



Scanning the System: Support for Quality Programming in Philadelphia's Out-of-School Time

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About Research for Action

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization. We seek to use research as the basis for the improvement of educational opportunities and outcomes for traditionally underserved students. Our work is designed to strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and the public at the local, state, and national levels; and enrich the civic and community dialogue about public education. For more information, please visit our website at www.researchforaction.org.

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Introduction

Approximately a quarter of a million school-aged children and youth live in Philadelphia.¹ No exact count exists of how many participate in Out-of-School Time (OST) programs. The City of Philadelphia estimates that 187,000 children and youth participate in the OST programs it funds annually, investing approximately \$41 million per year.² Other funders, including the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and private philanthropy, contribute an estimated additional \$14.3 million to Philadelphia's OST programs.³ This array of funding supports hundreds of OST providers that range in size and type.

OST programs provide, at minimum, child care for working parents before and after school, on weekends, in the evening, and during the summer. However, these programs also have the potential to benefit participants in a variety of ways. High-quality OST programs can positively impact a range of academic, social, and emotional outcomes for children and youth.⁴

The City of Philadelphia is engaged in an effort to support OST program quality as part of its larger OST strategic initiative, launched in 2017.⁵ Through these quality improvement efforts, the city hopes to better leverage the capacities of its diverse array of OST providers to improve key outcomes for children.

This report represents a first step in Philadelphia's efforts to support OST program quality. The City of Philadelphia commissioned Research for Action (RFA) to conduct research to examine what OST providers are currently doing to ensure program quality and to identify where providers can benefit from additional support. Ultimately, Philadelphia hopes to realign its current OST-related funding to support a shared, inclusive, and coordinated system that sets and reaches ambitious goals on behalf of its young people.

Philadelphia's OST System: A Comprehensive Approach to Improving Quality

Philadelphia began a comprehensive effort to improve OST program quality through a grant from the Wallace Foundation in 2012. This grant enabled the city to create an "OST system"⁶ called PhillyBOOST. Designed to be "an over-arching city-level infrastructure that supports and helps sustain quality improvement efforts,"⁷ PhillyBOOST's early efforts included the development of an OST data management system and a Quality Improvement Pilot project that tested the use of several quality assessment tools with a small group of providers. Research on OST systems has identified several other strategies through which systems can improve OST program quality:⁸

- a. Developing a set of quality standards;
- b. Providing programs with common tools and metrics to assess their alignment to these standards; and
- c. Providing technical assistance and training aligned with these standards.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates"

² City of Philadelphia, "Philadelphia OST Operational Plan" (2017).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, and Molly Pachan. "A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents." *American journal of community psychology* 45, no. 3-4 (2010): 294-309.

⁵ City of Philadelphia, "Philadelphia OST Operational Plan" (2017).

⁶ While OST system is the term used by the Wallace Foundation, Philadelphia describes its work as building a "system of systems" given many smaller networks of OST programs throughout the City. <http://www.phillyboost.com/project-overview.html>

⁷ Cheryl Hayes, Christianne Lind, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Nichole Stewart, Sharon Deich, Andrew Gersick, Jennifer McMaken, and Margo Campbell. "Investments in building citywide out-of-school-time systems: A six-city study." *Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures & The Finance Project* (2009).

⁸ Cheryl Hayes, Christianne Lind, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Nichole Stewart, Sharon Deich, Andrew Gersick, Jennifer McMaken, and Margo Campbell.

"Investments in building citywide out-of-school-time systems: A six-city study." *Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures & The Finance Project* (2009).

Philadelphia's OST strategic initiative is intended to expand the OST system's quality improvement role by addressing these strategies. According to the Philadelphia OST Plan, the city proposes to support OST quality improvement through the following activities:⁹

- Developing a clear understanding of how OST providers and networks currently define quality, particularly as it relates to their program staffing models;
- Convening a citywide OST network to develop next steps in terms of how the network can begin to agree on the key quality metrics for OST and the outcomes associated with the metrics;
- Developing coordinated and standardized training for the OST workforce that leverages existing training efforts; and
- Increasing the number of professional development trainings provided to OST staff.

The findings in this report address each of these strategic goals. In particular, the report describes OST provider definitions of quality, quality assurance efforts, and program staffing and training. Research has found all of these elements are key drivers of OST program quality.¹⁰

⁹ City of Philadelphia, "Philadelphia OST Operational Plan" (2017).

¹⁰ Charles Smith, Tom Akiva, Gina McGovern, and Stephen C. Peck. "Afterschool quality." *New directions for youth development* 2014, no. 144 (2014): 31-44; Denise Huang and Ronald Dietel. "Making afterschool programs better (CRESST Policy Brief)." *Los Angeles, CA: University of California* (2011); Beth M Miller, "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005); Jenell Holstead and Mindy Hightower King. "High-quality 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Academic achievement among frequent participants and non-participants." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)* 16, no. 4 (2011): 255-274; Deborah Lowe Vandell, Elizabeth R. Reisner, B. Bradford Brown, Kim M. Pierce, Kimberly Dadisman, and Ellen M. Pechman. "The study of promising after-school programs: Descriptive report of the promising programs." *University of Wisconsin, Madison: Wisconsin Center for Education Research*. (2004).

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

- How do the various types of OST programs understand and think about program quality? What practices are currently in place to ensure quality, and where do providers need support?
- How do OST networks approach staffing for programs? What are the characteristics of staff in each network? What training is provided to staff? How do networks use volunteers in their programs?

Methodology

To answer these questions, RFA conducted in-depth interviews with six of the largest OST providers in Philadelphia. Data from these interviews, along with research on quality in OST, were used to develop an OST provider survey. Below, we describe the sample for each data source beginning with the interview sample.

Interview Sample

RFA conducted 60-90 minute interviews with six of the largest OST providers in Philadelphia.¹¹ Together, they serve more than 30,000 youth annually. RFA also considered variation in the type of organization (city department vs. non-profits). Table 1 describes the interview sample.

Table 1. Interview Sample

Category	Interview respondents
Total	Six providers 500+ sites
Type of organization	Five non-profit and one public
Maturity of programs	One provider = Five years or less One provider = 15+ years Four providers = 20+ years
Primary activities	Five general youth development programs One sports program
Size	Five large providers (11+ sites) One network with member organizations of varied sizes
Funding source	Three funded by Department of Human Services (DHS) One funded by 21 st Century Community Learning Center (21 st CCLC) Two received other funding
Timing of programming	100% school year and summer
Location of Programs	One school-based Two community-based Three based in a mix of locations

¹¹ RFA compiled a list of the largest OST providers by number of sites, using the Philadelphia OST Directory. PhillyBOOST provided data on providers by number of youth served. Organizations selected for interviews fell in the top ten list of largest providers by both metrics.

Survey Sample

The OST quality survey was sent to 258 organizations the City of Philadelphia identified as OST providers.¹² Ninety-four organizations responded, for a response rate of 36%.¹³ While the survey response fell under 50%, the resulting data still represent the diversity of Philadelphia OST programs and include almost all of the largest OST providers in the city.¹⁴ Table 2 displays the characteristics of the survey respondents.

Table 2. Survey Sample

Category	Survey respondents
Total	94 providers 1,100 sites 112,000 students
Type of organization	81% Non-profit 7% School 4% Other 3% City department 3% University 1% Faith-based organization
Maturity of programs	15% 5 years or less 18% More than 5 but less than 10 years 15% More than 10 but less than 15 years 20% More than 15 but less than 20 years 34% More than 20 years
Primary activities	14% Arts, 16% academics, 18% sports, and 52% general youth development
Size	39% Small (1 site) 39% Medium (2-10 sites) 21% Large (11+ sites)
Funding source	53% Department of Human Services (DHS) or 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) 47% Other funding sources
Timing of programming	96% School year, 81% summer
Locations	38% Schools 28% Community 23% Both

The survey analysis examined trends in the aggregate as well as by the various groupings of OST organizations described in the table above.

¹² No comprehensive database of Philadelphia's OST providers exists. The sample was identified by the City of Philadelphia starting with providers listed in the Philadelphia OST directory and the programs funded by the Philadelphia Department of Human Services. Other providers were added through additional online research. A handful of those surveyed opted out of the research, indicating in some cases that they did not provide OST programs.

¹³ Given its size and complexity, the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation completed nine different surveys representing all of its summer, school year, and sports programs. Therefore, the total number of surveys received was 102. The analysis accounts for the additional PPR surveys as appropriate throughout the report.

¹⁴ RFA reviewed survey respondents in comparison to other lists of the largest OST providers both by sites and numbers of youth served.

High-Level Findings

Our analysis revealed the following:

- **In the survey, Philadelphia’s OST providers endorsed a comprehensive, research-based definition of program quality.** Providers reported that all 14 elements of program quality included on the survey were extremely or very important. Importantly, providers’ endorsement of key quality indicators did not differ significantly by provider goals or primary activities (academic, arts, sports, etc.).
- **However, in interviews, providers’ definitions of quality varied.** They agreed on a basic set of quality indicators, such as safe, fun, and structured programming; however, some further defined a quality program as one that intentionally designs activities, practices, and structures to improve specific student outcomes. Some providers addressed the tension between the quality ideal and their current capacity by defining quality for their sites along a continuum, ranging from a minimum threshold of safe and engaging programs to programs that were also intentionally structured with skill-building goals.
- **Programs receiving DHS/21st CCLC funding more frequently reported using formal tools and data to assess and improve quality.** While all providers reported engaging in some quality assurance activities, programs that did not receive DHS or 21st CCLC funding tended to do so less frequently and without the use of formal or standardized tools.
- **Philadelphia providers report more stable and highly qualified staff at the site coordinator level, with more frequent turnover and less highly qualified staff at the frontline staff level.** Frontline staff are typically part-time and paid at near-minimum wage with no benefits. In addition, 37% of the average OST provider’s workforce are volunteers.
- **About half of Philadelphia’s OST providers met the minimum recommended threshold of 14 hours of annual professional development for both full- and part-time staff.** Yet half did not meet this threshold. In addition, volunteers received less training than paid staff. Survey results suggest training gaps for volunteers, smaller and younger organizations, and organizations not receiving DHS or 21st CCLC funding.
- **Providers requested additional support in developing the organizational infrastructure necessary for high-quality programming.** Providers found infrastructure development to be a greater need than program development. In particular, providers requested support attracting and retaining highly qualified staff, increasing professional development, finding adequate facilities, engaging parents and communities, and establishing financial stability. All are important components of OST program infrastructure.

I. Defining Quality

City OST systems are designed, in large part, to improve program quality. However, achieving this goal depends on having a clear definition of quality.

Defining Quality: Research-Based and Field Definitions of OST Program Quality

Some consensus exists in the OST field and research literature on elements of programming that indicate quality.¹⁵ Table 3 displays those elements generally agreed upon as well as those with varied emphasis in the field.¹⁶ Research is also beginning to identify important elements of quality related to organizational capacity, including highly qualified staff and leadership, strong staff training, and continuous quality improvement activities, among other features.¹⁷

Definitions of quality may vary by program goals and contexts. For example, high-quality, academically focused programs should have strong school partnerships,¹⁸ while programs that focus on sports or arts programming could be considered high quality without them. In addition, programs operating in Philadelphia may have different contextual factors that shape the definition of a quality program. Philadelphia’s providers may need bilingual staff to support a multilingual population, for example, while this may not be an indicator of quality for providers in settings that are not linguistically diverse.

Table 3. OST Quality Elements

Quality Elements Broadly Agreed Upon in the Field	Quality Elements with Varied Emphasis in the Field
Positive adult-child interactions	Variety of activities*
Positive peer relationships	Intentionality ¹⁹
Parent engagement	Youth leadership and participation in decision-making*
Safe environment	Links to schools and communities*
Youth engagement	Quality assurance activities*
Social norms	Staffing*and staff training
Skill-building opportunities	Management*
Routine/structure	Support for diverse student populations, including ELL students
Age-appropriate activities	

*Note: All of these elements pertain to organizational infrastructure.

The ways in which Philadelphia’s OST providers define quality is also influenced by various quality frameworks introduced over the last decade by state agencies, funders, and OST advocacy groups. Table 4 summarizes the components of these quality frameworks as well as their similarities and differences.

¹⁵ Charles Smith, Tom Akiva, Gina McGovern, and Stephen C. Peck. "Afterschool quality." *New directions for youth development* 2014, no. 144 (2014): 31-44; Denise Huang, and Ronald Dietel. "Making afterschool programs better (CRESST Policy Brief)." *Los Angeles, CA: University of California* (2011); Beth M. Miller, "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005); Christina A. Russell and Elizabeth R. Reisner. "Supporting social and cognitive growth among disadvantaged middle-grades students in TASC after-school projects." *Journal of Youth Development* 1, no. 2 (2006): 47-57.

¹⁶ These quality elements are adapted from Nicole Yohalem, Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom, Sean Fischer, and Marybeth Shinn, "Measuring Youth Program Quality: A guide to assessment tools, second edition." Washington DC, (2009).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Denise Huang and Ronald Dietel. "Making afterschool programs better (CRESST Policy Brief)." *Los Angeles, CA: University of California* (2011); Jenell Holstead and Mindy Hightower King. "High-quality 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Academic achievement among frequent participants and non-participants." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)* 16, no. 4 (2011): 255-274

¹⁹ Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, and Molly Pachan. "A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents." *American journal of community psychology* 45, no. 3-4 (2010): 294-309.

Table 4. Philadelphia’s Quality Frameworks

Elements of Quality	Keystone Stars (School-aged)	PSAYDN	NIOST	DHS
Positive adult-child interactions	X	X	X	X
Positive peer relationships	X	X	X	X
Parent engagement	X		X	X
Safe environment	X	X	X	X
Healthy environment	X			X
Youth engagement		X	X	X
Positive social norms	X	X	X	X
Skill-building opportunities		X	X	X
Routine/structure	X	X	X	X (Structure defined by project-based, experiential and service-learning)
Unstructured activity time	X		X	X
Variety of activities	X	X		X
Intentionality (i.e., clear goals and aligned structures)		X	X (specifically regarding academic skill-building)	X
Youth leadership and participation in decision-making*		X	X	X
Linkages to schools *	X	X	X	X
Linkages to communities*		X	X	X
Quality assurance activities *		X	X (focus on involving front-line staff in reflecting on their practice)	X
Staffing and staff development*	X	X	X	X
Management*		X		
Support for diverse populations including ELL students*	X	X	X	
Adequate physical space*	X		X	

*All of these elements are part of the organization infrastructure.

Pennsylvania utilizes the Keystone Stars framework, a nationally recognized model, for licensed child care providers serving children birth through age 12. A second framework comes from the Pennsylvania Statewide After-School Youth Development Network (PSAYDN), a statewide OST advocacy group.²⁰ In 2010, PSADYN developed a quality framework based on a review of research and other quality frameworks in the field. This alternative framework was particularly relevant for providers working with older youth and those not in the Keystone Stars system. PhillyBOOST introduced a third framework from the National Institute of Out of School Time (NIOST) called the After-School Program Assessment System (APAS) as part

²⁰ Personal conversation with Laura Saccenta, PASYDN, on 6/22/17.

of the PhillyBOOST quality improvement pilot initiative conducted in 2013-14. In addition to these frameworks, Philadelphia DHS, the largest funder of OST programs in Philadelphia, also has a framework for assessing quality.

While these frameworks encompass many of the key elements of quality identified in the research literature, they also differ in several ways. The Keystone Stars framework for school-aged programs originated from tools designed for pre-K programs and emphasizes health and safety. The PSADYN and APAS frameworks emphasize health, safety, and staffing as well, but they also examine youth leadership and community partnerships.²¹ APAS also places more emphasis on support for front-line staff and their involvement in quality assurance activities. The DHS framework is unique in that it defines structured activities as those that focus on project-based learning, experiential learning, and service learning.²²

Defining Quality: Towards a Common Definition of OST Quality in Philadelphia

City OST systems must seek some consensus among providers in order to advance a coordinated and effective approach to support.²³ A first step in system-wide quality improvement is, then, to understand how Philadelphia’s providers define quality at the programmatic and organizational levels. This section describes Philadelphia OST providers’ views on program quality and examines the following topics:

- Definitions of quality programming
- Organizational infrastructure to support high-quality programming

How City OST Providers Define Quality Programming

Survey Results

Our survey was designed to develop a broad understanding of how Philadelphia’s OST providers define quality. To that end, we asked providers to indicate which of the elements identified in the literature were most important for their program. Table 5 displays the elements of quality endorsed by a large majority of providers.

Table 5. Elements of Programmatic Quality Valued by Providers

Positive Relationships	Program Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically and emotionally safe environment • Positive peer relationships • Youth voice and leadership opportunities • Development of positive adult-youth relationships • Parent engagement • Support for English Language Learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent program structure • Evidence-based programs • Intentional activities (i.e., skill building) • Fun and creative activities • Culturally relevant activities • Variety of activities • Culminating activities, such as public projects or events • Nutritious meals and/or snacks

Philadelphia’s OST providers endorsed a comprehensive, research-based “ideal.” Survey respondents endorsed all elements of quality identified by research as extremely or very important.

²¹ Nicole Yohalem, Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom, Sean Fischer, and Marybeth Shinn, “Measuring Youth Program Quality: A guide to assessment tools, second edition.” Washington DC, (2009).

²² PHMC/DHS request for continuation application OST project (2014).

²³ Daniel Browne, “Growing and Learning Together. What Cities have discovered about building after-school systems” (2015).

With only two exceptions, OST providers did not differ in their endorsement of program quality indicators. Support for English Language Learners (ELLs) was extremely important to arts and academic programs but only moderately important to sports providers. In addition, parent engagement was less important to younger programs than to more mature programs.

However, these organizational differences were small. Overall, survey respondents exhibited strong consensus on quality indicators.

Digging Deeper: Interview Findings

Our interviews with six providers were designed to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how providers define and approach quality, given variations in context and capacity.

In interviews, providers described more varied definitions of quality that reflected their operational realities. All providers agreed on basic elements of quality, but some went further, articulating tiers of possible quality that could be achieved given the right supports and resources. These responses suggest a trajectory for growth in program quality.

All interviewees agreed that safe, engaging, and affordable activities were a minimum threshold for quality programming. Providers reported that meeting these basic criteria enabled them to get participants in the door and keep them safe during after-school and summer hours. As one provider explained:

Still, we need to do what's going to get the kids in because, frankly, that's all I want them to do. Get them in there... A kid wants to come in once a month, once a year, that's fine because he's safe, and that's an outcome... We want it to be enticing enough and positive enough that they want to come back.

Providers also agreed that positive, caring adult-youth relationships were a foundational element of any quality OST program. OST staffing will be discussed further in the next section.

One provider identified a variety of program offerings as an additional minimum element of quality. This provider acknowledged focusing more on the variety of experiences available to participants rather than on their quality. This emphasis was aligned with the provider's goal of "exposure" to different opportunities.

Interviewees also agreed that structured activities were an important basic element of program quality. Three providers considered structure after establishing safety, engagement, and variety. One provider described this definition of quality in the following way:

Not just oh, the kids played basketball in the gym. Well, what kind of basketball activity did they do in the gym? Free play and unstructured, supervised activity is great, but what kind of structured activity can we offer on the whole? How do we do that?

However, these providers did not necessarily tie the structure of activities to particular outcomes.

A few providers identified a further step towards quality programming: intentional skill-building opportunities. Intentionality is generally defined as having a clear and explicit focus on the development of a particular set of social, academic, or extracurricular skills. In the Philadelphia OST context, intentionality included clear outcomes, interim benchmarks, and a program structure tied to these outcomes. One provider described intentionality as "structur[ing] the after-school program to be most impactful for these certain goals."

Intentionality was related to particular program structures, such as specific adult-youth ratios, age-appropriate groupings, and weekly schedules designed to meet the necessary dosage for maximum program impact. It also involved the integration of evidence-based programs and practices. One executive director described “increas[ing] the efficacy of the model”:

In homework club, there’s best practices to bring to not make it feel like school but to help those kids even more. We brought some similar best practices to our computer club programs. Instead of just being a place to hang out and be on the computer, now we have a whole entrée, the Microsoft suite. The kids are doing preliminary or basic code right now with these things called Ozobots. It’s pretty cool, and they love it. Now they’re going to the next phase, which is going to involve tablets.

Providers viewed greater intentionality as an advancement in quality. Research supports this perception and identifies intentionality as a key element of impactful OST programs.²⁴ One provider described this intentionality as “growing up”; two organizations described this development in terms of quality “tiers.” These organizations formally created their own quality tiers to encourage quality improvement at various program sites. One executive director described the quality tiers in her network, saying:

...we have two [models] we call a targeted and a standard model. The targeted model is...where [there are] more expectations in line with best practices for youth development. If you’re elementary age group, [you are] meeting more frequently, but for maybe shorter durations than your middle- or high-school peers.

Another executive director described the tiered approach for its network as a process, saying:

We have a best practices checklist. We want you to get everything checked off and we’ll support that process...we just want you to commit to the process.

A third provider described advancing in the quality tiers outlined by the Keystone Stars framework. This provider had both pre-K and school-aged programs and some of its after-school programs were using the Stars School-Aged quality tools.

In summary, Philadelphia’s OST providers agree, in the abstract, on a comprehensive research-based definition of quality. At the same time, providers refined their definitions of quality based on their own capacity and contextual barriers. To address this tension between the ideal and their current status, some providers have further defined quality by identifying “tiers” and steps towards quality; in doing so, they are identifying a process by which OST providers can achieve higher levels of quality.

Organizational Infrastructure to Support Quality

Moving towards higher quality programming requires organizational capacity.²⁵ As described above, providers varied in their capacity to achieve optimal quality in their programming. Our survey asked providers to indicate which elements of organizational infrastructure, identified in research and through provider interviews, were most important to achieving and sustaining quality. Table 6 displays the components of organizational infrastructure valued by providers.

²⁴ Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, and Molly Pachan. "A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45, no. 3-4 (2010): 294-309.

²⁵ Charles Smith, Tom Akiva, Gina McGovern, and Stephen C. Peck. "Afterschool quality." *New directions for youth development* 2014, no. 144 (2014): 31-44; Jennifer Birmingham, Ellen M. Pechman, Christina A. Russell, and Monica Mielke. "Shared Features of High-Performing After-School Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation." *Policy Studies Associates, Inc.* (2005).

Table 6. Organizational Conditions for Quality Valued by Providers

<p style="text-align: center;">Quality Assurance Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to collect and use participation, quality and outcomes data • Ability to set clear goals and measure outcomes • Ability to apply a Theory of Change or Logic Model 	<p style="text-align: center;">Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to attract and retain high-quality staff • Professional development for staff • Low youth-adult ratio
<p style="text-align: center;">Infrastructure and Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality, adequate space • Sufficient materials and supplies • Administrative systems (HR, leadership, financial systems) • Financial stability 	<p style="text-align: center;">Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong partnership with the participants' schools • Strong community connections • Youth input into organizational decision-making

Providers endorsed a comprehensive set of organizational structures as important building blocks for implementing quality programming. Again, no differences were observed by type of organization, even where such differences might be expected. For example, providers that offered sports, arts, and general youth development rated school partnerships as extremely or very important just as often as academically focused programs.

In interviews, providers also agreed that a wide range of organizational infrastructure elements were important for advancing program quality. Specifically:

- *Staffing:* Providers identified quality staffing as the most important support for quality programming. At minimum, providers defined quality staff as being caring and committed to their students. With more intentionality and skill-building in programming came increased staff training and, in some cases, more rigorous education requirements for frontline staff. One program director described the increased expectations for staffing required to advance in quality ratings within the Keystone Stars framework:

...Group leaders then have to be degreed, as you go up [quality levels]. They require an associate [degree]. The staffing requirements keep going up, and the training requirements. It's all tied to quality.

- *Strong site-level leadership:* Providers also talked about the need for strong site-level leadership to implement programs in accordance with their structures and goals. This aligns with research which has found that site-level leadership is important for continuous quality improvement processes.²⁶
- *Clear programmatic expectations and incentives for quality:* Interviewed providers recognized, however, that site-level leadership might vary in strength. To create consistent quality, providers emphasized the importance of creating clear expectations and conveying them to sites. One executive director explained:

²⁶ Charles Smith, Tom Akiva, Samantha A. Sugar, Yun-Jia Lo, K. A. Frank, Steve C. Peck, K. S. Cortina, and T. Devaney. "Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study." In *Ypsilanti, MI: Forum for Youth Investment*. (2012).

We know that [the strength of site leadership is] out of our control in some cases, so we try and support [quality] with other things. Which is that they have at least a structured series of expectations throughout the year that they must abide [by].

In addition, two providers offered or received incentives for increases in program quality. These came in the form of monetary reimbursements, increased staff training opportunities, or more opportunities for youth to participate in network-wide events.

- *Quality assurance activities:* Providers also described the importance of quality assurance activities, including the ability to collect data on program participation and outcomes, as critical to quality improvement efforts. For example, one network required all providers to collect participation data, and it required providers to track outcomes in order to move to new quality levels. This network also supported providers in thinking about the best outcomes to measure and offered assistance with tools to support data collection. Providers also conducted program monitoring and developed performance metrics to provide feedback to frontline staff.
- *Facilities:* Providers also identified adequate facilities as essential to quality programming, particularly for sports programs. Providers reported struggling to find quality facilities in good condition, and they noted that air-conditioned facilities were in particularly short supply. One executive director explained:

Facilities [are] a challenge...Very few of our centers are air conditioned. That's tough, especially when the kids start running, especially if that gymnasium's in a church basement. They start sweating. The walls start sweating. It's dangerous, slippery, et cetera.

Providers also reported challenges using school facilities. The availability of school gyms and outdoor spaces varied, especially in the summer. Providers also noted that schools charge a fee for using public school gyms past 6pm, and this created another barrier to the use of these facilities.

- *Partnerships:* Providers noted that strong school and community partnerships are important for quality programming. This was particularly true for school-based providers, or those seeking to improve students' academic performance. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with school partners helped to clarify the availability of program space and other needs. One provider also trained its own staff to better align and communicate with school partners. Providers also reported that school principals could significantly influence their ability to offer quality programming, so they developed strategies to achieve principal buy-in, such as regular formal opportunities for principals to provide feedback.
- *Funding.* Providers indicated that adequate funding is needed to support a range of quality supports, including professional development, staff time for quality assurance activities, and better wages for OST staff.

However, interviewed providers did not perceive administrative systems, youth input in decision making, and sufficient materials and supplies to be closely related to quality programming.

In summary, Philadelphia's OST providers agree that high-performing OST organization requires a comprehensive set of organizational capacity components.

II. Quality Assurance Activities

Research shows that quality assurance is a critically important component of OST program quality. Quality assurance activities include the collection of program data and use of this data for program improvement. OST programs that engage in quality assurance activities have better outcomes for participants than those that do not use these processes.²⁷ A citywide OST system can facilitate quality improvement efforts by encouraging and supporting providers in these quality assurance activities.²⁸ In addition, a city OST system needs data to drive its own decision making.²⁹ Therefore, it is important to understand what type of data OST providers are collecting and how they are collecting it.

