

**Financing the Out of School Time Sector:  
Lessons Learned & Innovative Strategies**

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*Learning in Communities / Providence*

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**TO:** Learning in Communities / Providence Leaders  
**FROM:** Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and Community Matters  
**DATE:** December 3, 2003  
**RE:** Financing the Out of School Time Sector: Lessons Learned & Innovative Strategies

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This memo is a companion to the PowerPoint slide deck detailing the key lessons learned and most promising practices regarding financing out-of-school time programming and systems. It outlines the current national context for financing out-of-school time programs and initiatives, and discusses promising practices from around the country in four categories of support for the out-of-school time sector: public funding from federal, state and local governments; private funding, including public/private partnerships; parent fees; and in-kind funding.<sup>1</sup>

## **The Financing Climate Facing the Out-of-School Time Sector**

Out-of-school time programs are typically financed through a combination of public funds, parent fees, in-kind donations and private funding. Parent fees cover most (or sometimes all) of the costs for programs serving affluent children and youth. By contrast, programs serving lower-income children and youth tend to rely heavily on public funding, with some support from private donations. In-kind donations are typically small; however, for those programs whose facilities costs are donated, these contributions can represent a significant savings. As a whole, the sources of funding for OST programming are not a coherent system, but rather a collection of constantly shifting funding streams from which programs piece together a patchwork of support.

The cost of care varies a great deal according to the program model and the level of in-kind resources provided to the program. Most estimates place the cost per child for a high-quality program at around \$4,000 per academic year, or \$6,000 for a full year program.<sup>2</sup> In low and moderate income settings, public funding from subsidies and other sources typically makes up 40-50% of total program budgets, with parent fees accounting for 15-25%.<sup>3</sup> This leaves a funding gap of about a third of the total annual cost, which programs must close through fundraising from other sources.

### **Insufficient Funding: A Structural Gap for Nearly All Programs**

Coping with the gap between the cost of delivering high-quality care and the actual revenues received by the program is a virtual constant in OST programs.<sup>4</sup> The total supply of public and private funding sources available to OST programs is insufficient to ensure that programs can

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<sup>1</sup> This memo does not address Providence or Rhode Island OST funding questions directly. Preliminary findings of funding options in the city and state are detailed in Elaine Ferish and Andrew Bundy, *Stepping Up! Out-of-School Time and Youth Development in Providence: A School-Community Analysis*, Providence School Department & United Way of Rhode Island, January 2003. Additionally, Learning in Communities / Providence is also conducting a separate analysis of current OST funding in the city and state.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Halpern, Sharon Deich, and Carol Cohen, *Financing After-School Programs*, Washington, DC: The Finance Project, May 2000, p. 16. Samantha Wechsler, Amy Kershaw, Elaine Ferish, Andrew Bundy, *Meeting the Challenge: Financing Out-of-School Time Programming in Boston and Massachusetts*, Boston, MA: Parents United for Child Care, March 2001, p. 21, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Halpern et al., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Wechsler et al., p. 38.

meet the demands of parents who desire high-quality care for their children. Public subsidies for low-income children do not cover the full cost of quality care. (In Massachusetts, for example, the reimbursement rate for a full-year program is \$4,200, leaving a 39% shortfall.)<sup>5</sup> Other sources of revenue for OST programming are not plentiful enough to ensure that programs are able to fill this gap.

Private grants tend to be small, forcing programs to apply for many different grants, hoping to combine them. Foundations and corporations also often restrict their funding to specific projects or initiatives, rather than permitting the allocation of grant funds to core operating expenses.

### **Fragmented and Unstable Funding**

OST programs typically derive their funding from a large number of relatively small sources. Few public or private sources exist whose primary goal is financing the OST sector. Instead, the sector tends to compete for marginal funding from public and private funding streams in more established sectors, such as childcare, remedial education, dropout prevention, parks and recreation, and prevention of drug use, delinquency and other problems.<sup>6</sup>

The range of sources from which OST programs often receive funding can create an amazingly complex web of reporting requirements. Keeping up with the volume of reporting measures from diverse funding can be a significant drain on already under-resourced programs. Most funding sources have their own goals and objectives that a program must meet and report on – goals which may or may not directly align with the stated mission of the funded program. At its worst, the scramble for funding from any available source can muddle the mission of OST programming. Out-of-school time programs regularly walk a fine line between promising all things to all funders in order to secure adequate funds, and staying focused on getting results for the children they serve.

