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PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATION GRANTMAKING

Building Community from Crisis: A Collaborative Fund for the Out-of-School Time Field

by Minna Jung

Grantmaking Principle: Leverage, Influence and Collaboration



Grantmakers
FOR EDUCATION





Grantmakers for Education's vision is for all learners to thrive in education systems that are equitable and just, supported by funders who are equipped with the knowledge and connections to advance transformation. Grantmakers for Education catalyzes learning, fosters connections and creates opportunities for members to collectively advance effective, strategic and equity-centered grantmaking in the field of education.

Grantmakers for Education developed its series of case studies on effective education grantmaking as reflection and discussion tools. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data or illustrations of successful or unsuccessful grantmaking. In addition, to help make the case a more effective learning tool, it is deliberately written from one foundation's point of view, even though other foundations may have been involved in similar activities or supported the same grantees.

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Introduction

In early 2020, the first reports of COVID-19 multiplied into a worldwide pandemic seemingly overnight. By the end of March in the United States, lockdown orders had closed most schools and afterschool programs to in-person learning, causing an unprecedented disruption in the lives and learning journeys of children and young people. As schools transitioned to virtual learning, community-based organizations pivoted from providing afterschool programs to dealing with all manner of crises and basic needs: delivering food, helping with Wi-Fi and computer access, staying connected to children and youth who were isolated in quarantine, and ensuring families had access to emergency financial resources and basic supplies.

Some out-of-school time (OST) providers stayed open to provide full-day programs for the children of first responders and essential workers, while others quickly developed and launched virtual programming.¹

Like nonprofits everywhere, OST providers faced the need to lay off staff and support those who remained through burnout and fatigue, while moving much of their work online and meeting new daily crises. Throughout the early months of the pandemic, local, state and national intermediaries—organizations that support networks of community-based organizations—helped providers access financial assistance and protective equipment; understand changing safety regulations and policies; and develop and train staff to deliver remote programming.

In the philanthropic sector, the onset of the pandemic prompted immediate conversations about redirecting or augmenting grantmaking toward emergency relief. Many funders quickly eliminated project-based grant restrictions and paid out future grants

immediately to enable organizations to respond quickly and flexibly to changing needs.

At Grantmakers for Education (EdFunders), the Out-of-School Time Impact Group, a community of funders investing in the out-of-school time sector, initiated weekly convenings open to funders and field stakeholders to share information, forge connections and brainstorm effective philanthropic responses to the rapidly evolving situation. The exchange of information during the stakeholder convenings, combined with the dire situation within the field and the urgent need for services that the OST community was well-positioned to provide, inspired the impact group funders to launch a pooled fund to support the field. Ultimately, seven grantmaking organizations joined forces to create the **Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund**.

Like other stories about our individual and collective experiences of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the story of the OST pooled fund illustrates how, amidst the enormous stresses created by crisis, funders and grantees found opportunities to connect with each other and work toward shared goals. Their experience offers important insights for education grantmakers on

advancing equity and building trust, insights that apply not only in crisis but also beyond. The fund's experience also raises important questions for education grantmakers around what it takes to build sustainable collaboration and aligned action for systemic change.

“We had to move into action immediately. We had to get permission to use existing federal funding streams for programs to go virtual. We had to get permission under regulatory frameworks for programs to provide care all day long. We had to make sure staff at OST organizations were getting paid, and that the children in these programs could still get meals. It was exhausting.”

—Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

The Pandemic's Immediate Impacts on OST Programs

OST programs serve millions of young people each day, fostering joy, engagement, connection, mentoring, academic support and community through safe, supportive environments staffed by youth development professionals. When pandemic lockdowns forced programs to shut their doors, this important source of support and connection for young people across the U.S. was disrupted.

In addition, leaders in the OST field were alarmed at the prospect of laying off skilled youth workers and educators, which would in turn jeopardize the significant progress made over the years in the professional development and

What Are Intermediaries?

Intermediary organizations in the OST sector exist at the local, state and national levels. They provide a variety of supports to the field, including: engaging in policy development, advocacy and communications; brokering cross-sector partnerships; raising and distributing funds; conducting research; developing and maintaining data systems; and providing professional development.²

stability of this workforce. In an industry lacking the safety net of sustainable federal funding, the loss of physical space and program fees made the situation even more tenuous.

However, almost overnight, many OST providers found a way to step up to the challenges of the pandemic. Some stayed open throughout the first wave of lockdowns, offering full-day programs for the children of first responders and essential personnel who did not have the option of remote work. Others began delivering food, connecting with families, and ensuring that young people had access to digital resources so they could continue learning in online environments. As spring and summer of 2020 brought to light a series of events involving tragic violence against Black people, many community-based organizations ramped up their longstanding efforts to support young people's civic engagement, leadership development, cultural and racial identity development, and understanding of the nation's systemic inequities.

For ongoing pandemic operations, OST organizations needed to figure out whether they qualified for COVID relief funds (like [Paycheck Protection Program loans](#)) and how to apply for them; whether COVID-lockdown orders and other regulations permitted them to stay open and under what conditions; and whether children could continue to participate in programs that not only provided enrichment services, but also meals and other essentials.

As OST program providers expanded their repertoire of services for children and families during the pandemic, so did their intermediary partners. National organizations like the Afterschool Alliance, Every Hour Counts, the National Summer Learning Association and the National Afterschool Association worked with statewide afterschool networks, local intermediaries and OST providers. They advocated for the preservation and expansion of expanded learning

opportunities, hosted convenings, produced resources and guidance for OST providers, shared effective practices to mitigate pandemic-related disruptions, promoted the role of OST in school reopening discussions and connected OST providers with expert technical assistance. For families, educators and those who had supported and worked in the field long before the pandemic, the value of OST programs had never been more evident.

