WISCONSIN OUT OF SCHOOL TIME ALLIANCE

Blueprint for Impact: Starting a 21st Century Community Learning Center



Guide Book

Guidebook Legend



Webinar that provides an overview of the topic



Video that shares examples related to the topic



Podcast with staff to expand on topic knowledge



Articles that dive deep into the topics



Resources that you and your staff can use



Grant Requirement vital information needed for the grant

How to Use the E-book

This resource is designed with flexibility in mind. Use it as a staff training template and work through each topic in order or pick and choose topics and content that are most relevant to you and your staff.

Launching an impactful 21st Century Community Learning Center after-school program is more achievable than you might think. This comprehensive guide empowers educators and community leaders to create dynamic, student-centered programs that not only meet educational needs but also inspire growth, foster engagement, and drive meaningful outcomes for students, families, and the broader community.

Creating a successful and sustainable 21st CCLC program has become a major focus for youth-serving initiatives in recent years. Research shows that youth who participate in well-structured, supportive programs can experience improved overall development and academic success. To build these effective programs, staff need to be equipped with essential knowledge, tools, and resources.

No matter the setting—schools, community centers, afterschool programs, clubs, or libraries—the goal remains the same. We aim to create a safe, supportive environment that fosters learning and personal growth through intentional activities, positive relationships, and a nurturing atmosphere. But how do we achieve this? And how do we ensure our staff are ready for this important mission?

This guide will explore the various elements that frontline staff need in their “toolkit” to create and sustain a successful 21st CCLC program. Each topic will be presented in multiple formats to suit different training schedules, learning preferences, and timelines—including webinars, podcasts, short videos, and additional resources.



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1 Funding the Future: Mastering your CLC Grant Blueprint



Webinars

Evaluating and Demonstrating Your School's Need for a 21st CCLC Grant Program.

This webinar provides valuable insights into identifying and articulating your school's needs for the grant. It covers effective strategies for gathering and presenting data, best practices for writing compelling grant proposals, and includes examples and case studies from successful applications. This session is designed to help educators and administrators improve their chances of obtaining funding for after-school programs and other educational initiatives.

Budget: What Will it Cost to Operate my Program

Understanding the financial aspects of running an afterschool program is crucial. This video breaks down the costs involved and provides practical tips for budgeting effectively. Learn how to plan your expenses, secure funding, and manage your program's finances to ensure sustainability.

Developing and Sustaining Partnerships

In this insightful video, explore the essential strategies for building and maintaining effective partnerships. Learn how to foster collaboration, mutual respect, and shared goals to achieve long-term success. Whether you're working in an out of school program, education, or community development, these practical tips will help you create strong, sustainable partnerships that drive positive outcomes.

Podcast

Advocating for Program Resources and Making Connections

In this episode, we discuss the importance of advocating for resources and building connections to support youth programs. Join us as we talk with Jennifer Smith who share strategies for securing funding, forming partnerships, and enhancing program effectiveness. Learn how to navigate challenges and leverage community assets to create impactful youth services. Perfect for program coordinators, educators, and anyone involved in youth development.

Resources

Starting an Afterschool Program Assessing the Need

The document 'Assessing the Need' guides schools in starting afterschool programs by collecting data from families and the community. It includes tips for designing effective surveys and provides a sample survey to identify the types of care needed and preferred activities.

Needs Assessment Worksheet

This worksheet guides schools through a comprehensive needs assessment to establish a 21st Century Community Learning Center. It helps identify strengths and areas for improvement in providing after-school programs that support student success.

Allowable Costs Associated with the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant

This is a resource provided by the Wisconsin DPI to help grantees identify what budget items can be funded with CLC grant dollars, ensuing responsible stewardship of public funds.

The Road to Sustainability

This comprehensive guide is designed to help out-of-school time programs develop and implement effective sustainability plans. It covers essential topics such as creating a vision, building collaboration, advocating for support, and finding funding. It includes practical tools like worksheets, templates, and case studies to assist program leaders in strategically securing resources and ensuing long-term success.

Sustainability Electronic Resource Book

Sustainability in youth development involves designing and maintaining programs that consistently support young people over time. This resource includes key elements such as stable funding, dedicated staff and volunteers, strong partnerships and family engagement, effective marketing and outreach, ongoing evaluation and improvement, clear policies and procedures, and access to adequate facilities and resources.





Building You Dream Team: Hiring with Heart and Strategy

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Webinars

Cultivating Staff with a Healthy Organizational Culture

Discover effective strategies for fostering a positive and healthy organizational culture. This video explores key practices to enhance employee well-being, boost morale, and create a supportive work environment. Learn how to cultivate a culture that promotes collaboration, innovation, and productivity.

Staff Development: Where to Start

In this webinar, Janet Levings from AIR discusses key elements of staff development for afterschool programs and demonstrates how to use Tool 23 – Professional Development Plan from the Beyond the Bell Toolkit to support staff goals.

Podcast

The Vital Role of Quality Staff in 21st Century Community Learning Centers

In this episode, we explore the critical importance of high-quality staff in 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) programs. Discover the essential characteristics and skills needed for OST staff to foster meaningful connections with youth, create cohesive and mission-driven teams, and transform basic supervision into impactful youth development programming. Learn about mandatory staffing requirements for CCLC programs and practical strategies to elevate the quality of out-of-school care.

Article

Equitable Strategies to Support Recruitment, Retention, and Rejuvenation of a Strong OST Workforce

This article briefly outlines equitable strategies to enhance recruitment, retention, and rejuvenation of the out-of-school time (OST) workforce. It emphasizes the importance of quality jobs, including livable wages and positive work environments, to advance equity in OST programs

Grant Requirement

21st Century Community Learning Center programs are required to employ a dedicated program coordinator for a minimum of 20 hours per week if overseeing one site and 40 hours per week if overseeing multiple sites.

Resource

Staff Recruitment Toolkit

The Staff Recruitment Toolkit provides comprehensive resources and strategies to help organizations attract and hire the best candidates. It includes practical tools and templates to streamline the recruitment process and ensure a good fit for your team.



3 From Vision to Reality: Crafting a Program That Inspires



Webinars

Project Based Learning Overview

This webinar dives into the fundamentals of project-based learning (PBL), gives insights into the core principals and benefits of PBL and how to design and implement effective projects that engage students in meaningful, real-world learning. Experts will share practical tips and strategies for creating a student-centered classroom environment that fosters critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity.

Project Based Learning & Partnerships

This webinar explores the impact of partnerships in project-based learning (PBL). It delves into how collaborations with community organizations, businesses, and stakeholders can enhance PBL for students. Experts share successful partnership models and strategies for building and sustaining these relationships, highlighting how they provide real-world learning opportunities, resources, and support to enrich PBL projects and student outcomes.

Making Service Part of Your Afterschool Program Culture

In this insightful video, explore the essential strategies for building and maintaining effective partnerships. Learn how to foster collaboration, mutual respect, and shared goals to achieve long-term success. Whether you're working in an out of school program, education, or community development, these practical tips will help you create strong, sustainable partnerships that drive positive outcomes.

Short Videos

Downtime/Transition Activities

This video explores effective strategies for managing downtime and transition activities in out-of-school time programs. It provides practical tips on keeping participants engaged and ensuring smooth transitions between activities.

Inquiry-Based Learning

This video provides a concise overview of inquiry-based learning, which is an approach that encourages active engagement, critical thinking, and exploration, making the learning process more dynamic and student-centered.

Experiential Learning

This video provides an overview of experiential learning, an educational approach where learners gain knowledge and skills through direct experience. This method emphasizes active participation and reflection, allowing students to connect theory with practice.



Articles

Setting the Stage for Children's Success

This article explores the critical elements of program quality in school-age care, emphasizing the importance of both physical and emotional environments. It highlights how these environments impact interactions among staff, children, and parents, and outlines strategies for creating supportive and enriching spaces that foster children's growth and development.

Measuring Youth Development

This article from the Wallace Foundation explores how afterschool and other out-of-school time programs measure their impact on youth development.

Engaging Families in Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs

This article discusses the importance of involving families in afterschool and summer learning programs. It highlights how family engagement improves student outcomes such as attendance, behavior, and academic achievement.



Podcast

Together We Thrive: Family Engagement Strategies

This episode offers practical strategies for fostering family-school partnerships, effective communication methods, and overcoming challenges to ensure families are actively involved in their children's education. Learn from a veteran CLC Coordinator on how family engagement can significantly impact student outcomes and enhance the quality of out-of-school care.

Resources

Developing High-Quality Learning Environments for Youth

This site provides resources and guidelines for creating effective learning environments in youth programs. It dives into topics including program design, quality standards, best practices and much more.

ACT Now's Family Engagement Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by the Afterschool for Children and Teens (ACT Now) Coalition to aid afterschool and summer program administrators and staff as they navigate the family engagement process, regardless of their starting point.

Arly-Family Engagement Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help afterschool programs create an inclusive and welcoming environment for families and caregivers. It provides practical strategies for developing effective communication plans, fostering strong relationships, and engaging families in meaningful ways. The toolkit includes resources such as sample emails, social media graphics, and tips for hosting family events, all aimed at enhancing family involvement and support for afterschool programs.

