

# American Institutes for Research

## Recognizing the Role of Research and Evidence in Out-of-School Time

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unimaginable challenges and change in the past year, and this has been especially true for young people. With the passage of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), state and local education agencies, childcare agencies, and the Corporation for National and Community Service through AmeriCorps have the opportunity to leverage an historic investment in comprehensive afterschool and summer programs that can support young people during the hours they are out of school.

Ongoing guidance from the U.S. Department of Education specifies what state and local education agencies must do with these funds. Importantly, ARP funding requirements specify that state education agencies reserve funds to address learning loss, and to provide summer enrichment programs, and comprehensive afterschool programs. States must describe “the evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs” and the “evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs” that address or otherwise ensure a response to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.

While the goals of the current administration have been made clear—“build back better”—the use of terms like “research” and “evidence” may be less so. What do these terms mean and how are they different from each other? Moreover, what does this emphasis mean for afterschool and summer programs that aim to leverage ARP funds in support of youth, families, and communities?

In this guidance series from AIR, we describe:

- Research versus evidence, how they are the same and how they are different – and how afterschool and summer programs can (and should!) make the most of this time of opportunity ([read Guide 1 online](#)).
- What we know from decades of **research** on afterschool and summer learning programs to ensure that programs are grounded in the research and driving toward the evidence ([read Guide 2 online](#)).
- What **evidence-based** means for afterschool and summer learning programs ([read Guide 3 online](#)).
- Strategies to leverage the historic investment in afterschool and summer programs, including a guide for creating an evidence-based logic model ([read Guide 4 online](#)).

The guides can be read in order (starting with Guide 1 and going through to Guide 4) or separately, depending on your needs and interests. For more information, or if you need technical assistance, please contact us.

### RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Guide 1, Overview: Recognizing the Role of Research and Evidence in Out-of-School-Time \(PDF\)](#)

[Guide 2, Research: Recognizing the Role of Research and Evidence in Out-of-School-Time \(PDF\)](#)

[Guide 3, Evidence: Recognizing the Role of Research and Evidence in Out-of-School-Time \(PDF\)](#)

[Guide 4, Strategies: Recognizing the Role of Research and Evidence in Out-of-School-Time \(PDF\)](#)