SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

As a Community Based Organization (CBO) Program Coordinator for a partnership with a school, use this checklist to identify what steps you have taken to build a sustainable program and partnership and then choose which steps you will take next to strengthen the capacity of your partnership to withstand the inevitable changes it will encounter.

Relationship Building

❑ *Build relationships and collaborate with stakeholders that influence the sustainability of the program.* Youth, families, teachers, school staff, school administrators, school district leaders, CBOs, volunteers, and businesses care what happens in a school community. Involve them in planning, leading, and/or evaluating components of the program. Take the first step by mapping out your Partnership Ecosystem.

❑ *"How" we do the work is often just as important to the success of our partnership as "what" we are doing.* To create a collaborative culture for partnership interactions and meetings, apply strategies from the Tip Sheet for Planning for Equitable Collaboration Meetings.

❑ *Build collaborations with other CBOs to strategically share resources, seek new sources of funding, refer families to programs well-suited to their interests and needs, and cooperate to meet the needs of the school community.*

❑ *Participate in school-based leadership and decision-making.* For example, find out what kinds of committees and groups you and/or a parent/guardian from your program could join, such as the Building Leadership Team or the Race and Equity Team at the school.

❑ *Ensure key school stakeholders have relationships with people from your organization (rather than only with you).* For example, include your supervisor in an annual meeting with the principal and introduce your staff or colleagues to stakeholders whenever they are in the school building or attending events, etc.

Communication

❑ *Use "our" rather than "my" when referring to the program and/or partnership, internally and externally.*

❑ *Establish an annual communications strategy and plan.* Communicate multiple times per year about program updates and achievements so diverse stakeholders are aware of what the partnership offers to the community, how the services match needs at the school, and what its outcomes are. For example, create a quarterly newsletter for your program and partnership.

❑ *Participate, to the extent allowable by your organization, in activities that raise awareness and advocate for youth programs*, such as Lights On Afterschool.

Documentation

- ❏ *Establish a [Partnership Charter](#) or [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with your partner to document what you expect from each other.*

- ❏ *Document key components of the partnership and program.* This will enable the next person in your position to build on what has been developed so far. Develop a brief "guidebook" for the partnership and program that includes:
  - ➢ An annual calendar showing key tasks, events, etc. that occur at specific times of the year.
  - ➢ A list of "Key People to Know" including names, positions, and contact information
  - ➢ A [Partnership Ecosystem Map](#) for this school
  - ➢ Partnership and program vision, goals, and descriptions
  - ➢ Brief history of each partnership and/or program
  - ➢ A list of tools or resources you often use to support the partnership

- ❏ *Collect annual reports, newsletters, and grant applications, and file them together.*

- ❏ *Create a tangible folder or a folder on the desktop of your computer and file the documents listed above in that folder.* Before you leave your position, transfer the file to a public or shared folder or give the tangible folder to your supervisor or another member of your team.

Partnership and Program Quality

- ❏ *Review the [Checklist of Partnership Elements](#) and assess the status of the partnership.* Choose one area to focus on for partnership growth. These elements provide a strong foundation for effective school-community partnerships and, because they emphasize collaboration and shared leadership, ensure that the partnership's existence is not dependent on a single person or organization.

- ❏ *Develop a high-quality program.* Engage in a continuous improvement process focused on program quality, such as the [Youth Program Quality Initiative](#), or evaluate your program using quality standards, such as the [Washington State Quality Standards for Afterschool and Youth Development Programs](#).

- ❏ *Invest in staff development through coaching, skill development, collaborative team learning, and training.* A member of your team may succeed you when you leave your position, or move on to develop or manage other partnership programs in the future.

Resource Development

- ❏ *Share program updates and achievements with any organization or individual that provides resources to the partnership.* Stakeholders are more likely to continue supporting the partnership when they are aware of the outcomes of their investment.

- ❏ *When possible, diversify funding sources so the partnership is not dependent on a single source.* Use the [Finding Funding worksheet](#) to document current and potential resources. Ask each partner to acquire funding or in-kind resources so all partners are invested financially in the program and partnership.

- ❏ *Discuss sustainability with your partner(s).* People and funding come and go, so prepare in advance for potential changes.