

## **Getting a Community After School Program Off the Ground Tip Sheet for Iowa State University Extension Staff**

Getting a community after school program off the ground can seem overwhelming and daunting. Like most endeavors that are worthwhile, the amount of time you put into it is well worth the effort invested. Creating a sound after school program that focuses on safety, quality and education is a process that can be accomplished by a group of caring people with a shared vision.

### **A. Calling a Community Meeting (After School Advisory Board)**

It is critical to the development of an after school program that you involve as many pertinent people as you can in this process. Collaboration in the community is a large portion of how the project will be created.

*Persons invited to this meeting should be called personally.* A target group of 20-30 persons is recommended representing the following areas:

- Youth and human service providers
- Parents
- Youth
- Community members
- Business and industry
- Financial institutions
- Religious community
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Community power players
- Retirees
- Others identified locally

### **B. Community Meeting (After School Advisory Board) Agenda Items**

- A. Introduce idea of an after school program.
- B. Ask each person to introduce themselves and to share one reason that an after school program would be beneficial in the community.
- C. Discuss options—what ages/groups need an after school program (i.e. K-6, K-8, Summer Care, family outreach activities, literacy initiatives, others).
- D. Get consensus of group to move ahead with planning. Who needs to be involved in this process? (i.e. if the AS program is to be school-based, what needs to happen to get school board approval for use of the building? Will the school have other resources than facility that they would like to offer? Who are the best people to work with school administration in moving this idea forward? How might an AS program utilize the school's nutrition program in order to minimize food costs?)

- E. Referring to needs identified, ask for volunteers to help gather information and community resources that might support the needs. Also, how do we know the type of program that families want for their children? Establish a committee that prepares and collects a family survey. Encourage the compilation of survey data by the next meeting. A sample family survey is attached.
- F. Discussion of when program might begin and how long it should run.
- G. How many students might be served?
- H. Get commitment of people present to serve on the After School Advisory Board. Describe the role of an After School Advisory Board member.
- I. Share a description of potential committees that will work to get the ASP off the ground.
- J. Are there others that should be involved in this effort? Make plans on who will invite them to next meeting.
- K. Briefly share agenda items for next meeting:
  - Each member come with what their business/agency/group has to offer the after school program.
  - Review of family survey information.
  - Be ready to commit to work on a committee.
  - Set date for second meeting (within 3-4 weeks)

### **C. Prior to Second Meeting**

Work with committee completing the family survey. Get the survey to parents soon after the first meeting so that they might be returned within two weeks, which leaves a small amount of time to compile the findings.

Invite to the second meeting those identified as needed in the process. Prepare an outline of proposed activities as discussed in the initial meeting; this will be skeletal in nature.

## **IV. Second Meeting Agenda**

- A. Each member share what their business/agency/group/individual has to offer the after school program.
- B. Review and discuss compilation of family surveys to help determine direction for the program.
- C. Review outline of what program might look like thus far.
- D. Discuss and determine short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals for the ASP Advisory Board.
- E. Review and commit to committee assignments.
- F. Break into committees to determine short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals and timetables for accountability.
- G. Set date for third meeting of the AS Advisory Board as well as committee meetings.

## **V. A Sidebar on Financing the Program**

Unless you want to play the game of always, annually, chasing the almighty grant dollar, you should be prepared to talk about how the ASP will be financed. Developing a fee structure for the program will be needed in order to sustain the program, so you might as well discuss this idea up front.

In rural areas of the state, a full-time coordinator for the after school program is not always needed. Typically, a part-time coordinator will suffice. In many school districts, health benefits must be paid to those who work 20 hours or more. If your program can afford those benefits, that is terrific! However, most programs must operate on a conservative budget and cannot afford those benefits. Given that a part-time coordinator may be sufficient in the quality management and implementation of your program, please note these budget areas. If the salary and benefits of the ASP Coordinator are covered by another source other than fees, the cost per night per child in the after school program should be around \$3. However, if fees need to cover the costs of the ASP Coordinator, it will take between \$4-5 per night per child. These figures assume that you are working with the school district's nutrition program so that food costs are minimized.

TIP--It is important to note that community colleges and local universities often have students in the America Reads program. These students get either credit or tuition help for the service they provide. They can be a "free" staff member in your after school program. Going through the effort of working with these students, many of whom are nontraditional, adult, students, is well worth it.

## **VI. Third Meeting Agenda**

- A. Review project to date.
- B. Report from each committee.
- C. Review budget.
- D. Ask for corrections/discussion.
- E. Review business/organization/individual support.

## **VII. Meetings Continue Until After School Program is Operational and Sustainable**

## **Attachment A**

### **Potential Sources of Data to Support Project Need**

In the event that grant proposals are developed, this outline for support data to show project need can be helpful.

#### **\*\*SOURCES NEED TO BE LISTED FOR EACH PIECE OF INFORMATION**

##### ***Chamber of Commerce/County Economic Development Group***

- any downward economic or population trends—current compared to 5 and 10 years ago
- current county unemployment rate
- number of families in county with both parents working
- local (county) population decline—current, 5 years ago, 10 years ago, 15 years ago, 25 years ago
- population trends noticed over last 2-5 years (i.e.—ethnicity changes, etc.)
- percent of families in poverty—current, 5 years ago, 10 years ago
- per capita income: U.S., state, County, each community
- percent of workforce working in agriculture
- percent of workforce employed outside the county
- average pay of jobs in manufacturing field

##### ***School(s)***

- Students served as of fall of the current year (and % minority—list by white, black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, Hispanic, other)
- School enrollment 5 years ago, 10 years ago, 25 years ago
- reasons (need statements) for starting alternative school
- information regarding alternative classrooms for elementary and junior high students
- number of special education students—current, 5 years ago, 10 years ago, 25 years ago
- how many students work with IEPs—Individual Education Plans
- number of youth identified for Title 1 services
- 2000 testing records:
  - percent of students reading below grade level and at what level the average student at a given grade level reads
  - percent of students writing below grade level and at what level the average student at a grade level writes
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills Report:
  - percentile scored on language subtest, math subtest, social science subtest, science subtest for each grade level
  - comparative percentile scores in these areas from five years ago (1995) and 10 years ago (1990)
- percent of parents that work at major employers
- Complete Iowa Youth Survey/Search Institute Reports—latest report and report from three years prior

- any other reports that might be helpful
- percent of free and reduced lunch—overall district and by elementary center. Also, how what percent of those qualify for free lunches

### ***Student Reports***

- percent that report they are unsupervised at home each day for one hour; two hours
- number who have the responsibility of caring for younger peers during this unsupervised time

### ***Other Surveys/Sources***

- recreation gaps (especially at outlying centers)
- analysis of participation in extracurricular activities related to annual income (i.e. in households with income of \$10,000 or less, participate in only 1.6 extracurriculars)
- barriers to participation (i.e. transportation, fees, supplies, student interest, parent interest)

### ***Mental Health***

- psychiatric hospitalizations (due to substance use)
- need data from abuse/violence prevention or mental health agency

### ***Sheriff's Office/Police Department***

- juvenile pick-ups, arrests (even for adolescents), drug use, meth use other stats (these numbers could be broken down by elementary students, junior high students, and high school students)
- number of truancy cases—compare latest year to five and ten years ago

**Attachment B**  
**Support Letter Information**

In the event that grant proposals are developed, this outline for support letter information can be helpful to those with whom you are working.

Your letter in support of this project must reflect the commitment of your organization. You need to specifically state the role your organization will play. Please include the following in your letter:

1. Date
2. Name and Address:                   (Name)  
  Superintendent  
  (School Name)  
  (School Address)  
  (School City, State, Zip)
3. Salutation: “Dear (Superintendent Name):”
4. Introductory Paragraph:  
Please write something to the effect of the following:

“It is my pleasure to support the (Name of School) Community School District’s application for funding toward the development of an after school program. \_\_\_(your organization name)\_\_\_ is pleased to be a part of this community collaborative which will greatly benefit the children in the district.”

5. Commitment Paragraph:  
Please be clear and concrete about what your organization/business is providing to the program. The reviewers of the proposal want to see specifically how you are involved and what you will do. Provide 3-4 sentences to support your commitment.

For example, “Our organization is pleased to be able to supply the curriculum necessary to teach money management skills to the children.....” or  
“Our organization is supplying 10 employees as volunteers each month to assist with the program....” or  
“Our organization will be providing the necessary training of staff prior to and during the program. We will be training staff in the following areas.....” or  
“Our organization is contributing \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the program in order to assist with the purchase of \_\_\_\_\_.”

6. Optional Support Paragraph:  
If you have been involved in a school or community process which has talked about the importance of after-school programming, please talk about that here (i.e. if you were involved in a county coalition, school discussion groups, community discussion groups, etc.).  
Also, if you have any statistics you can refer to which relate to the need for the program, you may include them here.
7. Closing Paragraph:  
Conclude with an additional support statement of the project.
8. Close as you would any correspondence (i.e. Sincerely) and your signature.

**Attachment C**  
**Sample After School Program Family Need Survey**

**\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary Parent Questionnaire**  
**To Identify Interest in an After School Program**

***Please return this questionnaire by \_\_\_(date)\_\_\_ to your child's teacher.***

Parents, the district is trying to identify interest in the possibility of an after school program. Please give this questionnaire your thoughtful attention. You are not bound to your answers. We are trying to establish the degree of need for such a program. Thank you for your time.

1. If an after school program was available, what grades of students would you like to send to the program? \_\_\_\_\_ K-3<sup>rd</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>
  
2. Please identify how many children you have in each grade level that would utilize an after school program.  
\_\_\_\_ K \_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_ 8
  
3. To the best of your knowledge, do you think your family would potentially use an after school program on a daily basis or on a variable basis? \_\_\_\_\_ Daily \_\_\_\_\_ Variable
  
4. To the best of your knowledge, what days might your family utilize an after school program?  
\_\_\_\_ Monday \_\_\_\_ Tuesday \_\_\_\_ Wednesday \_\_\_\_ Thursday \_\_\_\_ Friday
  
5. To the best of your knowledge, what time would be most beneficial for the after school program to be open?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5:00 PM \_\_\_\_\_ 5:30 PM \_\_\_\_\_ 6:00 PM
  
6. To the best of your knowledge, if an after school program was only offered three days a week, do you believe your family would still utilize the program?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
  
7. If you were asked to pay a fee in order for the program to be operational, what is the most your family would be willing to pay per child per day?  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$3/day \_\_\_\_\_ \$4/day \_\_\_\_\_ \$5/day
  
8. Would you be willing to pay for a snack for your child? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
  
9. What types of experiences would you like an after school program to offer your child? (check all that apply)  
\_\_\_\_\_ homework help  
\_\_\_\_\_ a safe place after school  
\_\_\_\_\_ recreation  
\_\_\_\_\_ educational enrichment  
\_\_\_\_\_ fun  
\_\_\_\_\_ opportunity to participate in clubs  
\_\_\_\_\_ other; please list ideas:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What questions or comments do you have?