Afterschool Alliance

An Advocate's Playbook: Strategies to Expand State Investments in Afterschool & Summer

Afterschool Alliance

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

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INTRODUCTION

While demand for afterschool and summer learning programs has soared in recent decades, federal funding for programs has not kept pace. Funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the only federal funding stream dedicated to local afterschool and summer programming, has remained effectively flat for more than 20 years. To address the unmet demand, many states are investing their own dollars, pairing state resources with federal funding to expand access to afterschool and summer opportunities.

State afterschool networks are at the forefront of state-level efforts to expand access to afterschool and summer programs. Their advocacy efforts have helped secure nearly $6 billion across 28 states. Each funding win was made possible by four key strategies:

1. Collecting and utilizing **data** that captures the demand for and impact of programs
2. Building **relationships** with stakeholders and policymakers
3. **Communicating** a coordinated and tailored message about the importance of programs
4. **Mobilizing** allies to support a specific funding proposal before the statehouse

Alongside strategies and featured stories from state network staff and partners, this playbook provides the tools to help others successfully replicate funding wins.

DATA

Together, data and personal anecdotes are highly effective in building policymaker support for new investments and initiatives. At the state level, advocates have leveraged data to demonstrate the positive impact of—and unmet demand for—afterschool and summer learning programs. Through surveys, return on investment (ROI) studies, story collection, and pilot investments, advocates have leveraged data to prove three things:

1. Constituents want access to afterschool and summer learning programs;
2. Funding can grant that access; and
3. Expanding access will positively impact youth, families, and the state economy.

Documenting Demand. Policymakers must be convinced of the *demand* for afterschool and summer learning programs in their state. Several states have tapped *America After 3PM* data from the Afterschool Alliance, collected from families nationally roughly every five years.

In the research, unmet demand is quantified by the number of students who would participate in a program if one were available to them. Notably, Vermont and Minnesota each found traction when data showed that more than 60% of families who wanted programs were unable to access one. A few examples of state data collection on demand:

- A number of states pair *America After 3PM* data with the demand for 21st CCLC funding, where nationally, only 1 in 3 requests for funding are awarded.
- Vermont, as it works to achieve afterschool for all, points to the state's unmet demand from *America After 3PM* data along with the fact that temporary federal pandemic relief funding met less than half of the need for program support, with $10 million in funding available but $25 million in grant applications.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: PA

Pennsylvania afterschool advocates made a strong case for afterschool funding with site visits, career development showcases, and legislative testimony. However, state legislators needed further proof that afterschool was a wise investment. Advocates leveraged the legislature's Afterschool Caucus to commission an ROI study to quantify the impact of afterschool and provide the justification for dedicated funding. With an ROI of every $1 invested yielding $6.69 in return to the state economy, Pennsylvania policymakers were willing to invest $11.5 million into the BOOST initiative (Building Opportunities for Out-of-School Time).

Demonstrating State Benefits. Vermont and Pennsylvania utilized legislative study committees to generate return on investment figures. The data quantifies state savings realized by investments in afterschool and summer.

Other states, like Alaska, demonstrated how programs address a state issue, in this case an epidemic of substance misuse and suicide. With the help of the Centers for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Alaska demonstrated that participating in organized activities, including afterschool programs, supports well-being and helps build protective factors against marijuana use. The data helped secure a portion of recreational cannabis excise tax revenue for the Positive Youth Development Afterschool Program (PYDAP). YRBS data also looks at other harmful behaviors such as suicide and juvenile crime.

Alaska's Use of YRBS Data to Show Impact of Program Participation on Marijuana Use

Problem behaviors	Significantly reduced risk?
Used marijuana ever	Yes*
Tried marijuana for the first time before age 13 years	Yes
Used marijuana one or more times during past 30 days	Yes
Used marijuana three or more times during past 30 days	Yes
Parents who consider it a little bit wrong or not wrong at all for them to smoke marijuana	Yes
Think their friends feel it would be a little bit wrong or not wrong at all for them to use marijuana	Yes

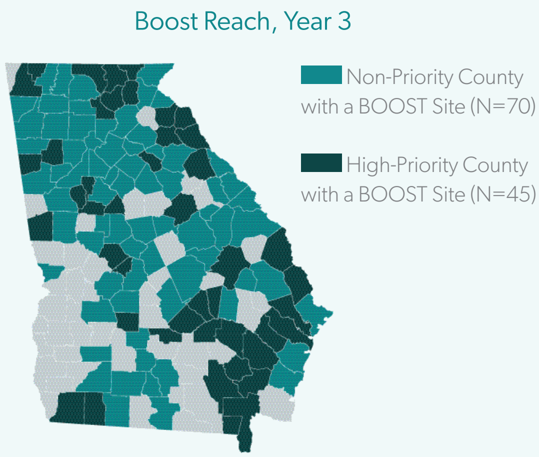
*significantly reduced risk at p<=0.007

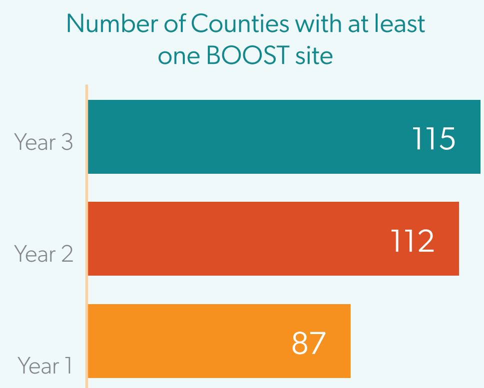
Youth Input and Data. Centering youth voices in data collection can be very effective in illustrating the positive impact of afterschool and summer programs. In Illinois, student surveys demonstrated that science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) learning in afterschool improved peer relationships, critical thinking, and career interest among participants. That evidence helped the state network successfully advocate for STEM programming to be required in Illinois' Teen Responsibility, Education, Achievement, Caring and Hope (Teen REACH) program grants. The network gathered the data through two site visits to each STEM Club, administering Common Instrument student surveys from Partnerships in Education and Resilience (PEAR) and conducting Dimensions of Success (DoS) observations.

Pilot Outcomes. States have used positive outcomes from small-scale pilot or short-term investments to effectively illustrate impact. With the governor's leadership, Alabama leveraged an initial $1.5 million pilot investment in 2023 into a $17.5 million grant program in a few years' time. The pilot's data proved afterschool could address state concerns around literacy rates, workforce shortages, and rural families' access to government services.

In Vermont, Michigan, and Georgia, data from short-term investments in afterschool and summer using federal pandemic relief funds helped document impact and need. Georgia, for example, tapped $85 million in American Rescue Plan funding to create the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grant initiative to expand access to programs across the state, including in 17 previously unserved counties. The temporary funds partially satisfied unmet demand and expanded access, producing data that advocates utilized to secure state investment after the federal relief funds ended.

Georgia data on pandemic relief BOOST grants helped make the case for sustained funding





By leveraging afterschool and summer data, advocates at the state level have been successful in proving to policymakers that investment is an effective use of public funds that the public supports. Data also helped advocates develop allies and raise awareness—another essential element of securing state funding.

RELATIONSHIPS

Cultivating relationships with state leaders, policymakers, education coalitions, and the afterschool field is a core strategy for securing state funding. In fact, every successful state campaign fostered relationships with key state leaders to develop champions. Advocates built trusted and deep partnerships through information sharing, cultivating collaborative spaces, program site visits, and more.

LEVERAGING GOVERNMENT RELATIONS SPECIALISTS, VT

Vermont Afterschool has worked with a lobbyist since 2012 to foster relationships with legislators, advocates, and the governor's office. Lobbyists introduced Vermont Afterschool to legislators across the political spectrum and across the committees of jurisdiction. Because the lobbyist is in the State House daily, they can connect with legislators individually, attend committee meetings, facilitate testimony opportunities, and share weekly updates with the network team. Lobbyists are essential touchpoints for both long-term relationship-building and time-sensitive developments within the state government that are integral to legislative success.

Governors and Lieutenant Governors. Many states found traction working with the governor or lieutenant governor to advance their cause.

- Advocates in Michigan developed a strong working relationship with Governor Whitmer, becoming trusted advisors around afterschool and gaining a powerful ally responsible for state budget recommendations. With support from the governor, Michigan advocates grew their commitment for afterschool and summer programming to $75 million in just a few years' time.
- In New Mexico, Lt. Governor Howie Morales aided advocates by supporting the state network in organizing a series of roundtable discussions to promote out-of-school time (OST) bills before the legislature and became a strong spokesperson and ally for afterschool throughout his time in office.
- In Pennsylvania, Lt. Governor Austin Davis led efforts within the administration to secure state funding for afterschool in Governor Josh Shapiro's 2024 budget recommendations after years of stalled progress in the state legislature.

