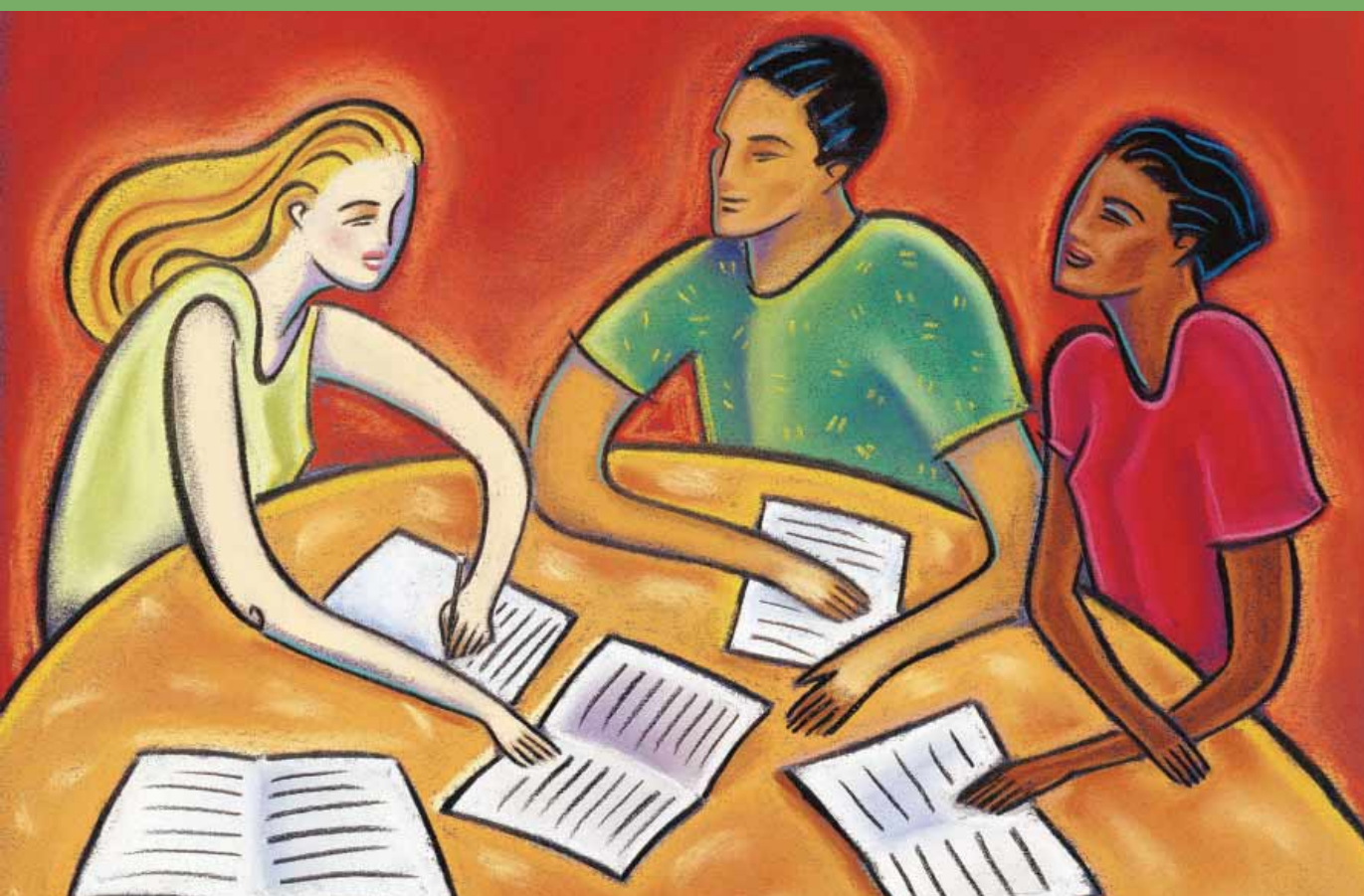# Financing and Sustaining Out-of-School Time Programs in Rural Communities

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The **FINANCE** PROJECT

Financing and Sustaining Out-of-School Time Programs in Rural Communities

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Introduction

hildren and youth in all communities can benefit from a safe and enriching environment during afternoons and evenings. Participating in out-of-school time programs can avoid risky behavior and contribute to desired outcomes such as improved academic performance and positive youth development.[1] Demand for these programs has grown during the past several decades, and many public- and private-sector leaders now understand the importance of investing in this kind of programming.

Funding rarely meets all program needs. Grants often provide only seed funding or are time-limited, leaving many programs struggling to sustain themselves. This is especially true for out-of-school time programs in rural communities, which typically have access to fewer resources and face additional barriers to sustainability.[2] Leaders of programs serving rural America need to act strategically to ensure the long-term success of their initiatives.

This strategy brief describes the funding landscape of rural programs and highlights the unique challenges confronting rural program leaders. It describes the different public and private resources that can support out-of-school time programming and identifies key strategies that can be used to finance and sustain these programs in rural communities.[3]

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[1] The term "out-of-school time programs" is used to describe a wide range of services and activities for children and youth during nonschool hours, including before and after school and during summers and weekends. They may be community- or school-based programs, with such activities as counseling, mentoring, career exploration, academic assistance, and sports and recreation.

[2] In 2006, the new urban-centric classification system developed by the U.S. Bureau of the Census prompted the National Center for Education Statistics to change its definition of rural territories to reflect proximity to an urban area rather than just population size. Small towns and rural areas are now categorized as "fringe, distant, or remote," ranging from 5 miles to more than 25 miles from an urban area (see National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, "Exhibit A: NCES's Urban-Centric Locale Categories," in *Status of Education in Rural America* (Washington, D.C., 2007), at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/ruraled/exhibit_a.asp).

[3] This brief is adapted from Elisabeth Wright, *Finding Resources to Support Rural Out-of-School Time Initiatives* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, February 2003).

Rural Programs and the Funding Landscape

Rural programs serve a significant portion of the nation's children and youth. One-third of all public schools in the United States are located in rural areas, serving 21 percent of school-age children.[4] Enrollment in rural schools grew by 15 percent, or more than 1,339,000 students, between the 2002–03 and 2004–05 school years.[5] In addition, poverty is concentrated in remote rural settings; 19 percent of children living in rural communities are impoverished, compared with 15 percent of children living in nonrural communities.[6] Rural students living in poverty face additional barriers to accessing education and development opportunities, compared with their urban peers. Many youth living in rural areas must overcome long distances to attend school and may not be aware of the programming that is available to them. They can also be left unsupervised for more hours before and after the school day if jobs require their parents to travel farther for work. Rural out-of-school time programs are in a prime position to offer their communities enrichment activities to help ensure youth engagement, health services, academic success, and career and workforce development.

Resource Challenges for Rural Out-of-School Time Programs

A set of common issues emerge for leaders of rural out-of-school time programs struggling to provide services with limited staff and resources. Besides the myriad challenges all out-of-school time programs must overcome to secure financing and support for their work, those in rural communities also face the following obstacles:

- **Few Private Partners**
  One way for program leaders to diversify their funding base, secure stable funding streams, or gain more participants for their out-of-school time programs is to tap multiple local public and private resources. Yet rural areas generally lack local businesses, foundations, universities, and faith-based organizations with which out-of-school time programs can establish partnerships. Moreover, rural-based partners usually have fewer resources to support out-of-school time programs in need.

- **Limited Tax Base**
  Many rural communities face difficult socioeconomic circumstances. Economic downturns can have a significant impact, because local job markets in rural areas tend to rely on a few industries. In addition, young people often leave rural communities in search of better employment opportunities, resulting in a "brain drain." In places where the tax base is shrinking, declining revenue may pit youth programming against other community programming, such as services for the elderly. Competition with other community groups over limited resources can undermine public support for youth programming.

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4 National Center for Education Statistics, U. S. Department of Education, *Status of Education in Rural America* (Washington, D.C., 2007), at: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/ruraled/chapter1.asp.
5 J. Johnson and M. Strange, *Why Rural Matters 2007* (Arlington, Va.: Rural Trust, 2007), at: http://www.ruraledu.org/site/apps/nl/content.asp?c=beJMIZOCIrH&b=3508831&ct=4537799.
6 Afterschool Alliance, *Afterschool Programs Meet the Needs of Youth in Rural America* (Washington, D.C.: Afterschool Alliance, 2004).

- **High Transportation Costs**

  Rural communities are, by definition, less densely populated and spread out over larger geographic distances. Developing a suitable transportation system for rural areas is more complex and expensive than developing one for urban areas. Much of a rural program's budget can be devoted to transportation costs, and some programs find these costs prohibitive. Program leaders sometimes have to choose between expanding components of a program or investing in transportation so participants can attend the program.

- **Staffing Challenges**

  Adequate staff capacity is critical to running any out-of-school time program, and many programs must cope with high staff turnover. Even if quality staff members are recruited in rural settings, programs may not be able to pay them enough to retain them. Professional development opportunities also are less available in rural communities than in more urban environments, and small rural programs often cannot afford to send staff to trainings and conferences held in distant locations.

- **Limited Eligibility for Funding**

  Many funding streams for out-of-school time programs are not targeted to rural communities. Even if rural programs are eligible to apply for funds, they may not meet all the grant requirements, such as a concentration of low-income students. For example, some rural programs with low-income participants may be ineligible for federal food and nutrition funds if the school or community does not meet certain income guidelines.

Despite these challenges, federal, state, and local entities allocate resources to support rural out-of-school time programs through numerous initiatives. Moreover, the private sector provides support for out-of-school time programming.

Funding Sources for Rural Communities

Federal Sources

Several federal agencies administer initiatives that can help out-of-school time programs in rural communities. Some of these initiatives target rural communities explicitly; others are large programs that should not be overlooked because they are important funding sources for out-of-school time efforts. (See also, "Resources for Out-of-School Time Programs in Tribal Communities" on page 11.)

U.S. Department of Education

21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) program is the only federal funding source dedicated to out-of-school time programs. It aims to provide opportunities for academic enrichment, particularly for youth who attend low-performing schools. 21CCLC funds can be used to support a broad array of program activities, including arts, music, recreation, drug and violence prevention, and youth development activities. This federal block grant flows to states based on the number of low-income students, and state education agencies award grants to applicants in a competitive process. Eligible applicants include schools as well as community- and faith-based organizations. States have discretion on how funds are prioritized, but the funds must target the state's poorest communities and students attending low-performing schools. Since its inception, the 21CCLC program has focused grant-making on urban and rural communities; many states have designed their grant-making process to ensure a geographical balance. A 2006 report on 21CCLC programs found that one-third of 21CCLCs are located in rural communities.[7]

Title I Grants to Local Education Agencies. Often referred to as simply "Title I," this funding stream is the largest federally funded elementary and secondary (K–12) education program. Title I provides funds to local education agencies (LEAs) to improve the academic performance of students who are failing or most at risk of failing. Grants are targeted to schools with high concentrations of children from low-income families. Title I dollars also are used to increase parental involvement, coordinate school services, and extend the school day and school year. Funding is allocated to states by a formula based on student enrollment, poverty figures from the U.S. Census Bureau, and other data, and states distribute the funds to LEAs. Local school districts, through their LEA plan, then allocate the funds to qualifying schools that have the highest percentages of low-income children. Strong relationships with school officials can help rural out-of-school time programs access Title I funds. For more information on Title I, see http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html.

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[7] Robert Stonehill et al., *21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) Analytic Support for Evaluation and Program Monitoring: An Overview of the 21st CCLC Program: 2004-2005* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education and Learning Point Associates, July 2006), 53, at: http://www.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/2006report.doc.

Title I Supplemental Education Services. Title I Supplemental Education Services, sometimes called SES, provides funding for academic supports for eligible children in failing schools. Grants for SES are given on a per-child basis and are meant for students who attend schools that are classified as failing or in need of improvement by the state education agency. These services must be provided outside regular school hours, and funding can be used for tutoring, afterschool programs, and summer school programs for eligible children. SES providers must apply for approval from the state and enter into a contract with a local school district on what types of services and supports they will provide. Parents are notified if their child is eligible for services and select from available providers; services are free for families, with the school districts reimbursing the provider for services. Rural out-of-school time initiatives can pursue becoming an SES provider or partnering with local school districts to provide supplemental education services.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program supports initiatives that prevent violence in and around schools; prevent young people's illegal use of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol; and foster a safe and an orderly learning environment. SDFSC can also be used to support communitywide drug and violence prevention programs. Its two companion programs are the State Program and the National Program. The SDFSC State Program allocates funds to state education agencies, which then distribute funds to LEAs based on need and enrollment. The SDFSC National Program provides discretionary funding for initiatives that respond to emerging needs, such as direct grants to school districts or communities with severe drug and violence problems. Out-of-school time programs can access funds or partner with eligible applicants to support educational and youth-oriented activities, including mentoring, delinquency prevention, leadership development, and civic engagement. For more information on this funding stream, see http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html.

