Wyman Center, based in St. Louis, Mo., provides highly effective programs for teens, rooted in youth development research and evidence-based practices. Wyman serves youth through their St. Louis-based Teen Leadership Program (TLP), and their Teen Outreach Program® (TOP®), delivered locally and replicated nationally through their National Network of partners in 32 states and Washington DC.

For 115 years, Wyman Center has provided services for disadvantaged youth, but in the last two decades, has made a deliberate effort to address the needs of modern teens by focusing on developing and administering long-term, outcome-based programs that promote healthy behavior, achievement of educational milestones, and foster a sense of community.

Today, Wyman Center has grown from serving small groups of youth locally in St. Louis, to the capacity to serve more than 50,000 youth nationwide in 2013, with quality and affordable replication. Wyman continues to drive the evolution of their programs, and, with the recent implementation of Efforts to Outcomes (ETO®) software, is poised to improve local delivery of programs and national replications through performance management.

Providing Support to St. Louis Teens

Rooted in best practices, Wyman’s Teen Leadership Program (TLP) is a six-year program beginning in 9th grade that provides intense residential summer experiences and wrap-around school year support to teens from low-resource environments. TLP serves teens in St. Louis, urging them to challenge themselves and navigate diverse environments to prepare for college, career and life.

Teens in TLP graduate high school on time, go on to college, and graduate from post-secondary education at rates above their high-income peers.

Wyman’s Teen Outreach Program® (TOP®) is an evidence-based youth development program that supports the development of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills such as self-regulation, influence, negotiation, communication, conflict management and decision-making skills. TOP® is proven to significantly reduce risk behaviors including teen pregnancy, course failure and school suspension.
TOP® measures participant success against three long-term goals:
Healthy behavior: positive, constructive actions that allow young people to avoid risky behavior. Life skills: competencies necessary to grow into healthy, self-sustaining adults and hit key milestones, including high school graduation. Sense of purpose: knowledge of their own worth as they contribute to their communities through meaningful service.

The program, which can be administered in schools as a part of the regular curriculum, as an afterschool program, or in a community-based setting, is delivered in weekly sessions over a nine-month period. In addition to curriculum-guided, facilitator-led peer group discussions, TOP® includes, at least, 20 hours of community service learning, providing youth participants with “real world” opportunities to practice the skills they are learning in the program.

In addition to positive outcomes for youth, TOP® has shown to be a cost-effective program for youth. The 2007 Brookings Institution study “Cost Effective Investment in Children” found that for every $1 spent on TOP®, $1.29 is returned to the community due to increased educational outcomes and earnings prospects of participants. TOP® was also recommended to be included as a component in the federal deficit reduction plan in the study.

Though Wyman’s TOP® and TLP have demonstrated success through evaluation, organizational leaders identified the need for a more comprehensive view of Wyman’s programs. In 2013, the organization implemented ETO software to support the case management needs of both TOP® and TLP.

The ETO software system has enabled program staff to identify and analyze trends in real time, and make adjustments in a timely manner to support programming. Facilitators can quickly and easily record attendance, track contacts with teens and partners, conduct assessments and fulfill other case management needs.

“These adjustments and the knowledge that we gain from [ETO software] will help to inform our replication efforts and identify best practices,” Wyman Senior Director of Programs Katrina Peoples said.

Wyman’s National Network

Wyman’s success serving teens in St. Louis spurred national growth, and beginning in July of 2009, Wyman Center launched a National Network of partners, certified by Wyman to replicate TOP®.

Currently, TOP® reaches 18,000 teens through 57 Certified Replication Partners. Wyman’s partners are responsible for securing all funding and must agree to follow the TOP® fidelity model. Once start-up and first year operational expenses are secured, Wyman provides Certified Replication Partners with a program framework, training and technical assistance, so they can train service providers who will work directly with youth.

Program Effectiveness and Positive Behavioral Outcomes for Youth Participants

The following data has been gathered through several empirical research studies conducted by TOP®.

- 52% lower risk of suspension
- 60% lower risk of course failure
- 53% lower risk of pregnancy
- 60% lower risk of school drop out

“Our mission and programming has grown from serving groups of 25 youth at a time in St. Louis, to bringing TOP® to scale and serving thousands of youth at a time nationwide, impacting entire communities. We hope that we can continue this momentum and impact even more youth by further developing our national network and replications.”

-Emily Black
Communications Manager,
Wyman Center
In addition to supporting and informing local delivery of TOP® and TLP, ETO software is supporting some of Wyman’s national partners that are piloting approved adaptations of TOP® to serve teens in foster care, juvenile justice and residential care, and needed additional support capturing survey data. ETO software helps to ensure fidelity to the program model for these adaptations by capturing all of the program components that support fidelity in one place.

Wyman’s success with TOP® and its replications has garnered recognition from experts in the field—the program has been recognized as being highly effective and featured on various ‘best practice’ or evidence-based program lists (see sidebar on previous page). Additionally, Wyman Center was named to the Social Impact Exchange’s S&I 100 Index, a broad index of highly-effective nonprofits with demonstrated success and plans for growth.

Wyman is continuing to learn and adapt to partner needs and is helping them improve their effectiveness. The primary goal of the National Network is to create a collective voice that will drive resources for sustainability and on-going capacity building to effectively support at-risk teens nationwide.