

**REPORT FROM VERMONT'S  
UNIVERSAL AFTERSCHOOL TASK FORCE**

**May 17, 2021**

**MEMBERS**

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Carrie McDonnell (Windsor/Orange County), Afterschool Program Representative

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Introduction.....3**

**Program Funding Priorities.....4**

**Grant Program Implementation Priorities.....6**

**Background.....8**

**Work of the Universal Afterschool Task Force in 2020-2021.....11**

**Funding Estimates for Universal Afterschool.....15**

**Building on Vermont’s Strengths.....16**

**Moving Towards Universality.....19**

**Appendix I: Proposed Grant Program.....20**

**Appendix II: Thinking Outside the Box.....26**

**Appendix III: Notes on Estimated Cost Calculations.....27**

## INTRODUCTION

In his January 2020 State of the State address, Vermont Governor Phil Scott proposed an initiative to offer universal access to afterschool programs for all children and youth in kindergarten through high school. As stated in his speech, the rationale for this far-reaching goal is based on four considerations. In Governor Scott's words:

- *First, it's based on a successful model from Iceland focused on preventing drug use as well as improving academic and social outcomes. And the evidence is clear: Kids who participate in afterschool activities and programs do better in school and in life than kids who don't.*
- *Second, a universal program expands choices for every kid—it doesn't limit them. And it would be voluntary. Those who currently go home to their families, or participate in drama, music, sports, debate, or older kids who choose to work could all continue to do so.*
- *Third, it supports working parents by reducing the logistical and financial burden of afterschool care.*
- *Finally, we're not recreating the wheel, but we are creating more equity. Many schools already have afterschool options through organizations like the YMCA and others, but it's far from universal.*

*(Office of the Governor, State of the State Address, January 9, 2020)*

The Task Force's overall vision for Universal Afterschool in Vermont reflects the Governor's charge and direction. The overarching goal is that every child and youth in Vermont (kindergarten through high school) has a place to be in the afterschool hours outside the school day and over the summer. In addressing Universal Afterschool it is important to note that "afterschool" is about more than the hours of 3-6pm on a weekday. It is also about programming during school vacation weeks, programming in the evenings and weekends especially for older youth, before school programs, and summer programs to help bridge the gap between June and September. Afterschool is about dynamic, integrated programming, youth agency, and connecting learning and positive youth development across contexts. The Task Force also recognizes that it will take a wide variety of community partners, schools, and organizations working together to provide universal afterschool across Vermont.

More than anything, the Task Force focused on equity at the very core of its work and program design. In order to truly achieve Universal Afterschool every aspect of the system must be based on inclusion. Universal Afterschool is about more than providing programming for many children and youth. It is also about ensuring that none are left out because of where they live, what languages are spoken at home, how much money their families have, any special needs or disabilities that may require special accommodations, their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or any other factor. In 2021, Vermont is making significant inroads in expanding access to afterschool and summer programs. The state's efforts to expand access to programming in summer 2021 start with a commitment to making sure that every child and youth has a place to be and/or a summer program to participate in if they choose. The location of available programs is being mapped to help identify gaps in services and organizations can apply for funding to increase access through additional program hours, serving more children or youth, lowering the cost for families, providing supports for students with special needs, and/or making the program more accessible in any number of ways for all children and youth, especially for those representing traditionally marginalized populations. In addition, millions of one-time federal dollars are flowing to schools, districts, and supervisory unions that can be used to support learning recovery efforts, including afterschool and summer programs. There are also federal COVID-19 recovery

dollars for childcare, health, mental health, and other related services.<sup>1</sup> This is the context in which the Universal Afterschool Task Force is doing its work and the basis upon which this report can build as Vermont moves forward in providing access to afterschool and summer programs for every child and youth.

The Task Force discussed a wide range of priorities relating to the design and implementation of Universal Afterschool. The sections that follow categorize these priorities into two key areas: (1) Program Funding Priorities- that speak to how funding should be directed to meet specific needs and gaps in the state; and (2) Grant Program Implementation Priorities- that address the system itself and the key principles that it should embody as Vermont moves towards Universal Afterschool.

### PROGRAM FUNDING PRIORITIES

The 2020 America After 3PM report found that 39%, or over 26,000 Vermont children and youth, who are not currently participating in afterschool programs would be today if more were available and accessible<sup>2</sup>. While all communities in Vermont should be allowed to apply for funding, the Universal Afterschool Task Force recommends the following funding priorities:

**Expanding access to programs for children and youth in grades K through 12 who qualify as low-income and middle-income.** According to the 2020 America After 3PM study, Vermont has the lowest level of low-income children enrolled in afterschool in the nation, and Vermont parents listed program cost as one of the key barriers to participation. <sup>1</sup> Vermont has existing models it can learn from and expand upon when targeting economically disadvantaged populations, such as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program and the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

**Expanding programming in parts of the state where few or no options are currently available.** Parents in Vermont also report lack of available programs in their area as a barrier to participation. These disparities in program availability are further substantiated by data collected at the state level. Grant funds should be targeted to support programs in these communities. <sup>1</sup>

**Making sure that underserved populations and historically marginalized children and youth are accessing and participating with parity in programs.** Analysis of afterschool participation rates across different populations of youth should be an ongoing and integral part of the funding process. Data from Vermont's Youth Risk Behavior Survey in recent years show that special consideration should be taken to ensure access among racial/ethnic groups, English Learners, New Americans, and LGBTQI youth.<sup>3</sup> In addition, programs that serve older youth are important, as well as options that encourage participation in non-traditional offerings (e.g., engineering clubs for girls and non-binary gendered youth).

**Providing additional resources so that children and youth with disabilities and/or special needs are able to fully participate in programs.** All afterschool opportunities created through public funds or using public facilities should develop capacity with the financial support of the state to be equitably accessible to children and youth with disabilities. Children and youth should not be denied access to

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<sup>1</sup> Resource from the Joint Fiscal Office which specifies the funds allocated to childcare and mental health as well as schools: <https://lifo.vermont.gov/assets/Subjects/Combined-Federal-Stimulus-related-to-COVID-19/f2afb4556c/FFIS-Vermont-allocations-from-ARPA-as-of-4May2021.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> American After 3PM. December 2020. Afterschool Alliance.

<sup>3</sup> Vermont's Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2017 and 2019.

afterschool opportunities due to the need for services and supports in order to access the opportunities. The design of afterschool programs should consider universal design concepts to ensure inclusion of all children, be ADA compliant, and applicants seeking state funding must either demonstrate the capacity to serve children and youth with disabilities or have a stated plan by which they will work towards having the capacity to serve children and youth requiring support with additional state funding. Program plans would need to be monitored and supported over time by the agency awarding state funding. Requiring a plan recognizes that it may take programs time to hire and train the appropriate staff and put into place accommodations, systems, and/or structures for a child/youth to be successful. This may occur through partnership and information sharing with school day staff and others. Grant funding should be allowed to be used towards hiring 1:1's and providing training to program staff, transportation, or equipment/supply needs. The state administration should develop sample partnership agreements that community partners and schools working in collaboration could use to clarify roles and responsibilities.

