



Second-Year Evaluation of Georgia's Building Opportunities for Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Grants Program

Implementation Study Brief



G·san

GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK



Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) is a competitive grant program administered by the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) and operated in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). BOOST offers \$85 million via three-year grants, renewed annually, with funding made available through the American Rescue Plan. The grants program is aimed at promoting evidence-based practices and whole child supports in afterschool and summer learning programs. BOOST is designed to expand access, reduce barriers to enrollment, and increase programmatic quality to improve outcomes for students and families throughout the state. GSAN provides recommendations for grant awards based on rigorous application criteria and offers technical assistance and training to grantees to ensure successful implementation. All grants are approved by GaDOE, ensuring alignment with statewide priorities and goals.



On February 1, 2022, GSAN released a competitive Request for Proposal to begin a nationwide search to identify an experienced research partner to conduct a third-party evaluation of the BOOST grants program including assessment of the program's administration effectiveness, utilization of federal funds, sustainability, and impact of the grantees' collective interventions. In March 2022, GSAN selected Metis Associates as the BOOST evaluation partner.

Metis is a national consulting firm that delivers customized research and evaluation, grant writing, and data management services. They have over four decades of experience providing data-informed solutions, specializing in youth development and public education.

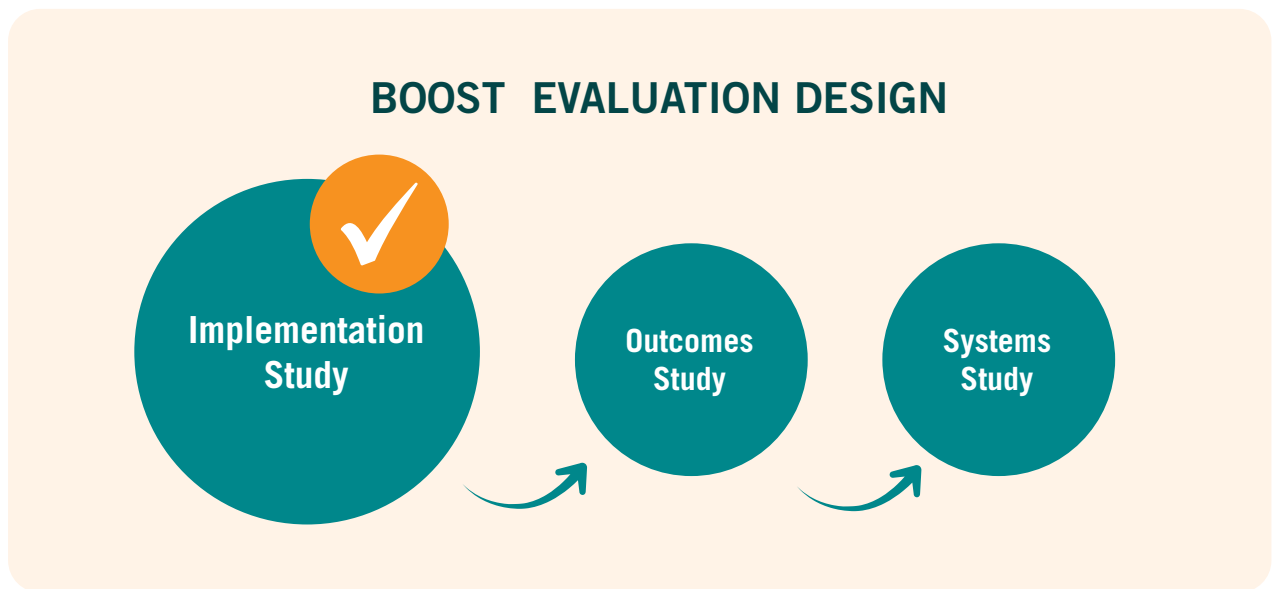
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Introduction

In July 2021, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) partnered with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to establish the **Building Opportunities for Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Grants Program**, which utilizes Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER III) from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support the learning acceleration, connectedness, and well-being of Georgia's students, utilizing a whole child approach.

This is the first of three Evaluation Briefs showcasing findings from the Year 2 BOOST Evaluation Report. While the [full report](#) includes information on all three evaluation study components – Implementation, Outcomes, and Systems—this Evaluation Brief presents findings from the BOOST evaluation's **Implementation Study**.



Two other Evaluation Briefs are also available that showcase the BOOST [Outcomes Study](#) and [Systems Study](#) results.

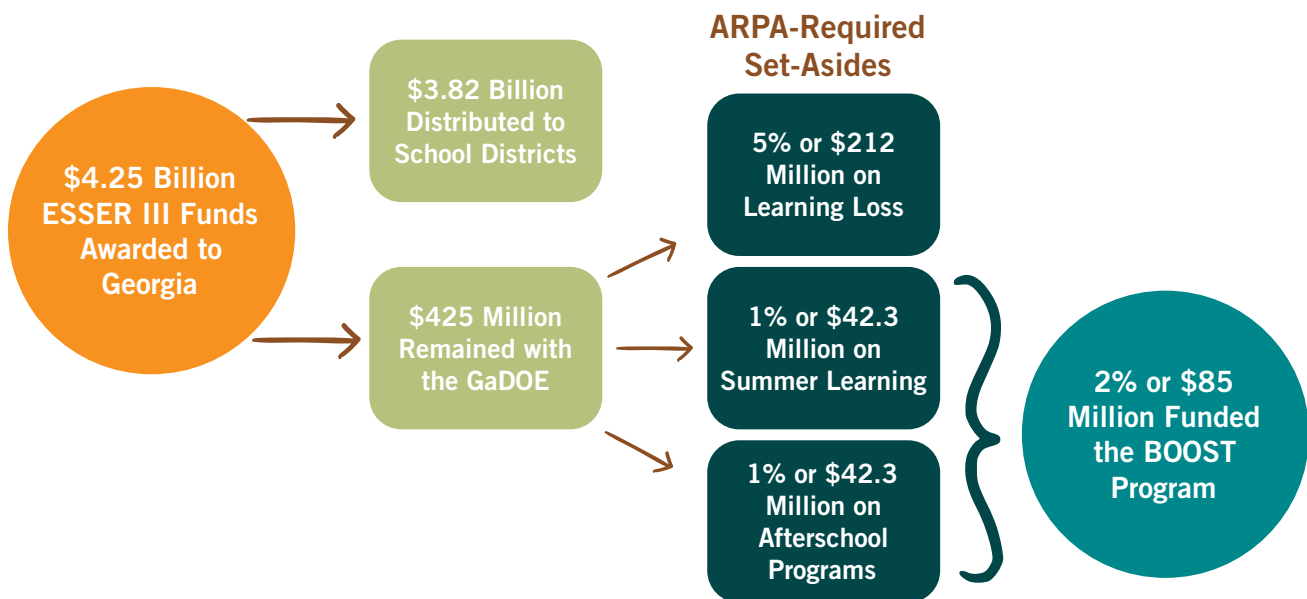
The remainder of this **Implementation Study Evaluation Brief** is structured as follows:

- An introduction to the ARPA and Georgia's BOOST Grants Program
- A summary of the evaluation's approaches and methods
- A summary of the BOOST Grants Program reach
- The Implementation Study results
- The key findings and takeaways

Georgia's BOOST Grants Program

In July 2021, GaDOE partnered with GSAN, a public-private collaborative that has supported Georgia's afterschool and summer learning field for over 15 years, to establish the BOOST Grants Program. GSAN administers this **three-year competitive grant to distribute approximately \$85 million** (Figure 1) to Georgia communities on behalf of GaDOE.¹

FIGURE 1. ESSER III Funding Distribution



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. The program prioritized specific populations, including 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.

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



¹ Georgia ARP-ESSER State Plan. July, 2021. <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/07/Georgia-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf>



Methods

Evaluation Design

Metis Associates (Metis), the BOOST evaluation partner, designed the cross-site evaluation to include three components. The [Implementation Study](#) began in the program's first year and documented BOOST implementation, such as service delivery, youth satisfaction, challenges, success stories, and lessons learned.

The BOOST evaluation's two remaining components began in the program's second year: the [Outcomes Study](#) assesses youth's learning acceleration, connectedness, and well-being outcomes, and the [Systems Study](#) focuses on the quality and effectiveness of BOOST oversight, administration, and sustainability.

Participatory Approach

In December 2022, Metis facilitated the first meeting of the BOOST Evaluation Advisory Group (EAG), a subcommittee of the BOOST Advisory Council. The group met quarterly through 2023, with 12 members, including GSAN staff and grantee representatives. The EAG provided invaluable feedback on the FLUX end-of-year grant reporting, data management tools, case study protocols, and implementation report findings, which were incorporated discerningly into the evaluation. Metis also convened and led a Youth Evaluation Advisory Group (YEAG) in the spring of 2023. The YEAG trained middle and high school students in evaluation methods and allowed youth to share their experiences with their BOOST program while contributing to a participatory evaluation process.

DATA SOURCES

End-of-Year Grantee Reports



The grantee reports consist of 25 questions about services provided, successes and challenges experienced, and characteristics of youth served, as well as data on youth satisfaction, and progress toward meeting outcomes.



Key Stakeholder Interviews

To learn about BOOST's creation, implementation, and sustainability, one-on-one interviews were done with 14 individuals. They represented 12 state and national organizations with education, afterschool, and grantmaking expertise.



Grantee Case Studies

For eight randomly selected BOOST grantees, Metis conducted virtual or in-person interviews or focus groups with organizational leadership, program staff, partners (if appropriate), students, and parents, as available.



Literature Review

Metis completed a two-phase literature review to identify states that use an ESSER III fund distribution model similar to Georgia and learn about similar evaluations of those efforts that might be underway.



Document Review

The Metis team reviewed different types of program documentation to inform the development of and updates to the evaluation plan, understand GSAN administrative activities in support of BOOST, and develop data collection tools.

BOOST Reach

A total of 97 BOOST grantees (including 93 community organizations and four statewide organizations) implemented programming in Year 2. The statewide and community grantees operated **1,416 academic year sites**, serving **79,911 youth**. The majority (74%) operated at least five locations, and one grantee (Boy Scouts of America Atlanta Area Council) served 512 sites.

There were also **639 summer program sites** among the statewide and community grantees, with the majority (83%) operating fewer than five sites and one community grantee (Bread of Life Development Ministries, Inc.) operating 69 sites. Across all the BOOST-supported summer program sites, **86,924 youth** participated.

The BOOST-funded academic year and summer program sites served youth in **112 or 70% of Georgia's 159 counties** (Figure 2).

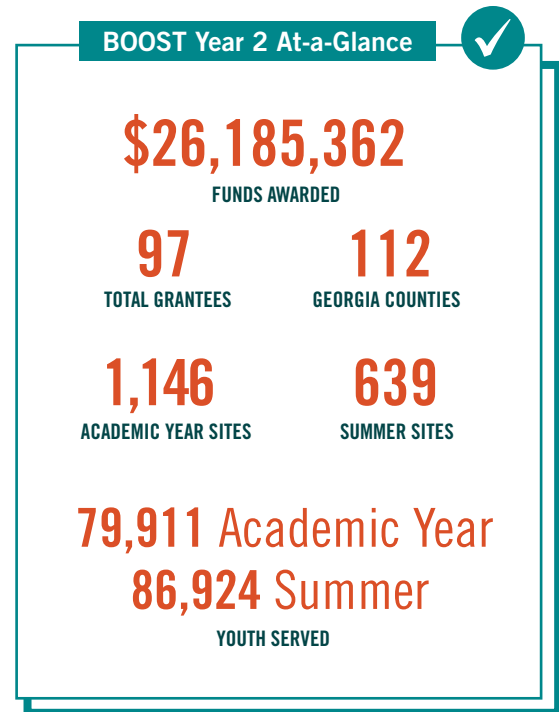
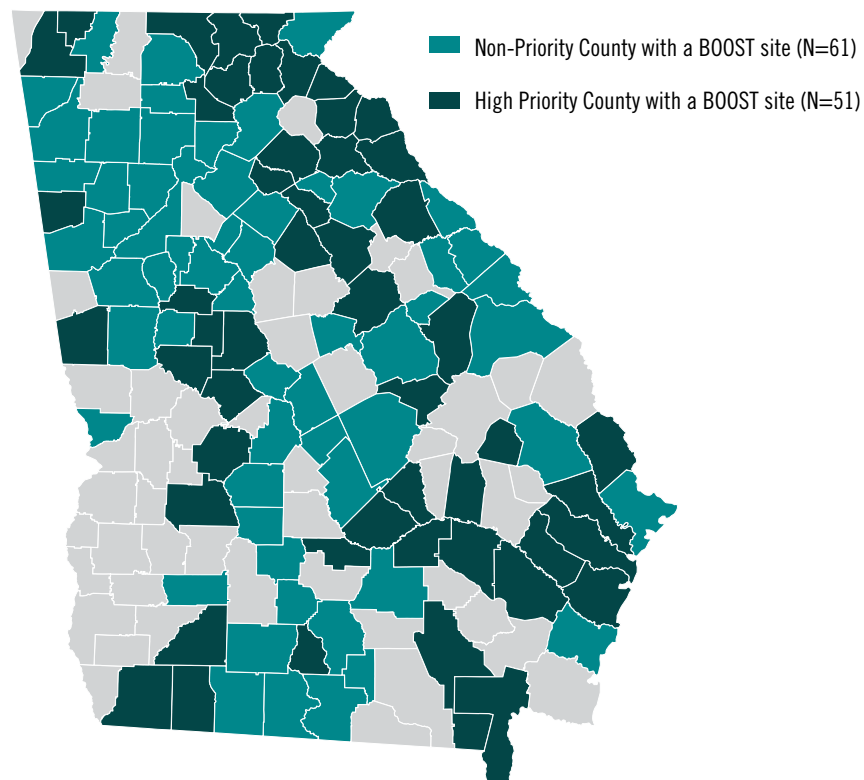


FIGURE 2. BOOST Reach Across Georgia's 159 Counties



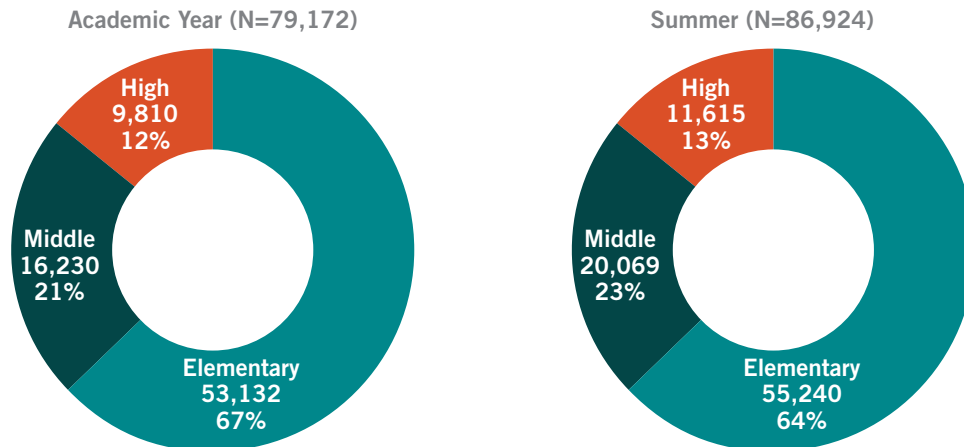
Implementation Study

Youth Served

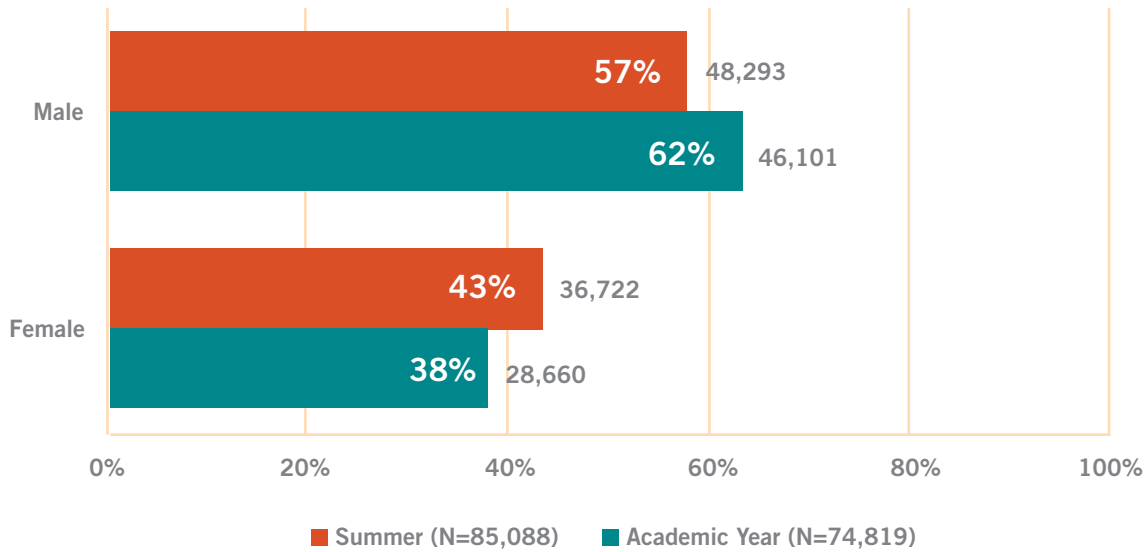
BOOST-funded statewide and community grantee sites, also funded via other public and private funding, served **79,911 young people** during the 2022-23 academic year and **86,924 young people** during the summer of 2023. This represents an increase of approximately 10% over the youths served last year (72,551 in school year 2021-22 and 78,831 in summer 2022).

Most youth served by BOOST-funded sites were in elementary grades K through 5 (Figure 3). During the academic year, these students accounted for 67% of all participating youth, while during the summer, these youth accounted for just under two-thirds of the population served (64%).

FIGURE 3. Grade Levels of Youth Served, Year 2



Middle school youth were the next largest group served (21% for the academic year and 23% for the summer), followed by high school-aged youth (12% for the academic year and 13% for the summer). Figure 4 shows that proportionally more males were served during the academic year (62%) and the summer (57%), with higher rates of gender data not collected for the academic year (6%) than the summer (2%) (not shown). However, it is important to note that the observed gender differences were primarily due to two grantees (Boys Scouts of America Atlanta and Northeast Georgia). Without these two grantees, the proportion of male and female participants served was relatively equivalent: 49.4% female to 50.6% male during the academic year and 48.4% female to 51.6% during the summer (not shown).

FIGURE 4. Gender of BOOST Youth, Year 2

Overall, grantees reported serving mostly Black youth, with the highest percentage of Black youth being served in the summer (57%) compared to the academic year (48%) (Figure 5). These proportions are substantially higher than the percentage of Black youth statewide (36% – not shown).

Academic year grantees served more White youth (36%) than the summer grantees (30%). Other races were represented relatively similarly in the academic year and the summer: other (8% for the academic year, 6% for summer), Asian (5% for the academic year, 3% for the summer), and multiracial (3% for the academic year, 4% for summer). Youth identified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders accounted for less than 1% of the overall population served during both periods.

Also shown in Figure 5, the percentage of Hispanic youth participants is comparatively small (10% for summer and 12% for the academic year) but generally aligned with the ratio of Hispanic school-age youth statewide (18% - not shown), as reported by GaDOE for the 2022-23 school year.²

² Georgia Department of Education, 2023.

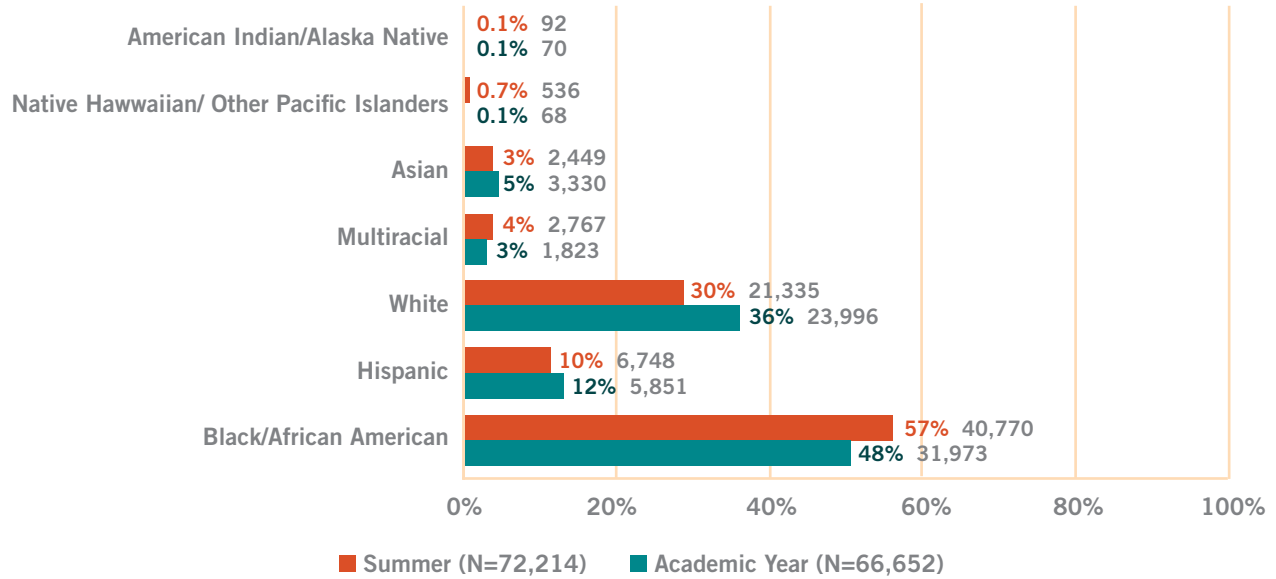
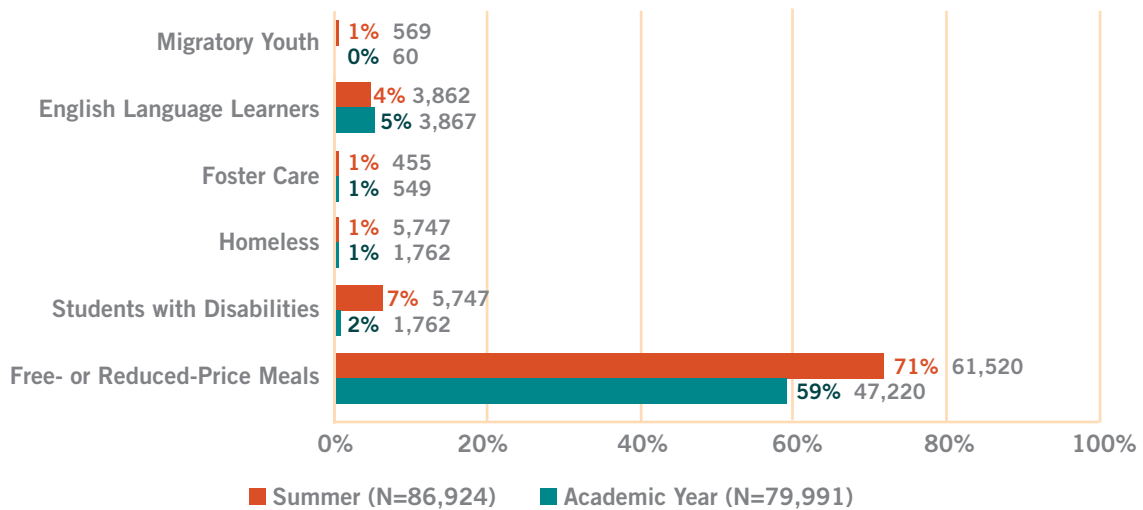
FIGURE 5. Racial/Ethnic Background of Youth Served, Year 2**FIGURE 6. BOOST Priority Youth Served, Year 2**

Figure 6 shows that the Year 2 BOOST grantees successfully targeted the priority youth populations outlined in the ARPA. Specifically, the data show that over two-thirds of the BOOST youth served were eligible for free- or reduced-price meals at school during the summer (61,520 or 71%). Conversely, only 59% of students (47,220) served during the academic year were eligible for free- or reduced-price meals.^a

^a Note that substantially less subgroup data was available in Year 1 than in Year 2, which would skew comparisons between years.

