

# Investments and Opportunities in Summer Learning:

## A Community Assessment of Baltimore, Maryland

### INTRODUCTION

Education leaders in Baltimore City—the location of the seminal Johns Hopkins University study of summer learning loss—have long been aware of the challenge of summer learning loss and the role it plays in compromising student success and aggravating the achievement gap. While there is an array of summer learning programs offered throughout the community, Baltimore has not yet seen systematic efforts to beat summer learning loss.

With support from the Morton K. and Jane Blaustein Foundation and the T. Rowe Price Foundation, the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) and the Family League of Baltimore City (Family League) have collaborated to begin system-building efforts in the city.

Family League serves as an architect of change in Baltimore by promoting data-driven, collaborative initiatives, and aligning resources to create lasting outcomes for children, families, and communities.

To launch system-building efforts, NSLA and Family League assessed Baltimore’s summer learning landscape and convened other community stakeholders to develop strategies for increasing access to and the quality of summer programming across the city. The community assessment defined summer learning opportunities as organized academic and/or enrichment activities for pre-K through 12th grade students.

To support ongoing strategic planning around summer, NSLA and Family League convened two groups, a Summer Steering Committee and a Summer Provider Group. The Summer Steering Committee has met every two months and includes representatives from the Mayor’s Office,



Baltimore City Public Schools, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, other city agencies, local foundations, and a representative of summer learning program providers. The steering committee used NSLA’s *Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems* framework to guide the development of policy recommendations.

#### BALTIMORE CITY COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS FOR 2012

Total Population	622,417
Poverty Rate	23.4%
Approximate Percent of Children Living in Poverty	33.0%
Approximate Percent of Children Living in Low-Income Families	62.0%
Unemployment Rate	10.2%
School Enrollment	84,747
High School Graduation Rate	66.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; KidsCount 2012



The Summer Provider Group met every two months, offering participating providers a chance to review the data analyses, raise questions about needs and assets, and review the Summer Steering Committee's proposed strategies for the future.

In response to the Provider Group's recommendations, Family League began to coordinate summer trainings and provide more centralized communication on upcoming summer opportunities for summer 2014, with the intention to offer additional training opportunities for summer programs in future years.

Overall, the assessment and planning process positions Baltimore well for progress towards coordinated action around summer learning loss. This report highlights the findings of the community assessment, and documents the strategies that emerged from the deliberations of the Steering Committee and Provider Group on how to enhance and institutionalize summer learning in Baltimore.



## SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS TARGETED TO LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

can help close the achievement gap that has been attributed, at least in part, to cumulative learning loss during the summers and that has been shown to be steeper for low-income students than for others.

## UNDERSTANDING SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

Extensive research confirms that during the summer most children and youth typically lose up to two months of math achievement, and low-income youth fall chronically behind their peers in reading.

Research shows that summer learning loss makes a significant contribution to the ninth grade reading achievement gap.

In effect, without ongoing opportunities to learn and practice essential skills during the summer months, children and youth fall behind on measures of academic achievement. These losses contribute to an ever-widening achievement gap and impact student success later in life.

## THE LEVEL OF A YOUNG PERSON'S ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OVER THE SUMMER IS A CRITICAL FACTOR IN HIS OR HER FUTURE SUCCESS AND LIKELIHOOD OF EARNING A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND COLLEGE DEGREE.

Newer research brings attention to additional risks associated with summer break. Children are at greater risk for unhealthy weight gain during the summer than during the school year, particularly black and Hispanic youth, and youth who are already overweight. Related to both activity level and access to healthy food, a child's body mass index can increase two or three times faster during summer vacation than during the school year, contributing to the problem of childhood obesity. In addition, millions of children go without access to federally subsidized meals when schools close for summer break.

For additional information, see:

McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., Schwartz, H. L., Bodilly, S. J., McInnis, B., Lichter, D. S., Cross, A. B. (2011). *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*. RAND Education: Santa Monica, CA.

NSLA's *Healthy Summers for Kids: Turning Risk into Opportunity* report: <http://www.summerlearning.org/HealthySummers>

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

NSLA's community assessments are designed to capture a snapshot of the investments and opportunities in summer learning made available by private funders, government agencies, community-based organizations, national service providers, and other sectors.

Through data requests to programs and foundations, interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups, and/or other methods, the community assessment process creates a snapshot of the summer programs that are operating – and provides an initial starting point for city-wide conversations around increased collaboration and coordination.

The following caveats are important to keep in mind regarding the data and findings in a community assessment. All reported figures are subject to the following considerations, and due caution must be exercised in interpretation and extrapolation.



### Incomplete and Estimated Data

The study team may not receive complete data from all targeted organizations and agencies for varying reasons. When considered as a whole, it is likely that incomplete and estimated data may have led to an underestimate of the total summer learning program landscape.

### Double-Counting

There is the potential for youth who may have participated in more than one program to be counted multiple times in the data used for a community assessment. The study team is often unable to verify that counts of enrolled participants were unduplicated for some organizations. There may also be duplication of students across programs, as some children may attend programs with multiple providers throughout the summer.

### Budgeted Funding vs. Program Cost

The community assessment process uses program budgets to approximate program cost. This approximation most likely underestimates the true cost of summer programming, since facilities costs, year-round administrative costs, in-kind contributions or other elements may not be reflected in the summer budgets. Although in-kind contributions are often an important source of support for summer programs, reliable information on the value of these resources was not available.<sup>1</sup>

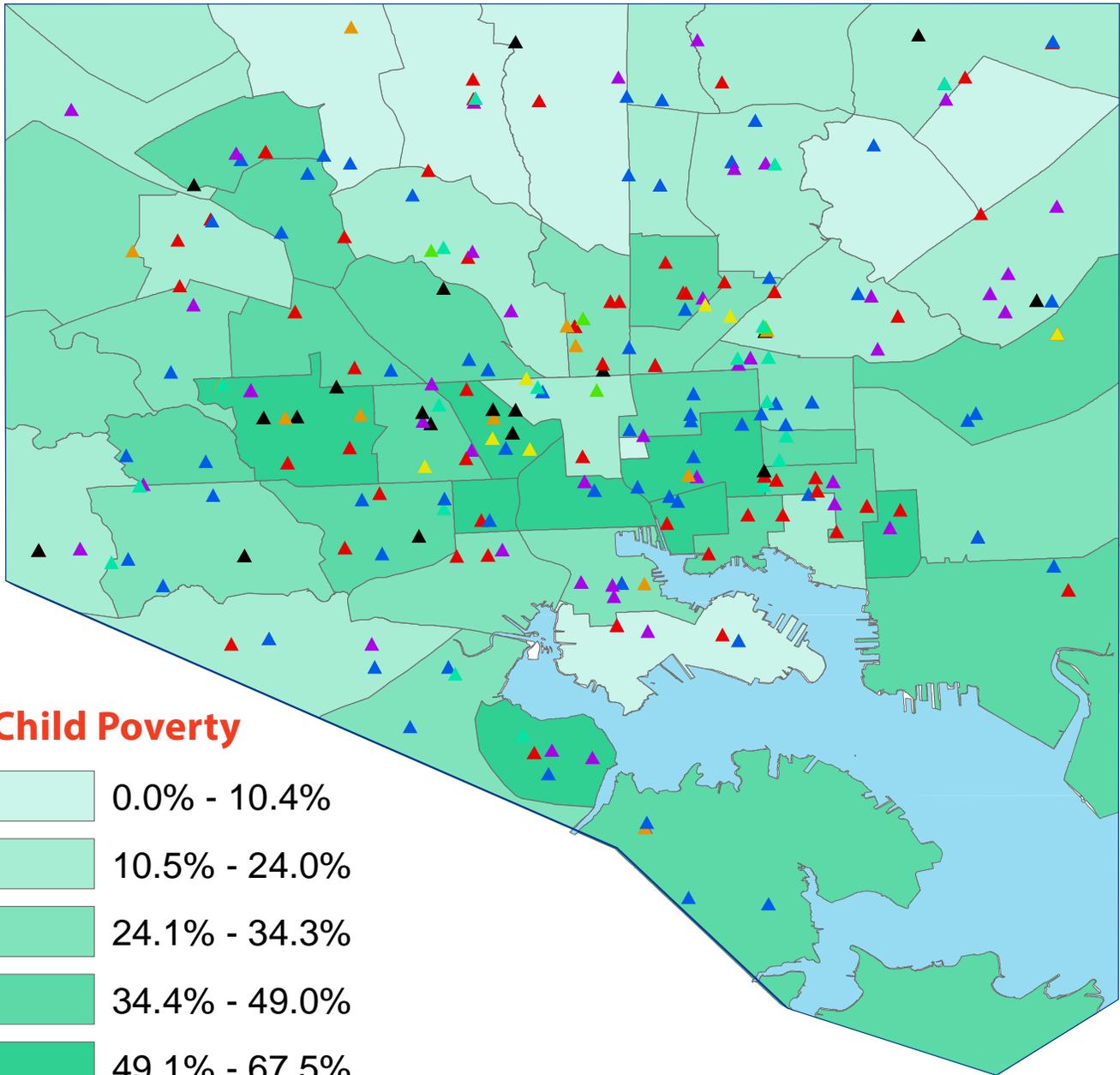
### Snapshot in Time

Data collection for this resource scan focused on summer 2013 and represents a snapshot in time. The extent to which providers are able to offer programs and the size of those programs may vary from year to year, sometimes substantially, based on available funding.

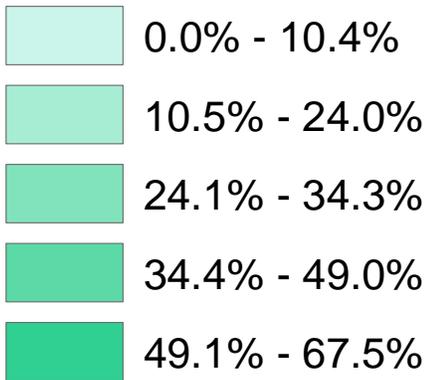
<sup>1</sup>For more on the challenges of estimating summer program cost, see:

- (1) McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., Schwartz, H. L., Bodilly, S. J., McInnis, B., Lichter, D. S., Cross, A. B. (2011). *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*. RAND Education: Santa Monica, CA.
- (2) Grossman, J. B., Lind, C., Hayes, C., McMaken, J., Gersick, A. (2009). *The Cost of Quality Out-of-School-Time Programs*. A joint publication of Public/Private Ventures and The Finance Project.

# 2013 SUMMER LEARNING SITES



## Child Poverty



- |   |            |   |                        |
|---|------------|---|------------------------|
|  | Unknown    |  | Pre-School             |
|  | Elementary |  | Elementary/Middle      |
|  | High       |  | Middle/High            |
|  | Middle     |  | Elementary/Middle/High |

## BALTIMORE'S SUMMER LEARNING LANDSCAPE

During the fall of 2013, Family League and NSLA worked to identify summer programs operating in the city and to learn about their programming and the youth that they served. Data collection focused on outreach to providers who operated during the summer of 2013. Administrative data from the 2-1-1 informational call line<sup>2</sup> and summer meals sites was used to identify potential summer programs.

Once identified, Family League staff contacted programs to request the following information: organization type, grades served, program address, program size, length of day, program cost, funding sources, and per pupil cost. For a program to be included in the community assessment, information on organization type, grades served, program address and program size needed to be complete at a minimum. After reviewing this data, Family League identified 229 summer programs that operated in Baltimore during summer 2013.

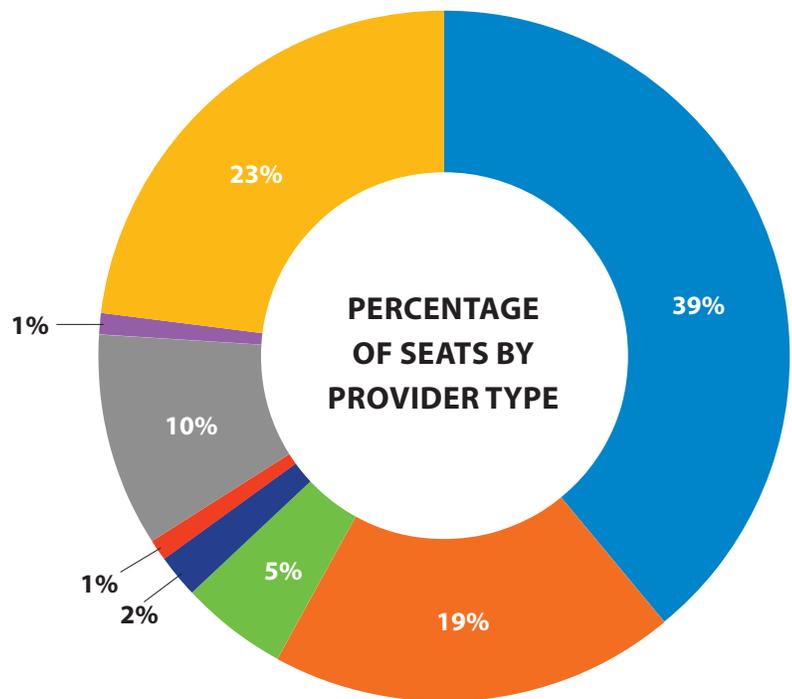
As a whole, these programs reported 16,941 seats were available in summer 2013. Additionally, the city's *YouthWorks* program served 5,000 high school students at over 450 locations. Taken together, these 21,941 seats represent the capacity to serve approximately 25 percent of the city's K-12 youth.

