SUSTAINABILITY

**the endurance of systems and processes;
capable of being prolonged; to keep up; to withstand**

Sustainability involves a multitude of things—it is not simply "raising money". Rather, sustainability flows from a confluence of factors, including quality programming, positive outcomes, effective management and so on. For a program to continue to thrive, grow and attain long-term sustainability, it is essential to develop a plan with multiple, critical components.

Sustainability is a process. Every sustainability plan will look different. ELO programs are unique and exist in changing environments. While ELO sustainability plans will follow the same, general outline, programs are starting from different points and no two programs will have the same timeline or exact plan. Thus, it is important for each program to develop their own sustainability plan and timeline that fits their program and community.

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Nebraska Statewide Coalition c ( ) mmunity-wide ELO Systems

Sustaining high quality ELO programs that serve all youth through broad community ownership

Building Partnerships and Sustainability in Your Community

*Complete 'Community Scan' document

*Identify 4-5 priority partnerships and complete 'Partner Analysis' document

*Begin outreach, schedule meetings

*Educating potential partners of importance of ELOs in your community and about your program

*community wide EDUCATION (newspaper, television, radio)

*Schedule program visits for potential partners

*Engage potential/current partners in Lights on AfterSchool event

*Create Advisory Board (or strengthen existant group)

*Further engage partners in the programming...invite partners to serve on advisory board

*Seek increases and commitments for in-kind donations/programming assistance

*Continue to engage new potential partners (creating a new priority list)

*Seek financial commitments to your program, long-term sustainability

*Seek long-term in-kind commitments

*Ask current partners to reach out to other potential partners

*Further development of community - wide ELO systems planning

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Building Collaboration: Developing a Community-Wide System for Sustainability

Community partners each possess unique skills and resources to contribute to your program and to expand its base of support. Working with a diverse group of community partners can increase the potential for sustainability because each partner organization comes with its own constituency and contacts that provide a range of support that can benefit ELO. Meaningful and successful partnerships are best structured as a collaboration in which each organization is expected to make both a commitment and a contribution to the collaboration.

Collaboration

➤ avoids duplication and allows organizations to do what they do best in support of a common agenda

➤ increases the number of people concerned with your program's sustainability and offers more avenues or access to potential funding sources

Collaboration is an essential ingredient for sustainability.

Distinguishing collaboration from other types of working relationships will help all of the participating organizations to understand what is expected of them from the start.

Cooperation: an informal, short-term relationship without a clearly defined mission or structure. (example: sharing materials or supplies between two organizations)

Coordination: a somewhat formal relationship that involves longer-term interaction around a specific effort. It requires some planning and division of roles. Resources may be shared to a small degree. (example: sharing building/program space)

Collaboration: a more formal and long-term arrangement. It brings separate organizations or individuals into a new relationship with a joint commitment to a common purpose. Such a relationship requires comprehensive planning and well-defined communication. Partners pool their resources and share the products of their work.

➤ foundations and state agencies have begun to show greater interest in these types of partnerships when considering funding ELOs

True collaboration takes a great deal of planning, time and effort, but the benefits far outweigh the costs. Numerous voices advocating for the same goal will have far more impact than any single organization alone could

To enhance your sustainability efforts through collaboration, you need to:

• Identify your program's current and potential key partners who will help achieve your vision.

• Consider the best way to involve these partners and make the most of the resources they have to offer. Some partners may be more involved than others. (For example, some partners may provide valuable advice and information in the formation of your sustainability plan, while others may offer staff time to teach ELO programming while others might arrange for meetings with potential investors.)

• Create and implement outreach and communications efforts to keep your partners informed of developments, challenges and successes.

*Adapted from Afterschool Alliance, Road to Sustainability

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Key Community Partnerships

Working with a diverse group of community partners is essential to improving the overall program quality and increasing the potential for sustainability. It is important to seek out potential partners form each of these four key sectors in your community.

EDUCATION

School District
Superintendent
School Board
Principal
Teaching Staff
District Office personnel

Local College or University
Academic Departments
Career Center
Student Clubs
Athletic Departments

CITY GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SERVICES

Mayor's Office
City Council
Police Department
Parks and Recreation Office
Library
Health and Human Services Dept

COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Religious Groups
Church council
Churches
Local faith-based organization

Non-profit Organizations
Museums
YMCA
Artistic/Science organizations Environmental

Service Organizations
Rotary
Lions
Optomists
PEO
Soroptomists
Elks
Kiwanis

BUSINESS

Chamber of Commerce
Industries in your community
Local businesses
Local banks
Hospital
Auto dealerships
IT businesses
Electric company
Co-Op
Local farmers/ranchers
Local grocery store
Local nursery/arbor

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Identifying and Building Partnerships:

(1) Complete Community Scan worksheet
- With your "community partnership" contract person and site directors, spend time completing this document to think through potential partnerships and current community connections.

(2) Prioritize 3-4 partnerships
- It is important to prioritize potential partnerships that have been identified after completing your COMMUNITY SCAN document.
- In identifying potential partners, try to prioritize from a few different types (i.e. city government, business, service).
- Continue to revisit this list of partnerships and reprioritize as you begin outreach/develop partnerships. This process will continually be evolving and new priority lists will be created.

(3) Utilize the Partnership Analysis worksheet
- After completing the COMMUNITY SCAN document, identify 4-5 potential partners.
- Use the PARTNERSHIP ANALYSIS document to record how these partners can benefit/contribute to your program. When you can clearly spell out the benefits of partnering with your program, partners will be much more likely to want to participate.
- For existing or previous partners, think about how you might encourage them to take their involvement to the next level.

(4) Education/Outreach to targeted partners
- Utilize your ONE PAGE PROGRAM OVERVIEW document to highlight your program.
- Utilize four infographic documents (found in the messaging section of this resource binder) in discussing the importance of ELO programs. Know and be comfortable with this information.
- Utilize your program video (if you have had this made for your program).
- Approach this meeting/presentation with a clear purpose. It is easier for partners to respond to requests when they know what is being asked of them.
- Be open to areas of collaboration with this partner that they may present to you that you had not initially thought of.

(5) Following Up
- Follow-up with 'the ask'—to be a part of the advisory board, provide resources, services, etc.
- If the meeting was a presentation (for example, at a Chamber of Commerce meeting), follow up with the director/chair of the group.
- If the partnership is working, find ways to publicize it's success (newsletters, newspaper)

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COMMUNITY SCAN---Mapping out potential partners for your ELO program

Initial objective: To engage them in the importance of ELO programs and to participate in a community advisory board

Name of business, organization, faith based sector...	Previous contact occurred with this business, organization	Previous partnership existed with the business, organization	Direct personal connection/s (i.e. you personally know individual/s with this business, organization)	Indirect personal connection/s (i.e. someone you know who has personal connection with individual/s at this office/business)	Contact person (who to make initial contact with at this organization, business)
Local Hospital					
Local Bank 1					
Local Bank 2					
Mayor's Office					
City Council					
School Board					
Library					
Parks and Rec Dept					
Police Dept					
al Church Counsel					
al College					
Local Museum					
Largest employer in your community (business, industry)					
Chamber of Commerce					
Rotary Club					
Elks Club					
4-H Extension					
Local Grocery Store					
Health/Human Svcs.					
Local YMCA					
Local auto dealer/s					
Local electric company					
Local Co-op office					
Local farm/ranch					
Optomists					

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PARTNER ANALYSIS

After completing the COMMUNITY SCAN document, identify 4-5 potential partners. Use this document to record how these partners can benefit/contribute to your program. When you can clearly spell out the benefits of partnering with your program, partners will be much more likely to want to participate. Think about how you might encourage them to take their involvement to the next level.

Name of potential partner:	What can this partner offer our program? Identify resources, services, or materials. (If you have had previous contact, think about what they have offered in the past and how they could take their involvement to the next level)	How might this partner benefit from a partnership with our program? What does our program bring to the partnership? (Consider the stake they may have in preparing youth and how your program can help them meet this goal)	Could this partner play a role on our program's community advisory group?	What is our specific ask of this partner?

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PARTNER ANALYSIS SAMPLE

After completing the COMMUNITY SCAN document, identify 4-5 potential partners. Use this document to record how these partners can benefit/contribute to your program. When you can clearly spell out the benefits of partnering with your program, partners will be much more likely to want to participate. Think about how you might encourage them to take their involvement to the next level.

