BENCHMARKING MODELS
OF BEST PRACTICE AMONGST NGOs

BACKGROUND

Between 2017 and 2018, the After School Game Changer and The Learning Trust partnered to develop a tool and process for NGOs to review and strengthen their programmes with the aim of establishing shared standards of quality and contributing to overall learning emerging from the after school sector. Additional outcomes include a means to highlight innovations in the sector, facilitate active peer-to-peer learning and to identify areas where capacity-building efforts can be focused.

The tool has been designed to allow organisations to conduct self-assessments of their practice against developing standards of good practice in key programme areas as well as to facilitate conversations and group learning between organisations. Whether completed by an individual or in groups, the tool is focused on informing organisations on developing standards and prompting them to take action to improve their own practice.

EXTENSIVE TESTING PHASE

Four pilots were undertaken to ensure the relevance of the tool and process. The first two pilots entailed two NGO's who volunteered to help 'test' the tool and process. The first involved a panel of peers reviewing an organisation and their programme and then giving feedback. This included a two-day process of presentations, discussions and a site visit. The second involved a group of facilitators reviewing the organisation and their programme. This included a facilitated workshop to complete the tool with the organisation's representatives. Upon completion of the first two pilots, it was clear that the correct balance of time, capacity and peer involvement had not yet been achieved. The team then proceeded to obtain further input from a sample of organisations that would potentially use the tool. As a result, a third pilot was held with as a reflective focus

The tool consists of surveys focusing on the following areas:

- **Programme Design**
- **Environment, Health and Wellness**
- **Human Resources**
- **Relationships**
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; and**
- **Organisational Development**

group of six NGOs. This informed an extensive reworking of the tool and process.

The final pilot focused on testing the tool as a means to facilitate both individual reflection and group learning with 16 participants representing 10 NGOs. Once individuals had completed the survey, organisations worked together in groups to reflect on areas where they felt they exhibited good practice, and also areas they wished to improve. Participants were then encouraged to pair up with members from another organisation to discuss and learn about how to improve on areas of development, learning from each other's experiences. Smaller group discussions culminated in a facilitated group discussion focusing on shared elements of good practice, along with what practical steps could be taken to achieve such results.

The fourth pilot had the effect of creating a safe space for peer-learning and the tool was found to be catalytic in facilitating both self-reflection and shared learning. With its combination of self-reflection and facilitated group discussion with peers, this final pilot was found to be the approach which would best attain the intended purposes of the peer-assessment process.

Western Cape Government
Cultural Affairs and Sport

BETTER TOGETHER.

Game Changer
After School

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that the tool is not about what organisations must do, but rather about understanding what various organisations in differing and unique contexts are doing to strengthen models of good practice. Using the tool enables organisations to identify what they can improve on and how to do so within their existing resources. If used in a group, there is an added benefit of peer-learning, assisting with areas of development that organisations may not be able to address on their own.

The tool is available for download by **clicking here**.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE TOOL IN GROUPS

- **Keep groups to 4-6 participants to encourage meaningful exchange and more effective facilitation.**

- **When completing the tool, focus on one section at a time. Alternatively, ask organisations to come having already completed that section of the tool.**

- **Group sessions require a facilitator to be present in the group – to guide the conversation and to capture learnings from the tool.**

- **Begin the group conversation by hearing from a peer organisation that is seeing positive results from their methods.**

- **Encourage groups to collate a document that captures their learnings, good practice and/or advice to other organisations.**