State Education Leaders. State education leaders like state superintendents or commissioners became allies in many states. Alabama's State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Eric Mackey, became a critical partner in the state network's advocacy strategy as well as a champion for the role that afterschool programs can play in improving academic outcomes for students.

Pennsylvania legislators at site visit to Sunrise of Philadelphia

State Legislators. Building relationships with legislators proved essential to growing momentum, as permanent state funding only succeeded after building broad legislative support. Georgia, through their story campaign, found support from the Speaker of the House after his wife connected with the weekly BOOST grantee stories. In Pennsylvania, New Mexico, and New York, carefully cultivated support from legislators led to the introduction of numerous pieces of legislation to invest state dollars in programs. When the Vermont network needed access to the legislators capable of advancing afterschool, support from a government relations consultant helped pave the way to small, initial wins that grew into the promise of universal afterschool. Once that support was established, other opportunities to fund afterschool flourished, such as the redirection of cannabis excise tax to afterschool with Vermont's 2023 Act 78.

Coalition Building. Cultivating the broad support for afterschool and summer learning funding required advocates to bring convergent interests together in expansive coalitions. Successful advocates recognized that those committed to education, child care, healthcare, or public safety could likewise share a commitment to afterschool and summer, as there was often overlap among the communities served by these fields.

Coalition work groups and summits can help establish alliances. Alaska, for example, hosted collaborative events with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that helped build the justification and support for afterschool as a prevention strategy for the state.

Program Relationships. Relationships with program staff ensured that grassroots voices could help make the case for funding to policymakers. Wisconsin has emphasized program provider engagement through roundtables and site visits to programs. The relationships forged through grassroots engagement have led to growth of the Wisconsin Partnership for Kids as an organizing body for the state's advocacy efforts to establish state funding. The Partnership launched an OST Advocacy Fellowship in 2025 to train local program leaders to host policymakers for site visits and advocate for afterschool. Further, program staff provided essential testimony and context in legislative hearings, offering practical and authentic perspectives as providers who would be responsible for implementing afterschool and summer learning programs with state funding.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MESSAGING

Effective messaging is built around strong data and stories, priorities that are top of mind for decision-makers, and effective deployment of communications that resonate with key audiences.

Successful advocacy efforts employed targeted messaging aligned to state interests, and adapted communications that worked best for the target audience, whether policymakers, programs, the public, or media. Advocates packaged data and stories to craft compelling communications and tapped strong, trusted messengers. The argument for funding has to resonate with the policymakers first and foremost.

See **Appendix A** for data types and how to align to your state's priorities

State advocates used a variety of approaches and strategies, including placing op-eds and news stories, using social media to reach leaders and engage supporters, training local spokespeople, in-person events and meetings, and showcasing programs at site visits.

Being Ready for Policy Opportunities. Timing is often the biggest factor in the success of legislative or budget campaigns. Being ready—with a foundation of support in place and strong messaging—is critical. Funding for afterschool and summer gained traction when advocates understood their state's priorities and were ready to position programs as a solution when the right moment arose.

Afterschool and summer learning can impact many areas, addressing education goals, workforce development, mental well-being, community safety, child care, and more. Focusing on a specific, urgent state concern or priority accelerates buy-in. In successful state efforts, advocates worked to build a theory of change or justification for funding around the identified state priorities in advance.

MESSENGERS MATTER

Identifying the right voices to carry the message matters. Who in or outside the field—such as parents, business leaders, youth, or school administrators—can speak credibly to the impact of quality programming?

Messengers who are trusted by policymakers can make the difference between a message that lands and one that doesn't.

Youth from After School Matters in IL speaks to media

In both Michigan and New Mexico, court cases alleging insufficient public education brought academics into political focus and pandemic learning loss strengthened public concern and investment.

Public attention on child wellness and safety framed investments in Pennsylvania and Alaska. In Pennsylvania, the Shapiro-Davis administration's focus on combating juvenile violence provided the opportunity for afterschool advocates to highlight afterschool as a safe space for youth engagement. Alaska demonstrated how afterschool could help address an epidemic of substance misuse and suicide among youth in the state.

Communications Strategies. Advocates used diverse storytelling devices and messengers to raise awareness and make the connection between afterschool and summer learning programming and political priorities.

- **Pennsylvania** organized a bus tour with public officials and media to reinforce the case for state investment through firsthand program visits.
- **Alabama** used data-driven op-eds to tell a compelling story about what a state investment could mean for children and families, helping build momentum toward its $17.5 million investment.
- **Georgia** used district maps and weekly program story snapshots to give policymakers a clear, ongoing picture of need and impact, helping secure the BOOST initiative.
- **New York** launched a statewide awareness campaign anchored by its Power of 3:00 ambassadors, mobilizing grassroots supporters across the state.
- **Michigan** launched the All In Michigan campaign, combining parent and student stories with celebrity voices to raise the issue's profile among state leaders.

Graphic from All In Michigan campaign

Ultimately, the success of communications depends on how they resonate with key audiences. By aligning messaging with state priorities and leveraging compelling data and storytelling, advocates can effectively make the case for increased investment in afterschool and summer learning programs.

MOBILIZATION AND ACTIVATION

With data collected, relationships developed, and messaging crafted, advocates are ready to mobilize their networks to advance the ask for funding. Providing well-prepared supporters with simple, clear actions to take is critical. Asks must align with what supporters are willing to do; and advocates need to make the action as easy as possible.

Successful state efforts have used a range of mobilization tactics:

Strategy	What Happens	Advocates Mobilized
Advocacy days and rallies at the Capitol	Advocates bring supporters to the statehouse to meet with legislators and rally support	Afterschool providers, parents, youth, and community partners.
Legislator breakfasts	Organizations host lawmakers for a meal to share perspectives, make the case for funding, and build relationships	Supportive policymakers, program directors, community partners, stakeholders, and established and prospective allies.
Action alert email campaigns	Supporters receive an email that allows them to send a message to their representatives in support of an action or funding using a simple interface	Program staff, parents, community members, networks, and affiliates of allied organizations.
Celebrity and media advocacy	High-profile voices publicly champion afterschool programs, generating attention from legislators and the press	Sports talent, media personalities, entertainers, etc. (In Georgia, former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan spoke out in support of legislative resolutions on afterschool.)
Legislative hearings	Lawmakers hear formal testimony about the impact of afterschool programs on children, families, and the economy	Program providers, youth and families, researchers, community partners, stakeholders, and subject matter experts.

POLICY ASKS: MECHANISMS FOR STATE FUNDING

For any of the strategies described in this playbook, advocates need to have a clear idea of their policy ask. A variety of mechanisms can be pursued to invest state funds in afterschool and summer learning programs.

Looking across successful state efforts, one effective strategy was leveraging pre-existing legislative language or a new revenue stream. For example:

- In Minnesota, advocates pressed for the revival of a previously established, though unfunded, state program.
- The Alaska state network asked that the sales tax revenue from recently legalized recreational cannabis support a new afterschool grant program.
- Vermont paired their funding ask with legislative momentum legalizing and taxing recreational cannabis.

Other specific asks include state budget appropriations, ballot measures, settlement funds, and state lottery revenue.

Read the state case studies to learn more about specific state efforts, and visit 3to6.co/statepolicy for more on mechanisms for investing state funding in afterschool and summer programs.

TESTIMONY LINE UP: MN

In Minnesota, advocates worked with state Rep. Fue Lee (D) and Sen. Justin Eichorn (R) to revive Minnesota's Afterschool Community Learning Grants. The legislators sponsored bills in the House and Senate and hosted a hearing about the impact of afterschool programming. Ignite Afterschool, the state network, testified alongside key partners and voices in the state, including the President of the Boys & Girls Club for Central Minnesota, the Executive Director of an Indigenous Boys & Girls Club site, the liaison to the Minnesota Department of Education, and a representative of a community foundation.

Afterschool youth speaking with a state legislator at Illinois' advocacy day at the Capitol

CONCLUSION

Securing state funding for afterschool and summer learning programs takes a combination of data, relationships, aligned messaging, and mobilized allies. But getting funding is only part of the battle—sustaining and growing it matters just as much. That takes persistence, patience, and a willingness to adapt messages and strategies as the political landscape shifts.

State networks with a history of securing investments stay focused on:

- Evaluating programs and collecting outcomes data from grantees
- Arranging policymaker site visits to funded programs
- Sharing stories from programs with decision-makers
- Advocating for more funding or policy improvements to better meet state needs

Advocacy can be challenging and tiring, as the job is never "done," but the payoff—directly supporting youth and families—is incredibly fulfilling. Further, the relationships formed in the process enrich efforts to expand quality programming well beyond funding wins.

Thank you to the state networks featured in this playbook for embodying the collaborative spirit strong advocacy requires, and for sharing their strategies, challenges, and success stories.