Name of potential partner:	What can this partner offer our program? Identify resources, services, or materials.	How might this partner benefit from a partnership with our program? What does our program bring to the partnership?	Could this partner play a role on our program's community advisory group?	What is our specific ask of this partner?
Local Factory, STEM-oriented business (i.e. IT focused company)	STEM programming—career information, have representative financial and in-kind support,	We are educating youth on STEM careers, preparing them for the workforce	Yes	"easy ask": to have a representative from their company participate in your upcoming career spotlight program, commit to a week of programming "middle ask": financial ask of providing the supplies for STEM programming (paying for costs of science materials for a specific program and/or the school year) "hard ask": as the STEM employers in your community, ask them to lead and financially sponsor a STEM Club at your program (dedicate staff time to develop curriculum, paying for all costs associated with program)
Local Grocery Store	Primarily financial resources; food donations; nutrition/career programming	Advertise their sponsorship to the public (thank you in the newspaper, in newsletters) Keep youth involved in safe, productive activities (prevent loitering and theft)	Yes	"easy ask": to have a representative from their store participate in career day or nutrition program "middle ask": food donation for an event, parent night (i.e. provide hot dogs and buns for a family cookout night) "hard ask": provide food item for your program for all the students year round (i.e. yogurts and juice boxes)
Mayor's Office			Yes	

Police Department	Programming—career presentations, safety demonstrations; awareness lessons	Keeping youth involved in safe programming during peak crime hours	Yes	"easy ask": provide a safety demonstration, career week presentations "middle ask": commit to a semester of programming (i.e. two days a week police officer leads a class/program); provide safety books or some form of in-kind resources that can be utilized for programming "hard ask": commit to curriculum development for programming, jointly participate in writing a grant together or fundraiser
Local/Regional Hospital	Financial resources Programming, in-kind donations Health fairs for families of students in program	Community exposure, prevention	Yes	"easy ask": providing programming, career week presentaitons, health presentations, nutrition "middle ask": commit to semester long programming/clubs, in-kind donations, providing financial support for event, material donations "hard ask": unrestricted funding for initiative (i.e. $25,000)
YMCA				

Building a Community-wide ELO System:

Planning you Initial Community Stakeholders Meeting/s

The _short-term goal_ of holding these meetings and organizing this group is to educate potential community partners about your programs and to "Make the Case" for the importance of these programs for youth in your community.

The _long-term goal_ of organizing this group is to forge partnerships that lead towards long-term sustainable after school programs in your community.

Who to invite:

- Please review the "Key Community Partnerships" document. This outlines the four core community groups that are the ideal after school partners. If possible, try to include a few people from each of these groups.

- In addition to new potential partners, also invite those who you already are partnering with in some fashion (i.e. YMCA, library, university)

- For the initial meetings, please try to invite at least 10-12 people.

Making the invite:

It is important that you make a personal invitation to each person you are wanting to participate in this group. If you decide to send out a paper invite/email, it is essential to follow-up this invite with a phone call or face-to-face invite. When inviting current and potential community partners, points to make:

- You would like community partners to become more aware of/educated about the excellent ELO programming available to youth in your community

- You would like them to become more engaged in the important work of ELO in your community and helping to work on sustaining these programs.

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Sample Meeting Agenda for initial meeting:

PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF BOTH YOUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

Demographics of students served, typical daily schedule, quality programming that occurs, etc.

Utilize your program's "One Page Program Overview"

SHARE IMPORTANCE OF ELO PROGRAMS (AFTER SCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAMS).

Utilize 3-4 infographics from the "Messaging/Communication Tools" section

EXPLAIN YOUR PROGRAM'S CURRENT FUNDING.

Discuss how your program's funding originated; explain 21st CCLC grant funding.

Discuss importance of your programs becoming locally supported and locally sustainable; all 21st CCLC programs need to transition from being federally funded to federal/state/locally funded.

MAKE THE CASE OF WHY ELOS MATTER TO EACH OF THE GROUPS OF PEOPLE REPRESENTED IN THE MEETING—SPECIFICALLY WHY *YOUR PROGRAM* MATTERS TO THEM

Prior to the meeting, refer to "Building Partnerships" handout to help you better articulate why each community sector is a stakeholder in this work.

"Why Business Should Care about ELO and STEM" handout

SHARE LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE GROUP:

To meet on at least a quarterly basis (monthly or every other month meetings are ideal if the group is able to commit to this schedule).

Help build broader community awareness about your programs and the importance of ELOs—create a "platform" for ELOs in your community.

Work towards creating a long-term sustainability plan for the program through development of community-wide partnerships/system that supports your programs. These community partnerships contribute time, money, expertise, or other resources to the ELO programs for the purpose of long-term sustainability.

