



# A Guide for Effective Governance:

Considerations and Lessons Learned for Afterschool Networks



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Child Care Bureau





# A GUIDE FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE:

## CONSIDERATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR AFTERSCHOOL NETWORKS



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## The Afterschool Investments Project

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides federal resources for child care that support both direct services and quality enhancements. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Child Care Bureau awards CCDF grants to states, territories, and tribes. With nearly half of the children receiving services being of school or kindergarten age, CCDF provides significant funding for afterschool care in a variety of settings. The majority of CCDF dollars are used to provide subsidies to eligible low-income children under age 13. A portion of CCDF funding is also used for quality improvement initiatives, such as professional development and technical assistance, with the goal of building the capacity of states to deliver quality services including programs before and after-school, during summers, and on school holidays.

To support state efforts to provide quality afterschool opportunities, the Child Care Bureau awarded a technical assistance contract on out-of-school time to The Finance Project and its partner, The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. The Afterschool Investments project provides technical assistance to Child Care and Development Fund grantees and other state and local leaders who support afterschool efforts. The goals of the project include:

- Identifying ways that states and communities are using Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy and quality dollars to support out-of-school time programs, and sharing these practices and approaches with other states;
- Identifying administrative and implementation issues related to CCDF investments in out-of-school time programs, and providing information and context (about barriers, problems, opportunities) as well as practical tools that will help CCDF administrators make decisions; and
- Identifying other major programs and sectors that are potential partners for CCDF in supporting out-of-school time programs, and providing models, strategies, and tools for coordination with other programs and sectors.

To meet these goals, the Afterschool Investments Project:

- Develops state profiles of afterschool resources, policies, and issues;
- Creates tools and materials to support the development and sustainability of afterschool efforts; and
- Provides technical assistance at meetings and conferences around building state collaborations for afterschool.

For more information about the project or to submit a request for technical assistance or information, contact The Finance Project at (202) 587-1000 or by email at [afterschool@financeproject.org](mailto:afterschool@financeproject.org), or visit <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool>.



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## Introduction

Many states and communities are searching for ways to ensure that children spend their nonschool hours in safe and supervised environments engaged in activities that promote learning, youth development, healthy behaviors, and recreation. The specific activities in which children engage during these hours and the places in which programs take place vary greatly in scope and setting, and the numerous public and private funding sources supporting afterschool programs vary greatly in overall mission.<sup>1</sup> In many states and communities, the broad range of stakeholders who care about improving the quality, broadening the availability, and ensuring the sustainability of afterschool programs come together to strengthen and support each other's efforts by forming networks—or collaborative associations. Networks employ a variety of strategies to achieve these goals including building state, regional, and local partnerships to promote good policy; working to direct adequate resources to sustain new and existing programs; and supporting efforts to provide high-quality services to all children.

An effective governance structure is essential to ensuring that a network is well managed, fosters leadership, and supports progress toward the stated goals. However, designing and managing an effective governance structure is often a challenging process. At the same time that a network endeavors to implement a vision, it must address such issues as how to make and implement decisions, whose participation or buy-in is needed for an initiative to succeed, how to secure that support and participation, and how to ensure effective communication and accountability. Moreover, as a network evolves and matures, the governance structure may also have to evolve to respond to changing needs.

This guide provides information on the design and function of effective afterschool network governance structures. It focuses on six key domains: (1) Vision, (2) Structure and Leadership, (3) Broad Representation and Participation, (4) Decision-Making and Accountability, (5) Communication, and (6) Measuring Results. State and local network experiences are shared throughout the guide and in the “Lessons from State and Local Networks” text boxes. The checklist on page 41 summarizes the major considerations for network governance put forth in this guide. Finally, the appendices offer lists of helpful tools and resources related to the issues discussed. It must be emphasized that this guide does not endorse a particular governance model—there is no cookie-cutter approach to effective governance. The unique assets and circumstances of each state or community will play a large role in determining the best governance structure for that network.



<sup>1</sup> The term *afterschool* is used broadly to refer to all programs that serve children during their out-of-school time hours, including before and after school as well as during summer and vacations.



## What is an Afterschool Network?

A network brings together a group of stakeholders or partners to work collaboratively toward a common vision—in this case, around policies and the allocation of resources to support afterschool programs. These partners come together and form a network in the belief that they can make a greater difference working together than they can as individuals. This publication includes examples of networks at the state and local level in exploring what makes for effective governance of an afterschool network.

For more descriptive information on the activities of afterschool networks, several recent publications describe their work and share lessons learned. *Statewide Afterschool Networks: Policies and Practices* provides brief descriptions of eighteen networks, listing their funding sources, major partners, key successes, challenges, and progress made. *The Afterschool Hours* describes the leadership efforts of municipal leaders in eight cities to bring together stakeholders to improve and expand afterschool programming, including what each city identified as the keys to success. Links to both publications can be found under the list of “General Governance” resources in Appendix C.

## What Is Network Governance?

Governance means both the structure that is charged with decision-making and the process by which decisions are made. Governance mechanisms guide network planning, oversight and policy direction, decision-making, implementation of administrative functions, program operations, and fiscal decisions. Networks are collaborative groups, in which a cross-section of stakeholders agrees to share responsibility, resources, and accountability in order to achieve shared goals that no single entity could accomplish on its own, including changes in policies, practices, and resource development. Collaborative governance requires network partners to clarify roles and expectations, revisit those roles and expectations when needed, and adjust their own policies when necessary to solve problems.

The specific governance structure that supports the work of an afterschool network will reflect the needs of the state or community, the nature of the network’s goals, and the anticipated timeframe for achieving those goals. In some cases, a formal governance structure will grow out of years of informal collaboration during which partners gradually build trust, beginning with small, shared accomplishments, before establishing formalized governance. In other cases, a legislative mandate or executive order will require the creation of a governance body that guides the work of partners from the network’s inception.

*Governance means both the structure that is charged with decision-making and the process by which decisions are made.*



Keep in mind that governance structures need to be dynamic and adaptable. The conditions that existed during the formation of a governance structure may change over time, and the network's governance structure should be able to adapt to changes in the organization and the surrounding environment.



## Lessons from State and Local Networks: Laying the Groundwork for Governance

Soon after receiving funding from the C.S. Mott Foundation to support a statewide afterschool network, **Rhode Island's After School Plus Alliance** realized a need to broaden its agenda to reflect the variety of afterschool programming in the state. Recognizing that the Alliance's constituents wanted to see the network demonstrate results, network partners chose not to focus on setting up a governance structure and instead worked toward providing concrete tools and information to the afterschool community. The founding members informally governed the network, and a formal governance structure emerged over time after almost two years of activity. However, because the group had built a positive reputation through its work in the state, it earned critical buy-in from the community and key stakeholders, thus ensuring a smooth transition to a formal structure.

**I. Vision** – Development, communication, and promotion of the network's vision and mission as well as building commitment, support, and responsibility for achieving the vision.

**II. Structure and Leadership** – Determination of how to structure and ensure adequate leadership of the network, including where the network will reside and how it will be organized and staffed.

**III. Broad Representation and Participation** – Formation and implementation of strategies to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the network and to encourage their effective participation.

**IV. Decision-Making** – Clarification of how decisions will be made and implemented, including both structure and process.

**V. Communication** – Development, maintenance, and implementation of an overall strategy for communicating both within the network and with other stakeholders in the community at large. Those on the ground level who implement policy as well as those in positions of power who influence or develop policy must be kept informed of the network's activities.

**VI. Measuring Results** – Establishment of a results-based accountability system that allows the network to monitor its progress toward achieving desired outcomes.



## Why Does Network Governance Matter?

Governance structures are the key operational mechanism of collaborative initiatives through which everything is negotiated. Thus a governance structure's efficacy, or lack thereof, tends to weave its way into all aspects of the network's efforts.

Effective governance structures:

- **Provide a stable foundation for high-quality work.** The positive leadership, strategic direction, meaningful linkages, and focus that come from a strong governance body (or bodies) provide the critical foundation of support that an afterschool network requires.
- **Are rewarded by funders.** Both public and private grantors increasingly want to see evidence of successful partnering and collaborative governance, and are inclined to view evidence of true collaboration as a critical success factor.
- **Ensure that all stakeholders are present at the table.** A good governance structure gives stakeholders a forum for conveying their views and the opportunity to influence initiatives and explore alternatives. Good governance also limits the tendency toward nay-saying after decisions have been made and implemented.
- **Promote sustainability through broad-based support.** Involving appropriate stakeholders in a positive and dynamic governance structure is one of the most effective ways in which a network can cultivate the broad base of support necessary for long-term sustainability.
- **Keep partners and stakeholders active and engaged over time.** A governance structure can be designed and implemented so that the strengths of each stakeholder are maximized, limitations (e.g., time, resources) are acknowledged, and each group's needs are met in the process.

*Governance structures are the key operational mechanism of collaborative initiatives through which everything is negotiated.*





## I. Vision

Although setting up a formal governance structure is an important early step in network development, network partners must first have a clear and shared vision in place before they can begin to consider the issue of governance in a sensible and strategic way. Until the network leaders can clearly articulate their vision and the major strategies for achieving that vision, it will be difficult to develop a governance structure to manage and evaluate their work.

