

GROW: Girls Reflecting Our World

Evaluation Plan



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Glossary

GPA: Grade point average

GROW: Girls Reflecting Our World

KAP: A survey method that measures knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

Background and Context

Girls Reflecting Our World, or “GROW,” is a youth leadership and mentorship program founded by Boston Police Department Officer Jamila Gales in 2018. Through life and social skills training and character-building opportunities, it aims to empower middle to high school-aged girls who attend school and live in inner-city Boston.

GROW’s mission is to support and encourage girls in the city of Boston during the transitional period between childhood and young adulthood. GROW achieves this with help from women in the community and by implementing activities that promote leadership, community involvement, social and life skills, and career exploration. Jamila and Mercedes described the girls in the program as “inner-city youth,” but it is important to note that they are not “criminal justice involved.” Understanding their historically underserved status, GROW creates opportunities to build skill sets and provides mentoring to the underserved girls of inner-city Boston.

The organization is dedicated to building trust, decreasing social and economic inequalities, and changing lives in the Greater Boston area. GROW’s community engagement work varies from running enrichment camps and summer events to facilitating youth dialogues and sports leagues. All the Boston PAL programs aim to “create opportunities for every demographic of [their] communities to interact with law enforcement and first responders in a positive and constructive manner” (Boston PAL, 2022). This is undoubtedly true for GROW, as a central goal of the program is to foster positive relationships between Boston youth and the police. Establishing meaningful connections between historically underserved youth groups and community officers can significantly reduce risky behaviors.

The core values of GROW are: 1) creating a safe space for girls to build healthy relationships, self-esteem, self-expression, self-identity, and leadership skills; 2) providing opportunities for youth, as well as their families, that they may not otherwise have; 3) building life skills that girls can carry with them throughout their lives; 4) promoting mental and physical wellness; and 5) fostering community building and service, with a focus on relationships with the police. GROW takes many different avenues to inspire and support participants, including wellness and restoration retreats, workshops, and partnerships with various agencies and initiatives like the Boston Police Department and Love Your Menses. Through these partnerships, the girls can grow in such areas as networking, self-defense, and teamwork. Meanwhile, workshops vary from those that teach “home-ec” skills about nutrition, cooking, and sewing or others that focus on professionalism through career exploration and communication etiquette sessions.

Program Description

GROW is a community-based mentorship and leadership program that serves girls in the inner city of Boston. What once began as a group of five girls who Jamila would bring to various attractions around Boston, namely the Museum of Fine Arts, aquarium, and Duck Tours, has blossomed into a major initiative through which Jamila, Mercedes, and community partners grow relationships with inner-city youth and their families, fostering transformation in experience and perception in all parties. The program targets middle to high school-aged girls (11 to 17) with a focus on ages 11 to 14. These girls live or attend school in Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, Roxbury, Hyde Park, and Mattapan. Currently, 35 to 40 girls are in the program, with a waiting list of over 50 individuals. The participants come from families who need additional resources and support, so it is a primary function of GROW to partner with them to address and overcome these unique challenges. Importantly, because of GROW, many participating girls have become agents of change in their communities and received awards, honorable mentions, and scholarships.

Furthermore, the girls in GROW have not become involved with the criminal justice system. GROW's mission is to be preventative and expose girls to various opportunities as they navigate adolescence and their transitions to adulthood. GROW also seeks to build trust between the youth and police in the city of Boston.

GROW seeks to address two primary social problems through its work:

1. Young girls who are exhibiting risky behaviors because of a lack of opportunity and guidance.
2. Distrust of police officers within the community. GROW's goal is for the girls and officers to unite as a community and build relationships outside the criminal justice system.

This can be accomplished by providing various resources to these girls that act as a preventative measure against delinquency. By directly and holistically addressing their needs, equipping them with critical life skills, and building their self-esteem, the program intends to mitigate deviant behavior due to a lack of opportunity. This, in turn, reduces the likelihood of involvement with the justice system. To overcome the distrust of law enforcement, participating officers strive to build long-term relationships with families using the village approach.

