

American Rescue Plan Program Highlight & Year 2 (FY2023) Results:

Massachusetts Afterschool and Out-of-School Time
Rebound Grants

Research Brief, January 2024

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Overview

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2, was enacted on March 11, 2021. The ARP Act provides additional funding for school districts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Education portion of ARP is known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER III or ARP ESSER) Fund. The purpose of the ESSER III fund is to support the safe reopening and sustaining safe operations of schools while meeting students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In FY2023, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) awarded year two of the Afterschool & Out-of-School Time Rebound (ASOST-R Subgrant to fund several regional or statewide non-profit entities with the ability to subgrant and provide wraparound support to afterschool and out-of-school time (ASOST) programs. The overall goal of the grant was to help ASOST programs rebound and strengthen the quality of services from impacts of COVID-19 and thereby improve learning and social-emotional outcomes and access to enrichment opportunities for youth impacted as well.¹

After a successful first year (FY2022), Massachusetts based non-profit organizations were eligible to seek continuation grants to carry further their work in Year 2 of the grant cycle. During Rebound Year 2, DESE awarded \$20 million total funds to the seven grantees for re-awarding to program sites. At least 94% of funds had to in turn be awarded as subgrants to ASOST programs. Grantees received 738 applications for funding and awarded sub-grants to 556 programs, which was over 100 more programs funded than in Year 1. Requests for funding from the ASOST programs actually exceeded the amount funded by almost \$9M (see Figures 1 and 2). The approximate range of yearly awards for each subgrant was \$15,000–\$100,000 depending on size, scope of program, and duration (i.e., if a summer component is included).

Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Rebound (ASOST-R) Grantees

Alliance of Massachusetts YMCAs Inc.
 Boston After School & Beyond
 Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership
 Massachusetts Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs
 Springfield Empowerment Zone
 United Way of Central MA
 United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley

Figure 1. Grant Applications Received & Awarded

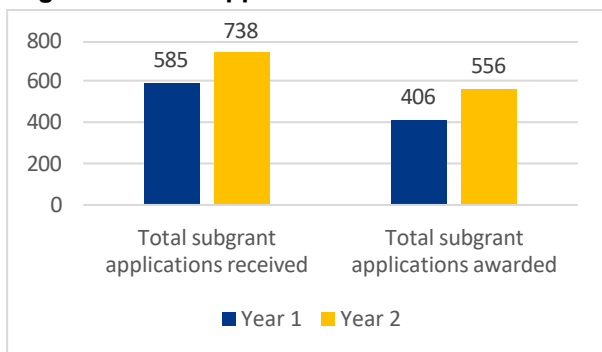
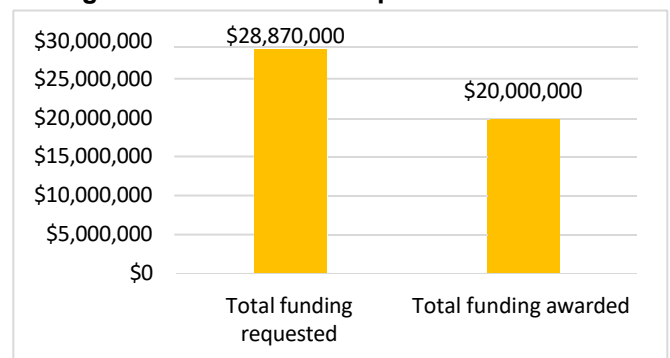


Figure 2. Year 2 Funds Requested & Awarded



As with the first year of this grant, funds awarded to subgrantees could be directed towards: (a) staff costs for administration and oversight of subgrants; (b) staff and/or contractual costs for professional development/training/technical assistance and evaluation activities; (c) supplies/materials (including technology needed), and mileage reimbursement for staff for on-site visits; (d) program coordination and programmatic staff costs (including increasing rates/incentives and costs for recruitment efforts as needed to fill staffing gaps); (e) scholarships for economically disadvantaged students/families on voucher wait lists or unable to afford programming; (f) transportation; (g) materials/supplies for program activities; (h) food/snacks for participants; (i) mental/behavioral health services or counselors; (j) social-emotional learning supports; (k) school/community partner specialist; (l) family engagement liaison; and (m) enrichment/extracurricular opportunities.

¹<https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2022/409-410/>

Collaborating Programs (subgrantees)

Collectively, the seven grantees funded 556 applications and served 130,455 youth: 57,000 in the school year and 73,455 in the summer. This represents an increase of close to 35,000 youth from the first year of the grant. Sixty-two percent (62%) of youth were in elementary school (PK-5th), 22 percent in middle school (6th-8th), and 16 percent in high school (9th-12th). Year 2 showed an increase from year 1 in the percentage of high school youth served. Programs served more elementary and middle school youth during the summer, whereas more high school youth participated during the school year.

