

# Putting Data to Work for Young People:

A Framework for Measurement, Continuous Improvement,  
and Equitable Systems

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2021

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# Introduction

Healthy, happy, thriving young people—that’s what every community wants. Afterschool—by which we mean not just what takes place in the hours immediately after school but all out-of-school-time, summer, and expanded learning programs—is one of the ways communities help their young people stay safe, discover new interests, learn new skills, and prepare for a bright future. Historically, however, afterschool has been a decentralized and disorganized field. Programs operate in isolation from one another and compete for a patchwork of funding from public and private sources. Civic leaders don’t always know much about the programs in their communities. As a result, the families that stand to benefit most from afterschool may not be able to access it, and the programs that are available may not be of the highest quality.

Many communities across the country have come to understand that just paying for more of the same is not the solution. Instead, they are seeking to coordinate efforts and resources within the community, knitting programs together into a single, cohesive afterschool *system*, which includes a range of programming outside of school hours, during the day through expanded learning activities, and as part of summer programs. At the forefront of this work are intermediary organizations responsible for a range of functions, including planning, raising and distributing funds, assessing

the quality of programs, connecting program providers with training and coaching, communicating and advocating on behalf of afterschool programs, and/or collecting and analyzing information.

This last task is among the most critical. In *Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered About Afterschool Systems*, The Wallace Foundation says, “An afterschool system has many moving parts, but the oil that makes all the gears turn smoothly is data. Program providers, city agencies, schools, funders, families, and youth—they all need up-to-date, accurate information to make sound decisions. City agencies, for instance, need to know where the demand for programs is highest so they can allocate resources accordingly. Families, in turn, need to know where to find good programs with open slots for their kids.”

Collecting data, knowing how to interpret it, acting on it effectively—all of these can be a struggle for intermediaries. There is a dizzying array of data out there. Many intermediaries waste time and energy collecting the wrong data in the wrong way. Disorganized or sporadic attempts can lead to confusion and frustration. To truly get the benefits of data, intermediaries need to be thoughtful and deliberate about what to collect, why collect it, how to collect it, and how to use it.

Every Hour Counts, a national coalition of expanded learning intermediaries, released a framework in 2021 to help intermediaries do exactly that. The framework focuses on a common set of outcomes that the intermediaries in the coalition hope to achieve through their afterschool system-building work and identifies ways of measuring progress toward each of those outcomes.

The framework groups outcomes into three levels: system, program, and youth. Every Hour Counts believes that positive outcomes at the youth level, such as exposure to enriching activities, depend on positive outcomes at the program level (e.g., improved program quality and responsiveness to community needs), which in turn depend on positive outcomes at the system level (e.g., effective advocacy for funding and afterschool-friendly policies).

For more on the link between system, program, and youth outcomes, see the Theory of Change Diagram on the next page.

## The Link Between System, Program, and Youth Outcomes

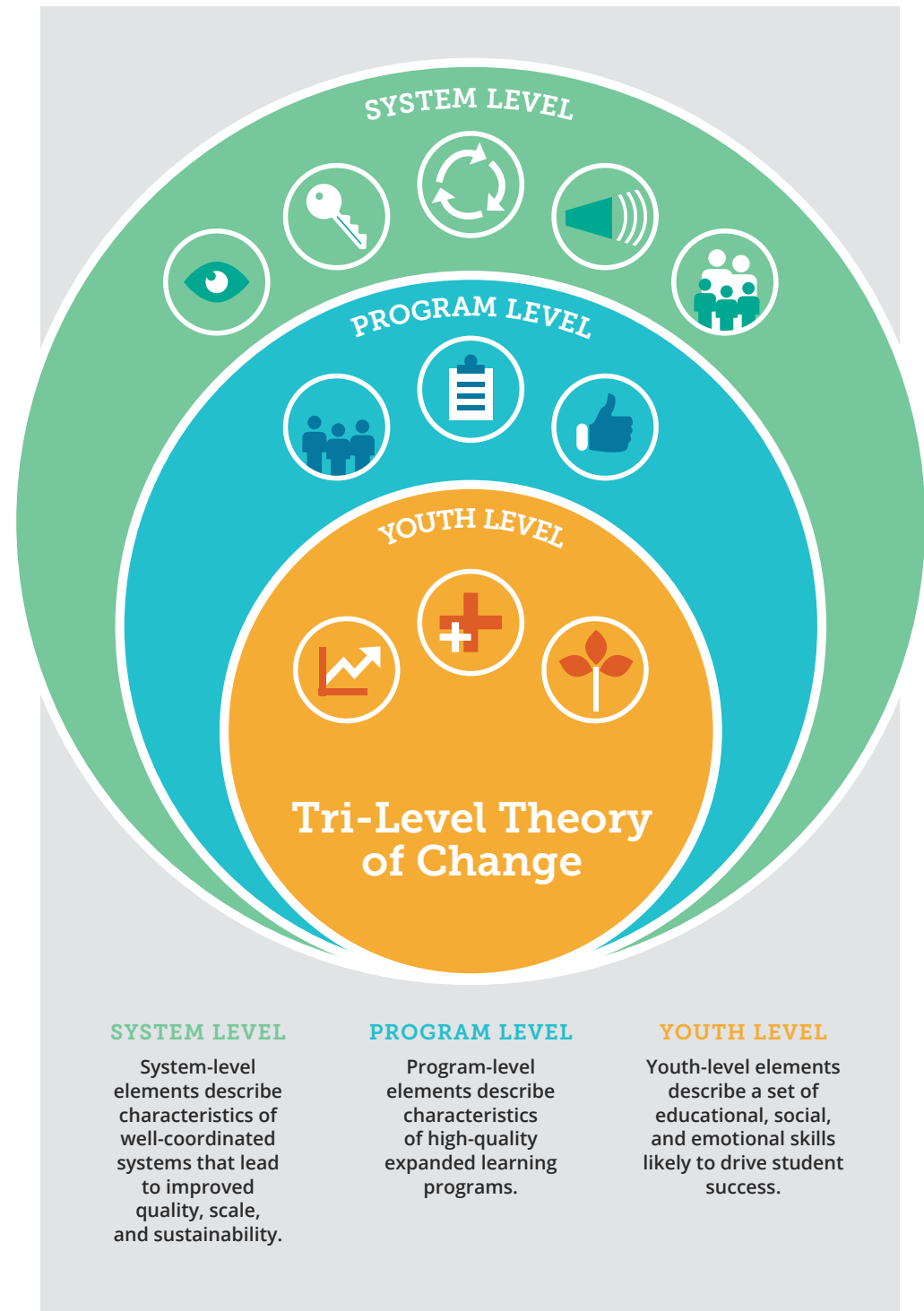
Research shows that afterschool programs that target specific youth outcomes (e.g., leadership, academic learning, social-emotional skills) can improve those outcomes if the programs are well designed and high quality, and if young people participate regularly. In reality, however, program quality in the afterschool field is uneven, and those who stand to benefit the most from high-quality programs are not always able to access them. Programs and funders in a community don't always work together to strengthen the provision of afterschool as a whole. The purpose of afterschool systems is to address these challenges.

Afterschool systems bring together program providers, funders, schools, families, and other stakeholders to work toward common goals; make access to afterschool more equitable by tapping resources to create more learning opportunities and ensuring that those opportunities are available to underserved populations; support continuous improvement; incubate innovation; and secure support for afterschool from community leaders and the public to ensure that these efforts are sustainable. These are positive outcomes at the

**SYSTEM LEVEL**.

When the system has established a network of providers, a set of common goals, and buy-in from the community, it is in a position to tackle the issue of program quality. It does this by developing common standards of quality, collecting and analyzing data to see how programs measure up to those standards, and supporting efforts to learn from the data and get better. This leads to positive outcomes at the **PROGRAM LEVEL**, specifically higher-quality programs that are better able to meet the specific needs of young people in the community.

When there are more high-quality programs that are responsive to community needs, young people will participate in greater numbers. They will be exposed to new and enriching experiences and ideas, which will help them build skills and develop healthy habits and beliefs. This is the ultimate goal: positive outcomes at the **YOUTH LEVEL**!



# An Updated Framework for Measurement, Continuous Improvement, and Equitable Systems

In 2014, Every Hour Counts updated the framework with support from American Institutes for Research to keep up with advances in the field and new questions being asked. It then engaged the RAND Corporation to evaluate efforts by intermediaries in three cities (Boston After School & Beyond, MA; Providence After School Alliance, RI; and Sprockets in St. Paul, MN) to put the framework into practice. RAND researchers reviewed the quality of the data the intermediaries collect; the measurement tools they use; the condition of their databases; the way they store, process, and use data; and the resources—human, technological, and financial—they bring to bear on their data-related work. Findings from this evaluation informed this latest version of the framework and the development of an accompanying guidebook.

RAND and Every Hour Counts learned how each of the intermediaries went about incorporating the framework into their work, as well as the core challenges they experienced. For all three, the process spurred an evolution in thinking about the potential of afterschool and summer and about what it means to be an outcomes-focused intermediary. Sprockets used the framework to reevaluate how it functions as an intermediary. Boston After School & Beyond revised its logic model and theory of change so that it

focused on specific skills and how to measure them. This had a ripple effect that led to changes in tools, processes, and professional development offerings. Adopting the framework helped Providence After School Alliance think about how its processes affect staff, the program providers it works with, and the broader afterschool community. As a result, it took steps to make its continuous improvement system more efficient and effective.

