

# *Making the Connections*

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A Report on the First National Survey of  
Out-of-School Time Intermediary Organizations

May 2012 | Collaborative for Building After-School Systems

## Forward

Only in the last few decades have organized citywide and regional after-school systems begun to emerge. The first federal funding stream to support out-of-school time (OST) programs is just 15 years old. Many communities today still match the picture that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation described in 2004 at the end of a 5-year, three-city OST demonstration: “Although the demand is widespread, and out-of-school time programs are multiplying, very few cities have a coherent, firmly established system for funding, promoting or regulating these activities. The programs constitute, in most places, a patchwork of independent efforts cobbled together by individual neighborhoods and schools, funded by a hodgepodge of often unrelated grants and contracts and certified or evaluated by no single authority.”<sup>1</sup>

And yet many cities have made impressive progress for kids and families. With catalytic support from influential national and local foundations, nonprofit intermediary organizations have taken root and begun to tackle the inconsistencies, inefficiencies and missed opportunities for children in places where out-of-school time was once uncoordinated.

These intermediary organizations have helped create dedicated funding streams for OST (the term this report uses for after-school, summer and other expanded learning opportunities), and raised millions of private and public dollars. They’ve developed cost-effective program models to reach and engage more kids in becoming full citizens of the 21st century. They have established standards and data systems for improving quality and accountability. They’ve improved outcomes for kids.

**The need for effective OST intermediaries grows as the country changes and fewer homes have an adult around after 3 PM.** The average American child spends most of his or her waking hours not in school. Families and communities increasingly seek not just safe places where

kids can bounce a ball and get their homework done at the end of the conventional school day, but also places where kids are happily engaged in becoming well-rounded, creative thinkers and learners.

**What does an OST intermediary do?** It connects public and private funders with direct service providers, serving as the nucleus and guiding coordinator within a community’s multifaceted network of government, schools, practitioners and front-line OST programs.<sup>2</sup> Its goal is to support whole OST systems. Typically it provides technical assistance and other supports to direct service providers. Child Trends and Public/Private Ventures in a recent report noted that intermediaries have made “enormous contributions to the scope, scale, and effectiveness of grassroots” organizations, “and often do[es] so at [a] low cost. Moreover, the work that intermediaries do often helps the federal government provide resources to community-based organizations more efficiently.”<sup>3</sup>

**Above all, intermediaries help improve youth outcomes by improving the quality of OST opportunities.** Their nimbleness allows them to innovate and design research-based models. Through evaluations of the work of intermediaries including the Providence After-School Alliance, The After-School Corporation, After School Matters, and LA’s BEST, we’ve seen that these organizations help kids do better in school and in life so that they graduate ready for careers and college.

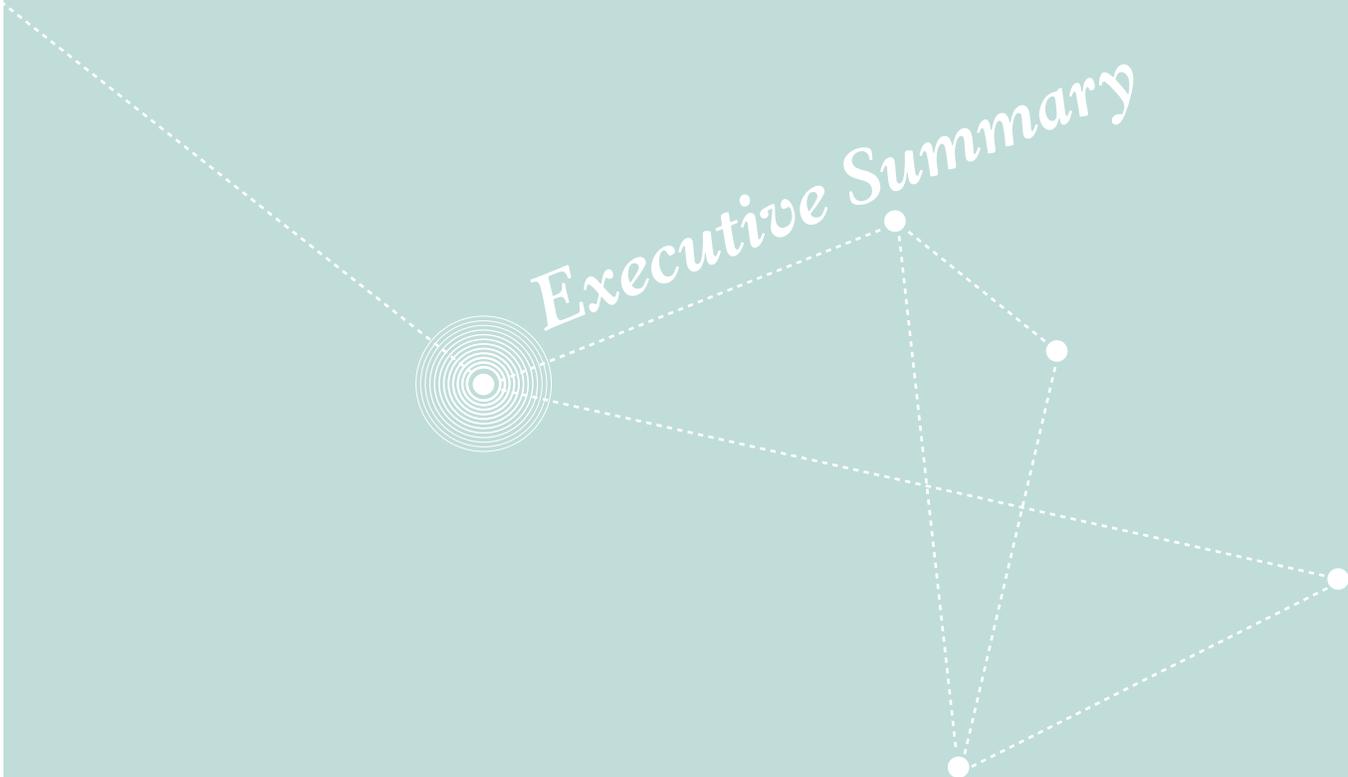
Based on this backdrop, our purpose in issuing a survey of intermediary organizations is to better understand what intermediaries do, pinpoint the ways in which they’ve made the greatest gains, and suggest ways for spreading the progress.

