Stone Soup:
The Recipe for an After School Recreation Strategy in Alberta
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The title for this report refers to a cherished fable. It is the story of a hungry man who finds himself in a village where everyone is carefully guarding what little food they have. Thinking creatively, he puts a large stone in a big pot, fills it with water and starts to make ‘stone soup’ for the entire village. Each of the villagers, impressed by his effort to make something they can all share, eventually finds they do have something they can contribute and before long, there is a hearty soup for all to enjoy.

In many respects, we find ourselves at a similar juncture. While there are many practical and obvious reasons to embrace an After School recreation strategy for Alberta, it will take the willing contribution of many different partners to create a high quality system of After School programs for our children and youth. All we really need, is some ingenuity and the leadership to start the soup and stir the pot.
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B. Detailed Report  
The Detailed Report follows the same outline as the Report in Brief and is intend to provide additional information and specifics that will be of interest to policy makers, program planners and those organizations and sponsors who are currently providing, or are considering, After School Recreation Programs in Alberta.
Executive Summary

The membership of the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association was asked to prepare a strategy and recommendations on how to most effectively and sustainably expand After School recreation programs across Alberta.

For our purposes, After School Recreation Programs refer to any child and youth recreation-based programming that is offered between the hours of 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm Monday – Friday, 3-5 days a week, during the school year. These programs are purposefully delivered and are intended to improve the social and developmental outcomes of children and youth, by increasing participation in quality recreation and other activities.

After School Programs are Effective Public Policy:
Governments now understand quality After School programs as a policy tool that is relatively simple, leverages existing resources, embraces local and rural diversity - and most importantly – there is evidence to show how it can impact some of our most critical and complex health and social problems.

There are Good Reasons for Action:
The direct, indirect and long term costs to our public systems associated with physical inactivity, obesity, poor diet and nutrition, juvenile criminality, and school drop-outs are not sustainable. As such, the full range of creative public policy mechanisms should be considered in the development of an Alberta After School recreation strategy.

Shared Goals and Outcomes:
The evidence based outcomes associated with quality recreation-based After School programs are very closely aligned and would contribute to the stated public policy goals of the Government of Canada, the Province of Alberta, a significant number of ministries, departments along with municipalities and community agencies.

Stone Soup:
An investment in an After School recreation strategy would leverage the contributions of multiple public and private sector partners and community organizations, each of which could contribute in the way that is most suitable and aligned with their mission and goals.

Putting the Pieces Together:
The ARPA scan of existing programs, services and funding streams shows just how many of these efforts are closely aligned with the goals of After School Programs (ASPs) and could - with some minor modifications - support various aspects of a provincial strategy.
**Sensible System Development:**
There are quite a number of capacity issues involved in the development of an effective ‘system’ that can provide and measure high quality outcome driven programs that genuinely reflect the interests of local communities, parents and children.

At the provincial government level, a reasonable, longer term, cross ministerial plan is required.

**A Safe Communities Legacy:**
There is an unmistakable alignment between the long term goals of Alberta’s Safe Communities strategy and a sustainable network of quality ASPs designed to prevent problems and build capacities, resiliency, community spirit and engagement among Albertas’ youth.

**Evaluate and Report:**
Valid evidence based evaluation tools must be incorporated in an Alberta ASP to sustain quality, ensure accountability and as a core commitment to ongoing innovation. ASP’s provide a unique opportunity to measure and report improvements on a number of the most critical health, social and developmental outcomes of Alberta’s children and youth.

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*Like many other potential partners, the ARPA see After School Programs as an ideal and aligned way to advance their long running and primary goal: improving the social, personal and long term health outcomes of children and youth through participation in recreation and sport. Already involved with ASPs to varying degrees, the many members of the ARPA will have to play a supportive and facilitative role – in almost every community - for a provincial after school recreation strategy to succeed.*
The Case for After School Programs

The popularity of ASPs around the world is driven by the growing body of research evidence demonstrating the range of measurable impacts that come from high quality programs. Governments across the political spectrum now understand quality ASPs as a policy tool that is relatively simple, builds on existing community resources, and embraces local, cultural and rural diversity. Most importantly, good quality and focussed ASPs can help to address some of our most critical and complex health and social issues. (1)

Aligned with the broad health, education, family and prosperity priorities of the Alberta government, ASPs can provide a shared platform for a number of ministries, departments and community partners to achieve their complimentary - and specific - policy goals. With a relatively small and cost effective (re)investment, a provincial strategy could leverage the participation and contributions of many potential partners who have a shared an interest in the kinds of outcomes ASPs can create.

Why Develop a Provincial After School Recreation Strategy?

At a time when fiscal resources are limited, there are real synergies to be found in an After School framework that can be adapted and aligned with the complimentary goals of so many community and governmental partners.

Critical Outcomes:
There is now a body of evidence to show that good quality recreation based After School programs can have an impact on some of our most troubling, complex and expensive social problems - including obesity and physical inactivity, personal and mental health, social isolation, success in school and the prevention of crime (2).

For each of these important and often overlapping issues, the personal, social and economic costs of inaction are prohibitive and the public costs of poor outcomes accrue largely to the province.

As a platform that can accommodate multiple and overlapping objectives, quality ASPs provide a unique opportunity to measurably improve outcomes for children and youth on several of our most pressing and intractable public issues.
Provincial and Federal Policy Alignment:

A strategy to increase the numbers of children and youth in After School recreation programs clearly aligns with the business plan and policy goals of the Government of Alberta (GOA), its many Ministries and departments. A scan of federal and provincial programs, services and funding opportunities, shows how many of our existing efforts – some with only minor modifications - could be actively incorporated into an Alberta After School recreation strategy. (3)

Many health promotion and other collaborative partnerships focussed on singular health, lifestyle, and education issues could easily align with the goals of a high quality ASP. Encouraged to participate, many different partners and organizations would see the clear ‘fit’ between the outcomes of ASP and their own mandates.

The cross sector development and expansion of recreational After School programs is perfectly aligned with the common vision of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity.

Acknowledging the burden of obesity and chronic disease linked to inactive children and youth, they recently signed a Joint Policy Statement urging cross ministry collaboration and shared targets for physical activity as a “proven strategy to address complex health, education, social and economic policy issues”.

For the many reasons presented here, the respective Ministers now recognize the After School time period as an important opportunity to actively partner with community organizations and other stakeholders to improve physical activity levels - and outcomes - for children and youth across Canada.(8)
Local, Cultural and Rural Diversity:
Although a framework with some clear outcomes is necessary to measure success, ASP’s are most effective when they reflect the local needs and interests of community groups, schools, parents, children and youth. At the same time, there are many smaller volunteer organizations, especially in rural communities, who could find new and effective ways to fulfill their missions in a local After School partnership. (e.g. Scouts, Guides, Lions, 4H Clubs).

The ability to adapt over time, to engage community groups and develop programs that focus on local issues (e.g. farm safety) is a unique and critical strength of ASPs as a policy instrument.

Critical Hours:
The term “Critical Hours” is now commonly used to describe the time after school between 3pm-6pm when many children are unsupervised and left to their own devices. During these hours evidence shows greatly increased levels of criminality and arrest, experimentation with drugs and sex, accidents, injuries and a host of other bad outcomes for children and youth – and their communities.

In fact, a recent Alberta study shows how serious and habitual young offenders almost never participate in adult supervised recreational sports or after school activities. After School programs should be considered as a critical and effective part of any long term or sustainable crime prevention strategy. (4)

Community Engagement:
There are a significant number of different organizations, including recreation departments across Alberta that are committed to providing quality After School programming for children and youth – most leveraging their existing infrastructures to support various program components (e.g. space, administration, equipment).

Some of the larger community organizations (e.g. Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, Big Brothers Big Sisters) are already adept at raising charitable and in-kind contributions, engaging volunteers and neighbourhoods, partnering with other agencies and services, and are familiar with evaluation and reporting requirements.

Any “framework” for high quality After School programs requires explicit program goals to create measurable outcomes, but must allow for flexibility in program design, delivery and content to reflect the priorities, abilities and interests of local and rural communities across Alberta.
Principally focussed on “at risk” communities and schools, these programs exist only where local circumstances (and personalities) are favourable, and survive in spite – not because of – the system level support they receive. Mission driven, these organizations are already demonstrating their commitment to improving outcomes for children and youth through ASPs.

**Measurable Benefits:**
Recreation based ASPs have been shown to produce a range of measureable social and economic benefits (5) depending on the blend of programming used, the quality and duration of participation, and the nature of the evaluative design. There are a wide range of outcomes that are associated to varying degrees with participation in recreational based ASPs, from improved physical and mental health, to better educational results, lifestyle choices and reduced criminality.

There are productivity gains (6) for parents of school age children and many longer term personal benefits for the children who participate. An Alberta After School recreation strategy designed to improve four or five shared and significant outcomes (e.g. physical activity, health, education) would be measurable and the value of the investment demonstrable over the short and longer term.

**Cost Effectiveness:**
There are enormous direct, indirect and long term costs associated with physical inactivity, obesity, poor diet and nutrition, juvenile criminality, school drop-out, and the early adoption of risky behaviours and addictions. Based on the Economic Burden of Illness in Canada (EBIC) data alone, a relatively small change in any one of these indicators pays a considerable return on the kind of investments required to support ASPs.

In fact, it is the failure to effectively prevent these conditions – and the unsustainable associated costs - that presents the strongest argument for investing in an effective and proven prevention strategy like quality After School programming.

**Timely Public Policy:**
As a relatively inexpensive (7) and straightforward public policy tool, ASPs can be developed over time, pulling together and aligning some new and existing resources, creating support systems, and identifying and eliminating barriers that are created by existing practices, policies and systems. At a time when fiscal resources are limited, there are real synergies to be found in a flexible After School ‘framework’ that can be adapted and aligned with the complimentary goals of so many community and governmental partners.
A Proposed Framework for After School Recreation Programs in Alberta

A Framework and Community Development Approach:
The approach proposed by the ARPA reflects the need to strike a balance between ensuring purposeful programs that can achieve measurable outcomes and the need to recognize the wide range of capacities and interests that exist across the province. So while the framework suggests an optimal balance of programming, there is a strong and necessary emphasis on a community development approach where local partners and parents can shape program components based on their unique circumstances (e.g. facilities, service clubs). Local direction in program development is essential if ASPs are to build on - and fit within - existing programs and services.

Program Elements:
The mix of programming used in other jurisdictions tends to vary widely along a continuum that focuses primarily on remedial education to those that are mainly activity based. (9) The framework proposed here suggests an optimal mix of three program areas – recreation, health and learning - and provides significant time for other activities that would reflect the interests and abilities of local communities, parents and kids. The proposed distribution of time would be a monthly, not a daily, expectation.