Logic Model

See appendix A. The logic model for GROW is intended to be read from left to right with arrows signaling the order in which events happen. The activities and outputs are colored red and blue and combined to make the outcomes purple. The longer an outcome may take to achieve, the darker the color of purple becomes. The inputs for GROW include the workshop facilitators or leaders, approximately seven Boston Police Department officers, the community, about 40 middle to high-school-aged girls, the families of the participating girls, and roughly five grants from foundations affiliated with the Boston PAL. As the logic model demonstrates, the community consists of partners who refer girls to the program, such as teachers, and entities that provide programming for participants, like the District Attorney's Office. Meanwhile, the activities that flow from these human, organizational, and financial inputs include tutoring and college preparation, financial literacy workshops, self-defense training, seminars on the safe use of electronic devices, civic engagement and empowerment initiatives, wellness workshops, youth-led dialogues, and water safety training. The direct results vary depending on the activity's focus. For example, the output of the IMPACT self-defense training is practice with techniques for physical protection. The short-term outcome is increased familiarity with these skills, the intermediate outcomes are a heightened awareness of one's surroundings and an ability to protect oneself, and the long-term outcome is reduced susceptibility to becoming a target and/or involved in the criminal justice system. Importantly, most of the outputs lead to increased exposure to resourceful information and growth opportunities for the girls, as seen by the placement of this outcome in the center of the model.

Based on the assumption that the participants are disadvantaged or underserved, the expectation is that the support and experiences of GROW will result in improved life skills and increased empowerment, and ultimately, reduced entry into the criminal justice system. Tangential to this main focus, certain activities facilitate outreach to the girls' families, strengthening familial ties and contributing to their self-esteem and resilience. Over time, these changes serve as additional protective factors against justice system involvement. Additionally, the program leadership understands GROW to be of mutual benefit to the BPD. They intend for many activities to facilitate positive interactions in the short-term, relationship-building in the intermediate term, and trust in law enforcement in the long term. In short, GROW's theory of change consists of three mechanisms—direct support to participating girls, engagement with their families, and positive interaction with police officers—through which the program achieves its intended impact of decreased entry of inner city youth into the justice system and increased trust of law enforcement within their communities.

Evaluation Purpose

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to measure the impact of GROW and its programs on the community. Officers Gales and Officer Parker will be able to determine how the activities meet the organization's expectations regarding preventing entry into the criminal justice system. Additionally, the evaluation will aim to provide evidence that the intervention positively impacts relationships between inner-city communities and local law enforcement. It will also assess GROW's success at an organizational level by examining changes in funding and participation. The intended users of the evaluation are GROW, specifically their leadership team consisting of Officer Jamila Gales and Officer Mercedes Parker, and the Bureau of Community Engagement. The stakeholders to consider are the GROW leadership, girls participating in the GROW program, the teachers and parents of the girls, the communities GROW operates within, the foundations that fund GROW, GROW's sponsors, such as the Boston Police Activities League (PAL), and the Bureau of Community Engagement.

Question Overview

This evaluation will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How impactful is GROW for preventing entry into the criminal justice system, and more specifically, how is working with law enforcement an effective prevention method?
2. How is GROW building community trust and therefore changing the narrative between the community and law enforcement?
3. How has GROW grown throughout its existence?

Evaluation Design (Surveys, Observations, Interviews, and Focus Groups)

This evaluation uses a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data like retention and detention rates will be used to assess the program's ability to retain girls and avoid behavioral difficulties. Pre-, mid-, and post-program surveys and interviews will track girls, their families, and their communities' development using the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (K.A.P.) method. Funding data will show how the organization has grown. GROW started with solely PAL money. Their funding has expanded from no funding at the beginning to four funding partners.

Evaluation Question 1

GROW's preventive impact can be assessed by looking at the girls' suspensions and behavior warnings six months before, during, and a year after the program. Institutional involvement might not be a good idea because not all behavior problems and dangerous behavior lead to involvement with the criminal justice system. Thus, reports and data on conduct will come from all referral partners involved, including the middle and high schools of participating girls.

Evaluation Question 2

GROW girls' family K.A.P. surveys will evaluate community trust. Selected family members will be surveyed. A qualitative method will first be used to develop a robust K.A.P. survey that is sensitive to the social, cultural, and historical factors relevant to relationships with law enforcement. Specifically, focus groups will be conducted with the GROW girls, their families, and participating Boston police officers to capture recurrent themes in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. From this information, qualitative K.A.P. surveys will measure knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs affecting relationships and cooperation with law enforcement.

GROW can send the survey to the parents and guardians they already have on file and for those who pick up the girls from the program. This questionnaire will assess program and family perspectives. These feelings may change swiftly. People can learn about the police and their work in numerous ways and at many times, especially if they already have preconceived notions. Respondents' understanding of law enforcement and police services is the knowledge metric. Second, the attitudes test will look at how families' social, cultural, and personal ideas about the roles and importance of police officers compare. Finally, the practice indicator measures family members' law enforcement actions, particularly help-seeking.

