



SUMMER MATTERS INITIATIVE
A public/private partnership with
New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development

BACKGROUND

1. History of NYC Out-of-School-Time (OST) Services

In 2003, with an initial grant from the Wallace Foundation, New York City began to redesign the largest public after-school system in the country. It consolidated regulatory and funding oversight for publicly funded after-school programs at the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), combined State and City funding sources, and issued one Request for Proposals to provide Out-of-School-Time (OST) services in the City's poorest neighborhoods. In 2009, the City poured more than \$100 million into OST providing services for more than 85,000 youngsters; 60 percent of whom live in the City's neediest neighborhoods. The success of this groundbreaking initiative was well documented in a series of evaluative reports by Policy Studies Associates (accessible on [DYCD website](#)).

Since 2009, cumulative State and City funding cuts have threatened to undermine the City's OST system. During this period, DYCD worked hard to sustain the infrastructure, carefully reducing services in the City's lowest-risk neighborhoods and eliminating poor performing programs. However, the situation worsened and, in 2010, major cuts in the City's publicly funded summer and year-round OST programming seemed unavoidable.

Among the most critical of these cuts was a \$1.5 million proposed reduction that would have eliminated 31, 8-week, summer programs that otherwise provide free, year-round OST programming for thousands of children growing up in some of the City's poorest communities. These programs, operated by 21 youth-serving agencies, were located in 20 poor communities including Crown Heights and East Flatbush, Brooklyn; Central Harlem, Manhattan; Far Rockaway, Queens; Mott Haven, South Bronx; and neighborhoods on the south shore of Staten Island.

Closure of the 31 programs would have had serious implications for the 21 nonprofits and the communities they have served for decades. A total of 280 full-time jobs would have been eliminated. Some school-year programs would have had to close because the agencies would lose their classroom space in schools. Hundreds of working parents would have had to find comparable programs in communities where free, high-quality youth programs are always in short supply.

2. Launch of Summer Matters Public/Private Partnership

The dire nature of this situation was brought to the attention of private philanthropy through a forum on issues of policy and budget in 2010 hosted by the New York City Youth Funders. This began a series of conversations to determine the possibility of establishing a public/private venture to assure continuity of programs in targeted areas. The conversation centered around how to raise funds which did not just fill a government void but could effectively serve as a catalyst to recoup government dollars with the promise of a match from private funders. In addition, private philanthropists were

becoming increasingly aware of the value of summer learning in the ongoing education of young people—designed to avoid an achievement gap which arose when such programs did not exist (see research brief by [Karl Alexander, Johns Hopkins University](#)). The decision was further solidified through our research and observation of the importance of middle school as a predictor of high school graduation and pathways to success. Finally, funders were convinced that the possibility of restoration of funds by City Council and other arms of government would likely give priority to elementary youth and summer youth employment programming, rather than for middle school summer programs.

The result of these deliberations led to the launch of the public/private initiative, Summer Matters. Through Summer Matters, the philanthropic community – led by The New York Community Trust and assisted by New York City Youth Funders – raised \$636,000 in private contributions. Drawing on this private support as leverage, DYCD was able to negotiate to restore \$611,000 in matching City funds budget for the 31 programs. **As far as we know, this is the first time a proposed public/private partnership got the City to forestall a planned budget cut.**

3. Outcomes of the 2010 Initiative

The funds leveraged by the Summer Matters Initiative made it possible for 21 agencies to operate the 31 programs for 6 weeks in summer, benefiting a total of 2,322 youngsters. In addition, this unique public/private partnership proved a successful means to:

- Avoid the breakdown of year-round youth services in high-need communities;
- Maintain the City's commitment to youth services during a time of fiscal hardship;
- Begin a partnership between the public and private sectors to strengthen vital youth services;
- Focus public attention on OST programming for middle school students; an issue that otherwise might not have been addressed.
- Assist low-income families living in the 20 communities who depend on the availability and continuity of publicly funded summer and after school youth services.

2011 PLAN

In 2011, Summer Matters is aimed at:

- Continuing vital middle school summer program slots in 2011 for over 2,300 children; and
- Implementing an engaging, year-round science/math enrichment initiative across participating program sites in partnership The New York Academy of Sciences, which pairs graduate school students from local universities with community-based organizations.