**2016-2017 Statewide Strategic Plan for Expanded Learning Opportunities in Texas**

**Presented by the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council to the Commissioner of Education, Office of the Governor, and the 84th Texas Legislature**

**November 1, 2014**

**Expanded Learning Opportunities**

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# Introduction

Senate Bill (SB) 503, passed by the 83rd Texas Legislature and codified in the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 33, Subchapter G, created the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Council to study issues concerning ELO and develop a statewide plan with recommendations for ELO programs for public school students in Texas. The Texas Commissioner of Education appointed thirteen members who studied and analyzed topics related to the legislative directive and developed a statewide plan with recommendations for the 2016-2017 biennium. This report presents the Council’s findings and recommendations.

**Texas ELO Council Statutory Requirements**

* Study issues related to creating safe places for children outside of the regular school day
* Study issues related to improving the academic success of students who participate in expanded learning opportunities programs
* Study issues related to assisting working families
* Study current research and best practices related to meaningful expanded learning opportunities
* Analyze the availability of state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students
* Analyze the unmet needs for state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students
* Analyze opportunities to create incentives for businesses to support expanded learning opportunities programs for public school children
* Analyze opportunities to maximize charitable support for public and private partnerships for ELO for public school children
* Analyze opportunities to promote STEM in ELO for public school students
* Study the future workforce needs of this state’s businesses and other employers

# Definition of Expanded Learning

Texas statute defines expanded learning as opportunities provided to public school students during an extended school day, an extended school year, or a structured learning program that occurs before school, after school, or during summer hours. In practice, expanded learning has no single clear definition or profile for programming, although some combination of common characteristics can be found. Overall, ELO programs commonly consist of intentional, safe and structured activities for school-aged youth that complement the regular school day such as: engaging students in project based learning, mentoring, tutoring, and an array of physical activity, academic support, community service projects or educational enrichment in one or more subjects.

ELO programs are most often supported by partnerships between school districts, community and faith-based groups, youth serving organizations, cultural institutions, and/or government agencies to provide a safe place for students to strengthen academic skills, develop social and emotional skills, participate in college and career awareness and exploration activities, and work with hands-on projects that complement course curriculum. The highest quality ELO programs engage parents, siblings and community partners and provide youth leadership development, student voice and choice in programming. (United Way Worldwide, 2012)

ELO programs encompass two general models:

1. Extended learning time (ELT) models add time to the regular school day, school week, or school year; and
2. Out-of-school time (OST) programs that operate before school, after school, or during the summer when the regular school day is not in session.

While the effectiveness of both models relies on the quality of programming, each supports safe communities, engaged learning, and a strong Texas workforce. In the wake of SB 503, proponents of both models have come together to analyze research, study existing program models, and make recommendations for expanded learning opportunities in Texas.

# Methodology

To accomplish its charge, the ELO Council was active in several forums. The full ELO Council convened in person on three occasions, participated in working sessions and webinars with subject matter experts, and shared the most current and informative resources and materials throughout the process. Working sessions consisted of smaller groups of council members and assigned planning staff, but all members were invited and several participated in all three workgroups. The workgroups were structured to most efficiently address the statutory requirements of SB 503 and non-statutory topics that the Council requested and prioritized.

The three council workgroups were titled:

1) Scope and Access,

2) Resources and Support, and

3) Programs and Services.

The Texas Education Agency, with staff support from the Southwest Educational Development Labs (SEDL) and Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST), facilitated several work sessions. Each workgroup examined topics related to the scope of work, created problem statements, studies research, identified findings, developed recommendations to address problem statements, and outlined a rationale for each preliminary set of recommendations for the full council.

In developing the recommendations, the ELO council considered multiple additional topics including:

* Engaging Texas businesses,
* Engaging private philanthropy,
* Factors that contribute to successful programs, and
* Standards for high quality programs.

The council’s workgroup sessions and strategic discussions resulted in a large scope of findings that were carefully considered and developed into the specific recommendations in this report.

Because the scope of findings was quite large, the work products of each committee were combined, recommendations were cross-walked between committees, and a set of combined preliminary recommendations with supporting rationale was reviewed by the full council. The council deliberated on the combined research, findings and preliminary recommendations in preparation for developing this report.