This section examines the extent to which programs have established the building blocks for quality assurance. We examine the following elements of strong quality assurance:

- Program quality assessments and assessment tools
- Participation data collection tools
- Outcomes measured
- Organizational differences in quality assurance

Program Quality Assessments and Assessment Tools

A variety of strategies can be used to assess program quality in OST programs. These include program observations, which can be conducted by program staff and supervisors or by external evaluators or monitors; self-assessments; and youth, staff, or parent surveys. Providers can also contract for third-party evaluations. Each of these activities can be done informally or with formal tools. Some of these strategies, such as program observations, should be conducted regularly, while others, such as third-party evaluations, may be more infrequent.

The vast majority of Philadelphia providers (96%) report conducting multiple quality assurance activities each year. Over 90% of respondents reported using internal program observations, self-assessment activities, staff surveys, and youth surveys.

Providers were asked which strategies they used and the frequency with which they used them. Table 7 displays the tools providers used and their typical frequency.

Table 7. Typical Frequency of Usage for Quality Assurance Activities

Once per quarter	2 – 3 times / year	Annually or less frequently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessments • Youth surveys • External observations • Funder-mandated assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff surveys • Parent/caregiver surveys • Third-party evaluations

Note: N= 98 - 101

The widespread and frequent use of quality assurance activities suggests that Philadelphia’s OST providers understand their importance. Therefore, the OST system’s efforts to support increased quality assurance activities are starting from a solid foundation.

²⁷ Jessica Sheldon, Amy Arbretton, Leigh Hopkins, and Jean Baldwin Grossman. "Investing in success: Key strategies for building quality in after-school programs." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45, no. 3-4 (2010): 394-404.

²⁸ Daniel Browne, "Growing and Learning Together. What Cities have discovered about building after-school systems" (2015); Cheryl Hayes, Christianne Lind, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Nichole Stewart, Sharon Deich, Andrew Gersick, Jennifer McMaken, and Margo Campbell. "Investments in building citywide out-of-school-time systems: A six-city study." *Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures & The Finance Project* (2009).

²⁹ Jennifer Gill (2012). "After-school data: Six tip sheets on what cities need to know." Wallace Foundation.

The Use of Quality Assessment Tools

A variety of research-based quality assurance tools are available to OST providers. All of the quality frameworks in the field are operationalized in a set of observational and/or self-assessment tools. For example, the KeyStone Stars framework uses the School-Aged Child Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS), the PSAYDN framework uses an internally created tool that combines scales from multiple national tools, and the NIOST framework uses the After-School Program Tool (APT) and the Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes (SAYO), and Philadelphia’s Department of Human Services programs are assessed with the Out-Of-School Time Observation Tool (OST). More detail on these tools can be found in Appendix A.

In an effort to identify which tools are most common among Philadelphia OST providers, our survey asked providers to indicate which, if any, they used in the past three years.

50% of providers conducted internal observations and assessments but did not use any formal observation tools. Therefore, while they are conducting quality assurance activities, they may be conducting these without reference to field standards.

Each tool is listed in Table 8, from the greatest to least percentage of providers using the tool.

Table 8. Quality Assurance Tools Used by Providers

Tools used by >10% of providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OST: Out-of-School Time Observation Tool (29%)• PSAYDN: Program Quality Self-Assessment (22%)• APAS (APT, SAYO): Afterschool Program Assessment System (20%)• QSA: Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool (13%)• SACERS: School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (11%)
Tools used by few providers (<10%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PQO: Program Quality Observation Scale (8%)• QAS: Quality Assurance System (7%)• POT: Program Observation Tool (6%)• YPQA: Youth Program Quality Assessment (6%)• PPRS: Promising Practices Rating Scale (2%)• CORAL: Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Observation Tools (1%)

Note: N=102

Table 8 shows:

- **Four of the top five most commonly used tools (OST, PSAYDN, APAS, and SACERS) are associated with the existing quality frameworks used in Philadelphia.** In addition, the QSA also has a Philadelphia connection, having been developed by Foundations, Inc., a national OST technical assistance provider that operates in Philadelphia.
- Among these five tools, the SACERS has the strongest evidence base for its utility.³⁰ The APAS has some, though less, evidence of utility, and the OST, PSAYDN and QSA tools do not have an evidence

³⁰ Nicole Yohalem, Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom, Sean Fischer, and Marybeth Shinn, “Measuring Youth Program Quality: A guide to assessment tools, second edition.” Washington DC, (2009).

base at this time.³¹ Other tools with a stronger evidence base, such as the YPQA, are used infrequently.

In summary, while Philadelphia’s OST providers are conducting quality assurance activities, only about half use formal assessment tools, and those that do are not using the strongest tools available in the field. The OST system can, then, boost program quality by promoting the use of high-quality formal tools.

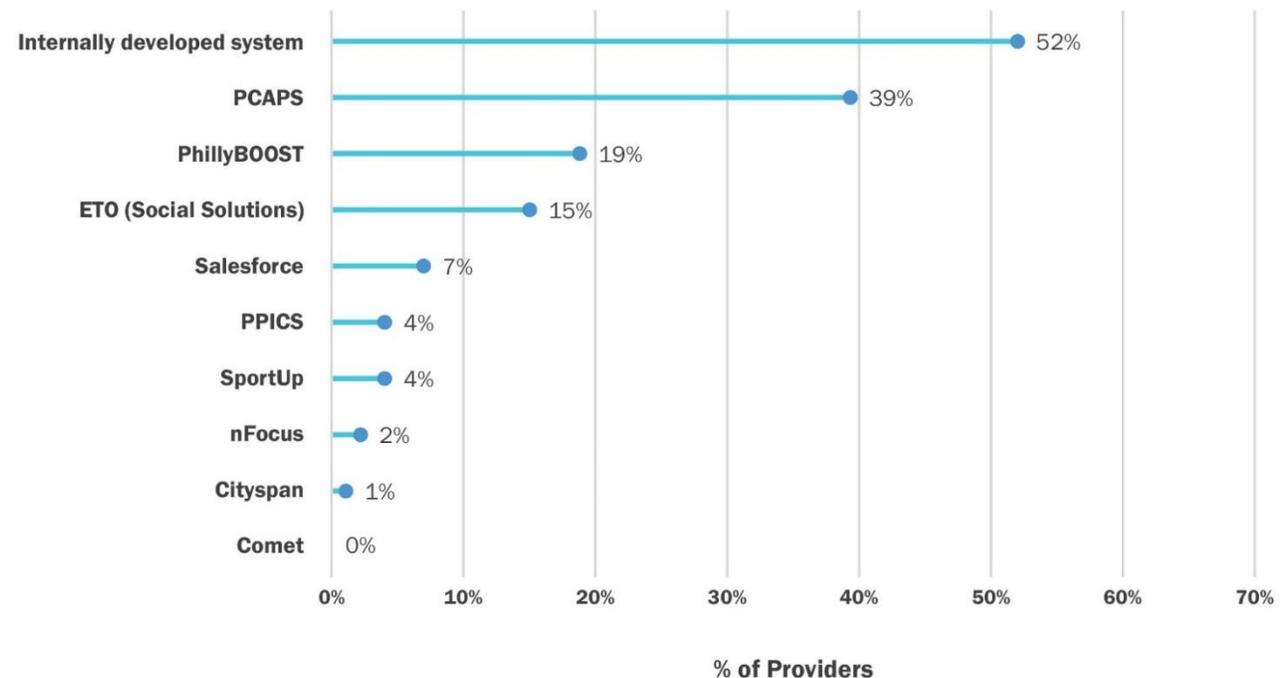
Participation Data Collection Tools

The number of days participants attend an OST program is highly correlated with outcomes such as academic achievement and social-emotional development.³² In addition, program participation can be a strong indicator of quality, particularly for middle and high school students who “vote with their feet.” At the system level, it is equally important to understand participation patterns.

To understand participation data collection in Philadelphia, our survey asked providers to indicate whether and how they used common software to collect program participation data.

95% of providers reported having a system to collect participation data. Of these, 63% report using externally developed systems (PCAPS, PhillyBOOST, etc.), sometimes in addition to an internal system. Figure 1 shows the full list of participation tracking tools and what percentage of providers report using each one.

Figure 1. Percentage of Providers that Use Participation Tracking Tools



N=102

Note: Providers may use more than one system to track participation.

³¹ Ibid

³² Smith, Charles, Tom Akiva, Gina McGovern, and Stephen C. Peck. "Afterschool quality." *New directions for youth development* 2014, no. 144 (2014): 31-44.

Figure 1 indicates the following:

- PCAPS, the data system required for programs funded by DHS, is the most commonly used externally developed system. Providers may use more than one system if one is required by funders but does not provide all the information needed for data-driven decision making.
- PhillyBOOST ETO is the next most frequently used external system. PhillyBoost ETO is a citywide system developed through the Wallace system-building grant which uses the ETO Social Solutions software and is free to OST providers.
- The third most commonly used system is provider-contracted ETO Social Solutions software. Providers may contract with ETO to create databases that are tailored to their individual organizational data needs.
- The six remaining tools are used by few providers, if at all.
- More than half of providers use an internally developed system to track attendance, such as Excel or Access files. Nearly one-third of providers use only an internally developed system.

In interviews, three providers described increased capacity to collect data due to their use of the PhillyBOOST data system. For two providers, it allowed them to collect participation data for the first time. One provider said, “Now I can tell you how many kids were in our centers yesterday—every center. At ten pilot centers, I can tell you what they’re doing. Dosage.” A third provider described PhillyBOOST as easier to use for data-driven decision making compared to their internally developed system.

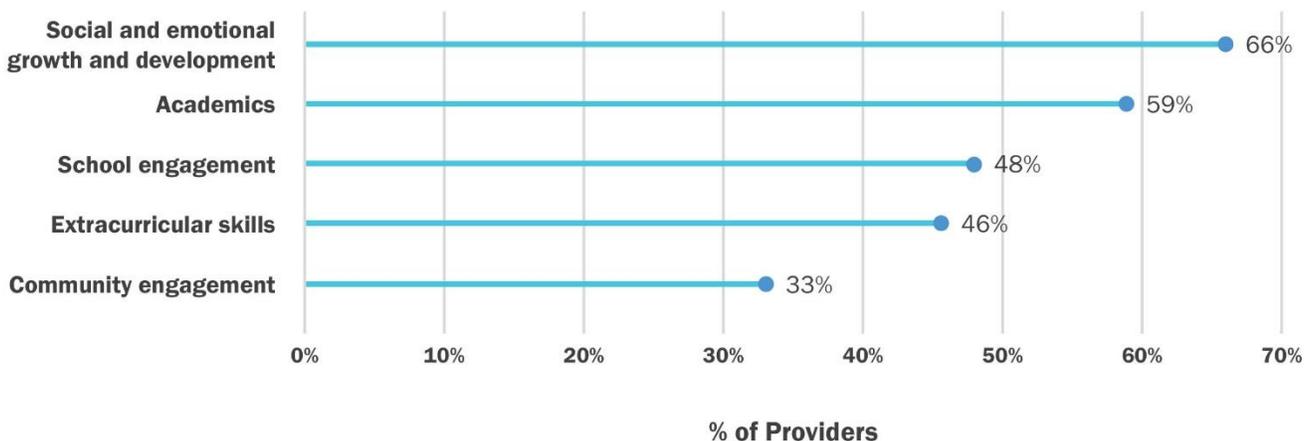
These data suggest that Philadelphia’s OST providers understand the importance of tracking program participation and are in the practice of doing so. However, a third of providers are only using internally developed systems that may lack the functionality of externally developed systems and may be less useful for data-driven decision making.

Outcomes Measured

OST programs can improve a variety of participant outcomes. If providers agree on common outcomes, a citywide OST system can have a greater impact.

91% of providers report measuring at least one program outcome. Figure 2 displays the type of outcomes measured by providers.

Figure 2. Percentage of Providers that Measure Outcomes, by Type



Note: N=102

Figure 2 indicates the following:

- The majority of providers measure social and emotional growth and development and academic outcomes.
- Almost half of providers measure school engagement and extracurricular skills.
- A third of providers measure community engagement.

The data suggests some commonality among providers around social-emotional and academic outcomes.

In interviews, providers described using various strategies to measure these outcomes, and they reported needing support with outcomes assessment and data access. Those providers tracking academic outcomes rarely accessed school or District data; instead, they created their own assessments, used teacher surveys, or asked students to bring in report cards. They measured social-emotional learning outcomes with standardized surveys and also sometimes used provider-developed instruments.

Organizational Differences in Quality Assurance

Quality assurance activities vary by several organizational characteristics: funding stream, primary type of activity, and overall capacity. Each of these will be described below.

Programs that receive funding from DHS / 21C engaged in more quality assurance practices than programs not receiving this funding.

- OST providers that receive DHS / 21C funding more often use external observations, funder-mandated assessment tools, third-party evaluations, and youth and parent surveys. In interviews, providers described external monitoring related to their DHS funding. In addition, 21st CCLC funding requires a third-party evaluation.
- While non-DHS / 21C funded programs conducted internal program observations and self-assessments, they rarely reported using any formal tools. In interviews, DHS funded programs described using mandated rubrics for assessing their project-based learning activities.
- Providers with DHS / 21C funding more often reported using an externally developed system such as PhillyBOOST, PCAPS, or Social Solutions software to track participation data. Providers that do not receive DHS/21C funding more often reported only using internally developed systems, such as Excel spreadsheets or Access databases. These internal systems often have less functionality for generating useful reports or dashboards.
- Providers with DHS/21C funding track academic outcomes more than providers without those funding sources, probably because this funding stream requires assessment of academic outcomes.
- Funders influenced quality assurance in a number of additional ways, such as increasing the capacity of organizations to do quality assurance. For example, one provider interviewed received funding to develop a logic model and other quality systems. Another provider had support from a foundation to do data analysis.

Quality assurance activities also differ by a program's primary activity. Providers can be sorted into four categories based on the main focus of their program: academics, arts, sports, and general youth development. Quality assurance activities varied, as described below.

- General youth development programs use the Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) tool, but sports providers use this tool infrequently, and arts and academic programs do not use it at all.

- Academic programs use PhillyBOOST more often than all other types of providers; sports providers use PCAPS least compared to all other providers.
- General youth development and academic providers most often measured academic outcomes; arts and sports programs more often measured extracurricular skills.

Providers reported limited capacity and staffing for quality assurance, and some were relatively new to quality assurance activities. While the providers we interviewed were among the largest OST providers in the city, and most have been providing OST programs for more than 15 years, they described limited internal capacity for quality assurance and a desire to increase this capacity.

Almost all of the providers we interviewed have at least one designated staff person focused on data collection. However, they reported that this was inadequate for their needs. As a result, program staff also collected data, and providers reported that not all embraced this role. One provider commented:

Our practitioners, many of them are very good at what they do, but they don't understand the value or why it's important to provide the data. That's something that I think is a challenge, and that we would all collectively benefit if we could start bridging those silos.

For three providers, quality assurance activities were relatively new and had significantly expanded in the last few years. For two of three organizations, these activities were driven, in part, by Wallace system-building activities and the development of PhillyBOOST. The third organization was a new entity attempting to coordinate and support the data collection activities of its member organizations.

In interviews, providers also reported using data to various degrees. Collecting data is only the first step in quality assurance. Using the data to support program improvement is a critical next step. While the survey did not ask providers about data use, all interviewed providers described using data to think about program improvement. Most providers regularly examined participation and enrollment data. One program director reported:

For us, it's looking very [basically] at, what are the trends? Are we keeping kids? Are we losing kids based on what we're doing? I would say that that's probably the biggest thing that we've focused on.

Three of six providers described sharing data with frontline program staff and sometimes school partners. Sharing data with frontline staff is a best practice that can help boost staff buy-in while providing feedback on areas for program improvement.³³ One provider explained:

Usually, it's site specific, so the director would... gather the information, compile a little mini report, and then sit down with the staff—her staff, the OST staff, and share with the principal. She would say 'This is what we came up with, so these are the things we're going to work on in the OST to piggyback on your teachers.'

Other providers did not describe sharing data with frontline staff but used it at the administrative level to determine which programs were most popular or whether enrollment at particular sites would support new program opportunities.

In summary, OST providers have established some building blocks of quality assurance, but the degree to which they engage in these activities varies by funding stream, program focus, and staff capacity. In

³³ Charles Smith, Tom Akiva, Samantha A. Sugar, Yun-Jia Lo, K. A. Frank, Steve C. Peck, K. S. Cortina, and T. Devaney. "Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study." In *Ypsilanti, MI: Forum for Youth Investment*. 2012.

addition, some organizations had only recently begun quality assurance activities and reported that the efforts by PhillyBOOST helped them increase organizational capacity for participation data collection. Interviewed providers reported using data for program improvement, although not all providers shared this data with frontline staff, a best practice for continuous quality improvement.

III. OST Program Workforce

Research indicates that highly-qualified staff are a key driver of quality OST programming.³⁴ However, finding, developing, and retaining staff is a significant challenge for OST programs, as positions are often low-wage and part-time.³⁵ Not surprisingly, then, OST systems often focus a large portion of their quality improvement resources on workforce development efforts, including training, technical assistance, and opportunities for higher education.³⁶

To develop the OST workforce, it is necessary to understand current needs. This section describes Philadelphia’s OST workforce and addresses the following topics:

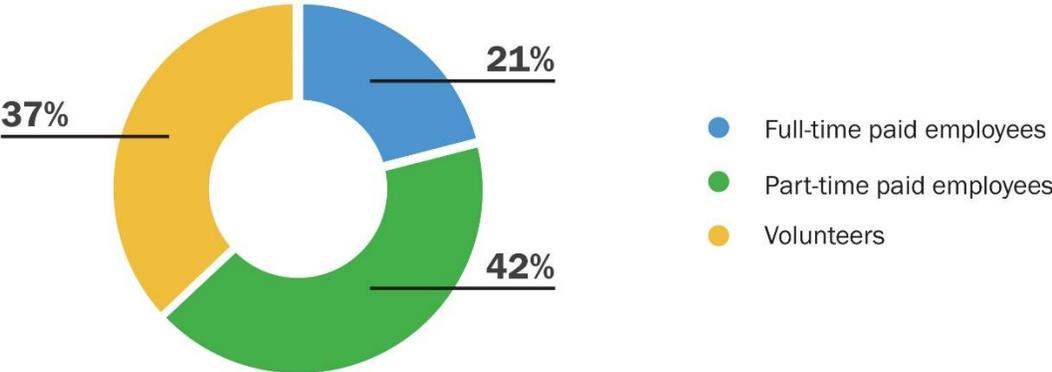
- Workforce composition
- Staff qualifications
- Staff retention and compensation
- Volunteer staffing and recruitment

Workforce Composition

Type of Staff

OST programs can be staffed by full-time, part-time, or volunteer workers. Our survey asked Philadelphia’s providers to report the number of each type of staff. Figure 3 displays the results.

Figure 3. Workforce Composition of the Average OST Provider



Note: N=101

³⁴ Allison JR Metz, Mary Burkhauser, and Lillian Bowie. "Training out-of-school time staff." *Child Trends: Washington, DC* (2009); Beth M. Miller, "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005); National Institute on Out of School Time (NIOST). <https://www.niost.org/>

³⁵ Beth M. Miller, "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

³⁶ Cheryl Hayes, Christianne Lind, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Nichole Stewart, Sharon Deich, Andrew Gersick, Jennifer McMaken, and Margo Campbell. "Investments in building citywide out-of-school-time systems: A six-city study." *Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures & The Finance Project* (2009).

Figure 3 reveals a heavy reliance on part-time staff and volunteers. This is common for the OST workforce and contributes to a less-than-optimal level of stability.

Importantly, the workforce composition varies across providers.

When we disaggregated our data by provider type and funding source, clear patterns emerged:

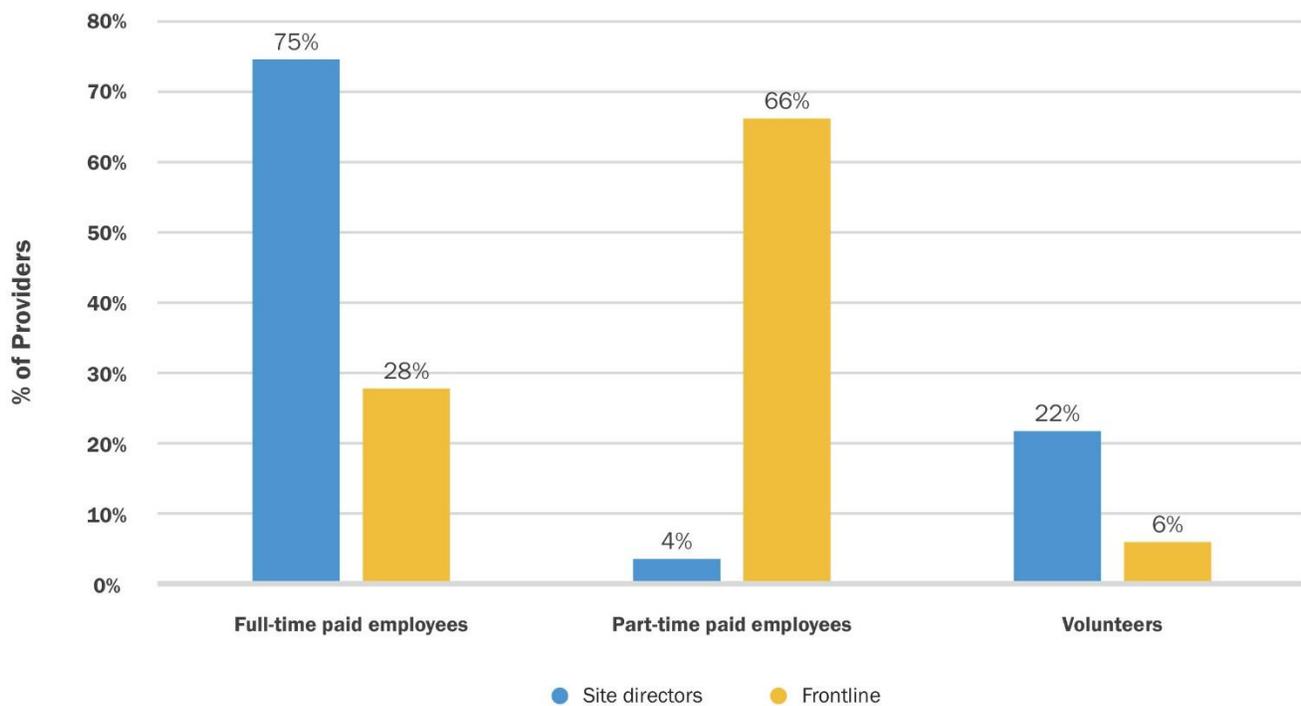
- **Provider type.** Sports programs utilize a larger percentage of volunteers than other providers (an average of 52%).
- **Funding source.** Programs with DHS/21C funding have a larger percentage of part-time staff and fewer volunteers (49% part-time, 31% volunteers) compared to those without DHS/21C funding (34% part-time, 43% volunteers).

Type of Position

Key OST positions include frontline workers that facilitate youth activities. In addition, program sites are overseen by site directors that supervise and hire staff, manage parent and partner relationships, and lead program planning and development. Site directors also play a key role in quality assurance activities.³⁷

Figure 4 shows the percentage of providers that employ full-time, part-time, or volunteer workers as site directors and frontline staff.

Figure 4. Type of Employee, by Position



Note: N=102 for site director question, 100 for frontline question

³⁷ Charles Smith, Tom Akiva, Gina McGovern, and Stephen C. Peck. "Afterschool quality." *New directions for youth development* 2014, no. 144 (2014): 31-44; Charles Smith, Tom Akiva, Samantha A. Sugar, Yun-Jia Lo, K. A. Frank, Steve C. Peck, K. S. Cortina, and T. Devaney. "Continuous quality improvement in afterschool settings: Impact findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention study." In *Ypsilanti, MI: Forum for Youth Investment*. (2012); Jennifer Birmingham, Ellen M. Pechman, Christina A. Russell, and Monica Mielke. "Shared Features of High-Performing After-School Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation." *Policy Studies Associates, Inc.* (2005).

Figure 4 shows:

- Three-quarters of providers report their site directors are full-time paid employees.
- Two-thirds of providers report their frontline staff are part-time paid employees.
- About a quarter of providers report their site directors are volunteers.

The high percentage of full-time site directors is encouraging, given their critical role in ensuring program quality. Their availability also makes them more likely to participate in professional development. This group represents a promising resource in system-wide quality support efforts, yet the notably high percentage of volunteer site directors remains an area of concern.

Staff Qualifications

Staff members' educational level, teaching certification status, and amount of training and experience in the OST field can impact program quality.³⁸ These characteristics are related to youth engagement, the provision of challenging activities, and the quality of homework help time. In addition, programs that employ staff with bachelor's degrees or teaching certifications are more likely to impact academic outcomes.³⁹ One study, conducted in a large urban area with a high percentage of ELL participants, found that the presence of bilingual staff increased the efficacy of the program.⁴⁰ Other key factors include content expertise, years of experience working with youth, and familiarity with the program's community. Philadelphia's OST providers were asked about the characteristics they consider when hiring frontline staff and site directors.

First, the survey asked providers about their minimum education requirements:

A majority of Philadelphia's OST providers (58%) expect site leaders to have a BA, and more than half (55%) require frontline staff to have a high school diploma.

OST providers are successful in meeting or exceeding the criteria for both types of positions:

- On average, 87% of site directors have a minimum of a four-year college degree;
- 99% of frontline staff have a high school diploma; and
- 41% of frontline staff have a four-year college degree.

³⁸ Denise Huang and Ronald Dietel. "Making afterschool programs better (CRESST Policy Brief)." *Los Angeles, CA: University of California* (2011); Beth M Miller, "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005); Jenell Holstead and Mindy Hightower King. "High-quality 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Academic achievement among frequent participants and non-participants." *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)* 16, no. 4 (2011): 255-274; Deborah Lowe Vandell, Elizabeth R. Reisner, B. Bradford Brown, Kim M. Pierce, Kimberly Dadisman, and Ellen M. Pechman. "The study of promising after-school programs: Descriptive report of the promising programs." *University of Wisconsin, Madison: Wisconsin Center for Education Research.* (2004).

³⁹ Yael Kidron and Jim Lindsay. "The Effects of Increased Learning Time on Student Academic and Nonacademic Outcomes: Findings from a Meta-Analytic Review. REL 2014-015." *Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia* (2014).; Patricia A. Lauer, Motoko Akiba, Stephanie B. Wilkerson, Helen S. Apthorp, David Snow, and Mya L. Martin-Glenn. "Out-of-school-time programs: A meta-analysis of effects for at-risk students." *Review of educational research* 76, no. 2 (2006): 275-313.; Patricia A. Lauer, Motoko Akiba, Stephanie B. Wilkerson, Helen S. Apthorp, David Snow, and Mya Martin-Glenn. "The Effectiveness of Out-of-School-Time Strategies in Assisting Low-Achieving Students in Reading and Mathematics: A Research Synthesis. Updated." (2004).; Beth M. Miller. "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

⁴⁰ Afterschool Alliance. "Taking a deeper dive into afterschool: Positive outcomes and promising practices." *Washington, DC.* (2014).

Providers also reported a variety of other criteria used when hiring site directors and frontline staff. The survey asked providers to indicate the importance of various characteristics when hiring site directors and frontline staff; Table 9 shows their response.

Table 9. Importance of Characteristics when Hiring Site Directors and Frontline Staff

Very or somewhat important	Slightly or not at all important
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education level • Experience with youth • Communication skills • Enthusiasm/passion • Content expertise • Community knowledge • Community membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program alumni status* • Teacher certification • Fluency in a second language**

Notes: N = 99 - 102

* Program alumni status was reported as a 'slightly or not at all important' characteristic when hiring site directors. However, this characteristic was reported as 'very or somewhat important' when hiring frontline staff. Other characteristics did not differ by staff position.

** More large than small organizations reported that fluency in second language was an important characteristic for site directors.

In addition, four of six interviewed providers also recommended hiring alumni or staff who knew the local community. One provider said, “The best people are the people...[from] the neighborhood where the program exists.” Another provider referred to the value of hiring former program participants as a practice they called “growing our own.” These providers believe that strong community connections may promote dedicated, caring staff that understand the backgrounds and needs of program participants.

Staff Retention

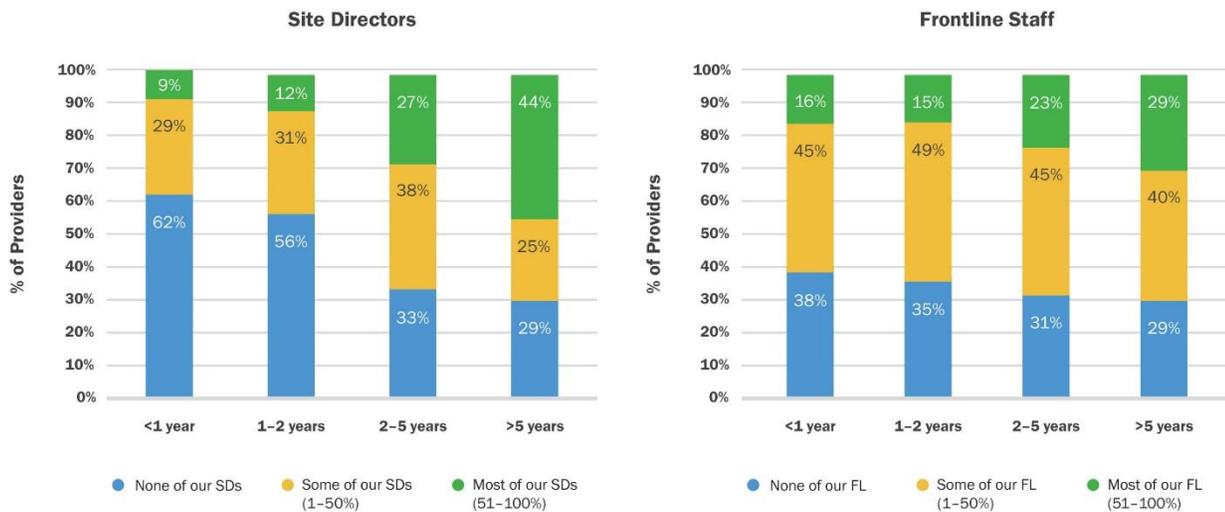
Staff turnover presents challenges for OST program quality. Programs with high staff turnover have lower-quality activities and more limited youth engagement.⁴¹ Turnover also disrupts the positive adult-youth relationships at the core of quality programming and can be particularly disruptive during the program year. However, staff turnover is a well-documented challenge for OST programs, in part because OST positions are often part-time and pay low wages.⁴²

Providers estimated the amount of time site directors and frontline staff have remained in their positions. Findings are presented in Figure 5; groupings indicate if a provider reported that “most,” “some,” or “none” of their staff fell into each tenure category. The graph on the left shows site directors’ tenure as reported by providers, and the graph on the right shows frontline staff tenure.

⁴¹ Miller, Beth M. "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

⁴² Yohalem, N., K. Pittman, and S. L. Edwards. "Strengthening the youth development/after-school workforce: Lessons learned and implications for funders." In *Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment and Cornerstones for Kids.* (2010).

Figure 5. Tenure of Site Directors and Frontline Staff



Note: N=101

The figure above shows:

- **Providers reported relative stability in the site director role.**
 - For almost half of the providers, the majority of their site directors had a tenure of five or more years; over 60% reported that some or most of their site directors had been in place for at least two years.
 - Only about a third of providers report that they have any site directors that have been in their position for less than a year.
- **Providers reported more turnover in their frontline staff.**
 - Over 60% reported frontline staff with less than one year of experience in their organization.
 - Less than 30% report that the majority of their frontline workers had been in their role for more than five years.

Site director retention, however, varies by program maturity. Programs in existence for ten years or more reported less turnover among site directors.

Stability of OST staff encourages program stability, a factor related to program quality. Whereas site directors appear to be a relatively stable group, the higher turnover of frontline workers suggests that OST providers may want to determine the root cause of turnover and enact strategies to reduce it.

Staff Compensation

Compensation is also related to program quality because it affects the degree to which programs can attract and retain high-quality staff.⁴³ One study found that higher staff wages were associated with multiple indicators of program quality, including staff and youth engagement, challenging activities, and

⁴³ Ibid.

high-quality homework time.⁴⁴ Philadelphia’s OST providers were asked about the typical compensation and benefits package offered to frontline staff and site directors. Table 10 shows their responses.

Table 10. Typical Benefits Package, by Position

Site Directors	Frontline Staff
Paid by salary; most common starting salary is \$25,000-\$34,999	Paid hourly; most common starting wage is \$7.51-\$12.50/hour
Receive full benefits	Do not receive any benefits

Note: N = 94 - 102

The table above shows:

- Site directors tend to be salaried, full-time employees with benefits. The most commonly reported salary range was \$25,000-35,000 per year.
- Frontline staff, typically employed part-time, are paid hourly at or slightly above minimum wage. They do not receive benefits.

Benefits vary across providers. Arts providers pay higher entry-level hourly rates for frontline staff than other program types, and more DHS/21C funded providers offer paid leave to part-time frontline staff than providers with other funding sources.

In interviews, four providers reported that compensation, difficult hours, and program inaccessibility created challenges for recruiting and retaining highly-qualified staff. A provider explained:

I think it's a perception of what the job is actually going to be. You may get a bevy of folks who think, 'Okay, I can go in. I can put in a few hours. I can go move onto this other phase of my life,' but I think it's a challenge once you build out, really, the level of accountability in what it takes to have that robust programming on the back end. I think that's where it becomes challenging to find the person who will invest their own time.

Given the low-wage, part-time nature of many OST positions, providers said it was important to hire people who were committed to the organizational mission and to provide them with regular positive recognition, opportunities for professional development and advancement, and adequate monitoring and support.

Volunteer Roles and Recruitment

Volunteers can play important roles in OST programs. First, they can help reduce the adult-youth ratio in OST programs. Research suggests that programs with lower adult-youth ratios are often higher quality programs, as more individual attention and greater supervision ensures a safer environment.⁴⁵ In addition, volunteers can be effective tutors and mentors given sufficient training and support.⁴⁶ OST programs can also engage parents and communities through the creation of volunteer activities.⁴⁷ However, recruitment and support for volunteers requires organizational time and resources, and OST providers may not have

⁴⁴ Miller, Beth M. "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

⁴⁵ Beth M. Miller. "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

⁴⁶ Tracey Hartmann, Rachel Comly, Rebecca Reumann-Moore, and Elise Bowditch. "Supporting literacy in OST: A summary of the evidence." *Research for Action*. (2017).; Cindy Kowal, "Using College Students as Mentors and Tutors," 2007.

⁴⁷ Allison Metz, Mary Burkhauser, and Lillian Bowie. "Training out-of-school time staff." *Child Trends: Washington, DC* (2009).

the necessary infrastructure. This section reports on volunteer roles and strategies for recruitment in Philadelphia’s OST programs.

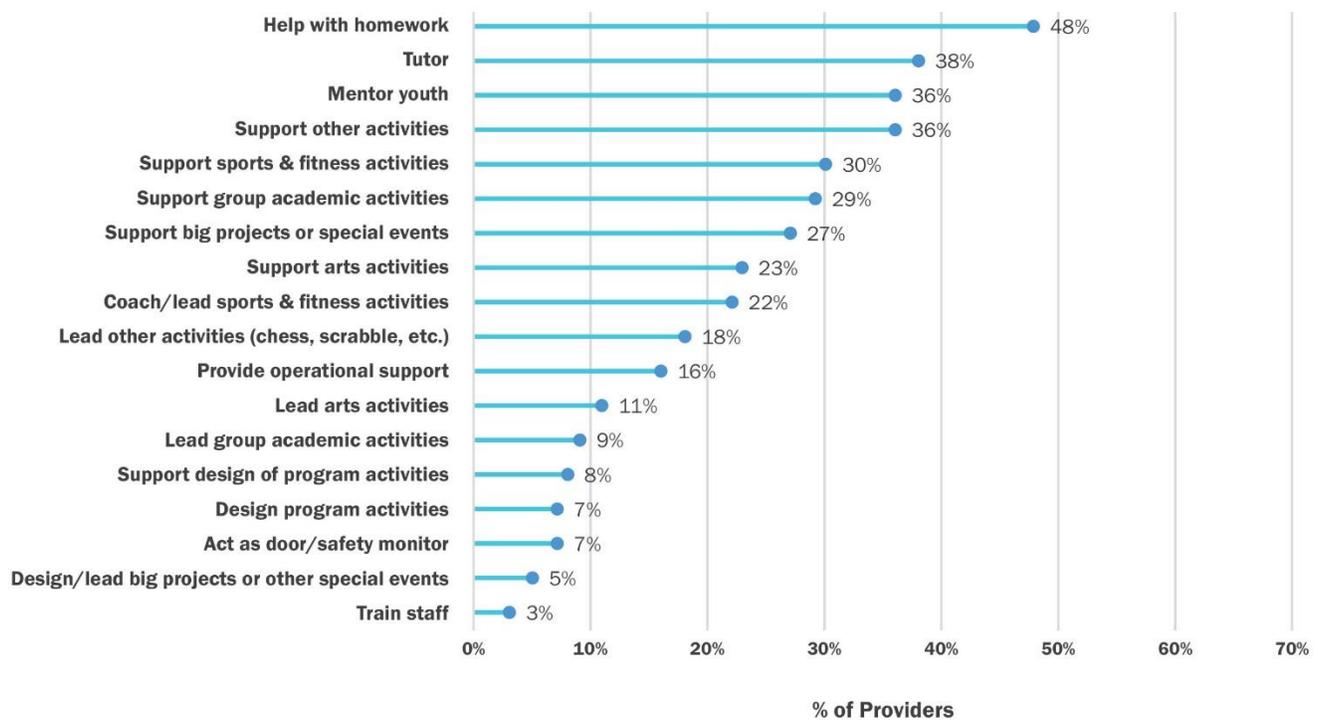
Volunteer Roles

Eighty-three percent of Philadelphia OST providers utilize volunteers, and the average Philadelphia OST workforce is 37% volunteer.

On average, volunteers work about seven hours per week. However, this varies by program size. Volunteers work more hours in large programs (an average of ten hours per week) compared to smaller programs (less than six hours).

Providers were asked about the most common ways that volunteers contribute to their programs. Figure 6 displays the findings.

Figure 6. Volunteer Contributions to OST Programs



Note: N = 102

The figure above shows:

- **Volunteers most commonly work directly with participants, providing homework help, tutoring, and youth mentorship.**
- Volunteers do not typically focus on administrative or organizational support functions. For example, they rarely train staff or design or support the design of program activities, big projects, or events.

Importantly, volunteer contributions vary across providers. Provider size, program type, funding source, and program maturity can shape volunteer contributions.

- **Program type:** Volunteers design activities for arts programs more than other program types.

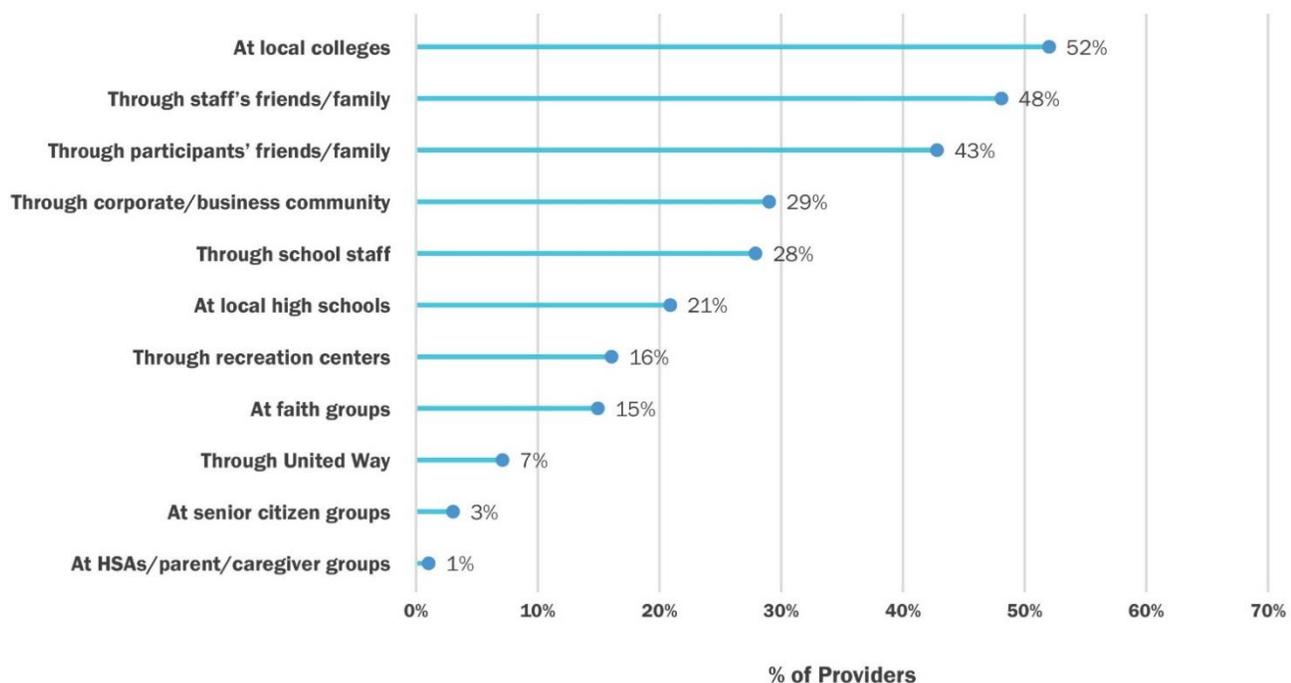
- **Funding source:** While DHS/21C funded providers have fewer volunteers than providers with other funding sources, they more often have those volunteers lead activities (e.g., chess, Scrabble, debate) and provide homework help than organizations with other funding sources.
- **Program maturity:** More organizations that have been in operation for 15+ years have volunteers support big projects or special events, compared to younger organizations.

