

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT



Minnesota Invests in Afterschool



\$30 million over four years

Reviving state afterschool funding for the first time in 14 years

The Challenge

As of 2019, Minnesota's After-School Community Learning Grant program, which supported afterschool programs from 2007 to 2009, had been unfunded for over a decade. 2020 *America After 3PM* data illustrate high unmet demand for afterschool programs, especially for low-income families. The study found that youth from low-income families were missing out on opportunities for social and academic enrichment, social-emotional learning, and cultural affirmation.

The Opportunity

Tim Walz's 2018 campaign for governor brought attention to state funding for schools and academic enrichment, highlighting the important role STEM plays in Minnesota's workforce development. Understanding afterschool's role in academic enrichment, Ignite Afterschool, Minnesota's statewide afterschool network, saw an opportunity to further develop its relationships, storytelling capabilities, and data-driven evidence on afterschool's connection to academic success.

Collaborating with the state's Department of Education, Ignite Afterschool collected data connecting afterschool and academic outcomes in the Minnesota Student Survey. Following the 2018 campaign, the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd opened a policy window to address economic and educational inequities in the state. In response, Governor Walz committed \$6.1 million of American Rescue Plan (ARP) pandemic relief funds, half of his afterschool investment, to culturally-affirming programs specifically. In subsequent legislative sessions, advocates worked to reinstate funding for the After-School Community Learning Grants, but funding is ultimately not included in the FY23 or FY24 state budget. With ARP funds sunseting in 2024, the governor asked the legislature to commit \$45 million to the existing grant program in his FY24 budget proposal. While unfunded for over a decade, the existence of a legislative mechanism for dedicated afterschool funding posed a major opportunity to simplify negotiations.

Strategies

- ▶ Leverage pre-existing state structures for afterschool funding
- ▶ Frame afterschool as the solution to state education priorities
- ▶ Collaborate with partners to produce data and stories that affirm the importance of afterschool

Timeline

- ▶ **2007:** After-School Community Learning Grants are funded through 2009 at \$5.3 million as a one-time appropriation, but do not receive further funding.
- ▶ **2018:** Tim Walz, a former educator, is elected governor after promising to make education funding one of his top priorities.
- ▶ **2020:** Unemployment spikes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and George Floyd is murdered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, reigniting conversations about equity. A study of unmet demand for afterschool programming in Minnesota frames the gap in access as an equity issue that's impeding academic performance.
- ▶ **2021:** Attempts to revive the After-School Community Learning Grants with \$2 million in funding fail in the state legislature. Governor Walz allocates \$13.2 million of American Rescue Plan pandemic relief funding to afterschool programs.
- ▶ **2022:** Governor Walz's budget recommends funding to reestablish the After-School Community Learning Grant program.
- ▶ **2023:** Governor Walz proposes a \$45 million investment over four years in the After-School Community Learning Grant. The final budget includes \$30 million for four years.



The Result

In the FY24 state budget, the Minnesota legislature committed \$30 million of the \$45 million proposed by the governor to fund the After-School Community Learning Grant program through FY27. At the governor's urging, the legislation required grants to support organizations that primarily provide culturally and academically enriching programming to historically underserved students. After years of data-driven relationship building and advocacy, the state secured significant funding to address inequity and close the afterschool access gap in Minnesota. Looking to maintain this dedicated funding after FY27, Ignite Afterschool developed the M3 (Making Meaning with Multiple Data Sets) program to train advocates across the state in cultivating impact stories.

What's Next

Advocates are now working to:

- ▶ Collect and leverage impact data to advocate for recurring funding for After-School Community Learning Grants
- ▶ Dedicate funds for continuous improvement and professional development
- ▶ Maintain bipartisan support for afterschool despite prior wins' connection to equity
- ▶ Increase burgeoning afterschool funding via legalized cannabis as the state tax rises to 15% in 2025



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