**Key Findings of the Texas ELO Council**

* High quality ELO programs provide positive safe environments that benefit Texas’ students, families, and communities.
* High quality ELO programs are uniquely positioned to have positive impacts on economic development, workforce productivity, and closing the academic achievement gap, particularly in in smaller or rural communities and in schools with high concentrations of high-poverty students.
* Many Texas students, especially those in smaller rural communities or who live in poverty, have limited or no access to high-quality ELO programs.
* High quality programs demonstrate positive results by offering:
* school-community partnerships
* engaged learning environments
* family engagement
* diverse and prepared staff
* intentional programming
* participation and access to otherwise unavailable programs
* safety, health, and wellness components
* continuous programmatic assessment and improvement (Afterschool Alliance 2012)
* Non-academic ELO programs build important soft skills that have a positive impact on academic and employment outcomes.
* Cost of programs depends on several factors including the services offered, age of students, and operating hours.
* There is currently no dedicated Texas state funding stream for ELO programming, limiting the ability to document programs and expand high quality efforts.
* Statewide ELO program standards are the most efficient approach to provide a framework for high quality programs.
* A statewide Texas ELO Initiative would increase awareness of and access to ELO programs and have positive benefits for Texas.

# Background and Research Presentation

## High Quality ELO Programs in Texas

One of the tasks of the ELO Council was to assess the current levels of program availability in Texas. Without a centralized statewide resource for ELO programs, it is difficult to determine the number and types of programs operating; however, it is clear that there is a gap in high quality ELO services. In 2009, a statewide study found that about 15 percent of Texas K-12 students participated in afterschool programs and that 51 percent would have participated if a program were available in the community. (Afterschool Alliance 2009) Practitioners and researchers have attributed the gap to a lack of funding availability. This assertion is supported by recent research showing that existing federal and local resources to support high-quality ELO programs were insufficient to meet demand. (Afterschool Alliance 2012)

An exploration of high quality ELO programs in Texas requires an examination of existing funding sources for those programs. By far, the largest existing source of public funding, and the only dedicated source of funding, is the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21stCCLC) program. This program generates about $100 million annually and funds the state’s Texas Afterschool Centers on Education (ACE) program, one of the largest statewide afterschool programs in the country. The Texas ACE program is administered by TEA and is funded through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative of the U.S. Department of Education.

Other federal programs (e.g., No Child Left Behind Title I, Part A; Community Development Block Grant, and the Child Care Development Fund) allow certain expenditures that can benefit ELO programs, but the primary purpose is not ELO programs. In addition, there are some examples in Texas communities where ELO programs are supported in local budgets or benefit from private funding initiatives, but those programs are difficult to identify and the funding is often highly competitive and short term.

Even with the sizeable Texas ACE program, the demand for programs and resources remains high. In FY2014, the Texas ACE program served 189,041 students in 174 Texas school districts. This represents only 3.7 percent of all Texas students and 6.2 percent of all Texas students living in poverty. The demand is expected to increase as the percent of students living in poverty has risen by 38.8 percent over the past ten years, two times more than the 19.3 percent increase in the general public school population. (Texas Education Agency 2014) It is critical to build the state’s capacity to reach the growing number of students and families in Texas.

The positive outcomes of Texas ACE program are clear. A recent external statewide evaluation of the Texas ACE-21st Century Community Learning Centers found the following when program participants were compared to nonparticipants:

* Program participation for students in grades 9-10 was associated with higher scores in reading/English language arts and mathematics on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)
* Participants in grades 6 to12 had fewer disciplinary incidents
* Participation in grades 4 to11 was associated with fewer school-day absences
* Participants in grades 7 to11 who attended 30 days or more and participants in grades 4 and 5 and 7 to 11 attending 60 days or more had an increased likelihood of grade promotion. High school students attending 60 days or more had a 97 percent chance of being promoted to the next grade level.

The evaluation also revealed the following:

* Program quality matters. Centers implementing higher-quality practices were correlated with greater reductions in disciplinary referrals and higher rates of grade promotion that programs less apt to implement these practices.
* Connections with other organizations and agencies within the community greatly enhance afterschool centers programming options.

Implementation of the Texas ACE strategic plan and Texas ACE programming statewide has resulted in benefits to the program and the students served. Some benefits include: higher quality programs, full time professional site coordinators and center directors, intentional lessons that connect out-of-school time learning with the regular school day, skills to serve students who are at-risk of dropping out-of-school, and evidence from a strong external evaluation that Texas ACE is making a difference. Texas ACE has developed compelling evidence that through its strategic focus on quality, its programs are using out-of-school time to improve and achieve success. (TEA 2013)

## Cost Effectiveness

The cost of funding programs varies depending on the level of services, size of the program, and other factors. However, there are a few studies and statistics that provide a general range of costs. Grants for Texas ACE sites range from $50,000 to $2.2 million, depending on the size of the program. Grantee budgets for fixed and operational costs are capped, as is the cost per pupil, which is currently set at $1,100 per pupil. All programs must comply with strict operating and service standards.

National studies also provide some reference points for program cost. One of the first and largest national studies included 111 high quality out-of-school time programs. The study found that programs cost between $790 and $2,260 per pupil, depending on the length of the program, operating structure, and grade levels served. The least costly programs:

* Operated in and by the school during the school year;
* Served 151-200 participants daily during the school year;
* Served younger children; or
* Operated only during the summer. (Baldwin, et.al, 2009)

Programs that served teens or that served all grade levels tended to cost more. The largest cost driver was staff salaries and benefits. Summer programs were less costly on an hourly basis because they operated for a full day, but summer programs can also be more expensive overall than after school programs. (Baldwin, et.al, 2009)

## Cost per Pupil by Program Type

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Program** | **Cost per Pupil Measure** | **Cost per Pupil Enrolled** |
| Texas ACE | Annual maximum allowed per pupil | $1,100\* |
| Out-of-School Time Programs  National Study (Baldwin, et.al, 2009) | School year (K-8) | $2,640 |
| Summer (K-8) | $1,000 |
| School Year (Teen) | $1,880 |
| Summer (Teen) | $790 |
| Extended Learning Time Programs National Study  (Kaplan, et.al, 2013) | Longer day | $290 – $1,695  (depending on the amount of time added) |

\* The Texas ACE program requires separate budgets for per pupil costs and fixed costs, such as salaries and travel expenses. Both per pupil costs and fixed costs are capped. All programs per pupil costs are capped at $1,100 per pupil. The cap on fixed budgets depends on the size of the program and other factors determined by TEA and federal regulations.

It is important to note that many OST programs receive non-public revenue that is critical to supporting the programs. Baldwin, et.al, found that programs typically benefit from three to five sources of public and non-public funding. In-kind contributions accounted for an average of one-fifth of a program’s expenditures. (Baldwin, et.al, 2009)

Extended time models, which offer longer regular school days or school years, also vary in cost by the types of programming. A recent study by the Wallace Foundation noted that all of the ELT programs examined resulted in a higher cost, but the increase was cost-efficient in relation to the additional time. The cost of adding expanded time in five schools ranged from $1,695 per child for 540 added hours to just $290 per child for 132 added hours. The schools in this study added an average of nearly 30 percent more time to the school calendar. (Kaplan, et.al, 2013)

Comparisons for state level investment in high quality ELO are difficult because of Texas’ large size and diverse population. In California, a state similar to Texas in these aspects, Proposition 49 guarantees $550 million in state revenue annually for expanded learning programs that complement the $120 million federal 21st CCLC funding. This state’s investment totals more than all other states combined. California has taken a coordinated approach to building the states capacity through developing common infrastructure for federal and state ELO funding streams. (California Department of Education 2014)

Boys and Girls Clubs across the nation have demonstrated positive return on investment for their popular ELO programs. In Arizona, one regional club network serving 31 clubs and 21,000 families determined that every dollar spent generated $19.33 of positive economic impacts for the community. This translates into hundreds of millions of dollars for one regional club network. Other regional networks across the nation have similar findings. (VSB&GC 2011)

In addition, there are costs to the state for building a statewide infrastructure for expanding and supporting ELO in Texas. For example, programs must be managed, database capacities must be leveraged and adapted for ELO, professional development must be provided, resource materials must be developed, and programs must be held accountable through quality assurance, program evaluation, technical assistance and management strategies. These administrative and statewide leadership costs would need to be components of any statewide initiative.