<sup>1</sup> Proscio, Tony and Basil J. Whiting. 2004. *After-School Grows Up: How Four Large American Cities Approach Scale and Quality in After-School Programs: Executive Summary and Overview*. New York: The After-School Project.

<sup>2</sup> Collaborative for Building After-School Systems. *Shaping the Future of After-School: the essential role of intermediaries in bringing quality after-school systems to scale*. September 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Delale-O’Connor, Lori and Karen E. Walker. *Rising to the Challenge: The Strategies of Social Service Intermediaries*. Public/Private Ventures and Child Trends. February 2012.

*Executive Summary*



## Executive Summary

In an online survey of 212 Out-of-School Time nonprofit coordinating organizations – termed intermediaries – the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems found the following:

- Even in a recessionary economy, intermediaries helped increase the number of kids in their cities or regions who got access to expanded learning opportunities
- Typically intermediaries needed private interests, such as foundation funding, to invest in building after-school systems before they were able to raise significant public funds
- Intermediaries play important roles in increasing funding and developing quality standards and tools
- They identify as their most pressing priority the need to expand access to more underserved kids
- Some are missing opportunities to do the hard, long-term work of changing policy and building data systems, but they seek ways to share knowledge and become more effective

### Why a national OST intermediary survey?

The Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS) is a coalition of nonprofit intermediary organizations representing cities and regions across the country. CBASS expands the availability of high-quality expanded learning opportunities, including after-school and summer, that help children gain the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to lead successful lives. Through policy, practice, and communications, CBASS helps cities and regions better coordinate approaches to increase the scale, quality, and accountability of expanded learning initiatives, particularly by leveraging the combined power of community organizations and schools.

In the fall of 2011, CBASS issued the first-ever national survey of OST intermediary organizations. Our goal was to map the intermediary landscape in order to help these organizations employ system-wide coordinated approaches to improving the quality of after-school and summer programs for more kids and families.

We sought to answer a few questions: Who exactly is out there helping to build the capacity of after-school programs? What impact are these organizations having on services and policies in their communities? What kinds of support do they need to build on their progress?

This report draws on the survey findings to highlight leading characteristics of OST intermediaries, to bring to light their most pressing issues and to share lessons for the field. CBASS plans to conduct a national survey biennially and use these findings as a baseline for future comparison.

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*80% of survey respondents report that in their communities over the past five years, they helped increase the number of kids served. 70% of the organizations play a role in raising public and private funds for programs in their communities.*

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### Findings from Survey Respondents

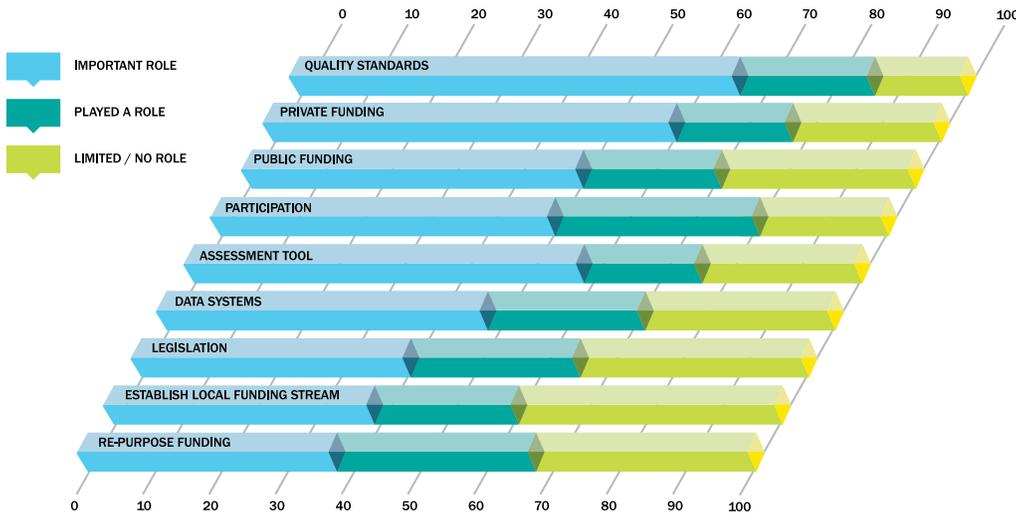
#### **Intermediaries come in all shapes, sizes and places.**

We were impressed by the large number and variety of organizations (212) that responded to the survey and the wide range of functions they fulfill. Respondents include local coordinating organizations focused on out-of-school time, community foundations, historic social services agencies such as United Way and YMCA's, regional and state youth-serving networks comprised of many smaller community agencies, and direct service providers. Although survey respondents represent a robust cross-section of intermediaries around the country, we believe there are many more which, due to this field's decentralized nature, we were unable to identify and survey.

**Intermediaries play an essential role in expanding kids' access to quality programs and learning opportunities.** In an increasingly scarce funding climate, 80% of survey respondents report that in their communities over the past five years, they helped increase the number of kids served. Seventy percent of the organizations play a role in raising public and private funds for programs in their communities. More than half report they play an important role in developing standards of quality and tools to help programs continually improve their effectiveness. A growing

**Local OST intermediaries and Statewide Afterschool Networks are policy leaders in their communities.** Many Statewide Afterschool Networks and Local OST intermediary organizations report shaping policy and increasing funding through legislation. Across the board, only a third of respondents report they played a critical role in their communities changing policy. We see this as a missed opportunity. Policy change is hard, complex work. Organizations must be able to focus on the long-term. But this is an area of need and one where intermediaries can be influential in transforming the lives of children and families.

*fig 1. To What Extent Do Intermediaries Report They Play a Role in Improving Funding, Participation, Quality, & Policy?*



**Intermediaries need time to show positive results.** Whether OST intermediaries can show they have a positive impact on kids correlates to how long they have been at this work. We found that three years is a critical turning point. Survey respondents that have worked in OST for three-to-five years are reporting positive impact in such areas as building data systems, increasing investment in quality standards and tools and helping more kids get access to expanded learning opportunities.

**Intermediaries' top priority is to help more under-served kids.** When asked to select their most pressing issues for the next five years, almost 60% of survey respondents

body of research shows that high quality OST programs help students improve their school attendance, behavior and attitudes toward learning and achievement.

chose: *increase access for underserved youth to high-quality, affordable programs.*

**Intermediaries need help and financing to build data systems.** Just as in other areas of education and youth development, collecting and using data goes hand-in-hand with improving quality. Data collection is an important marker of a coordinated OST system. A majority of respondents report that in their communities, program providers do not use data systems to track participation rates or other key information. In places where data systems exist, half the respondents play core roles in their development. They design and operate the systems, analyze reports and disseminate findings to providers and funders. Some train program staff to use data systems.

*Intermediaries had the most impact on funding, quality & participation.*

**Intermediaries want more information on building systems.** More than 70% of respondents express an interest in learning more about how to coordinate strategies among community stakeholders to improve quality, availability and sustainability of OST programs.

*Methodology*



# Methodology

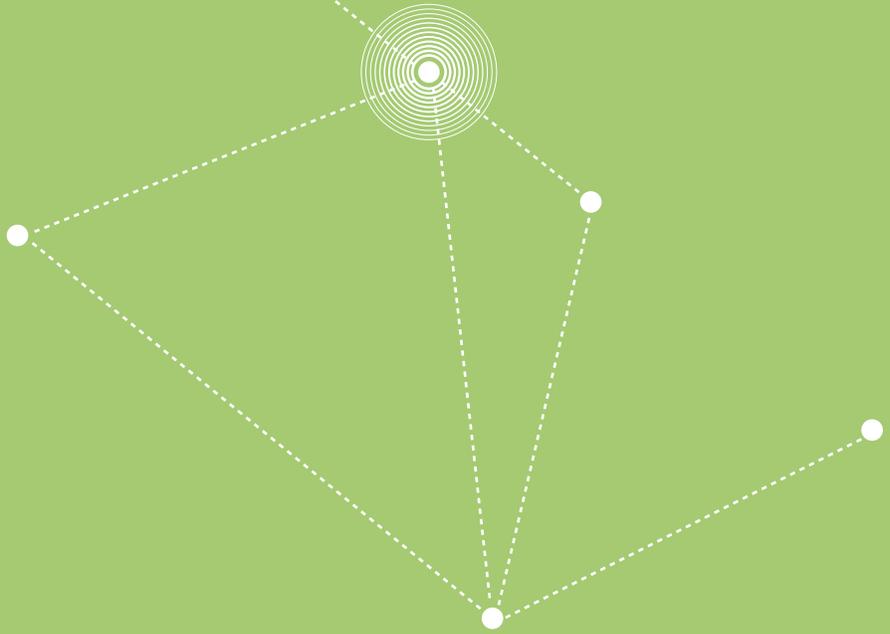
This analysis is based on data from an unduplicated sample of 212 organizations. From September through November of 2011, these organizations responded to an online survey comprised of fixed choice and open-ended questions. Of the 212 respondents, 127 – 60% – fully completed the survey. CBASS targeted the survey to organizations which identify as nonprofit OST intermediary organizations whose primary functions include grant-making, training, advocacy and policy, and/or program oversight for OST programs. A limitation of this survey is that respondents self-assessed critical areas of their work, including their impact.

The sample size for local foundations (16) and multi-site national providers (19) is small compared to what we know of their prominence in the OST field. We did not omit those organizations from our analysis and recognize the limitation of drawing large scale conclusions from the small sample for those categories. We recognize that public agencies fulfill intermediary functions and play important roles in building systems; however, we targeted this survey to nonprofit organizations for ease of comparison among respondents and to capture the scope of the nonprofit landscape.

We asked intermediaries to identify as one of six types of organizations:

1. Local OST intermediary, defined as a city or county-based coordinating entity focused on out-of-school time
2. Statewide After-School Network, a formalized consortia of 40 organizations launched by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
3. Local foundation, for example a community foundation that takes on intermediary functions
4. Community-based multi-service intermediary with service areas beyond education, such as workforce or economic development
5. Multi-site national provider, such as Boys and Girls Clubs
6. Other (including a small number of public entities, national intermediaries, universities and local providers of OST services)

# *Characteristics of Intermediaries*



# Characteristics of Intermediaries

We asked respondents to tell us about their reach, their core functions, histories and budgets. We learned that intermediaries:

**Vary widely by type.** Local OST intermediaries (26%) and organizations that identify as “other” (28%) comprise the majority of respondents, followed by community-based intermediaries with several focus areas beyond education at 17%. Statewide Afterschool Networks comprise 12% of the sample. Multi-site national service providers and local foundations comprise 9% and 8%, respectively.

