



NWT RECREATION & PARKS ASSOCIATION



Environmental Scan of After-School Programs in the Northwest Territories

Executive Summary

October 2011

Prepared by Lutra Associates Ltd.
for the NWT Recreation and Parks Association

Executive Summary

Quality after-school programs have the potential to enhance the health and well-being and positive development of children and youth in the NWT. The NWT Recreation and Parks Association (NWTRPA) commissioned the Environmental Scan of After-School Programs in the Northwest Territories (Environmental Scan) to determine:

1. The nature of after-school programming in place in NWT communities, including populations served, activities, benefits, program duration, and expected program life.
2. After-school program needs that are not addressed in current programming or elsewhere in the community.
3. Opportunities for NWTRPA or others to address unmet needs for after-school programming.

The Environmental Scan engaged over 100 organizations in virtually every community in the NWT – 67 completed questionnaires and 41 responded to say that they do not deliver after-school programs.

Profile of After-School Programs

The 67 organizations that deliver after-school programs offer a total of 142 programs. Schools are the primary deliverers of after-school programs. Community governments, friendship and youth centres, and other non-government organizations also deliver after-school programs. Organizations partner with a variety of groups to deliver their programs. Partnerships offer access to facilities, funding and other resources, human resources, and other knowledge/expertise. Most after-school programs target both genders and serve an average of 53 children and youth. Approximately one-third (35%) of programs commenced between 2009 and 2011, this time-frame coincides with the availability of after-school funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories.

After-School Program Activities, Location and Leaders

Just over two-thirds (67%) of after-school programs offer primarily structured programming while 32% are a combination of programmed time and unstructured playtime. Most programs (71%) include physical activities and 42% provide healthy snacks. Close to three-quarters (72%) of programs are delivered in schools. Other locations include recreation centres, outside, and youth centres. The majority (92%) of programs are led by paid staff. Approximately one-third (34%) of programs also engage volunteers and 9% have parental involvement.

“More qualified, responsible staff and parent involvement would help us deliver programs more effectively.”

After-School Funding

Organizations use a variety of territorial, federal and local funding to support after-school programs. Only one, the Government of the Northwest Territories', Active After-School Physical Activity funding (Active After-School) specifically targets the after-school period. Most after-school program budgets are not large – 50% are below \$10,000 and 25% are in the \$10,000 to \$19,000 range. Budgets pay for equipment and supplies, staff, and snacks.

After-School Program Needs

Organizations delivering after-school programs indicated that program leaders (paid and volunteer), stable funding, and youth-centered activities contributes towards successful programs. They further indicated that a lack of adequate/stable funding, high program costs, and a lack of suitable equipment and qualified program leaders challenges after-school programs. Specifically, organizations delivering after-school programs indicated that the following would strengthen existing programs:

- Enhanced human capacity (e.g., staff training, qualified and stable staff, and/or more volunteer/parental involvement);
- Adequate, stable funding;
- Improved facilities and/or better equipment; and
- Expanded/more variety in program activities.

Compared to schools, other organizations that deliver after-school programs identified a higher need for training.

Organizations were divided in their opinion of whether existing after-school programs are meeting the needs of children and youth in their communities. Just over half (55%) feel that programs are not meeting existing needs. They identified a lack of child/youth engagement, lack of variety in program activities, lack of human capacity, and a lack of resources as factors that support this assertion. More programs for older and inactive youth and a wider variety of programs, including programs in the performing, physical and visual arts, programs that develop youth, academic/homework programs, and sports programs are needed.

Recommendations

The following recommendations to the NWTRPA respond to challenges, needs, and opportunities identified by the Environmental Scan.

1. Communicate findings of the Environmental Scan to organizations delivering after-school programs, communities, recreation professionals, funders, and other government and non-government organizations.
2. Develop/sustain partnerships with key stakeholders to respond to Environmental Scan recommendations and support the delivery of quality after-school programs. Key stakeholders could include, organizations delivering after-school programs, communities, recreation professionals, funders, and other government and non-government organizations.
3. Facilitate the delivery of community-based training workshops to develop the skills and knowledge of after-school program leaders/volunteers. Workshops should focus on leaders/volunteers of programs delivered by non-school organizations. Training topics could include: first aid, behaviour management, child development training, fund raising, coaching, leadership, and mentorship.
4. Raise awareness of opportunities and positive impacts of community-based volunteering and mentoring.
5. Facilitate the delivery of workshops that use a community development approach to the design and delivery of innovative and quality after-school programs that meet the needs of youth.
6. Advocate for adequate, sustained funding to support quality after-school programming in the NWT.
7. Advocate for improvements to recreational facilities and equipment.

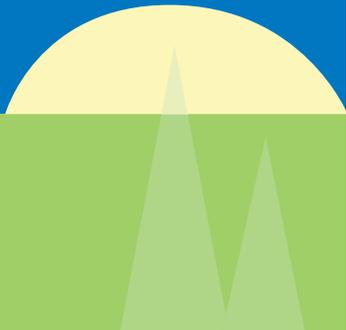
Highlights and Opportunities, Key Elements of Quality After-School Programs

Quality after-school programs have the following key elements:

- Skilled, qualified and caring staff,
- Focused, appropriate, and sustained programming that builds skills, and positive peer-to-peer and adult relationships,
- Good community partnerships/connections (e.g., with families and other adults, schools and other organizations), and
- Adequate, sustained funding.

“We are doing well with what we’ve got but we are still limited in what we can offer.”





Recreation for Life!

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