Evaluation Question 3

Participation data help measure program growth. Internal rosters of females from program start to 6-month intervals can provide useful data. We may compare rosters to see how many girls left and how much the program grew and quantify modifications in program budgets. GROW now receives funding from outside PAL. Funders and donations matter as GROW seeks to expand its reach and even become a model for police departments in other states to follow.

Data Collection Methods

See appendix B, which outlines the methods used for data collection. The evaluation will use a mixed methods approach to data collection. For question one, (How impactful is GROW for preventing entry into the criminal justice system, and more specifically, how is working with law enforcement an effective prevention method?), we recommend using surveys, observations, focus groups and interviews for the entire sample of 35 GROW girls. Additionally, analyzing grades over time and detention rates will aid in providing evidence for question one. This data should be collected 6 months prior to entering the program, in the middle of the program, and a year after program completion. Aside from grade changes and detention rates, changes in self-esteem and career path exploration will provide evidence for question one.

For question two, (How is this building community trust, and therefore changing the narrative between the community and law enforcement?), evidence includes: an increase in awareness, improvement in perceptions about police, and improvement in positive, help-seeking behavior. For methods, we recommend using K.A.P focus groups and family surveys. The sample will include all 35 GROW girls, families of GROW girls (convenience sampling), and the participating Boston Police Department officers. The time frame for the focus groups will occur once at the outset of the program. Meanwhile, the surveys for the girls, their families, and the officers will occur biannually for the next 7 years to follow participants' families until graduation as well as capture information on families of girls who enroll in subsequent years. In a given program cycle, the questionnaires will first be administered upon enrollment and then six months after entering the program.

For the final question, (How has GROW developed throughout its existence?), the evidence will be changes in funding, the number of participants, and retention rates. The primary method will be a process evaluation using the activity and results component from the logic model. For this question, we will need to include all stakeholders in the sample. The time frame will be four times throughout the year, at the end of each three-month term.

Data Analysis Plan

Evaluation Question 1

The proposed criteria for success would be reduced detention rates and an increased GPA for the girls of GROW. Changes in detention rates and GPAs would be measured over time. The evaluators will tally up the number of behavioral citations of every participant at each of the three-time increments and analyze the percentage change in these quantities. To supplement the findings regarding behavior and retention, the evaluators can examine the girls' grades and analyze if there was a change in their academic standing during their time in the program. One of the program goals is to promote academic excellence through tutoring and study halls. By measuring and analyzing grades six months before enrollment in GROW, during enrollment, and one year after leaving, the evaluators can determine if there were statistically significant positive changes in grades associated with the program. The indicator of choice will be the grade point average or GPA. This is defined as the score between 1.0 and 4.0 that the participants receive for all their courses. Because the timing of the three data collection periods may not align with the start or end of the academic year, the evaluation will utilize the girls' point-in-time GPAs. Again, the evaluators will need to partner with the middle and high schools of participants to obtain their grades. They will collect the data by recording the GPA of every girl from their academic records at each of the three-time points.

Evaluation Question 2

Performance will be judged based on the extent of improvement on each item within the three categories of knowledge, attitudes, and practices for the girls, family members, and police officers surveyed. Since the surveys will be given at three different times, improvement for the indicators is defined as a statistically significant positive percentage change at the standard alpha level of 0.05 between pre- and mid-program, mid- and post-program.

Evaluation Question 3

GROW began as a pilot program in 2018 for Dorchester only and became a city-wide program in 2019. It gained funding from the Hayden Foundation in 2020, Boston After School and Beyond and the Corey Griffin Foundation in 2021, the Martin Foundation and the City of Boston Foundation in 2022. Performance standards will be statistically significant funding growth adjusted for program costs. Success will also be judged based on the change in the total number of funders from beginning to present day as well as change in the length of time for which each funder is committed to supporting GROW. The evaluation will also look at how the total amount spent is split up by percentage to see how program activities are paid for.

Plan for Dissemination and Use of Findings

The proposed dissemination plan for the evaluation results involves two modes and two corresponding channels: 1) one-page flyers for distribution at funding and internal meetings and 2) formal slide presentations for external stakeholder meetings. The one-page document will summarize the findings of the evaluation, and the Program Director can use the material alongside GROW's impact video to succinctly and compellingly communicate to current or potential funders the value and effectiveness of the program. This method of dissemination will also facilitate communication about its impact internally, specifically, to the Boston Police Department. Meanwhile, a professional presentation will be useful for meetings with external stakeholders, such as other city police departments that are interested in implementing similar programs.

