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?
Programing 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.