

Funding Out-of-School Time Programs—Now and in the Future

Finding Sustainable Federal, State, and Local Funding Sources

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Executive Summary

Millions of families depend on out-of-school time programs to support their children's overall health and development outside of the classroom. Fortunately, the American Rescue Plan included \$122 billion designated for education and \$350 billion in flexible funding that many states and communities used to [launch out-of-school time initiatives](#) to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of children and youth. Once the spending window for these dollars closes, though, school districts that received the most funds (based on student poverty levels) will experience the most significant decline in funding. Consequently, advocates and program providers must plan *now* for a thoughtful, long-term approach to funding out-of-school time programs with other federal, state, and local funding sources. This fact sheet highlights some of the potential funding sources that can support out-of-school time programs. While it is not a comprehensive guide, it provides a general overview that advocates and providers can use as a starting point to think through sustainable funding options to support out-of-school time services.

A Growing Need, A Lack of Funding

Out-of-school time programs, which include activities offered before and after the core school day and during the summer, offer children in kindergarten through 12th grade an enriching and safe space to develop their interests, reinforce their academic learning, strengthen essential social and emotional skills, and build relationships with youth development professionals. School- and community-based programs supported by the federal government are especially crucial for helping low-income families access after-school programs. But a severe lack of

funding prevents millions of children from taking advantage of such opportunities.

Demand for after-school activities has increased 60% since 2004, and yet the number of children enrolled in after-school programs decreased from 10.2 million in 2014 to 7.8 million in 2020 due to factors including program costs, program availability, and transportation, according to the Afterschool Alliance.¹ Moreover, data shows that 24.6 million more children *would enroll* in an after-school program if one were available to them.²

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Despite the considerable need for out-of-school time programs, services remain critically underfunded with the high costs of programs for families being one of the biggest barriers to participation.³ In 2022, the federal government provided an all-time high investment of \$1.3 billion in designated after-school funding through the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st CCLC).⁴ Yet, this \$30 million increase from previous funding levels remains insufficient to meet the demands for after-school programs.⁵ Recent advocacy efforts have pushed for at least a \$500 million increase to serve the 24.6 million children who would enroll in an after-school program if one were available to them.⁶ Instead, most out-of-school time initiatives rely on



parent fees for funding as state and local governments provide limited resources to subsidize costs.⁷

While the [American Rescue Plan](#) provided immense support for out-of-school time programs at the onset and during the COVID-19 pandemic, those funds will soon expire. (States and communities must allocate their Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds by September 30, 2024, and spend them by January 28, 2025. Meanwhile, they must obligate their Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds by December 31, 2024, and spend them by December 31, 2026.) That means, advocates and program providers must identify sustainable funding sources to support out-of-school time services now and in the future. The following sections outline the general federal, state, and local funding sources available to support their efforts.

Federal Funding Sources

Federal dollars play a critical role in shaping the funding landscape of programs and services for children and youth. There are more than 280 federal funding streams that support a range of services for children and youth, according to Children’s Funding Project’s comprehensive [Federal Funding Streams for Children and Youth Services](#) database. Of all these streams, roughly 87 align with out-of-school time services. Advocates can use this resource to identify funding sources that specifically support out-of-school time programs as well as hundreds of other federal sources related to children and youth flowing into their communities.

The guide [Building, Sustaining, & Improving: Using Federal Funds for Summer Learning and Afterschool](#) developed by The Wallace Foundation is another resource that explains the range of core federal funding options available for out-of-school time programs. It outlines the federal programs that

provide funding for summer learning and after-school programs as well as their accompanying statutes and granting agencies.

Advocates interested in learning more about state and private funding for after-school and summer learning programs in addition to federal sources can refer to the Afterschool Alliance’s [funding database](#). It includes funding from federal programs like the 21st CCLC program (mentioned previously), Child Care Development Block Grant, AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Youth Mentoring Initiative.

