



Legislative Report

Act 78 of 2023 Afterschool Grant

Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs

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Issued by the Vermont Agency of Education

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Executive Summary

In FY25, the Agency of Education was able to build on the success of the first year of Act 78 implementation by adding additional sites, implementing additional supports, and on-boarding additional support staff. This represents an exciting development for afterschool in Vermont and demonstrates continued progress towards our goal of universal afterschool access.

This year's State Afterschool Grant competitions added another twenty-five projects across the state to the sixteen already in progress. These additions mean that this fund is now supporting work in thirteen of Vermont's fourteen counties and expanding access to programming for thousands of young Vermonters. The robust blend of public and private support continues to demonstrate the best of what is possible through partnerships and a shared commitment to our youth.

In addition to bringing in additional awardees, this year we were able to expand the level of supports being offered by the Agency of Education to existing awardees to increase the quality of program delivered statewide. Our Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) team began implementation of our monitoring and support plans to promote quality and ensure safety. This plan included in-person visits to all operating programs, a comprehensive review of site-specific safety plans, and data collections to ensure our planning and evaluations continue to be built on measurable successes. Existing awardees were also connected to state-wide training and support networks previously only available to 21st Century programs.

To support the agency's work, an additional position has been created in the regulatory compliance team with a specific focus on supporting community-based organizations like those funded through this program. This new position will significantly improve our ability to both monitor and support programs that operate outside of the supervisory union or district model with which we are most familiar.

Over the next year, the Agency and the ELO team look forward to continuing this work to expand and improve the quality of extended learning opportunities by aligning these funding opportunities with statewide strategic priorities to improve academic achievement and promote safe and healthy schools.

Purpose

This report is being written pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 4018 (d) which requires the Agency of Education to submit to the legislature a plan "to fund grant programs for the expansion of summer and afterschool programs with an emphasis on increasing access in underserved areas of the State" and a report on "the number of programs, slots, weeks, or hours; geographic distribution; and what is known about costs to families." That same statute requires that this report should include information regarding programming funded through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Note on Measured vs. Proposed Data

Information used in the assembly of this report comes from two primary sources: the data submitted by awardees as part of their monitoring and the proposals submitted by applicants during the application stage. The information from applicant proposals is a helpful indicator of intent and design, but it should not be understood as reflecting accomplished work. Throughout this document, we will indicate where datasets are pulling from concrete monitoring data and where they are using aspirational data from the applicant proposals.

Defining Goals

As established in the Afterschool Taskforce Report and articulated in Act 78, the ultimate purpose for these funds is to connect every young person in the state to robust, reliable, and affordable out of school time (OST) programming. While the potential benefits of robust OST programming are manifold, it is helpful to frame this conversation around the ways this mission is particularly well aligned with the state strategic plan and well supported by educational research. OST programs are an essential tool in the efforts to make Vermont a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Affordability

“They come home energized and I know they’re safe where staff know them.”

BEAMS program parent
Windham Southeast School District

The cost to working families of ensuring their children are safely supervised in the out of school hours is extraordinary. According to the most recent data from the Federal Department of Labor, there is no county in Vermont where a family can enroll their school-aged child in a center-based childcare program for less than 10% of the median household income per year. In Essex County, that cost is 17% of the median household income. This cost proposal puts working families in the impossible position of having to choose between sacrificing a significant portion of their household income, giving up economic opportunities to provide care themselves, or leaving children home alone. A universal afterschool program, designed with clear economic guardrails, would mitigate one of the single largest costs in many household budgets without making them compromise on quality or forgo professional opportunities.

In service to this target, work is being done to ensure new programming is being created in areas with high levels of economic need and that new and existing programming is being made available with a specific focus on minimizing costs to participants.

Access

“I like seeing my school-year teacher in summer, she knows how to help me read the big words. Breakfast and lunch here make the day easier so I can focus.”

