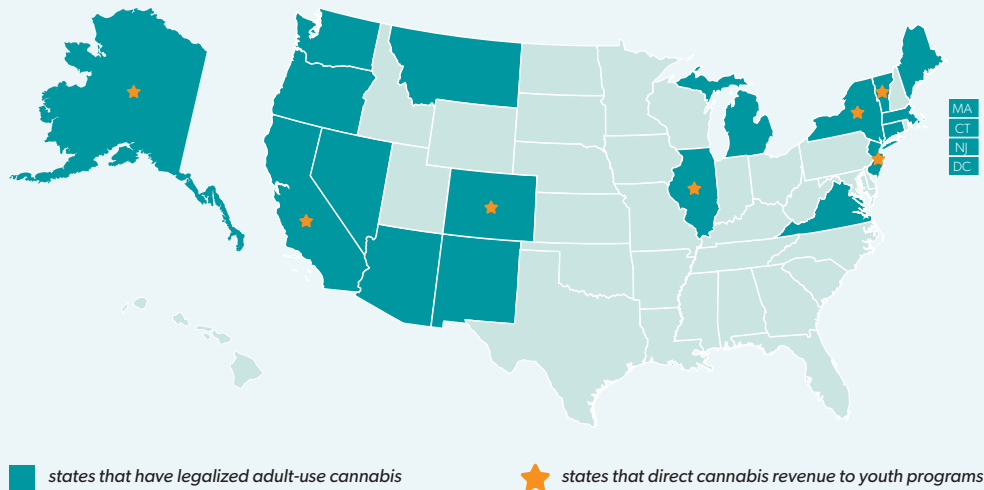


Advancing Afterschool and Summer Opportunities Using Cannabis Tax Revenue

The out-of-school time space is a significant and influential part of a young person's life. Afterschool and summer learning programs can help keep kids safe, promote positive youth development, and engage youth in productive activities that build skills and support positive outcomes. While a positive youth development approach can be implemented across various settings, afterschool and summer learning programs are well-positioned to help foster relationships and provide opportunities that can help prevent problem behaviors and support a healthy transition to adulthood.



Approximately half of states that have legalized adult-use of cannabis—including Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont—are already investing, or have plans to invest, cannabis tax revenue into youth development programs.

Map updated as of December 2021. For most up to date information on state legalization of adult-use cannabis, visit <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/marijuana-overview.aspx>

Public funding for youth development programs, including afterschool and summer learning programs, is essential to ensure that all kids have access to these engaging and enriching opportunities. One potential new, sustainable funding stream comes as states across the country legalize adult-use cannabis. Cannabis legalization can bring in millions of dollars in tax revenue to states, and in some cases has already generated, or is expected to generate, hundreds of millions in revenue annually. States can decide where to direct that revenue from taxes and many are using a portion of it to support youth development, afterschool, and summer programs.

This brief is a resource for afterschool advocates in states where legalization is being considered or has already occurred, but did not include youth development, afterschool, or summer programs as intended uses of the revenue. The purpose of this brief is to help make the case for the use of cannabis funds for afterschool and summer learning programs, and is not an indicator of support for adult-use cannabis legalization.

The Current Landscape

Cannabis legalization is expanding rather rapidly across the United States, and the pace at which states are considering legalization is picking up. As of December 2021, 18 states and Washington, D.C., have fully legalized adult-use of cannabis, with plenty more passing decriminalization bills and legalizing for medical use. Of the states that have not yet legalized (non-medical) adult use and sales of cannabis, 23 currently have active adult-use bills in the legislature and efforts are underway in seven states to place adult-use measures on the 2022 ballot. Legalization at the federal level is also starting to gain momentum. In July 2021, Democratic senators released a draft of a bill that would legalize and tax sales of adult-use cannabis nationwide. In November 2021, Rep. Nancy Mace (R-SC) introduced a bill that would legalize and tax sales of adult-use cannabis nationwide, with youth use prevention named as an allowable use of the revenue. These state and federal developments signal a growing trend towards legalization.

Legalization Process

Legalization can happen in two ways—through legislation, where a bill is sponsored and introduced to a legislative body, or by ballot measure, where the public can vote on and approve various initiatives. Both methods have been used, with states such as Illinois and New York passing through legislation and Oregon and Alaska passing through ballot measure. Other states have done both a ballot measure and legislation to establish the legalization framework.

The bill introduced by Rep. Mace at the federal level, and nearly half of the states that have legalized adult-use of cannabis, direct tax revenue towards youth development and prevention programs as a way to reinvest back into communities and young people. Funding youth development programs, including afterschool and summer programs, can help support youth and their families, prevent substance misuse, and overall create more equitable and thriving communities across the country, especially those most underserved.

