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ABSTRACT

Boys & Girls Clubs in New York City and Boston participated in a 3-year initiative to provide and enhance services to underserved teens. Researchers collected data via surveys of club members and staff; cost surveys of club administrators; interviews, focus groups, and observations at each club; and attendance information. Results indicated that these voluntary youth-serving organizations drew in many community teens. In 1 year, Boston added from 20-100 new teen members at each club, while New York added from 201-1,100 new teens. Clubs that went beyond recruitment goals experienced difficulty meeting teens' needs. Clubs reached teens with such strategies as increased hours of activities, collaborations with outside agencies, and targeted street outreach. Programs served teens with many needs, though they found this challenging. Sustaining teens' involvement was more difficult than recruitment. Clubs retained a little over half of their target groups for at least a full year. About 40 percent of teens attended less than once a month. Program challenges included hiring appropriate staff, preventing turnover, and providing sufficient staff training. Clubs were quite successful in providing teens with emotional and instrumental support. Over three-quarters of teens reported feeling safe at their clubs. Clubs in both cities invested in improvements in their management information systems. Appendices include youth survey scales and constructs and characteristics of youth survey participants. (Contains 15 references.) (SM)

A Report on the Experiences of Boys & Girls Clubs in Boston and New York City

Increasing Opportunities for Older Youth in After-School Programs

Carla Herrera and Amy J.A. Arbreton

A Publication of Public/Private Ventures

Increasing Opportunities for Older Youth in After-School Programs

A Report on the Experiences of Boys & Girls Clubs in Boston and New York City

Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

Acknowledgments

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This report is the culmination of three years of work on the part of many individuals. The evaluation would not have been possible without the help of the teen club members who shared their club experiences with us by participating in our focus groups and youth surveys.

Staff of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston and Madison Square Boys & Girls Club provided valuable input and feedback on development of the youth survey, helped to orchestrate survey collection at their clubs, completed our staff survey and commented on early drafts of the report. In addition to the contributions made by club directors, program directors, initiative staff and other staff members at the clubs, staff in the central offices—Linda Whitlock, Bob Monahan, David Brody, Jennifer Allison, Maureen O'Sullivan and Jerry Steimel of the Boston Club, and Anthony Bandelato, Steve Melton, Herb Lowe and Cedric Dew of the New York Club—managed the initiative and helped with the administration and coordination of the evaluation activities at the clubhouses and with the coordination of several cross-club conferences. Club staff's commitment to increasing teens' access to their neighborhoods' clubhouses made the initiative possible.

We would also like to thank the P/PV staff whose contributions to the study and report were invaluable. Kathryn Furano, Corina Chavez and Lori McClung provided technical assistance to the clubs, and were integral in helping the initiative take shape. The information they gathered during their field visits and their analyses of these data helped form this report.

Lisa Gale and Zoua Vang spent many hours conducting site visits, collecting and analyzing data, developing and presenting feedback for the clubs on survey results and training sites in data collection. Jennifer Gera conducted qualitative data analyses for the report, and Marcus Gilmore conducted site visits and analyzed data collected during our focus groups. William Kandell helped to conceptualize and gather the cost study information. Zoua Vang analyzed the MIS data. Chrissy Labs and Crystal Wyatt managed and processed the incoming data, and Sarah Pepper expertly analyzed it. Karen Walker, Corina Chavez, Kathryn Furano, Lisa Gale, Rebecca Raley, Lauren Kotloff and Gary Walker reviewed drafts of the report and provided insightful comments that honed its content and structure. Jana Moore edited an early version of the report and helped to create its structure. Malish & Pagonis designed the report, and Maxine Sherman coordinated its publication and dissemination, including the copyediting.

Contents

Executive Summary

Few after-school programs have developed successful strategies for attracting large numbers of teens, especially older and harder-to-serve youth. For example, a study of three communities found that the availability of programs for and willingness of youth to attend programs showed a decline for youth aged 15 and older (Sipe and Ma, 1998). In addition, when programs do serve teens, getting them to participate on a regular basis can be challenging. In fact, even when five-day-a-week participation is mandatory, research has found that attendance among middle school youth is much lower than attendance among elementary school youth. A study of 10 after-school programs, for example, found that slightly over half of the middle school youth attended the days for which they were scheduled compared with a little over two-thirds of the elementary school youth (Grossman et al., 2002). Finally, programs struggle with sustaining teens' interest and involvement over time and need to consider the growing autonomy and changing interests of teens to successfully provide them with supports and opportunities that can help them through the challenges of adolescence. In response to the great need for teen programming, three of the eight clubhouses with Madison Square Boys & Girls Club in New York City, and all five clubhouses with Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston participated in a three-year initiative to provide and enhance services to underserved teens.

The clubs were successful: they drew large numbers of teens, involved them in a variety of activities, and provided them with emotional support, leadership opportunities and programming in two critical areas, academics and job training. However, the efforts were not without challenges.

The initiative was launched in Fall 1998, with grants from The Charles Hayden Foundation, which also provided funds to Public/Private Ventures to provide technical assistance and ongoing evaluative feedback to the clubs and to document the progress of the initiative.

What Were the Initiatives' Goals?

When the initiatives began, the Boston and New York organizations were already considering enhancing their efforts to reach underserved youth. Within the framework of developing "teen initiatives," the clubs

identified different target groups: Boston felt that *all teens* in their clubhouse communities were underserved, particularly because they had been seeing a dramatic decline in participation among their own club members when they reached 13, the age at which youth transition from preteen to teen programming. Thus, Boston focused on *retaining* 13-year-old transitioning club members but also hoped to attract new teen members. In Madison Square, staff targeted teens who were not already involved at the clubs, who were in trouble, and who might not have seen the clubs as a place for them without outreach. These different target populations helped shape the clubs' goals and strategies.

Boston's Goals

Boston set three overarching goals for this initiative:

- Attract 50 new teens at each clubhouse each of the three years of the initiative;
- Involve new and transitioning teens in club programming and retain them, particularly the 13-year-olds moving from 6- to 12-year-old programming into teen programming; and
- Provide all teens with engaging activities, support, guidance and developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills, especially in academic areas.

Madison Square's Goals

Madison Square's initiative, Project Link-Up (PLU), also focused on three central goals:

- Recruit 50 new teens who are characterized by one or more risk factors at each clubhouse each year of the initiative;
- Integrate, involve and retain these teens; and
- Provide teens with engaging activities, support, guidance and developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills, especially in employment-related areas.

Similarities in the Clubs' Approaches

Despite differences in the clubs' target groups, the clubs shared many commonalities in how they planned to achieve their goals, and ultimately shared many of the same experiences and challenges. The general approach involved increasing the time, variety, quality and intensity of programming available to teens. Specific strategies in both cities included:

- Hiring two new dedicated staff for the teen initiative;
- Increasing staff time available for recruitment;
- Tracking or monitoring youth's progress on a one-to-one basis;
- Creating collaborations with schools and other community agencies to recruit, refer and track youth's progress;
- Increasing the amount of time that teens have access to the clubs; and
- Creating more academic and job-related programming.

Did Clubs Reach Teens and Higher-Risk Youth?

The organizations involved in this initiative succeeded in drawing teens and higher-risk youth from their communities, but in two clubs these successes created their own set of challenges.

Successes

The Boston clubs added an average of 63 new teens in Year 1 and 52 new teens in Year 2; the New York clubs reached or exceeded their goal of identifying 50 PLU youth per club each year of the initiative. The clubs served many disadvantaged teens: about 80 percent of teens in New York and 60 percent in Boston reported being economically disadvantaged; and about 20 percent reported engaging in three or more risky behaviors in the last year (including 16% of Boston teens and 13% of PLU teens who reported being on probation in the past year). Reports for new

members were comparable with those of continuing members, indicating that clubs were already serving many disadvantaged teens. Many new members (particularly in New York) did, however, differ from other club members in one important way: they may not have joined the club on their own, without the additional staff and resources provided by the initiative.

Strategies. Partnerships with agencies, such as probation in New York and the Police Department and Division of Youth Services in Boston, were quite successful at helping clubs reach higher-risk teens. Many teens referred by these agencies joined the clubs to fulfill a community service requirement, which may have helped clubs retain them long enough to get them interested and invested in club programs. In New York, street outreach was very effective at reaching youth who may not have otherwise considered the club a place for them. In Boston, opening the clubs to teens earlier in the day, just as school was getting out (rather than limiting teen participation to evenings), helped them reach more youth.

Challenges

Increasing teen membership requires a parallel increase in staffing levels and supports that was not always met. One club in New York and one in Boston went well beyond their goals of recruiting 50 new youth per year without increasing the number of staff to serve them; both clubs experienced difficulty meeting teens' social needs for adult and peer support. Recruiting a manageable number of teens, given staffing and space considerations was important for providing teens with opportunities to develop positive relationships at the clubs. In part, these challenges may have resulted from the distinct and more diverse needs and interests of older youth, compared with younger youth who might have been easier to accommodate with fewer increases in resources.

Did Clubs Keep Teens Involved?

Clubs were successful in involving many teen participants, keeping them actively involved for at least a year and attracting them to a variety of activities. However, the clubs had difficulty sustaining the participation of some higher-risk youth.

Successes

A substantial portion of youth attended the clubs regularly: one-third of the teens attended once a week or more, and 60 percent attended once a month or more. In addition, youth-reported attendance increased over the three years of the initiative in New York, providing evidence that the New York clubs were able to involve teens more intensively as the initiative progressed.

In addition to regular attendance, retention rates were comparable with or better than typical retention rates in after-school programs, many of which primarily serve younger and easier to retain youth (Grossman et al., 2002). In New York, a little over half of the teens recruited for PLU were retained as *active* members for at least one full year. One year into the initiative, the Boston clubs had increased their retention rates slightly from 49 to 52 percent, so that about half of their preteens were transitioning to the teen centers.

Strategies. To increase involvement and retention, clubs developed mechanisms to orient new teens to the clubs and help preteens feel more comfortable making the transition from youth to teen programming. The New York clubs also refined their outreach strategies to focus on teens who would most likely benefit by regular participation.

Challenges

Clubs experienced some difficulty reaching and retaining higher-risk youth. After the first year of the initiative, New York expanded its risk criteria for PLU eligibility to include a broader range of youth, in part because they had expended a lot of effort to retain some higher-risk youth who were not interested in the club, taking time away from other teens who were motivated to participate. In Boston, clubs had difficulty reaching, serving and finding jobs for teens involved in a job-training program that targeted very specific groups of high-risk youth, such as teen parents and adjudicated youth.

Did These Initiatives Provide Teens With Adult Support?

Staff were very successful in providing teens with high levels of adult support, which practitioners and researchers agree is related to positive outcomes for youth. But the clubs grappled with staff turnover, which had negative implications for teens.

Successes

About 80 percent of teens reported the availability of a caring and helpful adult staff member at the club; 77 percent reported that at least one adult knew how they were doing in school; and 80 percent knew at least one adult who could help them find a job.

Strategies. The clubs developed tracking and case management systems that helped provide adult support to teens. In Boston, the teen education advocate provided academic tracking for teens, visiting schools often and, in some cases, requiring teens to share report cards. Clubs also created forms for tracking some youth's participation in club activities.

New York used a formalized case management approach with guidance specialists identifying PLU youth's interests and needs, and documenting how staff linked them with services within and outside of the clubs. This approach and added attention provided by an outreach worker contributed to PLU teens' reports of frequent communication with staff about personal issues and high levels of confidentiality in these discussions.

Challenges

Case management is expensive and time consuming—an entire full-time position was dedicated to case management in each of the New York clubs. In addition, the approach can serve only a limited number of youth before more staff are needed; guidance specialists in New York became overwhelmed with their growing caseloads in later years of the initiative, leading to a drop in the number of teens reporting adult support.

Staff turnover occurred in all but two clubs and had important ramifications: youth from clubs with no turnover reported relatively high levels of supports and opportunities, while youth from clubs with excessive turnover reported fewer positive benefits from club participation.

Did Clubs Provide Programming that Met Teens' Needs and Interests?

The clubs developed successful programs in two areas that addressed teens' interests and needs: academics and job training. Teens also found ample leadership opportunities at the clubs, an important factor for youth development. But creating programming that youth found interesting was difficult for staff.

Successes

Youth reported wanting help in academics and job-related areas and reported receiving benefits in line with these focuses. About 70 percent of youth across all clubs said staff members helped them find employment, and about 75 percent reported that the clubs helped them improve their academic performance.

Teens also reported getting involved in fairly high numbers of leadership opportunities, which included leading a sports team, tutoring, helping set rules and participating in community service. More than 80 percent said they experienced at least one leadership opportunity at the club in the last year, and about half said they experienced five or more opportunities.

The clubs were also successful in running some programs targeting higher-risk youth. Several offered leadership training and opportunities and provided participants with a stipend—important motivating factors for these youth. Job-readiness training in both cities also often targeted higher-risk youth, many of whom were attracted to opportunities that could help them get a job.

Strategies. Teens thought academic benefits resulted from programs, such as tutoring and homework assistance, that were available at the clubs every day and through staff's success in changing their attitude toward school. Teens felt close to the staff and were open to accepting academic help from them. Boston clubs also required teens to share their report cards with staff or devote an hour every day to homework;

teens initially resisted the requirements, but later accepted them and reported academic benefits.

Programs that appeared the most attractive to higher-risk teens offered stipends, leadership and job-training opportunities.

Challenges

Staff noted the difficulty of developing programs that engaged teens. About half of the teens agreed that the clubs provided them with interesting and engaging activities, but the most frequently mentioned barrier to club participation was a lack of interesting, age-appropriate activities. These findings confirm staff's reports of the difficulty of creating programming for this age group, and suggest that this is an important area for continued growth.

What Did the Initiatives Cost?

Not including expenses for in-kind support, such as space, amenities and management infrastructure, a rough estimated annual cost of serving teens in Boston's initiative was about $499 per youth, whereas the estimated cost of serving teens in New York's PLU program was about $2,178. The costs reflect the different focuses of the two initiatives: the Boston clubs used their funds to support services for all teens; New York's funds supported extensive outreach to more youth than ultimately became part of the project (but did become club members) and an intensive case management approach used with a small group of teens.

Are the Initiatives Sustainable?

Both organizations are trying to sustain their work. After the first year of the initiative, Boston established a mechanism to identify funds that would make the new staff positions part of their core teen program. In New York, PLU was an add-on program, designed to serve a specific group of teens. Although the New York clubs see the services provided by PLU as critical to reaching this group, financed staff positions did not become a part of the clubs' core teen program. To sustain the initiative, New York will continue to seek grants to support PLU staff and services.

Clubs in both cities also underwent structural and attitudinal changes that will last beyond the initiatives:

- The clubs added and enhanced job-related programming and educational services;
- All three New York sites established teen centers by the end of the initiative;
- Boston clubs established preteen transition centers;
- Boston teens got increased access to other areas of the club;
- Staff increased their sensitivity to the need for services for teens and higher-risk youth; and
- Staff built a strong recognition of the need for programming that appeals to older youth.

Although clubs met with challenges as they sought to attract and retain teens from their communities over the course of this three-year initiative, they ultimately found many successful mechanisms for working with this harder-to-serve population of youth. The changes in club practices and populations served, and their effects on teens' club experiences, provide lessons for other community agencies trying to achieve similar goals for this frequently underserved population of youth. Overall, the findings from this study suggest that investing in existing voluntary youth-serving organizations, like Boys & Girls Clubs, can be an effective way to attract teens and provide them with supports and opportunities that can make a difference in their lives.

I. Introduction

Few programs offer activities for teens; and teens stop taking advantage of the few programs that do exist as they grow older (Sipe and Ma, 1998; Gambone and Arbreton, 1997). For some teens, a decline in participation indicates the important transition to after-school work. However, for a large number of teenagers, this decline represents an increase in the amount of time spent hanging out with friends in unsupervised settings and, in many cases, engaging in risky and delinquent behaviors. Indeed, high school is a time when youth's engagement in risk activities rises: over 50 percent of high school students experiment with alcohol, 33 percent are drinking on a somewhat regular basis, and 26 percent are experimenting with marijuana (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1998). Further, several studies have documented that teen criminal activity primarily occurs during the after-school hours, particularly from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999).

Why Are Teens Underserved?

Teens are a challenging population to serve for several reasons:

- Teens are not necessarily motivated to seek out positive after-school alternatives because they enjoy simply hanging out with peers;
- Although many high schools offer a range of extracurricular activities, they tend to attract students who are at least moderately engaged in school. For those teens who are not engaged in school, there are few opportunities; and
- Preparing teens for the world of work and higher education and addressing risk factors that are less common in younger youth may require special programming and staff sensitive to these needs.

What Can Be Done?

As a first step, a successful teen initiative needs to be able to attract teens. Additionally, successful teen initiatives should offer engaging activities while at the same time providing teens with key developmental opportunities that benefit them, such as supportive

adults and the opportunity to spend time in a safe space (e.g., Lerner, 1995; Tierney and Grossman, 1995; Slavin, 1991). And programs that serve teens with specific needs must find ways to address those needs while maintaining youth's interest. For these reasons, directed outreach, recruitment and retention efforts may be critical to reaching teens and sustaining their involvement.

This report documents the process that Boys & Girls Clubs in New York and Boston initiated to increase their teen membership and services. It describes how existing youth-serving organizations bolstered their teen membership by increasing staffing, adjusting programming to match youth's needs and interests, and relying on resources and partnerships outside of the clubhouses.

The Initiative

As a voluntary youth-serving organization with more than a hundred years of experience serving youth ages 6 to 18, Boys & Girls Clubs emerged early on as a good organization to test new strategies for reaching and retaining teens. The Boys & Girls Clubs' strong organizational capacity and extensive experience in designing and implementing youth development programming provided a model setting in which to document successful approaches and challenges to serving teens that could inform a larger audience.

The Boys & Girls Clubs' setting provided the initiatives with many existing capacities, including:

- Clubhouses (i.e., their own space) located in impoverished urban areas with gyms, pools and other existing facilities that could be used for programming;
- A long history of experience working with youth of all ages;
- Administrative support and guidance from a central office;
- Materials, curriculum and the expertise of existing staff; and
- Pre-established relationships and name recognition with families and agencies in the community.

Clubhouses that Participated in the Initiative

New York City:

- Carey Gardens Clubhouse
- Flatbush Clubhouse
- Navy Yard Clubhouse

Boston:

- Ansin Youth Center/Charlestown Clubhouse
- George Robert White Youth Development Center/Blue Hill Clubhouse
- Gerald and Darlene Jordan Boys & Girls Club/Chelsea Clubhouse
- Roxbury Clubhouse
- South Boston Clubhouse

Three of the eight clubhouses with Madison Square Boys & Girls Club in New York City, and all five clubhouses with Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston participated in the three-year initiative. The initiative was launched in Fall 1998, with grants from The Charles Hayden Foundation. Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) also received funding from the foundation to provide technical assistance and ongoing evaluative feedback to the clubs and to document the progress of the initiative as it unfolded.

The Boston and New York organizations were already considering enhancing their efforts to reach underserved youth and were interested in stretching their capacities to better serve their communities. Within the framework of developing "teen initiatives," the clubs identified different target groups: Boston felt that *all teens* in their clubhouse communities were underserved, particularly because they had been seeing a dramatic decline in participation among their own club members when they reached 13, the age at which youth transition from preteen to teen programming. Thus, Boston focused on *retaining* 13-year-old transitioning club members but also hoped to engage new teen members. In Madison Square, staff

targeted teens who were not already involved at the clubs, who were in trouble, and who might not have seen the clubs as a place for them without outreach. These different target populations helped shape the clubs' goals and strategies.

Boston's Goals

Before the initiative, the board and administrative staff of Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston conducted a "program study" that evaluated its organizational capacity. They found that they were so successful in reaching 6- to 12-year-olds that cramped clubhouses had to limit teen access to evening hours, and few new teens were coming. The clubs were also losing young teens who had regularly attended preteen programs. Boston set three goals for this initiative:[1]

- Attract 50 new teens at each clubhouse each of the three years of the initiative;
- Involve teens in club programming and retain them, particularly the 13-year-olds moving from 6- to 12-year-old programming into teen programming; and
- Provide all teens with engaging activities, support, guidance and developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills, especially in academic areas.

Madison Square's Goals

Madison Square's initiative was primarily focused on reaching teens outside of the clubs with more significant risk factors than those generally served by the clubs, and integrating these youth into the clubs or linking them to outside services. The overarching goals of the Project Link-Up (PLU) program were to:

- Recruit 50 new teens characterized by one or more risk factors at each clubhouse each year of the initiative;
- Integrate, involve and retain these teens; and
- Provide teens with engaging activities, support, guidance and developmentally appropriate knowledge and skills, especially in employment-related areas.

P/PV's Goals

P/PV had five main goals:

- Document the initiatives as they unfolded;
- Provide technical assistance based on P/PV's experiences with other initiatives in the youth development field;
- Help clubs create or append their management information systems;
- Provide ongoing feedback to clubs about the quality of programming and support they were providing teens, based on feedback from teen club members; and
- Assess the cost of the initiative for clubs and other programs interested in replication.

Similarities in the Clubs' Approaches

Despite differences in their target groups, the clubs shared many commonalities in how they planned to achieve their goals, and ultimately shared similar experiences and challenges. The overarching approach involved increasing the time, variety, quality and intensity of programming available to teens. Specific strategies in both cities included:

- Hiring two new staff dedicated to serving teens;
- Increasing staff time available for recruitment;
- Tracking or monitoring youth's progress on a one-to-one basis;
- Creating collaborations with schools and other community agencies to recruit, refer and track youth's progress;
- Increasing the amount of time that teens have access to the clubs; and
- Creating more academic and job-related programming.

Overview of Research Questions

This report describes the efforts that Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston and Madison Square Boys & Girls Club undertook to reach and retain teens, and the effect these efforts had on youth's experiences at the clubs. We also describe the challenges the clubs faced and the implications their experiences have for other initiatives designed to improve the lives of teens. A companion field report for practitioners describes in more detail best practices garnered from the initiative in recruiting, serving and retaining teens.

Because clubs in New York and Boston experienced similar successes and challenges, we present many of the findings jointly. In cases where strategies differed or the results of the strategies led to different experiences by youth, we describe the clubs separately.

The current report answers the following questions:

- Did clubs reach their outreach and retention goals? What implications did increasing teen membership have on peer interactions at the club?
- Did the clubs provide teens with adult support and guidance? What strategies did staff use to strengthen this support?
- Did clubs develop programming that engaged and sustained the interest of teens? Did teens participate in a wide variety of activities? Did programming provide club members with knowledge and skills in developmentally appropriate areas?
- How much did these efforts cost? To what extent are they sustainable?

Research Methodology[2]

As clubs set forth on their ambitious agendas, it became important to identify which strategies were working and which were not. P/PV also wanted to provide feedback to the clubs about whom they were reaching and the interests and needs of these teens to help staff create the best possible programs.

P/PV used several data collection strategies. Site visits were conducted before the initiative started. Field officers and researchers also visited the clubhouses several times a year to interview staff members. Staff completed surveys at the beginning of the initiative and during the last year, and teens completed surveys in the spring of each year. P/PV researchers also conducted focus groups with teens midway through the three-year initiative. Each club instituted an attendance tracking system and the data were sent to P/PV for analysis. Finally, transcripts of workshops and conferences were kept to track progress and challenges.

Organization of the Report

Chapter II describes whom the initiatives reached, the strategies used to reach the youth and the implications of membership increases for teen club members. Chapter III discusses teens' reports of adult support and the strategies clubs used to provide this support. Chapter IV describes the clubs' efforts to provide interesting, engaging and skill-building activities for teens. Chapter V reports the costs of the initiatives and clubs' plans to sustain them. Finally, Chapter VI summarizes what these findings mean for practitioners and policymakers interested in bolstering services for teens.

II. Were Clubs Able to Reach and Retain Teens?

To achieve their goals for the teen initiative, the clubs' first major hurdle was to increase the number of teens attending the clubs. Although both organizations had previously reached some teens in their communities, both knew that there were many who had not been reached and could benefit from their services. Staff also recognized that to make positive contributions to teens' lives, they needed to keep teens involved long enough and often enough to provide them with supports and experiences that foster healthy development.

This chapter discusses the extent to which the clubs achieved their outreach and retention goals. We address the following questions: Did clubs reach their membership goals? Whom did they reach? How did they reach them? Were they able to involve and retain these youth once they were recruited? And, what implications did these efforts have for teens' interactions with their peer club members?

Did Clubs Reach Their Membership Goals?

The clubs reached or exceeded their membership goals. New York reported enrolling at least 50 teens annually in PLU at each club. To reach these teens, who needed to meet certain criteria,[3] staff recruited an additional 100 to 150 new teens per club, leading to large membership increases. In Year 3, each New York club added from 201 to 1,100 new teens in addition to their PLU recruits.[4] The large increase was especially noticeable at the smallest New York club, where total membership increased almost 80 percent in three years, from 818 members to 1,448.

Although outreach was not Boston's central goal, the Boston clubs also drew many new teen members, averaging 63 new club members in Year 1 and 52 in Year 2.[5]

But, these membership increases brought challenges. Staff in both cities welcomed these increases in membership, but clubs were limited in the number of teens they could serve, both in terms of staff available to work with the youth and in the amount of space they could devote to teens. Consequently, several clubs began to develop strategies to accommodate the new members. Because of overcrowding, one

Boston club capped teen membership twice during the initiative, and a New York club began opening the teen center earlier in the day. The smallest clubs tried to overcome this challenge by holding activities outside of the club and collaborating with community agencies to provide teens with programming in other settings.

Whom Did the Clubs Reach?

Boston was most successful at reaching younger teens, while New York reached many older teens. In Boston, 83 percent of new teen members were between 12 and 15 years old, with only 17 percent between 16 and 18 years old (see Figure 1).[6] In contrast, over a third of PLU teens in New York were 16 to 18 (see Figure 2)—a striking accomplishment given that teen club members outside of the program were younger, on average. Because older teens are more likely than younger teens to engage in a number of risk behaviors, recruiting older teens was in line with the initiative's goals to reach higher-risk youth.[7]

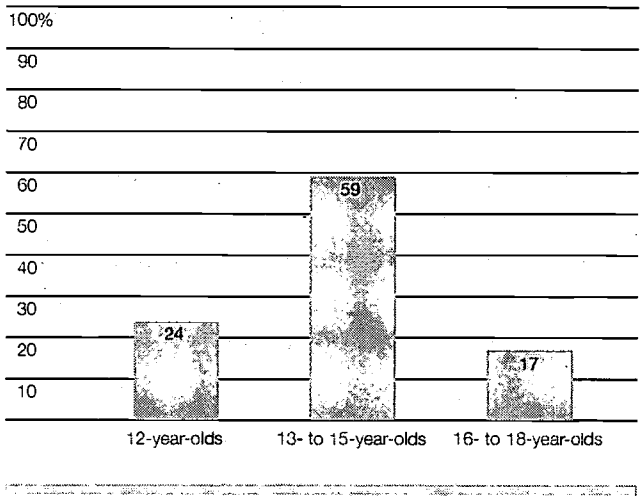
Reflecting the gender characteristics of their current membership, clubs in both cities recruited more boys than girls. In Year 3, 60 percent of Boston recruits and 56 percent of PLU recruits were male.[8]

Several factors contribute to these findings in New York. Most of the outreach workers were young men, which may have affected their ability to draw in teen girls. A stronger focus on boys also fit with the initiative's goals: males in this study were more likely to engage in the specific risk behaviors targeted in PLU, such as having been arrested, carrying a weapon or using drugs.[9] Staff may have recruited more girls if targeted risk factors had included those more commonly seen in girls.

The clubs that reported the most success in attracting girls made concerted efforts to reach girls by creating targeted programming (discussed in chapter IV) and by hiring female staff.

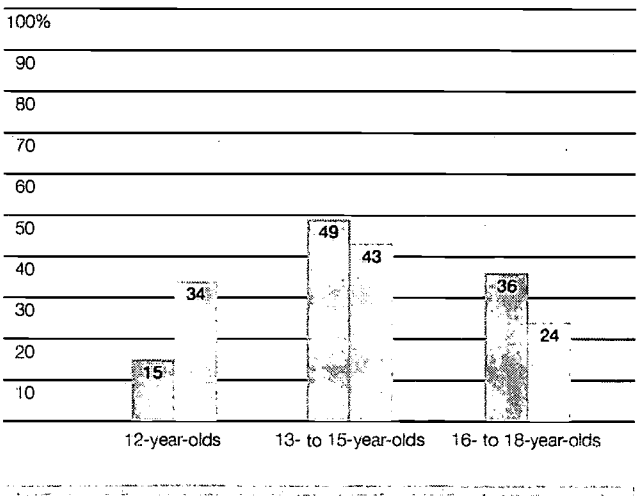
The clubs reached many "higher-risk" teens. Although the Boston clubs did not make special efforts to attract higher-risk teens, new and continuing Boston teens were characterized by several risk factors. In Year 3, about a third of teens taking the

Figure 1:
Age of New Teen Members in Boston



Note: Each bar reflects the percentage of youth representing each age group. Proportions were derived from MIS data for Years 1 and 2.

Figure 2:
Age of New Teen Members in New York



Note: Each bar reflects the percentage of youth representing each age group. Proportions were derived from MIS data for Year 3.

Defining Risk

In this study, we define "risk" as teens' engagement in risky behaviors, lack of success in or connection with positive activities, or exposure to environments that put them at risk for future problems. Risk was assessed in 12 areas: seven were risky behaviors; three were individual risk factors; and two were environmental risk factors. Youth's total risk score was the number of these 12 areas in which they reported having risk, with unprotected sexual intercourse and probation/jail weighted slightly more than 1.0 in the final total. Higher-risk teens reported risk in more areas than lower-risk teens.

Risky Behavior (engaged in during the last year):

- **Alcohol/Marijuana Use**: Youth smoked marijuana or got drunk.
- **Carrying a Weapon**: Youth carried a weapon or something intended to be used as a weapon.
- **Sexual Activity**: Youth had sexual intercourse or unprotected sexual intercourse in the last year.
- **Theft**: Youth stole something worth more than $50.
- **Arrest**: Youth was arrested and had to go to court.
- **Drug Use**: Youth used other drugs to get high.
- **Probation/Jail**: Youth went to jail, juvenile home, was sent away by the court or was on probation.

Individual Risk Factors:

- **Lack of Connections with Positive Activities**: Youth has not played sports on a school team or league; gone to religious services; engaged in non-athletic, after-school activities at school; or gone to a non-Boys & Girls Club after-school program in the last month.
- **Low Future Expectations**: Youth does not expect to graduate from high school.
- **Academic**: Youth received primarily Es and Fs, Ds, or Cs and Ds on last report card; skipped one or more days of school in the last month (without being sick or having a holiday); or repeated a grade.

At-Risk Environments:

- **Economic**: Youth receives free or reduced-price lunch at school or lives in public housing.
- **Single-Parent Family**: Youth does not live with both a male and female guardian or (in a small minority of cases) lives with foster parents.

P/PV survey[10] reported being both economically disadvantaged *and* coming from a single-parent home[11] (with 60% reporting economic disadvantage), while about half reported being academically at risk (see Table 1 and Figure 3). And, 25 percent of Boston teens had engaged in three or more risky behaviors in the year prior to our survey (see box on this page for definitions). New and continuing club members reported similar levels of risk.[12]

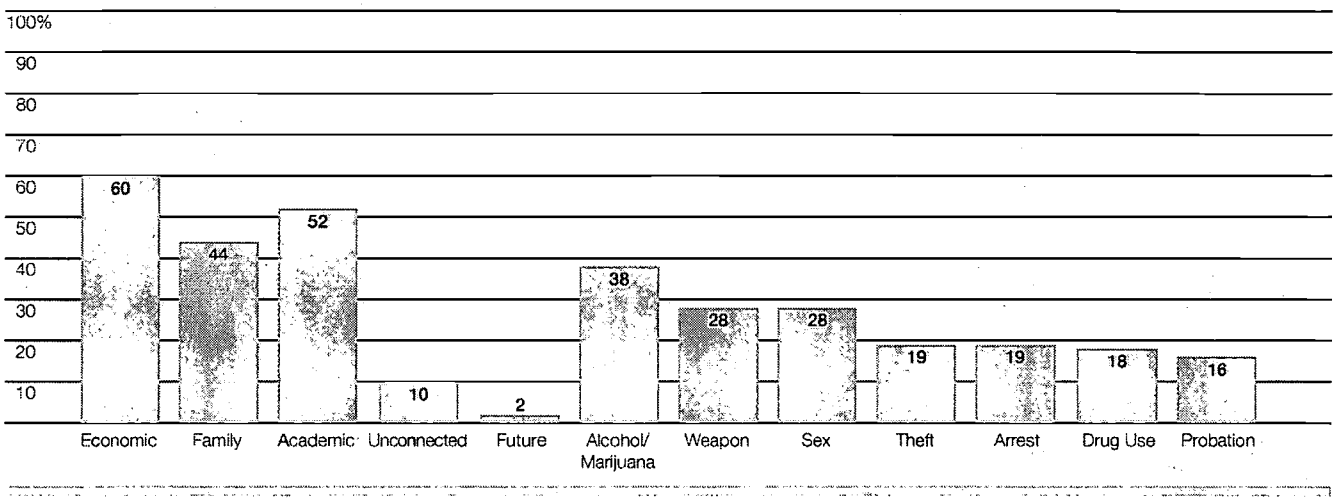
In New York, responses to our youth survey indicate that the clubs achieved their goal of recruiting youth who were characterized by risk. In Year 3, about half of PLU teens reported both being economically disadvantaged and coming from a single-parent home (with 80% reporting economic disadvantage), while close to 20 percent reported engaging in three or more risky behaviors in the previous year. Compared with other New York club members, PLU teens were more likely to report being at risk in 6 of 12 areas, and reported having more risk factors overall (see Table 1 and Figure 4).[13] These differences were only evident, however, in Year 2.

How Did the Clubs Reach Teens?

To achieve these increases in membership, staff made access to the clubs easier for teens, strengthened collaborations with other agencies and, in New York, used targeted street outreach.

Clubs increased the hours of teen activities. To enable teens to participate in club activities more easily and more often, Boston significantly expanded their hours for teens, opening for teens at 2 p.m. instead of 6 p.m. on weekdays while maintaining their 9 p.m. closing time. Staff felt their previous hours—limited to evenings for teens—left too much time for teens to get involved in other activities (good or bad) between the time when school was dismissed and the time clubs opened. To provide more space and staff time for teens, all Boston clubs also stopped allowing membership for 6-year-olds not enrolled in the first grade, and some froze enrollment of 6- to 12-year-olds and limited how late 6- and 7-year-olds could stay at the club. In addition, at least two Boston clubs extended their summer hours by opening to teens in the late afternoon and providing them with additional programming.