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Community Advisory Board

Purpose and Role of the Advisory Board

A true advisory board is exactly that—*advisory*. Advisory boards are different from governing boards. The board of directors of a nonprofit organization is its legal, governing body. In contrast, an advisory board does not have any formal legal responsibilities. Rather, an advisory board is convened by the organization to give advice and support. Advisory boards are immensely valuable and useful in a number of important ways for ELO programs:

(1) Creates a link and partnership with a specific group of stakeholders

(2) Offers opportunities for strengthening partnerships and building your program's long-term sustainability. Through these connections, direct financial and in-kind support for your program can be attained.

(3) Taps into the brainpower of trusted and valued community members—allows you to look at partnership building through another lens (which may give you different, helpful perspectives).

**Another option is to refer to this group as an "Advisory Council" or "Advisory Committee"

Developing/Strengthening your Advisory Board

(1) Make sure the purpose, role, and authority of the advisory board are documented in writing. A purpose statement for the advisory board is helpful when recruiting potential advisory members, so they know why the advisory board is important, and what their role will be.

(2) Quarterly meetings should be held. Mornings or the lunch hour are often optimal meeting times. Choose a "friendly" meeting environment; provide breakfast/lunch/refreshments (you can utilize your grant money for these meeting expenses).

(3) The ideal community board should have 10-15 members (keeping in mind that everyone will not always be in attendance at your meetings).

(4) The individual working on your community partnership work should take a very active role in this group, be co-leading it with you.

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How Businesses Can Partner with ELO Programs

Business partners can assist afterschool programs and advocacy efforts with securing resources that would otherwise not be made available. By investing in after school programs, businesses are helping to prepare their future workforce. Many businesses also benefit from building relationships with programs that can provide afterschool services to local employees. These relationships are often beneficial to both business and afterschool providers.

Providing Technical Assistance directly *to programs* can be extremely valuable to improving the quality of the management and administration of afterschool programs.

Providing merchandise and equipment to afterschool programs can have a large impact on the quality of programs available to youth. Donations may include: Supplies for STEM projects/curriculum, academic materials, art supplies, games and sports equipment, furniture, technology, office supplies. There are many donations that are specific to a particular business that are needed and benefit youth (i.e. a grocery store donating food items).

Providing in-kind donations. Allowing employees to volunteer time in teaching after school classes is an invaluable partnership—this allows students to be exposed to and learn specific skills from those employed by a business. For example, an IT company could provide allow employees to teach a computer coding class for three hours a week. Providing meeting space for programming is another valuable resource.

Serving on the program's board of directors or advisory group

Providing financial support can be hugely important to the sustainability of afterschool programs. Businesses can underwrite annual giving, fundraising events or purchases which can greatly improve a program's outcomes for youth.

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STRENGTHENING YOUR NEW AND EXISTING PARTNERSHIPS

Honor your partners

It is important that you recognize the important contributions that your partners make toward sustaining and enhancing the quality of your afterschool programs.

- Recognize your partners at events, such as *Lights On Afterschool!* You can acknowledge them in materials promoting the event, or you can also invite them to take part in the celebration.

- Submit a letter to the editor or op-ed to your local newspaper, acknowledging your partners' support.

- Feature your partners prominently on your website, on event fliers and in your informational brochures. Be sure to ask your partner if they have a logo that you could use.

- Create an afterschool "wall of fame" at your program, where you can feature all of your partners and their contributions.

- Nominate a partner for a community service award.

Thank your partners for their support

- You can send a letter of thanks to the organization, as well as the program's board of directors.

- Offer to make a personal appearance at their board meetings to acknowledge their contributions.

- Have students write thank you notes, expressing the positive impact of the after school program on their lives.

- When thanking your partners, be specific about how their contribution has supported your program. For example, if a partner has donated use of a vehicle for transporting students to and from your program, mention how many students have been able to attend your program as a result of this donation.

- Provide your partners with tangible reminders of what they've supported. Provide partners with pictures of program activities. Have the students create a "trophy of appreciation" that they could display in their office. Another idea is to offer to have your students share their work from projects supported by your partners at their annual meetings or conferences.

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Deepening your Partnerships with Parents/Guardians:

Family Engagement in ELO Programs

Engaging parents and families is an ongoing effort. It benefits students and *also is beneficial for your program as a whole*. <u>Parents and families are often your best advocates</u>!

