



Annual Report

2024-2025

Spro**ckets**

Find out what moves you

Sprockets Reporting Period June 1st, 2024 – May 31st, 2025



Sprockets Overview

Sprockets, Saint Paul's out of school time network, strengthens youth development across the city by expanding access to high-quality afterschool programs and elevating youth voice in decision-making. As recent national research confirms, afterschool is a critical developmental context: it builds academic momentum, fosters social-emotional well-being, and promotes long-term success, especially for low-income youth and youth of color. ^{1 2}

This new research, especially a [longitudinal study](#),¹ led by [Dr. Deborah Vandell](#),² is very clear and compelling. This study follows a large sample of young people over 26 years and affirms that benefits of participating in afterschool endure into adulthood. The findings are clear: kids who participate in afterschool are stronger learners, earners, and leaders. ²

Sprockets plays a critical role in realizing this potential locally by equipping youth-serving organizations with tools, training, and data-driven strategies to improve program quality. Central to this work is the Activator Cycle, a structured framework that guides organizations in collecting and analyzing data on quality, participation, experience, and outcomes. Using these insights, partners create targeted improvement plans—ensuring that youth are met with meaningful, high-impact opportunities.

Throughout the year, network-wide events create space for youth workers and organizational leaders to connect, share effective practices, and tackle common challenges together. Sprockets also delivers professional development grounded in equity, relationship-based youth work, and social-emotional learning—skills identified as essential in building trust, belonging, and resilience in young people.² These trainings strengthen individual practice and contribute to a skilled, collaborative OST workforce.

Sprockets also invests in youth leadership and civic engagement through programs like Youth on Boards (YOB) and the Saint Paul Youth Commission (SPYC). These initiatives provide young people with real decision-making power and a platform to influence city policy. YOB participants serve on bodies such as the Parks & Recreation Commission and Financial Empowerment Community Council, and through programs like the Youth on Boards Summer Academy, they gain tools to lead with confidence and cultural awareness.

By advancing program quality, workforce excellence, and youth leadership, Sprockets helps ensure that afterschool in Saint Paul is not just a place to go—it's a place where young people grow, lead, and thrive.

Citations:

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. [The Future of Youth Development: Building Systems and Strengthening Programs \(2025\)](#).¹

² [Simpkins, S.D., et al. Organized Afterschool Activities as a Developmental Context for Children and Adolescents: A Longitudinal Study.](#)²

Network Engagement

Sprockets offers multiple opportunities for youth worker engagement across Saint Paul! Whether you're looking to grow professionally or connect with peers, you can take part in Network Gatherings, Trainings, Cohort experiences, and the Activator Continuous Program Improvement Cycle — all free of charge to youth workers.



"I can't express the value of the opportunities I've been afforded in terms of community, networking, and learning. It's truly professional development at a personal level, and has supported me from my roles as a youth programs coordinator to an operations manager. What can I bring back to my organization? How does this impact the youth we serve? This reflection is truly woven into everything Sprockets does."

– Isabel Patrick Pacheco, Family Values for Life

From Passion to Profession: Building a Career in Youth Work



For many youth workers, the work isn't just a job; it's a calling. But how do you turn that passion into a lasting profession? This year, a strong theme emerged across the Sprockets Network: weaving together networking, learning, and growth as the foundation for a sustainable youth work career.

It began with our Passion to Profession career panels during the March Network Gathering⁷, where youth work professionals shared their journeys and career pathways. We followed up with a targeted training on grant writing, one of the many skills youth workers are eager to build—skills that make a difference now *and* open doors for future opportunities in the field.

Stay tuned for more trainings in our *Building Skills for Future Youth Work Careers* series—designed to help you deepen your impact today and shape your professional path tomorrow.



Sprockets Learning Cohort

The Sprockets Learning Cohort (SLC) [↗] brought together a dedicated group of youth workers over an 18-month journey of growth and connection. Grounded in relationship-centered learning and critical reflection, participants built strong peer bonds, shared diverse perspectives, and explored the intersections of identity, systemic oppression, trauma, mental wellness, and restorative practices.

This wasn't just a training—it was a transformation. Along the way, participants created a supportive network rooted in trust and shared purpose. Each youth worker also led an action project, applying insights from the cohort in their own organizations or communities. These projects became real-time examples of learning in action, showing how professional development can spark broader systems change.

At the heart of SLC was the belief that investing in the growth of youth workers is an investment in the growth of youth and, ultimately, communities.



Continuous Program Improvement (CPI)

How often a young person **participates** → in a **high-quality** program → that **provides positive experiences** = **positive outcomes**. Research shows that these things matter, which is why Sprockets supports youth programs in making meaning of all four of these areas of data. The annual Activator Continuous Improvement Cycle helps partners Assess – Plan – Improve their programs. But it is more than just the data. Sprockets creates space for program teams to reflect and provide perspectives that makes the data relevant and provides their insight into action items for the improvement plans that will make the most impact.



Congratulations to our partners that completed the 2024-25 Activator Cycle!

[Learn more about the Activator Continuous Program Improvement Cycle](#) ↗



The following partners used data to inform their Activator CPI plans:

Community Partners

Athletes Committed to Educating Students (ACES)

Breakthrough Twin Cities

ComMUSICation

Family Values for Life

Hmong American Partnership

Karen Organization of Minnesota

- Como Park High School
- Washington Technology High School

Keystone Community Services

- Community Kids
- Teen Tutor Program

Saint Paul Public Schools Community Education – Youth Development

Saint Paul Public Schools Discovery Club

- Expo Elementary
- Highland Park Elementary
- L'Etoile du Nord Elementary

Saint Paul Urban Tennis

Urban Roots

YMCA

- At Bruce Vento Elementary
- At Dayton's Bluff Elementary
- At Maxfield Elementary
- At Saint Paul Music Academy

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation

Highwood Hills Recreation Center

MLK Recreation Center

Sprockets

- Saint Paul Youth on Boards
- Saint Paul Youth Commission

Right Track

Saint Paul Public Library

SPPL Homework Help

SPPL Createch

SPPL Community Specialists



Youth Voice and Decision Making

Saint Paul Youth Commission



Stand up. Speak out. Lead.

Established in 2006, the Saint Paul Youth Commission (SPYC)⁷ is where young people learn to enhance their civic leadership, work in partnership with elected officials and stakeholders, represent their peers, and advocate for youth voice in decision-making to ensure that Saint Paul is a city that works for all of us.

Each year SPYC works on IMPACT (Igniting Movement through Passion, Actions, and Community Togetherness) projects. IMPACT projects are youth-led projects that bring awareness and solutions to issues faced by youth in Saint Paul. Each year commissioners select issues they are passionate about to focus their IMPACT Project on.

2024-2025 Commissioners:

22 Commissioners including 9
returners and 13 new members

*"I learned that you have to take
action since talking and planning
means nothing unless you do it."*

11 Schools Represented:

- Central Senior High School
- Como Park Senior High School
- Creative Arts Secondary School
- DeLaSalle High School
- Harding High School
- Hmong College Prep Academy (HCPA)
- Highland Park Senior High School
- Johnson Senior High School
- Saint Agnes High School
- Sejong Academy
- SPPS Online High School (OHS)



2024-2025

Saint Paul Youth Commission IMPACT Projects

Igniting Movement through Passion, Actions, and Community Togetherness



Rondo-Frogtown Loop Family-Night

The Rondo-Frogtown Loop group organized a family night to raise awareness and gather feedback on the Rondo-Frogtown Loop, a free van service that helps kids and teens ages 10-18 travel between community centers and libraries in the Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods.

Reconstruction of Duluth & Case Rec Center

The Duluth & Case group developed a survey to ensure young people's voices are heard in the upcoming reconstruction of the Duluth & Case Rec Center. They attended community events to promote the survey and collect feedback and recommendations.



Youth Dismantling Drug Stigma (YDDS)

The Youth Dismantling Drug Stigma (YDDS) group took action to challenge negative stereotypes of people living with addiction. They learned about harm reduction, hosted a Narcan training for young people, and tabled at their schools to help reduce drug stigmatization and promote community resources.

Saint Paul Youth Connect

The Saint Paul Youth Connect group created *Saint Paul Youth Connect* ↗, a webpage designed to help young people access resources for jobs, internships, food shelves, clothing, and reliable news. They collaborated with a user experience strategist to design audience personas and produced a promotional video ↗ to launch the site.



Youth Voice and Decision Making

Youth on Boards

Youth on Boards [↗] is a partnership with the Mayor's Office and Saint Paul Parks and Recreation to implement an initiative to train, place, and support young people (ages 14-20) on Saint Paul's boards and commissions as equal voting members. Youth on Boards also partners with Saint Paul's youth employment program Right Track to hire and compensate the participants.

The Youth on Boards initiative is a two-fold initiative with a Summer Academy and a commitment to serving on Saint Paul's Boards and Commissions. The Summer Academy program provides a foundation of how the City works, what boards and commissions are and how to serve on one, navigating local government and politics, engaging with the community as a representative, and much more.

13 Board and Commission Partners:

- Advisory Committee on Aging - **New this year!**
- Business Review Council
- Capitol Improvement Budget Committee
- Climate Justice Advisory Board
- Financial Empowerment Community Council
- Human Rights & Equal Economic Opportunity Commission
- Labor Standards Advisory Committee - **New this year!**
- Mayor's Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities
- Neighborhood Safety Community Council
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Saint Paul Children's Collaborative
- Transportation Committee



"I've gained a new perspective about the government and how it works."





Youth Voices: This Year's Impact of Youth on Boards

This year, Youth on Boards participants shared how the program has shaped their skills, confidence, and sense of community. Program participants highlighted the ways they have grown as leaders and how the experience has prepared them for the future.

Building Skills & Confidence

Youth consistently shared that they developed essential leadership skills like communication, public speaking, networking, and active listening. Several noted how their confidence has grown: ***"I've gained way more confidence. I feel more free to talk in front of people."*** Others emphasized learning to negotiate, organize, and collaborate with others, saying that ***"leadership skills and public speaking skills"*** and ***"better communication, better understanding of others"*** were among their biggest takeaways.

Youth on Boards Stats

- ★ **100%** of those trained in 2024 were recommended **and** appointed to a board or commission
- ★ Since 2021, Youth on Boards has had **4** cohorts and trained **54** young people through Summer Academy
- ★ **46** participants are serving or have served on a City Board or Commission



Alumni Spotlight: Daisy Vang

Daisy, a Youth on Boards Cohort 2 alum (2022-2024), is a Sociology of Law, Criminology, and Justice student at the University of Minnesota. Her long-term goal is to represent her community as the next Saint Paul City Councilmember for Ward 6. Through internships with both Saint Paul and Minneapolis city council and the Citizens League, she's gaining hands-on experience in policy and leadership. Daisy is still serving on the Saint Paul Children's Collaborative as a voting board member.

She credits Youth on Boards for giving her ***"community engagement, critical analytical skills, and long-term professional step-ups."*** Reflecting on her journey, she shared: ***"I understand more of myself within my values and morals because of the experiences and perspectives I've been able to understand."***



Saint Paul's Out of School Time Network



[stp.spyc](https://stp.spyc.org)



stpaul.gov/spyc



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