

Communities at the Forefront:

Elevating Girls' Sports
Through Local Programs

*Encompassing data from the Sports 4 Life
national and regional initiatives*



Our Mission

We are the ally, advocate and catalyst for tomorrow's leaders. We exist to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life.

Letter from the CEO

The Women's Sports Foundation is the ally, advocate, and catalyst for tomorrow's leaders. We exist to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life.

Founded by tennis legend and social justice icon Billie Jean King in 1974, the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) is a champion of leadership and change. We are building a future where every girl and every woman has the opportunity to participate in sport and realize her power and potential. We are building a movement – inspiring confidence, persistence and leadership so the next generation can thrive.

The WSF is committed to ensuring that all girls and women have equal access to physical activity and sport and the lifelong benefits that accrue. The WSF is especially focused on improving opportunity for girls in underserved communities, particularly girls of color who are doubly hit by gender and race and face complex and intersecting challenges. Glaring disparities in resources and opportunities persist. To meet these pressing needs, the WSF always has its ear to the ground, working closely with program leaders, coaches, parents and girls, to inform its work.

Five years ago, with generous support from founding partner espnW, the WSF launched Sports 4 Life, a national program that provides grants, technical assistance and training to community-based organizations throughout the country that serve predominantly African American and Hispanic girls. For many organizations, the Sports 4 Life program is a lifeline. The funding is meant to help organizations deliver structured, developmental sports programming to girls ages 11 to 18 with a focus on four foundational areas: leadership, self-esteem, confidence, and perseverance.

The WSF also provides its community partners with resources and training for professional development. Beyond support from the WSF, the Sports 4 Life program pays even larger dividends, as the ripple effect is far reaching. Organizations can leverage the relationship with the WSF to bolster outreach to community stakeholders and other funders.

In 2017, the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation generously provided the WSF with funding to implement a four-year regional model of this programming in Western New York and Southeast Michigan. This effort focuses on capacity building as well as programming and is creating a roadmap for other organizations to achieve sustainability.

Communities at the Forefront: Elevating Girls' Sports through Local Programs shines a spotlight on the extraordinary leadership, programming, and practices of our local partners. The data and insights collected over the past five years makes clear that community-based programming is having a tremendous positive impact on the lives of girls. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is creating new challenges around keeping girls physically active and engaged in sport, this research yields fresh insights on what works, how it manifests, and what we can do now and in the future to ensure girls are healthy and strong and they #KeepPlaying. All girls. All women. All sports.



Dr. Deborah Antoine, CEO, Women's Sports Foundation

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The Women's Sports Foundation thanks its National Partners espnW and ESPN, Gatorade, NBC Sports Group and Yahoo Sports for their year-round support and commitment to help strengthen and expand opportunities for all girls and all women through all sports.

Special thanks to espnW, the cofounding partner of the Sports 4 Life program, and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation for also providing funding for this important initiative.

espnW is a global multiplatform brand dedicated to engaging and inspiring women through sports. espnW.com, the brand's content home, offers total access to female athletes and the sports they play, takes fans inside the biggest events, and captures the biggest trends in sports life/style. espnW also provides a unique point of view on the sports stories that matter most to women and highlights the crossroads of sports and culture. Founded in July 2010, espnW's content and voices live across digital, television, radio, films, events, educational platforms and social media.



The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grant-making organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and



Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his Buffalo Bills franchise. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. The Foundation has a grant-making capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information, visit www.rcwjrf.org.

Finally, we thank the amazing Sports 4 Life program leaders, girl participants, and community stakeholders who gave so generously of their time to take the surveys, be interviewed, and provide feedback so that this report would accurately reflect their experiences in and knowledge of girls' sports programming.

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About the Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sports and life. We are an ally, an advocate, and a catalyst. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we strengthen and expand participation and leadership opportunities through research, advocacy, community programming, and a wide variety of collaborative partnerships. The Women's Sports Foundation has positively shaped the lives of millions of youth, high school and collegiate student-athletes, elite athletes, and coaches. We're building a future where every girl and woman can #KeepPlaying and unlock the lifelong benefits of sport participation. All girls. All women. All sports. To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org

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Executive Summary

The benefits of sports participation for young women are tremendous: increased confidence and higher self-esteem, a more positive body image, better overall physical health, lower rates of obesity, better grades in school, a higher graduation rate, and a greater likelihood to attend college. Quality sports programs can also provide a leadership training experience for girls. However, African American and Hispanic girls are far less likely than other youth to have full access to sports through these various pathways.

African American and Hispanic girls, especially those living in under-resourced communities or attending high-minority schools, face barriers to accessing sports at every level. Compared with their peers, they are more likely to begin sports later and drop out earlier. Some barriers are due to urban environments that are polluted, unsafe, or lack infrastructure for play areas or reliable transportation. Other barriers stem from racial and ethnic disparities in who can access and afford to play both in communities and in schools, as well as who makes the team. Additionally, there are gender disparities in the way that many communities still offer and value sports programs for boys more than girls.

In October 2014, the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), and espnW co-founded "Sports 4 Life" (S4L), a national grant program to increase participation and retention of African American and Hispanic girls in sports, especially in under-resourced communities. These grants are intended to help small and mid-size organizations in all 50 states create or expand sustainable developmental sports programming for girls in middle and high school, as well as provide high-quality sports programming to foster strong recruitment and retention of African American and Hispanic girls. The program also seeks to create leadership opportunities and increase public awareness to address disparities in girls' access to sports. The average award is \$5,296.

In 2018, drawing on lessons learned from the national initiative, the WSF established a regional model to delve deeper into communities. The Sports 4 Life regional initiative, funded by the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation, expanded on the success of the first three years of the Sports 4 Life Initiative by focusing on a four-year investment model in two geographic regions to: (1) to strengthen the capacity of local organizations and (2) develop and/or expand quality youth sport programming to increase the number of girls in underserved communities who participate in athletics. Regions of focus for the Sports 4 Life regional initiative are



Bridge the Gap

Western New York and Southeast Michigan. Within each region, four organizations will be funded for four years, at \$20,000 per year.

- Nationally, Sports 4 Life made 258 grants to 162 organizations over the past five years (2014-19) for a total of \$1,601,750.
- Grants were regionally diverse and reached 34 states plus Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Funded organizations represented 36 different sports.
- Between 2014 and 2018 the Sports 4 Life community partners reached 45,466 girls.
- Most girls were in middle or high school and 82% identified as African American or Hispanic.

This report presents findings from data collected over the last five years from the Women's Sports Foundation's Sports 4 Life grantees. The S4L evaluation team developed several research tools customized to measure strength in the key objectives identified by the national and regional initiatives, and to examine these objectives from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders—the girls who participate, their program leaders, and community stakeholders. These tools, combined with qualitative data drawn from interviews, think tanks that brought together regional partners and the WSF to identify key regional priorities, and open-ended survey questions, provide



Woodcraft Rangers

a robust account of S4L's contributions to the field of positive sports youth development.¹

The Youth Athletic Fitness Survey (YAFS) was designed to capture basic information about girls' backgrounds, behaviors, interests, attitudes, and identities. More than 900 girls in S4L programs have taken the survey. It includes specific measures of the WSF's four foundational benefits of sports: leadership, self-esteem, confidence, and perseverance. Key findings include:

- Eighty-three percent of girls agreed that participating in Sports 4 Life programs helped them get better grades in school. Girls indicated that sports helped them focus, manage academic-related stress, and increase their self-confidence.
- Girls in S4L programs rated themselves highly on leadership identity, sports and exercise self-efficacy, and perseverance. Positive body image was high but had the most room for growth. High scores in these areas were positively and significantly correlated with having close female friends who participate in sports and exercising more days per week.
- Over three quarters (80%) of girls responded that their mother provided the greatest source of support for sports participation. Fathers were cited by 57% of girls as providing encouragement for sports participation most of the time.
- A remarkable 84% of girls indicated that their parents worried about them being safe when moving around their cities. However, only 15% of girls themselves didn't feel safe when traveling to sports practices or exercise. Almost half of girls (45%)

¹ All the tools used in the Sports 4 Life evaluation may be requested from the Women's Sports Foundation.

indicated they had difficulty finding transportation to sports or exercise.

- Just over one-third of girls felt their schools were not offering girls' sports that interested them, and just over one-quarter had challenges due to family responsibilities or lack of money for participation.

The evaluation team also gathered perspectives of more than 200 program leaders and stakeholders such as parents, coaches, and community leaders through the Adult Leader Survey (ALS), the Exemplary Program Leader Survey (EPLS), interviews, and focus groups.

Key insights included:

- Program leaders emphasized that most girls join their programs with little to no previous experience playing sports, but that participation helps girls create an athletic identity and fuels more participation and interest in sports. Only 17% thought girls were already participating regularly in sports before their programs. Leaders noted the importance of connecting sports skills to life skills.
- Program leaders affirmed that girls were more likely to participate in sports regularly and participate in more opportunities after S4L programming. Eighty-nine percent thought girls would continue to participate regularly after their first season.
- Leaders were more likely to see girls taking a leadership role in other community/school or sports activities after they had participated in programming for at least one season, 72% vs. 15% for community/school activities and 72% vs. 12% for sports activities.
- While most program leaders agreed that girls have adequate physical skills for sports participation (88%), less than two-thirds agreed that girls get enough physical activity (64%).
- Fifty-nine percent of program leaders felt that girls needed more help with academics.
- Many program leaders were concerned about barriers to participation from their families. For example, only 61% of program leaders agreed that girls have adequate family support to participate and just over half (53%) of program leaders perceived that girls have other family obligations that limit attendance.

In November 2018 the Women's Sports Foundation administered a brief assessment to 64 community sports programs within the WSF's network of Sports 4 Life national initiative current and former grantees to identify the common ways that exemplary programs address barriers and meet the needs (and optimize on the strengths) of participating girls. These programs have been identified by the WSF as exemplary for their service in providing quality sports opportunities to underserved girls.

- Approximately 80% of the exemplary programs have specific policies or program-level practices aimed at increasing girls' participation and retention in sports, which ranged from targeting the provision of tangible supports (i.e., providing clothing/equipment and transportation), to ensuring equal access (i.e., the development of curriculum/lessons that specifically target girls), and to building a community of support (i.e., prioritizing the hiring of female coaches as well as coaches of the same race/ethnicity as the girls they serve).
- Exemplary programs identified parent involvement and education as another critical component of support with 91% of programs stating they build relationships with parents and get them actively involved, and 75% of programs providing some form of parent education, such as separate parent meetings, brochures, etc.
- More than four out of five (83%) surveyed exemplary programs have training for coaches when they first join a program, and 72% indicated they have annual training in which their coaches regularly attend workshops and/or seek specialized coaching certifications.
- Eighty-three percent of exemplary programs indicated their coaches use specific strategies to support girls' interest and engagement in their program, and 84% of the programs surveyed indicated they used specific strategies to build girls' confidence and skills in sport. These strategies include making sure the girls are safe (99%) and having fun (97%); developing girls' skills on (85%) and off the field (97%); fostering team morale/cohesion (93%), friendships (92%), and team-based goals; and building close, trusting relationships with the girls (94%), including getting to know the girls as people, not just athletes.

The regional initiative focused on a guided, capacity-building process during its first two years. Through working closely with eight organizations across two geographic regions, the WSF was able to help these regional partners take concrete steps toward achieving their goals by identifying capacity-building needs and priorities as well as strategies to address them. After working through a capacity-building self-assessment and planning tools designed by the WSF and the evaluation team, regional partners reported the following:

- Regional partners gathered information to identify opportunities to strengthen organizational capacity to serve girls. The most common strategies prioritized include implementing more program measurement and evaluation, providing more staff training, and growing marketing and communications efforts and social media outreach.

- Organizations identified many areas for improvement, but program implementation and design were the most common areas organizations selected for capacity building.
- Within the areas identified for improvement, program measurement and program planning were the most common capacity-building sub-areas for participating organizations. Fewer goals were focused on areas of funding or program sustainability compared to other goal areas.
- Regional think tanks led by the WSF, which brought together regional partners twice yearly for brainstorming and collaboration, addressed the need for girls to be able to try multiple sports to find something they enjoy and develop an athletic identity in light of the prevailing "pay to play" model that limits a girls' ability to try new sports, including those that are non-competitive.
- A community stakeholder survey of a convenience sample of community members/leaders involved with regional partners showed that they regarded these programs as valuable and accessible. They were less sure if the programs were communicating well with parents, schools, and other community organizations.



Citywide Aquatics, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

Introduction



Wendy Hilliard Gymnastics Foundation

The benefits of sports participation for young women are tremendous: increased confidence and higher self-esteem, a more positive body image, better overall physical health, lower rates of obesity, better grades in school, a higher graduation rate, and a greater likelihood to attend college. Quality sports programs can also provide a leadership training experience for girls. However, African American and Hispanic girls are far less likely than other youth to have full access to sports through these various pathways.

Sports may be the most popular organized activity in which youth engage (Holt, 2016). For many youth, there are several opportunities to play sports formally and informally throughout their lives. They may have informal opportunities with friends and family in their neighborhoods, physical education classes as a part of their school day, after-school sports teams supported by school budgets, community sports recreational teams, private coaching, or “travel” sports clubs.

However, African American and Hispanic girls are far less likely than other youth to have full access to sports through these various pathways (PRRAC, 2015; Thompson, 2018). Girls in these demographics are less likely to play sports than their white peers and more likely to enter sports at a later age and drop out earlier (Sabo & Veliz, 2008, 2014; Zarrett et al., 2018). Low-income, African American girls are most likely to have never played sports compared to girls and boys of different income levels and races (Zarrett et al., 2020).

African American and Hispanic girls are doubly hit by both gender and race disparities in sports (Staurowsky et al., 2015). These disparities are compounded by the fact that girls in these racial/ethnic groups are disproportionately affected by poverty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, n.d.), which is linked with scarcity of safe places to play, limited public transportation, or the need to contribute to family child care or income (PRRAC, 2015).

While African American and Hispanic girls face similar barriers to access, they have different risk factors when it comes to physical and mental health (Staurowsky et al., 2015), and different dominant cultural messages that may impact their self-esteem, body image, and access to role models (Duncan et al., 2015; Jones, 2018; V. Lopez, 2019; O’Neal, 2018).

Benefits of Sports Participation

Participation in sports has several benefits to individuals in the areas of positive youth development (Holt, 2016); physical and mental health, including better body image and overall quality of life (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Zarrett et al., 2018); positive self-perceptions (Duncan et al., 2015); academics and general cognitive functioning (Hartmann, 2008; Hillman et al., 2014); and social emotional competencies (Kahn et al., 2019).

Youth who participate in sports are more likely to participate in other extracurricular activities, increasing their ability to contribute to their communities (M. H. Lopez & Moore, 2006). Sports participation is commonly acknowledged as a key training ground for leadership skills (Kniffin et al., 2015) and has potential education and career benefits (Stevenson, 2010). This is reflected in the fact that a disproportionate number of CEOs, especially female CEOs, have extensive experience in competitive sports (Hess, 2017).

Youth who participate in sports are healthier and less likely to engage in health-risk behaviors than youth who do not participate (Rosewater, 2010). However, girls and women of color are more vulnerable to the negative effects of chronic illnesses and other health concerns that would otherwise be mediated through more active lifestyles. Over one-quarter of African American girls and one-fifth of Hispanic girls report not being physically active for at least 60 minutes in the last week, while less than one-sixth of white girls do (PRRAC, 2015; CDC, n.d.). Research shows that women of color generally are more at risk for heart and respiratory problems (heart attack, high blood pressure, stroke, etc.)

and have a higher incidence of obesity and diabetes (Staurowsky et al., 2015).

Common Barriers to Opportunity and Access

African American and Hispanic girls, especially those living in low-income neighborhoods or attending high-minority schools, face barriers to accessing sports at every level.

- **Healthy places to live.** Girls who live in high-crime neighborhoods have lower odds of being physically active, and higher odds of being overweight/obese (Chapparo et al., 2019). Many neighborhoods where African American and Hispanic girls are disproportionately concentrated have higher rates of traffic and crime and fewer parks and other outdoor spaces, grossly limiting opportunities to play safely outdoors. In addition, poor housing quality, high rates of pollution, and “food deserts” may contribute to asthma and obesity, further limiting the opportunity to take advantage of physical activities (Claflin et al., 2017; García et al., 2009; PRRAC, 2015).
- **Participation in school sports teams.** Many economically disadvantaged African American and Hispanic girls attend schools with fewer resources for academic and extracurricular activities. Opportunities to play sports are diminished for all students at these schools, particularly girls. However, even within these conditions, girls of color receive disproportionately fewer spots on teams than white girls, white boys, and boys of color (PRRAC, 2015). As pay-for-play sport opportunities grow increasingly more popular and as the expense of school- and community-based sports also increases, disparities in access to sports for lower-income and middle-income families have only increased in recent years (Eyler et al., 2018; Sabo & Veliz, 2014).
- **Community programs.** Recreational programs may be less available to these girls. WSF research found that about half of African American parents (51%) and Hispanic parents (49%) felt that their “community offers more sports programs for boys than for girls” (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).



Natasha Watley Foundation

Sports 4 Life Grant Overview

National Initiative

In October 2014, the Women's Sports Foundation, with support from national partner espnW, launched "Sports 4 Life," a national grant program to increase participation and retention of African American and Hispanic girls in sports, especially in under-resourced communities.

The Sports 4 Life (S4L) national initiative aims to achieve the following goals:

- Create leadership opportunities and improve the overall physical health of African American and Hispanic girls through sports;
- Strengthen the capacity of small and mid-size organizations to:
 - Create or expand sustainable and developmental sports programming in a girl-only environment for middle- and high-school-aged girls, and
 - Provide high-quality sports programming to foster strong recruitment and retention of African American and Hispanic girls in middle and high school;
- Make grants to organizations in all 50 states; and
- Increase public awareness about the disparities that exist among girls playing sports (i.e. gender, race, income) and the impact of inactivity on health and wellness of girls nationwide.

For each funding cycle, the Initiative has had specific objectives for the number of girls and organizations reached, renewal of funding to programs meeting goals, and increasing the funding pool to be able to meet funding needs. In 2016, the Initiative added the goal of providing research on how Sports 4 Life organizations were helping girls academically.

Regional Initiative

In 2018, drawing on lessons learned from the national initiative, the WSF established a regional model to delve deeper into communities. The Sports 4 Life regional initiative, funded by the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation, expanded on the success of the first three years of the Sports 4 Life Initiative by focusing on a four-year investment model in two geographic regions to: (1) to strengthen the capacity of local organizations and (2) develop and/or expand quality youth sport programming to increase the number of girls in underserved

communities who participate in athletics (with a focus on girls of color wherever appropriate, given the community demographics).

Regions of focus for the Sports 4 Life regional initiative are Western New York and Southeast Michigan. Within each region, four organizations will be funded for four years, at \$20,000 per year. The program has five primary objectives:

Objective 1: Strengthen capacity. The first two years of the grant focused on capacity building, which includes areas such as organizational management, board or volunteer leadership, fundraising, and resource development. The aim of this first two years was to generate infrastructure for long-term sustainability beyond the grant period.

Objective 2: Support expansion and addition of programming. The second two years of the grant are intended to fund direct programming to increase the number of girls, ages 11-18, participating in sports through the expansion of existing programs and/or the addition of new sports opportunities and programs.

Objective 3: Provide training and professional development. Twice each year, the WSF will plan site visits to include technical assistance and training on capacity building, leadership, evaluation, and positive youth development, among other topics. The WSF also will provide technical assistance and expert guidance throughout the year in the form of regularly scheduled calls, webinars, and virtual office hours.

