



# Oregon Afterschool and Summer Advocacy Guidance

Expanded Learning Partnership  
**OregonASK**

# Advocacy Guidance

This guide is intended to help any afterschool stakeholder engage in legislative or other advocacy in support of high-quality afterschool programming.

Advocacy is NOT lobbying.

**Advocacy** (Noun) ad•vo•ca•cy \ 'ad-və-kə-sē\; the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating something.

**Lobby** (Noun) lob•by \ 'lä-bē\; an organized group of people who work together to influence government decisions that relate to a particular industry, issue, etc.

From the Alliance For Justice (<http://bolderadvocacy.org/navigate-the-rules/influencing-legislation>):

Influencing legislation – or “lobbying” – is a key advocacy strategy that nonprofits can use to advance their cause. In fact, by not lobbying, many 501 (c)(3) organizations are not taking full advantage of their rights under federal tax laws, which set out generous lobbying limits.

The Internal Revenue Code defines lobbying as activities that attempt to influence specific legislation. There are two types of lobbying – **direct** and **grassroots**. Direct lobbying refers to a communication with a legislator (federal, state, local) or legislative staff member that refers to specific legislation and expresses a view on that legislation. Grassroots lobbying refers to a communication with the general public that refers to specific legislation, expresses a view on that legislation, and urges the public to contact their legislator(s). Not all communications that refer to, or even express a view about legislation, constitute lobbying.

Contrary to popular belief, **nonprofits can lobby**. The amount of lobbying a nonprofit organization can engage in depends on its tax-exempt status. 501(c)(3) public charities can engage in a limited, but generous, amount of lobbying; 501(c)(3) private foundations are subject to a prohibitive tax on any lobbying expenditures they make; 501(c)(4) organizations can engage in an unlimited amount of lobbying; and political organizations exempt under 527 may make very limited lobbying expenditures, but these expenditures may be subject to tax if they do not further a political purpose.

It is critical that you educate legislators and other policy makers on what is happening in your community, especially the impacts you are seeing in your program. They need this information to make well-informed decisions at the local, state, and federal levels.

# Tips for Working with Legislators

## Do Your Homework

- » Study the discussion guide and message map provided in this guidance and be prepared to speak without using them. You should have a leave-behind that will provide detail on everything once the conversation is over.
- » Study the legislator profiles available online at <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/>. These profiles include their legislative information (committees they're on, for instance), but also other personal and professional information.
- » Practice your message, but don't over-practice! You want your enthusiasm for afterschool to be front-and-center, not your ability to recite facts. If a question arises that you can't answer, explain that you will follow-up in a timely manner with the answer. No need to know every detail about everything!
- » If you aren't from their district, become as familiar as possible with the legislator's district.

## Keep In Touch

- » Write, call, and visit to introduce yourself. Let them know who you represent to keep them informed about the issue and your impact on the community and on the legislator's district.
- » Have an OregonASK staffer add the legislator's name to the OregonASK mailing list and ask to have your name added to the legislator's mailing list. Ask how they like to be contacted – by email, mail at home or mail at the Capitol, or by phone.
- » Make sure the legislator receives invitations to special events held in your community or your office. This serves as a reminder to them of your role in the community. Remind your legislator that attending these functions is an excellent way to meet with constituents.

## Be Consistent and Reliable

- » Your most important goal as an advocate is to be viewed as a credible source of information for your elected official. Never lie and never hedge on the facts. If you don't know the answer to a question, always tell your elected official that you will get back to them with the best information you can find. Once you lose your credibility, all future efforts will be compromised.
- » Be sure to let OregonASK staff know of any questions the legislators had or anything they were very excited about! We can help take advantage of these as opportunities to reconnect with them.
- » Don't dilute your message or confuse your legislator on your priorities. Be clear, concise, and keep the message simple. Mixing too many issues, or personal and professional issues, can lead to confusion. A confused legislator will leave your conversation without a clear understanding of what you would like him/her to do.

## Keys to the Conversation

- » Woody Allen said 95 percent of life is showing up. So show up – and be seen! Attend events related to afterschool, social, or political, and otherwise, at which legislators are present. Be sure to introduce or re-introduce yourself and remind them of the conversation you've had.
- » If the legislator is cooperative, be sure to get them to a site! Engage them in afterschool programming in some way, either just a visit or as a guest speaker, even. They may even make a good volunteer for your program.
- » Always call a senator "Senator," and a House member "Representative." Don't get them mixed up!
- » Develop a personal connection so the elected official will remember you. It could be a story, common interest, or knowing someone in common. Make the connection early in the conversation.
- » Ask the elected official what they think and if they have any advice for you.
- » Keep the conversation two-sided so each participant gives and receives information.