Aligning to DESE priority areas, programs served a variety of special populations including students who were identified as low-income (62%), English Language Learners (18%), have disabilities (9%), are in foster care (5%), migratory students (1%), students experiencing homelessness (>1%), and BIPOC students (57%). See Table 1 and Figures 3 and 4 for student details.

Table 1. Year 2 Student Populations Served

Special Populations	# of Students	% of Students	Statewide %
Low Income	80,346	62%	42%
English Language Learners	23,851	18%	12%
Students with Disabilities	11,584	9%	19%
Students in Foster Care	6,131	5%	*
Migratory Students	1,541	1%	*
Students Experiencing Homelessness	795	<1%	*

*State percent not available

Figure 3. Year 2 Students Served by Grade

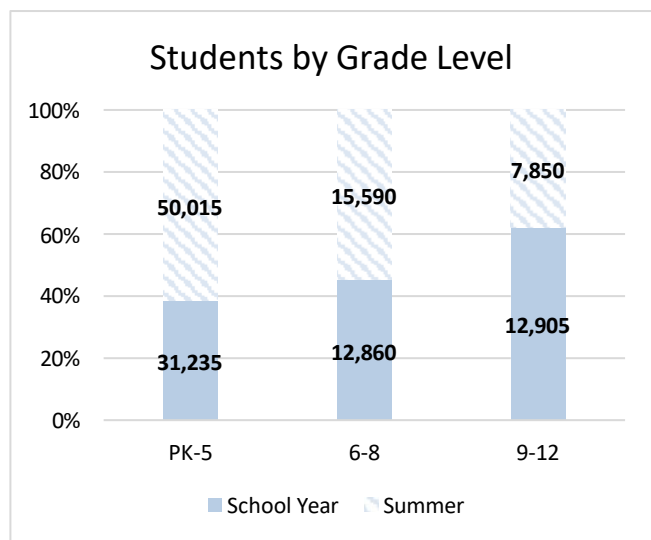
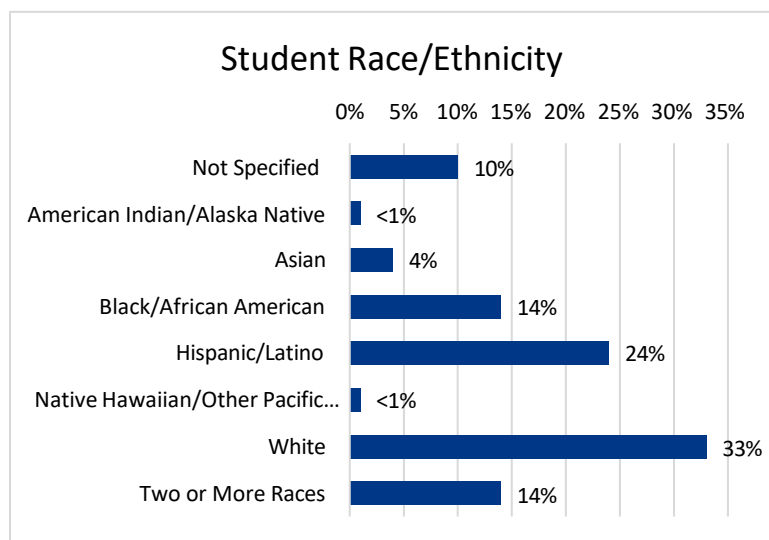


