

# ESSA Implementation: Providing Feedback on 21st Century Community Learning Centers Request for Proposals

As the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is implemented at the state level, afterschool advocates have the opportunity to provide feedback to their state education agency (SEA) on Title IV, B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The first step will be helping to shape the 21st CCLC section of the state ESSA application that will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. Even while those applications are under development, SEAs will be revising their RFP process for 21st CCLC funding.

This tool is specifically designed to help afterschool advocates shape the 21st CCLC RFP.

Goal	Action Steps
<p><b>Be a partner:</b> Ensure the afterschool community is meaningfully consulted in the development of the new 21st CCLC RFP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Contact your state 21st CCLC director to ask how the new RFP is being designed</li> <li>■ Ask to join the design process, bringing your expertise of programs on the ground</li> </ul>
<p><b>Be an interpreter:</b> Ensure the new 21st CCLC RFP incorporates revisions based on new language in ESSA, such as changes to allowable activities and performance measures, and retains key provisions, such as eligible entities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Help to navigate the complicated language (e.g., the inclusion of “external organizations”)</li> <li>■ Highlight the new language on expanded learning programs</li> <li>■ Clarify that CBO’s are allowable lead applicants</li> </ul>
<p><b>Add your technical expertise:</b> Help your SEA understand that external organizations are technical assistance providers (like networks or intermediaries) that may help provide a grantee with professional development or technical assistance to help them reach quality standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Make the case that your SEA increase their reserve for training and technical assistance and position your network to provide these services, as appropriate</li> <li>■ Look for opportunities to help the state improve quality through professional development and technical assistance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide Insights on Grant RFPs:</b> Use your knowledge of the field and what the youth and the state need to design strong RFPs that lead to effective programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Offer feedback or suggestions on eligibility criteria, competitive priorities, quality, performance measures, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Inform and Educate:</b> Help legislators, partners, businesses, parents, and other stakeholders learn about the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consider looping in friendly state legislators to let them know how the process is moving forward and how they can help</li> </ul>

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## Become/Remain a Partner with Your State Education Agency

**Develop/Continue to build a relationship with your state's 21st CCLC director.** Find time to meet with your 21st CCLC director to find out how he or she is addressing 21st CCLC in the state ESSA application and what the process will be for revising the state RFP. Offer to be a resource to your SEA in the process.

**Make the case that afterschool advocates should be included among those consulted about the new RFP.** In preparing new RFPs, ESSA requires SEAs to conduct meaningful consultation with: parents, teachers, principals and other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, students, community-based organizations, local government representatives, and other stakeholders who have relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities.

## Help Your State Education Agency Understand and Interpret the New Law

**Clarify for your state education agency the meaning of "external organizations."**

- The new law mentions "external organizations" and "partners"—these are two distinct ideas.
- External organizations are technical assistance providers (like networks or intermediaries) that for example, may provide a grantee with professional development or technical assistance to help them reach quality standards.
- Partners are the organizations written into local grants that will have a role in providing services to students.
- This distinction is important because states under the law should create a list of pre-approved external organizations but not partners.

**Ensure the meaning of "expanded learning programs" in Title IV, Part B of ESSA is understood.**

This section of the law requires that states that choose to allow grantees to extend their school day for all students with 21st CCLC funding must: 1) add a minimum of 300 additional hours of programming each year; 2) ensure programming be 'afterschool-like' in nature and not an extension or addition of traditional classroom activities; and 3) require partners for any local education agency seeking this type of grant. Regular afterschool, before school, and summer programs are not subject to these special conditions.

**Clarify that schools and community-based organizations continue to be eligible lead applicants for 21st CCLC grants.**

Either schools or community-based organizations are legally able to apply as long as they propose to serve populations of students in which 40% or more are eligible for Free and Reduced Meal Status (FARMS) or target their services to schools identified by the state as being in need of support.

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## Be a Technical Expert

**Remind your state that the set aside for quality has increased from 3% to 5%.** Research<sup>1</sup> shows that the quality of afterschool programs is key to significant positive outcomes. Many statewide afterschool networks, as well as other state and local intermediaries, are well-positioned with the tools and training that can help programs

develop, monitor, and increase quality. Encourage your SEA to increase the resources devoted to quality improvement activities and share the tools and resources your network has (i.e., for capacity building, parent engagement, and professional development) to make the case for using the additional investments in technical assistance.

## Provide Insights into Building a Strong Grant Program

**Weigh-in on competitive priorities that your SEA may be considering.** Based on needs assessments, gaps analysis, and other research that your network has conducted in your state, consider making recommendations about competitive priorities, such as middle school and/or STEM programs.

**Help your SEA determine new performance measures to consider as part of 21st CCLC.** Under ESSA, states have the opportunity to expand beyond the currently required GPRA indicators to include performance measures that better reflect the strengths of the afterschool field, such as school engagement, school day attendance, employability skills, or other areas based on 21st CCLC state data.

<sup>1</sup> [www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm)