



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** OCTOBER 17, 2023

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**THROUGH:** JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

**FROM:** DANA WEDELES, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES OFFICER, CMO

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Release of Out of School Time FY 2023 Contingent Reserves to Support the Youth Support Network.

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**ISSUE:** Release of Out of School Time FY23 Contingent Reserves to fund the Youth Support Network's (YSN) Program Locator and Program Quality Pilot.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council allocate FY23 Contingent Reserves in the remaining amount of \$340,000 to be transferred to ACT for Alexandria which will manage the development of a program locator and Youth Program Quality Pilot, in partnership with the Weikart Center for Program Quality.

**BACKGROUND:** In the FY23 budget, City Council included a \$400,000 contingent reserve to "support the efforts of the newly constituted Youth Support Network to rationalize and refine the delivery, quality, and innovation of the public and private providers that provide out-of-school time services in the City."

In October 2022, \$60,000 was designated for an Out of School Time Landscape Scan, leaving \$340,000 in remaining funds. The funding would support the programmatic components previously approved by the Youth Support Network Executive Committee.

The Youth Support Network Executive Committee serves as the decision-making body for the Youth Support Network. The committee is primarily composed of provider organizations representing a diverse array of K-12 out of school time programming. Participating providers, co-chair and member-at-large organizations have received funding for their participation, ensuring equity and honor their commitment to participating in the Network. The YSN wants to continue funding participants through 2025 to ensure a variety of organizations can participate in the network's development. ACPS, ACT for Alexandria, and the City of Alexandria each have one standing seat on the Executive Committee. The standing members are represented by positions that support many youth-serving providers in their respective roles.

- ACPS: Executive Director of Community Partnerships & Engagement (Taneika Tukan)
- ACT for Alexandria: President & CEO (Heather Peeler)
- City of Alexandria: DCHS Chief of Youth Development (Noraine Buttar)

All co-chair and member-at-large seats are based on an annual commitment and are open to 80+ providers from city agencies, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and businesses who offer K-12 programming in the City of Alexandria.

ACT's administrative fee to house and support the development of the YSN would be split with the Frank & Betty Wright Foundation in 2024, as detailed in the outlined budget below. ACT provides financial management and oversight in support of the YSN and is actively engaging other funders to attract additional investment to further support the sustainability of the YSN.

**DISCUSSION:** The contingent fund reserves will enable the Youth Support Network (YSN) to establish a foundation for a strong out-of-school time/expanded learning network, preparing the network for future collaboration and coordination. These support structures include 30 communities with established OST networks across the country. The investments will:

- Support equitable access to programs through a program locator that will give youth and families easy access to information about program offerings.
- Support program quality, introduce a quality framework for our community, and build capacity for youth-serving organizations in Alexandria.

This funding will directly address key recommendations in the Youth Safety & Resilience Report, including:

- **Recommendation #1:** Youth programs should be creative, inclusive, and flexible and should foster social connection and a sense of belonging and promote youth behavioral health.
- **Recommendation #3:** Use a variety of methods and partnerships to creatively engage young people and ensure that youth are fully aware of the resources and programs available to them.
- **Recommendation #4:** Build effective Youth-Adult Partnerships by providing adults with ongoing trainings and technical assistance to promote positive youth development, and by providing youth with a strong foundation and ongoing opportunities to participate in decision and policy making with adults.
- **Recommendation #5:** When asking youth for their input and feedback, it is critical that adults listen, take their ideas seriously, and hold themselves accountable to respond to their concerns.

Specifically, the funds will be used towards two initiatives:

#### **Program Locator (Cityspan) & Website Design/Program Locator Design/Branding**

Early findings in the landscape study show that youth, families, and providers want to be more aware of the programming options in the City of Alexandria.

Cityspan is small, minority-owned business and is the primary developer of program locators and data/registration systems for out-of-school time/expanded learning networks across the country. The program locator will enable youth, families, providers, and community members to explore the array of programming available to young people and connect them with providers. The locator will be consistently updated and managed by Cityspan.

Contracting with Cityspan also opens the possibility for future development of a comprehensive data system and registration system for participating programs.

