

Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC)

Who is ATAC?

The Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative is a group of national organizations working to aid states, through technical assistance, in building statewide afterschool networks. Members of the ATAC team (described below) represent a diverse array of constituency groups, and, to a large degree, reflect the range of stakeholders and expertise that is needed at the state level to affect change.

Who are we?

Afterschool Alliance—Advocacy organization committed to raising awareness and expanding resources for afterschool programs. The Alliance can help tailor your message about afterschool for particular audience, develop a strategic communications plan, public education and outreach campaigns, legislative strategies, and connect with national public awareness activities like Lights On Afterschool!

Council of Chief State School Officers—National association of public officials who head state departments of education. CCSSO can assist you in engaging your state education leaders, understanding your state department's priorities and how afterschool may fit in.

The Finance Project—Non-profit dedicated to improving results for children, families and communities nationwide. The Finance Project can provide direct assistance to states in developing strategic financing plans, creating public-private partnerships, developing dedicated revenue streams, and generally thinking about supporting sustainability at the program level.

National Conference of State Legislatures—a bi-partisan membership organization dedicated to serving state lawmakers and their staffs. NCSL can assist you in identifying lawmakers with an interest in afterschool, develop strategies for engaging lawmakers, track recent afterschool legislation, and provide information on current and past legislative action in the states.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices— a bi-partisan membership organization for governors. NGA Center provides technical assistance to governors and their staff on policy options for afterschool information about developments and promising practices in other states.

National League of Cities—membership organization comprised of local elected officials. NLC is well-positioned to help state networks work with municipal leaders identify ways that they can stimulate and support quality programs at the local level.

University of South Carolina Educational Foundation—houses the Resource Network for Community Education and Afterschool Programs. Terry Peterson, formerly with the U.S. Department of Education, can help you identify and understand policy levers, and make connections between stakeholders.

What Does ATAC Do?

The overall goals of the ATAC group are to:

- facilitate statewide, regional and local partnerships at all levels;
- support statewide efforts to secure resources needed to sustain new and existing afterschool programs; and
- support statewide systems to ensure programs are of high quality.

How Does ATAC Work?

ATAC organizations are available to assist state networks in a variety of ways. Each state is assigned a primary and secondary ATAC contact person who acts a liaison to the other ATAC team members. Thus, state networks discuss technical assistance needs with their ATAC contacts who then use the resources of the entire ATAC team to respond strategically to the network request. Because assistance is customized to the needs of each state, ATAC does not deliver a preset menu of technical assistance options. Ways in which ATAC delivers technical assistance are:

- Participating in conference calls
- Convening on-site meetings
- Email consultations
- Gathering and researching information
- Creating tools and materials
- Brokering assistance, consultation, and facilitation

Why is ATAC providing technical assistance to statewide networks?

Knowing that scaling up and sustaining successful afterschool programs will require coordinated and collaborative efforts across many public and private sectors; ATAC is working to help strengthen the capacity of states to build state infrastructures.

A statewide afterschool network is a vehicle for bringing together policymakers, educators, childcare providers, youth development workers, program developers, advocates, parents, and others interested in improving outcomes for children and youth through school-based/school-linked afterschool programs. The networks provide a means to encourage local and state policymakers to invest additional resources wisely to expand quality afterschool opportunities and address particular needs to improve quality and sustainability. The networks also provide a means for joint planning, sharing of resources and best practices, building bridges to and between federal, state, and local afterschool initiatives, and forging partnerships necessary for comprehensive statewide afterschool policies.

Thus, ATAC works with states to ensure that policies are in place to support the sustainability and quality of afterschool infrastructures and programs. It is the hope of the Mott Foundation and ATAC that there will eventually be networks in all 50 states.

Examples of ATAC Technical Assistance Provided

Since its inception, ATAC has assisted many states in their efforts to build a statewide afterschool network. Going from General to more targeted assistance, here are some examples of assistance that ATAC has provided to states.

- Invited by the Governor's office and the University of Alabama Program for Rural Services and Research, The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Afterschool Alliance helped convene a meeting of diverse stakeholders for an initial discussion of the state of afterschool in Alabama. Objectives of the 6-hour meeting were to convene the key stakeholders invested in afterschool throughout the state, understand what the state is doing to support afterschool programming and/or policymaking, develop a statewide vision for afterschool in Alabama, and arrive at some goals and priorities for action.
- The National Conference of State Legislatures, working with State Senator Angela Monson presented a national perspective on afterschool issues to legislators, legislative staff, agency staff and other key stakeholders. The presentation led to a broad discussion on challenges afterschool programs faced, as well as strategies for financing programs, and changes to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program. Oklahoma Department of Education staff were on hand to present information on Oklahoma's consolidated state plan for 21st CCLC.
- The United Way of Rhode Island requested information on how states were structuring the governance of their state networks. ATAC provided descriptions of the governance structures of the other Mott grantee networks, as well as several descriptions of the governance structures of other similar initiatives, and offered to host conference calls with states struggling with similar structural questions. ATAC also helped review the invitation lists for the initial network organizational meetings to help ensure that the list encompassed the full range of possible stakeholders in Rhode Island.
- Core leadership in North Carolina were concerned about the quality of afterschool programs and wanted information on afterschool standards. The Afterschool and Community School Network (the Network) was asked to educate the leadership on afterschool standards. Working with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National League of Cities, the Network pulled together their resources into creating a presentation and standards samples to share with North Carolina's leadership.
- The National Conference of State Legislature and the National Governors Association led a discussion of Wisconsin afterschool policymakers and practitioners. Following the meeting, ATAC members worked with legislatures in Wisconsin to develop, administer, and analyze a survey on where afterschool programs were located in the state.
- PlusTime New Hampshire was looking to identify the range of financial resources that are currently being used to support afterschool programs in the state. The Finance Project has worked with PlusTime to organize a group of representatives from public agencies to help them collect state level data on funding allocated to afterschool programs. The Finance Project has assisted them in determining what data to collect, both from public agencies and private funders, and has provided some tools to assist in the data collection process. As they continue to work to gather the funding information, the group meets via conference call

with Finance Project staff to troubleshoot problems and strategize on how best to gather and analyze the information.

- The Illinois After-School Partnership is developing a strategic financing plan for the afterschool system in their state. The Finance Project is working with the Partnership and staff to provide them a variety of sample financing plans, link them to other states and cities that have developed similar plans, and provide tools and materials to help them develop a process for working through all the components of a financing plan.
- PlusTime New Hampshire is developing a communications strategy format to be included in their strategic plan for the next few years. The Afterschool Alliance provided guidance on the elements of a communications plan, content for the goals of the network, specific strategies to accomplish their communications goals and some feedback on the feasibility desired strategies or outcomes. PlusTime subsequently has incorporated an extensive social marketing component into their multi-year strategic plan with the tools and advice of the Afterschool Alliance.
- The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, with support from ATAC partners, is working with thirteen governor's offices and their state afterschool network partners to hold statewide summits that engage new partners and build support for afterschool. For example, in Kansas the governor's summit on extra learning opportunities (ELOs) was held in conjunction with the state workforce summit. The NGA Center and the Afterschool Alliance worked with the Kansas Enrichment Network to 1) develop a summit agenda that helped educate state workforce leaders on the benefits of supporting afterschool efforts; 2) highlight the role of the Kansas Enrichment Network in the state; and 3) provide talking points for the governor's remarks. The summit also featured an invitation-only 'think tank' dinner, where NGA Center staff facilitated a discussion among high-level cabinet staff, agency representatives, foundation leaders, business leaders, and others to consider next steps for state afterschool policies that bridge the common priorities of diverse stakeholders.