

# Supporting Student Success

A Governor's Guide to  
Extra Learning Opportunities



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# Executive Summary

**E**xtra learning opportunities (ELOs) help to ensure that children are successful in school and in life. Although before- and after-school programs have been around for decades, we are learning more about how the hours outside of school can be critical determinants of student achievement. With many forms and purposes, extra learning opportunities are a key part of many state policy efforts to support the long-term success of children, families, and communities. State policymakers increasingly recognize the important contributions that high-quality extra learning opportunities can make toward education, youth development, workforce, and prevention priorities.

Extra learning opportunities help to keep youth engaged in their schools and communities from an early age. They provide safe havens, promote positive development, and offer additional academic assistance and enrichment to students who require it. ELOs can play a crucial role in state policy efforts to improve schools, help youth develop essential workforce skills, and support families and communities. For example, high-quality ELOs can be an important strategy to close the achievement gap in reading and math.<sup>1</sup> Research also points to the impact of ELOs on outcomes that indirectly affect school achievement: positive social behaviors and attitudes, improved engagement in learning, and development of skills such as problem solving or higher-order thinking.

Research indicates that the demand for ELOs exceeds the supply. Furthermore, ELOs for low-income and minority children are limited compared to those available to their white and more affluent peers.<sup>2</sup> States struggle to ensure not only that enough programs exist but that they can effectively meet student needs.

States should tap the full potential of ELOs. Governors can employ a number of strategies to support improved ELO quantity and quality in their states:

**Make explicit connections between ELOs and related policy priorities.** For example, governors can link ELOs to high school reform efforts, build on the similarities and successes of early childhood programs, or promote healthy lifestyles through ELOs.

**Build a state policy infrastructure to support collaboration and coordination.** Governors can support the development of statewide after-school networks, improve coordination among the state agencies that oversee ELOs, and improve statewide information gathering and planning efforts.

**Coordinate funding and leverage new resources for ELOs.** Governors can help to identify how programs are currently funded and align federal and state ELO dollars where possible.

**Engage new partners to support ELOs.** Governors can use statewide summits to focus attention on, and engage new leaders to support, ELOs. They can also promote and expand public-private and school-community partnerships.

**Build an accountability system for improved ELO quality.** Governors can develop program standards, highlight and share promising practices, and build the capacity of program providers.

As governors continue to lead education progress, they can consider ELOs to help redefine time and learning, bridge schools and communities, and promote new ways to learn both in and outside the classroom. Through leadership and strategic action, governors can make use of programs in nonschool hours to boost student achievement and foster connections between schools and communities.

## Introduction



**E**LOs are not new, but the past decade has seen a renewed emphasis on their contributions to students' academic achievement and overall development. In the early 1990s, two key reports reflected growing awareness of the opportunity presented by the after-school hours and the many factors that influence student learning both in and outside of school.<sup>3</sup> In 1992, the Carnegie Corporation of New York report *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours* focused on the 40 percent of young people's time that is often unstructured, unsupervised, and unproductive.<sup>4</sup> It challenged policymakers to consider the community supports necessary to help young adolescents transition successfully to adulthood—with meaningful connections among schools, families, and communities that work in concert to ensure their success. In 1994, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning released its report *Prisoners of Time*, which remarked that the national discourse on student achievement should not be limited by the construct of time.<sup>5</sup> The commission recommended that schools respond to the individual and varied needs of students, their families, and their communities by staying open later, and even year round, as necessary.

Despite the country's efforts to improve the stark achievement gap that exists in many schools, low-income and minority children continue to struggle to meet increasingly demanding education standards. The No Child Left Behind Act created a renewed sense of urgency in states and communities to ensure that every child is academically successful. We know that one-third of the students who enter high school do not graduate; of those who do, another third do not graduate prepared for postsecondary education or the workplace.<sup>6</sup> We also know that many children spend the hours after school engaged in unsupervised and unsafe activities that put them at risk of becoming victims of crime or engaged in other risky behavior.<sup>7</sup> Polling and surveys tell us that parents, as well as most voters, want children to have safe places to go after school that provide additional avenues to learning.<sup>8</sup>

Even with the widespread support for after-school programs, the demand for ELOs exceeds the supply, predominantly for low-income youth. According to a 2004 survey of parents, as many as 15 million children need some type of after-school care.<sup>9</sup> Demand for programs is more pronounced for African American and Hispanic youth. Parents of low-income and minority youth report limited out-of-school-time options and are more likely than more affluent parents to want programs that emphasize academic learning.<sup>10</sup> States can support the improved quality and quantity of ELOs as a strategy to help all students succeed.

## What Are ELOs?

**E**xtra learning opportunities (ELOs)—often referred to as before- and after-school, summer, or out-of-school-time programs—provide youth ages five to 18 with a variety of supervised activities designed to promote learning and positive development beyond the traditional school day. ELOs come in many forms: academic support, service learning, organized sports, homework help, arts and music, tutoring, volunteering, community service, and scores of others. Examples include extracurricular activities at school or community-based programs such as 4-H and the Boys and Girls Clubs, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and school-age child care programs. ELOs can have any number of purposes for youth: improving academic performance, developing new skills, considering career or college opportunities, participating on teams, learning new problem-solving approaches, and interacting with their peers and with caring adults. High-quality ELOs have the potential to:

- ▶ *Support children and families* by providing a supervised environment during nonschool hours and offering academic, recreational, artistic, and other activities and supports that enhance student success
- ▶ *Support schools* by offering additional academic assistance to students in need, reinforcing the ways students learn and apply school content, and engaging families
- ▶ *Support communities* by preventing youth participation in crime and supporting school-community connections
- ▶ *Support state goals* to ensure students have the knowledge and skills to succeed in a knowledge-based economy





# The Promise and Potential of ELOs: What the Research Suggests

Research increasingly supports the importance of ELOs in helping children succeed academically and socially. More and more, policymakers and educators see their value in improving student achievement and supplementing the school curriculum, while offering other enriching activities. At best, ELOs do this by providing students with school-linked opportunities for social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The research is limited because of the field's relative newness and broad scope, but promising initial conclusions can be drawn from studies undertaken thus far.

