



## Uncertain Times 2009: Recession Imperiling Rural Afterschool Programs and the Children They Serve

What has been the effect of a faltering economy, state and local budget cuts and stagnant funding on afterschool programs and the youth and families that they serve? The Afterschool Alliance's new national survey of afterschool providers, *Uncertain Times 2009*, offers answers.

From April 9, 2009 to May 7, 2009 the Afterschool Alliance surveyed afterschool programs on how the economy is affecting their programs and communities. 1,447 programs responded to the survey, representing 8,587 afterschool sites serving more than 1.2 million children. Leaders at 489 rural programs were among the respondents.

Overall, rural program leaders report that they are serving a high need population, struggling to maintain their funding and are worried about how the recession will affect future funding. Nearly all respondents to this web-based survey say that more children in their communities could benefit from afterschool programs, if programs were available.

### Key Findings for Rural Afterschool Programs:

- Rural afterschool programs are serving a high need population. On average, 62 percent of kids at rural programs qualify for free/reduced price lunch (compared to 67 percent of students at afterschool programs overall). Eleven percent of students at rural programs are Limited English Proficient and 11 percent have special needs/disabilities.
- 95 percent of program leaders in rural areas, as well as nationwide, report that the recession is affecting their communities, and 6 in 10 say it is "very much" affecting their community.
- Following the national trend, unemployment, failing/shrinking businesses and high food prices are top ways rural communities are affected by the recession. Rural programs also reported their communities being greatly affected by high gas prices.
- About 5 in 10 rural programs report a loss in funding due to the recession, slightly less than the 6 in 10 nationally. One in ten of both sets of respondents report that their programs have experienced a significant loss that will cause cutbacks to the program, or cause one or more sites to close.
- Nearly half of rural program leaders (46 percent) report that their budget is inadequate to meet the needs of students and families. Nationally, 47.4 percent report inadequate funds - virtually the same percentage.
- 62 percent of rural programs, as well as those in the national survey, report that funding is down from 2 years ago.



# Afterschool Alliance

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- 9 in 10 programs in rural areas (89 percent) and nationwide expect the recession to impact their programs in the 2009-2010 school year. One-third of rural programs (35 percent) expect the recession to “very much” affect their program.
- Rural programs are seeing the same prospects for future funding as programs across the nation. 69 percent report that funding is less than secure for the next 1 to 2 years. Eighty-five percent of rural programs report funding is not secure for the next 3 to 5 years - virtually the same as the 83 percent of national respondents who said the same.
- 83 percent of respondents in rural communities say more kids need afterschool; nationally, 85 percent say kids need more afterschool in their communities.
- 81 percent of rural programs offer summer programs and 43 percent expect enrollment to be higher in summer 2009 than the year before. Nationwide, 42 percent of programs expect summer enrollment to be higher.
- 3 in 10 rural programs (29 percent) say they would need to at least double capacity to serve all the kids in their community who need afterschool, as did nearly one-third of national respondents.
- Rural programs report the same top significant barriers to participation as programs across the nation: fees and transportation.

In sum, *Uncertain Times 2009* finds that –in rural communities and across the nation – many afterschool programs, and therefore many kids and families, are feeling the effects of the recession and expect that to worsen next year.

*Methodology: Uncertain Times 2009 used web-based survey software. The Afterschool Alliance emailed a link to the survey to more than 10,000 contacts in its database in April 2009. Recipients were encouraged to forward the survey to afterschool program staff, and programs were asked to be certain that only one person per program completed the survey and to provide responses from a site-level coordinator when possible. Nationally, 1,834 responses were reviewed. 387 of them did not provide sufficient data to be included in the final analysis or were duplicate responses. Therefore, the final national sample was 1,447 responses which represent approximately 8,587 afterschool sites serving more than 1.2 million children. (Many respondents are responsible for multiple sites.)*