As the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is implemented at the state level, afterschool advocates have the opportunity to provide feedback to their state education agency (SEA) on Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The first step will be helping to shape the 21st CCLC section of the state ESSA application that will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. Even while those applications are under development, SEAs will be revising their RFP process for 21st CCLC funding.

This tool is specifically designed to help afterschool advocates shape the 21st CCLC RFP.

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As the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is implemented at the state level, afterschool advocates have the opportunity to provide feedback to their state education agency (SEA) on Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers. The first step will be helping to shape the 21st CCLC section of the state ESSA application that will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. Even while those applications are under development, SEAs will be revising their RFP process for 21st CCLC funding.

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<th>Goal</th>
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| **Be a partner:** Ensure the afterschool community is meaningfully consulted in the development of the new 21st CCLC RFP. | - Contact your state 21st CCLC director to ask how the new RFP is being designed  
- Ask to join the design process, bringing your expertise of programs on the ground |
| **Be an interpreter:** Ensure the new 21st CCLC RFP incorporates revisions based on new language in ESSA, such as changes to allowable activities and performance measures, and retains key provisions, such as eligible entities. | - Help to navigate the complicated language (e.g., the inclusion of “external organizations”)  
- Highlight the new language on expanded learning programs  
- Clarify that community-based organizations are allowable lead applicants |
| **Add your technical expertise:** Help your SEA understand that external organizations are technical assistance providers (like networks or intermediaries) that may help provide a grantee with professional development or technical assistance to help them reach quality standards. | - Make the case that your SEA increase its reserve for training and technical assistance and position your network to provide these services, as appropriate  
- Look for opportunities to help the state improve quality through professional development and technical assistance |
| **Provide insights on grant RFPs:** Use your knowledge of the field and what the youth and the state need to design strong RFPs that lead to effective programs. | - Offer feedback or suggestions on eligibility criteria, competitive priorities, quality, performance measures, etc. |
| **Inform and educate:** Help legislators, partners, businesses, parents, and other stakeholders learn about the process. | - Consider looping in friendly state legislators to let them know how the process is moving forward and how they can help |

Full ESSA Playbook can be accessed at essa.afterschoolalliance.org
Chapter 2: Spotlight on 21st CCLC RFP

**Become/Remain a Partner with Your State Education Agency**

Develop/continue to build a relationship with your state's 21st CCLC director. Find time to meet with your 21st CCLC director to find out how he or she is addressing 21st CCLC in the state ESSA application and what the process will be for revising the state RFP. Offer to be a resource to your SEA in the process.

Make the case that afterschool advocates should be included among those consulted about the new RFP. In preparing new RFPs, ESSA requires SEAs to conduct meaningful consultation with: parents, teachers, principals and other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, students, community-based organizations, local government representatives, and other stakeholders who have relevant and demonstrated expertise in programs and activities.

**Help Your State Education Agency Understand and Interpret the New Law**

Clarify for your state education agency the meaning of “external organizations.”

- The new law mentions “external organizations” and “partners”—these are two distinct ideas.
- External organizations are technical assistance providers (like networks or intermediaries) that for example, may provide a grantee with professional development or technical assistance to help them reach quality standards.
- Partners are the organizations written into local grants that will have a role in providing services to students.
- This distinction is important because states under the law should create a list of pre-approved external organizations but not partners.

Ensure the meaning of “expanded learning programs” in Title IV, Part B of ESSA is understood. This section of the law requires that states that choose to allow grantees to extend their school day for all students with 21st CCLC funding must: 1) add a minimum of 300 additional hours of programming each year; 2) ensure programming be ‘afterschool-like’ in nature and not an extension or addition of traditional classroom activities; and 3) require partners for any local education agency seeking this type of grant. Regular afterschool, before school, and summer programs are not subject to these special conditions.

Clarify that schools and community-based organizations continue to be eligible lead applicants for 21st CCLC grants. Either schools or community-based organizations are legally able to apply as long as they propose to serve populations of students in which 40% or more are eligible for Free and Reduced Meal Status (FARMS) or target their services to schools identified by the state as being in need of support.
**Be a Technical Expert**

Remind your state that the set aside for quality has increased from 3% to 5%. Research\(^1\) shows that the quality of afterschool programs is key to significant positive outcomes. Many statewide afterschool networks, as well as other state and local intermediaries, are well-positioned with the tools and training that can help programs develop, monitor, and increase quality. Encourage your SEA to increase the resources devoted to quality improvement activities and share the tools and resources your network has (i.e., for capacity building, parent engagement, and professional development) to make the case for using the additional investments in technical assistance.

**Provide Insights into Building a Strong Grant Program**

Weigh-in on competitive priorities that your SEA may be considering. Based on needs assessments, gaps analysis, and other research that your network has conducted in your state, consider making recommendations about competitive priorities, such as middle school and/or STEM programs.

Help your SEA determine new performance measures to consider as part of 21st CCLC. Under ESSA, states have the opportunity to expand beyond the currently required GPRA indicators to include performance measures that better reflect the strengths of the afterschool field, such as school engagement, school day attendance, employability skills, or other areas based on 21st CCLC state data.

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\(^1\) [www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm)
Chapter 2: Spotlight on 21st CCLC RFP

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program has been preserved and updated in the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). State education agencies (SEAs) are currently reviewing the changes to the law as they prepare new Requests for Proposals (RFPs). The following discussion questions are intended to help the afterschool field and providers offer their input to state agencies as RFPs are developed.

Discussion Questions to Help Shape RFP

- Under ESSA, states have the opportunity to expand beyond the currently required indicators used to evaluate 21st CCLCs to include performance measures that better reflect the strengths of the afterschool field, such as school engagement, school day attendance, employability skills, or other areas based on 21st CCLC state data. What performance measures do you think the state should look at to determine success of 21st CCLC?

- If an external organization were to provide you with technical assistance and training before, during, or after receiving a 21st CCLC grant, what sort of topics would you most like to see offered? Are there current technical assistance offerings provided by the SEA that you would change to better meet your needs?

- ESSA now allows an SEA to automatically renew 21st CCLC grants based on an entity’s performance during the proceeding sub grant period, if it so chooses. Should the SEA automatically renew 21st CCLC grants based on performance in the previous grant cycle? Why or why not? What specifically do you think the criteria for renewal should be?

- What aspects of your state’s RFP process may be impacting equity across the state and how should your state address that? For example, how can the SEA ensure distribution of sub grantees is equitable across rural and urban communities? Should the SEA reconsider the length of grants and/or reconsider different step-down formula for funding in years 2-5?

- ESSA now requires the program activities to align with the challenging state academic standards to improve student academic achievement and overall student success. What types of supporting information should/should not be requested by the SEA in an RFP to illustrate that activities align with state academic standards to improve student academic achievement and improve overall student success?

- ESSA presents an opportunity for the SEA to consider new priorities within the RFP process. Are there state priorities related to high-poverty, low-performing schools that we should consider? Priorities that could help promote college and career readiness? Priorities that could strengthen services for families and promote stronger family engagement? Other suggestions?

- In addition to 21st CCLC under Title IV, Part B, ESSA allows Title I and Tile IV, Part A funds to be used to support afterschool programs, but that decision will be based on local school and community needs assessments and local school and district officials. How can your program build or strengthen relationships with school and community leaders to make a case for these funds supporting quality afterschool programs for children?