



Out-of-School Time Cost Study

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

up to \$1,500,000

LETTERS OF INTENT DUE: September 2, 2022

PROPOSALS DUE: October 18, 2022

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Many studies have documented the potential of the out-of-school time (OST) sector to support young people's learning and development (see NASEM, 2002, 2021). At their best, OST programs (summer and afterschool) are organized as supportive social environments, centered on rich relationships between adults and youth, and among youth, that support young people's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical well-being (American Institutes for Research, 2019; Durlak et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2014). Research has found that supportive afterschool programs may be especially important for young people who do not thrive in school (Liu, Simpkins & Vandell, 2021; Vandell et al., 2020a, 2020b).

With significant federal funding starting in the 1990s, the number of young people attending afterschool programs has grown substantially. Over the last several decades, the OST field has developed a network of intermediary organizations, regular regional and national conferences, journals, and a range of evidence-based tools and frameworks that can inform powerful OST programs for young people. Ongoing research suggests that since early 2020, when many school systems were physically closed due to the CV-19 health crisis, the afterschool sector played a pivotal role in serving its communities. Afterschool and summer programs have been reported to have mobilized food and other supports to families and children, assisted with technology supports required for remote school learning, and provided a safe place of refuge for many children and young people whose lives were upturned by the pandemic and the subsequent racial reckoning following the murder of George Floyd.

Despite these significant accomplishments, including the growing evidence of the benefits to young people of participating in such programs, we know that many programs were unable to meet community demand before the pandemic, and that such challenges have been exacerbated over the past couple of years through nationwide staffing shortages (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). Working in the OST field has been described as "precarious" due to low wages and benefits, and the hourly or seasonal nature of the job (Baldrige, 2014). Many programs operate on extremely tight budgets, and may be forced in some cases to stretch their resources and staffing to do the best that they can for their communities. Thus, although "what quality looks like" may be well documented in the literature, resource restrictions, and other factors, may limit program abilities to adequately fund high quality programs. The OST workforce, in particular, may suffer from the economics of OST funding. This study is meant to both document the extent to which such a gap between our understanding of what constitutes a high quality OST program and how such programs are funded and budgeted in reality, and also to document the trade-offs and strategies high quality programs take to best serve their communities. It is also meant to produce practical tools (e.g., see [Ed Counsel, 2022](#)) that OST leaders can use to seek and secure adequate funding needed to provide the best programs possible for the families and youth that they serve.

It is in this context that The Wallace Foundation, in partnership with the Afterschool Alliance and the National After School Association, seeks to support a study that will:

1. Synthesize the literature on the economics of provision of high quality OST programs, taking into account if and how workforce quality (pay, benefits, security, professional development) are or are not a part of the analysis, with a specific focus on identifying and interpreting the evidence against extant estimates of costs or economic benefits related to the importance of providing OST (burden of not providing programming) and the to the potential effects of OST (economic benefit shadow prices).
2. Review the literature on OST to identify markers of high quality, including a high quality job/workforce; describe the resources related to providing high quality OST; and provide general estimates of the costs associated with these resources. Importantly, this analysis is grounded in two goals: 1) to identify and describe the resources or ingredients related to high quality OST to inform policy and practice nationally; and 2) to provide ranges of the economic values of the resources required based on their characteristics, with information about how characteristics and prices vary in important ways related to quality.
3. Conduct a cost study to describe the current landscape of OST and the related ingredients and costs through empirical data collection. For example, document:
 - a. The resources (“ingredients”) in various models of OST, including information about the ingredient qualities and quantities to inform policy and practice.
 - b. A breakdown of the underlying cost structures (e.g., staffing, materials, technology, food, transportation, etc.) of high quality programs in ways that can help OST providers articulate and seek resources to provide such programs
 - c. The ways in which high quality OST programs are funded, through multiple funding sources, including if particular funding streams cover particular kinds of OST costs.
4. Produce tools that can help OST organizational and field leaders advocate, resource, and plan for high quality programs.

This study is meant to update two reports that have provided a great deal of guidance for the field:

- In 2005, The Wallace Foundation commissioned a study intended to provide the field with hard evidence about the costs of quality afterschool and summer programs, filling a critical information void and making it easier for many providers to plan. Based on a detailed examination of 111 high-quality afterschool and summer programs in six cities, [*The Cost of Quality of Out-of-School Time Programs*](#) found widespread cost differences, stemming from factors including program hours, youth-staff ratios, age groups served and types of facilities—each of which represents significant choices made by program leaders as they design and budget their programs. In addition, the report found that afterschool and summer programs typically relied on a range of funding sources, including in-kind contributions. Moreover, per-child costs in larger programs were not necessarily less expensive than those in smaller programs. The report has had more than 50,000 downloads, since its publication in 2009.

