



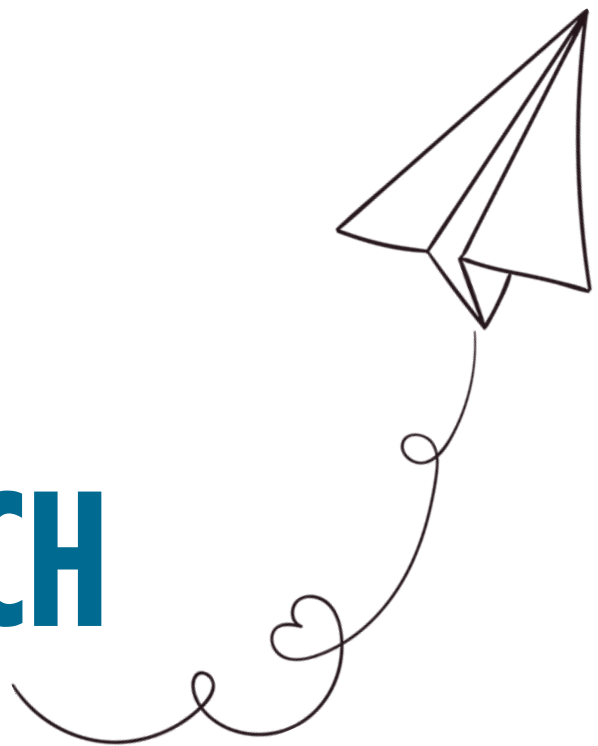
READY



SET



LAUNCH



Afterschool Program Start-up Guide



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The Vermont Community Foundation, Vermont's Department of Children and Families, Child Development Division, and Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)

Overview

This guidebook is intended to assist you in planning and starting an afterschool program. It is important to note that this is not intended to be a complete planning document; rather as an overview for the start up phase of program implementation. Whether you are a parent, school board member, teacher, community member, or afterschool professional, this is aimed to help anyone and everyone who wants to take leadership in creating a program.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Why Afterschool Matters	4
Types of Afterschool Programs	5-6
Where to Start	7
Mission and Vision	8-9
Components of a Successful Program	10-15
Safe and Supportive Environment	10
Curriculum Development	11
Sample Daily Schedule and MS/HS Youth	12
Family Engagement	13
Staffing and Professional Development	13
Quality Standards, Evaluation and Assessment	14
Fiscal Management and Additional Resources	15
College and Career Readiness	16
Funding for Programs in VT	17
Final Thoughts	18

About this guide

"How and where do I start?" Think of this guidebook as a response to that question. We offer practical advice to help you create a new program in your community. While we're not recommending specific activities or documents, you will find information, ideas, and resources to help you move forward with your own process.

What is afterschool?

Afterschool programs operate in the out-of-school time hours or what we call the "third space" (which is anytime when youth aren't at home or attending school).

For this guide, afterschool means any type of program that is continuous, structured, and accessible. It is held after school gets out, before school starts, during school vacation weeks, inservice days, and during the summer break.

Programs serve youth in grades K-12 and can be in school buildings or other locations in the community. They can encompass a broad range of focus areas including academic support, mentoring, youth development, arts, community-based learning, and sports and recreation.

Who are we?

Vermont Afterschool is a statewide nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that the children and youth in every Vermont community are able to benefit from the power of afterschool, summer learning, and third space programs during the out-of-school time hours. We work with afterschool programs, advocates, and partners throughout the state to strengthen the quality of programming, to expand the number and type of programs offered, and to improve access so all children and youth have opportunities to succeed. To learn more about our work, visit:

www.vermontafterschool.org



WHY AFTERSCHOOL MATTERS

Afterschool, summer learning, and third space programs re-imagine how, where, and when our young people learn. Youth spend approximately 20% of their waking hours in school. How they invest the other 80% of their time in the third space is a game changer.

KEEP KIDS SAFE

1 in 4 kids in Vermont are alone and unsupervised from 3 to 6 p.m. These are the hours when juvenile crime and victimization peak. Afterschool programs can build protective factors such as connectedness, self-control, self-confidence, adult mentors, and quality peer relationships which can prevent youth from engaging in risky behaviors.