**ELOs can support students' school success.** With increasing state accountability for student achievement, ELOs can be especially important to children who struggle to meet school standards and need additional help. Extra academic assistance is often a component of an ELO program, but other components can also be critical to improving student school engagement and attendance. For example, some studies have found that compared to their higher-income peers who participated in extracurricular opportunities, low-income tenth graders who spent no time in such activities were more likely to drop out of high school or be suspended.<sup>11</sup>

A number of studies have documented that regular participation in out-of-school-time programs, particularly by elementary and middle school youth, contributes to

- ▶ better school attendance;<sup>12</sup>
- ▶ improved engagement in school and learning, including improved school behavior, increased educational aspirations, and better work habits;<sup>13</sup> and
- ▶ improved achievement in math and reading, especially among low-achieving or at-risk students.<sup>14</sup>

A ten-year study of Los Angeles Better Educated Students for Tomorrow (L.A.'s BEST), which provides homework assistance, library programs, and other activities for low-income and low-performing elementary students, found

that its participants performed better on standardized tests in math, reading, and language arts and that grades in these and other subjects also improved.<sup>15</sup>

ELOs also make positive contributions to the school environment. Principals and school board presidents echo strong public support for ELOs as positive contributors to school success.<sup>16</sup> More one-on-one time between students and adults after school can unveil specific learning needs of individual students to be communicated to teachers and other school personnel. ELOs can offer schools additional flexibility by picking up—using new approaches and varied activities—where school leaves off at 3 o'clock. They can provide youth with new avenues to learning, applying and deepening concepts learned during the school day. This may be especially important when school staff face time constraints as they try to ensure that all state standards requirements are addressed. Programs also promote increased family involvement, often seen as critical to school improvement efforts.<sup>17</sup> ELOs can provide the door through which parents engage with schools and teachers. Schools may choose to include ELOs as a strategy in the parental involvement plans required by the No Child Left Behind Act. ELOs with a family involvement component have been linked to improved school achievement and completion, decreases in risky behavior, and longer-term benefits such as higher earnings, home ownership, and reduced need for welfare and other social services.<sup>18</sup>

**ELOs can support students' transitions to higher education or the workplace.** With the challenges of the changing workforce and economy, states seek to foster their students' successful transition to postsecondary education and the workplace.<sup>19</sup> To prepare for life after high school, youth require experience in decision making, complex problem solving, and leadership. ELOs can help students of all ages to develop critical "new basic skills" required to work in today's workplace—literacy and numeracy, problem solving, teamwork, oral and written communication, and technology.<sup>20</sup> They provide experiences that help youth develop new skills through activities such as service learning, job shadowing, apprenticeships, or mentoring.

## No Child Left Behind: An Increasing State Role for ELOs

Several changes to programs under the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) created important new opportunities for states.

**21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.** The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (21st CCLC)—the only federal funding source devoted explicitly to ELOs—changed from a federal-to-local funding program to a state-run competition. In 2004, states received the full \$1 billion appropriation after a three-year phase-in, with funds block granted according to each state’s population of low-income students.<sup>1</sup> Along with the transfer of the 21st CCLC to states, NCLB identified several priorities for state funding decisions. States must prioritize programs that will serve low-performing schools and low-income students, and proposals that are jointly submitted by a district and a community-based organization.<sup>2</sup> In addition, programs must now hold improving student academic outcomes as an explicit goal. The act also encourages programs to integrate education, youth development, school-age care, and related services through community partnerships. State leaders can encourage partnerships among schools, community- and faith-based organizations, and others to deliver high-impact, comprehensive services to children in their schools and neighborhoods.

**Title I Supplemental Educational Services.** Under NCLB, districts with schools that fail to achieve academic performance goals (“adequate yearly progress,” or AYP) for three consecutive years or more are required to designate a portion of the school’s Title I funds toward supplemental educational services (SES) for low-income students. Parents can use these funds to pay a supplemental service provider of their choice. To be approved by state education agencies, providers must demonstrate a record of effectiveness in increasing the academic proficiency of students. Providers must also enter into agreements with schools that specify achievement goals for each student and describe how the student’s progress will be monitored. ELOs with explicit academic components may be well-positioned to become approved providers of such supplemental educational services. Partnerships between educational or tutoring programs and after-school programs, such as 21st Century Learning Centers, can expand the reach of supplemental educational services (see discussion on page 20). The Supplemental Educational Services Quality (SESQ) monitors state SES implementation progress, approved SES providers in each state, and other information for policymakers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Information on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers is available at <<http://www.ed.gov/21stccle>>.

<sup>2</sup> States must place funding priority on programs where at least 40 percent of students are eligible for free and reduced price lunches and competitive priority for programs serving students who attend low-performing schools that do not meet adequate yearly progress standards (AYP) under NCLB. For more information, visit <<http://www.ed.gov/21stccle>>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, visit the SESQ Center at <[www.tutorsforkids.org](http://www.tutorsforkids.org)>.

ELOs can impart important workplace knowledge and skills by offering<sup>21</sup>

- small-group learning activities to develop teamwork and leadership skills;
- choice-based activities and opportunities to interact with mentors to learn about multiple fields of interest;
- venues to develop math and literacy skills in context (e.g., service learning or hands-on apprenticeships); and
- time, venues, and individual attention that allow for thinking and complex communication skills.

Many ELOs have the explicit goal of helping participants to understand postsecondary options and how to approach them. Upward Bound, a federal program of the U.S. Department of Education, seeks to increase the rates at which participants enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education. Its programs serve high school students from low-income families and students from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor’s degree.<sup>22</sup> Citizen Schools, another promising program model, connects middle school students with adult volunteers in hands-on learning to provide the tools and leadership skills they need to transition to college and successful employment. An internal evaluation found that over one academic year, the majority of participants improved not only their grades, but also improved their oral

communication skills.<sup>23</sup> The program enjoys a number of corporate sponsors, including Bank of America and Comcast.<sup>24</sup>

For high schoolers, promising programs include youth apprenticeships, community service, civic involvement and leadership opportunities, social opportunities, and skills development.<sup>25</sup> Additional attention to links between high school reform and ELOs could produce a blended and more efficient approach to school- and community-based learning opportunities, such as flexible credit for out-of-school learning.<sup>26</sup> After-school programs for older youth and high school reform have several common purposes:<sup>27</sup>

- ▶ Making learning experiences relevant through real-world opportunities for work, community service, and higher education
- ▶ Creating smaller, safer learning environments that offer individual attention and the chance to form meaningful relationships with peers and caring adults
- ▶ Giving youth a voice in their education process and providing choices to receive more personalized education
- ▶ Involving community in education

**ELOs help business and contribute to economic development.** ELOs can support state efforts to sustain and strengthen the current workforce while developing the skills of future workers. They contribute to more productive workplaces through lower rates of absence and decreased turnover—at a minimum, parents don’t spend work hours making after-school care arrangements or worrying about their children. The Parental After-School Stress Project at Brandeis University suggests that parents with the greatest concern about their children’s after-school arrangements—most often when unsupervised—report more job disruptions, more missed days of work, increased errors, and decreased productivity, which can translate to up to five extra days of missed work per year for each employee.<sup>28</sup>

Employers large and small increasingly recognize the ways that ELOs help business, and many corporations are joining the call for high-quality ELOs. Corporate Voices for Working Families, whose membership includes 47 large corporations, recently put out a call to action for government at all levels to support a system of after-school learning supports for all students.<sup>29</sup> ELOs across the country increasingly

attract business partners and their financial support. For over a decade, the American Business Collaboration, a network of more than 30 corporations, has distributed grants to after-school programs in each of its headquarters states.<sup>30</sup> Many city initiatives, such as Detroit’s Mayor’s Time, enjoy both business sponsorships and commitments from local foundations.<sup>31</sup>

**ELOs help strengthen communities by reducing crime and preventing unsafe behavior.** ELOs contribute to safer and healthier neighborhoods. ELOs keep young people learning and engaged during hours when they are most vulnerable. During the hours after school, young people are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drug use, crime, or sexual activity that threaten their futures and can weaken communities.<sup>32</sup> Some suggest that high-quality ELOs can help states reap long-term economic benefits by avoiding future costs of welfare, crime, and social supports. A 2002 study of **California’s** Afterschool Education and Safety program, for example, estimated that by reducing the costs of crime and delinquency alone, every dollar spent on after-school programs can return \$4 to \$6.<sup>33</sup>

ELOs help students become active, engaged, and well-rounded community members.<sup>34</sup> By providing youth with meaningful activities and opportunities to develop positive relationships with caring adults and their peers, ELOs can prevent risky behavior and support positive youth development outcomes, such as community involvement, confidence, conflict resolution and decision-making skills, leadership skills, and respect for diversity.<sup>35</sup>

ELOs help forge connections among parents, youth, schools, businesses, community- and faith-based organizations, and many others, all of which have a stake in the success of families and their children.

## What Do Successful ELOs Look Like?

Most agree that quality ELO programs seek to meet young peoples' academic, social, health, and other needs; allow them to develop new skills and interests; and do not "look or feel" like an extension of the regular school day. Program approaches, activities, and curricula vary significantly, just as youths have a variety of learning needs. ELOs with the explicit goal of improving school achievement *do* require a targeted and intentional academic component. Beyond homework assistance, successful programs build on and reinforce school content through a variety of activities that can encourage teamwork and/or result in a product such as a performance or written piece.<sup>36</sup>

No single formula for success exists. Researchers and practitioners believe, however, that effective programs combine academic, enrichment, cultural, and recreational activities to guide learning and engage children and youth. Effective programs, by design, also seek to meet the particular needs of the communities they serve. Beyond these conditions, high-quality ELOs share some common characteristics:<sup>37</sup>

- Effective partnerships between multiple community organizations seek to promote learning and community engagement.
- Programs place sufficient resources, including adequate compensation of qualified staff, into strong program management.
- Qualified after-school personnel and volunteers staff the programs and have regular opportunities for professional development and career advancement.
- Enriching learning opportunities for participants complement rather than duplicate school learning and use project-based learning and exploration to impart new skills and knowledge.



- Intentional links exist between school and after-school staff, so that they can coordinate and maximize the use of resources and facilities.
- Staff place appropriate attention on safety, health, and nutrition.
- Administrators and staff emphasize family involvement in participants' learning and development.
- Programs enjoy adequate and sustainable funding supports.
- Programs engage in evaluation for continuous improvement and assess their effectiveness.

No matter what their desired approach, programs must be explicit and realistic about their goals and the outcomes they will address. The after-school, child and youth development, service learning, and mentoring fields, and others, have documented effective practices to achieve an array of outcomes. For example, programs seeking to reduce risky behaviors may work toward a longer-term outcome of decreased participation in risky activities and improved social behaviors such as interaction with peers. A program that seeks to improve math skills, among other goals, may look at long-term outcomes such as improved school performance in math and/or increased use of math for complex problem solving, based on teacher surveys, math scores, or grades.<sup>38</sup> Regardless of program type, governors can help ensure that every student's potential is realized by strengthening the accessibility, variety, and quality of ELOs in states.

## The Next Phase of ELO Research

As the role of ELOs has broadened to meet the needs of youth and their families, research has also evolved. The documented benefits of ELO programs are positive, when one looks at specific fields or approaches (e.g., prevention, youth development, academic enrichment), yet exact effects vary by program purpose and goal. While the primary goals of most ELOs overlap, such as keeping children safe and providing learning activities, each program's exact approach and desired outcomes may differ (e.g., pregnancy prevention versus academic achievement). ELOs also serve a large age span, which can complicate evaluation efforts—what children under 10 need after school is not necessarily what older middle or high school students need. To date, attention and policies around ELOs have predominantly focused on the needs of elementary and middle school students. Participation in after-school programs also typically declines as youth progress in age and fewer options are available.<sup>39</sup>

Research is responding to these challenges by examining ELOs through a blend of academic and nonacademic disciplines and emphases for specific age groups. The broad scope of the programs has made it more difficult for researchers to provide consistent, sweeping conclusions on the impact of the full range of ELOs. The most recent synthesis of the literature notes documented positive effects but reminds policymakers that at this stage it may be unrealistic to rely on after-school programs alone to directly improve multiple youth outcomes, such as test scores and social behaviors.<sup>40</sup> For policymakers, this means setting realistic and measurable expectations for programs—most of which serve children less than 20 hours per week—and using evaluations to keep what works and alter activities that do not show the desired impact.

A few studies have challenged the field to identify more specifically the positive effects of ELOs on student achievement.<sup>41</sup> They focused necessary attention on the limitations described above and on the need for more targeted research and evaluation. An evaluation of the first 21st Century Community Learning Center programs sparked wide debate on the ways policymakers should use the research findings in

developing and improving policy.<sup>42</sup> In February 2003, the Department of Education released *When Schools Stay Open Late: The National Evaluation of the 21st-Century Community Learning Centers Program*, which presented results of programs that received funds through the original federal discretionary program prior to state administration of funds.<sup>43</sup> The evaluation, which has been updated in subsequent years, found modest and mixed impacts of the program on participants' academic improvement, feelings of safety, and developmental outcomes. Subsequently, new, larger-scale research studies continue to inform policy and practices by further clarifying those program elements that translate into measurable results for children.<sup>44</sup> States can play a critical role in these efforts by shaping state-level research, spearheading efforts to evaluate across programs, and increasing programs' capacities to evaluate their own efforts.



# Enhancing ELOs in States: What Governors Can Do

Governors can act in a number of ways, big and small, to support ELOs. In 1997, NGA convened researchers, policymakers, and other experts to recommend state strategies to improve and expand ELOs. Better information and the progress achieved over less than a decade have reinforced, built upon, and clarified the recommendations of the advisory committee on ELOs, informing the recommendations presented in this guide.<sup>45</sup> All of the recommendations relate to championing state partnerships and building infrastructure that supports ELOs and improves their quality, regardless of program strategy, setting, or philosophy.<sup>46</sup>

## Make explicit connections between ELOs and related policy priorities.

Governors can ensure that the relationship of ELOs to numerous policy initiatives is clearly articulated. High school reform, early childhood development, and health promotion are three examples of areas in which strategic links can be made.

**Linking ELOs to high school reform.** ELOs can be a thread of any K–12 reform strategy to boost student performance. As governors are placing renewed urgency on high school reform, *Getting It Done: Ten Steps to a Statewide Action Agenda* offers initial steps they can take.<sup>47</sup> Recommendations include challenging business, parents, communities, and others to support college awareness initiatives; expanding college-level learning opportunities; designing math and literacy recovery programs; and providing supports to help students pass high school exit exams. All are areas where existing ELOs can and do play a role in schools and communities.

In fall 2005, Governor Ernie Fletcher of **Kentucky** will host an NGA-sponsored policy summit that highlights the specific contributions of ELOs to the state's comprehensive high school reform effort. The summit will emphasize not only high school ELOs, but also those that reach elementary and middle school youth before their critical transition to secondary education. The governor and his partners seek to

coordinate and enhance the contributions of ELOs to improved learning and increased school engagement for those most at risk of dropping out.

**Building on early childhood successes.** Governors have made important strides in early childhood education and development. NGA's Task Force on School Readiness highlighted these efforts and recommended actions states can take to ensure that children enter school ready to learn. A number of the recommendations could also apply to ELOs. In fact, many leaders view ELOs as an extension of the supports students need as they enter school. In **North Carolina**, Governor Michael Easley spearheaded creation of the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NCCAP), seeing the opportunity to build an after-school system that parallels the successes of NC Smart Start, a public-private early childhood system that supports community school readiness efforts across the state.

Many of the challenges of supporting early childhood programs—including ones in various settings and of various types—reflect those experienced by ELOs: the coordination of agencies, programs, and funding streams with overlapping purposes; philosophical and turf battles; and the establishment of accountability systems that are true to program purpose, for example. Both fields overlap among education, human services, and often health initiatives that link schools, families, and communities. Not surprisingly, leaders in the field of early childhood—particularly child care administrators—often also oversee some state-funded ELO programs.

To ensure balance in attention and investments as children age, state leaders can ensure that ELOs and early childhood programs reinforce one another in philosophy, policy, and practice. Policymakers in **New Mexico** sought to design a policy agenda around needs of children at all age levels, while targeting specific places to take initial steps. To ensure balance in the age focus, the New Mexico Children's Cabinet identified high-quality preschool and out-of-school-time programming as its two priorities for the 2005 legislative session.<sup>48</sup> Doing so allowed the cabinet to publicly promote policies for all children under 18 and not focus on one age



group to the exclusion of another. The dual focus also helped to define common ground between those interested in early childhood education and those interested in ELO programs, instead of creating the potential for competition.

**Promoting healthy lifestyles through ELOs.** With increasing attention to the problem of youth obesity, many governors have crafted initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles. ELOs can support their efforts by helping students and their families engage in physical activity and learn proper nutrition. In **Vermont**, Governor Jim Douglas launched the Fit and Healthy Kids Initiative to coordinate health education and physical activity programs and to combat obesity. Seeing the important role of after-school programs in promoting physical fitness and healthy choices, he directed the Vermont Out-of-School Time Network (VOOST), a statewide after-school network (described below), to administer a portion of department of health funding that will flow to communities and ELOs.

### **Build a state policy infrastructure to support collaboration and coordination.**

One of the most important ways state leaders can promote quality ELOs is to build or strengthen a state ELO infrastructure. ELOs serve different children, hold different goals and purposes, are funded by multiple funding streams, and are run by numerous organizations such as schools, community-based organizations, and so forth. Governors can lead state efforts to connect the many players and their respective pieces of the ELO puzzle.

**Support the development of statewide after-school networks.** Governors can lead the development of statewide, public-private networks to bridge the variety of after-school philosophies and approaches, devising shared goals and policy solutions. In 2002, the C. S. Mott Foundation began providing three-year grants to states to build statewide

after-school networks that work to

- ▶ create a sustainable structure of statewide, regional, and local partnerships, particularly school-community partnerships, focused on supporting statewide policy development;
- ▶ support the development and growth of statewide policies that will secure the resources to sustain new and existing after-school programs; and
- ▶ support statewide systems to ensure that programs are of high quality.

Many of the states highlighted in this guide are among the 31 that now receive funding from the Mott Foundation to build statewide networks. The infusion of private dollars can galvanize the collaboration necessary to create streamlined policies.

A number of national partners, including the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, help states move toward good after-school policy through targeted and customized technical assistance as partners in the Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC).<sup>49</sup> ATAC partners include the Afterschool Alliance, Council of Chief State School Officers, National Conference of State Legislators, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, National League of Cities, The Finance Project, and the University of South Carolina Educational Foundation. Constituency organizations such as the NGA Center and the National League of Cities work with states where their members play an active role in after-school policy.<sup>50</sup> Other partners offer area-specific expertise. For example, The Finance Project helps states consider financing and sustainability efforts. Together, ATAC organizations represent at the national level the participants and expertise that networks should strive to incorporate in states: policy knowledge coupled with key after-school stakeholders. The Mott Foundation intends to continue funding all states that demonstrate the ability to support successful development of similar networks.<sup>51</sup>

Several governors and their advisors are active in their states' efforts to build and sustain an ELO infrastructure. In **Oregon**, Governor Ted Kulongoski's office leads the core group developing a statewide after-school network, an important strategy of the governor's Children's Charter. The Children's Charter seeks to keep children safe and healthy and ensure their successful transition to college or the workplace.<sup>52</sup> The governor's staff has been instrumental in

connecting grassroots network building to the development of a new community schools initiative. The new network is connected to several state policy initiatives in education, social services, and prevention from its outset. The governor's leadership has helped to generate the support of multiple agency heads. **Missouri** Governor Matt Blunt included \$75,000 in his FY2006 budget expressly for activities of the Missouri Afterschool State Network. The network—a partnership of multiple state agencies, state policy organizations, and others—works to provide a statewide system of after-school programs that collectively reflect best practices in education, youth development, and quality care for all Missouri students during nonschool hours. The funds were approved by the legislature in May 2005.

**Improve coordination among state agencies that oversee ELOs.** Governors can encourage inter- and intra-agency collaboration and coordination that result in better data and better use of existing ELO resources. The **North Carolina** Center for Afterschool Programs (NCCAP) is jointly led by the governor's office and the departments of education, human services, and justice. The joint effort has allowed for better coordination of a number of programs and training resources, including the state-funded Support Our Students program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and School-Age Child Care programs. The governor's education advisor is the chair of the board of NCCAP.

The **Kansas** Enrichment Network seeks to increase the quantity and quality of out-of-school-time programs through public policy, assistance to programs, evaluation, and communication efforts. Active partners include five state agencies and other public offices, including the governor's office, the Children's Cabinet, and the departments of commerce, health and environment, social and rehabilitative services, and education. Network partners, through the executive committee, determine shared policy priorities and strategies, recruit additional participants to the network, direct technical assistance, and identify and frame research needs for after-school programs in Kansas.

**Initiate statewide information-gathering and planning efforts for ELOs.** Coordinating state after-school program efforts requires a good understanding of the landscape of after-school programs—public and private—that already exist in the state before embarking on any comprehensive policy agendas. Many states and communities struggle to understand the need for, and availability of, after-school

programs in the state or how and where investments are being made.<sup>53</sup> A number of states, including **Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri,** and **New Mexico,** have passed legislation calling for information-gathering and planning activities to guide future work.<sup>54</sup>

In 2003, the **Missouri** legislature adopted a resolution creating the Joint Legislative Committee on Out-of-School Programs to review programs across the state. The resolution called on the committee to: (1) analyze the quantity and quality of Missouri after-school programs; and (2) recommend, in consultation with the departments of elementary and secondary education and social services, a plan to “provide the opportunity for every Missouri school-age child to access quality out-of-school programs and design a system to train, mentor, and support after-school programs, and thereby guarantee their sustainability.”<sup>55</sup> The resolution led to establishment of the Missouri Afterschool State Network.

In 2005, **Massachusetts** lawmakers created a special commission on after school and out of school time through legislation. The commission consists of three agency heads, partners of the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership, and other public and private members. The legislation charges the commission “to undertake a study and make recommendations on how to better coordinate, expand, finance, and improve accessible, affordable, quality out-of-school time programming for school-age children in all settings.” After the commission submits its recommendations to Governor Romney and the legislature, the 2006 ELO summit will provide the opportunity to raise the visibility of this issue. The summit will also bring additional allies to the table to support after school and extended learning opportunities for Massachusetts children and youth.

In other states, governors have signed executive orders to jumpstart the process. In 2004, **Arizona** Governor Janet Napolitano created the Statewide Youth Development Task Force by executive order to provide leadership by actively advocating for policy legislation, infrastructure and resources to support a network of comprehensive and sustainable services, programs, and opportunities for youth. The task force is charged with creating a comprehensive youth development plan for Arizona and a database of youth development organizations, reviewing relevant federal and state legislation, and reviewing federal and state dollars that go toward youth-oriented programs.<sup>56</sup>



## Comprehensive Planning with State Support: Illinois After-School Partnership

Illinois was one of the first states to call for improved cross-system information to inform state ELO strategies. In spring 2001, the Illinois General Assembly passed HR0063 establishing the Illinois After-School Initiative and Task Force, convened and co-chaired by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services.<sup>57</sup> The task force was to assess the state of after-school services in Illinois and develop recommendations for enhancing and expanding out-of-school-time services across the state. The task force presented its report to the legislature in 2002. It made 25 recommendations in five key areas: state-level interagency collaboration; capacity building; community collaboration; evaluation; and funding.

In 2002, the C. S. Mott Foundation awarded statewide after-school network funding to Illinois through the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention. Shortly thereafter, in 2003, the legislature passed a second resolution, HR0176, making the Illinois After-School Initiative permanent as the renamed Illinois After-School Partnership. The Partnership is to implement the task force recommendations, with continued leadership from the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Housed at the Illinois Center for Violence Prevention, the Partnership has working groups organized around the key recommendation areas and leads a team of state agency representatives who work to coordinate services and systems. Seeing the Partnership as a valuable after-school policy resource, Governor Rod Blagojevich's office contributed by supporting a 2004 summit to promote business involvement in after-school programs (described below).

Still other states have gathered data and information with no formal legislative or other policy mandate. In 2004, the **Washington** Afterschool Network held focus groups around the state to gather information to develop *Afterschool in Washington: A Smart, Strategic Investment*, which called for support of statewide intermediary organizations for after-school programs, improved staff training and professional development, and enhanced public awareness efforts.<sup>58</sup> In **Minnesota**, the president of the University of Minnesota partnered with the Out-of-School Time Partnership, a public-private after-school network, to sponsor the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. In 2005, the commission

released a report that recommended building support for statewide intermediary efforts, increasing communities' capacity to support programs, building public will, enhancing youth involvement, and creating an investment fund for programs to ensure that all the state's young people have and choose engaging opportunities to learn and develop.<sup>59</sup>

To improve ELO information, governors may charge existing entities, such as a children's cabinet,<sup>60</sup> to lead this work or appoint a new task force or other interagency body. Because ELOs are funded and administered by multiple state agencies, any group charged with state-level information gathering and strategic planning should have representation from all relevant agencies and offices, especially those that oversee key data. The process often also includes other participants such as policymakers, parents, youths, representatives of provider groups and schools, business leaders, and many others. In states that have them, statewide after-school networks are often a natural group to help convene and staff these planning efforts, as in **Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Rhode Island**, and many others highlighted in this guide. In 2004, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius unveiled *A Call for Quality Afterschool Programs in Kansas*, prepared by the Kansas Enrichment Network (the statewide after-school network) in conjunction with Kansas Action for Children. The report describes the existing after-school program and funding landscape and makes recommendations, including creating common after-school standards, aligning agencies and systems around after-school and youth development resources, providing flexible funding for programming, and linking after-school programs to the state's workforce and economic development strategies.<sup>61</sup>



### Coordinate funding and leverage new resources for ELOs.

ELOs are typically funded from federal, state, local, and private sources that match the variety of their purposes: education, social services, child care, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, youth development, health promotion, recreation, arts education, and many others. Over 100 federal programs have the potential to support ELOs.<sup>62</sup> Yet these multiple sources of support, when not maximized and aligned with state, local, and private funds, can cause duplication and inefficiencies in program and service delivery. Moreover, despite increasing investment and interest, ELOs often struggle to replace initial seed grants and sustain themselves over the long term.<sup>63</sup>

Governors can promote the long-term sustainability of ELOs by encouraging coordination of federal, state, local, and private funds to make available dollars go further and leverage new resources. They can consider policies that combine existing grant funds; align or link reporting requirements for federal, state, and private dollars; and block grant dollars to communities in exchange for demonstrated program progress toward broad, clearly defined, and measurable goals.

**Identify where and how funds support ELOs.** State leaders should determine the full range of federal, state, local, and private sources that support ELOs before assessing policy solutions to maximize and coordinate the many ELO funding sources. Federal programs that states and communities most often use for ELOs include the following:

- ▶ 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Department of Education)
- ▶ Child Care and Development fund (CCDF, Department of Health and Human Services)<sup>64</sup>
- ▶ Safe and Drug Free Schools (governor's portion and Department of Education)
- ▶ Federal Food and Nutrition Funds (Department of Agriculture; several programs reimburse ELO programs for funds spent on snacks and, in some cases, meals for students, which can free up already designated dollars for other important expenditures)<sup>65</sup>
- ▶ Title I<sup>66</sup> and other education funds that flow to school districts (e.g., drug and crime prevention, bilingual education, health education), which can be accessed by school-based and in some cases school-linked ELOs
- ▶ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, Department of Health and Human Services)<sup>67</sup>

Numerous other federal programs can be used for ELOs and are often supplemented by state, local, and private investments. **California** has dedicated state funding explicitly to ELOs.<sup>68</sup> States may also choose to include before- and after-school programs among the expenditures allowable at community or school discretion. In **Washington**, Initiative 728 allows schools to use state education funds for a menu of purposes, including after-school programs.

Several states, including **Illinois** and **New Hampshire**, have mapped the full landscape of federal and state investments in ELOs. The process can inform state officials where and how funds are currently being spent, identify any resource gaps that exist, guide decisions about ways to make better use of funds in the system, and determine where new funding may be leveraged as needed.<sup>69</sup>

**Align and coordinate federal and state ELO dollars where possible.** Once policymakers have a better sense of the ELO funding landscape, they can consider new ways to coordinate dollars for ELOs. Although there are often philosophical and administrative differences among funding sources, state leaders can work to maximize their reach by finding places where program goals overlap. For example, many federal funding sources allow, or sometimes require, a portion of funds to be used by the state for state-level administration, quality improvement efforts, and/or technical assistance to programs. Some states combine or target these dollars to support state-level, cross-agency activities in support of programs, so that they reinforce and do not duplicate one another.

