Boys & Girls Clubs | Big Brothers Big Sisters

Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Edmonton & Area

Supporting Middle Years Out-of-School Time Activities Through Approaches Enhanced by Natural Supports

Policy and Practice Framework

Collaboratively developed by the
Middle Years Project Team
through a grant administered by BGCBigs

December 2020

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

- Alberta Children's Services
- Alberta Health Services
- Alberta School Councils Association
- Alliance Jeunesse-Famille de l'Alberta Society
- Altacare
- Bent Arrow
- Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area (BGCBigs)
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary
- Brander Gardens Rocks
- Britannia-Youngstown Community League
- Catholic Social Services
- City of Edmonton
- Community University Partnership
- Edmonton Catholic Schools
- Edmonton Community Foundation
- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
- Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
- Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
- Edmonton Police Service
- Edmonton Public Library
- Edmonton Public Schools
- Food 4 Good
- Free Play for Kids
- High Park Community League
- Jasper Place Family Resource Network
- Kids on Track
- KULAN Horn Youth Society
- Mayfield Community League
- Muttart Foundation
- PolicyWise for Children and Families
- REACH Edmonton

- The Family Centre
- University of Alberta Alumni Association
- United Way
- Yellowhead Tribal College
- YMCA
- Youth, families, and community members from the communities of Britannia-Youngstown, Mayfield and High Park in Edmonton

SUBJECT MATTER CONTRIBUTORS

- Ian Amundson
  Club Manager, BGCBigs
- Mark Cabaj
  Human-Centered Design Evaluation Expert
- Vanessa Desa
  Community Leader
- Sandra Prefontaine
  Community Initiatives Lead, BGCBigs
- Nancy Reynolds
  Natural Supports Expert, Max Bell Foundation and Burns Memorial Fund Co-Fellow
- Dr. Suzanne Tough
  Natural Supports Expert, Max Bell Foundation and Burns Memorial Fund Co-Fellow
- Ben Weinlick
  Human-Centered Design Expert

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES

The following resources were heavily sourced to support the development of this Framework:

- *Best Practices in Out of School Time Programs* [1]
- *OST Programs Best Practices Strategy Elements Matrix* [2]
- Resources developed by the Connections First Initiative: https://www.connectionsfirst.ca/

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research shows that participation in quality out-of-school time (OST) activities and the presence of naturally supportive relationships during the middle-years of childhood (i.e., between the ages of six and 13) supports childhood resiliency, overall well-being and the development of skills needed for a healthy transition to adulthood. Changing demographics and economic circumstances have resulted in shifting needs and increasingly, families are looking to opportunities during out-of-school time to help their children develop and practice life skills that are essential for a healthy transition into adulthood. However, not all families are able to access OST programs due to barriers like affordability, availability, and accessibility. Additionally, OST providers face many challenges in delivering quality OST activities. These include securing sustained funding and accessing facilities during OST hours that are within walking distance of where children live and go to school.

Supporting Middle Years Out-of-School Time Activities Through Approaches Enhanced by Natural Supports – Policy and Practice Framework is a strategic document that explores the opportunities to promote positive outcomes for middle-years children and youth by supporting OST activities that facilitate the development of natural supports at the individual level, as well as through more informal, grassroots connections to the larger community.

Natural Supports

Informal reciprocal connections that consist of close relationships, such as family and friends, and broader associations, such as neighbours and mentors.

This Framework focuses on key principles that work together to create overall sustainability and provides illustrative policy and practice responses that can be applied by stakeholders involved in the critical functions of OST policy development and funding, program planning, collaboration, and coordination, and program design and delivery.

The key principles at the core of the Framework are:

- Leverage existing community facilities.
- Ensure accessibility and affordability for all families.
- Effectively plan, coordinate, collaborate and communicate OST supports.
- Offer a broad spectrum of OST options.
- Be inclusive by providing universal and targeted OST supports.
- Enhance children's emotional, physical and social development, and overall resiliency.
- Systematically integrate natural supports into OST activities.
- Be evidence-informed, yet innovation oriented.

This Framework is not a step-by-step guide and does not prescribe changes to policy or practice; rather, it is meant to expand and challenge conventional thinking and encourage stakeholders to adopt creativity and flexibility when thinking about OST. This Framework can be applied in whole or in part and is meant to be used to adjust existing, and/or introduce new, policies and practices to ensure alignment with unique needs. Further customization by different OST timeframes (e.g., weekends, summers) may also be considered. Ensuring that OST activities align with the evolving needs of children, youth and families over time requires OST stakeholders to embrace a mindset of continuous improvement. As such, OST stakeholders are encouraged to continuously learn and adapt the Framework over time and use it as a part of their continuous improvement process.

Middle Years OST Natural Supports Framework - Overview

1. What is this Framework about?

Naturally Supportive Culture

Middle Years

Out-of-School Time

Natural Supports

Framework Focus
Supporting and sustaining middle-years OST through approaches enhanced by natural supports.

Some terms...

- *Middle Years* - *The ages between 6-13.*
- *Natural Supports* - *Informal reciprocal connections that consists of close relationships and broader associations.*
- *Out-of-School Time (OST)* - *The hours that children/youth are not in school.*

The Framework ...

- *Is NOT a step-by-step guide.*
- *Can be applied in whole or in part.*
- *Is meant to expand and challenge conventional thinking and encourage creativity and flexibility.*

2. Who can use this Framework?

This Framework is meant to inform OST stakeholders involved in the key functions of OST:

- Policy development and funding
- Planning, collaboration and coordination
- Design and delivery

3. What are the key elements?
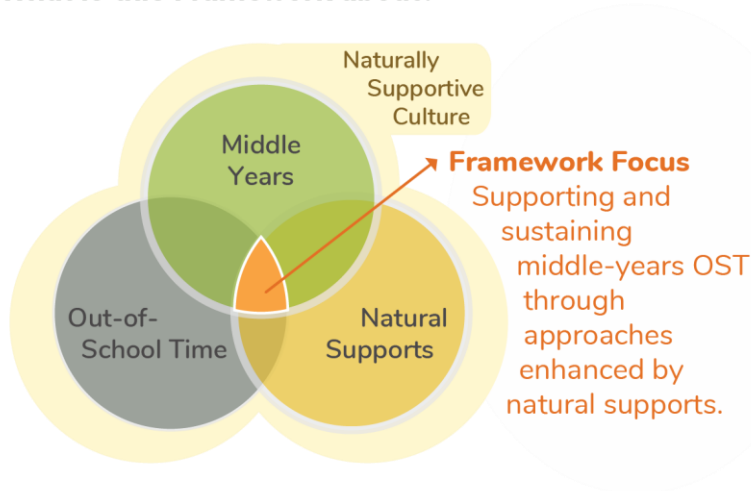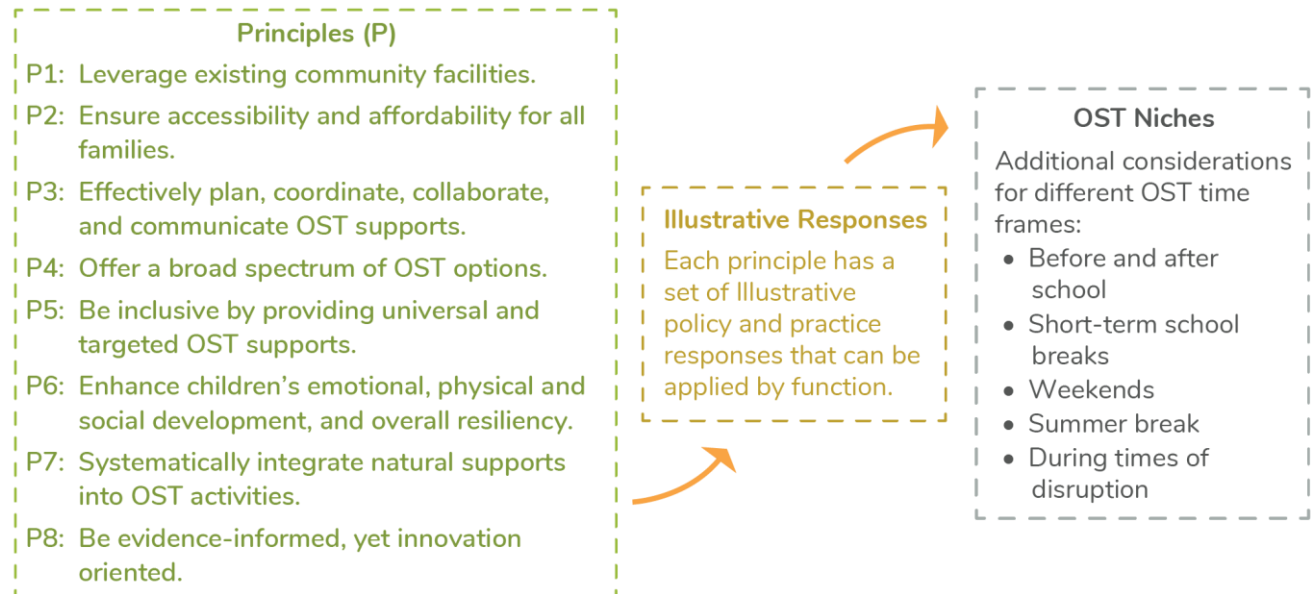
Principles (P)

P1: Leverage existing community facilities.

P2: Ensure accessibility and affordability for all families.

P3: Effectively plan, coordinate, collaborate, and communicate OST supports.

P4: Offer a broad spectrum of OST options.

P5: Be inclusive by providing universal and targeted OST supports.

P6: Enhance children's emotional, physical and social development, and overall resiliency.

P7: Systematically integrate natural supports into OST activities.

P8: Be evidence-informed, yet innovation oriented.

Illustrative Responses

Each principle has a set of Illustrative policy and practice responses that can be applied by function.

OST Niches

Additional considerations for different OST time frames:

- Before and after school
- Short-term school breaks
- Weekends
- Summer break
- During times of disruption

4. How is alignment to the Framework achieved?

Stakeholders involved in key OST functions can expand natural supports-enhanced OST activities for middle-years children and their families by aligning their policies and practices to the Framework's principles.

Steps for Alignment:

Identify your OST function. → Answer principles-focused questions. → Review the principles, illustrative responses, and available research and information. → Identify and implement concrete actions and evaluate their effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

This Framework recognizes the importance of the middle years (ages six to 13) to supporting the healthy transition of youth into adulthood and focuses on building resiliency and well-being through out-of-school time (OST) activities that are enhanced by natural supports and naturally supportive environments.

PURPOSE OF THIS FRAMEWORK
The purpose of this document is to provide OST stakeholders with a framework to inform their efforts towards supporting and sustaining quality OST activities for the middle years using approaches enhanced by natural supports.

WHO IS THIS FRAMEWORK FOR?
This Framework is meant for OST stakeholders involved in the following three key OST functions:
- **Policy Development and Funding:** Providing influence over OST activities through policies, regulations and funding.
- **Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination**: Planning and managing OST activities at the community-level by establishing networks and coordinating groups.
- **Design and Delivery:** Designing and delivering OST activities at the community level.

This Framework uses the natural geographic clustering of schools as a way to organize and align access to OST activities and is meant to be customized and applied at the community level. Although the focus is on communities in Edmonton, the Framework can be applied more broadly to other areas of the province.

FRAMEWORK ORGANIZATION
This Framework is organized around eight principles for supporting and sustaining OST activities. Each principle has a set of illustrative policy and practice responses that can be customized and applied by OST stakeholders in the key functions of policy development and funding, program planning and coordination, and program design and delivery. Additional considerations by OST niches (e.g., before and after school, weekends, summer) are provided to allow for further customization.

HOW TO USE THIS FRAMEWORK
This Framework does not prescribe changes to policy or practice; rather, it is meant to expand and challenge conventional thinking and encourage stakeholders to adopt creativity and flexibility when thinking about OST. This Framework can be applied in whole or in part and is meant is to be customized by stakeholders to address the unique circumstances and needs of their individual communities.

DEFINING KEY TERMS IN THIS FRAMEWORK
For the purposes of this Framework, the following key terms and their context are described:
- Middle years: The years between the ages of six and 13.
- Out-of-school time: The hours that children and youth are not in school.

- <u>Out-of-school time activities</u>: Planned activities, ranging from formally structured programs to less-structured events, that occur during the hours that children and youth are not in school.
- <u>Out-of-school time niches</u>: OST activities occurring during specific times when children are not in school - specifically:
  - Before and after school
  - Short-term school breaks
  - Summer break
  - Weekends
  - Times of wide-spread disruption (e.g., pandemic, flood, fire)
- <u>Natural supports:</u> Informal reciprocal connections that consist of close relationships, such as family and friends, and broader associations, such as neighbours and mentors. [3, p. 8]
- <u>Community</u>: Individuals of a given group that are bound together based on geography or perceived social, functional, cultural and/or circumstantial connections. [4, p. 2]

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

CONTEXT

Alberta's *Well-Being and Resiliency Framework* outlines the importance of policies, services and programs that prevent and/or aim to reduce the impacts of early adversity by promoting the development of well-being and resiliency. [5] Creating safe environments, supporting families and helping young people succeed are key components of the *Well-Being and Resiliency Framework*. This priority requires coordinated and collaborative efforts from stakeholders across policymaking, planning and delivery, as well as approaches that extend beyond the family unit into the broader community.

Programs and services that promote healthy environments and positive experiences, especially during the middle years of childhood development, help build protective factors in children, youth and families and create stronger, healthier communities. Additionally, those that focus on child development and well-being, including skills development, creating safe and nurturing environments, and promoting positive social connections, help children and youth reach their fullest potential and build resiliency and well-being on the path to adulthood.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MIDDLE YEARS

The middle years of childhood refer to the time period between the ages of six and 13. This is a crucial period of development during which children and youth begin to consolidate their personalities, behaviours, and competencies and develop critical cognitive and social skills. [6]

Children and youth in their middle years undergo rapid development that range from changes to their physical and emotional being, to a broadening of interactions beyond their immediate family. "Middle childhood is a powerful predictor of adolescent adjustment". [6, p. 2] Some key transformations and potential effects include:

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

- Opportunities for ongoing brain development.
- Rapid change and expansion of social networks.
- Potential for adverse childhood experiences.
- Potential for increased isolation and sedentary behaviour.
- Transition to adolescence.

The skills and relationships developed by children and youth during the middle years are crucial to supporting a healthy transition into adulthood and building resilience and well-being over their life course. As such, the middle years are a key period for providing appropriate preventative and proactive supports to help children and youth develop positive behaviours and attitudes, setting the foundation of healthy adulthood. [6] Despite the importance of the middle years, there has been little emphasis given to this age group, outside of the education sector, both

in terms of funding support and availability of support services. There is also limited data to support identification, monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of supports available for the middle years.