Grant Requirements

21st Century CLC programs are required to meet a minimum of 10 hours per week and 115 days per year. Summer programming and days set aside for program staff training or program planning do not count toward this total.

Programs must offer adult family members of 21st CCLC participants opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children's education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development. Programs must offer at least four family engagement events per school year.

21st Century Community Learning Centers are required to regularly provide all participants academic enrichment programming that goes beyond remedial education, tutoring services, or homework help.



The Backbone of Success: Forms, Framework and Flow

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Webinars

Creating Policies and Procedures

Establishing clear policies and procedures is essential for the smooth operation of your afterschool program. This video provides guidance on developing effective policies and procedures that ensure consistency, compliance, and safety. Learn how to create a framework that supports your program's goals and enhances its overall effectiveness.

Cayen Evaluation Webinar Series

This webinar series provides professional development on topics such as program evaluation, student engagement, data reporting, and continuous improvement. Each session offers practical tools, expert insights, and actionable strategies to enhance the quality and impact of CCLC programs across Wisconsin.



Grant Requirements

Transportation between school, center, and home cannot be a barrier for any student attending the 21st CCLC. Applicants must describe how they will meet the potential transportation needs for participants, ensuring that transportation to and from the program will not interfere with their ability to participate

Articles

Recruiting and Enrolling Youth into Your Program.

This article from the Iowa Afterschool Alliance discusses the impact and importance of afterschool and summer programs and focuses on making your program attractive to kids as well as meet the needs of parents to get youth in your program.

Linking Schools and Afterschool Through Social and Emotional Learning.

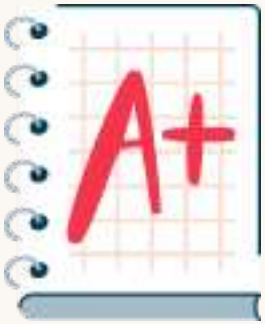
This article from the American Institutes for Research explores how schools and afterschool programs can collaborate to support student's social and emotional development. Strategies in the article include aligning goals, sharing practices, and developing joint programs to enhance SEL.

Getting There is Half the Battle

Discusses the significant impact of transportation access on Out-of-School Time programs and the families they serve. It highlights the challenges faced by both urban and rural communities in ensuring children can attend these programs. The article emphasizes that transportation barriers can hinder participation and limit the benefits of OST programs, which are crucial for children's development and well-being.



5 Measuring What Matters: Evaluating for Growth and Impact



Webinar

Your Continuous Improvement Reality Check

This webinar provides an overview about afterschool program quality, the importance of using data for improvement, and creating a culture of continuous improvement.

Podcast

Aligning Program Activities with Grant Goals

In this podcast a veteran CLC Coordinator shares her insights on aligning afterschool program activities with the goals and objectives of the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. She discusses strategies for ensuring that programs support students' academic, social, and emotional needs while engaging families and the community. This conversation highlights the importance of stakeholder involvement and addresses challenges in aligning activities with grant objectives.

Grant Requirement

WI 21st CCLC grantees are required to participate in a self-assessment process during the five-year cycle of funding. This process is intended to be an opportunity for site program staff to reflect on what they do well and what they can improve to best meet the needs of the students and families served by the program.





Articles

Why Measuring Quality in Youth Programs Matters: Insights on Defining, Evaluating, and Strengthening Impact

The Forum for Youth Investment emphasizes the importance of assessing and improving the quality of youth programs. Key topics include, the importance of quality measurement, defining quality, continuous improvement, and shared language.

How to Maximize Grant Funding & Prove Impact with Better Reporting in Youth Programs

This article provides strategies for youth programs to secure more grant funding by demonstrating their impact through effective measurement and reporting. It emphasizes the importance of showcasing measurable results, using data to tell compelling stories, and maintaining accountability to build trust with funders. The article also offers practical tips on improving reporting practices, such as establishing clear metrics and leveraging technology for data collection



Resources

Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant Program Self-Assessment

The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant Program Self-Assessment is a tool for grantees to evaluate their programs. It helps identify areas of success and improvement, guiding continuous enhancement efforts to ensure quality and effectiveness in serving students and families

WASCIP Self-Assessment Rubric,

Developed by the Wisconsin DPI is designed to help CCLC and other afterschool programs evaluate and improve their quality. This assessment rates administration, academic programming, youth development and partnerships.

Designing and Assessing Child Outcomes

Designing and Assessing Child Outcomes in OST Programs is a 12-hour blended course that covers creating meaningful child outcomes, aligning them with SMARTIE goals, and translating these goals into effective activities. It also addresses documentation and assessment of progress.



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