INSPIRE LEARNING

Consistent time spent in afterschool activities during the elementary years is linked to narrowing the academic achievement gap. In a longitudinal study, income differences in math achievement were eliminated for students who had consistent afterschool activities across K-5 years. Studies also show that those in third space programs have better grades, attendance, behaviors, and college/career attainment.



SUMMER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Summer learning programs, often run by afterschool providers, help Vermont students stay on track academically, remain active and healthy, access healthy food, build interests and skills over the summer, and start the next school year ready to learn. These programs are also a lifeline for working families. Studies have shown that up to two-thirds of the academic achievement gap can be attributed to differences in summer learning opportunities.



SUPPORT FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Parents benefit from peace of mind when their children are engaged in quality programs. In Vermont, 77% of children and youth ages 6-17 have all available parents in the workforce. For most families, there is a gap of 15-25 hours per week when parents are still at work and children and youth are out of school and need supervision. This need for programs is even greater during school vacation weeks and over the summer.



BUILD PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Afterschool and third space activities provide a safe and supportive environment and help students form and grow positive bonds with staff and their peers. According to the 2017 Vermont Youth Behavior Risk Survey, 60% of high school students feel like they matter to the people in their community. For young people who participate in afterschool activities, this measure of belonging goes up to 71%.



TYPES OF PROGRAMS

One important thing to consider as you start out is what type of program you'd like to offer. What you offer will depend on the age of youth served, type of activity, and the number of youth. Reference the information below on types of programs to consider as you move forward.

LICENSED AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

- An afterschool childcare program is considered any place operating as a business or service on a regular continuous basis with or without compensation. This childcare service is provided by an entity or person other than the child's own parent, guardian, or relative.
- The Vermont Child Development Division (CDD) monitors and oversees all licensed afterschool childcare programs (ages 5-15) in the state. They also provide support for those seeking to become licensed.
- For more information about afterschool licensing regulations in Vermont, please visit the CDD and childcare provider websites:
dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers
dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-regs/childcare



21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMS

- The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center (21C) Initiative is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to afterschool and summer learning programs. Funds are administered through the Vermont Agency of Education through a competitive grant process.
- In order to apply, interested applicants must serve communities that meet income eligibility guidelines (e.g., in 2019 the guideline specified at least a 40% free and reduced lunch rate) or are eligible for Title 1 schoolwide status.
- Please note that while 21C programs are exempt from the CDD licensure requirement, they can still apply in order to participate in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.
- For more information please visit:
education.vermont.gov/student-support/federal-programs/after-school-programs



TYPES OF PROGRAMS

PROGRAMS FOR TEENS AND OLDER YOUTH

- Teen centers, youth centers, or other programs serving older youth outside the school day are also considered part of the afterschool and third space field.
- The Vermont Youth Center Alliance is a great resource based out of Vermont Afterschool that is here to support your work with teens and older youth.
- Email us (info@vermontafterschool.org) if you'd like to join the Vermont Youth Center Alliance.



SCHOOL-BASED EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Schools often run athletic teams, homework support programs, and other special-interest clubs that meet afterschool and/or during the summer. School-based extracurricular activities do not need to be licensed unless a school wants to create a comprehensive afterschool program for children under the age of 15 and is not currently funded by a 21C grant (see page 5).



RECREATION AND SINGLE FOCUS PROGRAMS

- Parks and recreation departments may run sports leagues, single skill-based activities, and other short-term special programs for children and youth. These programs don't need school-age care licensure.
- Any individual, business, or organization that offers a single skill-based activity (e.g. pottery, dance, drama, martial arts, etc.) for children or youth in the out-of-school time hours would fall into this category and would be exempt from licensure.



WHERE TO START

Planning, starting, and managing an afterschool program is a comprehensive undertaking, but serves as an important opportunity to support your community's children and youth. The need for quality afterschool programming is growing and offering youth quality choices about how they spend their time in the third space ensures that they are engaged and supported in safe and caring environments.

Important First Steps

1

Conduct a needs assessment. A needs assessment tells you if there is a need for this service in your community, what resources are available to meet these needs, and gaps that exist. Surveys through the school, focus groups, and individual interviews are all effective ways to conduct a needs assessment.

2

Moving into the planning phase will require determining if you have the facilities, support, money, and staff to make a successful program possible. This is also a great time to form a stakeholder advisory group in order to involve school personnel, community partners, youth, and families in the design and development of the program.

3

Find a space that meets the needs identified in the assessment for your program and obtain contracts for the use of the space. Keep in mind that if your goal is to be a licensed program, you will be required to meet specific standards for facilities.



Please note: If your goal is to become a licensed afterschool program, review the [afterschool regulations](#) on the CDD website. Your first step will be to speak to a licensor to get started (800-649-2642, Option "3").



Don't underestimate the power of support from families and community partners. Time, commitment, and support from these key players will be necessary for success.

MISSION & VISION

It may be tempting to jump right into decisions such as who to hire, budgeting, and curriculum development, but spending time on a vision and mission is extremely worthwhile. This is your foundation for everything; and thinking about the big picture will be key to long-term success.

Developing a Vision

Philosophy

The philosophy should reflect the values, beliefs, and interests of the program planners and families they serve.

Mission Statement

A mission statement should be short and concise. It defines the purpose of your program and will directly reflect and support the philosophy. As you develop your mission, consider the developmental needs of school-age children and youth.

Program Goals

The program goals determine what the curriculum and approach will be. When establishing program goals, it's helpful to keep in mind the needs of youth, resource availability, and the families looking for quality programs.



Think of your vision as the foundation of your work. A powerful vision motivates, incites passion, and cultivates measurable impact. It will bring together people of diverse interests and backgrounds around a common purpose. A clear vision will help you articulate the program's purpose to administrators, teachers, program staff, parents, and the community. Equally important is that the students themselves understand the role they play in making that vision a reality.

MISSION & VISION

S.M.A.R.T. goals can provide a standard for performance to be measured and reviewed over time. Take a moment to run each of your goals through this process.

Using S.M.A.R.T. Goals



Specific, significant, and strategic. This step should define and answer: Who, what, when, where, and why.



Measurable, meaningful, and motivational. How are you going to do this work? This step should establish concrete criteria and milestones for measuring progress.



Attainable, achievable, and action-oriented. This step should establish how you are going to accomplish the goal, what barriers you may need to overcome, and the tools and skills needed.



Realistic, relevant, and results-oriented. Make sure your goals are relevant and realistic. Your goals should represent your mission.



Tangible and time-based. This step ensures that there is a clear timeframe for your goal.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals Template

Goal	Is this goal SMART?
S pecific What is the goal trying to accomplish?	
M easurable How will this goal be measured?	
A ttainable Is the goal achievable, given the available time and resources?	Yes/no
R elevant Does the goal have meaning for those whose decisions it will influence?	Yes/no
T imely What is the end date for the goal?	
What resources are required to pursue this goal?	
What important dates are associated with this goal?	
What milestones will be measured along the way?	
What activities will need to be completed to attain this goal?	
Notes	

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Being intentional and flexible when designing a program and creating a safe and supportive environment is fundamental to success.

Safe and Supportive Environment

➤ Location is often dictated by the operational arrangement of a program. For example, a school-based program will be located at a school, a government-based program may be located in a municipal building or recreation center, and a for-profit program may have its own building or be based out of a home.

➤ The look, feel, and safety of the environment will depend on the age of the youth you are serving. Transform the program space into a comfortable setting which fits the goals of your program. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways including:

- Ensuring staff conduct themselves as role models for the youth they serve
- Creating a comfortable lounge area in one part of the room
- Providing a conference table for meetings
- Ensuring adequate open space in the activity areas
- Decorating the walls and posting quotes of inspiration
- Most importantly, highlighting the activities and experiences of the youth through their own words

➤ Offering food is an important part of providing a quality program. Afterschool and summer meals help to fight childhood hunger and make sure that all children and youth have access to healthy options during the out-of-school time. Additionally, offering snacks and meals increases participation in afterschool programs and improves effectiveness of enrichment activities. See Hunger Free Vermont for information on nutrition assistance programs: www.hungerfreevt.org/out-of-school-time-meals-1

➤ Questions to consider:

- Are the hours and location convenient for families and students?
- Is there a fee to use the space?
- Who will set up and take down the program if it's a shared space?
- Can you serve food and offer all the activities in the space that will provide a quality program?



COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

The afterschool and out-of-school time space is a wonderful time to get your students excited about learning while pursuing their own interests. It is a chance to be flexible, hands-on, and creative.

Curriculum Development

- The goal of quality afterschool programming is to complement and support but not replicate the school day. Take advantage of the more flexible nature of the afterschool time and space to emphasize flexibility and to experiment with different formats for exploration and learning (e.g., community service activities, field trips, different age groupings and sizes, bringing in outside experts, artists, and community members, etc.).
- The afterschool program is an opportune setting to get your students excited about learning while pursuing their own interests. Curriculum in an afterschool program should emerge from the children's interests and include areas such as science, technology, engineering & math (STEM), art, coding, team building games, field trips, nature, etc.
- With afterschool programs, youth must have the opportunity to participate in the design, delivery, and evaluation of the program. Giving youth a voice to effectively create an environment that meets their personal needs builds critical skills for their future.
- Consider the cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical development stages of children in your curriculum development. All children develop in different areas and different rates, which can make creating curriculum challenging. The key is to create activities that can adapt to the different development levels of the children.
- Although structured activities are very important, do not underestimate the importance of daily free time. Always make sure that children and youth have choices.
- Mizzen by Mott is a free app built with and for afterschool professionals to provide high-quality, engaging learning content and tools to the field. Mizzen includes curriculum and learning content for all ages from top afterschool curriculum experts, as well as easy-to-use attendance, messaging, communications, and scheduling tools.
www.mizzen.org



COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Successful programs prioritize youth voice and choice by identifying what is of interest to the youth, asking for input, and running multiple programs at a given time to allow youth to choose. Programs can increase engagement levels within activities by including children in planning and reflection routines such as how to use their time, how to complete a task, considering changes and next steps.

Sample Daily Afterschool Schedule K-5

- Check in students with activities during the transition:
 - Age appropriate board games
 - Reading
 - Building and manipulatives
 - Journal writing
 - Homework
- Snack
- Outdoor time
 - Free play
 - Four square, soccer, sidewalk chalk, nature activities
- Club or enrichment time (offer 2-3 choices of activities for students to choose from):
 - Simple science activities
 - Performing and visual arts
 - Simple cooking activities
 - Engineering fun
 - Board game tournaments
 - Ongoing projects such as simple rockets, sewing, cartooning, etc.
- Clean up, free time, and transition to home

Programming for MS/HS Youth

- Successful afterschool programs for middle and high school youth must be interest-based and youth-driven, with the programs often organized in a “club” format that meets once or twice a week over a series of weeks or months. The club format should allow for young people to explore new interests and hobbies, as well as develop greater skill and mastery in areas of interest to them.
- Many middle school and high school afterschool programs in Vermont allow for youth to take on leadership roles. Some programs support youth as afterschool instructors by having them lead clubs and share their skills and knowledge with their peers.
- Especially in some rural areas, working as staff in an afterschool or summer program may be the only opportunity that some teens have to build job skills and gain work-based learning experience. Programs planning to hire youth as staff in their afterschool program should check out our guidebook on Youth Workforce Development.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Family Engagement

- Connecting with families is an important aspect of operating a successful afterschool program. Program staff will see parents, guardians, caregivers, and families each day for pick up and this is an opportunity to build relationships of trust. If you do not have daily contact with your students' families, there are still ways to facilitate involvement including:
- Producing bi-monthly or monthly newsletters targeted to families
 - Program orientations at the beginning of the year
 - End of the year celebrations
 - Family nights
 - Phone calls
 - Scheduling individual meetings offsite
 - Offer a survey to families to get their feedback on how the program has been their child