Rural Education Achievement Program. Many rural communities lack the resources to effectively compete for federal grants, while some districts receive program allocations that, based on population, are too low to even begin meeting the intended purposes. The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) aims to address these barriers. One of the most important REAP initiatives is the Small, Rural School Grant Program. This program provides supplemental funds for Title I and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program. REAP funds flow by formula grant through state education agencies to school districts in rural communities that meet specific criteria. For more information and a list of REAP contacts for each state, see http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/reap.html.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Child Care and Development Fund. Administered as a formula block grant to states, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is the nation's largest direct federal subsidy program for child care. CCDF is used primarily to provide child care assistance for eligible low-income families through vouchers or certificates. Some states use these funds to contract with providers for a fixed number of child care slots. These contracts can help increase the supply of providers in rural areas where families face the additional challenge of traveling long distances to access eligible providers. States also use the funds for quality enhancements, child care resource and referral activities, and school-age child care activities. A minimum percentage of the block grant must support activities that improve the quality of child care programs, including program startup, expansion, or accessibility. Some states target these quality dollars to improve out-of-school time infrastructure in ways that effectively reach programs in rural areas. States set the rates at which providers are reimbursed for subsidies; these rates are based on attendance of eligible children. Although some exceptions are made, center-based providers typically must be licensed by the state to be eligible for reimbursement with CCDF funds.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. This federal block grant program provides income subsidies and supportive services to eligible low-income families with children. States can use Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars to support child care and afterschool programs, enabling parents to fulfill their work and training requirements while receiving cash assistance. Rural out-of-school time programs can use TANF funds for positive activities for youth in low-income families, including mentoring, child care, health services, job training, and educational enrichment.[8]

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[8] For more information, see Nanette Relave, *Using TANF to Finance Out-of-School Time Initiatives* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, June 2007), at: http://www.financeproject.org/publications/TANFtoFinanceOST.pdf.

Corporation for National and Community Service

AmeriCorps. As part of a network of local, state, and national programs, this discretionary grant provides funds to promote service learning among its trained volunteers in public agencies and nonprofit organizations. More than 70,000 AmeriCorps volunteers are engaged each year to help youth-serving programs do more with limited resources; they may contribute by tutoring and mentoring youth, teaching computer skills, or running afterschool programs. Members receive an education award to offset their college expenses in exchange for their term of service. Most AmeriCorps grants are allocated to state commissions, which then distribute funds to eligible local nonprofit organizations. The remaining funds are given to national nonprofit organizations that run multistate programs. Eligible rural youth-serving organizations that receive grants are expected to recruit, select, and supervise AmeriCorps members to supplement their staff; programs can use the funding to offset their operating costs and subsidize members' living expenses.

Volunteers in Service to America. Members of Volunteers in Service to America (AmeriCorps*VISTA) are part of the AmeriCorps program and commit one year of full-time volunteer service to a specific organization. These volunteers focus primarily on improving organizational infrastructure, promoting sustainability, and alleviating poverty in the areas they serve. Organizations can apply for these funds by contacting their appropriate Corporation for National Service state office. Private and nonprofit youth-serving organizations in rural areas—particularly those aiming to support disadvantaged youth and/or reduce poverty—can use VISTA members to supplement their staff and further support their activities. Many programs view AmeriCorps*VISTA as an excellent resource to address insufficient staff capacity or high staff turnover.

Learn and Serve America: School and Community-Based Programs. The Learn and Serve America grant program supports and encourages service learning by helping students get involved in community service activities while building their academic and civic skills. The program provides grants to school-community partnerships and training and technical assistance resources to parents, schools, and community groups. Individual programs may be able to access subgrants through Learn and Serve grantees, including state commissions and multistate community organizations. Out-of-school time initiatives in rural settings can partner with schools or multistate community organizations to secure training and professional development support for educators and volunteers.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) provides federal funding and national program leadership to the Cooperative Extension System (CES), a three-way partnership of federal, state, and county governments and resources. The CES promotes information and resource sharing for youth programs in rural areas. Local community programs are assisted primarily via training, technical assistance, and in-kind resources delivered through the National 4-H Youth Development Program. 4-H programs and clubs are organized through CES offices that are affiliated with land-grant universities and often incorporate life skills development into their out-of-school time programming. Having a 4-H presence in all 3,150 counties in the nation puts CES in a unique position to help build collaborations among youth-serving organizations and increase the quality and availability of out-of-school time programs in rural areas. Rural out-of-school time programs can partner with their local CES 4-H programs to support activities that promote positive youth development.

Child and Adult Care Food Program and National School Lunch Program. Under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), funds are available to reimburse schools and nonprofit organizations for nutritious snacks and meals served to children and youth in out-of-school time programs. The two programs differ slightly in age requirements and types of food offered; for example, CACFP funds can cover lunches, snacks, and suppers, while NSLP funds can cover only lunches and afterschool snacks. Although rural out-of-school time programs serve a predominantly low-income population, accessing this funding depends on community economic characteristics. To use NSLP funds, an out-of-school time program must be sponsored by a school that meets free and reduced-price lunch income eligibility criteria and is willing to administer the food program.[9] An out-of-school time program is eligible for CAFCP funds if it is located in an attendance area of a school with at least 50 percent of its enrollment eligible for free or reduced-price meals and snacks. For more information on these food programs, see http://www.frac.org/Out_Of_School_Time/index.html.

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[9] Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals and snacks. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals and snacks, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents.

Rural Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Communities Program. The Rural Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) program offers targeted grants, loans, and tax incentives to a preselected group of rural and tribal communities. Designations occur every 10 years and do not require reapplication by the selected EZ/EC. If a rural out-of-school time program is located within an EC/EZ, it can access the funds in two different ways: apply directly to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to obtain support funds or contact the EC/EZ to get designated as a benchmark project and receive a one-time grant.

Rural Business-Cooperative Service. The Rural Business-Cooperative Service brings together private-sector and community-based organizations to provide financial and technical assistance to collaboratives in rural areas. The program mainly supplies loans and grants to businesses and nonprofit organizations for various economic development activities, such as establishing child care centers. State rural development offices administer the loans and grants. The Rural Business-Cooperative Service also houses the National Rural Development Partnership, which coordinates and brings together partners at the national, state, and local levels. Most states have state rural development councils that convene key stakeholders on rural development concerns, including out-of-school time programming. Visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp to view a database of state rural development councils' efforts, including best practices on social services and youth development.

Rural Housing Service. Like the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, the Rural Housing Service provides grants and loans to rural communities for facilities and facilities improvements, including nonprofit or family child care centers. These facilities can house out-of-school time programs. For more information, visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Community Development Block Grant. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) state program provides funds to states to support economic and community development efforts at the local level, particularly rural areas.[10] Funds are generally used to improve the physical infrastructure of facilities or to support broader community improvement efforts, including youth development activities. Up to 15 percent of federal CDBG funds can be used for public services needs, including out-of-school time programs. Localities determine how CDBG subgrants are allocated, often through an extensive public input process.

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[10] For more information, see Roxana Torrico, *Using the Community Development Block Grant to Finance Community-Based Youth Programs* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, January 2008), at: http://www.financeproject.org/irc.cfm.

Resources for Out-of-School Time Programs in Tribal Communities

Extreme geographic isolation, insufficient infrastructure, and high poverty and unemployment rates in Native American tribal communities often compound the standard challenges of sustaining out-of-school time programs in rural areas. Program leaders in these communities can tap additional funding streams for tribal governments.

The U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) administers many programs that can support diverse activities in tribal communities. Targeted funds drawn from other federal programs fund many of BIA's programs. For more information on the BIA's Office of Indian Education Programs, visit www.oiep.bia.edu. The *Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants* program is designed to protect Native American children and provides support to tribal governments for operating child and family service programs. Child- and family-focused program grantees may use these dollars for of-school time activities. To apply for these funds, tribal governments can submit an application to the local BIA agency or regional office. For more information, see http://www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html.

The U.S. Department of Education provides more than $7 million in set-aside funding to the BIA to run its own *21st Century Community Learning Centers* program competition for schools in tribal communities.* The U.S. Department of Education also funds *Indian Education* grants. This block grant program provides supplemental funding by formula to school districts to reform elementary and secondary school programs serving Native American students. Indian Education grants can be used to start or maintain programs emphasizing cultural activities and academic support services. All funds flow directly to eligible local education agencies and are based largely on the number of Native American students enrolled in the school system. For more information, see http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oie/programs.html.

The U.S. Department of Justice funds the *Tribal Youth Program*. This discretionary grant program supports youth development activities through grants to tribes or tribal coalitions. The program's focus is on reducing crime, preventing alcohol and drug abuse, and providing mental health services to tribal youth in the juvenile justice system. Tribal out-of-school time programs can use funds to support various activities, including delinquency prevention programming. Grants can also be used to support coordination and collaboration related to program development and implementation. For more information, visit www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

The purposes of the U.S. Department of Labor's *Native American Employment and Training Program* are to afford individuals opportunities to improve their skills and, ultimately, to improve economic and social development in tribal communities. These discretionary funds can be applied to support various employment and training programs and services in tribal areas. Out-of-school time programs can use the funds to promote academic, occupational, and literacy skills among tribal youth. For more information, visit www.doleta.gov/.

* Note: See the U.S. Department of Education's state budget tables by program at http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/08stbyprogram.pdf.

State Sources

In addition to federal funding sources, many state funding programs aim to improve outcomes for children and youth. For example, in fiscal 2006, 30 states and territories budgeted state funds specifically for out-of-school time programs.[11] A common way to support this programming is through a line item in the state budget. This funding is typically administered through state departments or agencies that administer programs in:

- education;

- human services;

- health and mental health;

- labor and workforce development; and

- law enforcement and juvenile justice.

Some states also create dedicated revenue sources to support out-of-school time initiatives.[12] Dedicated revenue sources raise and/or direct public funds for a specific purpose. Mechanisms for generating dedicated revenue include special taxes, guaranteed expenditure minimums, fees and narrowly based taxes, income tax checkoffs, and children's trust funds. Creating dedicated revenue sources can be difficult, but this funding can provide resources for out-of-school time programs throughout a state, including rural communities.

Local Sources

Regions and municipalities have increased their focus on and investments in out-of-school time programs. Local support can come in the form of a line item in the general fund; local government policymakers address local priorities through these unrestricted revenues. Funding can also flow from various local agencies, such as libraries, parks and recreation departments, and child abuse prevention entities. School districts can serve as a primary source of local support for many rural out-of-school time programs. Localities can also raise revenue through a dedicated revenue source, such as special fees or taxes.

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[11] Jennifer Stedron and Daniel Thatcher, "State Funding for Expanded Learning Opportunities," *NCSL Legisbrief*, vol. 15, no. 34 (August/September 2007), National Conference of State Legislatures, Denver, Colo.
[12] For more information, see Rachel H. Sherman, Sharon Deich, and Barbara Hanson Langford, *Creating Dedicated Local and State Revenue Sources for Youth Programs* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, January 2007), at: http://www.financeproject.org/publications/DLR_PM.pdf.

To access these funds, out-of-school time program leaders in rural communities should learn about the local funding landscape and participate in local planning efforts to help determine funding priorities. Strong relationships with local elected leaders and their staff, agency officials and personnel, and school superintendents and principals can also help programs access these funds.

Private Sources

Although fewer businesses and foundations can be found in the immediate area of rural communities, many different private partners can support out-of-school time programs. Potential business partners include hospitals, restaurants, manufacturers, retail stores, banks and financial institutions, chambers of commerce, and large national chains with a history of giving. Out-of-school time programs can also turn to various local, regional, and national foundations for support. For example, the JCPenney Afterschool Fund provides funding to several national youth-serving organizations, including the National 4-H Council, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, United Way of America, and the YMCA. Programs affiliated with one of these four organizations can contact the organization's national office to request information on accessing these funds. Securing funds from private sources typically requires preparing a targeted request or submitting a grant proposal.[13]

Rural out-of-school time programs can also secure funding locally through fundraising campaigns and donations from community members. Moreover, they can raise funds through participation fees. Programs that charge fees typically use a sliding scale so the cost is not too burdensome for families; for those unable to pay, the fee is waived or a scholarship is provided. Other programs do not charge fees, fearing it would inhibit participation.

[13] For information on writing a successful grant proposal, see Michelle Ganow Jones, *Getting the Grant: A Guide to Securing Additional Funds for After School Education and Safety Programs* (Washington, D.C.: The Finance Project, August 2007), at: http://www.financeproject.org/Publications/FINA_GrantwritingGuide.pdf.

Rural out-of-school time programs must adopt a strategic approach to financing and sustaining their efforts. Three effective strategies are to create a diverse funding base, build partnerships, and tap existing networks. Successful program leaders employ a mix of strategies that complement their strengths and work for their community.

Strategy 1: Create a Diverse Funding Base

Out-of-school time initiatives in rural communities should aim to develop a diverse funding portfolio to support their efforts. Political and economic factors make it difficult for programs relying on one or two large funding sources to successfully sustain themselves over long periods; a diverse funding base better enables a program to continue to operate in the face of changing conditions. Many successful leaders of out-of-school time initiatives in rural communities lack a large, primary funding source. Instead, they weave together a wide range of resources to support their work. Program leaders can create a diverse funding base in several ways.

Maximize Federal, State, and Local Revenue

Public revenues can provide resources to establish, improve, and expand out-of-school time programs. Maximizing public revenue can expand the funding base for programs, provide stable revenue, and free up existing funds for other purposes (see "Using Diverse Resources to Support Out-of-School Time Programming" on page 15, "Accessing Rural Enterprise Community Funds" on page 15, and "Using Public Funds to Create and Expand Out-of-School Time Programs" on page 16). This multistep process requires program leaders to identify different federal, state, and local funding sources that could support elements of their program; understand how a certain funding source is distributed; determine who in the state or community decides how funds are allocated; and implement a plan to access the funds. State and local officials can also play a role by making information on available resources easily accessible so rural program leaders can make informed decisions.

Using Diverse Resources to Support Out-of-School Time Programming

Community members in Wautoma, a rural area in central Wisconsin, use a wide range of public and private resources to support their out-of-school time initiative, the A+ Afterschool Program. In 2001, Wautoma received the first year of federal funding from a three-year 21CCLC grant from the U.S. Department of Education to begin the program at a middle school site. During the third and final year of the federal grant, program leaders applied for and received a five-year grant from the state 21CCLC program to augment the afterschool program and offer it in an elementary school serving students in kindergarten through grade three. Program leaders appealed to the school district and county, leveraging support from the principals and county board of supervisors, to provide supplemental funding to enable programming to continue at the middle school site and expand to yet another elementary school serving students in kindergarten through grade five.

A+ Afterschool Program leaders have also accessed some new forms of revenue. Wisconsin's school boards have the authority to create a Community Service Fund, often referred to as Fund 80, to institute an additional property tax to support extracurricular programs for students and programs that serve the community outside the regular school curriculum. Wautoma, a small community, has taken advantage of this provision and collects local taxes under Fund 80 to support its afterschool programs and a few other community programs.

The A+ Afterschool Program also uses community volunteers to provide enrichment activities. This in-kind support enables the program to offer activities it would not otherwise be able to provide, including fishing, piano lessons, and activities led by a local naturalist.

Accessing Rural Enterprise Community Funds

Designated as a Round II Enterprise Community in 1998, the Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community (NNEC) works to build sustainability through its seed grants and unique partnerships. The NNEC includes three reservations covering a 500-square-mile area in rural northern Wisconsin. Through its community planning process, the NNEC is able to engage citizens and focus on education programs that enable area youth to gain exposure to careers and academic services, including school to work, tech prep, and job shadowing programming.

Rural EZ/ECs can encompass more than one tribe, resulting in a subzone system within the larger grant program. These subzones are able to approve one-time grants for benchmark projects through the budget process. Their subgrants are offered to help programs that improve students' educational performance and strengthen postsecondary and job training support services for area youth. Together, NiiJii initiatives have served more than 5,000 families, or approximately 75 percent of the NNEC population.*

* Note: For more information, see http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/ezec/05_Exec_Summaries/northwoods.html.

Using Public Funds to Create and Expand Out-of-School Time Programs

In 1999, following the receipt of startup funding from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's health education grants, several community planning groups in Garrett County were awarded Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use Prevention mini-grants of $2,000 per year to plan activities they believed were needed in the community. A few of these community planning groups used their grants and various categorical funding streams related to health education and improvement to start an out-of-school time program in the community's two elementary schools and two middle schools. The afterschool programming was to cover topics such as nutrition education, tobacco and drug use prevention, adolescent pregnancy prevention, and injury prevention. This startup program initially operated two evenings per week. Eventually, program leaders applied for and secured funding for AmeriCorps members and recruited regular volunteers to keep the program running for three more years. The AmeriCorps members served as afterschool staff assistants and were critical in keeping program costs low. Funds from a 21st Century Community Learning Centers program grant awarded in 2003 were used to support new staff members; this facilitated a formal shift from volunteer tutoring to paid teaching staff. Within four years, the afterschool program grew from serving 80 children in four schools to serving 400 children in six schools.

In 2004, the local 4-H office received a Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) grant and began searching for new audiences. This combination of events enabled CYFAR to play an integral role in further developing the afterschool program. CYFAR funds were used to help develop new curriculum guides and launch a semiannual overnight camp for children. Program leaders used the 4-H office's many curriculum guides on topics such as forestry, gardening, photography, outdoor cooking, and agricultural literacy. The program's participants are allowed to use the computer lab in the 4-H office. In addition to supporting a 4-H extension educator position, CYFAR dollars were used to hire the program's new coordinator to teach children about science. The program also looks to local resources and receives small grants from the county-level arts council for curriculum development.