Figure 4. Year 2 Students Served by Race/Ethnicity



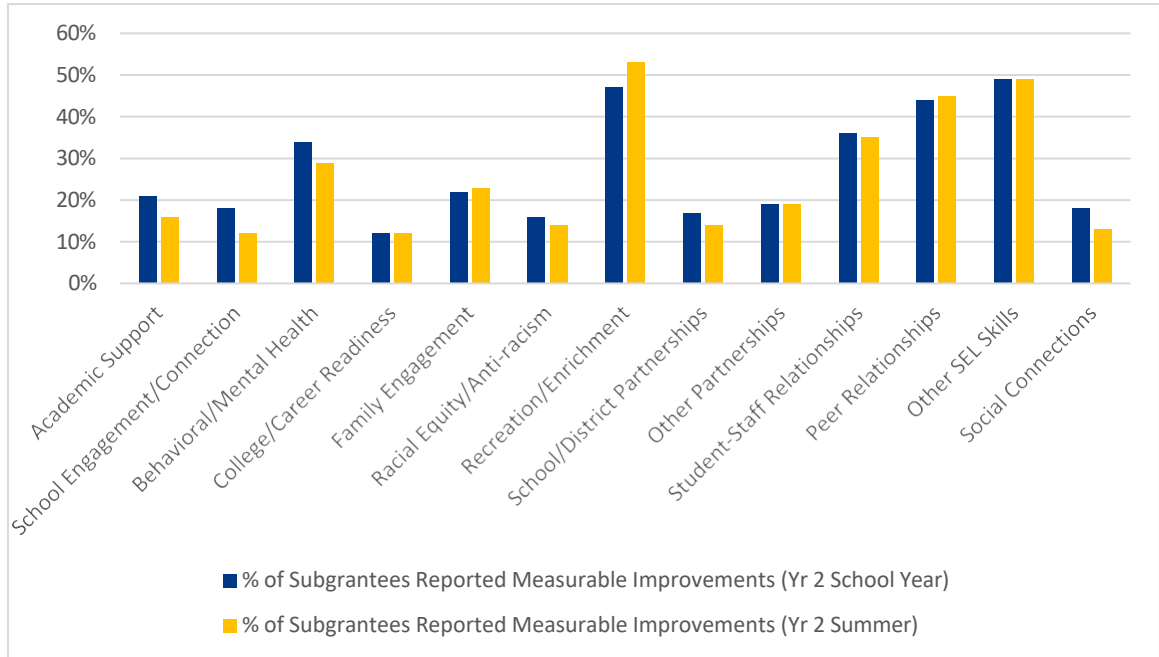
“Through ASOST-R, we have been able to aid organizations to offset increases in costs caused by inflation for things like transportation and have been able to also help programs expand their accessibility particularly through funding salaries for more staff.”

-Grantee Organization

Outcomes

Rebound Year 2 grantees were required to work with their subgrantees to track improvement in selected social-emotional learning (SEL) outcomes. Grantees used a variety of tools to measure progress toward outcomes. Some of the grantees already had in place field-tested measures and approaches to ongoing data collection. Other grantees and subgrantees chose to utilize the tools developed by DESE 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program such as the Survey of Academic Youth Outcomes (SAYO). Subgrantees reported progress toward a variety of program outcomes with success varying between the school year and summer (see Figure 5). Outcome areas with the most programs reporting improvement included recreation/enrichment, peer relationships, and other SEL skills.

Figure 5. FY2023 ASOST-R Subgrantee Outcomes

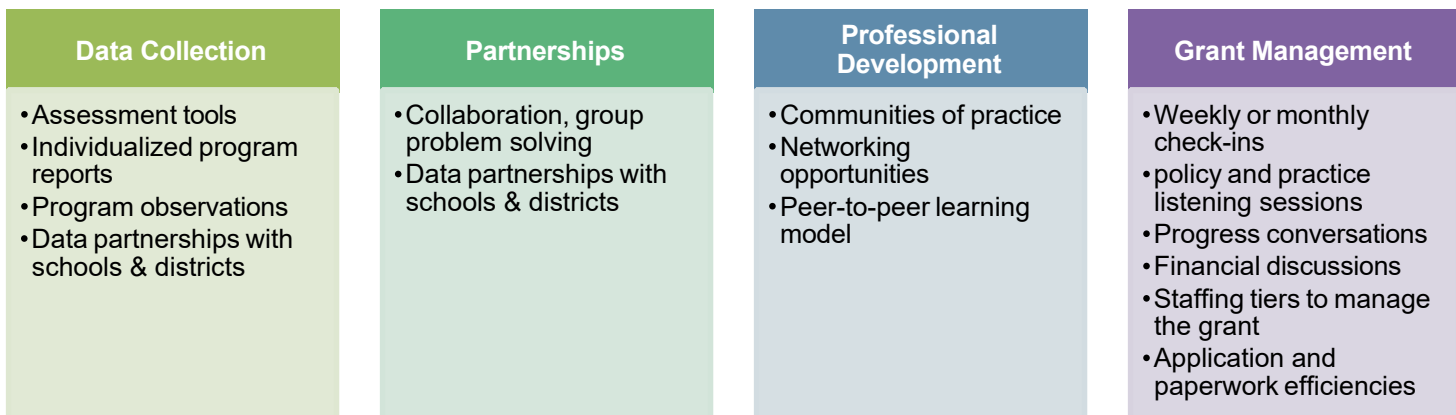


“The biggest takeaway that we gathered from the site visits and narrative reports is that the ASOST-R grant funds were crucial to mitigating three critical issues – the nationwide staffing, childcare, and youth mental health crises.”
-Grantee Organization

Year 2 Innovative Highlights

Based on lessons learned from the first year of the ASOST-Rebound grant, the seven grantees looked to refine and build on successful practices. Grantees highlighted practices that worked well in the areas of data collection, partnerships, professional development, and grant management. Figure 6 illustrates the various innovative highlights grantees implemented in Year 2.

