



Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time

YEAR 1 – IMPACT BRIEF



G·san

GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK



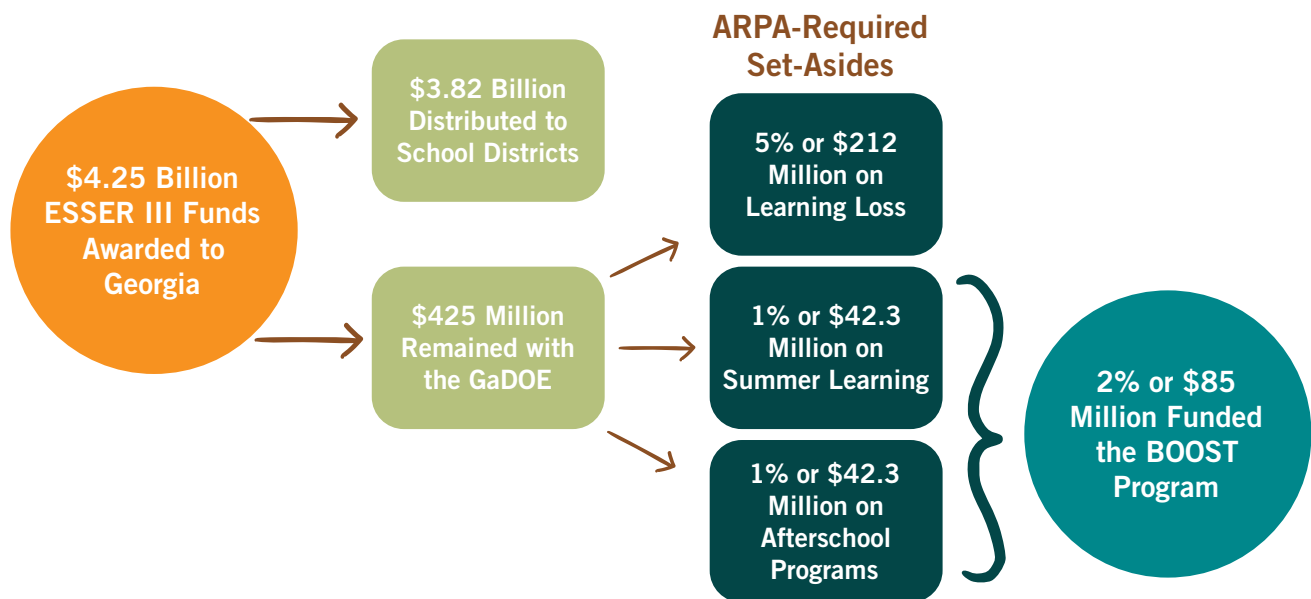
Introduction

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), signed on March 11, 2021, set aside 10% of the \$122 billion Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER III) for state education agencies. \$8.45 billion was directly allocated to support out-of-school time (OST) programs. These funds were divided in three ways: 1% (\$1.2 billion) for comprehensive afterschool; 1% (\$1.2 billion) for summer enrichment; and 5% (\$6.1 billion) for learning recovery, which can include afterschool, summer, or extended school year programming.¹

Georgia's BOOST Grants Program

In July 2021, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) partnered with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN), a public-private collaborative that has worked alongside and supported Georgia's afterschool and summer learning field for over 15 years, to establish the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grants program. GSAN administers this three-year competitive grant to distribute approximately **\$85 million** to Georgia communities on behalf of GaDOE. Through BOOST, GSAN and GaDOE aim to expand access to and strengthen the quality of summer enrichment opportunities and comprehensive afterschool programming for K-12 youth statewide.¹

FIGURE 1. Distribution of Georgia's ESSER III Funds



GSAN led the development of the BOOST grants program with input from GaDOE and by soliciting and incorporating feedback from the field regarding the need for sustained and flexible support of their programming. Based on the needs expressed by OST providers in the field, the BOOST grants program featured: 1) one-year renewable grants for up to three years; 2) integration of summer enrichment and comprehensive afterschool funds into one grant application; 3) flexible use of funds to cover new programmatic needs; and 4) an application, reporting, and technical assistance process designed to ease administrative burdens for small organizations.

