Uncertain Times 2012—New Jersey
Afterschool Programs Still Struggling in Today's Economy

Afterschool programs provide a lifeline for families and communities across the nation, providing a safe and supervised space for kids to engage in creative, educational activities with caring adults and mentors. But a rocky economic climate and tightened budgets at the local, state and federal levels have put these programs at risk.

Uncertain Times 2012, conducted between April 25 and June 8, 2012, is the third installment of the Afterschool Alliance's *Uncertain Times* survey series that assesses the impact of economic conditions on afterschool programs. While many studies have evaluated the impact of programs, *Uncertain Times* is the only research to examine the fiscal health of afterschool programs and their ability to meet the needs of their communities. Based on 1,012 survey responses, the national report finds that afterschool programs are struggling to meet the needs of children and families in their communities, as they face shrinking resources and dismal prospects for new support. Hardest hit are programs serving disadvantaged communities—the very population that has the most to gain from afterschool and summer programs.

In New Jersey, afterschool programs are experiencing the effects of a challenging economy but are faring slightly better than afterschool programs nationally. Based on responses from 74 program providers—of which 42 percent are located in urban communities, 54 percent in suburban communities and 13 percent in rural communities—New Jersey afterschool programs overwhelmingly agree there are children in their communities that need afterschool programs but are unable to access them. In addition, New Jersey afterschool programs are also serving a high needs population—an average of 52 percent of children served qualify for free or reduced price lunch, 13 percent have special needs or learning differences and 8 percent are Limited English Proficient.

Afterschool programs serve as a safety net for communities that are struggling: helping kids stay away from risky behaviors, keeping kids in school, contributing to students' academic success and providing peace of mind to working families.[i] In New Jersey, 98 percent of afterschool providers report that their communities are deeply affected by the tough economic times, and almost 4 in 10 say that their budget is inadequate to meet the needs of their communities.

Key data for New Jersey include:[ii]

CURRENT BUDGET

	New Jersey	National	Difference
My program's budget is in worse shape today than it was at the height of the recession	26%	39%	↓13
My program's funding is down a little or a lot from three years ago	45%	62%	↓17
My program's budget is inadequate to meet the needs of the community	39%	57%	↓18

PROGRAM SERVICES

	New Jersey	National	Difference
Children in the community need afterschool care, but are unable to access it	82%	88%	↓6
My program would need to at least double its capacity to meet the needs of all kids in the community	20%	24%	↓4
Loss of funding caused major cutbacks or shut down sites	11%	16%	↓5

> Top three changes New Jersey afterschool programs instituted due to a loss of funding or budget stagnation:
>
> 1. Fee increase
> 2. Staff layoffs
> 3. Variety of activities reduced

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

	New Jersey	National	Difference
The challenging economic climate is affecting my community	98%	97%	↑1
The community is showing very little signs of recovering from the economic recession	48%	55%	↓7

FUTURE OUTLOOK

	New Jersey	National	Difference
The challenging economic climate will affect my program during the 2012-2013 school year	82%	85%	↓3
My program's funding for the next 1-2 years is less than secure	44%	61%	↓17
My program's funding for the next 3-5 years is less than secure	62%	81%	↓19

[i] The Afterschool Alliance. (2012). *Afterschool Essentials: Research and Polling*. Retrieved from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/2012/Essentials_4_20_12_FINAL.pdf
[ii] Percentages are based on afterschool program providers who agree with the following statements.