Figure 6. Year 2 Innovative Highlights



Data

The seven grantees are required to implement data/evaluation activities using tools that best fit overall goals of grant recipients and subgrantees. Over the course of the grant, grantees have used a variety of tools and strategies to promote ongoing program improvement. Some grantees used results of data collection to inform professional development opportunities or tailored technical assistance sessions. Other grantees developed data partnerships that helped ease collection and reporting functions. In Year 2, grantees implemented creative strategies to share data back to subgrantees with an aim of ongoing program improvement. One grantee noted, “Data help us dig deeper into every aspect of our work, marshal resources where they’re needed, and stay focused on achieving better outcomes for students.”

Partnerships

The ASOST-R Subgrant awards funds to programs that have or want to strengthen partnerships with local schools and/or other community-based organizations. In concert, the seven grantees utilized creative partnerships to carry out their work on this grant including partnerships with schools and school districts, organizations to provide training, connecting their funded programs to national resources, and working with data partners to provide further analysis and support.

Assessment Tools & Reporting

Subgrantees collect various data and utilize individualized reports to examine their data, identify action steps, and incorporate findings into their programs.

Data Sharing with Schools/Districts

Sharing student information with schools helps ease the logistics of program enrollment and allows for deeper analysis on participation and positive youth outcomes (e.g. attendance rates, reading and math scores, and behavioral outcomes). It also provides a look at participation rates and demographic served by program.

“Participants assessed and discussed their current state, ideal future state and strategies they planned to enact during the grant period. Many participants saw their proposed strategies in practice by other [programs] and were able to compare needs, garner best practices, and/or innovate new approaches together through this collaborative community.”
-Grantee Organization

Professional Development

The seven grantees are tasked with providing ongoing coaching, training/professional development, and support for their network of subgrantees. Grantees provided training and technical assistance related to the Request for Proposals (RFP) process, invoicing, data collection, and reporting.

Some of the grantees also contracted with other nonprofit training providers to offer a menu of topics that aligned with subgrantee program and staffing development needs. The funded programs were also invited to participate in professional development webinars offered and managed by NIOST, some in partnership with other national partners. Broadly, programs had opportunity for professional development in:

- Behavior Management
- Trauma-informed Practices
- Program Quality Tools
- Belonging and Inclusivity
- Mental Health
- Culturally Competent Programming, and
- Disability Inclusion

Communities of Practice

Funded programs participate in Communities of Practice to:

- network and connect with staff from all leadership levels.
- collaborate in statewide brainstorming, problem-solving, idea generation, and resource sharing.
- gather best practices from peers.

Grant Management

Experience with the grant process led grantees to implement a variety of practices in managing grants and program logistics. Most grantees cited streamlined administrative processes to ease the burden on subgrantees, for example, the ability to complete forms on phones and the use of data systems to collect information and signatures. Grantees held regular check-ins to maintain close communication, and listening sessions helped to gain feedback and identify priority areas.

Regular Check-ins

All grantees implemented regular check-ins with the subgrantees at varying frequency, some monthly, some weekly. The purpose of these check-ins was to:

- establish/build relationships
- set a tone for collaboration
- explain expectations of the grant
- offer space for questions & feedback

ASOST-Rebound Spring Conference

Rebound and Reposition Your Thinking

In partnership, the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership and NIOST hosted a conference on April 28th, 2023 at Devens Commons Center for approximately 200 program staff working in ASOST-Rebound Grant funded programs. This conference provided an opportunity for participants to learn from other subgrantees on the variety of ways the Rebound Funds have been used to enhance program implementation and quality as part of the state's COVID-19 recovery response. The conference leveraged a peer-to-peer learning model, centered the expertise and experience of program providers, and helped connect programs from different regions of the state who may otherwise not have the opportunity to learn from one another. Eighteen sessions were presented by program leaders and staff on topics which included best practices in curriculum, data collection, program evaluation, program management and finance, social-emotional learning, diversity, equity and inclusion, peer relationships, partnerships, and staff/youth recruitment.



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Press Corner

Several grantees were in the press this year for their efforts around supporting the field with ASOST-Rebound funds.

- [Funding Slated for Several Jamaica Plain Youth Programs](#)
- [Potential Funding Coming to Several Eastie Programs](#)
- [Boston After School & Beyond Awards \\$2 Million to Sixty-eight Afterschool Programs to Provide Enrichment](#)
- [United Way disburses grants for out-of-school opportunities](#)
- [\\$1M in grants announced for 15 Springfield summer programs](#)
- [Grant will provide social emotional support for Springfield students in Empowerment Zone](#)