**Strengthening key elements of program quality within all afterschool programs, including in the areas of Social-Emotional Learning, STEM, transferable skills, positive youth development, universal design, youth voice, and program intentionality).** Afterschool programs should offer a wide range of offerings and opportunities for youth. Youth voice must be incorporated into how a program is designed and what programming is offered. Particular attention should be paid to offering programming and supports around Social-Emotional Learning, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), creative expression and the arts, transferable skills, positive youth development, and youth voice/engagement as these areas have been shown to contribute to positive and long-lasting impacts for youth.<sup>4,5</sup>

**Building protective factors that align with youth substance misuse prevention.** Afterschool programs reduce the risk of substance abuse by helping youth strengthen their connection to school and build self-control, self-confidence, and quality peer relationships. They also help to keep kids away from drugs by engaging them in educational, stimulating activities.<sup>6</sup> Vermont's afterschool programs should promote a sense of belonging, positive relationships with staff and peers, and opportunities to practice decision making and explore sense of self.

## GRANT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

**Flexibility.** Every community in Vermont has a unique mix of resources, partners, strengths, and opportunities. Flexibility in the system will allow funds to be geared towards specific needs in the local community, including staffing, transportation, supplies, etc. While program quality is important, the Task Force recommends allowing for a wide variety of program types and programming options as

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<sup>4</sup> Expanding Minds and Opportunities. 2013. [Expanding Minds and Opportunities | The Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project \(expandinglearning.org\)](https://www.expandinglearning.org/)

<sup>5</sup> Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., and Pachan, M. A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45 (3-4): 294-309, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> SAMHSA's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies. (2014). CAPT Decision Support Tools—Strategies and Interventions to Prevent Youth Marijuana Use: An At-a-Glance Resource Tool Using Prevention Research to Guide Prevention Practice. SAMHSA's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies.

essential given Vermont's varied landscape. The application process should be accessible to all communities (e.g., small, rural, etc.).

**Eligibility.** The Task Force recommends a mixed delivery model that would allow a broad array of entities to apply for funding to expand afterschool access. Eligible entities should include a school, district, supervisory union, nonprofit organization, municipality, and licensed childcare center.

**Dosage.** Eligible programs should serve children and youth on a regular basis outside the regular school day/year (e.g., before school, after school, summer, weekends, school vacation weeks, evenings, or teacher in-service days). A schedule that includes programming until at least 5-6pm during the week throughout the school year and provides at least 5-6 weeks of full-day services in summers is recommended.

**Broad Range of Priority Areas.** The grant program for Universal Afterschool must allow for a broader range of priority areas so that programs can apply for what their community most needs and/or what special populations within their community need.

**Multi-Agency and Cross-Sector Collaboration and Coordination.** As seen throughout COVID, multi-agency collaboration and coordination is essential to the success of any major initiative serving children, youth, and families. Because afterschool is a cross-cutting issue, close collaboration should include, but not be limited to, the Agency of Education- 21C Program<sup>7</sup>, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Agency of Administration/Department of Libraries, and Agency of Human Services, in particular the Department of Health, Department of Mental Health, Department for Children and Families- Child Development Division, Family Services Division, and Licensing Unit. This cross-agency collaboration is essential to creating a coordinated system with the broad perspective of the whole field.

**Multi-Year Funding.** Multi-year funding is essential to give programs time to get up-and-running and to build staff and programming options. Multi-year grants also place the emphasis on designing and running quality programs instead of on writing one grant after another. It also takes time for parents, families, and children/youth to get to know program staff. Knowing that a program will be around for a number of years also increases the likelihood that children and youth will participate.

**Program Sustainability.** The grant application process should include questions about program sustainability. With limited resources, the state should invest in programs that are:

- most likely to close equity gaps and serve children/youth and communities who have not had access to afterschool programs;
- actively planning for sustainability that is not reliant on this one funding source (i.e., able to operate for multiple years and even beyond the scope of the current grant); and
- able to demonstrate efficiency through collaboration with other community partners.

**Family Engagement and Support.** Universal Afterschool must meet the childcare needs of working families while also providing opportunities to enhance learning, foster positive youth development, encourage family engagement, and build protective factors for children and youth. Meeting the needs of

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<sup>7</sup> The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21C) program is a federal program funded under Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

working families includes ensuring that programs run on a regular basis five days a week and that they are open for enough hours each day to better align with the regular work schedule of parents and family members.

**Youth Voice.** Authentic youth engagement requires intentional programming, skilled staff, and a deep understanding of how to build youth voice into every aspect of programming. Research shows that afterschool programs that support true youth engagement have stronger positive youth outcomes.<sup>iv</sup> The Task Force recommends that youth voice be an integral and foundational component within all afterschool programs, from collecting youth input into program structure and options to the establishment of local youth councils and other opportunities for young people to have a say in the program and in their community.

**Protective Factors.** Research shows that afterschool programs play an essential role in primary prevention measures. As recommended by Vermont's Opioid Coordination Council and the Vermont Marijuana Commission, expanded access to afterschool programming can build protective factors for youth.<sup>8</sup> Universal Afterschool program must include key protective elements such as a sense of belonging, support from caring adults and mentors, positive peer relationships, and youth agency. In addition, research from Iceland's Drug-free program has shown that parents are key in making these partnerships work.<sup>9</sup> The research found that good, solid relationships, and the ability to spend more time with their kids had good outcomes. Therefore, making families part of the process is a key protective factor.

**Provides Safe Transportation.** The Task Force recommends that all afterschool programs address the need for safe transportation to and from the program location. If not providing transportation themselves, the program should show that the need for transportation has been assessed and addressed in a manner consistent with ensuring access. Programs not providing transportation should reassess the need annually and be prepared to respond with an updated plan should the community or family needs change. The diversity of settings and increased opportunities will often be dependent on transportation availability.

**Partnerships across Schools, Communities, and Families.** Research has shown that children and youth thrive when there is alignment and close partnership across schools, community, afterschool programs, and family.<sup>10</sup> Quality afterschool programs do not replicate the school day but rather complement and reinforce it. Close collaboration between school staff and afterschool staff is essential; school staff are encouraged to welcome and prioritize communication with the afterschool staff. This can include the co-development of shared releases of information, approved by a parent/guardian that allow afterschool providers access to information such as the child/youth's school day teacher, free and reduced lunch status, IEP/504/EST status, English Language status, as well as open and consistent communication as to the child/youth's successes and challenges within both the school and afterschool setting. All data and information sharing should be in accordance with student data privacy laws and as appropriate to the school-community partnership.

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<sup>8</sup> Youth Resilience: Strategies for the Third Space. 2019. Vermont Afterschool.

<sup>9</sup> The Programme, Drug-free Iceland, Final Report. May 2003. Steering Group for the Programme Drug-free Iceland.

<sup>10</sup> Anthony, Kenneth; Morra, Joseph. Creating Holistic Partnerships between School and Afterschool. Afterschool Matters, n24 p33-42 Fall 2016

Close collaboration between schools and community partners should be supported through written partnership agreements that clarify roles, responsibilities, and sharing of costs. The state agency providing funding should develop models for such agreements. Likewise, vibrant afterschool programs help connect children and youth to their community through service projects, field trips, outdoor adventure programs, career exploration, as well as, bringing in guest speakers, local artisans, and community members to share skills, information, and interests.