Staffing and Professional Development

- Staff will be one of the most critical pieces of the starting and implementing of your program. Hiring staff who have a genuine interest in working with youth, understanding the philosophy of youth development, and advocating for youth interests and needs are basic attributes of good afterschool programming staff. The following are some potential tasks you'll undertake to hire and support staff:
- Recruit and hire staff: Hire staff that has prior experience, child-related training, and a commitment to school age children.
 - Create job descriptions: Job descriptions will help define the roles and responsibilities of staff members. They also make the role clear to staff when hired and hold them accountable for the job they are expected to do.
 - Be sure to do a thorough orientation with new staff. Topics you need to include in your new employee orientation include specific job responsibilities and expectations, as well as a general overview of the program. Include the program missions, goals, philosophy, and history in the new staff training as well as review licensing regulations (if applicable) and review your staff handbook policies.
 - Staff should also have the opportunity to engage in ongoing training throughout the year based upon their individual goals and needs of the program. Timely and frequent supervision, staff meetings, and formal and informal feedback/evaluation is recommended.
 - Encourage staff looking to further their education to consider the [Afterschool and Youth Certificate](#), offered by the Community College of Vermont (CCV).
 - Utilize our [Universal Afterschool Staff Onboarding Checklist template](#) to ensure your onboarding process covers all critical components.



See the "Professionals & Program Resources" page on [our website](#) for more information on trainings and career pathways for afterschool staff of all levels.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

State and National Quality Standards

- Quality programs should be aware of all quality standards in their state and nationally. This includes:
- Vermont's Afterschool Core Competency Knowledge Areas
 - Afterschool Career Pathways for Professionals
 - Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) which is a quality ratings system for Vermont's licensed afterschool and early childhood programs
 - National AfterSchool Association's Health and Physical Activity Standards for Out-of-School Time

Evaluation and Assessment

- Program evaluation and assessment processes help programs improve over time and provide a snapshot of program effectiveness. Program evaluation is usually focused on outcome or impact measures and looks at progress towards stated goals over time. Program assessment is focused more on how you are operating and focuses on program practices and staff interactions with the children and youth in the program.
- The most important consideration is to create a process that will result in information that can be used to improve the program. These should be living documents that are created annually, referred to frequently, and adapted over time as the program changes and grows.
- We recommend that programs consider using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) process developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. This particular assessment and improvement process is used in many states to support youth programs. It focuses on the point of practice and includes opportunities for staff to learn together, observe one another, discuss important components of quality, and develop program improvement plans.
- There are several versions of the assessment tool available: School Age (K-6 grade), Youth (6-12 grade), and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). For more information on the YPQA, visit the Weikart Center site: forumfyi.org/work/the-weikart-center/.
- We are happy to work with you to create a continuous quality improvement process that will really work for your program. Contact us at info@vermontafterschool.org or 802-448-3464.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Fiscal Management

- Developing a long-term financial plan is essential for a successful and sustainable afterschool program. Effectively budgeting and tracking expenses and revenues coming into the organization is essential.
- Before starting up your program, you will need to consider how much funding it will take to both start up and operate daily. Use your needs assessment to approximate how much the parents can afford to pay for afterschool to develop a budget.
- Components of the budget may include:
 - Start up costs including space, legal fees, licensing fees, equipment, and supplies.
 - Operating expenses including staff salaries, benefits, professional development, supplies, utilities, insurance, maintenance, and food.
- Use the Wallace Foundation's cost calculator to determine reasonable costs for operating a program: www.wallacefoundation.org/cost-of-quality/pages/default.aspx

Additional Start Up Resources

- The National AfterSchool Association (NAA) start-up guide: naaweb.org/so-you-want-to-start-an-afterschool-program
- The Afterschool Alliance has many resources, tools, and tips for starting an afterschool program in your community. Visit their start up page to learn more: www.afterschoolalliance.org/startingaProgram.cfm
- Beyond the Bell: A Toolkit for Creating Effective After-School Programs. We highly recommend this publication that provides tools, replicable documents, and information in key areas of developing quality afterschool programs. Order online: www.beyondthebell.org/products/
- A Resource Guide for Planning and Operating Afterschool Programs 3rd Edition: www.sedl.org/pubs/fam95/afterschool.pdf

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

College prep and encouraging career awareness are avenues afterschool programs can explore with students of all ages. Focusing on positive youth development in afterschool supports young people in developing the skills and confidence to create long-term goals and explore new interests. Afterschool programs can encourage positive youth development by providing key learning opportunities in literacy and test preparation, life skill development, college admissions, and workforce opportunities.

Afterschool and College Prep



Afterschool programs can support students in college prep by:

- Providing space and support for young people to develop study and time management habits
- Hiring staff that can support test prep and tutoring and offer it as part of your program
- Creating opportunities to explore, connect to, and visit colleges
- Building connections to local internships and volunteer opportunities
- Providing programming that supports young people developing important life skills

Skill development that can be supported by afterschool programming

- Communication
- Leadership
- Critical Thinking
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Technology Literacy
- Time Management
- Financial Literacy

Afterschool and Career Awareness

There are many ways to include all age groups in career pathways. Elementary students can take part in career-themed clubs such as coding and welding. Middle school students can practice mock-interviews and participate in camps such as engineering. High schoolers can earn internship credits and/or apply for jobs with local businesses. Afterschool programs should aim to provide innovative ways to introduce elementary, middle, and high school students to new interests and a wide range of careers. Consider providing activities and experiences such as:

- Competency based learning
- Hands-on STEM
- Mentorships and job shadowing
- Work site-visits and apprenticeships
- Informational interviewing
- Career fairs

Additional Resources to Explore:

- PASE: pasesetter.org/resources
- Afterschool Alliance: afterschoolalliance.org
- Agency of Education - Work Based Learning: <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-work-based-learning-within-the-career-development-progression.pdf>

FUNDING FOR VERMONT PROGRAMS

- The Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC grant program has been funding high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs since 1998 (see p. 5). For more information: education.vermont.gov/student-support/federal-programs/after-school-programs
- The Vermont Children’s Trust Foundation awards grants to Vermont 501(c)3 nonprofits, municipalities, or schools that provide primary prevention programs for children and their families. Grants are not given to individuals or for-profit organizations. For more information visit: www.vtchildrenstrust.org
- The Building Bright Spaces for Bright Futures Fund, created in 2002 by the Vermont Legislature, provides grants for child care and youth programs to expand the supply and improve the quality of care available to Vermont families. For more information please visit: www.investinvermont.org/borrowers/early-care-and-learning/building-bright-spaces-for-bright-futures.html
- The Vermont Community Foundation awards Spark community grants and place-based grants to tax-exempt organizations in Vermont. For more information please visit: www.vermontcf.org/NonprofitsGrants/AvailableGrants.aspx
- The Children’s Literacy Foundation offers at-risk youth and summer reading grants to out-of-school time programs in the form of book donations and literacy events for youth. Please visit: clifonline.org
- Various funding opportunities for afterschool science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs can be found here: For more information, please visit: www.afterschoolalliance.org/stemfunding.cfm
- Licensed programs are eligible for Vermont’s Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) payments through the Child Development Division. For more information, please visit: dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/ccfap
- Some programs have been able to secure funds through their town and school budgets, other private and public funding sources, as well as participant fees. It’s often a number of sources that come together to fund programs but we recognize it’s not usually enough. Which is why we advocate for state and federal policy that promotes access, affordability, and sustainability of afterschool, summer learning, and out-of-school time programs.



Stay in touch! Learn of afterschool news, grant opportunities, and advocacy action alerts by signing up for our e-newsletter:
www.vermontafterschool.org/get-involved/subscribe/

FINAL THOUGHTS

Starting a new afterschool is an exciting time as you begin to think about how to manage a high-quality program where young people will learn and have fun. There is a lot of planning that goes into starting an afterschool program: from getting the doors open and ready to go to assessing and evaluating annually. This guidebook is here to give you a solid start and help you build a thriving afterschool program that will meet the needs of children, youth, and families. We wish you the best in your endeavor to start up an afterschool program in your area and are available to answer any questions and provide support along the way. Providing quality afterschool care of youth is important to all of us--kids, families, and communities. We are here for you! Please contact us at Vermont Afterschool for more information.



www.vermontafterschool.org
150 Kennedy Drive, South Burlington, VT 05403
802-448-3464
info@vermontafterschool.org