

# Measuring Partnership and Supports in Out-Of-School Time

Project focus for BellXcel's partnership with the Strategic Data Project Fellowship through the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University



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## Summary

Through its youth management platform Arly, BellXcel engages with hundreds of school districts and community organizations, providing coaching, tools, and resources to enhance the quality of their summer and afterschool programs for students in grades PK-8.

While BellXcel built a full body of evidence of its impact on students, educators, and families, it sought to understand the effect of these tools and resources on the operations, cultures, and systems within these provider organizations. BellXcel hypothesized that using Arly's features and services, organizations would increase their awareness and adoption of evidence-based practices, leading to adaptations to policies, behaviors, and systems to align with evidence-based strategies.

This study was designed as the project focus for BellXcel's partnership with the Strategic Data Project Fellowship through the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University to gather data from the BellXcel network of providers utilizing its youth management platform Arly, and give insight into whether and how subsequent organizational changes occurred.

## Background

In BellXcel's first 20 years as a direct service provider of out-of-school time (OST) programs, students' well-being and academic outcomes were the focal points of its measurement strategy. As BellXcel shifted to licensing partnerships, its evaluation expanded to include adult behavior change as a critical driver of student outcomes and influential in program quality. BellXcel codified and delivered elements of high-quality OST programs using a knowledge-transfer model. This model allowed partner organizations to achieve outcomes comparable to those in the prior direct service model.

BellXcel's shift in delivery required a new measurement strategy to understand systems change. BellXcel has long embraced a culture of learning and continuous improvement, and received feedback from program leaders about how working with BellXcel has influenced changes within their organization. To structure this new measurement focus, FSG's systems change framework<sup>1</sup> (Kania et al., 2018) informed BellXcel's work to understand partner organizations before, during, and after BellXcel.

FSG is a global nonprofit consulting firm that partners with foundations and corporations to create equitable systems change.

The goal of this strategy was to learn if and how engaging BellXcel influenced the following:

- **Structural changes:** policies, practices, and resource flows
- **Relational changes:** relationships, connections, and power dynamics
- **Transformative change:** mental models

In 2021, BellXcel and its research affiliate, Sperling Center for Research & Innovation (SCRI), sought to understand the totality of the partnership experience and to share these findings with the OST field. These findings can provide essential insights for the OST field to maximize a focus on quality OST experiences.

In 2021, through interviews with program leaders, SCRI found that after engaging with BellXcel, leaders reported positive changes within their organizations in the following areas (Sperling Center for Research and Innovation, 2021):

- **Outcomes and evidence**
- **Community relationships**
- **Organizational confidence**
- **Philanthropy**
- **Program planning and operations**

In 2022, BellXcel launched a second phase of this study as the project focus for their partnership with the Strategic Data Project Fellowship through the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University. The results of this study will inform the ongoing development and refinement of Arly's strategies, tools, and resources to support partners better and expand quality within the OST field.

## Features & Services

Leveraging its three-plus decades of OST experience, BellXcel has designed a suite of features and services to support organizations' ability to embed evidence-based practices in their programming. These practices are proven to support and increase the quality of OST programs across many areas. Features were developed to allow flexibility based on program capacity or community needs. This flexible and scaffolded approach enables organizations to address program variations and set up the basics for, or accelerate, quality where needed within their specific community context.

The BellXcel youth program management platform was branded as "Arly" in 2022 and is a SaaS (Software as a Service) solution that offers OST providers support for elements of a high-quality program.<sup>1</sup> These evidence-based supports include enrichment, literacy, and math curriculum, professional development, evaluation and measurement tools, and operational and business resources. Pairing this technology with personalized support from Arly staff in areas such as program design, implementation, instruction, software support, and evaluation, creates a partnership experience for the organizations.

As part of developing Arly, BellXcel engaged a third party to map program quality markers in three categories (Student Achievement, Program Quality, or Promising Practice) to align Arly's features, services, and content with these quality indicators and identify gaps. Appendix 1 provides an example of a list of best practices around attendance.

<sup>1</sup>Because this study began in 2021, the original study instruments referenced BellXcel. Given the branding of Arly in 2022, this report refers to "Arly" throughout to align with more current terminology, and maintain consistency.

# Hypothesis

BellXcel hypothesized that by using Arly's features and services, OST provider organizations would increase their awareness and adoption of evidence-based practices, leading to adaptations to policies, behaviors, and systems to align with evidence-based strategies. To begin testing this hypothesis, the study measured organizational needs, the efficacy of Arly's features and services, direct program impacts, and changes to help answer the following:

1. To what extent and in what ways do organizations experience changes from engaging with Arly?
  - a. How did organizations or staff experience internal changes?
  - b. How did organizations change their role within its community ecosystem?
2. To what extent were the features and services helpful for organizations' goals?
  - a. What contributed to specific program or system-level changes?

## Design & Methodology

In designing the survey mechanism, BellXcel again used FSG's Systems Change Framework (Kania et al., 2018) to understand whether and how its support influenced provider organizations in structural, relational, and transformative changes. This framework and the 2021 SCRI qualitative study were the foundation for the survey's focus areas. Research by RAND and the Wallace Foundation helped identify best practices for high-quality summer learning, which were then mapped to Arly's target areas of impact (Browne, 2019) (Schwartz et al., 2018). The study focused on 24 features and services included in engaging with Arly, listed in Appendix E.

BellXcel's internal teams provided an inventory of platform features and coaching services and a logic model for each software feature, coaching

conversation, curriculum or content piece, and evaluation tool. A mapping exercise outlined potential connections between research-based best practices for quality programs, systems-level changes, and features and services. Appendix B includes an example of this mapping effort.

BellXcel determined that a retrospective approach was the most appropriate design rather than a pre-and post-survey distribution since a respondent's self-assessment could be skewed before exposure to BellXcel's evidence-based practices.

The survey questions covered the following four categories. More detail about these sections is included in Appendix C:

- **General Information**
- **Efficacy of Specific Features and Services**
- **Program Elements and Impacts**
- **Systems Change**

## Distribution & Sample

From November 2022 through February 2023, the survey was distributed to over 100 administrators who had engaged with Arly from 2021 through 2022. Ultimately, 35% of administrators responded to the survey, exceeding BellXcel's goal of 25%.

Respondents represented 28 organizations in 26 cities and 14 states. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents worked with community-based organizations, and 26% with schools or districts. Respondents' roles within their organizations varied, and their titles included Assistant Principal, Instructional Coach, Teacher, Director, Vice President, and others.

Most respondents (91%) interacted with Arly features and services directly, and 40% were involved in deciding to purchase Arly. Most said the organizations they worked with had previously implemented youth programs before working with Arly (91%), and about three-quarters (76%) said their organization facilitated additional programming outside of youth programs.

# Findings

## Support Needs & Challenges

BellXcel identified 11 important program areas for facilitating high-quality programs. The survey asked respondents to rate their organizations' need for support in each area. Before engaging Arly, at least 70% of respondents felt the organization they work with needed support in these program areas. A more detailed view of these needs is in Appendix D.

The most frequently noted areas for support were:

- **Internal use of data** (95%)
- **Family engagement** (91%)
- **Using curriculum for activities** (91%)
- **High-quality instruction** (91%)

Less often noted areas for support were:

- **Attendance tracking** (71%)
- **Recruitment and enrollment** (76%)
- **Culture and climate** (82%)

Before Arly, 39% found it difficult to access high-quality resources, 26% felt unsuccessful in facilitating evaluation, and 18% felt unsuccessful in enrolling enough youth participants. This finding indicates that before engaging Arly, most organizations sought some level of support in the areas that help drive program quality in OST.

## Curriculum & Professional Development

Respondents indicated a need for support with curriculum, professional development, instruction, and staff support before engaging with Arly. Most reported improvements in using curricula and facilitating high-quality instruction after engaging Arly, while a smaller group noted improved staff management. This finding identifies an important impact of Arly's features and services and helps inform future enhancements.

Before Arly, four in ten felt their organizations found it difficult to access quality resources (39%), and 53% felt average or below average in staff preparation. Organizations' easy access to high-quality resources grew from 61% to 93%, and the ability to prepare staff increased from 47% to 85%. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate these findings. Most respondents said their organization required some level of support in curriculum use (91%), facilitating high-quality instruction (91%), and staff management (85%). For those who felt their organization needed significant support<sup>3</sup>, 90% improved using curricula, 89% improved in high-quality instruction, and 77% improved staff management.

Figure 1: Organizations' Ability to Access High-Quality Resources

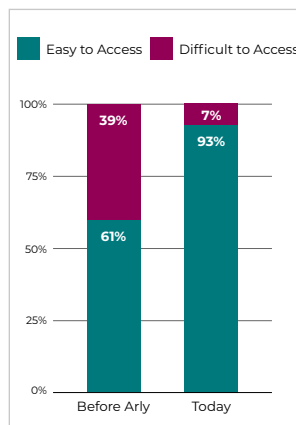
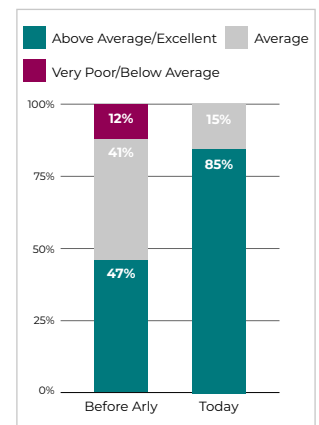


Figure 2: Organizations' Ability to Prepare Staff Effectively



Aligned with the FSG systems change framework, respondents noted new access to a structured and easy-to-use curriculum (policies and practices), which enabled fun and engaging activities (mental models). Respondents said high-quality, coherent, and flexible professional development allowed for better onboarding (practices and policies) and the establishment of shared goals (mental models).

<sup>3</sup>“Significant support” includes somewhat, moderately, or very much in need of support.

Qualitative feedback from respondents included:

*“Most of my organization’s programs do not have a curriculum. The curriculum provided was user-friendly for staff and allowed for smooth sailing days full of lessons, instruction, and fun.”*

*“The staff had not really utilized [English Language Arts] and Math curricula in the past. Having the scholar<sup>4</sup> bundles and [professional development] was very helpful for the staff.”*

*“The curriculum provided desired outcomes, goals, and standards to meet...giving the program a high-functioning structure. Additionally, the resource library had tools available to staff that supported their ability to confidently facilitate instruction and learning.”*

*“Candidates were more interested when learning that [Arly] provides curriculum and a library of tools/resources to assist teachers with facilitating learning.”*

*“Staff can get [professional development] hours completed while still finishing up the school or can complete in the program.”*

Arly offers an academic curriculum in English/Language Arts and Math for students in grades PK-8 and a STEM-focused enrichment curriculum. The Arly professional development library for instructors and program staff includes content related to instructional support, classroom management, and youth development.

<sup>4</sup>“Scholar” is a term used for youth participants in some of the partner organizations’ programs.

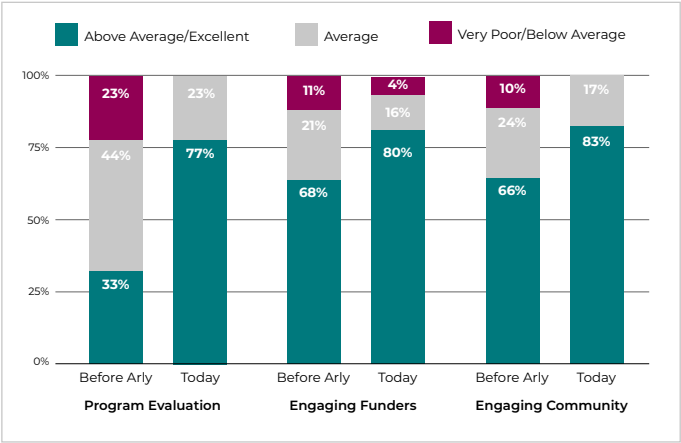
Evaluation, Data & Outcomes

Respondents noted that their organizations needed support in implementing and using evaluation and data before Arly, and large majorities noticed improvement after engaging with the features and services. This finding illustrates a vital impact area for Arly’s features and services.

Considering respondents who used at least one evaluation tool or the data dashboard, one-quarter (23%) felt their organization was below average at facilitating program evaluation before Arly. Respondent organizations’ ability to facilitate program evaluation grew from 33% to 77% if they used at least one evaluation tool or the data dashboard. After engaging with Arly, all respondents felt their organization was successful at facilitating evaluation.

These respondents also reported that their organizations’ ability to engage funders grew from 68% to 80%, and their ability to engage community partners increased from 66% to 83% after engaging with Arly. Figure 3 illustrates these findings. Most felt their organization required some level of support in data use internally (95%) and externally (85%). For organizations needing significant support, 100% improved using data externally and 90% improved using data internally.

Figure 3: Organizations’ Ability to Facilitate Program Evaluation, Engage Funders, and Engage Community Partners



Aligned with the FSG systems change framework, respondents shared that new, accessible, and shareable data (practices, mental models) resulted in more support and funding (resource flows, relationships, power dynamics).

Qualitative feedback from respondents included:

*“We have not ever had data like what [Arly] provided before - a report of survey data, [academic] assessment, attendance, retention, etc.”*

*“[We] used data for presentations and talking points, resulting in greater buy-in.”*

*“The information shared by Arly, such as growth and survey data, elevated our use of data.”*

*“We compiled data from pre and post-assessments to determine program and curriculum effectiveness.”*

*“This helped fine-tune our next steps and what we should adjust moving forward [which contributed to improved internal data use].”*

Arly offers providers a variety of tools to collect and measure data that they can use to demonstrate their impacts, including enrollment, attendance, and retention; staff professional development access and completion; participants’ academic growth and wellbeing; and program satisfaction and engagement for youth, families, and program staff.

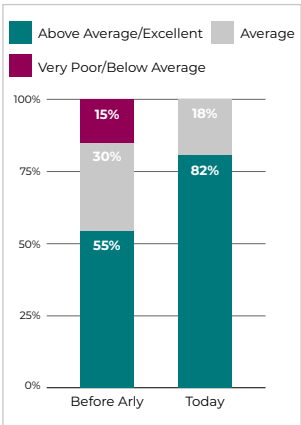
## Recruitment, Enrollment & Attendance

Organizations noted a need for recruitment, enrollment, and attendance support before Arly. A majority noticed improved attendance tracking after engaging Arly, while a smaller group reported improved enrollment and recruitment practices. This finding identifies an impact area of Arly’s features and services and an area for enhancements.

When respondents used at least one of the enrollment features, their ability to enroll enough participants grew from 55% to 82%. Before Arly, 15% of these respondents felt their organization was below average at enrolling enough youth, and another 30% felt average in this area. While 15% struggled in this area before Arly, none of the respondents felt this way after Arly. Figure 4 illustrates this finding.

Many noted that their organization sought some level of support in recruitment and enrollment (76%) and attendance tracking (71%). For those who said their organization needed significant support, 94% improved attendance tracking and 69% improved recruitment and enrollment.

Figure 4: Organizations’ Ability to Enroll Enough Youth Participants for Their Program





Aligned with the FSG systems change framework, respondents reported replacing or complementing other systems (policies, mental models) while using Arly's easier and more efficient enrollment (practices). Respondents also noted more manageable attendance tracking (practices) and that it helped to allow multiple people access to information (policies).

Qualitative feedback from respondents included:

*"[Arly provided] online enrollment that is easily accessible for parents. Easy communication and attendance rostering."*

*"Much easier to monitor recruitment and enrollment with the Dashboard."*

*"It created a formal system for us to use for Attendance Tracking, and allowed multiple people to see/track attendance at any time."*

*"Easier to monitor which students were attending and who needed follow-up contact."*

*"[We] used the platform to complement traditional paper sign-in, which made reporting much easier."*

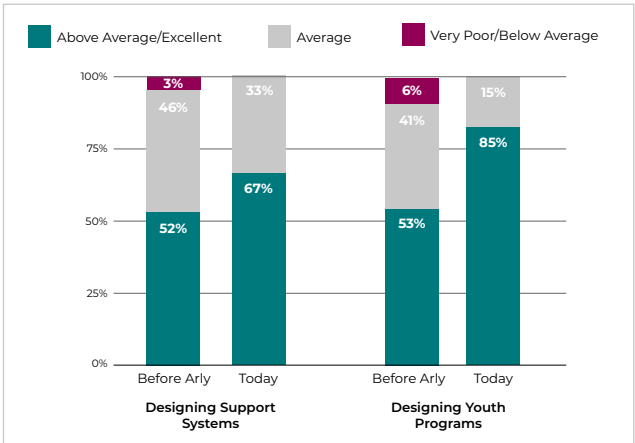
Arly supports organizations as they recruit, enroll, and track program participants. The platform includes online enrollment, attendance tracking, marketing resources, and best practices. Program staff can also access professional development resources and coaching support from staff.

## Program Planning & Design

Organizations noted a need for support in program planning before Arly, and a majority noticed improvement after engaging Arly. While some seeking support did not notice improvement, this finding identifies an impact area of Arly's features and services and an area for enhancements.

Before Arly, half felt below average or average at building operations support systems (49%) and designing youth programs (47%). Organizations' ability to build support systems grew from 52% to 67%, and their ability to design programs increased from 53% to 85%. Figure 5 illustrates these findings. Nine in ten said their organization sought some level of program planning support (88%). For organizations that needed significant support, 80% improved in program planning.

Figure 5: Organizations' Ability to Design Support Systems and Design Youth Programs



Aligned with the FSG systems change framework, respondents noted that their Arly experience enhanced their planning strategies (practices and mental models). Specifically, respondents said coaching conversations helped set goals and budgets while outlining clear next steps (policies and mental models). Respondents noted feeling supported through the process and integrating accountabilities (mental models and practices).

Qualitative feedback from respondents included:

*"It was helpful to discuss the pricing of the material ahead of our budget."*

*"Meetings to target goals for the summer and having common goals [contributed to better program planning]."*

*"Goal setting begins early on, making it clear what everyone has to do and work toward."*

*"Brainstorming with our Success Lead<sup>5</sup> and making decisions based on [their] experience [contributed to better program planning]."*

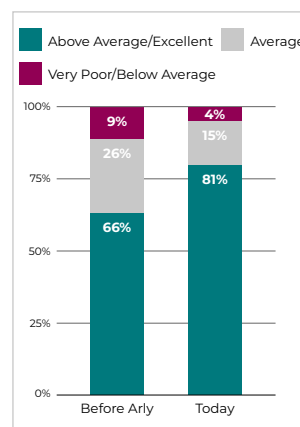
Arly offers providers a wide range of support related to program planning and design, including customized coaching, onboarding, an interactive program planner, and professional development modules.

## Family Engagement

Organizations noted a need for family engagement. This finding identifies a potential enhancement to Arly's features and services to provide targeted support to programs seeking help in this area.

Before Arly, 35% felt their organization was below average or average at engaging families, indicating a relatively successful area for programs before Arly. Organizations' ability to engage families grew from 66% before Arly to 81% after Arly. This finding is in Figure 6. Nine in ten said their organization sought some level of support with family engagement (91%). For organizations needing significant support, 63% improved in family engagement.

Figure 6: Organizations' Ability to Engage Families



Aligned with the FSG systems change framework, respondents said that families were engaged through events and communication (practices) and found enrollment was more accessible for families.

Qualitative feedback from respondents included:

*"Family communication improved by using the app."*

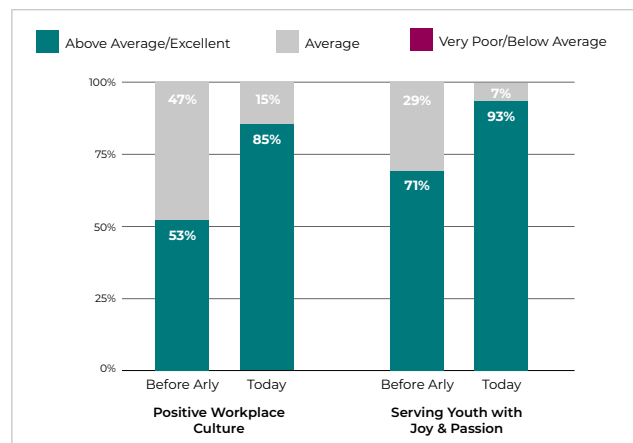
*"[Arly provided] online enrollment that is easily accessible for parents. Easy communication and attendance rostering."*

*"We implemented ideas around how to best engage families, such as a culture share."*

<sup>5</sup>"Success Lead" is another term for the account's primary BellXcel coach.

Family engagement significantly contributes to positive student outcomes in OST programs, supporting attendance, retention, and program satisfaction (McCombs et al., 2011). Arly has developed training and resources to help providers increase family engagement. The Arly Family Communication App allows programs to share program updates and communicate efficiently with caregivers.

Figure 7: Organizations' Ability to Establish Positive Workplace Culture for Staff and Serve Youth with Joy and Passion



## Culture & Climate

Organizations noted a need for support in program culture and climate before Arly, and a large majority noticed improvement after engaging Arly, identifying an impact area of Arly's features and services. Before Arly, half felt their organization was average in maintaining a positive culture for staff (47%), and 29% felt average at serving youth with joy and passion. Organizations' ability to maintain a positive workplace culture for staff grew from 53% to 85%, and their ability to serve youth with joy and passion increased from 71% to 93% compared to before Arly. Figure 7 illustrates this finding.

Most (82%) said their organization sought some level of support in establishing a positive program culture and climate. For organizations that needed significant support, 81% improved in building a positive culture and climate.

Aligned with the FSG systems change framework, respondents noted collaboration, onboarding, program values (practices, policies, mental models), and staff support (power dynamics) as enhancements to the program environment.

Qualitative feedback from respondents included:

*"A shared vocabulary allows for intentional climate elevation; for example calling all of the program participants "scholars."*

*"Streamlined processes so time with students was increased [contributed to culture and climate]."*

*"Because there was less stress on creating lesson plans, staff were much less stressed and much happier."*

*"The trainings on social-emotional development and classroom culture/climate really helped prepare staff to meet the students' needs not just academically but socially and emotionally. This supported [them] in developing the whole child-- mind, body, and spirit."*

One of the foundational elements of a successful OST program is creating a positive, consistent culture and climate for students and staff. Arly offers a wide range of professional development modules, supplemented by coaching, to support providers in setting expectations, promoting positive behavior management, and developing program elements to support culture and climate.

Figure 8: Organizations' Ability to Manage Day-to-Day Operations

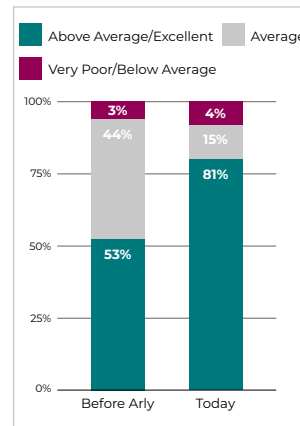
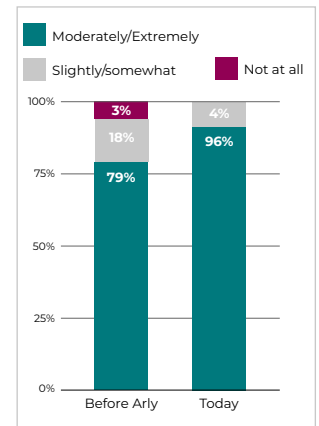


Figure 9: Organizations' Confidence in Implementing Youth Programs



## Implementation & Day-to-Day

Organizations noted a need to support overall program implementation before Arly and all of them noticed improvement after engaging Arly. This finding identifies a powerful impact area of Arly's features and services. Before Arly, half felt their organization was below average or average in day-to-day operations (47%). Organizations' ability to manage day-to-day operations grew from 53% to 81%, and confidence in youth programming grew from 79% to 96%. Almost all organizations felt highly confident in implementing youth programs after Arly. These findings are in Figures 8 and 9.

Most said their organization sought some level of support in implementation (85%). For organizations that needed significant support, 100% improved in program implementation.

Aligned with the FSG systems change framework, respondents said access to resources and information in one place made them more efficient (policies and practices) and enhanced the program's structure, culture, and climate (mental models).

Qualitative feedback from respondents included:

*"Using [Arly] made my work more efficient by providing me with options for my specific needs. If I didn't understand how to implement something or just needed more information on something, I went to the software platform and found help."*

*"[Arly] gave access to resources that provided efficiency."*

*"Streamlined processes so time with students was increased [contributed to culture and climate]."*

Administrators can devote more time and attention to program participants and activities when administrative tasks are streamlined through technology. Arly offers a wide array of tools and resources to support back-office operations.

## Helpfulness of Arly Features, Content & Services

Survey respondents answered about their individual usage of BellXcel features and services, not their organization's. For example, each program may run enrollment differently, so an individual's usage of enrollment features within a program may vary. It is essential to interpret the results below as individual usage rather than organizational usage of a feature. These findings have illuminated opportunities for future surveys and analysis to gather additional information about the respondents' roles because expected usage can vary drastically by feature, program, and organization. More specific self-reported usage information and integrating actual usage data where applicable will make for a more meaningful interpretation of future results.

Appendix E provides details about the usage of each feature and service. The features that most respondents directly used were the professional learning and resource library (94%), curricula (91%), and youth roster (90%).

All or nearly all (93-100%) of those who accessed the features and services found them helpful for their organization in meeting its goals. There was variation in the intensity to which features and services were most helpful.

Respondents most often ranked sales and coaching conversations as "very helpful":

- **Pre-launch check-in** (100%)
- **Planning check-in** (94%)
- **Kick-off call** (94%)
- **Pre-contract conversations** (86%)

Beyond sales and coaching conversations, the most often ranked as "very helpful" included:

- **The attendance tracker** (83%)
- **Evaluation services** (83%)
- **Youth roster** (82%)
- **Data dashboard** (75%)

These findings indicate that respondents found value in coaching sessions, especially before programs began, which focused on program planning. Respondents also valued features and services related to data collection and reporting. These findings align with research in the OST field, which shows that program planning and measurement are essential for program quality (Browne, 2019) (Schwartz et al., 2018).

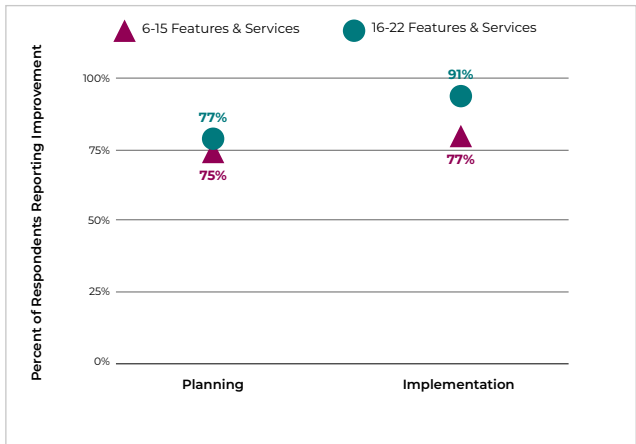
The least often ranked as "very helpful" included the quality screener (40%) and program planner (53%), which aligned with what BellXcel had assessed of Arly's features and services and highlighted an important area for meaningful change. The quality screener is in beta form and is still a paper-based tool. In its current iteration, the program planner is designed for an initial program launch, so the feature can become less necessary as administrators gain experience in facilitating programs. Nonetheless, most respondents still ranked these tools as helpful, so future enhancements would aim to move respondents to consider the tools "very helpful." Given respondents' value of planning and data-centered support identified in other findings, these rankings could help elevate tools with the potential for meaningful impact internally.

# Aligning Adoption of Features & Services to Program & Systems Changes

The analysis grouped respondents into low and high-adoption cohorts, with each feature or service considered equally. These groups are outlined in Appendix F. In this analysis, cut points created roughly equal-sized groups wherever possible. While this framing is helpful for interpretation, cut points and lack of weights for features and services present limitations, and future study design should try to decrease the need for this practice. Directionally, more respondents in the high-adoption group noted improved planning and implementation.

When considering the full suite of features and services, 77% of the low-adoption group improved in implementation, while 91% of the high-adoption group improved. Also, 75% in the low-adoption group improved in planning, while 77% in the high-adoption group improved. This finding is illustrated in Figure 10 and builds an understanding of how using more features and services aligned with evidence-based practices for a high-quality program may change respondents' experience and perceived improvements.

Figure 10: Improvement in Planning & Implementation by Use of the Full Suite of Features & Services

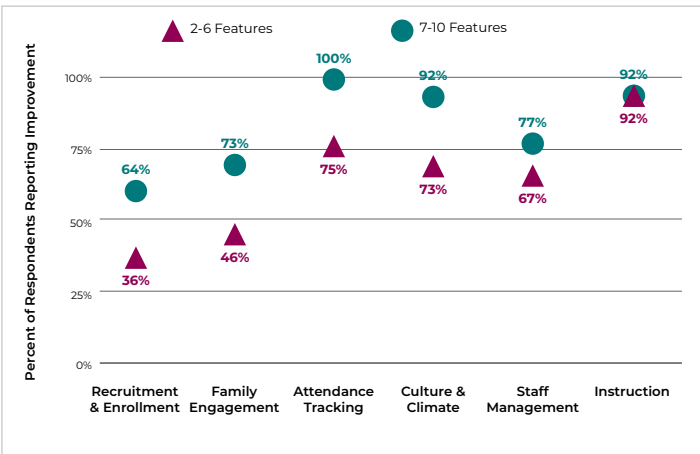


For the ten platform-specific features, 75% of the low-adoption group improved in implementation, while 92% of the high-adoption group improved. Also, 73% in the low-adoption group improved in planning, while 79% in the high-adoption group improved. Figure 11 illustrates these findings. Figure 12 also shows a similar trend in improved attendance tracking, culture & climate, recruitment and enrollment, family engagement, and staff management. Instruction success was high in both the low and high adoption group.

Figure 11: Improvement in Program Areas by Use of the Platform-Specific Features



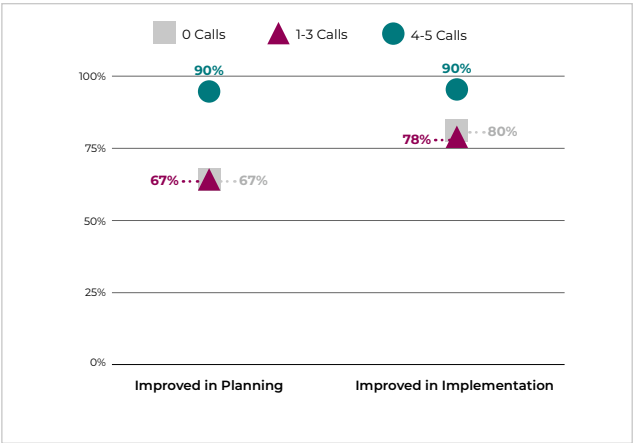
Figure 12: Improvement in Program Areas by Use of the Platform-Specific Features



In the high and low-adoption group analysis, those who engaged in more coaching conversations more often noted improved program planning (90%) than those who engaged in fewer coaching conversations (67%). When reviewing the full suite of features and services, there was less difference in improved planning, as shown in Figure 10. These coaching conversations could inform helpful supports encourage and enhance program planning for OST programs. Understanding the impact of coaching can help identify planning supports in a new way for Arly and can help strategically maximize future coaching efforts.

For sales and coaching conversations, two-thirds of respondents who attended between zero and three coaching sessions reported improvement in planning (67%). In comparison, 90% of those who attended four to five sessions noted improvement. Eight in ten respondents who did not participate in any sessions (80%) or had one to three sessions (78%) reported improved implementation. In contrast, 90% of those who attended four to five sessions noted improvement. These findings indicate the value of coaching conversations, specifically regarding their ability to enhance program planning, an essential element of high-quality programs. Figure 13 illustrates this finding.

Figure 13: Improvement in Planning & Implementation by Access to Sales & Coaching Sessions



Directionally, all of these findings combined show that more high-adoption group respondents noted improvement in key program areas. For the full suite of features and services and platform-specific features, usage influenced implementation improvement, while coaching conversations influenced planning improvement. These findings help parse the impact of features and services while showing a positive overall effect of engaging with more features to embed

## Future Enhancements

This study helped BellXcel identify where to expand or refine Arly features and services to positively influence partner organizations' work. Given the importance of these evidence-based practices and respondents' need for significant support in these areas, modifying features and services can affect program quality and system changes.

Mapping support needs and improvements identified essential areas in which organizations reported challenges and saw impressive growth after engaging with Arly. This mapping also identified ways to enhance features and services to continue to address evidence-based practices in which organizations sought significant support. Most organizations identified improvements in areas that needed substantial support. However, a small group of respondents identified needing support in recruitment and enrollment (37%), family engagement (31%), staff management (24%), and program planning (20%) and did not see improvement.

Because those who engaged in more coaching conversations saw improved program planning (90%) compared to those who engaged in fewer (67%), it would be helpful to review these conversations to understand how they influence program planning. This understanding could help make coaching principles more accessible to programs and enhance the effectiveness of the full suite of features and services related to support program planning. For example, qualitative analysis revealed that respondents found goal-setting with their coach was very valuable to their program. BellXcel should review if goal-setting can become more integrated into features and services through professional learning resources, onboarding, or developing features specific to the technology platform to maximize the coaching efforts strategically.

Given the number of meaningful findings, BellXcel plans to revise and redistribute the survey in 2024 to gather more insight around crucial program areas and monitor trends over time. In future iterations of the survey, gathering additional information about the respondents' roles will be helpful because expected usage can vary drastically by feature, program, and organization. Gathering more specific self-reported usage information and integrating actual usage data where applicable will make for a more meaningful interpretation of future results. Ultimately, the findings provided knowledge about several essential objectives for Arly. Further research on these concepts will enhance understanding of its partner organizations, interactions with features and services, program quality improvements, and system changes.



# Conclusion

BellXcel successfully invested in a fundamental shift in its data measurement strategy: from direct service impacts to learning about provider organizations' experiences and changes. Using qualitative and quantitative results to understand organizations' needs and challenges before Arly, their experiences with the features and services, and their perception of change gave Arly deeper insight into respondents' experiences.

Specifically, BellXcel found:

1. Organizations reported various successes and support needs; at least 70% of respondents felt their organizations needed support in one or more of the eleven program areas that positively affect program quality. The most common support needs were internal data use, family engagement, curricula, and instruction.
2. After working with BellXcel, respondents' self-assessments of their ability to deliver quality increased in many all areas to varying degrees. Notable increases in the self-assessments were related to:
  - **Evaluation:** moving from 33% to 77% rating as above average
  - **Positive workplace culture:** moving from 53% to 85%
  - **Accessing high-quality resources:** moving from 61% to 93%
3. Most or all of the respondents who used Arly's features and services found them helpful for their organization to meet its goals. In particular, respondents valued support

focused on program planning and data. Coaching conversations, specifically before the programs started, were most often considered "very helpful," as were features centered around data, including the attendance tracker, evaluation services, and data dashboard.

4. BellXcel discovered that the totality of the experiences successfully enhanced organizations that engaged with multiple features and resources. Directionally, those who utilized more features and services noted improved implementation compared to those who used fewer features and services. Those who engaged in more coaching conversations reported improved planning compared to those who engaged in fewer coaching conversations.

Overall, BellXcel successfully designed flexible supports with Arly to reach various organizations to enhance their work within their specific communities and contexts. Arly's features and services target best practices for high-quality programs, and many of the above results found that organizations utilizing Arly improved in embedding many evidence-based practices. Through this study and shifting its measurement strategy, BellXcel identified areas to enhance Arly's features and services while also measuring the types of effective support that partnership and carefully designed features and services can have for provider organizations that may seek support in those areas.

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## APPENDIX A: Quality Indicators, Evidence, and Supporting Tools Around Youth Attendance in Programs

| Strength of Evidence | Indicator   | Example Supporting Arly Tools                            |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Promising Practice   | Establish an attendance policy  | Planner, coaching call, resource library                 |
| Promising Practice   | Communicate attendance policy to families   | Families App, resource library                           |
| Promising Practice   | Offer incentives for strong attendance and seek to overcome barriers to attendance. | Professional learning                                    |
| Promising Practice   | Call or send a text if a student is absent, at least during the first week          | Attendance tracker, families app, family records manager |
| Program Quality      | Send out a reminder about the program start before the first day                    | Families app, planner                                    |
| Program Quality      | Communicate transportation details to families                                      | Families app, family record manager, planner             |
| Program Quality      | Reminder to parents of transportation details before the first day                  | Families app, family record manager, planner             |
| Program Quality      | Track individual student daily attendance in a MIS                                  | Planner, attendance tracker, dashboard for monitoring    |
| Promising Practice   | Send positive progress reports to families during the program                       | Families app, professional learning                      |

## APPENDIX B: Example of Mapping Pre-Work

| Systems or Program Factors                  | Targeted Features & Services                   |
|---|--|
| Program planning (goal setting, scheduling) | Sales and coaching conversations               |
|   | Program planner & calendar                     |
|   | Professional learning and resource library     |
|   | Evaluation reports for continuous improvement  |
|   | Data dashboard                                 |
|   | Youth participant roster                       |
|   | BellXcel Teams communication app               |
| Family engagement                           | Coaching sessions                              |
|   | Professional learning and resource library     |
|   | BellXcel Families communication app            |
|   | Family portal                                  |
|   | Online enrollment manager                      |
|   | Evaluation reports for external impact sharing |
|   | Stakeholder surveys                            |

## APPENDIX C: Survey Concepts and Number of Questions in Parentheses

| Category   | Concept  | Details  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>General Information (20)</b>                        | Respondent information   | Youth development experience, role, use of features and services   |
|  | Organization information   | Location, previous program experience, the decision to engage BellXcel   |
| <b>Efficacy of Specific features and services (35)</b> | Helpfulness of the features and services in meeting organizations' goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales, coaching, and support interactions</li> <li>• Online platform-specific features</li> <li>• Curriculum bundles</li> <li>• Evaluation tools and services</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Program Elements and Impacts (45)</b>               | Identified support areas before engaging BellXcel                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program planning (goal setting, scheduling)</li> <li>• Staff management (hiring, PD, coaching)</li> <li>• Participant recruitment and enrollment</li> <li>• Attendance tracking</li> <li>• Program implementation (day-to-day operations)</li> <li>• Using structured curricula</li> <li>• Facilitating high-quality instruction</li> <li>• Establishing a positive culture and climate for participants</li> <li>• Family engagement</li> <li>• Using data for internal continuous improvement</li> <li>• Using data for external impact reporting</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> |
|  | Rating change in the areas where support was needed                      |  |
|  | Examples of improvements made in these areas                             |  |
|  | Contributing factors for organizations to improve                        |  |
| <b>Systems Change (26)</b>                             | Rate success in these areas before BellXcel                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing high-quality resources</li> <li>• Confidence in implementation</li> <li>• Designing operations systems (payroll, technology, etc.)</li> <li>• Staff preparation (onboarding, training)</li> <li>• Program design (goal setting, budgeting, etc.)</li> <li>• Sufficient enrollment of youth participants</li> <li>• Day-to-day operations</li> <li>• Program evaluation (measuring outcomes, using data)</li> </ul>  |
|  | Rate success in these areas today  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a positive work environment</li> <li>• Serving youth with joy</li> <li>• Engaging funders</li> <li>• Engaging community members</li> <li>• Engaging families</li> </ul>  |

## APPENDIX D: Reported Need for Support in Program Areas

|   | Not in Need of Support | In Need of Support |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|
| Using data internally                           | 6%                     | 95%                |
| Family engagement                               | 9%                     | 91%                |
| Using curricula for activities                  | 9%                     | 91%                |
| Facilitating high-quality instruction           | 9%                     | 91%                |
| Program planning                                | 12%                    | 88%                |
| Staff management                                | 15%                    | 85%                |
| Using data externally                           | 15%                    | 85%                |
| Program implementation                          | 15%                    | 85%                |
| Building positive culture and climate for youth | 18%                    | 82%                |
| Participant recruitment/enrollment              | 24%                    | 76%                |
| Attendance tracking                             | 29%                    | 71%                |

## APPENDIX E: Self-Reported Direct Use of Features & Services

| Feature/Service                            | Used/<br>Accessed | Feature/Service                  | Used/<br>Accessed |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Professional learning and resource library | 94%               | Program planner and calendar     | 63%               |
| Curricula bundles                          | 91%               | Enrollment manager               | 63%               |
| Youth participant roster                   | 90%               | Planning check-in                | 50%               |
| Data dashboard                             | 85%               | Mid-program check-in             | 50%               |
| Star assessment for instruction            | 79%               | Kick-off call                    | 47%               |
| Star assessment for growth measurement     | 76%               | Pre-launch check-in              | 47%               |
| Attendance tracker                         | 75%               | Enrollment form builder          | 47%               |
| Evaluation services (analysis & reports)   | 74%               | Quality screener                 | 45%               |
| Stakeholder surveys                        | 69%               | Marketing toolkit                | 41%               |
| Help desk                                  | 66%               | Family records manager           | 39%               |
| Pre-contract conversations                 | 65%               | Teams/Families communication app | 24%               |
| Help Center                                | 64%               | Family portal                    | 24%               |

## APPENDIX F: No, Low & High-Adoption Groups

|                               | No Adoption       | Low-Adoption        | High-Adoption        |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 24 features and services      | N/A               | 6-15 features (58%) | 16-22 features (42%) |
| 10 platform-specific features | N/A               | 2-6 features (52%)  | 7-10 features (48%)  |
| 5 sales and coaching sessions | No sessions (24%) | 1-3 sessions (38%)  | 4-5 sessions (38%)   |