**Depend equally on public and private revenue streams.** Thirty-eight percent of respondents support OST programs through mostly public funding 38% through mostly private funding, and 24% depend on a roughly even split.

**Typically work at the city/county level.** More than a third of respondents work at the city/local and county/regional levels. Some 21% work statewide and 10% nationally.

**Are relatively mature and survived well past the start-up phase.** Almost 40% have been working in OST for more than 15 years. Some 30% are 6-to-10 years old and a new wave of organizations (7%) have been working in OST for less than 2 years.

**Grew out of community demands.** Forty percent formed in response to a local planning effort. A third were established through community advocacy. Some 31% said they got their start through foundation funding. Another 15% said the impetus came from a mayor or other elected officials.

**Are most concentrated in the Northeast.** Fifty-three percent are in the Northeast, followed by 20% in the South. Fourteen percent are in the West and 13% are in the Midwest.

**Are needed by their communities.** We expect self-reporting organizations to say they are important to their communities, so we tried to capture the state of external support for their work by asking respondents: Do your local policymakers think the intermediary is essential? Some 64% said yes.

fig 2. Intermediaries Vary By Type

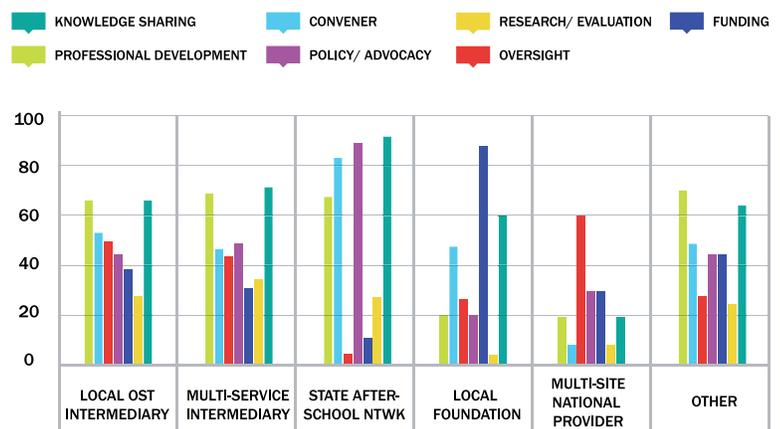


Number of Respondents: 212

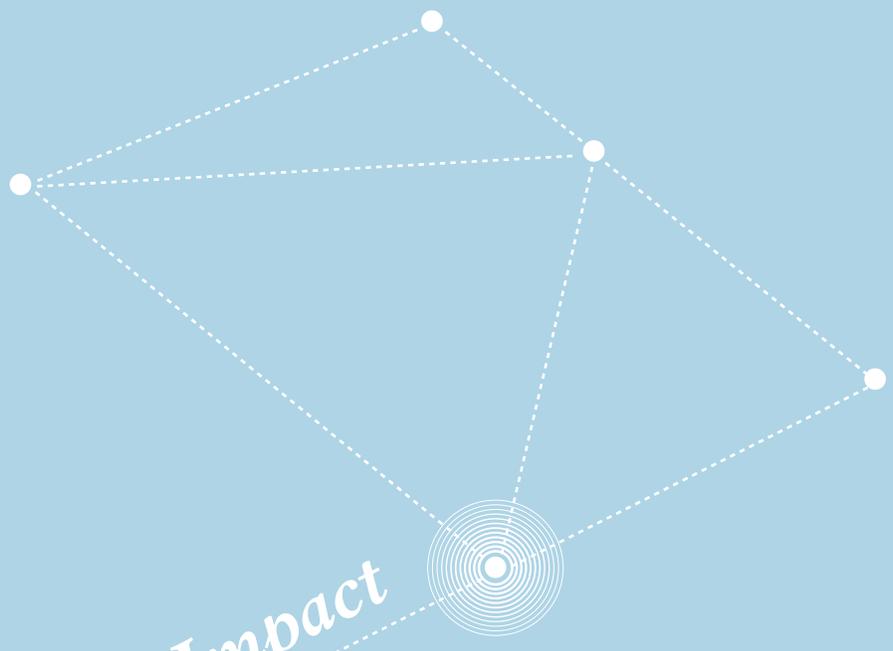
**Fulfill many functions.** Most engage in knowledge sharing and communication and provide professional development to program staff. Half convene and broker relationships and work on policy and advocacy. Close to a third fund and oversee programs and are involved in program research and evaluation.

**Operate with modest budgets.** Just short of two-thirds of respondents have annual operating budgets of \$500,000 or less. Some 30% have budgets between \$500,000 and \$5 million, and 10% have budgets of more than \$6 million.

fig 3. Intermediaries Fulfill Many Functions



Percentage in each category that report fulfilling these functions  
Number of Respondents: 170



*Impact*

# Impact

## Funding

Our goal is that funding for OST becomes a public responsibility in order to reach all kids who could benefit. We also recognize that private philanthropy is essential to leveraging public funding. Our analysis of survey data suggests that building an OST system often depends on private revenue coming in first. We found a correlation between the number of years an intermediary has been working in OST and the split between public and private funding. Generally, the longer an organization has been working in OST, the more likely it is to report that funding for OST is “mostly public” as opposed to “mostly private” or evenly split between the two.

Some 60% of organizations have been working in OST for two years or less report their revenue is mostly private.