EMPHASIS ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME FOR THE MIDDLE YEARS

During the middle years of a child, schools meet for six hours per day, 180 days per year. The average child in their middle years has approximately 67 hours of free time out of school each week, which is more than they spend in school. [6, p. 1]

Out-of-school time (OST) refers to the hours that children and youth are not in school, including the following times:

- before and after school
- short-term school breaks
- weekends
- summer break
- during times of wide-spread disruption (e.g., flood, fire, pandemic)

OST activities are known to support the development of life and technical skills, friendships, and physical and mental well-being. These activities reduce the likelihood of children and youth engaging in disruptive activities. Furthermore, participation in OST activities provide opportunities for mentorship, leadership, development of responsibility, and building of connections – all of which are important skills for supporting a healthy transition into adulthood. [7] These activities can range from structured programs offered by care centers and schools to less structured extracurricular clubs and summer camps offered by community-sponsored organizations and agencies. Local, provincial, and national agencies have been joined by foundations, corporations and community-based organizations to address the need in communities for OST activities. In general, the purpose of most OST approaches is to provide one or more of the following: [7, p. 6]

Figure 1: Gap in OST for the Middle Years in Edmonton
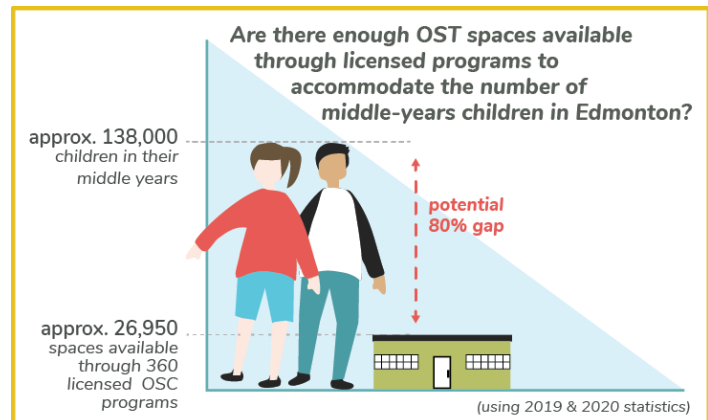
Demographics
- *Population estimates as of July 1, 2019*
- *Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census metropolitan area and census agglomeration, 2016 boundaries. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25318/1710013501-eng. Retrieved: Oct. 27, 2020*

Out-of-school care (OSC) programming
- *Out-of-school care programming is defined as a licensed childcare program provided to kindergarten and school-aged children (i.e., grades 1-6) in any or all of: before-and-after school, during the lunch hour, or when school is closed*
- *Source: Government of Alberta Child Care Look Up: http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/oldfusion/ChildCareLookup.cfm. Retrieved: Oct. 27, 2020*

- Constructive, supervised activities for children and youth.
- Caring supportive relationships with adults and other children and youth.
- Accessible safe places for children and youth.

A recent environmental scan of OST best practices revealed that structured programs are more likely to be monitored and evaluated to identify effectiveness of approaches, although rigorous process and outcome evaluation still remains a challenge for many programs. Less is known about the effectiveness of unstructured OST approaches as they are not as well documented.

NATURAL SUPPORTS AND NATURALLY SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Natural supports are informal reciprocal connections that consist of close relationships, such as family and friends, and broader associations, such as neighbours and mentors. Natural supports elevate the well-being of another through relationship [3, p. 8] and research has shown that children who have positive relationships with friends, family members, neighbors and other community members are more resilient and more likely to experience positive developmental outcomes. [3] Natural supports differ by the strength of the relationship developed as well as by the function the relationship serves, with the understanding that relationships may become more or less influential over time. For the purposes of this Framework, three types of natural supports connections are described: one-to-one, group, and community.

One-to-one connections provide the most impactful relationships as they occur at the individual level. These relationships provide a child or youth with a sense of identity, belonging, security, social norms, attachment, stability, and self esteem. For example, they typically include relationships with parents, siblings, extended family, friends, and mentors. [8]

Group connections are developed through association with a group, environment, or through participation in an activity. These relationships are weaker, but critical because they function to bring new ideas, ways of doing things, and access to information and resources beyond the child's or youth's immediate group. For example, these could include relationships with classmates, coaches, teachers, co-workers, and other individuals within the community, such as bus drivers and business owners. [8, p. 5]

The broadest type of connection occurs at the community level and are those formed between members who belong to the same community. Connections or networks developed at the community level enable its members to benefit from a naturally supportive environment, as well as contribute to instilling a naturally supportive culture within their community.

Figure 2: Natural Supports Connections
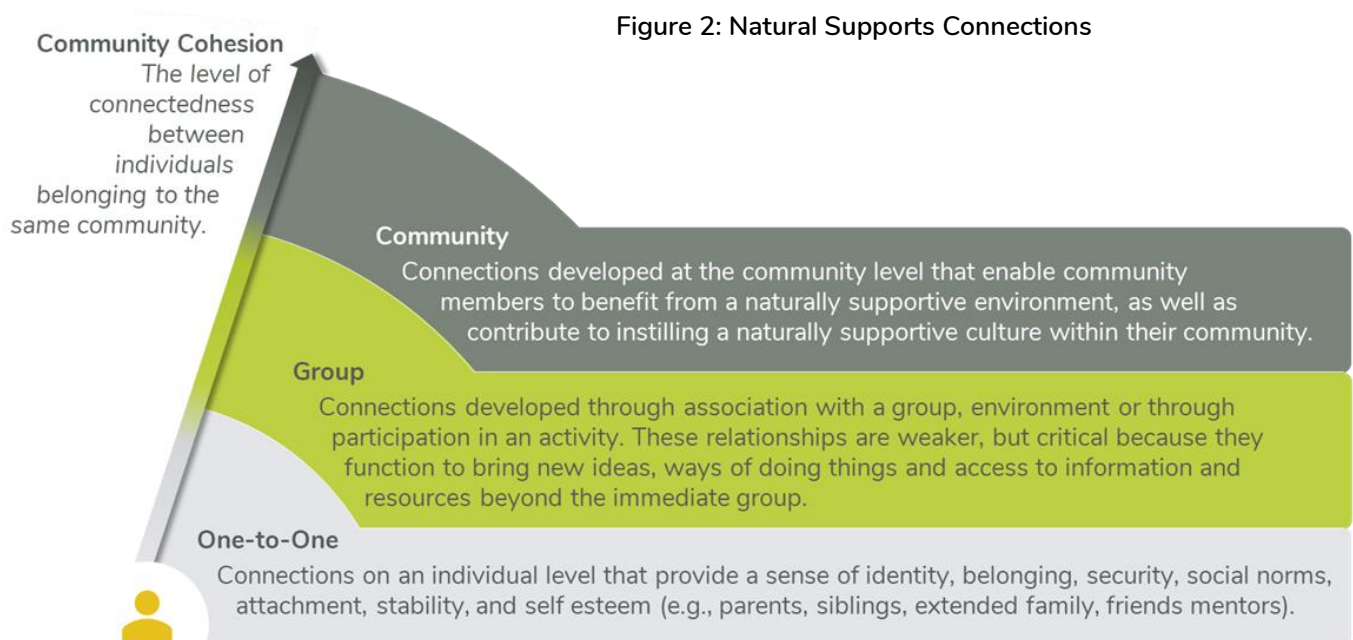
Communities can build resilience in their children and youth by providing access to resources, activities, and programming that promote the creation of natural supports. [3] Understanding the opportunities that enable the development of natural supports within community settings can also be instrumental in creating more supportive environments for children, youth and their families. [7] [3]

Most often, family is the first and primary environment within which children grow and learn. According to research gathered and presented by the Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, the most common factor among resilient children is the presence of at least one stable and supportive relationship with a parent, caregiver, or other dedicated adult. However, the ability of parents and caring adults to provide adequate and appropriate support varies as a consequence of competency, awareness, skills, and resources. Both families and their children benefit when they are supported by caregivers, community supports/activities, and the structural environment, as these can augment family skills to enhance development. [3, p. 3] Not only do social connections improve well-being for children, they provide a mechanism for parents, caregivers, teachers, coaches, etc., to better support children and youth themselves. [7, p. 24] A recent study notes that "emerging research has demonstrated that residing in highly cohesive neighbourhoods may strengthen a child's ability to positively cope with adversity" and the study concludes that "greater neighbourhood social cohesion appeared to buffer the effects of stressful life events on several domains of adolescent mental health". [9, p. 1292]

Natural supports are also an important way of managing the costs of delivering OST activities and providing OST activities when more formal programs are unavailable. Natural supports and supportive environments have been shown to play an important role in addressing gaps during times of disruption (e.g., floods, fires, pandemics, times of fiscal constraint). Disruptions can cause uncertainty and volatility in public and philanthropic investments for OST activities, making natural supports even more important during these times.

PUTTING THE PERSPECTIVES TOGETHER INTO A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Supporting Middle Years Out-of-School Time Activities Through Approaches Enhanced by Natural Supports – Policy and Practice Framework is a strategic document that explores the opportunities to promote positive outcomes for middle-years children and youth by supporting OST activities through illustrative approaches enhanced by natural supports. These illustrative approaches help develop relationships at the individual as well as community level, providing the opportunity for OST to contribute to developing a naturally supportive culture within the community, and in turn be supported by the community connections generated by this culture.

Figure 3: Integrating Perspectives
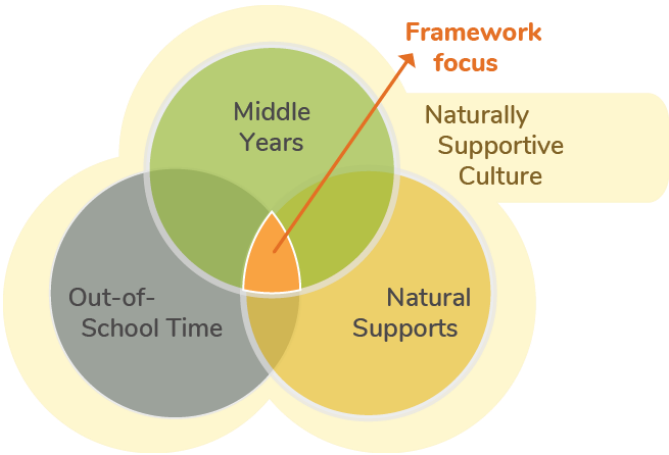
This Framework is organized around eight principles for supporting and sustaining OST activities. Each principle has a set of illustrative approaches that can be customized and applied by OST stakeholders in the key functions of:

- policy development and funding
- program planning, collaboration and coordination
- program design and delivery

This framework structure enables stakeholders to assess their current approaches, consider new perspectives and possibilities, and customize a path to suit their unique circumstances. Stakeholders are challenged to consider "incremental" improvements to policy and practice, which are easier to implement but lower impact on OST sustainability, as well as "game changing" approaches, which are more challenging to develop but have a higher impact. Furthermore, additional considerations by OST niches (i.e., before and after school, short-term school breaks, summer break, weekends, and during times of wide-spread disruption) are provided to allow for further customization of the Framework.

Characteristics/Attributes of a Naturally Supportive Community [13, pp. 14-15]

- Collaboration across community serving organizations and involving broad and diverse partnerships.
- Inclusivity with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, language, disabilities, etc. Cultural diversity is valued for the richness it adds to the community fabric.
- Accessibility, both physical (e.g.: a safe walkable distance), and ease of use (e.g.: equal opportunity to participate).
- Community driven, authentically, and respectfully engaging with residents.
- Shared leadership, advancing volunteerism, and learning.
- Belonging, pride in neighbourhood.
- Neighbourliness - neighbours helping neighbours.
- Resiliency, healthy relationships, and living in a supportive environment.
- Strength-based, focus on shared assets, not gaps.

CURRENT POLICY AND PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT

While there has been recognition of the importance of supportive relationships to building resiliency and well-being during the middle years of childhood, there is limited data and documented evidence showing the intentional use and/or integration of a natural supports approach in OST activity planning and delivery. Anecdotal evidence, however, indicates that OST stakeholders are employing a natural supports approach to OST activities on some level.

In Edmonton, the current environment for providing natural supports-enhanced OST activities to children in their middle years is comprised of a patchwork of policies, planning tables, and program coverage, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: OST Resources, Activities, and Bodies

OST Function	Key Bodies	Related Resources and Activities
Policy Development and Funding	Alberta Children Services	• *Child Care Licensing* Act • Child Care Licensing Regulation • Provides grant funding for out-of-school care service providers
	Alberta Community and Social Services	Assured Income for Severely the Handicapped (AISH)/Social Assistance.
	• Alberta Education • Alberta School Boards (i.e., Public, Catholic, French)	*Education* Act and school board specific policies that influence access and affordability of school facilities.
	• Alberta Recreation and Parks Association / Canadian Recreation and Parks	Oversees provincial implementation of a variety of programs and initiatives related to children and youth recreation, including Everybody gets to play™, HIGH FIVE®, After School, and the Youth Development Through Recreation Services (YDRS) Symposium.[i]
	City of Edmonton, Citizen Services	Manages facilities and provides funding for OST activities.
	Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues	Provides guidance to local community leagues on facility use and advocates to the City of Edmonton regarding recreational activities.

---

[i] Retrieved from: https://arpaonline.ca/program/children-youth-programs. November 27, 2020.

OST Function	Key Bodies	Related Resources and Activities
	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	Provides funding for OST activities.
	National bodies (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA)	Regulates standards for local programs and services and funds targeted activities.
	Philanthropic groups (e.g., United Way, Community Foundation, corporate donors)	Provides funding for OST activities.
	Provincial and/or international policies or frameworks	The following policies cross all sectors and Government of Alberta ministries: • United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples[ii] • Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)[iii] • Alberta's French Policy[iv] and French Policy 2020-23 Action Plan[v]
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	• Alberta Family Resource Network • Edmonton Community Services • Large human service agencies	Participates in planning for community-scale OST activities on a case-by-case basis.
	OST Collaborative	• Supports and offers capacity building opportunities to local and community groups that are offering out-of-school time programming. • Creates an environment where shared knowledge and best practices enable the delivery of quality programming.
	School boards	Participates in facilities planning for school-based OST activities.
Program Design and Delivery	• Human service agencies (e.g. Catholic Social Services, Edmonton	Designs and manages specific OST activities on a case-by-case basis.

