

2018 OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME REPORT



NRPA National Recreation
and Park Association

Because everyone deserves a great park



R
City of
Rock Hill
RECREATION

Wash and dry
using paper towels.
eggshells you

3

Paint the cardboard green and
allow it to dry. Then draw out
a simple flower shape on the
cardboard.

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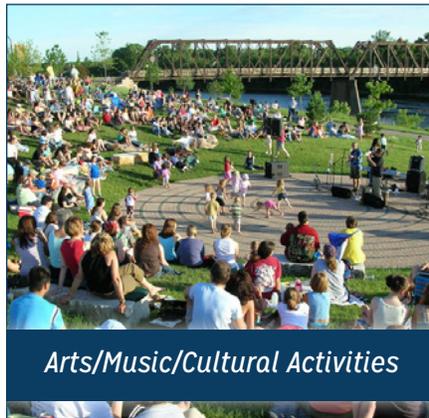
KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Top benefits of OST programs include offering children safe places to play outside of school hours, free/affordable facilities for engaging in health and wellness activities, social opportunities and chances to connect youth to peers.

OST programs also include a broad set of offerings and programming that prepares children for the future:



Physical Activity/Fitness Programs



Arts/Music/Cultural Activities



Family Engagement Programs

Park and recreation agencies tailor OST program offerings to serve specific populations and audiences, including by age, gender, race/ethnicity and at-risk youth.



More than half of park and recreation agencies offer OST STEM activities that focus on the environment, technology and project-based learning.



Fifty-seven percent of park and recreation professionals report that there are children participating in OST programs who live in households facing significant financial challenges.

One in six park and recreation professionals reports having OST youth participants who come to their programs hungry.

INTRODUCTION

Parks and recreation promotes a better quality of life across the United States. Through their vast network of park land, trails, recreation facilities and other amenities, local park and recreation agencies touch the lives of millions of people every day. Americans from all backgrounds benefit from their local and regional park agencies in many ways—as gathering places to meet with friends and family, open spaces to exercise and reap the benefits of clean air and water, and community resources where they can connect to others and nature. These offerings along with park and recreation programming help make our towns, cities and counties vibrant, healthy communities.

One group that benefits particularly from the vast array of park and recreation agency services is children. Park and recreation agencies provide safe places where kids can go when they are not in school. The hours before and after school and when schools are not in session can be challenging and potentially dangerous times for youth who are not under the direct watch of parents, teachers or family. But those times also represent opportunities for learning and personal enrichment that open up greater possibilities for children.

Local park and recreation agencies' out-of-school time (OST) programs are leading providers of child care in our nation. According to data published in the [2018 NRPA Agency Performance Review](#):

- 84 percent of local park and recreation agencies offer summer camps
- 63 percent of local park and recreation agencies offer programming targeted specifically to teens

- 55 percent of local park and recreation agencies offer after-school programming
- 36 percent of local park and recreation agencies offer pre-school programming
- 21 percent of local park and recreation agencies offer before-school programming
- Eight percent of local park and recreation agencies offer full daycare

Out-of-school time programs give parents and caregivers the opportunity to earn a living knowing that their children will be supervised and engaged in worthwhile activities. These programs also provide education about nature and nutrition, tutoring, mentoring and enrichment opportunities that improve the mental, physical and emotional health of youngsters. In addition, OST programs often offer science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) opportunities for children that can give them a “leg up” on future education and career paths. Finally, these programs can serve as critical refuges for youth living in households with substance-use issues.

For all the positive impact local park and recreation agencies' OST programs have on children in their communities, there remain many opportunities for greater success by serving more youngsters and expanding program offerings. The NRPA Research team surveyed park and recreation agencies throughout the United States to gain a better understanding of the scopes and missions of out-of-school time programs and their greatest challenges. The 25-question survey was sent to park and recreation agency directors during July 2018. The survey generated 334 responses, the data from which are the basis of this report.



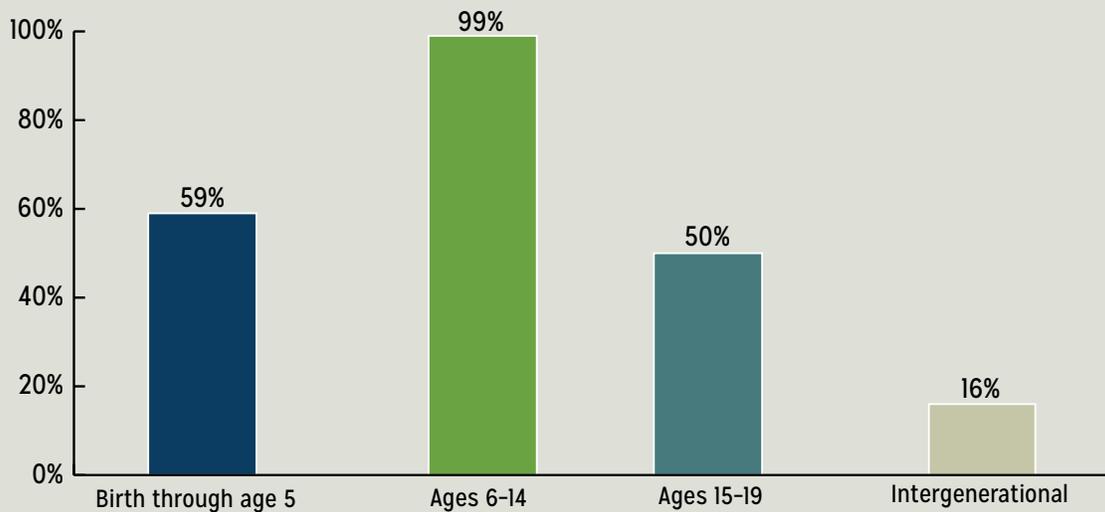
KEY RESULTS

Nine in 10 park and recreation agencies offer out-of-school time (OST) programs that serve millions of children throughout the United States. These before-school, after-school and/or summer programs provide physical activity opportunities, nutrition education experiences and social connections with peers. The typical park and recreation agency OST program serves roughly 700 children per year. But the size of these programs varies widely, with some agencies serving tens of thousands of children annually.

