Evaluation Proposal for Caldera's Youth Program

Presented by:
BrightPath Consulting, April 2024

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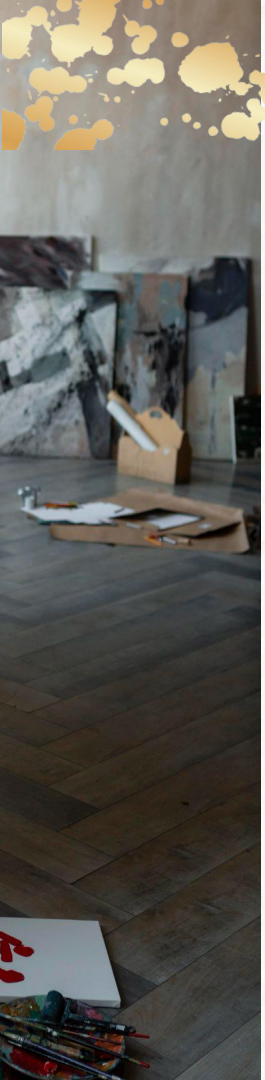
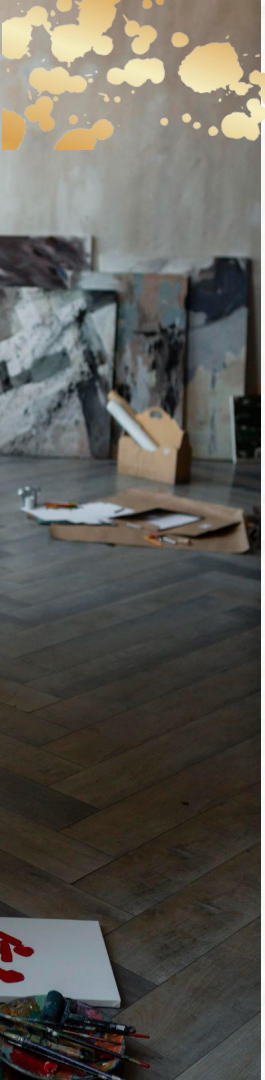


Background

There is a growing movement in the United States Education world that is calling for shifts away from our education system's traditional laser focus on reading and math scores to a more holistic focus on the 6 C's: collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creative innovation, and confidence. Top business leaders and researchers alike are noting how cultivating these C's are what will support our youth in developing fulfilling and satisfying career paths and protect them against automation and outsourcing (Pasek & Hadani, 2020; Wade, 2023).

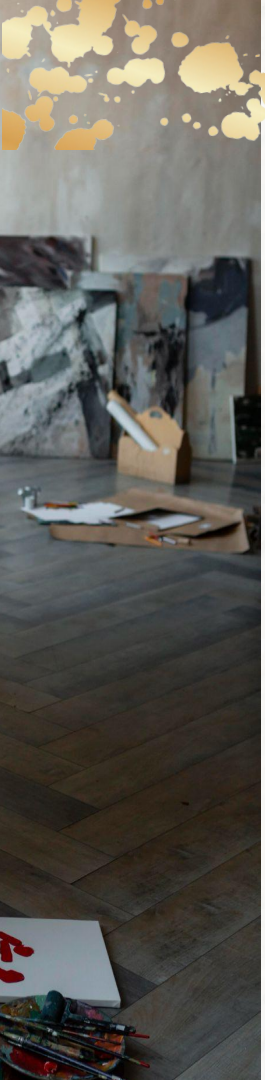
Arts education has been elevated as a way to promote the developmental skills represented by the 6 C's; yet, in favor of the math and reading foci to date, funding for arts education has been drastically cut over the years and access to arts programming is primarily found in affluent communities and amongst students from higher socioeconomic status (American Academy of Arts and Sciences 2021).



Program Overview

Caldera Arts, a **relationship centered,** Oregon based, non-profit which offers youth **arts and environmental immersion opportunities** aims to "inspire and support youth from underserved rural and urban communities by awakening the potential of their creative voice" (Caldera website)– because they believe, cultivating creativity in today's youth is what is going to support their success in the future.

Guided by its values for **creativity, collaboration and community** Caldera Arts offers no-cost ongoing programs which provide sustained engagement with mentors, arts education and opportunities, a diverse peer community, and access and exposure to nature. Caldera's commitment to **equity and inclusion** ensures that these opportunities are offered to youth who most likely would otherwise not have the opportunity to experience art and nature in this immersive way.



Evaluation Context & Needs

Through anecdotal evidence over the years, Caldera Arts has seen how its ongoing programming and relationship building promotes positive youth development outcomes such as resilience, confidence, flourishing, and a sense of belonging and connection, in addition to learning, life and literacy skills.

As the program emerges in the post-pandemic world, Caldera Arts is looking to grow and expand its program offerings and audiences. Driven by its **commitment to learning and improvement**, Caldera Arts seeks to use data to **inform its programmatic decisions** as well as **better understand its impact**.

BrightPath Consulting proposes an evaluation to support Caldera Arts efforts to learn and understand the effectiveness and impacts of their Youth Program. We propose to examine: how effectively Caldera **recruits** new learners; which components of its program are currently most **engaging** for its learners; and which aspects of the programming are contributing to the development of the **positive youth development outcomes** Caldera Arts seeks to cultivate. Furthermore, through an **Outcomes Harvesting process** with program alumni, we will help Caldera Arts form a clearer understanding of the kinds of **community transformation** that can be expected after participating in Caldera Arts.

Partner Analysis: Primary

Program Staff

- Wieden Family
- Board of Directors
- Staff and Mentors
- Research and Learning Specialist

Program Participants

- Current Learners
- Alumni

Community Partners

- Artists/ Creatives/ Cultural Workers
- Naturalists
- School partners and school counselors
- Other community partners

Partner Analysis: Primary

With the participatory approach to the evaluation of the Youth Program, we envision all primary partner groups to be highly engaged in the evaluation process. In particular, we intend to foster engagement with current learners to ensure their perspectives are integrated into all aspects, from planning to data interpretation.

Communication Strategies	Engagement in Evaluation	Use of Evaluation
• Quarterly evaluation update meetings • Frequent email, phone calls, and Zoom meetings • In-person requests for participation in interviews and surveys	• Evaluation team members • Provide program data to evaluation team • Participate in interviews and surveys • Host sites for data collection	• Decision-making • Adjust programming • Inform recruitment improvements

Additional Considerations

- Youth appropriate language in surveys and communications
- Parental consent & youth assent

Partner Analysis: Secondary

General public, youth not participating in Caldera programming, families, funders, and the broader community.
Secondary partners will not be directly engaged in the evaluation or in its use. However, we expect that this group will benefit from the evaluation as Caldera uses evaluation findings for decision-making and program improvement, leading to impacts in the broader community.

Communication Strategies	Considerations
• Social media • Community bulletin boards • Event announcements • Posters and resources at schools	• Publishing materials in different languages as needed • Publishing materials accessible to those with disabilities • Youth appropriate language

Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Output	Short -Term Outcomes	Long -Term Outcomes	Impact
Funding -Staff -Physical Space -Community partners (schools, art institutions) -Artists in residence -Mentors -Alumni -Curricula -Training Materials	**Recruitment** -Connecting with partner schools -Partnering with school counselors for referrals **Mentorship** - Middle school (during school hours) - High school (after-school and weekend) **Weekend Intensives** - 4x/yr weekend learning experience **Camp Caldera** -8-10 days summer learning	**Recruitment** # Learners recruited # partner schools **Mentorship** # of mentorship sessions/school year # of learners served at each event #of after-school workshops conducted # of weekend workshops conducted # projects created **Weekend Intensives** # of attendees at weekend workshops # weekend workshops held **Camp Caldera** # of summer camps held.	Learners -build connection with adult learners/staff/mentors - build connection with peers - identify and build their creative skills - gain a better understanding of their identity -build a sense of belonging and community. - gain in depth exposure into the world of art and its use for social change -experience improved engagement in school	Learners - become more confident in themselves and their creative ability -sustain intercultural connections built among peers and staff -embrace different culture and work with people from different backgrounds. -develop critical thinking and good communication skills -develop essential life and social skills -sustain good academic standing	Learners -become well rounded individuals with sufficient social and life skills -become resilient and self-sufficient -build leaderships skills they can use for social change Alumni -engage in community leadership -have positive life outcomes which help them contribute to societal change

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Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Output	Short -Term Outcomes	Long -Term Outcomes	Impact
	Alumni "programming" -Ongoing social network development Invitations to art events & exhibitions -Scholarships	**Dosage** # of hours each learner spends attending each type of programming/yr **Alumni Programming** # of scholarships # residency offers	-Learners gain awareness on environmental issues - Alumni have the opportunity to sustain relationships built in the program		

Assumptions:

- 6th graders are the right target audience to recruit and retain over time. And that the outcomes will be achieved without any other opportunities to engage with the program at different stages of development
- Artists in residence program have the training/skills/tools and willingness to support youth in achieving the outcomes
- All of the mentors are staff
- The programming offers enough dosage (of the weekly, 4x/yr and summer program) to attain the outcomes

External Factors:

- The influence of cultural perspectives on the value of the arts on ability of students to participate - especially when programming time is out of school hours and no longer during school hours - (retention)
- Family & community buy-in about the power of arts to bring social change therefore (will they promote,prioritize, etc.)
- Post-Covid recovery, particularly for funding extracurricular programming

Logic Model Narrative

Caldera seeks to support youth from underserved rural and urban communities by helping to amplify the power of their creative voice. Specifically through the Youth Program, Caldera aims to support the social, emotional and mental development of underserved youth by interlacing mentorship, art, and nature.

Partnering with schools who serve BIPOC students, students from rural, historically marginalized, and underserved communities will ensure that the students who need Caldera's program the most, will have access to the program. With the right funding, family, staff and community support, as well as the committed regular participation of learners, youth will gradually develop creative positive youth outcomes.

Effective program scaffolding, the right program dosage, and implementation from mentors and workshop facilitators will ensure that learners are developing essential life and social skills, an appreciation for nature and the environment, and building intercultural relationships with both staff and peers.

Sustained connection and support provided for learners throughout middle and high school and even after the program will lead to sustained positive outcomes for youth. Learners' continued connection with the program will also provide future support for the program in terms of raising future mentors and potential staff.

An important assumption is that adult learners and artists are willing and able to support the youth program. Also for the program to run effectively, we assume a general acceptance and support for creative arts programs, and their potential to lead to positive youth outcomes and social change.

Evaluation Matrix Narrative

Evaluation Design

A **convergent mixed-methods** design for evaluation questions 1-4.

Evaluation question 5 will utilize an **exploratory mixed-methods** design, where qualitative findings will inform the development of subsequent quantitative measures.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation will utilize a **highly participatory** & **culturally responsive evaluation** approach to include two main components:

- Primary partners **highly engaged** in final evaluation plan and decisions.
- **Evaluation team includes representatives** from each primary partner group, especially **current learners and alumni**. Youth partnership with the evaluation team will **ensure youth voices and perspectives are centered** to promote use of the evaluation.

Data Collection Methods

With an emphasis on data justice, exploring, and understanding, **qualitative methods will be prioritized** in this evaluation.
Methods: Interviews, surveys, program data and materials, and focus groups

Evaluation Questions

1. How does Caldera recruit and retain learners in the Youth Program, and what factors influence learners' participation and engagement?
2. Which processes, components, and activities within the Caldera Youth Program are most effective in achieving desired outcomes and integrating the arts, environment, and mentorship?
3. How does participation in the Caldera Youth Program promote positive youth development outcomes and how do these changes correlate with improvements in measurable 21st-century skills?
4. How have the experiences of alumni from the Caldera Youth Program influenced their adult life choices and outcomes?
5. What is Caldera's impact on community transformation?

Eval Question 1: How does Caldera recruit and retain learners in the Youth Program, and what factors influence learners' participation and engagement?

