

PROVIDENCE AFTER-SCHOOL ALLIANCE
Learning in Communities / Providence

Executive Summary

Mayor David N. Cicilline is pleased to announce the launch of the *Providence After-School Alliance*, a new public-private venture to develop a comprehensive, citywide system to substantially increase high-quality, affordable out-of-school time learning opportunities for Providence's children and youth. To be most effective, these activities must be part of a strong system of out-of-school time programs that is accountable for results, supports quality improvements and is adequately financed.

The *Providence After-School Alliance* will implement the Business Plan that was developed through the planning process for *Learning in Communities / Providence*, sponsored by The Wallace Foundation. The Business Plan lays out a set of investments that will lead to a more effective system for out-of-school time, more high-quality after-school programs, and better health, education and developmental outcomes for our youth.

The Business Plan highlights five critical elements that must be in place if we are to yield substantial increases in high-quality out-of-school time learning opportunities for Providence children and youth.

- **Leadership** – of parents, youth, out-of-school time (OST) programs, city leadership, business, philanthropy and government.
- **Quality Standards** – that are embraced by the community and used as a tool for quality improvement and accountability.
- **Targeted Investments** – to build effective program models on a small scale and leverage systemwide changes that support quality and participation. The business plan prioritizes three key investment strategies:
 1. Create community connections for learning – ***middle school / neighborhood hubs***.
 2. Build the public infrastructure – ***recreation centers***.
 3. Improve existing out-of-school time programs – ***quality and capacity-building***.
- **Pooled Resources and Aligned Funding** – to provide incentives for quality improvements, capacity-building and systems change through a joint funding pool of public and private investors, through the newly-created Providence Youth Opportunities Fund.
- The ***Providence After-School Alliance*** – a new public-private intermediary organization that serves as a vehicle for collective action, advocacy and integrated planning.

Success in meeting our goals for out-of-school time will be possible because of the commitment and collaboration of public, private and community partners. The *Providence After-School Alliance* will be a new independent entity with an Executive Board chaired by Mayor David N. Cicilline and comprised of top business and civic leaders, parents and youth. The *Providence After-School Alliance* will be responsive to the needs and concerns of the out-of-school time community and will have an Advisory Committee comprised of key stakeholders in the city, including parents, youth, providers and civic leaders. The Mayor has asked the Education Partnership to serve as the interim, incubator home to the *Providence After-School Alliance* during its first two years of organizational development.

Providence is a dynamic place, rich in cultural diversity and in the midst of exciting municipal reform. Providence enjoys a wealth of assets, from the health and strength of its higher education institutions, to the vibrant diversity of its people, to the strength of its youth leaders, to the quality and vitality of its arts and cultural community. The challenge is to ensure that our children fully engage with and benefit from these resources. Providence has much to offer its children and youth, but faces several key challenges in providing out-of-school time opportunities that support the creative potential of youth and provide rich learning environments.

These challenges include:

- 40% of Providence children and youth live below the poverty line. Our youth experience a range of challenges that stem from poor economic conditions and the associated risks.
- The non-school hours are a critical time for young people to develop their skills and talents, and also prime time for youth to engage in unhealthy, unsafe, or criminal behavior. Providence children have limited access to enriching after-school programs that will help them develop into adulthood.
- High-quality learning opportunities outside of school can powerfully affect performance in school and in the workplace. Providence lacks a system that supports programs and encourages efforts to provide high-quality services on a broad scale.

Creating a system that provides youth with high-quality learning opportunities – before school, after school, and during the summer – is the driving force behind the *Providence After-School Alliance*. Children and youth who have safe, nurturing, learning environments during out-of-school time are at significantly less risk for truancy, emotional stress, receiving poor grades, substance use, sexual activity and crime. Children and youth benefit socially, emotionally, and academically when they have easy access to a wide variety of enriching activities and the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with peers and adults. High-quality out-of-school time programs are well-attended and involve youth for enough time each week and over a long enough period of time to have a positive influence.

The Business Plan for the *Providence After-School Alliance* lays out the key strategies and implementation steps required to increase the quality of out-of-school time programs, broaden access to children with the greatest needs, and leverage public and private resources to sustain the system over the long-term. The *Learning in Communities* business planning process has had the active involvement of the city's leaders, the city's youth, and those who know young people best – their families, educators, program providers and youth development leaders.

A citywide alliance committed to expanding high-quality out-of-school time opportunities will be vital to implement the Business Plan over the next five years and to ensure the success and long-term sustainability of the new intermediary organization. With the strong leadership and commitment of Mayor David N. Cicilline, the Business Plan is currently under active consideration by The Wallace Foundation and other local, state, regional and national funders for possible further investments during a five-year implementation phase.

For more information on the *Providence After-School Alliance*, please contact Mayor David N. Cicilline at 401-421-2489 or Hillary Salmons at the Education Partnership, 401-331-5222, ext. 111.