



Strategic Plan

2017 – 2020

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IMPACT
strategies group

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About Sprockets

Sprockets is passionate about supporting young people and exists to ensure all youth in our city thrive. The Sprockets network includes many different afterschool and summer programs for youth in Saint Paul. It is a collaboration of community organizations, the City of Saint Paul, and Saint Paul Public Schools.

Mission

Sprockets improves the quality, availability, equity and effectiveness of afterschool learning for all youth in Saint Paul through the committed, collaborative and innovative efforts of community organizations, government, schools and other partners.

Vision

All Saint Paul's youth will develop their abilities as learners, contributors, and navigators so they can recognize and achieve their greatest potential.

Values

- **Culture:** We promote cultural health and understanding, recognizing that culture is an essential lens through which we learn and grow.
- **Partnership:** We will be successful only when an inclusive network of youth, parents, schools, organizations and government, reflective of our diverse community, is committed and works together to achieve long-term results.
- **Meaning (relevance):** Youth learn best when it is meaningful and relevant to them.
- **Quality (research):** We promote both practice-based reflection and research-based knowledge to improve learning opportunities.
- **Learning:** We each have something to learn and to contribute; we value learning not only as our end but as part of our process.
- **Equity:** Youth have a right to high-quality, inclusive, and culturally-relevant out-of-school time learning opportunities. As a community and a network, we have a responsibility to ensure that all youth and families have equitable access to such opportunities and to advocate for systems, policies, and resources to best fulfill those rights and responsibilities.

Our Story and This Moment in Time

Youth are our future. The experiences they have during their formative years—the knowledge they gain, the relationships they build—set their trajectory for a lifetime. And young people are also essential contributors to our present. Afterschool organizations in Saint Paul have long recognized this fact and have been providing meaningful opportunities for the city's young people for decades. In recent years, those providers came together to work more closely in order to improve outcomes for youth.

Sprockets officially came into being in 2011 after several years of collaborative

conversations and planning among a wide variety of Saint Paul stakeholders, all of whom were concerned about closing opportunity gaps and ensuring opportunities for youth. Six years in, Sprockets is a well-respected model that has garnered national attention for its cross-sector partnership and its focus on improving young people's access to quality out-of-school-time learning. We are now a nationally recognized leader in the afterschool field, and a model for communities regionally and nationally who seek to replicate our work.

Sprockets was founded with a steadfast commitment to reducing racial and other disparities for Saint Paul's youth. In all decisions both large and small, we consider the implications those decisions will have on equity in our community, and we work with our partners to advance equity and justice in all we do.

We are in a time of great transition—nationally, regionally and locally. Leadership changes are on the horizon at both the city and the school district. There are immense changes underway in the broader education field, including the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and changes coming to the 21st Century Learning Community grants. Dramatic changes are anticipated at the U.S. Department of Education. The rights of marginalized groups are increasingly under attack and long-held educational values are at risk.

Sprockets is committed to supporting young people during this time of change and tumult by continuing to advance the afterschool field. Over the next three years, we will help more organizations improve the quality of their programs, while also working at the systems level to continue promoting afterschool programs with policy makers, funders and other community leaders.

We believe that strengthening the quality, availability, equity and effectiveness of youth-serving organizations will pay dividends for our community.

Strategic Priorities

Over the next three years, the Sprockets Leadership Group and staff commit to the following five strategic priorities.

1. Champion the importance of accessible, high-quality learning opportunities for the youth of Saint Paul.
2. Support Saint Paul's youth-serving organizations as they strive to continuously improve their programming.
3. Advance the field regionally and nationally by piloting and testing new initiatives that deepen the practice of youth-serving organizations.
4. Position Sprockets as a strong leader in the national afterschool field and in Saint Paul.
5. Ensure the financial sustainability of Sprockets and help to maintain and increase funding support for Saint Paul youth development organizations.

