

## Promising Practices in Afterschool

NIOST is one of six national organizations across the country that has been funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to collect promising practices in afterschool. Each organization collects practices from different geographic areas and program auspices.

NIOST's focus is identifying system building and infrastructure practices from the 20 cities across the country participating in the Cross-Cities Network. Practices are collected on an ongoing basis and are submitted to the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research where a review team evaluates the practices to ensure they are valid. Once practices pass successfully through the review process, they are posted to the [www.afterschool.org](http://www.afterschool.org) web site so that others may learn from them.

To learn more about the Promising Practices Initiative or to submit your own practice, please visit [www.afterschool.org](http://www.afterschool.org)

Or

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# Promising Practices in Citywide Afterschool Initiatives

## Creating Infrastructure that Supports Program Improvement and Capacity Building

### About San Diego "6 to 6"

San Diego has become the first major city in the United States to offer before and afterschool services in every public elementary and middle school in its jurisdiction. San Diego's "6 to 6" Extended School Day Program is a partnership between the City of San Diego's Community and Economic Development Department, the San Diego Unified School District, eight smaller districts that serve schools within the City's boundaries, and 15 local community-based organizations (CBO's).

In 1995, then Mayor Susan Golding convened the Safe Schools Task Force, a "collaboration of local policymakers, to develop a plan that would ensure that San Diego was poised to take a leadership role in the afterschool arena" (Ferrin & Amick, 2002). One of the goals of the Safe Schools Task Force was the creation of an extended school day program. Since September 1998, the program has evolved from serving the original 31 sites to now serving over 200 sites and approximately 25,000 students annually.

The City of San Diego has committed to opening community schools before and after school to provide a safe place for elementary and middle school age youth to experience academic enrichment and recreation activities during the non-school hours. San Diego's "6 to 6" is designed to be an extension of the regular school day, with structured and well-supervised activities that promote enthusiasm for learning and build skills in the areas of reading, writing, speech, math, and science.

### City/School Partnership

San Diego's Community and Economic Development Department has executed Memoranda of Understanding with all nine school districts serving students within the city. The Community and Economic Development Department takes responsibility for the fiscal management, monitoring, and evaluation of the programs as well as sub-contracting direct services to CBO providers, collecting monthly reports, and preparing semi-annual reports for the State and Federal Department of Education. The districts are responsible for ensuring

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that adequate facility space is made available for the program, academic activities articulate with district standards, academic evaluation data is shared, daily snacks are delivered, and custodial and security services are provided. The city and the partner districts jointly share decision-making and policy formation.

The three major community-based organizations providing the majority of San Diego's "6 to 6" programs are Harmonium Children's Services, Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) and the YMCA of San Diego County. The sub-contract with each of these CBO's specifies the scope of services, period of performance, budget and allowable expenditures, staffing requirements, program content, funding procedures, etc. to which all programs funded by the city must ascribe.

## Program Monitoring

One of the key infrastructure elements that has contributed to the success of San Diego's "6 to 6" and its unique success in achieving scale is the program monitoring system. There are two staff positions supported by the city - Program Monitor and Program Analyst. One of the program monitor's primary responsibilities is to monitor sites for compliance with the contractual agreement.

However, another focus of the program monitor's position is to support the training and technical assistance needs discovered through the program monitoring process.

Program monitors have responsibility both for informing providers of scheduled trainings and also tailoring future trainings to address identified program and provider needs. San Diego's "6 to 6" program monitors have delivered up to nine in-service trainings per year in addition to supporting countywide and statewide trainings. Through the trainings providers gain exposure to regional experts and have the opportunity to share "best practice."

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### Program Monitor/Analyst activities include:

1. Review monthly program reports.
2. Process and approve monthly fiscal reports and payments.
3. Visit each school site at least twice a year.
4. Conduct and review internal and external audits.
5. Conduct annual community, staff, parent, and principal satisfaction surveys.

The site visit evaluation tool is based on a point system. Evaluation categories include staffing, safety, program, facility, equipment/supplies, in-kind contributions, space, accomplishments, academic structure, and school collaboration. Final scores are categorized in levels from 1-4 with 4 considered the highest level of performance. If the site receives a "level 1" score, the site supervisor will be given a plan of action and the program monitor will revisit the program within a 30 day period. The evaluation includes a written narrative that describes the site activities, staff interactions, and program operations observed during the visit. This section is also used to track the structure of the academic enrichment, support services, literacy development, and homework or tutoring services being implemented at each of San Diego's "6 to 6" sites. A copy of the evaluation is also shared with the school administrator.

## Benefits of a Program Monitoring Strategy

Implementing a program monitoring strategy and infrastructure addresses several crucial challenges facing San Diego "6 to 6." Essentially, individual program staff straddle three centers of authority and accountability: the school, the city, and the CBO's that employ them. The program monitoring system allows for formal and clear communication between the three entities in regards to program quality and expectations. Not only is there agreement on the expectations, but there is a standard process and procedure for notification of perceived deficits and improvement planning.

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Of the three organizations the city is in an advantageous position to offer an unbiased program review, i.e. the sponsoring community organization or host school may feel pressure to demonstrate positive results and understate weaknesses.

San Diego's ambition has led to a broad and complex program arena. The standardization of a program monitoring process and tools creates continuity that might not otherwise exist among programs, program providers, and school districts. Additionally, rather than just being a part of the equation as a funding source, the city serves as an invested and resourceful partner.

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Each of the providers has their own set of documented standards that often extend beyond the expectations embedded in the contractual agreement. They also provide internal monitoring in addition to that provided by the city. Program leaders in San Diego had the foresight to institute a program monitoring system that could recognize the historic contributions and expertise of the community providers, while establishing a baseline framework for quality that was acceptable to all partners. In order to genuinely achieve high program quality and quantity citywide, earnest energy and planning needed to be focused on creating the necessary accountability and assessment infrastructure.

### Resources:

Interviews conducted for this publication:

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### Reference:

Ferrin, D., & Amick, S. (2002, Summer). San Diego's "6 to 6:" A community's commitment to out-of-school time. New Directions for Youth Development, 109-117.