## The Critical Role of Infrastructure

High-quality, cost-effective, and affordable programs, require a solid and sustainable infrastructure at the local, state, and federal levels. The Texas ACE program provides infrastructure to the federal program, but that infrastructure must expand to accommodate more high quality programs. In looking at other states, California emerged as a state with similar scale to Texas and that has built a statewide infrastructure to compliment its federal initiatives. The state made a significant investment of $500 million annually to strategically align the state program with the federal ELO investment built by the 21st CCLC program and create a centralized program. Research on the California initiative demonstrated positive impacts on school attendance, dropout rates, juvenile crime and academic success. (California Department of Education 2014)Building infrastructure requires strategic partnerships and proven models. In Texas, many opportunities exist to build on local initiatives in cities and regions across the state. There are practical examples in which former Texas ACE grantees have sustained ELO programming to some extent after grant funding ended by creating braided local funding streams and community partnerships.

Texas has a growing number of local government bodies and private foundations that are willing to help fund ELO programs. However, a state ELO investment is essential to bring to scale a meaningful statewide infrastructure for ELO programming. There are many Texas students who are low income, at risk of dropping out of school and who are most in need who do not have ELO programming available or offered to the scale necessary to meet the need.

Infrastructure must include state-supported quality standards, which provide the necessary framework for high quality programs. Without standards, there is no baseline from which to operate and replicate high quality programs. In Texas, the Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST) is working with OST programs statewide to adopt quality standards, but a comprehensive coordinated approach that addresses the full statewide landscape of ELO is the most efficient approach.

## Out of School Time Quality Standards

Quality standards encourage ELO programs, especially out of school time programs, and the larger systems within which they operate, to employ proven high quality practices that guide implementation and continuous improvement. Standards of quality are often used alongside of systems of program accountability that integrate a set of quality standards, systems of professional development opportunities for OST practitioners, and measurement tools for program evaluation. (Granger, 2008; Hayes et al., 2009; Simkin et al., 2013).

In Texas, TXPOST is currently working to refine a set of statewide standards for OST programming that reflect stakeholder input gathered through a strategic development process. In parallel efforts, TEA’s is working collaboratively toward implementing quality standards for the federal Texas ACE OST program.

TXPOST has proposed a rubric of eight Program Quality Standards for OST Programs in the following categories:

* Safe Environments, Health and Nutrition
* Relationships and Interactions
* Programming and Activities
* Diversity and Inclusion in Programming
* Family Engagement and Community Partnerships
* School Linkages
* Administration, Organization and Staff Development
* Programming Sustainability, Evaluation, and Awareness

Several of the topics addressed in these standards and TEA’s federal program initiative align with the ELO strategies in the following report section. The adoption of standards by a statewide initiative under TEA would formalize a best practice framework for all programs in Texas regardless of funding source and ultimately increase student success as a result of participation in these programs.

**High Quality: What is it and why is it important?**

High quality ELO programs are those that can demonstrate that they have fully implemented program elements that have been proven to increase positive student outcomes. Those standards usually apply to out of school time programs rather than extended day programs, but could be applied to either. High quality standards have been adopted in 33 states, either through state-sponsored programs or statewide organizations that coordinate OST partnerships.

## ELO Research Summary

One of the primary drivers of ELO programs is their suitability for offering safe places for students during traditional non-school hours. National research demonstrates that the afternoon hours between three o’clock and six o’clock on school days are the peak hours for behaviors that put children at risk of dropping out of school or becoming involved in the justice system. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014) Keeping students engaged in positive activities during these hours can reduce the likelihood of risky behaviors and becoming a victim of crime, in addition to providing all of the benefits that ELO programs offer.

Regular access to programs helps to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their higher-income peers. Research shows that participation in high-quality ELO programs yields positive academic outcomes. (Grossman, et.al, 2009) When properly implemented, ELO programs skillfully reinforce literacy and mathematics for students who are struggling by providing extra time and differentiated methods of instruction, such as project based learning activities, to keep students engaged in school while building skills and progressing toward graduation, college and the workplace. Data also indicates that summer ELO programs are critical to help students retain knowledge from the school year, help to close the achievement gap, and to prevent summer learning loss. (National Summer Learning Association, 2009)

Learning supports in ELO programs allow educators, community organizations, employers and volunteers to engage students in new and productive ways that spark student interest, support learning, and keep students engaged. Meaningful student engagement is essential in order to build the relationships and infrastructure required to deliver high-quality life experiences. In high-quality programs students are meaningfully engaged with each other and with qualified educators, adult advocates, youth development professionals, employers, college students, professors, and volunteers from the community. Students participate in activities that encourage inquiry, responsibility, problem solving, solid work habits, creativity, mastery of content, and a sense of belonging.

