



# The Arkansas Out of School Network

**BUILDING QUALITY**  
in **AFTERSCHOOL**

at American Institutes for Research ■



## How did you engage stakeholders in the process of creating statewide quality standards?

We identified a diverse set of stakeholders because we wanted the standards to be universal in terms of their practical application in the field. We identified programs that have their own internal or national standards, such as the YMCAs, and we also wanted to know how the standards would be applicable in terms of youth engagement in more self-directed program environments like 4-H programs. Program diversity in terms of resources and geography was also important, so we targeted both small community-based programs and programs that were fortunate to have secure funding. In addition, we wanted to ensure institutional buy-in, so we made sure that our licensed programs were represented as well as 21st CCLC programs. Our Network's Quality Committee was the perfect vehicle to house this work and to drive the process of developing the standards. In addition, we sent the standards in draft form to other stakeholders for feedback to be sure we included broad-based input.



## What advice do you have for other states before they start to develop or implement their own quality standards?

The most fundamental factor is an understanding of your state's out-of-school time landscape in terms of the diverse types of programs and their unique needs. Consider how the standards will be used and in what context on the front end. I also would say it is imperative to learn from and draw upon the work of other Statewide Networks when developing the standards. It is not necessary to devote time and resources to reinvent the wheel.



**Laveta Wills-Hale, MA**

The Arkansas Out of School Network

*Please share your thoughts with us via e-mail at [SANSupport@air.org](mailto:SANSupport@air.org). We look forward to hearing from you.*



## What challenges did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

The challenges were post development. Our stakeholders were engaged because they saw the value of having a set of standards that was unique to Arkansas. The critical challenge is how to promote statewide buy-in and endorsement. We did not have a clear enough strategy beyond the roll-out. Although our standards anchor our professional development and our quality coaching supports are aligned with the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), it is important to provide multiple touch points to reference within the standards from a communications and messaging standpoint. We have shared the standards with all of our institutional partners and some funders for use in their program guidelines and as a compliance component in their grant-making process. In addition, the standards were identified as a requirement in the 2011 Positive Youth Development (PYD) Grant Program Act (166), which will create a dedicated stream of state funding once an appropriation is secured. Programs funded under the PYD Act will be required to implement programming that is aligned with the AOSN quality program standards.



## What successes are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the fact that our quality standards are applicable to a diverse set of programs and the due diligence that was devoted to ensuring that our standards were valid and research based. I am also proud of the fact that we made sure we were thinking about alignment with national standards as well as identifying an assessment tool (YPQA) that works well across age groups and program environments. We also were able to bring state agencies to the table who had a vested interest in seeing a strong set of standards developed, so the Arkansas Department of Education's 21st CCLC program and the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education were critical partners in this process, which helped them accomplish their mutual goals.



## Who did you work with to create your quality standards?

- Arkansas State University Childhood Services
- Arkansas Department of Education 21st CCLC Programs
- DHS Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education
- Boys and Girls Club of Central Arkansas
- City of Little Rock Department of Community Programs
- Save the Children
- UALR Children International
- University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development
- Welcome the Children
- YMCA