Objective 4: Foster opportunities to network and collaborate. Throughout this process, the WSF will facilitate collaborations between partner organizations and provide opportunities to share tactics and optimize resources. Ideally, the Initiative will take a learning lab approach to share ideals and struggles and generate opportunities for research.

Objective 5: Educate parents and youth-serving community leaders. The benefits of improvements to organizational capacity, increased understanding of positive youth development practices, and increased understanding of the challenges facing low-income girls and girls of color should be shared with community stakeholders. Organizations will receive assistance in how to foster greater support (financial, technical, and educational) for programs, share information about the program and its benefits to underserved girls and the community, and work within communities to create opportunities to support girls in new ways (e.g., arranging transportation, producing bilingual outreach materials).

Research Methodology

This report presents findings from data collected over the last five years from the Women’s Sports Foundation’s Sports 4 Life grantees. The S4L evaluation team has developed several research tools customized to measure strength in the key objectives identified by the national and regional initiatives, and to examine these objectives from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders—the girls who participate, their program leaders, and community stakeholders. These tools, combined with qualitative data drawn from interviews, learning labs (referred to as think tanks), and open-ended survey questions, provide a robust account of S4L’s contributions to the field of positive sports youth development.

Methods and Measures

Several surveys have been developed for the WSF and, more specifically, Sports 4 Life programs. The evaluation also drew on interviews, focus groups, and WSF grant documentation and grantee reports.

The Youth Athletic/Fitness Survey (YAFS). The YAFS is a survey developed for the WSF by Dr. Don Sabo and Dr. Renee Cadzow at the Center for Research on Physical Activity, Sport & Health at D’Youville College. It is a seven-page questionnaire that contains 35 distinct measures of girls’ backgrounds, behaviors, interests, attitudes, and identities. It is designed to provide program heads, coaches, or instructors with basic information about the girls in their programs. In 2017, there was an additional academic section that was not completed in other years, and in 2018 a few additional questions were added. Philliber also created an online version of the questionnaire and updated a previously created Spanish translation, as well as an instructional webinar for program leaders on the administration of the YAFS.

The Adult Leader Survey (ALS). The ALS is a 21-question online survey that asks program leaders about the frequency of program sessions; program reach; characteristics of girls in the program, such as interest in sports and leadership before/after joining the program; and information about program leader demographics and experience.

End of Year Reports. At the end of each program year, grantees fill out an annual progress report for the WSF. This report includes questions regarding the size of the program, enrollment, and retention. The report also asks for limited demographics of the girls in the program. There are open-ended questions about progress made



XS Tennis and Education Foundation

toward goals and overall opportunities and challenges experienced as a part of this Initiative.

Community Stakeholder Survey (CSS). This survey is for individuals in the community who support the program or benefit from it—typically parents, coaches, teachers, other youth leaders, donors, etc. The survey includes questions about stakeholders’ relationships to the program (parent, coach, community leader, etc.); how long they have been engaged with the program; their perceptions of the program quality, especially in areas related to positive youth development and providing opportunities for girls, their perceptions of program needs and challenges, and their perceptions of how the program communicates with the community it serves.

Capacity-Building Self-Assessment Tool. This regional initiative tool was introduced during the first site visit programs have with the WSF. This was designed as an internal tool for each organization to facilitate:

- Clarity and team building around shared goals, priorities, and program planning
- Integration of best practices to address greatest needs and maximize effectiveness
- Guidance for implementation, measurement, sustainability, and growth
- Assessment of changes over time



Girls in the Game

Capacity-Building Planning Tool. The results from the capacity-building self-assessment were used as a foundation for developing this regional initiative planning tool. It helped to identify priority areas including:

- Clarity and team building around 3-4 prioritized goals
- Detailed, measurable objectives to meet each goal
- Activities designed to meet each goal
- Timetable
- Identification of lead organizer and other key people participating in goals
- Updates/Progress toward goals

Exemplary Program Leader Survey. In November 2018 the Women’s Sports Foundation administered a brief assessment to 64 community sports programs within the WSF’s network of Sports 4 Life national initiative current and former grantees to identify the common ways that exemplary programs address barriers and meet the needs (and optimize on the strengths) of participating girls. These programs have been identified by the WSF as exemplary for their service in providing quality sports opportunities to underserved girls.

Data collection

The evaluation team provided webinars, evaluation training manuals, materials, and technical support to organizations that volunteered to participate in the research efforts. A full listing of the participating organizations, their primary sports, years of data collection, geographic regions, and number of surveys collected, is located in Appendix 2, Tables 33 and 34 on pages 57-60.

Number of data points collected from 2014-19 (national initiative) and 2018-19 (regional initiative)

| | National Initiative | Regional Initiative |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Youth/Athletic Fitness Survey (YAFS) | 928 | 285 |
| Adult Leader Survey (ALS) | 146 | 75 |
| Community Stakeholder Survey (CSS) | N/A | 65 |
| Capacity-Building Self-Assessment Tool | N/A | 8 |
| Capacity-Building Planning Self-Assessment Tool | N/A | 8 |
| Interviews with program leaders | 8 | N/A |
| Grantee Survey on Academics | 50 | N/A |
| Exemplary Program Leader Survey (EPLS) | 64 | N/A |
| Grantee Application and/or Final Reports | 242 | N/A |

Sports 4 Life Granting Summary

Sports 4 Life made 258 grants to 162 organizations over the past five years (2014–19) for a total of \$1,601,750. Between 2014 and 2018 the Sports 4 Life grantees reached 45,466 girls.² Most girls were in middle school or high school and 82% identified as African American or Hispanic.

Each year since 2014, the Women’s Sports Foundation, with support from espnW and other funders, has invited organizations to apply for the Sports 4 Life national initiative. Organizations can use their funds for a variety of purposes. The majority (89%) of programs in 2018–19 used funds to expand an existing program, while the remaining 11% wanted to start a new program. These programs met for an average of 33 weeks per year, with a range of three to 52 weeks per year.

More recently, the Sports 4 Life regional initiative, launched in 2018, targeted a four-year investment model with eight organizations in two geographic regions: Western New York and Southeast Michigan. The regional initiative is supported by a grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr., Foundation. These organizations receive \$20,000 per year, the first two years of which focus on capacity building and the second two years on strengthening/expanding girls’ programming to engage in capacity building activities. These capacity-building activities in the first two years are intended to drive program growth or development in the last two years.

Among national initiative grantees, awards averaged \$5,296 per year for a total of \$1,281,750. Regional initiative grantees were awarded \$20,000 per year for the past two years for a sum of \$320,000.

National initiative grantees estimated on average that that 42% of girls served were African American and 40% were Hispanic or Latina. Among grantees in 2017–18 (the first year the question was asked), 38% served girls with a disability. The average number of girls served per award was 250.

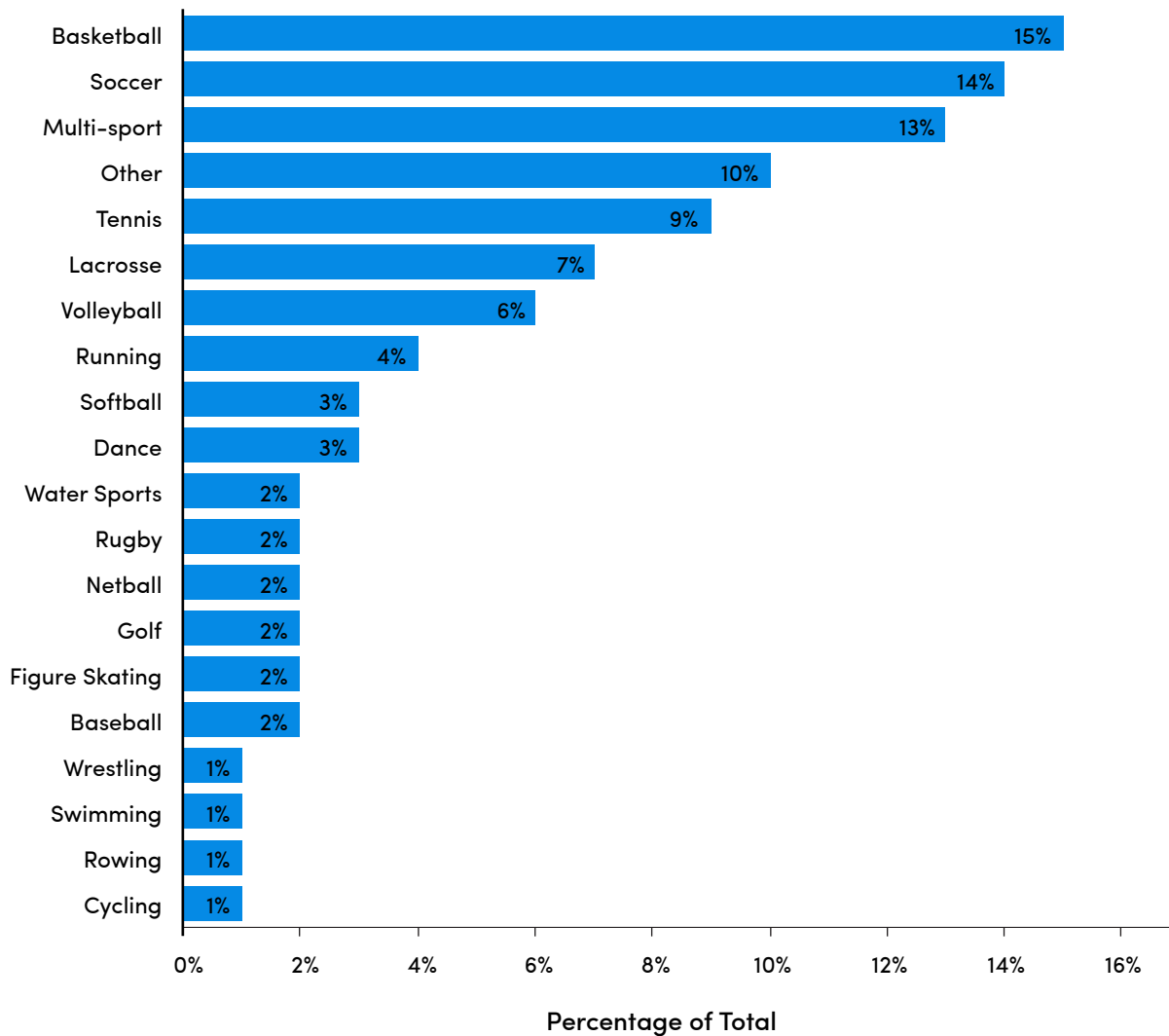
Combined, the national and regional initiative grantees, represented 36 different sports between 2014 and 2019. The most funded sports were basketball (15%), soccer (14%), tennis (9%), lacrosse (7%), and volleyball (6%) (see Figure 1 on following page).

² Final reports were received from 171 of 192 national grantees between 2014 and 2018. Final reports from 2019 were not yet available at the time this report was produced. The regional initiative grantees are not included in this count because they will not report enrollment data and demographics until years 3 and 4 of the initiative.

“The Sports 4 Life grant helped us expose more minority girls to the sport of swimming that would not otherwise have a chance to learn and participate. It allowed the team to increase their numbers and also reach a target group that they always had wanted to work with. The girls were able to overcome a stigma that minorities cannot swim and cannot swim well. We believe all of the girls that participated had life changes. They can now take a skill that they learned and use it in so many ways. Some of the girls have talked about getting jobs, swimming for their schools, and swimming for fitness. Everything about the girls’ experience was life-changing and complimentary to their future endeavors and outlook towards themselves and others.”

— Program Leader

Figure 1. Sports funded between 2014 and 2019



Source: Grantee Applications and Final Reports, N = 258

Note: "Other" includes: Other (3), Field Hockey (1), Football (1), General Fitness (1), Karate (1), Roller Derby (1), Yoga (1)

“The Sports 4 Life grant helped fund the program expansion in order to create the new county team. Participation increased by 25%, enabling 120 girls to join program. With the additional coaches hired, we were able to provide quality programming, maintain low coach to participant ratios and ensure each participant received one-on-one mentorship.... The program helps participants establish healthy habits and positive life skills for a lifetime, which has a ripple effect on family and friends.”

– Program Leader

Where Were National and Regional Grantees Located?

Grants were regionally diverse and reached 34 states plus Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The regional initiative was focused in Western New York and Southeast Michigan.

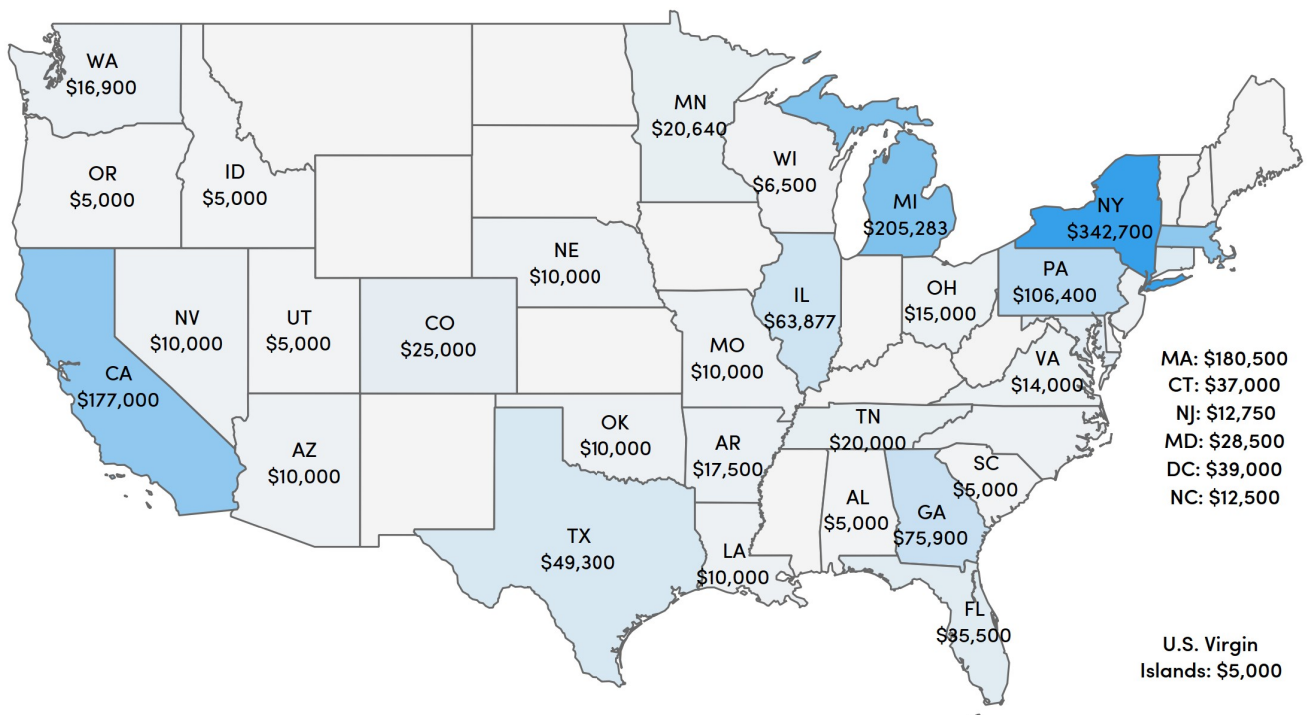
One third (32%) of the organizations were in the Mid-Atlantic states (including Washington, D.C.), with the West (19%) and South (16%) (including the U.S. Virgin Islands) also well-represented. Remaining regions receiving funding were the Midwest (16%), New England (12%), and the Southwest (5%). See Appendix 1 on page 43 for more detailed information.

“The Sports 4 Life grant supported the salary of one of our coaches who ran our leagues in schools during the 2017–18 school year. Without support of partners like the Women’s Sports Foundation, [our program] would not be able to offer our cost-free sports leagues to students.”

— Program Leader

Figure 2: Total funding by state (national and regional initiatives)

AK: \$5,000



How Did Funding Patterns Change Over the Past Five Years?

The Sports 4 Life national initiative has had five rounds of funding awards, beginning with a small grant to three organizations in 2014. S4L funding greatly increased in 2018 with the addition of the regional initiative.

The first round of funding in 2014 was a national initiative pilot that provided grants to only three organizations. In 2015, the number of requesting organizations was far greater than anticipated. After the initial round of funding, a second round was added in the same year to try to meet the need. The total funding increased from \$194,250 in 2016 to \$475,000 in 2018, an increase of 145%. In 2019, there were fewer donors, and the total amount was lower (see Figure 3 on following page).

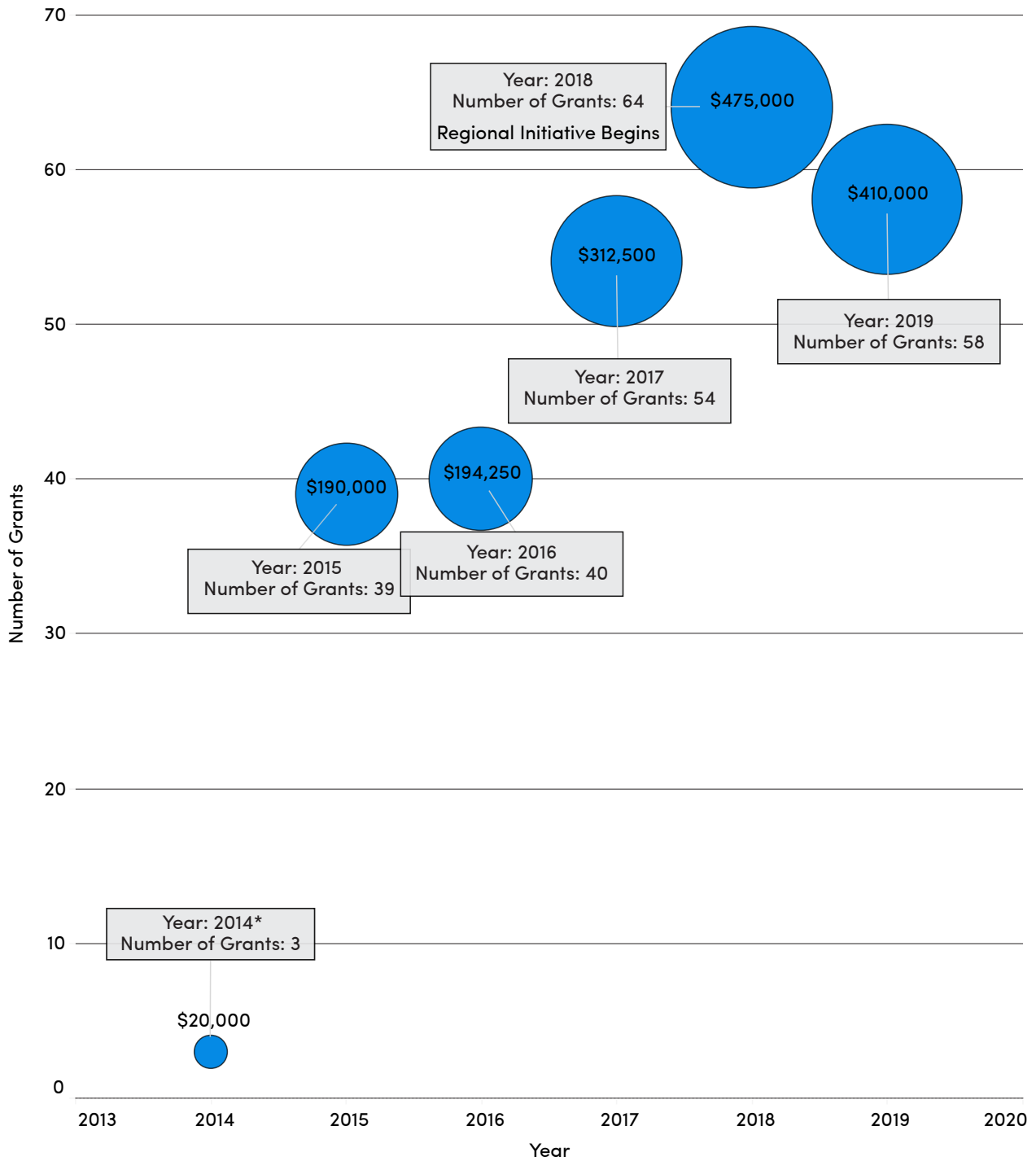
“The Sports 4 Life program allowed for us to have more funding to reach more girls. The available funding pushed us to explore new outlets to reach our girls. It also included the development of our organized AAU program, the off-site outings to college campuses, and the ability to bring nutritional partners showing the girls more on-site education about healthy living— these are just a few examples of why this funding was important for us.”