The Case for Investing in Afterschool

For states considering legalization, decision makers have an important opportunity to direct tax revenue from cannabis sales to fund afterschool and other youth development programs. Afterschool and summer programs support communities nationwide in a variety of ways. They support youth throughout critical phases in their development, helping them grow and develop skills to make smart choices, build healthy relationships, avoid drugs and risky behavior, and graduate from high school.¹ They also benefit families by helping parents keep their jobs and connect with community resources. According to the most recent America After 3PM data, 3 in 4 parents agree that afterschool programs help keep kids safe and out of trouble (74 percent) and reduce the likelihood that youth will engage in risky behaviors (75 percent). More than 8 in 10 parents agree that afterschool programs provide kids opportunities to learn life skills (82 percent) and provide working parents peace of mind (83 percent).² Many afterschool programs also have deep connections and reach in underserved communities, including those that were disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs, and investing in these communities can help repair some of the harm done.

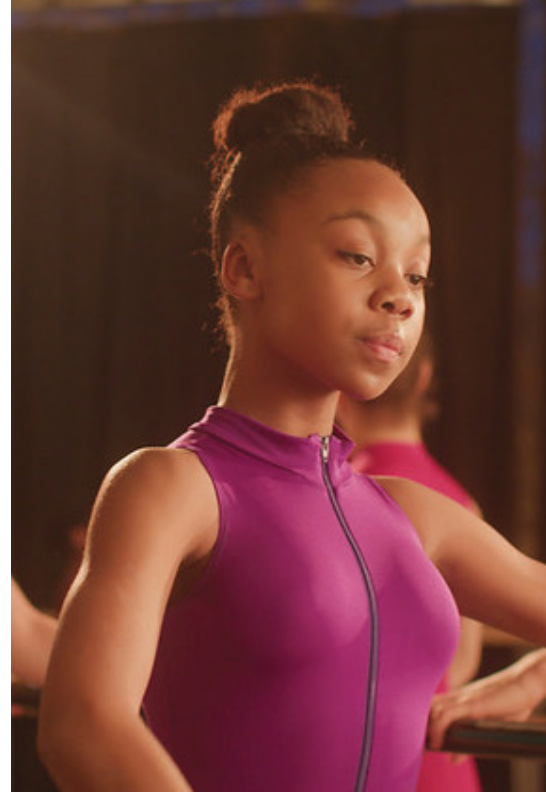
Across the country, demand for afterschool programs has skyrocketed, and the number of children and teens waiting for an afterschool program has continued to grow over the last 15 years. Today, while 7.8 million youth participate in afterschool programs, nearly 25 million more would enroll if a program were available.³ Investing in afterschool programs is a proven strategy to help both kids and families thrive.

Afterschool programs can help youth make healthy choices

Afterschool programs provide an ideal environment for youth to build protective factors, avoid substance misuse, and ultimately reach their full potential. In the afterschool setting, youth are surrounded by caring adults and mentors that help create a safe space for youth to express themselves, develop a sense of belonging, and discover their passions, while fostering an environment that supports healthy development. In these settings, youth can build positive relationships with both adults and their peers, and develop important skills such as self-control and confidence, responsible decision making, strong social skills, and other social and emotional competencies.⁴ The experiences that young people have in afterschool help build protective factors and promote healthy development, which prevents substance misuse and engagement in other risky behaviors.

The supports that afterschool programs provide may be particularly beneficial for adolescents who are the most at-risk for engaging in drug use. Characterized as the “second most critical period of brain development,” adolescence is an important time cognitively, socially, and emotionally. As children get older, their brains are continuously developing to enable more complex thinking, presenting a prime time for youth to build necessary skills that they will need in adulthood, such as learning self-control and responsible decision making.⁵ As key areas of the brain continue to mature during adolescence and into the mid-20s, teenagers are particularly sensitive to drug exposure and may be more at risk for long-term effects from marijuana use, as marijuana use impacts how connections are formed within the brain.⁶ This is especially problematic considering that in 2019, nearly half of all high school seniors surveyed (49 percent) report having ever used marijuana.⁷

The hours after school between 2 and 6 p.m. are the peak time for youth to commit crimes, use drugs, and engage in other risky behaviors.⁸ Afterschool programs can turn that time of risk into a time of opportunity for adolescents, where teens are engaged in deeper learning and enrichment, developing key skills, and supported on their path towards adulthood. Research shows that afterschool and summer programs help kids make gains in academic achievement, improve their work habits and school attendance, build life skills, and graduate on time.⁹ Conversely, those who are not engaged in structured after school activities are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, experiment with drugs, and skip school.¹⁰



Promoting positive developmental supports

Afterschool and summer enrichment programs serve both as a fundamental setting in which healthy development and learning takes place, as well as an intervention through which social and emotional skills and competencies are fostered. Through afterschool and summer enrichment programs, young people will have the supports they need to re-engage, recharge, and rebound from the pandemic.