Other communities in Every Hour Counts' network have learned from the three intermediaries in the evaluation and embraced the framework as a way to help them meet their own needs. Philadelphia's intermediary, for example, used it to communicate its vision to foundations and city leaders, helping it secure a \$2 million grant for afterschool programs.

Findings from the evaluation informed this latest revision of the framework and the development of the accompanying guidebook.

## Key Findings from the Evaluation

- 1. The framework is about more than measurement.** The most important thing Every Hour Counts and RAND learned from the experiences of the cities in the evaluation is that the framework is about much more than measurement. System leaders found it to be a powerful tool for setting goals, understanding and communicating the value of their work, and supporting continuous improvement of both the system and the programs within it.
- 2. Organizational structure and community context determine intermediaries' goals, activities, and strategies.** Each intermediary in the evaluation had its own history, structure, level of resources and staffing, and relationship to program providers. Their goals, activities, and strategies varied accordingly. The latest version of the framework includes an expanded menu of system-level outcomes to reflect this variation.
- 3. Data use—not data collection for its own sake—is the goal.** Data that isn't used can be a waste of time and money, yet at least one intermediary in the evaluation wasn't using the youth outcomes data it collected. To avoid this situation, intermediaries need to periodically review the data they're collecting, whether and how they're using it, and whether it's serving its intended purpose.
- 4. Intermediaries should aim to measure wisely, not measure everything.** Collecting and using data takes money, time, and expertise; some types of data take more than others. So they don't bite off more than they can chew, intermediaries should identify the pieces of data that they genuinely need and have the capacity to properly collect and use.
- 5. Effective data use requires strong policies and practices.** The intermediaries in the evaluation faced organizational, technical, and political challenges to collecting and using data effectively. Another publication to come out of this project, *Putting Data to Work for Young People: A Ten-Step Guide for Expanded Learning Intermediaries*, offers a concrete plan for addressing such challenges.

# Components of the Updated Framework

The framework is an at-a-glance reference designed to help afterschool system leaders think through their data needs, plan for data collection and use, and carry out those plans.

The outcomes included in it are intentionally broad. To help afterschool system leaders customize the outcomes according to their own needs, the latest version of the framework includes the following new components:

- **Indicators.** The factors that signal progress is being made toward a given outcome.
- **Data to collect.** The specific information systems can collect to keep track of indicators.
- **Options and considerations for measurement and analysis.** Helpful tips and ideas for working with data that come from RAND's evaluation.
- **Examples of how data can guide priorities and actions.** Ways to interpret the data and make use of the findings.
- For each outcome, we added **racial equity questions** designed to help systems think about whether their decision-making and work processes are equitable and inclusive, which young people are benefitting from their efforts, and the extent to which those efforts are culturally responsive.

## Dig Deeper with the *NEW* Guidebook

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For system leaders and others who want to dig deeper, the new guidebook to the framework provides nuts-and-bolts information about each outcome: how data on a particular outcome might be used to improve the system, what to consider when selecting indicators to track and data to collect, and more fleshed-out options for measuring and analyzing each indicator. (We give each section of the guidebook the same label as the corresponding outcome in the framework: #1 for the first system-level outcome, etc.) Appendix C: Afterschool Data Toolkit in the guidebook offers a wealth of additional resources—from assessment tools to sample data-sharing agreements and communications materials—drawn from the communities that participated in the study.

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The guide follows the format of the framework with sections on each of the three levels of outcomes—system, program, and youth. Following the discussion of each outcome, there is a sample tracking table that provides concrete examples of the relevant data a system might collect and how it might be used to inform decision-making. Throughout the guide, there are examples of how the three intermediaries in the evaluation approached a particular outcome and outside resources that system leaders may also find helpful.

Available at:  
[www.everyhourcounts.org](http://www.everyhourcounts.org)

# Getting Started with the Framework

The framework is not a checklist of data to collect. System leaders have used it to supercharge their planning, communications, and continuous improvement. To get the most out of the framework, we encourage users to:

- 1. Treat the framework as a menu of options.** The outcomes and indicators in the framework are presented in an order that will help communities make steady progress in their afterschool system-building work. At the same time, not every outcome and indicator will make sense for every system, or for every program within a system. System leaders should focus only on those outcomes and indicators that line up with the system's goals—and its capacity to collect and work with data.
- 2. Collect only the data that the system needs and is ready for.** Different communities will be more or less ready to collect and work with data depending on where they are in the system-building process. Newer systems might be wise to start with youth attendance and a couple of system- and program-level indicators, while more well-resourced systems might be able to take on more. The framework can help leaders understand what their system can handle now and what should be a future goal.

