



# How Statewide Afterschool Networks Increase Investment in Afterschool

Photo: Joe Quint

American Youth Policy Forum  
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American Youth  
Policy Forum

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Betsy Brand

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# Executive Summary

In this paper, AYPF uses “afterschool” to refer to all out-of-school programing, including summer and expanded learning programs.

Across the country, the demand for high-quality afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs has grown. Communities have recognized that whether the program is academic, creative, or athletic, afterschool programs provide youth with a broad range of knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable college, career, and adult success. For many communities, particularly disadvantaged ones,

these programs are vital for youth and can make the difference for many students struggling to succeed.

However, securing and sustaining funding for such programs can often present challenges, and the quality and nature of afterschool programs can vary significantly depending on where a student lives. Where some states and districts have established robust afterschool programs, others struggle with a persistent lack of resources, funding, or commitment from local governments or community organizations.

Statewide Afterschool Networks (SANs) are state coalitions of afterschool advocates who push for increased investment in afterschool programs, resources, and policies. More and more, SANs are providing critical leadership and support across their states to increase widespread investment in afterschool so youth have equal access to programs that help them achieve their full potential. The SANs are unique and reflective of their state context and afterschool communities, but they all share a deep commitment to expanding access to high-quality afterschool. They approach their work in varied ways and focus on different priorities, but they all develop dynamic partnerships with key stakeholders and use innovative and creative strategies to build support for afterschool.

Drawing on interviews of several SANs leaders, this issue brief provides a look at how these networks are advancing investment in afterschool programs across their states. The report describes specific examples of how SANs leaders have addressed issues such as:

- **Framing afterschool as critical to student success**
- **Making every dollar count**
- **Sustaining and growing programs**
- **Improving program quality**
- **Ensuring equity**
- **Challenges and opportunities**

## *Framing Afterschool as Critical to Student Success*

In times where local and state funding for afterschool programs is tightening, the role of SANs becomes even more essential in finding creative ways to build community support and secure funding from a variety of sources.

In order to do this effectively, SANs leaders agree that building political and public will for afterschool and creating a common, unified vision for a successful afterschool program is crucial. Since a wide variety of community stakeholders is often involved in building strong afterschool programs, SANs help to develop a shared agenda and identify champions who can inspire everyone from educators and city leaders to local community groups to come together to achieve a common goal of creating productive, safe, and engaging afterschool programs.

### *Making Every Dollar Count*

High-quality afterschool programs require substantial funding, but for many communities, especially in low-income areas, these funds aren't there. However, SANs leaders have identified creative ways to get the most out of existing revenue streams. Creating a funding map can help local leaders strategically identify where resources exist, which school districts or neighborhoods require extra funding, and allocate resources accordingly to ensure equal funding for schools and programs. SANs can also help reduce administrative burdens on schools and afterschool programs by providing grant writing support or advocating for streamlining the afterschool application process.

### *Sustaining and Growing Programs*

For many existing afterschool programs, the task of maintaining an investment in afterschool funding and other supports is a never-ending process. Federal funding for afterschool programs is limited, and state funds can't always be relied upon. Therefore, SANs leaders promote utilizing a diverse range of funding streams from public funds, community organizations, local philanthropy, and faith-based groups to sustain programs. Over the years, many SANs have been successful in growing the dollars available for afterschool.

### *Improving Program Quality*

Building a high-quality afterschool program doesn't happen overnight. Time, resources, data collection, trained staff and leaders, and continual evaluation all play a role. SANs can help improve the quality of local programs by offering training for professional development, coordinating between different programs to foster dialogue, developing quality standards or guidelines, and providing guidance and leadership to help individual programs be as effective as possible.

### *Ensuring Equity*

Many students who would benefit the most from afterschool programs are often the ones who have the least access to them. Closing these gaps in afterschool access can be addressed by SANs in part through advocating for equitable funding and also through working with community leaders to address issues such as lack of transportation, safety, and the complexities of balancing family, work, and school.

### *Challenges and Opportunities*

The recognition of the value of high-quality afterschool programs has never been more widespread, and strong evidence points to their benefits. However, significant gaps in program quality, funding, and resources present a persistent challenge for many afterschool providers and states. SANs can address these issues by advocating for increased investment in high-quality afterschool, continually offering advice on improving and expanding programs, ensuring access to the neediest youth, and filling crucial coordination, training, and administrative gaps.

The leadership from the SANs has resulted in a stronger afterschool infrastructure across the states and in more opportunities for afterschool for thousands of children. But demand for high-quality afterschool continues to outpace supply, so the SANs know that their job isn't done.

# How Statewide Afterschool Networks Increase Investment in Afterschool

In communities across the country, there is a recognition that agencies and programs need to work together to ensure that all children and youth have the skills and supports necessary to succeed in education, careers, and civic society. This paper describes how Statewide Afterschool Networks (SANs) and other state leaders provide leadership and support across their states to increase investment in

afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs so that more children and youth have access to such services and can develop the skills needed for success.

In this paper, AYPF uses “afterschool” to refer to all out-of-school programming, including summer and expanded learning programs.

The paper discusses strategies, challenges, and opportunities for states and statewide intermediaries to encourage more coordination of funding, build public will and support of afterschool, use existing funding efficiently, and improve quality and access.

## THE VALUE OF AFTERSCHOOL, SUMMER, AND EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAMS

Youth need a diverse range of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors in order to graduate high school prepared for postsecondary education and to be productive members of the workforce, hold a family wage career, and be civically engaged lifelong learners. Not only do students need an increasingly deep understanding of academic content, they must also learn how to apply that knowledge to real-world problem solving, in addition to having critical thinking, collaboration, communication, social, and emotional skills.

Youth are able to develop some of these skills in school, but most schools are not designed to help youth develop the full range of skills needed for college, career, and civic success. Many schools lack the resources, both in money and personnel, to provide rich learning experiences, and very few schools provide real-world learning experiences, such as service learning, internships, apprenticeships, or work-based learning, that are critical to developing many skills. Plus, students spend a lot of time outside of school and learn a great deal during those out-of-school hours.

Low-income and vulnerable students in particular often face greater challenges in developing these skills, as they frequently attend low-performing schools in disadvantaged communities and have limited opportunities for enrichment and extracurricular activities. This lack of opportunity often leaves them ill-prepared for success in the adult world, widening the achievement gap, and placing them at a greater risk later in their lives.

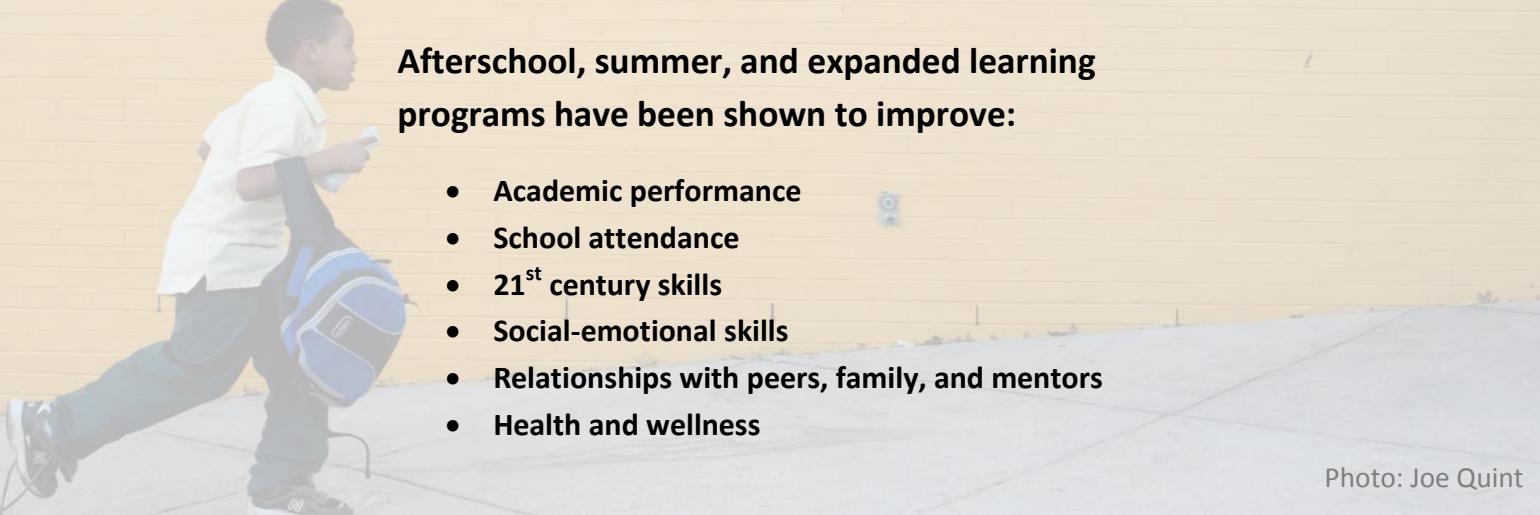
While the public education system is seen as the place for youth to gain knowledge and skills, in reality there are many other programs and organizations in communities that provide skill development and key supports to help children and youth be successful. Afterschool programs provide opportunities for different kinds of skill, knowledge, social, and emotional development: they enhance and add to the knowledge that is learned in school settings, they provide experiences that broaden horizons and open up future opportunities, and they connect children and youth with caring adults and mentors.

Afterschool programs are increasingly viewed as critical community partners and vital to the success of children and youth.

High-quality afterschool programs have positive impacts on youth in a number of ways. Research has shown that afterschool programs increase academic performance, engagement, and attendance in school; help develop 21<sup>st</sup> century and social and emotional skills; improve health and well-being; prepare youth for college and careers; keep youth safe and reduce risky behaviors; and connect them to caring adult mentors and advisors.<sup>1</sup>

But in order for programs to have a positive impact, they need to be of high quality. Programs that are high quality are ones that have a clear mission, hold high expectations of youth, provide a safe environment and supportive emotional climate, have a small total enrollment, have a stable and trained workforce, provide appropriate content and pedagogy, assess programs on a regular basis, and have stable community partners.<sup>2</sup>

One critical ingredient of high quality programs is that they are based on strong, sustainable community partnerships.<sup>3</sup> These partnerships include a range of stakeholders, such as afterschool providers; public schools; community-based organizations; philanthropy; publicly-funded programs such as libraries, museums, child nutrition, health, juvenile justice, workforce development, and parks and recreation; national organizations such as United Way and YMCA; municipal government; employers; and parents.



## **Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs have been shown to improve:**

- Academic performance
- School attendance
- 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
- Social-emotional skills
- Relationships with peers, family, and mentors
- Health and wellness

Photo: Joe Quint

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<sup>1</sup> There is an extensive research base on the value of afterschool. This document provides a summary listing of many of those sources:

The Advancement Project. (2012). *The benefits of after school programs*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.advancementprojectca.org/sites/default/files/imce/Benefits%20of%20After%20School%20Programs%20-%20handout.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> The Wallace Foundation. (n.d.). *Cost of quality: Out-of-school time cost calculator*. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/cost-of-quality/quality-strategies/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2011). Quality afterschool: Helping programs achieve it and policies support it. *Afterschool Alert (Issue Brief No. 47)*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue\\_47\\_quality.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_47_quality.cfm)

## STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORKS

Creating and sustaining these community partnerships and high-quality afterschool programs is challenging and time consuming, and it does not happen easily. Vision and leadership are critical, as is the presence of an organization that can help manage the process of bringing partners together, find funding to sustain partnerships and programs, build a common agenda, and provide assistance and support to constantly improve quality and access. In 2002, the Charles S. Mott Foundation invested in an effort to create the Statewide Afterschool Networks (SANs), state coalitions of diverse organizations that work together to leverage resources for high-quality afterschool programs.<sup>4</sup>

SANs foster partnerships and policies to develop, support, and sustain high-quality afterschool and expanded learning opportunities and have been critical in leveraging funding streams from various agencies and sources. SANs also work closely with communities in their states and provide leadership, technical assistance, training, and support for developing local afterschool programs and systems. While SANs share these main goals, they vary greatly in how they are structured, organized, and funded, and they are sensitive and responsive to the unique political, funding, and social contexts in their states. Fifty states now have a Statewide Afterschool Network.

## INCREASING THE INVESTMENT IN AFTERSCHOOL

SANs play a key leadership role in advancing the investment in afterschool by identifying and advocating for funding, building the public will for more afterschool, and promoting access to quality programs.<sup>5</sup> In times of tight budgets and competing priorities, the work of the SANs becomes even more important. Despite limited budgets and crowded policy agendas, SANs in many states have been able to sustain funding for afterschool, and some SANs have been able to expand funding and support. To learn about the work of the SANs in today's competitive funding and policy environment, AYPF interviewed leaders of several SANs and staff in state education agencies and afterschool programs as well as reviewed documents on how SANs are accomplishing these complex and multi-layered goals.

While each state has its own context and strategy for investing in afterschool, the SANs leaders described common activities that fall in certain categories. These include: framing afterschool as a critical component to student success; making every dollar count; sustaining and growing programs; improving the quality of afterschool; and ensuring equitable access, especially for students in low-income communities.

### Framing Afterschool as a Critical Component to Student Success

#### Creating a Common Vision and Commitment

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<sup>4</sup> For more about SANs, see:

Chung, A., Hughes, G., & Dunham T. F. (2013). Making partnerships work for policies that expand learning opportunities: Statewide Afterschool Networks. *Expanded Learning & Afterschool Project*. Retrieved from <http://expandinglearning.org/expandingminds/article/making-partnerships-work-policies-expand-learning-opportunities-statewide>

<sup>5</sup> Donner, J. (2012). *Making the connections: A report on the first national survey of out-of-school time intermediary organizations*. The After-School Corporation: New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/coordinating-after-school-resources/Documents/Making-the-Connections-Report-First-National-Survey-of-OST.pdf>

Communities recognize that no single intervention or program can meet the needs of all its children and youth and that it is important to come together to create a shared vision for what they want. This requires developing a common agenda and goals with the input and accord of many stakeholders. This work, often referred to as “[collective impact](#),” involves a wide range of stakeholders across many programs, agencies, and funding streams solving a specific community problem. Identifying and selecting a common agenda, such as preparing more students for college and career readiness or increasing the number of students who study in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, can have a galvanizing effect on disparate groups that might not normally work together. Having a common agenda can promote alignment across providers, systems, and funding streams, maximize and rationalize resources, and, ultimately, improve youth outcomes.

One such approach is the collective impact work happening in Cincinnati, pioneered by Strive Together, a cooperative effort across several community leaders, including Cincinnati Public Schools, business, non-profit, and civic organizations. Through a collaborative approach, these stakeholders identified a common set of goals, outcomes, and indicators of success. A common data tool, the Learning Partner Dashboard, makes it possible for schools, afterschool programs, and partners to enter student information into the Dashboard and use it to facilitate communication and collaboration, to track services and interventions, and to target students needing additional services. The [Ohio SAN](#) promotes these community partnerships as a way to improve access to and quality of afterschool programs.

As part of this agenda-setting, SANs help those unfamiliar with the benefits of afterschool see how it contributes to the development and success of children and youth in many domains. SAN leaders show how afterschool improves student outcomes in areas like academic preparation, school attendance and engagement, social and emotional skills, and more. By sharing this information, SANs help make the case for afterschool providers to have a seat at the community table and play a contributing role in collective impact work.

In California, afterschool is viewed as a critical partner to help local educational agencies meet certain state-mandated education priorities, such as increasing student engagement, improving school climate and student achievement, expanding access to courses, and implementing the Common Core State Standards. Because school leaders see that afterschool and summer programs are an important piece of the educational strategy, those leaders are very supportive of afterschool. Jessica Gunderson, Policy Director, Partnership for Children and Youth (PCY), a California intermediary that connects schools and community partners and improves services for low-income children, said that PCY has been very intentional about including language about college and career readiness, STEM, social and emotional learning, and summer learning loss when they talk about afterschool, as a way to appeal to other groups and strengthen support for afterschool. They also work with local communities to help them figure out how their local school dollars can be used for afterschool, and some districts are using their K-12 local control funds to enhance and expand afterschool and train teachers. Even with these efforts, Gunderson emphasized that afterschool providers need to coordinate more intentionally with K-12. “We still need to push our way into K-12,” she said.



Jeff Cole, Network Lead, Beyond School Bells (BSB) in Nebraska said, “We focus on talking about afterschool as a strategy to improve STEM outcomes. This has been a game changer, as people see how they can get involved with afterschool to improve STEM outcomes and talent.”

In New Mexico, Danette Townsend, Community School Manager, ABC Community School Partnership and Chair, New Mexico Afterschool Alliance (NMASA), described how the strong community schools initiative in the state has been helpful to advancing afterschool.

She said that they have advocated that a key component of quality community schools is a strong afterschool program, which aligns with the demands of parents to have more afterschool options. The NMASA has been very intentional that community schools and afterschool are not in competition with each other, but that they both contribute to a stronger educational experience for children and youth.

Other SANs have been involved with State Children’s Cabinets or Councils,<sup>6</sup> which are “cross-agency coordinating bodies that are charged with changing the fragmented and ineffective way states often do business for children and youth.” SANs often provide information, advice, data, and research to the cabinets to inform them about afterschool services, the benefits of afterschool, gaps in coverage, and to advocate for more coordination across funding streams. As statewide intermediaries, SANs also convene partners and stakeholders to promote coordination, and this can inform the work of the Children’s Cabinets and provide a foundation for evolving collaborative efforts.

SANs also encourage and support collaboration at the local level to advance common goals. In Nebraska, BSB worked with city leaders, public educators, and community-based providers in several cities across the state to help them create a vision and plan for a citywide afterschool system in their community. BSB was able to leverage funds from several local philanthropies that saw the value in helping communities across the state develop coordinated approaches to providing afterschool. BSB then provided support to the city teams as they developed their plans and created a coalition among the cities so they could learn from each other.

One other task of collective impact efforts is to figure out how to use diverse funding streams to achieve big goals. Coordinated financing allows programs to drive their funds toward commonly agreed-upon outcomes and leverage more resources. It also allows programs to combine diverse funding sources in flexible ways to meet multiple needs of children and youth. SANs provide input on afterschool funding sources and how they can be better connected with other funding streams to help children and youth.

## **Building Public and Political Will**

Afterschool programs are widely supported by parents, and children and youth say they would attend them if there were programs in their neighborhood. In 2014, parents of approximately 19.4 million

<sup>6</sup> Gaines, E., Faigley, I., & Pittman, K. (2008). *State children's cabinets and councils: Elements of success issue 1: Structural options*. The Forum for Youth Investment: Washington, DC. Retrieved from [http://forumfyi.org/files/Elements\\_of\\_Success1\\_Structure.pdf](http://forumfyi.org/files/Elements_of_Success1_Structure.pdf)

children (41 percent) said they would enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available, up from 18.5 million children (38 percent) in 2009 and 15.3 million children (30 percent) in 2004.<sup>7</sup> Despite this interest, funding for afterschool is insufficient to meet demand. In some states, the funding from the federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) program is the only source of dedicated funds, and afterschool providers must find other funds at the state and local level to support their programs. For this reason, many of the SANs leaders we spoke to said it is important to build

“Afterschool providers suffer from terminal modesty – we don’t tell enough people about the great work we do.” Jeff Cole, Nebraska

support and demand for afterschool programs, and all of them said they are always working to increase the dollars available for afterschool. All of the SANs leaders were clear that more money was needed for afterschool, as there are millions of children nationwide who lack services.

Many SAN leaders said that they spend a great deal of time and energy in cultivating champions and building the public will to support funding for afterschool. In California, Gunderson, PCY, said that it “takes time to develop relationships with champions and

that it is important to keep relationships strong as a champion moves into a position with more power.” Joe Davis, Executive Director, Florida Afterschool Network, said that a champion may not be someone who is in the trenches running afterschool programs every day, but may be someone who is behind the scenes in agencies that can promote strong alliances and collaboration. He said, “You never know where a champion will come from. Champions are everywhere.” Laveta Wills-Hale, Network Coordinator, Arkansas Out-of-School Network, said they “realize they are at the point where they need a sustained campaign to build the public will to push for a set aside for dedicated [afterschool] funding.” Cole, BSB, described a successful approach used in Nebraska to build public will. The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation created a relationship with Nebraska Education Telecommunications and developed television spots with well-known and highly-respected individuals to talk about the benefits of afterschool and how others could get involved, “which has been very effective.”

Cole also said that the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation “works with state government leaders so [individual afterschool programs] don’t have to. We do the work of building champions and public will for them. We create partnerships with others in economic development, workforce, career and technical education, etc. and make afterschool a part of the agenda.”

Many SANs also organize legislative briefings and breakfasts to share information on the benefits of afterschool and to advocate for more and flexible funding or improved coordination. Oftentimes SANs bring children and parents to these events to have them tell their stories directly to the legislators.

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<sup>7</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *America after 3PM: Afterschool programs in demand*. Washington, D.C. [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AA3PM\\_National\\_Report.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AA3PM_National_Report.pdf)

Raising funding for afterschool is a “lifelong marathon.” Michelle Doucette Cunningham, Executive Director, Connecticut After School Network

SANs also work to create messages about afterschool that will resonate with politicians and the broader community. In Florida, Davis said they are using simple messages that convey the need for afterschool. One such message is based on the numbers 6-1-5. The 6 represents the 6,000 hours that students are awake in a year; the 1 represents the 1,000 hours that students are in school in a year; and the 5 represents the 5,000 hours that students are out of school, clearly pointing to the need for productive activities for youth in the 5,000 hours. Another message they use is based on research that predicts school success and failure based on the ABC's: attendance, behavior, and course grades.

Given that afterschool contributes to improvements in all of these areas, they promote the messaging that afterschool helps with the ABCs. Davis also said that they target their message campaigns to specific subgroups, such as parents, business leaders, or politicians, and they have realized that they need to better equip parents to demand high quality afterschool and be prepared to carry this message to their state legislators.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham, Executive Director, Connecticut After School Network, said the state has focused on a single message, year after year, which is to increase support for afterschool. The SAN develops materials that can be used to help create champions and is clear that raising support for afterschool for all children is a “lifelong marathon.” As a result of this consistent message, funding for afterschool in Connecticut has increased substantially.

In Rhode Island, Elana Rosenberg, Senior Project Manager, Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance, said that they are working on message campaigns that clarify the difference between afterschool and extended learning time and between summer school and summer learning, so that there is a greater understanding and appreciation of what afterschool offers.

### Multiple Funding Sources for Afterschool Available

There are many funding sources available at the [federal](#), [state](#), and [local](#) levels to [support afterschool and expanded learning](#).

A short summary of federal funding sources is provided here:

- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Program:** Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, this is the primary federal funding source dedicated to afterschool.
- **Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program:** Enables afterschool programs to offer low-cost or free snacks to children.
- **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF):** Subsidizes child care costs, including the costs of afterschool care for children ages 5-12 for low-income families and also allocates a small portion of funds to be spent on activities aimed at improving program quality.
- **Community Development Block Grant:** Provides communities with resources to address a wide range of community development needs such as child care fees for low-income families and to support construction of day care or youth centers.
- **ESEA Title I:** Funds can be used to support extended learning programs that serve low-income, at-risk youth.

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- **ESEA Title II: Professional development funding can be used for teachers who work in afterschool programs.**
  - **GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs): Afterschool programs, in partnership with GEAR UP, may use funds for tutoring programs, afterschool and weekend programs (including transportation), summer programs, mentoring services, and college counseling.**
  - **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act: Funds support preventative and comprehensive services for juveniles and the personnel with whom they interact, including afterschool program staff, and it also supports mentoring and programs for positive youth development**
  - **Safe and Drug Free Schools: Afterschool programs can provide conflict resolution, peer mediation, mentoring programs, character education programs, or community service projects in partnership with schools.**
  - **Social Services Block Grant: Funds can be used to support child care and youth services.**
  - **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Funds are used primarily to provide cash assistance to low-income families and may also be used to support afterschool programming and initiatives, either directly or through a transfer of funds to the CCDF.**
  - **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): Funds can support afterschool programs in the delivery of tutoring, literacy and math skills, training services, community service opportunities, leadership development opportunities, adult mentoring, counseling, and transportation.**

Photo: Joe Quint

At the state level, some states provide dedicated funding for afterschool, others provide support through a combination of programs that are flexible enough that they can be used for afterschool activities. Afterschool programs can receive funds from agencies such as the state education agency, state department of health and human services, state department of children and families, and governor's commissions.

At the local level, funding for afterschool programs comes from programs such as Boys & Girls Clubs of America, United Way, 4-H chapters, K-12 education, parks and recreation departments, libraries, police departments, philanthropies, and employers. Some afterschool programs also charge fees to families based on income, but the revenue from fees is generally insufficient to sustain a program.

## Making Every Dollar Count

While existing afterschool dollars are not sufficient to meet the demand for services, there are ways to use funding to reach more students with high-quality programs. They include mapping afterschool resources, accessing, blending, and braiding funding, and reducing administrative burdens.

### Mapping Afterschool Resources

There are many programs that can be used to support afterschool programs. But identifying them and the agencies that administer them is a challenge for most afterschool providers and youth workers. Conducting a map and analysis of the funding sources that are available at the state and local levels is a first step to developing a clear picture of existing funding streams, what they do and do not fund, and where they are currently being used. Maps can help inform advocates and legislators about current resource use and where strategic investment in afterschool can be made. Maps can help community leaders and afterschool intermediaries see which neighborhoods have resources or which ones lack funds and services. With information of this type, community leaders can ensure that funds and programs are equitably distributed across all neighborhoods.

Many SANs have conducted mapping exercises at the state and local levels. For example, the New York Statewide Afterschool Network developed a [statewide fiscal map](#) over the course of almost ten years that tracks programs that can be used to support afterschool and that demonstrates where there have been increases or decreases, which is important information for advocates and legislators. In Nebraska, BSB conducted two statewide fiscal maps and one for the city of Omaha, which were shared with local afterschool providers, who have used them to learn about available resources and potential partners. Fiscal maps can also help states and communities see if the money that is spent aligns with their priorities.

### Accessing, Blending, and Braiding Funding

Many afterschool programs receive funds from only one source; they do not blend or braid funds. But if they do access more than one funding stream, Alli Lidie, Deputy Director, New York Afterschool Network, said that program leaders have little time to or knowledge about how to combine funds.

Each source of funding available to support afterschool programs – from federal, state, local, and philanthropic sources – has its own purposes, requirements, and structures, and it can be extremely difficult to align them in a way that allows a coordinated approach. Most afterschool providers do not have the time or resources to create relationships with various agencies or figure out how to cobble together multiple funding sources to meet the demand for programs or specific needs of the youth. Some local afterschool programs are experts at doing this, but it is often because of one savvy administrator who has built personal relationships and knows where the money is. Even when a logical source of funding exists, such as school-age child care funds, the program requirements might make it difficult to coordinate with, so afterschool providers might not be able to access that money.

This is where SANs play an important role, by providing training and technical assistance to afterschool providers and community partners and to local afterschool intermediaries, so that staff on the ground understand how to access, blend, and braid funding. SANs collect information about ways in which communities are coordinating funds or using funds that might not ordinarily be viewed as “afterschool” funding and share this information. In California, Frank Pisi, Director of the California Afterschool Network, said the SAN raised “awareness of the availability of SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program] and how afterschool programs can access that money. As a result, an additional \$9-10 million a month is now available for nutrition programs that had not been available before. However, only about one third of the afterschool programs participate in the SNAP program, so we are trying to get more programs involved," he said.

Gunderson, PCY, reported that some afterschool programs in California use funds from the migrant education program to pay for transportation costs for children in afterschool and summer programs.

Cole, BSB, described how they help local leaders access funding in Nebraska. He said, "We support local leadership development for mayors, superintendents, school board members, and system directors. We developed an i3 [Investing in Innovation] grant for a coalition of communities, but we did not get it. However, we did cement some strong relationships and increased the level of knowledge of providers about funding sources."

### **Reducing Administrative Burdens**

Every funding stream and agency has its own mandates, regulations, application forms, data collection, and timetables that must be followed. All of these program variables place a huge burden on afterschool program staff whose primary focus is serving children and youth, not dealing with bureaucratic processes. Several states view a streamlined application as an important tool for coordinated financing. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services has streamlined processes for grant applications and requires all recipients of their afterschool funding, all 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, and all New York City Department of Youth and Community Development afterschool programs to use a [quality self-assessment tool](#) which consolidates evaluation and reporting across all programs as a way to ease this burden, according to former New York State Afterschool Network Executive Director Nora Niedzielski-Eichner.



Photo: Our Piece of the Pie

The Massachusetts Department of Education streamlines the process of applying for state funds through its Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Quality grant program, which helps local programs understand the financing landscape and access grant-writing support.

Another type of barrier relates to different eligibility requirements or rules. Gunderson used the example that eligibility for many child care programs is stricter than for afterschool programs with regard to issues like income in California. As a result, afterschool programs have to collect more data and provide greater documentation about family income on all students to ensure they are eligible.

Timing is also a challenge when applying for or reporting on funding from multiple sources. Application due dates do not always align, and reporting periods can span different time periods, requiring afterschool programs to report on programs that are partly funded or not completed. To help local afterschool providers, some SANs advocate for streamlined processes for applications, reporting, and evaluations with state agencies and work with state agencies to clarify regulations to ensure greater scheduling alignment. SANs can also provide grant writing support to local afterschool intermediaries or programs, to ease the workload of applying for multiple programs.

## Sustaining and Growing Programs

Sustaining investment in afterschool programs is an ongoing task. While federal 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding has remained fairly constant over the past five years, it can only be used by local grantees for between three-five years, which means that local afterschool programs must identify funding to replace it.

Dedicated state funding, if it exists, can change from year to year as well, forcing programs to scramble when the legislature cuts budgets. SAN leaders say they spend a great deal of time advocating for sustainable funding, fighting against cuts, and pushing for increases, and many are very proud of how afterschool programs have become institutionalized in their states and communities.

Different funding sources allow afterschool providers to experiment and innovate with programming in ways that a single source of funding might not typically allow, that leads to a stronger, more comprehensive set of services.

SANs leaders described some of the challenges they have faced in their efforts to sustain and grow funding. On the positive side, BSB advocated for a bill that would allocate money from the lottery to afterschool innovation. They approached their campaign as one that would help children and families in all communities, rural as well as urban. Given the rural nature of Nebraska, this was an important message, and state legislators from the many rural parts of the state realized that this funding would benefit their communities, not just the cities, and approved the measure. Now one percent of lottery funds, which is about \$175,000, is dedicated to afterschool.

Connecticut initially enacted a funding stream for afterschool of \$100,000. Doucette Cunningham said their strategy was to stick to a simple message of increasing the pot and growing it little by little every year. Because of their sustained and consistent effort over many years, the amount allocated for afterschool has now grown to \$5.3 million.

Arkansas, on the other hand, has run into hurdles with creating a separate funding stream for afterschool. Wills-Hays, Arkansas Out-of-School Network, described efforts to enact a state funding stream for afterschool in 2008, when Governor Mike Beebe created a Governor's Task Force on Best Practices for Afterschool and Summer Programs. The task force report resulted in legislation in 2009 designed to fund afterschool and positive youth development programs and was passed, but not funded.

Because funding for the afterschool legislation did not materialize, the Network decided to pursue another avenue. Arkansas had created a \$200 million fund to close academic achievement gaps, based on a court order. Because afterschool is a prime strategy to improve student performance, the Out-of-School Network decided to ask for a two percent set aside from that fund to use for summer learning. Unfortunately, however, the Arkansas Attorney General determined that summer school was not a constitutional use of funds, and so that money is not available either. Wills-Hays acknowledged that it is time for a sustained campaign to build the public will and advocacy to push for funding for afterschool.

Florida is one state that provides a state match for the \$58 million in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds it receives. However, Davis said the state provides a very small match, which they hope to grow. There are other sources of funding for afterschool including school-based afterschool programs, which are usually fee-based, programs offered by community- and faith-based organizations, and funding from parks and recreation departments and municipalities. Davis also described unique entities called [Children's Services Councils](#) (CSCs) which are local governing bodies that oversee funding for programs and

services that improve the lives of children and their families. There are eight CSCs across the state, and funds are raised locally for a wide variety of purposes. Davis said that between five to 30 percent of CSC funds are dedicated to afterschool programs and therefore a major supporter. Florida also receives funds from the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for prevention and intervention services during and after school. Davis said the State Secretary for Juvenile Justice is a strong champion of afterschool and consistently advocates for more support.

Delivering evidence-based programming and undergoing evaluations is an important part of sustaining successful afterschool and expanded learning opportunities. Finding the resources to accomplish this is challenging, and programs and systems can benefit from coordinated financing that allows them to use funds for this purpose. SANs leaders talked about the importance of using data to inform policymakers, funders, and the public about the value of afterschool, but that data collection is generally weak. In Florida, Davis said that outside of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program and programs administered by the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, most programs do not keep good data. He also said it can be challenging to figure out what data points are truly indicative of high quality programs and have afterschool programs collect that information. Gunderson said she was “dumbfounded by the lack of good data” in California but went on to say that PCY is working with programs to improve data collection and will be introducing a student identifier system so all programs can start collecting data on students. These efforts to improve data collection should provide more evidence of the value of afterschool, which is a critical tool in advocating for more funding.

SANs leaders also talked about the importance of diversifying funding as a sustainability strategy. Diversified funds provide a cushion if one funding source dries up and can even out the availability of dollars over the calendar year.

### **Improving the Quality of Afterschool**

While everyone agrees that having high-quality afterschool programs is important, it takes time and resources to build a quality system. SANs focus on building quality in various ways, some of which

Training and technical assistance, data collection, evaluation, partnership building, and ongoing improvement and innovation all lead to quality, but they require adequate, flexible funding along with strong leadership and guidance.

include helping programs implement quality tools and working with local programs to measure and assess quality. SANs convene local afterschool program providers to share information on building quality programs and to learn best practices from each other.

SANs also provide training for professional development and to build the capacity of the system. Nebraska’s BSB supports local leadership development for mayors, school superintendents, school board members, and system directors as a way to increase the knowledge level of providers and keep everyone working toward a quality system. Other SANs promote the use of Title II of

the Elementary and Secondary Education Act funds to support professional development for program providers which helps build the capacity of the staff who manage afterschool programs.

In Connecticut, Doucette Cunningham said they were able to set-aside four percent of their state funding to be allocated to activities to promote quality, such as training and technical assistance. It is also used to support a data collection system and a state-wide evaluation of the entire program. The quality set-aside provides essential support services that both ensures the programs can achieve their

goals for improving student outcomes as well as documenting this success to make the case for further investment.

The Massachusetts Department of Education evaluates afterschool effectiveness with its survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes and helps programs compare their practices to program standards through its Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool.

New Mexico, which has many very small afterschool programs given the rural nature of the state, has created three tiers of quality standards for small, medium, and large programs. Kim Johnson, Mott Afterschool Coordinator, New Mexico Public Education Department, said that the three tiers allow any program to reach a high quality standard based on their size and resources avoiding comparing small programs to large ones.

Yet other SANs leaders said that funding to support quality improvement efforts is scarce as quality improvement is not viewed as a high priority and competes with the cost of direct services. Another challenge is that quality varies depending on the funding stream, with some programs focusing tightly on improving quality and other programs with lax or no standards.

### Ensuring Equitable Access

The supply of high-quality afterschool programs is not evenly distributed across states or communities, resulting in inequitable access. Rates of participation in afterschool programs remain relatively low among disadvantaged and minority youth, the very youth who may be most in need of academic assistance.<sup>8</sup>

More than 4.1 million, or 61 percent, of African-American parents and 4.2 million, or almost half, of Latino parents of children who are not enrolled in an afterschool program say that they would enroll their children in quality afterschool programs if one were available, significantly higher than the national average of 38 percent.<sup>9</sup> The demand for summer learning programs is even greater. More than three in four African-American children and seven in 10 Latino children would likely enroll in a summer learning program, based on parental interest.<sup>10</sup> And half of children from low-income households not participating in an afterschool program would be enrolled if one were available to them, 16 percentage points higher than for children from higher-income households (34 percent).<sup>11</sup>

SANs conduct fiscal mapping exercises to identify which communities lack resources and programs. SANs and community leaders can advocate for more funding or reallocate funding to high need areas.

Closing these gaps and providing more access to afterschool is important not only to ensure equity across groups, but research also documents greater gains for those youth who enter programs at

<sup>8</sup> Gardner, M., Roth, J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009). *Can afterschool programs help level the playing field for disadvantaged Youth?* Campaign for Educational Equity: Teachers College, Columbia University: New York, New York. Retrieved from [http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/11242\\_After-school\\_report\\_10-7-09\\_web.pdf](http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/11242_After-school_report_10-7-09_web.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2013). The importance of afterschool and summer learning programs to African-American and Latino communities. *Afterschool Alert (Issue Brief No. 59)*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue\\_59\\_African-American\\_and\\_Latino\\_Communities.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_59_African-American_and_Latino_Communities.cfm)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2014).



greater risk, whether risk is defined on the basis of prior achievement levels or family characteristics (e.g., income, race/ethnicity, etc.).<sup>12</sup>

Other groups of children and youth, such as students with disabilities, English language learners, and recent immigrants, may lack access to high-quality afterschool programs, although less data is available on those populations. There are also fewer afterschool programs for older youth than younger children and for children who live in rural areas.

While more funding will help, that alone may not solve the access challenge: there are other barriers that prevent low-income and minority families from accessing programs, some of which are financial, logistical, or family-related. Some programs in low-income or rural communities may not have the same amount of resources as higher income communities (there may be fewer charities or community-based organizations located in the community), and some parents in those communities may not be able to afford the fees for afterschool programs. Other barriers include lack of transportation, concerns about safety, family obligations such as caring for younger siblings or going to work, and lack of interest in participating due to either negative attitudes about programs or preferences for other afterschool activities.<sup>13</sup>

For programs to be accessible, they also should be culturally relevant and foster a positive sense of identity, build upon the cultures of the families, and offer a curriculum that values and responds to the strengths, challenges, and needs of all of the different kinds of youth in their communities (e.g., youth of different ethnicities, class backgrounds, spiritual beliefs, genders, sexual orientations, and physical or cognitive abilities).<sup>14</sup> Keeping the needs of the population in mind can help as SANs leaders advocate for increased support.

SANs leaders talked about the challenges in serving rural communities across their states, given the lack of resources in many of those communities. In New Mexico, Johnson said that many of their rural areas have no afterschool providers at all, so they are exploring how to use online resources. She also said that one small, rural elementary school has tried a new approach and pays individuals to provide afterschool services as a way to meet needs.

Townsend said that they are working hard to ensure that all of their elementary schools have afterschool programs to provide supplemental learning and that most of the high schools have many extracurricular activities in New Mexico. But she said, "Our equity challenge is less about neighborhoods

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<sup>12</sup> Lauer, P. A., Akiba, M., Wilkerson, S. B., Apthorp, H. S., Snow, D., & Martin-Glenn, M. L. (2006). Out-of-school time programs: A meta-analysis of effects for at-risk students. *Review of Educational Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography/database/meta-analysis-of-effects-of-out-of-school-time-programs-for-at-risk-students>

<sup>13</sup> Gardner, M., et al. (2009).

<sup>14</sup> Olsen, L. (2000). Reflections on access and equity implications for after school program evaluations. *The Evaluation Exchange* (Vol. 6, No. 1). Retrieved from <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/out-of-school-time-issue-1/reflections-on-access-and-equity-implications-for-after-school-program-evaluations>

than grade level. We only have two providers that work with middle school students," and thus, they are trying to find ways to provide more services to middle school youth.

SANs leaders can help align funding priorities with measures that will truly improve access to programs, rather than simply expanding the supply of programs. Funds are needed to ensure that programs in low-income communities are of high quality and that resources are available to ensure well-trained staff. Flexibility in funding is important as well, so that barriers, such as transportation, can be addressed.

As previously mentioned, many SANs conduct fiscal mapping exercises to identify which communities lack resources and programs. Armed with demographic data and information on which communities or neighborhoods do not have afterschool programs, SANs and community leaders can advocate for more funding or reallocate funding to high need areas. However, particularly for afterschool programs in small and rural communities, it is difficult to collect data on access and equity.

Given that all states indicate that the demand for afterschool is not being met, and it is often the lower-income communities that lack access, increasing the investment and addressing equity in afterschool becomes imperative.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Overall, the environment for afterschool is positive. Funding has for the most part remained constant over the past several years, research has proven the value of afterschool, parents want more afterschool for their children, and the quality of programs continues to improve.

Overall, the environment for afterschool is positive. Funding has for the most part remained constant over the past several years, research has proven the value of afterschool, parents want more afterschool for their children, and the quality of programs continues to improve.

But there are challenges too. While there are various funding sources that can be used to support afterschool, there is not enough funding to meet the need. Funding is also needed not just for direct services, but to improve data collection and use, provide sufficient training, develop partnerships, and improve quality.

The issue of equitable access to high-quality and age-appropriate afterschool programs continues to need attention. SANs can play an important role in trying to equalize funding to address these discrepancies and ensure that all young people have access to high-quality afterschool and summer programs in their neighborhoods. They can also help advocate for special emphasis on funding for low-income, disadvantaged, and rural communities.

Coordination of various funding streams can result in more children and youth being served and more flexible use of dollars. However, it continues to be a challenge to blend and braid funds and develop coordinated funding. Having multiple funding streams can also be both an advantage and a disadvantage. More funding streams mean more money, but at the same time, having varied funding sources can make it harder for policymakers and legislators to understand how they connect to afterschool, harder for advocates to fight for funding when there are so many sources, and harder for program leaders to use them in aligned and coordinated ways.

Flexibility is important to allow coordination of funds and innovation at the local level. However, with more flexibility comes the need for clear quality standards and a commitment to ensuring that funds are equitably distributed to low-income communities. More flexibility also gives policy leaders the option to spend less money on afterschool programs, so while some flexibility is a good thing, it is important to consider how flexible approaches would cause more, not less, money to go to afterschool.

There are many issues competing for money, time, and attention, like Common Core State Standards, early childhood programs, STEM, increasing academic performance, preparing students for college and career, and developing social and emotional learning skills.

Afterschool, because of its flexible nature, can help address all of these issues in one way or another, but many decision makers do not see afterschool as a player. SANs can help others understand how afterschool connects and aligns to these issues and demonstrate how afterschool can help meet many of these goals.

Another challenge is that there is a continued separation of K-12 and afterschool in many communities. Several SANs leaders said they have to continually work to break down barriers between these two sectors and to have K-12 educators value what afterschool has to offer. Creating strong relationships with key stakeholders is important, but SANs leaders expressed frustration that the solution seems to be relational when it should be systemic.

A state framework to ensure that the availability of high-quality, developmentally-appropriate afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs for all youth could help ensure greater equity.

The availability, quality, and support of afterschool programs vary across each state, with, in some cases, large variations. This means that some children have lots of high quality programs to choose from, and other children have few or none. A state framework to ensure that the availability of high-quality, developmentally-appropriate afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs for all youth could help ensure greater equity. But it would have to be done carefully, to allow the afterschool community the necessary flexibility and freedom to design innovative and unique programs.

While the federal government supports afterschool through the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program, SANs leaders said that the federal

government could do much more to promote afterschool by fully funding that program, by exploring legislation that is supportive of afterschool in general, providing more flexibility across other education and youth programs, understanding the huge need and demand that exists, creating alternative pathways for afterschool and opportunities for innovation, and encouraging every federal agency to explore how their work connects to and can support quality afterschool.

## CLOSING

Since 2002, Statewide Afterschool Networks have played a critical role in expanding afterschool. They have become skilled at creating important stakeholder relationships, raising the awareness of

afterschool as a key player in improving youth outcomes, building public and political will, providing technical assistance to improve the quality of programs, and pushing for greater access by all. Despite their many gains, SANs are often hampered in their efforts to increase investment in afterschool by the lack of resources to meet demand, multiple and competing priorities, and, the difficulty of working with some K-12 educators who do not always see the value of afterschool. Even with these challenges, however, the SANs leaders we talked to expressed optimism about the future of afterschool and shared their personal commitment to the goal of providing high quality afterschool for every child in their state.

## **About the Author**

Betsy Brand is the Executive Director of the American Youth Policy Forum and has been with AYPF since 1998. Ms. Brand started her career working for the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor (1977-1983) and then moved to the U.S. Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee (1983-1989). From 1989-1993, Ms. Brand served as Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education. She also served as a consultant on policy and best practices affecting education and workforce preparation. Ms. Brand is a nationally-known expert on college and career readiness, afterschool and expanded learning, career and technical education, and youth reengagement.



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