



## Review of the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds in Support of Out-of-School Time Programming:

Summarizing Implementation and Outcome Findings



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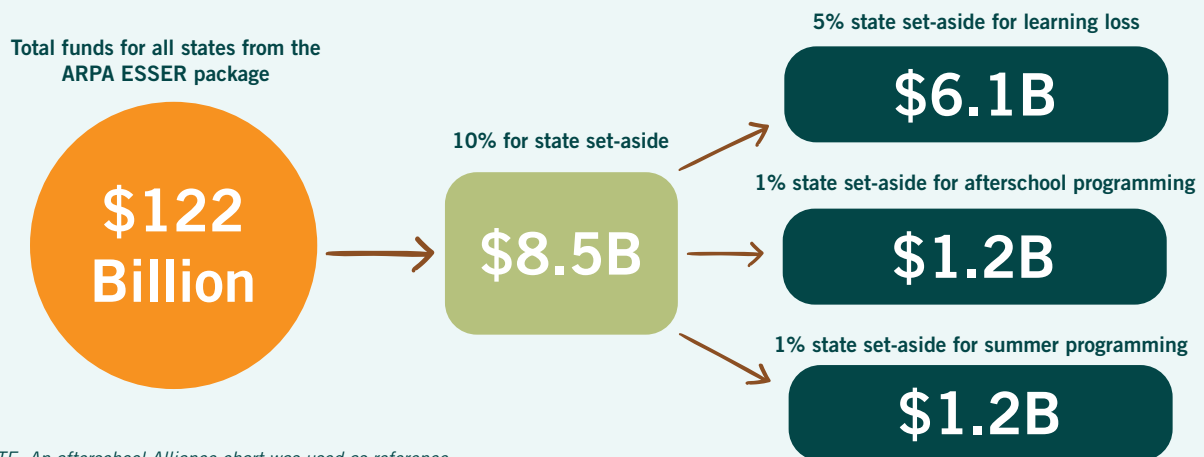
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# Executive Summary

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has partnered with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to distribute the state's American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARPA ESSER, also known as ESSER III) funds for afterschool and summer programming through the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time grants program (BOOST).

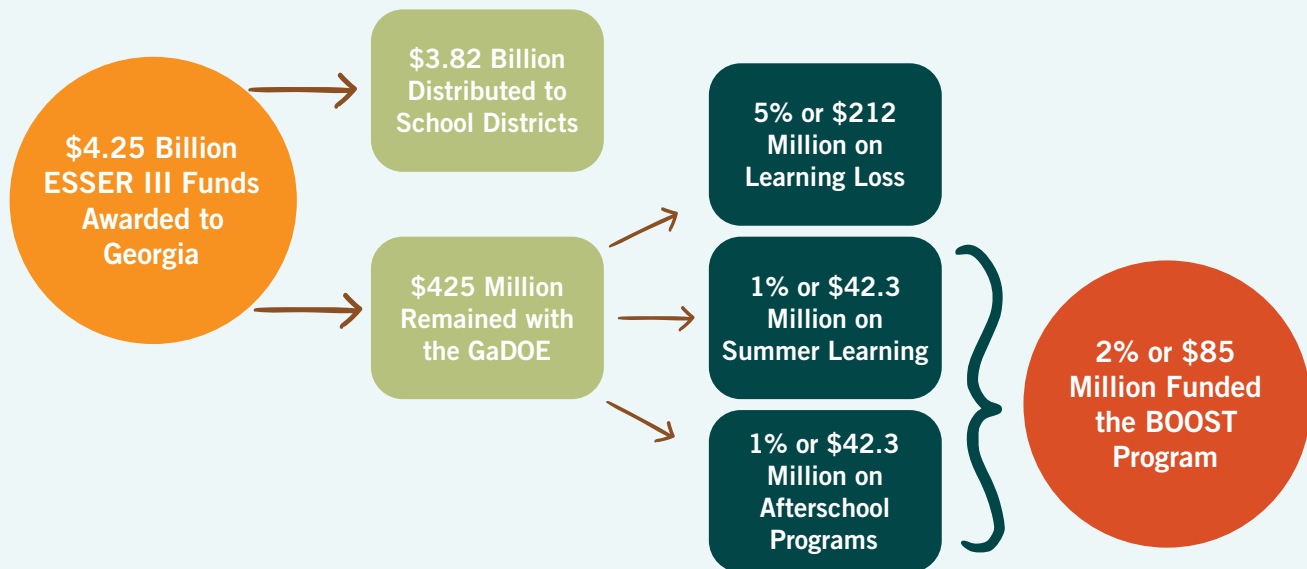
As part of the ARPA of March 2021, \$122 billion was reserved for the ARPA ESSER Fund, from which 10% was dedicated to state set-aside funds for State Education Agencies (SEAs). From there, \$8.45 billion was made available for out-of-school (OST) programming, including \$1.2 billion for afterschool and \$1.2 billion for summer programming (Figure 1). While using these funds, states must meet basic requirements to ensure local engagement and the prioritization of students' needs. Beyond these requirements, however, states have relative flexibility in how they wish to distribute their set-aside funds while meeting the mandated minimum allocations in afterschool and summer spending.

**FIGURE 1.** American Rescue Plan Act State Set Aside Breakdown



Of Georgia's approximate \$4.25 billion in ARPA ESSER funds, \$3.8 billion (90%) went directly to school districts, while \$425 million (10%) remained with the GaDOE as part of its state set-aside funds. In keeping with federal requirements, Georgia was required to spend \$212 million (5%) on learning loss, \$42 million (1%) on summer learning, and \$42 million (1%) on afterschool programming. The combined 1% set-asides (approximately \$85 million) funded Georgia's BOOST Grants Program (Figure 2).

In the spring of 2023, Metis Associates partnered with GSAN to systematically review all 52 ARPA ESSER recipients to investigate the different approaches states used to expend these funds. In the fall of 2023, Metis Associates engaged in the next inquiry phase to explore implementation and outcome findings across state uses of these funds, including states with similar models to Georgia and using different approaches to disseminating ARPA ESSER funds.

**FIGURE 2.** American Rescue Plan Act State Set Aside Breakdown

The [Year 1 Literature Review](#) explored the extent to which other states and territories used similar distribution models to Georgia, resulting in six focus states (Arkansas, Idaho, Minnesota, South Carolina, Washington, and Vermont) that also partnered with a statewide afterschool network to run competitive grant competitions.<sup>1</sup> By the beginning of the 2023-24 school year, Connecticut, Indiana, and Utah also emerged as using similar models for ESSER III state set-aside funds, bringing the total number of comparison states to 10.

Of these 10 states, Idaho, Massachusetts, and Connecticut completed at least one publicly available evaluation report. These reports summarize available data to illuminate the reach of each grant program, the implementation and evaluation components and their fidelity, possible outcomes, and potential recommendations. This literature focuses primarily on these three states, addressing evaluation scope and methods, grant implementation and reach, and reported findings and recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> Oregon was also reviewed for having meaningful similarities in the use of funds to reach underserved students in the state, though Oregon did not use ARPA ESSER III funding for the grant that was reviewed.



## Methodological Approach

As a component of the BOOST evaluation, Metis conducted a literature review of how other states and territories have managed their ARPA ESSER III funds. First, in Year 1, they reviewed states' similarities to Georgia's BOOST program design and implementation efforts to answer the following research questions:

- *How have other states used ARPA ESSER set-aside OST funds to address education challenges related to COVID-19?*
- *In what ways does Georgia's BOOST grants program align with or differ from other states' approaches to using ARPA ESSER OST funds?*
- *To what extent have states conducted evaluations of those efforts, if at all?*

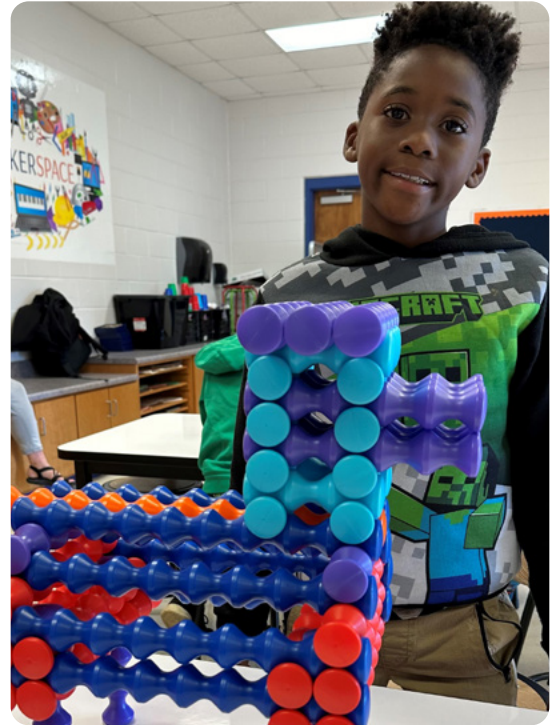
Second, in Year 2, Metis expanded their review to include greater detail on states' evaluation efforts, led by the following research questions:

- *What was the scope of the evaluation, and what methods were used?*
- *How were the grants implemented?*
- *How many grantees and students did these grants reach?*
- *What were the observed benefits to participating students' academics and wellbeing, if any?*
- *What grant program modifications were recommended based on evaluation findings, if any?*

Specifically, the following sections distinguish which states: (1) partnered with an external evaluator; (2) published a report; and (3) publicly shared any implementation or program findings. Where available, implementation outcomes are included from states without formal evaluation reports. Updates to the Year 1 research questions are also included.

Metis conducted research for the Year 2 literature review in two phases. First, preliminary online research was conducted on all 52 ARPA ESSER fund recipients, including all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, to look for any states or territories that had implemented a similar distribution plan to Georgia since the publication of the Year 1 literature review. This step included systematically reviewing states' submitted ARPA ESSER funding plans, state education department websites and press releases, afterschool network websites, grant Requests for Proposals (RFPs), and resources and articles provided by organizations such as the Afterschool Alliance. Resources were also reviewed for statewide evaluation efforts or findings, including reports, conference proceedings, or informal outcomes detailed within the documentation. Metis used Excel tables to record categories, including the type of distribution (grant v. formula), partnerships, eligible entities for summer and afterschool funds, and the evaluation status for each state. Metis also conducted individual outreach to staff with out-of-school and statewide education agencies.

Based on those findings, Metis identified three states that published evaluation reports for their ARPA ESSER III grant competitions: Connecticut, Idaho, and Massachusetts. The second phase of research thus comprised a review of the evaluation reports provided by the focus states based on the Year 2 research questions. The results of these efforts are described further below.





## Focus States: Similarities to Georgia

Ten states shared similar ARPA ESSER III funding distribution models with Georgia. They used a competitive grant process, prioritized organizations that do not otherwise receive grant funding, and/or partnered with an out-of-school time (OST) network or organization to administer funds. These ten states include Arkansas, Connecticut, Idaho, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, and Washington. Their funding distribution models are summarized in the table below.

**TABLE 1.**  
Similar State ARPA ESSER III Funding Distribution Models to Georgia

STATE	GRANT TIMELINE	OST NETWORK PARTNERSHIP	ELIGIBILITY OF LEA DISTRICTS	AFTERSCHOOL OR SUMMER	REPORT AVAILABLE*
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>2021–2024</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Not eligible</b>	<b>Both</b>	✓
<b>Arkansas</b>	2021–2024	Yes	Eligible	Both	
<b>Connecticut</b>	2021	No	Not eligible	Summer	✓
<b>Idaho</b>	2023–2024	Yes	Eligible	Both	✓
<b>Indiana</b>	2022–2024	Yes	Eligible	Both	
<b>Massachusetts</b>	2022–2023	No <sup>†</sup>	Eligible	Both	✓
<b>Minnesota</b>	2022–2024	Yes	Not eligible	Both	
<b>South Carolina</b>	2022–2023	Yes	Not eligible	Both	
<b>Utah</b>	2021–2022	No	Eligible	Both	
<b>Vermont</b>	2022–2023	No	Eligible	Both	
<b>Washington</b>	2021–2022	Yes	Not eligible	Both	

The following sections will examine evaluation findings and implications for the three states with publicly available reports at the time of this study, including Connecticut, Idaho, and Massachusetts, alongside Georgia.

\* Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP) was a grantee and provided subgrants to OST programs.

<sup>†</sup> As of February 29, 2024

## GEORGIA: Georgia Building Opportunities for Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Grant



The Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) led the development of the BOOST grant program with input from GaDOE and the out-of-school time field across the state and nation. The program offers one-year renewable grants for up to three years (2021-24), with the possibility of both summer enrichment and afterschool programming in a single application.

### EVALUATION SCOPE AND METHODS

Early in 2022, GSAN partnered with Metis Associates (Metis) as the BOOST external evaluator. Metis used a participatory approach to engage grantees and program stakeholders in an Advisory Council and Evaluation Advisory Groups throughout the process. In addition to document review and literature reviews, the evaluation used descriptive analyses, thematic analyses, and performance level analyses for stakeholder interviews (N=14), grantee case studies (N=8), and end-of-year grantee reports (N=97). This review examines the Year 2 report on the 2022-23 school year and the summer of 2023.

### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

GaDOE partnered with GSAN to administer ARPA ESSER III funds through the BOOST grant initiative, available to statewide or local organizations providing afterschool and/or summer programming. Eligible applicants included nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, and municipalities, prioritizing programs serving special populations (i.e., youth with disabilities, youth receiving free or reduced-price lunch, etc.).

Supported by professional development webinars, trainings, and technical assistance, BOOST grantees used funds to focus on at least one of the ARPA ESSER III program priorities: (1) Expanding access to serve more youth, (2) Reducing barriers to out-of-school time participation, and (3) Strengthening programmatic quality. Overall, grantees who were interviewed expressed satisfaction with the BOOST program's implementation, specifically mentioning GSAN's communication with grantees, support with budget questions, "solid" administrative team, BOOST-provided trainings, and ability to get "money out the door and provide access for kids."

### PROGRAM REACH

In its second year, BOOST administered \$27 million to 97 grantees, including four statewide and 93 local organizations, reaching 112 counties across the state. **BOOST-funded programming in 2022-23 reached 79,911 students during the academic year and 86,924 students in the summer.** Over two-thirds of the summer BOOST youth (61,520 or 71%) and 59% of academic year BOOST youth (47,220) were eligible for free- or reduced-price meals at school.

### PARTICIPATING YOUTH OUTCOMES

BOOST grantees were required to develop three outcomes for youth participants and engaged in a technical assistance process with GSAN and Metis to ensure they had measurable outcomes, attainable targets, and access to appropriate tools for measuring outcome attainment. Overall, the Year 2 BOOST evaluation showed that **the great majority of grantees met or exceeded at least one of their academic year outcomes (93%) and/or summer outcomes (99%).** Below is a summary of outcome findings within each of the four BOOST-specific service areas.



**Accelerated learning** outcomes were achieved by 82% of academic year grantees (impacting 46,945 youth) and 85% of summer grantees (impacting 48,587 youth). Key impacts included:

- Academic gains in literacy and math
- Improved graduation rates

**Enrichment** outcomes were achieved by 75% of academic year grantees (impacting 8,534 youth) and 71% of summer grantees (impacting 13,264 youth). Key impacts included:

- Increased exposure to new experiences (e.g., visual/performing arts and STEM projects)
- Enhanced college/career readiness

**Well-being and connectedness** outcomes were achieved by 69% of academic year grantees (impacting 11,692 youth) and 77% of summer grantees (impacting 31,088 youth). Key impacts included:

- Growth in self-confidence and social skills
- Improved sense of belonging
- Stronger adult relationships

**Healthy eating and physical activity** outcomes were achieved by 95% of academic year grantees (impacting 27,052 youth) and 81% of summer grantees (impacting 34,811 youth). Key impacts included:

- Increased physical activity
- Improved nutrition knowledge
- Enhanced access to healthy foods

Grantees also assessed youth satisfaction with BOOST programming, and they determined their measures through a technical assistance process with GSAN and Metis. **Approximately 90% of academic year youth (14,745) and 89% of summer youth (19,923) expressed overall satisfaction with their program.** Many youth also reported satisfaction with the following:

- Program activities (92% in the academic year; 90% in the summer)
- Relationships with program staff (89% in the academic year and 92% in the summer)
- Relationships with program peers (91% in the academic year and 85% in the summer)

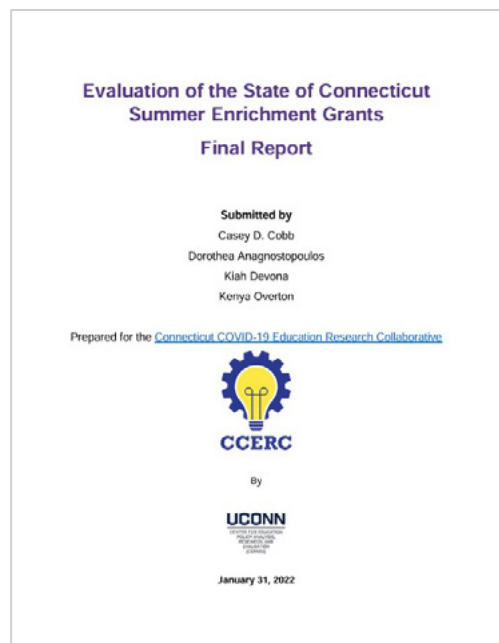
## RECOMMENDATIONS

The BOOST report offered the following recommendations:

- **Maintain the emphasis on expanded reach** with a focus on underserved populations;
- **Facilitate knowledge sharing** among grantees through communities of practice;
- **Expand focus on sustainability** by coaching identified grantees to strengthen capacity;
- **Continue providing evaluation technical assistance** to grantees in Year 3;
- **Use standardized test data to assess accelerated learning** further by partnering with GaDOE to consider using the Georgia Milestones Assessment System; and
- **More uniformly measure youth satisfaction** with standardized tools and target ratios.

The Georgia BOOST evaluation and its findings can also be found in greater detail in Appendix I, as well as the [BOOST Year 2 Implementation Report](#) and [Evaluation Brief](#). The evaluation reports of each of the three focus states are summarized below.

## CONNECTICUT: Summer Enrichment Initiative



Connecticut's Summer Enrichment Initiative took place in Summer 2021 with two grant competitions. **Expansion Grants**, ranging from \$2,500 to \$25,000, aimed to expand existing enrichment opportunities and increase access for students who might otherwise not have summer program access. **Innovation Grants**, ranging from \$50,000 to \$250,000, sought to provide students with innovative summer programming. The Connecticut State Department of Education created these initiatives to provide "Connecticut students opportunities for socialization and fun as the state eased its COVID pandemic restrictions and prepared for the return to in-person school in Fall 2021" (p. 4).

### EVALUATION SCOPE AND METHODS

The Connecticut State Department of Education partnered with the Connecticut Covid-19 Education Research Collaborative out of the University of Connecticut to evaluate the Summer Enrichment Initiative in the summer of 2021. The evaluation used a combination of student (N=1,231) and site supervisor surveys (N=215), case study

visits (N=10), focus group interviews (N=62 students; N=42 staff members), and enrollment data to address their major areas of evaluation interest, including:

1. The degree to which camps increased students' access to summer programming,
  - How camps used Summer Enrichment funds and the types of programming they offered,
  - Students' enjoyment of camp activities and experiences, and
2. How the camps readied students to return to school after a year of pandemic-related disruptions.

The evaluation included primarily descriptive and thematic analyses and bivariate analysis to explore the relationship between youth satisfaction and other youth characteristics and experiences.

### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The Summer Enrichment Initiative included two competitions for nonprofit organizations providing summer enrichment programming to youth. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) developed the grant initiative, awarded Expansion and Innovation grantees in the summer of 2021, disbursed funds, and monitored grantee spending. Implementation successes and challenges were determined using a combination of program staff interviews and surveys. An emergent success of the initiative was the increased connection between families, students, and out-of-school time programs. These strengthened relationships were evidenced by 85% of site supervisors citing "staff relationship with students" as the leading reason why they believed their students were ready to return to school. Site supervisors described challenges, including finding qualified staff and the short timeline between the grant announcement and the start of programming. Some site supervisors felt this led to lower enrollment since some students likely enrolled in alternate programming before the initiative began.

### PROGRAM REACH

The Summer Enrichment Initiative administered over \$8.6 million to 235 programs across the state in the summer of 2021. The Summer Enrichment evaluation used responses to the site supervisor survey (N=121) to determine that the total number of youth served at the 121 responding sites increased from 17,087 students in 2020 to 32,336 students in 2021. Additionally, 39% of camps offered every student a scholarship or enrollment fee waiver,

leading to 56% of all Summer Enrichment Initiative students with a scholarship or fee waiver. Connecticut used program enrollment data to assess the impact of the Summer Enrichment Initiative on expanding student access to summer programming. **In all, 108,000 Connecticut students accessed programming through the grant initiative.**

## PARTICIPATING YOUTH OUTCOMES

The evaluation used student surveys to measure youth perceptions of camp climate and enjoyment of camp activities and experiences. Relating to camp climate, two-thirds (66%) of students reported that participants were “always” or “mostly” nice to one another, and another two-thirds felt they were “always” or “mostly” given a lot of choices during their time at camp. Regarding youth enjoyment, approximately **85% of respondents graded their camps with an A or B, with 72% on average reporting that they had “a lot” of fun** at their summer program. The evaluation also used bivariate analyses to explore the relationship between youth satisfaction and other youth-reported outcomes. The strongest correlation reported was between student perceptions of camp staff and how much fun they had at camp ( $r=.432$ ), indicating a strong relationship between staff-student relationships and student enjoyment of their summer program.

The evaluation gave special attention to the program’s impact on student readiness to return to school following the isolated initial stages of the pandemic. Almost half of site supervisors (49%) felt that their program was “very effective” at preparing students to return to school in the fall, which aligns with over half of students (58%) who said “probably yes” or “definitely yes” to a question asking if the program made them excited to return to school. Site supervisors also shared their perceptions on this topic in case study interviews:

*“For those that had been isolated, coming here every day and seeing people, and having conversations, is part of that [school] routine.”*

*– Innovation Camp Staff Member*

In terms of social skills, two-thirds (66%) of students reported that peers were “always” or “mostly” nice to one another. While the Summer Enrichment grant evaluation did not assess academic growth directly, staff and student perceptions of academic preparation quality were collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. 75% of site supervisors believed the summer experience was “extremely effective” and “very effective” in building students’ preparation and enthusiasm for school in the fall.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendations from the Summer Enrichment Initiative report include:**

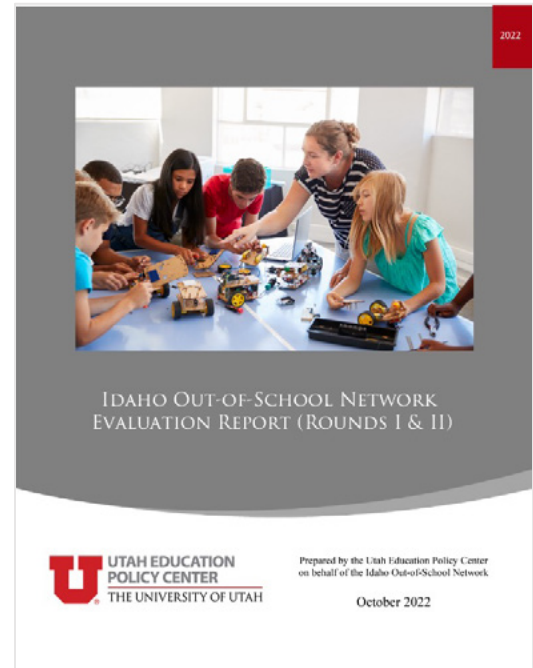
- **Starting the process of the Request for Proposals and funding administration earlier** to support participant recruitment and efficient use of funds;
- **Supporting a mix of camp activities** within camps instead of focusing on activity variation between camps to support student enjoyment;
- **Fostering program-school partnerships** to improve student engagement and further foster their enthusiasm for returning to school; and
- **Strengthening camp-CSDE partnerships** to support staff recruitment and training.

## IDAHO: Idaho Community Programs for Youth (ICPfy) Awards Rounds I & II

Idaho used three rounds of awards for its Idaho Community Programs for Youth (ICPfy) Awards in 2021 and 2022. The rounds varied by implementation timeline and programming type, with Round I supporting afterschool programs from August 2021 to July 2022 and Round II targeting summer programs from January to July 2022. Round III, available to all previous grantees, was a summer spending extension through August 2022. The ICPfy program aimed to provide evidence-based out-of-school-time programming for students most impacted by COVID-19 (Round III RFP).

### EVALUATION SCOPE AND METHODS

The Idaho Department of Education partnered with the Utah Education Policy Center (UEPC) to evaluate the ICPfy grant. Their report covers Rounds I and II from August 2021 to July 2022. Data sources included a document review, a family survey (N=222), a program staff survey (N=98), a program manager post-training survey (N=9), program manager interviews (N=18), and site visits (N=6). They used descriptive and thematic analyses to answer their evaluation questions.



### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Like Georgia, Idaho partnered with their statewide afterschool network, the Idaho Out-of-School Network (ION), to administer their ARPA ESSER III grant funds in the Idaho Community Programs for Youth (ICPfy) grant, which comprised three rounds, described above. Eligible applicants included nonprofit organizations, public schools, faith-based organizations, and municipalities providing OST services to youth that do not already receive other select funds. Also similar to Georgia, applicants were required to select program purposes (e.g., expanding access, reducing barriers, and increasing programmatic quality) on which to focus their funds.

Idaho measured program success against the ION Building Blocks for Out-of-School Time (OST), considered the best OST practices in the ICPfy initiative. The Building Blocks were assessed through stakeholder surveys, program manager interviews, and end-of-year progress reports that informed measures of implementation successes and challenges.

Key findings include:

- **Intentional Program Design** (96% of staff knew the mission/goals of their program; 98% felt they knew how to accomplish those goals)
- **Supportive Environments** (68% of families were satisfied with the program environment overall)
- **Youth Voice, Leadership, and Engagement** (Staff surveys showed that over 80% of staff asked students for ideas and feedback, 89% gave students choice in activities, 81% felt students had opportunities to be leaders in the program)
- **Students' Backgrounds** (89% of staff felt programs honored students' cultural backgrounds, while 60% of families felt the same)
- **Community, School, and Family Engagement** (68% of families were satisfied with the program environment overall, and 59% of parents from all programs had visited or attended events hosted by their program)

- **Organizational and Leadership Management** (Overall, staff survey respondents shared positive perceptions of program leadership, highlighting the role of program managers in creating environments that are enjoyable and impactful for both students and staff)
- **Ongoing Staff Support and Volunteer Development** (Almost all program staff (96%) agreed that they had received the training needed to do a good job in their role)
- **Youth Safety and Wellness** (95% of families agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I know my child is in good hands when they are at this program.”)

The ICPfY report listed professional development as one challenge in their implementation since they could not provide ongoing professional learning experiences to grantees as intended. However, program-level staff did receive initial orientation, content-specific training, and attendance at an annual statewide conference.

## PROGRAM REACH

The ICPfY administered \$17 million in total across three rounds of awards. The report focuses on the 19 grantees that made up ICPfY programming for Rounds I and II. The number of students served is not included in the ICPfY evaluation report.