Pennsylvania youth at rally for afterschool funding

APPENDIX A

Collect Data to Match Messaging: Funding for Afterschool Programs

Consider…	*to support the message…*	*as seen leveraged for advocacy in…*
Program demand and waitlist count How many children do not have access to services in existing programs?	Demand outpaces available programming. Families are missing out on essential services. Slots are ready to be filled with additional investment.	North Carolina: *America After 3PM* data captures undeniable demand from the parent perspective and advocates want county specifics. After asking providers to quantify their existing waiting lists, it becomes clear the metric poses a significant challenge to access.
Qualified but unfunded grant applications (to 21st Century Community Learning Centers [21st CCLC], state funding) How much funding would actually meet demand?	There are trusted partners that can and want to provide programming, but they cannot without funding. State investment must expand to meet unmet demand.	Vermont: Advocates in Vermont point to the disparity between available state funds and the money requested by qualified applicants. The gap in available funds provides a data point to show providers are ready to scale toward universal afterschool with greater investment.
Afterschool and summer desert maps Which counties do not have out-of-school time (OST) programs?	Targeted funding is necessary to reach new counties and thereby expand the accessibility of programs.	Georgia: Mapping access to OST, advocates justify state investment as a means of reaching counties without 21st CCLC sites. Their BOOST funding has successfully prioritized unserved counties.
Evaluation outcomes To what extent are programs achieving their objectives?	Programs report notable impact on youth and families. We should expand funding to ensure that everyone who wants these services can benefit from them.	Idaho: Advocates commission an impact evaluation of the programs funded by federal relief dollars. Overwhelming reports of desired outcomes encourages the state to add money to 21st CCLC funds in 2025.

APPENDIX A

Collect Data to Match Messaging: Funding for Afterschool Programs Con't.

Consider...	***to support the message...***	***as seen leveraged for advocacy in...***
Return on investment (ROI) How does investing in OST benefit your state economy?	Public funding for OST is a sound investment that supports the current workforce, enhances the future workforce, and prevents spending on reactive measures like healthcare and the carceral system.	Pennsylvania: ROI study calculates that every $1 spent on afterschool yields a $6.69 return for the state economy. Funding this study prior to funding grants incentivizes large scale investment.
Cost modeling To actualize ROI, how much would it cost to provide everyone quality programs?	The ROI on afterschool is only actualized when investment meets the true cost of quality OST programming. Cost modeling is the first step toward consequential universal afterschool.	Massachusetts: A 2012 cost-modeling study induces a 15% increase in 2013 funding for the ASOST grant program. Now advocating for the expansion of child care, the governor's task force has commissioned 2023, 2024, and 2026 models.
Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) or community youth survey data To what extent does OST act as a protective factor in your state? What risk factors are most prevalent in your state?	Afterschool is a protective factor against self-harming behaviors like substance abuse and suicide. Funding for afterschool is an essential investment in youth wellness.	Alaska: To expand upon the YRBS connection between hours in afterschool and a reduction of self-harm, the state network commissions a brief. Later that year, Alaska's PYDAP grant references YRBS and protective factors as a justification.
Education statistics (NAEP scores, graduation rates, chronic absenteeism) Is there a need to improve education outcomes?	Afterschool can extend and customize learning opportunities to improve youth education outcomes. Targeted programming can also induce equity of education outcomes.	Michigan: To supplement and sustain federal relief funds, the governor frames afterschool and summer funding as an academic intervention, addressing COVID-19 learning loss in student outcomes. Advocacy for increased funding connects 21st CCLC to improved graduation and attendance.
Anecdotes How can you humanize the impact of afterschool and summer programs as a complement to quantitative data?	The impact of afterschool and summer programs looks slightly different for everyone because its programming can meet various needs, including career exploration, dual language enrichment for English language learners (ELLs), etc. Let's make the impact real with an anecdote.	Georgia: Advocates collect snapshot stories of state-funded programming to give policymakers an understanding of how their investment manifests. Targeted emails share one story brief a week.

APPENDIX B

Strategy Planning for Advocacy Campaigns

This chart is an adaptation of the Midwest Academy strategy chart. Use it to help you determine policy goals that will result in stronger support for high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs. Then, systematically address the questions in each section. You will emerge with a structure of a plan, and the assets you have to execute it.

Goals

1. Long term
What is the long-term vision for afterschool in your state?

Example: Universal afterschool, multi-million dollar state investment

2. Intermediate
What is needed now?

Example: Initial pilot investment

3. Short term
What steps are needed to get to the intermediate goal?

Examples: Data collection, Caucus for afterschool, bill introduction, task force or study committee

Goals are always concrete improvements in children's lives.

Organizational Considerations

1. List the resources that your organization brings to the campaign. Include: money, staff capacity, reputation, listserv/contacts, etc.

How can you best leverage existing resources to mobilize your community or legislators?

2. Is your team capable of overseeing the statewide campaign? Will outside consultants be needed, like lobbyists, media/ communications consultants, or organizers?

3. If fiscally sponsored, what restrictions may be in place to limit activities like lobbying?

Constituents, Allies, Accomplices, and Opponents

1. Who cares about this issue enough to join in or help the organization?

- Who is impacted?
- What do they gain if they win?
- What risks are they taking?
- What power do they have over the target?
- What groups are they already connected to?
- How MUCH do they care? Who can be counted on as an accomplice and who may only chime in at a key moment of traction?

2. Who are your opponents?

- How strong is the opposition?
- What will they do/spend to oppose you?
- Would they remain opponents if OST were framed as a solution to problems they're focused on?
- Is there divisive language that will trigger opposition?

Targets

1. Primary Targets

A target is always a person. It is never an institution or elected body.

- Who has the power to give you what you want?
- What power do you have to activate them?

2. Secondary Targets

- Who has the power to influence those identified as primary targets?
- What connections or relationships do you have to activate them?

Tactics

For each target, list the tactic most likely to activate the target, based on your relationship and shared goals.

Tactics include:

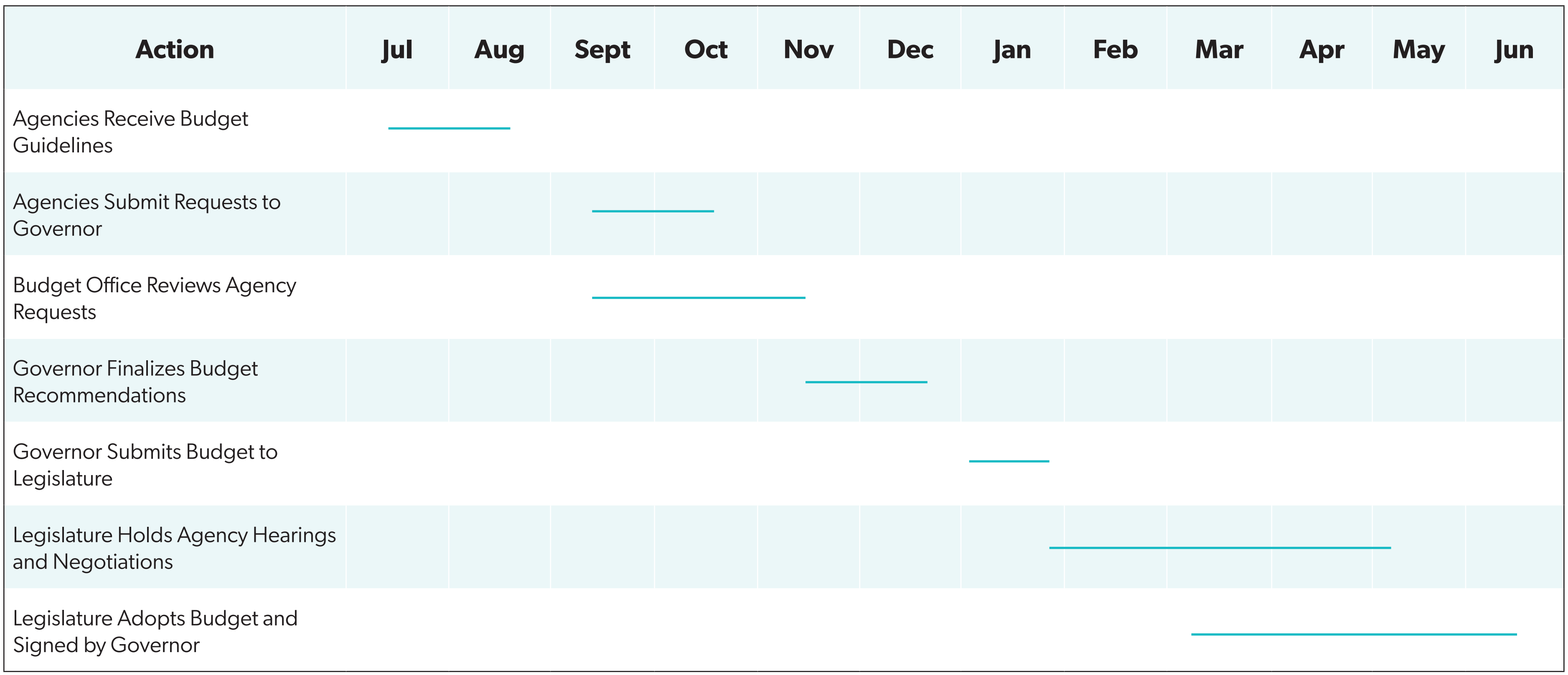
- Media campaigns
- Research briefs
- Roundtables
- Coalition creation
- Site visits
- Outcomes data report
- Rallies or Advocacy Days
- Expert and constituent testimony

APPENDIX B
Community Asset Map

APPENDIX C
State Budget Process "By the Book" vs. "Inside Scoop"

Note: States generally have two budgets—the operating budget for the operations of a state agency or program and the capital budget for the acquisition and/or construction of items such as buildings, equipment, and land. This document focuses on operating budgets and is intended to show advocates the budget process by calendar and to demystify the various steps to the making of a state budget. It takes a year to produce the budget, so it may take a year or more for advocates to influence it. There are many decision points in the budget process that can help or hurt your proposal. Getting a state agency to propose a new program in its budget requires working long before the governor's call for agency budgets in September. If you succeed in that, you'll want to watch your proposed program as the budget passes through other steps and continue to advocate for your item as the budget moves through later decision-makers' review and approval.

Typical State Operating Budget Cycle for Annual State Budgets



APPENDIX C

State Budget Process "By the Book" vs. "Inside Scoop" Con't.

The "By the Book" Budget Process	Inside Scoop for Advocates
1. The state budget office sends budget guidelines to agencies. • Guidelines provide budget assumptions, such as spending targets and inflation. • They are typically sent to agencies during summer months.	1. Agencies are working on several budget years at the same time. They are closing the books on previous year, allocating money on current year, testifying on the next year's budget and preparing the following year's budget. Budget prep is a full-year process. For states operating on an annual budget, agencies usually start working on "next year" in the summer after the passage of the state's operating budget.
2. Agencies submit requests to the governor. • Each agency typically submits requests to the governor in the fall. • In most states, the legislature also sees agency requests before the executive budget is prepared.	2. Departmental liaisons may be talking with legislative analysts, the state budget office and governor's budget staff way before the budget is submitted. • They, too, are dealing with many budgets at one time. Who has influence on this? Key leaders can be important to influence the budget office recommendation.
3. The state budget office reviews agency requests. • Budget officials meet with agency staff and advocates for clarification through small meetings or agency public hearings. • Budget staff reviews material in the context of big-picture trends that affect the budget (e.g. caseload data, demographic shifts).	3. The governor's legislative staff is becoming familiar with the budget document, which is not final yet.
4. The governor finalizes budget recommendations. • Budget office submits compiled information into recommendations to the governor, usually during late fall. • The governor reviews and adjusts the recommendations to develop a budget proposal.	4. If the leaders belong to the same party, this may be a consensus document between the legislative and executive branches. If there is split government, then the document likely reflects only the views of the executive branch.
5. The governor submits the budget to the legislature. • Bill is typically submitted to legislature after the first of the year. • State of the State address is often a venue to outline specific priorities.	5. It's important to make sure you are working with someone who can influence the State of the State message.

APPENDIX C

State Budget Process
"By the Book" vs. "Inside Scoop" Con't.

The "By the Book" Budget Process	Inside Scoop for Advocates
6. Legislature holds agency hearings. • Proposed executive budget typically drives the legislative budgeting, sets the agenda. • Budget bills may be introduced in one or both chambers.	6. Besides committee chairs and chamber leaders, legislative budget analysts influence the material discussed and decisions made by analyzing past agency performance, effectiveness, and perceived need for programs. Agencies have influence on what the budget analysts see and digest.
7. Legislature adopts the budget. • In most states a majority vote is required to pass the budget. • Once both chambers approve the budget, it is submitted to the governor for approval.	7. Most legislatures can increase or decrease a governor's request. A majority vote in the committee is required.
8. Governor signs or vetoes budget bill. • In most states, specific line items or requests can be vetoed, rather than the entire bill. • In some states, the legislature may override the governor's veto.	8. Don't take anything for granted. It is appropriate to organize a letter-writing campaign to encourage the governor to sign or ask that he or she not veto your provision. Thank-you notes to those who worked on it are always wise. Public recognition is important.
Considerations: • Does your state appropriate the budget annually or biennially (every two years)? If biennially, does your legislature review the budget and make revisions annually? • Where does budget power lie? What can the governor do without legislative approval? For example, does the governor have veto, line-item veto, or budget-item veto power? • Does the state require a balanced budget? • Where are the bulk of your state dollars going? • Does your state have a rainy day fund?	**Considerations:** • Because government officials think in multi-year and review past years' spending, advocates need to have the same view and knowledge. • Are there other fiscal hurdles? Some states have a Board of Estimates that "allocates" appropriated money and makes money decisions between legislative sessions. • This can involve sleight-of-hand budgeting. • Typically more than half of a state budget pays for education and health care (Medicaid). • Catch-all strategy to have for fiscal emergencies, but very subjective. How much is enough?

For more information, see "Budget Processes in the States," National Association of State Budget Officers, available at www.nasbo.org.

APPENDIX D
STATE FUNDING CASE STUDIES

Alabama
Alaska
Georgia
Michigan
Minnesota
New Mexico
New York
Pennsylvania
Texas
Vermont

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

Alabama Invests in Afterschool

$17.3 million for Afterschool

Alabama's first-ever permanent state investment in afterschool programs.

The Challenge

For decades, Alabama lacked dedicated state funding for afterschool and summer programs, forcing local organizations to rely on limited federal and philanthropic support. This left thousands of students, especially in rural areas, without access to quality afterschool programs. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the consequences of this underinvestment, highlighting afterschool as both an educational and economic necessity.

The Opportunity

The COVID-19 pandemic created a critical policy window as Alabama leaders sought solutions to learning loss, workforce challenges, and youth disengagement. Seizing this opportunity, A+ Education and the Alabama Expanded Learning Alliance (AELA) quickly mobilized to push for sustainable afterschool investments. Advocates aligned afterschool with the Alabama Literacy and Numeracy Acts, demonstrating how these programs support reading and math goals through hands-on, community-based learning. AELA backed their case with data from the Summer Adventures In Learning (SAIL) program and Alabama After 3PM, ultimately securing funding in both Acts for summer camps targeting students below grade level in math and reading.

By framing afterschool as a strategic solution to the state's biggest challenges—academic recovery, public safety, and economic growth—advocates highlighted its role in addressing literacy gaps, workforce shortages, and rural access. A widely circulated op-ed by Felicia Simpson and Dr. Terry Peterson underscored afterschool's broad impact, blending research and storytelling to build public and legislative momentum for long-term investment.

Strategies

- Tied afterschool and summer programs directly to state education priorities
- Used data, personal stories, and media outreach to build public and legislative support
- Built strong relationships with key state leaders and used momentum from a successful pilot program to secure dedicated state funding

Tips/Lessons Learned

- Start small, prove impact, then scale
- Build relationships early and sustain them
- Position as a component of state's education priorities

Timeline

- **2019–2021:** Alabama Extended Learning Alliance (AELA) and A+ Education Partnership organize and hold stakeholder conversations on the need for investment in afterschool and summer programs. Advocates release a research brief linking afterschool to literacy and math outcomes, and use data from Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) and America After 3PM to guide program implementation of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds
- **2022:** Governor Kay Ivey includes $1.5 million in the state budget for a pilot afterschool program, Alabama's first dedicated funding for afterschool
- **2023:** Based on positive data from the pilot, the Governor and legislature double down with a $2.8 million investment in afterschool programming statewide
- **2024:** Advocates' push for better coordination and program quality at the state level leads to the establishment of the Office of Extended Learning
- **2025:** HJR 100 passes and establishes the Joint Interim Study Commission on Expanding Access to High-Quality Out-of-School Education Programs. The legislature also approves a $17.3 million investment for afterschool in the state budget

The Result

In 2022, Governor Kay Ivey included $1.5 million in the state budget to pilot afterschool and summer learning programs—the first dedicated investment for afterschool in Alabama's history. Advocates at AELA and A+ Education tracked outcomes and shared community stories to demonstrate the program's success, leading to a $2.8 million expansion in 2023. Following strategic discussions with the Lieutenant Governor, Representative Terri Collins introduced and passed HJR 100 in 2025, creating a Joint Interim Study Commission to improve coordination and quality. That same year, Alabama approved a $17.3 million investment, cementing its long-term commitment to out-of-school time programs.

What's Next

Advocates are now focused on:

- Protecting and sustaining Alabama's investment in afterschool and summer programs
- Ensuring that state funding is effectively allocated and distributed to programs across the state and prioritized in future budgets
- Continuing the development of the professional development infrastructure to ensure high-quality afterschool and summer programs

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

Alaska Invests in Afterschool

Approximately $1.8 million for Afterschool

Directed to afterschool programs annually from 12.5% of the state excise tax on cannabis

The Challenge

Youth in Alaska faced high rates of self-harming behavior, like substance misuse, with limited state investment in programs that leverage social and emotional development for prevention. When Ballot Measure 2 legalized recreational cannabis in Alaska in 2014, the excise tax became subject to the discretion of the Marijuana Control Board without any requirement on what those funds could be used for.

The Opportunity

The Alaska Afterschool Network engaged in information gathering to provide advocates with vital evidence of afterschool's prevention capabilities. The Centers for Disease Control's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) showed young people who participated in afterschool programs just two times a week were 20% less likely to use alcohol and 40% less likely to use marijuana. The Alaska Afterschool Network commissioned the McDowell Group to further research the relationship between afterschool and prevention. Their report concluded that afterschool itself is a protective factor, providing young people a key support system to mitigate risk factors and emotional skill building to face life's stresses without substances.

The Alaska Afterschool Network then brought this robust research to established social service partners concerned with youth wellness. After years of serving on coalition workgroups and presenting at prevention summits, the Alaska Afterschool Network leveraged deep partnerships with both the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Concerned that legalizing cannabis could worsen adolescent substance misuse, advocates in Alaska positioned out-of-school time programming as an essential prevention strategy.

Strategies

- Frame afterschool as the solution to state-specific youth development concerns
- Leverage data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and metrics of success from states already implementing similar policy
- Partner with a broad coalition of social service organizations on a concerted information campaign
- Designate existing state revenue streams for afterschool

Tips/Lessons Learned

- Embrace the social-emotional skill-building capabilities of afterschool as protective factors for youth
- Present afterschool as a vital component of community education and engagement
- Foster local, long-term partnerships
- Prioritize funding for communities impacted by a history of disproportionate criminalization

Timeline

- **2014:** Alaskans vote to legalize recreational cannabis and tax it at $50 per ounce in Ballot Measure 2. Advocates of the measure point to Colorado's cannabis tax, which funds state education, as a model for Alaska.
- **2015:** HB 123 establishes the Marijuana Control Board to regulate cannabis and prepare for licensed retail by 2016.
- **2016-2017:** Alaska Afterschool Network conducts a mapping inventory of afterschool access in the state. Advocates leverage research and relationships to advocate that cannabis revenue funds afterschool prevention programming.
- **2018:** SB 104 dedicates 25% of the state's cannabis tax to the Marijuana Use Education and Treatment Fund. Half of the revenue is directed to Positive Youth Development Afterschool Grant Programs.

The Result

In 2018, the state legislature passed SB 104 to allocate 25% of the state cannabis excise tax to the Marijuana Use Education and Treatment Fund. In practice, but not in enacted language, half of the Fund is designated for afterschool programming. The 12.5% of excise tax revenue is dispersed to community-based organizations serving 5th through 8th grade students through the Positive Youth Development Afterschool Grant Program. The program is designed to increase access to recreational, educational, and skill-building enrichment opportunities that instill protective factors against substance misuse. One of the unique aspects of the legislation is the explicit mention of professional development for program staff, wherein designated funding is allocated for supporting and training out-of-school time providers on best practices. Collaboration with the DHSS proved essential, as SB 104 directs another 12.5% of the tax to their department for treatment, surveillance, and monitoring of marijuana. Municipalities have begun to levy their own cannabis excise taxes for child care and out-of-school time programming, with revenue generated at 5% in Anchorage since 2023.

What's Next

Advocates are now working to:

- Suppress legislation proposed to diminish the state excise tax on recreational cannabis
- Braid funding for the Positive Youth Development Afterschool Grants to include tax revenue from vape products or potential settlement funds from states' social media lawsuit
- Expand cannabis revenue for afterschool with a local excise tax, as implemented in Anchorage in 2023

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

Georgia Invests in Afterschool

$12.5 Million for Afterschool and Summer

Expanding state investment in afterschool and summer programs in Georgia.

The Challenge

For over 15 years, Georgia lacked dedicated state funding for afterschool and summer programs, relying instead on limited federal support that resulted in uneven access across communities. The COVID-19 pandemic initially excluded afterschool from federal relief funding, deepening challenges for programs serving working families, rural areas, and students with academic or mental health needs. In 2021, the Georgia Department of Education selected the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to lead the $85 million Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) initiative, funded by the American Rescue Plan, to expand access, reduce barriers, and improve program quality. GSAN prioritized accessibility, partnered with a third-party evaluator to measure outcomes like learning acceleration and well-being, and required grantees to track data while providing strong technical assistance to build capacity across the state.

The Opportunity

While BOOST successfully expanded afterschool and summer programs across Georgia, its funding was never intended to be permanent. Recognizing the looming 2024 funding cliff, GSAN launched a strategic advocacy campaign in fall 2023 to push for sustained state investment. They met with legislators, often alongside trusted partners like the Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCAs, and produced targeted materials, including short video segments, four-page summaries, and district-level maps showing BOOST's reach. As lawmakers began hearing consistent messages from constituents and providers, the impact of BOOST became undeniable: it improved academics, supported parents, and addressed student mental health needs. GSAN and its partners kept the pressure on throughout the session and beyond.

Strategies

- Targeted lawmakers with a clear, coordinated campaign showcasing why ongoing state funding was needed after federal relief ended
- Worked closely with trusted partners and local voices to share real stories and data about how the BOOST grant program helped kids and families
- Leveraged strong relationships to shape key policy discussions and secure a formal recommendation for state afterschool and summer funding

Lessons Learned

- Act early and define the narrative
- Clarify messaging and make it local
- Stay visible and consistent

Timeline

- **2021:** GSAN launches BOOST with the Georgia Department of Education, using $85 million in American Rescue Plan funds to support afterschool and summer programs statewide
- **2023:** GSAN launches coordinated advocacy strategy ahead of BOOST's 2024 expiration
- **2024:** GSAN presents to the legislative Study Committee on Access to Affordable Child Care, and the final report includes a recommendation for OST funding
- **2025:** Georgia legislature allocates $12.5 million in recurring state afterschool and summer funding

In summer 2024, GSAN seized another key opportunity through the Legislative Study Committee on Access to Affordable Child Care. By leveraging longstanding relationships, they helped shape the agenda for a session focused on afterschool, bringing in a rural provider to testify and connecting afterschool to broader child care and workforce goals. Their efforts paid off when the committee's final report formally recommended sustained state investment in afterschool and summer programs.

The Result

In 2025, Georgia's General Assembly made history by including $12.5 million in recurring funding for afterschool and summer programs in the FY26 budget, the state's first dedicated funding stream for afterschool and summer learning. Built on the proven pillars of BOOST—expanding access, reducing barriers, and improving quality—this new investment ensures continued support for programs launched or expanded with federal relief funds. Thanks to GSAN's leadership and the advocacy of program leaders, parents, and students, a temporary initiative became a lasting public commitment— marking a permanent shift in how Georgia prioritizes afterschool programming.

What's Next

With Georgia's first-ever recurring state investment in afterschool and summer programs secured, GSAN and its partners are focused on building on this momentum to strengthen, scale, and sustain the field statewide.

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

Michigan Invests in Afterschool

$75 million for afterschool and summer learning programs

Michigan has steadily increased its investment in afterschool for five consecutive years, with $75 million awarded for the 32n Out-of-School Time Grant Program in FY2026.

The Challenge

Michigan has never had enough afterschool or summer learning programs for all the families who want and need them. Statewide, 5 in 6 youth whose parents want to enroll them were missing out because programs are unavailable, too expensive, or inaccessible.

While the unmet demand among families continued to grow, so too has a strong network of afterschool supporters led by the Michigan Afterschool Partnership (MASP) that's urging leaders to step up and close the gap.

The Opportunity

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MASP made a strong case for investing in afterschool and summer learning programs to address student learning loss and the increasing demand for care among families with children in grades K-8. In 2021, Michigan leaders responded by using $5 million in American Rescue Plan funding and $5 million in state funds to help more families access programs. This marked the first-ever dedicated funding in the state budget for afterschool and summer learning programs. The momentum created a critical opportunity for MASP to share data about the power of afterschool with lawmakers and push for a sustainable funding solution.

Seeing the need in communities, the state increased funding to $25 million in 2022. MASP worked closely with Governor Whitmer's office and the Michigan Department of Education to create the 32n Out-of-School Time Grant Program to "improve school attendance, academic outcomes, positive behaviors, and skill acquisition of Michigan's K–12 students." A combination of state staff and MASP staff who are housed at the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) continue to manage and oversee the grants today.

Strategies

- Collect data to make the case for change and inform promising solutions
- Identify and educate champions about how afterschool supports state priorities
- Coordinate communications across your entire network

Timeline

- **2021:** Governor Whitmer and the Michigan legislature approve $10 million in the state budget for afterschool and summer learning, the state's first-ever investment
- **2022:** Michigan increases its investment to $25 million and establishes the 32n Out-of-School Time Grant Program to expand access to afterschool and summer learning opportunities. MASP conducts listening sessions with 200+ providers and advocates to learn about challenges and opportunities for strengthening the afterschool system
- **2023:** Michigan doubles its investment in the 32n Out-of-School Time Grant Program to $50 million. Governor Whitmer creates MiLEAP (the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential) by executive order. MASP works with the Michigan Department of Education and MiLEAP to convene the Michigan Out-of-School Time (MOST) Committee to develop recommendations for equitable state funding strategies
- **2024:** Michigan increases its investment in the 32n Out-of-School Time Grant Program to $57 million. MASP launches a statewide public awareness campaign: *All in Michigan: Afterschool for Every Child*
- **2025:** Michigan increases its investment in the 32n Out-of-School Time Grant Program to $75 million

Each year, MASP collects data about the impact of 32n and mobilizes advocates to educate decision-makers about how programs help students improve their grades, keep young people safe, and help parents work. The MASP team organized Capitol Day events that draw 300+ youth and providers, legislative site visits, and youth-led advocacy work to show leaders how programs help young people succeed in school, build life skills, and make a difference in their communities. Support for the grant program continued to grow and Michigan lawmakers increased the state's investment—to $50 million in 2023 and $57 million in 2024—to reach and serve more students, especially those in under-resourced neighborhoods. In 2024, MASP and its partners launched a statewide public awareness campaign to build support for a universal afterschool and summer system. The campaign, *All in Michigan: Afterschool for Every Child*, engaged nearly 1,200 champions and earned more than 10 million impressions on social media in its first year.

These achievements reflect MASP's years of careful work to build public and private partnerships and strong relationships with providers across the state. MASP has grown its network into a powerful statewide grassroots coalition that is equipped and ready to make afterschool opportunities available for every Michigan youth.

The Result

Michigan has steadily increased its investment in afterschool over five consecutive years. In FY2026, state leaders approved $75 million for the 32n grant program under MiLEAP. Data from FY2025 show that more than 56,000 Michigan students benefited from 32n-funded programs that offered literacy, workforce development, tutoring, career and technical education, STEM learning, and more.

What's Next

MASP is working alongside partners to create the *Michigan Afterschool Council*, a collaborative effort to define and fund a statewide universal afterschool and summer system.

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 sunsetting 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

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

New Mexico Invests in Afterschool

$20 million for out-of-school time

New Mexico dedicates funds for afterschool and summer programs in state budget

The Challenge

More than 3 in 4 New Mexico students whose families wanted afterschool programs could not access them—a gap driven by limited funding, not limited interest. For years, the state lacked any dedicated funding stream for afterschool and summer programs. A 2019 state investment allowed some districts to opt into extended learning programming, including afterschool programs, but it was far from enough to meet the need.

Meanwhile, a landmark court ruling was reshaping the policy landscape. In 2018, a district judge ruled in Martinez-Yazzie vs. New Mexico that the state had failed to provide sufficient access to quality instruction for students, particularly those at risk. The ruling specifically cited inadequate afterschool, summer, and extended learning opportunities. The court mandated that the Public Education Department (PED) develop a reform plan.

The Opportunity

Two forces created an opening for advocates. First, the Martinez-Yazzie lawsuit put the state on notice: New Mexico had a legal obligation to address education gaps, and afterschool and summer programs were part of the answer. Second, $6 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) pandemic relief funds directed to out-of-school time (OST) programs gave advocates real evidence of what a dedicated investment could accomplish—and a sense of urgency. Since pandemic ARP funds were temporary, advocates knew they needed to replace them with permanent state funding before the money ran out.

Strategies

- Mobilize communities affected by accessibility and inequity of state's youth services
- Engage stakeholders through in-person and virtual roundtables alongside public officials
- Develop communication strategy to raise awareness
- Frame out-of-school time as a solution to statewide priorities

Timeline

- **2018-2019:** Martinez-Yazzie vs. New Mexico finds that New Mexico has failed to equitably provide its students a quality public education. NM SB1 creates the Public Education Reform Fund to address inadequacies outlined by the ruling.
- **2019:** Lt. Governor Howie Morales, newly elected after a career in education, becomes a strong ally to the New Mexico Out-of-School Time Network (NMOST) and afterschool programs.
- **2020-2021:** NMOST champions legislation to allocate $2 million in state funding to afterschool and summer programs, but efforts stall. $6 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) pandemic relief funds are directed to afterschool and summer.
- **2022:** Ahead of state budget negotiations, Lt. Governor Morales, allied representatives, and NMOST employ a targeted campaign to build support and communicate the positive impact of ARP funding for afterschool and summer to state legislators.
- **2023:** FY24 state budget dedicates $10 million for afterschool and summer learning, with another $10 million for tutoring.
- **2024-25:** FY25 and FY26 state budgets each dedicate $15 million for afterschool and summer programs.
- **2026:** FY27 state budget includes $20 million for afterschool and summer programs.

Building a case for investments is stronger with a champion inside government, and NMOST found one in Lt. Governor Howie Morales. Elected in 2018 after a career in education, Morales understood afterschool's value and was willing to use his platform to make the case. Together, NMOST and Lt. Governor Morales hosted roundtable discussions in 2019–2020, bringing lawmakers and community leaders face-to-face with the programs and families that stood to benefit.

That groundwork translated into legislative action, but progress was not immediate. State representatives Bill Tallman and Tara Lujan introduced bills to allocate $2 million in state funds to OST programs in 2020 (HB 112) and 2021 (HB 247/SB 206). Both bills stalled in committee without advancing to a vote. Rather than retreat, NMOST and its allies kept building their case. They used local op-eds and story maps to keep afterschool visible in public conversations, and leaned on independent research: evaluations from New Mexico State University's research center consistently showed that students in 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) programs improved their grades in math and reading. The data mattered. By 2022, with ARP funds set to expire in 2024, Lt. Governor Morales and allied legislators launched a targeted campaign to show lawmakers exactly what was at stake—and what had already been proven possible. That combination of relationships, data-driven communications, and legal pressure finally moved the needle.

The Result

In 2023, New Mexico made history: for the first time, the state legislature dedicated funding specifically for afterschool and summer learning programs, providing $10 million in the fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget. The investment was framed as a key strategy for addressing post-pandemic youth wellness. It was the beginning of a sustained investment arc. The FY25 and FY26 budgets each allocated $15 million, and the FY27 budget increased that commitment to $20 million. The Martinez-Yazzie lawsuit continued to reinforce advocates' position: in April 2025, a judge required the PED to submit an updated reform plan, and the action plan released in November 2025 named OST programs as a key component to address the educational inequities identified in the lawsuit. New Mexico's advocates had not only won dedicated funding: they had secured a place for OST programs in the state's broader commitment to educational equity.

What's Next

Advocates are now working to:

- Establish permanent, dedicated funding for out-of-school time programs
- Ensure afterschool and summer learning remain key interventions in the state's reform plans to address Martinez-Yazzie
- Position afterschool programs as partners for the state's new "mixed-delivery system" of universal child care, which relies on community-based providers

NMOST
New Mexico Out-of-School Time
NETWORK

Afterschool Alliance

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**

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STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

New York Invests in Afterschool

$116 million for the Learning and Enrichment Afterschool Program Supports grant in FY26-27

The Challenge

New York has a long history of out-of-school time (OST) investment, dating back to its introduction of the Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention program in 1996. However, budget austerity, caused by the Great Recession, suppressed OST funding for years. While New York incrementally reinvested in the Advantage After School program beginning in 2015 after years of legislative advocacy, OST funding remained below its pre-recession level. Unmet demand for programs continued to rise. Nearly 50% of New York children would have participated in an afterschool program if one were available to them, according to *America After 3PM.*

The Opportunity

The New York State Network for Youth Success invested in grassroots coalition building, launching the Power of 3:00 public awareness campaign and hiring two staff members to lead the grassroots organizing efforts across the state. The Power of 3:00 campaign focused on three benefits that afterschool programs can provide to the state—supporting working families, improving academic and social development of young people, and providing a safe environment during peak hours of juvenile crime. The network drew on messaging research conducted by national partners, as well as the concerns that legislators and state leaders had raised in previous sessions. The campaign took advantage of an existing structure of regional networks to train advocates to connect the benefits of afterschool to the priorities of lawmakers in the state. The network also secured media placements with influential local and statewide outlets.

Strategies

- Cultivate grassroots support through an ambassador program
- Work with legislative champions to draft and introduce legislation
- Leverage media placements, webinars, and roundtables to elevate public awareness through a statewide communications campaign

Timeline

- **2009:** The primary fund for OST in New York, Advantage After School, peaks at $28M.
- **2015:** After years of cuts, Advantage After School funding is increased for the first time since 2009, bringing the total to $19.25M.
- **2016:** The network launches the Power of 3:00 campaign to promote the impact of afterschool and unmet demand for programs.
- **2017:** Governor Cuomo's budget proposal introduces a new $35M funding stream (Empire State After School) to provide high-quality programming to high-need districts. The Power of 3:00 Ambassador program launches to cultivate grassroots advocates focused on funding sufficient to meet demand.
- **2020:** After years of incremental increases, Advantage After School is funded at $33M and Empire State After School (ESAP) is funded at $55M.
- **2021:** Legislative champions continue to advocate to raise the per student allocation awarded to ESAP grantees. This legislation (A7881/S6750) raises awareness of the barriers to quality programming imposed by current grant structures.
- **2023:** The state convenes a task force to solicit funding recommendations from the field. Funding for afterschool programs remains stable in the budget, but language is included to conduct a Universal Afterschool Feasibility study.
- **2024:** Advantage After School and ESAP are merged into one grant program, Learning and Enrichment Afterschool Program Supports (LEAPS), and funded at $97.5M, a $9.5M increase over the previous year.
- **2025-2026:** After receiving $112.2M in FY25-26, LEAPS is funded at $116 million in the FY26-27 budget.

Hoping to create momentum from the 2015 increase to Advantage After School funding, the expanding coalition campaigned for investment that would match demand. Governor Cuomo proposed a new $35 million Empire State Afterschool Program (ESAP) in his 2017 State of the State address, which was approved in the final budget. Targeting under-resourced counties, the ESAP grants aimed to provide afterschool access to an additional 22,000 students. Between 2017 and 2020, the network continued to deliver advocacy training to afterschool providers across the state. The Power of 3:00 Ambassador program trained 44 grassroots ambassadors and network webinars minted new advocates.

After years of incremental increases, New York appropriated a total of $88 million through Advantage After School and ESAP in the FY19 state budget. Despite historic investment in OST, grant awards provided a limited amount of funds per student, presenting challenges to overall program quality. Leaning on champions in the state legislature to introduce bills that raised this amount, advocates ensured that the true cost of quality OST remained on the political agenda year after year.

To streamline program administration at the state level and ease the application process for the afterschool field, the state network convened a Public Funding Taskforce to solicit input on public funding RFPs, grant implementation, and data collection on grant activities. Between 2021 and 2024, many providers chose to return state funding rather than brave the administrative challenges caused by New York's divergent grant requirements and cycles. The task force produced recommendations on the components of afterschool grants that presented challenges to providers. The task force recommendations not only inspired policymakers to prepare for the consolidation of Advantage After School and ESAP, but also prompted a Universal Afterschool Feasibility study in the FY23-24 state budget.

The Result

The FY24-25 budget consolidated Advantage After School and ESAP into the Learning and Enrichment Afterschool Program Supports (LEAPS) program, funded at an unprecedented $97.5 million. Since the consolidation of LEAPS, state-level OST funding continues to grow. After operating at $112.2 million in FY25-26, LEAPS was funded at $116 million in the FY26-27 budget. Advocates looking to expand afterschool access further still eagerly await the forthcoming Universal Afterschool Feasibility report.

What's Next

Advocates are now working to:

- Increase funding to meet the qualified, but unfunded applications to LEAPS
- Restore OST access to middle and high school students left out of LEAPS funding
- Ensure the efforts to establish universal child care include school-age children in the full continuum

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

Pennsylvania Invests in Afterschool

$11.5 Million for Afterschool

Establishing the Building Opportunity through Out-of-School Time (BOOST) initiative, Pennsylvania's first dedicated investment in afterschool programs.

The Challenge

Pennsylvania's afterschool and summer programs have primarily relied on funding from school district budgets; federal grants, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers; and philanthropy. Understanding the limitations of this funding structure, advocates identified dedicated state funding for afterschool as a need for the field and began mobilizing toward this goal. Partners—including Allegheny Partners for Out-of-School Time (APOST), Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool and Youth Development Network (PSAYDN), Schools and Homes in Education Afterschool program (SHINE), and Sunrise of Philadelphia—built strong relationships with lawmakers, elevated community voices, and organized public engagement through events like *Lights On Afterschool* and legislative site visits. Their efforts led to the creation of the bipartisan Afterschool Caucus in the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 2015, which coordinated visits to programs like SHINE and amplified the field's value. In 2016, the Afterschool Caucus released a white paper regarding the value of out-of-school time (OST) programs to Pennsylvania's young people, families, communities, and economy. That same year, a Legislative Budget and Finance Committee report recommended the development of a statewide afterschool data infrastructure, marking a key step toward long-term policy support.

The Opportunity

From 2016 to 2018, Pennsylvania's Afterschool Caucus remained active by hosting events on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), issuing policy recommendations, and organizing site visits, coding demonstrations, and receptions to showcase afterschool's impact on education and workforce readiness. In 2018, advocates began laying the groundwork for a state return-on-investment (ROI) study. Leaders like Laura Saccente of PSAYDN testified before policymakers to emphasize the role of afterschool programs in STEM learning and workforce development.

Strategies

- Established a bipartisan Afterschool Caucus to develop afterschool champions in the state legislature
- Used data, storytelling, and site visits to show the impact and unmet need for afterschool programs
- Adapted messaging to match political priorities, helping secure bipartisan support and budget inclusion

Lessons Learned

- Long-term relationship building pays off
- Align with broader policy priorities
- Sustained advocacy is essential

Timeline

- **2015:** Bipartisan Afterschool Caucus established in the General Assembly to formally support afterschool policy and investment
- **2016:** A Legislative Budget and Finance Committee Report recommends exploring a statewide afterschool data infrastructure
- **2019:** House Resolution 180 passes, directing the Joint State Government Commission to commission a return-on-investment study
- **2021:** ROI study released; Rep. Schlossberg introduces HB 2429
- **2022-2023:** BOOST legislation passes in the House but fails in the Senate both years
- **2024:** Governor Shapiro includes $11.5 million for BOOST in his proposed budget; BOOST is included in the final budget passed in July 2024

This effort led to the passage of House Resolution 180 in 2019, which formally commissioned the ROI study, released in 2021, showing that every $1 invested in afterschool yields a $6.69 return. In the 2021 regular session, Rep. Mike Schlossberg introduced HB 2429 to establish the Building Opportunity Through Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Grant Program and create a dedicated state funding stream. Although the bill failed, it strengthened advocacy efforts, expanded the coalition, and led to site visits and advocacy days highlighting the impact of afterschool programs on Pennsylvania's education system.

The Result

In summer 2024, the Pennsylvania General Assembly approved $11.5 million for the BOOST initiative, the state's first dedicated investment in afterschool programs, after Governor Josh Shapiro included it in his budget proposal. Lt. Governor Austin Davis helped propel the effort by framing BOOST as a public safety and youth gun violence prevention measure, reinforcing its relevance across bipartisan priorities. Behind the scenes, advocates used data, storytelling, and coordinated outreach to position BOOST as both an academic recovery strategy and a community safety solution.

What's Next

Advocates are working to:

- Scale the BOOST investment statewide
- Embed afterschool programs into state education and workforce systems
- Institutionalize data collection infrastructure across state agencies

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

Texas Invests in Afterschool

$5 Million for Afterschool

Texas' first-ever allocation of state funds for community-based afterschool programs in its biennial budget.

The Challenge

The demand for afterschool and summer programs in Texas far outpaces the supply. Until 2023, Texas had no dedicated state funding for afterschool programs. Afterschool providers across the state relied on federal support, local school district budgets, and philanthropic funding. This left significant service gaps, especially in rural communities, and limited resources for community-based organizations (CBOs). The absence of coordinated state investment prevented long-term progress.

The Opportunity

In 2019, with the passage of House Bill 3, the Texas Legislature established the Additional Days School Year (ADSY) program at the Texas Education Agency (TEA), funding summer learning through the state's public school finance formulas. ADSY took root and grew to serve a broader range of students, and made financial adjustments that enabled more districts to participate. With the success of ADSY, advocates pondered: If the state is willing to invest in summer learning through public schools, why not extend support to afterschool and summer programs offered by community-based providers?

As concerns grew about youth mental health, pandemic learning loss, and academic recovery, a window for action opened. A coalition of organizations led by the Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST) mobilized to make the case for public investment in afterschool, aligning with the state's pressing education and workforce challenges. They positioned afterschool as essential infrastructure to support students' mental health, improve academic outcomes, address chronic absenteeism, and help working families. The coalition conducted targeted outreach to legislators, spotlighted programs in specific districts, and used demographic data on youth to build compelling local cases. By personalizing the policy ask and clearly linking it to broader legislative priorities, the coalition expanded the appeal of afterschool programs across diverse constituencies.

Strategies

- Leverage positive outcomes from pilot efforts
- Frame afterschool as a solution to statewide priorities
- Execute targeted, data-driven advocacy

Tips/Lessons Learned

- Start with what the state already supports
- Connect to broad, bipartisan priorities
- Go local and personal

Timeline

- **2019:** Texas Legislature passes House Bill 3, creating the Additional Days School Year (ADSY) program supporting summer learning programs
- **2019-2020:** ADSY pilot shows positive outcomes; advocates began to position afterschool as a logical extension
- **2022-2023:** Growing concern over youth mental health and learning loss prompts TXPOST-led coalition to advocate for state afterschool funding
- **Mid-2023:** Legislature includes $5 million for community-based afterschool programs in the biennial budget

The Result

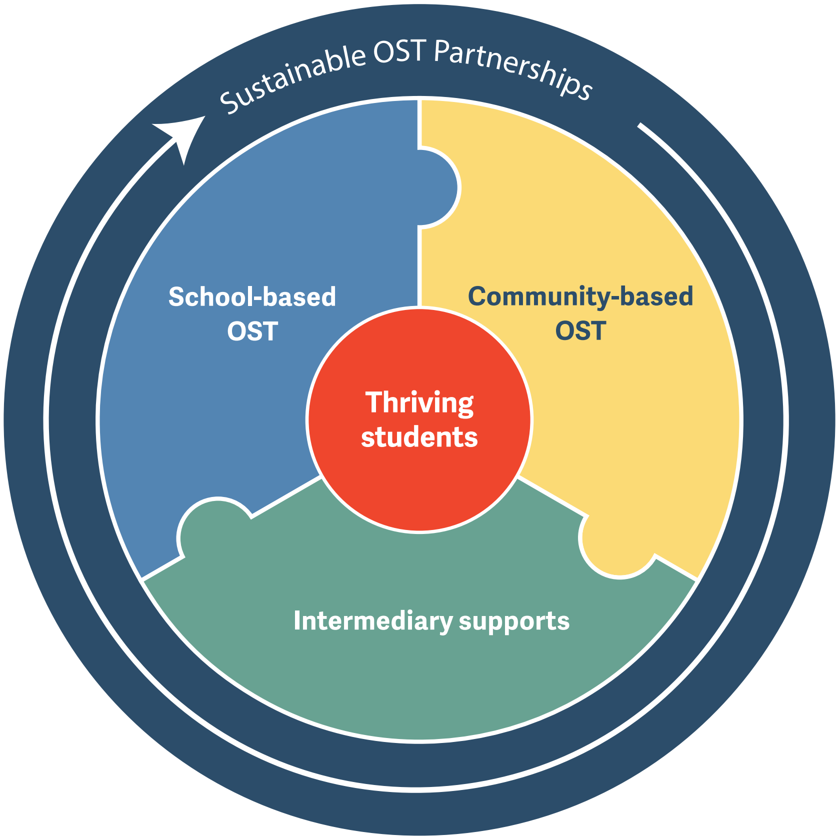
In 2023, the Texas Legislature allocated $5 million in the biennial budget ($2.5 million per year) for community-based afterschool programs, with a focus on programing that is inclusive of all provider types. This marked Texas' first direct state investment in afterschool programming. It was also the only new funding approved in Article III (Education) of the 2023 state budget, making the win even more significant. The allocation was framed around mental health and learning recovery, themes that resonated deeply with the state legislature.

What's Next

Advocates are working to:

- Expand the investments to meet the need for programs.
- Align state resources with the Texas ACE program, also known as 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants, to close geographic gaps and strengthen sustainability for CBOs.
- Develop support systems for providers currently excluded from public funding streams.
- Build a stronger data infrastructure to track participation, outcomes, and program reach.

Strategy for Texas OST Funding



STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT

Vermont Invests in Afterschool

Approximately $10 million

directed to afterschool programs annually from 6% state sales tax on cannabis

The Challenge

Data collected by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) highlighted the threat that substance misuse and suicide pose to Vermont's youth. As of 2016-2017, Vermont had the 18th highest rate of suicide in the nation and suicide was the second leading cause of death for teens. Opioid overdoses were nearly 1.5x the national average. The CDC's 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) highlighted the positive outcomes associated with afterschool participation, including decreased substance misuse and increased feelings of community belonging. Unfortunately, demand for afterschool outpaced the supply without local infrastructure or funding. As of the latest America After 3PM report, for every child enrolled in afterschool in 2014, three were waiting to get in.

The Opportunity

Vermont Afterschool, with the help of external lobbyists, leveraged the demonstrated connection between afterschool and positive youth outcomes to advocate for universal access to programming. The State Legislature recognized afterschool's vital potential for prevention in its $600,000 investment in Afterschool for All Grants, awarded between 2018-2020 from tobacco settlement funds. Vermont Afterschool, seeking a greater funding commitment, engaged in coalition building with the Marijuana Commission, Opioid Coordination Council, and Advisory Council on Child Poverty and Strengthening Families Council – each dedicated to fostering youth resilience and wellness. Vermont Afterschool also launched the Vermont Youth Project to amplify prevention efforts across the state.

Strategies

- Seek governor's support for afterschool
- Frame afterschool as the solution to state priorities
- Develop shared advocacy language when coalition building
- Prove impact with temporary funds to get traction for permanent investment

Timeline

- **2016-2017:** Concerning data captures high rates of substance misuse and suicide in Vermont. The positive outcomes of afterschool provide a vital counternarrative and avenue for youth wellness.
- **2018:** In a one-time appropriation, Vermont Legislature disburses $600,000 over three years in Afterschool for All Grants to increase access to afterschool programs as a tool of prevention and positive youth development.
- **2019:** Vermont Afterschool centers resilience and prevention in recommendations to state councils and in joint reports with the Marijuana Commission. The State Network launches the Vermont Youth Project to amplify prevention efforts and youth voices.
- **January 2020:** Governor Phil Scott announces a universal afterschool initiative as a part of his policy platform in his January State of the State address.
- **Late 2020:** In response to the Governor's call for universal afterschool, Act 154 creates the Task Force for Universal Afterschool to realize his vision. In parallel, Act 164 legalizes cannabis starting in 2022 with a 6% sales tax to fund afterschool and summer programs.
- **2021:** The Afterschool Task Force's first report recommends a structure for the cannabis-funded grant program. While waiting for legalization to begin in 2022, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds an initial attempt to scale afterschool access with the Summer Matters grants.
- **2021-2023:** To establish a cross-agency view of progress and strategy, the Interagency Afterschool Youth Task Force is convened by executive order. With this new task force's support, ARP funds expand afterschool and summer programming across Vermont.
- **2023:** Act 78 formally creates the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund to receive and disperse cannabis sales tax as grants to address the accessibility of quality afterschool in Vermont. The fund awards about $10 million in FY24.

In response, Governor Phil Scott announced in 2020 his intention to scale state funding to accommodate universal access to afterschool programs. To actualize the Governor's State of the State promises, the State Legislature created the Afterschool Task Force in Act 154. The legislation suggests that the Afterschool Task Force consider cannabis taxation as a revenue stream and Vermont Afterschool mobilizes allies to that end. Subsequently, the 2020 legalization of cannabis in Act 164 includes a provision to direct a 6% sales tax into afterschool programming.

The Result

As of 2020, the Legislature facilitated sustainable funding for afterschool with the forthcoming legalization of cannabis. The Task Force for Universal Afterschool, with input from Vermont Afterschool, collaborated to conceptualize a cannabis-funded grant program ahead of retail sale in 2022. In the meantime, Vermont worked to direct nearly $10 million from COVID-19 federal relief funds to afterschool programs to prove impact and begin scaling towards universal access. Proposal requests exceeded $25 million collectively, indicating unmet demand. According to the latest America After 3PM report, there were two children waiting for afterschool access for every child enrolled. The Governor issued Executive Order 08-21 to form the Interagency Afterschool Youth Task Force, responsible for facilitating the federal relief grant programs and advising on the creation of a new cannabis-funded grant program for afterschool. Finally, Act 78 established the Universal Afterschool and Summer Special Fund to disperse the state's cannabis sales tax in grants beginning in 2024. This dedicated funding stream characterizes afterschool as essential to positive youth development and prevention, necessitating universal access to quality afterschool. In FY24, the Afterschool and Summer Special Fund awarded $10 million in grants.

What's Next

Advocates are now working to:

- Address data capacity and bureaucratic challenges that come with scaling to universal afterschool
- Source other sustainable funding streams to supplement cannabis sales tax contribution
- Develop quality index to ensure that the state is guaranteeing not just access but quality enrichment through afterschool