Afterschool programs provide integral developmental supports:



Caring and supportive mentors



Safe spaces where students build confidence and feel a sense of belonging



Opportunities to work collaboratively, problem solve, and think critically

In turn, these supports help kids:



Gain self-control and confidence



Develop strong social skills



Build healthy relationships with their peers and adults



Improve work habits and grades



Improve school day attendance and behavior



Reduce risky behaviors, such as tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use

Afterschool can address issues of equity

Among the strengths of afterschool programs are their close ties to communities and their ability to reach students most in need. Afterschool programs often support youth in under-resourced communities, helping to expand educational opportunity and support overall student success. However, there are not enough afterschool programs to meet the demand in these communities, and too many children are being left out of opportunities that their more well-off peers are afforded. Overall demand nationwide for afterschool programs is incredibly high, and that demand is even greater among lower-income communities and children of color.¹¹

With cost and access being the biggest roadblocks to participation—challenges that are especially pronounced in low-income communities and communities of color—publicly funded afterschool programs are necessary to ensure more youth who need afterschool can participate. Directing funds from cannabis tax revenue to afterschool programs is a way to reinvest back in the low-income communities and communities of color disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs to provide opportunities that youth otherwise might not have and help young people in all communities thrive. Afterschool creates opportunities for youth to engage in hands-on learning activities to support academic growth, provides enrichment activities to complement school day learning, and offers physical activity to support healthy development. Research has shown that afterschool programs have a particularly strong impact on youth from low-income communities, with consistent participation shown to lower dropout rates, improve achievement and behavioral outcomes, and close opportunity gaps present between them and their more well-off peers.¹²

Afterschool programs can also help strengthen communities through supports that extend beyond reaching youth. Programs support parents who need a safe space for their kids while they are working and help connect families with community resources, such as financial planning or mental and physical health services.¹³

Return on Investment:

Students who participate in high-quality afterschool programs exhibit significant reductions in drug use and other problem behaviors. Research suggests that lowering the risk of substance use and misuse among youth can save an estimated \$840,000 to \$1.1 million that the average person with a substance use disorder costs society.⁽¹⁾

Research shows that afterschool provides a solid return on investment; every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least \$3. Apart from helping reduce crime and juvenile delinquency that costs society, afterschool saves money by increasing kids' earning potential, improving kids' performance at school, and overall helping youth thrive.⁽²⁾

¹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10940-008-9057-3>

² <http://afterschoollalliance.org/documents/National-One-Pager-2020.pdf>

Afterschool can bridge divides

In the polarized political climate we currently live in, afterschool brings people together from across the political spectrum and bridges political divides. Afterschool champions are both Republicans and Democrats, and funding for afterschool and summer programs has strong support from both sides of the aisle. Because of this, directing tax revenue to afterschool programs can be an effective strategy in broadening support. Overall, 87 percent of parents favor public funding for afterschool programs in communities that have few opportunities for youth, with 91 percent of parents who identify as Democrat, 87 percent who identify as Independent, and 85 percent who identify as Republican in favor of support. Similarly high levels of support are seen for publicly funded summer learning opportunities as well, with 88 percent of parents in favor, including 92 percent of Democrats, 88 percent of Independents, and 86 percent of Republicans.¹⁴

How States are Investing in Youth Through Cannabis Tax Revenue

States that are currently investing cannabis tax revenue in afterschool and summer can offer a variety of lessons learned and promising practices for advocates who are interested in making the case that their state should invest cannabis tax revenue in youth development programs, including afterschool and summer.

Developing an understanding of how other states have approached directing cannabis revenue to afterschool and summer is an essential step no matter where your state may be in the legalization process. The following stories from Vermont, Alaska, New York, and Illinois demonstrate the importance of understanding and responding to state context and how the promising practices can be put into action to generate results and revenue for afterschool and summer programs that support youth prevention and overall wellbeing.



The Vermont Story - Prevention-focused messaging

History of legalization

Vermont's cannabis revenue for afterschool success story is one piece of their greater prevention efforts, which began in 2016. Early on in the efforts, Vermont Afterschool spent time outlining the connection between afterschool and prevention. Reports from Vermont's Opioid Coordination Council and the Vermont Marijuana Commission in 2019 called for expanding access to afterschool to build protective factors for youth, solidifying the state's conversations around prevention and the role that afterschool plays. In 2019, \$600,000 from the tobacco settlement was set aside specifically for afterschool and established the Afterschool for All Grant program. At the same time, Vermont created a statewide prevention council and appointed a chief prevention officer. The following year, when the cannabis bill was introduced, one of their prominent champions, Vermont State Representative Diane Lanpher, was instrumental in getting the cannabis sales tax revenue to fund afterschool, using the same framing of greater access to programs linked with protective factors.

Prevention efforts in Vermont are grounded in the idea that all youth have the right to grow up substance-free, and the state's work has revolved around reimagining communities to support young people in this context. In Vermont, the goal is to change the environment around youth to offer them opportunities to be active, engaged, connected, and heard. This perspective is largely shaped by the work happening in Finland, which is focused on youth rights, combined with Iceland's research-based approach to prevention. In 2017, Vermont Afterschool convened a group of young people from across the state to draft the Vermont Declaration of Youth Rights, underpinning the prevention work. Two years later, Vermont Afterschool was the first organization in North America to sign a 5-year contract with the researchers in Iceland to pilot

Promising Practices

The following promising practices can help advocates successfully make the case for supporting afterschool and summer programs for youth using cannabis tax revenue.

1. **Be prepared.** Although it is never too late to join the discussion, it is best to prepare before adult use cannabis legalization gains momentum in your state, and to get involved in discussions about how the revenue will be spent as early as possible.
2. **Get organized.** Partner with diverse stakeholders beyond your usual afterschool champions to help make the case. Gather and be prepared to use data that establishes a connection between afterschool and summer programs and the other priorities of the legislation.
3. **Make an Ask.** Request that 10-30% of revenue be dedicated specifically for youth programs, including afterschool and summer programs.
4. **Have a Plan.** Taking your state context into consideration, be ready to make a recommendation about how funding should flow to afterschool and summer programs. Consider whether funding should be set aside for expansion, sustaining existing programs, increasing access, or other purposes. If applicable, consider adding cannabis tax revenue to an existing funding source for afterschool and summer programs, as opposed to creating an entirely new program.
5. **Think Big.** Promote a holistic view of prevention by recommending that afterschool and summer programs utilize prevention curriculum as a component in programming, along with a wide array of supports and engaging experiences to positively influence behavior. Ensure that prevention programming and curricula are culturally responsive and utilize a two-generation prevention approach.
6. **Build an Evidence Base.** Plan for using data to measure the impact of the program in order to help to sustain funding. Develop systems for afterschool and summer programs to capture and share successes and lessons learned widely, including with policymakers, community stakeholders, and other states.

Coalition Building:

Partners beyond afterschool and summer champions could include:

- Elected officials
- Social justice groups
- Public health/mental health/substance use prevention voices
- School health and community school champions
- Racial equity allies
- LGBTQ youth advocates
- Law enforcement
- Youth treatment centers/programs
- Those working on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Informed Care
- Early education

Messaging Tips: say **THIS** not **THAT**

Say “adult use of cannabis” *not* “recreational use”

Say “substance use or misuse” *not* “substance abuse”

Say “cannabis or marijuana” *not* “pot or weed” and avoid using cannabis jokes or puns

their model in Vermont. Known as the Vermont Youth Project, the initiative blends the prevention model that Iceland is known for with the youth rights and youth voice work from Finland, along with Vermont’s already established “best practices.” The Vermont Youth Project focuses broadly on prevention by exploring the various societal and environmental factors that lead to healthy or risky behaviors for youth.

In January 2020, Governor Phil Scott proposed universal access to afterschool programs for all children and youth in kindergarten through high school in his State of the State address. This announcement came after years of extensive efforts by advocates across the state to make the case for afterschool. Just months after the governor’s announcement, cannabis legislation that called for revenue to support afterschool and summer learning passed, and cannabis revenue is now recognized as a key part in achieving universal afterschool.¹⁵

Current/Proposed investment

In October 2020, Vermont legalized adult-use cannabis. The legislation called for retail sales to be taxed at 6 percent, all of which will fund a grant program to start or expand afterschool and summer learning programs, particularly in underserved areas. Revenue will be collected starting in 2022 but will take a few years before the fund accumulates enough to make substantial investments in afterschool. In a couple of years, estimates are that there may be \$3.5 million available to support the state’s goal of universal afterschool.¹⁵

Vision for the future

For Vermont Afterschool, the goal for the future is simple—providing every young person access to afterschool and ensuring that no one is left out because of factors outside of their control. While the estimated \$3.5 million is significantly more than past investments, it will not be enough to completely fund a universal afterschool program. Vermont Afterschool is actively working on finding additional sources of revenue to expand this fund. Similar to the tobacco settlement funds, one possible source in the future may come from opioid settlements.

However, there is more to universal afterschool than securing funds and providing programming. While funding is necessary to open and sustain programs, a large part of the work is building public will for afterschool, increasing quantity and quality of programs, and ensuring that afterschool offers young people and families the supports they need and the opportunities they want.





History of legalization

The first iteration of cannabis legislation was introduced by Senator Liz Krueger and Assembly Member Crystal Peoples-Stokes in 2013 and was reintroduced in almost every legislative session until it eventually passed in 2021. Although amended legislation to legalize cannabis gained momentum among state legislators over the years, previous attempts to pass the bill stalled in the legislature and also under a governor who was initially opposed. External factors encouraged the reconsideration of legalizing cannabis in New York among decision makers, especially as states surrounding New York began to pass legislation. In 2018, Cynthia Nixon, who was running for governor of New York, highlighted cannabis legalization as one of her main priorities. It was then that Governor Cuomo formed a commission to study the potential impact of legalization, which ultimately concluded that the benefits of legalization outweighed the negatives. Following the assessment, the governor announced a proposal to legalize cannabis as part of the 2019 executive budget. This first attempt was unsuccessful, as the legislature was at odds with some of the stipulations included in the proposal, especially on how cannabis revenue would be distributed, and did not move it any further. Governor Cuomo introduced amended proposals in his 2020 and 2021 executive budgets that addressed concerns about the revenue distribution and tax structure through a social equity lens. Most notable in the 2021 proposal was a proposed \$100 million set-aside of the revenue earmarked for a social equity fund to aid nonprofits, including those that provide afterschool, in efforts to reinvest in communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs. The onset of COVID-19 stymied negotiations of the proposal in 2020, but left optimism for legalization in 2021 in light of anticipated budget shortfalls due to the pandemic.