**Spotlight on Programs**

In one Texas ACE program in the Rio Grande Valley, high school students are earning nurse’s aide certifications, or Certified Nurse’s Aide (CNA), during afterschool time through a partnership with an area college, and students are being hired into positions through local partnerships with healthcare employers. During the Texas ACE program, students study further career opportunities and postsecondary options in the health care professions to extend their high school graduation planning and postsecondary education vision beyond entry level employment.

Programs that extend the regular school day or year (ELT) in particular have been shown to have a positive effect on the literacy achievement of students performing below standards, especially those in suburban school districts. The effect on math achievement was not as strong, but it was significant across many types of settings. (Durlak and Weissberg 2010)

The types and characteristics of the ELT programs make a difference on outcomes. In general, ELT programs are effective when (Kidron and Lindsey 2013):

* Certified teachers deliver the increased learning time academic instruction
* Program facilitators use traditional instruction
* Program facilitators use experiential instruction
* Specific student subgroups are targeted such as:
  + - Students struggling to meet grade-level standards in English language arts
    - Students with ADHD

There is now a solid base of research and best practices clearly showing that quality ELO programs are making a positive difference for students, schools and communities. (Peterson 2013) Students in ELO programs are not only safer or less at-risk during peak hours for juvenile crime after school, but they are also developing critical life skills and extending learning in areas of personal interest as well in core academic content that will serve them as they grow. These profound experiences are an important part of youth development and education, particularly for those students who are struggling, who are at risk of dropping out of school, or for whom resources for enrichment opportunities are limited. The ability to access high-quality ELO programming is critical for students of all backgrounds in order enrich learning experiences and to develop skills that will benefit them in preparing for adulthood – including college and the workplace.

## Economic and Workforce Development

The cost of ELO investment is offset by their potential impact on local economies and build the Texas workforce. Businesses have invest in local programs that support workforce careers and build or strengthen partnerships with government, private, and non-profit organizations while K-12 students explore post-secondary opportunities build strong portfolios that align with workforce needs and earn diplomas under one of the state’s five Foundation School Program endorsement areas. ELO activities are designed to reinforce coursework and contribute to workforce development that is age-appropriate for each grade level such as through career interest inventories, career awareness, career exploration, mentoring, internships and even career certifications in high-demand fields in the Texas workforce.

Two of the largest and fastest growing career sectors in Texas are in the energy, medical, and technology. Recognizing these trends, Texas is actively building the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce skills that will contribute to the state’s economy now and in the future. According to the Texas Comptroller of Public Account, “the Texas economy will demand more than 715,000 STEM jobs by 2018, up from nearly 585,000 in 2008.” ([www.thetexaseconomy.org](http://www.thetexaseconomy.org)) This represents an 18 percent increase in demand over a ten year period. Meeting these demands in the future requires providing relevant education options to students today. STEM education in ELO programs can increase both interest in and aptitude for STEM fields and have positive impacts on students and Texas communities well into the future.

Currently, the federally-funded Texas ACE program supports afterschool sites where students engage in hands-on learning that promotes STEM education including: math camps, energy industry camps, weather and flight projects, robotics, wind and solar projects, computer programming including game and software development. Several programs are taught by volunteer engineers from business and industry, providing mentoring and access to real-world applications of STEM education. These types of experiences reinforce learning during the school day and strategically support students with high school and postsecondary graduation planning that will impact the economy and Texas workforce.

Many working parents rely solely on ELO programs, not only to keep their children safe, but also to maintain their work hours and keep their jobs. Census data estimates that 68 percent of Texas school-age children live in households where all parents are in the workforce and, therefore, are more likely to be away from the home during peak hours for risky behavior. (U.S. Census Bureau 2011) ELO programs have the secondary effect of allowing employees to focus on their work knowing that their children are safe and engaged.

In these programs, students develop skills that are valued by employers such as communication skills, leadership qualities, strong character, and other soft skills needed for success in the workplace. High quality ELO programs provide enriching pre-employment experiences for youth such as career exploration, job shadowing, field trips to colleges and internships with employers in chosen fields of interest. Many students are exposed to hands-on learning leading to skill beneficial in STEM fields or healthcare career pathways. Further, ELO programs build the important softer skills that are required for success in the workplace such as communication, working in teams, project management, and leadership.

It is important to build capacity for businesses to support high quality ELO programs, not only as a future workforce investment, but to increase productivity of current employees. A study at Texas A&M University’s Bush School of Government and Public Service is taking an important step in this direction. According to a presentation to the ELO Council, the study recognizes that gaps exist in understanding employees logistics problems regarding work hours and their school-aged children. Gaps also exist in understanding productivity problems for employers when ELO programs are absent. The study will examine Texas employers attitudes toward ELO programs, document existing private sector initiatives related to staff productivity during out of school time, and identify incentives for employers to support programs. Initial results of this study are expected in fall 2014. (Morrison 2014)

# Texas ELO Statewide Strategic Plan

Overview of Recommendations

The ELO Council’s recommendations are centered on creating a statewide **Texas ELO Initiative** to be administered by the Texas Education Agency. The vision, goals, strategies, activities and measures for the initiative are outlined in the Texas ELO Statewide Strategic Plan.

The Texas ELO Initiative consists of four components with corresponding goals, objectives, strategies and activities: 1) state-funded competitive grants that promote high quality ELO programs in Texas; 2) program implementation, training, and technical assistance; 3) creating statewide partnerships to develop the state’s capacity for high quality programs; and 4) coordinated evaluation of Texas ELO programs.

The ELO Council recommends that the Texas Legislature dedicate funds in the Texas Education Agency’s 2016-2017 biennial appropriation for the purpose of implementing the four recommended components of the Texas ELO Initiative.

## Vision

Involve Texas communities, schools, families, businesses, and post-secondary education institutions to increase access to a coordinated network of high quality ELO programs that are built on a common set of high quality program standards that increases opportunities for all students to be successful and ultimately contribute to closing the achievement gap and supporting a strong Texas economy.

## Goals, Strategies, Objectives, Activities and Measures

**Goal 1. Expand opportunities for Texas students to participate in high quality ELO programs.**

Strategy 1.1. Administer high quality state-funded competitive grants to Texas school districts and community-based organizations to provide ELO programs that target underserved students in geographically diverse locations including rural, urban, and suburban campuses as well as communities with high rates of juvenile crime.

Objective 1.1. Provide the necessary framework and support to serve the Texas students and families in quality programs.

Activity 1.1.1. Develop and administer grants supporting high quality ELO programs that operate within the following minimum framework elements:

* + - * + Achieve designation as a high quality ELO program as set forth in an ELO program blueprint for implementing high quality standards.
        + Increase access to high quality ELO programs for students that would benefit the most and otherwise would not receive services
        + Provide supplemental developmentally appropriate activities that complement, rather than replicate, the basic education program either by providing out of school time, extended day, or extended year programs.
        + Expose youth to career and post-secondary opportunities aligned with the five endorsement areas in the Foundation School Program and high-demand career fields.
        + Create opportunities for local employers to engage in ELO programming through grade level appropriate activities such as mentorship, volunteer-led hands-on learning instruction, and internship options for secondary students that are based on the needs of the labor markets.
        + Before school, after school, and/or summer programs that offer hands-on learning experiences that complement curriculum offered during the regular school day
        + Address essential ‘soft skills’ such as communication, character education, leadership skills and youth developmental opportunities that are essential for success in school, careers and in life

Measures:

* Average cost per student
* Average cost per program
* Increase in academic outcomes
* Total students served
* Total number of programs
* Total at-risk students
* Program hours per student

**Goal 2: Make available high quality materials and resources for programs in Texas.**

Strategy 2.1. Engage a qualified ELO training and technical assistance provider to implement grant-related activities that support high quality programs.

Objective 2.1. Increase the number of programs in communities across Texas that have access to high quality program resources and hands on technical assistance. Technical assistance is critical to provide programs with the necessary individual and program-wide hands-on guidance, networking opportunities, and the highest quality resources available on the scale required for statewide impact.

Activity 2.1.1. Plan and convene an annual statewide summit to bring together practitioners, program administrators, the business community, philanthropy, and policy makers in the interest of building the capacity of local and regional intermediaries to make well-informed judgments on how best to serve the needs of communities. Forums would be coordinated to include all stakeholders.

Activity 2.1.2 Coordinate professional learning communities where pilot program grantees can receive program information and training on relevant topics such as the Texas ELO Initiative Blueprint, high quality ELO program standards, intentional program content, building partnerships, parent engagement, program evaluation, and sustainability.

