How to Talk to Policymakers and Funders About Quality Standards

Why Quality Is Important

- Research shows that quality afterschool programs increase positive outcomes for youth. High-quality afterschool programs are linked to significant gains in test scores, improved work habits, and fewer behavior problems.
- It is not enough for communities to just have access to afterschool programs. Communities need access to consistent and high-quality programs that benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically.

How Quality Standards Can Help Policymakers and Funders

- The Standards assist stakeholders in understanding the key elements of high-quality programming and what quality programming looks like.
- The Quality Standards help to ensure that policymakers and funders are linking funding and support to research-based practices that lead to measurable outcomes.
- The Standards also help programs to develop plans for improvement. These plans will help funders and policymakers to gauge programs progress to improvement and determine aspects of programming that need further investments.

What To Do About Other Quality Tools

- The Standards were created with input from the field in Illinois; and, thus, are compatible with many other quality tools.
- The Standards can be used by providers that don't have a quality tool or in conjunction with other assessments.

What is the Context Statewide

- Programs and organizations statewide have already begun endorsing the Standards like the United Way of Illinois, the Illinois Collboration on Youth, the Illinois Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, and many others.
- These Standards were developed in partnership with providers around the state and the Illinois State Board of Education and the Department of Human Services.

Implementing Quality Standards

- Policymakers and funders can encourage programs to use ACT Now's Refelction and Planning Guide to reflect on program strengths and weaknesses and create improvement plans in order to ensure they are investing in positive youth outcomes.
- The Standards can also be incorporated into grant proposals and reports to provide a common language for what quality programming looks like.
- To find Standards resources and more visit: http://www.actnowillinois.org/quality-standards/
- ACT Now offers free trainings around the state on the Standards and information sessions for funders to assist in learning about the Standards.