Half the intermediaries that have been working in OST for more than 11 years report their revenue is mostly public.

### Intermediaries help raise money for communities.

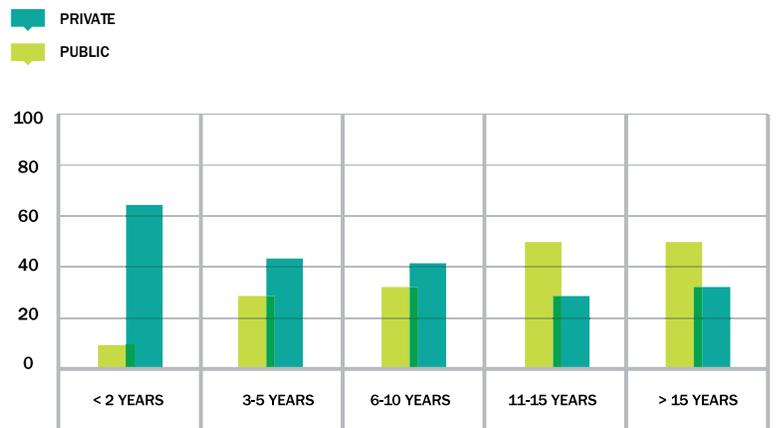
Half of organizations play an important role in raising public funding. Of those, 50% raised up to \$1 million, 23% raised between \$1 to 5 million, and 26% raised more from \$6 million, to more than \$50 million over the past five years.

Sixty percent of organizations play an important role in raising private funding. Of those, sixty percent raised up to \$1 million, almost 30% raised \$1 to 5 million, and 10% raised from \$6 to 50 million.

Of the 110 organizations with at least six years of OST experience who report raising public funding for their community, half play an important role.

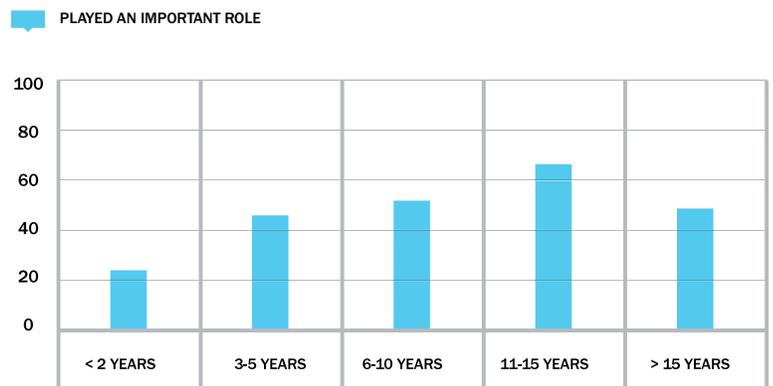
Of the nine organizations working in OST for less than two years who report raising public funding, only two identify as playing an important role.

fig 4. Private Revenue Comes in First



Number of Respondents: 162

fig 5. Organizations with More OST Experience Report Playing an Important Role in Raising Public Funds



Number of Respondents: 168

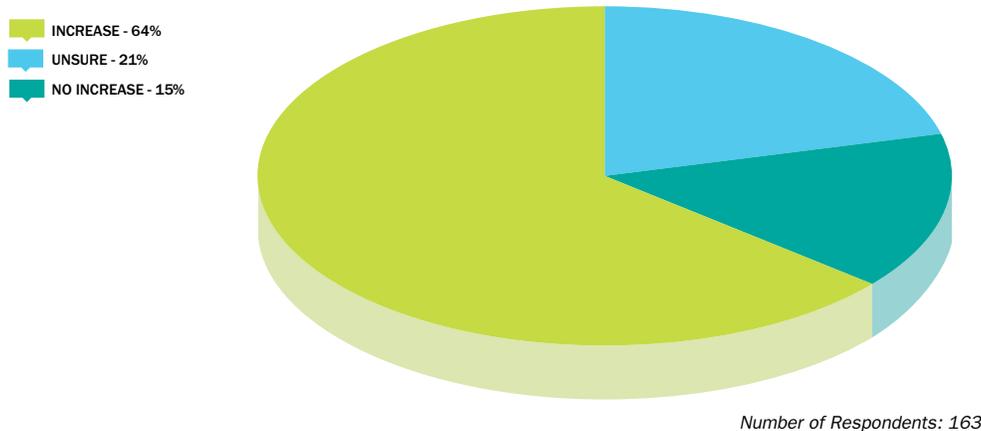
## Participation

When government budgets get tight, communities often rally to keep critical youth services off the chopping block. We know that with their bird’s eye perspective, intermediaries can be adept at targeting services to kids most in need by using tools such as program navigators and weighted grant-making based on need, and by building cost-effective, scalable program models that reach large numbers of kids. We wanted to understand if more or fewer kids participated in expanded learning opportunities beyond school time during the economic downturn of the past five years, and what role intermediaries played.

## Quality

A decade of research shows that program quality drives better outcomes for kids. We believe that quality improvement should not be a one-off intervention in the form of training here and there, but rather a continuous growth cycle. It should be grounded in quality standards that entire communities share, tools that front-line staff and funders can use to assess strengths and weaknesses, data systems that track participation rates and youth outcomes, and regular staff training. Through this survey, we wanted to better understand the extent to which communities have adopted quality and accountability tools and what role intermediaries play in their development.

*fig 6. Percentage of Communities Where Intermediaries Report an Increase in Youth Participation 2006-2011*



**Use of quality standards and tools is widespread among organizations working in OST for more than three years.**

70% of respondents say quality standards, and 62% say a quality assessment tool have been adopted. Among organizations that have supported OST programs for two years or less, 71% do not have program quality standards. For organizations working in OST for at least three years, 70% have standards.