[ii] More information available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html

[iii] More information available at: https://www.alberta.ca/gender-based-analysis.aspx

[iv] Document available at: https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/9818af69-7a54-43af-9d91-f899745d864c/resource/fbc613c8-aa52-4669-a3f9-80192a0a1283/download/french-policy-english.pdf

[v] Document available at: https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/96f8b5e5-7bf3-433b-832b-285dfff9da82/resource/cf497bed-18e4-4c14-a7b1-346063c92a51/download/cmsw-french-policy-action-plan-2020-23.pdf

OST Function	Key Bodies	Related Resources and Activities
	Mennonite Center, YMCA, Bent Arrow, BGCBigs[vi]) • Community leagues • City-owned drop-in recreation centers • Private sports clubs • Sports programs (e.g., Edmonton Soccer Association) • Cultural community groups • Faith-based groups	

While OST stakeholders in all three key OST functions are involved in exemplary work, in Edmonton the patchwork-nature of OST systems, funding streams, and programs/activities means there are large gaps in the access, quality, and affordability of OST activities for middle-years children and their families.

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

Edmonton-area OST stakeholders participating in a workshop in the fall of 2019 to identify OST needs and brainstorm ideas for middle-years OST activities using approaches enhanced by natural supports.

[vi] Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area

FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

Research into decades of experience, coupled with the feedback from Edmonton-area residents, service providers, and large institutions, point to a set of principles that OST stakeholders can draw from when developing policies and practices to support and sustain quality middle-years OST activities using natural supports-enhanced approaches.

This Framework focuses on eight key principles (denoted by P); not listed in any priority:

STEWARDSHIP AND INFRASTRUCTURE

P1: Leverage existing community facilities

P2: Ensure accessibility and affordability for all families

P3: Effectively plan, coordinate, collaborate, and communicate OST supports

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

P4: Offer a broad spectrum of OST options

P5: Be inclusive by providing universal and targeted OST activities

P6: Enhance children's emotional, physical and social development, and overall resiliency

NATURAL SUPPORTS

P7: Systematically integrate natural supports into OST activities

EVIDENCE AND EVALUATION

P8: Be evidence-informed, yet innovation oriented

> **Principle**
> A principle is a statement based on evidence of what works and/or a deeply held belief or value.

These principles are not mutually exclusive; rather, they need to work together in order to create sustainability for OST activities. The sections that follow provide a detailed exploration of each principle and identify illustrative responses that can be applied by OST stakeholder functions.

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

Reading the Illustrative Response Tables

Each principle described will be followed by a table of illustrative responses.

<u>Illustrative Responses</u>

Illustrative responses are considerations and/or approaches to policy or practice that can be applied by stakeholders according to their key OST function. There are two types of responses:

Incremental:
- Denoted by the following symbol: ↗
- Responses that are easier to implement but have a lower impact on OST sustainability.

Game Changing:
- Denoted by the following symbol: 💥
- Responses that are more challenging to implement but produce a higher impact on OST sustainability.

<u>Level of Coordination/Collaboration</u>

Implementation of illustrative responses may require different levels of coordination/collaboration from stakeholders. Some can be implemented on an individual basis, while others may require the coordination/collaboration of multiple stakeholders and/or involvement of broader systems.

Organization
- Coordination within an individual stakeholder organization, agency, and/or association.

Community
- Coordination and/or collaboration with other stakeholder organizations, agencies, and/or associations within the community.

Systems
- Coordination and/or collaboration with a group of stakeholders that are organized as a single body with common goals and established protocols (e.g., school boards, government, municipality).

OST Role ⤵	Illustrative responses by key OST Role ⤵	Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ Incremental approach	x		
	💥 Game changing approach		x	
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Incremental approach			x
	💥 Game changing approach			x
Design and Delivery	↗ Incremental approach		x	
	💥 Game changing approach			x

Stewardship and Infrastructure

The first three principles refer to how OST stakeholders can create the broader infrastructure to plan, fund, and operate OST activities through natural supports-enhanced approaches.

P1: LEVERAGE EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Quality OST activities require settings (e.g., buildings, facilities, surroundings) that:

- Provide sufficient space for OST activities.
- Meet basic safety codes.
- Are accessible for different levels of physical abilities.
- Are within 15-minute walking distance of schools or homes.
- Consider the needs of diverse groups (e.g., accessible for different levels of physical abilities, makes children and youth feel safe) – *refer to P5 (pg. 28) for further discussion of this consideration.*

OST activities that require transportation to and from the program location creates logistical, safety, and resource challenges that are difficult to overcome. Instead, activities should be offered in the communities where families live and/or where children and youth go to school. Where this is not possible, transportation should be provided by the program or there should be subsidized access to public transportation arranged. While there may be cases in which activities must be offered outside of the community (e.g., specialized programs for sports or academic support), these should be considered the exception rather than the rule.

Edmonton communities, through schools and community leagues, are full of facilities and outdoor recreation spaces that meet these requirements and are ideal for OST activities. There are also many faith-based facilities, community halls, and recreational facilities that provide options. While these options vary in their suitability (i.e., fit for purpose), level of use, and physical accessibility, many Edmonton communities have at least one such physical asset. Many of these assets are under-utilized during OST hours.

Edmonton is facilities rich but accessibility poor. Many institutions have strict regulations which limit how and when their facilities are used and by whom. These restrictions may be motivated by a desire to manage risk and liabilities, limit operational costs and wear and tear on facilities, or ensure that the facilities are used in certain ways by certain groups.

In order to access these facilities, OST providers must approach institutions or organizations on a case-by-case basis to explore the possibility of use, negotiate the terms of use, and manage the arrangement. Although providers may be able to secure a quality location to deliver their program, it often takes a lot of time and effort to secure each location.

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below.

Table 2: Leverage Existing Community Facilities - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems

Policy Development and Funding	↗ Build on the Joint Use Agreement[vii] in Edmonton:
	    o Establish, test, widely share, and promote different shared-use agreements and memorandum of understanding agreements on facility use.
	    o Negotiate additional terms, such as extended hours for facility use (i.e., longer after school care, weekends, summer time, and holidays), custodial services, facility maintenance, and sharing of equipment.
				×

	☀ Create a Facilities Joint Board (FJB), comprised of municipalities, school boards and community users, to develop policies for expanding the use of existing facilities.			×
	☀ Establish member-based access to facilities so that the vetting process (e.g., program vetting and background checks) only needs to be done once.			×

Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Increase communication/messaging around:
	    o The importance of the middle years and how community cohesion and supportive culture can play a key role.
	    o Awareness that public-funded facilities are for available for public use.
			×	

	☀ Develop innovative approaches to insurance and legal agreements to prevent backlogs and barriers - e.g., build on/extend existing arrangements instead of seeking new arrangements. This could assist grassroots organizations with reducing administrative and cost-related barriers.		×	

[vii] The Joint Use Agreement (JUA) is a formal partnership between the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools and Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord to share facilities to benefit students and Edmontonians. It provides access to school facilities for community groups after school hours, use of City recreational facilities (arenas, pools, and others) by students during school hours, and shared use of sports fields by students and community sport groups.

Table 2: Leverage Existing Community Facilities - Illustrative Responses	Organization	Community	Systems

↗ Establish and maintain a local inventory of community facilities that could be used for community programming and events, including OST activities, by:
  o Listing community partners/participants who can provide facility space during times when their facilities are not used.
  o Developing and maintaining a list of community contacts.
  o Seeking out and listing community facilities that accommodate Indigenous programming (e.g., facilities that can accommodate Indigenous ceremony).
		x	

💥 Create a centralized process for streamlining access to community facilities, including creating a paid position responsible for facility booking and maintenance.		x	
Design and Delivery — ↗ Provide access to supplies and/or equipment that support delivery of activities and develop agreements for maintenance of supplies and/or equipment.		x	
↗ Provide permanent storage space for facility users.		x	
💥 Incorporate members representing the facility and those representing service delivery into OST programming (working alongside) in order to build a sense of community.		x	

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

P2: ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY FOR ALL FAMILIES

ACCESSIBLITY

Ensuring that OST is accessible means that programs and activities are available for families when they need it and where they need it. With many parents working non-traditional hours, families are having difficulty finding programs that fill the gap between the end of the school day and the end of their work day. Oftentimes, families fill this gap by using a patchwork of programs. For families living in rural areas, accessibility is even more of a challenge. In addition to many rural parents working non-traditional hours, there are not as many OST programs available in rural areas, and where there are activities, they are often not located within walking distance of where families live.

According to the Ministry of Children's Services' *Child Care Consultation Report*, families identified issues around access to regulated child care programs[viii] to be the most prevalent. Specifically, the following access-related issues were identified (listed in order of prevalence):

- Finding a child care program that suits my working hours.
- Finding information on child care programs.
- Finding a child care program in my urban community.
- Applying for subsidy.
- Finding a child care program in my rural community. [10, p. 4]

In this Framework, accessibility refers to geographical proximity, hours of availability, cultural responsiveness, and the creation of safe environments and spaces. As the framework principles are not mutually exclusive, rather, they necessarily work together, these perspectives of accessibility are elaborated further in the other principles.

AFFORDABILITY

Securing sustainable funding for OST activities remains a complex challenge. In Edmonton, there are a small number of public agencies, foundations, and private sponsors who fund OST activities for targeted groups, communities, and for distinct purposes (e.g., Free Play for Kids). These investments have helped to provide OST activities for thousands of middle-years children; however, they address only a fraction of the need/demand across communities and do not fully address the financial barriers to participation. As a result, OST in Edmonton is a patchwork of accessibility and affordability characterized by:

- A small number of programs that are fully funded through grants and contributions that are provided to families at no cost.
- A greater number of programs that rely partially or fully on participant fees, resulting in many families only being able to participate in programs periodically or not at all.
- Many communities that do not have access to any formal OST activities.

---

viii The Child Care Licensing Regulation identifies out of school care program as a category of "child care program" and defines "out of school care program" as a "child care program provided to kindergarten children and school-aged children in any or all of the following periods: (i) before and after school; (ii) during the lunch hour; (iii) when schools are closed".

In order to fill the gap, OST delivery organizations invest a tremendous amount of time and labour fundraising for additional resources and are often forced to charge program fees. This results in a landscape of differently funded OST activities within a community, with some areas entirely without supports and many lower-income families unable to participate.

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below.

Table 3: Ensure Accessibility and Affordability for all Families - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ Encourage municipal and provincial departments and local foundations to increase funding to OST activities, including OST programming in rural areas and during non-traditional work hours.			×
	↗ Broaden the funding eligibility requirements so that more families can qualify for OST subsidies and/or more OST delivery programs/activities qualify for funding.			×
	↗ Assist grassroots programs/organizations with grant funding applications and reporting requirements (e.g., larger organizations can act as an intermediary for mobilizing funding to smaller agencies).		×	
	☀ Create a framework for funding families who do not qualify for subsidies and cannot afford OST programing.			×
	☀ Establish a multi-ministry supported, community-use of schools grant that allows for diverse OST programming.			×
	☀ Establish an Alberta tax credit for children in OST programs.			×
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Implement shared-purchasing and share operational support functions (e.g., administration, marketing) to reduce program costs.		×	
	↗ Secure corporate sponsors within the immediate community to support OST activities.		×	
	☀ Identify consistent groups (e.g., Family Resource Networks, the City of Edmonton, MAPS Initiative) to lead or facilitate OST planning in communities in order to coordinate and prevent overlaps in services.		×	
	☀ Share programing space for multiple programs and/or other delivery organizations to reduce costs (refer to P1).		×	
Design and Delivery	↗ Employ sliding scale fee structures for participation (e.g., full, partial, or no fee) to ensure equitable access for all families across the income spectrum.	×		
	↗ Employ sliding scale fee structures for participation (e.g., full, partial, or no fee) and allocate facility time to each bracket on the scale so that there is affordable and equitable access to facility space.		×	

Table 3: Ensure Accessibility and Affordability for all Families - Illustrative Responses	Organization	Community	Systems
↗ Implement a fee model that rewards volunteer support.	×		
↗ Provide fee and equipment waivers to low income families.	×		
↗ Reduce costs by using natural supports within the community or community volunteers to assist with operational functions.		×	
↗ Explore the use of natural supports to augment operational needs such as support for extending beyond the traditional hours of operation (e.g., after 6:00 pm, weekends), and assistance with transportation to OST facilities for children and youth who are do not live within walking distance or have barriers to reaching the facility.		×	
↗ Establish an agreement with City of Edmonton transit services to makes transit services more accessible (e.g., special routes, addition of stops) and/or more affordable (e.g., adopt a subsidized fee structure) for transportation to and from OST activities.			×
💥 Work with police to change standards for getting subsidized record checks. Police record checks are often a barrier to using natural supports; some community organizations do not qualify for subsidized volunteer record checks or cannot afford record checks given the number of volunteers needed to run programming. *(Note: This response is also applicable to the policy development and funding role).*			×

Brander Gardens ROCKS

Brander Gardens ROCKS is focused on building the capacity of and supporting the diversity in the Brander Gardens community in Southwest Edmonton. Programming focuses on academic school readiness, fitness and recreation, music and art, leadership, and the celebration of diversity. Programs are delivered in Brander Gardens Elementary School and in the Capital Region Housing green space. In August 2020, tents were set up in the green space for games and reading. Although the program usually incorporates two field trips per week, field trips were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

P3: EFFECTIVELY PLAN, COORDINATE, COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE OST SUPPORTS

In many areas throughout the province, OST activities occur in a variety of settings, are offered by a wide range of service providers, and are funded through a diverse range of sources with uneven levels of coordination and/or consistency.

This fragmented approach causes multiple issues for both OST providers as well as families needing OST supports. It makes it difficult to assess the current state of OST supports in communities, let alone the province, so that:

- Funding can be directed to where it is most needed.
- Gaps and/or duplication in supports can be identified and addressed.
- Families can navigate to the OST supports (e.g., programs, funding) that are available and address their needs.

There are a variety of basic management functions that OST stakeholders can apply to ensure that middle-years children and families have better planned, coordinated and communicated OST supports.

- Research and Monitoring
  - o Tracking existing OST activities in the community.
  - o Consulting with residents to determine their OST needs.
  - o Spotting gaps or duplication in OST activities.
- Planning and Evaluation
  - o Establishing priorities for OST activities.
  - o Coordinating activities to address gaps and/or duplication.
  - o Evaluating activities and results to ensure a spectrum of OST options are available.
- Communication
  - o Documenting, disseminating, and continuously updating information to ensure accuracy, timeliness, and that information is communicated to children and families in communities where they live or attend school.

What programs and where?

Finding information on child care programs was the second most prevalent issue identified in the Ministry of Children's Services' *Child Care Consultation Report.* [10, p. 4]

These basic management tasks are clear and straightforward, but the capacity to fulfill them in a way that is responsive to each community is uneven. While there are stewardship groups for certain OST niches (e.g., summer programming) and distinct communities (e.g., west-Edmonton has community resource coordinators), community-based management of OST activities is largely ad-hoc in some communities and entirely absent in most.

To ensure that middle-years children and youth and their families have access to OST supports, OST stakeholders must find ways to dramatically improve the planning, coordination and communication of OST activities at the community level.

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below.

Table 4: Effectively Plan, Coordinate, Collaborate and Communicate OST Supports - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ Establish an inventory system for committees, working groups and collaboratives at a neighbourhood level. Current systems already exist through 311; however, the knowledge and coordination piece could be enhanced.			×
	↗ Provide updated information for each community through 211 as a consistent way for current and new community members to find OST programming.			×
	☀ Allocate appropriate funding for the creation of a community engagement coordinator role.			×
	☀ Develop and establish a systemic approach for evaluation of OST programs that includes the evaluation of both licensed and unlicensed programs.			×
	☀ Produce and implement an agreed-upon curriculum framework for OST activities(with a licensed and un-licensed focus).			×

Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Plan and coordinate OST activities in the community to align with the needs of families in the community by:
	  o Building relationships with families in the community to understand the demographic make-up of the community and the OST needs of families.
	  o Assessing current OST services and identifying gaps and overlaps.
	  o Actively engage partners, such as school resource officers and school health nurses, in the planning of OST activities.
				×

	↗ Collaborate with community schools to develop a program for schools to receive and distribute updates in school newsletters, websites and community events.		×	
	↗ Hold planning meetings at the local community level with a rotation through participants' facilities.		×	
	↗ Actively engage stakeholders in planning committees – include parents, children and youth, and the community at large.		×	
	↗ Share communication networks to distribute information and promote of events.		×	
	↗ Connect with parent councils at schools to get the word out to families about community OST programs and activities.			×

Table 4: Effectively Plan, Coordinate, Collaborate and Communicate OST Supports - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems
	↗ Collaborate with Block Connectors and Abundant Community[ix] to effectively customize the information to each individual family need and provide the right type of supports to support children and their families with accessing OST programs and activities.		×	
	☀ Create a routine and consistent community engagement process, including establishment of paid community coordinator position(s) to consistently connect and engage with residents and families.		×	
	☀ Include school administration in the planning or attending of community-led initiatives and events.			×
Design and Delivery	↗ Build relationships with families in the community to assess OST needs.	×		
	↗ Share staffing across various partnerships.		×	
	↗ Include natural supports in the delivery of OST activities as a way to address the needs for extended hours.	×		
	↗ Include family members, care givers and other natural supports in the design and/or delivery of OST activities as a way to build cohesion and strengthen relationships.	×		
	☀ Intentionally capture data and use it to inform design and delivery of OST services so that it is customized to the demographics and needs of families and the community.		×	
	☀ Have all levels of agency/program participate in front line work - create connection to what is happening on the ground.	×		

[ix] Abundant Community is an Edmonton-based initiatives. More information available at: More information available at: https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_communities/abundant-community-edmonton.aspx

Out-of-School Time Collaborative

The Out-of-School Time Collaborative is a partnership of community groups, community leaders, service delivery agencies, and local institutions that have been working together since 2008 to improve the resiliency of children and youth through widely accessible and quality out-of-school time programs.

The Collaborative believes that by being connected to services, programs, and opportunities through OST programs, children, youth, and their families will become more actively involved in their communities, experience greater academic success, develop an enhanced sense of belonging and identity, and be more engaged Edmontonians. The goals of the Collaborative are to:

- Create opportunities for children, youth, and their families to:
    o Become more actively involved in their communities.
    o Experience greater academic success.
    o Develop an enhanced sense of belonging and identity.
    o Support and offer capacity building opportunities to local and community groups that are offering this out-of-school time programming.
- Create an environment where shared knowledge and best practices enable the delivery of quality programming.

Further information on the OST Collaborative is available at: https://reachedmonton.ca/initiatives/out-of-school-time-collaborative/

Out-of-School Time Programming

The next three principles refer to how OST stakeholders can develop relevant, responsive, and quality OST activities for middle-years children and youth.

P4: OFFER A BROAD SPECTRUM OF OST OPTIONS

There is no one-size fits all OST program that works for all middle-years children and youth, families, and communities. In order to be relevant and meet the unique needs and demands of families, policy makers, planners, and program managers should strive to create a spectrum of options for families in each community.

The following diagram describes the range of OST activities, characterized by the degree to which they are formalized (i.e., highly structured through to grassroots/organic), and the resources available to them based on their degree of formalization.

Figure 4: OST Activity Spectrum

Highly Structured	Semi-Structured	Grassroots/Organic
• Intentional planning with formal program structure • Provincially regulated through child care legislation, licensing and approvals • E.g., out-of-school time programs, day cares, day homes	• Intentional planning with semi-formal program structure • Adheres to municipal/agency/organization/association OST-related regulations, standards and policies • E.g., Municipal programs, programs delivered by community-level agencies, sports associations	• Intentional planning with informal activity structure • Not required to comply with any OST-related regulations, policies or standards* • Varying availability and types of programming across providers and/or organizers • E.g., open skating at community skating rinks *required to comply with insurance and health and safety standards.*

Professionally-driven (formal)   *Community-driven (less formal)*

Resources
• Available funding
• Policies, standards and regulations
• Best practice research and supporting data

more resources ⊕ ————————————— ⊖ less resources

Many of the known OST programs in Edmonton fall towards the more formal end of the OST spectrum (i.e., highly structured and semi-structured programs). These programs tend to be regulated through licensing and have more resources available to support sustainability, such as funding and guidance (i.e., standards, best

practices, and data), which also supports continuous improvement efforts. Less formal OST activities, those that tend to be more community-driven, also exist within communities but are less well known. These activities have fewer access to resources to support their sustainability and as such, have less capacity to organize and deliver programs. These grassroots/organic programs and activities tend to be organized around the community, relying on natural supports and volunteers within the community. Although they are less formal, they contribute to building community cohesion, which emerging research has shown to strengthen a child's ability to positively cope with adversity.

This principle challenges OST stakeholders to develop programs, plans and policies that draw from this comprehensive range of OST options.

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below.

Table 5: Offer a Broad Spectrum of OST Options - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ Share in a community-level coalition of programming that includes programmers from the full spectrum of support.		×	
	☀ Encourage municipal and provincial departments and local foundations to increase funding to support grassroots OST activities.			×
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Make the transition to OST programs smoother and more welcoming for children and youth by involving staff from both the school and the OST program so that time is taken to support the family in making the connection.		×	
	☀ Work with schools to coordinate bussing from schools to the OST activity location or offer the program directly in the community and within walking distance from the school.			×
Design and Delivery	↗ Establish a coordinator role whose main function is focussed on identifying and scheduling rotational programmers to deliver OST activities from various agencies along the spectrum of OST activities during periods of school closure.		×	
	↗ Build relationships with children, youth and their families by having a programmer/coordinator present at all OST activities.		×	
	☀ Support the use/building of infrastructure required for OST activities (e.g., build an outdoor hockey rink, fundraise for supplies).		×	

P5: BE INCLUSIVE BY PROVIDING UNIVERSAL AND TARGETED OST ACTIVITIES

Many communities are comprised of diverse residents, families, and demographic groups. Some of this diversity includes different ethno-cultural communities (e.g., immigrants, refugees, Indigenous), children with developmental needs (e.g., persons with various disabilities, complex behavioural challenges), and gender identities (e.g., straight, LGBTQ2S+). To be effective, OST activities need to strive to be inclusive of this diversity.

Creating inclusion in OST activities requires OST stakeholders to strike a balance between providing universal programs that are suited and open to everyone, as well as programs that target specific groups. For example, the community needs relatively universal programs like soccer leagues, coordinated through the City of Edmonton, that provide OST activities for thousands of middle-years children, as well as the more targeted programs like Free Play for Kids. Through sports, Free Play for Kids fosters inclusion, confidence, and respect in the kids and youth who participate. It is a free after school club that encourages healthy lifestyles, provides rewarding experiences, encourages teamwork, builds leadership skills, develops and strengthens physical literacy, and provides opportunities to play and have fun. Furthermore, programs assist in the adjustment of immigrant and refugee children and youth to Canadian culture to enhance integration, encourage positive social and emotional development, all while providing a safe place during critical hours.

Cultural Safety

An environment in which diverse cultural identities are recognized and respected and individuals and groups feel safe and empowered to meet their needs, expectations and rights within an individual's cultural context. [16, p. 16]

Inclusive OST activities are intentional in ensuring all children feel welcome, are able to participate in activities, and develop a sense of belonging. Approaches to achieve this, however, vary depending on the activity, community, and most importantly, the children and youth in the programs. For example:

1. *The Inclusion Toolkit for After School Programs*, generated through the Special Needs Inclusion Project, includes detailed description of what inclusion means for children with disabilities, as well as standards related to philosophy, outreach, strategies and evaluation to ensure inclusive OST programs. [11]

2. The California School Age Consortium provides a series of modules on how to ensure OST providers can create programs that encourage cultural sensitivity.[x]

3. Consideration should be given to include guidance from cross-sectoral policies such as:
     o United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
     o Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)
     o *Alberta's French Policy* and *French Policy 2020-23 Action Plan*

While many OST providers are inclusion-oriented and have produced many inclusive spaces, they can build even more inclusive, natural supports-enhanced OST activities by integrating the principle of inclusiveness into their policies and planning and delivery practices.

---

[x] See https://www.calsac.org/equityandinclusion

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below.

Table 6: Be Inclusive by Providing Universal and Targeted OST Activities- Illustrative Responses	Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ Integrate inclusive policies and practices into OST programming as a mandatory requirement for receiving OST funding and grants.			×
	☀ Provide funding for OST staff to learn and acquire skills (e.g., trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity training) that are critical for working with certain targeted populations.			×
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Coordinate inter-agency trainings and cultural learnings with agencies and organizations providing support and services for targeted populations.		×	
	↗ Build relationships with families in the community in order to understand and identify target populations.		×	
	↗ Plan and coordinate regular community-level opportunities for children, youth and families to share and learn about each other's culture, values and traditions.		×	
	↗ Target vulnerable populations when informing on OST activities and use both electronic and physical forms of media.		×	
	☀ Work with community organizations and associations to develop routine processes for engagement whereby community members can identify new residents and provide them with information regarding community resources, services, and events.		×	
	☀ Support newcomers to the country (e.g., immigrant and refugees) to help them develop their own supports and services.		×	
Design and Delivery	↗ Use natural supports of parents, caregivers and cultural leaders to provide cultural teachings.	×		
	↗ Have a programmer/coordinator present at all OST activities to build relationships with children and families, not just focus on service delivery.		×	
	↗ Train staff in skills (e.g., trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity training) that are critical for working with certain targeted populations.	×		
	☀ Intentionally recruit and include diverse populations from within the community to improve community integration and cultural sensitivity.		×	

P6: ENHANCE CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND OVERALL RESILIENCY

Quality OST programming consists of more than just supervised activities for middle-years children to pass the time between school and home. New and emerging research sheds greater light on the importance of the middle years as a critical stage of development in a child's life and its importance in laying the foundation for their identity, lifelong skills, and values.

OST programming, whether structured or developed through grassroots/organic efforts, should aim to support middle-years children in developing the core skills, competencies and developmental milestones in five key areas of their development: cognitive, physical, emotional, communication, and social. Activities should be tailored to the different types of programs, expectations of families, and cultural contexts (e.g., Indigenous, new Canadians) in which OST activities are offered.

There are many resources available to inform and support this principle – key examples include:

- *Well-being and Resiliency: A framework for supporting safe and healthy children and families*[xi]
    - Describes the ways of working to promote well-being and resiliency in Alberta.

- *Well-Being and Resiliency: The miyo Resource – kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin*[xii]
    - Discusses foundational beliefs and approaches of Indigenous peoples to promote well-being and resiliency and outlines an evaluative process that honours an Indigenous worldview.

- **The Search Institute**[xiii] - Two key frameworks with accompanying resources and tools:[xiv]
    - *Developmental Relationships Framework* – Identifies the elements and strategies for developing strong positive relationships with young people. This framework is supported by useful tools like the Relationships Check Tool and the Building Developmental Relationships During the COVID-19 Crisis Checklist.
    - *Developmental Assets ® Framework* – Identifies the positive experiences and qualities that influence young people's development, helping them become caring, responsible, and productive adults.

> **Culture and Well-Being: Indigenous World View**
>
> Many Indigenous populations have related worldviews that are distinct from the western worldview. In Indigenous worldviews, the collective perspective is highly valued, and a holistic view acknowledges the balance between physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual elements of life. [5, p. 14]

[xi] Available at: https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/520981c4-c499-4794-af55-bc932811cb1e/resource/7fda0ae8-8d97-49e7-b94b-7f0088cd767d/download/well-being-resiliency-framework-march2019.pdf

[xii] Available at: https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/a0afeba2-e180-4f1c-8aa0-68bb1327ff71/resource/acc8ecfd-00dd-40c2-8c31-36d01656daad/download/well-being-resiliency-miyoresource-march2019.pdf

[xiii] More information available at: https://www.search-institute.org/about-us/

[xiv] Frameworks and tools available at: https://www.search-institute.org/tools-resources/free-downloads/

Culture and Well-Being: New Canadian Perspective

Infants, children, and youth who are immersed in their culture, language, and community internalize a healthy self-concept and positive cultural identity. Those who grow up with supportive role models, mentors, teachers, natural supports, and ceremonies are more likely to develop positive self-esteem and feel a connection to their community, leading to increased well-being and resiliency. [5, p. 16]

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below

Table 7: Enhance Children's Emotional, Physical and Social Development, and Overall Resiliency - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ In contracting for service programs, prioritize those that explicitly focus on self-regulation and executive function skills and incorporate opportunities for program participants to practice these skills.			×
	↗ Develop education and early learning policies that recognize the importance of executive function and self-regulation as important skills that children need to succeed academically.			×
	↗ Develop a provincial definition of quality OST programming.			×
	☀ Require OST providers to provide training to staff and volunteers.			×
	☀ Reduce regulatory barriers and increase incentives for two-generation programs to actively build the core skills of children and the adults they depend on.			×
	☀ Establish a curriculum framework for OST providers.			×
	☀ Establish a provincially approved evaluation tool for OST programmers.			×
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Integrate the Child Development Framework into the design, delivery, and evaluation of programs.			×
	↗ Collaborate with community agencies on parent education programs to reduce overlap.		×	
	☀ Develop evaluation tools accessible to both regulated and unregulated programs. Use of the tools should increase an agency's eligibility for funding.			×
Design and Delivery	↗ Support skills development with tools such as goal-setting templates, test reminders, timelines, and planners.	×		

Table 7: Enhance Children's Emotional, Physical and Social Development, and Overall Resiliency - Illustrative Responses	Organization	Community	Systems
↗ Create regular opportunities to learn and practice new skills in age-appropriate, meaningful contexts, such as play-based approaches in early childhood, planning long-term school projects in adolescence, and role playing difficult conversations.	×		
☀ Adopt a natural supports lens and supportive culture into the design of OST activities to build skills in children and youth that allow them to identify, develop, and sustain naturally supportive relationships and networks throughout their life (refer to Principle 7: Systematically integrate natural supports into out-of-school time activities).	×		

KULAN Horn Youth Services

A four week program during summer 2020 to engage the minds of youth in a way that allows them to collaborate with each other online, learn life lessons, as well obtain academic help to get them ahead of the curve for the upcoming school year.

The need for a program was evident with the rise of COVID-19 causing uncertainty and anxiety for children and families in the community. Parents were noticing that due to the abrupt closure of schools, their kids were falling behind academically and needed to engage in activities that emphasized engagement, collaboration, socialization, and working together as a cohesive unit towards a common goal. The summer program, along with the delivery of additional classes, provided kids with:

- Academic tutoring on specific subjects that were of concern to each student individually.

- Cultural teachings from influential elders in the community to ensure the basic components of their culture were taught and communicated in positive ways, including the importance of culture and how it shapes identity. Cultural games were also taught, but due to COVID-19 restrictions on gathering, could not be played.

Further information on KULAN Horn Youth Services is available at: https://www.kulanyouthservices.org/

Natural Supports

Children in the middle years with natural supports build more life skills, social skills and resilience compared to children without support. Naturally supportive environments provide a mechanism for adults to support child and youth development. [12] Natural supports are also an important way of managing the costs of delivering of OST activities and providing OST activities when more formal programs are unavailable (e.g., in rural communities, during times of disruption).

P7: SYSTEMATICALLY INTEGRATE NATURAL SUPPORTS INTO OST ACTIVITIES

While the rationale for intentionally integrating natural supports into OST activities is strong, OST stakeholders are only now beginning to fully understand the wide range of approaches that can be implemented.

Integration of a natural supports lens into OST activities means designing OST activities with the goal of providing children and youth with opportunities to cultivate natural supports so that they can learn to identify, develop, and sustain naturally supportive relationships and networks throughout their life. The commitment to expanding and/or focussing on a natural supports approach in OST programming must be accompanied by the desire and commitment from leadership to implement the change at both a strategic level (program principles, philosophy, and vision) and operational level.

There are several existing resources that provide practical guidance on adopting a natural supports lens into programming and activities:

- *Call to Action: The Opportunity of Natural Supports to Promote Well-being and Resiliency in Alberta.*[xv]
  - o Provides information about the potential of natural supports and supportive environments to foster child and youth development and to mitigate the influence of adversity on individual potential. [3, p. 2]
- *Working with Vulnerable Youth to Enhance their Natural Supports: A Practice Framework*, developed by the Change Collective of Calgary[xvi]
  - o A practice framework for enhancing the capacity of organizations to integrate a natural supports approach into their programs. The framework identifies foundational constructs, principles, and a continuum of needs and opportunities to guide practitioners. [8, p. 3]

Figure 5: Social Snacking
Image created and provided by Connections First

---

xv A document of the Connections First Max Bell Foundation and Burns Memorial Fund Policy Fellowship See: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c3fae1d5b409b2446a7d0aa/t/5e78ee867d8a4d409cf06c23/1584983686456/Call+to+Action+Long+Form+-+Final.pdf
xvi See: http://www.burnsfund.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CC-Natural-Supports-Framework_2019_FINAL_Pages.pdf

- *A Guide to Building Naturally Supportive Communities.*[xvii]
  - o Provides suggestions and tactics for how a community might go about becoming more naturally supportive, with a focus on children ages six to 16. [13, p. 3]

Key factors and implications for adopting a natural supports integrated approach into OST programming include: [14, pp. 5-9]

1. Leadership support and buy-in for making natural supports and supportive environments a priority in OST program, both strategically and operationally.
2. Policies and procedures that support and enable children and youth's connections to natural supports.
3. OST service providers (and their staff) have the knowledge, skills, and ability to support capacity-building of children and youth to develop and sustain naturally supportive relationships.
4. OST activities enable and support connection to natural supports.
5. Creation of a culture and environment that promotes a natural supports approach in OST activities.

Figure 5 on the following page provides a conceptual overview of the main types of natural supports connections established along a range of OST options. The types of natural supports connections range from the development of close 1:1 relationships through to development of looser connections at the community level that enable children and youth to benefit from, as well as contribute to, a naturally supportive culture within their community. OST options range from highly-structured (more formal) to grassroots/organic (less formal). Figure 6 provides examples of activities for each combination of natural supports connection and OST formalization.

[xvii] A document of the Connections First Max Bell Foundation and Burns Memorial Fund Policy Fellowship. See: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c3fae1d5b409b2446a7d0aa/t/5eddb29b4b689d06b81ef47d/1591587485215/A+Guide+to+building+naturally+supportive.pdf

Figure 6: Building Naturally Supportive Connections in OST Activities - Conceptual Overview
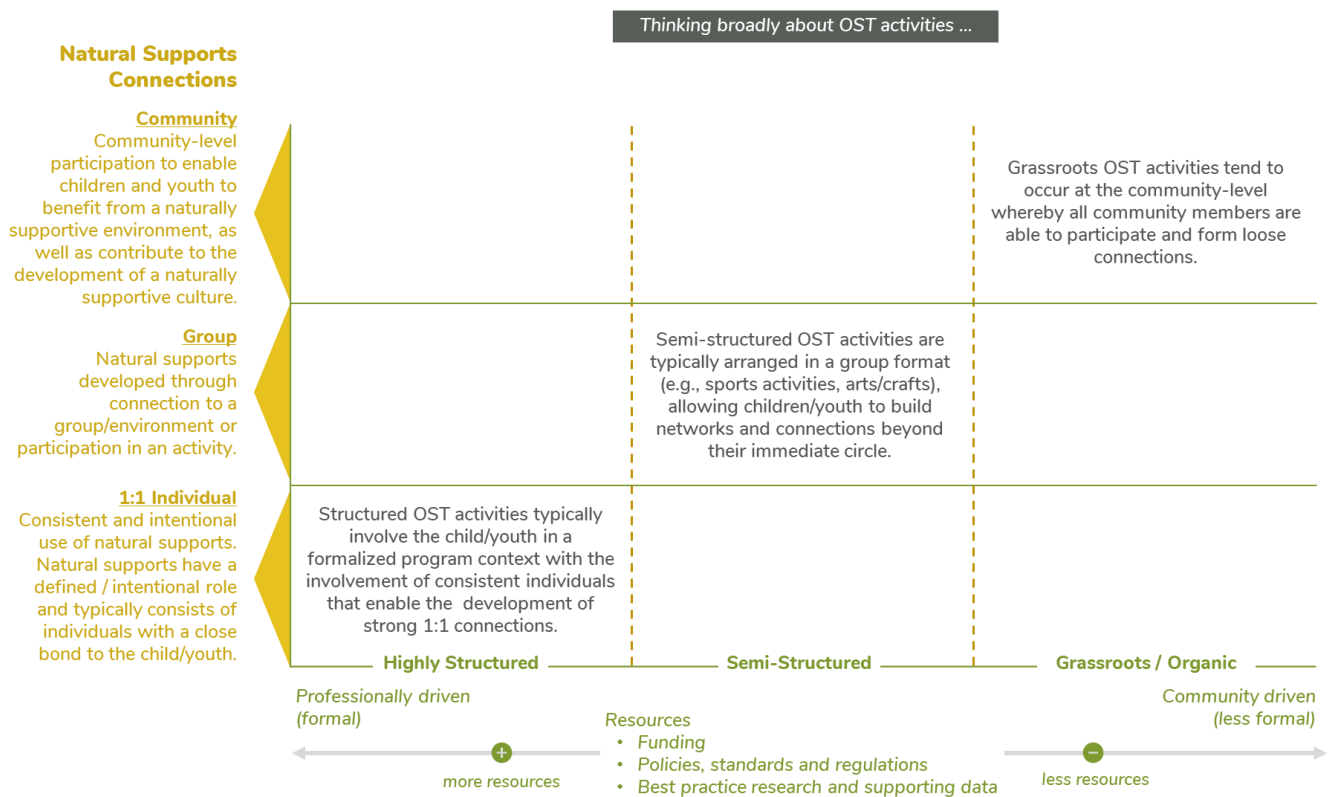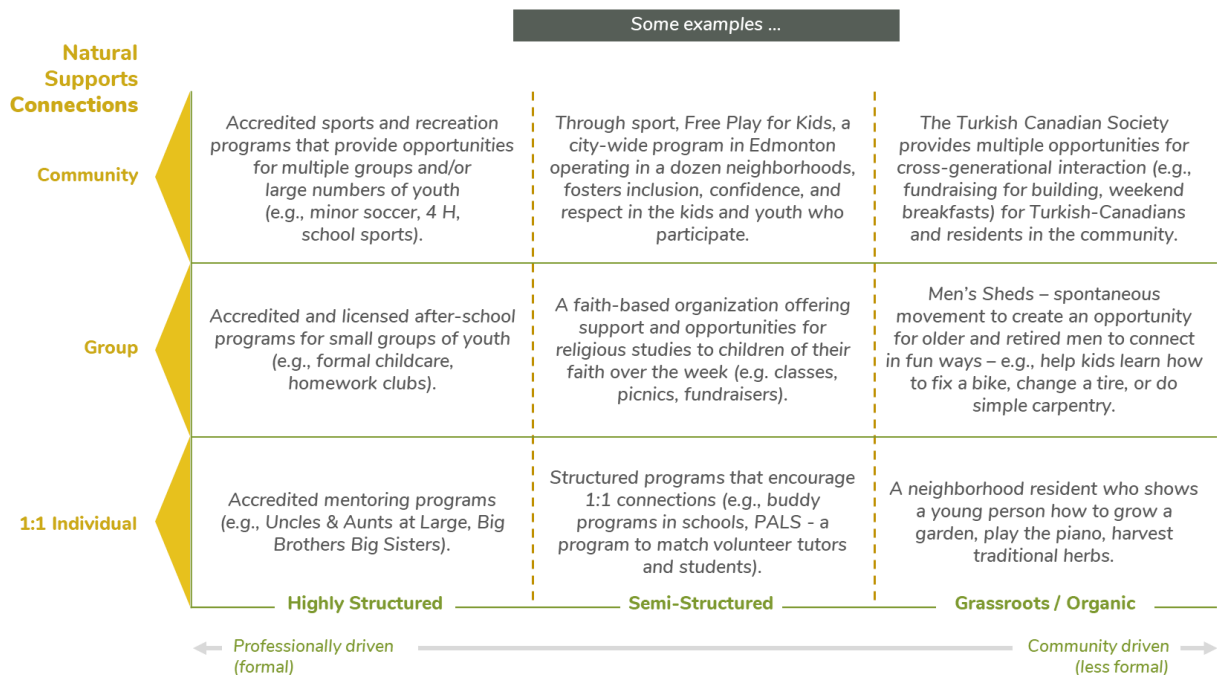
Thinking broadly about OST activities ...

Natural Supports Connections

Community
Community-level participation to enable children and youth to benefit from a naturally supportive environment, as well as contribute to the development of a naturally supportive culture.

Grassroots OST activities tend to occur at the community-level whereby all community members are able to participate and form loose connections.

Group
Natural supports developed through connection to a group/environment or participation in an activity.

Semi-structured OST activities are typically arranged in a group format (e.g., sports activities, arts/crafts), allowing children/youth to build networks and connections beyond their immediate circle.

1:1 Individual
Consistent and intentional use of natural supports. Natural supports have a defined / intentional role and typically consists of individuals with a close bond to the child/youth.

Structured OST activities typically involve the child/youth in a formalized program context with the involvement of consistent individuals that enable the development of strong 1:1 connections.

Highly Structured ─── **Semi-Structured** ─── **Grassroots / Organic**

Professionally driven (formal) — *Community driven (less formal)*

Resources
- Funding
- Policies, standards and regulations
- Best practice research and supporting data

← more resources ⊕   ⊖ less resources →

Figure 7: Building Naturally Supportive Connections in OST Activities - Some Examples

Some examples ...

Natural Supports Connections

	Highly Structured	Semi-Structured	Grassroots / Organic
Community	Accredited sports and recreation programs that provide opportunities for multiple groups and/or large numbers of youth (e.g., minor soccer, 4 H, school sports).	Through sport, Free Play for Kids, a city-wide program in Edmonton operating in a dozen neighborhoods, fosters inclusion, confidence, and respect in the kids and youth who participate.	The Turkish Canadian Society provides multiple opportunities for cross-generational interaction (e.g., fundraising for building, weekend breakfasts) for Turkish-Canadians and residents in the community.
Group	Accredited and licensed after-school programs for small groups of youth (e.g., formal childcare, homework clubs).	A faith-based organization offering support and opportunities for religious studies to children of their faith over the week (e.g. classes, picnics, fundraisers).	Men's Sheds – spontaneous movement to create an opportunity for older and retired men to connect in fun ways – e.g., help kids learn how to fix a bike, change a tire, or do simple carpentry.
1:1 Individual	Accredited mentoring programs (e.g., Uncles & Aunts at Large, Big Brothers Big Sisters).	Structured programs that encourage 1:1 connections (e.g., buddy programs in schools, PALS - a program to match volunteer tutors and students).	A neighborhood resident who shows a young person how to grow a garden, play the piano, harvest traditional herbs.

Highly Structured ─── **Semi-Structured** ─── **Grassroots / Organic**

Professionally driven (formal) — *Community driven (less formal)*

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below.

Table 8: Systematically Integrate Natural Supports into OST Activities - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ Build a community's capacity to overcome key barriers. This includes supporting/funding community connectors, engagement coordinators, and other community champions.		×	
	↗ Work locally to decrease barriers to participation to increase community cohesion – e.g., change policies to facilitate access and participation, including legal, and risk management barriers.		×	
	☀ Develop guidelines for reporting on implementation and evaluation of strategies that address the well-being of children and youth, their families, and the community they are members of.			×
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Collaborate with OST stakeholders to provide opportunities to educate, inform, and train citizens on approaches that build capacity for being a natural support resource for children, youth, families, and the larger community.		×	
	↗ Connect with families to identify key barriers to participation in community events to increase neighbourhood cohesiveness.		×	
	↗ Coordinate messaging around community-level events, resources and supports to promote/emphasize engagement and relationship development.		×	
	↗ Consider the key facilitators and barriers when implementing community-based opportunities to ensure high levels of participation of residents and families.		×	
	↗ Employ a designated community connector or coordinator to promote community relationships, communicate OST activities and build community capacity.		×	
	☀ Collaborate with educational institutions, businesses, and community organizations to compensate natural supports with non-monetary incentives for volunteering their time and effort to support OST activities. Incentives could include certificates for employability, credits for community services, and references for employment.			×
Design and Delivery	↗ Integrate programming and activities that support the family as a unit.	×		
	↗ Recognize that OST staff play a role as natural supports to children, youth and families, and provide training to prepare them for this role.	×		

Table 8: Systematically Integrate Natural Supports into OST Activities - Illustrative Responses	Organization	Community	Systems
↗ Seek out opportunities for children and youth to contribute to the community through activities that are suitable for them to volunteer as a group.		x	
↗ Offer opportunities that enable the creation of natural supports to increase neighbourhood cohesiveness and connectedness. Emphasize informal opportunities, such as interest groups, neighbourhood event nights, and block parties.		x	
💥 Partner with schools to offer credit for children and youth who volunteer in community activities.			x
💥 Involve children and youth as active contributors to their community as a way to strengthen OST activities in the community and support sustainability by encouraging previous recipients of OST programming to become supports to the next generation.		x	

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

Evidence and Evaluation

The next principle emphasizes the importance of adopting an evidence-based approach to inform the development and assessment of OST activities.

P8: BE EVIDENCE-INFORMED, YET INNOVATION ORIENTED

Over the years, OST stakeholders have developed, tested, and refined a variety of programs and policies that provide quality OST supports to children in the middle years. These programs tend to be informed by extensive research and evaluation, aligned to best practice models, and reinforced by strong standards and insurance requirements. Often, these are regulated programs, such as:

- one-on-one mentoring
- regulated group care (e.g., after school clubs)
- recreation targeted programming (e.g., sports and arts)

These practices, standards, and policies are well documented in places such as After School Alliance and should be used to inform the design of OST activities. [15]

At the same time, building an OST environment for middles-years children requires OST to move beyond a focus on sustaining or replicating these best practices and move towards creating practices and policies to address new needs, opportunities, and challenges. Some of these include:

- Tailoring programs to meet the unique needs of different groups (e.g., newcomers to Canada, Indigenous, vulnerable children and youth) and purposes (e.g., safe havens, academic achievement).
    - For example, to reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, *Well-Being and Resiliency: The miyo Resource – kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* discusses foundational beliefs and approaches of Indigenous peoples to promote well-being and resiliency and outlines an outlining an evaluative framework that recognizes culturally-based practice and assesses program effectiveness and the achievement of outcomes in a meaningful way. [16, p. 7]
- Expanding the spectrum of supports beyond traditional regulated, fully structured programs to include those that are less structured and regulated.
- More explicitly integrating natural supports into OST activities.

It is important that OST stakeholders be informed by the evidence that they have accumulated about what works, but also focus on experimenting, testing, refining, and scaling a new generation of natural support enhanced OST activities for middle-years children, and creating new policies, standards and regulatory frameworks to support them.

A recent environmental scan of OST best practices revealed that OST activities are often structured programs, which are more likely to be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness, although rigorous process and outcome evaluation still remains a challenge. Less is known about the effectiveness of unstructured OST approaches as they are not as well documented.

Considerations for better informing innovative approaches include:

- Information and research on the influence of less formal, volunteer, and ad-hoc OST approaches are lacking.
- Implementation and testing of innovative approaches (mentioned above) in real-world settings is essential.
- There is a need for rigorous and methodologically sound evaluation approaches appropriate to the community setting.
- Multiple levels of evaluation, (e.g., outcome evaluation such as child and youth skills development, and process evaluation such as intended implementation) are important considerations. A population health approach to evaluation is recommended.
- A better understanding of dosage of activities (e.g., frequency, intensity) is required.
- A better understanding of the format of the program/approach beyond the critical hours (e.g., summer, professional development days, weekends) is required. [7, p. 4]

These innovative efforts are, by definition, ahead of the existing evidence base and requires OST stakeholders to develop new evidence through systematic evaluation and careful assembly of evidence over time in order to better understand what works and does not work, for whom, under what context, and why.

Illustrative responses for this principle are provided in the table below.

Table 9: Be Evidence-Informed, Yet Innovation Oriented - Illustrative Responses		Organization	Community	Systems
Policy Development and Funding	↗ Gather the available evidence on best practices in OST and summarize it for easy reference by policymakers and funders.			×
	↗ Identity a top 10 list of areas requiring innovation in OST for easy reference by policymakers and funders.			×
	☀ Develop a set of standards for the design and evaluation of OST activities that are tailored to different options in the OST spectrum and require that they be employed in future OST activities.			×
	☀ Create a pool(s) of funding to invest in the evaluation of new OST programs and supports in priority areas.			×
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	↗ Create a set of checklists, rooted in best practice, that highlight evidence-based elements of good OST program design.		×	
	☀ Create a position in an existing organization that supports OST planning to create evaluation designs for each community-based OST plan.		×	
Design and Delivery	↗ Establish easy to use tools for assessing OST activities across the spectrum of OST options.	×		

Table 9: Be Evidence-Informed, Yet Innovation Oriented - Illustrative Responses	Organization	Community	Systems
↗ Use relevant cultural indicators and methods for gathering data, where appropriate for the program.	×		
↗ Include relevant community supports indicators.		×	
↗ Gather and use community stories to illustrate/support the evidence. Narrative is more engaging for citizens than data, so it is important to capture and communicate both.		×	
☀ Coordinate and collaborate with other community organizations to determine the potential for establishing common evaluation data/indicators and building shared language and knowledge across the community.		×	

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME NICHES

Traditionally, OST stakeholders have focused on providing middle-years children with programs operating during afterschool hours. A more comprehensive approach to middles years, natural-supports-enhanced programs includes supports that also respond to the needs of children, youth and families during short-term school breaks, weekends, summers, and during times of disruption.

This Framework focuses on five OST niches where programs and activities are typically offered, or where it is needed but not widely available. Each niche is described in terms of its unique characteristics, current challenges, and unique implications to consider when applying the Framework principles. As with all components of the Framework, the niches and considerations discussed are not meant to be prescriptive; rather, they are meant to expand and challenge conventional thinking and encourage stakeholders to adopt creativity and flexibility when thinking about OST within their respective roles of policy development and funding, program planning, collaboration and coordination, and program design and delivery.

> **OST Niches**
> 1. Before and after school
> 2. Short-term school breaks
> 3. Weekends
> 4. Summer break
> 5. During times of disruption

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

Before and after school is the most common OST niche, providing structured and grassroots/organic programs for children and youth before and after school each weekday during the school year, except on statutory holidays. Before and after school OST operates from the beginning of September (after labour day) to the end of June.

In the last 20 years, OST stakeholders have developed a variety of OST activities to fill this niche. Programs and activities are characterized by the following features:

- Operating hours are typically between 6:30/7:00 am – 6:00/6:30 pm.
  - May provide extended hours for additional charge.
  - Usually operate from Monday to Friday with exception of statutory holidays.
- May accept part-time and drop-ins (depending on the program).
- Some offer care during lunch time.
- Licensed providers are able to accept childcare subsidy.
- Age range is dependent on the program, usually up to 12 years of age.
- Program focus varies (e.g., academic, sports).

SHORT-TERM SCHOOL BREAKS

Outside of statutory holidays, the timing of short-term school breaks (e.g., spring, Christmas) vary depending on the school board (i.e., Public School Board or Catholic School Board). Additionally, schools offering year-round

schooling have a shorter break in the summer and some have an additional break in the fall. Families are often in need of OST activities to keep children and youth engaged during these times away from school.

- Most before and after school programs include activities for professional development and faith development days. These days are not always aligned across school boards, they differ in number from year-to-year. Additionally, the dates are not communicated directly to OST program providers and organizations who provide activities for children and youth, but are not technically OST providers (e.g., libraries), reducing their ability to plan for these days.

- Year-round schooling breaks do not align with other school breaks. One school of children in the neighbourhood will return to school in August, while other students remain off. This can greatly reduce the children participating in day programing, while increasing the need of evening programing that is typically not available.

- Spring breaks, typically at the end of March, present the need for longer programing, but the nature of the short term break presents implications for staffing, planning, and capacity of OST programs. For agencies/organizations that are not technically OST service provider, but offer some OST services, these agencies/organizations often do not have the capacity to offer increased services during short-term breaks, especially when they are not aware when these breaks occur.

WEEKENDS

The third major niche area for OST supports is the estimated 44 weekends during the school year, excluding summer vacation and holidays. The majority of OST activities in this niche area are provided by sports clubs and activities sponsored by communities and faith-based organizations.

OST stakeholders have surfaced the following challenges to providing natural supports-enhanced OST activities during this niche:

- Typically consists of sign-up programs that may or may not last the entire school year.
- Some before and after school care provide weekend hours by appointment.
- May not be conveniently located and transportation may be a barrier.

SUMMER BREAK

The fourth niche area of OST activities is the roughly eight weeks of summer break in July and August. These families are looking for structured full-time opportunities to keep their children active and engaged over the summer months. They are also looking for some academic components within these programs to help prevent "summer slide", the tendency of children and youth to lose, over the summer months, some of the academic achievements and skills they learned throughout the year. Characteristics of summer time programming often include:

- abundance of outside time
- full day time hours
- supplied food program

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

- one location
- fieldtrip options
- cost efficient
- age appropriate, qualified, and educated staff

More information on best practises for summer time OST is available in the OST *Summer Programs Tool Kit*[xviii], which was developed in 2010 as an initiative under the OST Shard Services Table in Edmonton. [17]

TIMES OF WIDE-SPREAD DISRUPTION

Times of wide-spread disruption refer to community-wide prolonged interruption in normal day-to-day activities that may be caused by environmental causes (e.g., fire, flood, tornado, harsh weather), health-related emergencies (e.g., pandemic) or other disruptions (e.g., labour, fiscal).

Disruptive times have emerged as a unique opportunity for OST supports in the last five years due to the fires in northern Alberta (e.g., Slave Lake, Fort McMurray), floods in Calgary, and COVID-19 pandemic across the globe.

While the experience and associated research is still emerging, the implications include:
- Increase in trauma and stress on families and children.
- Increase use of technology in service delivery.
- Transportation may become an issue.
- Inability to meet physically and/or on site.

Further observations related to the COVID-19 pandemic are available in Appendix D: OST During Times of Disruption: Observations from COVID-19 Pandemic.

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

[xviii] See: https://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Out-of-School-Time-OST-Summer-Toolkit.pdf

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR OST NICHES

The table below provides implications for each niche that should be considered when stakeholders are aligning OST policy, funding, planning, and/or design and delivery to framework principles.

Table 10: Key Considerations for OST Niches

Considerations by Principle (P) �911	Before & After	Short-term School	Weekends	Summer Break	Times of Disruption
P1: Leverage existing community facilities					
• Difficulties accessing space due to facilities hours of operations not aligning with OST need.	×	×	×	×	
• OST located within schools need to lease available space from the schools. This is coordinated between the leasing services office and the school principal. Other OST providers may provide transportation to and from the center to the school.	×				
• Access to facilities during closure or short notice.		×			×
• Children who may have the ability to walk to school during the school year need access to a program in their community to avoid transportation barriers.	×			×	
• Complete loss of program space.					×
P2: Ensure accessibility and affordability for all families					
• Monetization on need, best hours cost the most.	×				
• Cost is a barrier.	×		×		×
• Waiting lists for programs can be long.	×				
• Programs located within schools only accept children and youth attending those schools.	×				
• Varying degree of costs associated with being on waiting list. This has implication for low income families who are on multiple waiting lists.	×				
• Some families can incur double cost by having to take time off to support their kids or engaging additional services to address their OST needs.		×		×	
• For OST activities in school facilities, a custodian needs to be present, increasing program costs and for community league facilities, costs to rent facilities are higher on weekends.			×		

	OST Niches → Before & After	Short-term School	Weekends	Summer Break	Times of Disruption
Considerations by Principle (P) ⤵					
• For many families that "make do" throughout the school year, OST options may require more organized support in the summer for their children as the length of time requiring support is doubled, or in some cases tripled.				×	
• Some families continue to pay for to hold their spots, while not actually attending programs.					×
P3: Effectively plan, coordinate, collaborate, and communicate OST supports					
• Implications exist on availability of community stakeholders to meet. Typical workday is from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm while OST programmers' hours align with after school time.	×				
• Varying goals on how OST time is spent. Some prioritize additional academic supports while others emphasize children's need to play. This has implications for planning and collaboration.	×				
• Programmers may need to create flexibility in their staffing and supports to accommodate the changes in scheduling.		×			
• Staffing for seven days a week as opposed to five			×		
• Majority of community-based groups, such as inter-agency groups, do not hold meetings over the summer months, eliminating the opportunity for programmers to plan between agencies.				×	
• Processes become reaction-based, in some cases with no precedent.					×
P4: Offer a broad spectrum of OST options					
• Abrupt, immediate, and sudden change in routine for children who just enter into the middle years. No/limited support exists to support the transition of children from attending six hours of school and then an OST program afterwards.	×				
• Responding to the needs of individual families, some may need all days supported and others may need flexibility.		×	×		
• Activities should include kids, families and community - shared events.			×		
P5: Be inclusive by providing universal and targeted OST supports					
• The implications of offering targeted and universal supports in an OST setting are based on the availability of multiple stakeholders.	×	×	×	×	×
• Requires the collaboration of groups and providers.		×			

Considers by Principle (P) ⤵	Before & After	Short-term School	Weekends	Summer Break	Times of Disruption
P6: Enhance children's emotional, physical and social development, and overall resiliency					
• All content needs to support transitions between the ages and stages of children.	×	×	×		
• Opportunity to build new relationships beyond the OST cohort to participate in more broadly based community activities and to involve family more fully in activities/programming.				×	
• Considerations for trauma-informed programming during times of disruption; focus on social and emotional wellness (e.g., programs should include staff Mental Health First Aid to respond to stressed and traumatized children and parents).					×
• Children and their families get to know neighbours and have someone they can go to /count on in times of disruption.					×
P7: Systematically integrate natural supports into OST activities					
• Need to build community buy-in and understanding of OST as a shared community responsibility, moving beyond paid care. In order to do that there needs to be a strategy to build a common understanding about the benefits of living in a naturally supportive community as well as the value of natural supports. in optimizing outcomes for children.	×				
• Community supports are necessary to augment the normal understanding of OST hours. Opportunity to engage with extended family, seniors and older community youth etc. to help develop and deliver programming.		×			
• Include supports for children and families - offer a dual focus.			×		
• Weekend supports could be from local business, parents, extended family not working weekends etc. They could participate in both planning and implementation of weekend programs. Weekend programs could also be community wide, not only for children normally involved in OST, and would ideally be more collaborative activities, joining with other community organizations.			×		
• Engage with parents, extended family, local seniors and older youth to help plan and implement summer programming. Engage with local business. Learn about other cultures/ neighbourhood diversity.				×	
• A naturally supportive environment is critical to support resiliency at the individual level of the child, at the level of family, as well as for the community.					×

OST Niches →

Considerations by Principle (P) ↴	OST Niches → Before & After	Short-term School	Weekends	Summer Break	Times of Disruption
P8: Be evidence-informed, yet innovation oriented					
• Use of tools to support evaluation.	×	×	×	×	×
• Engagement of other community service providers in shared measures and data collection.	×	×	×	×	×
• Include relevant community natural supports indicators. These are new and innovative in themselves.					×

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK

This Framework is meant to be used by OST stakeholders to determine how they can better align their policies and practices to the Framework's principles to expand natural supports-enhanced OST activities for middle-years children and their families. The Framework is not meant to be prescriptive; rather, it is meant to provide ideas for how stakeholders can reference, adapt and customize the illustrative approaches to adjust their existing policies and practices, and/or introducing new ones, in alignment with their own organizational and/or community context.

