



CALIFORNIA

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

QUALITY  
SELF-ASSESSMENT  
TOOL USER'S GUIDE

Supporting Continuous Program Improvement  
for Quality After-School Programs

Revised August 2009

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# QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL USER'S GUIDE

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## THE CALIFORNIA QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL STARTS IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT PROGRAM QUALITY

Today in California, thousands of after-school programs offer students hands-on opportunities to explore their talents and interests, to succeed in school, and to give back to their communities. These programs provide thousands of youth—from kindergarten through high school—with safe, enriching environments in the after school hours.

To ensure that the young people we serve thrive and succeed, we need well designed, properly equipped and maintained after school programs. These programs offer a diverse range of high quality, relevant and engaging activities that link to the school day. The diversity of California’s youth also requires proactively inclusive, accessible and culturally competent after school programs.

The California After School Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool provides after school programs with a clear and concise way to start important conversations about program quality. The QSA Tool facilitates program improvement and support through a **staff-directed process**, rather than through external monitoring.

### RESEARCH SHOWS THAT HIGH QUALITY AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS:

- ▶ Have clearly defined and measurable goals that address community-specific interests and needs.
- ▶ Implement program activities to achieve specific program goals.
- ▶ Incorporate youth development policies and practices throughout the program.
- ▶ Use many kinds of data to assess their progress.

### THE QSA TOOL CAN BE USED TO:

- ▶ Engage key stakeholders (i.e., program/site staff, program administration, school teachers and administrators, collaborators) in meaningful conversations about program quality and continuous program improvement.
- ▶ Encourage after school program stakeholders to think about ways in which they can support high quality after school programming in their community.
- ▶ Generate an action plan that identifies the immediate, mid-range, and long-term professional development and technical support needed to enhance program quality.

The QSA Tool is meant to support a reflective process in which program staff and stakeholders explore their own programs and work collaboratively to develop strategies to enhance policies, procedures and practices. The QSA Tool will help program staff and stakeholders assess their program and identify their challenges. As a result, the QSA Tool is appropriate for formative assessments and for building teams that will work toward program improvement. The QSA Tool should not be used as an external evaluation measure.





## OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

### WHAT'S INSIDE THE QSA TOOL: ELEVEN QUALITY ELEMENTS

The QSA Tool is organized into eleven quality elements identified through review of current after school literature and research.

#### Quality Element

**Section 1:** Program Design & Assessment

**Section 2:** Program Administration & Finance

**Section 3:** Community Partnerships & Collaboration

**Section 4:** Alignment & Linkages with the School Day

**Section 5:** Program Environment & Safety

**Section 6:** Youth Development

**Section 7:** Staff Recruitment & Professional Development

**Section 8:** Family Involvement

**Section 9:** Nutrition & Physical Activity

**Section 10:** Promoting Diversity, Access, Equity, & Inclusion

**Section 11:** Effectively Supporting English Learners

### PERFORMANCE LEVELS

The QSA Tool uses the following rating system to assess the degree to which each quality indicator is evident in the program

**Level 1:** Our program is just beginning to work in this area and has an urgent need to address this practice. Our program can be much better at this than we are currently.

**Level 2:** Our program has done some work in this area but will need targeted support to move to the next level. Our program is making progress, but can improve further.

**Level 3:** Our program has achieved a high level of proficiency in this area and needs only a little additional work to be exceptionally proficient. Our program is very good at this practice.

**Level 4:** Our program is exceptionally proficient in this practice and can demonstrate this in observable ways. This is an area of quality practice where our program can serve as an example for others.

**Don't Know:** I am not familiar enough with this aspect of the program to rate performance on this indicator or am just not sure how to rate it at this time.

After school programs should strive to meet Level 3 or 4 for each indicator to demonstrate overall program quality. Assistance and support should be sought for areas scoring as Level 1 or Level 2.

There is space next to each indicator for respondents to note what the practice looks like at their site or in their organization. This can help to inform the team's discussion of the results.

## USING THE QSA TOOL FOR PROGRAM PLANNING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When developing an action plan based on the QSA Tool ratings, after school programs should consider the following:

- ▶ **What is the current Performance Level in our program?** Practices that receive a 1 or 2 rating will likely need to be addressed in the short-term. Practices that receive a 3 rating will likely need additional attention within the current school/fiscal year, and practices that are rated as a 4 should be sustained.
- ▶ **How urgent is the need to address the practice?** Practices that have a direct impact on participants' health and safety or that are closely linked to program goals should take priority in the action plan.

High quality state-funded after-school programs cannot overlook grant compliance requirements. For more information, visit the California Department of Education After School Programs Office web site at [www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba)

# IV

## USING THE PROGRAM QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

### QUICK GUIDE

**After school programs must decide how best to use the QSA Tool. There is no one right way to use it!** Use the following steps to determine how your program can use the QSA Tool to assess program quality and develop an action plan.

#### STEP ONE: SELECT QUALITY ELEMENTS AND FORM A SELF-ASSESSMENT TEAM

To get ready to complete the QSA Tool for your program or organizations, think about the following:

##### **Which quality elements should we consider?**

The QSA Tool includes 11 quality elements. Depending on the time and resources available, programs may choose to complete the entire QSA Tool at one time, or to consider a few quality elements in turn.

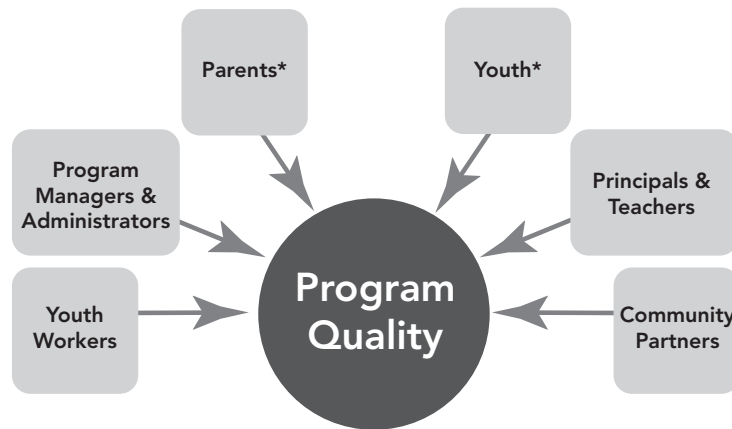
Programs should allow sufficient time to train staff and stakeholders in the use of the Tool, to review feedback about each program quality element, and to develop an action plan.

##### **Who should participate in the self-assessment?**

After school programs can have many stakeholders, ranging from program staff and administrators, to students and parents, to principals and teachers. Depending on the local context, programs may choose to invite a variety of stakeholders to participate.

Depending on who is asked to participate in the self-assessment process, programs may need to collect input in a variety of ways. For example, participants can provide input into program quality through brief surveys or focus groups, parents and caregivers can provide feedback through informal conversations, community meetings, or surveys in their primary language.

##### **Many Stakeholders Can Provide Input Into Quality Self-Assessment**



\*Parent and youth feedback can come from informal conversations, focus groups, or surveys that explore similar themes as the QSA Tool.



## STEP TWO: COLLECT INPUT

There are a wide variety of ways to use the QSA Tool to collect input about program quality, after school programs should use the Tool in a way that works for them.

Examples include:

- ▶ Using the QSA Tool as a start-of-year and end-of-year assessment that charts changes in program quality over time.
- ▶ Using the QSA Tool as a guide for staff development, walking staff members through each element and discussing their role in supporting program quality.
- ▶ Completing the QSA Tool as a survey and meeting to review the results (See Survey-to-Discussion Guide).
- ▶ Meeting in small groups to review program quality elements and develop consensus-based ratings (See Consensus-Based Discussion Guide).

It is critical to set the stage for the self-assessment team, so that team members understand the purpose of the process. Consider:

- ▶ **Do staff and stakeholders understand the purpose of self-assessment?**  
Self-assessment is not a requirement or evaluation, but instead a way to stimulate important conversations about program quality.
- ▶ **Are stakeholders asked to provide input in a way that works for them?**  
Program staff may prefer to complete the QSA Tool anonymously; youth could provide feedback through a focus group.
- ▶ **Have stakeholders reviewed the quality elements and asked clarifying questions?**  
Depending on their familiarity with specific program quality elements, members of the self-assessment team may need additional clarity before providing input.

## STEP THREE: ACTION PLANNING

Based on the team's assessment findings, the self-assessment team (or subcommittee) will develop an action plan to improve practice quality where needed and to sustain their strengths. See the *Action Plan Guide* on page 14 for more details on this step.

To carry out its action plan, a program may require technical assistance and other supportive resources. *The After School Program Self-Assessment Summary and Assistance Request form* on page 20 is one way to request this type of assistance.

*Additional resources about after school program quality* are located at the California Afterschool Network's web site at [www.afterschoolnetwork.org/quality-improvement](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/quality-improvement).