- 3. Take a cautious approach to youth outcomes.** It's natural for systems and their funders to want data on youth outcomes. After all, the whole point of afterschool system building is to benefit young people. The framework does list a number of beliefs and skills, both social-emotional and academic, that systems may seek to promote, but these can be difficult and costly to measure. What's more, many take years—not just a single six- to nine-week afterschool program—to develop. Systems looking to advocate for their work may be better off drawing on existing research that demonstrates the benefits of afterschool programs and afterschool systems. Then, rather than devoting precious resources to measuring youth skills and beliefs, they can focus on measuring and fostering the conditions that research has linked to better youth outcomes, such as program design and execution and increased youth attendance.

- 4. To achieve equitable outcomes, consider how to build an equitable system.** Afterschool systems have always focused on the goal of making high-quality afterschool programming accessible to underserved youth and raising their rate of participation. Equity and inclusion must start with the processes and structures a community puts in place as it builds its system. The racial equity questions included in the framework are meant to help system builders think critically about these issues.

With these tips in mind, you are ready to start using the framework and accompanying guidebook. The framework is a reference tool designed to help afterschool system leaders think through their data needs, plan for data collection and use, and carry out those plans. The guidebook offers practical information about each outcome in the framework. With the guidebook, system leaders—whether they work for intermediaries, city agencies and school districts, community-based organizations, or statewide afterschool networks—can dig deeper into each of the outcomes identified in the framework. The framework and parts of the guide may also be helpful to funders interested in how best to support afterschool programs and track their investments.

We hope these resources help you crystalize your vision of a high-functioning afterschool system that nurtures young people in your community, figure out what it will take to get there, and track your progress along the way.



**DESIRED OUTCOME #1:** The community shares a common vision and goals for afterschool

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Who has the system involved in establishing the vision? Are those involved representative of the community, including youth? How has the system involved youth in the process? Are system leaders systematically collecting and analyzing demographic information about board and staff members? Is the system encouraging cross-sector collaboration between afterschool, schools, workforce, health, and other sectors to meet the developmental needs of underserved youth in a holistic way?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>System sets and publicizes shared vision and goals</b></p>	<p>Adoption of community vision and goals                      Publication of community vision and goals                      Reporting of progress toward community goals</p>	<p>Consider periodically assessing whether and how stakeholders discuss the community goals and incorporate them into their planning.</p>	<p>Reinforce vision and associated goals among community stakeholders.                      Demonstrate value of the system to funders.                      Understand the effectiveness of activities to reach goals.</p>
<p><b>System adopts and uses a shared definition of program quality</b></p>	<p>Adoption of program quality standards                      Number or percentage of providers or programs using the program standards</p>	<p>Consider conducting interviews or surveying providers or program leaders to further examine how they use quality standards to inform program design and delivery.</p>	<p>Understand the reach of quality standards and identify nonparticipating providers/programs who may benefit from using the quality standards.                      Flag potential problems if standards are not resonating or seen as useful to provider community.</p>
<p><b>System adopts and uses shared measurement tools</b></p>	<p>Adoption of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management information system (MIS)</li> <li>• Program quality assessment tool</li> </ul> <p>Number and percentage of providers or program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With staff trained to use the MIS</li> <li>• Using the MIS</li> <li>• Using program quality assessment tool</li> <li>• Sharing attendance and/or program quality data</li> </ul> <p>Number and percentage of youth served in programs that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the MIS</li> <li>• Use the quality assessment tool</li> <li>• Share attendance and/or program quality data with the system</li> </ul>	<p>Consider analyzing use of measurement tools by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Session</li> <li>• Year</li> <li>• Program type</li> <li>• Frequency of use</li> </ul>	<p>Understand the provision and usefulness of system tools.                      Identify training needs of providers.                      Demonstrate the value of the intermediary and system.</p>

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<b>System engages key community stakeholders (e.g., other community organizations, local government, foundations, school districts, business leaders, youth, families)</b>	Board composition (i.e., are all major community stakeholders represented?)  Number and percentage of providers in the community that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participate in the network</li><li>• Should participate in the network</li><li>• Are “active” network participants</li></ul> Stakeholder support (e.g., principals providing access to data and facilities, mayors raising awareness and funds)	Consider conducting a self-assessment to determine whether the board is representative of the community to achieve desired system goals.	Understand the health and sustainability of the system.  Identify targets for needed outreach and engagement activities.
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**DESIRED OUTCOME #2:** Youth have expanded and equitable access to — and increased participation in — high-quality afterschool programs that meet their needs

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Are access and participation equitable across regions, demographics, and youth needs? Are system staff members provided professional development on how to integrate equity in policies, practices, and governance? How are the people most affected by the system involved in the design and implementation of policies?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<b>System provides equitable access to high-quality programming</b>	Number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs offered in community</li> <li>• Available program slots</li> </ul>	To determine whether access and participation are equitable, track the percentage of youth in the community versus the percentage of youth in programs by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Region/neighborhood</li> <li>• Program type (e.g., academic, sports, arts)</li> <li>• Youth demographics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender, family income)</li> <li>• Youth needs (e.g., English language learners, learning needs)</li> </ul> Consider periodically tracking these factors to determine community progress toward achieving equitable access and participation.	Identify gaps in the availability of, and participation in, programs for different neighborhoods and youth. (Reasons for those gaps may require additional investigation before acting.)
<b>System ensures equitable participation</b>	Number and percentage of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth participating in programs</li> <li>• Youth participating in high-quality programs</li> </ul>		Move programming to targeted neighborhoods; encourage more or different types of programming in targeted neighborhoods or for certain youth; fundraise for additional programs, slots, or scholarships for youth; identify and remove barriers to participation (e.g., lack of transportation, programming that does not meet community needs).
<b>System expands access and increases participation</b>	Number of programs with available but unused slots Number of unused slots Number of programs with wait lists Number of youth on a program wait list Number of new program slots created Money raised/identified to support program slots Change in participation rates of underserved youth		Determine whether there is unmet demand for programming. Determine if there is weakness in participation in particular programs or program types. Additional investigation will be needed to determine whether the issues are related to excess availability, recruitment, cost, program type, or quality. Track progress made to expand program opportunities, available funding, and participation rates and which communities and students benefit from those efforts. Demonstrate value of intermediary, measure effectiveness of efforts, and garner buy-in of the community around common goals.



**DESIRED OUTCOME #3:** Afterschool programming community engages in continuous quality improvement

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Are the quality standards culturally responsive and appropriate? Who delivers professional development to providers? Who is involved in setting improvement priorities for the system?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>System provides high-quality professional development, including workshops, coaching, and facilitated peer learning</b></p>	<p>Number of professional development opportunities provided</p> <p>Number and percentage of providers/programs participating in a specific professional development activity</p> <p>Professional development session attendance rates</p> <p>Degree of participant satisfaction with aspects of professional development activity</p>	<p>Require a system for tracking professional development offerings and attendance.</p> <p>To gauge participant satisfaction, conduct course feedback surveys at the end of professional development sessions that ask for participants’ opinions about the content, quality, and usefulness of the offerings.</p> <p>Consider periodically asking provider staff about their satisfaction with the offerings.</p>	<p>Identify trends in offerings and participation.</p> <p>Determine effectiveness and satisfaction with professional development.</p> <p>Plan and improve next year’s professional development and outreach activities.</p>
<p><b>System delivers data to program providers</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving system-provided data reports</li> <li>• Using system-provided data reports</li> <li>• Using program quality assessment data</li> <li>• Using MIS data reports</li> </ul>	<p>Data reports can include all indicators collected (e.g., youth attendance, demographics, and engagement; program quality indicators) and benchmark programs against citywide averages.</p> <p>Consider surveying programs to determine the extent to which they use data reports.</p> <p>Informal feedback on usefulness can help systems improve data reports.</p>	<p>Usage data can signal strengths or weaknesses of system-provided reports and be used for improvement of reports or support.</p> <p>Additional information may be needed to determine what is driving the utilization rates.</p>
<p><b>System shares best practices with the provider community</b></p>	<p>Creation of best practice materials</p> <p>Number of times best practice materials are distributed or downloaded</p> <p>Number and percentage of programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving training tied to best practices</li> <li>• Using best practices</li> </ul>	<p>Ideally, best practices should be tied to an understanding of which populations are accessing and attending programs. Best practice topics include recruiting and attendance, effective program design, incorporating youth voice, and meeting specialized youth needs.</p> <p>Consider surveying programs to determine the extent to which they are using best practices.</p>	<p>Demonstrate system value, signal areas where best practice materials need to be shared and spread, and track the spread of best practices and quality improvements inside the system.</p>



**DESIRED OUTCOME #4:** The system effectively advocates for policies and funding to support afterschool programs

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** How is equitable access for all youth in your community built into the system’s communication and funding strategies? Which youth have access to new programs and initiatives?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>System promotes and communicates the value of afterschool</b></p>	<p>Number of communication activities, including reports, briefings, special events or convenings, and testimony to public bodies (by topic and type)</p> <p>Number and type of policies and stakeholders influenced</p>	<p>The value of afterschool can be communicated in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access</li> <li>• Participation</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Youth outcomes</li> <li>• Value of the coordinating body</li> </ul> <p>Consider using a spreadsheet to track the communication type, audience/recipient, and perceptions of influence.</p>	<p>Understand the effectiveness of past communication efforts and use that information to identify and plan for next year’s activities.</p>
<p><b>System shares information about policy and funding opportunities with providers</b></p>	<p>Number of new funding opportunities identified and shared</p> <p>Content of communications about funding opportunities</p>	<p>Start by developing a list of information considered critical to providers, such as federal, state, or local policies affecting programs and funding opportunities, and develop a strategy for tracking the information and communicating it to providers.</p> <p>Consider self-assessing whether information shared is timely and effectively communicated.</p>	<p>Identify information gaps and methods of improving the effectiveness of information strategies.</p>
<p><b>System secures sustainable and diverse system-level funding</b></p>	<p>Number of funders</p> <p>Funder type (e.g., government, foundation, private donor)</p> <p>Amount of funding</p> <p>Length of funding commitments</p> <p>Restrictions on use of funding</p>	<p>Consider reviewing the information periodically to identify gaps and determine if current funding is sustainable, sufficient, and spread across different types of funders.</p>	<p>Understand the sources and stability of funding for the system and/or programs. Use the data to plan funder engagement strategies and grant writing activities.</p>
<p><b>System supports new programs and initiatives</b></p>	<p>Number and type of programs or initiatives developed</p> <p>Cost of new initiatives</p> <p>Spread of knowledge from initiatives</p>	<p>Consider who is benefiting from new programs and initiatives and whether the answer matches system priorities.</p>	<p>Communicate value of system to funders and stakeholders.</p> <p>Determine targets for future programs and initiatives.</p> <p>Understand viability of scaling new pilot programs.</p>



**DESIRED OUTCOME #5:** Families and youth are satisfied with, connected to, and have voice in the afterschool system

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** How does the system know what families and youth want in terms of program options? Are levels of satisfaction equally distributed in the community? Are the youth in leadership positions representative of the community?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>System provides information about program options to families and youth</b></p>	<p>Number of program catalogs distributed</p> <p>Use of online program finders (i.e., number of views)</p> <p>Percentage of families and youth who report being aware of program offerings in the community</p>	<p>Community-wide family or youth surveys are challenging to administer and may require support from the district or a research partner.</p>	<p>Understand the extent to which the system provides program information to families and how families access information.</p> <p>Plan for improvements to future communications.</p>
<p><b>System ensures program options meet the needs of families and youth</b></p>	<p>Percentage of families and youth in the community reporting satisfaction with available afterschool programs in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Cost</li> <li>• Content</li> <li>• Safety</li> </ul>		<p>Identify community needs and satisfaction with program offerings.</p> <p>Inform program content, target resources, and fundraising.</p>
<p><b>System ensures youth voice and leadership in the community</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of system-related boards and leadership committees with youth members</p> <p>Degree of influence of youth voice in system-level decision-making</p>	<p>Degree of influence may be a qualitative assessment. Soliciting the opinions of youth and adults is important.</p>	<p>Determine board and committee membership.</p> <p>Assess and develop decision-making processes.</p>



**DESIRED OUTCOME #1:** Programs provide high-quality, equitable experiences to youth

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Who is participating in high-quality programs? Are there groups of youth who have inequitable participation? Are racially diverse young people helping the system determine what constitutes a high-quality afterschool experience?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>Programs meet established program quality standards (often established by states)</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of programs meeting quality thresholds on program quality assessments in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive relationships between adults and youth</li> <li>• Positive emotional climate</li> <li>• Hands-on, inquiry-based learning opportunities</li> <li>• Culturally relevant content and activities</li> <li>• Youth engagement</li> <li>• Meeting special needs (e.g., English language learners, physical needs, learning needs)</li> </ul>	<p>To systematically track and use information for continuous program improvement, consider adopting a program quality assessment tool. (See <a href="https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/2008-10OSTProgramQuality.pdf">https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/2008-10OSTProgramQuality.pdf</a> for a list of commonly used tools.)</p> <p>Consider analyzing by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Region/neighborhood</li> <li>• Program type</li> <li>• Youth population served</li> </ul>	<p>Identify particular strengths and weaknesses of the system and programs to provide additional support from the system or exemplar programs.</p> <p>Track effectiveness of support by assessing year-to-year results.</p> <p>Determine how to focus limited resources to support program quality.</p>
<p><b>Programs deliver experiences that youth believe are high quality</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of youth reporting the following aspects of a high-quality experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity is engaging</li> <li>• Youth have opportunities to exercise choice</li> <li>• Activity is challenging</li> <li>• Relationships between adults and youth are positive</li> <li>• Relationships among youth are positive</li> </ul>		



**DESIRED OUTCOME #2:** Programs are intentionally designed and meet youth needs

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Are programs conducting structural racial equity analysis of internal policies and practices that influence program design? Are programs examining board and staff leadership structures? Is the system allocating sufficient financial resources to support building the capacity of program leaders for equity work? Are program staff provided professional development that will enhance their understanding of racial equity? Is a diverse team leading the professional development? How are youth and families informing program design?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<b>Program content matches youth needs and desired youth outcomes</b>	Number and percentage of programs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Match between program activities and youth needs</li> <li>• Match between program activities and desired youth outcomes</li> </ul>	To avoid the burden of extensive documentation, consider gathering indicators of effective program design in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program quality observations</li> <li>• Youth surveys</li> <li>• Management information system</li> </ul> Also consider including the elements of effective program design in program quality standards and professional development.	Identify content for professional development for program staff and support for planning.  Identify need for specialized programs or instructors.
<b>Planned program activities are effectively structured</b>	Number and percentage of programs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sequenced lessons (i.e., each activity builds on the one before)</li> <li>• Activities that require active youth participation</li> </ul>		
<b>Program content reflects input from youth and community members</b>	Number and percentage of programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving and responding to youth input</li> <li>• With explicit connections between afterschool program design and school day</li> </ul>		



**DESIRED OUTCOME #3:** Programs use management practices that enhance quality

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Who is participating in programs that use quality management practices? Are there groups of youth who lack this access? Are programs mapping changes in our community (e.g., in financial resources available) that may influence quality?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<b>Program staff track individual student attendance daily</b>	Number and percentage of programs tracking individual-level student attendance data daily	Many management information systems (MIS) set program attendance defaults to all present or all absent. If the MIS says attendance for a given programs is either 100% or 0%, the program may not be entering individual student attendance into the system.	Identify programs that may need additional support using the MIS.  Identify and share best practices.  Identify struggling programs for follow-up to understand needs and barriers.
<b>Program leaders ensure the professional development and qualifications of staff who work with youth</b>	Number and percentage of providers that have training requirements for program staff  Percentage of trained staff working in programs	The provision of training can be analyzed at the system, provider, or program level.	
<b>Program staff create and carry out family engagement strategies</b>	Number and percentage of programs that have: • Family engagement plans • High level of family reports of engagement and satisfaction	Response rates from family surveys can be low, which affects the generalizability of the data. Systems interested in surveying families may want to consult with a research partner.	
<b>Program leaders use data to improve practice</b>	Number and percentage of programs that: • Use data to inform program content • Receive data from the system • Participate in data-use training	Consider also tracking more sophisticated indicators, such as frequency of data use and the type of decisions providers/programs are making with different data sources.	





**DESIRED OUTCOME #1:** Youth have high rates of afterschool program participation

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Has the system analyzed who is coming and who is not coming to afterschool programs? Are there barriers certain groups of youth may face that prevent them from participating in programs? How can the system address these barriers?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>Youth have consistent high participation rates</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolled</li> <li>• Attending at least one day</li> </ul> <p>Average daily attendance rate of individual youth</p> <p>Number and percentage of individual youth attending at established and relevant thresholds (e.g., 50% of program days or above, 75% or above)</p>	<p>Provide programs with a common management information system for tracking youth attendance and establishing common standards for tracking attendance.</p> <p>Consider analyzing youth attendance by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program type</li> <li>• Youth demographics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender, family income)</li> <li>• In-school youth indicators (e.g., chronic absenteeism, academic performance)</li> </ul> <p>Youth attendance can be analyzed at the individual, program, and system levels.</p>	<p>Understand how youth participate through enrollment, attendance, and the consistency of attendance.</p> <p>Identify community and program strengths and weaknesses. Reasons for these often need further investigation before action can be taken.</p> <p>Inform changes or methods of support for recruitment and enrollment procedures, program content, family engagement strategies, and program quality.</p>
<p><b>Youth participate in programming over time</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of individual youth participating in consecutive sessions of programming</p> <p>Number and percentage of individual youth participation in multiple years of programming</p>	<p>This requires the ability to track individual students over time.</p>	<p>Identify programs and program types linked to youth program participation over time.</p> <p>Identify when youth tend to drop out of programming, which can lead to new or different approaches to engagement.</p>



**DESIRED OUTCOME #2:** Youth are exposed to new and enriching experiences and content

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Is the system making an intentional effort to serve indigenous, immigrant, and racially and economically diverse youth and giving the youth the opportunity to weigh in on what type of programming would respond to their needs? Are programs providing youth content and new experiences that support positive development, and are these offerings distributed equitably among youth with different characteristics?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>Youth engage in novel experiences and/or specialized content</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of youth who participate in a program that offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Novel experiences (e.g., field trips, exposure to new activities)</li> <li>• Specialized content (e.g., STEM, arts, apprenticeships)</li> <li>• Novel experience or specialized content</li> </ul>	<p>Use a management information system to gather information on program content.</p>	<p>Report to community and funders.</p> <p>Identify groups of youth that may need additional services or different programming.</p>
<p><b>Youth report learning new things in the program</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of youth who report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning something new in the program</li> <li>• Having a new experience in the program</li> </ul>	<p>Consider analyzing by youth demographics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender, family income)</p>	



**DESIRED OUTCOME #3:** Youth develop and demonstrate positive skills and beliefs

**RACIAL EQUITY QUESTIONS:** Are diverse youth involved in determining appropriate skill and belief indicators? Are youth empowered to participate in meaningful ways in policy, governance, and research discussions? Is outcome measurement affecting the experiences youth have in programs? In what ways, and are they desirable and equitable?

INDICATORS	DATA	MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE DATA CAN GUIDE PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS
<p><b>Youth engage in program activities that build positive skills and beliefs, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships</li> <li>• Happiness</li> <li>• Curiosity</li> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Engagement in learning in and out of school</li> <li>• Self-regulation</li> <li>• Perseverance</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Growth mindset (i.e., the belief that one’s abilities can be developed with effort)</li> <li>• Academic learning</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>	<p>Number and percentage of youth who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in programs that have a logic model that links program activities to youth skills</li> <li>• Report engaging in activities that would help them build identified skills</li> </ul>	<p>Only track skills and beliefs directly linked to program content (e.g., only tracking reading outcomes in programs that offer concentrated reading instruction).</p> <p>Tracking skills and beliefs at the system level requires (1) all programs working to foster a common set of youth skills and beliefs or (2) analyzing specific youth outcomes for a subset of programs working toward that goal (e.g., only tracking reading outcomes in programs offering concentrated instruction in reading).</p>	<p>Report to community and funders.</p> <p>Understand and track the effectiveness of programs in meeting goals and providing opportunities to learn and develop skills.</p>
<p><b>Youth demonstrate positive skills and beliefs</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of youth who demonstrate desired skills</p>	<p>Ways to measure the demonstration of skills and beliefs include collecting instructor ratings of youth performance, reviewing the work youth complete in the program, and tracking the accomplishment of program activities.</p>	
<p><b>Youth develop positive skills and beliefs</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of youth who develop desired skills</p>	<p>Ways to gather indicators of the development of skills and beliefs include youth surveys, instructor surveys, and administrative data.</p>	

# Appendix: Data Use Assessment Tool

Outcome Within Framework	Measured (yes/no)	Data system storage	Frequency of data collection	For sample or entire population?	Tool used to measure (e.g., SAYO, YPQA, DESSA)?	Frequency of data analysis	Type of analyses run	Data shared with...	Use of data
<b>SYSTEM LEVEL</b>									
<b>The community shares a common vision and goals for afterschool</b>									
<b>Youth have expanded and equitable access to — and increased participation in — high-quality afterschool programs that meet their needs</b>									
<b>Afterschool programming community engages in continuous quality improvement</b>									
<b>The system effectively advocates for policies and funding to support afterschool programs</b>									
<b>Families and youth are satisfied with, connected to, and have a voice in the afterschool system</b>									
<b>PROGRAM LEVEL</b>									
<b>Programs provide high-quality, equitable experiences to youth</b>									
<b>Programs are intentionally designed and meet youth needs</b>									
<b>Programs use management practices that enhance quality</b>									
<b>YOUTH LEVEL</b>									
<b>Youth have high rates of afterschool program participation</b>									
<b>Youth are exposed to new and enriching experiences and content</b>									
<b>Youth develop and demonstrate positive skills and beliefs</b>									

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Students today need more ways to learn so they are prepared for college and career. But the young people who most need additional learning opportunities are least likely to have them due to structural inequities. Every Hour Counts is a coalition of local organizations that increases access to quality learning opportunities, particularly for underserved students. Our approach — called an expanded-learning system — coordinates the work of service providers, public agencies, funders, and schools, so dollars stretch farther and more young people are served.

The Every Hour Counts coalition represents longstanding partnerships with more than 3,500 schools, districts, and community-based organizations that provide quality after-school and summer programming. Every Hour Counts partners support initiatives that reach 500,000 youth each year.

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