



AFTER
SCHOOL matters®

FISCAL YEAR 2025

The Impact of Investing in Teens, Instructors, Communities, and Our Future



Overview

After School Matters (ASM) had another wonderful and impactful year of programming.

As you will see in this report, our amazing instructors created engaging, supportive, and safe learning environments where teens from across Chicago were able to gain confidence, develop new skills, foster connections, and find a place where they belong.

In Fiscal Year 2025, ASM ran 1,645 high-quality programs that provided 24,000+ opportunities to 17,000+ teens across the city. These paid after-school and summer opportunities provided Chicago high school teens with a space to explore their passions and develop their talents in arts, communications and leadership, sports, and STEM. Through these project-based programs led by industry experts, teens also gained independence and critical life skills for work, college, and beyond.

Fiscal Year 2025 at a Glance

1,645

Programs

24,398

Opportunities Filled

141

Community Partners

17,017

Unique Teens

98

CPS Sites

67

Community Areas

In this report, you will learn more about:

- **Our Reach**
- **Who We Served**
- **The Types of Opportunities Offered**
- **Our Impact:**
 1. Youth Engagement
 2. Safe, Welcoming Environments
 3. Personal Growth and Skills Development
 4. Preparation for the Future
- **Our Investment in Teens and the Community**
- **Program Highlights from Fiscal Year 2025**
- **Our Plans for the Future**



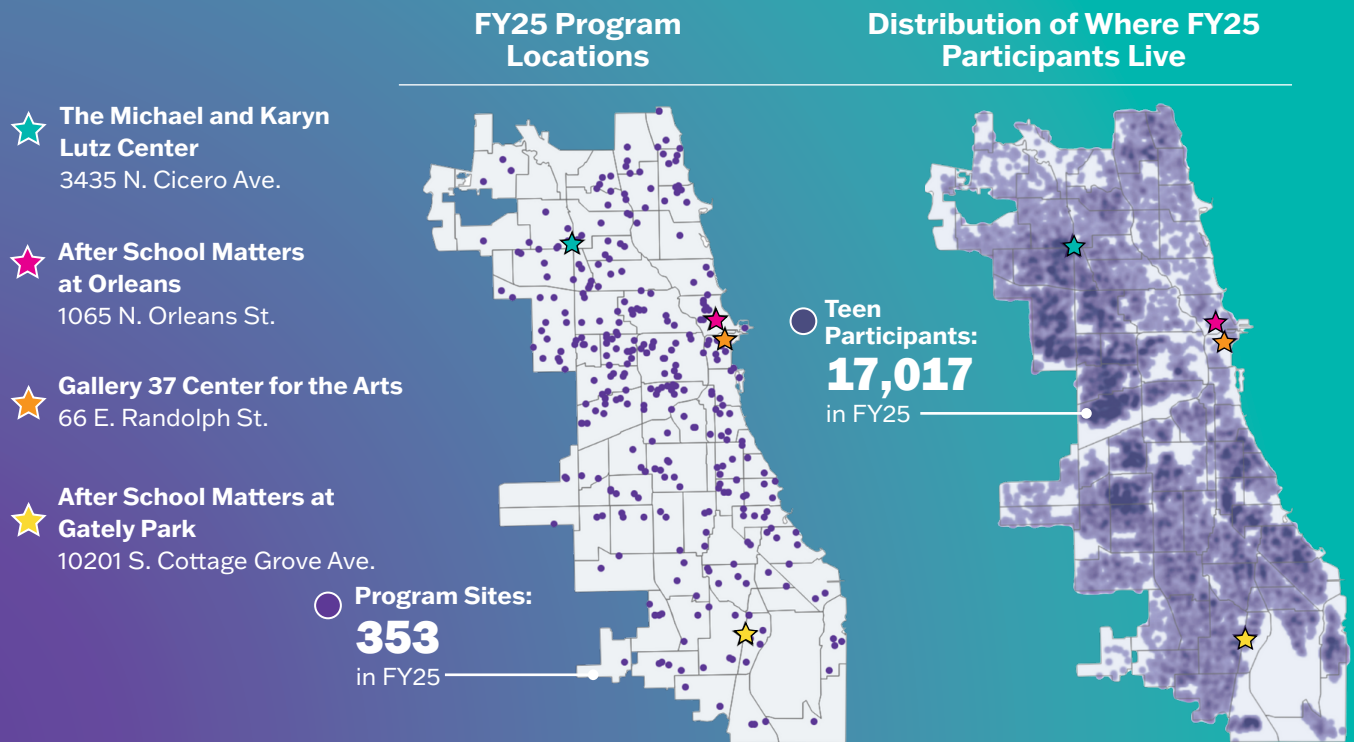


Our Reach

ASM provides opportunities for teens across Chicago to connect, create, and thrive.

ASM invests in communities across the city and partners with 141 organizations to offer programming in 67 of Chicago's 77 community areas, meaning teens can find programs close to home or school that are interesting to them.

In addition to our four flagship locations, ASM ran programs at 350+ sites across the city.



ASM programs provide teens with the opportunity to travel across the city, exposing them to new people, places, and experiences.



Nearly 9 in 10

teens said by participating in their program they met people they wouldn't have otherwise.



Average distance teens travel: **3.3 miles**

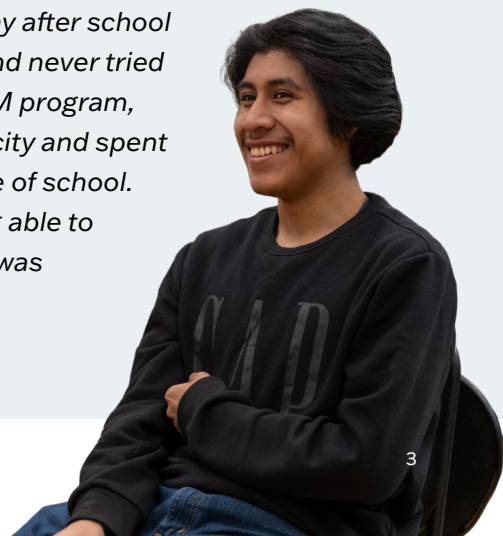


80.8%

of teens traveled between **1-5 miles** to get to programs, but some traveled **15 miles or more** to attend their program.

“ For two years every day after school I did the same thing and never tried new things. In this ASM program, I've seen more of the city and spent time by myself outside of school. Creating art and being able to say, 'I made it myself' was refreshing. ”

-ASM Teen

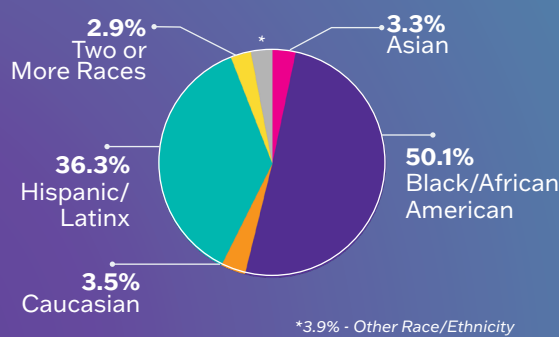


Who We Served

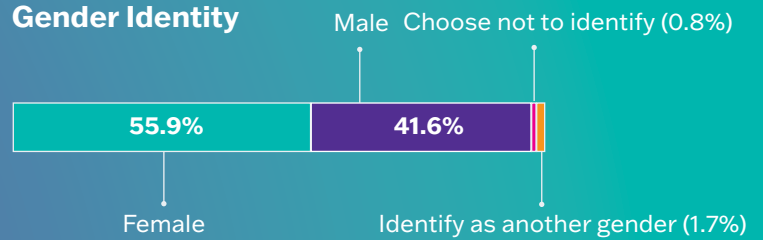
In Fiscal Year 2025, ASM engaged a diverse population of 17,017 teens who were between 13 - 24 years of age. More than 96% of these teens identified as a person of color, 56% identified as female, and the vast majority (92%) were in 9th through 12th grade.



Race/Ethnicity



Gender Identity

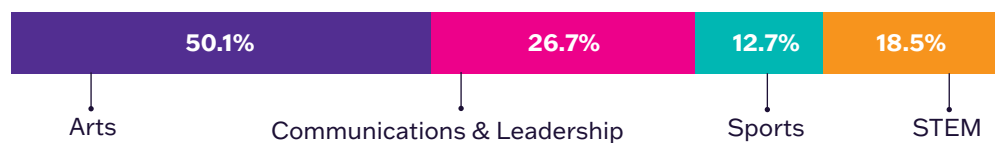


3 in 4 teens live in high-poverty community areas.

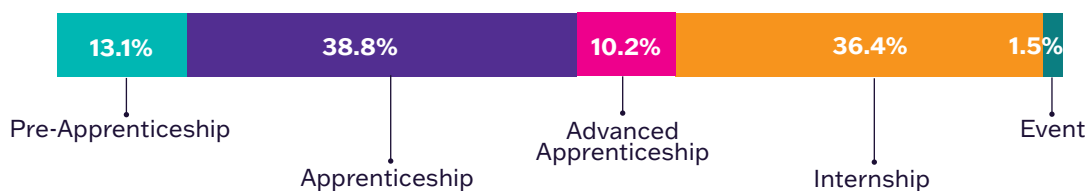
Types of Programs Offered

ASM offers a wide range of programs across content areas to meet teens' needs and interests. Our scaffolded model supports all experience levels, with opportunities that include pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships, internships, and special events.

Content Areas



Program Model





Spotlight: Unique Program Partnerships

ASM is made up of a unique network of program partners across Chicago from city and government agencies, cultural institutions, community-based organizations, schools, corporations, and more. A few of these are highlighted below.

In partnership with Chicago Public Schools

Daytime Programs

ASM offered 52 daytime programs for **410 teens with disabilities**. These teens participate in an ASM program during the school day, typically at one of ASM's buildings, and develop technical and critical life skills.


89% of teens in daytime programs said they learned something new.



In partnership with Chicago Public Libraries

ASM offered 56 internship programs for **139 teens** during the summer. Interns in these programs collaborate with library branch staff to support various branch needs and programs (e.g., setting up and helping run summer activities, assisting in visual displays and program materials, completing administrative tasks such as photocopying and filing).


90% of teens said participating in their program made them feel more prepared to work in a professional environment

In partnership with Chicago Housing Authority

Learn and Earn: Career Connections

ASM offered 14 Learn and Earn: Career Connections programs for **488 teens** during the summer. These innovative programs merge the benefits of personalized e-learning and direct academic instruction with career-centered education and youth development principles to provide a unique experience for teens to develop academic and career-specific skills (e.g., coding, cosmetology) during the first years of high school.




70% of teens in Learn and Earn programs reported being more interested in pursuing a career in an area their program covered.



Our Impact

ASM has a deep commitment to running high-quality programs.

To understand impact and monitor program quality, ASM continuously tracks essential administrative, survey, and observation data throughout the year. Combining data from these sources provides a holistic understanding of program experiences and highlights the ways ASM impacts and invests in teens, instructors, and community partners each year. For example, ASM utilizes this information each session to provide data-informed coaching and professional development to instructors and community-based organizations.



In Fiscal Year 2025, teens, instructors, and parents/guardians shared their voices via:



14,264 teen surveys



508 instructor surveys



1,379 parents/guardian surveys

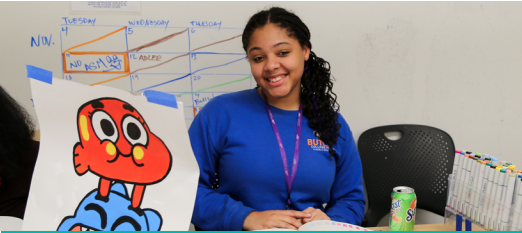
Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)

ASM measures quality in part through the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), a gold-standard youth development observational tool. The tool scores programs in four key dimensions: Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement. Programs are periodically assessed (~every two years). Historically, ASM programs score higher than national norms **across all domains.**



Youth Engagement

ASM provides **joyful, challenging, and engaging program experiences** that teens want to return to week after week.



“ My program gives me something to look forward to after school. When I’ve had a long day at school, I know **my dance program will lift my spirits and give me good vibes** before I go home. ”
– ASM Teen

92% of teens attended their programs on a **daily basis**.

91% of teens reported their program gave them **something fun to do**.

87% of teens reported their program allowed them to **explore their own interests**.

Over 9 in 10 teens and parents/guardians **felt satisfied** with their ASM program experience.

Safe and Welcoming Environments

ASM programs provide a welcoming environment for teens to develop supportive relationships and connections with instructors and peers. Additionally, ASM programs provide teens with both a physically and emotionally safe space.

88% of teens reported **feeling supported** by their instructor.

83% of teens reported that their program provided a **safe space to be their true self**.

83% of teens reported **strengthening or building new relationships** in their program.

95% of parents/guardians said that **ASM provided their teen with a safe space** to go.

“ ASM has expanded my children’s horizons in ways that I could never have imagined. ASM is a **‘home away from home’** for my kids where we feel fully confident in their safety and well-being. ”
-ASM Parent/Guardian

Mental Health Supports

ASM makes intentional efforts to support teen mental health in a variety of ways.



ASM offers mental health supports and resources to teens who need them via a partnership with Adler University.



ASM offers several professional development workshops for instructors focused on mental health and fostering warm, welcoming spaces for teens.



3 in 4 teens said participating in their program helped them safely cope with difficult emotions.

Personal Growth and Skills Development

ASM programs help teens gain confidence and grow their skills.

Across all ASM programs, teens work on developing technical skills in their programs' content area as well as critical work and life skills like teamwork, problem solving, communication, and more. This year, **more than 4 in 5 teens reported having these skills after participating in their program (83%).**



92% of teens reported improving or **learning new skills.**



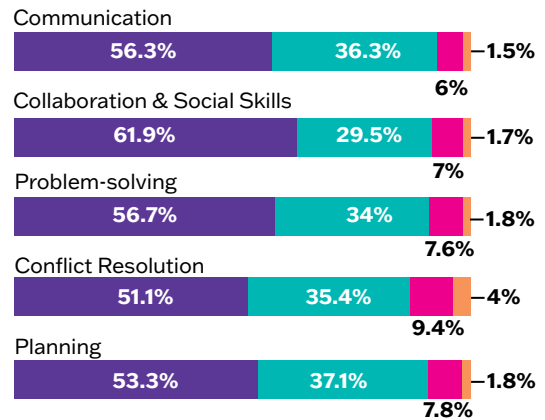
85% of teens reported **developing confidence** in their skills and abilities.



85% of teens reported **being proud of what they accomplished** in their program.

Skills Gained

● A Lot ● Somewhat ● A Little ● Not at All



“One highlight for me was meeting new people and learning skills and knowledge about computers I didn't have/know before. It really helped me grow and feel more confident about my future.”
-ASM Teen

“Each session I see my children grow more comfortable and confident in their self with the After School Matters outings and performances and their social skills are getting better too.”
-ASM Parent/Guardian

Preparation for the Future

ASM programs help prepare teens for their future.



92% of teens reported participating in ASM made them **more hopeful about their future.**



82% of graduating seniors shared that participating in ASM made them **more confident in pursuing their career and education goals.**



97% of ASM graduating seniors reported having plans for after graduation with **87% planning to attend college or a trade/vocational program.**



“After School Matters exposed me to different career options. To me, After School Matters expanded my world and showed me the amount of opportunities and pathways that are available.”
-ASM Teen



Investment in Teens and Our Community

ASM contributes to the economic vitality of Chicago's neighborhoods, organizations, and residents. At ASM, investing in community-based organizations (CBOs) and instructors across the city is pivotal to ensuring our teens' program experiences are of the highest quality.

This year, ASM:

Invested nearly **\$20M** back into our communities through teen stipends and instructor pay.

Broke ground on a vibrant new Teen Center, a milestone in a project contributing **\$25M** in capital investments in Chicago's Cabrini neighborhood.

Employed **577** independent instructors and supported **512** CBO instructors who are experts in their field.

Distributed over **\$2M** in private and public revenue to Chicago's CBOs.

Provided critical supports to CBOs and employee instructors through:



Professional Development & Communities of Practice



Administrative Support



Stipend Distribution for Teens

Impact of Teen Stipend

The stipend/wage teens receive for participating in programming often serves as an important source of income for them and their families.

While teens use their wages and stipends in a variety of ways, **nearly half of teens** reported using it for necessary personal expenses, and **nearly 1 in 3 teens** report that it contributes to family needs like rent or food costs.



More than half of teens and parents/guardians said their teens' program payment was an important source of income for teens and their families.



“ On the first day, my teen came out after the program and said, 'I stepped out of my comfort zone and made a new friend.' The money and debit card has also provided a **new financial freedom** and understanding of how quick a paycheck can go and how to use it wisely. ”
-ASM Parent/Guardian

Program Highlights

In Fiscal Year 2025, ASM partnered with amazing instructors and local organizations to provide meaningful and engaging program opportunities for teens. **A few examples are highlighted below.**



Drama and Musical Theater @ North Grand High School *Humboldt Park*

Drama and Musical Theater @ North Grand High School is hosted in Humboldt Park on the North side of the city. Through this program, teens work together to produce and perform a live theatrical production. From start to finish, teens get hands-on experience both on-stage and behind the scenes, taking on acting, costuming, stage makeup, set construction, and more. The program is led by North Grand's drama teacher, allowing for deeper connections with students and increased visibility for arts programming.



Landscape Design and Wellness

Woodlawn

Landscape Design and Wellness offers teens the unique opportunity to explore the professions of the botanical sciences and landscape design with a special focus on health and wellness. Through this program, teens gain an understanding of soils, plant development, and garden design while learning about the importance of collaboration and preparing them for education and career opportunities related to botany. Emphasizing the importance of nurturing local green spaces, last year teens in this Woodlawn-based program on the South side were able to redesign and cultivate their own landscaping at a local park, culminating in a garden festival where they showcased the wonders of botany through the gardens they designed.



Advanced Drawing & Painting Portfolio @ Gallery 37

The Loop

Advanced Drawing & Painting Portfolio, hosted at ASM's flagship Gallery 37 location in the Loop, allows teens to grow their passion and push their drawing and painting skills to the next level. Throughout the session, teens are challenged to explore new mediums and refine their own personal style. This advanced-level program culminates in teens creating a series of portfolio-ready pieces that they can use for art school applications.



Looking Ahead

ASM has many new and exciting ventures on the horizon in Fiscal Year 2026.

Grand Opening at ASM Orleans Teen Center

In November 2025, ASM celebrated the grand opening of its new Teen Center in Chicago's Cabrini community. This state-of-the-art facility features a black box theater, gymnasium, commercial kitchen, art studios, STEM and skilled trades labs, and more. This marks a new milestone in expanding ASM's footprint of providing teen-centric spaces across Chicago designed to inspire, empower, and connect young people.



2026 Instructor Forum

In March 2026, hundreds of instructors will convene at ASM's annual Instructor Forum hosted at our new building on N. Orleans in the Cabrini neighborhood. This full day of hands-on workshops is designed to help instructors strengthen their practice, discover fresh approaches, and deepen the experiences they create for young people. The theme for this year's Instructor Forum is "Shaping the Future: Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow." They will explore strategies that nurture teen voice, build meaningful relationships, and inspire authentic learning in every program space and ultimately prepare teens to lead the world forward.



35th Anniversary

In 2026, ASM celebrates our 35th Anniversary. From one location at Block 37 providing arts programs for 260 teens in 1991, to 350+ locations serving nearly 20,000 teens annually with arts, communications and leadership, sports, and STEM programming in 2026 – we've become the largest and most impactful provider of after-school and summer programs for teens in the nation. Our 35th Anniversary is a celebration of impact and how we continually meet the moment for Chicago teens.

ASM is already using what we learned this past year to continue innovating and investing in teens, instructors, community-based organizations, and Chicago communities in ways that will ensure teens have **safe, supportive, and engaging programs where they can thrive.**





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ASM Leadership

Mary Ellen Caron, Ph.D. (Chief Executive Officer)
Mischelle Causey-Drake, J.D. (General Counsel)
Tony Diaz (Chief Program Officer)
Katrina Ferreyra (Chief Development Officer)
Melissa Mister (Chief of Strategy and Staff)
Elizabeth Pagliai (Chief Financial Officer)
Brian Pool (Program Implementation Officer)
Tony Raden, Ph.D. (Chief Impact Officer)

Authors of the Report

Maks Preuss, M.A. (Manager of Research & Evaluation)
Lizzie Hilvert, Ph.D. (Director of Research & Evaluation)
Tony Raden, Ph.D. (Chief Impact Officer)

Designer

Andrea Guerrero (Senior Graphic Designer)

Additional Acknowledgments

A very special thanks to our instructors and community-based partners for continuing to run and host amazing programs for Chicago teens. Thank you to all of the teens, instructors, parents/guardians, and community-based partners who shared their voices and opinions with us. Additional thanks to ASM leadership and staff members for their feedback on the content and design of this report. We would also like to thank our numerous funders and partners, including the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Library, the State of Illinois, and the generous support of many foundations, organizations, and individuals.

