

Out-of-School Time Stories

BOOST Grantee Spotlight: Georgia Alliance of YMCAs



The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. Developed out of a need to support working families, Georgia YMCAs provide quality childcare and youth development programs in a safe and nurturing environment while parents are at work.

The **Georgia Alliance of YMCAs** was established to coordinate the efforts of all 17 YMCA organizations across Georgia and to help strengthen the delivery of programs and services. Serving communities in 75 counties, the Georgia Alliance of YMCAs is one of the state's largest childcare provider.

The Georgia Alliance of YMCAs received \$4,500,000 in BOOST funds to **expand and enhance the quality of existing YMCA programs, focusing on learning acceleration and enrichment activities.** In Year 2, BOOST funds were distributed to all 17 Georgia YMCAs via a formula grant process, ultimately supporting academic year programming at 200 sites and summer programming at 64 sites across Georgia.

Meeting the Needs of Working Families

"[We are] trying to make sure that we can give that opportunity to parents so that they're not stressed. Their kids are in good hands, and they also get that extra opportunity to work on things they may not be able to get done in school."

— YMCA BOOST Staff Member




Youth Served in Year Two:
12,181 in Afterschool
13,198 in Summer



Ages Served:
Elementary, Middle, and
High School

Counties Served:
Statewide

Programming Offered:
Afterschool & Summer

BOOST Grant Purpose:
 Increase Quality

Website:
www.ymcaatlanta.org/georgia-ymca-alliance



Georgia YMCA out-of-school time (OST) programs provide youth across the state with academic support, well-being skill building, access to nutritious food, and the ability to foster positive relationships with peers and adults. Using a whole-child approach, the programs and activities—which include homework help, physical activity, swimming, hands-on learning opportunities, team-building experiences, and field trips—help youth improve their academic efficacy, interpersonal skills, and overall health and wellness.

Additionally, these programs provide critical support for working families, who report that the Y’s OST programs **help them keep their jobs and alleviate stress when their children are enrolled**. “It’s that afterschool access that the parents need. That is extremely important to them,” explained one YMCA staff member. In fact, several parents referred to their local YMCA program as a “blessing.” “The Y has been such a blessing to our family. I don’t think that we would be where we are now if we didn’t have the Y available. It would really put a strain on our family,” one parent commented. “And to top it off, they also pick up my children from school and bring them back to the Y until six o’clock. I felt like it was a blessing,” another parent shared.

Addressing the Staffing Challenge

Like many non-profit organizations in the youth development sector, Georgia YMCAs are experiencing staffing challenges. Lower wages, demanding workloads, and the part-time nature of OST programs make it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff. At the same time, there is increased demand for afterschool programs as more parents return to work and seek childcare options, further exacerbating staffing challenges.

Fortunately, **BOOST funds have been instrumental in helping Georgia YMCAs increase salaries, fund staff positions, and hire certified teachers to provide learning acceleration activities**. “Staffing is a huge barrier for us. But BOOST has helped us bring in some staff from the schools, which has allowed [youth] access to more programming,” one staff member explained. In a few cases, local YMCAs were even able to hire additional staff needed to establish new programs. One staff member said, “We started a middle and high school program, which we lacked before.” Finally, training opportunities provided through BOOST helped YMCA staff develop new skills that contribute to higher-quality programs. As one YMCA administrator explained, “We were able to get 15 new sites Quality Rated above two stars [on Georgia’s quality rating and improvement system for early- and school-age care programs]. BOOST was able to help us to do that because we were able to send staff to trainings for those.”

“I would be stressed if I did not have the Y. As a single mom, they have become my village. My son wanted to do a sport, they have it. If I was working late, they accommodate me and make sure my kid was safe. If I didn’t have the time to get homework done, they have someone there to do it. The Y is...amazing.”

— YMCA BOOST Parent

“We can’t introduce more programs if we don’t have the staff to focus on running those programs. We’ve been able to do that through BOOST funding.”

— YMCA BOOST Staff Member

Strengthening Community for All

Another key feature of YMCA OST programs is integrating character development and well-being principles into all activities. **With the support of BOOST funds, Georgia YMCAs have provided staff training in Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)**, an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention program used in all Georgia YMCA programs. One Georgia YMCA administrator explained, “One of the things that BOOST has done for us is to expand what we’ve been able to do with our staff, especially training around TBRI principles.” As a result, program staff were better equipped to create nurturing environments for youth to learn, connect safely with peers, and try new things. “We’ve seen a few children this year that have come in, not very good at being social, did not really want to participate,” one staff member described. “At the end of the school year, we saw a turnaround. They came because they wanted to.”



Georgia YMCA Youth Outcomes

Improved relationships with peers: **81%**

Improved relationships with staff: **86%**

Improved student engagement: **89%**

These findings are consistent with youth survey data obtained through Hello Insight, an online platform with research-based tools, including pre- and post-surveys, used by all Georgia YMCAs to measure students’ well-being. Of the 2,150 youth who completed the surveys, the great majority showed meaningful improvement in their level of engagement (89%), peer relationships (81%), and relationships with YMCA staff (86%).

For parents, **having a safe space for their children to develop their social skills is another significant benefit of Georgia YMCA programs**. One parent commented, “One of my goals was for [my child] to get more social interaction. I feel like we achieved that because at the Y, he was able to interact with [other kids] very well, and he loved it. I think that built some social skills that he needed.” Another parent agreed, “I wanted him to be around more kids his age and do kid-friendly things. The Y has provided that.”

“My son is super active. He needed a place where he could run, have fun, and be loved. It’s better for him to be at the Y where he can be fully himself.”

— YMCA BOOST Parent

SPOTLIGHT DATA SOURCES

- Case study interviews & focus groups with youth, parents, staff, and administrators
- End-of-year grantee report



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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.