

A VIEW FROM THE FIELD:

Helping Community Organizations Meet Capacity Challenges

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Lucy N. Friedman is president of The After-School Corporation, a New York City-based not-for-profit organization that seeks to enhance the quality, availability and sustainability of out-of-school time programs in New York and the nation.

The After-School Corporation (TASC) is a nonprofit after-school intermediary focusing on three areas of work: we support after-school programs and innovate new models, advocate to influence public policy and work toward building the field. In New York City, we support community-based organizations, or CBOs, in operating daily, comprehensive after-school programs inside public schools, providing funds, monitoring, professional development, curriculum and materials.

Over nine years, TASC has supported more than 150 CBOs operating in more than 320 schools. From this experience we've acquired an insider's perspective on the strengths of CBO program providers, as well as the capacity challenges that can prevent programs from achieving the best possible outcomes for kids.

Among TASC's CBO partners in New York City, some operate a single program in one school. Others have operated as many as 20 TASC-supported programs, as well as programs that follow less-comprehensive after-school models. Some of our CBO partners are small entrepreneurial operations that started as storefronts or in church basements. Others are long-established citywide nonprofits that began as sports, arts or recreational programs, as well as Y's, settlement houses and community development agencies that expanded from housing into social services.

We are allies and partners with CBOs in policy and advocacy work. For example, TASC is collaborating with CBOs on ways to expand the school learning day while keeping the less formal, hands-on approach to after-school learning in the daily mix. CBO leaders and staff members influence every aspect of our work, from pursuing research to innovating program models. In return, we provide CBOs with support to help programs achieve a level of quality and sustainability they would have difficulty accomplishing independently.

Our interests, however, are not always perfectly in synch. For example, we are committed to bringing programs to scale, which means serving sizable groups of 150 to

300 kids per school, at a cost per child of around \$1,600. Some of our CBO partners are not as concerned with scaling up in order to make systemic change, however, and might prefer to serve fewer children in programs at a higher cost per child.

Holding CBOs Accountable

In many ways we're the CBOs' most steadfast supporters, but we also try to hold them accountable for high enrollment, strong attendance and incorporating TASC's core program elements (including low student-to-staff ratios and diverse activities). Quality feeds sustainability: educators and parents fight to continue and replicate effective programs.

We push back on program operators who suffer from "laminated plan syndrome," repeating activities each year without incorporating fresh, field-tested content in areas of need and promise, such as science inquiry. Our program officers each support 24 programs and conduct on-site evaluations at least twice each year. We make every effort to bring programs along a learning curve, urging site coordinators to use the Quality Self-Assessment Tool developed by the New York State Afterschool Network.

Each CBO has strengths. These typically include strong commitment to youth development, deep community networks, and diverse staff who look like the kids and model success. Especially in immigrant communities, many parents face language barriers with day school teachers, or come from cultures where parents aren't allowed in schools. CBO after-school educators offer them a non-threatening way into their schools.

CBOs also share common challenges. These include:

- Many CBOs have difficulty developing and retaining strong frontline staff, site coordinators and middle managers. As the after-school field matures and expands, we all have a harder time maintaining the pioneer spirit that once attracted and retained strong staff.

- CBOs struggle to build meaningful working partnerships with their host principals and schools and to communicate to educators the benefits of after-school.
- Many lack capacity to deliver structured and rigorous content across a broad range of disciplines. Often the content deficit is not the result of a belief system, but content takes a back seat to life-and-death functions such as meeting payroll, licensing requirements and grant application deadlines.
- Many encounter problems in fiscal management and governance in an era when nonprofits are expected to follow data management and accounting standards prompted by Sarbanes-Oxley. Some CBOs that engage kids in thrilling activities struggle to produce timely enrollment reports or audits.

CBOs recognize these challenges and seek opportunities to strengthen capacity. When TASC received a grant to operate a CBO capacity-building initiative in 2000, we anticipated smaller CBOs would be the most eager recipients. We found that mid-sized and larger CBOs wanted to be included. Ultimately 66 of our 87 CBO partners at the time participated in capacity-building training.

Perhaps surprisingly, my TASC colleagues and I have found that neither the size of a CBO nor its history reliably predict its capacity to administer strong programs. Of course, many large and long-established CBOs are field leaders for excellent reasons: they set high standards and establish a culture of continuous improvement. But others struggle with administrative weaknesses and gaps between intention and practice, while smaller, less well-funded organizations operate fully-enrolled, enriching programs.

Strong CBOs that run high-quality programs have executive and middle managers who quickly acknowledge problems and work with all available resources to improve. They typically have after-school at the core of their mission. They employ supervisors and site coordinators who are trained to be both managers and educational leaders. In addition, these CBOs are sufficiently staffed so that all programs, even if they are geographically distant from the main office, receive constant attention from supervisors.

One problem occurs when CBOs rapidly expand the number of after-school programs they operate – say from five to ten in a year – without sufficiently expanding administrative or support staff. I often visit program sites, and when I know more about a site’s struggles than the supervisor or CBO director, that worries me.

TASC’s experience, coupled with research findings and discussions with colleagues in other cities, leads me to recommend that foundations work with networks and intermediaries to support the following:

- Pursue a broad-based, multi-pronged strategy to strengthen the skills and professionalism of the after-school workforce, developing training prototypes and college opportunities for staff and both mandates and incentives for CBOs to access more training
- Educate the educators – leaders of schools and school systems – about the value of after-school programs operated by CBOs, how they benefit kids, and how to build strong working partnerships.
- Develop and disseminate program content and curricula, and hold CBOs accountable for training staff to deliver strong content
- Change expectations among private funders and advocate with government agencies to allow CBOs and intermediaries to use a greater portion of their funds to support administrative staff, training and supervision.

Part II: Organizational Challenges that Inhibit Providers from Delivering High Quality After-School Programs

1) CBOs face persistent problems in hiring and developing strong staff at all levels.

TASC’s research team is engaged in an ongoing examination of staffing and other organizational practices that distinguish high quality after-school programs. Interestingly, we did not find significant differences between high- and lower-quality programs with

respect to frontline staff's compensation rates or their years of experience working for organizations.

Through this observational and tracking research, which was funded by the Cornerstone Foundation, data showed us that frontline staff in the highest-quality programs had higher levels of education, were more likely to be current students enrolled in college or graduate school, and were more likely to have developed activity lesson plans. They had relevant prior experience in education, child care, arts and social services. They also received more hours of training, and more training specifically on after-school management and content.

Many CBOs have persistent difficulties recruiting, hiring and retaining staff with strong qualifications or preparation. For frontline staff, most of whom work 15 hours a week, salaries are low for attracting college-educated workers. Many are current college students, teaching artists or holders of more than one part-time job whose schedules don't always mesh with after-school, or change in mid-year. They need more paid hours beyond the 15 in the classroom for training and time to plan lessons and consult with supervisors. And their job is particularly tough if they work in school-based after-school programs rather than CBO centers, answering to the sometimes competing demands of their CBO bosses and principals.

Location is also a factor in recruitment and retention. While venerable programs in lower and central Manhattan may have many qualified job applicants, we know that's not the case in rural upstate communities, in small towns and suburbs in New Jersey or in parts of New York's boroughs.

For program leaders and other middle managers, some CBOs offer little room for career advancement, few or no performance incentives or potential salary increases, and little staff development beyond what is provided by funders or the intermediary agency. Some have no human resources staff to assist in recruiting. The cultures of many CBOs do not favor hiring from the outside, instead promoting from the bottom up. That is

helpful for encouraging talent to see a career path in after-school. And indeed, many of the best site coordinators have gone on to become effective youth or after-school supervisors within CBOs, even principals. But successful site coordinators don't always have the skills to be strong middle managers with responsibilities such as budgeting and holding staff meetings.

CBOs also need the financial capacity to hire enough supervisory personnel to observe and aid staff at the point of service. I'm distressed when I hear from a site coordinator that she rarely has time to meet individually with staff except to address a disciplinary issue.

Early this year, I visited an elementary program supervised by a willing but inexperienced site coordinator. I saw junior staff members standing on the sidelines, adding little except a warm body to meet the required student-to-staff ratio. I saw a group leader penalize young children for inappropriate behavior by making them sit in frozen silence at desks, sacrificing their outdoor sports time. This is the antithesis of the nurturing, stress-reducing, mind-expanding experience we want for kids.

Strengthening the skills of the after-school workforce, and creating opportunities for after-school educators to pursue relevant higher education and administrative training, is a job for the field, not one that many CBOs are equipped or willing to address independently.

Many CBOs are getting support from several levels of government and have sufficient funding, or access to opportunities to promote high quality professional development. But they're not taking full advantage. They lack sufficient incentives or mandates to build cultures of staff development, similar to the federal government mandates that require programs funded by 21st Century Community Learning Center Funds to evaluate.

The frontline staff retention rate for TASC programs is about 70 percent, which means the average program will see one-third of its staff turn over each year. Given that, many CBOs rationalize devoting few resources to training or college access for staff. Some TASC-supported programs rarely send representatives to training conferences we customize for staff at every level. Almost one-fourth of the programs we supported this year left on the table a \$2,500 budget for staff training sessions of their choice, delivered at their sites. CBOs that could secure for their AmeriCorps employees a \$1,000 college tuition grant at no cost to the CBO frequently fail to do the small amount of paperwork required.

But the after-school field is expanding so rapidly, the notion is no longer accurate that these are dead-end jobs for a revolving cast of inexperienced educators. We believe many part-time group leaders or full-time site leaders will -- or could -- stay in youth work, education, nonprofit or public service careers. Providing them with benefits such as college opportunities would boost their qualifications and career and salary prospects, and immediately pay off in their interactions with kids. We need entry-level staff to stay with the field and move up to become managers and leaders, particularly young men of color. Their development will pay off for years to come.

2) CBOs need help educating our partners, including school superintendents, principals and executive officers of multipurpose agencies, about what can be expected of after-school programs, and how they can benefit kids.

CBOs face numerous challenges in working with school system leaders and principals. The first is getting through the door to meet with them. Having the backing of an intermediary who comes bearing funds is an advantage, but not always sufficient to get a hearing. For many principals, forging partnerships with CBOs is a low priority that falls outside their core duties, unrewarded by the system. Principals may also feel they don't have the staff capacity to manage such partnerships.

More problematic, many enlightened school leaders who might be persuaded to work with CBOs don't have a clear understanding of their work or value. They may resist letting CBOs into their schools because they may view youth development as "soft." They're worried by having staff in school buildings they neither hire nor supervise. They commonly lack confidence that CBOs will align their programs with the school's goals. They face immediate pressures to raise test scores and help kids meet academic benchmarks. The field must make a persuasive case for youth development and its short-term and long-term benefits.

I'm thinking of a principal with whom I met recently who was a benign landlord for the program in his school. He thought it was fine as a convenience for parents and a safety measure for kids, but he had no investment in it. He was running his own after-school remedial program in the same school, staffed by teachers.

Even when principals participate in a CBO's selection and sign a memorandum of understanding (which we require), too often there is a lack of mission clarity or outright conflict among the principal, the site coordinator and the CBO executive director.

This is exacerbated when principals and CBOs don't regularly communicate. It can lead to a situation like one we encountered this year. A high quality program has operated successfully for many years in a grade school, which recently experienced a change in principals. The new principal requested there be a nurse on staff, which the CBO did not have the capacity to provide. The principal declared he no longer wanted the CBO in the school. In this situation, a veteran CBO supervisor was able to handle the crisis, but this is not always the case.

Many states and municipalities which have supported after-school programs in schools have neither required nor encouraged CBOs to relate their programming to what happens during the school day, or to fill gaps in school-day learning. This is a prescription for continuing tensions between CBOs and educational leaders, and lost opportunities for kids.

3) Even with support and resources from an intermediary such as TASC or those in other cities, CBOs often lack the capacity to deliver rigorous, varied content.

Many after-school programs were founded primarily to keep kids safe, to achieve equity and to offer kids healthy recreational opportunities. For program providers, the easiest default is to open up the gym and let everyone play. However the field has progressed toward more ambitious programming. We want kids to experience sports, arts, science, service learning, literacy projects and other varied activities, but most CBO leaders and frontline staff members are not experts in these topics. Many are either youth development specialists or historically focused on one main component, such as sports or arts. To offer rich and varied programs, many must break out of their comfort zones.

Research shows that effective programs which maintain high attendance offer structured activities that are sequenced toward goals, that offer hands-on learning opportunities, that are age appropriate, and that offer kids voice and choice (especially important for older kids).

But preparing staff to do this well requires a commitment to training around the specific curricula a program chooses, followed by classroom observation and feedback. It's the rare CBO which employs a manager dedicated to reviewing and disseminating content and assuring staff can deliver it. And until recently, there hasn't been much of a reward system for CBOs or frontline staff to do an expert job with content.

We saw the staff of several CBOs struggle with this last year while rolling out "Building Healthy Communities," a service-learning project backed by The Corporation for National and Community Service's Learn and Serve America program.

In Year One of this three-year program, at sites in New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia, many group leaders had difficulty helping kids take the lead in identifying and "mapping" health needs in their neighborhoods, then developing and executing

service projects of the kids' choice. Many staff members would have been more comfortable instructing kids on community health needs, and having the adults take the lead on conceiving service projects.

In the program's second year, we see many program leaders effectively helping kids become the agents of change. We attribute that to more extensive training and greater opportunities for the frontline staff to receive observational feedback and to network and share what works.

Too often, I've visited programs where it's obvious that group leaders were handed "the box" of materials and the guidebook, and there the support ended. It's up to those who promote quality to see that site coordinators and frontline staff get technical assistance on curriculum that is convenient, interactive, tied to observation and feedback and subsidized by intermediaries or other networks.

4) CBOs face challenges in fiscal management and governance in an era when nonprofits are expected to follow accounting and data management standards prompted by Sarbanes-Oxley.

Expectations for nonprofit fiscal management and governance have changed from what they were 10 years ago. We know it's not a popular idea with funders, because everyone wants to support agencies with lean back office staff and expenses, but we believe overhead rates must be raised. We plead mea culpa as funders ourselves. We started out a decade ago giving CBOs a 10 percent overhead. But that is probably insufficient for organizations managing blended funds and reporting requirements from three levels of government and private funders, atop new management rules.

To offer a few examples that draw on staff time, private funders are appropriately requiring increased accountability through a greater volume of reporting and more detailed reporting from organizations they support. The Internal Revenue Service is increasing the amount of information nonprofits must report on the 990 forms. Whereas

in the past, a small nonprofit could have one board committee that handled all aspects of finance, now agencies must establish separate finance and audit committee. Staffing and preparing for another set of four board meetings a year is a burden for a small or medium-sized agency.

Many of our CBO grantees have encountered a range of problems meeting TASC's financial and reporting requirements (which are often tied to the receipt of public funds). We have encountered CBOs that struggle to track and report attendance, even though they face reduced funding if they miss attendance benchmarks; to create and maintain a working budget; to perform program audits; perform cost analyses to determine overhead rate and unit-cost of service, and acquire insurance coverage and payroll support. Some small CBOs -- or larger CBOs in expansion mode -- become over-extended when trying to fit new after-school programs into their existing internal management systems.

How is program quality affected?

Even CBOs that run strong programs often hire dozens of new employees to staff new and expanded programs at the start of the year without increasing their management capacity, in order to keep overhead costs low. When CBOs can't or don't fund staff members to properly handle management and reporting requirements, they can damage their credibility with their boards, school leaders and funders, endangering their sustainability.