## STEP FOUR: FOLLOW UP

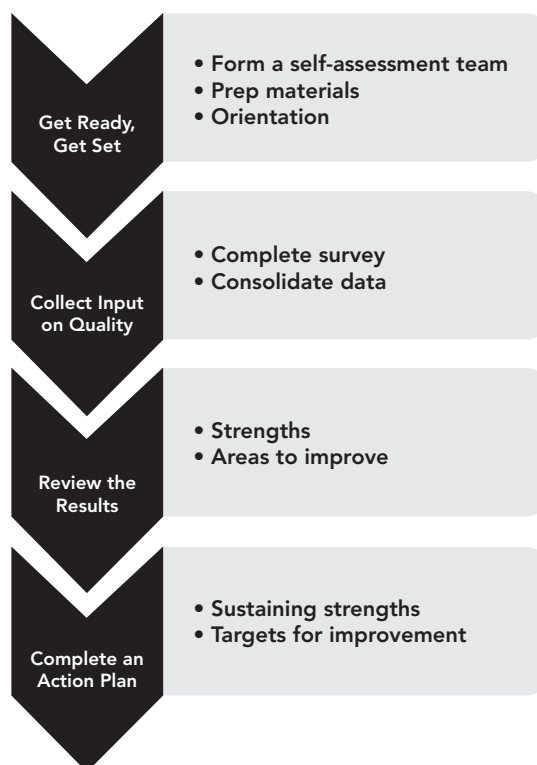
Reflecting on the steps that your program has taken to improve will deepen the assessment team's experience and promote a healthy sense of joint responsibility for program quality. At the conclusion of the school year—or at least three months after the implementation of the action plan—program staff should spend about an hour sharing the activities they have undertaken to address quality, what's worked and what hasn't, and what remains to be done in the future. This step is detailed in the *Action Plan Follow-Up Guide* on page 22.

## SURVEY-TO-DISCUSSION METHOD

This section describes one potential way for programs to use the QSA Tool to start important conversations about program quality. Other examples are provided in the Consensus-Based Scoring Guide and Section IV.

The Survey-to-Discussion method is most effective for large after school programs or multi-site projects with many self-assessment team members and limited group discussion time.

### AT-A-GLANCE



### GET READY, GET SET...

- 1. Form a Self-Assessment Team**—Invite a variety of stakeholders to participate in order to include multiple points of view; schedule sufficient time to review the Tool, collect responses, discuss the results, and develop an action plan.
- 2. Prepare Necessary Materials**—Provide a copy of the QSA Tool for each team member and identify a tabulation method (tools are available at [www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool)).
- 3. Orient the Team**—Meet in advance to explain the purpose of self-assessment, to review the QSA Tool, and to explain how the results will be tabulated and used.

### COLLECT INPUT ON QUALITY

- 1. Complete the QSA**—Each self-assessment team member will complete the QSA Tool on their own.
- 2. Summarize individual responses**—Depending on how programs are using the QSA Tool, they may choose to summarize input for individual programs or a group of sites.

## REVIEW THE RESULTS

- 1. Warming Up**—Prior to reviewing the self-assessment results, allow team members a few minutes to discuss the program content areas (or specific indicators/practices) that they anticipate being the strongest or weakest, and the examples they use to support their conclusion.

Asking team members for their input will enhance their engagement in the discussion and will emphasize that survey results aren't the only valid source of information about program quality. These other ways of knowing are critical additional sources of information that will assist in understanding the survey results.

**Facilitator note:** *In some cases, you may need to encourage team members to provide concrete and objective evidence, rather than opinions. So, for example, it is less helpful to predict that a program will score poorly on a particular element because “our program administration is not supportive” than to identify the resource, training, and practice deficiencies that affect a particular element.*

- 2. Discussing the Results**—Depending on the number of program quality elements assessed by the team, this phase of self-assessment may include discussing individual elements or comparing results across multiple elements.

### REFLECTING ON A SPECIFIC QUALITY ELEMENT FOR EACH PROGRAM QUALITY ELEMENT, DISCUSS:

- ▶ Which indicators are rated the highest? What does our program do to accomplish this?
- ▶ Which indicators are rated the lowest? What does our program currently do (or not do) that affects this practice?
- ▶ Are there any indicators whose ratings are much higher or lower than predicted? Why might that be?
- ▶ Are there any indicators for which many people said they didn't know the answer? Does this suggest the need for additional information, training, or resources?

### COMPARING MULTIPLE QUALITY ELEMENTS WHEN COMPARING RATINGS FOR MULTIPLE QUALITY ELEMENTS, DISCUSS:

- ▶ Which program quality elements (i.e. Program Design/Assessment, Youth Development) are strongest in this program? Why?
- ▶ Which program quality elements received the lowest overall ratings? Why?
- ▶ Does a high or low rating for one program quality element affect our performance on another? How? Does this suggest need for additional information, training, or resources?

