



## 2022-2023 ND Afterschool Network Program Self-Assessment & Action Plan User Guide

Afterschool and summer learning programs are vital partners in supporting students' well-being and academic growth. Across North Dakota, hundreds of out-of-school time programs (including programs offered before school, after school, summer, and when school is otherwise not in session) are helping kids learn and grow, supporting working families, and inspiring future careers. High-quality out-of-school time programs and experiences can help students in North Dakota graduate [Choice Ready](#) with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful.

Research shows that high quality out-of-school time programs:

- Have clearly defined and measurable goals that address community-specific interests and needs.
- Engage multiple stakeholders in meaningful conversations about program quality & continuous quality improvement.
- Use multiple kinds of data to assess their progress.

### I. Overview of the Program Self-Assessment Tool

The Program Self-Assessment Tool is based on the four domains of the ND Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs: Health & Safety, Relationships & Interactions, Youth-Centered Program Design, and Leadership & Management. It is designed to assist out-of-school time programs at any stage of development, appraise your progress in four quality domains, and promote relevant training and other strategies for continuous quality improvement. It may be used in conjunction with other formal and informal evaluation methods to help programs identify strengths and needs and inform continuous improvement efforts and plans.

The Program Self-Assessment Tool provides an opportunity to reflect on program quality. It provides a framework for staff in your program to:

- **Reflect on achievement** on each of the indicators within the standard domains
- **Identify specific areas** for professional development and training
- **Plan specific actions** that will lead to improvement

The standards are aspirational in nature and are intentionally broad so programs can tailor them to their specific context. It is important to remember that while standards provide a shared framework, they alone cannot change the quality of programs or the skills of program staff. The standards provide a research-based framework for programs to understand and measure program quality and to plan for

improvement. By implementing the standards and engaging in a continuous quality improvement process, you will improve the quality of your program and, simultaneously, improve outcomes for youth.

Many programs may already use some sort of quality tool. As the standards were developed, the committee reviewed many types of tools and gathered feedback from programs. If programs already have quality tools that they are using, we suggest that you start by identifying which parts of the standards and Program Self-Assessment overlap and finding ways to incorporate parts of the standards that are not already encompassed in the current quality tool in your program.

**Note:** *The Program Self-Assessment Tool is a resource to assess if programs are utilizing best practices and to help identify strategies to implement best practices not currently in place. **The ND Quality Standards and Program Self-Assessment is NOT a report** and is best utilized if viewed as an opportunity to identify areas for improvement. **There is no penalty or negative impact if a program site ranks themselves low in any indicator area**, but programs will have a better understanding of needs and ND Afterschool Network coaches will be able to provide better supports to programs throughout the year. It is not the expectation that every program site has every best practice in place.*

## II. Program Self-Assessment Format

Increasing program quality requires reflection to identify strengths and recognize areas of opportunity. Reflection heightens awareness of performance and leads to change and growth. The Program Self-Assessment Tool is aligned with the domains and indicators of the ND Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Standards. It is organized into four domains: Health & Safety, Relationships & Interactions, Youth-Centered Program Design, and Leadership & Management.



Within each domain, indicators are grouped into 3 to 4 category headings.

What does health & safety look like in our program space?		How are we doing?			
<b>HS1</b>	Our program environment is safe and free of hazards.	1	2	3	4
<b>HS2</b>	Our program space and equipment are appropriate for the ages and developmental stages of the youth we serve. All students are able to access and use the space.	1	2	3	4

Programs will assign a rating of either 1, 2, 3 or 4 based on the self-assessment rating scale for each indicator.

On this indicator, we are:  
**1 - Experiencing challenges**  
**2 - Making progress**  
**3 - Right on track**  
**4 - Excelling**

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There is space with each indicator to note what the practice looks like within the program site and record evidence of your rating. Depending on the indicator, evidence may include confirmation that a specific policy is in place, documenting the process your program site uses, other data or information you used to inform your rating.

### III. Program Self-Assessment Process

Program quality is an ongoing process involving reflection and thoughtful assessment that cannot be accomplished by one person alone. Rather, it is best achieved through continuous practice that includes staff, parents, youth, and school or community partners throughout the program year. Suggested guidelines for implementing the Program Self-Assessment are below.

## **1. Select Your Review Team**

As a best practice, we recommend including at least 3 to 5 stakeholders as part of your Program Self-Assessment Review Team at each program site. Each person will bring their own knowledge and experience. It is ok if a team member only has strong knowledge of a certain domain. Consider including stakeholders from the following groups:

- Program Site Staff
- School Day Teachers
- Organization and/or Administration
- Community/Business Partner
- Parents/Guardians
- Program Volunteers
- Youth/Participants

It is imperative to quality improvement efforts that a Review Team includes individuals working directly with youth within a program site. Administrative staff can play an important role in the quality review process, but the tool is not effective or valid if completed only by individuals who do not work directly in the program.

## **2. Familiarize your Review Team with the ND Quality Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs and the Program Self-Assessment Tool.**

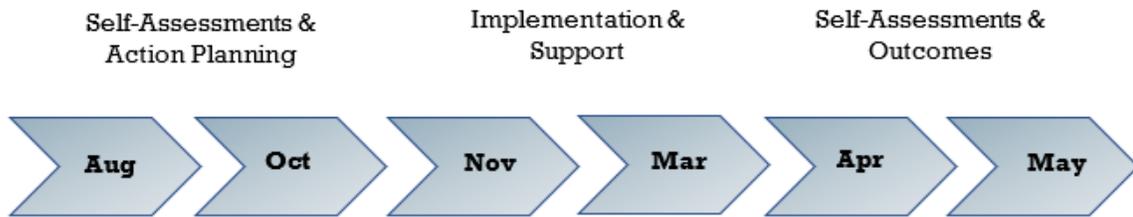
Determine how you will introduce the ND Quality Standards and Program Self-Assessment Tool to your Review Team. This may include [watching on-demand videos on the ND Afterschool Network's YouTube channel](#), attending a live training on the ND Quality Standards or Program Self-Assessment Tool by the ND Afterschool Network ([calendar of upcoming events can be found here](#)), or assigning members of the team to relay the information to the full Review Team.

## **3. Decide the format for your Review Team to complete the Program Self-Assessment & Action Plan.**

Best practices for completing the Program Self-Assessment & Action Plan may include:

- Assign one or more of the four quality standard domains to team members to complete on their own. Then meet to go over individual ratings and come to a consensus for a rating on each indicator.
- Complete the Program Self-Assessment together as a full Review Team and come to a consensus on a rating for each indicator. You may choose to meet multiple times to focus on certain domains or complete all four domains in one longer planning session.

**Note:** *The ND Afterschool Network recommends that all program sites complete all four domains of the Program Self-Assessment Tool to have a well-rounded and complete understanding of best practices. The ND Afterschool Network Quality improvement model recommends that each program site conduct a self-assessment at the beginning and end of a program year.*



#### **4. Submit your Program Self-Assessment Results.**

The ND Afterschool Network will provide support, technical assistance, and coaching based on the Program Self-Assessment & Action Plan Results. To better support programs through an annual continuous quality improvement cycle, the Program Self-Assessment should be completed at the beginning of the program year to allow program sites time throughout the year to work on action items and goals identified during the review process.

### **IV. Program Self-Assessment Rating Guidelines**

Each member of the Review Team should understand the importance of accurate and objective rating within each indicator. An honest understanding and reflection of program site practices will lead to improved growth, better understanding, and ownership of program goals and objectives. Engaging in continuous quality improvement will lead to increased positive staff and youth outcomes.

#### **1 – Experiencing challenges**

Our program is just beginning to work in this area. This is not understood and/or demonstrated. A better understanding, more information, and/or more support is needed to fully meet this indicator.

#### **2 – Making progress**

Our program has done some work in this area but may need targeted support to move to the next level. Our program is making progress but can improve further. This is implemented inconsistently or only with guidance. It is partially met. It could be implemented more consistently or fully. With more practice or support this could be fully met.

#### **3 – Right on track**

Our program has achieved a level of proficiency in this area. Our program is very good at this practice. We have data to support that our program is meeting the needs of student, staff, and families on this indicator.

#### **4 – Excelling**

Our program is exceptionally proficient in this practice. This is an area of quality practice where our program can serve as an example for others. Evidence of excelling is clearly observable. This is always in place and consistently fully implemented.

**Note:** If you are unsure what is meant by a particular indicator, score it as a 1. Take notes or keep track of your thoughts to revisit the indicator.

## **V. Program Self-Assessment Action Plan**

Each quality domain includes reflective questions for your Review Team to consider the results of your self-assessment ratings as you think about areas of strength and areas of opportunity. As a group, answer the following questions for each domain:

- How can we improve in this area?
- What are some easy things we can do right away?
- What changes do we need to work on long term?
- What resources, supports, or partnerships can help us?

The last step to of your Program Self-Assessment is to complete an overall reflective Action Plan. As a Review Team, identify the following:

- What are your top two goals after reflecting on your program site's self-assessment ratings?
- What actions will you take to meet each of these two goals?
- What materials, resources, and/or support will you need to meet these goals? Who will be responsible for securing these resources?
- How will you know if you are successful in meeting these goals?

The ND Afterschool Network will use the Program Self-Assessment and Action Plan results to provide support, technical assistance, and coaching to support your continuous quality improvement efforts.