Activity 2.1.3. Create a Blueprint for the Texas ELO Initiative Blueprint for high quality programs across Texas to achieve a state designation.

Activity 2.1.4. Develop and make available an array of high quality useful hands-on best practice resources and tools for school districts and providers

Activity 2.1.5. Provide ongoing technical assistance to ELO pilot grantees in order to achieve program goals

Activity 2.1.6. Develop a statewide annual report on ELO program activities under this initiative, including documenting the ELO program design, implementation, gaps, and progress.

Measures:

* + - * Number of conference attendees
      * Number of non-school conference attendees
      * Number programs seeking designation
      * Number of programs provided technical assistance
      * Statewide training and technical assistance events

**Goal 3: Expand partnerships and programs on the statewide level.**

Strategy 3.1. Engage a qualified organization to provide leadership and coordination on the statewide level to expand partnerships and programs throughout Texas and increase access to existing federal, local, and private high quality initiatives.

Objective 3.1. Identify existing gaps and document the costs associated with serving students in ELO programs.

Activity 3.1.1. Develop and maintain current data on the availability of expanded learning opportunities in communities across the state to ultimately help parents locate programs; funders and policymakers determine needs/gaps for resources; and providers locate partners and vendors.

Activity 3.1.2. Conduct an economic impact analysis of the educational, social, and financial benefits of high-quality ELO programs for producing a highly educated workforce and attracting and retaining businesses in our state.

Objective 3.2. Increase the number of programs and providers that have access and use high quality ELO program standards and other program opportunities, such as voluntary certification for staff, optional designations for programs.

Activity 3.2.1. Develop, modify and adopt quality standards for both Extended Learning Time (ELT) and Out of School Time (OST)

Activity 3.2.2. Develop a designation process in coordination with TEA as an opportunity for programs to be recognized for meeting the Texas ELO Initiative quality standards

Activity 3.2.3. Develop a professional ELO certificate program that supports ELO program standards adopted by the pilot grant program and work with appropriate agencies to authorize incorporating those ELO certification opportunities into secondary curricula, including career technical education (CTE) courses, as a type of endorsement

**Goal 4: Identify the characteristics of Texas ELO programs that have the most impact on students including: academic achievement, character development, workforce readiness, economic development, and assisting working families.**

Strategy 4.1. Conduct a program evaluation through a qualified external organization.

Objective 4.1. Document the design, implementation, and outcomes of Texas ELO Initiative programs.

Activity 4.1.1. Collect data and evaluate programmatic outcomes including those related to academic success, social and emotional skills, and workforce/college preparedness

Activity 4.2.2. Analyze data to document the program characteristics that have the most impact on outcomes in order to sustain and replicate high-quality programs

Activity 4.2.3. Coordinate with the Texas ACE program appropriate to align data collection and assessment of federal and state initiatives

In addition to program-specific impacts, all of the activities proposed under this strategic initiative are expected to contribute to **achievable statewide impacts**. Specifically, it is expected that the Texas ELO Initiative will lead to the following measurable impacts:

*Infrastructure/capacity Impacts:*

* An increase in programs implementing ELO quality standards
* An increase in access to ELO programs in all areas of the state
* An increased number of students and families served by high-quality ELO programs
* An increase in the number of at-risk and underserved students served by ELO programs
* An increase in the level of program access to non-public sources of revenue
* An increase in the level of school and community partnerships
* An increase in the number of businesses and volunteers engaged in ELO programs
* An increase in assistance for working parents

*Student outcomes:*

* A positive impact on college and workforce readiness indicators
* A positive impact on graduation and promotion
* A positive impact on indicators of academic achievement
* A positive impact on student attendance
* A positive impact on youth behavior indicators
* A positive impact on measures specific to the unique services offered by each program

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# Appendix 1: ELO Council Presentation Resources by Date Presented

**May 2, 2014**

*Texas 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Texas ACE* presented byKristen Nafziger, Founding Partner, EDVANCE Research

*Texas Out-of-School Time Landscape* presented by Molly Clayton, Executive Director, Texas Partnership for Out of School Time

*Opportunities for Texas State and Local Leaders to Leverage Afterschool and Summers to Expand Learning* presented by Terry K. Peterson, Ph.D., Senior Fellow to the Riley Education Institute and College of Charleston and Advisor to the CS Mott Foundation

*Making Sense of the Out of School Time Challenge* presented by Jennifer Knowles Morrison, Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University

**July 15, 2014**

*Expanded Learning Time: Redesigning the School Schedule to Better Meet the Needs of Students* presented by Blair Brown, Vice President of Advocacy & Communications, National Center on Time and Learning

*Why Summer Matters* presented by Sarah Pitcock, Chief Executive Officer, National Summer Learning Association

**September 29, 2014**

*“TBD”* presented by Jennifer Knowles Morrison, Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M

# Appendix 2: Topics Studied by ELO Council Workgroups

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| --- | --- |
| **1 – ELO Scope and Access** | **T1. Study issues related to creating safe places for children outside of the regular school day** |
| **T5. Analyze the availability of state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students** |
| **T6. Analyze the unmet needs for state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students** |
| **T10. Study the future workforce needs of this state's businesses and other employers** |
| ***T18. Extended day, extended year*** |
| **2 – Resources and Support** | **T3. Study issues related to assisting working families** |
| **T7. Analyze opportunities to create incentives for businesses to support expanded learning opportunities programs for public school children** |
| **T8. Analyze opportunities to maximize charitable support for public and private partnerships for ELO for public school children** |
| ***T11. Sustainability of ELO Programs*** |
| ***T12. Professional Development*** |
| ***T13. Financial Challenges*** |
| **3 – Programs and Services** | **T2. Study issues related to improving the academic success of students who participate in expanded learning opportunities programs** |
| **T9. Analyze opportunities to promote STEM in ELO for public school students** |
| ***T14. Character Building, Social Skills, and Social Success*** |
| ***T15. Health Care, Behavioral Health, and Human Services*** |
| ***T16. Special Education Services*** |
| ***T17. Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyles*** |

Non-statutory topics are in *italics*.

# Appendix 3: Background of the Texas ACE Program

The federal funding that currently supports Texas ACE began in 1994 as a small federal pilot program created under the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative grew strategically and significantly, such that in 2002 the initiative was transferred to the states to administer and coordinate.

In 2008, TEA led a significant strategic overhaul of the program to focus on program quality and to strengthen results. What follows are the strategies and actions that were undertaken to integrate research-based best practices and to build an effective statewide infrastructure at TEA that supports high standards and continuous improvement in programs across the state.

TEA established an overall mission focus for the Texas ACE program for all students to graduate from high school prepared for college and the workforce. Toward this end, ACE’s programmatic objectives are to improve academic performance, attendance, behavior, promotion rates, and graduation rates. External evaluation results reveal that Texas ACE is making significant progress toward achieving these objectives. To support these programmatic goals, the state office also operates under specific goals. Those statewide goals are to:

* Engage a technical assistance provider to support TEA all activities to ensure program quality
* Engage program evaluation resources, both for a statewide external evaluation, and to train and support local program evaluators with analyzing formative and summative data to continue program improvement strategies
* Build partnerships with other stakeholders to coordinate efforts to strengthen ELO in Texas
* Conduct a comprehensive review of program processes and procedures, as well as a needs assessment with grantee leaders
* Establish program requirements, performance and accountability measures designed to equip grantees and to reinforce best practices for high-quality programming
* Develop a Texas ACE Blueprint with an array of materials for planning, resourcing, implementing, managing and enduring afterschool programs
* Provide training and technical assistance to grantees in building program infrastructure including: project management, data collection and analysis, financial management, managing human resources and accountability practices
* Provide training and technical assistance in research-based strategies for program implementation and deliver professional development for all ACE project directors, center directors and other program partners with an enduring focus on high-quality programming
* Ensure grantees have the necessary tools and resources to implement quality programming
* Establish performance measures, train grantees, and monitor for performance expectations
* Ensure that the ACE program office has the resources and tools necessary to support and monitor grantees not only for program compliance, but also for program quality.
* Provide an online suite of tools, resources, podcasts, a help-desk, videos, lesson plans and current training materials to support quality OST programming
* Deliver robust professional development via an annual convening for afterschool providers, convene regional trainings with networks of afterschool providers, host Webinars for cost-effective and frequent convening of OST professionals, and coordinate other strategic opportunities to build capacity of grantees to implement quality programming, especially for youth who are at-risk of dropping out-of-school.
* Maintain a focus on sustainability and teach grantees skills necessary for diversifying portfolios, building infrastructure and designing programs to endure after competitive grant periods end.