— Program Leader

“The funding enabled us to reach the community and bring in folks who had no idea about the organization or that we offered more than tennis. Because of the press release that was prepared by the WSF, local news media actually came to our facility to talk about the program. Because of this coverage, we received a great response and were able to bring the sport of tennis and the STEM career of coding to girls of color. They were introduced to two areas that are not readily available to everyone, and it was FREE. The WSF grant covered expenses for coaches, equipment, supplies, etc.”

— Program Leader

Figure 3. Number of organizations and amount of grant funding over the past five years



Source: WSF Grantee Database.

Bubble size reflects the relative amount of funding each year.

*The Sports 4 Life initiative began 2014 with three model grants, leading into the 2015 grant cycle.

Results from the Youth Athletic Fitness Survey: A Five-Year Look Back at the National Initiative

The Youth Athletic Fitness Survey (YAFS) was designed to capture basic information about girls’ backgrounds, behaviors, interests, attitudes, and identities. It includes specific measures of the WSF’s four foundational benefits of sports: leadership, self-esteem, confidence, and perseverance. Over 900 girls in S4L programs have taken the survey.

Youth Athletic Fitness Surveys (YAFS) were completed by 928 girls representing 23 national initiative organizations between 2014 and 2019. The most organizations represented were from the South (26%) and West (26%). The remaining organizations were in the Middle Atlantic (17%), Midwest (17%), New England (9%), and Southwest (5%). Lists of organizations who participated in the survey, as well as how many youth completed the survey (range of 4–166, with an average of 40) are in Appendix 1. Programs were asked to indicate their interest in having a sample of their girls take the YAFS and as an incentive were told they would receive an individualized report for their organization. Organizations were selected to represent diverse geographic areas, sports, and program size. Girls who were surveyed were representative of the age range and racial/ethnic groups prioritized for S4L funding. Among participants surveyed:

- The average age was 12.9 years.
- 42% of girls were in grades 6, 7, or 8 and the average grade level was 7.8.³
- 50% of participants identified as Hispanic, while 24% identified as Black, and another 24% as White.
- 78% of participants live with two adults in the same household.
- 35% of participants’ mothers have a college degree or more.
- 42% of participants were in their first year of the program, while 31% had been participating for more than one year.

Girls generally were extremely positive about playing sports and enjoying exercise. Just fewer than half played on more than one sports team. Fewer than one-third exercised almost every day, with most (58%) exercising two to five days per week (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of girls scoring high on sports and exercise interest and participation

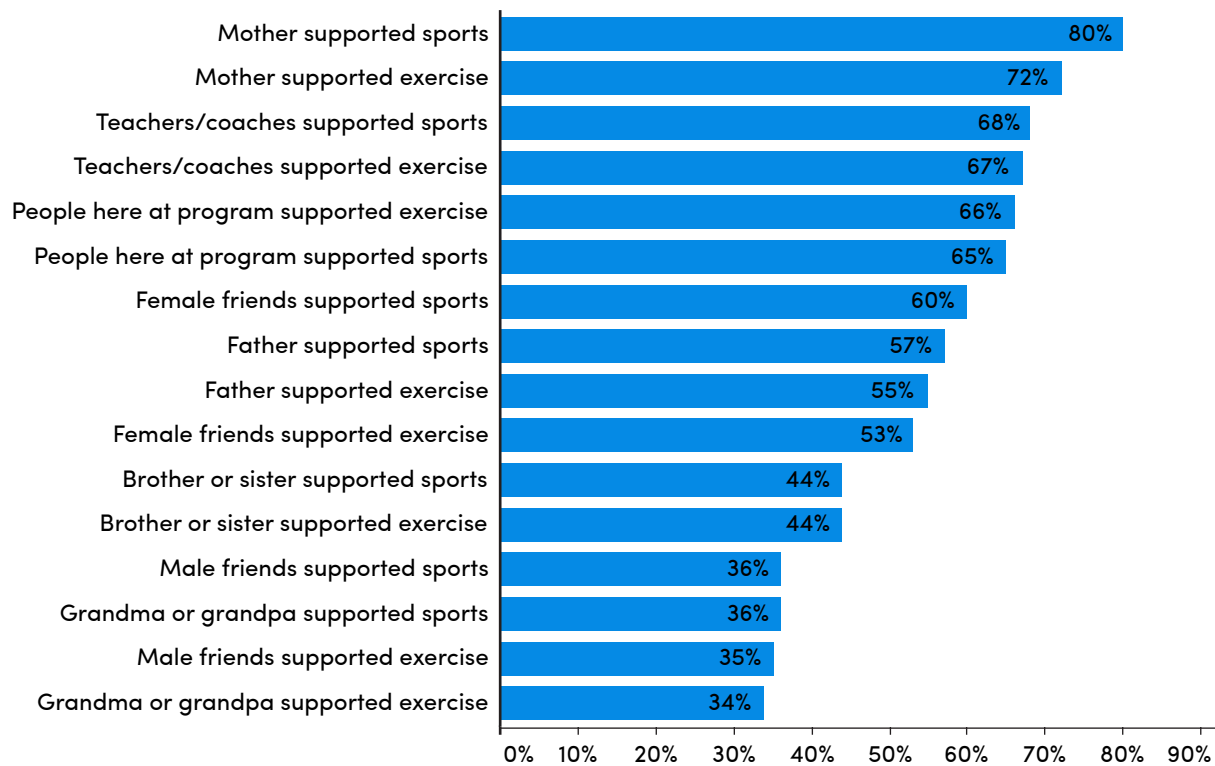
| | |
|---|-----|
| I’m very interested in playing sports. | 93% |
| I really enjoy exercise. | 87% |
| I have much fun with exercise and sports.* | 93% |
| Able to go to the program a lot or most of the time | 89% |
| Played on more than one sports team in the past 12 months | 45% |
| Exercised one day or less in past week | 12% |
| Exercised 2–5 days in past week | 58% |
| Exercised 6–7 days in past week | 30% |

**Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.*

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 903–918

Participants tended to have close friends involved in sports and exercise. Half of the girls responded that three of their closest female friends are involved in sports, and nearly half said the same for their closest male friends. Over three-quarters (80%) of girls responded that their mother provided the greatest source of support for sports participation. Teachers, coaches, and program staff were also likely to provide support. Fathers were much less likely to provide support for their daughters’ sports participation (60%). Just over half of girls felt supported by fathers or female friends (see Figure 5 on following page).

Figure 5. Percentage of girls indicating sources of support for sports and exercise “most of the time.”



Source: YAFS. Girls could choose multiple responses. N ranges from 766–916

What Are Girls’ Challenges to Participation?

A remarkable 84% of girls indicated that their parents worried about them being safe when moving around their cities. Almost half of girls (45%) indicated they had difficulty finding transportation to sports or exercise.

Program leaders echoed the same concerns over safety and transportation. Despite these issues, only 15% of girls stated that they felt unsafe getting to practice.

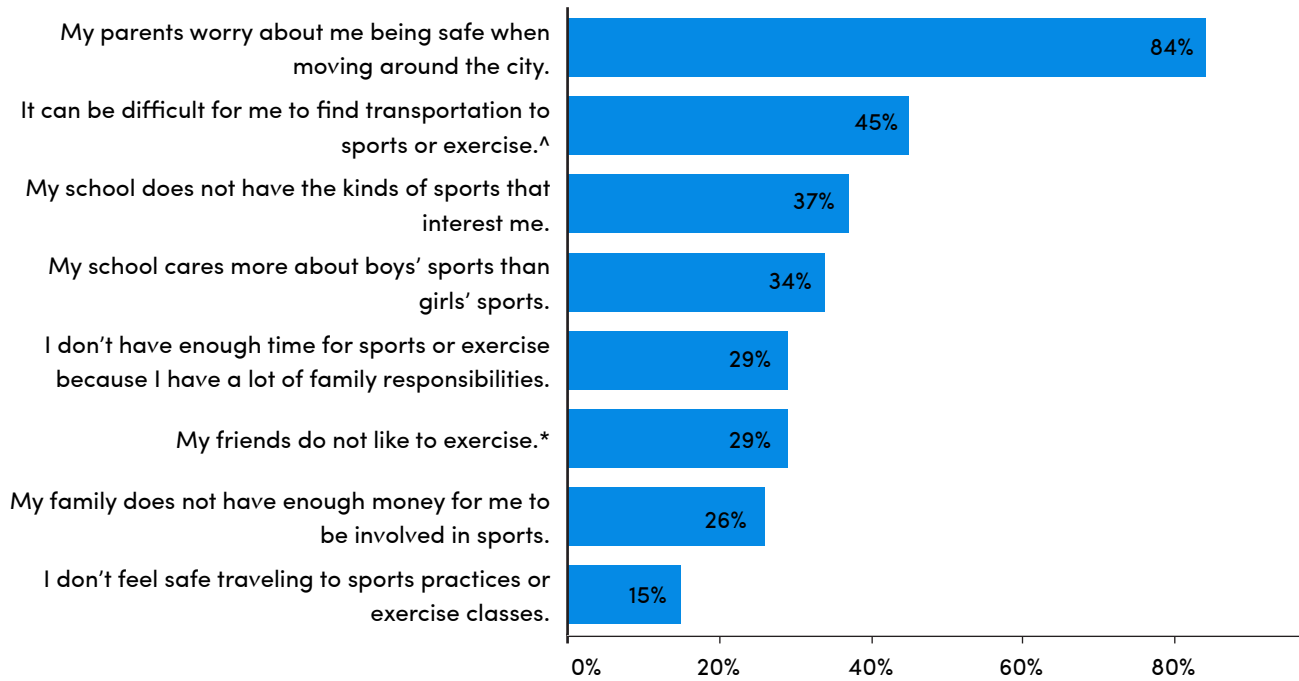
Just over one-third of girls felt their schools were not offering girls’ sports that interested them, and just over one-quarter had challenges due to family responsibilities or lack of money for participation (see Figure 6 on following page).

While nearly all program leaders agreed that it is easy for girls to make friends in the program. Many were concerned about barriers to participation from girls’ families. For example, only 61% of program leaders agreed that girls have adequate family support to participate and just over half (53%) of program leaders perceived that girls have other family obligations that limit attendance (see Figure 7 on page 21).

“For girls, access and transportation to our site is a huge one. Many of our girls, you know, we’re in an after-school program, many of our girls have to travel through... almost all the kids in our program take public transit. And a lot of them have to travel through areas that really aren’t super safe for girls to travel alone.”

— Program Leader

Figure 6. Percentage of girls indicating challenges to participation



*^New item added in 2018. *Modified the wording of the question from the survey to fit graph.
Source: YAFS; N ranges from 578-913. Percent "agree a little" or "strongly agree".*

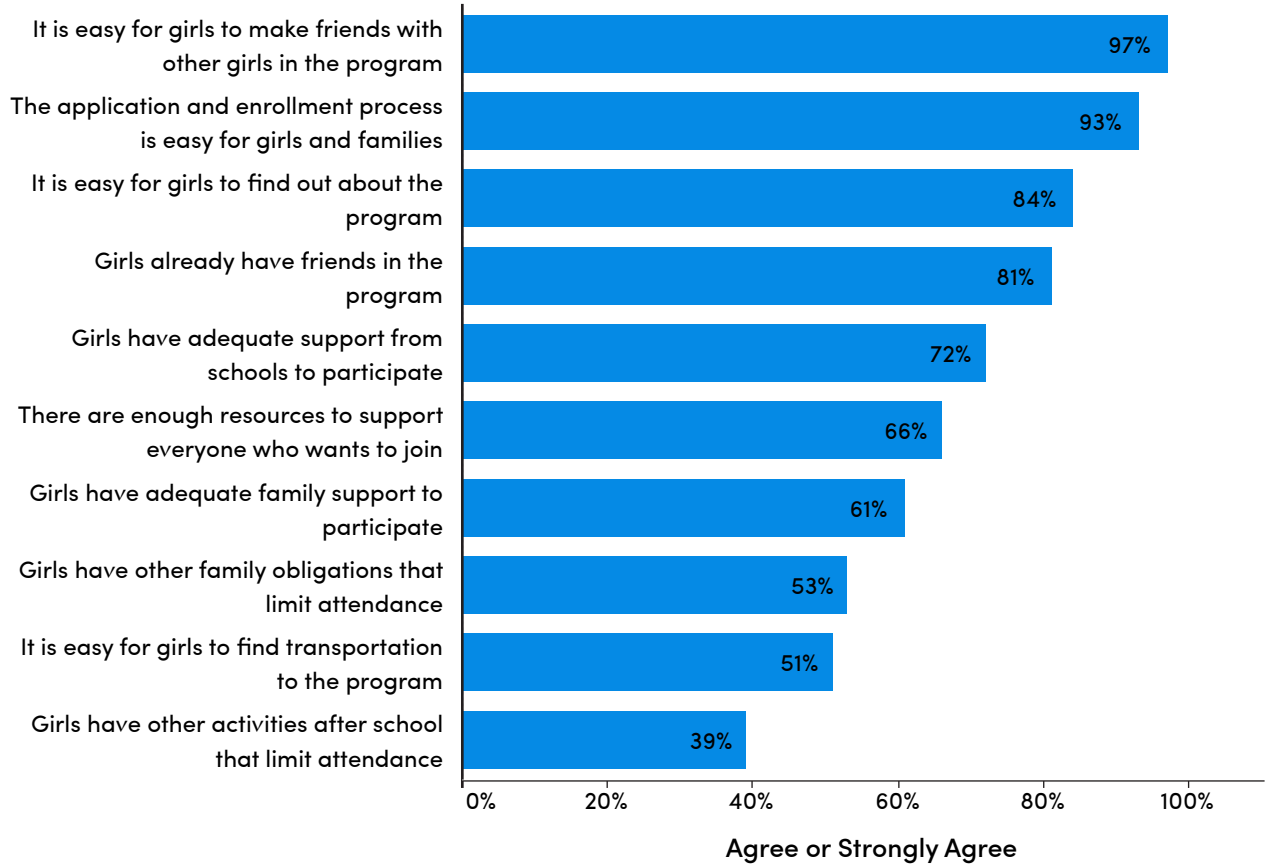
“Some barriers we run into are related to a child’s immigration status. Their parents are less involved and less likely to let them participate for fear of getting in trouble. We have to do additional outreach to gain their trust and work with the school faculty to encourage them to join the program.”

— Program Leader

“Transportation and family support are the major barriers to participation. Although our programming comes at no cost to families, we do not have the infrastructure or funding to solve transportation issues for all programming elements.”

— Program Leader

Figure 7. Attendance and enrollment challenges identified by program leaders



Source: Adult Leader Survey (ALS; revised 2018). N ranges from 112-114

What Impact Do Community Sports Programs Have on Girls’ Attitudes and Behaviors?

Girls scored highly on leadership identity, sports and exercise self-efficacy, and perseverance. Positive body image was high but had the most room for growth. High scores in these areas were positively and significantly correlated with having close female friends who participate in sports and exercising more days per week.

The YAFS surveys are given toward the end of the program year. The ratings in the foundational areas prioritized in Sports 4 Life programs were extremely high. While it is not possible to attribute this impact to the programs without further study, it does appear that girls in S4L programs are experiencing many benefits. Notably, girls were extremely high in perseverance, a quality that is highly valued in a wide variety of settings. (See Figure 8 on following page)



Southern California Golf Association

Figure 8: Percentage of girls scoring high in attitudes and behaviors in foundational areas

| | Overall percentage answering sort of or very true for me |
|--|--|
| Perseverance | 94% |
| I keep trying until I reach my goal. | 97% |
| Once I decide something, I don't stop until it is done. | 93% |
| Exercise Self-Efficacy | 93% |
| It is easy for me to learn a new kind of exercise. | 95% |
| Even if I tried to exercise more, I would get much stronger.* | 89% |
| Sports Self-Efficacy | 92% |
| I could get really good at a new sport if I tried it. | 96% |
| I'm very good at sports.* | 90% |
| Leadership Identity | 88% |
| I am able to help others move ahead. | 95% |
| I can show others how to get things done. | 93% |
| I see myself as a leader. | 86% |
| Athletic Identity | 79% |
| I plan to be involved with sports and exercise when I am an adult. | 89% |
| Sport is a big part of who I am. | 82% |
| I see myself as an athlete. | 82% |
| Body Image | 77% |
| My body is getting healthier. | 92% |
| I feel confident about my body. | 82% |
| I like the way my body looks.* | 80% |
| I don't feel awkward about my body.* | 79% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 858-918. Scale percentages are percent with item averages in the high end of the scale.

Correlational analyses were used to test for statistically significant relationships between participation and its intended benefits. Without a more rigorous evaluation design (involving a control group that is not in the program) we cannot say for sure if one thing causes another, only that they are related in a positive or negative way. The correlational analyses indicated that having close female friends who participate in sports and exercise and exercising more days per week were related to positive outcomes in the four foundational areas of leadership, self-esteem, confidence, and perseverance.

Having more close female friends who participated in sports and exercise was positively and significantly related to:

- exercising more often and being on more sports teams,
- attending the program more often,
- having higher exercise self-efficacy (ability to learn a new exercise and get stronger with more exercise),
- being interested in sports and enjoying exercise,
- having a stronger athletic identity,
- feeling like their bodies are getting healthier,
- feeling more comfortable helping others move ahead and showing others how to get things done,

- a higher sports self-efficacy (getting good at a new sport and confidence in sports),
- having fun with exercise and sports,
- feeling confident about their body, and
- seeing themselves as a leader and having perseverance.

Being on more sports teams, exercising more days per week, and going to the program more often were positively and significantly related to confidence in:

- sports skills and interest in sports and exercise,
- athletic identity,
- feeling healthier,
- leadership identity,
- ability to finish what they started,
- confidence in getting good at a new sport,
- exercise self-efficacy,
- feeling less awkward about their bodies,
- liking the way their body looks and feeling confident about their bodies, and
- ability to reach a goal.

How Are Girls Impacted by Community-Based Sports Programs?

In an open-ended question YAFS asked girls to identify their two favorite things about sports and exercise. The top themes that girls identified were:

1. **Having fun.** "I love the energy and how fun it is. Not only do I have fun, but I get fit too."
2. **Being with friends and meeting new people.** "What I like about sports is that you can make new friends and can play with along with your friends. And can compete with each other. And can win for your teams."
3. **Exercise, being in shape, and sweating.** "I like that I am able to become healthy and fit, also I enjoy just running around and burning fat."
4. **Staying positive.** "It's an easy way to clear your mind. It is also good for body positivity and a healthier lifestyle."
5. **Teamwork and team bonding.** "Two things that I love about exercise are that it's fun and you get to be part of something bigger than yourself, you get to be part of a team where everyone supports you!"
6. **Challenging myself.** "What I like about sports is training and the fact that you are challenging yourself to your full potential that you didn't even know you had."

7. **Getting stronger.** "I like how sports and exercise makes me feel stronger mentally and physically."
8. **Perseverance.** "I like to show my competitiveness and dedication, that I can do anything I put my mind to."
9. **Sense of accomplishment and achieving goals.** "Love the feeling of accomplishing something I set out to do. It pushes me to see how far I can go and feels great when I achieve my goals."
10. **Stress relief and focus.** "It makes me happy and helps me relieve stress. In a way, it takes away all my troubles and only makes me focus on one thing, the sport."

What Are Program Leaders Observing in Their Work With Girls?

Program leaders emphasized that most girls join the program with little to no previous experience playing sports, but that participation helps girls create an athletic identity and fuels more participation and interest in sports. Leaders noted the importance of connecting sports skills to life skills.

"You know, soccer's a great sport, but we want the girls to find the sport that most...you know, that they like the best. So, yeah, we do see girls start to develop this identity that, yeah they're an athlete and they can go try other sports, and that there are other things out there for them. And it goes, it's so much around, are you helping them develop their "growth mindset" and their confidence? And their confidence as athletes, that's transferable to other sports. And yeah, we do see that once girls have been in the program for a year or two."

— Program Leader

In 2019 and 2020, Philliber interviewed eight Sports 4 Life 2018 grantee program leaders about how their programs addressed key priorities of the grant program. Several common themes emerged. The first was that their programs often acted as a gateway to more sports involvement. They found that most girls came in with limited athletic experience. If they had athletic experience, they typically had little to no experience in the program's sport. Generally, girls did not have a strong athletic identity when they joined the program. As a result, programs worked to increase overall interest in sports and fitness. Leaders described increased participation in school sports among girls who had no athletic identity or confidence before joining the program. Girls often went on to participate in other sports and join school sports teams.

The second theme was that programs actively worked to connect sports skills to life skills, including coping mechanisms, leadership skills, and personal safety. Programs saw increased participation in leadership roles outside of the program, such as school clubs that are community-service-oriented. Additionally, many programs have created leadership opportunities within the program, such as mentoring or assistant coaching roles.

The most common barriers programs faced were transportation, family engagement (both lack of engagement and lack of support for participation), retention and recruitment of girls, and retention of staff and/or ability to pay staff, which in turn limits program availability.

"In [our program] one of the rules is you have three seconds in which you need to pass the ball. How do you take that and apply it in life? Sometimes, in life, you have three seconds to make a decision. And how you're going to make that decision is going to be...it could be negative or positive. Are you going to make the right decision? You've only got three seconds."

— Program Leader

"The girls we have are vulnerable. They are, in many cases, not self-motivated to be athletes or to show up for things. And so, some of those, they have a lot of self-limiting feelings and attitudes. And so, sometimes just convincing them to opt into the program alone is the biggest challenge."

— Program Leader

What Is The Relationship Between Sports 4 Life Participation and Academic Achievement?

Eighty-three percent of girls agreed that participating in Sports 4 Life programs helped them get better grades in school. Girls indicated that sports helped them focus, manage academic-related stress, and increase their self-confidence.

"This program has helped me in school by keeping myself aware and thinking a few moves ahead."

— Program Participant



Harlem Lacrosse

Program leaders noted that measuring girls' academic achievement can be difficult— school data-sharing agreements, difficulties collecting data from another party, and data management were some of the key challenges program leaders highlighted. When asked to self-report academic achievement on the YAFS, most participants said they earned A's and B's during the last school year and were absent from school two or less days (during the past 30 days). Sixty-three percent of participants aimed to graduate from a four-year college or higher. When asked specifically if their S4L program helped them with school, the majority felt it did (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Program support for academics

| Participation in this program has helped me.... | Overall |
|---|---------|
| Get better grades in school | 83% |
| Stay focused at school | 81% |
| Enjoy going to school | 70% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 772–773

“Soccer has helped me relieve stress, which helps me concentrate in school.”

— Program Participant

“It has made me more confident; where I am not as shy and [am] able to talk to new people. Also, it has given me expectations and standards to stay with a good grade.”

— Program Participant

“For the girls that feel like they aren't athletic, we get them to see the same dedication, practice, and correction needed to succeed academically, is what's needed to learn how to snowboard. We find most of the girls struggle with not being right or instantly the best and therefore feel like it's not for them. We try to demonstrate how this initial struggle is to be expected and a part of the learning process. Towards the end of our program, we find that the girls try more often versus just convincing themselves it's not for them without even trying.”

— Program Leader

Correlational analysis showed significant positive relationships between participation and its intended benefits.

- Exercising more and going to the program more often were positively and significantly related to higher self-reported grades.
- Being on more sports teams, exercising more, and going to the program more often was positively and significantly related to self-reported enjoyment in school.
- Having more close female friends who participated in sports was positively and significantly related to higher self-reported grades.

Does Sports 4 Life Participation Increase Interest in Sports and Leadership?

Program leaders affirmed that girls were more likely to participate in sports regularly and participate in more opportunities after S4L programming. Leaders were more likely to see girls taking a leadership role in other community, school, or sports activities after they had participated in programming for at least one season.

Adult Leaders Surveys (ALS) were completed by 146 program leaders between 2014 and 2019 representing 99 national initiative organizations. The ALS is emailed as a link to an online survey to a representative group of current Grantees each year.

The way we asked program leaders (on the ALS) about girls' increase in participation in sports and exercise changed when the ALS was revised to align with the YAFS in 2018. In both versions, program leaders indicated that girls were becoming more active and interested in sports. Figure 10 shows the more general questions asked initially. Of a small group of program leaders, almost all agreed that girls were more interested and active after their programs.

Figure 10. Program leaders' perceptions of girls' increased participation in sports

| | Percentage who agree or strongly agree |
|---|--|
| Girls were more interested in being physically active and/or playing sports | 92% |
| Girls who were previously sedentary were more active | 96% |

Source: ALS (prior to 2018); N = 24



Citywide Aquatics, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

In 2018, the ALS was revised to ask more about regular participation in sports, exercise, out-of-school-time activities, community groups, and leadership roles. These topics aligned more with the YAFS and with literature in positive sports youth development. As Figure 11 shows, relatively few program leaders thought girls were likely to be involved in other extracurricular activities before their programs, but many thought girls were more involved in other activities after having participated in their program for at least one season.

Figure 11. Program leaders' perceptions of girls' increased participation in sports (revised items)

| | Percentage of Program Leaders Indicating "Likely" or "Very likely" for Girls in Their Programs | | |
|---|--|------------------|--------|
| | Before Program | After One Season | Change |
| Participated regularly in sports or exercise | 17% | 89% | +72 |
| Participated regularly in out-of-school-time activities* | 26% | 66% | +40 |
| Was involved with community-based groups* | 20% | 56% | +36 |
| Was interested in being a leader in the sports environment | 12% | 72% | +60 |
| Was interested in being a leader in her school or community | 15% | 72% | +57 |

* at post, these questions specify programs besides yours
Source: ALS (revised 2018); N = 116-121

What Opportunities Do Program Leaders See for Girls' Programs?

While most program leaders agreed that girls have adequate physical skills for sports participation (88%), less than two-thirds agreed that girls get enough physical activity (64%). Fifty-nine percent felt that girls needed more help with academics.

On the Adult Leader Survey, program leaders were asked to make ratings of girls' interests and abilities that corresponded with areas addressed in the YAFS. As Figure 12 shows, most program leaders agreed that girls had good levels of physical skills, self-esteem, leadership skills, and athletic confidence.

Relatively fewer program leaders agreed that girls had a healthy body image or that they got enough physical activity. In addition, over half (59%) of program leaders agreed that girls need more help academically and about one-third (37%) felt that this was a barrier to participation. This sentiment was also reflected in open responses, with many programs stating that they would like to incorporate academics into their programs.

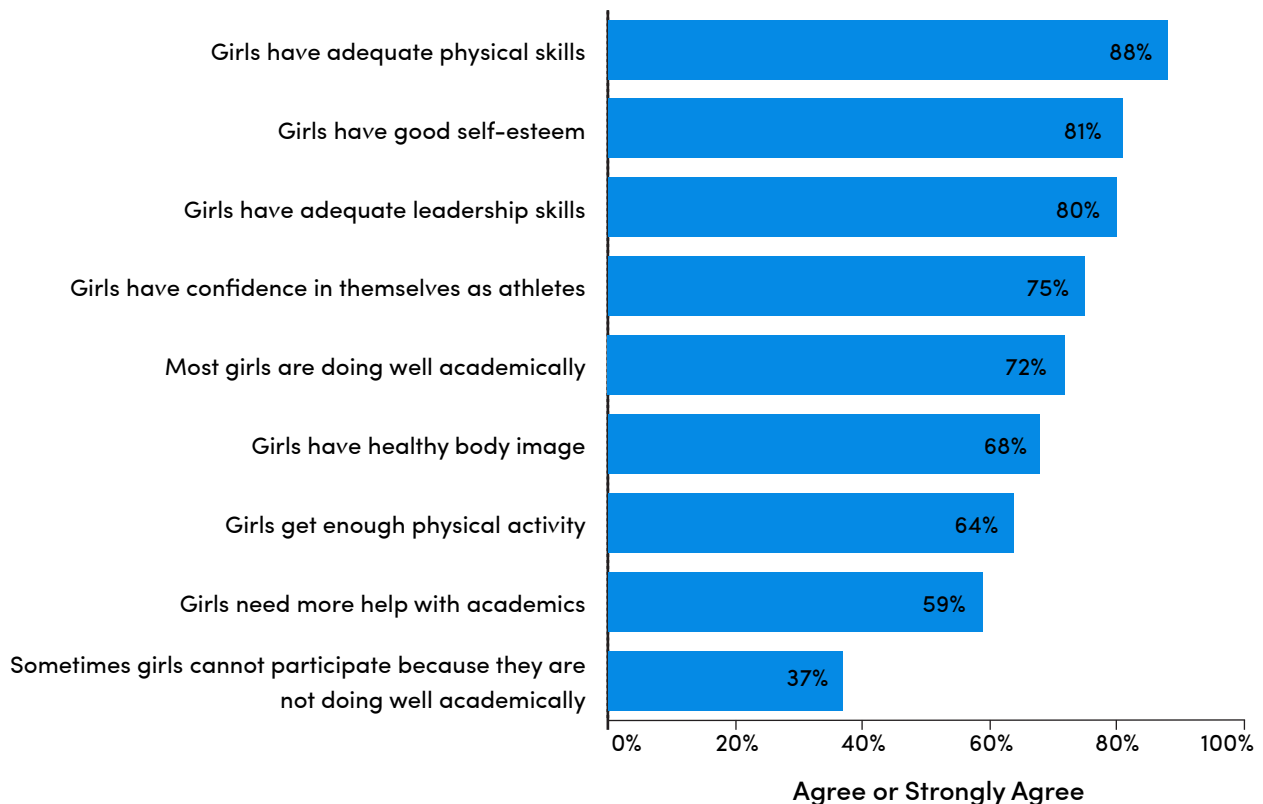
“We would like to incorporate some sort of academic tutoring or homework help for our student-athletes.”

— Program Leader

“I would like to see the girls have more opportunities to watch female professional and collegiate athletes play. I feel that this experience would allow them to see what a highly skilled athlete looks like and make the possibility of becoming this type of athlete more realistic.”

— Program Leader

Figure 12. Percentage of program leaders agreeing that girls are strong in foundational areas



Source: ALS (revised 2018); N ranges from 112-114.

Goals and Strategies for Capacity Building

Organizations identified many areas for improvement, but program implementation and design were the most common areas organizations selected for capacity building.

In 2018, organizations participating in the Sports 4 Life regional initiative completed organizational capacity self-assessments. Using the results, organizations developed three to four planning goals and objectives in areas where their organizational capacity was weakest. Among the eight participating organizations, the most goals were in the capacity element of program implementation and design, followed by professional development and program measurement (see Figure 13 on following page). Most of the programs are implementing measurement tools that will allow them to better understand the barriers their participants face and what keeps them in the program.

Program measurement and program planning were the most common capacity-building sub-areas for participating organizations. Fewer goals were focused on areas of funding or program sustainability, compared to other goal areas (see Figure 13).

“The program could improve by creating a permanent home site that will allow the program to better serve all aspects of the program, including mentoring entire group, break out groups, food prep/service and to increase the capacity of the program.”

— Community Stakeholder

“The program could improve by continuing to expand reach to other schools/districts, keep working towards including families.”

— Community Stakeholder

Regional Priorities

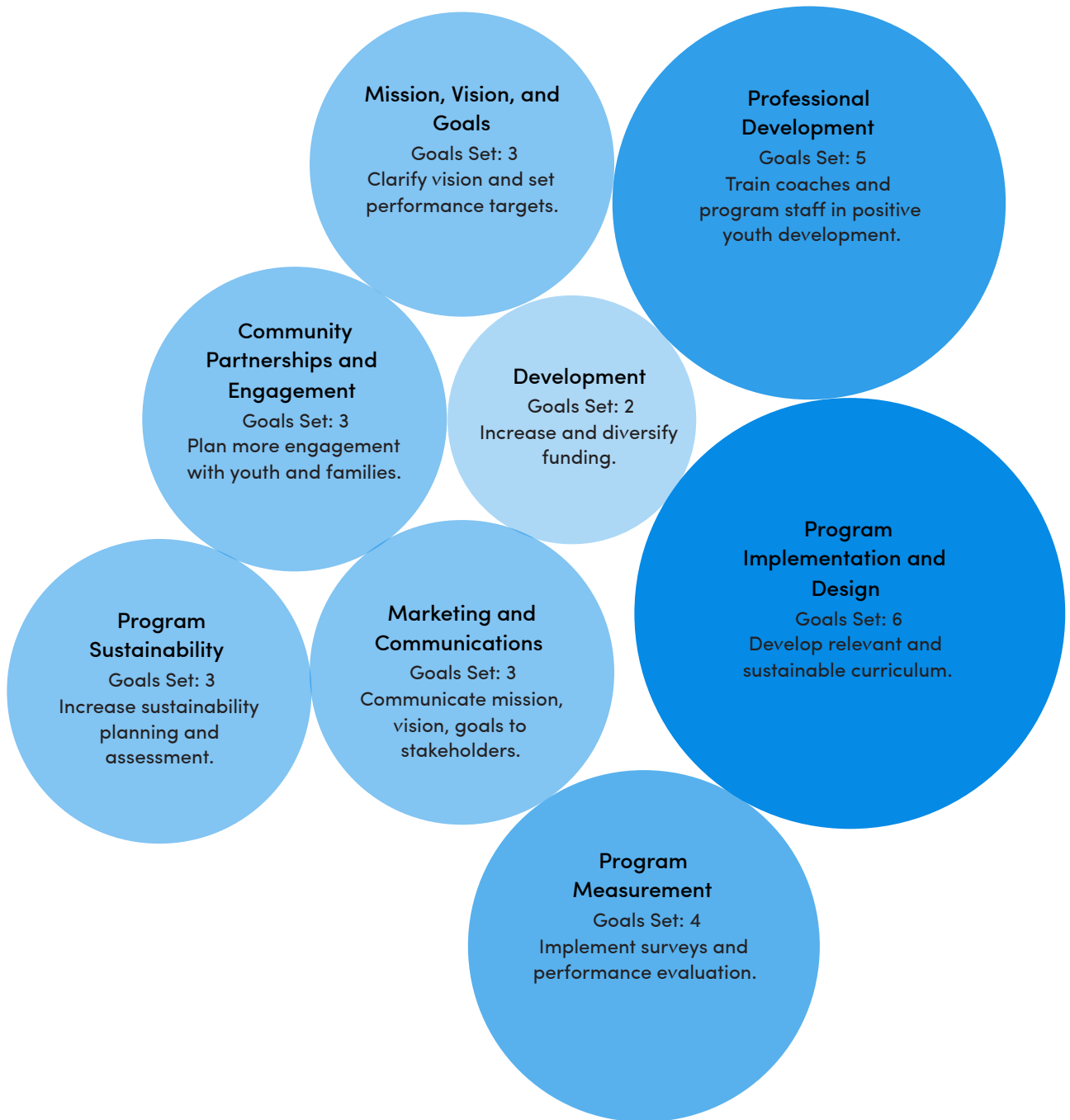
Twice a year, the WSF led in-person trainings for the partners in each region. The WSF led the group in a dynamic discussion along the lines of a “think tank” to elicit insights, and identify key regional priorities and strategies that foster innovation. These think tanks addressed the need for girls to be able to try multiple sports to find something they enjoy and develop an athletic identity in light of the prevailing “pay to play” model limits a girls’ ability to try new sports and excludes many girls, especially those who prefer non-competitive sports. Choosing their preferred sports can also empower girls. Programs emphasized the need for mentorship and social emotional learning through sports, especially when expanding participation.

Insights from the think tanks affirmed the importance of coaches and other adults as positive sports role models and emphasized the need for more female coaches. Additionally, think tanks noted that coaches need more training, especially in coaching girls at specific developmental stages and demonstrating leadership. Programs serve girls from diverse backgrounds and think tank participants noted that coaches could benefit from cultural sensitivity training as well.

The regional initiative also provided several workshops and webinars as professional development in the topics identified as priority areas for regional grantees. These included:

- Developing Program Budgets
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Corporate Partnerships and Sponsorships
- Supporting Adult Leaders of Girls Programming

Figure 13. Most common goal areas identified for capacity building



Source: 2018 Capacity-Building Planning Tools
Total number of organizations = 8
Total number of goals = 29

Feedback from workshop participants was positive, and 95% of respondents stated they would be able to use what they learned “somewhat” or “very much.” On average, participants showed an increase of seven percentage points in their understanding of and ability to engage in the workshop topic.

What Are Some of the Primary Strategies Community Organizations Are Employing to Meet Capacity Building Goals?

Top strategies employed to meet capacity-building goals include implementing more program measurement and evaluation, providing more staff training, and growing marketing and communications efforts and social media outreach.

Organizations detailed 36 strategies they would employ to measure objectives or carry out activities in pursuit of their capacity-building goals. The most common strategy identified was to implement surveys, measurement and/or evaluation (see Figure 14). Six of the 36 total strategies organizations identified to meet their goals were increased youth or community engagement (i.e. youth advisory council).

Figure 14: Count of strategies employed to meet capacity-building goals

| Strategies | Count |
|---|-------|
| Surveys, measurement and evaluation | 12 |
| Staff recruitment, training, and performance evaluation | 6 |
| New and/or increased youth and community engagement | 6 |
| Increase and diversify funding, create an endowment fund or sustainability plan | 5 |
| Create a new communications, marketing, and/or social media plan | 3 |
| Develop and/or update sustainable and relevant curriculum | 2 |
| Communicate mission, vision, and goals to stakeholders and program staff | 2 |

Source: 2018 Capacity-Building Planning Tools. Eight organizations identified 36 strategies to meet their goals.



Scout Bassett, WSF Travel & Training Fund recipient

“Through filming our coach video this season, we have benefited from learning so much more about our coaching team and why they coach for us. Gaining this insight is invaluable to why our volunteers want to be a part of this program and will help us in our future coach ambassador program as Phase II roll out.”

— Regional Initiative Partner

Year 1 reports indicated that regional partners were able to improve their staff training by offering professional development and by creating internal staff training and certification processes. Additionally, organizations were able to pilot new programs, create assessment tools, and improve program equipment and facilities with Sports 4 Life funds.

All organizations reported being able to apply training support provided by the WSF. Two organizations noted that the in-person training helped program staff understand “how we work as individuals and how we work with each other.” The skill-specific aspects of training were also valued according to program reports: staff were able to apply budgeting techniques, social media awareness skills, team-building activities, and methods to increase program capacity.

What Do Community Stakeholders Perceive as Valuable Contributions From Regional Partners?

A Community Stakeholder Survey of a convenience sample of other adults working with regional partners showed that they regarded these programs as valuable and accessible. They were less sure if the programs were communicating well with parents, schools, and other community organizations.

Stakeholders generally held regional partners' programs in very high regard. Regional partners' community stakeholders were surveyed in 2018 and 2019 (N = 65). Each Partner identified and invited multiple stakeholders to provide survey feedback on their organization's standing the community. Community stakeholders included parents of participants, coaches, teachers, school administrators, youth leaders, donors/funders, partner organizations, volunteers, and others. About half (48%) had been involved with the organization for more than two years.

In terms of program value, most stakeholders agreed that the programs provided positive experiences for the girls served (98%); that the staff had strong relationships with the girls (93%); that the programs provided valuable service to the community (92%); and, to a slightly lesser extent, that the programs provided valuable services to the schools (87%).

In contrast to other sources of data reviewed in this report, most community stakeholders felt the programs were offered in safe locations (97% agreed). They also thought programs were offered at convenient days and times (93% agreed). Relatively fewer agreed that the programs were easy to join (82%) and easy to get to via transportation (74%); however, these items also had higher percentages of respondents who indicated that they did not know. Most stakeholders perceived programs as not costing too much time or money for girls and their families (77%).

Many stakeholders were not able to answer questions regarding communication with parents, schools, and the community, but most who could answer agreed that programs were doing well in these areas.

“The program offers introductory sports for those who do not otherwise have access.”

– Community Stakeholder

“This program offers my daughter an opportunity at a sport that would normally be cost-prohibitive to many families. I also enjoy the STEM aspect of the program and the access to other young women that she may not have met.”

– Community Stakeholder

“Pro-social, intentional curriculum that teaches girls important social, emotional, and physical skills.”

– Community Stakeholder



Inner City Education Foundation

Exemplary Programs and Practices

What are some best practices that exemplary programs are employing to recruit, engage, and maintain girls' participation in sport? This section highlights critical supports provided by exemplary community sports programs for recruiting and retaining girls in sport and helps inform a valuable set of recommendations for community programs to help counter gendered cultural barriers and actively reduce the gender gap and disproportionate drop-out rates in girls in sport.

As part of the *Coaching Through a Gender Lens: Maximizing Girls' Play and Potential* study (Zarrett, et al., 2019), in November 2018 the Women's Sports Foundation administered a brief assessment, called the Exemplary Programs Leader Survey (EPLS), to 64 community sports programs within the WSF's extensive network of Sports 4 Life current and former grantees to identify the common ways that exemplary programs address barriers and meet the needs (and optimize on the strengths) of participating girls. These programs have been identified by the WSF as exemplary for their service in providing quality sports opportunities to underserved girls. The programs provided a wide variety of popular sports, served a large number of girls across a wide age range, and spanned across urban, suburban, and rural settings (see Figure 15).

Specified Policies/Practices for Girls' Participation Engagement and Retention

Approximately 80% of these exemplary programs have specific policies or program-level practices aimed at increasing girls' participation and retention in sports that ranged from targeting the provision of tangible supports, to ensuring equal access, and to building a community of support. We describe some of these in detail below.

Tangible Supports. The majority of programs reported having specific policies/practices centered around the provision of tangible supports, such as clothing/equipment, scholarships, and transportation (e.g., year-round fund raising, subsidizing the cost of participation). For example, one program was proud of their "great track record for the number of girls we have assisted in receiving basketball scholarships" and another program described how their program "subsidizes the cost of participation for players so girls who may traditionally be excluded because the financial priority would otherwise be for their brothers have been allowed to play."

Safety, Access, and Fairness. Another common policy that programs shared was their focus on safety and fairness. Along with having a "safe sport policy" (80%), the majority of programs emphasized policies and practices to ensure girls' equal access to sport opportunities.

Figure 15. Exemplary Program Descriptions

| Program Location | Urban Setting | Suburban Setting | Rural Setting | Multiple Settings |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| | 54 (84%) | 5 (8%) | 2 (3%) | 3 (5%) |
| Most Common Sports Offered* | Basketball | Soccer | Volleyball | Tennis |
| | 21 | 18 | 12 | 11 |
| Number of Girls Served | Less than 50 | 51-100 | 101-200 | More than 200 |
| | 5 (8%) | 17 (21%) | 13 (20%) | 29 (45%) |
| Age of Girl Participants* | Less than 7 years | 7-10 years | 11-13 years | Older than 13 years |
| | 17 | 42 | 57 | 45 |

*Programs could report multiple sports and age groups.

From Zarrett, N., Cooky, C., & Veliz, P.T. (2019). *Coaching through a Gender Lens: Maximizing Girls' Play and Potential*. Women's Sports Foundation

“Girls deserve excellent coaching, field spaces, equipment, and front-line opportunities to compete and experience the best of sport. We are turning sports culture upside down in Memphis by ensuring girls are given equitable opportunities.”

— Program Leader

Practices included the provision of girl-only programming and events, the development of curriculum/lessons that specifically target girls, targeted recruitment strategies, equal number of boys’ and girls’ teams, equal space allocations, and requiring an equal number of slots for girls on co-ed teams. Weekend clinics, summer camps, and other girl-only events were commonly described as an effective way of prompting girls’ initial entry into sport and an access point towards participation in the larger year-long programming.

Building a Community of Support. The exemplary programs discussed their efforts to build a community of support for girls by prioritizing the hiring of female coaches as well as coaches of the same race/ethnicity as the girls they serve, creating certain programmatic activities in which girls could be mentored by other older girls, planning events during which college-aged women would interact with girls in the program, and building relationships with parents and getting them actively involved. In particular, the majority of programs reported consciously recruiting racially and ethnically diverse female coaches so girls are “constantly seeing women like themselves in and around the game,” with 93% of programs having women on staff and in coaching roles, and 75% indicating they have program staff who reflect the racial/ ethnic make-up of the girls they serve. One program described how they recruited former participants in their programs as staff/coaches as a highly effective strategy for providing role models “who directly understand the experiences and challenges of our girls.” Another program invites high school and college players and coaches to facilitate workshops and clinics, stating, “It is an organizational priority to provide mentoring opportunities for our participants. We want our girls to see the different pathways that sport can create for them. We also believe that by engaging with these mentors, our participants will become more excited about participating in sports.” One program emphasized the importance of having female program directors in charge of their girls’ programs “whose job is to recruit, retain,

and train girls,” claiming that as a result they have “very high engagement and in many cases have more girls than boys!”

Programs also identified parent involvement and education as another critical component of support with 91% of programs stating they build relationships with parents and get them actively involved, and 75% of programs providing some form of parent education, including separate parent meetings, brochures, etc. Several programs discussed the importance of frequent communication with parents, and some described inviting families for special family days to “increase buy-in from home.” One program even discussed recently establishing a “girls’ program coordinator position with the explicit purpose of regularly engaging girls and their families.”

Coaching Strategies for Enhancing Girls’ Opportunities/Engagement

More than four out of five (83%) surveyed programs have training for coaches when they first join a program, and 72% indicated they have annual training in which their coaches regularly attend workshops and/or seek specialized coaching certifications. Most programs describe training specific to coaching the sport (e.g., coaching clinics), however some programs also describe specialized trainings that address a broader range of girls’ needs such as “positive youth development and strengths-based practices,” “social/emotional learning,” and “character development,” all of which are “centered on building confidence, tenacity, grit, and community engagement,” and “inclusive spaces training that goes over best practices with working with girls/women, and applying an intersectional lens that accounts for race, class, religion, and other identities.”

Eighty-three percent of programs indicated their coaches use specific strategies to support girls’ interest and engagement in their program, and 84% of the programs surveyed indicated they used specific strategies to build girls’ confidence and skills in sport. These strategies range from making sure the girls are safe (99%) and having fun (97%), developing girls’ skills on (85%) and off the field (97%), fostering team morale/cohesion (93%), friendships (92%), and team-based goals, and building close trusting relationships with the girls (94%) including getting to know the girls as people, not just athletes (95%). We outline some of these common strategies below.

Fun and Mastery. Programs emphasized goals of fun, effort, and skill development. Strategies included emphasizing and celebrating progression in skill level over winning (e.g., “We always encourage our coaches’ main priority being the development of the girls and not so much the end result of a game”), helping to facilitate girls’ goal setting, providing regular opportunities for open communication and input, and “keeping practices fun by incorporating games and friendly competitions.”

“We never forget to make sure the kids are having fun learning and realizing that the best things in life come with a lot of hard work filled with grit and grace.”

— Program Leader

Other programs described that as making sure that the coaches have a “growth mindset and celebrate small victories often,” and “make it a point to always acknowledge effort/dedication to build confidence in our athletes.” One program has their coaches “develop practice plans that allow everyone to experience success regardless of ability.”

Programs described various ways to help facilitate girls’ goal setting. For example, one program stated, “Girls are recognized for setting and working towards their own individual goals. We purposefully focus on all of the ways to be a good participant and teammate: cheering each other on, validating other girls’ efforts and experience, recognizing and verbalizing our own needs in a positive way. We try to strike the balance between pushing and encouraging while letting kids know that it’s ok to need a break or have an off day.” Programs also described ways to ensure positive communication and player input (84% of programs) emphasizing the importance of having an autonomy-supportive style of coaching in which a coach listens to the concerns and ideas of players and provides players ample opportunities to ask questions, provide input into what they like, and what can be improved to further support engagement and mastery.

Team-Building. Exemplary programs also listed building strong team cohesion and morale as a most important or very important goal for coaches (93%). Seventy-seven percent of programs also offer peer-leadership opportunities that provide “team-building opportunities,” provide ways for them to “get together outside of the sport,” and “get girls involved in decision making.” As one exemplary program described, “Some workouts are focused more on individual effort, while others challenge girls to work together as a team. All allow girls to focus on interpersonal relationship building among teammates in a safe environment. Several programs described embedding opportunities for building team cohesion into their curriculum by “incorporating many team-building activities into our practices to provide a valuable opportunities to develop meaningful friendships between teammates,” and “creating time and opportunities within practice for girls to be social,” as well as “setting up team outings outside of practice/games to foster the support system we hope our girls are to one another”.



Natasha Watley Foundation

One program described holding “Big Sister Mentoring Programs with the athletes, team outing events, jam sessions, as well study sessions. It not only creates an environment of bonding, but also attaches the educational piece that may be needed as well.”

Connecting with the Players. Programs highly endorsed the importance of coaches getting to know the girls as people, not just athletes (95%), developing trusting relationships with girls (94%), and creating a safe space for girls (99%). For example, one program sets up a regularly time each week to “ask the girls what are some of their concerns and issues in life. Once we learn what that is, we set up times to discuss and time to work in those areas.”

Some programs use “evidenced based/informed curricula to engage girls in discussion about their overall health, well-being,” and other important on-goings in their lives. One program had a coach-player matching system where they “match up girls to junior coaches to make sure their needs are being heard and met and that they are getting the training or whatever else they need to earn ‘wins.’” They explain, “We talk and listen a lot.”

Conclusion

The Sports 4 Life grant program has reached well over 42,000 girls in the past five years, the majority of whom were African American or Hispanic. The grants were made to a diverse group of over 200 organizations—from small to large, from all regions of the United States, representing over 36 sports. These organizations also serve middle school and high school girls at a range of skill levels. Across this diversity, S4L has addressed the issues such as access, equity, and retention that have historically been the biggest barriers for this population.

Recruitment and rates of participation. S4L partner reports consistently show organizations are developing and expanding their programs, as well as offering no-cost opportunities to participate. Not only does this allow more girls in more geographic areas to play sports, but also gives them more choices as to what they want to play and provides more opportunities to opt-in to sports with friends.

Retention of girls. Many S4L partners have used their funds to offer more holistic programming. These strategies emphasize how connected sports are to life skills needed across a variety of domains. Expanding programs to make connections to STEM, providing academic tutoring, and including nutrition coaching, are just some of the strategies organizations are using to keep girls on track in school and good physical health.

Further, some organizations have used funds to work with coaches—getting to know their needs better, providing professional development on social emotional competencies, increasing their numbers so they can have a lower ratio of coaches to girls, and intentionally recruiting and foster female coaches who can serve as role models.

Challenges remain and are remarkably consistent; family engagement and support, academics, and transportation are often at the top of the list. Understanding and addressing these barriers is key to increasing retention of African American and Hispanic girls in sports.

Increasing awareness. The WSF and S4L partners increase awareness of issues regarding participation and retention of girls and sports in a variety of ways. First, the research and evaluation program of S4L gathers data and regularly reports on barriers to participation, challenges faced by organizations, challenges faced by the field, and exemplary practices that address these barriers and challenges in effective ways. Further, the WSF, as a part of the regional initiative, provided and facilitated ongoing professional development and

technical assistance through in-person trainings and webinars to support the regional partners.

Building organizational capacity. Beyond providing funding for girls' sports organizations, the regional initiative also attempts to address S4L goals at the organizational level by focusing on capacity building. Under the guidance of the WSF, partners conduct community needs assessments and community stakeholder surveys to address their unique needs around infrastructure. The WSF uses a cohort approach to bring partners together twice yearly and regularly by phone to foster collaboration and sharing of best practices. This allows organizations to come together to learn from each other and from the WSF. It also encourages regional partners to collaborate with one another and coordinate efforts to communicate more directly with funders in the region, and to coordinate efforts to improve regional participation and retention of girls in sports. The regional initiative has also been designing and testing tools and processes for helping organizations assess and strategize about how to increase capacity for providing high quality sports programs.

Benefits of participation. The research conducted as a part of the S4L program finds that girls are benefiting from these programs in ways that start with teamwork and skill development but extend far beyond. Importantly, when girls in S4L programs were surveyed about what they liked most about sports, the most common answer was having fun. Beyond that, girls cited a range of benefits, from fitness to stress reduction to a sense of accomplishment. Surveys showed that girls had consistently high self-ratings on sports self-efficacy, leadership, athletic identity, and perseverance, and these were positively associated with having friends who participated and exercising more often. Both girls and program leaders felt that participating on a team often helped girls put in a stronger effort at school and become more likely to get involved in other teams and community programs.

Summary. The Sports 4 Life program has supported opportunities for thousands more African American and Hispanic girls to participate in sports and have high-quality, affordable, and supportive experiences. Research suggests that these experiences will provide benefits that extend beyond sports and may lead to additional opportunities that will improve their chances of succeeding at whatever life goals they set.

Program Policy and Practice Recommendations

Here are five key ways that community leaders/programs can help facilitate girls' participation:

1. Design and implement intentional strategies and policies for recruitment and retention of girls in sport. This should include well-developed policies on 1) implementing targeted recruitment of girls, including the provision of early developmental opportunities/exposure to sport; 2) establishing safe and inclusive spaces for girls; 3) providing access to female coaches/role models/mentors who can actively demonstrate to the girls that they belong and are valued in the space; 4) ensuring specified daily program practices to counter stereotypes and/or gendered norms; and 5) mandating/requiring adequate training of coaches.
2. Build a community of support for the girls by actively seeking support from players' parents, peer networks, school administrators, teachers, and other community partners. Girls will benefit from having multiple champions in their daily lives to counter the cultural and social barriers that they face in playing sport.
3. Engage and educate parents by putting great efforts forth in getting to know all of players' parents, building relationships with them, providing opportunities for them to get involved and have input, and educating them on the value of sports and how best to be positive and supportive of their

“We create an environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, access to services, and opportunities, and strengthens their ability to avoid risks and to stay safe, secure, and be protected and live without fear of violence or retribution. We encourage and recognize youth, while promoting their social and emotional competence to thrive.”

— Program Leader

athletes. The most frequent challenge programs reported when coaching girls was engaging and communicating with parents. Sport programs and coaches will need help developing methods to improve the involvement and effectiveness of parents so that they can serve as key interpreters of experience, role models, and an educational resource to their daughters. This may involve the provision of education for parents on the value of sports and ways to be positive and supportive of their athletes.

4. Implement a curriculum and/or evidenced-based strategies for supporting positive relationships between coaches and players, as well as among the players (e.g., friendship, team cohesion) both during and outside of the sport. This includes getting to know the players (and helping them to get to know one other) as people, not just as athletes, and addressing the broader needs/development of each of the players beyond just their sport-based development.
5. Strike the right balance between fun/skill development and competition (winning). Programs made an important distinction between advanced programs that serve girls with prior sports experience and have a more competitive structure and those programs that serve girls without prior sports experience and have a more holistic structure. Programs need to be tailored to meet the skill development of participating girls, with increasing competitiveness as girls progress in skill level.

In a recent WSF report, *Keeping Girls in the Game: Factors that Influence Sport Participation* (2020), a robust set of policy and best practice recommendations were identified. They are reprinted here and can also be found within the report on the WSF website.

Recommendations Directed Towards Parents and Caregivers of Athletes

1. Educate parents/guardians. Communicate regularly with these key influencers in children's lives. Highlight the value of sport participation through promotional and educational materials that emphasize the physical, emotional, social, and academic/career benefits. Make it easy for parents to access information about program availability, including scholarship opportunities and transportation. Program coordinators can set expectations and instill their philosophies by holding pre-season educational sessions with parents and caregivers.



Wendy Hilliard Gymnastics Foundation

2. Educate parents and caregivers about how they can support their daughters' sport participation. Strategies to do this include:
 - a. Reinforcing that being active is important by the words you say and actions you display. For instance, taking action shots, rather than posed pictures, of your child and display them in your home. Be proud of your athlete!
 - b. Emphasizing fun, fitness, and healthy competition when talking about the joys of sport participation.
 - c. Not commenting on your child's body size or shape.
 - d. Ensuring your child has the proper equipment by either purchasing it or finding programs that supply equipment to all participants.
 - e. Making an effort to watch her games and considering volunteering for the team.
 - f. Making sure she has safe transportation to and from practices and games.
 - g. Being an active role model; intentionally setting aside time to be active with your child and helping them practice fundamental skills.
 - h. Providing examples of active women by watching and attending women's sporting events, watching sport documentaries on female athletes, or reading sport books and media publications.
 - i. Encouraging your child to follow media sites that cover women's sport such as espnW or The GIST (<https://www.thegistnews.ca/>)

Recommendations for Teams, Organizations, and Leagues

3. Start by performing a needs analysis to better understand specific barriers to participation and constraints. After conducting a needs analysis, consider the proposed sport program's level of inclusiveness. We can think of inclusive spaces on four domains (see Cunningham, 2019):
 - a. **Physical:** the safety of the sport event (including traveling to and from the sport event), as well as provisions to ensure that people can participate fully while also wearing various kinds of attire.
 - b. **Psychological:** the absence of psychological or emotional hardships to which participants might be exposed and the development of trust, sharing, engagement, and a common in-group identity.
 - c. **Sociocultural and Political:** the acceptance that participants feel, as well as their ability to express openly social identities, beliefs, and attitudes important to them.
 - d. **Experimental:** the participants' ability to take risks and experiment at the sporting event. This domain is likely to have both physical (e.g., learning and experimenting with new technical skills) and psychological (e.g., reaching out and communicating with other participants) elements.
4. When attempting to enhance inclusion and increase participation within communities that have higher dropout rates or instances where children have never played sport, work with leaders who live and work within the target community. These individuals are often the best source of information and can help build inclusive sport spaces.
5. In addition, be sure to train and empower coaches who are local to the area to help ensure the initiatives gain traction and are sustainable over time. Finally, systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the program by surveying and/or interviewing participants, volunteers, and support staff. Such feedback highlights points of pride and areas for improvements that will allow the program to meet the needs of the community.
6. Find new and creative ways to promote opportunities for girls to participate in a wide variety of sports, including non-traditional sport pathways, to encourage more adolescent girls to participate, regardless of their ability level or interest level in traditionally offered sport.
 - a. For instance, quidditch— adapted from the fictional sport of the same name in the Happy Potter book series—is a mixed-gender sport that

integrates aspects of dodgeball, rugby, tag, and capture-the-flag. More importantly, both the popular press and empirical research show how the sport promotes inclusivity, reduces gender stereotyping, and increases self-confidence and pride among female participants (Cohen et al., 2014).

