



Starting a High-Quality Program

Quality Indicators to be Addressed Prior to Program Start-Up

The following questions will help you determine which quality indicators you have already addressed and those that require additional attention to ensure that the start-up of your program is successful.

Environment and Climate

- Does your program provide a stimulating, welcoming and supportive environment for young people?
- Is the program space clean and safe?
- Do you have safety plans and procedures in place? Have you shared these plans and procedures with staff and families?
- Is there adequate security for the program?
- Are there effective arrival and dismissal procedures and safe travel home plans in place for all participants?
Do you provide healthy and nutritious snacks and/or supper?
- Do you maintain complete records on all participants?

Administration and Organization

- Are your participants aware of what is expected in regards to their attendance and participations?
- Do you maintain all required program documents such as: health certificate, security clearance, insurance etc. in a safe place?
- Have you developed an employee handbook that clarifies internal policies and procedures? Do you refer to it?
- Do you have complete and current enrollment/registration documents for all participants?
- Do you have a clear salary structure for staff?
- Do you have in place an effective communication system between the school and your organization?
- Do you have a family engagement plan? Do you review and update it as needed?
- Do you keep track of where the participants are during program hours?

Relationships

- Are staff members respectful toward each other?
- Are staff members able to communicate with one another and to model positive adult relationships?
- Are staff members able to interact with families in a comfortable, respectful and welcoming manner?
- Do staff members treat participants with respect and listen to what they have to say?

Staffing and Professional Development

- Is the program director committed to his/her professional development?
- Does the director recruit, hire and develop staff that reflects the diversity and culture of the community?
- Is staff competent in core academic areas?
- Does your program have the required staff-to-participant ratios per state regulations?
- Does your organization provide positive working conditions for the staff?
- Are staff supervised, supported and provided feedback on a regular basis?



Programming and Activities

- Do the activities reflect the program mission?
- Are the activities developmentally appropriate for your participants?
- Do the participants learn new skills through the activities?
- Are the activities project-based and experiential?
- Do the activities promote creativity and self-expression?
- Do you offer high-quality academic support, like tutoring or homework help?
- Do the activities take into account the culture and language of your participants?
- Do you offer enrichment opportunities via the arts, technology, recreation and health?
- Do you have a schedule in place? Are staff, participants and families given copies?

Linkages between Day and Afterschool

- Are you able to secure commitment of resources (classroom space, storage, bulletin boards, computer labs, office space) from school principal?

Youth Participation and Engagement

- Does your program offer multiple opportunities for engaging youth?

Program Sustainability and Growth

- Do you have a written statement of mission and goals?
- Does your staff understand and embrace your mission and goals?

Measuring Outcomes and Evaluation

- Has your program developed a plan for program evaluation that includes gathering both qualitative and quantitative data?

The above are based on the critical indicators for program start-up from the [NYSAN Quality Self-Assessment \(QSA\) Tool](#). The list of these indicators with self-assessment information as well as the complete [QSA Tool](#), which includes links to research, tools, and resources that are relevant to each element of program quality, will also be helpful for starting and running a high-quality afterschool program.