Some OST programming extends even beyond childhood: one in six agencies have intergenerational offerings aimed at supporting caregivers and families of students. An example of an intergenerational opportunity is community gardens, where youth and older adults work together to learn about healthy eating and community-wide collaboration.

Park and Recreation Agencies Deliver Out-of-School Time Programs to Children of All Ages

(Percent of Agencies Serving Each Age Cohort)



The age breakdown of OST program participants mirrors that of agencies' programming targeted audiences, with four in five children participating in OST programs being of elementary or middle-school age. Thirty-three percent are between six and

eight years old, 30 percent are between nine and 11 years old and 16 percent are aged 12 to 14. Fourteen percent of OST program participants are aged five years old or younger while seven percent are between the ages of 15 and 17.

Age Distribution of Out-of-School Time Program Participants

(Mean Percentage Distribution of OST Participants)

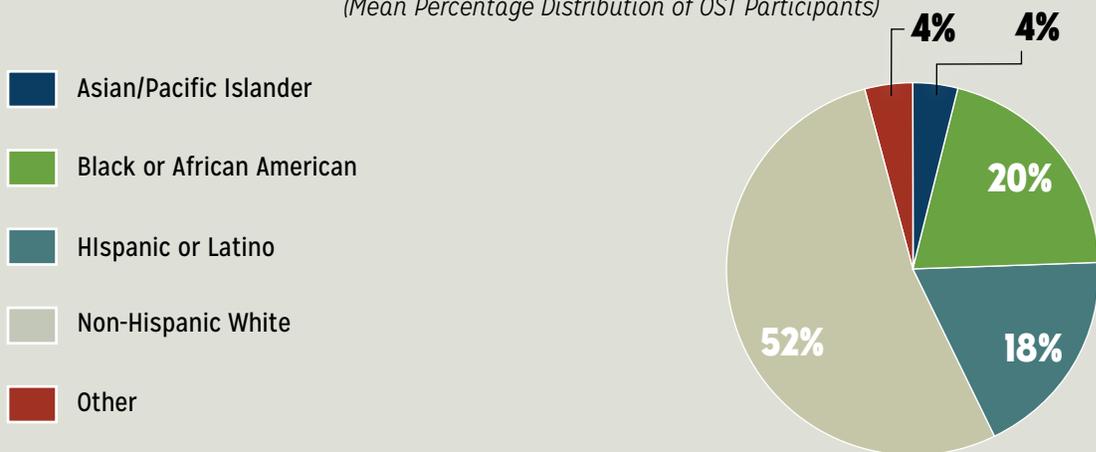


The children served by OST programs are racially and ethnically diverse, demonstrating park and recreation agencies' innate ability to unite Americans from a variety of backgrounds, incomes, races and places. Forty-four percent of participating youths identify as non-Hispanic white while 23 percent identify

as black or African-American. One in five children participating in OST programs identifies as Hispanic or Latino, while five percent identify as Asian/Pacific Islanders and two percent are of Native American or American Indian descent.

Park and Recreation Agency OST Programs Serve a Diverse Population

(Mean Percentage Distribution of OST Participants)





BENEFITS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

Out-of-school time programs can convey many benefits to their communities. Fundamentally (and perhaps most importantly), park and recreation OST programs give children safe places to play outside of school hours. The hours before and after school and when schools are not in session during the summer can be challenging and potentially dangerous times for kids when they are not under the supervision of parents, teachers or family. Out-of-school programs provide youngsters opportunities to be physically active and to socialize with friends in an outdoor setting, away from traffic and other threats while their parents or caregivers are at work.

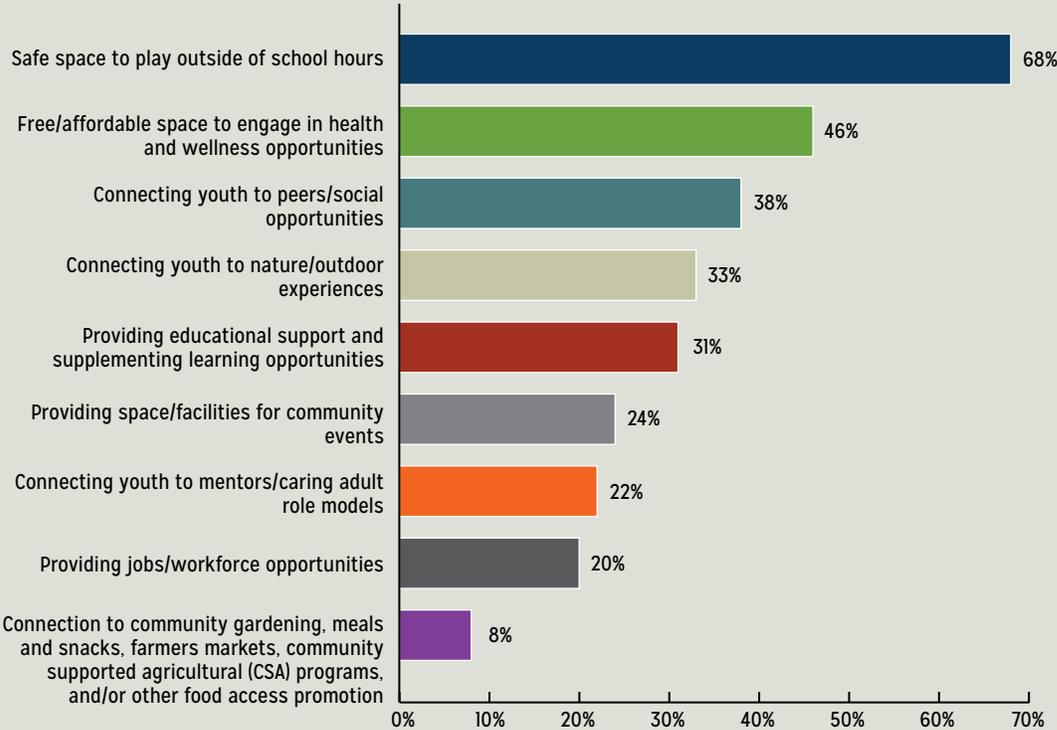
Two-thirds of survey respondents agree that offering a safe space to play is a top benefit of their park and recreation agencies' OST programs. Similarly, 46 percent of park and recreation professionals report that another benefit of OST programs is providing a free or affordable space that encourages healthy, physically active lifestyles through play, swimming, exercise and sports.

OST programs offer ways in which children can build self-confidence. After-school and summer camps are places where they can build life-long friends through social interaction that allows them to connect with other children in their communities or even those from across town (38 percent). These same programs also can connect youth with mentors and adult role models who may be lacking in other areas of these children's lives (22 percent).

OST programs are also opportunities to learn. Thirty-one percent of park and recreation professionals indicate that their OST programs provide educational support and supplemental learning opportunities. For some children, after-school care facilities are places where they can complete homework with the support of counselors. In other cases, after-school and summer camps are places where park and recreation agencies can offer classes and interactive opportunities for learning. For example, one-third of park and recreation professionals say a top benefit of their agencies' OST programs is connecting youth to nature and providing invaluable outdoor experiences.

Top Benefits Out-of-School Time Programs Provide to their Communities

(Percent of Respondents)*



*- Respondents permitted to select up to three choices



Out-of-school time programs are not just about providing places where children can go while their parents and caregivers are at work. OST programs also offer a broad set of offerings and programming that prepare youngsters for the future—from introducing them to new ideas and concepts to providing mentoring services that help guide them through the many challenges of adolescence.

The vast majority of park and recreation agencies offers opportunities that encourage physical activity and exposure to arts and culture. Ninety percent of park and recreation agencies have OST programs tied to physical activity, fitness programs and/or stress management and relaxation activities. Eighty-nine percent of agencies offer art, music and/or cultural activities as a part of their OST offerings.

OST program offerings may also include education opportunities that prepare local youth for the future and expose them to a world beyond that which they already know. Roughly two-thirds of park and recreation agencies offer local children programming focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), including environmental topics. Sixty-four percent of OST offerings encourage healthier lifestyles with programming on nutrition and healthy cooking. One-half of agencies introduces local youth to gardening as a part of their OST programs.

Park and recreation agencies also deliver OST programming that helps local children deal with the many challenges of growing up. Such programming may focus on:

- Family engagement (cited by 70 percent of respondents)
- Youth development, including leadership, career-readiness training and a social-emotional learning curriculum (61 percent)
- Intergenerational programs/activities (53 percent)
- Mentoring (34 percent)
- Substance use prevention (18 percent)
- Gang and violence prevention, including mentorship programs and “Parks after Dark” (18 percent)

For all that agencies currently deliver in their OST programs, many are looking to expand their offerings in the near future. Activities that park and recreation agencies are planning to offer within the next three years include programming on:

- Mentorships (cited by 30 percent of park and recreation professionals)
- Intergenerational activities (27 percent)
- Gardening/agriculture (27 percent)
- Youth development including leadership programs, career-readiness training and a social-emotional learning curriculum (19 percent)
- Nutrition/healthy cooking (18 percent)
- STEM programming (18 percent)



Park and Recreation Agencies Deliver a Diverse Set of Out-of-School Time Program Offerings (Percent of Agencies)



Today's youth deal with a number of challenges both at home and at school—challenges that can often put intense pressure on their development. Fifty-seven percent of park and recreation professionals report that they have children participating in their out-of-school time programs that live in households facing significant financial challenges. Such burdens may include unemployment (of a parent or caregiver) and low income leading to an inability to pay OST program fees and food insecurity. In the case of the latter, one in six park and recreation professionals reports that there are youth participants in their OST who come to their programs hungry.

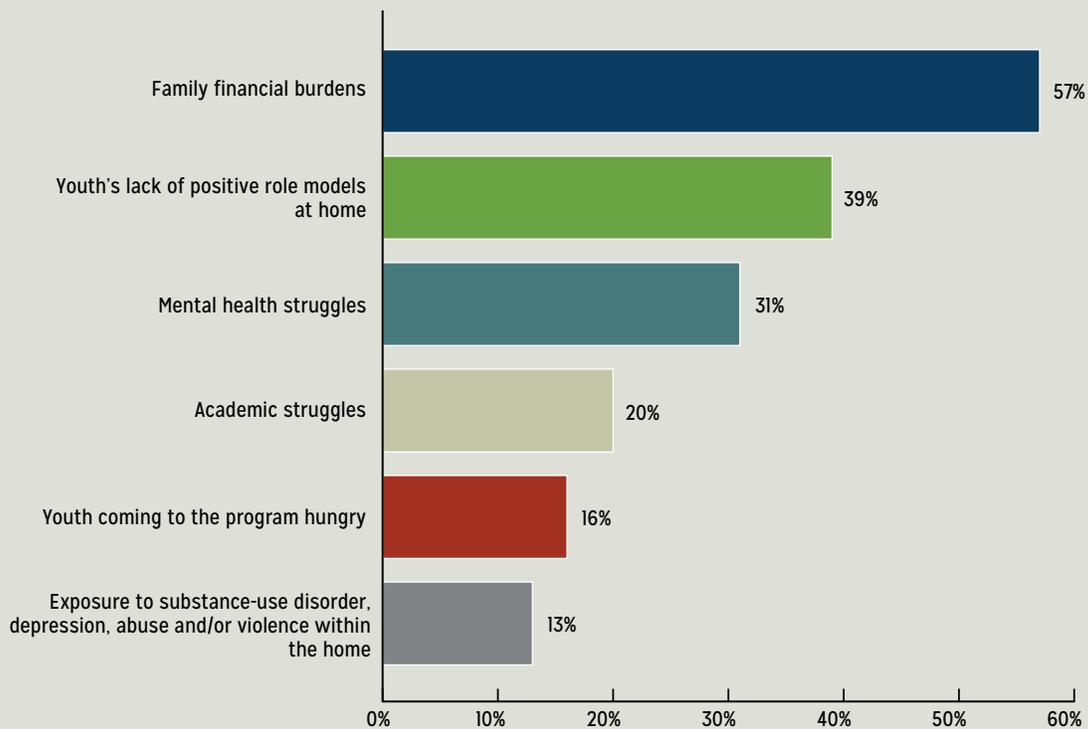
Some of these challenges represent areas where park and recreation agencies attempt to deliver programming to serve

specific needs. For example, two in five survey respondents report that they have OST program participants who lack positive role models at home. Other challenging circumstances OST youth may be living under include:

- Mental health struggles, including depression, social struggles, peer pressure and violence (cited by 31 percent of respondents)
- Academic struggles, including chronic absenteeism and high dropout rates (20 percent)
- Exposure to substance use including resulting depression, abuse and/or violence at home (13 percent)

Family Financial Burdens, Lack of Positive Role Models and Mental Health Issues Are the Biggest Challenges Facing OST Program Participants

(Percent of Respondents)



To meet these challenges, park and recreation agencies tailor some of their out-of-school time program offerings to serve specific populations and audiences. These specialized offerings can include nutrition education, physical activity or sports-based programs, nature experiences, and education and enrichment clubs. Two-thirds of park and recreation agencies develop OST programming targeted to specific audiences, with a greater percentage of agencies in metropolitan/urban (79 percent) and county/rural (76 percent) settings doing so.

The second and third most widely targeted audience groups for specific OST programming are linked to gender: 45 percent of agencies develop programming specifically for female youth and 42 percent for male youth. Forty-two percent of

agencies also deliver programming geared to minority youth populations; that share rises to 63 percent for agencies located in metropolitan or urban settings.

Agencies also tailor programming for youth populations in specific circumstances. These include:

- Youth at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system, engaging in substance use or other problematic behavior (cited by 30 percent of respondents)
- Youth with mental illness and/or substance-use disorders (10 percent)
- Homeless youth (eight percent)
- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system (eight percent)



Two-Thirds of Park and Recreation Agencies Gear OST Programming to Specific Audiences
(Percent of Agencies)

	All	Metropolitan/Urban	Suburban	County/ Rural
Early childhood populations (birth through age 5)	56%	44%	61%	51%
Female youth	45	39	49	37
Male youth	42	44	39	40
Minority youth	42	63	35	43
Youth at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system, engaging in substance use and/or other problematic behavior	30	44	28	31
Youth with mental illness and/or substance-use disorders	10	8	10	14
Homeless youth	8	17	8	6
Youth involved in the juvenile justice system	8	17	5	9
LGBTQ youth	7	11	5	6
New American youth	7	17	6	3



STEM PROGRAMMING

Out-of-school programs play an important role in promoting science, technology, engineering and math learning—subjects collectively known as STEM. Research shows that to bridge current achievement gaps it is necessary to take an immersive approach and offer opportunities for students to practice STEM skills in informal settings. These experiences provide real-world experience and help students connect STEM to their lives and communities.

As the stewards of public greenspaces, local park and recreation agencies are well-positioned to offer unique opportunities for youth to investigate STEM principles through hands-on nature

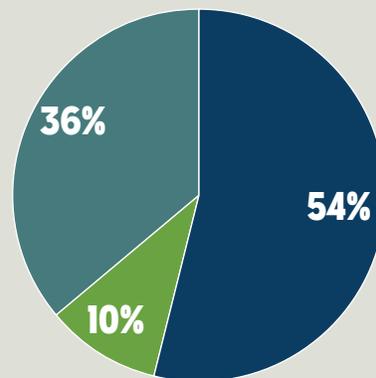
education in their own communities. Many of these agencies offer these programs to children typically underrepresented in STEM fields.

Fifty-four percent of park and recreation agencies include STEM programming as a part of their out-of-school time offerings. Larger agencies located in metropolitan and urban settings are more likely than other agencies to offer STEM programming (66 percent). Fifty-five percent of agencies in suburban locations offer STEM programming while 51 percent of county and rural systems do so.

More than Half of Park and Recreation Agencies Offer STEM Programs/Activities Through Their OST Programs

(Percentage Distribution)

- Offers STEM programs
- Plans to offer STEM programs in the next year
- Does not offer STEM programs and does not plan to add within the next year



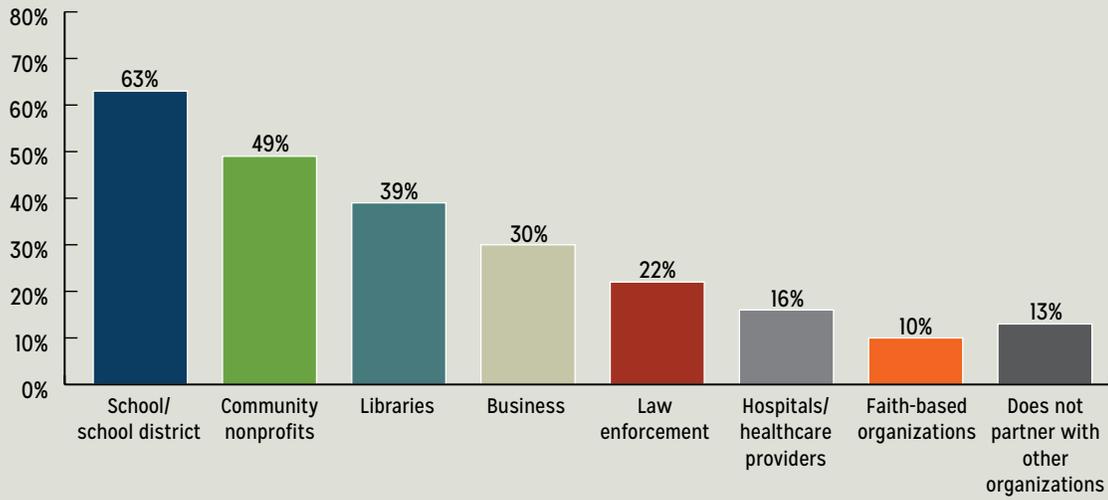
While most park and recreation professionals agree that it is important to include STEM programming in their OST offerings, there are a number of reasons that hamper agencies from doing so. Among the top reasons is a lack of resources to deliver a high-quality STEM offering. Thirty-two percent of park and recreation professionals indicate that their agencies lack staff with the content knowledge or the confidence needed to teach STEM topics. Another closely related factor is cost: 30 percent of park and recreation professionals report their agencies do not have the financial resources needed to develop or support effective STEM programming and training. In fact, 31 percent of survey respondents believe that there are other program providers (e.g., schools, nonprofits) better equipped to deliver STEM programming than are park and recreation agencies.

For those park and recreation agencies that do offer STEM learning as a part of their OST programming, many partner with external government agencies and organizations. The most common partners for STEM offerings are local schools and school districts, reported by 63 percent of park and recreation professionals. Closely following are community nonprofits (cited by 49 percent of survey respondents) and libraries (39 percent). Other partners that support park and recreation agency STEM programming include:

- Businesses (30 percent)
- Law enforcement (22 percent)
- Hospitals and healthcare providers (16 percent)
- Faith-based organizations (10 percent)



External Partners Park and Recreation Agencies Use to Deliver Out-of-School Time STEM Programs (Percent of Agencies Offering OST STEM Programming)



Regardless of whether a park and recreation agency is working with a partner, it is typically agency staff that lead and facilitate at least some of the STEM OST programming. Sixty-two percent of park and recreation agencies offering STEM OST programming have agency staff leading and facilitating the content.

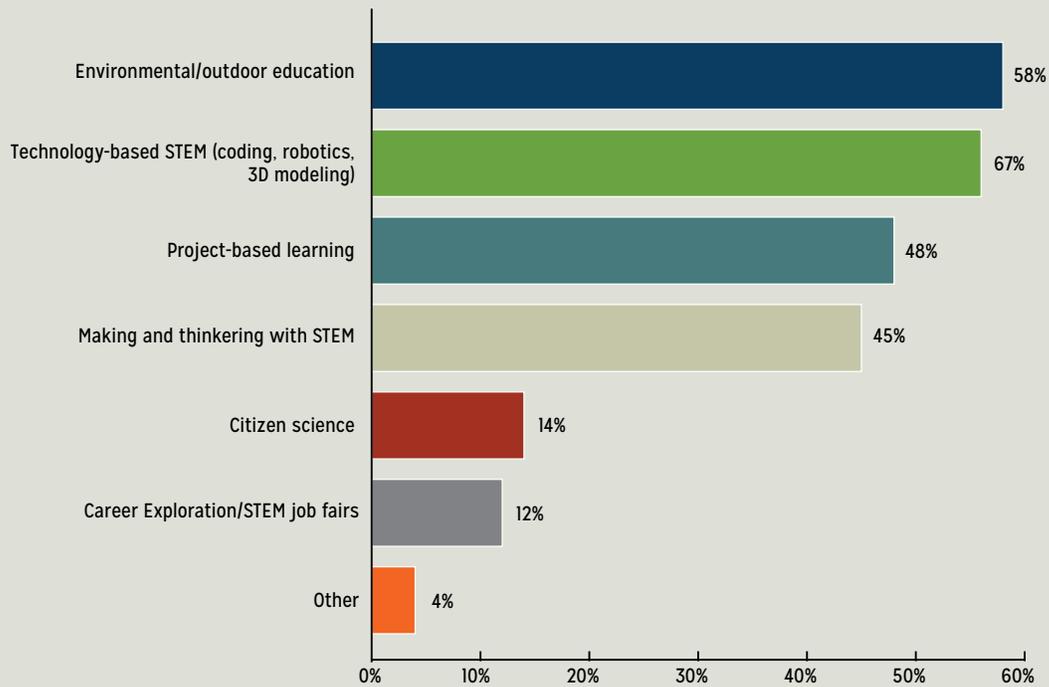
The type of STEM offerings can vary by agency but are likely to include programming about the environment and technology. Fifty-eight percent of park and recreation agencies have OST programming that educates local youth about environmental

issues and the role of parks and recreation in conservation and sustainability. This is closely followed by 56 percent of agencies delivering OST content tied to technology, including coding, robotics and 3D modeling. Other commonly delivered OST STEM program offerings include:

- Project-based learning (cited by 48 percent of respondents)
- Making and tinkering with STEM (45 percent)
- Citizen science (14 percent)
- Career exploration, including STEM job fairs (12 percent)

Environmental and Technological Programs Are Offered as Part of Out-of-School Time STEM Activities

(Percent of Agencies Offering OST STEM Programs)

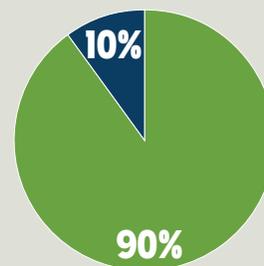
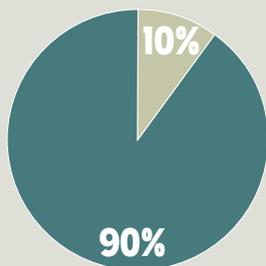


Relatively few park and recreation agency out-of-school time STEM programs adhere to a national or state curriculum. Just ten percent of those park and recreation agencies that do offer STEM programming as a part of their OST offerings utilize a national or state curriculum. Examples of curriculums used include those for a state department of education, the U.S. Department of Defense, Project Wild, Makers Space and 4-H.

Similarly, just 10 percent of agencies currently offering STEM programming as a part of their OST offerings are receiving federal funding to support those activities. One such source of funding is the [21st Century Community Learning Center](#) program. This program targets students living in areas of high poverty and low-performing schools with activities designed to supplement what students are receiving in school in order to improve education outcomes.

Most Out-of-School Time STEM Programs Neither Adhere to a National or State Curriculum nor Receive Federal Funding

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies Offering OST STEM Programs)



Use a national or state curriculum
 Does not use a national or state curriculum

Does not receive federal funding
 Receives federal funding



NUTRITION AND GARDENING

More than 13 million children in the United States live in “food insecure” homes. Parks and recreation can expand its offerings to provide access to healthy meals through the USDA Child Nutrition programs, ensuring that children receive the nutrients they need to be successful now and in the future. Parks and recreation is also equipped to provide gardening opportunities offering children ownership through growing their own healthy foods and providing a critical role in nutrition education.

Park and recreation agencies’ out-of-school time programs serve as gateways to healthy eating and access to sustainable food practices for children. Four in five park and recreation agencies include nutrition-oriented activities—including gardening—as a part of their OST offerings, although the share of agencies doing so varies by locale.

- Metropolitan/urban agencies: 81 percent

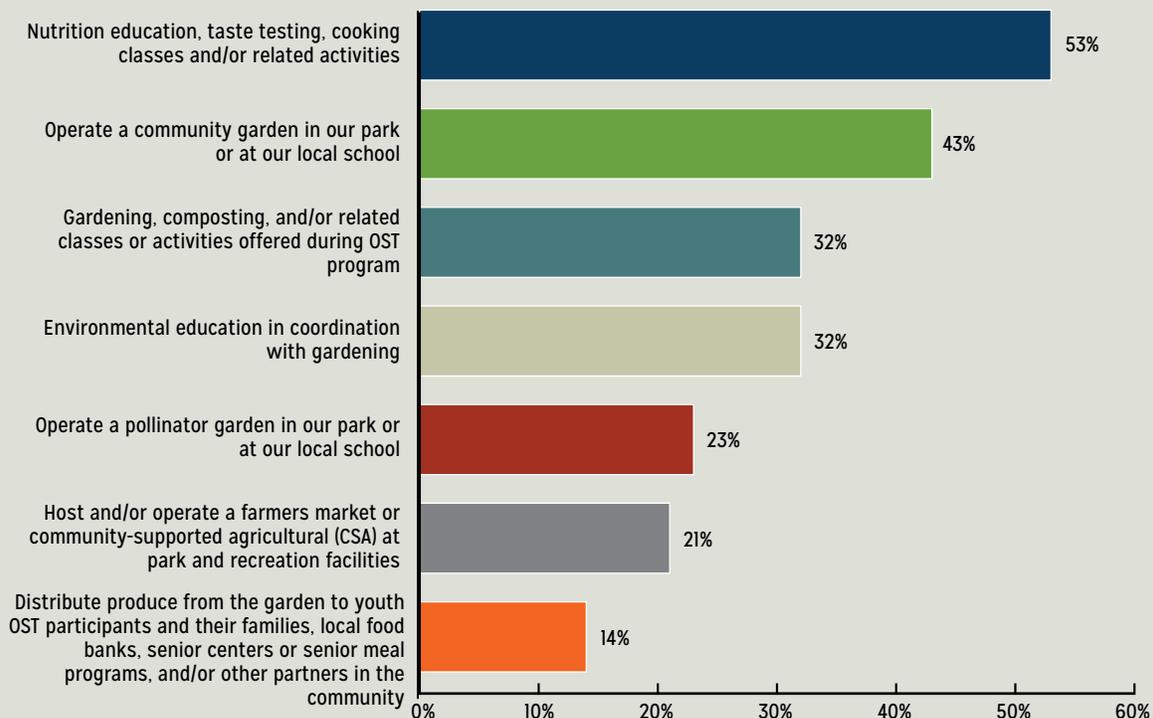
- Suburban agencies: 82 percent
- County/rural agencies: 78 percent

Most common in nutrition-oriented OST activities is nutrition education, in which 66 percent of OST programs provide cooking classes, taste testing, experiencing healthy food and other similar activities.

Planting and harvesting in gardens provide children opportunities to learn how healthy and sustainable food is produced, and also helps create life-long healthy eating habits. As a result, gardening and related activities are common components of OST programs. Fifty-four percent of OST programs that include nutrition-oriented offerings have youth operate a community garden in a park or at a school. Similarly, 40 percent of these same agencies offer local youth classes on gardening, composting or other related topics, while the same percentage links gardening activities with education on environmental stewardship.

Four in Five Park and Recreation Agencies Offer Gardening and Nutrition-Oriented Activities as a Part of Their OST Programming

(Percent of Agencies)



SUBSTANCE-USE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS

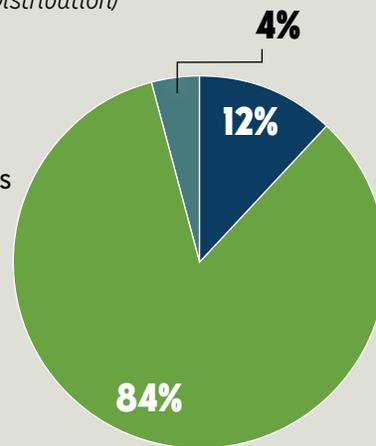
Substance-use disorders represent a serious national crisis affecting not only public health but also the economic and social welfare of our communities. In 2016 alone, 116 people died each day from an opioid-related drug overdose, per the Department of Health and Human Services. As community health hubs, park and recreation agencies are uniquely positioned to offer programming that supports children through mentorships and social-emotional learning opportunities, as well as supporting families through recreation activities and social connections.

Twelve percent of park and recreation agencies include substance-use prevention and/or treatment activities as a part of their OST programs. Agencies within metropolitan or urban locales (15 percent) are slightly more likely to include such programming than are agencies located in either suburban or county/rural settings (10 percent each). Another four percent of agencies intend to add substance use prevention and/or treatment activities to their OST programming in the coming year.

One in Ten Park and Recreation Agencies Offers Substance-Use Prevention and/or Treatment Activities in Their Out-of-School Time Programs

(Percentage Distribution)

- Offer substance-use prevention/treatment activities
- Does not offer substance-use prevention/treatment activities
- Intends to offer substance-use prevention/treatment activities in the next year



Even if they do not currently offer substance-use prevention and/or treatment in OST programming in their communities, one-third of park and recreation agencies participates in community coalitions that work to address substance use in their communities. County and rural park and recreation agencies (39 percent) are more likely than metropolitan/urban (30 percent) and suburban (34 percent) agencies to participate in substance use coalitions for their communities.

Other substance-use prevention program coalition members come from a variety of community service organizations. Park and recreation agencies are likely to partner with local police

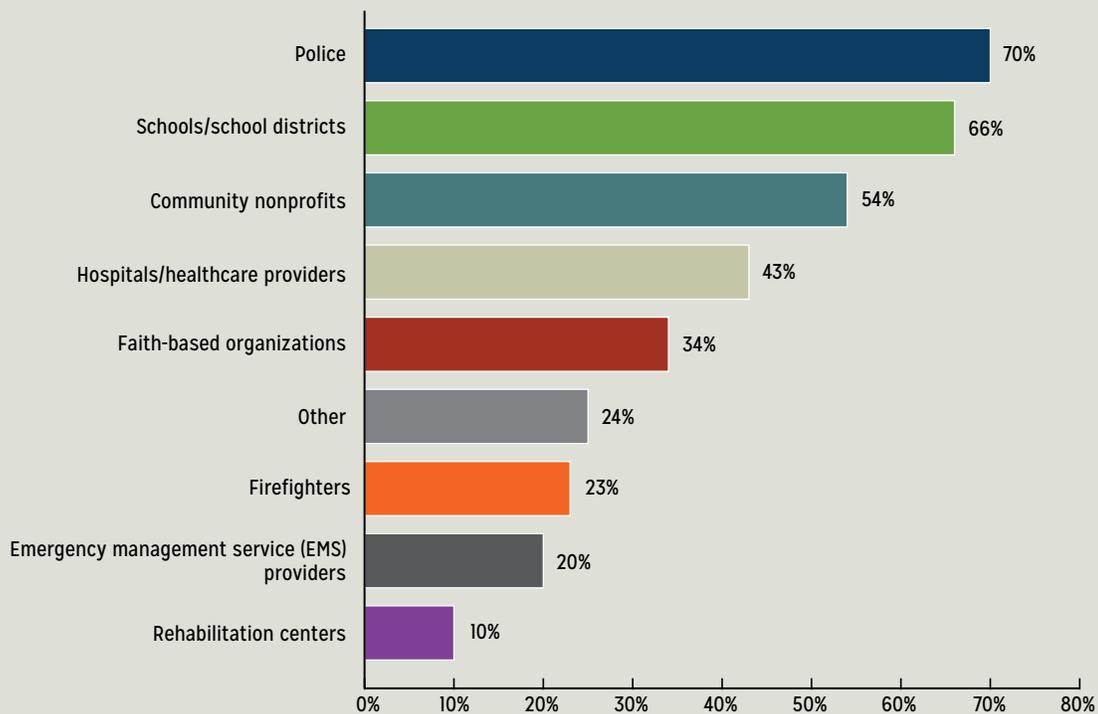
departments (70 percent), schools (66 percent) and community nonprofits (54 percent) when addressing issues related to substance use. Other partners include:

- Hospitals/healthcare providers (cited by 43 percent of respondents)
- Faith-based organizations (34 percent)
- Firefighters (23 percent)
- Emergency management service (EMS) providers (20 percent)
- Rehabilitation centers (10 percent)



Park and Recreation Agencies Partner with Police, Schools and Community Nonprofits on Substance Use Issues

(Percent of Agencies Participating in Community Coalitions Addressing Substance Use and/or Treatment Activities)



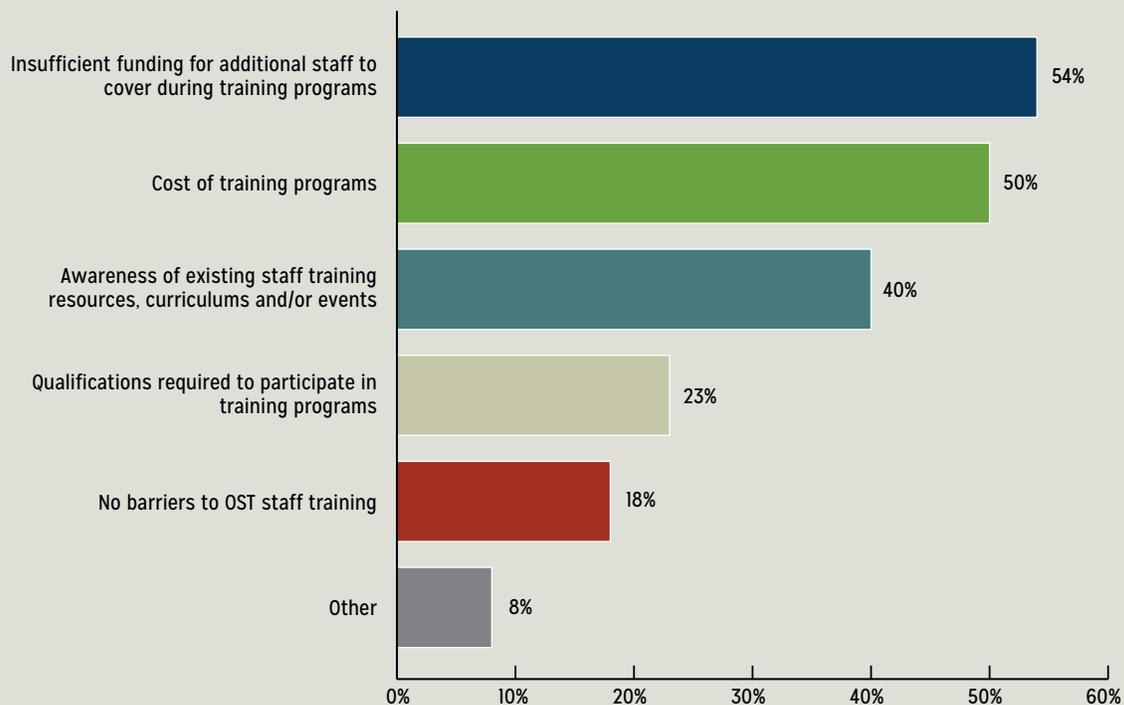
LIMITATIONS TO FUNDING AND TRAINING

Park and recreation agencies have become cornerstones for communities across the country, providing youth with opportunities to thrive during out-of-school times. However, even with the many benefits that OST programs currently bring to their communities, park and recreation agencies face a number of challenges that prevent them from offering the staff training necessary to better serve local youth. Four in five agencies deal with barriers that prevent them and their OST teams from partaking in training opportunities.

Cost is a major barrier to training park and recreation OST staff. Fifty-four percent of agencies lack access to extra personnel in order to cover their current OST programming when staff is in training. One-half of agencies lacks sufficient funding to pay for OST-related training. Further, two in five agencies lack the awareness about existing training from which their OST staff can benefit.

Funding Limitations Are the Greatest Barrier to Training Out-of-School Time Staff

(Percent of Agencies)



Park and recreation leaders identify a number of areas in which they want to train their OST staff. Agencies want their staff to be better trained to deliver educational content on both the environment (70 percent) and STEM (65 percent). Agencies also seek training for their staff in order to better help children navigate the many challenges of adolescence.

- Sixty percent of agencies have an interest in training their staff to serve as mentors to children
- Fifty-three percent of agencies desire that their staff receive youth mental health first-aid training

- Fifty-one percent want their staff to be better trained to help identify and deliver appropriate services to children living with a stressful or traumatic experience
- Thirty-eight percent want to prepare their staff to be able to identify signs of substance-use disorder
- Thirty-one percent identify a need for staff training in gang/violence prevention programs



CONCLUSION

Park and recreation agencies are crucial resources for millions of children and families in the United States. Through their out-of-school time (OST) programs, these agencies are primary providers of before- and after-school care, as well as summer camps that are invaluable to working families. OST programs provide avenues of discovery for youth—from learning to lead healthy lifestyles through physical activity to better nutrition, from exposure to arts, culture, science and technology to how they can improve the natural environment around them. OST programs offer places where children can build self-confidence through mentoring opportunities and thrive from positive adult role models.

However, more can be done. A big challenge for most park and recreation agencies is finding adequate resources—both in terms of staffing and finances—to train their staff in order to better serve children in their communities. Park and recreation agency leaders seek greater opportunities to better train their staff on the delivery of educational content of both the environment and STEM. Access to greater resources and funding are critical to these agencies' mission of helping our children navigate the many challenges of adolescence. Park and recreation agencies make a difference in the lives of their communities' youth.

ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing parks, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 60,000 recreation and park professionals and advocates, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation and conducts research with two goals. First, NRPA creates data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA generates data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more stable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public. The NRPA research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more at www.nrpa.org/Research







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