Grantmakers with a history of OST support were quick to appreciate the crisis-specific and ongoing needs being

of the last several years that allowed OST programs to play such a critical role for children, young people and their families and communities. Education funders and policymakers were starting to fully recognize OST programs as a vital source of mentoring, enrichment services and recreational activities for millions of children and young people. To support the OST field as both a crisis response and as an important component in their long-term strategies to support the success of children and their families, funders began asking themselves what more they could do collectively, as well as within their individual organizations.

“The pooled fund was the right thing to do. We needed a space for collaboration, alignment and coordination so we could be stronger together, in addition to the individual grants we were making. And we were concerned about duplicative funding efforts—that we were all funding the same things, but not covering all of the bases. But in the beginning, the need was not defined. We had to ask ourselves—at what level could these pooled funds really make a difference?”

—Gigi Antoni, Director of Learning and Enrichment, The Wallace Foundation

fulfilled by providers and intermediary organizations and directed funding to meet those needs. During the first few months of the pandemic, for example, OST organizations needed flexible funds for operations and new activities, including the development and sharing of tools and resources across different states and regions. Funders made what was for them, extraordinary efforts to quickly authorize flexible funding for grantee organizations that were, in turn, responding to extraordinary and rapidly changing demands in their respective fields.

But for funders, it was important to not only support the OST field in the immediate crisis response to the pandemic, but also to sustain the gains

Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund: How It Formed

In March 2020, EdFunders' Out-of-School Time Impact Group initiated weekly, one-hour virtual convenings that were open to all funders and anyone else who wanted to join.³ Funders and field actors used these convenings to share information, forge connections and brainstorm effective philanthropic responses to the rapidly evolving situation. The convenings sparked conversations among funders about jointly supporting the OST field to navigate the crises of the pandemic. Several funders, including Rebecca Goldberg of the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation; Gigi Antoni and colleagues of The Wallace Foundation; Gwynn

Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund Contributing Grantmakers



Bezos Family Foundation

Our mission: to invest in the science of learning and the experiences that youth need from birth to high school to pursue their own path for success.



S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation

Founded in 1957, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation envisioned a productive, vibrant, and sustainable California that could be a model of success and a source of innovation, and worked towards this vision through its Education and Environment grantmaking portfolios. The Foundation concluded operations on December 31, 2020.



Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

The mission of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is to support efforts that promote a just, equitable and sustainable society. The purpose of the education program is to expand opportunities for children and youth to succeed in school, work and, ultimately, life.



New York Life Foundation

Inspired by New York Life's tradition of service and humanity, the New York Life Foundation has, since its founding in 1979, provided over \$360 million in charitable contributions to national and local nonprofit organizations. The Foundation strives to support young people, particularly in the areas of educational enhancement and childhood bereavement support. Our educational grantmaking programs focus on enrichment for middle schoolers during the critical out-of-school hours, in order to prepare them for successful transitions to high school and throughout life.



Overdeck Family Foundation

The mission of Overdeck Family Foundation is to open doors for every child in the U.S. by measurably enhancing education both inside and outside the classroom.



Susan Crown Exchange

Preparing youth to thrive in a rapidly changing world.



The Wallace Foundation

Our mission is to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people, and in the arts for everyone.

Hughes of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; and Gemma Lenowitz of the Overdeck Family Foundation, played an active role in moving the idea of a pooled fund forward during early spring 2020. Kathleen Traphagen, a consultant who co-facilitates the OST Impact Group, stepped in to facilitate discussions about a potential pooled fund.

By May 2020, seven funders—Bezos Family Foundation, S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, New York Life Foundation, Overdeck Family Foundation, Susan Crown Exchange and The Wallace Foundation—had decided to commit funds to a pooled effort.⁴ The Mott and Wallace foundations each contributed \$500,000, while the remaining five

funders contributed \$100,000 each to the fund.

Over the summer and fall of 2020, Kathleen Traphagen engaged the funders and prospective grantee organizations in developing a priority framework (see Appendix A) focused on four main areas:

1. Building field capacity.
2. Supporting innovations in programming and professional development.
3. Building back better with K-12 and communities.
4. Co-strategizing to maximize impact.

Early notes show long lists of ongoing issues to tackle within the OST field.

In other words, funders were given the space to put all their priorities on the table for consideration; eventually, prospective grantee organizations were also asked to weigh in on the funding priorities. As Gigi Antoni of The Wallace Foundation put it with humorous understatement, "It took us a minute to get aligned."

Getting to agreement on the four categories of the priority framework took time and discussion among the funders, requiring navigation of each organization's unique history, organizational structure and governance process. There were advantages to this careful, collaborative process, aside from the obvious benefit of keeping participants engaged because their input

was heard and reflected in the process. One, asking the potential grantees for their feedback ensured that the priority framework aligned to the needs of the field and each grantee's area of expertise. Two, the process of creating the framework helped funders deepen their learning about each other and about the grantee organizations, which helped them think about ways to get past silos of work in the OST field and tackle systemic challenges together.

One of the top considerations driving their thinking during this period was how to embed racial equity into the priorities of the fund—an issue that was top-of-mind for many grantmakers, especially those that fund education or education-adjacent fields. [A 2017 case study from EdFunders](#) describing the equity journeys of two foundations opened with the following statement: “There is probably not a single education grantmaker in the United States who is unconcerned by the persistent gaps in K-12 educational achievement and postsecondary attainment among various groups of students—in particular, those in different racial and ethnic groups.” OST funders were already grappling with similar concerns about ensuring equity in access to high quality out-of-school time learning opportunities.