Such a blended approach will allow more funding partners and community organizations to participate in a way that reflects their specific interests and abilities and will allow a provincial strategy to contribute to a broader range of important outcomes. Much of the time set aside for local programming (30%) will likely be used recreationally (10) or overlap with other program elements, but this provision recognizes the wide diversity of interests and abilities across the province. This flexibility will also encourage the development of unique local partnerships and a shared sense of ownership, critical to longer term sustainability.

The most important discussion pertains to the specific kinds of outcomes the contributing partners and the GOA might consider most worthy of investment (see Figure 1).

As with any framework some degree of flexibility will be necessary, but the program mix that is adopted at the local level must be purposefully linked to at least some of these measurable outcomes.

High quality recreation based After School programs can have an impact on some of our most troubling, complex and expensive social problems - including obesity and physical inactivity, personal and mental health, social isolation, success in school and the prevention of crime
Depending on their circumstances and facilities, some communities may only be able to provide two or three elements of the proposed program framework, although the commitment to physical activity and recreation should be considered essential. (11)

Readiness and Population Health:
Many of the issues that can be addressed through quality ASPs – especially health related outcomes – are widely distributed. While the percentages of poor outcomes are higher in low income communities, the numerical majority of children and youth who could benefit from recreation based ASPs are dispersed across all income brackets. Developing targeted outreach strategies to high risk groups will be critical in the long term development of an After School system, but in the early stages it will be useful to support those communities who are ready, have some existing capacities and the interest to move ahead.

Quality and the Link to Outcomes:
It is impossible to overstate the need for well conceived and purposeful programming where quality can be regularly assessed and attributable outcomes measured at appropriate intervals. Local ASPs that are linked (and branded) as part of a broader Alberta After School recreation strategy must provide the data required for evaluations that can demonstrate the link between program activities and one of the intended outcomes in Figure 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Components by Time %</th>
<th>Associated Outcomes &amp; Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recreation</strong> @ 30%</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual / team sports</td>
<td>• Cardiovascular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vigorous physical activity</td>
<td>• Diabetes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skill development, physical &amp; sport literacy</td>
<td>• Obesity / Body Mass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Yoga, dance, Pilates, alternative activities</td>
<td>• Diet &amp; Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor activities / Enjoying natural environments</td>
<td>• Behaviour re Risk Avoidance LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trips to special and public recreation facilities</td>
<td>• Mental Health LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Programs linked to active school / community initiatives</td>
<td>Recreation &amp; Physical Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arts and Cultural activities</td>
<td>• Physical / Sport Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership training and team building skills</td>
<td>• Active, quality time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participation in Other Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Healthy Lifestyle Changes LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong> @ 20%</td>
<td>Child / Youth Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nutrition, healthy eating / cooking</td>
<td>• Self Esteem, Confidence LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assorted health &amp; harm reduction strategies</td>
<td>• Social Skill / Social Support LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School or community based health promotion partnerships</td>
<td>• Peer Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wellness and lifestyle programs</td>
<td>• Self Regulation Behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Snack and/or dinner provided</td>
<td>• Resiliency</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safer Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth Engagement LC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participation in Community LC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Risk Avoidance 3-6 pm LC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Incidence Rates Criminality LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong> @ 20%</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homework clubs</td>
<td>• School Attainment / Success LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Remedial &amp; enriched learning opportunities</td>
<td>• Attendance / Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Computer Access</td>
<td>• Drop Out Rates LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special skills and training (4H, trade readiness)</td>
<td>• Belonging / Sense of Community LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Programs linked to school curriculum and learning strategies</td>
<td>• Post Secondary Plans LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lifelong learning</td>
<td><strong>Community / Societal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Future Civic Engagement LC</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Involving Marginalized Groups LC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteerism / Community Spirit LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Content</strong> @ 30% LC</td>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child, youth, parent &amp; community interests</td>
<td>• Future Health Care Costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Age adjusted programs for youth</td>
<td>• Education / Employment Outcomes LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rural, linguistic, cultural programming</td>
<td>• Workplace Productivity of Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community partners, Service clubs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skill development, employment readiness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leadership training and development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Volunteer contributions and community service</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. The chart demonstrates the kind of program elements and the time distribution envisioned for each of the three components – recreation, physical activity, health and learning – and the time set aside for local programs and interests. Some of the potential, and overlapping, outcomes that are associated with each of the proposed programs elements are shown opposite. (12)
**A Comprehensive Evaluation Strategy:**
Ideally, Alberta’s After School recreation strategy will incorporate a commitment to evaluation from the outset although it is important to recognize the widely differing levels of interest and experience with evidence based tools and their practical applications.

Larger community based organizations and municipalities involved with ASPs increasingly include valid evaluative measures, including pre and post testing, assessments of quality and attribution for self reported outcomes.

The proposed evaluation strategy suggests incorporating the existing tools into a single system, ensuring changes to organizational policies and practices are captured, providing a limited but valid assessment of economic impact, and ensuring outcomes can be measured at the participant, program and population health levels. A single system also provides a unique opportunity to communicate and report on improvements to the outcomes of children and youth across Alberta.

Evaluations must be based in the research, but respondent burden is a real issue. Given their limited expertise and capacities, local ASP must be accountable for reporting requirements and providing needed data, however, the responsibility for evaluative design, data analysis and report generation should be centralized. As the framework anticipates some significant local variations, a suite of evidence based tools, clearly linked to the outcomes of the Alberta After School recreation strategy, are required.

**Partnering for Research and Evaluation:**
As the system development process outlined by the ARPA unfolds over time, there is a unique opportunity to link with the academic and research communities to ensure a rigorous, long term evaluation is included from the outset. Adapting the evaluation strategy outlined by ARPA, the research would be structured to capture changes to policy, systems and practices; identify program level outcomes; provide regular information on quality and participation; calculate reliable economic impacts; and include significant pre and post population health measures.

There are qualified and interested Canadian and Albertan academics who would be interested and a number of funding opportunities (often matched, paired or braided) available to support this kind of public sector, community and academic research partnership - especially where it forms a core element of system development.

A provincial investment in this area, already essential for accountability, will provide an important opportunity to partner, leveraging resources and expertise. (13)
Alignment and Contribution Analysis

The system development process envisioned by ARPA includes the gradual engagement of a very diverse group of supporters, all of which are encouraged to see how some aspects of their mission and goals might be achieved – sometimes in a different way – through ASPs. Although suggestions of how others might participate should be carefully presented, the ARPA review of policy positions, business plans, current and potential program initiatives, suggests that the outcomes of a high quality provincial After School recreation strategy align very closely with numerous organizational goals and the stated policy objectives of both the federal and provincial governments.

There are two pre-requisites for sustainable partnerships: a clear and shared set of common or complimentary goals; and a framework that recognizes and incorporates the strategic interests and abilities of those who choose to participate. A successful process of engagement, particularly where there is an expectation of contribution or modified behaviours, should allow the participants themselves to explore and describe where and how best they might "fit" into the overall picture. In practice, the greater the degree of interest, the wider the range of alternative methods that can, and will be considered.

To ‘prime the pump’ and encourage a robust discussion on the full range of potential contributions, ARPA has outlined some of the obvious and creative ways that various partners might contribute to a provincial After School recreation strategy in Section Three.
Similarly, Figure 2 provides ideas about where the various program components of an Alberta After School system, might find sources of support.

**Aligned Networks and Associations:**
There are a significant number of collective strategies, partnerships, and recreation and sports associations throughout Alberta, whose missions and mandates very closely align with the active, healthy living components found in quality After School recreation programs. The energy, resources and local partnerships of these groups could be instrumental in the development of ASP in the schools and communities where they already work. A strategy to consult with and engage these many partnerships and associations may enable them to see a role in ASP’s for their organizations and volunteers.

**Possible Roles and Contributions:**
There are a variety of components required to create high quality ASPs and it is reasonable to assume that the various potential contributors would have different, as well as overlapping, capacities and interests. Figure 2 provides a departure point for the discussion around which aligned groups might support particular aspects of an After School system across Alberta.
Figure 2.
System Development for Alberta After School:
Possible Roles & Contributions

POTENTIAL PARTNERS / SUPPORTERS:

|----------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------|----------------|
**Alberta Corporate Support and Philanthropic Engagement:**
Given the political culture and public policy context in Alberta, creating opportunities to engage the support of private sector donors must be a key strategy for the After School initiative. While there are a number of corporations, business groups and charitable Foundations that already support ASPs, most are primarily focused on improving circumstances among specific disadvantaged groups and/or communities. ASPs are well suited to philanthropic participation, especially given the many ways to contribute (Figure 2), but further work is needed to identify how we might - most effectively - engage corporate support.

A short survey was conducted by the ARPA to assess if, how, and in what manner, business people, corporations and private sector organizations might support ASPs. (14) Interestingly, their primary motives to engage include improving the lifestyle choices made by children (86.8%); their health outcomes (84.6%); and a strong interest in providing a safe and healthy environment for lower income children and youth (84.2%). ASP’s intended to prevent crime/reduce criminality (76.3%); and improve school results (73.7%) were considered valuable, but slightly less worthy of investment.

Business people were a bit ambivalent about the kinds of support they might prefer to provide to ASPs, suggesting program equipment and supplies; special programs; support for low income children; volunteer engagement; and providing in-kind resources, were all worthy of consideration, but no clear priority emerged. They were however, clearly not interested in providing any one-time capital donations (70%); or supporting a province-wide centralized resource for ASPs (61%), and more than half of the respondents suggested they would not consider providing funds for operational costs.

This survey (N 40) provides a good starting point for a strategic approach to developing corporate, business and private sector support for ASPs in Alberta. This should include a more extensive consultation and the creation of key messages and communications materials that could be shared and used by ASPs across the province. Given our political and philanthropic culture and the clear need to diversify sources of support, engaging private sector and corporate interest in ASPs will be critical to success in Alberta.

**Diversification and Sustainability:**
A review of the literature and experiences in most other jurisdictions is clear: attracting and engaging specific (albeit self interested and aligned) program contributions to a broader After School strategy is the most common way to develop a range of good quality programs. Similarly, the key to longer term sustainability is the creation and alignment of diverse funding opportunities and program supports, volunteer and in-kind contributions, and local partners who share a commitment to ‘their’ ASP. (15)

That said, providing system level resources and support to local ASPs is an essential, effective and cost effective contribution to program growth, quality and sustainability.
Principles, System Development and Demonstration Strategies

Assumptions and Principles:
Developing an integrated and sustainable system of high quality after school opportunities across Alberta will be an evolutionary process that requires many different partners to willingly innovate and adapt, addressing policy and practice issues as they arise. It seems reasonable to assume that each one of these agencies and organizations will have its own culture and a differing set of expectations of how ASP might best be developed in Alberta. To facilitate collaboration, ARPA has provided a set of definitions, assumptions and principles to guide the process, recruit the participation of partners, and frame the discussions (Section Four).

Implementation: A System Development Approach:
(16) In an attempt to be realistic about the amount of effort involved in developing what could truly be called a ‘system’ of After School Programs in Alberta, the following outline, each with key strategic tasks and timelines, is proposed.

- Phase One: Leadership and Planning May/June 2010 - March 2011
- Phase Two: Developing System Supports April 2011 - September 2011 (Ongoing)
- Phase Three: Expansion and Engagement September 2011 - June 2013
- Phase Four: Building Sustainability September 2011 - June 2013

Proposed Demonstration and Business Planning Strategy:
Much is already known about running, managing and, to a lesser extent, evaluating basic ASPs. A demonstration effort should therefore focus on identifying those capacity and other issues that are critical to business planning, further system development and provincial scalability. The effort is not intended to re-establish the link between ASP and positive outcomes, but to learn and clarify how we can best design and deliver quality programs in a variety of circumstances in communities across Alberta.
Provincial Leadership

Cross Ministry Provincial Leadership:

Given the significant and varied impacts possible through high quality After School programs there are good reasons for several of the key partners to assume a leadership role in the development of a collaborative provincial strategy. There are a number of factors however, that suggest leadership from the recreation sector is essential, including the anticipated program mix; the need to engage local recreation providers and facilities; the many strong community partnerships that already exist; and the clear vertical and horizontal alignment with the primary ‘Active Alberta’ policy goals of the Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

In many jurisdictions, particularly in the United States, After School programs are primarily led by the education sector. These programs overwhelmingly target particular “at-risk” groups or communities and are generally intended to compensate for personal or family disadvantages and to remediate poor results in school. There are, similarly, a number of important reasons for Ministry of Education leadership in an After School strategy for Alberta: school facilities are a critical resource and preferred location for parents; educational programming encourages participation among new Canadians (17); and the ability to improve grades, school engagement, and align ASPs with specific teacher, school and community priorities is critical to the success of local educators and the Ministry.

The ARPA report and developmental strategy also encourages a strong focus on aligning groups around shared outcomes. As such, it will be important to go beyond the Ministry of Education and include the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Alberta Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit, and the Safe Communities Secretariat within the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Public Security, early in the developmental process as the policy goals and business plans of these Ministries are clearly linked to high quality community based ASPs. Expanding the circle of partners – as suggested in Figure Three – is a core element of the contribution strategy and should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

Driven by the recent proclamation of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity, declaring the after school hours as key opportunity to improve the activity levels – and health outcomes – of children and youth, the leadership of ATPR is both necessary and timely. With over 1100 members across the province, including 110 municipal governments, the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association is well positioned to facilitate the growth of ASPs across the province.
ARPA Membership: Leadership, Leverage and Support:

It is entirely appropriate that the ARPA would share a leadership role in the development of an After School recreation strategy for Alberta. Based on their thorough 2009 study of After School in Alberta, the association, its Board of Directors and 1100 members see ASPs as an ideal and perfectly aligned way to advance their long term and primary objective: improving the social, personal and long term health and wellness outcomes of children and youth through participation in recreation. Already involved with After School recreation programs to varying degrees, the many members of the ARPA will have to play a supportive and facilitative role – in almost every community – for a provincial strategy to succeed. No matter how willing, ARPA members and their community partners still face significant capacity issues.

Although the ARPA is directly involved with 110 different communities through their recreation departments, the ‘fit’ for these members will be driven by their infrastructure, staff abilities, their community relationships, and the support of their local Municipal Councils and administrative bodies. While it would be difficult to ascribe a monetary value to the many contributions that could by leveraged by ARPA members across Alberta we have itemized the valuable and varied ways ARPA members might participate. The recommendations below outline immediate and short term commitments, but the ARPA is committed to providing support and leadership to After School development for the foreseeable future.
Report Recommendations and Support from ARPA

Report Recommendations:

The Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation should lead a cross ministry strategy and planning session on the potential framework, benefits, outcomes and requirements of an Alberta After School recreation strategy as outlined in the ARPA report.

Early planning and leadership should begin with the Ministries of Education, Children and Youth Services, Health and Wellness, Culture and Community Spirit and the Safe Communities Secretariat - (May/June 2010) to facilitate the following:

A smaller leadership team of Ministers and Deputy / Assistant Deputy Ministers should be assembled from those most aligned with the possible outcomes of an After School program including, at a minimum, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Education, Health and Wellness, Children and Youth Services and Culture and Community Spirit - (June 2010),

Stakeholder Consultations: In partnership with the ARPA, review the proposed framework, key program components, the potential outcomes and evaluation strategies with existing service providers, municipalities, community agencies and potential community partners - (May/June – September 2010),

Expand the collaborating group of provincial Ministries and departments to include the Ministries of Solicitor General and Public Security, Aboriginal Relations, Infrastructure, Agriculture and Rural Development, Employment and Immigration, Justice and the Attorney Generals’ Office - (September, 2010),

Contribution Analysis: Undertake a more formal GOA review of the alignment and potential for After School support (e.g. facilitate, fund, share resources, remove obstacles) across the Ministries and departments as outlined in the ARPA report - (September – December 2010),

Work with a community agency or partner (e.g. ARPA) to undertake a Labour Market Planning Partnership designed to identify the human resource needs of a larger scale ASP in Alberta (recruitment, training, retention, qualifications, use of volunteers and students) - (September 2010 – January 2011),

Work with Alberta Infrastructure and other allied stakeholders to create a provincial strategy to ensure facilities for ASPs are adequate and accessible - (September 2010 – January 2011),

Given our political and philanthropic culture and the clear need to diversify and sustain support, engaging corporate and private sector interest in ASPs will be critical to success in Alberta.
Provide support for a “demonstration” strategy that would initially include six different and broadly representative communities (as outlined by ARPA) from across Alberta. This initiative would test the proposed framework; pilot the evaluation tools; identify local and shared access, facility, and policy barriers; union and contractual issues; identify system needs and centralized supports; and provide concrete directions on program expansion and budget needs - (September 2010 – June 2011),

Philanthropic and Private Sector Support: Alberta’s Promise should lead a research project with interested corporate, private sector and Foundation partners to identify what would motivate the broader engagement of these two potential funding partners in ASPs across the province. This would include collecting data on motives and preferred methods to participate, and the specific types of ASPs they see as most aligned with their philanthropic interests. The findings should be used to create a key messages document and a strategy to engage these important stakeholders - (September 2010 – January 2011),

Develop a three year cross ministry business plan and brand for an Alberta After School recreation strategy. (June 2011 - Soft launch and expansion begins September 2011).
Roles and Next Steps for Alberta Recreation and Parks Association:

The ARPA would like to affirm its commitment to work in partnership on the development of an After School recreation strategy for the children and youth in Alberta. The effort and the potential outcomes of the work are directly aligned with the mission and vision of the Association and its 1100 members across the province.

For its part ARPA will:

- Establish a representative group of senior leaders and ARPA Board members who will agree, on behalf of the membership, to provide leadership and support to the development of a provincial After School recreation strategy as outlined in this report - (May/June 2010).

- Present the ARPA report and its recommendations to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation and senior staff to request their support and offer the assistance of the ARPA in the developmental process - (May/June 2010).

- Offer to meet with and present the ARPA Report with other senior provincial leaders including those Ministries that are identified as potential partners (e.g. Health and Wellness, Education, Child and Youth Services, Culture and Community Spirit) - (May/June 2010).

- Pending available resources, host, or co-host, a session(s) with a broader range of community organizations and agencies that are already involved, or interested, in the provision of ASP in Alberta. This gathering(s) would be used to test the proposed framework, identify shared or system level supports, develop alignment on evaluation / outcomes and establish a Professional Advisory Group - (June 2010).

- Pending available resources, support the research and development of a labour market strategy to provide concrete recommendations on staff recruitment, retention, qualifications and training for provincial After School programs - (September/December 2010).

- Pending available resources, support the implementation and research design for a scalable demonstration initiative (based on the goals outlined by ARPA) and assist with the development of provincial strategies and recommendations based on these findings - (September 2010 – June 2011).
Detailed Report

A Proposed Framework for After School Recreation Programs in Alberta

In order to move the discussion forward, ARPA was asked to identify the merits of a recreation based provincial After School strategy and to provide an outline of how such a program might be structured and sustained. The following section proposes a Framework and describes most of the key elements of an ASP.

**Definition:**

An After School Recreation Strategy refers to any child and youth recreation-based programming that is offered between the hours of 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm Monday – Friday, 3 to 5 days a week, during the school year. In general terms, they are intended to improve the health, social and developmental outcomes of children and youth, by increasing participation in quality recreation and other activities.

The blended approach advanced by ARPA will allow more funding partners and community organizations to participate in a way that reflects their specific interests and abilities and a provincial strategy that can contribute to a broader range of important outcomes. Much of the time set aside for locally driven programming (30%) will likely be used recreationally (18) but this provision allows for the wide diversity of interests and abilities across the province. This flexibility will also encourage the development of local partnerships and a shared sense of ownership, critical to longer term sustainability.

The most important discussion pertains to the specific kinds of outcomes the contributing partners and the Government of Alberta might consider most worthy of investment (see Figure 1). As with any framework some degree of flexibility will be necessary, but the program mix that is adopted at the local level should be linked to at least some of these measurable outcomes. Depending on their circumstances and facilities, some ASPs may be limited to two of the three program areas and in practice, activities during the optional time will likely overlap or align with the other program elements.

**Physical Activity:**

If the Framework is to insist on any of the three program elements as a prerequisite to participation in an Alberta ASP, 45 - 60 minutes of quality daily physical activity should be mandatory. (19)

**Safety:**

All ASPs will treat the safety of participants and staff as a critical component of their program planning, both on site and in terms of limiting risk when children and youth are traveling to and from the program. As an ASP system develops, minimum standards for safety and first aid will be required.
**Age for Service:**
An After School recreation strategy in Alberta should not be restricted to younger children (6-12) although as a practical matter they will comprise the majority of participants. Ideally, ASPs should be made available to all children and youth between grades 1 and 12, with the specific blend of age configurations determined by gaps in service, local priorities and community capacities. Age appropriate programming is critical to success and youth input and specialized content should increase steadily with the age of participants.

**Inclusivity:**
Programming needs to be respectful of Alberta’s increasingly diverse population and encourage the development of activities that are important and enjoyable to different cultural, linguistic and ethnic communities. Every effort should be made to ensure that ASPs are accessible to those with disabilities.

**Nutrition and Healthy Eating:**
There should be provision for a healthy and nutritious snack and/or of dinner for participants depending on the circumstances. Food safety, preparation and cooking programs are encouraged where facilities are available.

**Location:**
There is now significant research evidence to suggest that school-based ASPs are most effective and are greatly preferred by parents, children and youth. School based programs eliminate the critical concerns of parents about the safety and responsibility for travel, costs associated with transportation, and the quality of programs and staff in alternative locations. (20)

Recognizing that local ASPs will need to access existing community resources and facilities, an Alberta strategy should support and encourage facility use in the following order:

- School based, or on-site facilities with adequate available recreational space
- Community operated recreational facilities within a reasonable distance
- Other suitable community locations (e.g. community centres, clubs, Legion Halls)

**Cost & Fees:**
There is clear evidence that fees act as a substantial barrier to participation, particularly in high risk, low income communities, for families with multiple siblings and where parents have concerns about program quality. In order to be effective, an Alberta strategy must make provision for those who are unable to pay, most easily undertaken by expanding the current criteria and eligibility for Out of School Care (restricted to licensed care for children age 6-12) or through the income tax system. Parents and families who are able to pay for ASP should be asked to do so.
**Travel & Transportation:**
Whatever program and funding supports are made available to support ASP it will be essential to incorporate a formula that recognizes the extra costs associated with transportation where needed – especially in rural and more remote communities. Participant numbers would need to be established to enable special transportation support (e.g. a cost per child threshold).

**Registration and/or Drop In:**
There are good reasons, particularly from an impact and measurement perspective to require the registered and regular participation of children and youth. Meaningful outcomes can only be achieved and attributed where there are purposeful and organized quality programs being provided with some fidelity (e.g. dose and response). That said, accommodation must be made for those communities or groups where participation would be dramatically improved by a “drop in” format and the evaluation requirements amended accordingly.
**School Sports:**
As many school facilities are used for sports teams during the 3pm - 6pm period, ASPs must coordinate their activities with those of the school. Students who participate in team sports should still be eligible to participate in other aspects of ASPs, which will have to coordinate their active recreational programming with access to gymnasiums and sports fields.

**Integrated Services:**
ASP’s should be integrated wherever possible with the many existing programs and services that engage children and youth (e.g. Alberta Youth Mentorship, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers / Big Sisters, YMCA, special CFSA or Aboriginal initiatives, elite sport training, etc.). Whenever it is appropriate, children and youth should be encouraged to access and participate in other activities as part of – not instead of – the ASP being offered.

**Hours and Days:**
Ideally ASPs would operate during every school day in Alberta, which varies by Board but averages 185-190 days per year. It would be appropriate to set a minimum standard of 3 days a week (maximum 5) although some flexibility about the distribution of these days over the course of the school year would be important (e.g. minimum 115 days). Special strategies to support families during school holidays and breaks should also be eligible for provincial or system level support.

**Licensing:**
Although flexible, the current approach to licensing out of school care is difficult to apply and may not be appropriate, given the wide range of locations, programs, ages, and service providers that are, and may become, involved in ASPs across the province. A new Quality Assurance System (QAS) should be developed that monitors pre-established participation rates; ensures the ongoing use of quality assessments; and necessitates compliance with system level reporting on evaluation.

**A Population Health / Readiness Approach:**
Although most government and charitable programs are focused on specific or targeted populations of children and youth, many of the issues that can be addressed through quality ASP – especially health related outcomes – are widely distributed. While the percentages of poor outcomes are higher in low income communities, the numerical majority of children and youth who could benefit from ASPs are dispersed across all income brackets.

There will absolutely be a need to make special efforts to engage underserved groups especially non-participating and isolated youth, disabled, Aboriginal and newcomer communities. While these more purposeful initiatives are important strategic priorities for many potential partners, in the early stages of system development it will be useful to support those who have existing capacities and are ready and interested to move ahead.

The senior partners in an After School recreation strategy might want to provide some direction or flexible criteria that communities and regions can use to help establish their priority service locations for ASPs – but that decision should be left to local groups and steering committees.
A Comprehensive Evaluation Strategy

Cultural Shift:
Many groups within the recreation sector and some in social services have not historically been involved in rigorous evaluations and have some difficulty seeing the value of the time and effort involved. ASPs will still need to capture outputs and participant numbers but the shift to understanding and using evaluations as a management, quality and planning tool – not an obligation or justification strategy – will be quite significant. A good quality evaluation will require structural or system level support, training, encouragement and incentives to comply. (22)

Alignment:
There are a number of evaluation tools being used and/or developed by ASP service providers, most already designed to capture some useful pre and post program outcomes - albeit self reported. (23) At the new ‘Calgary After School’ initiative they added some key social, geographic and demographic variables to the “Class” recreation registration system, already commonly in use across Alberta, and have incorporated some critical pre/post variables that are used in the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth (NLSCY).

Further refining and sharing this tool would provide a rich data set, link the results to national statistics, and allow for a provincial roll-up to measure and report on the collective impacts of ASP across Alberta. It would also be very useful to incorporate the evaluative measures already endorsed by the many partners in the Alberta Youth Mentorship strategy.

Quality Assurance System:
While it is flexible, the current regulatory system for Out-of-School care is not well suited to the wide mix of ages, programs and locations that are likely to be involved in any provincial ASP. There would however, be considerable value in a QAS that could monitor how well programs are functioning, as a condition of their ongoing funding. This would be comprised of three elements; a) maintain participation numbers above a pre arranged level; b) regular (quarterly) questionnaires on program quality completed by a sample of children and parents; and c) compliance with system level reporting and evaluation requirements.

Dose - Response and Attribution:
The insistence on a minimum of three days a week or 115 days a school year is necessary if we hope to attribute meaningful impacts to the ASP. Similarly, all pre and post questions on behavioural and attitudinal changes (e.g. risk reduction, better diet) and program level outcomes must incorporate the concept of attribution – where the participant attributes some portion of their success specifically to their participation.

Measuring Outcomes:
Given capacity and expertise issues at the local level, funders should assume primary responsibility for evaluation, while ASPs concentrate on providing the data that are requested and adjusting programs based on the reports generated by these findings.
It will be important to ensure that service providers are able to capture outcomes at three different levels – using simple and clear indicators:

- **ASP Participation**: Activity levels, changes to health, body weight, diet
- **Program Specific**: Changes to attitudes, behaviours, knowledge retention
- **School, Community and Population Health**: Pre and post assessments and/or control group comparisons on key health, activity, lifestyle changes and learning indicators,

**Policy and Outcome Mapping:**

As the development of a quality ASP in Alberta will require the collaboration and facilitative participation of a number of different ministries, organizations and systems, the evaluation strategy must include an annual review process to capture the shifts in policies and practices that have enabled and supported After School program development. Measuring and reporting on these sorts of institutional ‘outcomes’ will be critical to the developmental process and may help incent partner participation.

**Economic Evaluation: Return on Investment (ROI):** The current interest in creating ROI ratios has invited some rather dubious methods where ‘plug in’ values and cost avoidance estimates are inappropriately applied from other jurisdictions. Done well, a full blown cost benefit analysis would be extremely complex and would include quite a number of speculative long term projections of personal and societal benefits.

A more practical approach would involve capturing 3 or 4 outcomes where there is reliable Canadian data (e.g. Economic Burden of Illness in Canada EBIC, National Crime Prevention Centre NCPC) on the measurable costs of those circumstances or conditions an ASP would be trying to prevent. It would be most useful to follow indicators where numerous costing studies have already been undertaken and reliable formulas exist (24), including:

- Reductions in the cost of physical inactivity;
- Reductions in the cost of obesity/body weight;
- Reduction in costs associated with educational remediation or failure;
- Reductions in the cost of juvenile crime and criminality;
- Reductions in time lost by parents with inadequate After School care (e.g. productivity).

Measuring improvements in these outcomes for the children and youth who participate can then be assessed using a pre/post method and/or through comparators to similar non participating populations and control groups.
The focus should not be directed at producing a high (and likely invalid) ratio to describe a ROI, but rather to ensure the benefits we are able to measure, outstrip the cost of our investment. Other measureable outcomes that are not well suited to valuation should also be reported as important benefits of the work, but not monetized (e.g. improved self confidence, school and community engagement, better familial relations, etc.).

At a provincial level, there would be some real value in undertaking a baseline study on the costs of obesity and physical inactivity specific to children and youth in Alberta. These baseline data would be particularly useful for evaluation purposes, but are also critical in terms of motivating other community partners and helping to establish concrete targets and shared goals. (25) All evaluations should capture and value the contributions of ASP volunteers.

**Suite of Measurement Tools**: As this report suggests, there is likely to be some considerable variation of ASPs across the province, even within a broad framework. Some communities, given their capacities may only be able, or interested, in addressing one or some of the potential outcomes or program elements. Consequently, an Alberta ASP should provide and support a suite of valid and reliable evaluation tools that can be used appropriately at a local level and aggregated provincially.

**Public Report and Provincial Data**: Alberta suffers from an acute shortage of accessible or shared data about the health and well being of our children and youth. Establishing a common system to report on all ASPs in the province - by making it a condition of licensing or funding – would provide a rich and useful data set, allowing us to measure and publically report on our success. There are good research partnership opportunities with Canadian and Alberta Universities and Colleges to support this aspect of the work.
Alignment and Contribution Analysis

The system development process envisioned by ARPA includes the gradual engagement of a very diverse group of stakeholders and supporters, all of which are encouraged to see how some aspects of their mission and goals might be achieved – sometimes in a different way - through ASPs. Although suggestions of how others might participate should be carefully presented, the ARPA review of policy positions, business plans, current and potential program initiatives, suggests that the outcomes of a high quality provincial After School program align very closely with numerous organizational goals and the stated policy objectives within both the federal and provincial governments. (26)

There are two pre-requisites for sustainable partnerships: a clear and shared set of common or complimentary goals; and a framework that recognizes and incorporates the strategic interests and abilities of those who choose to participate. A successful process of engagement, particularly where there is an expectation of contribution or modified behaviours, should allow the participants themselves to explore and describe where and how best they might “fit” into the overall picture. In practice, the greater the degree of interest, the wider the range of alternative methods that can, and will, be considered. Some of the more obvious existing and potential way partners might contribute to After School Programs (ASP) are outlined in the following section.
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA (GOA):