We found that more mature intermediaries played a driving role in helping communities serve more kids even in a recession.

Overall, 64% of respondents reported that the number of youth served by OST programs increased. Some 15% said there had been no increase and 21% were unsure.

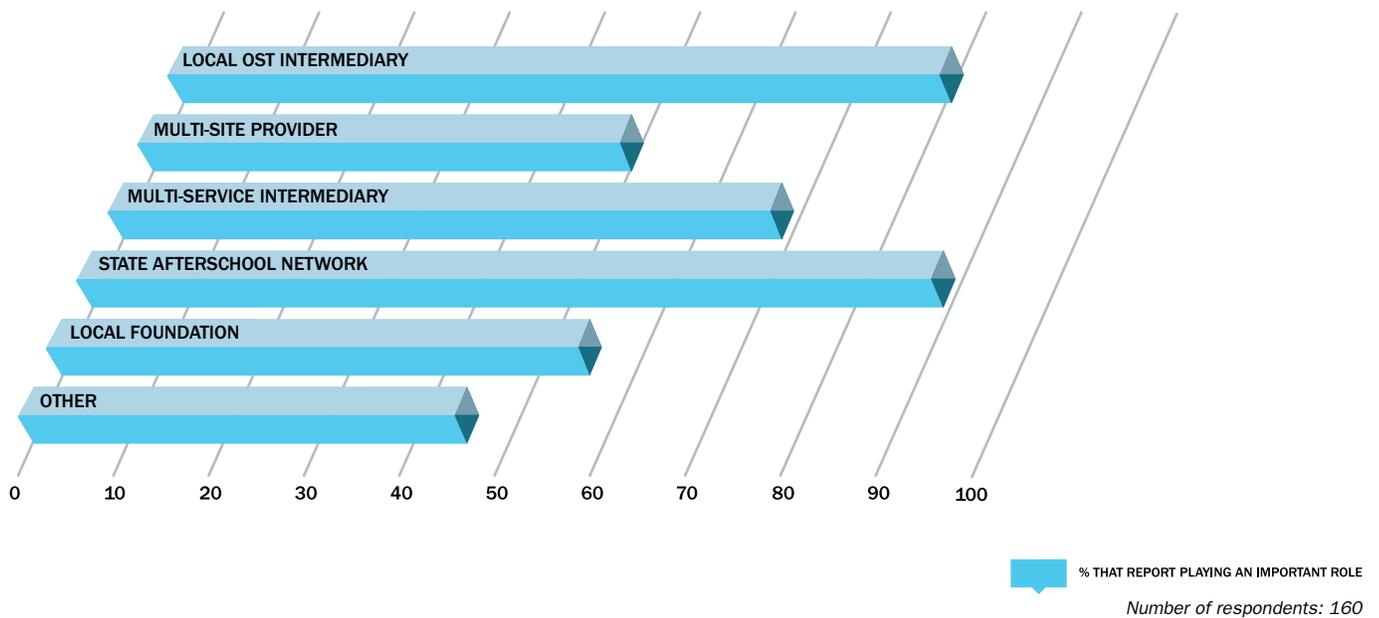
Seventy percent of responding organizations working in OST for at least three years saw an increase in participation. Only 36% of those with less than two years of experience saw an increase in participation.

Half of survey respondents working in OST for three or more years report playing an important role in increasing participation. Of organizations working in OST for less than two years, only one organization reports playing an important role.

**Local OST intermediaries and Statewide Afterschool Networks were the most instrumental in the development of the standards for their communities.**

Eighty-eight percent of Statewide After-School Networks and 80% of local OST organizations identify as playing an important role in the development of quality standards, as compared to 65% for all respondents.

fig 7. Influencing Quality Standards by Organization Type



Respondents play a variety of leadership and implementation roles in the community’s adoption of quality standards, in descending order of frequency:

- Provide training on implementing the standards (36%)
- Initiate the development of the standards for their community. (33%)
- Convene community members to design the standards (32%)
- Independently designed the standards (11%)

### Data Systems Are Not Widely Used

A recent report by the RAND Corporation found that an important feature of OST system-building efforts is a focus on gathering data needed for sound decision-making and having a web-based technology system in place to collect basic information on enrollment, attendance, student demographics and program activities. The report cited information-gathering through data systems

as being critical for “improved access and services.”<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, given the complicated nature of setting up common data systems and reaching community consensus on the types of data to collect, fewer than a third (29%) of respondents report their communities are using data systems to track participation rates. We found that among that sample, data systems are more commonly used by organizations with six years or more of experience working in OST.

Of the organizations that help providers use a data system:

- 33% train staff on using data
- 33% analyze reports and disseminate analyses to program providers and funders
- 18% designed the system
- 17% operate the system

No organizations younger than six years old report designing or operating data systems, training staff or analyzing data.

<sup>4</sup> Using Information Technology to Boost City After-School Opportunities. November 2010. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

### Impact on Policy

Among policy changes that are hard to win but lasting in their impact are working with policymakers to create dedicated public funding streams; repurposing existing funding streams to support after-school; and repurposing funds to support best practices across a system or network of programs. Because their goal is to support whole systems, intermediaries can be effective brokers and advocates, rallying schools, families and after-school programs around a shared vision for policy change. We asked respondents to reflect on their impact through the economic tumult of the past five years.

Among all kinds of intermediaries surveyed, Statewide Afterschool Networks and local OST intermediaries have made the greatest headway in passing legislation to support better policies and more funding, establishing new funding streams for OST, and shifting and repurposing funding. This finding concurs with the fact that a high percentage of SANs (90%) and a moderate number of local OST intermediaries (42%) fulfill policy and advocacy functions. Across the board, only a third of respondents indicate they play a critical role in affecting policy change in their communities, which we see as a missed opportunity.

Almost all of the Statewide After School Networks (91%) and almost half of local OST intermediaries who were involved in passing legislation to support better policies and more funding, indicated playing an important role.

Similarly, 77% of Statewide After School Networks and 53% of Local OST intermediaries played an important role in establishing a line item or funding stream for OST programs, while other types of organizations indicated playing a limited or no role.

For repurposing or shifting funding from other programs to out-of-school time, local OST organizations played the strongest role in securing reallocated resources, with 56% playing an important role.

fig. 8 Role in Passing New Legislation by Organization Type

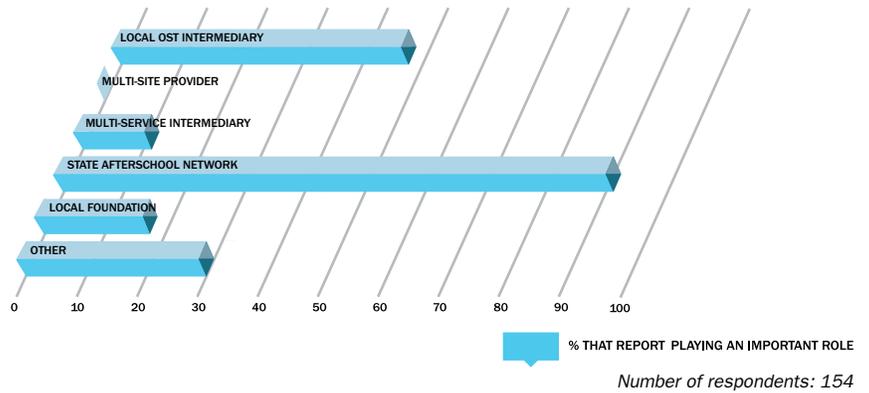


fig. 9 Role in Establishing New Funding Streams by Organization Type

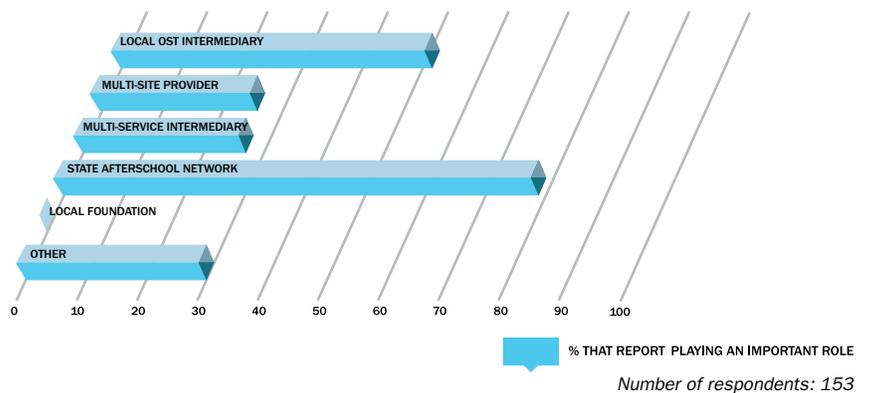
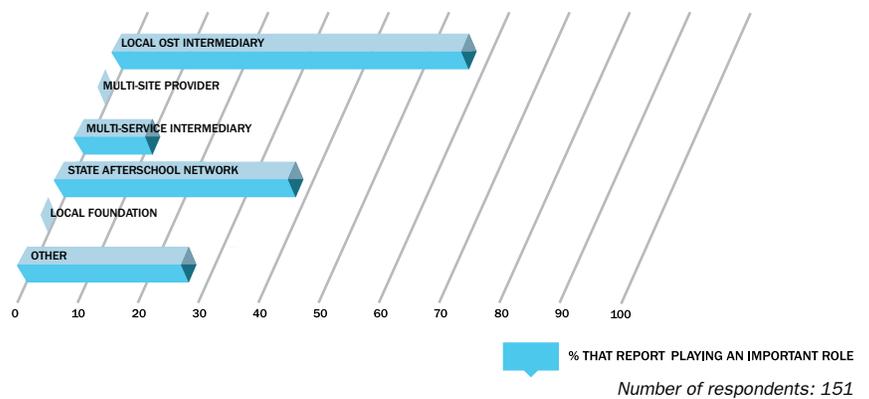
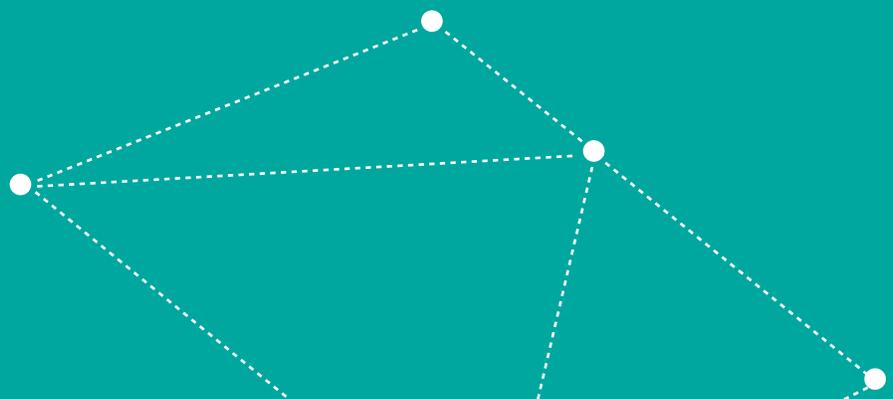


fig. 10 Role in Repurposing Funding for OST by Organization Type



*Pressing Issues*



**Out-of-school time policy is always evolving.** Amid ongoing complexities in the education and youth development fields, we wanted to use this survey to regularly take stock of priority issue areas. We asked a series of questions to understand high priority content areas to advance the organizations' work and ways in which respondents are most interested in gaining knowledge.

