



## Ascend at the Aspen Institute Black and Native Family Futures Fund Grants

### Request for Proposals (RFP)



Photo Credit: Generation Hope

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**Vision:** Ascend at the Aspen Institute envisions an America in which every family passes a legacy of prosperity and well-being from one generation to the next.

**Summary of RFP:** The Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative at Ascend at the Aspen Institute requests proposals from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) that are committed to improving the college completion of student parents at their institution. Selected Fund partners will receive expert technical assistance and opportunities to learn from a community of practice dedicated to advancing the success of Black and Native student parents.

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*Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.  
-Sitting Bull*

## **The Ascend at the Aspen Institute Black and Native Family Futures Fund**

Recognizing Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are uniquely positioned to serve Black and Native student parents, [Ascend at the Aspen Institute](#), with support from [Lumina Foundation](#), is launching a capacity building fund to increase access and success for student parents at these institutions.

**This 18-month project, from November 2022 to April 2024, will provide \$75,000 grants to three HBCUs and two TCUs.**

Within this project, student parent is defined as a postsecondary student who is pregnant, a parent with at least part-time custody, or a guardian (officially or unofficially) of a child under age 18. This definition is meant to be inclusive and encompasses foster parents, adoptive parents, extended family, and other caregivers.

As a capacity building fund, this project aims to improve Fund partners' ability to support student parents by strengthening institutional commitment and staff development and capacity. During this project, Fund partners will establish a cross-campus task force to plan and begin implementing or expanding student parent supports at their institutions. The first year of the project will focus on planning and the last six months will focus on implementation. Partners will receive support throughout the process from an expert HBCU or TCU technical assistance provider who they will meet with monthly and ad-hoc as needed. The five partner institutions will also participate in peer learning through a community of practice.

Through the Black and Native Family Futures Fund, we aim to develop culturally informed promising practices that can increase student parent access and success on all college campuses, particularly the HBCUs and TCUs that serve many Black and Native student parents.

### **Benefits to Participating Institutions**

#### **Expert Technical Assistance**

Technical assistance will be provided to HBCU partners by [Teamer Strategy Group, LLC. \(TSG\)](#) and to TCU partners by the [Center for Native American Youth \(CNAV\)](#). Technical assistance providers will help institutions customize guidance and tools in the [Family Friendly Campus Toolkit](#) to meet their unique campus needs. All partners will be provided with one-on-one technical assistance related to developing their action plans; collecting and leveraging data; implementing action plans; sustainability planning; and overall strategy guidance and capacity building. Technical assistance providers will offer culturally informed strategic guidance throughout the project, act as sounding boards when challenges arise, and will connect institutions to relevant tools and stakeholders in both the Ascend Network and their own personal networks.



Photo Credit: TaNeel Filesteel

## Community of Practice

Partners will benefit from peer learning through a community of practice, which will gather for virtual quarterly convenings and a closing convening, potentially in-person. During convenings, partners will share project wins and lessons learned, as well as promising strategies and helpful resources.

## Showcasing Your Work

Partners' efforts will be showcased in a playbook that will be drafted at the close of the grant period. This playbook will be uplifted through a virtual launch webinar, shared with the Ascend Network, and promoted widely via Ascend and partner communication channels. In addition, there will be opportunities throughout the grant period to showcase partner efforts during convenings and through other forms of media, such as featured blog posts, op-eds, and podcasts.



Photo Credit: Chona Kasinger

## Ascend Network and Convenings

Partners will have the opportunity to join the [Ascend Network](#) if they have not already. The Ascend Network provides a special opportunity to learn from and collaborate with others around the country who are committed to identifying, developing, and implementing 2Gen approaches. This community enables access to peer guidance and sharing best practices; opportunities for technical assistance and co-designing policy and practice change with Ascend; strategic convenings and networking; and amplifying thought leadership within the field.

## Grant Activities

Black and Native Family Futures Fund partners will draft and begin implementing action plans that aim to create a supportive and respectful institutional culture for student parents and increase their enrollment and completion. This project builds on learnings from Ascend's institutional practice work with the [Postsecondary Leadership Circle](#).

Within this process, partners will:

- Establish a cross-campus task force dedicated to student parent success;
- Create a profile of existing student parent supports;
- Collect and analyze data to identify student parents, establish a baseline of current supports, and better understand their needs;
- Develop an action plan with measurable goals and specific actions planned after the grant period to sustain efforts, which can be used by partners to seek additional external resources;
- Establish or refine a process for respectfully including and responding to student parent voices and experiences; and
- Begin implementing or expanding family-friendly support services that leverage both institutional and community partnerships.

## Timeline of Grant Activities

The grant period for this project is 18 months, from November 2022 through April 2024. By November 2023, Fund partners will conclude the project planning period and begin implementation of their action plans.

Partners will receive ongoing one-on-one support during each step of the process from Ascend and an expert HBCU or TCU technical assistance provider, meeting monthly and ad-hoc as needed. In addition, partners will participate in peer learning through quarterly Black and Native Family Futures Fund community of practice convenings.