The table below describes how each of the three key OST functions can use the Framework and when they should use it.

Table 11: Framework Alignment Application for Key OST Functions

Key Function	Use (Purpose)	When
Policy Development and Funding	To ensure that policies, regulations, and funding priorities and levels enable and support, rather than hinder, natural supports-enhanced OST activities.	During the development and review of policies and regulations that affect OST.
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	To guide local efforts in planning natural supports-enhanced OST activities for a city, specific community, and/or specific OST niche (e.g., disruption, summer).	During the development, management and evaluation of community-based OST activities.
Design and Delivery	To guide efforts in designing, managing, evaluating, and continuously improving specific natural supports-enhanced OST activities.	During the development, management and evaluation of specific programs and services

The application of the Framework can be completed in three steps:

1. Answer principles-focused questions that relate to their specific role (e.g. policy maker, planner, program developer or administrator).
2. Review the Framework, other research, and the work of peers and local community to see how others are using (or not) with these principles and OST niches.
3. Identify, implement and evaluate concrete actions that align with the Framework.

The table below offers a set of questions that organizations involved in OST can explore and some illustrative actions that may be taken.

Table 12: Framework Alignment Application – Principles-Focused Questions and Illustrative Actions

Key Function	Principles-Focused Questions	Illustrative Actions	Actual Application
Policy Development and Funding	(1) To what extent do our policies, regulations and administrative practices align with these principles? (2) Where do they align the best and the align least? Why? (3) What are the barriers to greater alignment? How can they be addressed and overcome? (4) What concrete actions can we take to better align with these principles? (5) What are the results that emerge when we align with these principles? (6) How can we adapt and improve our policies and practices moving forward?	A funder adjusts its criteria for recreation programs so that they are more inclusive. A Community League board decides to open up its under-utilized facility for OST activities for local residents. A government agency responsible for the well-being of at-risk youth agrees to establish a policy-regulatory framework to encourage innovation in natural supports-enhanced OST models.	See Appendix A - *Vignette: Policy Development and Funding Application of the Middle-Years OST and Natural Supports Policy and Practice Framework*
Planning, Collaboration, and Coordination	(1) To what extent do our community-based planning processes, and eventual plans, align with these principles? (2) Where do they align the best and the least? Why? (3) What are the barriers to greater alignment? How can they be addressed and overcome? (4) What concrete actions can we take to better align our community plans with these principles? (5) What are the results that emerge when we align with these principles?	A coalition of service providers in an under-serviced area of the city develop a shared service plan to address the areas of most need. A group of organizations have staff participate in training in culturally responsive or safe program design to be more inclusive. Major OST stakeholders agree to create a natural supports-enhanced OST plan for all children –	See Appendix B – Planning, Collaboration and Coordination Application of the Middle Years OST and Natural Supports Policy and Practice *Framework*

Key Function	Principles-Focused Questions	Illustrative Actions	Actual Application
	(6) How can we adapt and improve our policies and practices moving forward?	including middle years – for future pandemics.	
Design and Delivery	(1) To what extent is our program developed, managed and evaluated in a way that aligns with these principles? (2) Where do they align the best and align the least? Why? (3) What are the barriers to greater alignment? How can they be addressed and overcome? (4) What concrete actions can we take to better align with these principles? (5) What are the results that emerge when we align with these principles? (6) How can we adapt and improve our policies and practices moving forward?	A group developing a new program in a community chooses to experiment with a new type of natural supports-enhanced activity to provide more cost-effective options to local residents.	See Appendix C – Design and Delivery Application of the Middle Years OST and Natural Supports Policy and Practice *Framework*

CONTINUOUS LEARNING, ADAPTATION AND CUSTOMIZATION OF THE FRAMEWORK

Developing policies, plans, and programs to ensure that middle-years children and their families have affordable, accessible, and quality natural supports-enhanced OST activities requires OST stakeholders to embrace a mindset of continuous improvement. This involves continuous cycles of planning, implementation, review and adaptation over time. As such, OST stakeholders are encouraged to continue to learn and adapt the Framework over time and use it as a part of their continuous improvement process.

Photo courtesy of BGCBigs.

APPENDICES

A. VIGNETTE: POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING APPLICATION OF THE MIDDLE-YEARS OST AND NATURAL SUPPORTS POLICY AND PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Using the Middle Years Out-of-School Time (OST) and Natural Supports Framework to influence OST activities through policies, regulations, and funding.

CONTEXT

In the summer of 2020, the Ministry of Alberta's Children's Services gathered feedback from parents, child care providers, early child hood educators and other experts as part of an effort to modernize the *Child Care Licensing Act and Regulations* that expire on January 31, 2021.

In July 2020, the Leads of the Middle Years OST and Natural Supports Project had an opportunity to meet with the Office of the Minister of Alberta's Children's Services to present on overview of the *Middle Years Out-of-School Time and Natural Supports Framework*.

APPLICATION OF THE MYOSTNS FRAMEWORK

The Project Leads emphasized the importance of the focus and message of the Framework – that being the importance of exploring opportunities to promote positive outcomes for children by supporting and sustaining OST activities for the middle years through approaches that facilitate the development of natural supports. Specifically, they pointed out specific elements of the Framework that are relevant for the *Child Care Act and Regulation* and evidence that show that:

- Early and appropriate supports during the middle years of childhood can promote resiliency, well -being and better prepare children for transition to adulthood.
- OST activities are known to support development of life and technical skills, friendships, and physical and mental well-being.
- Natural supports and supportive environments help build resiliency in children and families and can play an important role in addressing gaps during times of disruption.

ILLUSTRATIVE APPROACHES

The Government of Alberta plays an important role in setting the landscape for OST in the province through their role in policy development and funding. The Project Leads presented some provocative questions and illustrative approaches to the Minister of Children's Services as an example of the Framework's principles and illustrative responses in action:

- How can the continuum of child care could be expanded to include more OST activities?
    - Expand the spectrum of OST activities considered within *Child Care Licensing Act* and Regulation by encouraging the adoption of natural supports-based approaches within OST programming.

- How can processes be streamlined to improve efficiency?
  - Engage with OST stakeholders, organizations and the broader community to support efforts to mobilize, collaborate and coordinate OST activities in the regulated and broader community.
- Can a culture of citizen involvement in supporting children and families be fostered to accommodate natural supports and grass roots/ community-based approaches?
  - Invest in programs that experiment with new ways of engaging culturally and inter-generational natural supports in OST activities.
  - Amend Child Care Licensing Act and Regulation to allow for flexibility in adopting natural supports-based approaches.
- Can the Government of Alberta work with community funders to leverage provincial funding and community funding to support sustainability, availability and affordability of OST activities?
  - Develop a provincial after-school program fund to increase access and affordability for vulnerable children and families

The principles and actions referenced in the questions above relate to ensuring affordability, offering a broad spectrum of OST options, effectively planning, coordinating and collaborating OST supports, and integrating natural supports into OST.

OUTCOME

This opportunity to meet with the Minister's office did not result in any immediate regulatory adjustments but served to lay the groundwork for potential policy considerations in the future.

B. VIGNETTE: PLANNING, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION APPLICATION OF THE MIDDLE-YEARS OST AND NATURAL SUPPORTS POLICY AND PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Using the Middle Years Out-of-School Time (OST) and Natural Supports Framework to plan and coordinate OST activities.

CONTEXT

The Middle Years OST and Natural Supports (MYOSTNS) Project Team engaged with REACH Edmonton and members of the OST Collaborative to provide participants with an overview of the Framework and assess how it might add value to the planning, coordination and delivery of OST programs and activities, particularly those occurring over the summer months.

APPLICATION OF THE MYOSTNS FRAMEWORK

The Project Team provided a walk though of the Framework and its principles to support sustainability of OST programs within the context of the needs and demographics of the community and the resources and abilities of organizations. Participants were asked to think about preparing for summer time OST and to review the Framework to see if the principles align with their planning and coordination decisions and activities as well as identify any missing principles . The questions below were posed to participants to help them explore the kind of actions they might take.

1. To what extent do our community-based planning processes, and eventual plans, align with these principles?
2. Where do they align the best and the least? Why?
3. What are the barriers to greater alignment? How can they be addressed and overcome?
4. What concrete actions can we take to better align our community plans with these principles?
5. What are the results that emerge when we align with these principles?
6. How can we adapt and improve our principles and practices moving forward?

ILLUSTRATIVE APPROACHES

The engagement sessions drew out thoughtful discussions ranging from the challenges in OST delivery to suggestions for implementing the Framework on a more practical level. The following key insights emerged from the sessions:

1. **The Framework encourages a more intentional and systematic approach.**
   The Framework's principles reflect the fundamental values that are already being followed by OST planners, coordinators and service providers in the OST Collaborative. However, framing these principles more explicitly can make it easier to communicate and use them in OST Collaborative planning, and in discussions with policy makers, funders, and local institutions (e.g., school boards).

   For example, while the OST Collaborative draws heavily on natural supports in their OST activities, the Framework assists OST Collaborative members with thinking more broadly about who, where, and how they might engage a broader network of natural supports in their work:

- Connecting with parent councils at schools - the purpose of parent councils is to get the word out to families about what is happening in the communities (including OST programs and activities).
- Collaborating with Block Connectors and Abundant Community to effectively customize the information to each individual family need and provide the right type of supports to support children and their families with accessing OST programs and activities.

2. **The principles are connected and overlapping.**
Although each principle can be considered and pursued individually, taking actions to align to one principle often requires approaches that necessarily require alignment to other principles. The following example provides an illustration of how the Framework principles are often overlapping:

> **Abundant Community Edmonton**
>
> A grassroots initiative fostering neighbour to neighbour relationships. The goal is to cultivate a culture of care and connection, increase the sense of belonging and inclusion, and ultimately create a healthier and more livable city — one block at a time.
>
> *More information is available at:* *https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_communities/abundant-community-edmonton.aspx*

A grassroots community group is organizing an ad-hoc event over two days for community youth and their families. To encourage participation, they have found a location for the event that is conveniently located in the community but are not sure how to book the facility or whether they can use it as they do not have their own insurance. The group would like to provide the activities for free. They have decided to recruit volunteers to try and reduce costs but cannot afford to have background checks completed on all the volunteers. To help with costs, the group is looking to secure funding but is not sure whether funding is available, how to apply, and whether they are eligible as they are not registered as a charitable organization. This example illustrates an overlap of the following principles:

- P1; Leverage existing community facilities.
- P2: Ensure accessibility and affordability for families.
- P4: Offer a broad spectrum of OST options.
- P7: Systematically integrate natural supports into OST activities.

The key is to understand the context of the community, families and the organization itself, as well as how the principles are connected. In doing so, OST stakeholders will have a better understanding of which principle(s) to focus on to address their need and how much emphasis to put on the connecting principles.

3. **The Framework encourages bolder thinking.**
The distinction between incremental and game-changing policies and practices encourages bolder responses. Incremental improvements (i.e., those that are easier to implement, but yield smaller impact) can be accomplished through low levels of collaboration and/or coordination; however, they have limited utility. The more game changing, and lasting, improvements often require collaboration and coordination at the community and/or systemic level. It is important not to lose sight of approaches that require wider scale participation, as one game changing action may be equivalent to multiple incremental improvements. For example, OST Collaborative members and schools have done a great deal of work to address leverage existing communities facilities (principle 1). There is currently a joint-use agreement in place that supports this principle; however, even with this agreement, there are still barriers such as processes for booking the

facility and accessing the facility during the time needed (e.g., school facilities are not available through the entire summer due to the need for school maintenance and cleaning). Addressing these challenge may require a more comprehensive and systemic approach, such as hiring extra staff and creating more detailed, universal policies.

OUTCOME

Engagement with OST planning and coordinating stakeholders resulted in the MYOSTN Project Team making some improvements and additions to the Framework's principles and approaches as well as provided some considerations for the next steps in moving the Framework from a strategic document into a more practical guide for implementation. These considerations include:

- o Building awareness of the Framework.
- o Providing training on how to use the Framework for each of the critical OST functions.
- o Providing user guides, tools and templates to support Framework application.

C. VIGNETTE: DESIGN AND DELIVERY APPLICATION OF THE MIDDLE-YEARS OST AND NATURAL SUPPORTS POLICY AND PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Using the Middle Years Out-of-School Time (OST) and Natural Supports Framework to design and deliver OST activities at the community level.

CONTEXT

Throughout 2019 and 2020, the Middle Years OST and Natural Supports (MYOSTNS) Project Team collaborated with stakeholders from the communities of Britannia-Youngstown, Mayfield and High Park to identify the OST needs of children and families in those communities, develop some ideas to address some of the needs, and test the ideas for practicality and sustainability.