Executives who should be concentrating on service at the program level are spending too much time on fiscal, data and other management functions that could be better handled by chief financial officers (an expensive position for a small agency) and administrative staff. When there is no one else available to write reports for donors, program leaders can be diverted from time they might otherwise spend on planning, leading or monitoring program activities.

Part III: Addressing Capacity Challenges

Based on research, observation and conversations with colleagues throughout the country, it seems to me the after-school field is moving toward a consensus on the elements of quality programs. We expect programs to enhance kids' growth and development, support their academic progress and expose them to forms and methods of learning not available during the school day. And they should do this in ways that can be measured, compared and managed with consistent data. But it's unrealistic to expect providers, operating independently or even in citywide networks, to be able to achieve consistent program quality without the active involvement of private funders, policymakers and public institutions.

Since so many cities and individual CBOs are confronting similar quality problems, it makes sense to consider systemic responses. Foundations can play a critical role in supporting innovative approaches and demonstration projects which can in turn leverage changes in public policy and greater investment in after-school. We saw how the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation influenced the growth of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, how the Open Society Institute's investment in TASC leveraged the growth of the field in New York and beyond, and how the Wallace investment in New York City's Out-of-School-Time initiative led to a large, stable citywide system.

As after-school systems enter their second decade, we recommend that foundations consider four areas of investment which we believe could have a ripple effect on the field, strengthening the quality of community organizations and their staff and resulting in better outcomes for kids.

- 1) ***Pursue a broad-based, multi-pronged strategy to develop and train staff at all levels and support higher education opportunities for after-school educators***

TASC proposes that at least three percent of funds targeted to after-school programming be invested in the professional development of staff. This investment

would support more training opportunities for all kinds of staff at CBOs and government agencies. It would also support the expansion of undergraduate higher education opportunities to help frontline staff develop basic knowledge, and graduate coursework to help more senior staff strengthen their youth development and management skills. Whether they use their college credentials to stay in after-school or become teachers or accountants, the result will be to build career vistas and attract and retain qualified staff.

We're already seeing this work through The Center for After-School Excellence. TASC launched the Center in 2006, with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies, to provide higher education opportunities to after-school educators, beginning in New York City. Out-of-school-time educators receive scholarships and support to attend college courses at five City University of New York campuses, on such topics as child and adolescent brain development, behavior management, and after-school curriculum. Those who complete two semesters of coursework earn professional certificates and hiring preference among many New York CBOs.

The Center's first class of after-school educators will receive their professional certificates this spring. Coming from after-school programs all across New York, these frontline workers have coalesced into a network. They share tips on job openings and strategies on managing jobs, family life and college-level academics. They have that electrical connection of pioneers who not only are building better futures for themselves, but also a profession. And they're practicing what they preach to the kids in their programs: go to college.

Beyond the university, we suggest private money can best be spent leveraging public money to support intermediaries that can provide training more efficiently than public agencies.

Here are a few examples of the kinds of staff development that should be more common. Frontline staff could be videotaped to improve their point-of-service performance. Experienced supervisors and site coordinators should be matched to

newcomers in coaching or mentoring projects. Site coordinators, who receive more training than any other group of after-school educators, should learn to turnkey that training. Site supervisors, who bring continuity to their organizations and are most likely to stay in the field, should get management training when asked to handle more sites or broader responsibilities.

Sites can encourage kids who grow out of their programs to become counselors-in-training while in high school, then assistant group leaders while in college. These home-grown after-school enthusiasts become prime candidates to earn college degrees in teaching, youth work and social work.

The role of the executive director as an instructional or content leader must be addressed. Traditionally executive directors are expected to spend much of their time fund-raising and advocating. While those roles remain vital, nonprofits in the after-school field are increasingly expected to account for the outcomes of participants, and the quality of their programs. For senior-level staff, such as executive directors, COOs and associate directors, we propose the creation of college-based customized leadership development programs, lasting one to two weeks. These intensive sessions would focus on strategic planning, finance, managing teams, and data and communication. They would also address content and school-day alignment. Research has shown that principals are more effective when they are freed from administrative tasks to concentrate on classroom-level quality, and this should be built into the development system for CBO executives.

Funders can help executives track quality by encouraging reporting systems similar to one we use at TASC. Working from a checklist of quality elements, our program officers report their observations directly to the executive directors of CBOs. Funders should encourage CBOs to require program staff to use quality self-assessment tools to guide improvement. We need to provide CBO staff at all levels with access to technical assistance geared to those self-identified areas of weaknesses, such as helping less multi-dimensional programs round out and deepen their content or curriculum.

Fiscal and data management officers within CBOs also need to share in development. We have learned from experience how important it is to bring together program and fiscal people who rarely have opportunities to openly discuss mission, priorities, and connections between field and back-office functions.

Once a year, TASC stops all other work for a day to assign each staff member to a cross-departmental team. Each team travels to a program site on a “treasure hunt.” The teams must return with photographic evidence that someone read with a child, someone else created an art project, etc. Along with the rest of the staff, budget analysts and grants managers return from these visits excited and reinvigorated, with pride in their work and a direct connection to kids.

We also see a place for providing workshops and training academies for key supervisors within public agencies that regulate out-of-school time programs. New York State Afterschool Network put such an initiative into effect with great success at the start of this school year.

2) Educate the educators – leaders of schools and school systems – about the value of after-school programs operated by CBOs, and how to build strong working partnerships

CBOs need help to effectively market after-school to community and educational leaders. Many superintendents and principals still perceive after-school as a variation on endless recess, rounded out with snack, homework help and a few arts and crafts. Perceptions have not caught up to reality in many places. If principals think they’re making a choice between test prep delivered by teachers, or pick-up basketball and finger-painting, is there any question as to how educational leaders will invest their funds?

Funders could perform a great service to the field by creating opportunities to disseminate research on the benefits of after-school to superintendents and principals, and helping them understand how our work supports their goals. Foundations should work with schools of education and universities to include coursework on summer and out-of-school time learning at all levels. They should work with intermediaries to advocate for quality after-school to be included in school “report cards.” When parents weigh school choices, many factor in after-school.

We also must make concerted efforts to become integrated into the system that prepares school principals, supervisors, school system leaders and policymakers. Together with local CBO leaders, TASC has discussed with the city Department of Education training new principals on CBO partnerships. We are pursuing an initiative right now, with support from the Noyce Foundation, to educate CBO directors, principals and policymakers on the ways after-school can excite interest in science among girls and others who grow up to be underrepresented in related professions.

Principals are often the best ambassadors to other principals. We propose that funders support the creation of principal mentoring networks.

CBOs and school leaders need help communicating their expectations more effectively at the start of partnerships, and throughout the school year. We should assist CBOs by creating model partner agreements and start-up program packages that cover all relevant policies and supporting documents. CBO staff should be trained to use research data to communicate with policymakers and to market after-school programs to principals, parents, community leaders and school system leaders.

3) Develop curricula, and hold CBOs accountable for its effective delivery

Anyone who spends a significant amount of time visiting after-school programs can pinpoint the magical moments: those times when kids are so intensely and excitedly engaged in an activity – be it preparing for a robotics competition or nailing the steps in a

salsa routine – they don't want to go home. The research has established that the more kids regularly participate in programs, the more likely they are to improve in attitude, behavior and school day attendance. Research also shows that programs which offer strong curricula have fewer behavior management issues.

Private funders should invest in developing curricula that stimulates kids and strengthens their attachment to programs and school; disseminating that content to programs; and supporting training that includes on-site observation and feedback.

Funders should structure their investments to encourage CBOs to work toward the optimum balance between academic remediation, literacy, math and other activities with an academic focus, and sequenced, project-based, activities. Part of our challenge as a field is not only helping kids learn, but helping them learn differently than they do during school. It can be a struggle even for certified teachers to deliver sequenced, inquiry-based, thoroughly engaging curriculum that incorporates multiple ways of learning.

It's incumbent on the field to educate CBO executives on the need be responsive to principals and community leaders, and to deliver learning activities aligned with school curriculum. As a field, we support literacy and math learning through such research-tested curricula as KidzLit and KidzMath and the Comic Book Project. Organizations including the Coalition for Science Afterschool make a strong case that after-school is the ideal environment for kids to engage in science inquiry through such tested curricula as After-School Science Plus. Our field needs to deliver on these promises. We could create sample 10-week activities for providers along many themes, geared to age and grade levels.

At the same time, we must develop and deploy a core of experienced after-school professionals, within intermediaries and other organizations, whose responsibility is to coach and work with staff to identify and deliver this challenging curricula, and to provide monitoring and booster training during the course of the school year.

4) Change public funding streams so that a higher percentage can be allocated for CBO overhead, and to eliminate inefficiencies.

Public funding formulas were established in the days before Sarbanes-Oxley and more sophisticated reporting to private donors. Now that private and public funders expect providers to meet an appropriately heightened threshold for data management, fiscal systems, and more frequent and detailed reporting, they must pay for it.

In order to continue to receive funding and operate programs, providers have no choice but to attend to management and budget issues. They do have a choice, however, whether to operate a program that simply meets licensing requirements and basic safety needs, or to invest resources and energy into all the elements we've discussed here. It's time for a realistic discussion on the trade-offs forced by insufficient overhead.

Finally, many trends in the after-school field make it more important than ever for funders to support networks and intermediaries. We think we are uniquely equipped to identify the inefficiencies in public funding streams that, if addressed, could liberate significant funds to support more staff development and program slots. In New York City, for example, some programs are receiving funds from all three levels of government that overlap to serve the same number of kids. Intermediaries can assure that within their networks, funding is more equitably and efficiently distributed.

Finally, funders can encourage CBO leaders to get out of the office and spend time among kids. Quality comes down to what happens between kids and their after-school educators. But it starts with leaders who think about science and arts at least as much as they think about boards and budgets.

About TASC and CBOs

TASC funds, monitors and evaluates the after-school programs that CBOs operate in public elementary and middle schools. We support program providers with research-tested curricula, program development and technical assistance. We provide guidance on self-evaluation, professional development of site coordinators and staff, development of the citywide after-school workforce and advocacy at the city, state and federal level.

Our belief is that programs for elementary and middle school kids should meet inside public schools, every day school is in session for three hours a day.

But while our programs operate inside schools, we don't believe that schools alone should control them. If we wanted more school, we wouldn't call it after-school. For programs to successfully serve the whole child, we believe CBOs must take a lead role in their operations. The TASC model calls for CBOs to employ at every site a fulltime, year-round site coordinator to run the after-school program in close cooperation with the school principal.

As an intermediary, one of our chief responsibilities is to increase the pool of public funds for after-school and to help CBOs apply for those funds. Among smaller CBOs that have long histories in underserved communities, we help them develop systems for budgeting and hiring and record-keeping. About a tenth of the staff CBOs employ in after-school programs are high school students. We assist by training high school students to work with younger kids. Through The Center for After-School Excellence, we're helping after-school educators attend college courses that focus on their work in after-school and help them build careers in the field.

We broker relationships between CBOs and schools, starting out as matchmakers and often becoming marriage counselors. When the principal won't let a CBO use the gym or the art room for an after-school program, we're there. This year we intervened on

behalf of site coordinators who were wandering their school corridors without a land line, a PC or even a storage closet to call their own.

TASC has been active in developing after-school programs across New York State and in New Jersey. We're providing assistance to after-school providers, CBOs and government entities in New Orleans and New Mexico, among other localities. We're also partnering with after-school intermediaries in Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Providence, Washington, DC and Palm Beach County in the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems.