially disadvantaged youth, and/or youth with special needs. For a community with a formal internship program, this Benchmark requires evidence of at least 5 internship opportunities that address the target population described above.*

Achievement of this benchmark to be evidenced by:

- A. Letters from municipal officials or business managers confirming they have created internship opportunities as described above, or
- B. Letter from the formal internship program in the community which confirms that at least 5 of its opportunities target the population described above, or
- C. *Comparable evidence approved by the QYD Credentialing Committee*

OVER 25 YEARS OF DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS®

The Developmental Assets® are 40 research-based, positive experiences and qualities that influence young people's development. Recently, more than 120,000 students in grades 6-12 from across the U.S. were surveyed to update the Assets and continue to provide the world with relevant and useful data.



UNITING

In the 1990s, Developmental Assets® became the foundation for up to 600 community coalitions to motivate individuals, families, organizations, and communities to work together.



IMPROVING THE GLOBAL YOUTH COMMUNITY

Surveys have been conducted in more than 30 countries around the world, in 30 languages other than English and involving more than 5 million youth (25,000 globally).



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from

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INSTITUTE

GROUNDBREAKING

First introduced in 1990, "The Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th to 12-Grade Youth" report introduced Search Institute's framework of Developmental Assets®, now used throughout the world.



COLLECTING A LOT OF DATA

Assets have been measured in more than 5 million young people, examining assets within different cultural groups, urban and rural youth, young people from grades 4 through college, and, in analyses currently underway, LGBT youth.



FOSTERING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The more assets youth experience, the better off they are. Youth with more Developmental Assets report lower levels of high-risk behaviors (such as alcohol use and violence) and higher levels of thriving behaviors (such as academic work, leadership, and valuing diversity).

QYD™ Alignment with the 40 Developmental Assets

The **10 QYD Benchmarks** are aligned with the positive youth development framework embodied by Search Institute's *40 Developmental Assets™*. Achievement of many of the benchmarks support more than one of the developmental assets. The Search Institute and other research entities have established that "quantity matters" – that is, the more protective factors in play within the life of a youth, the less likely that youth is to be impacted by negative factors, and the more likely that youth will have the foundation necessary to thrive. This is why the **QYD Project™** seeks to saturate a community with so many supports and actions aligned with the *40 Developmental Assets™*.

In one way or another, virtually all of the assets listed below are being promoted by the achievement of one or more of the **10 QYD Benchmarks**. This is what a **Quality Youth Development Community™** is striving for. The **QYD Project™** seeks to establish a community framework to help youth thrive.

The Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets™

1. Family Support

Family life provides high levels of love and support.

2. Positive Family Communication

Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.

3. Other Adult Relationships

Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.

4. Caring Neighborhood

Young person experiences caring neighbors.

5. Caring School Climate

School provides a caring, encouraging environment.

6. Parent Involvement in Schooling

Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

7. Community Values Youth

Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.

8. Youth as Resources

Young people are given useful roles in the community.

9. Service to Others

Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.

10. Safety

Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

11. Family Boundaries

Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.

12. School Boundaries

School provides clear rules and consequences.

13. Neighborhood Boundaries

Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.

14. Adult Role Models

Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.

15. Positive Peer Influence

Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.

16. High Expectations

Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

17. Creative Activities

Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.

18. Youth Programs

Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.

19. Religious Community

Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.

20. Time at Home

Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.

21. Achievement Motivation

Young person is motivated to do well in school.

22. School Engagement

Young person is actively engaged in learning.

23. Homework

Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.

24. Bonding to School

Young person cares about her or his school.

25. Reading for Pleasure

Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

26. Caring

Young person places high value on helping other people.

27. Equality and Social Justice

Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.

28. Integrity

Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.

29. Honesty

Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”

30. Responsibility

Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.

31. Restraint

Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

32. Planning and Decision Making

Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.

33. Interpersonal Competence

Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.

34. Cultural Competence

Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.

35. Resistance Skills

Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.

36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

37. Personal Power

Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."

38. Self-Esteem

Young person reports having high self-esteem.