All three of these tools can help advocates and community leaders identify existing and untapped funding options for out-of-school time programs that will help sustain programs into the future. Keep in mind, though, this is only the first step in the long process to secure funding. Advocates should expect to commit to building their local capacity to ensure that they are well positioned to apply for and ultimately spend competitive federal funds. This may mean spearheading efforts or partnering with local stakeholders such as after-school networks and community-based advocacy organizations who already lead this work.

State and Local Funding Sources

Depending on the state or community, there are a range of state and local funding options that advocates and providers can access as well.

Budget Processes

According to Urban Institute, there are notable differences in how local and state governments allocate public funding. The bulk of local government general spending (40%) went toward elementary and secondary education in 2020.⁸ Elementary and

secondary education expenditures may include costs associated with operating and maintaining public schools as well as other educational facilities and even preschool programs associated with school systems.⁹ Out-of-school time advocates and providers seeking to access school funding should prioritize building strong school-community partnerships. These partnerships allow communities to maximize their resources and ensure that providers can foster positive learning environments outside of the traditional school day.¹⁰

In 2020, the largest portion of states' general spending (44%) went toward public welfare services.¹¹ Public welfare spending includes funding going to programs like TANF and Medicaid. These two programs in particular can impact out-of-school time programs in a range of ways. For example, states may use TANF dollars to subsidize the cost of child care for programs operating in accordance with summer and after-school hours.¹² TANF funds can also support youth summer jobs.¹³

Medicaid was the largest state-level public welfare expenditure in 2020.¹⁴ Out-of-school time advocates may be interested in these dollars because of the profound impact they can have on child and youth mental health.¹⁵ For example, the [Georgia Apex Program](#) leverages Medicaid funding to bring together community-based mental health providers and local school districts to promote positive mental health. Advocates can explore the link between Medicaid funding and local out-of-school programming by looking into school-based services. Likewise, they can consider identifying how their community or state could use state funding from other public welfare programs to support out-of-school time programs in creative ways.

Considering the range of public funding in the context of local and state budget processes, advocates should assess whether and how much of these local and state-administered funds reach out-of-school time programs. Advocates may be positioned to advocate for increased funding in cases where their programs receive some, but not enough, funding. There is also the possibility that advocates can push to establish new funding to support their programs. Several states already budget portions of their own revenue for after-school programs.

- New York state put \$33 million¹⁶ and \$55 million¹⁷ toward its Advantage After School Program and Empire State After-School Program respectively

during the state's fiscal year 2019–2020 budget appropriations. Advocates are now seeking an additional \$219 million to support the merger of these two programs.¹⁸

- Alabama put \$1.5 million toward its Afterschool and Summer Program pilot in 2022.¹⁹ The state's governor proposed a \$1.3 million increase in funding for the program in the 2023 budget.²⁰
- Michigan put \$50 million toward after-school and summer programs in the state's 2023 budget.²¹ This investment from the state's general fund builds on the \$25 million of federal COVID-19 relief dollars that the state initially put toward programming.²²

Tax Revenue

Governments can support children and youth by dedicating a set portion of a specific type of tax revenue to programs and services for a length of time (generally longer than the typical one- to two-year budget cycle). There are a range of [tax types](#) that may be dedicated depending on state context. These include, but are not limited to, property, sales, income, marijuana, lottery, and sports betting taxes. States may use legislative action, ballot measures, and/or constitutional amendments to dedicate their tax revenue specifically to out-of-school time programming.

- Alaska has dedicated a portion of its marijuana tax revenue to after-school programs since 2018.²³ In addition to Alaska, at least five other states including Vermont and Connecticut also dedicate marijuana tax revenue to youth programs. Using marijuana tax revenue to support out-of-school time programs has also gained momentum on the local level. For example, Denver Afterschool Alliance started receiving \$1.5 million per year from the city's marijuana tax revenue in 2019.²⁴
- Massachusetts took a different approach by dedicating 1% of its sports betting revenue to the Youth Development Achievement Fund beginning in 2022. This fund provides financial assistance for higher education programs and after-school and out-of-school programs.²⁵

