

Thinking Outside the Box: Engaging Nontraditional Community Partners

“Nontraditional” partners have proven to be very important for rural communities to enrich afterschool programming and build long-term sustainability. These nontraditional partners often include businesses, organizations and individuals that do not necessarily have an immediate connection to youth.

Examples of non-traditional partners in rural communities: Rotary and Optimists Clubs, school Parent Teacher Associations, scout troops, churches, nursing homes, farms, ranches, local CO-OPS, regional hospitals, banks, senior citizen centers/clubs, local or regional community foundations, high school CTSO organizations

Examples of non-traditional partnerships that have occurred in rural programs:

- Local bank partnering with programs to support entrepreneurship programming: small financial partnerships of \$500-\$2000 that provide funding the programming to purchase supplies, “student loans” to start their business, etc. Also in-kind contributions of bank employees providing a presentation on business plans and loans, as well as conducting “mock loan interview/application” with students.
- partnering with a local trucking company. This company supports the afterschool program by providing students with industry specific, skill-building supports such as paying the costs of a curriculum unit to teach map-reading skills using a GPS.
- Over one-third of the schools in Vermont have fewer than 100 students. For many of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs based at these schools, their partners are not organizations, but individuals. In one community, an individual who is a program partner teaches students how to make baskets. Individual partners often will volunteer their time—or be paid a small stipend—their services are considered in-kind contributions. Is there someone in your community that has a specific skill set that would be exciting for students to learn?
- Partnering with a regional arts council to fund two artists to work with students in their program twice weekly. Initially, the program paid a small stipend to the council for these artists time. Over time, the relationship has strengthened as both the program and the Arts Council saw value and results from the partnership and now the art instruction is provided to the program for free as an in-kind contribution.
- Partnerships with CTSO organizations at local high school—these organizations include Skills USA, FFA, Ed Rising. A number of afterschool and summer programs have created partnerships with these clubs to provide programming, as well as instruction from the students in these programs. In turn, programs provide stipends to these students or to the CTSO programs (to cover costs of student fees). Additionally, this can be a pipeline for programs to hire students as staff in their programs.
- Matching contributions from local or regional community foundations—many communities have initiated partnerships of 1:1 matches to cover staffing costs, specific clubs or summer activity, specific equipment for new programming, gardens, etc.
- Partnership with a local farm to pay for stipends for FFA students to teach ag-based clubs in their program.

Please refer to the **BSB Partnership Toolkit** for assistance and guidance in taking inventory of your current and potential partnerships, as well as steps to help guide you in building local partnerships.