Private grants supporting after-school programs tend to be distributed on relatively short cycles, usually on an annual basis. Programs must therefore constantly reapply for funds which are often vital to their continued operation, while coping with constant uncertainty and unpredictability with respect to their long-term financial situation. In many cases, this instability inhibits programs' capacity to plan for future staffing, programming and enrollment, and contributes to the high turnover rate of the OST workforce.<sup>7</sup>

### **Public Funding Sources**

Public monies represent the largest source of funding for OST programs serving low-income and urban children, youth and families. In recent years, policy makers have adopted after-school programs as a key component of strategies to advance school reform, promote safe neighborhoods, and improve childcare options for working families. While in many areas public funding still falls short of the need, it has become an increasingly important source of support to the sector.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Halpern et al., p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Wechsler et al, p. 40.

## **Federal Funding**

Over one hundred federal programs offer support to out-of-school time programs. Some of the largest are discussed in detail below. The Finance Project has compiled a thorough resource guide of these funding opportunities for programs called *Finding Funding: A Guide to Federal Sources for Out-of-School Time*.<sup>8</sup>

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC)**

This program provides “expanded learning opportunities in order to improve academic achievement” for at-risk students.<sup>9</sup> Funds are also available for youth development programs focusing on drug and violence prevention, technology education, arts and recreation, counseling and character education.<sup>10</sup>

The program started in 1998 as a \$40 million dollar pilot program, rapidly gained bi-partisan support in Congress, and increased to its current size of \$1 billion for FY 2004. Funds are disbursed through state departments of education to qualifying schools, school districts, non-profit community-based agencies and faith-based organizations, on a competitive basis.

While the program is popular among voters, like much OST funding the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program is vulnerable to political maneuvering in Washington. A February 2003 White House proposal for a 40% reduction in funding for this program was roundly rejected by Congress this past year, which has passed legislation maintaining the current funding level at \$1 billion.

### **Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)**

This \$3.5 billion fund is used primarily to allow low-income families with children under 12 to access childcare. Money is typically distributed through state human services departments. States combine this money with their own funds to support a variety of programs. States may provide subsidies to families in the form of vouchers, or contract slots directly to licensed child care providers. CCDF funds also have three earmarks, or required allocations of funding to specific areas of work: 4% for improving quality, an additional \$173 million for quality expansion activities, and \$19 million for child care resource and referral.<sup>11</sup> While precise figures for how much of this money is spent on school-age care are unavailable, the history of these funds nationally is that they have been primarily spent on early education and pre-school childcare, with spending on school-age care increasing in recent years.

Many states use CCDF funding to make vouchers directly available to families. When this funding is delivered in this “portable” voucher format, it has the advantage of “following the child,” and putting significant discretion about program choices in the hands of parents. From

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<sup>8</sup> Heather Clapp Padgett, *Finding Funding: A Guide to Federal Sources for Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives, Revised and Updated*, Washington, DC: The Finance Project, January 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Halpern et al., p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ed.gov/programs/21stccclc/awards.html>

<sup>11</sup> Halpern et al., p. 10-11.

the perspective of programs and organizations, however, such a funding mechanism can make long-term fiscal planning challenging. The number of students with vouchers who will enroll in a given program each year is uncertain, and can change with little notice. Many programs have difficulty finding families who are either a) able to pay the market rate, or b) eligible for and ready to use vouchers.

The other common funding system under CCDF is the allocation of a certain number of subsidized slots to licensed programs that meet a set of statewide standards of program quality. Programs with a contract for subsidized slots, or access to other funding sources to subsidize care, are almost by definition in a stronger position than programs serving parents with vouchers. Licensed programs with renewable contracts for a designated number of slots are better equipped to avoid having vacant slots, maintain revenues, ensure staffing stability, and achieve high program quality.

### **Temporary Assistance for Need Families (TANF)**

TANF, formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), is the federal government's income assistance program. States may spend some of this money directly on services to support working families such as after-school and other childcare options. They may also transfer up to 30% of TANF funding to the CCDF. Nationally, in 1998, \$652 million was transferred from TANF to CCDF, though it is unknown how much of that transferred funding supported school-aged children.

### **The Child and Adult Food Care Program**

OST programs serving schools or neighborhoods where over 50% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch are eligible to receive free snack and meals. Interestingly, in order to participate, programs do not need to show that the individual children they serve are eligible for free lunch.

### **Other Federal Funding**

Besides the four largest federal sources of funding for OST programs, a number of other smaller programs have been successfully used to fund OST activities.

