



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

## Systems Study Brief



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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.

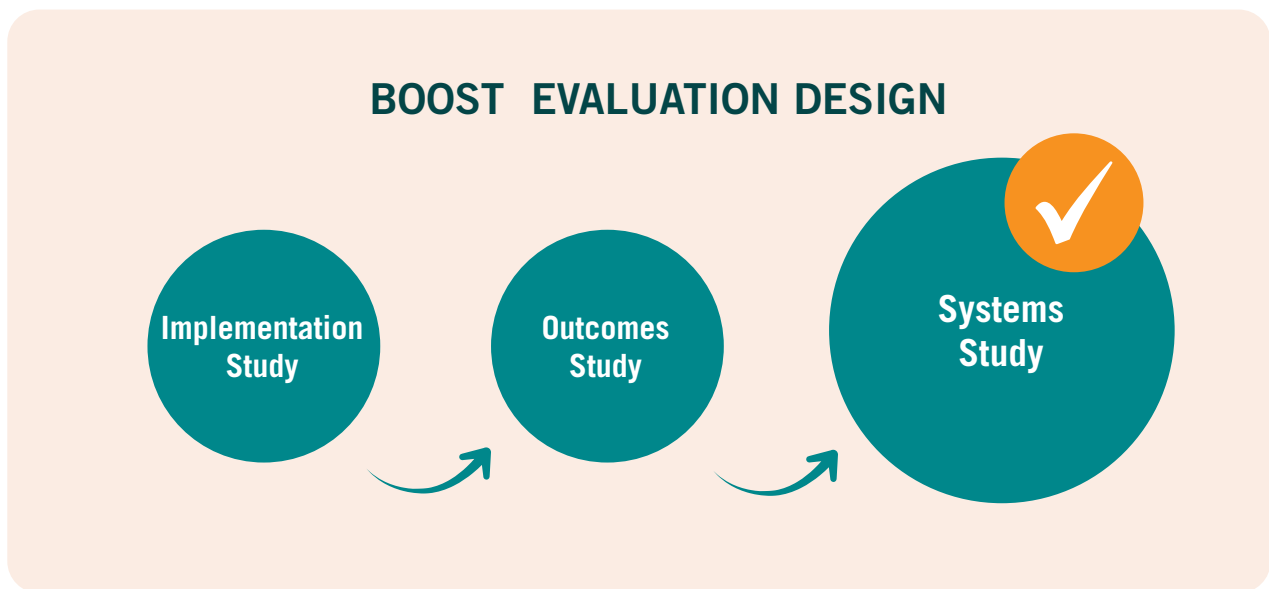
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# Introduction

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 third 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 **Systems Study**.



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

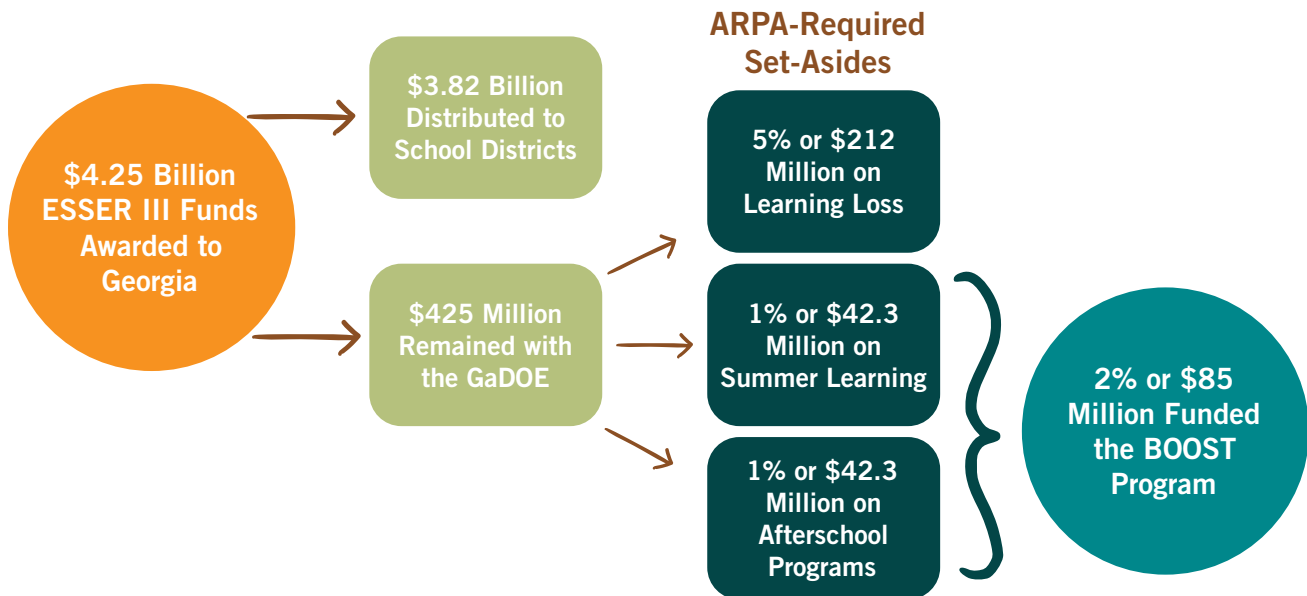
The remainder of this **Systems Study Evaluation Brief** is structured as follows:

- 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 Systems 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.<sup>1</sup>

**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:



<sup>1</sup> 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

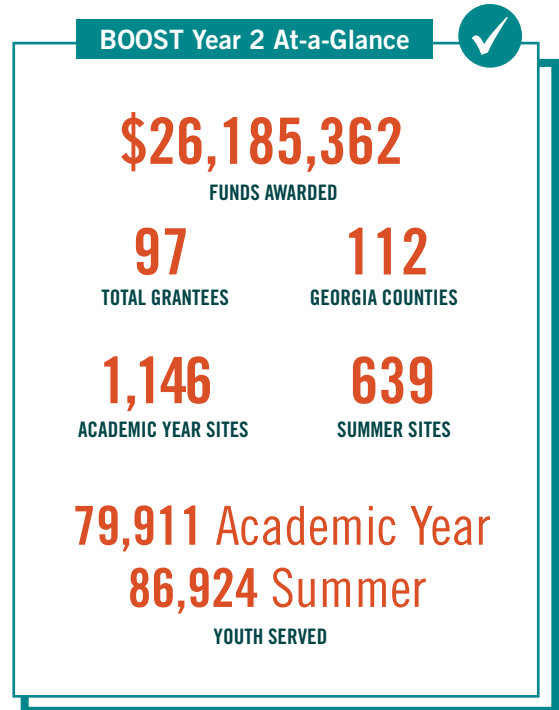
The Metis team reviewed different types of program documentation to inform the development of and updates to the evaluation plan, understand GSAN administrative activities in support of BOOST, and develop data collection tools.

# BOOST Reach

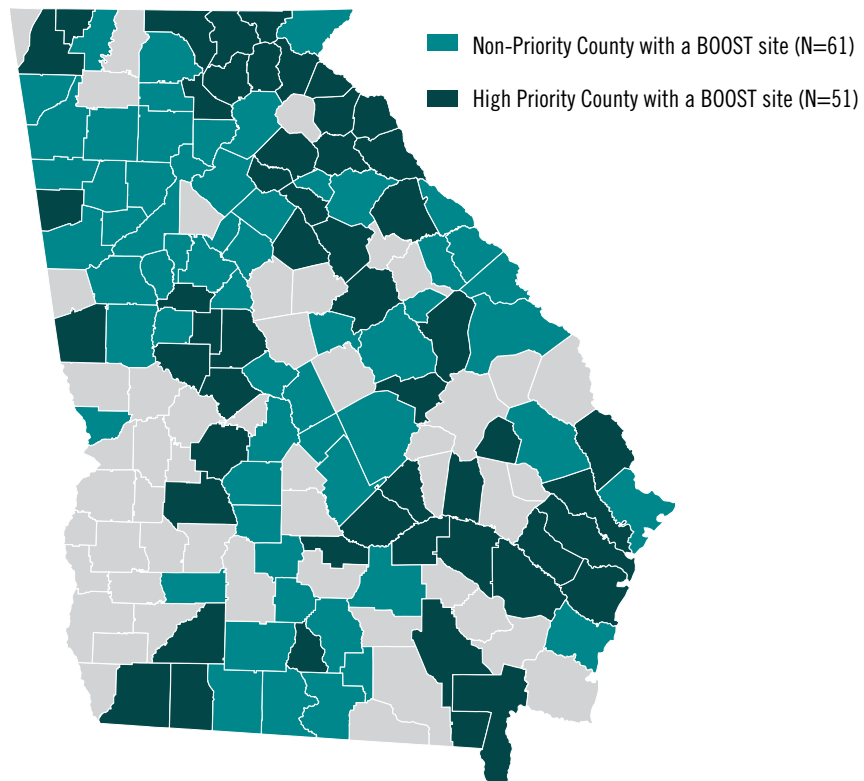
A total of 97 BOOST grantees (including 93 community organizations and four statewide organizations) implemented programming in Year 2. The statewide and community grantees operated **1,416 academic year sites**, serving **79,911 youth**. The majority (74%) operated at least five locations, and one grantee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



# Systems Study Findings

## BOOST Grants Program Design

### Program Mission

In the spring of 2023, Metis researchers conducted 14 interviews with BOOST stakeholders with varied experiences with and knowledge of the BOOST grants program’s development, planning, submission, review, implementation, and evaluation. Several stakeholders discussed their role as an advisor or information provider, with some statewide partners, for example, describing how they gathered information about local agencies’ needs to share back with GSA and inform the RFP. This collaborative process brought together statewide and local providers, national and statewide out-of-school-time (OST) experts, GaDOE, and GSA to create two RFPs—one for statewide and one for local agencies—that would reach underserved youth throughout the state.

*“A huge part of [BOOST] was to be able to help support nonprofits in school districts who were providing essential academic support services across the state. And the idea was to get those public dollars into their hands so that they could continue to provide academic support and address the learning loss that we all experienced post-COVID.”*

– Key Stakeholder Informant

When asked to describe the mission of the BOOST grants program, eight interviewees explained that **diminishing learning loss and meeting the educational needs of all students were key goals**. Several described this need as particularly pressing given the impacts of COVID-19 on multiple facets of the education system. The next most common response, noted by half of all respondents, was to expand access to OST learning during the academic year and summer to promote student success. Other common responses (four each) included strengthening OST quality while building the capacity of the state’s OST providers and meeting the mental health or well-being needs of students whom COVID has impacted.

*“When you don’t use a competitive process, you assume that you know who’s doing great work and who needs to be funded... If you go with a list of organizations already funded by GaDOE or United Way of Greater Atlanta, you’re limiting yourself... If you go with a formula, you end up funding organizations that are not set up to succeed.”*

– Key Stakeholder Informant

### Funding Distribution

According to nine stakeholders, the decision to disperse ESSER III funding in Georgia through a competitive grants program was primarily a means of ensuring the equitable distribution of funds. This includes ensuring that community-based organizations (CBOs) (as opposed to only schools) could access federal funds that otherwise would not have been available. Several stakeholders mentioned that **GSA was uniquely positioned in the state to help reach a broad range of organizations, given its longstanding and productive relationships with the OST community**. Still, a grant competition brought further visibility, helping GSA “see what was out there” and allowing those who operate programs in “little invisible spots” to request funds to meet their needs.



Ensuring that additional organizations have the opportunity to apply for funding also fosters more fruitful competition. Five respondents described a **competitive grant process as confirming that only high-quality programs would receive funding—ensuring that “taxpayer dollars are being used wisely for the kids.”** This includes uplifting programs with high-quality offerings for youth and prioritizing those with the capacity to manage and spend federal funds.

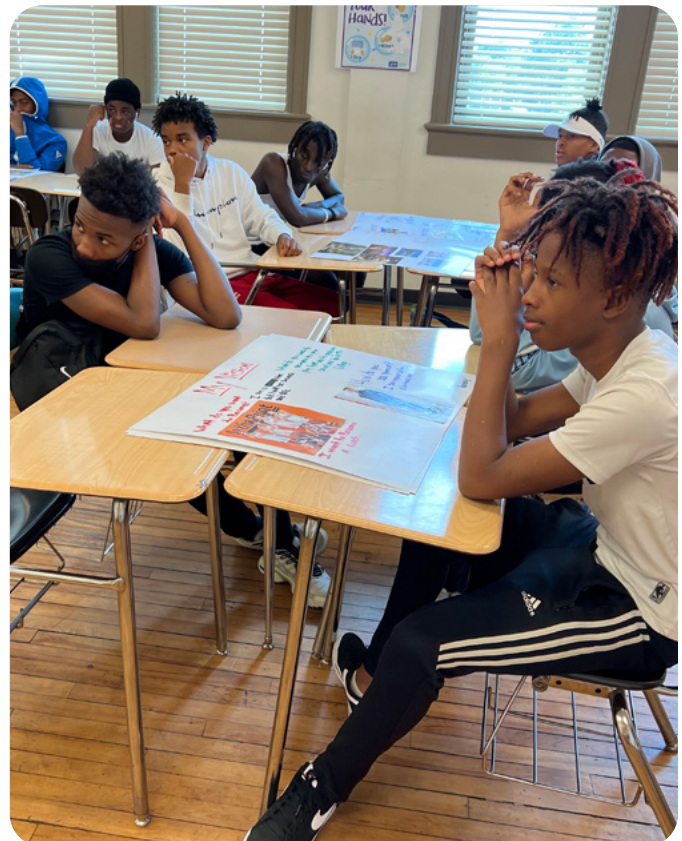
*“I would argue there isn’t an organization statewide in Georgia that has the expertise, the experience, and the ability to get this done the way GSAN does.”*

– Key Stakeholder Informant

In describing the RFP development process, several stakeholders described reaching new organizations as a key motivator. **While the ability to manage a BOOST grant was part of the funding criteria, GSAN and partners also sought to build local capacity so that smaller organizations would be encouraged to apply.** This included being upfront and transparent about grant requirements and the scoring rubric while giving all organizations equal access to information—so that no one would have a “leg up” over another. According to interviewees, GSAN sought to reduce barriers and ease the burden on applicants by issuing multi-year funding instead of making organizations apply multiple times for summer and afterschool funding over three years. Being flexible with funding

was also an important consideration while developing the RFP. It allowed organizations to focus on their specific needs and request support for transportation and capital costs not typically covered by other grants. One stakeholder explained that making student scholarships an eligible cost would have helped many organizations bring in families who otherwise couldn’t afford program fees.

**The RFP was also shaped by what seven interviewees described as a collaborative and iterative process that incorporated rounds of feedback from different stakeholders.** This occurred throughout the RFP development, starting with the knowledge about OST needs that GSAN had already accumulated because of their existing relationships with providers across the state. For example, one stakeholder explained that the decision to include transportation costs as an eligible expense was based on “what [GSAN] heard over the years,” which was then “incorporated into the RFP.” Advisors from GaDOE, United Way of Greater Atlanta, and other statewide and national agencies provided input on RFP drafts, incorporating best practices from other states when relevant. Further, statewide providers such as the YMCA checked with local branches to ensure they were “on board to participate.” This accumulation of input at multiple levels and times throughout the RFP development process led to what these stakeholders described as a strong RFP that other states now use as a model.



Augusta Richmond Juvenile Court

Interviewees praised GSAN for overseeing the RFP development and grantee selection processes. One stakeholder, for example, described GSAN as “nothing if not thorough... They staffed up appropriately, were dogged in their communication with people, and were extremely strategic in approaching the grantees about improving outcomes and services.” Another shared that the BOOST grant had “become the standard by which we are judging all others.” Others were similarly positive in calling the distribution of funds fair and unbiased.

Still, two stakeholders expressed their interest in bringing greater attention to racial disparities in the fund distribution process, with one describing the need for more outreach to grassroots organizations in Southeast Asian, Latino, and African American communities, which COVID has disproportionately impacted. This individual noted the quick turnaround required to distribute funds, acknowledging that the tight timeline did not allow for the flexibility to identify gaps and reallocate appropriately. Another interviewee recognized that ensuring a good mix of urban and rural applicants was challenging, though they did not find the RFP process at fault. Even though the selection process awarded additional points to organizations based on geography, this individual noted that there are fewer youth-serving organizations in remote areas, resulting in fewer rural applicants.

## Program Priorities

In describing the selection of the three BOOST program priorities (expanding access, strengthening program quality, and reducing barriers to participation), most stakeholders (eight people) explained that they were chosen as ways to meet the needs of youth and families in the state. Research findings and conversations with community partners revealed the need to address academic recovery, learning loss, mental health needs, and social isolation post-pandemic. Additionally, several interviewees highlighted the gap in access to OST programming statewide and nationally as driving the priority area.

Eight stakeholders spoke primarily about access when asked about all three priority areas, with one explicitly naming access as “purpose number one.” According to five interviewees, access encompasses increased support for transportation to bring students to and from programs, especially outside of metropolitan areas. Two stakeholders explained that improving program affordability with BOOST grant funds is another way to improve access. Two others cited research showing that there are not enough seats to meet the demand for OST programming in Georgia; for every child in an OST program, two more are waiting to get in. **While getting more kids in the door is key, it’s not everything. One stakeholder also described improving program quality as going hand in hand with expanding access and reducing barriers.** Many grantees, this individual stated, are addressing multiple priorities simultaneously to ensure that as many youths as possible can attend high-quality programming.

*“There are not enough slots for kids to have programming. Why is that? In some cases, it’s because there aren’t enough organizations, but for the most part, it’s because those organizations don’t have enough money.”*

– Key Stakeholder Informant

While all stakeholders supported the three priority areas, two suggested that the priorities could have included more intentional language about reaching students prioritized in Title I of ESSA, who were also those most impacted by the pandemic. Interviewees specifically highlighted students in the juvenile justice system, students in foster care, and others needing additional resources—all included in the BOOST RFP.

## BOOST Public-Private Structure

All stakeholders lauded GaDOE's decision to partner with GSN to manage, administer, and provide support for BOOST, with some calling it a model that should be replicated. Stakeholders described many benefits to using a public-private structure, with half referencing how a private organization like GSN's distinct qualities enhanced the BOOST process. Almost all (12) stakeholders described GSN as an obvious choice of partner because of its knowledge of OST best practices. Four interviewees also described that CBOs already know and trust GSN, so they are more comfortable working with them than with a less familiar government entity. Combined with their expertise in grant administration, these interviewees felt that GSN brought unique knowledge, skills, relationships, and experience to the table.

*"I think the value added of [having GSN involved] is it shows that—through a combination of a partnership with the state education agency and a statewide intermediary, or an entity like GSN—you can use [public] funds... to run a competition and have a positive impact. I think that helps make the case not just in Georgia but in other states that this is something worth having. It is more than a nicety, but essential to be able to provide supports for families and kids that need it."*

– Key Stakeholder Informant

One stakeholder explained that having GSN working directly with grantees helped them see "their grant specialist as a partnership rather than compliance." While GSN still enforces BOOST grantee regulations, it "can feel a little different if they [grantees] are like, 'well, I guess we've got to do this.' Rather than 'we have to do this otherwise, we're going to lose our money.'" The TA that GSN provided to all grantees also supported this partnership feeling. As a content expert in the OST field, GSN provided grantees with professional learning opportunities that supported their work while further building strong relationships.

Further, two stakeholders explained that having GSN as a partner allowed for greater speed and support than would have been possible if GaDOE had been running the BOOST competition alone. The collaboration created a "fantastic opportunity."



Girls On The Run

## GSAN Oversight & Program Supports

When asked about GSAN's greatest successes overseeing BOOST, all who responded were positive overall and about various aspects of their work. This includes GSAN's strengths: communicating with grantees and answering their questions, helping grantees navigate legal and budget questions, offering training and certificate programs from the Georgia Center for Nonprofits, and getting the "money out the door and getting access for kids." According to one stakeholder, GSAN succeeded by working directly with providers and administering the grant as contracted in ways that GaDOE could not do. Three stakeholders also mentioned that, despite some staff changes at GSAN, the GSAN team hired new people promptly and built a "very solid team."



*East Atlanta Kids Club*

Seven stakeholders further described GSAN's training and technical assistance offerings, which were virtual to increase accessibility to sites throughout the state. GSAN's ability to walk grantees through training about quality measures was cited as an important form of grantee assistance. Some interviewees recommended how to improve BOOST training and support, including two who suggested GSAN could further differentiate the training to provide more basic information to newer programs and higher-level training to those with more program and administrative experience. Others mentioned how, with BOOST, smaller receiving agencies benefited from connections to a statewide entity that has knowledge of the field at a national level and can provide supporting materials and feedback.

## Implementation Challenges

While generally positive about BOOST, stakeholders also discussed challenges to grant implementation. **Half of the respondents mentioned issues related to grantee funding and financials**, including determination of final award amounts, the need for state vendor approval, having to split afterschool and summer funding evenly, delays in securing first-year grantee funding, and the lag in second-year budget approvals.

Additionally, three stakeholders noted that understanding and interpreting state and ESSER relief fund regulations and allowable costs was difficult. While they stated that GSAN was a helpful arbiter in explaining these regulations, navigating this portion of BOOST was a "moving goalpost." Two interviewees also named the tight grant schedule a challenge, leaving grantees with limited time to hire and orient staff, purchase equipment and supplies, and implement planned services. Further, finding program staff to meet demand is a challenge. One interviewee explained, "Most of the funds are spent on salaries because the challenge is getting quality staff. And so, we still have [youth] on waiting lists, but it's not the capacity of the facility causing that; it's not having the staff."

*"The first time we could draw down funds was in March. Some of our affiliates held off on doing the [BOOST] enhancements because it was just too late. They couldn't afford six months of additional staff without funds."*

**– Key Stakeholder Informant**

To address these challenges, some stakeholders suggested improved communications between grantees and partners. Interviewees also encouraged further examination into the best cadence of communications with grantees—balancing their need for information and support with the desire not to overwhelm them. Some stakeholders also wanted to see more discussions about how to best facilitate processes for vendor approval, eligible expenses, and budgets.

## Successes and Lessons Learned

*“Some of the biggest impact [of BOOST] has been providing funding to providers that have never had federal funds before and giving them the capacity so that now they’re in a place where they can go after 21st Century [Community Learning Centers] grants, or some of the other funding streams.”*

– Key Stakeholder Informant

Interviewees defined success for BOOST in many ways, though there was the greatest agreement (six people) that the initiative should build local capacity for program staffing, operations, and fundraising. Relatedly, the ability to sustain programming post-BOOST will be an important measure of success. One stakeholder explained, “I think [capacity building] is a measure of success. What happens to those programs in 2025 and 2026? How many of those can get additional funds and keep their programs going?... And for the network itself, what do they look like post this huge endeavor that shifted the organization itself?”

**Others described success as expanding access, improving program quality, providing students with academics, enrichment, and well-being and creating sustainable public-private partnerships**

**and cross-sector collaboration.** More broadly, some spoke about BOOST’s potential to support the OST field: “[BOOST] has raised the caliber of what people think about OST,” contributing to stronger support from state actors and funders, thus advancing program longevity.

Stakeholders also emphasized several different ways of measuring success, with some naming quantitative measures, including academic outcomes (grades and test scores), number of students served, and school attendance. Others suggested qualitative or mixed-methods approaches using student, parent, and teacher surveys and anecdotal evidence to assess youth satisfaction, the quality of relationships, and whole child-related impacts (e.g., feeding children, increasing physical activity, improving mental health). Further, three stakeholders discussed tracking local program goals and outcomes as an important way to monitor program success.

Stakeholders were largely satisfied with BOOST’s ability to meet these metrics for success, with six describing how organizations have grown capacity due to BOOST. This growth includes adopting best practices, building internal teams and partnerships, enhancing the capacity to apply for new funding, and investing in new curricula and enrichment.



Safe Harbor Children’s Shelter

When asked about lessons learned, six stakeholders highlighted the importance of collaboration when distributing funds and supporting grantees. As discussed above, a public-private partnership is a critical model for distributing government funds in a timely manner that prioritizes grantee needs; two stakeholders specifically described Georgia as a model for other states doing this work.

Five interviewees also referenced successes on the ground when describing program impact. Specifically, three stakeholders explained how BOOST has expanded the reach of funding geographically to rural areas and to smaller “mom and pop” organizations, which “expanded availability of services for kids.” Two also spoke about BOOST’s impact on children and families as a key success, giving kids a safe place to go and building their confidence.

