

INSIGHTS FROM THE GRANTEES OF THE AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER RECOVERY AND OPPORTUNITY FUND

# Grantmaking Practices to Support Equity and Sustainability in Out-of-School Time



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 2020-2022, seven national foundations collectively supported the out-of-school time (OST) field to withstand, recover, reopen and re-imagine, through the acute phases of the COVID pandemic and the ongoing impact.<sup>1</sup>

The funders pooled their resources through Grantmakers for Education (EdFunders), providing grants to national intermediaries supporting the field with advocacy, convenings, professional development opportunities, communications, toolkits, guides, youth voice and leadership initiatives, and other actions to strengthen practitioners' capacity to meet the evolving needs of children, youth and families.

In addition to providing flexible financial support to each organization, the funders commissioned grantees to produce a report identifying key field-facing challenges and recommendations to address them. The report prioritized perspectives of Black, Latino and Indigenous communities represented in the grantee cohort – acknowledging that these perspectives are among those that have been historically under-represented within the OST field's leading policy, practice and research tables.

This document – collaboratively produced by the eight grantee organizations and published by EdFunders, summarizes themes and insights from the report and a series of follow-up conversations among the funders and grantees. The report identified the following field-facing challenges, with recommendations for funder action.

- 1. Research & Outcomes:** The OST field's **research agenda** and the **definition of successful outcomes** are largely driven by priorities and values of external stakeholders: policymakers, formal education systems, the philanthropic sector, research organizations and others.

Funders should use their resources and influence **to advance community-centric research and outcomes** reflective of the priorities of young people, practitioners, families, and communities.

- 2. Workforce:** The OST field has historically underinvested in its workforce, despite the explicit link between a well-supported workforce and high-quality programming.

Funders should use their resources and influence to **support a skilled and stable workforce** for the OST field.

- 3. Policy and Advocacy:** The field's **advocacy capacity** is strengthened by robust and sustained investment and the intentional centering of voices that have been historically marginalized, including youth and organizations representing constituencies of color.

Funders should use their resources and influence to **grow and sustain their investments in policy and advocacy at all levels** and **ensure that the field's policy priorities are informed by a full diversity of voices.**



## AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER RECOVERY AND OPPORTUNITY FUND CONTRIBUTING GRANTMAKERS



### **S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation**

Founded in 1957, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation envisioned a productive, vibrant, and sustainable California that could be a model of success and a source of innovation, and worked towards this vision through its Education and Environment grantmaking portfolios. The Foundation concluded operations on December 31, 2020.



### **Bezos Family Foundation**

Our mission: to invest in the science of learning and the experiences that youth need from birth to high school to pursue their own path for success.



### **Susan Crown Exchange**

Preparing youth to thrive in a rapidly changing world



### **Charles Stewart Mott Foundation**

The mission of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is to support efforts that promote a just, equitable and sustainable society. The purpose of the education program is to expand opportunities for children and youth to succeed in school, work and, ultimately, life.



### **New York Life Foundation**

Inspired by New York Life's tradition of service and humanity, the Foundation strives to support young people, particularly in the areas of educational enhancement and childhood bereavement support. Our educational grantmaking programs focus on enrichment for middle schoolers during the critical out-of-school hours, in order to prepare them for successful transitions to high school and throughout life.



### **Overdeck Family Foundation**

The mission of Overdeck Family Foundation is to open doors for every child in the U.S. by measurably enhancing education both inside and outside the classroom.



### **The Wallace Foundation**

Our mission is to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people, and in the arts for everyone.



## AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER RECOVERY AND OPPORTUNITY FUND GRANTEES



### Afterschool Alliance

The Alliance works to ensure that all youth have access to affordable, quality afterschool programs by engaging public will to increase public and private investment in afterschool program initiatives at the national, state, and local levels.



### Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of local, state and national leaders who work to grow excellent and sustainable Community Schools to create communities where everyone belongs, works together, and thrives. The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is the lead intermediary and home of the Coalition for Community Schools, with the mission to partner with under-resourced communities to equip leaders to better prepare children, youth, adults, and families for postsecondary education and training, rewarding careers, and civic and community engagement.



