

Element One: Safe and Inclusive Environments

Quality programs provide safe and structured environments in both direct care and virtual learning, that are secure, nurturing and inclusive for all to learn and explore. Programs:

- Promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of youth.
- Provide an inclusive environment where all youth, family and members of the community feel welcome.
- Implement policies and procedures that protect the health and safety of youth.
- Foster supportive staff-youth relationships, positive peer relationships and connections with families.
- Ensure that policies and procedures recognize the diversity of the community and are responsive to the needs of staff, youth and families.

Element Two: Diverse Learning Opportunities

Quality programs provide a balanced variety of activities that support the growth and development of program participants in both direct care and virtual learning. Programs:

- Offer age-appropriate activities at a relaxed, flexible pace.
- Align learning environment with educational standards and integrate engaging hands-on learning techniques.
- Offer opportunities to learn and build new skills focused on social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.
- Gear instructional approaches toward encouraging youth to push beyond initial level of competence.
- Assess student interest and foster opportunities for youth voice and choice.

Element Three: Effective Administrative Strategies

Quality programs have solid administrative systems that invest in human capital and utilize sound fiscal management and business practices that enable them to meet the evolving needs of afterschool. Programs:

- Share program's vision or mission with community and maintain an internal communication plan.
- Align budgets with vision and or mission statements and ensure they are appropriate for organizational size and monitored routinely.
- Measure and analyze information systematically for staff assessment, intentional program planning
- Provide professional development opportunities to ensure staff are properly qualified and equipped with the academic and experiential knowledge needed for both direct care and virtual learning.
- Monitor evolving trends in order to make strategic decisions and develop sustainability strategies.

Element Four: Collaborative Relationships

Quality programs create and maintain linkages in the community to broaden availability of services including direct care and virtual learning as well as build relationships that can lead to program sustainability. Programs:

- Encourage diverse community and volunteer involvement based on student need and in accordance with best practices.
- Sustain multiple partnerships that garner resources to support participants and staff.
- Monitor relationships and interactions among participants, staff, families, volunteers, service providers and community partners.
- Invite partners to engage in planning processes and other efforts to support quality services and program sustainability.
- Encourage parental involvement and provide opportunities to serve and engage parents.

Element Five: Program Sustainability

Quality programs market the success of their innovative programming and raise awareness of positive contributions to the community and ability to meet the evolving needs of the community. Programs:

- Institute marketing/communication plans that highlight the benefits of services provided to youth and the community.
- Collaborate with leadership, staff, participants and other internal and external audiences to further unified messages.
- Arrange regular meetings between leadership and existing or potential stakeholders to foster positive relationships and work toward sustainability.
- Share messages based on vision and mission statements and promote activities throughout the community
- Document evidence of program impact on youth outcomes, supported by evidence based research and best practices.