Encouragingly, Philadelphia OST programs are most often using volunteers in the ways that research shows they can be most effective. It is important to note, however, that volunteers must be properly trained and supported to be effective. Training practices used by Philadelphia OSTs are discussed later in this report.

Volunteer Recruitment

Providers were asked where they typically recruit volunteers. Figure 7 displays the percentage of providers that recruited volunteers from the following sources.

Figure 7. Percentage of Providers that Recruit Through Each Source



Note: N = 102

The figure above shows:

- **Most commonly, providers recruit staff via local universities and personal connections such as the friends and family of staff and participants.**
- The least common recruitments sources across providers include recreation centers, faith groups, United Way, senior citizen groups, and HSAs/parent/caregiver groups.

For more information on the tactics for recruiting volunteers, see Appendix B.

Responses show that providers mostly recruit volunteers from the many colleges and universities in Philadelphia. However, while research suggests that college volunteers can be an important resource for

youth programs, they are most often “episodic and occasional volunteers” and not well-suited for long-term positions.⁴⁸ Therefore, the OST system should be strategic about the best use of this volunteer resource.

Challenges and Strategies for Working with Volunteers

In interviews, providers had mixed views about using volunteers. All six providers reported challenges, including difficulties recruiting and sustaining volunteers and establishing the infrastructure needed to support them. One program director explained, “You’re going to have people that show up to one thing and disappear.” Because of this challenge, four providers hesitated to place volunteers in lead roles. One provider explained, “It insulates us from having to rebuild programs if volunteers bail.” Providers suggested investing in volunteer engagement and communicating clear expectations. One provider said, “Make sure a volunteer walks in the room and knows exactly what they’re supposed to do.”

Providers recommended several promising practices for working successfully with volunteers:

- Design volunteer roles intentionally. As one provider explained, the role of the volunteer has to be “well planned on the front end.”
- Offer events to celebrate and appreciate volunteers. Events could include end-of-year celebrations, sporting events, and learning opportunities.
- Ensure strong communication. Cultivate personal relationships and be clear about roles and responsibilities.
- Offer effective training and support. Providers suggest that strong program orientation and ongoing support may sustain engagement and retain quality volunteers.

To use volunteers successfully, providers may require additional resources to develop a supportive infrastructure. A provider that does not use volunteers explained that their use would require additional financial support in order to hire a volunteer coordinator whose “sole focus [would be] to source for volunteers, to screen volunteers, [and] to do volunteer training.” One program that uses about 160 volunteers had two staff members dedicated to volunteer training and two dedicated to volunteer recruitment, placement, and ongoing support and communication.

IV. Staff and Volunteer Training

Given the importance of hiring and retaining highly qualified staff, OST staff training is one of the core organizational supports for program quality.⁴⁹ Because many OST staff do not have specific training or credentials in youth development, education, or OST programming, it is especially necessary to provide staff with quality professional development.⁵⁰ The number of hours of professional development received by OST staff has been correlated with increased program quality, particularly staff engagement.⁵¹ In addition, research has found that staff tend to stay on longer when they feel supported and have professional development opportunities.⁵²

⁴⁸ Cindy Kowal, "Using College Students as Mentors and Tutors," (2007).

⁴⁹ Allison Metz, Mary Burkhauser, and Lillian Bowie. "Training out-of-school time staff." *Child Trends: Washington, DC* (2009).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Beth M. Miller. "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

⁵² Afterschool Alliance. "Taking a deeper dive into afterschool: Positive outcomes and promising practices." *Washington, DC*. (2014).

OST systems can improve quality by offering staff professional development, training, technical assistance, and professional advancement opportunities. The survey asked Philadelphia OST providers to report on their current practices regarding staff training.

Amount of Training

While staff training has been correlated with program quality, research is limited regarding the amount of training required. However, research on teacher professional development suggests that more than 14 hours per year may be a minimum threshold for impacting student outcomes; this provides one metric for thinking about the time needed for OST staff training.⁵³

Philadelphia’s OST providers were asked to indicate the amount of training and support provided to full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff, as well as the formats in which training and support were provided (staff meeting, observation, in-house and external trainings, and webinars) and the topics covered. Table 11 describes the amount of training and support activities conducted by OST providers for different types of staff.

Table 11. Amount of Training and Support Activities, by Staff Type

	Paid Staff		Volunteers
	Full-time	Part-time	
% of providers that conduct training / support activities	91%	86%	62%
Average number of types of activities held	4.5	4.0	2.0
	Site Directors	Frontline	
Average number of hours of training / support provided	19.5	18.2	7.4

Note: N = 85 – 102

The table above shows:

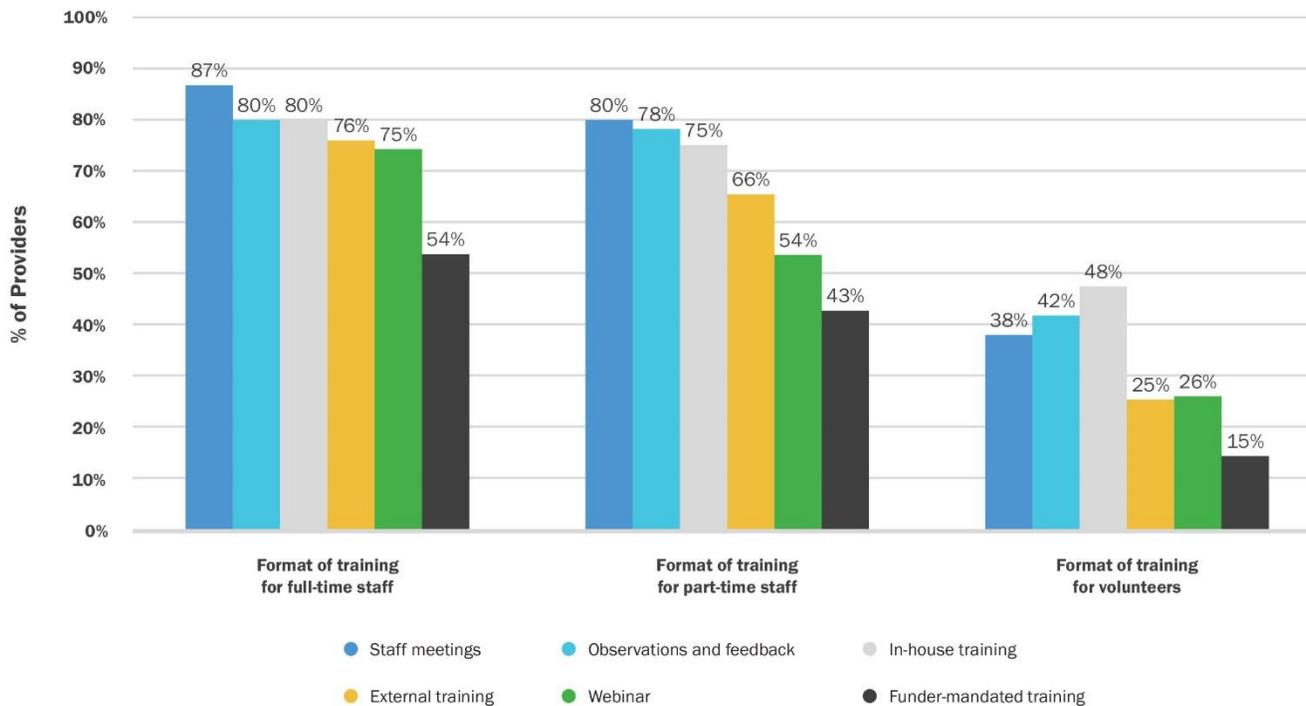
- **Almost all providers conduct some type of training and support activities with their paid staff, but far fewer provide training and support for their volunteers.** On average, OST providers conduct more than twice as many different types of training and twice as many hours of training with their paid staff compared to their volunteers.
- On average, OST providers in Philadelphia are delivering beyond the recommended threshold of more than 14 hours of annual training to their site directors and frontline staff. **However, about half are providing less than the minimum threshold.** More than half of providers surveyed are meeting the minimum threshold for their site directors; about half are meeting that threshold for frontline staff.
- **Volunteers may not be receiving adequate training.** These findings suggest that more professional development opportunities and resources are needed.

⁵³ Sara Hill. "Leap of Faith: A Literature Review on the Effects of Professional Development on Program Quality and Youth Outcomes." *National Institute on Out-of-School Time* (2012).

Training Formats

OST staff training and support can include staff meetings and supervisory check-ins, formal in-house or externally provided training, or on-site observation and coaching from supervisors. Research does not support the effectiveness of one format over another for OST staff development. However, a variety of approaches are likely important, in addition to comprehensive, ongoing, and iterative support that includes modeling, coaching, and evaluation.⁵⁴ Figure 8 displays formats used by providers for OST training and support.

Figure 8. Training and Support Activity Formats Used, by Staff Type



Note: N = 102

The figure above shows:

- **Staff meetings, observations and feedback, and in-house trainings are the top three reported formats used for training and supporting staff and volunteers.**
 - Paid staff are most often trained in staff meetings, followed by observations and in-house trainings.
 - External trainings and webinars are the next most commonly used formats, used by three-quarters of providers for their full-time staff and half to two-thirds of providers for their part-time staff.
 - Funder-mandated trainings were the least commonly reported type of training, but about half of providers report that full-time staff and slightly less than half of providers report that part-time staff experience these trainings.

⁵⁴ Allison Metz, Mary Burkhauser, and Lillian Bowie. "Training out-of-school time staff." *Child Trends: Washington, DC* (2009).

- The top three training formats are the same for volunteers, but in the reverse order. In-house training is the most common training format, followed by observations and staff meetings.
- **Slightly fewer providers use each training format with part-time staff than with full-time staff—particularly external trainings and webinars.**
- **About half as many providers use each training format with their volunteers.**

The diversity of training formats suggests that providers are attempting to increase their accessibility by tapping into diverse resources, including outside professional development. In addition, the prevalence of observation and feedback as a training approach is encouraging because this type of training is part of a continuous quality improvement process found to increase program impact.⁵⁵

Training Topics

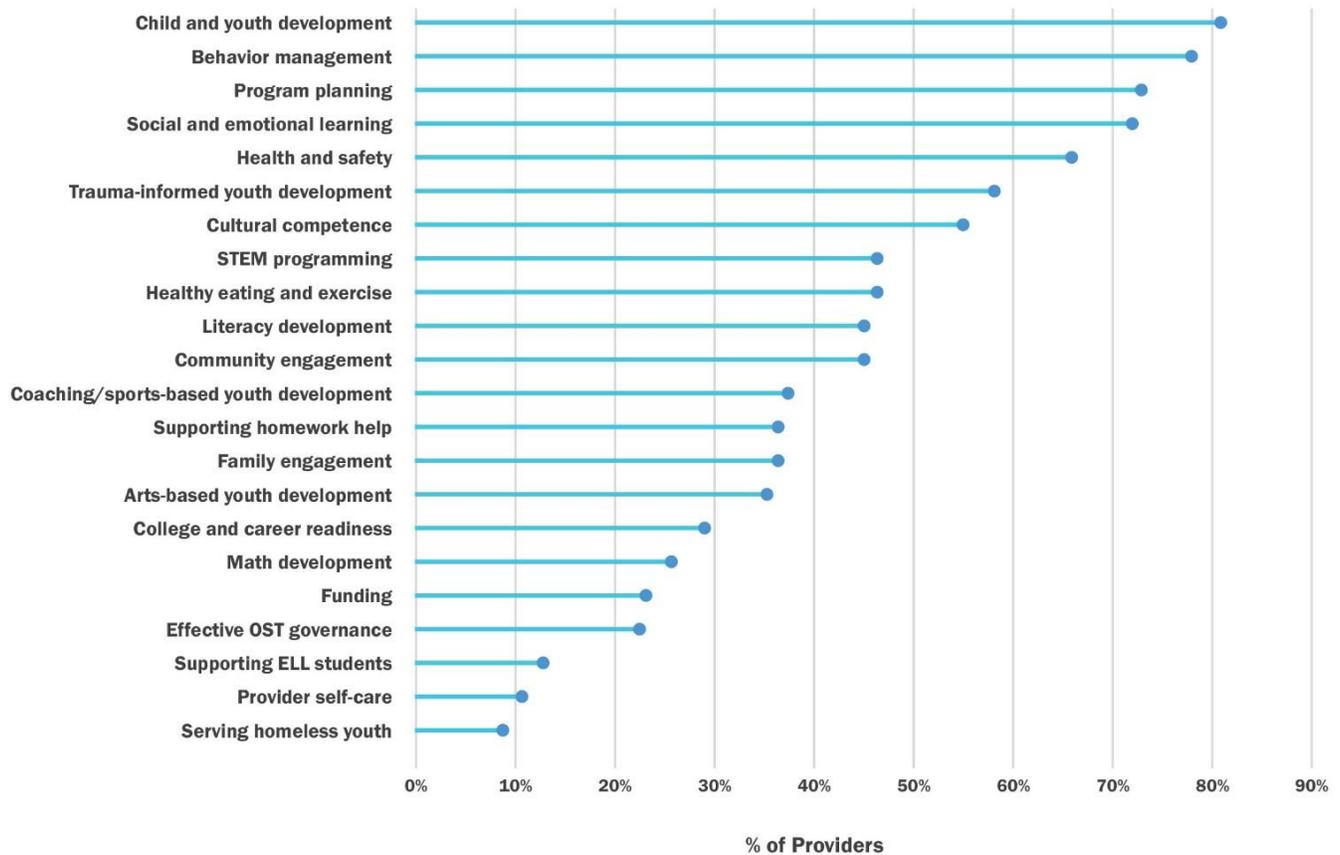
Professional development should prepare the OST workforce to implement quality programming that leads to positive youth outcomes. This professional development can help staff plan high-quality activities, engage families and the community, and have positive and healthy interactions with program participants.⁵⁶ Therefore, the training topics, as well as the amount of training, are important.