### Every Hour Counts

Every Hour Counts is a leading voice in promoting the work of building afterschool and summer learning systems. Every Hour Counts is a national network of 28 cities and communities dedicated to expanded learning, equity and making learning fun. The Every Hour Counts coalition represents longstanding partnerships with more than 3,500 schools, districts, and community based-organizations that provide quality after-school and summer programming. Every Hour Counts network members support initiatives that reach more than 500,000 students each year.



### National Afterschool Association

The National Afterschool Association is the professional membership association for people who work with and for youth during Out-of-School time. NAA fosters positive youth outcomes by supporting, developing, and advocating for afterschool professionals and leaders.

As a national association, we deploy our mission through people-centered programs and partnerships, building equity, access, and connections to create a strong, valued profession that benefits kids, families, and communities.



### National Indian Education Association

The National Indian Education Association advances comprehensive, culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.



### National Summer Learning Association

For nearly 30 years, NSLA has worked to combat summer learning loss and close the achievement and opportunity gaps which research shows grows most dramatically between lower and higher income students over the summer months. Our vision is, and always has been, to ensure all young people in America, regardless of background, income, and zip-code, can participate in and benefit from a high-quality summer learning experience, every year. NSLA supports and collaborates with a broad and ever-growing network of 15,000+ leaders of school districts, youth serving government agencies, non-profit and corporate partners from across the country focused on improving the lives of youth.



### National Urban League

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights and urban advocacy organization with 90 affiliates serving 300 communities, providing direct services that impact and improve the lives of more than two million people nationwide.



STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

### UnidosUS

UnidosUS challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos in the United States across a range of key issues. With respect to education, we advocate for high-quality education from early childhood through college, vocational training, and beyond.

## KEY LEVERAGE POINTS FOR CHANGE

Before we detail these field challenges and our specific recommendations for shifting philanthropic practice related to each, we identify key leverage points, each representing an area where philanthropic change has the potential to catalyze significant progress for the field overall.

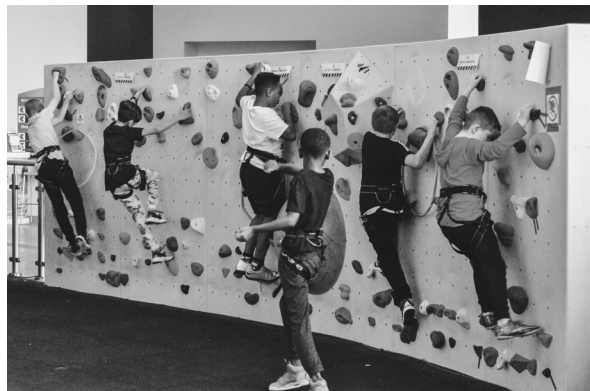
- 1. Philanthropic allies.** The OST field needs to grow and diversify its funding base within private philanthropy. The best way to achieve this is with our existing funders, who can build awareness among their peers in education and other allied philanthropic fields of the value of out-of-school time.
- 2. Grant flexibility.** General operating or flexible, sustained support enables organizations to determine and support their own priorities in collaboration with their constituencies.
- 3. Grant cycles.** Grant cycles of 1-2 years are common. Yet program providers and grantees supporting field infrastructure need predictable funding over much longer periods of time to decrease the amount of time and resources spent on development and increase their overall impact. What stands in the way of longer-term commitments?
- 4. Racial equity** work within philanthropies is critical and will be a powerful driver of shifting practice.
- 5. Strategic planning processes.** Many funders are guided by strategic plans and theories of change. When designing investment strategies, it's important for funders to **seek and always adequately compensate a range of voices to share their experience and expertise**, including voices of youth, practitioners, BIPOC, LGBTQI and differently abled communities. As strategy is developed, it is important to **resist a pull toward innovation over providing needed capacity** to existing programs with successful approaches.
- 6. Funder collaboration.** Why is it so difficult for many philanthropies to meaningfully align and collaborate over the long term? The issues facing the OST field are far too complex for one funder or one set of stakeholders to tackle alone. Making progress will take sustained, deep philanthropic collaboration in partnership with field actors.



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## FIELD-FACING CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS

A brief note on the organization of this document. For each of the three challenges addressed, we provide a summary background, suggest changes in funder practices, and offer resources for further exploration. Resource lists are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative and catalytic for conversation.



# 1 ADVANCE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION IN SUPPORT OF A WHOLE CHILD, WHOLE COMMUNITY VISION

In the OST sector, research and evaluation are key points of influence. Historically, research has extracted data from communities for the benefit of the philanthropic sector, policymakers, research organizations and other external stakeholders. Research has been done to but not with staff, youth, families, and communities.

Often, positive outcomes expected by public and private funding sources are defined by participants' advancement on school-related indicators such as test scores, grades, attendance, and behavior. This de-emphasizes harder-to-measure, longer term outcomes such as increasing young peoples' sense of mattering, belonging and identity, although we know from the science of learning and development that these latter outcomes are critical to healthy youth development and learning. For example, stress caused by experiencing racism can be buffered by OST programs that focus on development of positive racial identity.

Additionally, positive outcomes required by funders are largely defined by the young person's individual progress – not considering a collective perspective that defines the programs' impact on families and communities. For example, in many

Native communities, priorities for youth programs might emphasize cultural preservation, Native language skills, instilling pride in young people's Native identities, deepening intergenerational relationships, and developing young people as leaders who will foster and carry cultural values and identities. The outcomes are integrated throughout the community. This value is not recognized in the dominant frame of individual achievement that currently defines research and outcomes in the field.

**Our call is for funders to advance community-centric research and outcomes reflective of the priorities of young people, practitioners, families, and communities.**

## FUNDING PRACTICES TO CONSIDER:

### When funding research

- Support research “with, not to.” Build guardrails and guidelines into RFPs to require evidence that Black, indigenous, Latinx, Asian and other marginalized communities are playing a meaningful role from beginning to end. Require research firms to co-create deliverables to benefit the communities post-research. Ensure researchers are interacting with communities – including youth workers – as sources of knowledge and expertise. Strategies to achieve this include supporting research-practice partnerships and youth participatory action research.
- Recognize the history of institutions in communities. For example, education has been weaponized against Native communities. Building trust will require fundamentally changing power dynamics and supporting a co-design process that is centered in full, meaningful collaboration. Ensure that researchers have explicit plans for trust-building activities and accept the implications for this in the timeline. One strategy to build trust is to partner with and meaningfully compensate trusted organizations in the community.
- Ensure that data is made accessible to communities so they can use it to advance their own knowledge, advocacy and positive change.
- Support and expect researchers to address their own biases and pay attention to cultural norms and language.
- Value and honor diverse methodologies. Interrogate which methodologies have been privileged by public and private funding sources, and why. What is the set of assumptions that drive how research currently gets done, and what lies behind those assumptions?

**Ensure that data is made accessible to communities so they can use it to advance their own knowledge, advocacy and positive change.**

- Fund research that will query OST’s true impact on youth and communities and how OST aligns with the science of learning and development. Share findings on how the field can improve, and then enter trusting funding relationships with programs that are taking steps to improve.
- Support multi-stakeholder field-facing efforts to: interrogate how OST research questions are developed and assess their relevance to proximate actors; share successes and challenges in advancing a community-centric research agenda; and develop outcomes that consider community impact in addition to impact on individual youth.
- Invest in the capacity and infrastructure of community-based organizations so they can participate in research involving their own communities.
- Encourage and support budget set-asides for research dissemination to the field and knowledge and dual-capacity building activities between researchers and communities.
- Invest in the capacity and infrastructure of local, state, and national intermediary organizations to support the use of data for continuous improvement with their respective community organizations in their networks.
- Engage in multi-year funding and ensure participants and programs are compensated for the full cycle of research.

### When determining the outcomes your philanthropy expects from its OST grantees

- Ask your grantees what outcomes they and their youth and family constituents want to achieve and base your outcome requirements on their priorities.
- Advocate for and emphasize the importance of youth developing the skills, dispositions and attitudes to become caring adults – do not just focus on academic outcomes or those outcomes related to school performance (e.g., school attendance, behavior, grades, test scores).
- Use the communications and influence power of philanthropy to represent the value of afterschool and summer learning holistically – not just in service to school or academic learning.
- Examine how your philanthropy uses the outcome data you require grantees to provide and take steps toward data-sharing and enabling grantees to use data for improvement, rather than penalize grantees for sub-optimal outcomes.

### RESEARCH RESOURCES

[Strategies for Community-Led Research that Centers Proximate Voices](#), a compilation of resources.

- [Youth Perspectives on Designing Equitable Out-of-School-Time Programs](#). Funded by the Wallace Foundation.
- The Coalition for Community Schools/ IEL runs a [Research-Practice Network](#) focused on improving implementation and outcomes for community schools.
- UnidosUS shares the [core values](#) that guide their approach to teamwork, evidence and data.

### OUTCOME RESOURCES

- The [Every Hour Counts Framework for Measurement, Continuous Improvement and Equitable Systems and accompanying Guidebook](#), released in 2021, offers a comprehensive vision for system, program and youth outcomes. Access information from a data symposium presented by Every Hour Counts [here](#).
- The Susan Crown Exchange's [Preparing Youth to Thrive Initiative](#) produced resources on the development of social-emotional skills -- such as emotion management, empathy, teamwork, responsibility, initiative, and problem solving -- among children and youth in out-of-school time programs. [This paper](#) by Katherine Plog Martinez, Kiley Bednar, Karen Pittman and Poonam Borah discusses measurement of SEL outcomes in OST.
- [This resource](#) from White Supremacy Culture exploring the cultural assumptions underlying quantity over quality and progress is useful in unpacking philanthropic approaches to outcomes and evaluation.



Gathering of a group of community school leaders during the National Community Schools and Family Engagement Conference in Los Angeles, 2022. Photo credit: Institute for Educational Leadership.



## 2 SUPPORT A SKILLED AND STABLE WORKFORCE

The skills, attitudes and knowledge of youth development staff are the foundation of program quality and the main drivers of youth and program outcomes. Many youth workers come from the communities they serve. Their cultural competence benefits youth, and their shared lived experience and knowledge of community enable them to build the trusting relationships and become the caring adults that the science of learning and development tells us are critical to youth outcomes.

Building the skills, attitudes and knowledge to become an effective youth worker results from lived experience – growing and improving as a professional over time – and gaining access to professional development and advancement opportunities.

Seeing youth as members of communities and recognizing that long-term positive youth outcomes are a product not only of program participation but also of living in healthy communities demands that we ensure that adults in the community working with youth are paid a sustainable wage and have high quality jobs.

Yet despite all of this, the field has historically under-invested in its workforce. For decades prior to the pandemic, the OST workforce has been beset by complex systemic challenges, including: low pay and inadequate access to benefits, no clear advancement pathways, uneven access to professional development, and racism and exclusion from advancement to leadership roles experienced by staff of color. The pandemic worsened all these challenges, as staff quit in large numbers, likely moving to higher-paying jobs and/or jobs with less COVID exposure risk.<sup>2</sup>

**Our call is for funders to support a skilled and stable OST workforce.**

### FUNDING PRACTICES TO CONSIDER

- Provide funding at levels that support grantees to offer high quality jobs -- including paying a living wage, offering benefits, professional development/ advanced education for staff, leadership pathways and mentoring, and advancing racial equity at all levels of the organization, including staff, leadership, and board.
- Provide funding at levels that support grantees to be financially secure organizations, including adequate indirect costs, organizational capacity building, and intentional succession planning.
- Support and facilitate partnerships among OST organizations and experts in nonprofit management and capacity building. Ensure leaders have training and access to networks for fundraising and building social capital.
- Support efforts to recruit, support and retain leaders and professionals from Black, indigenous, Latinx, Asian and other communities that have been historically excluded.
- Support efforts to recruit youth in OST programs into youth worker roles.
- Confront -- and help grantees and communities confront -- the tradeoff of scale vs. quality.
- Advocate and support field efforts to increase reimbursement rates and public funding to support living wages and benefits.
- Support research and data analysis needed to develop better recruitment and retention practices and improving pipelines for staff of color to move into leadership roles.
- Support updated cost of quality studies. Cost models need to account for the cost of job quality, not just program quality.



- Support field infrastructure, including local, state, tribal and national intermediaries providing advocacy, support, tools and convening spaces for organizations to solve workforce challenges.
- Use philanthropic influence, communications and convening power to boost recognition of OST staff as professionals with skills and talents, help the field move out of the scarcity mindset, and advocate for funding the full cost of job quality.

## WORKFORCE RESOURCES

- The Wallace Foundation is supporting American Institutes of Research and partners to implement the [Power of Us survey](#) of the youth workforce. Power of Us is a national survey designed for the participation of the youth fields workforce across sectors and geographies designed to inform policy, practice, and further research to better support the workforce.



National AfterSchool Association's 2022 Next Generation of Afterschool Leaders being honored at NAA22 Convention. Photo credit: Ben Trentelman, Utah Afterschool Network

- National Afterschool Association's Thriving Youth Workforce initiative is developing a [job quality framework](#) that includes pay, benefits, schedule, working conditions, agency, and respect. NAA and partners are further developing this framework into a usable tool to define and improve the quality of OST jobs along a continuum.
- In 2022, the Learning in Afterschool and Summer Initiative presented a 2-part session on [preparing youth for the afterschool workforce](#).
- EdTrust published [A Natural Fit: Supporting After-School Staff of Color in Teacher Pipelines](#), examining the experiences of current and former teacher candidates of color with after-school or OST experience to provide insights into how teacher preparation programs and state policymakers can create the right programmatic experiences and conditions to recruit after-school/OST staff into the teaching profession and prepare them for success.
- [The Afterschool Leadership Landscape: Supporting and Strengthening Racial Equity](#), by the National Afterschool Association, examined the racial leadership gap in the afterschool sector.
- National Afterschool Association's [Core Knowledge, Skills, and Competencies for Afterschool and Youth Development Professionals](#), was revised in 2021 to center equity and culturally responsive practices.
- The Institute for Educational Leadership offers nine modules encompassing [Youth Service Professionals, Knowledge Skills and Abilities \(YSPKSA\)](#).
- Every Hour Counts profiles multiple efforts to support the OST workforce in the post [Building A Thriving Out-of-School Time Workforce: What Would It Look Like if We Nailed It?](#)

### 3 CONTINUE TO BUILD A STRONG AND DIVERSE POLICY AND ADVOCACY CAPACITY ACROSS THE OST FIELD

The OST field has made remarkable strides in its policy and advocacy work over the past few years, resulting in unprecedented resources allocated to and available for afterschool and summer learning; and attention to the importance of afterschool and summer learning experiences by the US Secretary of Education and the federal Department of Education.<sup>3</sup> Forums such as the Youth Development Policy Table are bringing together a diverse set of field stakeholders to strategize, exchange information and strengthen their capacities. Alliances with allied sectors include the [Whole Child Policy Table](#), the National Coalition on Emotional Well-being in Out-of-School Time Settings, the Child Trauma and ACEs Policy (CTAP) Working Group, the SoLD Alliance, the Children’s Cabinet Networks and others.

There are daunting challenges ahead. The federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program requires constant advocacy and vigilance focused on sustaining or increasing the budget allocation – and this is true of other federal programs, and programs at the state and local levels. The billions of dollars provided to state and local education agencies through COVID relief efforts are not a sustainable source of revenue and must be spent by September 2024. To avoid the COVID ‘funding cliff,’ increased public support for out-of-school time and youth development programs will be necessary – and this will only be won with strong and sustained advocacy at the local, state and national levels. A look at [voter-approved Children’s Funds](#) provides a sense of what is possible. Those are only the finance-related policy challenges – there are many other policy challenges as well, related to regulations, eligibility and more.

It is critically important to increase representation and power of diverse voices

within the OST policy and advocacy sector, including organizations representing Black, indigenous and other communities of color, LGBTQIA youth, youth with disabilities and other youth who have been historically marginalized.

Our call is for funders to support a strong policy and advocacy community that effectively includes and represents the diverse constituencies of the OST field.

#### FUNDING PRACTICES TO CONSIDER

- Fund collaborative field efforts to document and uplift successful stories of COVID relief spending on afterschool and summer learning.
- Invest in advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels with long-term investment horizons.
- Invest in communications and public education at the local, state and federal levels.
- Invest in intermediaries at the local, state and national levels.
- Fund inclusion of youth in policy development settings, at all levels. Ensure as a funder you are knowledgeable about the benefits and risks of involving youth and build the capacity of your grantees to involve youth successfully.



- Fund efforts to enable youth to build their policy and advocacy skills – strategy development, organizing, writing, public speaking, collaboration, allyship and more.
- Fund and engage in narrative and communication that uplifts youth stories.
- Fund organizations representing communities of color and other historically excluded communities to engage and continue to inform policy and advocacy work in the sector. Ensure that grantees engaging in policy are including and listening to a diverse set of voices in their strategy development and their advocacy work.
- Support advocates to deepen alliances with other sectors and leverage unlikely allies.
- Support research and data analysis needed to understand/inform policy strategies.
- Support staff and back office costs of policy and advocacy.
- [Engage Every Student](#), launched in summer 2022, is an initiative led by the US Department of Education in partnership with the Afterschool Alliance, the National Summer Learning Association and other partners, focused on universal access to high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities for every child.
- In October 2022, we will jointly release a Youth Voice Toolkit, supported by the EdFunders pooled fund. The toolkit will be available on the EdFunders [website](#).

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#### **POLICY & ADVOCACY RESOURCES**

- [Bolder Advocacy](#), a program of Alliance for Justice, has comprehensive information and guidance for foundations engaging in and supporting advocacy.
- [Help Kids Recover](#), a collaborative effort led by the Afterschool Alliance, is a comprehensive website focused on assisting OST and summer program providers to access COVID education recovery resources in partnership with education leaders. The site includes an interactive map of city, state and district investments of COVID relief funds into afterschool and summer learning.



## CONCLUSION

The eight grantee organizations of the Afterschool & Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund valued the opportunity to work together. We express appreciation to the funders for supporting the work; to Dax-Devlon Ross and Emely Martinez of Dax-Dev Consulting for facilitating our process and writing the report we delivered to funders in August 2021, and to Pam Stevens for playing a supporting facilitation role.

This summary draws from the report and our conversations with funders. We hope the recommendations offered here will spark and inform conversation and action in the philanthropic community, in partnership with us and a diverse array of stakeholders. We need all of us at the table to advance our vision of universal access to meaningful and joyful afterschool and summer learning experiences for all children and youth. We look forward to the work ahead.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> We are using the phrase ‘out-of-school time’ to refer to all kinds of programs that happen outside of the classroom – before and after school, in the evenings, weekends, and summer; in school buildings or community settings; run by schools or community organizations, serving children and youth K-12. The out-of-school time field encompasses program providers and the infrastructure that supports them – including intermediaries, policy and advocacy-focused organizations, technical assistance providers, research, communications, philanthropy, and other entities supporting the delivery of high-quality programming.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/afterschool-programs-are-low-on-staff-leaving-students-un-supervised-and-underserved/2022/03> and <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-07-18-summer-learning-programs-struggle-and-devise-solutions-as-staff-shortages-persist>

<sup>3</sup> Secretary Cardona on summer learning and enrichment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wy9NenPWzPE>



Grantmakers for Education is the nation's largest community of education philanthropists. EdFunders members make up a diverse network of almost 300 public, private and community foundations, and others, that support public education. Working in partnership with our members, we pursue systemic approaches to equity and racial justice in education in order to make a positive impact on learners everywhere. We are a hub for new connections and ideas, a compass to help members navigate their work, a spur for collective action and a champion for positive change in education. For more information or to learn about membership, please contact us at [information@edfunders.org](mailto:information@edfunders.org).



We welcome your questions, comments, and feedback.

Contact:

Kathleen Traphagen: [ktraphagen@edfunders.org](mailto:ktraphagen@edfunders.org)

Rebecca Goldberg: [rgoldberg@edfunders.org](mailto:rgoldberg@edfunders.org)

Co-Facilitators, Edfunders Out-of-School Time Impact Group

400 SE 103rd Dr. #33348, Portland, Oregon 97216

503.595.2100

[information@edfunders.org](mailto:information@edfunders.org)

[www.edfunders.org](http://www.edfunders.org)