**Intermediaries are most interested in reaching more underserved kids.** When asked to select their three most pressing issues for the next five years, the survey group as a whole cited the following priorities in descending order:

- Increase access for underserved youth to high-quality, affordable programs (59%)
- Raise funds for programs (46%)
- Establish data systems, using data to drive improvement and/or share (35%)
- Improve professional development for program staff (34%)
- Implement quality improvement systems such as adopting quality standards and assessment tools (34%)
- Raise funds for intermediary functions such as capacity building (33%)
- Improve summer programming opportunities (32%)

**Intermediaries are hungry for more information on building systems.**

More than 70% of respondents express an interest in learning more about how to coordinate strategies among community stakeholders to improve quality, availability and sustainability of OST programs. They're interested in webinars, listservs, conferences, and peer-to-peer networking to gain and share information among intermediary peers.

When asked to select the top three areas of interest for receiving additional information, many respondents indicated an interest in learning about funding and program sustainability in a difficult economy (56%) and in building coordinated OST systems (48%). Other priority areas include:

- Determining youth, program and system level outcomes (33%)
- Expanding participation and improving services for middle and high school youth. (29%)

Of note:

- Two-thirds of local foundations expressed a high interest in learning about systems design, designing quality improvement systems, and establishing youth, program and systems outcomes.
- Half of the Statewide Afterschool Networks surveyed expressed high interest in systems-building, youth outcomes and data systems, noticeably higher than local OST intermediaries for a comparable sample size.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

This survey reveals important lessons that we hope will be instructive to emerging intermediaries around the country and to funders and policy makers interested in harnessing the power of intermediaries to build OST systems.

**Stick with it for the long haul.** While intermediaries are by their nature fast-moving in response to issues and opportunities in their local communities, we learned it takes intermediaries a few years to show impact related to funding, quality and policy. As more communities consider whether to form an intermediary body to make expanded learning opportunities an established facet of local life, they should be realistic about the length of the runway needed to achieve lift-off.

Community-grown systems-building doesn't happen overnight. Organizations need time to build trust, gain community buy-in and facilitate planning processes to make key decisions. As organizations pass their third, then their fifth birthdays, they increasingly play important roles in increasing access and quality, establishing data systems and influencing policy. This finding points to the need for funders and policymakers to stick with intermediaries for long-term support. If the infrastructure is dismantled, it can take years to build back up.

**Staging may be key to success.** Systems are also not built all at once. With organizations' budgets trending at \$500,000 or less, intermediaries need to maintain strategic focus as they build the after-school infrastructure. In communities with no system for funding or overseeing programs, the question is where to start. This is the progression we saw among respondents: They first raised private funds, then public dollars. They first developed quality standards, then tools and then management information systems. These findings could be a starting point for creating a strategic roadmap for intermediaries as they move from emerging, to operational, to advanced networks and institutions.

**There's no need to start from scratch.** Hillary Salmons, Executive Director of the Providence After-School Alliance, often advises emerging intermediaries, "Don't recreate the wheel. When we first got started, we borrowed many tools from existing intermediaries, and that allowed us to ratchet up our AfterZone much faster and more effectively than had we started from scratch." As the field continues to develop and new communities form intermediaries, we can fast-track progress by exchanging knowledge and providing technical assistance. Respondents indicate an appetite for both in-person and on-line networking and learning. By helping intermediaries assist each other in the areas where each is strongest, private entities such as foundations and corporations can have an impact not just in one city or state, but on kids across the nation.

CBASS and other peer learning communities can help by harnessing the expertise of multiple intermediaries to push out knowledge in a deep and systemic way. In the near future, CBASS will expand its reach and community of practice by disseminating promising practices and lessons learned through a series of institutes, webinars and new publications. ✨

**To learn more about CBASS, please visit:**  
[www.afterschoolsystems.org](http://www.afterschoolsystems.org) or contact Jessica Donner, [jdonner@tascorp.org](mailto:jdonner@tascorp.org), 646-943-8738.

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## **Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS)**

CBASS is a coalition of leading after-school intermediary organizations representing cities and regions across the county. CBASS's mission is to expand the availability of high-quality learning opportunities, including after-school and summer, that help children gain the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to lead successful lives. CBASS does this by helping cities and regions employ coordinated approaches to increase the scale, quality and accountability of programs, and to leverage the combined power of community organizations and schools to create integrated, effective, and inspired learning systems for our children and youth. CBASS is comprised of the following intermediaries:

- The After-School Corporation, New York City
- The After-School Institute, Baltimore
- After School Matters, Chicago
- Baltimore's Safe & Sound Campaign
- Boston After School and Beyond
- Chicago Allies for Youth Success
- Partnership for Children and Youth, Bay Area, California
- Prime Time Palm Beach County
- Providence After School Alliance

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This report was made possible through the support of a generous grant from The Wallace Foundation, a national philanthropy that seeks to improve education and enrichment for disadvantaged children. Wallace's major initiatives include efforts to help selected cities make good out-of-school time programs available to many more children. The foundation maintains an online library of free publications at [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org).





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