## Sustainability

**Stakeholders who discussed sustainability were all adamant that BOOST (or a comparable form of support) should continue to support OST programs for Georgia youth.** Though

it was conceived as a response to the impact of COVID, the need for interventions that continue to address learning loss and mental health challenges is as strong as ever. One interviewee described how researchers have found “that the pandemic may be over and the funding may be over soon, but the impacts on young people and the need for additional supports isn’t going to be over anytime soon...Even before the pandemic, we had 25 million students who wanted to be in an afterschool program nationally and who didn’t have access to a program or couldn’t afford available ones. And so, I think sustaining the programs that started and the programs that expanded is critical.” Those interviewed also noted that programs simply cannot continue with the same scope and reach if staffing funds disappear.

*“You’ve seen in states and in local jurisdictions, universal pre-K or early care programs or state versions of Head Start rolled out on a pilot basis ... And if they were not intended to be forever, they’re now forever because parents spoke up and said, ‘Absolutely, you cannot take this away.’ I feel that must happen here, particularly in the communities that never had access to these [OST] programs before. Voices at the local, state, and federal levels need to be raised. I would argue the funds are there, the support is there, but it’s a prioritization issue at different value levels, and does it make sense to spend money on it.”*

– Key Stakeholder Informant

While agreeing that such offerings are worthwhile, there needed to be more consensus on where future funding should come from. Five stakeholders argued that the federal government has a role in sustaining OST funding—though they should not be the sole source of dollars. One stakeholder mentioned the need to garner support from members of Congress who could decide to extend funding or devise a plan to give tax breaks to families with children enrolled in OST programming. This individual also discussed the possibility of leveraging Title I funds or the Child Development Block Grant to better meet the financial needs of OST programming.

Others saw the state as the starting point for future support before going to the federal government, with one noting, “I think that the main thing is at the state level to say, ‘We’ve had the opportunity through these federal dollars to test this out. We’ve learned some things. Maybe we do a few things differently. But here’s the evaluation, the success, the stories, and the voices that benefited from this. We need to keep going. We need to continue this, and the state needs to invest in this to do so.’” Another similarly stressed the state’s role in advancing OST efforts:

**“I hope to see more state investment in out-of-school time and not just as a stop-gap to bridge**

**learning loss, but looking at the wide array of what of services these programs offer and think of it being a whole child, whole community approach to how we are supporting young people.”**

Five stakeholders argued that braided funding that combines a mix of federal, state, local, foundation, corporate, and private philanthropic funds would be necessary to sustain the accessibility and levels of service made possible by BOOST. One stakeholder noted that GSAN and GaDOE could guide how to blend and braid funding to support CBOs, as Alabama’s Department of Education has done in partnership with their afterschool network.

Making a case for these kinds of support at various levels requires concerted advocacy and the wise use of storytelling and evaluation data. Six stakeholders explained that advocacy efforts are important in sustaining BOOST-like support. Some noted that mobilizing youth and especially getting the “taxpayers calling”—is a particularly effective way to create change. One advised creating a campaign that recruits “champions, whether ideally elected officials but also... sports figures, celebrities [who can] harness the power of parents and young people.” Some also noted that GSAN is important in coordinating such advocacy efforts.

Six stakeholders articulated the need to keep “storytelling...ongoing and often” about the impact BOOST has had on families, communities, and state-level partnerships to ensure that policymakers understand the benefits—with some arguing that this kind of widespread sharing has not been done enough. This includes not just promoting the impact of OST programming on youth but also the well-being of their families; as one explained, “It would be nice to be able to speak to how important afterschool is in terms of families recovering [from COVID] and people going back to work.” These interviewees stressed the importance of doing more to share anecdotes, voices, and successes of BOOST to change how things are done in the state. As one stated, “The storytelling must include this idea of collaborative partnership and how these entities came together to execute the stuff you can’t see publicly. I think that’s a huge part of the story, and GSAN has the opportunity to do that because it models a different way of doing business in our state, and I believe that that has to be how we do this moving forward.”

