

Strategies for Success:

Do Your Homework! Become an Expert

As partners begin to think about how community-based organizations (CBOs) and schools might better partner, information gathering becomes an integral first step. Examining data and trends will help determine the resources, strengths and needs of both the school system and the community. Below are some suggested approaches used by schools and CBOs to identify needed information and data.

- **Review school report cards.**

Gather information about the school, such as grades, state achievement test scores and attendance. Use the data to identify the opportunities where CBOs can link after-school activities that support shared goals and meet the needs of the youth.

- **Conduct or review a needs analysis.**

One way to effectively respond to the needs of children and youth is to include the community in the data collection process. Through a needs analysis, partners can identify important statistics and findings, such as the number and locations of unsupervised youth, that can be used in developing your after-school partnership.

- **Find recent articles on education issues.**

Search local and national newspapers and education journals and newspapers, such as *Education Week* for additional information about trends in education. Look for statistics that indicate trends in school success as well as those that identify gaps in achievement, nationally, in your state and in your local school district.

• Review models that work.

Schools and CBOs can get a lot of information just by finding out who is already doing the work. Tour other successful programs and interview 21st CCLC grantees to learn what strategies work and what has not worked. Another way to find out what others are doing is to subscribe to the *Promising Practices in Afterschool Listserv* at www.afterschool.org. Build your own list of best practices and use those as a guide for building your partnership model. By connecting with established partnerships you will also find out what resources already exist – curriculum programs, additional space, technical assistance – and are available for collaborative use.

• Research 21st CCLC requirements in your state.

Each state determines specific priorities for 21st CCLC funding. It is important to become familiar with those priorities and choose key programs that will directly address them. You should become familiar with how the 21st CCLC and other after-school funds are promoting academic achievement by supplementing and enhancing the schools' core instructional programs. Find out what additional forms you will need as well as the timeline for submitting your grant request. For state contacts and links to state applications, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/applicant.html>.