



Participation Tracking Systems

Dear Friends,

Most would agree that collaboration is key to success - through sharing information and working together we can do more than with a solitary effort. However those of us who have attempted to partner with others recognize how difficult it really is. Usually we see accomplishment when each entity can bring its own unique offerings to the table. The best potlucks have a variety of salads, desserts and main dishes. Sometimes, though, we have too much going on in our lives to coordinate and we all bring salad.

In the city of Boston we have many individual efforts underway to address the needs of our youth during their out-of-school hours. One of the ways that organizations like Roca, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston, Boston Public Health Commission and Boston Public Schools are working to address needs is through data collection. Each has invested a significant amount of time, energy and money in creating participation tracking systems specific to their needs which have increased their abilities to perform their jobs well. Systems like Cayen, KidTrax and Efforts to Outcomes, to name a few, are valuable participation tracking and data collection systems that are able to be uniquely programmed for individual organizations. (Go to Boston Beyond's [Resource Section](#) to learn more about these and other participation tracking systems.)

In this month's **Guest Column** you can read about how [The Wallace Foundation](#), has found that developing a citywide unified participation tracking system ensures equal access, cuts costs and standardizes quality. While there has been and continues to be significant movement toward this end in Boston, it is hard to imagine how this can happen gracefully without giving up individual organizations' investment in valuable and unique data collection systems. Many feel that losing their ability to self manage would also mean losing quality control.

So what is best for Boston? When there are too many salads at the potluck should we combine them all and make one big bowl to save on costs and give equal access to everyone? Or should we try each individually knowing that they were made with unique ingredients and perhaps some will suit our preferences over others. Perhaps we should each choose the ingredient we think is most important and then combine them all; but what if it becomes unpalatable or too much? Obviously the salad/potluck metaphor is limited but it helps to illuminate the debate. In this newsletter we share what we've learned on the subject from The Wallace Foundation and ask that you respond with your thoughts about developing a unified citywide participation tracking system (email: newsletter@bostonbeyond.org).

Enjoy!
Boston After School & Beyond

Guest Column

➔ **The Wallace Foundation believes that by supporting cities to unify their participation tracking and data collection systems they will develop sustainable quality programming for all.**

By Nancy Devine, Director of Communities Program and Dara Rose, Program Officer of Communities Program

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