During all of this, the New York State Network for Youth Success focused on ensuring that funding for afterschool programs was included as part of the process. The initial request was for 25 percent of cannabis tax revenue to go towards afterschool programs as a place where young people build skills for the future and gain protective factors that help them avoid substance use. Momentum for legalization grew further during 2020 when COVID-19 hit as there was more of an urgency to find additional sources of revenue for the state to fill in anticipated gaps. And, as conversations around racial equity intensified in the aftermath of George Floyd, the focus shifted more towards social equity and the emphasis on communities impacted by the war on drugs, something that was initially missing in the legislation.

The New York State Network for Youth Success conducted extensive research on the lack of state and federally funded afterschool programs in communities with high juvenile and adult arrests for drug possession. The research showed that counties with the highest rates of drug arrests had either zero afterschool programs or not enough afterschool programs to meet the demand. A brief documenting those findings was shared with the legislature and helped to build the case to include afterschool as an allowable expense in the cannabis legalization bill (2019) and the Governor's cannabis proposal (2021).

Current/Proposed investment

Ultimately, adult-use cannabis was legalized in March 2021 when the 2021 Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act was signed into law, establishing a 9 percent state excise tax on retail sales. The final legislation had a large focus on equity and dictated that 40 percent of sales tax revenue is dedicated towards community reinvestment as part of the Community Grants Reinvestment Fund, with afterschool listed as an allowable use for this grant funding. Although it is estimated to take a few years for the revenue to accumulate high enough to begin distributing to community needs, the program is expected to raise \$350 million a year in tax revenue when fully implemented.

Vision for the future

For many families in New York, afterschool goes beyond the after school hours. The New York State Network for Youth Success wants every child in New York to have access to a high-quality afterschool, summer, and/or expanded learning program that supports their success in school and beyond. Even though New York has made gains in increasing availability of afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning programs, access to these programs remains far below demand. Anticipated revenue from adult-use cannabis can help narrow the gap by increasing access to expanded learning opportunities especially in communities significantly impacted by the war on drugs. However, New York is at a defining moment for the state to build a robust afterschool system that provides long-term sustainability for these high-quality programs; one which would provide a strong foundation for the state to prioritize and achieve universal afterschool. Investments in these programs provide significant benefits for New York's families, communities, businesses, and the state's economy. Making afterschool accessible for all children in New York is a win for everyone.



The Alaska Story - Prevention-focused programming

History of legalization

In November 2014, Alaskans approved Ballot Measure 2, legalizing adult-use cannabis. In Alaska, alcohol and tobacco tax revenue was already directed back into local and state governments, and cannabis legalization opened up the possibility for additional funding for communities. From there, the legislative effort to get dedicated funding for afterschool and summer learning programs included as allowable uses of cannabis revenue funds began.

Prior to the Alaska Afterschool Network's legislative work, the Network had deep relationships with statewide and regional substance use prevention coalitions, especially the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Drug Free Community Coalitions. These strong relationships helped ensure the prevention community was aware of and in support of the Network's legislative work to secure funding for afterschool prevention programming. These strong relationships were forged by serving on coalition workgroups, presenting at substance misuse prevention summits, and utilizing a shared language of risk and protective factors. Additionally, the Network had a robust relationship with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and frequently presented at DHSS funded conferences and summits on the benefits of afterschool and the development of adolescent protective factors.

In the spring of 2018, when Representative Claman and Senator Giessel proposed bills that would dedicate 25 percent of marijuana sales tax revenue to prevention efforts, the Alaska Afterschool Network expanded its partnerships with prevention allies across the state to build a case for investing in afterschool and summer programs. Using data and research linking afterschool and prevention, the Alaska Afterschool Network was able to position afterschool and summer programs as safe environments for youth to build protective factors, form healthy relationships, and reduce risk factors related to substance misuse. The research that finds that young people who are regularly engaged in out-of-school time activities are significantly more likely than their peers who are not engaged in afterschool programming to have healthier behaviors, especially regarding substance use was especially helpful.¹⁶ In a state like Alaska, where young people experience disproportionately high rates of substance misuse and mental health challenges, depression, and suicide, the need for youth supports like afterschool programs is unquestionable. These additional prevention supports are particularly beneficial for older youth who are most at risk for substance use.

Current/Proposed investment

During the 2018 legislative session, the Alaska legislature passed Senate Bill 104, creating a Marijuana Education and Treatment Fund. Twenty-five percent of the excise tax collected on marijuana products is deposited into the Fund. The first half (12.5 percent) goes to the Department of Health & Social Services for education, treatment, surveillance, and monitoring of marijuana. The second half (12.5 percent) provides funding for the Positive Youth Development Afterschool Program grant program, which supports afterschool and summer programs that help youth build protective factors and reduce the risk of substance misuse. The funding is targeted to programs that serve youth in grades 5-8, the population at risk for early substance misuse.

