

Lesson 1: Developing Relationships

Learn how to build community partnerships and delve into the planning process.

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PASA's AfterZone model of after-school programs was developed as the result of an extensive needs assessment that showed a lack of quality after-school programs for youth in Providence, Rhode Island. This was especially true for middle-school students, who are often left unsupervised and thus more likely to participate in risky activities.

Planning a network of citywide after-school programs can take months or even years to achieve. It took two years for PASA and leaders in Providence, Rhode Island, to establish the AfterZone model.

In the beginning, focus on people. Start by building a leadership circle that consists of people from the school district, the mayor's office, the parks and recreation department, and some of your after-school providers to look at what you can accomplish collectively.

The impetus behind creating an after-school system in Providence started with the mayor, David N. Cicilline, who began talks by bringing together all middle school principals, directors of city recreation centers, and the heads of the public libraries. According to Cicilline, many of these leaders didn't know one another. By getting everyone together in the same room, relationships developed and common interests concerning youth emerged.

After developing the core group, work collectively on a strategy for youth; worry about money later. Articulate a strategy around engaging with youth and working together to share limited resources. Be sure that you call upon people who have done this work before in other cities with successful results. Hillary Salmons, executive director of PASA, says, "It's important that the city or community looks at youth-development programs as the focus of the city, rather than as the pet-project goal of the mayor or superintendent. It's extremely important that there's a high-level leadership circle that can collectively mobilize resources in a strategic way and really champion and put youth first. Knowing what youth want takes talking with them and their parents and using research and other methods to get there." (See the "Logic Model" in the supplementary materials that follow to learn more about PASA's strategy.)

VOCABULARY

- » **AfterZone:** A geographic area that defines a "community campus" of schools and community providers in the area. Students from different schools can attend a network of after-school programs within the zone.
- » **Providence After School Alliance (PASA):** An intermediary agency responsible for creating a system of high-quality after-school opportunities for middle school youth in Providence, Rhode Island. Initially funded by The Wallace Foundation and Bank of America, PASA is driven by the collective efforts of over 150 public and nonprofit after-school providers and is spearheaded by Mayor David N. Cicilline.
- » **Program provider:** Any organization or person providing activities for children and/or youth during the after-school hours.

Developing Relationships (continued)

After forming relationships, consider identifying and forming an intermediary entity to fully launch the effort. PASA has taken on this role, acting as the liaison between the public and private sectors (for example, between the school system, the parks, and local business providers). The intermediary is a key element of the process, but will involve quite a bit of financial resources and staff infrastructure to create.

During the planning process, it's important to revisit the vision and mission again and again. Clarify what you're doing and trying to achieve jointly, and encourage group participation to share in building and articulating the vision. The mission and vision should eventually lead to creating a set of standards, which will be described in Lesson 3.

Finally, do your research and develop a business plan based on the findings and ideas that emerged through the strategy meetings. A strong business plan and vision will help attract private funding and grants.

KEY POINTS

- » After-school initiatives start with people. Develop a leadership circle that includes school district representatives, middle school principals, and key after-school providers.
- » Youth should be the focus of all talks. Build candor with the core base.
- » Work with resources on hand. Think: What are you trying to achieve and what can people provide to the partnership? What are your current and future funding mechanisms?
- » Emulate other cities and communities that have created successful models.
- » Consider partnering with/identifying/forming an intermediary entity to coordinate the end results.
- » Quality standards should come from the core base, using research and outside sources for reference.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

In the pages that follow, read more about PASA's network-building strategy in the following document:

- » PASA's "Initiative-Wide Logic Model": A tool for presenting PASA's after-school, system-building strategy to key partners and stakeholders at edutopia.org/pasa-lessons
- » For more information on the research behind PASA's development, go to edutopia.org/pasa-lesson-community-relationship