# Governance Structures for City Afterschool Systems: Three Models

**Public Agency**

**Network**

**Nonprofit**

FourPoint Education Partners

The Wallace Foundation®

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# Governance Structures for City Afterschool Systems: Three Models

## Introduction

In cities across the country, formal systems have emerged to coordinate afterschool opportunities for children and youth. City afterschool systems represent groups of stakeholders—afterschool providers, city agencies, schools, and other community organizations and institutions—that are coordinating efforts to boost afterschool program participation, improve program quality, advocate for resources and policy changes, and connect programs to enhance opportunities and outcomes for children and youth.[1]

City afterschool systems are complex and dynamic. They draw their power from the resources of community partners and the ability of city leaders to gather and focus those resources. In 2013, at least 77 of the 275 largest U.S. cities were working to coordinate afterschool options.[2] As more cities engage in this work, information is becoming available about how systems are governed and how partners are organizing themselves to meet shared goals. This brief describes three distinct models for afterschool system governance.

## What Is Governance And Why Does It Matter?

Establishing an effective governance structure is essential for any partnership.[3] In the context of afterschool systems, governance can be thought of as the basic operating structures and practices that guide and support the work. This includes staffing the system; identifying roles and relationships among system leaders, staff, and stakeholders; and establishing communications mechanisms, decision-making structures, and other structures that allow the system to carry out its work effectively and track its progress.

One distinguishing feature of afterschool system governance is the organizational home. Where the system lives—its home—drives a number of aspects of system governance, including how it is staffed, how decisions are made and by whom, and how its work is funded over time.

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## Our Exploration Into Afterschool Governance

From 2012 to 2017, FourPoint Education Partners (formerly Cross & Joftus) served on the technical assistance team for The Wallace Foundation's Afterschool System Building Initiative (ASB), which supported 14 cities to strengthen their afterschool systems.

Through this role and work in other communities, we began to see several distinct types of governance structures emerging in afterschool systems. To better understand and articulate these types, we:

- ✓ Interviewed leaders from 15 cities with formal afterschool systems:

  **12 in the ASB initiative:**
  *Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Fort Worth, Grand Rapids, Jacksonville, Louisville, Nashville, New York, Philadelphia, Providence, and Saint Paul*

  **Additional cities:**
  *Oakland, Omaha, and Palm Beach County*

- ✓ Interviewed other afterschool system field leaders
- ✓ Searched for any literature available on the topic
- ✓ Drew from our own experiences related to designing and refreshing governance systems

Information gathering took place from fall 2013 to fall 2015.

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## Three Governance Models

Three distinct models of afterschool system governance stood out in our sample of 15 cities, two with clear subtypes.[4]

**1. Public Agency with a home in a:**
- Mayor's office: *Grand Rapids*[5]
- School district: *Grand Rapids, Oakland*
- Other city agency (libraries, parks and recreation, etc.): *Nashville, New York City, Philadelphia*

**2. Nonprofit with a home in a:**
- Single purpose nonprofit: *Boston, Fort Worth, Providence, Palm Beach County*
- Multiservice nonprofit organization: *Baltimore, Jacksonville*

**3. Network with no single organizational home:**
- Several organizations share management and oversight: *Denver, Louisville, Omaha, Saint Paul*

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## Public Agency

- Led by mayor, superintendent or other city agency lead
- Organizational home is mayor's office, school district or other city agency (e.g. libraries or parks and recreation)
- City examples: Nashville, New York City, Philadelphia, Grand Rapids, Oakland

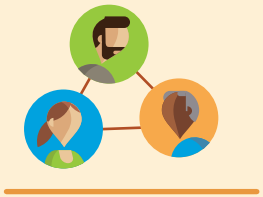
Community leaders can attract partners

City agencies can anchor systems during political transitions

Staffing, leadership, and infrastructure is already in place

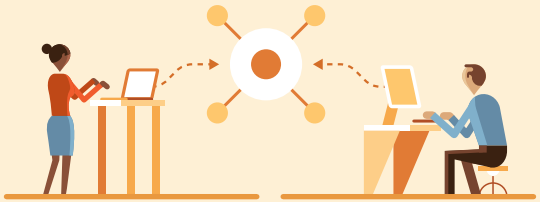
## Network

- Organizations designate single lead or leadership team
- No single organizational home; several organizations share management and oversight
- City examples: Denver, Louisville, Omaha, Saint Paul



Non-hierarchical

Decision making involves a wider group



Relies on collaboration among networked organizations

## Nonprofit

- Led by non-profit board of directors or someone designated by the board
- Organizational home is a single purpose or multiservice non-profit
- City examples: Baltimore, Jacksonville, Boston, Fort Worth, Providence, Palm Beach County

Accountable to a board of directors

Many non-profits re-grant funds to programs

*Single purpose*: focus is afterschool

*Multiservice*: afterschool is part of a larger strategy

## Considerations:

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There's no "right" governance model. Choose the best one for your local context.

Be clear on who's responsible for leadership, oversight, and day-to-day operations.

Don't expect your model to look the same 10 years from now.

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GOVERNANCE MODEL TYPES AND EXAMPLES

## Public Agency

Afterschool systems are sometimes housed within city agencies or public systems. In some cities, the afterschool system is a signature program of the mayor, making that office a logical operational home. In others, systems work may sit in one or more municipal departments, such as parks and recreation or libraries, or in the local school system.

In this model, city or school district employees primarily staff the system, with agency, school district and/or city leaders providing strategic leadership and oversight and rallying other leaders and partners around system goals. While they are part of city agencies, afterschool systems adopting this model may still choose to establish a governing body specific to the work of the system, as was the case in Grand Rapids and Nashville.

> **EXAMPLE:** *Former Nashville Mayor Dean launched the Nashville After Zone Alliance (NAZA) as a strategy for increasing the high school graduation rate. Mayor Dean was a hands-on NAZA champion, staying involved in decision making, engaging key stakeholders, and keeping them focused on the work. He also engaged Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools' superintendent as vice-chair and other leaders from municipal agencies and the business community. A NAZA coordinator was hired to manage the system. Through city contracts, NAZA channeled a combination of public and private funds to five coordinating organizations (one in each of the city's "Zones") and to provider partners that delivered afterschool programming. Each coordinating organization had a Zone Director, who was responsible for managing the Zone's program partners. Zone directors were also responsible for specific aspects of system development. For example, one Zone director led NAZA's communications strategy. To buffer NAZA from any potential impacts of leadership transitions, just prior to Mayor Dean's departure, NAZA moved to its new home—the Nashville Public Library—where the hope is it will become an ongoing part of the city infrastructure.*

## Network

Afterschool systems adopting a network model are staffed and operated by a small set of organizations (2-3) that each take responsibility for and contribute to the leadership of system-building work. While all four of the networks in our city sample were comprised of a combination of public and private partners, in theory a network could be comprised solely of public or private partners.

Leadership and staffing structures vary from network to network. In some, responsibility for system leadership and operations is shared across staff from lead organizations. In others, networks appoint a full-time system lead or organization ultimately responsible for the work. Like the other models, networks receive funding from a mix of public and private sources. Unlike the others, decision making in this model commonly involved a wider group of stakeholders and was less likely to be swayed by any one individual or organization.

> **EXAMPLE:** *Sprockets is a public-private partnership that supports a system of afterschool options in Saint Paul. Sprockets staff sat within three separate organizations. Its director was housed in the city's parks and recreation department, an associate director and a communications and network associate were employed by Augsburg College's Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship, and a network organizer worked out of the YWCA of Saint Paul. Together, the Sprockets team collaborated with providers and community partners to increase high-quality afterschool opportunities for youth. This included regular engagement with four existing neighborhood network teams—groups of providers and community members that have long worked to improve out-of-school time opportunities for youth in specific geographic regions of the city.*
>
> *While Sprockets did not directly fund programs, its relationships with these teams enabled citywide initiatives focused on program quality and access. An executive committee and leadership team with members from city*

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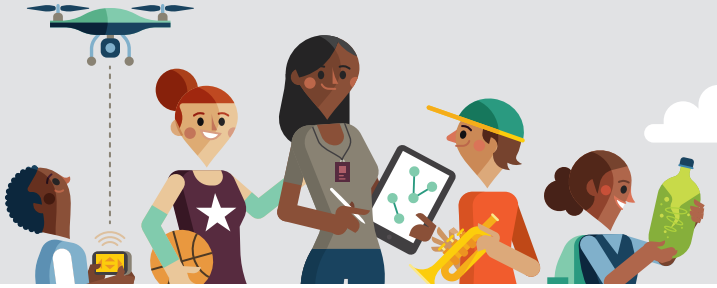

**NETWORK (CONTD.):**

> *agencies, the mayor's office, the school district, community-based organizations, and others helped set Sprocket's strategy and maintain network momentum. A community advisory council (CAC) of providers and parents helped support network operations, and workgroups with members from the leadership team and CAC worked on specific issues, such as quality and sustainability. Sprockets staff also engaged the St. Paul Youth Commission to provide input on its strategy and practice.*

## Nonprofit

Another common home for afterschool systems, among those we examined, is within a local nonprofit organization. This includes nonprofits that operate a variety of programs (multiservice nonprofits) and those that are created specifically to carry out the work of afterschool system building (dedicated or single-purpose nonprofits).

