

# Sprockets Activator Designations

New in the 2018-2019 Activator Cycle, programs will be able to receive an Activator designation that best illustrates how its program engages in the Activator cycle. The designations will also help Sprockets target technical assistance to programs in specific ways to help them where they would most benefit.

Sprockets believes that all young people deserve to participate in high-quality afterschool learning opportunities because this is where they achieve positive outcomes. It is also important that all organizations have access in Sprockets supports and resources without barriers.

Strong programs collect and use data as part of a continuous improvement cycle, and multiple data sets are of high value in that process. Programs create more impactful improvement plans when they strive towards collecting quality, participation & attendance, program experience, and youth outcome data.



## Emerging Activator

New to the Activator cycle, they have a vested interest in program improvement, but haven't participated previously in the cycle but limited staff or organization capacity may make participating in the cycle a challenge.

### Data Collection Requirements

- Attendance/Participation
- External - Youth Program Quality Assessment

### Supports

- Sprockets Mentor
- External YPQA Assessment



## Stabilizing Activator

Stabilizing Activators have a vested interest in program improvement and have previously participated in the cycle. Stabilizing Activators have staff who have participated in the cycle before, but may be strengthening their systems and internal staff supports.

### Data Collection Requirements

- Attendance/Participation
- External and Self Assessment- (YPQA)

### Supports

- Sprockets Mentor - optional
- External YPQA Assessment
- Experience Data Technical Assistance - optional in spring



## Enhancing Activator

Enhancing Activators have a history of participation in the cycle and have developed internal supports for data collection and utilization. They have a process for collecting youth experience data during the "assess" portion of the cycle to inform their improvement plan. \*When experiencing large staff turn-over, these programs may become stabilizing to leverage additional technical assistance and support for the cycle.

### Data Collection Requirements

- Attendance/Participation
- External and Self Assessment- (YPQA)
- Experience Data

### Supports

- External YPQA Assessment
- Outcomes Data Technical Assistance - optional in spring



## Sustaining Activator

Sustaining Activators have internal structures and leadership that supports the collection and utilization of all 4 data sets. They are committed to continuous program improvement through data collection and program improvement. \*Some Sustaining Activators will be invited to mentor an Emerging Activator and receive "Mentor Organization" status.

### Data Collection Requirements

- Attendance/Participation
- External and Self Assessment- (YPQA)
- Experience Data
- Youth Outcome

### Supports

- Resources to become a Sprockets Mentor
- External YPQA Assessment

# Sprockets Activator Designations—FAQ

## **In the past, PQA assessments have been optional. Why the change?**

The Program Quality Assessment tool was adopted as a Sprockets resource early in the development of the network to provide a shared language around youth work practices. The framework can be used both as a set of standards for high quality instructional practices for staff and a measurement snapshot aligned to those practices.

The tool is a low stakes strategy that focuses not on the scores themselves but on improving youth work practice through conversation. As staff learn more about the items in the tool and discuss where strengths and growth areas lie in implementing programming, the practices and improvement goals become stronger.

- Self/internal Observation - This will now be required for all Activators with the exception Emerging Activators. There are a variety of strategies to implement internal observations, including team scoring. Sprockets will provide support for considering the best option for your organization.
- External Observation - These are required for all Activators. Having an outside perspective to review alongside your internal scores is a valuable piece of the process. Quality is an important data set in which to evaluate your program. We are excited to have build the capacity to support the full network in this area.

## **Do we have to utilize the Sprockets resources for our data sets?**

No. Sprockets has provided a variety of resources, including the Cityspan/Sprockets shared data system, SAYO surveys, Holistic Student Assessment and more. We recognize that these supports may not be the best fit for all programs. Some programs use other data collection tools, which is great!

## **What if our program stays at Stabilizing or Enhancing designations? Is that bad?**

Each organization is different in many ways. Factors like program structure, staffing, turnover and priorities all play a part in how a program may experience the activator cycle. Sprockets believes that when you collect all 4 types of data, you see a fuller picture of what is happening in your program. We also believe that it is important to focus on the integrity and use of data collected. It may take a few years to balance PQA observation practices and administering a youth experience survey. While having an understanding of the impact on young people through outcome data is important, measuring impact is complex. Sprockets continues to work on supports to help programs navigate that piece of the data process.

## **Do we have to progress through all 4 designations?**

No. While this does provide a framework that programs can use to plan out their development over time, some organizations may find they step into designations without going through a “progression”. An organization may also have history as an Enhancing or Sustaining Activator and find themselves in Emerging or Stabilizing when there is large staff turn over, funding or programming changes.

## **We have been collecting 4 forms of data and participating in the Activator cycle for many years. Do we still need to attend M3 and submit an improvement plan?**

Yes! Sprockets is proud to say that there are a number of partners that land in the Sustaining Activator category. The philosophy around continuous program improvement is that each year a program participates in an assess - plan - improve cycle as a way to check in annually. Each year brings new youth, or the same youth growing and developing. New staff or other variables also play into the context of a program. Sprockets is interested in connecting with Sustaining Activators with robust internal structures to make meaning of data to discuss opportunities to adjust timelines or other potential variations. Making meaning of data and improvements plans on an annual basis, however, are a key part of being an Activator.

## **Why is it important for my program to be a Sprockets Activator?**

Sprockets partners want to be an Activator for a variety of reasons. Here are some we have heard... what would you add?

- With more funders acknowledging the importance of continuous program improvement, being an Activator demonstrates commitment to an Assess-Plan-Improve cycle.
- Being an Activator provides an accessible process for staff at all levels of the work to build evaluative thinking skills. Working together to collect *and* analyze the data builds more investment and action from all!
- All young people deserve high quality programs and participating in the cycle annually ensures we are always striving to provide the best spaces and opportunities.