Figure 9 displays the content providers covered in staff training sessions.

⁵⁵ Jessica Sheldon, Amy Arbreton, Leigh Hopkins, and Jean Baldwin Grossman. "Investing in success: Key strategies for building quality in after-school programs." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45, no. 3-4 (2010): 394-404.

⁵⁶ Allison Metz, Mary Burkhauser, and Lillian Bowie. "Training out-of-school time staff." *Child Trends: Washington, DC* (2009).

Figure 9. Training Topics Covered by Providers



Note: N = 102

The figure above shows:

- **More than two-thirds of providers trained their staff in child development, behavior management, program planning, and social and emotional learning.**
- Less than one-fifth of providers trained their staff to support English Language Learners, learn about provider self-care, or serve homeless youth.

Organizational Differences in Staff Training

Staff training and support practices differ by type of organization. As summarized below, the frequency, format, and content of training sessions differed based on a program’s funding source, maturity, primary activities, and size.

- **Funding source:** DHS/21C funded organizations provide more types of trainings and support activities than organizations without those funding sources. Their trainings also more often cover a broader range of training topics.
- **Program maturity:** More mature programs (those in service 10+ years) offer more training opportunities for their part-time staff.
- **Program size:** Small programs (those held at one site) provide in-house or external training for volunteers less often than larger programs.

- **Primary activities:** Academic and general youth development programs more often report having training on family engagement, compared to sports and arts programs.

Challenges and Strategies for Providing Staff Training

In interviews, providers noted several challenges to offering staff training. These included funding, scheduling issues with part-time staff, and staff openness to professional development.

- Two providers discussed the difficulty of scheduling professional development for part-time staff because staff have other jobs. One provider said, “For us, it’s a challenge because a lot of our part-time staff are also working full-time jobs—or not full-time jobs, but they’re maybe working another job, so just trying to map out, when can you get the bulk of folks?” Some programs used online or electronic training to reach part-time staff. One program provided program coordinators with shared drives in order to disseminate trainings to frontline staff; another program emphasized the benefits of online training.
- One provider reported that it is difficult to find funds, or room in the program budget, for professional development.
- According to one provider, it can be a challenge to ensure that veteran staff members remain open-minded toward professional development. The provider explained, “[A professional development provider] can’t just come in and tell them how to do their job.” This provider also highlighted the importance of finding a professional development provider familiar with the program’s urban context.

In summary, providers reported that professional development was a key lever for improving program quality. At least half of Philadelphia’s OST providers are offering training for a minimum threshold of 14 hours per year, and some are offering more. DHS and 21st CCLC funded programs more often meet this threshold. However, the research suggests training gaps for volunteers, smaller and younger organizations, and organizations not receiving DHS or 21st CCLC funding.

V. Areas for Support

The supports provided by an OST system should align with the areas of greatest need. This section presents providers’ reports of their greatest needs.

Providers were asked to what extent they agreed that their program(s) could use additional support in areas related to infrastructure and program activities. Table 12 displays their responses.

Table 12. Areas for Support

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
Areas related to infrastructure and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to attract and retain high-quality staff • High-quality, adequate space • Professional development for full-time and part-time staff • Financial stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient materials and supplies • Strong partnership with the participants' school • Strong community connections • Ability to collect and use participation, quality, and outcomes data to inform program implementation • Ability to set clear goals and measure outcomes • Youth input into organizational decision-making and quality assessment • Ability to apply a Theory of Change or Logic Model
Areas related to programming activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence-based programs • Culturally relevant activities • Youth voice and leadership opportunities • Positive peer relationships • Support for English Language Learners • Nutritious meals and/or snacks

Note: N = 101 - 102

The table above shows:

Providers need more support for infrastructure and capacity than for program activities. Providers expressed particularly high need for the following:

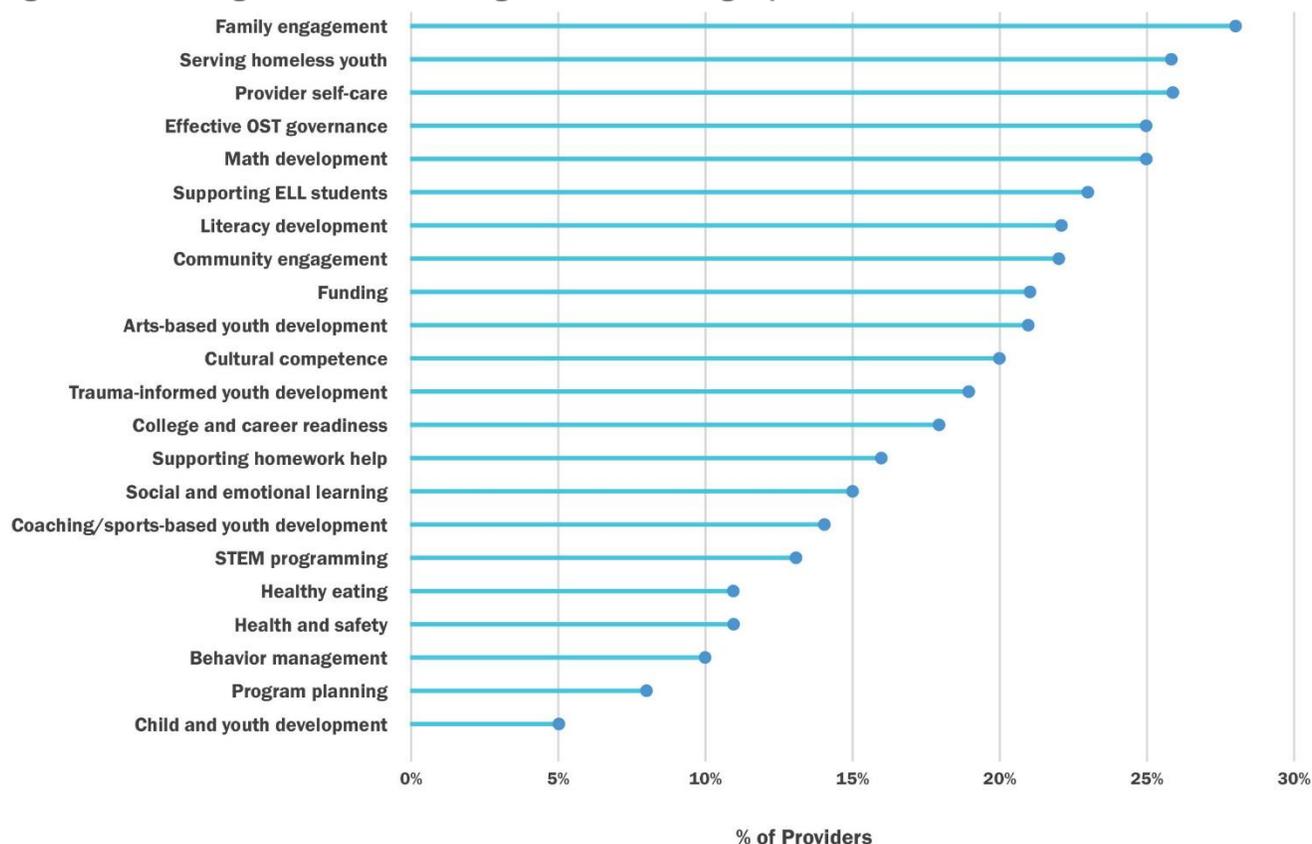
- **Recruiting and retaining high-quality staff.** In interviews, providers wanted more support for OST workforce development. One provider suggested creating a pipeline through program alumni, OST training and certification programs, and Philadelphia’s higher education institutions in order to have an ongoing source of qualified OST staff.
- **Achieving financial stability.** Interviewed providers also underscored the need for more financial resources, particularly in order to boost quality and recruit and retain high-quality staff.
- **Providing professional development.** Although half of providers met the minimum threshold of professional development per year, this finding suggests that providers do not believe it to be enough. Specific topics for professional development are described in Figure 10.
- **Finding high-quality, adequate space.** This theme was also raised in interviews and discussed earlier in this report (see pages 12-13).
- **Increasing parent engagement.** This is the only programmatic element for which most providers strongly agreed they needed support.

Providers reported at least some desire to receive support in the following areas:

- **Quality assurance activities.** In interviews, two providers identified the need for a universal definition of quality applicable across different types of programs. Once this quality definition is created, providers report a need for professional development tied to this definition.
- **Community engagement.** Providers also raised this topic in interviews. In particular, two providers spoke about the need to better connect with neighborhood institutions and organizations in order to further their work. For example, one provider suggested help connecting with neighborhood block captains. However, two providers that were interviewed were already deeply embedded in neighborhoods.

Providers were asked to identify additional professional development topics they would like to offer. Figure 10 shows the percent of providers who would like to offer each additional training topic.

Figure 10. Percentage of Providers Desiring Additional Training Topics



The figure above shows:

More than a quarter of providers wanted additional staff training in family engagement, serving homeless youth, and provider self-care.

Training needs differed by funding source, program maturity, and primary activities, as detailed below:

- **Funding source:** More providers with DHS/21C funding wanted to provide training about supporting homeless youth and provider self-care. Fewer providers with DHS/21C funding were interested in social-emotional learning or community engagement training.

- **Program maturity:** More programs that have been running for more than five years wanted to provide training in provider self-care than programs running for less time.
- **Primary activities:**
 - Academic programs more frequently wanted to provide training about supporting ELLs, but fewer wanted to provide training on social-emotional learning.
 - Sports programs, more than other programs, wanted to provide training in social and emotional learning.
 - Sports and arts programs more frequently wanted to provide training in family engagement.

In summary, providers identified a number of areas in which they could use additional support, particularly with regard to developing their organizational capacity.

VI. Summary and Recommendations

Philadelphia's OST system is ready to take on a greater role in boosting program quality so that these programs can provide even more effective supports for children and youth. This research reveals a number of existing strengths in Philadelphia's OST system that can be built upon to increase quality. These highlights are summarized below with recommendations for system-level activities to boost quality.

Defining Quality

Strength: Providers agree that all elements of program quality identified in the research literature are important. A first step for citywide program quality improvement efforts is developing a consensus around quality,⁵⁷ and survey data suggests that such a consensus exists. Most providers endorsed all program quality elements, as well as all elements of an organizational infrastructure to support quality, as extremely or very important.

Recommendation: Create a formal definition of quality that builds on this consensus but also describes a developmental trajectory of growth towards the highest level of quality. While providers agree on the ideal set of quality indicators identified by research, our interviews suggest that, in practice, definitions may be more varied and constrained by what providers feel they can achieve. It takes time and resources for providers to achieve the highest level of quality. Therefore, some provider networks have adopted a tiered framework, and a similar approach could be useful for the OST system. Quality could be described along a continuum: safe, engaging programs staffed by caring adults could be a minimum threshold, with additional elements (including more intentional structure, goals, and skill-building) representing higher levels of quality. Offering tiers of quality may highlight provider strengths while also identifying areas of improvement.

Quality Assurance

Strength: Providers agree on key outcome areas, including social and emotional learning. Another important step in improving program quality is to identify a common set of outcomes. The largest number

⁵⁷ Daniel Browne. "Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered about Building Afterschool Systems. Perspective." *Wallace Foundation* (2015).; Cheryl Hayes, Christianne Lind, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Nichole Stewart, Sharon Deich, Andrew Gersick, Jennifer McMaken, and Margo Campbell. "Investments in building citywide out-of-school-time systems: A six-city study." *Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures & The Finance Project* (2009).

of providers reported assessing social and emotional outcomes, followed by academic outcomes and school engagement. These are broad outcome categories, and variation could still exist, but these categories provide a foundation that could be expanded and refined over time.

The focus on social and emotional outcomes in particular may offer the most common ground, as it was endorsed by programs of all types. Often thought to be less important than academic or work-related outcomes, social and emotional outcomes are increasingly recognized in research as foundational to other important outcomes.⁵⁸

Recommendation: Support providers as they collect data and assess key system-wide outcomes. The survey did not ask providers to indicate the tools used to measure social and emotional outcomes. However, interviews suggest providers sometimes create their own. Research has begun to generate more measures which providers can use to document their impact in these areas. In interviews, providers reported sometimes using internally developed surveys; therefore, they likely need support identifying valid measures. In addition, as a sizeable number of providers did not have an external software system for compiling program data, they likely need support in collecting and analyzing outcomes data. The city OST system could support these efforts.