In many states, localities also can dedicate a portion of public tax revenue to children and youth services, often by using ballot measures to create a [voter-approved children's fund](#). Communities use the money in these children's funds to support programming and operating costs as well as facilities

and capital investments. There are [more than 50 voter-approved children's funds across the country](#) that support a range of child- and youth-serving needs. For example, the [Oakland Fund for Children & Youth](#) in California is a comprehensive fund with a special focus on out-of-school time initiatives. It has funded local organizations that provide after-school and summer programming to K-12 students. (Read the fund's [2022-2025 strategic investment plan for more information](#).) Out-of-school time providers can request funding if their [locality and/or state has a fund](#) dedicated to supporting after-school and summer programs or explore [the steps and advocacy efforts required to start such a fund](#).

Note that it is possible for states to dedicate funding to children and youth using nontax revenue. For example, Tennessee has dedicated \$25 million per year in lottery revenue to the Tennessee Education Lottery since 2002.²⁶ This fund supports voluntary pre-K and after-school programs. One point to highlight here is that a state's ability to dedicate tax and nontax related revenue to after-school and summer programs is influenced by a variety of contextual factors. Advocates need to tune into their state and local context to ensure that they are pushing for investments residents want. This often means developing an effective messaging campaign that fits the political and social climate where one resides.

Bonds

Governments can issue bonds to support spending goals and other priorities. In the simplest terms a bond is a loan. An entity interested in borrowing money, such as a government or company, issues a bond "to raise money from investors willing to lend them money for a certain amount of time."²⁷ In exchange, the company or government agrees to repay the full loan amount to the bond holders with interest.²⁸ There are several different types of bonds that governments can issue but one piquing interest among advocates for children and youth is the general obligation bond.

General obligation bonds are government-issued bonds that can be established at both the local and state levels and are used to raise money for projects that may not generate a revenue stream. They are frequently used to support the development of facilities and for major infrastructure projects. For example, Massachusetts established the [Early Education and Out of School Time \(EOST\) Capital Fund](#) in 2013. The accompanying legislation authorized \$45 million in bonds over a five-year period to support

the construction and renovation of facilities supporting early care and out-of-school time programs. Within the fund's first four years of operation, it funded 21 projects that increased the number of slots for early care and education and out-school time combined by 448 slots, among other wins.²⁹ Advocates for out-of-school time programs can explore whether their states have established a similar type of fund using general obligation bonds, or whether legislators might consider creating a similar fund. Meanwhile, local governments typically use general obligation bonds to support facilities development at public schools.

Fees

Governments can generate revenue by imposing charges associated with specific government services and resources. License plate fees are unique to state governments. In 2021, [Louisiana](#) legislators decided to dedicate 50% of revenue generated from NBA Pelicans license plates to the state's Early Childhood Education Fund.³⁰ The state established the fund with the goal of expanding the number of quality early childhood care





and education slots to eligible families. Several states have established license plates specifically to support after-school programs as well.

- Mississippi has a license plate tag to support the Mississippi Afterschool Alliance.³¹
- Illinois has a [Park District Youth Program license plate](#) that funds Illinois park districts and other recreation agencies providing after-school programming to youth.

Payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) allows local governments to enter into voluntary agreements with businesses and nonprofit entities thereby allowing those entities to pay a fixed yearly contribution over a set period of time rather than a typical property and/or sales taxes. These agreements are designed on the basis that they help governments recoup revenue they would otherwise lose through tax exemptions. In 2022, the City of Boston collected approximately \$94 million from its educational, medical, and cultural institutions.³² A portion of this revenue goes toward children's supports and services based on guidelines established by the city's 2011 PILOT Task Force. Examples show that PILOTs have been used to support a range of child and youth services including preschool expansion. Advocates for out-of-school time programs can explore how the PILOT model can support after-school and summer programs.

In addition to PILOTs, local governments can impose fees on the private sector through community benefits agreements (CBA). These legally binding agreements are typically held between community groups and real estate developers and/or businesses and outline how proposed development projects will positively impact a community.³³ Many examples of CBA

agreements show that funds are used for facilities development. For example, in Pennsylvania the Hill District Community Benefits Agreement between One Hill Coalition and the Pittsburgh Penguins led to \$8.3 million going toward community development and included funding for a new youth center.³⁴ CBAs may also be used for other initiatives. An agreement between the Boston Planning & Development Agency and Melnea Hotel and Residences project called for \$400,000 to be distributed among 12 organizations providing services and programming in areas such as youth and adult workforce development.³⁵

Assets

Governments typically own a diverse range of real estate and other assets that they can use in unique ways to support out-of-school time programs. These governments, in addition to community-based organizations and businesses, can support out-of-school programs through in-kind facilities usage. That means, they can allow programs to use public facilities and other resources for free or at a discounted rate. The best examples of this are found at the local level. For example, Metro Nashville Public Schools supported Nashville Afterschool Zone Alliance by matching \$400,000 of city funding with in-kind facilities usage, transportation, and staff support in 2010.³⁶ Relatedly, the New Orleans Recreation Development (NORD) Commission encouraged individuals, organizations, and other entities to apply for summer program partnerships in 2023. This partnership allows providers to host summer programs at any of NORD's recreation centers at no cost.³⁷

Governments can also explore income generation by assessing the profitability of government-owned assets and determining a plan to put those profits to good use. The process generally requires a government entity to take stock of its real estate and land, develop those properties, and then collect additional revenue from those properties through rental income, public parking fees, and other methods that resulted from that development.³⁸ This revenue is then pooled in a fund and reinvested back into the community. This approach is generally new so there are no known examples of it being used to support children and youth; however, as more cities and counties pursue this work it is possible that examples may emerge in the future.³⁹

Settlements

Local and state governments are slated to receive one-time response funding from opioid manufacturers, distributors, and retailers to acknowledge their role in fueling the country's opioid epidemic. Money from these settlements now totals more than \$50 billion.⁴⁰ States can use opioid settlement dollars to provide infrastructure grants to organizations combating opioid addiction, including those with a children and youth focus. For example, the Colorado Opioid Abatement Council voted to provide \$500,000 grants to the Boys & Girls Clubs in both Fremont County and Chaffee County to support facilities expansion and development. These investments will allow both clubs to grow their out-of-school time programming.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Wisconsin has dedicated \$750,000 for a related purpose. Funds will allow the Boys & Girls Club of the Fox Valley to partner with the Wisconsin Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs and 25 other Boys & Girls Clubs organizations to serve youth at 199 sites in 73 communities across the state with the SMART Moves Program, a program that provides youth with the information and skills to make healthy decisions.⁴²

Note that this is not the first nor last time states have received settlement dollars. In the late 1990s, states and territories signed the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) with some of the largest tobacco companies in the country. The goal of the MSA was to settle lawsuits related to the high health care costs of smoking-related illnesses and complications. More recently, Juul Labs, a company that produces electronic cigarettes, has settled lawsuits related to deceptive marketing. The Juul settlements are worth following as they have brought in an influx of hundreds of millions of dollars to states.⁴³

Conclusion

This fact sheet highlights some funding sources available for out-of-school time programs and is intended to help advocates and providers explore how to fund their programs. Advocates should expand their networks to identify which funding options best suit their individual communities and determine which ones to champion. Advocates can collaborate at the state and local levels by reaching out to [statewide after-school networks](#) or [other after-school intermediary networks](#). These networks may present opportunities for advocates to engage in children's campaigns where funding for out-of-school time programs is a top issue or policy priority. If a community has not previously participated in an after-school network, child- and youth-focused intermediary organizations in surrounding communities can help with advocacy efforts.

Out-of-school time programs set children and youth up for success, but not every young person has the opportunity to access quality programming. As funding from the American Rescue Plan comes to an end, advocates should strategize within their communities *now* to tap other available sources of funding to sustain and expand existing programs and create new ones.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

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The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. Learn more at www.afterschoolalliance.org.






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