- b. Another way to creatively increase participation in middle school and high school is by offering intramural programs and activity clubs. Activities can be based on students' choices and range from friendly competition in a variety of sports (e.g., kickball, quidditch, flag football, pickleball) to yoga, dance lessons, or fitness classes. If a school's budget is constrained, walking programs offer an easy, low-cost option. Additionally, programs can recruit parents, retired coaches, or high school/college athletes to supervise and officiate the intramural sports. For more information on how to start these initiatives, visit: <https://www.actionforhealthykids.org/activity/intramural-programs-activity-clubs/>
7. Evolve your program with the changes of youth sport needs and interests. A child's enjoyment, cost of participation, and safety will continue to be primary concerns for parents. Survey your participants and use publicly available resources to track what sports are most appealing. For instance, the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Project Play Healthy Sport Index can provide guidance on the health benefits and risks of popular youth sports.
8. Emphasize team building and inclusion when creating and strengthening girls' sport experiences while simultaneously remaining focused on the

fitness benefits of sport. Organize activities with both fitness and sociability in mind in order to increase girls' motivation for participating in school sport specifically.

9. Educate girls on the synergy between sport participation and academic pursuits and how both can provide them opportunities in the future. Support girls' academic pursuits by teaching time management skills and supporting balanced relationships with both athletics and academics.
10. Foster a supportive climate for girls from marginalized groups by creating a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment through policy and practice.
 - a. Signal you provide a welcoming environment by including images of girls from all backgrounds in your promotional materials. Also, highlight video testimonials from participants who can talk about how they feel welcomed in the space. Women Win's digital storytelling project provides an example of how you can highlight girls' voices in print and media. See <https://www.womenwin.org/stories/digital-storytelling-project>
 - b. Reduce bullying in sport and signal that your program is a safe space for girls by:
 - Clearly stating the core values that are upheld in the space
 - Setting norms and expectations that foster a safe space
 - Implementing an anti-discrimination policy
 - Teaching girls and parents how to identify and respond to bullying behaviors (<https://www.stopbullying.gov/> provides comprehensive training materials on how to prevent and assess bullying).
 - c. Eliminate instances of abuse
 - Take responsibility for protecting girls against abuse. Many sport organizations, at all levels, do not have adequate policies or procedures. They need to work with experts from various fields to develop effective policies. At a base level, there must be a procedure for filing complaints and involving the police if necessary.
 - Implement, evaluate, and continuously refine the policies you enact.
 - Mandate training for all coaches, parents, and athletes associated with the sport organization. The U.S. Center for SPORTSAFE provides resources and training that can be found on their website, <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/>.



Woodcraft Rangers

11. Embrace the power that positive mentors and role models have on participation through programming. Young girls seeing professional women athletes can increase aspirations in both participation and in professional sport careers. As such, hold free clinics that are run by top female athletes in the area. College and high school athletes who volunteer can use the clinics as a way to give back to the community and perhaps create new fans for their teams.
12. Given the importance of having female role models, make a concerted effort to recruit women to coach and lead your sport programs. For example, require that at least 50% of your teams are coached by women.
13. Through surveys or interviews, identify why girls enjoy (or are turned off by) sport. Using the data, provide sport programs that meet the participants needs and wants. However, all programming—traditional and innovative—should emphasize the physical, mental, social, and academic/career benefits of sport participation (discussed in the report). To close the participation gap among older high school girls, it might be particularly important to communicate the link between sport participation and academic/career success. For instance, draw from data that show 94% of women who hold C-suite level positions are former athletes and 52% played in college (Hinds, 2018).
14. Develop opportunities for girls to participate in mixed-gender teams and to work on policies to ensure positive participation environments to support girls and boys, and women and men, as they learn to play and compete together.
15. Develop more methods to help inform girls, coaches, teachers, and others about ways that they can get involved in sport not only as athletes but also as coaches, administrators, and executives, and in the full array of other roles they could play working in sport. Ensure that outreach is culturally and linguistically relevant and accessible.
16. Embrace the use of technology in sport through collaboration. As screen time continues to rise in importance for youth, it is important to find collaborative ways to incorporate the use of technology to drive sport and physical activity participation (Staiano et al., 2016).
17. Provide youth coaches with tools and resources that maximize girls' participation and retention, and address girls' needs, challenges, motivations, and strengths. Integrate best practices that includes striking a balance between fun, skill development, and competition (winning); viewing mistakes as opportunities to learn and adjust; and providing good technical instruction for improvement. Move past simplistic masculinized ways of defining competitiveness (winning at all costs, external outcomes) to definitions of healthy competition that involve skill development, growth, and progression in individual players and their goals. Finally, survey families who leave sport to understand how they can make improvements at the individual or organization level.
18. Make coach background checks, qualifications, and education a priority for your youth sport organization. For instance, U.S. Soccer offers both in-person and online youth coaching clinics (The Aspen Institute, 2018). Other sport organizations should follow the same formula, making education and training convenient for coaches to aid in completion. Offer trainings that not only relate to teaching skill development but also cover issues related to diversity and inclusion (e.g., gender stereotypes, implicit bias, cultural competency).
19. Seek out funding and programs in underserved communities. Given the inequities around access that girls face in underserved communities, there is a need for more funding to support advocacy efforts in those communities. As mentioned previously, sport organizations should engage stakeholders in the community to help partner in awareness, outreach and fundraising efforts. As articulated on the Olympic Games website, "Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls (<https://www.olympic.org/gender-equality>). To gain support, it is helpful to show local companies how sponsoring girls' sports aligns with their commitment to gender equality. In addition, their support can help level the playing field for girls and women in the sport industry (for more information, see <https://www.marketingweek.com/brands-level-playing-field-women-sport/>)
20. Although the onus for creating a safe and welcoming sports experience for girls should not be on the girls themselves, programs can help girls adopt positive behaviors and attitudes. Consider the Positive Space Network's Safer Space policy at the University of Victoria. Such a policy can help establish how girls within a group should interact. Recommendations include:
 - a. Respect your own physical, mental, and emotional boundaries.
 - b. Stay attuned to your own needs and remember that you are welcome to take time away from the group should you feel that you need time alone or away from the group.

Recommendations Geared Toward Enhancing Girls' Experiences

20. Although the onus for creating a safe and welcoming sports experience for girls should not be on the girls themselves, programs can help girls adopt positive behaviors and attitudes. Consider the Positive Space Network's Safer Space policy at the University of Victoria. Such a policy can help establish how girls within a group should interact. Recommendations include:
 - a. Respect your own physical, mental, and emotional boundaries.
 - b. Stay attuned to your own needs and remember that you are welcome to take time away from the group should you feel that you need time alone or away from the group.

- c. If something doesn't feel right to you, please speak up. You may not be the only one who feels that way.
- d. Be assertive if possible. If you have a concern with someone, be direct.
- e. Respect others' physical, mental, and emotional boundaries.
- f. Always ask for explicit verbal consent before engaging or touching someone. Never assume consent. It is important to remember that consent is not always implied, even with people that one is typically very close to.
- g. Don't assume the race, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, gender, history with violence, etc., of others. Instead, ask if someone is open to engaging in dialogue about identity. Don't take it personally if someone doesn't want to answer a question.
- h. If at all possible, find out what pronouns people prefer or use neutral pronouns such as they or ze.
- i. Respect the confidentiality of others. Respect the privacy of information, narratives, and experiences that others share with you.
- j. Respect diverse opinions, beliefs, and points of view. Share ideas rather than judgments.

Recommendations for the Sport Industry as a Whole

- 21. Commit to multi-year corporate partnership deals with girls' sport organizations and leagues to ensure they are financially sustainable. As mentioned above, from a financial standpoint, sponsoring girls' sports allow brands to reach and connect with new audiences (Kidd, 2018). In addition, financial support can signal an organization's support for gender equality. Corporations can also fund community and high school sports, which would help close the gap on "pay to play" model that is pervasive in youth sport.

Recommendations for the Media

The quantity and quality of media coverage of girls and women in sport could be vastly improved. Improved coverage would most likely lead girls to see their sports participation valued by society. These recommendations are from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard; Springer, 2019; and Cooky et al., 2015.

- 22. Commit to consistent media coverage of women's sports. While covering women's sports during sports mega-events is important, to build and sustain audiences and fan bases, sports media need to cover women's sports on an everyday basis. This allows

readers and fans to build anticipation, understand strategies, and know players and teams. Focusing on lesser-known stories and backstories helps build and sustain a loyal fan base.

- 23. Deliver knowledgeable coverage: The more knowledgeable those in sports media are, the more information they will convey to readers/ viewers/ consumers. This will enhance the knowledge of audiences and fans, which will in turn create more interest in women's sports coverage. As it is, audiences need to invest more time, energy, and effort to find the detailed information that is readily accessible in men's sports content.
- 24. Improve the quality of women's sports coverage to mirror the coverage of men's sports. This requires moving beyond conventional narratives of female athletes and delving into complex understandings and nuanced narratives that reject gender stereotypes and roles (e.g., female athlete as "girl next door," mother balancing work and child-rearing, or object of men's sexual desire). Frame ideas and questions that are athlete-driven, rather than gender-driven, in order to avoid some of the issues that often plague women's sports coverage, like femininity, attractiveness, and biology.
- 25. Present women's sports stories in ways roughly equivalent in quality with the typical presentation of men's sports. This refers, of course, both to the technical quality—deploying ample game footage, graphics, music, and interviews to accompany a story—and to the quality of the sports anchor's verbal presentation, including amplifying the enthusiasm in reporting women's sports to a level on the excitement meter that is equivalent with the usual presentation of men's sports.
- 26. Hire, develop, and retain more women in sports media. Hire and retain on-camera sports anchors that are capable and willing to commit to gender-equitable quality and quantity of coverage. Sports media need to open the occupation to more women. Perhaps just as important, hiring and retention decisions should prioritize anchors and analysts—women and men—who are knowledgeable about and love women's sports.

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Nicole Ross and Nzingha Prescod

Appendix 1: Sports 4 Life Overall

Table 1. Total amounts funded by region: 2014-19 national and regional initiatives

| Region | Total dollars |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Middle Atlantic | \$526,350 |
| Midwest | \$339,300 |
| New England | \$217,500 |
| South | \$200,400 |
| Southwest | \$69,300 |
| West | \$248,900 |
| Total | \$1,601,750 |

N = 258

Table 2. Organizations funded (by state/region): 2014-19 national and regional initiatives

| Organization Name | Years Funded | State | Region |
|--|------------------|-------|-----------------|
| #SomaliGirlsRock* | 2016, 2019 | MN | Midwest |
| Algonquin Sports for Kids, Inc*(RI) | 2018, 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Algonquin Sports for Kids, Inc* | 2016 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| America SCORES Cleveland* | 2016, 2017, 2018 | OH | Midwest |
| America SCORES Milwaukee | 2017 | WI | Midwest |
| America SCORES New York | 2016 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Ann Arbor YMCA(RI) | 2018, 2019 | MI | Midwest |
| Atlanta Youth Tennis Foundation | 2015 | GA | South |
| Ballin Out Loud, Inc. | 2017 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Baseball For All | 2019 | IL | Midwest |
| Bay Area Women's Sports Initiative (BAWSI)* | 2016, 2018 | CA | West |
| Beacon House | 2015 | DC | Middle Atlantic |
| Beat the Streets Wrestling Program Philadelphia* | 2016, 2018 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Best Self Behavioral Health (RI) | 2018, 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Beyond Soccer, Inc.* | 2016, 2017, 2018 | MA | New England |
| Birmingham Area Tennis Association | 2019 | AL | South |
| Boston Showstoppers* | 2016, 2018 | MA | New England |
| Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh* | 2016, 2018 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Oceanside | 2019 | CA | West |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Pueblo County* | 2015, 2016 | CO | West |

| Organization Name | Years Funded | State | Region |
|--|------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Southcentral Alaska | 2019 | AK | West |
| BRIDGE Lacrosse* | 2016, 2018, 2019 | TX | Southwest |
| BRIDGE THE GAP YOUTH INC. | 2017 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Brooklyn Youth Sports Club | 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Campbell Junior Basketball Inc.* | 2016, 2017 | GA | South |
| Chicago Youth Boxing Club | 2017 | IL | Midwest |
| Children's Aid Society | 2017 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Chill Foundation | 2018 | MA | New England |
| City Lacrosse* | 2017, 2018 | CA | West |
| City of Passaic | 2019 | NJ | Middle Atlantic |
| Coastal Outreach Soccer* | 2016, 2017, 2018 | GA | South |
| Constitution State Junior Roller Derby | 2019 | CT | New England |
| COVA-Conservatory | 2015 | CA | West |
| Dallas Tennis Association | 2018 | TX | Southwest |
| Dance Theatre of Harlem, Inc. | 2015 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Dancing Dreams* | 2018, 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Darden Enlightenment Center* | 2017, 2019 | NC | South |
| DC SCORES* | 2015, 2017 | DC | Middle Atlantic |
| DeKalb Aquatics Swim Team Inc | 2018 | GA | South |
| Denny International Middle School* | 2015, 2018 | WA | West |
| Detroit Community Schools | 2018 | MI | Midwest |
| Detroit PAL* | 2015, 2016, 2019 | MI | Midwest |
| Directed Initiatives for Youth, Inc. DBA Excite All Stars* | 2017, 2019 | LA | South |
| Down the Line and Beyond* | 2017, 2019 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation* | 2017, 2018 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Education First, Athletics Second Coalition* | 2018, 2019 | MO | Midwest |
| Environmental Charter Schools | 2015 | CA | West |
| Extreme Kids and Crew | 2018 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Fairview Foundation | 2017 | MN | Midwest |
| Figure Skating in Detroit (RI) | 2018, 2019 | MI | Midwest |
| Figure Skating in Harlem, Inc.* | 2015, 2017 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Florida Department of Health in Seminole County | 2015 | FL | South |
| Florida Future Elite | 2019 | FL | South |
| Fort Smith Express Soccer Association* | 2016, 2019 | AR | South |
| Friends of Fort Dupont Ice Arena* | 2017, 2019 | DC | Middle Atlantic |
| Girls Athletic Leadership School Los Angeles | 2018 | CA | West |
| Girls in the Game* | 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018 | IL | Midwest |
| Girls Incorporated of Alameda County | 2015 | CA | West |
| Girls Incorporated of Omaha* | 2016, 2019 | NE | Midwest |
| Girls Incorporated of the Washington DC Metropolitan Area | 2016 | DC | Middle Atlantic |
| Girls Leading Girls | 2018 | CA | West |

| Organization Name | Years Funded | State | Region |
|---|------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Girls on the Run NYC | 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Girls on the Run of Buffalo (RI) | 2018, 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Girls on the Run of the Bay Area | 2017 | CA | West |
| Girls on the Run Philadelphia* | 2017, 2018 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Girls Place Inc. | 2018 | FL | South |
| Girls Youth Basketball* | 2017, 2018 | NV | West |
| Gonzo Soccer, Inc. | 2015 | IL | Midwest |
| Greenwich Village Youth Council | 2015 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Harlem Lacrosse* | 2019 | MA | New England |
| Harlem Lacrosse* | 2017 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Heart of Los Angeles | 2015 | CA | West |
| Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury, Inc.* | 2017, 2019 | CT | New England |
| ICEF Public Schools | 2019 | CA | West |
| Inspirational Triathlon Racing International (i-tri)* | 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| International Student Athlete Academy, Inc. | 2016 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Jackie Joyner- Kersee Foundation* | 2017, 2018 | IL | Midwest |
| KiDsGyM USA, Inc. | 2019 | GA | South |
| L.A.C.E.R. Afterschool Programs* | 2016, 2017, 2018 | CA | West |
| Lady Wheelchair Mavericks Dallas VA Basketball Association | 2019 | TX | Southwest |
| Lakewood High School Girls Basketball Program | 2016 | FL | South |
| Lancaster Tennis Patrons, Association, Inc.* | 2017, 2019 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Lost Boyz Inc.* | 2016, 2019 | IL | Midwest |
| MACH Academy, Inc.* | 2016, 2018 | GA | South |
| Memphis Inner City Rugby* | 2018, 2019 | TN | South |
| Merrimack Valley YMCA | 2017 | MA | New England |
| MetroLacrosse Inc* | 2015, 2018 | MA | New England |
| Midnight Golf Program (RI) | 2018, 2019 | MI | Midwest |
| Moving in the Spirit | 2015 | GA | South |
| MVP360 Leadership Development Programs, Inc.* | 2017, 2019 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Natasha Watley Foundation* | 2018, 2019 | CA | West |
| Netball America* | 2015, 2016, 2017 | CA | West |
| Netball America* | 2016, 2018 | GA | South |
| NEW ENGLAND YOUTH TACKLE FOOTBALL Inc. | 2018 | MA | New England |
| New Heights Youth, Inc. | 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| NNCC Students Run Philly Style | 2019 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| North Country HealthCare DBA Girls on the Run of Northern Arizona | 2015 | AZ | Southwest |
| Norwalk Grassroots Tennis & Education* | 2017, 2019 | CT | New England |
| Oakland Lacrosse Club* | 2015, 2018, 2019 | CA | West |
| Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation* | 2017, 2019 | OK | Southwest |
| Olivet Boys & Girls Club | 2017 | PA | Middle Atlantic |

| Organization Name | Years Funded | State | Region |
|--|------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Orleans County YMCA(RI) | 2018, 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| PACE Center for Girls, Lee County* | 2018, 2019 | FL | South |
| Parks & People Foundation | 2017 | MD | Middle Atlantic |
| Pequeñas Ligas Hispanas de New Haven, Inc.* | 2015, 2017 | CT | New England |
| Philadelphia Youth Basketball (PYB) | 2019 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Philly Girls in Motion, Inc. | 2015 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| PHIT Foundation, Inc. | 2016 | AR | South |
| Play Like A Girl!* | 2015, 2016 | TN | South |
| Play Rugby USA | 2018 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Play Rugby, Inc. | 2015 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Playworks Education Energized* | 2015, 2018 | MA | New England |
| Playworks New England | 2019 | MA | New England |
| Portland Tennis & Education | 2018 | OR | West |
| PowerPlay NYC* | 2014, 2017 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Project 2020, Inc | 2015 | CA | West |
| Racquet Up Detroit (RI) | 2018, 2019 | MI | Midwest |
| Rae's Hope, Inc | 2018 | TX | Southwest |
| Raritan Valley YMCA | 2016 | NJ | Middle Atlantic |
| Redwood City Police Activities League | 2015 | CA | West |
| Rockford Park District Foundation | 2016 | IL | Midwest |
| Rodney Street Tennis & Tutoring Association | 2019 | DE | Middle Atlantic |
| Row New York* | 2017, 2018 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Sacred Heart Nativity Schools | 2017 | CA | West |
| SF Seals Soccer 2005 Girls Team | 2018 | CA | West |
| Shooting Touch, Inc.* | 2017, 2018 | MA | New England |
| Shred Love | 2015 | NJ | Middle Atlantic |
| Sisterhood Agenda, Inc. | 2015 | VI | South |
| Skate Like a Girl | 2017 | WA | West |
| Soccer in the Streets | 2016 | GA | South |
| Soccer Without Borders* | 2015, 2018 | MA | New England |
| Soccer Without Borders* | 2017 | MD | Middle Atlantic |
| South Bronx United* | 2016, 2018 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| Southwest Leadership Academy | 2019 | AZ | Southwest |
| Sportsmen's Tennis and Enrichment Center* | 2016, 2017, 2018 | MA | New England |
| Sporty Girls, Inc. | 2014 | GA | South |
| St. George Youth Sports League | 2015 | SC | South |
| St. Bernards Development Foundation and St. Bernards Health and Wellness | 2015 | AR | South |
| Starfinder Foundation* | 2015, 2018 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| STARLINGS | 2016 | MD | Middle Atlantic |
| Street Soccer USA* | 2016, 2018 | NY | Midwest |
| Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation | 2019 | ID | West |

| Organization Name | Years Funded | State | Region |
|--|------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Tamarack Waldorf School | 2017 | WI | Midwest |
| Team Up Philly | 2017 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| Tenacity | 2018 | MA | New England |
| Texas Regional Para Sport | 2019 | TX | Southwest |
| The BASE* | 2017, 2018 | MA | New England |
| The Charm City Youth Lacrosse League* | 2015, 2016 | MD | Middle Atlantic |
| The Cycle Effect* | 2018, 2019 | CO | West |
| The First Tee Baltimore | 2016 | MD | Middle Atlantic |
| The Mountaineers | 2017 | WA | West |
| The SCGA Foundation* | 2018, 2019 | CA | West |
| The Skills Center | 2017 | FL | South |
| The Washington Inner City Lacrosse Foundation* | 2017, 2018, 2019 | DC | Middle Atlantic |
| TrailsforYouth.Org* | 2016, 2017, 2019 | VA | South |
| Urban Sports Group* | 2018, 2019 | NY | Middle Atlantic |
| USA Field Hockey | 2019 | CO | West |
| USA Water Ski & Wake Sports | 2019 | FL | South |
| Utah Development Academy | 2015 | UT | West |
| Virginia Beach Threat | 2015 | VA | South |
| Vista Maria* | 2016, 2017 | MI | Midwest |
| Wendy Hilliard Foundation | 2018 | MI | Midwest |
| Woodcraft Rangers* | 2015, 2017, 2018 | CA | West |
| Woodrow Wilson High School | 2017 | CA | West |
| XS Tennis and Education Foundation | 2018 | IL | Midwest |
| YMCA of Greater San Antonio* | 2016, 2017 | TX | Southwest |
| Youth Enrichment Services, Inc. | 2016 | PA | Middle Atlantic |
| YWCA Mankato | 2015 | MN | Midwest |

Notes: N = 258; * funded more than one year; (RI) Regional Initiative

Table 3. Primary sport: 2014–19 national and regional initiatives

| Primary Sport | Percentage |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Cycling | 1% |
| Rowing | 1% |
| Swimming | 1% |
| Wrestling | 1% |
| Baseball | 2% |
| Rugby | 2% |
| Water sports | 2% |
| Netball | 2% |
| Figure Skating | 2% |
| Golf | 2% |
| Dance | 3% |
| Softball | 3% |
| Running | 4% |
| Volleyball | 6% |
| Lacrosse | 7% |
| Tennis | 9% |
| Other | 10% |
| Multi-sport | 13% |
| Soccer | 14% |
| Basketball | 15% |

N = 258; Other includes Cheerleading, Classical ballet, Field Hockey, Football, General Fitness, Gymnastics, Ice Hockey, Karate, Mountain Bike Racing, Roller Derby, Skateboarding, Skating, Snowboarding, Softball and Baseball, Squash, Wheelchair Basketball, Winter sports, and Yoga.

Appendix 2: National Initiative by the Numbers

Table 1. Age

| Age in years | Percentage | Number |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 8 | <1% | 1 |
| 9 | 1% | 7 |
| 10 | 5% | 43 |
| 11 | 22% | 203 |
| 12 | 22% | 207 |
| 13 | 18% | 172 |
| 14 | 10% | 91 |
| 15 | 5% | 49 |
| 16 | 7% | 66 |
| 17 | 5% | 49 |
| 18 | 2% | 15 |
| 19 | <1% | 1 |
| Missing | 3% | 24 |
| Total | 100% | 928 |

Source: YAFS; Average age: 12.9; N = 928

Table 2. Grade

| Grade | Percentage | Number |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 4 | 1% | 7 |
| 5 | 4% | 40 |
| 6 | 10% | 88 |
| 7 | 18% | 168 |
| 8 | 14% | 127 |
| 9 | 3% | 31 |
| 10 | 5% | 48 |
| 11 | 4% | 32 |
| 12 | 4% | 40 |
| Missing | 37% | 347 |
| Total | 100% | 928 |

Source: YAFS; Average grade: 7.8; N = 928

Table 3. Mother's education level

| | Percentage | Number |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Didn't finish HS | 12% | 112 |
| HS degree | 13% | 123 |
| Some college | 10% | 91 |
| College degree | 21% | 193 |
| More than college degree | 14% | 133 |
| Don't know | 28% | 256 |
| Missing | 2% | 20 |
| Total | 100% | 928 |

Source: YAFS; N = 928

Table 4. Adults in household

| | Percentage | Number |
|--|-------------|------------|
| Two or more parents/ grandparents | 78% | 724 |
| One parent/grandparent | 20% | 182 |
| Other living arrangements or no response | 2% | 22 |
| Total | 100% | 928 |

Source: YAFS; N = 928

Table 5. Racial/ethnic categories of youth survey participants (overlapping)

| | Percentage | Number |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Hispanic | 50% | 460 |
| African American | 24% | 220 |
| White | 24% | 219 |
| Other | 9% | 87 |
| Asian | 7% | 66 |
| American Indian | 3% | 25 |
| Native Hawaiian | 1% | 10 |
| Missing | 1% | 8 |
| Total participants | | 928 |

Source: YAFS; N = 928; Note: The patterns in the way youth filled out this measure reflect the complexity in creating an analysis that compares results among ethnic and racial groups. Youth were asked to indicate all categories that applied or fill in a blank labeled "Other"; therefore, they could be in more than one racial/ethnic category.

Table 6. Female friends involved in sports or exercise

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| 3 closest female friends involved in sports | 50% |
| 3 closest female friends exercise at least 3x/week | 39% |
| No closest female friends involved in sports | 10% |
| No closest female friends exercise at least 3x/week | 16% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 899–916

Table 7. Male friends involved in sports or exercise

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| 3 closest male friends involved in sports | 48% |
| 3 closest male friends exercise at least 3x/week | 44% |
| No closest male friends involved in sports | 20% |
| No closest male friends exercise at least 3x/week | 22% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 896–903

Table 8. Supported or helped involvement in sports most of the time

| | Overall |
|------------------------|---------|
| Mother | 80% |
| Teachers/coaches | 68% |
| People here at program | 65% |
| Female friends | 60% |
| Father | 57% |
| Brother or sister | 44% |
| Grandma or grandpa | 36% |
| Male friends | 36% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 790–900

Table 9. Supported or helped involvement in exercise or fitness most of the time

| | Overall |
|------------------------|---------|
| Mother | 72% |
| Teachers/coaches | 67% |
| People here at program | 66% |
| Father | 55% |
| Female friends | 53% |
| Brother or sister | 44% |
| Male friends | 35% |
| Grandma or grandpa | 34% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 766–889

Table 10. Possible barriers – percentage agree a little or strongly agree

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| My parents worry about me being safe when moving around the city. | 84% |
| Sometimes it is difficult for me to find transportation to sport practices or exercise classes. + | 45% |
| My school cares more about boys’ sports than girls’ sports. | 34% |
| My school does not have the kinds of sports that interest me. | 37% |
| My friends do not like to exercise.* | 29% |
| I don’t have enough time for sports or exercise because I have a lot of family responsibilities. | 29% |
| My family does not have enough money for me to be involved in sports. | 26% |
| I have a problem traveling to sport practices or exercise classes.* | 21% |
| I’m more interested in boys than sports. | 19% |
| I don’t feel safe traveling to sports practices or exercise classes.*+ | 15% |

*Changed the wording of the question from the survey.

+ New item added in 2018

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 578–913

Table 11. Leadership identity – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| I am able to help others move ahead. | 95% |
| I can show others how to get things done. | 93% |
| I see myself as a leader. | 86% |
| Leadership identity | 88% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 858–861

Table 12. Self-efficacy (sports) – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| I could get really good at a new sport if I tried it. | 96% |
| I’m very good at sports.* | 90% |
| Self-efficacy (Sports) | 92% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.
Source: YAFS; N ranges from 907–918

Table 13. Self-efficacy (exercise) – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| It is easy for me to learn a new kind of exercise. | 95% |
| Even if I tried to exercise more, I would get much stronger.* | 89% |
| Self-efficacy (Exercise) | 93% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.
Source: YAFS; N ranges from 905–914

Table 14. Athletic identity – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|--|---------|
| I plan to be involved with sports and exercise when I am an adult. | 89% |
| Sport is a big part of who I am. | 82% |
| I see myself as an athlete. | 82% |
| Athletic Identity | 79% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 907–913

Table 15. Body image – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| My body is getting healthier. | 92% |
| I feel confident about my body. | 82% |
| I like the way my body looks.* | 80% |
| I don’t feel awkward about my body.* | 79% |
| Body image | 77% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.
Source: YAFS; N ranges from 896–907

Table 16. Perseverance – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| I keep trying until I reach my goal. | 97% |
| Once I decide something, I don’t stop until it is done. | 93% |
| Perseverance | 94% |

Source: YAFS; N = 861

Table 17. Self-reported grades

| | Overall |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Mostly A's (an average of 90 to 100) | 29% |
| Mostly A's and B's (85 to 89) | 37% |
| Mostly B's (80 to 84) | 10% |
| Mostly B's and C's (75 to 79) | 13% |
| Mostly C's (70 to 74) | 4% |
| Mostly C's and D's (65 to 69) | 2% |
| Mostly D's (60 to 64) | 1% |
| Mostly F's (below 60) | <1% |
| Item left blank | 4% |

Source: YAFS; N = 928

Table 18. Self-reported absences

| | Overall |
|-----------------|---------|
| 0 days | 43% |
| 1 or 2 days | 30% |
| 3 to 5 days | 12% |
| 6 to 9 days | 4% |
| 10 or more days | 4% |
| Item left blank | 7% |

Source: YAFS; N = 928

Table 19. Program support for academics – percentage agree or strongly agree

| Participation in this program has helped me.... | Overall |
|---|---------|
| Get better grades in school | 83% |
| Stay focused at school | 81% |
| Enjoy going to school | 70% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 772–773

Table 20. Educational goals

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| Graduate from a 4-year college or higher | 63% |
| Graduate from a 2-year or community college | 5% |
| Go to college | 16% |
| High school graduation, GED, or technical/vocational school | 10% |
| Item left blank | 6% |

Source: YAFS; N = 928

Table 21. Before receiving the Sports 4 Life grant, approximately what percentage of girls in your program participated in opportunities to be physically active?

| | |
|---------|-----|
| 0–25% | 25% |
| 26–50% | 38% |
| 51–75% | 12% |
| 76–100% | 25% |

Source: ALS (prior to 2018); N = 24

Table 22. Before receiving the Sports 4 Life grant how many different types of sports did girls in your program regularly participate in during the past year?

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| None | 25% |
| 1 | 46% |
| 2 | 17% |
| 3 or more | 12% |

Source: ALS (prior to 2018); N = 24

Table 23. Before your Sports 4 Life funded programming began, if given free time, how likely were girls in your program to participate in physical activity?

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Not likely | 38% |
| Somewhat likely | 33% |
| Likely | 17% |
| Very likely | 12% |

Source: ALS (prior to 2018); N = 24

Table 25. After receiving the Sports 4 Life grant how many different types of sports did girls in your program regularly participate in?

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| None | |
| 1 | 33% |
| 2 | 21% |
| 3 | 29% |
| 4 or more | 17% |

Source: ALS (prior to 2018); N = 24

Table 24. Girls' experiences after receiving Sport 4 Life funded programming – percentage agree or strongly agree

| | Overall |
|--|---------|
| Girls were more interested in being physically active and/or playing sports. | 92% |
| Girls who were previously sedentary were more active. | 96% |

Source: ALS (prior to 2018); N = 24

Table 26. Girls' experiences before and after one season of program participation

| | Likely or Very likely | | |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|--------|
| | Before Program | After One Season | Change |
| Participated regularly in sports or exercise | 17% | - | - |
| Participated regularly in out of school time activities* | 26% | 66% | +40 |
| Was involved with community-based groups* | 20% | 56% | +36 |
| Was interested in being a leader in the sports environment | 12% | 72% | +60 |
| Was interested in being a leader in her school or community | 15% | 72% | +57 |

* at post, these questions specify programs besides yours

Source: ALS (revised 2018); Pre N = 121; Post N = 116

Table 27. Interest in sports and exercise — percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|--|----------------|
| I'm very interested in playing sports. | 93% |
| I really enjoy exercise. | 87% |
| I have much fun with exercise and sports.* | 93% |
| Interest in sports and exercise | 89% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 912-916

Table 28. Sports or exercise volume

| | Overall |
|---|----------------|
| Played on more than one sports team in the past 12 months | 45% |
| Exercised one day or less in past week | 12% |
| Exercised 2-5 days in past week | 58% |
| Exercised 6-7 days in past week | 30% |
| Able to go to the program a lot or most of the time | 89% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 903-918

Table 29. Length of time in program

| | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| First year | 42% |
| Started last year | 27% |
| Started before last year | 31% |

Source: YAFS (Additional question beginning in 2018); N = 572

Table 30. Friends involved in sports

| | Overall |
|--|----------------|
| 3 closest female friends involved in sports | 50% |
| No closest female friends involved in sports | 10% |
| 3 closest male friends involved in sports | 48% |
| No closest male friends involved in sports | 20% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 896-896

Table 31. Please rate your level of agreement about the following challenges to attendance and enrollment for the girls you serve in your program:

| | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------------|
| It is easy for girls to find out about the program. | 84% |
| There are enough resources in the program to support everyone who wants to join. | 66% |
| The application and enrollment process is easy for girls and their families. | 93% |
| Girls in the program usually have other family obligations after school that limit their attendance. | 53% |
| Girls in the program usually have other activities after school that limit their attendance. | 39% |
| Girls usually have adequate family support to participate in the program. | 61% |
| When girls join, they usually already have friends in the program. | 81% |
| It is easy for girls to make friends with other girls in the program. | 97% |
| Girls usually have adequate support from their schools to participate in the program. | 72% |
| It is usually easy for girls to find transportation to get to program activities. | 51% |

Source: ALS (revised 2018); N ranges from 112-114

Table 32. Please rate your level of agreement about the following areas of youth development for the girls you serve in your program:

| | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Girls in the program have adequate physical skills. | 88% |
| Girls in the program get enough physical activity. | 64% |
| Girls in the program have confidence in themselves as athletes. | 75% |
| Girls in the program have good self-esteem, in general. | 81% |
| Girls in the program have healthy body image. | 68% |
| Girls in the program have adequate leadership skills. | 80% |
| Most girls in the program are doing well academically in school. | 72% |
| Sometimes girls cannot participate in the program because they are not doing well enough academically. | 37% |
| Girls in the program need more opportunities for help with academics. | 59% |

Source: ALS (revised 2018); N ranges from 112-114

Table 33. National initiative adult leader survey

| Organization Name | Year Funded | Region | Primary Sport | Number of ALS Surveys |
|---|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| #SomaliGirlsRock | 2016 | Midwest | Soccer | 1 |
| America SCORES Cleveland | 2018 | Midwest | Soccer | 2 |
| America SCORES New York | 2016 | Middle Atlantic | Soccer | 1 |
| BRIDGE Lacrosse | 2018 | Southwest | Lacrosse | 2 |
| BRIDGE Lacrosse | 2019 | Southwest | Lacrosse | 2 |
| Bay Area Women’s Sports Initiative (BAWSI) | 2018 | West | Soccer | 2 |
| Beyond Soccer, Inc. | 2018 | New England | Soccer | 3 |
| Boston Showstoppers | 2018 | New England | Basketball | 2 |
| Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh | 2016 | Middle Atlantic | Basketball | 1 |
| Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Basketball | 2 |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Oceanside | 2019 | West | Multi-sport | 1 |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Pueblo County | 2016 | West | Volleyball | 1 |
| Boys & Girls Clubs of Southcentral Alaska | 2019 | West | Multi-sport | 2 |
| Chill Foundation | 2018 | New England | Skateboarding | 1 |
| Coastal Outreach Soccer | 2016 | South | Soccer | 1 |
| Coastal Outreach Soccer | 2018 | South | Soccer | 1 |
| Dancing Dreams | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Dance | 1 |
| Dancing Dreams | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Dance | 1 |
| DeKalb Aquatics Swim Team Inc | 2018 | South | Swimming | 2 |
| Detroit PAL | 2019 | Midwest | Multi-sport | 4 |
| Directed Initiatives for Youth, Inc. DBA Excite All Stars | 2019 | South | Multi-sport | 1 |
| Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Ice Hockey | 1 |
| Education First, Athletics Second Coalition | 2018 | Midwest | Basketball | 1 |
| Extreme Kids and Crew | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Dance | 1 |
| Girls Athletic Leadership School Los Angeles | 2018 | West | Running | 2 |
| Girls Leading Girls | 2018 | West | Soccer | 1 |
| Girls Place Inc. | 2018 | South | Volleyball | 1 |
| Girls Youth Basketball | 2018 | West | Basketball | 2 |
| Girls in the Game | 2014 | Midwest | Multi-sport | 1 |
| Girls in the Game | 2018 | Midwest | Basketball | 3 |
| Girls on the Run NYC | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Running | 2 |
| Girls on the Run Philadelphia | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Running | 2 |
| Harlem Lacrosse | 2017 | Middle Atlantic | Lacrosse | 1 |
| Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury, Inc. | 2019 | New England | Basketball | 1 |
| ICEF Public Schools | 2019 | West | Rugby | 3 |
| Inspirational Triathlon Racing International (i-tri) | 2017 | Middle Atlantic | Multi-sport | 1 |
| Inspirational Triathlon Racing International (i-tri) | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Multi-sport | 1 |
| International Student Athlete Academy, Inc. | 2016 | Middle Atlantic | Basketball | 1 |

