

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code

The Vision

The California AfterSchool Network (CAN) and many others envision a society where Out-of-School-Time (OST)¹ workforce are valued members of our society; supporting and nurturing them is crucial to sustaining high-quality programming and honor their humanity by creating supportive and respectful conditions that support them to thrive². Our aim is to foster an environment nationally where the contributions of OST professionals are acknowledged and appreciated, leading to greater support, investment, and resources for the field. One of many strategies to accomplish this bold vision is to establish a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code.

What is a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code?

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is a [federal statistical standard](#) used by federal agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data. The U.S Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) is responsible for updating and maintaining the SOC system.³ All workers are classified into one of 867 occupations or “SOC code.”

The Opportunity

Establishing a SOC code for the OST field presents a promising opportunity across various fronts. Firstly, it would enable the consistent quantification of the OST workforce, providing essential data on its size, demographics, and trends. This data would serve as a foundational tool for making compelling cases for workforce initiatives and securing vital funding. The introduction of a dedicated SOC code would streamline partnerships with workforce agencies, fostering collaborative relationships conducive to achieving shared goals. From an advocacy and policy perspective, a SOC code would lend credibility and precision to our efforts, empowering us to shape policies that benefit the OST field. Most importantly, establishing a SOC code would give the OST field ownership over the narrative and contributions, enabling us to showcase the significance of OST programs with clarity and authenticity.

¹According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Out- of- School Time (OST) is a supervised program that young people regularly attend when school is not in session. This can include before-and after-school programs on a school campus or facilities such as academic programs (e.g., reading or math focused programs), specialty programs (e.g., sports teams, STEM, arts enrichment), and multipurpose programs that provide an array of activities (e.g., 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs).” Reference - <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/ost.html>.

² California AfterSchool Network Policy Framework - <https://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/cans-policy-framework>

³ US Bureau of Labor Statistics - <https://www.bls.gov/soc/>

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Timeline & Process

The SOC Code system is updated and revised approximately every decade. The next revision period is set to begin in 2024, with the release of an updated SOC Code system expected by 2028.



National Workgroup

CAN and the Afterschool Alliance brought together 16 organizations that represent various youth development sectors, including statewide and national organizations, to draft a proposal to add a new code to the SOC system. The group convened monthly from September 2023 through February 2024 and expects to reconvene when the revision process opens later this year.

Next Steps

CAN, in partnership with the Afterschool Alliance and national workgroup, will continue to develop the proposal containing recommendations to be submitted to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Concurrently, CAN and the Afterschool Alliance will prioritize building awareness within the OST community, ensuring the field is informed and engaged in the process. This will involve disseminating information and engaging in discussions to prepare the field for public comment. As part of this preparation, CAN and the Afterschool Alliance will continue to encourage input and feedback from the field to ensure that the proposed SOC code accurately reflects the diverse roles and responsibilities within the OST workforce. If you have any questions or would like to get involved, please email Leslye Lugo llugo@afterschoolnetwork.org and Malia Villarreal mwillarreal@afterschoolnetwork.org.