While the academic year rate is similar to that reported for the state (59%)³, the summer rate is comparatively higher. The data in Figure 6 also show that BOOST summer grantees served a slightly higher proportion of students with disabilities than their academic year counterparts (5,747 or 7% vs. 1,762 or 2%, respectively) and slightly lower proportions of English language learners in the academic year (3,867 or 5%) and the summer (3,862 or 4%) than the state (11% – not shown).⁴

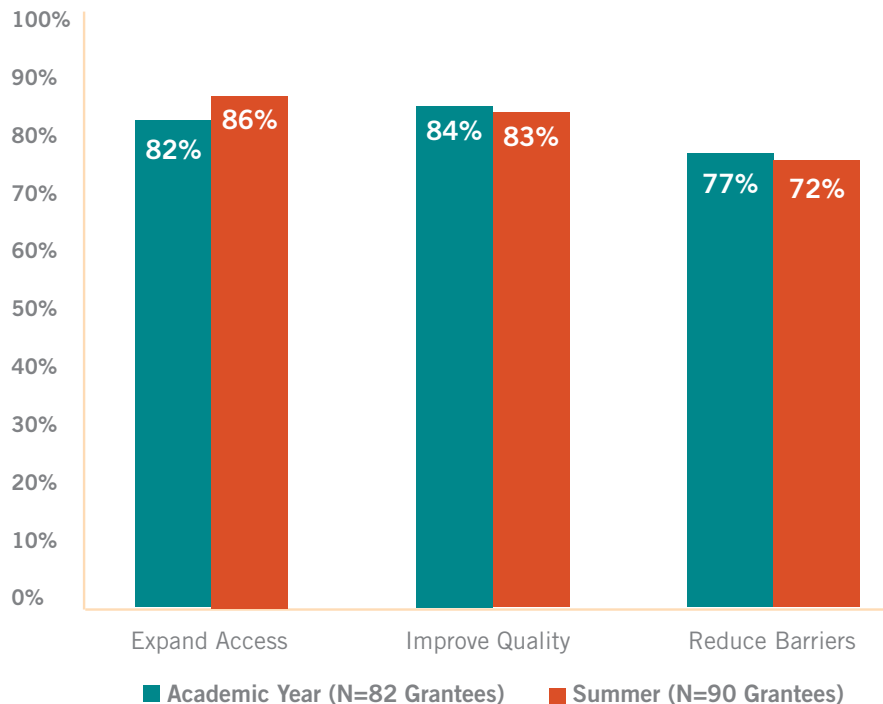
Program Purposes

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. Reduce barriers to youth participation
3. Strengthen program quality

Figure 7 shows how many grantees addressed each purpose in Year 2 during the academic year and the summer. Both sets of grantees most frequently worked on expanding access (82% for the academic year and 86% for the summer) and strengthening program quality (84% for the academic year and 83% for the summer). About three-quarters of all grantees focused on reducing barriers to participation (77% for the academic year and 72% for the summer).

FIGURE 7.
BOOST Program Purposes Addressed



³ Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2023.

⁴ Georgia Department of Education, 2023.

Expand Access

Grantees described many ways they expanded access to their BOOST-funded programs, including:

- **Served more youth than in years before BOOST funding** (69% for the academic year; 32% for the summer).
- **Served new youth populations**, such as students with exceptional needs, English language learners, high school-aged youth, vulnerable or high-risk youth, and homeless youth (44% for the academic year; 23% for the summer).
- **Expanded daily program hours or weekly days of operation** (33% for the academic year; 7% for the summer).
- **Opened new sites or locations**, such as at schools, local churches, or foster care facilities (35% for the academic year; 12% for the summer).
- **Implemented school- or district-supported youth recruitment** (46% for the academic year; 13% for the summer).
- **Conducted community-based and family-focused outreach and recruitment**, such as partnering with local community-based organizations to identify eligible youth, soliciting feedback from community families, attending community forums or meetings, and using bilingual staff to communicate with community families (40% for the academic year; 3% for the summer).



LIFT Youth Center



Views from the Case Study Grantees

“We used BOOST funding, initially and ongoing, to expand our reach. We wanted to be able to operate in more school districts and be a little more intentional and excellent in the programs we offered.”

– BOOST Program Leader

“For the afterschool program, we were able to reach more partners and more schools. We feed into schools. We don’t have a physical space, so we rely heavily on partnerships and their ability to recruit for us to do that.”

– BOOST Program Leader

“We started out in just Midway and expanded into two different cities. We’re in Midway and we’re in Ashburn, and we’re looking for a third BOOST location, which is Folkston, Georgia, because there’s a need there as well. They don’t have a lot of OST programming, so BOOST would help in that area as well.”

– BOOST Program Leader

Reduce Participation Barriers

During the first program year, BOOST grantees worked to alleviate challenges to youth participation by:

- **Providing transportation services** using program vans, buses (some with wheelchair lifts), or other vehicles or partner-provided bus services to transport youth to the program and field trips (55% for the academic year; 48% for summer).
- **Continuing to offer free programming** (66% for the academic year; 46% for summer).
- **Waiving program fees** such as offering scholarships, using sliding tuition scales, and offering sibling or family discounts (41% for the academic year; 10% for summer).
- **Offering more accessible program locations**, such as those within walking distance of participants' homes or at more convenient locations for families (e.g., neighborhood schools or housing authority complexes) (28% for the academic year only).
- **Providing English language support for youth** (15% for the academic year; 2% for summer).
- **Providing English as a second language classes or other adult education for parents/family members**, such as leadership development, financial literacy, mental health awareness, and co-parenting strategies, (9% for the academic year only).



C5 Georgia Youth Foundation



Views from the Case Study Grantees

“We use our BOOST funding in addition to the other funding we get to offer this program for free. For that barrier of cost, we want to eliminate it for all our students in schools.”

– BOOST Program Leader

“Transportation was a major barrier. It is a major barrier if we do not provide that because our kids come from all over metro Atlanta. Transportation was critically important as it relates to the funding. We provide those buses to ensure our kids can attend the program.”

– BOOST Program Staff Member

“The biggest impact is that we were able to go from the standard fees, what people pay for afterschool and things like that, and we were able to reduce the cost for the parents, and that’s a great thing.”

– BOOST Program Leader

Strengthen Program Quality

Grantees used BOOST funding to strengthen program quality in a variety of ways, including:

- **Providing youth with healthy meals or snacks on site** (61% for the academic year; 19% for the summer) or to take home (16% for the academic year; 2% for the summer).
- **Expanding existing program services and activities**, such as offering new instructional levels, holding learning acceleration events, offering new student clubs, expanding services to additional classes, intensifying student mentorship, and increasing tutoring provisions (51% for the academic year; 35% for the summer).
- **Providing staff training** on leadership, trauma-informed service delivery, inquiry mindset, art therapy, phonics instruction, and other BOOST-supported topics, such as ASYD Quality Standards (45% for the academic year; 12% for the summer).
- **Revising/enhancing existing curricula**, such as math and English language arts curricula, Take Flight Aviation curriculum, and STEAM curriculum, (44% for the academic year; 6% for the summer) or implementing new curricula, such as I Can Problem Solve (26% for the academic year; 18% for the summer).
- **Implementing new teaching strategies**, such as project-based learning, evidence-based phonics instruction, play-based learning, and individualized learning (39% for the academic year; 2% for the summer) or **new program approaches**, such as youth-led action projects, individual learning plans, trauma-informed teaching or coaching, and weekend/Saturday learning and enrichment sessions (32% for the academic year; 4% for the summer).



East Atlanta Kids Club



Views from the Case Study Grantees

“The BOOST funding has allowed us to have reading specialists who serve our kids one-on-one. These reading specialists have filled in some of the cracks or the foundation that was crumbling. They’ve been able to support those students and be there with them one-on-one, and nurture, and give them those skills and build their confidence.”

– BOOST Program Staff Member

“We have expanded to include a lot of field trips, which were [scarce] before because we couldn’t offer it to all grade levels. I think that having our 12th graders tour the colleges was beneficial. The parents appreciated their child going to that college because they couldn’t spearhead that in their household.”

– BOOST Program Staff Member

“[With BOOST] we have added to our curriculum. Before, we were offering the same course semester after semester, but now we have different levels for girls who want to be more challenged. We started with Web Dev 1, but now we have a Web Dev 2 curriculum and robotics.”