**Cost to Families.** Universal afterschool must mean access for all children and youth. The Universal Afterschool system in Vermont should lower the cost to families across the board rather than only helping a subset of children/youth pay for access to programs.

**Supports Staff.** The quality and success of the afterschool system in Vermont relies heavily on the people who staff and run the programs. The system must build up, strengthen, and support individuals working in afterschool through livable wages, opportunities for learning and advancement, meaningful work, and support from supervisors as well as the organizations and communities in which they work.

**Monitors Outcomes and Program Quality.** Outcomes should be monitored at both the state level and at the program level. Monitoring outcomes and their alignment with established implementation priorities will allow Vermont to modify the grant program over time in order to make continual progress. Assessments of program quality should consider parent/family, youth, and community partner feedback.

## BACKGROUND

The move to provide Universal Afterschool in Vermont did not come about overnight. Rather, Vermont's efforts to expand access to afterschool and summer learning programs began in earnest more than seven years ago. Where Vermont is today is the result of extensive and ongoing efforts by the administration, General Assembly, stakeholders, and advocates for many years.

### 2013-2014

House & Senate Education Committees both included language in the Misc. Ed Bill that charged the PreK-16 Council with creating an Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Working Group to "review and evaluate issues of equity in and access to Vermont's Expanded Learning Opportunities, including afterschool and summer programs" (H.876). While the Misc. Ed. Bill was not enacted that year, the PreK-16 Council took on this work, given that the legislature had put forward the request.

ELO Working Group met for six months and created the report, "Every Hour Counts: Vermont Students Succeed with Expanded Learning Opportunities." This report outlined both national and state data on the value of afterschool and summer programs. It also created a database and accompanying mapping tool to assess available program locations, indicators of need, and issues regarding access.<sup>11</sup>

Vermont Afterschool received a grant from the National Conference of State Legislatures to support the work of the ELO Working Group, particularly around data and mapping.

Another product the ELO Working Group was a comprehensive Return-on-Investment (ROI) study. The methodology behind the Vermont ROI study has since been replicated by several other states

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<sup>11</sup> Vermont Afterschool. <https://www.vermontafterschool.org/impact/map/>



and at the national level.

### **2015-2016**

Increasing access to afterschool and summer learning programs was supported by a number of councils and groups, including: Vermont's Child Poverty Council, Working Vermonters Caucus, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance, Voices for Vermont's Children, and Hunger Free Vermont.

Rep. Mike Mrowicki introduced a bill (H.391) to create the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund.

House Education Committee created the ELO Special Fund in Misc. Ed bill (H.480) and charged the ELO Working Group under the PreK-16 Council with developing recommendations for how the fund should be set up and administered.

ELO Working Group met for 6 months and created the report, "Closing the Gap in Vermont: The Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund." This report provides the framework for creating a state level grant program in order to increase access to afterschool and summer learning programs.

The ELO Working Group also created a further report at the direction of the PreK-16 Council called, "All Learning Counts: How Expanded Learning Opportunities Support Flexible, Personalized, Student-centered, and Proficiency-based Learning in Vermont."

### **2017-2018**

The Vermont Childhood Poverty Council named funding for afterschool and summer learning in the ELO Special Fund as a top priority. Voices for Vermont's Children and Hunger Free Vermont both actively support the ELO Special Fund request.

Rep. Diane Lanpher introduced H.270 to recognize the priorities of the Vermont Childhood Poverty Council, which she co-chaired, and to implement the recommendations of the ELO Working Group on the structure, priorities, and administration of the ELO Special Fund.

House Education Committee took up H.270, marked it up, and recommended \$1 million in the ELO Special Fund in March 2017 in its memo to the Appropriations Committee.

The ELO Working Group language contained in H.270 was eventually moved to the Miscellaneous Education bill. Even though the language passed the House of Representatives, and the House and Senate conferees agreed to the ELO language, a last minute disagreement over unrelated issues stopped the bill from passing before adjournment.

The budget approved by the legislature included \$2.5 million in one-time money to be used for substance use disorder prevention efforts, and the Secretary of Human Services was charged with determining how to spend these funds. Ultimately, recognizing the connection between afterschool programming and the state's prevention goals, \$600,000 of these funds were allocated for expanding access to afterschool and summer learning programs. To allocate and oversee the use of these funds, the Afterschool for All grant program was created under the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services (see under 2018-2019 for implementation details).

**2018-2019**

Vermont's Opioid Council and Marijuana Council recommended that the state "Increase geographic equity and access to afterschool programs and out-of-school activities" as one of four key strategies identified under Prevention.<sup>12</sup>

The Prevention and Education Subcommittee of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Marijuana recommended funding for substance misuse prevention. Under prevention, they recommended \$6 million to fund six regional prevention networks for activities including "fund prevention programs, such as afterschool programming, youth leadership, and community coalitions".<sup>13</sup>

In spring 2019, the Afterschool for All Grant Program was established by the Child Development Division to award the \$600,000 set aside from the tobacco settlement. Vermont Afterschool was given a grant from the state to help run the grant process and provide technical assistance and coaching support to the grantees. A Grant Oversight Committee was created, and the grant program was designed to follow the program intent as outlined in H.270. In that first round, over 100 Letters of Interest were submitted with 2-year requests totaling approximately \$5.4 million. The Oversight Committee recommended awards for 12 organizations and specified that all awards would be for 2-year grants.

**2019-2020**

Governor Scott's State of the State Address in January 2020 included a major initiative to provide universal afterschool in Vermont.

The Senate Education Committee introduced S. 335 to create a Universal Afterschool Task Force. The language from the bill was eventually incorporated into H.969 and passed in fall 2020.

Also in fall 2020, one of Vermont's key responses to the need for childcare and out-of-school time programming for children when schools re-open in the fall with adjusted in-person schedules and remote learning days was to create the School-Age Childcare Hubs. \$12 million was allocated to the Hubs initiative including \$6.9 million for grants to organizations to open School-age Hubs and a \$5 million increase to the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP). The Hubs initiative was administered by the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services.

In December 2020, a second round of Afterschool for All grants was made possible due to a financial contribution to Vermont Afterschool from the Vermont Community Foundation (\$50,000) and remaining state dollars (\$61,000). Grant proposals were collected from 87 programs totaling over \$900,000 in requests. Ten new grants were awarded in this second round of Afterschool for All grants.

The Vermont Community Foundation later gave an additional \$110,000 from the VT COVID-19 Response Fund to Vermont Afterschool to run a similar grant program to support teen centers in Vermont. Fourteen grants were awarded to teen centers that were continuing to operate and run programming during COVID.

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<sup>12</sup> Building Bridges: The Opioid Coordination Council's Recommended Strategies for 2019.

<sup>13</sup> (Report from the Prevention and Education Subcommittee as Revised and Adopted by the Governor's Advisory Commission on Marijuana, December 2018).

Also in December 2020, Secretary of Education Dan French convened the first meeting of the Universal Afterschool Task Force.