## COMPLETE AN ACTION PLAN

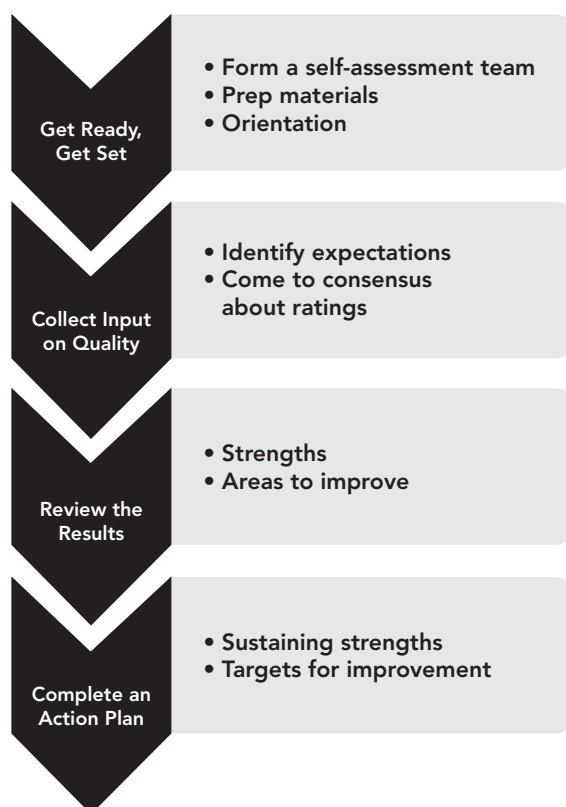
Based on the team's assessment findings, the self-assessment team (or subcommittee) will develop an action plan to improve quality practice where needed and to maintain those areas in which programs are strongest. See the *Action Plan Guide* on page 14 for further details.

## CONSENSUS-BASED DISCUSSION METHOD

*The Consensus-Based Discussion method is one potential way for programs to use the QSA Tool to start important conversations about program quality. Other examples are provided in the Survey-to-Discussion Guide and Section IV.*

The **Consensus-Based Discussion** method is most effective for small groups of staff and stakeholders (e.g. at the site level) or programs with regularly scheduled, lengthy self-assessment team meetings.

### AT-A-GLANCE



### GET READY, GET SET...

- 1. Form a Self-Assessment Team**—Invite a variety of stakeholders to participate in order to include multiple points of view; schedule sufficient time to review the Tool, collect responses, discuss the results, and develop an action plan.
- 2. Prepare Necessary Materials**—Provide a copy of the QSA Tool for each team member and identify a tabulation method (tools are available at [www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/qsatool)).
- 3. Orient the Team**—Meet in advance to explain the purpose of self-assessment, to review the QSA Tool, and to explain how the results will be tabulated and used.

## DISCUSS QUALITY PRACTICE

- 1. Warming Up**—Ask team members to briefly discuss the quality indicators where they expect there to be more disagreement and why. Review strategies for resolving disagreements on indicator ratings.

### RESOLVING DIFFERENCES OF OPINION IN CONSENSUS-BASED SCORING

#### Ask the other person

- ▶ What would the “perfect practice” look like for you?
- ▶ How does our program measure up to your expectations, based on observable practices and policies?
- ▶ How does the rating you chose (e.g. 3) align with the examples you gave?
- ▶ Tell your teammate what you hear them saying to ensure that you are interpreting them correctly.

#### Ask yourself

- ▶ Is my teammate using a different definition of the practice than I am?
- ▶ Does my teammate have additional information about our program?
- ▶ Do we have a similar understanding of the rating scale?
- ▶ How does this new input affect my opinion about the rating?

- 2. Assessing the Program**—How the team approaches this process will depend on how many team members participate. A small team (less than eight) can simply work its way through the QSA Tool, discussing with one another the rating that they would give to each quality indicator and why.

A large assessment team might consider a two-step assessment process. First, groups of three to five team members review the indicators in one program content area at a time. To make this a more dynamic process, write each program content area (and its corresponding indicators) on chart paper and distribute them around the room. Small groups can then circulate around the room discussing the indicators in each program content area. Second, the small groups reconvene. The whole group discusses and compares indicator ratings and arrives at consensus.

In most cases, the group will agree on a rating with minimal discussion. For some indicators, however, team members may suggest widely different ratings. In this case, the team (or those who initially disagree on the rating) should explore their divergent views, with the goal of agreeing on a single rating. As the group determines the scores, they should take notes on the conversation held, particularly for those indicators about which they disagreed. These indicators may highlight areas in which a program needs to clarify expectations, enhance resources, and keep the team involved in discussion and planning.

## REVIEW THE RESULTS

Depending on the number of program quality elements assessed by the team, this phase of self-assessment may include discussing individual elements or comparing results across multiple elements.