The **Workforce Investment Act** of 1998 revamped federal job training funding. It targets services to youth, adults, and dislocated workers. Funds are distributed through state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), which also have advisory youth councils. Youth programs can competitively apply to WIBs for Youth Formula Grants to provide a variety of services including academic support; leadership development and community service; work experience and internships. The amount disbursed to each local WIB is based on a formula that factors in the unemployment rate and the number of economically disadvantaged youth between the ages of 16 and 21 in the board's jurisdiction. In 2002 and 2003, these grants totaled about \$1 billion per year.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The Finance Project, *Using the Workforce Development Act to Support Out-of-School Time Initiatives, Strategy Brief*, Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, Vol. 4, No. 2, September 2003.

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that school districts make **Supplemental Educational Services (SES)** available for students enrolled in schools that do not meet performance standards for three consecutive years. Programs that have a “demonstrated record of effectiveness” are eligible to receive a per-child allocation for offering these supplemental educational services. The allocation ranges from \$600 to \$1,500, and comes from the host school district’s Title I funds. Some of the challenges facing programs using this funding source are that they must be able to demonstrate their own academic effectiveness and comply with federal reporting requirements. Significantly, SES funding may not be a sustainable funding source, particularly if it is well used; if a school improves, the district is no longer required to pay for supplemental services.<sup>13</sup>

After-school programs are increasingly looking to **Americorps** and national service as a way to professionalize the workforce. Americorps volunteers donate a year to citizen service in exchange for a small salary and an educational award that can be applied to college tuition or loans. Many OST programs use these volunteers as a way of subsidizing high quality staff. As the program grows it may become an important pipeline for front-line OST professionals.

It should be noted however, that while highly touted by officials across the political spectrum, sustained Americorps funding is by no means guaranteed. Due to perceived mismanagement, Congress decreased its funding from \$240 million to \$175 million in 2003. The resulting 55% reduction in the number of volunteers decimated many programs.<sup>14</sup> Efforts in Congress to restore Americorps funding are currently ongoing. While many believe that the program will be restored at least to its 2002 level in 2004, the current cuts highlight its potential use as a political football.

## **State Funding**

Not surprisingly, the amount and purpose of state funding of OST programs varies a great deal from state to state. Some states focus on improving quality, or increasing access or supply, while others promote out-of-school time programs as part of an academic remediation plan. In Washington State, program directors and lead teachers attend 20 hours of basic training and 10 hours of annual professional development as part of the State Training and Registry System (STARS).<sup>15</sup> In California, just before the current budget crisis, annual spending on the After-School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership rose to \$117 million in grants to after-school programs based at elementary, middle, and high schools.<sup>16</sup> In Massachusetts, some Department of Education funding for after school programming has been directly linked to academic remediation activities for students who fail the high stakes Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Margaret Flynn, *Title I Supplemental Education Services and Afterschool Programs: Opportunities and Challenges*, Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, August 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Save Americorps, *Americorps: The Crisis and the Solution*, Washington, D.C.: Save Americorps, 2003. <http://www.saveamericorps.org/PressRoom/FactSheet.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Halpern et al., 12.

<sup>16</sup> California's Before and After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program *Fact Sheet, March 2002*. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/afterschool/aspfactsheetapr02.doc>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, and Wechsler et al, p. 30.

States use a variety of mechanisms to fund after-school programs, allocating support through departments of education, health and human services, youth development, juvenile justice and parks and recreation. Most initiatives are supported by general funds and the redistribution of federal aid, though some states have used other means to raise revenue for after-school programs. Many states, Kansas and New Mexico for example, put much or all of their tobacco settlement toward youth programs.<sup>18</sup> California voters recently passed Proposition 49, the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002, which will provide grants to elementary and middle schools in California for after-school programs. Though currently on hold for fiscal reasons, if it becomes fully funded, the act will provide an addition \$433 million.<sup>19</sup>

## Local Funding

In recent years, local governments have become increasingly involved in financing OST programs. A 1995 survey of city governments by the National League of Cities found that 49% of respondents offered some support to before- or after-school programs.<sup>20</sup> This number has likely increased since that time, as OST programs have taken a larger place on national and local agendas. Most municipalities and counties support OST programs using general funds, often through human service departments, park districts, and city school systems.<sup>21</sup> Other departments that commonly support OST programs include police departments, to encourage safe streets, and public health departments, to encourage a healthy and substance-free citizenry. In the vast majority of cities, funding for OST programming comes primarily from the above departments and/or allocations from federal Community Development Block Grants.