## PARTICIPATING YOUTH OUTCOMES

Pertaining to social well-being, program staff and families reported improved student outcomes related to behavior and social competencies, which included the constructs below:

- **Relationship Skills** (99% of staff observed improvement)
- **Self-awareness** (95% of staff observed improvement)
- **Social Awareness** (93% of staff observed improvement)
- **Responsible Decision-making** (92% of staff observed improvement)
- **Self-management** (92% of staff observed improvement)

Idaho did not assess academic achievement, but staff and family perceptions of academic growth were reported using staff and family surveys. Staff observed specific areas of growth, including improved homework and class participation (69%) and catching up with pandemic-related learning loss (52%). **Families reported strong perceptions of participant growth across academic outcomes, such as providing new learning opportunities (93%), academic success (87%), and catching up on pandemic-related learning loss (63%).**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

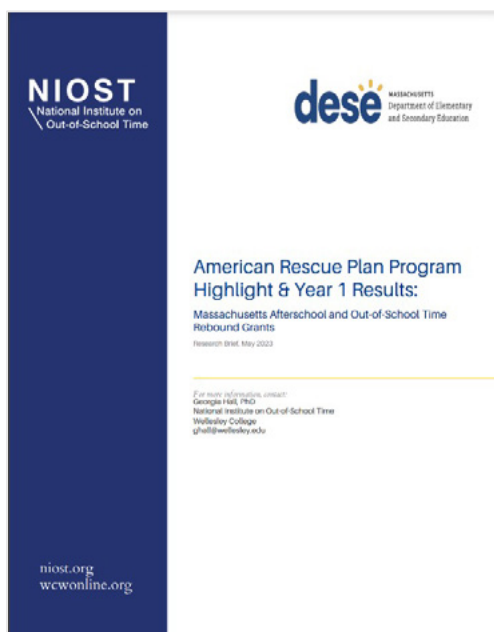
The ICPfY report included the following recommendations:

- **Continue to build a professional learning infrastructure** by expanding session content based on staff needs and supporting program leaders to facilitate discussions with their peers;
- **Support programs in expanding staff recruitment** to include specialized staff positions, possibly through an OST recruitment and retention study; and
- **Engage program leaders in sustainability discussions**, including supporting programs with the development of a logic model or theory of change to illustrate plans for how the program will support youth beyond the goals of the grant.



## MASSACHUSETTS:

### Afterschool & Out-of-School Time Rebound (ASOST-R) Grant



Massachusetts held a continuation grant process called Afterschool & Out-of-School Time Rebound (ASOST-R), in which regional and statewide OST organizations applied for subgrant awards to local organizations across the state. The Year 1 report is available and includes findings from a combination of afterschool and summer programming, totaling \$4 million in afterschool funding and \$6 million in summer program funding. The goal of the ASOST-R initiative was for “regional or statewide grantees to provide support, coaching, training, technical assistance, professional development, fiscal management, evaluation, and oversight to ASOST subgrantee programs,” in addition to making the subgrant awards.

#### EVALUATION SCOPE AND METHODS

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE) partnered with the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at Wellesley to evaluate the ASOST-R continuation grant. The report covered the 2021-22 school year, using a combination of grantee interviews and grantee-specific

assessment tools to evaluate implementation successes and challenges and a specific set of program and participant outcomes. These outcomes included subgrantee program improvements in academic support, school engagement and connection, mental health, college and career readiness, and more. NIOST used descriptive and thematic analyses in their methodology to assess these outcomes.

While some grantees had experience with validated assessment tools for these measures, ASOST-R also provided the option to use the NIOST-developed SAYO (Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes) tool. NIOST provided grantee and subgrantee trainings on this tool throughout the grant period. Some grantees also collected data through site visits and observations.

#### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The role of the MDESE was to fund the non-profit grantees and establish a set of criteria for subgrantee awards, leaving most of the funding distribution, oversight, and subgrantee technical assistance to regional and statewide grantee institutions (p. 1). NIOST partnered with the MDESE to evaluate the ASOST-R grant program, supporting the development of data collection tools, providing training to grantees, and hosting professional development webinars for subgrantees.

NIOST interviewed representatives from the seven grantee organizations to explore implementation successes and challenges. As one grantee expressed, the multiple components included in the grant application process “improved interest and engagement from potential subgrantees.” Other grantees explained their organizational capacity to “manage federal and state grants” before ASOST-R supported their success. For the grantees who did not have as much background experience in managing this kind of grant competition, they were able to develop new partnerships to better support subgrantees and expand their networks.

Massachusetts’ ASOST-R program also included professional development and technical assistance to subgrantees. Grantees provided these experiences through coaching, office hours, informational webinars, and Q&A sessions over

the life of their subgrants. NIOST provided grantee training on their data collection tools and professional development webinars related to youth development, organizational management, and out-of-school time best practices. Grantees reflected on their experiences with evaluating subgrantee programming in their interviews with NIOST:

*“We analyzed everything at an organizational level. We’re turning it back around to them. We’re looking at the specific indicators that align with what enhancements they’re working on...things that we knew that were directly aligned to how people were implementing so that they could actually see if they were moving along the continuum of best practice. So, their data collection efforts are very targeted toward their grant application and their focus.”*

– ASOST-R Grantee Organization

## PROGRAM REACH

MDESE administered \$10 million to 7 regional and statewide grantees, including:

- Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs Inc.
- Boston After School & Beyond
- Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (Massachusetts’ statewide afterschool network)
- Massachusetts Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
- Springfield Empowerment Zone
- United Way of Central MA
- United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

The seven grantees then awarded 406 subgrant awards to local out-of-school time organizations, reaching 95,554 students in the first year of the Rebound initiative (30,224 in the academic year; 65,330 in the summer). Grantees used a prescribed set of criteria in their sub-grant selection process. Some criteria included prioritizing (1) organizations that do not have other funding available, such as CBOs; (2) programs that serve economically disadvantaged populations; (3) programs that serve special populations like English learners, students with disabilities, students of color, students experiencing homelessness, and students in foster care; and finally, programs offering services like enrichment activities, mental health support, and learning acceleration, among others. As a result of these subgrant criteria, 74% (71,036) of participating students represented low-income populations, and 20% (18,734) qualified as students learning English. One grantee remarked on the success of expanding access to new populations of students in an interview with NIOST:

*“There are a lot of students who are ELL, have learning disabilities, a low socioeconomic status, BIPOC, and then a lot of refugees that we’re serving now. And so, we really stressed in our RFP that those are the types of students we want to support with this funding. So, I think we did a good job of finding programs that do serve those students.”*