The two expected uses of the findings are persuasive and conceptual. Regarding the persuasive use, Officer Gales can utilize the evaluation results to support the position that GROW is successful in preventing girls' entry into the criminal justice system and empowering them as agents of change in their communities. This will be beneficial for ensuring sustainability of funding, convincing new funders to commit to GROW, and garnering buy-in from the Boston Police Department. The conceptual use is relevant for external meetings. Officer Gales can use the findings in professional presentations to police departments outside of Boston to explain how the program works. This could influence their understanding of preventive law enforcement work but may not lead to direct action. For example, Officer Gales can communicate the evaluation results to stakeholders in Chicago who are interested in GROW's concept and method of empowerment for inner city girls but are having difficulty recruiting participants.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the proposed evaluation. First, the evaluation question focusing on prevention is hard to measure. Prevention of something can be hard to quantify. It is far easier to demonstrate that something did occur than it is to prove that something did not occur and attribute the absence of an outcome to a specific action. Therefore, while measuring GROW's success in preventing entry into the criminal justice system is possible, it might be a challenge. A second limitation is that it is hard to quantify the attitudes (changes in perceptions of law enforcement). This is because attitudes can vary, and it can be difficult to categorize them accurately enough to create quantitative data. A third limitation is that the program is a long-standing community organization that lacks visibility in the public eye, e.g. there is no website. This makes it difficult to find information on GROW and its programs via an internet search. A fourth limitation is that there is a lack of previous evaluation data which constrains GROW's ability to obtain funding because there is a lack of evidence regarding effectiveness for funders to review. However, this is one reason why our evaluation is important for GROW's public visibility to both funders and other stakeholders.

Regarding the data collection methods of evaluation question 1, post-program data on behavior may be unavailable after the girls graduate from high school and GROW. That is, the evaluation will not see GROW alumni's college or job disciplinary histories. Furthermore, the data analysis methodology can only permit conclusions about correlation. To attribute causation to the program, the statistical techniques would have to include a variety of covariates. Regarding the K.A.P. method for evaluation question 2, the evaluators may be unable to obtain responses from all the participants' families. Lastly, changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices may be significant for family members' real-world experiences even without achieving statistical significance.

Recommendations

In an effort to expand GROW's visibility, we suggest creating a website and adding a resource tab to Boston Police Department's existing website. The creation of a website or resource tab for the Boston Police Department website will help make it easier for stakeholders to find information on GROW and its work. A website will make it clear that GROW is its own organization while a resource tab will show how the Boston Police Department is partnered with them. Another recommendation to expand visibility is to create a social media page to help youth become aware of the organization. A website and resource tab have to be specifically looked up by a user, but social media posts can appear on youth and others' pages using the algorithm. Social media is a great way to showcase what GROW does in a digestible way that appeals to its target audience. Lastly, we recommend that the GROW team transition to working with Dr. Tiana Yom and the Northeastern University Public Evaluation Laboratory to implement this

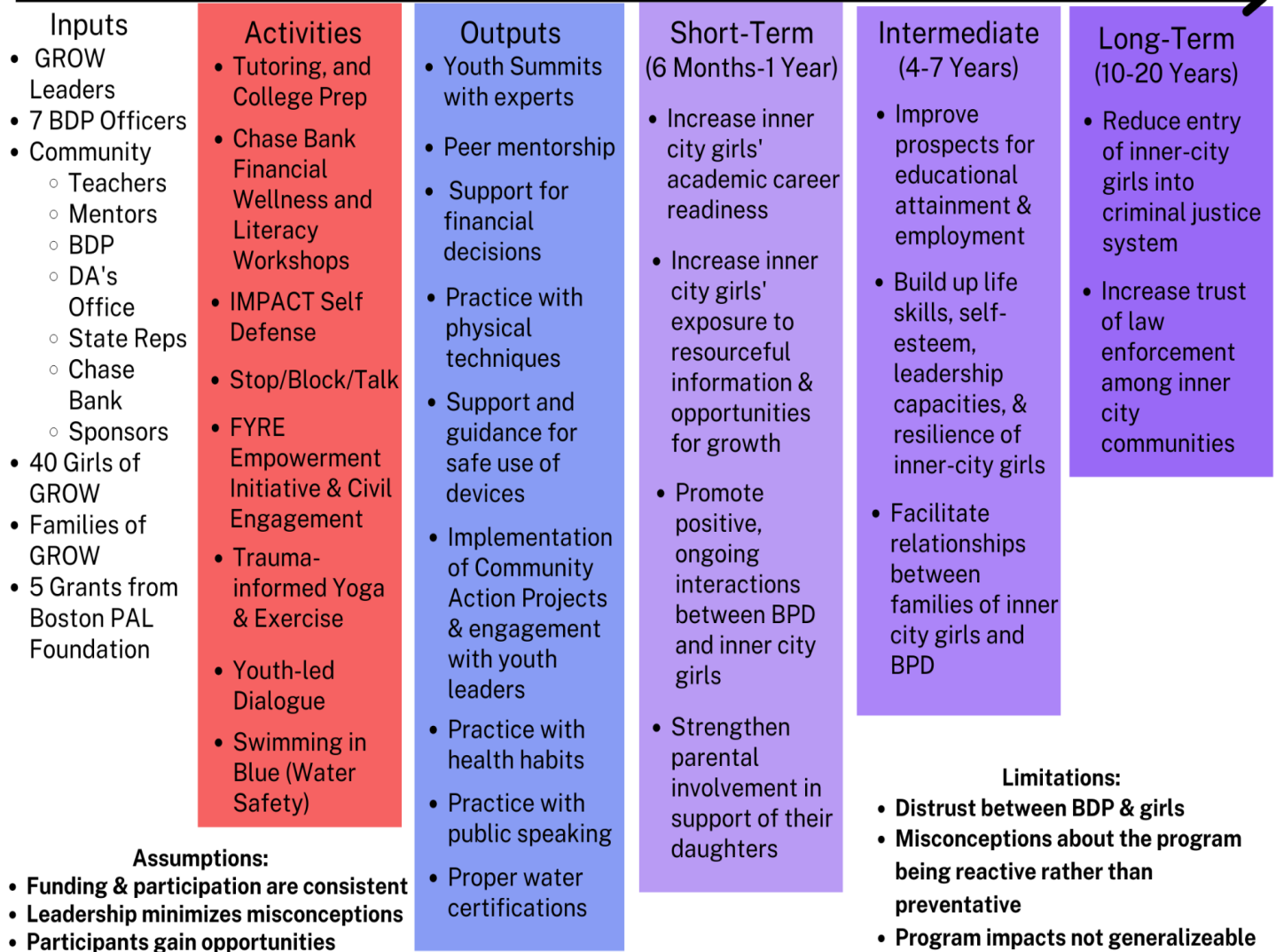
evaluation plan. This will provide the team with assistance in further developing and revising the focus group and survey instruments included in this plan.

Appendices

Appendix A: Logic Model

GIRLS REFLECTING OUR WORLD (GROW)

Background: The primary purpose of the evaluation is to show the impact of GROW's programs on participants and their communities, including how they prevent the entry of inner city girls into the criminal justice system and promote trust of law enforcement.



Appendix B: Methods Table

Evaluation Questions	Evidence	Methods and Measurement Tools	Sample	Timeframe
How impactful is GROW for preventing entry into the criminal justice system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grades over time -Detention rates -High Self-esteem -Career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Surveys -Observation -Interview or focus groups 	-All 35 GROW girls	-Look at detention and grades from 6 months before, in the middle, and 1 year after
How is this building community trust, and therefore changing the narrative between the community and law enforcement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increase in awareness -Improvement in perceptions -Positive help-seeking behavior 	-K.A.P. focus groups and surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All 35 GROW girls -Families of GROW girls (convenience sampling) -Participating Boston Police officers 	-Surveys to be conducted bi-annually, upon enrollment and then 6 months after participation (data collection will continue biannually for the next 7 years)
How has GROW developed throughout its existence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Funding -Number of participants -Retention rates 	-Process evaluation using the logic model's activity and result components	-All stakeholders	-4 times each year (at the end of each 3-month term)

Appendix C, Part 1: Focus Group Sample Questions for K.A.P. Survey Development

Open-ended questions to be discussed with GROW Boston police officers:

1. Do you know that GROW is a resource you can offer when interacting with youth in the communities you serve?
2. In what ways can Boston law enforcement work become a more easily accessible resource for community members?
3. What benefits have you seen or do you expect to see from GROW's academic enrichment and life skill development programs for youth in the communities you serve?

Open-ended questions to be discussed with GROW families:

1. From whom or from where do you obtain most of your information about Boston police officers and their work?
2. What can Boston law enforcement officers do to make themselves more easily accessible or approachable?
3. How comfortable do you feel going to the Boston police for help, and why?

Appendix C, Part 2: Sample Questions for K.A.P. Survey for GROW Families

The K.A.P. survey collects quantitative data. Respondents will select statements that reflect their knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Some choose yes or no; others choose strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. Sample statements for the three categories are:

For the following, select the option that best represents your agreement with each statement:

1. Knowledge: Police respond to emergencies and support communities with youth day programs.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Attitudes: Police help my community.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. Practices: I trust cops and will ask for help.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

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