### **WORK OF THE UNIVERSAL AFTERSCHOOL TASK FORCE IN 2020-2021**

**Purpose:** To consider and make recommendations on the framework for, the costs of, and related long-term funding sources for access to universal afterschool programs.

**Membership:**

- Senator Andrew Perchlik (Co-chair)
- Representative Kelly Pajala (Co-chair)
- Sandra Cameron, Director of Public Policy, Vermont School Boards Association
- Matthew DeBlois, (Vergennes Union Elementary School), Vermont Principals' Association
- Jess DeCarolis, Director, Agency of Education
- Retta Dunlap, a representative of the Vermont Home Education Network
- Christy Gallese (Chittenden County), Afterschool Program Representative
- Geoffrey T. Pippenger, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner, Department for Children and Families, Agency of Human Services
- Erin Maguire (Essex-Westford School District), Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators
- Carrie McDonnell (Windsor/Orange County), Afterschool Program Representative
- Heather Moore (Franklin County), Afterschool Program Representative
- Holly Morehouse, Executive Director, Vermont Afterschool
- Chelsea Myers, Associate Executive Director, Vermont Superintendents Association
- Mark Tashjian, Chair, Council of Independent Schools
- David Woolpy, Executive Director, Vermont Boys and Girls Clubs of Rutland County

**Meetings:** The Task Force met seven times between December 2020 and May 2021.

**The Task Force's work on the six specific tasks as assigned in H. 969:**

**1) The Task Force shall map existing afterschool programs and highlight gaps in access and equity, including equity for Vermonters with disabilities.**

- For baseline data on where programs are located and what geographic gaps may exist, the Task Force utilized the database and online map created by Vermont Afterschool for the ELO Working Group through the earlier grant from the National Conference on State Legislatures. This data is updated annually. <sup>vii</sup>
- Due to a lack of available data and time constraints on the Task Force, the gaps for children and youth with disabilities have not been highlighted or fully addressed in this report. In order to create an equitable Universal Afterschool program statewide, the Task Force strongly recommends that more data on participation for children and youth with disabilities be developed and that barriers to participation be identified and promising strategies to increase inclusion be encouraged.
- The Substance Misuse Prevention and Advisory Council also provided the Task Force with a map with information about prevention programs in Vermont.
- In December 2020, the Afterschool Alliance released a national report, America Afterschool 3PM. <sup>i</sup> This report ranks Vermont as one of the Top Ten states for quality of afterschool

programming and parent satisfaction. The report also states that more than 26,000 Vermont children and youth would be in afterschool programs today if more were available and accessible. Based on parent survey data, the report identifies three main barriers to participation: (1) Affordability- cost of programs; (2) Availability- having programs located in their community; and (3) Accessibility- challenges due to transportation.

- The Task Force was also able to draw on lessons learned through the School-age Childcare Hubs program implemented by AHS/DCF/CDD in fall 2020.
- In addition to having directors of afterschool programs as members on the Task Force, a number of leaders from afterschool programs in different parts of the state provided input through the public comment process embedded in the meeting agendas.
- The Task Force heard testimony from the Agency of Education on the 21C Program and from the Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division on the Afterschool for All Grant Program.
- Data from Vermont's Youth Risk Behavior Survey provides further clarification on the extent to which school-age children and youth are participating in extracurricular programming such as organized sports, theatre, band, etc. In 2017, 17% of Vermont high school youth report participating in extracurricular activities for 10 or more hours per week, while 34% of high school youth report not participating in any extracurricular activities after school. In addition, employment activities of high school youth is not collected uniformly at the state level, but is a means by which youth are engaged afterschool and during the summer in a structured manner. Further examination of participation in these activities would help to define the scope and extent of need and would be useful in determining funding needs.
- Responding to the need for additional data raised in part by the Universal Afterschool Task Force, in spring 2021, Vermont Afterschool was awarded a grant from the National Conference of State Legislatures to bring three new lenses to the data work in Vermont related to universal afterschool and summer access: health equity, learning recovery, and access for students with disabilities and for traditionally marginalized populations. This work will start in July 2021 and carry through December 2021.

**2) The Task Force shall recommend, as part of the framework, best practices and key evidence-based strategies to maximize health and substance abuse prevention and shall consult with the Substance Misuse Prevention and Advisory Council.**

- Members of the Substance Misuse Prevention and Advisory Council presented to the Task Force providing information on the prevention framework, best practices, and evidence-based strategies. They made five recommendations to the Task Force:
  - Work with the Substance Misuse Prevention and Advisory Council (SMPC) to cross analyze the Inventory of Substance Misuse Prevention services as required by Vermont Act 82 to further identify gaps in services and identify potential partnerships for afterschool expansion.
  - Examine funding and administrative cost sharing structures with substance misuse prevention coalitions and organizations to maximize the potential for both afterschool activities and prevention programming throughout the state without redirecting or diminishing the current funding structure for substance misuse prevention in Vermont.

- Identify a way to support communities in a planning process to ensure the implementation of universal afterschool access meets communities' needs and interests to ensure engagement in the resources provided.
- Require ongoing program evaluation activities into all programming recommendations to ensure effectiveness and to drive quality improvement.
- Implement a professional development requirement of afterschool staff which includes training on substance use prevention and building resiliency among Vermont youth.
- In addition, the Task Force considered data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) connecting prevention and afterschool participation.<sup>ii</sup>
- The Task Force also explored the Vermont Youth Project through Vermont Afterschool as an example of how Vermont communities are utilizing primary prevention strategies from Iceland and Finland to build protective factors for youth through afterschool activities, parent co-collaboration, and community-wide strategies.<sup>14</sup>
- The Task Force also identified that afterschool and summer programming itself is deemed to be a preventative measure, particularly when those programs, for example, use evidence-informed practices and strategies, have strong connections to the school day, promote partnerships, foster social-emotional competencies, engage parents, families, and the community, and have strong evaluation systems.

**3) The Task Force shall consider the report entitled “Closing the Gap in Vermont: The Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund,” dated November 2015, issued by the Working Group on Expanded Learning Opportunities of Vermont’s PreK–16 Council.**

- The Task Force reviewed the Closing the Gap report and heard testimony from Katie Mobley who was a member of the ELO Working Group. Task Force member, Holly Morehouse, had also served as chair of the ELO Working Group for two years.
- Key elements of the work of the ELO Working Group, including a number of their recommendations for the grant program, are reflected in this report, such as: the creation of an oversight committee; cross-agency collaboration; priority focus on low-income children and youth, underserved areas of the state, older youth, and STEM opportunities; eligibility being open to schools, districts, supervisory unions, non-profit organizations, municipalities, and licensed childcare centers; and multi-year and flexible funding.

**4) The Task Force shall review the status and results of the Afterschool for All (AFA) Grant Program administered by the Department for Children and Families.**

- Melissa Riegel-Garrett presented on the Afterschool for All grant program, including design of the grant program, implementation, administration, awarded grants, support to grantees, outcomes, and reporting.
- Katie Mobley, member of the Afterschool for All Grant Oversight Committee, shared information about how the AFA Oversight Committee has operations and continues to function in support of the grant program.