One of the unique aspects of the legislation is the explicit mention of professional development, where dedicated funding is allocated for supporting and training out-of-school time providers on best practices. During the first round of grant funding in 2019, \$1.25 million was awarded to seven youth organizations serving 33 communities across the state. Programs and their response to prevention vary, but each focuses on fostering relationships, building protective factors, and creating connections in the community. Grants are awarded for three years, and programs are currently in their third year of funding.

Vision for the future

Marijuana sales tax revenue has continued to increase as the adult use marijuana marketplace continues to expand. The Alaska Afterschool Network is working with leaders in the state to increase funding allocations to out-of-school time through the Marijuana Education and Treatment Fund. Additionally, the Alaska Afterschool Network has begun exploring local marijuana sales tax revenue as a potential source of regional afterschool funding.

Camp Fire Alaska

Camp Fire Alaska offers summer programming in rural communities across the state that struggle with high rates of substance misuse and high rates of youth/teen suicidal ideation and planning. The program partners with local tribal councils to bring cultural activities that align with local values in an effort to foster a sense of cultural identity and connectedness between youth and Elders in the communities. Additionally, Camp Fire Alaska helps youth build leadership and foundational skills, and teaches about healthy life choices, with an emphasis on holistic wellness and cultural identity in the reduction of high-risk behaviors.



Photo courtesy of the 50 State Afterschool Network

Project GRAD, Kenai Peninsula, AK

Project GRAD supports students in grades 5-8 in communities with limited access to engaging extracurricular activities, and the students come from Title I schools with high poverty rates and low academic achievement. Project GRAD started CHILL Time (Creating Healthy and Inclusive Learning and Lifestyles), a program designed to develop and amplify positive relationships between caring adults and youth to help students build the skills needed to overcome challenges and face negative temptations. The program aims to create a safe space where students feel a sense of belonging, build their academic and social-emotional skills, and make healthy choices regarding how they spend their time.

Springfield Urban League, Springfield, IL

Springfield Urban League serves older youth through their Project Ready program, which supports academic achievement and social-emotional development, builds workforce readiness skills, and broadens exposure to career opportunities. With the R3 grant, Springfield Urban League supports 100 high school students who are at risk of dropping out of high school and need support in developing job-readiness skills. Many youth in their community face obstacles to obtaining college and career success, such as poverty, exposure to crime, underemployment, and racism; many of these students also come from families of color and families with low-income.



The YMCA of Rock River Valley, Rockford, IL

During the height of the pandemic, Rockford Public Schools found that half of all students were failing, partly due to educational inequities that were exacerbated by remote learning. The YMCA is using the R3 funding to create math-focused programming for youth in kindergarten through fifth grade struggling with math skills. The pilot will initially serve 50 to 70 youth and grow to serve 1,000 students. The YMCA and Rockford school district plan to work collaboratively to train afterschool providers and track students' math achievement scores to determine program effectiveness.



The Illinois Story - Equity-focused programming

History of legalization

Governor JB Pritzker introduced cannabis legalization as part of his platform during the 2019 gubernatorial election. Once elected, legalization moved rather quickly. Proponents in favor of legalization framed their advocacy in terms of equity and emphasized how the war on drugs affected communities of color. A central component of the proposed legislation included a human services grant program, which would support the communities that were impacted the most by the war on drugs. When the first version of the bill did not include youth development as part of the grant funding, ACT Now, the Illinois Afterschool Network, stepped in to write letters to the bill's cosponsors to emphasize afterschool programs' role in preventing violence and substance misuse. ACT Now coordinated with its internal Policy and Advocacy Committee and other youth development organizations in its advocacy, but given the speed with which legalization moved, they did not organize any formal coalition focused on this issue. The final version of the act that passed both houses of the Illinois General Assembly emphasized violence prevention through locally designed community-based programs to support the communities hardest hit by the war on drugs. On June 25, 2019, Governor Pritzker signed the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (CRTA) into law, which legalized adult-use cannabis and created the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) grant program.

A considerable part of Illinois' success in including afterschool and youth development in the legislation was because of support from the legislative Black Caucus, which helped push the equity-focused goal. Much of the messaging and language used revolved around the idea of supporting communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs. Many of these communities continue to be plagued by violence and lack of access to services, and the programs from this grant funding aim to mitigate these issues. Luckily, the Black Caucus already valued youth development as a violence prevention tool; however, ACT Now still wrote letters and maintained consistent communication with their members to ensure youth development was included in the R3 funding.

Another success in Illinois' messaging approach was using data-driven principles to establish the targeted regions that would receive funding throughout the state. This data-driven approach helped build political support on both sides, as it helped attest that the targeted regions were not random or driven by political sway. Similarly, the R3 legislation requires that the R3 board has input from both Republicans and Democrats, which allows for bipartisan program execution. The R3 board also includes significant persons such as mayors and formerly incarcerated persons.