Develop New Revenue

New revenue can be developed for out-of-school time programs at the program level through fundraising efforts or at the state or local level through a dedicated revenue mechanism (see "Using Lottery Revenue for Afterschool Programs" on page 18). Fundraising can take different forms, from direct mail solicitation to community events that entail a contribution as part of admission, e.g, an auction or awards dinner (see "Involving Partners in Community Fundraising" on page 18). One benefit of funds that are raised in these ways is that they are flexible and can be used for various purposes. Although creating a new dedicated revenue source is an ambitious undertaking that takes considerable time and effort, program leaders can support the development of new dedicated revenue streams to support out-of-school time and seek to access these funds as they become available.

Take Advantage of In-Kind Support

Despite limited funds, businesses and organizations in rural communities are often able to make valuable contributions to out-of-school time programs in the form of meals, space, staff, or supplies. For example, many school districts provide out-of-school time programs with access to staff, facilities, and transportation resources. Volunteers also play a vital role in many rural out-of-school time programs. Successful program leaders use the special skills and hobbies of community members to provide programming and enrich program offerings. Depending on the nature of the activities, different volunteers may be most appropriate. For example, programs in tribal settings may be able to recruit elderly Native American volunteers willing to teach cultural traditions to area youth. In addition, volunteers can be powerful allies in recruiting additional volunteer support. Program leaders should take stock of their existing partners and resources to determine whether in-kind donations are being underutilized and seek out opportunities within the community (see "Making the Most of In-Kind Resources" on page 20).

Using Lottery Revenue for Afterschool Programs

In November 2002, Tennessee voters passed a constitutional amendment referendum that created a state lottery. As part of the legislation, the state legislature established that the state's lottery revenues would support specific education initiatives. Initially, the legislation determined that 50 percent of the state lottery's unclaimed prize money would be deposited into Tennessee's Lottery Education Afterschool Program (LEAP) account that funds competitive grants and technical assistance for organizations providing afterschool programs. The general assembly then passed a bill in spring 2006 increasing the percentage of funds available to LEAP to 100 percent of unclaimed prizes, effective July 1, 2006. Once the amount of available funding is known at the end of each fiscal year, the state department of education sends out a request for proposals to afterschool providers and awards grants based on the strength of the applications. From May 2005 through fiscal 2006–07, Tennessee's LEAP has provided $21.3 million to 214 afterschool programs serving at-risk students throughout the state.

Involving Partners in Community Fundraising

Teach My People is a faith-based afterschool program focused on serving elementary and middle school students living at or below poverty level in Pawleys Island, South Carolina. Participants are offered spiritual, emotional, and academic enrichment after school as well as during the summer months. The program is well known in the small community, largely due to the efforts of the staff and board of directors to build relationships with individual donors and garner support for their work through local faith-based organizations. The program leaders are able to raise a significant part of the budget through an annual winter fundraising event, the Gospel Brunch. They receive the food and venue free of charge with help from their long-time private partner, Myrtle Beach National Golf Course. Teach My People invites all their past donors to the brunch. Although the organizers do not charge specific amounts for tickets, the fundraiser generates about $30,000 each year from attendee donations because of the program's significant community support.

Considerations for Using Strategy 1

- Many successful program leaders think about sustainability early on—either during the development of the program or in the beginning of the life cycle of a limited grant—and incorporate sustainability strategies into their ongoing program operation. This enables them to diversify their funding base, build community awareness, and develop the relationships necessary to access different resources.

- The first steps in accessing public and private resources are becoming aware of what sources are available and monitoring new opportunities. This involves researching the local and state funding landscape and tracking relevant grant and proposal announcements. Government information resources, professional organizations, and state or local intermediary agencies can help with these efforts.

- Once a funding opportunity is identified, program leaders should determine whether the potential payoff from a grant or funding opportunity is worth the time required to attain and implement it, including time to develop the required application, engage relevant partners, and meet any reporting requirements. They need to ensure the effort is worth the resources gained. Fundraisers can be very labor intensive, for example, and program leaders need to consider whether the anticipated money raised is worth the effort.

- Program leaders who are able to think creatively about how they frame their work succeed at tapping a wide range of funds. They do not change their program to meet the needs of funding sources. They consider how their program responds to diverse funding priorities (e.g., academic success, workforce development, and health and fitness) to make it eligible for additional funding.

- Program leaders should be strategic when analyzing funding opportunities. Successful programs often start by making use of their natural allies and existing relationships to secure smaller amounts of funding before reaching out through more difficult avenues.

Making the Most of In-Kind Resources

In 2004, an informal needs assessment of 150 middle school students in Merrill, Wisconsin, revealed that most of them did not have adult supervision in the afterschool hours. In response to this survey, the UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development staff formed a steering committee composed of key community figures from the school, library, hospital, and law enforcement agency. In a matter of months, the After the Bell afterschool program was up and running with funding from a Safe and Stable Families grant awarded by Lincoln County Social Services. Middle school students now have a safe and structured environment where they can be engaged after school. The committee continues to meet quarterly to guide the program.

In lieu of a fee structure, the program relies on in-kind donations from various sources to maintain its services. After the Bell uses the school district's lobby and auditorium, computers and resources located in the UW-Extension office, and donated food items from a local grocery store. It also receives crafts, supplies, and in-kind materials from individual community members for its enrichment activities. The program supplements its staff with personnel from the University of Wisconsin's limited term employment system. Donations from businesses and community organizations are used to pay staff to coordinate and supervise the program on a daily basis as well as to purchase supplies.

The school district received an afterschool tutoring grant, which the principal used to expand the existing program. After the Bell Plus offers additional tutoring services for struggling students. Not only are the two programs not competing for limited resources, they are able to create a better out-of-school time initiative by working together.

Strategy 2: Build Partnerships

Partnerships play a key role in financing and sustaining out-of-school time programs in rural communities. They can provide both financial and in-kind resources to support daily operations (see "Addressing Transportation Challenges Through Innovative Partnerships" on page 22). Partnerships can also increase program visibility, foster greater collaboration, make better use of existing resources, and develop public will for out-of-school time programming within the community. Moreover, they can help programs qualify for a wider range of grants, because many federal and state grant programs now look for a partnership between local agencies and organizations with similar missions as a criterion for award. For example, 21CCLC grants give funding priority to applicants demonstrating partnerships between school districts and community-based organizations.

Out-of-school time programs have many different potential partners. Program leaders should cast a wide net to identify and secure partners. Prospective partners may come from:

- the education community, including teachers, principals, superintendents, school staff, PTA members, and school committee members;

- the business sector, including local employers, retail establishments, and chambers of commerce;

- philanthropies;

- libraries;

- parks and recreation departments;

- civic, community, and youth-serving organizations;

- law enforcement agencies;

- child welfare agencies;

- health and mental health agencies;

- faith-based organizations;

- the higher education system, including community colleges and universities;

- art and cultural institutions; and

- the community, including families and youth.

Addressing Transportation Challenges Through Innovative Partnerships

Many rural out-of-school time program leaders struggle to secure the necessary resources to provide transportation for their programs. They are turning to traditional and nontraditional partners to meet this challenge.

School districts are valuable partners in providing transportation for both school-based and community-based out-of-school time programs. For school-based programs, school districts can help transport youth home after their program by adding a route or coordinating programming with a scheduled late bus. School districts can also alter their schedule to transport students to their community-based programs. Alternatively, out-of-school time programs can purchase buses or vans from school districts or other partners, such as boys and girls clubs.

Transportation not only is a challenge for out-of-school time programs, but also for various community-based initiatives. Community-based organizations often need transportation services for only one or two specific periods during the day. Program leaders can identify other providers with complementary schedules and share a van or bus to provide transportation services. For example, an agency serving the elderly may only need a van to transport the elderly to appointments in the morning and a faith-based organization may need a bus only on the weekend. Community leaders and program leaders can partner with other providers in the community to share costs and create suitable transportation plans.

Partnering with other programs can also enable out-of-school time programs to access funding for which they would otherwise not be eligible. For example, Arkansas provides state funding so organizations working with the elderly can purchase vehicles. An out-of-school time program could work with an eligible organization in its community to access these funds through a joint application.

Considerations for Using Strategy 2

■ Successful program leaders view the process of partnership-building as ongoing; they continue to expand their network and engage new partners each year. They also recognize that partnerships need to be nurtured over time, and they strive to stay attuned to their partners' needs.

■ Strong partnerships are beneficial to all parties. Many different people and organizations benefit from quality out-of-school time programs in rural communities. Highlighting what potential partners can gain from collaboration can help program leaders develop new partnerships.

■ Potential partners may be more receptive when the request for support is targeted or when they are approached by a current partner. Successful program leaders "do their homework" and think strategically about the best way to engage a new partner. They identify ways that partners can contribute to their program and note if a current partner or advocate has a relationship with the potential partner. They then leverage their current partners and advocates to broker new relationships.

Leveraging Existing Networks to Support Out-of-School Time Programming

An example of successful collaboration between existing networks can be found on the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana. The local boys and girls club, serving about 1,165 members across four communities on the reservation, allows local 4-H staff to use its facilities to offer out-of-school time programming. The 4-H curriculum includes art and sewing classes, cultural activities, leadership training, and lessons in animal husbandry for tribal youth and children. The boys and girls club also plays an active role in recruiting potential participants for the 4-H programming from its large membership. In turn, the 4-H cooking and gardening curriculum complements the boys and girls club's diabetes prevention program. The 4-H office also partners with schools and county extension offices to provide additional classes during school hours. Both these organizations are able to play to their strengths as they pool their resources.

Strategy 3: Tap Existing Networks

Many national, state, and regional networks can provide program support or infrastructure for state and local leaders wanting to build or expand out-of-school time programming in rural communities. Networks such as state extension offices, boys and girls clubs, or YMCAs sometimes partner to provide programming in areas without services (see "Leveraging Existing Networks to Support Out-of-School Time Programming" on page 23). Alternatively, they provide support to existing programs that may include staff, supplies, curriculum, facilities, staff training, and programming resources (see "Networks That Support Rural Out-of-School Time Programs" on page 25).

Working with existing networks can also help program leaders overcome some elements of isolation they experience working in rural communities. Successful rural program leaders find a way to share information and learn from their peers despite their remote location. For example, many existing networks can help disseminate best practices, lessons learned, and interesting innovations and even facilitate collaborations among rural programs serving children and youth.

Considerations for Using Strategy 3

- Engaging with national or state level initiatives can take time and effort. In some cases, working with existing networks impedes program flexibility, incurs costs for joining, or damages other partnerships. Program leaders should approach the decision to use these resources carefully and build these relationships strategically, ensuring the proposed collaboration is beneficial.

- Many different systems can support out-of-school time programming in rural communities, including education, child care, child welfare, juvenile justice, and workforce development. Each system will likely have different webs of support that reach rural youth. State and local leaders or intermediary organizations can help promote coordination and collaboration among these systems to improve the access and reach of these supports to youth in rural communities.

Networks That Support Rural Out-of-School Time Programs

Many national networks can support out-of-school time programs in rural areas. Following are examples of out-of-school time networks that have a strong presence in these communities.

Boys and Girls Clubs in Indian Country

Boys & Girls Clubs of America (www.bgca.org) maintains a national network of more than 4,000 clubs serving more than 4.8 million youth nationwide. In 1992, the national organization forged its first partnership on Native American lands with the Oglala Sioux of Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Today, Boys & Girls Clubs of America maintains a network of more than 200 Native American boys and girls clubs in 86 American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Native Alaskan communities, serving some 120,000 youth. This national initiative involves many public and private partners, which extends the resource potential for Native American communities. For more information, visit www.naclubs.org.

Public Education Network

The Public Education Network (PEN) is a national association of local education funds (LEFs) advancing school reform in low-income communities nationwide. LEFs are independent of the school districts in which they operate, have boards reflective of their communities, and work with public school systems serving low-income students. LEFs collaborate with school principals, teachers, administrators, boards and districts, businesses, community organizations, and local citizens to develop and implement whole school improvement strategies, create model programs, leverage resources, award grants, and enhance the standing of public schools in the community. Active in 33 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, PEN's 82 LEF members serve more than 11 million children in 1,600 school districts. LEFs can help mobilize rural communities by representing an education agenda at various community meetings, engaging the community in education efforts, and disseminating information on education reform to a wide audience. For more information, visit www.publiceducation.org.