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<sup>14</sup> Vermont Youth Project, Vermont Afterschool. <https://www.vermontafterschool.org/vyp/about-vyp/>

- The Task Force also heard from several programs that have Afterschool for All grants, including Heather Moore who runs the afterschool programs in Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union and is also a member of the Task Force.

**5) In exploring funding sources, the Task Force shall prefer solutions that do not draw upon the State's Education Fund and shall explore the possibility of using potential revenue from the taxation and regulation of cannabis.**

- Act 164 of 2020 specifies cannabis tax revenue to expand access to afterschool and summer programming.  
<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2020/Docs/ACTS/ACT164/ACT164%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

Page 81 of the bill states:

\* \* \* Use of Sales and Use Tax Revenue \* \* \* Sec. 17c. DEDICATED USE OF SALES AND USE TAX ON CANNABIS Notwithstanding 16 V.S.A. § 4025(b), revenue from the sales and use tax imposed by 32 V.S.A. chapter 233 on retail sales of cannabis or cannabis products in this State shall be used to fund a grant program to start or expand afterschool and summer learning programs, with a focus on increasing access in underserved areas of the State.

- The Task Force created recommendations for what a state grant program should look like using the cannabis tax revenue and any additional state-designated funding in order to provide universal access to afterschool and summer programs. The details of the proposed grant program are outlined in Appendix 1.

**6) The Task Force may recommend legislative language to enact its recommendations.**

- As stated above, the Task Force recommends that Vermont establish a state grant program using the cannabis tax revenue and any additional state-designated funding that does not draw upon the State's Education Fund in order to provide universal access to afterschool and summer programs. The details of the proposed grant program are outlined in Appendix I.
- The Task Force also recommends the formation of an Afterschool and Summer State Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee could have the following duties:
  - I. Collect information and data annually to determine the state and extent of afterschool and summer programming in Vermont. This analysis shall include an exploration of trends in funding in Vermont and recommendations for how to leverage, integrate, and augment available federal, local, and private dollars to meet the need for quality afterschool and summer programs in communities throughout Vermont.
  - II. Develop all aspects of the state grant program for expanding access to afterschool and summer programs (e.g., Afterschool for All), including creating an application process, determining reporting requirements, setting funding priorities, and determining criteria for evaluating applications and for awarding grants and other incentives, such as professional development opportunities, for afterschool and summer programs in Vermont.

## FUNDING ESTIMATES FOR UNIVERSAL AFTERSCHOOL

If no other funding were to be used (e.g., no parent/family fees, no local match, etc.) other than current levels of federal funding through 21C and the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP), it is conservatively estimated that Vermont would need between \$22-\$28 million/year in additional funding to provide universal access to afterschool and summer programs, assuming that approximately 33% of children and youth would participate on a regular basis. Providing fully inclusive programs where greater than 33% of children and youth would participate would increase this cost.

In the calculations below, school year and summer programming are defined as programs that are in operation for 15 hours per week during the school year and 5 days per week, 40 hours per week, for 6 weeks total during the summer. The estimates below were developed based on an analysis of data from 21C programs in Vermont in 2018-2019. (See Appendix III for further notes on the program cost calculations.)

- **Elementary and Middle School Only at 33%.** If roughly 33% of children and youth participate in programs on a regular basis, it would cost roughly \$37.3 million/year to provide school year and summer programming to 33% of elementary and middle school children and youth. Each school would need an average of \$138,288/year. Allowing for an estimated \$15 million/year in federal funding, the state investment would be \$22 million/year (or \$11 million/year with a 1-to-1 local match).
- **Elementary and Middle School Only at 100%.** It would cost roughly \$42.8 million/year to provide at school year and summer programming to all elementary and middle school children and youth (100% participation). Each school would need an average of \$158,634/year. Allowing for approximately \$15 million/year in federal funding, the state investment would be \$28 million/year (or \$14 million/year with a 1-to-1 local match).
- **Elementary, Middle, and High School at 33%.** It would cost roughly \$39.5 million/year to provide school year and summer programming to 33% of all K-12 children and youth (including high school). Each school would need an average of \$133,976/year. Allowing for approximately \$15 million/year in federal funding, the state investment would be \$25 million/year (or \$12.5 million/year with a 1-to-1 local match).
- **Elementary, Middle, and High School at 100%.** It would cost roughly \$44.4 million/year to provide school year and summer programming to all K-12 children and youth (high school included). Each school would need an average of \$150,489/year. Allowing for approximately \$15 million/year in federal funding, the state investment would be \$29 million/year (or \$14.5 million/year with a 1-to-1 local match).

## BUILDING ON VERMONT'S STRENGTHS

Efforts to create universal access to afterschool and summer programs across Vermont should build on key elements of Vermont's existing infrastructure and the 12+ years of providing supports to afterschool programs through state agencies and partnerships.

**Vermont's 21C Programs,** Vermont has a strong system of 21C-funded afterschool and summer programs administered through the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE). 21C programs operate in 100 school communities and, pre-COVID, served annually 12,000 students (15% of the enrolled student population) with 5,500 of those being regular attendees (i.e., attending the program for 30 days or more

during the course of the school year) and with approximately 60% of the participants being economically disadvantaged (i.e., eligible for Free Reduced Lunch). Vermont's 21C state program focuses on establishing full, comprehensive centers with a wide variety of programming and options for students, a vast network of community partnerships, a strong evidence base, and a focus on family and parent engagement. 21C-funded afterschool programs in Vermont operate on average 12 hours weekly for 34 weeks during the school year and minimally 37 hours weekly for 5 weeks in the summer. 21C-funded programs are integrated within school systems as evidenced by their role in school/district Multi-Tiered System of Supports, by Project Directors often situated as central office staff, and based on 94% of the local site coordinators reporting that they meet with their school principal at least monthly. Program quality is ensured in a number of ways:

- 21C Project Directors are required to have contracts for at least 30 hours/week and often sit on district or supervisory union administrator and leadership teams
- 39% of 21C Project Directors have a Masters degree or higher
- 35% of staff working in 21C programs are licensed educators (including many school-day teachers and staff)
- 90% of 21C sites utilize a nationally recognized Program Quality Assessment Tool and Improvement System on an annual basis
- 21C directors and staff receive in-depth and ongoing professional development, coaching, and technical assistance through a contract with Vermont Afterschool
- AOE has a full-time State Coordinator for the 21C program who has long-experience running the program and sits within the Student Pathways Division
- 21C grants are awarded competitively, extend for 5 years, and applicants may re-apply
- All 21C funded programs are required to submit program outcome and quality data to both the federal government and the state; an annual performance report is also required each year along with regular monitoring and program improvement visits.
- Over the last 20 years, Vermont has intentionally built a strong community across the 21C programs through regular leadership retreats, professional development opportunities, field calls, communities of practice, sharing of resources and knowledge, and networking opportunities.

**Afterschool Supports for Working Families and Workforce Initiatives.** Vermont's Child Development Division has established systems for supporting early childhood and afterschool system in Vermont.

- Currently, there are 162 licensed afterschool programs in Vermont. There are many additional child care programs that serve young children as well as school-age children under an early childhood program license which supports the needs of families with multi-age children.
- The system supports a variety of community-based entities including municipalities, school districts, community and private entities.
- Regional child care referral organizations work with parents to find regulated afterschool and summer learning programs across the state.
- Families enrolling children in regulated afterschool and summer learning programs utilize the Child Care Financial Assistance Program to support access to these programs. In State Fiscal Year 2020 there was an average of 1460 children receiving Child Care Financial Assistance that attended a regulated Afterschool Program.



- Vermont has separate licensing requirements for school-age programs that recognize and reflect the specific needs of programs serving school-age children. The Child Care Licensing staff conduct regular program visits to assess compliance with regulations.
- Licensed and regulated afterschool programs in Vermont can also participate in the state's Step Ahead Quality Rating and Improvement System (STARS) which supports program quality through a process created specifically for those serving school-age children. Program quality assessments and technical assistance are offered to participating programs through a partner organization.
- Vermont funds a variety of professional development and program supports, including the Afterschool Foundations Certificate, the Afterschool Essentials Program, and an Afterschool Director's Credential which are connected with the broader Vermont early childhood and afterschool professional development system. These achievements earn a bonus through that system.

**Statewide Afterschool Network Organization.** Every state in the nation has a designated statewide afterschool network organization. These statewide partnership organizations braid private and public dollars to support the afterschool field. Since 2009, Vermont Afterschool has served as Vermont's statewide afterschool organization, as well as the state affiliate for the National Afterschool Association, the state lead for Youth Thrive, the state coordinator for Building Flourishing Communities, and the state partner for the Youth Program Quality Assessment and Improvement process developed by the Weikart Center, Forum for Youth Investment. As such, Vermont Afterschool works in close collaboration with a number of state agencies and departments to provide in-depth project support, resources, technical assistance, and evaluation services in the areas of afterschool and summer programming, positive youth development, and expanded learning. In 2019, 80% of Vermont towns with afterschool programs and/or youth-serving organizations were supported and/or impacted by Vermont Afterschool's partnership initiatives. As Vermont moves towards universal afterschool, having a strong, statewide partnerships can help support cross-sector collaboration, leverage diverse funding sources, and respond to the needs of afterschool programs and providers in a flexible and real-time manner.

**Statewide Systems of Support for Quality Programs.** In 2020, Vermont ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation for afterschool programs based largely on the quality of programs and staff. This high level of quality is something that Vermont has invested in over the last 15 or so years, with program quality standards and assessment tools, statewide coordination, quality committees, dedicated state positions, and professional development systems. Major federal funding sources for afterschool and summer also recognize and support quality supports, including professional development, technical assistance, and state level administration. The Child Care Development Block Grant includes a 4% quality set aside for state level activities. The 21C federal program allows up to 7% of funding to the state to be used for state administrative costs and technical assistance to programs. When Vermont created the School-age Child Care Hubs for remote learning days, quality supports, staff training, and technical assistance were provided there as well. Vermont's approach to universal afterschool should include funding and support for state administration of the effort, technical assistance, quality systems, and professional development. The funding could represent a set percentage of the total funding in the effort and be directed to the state agency/agencies supporting the work. There are also important economies of scale in providing quality supports at the state level rather than having each program determine their own standards and provide options locally. In addition, statewide systems can support shared learning, communities of practice, and the creation of a strong network of afterschool professionals and leaders.

Vermont's 21C program offers a good example of the type of peer support and connection that can develop through a strong statewide system, as well as the impact on program quality and growth over time.

**COVID Response and Recovery.** Much was also learned this past year with the need for programs for children and youth outside the school day and in the summer taking on even greater importance as part of Vermont's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Major statewide initiatives, such as providing childcare for the children of essential workers and setting up School-age Childcare Hubs on remote learning days, also helped with this knowledge gain. In 2021, new funding under the America Rescue Plan will provide increased federal support for afterschool and summer learning programs through 2023. This is an important opportunity to leverage the new federal dollars as a well-timed investment to help jump-start universal afterschool in Vermont. The new federal dollars are one-time money and flow mostly through local school districts. The statewide grant program proposed here can thus be used to expand enrollment, hours, and access for children and youth through community partners (e.g., non-profit organizations, recreation departments, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, childcare centers, traditional summer camps, etc.) and to set up Vermont's Universal Afterschool system so that after the federal funding expires in 2023, the infrastructure, partnerships, training, and resources are in place to continue to provide access across the state.

## MOVING TOWARD UNIVERSALITY

The landscape of afterschool and summer programming in Vermont is varied and complex. Solutions are not one-size-fits-all, and cross sector collaboration and ongoing conversation is essential. Members of this Task Force have acknowledged that it is difficult to tackle a complex issue such as Universal Afterschool in just a few months. It also takes time for all voices to be heard and for participating members to develop a deep understanding of the opportunities and challenges inherent within the current systems and programs. While there are other existing committees in Vermont that touch on issues related to afterschool and summer, having an ongoing, collaborative, and recognized committee with the sole purpose of monitoring and advising on this issue would bring tremendous value and help address these concerns. This is an approach that has been taken by a number of other states in support of statewide initiatives to expand access. It is also the approach used most recently by the Governor's office in forming the Summer Enrichment Team in order to expand access to summer programs in 2021. The Summer Enrichment Team is led by the Governor's office and includes the participation of representatives from the Agency of Education, Department for Children and Families, Department of Health, Department of Mental Health, Department of Labor, Fish and Wildlife, Vermont Afterschool, Senator Sanders' Office, and others such as a school principal and a child's psychologist.

As Vermont moves towards universal afterschool, there will be an ongoing need for guidance, evolution, and adaptation. In addition to expanding access, rebuilding the existing afterschool and summer programs that have played a substantial role in serving tens of thousands of children and youth in the state should be a priority in developing universal afterschool programs in Vermont. The Afterschool and Summer State Oversight Committee will have an important role to play following developments throughout Vermont's COVID-19 recovery efforts, continuing to assess access and need, and advising on current and future state investments. This Task Force recommends establishing the Oversight Committee as soon as possible so as to most effectively build on the work done here and to not lose direction or momentum. In addition, there were key aspects of equity and inclusion that this Task Force was not able to address to the level we would have liked due to data and time constraints (e.g., accommodations and supports for children and youth with disabilities to participate in afterschool programs; how to increase access for vulnerable and marginalized populations; how to ensure afterschool staff reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children and youth they serve; and how to best incorporate youth voice into program design and offerings).

The Task Force would like to note that while the meetings were open to the public, we had few members of the public comment or attend, and there was an absence of input from families and youth. The Task Force would like to acknowledge that with more time perhaps more diverse perspectives, specifically those of families, might be heard to inform the design of this program.

Finally, the Task Force would like to make note of larger structural issues related to the small, rural nature of Vermont that need additional study and consideration in order to firmly establish universal afterschool. These include: providing transportation for children and youth to and from programs all across the state; growing an afterschool workforce so that there are enough high-quality, trained professionals who are not necessarily licensed teachers to fill needed staff positions; and ensuring that those working in the field can earn a livable wage and have access to benefits.