Policy and Business Plan Alignment: The 2010-2013 Government of Alberta Strategic Business Plan establishes 10 clear Goals that are the shared responsibility of its Ministries and agencies. A system of high quality After School programs available to parents and children across Alberta would help to produce measurable outcomes that align closely with five of these strategic priorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOA: Goals for 2010-13 Strategic Business Plan</th>
<th>Quality After School: Aligned Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 1 Alberta will have a prosperous economy.</td>
<td>Improved school attainment &amp; graduation rates; likelihood of post secondary education; improved skills and employability; earning potential, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2 Albertans will be prepared for lifelong learning.</td>
<td>Increased ability in formal and informal learning; participation in other activities; ambition / likelihood of post secondary participation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 5 Albertans will be healthy.</td>
<td>Improved short and long term health indicators; improved activity levels / body weights; better nutritional / eating / personal health habits, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 6 Albertans will be independent and our children will be well cared for.</td>
<td>Supports workforce participation of parents; reduction in lost time for employers; a range of better child and youth outcomes during Critical Hours 3pm-6pm, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 7 Alberta will be a safe place to work and raise a family.</td>
<td>Improved engagement of youth; impacts on criminality and crime prevention; engages lower income and immigrant families; supports two parent and flexible employment; etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Potential / Suggested Roles:

- Intergovernmental leadership and cross ministerial engagement
- Funding and support for scalable demonstration projects and formal business planning phase
- Identification and elimination of policy and structural barriers
- Amendments to align existing programs, services and funding eligibility with local ASPs
- Provision of developmental and operating funds
- Subsidies for lower income families
- Labour force training and development
- Support ASP system resources: planning and design, monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance
- Supportive taxation measures
- Development of an Alberta After School brand and supportive social messaging
- Capital investments in appropriate and shared community facilities.
Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation:

Priority and Policy Alignment:

Upcoming Policy Document:
Active Alberta Policy: ATPR is set to bring forward a new “recreation, active living, and sports policy to encourage physically active lifestyle choices and increase participation in sports and recreation” among all Albertans. A Provincial After School recreation strategy would be a practical first step and a concrete part of this broader strategy.

Core Business Goal:
Albertans increasingly choose physically active lifestyles through participation in sport and recreation.

Business Plan 2010-13:
“The improve infrastructure to expand capacity and address the needs of Alberta’s growing population, by upgrading and restoring aging facilities..... Increase the emphasis on enhancing relations and partners and increasing collaboration within and across Ministries and with other governments to build consensus and improve the coordination of programs and services”.

Potential Roles:

- Assume a leadership role within the GOA on the development of ASPs and advocate for bi-lateral federal financial support
- Direct some of the ASRPWF Social Marketing spending to encourage ASP development and participation
- Adjust the funding criteria for existing programs (Sports Participation, Development Initiatives) to include ASP
- Encourage and advocate for a dedicated percentage of the Community Facility Enhancement Program grants to ASP capital requirements
- Provide one time support for local community systems infrastructure related to participation and evaluation
- Engage the network of Ever Active Schools in ASP
- Provide support to a Provincial Association of ASP for centralized resources (program development, evaluation, training, etc.)
- Support the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association to undertake follow up planning, developmental strategies and program design to engage their members in ASP
- Consult with and engage provincial recreation and sport associations about potential roles in a provincial ASP
- Support the ARPA in the utilization of HIGH FIVE™ quality assurance standard for sport and recreation programming for children ages 6-12
Ministry of Education:

Priority and Policy Alignment:

2009-12 Ministry Business Plan: Student Health and Wellness “A cornerstone of any successful education includes collaborative partnerships with appropriate range of community health and social service providers”.

Strategic Priority #7: Community Centred Schools: Ministry of Education will work with Treasury Board and Infrastructure to ensure schools are community-centred in order to “facilitate the provision of support services to children and students, and encourage community participation”.

Potential Roles:

- Actively work with Alberta Infrastructure to expand school based capacity for ASP and community engagement
- Direct a percentage of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) funding to ASP development
- Support program development for ASP that is educationally focussed and linked to curriculum
- Support and participate in evaluation efforts to capture ASP outcomes
- Provide or redirect a pool of funding to support home work assistance and or enrichment programs (e.g. educational components within ASP)
- Encourage and support the elimination of education-based policy barriers identified at the community level
- Encourage and province-wide health and wellness initiatives to actively engage in ASP
- Provide support for school facility access through expanded joint use of school/community agreements

Ministry of Children and Youth Services:

Business Plan Alignment:

Priority # 1. Prevention – Promoting the development and well-being of children youth and families.

Priority # 3. Partnerships – working with communities to build relationships, and share planning and decision making to improve outcomes for children and youth; collaborate with partners and stakeholder to focus on prevention and early intervention for children youth and families that are vulnerable; Improve services and outcomes for Aboriginal children, youth and their families; ensure families have access to quality affordable care, including out of school care.
Potential Roles:

- Provide / expand the Out-of-School Care Subsidy of $310/month for children (Grades 1 to 6) where needed to support participation in ASP
- Further align ASP’s with the space creation efforts of Creating Child Care Choices
- Expand or modify School Modular Program to share facilities, capacities with ASP
- Ensure access to Space Creation Innovation Funding for ASP
- Accreditation funding for out-of-school care will allow programs to access wage top-ups and grants for training, equipment, materials and supplies
- Assist with the planning and identification of community gaps for high risk children and youth
- Support additional Aboriginal ASP through the Aboriginal Space Creation Innovation Fund.
- Engage Regional CFSA’s to assist in enrolment and outreach to marginalized children - Success in School for Children in Care Strategy and Youth in Transition Funding both available
- Wage subsidy and training funding model may be adapted or expanded to include ASP staffing
- Engage Alberta’s Promise linking and brokering business and private sector donations to ASP
- Encourage the engagement of Family and Community Support Services and a flexible local interpretation of eligibility for ASPs
- Expand the Child Care Subsidy Program to include ASP fees
- Make Youth Strategies Branch Grants accessible for ASP development
- Youth Mentorship Grant Program accessible to ASP special projects / youth focussed
- Encourage the expanded participation of Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) locally
- Participate with Alberta Children and Youth Initiatives (ACYI) as appropriate in cross ministerial planning
- Engage the resources of the Alberta Centre for Child Family and Community Research and the Alberta Child and Youth Data Laboratory in training and evaluation as appropriate
- Include community aide/respite workers for ASP activities for families with FSCD contracts

Family and Community Support Services FCSS:

Program Alignment:

Under the current regulations governing eligible expenditures for FCSS, funding for traditional recreation programs is not available. There are however, a growing number of programs that occur after school with leadership and social skill development as a principal focus that do qualify. There is some local discretion and in some communities, the growing alignment and collaboration between FCSS, recreation and community services has helped.(29)

Recognizing there is some degree of local autonomy and flexibility in the funding and delivery of programs, FCSS supports programs that are preventive in nature to promote and enhance well-being among individuals, families, and communities. These programs are intended to help individuals in their community to adopt healthy lifestyles, thereby improving the quality of life and building the capacity to prevent and/or deal with crisis situations should they arise.(30)
**Potential Roles:**

- Adjust FSCC funding criteria to expand the eligibility of recreation based ASP (link to outcomes)
- Assist with the identification of program resources, sites and shared capacities
- Facilitate and support the work of local partners and collaborations for ASP
- Potential role in the allocation and decision making process for local ASP funding
- Encouraging the engagement of existing FCSS funded programs including the development of specialized programs and curriculum suitable for ASP
- Participate in system level evaluations, collect and share similar data sets across programs
- Include and engage existing child and youth programs under an Alberta ASP brand

**Ministry of Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services:**

**Priority and Policy Alignment:**
There is significant alignment between the outcomes associated with high quality After School programs, the stated policy goals of the Ministry and numerous programs within Alberta Health Services. Effective ASPs could make a significant contribution toward the goals and targets envisioned in “Framework for a Healthy Alberta”.

*Healthy Children & Youth Development Division:* Supports the development, coordination and evaluation of community health promotion and disease prevention strategies targeting children and youth aged 6 to 24 years. *Priorities include:* Promoting healthy weights and active living; resiliency and mental health; preventing injury; preventing substance misuse (including tobacco); and comprehensive school health – outcomes that are well aligned with high quality After School programs.

**Potential Roles:**

- Align where possible the programs and services of the Healthy Children and Youth Initiative
- Review all school based health and wellness programs for alignment or redirection to ASP
- Consider support for social marketing to encourage participation in ASP (as per the previous Make it Happen and the Healthy weights social marketing campaign)
- Continue support for the Healthy Weights Strategy and Regional Health Promotion Coordinators to work with local ASPs
- Engage the resources and programs of the Health Promotion Branch of Alberta Health Services in ASP support
- Engage the support and resources of the Community Nutrition Services Branch of Alberta Health Services in ASP
- Dedicate a percentage or encourage ASP applications through the Wellness Fund for Healthy School Communities ($1 million annual)
- Encourage the network of volunteers from Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities (ACHSC) to support the development of recreation based ASPs
- Use the system and community consultation services of the Healthy Living Program for ASP
**Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit:**

**Priority and Policy Alignment:**

*Alberta’s Cultural Policy: The Spirit of Alberta:* Includes two primary goals for Alberta that would be well supported by After School programs at the local level:

*Increase Capacity:* seek to provide opportunities for Albertans to learn to respect and understand one another’s cultural heritage, through the programming of museums, libraries, schools, cinemas, parks, sports clubs, sports and cultural centers,

*Improve Access:* The Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit along with our partners seeks to expand the roles of neighbourhood and community centers etc., as local cultural hubs to support those sectors most able to create and offer quality cultural services at a localized level.

**Potential Roles:**

- Direct funding or adjust criteria to include ASP in the Community Facility Enhancement Program (CFEP)
- Include ASP as an eligible province-wide applicant within the Community Initiatives Program
- Ensure community and regional parts of the ASP development are eligible for the Community Spirit Grant Program
- Alberta Foundation for the Arts: Direct a percentage or encourage innovative partnerships in ASP through the many grant streams available (e.g. Artists and Education; Arts Partnership)
- Provide support to ASP development through the Ministry’s facilitation, consultation services and training programs
- Provide support through the Volunteer Police Information Check Program
- Consider or encourage innovative applications for ASP development (not operations) through the “Other Initiatives” Lottery Fund Program

**Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General:**

**Priority and Policy Alignment:**

*Business Plan 2010-13:*

Strategic Priority #1: Reduce crime and support safe communities – work with other ministries, stakeholders and communities through Safe Communities to develop and advance a long term crime reduction and prevention framework.