An offshoot of the report is an online tool, the [*OST Cost Calculator*](#), that allows OST providers and other stakeholders to enter local data to generate an estimate of offering or scaling up or scaling down their programs. Since its publication, the online tool has been used roughly 5,000 times a year (down from almost 8,000 uses in its first year), and if updated and made more interactive could well be used more often.

- On the revenue side, in 2009, the Afterschool Alliance published [*A Roadmap to Afterschool For All*](#), which analyzed how afterschool programs braided funding to support their efforts. Working with 50 randomly selected school districts, researchers identified a random sample of programs within each district. The number for each district varied depending on the total number of afterschool programs in the district. A detailed questionnaire was sent to more than 500 programs to obtain basic descriptive information about programming offered and children served as well as funding information from all sources (federal, state, local, philanthropy, private, tuition, in-kind). Data were collected in the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008 and were based on the 2006-2007 school year. This study found that funding of all types was insufficient, with nearly one-third of programs reporting that their expenses exceeded their revenues.

The data and findings in these reports are intended to help OST leaders as well as policymakers and funders understand the range of costs for a wide variety of programs, customize their own programs to suit local conditions, more accurately estimate the funding needed to expand high-quality programs and clarify their thinking about how to coordinate public and private funding. The report may also have assisted programs in efforts to close revenue and expense gaps through increased evidence-based advocacy efforts.

Much has changed in the out-of-school time setting since these reports were published, including the introduction of many new technologies, changes in staffing structures and compensation, and other factors affecting the underlying cost structures of providing high quality OST programs for young people. The foundation and its partners seek to commission a team to conduct a study that can replace and update the above two studies. We also seek to develop user-friendly tools that allow OST stakeholders to use and benefit from the study’s insights, including but not limited to updating, and making more interactive, the current OST Cost Calculator.

Also, importantly, the pandemic has heightened awareness of the importance and precarity of youth workers in the OST sector. The study should attend in particular to the ways in which the job quality—including pay, benefits, professional development, and job security—for youth worker relates to high quality OST programs and outcomes.

2.0 ABOUT THE WALLACE FOUNDATION

Based in New York City, The Wallace Foundation is the philanthropic legacy of DeWitt and Lila Wallace, founders of the Reader’s Digest. Wallace is one of the nation’s 60 largest independent, charitable foundations. Our mission is to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people and in the arts for everyone. We are a national foundation, supporting work across the United States without a focus on any community or region.

The Wallace Foundation takes an unusual approach for a private foundation. Most of our work is carried out through large-scale, multi-year initiatives designed to accomplish dual goals. Our first goal is to help our grantees (such as school districts) create value for those they serve by supporting and strengthening their work at the local level. Our second goal is to add value by designing our initiatives to address important unanswered questions for the field, working with researchers to capture and document what is learned by our grantees as they innovate, and then sharing these findings with practitioners, policymakers and influencers in order to catalyze improvements more broadly. In this way, we aim to use the development of knowledge and evidence as a lever to help institutions beyond those we fund directly to improve their work.

Our three focus areas are K-12 education leadership, youth development, and the arts. Our initiatives are designed and managed by interdisciplinary teams consisting of program, research and communications staff members at the Foundation.

2.1 Research and Equity

Wallace is committed to supporting research that is designed and conducted with and for equity. To inform strategies for change, research proposals should use strength-based approaches and be designed to shed light on structures, systems, processes, or practices that produce or reproduce inequities. Research itself should be equity-centered—including partnerships and processes that center the voices and perspectives of communities that would stand to use or benefit from the research. Research teams should include principal investigators and other senior intellectual contributors with relevant lived experiences. Theoretical frameworks should account for systemic forms of exclusion or marginalization; research methods, from data collection to analysis, should clearly articulate how the use of such frameworks will lead to new insights and understanding at both a practical and conceptual level, and how they can support the development of strength-based change strategies.

3.0 SCOPE OF WORK

Because of the current expansion of funding for out-of-school time programs, this project is on a fast-track and we ask that proposals provide an aggressive but realistic timetable for the project process and deliverables. These factors will be among those we consider in reviewing proposals.

We refer applicants to [the current cost study report](#) and [Roadmap](#) and ask that they submit proposals describing research plans for how a new study would update, integrate, and replace these older studies, identifying limitations and strengths of prior reports, justifying changes, enhancements, and different kinds of approaches.