Mekanik is a local organizational design and brand agency. Mekanik will support the network with branding, establishing a website/online presence. They will also collaborate with Cityspan to handle the website design/front end of the program locator. Mekanik partnered with Kids' First Years to create their website.

The YSN will receive website user reports from surveys to measure increased awareness of programs that align with their needs and interests, as well as ease of website useability. This data will measure success and identify areas of improvement, if needed.

#### **Youth Program Quality Pilot - Weikart Center for Program Quality**

Early findings in the landscape study show that providers want professional development to enhance the quality of their programming.

The Weikart Center for Program Quality's Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) process is used in over 140 networks/systems nationwide. *"The YPQI approach harnesses the power of research evidence and the experience of practitioners to improve the quality of youth experiences in OST programming from the ground up. The YPQI uses evidence-based materials and practices that can be customized and applied in any program type, size, or setting."* (<https://forumfyi.org/weikartcenter/>)

The YSN Executive Committee has endorsed the opportunity with the Weikart Center after conducting due diligence and reviewing other potential partners. Ten to fifteen program sites/locations would be selected to participate in a cohort from 2024-2025. The cohort will be representative of a broad array of K-12 programming types, selected by a committee of providers. Participating sites would receive professional development through Weikart focused on building community, listening actively to youth, incorporating and encouraging youth voice, and reframing conflict.

During the 2024-2025 school year, the cohort would receive support to participate in a YPQI cycle of improvement process. Cohort sites will learn how to assess their programming, receive external evaluation, collect data, and build an improvement plan with their teams.

To create a model of sustainability and support, the Youth Support Network will hire a Director of Program Quality to receive training from the Weikart Center for Program Quality. The director will be trained to lead Weikart Youth Work Methods Workshops and support cohort sites through the YPQI process.

By the summer of 2025, the Director of Program Quality and the cohort will make recommendations to the Youth Support Network Executive Committee regarding the development and implementation of the YPQI in the City of Alexandria.

To measure success of the program quality initiative, the Youth Support Network will gather and use data from the 10 to 15 participating program sites/locations about their programming and chart their progress. Measurements include: (1) the cohort reports increased understanding of the elements of program quality, and (2) the cohort reports that the pilot built their understanding of/capacity to deliver high-quality programs. Based on cohort feedback, the Executive Committee will determine a quality framework that will be used the YSN.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** This request allocates the remaining \$340,000 of the \$400,000 in contingent reserves to be transferred to ACT for Alexandria for the following uses:

Item	Request	Notes
<b><i>Supplements for Landscape Study</i></b>		
Program locator (Cityspan)	\$35,000	Work starts in 2023 and continues through 2024 - in conjunction with Mekanik's website/branding work; development of program locator through Cityspan sets network up for future development of data and registration system
Website development/program locator design/branding (Mekanik)	\$66,500	Work starts in 2023 and concludes in spring/summer 2024 - in conjunction with Cityspan's program locator build
<b><i>Youth Program Quality Pilot - Weikart Center for Program Quality</i></b>		
Program quality pilot	\$50,000	Pilot begins in January 2024 and runs through May/June 2025
Participation grants for providers	\$75,000	Pilot begins in January 2024 and runs through May/June 2025 (assumes 8-10 hours per month for 15 sites/locations)
External evaluations for program quality pilot	\$4,000	Per Weikart - evaluations for 15 sites/locations; evaluations would be scheduled in fall 2024
Director of Program Quality	\$9,000	Portion of contract for Director of Program Quality
<b><i>Additional</i></b>		

Executive Committee Stipends to CBO's	\$78,000	Covers two years of stipends to the Community Based Organizations that are participants of the Executive Committee, supporting the building and development of the network. Their expertise provides shared leadership of workgroups that address Middle School Programming, Program Quality, and Social-Emotional Learning, the website and program locator.
ACT administrative fee	\$22,500	Split with Frank & Betty Wright Foundation
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$340,000</b>	

**STAFF:**

Noraine Buttar, Division Chief, Youth Development, Department of Community and Human Services  
Laura Durham, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities