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