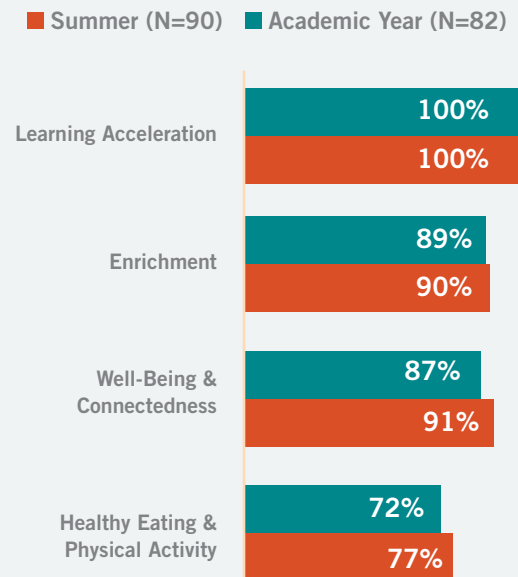
– BOOST Program Staff Member

Program Activities

All grantees were to offer at least three of the following four service areas as part of their BOOST-supported programs (Figure 8):

- **Learning Acceleration** (required) was offered by all academic year and summer grantees. Literacy instruction and STEM/STEAM/STREAM (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math) were offered most often among both academic year and summer grantees (85% and 75%, respectively; and (74% vs. 80%, respectively).
- **Enrichment** was provided by approximately 90% of the academic year and summer grantees. Crafts, visual and performing arts, and career exploration were the most commonly offered activities among BOOST grantees (68%-77% of academic year grantees and 64%-76% of summer grantees).
- **Well-being and connectedness** were provided by approximately 90% of academic year and summer grantees. At least half of the academic year and summer grantees offered team-building and problem-solving activities, well-being connectedness support, and mental health services. Nearly half of grantees provided mentoring (46% in the academic year and 44% in the summer).
- **Healthy eating and physical activity** were provided by about three-fourths of the academic year and summer grantees. Many grantees reported providing youth healthy meals and snacks during the academic year (84%) and summer programming (69%). Sports and other recreational activities were also offered by most academic year and summer grantees (78% and 85%, respectively).

FIGURE 8.
BOOST Implementation –
Service Areas Addressed

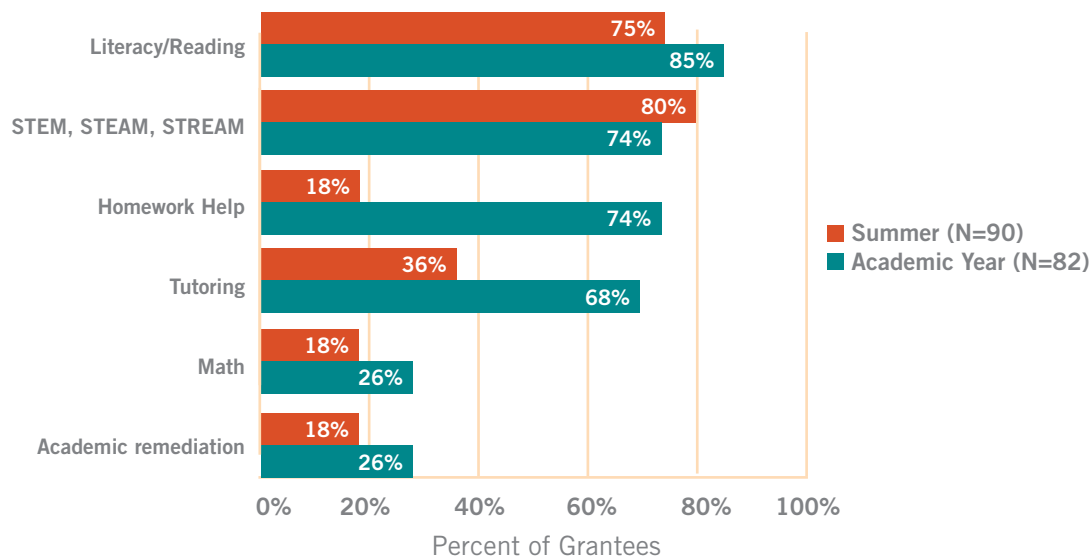


Information on the types of activities grantees offered in each of the four service areas is presented in Figures 9 through 12.

Learning Acceleration

Among all the learning acceleration activities, **academic instruction in literacy/reading or STEM/STEAM/STREAM** (science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math) was offered most often among both academic year and summer grantees (85% and 75%, respectively; and (74% vs. 80%, respectively) (Figure 9). Most academic year grantees also offered homework help (74%) and tutoring (68%).

FIGURE 9. BOOST Implementation – Accelerated Learning Activities



Grantee Spotlights

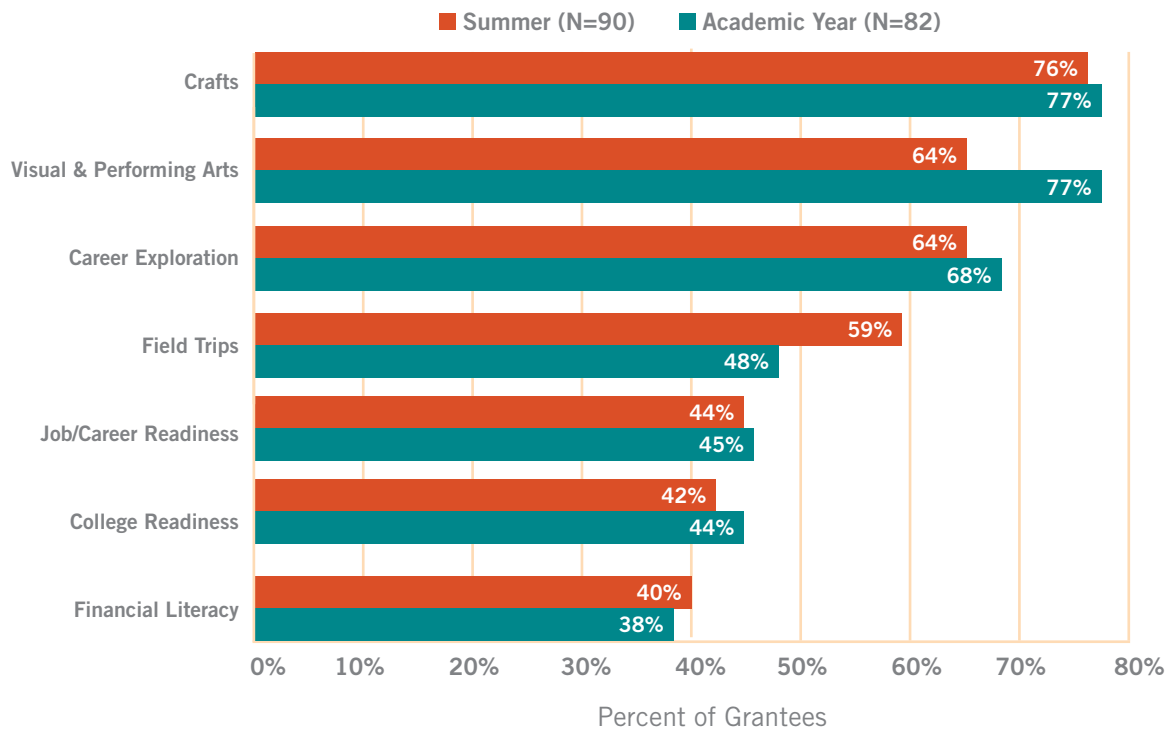
The **THRIVE Enrichment Program** (Richmond County) aims to meet the needs of children and families through effective expanded learning approaches that include school and community partners and focus on well-being and academic support for the whole child. The THRIVE academic performance component uses i-Ready to provide scaffolding support to meet the needs of program students. The student assessment data collected through i-Ready reading and math diagnostics allowed staff to appropriately plan and implement growth strategies to ensure students remain motivated to persist in skill building.

Los Niños Primero (Fulton, Cherokee, Cobb, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Hall Counties) Intragenerational Early Literacy Program seeks to improve Latino family literacy by inviting the parents into the classroom and encouraging them to invest early in an academic relationship with their children. The program is led by a bilingual teacher who uses bilingual books and creative exploration to strengthen literacy skills and build student confidence (child and parent). In Year 2, the early literacy program allowed the children to learn reading, writing, social, and language skills. With a focus on co-teaching with the parents, the parents worked alongside the children, improving their literacy and language skills.

Enrichment

Enrichment activities such as **crafts, visual and performing arts, and career exploration** were the most commonly offered activities among BOOST grantees (68%-77% of academic year grantees and 64%-76% of summer grantees) (Figure 10). Field trips were provided by approximately half of the academic year and summer grantees (48% and 59%, respectively). Approximately 40% or more of the academic year and summer grantees provided financial literacy, college readiness, and career readiness activities.

FIGURE 10. Enrichment Activities Offered



Grantee Spotlights

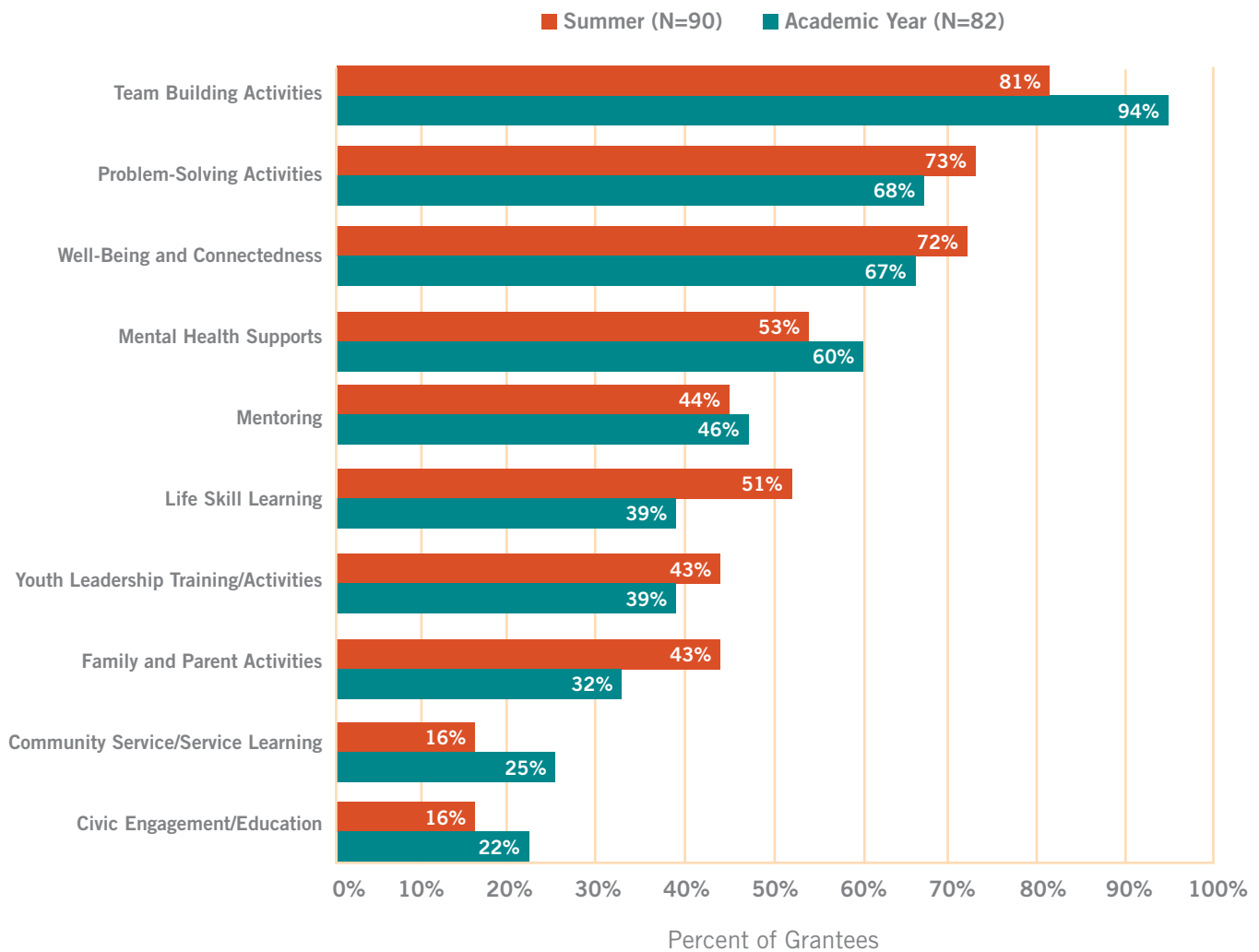
In Year 2, **After-School All-Stars** (ASAS) (DeKalb and Fulton Counties) continued to expand its selection of enrichment programs that included graphic design and a Gentleman's Elite Club. The program also continued to provide opportunities for the parents and families to stay connected to the ASAS program through chaperoning field trips and as classroom co-teachers. Each semester, all ASAS programs hosted a family night with student showcases and presentations demonstrating all the enrichment programs offered.

Through BOOST funding, the **GENTS & GLAM** Take Flight program (Appling, Coffee, Jeff Davis, Telfair, and Wheeling Counties) provided 40 hours of ground school training and flight time for youth ages 12-18. In November 2022, the first Take Flight Aviation Career Camp was held. This one-day event was for school-age youth and exposed them to discovery flights, career panels, drone building, and flying. The GENTS & GLAM afterschool programs also provided character education, mentoring, and college tours for their middle and high school students.

Well-Being and Connectedness

At least half of the academic year and summer grantees offered **team-building and problem-solving activities, well-being connectedness support, and mental health services**. Nearly half of grantees provided mentoring (46% in the academic year and 44% in the summer). Grantees were more likely to provide life skills and leadership development during the summer. In contrast, community service and civic engagement activities were more likely to occur during the academic year.

FIGURE 11. Well-Being and Connectedness Activities Offered





Grantee Spotlights

The **Boy Scouts of America Atlanta** (Gwinnett, Fulton, Cobb, Union, and Newnan Counties) focused its academic year programming on improving child well-being and connectedness. Scouts worked on leadership, goal setting, teamwork, problem-solving, and social skills development, such as self-confidence through earning achievements in various activities. Camping allowed youth to learn financial literacy and nutrition education through meal planning and food preparation while developing physical fitness and leadership skills. Youth Scouts also served others through annual service projects through their units' programs, establishing a valuable place in their community.

Team Up Mentoring (Walton County) serves youth between the ages of 3-21 who have experienced significant early childhood trauma. The afterschool program offered mentoring nights twice weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 to 8pm. Team Up buses picked children up and brought them to the Team Up dedicated facility, where they put their cell phones away, enjoyed hot meals together, and completed STEAM, journaling, well-being, and physical movement activities. They also spent time with volunteer mentors and participated in supportive, age-appropriate peer groups.

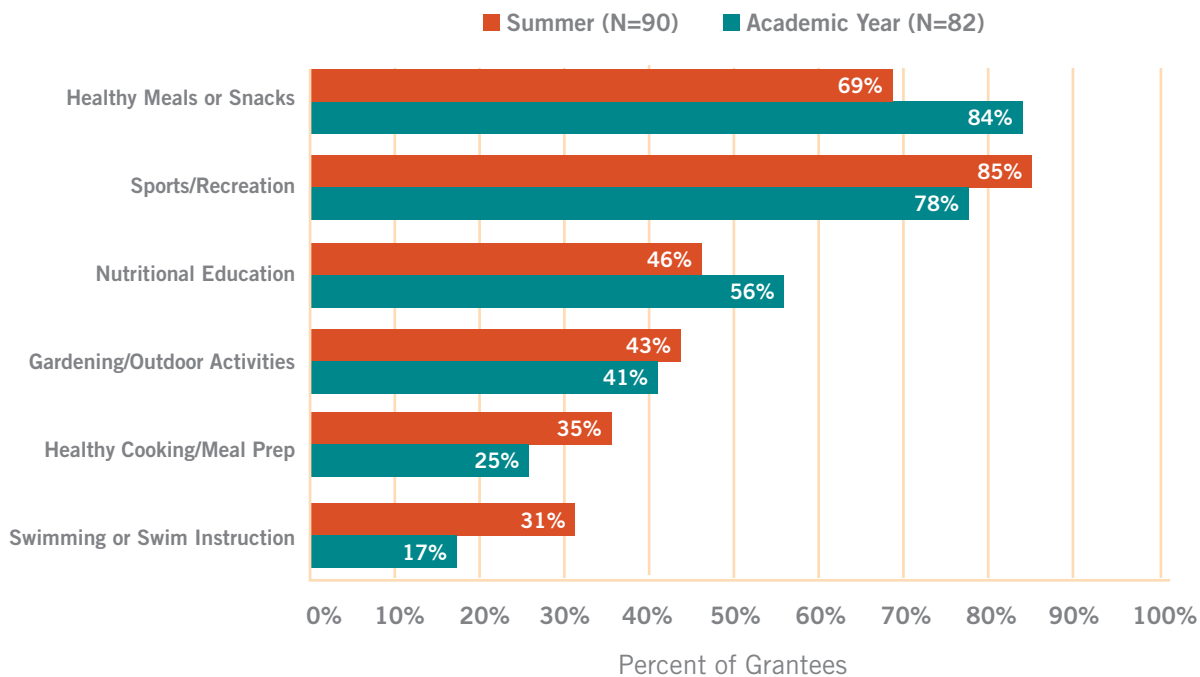


Boy Scouts of America Atlanta

Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Many grantees reported providing youth **healthy meals and snacks** during the academic year (84%) and summer programming (69%). **Sports and other recreational activities** were also offered by most academic year and summer grantees (78% and 85%, respectively). As one might expect, summer grantees were more likely to provide swim instruction and outdoor activities, such as gardening, than their academic year counterparts.