There were summer programs operating in summer 2013 that served youth in every grade. Elementary programs were the most common. Middle school students were served by the lowest number of programs, and had fewer available slots when compared to elementary and high school students. Nearly half of programs reported serving youth from more than one age group, but it was not possible to determine the exact number of students served for each.

Baltimore City Public Schools was the largest provider of summer programming providing 8,600 summer seats, equal to 39 percent of the total summer seats available in Baltimore. Two city agencies, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development and the Department of Recreation and Parks, provide 33 percent of the available summer seats, followed by community and faith based organizations that provide 24 percent of the summer seats. Libraries, universities, and miscellaneous programs provide the remaining 4 percent of seats in formal programs. The geographic distribution of program sites is shown on the opposite page.

SUMMER PROGRAM CAPACITY		
Grades Served	Number of programs	Number of seats
Elementary	74	7,359
Middle	24	2,764
High (program)	14	1,148
High (YouthWorks)	-	5,000
Elementary/Middle	64	3,626
Elementary/Middle/High	45	1,738
Middle/High	2	78
Pre-School	6	228
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>21,941</b>

*These 21,941 seats represent the capacity to serve approximately 25 percent of Baltimore's K-12 youth.*



<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Baltimore City Schools	39%	<span style="color: red;">■</span> Miscellaneous	1%
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> CBO	19%	<span style="color: grey;">■</span> Recreation & Parks	10%
<span style="color: green;">■</span> FBO	5%	<span style="color: purple;">■</span> University	1%
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Library	2%	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> YouthWorks	23%

<sup>2</sup>The 2-1-1 informational call line, a partnership between the United Way and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), connects residents to community services and volunteer opportunities. Baltimore's 2-1-1 line has included information about local summer programs in their outreach since 2011.



## THE COMMUNITY INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE SUMMER LEARNING SYSTEMS

Developed in 2013, NSLA's Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems (CIESLS) rating scale is based on the theory that effective summer learning systems can provide more summer learning opportunities for youth, improve program quality, and improve outcomes for youth through coordinated and collaborative action at the community level.

Based on research on system-building, best practices in existing afterschool and summer systems, and a survey of community intermediaries and program providers, NSLA developed a set of 39 indicators that define the size, scope, and features of summer learning systems. These indicators are used to measure community progress in achieving system-building milestones in each of the rating scale's six domains:

- Shared Vision and City-wide Coordination
- Engaged Leadership
- Data Management System
- Continuous Quality Improvement
- Sustainable Resources
- Marketing and Communications

## BUILDING A SUMMER LEARNING SYSTEM FOR BALTIMORE

The results of the summer program landscape assessment pointed the Summer Steering Committee and the Summer Provider Group to the community-level summer learning challenges and opportunities in Baltimore.

To investigate these further and develop strategies for mitigating the challenges and seizing the opportunities, the Summer Steering Committee used NSLA's *Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems (CIESLS)* framework to guide the development of policy recommendations. The committee created three work groups, each focusing on two of the CIESLS domains. These work groups met separately to discuss potential strategies within each system-building area. The key themes are discussed by CIESLS domain below.



### Shared Vision and City-wide Coordination

A shared vision for summer learning, which informs a community-wide summer learning action plan, can coordinate the efforts of a diverse group of stakeholders and support community-wide collaboration. Work group participants felt strongly that there is an opportunity to expand access to summer programs as part of a year-round conversation on how schools and communities support learning and health in the city. This year-round vision would create an opportunity to discuss structural challenges to supporting youth, such as facilities availability, funding timelines, and more.



### Engaged Leadership

Successful summer learning system-building requires community stakeholders and champions to advocate for summer programming, coordinate progress towards summer priorities, and share accountability for the development and implementation of the summer learning action plan. In particular, community stakeholders articulated a need to identify, engage and educate key community members in Baltimore around the importance of summer learning and the need for coordinated action. While sustaining engagement of key leaders, such as the Chief Academic Officer at Baltimore City Public Schools, community members also felt that local neighborhood leaders should be engaged around summer learning loss and the needs of their own neighborhoods. Additionally, the work group participants believe that the Baltimore Ravens, Orioles, and Blast, as well as local celebrities such as Michael Phelps could be engaged as champions if presented with a clear and coordinated ask for support.



