

Afterschool & Summer Programs Keep Kids Safe



OregonASK Policy Paper 2023

[Summer learning and afterschool programs](#) are integral to the safety, growth, and health of K–12 students and there is high support across the political [spectrum for public funding for quality summer programs](#). In 2022, Oregon’s summer learning grant initiative helped community-based organizations (CBOs) [provide quality opportunities and achieve outcome](#) goals statewide while serving nearly 240,000 children and families through 6,133 locally determined and delivered programs. Still, barriers including availability, cost, and lack of transportation meant that more than 50% of K–12 youth were not reached.

Expanding community-based summer learning and afterschool for all children—especially those who live rurally, are Black or Latino, or live with disabilities—requires a dedicated source of annual funding and a grant process that begins in late fall. Secure funding and a better timeline for grant applications, program planning, and community outreach will align CBOs with the needs of the families they serve and positively impact their ability to hire and train well-qualified staff and volunteers, an issue that disproportionately affects small organizations and those serving priority populations.

Formalizing systems and processes for the summer learning and afterschool grant initiative will create parity for CBOs and support equitable outcomes for all Oregon students. Characteristics of a high-quality grant program include timely RFPs, articulated standards and accountabilities, application scoring guidelines, technical assistance throughout the grant process, and quantitative and qualitative reporting requirements. These changes, along with the following recommendations, will improve the capacity of CBOs to ensure the safety and protection of the children they serve through high-quality programs.

Summer learning addresses “the opportunity gap in K–12 education by reducing socioeconomic, geographic, and racial inequities in youth success. Grant priorities include building mutually strengthening partnerships between community organizations and education entities to close the gap for youths who are underserved by our social systems.”

[Oregon Community Summer Grant Impact Report](#)



Standardize criminal background check practices and eliminate obstacles including their cost and timely processing.

Youth-serving organizations regularly conduct pre-employment or volunteer-onboarding background checks, but obstacles such as affordability and timeliness concern CBOs of all sizes and disparately impact smaller organizations. Standardizing background check practices for CBOs and addressing processing issues and costs will contribute to child safety.



Promote the safety of children, staff, and volunteers with mandatory reporter policies and training.

[Oregon](#) employees of public or private organizations who provide child-related services or activities are considered mandatory reporters ([ORS 419B.005](#) and [ODE policies](#) regarding contractors to Educational Service Districts). To promote [child safety](#) and [manage risk](#), require grant applicants to certify they have written policies and provide accessible staff and volunteer [training](#) before program implementation.



Safeguard children, staff, and volunteers by requiring first aid and CPR training and written emergency preparedness plans.

An unintentional consequence of the current timeline for summer learning grants is that CBOs may not adequately address first aid and emergency preparation. Requiring basic first aid and CPR training for program staff and volunteers is a common-sense safeguard. Child-centered emergency preparedness resources from [OregonASK](#) and [national organizations](#) can be tiered to serve summer learning programs.



Benchmark liability insurance limits for youth-serving grant programs and provide technical assistance to grant applicants to meet requirements.

Using grant RFPs and technical assistance to educate CBOs, clarify and standardize requirements, and access insurance brokers will streamline the application process. To create more equitable and affordable options, consider developing a special insurance pool or additional funding to address the high cost of specialized liability insurance. Formalize the opportunity to cover insurance costs by grant funds.