## APPENDIX I

### PROPOSED GRANT PROGRAM

The Universal Afterschool Task Force recommends a statewide grant program be designed and implemented to increase access to afterschool and summer programs. Below is a framework for such a grant program.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the grant program should be to provide Universal Afterschool in Vermont within a framework that emphasizes inclusion, belonging, and equity. The grant program should expand access for children and youth from historically marginalized groups, support low and middle income families, children and youth, and promote programming in underserved areas of the state. Afterschool programs funded as a part of this initiative should elevate youth voice and engagement; support working families; provide enrichment and learning experiences; build protective factors; support social-emotional learning, youth mental health, and well-being; and keep children and youth from kindergarten through high school healthy and safe. Programs should provide universally-designed learning (UDL) and enrichment experiences that are accessible and welcoming to all of Vermont's children and youth.

#### **Definitions:**

- Afterschool Program- a structured program serving children and youth on a regular basis anytime outside the school day and over the summer. This can include academic, enrichment and family engagement activities and programs that can occur before school, afterschool, on weekends and evenings, and during the summer and school vacations.
- Access- means the ability and opportunity for all children and youth to participate. Characteristics of accessible programs include:
  - They are inclusive (does not exclude children/youth based on characteristics/demographics);
  - Appropriately staffed
  - Do not have waiting lists;
  - Are either low/no cost or provide subsidy, scholarships and sliding fee scales
  - Operate during hours that support working families;
  - Are safe (including children/youth can get to and from the program safely) and are of high quality;
  - Prioritize supports and staffing to accommodate a wide range of needs (e.g., English Language Learners (ELL), Special Education (SPED), trauma-informed, disabilities, etc.)
- Equity- According to the Vermont Agency of Education, educational equity means that every child and youth has access to the resources, opportunities and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, whatever their race, gender/identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, disability, family background, or family income may be. (Adapted from CCSSO, Leading for Equity). Also see the Equity Lens Tool created by the Racial Equity Director/Agency of Administration and in use by the Vermont Agency of Education.

- Quality- see the National Afterschool Association's Focus Brief<sup>15</sup> and the Quality Assessment Tool from the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.<sup>16</sup>

### **Eligibility:**

Entities eligible for the grants should include schools, school districts, supervisory unions, nonprofit organizations, municipalities, and licensed childcare centers.

The program should require grant recipients to fulfill defined safety requirements as determined by the State (e.g. facilities, background checks) and be required to:

- Demonstrate competence with stated high-quality program standards and ongoing program evaluation;
- Demonstrate appropriate staffing levels and expertise to serve the number of children proposed;
- Conform to state and federal legislation governing the administration/use of public dollars and state and federal anti-discrimination statutes;
- Demonstrate the capacity to serve students with disabilities or have a stated plan by which they will have the capacity to serve students requiring supports with additional state funding;<sup>17</sup>
- Demonstrate understanding of methods to support children/youth with limited English proficiency and a way to communicate/engage families with limited English proficiency;
- Demonstrate completion of any state-required annual training, such as Mandated Reporting, Universal Precautions for Bloodborne Pathogens, Confidentiality, etc.; and
- Demonstrate a process to ensure that individuals working with children have had a criminal and child abuse registry check prior to working alone with children.

And be encouraged to:

- Partner with or demonstrate strong collaboration with the school district(s), community partners, and local mentoring programs;
- Engage in ongoing professional development, such as cultural competence, substance abuse prevention, resilience, and universal design for learning; and
- Utilize evidence-informed practices.

### **Anti-Discrimination Statutes:**

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<sup>15</sup> Why Afterschool Quality Matters. National Afterschool Association. A series of focus briefs: State of Afterschool Quality. [www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org)

<sup>16</sup> <https://forumfyi.org/work/the-weikart-center/>

<sup>17</sup> *Feedback from families of children with special needs should guide the minimum program requirements. Program directors should review all policies, procedures, and practices that could result in unintended barriers to access. For example, a child with a developmental delay may not be toilet trained at the age this is typically expected. Having a policy that requires a child to be toilet trained by a specific age may result in a barrier for a child whose development is delayed.*

All activities must conform to state and federal legislation governing the administration/use of public dollars and state and federal anti-discrimination statutes.

**Funding Priorities:**

Grant awards should be prioritized for programs that:

- Serve low-income and middle-income children and youth
- Serve underserved areas of the state
- Serve underserved/marginalized populations
- Provide access, supports, and accommodations for children and youth with disabilities and/or special needs
- Provide quality programming content and design (e.g., Social-Emotional Learning, STEM, creative expression and the arts, transferable skills, positive youth development, universal design, youth voice, and program intentionality)
- Support substance misuse prevention

**Potential Afterschool and Summer Programs Oversight Committee:**

The grant program should be overseen by an agency or department of state government with programs designs approved by an inclusive oversight committee. The Oversight Committee would be made up of state agency staff, afterschool and youth development experts, parents, teachers, youth, providers, and other stakeholders (see proposed list below). Members of the committee should be selected to bring a variety of ideas, perspectives, and approaches to the table. Having an inclusive oversight body can help improve program design transparency and will ensure programs are designed based on input from an informed and invested group bringing important perspectives and program interoperability to program design.

The oversight body should help inform the development of the application and grant-making process, the selection of funding priorities for programs, and how an assessment of overall program outcomes at the state level. This committee should have the authority to effectively navigate the state's progress towards universal afterschool.

Duties of the Afterschool and Summer Programs Oversight Committee could include:

- 1) Reviewing information and data collected annually and an evaluation conducted to determine the state and extent of afterschool and summer programming in Vermont. This analysis shall include an exploration of trends in funding in Vermont and recommendations for how to leverage, integrate, and augment available federal, local, and private dollars to meet the need for quality afterschool and summer programs in communities throughout Vermont.
- 2) Review and provide feedback on program plans submitted to it by state agencies to ensure programs implemented best support expanding access to quality afterschool and summer programs. The committee would need to approval final program designs before programs start.

**Potential Afterschool and Summer State Oversight Committee Membership:**

- Agency of Human Services, Child Development Division, Dept for Children and Families
- Agency of Human Services, Department of Health (prevention and youth focus)
- Agency of Human Services, Department of Mental Health
- Agency of Education
- Agency of Commerce and Community Development

- Vermont Department of Libraries
- Vermont Afterschool
- Hunger Free Vermont
- Member of the Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council
- Higher Education
- Representatives from Afterschool Programs and/or youth-serving organizations (3 seats)
- Parents' Organization (2 seats)
- Practicing educational leader (e.g., school administrator or member of a school leadership team)
- School board member
- Teacher and/or school guidance counselor
- Special Education Teacher or Administrator
- Social Worker
- Parents/ Families
- Youth/Children

Committee members should declare any potential conflicts of interest and, if eligible for funding, recuse themselves as appropriate from participating in any discussions about the grant competition design, process.

**Administration:**

It is important that the grant program is administered by an agency that is familiar with the needs of children, youth, and families. The agency/department responsible for administration of the grant program should also collect and analyze data, reporting to the General Assembly annually.

**Partnerships:**

Community and school partnerships are essential to diversify resources and provide more sustainability. The grant process should include a requirement or priority for organizations working with school and community partners.

