

Summer and Afterschool Needs Assessment Success Criteria

The Summer and Afterschool Needs Assessment helps youth serving programs and organizations learn best practices and identify areas where they might benefit from guidance or support. The Needs Assessment draws from the best available evidence on what constitutes high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs and organizes these Success Criteria into three domains and 17 areas of need. This document presents the Success Criteria as a stand-alone resource that can be used to review the criteria and complete a checklist to benchmark practices against a set of evidence-based standards.

To access the full Summer and Afterschool Needs Assessment, click on the link to review the instructions and complete the survey and assess your programs and organization in one or more areas of need.

Overview



Operations

- Program Operations
- Health, Wellness, and Outdoor Spaces
- Safety
- Budgeting and Financial Planning
- Building Broad Support and Sustainability



Design & Implementation

- Program Design and Planning
- Staffing
- Youth Identification, Recruitment, and Attendance
- Family Outreach and Engagement
- Professional Development
- Climate and Culture
- Program Assessment and Evaluation



Academics & Enrichment

- Partnerships
- Academic Instruction and Curriculum
- Enrichment
- Youth Leadership and Development
- Tutoring and Homework Help

Operations



Program Operations

- ❑ Our program's hours of operation were established based on the input and needs of our families.
- ❑ Our program site(s) were selected to provide the best amenities for prioritized youth and families.
- ❑ Clear guidelines are in place regarding the use and maintenance of the program facility in collaboration with program leadership and maintenance and facilities teams.
- ❑ We communicate clearly with families about transportation options and responsibilities during the enrollment period.
- ❑ If providing transportation, established routes are in place and confirmed. Site leaders and transportation staff have route maps, youth rosters, and we have effective plans and processes to test new routes.
- ❑ We create and execute transportation plans for any off-site field trips.
- ❑ A transportation lead has been identified for troubleshooting any issues, including updates to rosters.
- ❑ We have effective processes to order, store, and distribute supplies and program materials in advance of staff professional development and planning sessions.
- ❑ We have plans and processes for providing healthy meals and snacks.
- ❑ Staff are assigned to supervise and engage with youth during mealtimes.
- ❑ We have plans and processes to manage arrivals and dismissals including, warm welcome at arrival and safe sequencing at dismissals

Health, Wellness, & Outdoor Spaces

- ❑ Healthy food and drinks are provided in accordance with our schedule.
- ❑ Drinking water is readily available at all times.
- ❑ Each young person has a chance to be outdoors for at least 30 minutes out of every three-hour block of time at the program.
- ❑ The outdoor area meets the needs of children and youth, and the equipment allows them to be independent and creative.
- ❑ We regularly check the safety and maintenance of the outdoor spaces.
- ❑ Staff are trained in trauma-informed care.
- ❑ Staff have knowledge and strategies to cope with the stress of working with youth from communities disproportionately impacted by environmental stressors including poverty and violence.

Safety

- ❑ Safety protocols and procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of participating youth, and we review and practice procedures with all staff. Written procedures are posted within plain view.
- ❑ Physical environment, both indoor and outdoor, is clean and free from health and safety hazards.
- ❑ Fire extinguishers and first-aid kits are accessible and visible within the program space.
- ❑ We supervise youth appropriately according to their ages, abilities, and needs.
- ❑ Staff and participating youth know what to do to respond to emergencies.
- ❑ We have established procedures to prevent accidents and manage emergencies and staff are trained to respond in case of accidents and emergencies.
- ❑ All entrances to indoor and outdoor program space are supervised for security during program hours.
- ❑ A system is in place to prevent unauthorized people from taking youth from the program.
- ❑ Staff note when youth arrive, when they leave, and with whom they leave.

Budgeting & Financial Planning

- ❑ A budgeting process is established and clearly explained.
- ❑ At least one budget scenario has been established based on youth enrollment and staffing assumptions and includes a cost estimate based on data and an estimate of expected funding.
- ❑ We have a detailed plan for ongoing budget management including key milestone dates and regular meetings with decision makers to review and finalize the budget.
- ❑ An official with budgeting authority has been identified to support the project manager.
- ❑ We make the program affordable to all families by using all possible community resources and sources of subsidy.

Building Broad Support and Sustainability

- ❑ The program is seen as part of a comprehensive strategy for supporting young people's learning and development.
- ❑ Internal stakeholders (i.e., staff, school leaders) know the impact and value of the program.
- ❑ External stakeholders (i.e., parents, public agencies, youth-serving organizations, municipal leaders, local businesses, other policymakers, potential funders, etc.) know the impact and value of the program.
- ❑ Our program budget includes revenue from diverse funding sources.
- ❑ Our organization values its leaders and staff and invests in building their capacity and retaining talent through opportunities for skill-development, growth, and recognition.
- ❑ We document our outcomes and lessons learned, and have the tools we need to effectively communicate with decision-makers and stakeholders.
- ❑ We inform stakeholders about site activities through press releases, newsletter updates, and social media posts.