**Potential Roles:**

- Dedicate a percentage or adjust criteria for the Safe Communities funding to include support for ASP – especially in high risk communities
- Consider an application to the Innovation Fund to further the development and implementation of ASP in Alberta (demonstration stage support)
- Link, where appropriate, existing Safe Communities projects and partners to ASPs
- Consider how a network of high quality After School programs might be positioned as one part of the Safe Communities ‘legacy’
Ministry of the Solicitor General and Public Security:

**Potential Roles:**

- Create a dedicated strategy within the existing Community-based Programs for ASP (currently listed as a proven and effective crime prevention strategy)
- Support specific or targeted ASPs, through the Alberta Community Crime Prevention (ACCP) Grants stream
- Align and engage the Youth Restorative Justice Program with ASP as appropriate (e.g. shared space, volunteer/community service)
- Undertake a comprehensive review of Lottery Fund disbursements to facilitate increased funding to community innovation, wellness and quality of life initiatives such as ASPs

Ministry of Infrastructure:

**Priority and Policy Alignment:**

**Business Plan 2010-13:**

- Strategic Priority #1: Work with other ministries to provide learning facilities, health facilities and other public infrastructure to meet the needs of Albertans

- Strategic Priority #2: Adapt standard facility designs and best practices to increase the efficiency of health and education infrastructure.

**Potential Roles:**

- Encourage a percentage of the Community Facilities Enhancement funding and the Community Facilities funding to ASP capital needs
- Direct a percentage of Federal Building Canada Community Component funding to support ASP capital needs
- Dedicate a percentage of the Unallocated Capital Provision to support ASP capital needs
- Incorporate the space needed for ASP and other community programming in the design and construction of new schools
- Make special capital provisions for school design in rural communities to provide additional recreational space for ASP and other activities (e.g. large gym based on community inventory and population, not school size and student population)

*Research clearly shows that between 3pm and 6pm there are greatly increased levels criminality and arrest, more experimentation with drugs and sex, injuries and accidents, and a host of other bad outcomes for children and youth... none of which is much good for their community.*
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development:

**Potential Roles:**

- Involve the resources and services of Rural Alberta's Development Office to support ASP
- Agriculture Education & Training Branch assistance with AS Program development / curriculum
- Utilize the services of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development as appropriate
- Involve the 4-H Branch of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development in program development
- Engage the resources / supports available through the Agriculture in the Classroom Program
- Involve the Growing Forward Agency in curriculum and program support
- Adjust the eligibility for Leadership Development Grants to include leadership development programs in rural ASPs
- Review the criteria of the Rural Community Adaptation Grant Program to see what supports might be appropriate for ASP development
- Engage the support of the Alberta Fish and Game Association in curriculum / program support
- Involve the Canada’s Outstanding Young Farmers Program in curriculum / program development
- Engage the resources of Alberta’s Rural Development Fund for ASP implementation in rural and remote communities

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations:

**Potential Roles:**

- Dedicate a percentage or adjust criteria to support ASP applications to the General Grants Program
- Dedicate a percentage or adjust criteria to include ASP in the First Nations Development Fund
- Support the development of ASP within Aboriginal Communities

Ministry of Employment and Immigration:

**Potential Roles:**

- Funding through a Labour Market Partnership Agreement for a Human Resource strategy for ASP in Alberta
- Adjust funding criteria for Alberta Child Health Benefit Plan to include ASP fees
- Support program development and curriculum for youth related to employment and training opportunities within ASP

Treasury Board:

Consider a number of tax strategies that might best support ASP (deductible parental expenses, expand eligibility criteria of Fitness Tax Credit, adjust the value of charitable donations to community infrastructure, support matching public and charitable donations for ASP infrastructure, etc.). Treasury Board should also participate in a comprehensive review of Lottery Fund disbursements to facilitate increased funding to community innovation, wellness and quality of life initiatives, including ASPs.
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

Policy Alignment:

Inter-Sectoral Action on Children and Youth Physical Activity (2009):
Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation will work to collaborate with Ministers of Health and Education...to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of Canada’s children and youth by increasing their physical activity. (27)

Reaching for the Top: A Report by the Advisor on Healthy Children and Youth (28) recommendations:

- Setting obesity targets - The Government of Canada should seek to reduce the rate of childhood obesity from 8% to 5% by 2015
- Promoting after school programs - The federal government should show leadership by being the driving force supporting organizations that provide excellent after-school programs to support able-bodied and disabled children
- Increasing physical activity - Achieve a 20% increase in the number of Canadian children and youth who are physically active, eat healthily, and are at healthy body weights by 2015.

Potential Roles:

- Expanding the existing tax credit system to include any parental costs for ASP
- Create new allowable income tax deductions for families using ASP
- Direct a portion of Federal crime prevention resources to support the development of ASP
- Incent partners or dedicate a percentage of infrastructure funding through the Community Component of the Building Canada Fund to ASP
- Direct percentage of other federal funding transfers to ASP
- Assist and support the development of ASP in Aboriginal communities
- Assist monitoring population based health outcomes of ASP
- Redirect a percentage of social media spending to engaging Canadians to participate in ASP
- Establish bi-lateral funding for ASP’s in provinces and territories that establish ASPs
- Encourage the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Healthy Living Unit, Health Canada, and other line departments to participate and review the eligibility of ASP for existing program funds
- Encourage physical/sport literacy through the Canadian Sport for Life Strategy using ASPs
- Support for social messaging on recreation based After School participation; participation in population health monitoring and evaluations; direct and directed contributions to facility and/or capital; tax credits and allowances.
Local School Boards:

It is important to recognize that many school boards across the province are already actively engaged in supporting ASP and in a variety of ways. Providing space, supporting homework clubs and linking ASPs to school priorities are primary roles in most communities. There are also quite a number of other school health and recreation partnerships at the school and community level that are – or could be – engaged in ASPs for children and youth.

Potential Roles:

- Assist with the identification of local space, service gaps and participation in ASP planning
- Assisting wherever possible with facility access issues
- Assistance with staff recruitment for ASP from existing board personnel
- Support for program development and program specialists
- Assist with evaluation and control group support
- Provide the linkage between ASP and school curriculum
- Encourage student participation as Tutors in Homework and as other leaders/play animators, activity organizers (e.g. eligible for community service time)
- Revisit Joint Use of School agreements with community recreation service providers to expand opportunities for ASPs and facility usage (community and school)
- Assist with local Union engagement and address barriers arising from collective agreements
- Engage volunteers from local School Councils in the design and partnership development process

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENTS:

Priority and Policy Alignment:

There is considerable difference across the province in terms of how local recreation and community service departments are involved in direct programming and their roles in supporting ASP will vary accordingly. Some communities have moved almost entirely into a system and facility management role while others still provide direct services working closely with local communities to oversee, develop and deliver programs. For the purposes of ASP, the community development and oversight of direct staff model is preferable although many important contributions can still be made by those departments that have more of a system management role (e.g. quality of service, facility access, program linkages, sharing equipment).

Potential Roles:

- Assist with target community identification
- Provide specialized program staff and expertise
- Assist with training, development and recruitment functions
- Ensure ASP can affordably access public recreation facilities and existing programs
- Provide / support funding, planning and decision making process for local ASPs
- Act as the employer and service provider
- Provide local ASP supports and oversight (Manager)
- Support special transportation strategies with municipal public transit
- Align local ASP initiatives with Provincial strategy as appropriate
- Incorporate ASPs into annual calendar, program, facility and budget planning processes
- Participate in any financial match strategies to build ASP locally
- Support evaluation efforts aimed at provincial aggregate reporting

**Aligned Networks and Associations:**
There are a significant number of collaborative strategies and partnerships throughout Alberta, whose missions and mandates very closely align with various aspects of the active, healthy living components found in quality After School programs. The energy, resources and local partnerships of these groups will be instrumental in the development of ASP in the schools and communities where they already work. An abbreviated list of these groups includes:

- **Alberta Active Living Partners:** Active living organizations that collaborate through programs, services, research, and advocacy to help Albertans be physically active.
- **The Alberta Coalition for Healthy School Communities:** Promotes and fosters healthy school communities through a comprehensive school health approach that enhances the health of Alberta children and youth.
- **Ever Active Schools Campaign:** Fosters the development and growth of active living in Alberta's schools. Designated Ever Active Schools are committed to developing, supporting, and promoting physical activity which is fun, safe, challenging, focused on learning, inclusive, well managed, and linked to the community.
- **Be Fit for Life Network:** Meets the unique needs of rural and urban communities in Alberta, promoting, initiating, coordinating, developing and delivering regular physical activity and quality, healthy, lifestyle services and programs.
- **Healthy U:** Gives Albertans access to current, evidence-based information about healthy choices and factors that affect health. This site provides information on active living, healthy eating, workplace health and community health.
- **The InMotion Network:** Promotes physical activity for girls and women so they enjoy a balanced, healthy lifestyle through participation in a full range of physical activities.
- **Schools Come Alive:** Provides leadership through workshops, resource development, and collaborative partnerships to increase physical activity opportunities and promote healthy choices in Alberta school communities.
- **SHAPE - Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere:** Is designed to get children more physically active; eliminate safety obstacles in and around schools keep the environment clean by physically teaching children active and healthy lifestyles, and involve all members of the community.
- **Active Edmonton:** Inspiring a strong, supportive and active city and designed to complement other provincial and federal health promotion programs, with an emphasis on Edmonton residents.
- **Active Healthy Kids Canada:** Advocates on the issue of quality, accessible, and enjoyable physical activity to increase the attention given to, investment in, and effective implementation of physical activity opportunities for all Canadian children and youth.
Potential Roles/Engagement Strategy:
There will need to be a process to bring all these groups (and others) together to consider how they might best fit with a provincial strategy to substantially increase the number of children and youth engaged in physically active, healthy ASPs. Although they are funded through separate ministries, foundations and levels of government, it will be important to consider how, or if, some of these resources might be sustained by engaging more directly in outcome based ASPs.

Engaging Alberta’s Corporate and Private Sector:
The ARPA conducted a survey between March 19 and April 5, 2010 of 40 business sector individuals and organizations to gauge their interest in supporting ASPs. (31) The survey was designed to see what sorts of programs and associated outcomes would be most meaningful to them along with their preferences around location, age groups and the types of contributions they might be most comfortable making. Interestingly, business people felt that programs to improve the lifestyle choices made by children (86.8%) and their health outcomes (84.6%) would be the most valuable although there was nearly equal interest in ensuring that lower income children had a safe and healthy environment during the after school period (84.2%). ASP’s that are intended to prevent crime / reduce criminality (76.3%); and improve school results (73.7%) while still valuable, were considered slightly less worthy of investment.