Sub Questions	Data Indicators	Data Source	Data Collection Methods
What is Caldera's current recruitment strategy?	- Enrollment data - Partnership lists - Outreach strategies	- Staff - Community partners - Learners - Alumni	- Interviews - Program data (attendance/ enrollment) - Recruitment materials
What are facilitators and barriers to recruiting youth to the Caldera program?	- Successes and challenges - Resources/capacity needed for recruitment	- Staff - Community partners - Learners (current & past)	- Interviews - Surveys
What are facilitators and barriers to retaining youth in the Caldera program?	- Attendance records (retention, attrition) - Motivations	- Staff - Community partners - Learners - Alumni	- Interviews - Surveys
What are facilitators and barriers to youth engagement with the various components of the Caldera program?	- Learner satisfaction - Learner engagement - Learner/mentor relationship - Learner voice/choice	- Staff - Community partners - Learners - Alumni	- Interviews - Surveys

Eval Question 2: Which processes, components, and activities within the Caldera Youth Program are most effective in achieving desired outcomes and integrating the arts, environment, and mentorship?

Sub Questions	Data Indicators	Data Source	Data Collection Methods
What are the specific components and activities within the program that participants find most engaging and beneficial?	- Learners' favorite activities - Positive youth development outcomes - Youth engagement	- Learners	-Focus group discussions -Surveys
To what extent do Staff/Mentors, Community partners and Families perceive programming to be high quality and effective?	- Learners' favorite activities - Positive youth development outcomes - Academic /performance records - Engagement	- Staff - Community partners - Learners - Alumni	-Interviews -Focus group discussions -Surveys
What are considered best practices within the program according to learners, facilitators, and program evaluations?	- Satisfaction - Strengths and challenges	- Staff - Learners - Alumni	- Interviews - Focus group discussion - Program data

Eval Question 3: How does participation in the Caldera Youth Program promote positive youth development outcomes and how do these changes correlate with improvements in measurable 21st-century skills?

Sub Questions	Data Indicators	Data Source	Data Collection Methods
To what extent are youth experiencing/displaying positive youth development outcomes (ie., increased confidence, self-efficacy, belonging, etc.) while participating in the program?	- Program outcomes (confidence, self-efficacy, etc.) - Testimonials	- Learners	- Survey
To what extent are positive youth development outcomes sustained outside of the program	- Program outcomes - Testimonials	- Learners - Alumni - Parents/families - Teachers, school counselors	- Survey - Focus group
To what extent are youth experiencing growth in 21st century skills?	- 21st-century skills - Testimonials	- Learners - Parents/families - Teachers	- Survey - Interviews

Eval Question 4: How have the experiences of alumni from the Caldera Youth Program influenced their adult life choices and outcomes?

Sub Questions	Data Indicators	Data Source	Data Collection Methods
How do 21st-century skills persist in alumni?	- 21st-century skills (learning, life, and literacy)	- Alumni	- Surveys
What are the educational and career outcomes for Caldera alumni?	- Post-secondary education - Career choice - Job attainment - SES status	- Alumni	- Interviews - Surveys
How has participation in Caldera's Youth Program contributed to alumni life experiences?	- Intangibles (ex. life experiences)	- Alumni	- Outcomes Harvesting interviews

Eval Question 5: What is Caldera's impact on community transformation?

Sub Questions	Data Indicators	Data Source	Data Collection Methods
What are the lasting community changes to which Caldera is contributing?	- Intended outcomes/impact - Unintended outcomes/impact - Intangibles	- Alumni - Program staff - Community members	- Outcomes Harvesting interviews (informing eventual quantitative indicators) - Surveys
How do intercultural connections influence these outcomes?			
How does connection to nature influence these outcomes?			

Anticipated Challenges

Reaching rural participants and families

Engage program staff and learners to assist in data collection efforts

Hard to measure outcomes

Multiple measures, validated scales, mixed methods, quant/qual data

Alumni retention for long-term impact evaluation

Invoke belonging to Caldera community; offer compensation for participation in interviews and surveys.

Operationalizing “community transformation”

Outcomes Harvesting approach with an Exploratory Mixed Methods design. Qualitative interviews inform the development of quantitative measures of community transformation.

References

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Thanks!

We look forward to working with Caldera and the youth participants on this participatory evaluation!

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