The communities of Britannia-Youngstown, Mayfield and High Park were chosen for this engagement due to its make-up of families from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, the availability of community-led organizations and services in the communities, and the communities' need for OST services.
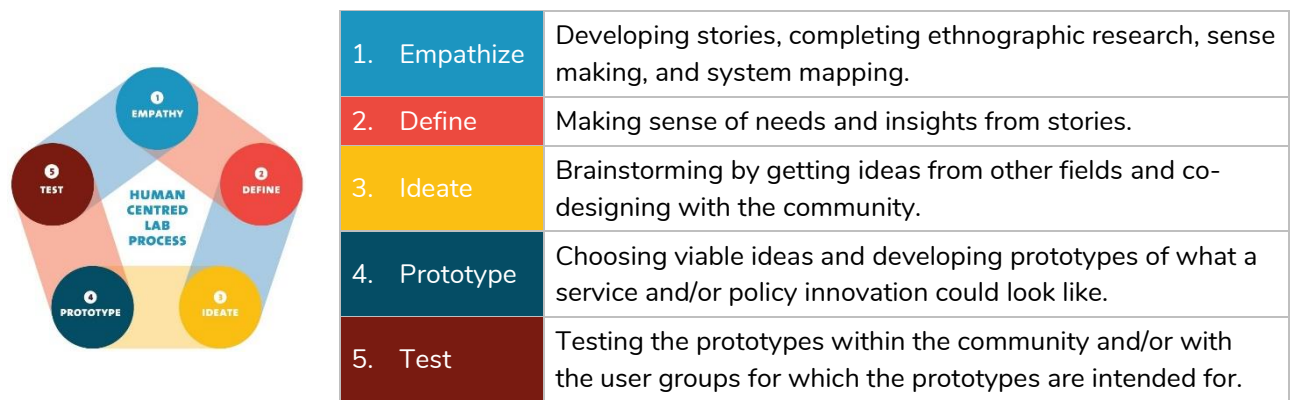
The purpose of this engagement was to provide community stakeholders with the experience of customizing the Framework through a repeatable process; specifically, how to identify principles and illustrative approaches that meet their needs and design and test approaches so that they are practical and sustainable for their community.

> **Human-Centred Design**
>
> A creative approach to designing programs, services, and supports for people by putting the people whom programs are meant to support at the center of program design.

APPLICATION OF THE MYOSTNS FRAMEWORK

There are many approaches for designing and testing services and policy innovations within communities. For experimentation in the communities of Britannia-Youngstown, Mayfield and High Park, the MYOSTNS Project Team used a bottom-up approach that focused on human-centred design. The key steps in this methodology are:

1.	Empathize	Developing stories, completing ethnographic research, sense making, and system mapping.
2.	Define	Making sense of needs and insights from stories.
3.	Ideate	Brainstorming by getting ideas from other fields and co-designing with the community.
4.	Prototype	Choosing viable ideas and developing prototypes of what a service and/or policy innovation could look like.
5.	Test	Testing the prototypes within the community and/or with the user groups for which the prototypes are intended for.

ILLUSTRATIVE APPROACHES

Through engagement with the communities, the following principles and illustrative approaches were identified as being relevant to addressing some of the barriers identified for OST activities in the communities of Britannia-Youngstown, Mayfield and High Park:

- Leverage existing community facilities (P1).
    - Community organizations and associations collaborate to establish and maintain a local inventory of community facilities that could be used for community programming and events, including OST activities.
- Effectively plan, coordinate, collaborate and communicate OST supports (P3).
    - Create a centralized process for streamlining access to community facilities, including creating a paid position responsible for facility booking and maintenance.
    - A coordinator whose main focus is on providing rotational programmers to deliver programing from various agencies along the spectrum during periods of school closure.
- Systematically integrate natural supports into OST activities (P7).
    - Reduce costs by using natural supports within the community.
    - Use natural supports of parents and caregivers to provide cultural teachings.
    - Include natural supports in the design and/or delivery of OST activities as a way to build cohesion and strengthen relationships selected identified as being applicable to the communities.

Through brainstorming and co-design, the following three ideas (prototypes) were developed for testing in the communities:

Seeds to Table
As part of the programming in the OST space, seniors and Elders help youth learn in real world contexts about foods, plant medicines and nutrition. There is mentoring and story telling that brings in learning about Treaty 6 lands, histories, and other cultural components of healthy relationships with land and food.

Adulting 101
As part of the programming in the OST space, organizations managing OST programming boost educational learning in tandem with school curriculums. Once a week, seniors would mentor youth by demonstrating a skill or sharing a cultural learning. The learning experiences would be a mix of practical skills for daily life as well as cultural learnings to recognize and appreciate the different cultural perspectives of community members.

Around the World
In one space that is open 5-6 days a week, multiple organizations are coordinated to be hosts for a day a week. The host organization brings in their specific skills and diverse perspectives and only have to plan for one day of quality OST programming rather than 5-6 days. Youth and families are assured divers programming that expands intercultural appreciation 5-6 days a week.

The prototypes were then tested in the communities through a rapid testing process and the results were assessed for potential implementation in their communities.

A detailed description of the application of the Framework in Britannia-Youngstown, Mayfield and High Park is available in *The Middle Years Out-of-School Time Natural Supports Project – Evaluation of Cycle 2 Prototypes.*

D. VIGNETTE: OST DURING TIMES OF DISRUPTION - OBSERVATIONS FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CONTEXT
Throughout 2019 and 2020, the staff team at REACH Edmonton responsible for providing "backbone support'' (e.g., capacity building, access to funding, coordination) to the OST Collaborative worked closely with out-of-school time (OST) providers across Edmonton to coordinate and provide OST during the pandemic.

OST AND NATURAL SUPPORTS DURING COVID-19
In late November 2020, the staff team and Middle Years Out-of-School Time and Natural Supports (MYOSTNS) project team met to reflect on their experiences and identify ways to prepare the OST infrastructure for future instances of pandemic and/or longer health-related disruptions.

They identified five impacts that COVID-19 had on providing traditional OST from March to November 2020.

> **The OST Collaborative**
>
> A partnership of community groups, community leaders, service delivery agencies and local institutions who have been working together since 2008 to improve the resiliency of children and youth through widely accessible and quality out-of-school time programs.

1. **The demand for OST supports increased.** Many schools relied heavily on OST providers to assist students struggling with being isolated and/or participating with online learning, while more young people turned to OST providers for general help in coping with the various effects of the pandemic and the effect on their well-being and resiliency.

2. **The role of OST supports expanded.** OST providers continued to provide developmental opportunities for children during non-school hours (e.g., recreation), yet also spent much of their time supporting the families of young people to help them cope with the pandemic (e.g., signing up for benefits, connecting to services, dealing with stress, personal safety), requiring them to operate as "triage case workers".

3. **The access to traditional OST activities decreased**. The requirements of social distancing in local facilities, coupled with the closure and/or partial access to neighborhood facilities (creating transportation barriers for many families), meant that it took "twice the effort to provide OST activities for a quarter of the children" in traditional programming.

4. **The shift to online activities and supports amplified the inequities for education and OST.** Many families, particularly those who more recently arrived in Canada, only have one device for online access, have poor wi-fi access, and have limited digital literacy. This means they are less connected to supports from schools, communities, and services.

5. **The effort to coordinate and provide OST supports is greater.** The increased demand for OST supports, the pressure to provide more than one-on-one supports, and the extra effort required to continually adapt traditional OST activities requires OST providers and those involved in planning activities to invest more time and energy in offering OST supports. This effort begins to wear on providers and youth alike the longer the pandemic persists.

The participants concluded that OST providers have emerged as a more-critical-than-normal "safety net" for youth and families during the Pandemic that can address issues and complement the work that traditional institutions (e.g., educational institutions, counseling services) are unable to adequately address on their own.

APPLICATION OF THE MYOSTNS FRAMEWORK

The OST Collaborative backbone team concluded that given that policy makers, funders and local institutions will almost certainly turn once again to OST providers to fulfill this role in a future pandemic, it is important to strengthen and prepare the OST infrastructure with a variety of pandemic-responsive policies and practices that reflect the MYOSTNS Framework.

Table 13: OST Policy and Practice Responses during COVID-19

Principle	Pandemic Policy and Practice
P1: Leverage existing community facilities.	Having contingency plans in place for securing and managing locations/programming space during a pandemic at scale that is able to accommodate, rather than limit, the high demand for OST support.
P2: Ensure accessibility and affordability for families.	Create a city-wide strategy that ensures that all families have access to wi-fi, are offered laptops and tablets, and are able to easily access tech-savvy, culturally responsive support (e.g., high school students) to provide families technical support for their digital needs.
P3: Effective planning, coordinating and collaborating.	Establish a planning and communication protocol between school boards, schools and OST providers to facilitate real-time communication and effective collaboration in providing students with academic and other supports during fast moving and uncertain contexts.
P4: Offer a broad spectrum of OST activities.	Develop, test, and refine a broader menu of pandemic-sensitive OST supports, including those offered online and/or outdoors, that can be scaled up during a pandemic.
P5: Provide inclusive and targeted support.	Employ a structured equity lens to explore how public policy and pandemic-related decisions affect those experiencing barriers to the full participation in society in general, and OST supports in particular.
P6: Enhance children's emotional, physical and social development, and overall resiliency.	Develop program supports able to respond to the extra and diverse challenges of supporting young people's development, safety, and achievement during a pandemic (e.g., counseling, academic supports, trauma-informed practice0.
P7: Systematically integrate natural supports	Invest in the development and expansion of those able to provide natural supports during a pandemic (e.g., young adults, other families) when formal institutions struggle to meet family needs.
P8: Be evidence informed, yet innovation oriented.	Create a real time evaluation process and set of tools, embedded in an equity lens, to determine the extent to which OST activities are, and are not, responding to the needs of diverse families and youth.

The backbone team of the OST Collaborative will be bringing these ideas to the members of the OST Collaborative and explore which ones can be fully or partially addressed during the current pandemic, as well as those that should be pursued once the current pandemic is over.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Child well-being	Well-being and resiliency are inextricably linked. Well-being is achieved when infants, children and youth are physically and emotionally safe, have secure, healthy relationships, have connection to culture and community and have opportunities to grow and develop to their full potential. Well-being encompasses physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual health, as well as factors like safety and security, supportive and nurturing relationships, a sense of purpose and belonging within a family and a community. [5, p. 10]
Community	Individuals of a given group that are bound together based on geography or perceived social, functional, cultural and/or circumstantial connections. [4, p. 2]
Community Cohesion	The level of connectedness between individuals belonging to the same community. [7]
Human-centered approach	A creative approach to designing programs, services, and supports for people by putting the people whom programs are meant to support at the center of program design. The core of the approach is an initial process of developing empathy with regards to the realities of potential program beneficiaries, and then proceeding to define, ideate, prototype, and test.
LGBTQ2S+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirited, Plus
Middle years	Children and youth between the ages of six and 13.
Natural supports	Informal reciprocal connections that consist of close relationships, such as family and friends, and broader associations, such as neighbours and mentors. [3]
Out-of-school time	The hours that children and youth are not in school, including hours before school and after school, and during short-term school breaks, summer breaks and times of wide-spread disruptions.
Resilience	The process of managing stress and functioning well in a particular context when faced with adversity. The outcome of resilience is positive change and growth. [5, p. 22]

REFERENCES

[1] V. Desa, "Best Practices in OST Programs: A Report Prepared for the After School Time Programs Table Edmonton," Edmonton, 2010.

[2] V. Desa, "OST Programs Best Practice Strategy Elements Matrix," Edmonton, 2010.

[3] R. N. W. J. A. M. Tough S, "Call to Action: The Opportunity of Natural Supports to Promote Well-being and Resiliency in Alberta. Document of the Connections First Max Bell Foundation and Burns Memorial Fund Policy Fellowship," December 2019. [Online]. Available: https://www.connectionsfirst.ca/call-to-action. [Accessed 11 May 2020].

[4] R. J. Chaskin, "Perspectives on Neighborhood and Community: A Review of the Literature," *Social Service Review,* vol. 71, no. 4, pp. 521-547, 1997.

[5] Children's Services, Government of Alberta, "Well-Being and Resiliency: A Framework for Supporting Safe And Healthy Children And Families," Government of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, 2019.

[6] Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, "Afterschool: the time of a child's life," Toronto, 2018.

[7] W. J. T. S. McDonald S, "Out-of-School Time: Evidence Synthesis, Best Practices and Environmental Scan," 2019.

[8] The Change Collective, "Working with Vulnerable Youth to Enhance their Natural Supports: A Practice Framework, Version 2.0," Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 2018.

[9] C. Z. I. K. J. Kingsbury M, "The protective effect of neighbourhood social cohesion on adolescent mental health following stressful life events.," *Psychological Medicine 50,* vol. 50, no. 8, p. 1292–1299, 2019.

[10] Children's Services, Government of Alberta, "Child Care Consultation Report," Government of Alberta, Edmonton, 2020.

[11] Special Needs Inclusion Project, "Tips, Tools & resources," 1 March 2010. [Online]. Available: http://www.snipsf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/v2010Inclusion-Tool-Kit-Sept-update1.pdf. [Accessed 05 06 2020].

[12] Connections First, "Connections First Infographic," May 2020. [Online]. Available: https://www.connectionsfirst.ca/infographic. [Accessed 20 May 2020].

[13] N. Reynolds, T. S, W. JL and A. M, "A Guide to Building Natural Supportive Communities. Document of the Connections First Max Bell Foundation and Burns Memorial Fund Policy Fellowship," May 2020. [Online]. Available: https://www.connectionsfirst.ca/guide. [Accessed 14 June 2020].

[14] The Change Collective, "Enhancing Natural Supports Organizational Audit," Calgary, Alberta, Canada, 2018.

[15] Afterschool Snack, "In the Field - Guest Blog: Inclusive Out-of-School Time," 10 November 2014. [Online]. Available: https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolSnack/Inclusive-Out-of-School-Time_11-10-2014.cfm. [Accessed 27 May 2020].

[16] Children's Services, Government of Alberta, "Well-Being and Resiliency: The miyo Resource – kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin," Government of Alberta, Edmonton, 2019.

[17] L. Leiren, "OST Summer Programs Tool Kit," 2010. [Online]. Available: https://albertamentors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Out-of-School-Time-OST-Summer-Toolkit.pdf. [Accessed 5 June 2020].

[18] Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, "Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families," Harvard University, Cambridge, 2017.

[19] D. Moroney and J. Newman, "Research: Recognizing the role of afterschool and summer programs and systems in reopening and rebuilding," 26 May 2020. [Online]. Available: https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolSnack/Recognizing-the-role-of-afterschool-and-summer-programs-and_05-26-2020.cfm. [Accessed 27 May 2020].

[20] Government of Ontario, "On My Way - A Guide to Support Middle Years Child Development," Queen's Printer for Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2017.

[21] J. Walsh, S. Dixit, S. McDonald and S. C. Tough, "Environmental Scan Summary," 9 August 2019. [Online]. Available: https://www.connectionsfirst.ca/environmental-scan-summary. [Accessed 14 June 2020].

[22] "Natural Supports Indicators," 2020. [Online]. Available: https://www.connectionsfirst.ca/indicators. [Accessed 14 June 2020].