Both climate and relationships in the places we live, work, and learn matter. For youth, research shows that when these elements are strengthened they serve as protective factors against undesirable outcomes and also as protective factors for academic success, health, economic self-sufficiency, and civic engagement.

Second Order Change intentionally makes this happen by supporting youth organizations to build a safe space, supportive environment, interactions and engagement for youth. This is done through professional development focused on staff social and emotional intelligence and its role in leadership and youth work. These competencies, shown at right, are the leading indicator of effectiveness in all professions and are critical for supporting youth development.

The Learning Experience
As one of the first of its kind, Second Order Change is a research-based, social and emotional intelligence series for youth development professionals. Participants attend learning sessions over the course of eight months and integrate learning through guided reflection, which provides time to explore and incorporate a new approach between sessions. The format enables participants to build supportive relationships with peers in the community across organizations.
Impact

The AYDC Second Order Change series was piloted in 2016-17. After a months-long collaborative process, the program was developed in partnership with a coalition of organizations offering youth programs in Anchorage and with guidance from the nation’s leading experts in youth development and social and emotional learning (SEL). Impact was measured in the pilot year. Participants, all of whom work with youth in differing roles and levels of leadership within organizations, completed a pre- and post-assessment of SEL attributes called the EQ-i 2.0. The analysis of pre-post changes showed participants experienced significant growth in specific areas over the course of the series.

Second Order Change at Work: A Testimonial

*In its pilot year, AYDC Second Order Change series has already fueled transformational shifts in the quality of services youth receive.* This unique emotional intelligence leadership experience unites diverse organizations around the commitment to help Anchorage youth grow up healthy, with the skillsets and mindsets they need to thrive.

One of AYDC’s key partners, Camp Fire Alaska, has championed the initiative and engaged staff at all levels—from direct service staff to CEO—in the eight-month professional development series. They found that in the pilot year of Second Order Change, *youth at program sites with staff involved in SOC reported higher levels of feeling safe, supported, and experiencing skill growth,* in comparison to sites that did not have staff participating.

Cassie Frost, Camp Fire Alaska’s Family Services Manager, has been a co-designer and advocate for the program from the get-go. Frost now facilitates the series for AYDC partners across the city. She also works closely with Camp Fire staff who have participated in the Second Order Change series. “I see us making shifts in our organizational culture,” Frost says. She has seen staff at all levels modeling skills, embedding new practices, and striving to grow as leaders. This kind of shift matters, and it matters most for youth.

Frost says, “Second Order Change is a chance to pause in our professional practice. We are constantly on the go—one deadline, project, or exciting thing after the next. To be able to look within and consider how we want to show up differently for our kiddos—it’s a tremendous opportunity.”