Equity concerns became especially heightened during the pandemic. Data from the first several months of the pandemic showed that the economic and health impacts of COVID-19 were worse for groups of color—for example, [a study of hospitalizations between March and December 2020](#) showed that all groups of color, particularly Latino groups, were at greater risk for infection, hospitalization and death from the virus. And, our nation's long and troubled history with racial justice and police brutality came to a boiling point with the murder of George Floyd by police officers in May 2020. Although this event was but one of a string of tragic events involving unprovoked and random acts of violence against Black people, the fact that it

was captured on camera heightened the sense of outrage and grief the nation was already experiencing from the concurrent social and political crises happening during 2020.

Consequently, racial equity was embedded in the context-setting language of the fund's priority framework, and specifically by prioritizing support for helping organizations to center equity in their work, expand the pipeline for leaders of color in OST organizations, and reduce inequities in digital access. The last item was especially important, given that many schools and programs were transitioning to online environments, which could potentially worsen existing disparities in which children and young people would be able to access online educational and enrichment programs.

As the priorities, structure and processes of the pooled fund started to crystallize, the funders also discussed how to best leverage the relatively modest level of funding to catalyze the greatest impact. They concluded that the fund's “best bet” was to support national intermediaries versus directly supporting statewide, regional or local intermediaries or OST providers. “Otherwise our impact would have been a mile wide and a millimeter thick,” noted Lucas Held, communications director at The Wallace Foundation. Most of the funders had been supporting many of the field's national intermediaries, so were in routine conversation and quite familiar with their needs and capacities.

In September 2020, the funders invited the leaders of four of the field's anchor intermediaries to weigh in on the draft priority framework. This outreach served several purposes: it gave field leaders a chance to prepare for a potential funding opportunity and assess their own capacity and needs; it reinforced the fund's practice of listening to the field; and it helped inform funders about the challenges and opportunities field actors were facing.

In October 2020, the fund issued a request for a joint proposal to the Afterschool Alliance, Every Hour Counts, National Afterschool Association, and National Summer Learning Association. The fund offered a total award of \$800,000 and asked the responding organizations to decide how to allocate the award and submit a joint proposal identifying activities aligned with the fund's priority areas, with an emphasis on racial equity. The fund also asked the organizations to set their own deadline for a response and supported a consultant to facilitate the proposal development process and write the proposal.

The grantees agreed to split the award evenly among the four organizations. Each identified activities aligned with their respective areas of expertise and contributed part of their grant to support a consultant, Pam Stevens, to facilitate their collaborative work. Among the activities the organizations chose to support with the fund's resources: developing tools, guides and convenings

“There was such an urgency from our grantee organizations and their networks that we could not delay with our usual deliberation. But we also kept on asking ourselves: who else needs to be at this table? We knew we had to grapple with the big missing piece—the fact that organizations that represent BIPOC communities were not vocal in the OST space. And that we needed to do more to bring them forward.”

—Claudia DeMegret, Senior Program Officer, The Wallace Foundation

to assist providers and local and statewide intermediaries in responding to pandemic-related challenges; developing stronger pipelines for leaders of color in the field; strengthening youth leadership programming; and working more collaboratively on policy and advocacy.

Traphagen also approached the Coalition for Community Schools. With each of these organizations, she talked through the opportunity of financial support from the pooled fund and tested the idea of the organizations working together to produce a report outlining key challenges in the OST space. All four organizations

for philanthropic action. The report, submitted in summer 2021, details recommendations for funders and the field to address four major challenges facing the OST field:

1. Defining holistic outcomes for afterschool and youth development programs by listening to proximate voices.
2. Supporting community-centric research.
3. Addressing the field's workforce challenges, particularly low-pay and other challenges faced by community-based youth workers.
4. Diversifying voices to strengthen the field's capacity for effective policy and advocacy.

Although the funders initially conceived the report as a project for the second grantee cohort, ultimately the facilitation team asked all eight grantee organizations to participate in developing the report.

The organizations recognized the value of being convened through the pooled fund, stating in the report: "with or without a pooled fund, support from funders to amplify equity work and break down organizational silos gives these conversations more weight. An overall

"I think that the pooled fund, in part, came out of a recognition felt by many that this was a moment to reach out to one another, not pull back. Through the fund, we were able to support the OST sector from a number of different angles and learn together about uncharted territory. But in addition to the learning and the information-sharing, I really valued the sense of community within the group associated with the pooled fund. We all need that feeling of community to get this work done—especially during times of crisis, when we are facing huge challenges that require impact at scale."

–Gwynn Hughes, Senior Program Officer, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Building Toward Equity and Representation Through the Pooled Fund

As the funders awaited the joint proposal from the four anchor intermediaries, they also began exploring support for a group of organizations working in the youth development space that were also closely connected to and/or led by Black, Indigenous, Latino and/or historically excluded communities. The goals were to increase representation at OST policy, practice and research tables; better understand how historically excluded communities experienced access and participation in out-of-school time; and elevate the importance of out-of-school time as a civil rights priority.

Kathleen Traphagen reached out to Hal Smith of the National Urban League, who expressed interest and offered to connect the fund with UnidosUS and the National Indian Education Association.

chose to participate and each received \$100,000 after submitting a proposal outlining activities within the priority framework.

The second group of grantees brought different strengths to the table than the first group. They focus on improving K-12 education opportunities for their constituencies with various practice, policy and research initiatives, and they all have a presence in the OST and youth development space as well. They have a deep understanding of the education and enrichment needs within the communities of color represented by these organizations—and this is exactly what the funders of the OST pooled fund intended to add to the effort.

The fund brought on Dax-Devlon Ross and Emely Martinez to facilitate the grantee cohort to develop an internal report for the funders outlining key field-facing challenges and recommendations

"This was a group that opened doors for us into spaces we had not known before. But more than that, this was a group very open to learning from each other, so all of us could help drive the narratives about what needs to happen with the entire system of education and enrichment programs."

–Shanise Kaaikala, Legislative Analyst, National Indian Education Association

Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund Grantees



Afterschool Alliance

The Alliance works to ensure that all youth have access to affordable, quality afterschool programs by engaging public will to increase public and private investment in afterschool program initiatives at the national, state, and local levels.



National Afterschool Association

The National Afterschool Association is the professional membership association for people who work with and for youth during Out-of-School time. NAA fosters positive youth outcomes by supporting, developing, and advocating for afterschool professionals and leaders.

As a national association, we deploy our mission through people-centered programs and partnerships, building equity, access, and connections to create a strong, valued profession that benefits kids, families, and communities.



National Urban League

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights and urban advocacy organization with 90 affiliates serving 300 communities, providing direct services that impact and improve the lives of more than two million people nationwide.



Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of local, state and national leaders who work to grow excellent and sustainable Community Schools to create communities where everyone belongs, works together, and thrives. The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is the lead intermediary and home of the Coalition for Community Schools, with the mission to partner with under-resourced communities to equip leaders to better prepare children, youth, adults, and families for postsecondary education and training, rewarding careers, and civic and community engagement.



National Indian Education Association

The National Indian Education Association advances comprehensive, culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.



UnidosUS

UnidosUS challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos in the United States across a range of key issues. With respect to education, we advocate for high-quality education from early childhood through college, vocational training, and beyond.



Every Hour Counts

Every Hour Counts is a leading voice in promoting the work of building afterschool and summer learning systems. Every Hour Counts is a national network of 28 cities and communities dedicated to expanded learning, equity and making learning fun. The Every Hour Counts coalition represents longstanding partnerships with more than 3,500 schools, districts, and community based-organizations that provide quality after-school and summer programming. Every Hour Counts network members support initiatives that reach more than 500,000 students each year.



National Summer Learning Association

For nearly 30 years, NSLA has worked to combat summer learning loss and close the achievement and opportunity gaps which research shows grows most dramatically between lower and higher income students over the summer months. Our vision is, and always has been, to ensure all young people in America, regardless of background, income, and zip-code, can participate in and benefit from a high-quality summer learning experience, every year. NSLA supports and collaborates with a broad and ever-growing network of 15,000+ leaders of school districts, youth serving government agencies, non-profit and corporate partners from across the country focused on improving the lives of youth.



recommendation for the funders is to use both financial support and convening power to enable ongoing conversations and collaborative action across these eight organizations and others, with a continued focus on those that are led by leaders of color and operate within communities of color.” A summary of the report and insights gleaned during conversations among the funders and grantees will be published by EdFunders and available on the EdFunders website in fall 2022.

The Value of Partnership and Collaboration Created by a Pooled Fund

Every funder interviewed for this case study noted that when the idea of a pooled fund for OST organizations came up, it immediately felt like the right thing to do. All of them had one constituency top-of-mind when it came to justifying their contribution to and participation in the pooled fund—the children and families affected by the pandemic’s drastic shutdowns of schools and services. All remember feeling a sense of urgency that something more needed to be done, in addition to what their individual organizations were already doing, especially in a way that enabled funders to learn together about where and how their pooled resources might make a significant impact. For most of the funders, the prospect of the OST pooled fund came up during a time when these conversations about doing more to help grantee organizations and center equity in their grantmaking were already taking place at their respective organizations. Their organizations were already calling emergency meetings to discuss authorizing more COVID-related relief and recovery funding. There was a window of opportunity in which organizational norms around the timing and requirements for grantmaking were superseded by urgency and purpose to help alleviate the suffering and stress of children and families everywhere.

All of the funders also spoke to how much they valued the community, collaboration and shared purpose fostered by the conversations and work of the pooled fund. Gemma Lenowitz of the Overdeck Family Foundation, who manages a portfolio focused on OST programs designed to support STEM engagement, welcomed the opportunity to join the funder group. “We all signed up for this effort so we could learn from each other and learn from the leaders in the field what their needs were during the pandemic. I saw the value of connecting and sharing information and intelligence among funders and among the grantees about what was happening in the OST field.” Jody Rosentswieg of the Bezos Family Foundation said: “This was a huge learning opportunity for us to learn more about out-of-school time with a trusted alliance of funders who have been doing this for a long time.”

For the funders, the fund provided structure and purpose to what was already taking place in their world—phone calls to each other and with grantee leaders about how the pandemic crisis was affecting the OST field and what they could do to support it. All of them expressed appreciation for the fact that the administrative burdens of collaboration—such as scheduling, agenda-setting, and managing feedback loops—were carefully managed by the facilitator of the OST pooled fund.

The value of collaboration and community engendered by the OST pooled fund was not limited to just the funder group; by design, the structure of the OST fund built in collaboration and coordination among the funders, among all eight grantee organizations, and between the two groups. Grantee organizations, particularly those in the second group, talked about how the OST pooled fund has opened doors for them into other spaces, like being invited to speak at convenings where federal education policymakers and other funders outside of the pooled fund are present.

All of the funders and grantee organizations that participated in the OST pooled fund spoke to the value of advancing their knowledge about the distinct cultural circumstances that shape the provision of OST services to specific communities represented by the second group of grantees. “I felt like the entire group—funders and the other grantees—really wanted to hear what was needed to support children and families in all of our communities,” said Shanise Kaaikala, legislative analyst of the National Indian Education Association. “It made me feel hopeful about the possibilities of shaping our futures together.”

And, even though the grantees remember the first year of the pandemic as being an exhausting, 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week experience, they are proud of what their organizations were able to accomplish during that period, both before and after the OST pooled funds came through. “The pandemic created an ‘all hands on deck’ moment for all of us in the afterschool field,” said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “The pooled fund helped affirm the value of intermediaries: that with our 50-state network, we can move nimbly and quickly to support programs on the ground with vital information. Overall, the pooled fund brought leaders together and helped us build our relationships with and trust in each other so we could talk about how to tackle the crisis of the pandemic and the ongoing needs of the OST field.”

The grantees of the OST pooled fund all completed a wide range of activities under the priority framework (see Appendix B). Overall, the major impact of the OST pooled fund can be summarized as follows:

A strengthened position in the policy arena: While the Afterschool Alliance and other policy-focused organizations had built a strong foundation of successful advocacy efforts, pooled fund support helped the intermediary organizations

strengthen their voice in the policy arena. They were able to secure afterschool and summer enrichment programming as key learning recovery interventions eligible for funding through the American Rescue Plan and other pandemic relief legislation. Support from the pooled fund also helped national intermediaries aid the field in accessing the funds through their state and local education agencies.⁵

Increased diversity and representation of voices on OST issues: In addition to the collaboration that took place through the OST pooled fund, grantee organizations continue to collaborate and work together on OST projects—for example, the Afterschool Alliance and National Summer Learning Association are lead partners in the U.S. Department of Education-led *Engage Every Student* initiative, featuring a call by U.S. Secretary of Education Anthony Cardona for universal access to afterschool programs. Every Hour Counts, the Coalition for Community Schools, and the National Urban League helped found the Youth Development Policy Table, which is co-led by the Afterschool Alliance.

Catalytic funding: Participation in the fund catalyzed additional grantmaking that is responsive to the key challenges and recommendations named by the grantees in their report to the funders. Examples of grants catalyzed by the pooled fund include:

- The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation is supporting Every Hour Counts in partnership with Minnesota-based Youthprise to implement Powered by Youth Voice: Future Directions for Afterschool. This effort, responsive to the recommendations in the grantee report, is employing design thinking, peer learning and networking to identify best practices to authentically engage youth in program development and designing the future of afterschool.
- The Wallace Foundation is supporting the National Urban League, National Indian Education Association, UnidosUS and the Coalition for Community Schools to advance work on the priorities named in the grantee report.
- The pooled fund delivered aligned support for the field and built deep relational trust and community among participating funders and grantees. These benefits also came with costs: the bandwidth and time required of funders and grantees to participate, and the detailed attention needed for administration and facilitation.
- The pooled fund provided a unique opportunity to advance representation from historically excluded communities at policy, practice and research tables, and to support the field's anchor intermediaries to advance their racial equity agendas. Having seven national foundations advance this agenda through the pooled fund sent a powerful signal to the field.

Lessons Learned

As Gwynn Hughes of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation said, “Funders often ask grantee organizations to collaborate with one another, but don’t always role-model the expectation themselves.” From the vantage point of nonprofit organizations, funders, in addition to their fiscal resources, can exercise leverage to convene leaders from disparate but related parts of the same sector—and grantees wish they would use that leverage more often.

Although all of the funders stated that, given similar circumstances, they would participate in the OST pooled fund again and that they all valued collaborative learning, using terms like “magic” to describe the experience, for the funders, their collective insights aligned on the following themes:

“In order to truly commit to equity in education systems, including the out-of-school time field, we need to first foster honest conversations about why communities of color have been underrepresented in the work so far. Organizations like ours get caught up in chasing after project funds that require a lot of day-to-day work. We also need to build coalitions that are centered on equity and pursue joint agendas. I hope that concrete, measurable progress can come out of the recommendations we made to the funders—so more expansive networks and coalitions are built to truly help us build capacity on the ground so we can both respond to crises and help children and families succeed in the long term.”

–Horatio Blackman, Vice President of Education Policy, Advocacy, and Engagement, National Urban League

Building community is important but it takes time:

Most of the funders talked about how isolating the role of national grantmaker can be, and how they experience distance from the service-providing programs on the ground, as well as from each other. During a time of great crisis, the OST pooled fund brought these funders together—some of whom knew each other previously, but some of whom didn't—and then widened the conversation further by consulting with the grantee organizations early and often. Most funders were grateful for the sense of community that was created by the pooled fund's discussions and activities, especially during times that were stressful for virtually all in America. Building this deep relational trust and community among funders, among grantees and across the two groups was beneficial and positively impacted grantmaking, even though it took time and bandwidth when funders and grantees were already overstretched.

Investing in the “how” matters:

Successful collaboration requires investing in structures and processes to create alignment around goals, strategies and tactics, and to support communication and community. Funders expressed appreciation for how the fund's priority framework was carefully built using an inclusive process, and how the fund's communications and meeting cadences were designed to build trust among the funders and grantees and minimize administrative burden for all involved. They noted that hiring a lead consultant to serve as the backbone of the effort and leaning on EdFunders' operational and financial expertise led to a smoothly functioning and thoughtfully executed experience.

A pooled fund offers a chance to advance equity:

The fund provided cover and leverage to advance representation from historically excluded communities at policy, practice and research tables, and to support the field's anchor intermediaries to advance

their racial equity agendas. For grantee organizations, the leverage and support of funders to help them align their efforts within a field and drive towards systemic change is one of the most valuable roles that funders can play. Although this was a one-time grant, the fund planted a seed that has been nurtured by additional grants.

What Next?

Given the positive experiences that funders and grantees had participating in the OST pooled fund, what are the possibilities for sustaining and supporting collaboration into the future, now that the OST pooled fund has spent down its dollars?

Most of the funders saw the OST pooled fund as a meaningful response for a unique period in time: an effort to do more, in a learning community with each other and with the field, that reached beyond the efforts of their respective organizations. The uniqueness of the

pandemic crisis may be one of the reasons why the funders collectively opted to end the OST pooled fund after its funds were spent down. Most of the funders believed that it would be difficult to convince their boards and senior leadership to continue contributing to the pooled fund beyond the crisis period. In addition, as the United States moves forward with recovery during less-deadly phases of the pandemic, many foundations are considering whether to revert back to their previously-established targeted objectives or [re-visit their funding](#) priorities and amounts altogether.

However, the funders were optimistic that they could find ways to effectively collaborate with each other into the future, in both crisis and non-crisis times. All of them spoke about the value of being able to connect to and learn from one another—of being able to compare notes about what they were hearing from education and OST leaders and providers, of being able to clarify what their shared goals were with respect to

“The only way our grants have impact is if we successfully get it out of the coffers into the communities that need them. While I think the pooled fund helped support communities in need during the pandemic at a very basic level, I think the real work still lies ahead of us. How do we, as funders, challenge ourselves to avoid perpetuating the structural racism built into systems—how do we continue to ask ourselves whether our grantee organizations are truly representative of communities in need of these services? How do we achieve the right balance between intermediary organizations that can see across states and regions and the smaller grassroots organizations that are providing essential services to children and families in need? And finally, how do we, as funders, avoid putting unnecessary strain on nonprofits through restricted funding and burdensome administrative processes? Whatever small ideas or big ideas that came from this pooled fund, I hope that we, and other funders, can continue to consider them all into the future.”

– Marlyn Torres, Senior Program Officer, New York Life Foundation

sustaining and supporting the out-of-school time field during a moment that was creating severe stresses for all in the nonprofit sector.

In the future, the OST Impact Group will continue to serve as one of the main venues for collaborative efforts, as

multiple funders support the group's continued existence and Kathleen Traphagen and others are committed to identifying opportunities for further collaboration and shared learning. "Moving forward, I'm sure we can find ways to put collaboration into our drinking water," said Gigi Antoni of The Wallace Foundation. For the

organizations that received grants from the pooled fund, the close collaboration between funders and grantees engendered by the OST pooled fund may be one of the most important outcomes to sustain in future endeavors involving multiple funders.

Study Questions

1. What are the benefits of and barriers to collaborative funding? Does it become easier to overcome barriers during times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, or can the same arguments for collaborative funding apply to non-crisis times?
2. In this case study, collaboration among the funders and among the grantees, and between the funders and grantees was built into the design and processes for the pooled fund. How well do you think the intentionality around collaboration worked? What would you have added or changed about the process?
3. How did the pandemic open opportunities for these funders to collaborate that had not been considered prior to the crisis? Did you find similar opportunities to work in different ways during the pandemic? What lessons from these collaborative experiences might you apply beyond the crisis?
4. How can grantmakers work to sustain community and collaboration among and between grantmakers and grantees for the long term? In what situations could these types of long-term relationships be beneficial? Might they become a hindrance in some situations?
5. How can funders engage in effective, longer-term aligned action to address deeply-entrenched systemic challenges in the field?
6. What did the grantmakers in the pooled fund do to broaden their list of potential grantees beyond those that they had traditionally worked with? What did they gain by doing this? What other ways can you think of to bring new voices to the table to advance equity?
7. What more can philanthropy do to center equity in their grantmaking processes? What lessons can be drawn from the opportunities and challenges faced by the grantmaking organizations involved in the OST pooled fund in their efforts to center equity from the start?
8. How did the administration and processes built into the pooled fund's structure contribute to its success? Would more administrative support for funders and grantees have been helpful or a hindrance? Why?
9. What lessons can be learned from this case study about the balance between funding organizations at the national level, like the intermediary organizations, and the grassroots level? What more needs to be done to ensure that an optimal balance and strong networks are maintained between different levels of investment and advocacy?
10. What were the most important outcomes from the OST pooled fund as they apply to your work?

Contributors

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Kathleen Traphagen, Out-of-School Time Impact Group Facilitator, Grantmakers for Education

Endnotes

¹ We are using the phrase ‘out-of-school time’ to refer to programs that happen outside of the classroom – before and after school, in the evenings, weekends and summer; in school buildings or community settings; run by schools or community organizations, serving children and youth in grades K-12. The out-of-school time field encompasses program providers and the infrastructure that supports them – including intermediaries, policy and advocacy-focused organizations, technical assistance providers, research, communications, philanthropy and other entities supporting the delivery of high-quality programming.

² For more about the role of OST intermediaries, see The Wallace Foundation’s Coordinating Afterschool Resources section of the Knowledge Center: <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/after-school/pages/coordinating-after-school-resources.aspx> and the 50 State Afterschool Network: <http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/>

³ Grantmakers for Education created impact groups to build on common interests among funders within the EdFunders membership and facilitate collaborative learning, action and outcomes.

⁴ The S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation implemented a planned sunset in December 2020.

⁵ See <https://helpkidsrecover.org/> for detailed information about how the American Rescue Plan can support afterschool and summer enrichment programming.

Appendix A | Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund Priority Framework

October 2020

CONTEXT

As the grip of the triple pandemics -- COVID-19, economic devastation and pervasive police violence and racial injustice -- continues its hold on the U.S., millions of young people who find joy, engagement, connection, mentoring, academic support and community in their afterschool and summer programs are bearing a heavy burden. Many programs shut down over the spring and summer, while others struggled to provide remote services, or found ways to serve the children of first responders with very limited resources.

Layoffs of skilled youth workers and educators jeopardize the significant progress achieved over years of investments in professional development and other quality improvement strategies. Adolescents, particularly young people who are Black, Indigenous or members of other communities of color (BIPOC) have borne the deepest brunt as programs serving teenagers largely did not receive any of the very limited federal COVID relief provided to the child care sector.

Amid these unprecedented challenges, we have seen the field step up to the moment as community-based organizations lean into their roles as connectors and supporters of young people and their families. OST providers deliver food, connect with families, help ensure that young people have access to technology and internet, and provide their programming online and in safe in-person environments to offer learning, enrichment, support and community to their participants. As uprisings for racial justice followed the brutal murder of George Floyd in the early summer, community-based organizations supported young people -- as they have for generations -- to exercise their agency as actors for change.

Throughout this crisis, intermediaries have played important roles in supporting provider organizations, through engaging in policy and advocacy, hosting convenings, producing resources and guidance, sharing effective practices, promoting the role of OST in school reopening discussions, amplifying bright spots and connecting providers with expert technical assistance.

As it becomes increasingly clear that the impacts of the pandemic will be felt over multiple years, the OST community's expertise in youth development and agency, social-emotional support, active learning and enrichment, and family engagement could help communities reconfigure what formal learning looks like. At the same time, as with other nonprofits, the pandemic has put the field under strain. To leverage this moment and ensure that the OST field survives, stabilizes and can be a strong partner in school re-opening, intermediaries need continued and expanded support.

A group of philanthropic organizations is joining forces to respond together to the needs articulated by field leaders. The goal of Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund is to bolster the capacity of national intermediaries to support providers in recovering and reopening to serve young people. The fund will prioritize support that impacts young people furthest from opportunity: low income children and BIPOC youth, and will support efforts to build organizational capacity to center racial equity.

FOUNDING STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bezos Family Foundation, S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, C.S. Mott Foundation, New York Life Foundation, Overdeck Family Foundation, Susan Crown Exchange, and The Wallace Foundation. The Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund is housed at Grantmakers for Education.

PRIORITIES

Building Field Capacity	
	Continue to facilitate convenings to share challenges, develop solutions, provide community, connect stakeholders and allies. Find new intersection and leverage points on audience, content, etc.
	Track impact on the OST field (program closures, layoffs, partnerships, bright spots) through comprehensive, rapid data collection (surveys, focus groups).
	Develop and disseminate communications tools showcasing a common message on the field's role in rebuilding and recovering. Consider creating a collaborative platform to amplify distribution of resources. Support dissemination across all networks.
	Support provider leadership with crisis management, approaches to revenue generation, sustainability.
	<p>Advance race equity in the field: (for example)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage expertise for trainings and guidance on advancing organizational commitments to race equity.• Resource local/state peer-to-peer technical assistance support to intermediary & local leaders around the country via tool development, webinars, zoom meetings and content specific working groups.• Support local and state intermediaries in engaging in strategic planning and reflection to better convene stakeholders, engage youth leaders and community members in taking steps forward to dismantle structural racism. Advance how local and state intermediaries work in collaboration with young people to design more just systems.• Strengthen the pipeline for leaders of color/ identifying and dismantling structural inequities within the field preventing leaders of color from advancing.
Supporting Innovations in Programming and Professional Development	
	For remote and socially-distant in-person approaches to programming and professional development, identify effective practices, develop/disseminate guidance, tools, reviews, and resources, convenings.
	Address inequities in digital access for OST professionals.
	Assist the field in reframing quality assessment and measurement.
Building Back Better with K-12 and Communities	
	Continue to develop and disseminate guidance, tools, support and networking that enables OST and K-12 to respond to the moment and 'build it back better,' including learning hubs and pods, and planning/support for summer 2021.
	Incentivize partnerships by providing seed funding that requires involvement of multiple stakeholders.

Co-Strategizing to Maximize Impact
Analyze existing coordination and identify improvements that will increase leverage and impact.
Strengthen connections with other constituencies such as corporate sector, parents, media, K-12 organizations, etc.
Convene intermediary stakeholders for ongoing discussions on future visioning and action, w/external facilitator, including: identifying lessons from 2020, collaborating on a policy agenda that would address the structural fragility of the workforce.

Appendix B | Afterschool and Summer Recovery and Opportunity Fund Outcomes

COLLABORATIVE OUTCOMES - HIGHLIGHTS

The eight grantee organizations worked collaboratively with DAX-DEV Consulting to produce a report uplifting field challenges and providing recommendations for funder action, prioritizing the perspectives of organizations representing communities of color. A summary of the report and conversations among the funders and grantees will be published and available on the EdFunders website in October 2022 and will catalyze ongoing funder discussions facilitated by the EdFunders Out-of-School Time Impact Group.

The eight organizations have expanded and strengthened their connections to one another and increased communication across networks about available leadership and policy opportunities, such as youth and adult fellowships, professional development, national conferences and convenings. They have expanded connections across their constituencies to share knowledge, create joint resources and communications and develop shared policy responses.

Joint policy and advocacy work contributed to the inclusion of unprecedented resources to the OST field in the pandemic relief legislation passed in 2021. As these resources became available, further joint work has produced substantial resources for the field on how to access these resources - including helpkidsrecover.org and the [Engage Every Student initiative](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES - HIGHLIGHTS

Afterschool Alliance

- Ran successful [Afterschool Ambassador](#) and [Youth Ambassador](#) leadership development programs, both of which recruit, train and support local leaders who generate awareness of the value of afterschool in their communities, build relationships with elected officials, and educate decision makers about afterschool issues.
- Produced [Youth Voice Videos](#) featuring youth perspectives about a variety of topics, from SEL and learning to equity and what youth want policy makers to know.
- Worked with Thrive Paradigm to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Afterschool Alliance AmeriCorps VISTA program, including designing more equitable onboarding practices, orientation and off-boarding trainings, ongoing professional development, and general technical support.

Coalition for Community Schools/IEL

- Convened discussions with local and state coalition members to understand the depth and effects of racism in the systems they lead and engage in. The conversations provided a forum for OST professionals to discuss how they are impacted and how they can have an impact, including advancing policy and practice changes toward dismantling structural racism. With additional support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the coalition produced two reports: [Community Schools: Supporting One Another As A Blueprint for the Future](#) and [Six Strategies to Build Empowering Youth Engagement](#).

Every Hour Counts

- Presented [Reimagining the Future of Afterschool: Building Back Better with Youth and Communities](#), with 600 adults and youth participants representing 90 cities and 40 states. The Afterschool Alliance's Youth Ambassadors were invited as speakers and participants, as well as speakers from National Summer Learning Association and National Urban League.
- Produced the [Return to School Guide](#), a collection of 45 resources to ensure that the transition back to school met the needs of young people, their families, and their communities.
- With Penn Hill, developed an [Advocacy Toolkit](#) to assist communities in tapping into federal funding.
- Published a series of [blog posts](#) on how intermediaries navigated the pandemic, featured on Medium.
- Hosted a virtual data symposium: [Putting Data to Work for Young People](#), that attracted 800+ registrants from 100+ communities, including international leaders.

National Afterschool Association

- Revamped the [Core Knowledge, Skills and Competencies for Out-of-School Time Professionals](#) with a racial equity lens, and is developing companion self-assessment tools for each competency.
- Developed [The OST Leader's Guide to Equitable Hiring and Staff Development](#) which includes best practices, guiding questions to support policy and practice changes, and no- to low-cost resources to support equitable hiring and staff development practices. These tools have been shared broadly to NAA's 32,000+ members.
- Developed and facilitated Equity Strategy Sessions for three distinct communities – program leaders, state affiliate and state network intermediary leaders; and citywide intermediary leaders in partnership with Every Hour Counts. More than 500 national, state and city leaders participated in these sessions.
- Published a dedicated [AfterSchool Today](#) magazine issue focused on equity-driven workforce issues, leaders of color and equity-driven leadership.

National Summer Learning Association:

- Launched the Capitol Hill Internship Program, and Fellowship Program for Emerging Leaders of Color. Profiles of the interns can be found [here](#).
- Expanded the year-round **Professional Summer Learning Communities** to ten subject areas including: Youth Employment & Internships; Libraries; Arts Education; Healthcare & STEM; College Access and Summer Melt; Health & Fitness; Public Housing; Special Populations; and Environment & Outdoors. Each community hosted three virtual meetings throughout the year and convened at the National Conference in Washington, D.C. in October of 2021.

National Indian Education Association

- Completed a [Landscape of Afterschool Program Access in Native Communities](#) and began collaborations with three organizations that focus on OST activities to expand programs in Indian Country.

National Urban League

- Launched the Emerging Voices from the Pandemic: Students Speak Out film series, focused on young people who had become

disconnected from formal education during the pandemic. Through a peer-to-peer approach, each young person was in conversation with a friend or matched peer to talk about the circumstances leading up to their disengagement and recommendations for administrators and teachers to make remote learning better. The campaign for the film series culminated in a webinar on October 28, 2021 featuring youth participants as panelists. The recording can be accessed [here](#). More information about the 13-part film series, a video playlist, and advocacy resources can be found [here](#).

UnidosUS

- Supported OST educators in its Escalera, Entre Mujeres, CASA Code, and other youth serving programs through the creation of an online community with Blackboard. Staff led an LGBTQ+ Latino History Teach-In for affiliates and others serving Latino youth.
- Worked with policy teams in Arizona, California, Florida and Texas to review state education agency plans for distribution of pandemic relief resources with an eye toward OST supports for English learners.
- Reviewed and analyzed annual statewide assessment data to provide information to policymakers on how Latino and English language student learning has been impacted during the pandemic and make the case for targeted OST supports for students with the highest needs.

Principles for Effective Education Grantmaking

1. Discipline and Focus

In education, where public dollars dwarf private investments, a funder has greater impact when grantmaking is carefully planned and targeted.

2. Knowledge

Information, ideas and advice from diverse sources, as well as openness to criticism and feedback, can help a funder make wise choices.

3. Resources Linked to Results

A logic-driven “theory of change” helps a grantmaker think clearly about how specific actions will lead to desired outcomes, thus linking resources with results.

4. Effective Grantees

A grantmaker is effective only when its grantees are effective. Especially in education, schools and systems lack capacity and grantees (both inside and outside the system) may require deeper support.

5. Engaged Partners

A funder succeeds by actively engaging its partners — the individuals, institutions and communities connected with an issue — to ensure “ownership” of education problems and their solutions.

6. Leverage, Influence and Collaboration

The depth and range of problems in education make it difficult to achieve meaningful change in isolation or by funding programs without changing public policies or opinions. A grantmaker is more effective when working with others to mobilize and deploy as many resources as possible in order to advance solutions.

7. Persistence

The most important problems in education are often the most complex and intractable, and will take time to solve.

8. Innovation and Constant Learning

Even while acting on the best available information — as in Principle #2 — a grantmaker can create new knowledge about ways to promote educational success. Tracking outcomes, understanding costs and identifying what works—and what doesn’t—are essential to helping grantmakers and their partners achieve results.

Grantmakers for Education is the nation's largest community of education philanthropists. EdFunders members make up a diverse network of almost 300 public, private and community foundations, and others, that support public education. Working in partnership with our members, we pursue systemic approaches to equity and racial justice in education in order to make a positive impact on learners everywhere. We are a hub for new connections and ideas, a compass to help members navigate their work, a spur for collective action and a champion for positive change in education. For more information or to learn about membership, please contact us at information@edfunders.org.



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