39. Sense of Purpose

Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."

40. Positive View of Personal Future

Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

How to Become a QYD Community™

1. Ask the **QYD Project™** to present the concept to a small group of local non-profit organizations and youth (e.g. at a meeting of a community coalition).
2. Discuss the value and feasibility of the **QYD Community™** credential, including an initial assessment of how the community would currently score, and whether at least 70% of the benchmarks can be achieved within 9 months.
3. If at least 1 community group (non-profits, municipal entities, school groups, faith-based organizations, or informal group of residents) are enthused about the **QYD Project™**, and feel it is both appropriate and feasible for their community, then they may create a local **QYD Steering Committee** (but at least 40% of the members must be 13- 19 years old).
4. The **QYD Steering Committee** will then identify and recruit a well-respected and non-controversial community leader (such as business owner, an educator, a clergy member) to champion the project, and serve as the Chair or Co-Chair.
5. The local **QYD Steering Committee** will sign and submit a non-binding Letter of Intent and Understanding to the **QCC**, which states their desire to move forward on the certification process, with the support of **QYD Project™** staff.
6. The **QCC** will review the Letter of Intent and Understanding, and within 15 days will either approve the request to begin the certification process, or recommend additional preliminary actions to be taken before beginning the formal process.
7. Upon approval of the Letter of Intent and Understanding, the **QYD Steering Committee** – with the support **QYD Project™** staff – will then prepare and submit a press release announcing the launch of the initiative, and inviting community members to attend an informational meeting.
8. The **QYD Steering Committee** – with support from **QYD Project Staff™** – will present the **QYD™** concept, benchmarks, and process at the informational meeting, at which time community members may volunteer to serve on the committee or a **QYD Benchmark Work Group**.

9. The **QYD Benchmark Work Groups** will be the work groups planning and implementing strategies to achieve each of the benchmarks necessary for **QYD™** certification.
10. Each **QYD Benchmark Work Group** will prepare a proposed work plan to achieve its assigned benchmark, which will then be implemented upon approval by the whole **QYD Steering Committee**.
11. As benchmarks are achieved, the **QYD Steering Committee** may submit documentation to the **QCC** for approval. When at least 70% of the benchmarks have been achieved, the **QYD Steering Committee** may submit the completed portfolio to the **QCC** for review, scoring, and rating.
12. Within 30 days, the **QYD Steering Committee** will be informed by the **QCC** as to whether their application to become certified as a **QYD Community™** has been approved, and at what star level. The decision by the **QCC** can be appealed in writing by the community within 30 days.
13. Upon being notified of their **QYD™** credential, the **QYD Steering Committee** will kick into celebration mode! They will organize a press conference, do TV/radio interviews, seek public proclamations from both local and state government, create new signage in the community, and post the achievement on websites and social media.

TEEN CENTER:
**DROP IN
CHANGES**

• Please call ahead for the most current information regarding drop-in hours.

• All staff will wear face coverings and gloves. We will have hand sanitizer available for all visitors.

• All visitors must wear face coverings and gloves. We will have hand sanitizer available for all visitors.

• All visitors must wear face coverings and gloves. We will have hand sanitizer available for all visitors.

STOP

DO NOT VISIT IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS:

- Cough
- Fatigue
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath

Admission Central Teens Thanks You!

Middlebury, VT

A Quality Youth Development Community™

Certified by the National QYD Project™, June 29, 2020

Technical Assistance for QYD™ Applicants

Technical assistance is available to guide and support **QYD Steering Committees** through the certification process. It is free for at least the first six targeted **QYD Community™** applicants within Vermont. This could involve up to 12 hours per month of support – by phone, video conference, or in-person as needed.

Upon request, the **QYD Project™** will also provide up to 25 free copies of this manual, as well as copies of numerous templates for various documents required by the certification process.

These include:

- A. Letter of Intent
- B. Letters of Participation, Commitment, or Confirmation
- C. Steering Committee Workbook
- D. Benchmark Work Plans
- E. Documentation for Benchmark Achievement
- F. Portfolio Format
- G. Press Releases
- H. Social Media Postings
- I. Proclamations
- J. Sample Video Clips
- K. Other Documents as Needed

All communities will receive a digital **QYD Steering Committee** Legacy Folder hosted by the **QYD Project™** in which they can keep records of their goals and actions, access benchmark resources, and connect with other **QYD Steering Committees**.

Assessment of QYD™ Effectiveness

The **QYD Project™** is currently undergoing a 2 year evaluation by the *Center for Rural Studies*, a nationally recognized research program of the University of Vermont, in order to assess the effectiveness of the project and the **10 QYD Benchmarks**, and to contribute to the broader impact quality of **QYD™**.

On July 29, 2021, an Interim Report was prepared by Kerry Daigle, CRS Research Specialist at the *Center for Rural Studies*. We have extrapolated some key takeaways.

Summary of Key Observations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Observations on Encouraging Youth Engagement: *QYD Steering Committees and community stakeholders alike expressed that the benchmarks are exceptional at engaging and empowering youth, and that the certification process is an important step to get youth involved in community initiatives outside of the school system.*

Observations on Benchmarking Process: *The benchmarking process was valued by both QYD Steering Committee members and community stakeholders. They provided a connection in-between the school systems and community in a way that one community stakeholder remarked was often missing in youth development opportunities. Community members felt that the benchmarks were attainable; no one expressed concern around achieving them.*

Observations on Steering Committee Process: *Overall, members had positive experiences on the QYD Steering Committees. They commented that the Executive Director was very accessible and helpful for programming guidance, questions related to QYD™, and providing educational materials to get started. Communities feel supported and encouraged to slow down and take the time they need through the process.*

Conclusions to Date: *In response to declining indicators for youth health and wellbeing documented through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), continued action is needed to address youth development concerns in Vermont and nationwide. The QYD Project™ is one such intervention that may address the needs of youth in an effective, innovative, and*

scalable way.

QYD Steering Committee members are invested in the benchmarking process and thinking about how it can be most meaningful to their community.

Despite the need to pivot intended operations due to Covid-19, results demonstrate that Middlebury, Brattleboro, and Essex QYD Steering Committee members had positive experiences on the Steering Committee and all communities have reached or feel confident in reaching their benchmarking goals.

Recommendations to Date: *To summarize, these include:*

- *Exploring opportunities to further reduce barriers to participation for youth.*
- *Providing opportunities for mentorship and information sharing within current and prior QYD Steering Committee members, existing QYD Steering Committee members, and across communities.*
- *Allowing and encouraging QYD Communities to pace themselves appropriately to achieve ideal youth engagement.*

The full interim report may be requested by contacting the QYD Project™.

Beyond the QYD Community™ Certification

The achievement of **QYD™** certification is not intended to be the end goal of the **QYD Project™**, but rather the starting point for promoting a cultural shift within the community in collaboration with other community partners. The initial 6-9 month timeframe for achieving at least 7 benchmarks is to foster excitement and momentum that results in a relatively quick “win” – which will motivate further and more substantive efforts.

The ultimate outcome being sought is to increase and acknowledge “substantive and sustainable” community investments that support, engage, and empower youth. This means that even when a community becomes certified by achieving 7 of 10 benchmarks, the community’s work is not done. This investment must be sustained in order to retain certification as a 1 Star **QYD Community™**. Communities can also continue their efforts and earn an additional star for each remaining benchmark achieved – up to a 4 Star **QYD Community™** with all 10 benchmarks documented.

The most substantive benchmarks, which in some cases may take longer to achieve, are the operation of an elected Community Youth Council (Benchmark #4) and having multiple non-profit boards and municipal committees embrace youth as active members (Benchmarks #6 and #9). It is the fuller engagement of youth in the life of the community – and their empowerment as valued participants in shaping the future of the community – which will be the true lasting impact of the **Quality Youth Development Project™**.

