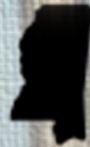


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*Review of TANF-funded Afterschool Care
Programs*

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Government Accountability Division

Executive Summary

Many taxpayer-funded federal and state programs exist to help families find, afford, and enroll their children in childcare and afterschool care. These programs are intended to offer a variety of services including basic childcare for young children and afterschool/summer enrichment programs for school-aged children. The Mississippi Office of the State Auditor (OSA) has examined some of these programs, and this is the first of a series of reports detailing how effectively these programs operated in Mississippi during Federal Fiscal Year 2024 (FFY 2024).

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is a large, federally funded grant awarded to states each year. In Mississippi, some TANF money is awarded and administered by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) to nonprofit organizations providing childcare or afterschool care to low-income families in Mississippi. These programs are intended to help students in low-performing, high-poverty areas. Unfortunately, a lack of adequate outcome metrics made reviewing this program difficult. Nevertheless, OSA makes the following recommendations to ensure the programs deliver their stated goals.

Recommendations:

- *MDHS should adopt outcome reporting for each afterschool program funded by TANF money and condition continued funding for nonprofits on measured progress toward a meaningful goal.*
- *MDHS should rely on subgrant agreements when monitoring grant outcomes.*
- *MDHS should adopt per-child, attendance-based cost benchmarks to ensure program funding is reasonable and services are regularly provided.*

Analysis

Each nonprofit recipient of an FFY 2024 TANF grant first submitted a response to MDHS's request for proposals (RFP) to provide the most effective and cost-efficient afterschool programs for Mississippi families.¹ MDHS's RFP required programs to include "measurable outcomes" related to topics including teen pregnancy prevention, literacy rates, and career readiness.² After being selected to receive TANF funding, the nonprofits signed grant agreements—effectively contracts—stating they would collect and submit participant and outcome data points to MDHS to ensure program effectiveness and compliance with TANF spending rules.

However, MDHS did not collect attendance data and did not track outcome metrics for these activities to determine whether they were effective. Furthermore, when OSA analysts requested MDHS provide data required by the subgrant agreements, MDHS staff noted its monitoring staff used RFP documents instead of its subgrants. While documents show MDHS did conduct some grant monitoring activities and provide technical assistance to subgrantees, the agency did not collect or maintain documentation showing the effectiveness of these programs. **OSA recommends MDHS require each subgrantee to set and meet the "measurable outcomes" required by its subgrant agreements. OSA further recommends MDHS stop using RFPs as a guideline for monitoring and instead follow the provisions of its subgrant agreements.**

Attendance

Though MDHS did not collect or maintain outcome metrics from these afterschool care subgrantees, it did collect participant data. However, analysts determined this data had limited usefulness. For example, MDHS provided OSA with participant data with multiple easily identified data entry errors, which made proper analysis impossible. These errors included duplicate entries, misspelled names, incorrect addresses, and other anomalies. **Analysts do not believe MDHS effectively monitored participation in this program by using the data they provided to OSA.** Despite lacking attendance data, OSA analysts attempted to analyze participant data MDHS provided. **Based on OSA's estimates, four of seven programs served less than 50% of the number of participants required by subgrant agreements.**³ This represents a best-case scenario because participant data was only provided on a monthly basis. For example, MDHS data did not note program

¹ An RFP is a document type state agencies often use to solicit proposals from private entities to accomplish something. In this case, MDHS's RFP solicited proposals on effective uses of TANF funding for afterschool care.

² See [resource](#).

³ This claim compares average monthly participants to subgrant requirements.

attendance but instead listed participants based on whether they attended an afterschool care program one day or every day each month. **OSA recommends MDHS establish a mechanism to track attendance to ensure taxpayer-funded programs are regularly attended.**

Funding for TANF Afterschool Programs

Seven TANF-funded afterschool programs analyzed by OSA spent over \$10.9 million to provide afterschool programs of varying sizes and services to low-income families in Mississippi.⁴ Figure 1 below shows the programs, how much money they were granted, and how much they actually spent.

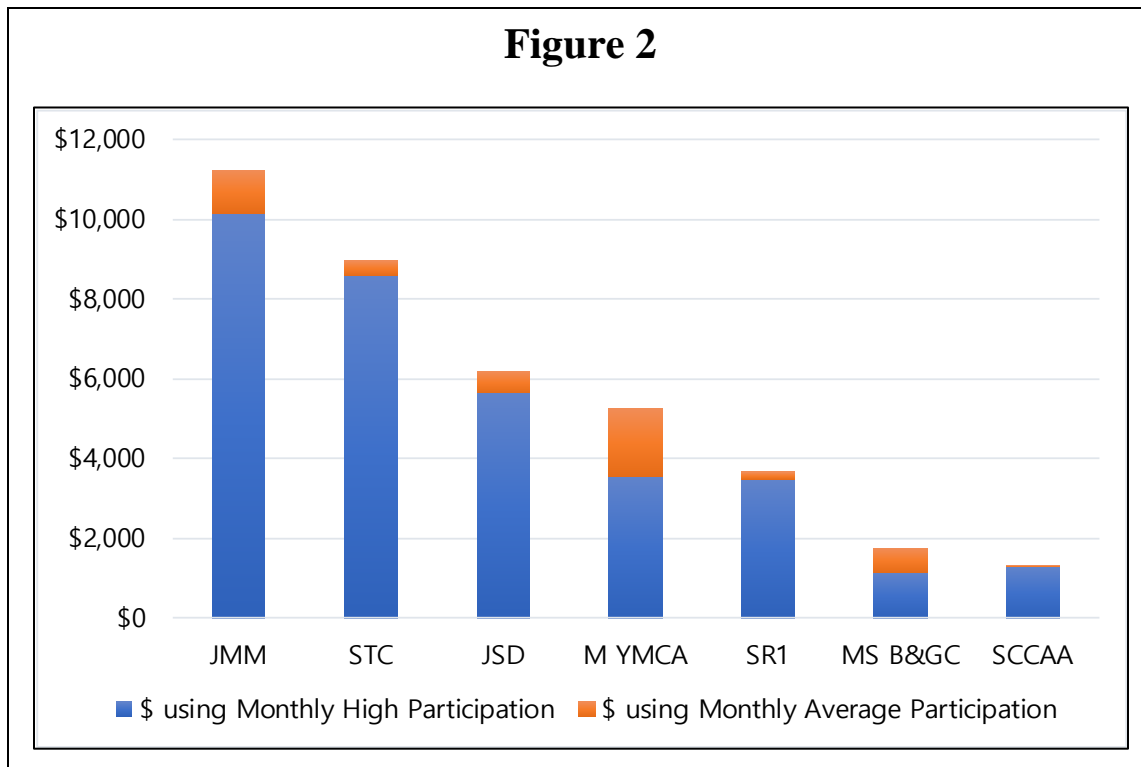
Figure 1			
Organization	Granted Amount	Spent Amount	% Spent
Jackson Medical Mall (JMM)	\$484,524	\$435,878	90.0%
Juanita Sims Doty Foundation (JSD)	\$838,331	\$764,904	91.2%
Mississippi Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs (MS B&GC)	\$5,812,357	\$5,766,275	99.2%
Jackson Metro YMCA (Metro YMCA)	\$775,541	\$549,640	70.9%
South Central Community Action Agency (SCCAA)	\$470,188	\$459,468	97.7%
Save the Children Federation (STC)	\$2,549,436	\$2,469,817	96.9%
Scientific Research 1 (SR1)	\$489,592	\$488,179	99.7%

Because MDHS did not collect or maintain attendance data for the afterschool care programs it funded, analysts used participant data to estimate per-participant costs for each afterschool program, which varied significantly.⁵ For example, the average cost per monthly participant in the Jackson Medical Mall program was approximately \$11,200 while the average monthly per-participant cost for the South Central Community Action Agency was approximately \$1,300. This wide cost variance is mostly a result of Jackson Medical Mall Foundation paying subcontractors to provide a variety of services to participants. The Jackson Medical Mall Foundation paid multiple subcontractors to provide individual sessions of curriculum like “Groove Lab” regardless of the number of participants attending each session. Figure 2 shows the estimated average cost per participant for each program. A larger gap between average and high monthly participation indicates a larger expected absentee rate.

⁴ OSA reviewed TANF-funded, nonprofit-operated afterschool programs active during all of FFY 2024.

⁵ Analysts used total unique monthly participants to calculate “Average Attendance.” MDHS provided spending data.

Figure 2



Comparison of Activities

TANF afterschool programs funded academic enrichment, healthy and active lifestyles, STEAM activities, and other activities in FFY 2024. The problems with the participant data and the lack of outcome data for these activities limited analysts' ability to determine if these programs meaningfully address the goals of each category. Figure 3 below shows which activities were prioritized by TANF programs as measured by monthly participation in activities.^{6, 7} Despite spending taxpayer money on these specialized programs, MDHS could not provide data showing any improved outcomes for participants.

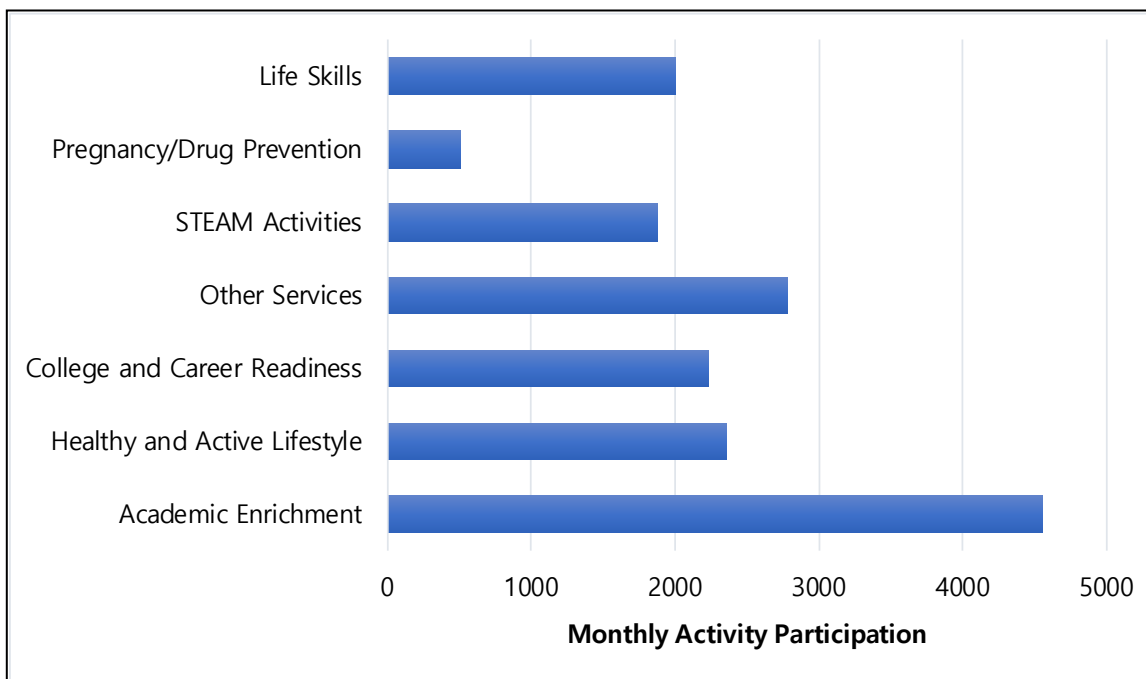
For example, the figure shows academic enrichment programs enrolled more participants than any other program type.⁸ However, MDHS could not provide data showing improved academic performance among those participants. **MDHS should require each nonprofit to collect and report meaningful outcome data to ensure the programs meet the needs of the participants and provide value to taxpayers.**

⁶ Analysts combined similar sub-service categories provided by MDHS to show the estimated participation.

⁷ Some participants were simultaneously enrolled in multiple activities.

⁸ The "Other Services" category includes violence and bullying prevention, food, transportation, and other afterschool activities.

Figure 3



Conclusion

MDHS did not properly monitor its grants to nonprofit organizations operating afterschool care programs and did not collect or maintain sufficient data to determine attendance rates for TANF-funded afterschool programs. Without appropriate program monitoring and sufficient data, MDHS is likely unable to maximize the efficiency of TANF-funded afterschool programs. MDHS should develop an improved data collection system and gather measurable outcome data to follow the guidelines set out in both the RFP and the grant agreements.