FIGURE 12. Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Activities Offered



Grantee Spotlights

Communities in Schools (CIS) of Georgia affiliates (11 Counties) have worked to help students be more active and adopt healthier living in the wake of the pandemic. In addition to providing healthy snacks, many affiliates have programs focused on healthy eating, and they try to make sure that students are more physically active. The affiliate BOOST-funded programs provided exercise classes, sports, and general recreation to get students moving again.

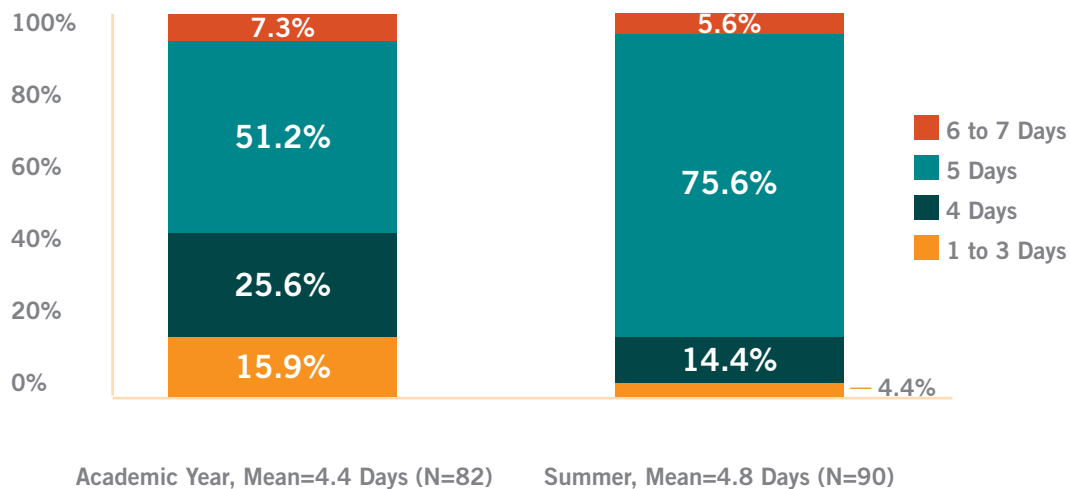
LIFT Youth Center (Catoosa County) increased youths' exposure to the outdoors through its Summer Adventure Education Program for 6th-12th grade students in Catoosa County. LIFT provided those new experiences through six outdoor adventure trips and six outdoor skills workshops throughout the summer, focusing on three goals: positive outdoor experiences to build confidence, outdoor/environmental education, and leadership development.

Dosage

Grantees report on the number of hours, days, and weeks of operation during the school year and the summer in their FLUX reports. These numbers are reported as whole numbers, represented below in Figures 13 and 14.

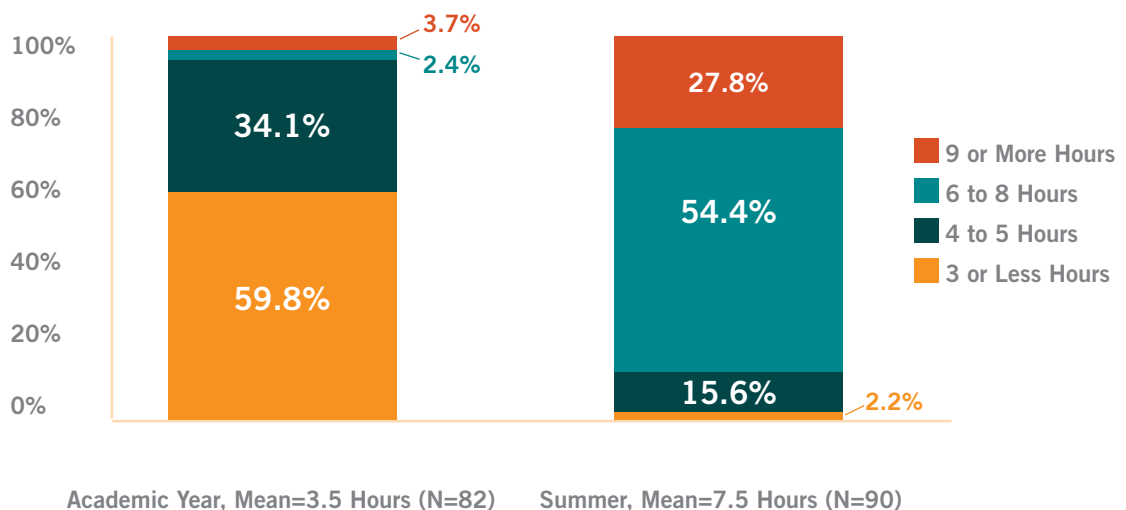
A greater proportion of summer grantees offered BOOST programming five days or more per week compared to their academic year counterparts (81% vs. 59%, respectively) (Figure 17). On average, the **academic year programs operated four days per week, while the average operation days for the summer programs were nearly five.**

FIGURE 13. Site Operations, Days Per Week



As might be expected, most academic year grantees offered three hours or less of daily programming (60%) (Figure 18). A slightly lower proportion of summer grantees offered a full day (from six to eight hours) of programming daily (54%). **Academic year grantees provided an average of 3.5 hours of daily BOOST programming, compared to an average of 7.5 hours for summer grantees.**

FIGURE 14. Daily Hours of Programming



Implementation Success

On the Year 2 end-of-program FLUXX reports, grantees conveyed their successes and provided numerous anecdotes of positive youth growth and development. Those mentioned most frequently by both summer and academic year grantees included:

- **Improved mental health, well-being, and connectedness**, focusing on mindfulness, respect, resilience, anti-bullying, adult-youth relationships, peer relationships, self-confidence, and coping skills (56% for the academic year; 25% for the summer).
- **Exposed youth to new content**, such as public speaking courses, STEM or STEAM instruction, and robotics curriculum) (40% for the academic year; 18% for the summer grantees) or offered them new programs, services, and initiatives, such as educational field trips, math clinics, sports instruction, workforce development, financial literacy, healthy eating and lifestyles, weekend camping trips, mental health support groups, martial arts lessons, SAT/ACT prep, and residential summer programs) (35% for the academic year; 2% for the summer).
- **Improved youth academic learning**, as evidenced by students' report card grades, test scores, and observed reading/writing abilities (38% for the academic year grantees; 33% for the summer grantees).
- **Adapted well to or overcame COVID-related challenges**, such as rebuilding in-person programming and absorbing post-pandemic higher costs (33% for the academic year grantees; 10% for the summer grantees).
- **Youth earned certifications or badges** (32% for the summer grantees; 10% for the academic year grantees).
- **Developed youth life skills**, such as becoming more college-ready, exhibiting leadership, learning problem-solving, communication, and social skills, practicing teamwork, discussing social issues, obtaining internships, demonstrating autonomy, engaging in community service, and life/future planning) (30% for the academic year grantees; 7% for the summer grantees).



Views from the Case Study Grantees

“My grades were failing, so I took on HYPE, which I truly enjoyed. It gave me the motivation to continue working hard and to join clubs at school too. I put in a lot of effort, and they had me give a speech at HYPE graduation. It was a huge motivator.”

– **BOOST Program Youth**

“The program has benefited [my daughter] because it keeps her motivated to learn even more. She was able to maintain passing scores on Milestones in both areas, ELA and math – and she was an honor roll student for the year.”

– **BOOST Family Member**

“We had a family that lost their mom suddenly. The BOOST funding allowed us to keep them in the program. We provided mentorship, tutorials, and scholarships for them to still come to the program. The kids are thriving.”

