



How did you engage stakeholders in the process of creating statewide quality standards?

Professional development providers, statewide associations, and local afterschool coordinating bodies served on the network's Professional Development and Quality (PD&Q) Committee and:

- Researched effective practices and standards guides from across the country.
- Engaged additional key stakeholders (mostly program providers) on a design team that determined the effective practices.
- Worked with a communications consultant to move from markers and flip charts to a rough-draft effective practices chart.
- Revised the effective practices chart based on feedback from regional input sessions.
- Collaborated with a graphic designer and communications consultant to bring the chart to life.



What advice do you have for other states before they start to develop or implement their own quality standards?

Make sure to ask yourself what motivation or incentive does anyone have to use it? Consider this:

- **Design matters.** Make your standards something that people want to interact with. Think of the final product as a tool that inspires and excites youth program staff to take action to strengthen their program.
- **Partner with funders to reinforce the standards.** Ignite recommends a low-stakes approach to standards, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't partner with major afterschool funders from the beginning so that they are part of the design and promotion. One idea—work to align or somehow integrate the standards into funders' requests for proposal!
- **Determine where the standards “live.”** Minnesota's standards are owned by the network, but other states have standards produced by the state education agency or other commission. Decide where your state's standards should be housed to give credibility and support their use.
- **Keep standards alive through professional development.** Ignite's PD&Q Committee often commented that as huge of a task as it was to develop the effective practices, it is just Stage 1. It's important to have a Stage 2 plan under way that is about professional development around the standards.



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Please share your thoughts with us via e-mail at SANSupport@air.org. We look forward to hearing from you.



What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

Challenge 1: Balancing regional perspectives and determining the need for effective practices. Parts of Minnesota had been using quality assessment tools for almost a decade when *Believe It. Build It.* was developed. These providers felt that this quality framework was sufficient. Areas of the state without equitable access were hungry for a free tool that would create shared language. We had to be attentive to create a guide that worked for program quality pros and novices alike.

Challenge 2: High stakes versus low stakes. Many partners were concerned that developing statewide afterschool effective practices would lead to high-stakes accountability systems. Many afterschool programs want public recognition for the good work they do, but they also want to spend more time considering the best way to build a system of public recognition around quality and program improvement.



What successes are you most proud of?

Ignite is very proud that *Believe It. Build It.* is a guide that users can interact with. It can be written in, added to, and taken apart and put back together. Supporting the effective practices, the We Believe section talks about the values and guiding principles that undergird our work. The Continuous Program Improvement section demonstrates that achieving quality is a continuous process and not a destination.



Who did you work with to create your quality standards?

- Amherst H. Wilder Foundation
- Blandin Foundation
- Brandi Olson Consulting
- Duluth Area Family YMCA
- Girl Scouts River Valleys
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- Hennepin County Library
- McGregor Independent School District 4
- Minneapolis Beacons Network
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board
- Minnesota Department of Education
- PACT for Families Collaborative
- Sprockets
- Stillwater Area Public Schools Community Education
- United Way of Olmsted County
- University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development
- University of Minnesota Youth Work Learning Lab
- YMCA Twin Cities