Efforts to coordinate Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) funds—the two largest federal funding sources for after-school programs in the states—illustrate steps that states can take.<sup>70</sup>

**Coordinating use of state-level set-asides.** Many federal funding sources, including CCDF and 21st CCLC, have state administration or related set-asides. Under CCDF, state child care agencies must spend a portion of the block grant on efforts to improve the quality of school-age-child care. Similarly, state education agencies may designate a portion of 21st CCLC block grants for state administration and activities. Some states, such as **Montana** and **North Carolina**, have aligned use of these funds to support the broad, statewide after-school networks described above. States may also provide joint training or technical assistance to programs through coordinated activities or funding.

**Easing programs' ability to access multiple funding sources.** States may also be able to alter their policies to make it easier for after-school programs to gain access to multiple funding sources. With regard to CCDF and 21st CCLC, some states are altering child care licensing regulations to acknowledge and adapt to the circumstances of a broader range of after-school providers. In many states, such licensing is tied to receipt of CCDF funding.<sup>71</sup> Many statewide after-school networks, such as Plus Time **New Hampshire**, the **Kansas** Enrichment Network, and the **Montana** Afterschool Network, have supported state agency efforts to streamline program eligibility or program requirements across public and private sources.

Coordinating funds is not limited to CCDF and 21st CCLC. In **Wyoming**, the Youth Development Collaborative created the 21st Century State Incentive Grant in response to the transfer of 21st Century Community Learning Center funds to the state. The program encourages collaboration among local youth services by streamlining the requirements for four federal and state funding sources administered by the state's education and health departments. The state incentive grant program combined four separate funding sources into a single grant flowing from the state to local coalitions: federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers; the governor's portion of the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools program; the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration State Incentive Grant; and state tobacco settlement dollars. The braided grant aligns the goals of the four funding streams and encourages communities to collaborate across systems to create a continuum of services during nonschool hours.<sup>72</sup>

In **Pennsylvania**, new investments in tutoring significantly expand ELOs and complement other ELO resources to communities. Under Governor Edward G. Rendell's Plan for a New Pennsylvania, \$66 million in state funding for 2005–2006 will go to expand services to reach students who struggle academically.<sup>73</sup> Pennsylvania also devotes \$200 million to an Accountability Block Grant program that allows districts to decide where to target resources among multiple research-based practices. Many of the allowable practices link to or emphasize ELOs, such as expanded early childhood and tutoring programs. The new ELO investments supplement existing efforts, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers, mentoring, and dropout prevention programs. Additionally, for over 20 years, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare has provided funding to support school-based and school-linked school-age child care programs.

## Engage new partners to support ELOs.

Governors can motivate new partners to provide expertise, support, and resources that enhance extra learning opportunities for their state's youth. Participation by business leaders, law enforcement and parents, for example, can be critical to ensuring good policy decisions. Moreover, adding new voices of support can mean the difference between success and defeat of a governor's policy agenda.

**Hosting statewide summits that engage new partners and strengthen existing partnerships.** In July 2003, the NGA Center for Best Practices awarded funds to 13 states, with support from the C. S. Mott Foundation and the Wallace Foundation, to conduct governors' summits on extra learning opportunities. Another 10 states received the support in 2005.<sup>74</sup> Summits focus on goals such as engaging business partners at the state and local levels, building support among new state leaders, and strengthening statewide networks to support ELOs. Successful governors' summits have sought to engage new partners to help influence state policies that affect ELOs. Summits often incorporate the following elements:<sup>75</sup>

- ▶ They enjoy direct gubernatorial involvement and support.
- ▶ They bring together a broad range of participants, including state and local elected officials, representatives of public and private agencies, young people, educators, and others.
- ▶ They provide a forum where specific state actions, policy solutions, and next steps can be discussed and clearly articulated.
- ▶ They showcase innovative or promising ELO practices.

The 2004 **Montana** ELO summit led to the creation of a permanent, statewide after-school network. Policymakers including the governor, legislators, and state agency heads joined local leadership, private and foundation representatives, and others at the capitol to discuss the state's ELO efforts. The summit resulted in expanded membership and interest in the Montana Afterschool Network and an action plan to formalize and strengthen its work. The newly expanded network has since been working to build state-level leadership, create a common message, and expand and connect local efforts to support ELOs across the state. Largely as a

result of the energy and action from this summit, the Montana Afterschool Network received a grant from the C. S. Mott Foundation in fall 2004 to strengthen network-building efforts.<sup>76</sup>

States have used summits to engage a broad range of new stakeholders, to mobilize new public support, and to target key groups who will champion future ELO policy efforts. In **Rhode Island**, Governor Don Carcieri's ELO summit, in partnership with the Rhode Island After-School Plus Alliance and the United Way of Rhode Island, afforded an opportunity to engage educators, corporation leaders, and others on the value of after-school programs. At the summit, the findings of a statewide parent survey on after-school programs were released, which aided in generating participants' commitment. In follow-up, the Youth Development Council, a subcommittee of the state's Children's Cabinet, is advising the governor's staff on creation of an after-school policy agenda. The Youth Development Advisory Council comprises representatives of the Rhode Island After-School Plus Alliance, state agency representatives, and community leaders.

Although summits can target multiple audiences, many states have convened smaller meetings to engage important stakeholders, particularly key legislators and business leaders. The **New Mexico** Children's Cabinet held its first Children and Youth Legislative Institute to inform legislators on research and best practices around the cabinet's two priorities: high-quality prekindergarten and out-of-school-time opportunities for children and youth.<sup>77</sup> National and state experts spoke about research showing that investments in high-quality programs produce future savings through improved outcomes for children, families, and communities. During its session, the legislature responded to the cabinet's



priorities by passing legislation strengthening the existing Youth Alliance (a mechanism for youths to have a voice in state policies that affect them) and creating the Next Generation Fund, which will provide \$2 million in seed money, to be shared with the Children’s Trust Fund, to generate private funding for youth programs. Other governors connect regularly with legislators to determine common priorities. **Michigan** Governor Jennifer Granholm initiated a children’s caucus to regularly engage cabinet members with legislators around common policy agendas for children and youth, including extra learning opportunities.

Governor-led statewide summits also help to engage prominent businesses on the issue. In **South Carolina**, Governor Mark Sanford’s ELO summit brought new business partners to the table, resulting in financial and in-kind commitments from six businesses for local programs. In **Illinois**, Governor Rod Blagojevich’s Afterschool Business Summit encouraged new business and after-school partnerships at the state, regional, and local levels. Co-hosted by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, the summit showcased innovative examples of business investment in activities for youth outside of school. Business representatives from across the state discussed the returns they have received from their investments in the programs. Connected to this effort, the Illinois After-School Partnership, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Illinois State Board of Education will work with the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to create business-to-business collaborations in each of the state’s Economic Opportunity Regions to support and expand local out-of-school-time programs for children and youth.<sup>78</sup>

In conjunction with the annual **Kansas** workforce summit, Governor Kathleen Sebelius held an ELO summit with an “E3” theme: education, employment, and economic development. The summit showcased innovative ways in which business and ELO programs supported each other at the local level—helping youth develop workforce skills needed by specific communities, enhancing local economies, and matching after-school participants with job experiences. The summit also provided an opportunity for discussions among cabinet staff, agency representatives, foundation leaders, business leaders, and others of next steps for state after-school policies that bridge common priorities. As a result, a number of state and local trade associations and workforce partners have become strong partners in Kansas after-school efforts.

**Expand private-public partnerships.** Private investments expand the reach of public dollars. Beyond initial business engagement, governors can attract and make the most of private resources to support ELOs. In partnership with statewide after-school networks or related organizations, governors can encourage businesses of all sizes to contribute in many ways, such as joining school-community partnerships, sponsoring or mentoring successful programs, donating employee volunteers, or helping to solicit donations.<sup>79</sup> In **New Jersey**, former Governor James McGreevey created a public-private after-school initiative called New Jersey After 3. Under his plan, state funds were matched by other public and private sources on a one-to-one basis to support programs serving 20,000 youths in grades K–8 for the 2004–2005 school year. The New Jersey After-School Partnership, with members from the corporate and foundation communities, works to raise private funds for New Jersey After 3. The partnership will ultimately be responsible for re-granting public and private funds to program operators, quality assurance, fiscal monitoring, and training program providers. Programs are school based, in partnership with community-based organizations, and feature a low student-to-teacher ratio and a comprehensive mix of academic, recreational, and arts-related programs. The current budget for New Jersey After 3 is \$7 million, which will be matched with private funds.

Created in 1990, PlusTime **New Hampshire** is the oldest statewide public-private partnership to support after-school programs and has worked with multiple administrations.<sup>80</sup> PlusTime New Hampshire continues to enhance ELOs through social marketing, community collaboration, advocacy and legislation, financial resources, program quality and staff development, and program expansion and capacity building. In 2003, PlusTime joined the then-governor’s office to encourage business involvement through the 3 to 6 Afterschool Challenge. The initiative, a joint effort of the governor’s office, PlusTime NH, and the 3 to 6 Task Force on Afterschool, aimed to raise \$1.5 million from the state business community, increase the availability of after-school programs, and build the capacity of existing programs through public-private partnerships. PlusTime NH administers the Project 3 to 6 program grants and also provided an AmeriCorps®VISTA member to the governor’s office to coordinate the efforts of the three partners. As part of the initiative, PlusTime NH and the 3 to 6 Task Force on Afterschool held a series of forums to educate businesses about ELO programs throughout the state and the role business can play to strengthen them. The resulting contributions



provided PlusTime NH with the necessary match to obtain a \$450,000 challenge grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service. The funding will support new programs in underserved areas as well as sustainability training for existing programs. Project 3 to 6 was recently endorsed by Governor John Lynch, who presented local business donors with letters of commendation at a breakfast at the Governor's Mansion.

**Promote school-community partnerships.** High-quality ELOs provide linkages between children's school experiences and their family and community environment. Governors can encourage strengthened and meaningful school-community partnerships that maximize the reach of resources within and between communities and schools, explicitly including family and parent involvement strategies. Successful partnerships focus on the broad supports children need to succeed and align roles so that responsibility for their success is shared among families, schools, and community organizations.

**New York's** Advantage Afterschool Program, created by Governor George Pataki in 1999, supports youth development programs during after-school hours. To receive funds, community programs must have a formal partnership agreement with a school. Program goals must include improved social, emotional, and academic development; reduction in negative youth behaviors and violence in schools; and pregnancy prevention.<sup>81</sup> Administered by the New York State Office of

Children and Family Services, the Advantage After School Program funds 181 programs, using more than \$20 million in federal TANF funds, and private resources from organizations such as The After-School Corporation (TASC).

**In Colorado,** Governor Bill Owens dedicates a portion of federal Safe and Drug Free Schools funds to promote connections between ELOs and schools to support middle school youth. Through a partnership with the Fund for Colorado's Future, the initiative emphasizes partnerships between schools and community groups, with schools providing facilities and community groups providing staff and programming. The program supports 48 community collaborations serving over 3,800 students in 16 schools.<sup>82</sup>

**Help ELOs house or connect with "supplemental educational services" under No Child Left Behind.** Where appropriate, governors can encourage partnerships between ELOs and schools to build the capacity of existing after-school programs to provide the supplemental educational services (SES) required under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; see page 8). ELOs with explicit and individualized academic components may be well suited to become approved SES providers. Partnerships between educational or tutoring programs and after-school programs such as 21st Century Learning Centers can expand the reach of supplemental educational services.

**In Louisiana,** one office in the department of education oversees a TANF-funded, state after-school program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and SES. As a result, the state has promoted SES as a possible component of programs operated by schools as well as community or faith-based organizations. In addition, a strong, cross-linked data system, created expressly for the department, allows policy-makers to track the progress of children in programs or program activities supported by TANF, 21st CCLC, or SES through their grades and state test scores. Officials hope to expand data tracking to school-age-child care programs funded by CCDF, as well as other state-administered after-school programs. The data provide critical information to improve program administration and implementation and indicate areas for program improvement.

**Highlight ELOs as a step toward community schools.** Many communities and some states are moving toward a "community schools" strategy, in which community partners offer community-driven and designed supports to children,

youth, and families through the schools.<sup>53</sup> School buildings house activities before, during, and after school, seven days a week. ELOs are often a central component of community schools and can be an initial step toward a comprehensive community schools strategy. This strategy can help eliminate duplication of effort and maximize community resources.

In 2005, **Oregon** Governor Ted Kulongoski unveiled an initiative to expand community schools in that state, with after-school programs a key component. The initiative seeks to “create a multi-faceted environment for learning... through intentional partnerships with families and a wide range of community organizations and institutions. The Oregon Department of Education, Commission on Children and Families, Department of Human Services, Community Colleges and Workforce Development, and Criminal Justice Commission have joined together to create a statewide policy framework, develop guiding principles, provide incentives, and access pooled funds to support local community schools efforts.”<sup>54</sup> The state will provide communities with guidance for local planning, alignment of cross-agency resources, technical assistance, and access to professional development resources.

Community Schools **Rhode Island**, sponsored by the United Way of Rhode Island, helps five urban areas across the state develop community schools. One of the project’s primary strategies is the creation of high-quality, enriching programs for middle school youth during school and during the out-of-school hours. The initiative stresses collaboration between schools and community-based organizations with the goal of supporting academic achievement and positive youth development. The United Way has committed over \$1 million to this initiative, which was matched by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. The Rhode Island Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, and Brooks Pharmacy have also committed resources to this initiative.<sup>55</sup>

## **Build an accountability system for improved ELO quality.**

States are beginning to determine strategies to systematically improve quality across the broad range of ELO programs for children of all ages. Governors can support the development or revision of ELO-relevant policies—regardless of agency or funding stream—that reinforce one another to enhance quality. For example, state child care licensing requirements regulate some, but not all, ELO settings and practices to ensure a minimum level of quality. States are seeking ways to align such policies across agencies to ensure that all quality standards or guidelines support—and do not hinder—the variety and depth of programs.

Governors can provide incentives for programs to meet agreed-upon benchmarks of ELO quality. Not surprisingly, standards of quality for after-school programs are not as fully developed as in other fields, such as early childhood or K–12 education. However, to move toward systemic accountability, governors can take steps to do the following:

- ▶ Create clear accountability systems that measure program progress toward stated goals and can work across the multiple agencies and offices that administer programs.
- ▶ Evaluate progress of state-supported ELOs toward stated goals to gauge their impact and inform continuous improvement.
- ▶ Coordinate education, child care licensing, youth development, and related systems to streamline after-school guidelines, standards, reporting requirements, and related data.
- ▶ Enhance professional development and training for after-school program staff.

States have taken initial steps to ensure that policies adequately and systematically support improved program quality. In particular, seeking consensus on common elements of ELOs across a broad range of participants and program types will not only generate commitment to accountability but can also help to clarify where programs support larger state and local initiatives for families and communities. Such consensus can also guide linkages between programs and services within communities.

**Develop standards for program quality.** Governors and state leaders can consider common standards or other policy tools to ensure that programs are working toward a unified benchmark of quality. To facilitate the development of program standards, a number of states, building on existing research and best practices information, are seeking consensus on what a high-quality ELO program looks like, given the priorities and needs of their state. At the same time, they are looking to generate support for efforts to improve the programs' quality.

Many cities, such as Baltimore, Kansas City, and Philadelphia, have developed after-school program standards, but states are at the very early stages of this work. Each city has taken a different approach, but several lessons can be gleaned from their experiences:<sup>86</sup>

- ▶ Standards can frame program capacity-building efforts and identify areas for program improvement, but doing so requires sufficient technical assistance and training support.
- ▶ Programs require sufficient tools—and need assistance to develop them—to adequately assess and evaluate their progress.
- ▶ It is necessary to decide which entity—state, local, organizational, or other—will enforce the standards and oversee their implementation. For example, would a mixed but coordinated set of accountability systems be sufficient?

To move toward standards, many statewide after-school networks have guided state-level discussions about ELOs and program quality. The **North Carolina** Center for Afterschool Programs (NCCAP) drafted core principles for high-quality after-school programs to take to communities for their feedback and adoption. Through four regional summits, a range of interested parties across the state provided input on the draft elements. The principles were then shared with state policymakers and others at the governor's 2004 statewide after-school summit. Draft standards serve as the basis for discussions among education, justice, and school-age-child care program staff toward linked accountability systems. The **South Carolina** Afterschool Alliance pursued a similar strategy by drafting *Standards of Excellence in After School Programming* to guide program quality. State leaders are using the draft standards to facilitate adoption of a coordinated accountability system. In **Louisiana**, the departments of

education and social services developed an interagency memorandum of understanding to work on new regulations for programs funded by education, child care, social services, and other state resources. The memorandum will facilitate discussions on program licensing regulations and quality standards for all state-supported after-school programs.

**Highlight and share promising practices.** Several governors have used statewide forums to share best practices with policymakers, state leaders, and providers across a variety of program approaches and disciplines. A number of NGA Center-supported, governors' ELO summits (see descriptions above), including ones in **Connecticut, Kansas, Rhode Island, and Vermont**, have showcased promising program approaches. In **North Carolina**, the governor's summit was held in conjunction with the first annual statewide after-school conference, which allowed providers, local officials, policymakers, and others to learn from one another about effective practices in the field and how they can be translated into policy at the state and local levels.

**Build the capacity of programs.** Many states are working to connect providers from all perspectives—education, school-age-child care, youth development, prevention, and so forth—with coordinated training opportunities, best practices dissemination, and peer sharing among programs. In particular, as states move toward standards of accountability for programs, it is essential to bolster the capacity of programs to meet new requirements.<sup>87</sup> A number of states have developed self-assessment tools for programs to consider areas for improvement, such as connections between programs and schools. For the past two years, the **Oregon** School-Age Care and Enrichment Network and **School's Out Washington** have partnered to provide a training conference expressly designed for after-school administrators to improve links between schools and all types of ELO programs.<sup>88</sup>

States have employed many approaches to coordinate and improve training opportunities. The **Missouri** Statewide Afterschool Network established an Afterschool Resource Center as an administrative hub for training, technical assistance, and evaluation activities for programs across the state. The Afterschool Resource Center coordinates training, using regional consultants around the state for on-site assistance. Because the center represents a collective effort by the departments of elementary and secondary education and social services, the Missouri School-Age Coalition, and other



providers, leaders are moving toward a uniform system of training for after-school service providers in multiple fields and disciplines. **California** created a system of after-school field support to strengthen programs across the state. Support providers in 11 regions serve as liaisons and resources to help build the capacities of local programs. Thirteen Regional Learning Centers allow program leaders to learn from successful peers in their region. Program administrators meet regularly to learn from one another, share best practices, and identify areas for program improvement.

Improving program quality depends on a high-quality ELO workforce. ELO staff commitments are typically part-time, and many programs also rely heavily on volunteers. Researchers note that the after-school workforce lacks a clear professional identity and has no national professional development system.<sup>89</sup> Program variety also translates to a broad range of possible staff skills (e.g., arts, education, health, youth development, recreation).

States can adapt emerging systems in youth development, school-age-child care, and other fields to foster a well-linked system of professional development for ELO providers. Many states have approached this by building on the school-age-child care credential (SACC) offered at specific universities. In 1995, **Wisconsin** developed a Wisconsin School-Age Credential for providers serving children ages five to 12, which has served as a model for others.<sup>90</sup> Several states, including **Idaho** and **New York**, use federal child care funds to offer financial supports to those pursuing such a credential.<sup>91</sup> Indiana launched a combined school-age-child care and youth development credential.<sup>92</sup> The **Indiana** Youth Development Credential provides an opportunity for adults working with youth to gain professional recognition for demonstrating competence through a certification process that recognizes performance, based on defined skills and knowledge.<sup>93</sup>

States may also look to the emerging apprenticeship approach, where youth-serving organizations offer employment during out-of-school hours while they also pursue education and training offerings. One model, the Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship Program of the U.S. Department of Labor, seeks to provide an out-of-school time certification for youth workers. The initiative combines mentoring, direct instruction, and on-the-job training on topics ranging from youth development to program organization.<sup>94</sup>

Building a system of professional development for practitioners not only improves ELO quality, it can also improve the sustainability of the workforce. To link and build off credentials and other professional development approaches, some states are developing career ladders for after-school staff, which tie salaries and responsibilities to increased education and experience in the field.<sup>95</sup> **New York** is creating such a professional development ladder, which will include the New York State School Age Child Credential as a key component.



## Conclusion

Extra learning opportunities have real potential to enhance student academic achievement and support state initiatives in education, youth development, prevention, justice, health, and economic development. Governors can strengthen these programs by ensuring that they are deliberately linked to those larger policy initiatives. The field is still growing. Increased accountability for quality, emerging program standards, and calls for new research continue to propel state efforts. States can make strides to ensure these varied programs are well connected to schools and community supports, aligned to state priorities, reflective of community needs and circumstances, and of high quality. A coordinated ELO policy strategy can further student achievement, support families, and strengthen communities.

# Notes

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