

Office of Children's Affairs (OCA) Resolution 23-0827

Melissa Janiszewski & Kat Jarvis
Safety Committee June 21, 2023

Resolution 23-0827

Approves a contract with Mile High United Way for \$3,500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funding and Broncos Franchise Sale Share funding through 12-31-2024 to administer My Spark Denver, providing stipends for eligible low-income youth to participate in approved fee-based out of school learning or enrichment programs, citywide.

Out of School Time (OST) at OCA

Current OST

- \$3.3MM in ARPA
- \$2MM in our base budget
- Total- \$5.3MM
- Supporting free comprehensive programming

Serving: Ages 5-17

My Spark Pilot

- \$2.5MM in ARPA
- \$1MM Bronco Funds
- Supporting fee-based programming

Serving: Middle School Students, ages 12-14

What is My Spark Denver?

My Spark is a stipend program that supports low-income students in accessing meaningful out of school learning and enrichment programs

Program Overview:

- **\$1,000** per student on restricted debit card
- Approved out-of-school learning or enrichment providers
- Partners—OCA, Mile High United Way (MHUW), **My Spark, LLC**, Gary Community Ventures (GCV), Denver Public Schools (DPS)

Participants:

- There are 12,000 Denver Public Schools middle school students eligible for free-and-reduced-lunch. My Spark will be serving 4,000 students.

Contract Term:

- 2023-2024 school year



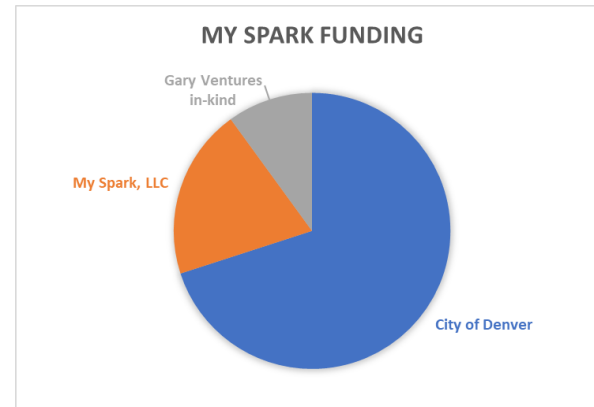
What is My Spark Denver?

My Spark is a stipend program that supports low-income students in accessing meaningful out of school learning and enrichment programs

Funding:

- \$3.5 MM-City of Denver
- \$1.0MM- My Spark, LLC
- \$0.5MM- In-kind from Gary Ventures

Total Cost: \$5MM



How This Works

Step 1: Providers Vetted

All providers must meet safety requirements, insurance requirements, and commit to non-discrimination against protected classes

**Utilizing OCA Policies and best practice*

Step 2: Family Receive Funds

My Spark confirms family eligibility and distributes funds

Eligibility: Free-reduced lunch eligible, DPS Middle School student

Step 3: Family registers for approved provider

Families and youth can review and select programming from approved providers on a website built to be integrated with OCA's Denver Afterschool Alliance (DAA) Connect Platform

How This Works

Protecting against discrimination of students

- Anti-discrimination policy signed during provider onboarding process
- My Spark participants will receive a restricted debit card in the mail and register the same way anyone else does—providers will not be able to distinguish between a My Spark participant and any other student

Ensuring students who need it most get access

- Undocumented students are explicitly included
- Working in partnership with DPS and its partners
- Materials and customer support are streamlined, aligned with other efforts, accessible in multiple languages, and website is ADA accessible





How This Works

Current implications for the city budget:

- No impact on the general fund or reserves
- Pilot program, no guarantee of future funding

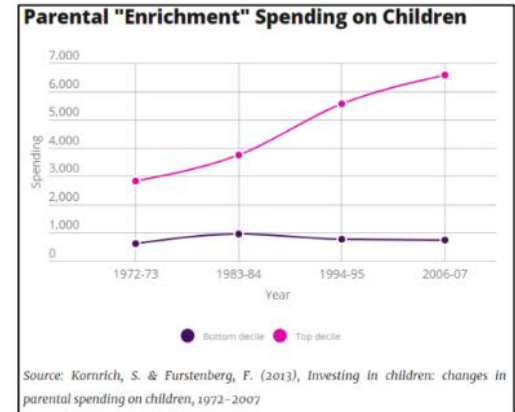
When the pilot concludes:

- Formal evaluation (done by a 3rd party evaluation team) and feedback from working committee made up of members of city and the community
- Working committee will review the evaluation and other data to make a recommendation about next steps

Why My Spark Denver?

Every youth in Denver should have the opportunity to pursue their passions and find their purpose through a variety of activities including athletics, arts, and academics, regardless of their income level.

Too many Denver youth are missing a sense of joy, passion, and belonging. Parents spend, on average, \$6,000+ annually on experiences that low-income families are not able to afford. My Spark stipend program seeks to address this gap.



Why My Spark Denver?

My Spark seeks to address this problem at a time where the need has never been greater

- Almost **28%** of Denver youth say they don't have an adult to go to for help with a serious problem¹
- **35%** of Denver kids said they felt so sad and hopeless that they stopped engaging in their usual activities¹
- Denver is experiencing an increased level of youth violence²
- The academic achievement gap in Denver is alarming, **42%** of Denver 8th graders reading on grade level and **29%** doing math on grade level and wide academic gaps between low-income students and their non-low-income peers³

Source 1: 2022 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
Source 2: <https://www.denverpost.com/2023/02/14/east-high-school-shooting-youth-gun-violence-response/>
Source 3: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/cmas-dataandresults-2022>
lick to add text

Benefits to Families – DAA Connect

What can \$1,000 get a student?

There are over 100 extracurricular and afterschool programs across Denver that can accept the *My Spark* Denver card. There is a variety of options for students and their families to choose, below are just a few:

- Photography Club
- New Cottage Arts
- STEMBlazers
- SkyHawks Sports Soccer, Flag Football
- Intro to Breakin-Bboy Factory

*<https://denvergov.org/youthprogramlocator/>

Find Youth Programs and Family Support Services

Search In-Person Programs

Select a School or Enter a Denver Address Within 3 Miles



OR

Search Virtual Programs









SEARCH

Families
Search for a variety of programs that keep youth safe, engaged and active. You can also locate additional resources that support the whole family. New programs and services are added often, so be sure to visit us frequently!

Organizations
Professionals in the youth-serving field can access the **Partner Directory** to connect and explore ways to work together to expand programs and services.

Types of Programs

 Academic, Literacy & STEM	 Arts & Culture	 College & Career Readiness	 Health, Wellness & Family Supports
 Outdoor & Environment	 Service Learning & Community Engagement	 Sports	 Leadership & Mentoring

What We Will Measure

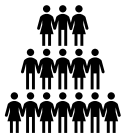


SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES → correlate to → LONG TERM OUTCOMES

- Student utilization of fee-based programming
 - Student and family experience (*pre-post survey*)
 - Increase in feelings of social connectedness
- Increases in youth well-being
 - Increase in protective factors
 - Improved academic progress
 - Youth Violence Prevention Best Practice (trusted adult)

Why This Program Design?

Gary Community Ventures and its partners have been piloting and collecting feedback on this work for years



Served over 370 students

Worked with over 50 program providers

Convened four Advisory Groups (Nonprofit Providers with a Northeast Denver focus, DPS Teachers, Participating Families and Youth)

Tested different aspects of program design:

- Provider and family registration experience
- Teachers as providers and free providers adding offerings
- Payment mechanisms



Spent over \$150,000 over four pilots, plus substantial in-kind staff time

Families, teachers, and providers loved the program (rated pilots at an average of 9.5/10)



Why This Program Design?

Insights from prior pilots have informed the current design

- **Families value choice.** Further, research on importance of student choice shows us that when kids pursue the unique extracurricular programs that align with their passions, there are greater benefits.
- **Families need an easy way to identify vetted options.** This is why we are building a quality website integrated to DAA Connect, OCA's current platform.
- **Payment system must minimize provider effort** and be straightforward for families. This is why we are using the restricted debit card model.



Source:

<https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-Value-of-Out-of-School-Time-Programs.pdf>

<https://www.ymca.org/blog/why-summer-camps-should-let-kids-lead>

A close-up photograph of a young boy with dark skin, wearing clear safety glasses. He is looking down intently at a book or document he is holding. The background is a blurred classroom environment with other students and papers. The overall lighting is soft and slightly dim, creating a focused and studious atmosphere.

Questions?