As we know, effective family engagement is an ongoing process and is a sustained positive relationship involving clear communication with mutual responsibility and respect. Parent handbooks, newsletters, culminating and showcase events, Lights on AfterSchool ents and Math/Literacy Nights often utilized as means to engage families in their student's ELO program. As we continue to work on further engaging families, the following are additional ideas

- Develop a parent advisory group to allow for input into programs and services

- Create a parent focus group that meets to address a specific topic/concern

- Ask staff to monthly call parents with positive news about their child

- Offer student/parent enrichment classes that families can jointly participate in (like scrapbooking, fitness)

- Try having a weekend event---you may be able to attract parents who typically do not attend weekday events

- Consider holding short monthly parent meetings and require parents/students to attend one meeting per semester

- Encourage parents to volunteer in the ELO program—develop a volunteer inventory checklist with ways that parents could contribute their time to the program.

- Consider holding parent education/skills development classes (frequency could be weekly, monthly, quarterly)

- Send home parent input sheets and surveys—ask for suggestions for creating the type of environment in which they would feel comfortable participating.

- Offer informal social events or activities that are simply for fun! For Example: Family Craft Night/Day, Family Recreation Day/Night, Zumba

- Hold a STEM learning event for families, where both students and their parents work on a STEM project together. If your student population is heavily Latino, provide instruction in both English and Spanish.

- Publicly recognize volunteers in a program newsletter that thanks all the parents and families that have been involved or helped out the program in any way the month before

- Organize a "Community Day" at which families provide volunteer time—i.e. an organized event in which there are designated projects for families to work on

- Arrange for an "International Night" to showcase different cultures.

- Restaurant nights—ask a local restaurant to donate 5-10% of their profits from sales from an evening (or two hours of the evening). Encourage families to dine at the restaurant that night (serves as fundraiser and a way to interact with families in another setting).

- Staff work with students to plan and host a "Parent Appreciation Day/Night" – Students make special badges, prizes, cook a special meal, make gifts, perform songs, etc.

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Strengthening School Partnerships

Strengthening your program's relationship with the principal:
- Familiarize yourself with the school improvement plan—identify ways in which your program can help achieve the schools' goals. Utilize this language in your program materials.
- Set up a regular meeting time to discuss the program, check-in.
- Ask the principal (or assistant principal) to be a part of the program's advisory group.
- Request that program leaders/site directors be included in school planning team meetings (data team meetings, curriculum meetings, school improvement plan meetings, etc).
- Agree/decide upon respective responsibilities of the school principal and program leadership.
- Meet with the principal over the summer months to plan for school year.
- Ask for program information to be included in the school monthly newsletter.

Strengthening your program's relationship with the Superintendent/School Board:
- Build upon your relationship with your principal in connecting with the district office.
- Schedule a meeting with the superintendent once a semester to discuss your program.
- Ask the Superintendent and/or a School Board member to serve on your Advisory Board.
- Annually present at a School Board meeting.

Strengthening your program's relationship with the teaching staff:
- Send out monthly emails/newsletters to teaching staff as a means of sharing information.
- Host a breakfast (quarterly or semester) for teachers—discuss program information, success stories, outcomes.
- Program director and/or site directors attend school staff meetings—try to be a regular part of the agenda.
- Attend grade level planning meetings once a month/quarter—discuss students in your program, any individualized support needed for specific students.
- Develop consistent protocol for site directors and teachers to communicate changes evidenced in a student's academics, behavior, attendance.
- Invite teachers to provide professional development/training to program staff on certain academic content.
- Ask teachers to recommend/refer students to your program.
- Develop mutual agreement on shared classroom space: cleaning, replacing items, check-ins.
- **Express appreciation on regular basis to teachers who share their classroom space for your program (flowers, thank you cards, recognition in newsletters, etc).**

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Research on Sustainability of ELO Programs

Since the first 21st CCLC grants were awarded in June 1998, the Afterschool Alliance and National Center for Community Education have learned some valuable lessons about sustainability through a series of studies on the early 21st CCLC grantees.

The studies revealed the following tips for successfully sustaining an afterschool program:

Create a sustainability plan for your program. As you are establishing or expanding your program, addressing how it will be sustained in the long-term needs to be a part of your planning from the very beginning. Planning for sustainability should not be an after-thought or an add-on to your program planning.

Create a working group to address sustainability in a consistent and ongoing manner. Sustaining a program should not fall on any one person or any one organization's shoulders, and is not a one-time effort. Ask program partners to share responsibility for sustaining the program.

Engage your program's community partners in actively pursuing other funding for the program. A wide variety of community partners may increase your program's access to various funding sources. For example, if your program's fiscal agent is a school, a nonprofit community partner may be eligible for funding not available to schools or other public entities.

Capitalize on your program's history and achievements when pursuing funding. Be sure to emphasize your program's or your community partners' history in providing high-quality afterschool programs, even if your current programs are different than they were in the past. Even for a new program, demonstrating your community partners' long-term commitment to afterschool can bring credentials to your program's request for support.

Use tried and true avenues of funding. School-based programs should look first to tap education funding streams, such as Title I, reading initiatives, school district budgets and state assistance to schools. School districts have expertise, and often personnel dedicated solely to grant writing and in tapping federal and state education funds. Community-based organizations are adept at securing grants in line with their organizational missions. City agencies know how to navigate their budgetary processes and shift or maintain funding for different priorities. Maximize your program partners' individual strengths in securing resources.

Pursue other funding sources before your initial grant expires (and 21st CCLC funding decreases). Given the time required to identify, write, submit and be notified of grants, as well as unforeseen shifts in public budgets and other such changes, you should pursue additional sources of funding in the early stages of your initial grant cycle. Additionally, to ensure the continuance of your program beyond your initial grant, you should aim to have been awarded at least one additional source of funding half way through your initial grant cycle.

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SWOT Analysis: Taking a Closer Look at Your ELO Program

Utilize the form below to capture your view of your community's ELO program's Strengths / Weaknesses / Opportunities / Threats as they relate to increasing sustainable programming.

Strengths	Weaknesses
(Examples: Good variety of activities, Staff is dependable and knowledgeable, Activities are well-planned and age appropriate, kids are engaged, etc)	*(Examples: Some schools are limited by space, school rules, or funding; staffing issues—under-skilled employees, limited time commitment; little variety in clubs/activities; need more rigorous activities, etc)*
Opportunities	**Threats**
(Examples: partnerships with local college, good volunteer base, potential partnerships, expansion of certain activity, etc)	*(Examples: Lack of funding, Lack of space for supplies and programming, Cost of supplies, Finding staff, transportation issues, Expecting donations/funds and not getting them, etc)*

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Why Business Should Support ELO Programs and STEM

Economic Transformation

The 21st Century's information economy is creating more jobs that require not only a college education but also some expertise in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math – collectively known as STEM. The last several decades have seen America's industrial- and manufacturing-based economy shift to a service economy fueled by information, knowledge and innovation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 1996 and 2006, the United States lost three million low-tech manufacturing jobs. In that same timeframe, however, 17 million service sector jobs were created, specifically in the areas of health care, education, environment, security and energy. From 2008–2018, many of the fastest-growing jobs in the service sector are and will be STEM-related, high-end occupations that include doctors, nurses, health technicians and engineers. Industries projected to have the most employment growth are in scientific, technical and management consulting; high-tech manufacturing; computer systems design; and other STEM-related services.

Preparing the next generation to succeed in school and in life

Science and technology underpin nearly every aspect of today's society, making STEM skills necessary for all students, regardless of whether or not they eventually pursue careers in STEM. We need a STEM-literate citizenry to make informed decisions about energy sources, health care, transportation, communication, and even food development and nutrition. To become the innovators, scientists, technologists and engineers of the future, youth must be exposed to and master STEM skills. Unfortunately, there is a growing body of research suggesting Americans students are falling behind their peers internationally in their understanding of key math and science concepts.

It's All About Time…

All segments of our society have a role to play in helping to turn these dangerous trends around. Schools will continue to have a vital role. However, to prepare youth for today's challenges, we must think about STEM learning opportunities beyond the traditional school day. Combining STEM learning with out-of-school time programming can offer students of all ages fun, challenging, hands-on introductions to the skills they will need to be successful in school, college and the workplace. Research shows that when young people have meaningful, high-quality STEM experiences during non-school hours that support their classroom instruction, they are much more likely to succeed in STEM careers. Innovative school-community partnerships with strong private-sector participation can provide youth with out-of-school time learning opportunities to become the excited, engaged and inspired STEM learners that America needs.

Adapted from Afterschool Alliance, Issue Brief #44: Afterschool and Middle School STEM, September 2010

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