Figure 3:
Risk Characteristics of Boston Teens



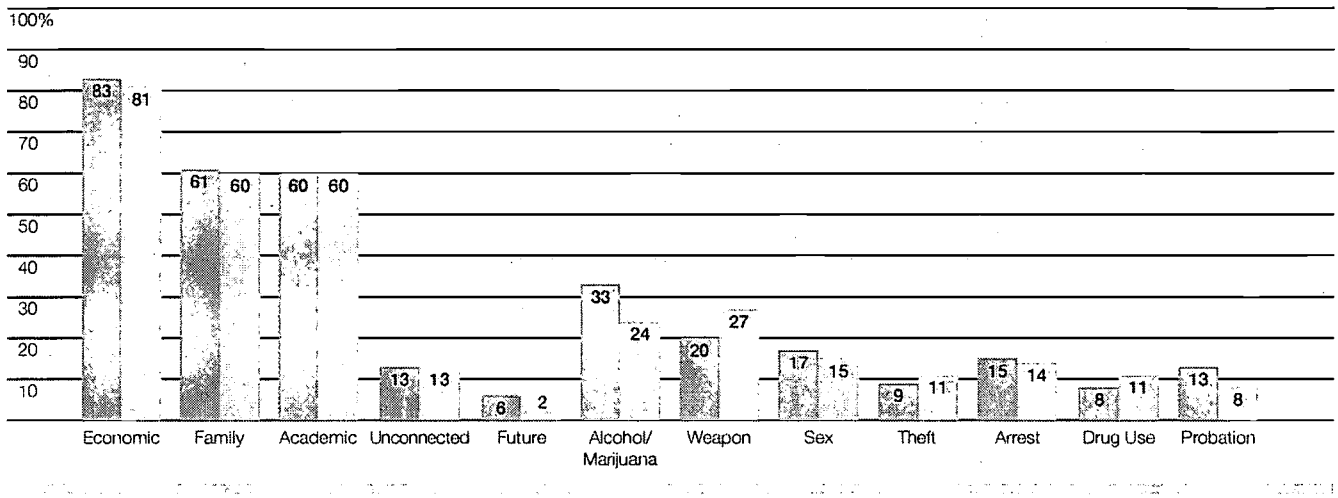
Note: Each bar reflects the percentage of youth reporting the risk factor in our Year 3 survey.

Table 1:
Risk Factors

Risk Type	New York PLU	New York Non-PLU	Boston
Environmental Risk Factors			
Youth reporting 1 or more	91%	90%	72%
Youth reporting 2	49%	48%	31%
Individual Risk Factors			
Youth reporting 1 or more	61%	63%	57%
Youth reporting 2 or more	12%	11%	7%
High-Risk Behaviors			
Youth reporting 1 or more	54%	51%	48%
Youth reporting 3 or more	19%	16%	25%
Youth reporting 6 or more	6%	4%	10%
Combined Risk Factors			
Youth reporting 1 or more	99%	96%	92%
Youth reporting 3 or more	66%	59%	52%
Youth reporting 6 or more	17%	14%	18%

Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of youth reporting risk factors in our Year 3 survey.

Figure 4:
Risk Characteristics of New York Teens



Note: Each bar reflects the percentage of youth reporting the risk factor in our Year 3 survey.

New York increased access to summer programming. As the initiative got under way, staff at the clubs, which had previously limited summer activities for teens to the junior staff program, thought that summer provided a valuable opportunity to reach teens from neighborhoods with limited summer resources. As a result, core area program staff began working with teens during summer evenings. Activities included field trips, baseball, sleepovers, Keystone, parties, camps, job placement and swimming. Clubs also hosted special summer events, such as tournaments and dances, and gave away promotional products to attract youth. New York had already been open in the afternoons during the school year, but they extended their operating hours by 30 minutes to an hour, opening from 3 p.m. to 9:30 or 10 p.m. on weekdays and from noon until 6 p.m. on Saturday.

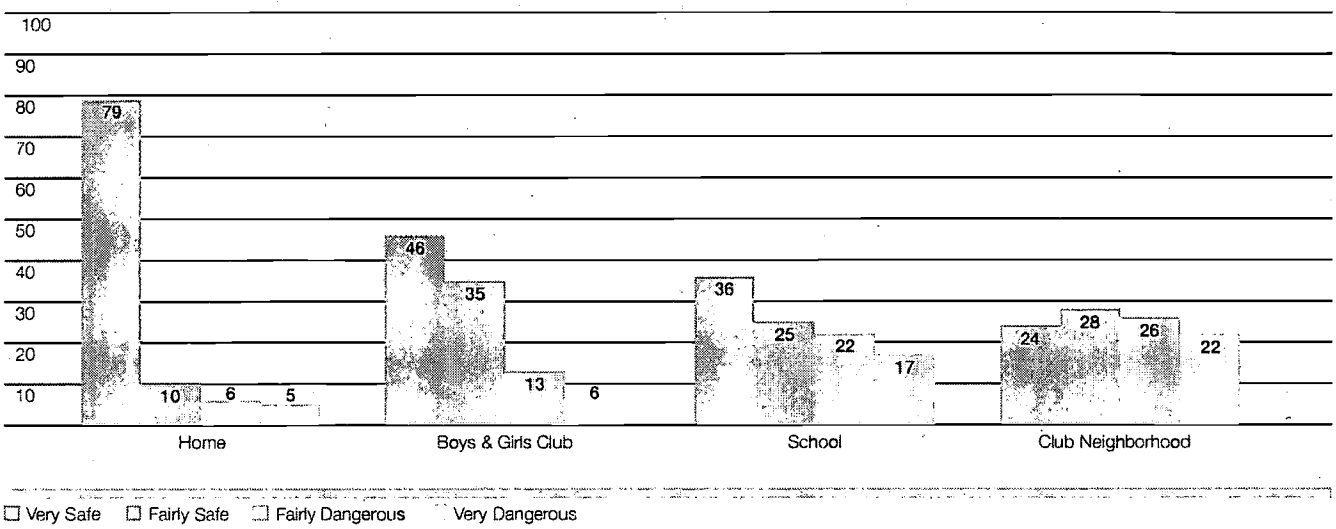
Affiliations with outside organizations led to referrals. Another major recruitment strategy used successfully in both cities was developing collaborations with outside organizations. Although staff had to devote time to creating and sustaining these partnerships, they helped the clubs reach many teens, particularly higher-risk teens.

Schools were the most common collaborative partners in Boston and were also fairly common in New York. Several clubs created or strengthened partnerships with schools, often visiting or communicating with school staff. Staff posted fliers on school campuses and took referrals from school counselors, principals, campus police officers and teachers. This was particularly true in Boston, where "teen education advocates" worked with schools to track teens' academic progress and recruit new members.

Two clubs in New York had close links with local schools in which staff members were coaches, giving the clubs large groups of potential recruits and providing a source of activities for club members. In one club, youth went to basketball games at the school; in the second, basketball tournaments were held at the club for the entire school district, and all participating teens became club members.

Clubs also had affiliations with other organizations that helped them recruit higher-risk teens, although some of these collaborations were started independently of the initiative. Three Boston clubs had formal affiliations with the Boston Police Department through the Youth Service Providers Network (YSPN). This partnership enabled club staff and

Figure 5:
Teens' Feelings of Safety in Different Places



Note: Each bar reflects the percentage of youth taking our Year 3 survey, reporting that they felt the specified level of safety in each different setting.

social workers based at the Police Department to work together to recruit and serve youth referred by police officers. One club also worked with the Division of Youth Services (DYS) to help teens move back into the community after an arrest. Another received several referrals from a behavioral program for youth at a local hospital.

All three New York clubs had successful affiliations with the Department of Probation, which allowed teens to fulfill their community service requirement through club participation. The project coordinator considered this referral source the most productive, with about a third of the referrals at one club coming from the Corrections Department. Other affiliations in New York included a settlement house, a homeless shelter and other community organizations serving families and youth.

New York clubs reached many teens through street outreach. Street outreach was a central component of New York's recruitment, and staff reported that it was their most successful strategy. Outreach workers hired for the initiative spent most of their time on

Feelings of Safety In and Around the Club

By offering a well-supervised setting for positive youth interaction, Boys & Girls Clubs become trusted, safe havens for youth. The clubs wanted to ensure that increases in the numbers of older, potentially higher-risk, teen members did not detract from youth's feelings of safety. Our data suggest that the clubs were successful in these efforts; perceptions of safety were fairly high, and these levels did not decrease over time.

When asked about safety in different places where they spend time, teens reported feeling safest at home, with 89 percent feeling fairly or very safe (see Figure 5). After youth's home, youth felt safest at the club, with over 80 percent reporting feeling safe there. Youth's schools were rated less safe, with only about 60 percent of teens reporting feeling safe. The club neighborhood was rated as least safe, with only about half feeling safe.

In Boston, youth reported the highest levels of safety at the two clubs with the largest areas devoted to teens. These clubs probably faced fewer problems with crowding and staff could more easily supervise youth activities.

Reports of safety were higher for average- than for higher-risk youth.

the streets, at youth hangouts, in schools and in youth's homes, focusing their efforts on different areas depending on the community and the age group they were interested in recruiting. Successful strategies included:

- Communicating and relating with teens "on their level";
- Recruiting from nontraditional places where teens congregate, such as schools, housing developments and teen "hot spots," like game rooms and parks;
- Developing relationships with community agencies that serve teens with targeted characteristics; and
- Developing relationships with families in the community.

But staff reported several challenges in these efforts. For example, one outreach worker found recruiting teens from outside the immediate community difficult because teens feared crossing boundaries into neighboring housing developments. He also reported that recruiting 13- to 15-year-olds was easy, but older teens showed little interest, saying they did not want to be around the younger club members. Older teens were also attracted to athletic and dance programs, and his club did not have a large gym or multipurpose room.

Developing strategies to overcome challenges like these took time. Outreach workers in the first year of the initiative did not have extensive experience in recruiting teens, and because street outreach was not a part of the clubs' traditional approach to recruitment, they did not have a standard "model" to follow. The program was also still developing and defining its focus. Over the course of the initiative, the project coordinator reported that outreach experience and more clearly defined goals enabled the outreach workers to strengthen their understanding of effective outreach strategies, and to learn how to target teens who were more receptive to their efforts (see box on retention strategies on page 12).

To What Extent Were the Clubs Able to Retain Teens?

To assess the clubs' ability to sustain teens' involvement, we focused on youth's frequency of attendance and retention rates. Because Boston's primary goal was to increase preteen retention rates, we report their success in retaining these young people. Similarly, we report New York's ability to retain only teens involved in PLU.

About 60 percent of the clubs' targeted groups attended the clubs once a month or more (with a third of them attending once or more a week). In Boston, management information system (MIS) data suggest that the largest proportions of teens attended either less than once a month (41%) or once or more a week (37%), with about a quarter (23%) attending one to three times a month.

MIS data from Year 3 suggest that PLU teens attended the clubs slightly more often than teens outside of the program: like teens in Boston, 40 percent attended less than once a month (compared with 55% of their peers); and about a third (compared with 20% of their peers) attended once or more a week. This finding is surprising given the initiative's focus on recruiting "hard-to-reach" teens who probably would not have come to the clubs on their own: the clubs were able not only to involve these youth but to achieve attendance rates which surpassed those of other teen club members.[14]

We also found differences between groups of teens in their self-reported attendance. In both cities, higher-risk youth reported attending less frequently than their peers.[15] And, in Boston, older teens reported attending less frequently than younger teens. This age difference is in line with expectations mentioned by staff that teens *should* attend less frequently as they get older to allow time for other positive activities, especially jobs. In Boston, older teens were, in fact, more likely than younger teens to be connected to positive activities outside of the club, suggesting that their lower attendance rates did not reflect a failure by the clubs, but rather, allowed them to take advantage of other positive opportunities in their communities.

How Did Clubs Try to Ensure Active Teen Participation and Retention?

To help ensure active participation and retention, clubs used three strategies:

Clubs developed or improved orientation efforts. Orientation was an important component of PLU, because most PLU youth were new to the clubs and unlikely to continue if they did not engage in activities and establish relationships with youth and adults. PLU staff met individually with recruited teens to determine whether the club could meet their needs and whether they met criteria required for PLU participation. Teens who were not eligible were introduced to staff and involved in regular club programming. Those eligible for PLU were given a tour of the club and introduced to club members and program staff in areas of interest to them. PLU staff then checked on them regularly to ensure that things were going well.

In Boston, moving into teen programming was a significant change for young teens—presenting them with a new and older peer group and a change in activities, staffing and structure. Instead of looking forward to teen programming, many preteens were hesitant about making the transition and, in fact, the clubs were losing many of these youth. To help ease this transition, staff introduced transitioning (and new) teens to program areas and activity options, took them on a tour of the teen center and explained club rules. In Year 3, three clubs also developed "preteen" programs, opening the teen centers to preteens in the early afternoon to allow younger members to interact with small groups of older teens.

The Boston clubs increased teens' access to club areas outside of the teen center. All five Boston clubs had separate rooms or "centers" for teens at the start of the initiative. When younger youth were in the club, teens were generally restricted to the teen centers. Some Boston staff worried that this confined teens and prevented them from accessing limited club resources. To address these concerns, the Boston clubs began using shifting schedules and increasing the amount of time that teens had access to other areas of the club, such as the gym, that were previously closed to teens earlier in the day.

The New York clubs refined their outreach strategies. New York staff reported that their early outreach efforts primarily focused on recruiting large numbers of teens, many of whom did not stay on as members. In Year 2, staff began to develop strategies to recruit teens who would be more likely to continue participation. New York staff found several strategies helpful in these efforts:

- Communicating frequently with club staff to learn what the club offers and provide them with feedback on what teens want from the club;
- Letting teens know what the club can and cannot provide *before* recruiting them;
- Ensuring that teens were open to club experiences prior to recruitment;
- Targeting recruitment to youth with characteristics that fit the goals of the program;
- Targeting youth who live close to the club and can easily participate; and
- Recruiting youth in pairs or very small groups—teens recruited in pairs are likely to continue participation because they have a social connection at the club. Youth in larger groups are easy to recruit, but if one group member stops coming, the entire group is likely to quit.

The clubs also changed some program parameters in Year 2 to help them reach teens who had risk factors, but who might be more receptive to their efforts and more likely to benefit by regular participation. The changes involved:

- Altering the definition of "risk"—the term was broadened to include teens experiencing negative peer pressure, youth in unhealthy relationships, teens disengaged from other positive activities and those who lacked employment skills. Staff considered these teens likely to engage in risky behavior in the future and, thus, in need of their services; and
- Adding a "waiting period"—during Year 1, some PLU teens stopped coming shortly after recruitment. In Year 2, the clubs began providing youth with PLU services only after they returned twice. Staff considered this crucial in focusing their efforts on serving teens most likely to benefit from continued participation.

Although we cannot estimate the extent to which these three strategies succeeded in improving participation and retention, comments from staff suggest that these efforts may have been successful, particularly later in the initiative.

Important differences in attendance emerged over time, providing some evidence that the New York clubs were able to involve teens more intensively as the initiative progressed. In Boston, attendance dipped from Year 1 to Year 2, but in Year 3 returned to Year 1 levels. In New York, teens in Year 3 reported more frequent attendance than teens in both Years 1 and 2.

Clubs retained a little over half of their targeted groups. Of the 300 youth who were recruited into New York's PLU program during the first two years of the initiative (50 per club each year), a little more than half (58%) were still active club members by the end of Year 2. Twenty-one percent stopped coming because they moved from the area, and 21 percent stopped coming because they lost interest or felt the club no longer met their needs.[16]

In Boston, about 49 percent of 12-year-olds returned as 13-year-olds the year prior to the initiative.[17] The data show that the clubs were able to retain only slightly larger *proportions* of preteens one year into the initiative: of those 12-year-olds in Year 1, 52 percent returned in Year 2. However, because the clubs increased the number of 12-year-olds they served, the absolute number of youth they retained increased from about 39 13-year-olds per club prior to the initiative, to about 47 in Year 2 (a 21% increase). Thus, in line with their initiative goals, the Boston clubs were able to increase their membership of 13-year-olds, but this resulted primarily from increases in their preteen membership, rather than from significant improvements in their ability to retain 12-year-olds. We do not have data to examine Year 2 to 3 or beyond.

What Were the Implications of Increases in Teen Membership?

An important concern, given these increases in membership, is that crowded clubs and the presence of unfamiliar peers, many of whom had engaged in risky behaviors, might negatively influence teens' perceptions of peer relationships at the club.

To assess the level of peer support perceived by teens, we asked teen survey participants how many peer club members they could rely on for various aspects of friendship and guidance (e.g., advice about personal problems, support when upset).

Counter to concerns that the initiative would harm teens' peer relationships, teens generally reported very high levels of peer support, and these levels were similar for higher- and average-risk youth: about 80 percent said that at least one peer club member provided them with social support; while 18 percent in New York and 28 percent in Boston reported having three or more supportive peers.[18]

However, we found varying levels of peer support across clubs in both cities. In New York, teens from one club reported lower levels of peer support and more negative peer interactions than members of the other two clubs.[19] Reports of supportive peers at this club also decreased over time, with the lowest levels in Year 3. Several factors likely contributed to these findings. The club is located between two rival housing developments and turf issues occasionally arose. In addition, a huge influx of new members in Year 3 (over four times the number of teens recruited in the other two clubs) may have affected youth's sense of familiarity with other teen members and their experiences of positive interactions with these youth. Similarly, a Boston club, which reported lower levels of peer support than all but one other club, recruited a large number of new members, while the Boston club with the highest level of peer support recruited relatively few new members.