SOAR Elementary program participant
Burlington School District

Maintaining structured programming during out of school time is a key means to maintain vital connections between students and resources on which they depend. Those resources can be foundational benefits like access to food or key developmental supports like continued access to special education services. Even for students without extenuating needs, participation in afterschool programming can be a means to mitigate isolation, build positive relationships, and foster a stronger sense of belonging in their community.

In service to this target, work is being done to foster strong connections between OST providers and the schools and service agencies that provide support for the same youth during the school day. Particular attention is being paid this year to connecting OST providers with federal nutrition assistance funding opportunities.

Economic Development

“My stipend internship showed me I can do this job. Running the lemonade stand taught me how to lead and work with people, now I’m thinking about my future.”

ACE Career Exploration Participant
King Street Center

Universal afterschool programming is an essential driver of economic activity. In the immediate, working parents with reliable programs to supervise their children will be better able to participate in the workforce. In the intermediate, afterschool program staff are an effective “farm league” for educators and childcare workers, both of which are fields for which the state workforce has critical need. And in the long term, participation in well-designed afterschool programming can introduce young people to networks and opportunities that become lifelong passions and careers.

In service to this target, work is being done to encourage programming with career skills instruction focus and youth leadership opportunities. Partnership work between Agency of Education and VT Department of Labor focusing on Youth Career Exploration has been particularly promising in the last year.

Direct Support First

While authorizing legislation carried an implicit mandate to improve the quality of OST programming, the primary objective was to increase the availability of OST programs, especially in critically underserved regions. With that in mind, the AOE prioritized a model that would focus effort, attention, and resources on participant-facing organizations who would themselves be the primary program delivery entities. This model focused funding where it would have the most immediate impacts for families in terms of creating new opportunities.

Multi-track Model

By fitting these Act 78 Afterschool funds into the existing continuum of state-managed funding opportunities, we are currently positioned to support an organization wishing to support OST programming at any stage of their development.

- The Room For Me grants overseen by the VT Department of Children and Families offers one-time funds to programs seeking quick cash infusions for immediate capital expenses or supplies.
- The Program Track State Afterschool Grant creates a medium-term (i.e., 42-month) funding commitment to support the delivery of OST programming. This funding can be used to add new capacity or offerings to an existing afterschool program or to stand up new programming.
- The Center Track State Afterschool Grant creates a long-term (i.e., 60 month) funding commitment to support the creation of a single-site comprehensive afterschool center (i.e., one that delivers programming year-round, that offers multiple concurrent programming options, and that has a dedicated director to plan and manage operations.)
- Nita M. Lowery 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants create a long-term (i.e., 60 month) funding commitment to support multi-site comprehensive afterschool centers, with a particular focus on serving communities of highest economic need.

By situation this state funding in a middle space between the federally funded 21C program and the small-scale DCF funding, we are able to effectively bridge the gap in supports available to programs of any level of size or readiness.

Looking Forward

Monitoring and Assessment

Consistent with the best practices already established in the AOE's oversight of the 21C program, all Act 78 programs are subject to both desk monitoring and in-person monitoring visits. These represent the best opportunity for agency staff to ensure

programming is being conducted to a high standard and that funds are being used in responsible ways. Desk monitoring includes financial measures such as the continuous review of all expenses reimbursed with grant funds and administrative measures such as the review of all site-specific emergency plans for all grant funded activities. In person visits provide the opportunity for staff to see first-hand how programs are being conducted and are performed for all awardees within their first year of operations.

Support

Building on the insights gained during the monitoring visits of the first cohort of Act 78 awardees, the agency will be taking a more proactive role in facilitating professional development opportunities for the staff and leadership of awarded entities. We will be folding them into our existing network of professional programming for 21C directors and aim to create a robust community of practice for OST professionals statewide.

New Grants

The agency will also be rolling out two new grants in the second half of FY 26, with awards set to coincide with the start of FY 27.