¹ H.R.1319 - American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

² Georgia ARP-ESSER State Plan. July, 2021. <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/07/Georgia-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf>

BOOST grantees are to use a whole-child approach (e.g., ensuring students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged) to help remove non-academic barriers to learning for students most impacted by COVID-19. Through BOOST grant awards, GSA required all applicants to focus on at least one of the three program priorities:

- **Expand access to serve more youth**, emphasizing children most impacted by the pandemic.
- **Strengthen programmatic quality** and expand and enhance the support and services offered.
- **Reduce barriers to OST participation**, such as transportation and enrollment costs, to ensure admissions for all youth.

Additionally, the BOOST grants program prioritized:

- Programs that serve youth with disabilities, youth experiencing homelessness, youth in foster care, English language learners, youth receiving free or reduced-price lunch, and migratory youth.
- Programs that have operated summer and/or afterschool programming in the past three years.
- Programs serving counties without state funding through the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program or the Out of School Services Program (formerly known as the Afterschool Care Program).
- Programs offering programming five days a week.



C5 Georgia's summer camp program provides high potential teens in under resourced communities academic, leadership development and life preparatory programs.

Implementation Findings

The RFP Process

On July 27, 2021, GaDOE and GSAN issued a BOOST Request for Proposal (RFP) that included two grant competitions – one for youth development organizations with statewide reach and the other for local youth-serving community-based organizations. The intent was to use a highly competitive, transparent application process to fund evidence-based afterschool and summer enrichment programming that supports Georgia's students' **learning acceleration, connectedness, and well-being**. Eligible applicants were nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and municipalities. The process included a detailed application and scoring rubric designed in consultation with national experts and made available within the RFP.

Of the 209 eligible BOOST applications submitted, 50% or 105 organizations (four statewide and 101 community-based organizations) were recommended and approved for \$27 million in funding. The four BOOST statewide grants ranged from **\$1.1 to \$4.5 million** annually. Additionally, 101 community grants were awarded to community-driven organizations across the state; **\$7,500 to \$225,000** for organizations that provided academic year or summer only programs and **\$16,100 to \$427,500** for organizations operating year-round programming.

Boost Grantees

A total of 100 BOOST grantees (including 96 community organizations and four statewide organizations) implemented programming in Year 1.[†]

Across the 100 grantees, the majority **(72%) were year-round programs** (e.g., operating both during the academic year and the summer months), and the remainder were academic year only programs (11%) or summer only programs (17%).

[†]There were originally 101 community organizations approved for funding, but one declined the grant award, and four deferred the grant award to Year 2 or Year 3.

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The Georgia Alliance of YMCAs promotes literacy by hosting a community book fair.

Collectively, the community grantees operated **1,342 academic year sites** (Figure 2). The majority (70%) operated at least five locations – with one outlier, Boy Scouts of America Atlanta Area Council, serving 594 sites. There were also **332 summer program sites** among the community grantees, with the majority (80%) operating fewer than five sites — with one outlier, Bread of Life Development Ministries, Inc. operating 62 sites. Additionally, the four statewide grantees — Communities in Schools of Georgia, Georgia Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA of Metro Atlanta, and Georgia Recreation and Parks Association — collectively operated **298 academic year sites and 310 summer sites**.

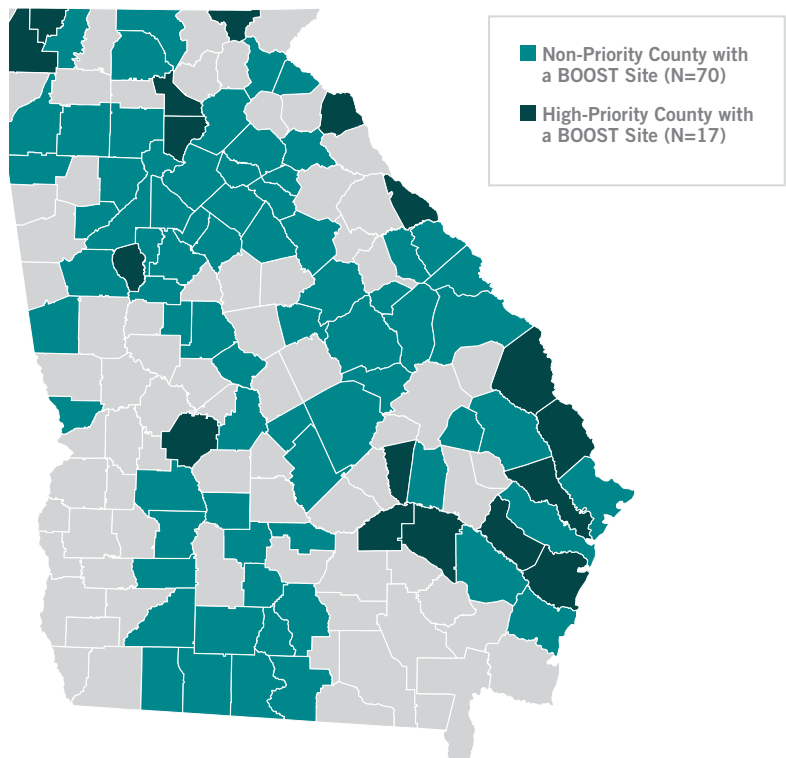
FIGURE 2. Number of Year 1 BOOST Sites

	ACADEMIC YEAR	SUMMER
4 Statewide Grants	298 Sites	310 Sites
Communities in Schools of Georgia	9 Sites	16 Sites
Georgia Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs	24 Sites	104 Sites
Georgia Alliance of YMCA	194 Sites	65 Sites
Georgia Recreation and Parks Association	71 Sites	125 Sites
96 Community Grants	1342 Sites	332 Sites

Program Reach

BOOST sites operated in **87 of Georgia's 159 counties** during the program's first year (Figure 3). Of these 87 counties, **17 were BOOST priority counties** because they had no programs receiving government funds through GaDOE's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program or the Division of Family and Children's Services' Out of School Services Program (formerly known as the Afterschool Care Program) at the time of the BOOST application.

FIGURE 3.
Georgia Counties with Year 1 BOOST Sites



Youth Served

BOOST-funded statewide and community grantees, which are also funded via other public and private funding streams, served:

- **72,551 young people** during the 2021-22 academic year
- **78,831 young people** during the summer of 2022

Most youth served by BOOST-funded sites were in elementary grades K through 5 (Figure 4). During the academic year, these students accounted for 63% of all participating youth, while during the summer, these youth accounted for about two-thirds of the population served (66%).

Figure 5 shows that the Year 1 BOOST grantees successfully targeted the priority youth populations outlined in ARPA. Specifically, the data show that **over two-thirds of the BOOST youth served were eligible for free- or reduced-price meals at school** (69% in the academic year and 79% in the summer). These rates are comparatively higher than the state rate, where 54% of students are eligible for free- or reduced-price meals.³

FIGURE 4. Number of Youth Served by Grade Level

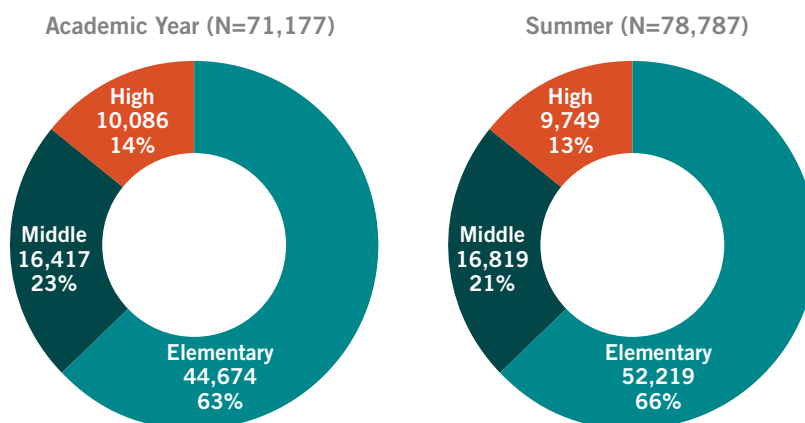
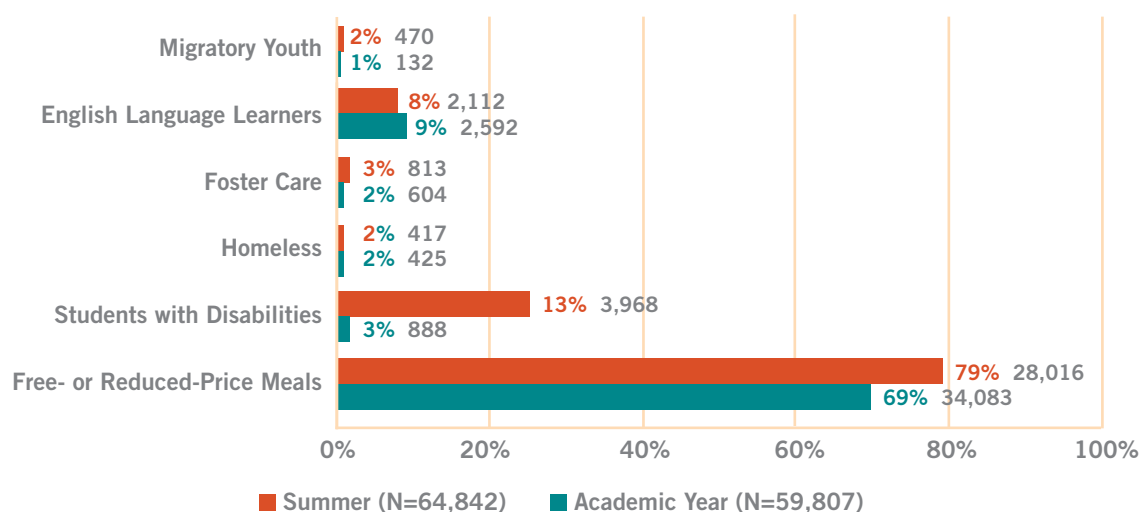


FIGURE 5.

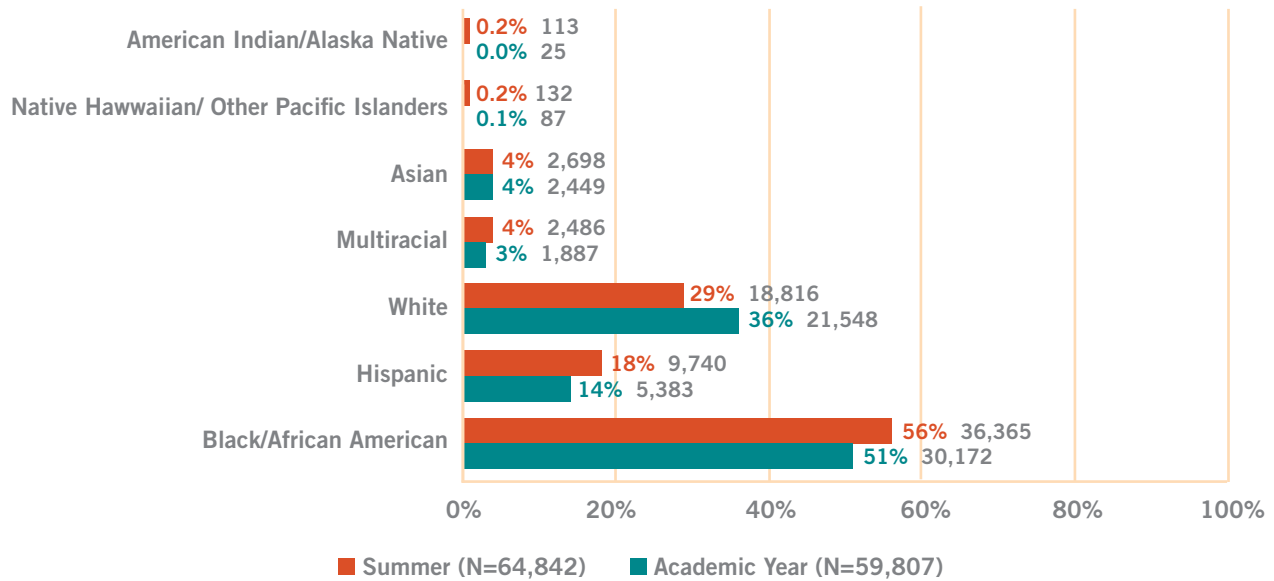
Percentages of ARPA Priority Youth Populations Served by Year 1 BOOST Grantees



³ The Governor's Office for Student Achievement, 2022

Overall, grantees reported serving mostly Black youth, with the highest percentage of Black youth being served in the summer (56%) compared to the academic year (51%) (Figure 6). These proportions are substantially higher than the percentage of Black youth statewide (34% - not shown).⁴

FIGURE 6. Racial/Ethnic Background of BOOST Youth



C5 Georgia provides youth the opportunity to tour university campuses as part of their college readiness programming.

[†] Race and ethnicity were collected separately leading to total percentages to equal to more than 100%

⁴ Kids Count Data Center. Child Population by Race and Ethnicity in Georgia. 2021 <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=12&loct=2#detailed/2/12/false/2048/68,69,67,12,70,66,71,72/423,424>

Program Purposes

As described earlier in this report, BOOST grantees were required to focus on at least one of the three program purposes:

1. Expand the number of youth served
2. Improve programmatic quality
3. Reduce barriers to youth participation

Figure 7 shows how many grantees addressed each purpose in Year 1 during the academic year and the summer. Both sets of grantees most frequently worked on access expansion (96% for the academic year and 99% for the summer) and improving program quality (82% for the academic year and 90% for the summer). About three-quarters of all grantees focused on eliminating barriers to participation (78% for the academic year and 75% for the summer).

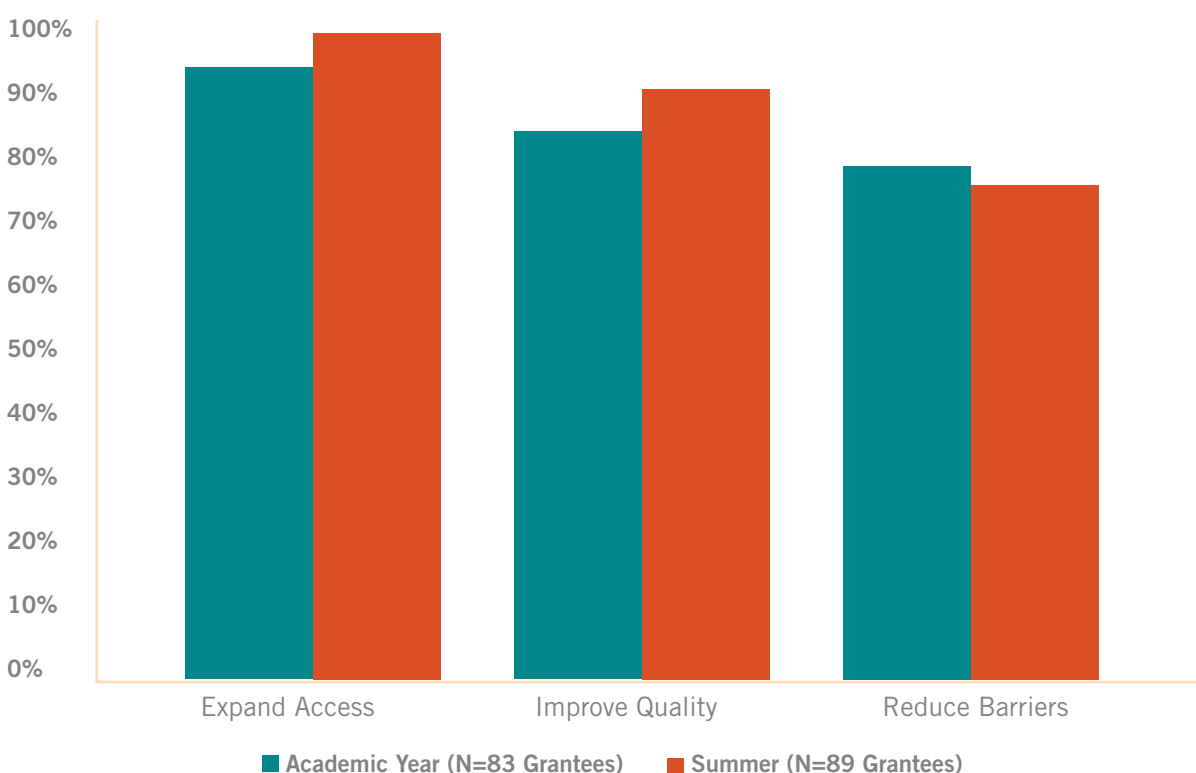


Grantee Spotlights

Family Support Circle (Clayton County) expanded and increased access to more children and youth to participate in the 2022 summer enrichment [Youth Excellence Program] due to the funding received by the BOOST grant. Specifically, they extended programming into two additional counties and served greater numbers of students affected by the pandemic.

With BOOST funds, Safe Harbor Children's Shelter (Glynn County) expanded access to serve runaway, homeless, and street youth, youth recently emancipated from foster care, and victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

FIGURE 7. BOOST Program Purposes Addressed



TOP 3 STRATEGIES UTILIZED FOR EACH PROGRAM PURPOSE

EXPAND ACCESS

- **Serving different or more youth** (46% for the academic year; 51% for the summer).
- **Opening or expanding to new sites or locations** (29% for the academic year; 29% for the summer).
- **Partnering with local schools or districts** to recruit new students helped BOOST grantees conduct student/family outreach and recruitment, identify the highest-need youth, and provide safe and convenient program space (26% for the academic year; 15% for the summer).

IMPROVE QUALITY

- **Expanding existing program services and activities**, such as college and career prep, field trips, mental health, and physical education (49% for the academic year and 57% for the summer).
- **Implementing new or revised curricula**, teaching strategies, or program approaches (28% for the academic year; 13% for the summer).
- **Hiring qualified teachers, either additional or as a new strategy** (e.g., certified teachers) (22% for summer; 19% for the academic year).

REDUCE BARRIERS

- **Providing transportation services** (64% in both academic year and summer).
- **Continuing to offer free programming** (45% for the academic year; 38% for summer).
- **Waiving program fees** (e.g., offering full scholarships) (28% for the academic year; 26% for summer).



Restoration Atlanta, Inc. promotes the physical and mental well-being of youth through hands-on programming activities.

Implementation Successes

On the Year 1 end-of-program reports, grantees described their initial successes and numerous anecdotes of positive youth growth and development. Those mentioned most frequently by both summer and academic year grantees included:

- **Improved school outcomes**, such as students' grades and test scores, reading/writing abilities, grade promotion, high school graduation, academic awards, and overall learning engagement.
- **Enhanced youth mental health**, such as building resiliency, overcoming grief, and reducing stress and anxiety.
- **Established new partnerships** with faith-based organizations, colleges, civic organizations, and local businesses.
- **Better well-being and connectedness** by building self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-awareness; and exhibiting feelings of belonging and developing friendships;
- **Enriched life skills** by improving communication and collaboration skills, becoming more college-ready, exhibiting leadership, obtaining employment or internships, and engaging in life planning.
- **Supported youth health and wellness** by learning to prepare healthy meals and understanding good nutrition and the benefits of physical activity.
- **Provided healthy snacks and meals**, including take-home meals and food gift cards for students and families in need.



The Think Big Youth Organization's Lights on Afterschool event provided a variety of educational and recreational activities for students. STEM activities engaged students in mindful enrichment to support their interest in school and connections with other students their age.



Youth learn about healthy eating at the Georgia Recreation and Parks Association's Fannin County site.



Grantee Spotlights

Southside Recreation Center (Lowndes County) used BOOST funds to waive program fees, reaching families who would not otherwise be able to afford the services. They noted that the “Center’s summer program would not have been available for some of the most vulnerable youth and their families to benefit from [without BOOST funds].”

BOOST funding allowed the Augusta Richmond Juvenile Court (Richmond County) to increase the availability of certified teachers and teacher assistants, providing more individualized support with assignments and areas of learning loss and academic deficiencies.

Many Georgia Parks and Recreation Association sites (statewide) increased STEM and STEAM options during their academic year programs. BOOST funds allowed the sites to purchase engaging quality materials, such as LEGO BricQ sets, snap circuit sets, architecture kits, STEM career boxes, and science and math games.

Vox Teen Communications (Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb and Fulton counties) provided healthy snacks and meals for in person activities and mailed snacks and gift cards to homes of youth who attended virtually. Breakthrough Atlanta (Fulton County) provided over \$28,000 in student meals and grocery store gift cards for their students during their BOOST summer program.



Youth are participating in cooking class at the New Neighbors Network’s BOOST-supported The Perch Summer Program. Located in rural Comer, Georgia, The Perch serves Burmese refugee youth and other local youth.

Grantee Challenges

Grantees were asked to describe implementation challenges and unexpected difficulties during the BOOST program's first year. Summer and academic year grantees described the following obstacles most frequently:

- **COVID-related challenges** include coping with student or staff illnesses/absences, shifting from in-person to virtual programming, and encountering vaccine requirements at field trip locations.
- **Staff turnover or staffing shortages**, resulting in some instances of serving fewer youth than planned and spending significant time recruiting, hiring, and training new staff.
- **Inconsistent or lower program attendance than expected**, particularly among older youth.
- **Lack of or difficulties with transportation**, such as determining field trip logistics, juggling multiple program sites/routes, managing home pick-ups and drop-offs, and affording surging gas prices and high vehicle maintenance costs.
- **Data collection and analysis**, such as difficulties with obtaining school test scores, identifying suitable evaluation instruments, tracking data collection efforts, and experiencing lower-than-expected completion rates on the youth satisfaction surveys.
- **Students with chronic school absenteeism and severe academic needs/learning loss**
- **Students with behavior, grief, or other mental health issues**, ranging from reacclimating to in-person learning to serving youth who were harming themselves, to coping with COVID-related family loss/death and other pandemic-related trauma.
- **BOOST funding or programming delays or reductions**, resulting in difficulties with program planning, purchasing supplies and materials, and expanding to new sites.
- **Program recruitment challenges**
- **Unexpected high enrollments of English language learner youth**, resulting in the need to provide additional support services (e.g., translation, English as a second language instruction, home technology).



Photo courtesy of Spectrum Autism Support

Looking Ahead

Next Steps

In grant year 2 and 3, Metis Associates, the BOOST evaluation partner, will continue the yearly data collection, analysis, and reporting. An outcomes and systems study will begin in year 2. The outcomes study will assess participating youth's learning acceleration, connectedness, and well-being outcomes. The systems study will focus on quality and effectiveness of BOOST oversight, administration efforts, and sustainability.

GSAN will respond to the finding of each evaluation by working collaboratively with the evaluation team to create recommendations that will aid with shaping the BOOST grants program infrastructure and administration. In addition, the BOOST grants program will identify key stakeholders and partners for the targeted funding for programs serving youth in foster care, justice impacted youth, and youth in rural communities, as well as organizations in need of capital purchases.

GSAN Recommendations

Based on lessons learned from the inaugural year of BOOST and early evaluation results, the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network recommends the following:

- Sustain federal and state funding to afterschool and summer learning programs to increase access, strengthen quality, and ensure affordability of care.
- Expand access to afterschool and summer learning programs, especially for youth in foster care, justice-impacted youth, English language learners, youth in rural communities, and youth with disabilities.
- Explore the public-private partnership funding model of BOOST to determine best practices and bring greater efficiency and sustainability to the provision of funds to youth development organizations.
- Lower barriers of access to government funding for smaller organizations, especially in rural communities, by providing flexible funding to allow programs to meet evolving needs, allowing funds to be used for hard to cover expenses, such as capital expenses, providing partial upfront funding rather than reimbursement-based funding, and investing in organizational capacity building.
- Invest in quality improvement supports, resources, and training opportunities to increase organizational capacity of youth development programs.
- Develop transportation grants to increase access to high quality youth development programs.



Extra Special People, Inc.'s Java Joy program provides hands-on work-readiness experience to youth with disabilities.



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