

Views from the Field:

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- 1. In recent years, the out-of-school-time field has seen an increased push toward outcomes-based programming. What makes professional development and continuous program improvement (in this brief, defined as: training, monitoring, coaching and data analysis) especially important in today's out-of-school-time environment?**

“Measuring and demonstrating strong outcomes has become increasingly important for after-school programs. More and more funders—public and private—require programs to report outcomes as a condition of receiving funding. Outcomes are also an important tool in advocating for after-school programs: To raise the public’s awareness and to convince policymakers to invest in afterschool, we need to be able to point to the critical impacts programs have on the lives of children. Knowing that quality programs are the key to successful outcomes means that, now more than ever, programs must invest in the professional development and training, rigorous evaluation, and continuous monitoring and program improvement that will ensure that they achieve strong outcomes for the children they serve.”

- 2. What are the most important things for policymakers and funders to understand about continuous program improvement in afterschool? Feel free to include some examples of best practices in professional development (provided for whom? implemented by whom?).**

“Policymakers and funders need to understand that continuous program improvement is essential for quality programs. In order to maximize their investment in after-school programs—in other words, to ensure that children and youth get the most benefit from these programs—they have to provide resources for professional development, training, monitoring and continuous program improvement. This includes resources directly to after-school providers for things like ongoing staff training, education benefits (i.e., reimbursing staff for college courses) and program evaluation, as well as to higher education, credentialing organizations and regional clearinghouses that are often a critical resource for smaller programs.”

- 3. In your experience, are the current investments in professional development sufficient to meet the desired programmatic outcomes? What policies could better support the increased need for professional development (local, statewide, national)?**

“Today there are 14.3 million children who go home alone each day when the school bell ends. 6.5 million children are in after-school programs, but the parents of another 15 million children say their children would participate in an after-school program—if one were available. Programs today are struggling mightily with too few resources to meet demand and making impossible choices between improving their services and serving more children. We need to invest adequately in afterschool so that programs and communities don’t have to choose between quality and quantity, and so we can ensure quality after-school programming for all children.”