Given the survey was circulated by the ARPA and associated networks, it is not surprising to see enormous support for sport and recreational activities (79%) within ASPs, while only 53% of respondents would be inclined to support programs that develop skill in arts and culture. Business people indicated a clear preference for ASPs aimed at older children ages 12-16 (81.6%) and 6-12 year olds (78%), but only half of the respondents would contribute to ASPs aimed at older youth (ages 16-18). Nearly two thirds do see ASP’s as an opportunity to encourage links with employment and training opportunities. In terms of location, business people felt most comfortable supporting ASPs in schools (70%) public recreation facilities (65%) and other community locations (64%). The chance to engage their employees directly in some volunteer capacity was only considered valuable by a small majority (54%).
Motivators: There are many reasons why a business might consider providing philanthropic support. Which of the following statements would motivate your business to contribute to ASP? (Scale 1-5: 1-not important – 5-very important)

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Figure 4: Motivations for Private/Corporate Sector Involvement

Given so few of them have ever been asked or contributed financial support to an ASP (76%), it was not surprising to find that Alberta business people were ambivalent about the kinds of support they might prefer to provide to ASPs. Program equipment and supplies; special programs; support for low income children; volunteer engagement; and providing in-kind resources, were all considered potentially worthy of investment, but no clear priority emerged. They were however, clearly not interested in providing any one-time capital donations (70%); or supporting a province-wide centralized resource for ASPs (61%), which they may consider a public role. Similarly, over half of the respondents suggested it was very unlikely they would consider funding operational costs for ASPs.

Despite the methodological limitations, this survey is a good starting point for the development of a strategic approach to developing business and corporate sector support for ASPs in Alberta. This should include a more rigorous and extensive consultation process and the creation of key messages and communications materials that could be shared and used by ASPs across the province. Given our political and philanthropic culture and the clear need to diversify and sustain support, engaging corporate and private sector interest in ASPs will be critical to success in Alberta.
Development, Implementation and Demonstration Strategies

Framing the Development Process: Definitions, Assumption and Principles:

This report assumes that developing a system of high quality after school opportunities across Alberta will be an evolutionary process, requiring a willingness to innovate and adapt as opportunities arise – and from a wide range of partners. As such, we should be explicit from the outset about the definitions, assumptions and the principles that will be used to recruit participation, guide the developmental process and frame the boundaries of the discussions.

Definitions:
For the purposes of this report and the discussion around a future recreation based After School strategy programs it’s important to clarify the following terms:

Recreation:
Includes all those things that an individual or group chooses to do in order to make their leisure time more interesting more enjoyable and more personally satisfying. Recreation is not confined to sports and physical activities but includes artistic, creative, cultural, social and intellectual activities. At a practical level this includes organized, team and individual sports, exercise, dance, play, arts and culture and other leisure activities that children and youth will enjoy.

Critical Hours:
Although some groups refer to all out of school time as ‘critical hours’ we refer specifically to the time between 3pm to 6pm weekdays, during the school year.

Out-of-School Care (OSC):
A licensed and certified child care program provided to kindergarten and school-aged children grades 1-6, before and after school, during the lunch hour or when schools are closed.

After School Programs (ASP): Community and school based programs offered between 3pm-6 pm weekdays during the school year that provide purposeful, supervised and age appropriate activities for children grades 1-12. These programs may or may not be licensed as Out of School Care.

Assumptions:
The outcomes associated with quality After School programs are very closely aligned and would contribute to the stated public policy goals of the Government of Canada, the Province of Alberta and a significant number of their respective ministries and departments.
Any new initiative should be developed in a “contributing partnership” - where existing services, grant streams, departmental programs or policies are engaged or modified to support some aligned aspect of the After School program (e.g. expanded criteria, dedicating a percentage of program staff, redirecting existing services, pairing, matching or braiding capital funds). Some new investments, however, will be required.

The current fiscal situation for all three levels of government and community agencies will require an investment strategy that can leverage and maximize the value of our existing facilities and community assets, building on existing programs and services wherever possible.

The full range of creative public policy mechanisms must be considered in the development of an Alberta ASP including tax incentives and purposeful changes to regulations, policies, practices, funding streams, mechanisms and systems that act as a barrier to the sustained development and delivery of quality programs.

Current and projected budget deficits and demographic profiles provide strong incentives for new or reallocated investments in wellness and prevention (32). Quality ASPs have the capacity to help address the growing and projected burden of health care, and the economic costs associated with obesity, physical inactivity, poor educational attainment, criminality and unhealthy lifestyle choices.

**Principles:**

There is no need to re-establish the link between good quality ASPs and positive physical activity, health, education and other developmental outcomes. A provincial strategy should focus on identifying opportunities related to providing and measuring quality ASPs, effective local designs and delivery, appropriate centralized or system supports, and plans to address longer term expansion and capacity issues.

A “framework” for high quality After-School programs does require explicit program goals to create measurable outcomes, but must allow for flexibility in program design, delivery and content to reflect the priorities, abilities and interests of local and rural communities (e.g. a community development model). We should anticipate programming will steadily change and improve over time.

Any strategy to provide ASP must make participation barrier free to children and youth from low income or disadvantaged groups. Although ASP are well suited to a population health approach (8), special efforts will be needed to engage targeted populations, including those aligned with the existing priorities of contributing partners (e.g. Aboriginal youth, children in care).

Quality ASPs should be available to all children and youth between grades 1 and 12, with the specific blend of age configurations and programming determined by gaps in service, local priorities and community capacities.

Special provisions may be required to address the challenges associated with rural and remote communities and will only be developed with the input of local residents and stakeholders.
Building on what currently exists, an Alberta After School recreation strategy would insist on the use of valid, straightforward evaluation tools that can measure and report on population health, local and program outcomes.

**Implementation: A System Development Approach:**

(33) In an attempt to be realistic about the amount of effort involved in developing what could truly be called a ‘system’ of After School Programs in Alberta, the following broad outline and extended timetable is proposed.

**Phase One:**
**Leadership and Planning: July/August 2010 – April 2011**

*Leadership Development:*
Initiated by Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation, convene a leadership team of deputy ministers from those provincial ministries most aligned with the outcomes proposed by the program mix outlined by ARPA - (by August/September 2010).

*Generating system level support:*
Using the ARPA report as a starting point, conduct a more formal GOA review of provincial programs, services and funding strategies to identify potential supports for the various components of an After School system - (by October/November 2010).

*Engaging agencies and communities:*
Bring together all those groups who are currently involved - or would like to be - in the provision of After School programming for a vision and planning session - (by November/December 2010).

*Developing and testing frameworks and methods:*
Develop a group of representative demonstration sites – both new and existing programs – to test review current and proposed program frameworks, develop and refine evaluation tools, and identify the business needs of a broader strategy - (by December 2010 – February 2011).

*Business Planning:*
Based on the potential for new investment, reallocations, partner contributions, and the experiences in different communities, establish a cross ministry three year build out plan to support the expansion of high quality After School programs in Alberta - (by April 2011).

**Phase Two:**
**Developing System Supports: July/August 2010- September 2011 (Ongoing)**

*Labour Market and Human Resource Planning:*
Work with provincial community agencies and partner organizations to identify and address the barriers to recruiting and qualifying and retaining people to work in ASPs. This would include strategies to engage older secondary and post secondary students, existing school staff and community volunteers - (by September 2010 - January 2011).
Establishing a Provincial Framework:
However flexible, a provincial framework must insist that programs and activities are linked to measurable outcomes. Tools and methods that allow local ASPs to measure and report on their effectiveness will be developed - (by April 2011).

Program and Quality Development:
Establish a method and a resource to share promising practices including curriculum and program ideas, support ongoing learning opportunities, and encouraging the use of reliable tools to regularly measure program quality, etc. - (by April 2011).

Training and Technical Support:
With input from practitioners and partners identify a strategy to provide a centralize support mechanism for evaluation, data management, training and technical support (e.g. safety, budget, reporting). Consider naming an ‘Alberta After School Resource Centre’ to acknowledge exemplary public service to children and youth by a notable Albertan - (by September 2011).

Phase Three:
Expansion and Engagement: September 2011- June 2013

Access and Participation:
Based on available budget, an annual target should be set for program development with specific goals (ratios or percentages) for new spaces, program expansions and efforts to include special populations.

Building Facilities and Sharing Space:
Develop and implement strategies to secure existing community space either through new agreements on shared facilities, the identification and elimination of financial and access barriers, and or investments in capital and facility expansions.

Outreach and Innovation:
Encourage and support the development of innovative recreation and physical activity programs designed to reach and engage difficult to serve populations and those at higher risk.

Establishing a Quality Brand for ASP in Alberta:
Investments in social marketing and messaging on the importance of healthy positive activities during the ‘critical hours’ (3pm to 6pm) and the expansion of Alberta’s high quality After School recreation strategy.

Phase Four:
Building Sustainability: September 2011 – June 2013

Expanding the Range of Funding Options:
Develop and disseminate the ASP fund development case statement to key constituents. Continue efforts to diversify the range of governmental and public funded programs that can be used to support some aspect of ASP.
Centralized Support and Resources:
Ensure that local ASPs have the information and training they require to raise adequate program and other needed resources.

Corporate, Foundation and Other Supports:
Create incentives; identify and remove barriers that prevent greater corporate sector involvement in funding ASPs (e.g. content, sponsorship restrictions, and naming rights).

Outcome Monitoring – Feedback to Program:
Prepare and issue an annual public assessment of the ASP in Alberta that provides output and outcome data from all provincially supported programs.

An ARPA Supported Demonstration Strategy:
Much is already known about running, managing and, to a lesser extent, evaluating basic ASPs. A demonstration effort should focus on identifying those capacity and other issues that are critical to business planning, further system development and provincial scalability. The effort is not intended to re-establish the link between ASP and positive outcomes, but to learn and clarify how we can best design and deliver quality programs in a variety of circumstances in communities across Alberta.

As there are already many good programs underway, some of which are very well aligned with the Framework proposed here, these initiatives should be included in the research and business planning phase. The demonstration strategy should focus on the following:

- Test the proposed framework in new pilots, review success/challenges of variations
- Pilot and test the proposed evaluation tools, identify needs re: training, data collection / use
- Develop and test an alternative to licensing (e.g. Quality Assurance System)
- Identify local and shared planning and developmental barriers (e.g. policy and practices)
- Identify system development needs and/or shared, centralized supports
- Provide concrete directions re: program expansion and budget requirements
- Develop meaningful and effective strategies for parental input and quality assessment

At this point, a ‘demonstration’ strategy should focus on identifying policy barriers and those capacity issues that are critical to business planning, system development and provincial scalability - not trying to re-establish the link between quality ASPs and positive outcomes.