### REFLECTING ON A SPECIFIC QUALITY ELEMENT FOR EACH PROGRAM QUALITY ELEMENT, DISCUSS:

- ▶ Which indicators are rated the highest? What does our program do to accomplish this?
- ▶ Which indicators are rated the lowest? What does our program currently do (or not do) that affects this practice?
- ▶ Are there any indicators whose ratings are much higher or lower than predicted? Why might that be?
- ▶ Are there any indicators for which many people said they didn't know the answer? Does this suggest the need for additional information, training, or resources?

### COMPARING MULTIPLE QUALITY ELEMENTS WHEN COMPARING RATINGS FOR MULTIPLE QUALITY ELEMENTS, DISCUSS:

- ▶ Which program quality elements (i.e. Program Design/Assessment, Youth Development) are strongest in this program? Why?
- ▶ Which program quality elements received the lowest overall ratings? Why?
- ▶ Does a high or low rating for one program quality element affect our performance on another? How? Does this suggest need for additional information, training, or resources?

## COMPLETE AN ACTION PLAN

Based on the team's assessment findings, team members (or a sub-committee) will develop an action plan to improve quality practice where needed and to maintain those areas in which programs are strongest. Please see the *Action Plan Guide* on page 14 for further details.



## SUGGESTED STAKEHOLDERS BY PROGRAM QUALITY ELEMENT

Self-assessment leaders may choose to ask specific stakeholders to give feedback on the elements about which they know the most. The following table identifies after school stakeholders who may know the most about a particular quality practice.

Quality Element	Most Knowledgeable Stakeholder
<b>Section 1:</b> Program Design & Assessment	District- or agency-level supervisors; Site Coordinators.
<b>Section 2:</b> Program Administration & Finance	District- or agency-level supervisors; Site Coordinators.
<b>Section 3:</b> Community Partnerships & Collaboration	After school program staff at all levels, including District- or agency-level supervisors, Site Coordinators, activity leaders, tutors, and volunteers; Principals and Teachers; Youth and Parents*; Community-Based Organizations.
<b>Section 4:</b> Alignment & Linkages with the School Day	After school program staff at all levels; Principals and Teachers; Parents and Youth* .
<b>Section 5:</b> Program Environment & Safety	After school program staff at all levels; Youth* .
<b>Section 6:</b> Youth Development	After school program staff at all levels; Youth and Parents* .
<b>Section 7:</b> Staff Recruitment & Professional Development	After school program staff at all levels.
<b>Section 8:</b> Family Involvement	After school program staff at all levels; Parents* .
<b>Section 9:</b> Nutrition & Physical Activity	After school program staff at all levels; Youth and Parents* .
<b>Section 10:</b> Promoting Diversity, Access, Equity, & Inclusion	After school program staff at all levels; Youth and Parents* ; Principals and Teachers.
<b>Section 11:</b> Effectively Supporting English Learners	After school program staff at all levels; Youth and Parents* ; Principals and Teachers.

\*Parent and youth feedback can come from informal conversations, focus groups, or surveys that explore similar themes as the QSA Tool.

## PLANNING FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

### ACTION PLAN GUIDE

*Depending on local context, after school programs may choose to incorporate findings from the quality self-assessment process into an action plan for individual sites, for districts or organizations as a whole, or both. The methods outlined below are intended for use at either the site or district/organization levels.*

#### CLARIFY THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE QUALITY RATINGS

Staff developing the action plan may choose to “diagnose” the practices in order to better understand how to sustain program strengths and most effectively address areas for improvement. Information collected through the “Review the Results” phase of the self-assessment will guide this process.

The *Issue Diagnosis Guides* on pages 16 and 17 provide a list of potential answers to the clarifying questions, along with key considerations when developing an action plan.

#### CLARIFYING THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO LEVEL 3 AND 4 RATINGS

**For program practices that need to be sustained, explore:**

- ▶ **What factors make this practice strong?** Possible factors include staff selection and training, resources available to the program, agreement among stakeholders about key priorities.
- ▶ **Can we use this strength to improve practice in some other dimension?** Either across quality elements (e.g. strengthening staff recruitment in order to improve youth-staff relationships), within a program (e.g. peer learning and coaching), or across programs.
- ▶ **What is needed to sustain this practice?** Examples may include training new staff in important policies and practices or continuing to budget for staff release time for coaching.