# Discussion Guide

Introduce yourself as being with OregonASK or your program and explain what you do professionally.



Ask the legislator about afterschool in their community.  
Do they know about afterschool programs in their area?  
Have they been to a program before?



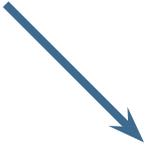
Yes, they know a lot about afterschool

No, they don't know a lot or anything about afterschool.



That's great! Ask them what they see as the biggest benefit of these programs. Then fill them in on the other benefits.

Let me tell you a little bit about afterschool programming, then. These are important programs for all Oregon communities, but especially a community like yours with... [community fact]



## USE MESSAGE MAP

Afterschool programs are critical to Oregon's economic and social well-being. However, less than 20% of Oregon Students are currently served by an afterschool program. There is significant unmet need and so many potential benefits. Afterschool programs:

1. Keep Kids Safe
2. Help Working Families
3. Cultivate Student Success



Ask them for their thoughts on this issue. Encourage them to visit a program in their area. Need to find one? Contact the OregonASK staff. Explain that you will follow-up with them at a convenient time.

# Oregon Afterschool Message Map

**Topline message:** Afterschool programs are critical to Oregon’s economic and social well-being. However, less than 20% of Oregon children are currently being served by an afterschool program. There is significant unmet need and so many potential benefits.

Afterschool is one part of a system of supports children and youth need to be successful. It’s a critical element of any collective impact strategy to most effectively use limited resources for greatest impact.

<h2>Key Message 1</h2> <p>Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe</p>	<h2>Key Message 2</h2> <p>Afterschool Programs Help Working Families</p>	<h2>Key Message 3</h2> <p>Afterschool Programs Cultivate Student Success</p>
<p><b>Supporting Fact 1.1</b></p> <p>The hours between 3 and 6 p.m. are those in which our children and youth are most likely to engage in risky behaviors or be involved in criminal activity.</p> <p>Kids need a safe and supportive place to go when not in school. And while you have them in a safe place, why not engage them in learning, as well?</p>	<p><b>Supporting Fact 2.1</b></p> <p>Working parents make up approximately one third of Oregon’s workforce, with about 80% of parents with a child under the age of 18 participating in the labor force.</p> <p>This means a lot of families have gaps in work and school schedules – meaning there is a lot of need for afterschool and summer programming across the state.</p>	<p><b>Supporting Fact 3.1</b></p> <p>Afterschool programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» improve academic achievement in both reading and math,</li><li>» improve behavior and motivation to learn,</li><li>» improve grades, and</li><li>» increase the likelihood of graduating from high school on time.</li></ul> <p>LOTS of research shows these outcomes are valid.</p>
<p><b>Supporting Fact 1.2</b></p> <p>Afterschool programs have been shown to increase school-day attendance, ensuring that they are safe and supported throughout the day, not just after school.</p> <p>This is especially important for the chronically absent or older youth at risk of dropping out of school.</p>	<p><b>Supporting Fact 2.2</b></p> <p>Lack of supervision after school cost businesses between \$50 billion and \$300 billion annually in lost productivity due to parent concern and time off nationally.</p> <p>Businesses cannot afford parents worrying about unsupervised children and youth during working hours.</p>	<p><b>Supporting Fact 3.2</b></p> <p>55% of Oregon students met their grade-level reading benchmarks, as shown by the Smarter Balanced standardized test.</p> <p>The Oregon Department of Education has identified 92 schools in Oregon that are classified as “priority” or “focus”- schools that need extra support to see improved student outcome.</p>
<p><b>Supporting Fact 1.3</b></p> <p>A study showed that students participating in afterschool programming experienced fewer stops by police.</p> <p>This is especially important because we know that over 80% of youth are unsupervised after school!</p>	<p><b>Supporting Fact 2.3</b></p> <p>Families often cannot afford to take time off to supervise children left alone after school.</p> <p>Perhaps parents lack PTO or work in hourly positions, so taking time off is not an option.</p>	<p><b>Supporting Fact 3.3</b></p> <p>Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Lunch has increased from 34.8% in the 2000-01 school year to 49.7% in the 2015-16 school year. This is an indicator of poverty and is usually lower than the actual poverty rate.</p>

## Parting comments:

- » If the legislator accepts paper materials, make sure to leave behind printed handouts from OregonASK as well as own your program brochure or profile.
- » Encourage them to visit the OregonASK website for more information ([www.oregonask.org](http://www.oregonask.org)) and to contact OregonASK for more information about afterschool in our state, or for help connecting with a program.
- » Encourage them to visit your program! OregonASK can help coordinate a visit.
- » Thank them for making time to meet/speak with you. They are busy, even when the Legislature is not in session.