### Data Management System

Model summer learning systems implement processes for data collection, sharing, and analysis across stakeholders. In Baltimore, a limited number of entities fund, oversee or regulate summer programming (including the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Department of Social Services, Family League of Baltimore, Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, and local foundations). Stakeholders identified a clear opportunity for these entities to facilitate data matching across programs by collecting the same key data points from programs.

Standardizing the collection of data points such as participant name, school attended, program attendance, or other key elements, would enable researchers at the Baltimore Education Research Consortium or another community partner to understand engagement and measure impact across the city's summer program providers.



### Continuous Quality Improvement

Exemplary summer learning systems adopt a process for quality improvement at both the systemic and programmatic levels. In Baltimore, community stakeholders identified several entities with regulatory expectations or quality guidelines for summer programming (including the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Department of Social Services, Family League of Baltimore City, Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, and local foundations). Examining alignment among the different expectations of these entities, and the training needs for programs to meet these expectations, could begin to move Baltimore's summer programs toward a common definition and standard for quality summer programming.



### Sustainable Resources

Community system-building around summer learning should consider the funding targets and strategies for both program development and growth, and system capacity-building. In Baltimore, summer funding has not been coordinated within a year-round, collective impact vision for the city's youth. Work group participants articulated a strong desire for collective fundraising under the umbrella of a common vision that includes summer.

Baltimore's summer program providers in particular noted that they struggle to coordinate the resources needed to successfully run summer programs across competing funding timelines and the city and school system fiscal years. To improve the flow of resources, program providers proposed mapping the resources available in the community and their application and reporting requirements. This asset map should include monetary, in-kind, and human capital resources.



### Marketing and Communications

Exemplary summer learning systems identify community-wide strategies to understand the demand for summer, to build awareness of need and of available resources, and to support student recruitment and enrollment. Baltimore's *Super Summer* initiative has begun the work around these areas—but city stakeholders recognized that the initiative could be strengthened to better engage with the city's families. With consistent *Super Summer* branding, families could be engaged in year-round conversations about summer through various community channels such as Baltimore Police Department's community relations councils, libraries, radio and television advertisements, resource fairs, local clinics, and through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program mailing lists. Existing communications between the city's agencies and city residents throughout the year, such as the Mayor's Office of Employment Development's *YouthWorks* job assignment mailings, could draw on the *Super Summer* common branding to support year-round awareness and advocacy.

In addition, community stakeholders identified a need for outreach to foundations, businesses, agency leaders and policy makers about summer learning loss and the best ways that these entities could help increase access to summer programs for Baltimore's youth. A one-page summary, created by the Summer Steering Committee but tailored to each sector, could strengthen buy-in and awareness of summer learning among these key stakeholders.

Together with the landscape assessment, these work groups provided a detailed picture of the strengths, assets, challenges, and barriers around summer learning in Baltimore City, as well as opportunities for concrete action in each of the CIESLS domains. Working together, NSLA and the Family League used this input to develop a "Baltimore Summer Learning Action Plan" that includes targeted strategies for increasing city-wide collaboration and coordination around summer learning for summer 2014 and during planning for summer 2015 and beyond.

By implementing these strategies, Baltimore City has the opportunity to leverage resources from around the city to tackle summer learning loss at scale. With the continued efforts of the Family League of Baltimore City, Summer Steering Committee members, summer learning providers, and others, the community can create a true summer learning system that supports more opportunities for youth while improving program quality and outcomes.

# THE BALTIMORE SUMMER LEARNING ACTION PLAN

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## Shared Vision and City-wide Coordination

- Articulate a city-wide, year-round collective impact vision for Baltimore's youth that highlights the importance of summer learning and health, includes summer programming as a key support, and addresses underserved populations.
  - Document the structural barriers to implementing this vision and collaborate with key stakeholders including Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks and others, and cultivate interagency partnerships to overcome these barriers.
  - Engage Family League as the primary local summer learning intermediary, and develop a process for Family League to engage key stakeholders in implementing the collective vision and summer learning action plan through a Summer Steering Committee.
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## Engaged Leadership

- Identify other relevant committees and work groups and their education and youth development priorities, and work to connect those efforts to the Summer Steering Committee.
  - Engage additional key stakeholders in the Summer Learning Steering Committee to plan and problem-solve around summer learning in Baltimore City.
  - Develop a strategy to continuously engage key players, including a plan for overcoming the transition of key individuals.
  - Prepare a one-page call to action for engaging the mayor and leaders at key city agencies, Baltimore City Public Schools, local foundations, and others.
  - Convene funders to standardize data collection.
  - Coordinate asks for support to the Ravens, Orioles, and other local sports teams or distinguished citizens who can communicate the importance of summer learning to a larger audience based on personal experiences.
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## Data Management System

- Explore the potential for the Baltimore Educational Research Consortium or another local intermediary to facilitate data sharing among summer programs, Baltimore City Public Schools, Department of Juvenile Services, Mayor's Office of Employment Development, Maryland Department of Social Services, Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and other agencies to conduct outcome and cost-effectiveness analyses of different summer offerings.
  - Engage summer programs throughout the city in tracking key data points such as student name, date of birth, school attended, program attendance, and student ID.
  - Build the capacity of summer providers to collect and use site level data.
  - Convene data managers to standardize the collection and analysis of key data points that support outcome and process evaluations.
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## Continuous Quality Improvement

- Identify the institutions that regulate or fund summer opportunities and the standards that they use to make decisions.
- Examine the alignment among existing camp certifications, child care certifications or funding requirements, and develop a shared program quality framework for different age groups in Baltimore that contributes to tracking quality of the summer system.
- Identify training opportunities for summer program staff that address both regulations and program quality standards.
- Document the roles of seasonal employees, youth workers, college students, AmeriCorps members, teachers, volunteers, and others in the city's summer programs, and consider how to intentionally train these summer staff to support quality programming.
- Use data from participants, staff, and families to support program improvement.



## Sustainable Resources

- Explore ways for summer programs in Baltimore to participate in shared economies of scale that support decreased cost and increased access across the city-wide system.
- Articulate the need for funding to support summer learning as part of a community-wide, year-round collective impact strategy, and implement a resource development plan aligned with other city-wide initiatives.
- Engage neighborhood champions in advocating for summer learning resources in their community through advocacy workshops and awareness-building sessions.
- Document the challenges that programs in Baltimore face as a result of competing funding timelines and the city and school district fiscal years, as well as strategies that could address these challenges through the use of private funding to complement public funding.
- Build a transparent city-wide funding process for summer programs that may include an intermediary.
- Map the resources and assets available for summer learning programs in Baltimore—including dollars, in-kind resources, camp fees, and human capital—as well as key points to access them.



## Marketing and Communications

- Engage neighborhood advocates in awareness-building efforts in their own communities.
- Engage young people in awareness-building and advocacy.
- Create a toolkit for neighborhood advocates that describe what they can do to share information about summer learning loss and available summer opportunities with their community.
- Coordinate marketing and communications efforts through the Baltimore City *Super Summer* campaign to take full advantage of the common branding, and collaborate with other summer messaging campaigns.
- Provide school principals and teachers with sufficient information to refer students to available summer programs and support them in this process.
- Identify when and where families receive information from city agencies, schools, and other partners throughout the year, incorporate information about summer learning and summer opportunities into these pre-existing communications, and develop a specific family engagement strategy.
- Develop specific messages to funding organizations, businesses, city agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders around the importance of high-quality summer learning opportunities, the need for these opportunities in Baltimore, and the steps they can take to support the work.
- Consider how social media can be leveraged to increase awareness of summer learning opportunities in Baltimore.



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T. Rowe Price Foundation, Inc.



The Family League of Baltimore serves as an architect of change in Baltimore by orchestrating data-driven, collaborative initiatives and funding effective programs to create lasting outcomes for children and youth.



**national summer  
learning association**

**About the National Summer Learning Association**

The vision of the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is for every child to be safe, healthy, and engaged in learning during the summer. To realize that vision, our mission is to connect and equip schools, providers, communities, and families to deliver high-quality summer learning opportunities to our nation's youth to help close the achievement gap and support healthy development.

**NSLA's Community Initiatives** aim to align existing resources and to increase community capacity to deliver high-quality summer learning at scale. Designing strategies that are unique to the local context, NSLA's Community Initiatives support community assessment; partner coordination; strategic planning; and capacity building with local intermediaries and stakeholders.

[www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org)