Although many providers also measured academic outcomes, many lack direct access to individual student academic data. Importantly, OST providers work with children and youth in the traditional public system, charter schools, and private schools. This complicates the task of accessing student data. The OST system could support providers' quality assurance efforts by brokering relationships between providers and school systems to enable access to academic data.

Recommendation: Support providers in aligning program structures to improve a common set of outcomes. A common set of goals could guide quality improvement efforts. For example, while some social and emotional learning may happen organically, the system could provide more extensive professional development on how to intentionally address social and emotional learning outcomes. In addition, program quality indicators and tools could focus on assessing program components most closely aligned with social and emotional learning outcomes, such as positive relationships.

Strength: Providers are engaged in a range of quality assurance activities. A majority of providers reported engaging in some internal quality assurance activities, including observing their programs and conducting self-assessments. Yet they varied in their approaches. Many used a common set of tools to assess quality, but the vast majority of providers also had their own internal system for collecting participation data. Some providers used both an internal and external system.

Recommendation: Select one system-wide, evidence-based tool to assess baseline program quality. Once an official definition of quality is determined, one of the quality assessment tools could be selected as a means for collecting baseline data. Tools that collect academic and social-emotional learning outcomes should be considered most seriously.

Recommendation: Encourage more providers to use PhillyBOOST. Many providers use Excel or Access for internal data collection. PhillyBOOST is a free and higher-capacity platform for data collection, available for Philadelphia OST providers to generate sophisticated participation reports.

⁵⁸ Jenny Nagoaka, Camille A. Farrington, Stacy B. Ehrlich, and Ryan D. Heath. "Foundations for Young Adult Success: A Developmental Framework. Concept Paper for Research and Practice." *University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research* (2015).

In addition, increased use of PhillyBOOST enables the OST system to analyze program access across the city.

Strength: DHS and 21st CCLC funded-programs have the most comprehensive structures in place to support program quality. Not surprisingly, organizations receiving funding from these two primary funding streams appear to have greater capacity for ensuring program quality. They report using a greater number of more formal quality assurance activities using externally-developed tools, including funder-mandated quality assessment processes. They are also more likely to have one or more systems for tracking student participation data and to offer more types of staff training on a broader range of topics.

Recommendation: Engage organizations not funded by DHS or 21st CCLC in further quality assurance and training activities. OST organizations funded by other sources were less likely to conduct internal quality assurance activities or use formal assessment tools. In addition, they were less likely to have program observations conducted by program monitors and third-party evaluations. Thus, their quality assurance activities may be conducted more informally and without consideration of more rigorous field standards. In addition, these organizations conducted fewer types of staff training around fewer topic areas. Therefore, the city OST system should further engage and support this group.

Recommendation: Engage more funders in program improvement. While many factors influence program quality and quality assurance activities, survey data suggest that funder requirements and supports are key factors. Providers describe the role of funders as both a carrot and a stick in the program quality improvement process. They offered examples of funders tying quality assurance requirements to their funding and providing resources to expand quality assurance activities. These data suggest that it would be important for the OST system to enlist private and corporate funders in support of these quality improvement efforts.

Workforce

Strength: Highly qualified and stable site directors. Site directors play a pivotal role in overseeing staff, managing partnerships, and helping to plan programs. They are also an essential component of the organizational infrastructure for program quality. Survey data reveal that the vast majority of site directors have been in their positions for several years, indicating stability. In addition, most have a bachelor's degree or higher—a factor highly correlated to strong programming.⁵⁹

Recommendation: Capitalize on site leaders' strengths to enhance continuous quality improvement efforts. Research suggests that quality improvement efforts are furthered by strong, stable site leadership. Providers expressed interest in increasing professional development for their full-time staff, including site directors. This creates an opportunity to train this group in quality improvement efforts.

Strength: Half of OST providers are engaging in meaningful staff professional development. These providers report conducting more than 14 hours per year of professional development, the minimum amount of training that research suggests may improve youth outcomes.⁶⁰ These trainings occur in a variety of formats and topic areas, particularly among DHS/21st CCLC providers.

⁵⁹ Beth M. Miller. "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

⁶⁰ Sara Hill. "Leap of Faith: A Literature Review on the Effects of Professional Development on Program Quality and Youth Outcomes." *National Institute on Out-of-School Time* (2012).

Recommendation: Expand professional development for OST providers and staff. While over 50% of OST providers conduct substantial professional development, almost the same number report their staff receive less. In addition, although 14 hours per year is seen as a minimum threshold, staff may need even more training and support.

Recommendation: Consider professional development strategies to sustain and support the entire OST workforce. Frontline staff positions are subject to more turnover and are less likely to be highly qualified. OST systems in other cities have used a variety of professional development strategies to increase the quality of their workforce,⁶¹ including technical assistance, on-site support, and higher education opportunities. In addition, providers want more professional development in staff self-care, which research suggests may facilitate greater staff retention in a low-paying and demanding field.⁶² The OST system should consider training staff in self-care activities in order to better support and retain OST staff.

Recommendation: Provide support for volunteer recruitment and training. Nearly 40% of the OST workforce is comprised of volunteers. Research suggests they can be effective mentors and tutors when given appropriate training and support, but they are also a less stable resource. The OST system could help providers develop a more consistent pipeline of volunteers by developing formal system-level partnerships with higher education institutions. The system could further strengthen volunteers by offering centralized trainings in the roles that volunteers most effectively fill, such as mentoring and tutoring.

Recommendation: Support OST service to homeless and ELL participants through professional development. As the ELL population in Philadelphia continues to grow, OST providers must strengthen their ability to support these students. Research found that the presence of bilingual staff was important in one large urban city.⁶³ Some large OST providers identified bilingualism as an important hiring concern, but small and medium-sized organizations did not. In addition, academic and general youth development organizations were interested in receiving more support for working with ELL students. OST providers also expressed interest in professional development related to supporting homeless youth. The OST system may be able to connect with key service providers or experts working with these groups to sponsor professional development.

Other Areas for System-Level Support

Support parent and community engagement through professional development and volunteer recruitment. Several providers described struggling with parent and community engagement, and most somewhat or strongly agreed that they need further support and professional development in these areas. The OST system could provide this support in several ways. First, the system could convene OST providers with important community leaders, such as block captains, town watch groups, and others. In addition, some OST providers, such as libraries and recreation centers, are embedded in neighborhoods and could be resources for other providers seeking to develop these ties.

Identify Adequate Facilities. Providers strongly agreed that they need support identifying facilities that are safe, in good condition, and consistently available after school and in the summer. To overcome this

⁶¹ Cheryl Hayes, Christianne Lind, Jean Baldwin Grossman, Nichole Stewart, Sharon Deich, Andrew Gersick, Jennifer McMaken, and Margo Campbell. "Investments in building citywide out-of-school-time systems: A six-city study." *Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures & The Finance Project* (2009).

⁶² Beth M. Miller. "Pathways to success for youth: What counts in after-school." (2005).

⁶³ Afterschool Alliance. "Taking a deeper dive into afterschool: Positive outcomes and promising practices." *Washington, DC.* (2014).

challenge, the OST system can help providers locate and negotiate the use of school buildings, churches, and recreation centers and identify resources to improve existing spaces.

Next Steps in OST Research

Research for Action is conducting two other strands of research which may further illuminate issues raised here. RFA will be releasing a report in Fall 2017 on community perceptions of OST programs based on focus groups and a Philadelphia parent survey. This report will further inform OST system strategies to further engage parents and communities. A third strand of research will examine literacy practices in OST programs. This report will be released in Fall 2017.

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Appendix A. Quality Assessment Tools

Evidence and Purposes of Quality Assessment Tools

Table A1 displays the grades served by, evidence for, and purposes of the various quality assessment tools. These instruments were assessed in seven areas: score distributions, interrater reliability, test-retest reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, concurrent/predictive validity, and validity of scale structure. These tools showed varied levels of evidence in each area.⁶⁴

Table A1.

	Grades Served	Evidence	Purposes
Out-of-School Time Observation Tool (OST)*	K-12	Unknown	Program Monitoring
Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network (PSAYDN)**	K-12	None	Improvement, Monitoring/Accreditation, Research/Evaluation
Assessing Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APAS/APT)	K-8	Moderate in two areas	Improvement, Monitoring/Accreditation
Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool (QSA)***	K-12	None	Improvement
School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)	K-6	Strong in two areas, Moderate in two areas	Improvement, Monitoring/Accreditation, Research/Evaluation
Program Quality Observation Scale (PQO)	1-5	Strong in four areas, Moderate in two areas	Research/Evaluation
Quality Assurance System (QAS)	K-12	None	Improvement
Program Observation Tool (POT)	K-8	Strong in three areas, Moderate in one area	Improvement, Monitoring/Accreditation
Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)	4-12	Strong in four areas, Moderate in three areas	Improvement, Monitoring/Accreditation, Research/Evaluation
Promising Practices Rating Scale (PPRS)	K-8	Strong in two areas, Moderate in two areas	Research/Evaluation
Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning Observation Tool (CORAL)	K-5	Strong in two areas, Moderate in two areas	Monitoring/Accreditation, Research/Evaluation

*Developed by Philadelphia Department of Human Services based on best practices from the After-School Alliance

**Used by Keystone Stars

*** Developed by Foundations, Inc., an OST technical assistance provider which supports 21st Century Community Learning Center programs and coordinates the Philadelphia-Out-of-School Time Resource Center

⁶⁴ For more information about the evidence for these tools, see Yohalem, Nicole, Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom, Sean Fischer, and Marybeth Shinn, "Measuring Youth Program Quality: A guide to assessment tools, second edition." Washington DC, (2009).

Quality Assessment Tool Content Areas

Table A2 displays the content areas assessed by these quality tools.

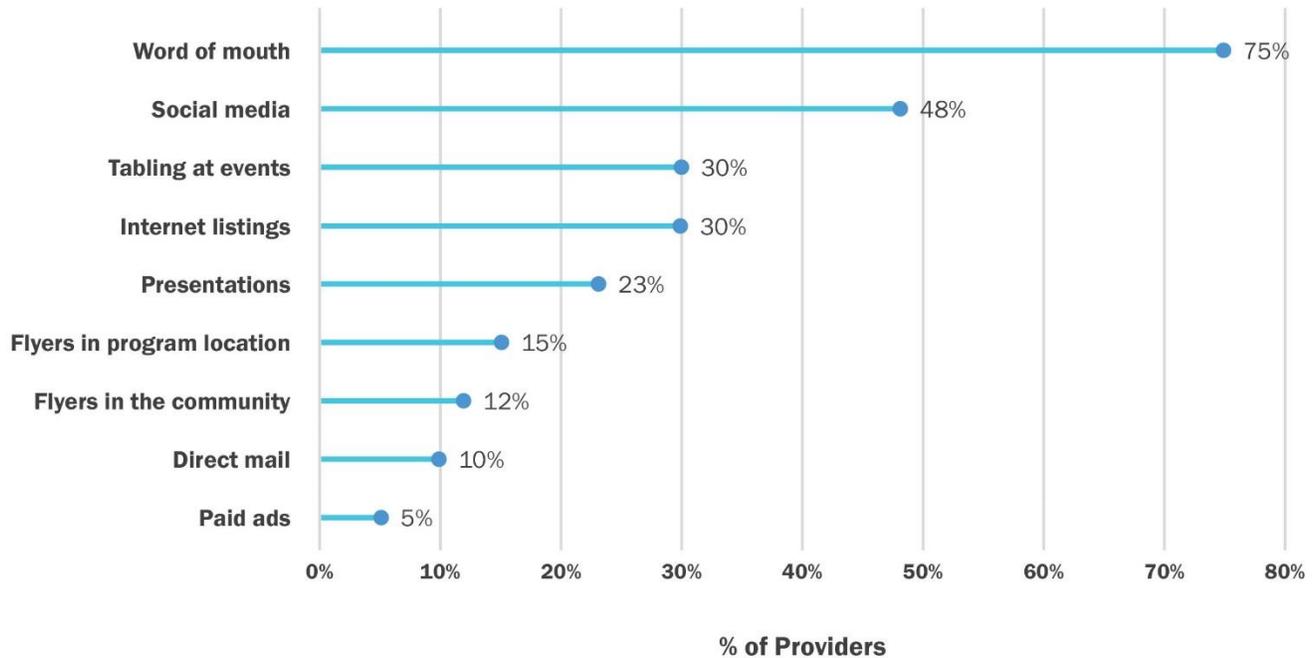
Table A2.

	OST	PSAYDN	APAS	QSA	SACERS	PQO	QAS	POT	YPQA	PPRS	CORAL
Relationships	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Environment		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Engagement	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Norms	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Skill-Building Opportunities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Routine/Structure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Linkages to Community	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
Staffing	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		
Youth Leadership/Participation	X	X	X							X	
Management	X	X		X			X	X			X

Appendix B. Volunteer Recruitment Tactics

Providers were asked what tactics they use to recruit volunteers. Figure B1 displays the findings.

Figure B1. Volunteer Recruitment Tactics



Note: N = 102

The figure above shows:

- **Providers tend to use low cost, informal recruitment tactics such as word of mouth and social media.**
- Low-cost recruitment tactics, such as tabling at events and listings on internet sites (e.g., Serve Philadelphia, VolunteerMatch, Idealist.org), were also common.
- Efforts that require significant resources—flyers, direct mail, and paid ads—were least common.

Recruitment tactics vary by organization size. Large organizations more often report presentations, tabling at events, and paid ads as tactics used to recruit volunteers, compared to smaller organizations.