

Ignite Afterschool Policy Platform



High-quality afterschool and summer learning programs have evidence-based benefits that will positively impact the persistent challenges facing Minnesota's young people, families, businesses, educators, and communities. They provide hands-on learning experiences that narrow the opportunity and achievement gap, build critical 21st century skills, and support working families by ensuring their children are safe and engaged in learning outside of school.

Despite the clear benefits for Minnesota, state funding for afterschool learning opportunities has been significantly cut over the last decade. Yet we can change course. We can invest in a brighter future by ensuring all young people have access to high-quality before-school, afterschool, and summer learning opportunities. Here's how:

Policy Agenda

Stage I (FY16-17): Create a new state public funding stream of \$50 million over the biennium (FY16/FY17) to fund competitive grants for afterschool programs primarily serving youth below 185% of the federal poverty line (youth eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch).

- **Step up state investment.** Minnesota has no state public funding accessible to the broad range of afterschool programs. We propose a competitive grant process - administered by the Minnesota Department of Education - that will restore lost funding, complement existing federal and private investments, and leverage new private funds.
- **Invest in low-income families to close the opportunity gap.** Prioritize funding for programs that primarily engage school-age young people whose families are at or below 185% of poverty.
- **Remove barriers to funding.** Allow collaboratives or partnerships of organizations to apply together, to increase the likelihood that small- and mid-sized programs can access funds too.
- **Boost 21st century skills and career readiness.** Fund programs that build 21st century skills, to prepare Minnesota's young people for success in a rapidly-changing world and economy. Focus statewide evaluation efforts on 21st century skill outcomes.
- **Promote choice and diversity of learning experiences.** Reserve up to 1/3 of funds for programs that provide, or plan to provide, under-supplied learning experiences. Prioritize high-quality STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and career readiness learning experiences in Stage I.
- **Support program quality to ensure results.** Allow up to 7% of funds to be used by the Minnesota Department of Education to support a statewide quality and continuous program improvement framework which promotes local coordination; and for statewide evaluation and administration of grants.
- **Ensure statewide distribution of funds.** Require funds to be distributed so that communities across Minnesota have access to funding, regardless of geography or community size.

Stage II: Increase funding, and expand eligibility to all school-age young people at or below 200% of poverty. More details to be determined.

Stage III: Increase funding, and expand eligibility to all school-age young people in households at or below median income for Minnesota households (about 250% of poverty). More details to be determined.