| Organization Name | Year Funded | Region | Primary Sport | Number of ALS Surveys |
|---|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| L.A.C.E.R. Afterschool Programs | 2016 | West | Dance | 1 |
| L.A.C.E.R. Afterschool Programs | 2018 | West | Dance | 1 |
| Lancaster Tennis Patrons Association, Inc. | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Tennis | 1 |
| Lost Boyz Inc. | 2019 | Midwest | Softball and Baseball | 2 |
| MACH Academy, Inc. | 2018 | South | Tennis | 1 |
| Memphis Inner City Rugby | 2018 | South | Rugby | 1 |
| Memphis Inner City Rugby | 2019 | South | Multi-sport | 1 |
| MetroLacrosse Inc | 2015 | New England | Lacrosse | 1 |
| NEW ENGLAND YOUTH TACKLE FOOTBALL Inc. | 2018 | New England | Football | 5 |
| NNCC Students Run Philly Style | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Running | 1 |
| Natasha Watley Foundation | 2018 | West | Softball | 1 |
| Netball America | 2016 | South | Netball | 1 |
| Netball America | 2018 | South | Netball | 3 |
| New Heights Youth, Inc. | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Basketball | 2 |
| Norwalk Grassroots Tennis & Education | 2019 | New England | Tennis | 2 |
| Oakland Lacrosse Club | 2018 | West | Lacrosse | 1 |
| Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation | 2019 | Southwest | Rowing | 2 |
| PACE Center for Girls, Lee County | 2018 | South | Other | 1 |
| Philadelphia Youth Basketball (PYB) | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Basketball | 1 |
| Play Like A Girl! | 2016 | South | Tennis | 1 |
| Play Rugby USA | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Rugby | 2 |
| Playworks Education Energized | 2018 | New England | Basketball | 2 |
| Portland Tennis & Education | 2018 | West | Tennis | 1 |
| PowerPlay NYC | 2014 | Middle Atlantic | Basketball | 1 |
| Rae's Hope, Inc | 2018 | Southwest | Volleyball | 1 |
| Rockford Park District Foundation | 2016 | Midwest | Figure Skating | 1 |
| Rodney Street Tennis & Tutoring Association | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Tennis | 1 |
| Row New York | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Rowing | 2 |
| SF Seals Soccer 2005 Girls Team | 2018 | West | Soccer | 1 |
| Shooting Touch, Inc. | 2018 | New England | Basketball | 2 |
| Sisterhood Agenda, Inc. | 2015 | South | Water sports | 1 |
| Skate Like a Girl | 2017 | West | Skateboarding | 1 |
| Soccer Without Borders | 2018 | New England | Soccer | 1 |
| South Bronx United | 2016 | Middle Atlantic | Soccer | 1 |
| South Bronx United | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Soccer | 2 |
| Sportsmen's Tennis and Enrichment Center | 2016 | New England | Tennis | 1 |
| Sportsmen's Tennis and Enrichment Center | 2018 | New England | Tennis | 4 |
| Sporty Girls, Inc. | 2014 | South | Multi-sport | 1 |
| Starfinder Foundation | 2015 | Middle Atlantic | Soccer | 1 |
| Starfinder Foundation | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Soccer | 3 |

| Organization Name | Year Funded | Region | Primary Sport | Number of ALS Surveys |
|---|-------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Sun Valley Ski Education Foundation | 2019 | West | Winter sports | 1 |
| Tenacity | 2018 | New England | Tennis | 1 |
| The Cycle Effect | 2018 | West | Cycling | 2 |
| The Cycle Effect | 2019 | West | Multi-sport | 2 |
| The First Tee Baltimore | 2016 | Middle Atlantic | Golf | 1 |
| The SCGA Foundation | 2018 | West | Golf | 2 |
| The SCGA Foundation | 2019 | West | Golf | 2 |
| The Washington Inner City Lacrosse Foundation | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Lacrosse | 1 |
| The Washington Inner City Lacrosse Foundation | 2019 | Middle Atlantic | Lacrosse | 2 |
| TrailsforYouth.Org | 2019 | South | Mountain Bike Racing | 1 |
| USA Water Ski & Wake Sports | 2019 | South | Water sports | 1 |
| Urban Sports Group | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Softball | 1 |
| Utah Development Academy | 2015 | West | Soccer | 1 |
| Vista Maria | 2016 | Midwest | Swimming | 1 |
| Vista Maria | 2017 | Midwest | Swimming | 1 |
| Wendy Hilliard Foundation | 2018 | Midwest | Gymnastics | 1 |
| Woodcraft Rangers | 2015 | West | Multi-sport | 1 |
| Woodcraft Rangers | 2018 | West | Soccer | 2 |
| Woodrow Wilson High School | 2017 | West | Soccer | 1 |
| XS Tennis and Education Foundation | 2018 | Midwest | Tennis | 1 |
| Youth Enrichment Services, Inc. | 2016 | Middle Atlantic | Basketball | 1 |

N = 146

Table 34. National initiative youth athletic/fitness survey

| Organization Name | Year funded | Region | Primary Sport | Number of YAFS Surveys |
|--|-------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|
| America SCORES Cleveland | 2018 | Midwest | Soccer | 46 |
| BRIDGE Lacrosse | 2018 | Southwest | Lacrosse | 35 |
| Beyond Soccer, Inc. | 2017 | New England | Soccer | 79 |
| Coastal Outreach Soccer | 2017 | South | Soccer | 19 |
| Coastal Outreach Soccer | 2018 | South | Soccer | 5 |
| DeKalb Aquatics Swim Team Inc | 2018 | South | Swimming | 23 |
| Girls Athletic Leadership School Los Angeles | 2018 | West | Running | 166 |
| Girls in the Game | 2014 | Midwest | Multi-sport | 8 |
| Girls on the Run Philadelphia | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Running | 16 |
| Heart of Los Angeles | 2015 | West | Basketball | 10 |
| Inspirational Triathlon Racing International (i-tri) | 2017 | Middle Atlantic | Multi-sport | 94 |
| Inspirational Triathlon Racing International (i-tri) | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Multi-sport | 63 |
| L.A.C.E.R. Afterschool Programs | 2017 | West | Dance | 81 |
| Lost Boyz Inc. | 2016 | Midwest | Softball | 12 |
| Netball America | 2018 | South | Netball | 81 |
| PACE Center for Girls, Lee County | 2018 | South | Other | 14 |
| Sportsmen's Tennis and Enrichment Center | 2017 | New England | Tennis | 9 |
| Sporty Girls, Inc. | 2014 | South | Multi-sport | 4 |
| Starfinder Foundation | 2018 | Middle Atlantic | Soccer | 21 |
| The Cycle Effect | 2018 | West | Cycling | 66 |
| The SCGA Foundation | 2019 | West | Golf | 29 |
| Utah Development Academy | 2015 | West | Soccer | 22 |
| XS Tennis and Education Foundation | 2018 | Midwest | Tennis | 25 |

N= 928

Appendix 3: Regional Initiative by the Numbers

Table 1. Age

| Age in years | Percentage | Number |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 9 | 3% | 9 |
| 10 | 12% | 34 |
| 11 | 19% | 55 |
| 12 | 14% | 39 |
| 13 | 10% | 27 |
| 14 | 5% | 13 |
| 15 | 4% | 12 |
| 16 | 10% | 28 |
| 17 | 20% | 57 |
| 18 | 1% | 4 |
| Missing | 2% | 7 |
| Total | 100% | 285 |

Source: YAFS; Average age: 13.2; N = 285

Table 2. Grade

| Grade | Percentage | Number |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 3 | <1% | 1 |
| 4 | <1% | 1 |
| 5 | 11% | 30 |
| 6 | 23% | 65 |
| 7 | 11% | 31 |
| 8 | 13% | 37 |
| 9 | 3% | 8 |
| 10 | 3% | 9 |
| 11 | 2% | 6 |
| 12 | 31% | 88 |
| Missing | 3% | 9 |
| Total | 100% | 285 |

Source: YAFS; Average grade: 8.5; N = 285

Table 3. Mother's education level

| | Percentage | Number |
|--------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Didn't finish HS | 10% | 28 |
| HS degree | 13% | 37 |
| Some college | 20% | 57 |
| College degree | 17% | 48 |
| More than college degree | 15% | 43 |
| Don't know | 25% | 71 |
| Missing | <1% | 1 |
| Total | 100% | 285 |

Source: YAFS; N = 285

Table 4. Adults in household

| | Percentage | Number |
|--|-------------|------------|
| Two or more parents/ grandparents | 65% | 184 |
| One parent/grandparent | 32% | 92 |
| Other living arrangements or no response | 3% | 9 |
| Total | 100% | 285 |

Source: YAFS; N = 285

Table 5. Racial/ethnic categories of youth survey participants (overlapping)

| | Percentage | Number |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Hispanic | 14% | 39 |
| African American | 70% | 200 |
| White | 13% | 38 |
| Other | 6% | 16 |
| Asian | 8% | 23 |
| American Indian | 0% | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian | <1% | 1 |
| Missing | 4% | 10 |
| Total participants | | 285 |

Source: YAFS; N = 285; Note: The patterns in the way youth filled out this measure reflect the complexity in creating an analysis that compares results among ethnic and racial groups. Youth were asked to indicate all categories that applied or fill in a blank labeled "Other"; therefore, they could be in more than one racial/ethnic category.

Table 6. Female friends involved in sports or exercise

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| 3 closest female friends involved in sports | 46% |
| 3 closest female friends exercise at least 3x/week | 25% |
| No closest female friends involved in sports | 14% |
| No closest female friends exercise at least 3x/week | 25% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 274-277

Table 7. Male friends involved in sports or exercise

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| 3 closest male friends involved in sports | 41% |
| 3 closest male friends exercise at least 3x/week | 37% |
| No closest male friends involved in sports | 23% |
| No closest male friends exercise at least 3x/week | 26% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 272-276

Table 8. Sports and exercise preferences

| | Overall |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Like co-ed sports best | 69% |
| Like co-ed fitness classes best | 60% |
| Like all-girls sports best | 51% |
| Like girls-only fitness classes best | 54% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 267-272

Table 9. Supported or helped involvement in sports most of the time

| | Overall |
|------------------------|---------|
| Mother | 76% |
| Teachers/coaches | 60% |
| People here at program | 53% |
| Female friends | 56% |
| Father | 50% |
| Brother or sister | 44% |
| Grandma or grandpa | 38% |
| Male friends | 30% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 225-274

Table 10. Supported or helped involvement in exercise or fitness most of the time

| | Overall |
|------------------------|---------|
| Mother | 63% |
| Teachers/coaches | 54% |
| People here at program | 52% |
| Father | 46% |
| Female friends | 50% |
| Brother or sister | 41% |
| Male friends | 30% |
| Grandma or grandpa | 34% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 224-273

Table 11. Possible barriers – percentage agree a little or strongly agree

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| My parents worry about me being safe when moving around the city. | 82% |
| Sometimes it is difficult for me to find transportation to sport practices or exercise classes. + | 42% |
| My school cares more about boys' sports than girls' sports. | 51% |
| My school does not have the kinds of sports that interest me. | 38% |
| My friends do not like to exercise.* | 32% |
| I don't have enough time for sports or exercise because I have a lot of family responsibilities. | 29% |
| My family does not have enough money for me to be involved in sports. | 25% |
| I have a problem traveling to sport practices or exercise classes.* | 19% |
| I'm more interested in boys than sports. | 16% |
| I don't feel safe traveling to sports practices or exercise classes.*+ | 12% |

*Changed the wording of the question from the survey.

+ New item added in 2018

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 266-277

Table 12. Leadership identity – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| I am able to help others move ahead. | 95% |
| I can show others how to get things done. | 94% |
| I see myself as a leader. | 93% |
| Leadership identity | 93% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 267-274

Table 13. Self-efficacy (sports) – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| I could get really good at a new sport if I tried it. | 94% |
| I'm very good at sports.* | 89% |
| Self-efficacy (sports) | 90% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.
Source: YAFS; N ranges from 275-278

Table 14. Self-efficacy (exercise) – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| It is easy for me to learn a new kind of exercise. | 93% |
| Even if I tried to exercise more, I would get much stronger.* | 87% |
| Self-efficacy (exercise) | 92% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.
Source: YAFS; N ranges from 272-274

Table 15. Athletic identity – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|--|---------|
| I plan to be involved with sports and exercise when I am an adult. | 86% |
| Sport is a big part of who I am. | 72% |
| I see myself as an athlete. | 69% |
| Athletic Identity | 70% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 267-275

Table 16. Body image – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| My body is getting healthier. | 91% |
| I feel confident about my body | 87% |
| I like the way my body looks.* | 82% |
| I don't feel awkward about my body.* | 77% |
| Body image | 79% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.
Source: YAFS; N ranges from 269-274

Table 17. Perseverance – percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| I keep trying until I reach my goal. | 97% |
| Once I decide something, I don't stop until it is done. | 95% |
| Perseverance | 95% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 271-276

Table 18. Self-reported grades

| | Overall |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Mostly A's (an average of 90 to 100) | 31% |
| Mostly A's and B's (85 to 89) | 38% |
| Mostly B's (80 to 84) | 9% |
| Mostly B's and C's (75 to 79) | 12% |
| Mostly C's (70 to 74) | 4% |
| Mostly C's and D's (65 to 69) | 2% |
| Mostly D's (60 to 64) | 1% |
| Mostly F's (below 60) | <1% |
| Item left blank | 3% |

Source: YAFS; N = 285

Table 19. Self-reported absences

| | Overall |
|-----------------|---------|
| 0 days | 45% |
| 1 or 2 days | 31% |
| 3 to 5 days | 12% |
| 6 to 9 days | 4% |
| 10 or more days | 4% |
| Item left blank | 4% |

Source: YAFS; N = 285

Table 22. Think about the girls with whom you work and what their experiences were, in general, before starting your program.

| Before starting your program, how likely was it that a girl... | Likely or Very Likely |
|--|-----------------------|
| Participated regularly in sports or exercise? | 21% |
| Participated regularly in out of school time activities? | 35% |
| Was already involved with community-based groups? | 16% |
| Was interested in being a leader in the sports environment? | 8% |
| Was interested in being a leader in her school or community? | 13% |

Source: ALS (revised 2018); N ranges from 74-75

Table 20. Program support for academics – percentage agree or strongly agree

| Participation in this program has helped me... | Overall |
|--|---------|
| Get better grades in school | 87% |
| Stay focused at school | 86% |
| Enjoy going to school | 75% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 264-268

Table 21. Educational goals

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| Graduate from a 4-year college or higher | 66% |
| Graduate from a 2-year or community college | 4% |
| Go to college | 18% |
| High school graduation, GED, or technical/vocational school | 10% |
| Item left blank | 2% |

Source: YAFS; N = 285

Table 23. These questions are about girls in your program who have been with you for at least one whole sports season.

| Among girls who have been in the program for at least one sports season, how likely is it that a girl... | Likely or Very Likely |
|--|-----------------------|
| Participates regularly in other out of school time activities, besides yours? | 47% |
| Is involved with other community-based groups, besides yours? | 44% |
| Is interested in being a leader in the sports environment? | 49% |
| Is interested in being a leader in her school or community? | 51% |

Source: ALS (revised 2018); N ranges from 72-73

Table 24. Interest in sports and exercise—percentage answering sort of or very true for me

| | Overall |
|--|---------|
| I'm very interested in playing sports. | 92% |
| I really enjoy exercise. | 91% |
| I have much fun with exercise and sports.* | 88% |
| Interest in sports and exercise | 90% |

*Changed the wording of the question and response options to be in the positive direction.

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 269-276

Table 25. Sports or exercise volume

| | Overall |
|---|---------|
| Played on more than one sports team in the past 12 months | 31% |
| Exercised one day or less in past week | 18% |
| Exercised 2-5 days in past week | 58% |
| Exercised 6-7 days in past week | 24% |
| Able to go to the program a lot or most of the time | 94% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 269-283

Table 26. Length of time in program

| | Percentage |
|--------------------------|------------|
| First year | 59% |
| Started last year | 15% |
| Started before last year | 26% |

Source: YAFS (Additional question beginning in 2018); N = 275

Table 27. Friends involved in sports

| | Overall |
|--|---------|
| 3 closest female friends involved in sports | 46% |
| No closest female friends involved in sports | 14% |
| 3 closest male friends involved in sports | 41% |
| No closest male friends involved in sports | 23% |

Source: YAFS; N ranges from 276-277

Table 28. ALS: Please rate your level of agreement about the following challenges to attendance and enrollment for the girls you serve in your program:

| | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------------|
| It is easy for girls to find out about the program. | 74% |
| There are enough resources in the program to support everyone who wants to join. | 74% |
| The application and enrollment process is easy for girls and their families. | 79% |
| Girls in the program usually have other family obligations after school that limit their attendance. | 40% |
| Girls in the program usually have other activities after school that limit their attendance. | 40% |
| Girls usually have adequate family support to participate in the program. | 70% |
| When girls join, they usually already have friends in the program. | 71% |
| It is easy for girls to make friends with other girls in the program. | 96% |
| Girls usually have adequate support from their schools to participate in the program. | 77% |
| It is usually easy for girls to find transportation to get to program activities. | 53% |

Source: ALS (revised 2018); N ranges from 69–70

Table 29. Please rate your level of agreement about the following areas of youth development for the girls you serve in your program:

| | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Girls in the program have adequate physical skills. | 88% |
| Girls in the program get enough physical activity. | 50% |
| Girls in the program have confidence in themselves as athletes. | 53% |
| Girls in the program have good self-esteem, in general. | 63% |
| Girls in the program have healthy body image. | 50% |
| Girls in the program have adequate leadership skills. | 60% |
| Most girls in the program are doing well academically in school. | 59% |
| Sometimes girls cannot participate in the program because they are not doing well enough academically. | 37% |
| Girls in the program need more opportunities for help with academics. | 47% |

Source: ALS (revised 2018); N = 68

Table 30. What is your relationship to the program you are completing this survey for?

| | Percentage | Number |
|--|------------|--------|
| Coach of program participants | 37% | 24 |
| Volunteer | 26% | 17 |
| Parent or caregiver of program participant | 20% | 13 |
| Teacher of program participants | 12% | 8 |
| Work with a partner organization | 6% | 4 |
| Community youth leader | 5% | 3 |
| Donor or funder of the program | 5% | 3 |
| School administrator | 3% | 2 |
| Additional | 15% | 10 |

Source: CSS; N = 65; Note: Community stakeholders were asked to indicate all categories that applied or fill in a blank labeled "Additional"; therefore, they could be in more than one category.

Additional includes: Mentor (3); Teacher Facilitator (1); Physical Education Teacher at school (1); Board Member (1); Development Manager (1); Consultant (1); Out of school time provider/director (1); Volunteer Coach (1).

Table 31. How long have you been involved with this program?

| | Percentage | Number |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Less than one year | 29% | 19 |
| One to two years | 23% | 15 |
| More than two years | 48% | 31 |
| Total | 100% | 65 |

Source: CSS; N = 65

Table 32. Program value

| Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements in thinking about the program in the past year. | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------------|
| This program provides a positive experience for the girls it serves. | 98% |
| This program provides a valuable service to the schools. | 88% |
| This program provides a valuable service to the community in general. | 92% |
| The staff of this program have strong positive relationships with the girls they serve. | 94% |

Source: CSS; N = 65

Table 33. Access to the program

| Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements in thinking about the program in the past year. | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------------|
| The program is offered at convenient days and times. | 94% |
| The program is easy for girls to join. | 82% |
| The program is offered in a safe location. | 97% |
| It is easy for girls to walk or find transportation to get to the program activities. | 74% |
| The program costs too much money or time for girls and their families. | 11% |

Source: CSS; N = 65

Table 34. Communication

| Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements in thinking about the program in the past year. | Agree or Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------------------------|
| The program communicates well with parents. | 80% |
| It is easy to find the schedule for program practices, games, etc. | 78% |
| The program communicates well with schools. | 63% |
| The program communicates well with other youth organizations in the community. | 45% |

Source: CSS; N ranges from 64- 65



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