Statewide Afterschool Networks

Statewide afterschool networks provide a vehicle for connecting various afterschool stakeholders. They help build partnerships and encourage policies that improve the quality, quantity, and sustainability of afterschool programs in their state. In addition, statewide afterschool networks hold trainings and forums, list available funding opportunities, and link rural providers to additional resources. Since 2002, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has provided core funding to statewide afterschool networks, with 38 state networks receiving funding. For more information on statewide afterschool networks, see http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/index.html.

Keys to Success for Rural Communities

A growing number of rural out-of-school time initiatives have succeeded in finding the resources needed to fund and sustain their efforts. Successful initiatives in rural communities share several characteristics.

Dynamic Leadership

Sustainable programs in rural areas often have a leader or group of key people who are determined and relentless. These individuals think creatively and strategically about places to look for support, focusing on traditional as well as nontraditional avenues of assistance. They stay abreast of any activities—within or outside their communities—that could potentially support their program. These entrepreneurs are passionate leaders who are able to be ambassadors for out-of-school time programming in the community and build the necessary relationships to employ their financing strategies.

Key Champions

In addition to having dynamic leadership, successful out-of-school time programs in rural communities have engaged champions from various sectors of the community to strengthen the visibility and sustainability of their work. These individuals typically have power and influence over resources and can use that power and influence to generate support for an organization, build public will, and garner increased support from public and private sources. Key champions also play an important role in engaging other stakeholders and recruiting other leaders to invest time and resources in an initiative.

An Ability to Capitalize on Community Strengths

Despite the numerous challenges that rural programs face, leaders of successful rural out-of-school time programs view their rural circumstances as an asset rather than a disadvantage. They do not presume their program's small size or remote location will keep it from securing funds. They find ways to promote the benefits of their unique situations and circumstances. Capitalizing on community strengths embodies a mindset that assets do exist in a particular rural community and that creatively assessing and exploiting these strengths will enable a program to sustain itself. For example, the small size of rural communities enables frequent communication with nearly all local stakeholders. Close communication is an important way to establish broad support in rural communities and can be a

challenge for programs in more urbanized communities. In addition, rural leaders are more likely than urban leaders to know the specific needs and unique resources of the community. In many larger communities, it is often necessary to conduct a needs assessment or resource mapping effort to understand community needs and capacities.

Broad Community Support

One asset in rural communities is that everyone tends to know everyone else. Leaders of successful programs take advantage of these connections. They use every tool and opportunity to persuade the community about the importance of out-of-school time programming, including regularly submitting articles to the local newspaper, giving updates at community forums or civic group meetings, and using parents and other key champions as spokespersons throughout the community. Many rural initiatives also host a community event or activity to increase their visibility, engage community members, and celebrate the contributions of participating youth. Initiatives with broad support often find that community members will rally if the program is at risk of losing resources.

Results Orientation

For all out-of-school time programs, demonstrating effectiveness plays a vital role in raising funds. A strong track record is critical to securing various public funds as well as support from the business and foundation communities. Programs can gather data on the academic and social impacts of their programming (e.g., grades, test scores, and attendance rates) as well as conduct parent and student surveys to document the program's effects and value to the community.

Networking and Information Sharing

Leaders of successful rural out-of-school time programs seek opportunities to network and share information with administrators in other rural communities. Contact with other leaders can provide support and inspiration to program leaders. Many states aim to convene rural leaders regularly in person or via technology to share ideas and experiences. Increased use of and access to technology, even in remote rural communities, helps promote ongoing communication through mechanisms such as e-mail or Listservs or through meetings via phone or satellite television connections when travel is not possible.

Conclusion

Out-of-school time programs can support rural youth and impart the skills they need to succeed. Finding adequate resources to finance and sustain these programs, however, can be difficult. It often requires additional effort by rural leaders to creatively weave together available resources to support their work and partner with others in the community to fully meet the needs of rural youth. The landscape, strategies, and examples presented in this brief can help out-of-school time program leaders consider new ways to approach the difficult tasks of financing and sustaining these important initiatives in rural communities.

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Organizations

Appalachian Regional Commission
202-884-7700
www.arc.gov

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
404-487-5700
www.bgca.org

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Office of Indian Education Programs
www.oiep.bia.edu
www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html

Coalition for Community Schools
c/o Institute for Educational Leadership
202-822-8405
www.communityschools.org

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
202-720-7441
www.csrees.usda.gov

National Child Care Information Center
1-800-616-2242
http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov

National 4-H Headquarters
202-720-2908
www.national4-hheadquarters.gov

Program in Education, Afterschool and Resiliency
Rural Afterschool Programming Resource Room
www.pearweb.org/research/rural.html

Public Education Network
202-628-7460
www.publiceducation.org

Rural Assistance Center
1-800-270-1898
www.raconline.org

Rural Community College Initiative
919-968-4531
http://www.mdcinc.org/rcci/

Rural Information Center
1-800-633-7701
www.nal.usda.gov/ric

The Rural School and Community Trust
703-243-1487
www.ruraledu.org

Save the Children
1-800-728-3843
www.savethechildren.org

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About The Finance Project

Helping leaders finance and sustain initiatives that lead to better futures for children, families, and communities.

The Finance Project is an independent nonprofit research, consulting, technical assistance, and training firm for public- and private-sector leaders nationwide. It specializes in helping leaders plan and implement financing and sustainability strategies for initiatives that benefit children, families, and communities. Through a broad array of tools, products, and services, The Finance Project helps leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships. To learn more, visit www.financeproject.org.

Sustaining and Expanding Youth Programs and Policies

This publication is part of a series of tools and resources on financing and sustaining out-of-school time programming developed by The Finance Project with support from Philip Morris USA. These tools and resources are intended to help policymakers, program developers, and community leaders develop innovative strategies for implementing, financing, and sustaining effective programs and policies. To access these resources and for more information on this project, visit www.financeproject.org/irc.cfm.

The Out-of-School Time Technical Assistance Project

This strategy brief is part of a series of technical assistance resources on financing and sustaining out-of-school time and community school initiatives developed by The Finance Project with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. These tools and resources are intended to assist policy makers, program developers and community leaders in developing financing and sustainability strategies to support effective out-of-school time and community school initiatives. For additional information on this project, visit: www.financeproject.org/osthome.htm.

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