1. Champion the importance of accessible, high-quality learning opportunities for the youth of Saint Paul.

How we will operationalize this goal:

- Lead efforts to raise awareness among policy makers, funders, and other community decision makers about youth development research, trends, and best practices.
- Support the Sprockets network in informing public officials and candidates for public office on the importance of afterschool opportunities and the most pressing current needs.
- Continue to provide community-level data analysis and reports to inform the public about the current environment for Saint Paul's youth.
- Build understanding and consensus about best practices to support Social Emotional Learning in the field.
- Use data and experiences of network members to inform policy makers and others regarding barriers and opportunities.

Commitment to Equity: We will use the Sprockets Shared Data System to advise policy makers, funders and other community decision makers of the greatest opportunities for investment to ensure that success is not predictable by race or socioeconomic status.

2. Support Saint Paul's youth-serving organizations as they strive to continuously improve their programming.

How we will operationalize this goal:

- Continue to provide trainings, network engagement opportunities and data analysis support to network members.
- Offer new educational opportunities, tools and supports related to Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for youth workers in the Sprockets network to help them improve their personal practice and develop a culture of continuous improvement.
- Build SEL into the foundation of program design, first by developing intention across the network and second by helping organizations identify the SEL priority areas and characteristics on which to focus.
- Identify organizations currently uninvolved with Sprockets and interested in receiving additional training and support to strengthen their programming. Develop an outreach and organizing strategy to involve these organizations.
- Promote youth engagement and leadership in programmatic decision making.

Commitment to Equity: We will prioritize our resources to support organizations serving significant numbers of youth who have been historically disadvantaged.

3. Advance the field regionally and nationally by piloting and testing new initiatives that deepen the practice of youth-serving organizations.

How we will operationalize this goal:

- Develop professional learning communities, cohort approaches, and/or coaching opportunities to help programs challenge themselves and continue to improve.
- Identify new systemic opportunities to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) work across the youth development and afterschool fields.
- Continue to test initiatives and measurement tools, such as the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA) pilot.
- Track and report SEL data, and explore options to integrate this data into the Sprockets Shared Data System. This will likely require identifying skills and measures for SEL, identifying gaps in current SEL tracking, and providing training and support for practitioners.
- Offer trainings and assessments for network members to analyze issues of equity within their work.
- Pilot other efforts to develop or enhance youth development frameworks or assessments.

Commitment to Equity: We will promote and facilitate trainings that help prepare youth workers to address issues of bias and systemic inequity within their programs and the network. We will also create opportunities for afterschool programs led by underrepresented communities to take on leadership roles within Sprockets.

4. Position Sprockets as a strong leader in the national afterschool field and in Saint Paul.

How we will operationalize this goal:

- Improve our storytelling to capture the immense learnings from the past six years and underscore the value of our work.
- Support our network members to better tell their stories.
- Gather testimonials from key regional and national partners. These should include key stakeholders like the Superintendent and Mayor, as well as national partners.
- Identify unique Sprockets terms, simplify where possible, and clarify terms and offerings for stakeholders.
- Create visual depictions, such as infographics, to illustrate Sprockets' value proposition, offerings, and governing structure.

Commitment to Equity: We will regularly review the composition of our committees and advisory boards to ensure that both our leadership and the stories we share accurately reflect the diversity of Saint Paul residents.

5. Ensure the financial sustainability of Sprockets and help to maintain and increase funding support for Saint Paul youth development organizations.

How we will operationalize this goal:

- Nurture and strengthen relationships with current and prospective funders.
- Maintain strong working relationships with key elected and appointed officials in both the city and school district. This includes ongoing efforts to educate candidates for these offices about the role that Sprockets plays and the value of afterschool programs to our region.
- Work closely with the Minnesota Department of Education to monitor and act upon funding opportunities from the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and from anticipated changes to 21st Century Learning Community grants. Involve Sprockets network members in these conversations and in shaping these opportunities.
- Identify non-traditional partners who can provide testimonials and introduce both Sprockets and the youth development fields to new audiences.

Commitment to Equity: We will ensure our budgeting processes are inclusive and transparent, and that equitable allocation of resources is stated as an affirmative goal.