**Proposed Program Elements:**

Below is a list of suggested required elements for grant applications:

- Detailed information about numbers of children to be served and ages, location, staffing plan, space utilization, program elements, sample daily schedule, schedule of hours program will operate in school year and summer
- Program sustainability plan
- Transportation for the participating children and youth
- Cost and other funding available to support the program as well as in-kind support
- Community partnerships
- Universally-designed learning (UDL) and enrichment experiences that are accessible and welcoming to all of Vermont's children and youth
- Specific staff training, including knowledge of strategies to support children/youth with special needs and those with limited English proficiency
- Description of the environment of the program (to ensure safe and supportive spaces)
- Quality monitoring and reporting
- Statement on commitment to equity within the program
- Plan to promote child success in the program and prevent expulsion

The grant application could allow for alternative programs to use elements not listed above and/or an explanation of how they will meet these elements or why a particular element does not fit with their afterschool program and therefore they document elements in other ways.

**Quality Supports:**

Any statewide Afterschool Grant Program should include support for ongoing professional development opportunities, coaching, and technical assistance. Consistent with state grant programs, and as identified under the “Administration” section, state-level supports should be considered under the Administration of the program and provided via the Agency and /or through Agency contracts. Adequate funding should be provided to ensure those quality state-level supports. Quality support efforts should encourage the following:

- Collaboration with community partners, school district(s), and local mentoring programs
- Ability and readiness to support children/youth with varying ability levels
- Understanding of methods to support children/youth with limited English proficiency
- Cultural competence
- Substance abuse prevention
- Resilience
- Universal design for learning
- Use of evidenced-informed practices for both instruction and prevention
- Competence with stated high-quality program standards and ongoing program evaluation

**Measures of Effectiveness and Reporting Requirements:**

A comprehensive evaluation process for afterschool programs and the grant program is key to determining program success and identifying opportunities for improvement. Data should be reported to the Afterschool and Summer State Oversight Committee and the administering state agency/department. Where possible the data should be reported in both aggregated and disaggregated formats. Program data reports should include:

- Demographic data
- Enrollment and participation data (including data on regular attendees and why families may have declined to enroll)
- Child and youth outcome data
- Children, youth, family, and community partner feedback
- Data from program quality assessments, such as the Youth Program Quality Assessment Tool developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality or other quality assessment tool proposed by the state
- Program improvement plans including program changes based on child, youth, family and community partner feedback

**Funding Authorizations:**

The Task Force recommends that any oversight committee be allowed to recommend to the granting Agency/Department creating sub-components for funding under a state grant program. For example, in addition to awarding grants to organizations and entities to run afterschool and summer programs, an oversight committee may recommend setting aside a portion of the funds to support capacity building efforts in communities where few or no program options exist prior to that community applying for full



program operation grants. The oversight committee could also recommend setting aside a portion of the funds for grants to programs in need of additional supports to serve children/youth with disabilities. If needed, the committee could recommend designating a portion of available funds for a state agency to award grants or contracts to organizations providing technical assistance and/or professional development to afterschool and summer program leaders and staff in order to build and maintain high and consistent levels of program quality across the state. In addition, agency-level grant funding could also be used to collaborate with local school districts regarding professional development and to support afterschool program staff to participate in school in-service training and opportunities.

## Appendix II

### Thinking Outside the Box

While Vermont will need to build on existing funding streams and community resources, the approach to Universal Afterschool can also benefit from looking outside our state and even our nation. For instance, in 2019, Vermont's Opioid Coordination Council considered models for prevention and positive youth development from countries that have well-developed and effective approaches, namely Iceland and Finland. A brief overview of system-wide efforts in each of these countries is provided below.

#### The Finnish Model for Youth Work

Finland has an extensive system for Youth Work that is being studied by and replicated in countries around the world. With one of the shortest school days but some of the highest test scores in the world, the programs, support, and opportunities provided for youth in the third space in Finland are important to consider. Youth Work in Finland is a recognized field, separate and distinct from the education system. Neighborhoods in every city and town have youth centers that are open usually from 12pm to 9pm and offer a safe space for youth to congregate as well as access to a wide range of resources (e.g., digital recording studios, theatre programs, graffiti art, painting, crafts, jewelry making, video production, band equipment, etc.). Encouraging young people to discover passions and interests in community with other young people and supported by adult role models and mentors is a priority in Finland: One of the key outcome measures of the Ministry of Education and Culture is that every youth in Finland will have a hobby. In this context, hobbies are seen as a way for young people to develop skills, interests, self-identity, self-efficacy, and social networks. Finnish youth workers are highly trained experts on youth development, youth transitions, youth living conditions, and youth culture who operate within this third space, connecting with youth and supporting healthy decision making. Bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees in youth work are all available in Finland. The system of youth work in Finland recognizes adolescence and young adulthood as a special and important time in a person's life, respects the autonomy and decision-making abilities of young people, and provides a cross-sector integrated approach to supporting positive youth development (e.g., education, health, prevention, social connections, employment, etc.).

#### The Icelandic Model for Broad-based Prevention

In response to concerns about the increasing prevalence of drug and alcohol use among adolescents, social scientists with the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), a non-profit research institute affiliated with Reykjavik University, developed and implemented an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder, community-based model for adolescent substance use prevention. The Icelandic Model of Adolescent Substance Use Prevention, or "Icelandic Model," aims to reduce the use of substances including cannabis, cigarettes, and alcohol by increasing parental monitoring and parental social involvement, and through youth participation in organized sports, the arts, and other structured activities after school. As with the Finnish model, these third space activities are provided outside of schools and separate from the formal education system. Studies show that after implementing the model, substance use and risk factors such as engaging in a "party lifestyle" decreased dramatically between 1997 and 2017.

## Appendix III

### Notes on Estimated Cost Calculations

Data from existing afterschool programs was used to calculate an estimated cost for programming. For this analysis, 'school year and summer programming' was defined as programs that are in operation for 15 hours per week during the school year and 5 days per week, 40 hours per week, and 6 weeks total during the summer. 21C programs that met these criteria in 2018-19 were grouped by size (small, medium, large, extra-large) based on the number of children and youth served in order to develop an average annual operating cost for each size group. Any costs included in the programs' annual operating budgets was included in these cost estimates.

The current average annual operating cost of each size group of programs was calculated as follows:

- The total project expenditure for each currently funded 21C project was obtained through a spreadsheet provided by the Vermont Agency of Education (based on 2018-2019 data). The analysis relied on 21C data because that is the only program that collects program cost information on a regular basis at the state level.
- A list of sites within each project was obtained from each project's Annual Performance Report, also provided by Vermont Agency of Education.
- For each site, the total number of annual operating hours and the total number of children and youth served were determined from the Annual Performance Report data.
- The estimated percentage of each project's funding allocated to each site was calculated by using a weighted average determined by each site's annual operating hours and total number of children and youth served.
- The allocation percentage for each individual 21C program site was used to calculate the total annual operating cost for each.
- The size group of each currently operating 21C was determined based on the number of regular attendees served by the site each year. Regular attendees are defined as those who have attended programming for at least 30 days throughout the school year.
- Within each size group, the average annual operating cost for a 21C site was calculated.

*NOTE: Not all costs (e.g., transportation, administration, etc.) were included fully across all the program budgets that were used for this analysis.*