Developing a common, shared vision is the first step in building trust among network members and is critical to the healthy functioning of a network. A vision statement provides a concrete reminder of what members of a network believe and what they want to accomplish. Keep in mind that an emerging

network brings together a diverse set of stakeholders around the common issue of afterschool programming. Although the issue of afterschool is on the agenda of all these various stakeholders, each partner offers a unique set of perspectives, needs, and assets. In order to proceed, group members need to state their goals and create a comprehensible vision that enjoys buy-in from all stakeholders and lays out expectations for the group. The vision is the network's unifying idea, and it must be articulated before a governance structure can be developed.

*The vision is the network's unifying idea, and it must be articulated before a governance structure can be developed.*

The **Afterschool Investments Project** has created a tool to guide afterschool partnerships, including state and local networks, through the process of creating a shared vision for their work. *Creating a Vision for Afterschool Partnerships* provides information on what a vision statement is and the purpose it serves; presents two alternative techniques for creating a vision statement; and includes a variety of considerations for planning teams as they finalize a vision statement. The tool is available on the **Afterschool Investments Project** Web site at <http://www.nccic.org/afterschool> under Project Resources.



### ***What Resources, Including Time, are Available?***

Vision statements should be compelling and inspiring, motivating stakeholders to move forward. During the process of developing a vision statement, network members begin to understand their unique roles and how they need to work with other members to ensure the network's success. In the end, the vision statement should reflect consensus goals and desired outcomes. Members of the network should be committed to the vision and willing to share responsibility for achieving its goals.

### ***Whose Input is Needed?***

Creating a vision statement that truly reflects shared network goals requires representation from a wide range of partners. The composition of the group that develops the vision may vary but should at least include representatives from organizations that are involved in or benefit from afterschool programming. Typical partners in an afterschool network visioning process include state and local government agencies, educators, school-age providers, families, employers, foundations, youth development workers, community-based organizations, and law enforcement agencies. If all partners are involved at this early stage, they will understand the different perspectives and opinions in the group and are more likely to approve of and buy into the final vision.

Usually the visioning process takes place during a group meeting or planning session. Ideally, the size of the group should be about 30 people. Working with a larger group can ensure early buy-in from a broader range of stakeholders, but can also make achieving consensus more difficult. A group larger than 30 might consider making decisions in small breakout groups before discussing issues with the larger body. Alternatively, the visioning process might begin with a smaller group that invites additional stakeholders to join the process only after a strong sense of agreement has been reached. The actual number of people involved in the process is less important than ensuring that the right people are involved and having a good facilitator to lead the group through the process.

### ***Who Should Facilitate?***

Keep in mind that network members often bring different perspectives and opinions to the table. An outside neutral facilitator can help a group find its common purpose by keeping group members focused and encouraging the consideration of all ideas. Use of an outside facilitator also enables all members of the group to participate actively in the process.

### ***What are the Steps in the Process?***

When developing a vision statement, many groups opt for a three-step process. First, the group brainstorms ideas; this visioning should take into account the network's scope, parameters, and priorities. Consider desired results, the conditions and causes necessary to achieving those results, and the potential problems and opportunities the network may encounter over time.



Next, the group drafts a preliminary vision statement based on the results of the brainstorming session. Depending on the situation and the cohesiveness of the group, it may be more productive for a small group to begin by drafting a vision statement based on the full group's discussions and then bringing it back to the full group for analysis.

Finally, the group revises the vision statement. After several iterations, members should eventually arrive at a statement that is unanimously supported. Keep in mind that the goals related to the vision and the strategies to achieve those goals may need to be revisited and revised again, particularly if circumstances change (e.g., new stakeholders join the group or new priorities are identified). Depending upon the level of intensity a group undertakes to develop a vision, the timeframe to complete a process can range from one day-long meeting to three or four shorter meetings with some smaller group decision-making in between larger meetings.



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Creating and Maintaining the Vision

Early in its development, the **North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs** held a retreat with members of its advisory board in order to give each member a say in creating the network's vision statement. The retreat was an opportunity for the various organizations at the table to work through their natural tensions and to confirm that everyone was on the same page as the statewide network was established.

When contentious or politically charged issues arise, the **South Carolina Afterschool Alliance** reminds stakeholders of the network's vision and that they are all trying to work toward the best interests of children. Likewise, leaders from the **Missouri Afterschool Network** frequently begin and end meetings with pictures of children in order to make this point.

#### ***How Will the Vision be Used?***

The vision should be an energizing statement that reminds partners of their shared goals and motivates them to work together. A network should consider not only how its governance structure will be aligned to support the vision but also how it will communicate the vision to prospective stakeholders.<sup>2</sup> This guide presents considerations related to both of these goals. Ensuring continued buy-in for the vision is necessary to mobilize current and potential partners effectively and to drive network goals and activities over the long term.



<sup>2</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of communication within and outside of the network, see the guide's section on communication beginning on page 32.

Think about how the network can generate interest in and build momentum for its work. Examples of possible strategies include the following:

- Develop a one-page document that describes the network's vision, goals, and major activities.
- Set up an online listserv for quick communication.
- Publish an electronic newsletter.
- Establish a network Web site.
- Develop a short message (no more than 35 words) that network stakeholders can use to communicate the value of and build support for the network.



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Building Support for the Network's Vision

The **Youth Development Coalition**, a local afterschool network in **Lincoln County, Oregon**, demonstrated what a network could bring to the community by organizing an event that would appeal to a wide range of afterschool stakeholders—a training on developmental assets, or the qualities that are essential for young people to be successful. At the end of the training, network organizers asked attendees if they were interested in forming a county-wide network to continue to support afterschool training for a wide range of service providers.

**Partnership for Children, Families, and Youth** in **Pasadena, California** wrote a concept paper for the city attorney. The document outlined the importance of afterschool services, the need for such services in the community, and the reasons those services deserve to be supported by the city. Now they have gained key champions in the city and hope to one day gain city funds to support their network.

Soon after deciding on its name and mission statement, the **Norwalk Afterschool Alliance** in **Connecticut** decided that the network's first activities would be to conduct a community needs assessment for afterschool and to coordinate training, an area of interest common to all the providers because all of them wanted more training opportunities. By coordinating through the Alliance, providers saved money on training.







## II. Structure and Leadership

In addition to clarifying the network's goals and vision, emerging networks need to make a number of key decisions about the structure and leadership of the governing body, including where it will reside, how it will be organized and staffed, and what roles each partner will play.

### *Deciding on a Home for the Network*

One of the first issues that an emerging afterschool network must address is where to reside. Networks frequently evolve from an existing organization that has been working on afterschool issues and has built trust and partnerships in the field. The organization then receives support to foster the development of a network, serving as the fiscal agent and providing the needed staff. The host organization reaches out to a broader coalition of like-minded organizations that jointly develop a separate and distinct governance structure to carry out the network's mission.

It is not always the case that there is a natural or obvious answer to the question of where to house the network. Should the network reside within an existing public or private organization? Should the network partners create an entirely new organization? The typical outcome often lies somewhere in between. For example, a new organization or entity is formed but is largely staffed and supported by existing organizations; or, an initiative is housed within an existing organization, but a new and separate oversight or advisory committee is established to distinguish the new effort from the organization's ongoing work. When choosing the best location for the network, consider the pros and cons of each option—forming a new and independent organization (i.e., establishing a 501(c)(3)—see the box on page 16), working through or allying with an existing organization, or embedding a network within an organization. The table on page 19 summarizes the pros and cons of each of these options.

### *Forming a New, Distinct Organization*

Typically, the decision to form a new organization is not made early in the development of a network. Most of the time the network is nurtured by another entity for the first few years before the leaders arrive at a point where they are ready to or have a need to be a separate

organization, unattached to the larger entity. Some networks never reach that point, feeling that the costs of independent status outweigh the benefits of its continued association or relationship with the other organization. That said, the decision to form a new entity requires significant organizational development resources and is generally pursued when no existing organization has the capacity to house a network, or when turf issues prohibit housing the network within an existing organization.



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Establishing 501(c)(3) Status

In **South Carolina**, the decision to create a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for the statewide network stemmed both from the lack of a single state entity that addressed afterschool issues and from a concern that certain groups of providers might feel left out if the network were associated with a particular state agency. The emerging network partners decided to seek out a neutral facilitator with expertise in 501(c)(3) creation to help them answer a variety of questions, including how to apply for nonprofit status, what kind of organization they would be, and how to structure their bylaws. The facilitator, an attorney with expertise in nonprofit law, received a token payment. If a group has few or no funds available, keep in mind that facilitators may be willing to offer services for free or at reduced rates in order to make professional contacts among the network stakeholders.

The primary benefit of forming a new, independent organization is that the new entity can create its own distinct brand and identity and thus avoid being associated with the reputation, history, and obligations of existing groups. A new organization is also free from internal tensions that might arise from decisions that affect the network and its parent organization in conflicting ways.

