One of the most daunting tasks in finding and developing new partnerships is convincing organizations to dedicate resources to your after-school or summer learning program. To ensure success, you must first know how to collect your data, and then you must learn how to leverage it.

The following strategies encourage the success of data system-building efforts:

**Start small.** Don’t take on too much at once. Create a limited set of goals for data collection and use or a limited set of providers piloting a new data system. You can always scale up later.

**Provide ongoing training.** Provide coaching and development manuals to mitigate the effects of staff turnover and further develop more experienced and engaged staff.

**Access expertise.** There are many ways to go about this. You may want to identify a research partner who participated in all phases of your data system’s development. Or you may wish to leverage that relationship primarily to access, analyze, and report the data those providers have collected. Or you may wish to identify internal staff to provide this support to the data system. Whatever you choose, having dedicated staff with skills in data analytics is essential.

**THE RIGHT COMPONENTS**

A data system framework has three key components:

1. **People.** Stakeholders (individuals, institutions, organizations) involved in the operation of the after-school or summer learning program and the dynamic connections among them.

2. **Processes.** Routines, norms, and practices that evolve and are repeated over time. They include collecting, organizing, analyzing, and using data to meet goals and inform the operation of the after-school or summer learning program.

3. **Technology.** The means by which data are organized and accessed to inform the operation of the after-school or summer learning program, including hardware and software systems.

**BUILDING YOUR DATA SYSTEM**
Don’t be afraid to show off. Presenting your data doesn’t have to be a dry task that exposes your school’s weaknesses. This is a time to show what you’ve got and ask willing listeners to give you what you want most.

Confirm commitment. Before pushing for a partnership, make sure the school community is ready to commit and you have the basic resources necessary to begin.

Think in terms of both qualitative and quantitative data. Of course budgets are important, but pictures of classrooms, quotations from students, and drawings of your plans will help partners to envision what you can accomplish together.

Be clear and concise. Partners want an easy-to-understand rundown of the details. Make sure your presentation clearly defines why help is needed, what the interest levels in the proposed program are, and what you will do to ensure that contributions are sustainable.

Make strong connections and nurture personal relationships. Find partners whose missions strongly align with yours and who have formed similar partnerships in the past. Stakeholders who think similarly are more likely to stay on the same path, and partners who understand schools are more likely to adapt well to the unique challenges of working within an educational setting.

Think long-term. The best data not only show where the need is, but also clearly project a plan for resources, flexibility if funding is reduced or things don’t go according to plan, and specifics for how the school will eventually be able to build capacity within existing structures through the partnership.

Use data from existing partnerships. One way to convince a prospective partner that you are a safe bet is to present data demonstrating gains in achievement or participation as a direct result of another community partnership.