– ASOST-R Grantee Organization

## PARTICIPATING YOUTH OUTCOMES

ASOST-R did not require grantees to monitor youth satisfaction. However, some ASOST-R grantees used the NIOST-developed SAYO tool in the youth version (SAYO-Y) with participating students. The SAYO-Y tool incorporates relevant questions that were included in the evaluation report on a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being high:

- Youth enjoy the program and feel engaged (3.39 in the summer; 3.59 in the academic year)
- Youth feel challenged (3.33 in the summer; 3.54 in the academic year)
- Youth feel they have a supportive adult (3.37 in the summer; 3.48 in the academic year)
- Youth feel the program has helped them (3.14 in the summer; 3.31 in the academic year)

Massachusetts did not require grantees to track subgrantee progress with academic growth, so the ASOST-R evaluation report did not include academic measures.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

NIOST did not offer recommendations for the ASOST-R evaluation in its Year 1 report.





## Conclusion

The American Rescue Plan ESSER III required states to set aside funds for expanding out-of-school time programming to reach more students while improving the quality of services. Georgia sought to achieve this goal through a partnership with their statewide afterschool network and a competitive grant competition. As described above, ten additional states used similar approaches in distributing funds, hoping to reach new and underserved populations. To explore the effectiveness of this model, this review examines Georgia's evaluation alongside the findings of the three focus states with available reports. Notable similarities and lessons learned are summarized here.

### Key Similarities and Takeaways

- Of the four states of interest in this study, **Georgia** and **Idaho** were the only two to directly partner with their out-of-school statewide (OST) networks—GSAN and ION, respectively. Both states' reports considered how OST programming benefitted from the robust supports provided by each OST network in their grant initiatives. Additionally, Massachusetts granted funds to their statewide afterschool network, which then subgranted awards. In the Year 2 BOOST report, "adamant" feedback from case study program leaders and state and national stakeholders suggested that "BOOST (or a comparable form of support) should continue to support OST programs for Georgia youth." The ICPfY report recommended that ION expand its partnership with the program team to develop a vision, theory of change, and logic model.
- **Idaho** shared **Georgia's** explicit use of three program purposes (expanding access, reducing barriers, and improving quality) to direct grantee programmatic focus. However, grantee feedback on activities related to these service areas was not included in the ICPfY report like in the BOOST report.
- In **Georgia**, the BOOST program was designed by GSAN with input from GaDOE and key state and national OST stakeholders to ensure its design aligned with best practices. The **Connecticut** State Department of Education also began its ARPA ESSER III funding distribution planning by surveying state education and out-of-school time partners to receive feedback on the best ways to prioritize out-of-school time funds.
- **Georgia** and **Connecticut** both focused on reaching special populations (i.e., students in foster care, students with disabilities, etc.), though they used different approaches. The BOOST grant included additional competitions for subsets of grantees who serve special populations, and the evaluation's Year 3 case studies will focus on these groups. In contrast, CCERC used bivariate analyses to explore youth satisfaction against specific characteristics like overall satisfaction with the camp or satisfaction with program staff. This allowed for relationships to be drawn between different youth characteristics, program experiences, and overall satisfaction.
- In **Massachusetts**, NIOST's evaluation mirrored some of the functions Metis performed in **Georgia**, like providing technical assistance to grantees and supporting the development of data collection tools. However, NIOST and MDESE utilized the SAYO tool, which was not required for ASOST-R grantees in their self-designed evaluation. At the same time, the BOOST End of Year Grantee Report, which was hosted on the United Way of Greater Atlanta's grantmaking platform, was required of all BOOST grantees.
- Both the **Georgia** and **Massachusetts** evaluations sought to balance grantee flexibility with strong evaluation practices, employing a thoughtful combination of custom and uniform outcomes and instruments. In Georgia, BOOST grantees were required to establish their outcomes, assessment tools, and findings with the support of GSAN and Metis-provided technical assistance. Metis used performance-level analyses on all grantee outcomes to determine how many outcomes were met or exceeded by each grantee. In Massachusetts, ASOST-R grantees determined their own tools to measure student well-being. However, the NIOST-developed SAYO tool was offered as an option to support grantees who were newer to measuring the prescribed grant outcomes. This allowed for a uniform evaluation of youth satisfaction for a subset of grantees while being flexible for grantees with established assessment practices.



Aided by their shared implementation approaches, Georgia, Connecticut, Idaho, and Massachusetts successfully reached more students, supported well-being, and provided academic enrichment. For example, Connecticut's summer programming enrollment nearly doubled from 2020 to 2021. Georgia also demonstrated continued enrollment growth across grant years, with an approximate increase of 10% of students from Year 1 to Year 2. Further, stakeholder perception of academic growth was strong across states. For example, 87% of ICPfY families in Idaho felt that their program helped their children to succeed academically. In comparison, 82% of Georgia's academic year grantees and 85% of summer grantees met or exceeded their academic outcomes using self-determined assessment tools. Sixty-nine percent of Georgia's academic year grantees and 77% of summer grantees met their well-being and connectedness outcomes. In comparison, in Massachusetts, 57% of academic year students and 70% of summer students showed gains in skills like communication, self-regulation, and perseverance. These positive outcomes illustrate the effectiveness of state-SAN partnerships and competitive grant competitions in distributing federal funds, suggesting their potential as models to best provide underserved populations with meaningful access to OST programming.







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## Appendix I: Overview of the Georgia Evaluation

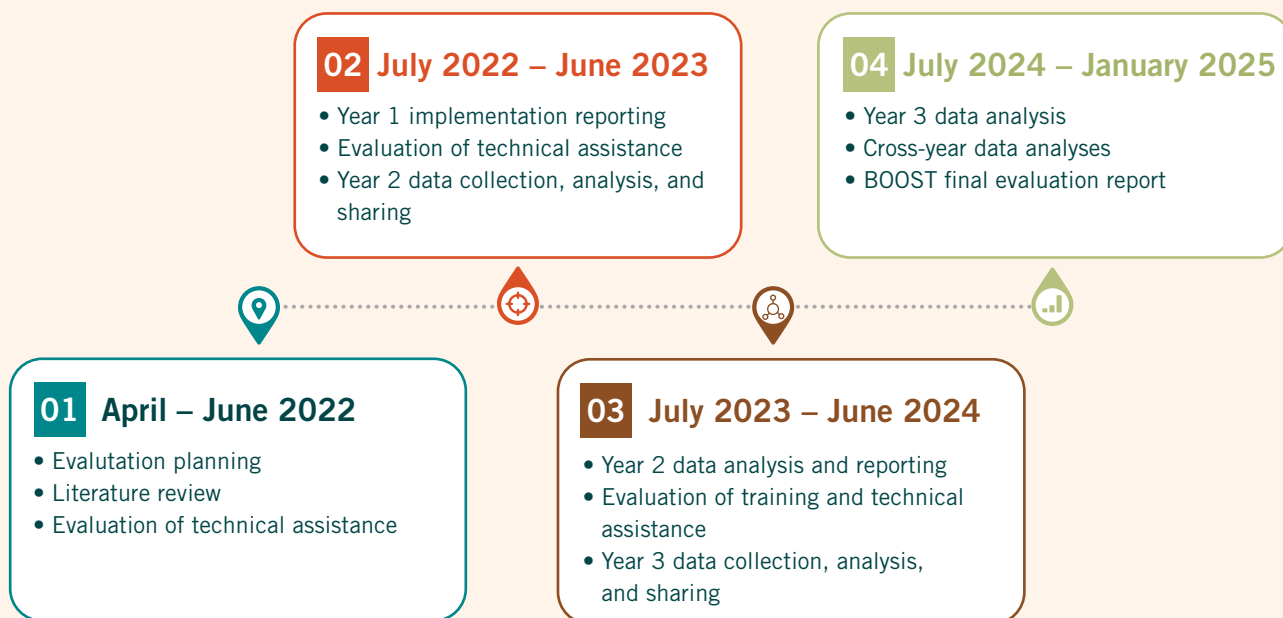
Upon receiving its ARPA ESSER state set-aside funds, GaDOE partnered with GSAN to administer the funds. GSAN leveraged its staff capacity and out-of-school-time expertise to administer a competitive grant process to distribute the \$85 million designated for summer and afterschool programming. The BOOST grants program was two competitions: one for organizations with statewide reach and one focused on smaller community-driven organizations. GSAN developed an application process in collaboration with GaDOE, consultants, national experts, and professional afterschool and policy networks to reach a mix of urban and rural communities of varying sizes and demographics. Eligible applicants included non-profit organizations, colleges/universities, and municipalities. Public schools, school districts, and other entities that received ARPA ESSER support through other avenues were ineligible, intending to reach those who still needed to benefit from these federal funds. A comprehensive communications campaign supported these efforts, as the funding opportunity was shared through press releases, presentations, social media, e-blasts, and agency newsletters. In Year 1 of the program, qualified external reviewers ultimately recommended 104 of the 209 eligible funding applications for the 2021-22 year, including four statewide grantees and 101 local organizations. In Year 2, 93 of these 101 local and all four statewide grantees were recommended for continued funding in the 2022-23 year.

Throughout the BOOST process, GaDOE's role has included funding disbursement and financial monitoring. As a partner, GSAN has been responsible for the for the following:

- Grant administration, including the Request for Proposals, scoring rubric, external reviewers, funding recommendations, and grantee annual reporting
- Quality support, training, and coaching for grantees
- Grant technical assistance and support
- Program evaluation management

Early in 2022, GSAN partnered with Metis Associates as an external evaluator for the BOOST program. Metis Associates (Metis), the BOOST evaluation partner, designed the BOOST cross-site evaluation to include three interrelated components. The Implementation Study began in the program's first year and aims to document BOOST implementation, such as grantee service delivery, youth satisfaction, challenges or obstacles, new partnerships, program success stories, and lessons learned. The evaluation's Outcomes Study began in the program's second year and assesses participating youth's learning acceleration, connectedness, and well-being outcomes. The Systems Study also started in Year 2 and focused on the quality and effectiveness of BOOST oversight, administration efforts, and sustainability.

The evaluation uses a participatory approach to engage grantees and program stakeholders throughout the process in a variety of formats, including the Evaluation Advisory Group and an Evaluation Advisory Group. Data for the evaluation comprises a combination of primary sources like interviews and grantee case study focus groups, secondary sources like document reviews and literature reviews, and end-of-year grantee reports through customized online software developed by GSAN's partnership with the United Way of Greater Atlanta. As shown below, the multi-year BOOST evaluation was to be carried out in four phases.

**FIGURE 3. Georgia BOOST Evaluation Design**

In 2022-23, the most recent grant year, 97 BOOST grantees operated 1,416 academic year sites and 639 summer program sites, spanning 112 of the state's 159 counties and serving 79,911 young people during the 2022-23 academic year and 86,924 young people in the summer of 2023. Implementation findings, participant outcomes, and systems-related results will be examined alongside the selected focus states in this literature review. The Georgia BOOST evaluation and findings are in greater detail in the [BOOST Year 2 Implementation Report](#) and [Evaluation Brief](#).



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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 @AfterschoolGA

 [Facebook.com/AfterschoolGA](https://Facebook.com/AfterschoolGA)