In the same vein, nine stakeholders were more specific about the need to share lessons learned and specific evaluation findings as essential to demonstrating why OST funding should continue. These findings, several argued, can support proposals to private funders by demonstrating the return on investment. Stakeholders agreed that this combination of qualitative stories and quantitative data is essential to making the case for future funding support; as one noted, “I think the data side is key. And then, the story side is just as key.”



*Deep Center*



## Sustainability: Views from the Case Study Grantees

When asked about sustainability planning, the case study grantees (program leaders) talked about their steadfast commitments to continuing their BOOST-funded work, particularly since they believe the need for learning loss support remains. To date, their sustainability planning efforts focused on diversifying their funding through corporate grants, family-advised donor foundations, and increased grant writing efforts in general, as well as tapping more into individual giving, such as launching student sponsor programs. Other strategies were developing new partnerships with local businesses and faith-based organizations and growing relationships with other community partners to support resource-sharing.

Case study grantees also discussed the role that GSAN could play in helping them with sustainability. They suggested that GSAN continue to share future funding opportunities with the grantees through a special funding-related newsletter or bulletin. It was also suggested that GSAN “create spaces for the grantees to remain visible, for us to exhibit, for us to be in front of other organizations and schools or people who might need our programming, then that would be helpful [with sustainability] as well.”

In addition, one of the statewide grantees described how the BOOST evaluation data would help with sustainability efforts: “We now can show that these programs work when we take this to our donors. We have a great pitch for sustaining through donor funding because we can show how we used the money and what the results were, and if we can continue this program, we can expect to see the same results. And I think that’s going to help us with pitching to donors to the annual campaign.”



*Los Niños Primero*



## Future Direction for BOOST

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Most stakeholders agreed that GSAN had already assembled a strong group of partners to create and implement BOOST, including GaDOE and United Way of Greater Atlanta, and statewide providers like the YMCA and the Georgia Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs. While there was no clear consensus on what groups to include in the future, individual interviewees made numerous helpful suggestions for other statewide entities to involve, including:

- Community foundations across the state,
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs,
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources,
- Disability groups,
- Faith-based leaders,
- Georgia's executive branch,
- State legislators and budget writers,
- Juvenile justice groups,
- Law enforcement,
- The healthcare community,
- Higher education to involve college students as volunteers or paid staff to work with youth and to support a pipeline of career and occupational programs for high school students,
- Georgia Chamber of Commerce,
- Parents and youth, and
- Schools and their staff members.



# Key Findings & Next Steps

## *Systems-Related Findings*

- State and national key stakeholders interviewed lauded GaDOE's decision to partner with GSAN to manage, administer, and provide support for BOOST, with some calling it a replicable model.
- When asked about GSAN's greatest successes overseeing BOOST, all state and national stakeholders were positive overall and about various aspects of GSAN's work, namely:
  - Communicating with grantees and answering their questions
  - Helping grantees navigate legal and budget questions
  - Building a "solid" BOOST administrative team
  - Offering training and certificate programs from the Georgia Center from Nonprofits
  - Getting the "money out the door and getting access for kids"
  - Providing high-quality training and assistance with quality measures
- While largely optimistic about BOOST grant implementation, state and national stakeholders discussed challenges, mostly on grantee funding and financial issues, such as determination of final awards and the need for state vendor approval. Others also noted that understanding and interpreting state and ESSER relief fund regulations and allowable costs was difficult.
- State and national respondents described BOOST successes as expanding access, improving program quality, providing students with academics, enrichment, and well-being and connectedness, and creating sustainable public-private partnerships and cross-sector collaboration. More broadly, some also spoke about BOOST's potential impact on the OST field: "[BOOST] has raised the caliber of what people think about OST," contributing to stronger support from state actors and funders, thus advancing program longevity.
- Case study program leaders and the state and national stakeholders were all adamant that BOOST (or a comparable form of support) should continue to support OST programs for Georgia youth. Though it was conceived as a response to the impact of COVID, they agreed that the need for learning loss interventions and mental health challenges is as strong as ever.



[BOOST Reports Page](#)



[BOOST Year 2  
Evaluation Report](#)



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GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

75 Marietta Street, Suite 401

Atlanta, Georgia 30303

(404) 521-0355 | [info@afterschoolga.org](mailto:info@afterschoolga.org)

[www.afterschoolga.org](http://www.afterschoolga.org)



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