A small number of cities with deep commitment to OST and youth development programming have employed innovative strategies to raise local revenue to support OST programming. In 1990 and again in 1997, residents of **Seattle** approved the Families and Education Levy, a referendum that raised property taxes to support learning activities outside of school including early child development, out-of-school time activities, and family services. The levy raises about \$10 million per year.<sup>22</sup>

In 1996, **Oakland** residents passed Measure K, which requires that the city set aside 2.5 percent of unrestricted general revenues for youth serving programs. In 1998, the first year that the measure took effect, the measure raised \$5.2 million, of which the city council set aside \$1 million for youth development grants.<sup>23</sup>

In 1991, **San Francisco** created a fund which set aside 2½ cents for each \$100 of assessed property value to support of youth and child programming, much of it OST programming. City voters renewed and expanded this Children's Fund in 2000 with a 3-to-1 vote in favor of an

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> The State of After School in California, Afterschool Alliance, December 2003.  
[http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/states/states\\_facts.cfm?state\\_abbr=CA](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/states/states_facts.cfm?state_abbr=CA)

<sup>20</sup> Halpern et al., p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> National Child Care Information Center, *Financing Child Care in the United States: An Illustrative Catalog of Current Strategies*, Pew Charitable Trusts, 1997. <http://www.nccic.org/pubs/financing-cc/child008.html>

<sup>23</sup> Halpern et al., p. 14.

increase to 3 cents on every \$100 of property tax, and an extension of the life of the Fund by an additional 16 years. Annual funding for children's programming exceeds \$22 million.<sup>24</sup>

## **Private Funding**

Private funds represent a key source of funding for many programs serving low-income children and families. As virtually all urban programs negotiate the shortfall between the cost of delivering quality care and the amount of money they take in from subsidies, other public funds, and parent fees, they regularly turn to foundations and other private funders to close the gap.

While private funding can be a significant part of program budgets (averaging about a third), private funding for OST programs is rarely structured in a way that promotes stability in programming or the fiscal health of providers. Grants are often for relatively small dollar amounts, awarded annually. The result is that programs often have to apply for many small grants and hope they get enough money to cover their expenses. This process and the uncertainty that accompanies it are repeated on a yearly basis, discouraging long-term planning.

A number of national foundations have made significant commitments to the out-of-school time field. In 1998, the Mott Foundation entered into a partnership with the federal Department of Education to fund evaluation and technical support for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program. For much of the nineties, the Dewitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund (now the Wallace Foundation) funded the MOST Initiative (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) to expand programs and build citywide systems in Boston, Chicago, and Seattle. Local philanthropic organizations, including many United Ways, have made significant out-of-school time investments in cities around the nation. Local corporate support has been another key source of funding for many programs.

## **Public/Private Partnerships**

A number of cities have sought to build a stronger out-of-school time sector through public/private partnerships. These partnerships combine the resources and specific expertise of leaders in both the public and private sectors, including business, philanthropy, parents, youth and community groups. In a successful partnership, all partners contribute time, money, or other resources to make progress towards a common goal.<sup>25</sup>

Each partnership creates a unique mission specific to the needs of the city's out-of-school time sector and the priorities of the members of the partnership. Common roles for these partnerships include: increasing the quality or supply of programs, raising additional revenue for OST programs, and building systems to support OST programming.<sup>26</sup>

Because OST programs have so many different constituencies, advocates have been particularly successful building public-private partnerships in this area. Governments are under increasing

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<sup>24</sup> League of Women Voters California Education Fund, 2000; <http://smartvoter.org/2000/11/07/ca/sf/meas/D/>

<sup>25</sup> Sharon Deich, *A Guide to Successful Public-Private Partnerships for Out-of-School Time and Community School Initiatives*, Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, January 2001, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12-13.

pressure to become more efficient and effective, and can capitalize on the expertise of their private sector partners. Educators and schools enter into the partnerships to help students get the academic and developmental support they need to succeed. Human service providers, arts and cultural institutions, and youth development agencies are often eager to pursue cultural, recreational, prevention, public health, mental health and related partnerships with their larger and better-endowed institutional allies. Businesses engage in the partnerships to help meet the childcare needs of their employees, to invest in the workforce of the future, and to have impact where the educational and youth leadership of their communities feel the payoff is greatest. Philanthropies leverage greater impact on communities when they mobilize other funders, and bring major institutional leaders to the table. High profile partnerships help community groups, families, and program providers by attracting attention and bringing much-needed resources to the out-of-school time field.<sup>27</sup>

In San Francisco in the mid-nineties, a public-private consortium of foundations and public agencies, with special leadership from the City of San Francisco, supported the design and implementation of the San Francisco Beacon programs, a school-based, multi-sited OST initiative.<sup>28</sup> In Boston, a team of foundations and corporations, with leading financial commitments from a university partner and the City of Boston, have generated more than \$24 million in funding to expand after school programs, improve their focus on learning, and promote long-term program sustainability.<sup>29</sup>

## **Parent Fees**

Most OST programs, particularly those operated by community-based organizations, charge a sliding scale fee to families who enroll their children. One study found that parent fees make up 36% of program revenues, with parents paying an average of \$55 per week.<sup>30</sup> Parent fees, though often a minor source of revenue for programs, can also serve other beneficial purposes. When families contribute something toward the program, the financial commitment increases their buy-in, and can boost student retention. It also encourages families who are eligible to apply for childcare vouchers, which can be a substantial funding source for programs.<sup>31</sup>

## **In-Kind Contributions**

In-kind contributions form an “invisible subsidy” for many of the nation’s OST programs. These subsidies come in the form of contributed facilities, often from schools or community centers; student volunteers and mentors, often provided by local higher education institutions, community based organizations, and faith-based institutions; training and technical assistance, made available by state and city agencies and United Ways, and others. Such in-kind facilities and services often are the only way that cash-strapped programs can make ends meet. One study

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> “Promising Practices in Citywide After School Initiatives,” National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), March, 2003; [http://www.niost.org/about/p\\_pfrancisco.pdf](http://www.niost.org/about/p_pfrancisco.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Boston After School for All Partnership, *Our Story*, 2002. [http://www.afterschoolforall.org/about/our\\_story.html](http://www.afterschoolforall.org/about/our_story.html)

<sup>30</sup> Boston EQUIP 1999 School Age Survey, cited in Wechsler et al., p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Conversation with Tom Regan, Jackson-Mann Community Center, Brighton, MA and Andrew Bundy, October, 2003.

estimated that these donations may cover a quarter or more of the full cost of running an after-school program.<sup>32</sup>

**Facilities** are the most significant in-kind subsidy for programs, many of which may receive free rent or utilities from a school, church or other host organization. Without in-kind help, facility-related costs average 15-20% of an OST program's budget; in cities where such in-kind help is commonplace, these costs can decline dramatically.<sup>33</sup> In many cities, school districts subsidize the cost of after-school programming by opening the doors of some of their schools to community-based organizations, and either covering, or offering at reduced rates, the costs of additional utilities and janitorial services. Programs may also receive donations of food, furniture, or other materials.<sup>34</sup>

**Community institutions** such as museums and other cultural organizations often support OST programs by opening their doors to students for free, or at reduced prices. Many museums offer curriculum kits and training workshops to program staff.

**Volunteers** or work-study students contribute their time and defray labor costs.

**Administrative and other services** -- such as marketing, printing, or legal work -- are often donated by local corporations. Some programs run by large multi-service agencies such as the YMCA subsidize their OST programming with revenue from other types of programming, such as fitness and health programs for adults.

## **Funding for Infrastructure and System-Building**

In addition to the cost of direct service, programs and cities offering high quality OST programming must also shoulder significant costs for program infrastructure and system building. "Infrastructure refers to the services, supports, and activities which go on in all high quality programs, and whose absence in many other programs is the main reason for poor program quality and limited impact on children."<sup>35</sup> These activities include capital and facilities expenses; workforce development, retention and recruitment; planning and evaluation; family support; and technical assistance to programs. Financial support for these types of activities is typically very limited.

It is clear from the cities with emerging, high-functioning and high-quality OST sectors that investment in infrastructure and system-building is a critical step. Adequate funding of the activities listed above can create the support that many providers need to create a high-quality program. Increasing the available resources for infrastructure and system-building is a key financing challenge facing the OST sector.

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<sup>32</sup> Suzanne Helburne et al., *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers*, Denver: University of Colorado, 1995, cited in Halpern et al., p. 14-15.

<sup>33</sup> Wechsler et al., p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> Wechsler et al., p. 24.

Curiously, this dynamic, emerging sector is both ready for action and chronically at risk. Across the country, providers, communities, and leaders are poised to increase the quality and availability of programming for children and youth. At the same time, in every US community, OST programs languish in a persistent state of financial instability, coping with the inevitable compromises in program quality and impact that result.

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