

STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORKS GETTING STARTED CHECKLIST

VISION AND GOALS

Develop a vision statement to communicate the goals of the network and to guide its work. Key action steps:

- Engage a neutral facilitator.
- Invite a group of approximately 20-30 key stakeholders.
- Collectively develop/refine a vision statement that aligns with goals of each partner.
- Outline concrete short- and long-term goals that map to your network vision.
- Align vision and goals align with intended network results.
- Share the vision and goals with a wide range of stakeholders to promote buy-in and refine as needed.
- Create/develop an identity distinct from, but connected to, related state-level groups.

WORK PLAN

Develop an initial work plan for the network stemming from your vision and goals. This work plan will outline the activities that will happen over a two- to three-year period to establish your network identity, set up a governance structure, create committees or work groups, engage existing and new partners and identify activities for short-term and long-term attention. Key action steps:

- With key network partners, specify action steps that work toward your network goals—these often cluster around three domains: (1) policy development/systems building; (2) finance and funding; (3) quality improvements.
- Be sure to include tasks that are critical to getting the network up and running (e.g. developing a governance structure and committees).
- In outlining activities and tasks, determine opportunities for exposure and “quick wins” (regional meetings, conferences, training calendars, etc) in addition to more comprehensive actions.
- Incorporate engagement strategies into your work plan to draw in a wide range of partners in the work and activities of the network on an on-going basis.
- Incorporate a schedule of regular meetings and designate time to check progress against time tables and tasks in your work plan.
- Clarify who has primary responsibility to complete each task.

GOVERNANCE

Once the network has a vision and an initial work plan, it is time to develop, review and refine a governance structure. Key action steps:

- Decide or clarify where the network will be housed.
- Determine strategies to connect with and/or build upon related state governance structures that already exist.
- Put in place a governance structure that meets network needs. This may include a board of directors or steering committee, an executive committee, and subcommittees or work groups.

- Consider which groups, sectors, and people should be a part of your governance structure, with attention to appropriate roles and responsibilities of each partner. What are political implications?
- Review membership and develop a plan to engage missing voices. Are the key stakeholders for your state engaged (policymakers, advocates, private leaders, non-profits, youth, child care, youth development, early childhood, etc)? Is representation balanced geographically? Politically?
- Clarify who will lead and staff the network. What is the relationship between the board and director? The director and coordinator?
- Establish a clear and well-defined decision making process.
- Develop a communication strategy that outlines how you communicate decisions within the network and outreach strategies to engage new partners in the network work.
- Consider developing network bylaws that specify the above: who should govern the network, roles and responsibilities, and decision making procedures.

FINANCING

Launching and sustaining a network means both securing funding for the network itself and expanding funding for afterschool programs generally. Key action steps:

- Develop a plan for funding the core operations of the network in the short and long run.
- Determine what funding and resources in your state can support your network –consider university partners; statewide non-profits; federal and state funding. Begin planning to access available funding.
- Prepare a long-term sustainability plan for the network: *Who? What? When? Why? How?*
- Be creative, and develop materials and information that make a persuasive case.

Getting Things Done: Some First Steps as a Collaboration

- Develop a one-pager that describes your network’s vision, goals, and major activities
- Set up an online listserv for quick communication
- Publish an electronic newsletter
- Design a logo for brochures, publications and other communication tools.
- Establish a network web site
- Create a calendar of afterschool trainings and conferences in your state
- Develop a short message (no more than 35 words) that network stakeholders can use to communicate the value of and build support for the network
- Support a statewide Lights On Afterschool! event
- Host a statewide meeting or conference

People are attracted to organizations that get things done. Remember that success breeds success!