STEPs’ mission is to provide participatory, utilization-focused evaluation for organizations serving children, youth and families in poverty.
What a year this has been for STEPs!

We have grown exponentially: number of agreements with community partners, number of personnel hired, reports written, presentations made, revenue generated.

Other growth is not so easily quantified. We moved into UNO’s Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, which prompted more growth than we could ever have anticipated. We learned about data visualization and infographics. We learned to navigate the university systems. We discussed and debated, we agreed and disagreed, we reflected and celebrated.

At the end of the day, we strive to provide useful data to our community partners and to alleviate poverty for children, youth, and families in our community.

The coming year holds much promise for us. Jeanette is on sabbatical so can focus her time and energy on STEPs. Emily graduated and is working with STEPs full-time. We have formed new partnerships and are continuing our existing ones. We invite you to track our growth: www.TakeTheNextSteps.org. Or better yet, come and visit us in the Community Engagement Center!

- Jeanette and Emily
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New team members: Adam Thurley and Andrea Bradley
We are thankful for our dedicated community partners. We appreciate their openness to evaluation and their desire to use evidence in making decisions. We believe the children, youth, and families of our community are the real beneficiaries.
“The evaluators are good listeners. They met with staff frequently and that helped alleviate any fear of evaluation... It was particularly helpful that the evaluators came across not with clipboards and checklists but with open eyes and ears.” ~Jef Johnston, Avenue Scholars Foundation.

"I look forward to meetings with the STEPs program evaluation team! - it’s always the pick-me-up meeting of the week!" ~Treva Haugaard, The GOALS Center.

“[The evaluators] were extremely professional, diligent, dedicated, and easy to work with... I would highly recommend Jeanette and her team to anyone looking for assistance with program evaluation.” ~Kris Valentin, Building Bright Futures.

All of our evaluation partners gave STEPs a rating of “excellent” on usefulness of evaluation findings.

Relationships with most of our community partners extend over multiple years, which provides continuity and depth to the evaluation.
In 2013-2014, STEPs completed many reports for community partners. In addition, we produced three professional manuscripts:

- “Leveraging relationships to overcome low-income community contexts: The Avenue Scholars experience”
- “Judges’ perceptions of the Nebraska CASA program”
- “Principal effectiveness in high-poverty, urban schools: Omaha-area perspectives and a literature review. Chapter: Findings from Omaha-area facilitated discussion groups.” [Building Bright Futures]

We have many more manuscripts in various stages of completion.

We also participated in five professional conferences:

- American Evaluation Association, Washington DC
- Evaluation Network for the Missouri River Basin, Omaha, NE
- National CASA Association, Grapevine, TX
- Abandoned Infants Assistance: Supporting children affected by parental co-occurring disorders, Seattle, WA
- International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, Omaha, NE
Our growth can also be shown in dollars and cents. We are grateful to our community partners and their funders. While we anticipate continued growth in the coming year, our focus remains on the provision of quality evaluation products.

We are proud to contribute to UNO’s strategic goal of being community engaged.