- A professional development grant to support afterschool and summer professionals in accessing the same sorts of high-quality professional training opportunities as are made available to school day staff. This grant will allow eligible entities to apply for up to \$2,000 per year to support their staff participating in such opportunities and will have a total award pot of \$500,000.
- A regional provider grant to support the introduction of high-quality program supports into existing afterschool programs. This program will allow content experts (e.g., specialists like museum educators) to develop and offer up programming that could be pushed into existing afterschool programs at schools and community-based organizations. This model will allow existing programs to increase the number of high-interest programs they can offer without incurring the cost of program development, specialist staff training, or equipment themselves. This grant will allow eligible entities to apply for up to \$300,000 per year and will have a total award pot of \$1.2 million in the first year.

Fiscal Year 2025 Report

Number of Programs

The second cohort of grantees is made up of twenty-five awardees, consisting of ten centers and fifteen programs. These awardees are listed by type and by annual award amount in **Table 1**. The total annual awarded amount for the second cohort is \$2.4 million. Each program track awardee was guaranteed three and a half years of funding at their requested annual award level, and each center track awardee was guaranteed

five years of funding at their requested level, meaning \$10.5 million of the special fund are obligated through June 30, 2030. Summary statistics about the annual award amounts broken out by award type are listed in **Table 2**.

These twenty-five new awardees were added to the sixteen existing awardees from the first cohort which have continued into this fiscal year, meaning that this fund is currently supporting a total of forty-one awards. Across both cohorts, there are sixteen center track awardees and twenty-five program track awardees. Summary statistics about the annual award amounts broken out by award type are listed in **Table 3**.

Table 1: Cohort Two Awardees

Organization	Annual Award	Award Type
Acorn Youth Arts, Inc.	\$75,000.00	Program
Addison Central School District	\$64,256.57	Program
Essex North SU	\$150,000.00	Center
Essex North SU	\$73,231.43	Program
Franklin Northeast SU	\$66,253.14	Program
Governor's Institutes of Vermont, Inc.	\$50,000.00	Program
King Street Center, Inc.	\$49,800.00	Program
Maple Run Unified School District	\$64,285.71	Program
Milton SD	\$149,743.00	Center
Mt. Abraham Unified School District	\$149,949.00	Center
North Country SU	\$75,848.29	Program
North Country SU	\$150,000.00	Center
Orange East SU	\$73,280.57	Program
Orleans Southwest SU	\$75,000.00	Program
Orleans Southwest SU	\$150,000.00	Center
Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary	\$51,428.57	Program
Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary	\$148,060.00	Center
Special Needs Support Center of the Upper Valley	\$60,000.00	Program
St. Johnsbury SD	\$150,000.00	Center
St. Johnsbury SD	\$75,000.00	Program
The Barra School	\$150,000.00	Center
The DREAM Program	\$60,000.00	Program
Windham Central SU	\$149,989.00	Center
Windham Southeast SU	\$80,000.00	Program
Windham Southwest SU	\$67,000.36	Center

Table 2: Summary Statistics for the Cohort Two Annual Award Amounts

Awardee Type	# of awards	Average	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Center	10	\$141,474.14	\$67,000.36	\$149,994.50	\$150,000

Awardee Type	# of awards	Average	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Program	15	\$66,225.62	\$49,800	\$66,253.14	\$75,000

Table 3: Summary Statistics for the Overall Annual Award Amounts

Awardee Type	# of awards	Average	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Center	16	\$134,145.87	\$67,000.36	\$148,901.50	\$150,000
Program	25	\$56,110.60	\$18.900	\$60,000	\$75,000

Slots, Weeks, or Hours

The Agency has a monitoring and data collection plan to allow for a relatively granular level of insight into both the number of unique students served and the number of days of service provided. For added clarity, these datasets are broken out by school year and summer in **table 4**. In this chart a dash indicates that a program did not operate during the indicated time.

Table 4: Summary of Unique Student and Days of Service Reporting

Organization Name	Awardee Type	Students School Year	Students Summer	Days School Year	Days Summer
Addison Northwest School District	center	151	186	109	20
Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro, Inc.	center	135	47	175	30
Caledonia Central Supervisory Union Cabot	center	46	-	58	-
Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union	center	-	201	-	23
Missisquoi Valley School District	center	46	8	83	30
Northeast Kingdom Community Action, Inc.	center	31	-	47	-
Orange Southwest Unified Union School District	center	63	-	158	-
Burlington School District	program	-	325	-	25
Caledonia Central Supervisory Union Afterschool Collaboration Expansion	program	147	-	119	-
King Street Center, Inc.	program	155	141	179	39
Kingdom East Unified Union School District	program	-	420	-	18
Montshire Museum of Science	program	147	-	16	-
University of Vermont	program	68	41	132	44
Vermont Works for Women	program	-	40	-	15
White River Valley Supervisory Union	program	281	347	171	35
Windham Southeast Supervisory Union	program	125	59	137	19

Because the data above is pulled from only those programs who have completed their first full year of programming, we are including the proposed data from the most recent round of awardees as well. The proposed annual number of youth that will be served by each grantee is represented in **Table 5** arranged by award type. The proposed annual number of programming days for each grantee are represented in **Table 6** arranged by both award type and time of year.

Table 5: Summary Statistics for Cohort Two Proposed Number of Youth Served

Awardee Type	# of awards	Average	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Center	10	254.1	40	202.5	595
Program	16	289.13	20	120	1100

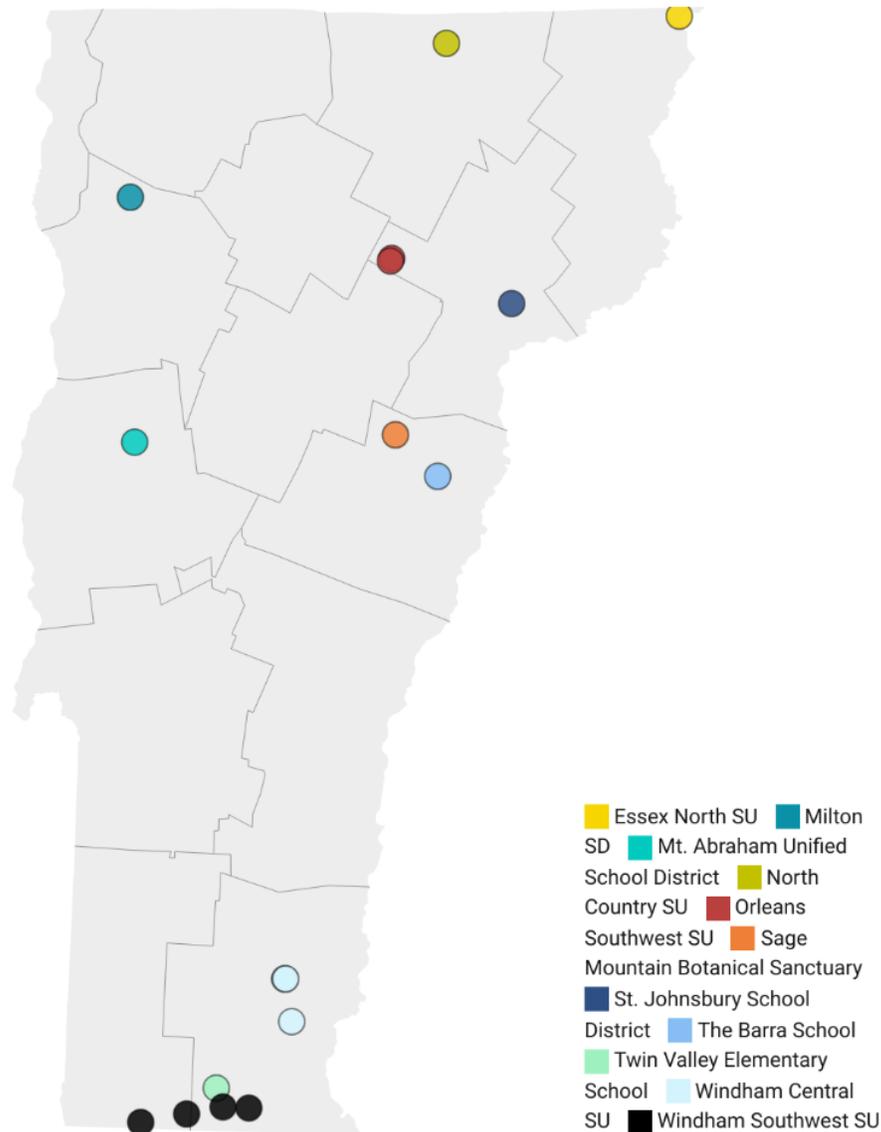
Table 6: Summary Statistics for Cohort Two Proposed Number of Youth Served

Awardee Type	# of awards	Average	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Center	10	194.9	139	205	298
Program	16	113.73	16	116	265

Geographic Distribution

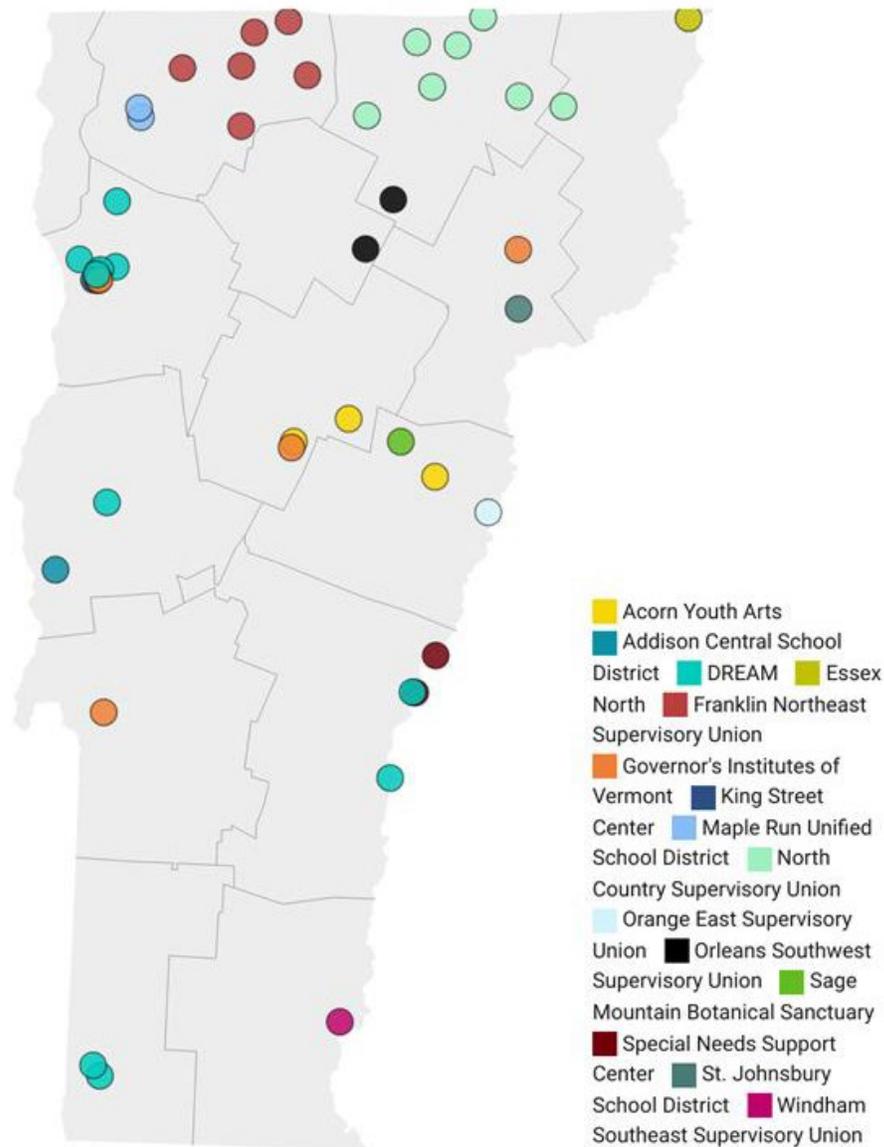
Awardees for this round of the Act 78 – State Afterschool Grant competition were widely distributed across the state with new projects funded in every county of the state but one. **Map 1** and **Map 2** details the locations of afterschool sites receiving Act 78 funding with each unique awardee identified. A fuller picture of Agency-managed afterschool programs can be found on **Map 3**, below, which overlays all Act 78-funded sites alongside those funded through 21C.

Map 1: Cohort Two Center Track Sites



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Map 2: Cohort Two Program Track Sites



Created with Datawrapper

Cost to Families

In line with the charge to increase access for marginalized student groups and to provide afterschool resources to under-supported communities, the agency has required that awarded entities must commit to not turning away any potential participant for inability to pay. Applicants were allowed to operate programs on a fee-for-service model, provided they included clear language around how that model would accommodate potential participants with financial need.

At this time, fourteen centers and twenty-one programs have committed to operating free of charge for participants. Of the seven awardees that did not commit to no-cost

programming for all participants, cost mitigations strategies that were proposed fell into two main categories: need-based sliding scale rates with a minimum cost of \$0 and a fee waiver program. **Table 7** outlines the division of cost structures by application type. **Table 8** outlines the cost to participate in the seven programs that operated on fee-for-service models.

Table 7: Cost Structures

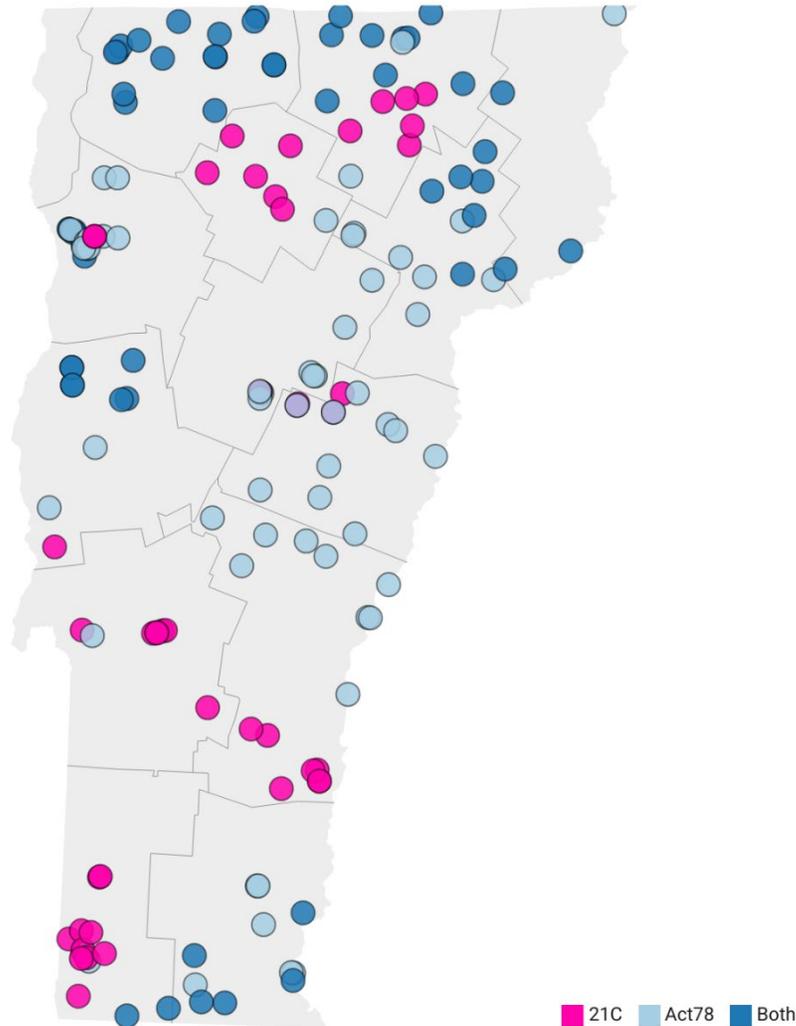
Award Type	Free for Participant	Sliding Scale	Fee Waivers
Center	14	1	1
Program	21	4	1

Table 8: Cost to Participate

Organization	Cost
Burlington SD	\$17/day or \$85/week, 10% discount for each subsequent sibling
Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro Inc.	\$25/year
Orange Southwest UUSD	\$15/day, \$11/day for siblings
White River Valley SU	\$120/week
Governor's Institutes of Vermont	\$3,100-\$3,400 per program
Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary	\$30/day

21st Century Community Learning Centers

The network of afterschool centers and afterschool professionals supported by the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant initiative was an essential resource in the implementation and execution of the Act 78 grant program. The 21C program remains the single largest supporter of high-quality, multi-site, and sustainable afterschool programming in the state and significant efforts were made to incorporate the learning of over two decades of implementation into the development of this new grant program. In FY24, 21C-funded programs support 10,930 Vermont students, including 5,119 research-based (i.e., 90+ hr/yr participation) attendees, across 90 sites. Through an innovative braided funding approach, this year Vermont's 21C initiative has been able to supplement an average of \$6 million federal dollars with \$7.5 million in other cash funds to increase sustainability and maximize impact.

Map 3: Current 21C and Act 78-Funded Afterschool Sites

Created with Datawrapper

FY 26 Competition Planning

The exclusive use of this funding continues to support the development and expansion of high-quality afterschool and summer programming. Assuming a relatively consistent level of income from the sales and use tax on cannabis, it is reasonable to assume this fund will continue to accrue roughly \$9 million each year. To fully utilize this funding, while also promoting sustainable growth in the field, the agency plans to follow a multi-pronged approach.

The primary strategy will be the continued delivery of annual grant competitions targeting direct support to program providers (i.e., the program and center track state afterschool grants.) Because these grants represent multi-year investments in local providers, it is important that funding be forward planned to avoid over-commitment.

Table 9 demonstrates how each cohort can also be modeled as a set of stacking

annual allocations. The costs and numbers of awardees for FY 24 and FY 25 cohorts are accurate, the future years are projections. Once five cohorts are in flight, the program will have reached carrying capacity and each new cohort that comes in will replace an older cohort phasing out. At that point, the cost of the program will become stable. The other strategies are described above in the subsection New Grants.

Table 9: State Afterschool Grant Growth to Carrying Capacity Model

Cohort	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
FY 24 Cohort	\$1,330,971.56 10 programs 7 Centers	\$1,330,971.56 10 programs 7 Centers	\$1,330,971.56 10 programs 7 Centers	\$731,592.56 7 Centers	\$731,592.56 7 Centers	-
FY 25 Cohort	\$463,474.00 15 programs	\$2,401,055.36 15 programs 10 centers	\$2,401,055.36 15 programs 10 centers	\$2,401,055.36 15 programs 10 centers	\$1,414,979.36 10 centers	\$1,414,979.36 10 centers
FY 26 Cohort	-	\$394,285.71 20 programs	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers	\$1,368,000.01 10 centers
FY 27 Cohort	-	-	\$394,285.71 20 programs	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers
FY 28 Cohort	-	-	-	\$394,285.71 20 programs	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers
FY 29 Cohort	-	-	-	-	\$394,285.71 20 programs	\$2,156,571.43 20 programs 10 centers

Cohort	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30
Total	\$1,794,445.56 25 programs 7 centers	\$4,126,312.63 45 programs 17 centers	\$6,282,884.06 65 programs 27 centers	\$7,840,076.49 75 programs 37 centers	\$9,010,571.92 80 Programs 47 Centers	\$9,693,958.72 80 Programs 50 Centers