Staffing of these models varies—in some non-profits, a lead, sometimes with additional staff, is solely dedicated to the functions of the afterschool system. In others, particularly multiservice nonprofits, a team from across the organization supports system functionality as part of its broader work portfolio. The nonprofits in our sample were funded through private and public sources, with some serving as re-granters of public funding for afterschool programs. State laws governing nonprofits require organizations to have a formal board of directors. While the specific purview of nonprofit boards varies, they typically provide strategic, financial, and operational oversight of the organization. In multiservice nonprofits, this includes, but is not limited to, the work of the afterschool system.

> **EXAMPLE:** *The Family League of Baltimore operates as a 501c3 and serves as a coordinating entity for state funds—helping to set funding priorities and distribute resources to programs serving Baltimore children and families. As such, its afterschool work sat within a larger portfolio of initiatives. The Family League directly funded programs through a mix of public and private sources. At the Family League, a senior director of initiatives oversaw Baltimore's afterschool system-building work in addition to other organizational priorities.*
>
> *The Family League also had a program director of extended learning and a quality improvement program manager, who helped move the day-to-day work of the system. Decision-making authority rested primarily within the organization and with its board, half of which was comprised of public officials who serve as ex-officio members. Other board members included partners, other agency representatives, and members of the business community. In addition to its organizational governance structure, the Family League engaged a citywide steering committee focused specifically on its community school strategy, which included afterschool, and regularly sought input from the provider community, youth, and families to inform its afterschool system-building approach.*

## Model Considerations

As cities consider which model might be the best fit for their community, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, there is no "right" governance model. Each model comes with its own set of advantages and constraints—the key is choosing the best one for a local context. Second, no matter the model, governance likely is most effective when it's clear which partners and people within the system are responsible for system leadership, oversight, and day-to-day operations. Third and finally, system organizers can expect that their model will not look the same 10 years from now as it does today. Of the 15 cities reviewed, nearly half changed their organizational home at some point. The governance of an afterschool system should continue to reflect the community's needs and context.

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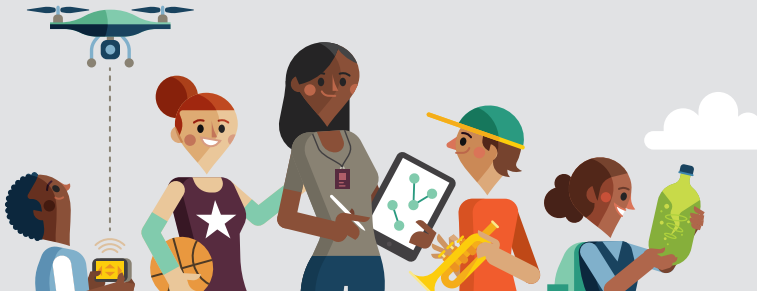

## Informants

**Wallace Afterschool System Building Grantees**

- Family League of Baltimore
- Boston Afterschool and Beyond
- Denver Afterschool Alliance
- Fort Worth SPARC
- Grand Rapids Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Network
- Jacksonville Children's Commission
- Building Louisville's Out of School Time Coordinating System (BLOCS)
- Nashville After Zone Alliance
- Comprehensive After School System of New York City (COMPASS)
- PhillyBOOST
- Providence After School Alliance
- Sprockets Saint Paul

**Additional City Systems**

- Oakland Unified School District
- Greater Omaha After School Alliance / Omaha's Collective for Youth
- Prime Time Palm Beach County

**Wallace Foundation Next Generation Afterschool System Building Technical Assistance Team**

- National Institute on Out-of-School Time
- John W. Gardener Center for Youth and their Communities
- National League of Cities
- Collaborative Communications Group
- Forum for Youth Investment

**Additional Afterschool System Experts**

- Andi Fletcher, consultant, formerly with Sacramento START
- Jessica Donner, Every Hour Counts
- Elaine Fersh, Community Matters
- Lucy Friedman, ExpandED Schools

## Endnotes

[1] Browne, Daniel, Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered About Building Afterschool Systems, The Wallace Foundation, July 2015. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/growing-together-learning-together.aspx Bodilly, Susan, et al., Hours of Opportunity: Lessons from Five Cities on Building Systems to Improve After-School, Summer School, and other Out-of-School Time Programs, RAND Education, October 2010. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/hours-of-opportunity-volumes-i-ii-iii.aspx

[2] Simkin, Linda, et al., Is Citywide Afterschool Coordination Going Nationwide? An Exploratory Study in Large Cities, FHI360, Sept 2013. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/citywide-afterschool-coordination- going-nationwide-an-exploratory-study-in-large-cities.aspx

[3] The Finance Project, A Guide to Successful Public-Private Partnerships, The Child Care Partnership Project, 1998. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED432399.pdf

[4] This brief summarizes key learnings from FourPoint's exploration of governance structures detailed in a longer report Governance of City Afterschool Systems: A Review and Analysis https://www.fourpointeducation.com/afterschool-system-governance-paper/

[5] In Grand Rapids, the system's home is shared between the mayor's office and school district.