Program Design & Planning

- ❑ A variety of internal and external stakeholders are involved in developing our program vision, and our long-term and daily decision making includes forums for staff, youth, families, and community partners to offer input.
- ❑ We have a vision and mission statement that describes our goals, values, and our approach to learning and development.
- ❑ Our program vision and mission are driven by a needs assessment or community, youth, and/or school level data.
- ❑ We prioritize serving the youth who may benefit the most based on our mission, vision, and philosophy.
- ❑ Staff work together with youth to plan and implement high-quality, culturally relevant, and tailored activities that are consistent with the program's philosophy.
- ❑ We hold regular meetings that follow our planning calendar to track progress, priorities, roles, and responsibilities.
- ❑ All youth outcome goals are mapped to data collection methods.
- ❑ Program data is used by multiple staff members and partners to inform continuous improvement strategies for the following year.

Staffing

- ❑ We have a staffing plan that incorporates projections of youth enrollment capacity, the target staff-to-youth ratio, and the needs of special populations (such as full-day aids and support staff).
- ❑ We are clear on roles and responsibilities for recruiting and selecting staff.
- ❑ We have identified strategies to overcome common challenges for recruiting and retaining staff, such as burnout and competing priorities. We offer the best possible wages and working conditions in an effort to reduce staff turnover.
- ❑ A written job description that outlines responsibilities to participating youth, families, and the program is developed and reviewed with each staff member.
- ❑ Enough qualified staff are in place to meet all levels of responsibility. Qualified staff are hired in all areas: to administer the program, to oversee its daily operations, and to supervise youth.
- ❑ We have contingency plans in place for staff coverage in case of emergencies or absences.
- ❑ Staff share the languages and cultures of the families they serve, and the communities they live in.
- ❑ Staff receive the recommended types and amount of preparation. They meet the requirements that are specific and relevant to their role.
- ❑ New staff are given a comprehensive orientation to the program philosophy, routines, procedures, and practices. They are personally introduced to the people with whom they will be working.
- ❑ Staff receive continuous supervision, feedback, coaching, and support.

Youth Identification, Recruitment, & Attendance

- ❑ We market our program purposefully, building on existing communications systems and assets, identifying and using trusted recruiters, and employing strategies to entice youth to attend.
- ❑ We have identified strategies to overcome common challenges to recruiting youth to programs, such as competing afterschool priorities and offerings and/or negative perceptions of traditional summer school.
- ❑ Recruitment strategies include personalized outreach to youth and families, such as handwritten notes, meetings, and phone calls. We reflect on and/or assess the effectiveness of recruitment methods and adjust our efforts based on our findings.
- ❑ We communicate, in writing, an expectation of high attendance during the program with families.
- ❑ We promote attendance through appropriate recognition for attendance and performance (e.g. pizza parties, prizes, spirit sticks - not penalties).
- ❑ We check for youth engagement and enjoyment throughout the program, including observations and/or direct feedback from participating youth.
- ❑ We have a daily protocol for communicating with families of absent youth.
- ❑ Staff roles in attendance tracking are defined and clearly communicated.
- ❑ The program has a clear policy on accommodating youth with special needs.

Family Outreach & Engagement

- ❑ Families are considered primary stakeholders in the program and there are required or voluntary opportunities for families to participate in the program.
- ❑ We make an effort to get to know family members to make them feel they're part of the program.
- ❑ We offer orientation sessions for new families.
- ❑ We encourage families to give input and to get involved in program events.
- ❑ We use formal and informal communication to connect to the families we serve.
- ❑ We offer enjoyable learning experiences where the whole family can learn together.
- ❑ Families of all young people receive positive communication from the program about their youth's participation and progress by the program's midpoint.
- ❑ Staff and families work together as a team to set goals for each young person and to develop an individualized plan of reasonable accommodations and supports, if necessary.
- ❑ We have a policy that allows family members to visit any time throughout the day.
- ❑ We provide information about community resources to meet the needs of youth and their families.

Professional Development

- ❑ We plan for and lead staff professional development prior to the program start.
- ❑ Staff give input about their goals for professional growth before and during the program.
- ❑ Professional development allows for practice delivering instructional materials and modeling key concepts such as checking for youth understanding, engaging all youths, and appropriate pacing.
- ❑ Professional development includes specific training for site leaders in multi-site programs.
- ❑ Professional development includes content on program climate and culture and behavior management, including individualized behavior support strategies where appropriate.
- ❑ Professional development is designed to promote a positive culture and climate that is free from bias and promotes mutual respect and inclusion of others from a different religion, ethnicity, class, ability, appearance, gender, or sexual orientation.
- ❑ Staff receive guidance on the importance of instructional time and are equipped to minimize disruptions.
- ❑ We onboard staff to any new technology prior to the start of the program.
- ❑ We incorporate staff care into professional development. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, team-building and restorative activities, offering self-paced options, and engaging staff input on program design.
- ❑ We offer benefits and incentives to staff that support their restoration and retention. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, providing paid time for program planning, offering flexibility in summer staff schedules (e.g. half days or sessions), gathering and implementing staff input on incentives for teaching during the summer.

Climate and Culture

- ❑ We have a vision and common language for a positive culture, climate, program goals, and values that are informed by staff, youth, and families.
- ❑ The elements of a positive climate and culture, including expectations of staff and participating youth, are communicated with program staff, youth, and families in writing.
- ❑ Our professional development is designed to equip staff to understand and deliver on our vision for positive climate and culture.
- ❑ We have clear roles and responsibilities for culture-building tasks, and youth have designated daily roles in bringing the culture to life.
- ❑ We have fully developed at least one method for recognizing positive behavior in the program.
- ❑ Staff make youth feel welcome upon arrival and throughout the day and respond to youth with acceptance and appreciation. Staff treat youth with respect and listen to what they say.
- ❑ Arrival, departure, transitions and meal times are positive experiences for staff, families, and participating youth.
- ❑ We have consistent routines, daily rituals, and traditions to create a sense of belonging and unity among youth and staff. Staff and youth have a sense of community and pride in our program.
- ❑ We offer a culminating event for families that includes opportunities to celebrate and share youth work and provide positive feedback to families.
- ❑ Physical representations of the program's culture and/or themes, including decorations and apparel or other accessories, are present.

Program Assessment and Evaluation

- ❑ We have a plan in place to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the program.
- ❑ We have a clear data collection process and assign responsibility for data collection and analysis.
- ❑ Staff are provided with youth information and data, as available and appropriate, during pre-program professional development and are given paid, dedicated time to review it and use it for planning.
- ❑ We have a plan for identifying and implementing needed course corrections before the program's midpoint.
- ❑ We have a clear process and assign responsibility for providing feedback to staff before the program's midpoint.
- ❑ Feedback process meaningfully involves staff in a two-way discussion/self-assessment of their practices.
- ❑ We engage key stakeholders in an end-of-program debrief that includes real-time group discussion.
- ❑ We collect and use stakeholder feedback/satisfaction and youth outcome data to improve the program next cycle.
- ❑ We share analyzed data at appropriate intervals with a broad group of stakeholders, including district leadership, site principals, school board members, youth, and families.

Academics & Enrichment



Partnerships

- ❑ We identify and build collaborative partnerships with individuals and organizations that complement our program's mission and goals, and expand its access to information, resources, and expertise.
- ❑ Partners share buy-in to a broader set of goals for youth.
- ❑ Program includes partners in year-round planning practices for summer programming. Partners have a voice in the development or review of programming. Regularly scheduled meetings, and consistent informal communication (email, phone, web meetings, face-to-face contact) is a regular part of doing business.
- ❑ Partners jointly identify and recruit participants.
- ❑ Memoranda of Understanding are in place that clearly articulate the partnership structures, roles, and responsibilities of each partner as well as the distribution and sharing of resources. Partners have a clear means of exchanging information as they work together to achieve common goals.
- ❑ We preserve partnerships by maintaining routine communication, sharing resources, and recognizing the work of partners in program communications (i.e. newsletters, social media, etc.).
- ❑ Program staff and partner staff communicate about the program goals, culture or behavior management strategy. Program staff and partner staff participate in joint training or planning prior to the summer program. Program staff and partner staff have an opportunity to co-facilitate or teach during the program.
- ❑ The program and its partner organizations regularly pursue joint funding opportunities.
- ❑ The program and its partners contribute data to a shared data system that is regularly accessed by both parties. The data system tracks participant attendance and progress toward other identified outcomes. The program and its partners use data to improve the program and report student progress.

Academic Instruction & Curriculum

- ❑ We annually select or adapt high-quality academic instructional materials as appropriate for our program goals, youth needs, and intended outcomes.
- ❑ Selection criteria for instructional materials include an assessment of how the curriculum supports diversity and inclusion to affirm youths' identities.
- ❑ Selection and adaptation of Instructional materials is led by staff with expertise in curriculum and instruction.
- ❑ Adaptations have been made to ensure the academic materials are appropriate for the program, such as scope and sequence, pacing guides, and lesson plans.
- ❑ Selected instructional materials include scaffolds, extensions, and supports to meet the needs of all youths, including special populations.
- ❑ We use academic data to inform youth groupings and instructional strategies.
- ❑ There are regular opportunities for active, physical play; creative arts and dramatic play; quiet activities and socializing; service learning.
- ❑ Activities are in line with the styles, abilities, and interests of the youth in the program.
- ❑ Activities are well suited to the age range of youth in the program, and reflect the languages and cultures of the families served.

Enrichment

- ❑ We engage youth to assess which topics will be high-interest for young people.
- ❑ We have a vision for high-quality, engaging enrichment that includes structured, sequenced activities for all grade levels.
- ❑ All youth have opportunities to select among enrichment offerings based on their interests and/or have choice and voice within enrichment activities.
- ❑ Responsibility for developing, purchasing or partnering on enrichment curriculum is assigned to staff with expertise in high-quality enrichment programming.
- ❑ We consider available expertise, time burden, and budget to determine whether to self-develop and deliver, purchase and deliver, partner externally, or mix enrichment options.
- ❑ We put effort and advance planning into intentionally sequencing enrichment content and delivery prior to the start of the program. Enrichment curricula and activities have been selected/determined for each grade-level and week of the program.
- ❑ We ensure that staff to youth ratios for enrichment are intentionally planned and appropriate for each activity.
- ❑ Enrichment is taught by content experts or staff with aligned experience.
- ❑ Staff are supported to plan, sequence, and practice activities before they are delivered within the program.
- ❑ Field trips align with program goals, curriculum, and youth interests

Youth Leadership and Development

- ❑ Positive youth development is integrated into the program and aligns with program goals and needs.
- ❑ Staff ask about and/or acknowledge the feelings of all participating youth.
- ❑ Our program includes small-group activities that promote belonging and inclusion.
- ❑ Staff ask questions that encourage youth to think for themselves and resolve their own conflicts.
- ❑ Staff use strategies for empathy building, including active listening skills that model empathy and encourage young people to express their emotions in a healthy way.
- ❑ Staff serve as role models in forming relationships with other adults and participating youth.
- ❑ Staff encourage youth to make choices and share responsibility and leadership with young people.
- ❑ We offer opportunities for youth to work in teams.
- ❑ Youth do not exhibit exclusionary behavior and staff intervene if exclusionary behavior occurs.

Tutoring and Homework Help

- ❑ Environment provides a quiet space to support youth's homework completion.
- ❑ Young people can generally complete their homework independently or with a small amount of support.
- ❑ Supervising adults work within textbooks and other material that youth bring to the session to complete their individual homework assignments.
- ❑ Supervising adults help youth get started and manage the process; provide support as needed; and make sure that supplies such as paper, pencils, and other tools are readily available in the homework space.
- ❑ We use trained educators (teachers, paraprofessionals, teaching candidates, recently retired teachers, or highly trained tutors) as tutors.
- ❑ We provide high-dosage tutoring (e.g. daily or at least three times per week) for at least 30-50 minutes.
- ❑ We emphasize attendance and focused work time for tutoring.
- ❑ Tutoring is aligned with evidence-based core curriculum. Tutors take specific actions to support youth learning including using quizzing, asking deep explanatory questions, spacing learning over time, incorporating worked example solutions with problem-solving exercises, connecting and integrating abstract and concrete representations of concepts, and combining graphical representations — like figures and graphs — with verbal descriptions.
- ❑ Systems and routines are established to help determine misunderstandings and skill gaps of each participating youth and for connecting 1-3 youth to a tutor.
- ❑ Supervising adults work within textbooks and materials used by school day as well as supplementary materials to assist youth to work through past material or pre-learning.

Citations

The success criteria and organizing framework were drawn from the following sources:

- [Summer Learning Toolkit](#) – The Wallace Foundation
- The NAA Standards for Quality School-Age Care – National Afterschool Association
- You for Youth – US Department of Education
- [Youth Program Quality Assessment \(YPOA\)](#) – The Forum for Youth Investment
- [Additional Days School Year Planning and Execution Program \(ADSY PEP\)](#) – Texas Education Agency
- [Additional Days School Year \(ADSY\) Summer Learning Framework](#) – Texas Education Agency
- [Strategies for Using American Rescue Plan Funding to Address the Impact of Lost Instructional Time](#) (High Dosage Tutoring – Pages 14-15) – US Department of Education