The downside to forming a new entity is that it may initially lack credibility or power until establishing itself and developing a record of accomplishment. Creating a new identity from scratch can be costly and time consuming. In addition, a new organization will, by necessity, need to spend time and energy putting in place basic organizational structures, such as fiscal systems, management controls, and legal paperwork that would already exist in an established organization. These tasks require time and energy that might otherwise go toward network-building activities. For smaller organizations, cash flow and establishing credit are important considerations. Finally, the network must carefully consider the long term sustainability of creating a new organization. If a new organization is formed in response to one initiative or funder, will the organization be able to sustain itself over time? Will the community be willing to support the new organization?



## To 501(c)(3) or Not To 501(c)(3) ...

### What does it mean to establish nonprofit organization status?

*Afterschool networks that are housed within another organization may consider the option of becoming a separate 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit corporation. But what does it really mean to establish 501(c)(3) status? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks? This box provides a summary of what is required of an organization to become a 501(c)(3), what it means to have 501(c)(3) status, as well as resources that can provide you with more information on this topic.*

#### **What is a 501(c)(3)?**

"501(c)(3)" refers to the section of the U.S. tax code that addresses tax-exempt, charitable organizations. To be approved for 501(c)(3) status, organizations must satisfy one of the exempt purposes listed in the code, which includes charitable, religious, or educational purposes. An organization must also show that it is 'charitable,' meaning that it works to benefit the poor or underprivileged, advance education or science, erect or maintain public buildings, lessen the burdens of government, lessen neighborhood tensions, eliminate prejudice and discrimination, defend human and civil rights, or combat community deterioration and juvenile delinquency. Lobbying efforts may not be a substantial part of the activities of a 501(c)(3) organization, and such organizations may not engage at all in campaign activities for or against candidates for public office. For more information on IRS definitions and requirements, visit <http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/index.html>.

#### **What is the Process for Becoming a 501(c)(3)?**

To become a nonprofit corporation, a network must first file the paperwork that is required (such as articles of incorporation) by the state in which the organization plans to incorporate, usually with the office of the Secretary of State. The network will also need to file for federal tax exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. Note that the process can vary from state to state, so networks may want to engage the services of an attorney or a technical assistance organization that assists newly forming nonprofits to help with the paperwork.

#### **What does it mean to be a 501(c)(3)?**

The primary benefit is that organizations with 501(c)(3) status are tax-exempt and eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions. Many public and private funders will only fund organizations with 501(c)(3) status. However, it is not necessary for the network to establish its own 501(c)(3) status to receive funding. Another eligible organization can serve as the fiscal agent for the network, allowing it to have the benefits of 501(c)(3) status without some of the drawbacks. In other cases, a network may decide that it is worth the costs and reporting burdens to apply for its own separate 501(c)(3) status.

#### **What is required of 501(c)(3) organizations?**

There are filing costs associated with establishing a 501(c)(3), plus additional costs if you must hire an attorney. Networks that wish to establish 501(c)(3) status must draw up articles of incorporation, identify and recruit a board of directors, and complete other paperwork as described above. Once established, 501(c)(3) organizations must file an annual report with the IRS. Networks with 501(c)(3) status will need to establish corporate record-keeping procedures (e.g., double-entry accounting) to meet these and other requirements, such as regular audits. They will need to develop systems for managing human resource related issues, including payroll tax and withholding and employee benefits; technology and Web site development; and management of overhead including facilities, space, and equipment; among other issues.

The Foundation Center offers an online tutorial that walks through the steps for establishing a nonprofit organization, available at <http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/tutorials/establish/index.html>. The Foundation Center also lists print and electronic resources for establishing a nonprofit organization at [http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/faqs/html/starting\\_nonprofit.html](http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/faqs/html/starting_nonprofit.html).



### **Working Through or Allying with an Existing Organization**

An obvious and major benefit to allying with or working through an existing organization is that it can be much easier than weathering the challenges of forming a new entity. The existing organization, which can be a public agency or a private organization, can bring to the table a strong track record, significant staff and management resources, organizational capacity, institutional knowledge, and ready partnerships. This approach avoids the need to focus attention on organizational issues and allows partners to focus instead on the activities of the network.

The major downside to working through an existing public or private organization is the potential loss of independence for the new network if others identify it with an already established entity or well known agenda. A network that chooses this route may find it needs to distinguish itself from its host organization, if necessary, so that prospective partners trust that the network exercises autonomy and is serious about its mission.



### **Lessons from State and Local Networks: Deciding Where to House the Network**

In **Louisiana**, the choice was made to house the statewide network within the state department of education. This decision made sense for **Louisiana** because of the role the agency plays as a major administrator of public funds and provider of technical assistance for afterschool programs in the state, as well as the lack of an obvious choice of another organization to play this role.

A group of stakeholders came together and voted on the organization best positioned to house the afterschool network in the state of **Washington**. **School's Out Washington**, a statewide nonprofit organization with a mission to ensure all young people have safe places to go when not in school, was deemed the natural place to locate the network because of the organization's willingness to take on this task and the leadership role it has assumed among afterschool programs in the state.



### ***The Middle Ground: Embedding a Network Within an Organization***

For many emerging networks, finding a middle ground between being part of an existing entity or creating a new 501(C)(3) is a win-win situation. For example, network leaders may decide to have the network become its own legal entity but share physical space and administrative resources with another larger organization to cut costs and save time and energy. Many networks benefit from the best of both worlds: network leaders seek to form a governance structure that enjoys the energy and independence of a new entity while drawing from the experience and resources of an established organization. The **North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs**, for instance, has been able to maximize its connections to the strong credibility and larger body of work of its host organization, the North Carolina Public School Forum, including that organization's reputation as a neutral convener and its record on policy development. Similarly, the existing advocacy organization Kansas Action for Children has been instrumental in providing guidance to the formation of that state's afterschool network, the **Kansas Enrichment Network**, which is housed in the school of education at the University of Kansas. The executive director of Kansas Action for Children also chairs the executive committee of the network, and Kansas Action for Children continues to provide expertise and helpful strategy to the network.

The benefits of the middle ground are that the network can function like a new organization by developing its own distinct brand and identity without having to devote time and resources to organizational development. Of course, the network still runs the risk of being associated with the agency in which it is embedded and must, at the same time, work to build its own credibility in the field.



### **Lessons from State and Local Networks: One Network's Evolution**

The **New York State Afterschool Network** began as an advisory group to facilitate the planning and implementation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in the state of New York. In 2003, this advisory group formally became **The New York State Afterschool Network**. The network is housed within The After-School Corporation, a nonprofit organization based in New York City that seeks to increase quality of and public funding for afterschool programs.

## Where Should the Network Be Located?

The answer to this question will be different for every network and will largely depend on the political climate and capacity of existing organizations. Some considerations are presented below.

### Working Through an Existing Organization

#### Pros:

- Can be much simpler than forming a new entity. Existing organization can offer:
  - A strong track record
  - Staff and management resources
  - Organizational capacity
  - Institutional knowledge
  - Established partnerships
- Avoids the need to focus attention on the organizational issues and allows partners to focus instead on the activities of the network

#### Cons:

- Potential loss of independence for the new network
- May have to deal with turf issues or other baggage of existing organization
- Must deliberately distinguish itself from its host organization so that prospective partners trust that the network exercises autonomy and is serious about its mission

### Forming a New Organization or Establishing 501(c) (3) Status

#### Pros:

- New organization can create its own distinct brand and identity
- New organization can operate independently
- Can avoid negative baggage of existing organizations

#### Cons:

- Requires significant organizational development resources
- May initially lack credibility or power
- Must address turf issues
- May be more expensive
- May face limited longevity

### The Middle Ground: A Blended Approach

#### Pros:

- Networks can benefit from the best of both worlds: a governance structure that enjoys the energy and independence of a new entity or project while drawing from the experience and resources of an established organization

#### Cons:

- As is the case with working through an existing organization, the network must be clear about establishing its own separate identity



## Organizing the Governance Structure

There is no single way to organize a governance structure; numerous variations exist, and what works for one network may not be the best approach for another. Ultimately, the governance structure that a network adopts must fit the network's unique set of circumstances. Many networks have found it helpful to look at governance models from organizations in states or localities with similar political and economic environments.

Most network organizational structures have multiple levels. Appendix B provides examples of organizational charts from the state networks in **New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and South Carolina**. Network governance structures commonly include the following components:

- A *board of directors* (which can also be referred to as a *steering committee* or *advisory board*) typically sets policies and strategic directions for the network and may even have legal or financial responsibility for the network, depending on the network's organizational status. Its major role is to run the network's fiscal and administrative functions. The duties of the board may include (but are not limited to) overseeing and evaluating the network's work plan, hiring staff or delegating the task of hiring staff, supervising staff, managing finances; preparing reports to state and local government agencies, convening meetings, engaging in policy development and public engagement, and fundraising.
- An *executive or coordinating committee* is a subset of the board, usually composed of network officers or other members that have been authorized to make decisions for the network between board meetings. The executive committee is charged with ensuring that policies and directions determined by the network's board are implemented and with overseeing routine operations.
- *Subcommittees, working groups, or standing committees* manage specific issues and report to the board of directors.
- *Connections to other organizations* like provider groups, advocacy organizations, and parents. Sometimes networks invite these groups to elect members that may serve on subcommittees in order to provide a more formal link to the community.

For example, the **North Carolina** afterschool network has a two-tiered governance structure. Its coordinating committee, which functions as an executive committee, is responsible for policy-making and determining the network's direction. Organizations that serve on this committee have invested funds or significant in-kind resources into the network. This group meets formally once a year and informally on an as-needed basis. The network also has an advisory board, which gives advice to the network and coordinating committee, and includes representatives from different constituencies across the state. The network's working groups are formed from the advisory board, and its members serve on committees. Four formal meetings of the advisory board take place each year.





### **Determining Roles and Responsibilities**

Networks must also make decisions about how to constitute their boards. The ideal size for each component of a governing body will vary. Leaders will need to determine an appropriate size with respect to the numbers of members in a governing body, and how much power and authority should be given to smaller committees with respect to the larger policy-making structure. This requires agreeing upon a process for how and by whom board and committee members will be chosen, how long they will serve, and how the network will handle turnover and succession. Networks frequently document how to handle these and other issues related to governance in written bylaws. **Rhode Island's After School Plus Alliance**, for instance, drafted bylaws that specify the composition of its board, including dedicated slots for parents, youth, providers, businesses, faith-based organizations, and state agencies. A network's bylaws can be as simple or complicated as needed.

Members of the governance team need to understand their individual roles. Some networks have found it useful to arrange a board retreat or develop a manual in order to help members understand their roles and responsibilities. Other options include holding an orientation for new board members or pairing a seasoned board member with one who is new.



### **Lessons from State and Local Networks: Orienting Board Members to the Network**

**Kern County's First Five Commission**, a governance structure set up to determine how monies from California's Proposition 10 are distributed and used within the county, provides each new member with a CD-ROM that explains member duties. The CD, *Field Lessons: A Guide for New Commissioners*, serves as a quick interactive guide highlighting information on the group's governance structure, meeting rules, and guidelines on the allocation and management of funds.

The **Illinois After-School Partnership** is co-chaired by the state departments of education and human services, both of which have experienced turnover in senior level positions. The network strategically builds relationships with staff at various levels within each agency in order to maintain institutional knowledge while reaching out to orient new senior level policy-makers as they come on board.

The composition of the network's governance structure may change over time as the network grows. Therefore, it is important to garner leadership from stakeholders who know the field well and can provide direction and vision for the network's activities. As a network matures and focuses more on policy and continuing resource development, it is also important to



ensure that public and private sector leaders—policy-makers, business leaders, and other influential people who can move a policy agenda or secure resources to support the network or afterschool programs—are involved. Networks gain strength through the engagement of diverse partners; a structure that offers meaningful roles and opportunities for many participants will support the long-term sustainability of the network. The **South Carolina Afterschool Alliance** has found that use of a committee structure ensures that expertise is strategically tapped. In **New Hampshire**, the board of the statewide network **PlusTime New Hampshire** was initially composed of leaders from the provider community. As the network began to be viewed as an expert resource on afterschool programming, the board composition changed to include members with access to state policy leaders.

If the network enlists the involvement of political figures, it may be important to seek out representation from both parties to ensure that the network can work in a bipartisan manner. Finally, many network coordinators warn that high-level policy-makers will only want to take part in a network's board or advisory group if that network has a definite plan for achieving its goals, so make sure that goals are well defined and clearly articulated before inviting those individuals to the table. Have a specific role in mind for policy-makers when you approach them. Let them share what they have to offer and what they are willing to do for the organization, and be realistic about the level of involvement they can provide.



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Working with Elected Officials

Afterschool networks frequently seek to engage the support of elected officials. However, members of networks that were started as an initiative of an elected official must be careful to keep the network from being too closely associated with any one office holder or party in order to outlive changes of administration and deal effectively with all policy-makers. **Indianapolis, Indiana** Mayor Bart Peterson appointed a cabinet-level afterschool programs coordinator to establish the **AfterSchool Coalition of Indianapolis**. The mayor and the afterschool programs coordinator have worked hard to secure community ownership of the network in order to ensure its sustainability. By continually reaching out to new stakeholders and requiring that a representative of a community organization such as the YMCA is president of the coalition, the city shares ownership of the initiative.

Consider how the network can connect with local partners to broaden its reach. In many cases, this objective may mean something as simple as tapping into existing groups to reach a particular audience. For example, The **Washington Afterschool Network** connects with parents and youth in **Washington** state by engaging local Parent-Teacher Associations and youth representatives from local YMCAs and 4-H clubs.

Sometimes the connection is more formal. For example, regional affiliate networks are a way for statewide or large community networks to address the need for broad geographical representation. **Louisiana's** statewide afterschool network includes a regional component to its organizational structure. The regional concept was developed by the Greater New Orleans Afterschool Partnership and will be replicated across the state. The network identifies regional conveners, typically large entities that fund local programs, such as the United Way or community foundations. The regional conveners are invited to be part of the state leadership team in order to create a cadre of advisors from throughout the state who can promote the network's goals while meeting the concerns of local partners.



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Establishing Membership in the Network

The **Kansas Enrichment Network** is owned and directed by its partners. Any interested entity may become a partner in the network as long as it signs a partner agreement that specifies how the organization will contribute to the network within its own organizational work and as a member (e.g. providing feedback, participating in committees, etc.)

#### **Leading and Staffing the Network**

Leadership of the governing body is another important factor that can determine the efficacy of the network. Successful collaborations often require a lead agency or an identified leader to unite the work of the collaborative. Afterschool networks should carefully consider which individuals or organizations are best positioned to offer leadership. The network should also develop strategies for involving key champions—leaders from business, government, places of worship, and other parts of the community who can use their power and influence to generate support for the network and implement policy agendas.





## Lessons from State and Local Networks: Engaging High-Level Stakeholders

The **Washington Afterschool Network** has formed the Panel of 50, an advisory group of high-powered individuals, including business leaders, funders and public officials, who are formally invited to participate in the network in an advisory role. Network leaders understand that members of the Panel of 50 have limited time and are therefore strategic in how they engage them. The Panel of 50 does not necessarily meet as a group, but network leaders can call upon them to provide advice and guidance in their areas of expertise. Recently, the network leaders asked the Panel of 50 to provide advice on how best to communicate and implement their statewide plan, *Afterschool in Washington: A Smart, Strategic Investment* (available at <http://schoolsoutwashington.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&pageid=198&sectionid=92>). The network leaders also asked panel members to consider ways to use their unique leadership positions to support implementation of the plan's recommendations. By using these leaders in high-profile roles, the network has been able to benefit significantly from the engagement of well-connected stakeholders.

Finally, it is important to devote adequate resources and realistic time allocations for network staffing. The best-designed network governance structure will not be successful without dedicated staff time to manage its tasks. When resources are available to hire network staff, consider how the network will manage human resources issues, such as how staff is supervised, how grievances are handled, and so forth. Afterschool networks frequently cite maintaining adequate staff as a challenge, but a few have devised creative strategies to overcome this obstacle. For example, the state networks in **North Carolina, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Montana, and Vermont**, and the **First Five Commission** in **Kern County, California**, all use college interns, work-study students, or volunteers from the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and AmeriCorps programs. Working with interns and volunteers is a low-cost way to staff the network and provides opportunities for young students to become engaged in the afterschool arena.

*The best-designed network governance structure will not be successful without dedicated staff time to manage its tasks.*

Successful network coordinators note that there needs to be a balance between those who can provide leadership—the individuals that a network may want to include on the board—and those who can carry out the day-to-day tasks. A board needs both the high-powered movers-and-shakers and the worker bees whose participation on committees and work groups will be vital to the network's success. The next section explores how networks can promote the participation of all vital stakeholders.





### III. Broad Representation and Participation

Emerging networks must consider how to secure broad representation and participation among stakeholders. Partners should plan carefully how stakeholders will be selected and how their involvement will be structured. To encourage effective participation, the network should have clearly defined roles and realistic expectations for members of the governing body. Documenting these processes in the network's bylaws is one way of demonstrating that the network is both purposeful and transparent in how it involves stakeholders.

#### ***Broad Representation***

In forming an afterschool network, organizers must take care to involve as many of the key actors as possible, because failure to do so can result in conflict and charges of inadequate representation later on. When considering who and what interests should be at the table, potential stakeholders might include representatives from state and local government agencies (e.g., social services, public welfare, child care, health, juvenile justice, law enforcement, and education); regional interests; the faith-based sector; the business or corporate sector; grassroots organizations; the nonprofit or civic community; foundations; other state associations and coalitions; afterschool service providers; groups that represent parents and families; youth representatives; and the media.

Some networks seek to formalize their members' commitment by asking partners to sign memoranda of understanding (MOU) or letters of agreement. This step helps codify standards and expectations from each partner. Other networks require voting members to agree to support the network through either in-kind or financial contributions. Both strategies give credibility to the partnership and encourage partners to buy into the mission of the network.



Often, the governance structure of a collaborative entity such as an afterschool network will comprise:

■ **Decision-makers or other influential stakeholders:**

- governor's policy advisors
- business leaders
- legislative aides
- local politicians

■ **Other key stakeholders:**

- regional representatives
- state and local agency staff

■ **Members of the population being served:**

- providers
- advocates
- parents



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Sharing Resources to Build Partnerships

Sharing information can be one way to bring partners to the table. The lead agency for the **Louisiana** afterschool network offered access to its reporting system for afterschool programs that allows them to match student educational data to the students they serve. The network's offer to facilitate access to this information for other key agencies was appealing to these potential partners and provided the network with the opportunity to engage state leaders in its work.

**PlusTime New Hampshire** partners must sign an MOU agreeing to contribute to the work of the network. In turn, each partner organization has a point person on staff at **PlusTime New Hampshire** responsible for communicating with and generating feedback from each partner on a regular basis. In addition to their own regular meetings, PlusTime NH staff attends regular meetings of their stakeholders (e.g., cooperative extension, agency work groups, etc.).

### Participation in the Network

Simply inviting broad representation in the governance structure does not guarantee that participation will follow. To help partners understand the network's mission and their role within the network, many networks provide an orientation session for new members as well as ongoing opportunities for training and engagement.

As the network pursues broad representation and participation, consider the individual circumstances and priorities in the state or community. What types of groups and individuals should represent the network?

If representation from particular organizations or political figures is desired, consider how to manage turnover and maintain that representation over time. All network partners should sense that their roles are meaningful, appropriate, and that they provide important opportunities for contribution. All members must understand and embrace their role in the implementation of decisions. Finally, as the network grows and its needs change, the composition of the partners at the table will also change.

Key stakeholders (both grassroots and decision-makers) will stay at the table when they have meaningful positions and understand the issues at hand. They open doors, help the network build new relationships, and ultimately influence policy decisions.

*All network partners should sense that their roles are meaningful, appropriate, and that they provide important opportunities for contribution.*



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Maintaining and Engaging Members

Recently the **South Carolina Afterschool Alliance** was challenged to keep the momentum of the network going while engaging a new administration and facing state cuts for afterschool programming. Since the network's inception, the staff has been engaging prominent board members by assigning each one specific tasks and encouraging them to use their connections to establish relationships with key leaders in the state. The network's deployment of its politically connected board members proved to be a valuable strategy. These leaders and representatives from the new governor's office helped the network organize a successful governor's summit on afterschool programming.

In California, **Pasadena's** local afterschool network keeps partners engaged by rotating the administrative functions of the network amongst the partnering public agencies. This set-up allowed each of the partners to share the administrative costs of the network, gave each partner the opportunity to showcase its organizational capacity, and encouraged each partner to remain involved in the functioning of the network.





Meeting schedules need to be planned carefully in order to have a broad representation of the afterschool community at network meetings. Consider having various public meetings at different times, with varying frequency. Some networks have tried to minimize travel and time burdens by holding quarterly meetings attached to a larger meeting or conference. States with large geographic areas or diverse regional concerns hold regularly scheduled regional meetings to hear varying points of view from across the state. Additional options for encouraging broad participation include convening an annual meeting for all stakeholders interested in afterschool programs and issues, piggybacking on existing conferences and other opportunities, and sponsoring conference calls that are open to all interested parties.



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Ensuring Broad Representation

In **Connecticut**, the **Norwalk Afterschool Network** found that holding its meetings at a different location each month was an effective way to build trust and ownership of the network and gave partners the opportunity to see each other's facilities, sometimes for the first time.

The **North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs** engages policy-makers at the local level by holding five regional meetings each year. County commissioners and mayors often attend these meetings to give voice to local issues. Local representatives plan the regional meetings; the network staff meets with a regional planning team to help set up the meeting and encourage appropriate representatives to attend. The governor's office sends official letters to invite potential attendees to each of the regional meetings. The invitation list reflects the diverse composition of the statewide governing board and includes partners from both public and private sectors. Because of the high profile of these meetings, leaders at every level of government have been involved, including some representatives from U.S. Senate offices.

To ensure broad representation and participation, state afterschool networks in **New York** and **Oregon** held regional focus group meetings to solicit feedback on the network governance structure and the role of regional networks in that structure.



## IV. Decision-Making

Once the governing body's structure and leadership have been established, stakeholders must determine how decisions will be made and implemented. Effective governance structures provide multiple opportunities for partners to participate in the decision-making process.

Part of governing in good faith entails adopting a trust model for the decision-making process. In other words, regardless of the resources each partner brings to the table, all stakeholders should have opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process and feel comfortable expressing their views. This participatory approach to decision-making is key to ensuring that diverse opinions are voiced and allows for the development of innovative ideas that incorporate many perspectives. Not every member of the network must agree to or have a hand in making all decisions, but those individuals who are interested should have a chance to be heard by network leaders and understand the process by which leaders make decisions.

*In other words, regardless of the resources each partner brings to the table, all stakeholders should have opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process and feel comfortable expressing their views.*

As stated earlier, governance is both the structure for decision-making and the process through which decisions are made. Different networks will assign decision-making responsibilities differently; each network has to determine the roles and responsibilities of the bodies that make up its governance structure depending on individual circumstances. A network might, for example, adopt the following decision-making scheme:

- The *board of directors, steering committee, or advisory board* is the highest decision-making body and focuses on the issues related to finance and human resources. It makes the overarching policy decisions and sets the direction for the network. The board or steering committee receives recommendations from the executive committee and the subcommittees.



- The *coordinating or executive committee* makes the detailed decisions about how the policies will be implemented or communicated for the network. It is often a subset of the board that meets in between the board of director meetings and is responsible for the day-to-day decisions that do not require board notification.
- The *standing committees, subcommittees, or working groups* investigate specific issues for the network and make recommendations to the board on those issues. They report their findings to the board of directors (e.g., the quality subcommittee does research on indicators of afterschool quality and submits its findings to the board of directors). Some organizations use their subcommittees more broadly, allowing them to undertake major activities and make decisions about a specific issue.

The distribution of responsibility for making decisions will differ depending upon the type of decisions to be made and the leadership structures that are established. Some networks have determined that members have varying degrees of interest in the decision-making process. For example, some stakeholders are most comfortable being kept informed of decisions and may be interested in learning about the network’s activities and providing input on a less frequent basis. The stakeholders may attend a conference or similar statewide event once a year where they can provide input or help elect new officers. Other stakeholders may have specific expertise and have interest in holding an advisory role. Finally, some stakeholders may be involved at multiple levels and desire a say in the final approval of decisions.



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Making Decisions

The **Washington Afterschool Network** built upon existing partnerships to create a structure that allowed for decision-making at multiple levels. In addition to creating an advisory group of high-powered individuals with specific areas of expertise, they have created a partnership group consisting of core state partners in afterschool who have the opportunity to serve on various committees representing each of the network goals. The network also has a steering committee comprising 14 organizations representing various state stakeholders. Each member of this steering committee has pledged to work on network activities or to provide resources to support the work. Each of these structures has opportunities to be involved in varying levels of decision-making for the network. The network staff believes that this consensus approach to decision-making has been successful because of the long history of collaboration in the state and the organization’s reputation as a neutral convener of stakeholders.

When the **Youth Development Coalition** in **Lincoln County, Oregon**, was ready to create a formal governance structure, its leaders decided to engage an outside facilitator to keep the discussion moving forward productively. A local consultant who had previously helped organize boards for local churches and businesses helped the group draft bylaws, clarify board members’ roles and responsibilities, and develop criteria for the selection of voting and nonvoting members.

Even in less formal governance structures, there has to be accountability. If the leadership roles within the network are clearly defined, it will be easier to determine where accountability and responsibility reside. As the network starts to define rules for decision-making, consider the following issues:

- **The definition of roles and responsibilities among different governance substructures.**  
In other words, how does the network ensure that issues are being dealt with appropriately and that findings and decisions are understood by all? How is accountability for carrying out decisions enforced?
- **The decision-making process in a group setting.** Networks must address such issues as how meetings are run and by whom, how often are they held, who is authorized to vote, and who is authorized to spend money. Some groups make decisions by super-majority vote (two-thirds or three-fourths needed for a decision to be made), whereas others opt to come to consensus. The network will need to decide how many members must be present for a decision to be valid.
- **The means by which members at various levels can voice their concerns and grievances.**  
The network will need to determine if it needs a dispute resolution mechanism. If the issue is not serious, think about providing informal problem solving or informal information-gathering sessions.

Once a decision is made, all members should be made aware of it. New decisions, programs, and policies should be reported to those involved in and affected by the decision. Rules that are determined for the network's decision-making process need to be codified. Many groups discover that written rules are helpful during times of conflict or when there are changes in the makeup of the network. Rules need not be written in a complicated format, but it is important for them to be put in writing and accessible to all.

Ensuring financial integrity is another critical aspect of effective governance. Networks must develop policies and procedures to ensure that appropriate financial controls are in place. Networks with responsibility for managing various accounts and disbursing grant money will need to decide which substructure handles fiscal issues. Typically, the executive committee is responsible for fiscal decisions, but some networks may choose to delegate fiscal management to a special subcommittee or to one of the collaborating organizations, if the network itself does not have the capacity to implement appropriate controls. Some networks also have different quorum requirements for making decisions about money. For example, if a quorum of 50 percent plus one is required for a regular meeting; a higher quorum requirement is necessary for a meeting at which fiscal decisions are to be made.





## V. Communication

Once a network has created a guiding vision and set up a structure for governance and shared decision-making, it will need to develop a strategy for communicating decisions to members of the network as well as to others who may be interested in or affected by the network's actions.

Communication is key both to building a strong organizational capacity within the network and to engaging and maintaining community support. Because outreach is never ending, it is best to begin with a plan. In the outreach plan, consider:

*Communication is key both to building a strong organizational capacity within the network and to engaging and maintaining community support.*

- The groups within the network that need to communicate on a regular basis;
- The type of communications and the most effective strategy for each audience (e.g., regular email, monthly meetings, or quarterly newsletters);
- The frequency of communications for each group;
- The different messages that need to be crafted for each group (e.g., messages that resonate with parents may be less convincing to the business community);
- The issues that need to be discussed in each group;
- The types of decisions that need to be made and by whom;
- How often and by what means the network will reach out to those organizations that are not yet formal members, (e.g., what type of information will be shared, and how often updates will be distributed); and
- The costs related to different forms of communication.

## Connecting the Pieces

Inevitably, networks will need to develop mechanisms to communicate with a growing number of partners. Networks are using many strategies to keep all partners connected, including the following:

- The director of the network serves as a liaison between groups.
- The director is involved in every meeting.
- The director or other network staff attends regular meetings of partner organizations.
- Individual meetings are held with key board members in between board meetings.
- Network members are invited to annual retreats.
- Meeting minutes are shared with all groups or posted on network Web sites.
- Members receive emails that share information on promising practices, funding information, and network progress.
- Faxing and telephoning are used to reach grassroots providers without Internet access.

Consider creating a one-page document that details the network's vision, goals, and planned activities. Think about this piece both as the network's calling card and as a framework for presentations, proposals, or longer papers. In addition, this document can easily be turned into a pamphlet that can be handed out at conferences and meetings and posted to the network's Web site. Recognizing the importance of marketing the network's message and activities, the **AfterSchool Coalition of Indianapolis** recruited a member of an advertising firm to serve as chairman of its media committee.

Frequently, networks make use of Web sites and listservs to create a public identity and share information with stakeholders. The **Iowa Afterschool Alliance** has found its Web site to be an effective tool for communicating and sharing resources with partners, affiliates, and the general public. The Web site is updated on a regular basis and includes information about the network, advocacy, program resources, and much more. The Web site was developed approximately one year after the network was established following extensive planning with the Web site designer and network's communications work group.







## Lessons from State and Local Networks: Forming Communication Strategies

The **Washington Afterschool Network** has a broad-based communication strategy that reaches a diverse audience. Members, outside practitioners, and interested members of the public participate in a listserv called the Children's Action Network sponsored by the Children's Alliance. The listserv has an alert feature that provides email alerts about policy and legislative developments. Nearly 4,000 individuals from various sectors belong to the listserv; about 480 have indicated a specific interest in afterschool. In addition to this grassroots listserv, The Washington Afterschool Network communicates with about 250 people every two weeks by email, focusing on issues relating to funding and policy. All information is posted on the network's Web site.

It is important for the network to carefully maintain lists of contacts. Even if representatives from key organizations have not attended a meeting in a while, they should probably remain on the network's mailing list in order to keep a broad base of organizations aware of the network's activities. Creating and maintaining a database that allows for collecting, categorizing, and ranking names and organizations is key to reaching the right people. The **Afterschool Alliance** in **Norwalk, Connecticut**, used information gathered for a needs assessment to create a directory of afterschool providers. Updating the directory on an annual basis ensures that the alliance's contacts are up to date, and each year the local newspaper publishes the directory as a special insert. The directory gives parents valuable information about the availability of afterschool programs and at the same time promotes the visibility of the network.







## VI. Measuring Results

Finally, an effective governance structure addresses how networks monitor and evaluate their own success as defined by their vision statement, goals, and objectives. How will the network know whether it is on the right track to achieve its desired results? A results-measurement orientation can help a network determine the efficacy of its work by clearly articulating intended results, defining the measures used to gauge progress, and providing data that the network can use for continuous improvement.

Collecting information to measure results can have several additional uses, including generating interest in and commitment to the goals of the network among stakeholders. For potential supporters, the network can use data to show where it is going, why it is going in that direction, and what progress it has made. The data can also guide the management and direction of the network by helping network leaders develop realistic expectations for progress and providing information that can be used on an ongoing basis to track and improve performance.

*How will the network know whether it is on the right track to achieve its desired results?*

### **What are the Network's Goals?**

In order to measure results, a network first needs to clarify what goals and measures it will use. A good place to begin is by developing and regularly revisiting the network's work plan, which should describe the vision, outline the network's activities, and indicate how the network will measure progress toward its defined goals.

The network's goals are the overall outcomes that it attempts to reach—for example, that every student in the community or state has access to quality afterschool care settings. When defining goals, analyze the capacity of the network to make sure the goals are realistic. Just as with the visioning process, consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges the network faces in achieving its goals.

In addition to measuring long-term goals, networks should develop incremental benchmarks and short-term goals. Often a network's long-term goals will take many years to accomplish, and having shorter-term goals and benchmarks will indicate progress made along the way. Celebrating incremental successes can help keep the network's partners excited about achieving its goals.





## Lessons from State and Local Networks: Documenting Goals and Progress Made

The **Iowa Afterschool Alliance** regularly revisits its work plan to monitor the progress made toward achieving goals and developing priorities. By doing so, the network is able to examine short-term accomplishments, identify long-term strategies, and regularly celebrate successes. **The Afterschool Alliance** in **Norwalk, Connecticut**, produces an annual report to lay out its goals for the coming year and to examine whether goals from the previous year have been achieved.

### ***What are the Network's Strategies?***

Next, define what strategies the network uses in order to achieve its goals. Some strategies frequently employed by afterschool networks are the following:

- Increasing public awareness
- Supporting program and provider networks
- Encouraging improved coordination
- Engaging in outreach and network building
- Fostering a system of coordinated training and technical assistance
- Impacting public policy and legislation
- Developing resources to support the network
- Promoting sustainable funding for afterschool programs

Once the goals and strategies are defined, develop a work plan that defines steps needed to implement these strategies, persons responsible for each task, and task deadlines.

### ***How Will the Network Measure Progress?***

Consider what measures the network can use to evaluate the effectiveness of those strategies. These measures can examine the level or quality of activities in which a network engages as well as the direct impact or outcomes of the work. Some examples include:

- Number of partners in the network
  - Percentage of current partners that actively participate in network activities
  - Number and types of professional development activities offered or coordinated

- Member satisfaction with network activities
- Reported increased capacity by consumers of technical assistance activities (learned new information, developed new skills, etc.)
- Documented use of information provided in network communications
- Percentage of policy goals met (changes in policy that improve the quantity and quality of afterschool programs)
- Percentage of public supporting afterschool programs
- Increases in public and private investments in afterschool at the state or local level
- Increases in funding secured by local programs
- Number of new afterschool programs or slots added since the network was created
- Percentage of children and youth attending an afterschool program



### Lessons from State and Local Networks: Measuring Success

**New Hampshire's** statewide afterschool network, **PlusTime New Hampshire**, began tracking its work early through development of a database that records all activities related to program assistance, collaboration (e.g., meetings hosted and attended by PlusTime NH staff), and securing funding. The database helps to link PlusTime NH's work to individual programs and children served. The information collected informs each year's annual report as well as a one-page summary on PlusTime NH's work that outlines the number of programs assisted, children served, funding secured, and related data. The ability to relay concrete accomplishments through communication tools like the one-page overview has been critical to maintaining and attracting partners and ensuring sustainability.

An evaluator helped the **Kansas Enrichment Network** gather information on the impact of its work. The evaluation asked Network partners to provide overall feedback on how the network was doing and participants in the network's technical assistance activities to rate those efforts. The **Missouri Afterschool Network** stresses the importance of having an evaluator on its steering committee to guide quality data collection that can demonstrate the network's effectiveness.



Measuring the impact of an afterschool network can be difficult. Networks frequently desire to achieve quick, concrete changes; however, a network's goals will often call for activities that do not generate changes that are readily or easily measured (e.g., building public awareness of the need for afterschool programs). Furthermore, it can be difficult to find or measure data for certain outcomes because many networks are not providing direct services but engaging in system-building efforts. Networks have a variety of goals, some short term and some long term. The challenge is to find measures that capture progress. Appendix C provides several resources that can help networks address the challenge of measuring their performance.

In spite of the challenges, defining the network's desired outcomes and measuring progress toward those goals will allow the network to communicate its role and impact, and to garner support from potential collaborators. Identify the results and measures that network partners and other key stakeholders understand and care about, and emphasize the kinds of data that would persuade skeptics to become supporters. From the beginning, think about the feasibility of answering particular evaluation questions. Take into account whether the measures are realistic given available resources and timelines. If not, are there other sources of data that are publicly available or other entities (e.g., public agencies or policy organizations) that may be able to help? When the results of the performance measurement are available, consider how the network can most effectively use its partners to communicate this information both to the network members and those stakeholders who are not yet part of the network.

### ***Remember to Celebrate Successes!***

Finally, as the network monitors its progress toward desired outcomes, remember to celebrate successes and milestones. Celebrating successes can be an important way to strengthen the network's partnerships and is an opportunity to build public support for the network and its goals. Use public displays to celebrate wins, no matter how small—make the network's success become everyone's success. Remember that success breeds success; people and funders are attracted to organizations that get things done.



## Tips for Success

The examples in this guide demonstrate that there are many different ways to develop a governance structure for a collaborative network. Although time consuming, developing an effective governance structure is critical to ensuring that the network has a system in place to guide its activities, provide oversight and direction, and make decisions about administration, operations, and finances. Afterschool networks that have been through this process share the following lessons learned for new and emerging networks:

- Be careful about becoming too bogged down in governance discussions. Doing so can have the unintended consequence of slowing momentum for the network, and can sap the energy of—or even drive away—participants who have a low tolerance for process.
- Contact similar state or local collaborative organizations to learn about their processes for developing a governance structure and to find out what did—and what did not—work. Collect examples of bylaws and organizational charts to use as a starting point for governance discussions.
- Have a preliminary meeting with potential partners before beginning governance discussions. This informal meeting can be a time for all parties to get issues out on the table and share their expectations before the initial planning begins.
- Begin the work of the network by rallying around one or two key issues with which many partners identify. Early wins for the network are easier to come by when the group is able to focus the network's efforts on issues where there is general agreement.
- Keep in mind that the network can't be everything to every group. Be strategic in choosing the governance subgroups that will make the important decisions for the network. The decision-makers need to be active participants in the network with a clear understanding of the vision and goals.
- Be sure that members are able to differentiate between network goals and individual organization goals. The two sets of aims may or may not overlap.
- Don't be afraid to revisit the network's governance structure. Changes in goals, state and community needs, and leadership are bound to occur, and a network may need to adapt its governance structure to meet these changing circumstances.



## Conclusion

This publication aims to provide emerging networks with guidance and real life examples useful in the process of setting up a governance and organizational structure for making decisions about the role of afterschool services in states and communities. The appendices offer models of governance structures and tools and resources related to the topics discussed in the guide.

## Acknowledgements

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## Summary of Considerations for the Governance of Afterschool Networks

### Vision

- Engage in a visioning process
- Decide whose input is needed
- Determine how to structure the process: Who will facilitate? What are the steps in the process?
- Revise and adopt the vision
- Communicate the vision to stakeholders

### Structure and Leadership

- Find a home for the network
- Organize the governance structure
- Determine how to lead and staff the network

### Broad Representation and Participation

- Foster broad representation among key stakeholder groups
  - Ask partners to sign memoranda of understanding (MOU) or letters of agreement
  - Require voting members to agree to support the network through either in-kind or financial contributions
  - Involve decision-makers, key stakeholders, and members of the population being served in the network's governance body
- Encourage participation in the network
  - Provide an orientation session for new members
  - Consider how to manage turnover and maintain that representation over time
  - Plan meeting schedules carefully; consider varying times and locations

### Decision-Making

- Provide all stakeholders with opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process
- Ensure that stakeholders understand the process by which leaders make decisions
- Define accountability, including the:
  - Roles and responsibilities among different governance substructures
  - Decision-making process in a group setting
  - Means by which members at various levels can voice their concerns and grievances
- Communicate decisions

### Communication

- Begin with an outreach plan
- Develop a message for the network
- Create a public identity and mechanism for sharing information (e.g., web site, listserv)
- Maintain lists of contacts

### Measuring Results

- Monitor and evaluate success as defined by the vision statement, goals, and objectives
- Articulate the network's short-term and long-term goals and develop benchmarks
- Clarify the network's major strategies
- Determine how the network will measure progress and develop measures
- Celebrate successes!





# Appendix A: Contact Information for Networks Referenced in this Guide

## **Illinois Afterschool Alliance**

Illinois Center for Violence Prevention  
220 South State Street, Suite 1215  
Chicago, IL 60604  
<http://www.icvp.org/afterschoolalliance.asp>

## **AfterSchool Coalition of Indianapolis**

2501 City-County Building  
200 East Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

## **Iowa Afterschool Alliance**

Youth Policy Institute of Iowa  
7025 Hickman Road, Suite 4  
Des Moines, IA 50322  
<http://www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org>

## **Kansas Enrichment Network**

University of Kansas School of Education  
Room 318 Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
1122 West Campus Road  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
<http://www.kansasenrichment.net>

## **Kern County's First Five Commission**

724 L Street  
Bakersfield, CA 93301  
<http://www.first5kern.org>

## **Youth Development Coalition, Lincoln County, OR**

P.O. Box 928  
Newport, OR 97365

## **Louisiana Afterschool Partnership**

1600 Constance Street  
New Orleans, LA 70130

## **Missouri Afterschool Network**

P.O. Box 1409  
Camdenton, MO 65020  
<http://www.moasn.org>

## **Montana Afterschool Network**

127 East Main Street, Suite 217  
Missoula, MT 59802  
<http://www.mtafterschool.com/>

## **PlusTime New Hampshire**

160 Dover Road Suite 1  
Chichester, NH 03258  
<http://www.plustime.org>

## **New York State Afterschool Network**

925 Ninth Avenue  
New York, NY 10019  
<http://www.nysan.org>

## **North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs**

Public School Forum of North Carolina  
Glenwood Place, Cumberland Building  
3739 National Drive, Suite 210  
Raleigh, NC 27612  
<http://www.nccap.net>

## **Norwalk Afterschool Alliance**

125 East Avenue  
Norwalk, CT 06850  
<http://www.norwalkct.org/BOEafterschool>

## **Oregon Out-of-School Time Network**

Willamette Educational Service District  
2611 Pringle Road SE  
Salem, OR 97302

## **Partnership for Children, Families and Youth.**

1724 Oakdale Street,  
Pasadena, Ca 91106

## **Rhode Island's After School Plus Alliance**

United Way of Rhode Island  
229 Waterman Street  
Providence, RI 02906

## **South Carolina Afterschool Alliance**

1611 Devonshire Drive, Suite 101  
Columbia, SC 29204  
<http://www.scafterschool.com>

## **Vermont Out-of-School Time Network**

P.O. Box 627  
Montpelier, VT 05601  
<http://voost.org/>

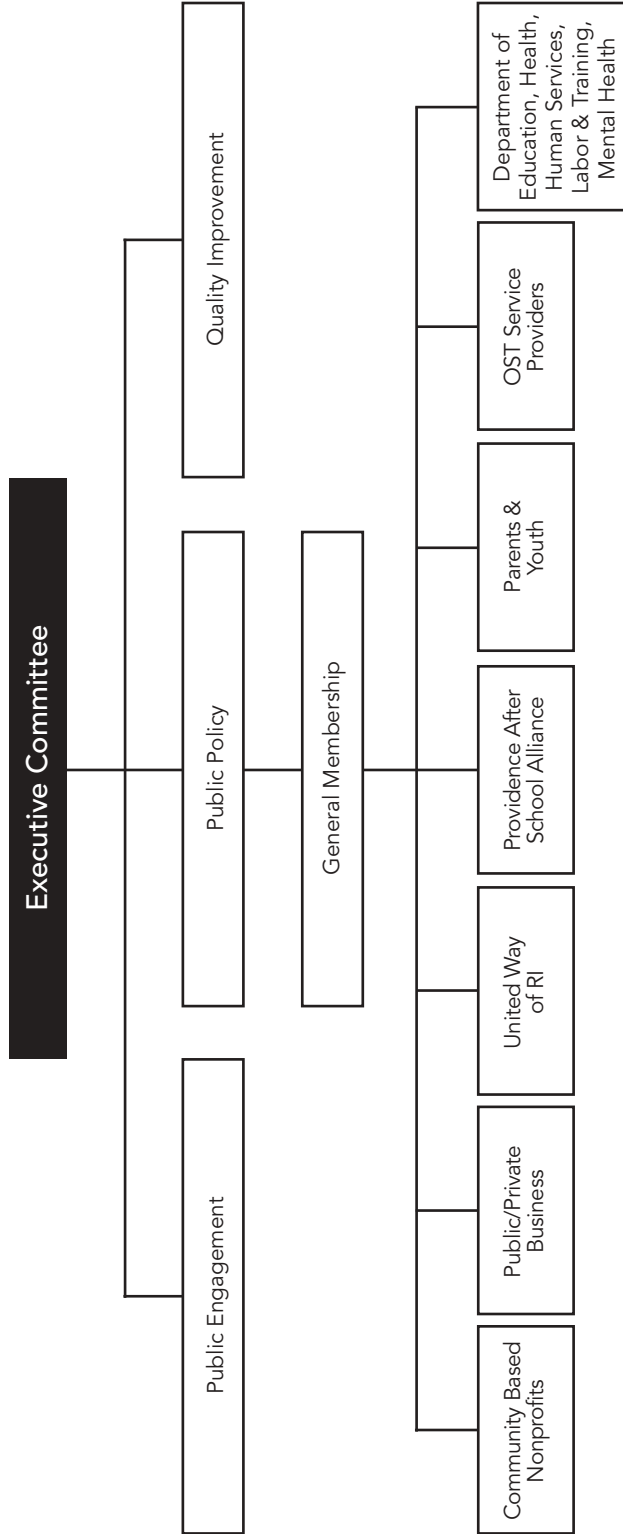
## **Washington Afterschool Network**

801 23rd Avenue S., Suite A  
Seattle, WA 98144  
<http://www.schoolsoutwashington.org/>



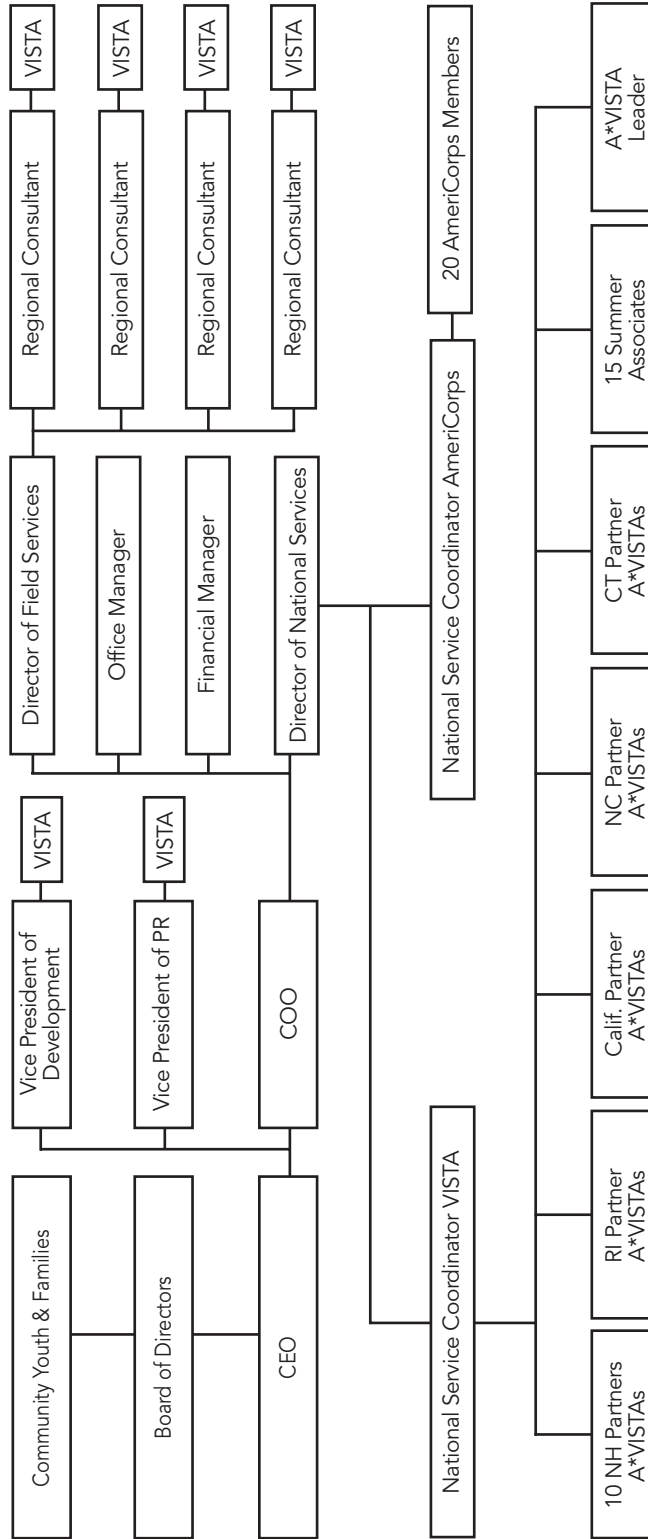
# Appendix B: Examples of Network Organizational Charts

## RI After School Plus Alliance Board of Directors



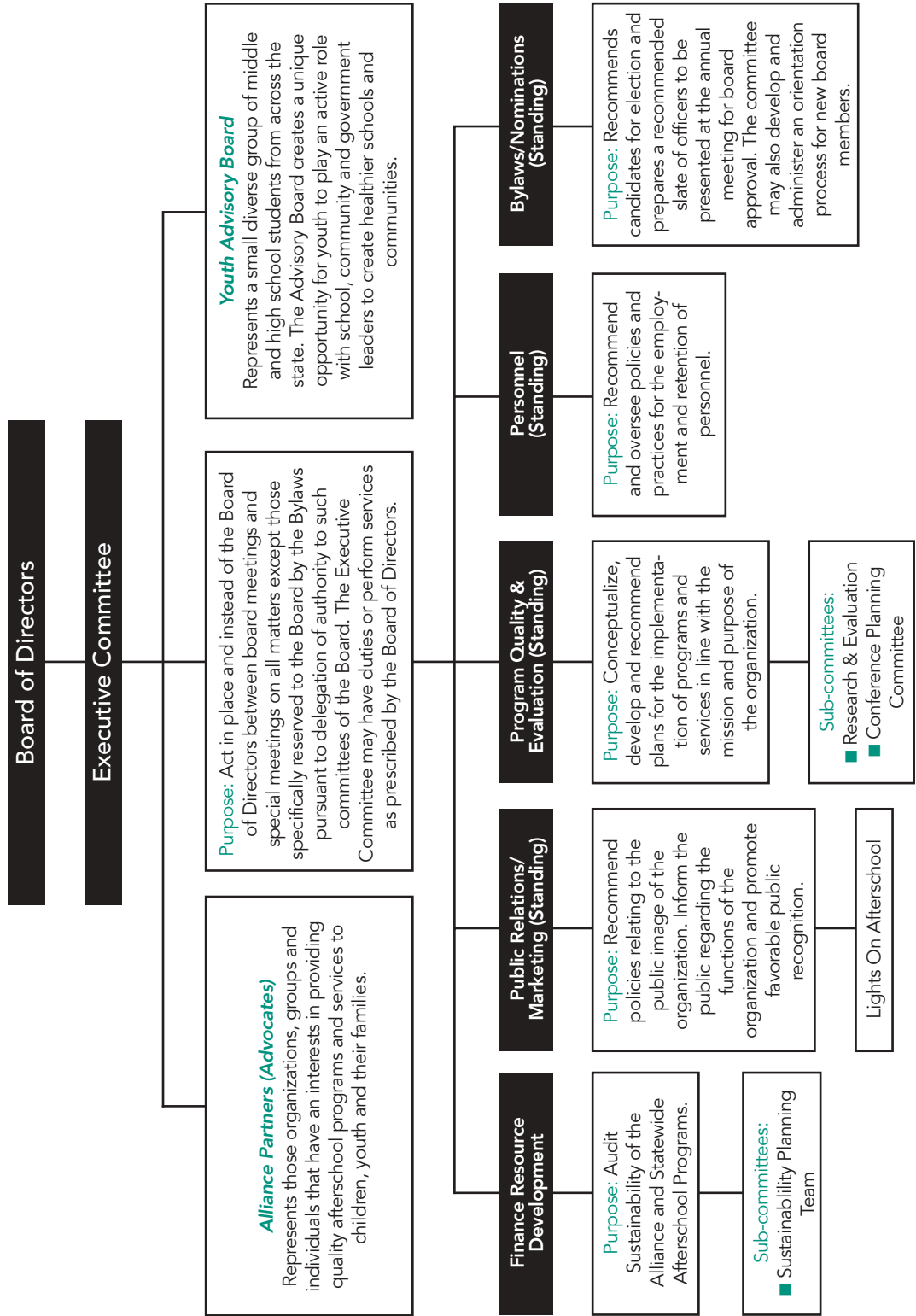
# Appendix B (continued)

## PlusTime NH Organizational Chart 2005



# Appendix B (continued)

## South Carolina Afterschool Alliance Committees of the Board of Directors



# Appendix C: Governance Tools and Resources

## General Governance

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### **Decision-Making**

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### **Board Representation and Participation**

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### **Communication**

*Afterschool Alliance* (<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>)

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children. The organization's Web site includes links to many useful tools and resources—including an Afterschool Action Kit—that program developers can use to increase awareness about the benefits of afterschool programs in their communities. The Afterschool Action Kit is available at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/ACTIONKT.PDF>

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Watson, Sara. *Using Results to Improve the Lives of Children and Families: A Guide for*







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**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
Administration for Children and Families  
Child Care Bureau