Summary

The clubs were quite successful at attracting large numbers of new teen members, many with significant needs. The New York clubs, which dedicated a staff position to recruitment, were particularly successful at increasing their teen membership. Successful strategies included significantly increasing previously limited hours in Boston, developing collaborations with outside agencies in both cities and, in New York, targeted street outreach.

About a third of teens in Boston and in New York's PLU program attended the club once a week or more. Moreover, attendance rates in New York increased over time, suggesting that the New York clubs were able to involve teens more intensively as the initiative progressed. Both organizations retained a little over half of their target groups of teens.

Teens reported experiencing high levels of peer support. However, those clubs that recruited numbers of teens well beyond their stated goals provided youth with lower levels of peer support than those clubs recruiting smaller numbers.

In the chapters that follow, we discuss in more detail the experiences of these teens and the strategies clubs used to serve them. Specifically, we focus on clubs' efforts to increase adult support for teens and to create engaging teen programming.

III. Were Clubs Able to Provide Teens With Adult Support?

In the previous chapter, we saw that the clubs met or surpassed their recruitment goals—a notable achievement. In addition to attracting teens, staff also considered as a central goal the provision of adult support—a developmental support that, research shows, can help youth avoid drug and alcohol use, lower youth's stress levels, help them perform better in school and help them make better decisions (Tierney and Grossman, 1995; Scales, 1991; Rutter, 1987; Werner and Smith, 1982). As a Boston unit director indicated:

> *The most important resource we can offer the kids isn't our buildings or games or leagues. It's our staff, because having that consistent, caring adult for these kids is [what is] most important.*

Staff thus set a high premium on building relationships with teens and wanted to use the increases in staffing to strengthen these relationships, their understanding of individual teens' needs and interests, and their ability to assess whether the club was meeting these needs.

To achieve this and other central initiative goals, both organizations increased the number of staff dedicated to serving teens. The clubs also implemented strategies that would enable staff to get to know teens' interests, needs and behavior both within and outside of the clubs.

In this chapter, we address the following three questions: Did the clubs provide adolescents with adult support and guidance? How did they accomplish this? And, what challenges did they face?

Did Clubs Provide Teens With Adult Support and Guidance?

We asked youth about staff support in three areas: general support, support in academic and job-related areas, and how many staff knew their interests and goals.

Clubs in both cities succeeded in providing about 80 percent of their teens with at least one adult to serve as a confidant and source of support (see Table 2).[20] This percentage is higher than that reported in a study of voluntary youth-serving organizations (65%) (Gambone and Arbreton, 1997) and a study of after-school Beacon Centers (55%) (Walker and Arbreton,

Table 2:
Adult Support

Type of Support	New York PLU	New York Non-PLU	Boston
General Adult Support			
At least one staff	89%	79%	80%
At least three staff	16%	14%	22%
Other Types of Support			
At least one staff knows youth's interests and goals	85%	74%	74%
At least one staff knows how youth is doing in school	80%	69%	80%
At least one staff to whom youth could go for help finding a job	90%	74%	80%

Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of youth reporting each type of adult support in our Year 3 youth survey.

2001). Additionally, about three-quarters of youth reported that at least one staff member knows their interests and goals and how they were doing in school; and 80 percent reported knowing at least one adult at the club to whom they could go for help finding a job.

In both cities, older teens (regardless of how long they had been attending the club) reported receiving higher levels of support than younger teens. Older teens reported knowing more club staff who could help them find jobs, who knew how they were doing in school and who knew their interests and goals.[21] They also reported spending more time talking with staff about personal issues. These findings suggest that older teens may develop more relationships—and, in some ways, more significant relationships—with adult staff than their younger peers. The *quality* of these relationships may make staff turnover particularly difficult for older teens. Yet, the larger *number* of supportive adults may provide a "buffer" for some older teens if staff leave.

Similar to our findings for peer support, none of these measures of adult support varied depending on risk status: higher-risk teens reported levels of adult support that were just as high as those reported by average-risk teens. As we document in the next chapter of this report, higher-risk youth generally experienced slightly lower levels of club benefits than their average-risk peers, so comparable reports of adult and peer support are noteworthy. It is likely that the increased level of staffing and attention to these youth allows for and promotes more adult-youth interaction that, in turn, helps the youth feel that there are supportive adults available.

Adult Support in the PLU Program

In New York, one goal established early on was to create relationships between PLU youth and at least three adults. Staff felt this was important because higher-risk youth may need extensive support to connect them to resources within and outside of the club. Consistent with this goal, PLU youth reported having access to larger numbers of supportive adults than their peers on all four measures tested, but these findings were only apparent in Years 1 and 2. And although PLU teens' reports of these supports remained high in Year 3, these levels were lower than those seen in earlier years of the initiative.

We did, however, see relatively high levels of other indicators of adult support in Year 3. For example, PLU youth reported spending more time talking one-on-one with staff about personal issues than youth who were not involved in the program. They also reported higher levels of staff confidentiality and were less likely than youth outside of the program to report disliking how they were treated by staff.

How Did Clubs Strengthen Adult Support for Teens?

The clubs provided teens with high levels of adult support primarily by creating and filling several new staff positions. One of the most important roles of these staff members was to develop and sustain meaningful and supportive one-on-one relationships with youth. Staff did this, in part, by learning about individual teens' interests and activities outside of the club, and by ensuring that their needs were being met when they were at the club.

The clubs hired additional staff dedicated to serving teens. Boston hired two full-time staff members at each club: a teen advocate and a teen education advocate. The teen advocate was primarily responsible for providing teen programming but also recruited new teens, communicated with parents and worked with community agencies to inform them about club services. The teen education advocate provided educational programming for teens, tracked teens' academic needs, assisted families with college applications and, in some cases, conducted outreach in neighboring schools.

New York hired one full-time and several part-time staff at each club. Two were dedicated PLU staff: a part-time outreach worker recruited teens, and a full-time guidance specialist[22] assessed the needs of recruited youth, connected them with club activities, tracked their participation, developed relationships with outside agencies for referrals and provided counseling and case management for participating teens. These two staff members also provided some teen programming in the last two years of the initiative.

The New York clubs created several additional part-time staff positions to improve programming for all teen club members, but not all clubs were consistently able to fill these positions.[23] Job specialists ran the clubs' job-readiness training program, and youth development specialists helped provide case management to teens in PLU. The initiative also financed a part-time teen director, educational assistant and culture and performing arts instructor at each club, and clubs relied on a consultant with a doctorate in social work to provide technical assistance.

Staffing Challenges: Training

Although administrative staff agreed that training was important for staff working with teens, staff in both cities thought it could be improved. In Boston, training was available but not generally required, and few workshops were specifically designed for teen staff. To improve training opportunities, the organization established a committee to examine training needs and began organizing cross-club departmental meetings in the last year of the initiative.

New York's more centralized effort resulted in fairly frequent cross-club meetings to foster collaborative learning among staff. But, few training opportunities involved all teen staff, and very few staff got involved in outside workshops. Administrative staff also had some reservations about working with outside providers because they wanted to ensure that training was in line with Boys & Girls Clubs' practices. Toward the end of the initiative, the organization hired a full-time staff member to improve staff training in the three clubs. Many of his early efforts, however, focused on training for administrative staff.

In addition to creating opportunities for cross-club interactions, P/PV provided technical assistance, workshops and curriculum throughout the initiative. Clubs also mentioned using the following strategies to foster the knowledge and skills of their teen staff:

- Encouraging staff communication and training across departments by, for example, having social workers train staff to work with youth with special needs;
- Developing collaborations with consultants who could provide guidance on specific topics; and
- Informing staff of trainings offered by outside organizations.

New York hired a full-time project coordinator to organize initiative efforts across the three clubs. The coordinator regularly visited the clubs, supervised dedicated initiative staff, tried to ensure that PLU was integrated into club functioning and documented program membership, successes and challenges. He also obtained resources for program development and contributed several ideas for teen programming.

Four Boston clubs filled at least one of the two new positions with existing staff. The clubs felt that hiring current staff to work with teens facilitated continuity between programming for younger and older youth, and that these staff relationships might motivate youth who grew up in the club to continue coming in their teen years.

The clubs implemented efforts to track and case manage teens. Clubs in both cities implemented strategies to track teens' activity participation at the club. Because teens' needs often revolve around school, employment, and peer and family issues, staff also tried to establish connections within these realms.

Tracking was implemented very differently in the two cities. In Boston, tracking was less structured and determined by the individual club; in New York, case management had several components that were used at all three clubhouses.

Case Management in PLU. Case management was a central component of PLU. Staff believed that higher-risk teens might be unlikely to get involved in programming that could benefit them and would need one-on-one efforts by adults to help them "link up" with these activities, encourage their involvement, check in to make sure their needs and interests were being met, and serve as a friend and advocate if problems arose.

The guidance specialists served as this resource for PLU teens. These staff members met with teens approximately twice a month for the first few months of their membership and recorded details about their activity participation. Guidance specialists collected additional information on teens' program participation by visiting program areas, examining program rosters and establishing relationships with staff who could provide information about teens' progress. In some cases, youth also received direct help from the guidance specialist. Focus group participants from one club said the guidance specialist helped them learn a language, get immigration papers, find employment and find a chemistry tutor.

In cases when PLU youth stopped attending the club, guidance specialists reported contacting them. If the teen was not interested in returning, staff conducted an exit interview to determine why and "closed" the case. Close to a third (31%) of PLU survey participants confirmed that staff members called if they stopped coming; however, this percentage was not significantly higher than figures for youth outside of the program (21%), and about half of teens in both groups reported *not* being contacted if they stopped coming. This component of the program, thus, did not seem to be as rigorously implemented as others.

Beyond tracking youth's progress at the club, the guidance specialist and other staff served as advocates with teens' parents, school staff and, in some cases, other staff at the club. Some staff reported making special efforts to talk with principals, parents or guidance counselors on behalf of teens who were failing several classes, being treated unfairly by teachers or experiencing other personal difficulties. In one week in Year 3, PLU staff across the three clubs reported making 55 of these "resource contacts" for PLU youth (an average of about 18 per club).

Tracking in Boston. The Boston clubs did not adopt a formal case management approach. However, all five Boston clubs had informal systems for tracking teens' club experiences.[24] Staff reported talking informally with teens about their involvement in activities and discussing teens' participation at staff meetings. Four clubs created informal portfolios that highlighted the successes and activity participation of more active teens, and some used tracking forms to record this participation. Each club also included a social worker, who was responsible for formal case management and referrals of teens and younger youth with behavioral or emotional problems. And, similar to New York, staff reported occasional follow-up on more active teens who had not attended for a while.

All of the Boston clubs also tried to create strong relationships with schools in their communities to track teens' academic progress and school attendance. Staff from most clubs reported visiting or calling schools frequently. One teen education advocate reported visiting middle schools at least once a week to attend

Staffing Challenges: Integration

Early in New York's initiative, PLU staff felt distinct from other club staff. They did not run programming and reported to a different supervisor. Other staff also had little understanding of the project's goals. These factors undermined efforts to integrate PLU teens into club activities and ensure that staff offered activities that addressed their interests and needs, leading some PLU staff to feel unsupported in their work. As discussed by one program director:

> *Initially, one of the challenges was [non-PLU staff] having a connection with PLU staff—working together and not laying the blame on [each other] about why kids didn't come [more frequently]. Staff didn't understand what PLU staff did. It was always this "us" versus "them" going on.*

To overcome this challenge, the program coordinator started attending meetings with club directors and the central office issued a message to all staff to increase their focus on teens. Additionally, because PLU staff did not run programming for teens early in the initiative, they quickly realized they needed to work more closely with other staff to learn about and help plan activities of interest to recruits. This process strengthened communication between PLU and non-PLU staff.

Likewise, in Boston, teen staff initially did not feel connected with other departments. Developing relationships with non-teen staff was important because they could keep teen staff abreast of teens' behavior outside of the teen center. Because other staff worked with preteens, collaborative efforts could also ease youth's transition into the teen center.

To foster these relationships, Boston's central office underscored the expectation that all staff needed to help teens benefit from the club. In some cases, teen staff began spending time with preteens, and non-teen staff began working with teens. Administrative staff at one club facilitated workshops in which all staff talked about teen programming and how it could be integrated into other areas.

In both cities, cross-department collaborations increased during the initiative. Staff became more devoted to keeping track of teens and developing teen services and programs. Staff at one club noted that teens had become part of the "agenda" at staff meetings. By the end of the initiative, teen staff felt like integral parts of their clubs. Boston teen staff felt that their colleagues recognized the role they needed to play in supporting teens, and New York's PLU staff felt that other club staff were sharing information with them and working with them on behalf of PLU youth.

school staff meetings. Staff felt these collaborations were generally strong. However, because youth in Boston are bused to schools in other communities, the relationships were often difficult to solidify. One staff member reported working with 42 schools.

What Challenges Did Clubs Face in These Efforts?

Although clubs were quite successful at providing teens with adult support, two factors—turnover and excessive growth—had negative effects on reports of adult support.

Turnover was a barrier to providing teens with adult support, particularly in two clubs. Clubs in both cities were faced with staff turnover throughout the initiative—a challenge that is common in youth-serving organizations, but one that had many ramifications for this initiative. Only one club in each city retained their original core lineups throughout the initiative. Staff attributed high turnover to competition in the job market, long hours of work relative to other jobs with higher wages, personality clashes among staff and a "revolving-door" phenomenon often associated with hiring young staff who have recently finished college.

In Boston, the extent of turnover was related to the club more than the position—one club had difficulty retaining both positions. In New York, turnover was also most frequent at one of the three clubs but was particularly frequent for the part-time outreach position. This position was difficult to retain (and fill) because staff were offered only a part-time position

without benefits, and the position required a range of skills and experiences, including living in the community, having connections with families and agencies in the area, being comfortable navigating potentially dangerous neighborhoods (a challenge when hiring women), and the ability to communicate and relate well with older, higher-risk teens.

Clubs with the most turnover had great difficulty meeting some of their goals, in part, because important components of the initiative were reassigned or discontinued when staff left. At several clubs, efforts to provide orientation, outreach, tracking and case management decreased when staff left, as priorities shifted and staff filled in for others. Turnover can also hinder relationships among staff and between the clubs and outside agencies—both of which help to create strong, cohesive services for youth.

Without a full lineup of consistent staff, the quantity and quality of programming may also suffer, as well as the quality of adult relationships. In fact, in both cities, youth from clubs with extensive turnover in key staff positions reported lower levels of adult support than youth from clubs with less turnover. Because engaging programming and relationships with staff become more important motivations for teens' club participation as they get older (see chapter IV), the effects of turnover may be especially harmful to efforts to retain older teens.

Without increasing staffing levels, clubs are limited in the number of teens they can provide with adult support. Both differences between clubs and changes over time further suggest that growth in teen membership influenced experiences of adult support. In Boston, teens from the club with the fewest new teen club members in both Years 1 and 2 reported higher levels of adult support than the two clubs with the largest numbers of new teen members during this time, suggesting that recruiting large numbers of youth (without also increasing staffing levels) may decrease the amount of support that adults can provide to individual club members. With increases in teen membership, staff may have had difficulty developing supportive one-on-one relationships with all teens.

Likewise, although teens reported similar levels of job-related support throughout the initiative, in both cities, over time, teens reported a decrease in the number of adults providing them with support and the number of adults who know their interests and goals, with the lowest levels reported in Year 3 and the highest levels (about 85% reporting one or more) in Year 1.

In New York, we also found that staff were able to provide PLU youth with particularly high levels of adult support early in the initiative. Fifty new members were recruited every year and retention improved as the initiative progressed. This growth was not supported with increases in the number of staff hired to case manage participants. As a result, staff felt overwhelmed with their caseloads and had to develop other strategies, such as phone calls, to work with the large numbers of teens.

Summary

In efforts to strengthen support for teens, the clubs created several staff positions and implemented systems to track teens' participation. Boston clubs began informally keeping portfolios for teens, and teen education advocates were responsible for providing academic assistance and tracking teens' academic progress and individual needs. In New York, guidance specialists made connections with other individuals in the teens' lives, tracked youth's club participation, helped teens connect with resources inside and outside the club and advocated for PLU teens when needed.

Staff in both cities were successful in providing teens with high levels of adult support. New York's case management model was particularly successful in providing teens with high levels of adult support, especially in early years of the initiative. But, youth's reports of these supports decreased over time, suggesting that increasing numbers of teens made it difficult to provide all teens with high levels of support. Staff turnover was also a problem in both cities and negatively affected youth's reports of adult support.

IV. Were Clubs Able to Create Programming that Benefited Teens?

Recent studies of voluntary youth-serving organizations show that youth who regularly participate in a variety of activities are more likely to report receiving important developmental supports and opportunities than youth with less intensive participation (Gambone and Arbreton, 1997; Kotloff et al., 1997). And, youth are most likely to get involved in activities that are attractive to them, given their age and interests, are affordable and involve peers whom they value (Hultsman, 1992; Medrich, 1991). Staff understood this and attempted to develop programming that would sustain teens' interests. New York focused on providing teens with employment training, while Boston focused on bolstering academic support for teens. Clubs in both cities also created leadership opportunities for teens and some targeted programming to address the needs of specific groups of youth.

In this chapter, we address several questions related to these efforts: What kind of programming changes did the clubs make? Did teens find programming interesting? To what extent did teens participate in these activities? And, did these activities provide teens with benefits in line with the clubs' goals?