# Daily Advocacy Activities

You can advocate for your program and afterschool in the time it takes to write an email. There are so many activities you can take on that don't involve lobbying and that require as little time as a phone call to the time it takes to coordinate and conduct a site visit. Here are just a few ideas to regularly advocate for your program.

## Stuff That's Easy to Do

- » Call or email a decision-maker – a member of Congress, your state legislator or a school principal, for example – and tell them you would like them to support afterschool programs (5 min.)  
Don't worry. For members of Congress, you will likely get a staffer on the first call. For others, this can be an easy conversation about how your program is positively impacting kids and families in your community.
- » Invite decision-makers to your afterschool event (10 min.)
- » Write thank you letters to a decision-maker (10 min.)  
Advocacy is about relationships. When a decision-maker supports afterschool in any way, either directly or indirectly, be sure they know about it! Write a handwritten note thanking them for their decision and explain why this is good for the community.
- » Keep your program's social media up-to-date (10 min.)  
This is an effective way to strengthen community advocates for your program. It is much easier to advocate for something you are educated on, and social media is a perfect vehicle for educating people on what you're doing with children and youth!
- » Check out what's going on with the national Afterschool Alliance and OregonASK (10 min.)  
The more you know about afterschool advocacy efforts in the state and across the nation, the more comfortable you will feel taking further action. Find out more at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org) and [www.oregonask.org](http://www.oregonask.org).

## Stuff That Takes a Little More Time and Effort

- » Write a letter to a decision-maker asking them to support afterschool programs (15-30 min.)  
Whether you are a parent or a program provider, the letter should follow a basic template:
  - 1st paragraph states the reason for the letter and who you are
  - 2nd paragraph gives reasons for your position and a specific illustration of those reasons
  - 3rd paragraph summarizes your position and requests a specific action from them
- » Start a letter writing or phone calling campaign (30-90 min.)  
The more letters and phone calls a decision-maker gets on an issue, the more they pay attention. Using the guidelines provided above, ask others you know who are involved in afterschool issues to join you in writing letters and making phone calls. Try hosting a letter writing party using some of the same planning guidelines as you use for a community forum. Email is also a terrific and convenient way to get out information and ask people to join you. Be sure people add their own personal approach to their phone calls and letters—form letters and highly scripted phone calls are not effective advocacy tools.

- » Attend legislative and community meetings in your area (60-90 min.)

When Congress and the Oregon Legislature is not in session, members generally hold a series of meetings across the state or across their district for the purpose of talking with their constituents. These meeting locations and times are generally advertised in newspapers beforehand and can also be distributed via email networks. Attend a “town meeting” and use talking points to speak with your legislator about afterschool issues. Additionally, various groups may hold community meetings or conversations to elicit input from stakeholders. Consider yourself a critical stakeholder and attend the meetings. Speak up about how your program positively impacts children and families and express your support for afterschool in Oregon.

## Stuff That Takes a Good Deal of Time and Effort

- » Coordinate a site visit to your program (a total of 240 min., depending on length of visit)

Seeing your program firsthand is the most effective tool to advocate for your program. Site visits allow the decision-maker to see the intervention – in this case, your program – in action. The decision-maker can ask children and youth their opinions on the program, and, if timed right, parents on how the program supports them.

- » Meeting with decision-makers (15-30 min. plus planning time; total of 120 min.)

Meeting directly with decision-makers is an effective tool in your advocacy arsenal. It allows the decision-maker to put a face and name with the issue. This can take some planning, especially when working with members of Congress. You should first contact the individual via email or telephone to schedule a time that works best for both parties. Plan ahead! Be sure you do your research and be prepared to speak on the talking points. In addition, have promotional or informational materials on hand to provide to the decision-maker, such as a program brochure or OregonASK one-pagers.

# The Importance of Follow-Up

Because this is about building long-term relationships, follow-up is very important. This guidance is not designed as a bunch of one-time meetings, but rather as a long-term relationship development strategy. Thus, it is important that you keep your legislator engaged from time-to-time so they don't forget about the issue. Here are a few ways to keep them in the loop.

- » Send a follow-up note within a week thanking them for meeting with you and highlighting one or two topics that were discussed, especially if they referred you to another person or resource.
- » Sign them up for your agency newsletters (ask them first).
- » Invite them to local or state events.
- » Get them to your program! Coordinate site visits with the legislator or their staff.
- » Attend their events. Many legislators hold regular coffee chats where the public is welcome.
- » Email them every-so-often with interesting news or research on the issue.



# OregonASK

Expanded Learning Partnership

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