At a policy level, the early adopters and champions who agree to participate in a demonstration strategy should be asked to identify how they might partner and align their efforts with any local Safe Communities initiative or projects. This successful cross ministerial effort provides a good working template for an Alberta After School recreation strategy, as it involves many of the same partners and is provincial in its scope and ambition. A system to develop and support ASPs could be an important long term outcome – and a concrete legacy - for the recent investments in prevention and safer communities.
Provincial Leadership

Cross Ministry Provincial Leadership:
Given the significant and varied impacts of quality After School programs there are good reasons for many of the potential partners to assume the facilitative and leadership roles required to develop a collaborative provincial strategy. Certainly the Contribution Analysis suggests a wide range of leadership opportunities exist as the strategy unfolds. There are however, a number of important reasons to suggest that leadership from the Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation will be critical to the success of the strategy outlined here:

- There is clear alignment between the outcomes of quality after school programs and the current investments and future policy goals of the Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.
- Recreation - broadly defined – will likely represent more than 50% of the total program mix, particularly where children and youth help to determine the priorities. (34)
- Access to existing recreational facilities (and staff) will be critical in most communities, especially in smaller, more remote and rural settings.
- The participant tracking system used by recreation providers in most communities (e.g. Class) can be readily adapted for program evaluation purposes.
- The linkages of those in the recreation sector will help to engage new partners in the creation of local high quality after school program (e.g. Sport Councils, volunteer and community associations) – particularly in smaller communities.

In many jurisdictions, particularly in the United States, ASPs are primarily led by the education sector. These programs are overwhelmingly targeted at particular “at-risk” groups or communities and are generally intended to compensate for personal or family disadvantages and remediate poor results in school. Regardless of whether programs are ‘targeted’ at the local level, there are a number of important reasons for Ministry of Education leadership in the development of any sort of After School strategy in Alberta, including:

- The use of school facilities is the preferred location for ASP – especially for younger children - providing a seamless transition, eliminating additional transportation costs, and allowing parents to remain at work.
- Any network or system of ASP for Alberta will necessitate the use of school facilities particularly given the limited inventory of potential space in many communities across Alberta,
- The clear alignment with the many healthy living, lifestyle, active school initiatives and school health partnerships already underway.
- There is good evidence to suggest that high quality ASP with a strong educational component can and will improve school results – in terms of attainment and school engagement,
- Many first generation immigrant families are reluctant to involve their children and youth in activities that are characterized as “recreational” preferring a focus on education and improving school results. (35)
- Quality ASP can be structured to link back to the curriculum and the specific health promotion and education strategies of school administrators and teachers.

Stone Soup: The Recipe for an After School Recreation Strategy In Alberta
As poor school results are often associated with disadvantaged families and communities, more partners, programs, services and grant streams could participate where there was a focus on improving school attainment.

Programs that do focus on remediating poor school results or providing enriched educational opportunities are more likely to engage the financial support of the private sector, donors and foundations.

Whatever framework is adopted around the mix of programming, even allowing for local, community and parental input, it is clear that recreation and learning should — and will - play a central role. While the success of the strategy outlined here requires the participation of many different partner Ministries, the active participation of the Education and ATRP will be essential.

Both the proposed Program Framework and the ‘Alignment and Contribution Analysis’ (above) suggest the importance of engaging a number of other key partners to begin the process. High quality ASPs can be designed to focus on several of the most important policy goals of the Ministry of Health and Wellness (Alberta Health Services) and purposeful efforts to improve long and short term health outcomes are critical in the proposed program mix. Similarly, leadership and support for the various healthy living program components will be required across the province and the engagement of Ministry expertise will be essential.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has a number of important potential roles to play and as they bear the primary responsibility for the well being of children, youth and families in Alberta they must be included in the development process. Not surprisingly, the ‘Alignment and Contribution Analysis’ demonstrates that this Ministry has the widest range of possible ways to support and engage with an ASP in Alberta. The other key partner in the early development of a broader cross ministerial group might be the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit where there is significant policy alignment — again with the possible outcomes of ASPs — and the clearly stated goals of this Ministry.

The shared leadership and cross ministry model most recently used to develop and implement the successful Safe Communities initiative, and the many partnerships that led to the creation of the Alberta Mentoring Partnership, offer good illustrations of what is ultimately required. As in this instance, leadership will have less to do with decision making and much more to do with creating a working consensus on the outcomes that should be targeted by an Alberta After School recreation strategy.
**ARPA Membership: Leadership, Leverage and Support:**

It is entirely appropriate that the ARPA take on a facilitative leadership role in the development of an After School recreation strategy for Alberta. Like many other potential partners, the ARPA and its membership see ASP’s as an ideal and aligned way to advance their long running mission: improving the social, personal and long term health outcomes of children and youth through participation in recreation and sport. Already involved with ASPs to varying degrees, the many members of the ARPA will have to play a supportive and facilitative role – in almost every community - for a provincial after school recreation strategy to succeed.

With a diverse membership spread across the province, the specific ways individuals and groups will participate is difficult to predict and inappropriate to prescribe. As with other partners, the ‘fit’ for members of the ARPA will be driven by their capacities, their community relationships, and the support of their local councils and governing bodies. There are however, a number of significant contributions that can be leveraged and engaged where local members of the ARPA are committed to supporting a provincial system of high quality After School recreation programs. These would include:

- Convene local partners for planning and development discussions on ASPs
- Share existing organizational data on child and youth participation, gaps in service, and identify underutilized community capacities
- Provide or facilitate the affordable use of local recreation facilities and assets
- Support or provide ASP program and specialized staff
- Provide support to community engagement and program planning with parents, kids and local Neighbourhoods
- Act as the organizational host for administrative, budget and accountability purposes
- Engage aligned service clubs, sport, recreation and youth organizations and funded partners in ASPs
- Encourage support for ASPs with other departments within the local or regional government
- Assist with the development, implementation and evaluation of a Demonstration and Business Planning Strategy as outlined in the ARPA report
- Share staff training, safety and human resource capacities with the local system for ASPs
- Engage local Boards and senior volunteers in efforts to expand support financial and other support at the local level
- Modify the existing recreational tracking systems (CASE) to support a common provincial evaluation strategy
- Integrate ASP’s into the annual facility access, planning and budget process

It would be difficult to ascribe a concrete monetary value to the many and varied contributions that could by leveraged by ARPA members across Alberta should the provincial government support the development of a provincial system of high quality ASPs. While the recommendations in this report do outline the immediate and short term commitments of the Board of Directors and the ARPA membership, the Association is committed to providing support and leadership to After School development for the foreseeable future.
Footnotes:

1. It cannot be overstated that all of the positive reports of outcomes in the literature are linked to programming that is purposeful, high quality, delivered by qualified and consistent staff. Efforts that are unstructured and informal have little ability to produce or measure outcomes.

2. Website: Canadian Parks and Recreation and the National Benefits Network: Benefits Catalogue Updated 1997

3. A scan of all the Ministries and departments of the Alberta government was undertaken to identify where there were existing programs, services and funding streams that were similar in their existing intent and/or potentially aligned with the outcomes of ASPs. Similarly, budget allocations for 2010-2013, business and strategic plans were reviewed to understand implications and motivations for supporting ASPs provincially.

4. “A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary” Canadian Research Centre for Law and the Family, Calgary Alberta, 2008

5. Website: City of Calgary, Family and Community Support Services Calgary, Research Brief No. 1, Outcome: Positive Child and Youth Development, June 2009

6. Unpublished Survey: Calgary Children’s Initiative Research with Adults and Youth in Calgary, Angus Reid Strategies, January 27, 2009

7. There are wide discrepancies around the costs associated with ASPs exacerbated by supply / demand issues. US data shows costs between $1700 – 3400 per child per year although estimates in Alberta suggest costs in the $1500-2500 range.


9. In the United States the focus is primarily educational while Australia for example has a large emphasis on recreation and physical activity.

10. Teen Zone is a self directed After School program for youth where they determine the program priorities which staff then facilitates. Even with a wide open range of choices, youth were still interested in significant active and sport recreation time.

11. The Membership of the ARPA is aligned with After School programs because of the opportunity they present to improve the lives of children through recreation. This component part is central to achieving the sorts of outcomes that are possible, and critical from the perspective of the ARPA.

12. This chart is an oversimplification drawn from a wide range of sources about the benefits and outcomes associated with high quality after school programs. It is intended to demonstrate the overlapping interest in outcomes and the need for diversity in programming.

13. There were immediate expressions of interest in the development of a long term partnership to evaluate the proposed after school recreation strategy from Canadian and Alberta based researchers with the requisite qualifications. There are a number of public funding opportunities that might be appropriate depending on how the research and partnership are designed (Alberta Centre for Child Family and Community Research, SHIRC, Canadian Health Research Institute, etc.). Given the nature of the project it should be feasible to attract private foundation support.
14. The ARPA survey was conducted on survey monkey and 40 responses were generated using a variety of social and personal networks from those involved with ARPA or the project. The respondents were a fairly representative mix of employer size, participated voluntarily and were asked to rank various options on a scale of likelihood (unlikely – very likely). Given the methodological limitations, the survey cannot be considered representative of all or a majority of private sector interests in Alberta.


16. Website: After School Alliance

17. Quite a number of the Key Informant Interviewees made this point based on their experience attracting new Canadians to ASPs.

18. Results from Teen Zone as described above.

19. This is the position of the ARPA regarding the need for mandatory activity as part of the After School strategy for Alberta.

20. There is some evidence provided by key informants that location preference for Schools gradually changes as the children get older and their parents are more comfortable with travel in the community. Notwithstanding, the costs associated with travel can serve as a barrier to participation.

21. The current licensing arrangements only cover children to age 12. The new Act provides for exceptions based on the particular circumstances of a program but would be cumbersome were it to apply to every ‘exceptional’ ASP. Expanding the current licensing approach to cover ASP is not workable the way it is currently structured.

22. Key Informant interviews.

23. The use of self reporting is a methodological challenge that is difficult to avoid when doing evaluations in a community based setting. Ideally, the After School evaluation system will include some hard indicators that can verify or refute self reports.

24. GPI Atlantic – Genuine Progress Index: This organization has provided quite a number of reliable studies on burden of illness and associated costs for provinces across Canada. They base their work specifically on national, provincial and local data.

25. GPI Atlantic would be able to provide such a base line study.

26. The entire section that follows comes from an in depth review of the Government of Alberta website, the various ministries and departments, their strategic and business plans 2011-2013, their listed programs, services and funding opportunities. It is important to acknowledge that some of this information may be out of date and not be properly represented on these sites.


29. Key Informant interviews with FSCC staff in Calgary, Lethbridge and Red Deer.

30. Website: Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta.

31. Summary of results from Survey Monkey of private sector interest in ASP conducted by ARPA (see footnote 14).
32. There are countless sources describing the difficulties in containing health care costs worsened by the demographic aging of the population. The Alberta Health and Wellness website shows spending now at 39% of the total budget.


34. Teen Zone as above.

35. Key Informant interviews as above.