What Kind of Programming Changes Did Clubs Make?

Designing and implementing teen activities is challenging. Teens are harder to please than younger youth and have different needs, ranging from college preparation to job training and independent-living skills. Teens of different ages (e.g., 12 to 13 and 17 to 18) also have very different interests, needs and schedules, and should have access to programming that reflects these differences. And teens are highly influenced by their peers, so, as one Boston staff member noted, if one teen does not want to engage in an activity, his or her peers will not either. Finally, teens have competing demands on their time, including jobs and other after-school activities, making consistent participation in activities difficult to achieve.

To address these challenges, the clubs in this initiative developed a range of "teen-friendly" activities.

Educational Programming

Clubs provided teens with homework help, tutoring and academic tracking. Staff in both cities provided

teens with academic assistance and guidance and implemented strategies to monitor teens' academic performance.

In Boston, the teen education advocate implemented activities for teens, including tutoring, reading groups, a program focusing on English as a second language and evening computer classes.

In response to the central office's increase in focus on education, some Boston clubs started requiring teens to engage in academic activities. Three Boston clubs began requiring teens to complete homework before engaging in other activities. Staff members from one of these clubs were particularly concerned about teens' academic performance and also started requiring teens to share their report cards—a strategy that previously had been used as a requirement for participation in club sports teams or field trips, but was made more pervasive during the initiative. Staff asked schools for extra work for teens who were getting Ds or Fs in core subjects and, later in the initiative, began requiring teens to attend either college preparatory or career awareness activities. Teens had difficulty adjusting to this increase in structure. But by the last year of the initiative, 78 percent of surveyed teens from this club reported sharing their report card with staff, and 96 percent found this process helpful. Both percentages were higher than those of any other Boston club.

Why Do Teens Come to the Club?

When asked what they want to get out of their club participation, the largest percentages of teens in both cities (over 75%) reported that an interest in "staying out of trouble" motivated them to participate. About 70 percent said they went for leadership opportunities or to get academic help. About two-thirds wanted to find employment and participate in new and exciting activities. A little more than half reported wanting to interact with adults, while peer relationships motivated about half the teens in New York and two-thirds in Boston.

Similar to their peers, higher-risk youth cited staying out of trouble and gaining leadership experience as their top two motivations for club participation. Getting a job was also an important motivating factor for these youth.

Older teens in both cities were more likely than younger teens to report being motivated by engaging activities, job opportunities, academic help and relationships with adult staff. Because older teens often make independent decisions about how they spend their time, sustaining these youth's participation may require programming that reflects these interests.

How Did Clubs Change Rules for Teen Behavior?

When the initiative began, none of the clubs planned to change their rules and expectations for teens' behavior. However, as the initiative progressed, some New York staff realized they needed to be more tolerant of PLU youth's failure to meet certain standards.

At one club, in particular, staff felt that retaining higher-risk youth required giving them more leeway. Rather than immediately suspending youth for rule infractions, some staff reported talking with teens about their expectations and requiring better behavior from them over time. As one staff member discussed:

> *If we set rules for teens, how do we know those rules are right? Before [the initiative] we were the big experts. We were going to take these troubled youth under our wings and show them the way...We had to reconsider the value of certain rules. We had to become more tolerant:.. Teens have different issues than 6-year-olds.*

But this strategy was controversial. Some staff felt that youth should be strictly and consistently punished for breaking rules:

> *We've had a lot of [incidents] where kids [break rules] and [staff] don't really do anything. The child is only suspended for a day and comes back bragging...Now kids can go on trips even if they're acting up...[There is] so much leeway for them.*

Teens' reports of barriers to more frequent participation support staff's concerns that higher-risk youth may have difficulty adhering to strict rules; yet, they also suggest that staff's efforts to be more tolerant of negative behavior did not translate into youth's perception of more lenience. Higher-risk teens were more likely than average-risk teens to report being suspended and "too many rules" as barriers. In fact, "too many rules" was one of the top two (of 12) most frequently reported barriers by higher-risk youth.

Input and Decision-Making

Providing youth with opportunities to make decisions and choose how they spend their time is important in contributing to teens' sense of autonomy and control over their environment.

In Year 3, about half of the teens involved in our survey agreed that the club gave them opportunities for input and decision-making. Higher-risk teens reported fewer opportunities than average-risk teens, while older teens reported more opportunities than younger teens.

Educational programming included activities relevant to adolescents' need for college guidance. Clubs created college groups and offered college tours, a program for dropouts, SAT preparation and assistance with college and scholarship applications.

A club-wide focus on education helped strengthen efforts in the education department. Fifty-seven percent of all surveyed New York staff members and 38 percent in Boston listed helping teens get better grades among their top three goals for teens. Staff in and outside of the education department told us about helping youth with homework, asking them about grades, and encouraging and rewarding youth who performed well at school. In fact, teens in both cities needed to maintain decent grades to participate in some activities, like Keystone, sports teams or field trips, giving them an incentive to study.

New York's project coordinator stressed that this club-wide agreement about the importance of education was a key element in strengthening efforts of the education department and in fostering collaborations with other departments, including sports, computers and cultural enrichment. These collaborations, in turn, helped create a "hook" to engage teens in educational activities. For example, one New York club ran a poetry workshop in which teens wrote poetry through the education department and performed it through the cultural enrichment department. The project coordinator felt that teens were drawn to this activity because the format and content of the poetry was hip-hop and rap—engaging topics for New York teens.

Job Programming

Whereas much of the new teen programming in Boston had an educational focus, New York's central focus was on providing teens with job-related experiences. In New York, a job specialist was added to each club. This staff member ran the club's job-readiness training program and placed club members in jobs inside and, in a few cases, outside of the club. The Boston clubs offered career preparatory and career tracking activities for teens as well as life-skills programs.

Leadership Opportunities

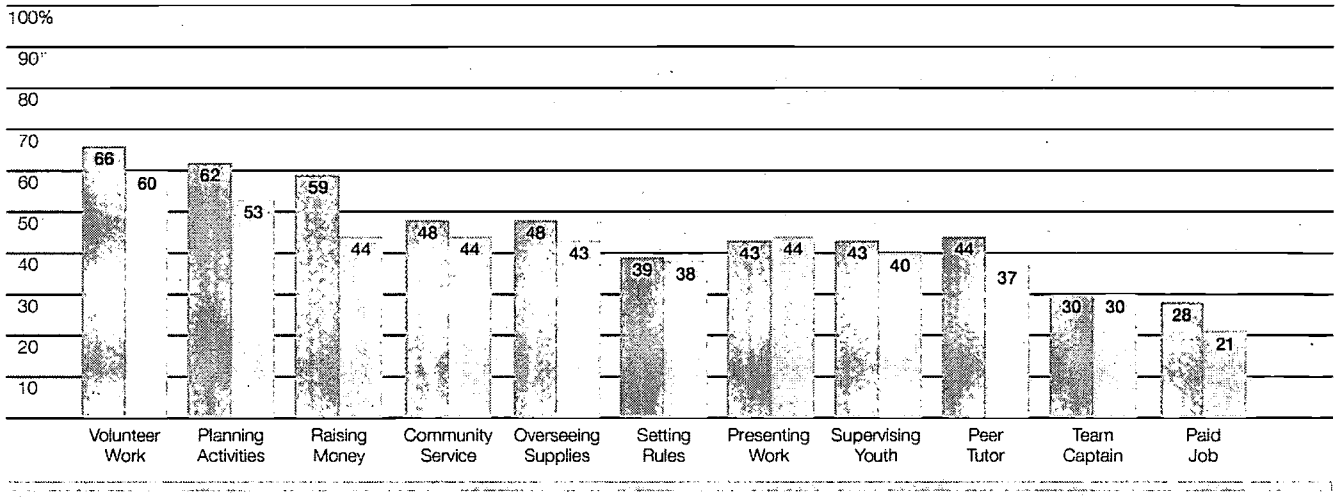
In addition to providing help with academics and jobs, clubs also offer teens opportunities for leadership. Experience with leadership roles is important in adolescence. By encouraging youth to make decisions that affect others, these opportunities allow youth to practice roles that are relevant to future jobs and may help develop responsibility.

More than 80 percent of surveyed teens in both cities said they experienced at least one leadership opportunity at the club in the last year; about half said they had five or more; and about 15 percent said they had 10 or more in the last year. The most frequently reported leadership experiences included volunteer work, planning club activities and helping to raise money (see Figure 6).

Staff and youth discussed a range of leadership opportunities during our interviews with them. All clubs offered paid junior staff positions and Keystone club, a leadership development program that involves community service. Other opportunities included involving teens in food drives, counseling and lifeguard positions, as well as peer-led orientations for new club members. Some clubs offered activities that incorporated opportunities for leadership. For example, teens in one New York club created a video, designing and implementing all aspects of its content, script, music, filming and editing.

In both cities, younger teens and boys reported fewer leadership opportunities than older teens and girls. And, similar to recent findings by Kotloff et al. (1997), higher-risk youth reported receiving more leadership opportunities than their average-risk peers. This is the only outcome measure for which higher-risk teens reported higher overall levels than

Figure 6:
Types of Leadership Opportunities



Note: Each bar reflects the percentage of youth who reported participating in the leadership activity in our Year 3 survey.

their peers. The finding may result both from higher-risk youth's attraction to leadership opportunities, as well as staff's efforts to reward positive behavior with leadership opportunities—especially for youth who may have exhibited behavior problems in the past.

In both cities, teens' reports of leadership opportunities were highest in the clubs with the largest teen populations. Both of these clubs offered the most junior staff positions, possibly in response to the large numbers of teens, as well as high staff turnover in both of these clubs and the need to help fill the void left by departing staff. These positions offered youth a chance to engage in many of the leadership opportunities we asked about in our survey.

Programming to Meet the Needs of Higher-Risk Teens

Clubs designed some programs specifically for higher-risk teens. These programs tried to meet the needs of higher-risk youth, while at the same time involving components that met their interests. Several focused on leadership development (possibly contributing to relatively high numbers of leadership experiences reported by these youth), and several offered stipends—both important motivating factors for these youth. One Boston club ran Peer Leaders—a stipended program in which the social worker met with small groups of teens, trained them to work with preteens and involved them in workshops covering such areas as decision-making and drug prevention. Three Boston clubs offered Young Leaders, another program offering stipends to young teens who, in at least one club, had engaged in high-risk behavior. Activities included career planning, tutoring, life skills activities and volunteer work. Similarly, New York clubs ran programs such as Youth of Purpose—a stipended leadership program which involved many teens who were not college bound and focused on community issues and career planning.

In Year 2, all of the Boston clubs ran Career Prep, a Boys & Girls Clubs of America job-readiness and placement program that targeted specific groups of high-risk youth, such as young parents or teens involved with the juvenile justice system. Staff thought the program included several strong components, but had difficulty adding the recruitment (often from outside the club), program operation and job placement (which was particularly difficult

given the high-risk status of these youth) components required by the program to their existing workloads. These experiences suggest that without a larger structure and staff positions devoted to recruiting and serving higher-risk teens (for example, Boston's Youth Service Providers Network (YSPN) and court diversion programs, and New York's PLU program), clubs may have difficulty recruiting and serving these teens.

Did Teens Find Club Programming Interesting?

Although some teens did find club activities attractive and interesting, about half did not. In Year 3, about half of the teens (56% in Boston and 46% in New York) agreed that the clubs provided them with new and interesting activities (see Table 3).

In both New York and Boston, higher-risk teens reported lower levels of interest than average-risk teens. Younger teens in New York also reported lower levels of interest than their older peers. Staff in New York were, thus, relatively successful in creating activities of interest to older as opposed to younger teens, but clubs in both cities could benefit from a stronger focus on developing programs that engage higher-risk teens.

Interest levels did not differ across the three New York clubhouses. In Boston, teens at two clubs reported lower levels of interest than those reported at the other three Boston clubs. One of these clubs had extensive turnover in teen staff throughout the initiative, very likely affecting staff's ability to provide consistent, engaging teen activities. The second club had almost no structured programming for teens before the initiative, and the activities and programs took time to develop.

Throughout the initiative, significant numbers of teens reported that a lack of interesting, age-appropriate activities kept them from attending the clubs more frequently. In fact, teens cited activity-related barriers more often than any others. In Year 3, close to a third reported these barriers (see Table 3).

Activity-related barriers were reported more often by higher- than by average-risk youth. And, in New York, girls were more likely than boys to cite a lack of interesting activities, supporting staff's reports that creating programs for girls was particularly challenging and stressing the need for continued efforts to create engaging programs for girls.

Turnover again may have played a role in Boston. Teens attending the club with extensive turnover cited activity-related barriers most often, and those at the club with no turnover the least often. As we have discussed, staff turnover had implications for many aspects of teens' club experiences—one of the biggest implications was a decrease in the clubs' ability to provide consistent, interesting teen programming.

These findings suggest that clubs in both cities should continue efforts to develop activities that teens will find interesting. Yet, youth's attendance was only related to how interesting they found activities in Boston.[25] Teens in New York who cited a lack of interest in club activities attended the club just as frequently as teens who were interested. Thus, in

Table 3:
Interesting Activities and Activity-Related Barriers

	New York PLU	New York Non-PLU	Boston
Interesting Activities			
New and interesting activities	41%	48%	56%
Barriers to More Frequent Participation			
Not enough activities	36%	32%	25%
Activities are not interesting	41%	29%	30%

Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of youth reporting agreement in our Year 3 youth survey.

New York, teens reporting lower levels of interest may have been drawn to the club by other aspects of their experience—perhaps by supportive relationships with peers and adult staff, or the other benefits they felt the club provided, all of which were reported by large numbers of teens; in Boston, disinterested teens simply participated less often, suggesting that developing engaging activities may be particularly important in Boston.

To What Extent Were Clubs Able to Involve Teens in Activities?

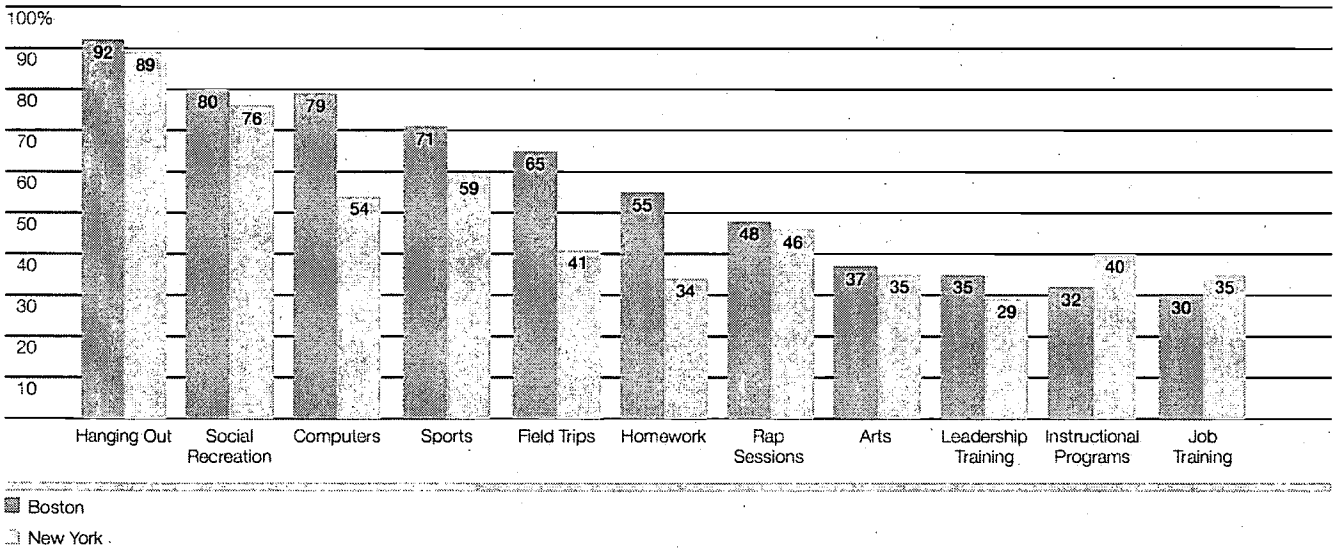
Developing programming for teens was important, but the real test of clubs' success was youth's participation in these activities. To assess this, we examined youth's participation in a number of specific activities and their involvement in a variety of activities.

Despite modest reports of interest by teens, the clubs were able to involve youth in programs spanning several areas. In New York, more than half of teens reported engaging in sports, social recreation, computers or "hanging out" at the club in the four weeks prior to our Year 3 survey (see Figure 7). A little less than half participated in instructional programs, rap sessions or field trips. And about a third participated in arts programming, homework, leadership training or job training. In Boston, a majority of youth reported engaging in sports, social recreation, computers, homework, field trips or hanging out at the club, while close to half reported participating in rap sessions. About a third reported participating in arts, leadership training, instructional programs or job training.

In both cities, younger teens were more likely to report participating in social recreation, arts, homework and field trips, while older teens were more likely to participate in group discussions and structured activities targeting the older age groups, such as job-training and instructional programs.

Higher-risk youth from both cities, regardless of age, were more likely than their lower-risk peers to participate in group discussions and job training, suggesting that higher-risk teens may be attracted to some types of structured programs, particularly activities that can help them earn money. Staff in both cities

Figure 7:
Activity Participation



Note: Each bar reflects the percentage of youth who reported participating in the activity in our Year 3 youth survey.

also told us that they made special efforts to involve higher-risk youth in such programming because these teens often lacked job skills and, in many cases, were not college bound.

Changes in these reports over time further suggest that teens increased their involvement in some of these activities as the initiative progressed. For example, in both cities, teens reported increased involvement in group discussions and computer activities. In Boston, teens reported increased involvement in job training, and in New York, teens reported increased involvement in arts programming. In New York, despite consistent efforts to provide teens with job training, teens reported less involvement in job training over time. Even in Year 3, however, at New York's lowest levels, over a third of teens (35%) reported being involved in job training in the four weeks prior to our survey.

Both organizations involved significant numbers of teens in a wide variety of activities. A little less than half of survey participants in New York (45%) and over half in Boston (58%) participated in six or more activities in the four weeks prior to our survey. Diversity of activity participation was the single most important variable in predicting youth-reported supports, opportunities and benefits from club participation—even more important than frequency of attendance or length of membership. For example, it was important in determining teens' reports of adult and peer support, leadership experience, decision-making opportunities, interesting activities at the club, and academic and job-related benefits. This variable was similarly important in a recent study of five Boys & Girls Clubs (Kotloff et al., 1997). Encouraging youth to get involved in a number of club activities may, thus, be one of the most important ways that staff can help youth benefit from club participation. Staff involved in this initiative experimented with ways to engage teens in multiple activities by, for example, creating rotations or developing activities that involve staff and activities from more than one department.

These reports suggest that teens in Boston were involved in a wider variety of activities than youth in New York. This difference may reflect the fact that all new staff members in Boston were hired specifically to create programming for teens, while in New York, key staff were hired for outreach and case management. Also, some Boston clubs required participation in certain activities—homework, for instance—while New York's teen department imposed less structure on how teens spent their time. Additionally, Boston started technology and education initiatives when the teen initiative began, possibly offering teens more opportunities and encouragement to participate in activities in these areas.

Did Youth Benefit?

Although we were not able to examine school or employment records, youth's self-reported benefits of their involvement in the clubs (based on survey and focus group data) were higher than their interest levels, and suggest that youth perceived benefits in line with club goals.

Academic Benefits. About three-fourths of teens surveyed in Year 3 reported that the clubs helped them improve their academic performance (see Table 4). Youth from our focus groups thought these improvements resulted from tutoring and homework assistance, and from staff's success in changing their attitude toward school. Staff's knowledge of teens' academic needs may also have contributed: as reported in Chapter III, about three-fourths of youth reported that at least one staff member knew how they were doing in school.

Although most surveyed youth were academically at risk, over 90 percent thought they would go to college, and most used the club as a resource for this transition: about two-thirds reported that the club helped them learn how to apply to college.

Higher-risk teens generally reported lower levels of these academic benefits than their average-risk peers. We also saw club differences in reports of these benefits that were related to both programming and staffing. Teens from one New York club that increased teens' access to computers and improved Project Graduate, its college-bound program, reported higher levels of benefits than youth from the other New York clubs. Similarly, teens from a Boston club that experienced high turnover in the teen education advocate position reported lower levels of academic benefits than their peers from other Boston clubs that experienced little or no turnover in this position.

Table 4:
Youth-Reported Academic and Job-Related Benefits

	New York PLU	New York Non-PLU	Boston
Academic Benefits			
Grade improvement	75%	74%	78%
Learning how to apply to college	71%	63%	70%
Job-Related Benefits			
Learning how to find/apply for a job	78%	69%	66%
Getting a job	77%	65%	72%

Note: Percentages reflect the proportion of youth reporting each benefit in our Year 3 youth survey.

Job-Related Benefits. About two-thirds of teens reported that the clubs helped them learn how to write a resume and look for a job; similar numbers said staff members helped them find employment. And, as discussed in Chapter III, about 80 percent reported that they could go to at least one adult staff member at the club for help to find a job.

Older teens reported receiving more help in job-related benefits than younger teens. In Boston, higher-risk youth were less likely to report help getting a job than average-risk youth, but in New York, PLU teens (many of whom were higher risk) were *more* likely to report help getting a job than their peers. This probably results from a strong job focus in PLU: staff encouraged recruits to participate in job training, both because these youth were interested in job opportunities and because they lacked job-related skills.

Summary

As part of the teen initiative, staff in both cities tried to develop engaging, skill-building activities for teens. Clubs offered several new teen activities, particularly in academic and employment-related areas—areas that were in line with the clubs' goals for teens and with teens' motivations for attending the club. Clubs were successful in these efforts: teens reported receiving academic and job-related benefits and gaining leadership experience.

Teens also reported engaging in a wide variety of club activities, and their participation in some activities increased over time.

Yet, staff noted the difficulty of developing programs that would attract teens: about half of the teens agreed that the clubs provided them with interesting and engaging activities, but the most frequently mentioned barrier to club participation was a lack of interesting, age-appropriate activities. These findings confirm staff's reports of the difficulty of creating programming for this age group, and suggest that this is an important area for continued growth.

V. What Did the Initiatives Cost and How Are They Being Sustained?

Additional financial support provided the underpinnings that led to clubs' accomplishments. This support allowed the clubs to keep their doors open longer, develop new programs and hire staff dedicated to teen programming. Staff also drew in large numbers of new teens, and provided one-on-one attention to club members either through tracking the teens' interests and needs or providing them with intensive case management. Teens benefited: almost 80 percent found supportive adult relationships at the clubs, 75 percent said they received help with school and 66 percent said they received help with finding jobs.

New York received grants of $1.5 million and Boston of $1.3 million. Most of these funds—from 80 to 95 percent—went to staffing the initiative. The direct costs were offset by the ability of the clubs to rely on existing program and administrative staff and infrastructure, club space, and club services.

Both organizations hoped to continue providing the teen programs even after the initiative ended. Their approaches to sustainability differed, however, reflecting their different focuses. Whether the initiatives eventually continue in their entirety, both have had lasting effects on the access teens have to the clubs, how they are served and the way services are documented.

This chapter addresses questions about the costs and sustainability of these initiatives: What were the costs associated with the initiatives? How are the initiatives being sustained? What lessons learned by the clubs will continue to be part of club culture after the initial three-year funding period?

How Much Did the Initiatives Cost?

The efforts undertaken by the clubs were financed, in large part, by three-year grants from The Charles Hayden Foundation.

How Did the Clubs Use the Funds?

For comparison reasons, we picked one year—Year 2 of the initiative—to examine costs. As Table 5 displays, individual clubs in Boston spent $80,000, while clubs in New York used an average of $143,000 to implement their initiatives. A majority of the funds

Table 5:
Costs of the Teen Initiatives in Year 2

	Total Club Budget	Proportion of Overall Club Budget Directed to Teen Programming	Charles Hayden Foundation Funding Toward the Teen Initiative	Percent of Hayden Funding Directed to Staff Salaries	Staffing Hours per Week Paid by Initiative Funding	Number of Teens in Club-Identified Target Group	Cost per Enrollee
New York							
Club 1	$830,885	42% ($348,971)	$132,512	94%	180	70	$2,230
Club 2	$865,039	32% ($276,812)	$188,410	95%	180	87	$2,437
Club 3	$438,260	29% ($127,095)	$110,920	93%	180	72	$1,868
Central Office			$70,800				
Boston							
Club 1	$631,330	20% ($126,266)	$80,000	83%	70	140	$600
Club 2	$1,230,000	46% ($570,000)	$80,000	90%	70	185	$432
Club 3	$1,232,000	42% ($512,000)	$80,000	91%	70	165	$485
Club 4	$1,046,941	33% ($347,399)	$80,000	90%	60	Not available	
Club 5	$1,150,000	39% ($450,000)	$80,000	80%	70	175	$480
Central Office			$20,000				

Note: Information in Table 5 is based on cost surveys completed by New York and Boston for Fiscal Year 1999, Year 2 of the initiative.

across all clubs was used to pay initiative staff. Boston clubs used their funds to pay for 70 hours per week of staff time and New York 180 hours per week throughout the entire year. The remaining 5 to 20 percent of the funding went toward program materials, such as arts supplies, recreation materials, games and equipment, office expenses, stipends for youth in New York, special events, and transportation. In addition to individual club expenses, Boston used $20,000 and New York $70,800 to offset their central office's expenses involved in hiring and training staff members, writing grants, and providing oversight to the clubs and the evaluation. The larger amount in New York reflects the more intensive involvement the central office took due to their inexperience with some components of the Project Link-Up (PLU) approach.[26]

What Is the Cost Per Youth?

To develop a rough estimate of the cost per youth, we divided The Hayden Foundation funds spent per club in Year 2 by the total number of youth considered the clubs' primary targets. We used $84,000 per Boston club (after adding $4,000 per club or one-fifth of the administrative expenses) for a range of $432 to $600 per youth, with an overall average of $499. To calculate costs in New York, we added $23,600 (i.e., one-third of the central office expenses) to each club's initiative expenses to cover the amount the administrative office spent. We divided each clubhouse total by the number of PLU youth recruited in Year 2 plus the number of continuing PLU youth from Year 1. The costs ranged from $1,868 to $2,437, with an overall average of $2,178.

The difference in cost is not surprising. The Boston clubs used their funds to increase their hours and staffing levels to retain teens and attract new members. New York's budget bought more hours of outreach to identify and select a targeted group of youth who may not have made it to the club on their own, and a more intensive, individualized case management approach.

It is important to note that these costs are estimates—there are some costs that are not added in, and costs do not reflect the fact that the initiative benefited many more youth than those in the identified target group:

- The changes clubs made affected the experience of all teen members in both cities, not just transitioning or new teens in Boston or PLU youth in New York. All teens, and many younger youth, benefited from the increase in service hours, staffing and educational and job services provided by the initiative;

- New York's recruitment efforts reached two to three youth who ultimately became teen members for every one in PLU who became a member. These youth benefited from the outreach and general club programming; and

- The youth's level of participation was voluntary (and ranged from once or twice a year up to daily attendance), making identification of the "treatment" teens received difficult.

What In-Kind Support Did Incorporating the Teen Initiatives into Existing Clubs Provide?

It is important to remember that the $499 and $2,178 figures potentially overestimate the cost per youth because, as previously noted, youth other than the target groups benefited from the initiative. From another perspective, however, they vastly underestimate the costs because they do not account for contributions provided by the existing infrastructure of the Boys & Girls Clubs.

Establishing these initiatives in existing Boys & Girls Clubs offset many of the costs of starting a similar initiative from the ground up. Senior staff at the individual clubs provided experience and management infrastructure for the initiatives. In Boston, social workers helped support the teens. In addition, in both cities, all of the expenses of running a building came from separate budgets. Finally, in both cities, clubs had computers, other equipment, supplies and large gyms for the youth, and several of the clubs had pools and weight rooms. These existing infrastructures gave the clubs a solid foundation for testing the new initiatives and need to be considered.

Were There Economies of Scale?

Would the cost per youth decrease over time as more youth are added? An important consideration is a club's capacity to continue to add and retain youth at the same level of funding, staffing and space—as was the case in this initiative. When that happened, costs went down, but the quality of youth's experiences also dipped. Staff from the two clubs that experienced particularly large membership increases doubted they could absorb more members, and teens reported fewer supports at these clubs. Adding more youth should coincide with efforts to add more staffing hours to maintain quality activities and a high level of staff involvement.

How are the Initiatives Being Sustained?

From the beginning, the clubs were interested in building their capacity to serve community youth who previously had been underserved. In Boston, the clubs recommitted to their teen members, increasing the hours clubs were open to teens and attending more to youth who had previously been lost in the transition from preteen to teen programming. New York developed strategies for reaching higher-risk youth than the clubs typically served, providing adult support to link them to services inside and outside the club. As noted earlier, these approaches built on clubs' existing strengths and capacities and recognized their limitations. In turn, the differences in how the initiatives were structured affected how the clubs planned to sustain their services.

Boston's board of directors supported the teen initiative as a glaring omission of services that needed to be remedied and continually supported even after the three-year initiative ended. From the beginning, the organization intended to institutionalize the teen advocate and teen education advocate positions. After the first year of the initiative, Boston established the Fund for the Future, a mechanism to identify funds that could make these positions part of the core program. The teen initiative was developed alongside computer technology and social work initiatives, and Boston is committing core funds to continue supporting each area.

New York's PLU project, although recognized as an important service, was an add-on program to a currently existing teen department. New York's clubs were already open in the afternoon and evenings and had staff to support regular teen programming. The PLU project was staffed by separate employees and served a distinct group of youth brought in from outside the clubs. Thus, when the three years of

funding ended, clubs did not retain the project coordinator, guidance specialist or (with the exception of one club) the outreach worker positions. However, New York hopes to continue and even expand the program through foundation grants and contracts with local government.

How Have the Organizations Changed?

In both cities, implementing the initiatives created lasting changes in the way teens are approached and served by the clubs. These efforts built the capacities of the clubs, regardless of whether the initiatives—as they were originally designed—continue.

Structural and Attitudinal Changes

Both clubs underwent structural and attitudinal changes that will last beyond the initiatives:

- The clubs in both cities added new and enhanced existing job-related programming and educational services;
- All three New York sites established teen centers by the end of the three-year period;
- Boston clubs established preteen transition centers;
- Boston teens got increased access to other areas of the club and recognition by all staff that will continue;
- Staff in both cities—both those directly involved in the initiatives and those who played other roles at the clubs, either in administration or in working with younger youth—increased their sensitivity toward the need for services for teens and higher-risk youth; and
- Staff in both cities built a strong recognition of the need to constantly build and revise programming so that it will appeal to older youth.

How Did Clubs Use Management Information Systems?

Both organizations improved their MIS systems as part of the teen initiative. Boston updated a computerized system already in place, while New York replaced a hand-written attendance system with a computerized system.

New York staff felt that their ability to monitor club membership was tremendously enhanced. The information provided by the MIS system improved staff's ability to:

- Communicate with parents frequently and easily;
- Discover important participation patterns—staff found that several teens recruited in Year 1 stopped coming to the club, but returned in Year 3;
- Raise funds—at one New York club, a local politician requested information on how many members attended schools in his district. With the new system in place, the unit director quickly tabulated this number and secured funding for the club;
- Plan programming and outreach more effectively—when a large group of youth are ready to move to a new age group, outreach may be needed to boost membership in the younger age group, while additional staff may be required to work with the older age group; and
- Increase staff's attention to and accountability for membership—in New York, analysis of membership, particularly of teens, is now a part of all program and unit directors' weekly activities.

However, both organizations reported several challenges in setting up and using these systems:

- Using an MIS system costs more than the system itself—New York staff reported spending $15,000 a year to run their system;
- At least a year is required for set up—New York staff were unable to fully use the system and take advantage of its features until the last year of the initiative;
- Clubs without staff dedicated to taking attendance experienced great difficulty collecting accurate data; and
- Clubs may need to train more than one person on using the system, especially when staff turnover rates are high.

Partnerships with schools and probation departments, which helped recruitment efforts, will also continue. One mechanism the Boston clubs are using to sustain their teen membership is that they are lead agencies for several Boston schools that received federal grants to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers. This relationship is drawing more teens to the clubs and helping to support the level of teen staff that was developed through the initiative. The program services clubs developed while implementing the teen initiative made them excellent candidates for receiving these grants. Similarly, New York staff felt that the experience of serving higher-risk teens and building collaborations with the department of probation gave the clubs a base on which to seek a Boys & Girls Clubs of America reintegration grant, which the clubs could use to build collaborations with detention centers to help serve youth leaving incarceration.

Management Information Systems (MIS) and Self-Evaluation/Assessment

The MIS systems and self-assessment tools developed during the initiative became integrated into the ways clubs examine who they are reaching and whether and how they might need to modify their strategies. Particularly in New York, the use of MIS systems was institutionalized and the data will continue to be examined at staff meetings. Boston staff found the MIS data helpful for presenting information to funders. They also found the teen surveys useful and will continue to conduct them.

VI. Lessons Learned

Few voluntary youth-serving organizations (VYSOs) have developed programs that attract large numbers of teens, sustain their interest and involvement, and provide them with supports and opportunities that can help them through the challenges of adolescence.

Five Boys & Girls Clubs in Boston and three in New York were involved in an ambitious three-year initiative to reach and serve teens in their communities.[1] We found that clubs in both cities were successful in reaching large numbers of teens and providing them with high levels of adult and peer support, but often not without significant challenges. Their experiences offer many lessons that can help inform organizations trying to build teen initiatives and funders who want to know what needs to be in place to foster efforts to develop strong teen programs.

Can VYSOs Attract Teens?

The clubs involved in this initiative showed that voluntary youth-serving organizations can definitely draw in many teens from their communities. In one year, Boston added from 20 to 100 new teen members at each club; while New York added from 201 to 1,100 new teens in addition to 50 teens eligible for PLU. These are major accomplishments that lend optimism to the success of programs that want to reach teens in impoverished communities.

Yet our data also show that more is not always better when recruiting teens, without accompanying resources, strategies and staffing to meet the needs of those youth. Those clubs—one in New York and one in Boston—that went well beyond their recruitment goals experienced difficulty meeting teens' social needs for adult and peer support. These findings suggest that defining the program's capacity, recruiting manageable numbers of teens within that capacity and keeping track of these numbers are key to success.

How Do VYSOs Attract Teens?

Clubs reached teens using several strategies, including increasing the hours of teen activities, developing collaborations with outside agencies and, in New York, conducting targeted street outreach. The large numbers of teens that New York's outreach workers

recruited indicate that street outreach was the most productive recruitment strategy in this initiative. New York's experience with this approach suggests several important characteristics of successful street outreach to teens. Outreach workers should:

- Be able to communicate and relate well with teens;
- Be willing to go where teens spend their time, for example, schools, arcades, parks and housing developments;
- Develop relationships with community agencies that work with teens with targeted characteristics; and
- Develop relationships with families in the community.

To reach teens most likely to participate actively in club activities, outreach workers should also:

- Have close connections with program staff to ensure that the needs and interests of recruited youth can be met by the club;
- Let potential recruits know what the club can and cannot provide before bringing them to the club;
- Determine whether teens are open to club participation and want to make positive changes in their lives before recruiting them;
- Target youth who live close to the club and can easily participate; and
- Recruit youth in pairs or very small groups—teens recruited in this way are more likely to continue participation than those recruited alone because they have a social connection at the club. Youth recruited in larger groups are likely to quit if even one group member stops coming.

Because few outreach workers began their work with all of these skills, organizations creating an outreach position may have to provide training and support to help staff develop these skills.

Can VYSOs Reach and Serve High-Risk Teens?

The experiences of the clubs involved in this initiative suggest that voluntary youth-serving organizations can reach and serve teens with many needs. Clubs did, however, experience challenges in these efforts, suggesting that meeting the interests and needs of many higher-risk teens may require targeted efforts.

Recruiting Higher-Risk Youth

The clubs were able to draw in many disadvantaged and underserved teens: about half of teens in New York and a third in Boston reported being *both* economically disadvantaged *and* living in a single-parent home (with 80% and 60%, respectively, reporting economic disadvantage); and about 20 percent reported engaging in three or more risky behaviors in the last year.

Clubs reached many higher-risk youth through collaborations with such agencies as probation in New York, and the Police Department and Division of Youth Services in Boston. Many of these teens joined to fulfill a community service requirement, which may have helped clubs retain them long enough to get them interested and invested in the club.

Serving Higher-Risk Youth

The clubs were also successful in running some programs targeting higher-risk youth. Several offered leadership training and opportunities, and provided participants with a stipend—important motivating factors for these youth. Job-readiness training in both cities also often targeted higher-risk youth, many of whom were attracted to opportunities that could help them get a job.

However, serving and retaining teens who had engaged in risk behaviors was difficult. After the first year of the initiative, New York expanded its risk criteria for PLU eligibility, in part, because many youth who had engaged in high-risk behaviors were unlikely to continue attending the clubs after their initial introduction. In Boston, clubs had difficulty reaching, serving and finding job placements for teens involved in a job-training program that targeted specific

groups of high-risk teens, such as teen parents and adjudicated youth. Additionally, clubs faced challenges in meeting the needs of higher-risk teens, suggesting that agencies interested in serving these youth may have to tailor their efforts to their distinct needs and interests. Compared with youth reporting fewer risk factors, higher-risk teens in both cities:

- Perceived more barriers to frequent club participation, especially with respect to club rules;
- Received fewer academic benefits but fairly comparable job-related benefits;
- Felt less safe at the club as well as other places where they spend their time; and
- Received fewer supports and opportunities in most areas, except adult and peer support for which higher-risk youth reported similar levels, and leadership opportunities for which higher-risk youth reported higher levels.

These experiences suggest that some youth who are characterized by several risk factors may require a more intensive approach than was possible in this initiative. Both clubs made some efforts to reach teens at the extreme end of a continuum of risk—Boston as part of specific individual programs and New York as an early focus of PLU. Their experiences made both organizations reexamine where on this continuum they would focus their efforts. The changes the clubs made meant they did not reach large numbers of "highest-risk" teens; but they also meant that the clubs focused their efforts more intensively on teens who were most likely to be retained as members and benefit from participation.

Can VYSOs Involve Teens Long and Often Enough to Provide Benefits?

Sustaining teens' involvement proved to be more challenging than recruitment: both Boston and New York were able to retain a little over half of their target groups of teens for at least a full year. Although there is room for improvement, this is a noteworthy accomplishment given the groups of youth that were targeted in this initiative. In New York, outreach workers targeted higher-risk teens who probably would not have come to the clubs on their own. And Boston's targeted age group of 13-year-olds was dwindling prior to the initiative. Increasing numbers of preteens (possibly a result of initiative efforts) and small increases in the percentage of these teens retained, led to a 21 percent increase in the number of 13-year-olds attending the Boston clubs.

Clubs also succeeded in actively involving many teens. In both New York's PLU program and Boston's general teen program, 60 percent of the youth came once a month or more (with about a third of teens attending the clubs once or more a week). In New York, PLU teens actually attended the clubs more frequently than their peers (only 20% of their peers attended once or more a week). We also found that, in New York, youth-reported attendance increased over time, providing some evidence that the New York clubs were able to involve teens more intensively as the initiative progressed.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that about 40 percent of Boston and PLU teens attended less than once a month. Decreases in attendance as teens get older and modest retention rates are, in some ways, expected and encouraged by club staff in the belief that older teens should make room in their lives for jobs and other positive outside activities. Yet, for the clubs to positively affect teen outcomes, youth need to be at least minimally involved. Also, the clubs had few mechanisms to determine how many of the teens who attended infrequently did so because they had already gotten the benefits they needed from the club and had turned to involvement in other constructive activities. New York's PLU program did include efforts to determine why involved teens ended their membership. Using a similar process to obtain a more complete picture of youth's attendance will be important for programs as they consider ways to retain youth who need their continued support and, at the same time, encourage decreased attendance from teens who are ready to move on to other developmentally appropriate activities.

What Challenges Do VYSOs Face in Staffing Teen Programs?

Hiring staff to work with teens and provide them with one-on-one attention and support was crucial in the clubs' efforts to meet their goals, but was challenging in several respects:

- Finding the "right" people with skills and experience to work with teens was difficult, particularly for those clubs implementing New York's outreach and case management model, which required staff to have skills in areas not commonly targeted by clubs.

- Integrating new teen staff into club operations was difficult. Strategies that enabled clubs to succeed in these efforts included:
  - Hiring staff members who had previously worked in the club with younger youth;
  - Concerted efforts by administrative staff to stress that all staff needed to cooperate in efforts to serve teens; and
  - Involving teen staff in programming for preteens, both to provide them with opportunities to get to know these youth, and to initiate efforts across departments to collaboratively serve all club members.

- Preventing turnover was a big challenge for all but two of the eight clubs. Most youth-serving agencies face frequent staff turnover, partly because of the low pay and long hours required of staff. However, clubs that retained their staff provided teens with higher levels of supports and opportunities than those with high turnover. Determining strategies that agencies can use to retain staff will, thus, be crucial in strengthening teen services.

- Clubs had difficulty providing sufficient training for staff. Teen staff from both cities felt that the clubs did not provide them with enough training. Working with teens involves unique challenges and may require tailored training. Outside of club-sponsored trainings, some clubs developed strategies to foster the knowledge and skills of their teen staff, including:
  - Providing staff with opportunities to interact and share strategies with staff from other clubs;
  - Encouraging staff communication and training across departments by, for example, having social workers train staff to work with youth who have special needs;
  - Developing collaborations with consultants who can provide guidance on specific topics; and
  - Informing staff of training offered by outside organizations.

Were Clubs Able to Provide Teens with High Levels of Adult Support?

Clubs in both cities were quite successful in providing teens with emotional and instrumental support. In the last year of the initiative, about 80 percent of teens reported receiving support from at least one staff member at the club.

To foster these relationships, clubs implemented tracking and case management strategies. Each Boston club hired a teen education advocate, who was responsible for monitoring teens' academic performance, in part, through collaborations with schools. The Boston clubs also experimented with portfolio systems and strategies to track youth's activity participation.

New York implemented an intensive case management approach for PLU teens. In line with PLU's goal of providing teens with extensive support and guidance, involved teens reported high levels of adult support, frequent communication with staff about personal issues and high levels of confidentiality in these discussions. In fact, in the first two years of the initiative, when membership numbers were relatively low, PLU teens reported even higher levels of adult support than their peers; and, in the last year of the initiative, these teens reported spending more time talking with adult staff about personal issues than their peers. This approach, thus, seemed to be an effective strategy for supporting teens, particularly higher-risk teens, who may need additional efforts to connect them with activities that meet their needs.

Sustaining high levels of adult support for teens was challenging in both cities. Although levels of adult support in Year 3 were fairly high, these levels decreased from earlier reports, possibly due to membership increases and extensive turnover in the last year of the initiative.

What Kind of Approach is Helpful When Trying to Ensure Active Teen Participation?

To make the clubs more "teen friendly" and ensure that teens' needs were being met, the clubs changed how they approached their work with these youth. Both clubs developed or improved their orientation efforts, and clubs in Boston increased teens' access to other areas of the club. Staff in Boston reported that these efforts helped encourage preteens to sustain their involvement. Three Boston clubs also increased the structure of teens' time at the club by requiring them to share report cards with staff or devote an hour every day to completing homework. Although these changes were met with resistance at first, teens seemed to become accustomed to them and reported some benefits.

Yet, we also note relatively low levels of input and decision-making by youth in both Boston and New York. As clubs create structured programming for teens and implement requirements for their participation, they should develop ways to elicit teens' input.

Can VYSOs Create a Safe Environment With Programming That Engages Teens' Interests?

An important goal for the clubs was to ensure that increases in older, potentially higher-risk, teen members did not detract from youth's feelings of safety. Our data suggest that the clubs achieved this goal: over three-quarters of teens reported feeling safe at the club.

The clubs also made extensive efforts to develop interesting, engaging activities for teens. These efforts were critical: high-quality programming not only provides teens with knowledge and skills, but also is one way that clubs sustain youth's participation. Engaging youth in a *variety* of activities is also key to providing youth with benefits; youth's involvement in a variety of activities was the most powerful predictor of the extent to which they received support and opportunities from the club (even more important than frequency of attendance or length of membership).

But creating engaging activities for teens was challenging. About half of surveyed teens reported that activities at the club were interesting and engaging, but the most frequently reported barriers to club participation involved the number and quality of age-appropriate activities.

Although this is clearly an area for growth in these clubs, it may be important to consider these findings in the context of other supports, such as high levels of adult support. In a recent P/PV study, Walker and Arbreton (2001) reported that many youth involved in after-school Beacon Center programs reported interest in the activities, but fewer reported adult support from staff. Although staff should clearly strive to provide youth with both supportive relationships and engaging activities, perhaps these two developmental goals are, in some ways, at odds with one another—staff who spend a great deal of time developing and running creative programming may have less time to devote to forming one-on-one relationships with youth.

Also, although youth did not generally report high levels of interest and engagement in club activities, the clubs were able to develop targeted programming that seemed to be successful in achieving its specific goals. Although clubs in both cities expanded programming in both academic and job-related areas, the Boston clubs focused most heavily on enhancing their academic programming, while New York focused on expanding job-related programming. Teens reported wanting help in both of these areas and receiving benefits in line with these focuses. Teens also reported getting involved in high numbers of leadership opportunities.

How Can VYSOs Track Teens' Attendance?

Clubs in both cities invested in improvements in their management information systems (MIS). Staff in New York, who moved from handwritten attendance records to a computerized system, felt that their ability to track and monitor club membership was tremendously enhanced. However, setting up the system required extensive staff time and effort. Clubs in both cities reported several additional challenges when setting up and using these systems:

- Using an MIS system costs more than the system itself—New York staff reported spending about $15,000 a year to run their system;
- Clubs need to dedicate at least a year to installing a new system. New York staff were unable to fully use the system and take advantage of its features until the last year in the initiative;
- Clubs without staff dedicated to taking attendance experienced great difficulty collecting accurate data;
- More than one person should be trained on how to use the system, especially when staff turnover rates are high; and
- Teen attendance may be particularly difficult to capture and should be collected with extra care.

Are These Efforts Sustainable and How Much Do They Cost?

The annual cost of serving teens in Boston's initiative was about $499 per youth, while the cost of serving teens in New York's PLU program was about $2,178. Differences in these costs reflect the different focuses of the two initiatives: the Boston clubs used their funds to support services for all teens; while New York's funds supported extensive outreach and an intensive case management approach for work with a small group of teens.

Both organizations are trying to sustain these efforts. After the first year of the initiative, Boston established a mechanism to identify funds that would make these positions part of their core teen program. In New York, PLU was an add-on program, designed to serve a specific group of teens. Although the New York clubs see the services provided by PLU as critical to reaching this group, funded positions did not become a part of the clubs' core teen program. Thus, sustaining the initiative will require raising foundation monies to support the specific program.

Final Thoughts

Balancing Quantity and Quality in Teen Services

Voluntary youth-serving agencies face a critical challenge when serving teens—ensuring a proper balance between the number of teens served and the quality of services provided to them. Without strategies for increasing access to space and staffing (and mechanisms for funding these needs), youth-serving organizations may be limited in the number of youth they can provide with in-depth, high-quality services. In this study, those clubs that recruited the highest numbers of teens provided them with the lowest levels of adult and peer support. And staff provided the highest levels of support to teens earlier in the initiative, when membership numbers were relatively low. Determining how to balance the quantity of youth served with the quality of services provided to these youth—and whether this balance may differ for youth of different ages—will be important as youth-serving organizations improve their efforts to serve teens.

Are Existing VYSOs Good Choices for Investments in Services for Teens?

The findings from this study suggest that investing in existing voluntary youth-serving organizations, like Boys & Girls Clubs, can be an effective way to attract teens and engage them in activities that can make a difference in their lives. The clubs involved in this initiative were successful in:

- Recruiting large numbers of teens—a majority with one or more risk factors;
- Eliciting frequent attendance from about a third of teens;
- Retaining the participation of about half of their target groups;

- Involving youth in a variety of activities, especially in academic, leadership and job-related areas;
- Providing teens with high levels of adult and peer support; and
- Providing teens with experiences and benefits in areas of interest to teens and in line with the clubs' goals.

Many of these successes would not have been possible without the existing infrastructure and expertise of the participating organizations. Both Boys & Girls Clubs have served youth for more than a century, and their ability to serve large numbers of school-aged youth in communities with few resources is well documented (e.g., Kotloff et al., 1997). These existing organizations offered the initiative:

- A safe space that was conducive to working with teens;
- Extensive experience in developing and implementing after-school activities;
- Administrative support and guidance from a central office;
- Connections between clubs that fostered cross-club sharing;
- Materials, curriculum and the expertise of existing teen staff; and
- Pre-established relationships with families and agencies in the community.

The initiatives built on these strengths and resources significantly lowered their costs, relative to costs of similar initiatives without this support.

What Challenges Do Youth-Serving Organizations Face in their Efforts to Serve Teens?

Despite their successes, the initiative posed many challenges to the clubs. Some challenges—for example, hiring and integrating new staff in their teen departments—were overcome. Others were not, suggesting the need for growth in several areas. To develop strong services for teens, voluntary youth-serving agencies should:

- Provide staff with training focused specifically on working with teens;
- Make concerted efforts to retain staff;
- Ensure that teens are given ample opportunities to engage in input and decision-making;
- Continue to develop ways to create interesting, engaging and age-appropriate activities for teens; and
- Make special efforts to ensure that higher-risk teens are experiencing developmental supports and opportunities through their participation.

What Strategy is Most Effective for Developing a Teen Initiative?

The two initiatives discussed in this report differed in many ways. Boston's strategy involved hiring two new staff members at each club who enhanced programming for all teens; New York's PLU program involved intensive outreach and case management to a small, targeted group of teens. Both strategies seemed to succeed in providing teens with benefits important for healthy youth development. Determining which of these strategies, or combination of strategies, is most effective for a given organization depends on the specific goals of the program as well as the strengths that the organization brings to the project.

New York's strategy of hiring an outreach worker for recruitment is useful for programs that want to reach large numbers of teens who may not come to the club on their own. Their intensive case management approach may also be key in providing higher-risk recruits with supports that encourage and sustain frequent involvement. Because these teens were new to the clubs (sometimes without ties to other club members), sustaining their involvement may have depended on the extensive one-on-one support provided by PLU staff members. Although the Boston clubs also served many higher-risk teens, many of these teens came to the clubs on their own, and thus may have already been motivated to participate.

Boston's less expensive strategy of hiring staff to provide programming for all teens was also effective for their goals, which involved sustaining the interests and meeting the needs of current club members, rather than drawing in and providing intensive services to significant numbers of hard-to-reach teens. Like staff in New York, these new staff provided teens with high levels of support and created a variety of programming, engaged in by many teens.

Both strategies have many strengths that can provide organizations with valuable lessons on how to improve efforts to serve teens. Although the clubs involved in this initiative still have room for growth, their experiences pave the way for other organizations that want to improve the lives of teens in their communities.

Endnotes

1. As part of their efforts, Boston also implemented technology and social work initiatives—the two other areas of interest identified by their organizational survey. However, these initiatives did not draw from the same funding as the teen initiative.

2. Further description of the methodology and data collection strategies are provided in Appendix A.

3. In the first year of the initiative, New York targeted teens who had already engaged in risky behaviors, for example, gang members, youth with drug abuse problems, truant or expelled teens, and youth on probation.

4. The increase in membership of 1,100 teens was documented at a club in which all staff members recruited youth for their program area. The club also held large sports tournaments for community teens and required participants to become members.

5. When this report was being prepared, MIS data for Boston were only available for Years 1 and 2.

6. Although clubs do not generally consider 12-year-olds as "teens," we included these youth in our analyses because they were recruited into New York's PLU program, and Boston focused most of its efforts on retaining this age group.

7. Compared with younger teens, older teens were more likely to report marijuana or alcohol use, sexual activity, and academic risk, as well as having more risk factors overall.

8. Boston data are from the Year 3 survey; New York data were calculated by the clubs for all Year 3 PLU recruits.

9. In both cities, boys were more likely than girls to report being at risk in 8 of 12 areas, in addition to reporting more risk factors overall.

10. An overview of the demographic characteristics of the entire youth sample is presented in Appendix A. Appendix B describes each of the measures used in the study.

11. A very small number of youth categorized as coming from a single-parent home actually lived in foster care; 2 percent of youth in New York and 1 percent in Boston.

12. New teens were more likely than continuing teens to report 2 of the 12 risk factors tested, and less likely to report marijuana or alcohol use. These analyses combine data across the three years of the initiative and hold constant the initiative year (i.e., Year 1, Year 2 or Year 3).

13. These analyses hold constant club and initiative year. When age and gender are also accounted for, PLU youth continue to have higher "risk" scores overall, but are *not* significantly more likely than their peers to report academic risk, economic risk or having been arrested. Thus, some of the higher risks of PLU youth can be attributed to the fact that they are more likely than their peers to be male and older.

14. In both cities, teens reported higher rates of attendance than the MIS data suggest; more than 70 percent of survey participants reported that they attended three or more times a week. We focus on the MIS data because they are more conservative, although they likely underestimate youth attendance. In Boston, several clubs, especially those with a separate entrance for teens, reported that many teens were not captured by their MIS system. And, in New York, staff reported that teen junior staff members often failed to swipe their membership cards when they entered the club, seeing themselves as staff. At the same time, it is likely that teens taking our survey inflated their self-reported attendance rates slightly and attended more frequently than those who did not complete the survey.

15. These analyses hold constant the initiative year, club, gender, age, number of club activities involved in, length of membership, and (in New York) PLU status.

16. These data were reported by New York's project coordinator.

17. These analyses, based on MIS data, assess how many youth attended the clubs both at age 12 and the year during which they turned 13. Other estimates consider how many youth attended at age 12 and any time past their thirteenth birthday. These less conservative estimates yield slightly higher retention rates (59% prior to the initiative and 58% in Year 2).

18. These differences between reports in Boston and New York may reflect differences in the length of membership of survey participants: 48 percent of teens in Boston had been members for five or more years, whereas only a third of New York teens had been members that long. The New York clubs tried to recruit as many PLU youth for participation in the survey as possible—these teens had only recently joined the club.

19. "Negative peer interactions" consists of two measures—barriers to more frequent participation that indicate feeling unsafe around other youth and negative treatment by other youth.

20. Percentages reported for all adult support measures are from Year 3.

21. This was true for youth in both cities, except for knowing interests and goals, which was only true in Boston.

22. At one club, the guidance specialist worked part time.

23. Because these New York positions served all teens, our discussions of turnover do not consider these staff members. Throughout this report, we focus most heavily on the two "dedicated" PLU staff.

24. It is important to note that the Boston clubs that were involved in formal collaborations to serve high-risk youth (i.e., the Youth Service Providers Network (YSPN), a court diversion program) did provide participating youth with structured case management and tracking. However, these programs were not started as part of the teen initiative, and fairly small numbers of teens served were directly involved in club activities.

25. In Boston, attendance was related to teens' reports of two of three activity-related measures: level of interest and barriers regarding a lack of interesting activities for teens.

26. The central office allocated 29 hours per week to cover time spent by a training director, a secretary, two bookkeepers, a comptroller and the assistant executive director.

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Appendix A
Methodology

P/PV's evaluation included several components: (1) a youth questionnaire administered to a sample of teen club members in each of the three years of the initiative; (2) a staff questionnaire administered to all club staff in the first and last years of the initiative; (3) a cost survey administered to directors of each clubhouse in the second and third years of the program; (4) interviews, focus groups and observation data from each club collected throughout the course of the study; and (5) attendance information gathered during the first two years of the initiative. Each element is described in detail below.

Youth Questionnaire

P/PV administered a survey to a sample of transitioning and teen club members (ages 12 to 18) at three time points, during spring (between March and May) of each year of the study. The survey included questions covering several key areas of program experiences and developmental outcomes of interest in this study, including sense of safety, social support from adults and peers, leadership opportunities, risk behaviors, opportunities for input and decision-making, interesting activities, and youth's perceived benefits from club participation. Additional questions were also developed and included in the Year 2 and Year 3 surveys based on club staff's interests and concerns (e.g., What do youth want to get from coming to the club? What aspects of activities are appealing to youth?). (See Appendix B for a description of measures discussed in the report.)

In January 1999, 2000 and 2001, P/PV researchers hired and trained at least one adult staff member at each club to administer the questionnaire to youth club members. Survey administrators targeted teen club members in specific age, gender and membership groups (i.e., new and continuing members) for participation—some of whom were part of the initiative and others who were not. Boston's initiative focused on retaining youth who "transitioned" into teen programming at age 13. Thus, we wanted to learn more about youth's experiences both before and after this transition, and asked staff to survey both youth who were 12 and those who had recently transitioned at 13, as well as older teens. Because New York's initiative focused specifically on teens involved in the Project Link-Up program, we made efforts to involve both youth directly involved in this program as well as some youth who were not a part of the program. A total of 645 youth from the eight clubs completed the survey at Time 1, 662 at Time 2 and 583 at Time 3. (See Table A-1 for a description of the demographic characteristics of youth completing the survey at each of the three time points.)

Survey administrators read the questionnaires out loud to youth in small groups of up to 10 youth. Youth completed their surveys in about 30 to 45 minutes and returned them to survey administrators in a sealed envelope to mail to P/PV. Youth received $5 gift certificates for their participation in Years 1 and 2, and $7 in Year 3.

During the summer/fall following each survey administration, P/PV staff visited the clubs to present survey findings and interpretations of these findings to club staff, and to discuss staff's suggestions for additional areas we should further explore in subsequent waves of the survey. In Years 1 and 3, we also discussed findings from the staff questionnaire.

Staff Questionnaire

In February of Year 1 and Year 3 of the study, P/PV administered questionnaires to all clubhouse staff. These surveys were mailed to club directors or (in New York) the project director and were returned to P/PV by mail. Staff were given a $5 gift certificate for their participation.

The survey included questions about staff goals for youth, strategies used to achieve these goals, case management and tracking of youth, background and training, as well as staff engagement and perceptions of organizational support. Only staff goals for youth are discussed in this report. In this set of questions, staff were given a list of nine goals for youth (e.g., youth will get better grades, youth will avoid delinquent behavior, youth will find a steady job) and asked to indicate their top three goals for teen club members.

Cost Survey

In February of Years 2 and 3 of the study, P/PV administered a cost survey to each club. The survey asked about individual club expenditures, as well as expenditures the central offices incurred during their involvement with the teen initiative. P/PV received the most complete information from the cost survey administered after the second year of the initiative; thus, only data from that survey are included in the report.

Table A-1:
Characteristics of Youth Survey Participants—Spring 1999, 2000 and 2001

Boston—5 Clubs

Year 1: 420 youth surveyed

Gender	
Male:	63%
Female:	37%
Age	
12 years old:	19%
13 to 15 years old:	57%
16 to 18 years old:	24%
Ethnicity	
African American:	38%
White:	35%
Hispanic:	16%
Mixed or Other:	9%

Year 2: 394 youth surveyed

Gender	
Male:	63%
Female:	37%
Age	
12 years old:	11%
13 to 15 years old:	62%
16 to 18 years old:	27%
Ethnicity	
African American:	42%
White:	28%
Hispanic:	22%
Mixed or Other:	7%

Year 3: 330 youth surveyed

Gender	
Male:	55%
Female:	45%
Age	
12 years old:	20%
13 to 15 years old:	60%
16 to 18 years old:	20%
Ethnicity	
African American:	32%
White:	34%
Hispanic:	25%
Mixed or Other:	8%

New York—3 Clubs

Year 1: 225 youth surveyed; 34 were in PLU

Gender	
Male:	63%
Female:	37%
Age	
12 years old:	21%
13 to 15 years old:	47%
16 to 18 years old:	32%
Ethnicity	
African American:	85%
White:	<1%
Hispanic:	8%
Mixed or Other:	6%

Year 2: 268 youth surveyed; 105 were in PLU

Gender	
Male:	49%
Female:	51%
Age	
12 years old:	22%
13 to 15 years old:	46%
16 to 18 years old:	33%
Ethnicity	
African American:	86%
White:	0%
Hispanic:	7%
Mixed or Other:	6%

Year 3: 253 youth surveyed; 89 were in PLU

Gender	
Male:	57%
Female:	43%
Age	
12 years old:	9%
13 to 15 years old:	57%
16 to 18 years old:	33%
Ethnicity	
African American:	84%
White:	1%
Hispanic:	8%
Mixed or Other:	5%

Site Visits

Technical Assistance Site Visits

P/PV technical assistance staff visited each participating club bi-monthly to support clubs in their initiative efforts. During these visits, program officers interviewed initiative and non-initiative staff about the progress of the initiative, discussed challenges faced by staff and offered strategies to overcome these challenges. Program officers also provided staff with research-based information in areas of need, curriculum and materials, training sessions, and workshops.

Research Site Visits

Staff Interviews. P/PV research staff conducted several visits to each clubhouse, including two intensive evaluation visits, one prior to the start of the initiative in Summer 1998 (to collect baseline information about club operations before the initiative was launched) and a second in Spring 2001. During the first visit, we interviewed initiative staff, other staff serving teens and key club staff (e.g., club directors, program directors) to document staff's expectations for the initiative, characteristics of the community and youth served, current staffing and strategies for club service, club goals and basic characteristics, and challenges of the club. In later visits, we asked staff about the start-up process, obstacles to implementation of the program, and whether and how implementing the program had changed the club environment. We also documented: (1) the club's staffing model and changes made to accommodate the initiative; (2) club strategies for maintaining an environment where youth feel safe; (3) changes made in the club physically or in its practices in response to needs of recruited youth; and (4) strategies used for recruitment and retention of youth. We also interviewed representatives from other community organizations with which the clubs had developed their referral network.

Focus Groups with Youth. In July 1999, during the summer of the first year of the study, we visited each of the eight clubhouses involved in the initiative to conduct a series of one-hour focus groups with small groups of teen club members (about six youth each). We tried to target both teens who were involved in the initiative and those who were not. We asked youth about their relationships with staff, the activities they enjoyed most at the club, suggestions for activities they would like to see started, their "transition" to teen programming, their perceptions of other youth at the club, changes they had seen in the club, and benefits they felt they had gained from their club involvement. Youth's responses were summarized and presented to staff.

Yearly Cross-Club Conferences

Club staff involved in the initiative met each spring in one of the two cities for a two-day conference. These conferences allowed staff to share information about effective strategies and challenges they were facing in implementing their programs. P/PV staff transcribed presentations and conversations from these sessions and information from them is included in the report.

Attendance Data

In the first two years of the initiative, P/PV worked closely with the clubs to assess tracking information needs and to purchase, set up and train staff to implement proper procedures to track appropriate attendance information. Data from these management information systems (MIS), collected over the first two years of the initiative, were analyzed to assess teen recruitment, attendance and retention rates of targeted youth.

Appendix B
Youth Survey Scales and Constructs

Leadership Opportunities

(Adapted from Gambone and Arbreton, 1997; 11 items; count of opportunities participated in at least once in the last year)

Have you had a paid job at the club in the last 12 months?

How often in the past year have you...

- Been a team captain at the club?
- Trained or supervised a group of youth at the club?
- Helped plan activities or events at the club?
- Presented your work to a group of people at the club?
- Helped raise money at the club?
- Been a peer counselor, peer tutor or mediator (someone who helps solve fights) at the club?
- Helped set rules or decide what happens when someone breaks the rules at the club?
- Been in charge of supplies or equipment or a place where things are for sale at the club?
- Done volunteer work at the club (like helping out with younger kids, helping in the office or cleaning up)?
- Been involved in community service, community volunteer work or efforts to change your community through the club (like helping elderly or sick people or participating in block or park clean-ups)?

Adult Support

(Adapted from Gambone and Arbreton, 1997; 6 items; Alpha=.84)

About how many of the adult staff at the club...

- Pay attention to what's going on in your life?
- Say something nice to you when you do something good?
- Spend time with you or talk to you outside of the club or club activities (like talking to you on the phone)?
- Could you go to if you need some advice about personal problems?
- Could you go to if you are really upset or mad about something?
- Could you go to in an emergency?

(Single items)

About how many of the adult staff at the club...

- Know what your interests and goals are?
- Know how you are doing in school?
- Could you go to for help to find a job?

Staff Confidentiality

(Single item; 4-point response set: "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")

- Staff here keep conversations we've had about my personal problems confidential.

Supportive Peers

(Adapted from Gambone and Arbreton, 1997; 6 items; Alpha=.89)

About how many of the youth who you spend time with at the club...

- Could you talk to about personal problems?
- Could you go to if you are really upset or mad about something?
- Spend time with you outside of the club or club activities?
- Could you go to for help in an emergency?
- Care about what happens to you?
- Make you feel good about yourself?

Input and Decision-Making

(Adapted from Gambone and Arbreton, 1997; 4 items; Alpha=.77; 4-point response set: "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")

- Staff let me decide what activities I'm going to do here (at the club).
- Staff give me a lot of choices about how I do things here.
- Staff let me decide how I spend my time while I'm here.
- There is a lot for me to choose from to do here.

Interest

(Adapted from Gambone and Arbreton, 1997; 4 items; Alpha=.78; 4-point response set: "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")

- I get to do things here that I don't get to do anywhere else.
- I get to go places that I don't usually get to go.
- I get a chance to do a lot of new things.
- The activities here really get me interested.

Safety

(Single items; 10-point scale: 1=Very Dangerous; 10=Very Safe)

How safe would you rate:

- The club.
- The neighborhood surrounding the club.
- Your school.
- Your home.

Case Management

(Single items)

- On days you come to the club, how much time do you usually spend talking one-on-one with adult staff about personal issues?
- Would you prefer to spend less time, the same amount of time or more time talking with staff?
- When you haven't come to the club for a while, do staff get in touch with you?
- Do you share information from your report card with adult staff at the club?
- Is sharing this information with staff helpful?

Barriers to Participation

(Single items)

Sometimes I don't come to the club because...

- The activities for kids my age aren't interesting.
- There aren't enough activities for people my age.
- I don't like the way I get treated by adults at the club.
- I don't like the way I get treated by other kids at the club.
- I don't feel safe around the other youth at the club.
- I was suspended by someone who works at the club.
- There are too many rules at the club.

Risk Status

(See chapter II, "Defining Risk" box)

Other Academic Risk Factors (not included in risk index)

(Single items; "Yes" or "No")

- Do you think you will go to college?
- Can you get extra help at school with subjects you are having a hard time with?

Activity Participation

(Count of total number of activities)

Over the last four weeks, have you participated in any of the following activities at the club or through a club program:

- Sports or physical education at the club?
- Social recreation activities at the club (like video games, board games or playing pool)?
- Arts programming at the club (like crafts, photography, music, dance or drama)?
- Computers at the club?
- Getting help on schoolwork or doing homework at the club?
- Instructional programming (like Smart Moves, drug awareness, Baby Think it Over, Youth of Purpose, College Club or Project Graduate) at the club?
- Leadership training (like attending Keystone, Torch Club or Young Leaders) at the club?
- Job training (like learning how to do job interviews, write resumes or choose a career) at the club?
- Going on field trips with the club?
- Group discussions with staff and youth about teen issues?
- Hanging out (with friends)?

Why Youth Participate in the Club

Responses to two sets of questions were combined to determine the extent to which youth were looking for particular experiences when attending the club and participating in its activities. Youth could choose from four responses ranging from "not at all important" to "very important."

"Want from the Club": Youth were asked to rate how important different experiences were in what they wanted to get out of attending the club: "What do you want to get out of coming to the club?"

"Choose Activities": Youth were asked to rate how important different activity characteristics were for them when choosing activities: "I have chosen to attend specific activities over others at the club when..."

Job Focus (4 items; Alpha=.75)

- Want from the club: A job.
- Want from the club: Help finding a job.
- Choose activities: The activity will help me get a job.
- Choose activities: The activity will help me make money.

School Focus (2 items; Alpha=.63)

- Want from the club: Help getting through school.
- Choose activities: The activity will help me do better in school.

Friend Focus (3 items; Alpha=.68)

- Want from the club: New friends.
- Choose activities: My friends are attending the activity.
- Choose activities: The activity will help me make new friends.

Adult Focus (4 items; Alpha=.71)

- Want from the club: Adults I can talk to.
- Choose activities: I like the staff leading the activity.
- Choose activities: The activity lets me talk with youth and staff (like a rap session).
- Choose activities: Staff participate in the activity with me instead of just supervising it.

Activity Focus (8 items; Alpha=.85)

- Want from the club: New experiences.
- Want from the club: Fun things to do in my free time.
- Choose activities: The activity is something I am good at.
- Choose activities: The activity is new at the club.
- Choose activities: The activity is exciting.
- Choose activities: The activity is challenging.
- Choose activities: The activity will teach me something new.
- Choose activities: The activity is competitive.

Leadership Focus (1 item)

- Want from the club: A chance to be a leader.

Stay out of Trouble (1 item)

- Want from the club: A place to stay out of trouble.

Club Benefits

(Single items; 4-point response set: "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree")

The club has helped me to...

Job

- Learn how to write a resume or look for a job.
- Get a job.

School

- Do better in school.
- Learn how to apply to college.

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