

STATE FUNDING SPOTLIGHT



Georgia Invests in Afterschool



\$12.5 Million for Afterschool and Summer

Expanding state investment in afterschool and summer programs in Georgia.

The Challenge

For over 15 years, Georgia lacked dedicated state funding for afterschool and summer programs, relying instead on limited federal support that resulted in uneven access across communities. The COVID-19 pandemic initially excluded afterschool from federal relief funding, deepening challenges for programs serving working families, rural areas, and students with academic or mental health needs. In 2021, the Georgia Department of Education selected the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to lead the \$85 million Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) initiative, funded by the American Rescue Plan, to expand access, reduce barriers, and improve program quality. GSAN prioritized accessibility, partnered with a third-party evaluator to measure outcomes like learning acceleration and well-being, and required grantees to track data while providing strong technical assistance to build capacity across the state.

The Opportunity

While BOOST successfully expanded afterschool and summer programs across Georgia, its funding was never intended to be permanent. Recognizing the looming 2024 funding cliff, GSAN launched a strategic advocacy campaign in fall 2023 to push for sustained state investment. They met with legislators, often alongside trusted partners like the Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCAs, and produced targeted materials, including short video segments, four-page summaries, and district-level maps showing BOOST's reach. As lawmakers began hearing consistent messages from constituents and providers, the impact of BOOST became undeniable: it improved academics, supported parents, and addressed student mental health needs. GSAN and its partners kept the pressure on throughout the session and beyond.

Strategies

- ▶ Targeted lawmakers with a clear, coordinated campaign showcasing why ongoing state funding was needed after federal relief ended
- ▶ Worked closely with trusted partners and local voices to share real stories and data about how the BOOST grant program helped kids and families
- ▶ Leveraged strong relationships to shape key policy discussions and secure a formal recommendation for state afterschool and summer funding

Lessons Learned

- ▶ Act early and define the narrative
- ▶ Clarify messaging and make it local
- ▶ Stay visible and consistent

Timeline

- ▶ **2021:** GSAN launches BOOST with the Georgia Department of Education, using \$85 million in American Rescue Plan funds to support afterschool and summer programs statewide
- ▶ **2023:** GSAN launches coordinated advocacy strategy ahead of BOOST's 2024 expiration
- ▶ **2024:** GSAN presents to the legislative Study Committee on Access to Affordable Child Care, and the final report includes a recommendation for OST funding
- ▶ **2025:** Georgia legislature allocates \$12.5 million in recurring state afterschool and summer funding



In summer 2024, GSAN seized another key opportunity through the Legislative Study Committee on Access to Affordable Child Care. By leveraging longstanding relationships, they helped shape the agenda for a session focused on afterschool, bringing in a rural provider to testify and connecting afterschool to broader child care and workforce goals. Their efforts paid off when the committee's final report formally recommended sustained state investment in afterschool and summer programs.

The Result

In 2025, Georgia's General Assembly made history by including \$12.5 million in recurring funding for afterschool and summer programs in the FY26 budget, the state's first dedicated funding stream for afterschool and summer learning. Built on the proven pillars of BOOST—expanding access, reducing barriers, and improving quality—this new investment ensures continued support for programs launched or expanded with federal relief funds. Thanks to GSAN's leadership and the advocacy of program leaders, parents, and students, a temporary initiative became a lasting public commitment—marking a permanent shift in how Georgia prioritizes afterschool programming.

What's Next

With Georgia's first-ever recurring state investment in afterschool and summer programs secured, GSAN and its partners are focused on building on this momentum to strengthen, scale, and sustain the field statewide.