#### DETERMINE SHORT-, MEDIUM-, AND LONG-TERM PRIORITIES

To determine the time frame to address specific quality practices, consider the following:

- ▶ **What is the current Performance Level in our program?** Practices that receive a 1 or 2 rating will likely need to be addressed in the short-term. Practices that receive a 3 rating will likely need additional attention within the current school/fiscal year and practices that are rated as a 4 should be sustained.
- ▶ **How urgent is the need to address the practice?** Practices that have a direct impact on participants’ health and safety or that are closely linked to program goals should take priority in the action plan.

Programs should begin addressing short-term priorities immediately, with a goal to improve performance within three months. Medium-term priorities should be addressed within three months, with a goal to improve performance within the current school/fiscal year. Long-term priorities should be addressed within the current school/fiscal year, with a goal for improved performance in the following school/fiscal year.

## CLARIFYING THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO LEVEL 1 AND 2 RATINGS

### For program practices that need improvement, explore:

1. **At what level does the issue occur?** Among a few people, at one site, in several sites, or throughout our district or organization? *This will affect the solution needed.*

2. **Which part of the program requires further improvement?**

*Consider:*

**POINT-OF-SERVICE**—interactions and activities that take place within the after school program itself, such as interactions among program staff and youth and the implementation of activities.

**ADMINISTRATION AND COMPLIANCE**—administrative supports and record keeping, such as attendance tracking, budgeting, and documentation.

**PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**—connections and relationships with key stakeholders, including parents, school staff (when applicable), other youth service providers, and community based organizations.

3. **The solution has which key elements?** *This will affect the focus of the solution.*

**KNOWLEDGE**—awareness of important facts or concepts needed to complete a task completely and well.

**SKILL**—ability to put one’s knowledge into practice on a regular basis.

**ATTITUDES**—willingness to do a particular task or organizational commitment to a particular process or activity.

4. **How complex is the solution?** *This will affect the time and resources needed.*

- ▶ The solution is clear and can be implemented fairly quickly with existing resources.
- ▶ The solution is clear and will need more time or resources to implement.
- ▶ The solution is not clear at this time.

## ISSUE DIAGNOSIS GUIDE— PROGRAM QUALITY ELEMENTS TO SUSTAIN

Walk through each of the exploration questions suggested in the *Action Plan Guide*, listing some common responses to each, with some considerations that may affect your organization’s action plan.

Exploration Question	Considerations
<b>What factors make this practice strong?</b>	
<b>“We have a really terrific staff member that makes this happen.”</b>	What does this person do, say or believe that could be shared with others? Can we recruit more people like her/him?
<b>“We orient new team members well.”</b>	Are organizational resources in place to continue this practice? Are we ready to orient new teammates who join us midway through the program year?
<b>“Our key stakeholders agree about this.”</b>	What do we need to do to sustain this agreement? How do we build this agreement with new stakeholders?
<b>“It’s reflected in our mission and vision, so people come to us to be part of it.”</b>	Will adjusting our mission and vision affect this practice in any way?
<b>“We support our staff on this on an ongoing basis.”</b>	Are organizational resources in place to continue this practice?
<b>“It just is.”</b>	Unpacking the reasons behind the successful practice will make it easier to sustain it.
<b>Can we use this strength to improve practice in some other dimension?</b>	
<b>“Maybe we can reach out to some of our partners for their help with improving our tutoring program.”</b>	What is the time and resource commitment that you have in mind for your partner? Are there other organizations that it might help to form a relationship with?
<b>“Our new line staff could really benefit from seeing our superstar staff in action.”</b>	What steps do we need to take to assure that the new staff will be able to observe their high-performing colleagues, such as aligning schedules, transportation, and providing a debriefing opportunity?
<b>“The enrichment program at our west side site is just phenomenal.”</b>	Which factors make it so successful? Which of these can be translated to other sites? What’s needed in terms of resources to make that happen?
<b>What does our program or district/agency need to do to sustain this practice?</b>	
<b>“The grant we have for this is running out soon...”</b>	Are plans in place to seek continuation funding?
<b>“My coach/mentor was a huge help.”</b>	Have arrangements been made to continue the relationship in some way?
<b>“It’s essential to get any new staff on board with this.”</b>	What is the plan to on-board new staff?

## ISSUE DIAGNOSIS GUIDE— PROGRAM QUALITY ELEMENTS TO IMPROVE

Walk through each of the exploration questions suggested in the *Action Plan Guide*, listing some common responses to each, with some considerations that may affect your organization’s action plan.

Exploration Question	Considerations
<b>At what level does the issue occur?</b>	
<b>Among a few staff.</b>	Is there a unique situation that is affecting this staff member’s performance? Is there another member of the staff who can work intensively with this group? Do these staff need to be re-assigned?
<b>At one of our program sites.</b>	Is there something unique about this program that is affecting its performance? Would its staff benefit from visiting a strong program? How might our district/agency better support this program?
<b>At multiple program sites.</b>	How might our district/agency better support these programs?
<b>At the administration level.</b>	How can program sites identify the issue clearly and work with administrators to develop an agreeable solution?
<b>Between our organization and our partners.</b>	Would clarifying our roles and responsibilities help? Does one partner feel misunderstood or under-valued by another? Will a conversation among organization leaders help this?
<b>Throughout our organization.</b>	How might we approach the solution in stages to make it more manageable? What outside resources might be needed to help address this?
<b>Which part of the program requires further improvement?</b>	
<b>Point-of-Service—interactions and activities that take place within the after school program.</b>	Are expectations clear for everyone involved? Have staff members had the chance to practice important skills and receive feedback? Who might observe the practice and provide an unbiased assessment?
<b>Administration and Compliance—administrative supports and record keeping.</b>	Are there guiding documents (grant guidelines, regulations) that can help us identify what needs to be done? Does our staff have sufficient access to and familiarity with organizational tools, such as Excel?
<b>Partnerships and Collaboration—connections and relationships with key stakeholders.</b>	Are the right partners “at the table”? Are our partners dedicating the time and attention needed to accomplish the shared work?

*continued on next page*

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The solution has which key elements?	
<b>Knowledge—awareness of important facts or concepts needed to complete a task completely and well.</b>	Would a training (or series), article, or book help to meet the need?
<b>Skill—ability to put one’s knowledge into practice on a regular basis.</b>	How can we arrange for staff to practice and receive feedback?
<b>Attitudes—willingness to do a particular task or organizational commitment to a particular process or activity.</b>	What are the factors contributing to the negative attitudes? How might we work to see things differently?
How complex is the solution?	
<b>The solution is clear and can be implemented fairly quickly with existing resources.</b>	Suggest prioritizing these tasks for immediate implementation.
<b>The solution is clear and will need more time or resources to implement.</b>	What additional resources may be needed? Can the solution be implemented in stages?
<b>The solution is not clear at this time.</b>	Would another point of view help us to better understand the issue? Can we try to break the problem into smaller pieces to better understand it?

### IDENTIFY NEXT STEPS

Once program quality indicators have been sorted according to the level of focus they require, and individual issues clarified, program leaders—in consultation with their staff—should develop a concrete set of steps to address each quality element.

#### Key questions to consider when developing next steps include:

1. Who is the lead staff person in charge of implementing this step?
2. What are key deliverable dates for this activity?
3. What resources can support this activity? Consider:
  - a. Other after school programs within your district or organization
  - b. Other departments (e.g. instructional services departments of school districts)
  - c. Regional Leads
  - d. External training and TA providers
  - e. Local or national conferences on after school programming, education, youth development, and other affiliated topics
  - f. Articles, books, or web sites about youth development, academic support, or after school programming

#### Resources available include:

- ▶ The **California Afterschool Network web site** contains a comprehensive collection of articles, web sites, and training and technical assistance resources for after school programs. [www.afterschoolnetwork.org/quality-improvement](http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/quality-improvement).
- ▶ The **After School Program Self-Assessment Summary and Assistance Request** form on page 20 is one way to reach out to California Department of Education Regional Leads and others to access training, technical assistance, and coaching. An up-to-date contact list for Regional Leads is at the CDE web site: [www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/cp/regntwrkcontacts.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/cp/regntwrkcontacts.asp)



**INCORPORATE QUALITY SELF-ASSESSMENT FINDINGS INTO AN ACTION PLAN**

Many after school programs have an action plan or other document that describes quality improvement plans. Findings from the quality self-assessment process can be incorporated into programs' existing action plans, as appropriate. After school programs that do not yet have an action plan may want to consider the following format:

**Sample Action Plan Format**

Quality Improvement Objective:					
QSA Element	Action	Responsible	Time Frame	Measure of Success	Other Considerations

**Sample Action Plan Format Example**

Quality Improvement Objective: Enhance participants' safety.					
QSA Element	Action	Responsible	Time Frame	Measure of Success	Other Considerations
Program Environment & Safety	Institute centralized sign-in and sign out at all program sites	Program Director, Site Coordinators	Immediately	Site Coordinators report using common form Program Director observation	Confirm that each Site Coordinator has received copy of revised form.
	Align program's safety plans with their host school's plans	Program Director, Site Coordinators, Principals	Initial outreach immediately; plan alignment by mid-year	Program & school plans integrated Program staff participate in school safety trainings	Program Director to communicate with Principals about this process

## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUEST GUIDE

Use this page to identify your program’s strengths and areas for growth, along with the kinds of training, technical assistance, or coaching needed to further promote quality. The *After School Program Training & Technical Assistance Request* (next page) can be used to communicate your self-assessment results and training needs with Regional Leads and other training and technical assistance providers.

Our Program’s Strengths Include:	Examples of this Practice in Our Program	Our Program’s Strengths Include:	Examples of this Practice in Our Program
Program Design & Assessment		Staff Recruitment & Professional Development	
Program Administration & Finance		Family Involvement	
Community Partnerships & Collaboration		Nutrition & Physical Activity	
Alignment & Linkages with the School Day		Promoting Diversity, Access, Equity, & Inclusion	
Program Environment & Safety		Effectively Supporting English Learners	
Youth Development			

Our Program’s Areas of Growth Include:	Specific Practices for Improvement	Target Audience	Urgency
Program Design & Assessment			
Program Administration & Finance			
Community Partnerships & Collaboration			
Alignment & Linkages with the School Day			
Program Environment & Safety			
Youth Development			
Staff Recruitment & Professional Development			
Family Involvement			
Nutrition and Physical Activity			
Promoting Diversity, Access, Equity, & Inclusion			
Effectively Supporting English Learners			

## AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUEST

District/Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Site(s) (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Our after school programs have conducted a thorough review of quality policies and practices using the California After School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool. As part of the self-assessment process, our after school programs have identified the following training and technical assistance needs.

### SELF-ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

#### Our Program's Strengths Include:

	Program Design & Assessment		Program Environment & Safety		Nutrition & Physical Activity
	Program Administration & Finance		Youth Development		Promoting Diversity, Access, Equity, & Inclusion
	Community Partnerships & Collaboration		Staff Recruitment & Professional Development		Effectively Supporting English Learners
	Alignment & Linkages with the School Day		Family Involvement		

#### Our Program's Areas of Improvement Include:

	Program Design & Assessment		Program Environment & Safety		Nutrition & Physical Activity
	Program Administration & Finance		Youth Development		Promoting Diversity, Access, Equity, & Inclusion
	Community Partnerships & Collaboration		Staff Recruitment & Professional Development		Effectively Supporting English Learners
	Alignment & Linkages with the School Day		Family Involvement		

#### Our programs would benefit from the following kinds of assistance:

Topic, Practice, or Policy	Target Audience	Assistance Format	Time Frame

Please respond to the program contact listed below at your earliest convenience to discuss ways in which we can work together to improve the quality of our after school programs.

Program Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTION PLAN FOLLOW-UP GUIDE

About three months after the initial self-assessment and action plan implementation, staff members can take the opportunity to assess their progress in implementing the plan in order to identify which steps have been completed, which remain to be implemented, and where modifications to the plan are needed.

### ASSESS PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CURRENT ACTION PLAN

**Questions to consider:**

1. What did we say we were going to do?
2. What did we do?
3. What do we still need to do?

### IDENTIFY NEW ISSUES

**Questions to consider:**

1. What new issues are coming up?
2. What actions need to be taken to address these new issues?

### REVISE AND RE-SHARE

Based on the outcome of the follow-up, programs may choose to revise their action plan to reflect accomplishments to date and to describe new objectives and action steps. Key stakeholders—especially those who influence the success of the plan—should receive updates, as appropriate.

# IV

## SOURCE DOCUMENTS

**The following reports and assessment tools were used in the creation and revision of the California After school Quality Assessment Tool:**

1. The California Department of Education [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov)
2. SEDL [www.se dl.org/afterschool](http://www.se dl.org/afterschool)
3. *Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool: Planning for Ongoing Program Improvement.* (2005) The New York State Afterschool Network.
4. *High Quality Program Assessment for Afterschool Cluster.* (2005) San Francisco Department of Children Youth and their Families.
5. *A Guide to Developing Exemplary Practices in Afterschool Programs,* Fletcher, Piha, Rose. (2005) The Center for Collaborative Solutions, the Community Network for Youth Development, and the Foundation Consortium for California's Children and Youth.
6. *Shared Features of High Performing After school Programs: A Follow-Up to the TASC Evaluation,* Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, Mielke. (2005) Policy Studies Associates Inc.
7. *The Quality of School-Age Child Care in After School Settings,* Little, Priscilla. (2007) Harvard Family Research Project.
8. *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development,* The Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Jacquellyne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton-Goodman Editors. (2002) The National Research Council, and The Institute of Medicine.
9. *Youth Program Quality Assessment,* Adams, Brickman, McMahon. (2005) High/Scope Education Research Foundation.
10. *Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools,* Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, Shinn. (2007) Impact Strategies.
11. *Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School,* Kakli, Kreider, Little, Buck, Coffey. (2006) United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Harvard Family Research Project and Build the Out-of-School Time Network.