– **BOOST Staff Member**

Grantee Challenges

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

- **Staff retention or recruitment**, resulting in staffing vacancies, higher than ideal staff-student ratios, hiring difficulties because of inadequate salaries for vacant positions, and serving fewer youth than planned (60% of the academic year grantees; 38% of the summer grantees).
- **Youth with mental health or behavioral issues**, including many students with adverse childhood experiences, such as witnessing family and community violence, living in high poverty, and incarcerated parents or other family members (39% for the academic year grantees; 21% for the summer grantees).
- **Youth with severe academic needs and learning loss**, such as students with limited English proficiency, students experiencing summer slide, lingering issues related to pandemic learning loss, and youth with below grade-level reading and math abilities (34% for the academic year grantees; 19% for the summer grantees).
- **Lack of or difficulties with transportation**, such as limited availability of bus drivers, unavailable buses, mechanical issues with older buses and vans, and affording the rising costs associated with providing transportation (e.g., gas, mechanical issues, and insurance). (34% of the academic year grantees; 14% of the summer grantees).
- **Data collection and analysis**, such as difficulties administering assessments due to student mobility and inconsistent student attendance, establishing data collection processes and identifying measurement tools (35% of the academic year grantees; 9% of the summer grantees).
- **Program recruitment or enrollment challenges**, particularly with enrolling and maintaining the engagement and enrollment of high school students) (27% of the academic year grantees; 10% of the summer grantees).



Views from the Case Study Grantees

“We are challenged with trying to get more staffing to accommodate [the demand]. We have the need here, and it has grown. We currently do have a waiting list. I think it’s maybe six on the list. So, if we get the staffing to support [the additional students], we can expand.”

– BOOST Program Staff Member

“We need bigger vans or buses because we have the student population that wants to come, but we must limit enrollment because we have limitations in the number of kids we can transport during the school year.”

– BOOST Program Leader

“With our camps this year, we had a lot more students that were interested and were signing up that wanted to join the program, but we couldn’t support them because they didn’t have transportation through the school system. We don’t provide transportation for students, and the schools weren’t able to provide additional bus routes.”

– BOOST Program Staff Member

“The [program’s] time commitment is a barrier, especially for our high school scholars where we compete against other extracurricular activities and things like that.”

– BOOST Program Leader

Grant Administration, Training & Technical Assistance

In Year 2, GSAN delivered 202 customized, one-on-one technical assistance sessions with grantees and responded to over 3,000 technical assistance inquiries from BOOST grantees quarterly. Examples of other grant administration responsibilities of GSAN included:

- Conducting grantee site visits to support the GaDOE overall monitoring plan.
- Analyzing grantee performance.
- Revising and updating annual grantee reporting templates in collaboration with United Way of Greater Atlanta and Metis.
- Convening and chairing the BOOST Advisory Council comprised of grantee representatives to help inform BOOST implementation statewide.
- Convening representatives from the four statewide grantees quarterly.
- Facilitating a BOOST grantee reception and a BOOST data and evaluation workshop at the statewide Afterschool & Youth Development Conference.
- Promoting media outreach and mentions of the BOOST Grants Program.

Overall, participants were highly satisfied with the BOOST-sponsored training activities:

- *98% agreed that the trainers knew the topic.*
- *95% agreed that the webinar accomplished its objectives.*
- *93% strongly agreed that they could use the knowledge or skills they gained in their jobs.*
- *93% agreed that the information addressed their professional needs.*
- *93% agreed that the workshop increased their confidence in the subject matter knowledge.*

In the program's second year, GSAN continued to use a multi-tiered approach to delivering comprehensive training and technical assistance (TTA) to all BOOST grantees. The overall goals of the TTA were to help meet grantees' organizational needs, bolster the quality of youth development services provided statewide, and strengthen grantee capacity and infrastructure. As described below, GSAN offers training, coaching, and technical support to help OST professionals build capacity and support sustainability in the field.

Interactive Training. In January 2023, GSAN launched the Year 2 robust BOOST Training and Quality Supports Plan, including virtual webinars and in-person professional development sessions open to all grantees through June 2023. Also offered were three certificate training series with the Georgia Center for Nonprofits.

As shown below, the BOOST webinars and sessions focused on quality, leadership, organizational practices, and youth development programming:

- Understanding and putting into practice the Georgia ASYD Quality Standards
- Using data to inform decision-making and improve outcomes
- Understanding nonprofit risk management and insurance
- Promoting literacy in OST programming
- Integrating STEM and STEAM
- Promising practices in delivering youth development
- Creating college and career pathways through programming
- Planning summer programs

Grantee Coaching. In Year 2, GSAN partnered with HTI Catalysts for the second time in the grant period to offer BOOST grantees small-group coaching based on the ASYD Quality Standards. Three cohorts of small group coaching were offered, with approximately four grantees participating in each cohort. Participating grantees received five 90-minute coaching sessions from coaches trained in the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) or the AYSD Quality Standards. After each session, grantees were given an optional 30 minutes for networking and community-building. The five sessions covered Coaching for Programming and Youth Development, Relationships, Staffing and Professional Development, Organizational Practices, and Evaluation and Outcomes.

Summary of Key Takeaways

In summary, the key takeaways of the BOOST evaluation Implementation Study include:

Program Reach

- Across the state, **97 BOOST grantees** operated **1,416 academic year sites** and **639 summer program sites**, spanning **112 of the state's 159 counties**. Compared to the first year of the grant, the number of academic year sites operated by Year 2 statewide grantees grew by 42% (N=126), while the number of community grantee sites decreased by 26% (N=350). The number of sites for summer programming remained relatively constant.
- BOOST-funded statewide and community sites served **79,911 young people during** the 2022-23 academic year and **86,924 young people** during the summer of 2023. This represents an increase of approximately 10% over the youths served in the previous grant year (72,551 in the school year 2021-22 and 78,831 in summer 2022).
- In both years of the BOOST grant, the majority of youth served have represented the ARPA priority youth populations (e.g., economically disadvantaged, disabled students, English language learners, etc.), while more summer youth were eligible for free- or reduced-priced lunch at school means (71%) compared to academic year youth (59%). In Year 2, BOOST grantees served about the same number of students experiencing homelessness (1% of youth in both the academic year and summer) than in Year 1 (2% of youth for both the academic year and the summer).



Georgia Alliance of YMCAs

BOOST Implementation

- Grantees reported using a whole-child approach and focusing on at least one of the three program purposes. **Almost all grantees increased the numbers of youth served**, reportedly emphasizing students and communities most hindered by the pandemic: 82% for the academic year and 86% for the summer. Program quality improvement was highly evident for all grantees: 84% for the academic year and 83% for the summer grantees. About three-quarters of the academic year and summer grantees also focused on reducing barriers to participation (77% for the academic year, 72% for the summer grantees).
- Grantees most often reported the following successes related to BOOST's three main service areas:
 - 1) Expanded Access for New Youth – **Served more youth** in Year 2 than in years before BOOST funding began (69% for the academic year grantees; 32% for the summer grantees); and **served new youth populations** (44% for the academic year grantees; 23% for the summer).
 - 2) Reduced Barriers to Participation – **Provided transportation services** (55% for the academic year grantees; 48% for the summer); **continued to offer free programming** (66% for the academic year grantees; 46% for the summer grantees); and **waived or reduced program fees** (41% for the academic year grantees; 10% for the summer grantees).
 - 3) Strengthened Program Quality – **Provided healthy meals or snacks** on site (61% for the academic year grantees; 19% for the summer grantees) and **expanded existing program services and activities to reach more students** (51% for the academic year grantees; 35% for the summer grantees)
- In Year 2, grantees' most touted successes related to:
 - Improving youths' mental health, well-being, and connectedness
 - Exposing youth to new content or offering new programs, services, or initiatives
 - Improving youth academic learning
 - Adapting well to or overcoming COVID-related challenges, such as rebuilding in-person programming and absorbing post-pandemic higher costs
 - Youth earning certifications or badges
 - Developing youth life skills, such as leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, and community service
 - Developing strong youth-program staff relationships
- In contrast, the second-year obstacles most frequently reported by BOOST grantees included:
 - Staff retention or recruitment
 - Youth with mental health or behavioral challenges
 - Youth with severe academic needs or learning loss
 - Lack of or difficulties with transportation
 - Data collection and analysis



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