Please describe your plan in ways that address the three phases described above: A literature phase, a data collection and analysis phase, and a tool development phase. Additionally, we ask that proposals:

- Consider and address how the study will account for possible differences in revenue and cost structures relevant to programs serving young people from historically marginalized communities.
- Describe how “high quality” will be indexed, taking into account research on equitable OST programs.
- Address whether or not the study will, unlike the 2009 cost study (see page iv on limitations), account for costs of particular program components (e.g., teaching artists or laptops), particularly those that research suggests may be important for young people from historically marginalized communities.
- Detail how the [Online Cost Calculator](#), or other tool, could be made more useful, and presumably more interactive. For example, users have requested that cost estimates be broken down by types of costs (staff, transportation, materials, etc.)
- Identify the different potential users of the results of this study, and the different ways that the results would be targeted and made usable for those specific audiences, such as thorough the production of infographics, visuals, PPTs, research briefs and other approaches.
- Discuss and budget for incentives for program participation in the study.

4.1 Research Deliverables

We anticipate that proposed studies will produce, at a minimum:

1. A technical report describing the results of the study.
2. A paper submitted to a peer review journal describing study results.
3. An online interactive cost calculator (or similar tool) updating and improving the current version.

4. Infographic and annotated Powerpoint slide deck, or equivalent, describing the project to non-technical readers.
5. Other deliverables that translate and make accessible key findings and insights from the technical report for differentiated audiences OST stakeholders (program leaders, site leaders, program funders, et al.).

5.0 COLLABORATION, COMMUNICATION, DISSEMINATION

5.1 Publications and Products

Wallace undertakes extensive communications efforts to share lessons from its research investments, both on its own through its website and with professional associations and issue organizations with which it partners.

Academic Papers. Wallace expects, and asks that proposals include related budgeted time, for teams to develop academic papers resulting from their research efforts. If you believe that a paper is warranted by the scope described in the RFP, please include such costs in your proposal. The foundation does not expect to have any involvement in that part of your work, though it requires that you maintain the same confidentiality and privacy of individuals and organizations involved in the research as that required for the public-facing reports, as described below. Further, Wallace expects researchers will share drafts with those they are studying, as appropriate, and conduct member checking. When research involves studying Wallace grantees, such as in this case, we ask that Wallace be allowed to review a draft of the paper so that we can attend to and draw your attention to (a) any possible risks to Wallace grantees and (b) any factual errors related to Wallace investments. Please include, as a budget item, costs for making your academic publications open access.

Public-Facing Reports. Generating and disseminating knowledge that can benefit the field more broadly is, as described in section 2.0, a crucial aspect of the foundation's philanthropic strategy. Wallace therefore expects that the contents of public-facing reports (and tools) will not only be rigorously researched but also written in an accessible tone and manner appropriate to our target audience of practitioners, policymakers and others interested in U.S. public education. Please budget for time to workshop your report (or equivalent products for non-technical readers) with a group of practitioners (intended end users) to hear from them what resonates most clearly for their work. Budget one day (likely to be two virtual half days) for such workshops.

Because they are central to our communication efforts, we ask for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on public reports and other products, representing our knowledge of and experience with their intended audiences.

Wallace seeks to work across all communities in the country, and to that end conducts an editorial review that considers four key factors: Clarity, including language accessible to non-specialists; organization of argument; support for and limitations to claims; and non-partisanship. In that spirit, we will provide editorial suggestions for your consideration that are intended to help you amplify your research findings and contributions to the broadest possible audiences. The 12-week editorial review process encompasses two iterations, in which Wallace's in-house research, program, and communications teams review drafts and provide comments for the researchers' consideration. We ask authors to build time for that review process into their schedule and to budget accordingly.

Our editorial review seeks to support rather than replace your own editorial review and quality control. As a result, we assume that drafts of publications will be fact-checked, copy-edited and proofread prior to submission to Wallace. Crucially, we ask that you budget editorial and graphics time to prepare your drafts for non-academic audiences. We expect authors to factor in the related costs when they make their

publication plans. We invite any questions from applicants about our editorial review.

5.2 Meetings and Travel

All travel costs should be included in your budget.

You should budget time for a monthly 60 minute zoom meeting with Wallace and partners, for project updates.

Please budget time for a public webinar presenting your findings to the field. The webinar will address Afterschool Alliance and National AfterSchool Association members and stakeholders.

Proposers should also budget time each year for developing and submitting the following updates for Wallace Foundation internal purposes:

- A monthly short email update listing (in bullet form) research activities of the prior month, plans for the following month, and any challenges or changes that have arisen. This will set the agenda for the monthly meeting described above, if needed.
- Two or three short (<5 pages) analytical memos, at appropriate phases of the research, describing emerging findings.

6.0 SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL

In this section we discuss qualifications, proposal requirements, and review criteria.

6.1 Qualifications

We seek research teams with the following qualifications:

- Experience conducting cost studies of public educational efforts, particularly with an equity lens or considerations
- Research and analytical skills appropriate to the project and proposed research designs
- Demonstrated experience working with the out-of-school time sector
- History of peer review publications in relevant content areas
- Excellent writing, publication, and communication skills

Wallace seeks to support research teams that bring a variety of perspectives to the work, including methodological expertise, firsthand knowledge and understanding of the communities and contexts being studied, and active engagement with the scholarly and practical discussions that are relevant to this study. We strongly encourage, and will give preference to, the formation of teams whose senior intellectual leadership (PI and co-PIs) includes researchers with lived experiences relevant to the purpose of the study being proposed. We further encourage proposers to develop teams that include early career scholars and scholars from communities underrepresented in the academy. We invite proposers to explicitly address these issues in their description of their team's qualifications.

6.2 Letter of Intent

Please submit a letter of intent email (no attachments) no later than September 2, 2022. In your email please include:

1. Name, title, and institution of PI and partners identified to date
2. Any proposal ideas or thoughts that you would like early feedback on
3. Any questions you may have about the RFP or the proposal submission process

After you submit your LOI, we will respond with initial feedback and an invitation to Wallace office hours in case you would like to discuss any questions or ideas. Regarding item 3, Wallace will compile a list of all RFP-related questions it receives and issue, before September 9, 2022, an FAQ to all who have submitted an LOI. Regarding item 2, Wallace will respond to you individually, and not publicly, about any ideas you have for the study, posing questions or considerations that you might address or clarify in your proposal.

You must submit an LOI to be eligible to submit a proposal.

6.3 Proposal Requirements and Deadlines

We ask that you submit the following in a Word document totaling no more than 15 pages for Part A. Documents should be single spaced with 11 pt font. References are not included in the 15-page limit. Proposals should address the following points:

Part A Proposal Narrative

1. Rationale

- a. What is the need in the field for the questions your study is addressing and how will your study contribute to the knowledge base?

2. Frameworks

- a. What theoretical and analytical frameworks will guide your work? Why?
- b. How will your team conceptualize and integrate equity into your work?

3. Research Plan

- a. Provide a detailed research plan including research questions, data collection strategies, and analytical framework and methods. This section should be the bulk of your proposal. In addition to the research design:
 - i. Call out the strengths and limitations of the current reports and tools and how your study will address them.
 - ii. Describe project deliverables.
 - iii. If relevant, describe contingency plans should social distancing due to pandemic conditions still be in place during your study.
- b. How will you build trust with those you will research and how will you protect their confidentiality and preserve the anonymity of individuals and organizations?
- c. What kinds of data, findings, information, or incentives will you provide those you are studying?

4. Qualifications

- a. What experiences and qualifications prepare you and your team to engage in this project? Describe who will lead or participate in the proposed activities and their roles in the project, highlighting how diverse expertise and experience will be leveraged.

Part B Proposal Attachments

Please also attach, as separate documents, not counted toward the 15-page limit:

1. A detailed budget in Excel format. Wallace allows a 15% indirect rate on all direct costs.
2. A budget justification explaining each budget line in the Excel document.
3. A project timeline with key activities and deliverables
4. A list of the FTEs of all senior staff, including from subcontracts, broken down by year, that clarifies who is doing what on the project. Please note that it is important to the Foundation that the proposed principal investigator has dedicated sufficient time to the project.
5. A description of your organizational capacity to support your proposed activities.
6. CVs of senior staff or key consultants included in your budget.
7. Sample reports or papers your team has produced that demonstrate the types of writing and language you feel would be relevant to the audience for this study.

In fairness to others, we will not review any materials not listed above. Complete proposals are due to Wallace by the end of your day on October 18, 2022. Please send to research@wallacefoundation.org.

6.4 Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated along the following lines:

- Demonstrated understanding of and insights on the potential benefits and uses of this study, and the products it generates, for the field of OST leaders and stakeholders.
- Quality of the research design, its appropriateness for the project, its sensitivity to burden on research subjects, and how it can contribute knowledge to the field.
- Qualifications of the team, including composition of the research leadership team (PIs/coPIs).
- Depth of conceptualization and integration of equity into proposed plans.
- Attention to issues of feasibility, practicality, and value of the proposed research deliverables.
- Budget and timeframe.

Questions about this RFP can be sent to research@wallacefoundation.org.

References

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