

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP FOR AFTERSCHOOL

Citywide Approaches Spreading Across the Country

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Commissioned by



About the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC).

NLC is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal government throughout the United States. Its mission is to strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance.

The YEF Institute helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth. Through the YEF Institute, municipal officials and other community leaders have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools, including:

- Action kits that offer a menu of practical steps that officials can take to address key problems or challenges.
- Technical assistance projects in selected communities.
- Peer networks and learning communities focused on specific program areas.
- The National Summit on Your City's Families and other workshops, training sessions, and cross-site meetings.
- Targeted research and periodic surveys of local officials.
- The YEF Institute's website, audioconferences, and e-mail listservs.

To learn more about these tools and other aspects of the YEF Institute's work, go to www.nlc.org/iyef.

About The Wallace Foundation

The Wallace Foundation is an independent, national foundation dedicated to supporting and sharing effective ideas and practices that expand learning and enrichment opportunities for all people. Its three current objectives are: strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement; enhancing out-of-school learning opportunities; and building appreciation and demand for the arts. More information and research on these and other related topics can be found at www.wallacefoundation.org.

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NLC would like to acknowledge the mayors and other elected officials representing the 27 cities featured in this report for their leadership in building citywide systems that expand access to high-quality out-of-school time opportunities for children and youth. We would also like to thank the municipal staff and other local partners in these communities who contributed to this report by participating in surveys and in-depth interviews and who have made tireless efforts to improve outcomes for young people in their cities.

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This report presents the broadest look yet at a growing trend in America's cities: the emergence of city-led efforts to build comprehensive afterschool and out-of-school time (OST) systems that meet the needs of children and youth in their communities. Mayors and other municipal officials who have demonstrated leadership in this area are increasingly linking isolated programs within more coordinated citywide networks, bringing disparate stakeholders together to create and advance common strategies, and using research-based approaches to improve program quality and access.

In preparing the report, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, the National League of Cities (NLC) identified 27 cities – from Philadelphia to Portland, Ore., and Bridgeport, Conn., to Jacksonville, Fla. – that have made impressive strides in the development of citywide OST systems. Staff from NLC's Institute for Youth, Education and Families surveyed and interviewed representatives from each city to understand more fully the nature and pace of change within these communities. The descriptive city profiles generated through this research provide a rich portrait of what progress looks like in these leading cities, some of which have been engaged in OST system-building initiatives for only a few years while others have labored for as long as a decade to achieve their current results. Examples of local progress include:

- Louisville, Ky., where the city, school district and local United Way have developed YouthPrint – a comprehensive blueprint for increasing youth participation in high-quality OST programs that builds on Louisville's pioneering use of the KidTrax data system and advances citywide efforts to boost educational attainment;
- Portland, Ore., where OST programs are a key component of a system of community schools and an emerging “cradle-to-career” framework of educational support for the city's children and youth;
- St. Paul, Minn., where a new OST network called Sprockets grew out of a mayoral initiative to promote out-of-school learning opportunities that reinforce learning gains in the classroom;
- Nashville, Tenn., where the Nashville After Zone Alliance is adapting a successful model developed in Providence, R.I., in which a balanced menu of high-quality afterschool enrichment activities are organized within different geographic zones of the city;
- St. Louis, Mo., where the mayor's vocal support for afterschool has bolstered and drawn attention to the St. Louis After School for All Partnership's success in creating 3,200 new program slots for children and youth.

Why are cities paying more attention to the needs of children and families during the afterschool hours? Afterschool and other OST programs can help city leaders confront pressing local challenges such as public safety, while also providing young people with expanded opportunities to learn and grow. More than 15 million – one in four – children and youth in the U.S. are on their own after school, either at home unsupervised without any structured activities or just “hanging out.”

High-quality afterschool programs have been shown to increase school attendance, raise graduation rates and reduce the likelihood that young people will smoke, drink, use drugs or become teen parents. Quality afterschool programs also address the needs of working parents who cannot pick up their children at 3:00 p.m., and increase their productivity at work. Furthermore, OST programs help cities reduce juvenile crime, promote healthy lifestyles and address childhood obesity, and build an educated and skilled workforce. In short, OST programs make a real, measurable difference in the lives of children, families, and communities. Polling data suggest that the parents of more than 18 million children who are not currently participating in afterschool programs would send their children to a program if one were available.

Recent efforts to enhance local data capacity have helped shed light on the benefits of creating or expanding a high-quality, citywide OST system. For example, equipped with the ability to track data on student participation across programs and match the data with school district information, local officials in Denver found a positive correlation between regular OST participation and school attendance and achievement. Louisville has seen reading scores improve for students attending OST programs at least two days per week. Other communities, such as Grand Rapids, Mich., have experienced a reduction in the number of juvenile offenders and offenses with more youth positively engaged and off the streets during the out-of-school hours. With continued improvement in the data and evaluation tools available to cities, the emerging body of evidence on the positive impact of OST programs is likely to grow.

In response to these community needs and opportunities, many cities have taken action through changes in policy, partnerships, and funding practices that support the growth of OST systems. Their actions have been aided by national foundations and organizations, the federal government and state and local partners. Since 2001, NLC has provided technical assistance to dozens of individual cities seeking to strengthen their afterschool and OST system-building efforts, sharing examples of successful city strategies and building robust venues for peer learning. The growth of federal funding provided through 21st Century Community Learning Center grants during the past decade has helped cities increase program slots and partner with schools and community-based organizations. Perhaps most important, resources provided by cities, parents, nonprofits, and local philanthropies have made a big difference in meeting local demand for OST programs.

This report highlights in great detail many of the exciting developments associated with recent city-level, OST system-building efforts. The progress and innovation reflected in these research findings offer further evidence that cities continue to drive many of the current efforts to expand high-quality OST opportunities, and that they are likely to continue to do so in the years ahead.

Key Findings

During the past decade, more than two dozen cities with committed mayoral leadership have made a fundamental shift in their approach to the development of out-of-school time opportunities for children and youth, moving from managing or funding individual programs to building more comprehensive afterschool systems that engage city, school, and nonprofit providers in their communities.

The 27 cities profiled in this report can be considered to have reached an advanced stage in the development of their citywide OST systems.¹ Each of these cities has made progress on six “action elements” defined as central to the sustainability of a coordinated OST approach in The Wallace Foundation’s report, *A Place to Grow and Learn: A Citywide Approach to Building and Sustaining Out-of-School Time Learning Opportunities*:

- **Committed leadership**, including top political, school, community and OST leaders, to secure funding and other resources and shape policies;
- **A public or private coordinating entity** to manage the development of plans, link disparate OST players, build citywide attention and support for OST, and ensure that plans and performance stay on track;
- **Multi-year planning** to set goals and priorities, develop ways to hold key players accountable for results and identify necessary resources;
- **Reliable information** to document the needs and wishes of parents and children, track participation and identify underserved neighborhoods and families;
- **Expanding participation** to reach more children and ensure that they attend often enough to benefit; and
- **A commitment to quality** because quality programs are most likely to benefit children and therefore scarce OST funding should be directed to delivering high-quality programming.

At least 20 additional cities are poised to pursue this more comprehensive approach, with evidence of strong support among the mayor and city council for such a strategy, and many more have expressed interest in learning how to get started. Among leading cities, mayoral leadership has been a key factor in driving local progress. Given cities’ momentum and interest in maximizing opportunities for youth development during the afterschool hours, the push toward citywide OST systems appears likely to continue.

The great majority of leading cities that are building afterschool systems have used data-driven analyses of community needs – including a thorough assessment of current supply of and demand for programs across all neighborhoods – as a key starting point for their efforts.

Twenty-four of the 27 cities surveyed for this report have used data from multiple sources to map OST programs throughout their communities. For example, mapping efforts in Boise, Idaho, and Rochester, N.Y., led to the creation of fully-equipped mobile recreation vans, which set up outdoor recreation centers in underserved areas of the city. The vans provide recreation services, address transportation

¹ These cities are Alexandria, Va.; Atlanta, Ga.; Baltimore, Md.; Boise, Idaho; Bridgeport, Conn.; Charlotte, N.C.; Charleston, S.C.; Cleveland, Ohio; Denver, Colo.; Fort Worth, Texas; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Louisville, Ky.; Nashville, Tenn.; New Orleans, La.; Newark, N.J.; Oakland, Calif.; Omaha, Neb.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Portland, Ore.; Rochester, N.Y.; San Francisco, Calif.; Spokane, Wash.; St. Louis, Mo.; St. Paul, Minn.; Seattle, Wash.; and Tampa, Fla. This list does not include the five sites in which The Wallace Foundation has made significant investments in OST system-building: Boston, Mass.; Chicago, Ill.; New York City, N.Y.; Providence, R.I.; and Washington, D.C. These five sites are also among the most advanced in their efforts to build citywide OST systems.

barriers, and are intended to serve as a mobile “gateway” to other city services. Some cities have used their mapping data to identify gaps in programming for middle and high school students or particular demographic groups and have developed plans to meet the needs of those populations.

City leaders clearly understand that quality matters and many have taken steps to improve the quality of local programs.

More than half of the 27 cities have created or adopted local afterschool standards to ensure that OST providers can assess and improve the quality of their programs and achieve desired outcomes for youth. Twenty-one of the cities reported using a quality assessment tool to help providers evaluate their programs, and 22 cities reported offering more training opportunities to increase the knowledge and skill level of afterschool program staff.

As their efforts to build comprehensive afterschool systems deepen and mature, these leading cities have somewhat naturally gravitated to more sophisticated strategies that are designed to address more complex or deep-rooted challenges.

With all of the progress cities have made in building citywide OST systems, municipal leaders are now focusing their attention on remaining challenges that must be overcome to take their systems to the next level. For instance, to hold programs accountable to the aforementioned quality standards and accelerate implementation, cities are exploring the use of quality rating systems that tie funding to program performance. Another likely area of growth is in the development of shared management information systems (MIS) that help cities measure the impact of OST programs more effectively. Eleven cities reported using an MIS to track attendance data and, in some cases, share data with local partners, with other cities poised to create an MIS in the near future. Information systems that enable providers across a community to collect similar data and analyze the impact of programs on various outcomes will help cities make real-time adjustments to ensure that youth do not fall through the cracks. Leaders from the mayor’s office in Omaha shared a common belief that “everything else will fall into place” if the city is able to develop a stronger data system.

Despite the severe economic crisis of the past several years and the extreme pressures it has placed on municipal budgets, a surprising number of leading cities report that they continue to invest funds from city general revenues in their efforts to build citywide OST systems.

Nearly 75 percent of cities responding to the NLC survey – 20 out of 27 cities – indicated that revenues from the city’s general fund are supporting afterschool and OST initiatives. For example, the Nashville, Tenn., Metro Council appropriated \$400,000 in 2009 for the city’s neighborhood-based OST system, representing Mayor Karl Dean’s only new initiative in that year’s budget. In 2010, Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle and the Omaha City Council passed a first-time ever budget line item of \$365,000 to support afterschool opportunities. At a time when so many cities are facing very tough budget choices and often implementing deep cuts in municipal funding for key services, the continuing investment of city revenues in OST systems is quite impressive.

A difficult budget climate has also forced or encouraged city officials to seek ways of reallocating funds or improving the use of existing resources within their OST systems. For example, Mayor John Peyton and the Jacksonville, Fla., City Council redeployed more than \$40 million in reserve funds,

federal earmarks, and other department cost savings in the 2009 budget to fund the mayor's anti-crime initiative, the Jacksonville Journey. Of these resources, \$3.8 million were allotted to the Jacksonville Children's Commission to create and fully fund 15 new afterschool programs.

The transition from supporting individual afterschool programs to building more comprehensive, citywide afterschool systems is a major change to how city and community partners do business that alters perspectives, deepens local partnerships, improves the odds for sustainability, and generates momentum for long-term and continuous improvement.

When local leaders move from a narrow focus on individual afterschool programs to a larger emphasis on OST system building, discussions of city-level strategies and priorities quickly change. Across the 27 cities included in this survey, city and community leaders typically began by replicating specific models or approaches (e.g., by adopting program quality standards, using geographic information system mapping technology to analyze issues of program supply and access, or creating an inventory of OST programs or an online program locator). In other instances, they started by moving forward with concrete action steps designed to strengthen some of the basic pillars of an OST system (e.g., by raising funds to expand programming slots, cultivating leadership for OST initiatives, or establishing a citywide coalition or some form of OST coordinating entity).

Once cities get started, however, the system-building perspective often fuels further progress and drives more strategic discussions about next steps. Early analyses of community resources and needs frequently reveal troubling gaps and spark efforts among key stakeholders to fill them. Gains in areas such as committed leadership, coalition building, and quality improvements lead to deeper, more nuanced and challenging work in categories such as multi-year planning, strategies to expand participation, data collection, sharing, and management, and strengthening or formalizing coordinating entities. In each of the six critical elements of OST system building, local communities are discovering and pursuing a logical progression from initial points of entry to increasingly sophisticated approaches. The very notion of an OST "system" provides a basic framework that guides cities as they continue on their journey.