Current investment

The R3 program enables funds to be directed to targeted areas with high economic disinvestment, gun violence, unemployment, child poverty, and rates of incarceration, as well as those impacted by the disproportionate damage caused by the war on drugs. These targeted areas are data-driven and identified by community-level information on gun injury, child poverty, unemployment, and state prison commitments and returns, along with the Disproportionately Impacted Areas identified by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). Twenty-five percent of all cannabis revenue is required to support these targeted communities to tackle some of the challenges. The money can be used to support evidence-based, promising, or innovative programming in the areas of civil legal aid, economic development, reentry from the criminal justice system, violence prevention, and youth development.

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) awarded the first round of R3 grants in January 2021. Nearly 400 programs applied for funding, but only 80 received grants, signaling communities' vast need for funds. More than half of the grants were to fund youth development, with some specifically for afterschool. In total, \$31.5 million was awarded to organizations to help the communities hardest hit by the war on drugs, with an anticipated potential of up to \$125 million per year in the future. Grants are currently for one calendar year to get programming up and running.

In June 2021, ICJIA awarded 21 grants totaling \$3.5 million to organizations providing youth ages 10 to 25 the opportunity to participate in prosocial summer activities to reduce violence and victimization or provide increased street intervention. Grant awards supported three months of programming, from July 1 to September 30, 2021.

In December of 2021, Governor Pritzker announced a grant competition for \$45 million in R3 funds, with a set aside of \$4.5 million for capacity-building grants to help small organizations expand.

Vision for the future

Funding youth development programs, including afterschool, is a good first step in community reinvestment, and the overwhelming number of grant applications shows a continued need for funding. Illinois, like other states, has experienced much fiscal instability, and having a reliable income source to support youth programming rather than relying on the possibility of general state aid is pivotal. Moving forward, the hope is that the R3 board and administration continue to prioritize funding for youth development programs in the following grant years and sustainably fund current youth development grantees, offering them the opportunity to renew funding after one year. ACT Now wants to continue to maintain consistent communication with legislators and expand support to ensure that youth development continues to be seen as a violence prevention strategy, specifically from an equity lens. Additionally, as programs are looking to come together to share their work, ACT Now wants to position itself as an intermediary that can convene, inform, and help set the vision for the future.



Photo courtesy of the 50 State Afterschool Network

Local Communities Investing in Afterschool and Summer

- Dedicating cannabis revenue funds to afterschool and youth prevention is not just happening at the state level. Even in states that are not currently investing in afterschool and summer using state tax revenue, it is possible to work with local advocates and decision makers to direct local tax revenue to afterschool and summer programs.
- In **Denver, Colorado**, \$1.5 million from the special sales tax revenue was set aside for the Denver Afterschool Alliance to support afterschool programs and train program staff. More than 100 programs throughout the city are funded through this grant. A portion of the funds were used to create a middle school curriculum based on youth development principles-- Healthy Lifestyles 101-- for out-of-school time providers to help address youth marijuana use.
- Clackamas County's Children, Family, and Community Connection in Oregon runs a mini-grant competition funded by local marijuana tax revenue. Currently, five youth-prevention focused organizations that span the county receive funds. Each of the five non-profits takes a different prevention strategy, with two of the five organizations-- Todos Juntos and Northwest Family Services-- offering afterschool programming as their prevention approach.



Action Steps for Getting Afterschool Funding Included in the Legalization Process

Cannabis legalization is picking up across the country, and depending on where individual states stand on this issue, there are steps that Statewide Afterschool Networks, partners, and other afterschool advocates can take to help ensure that if/when cannabis is legalized, funds will go towards supporting youth development programs. The following section outlines three different possible stages that states could find themselves in, along with action steps that can help generate support for youth development programs, including afterschool and summer learning programs.

Stage 1: Your state has not yet legalized adult-use and sales of cannabis

At this stage, the goal is to inform policymakers and other stakeholders of the benefits of afterschool and the demand for afterschool and summer programs in your state. Then introduce the concept of afterschool as a proactive substance use and misuse prevention strategy.

You could:

- Monitor the movement of cannabis legalization in your state, including through legislation and citizen-initiated ballot initiative efforts.
- Watch out for cannabis legalization in neighboring states.
- Read and understand your state's YRBSS (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System) data.
- Commission research about teen substance misuse in your state.
- Prepare materials that help make the case that afterschool and summer programs are a proven strategy to keep young people safe and healthy.
- Research organizations that have taken an interest in cannabis legalization and explore potential partnerships. Think outside of the afterschool space.

Stage 2: Your state has recently legalized adult-use and sales of cannabis

At this stage, you want to keep building on your message. Use a couple of different messages to frame your conversation, and then focus your messaging on the problem of substance use and misuse, and afterschool's role in addressing it.

You could:

- Look for areas of collaboration and organize meetings to discuss opportunities for tax revenue to go to afterschool and summer programs.
- Identify competing priorities for funding and consider messages to set afterschool and youth prevention apart from others.
- Develop a key message document supported by data for your state's champions and write an op-ed cosigned by one of your champions.
- Create an action plan for how to capitalize on revenue opportunities in advance of budget conversations.

Stage 3: Your state is deciding where to direct tax revenue from legal sales of adult-use cannabis

At this stage, you want to make the case for afterschool receiving revenue. Start with a general message and then hone in on specific topics important in your state, such as equity, COVID-19 recovery, and the economy. Finish with evidence of cannabis tax revenue for afterschool working in other states.

You could:

- Get involved on a task force that has decision making power.
- Make sure your key champions have the data and messages they need to make the case for investing in afterschool and summer using cannabis revenue.
- Share success stories from other states that have supported youth prevention via afterschool and summer programs.



Conclusion

There is much still to be learned about how cannabis legalization may impact youth use of cannabis. At this point the few studies that are available include some potentially conflicting findings and limited post-legalization data due to the relatively recent legalization in states. For example, research examining YRBSS (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System) data in states that have legalized adult cannabis use suggests that legalization is not associated with increased youth use.¹⁷ However, data from the National Institute on Drug Abuse's (NIDA) Monitoring the Future study indicate a reduced perception of risk from using cannabis among middle school and high school youth in states that have legalized cannabis.¹⁸ That reduced perception of risk could ultimately lead to increased youth use.

While more research on youth use and legalization is needed, it is essential that any legalization efforts include revenue that is dedicated to youth prevention efforts, including afterschool and summer programs. Afterschool and summer programs offer young people safe spaces, caring adults, engaging learning opportunities, and skill building activities - a powerful combination that can help lead to healthy futures.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ **McDowell Group:** McDowell Group. (2018). Protective Factors for Youth Substance Abuse and Delinquency: The Role of Afterschool Programs. Retrieved from <https://www.mcdowellgroup.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/act-protective-factors-and-afterschool-programs-1-30-2018-final.pdf>
- ² **America After 3PM:** Afterschool Alliance. (2020). America After 3PM: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks.
- ³ **America After 3PM:** Afterschool Alliance. (2020). America After 3PM: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks.
- ⁴ **McDowell Group:** McDowell Group. (2018). Protective Factors for Youth Substance Abuse and Delinquency: The Role of Afterschool Programs. Retrieved from <https://www.mcdowellgroup.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/act-protective-factors-and-afterschool-programs-1-30-2018-final.pdf>
- ⁵ **The Promise of Adolescence:** National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth.
- ⁶ **Marijuana Research Report:** National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). Marijuana Research Report. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/download/1380/marijuana-research-report.pdf?v=d9e67cbd412ae5f340206c1a0d9c2bfd>
- ⁷ **YRBSS 2019:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data.
- ⁸ **Fight Crime Invest in Kids:** Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. (2019). From Risk to Opportunity: Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks.
- ⁹ **Value of OST:** McCombs, J.S., Whitaker, A.A., & Yoo, P.Y. (2017). The Value of Out-of-School Time Programs. Rand Corporation. Retrieved from https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE200/PE267/RAND_PE267.pdf
- ¹⁰ **Adolescent Out-of-School Activities:** Mahoney, J.L., Vandell, D.L., Simpkins, S. & Zarrett, N. (2009). Adolescent Out-of-School Activities. In Handbook of Adolescent Psychology (eds R.M. Lerner and L. Steinberg). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470479193.adlpsy002008>
- ¹¹ **America After 3PM:** Afterschool Alliance. (2020). America After 3PM: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks.
- ¹² **The Evidence Base for Summer Enrichment and Comprehensive Afterschool Opportunities:** Peterson, T.K. & Vandell, D.L. (2021). Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wx8zvONEf2lgQuXJpsOvzlLFWfHIVbf4/view>
- ¹³ **America After 3PM:** Afterschool Alliance. (2020). America After 3PM: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks.
- ¹⁴ **America After 3PM:** Afterschool Alliance. (2020). America After 3PM: Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks.
- ¹⁵ **Vermont Universal Afterschool Task Force report:** Vermont Universal Afterschool Task Force. (2021). Report from Vermont's Universal Afterschool Task Force. Retrieved from <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/Task%20Force%20for%20Universal%20Afterschool%20Access%20Final%20Report%205-17-2021.pdf>
- ¹⁶ **McDowell Group:** McDowell Group. (2018). Protective Factors for Youth Substance Abuse and Delinquency: The Role of Afterschool Programs. Retrieved from <https://www.mcdowellgroup.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/act-protective-factors-and-afterschool-programs-1-30-2018-final.pdf>
- ¹⁷ **Association of Marijuana Legalization With Marijuana Use Among US High School Students:** Anderson D.M., Rees D.L., Sabia J.J. & Safford S. (2021). Association of Marijuana Legalization With Marijuana Use Among US High School Students, 1993-2019. JAMA Network. Retrieved from <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2783850?source=email>
- ¹⁸ **NIDA's Monitoring the Future 2020 study:** National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2020). Drug Use Trends Among U.S. Teens: Monitoring the Future. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/related-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/monitoring-future-2020-survey-results>