Photo Credit: Cheyenne Brady

### **Year 1 (months 1-12)**

- Attend project kick-off webinar;
- Establish a student parent task force;
- Create a profile of existing student parent supports;
- Collect student parent data through surveys, focus groups, and other existing sources;
- Perform student parent data analysis and leverage findings when developing the Postsecondary Success for Parents Action Plan;
- Finalize and submit the Postsecondary Success for Parents Action Plan that includes measurable goals, a timeline, and milestones; and
- Draft and submit interim grant report.

### **Year 2 (months 13-18)**

- Begin implementation of the Postsecondary Success for Parents Action Plan;
- Host site visits for Ascend staff and relevant external experts;
- Participate in interviews and provide relevant materials to aid Ascend in the development of a playbook codifying learnings from the project to inform policy and practice change in the broader higher education field;
- Draft and submit final grant report; and
- Attend project closing convening.

Data reported within this project will come from FAFSA data and surveys and focus groups conducted during the project. No personally identifiable student data will be requested.

## Allowable Uses of Grant Funds

Grant funds should be allocated to staff time and other expenses needed for the cross-campus task forces to complete the project's planning steps and begin action plan implementation. Depending on the changes and parent supports your institution intends to newly implement or expand, allocation of grant funds may vary. While one institution may focus funding toward staff time to develop staff and faculty trainings or change an existing institutional policy, another may want to launch a new program, such as a holistic support program for parenting students or campus childcare services. As a capacity building project, only limited funding can be allocated to direct programmatic support for services associated with launching a pilot program, such as



providing case management support to a limited number of students to test the concept. The full cost of implementing programs like these, however, would need to be obtained through other sources.

Besides staff time, examples of allowable uses of grant funds include software to bolster student parent data collection; incentives for students to participate in focus groups; childcare for students' children during focus groups; and consultant services if needed due to lack of internal capacity.

## **Application Requirements and Selection Criteria**

### ***Eligibility:***

This opportunity is open to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Lists of HBCUs and TCUs can be found on the U.S. Department of Education's website.<sup>1,2</sup>

### ***Key Selection Criteria:***

**Ascend will consider proposals that demonstrate the following:**

1. Prior, new, existing, and ongoing systemic institutional efforts to support student parents or student parents and their children through a 2Gen approach;
2. Awareness of the need for and potential benefits of institutional practice and policy innovation to support student parents;
3. Capacity and commitment of several key institutional leaders and cross-campus practitioners to engage in an ongoing student parent learning process and action plan development and implementation;
4. Desire to actively engage in regular technical assistance provided by Ascend and its partners throughout the project;
5. Commitment to participating in and actively contributing to a community of practice;
6. Demonstrated capacity to engage student parent voices and experiences as part of the action plan development process;
7. A focus on innovations that support either Black or Native student parents; and
8. Dedication to sustaining efforts focused on student parent access and success beyond the grant period.

### ***Required Proposal Components:***

1. **Cover sheet that includes the following information (please complete in the [form](#) provided here):**
  - a. Institution name
  - b. Name, title, email address, and phone number of lead applicant (senior institutional leader)
  - c. Name, title, email address, and phone number of project director (if different from lead applicant)
  - d. A one-paragraph summary of project purpose
  - e. Date of proposal submission
2. **Application Narrative:**
  - a. Proposal executive summary (half page)
  - b. Project rationale (up to 5 pages)

**Please describe:**

- i. Why your institution is interested in participating in the Black and Native Family Futures Fund. Discuss the goals your institution is trying to achieve.
- ii. A summary of the current understanding of your institution's student parent population, including an estimate of how many student parents are currently enrolled at your institution. If your institution is just beginning student parent efforts, an estimate can be obtained through your institution's Financial Aid Office using Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data.
- iii. How the project fits within your broader institutional priorities, including those related to equity and inclusion.
- iv. How the project might expand or build on existing institutional practices or policies that support student parents. Applicants should mention practice or policy ideas that have been discussed and are likely to be considered as a part of their planning process, and/or mention outcomes of existing initiatives and include links or attachments with any relevant documentation on existing student parent initiatives.
- v. The likely or potential institutional changes the project will include.
- vi. How the work might benefit either Black or Native student parents in addition to the student parent population more broadly.

**3. Action Planning Process (up to 2 pages). Please describe:**

- a. Strategies your task force will use to ensure effective collaboration across campus.
- b. Student parent data collection processes your institution is currently using and/or plans to put in place.
- c. Communication methods your institution intends to leverage to identify and engage student parents.
- d. How your institution plans on engaging the voice and experiences of student parents to help inform this effort.

**4. Institutional Capacity (up to 2 pages)**

- a. List the names and titles of the lead applicant, project director (if different from lead applicant), and other cross-campus leaders and practitioners who will serve on the project task force. Task forces must have a minimum of three members. Institution board members and external partners may also serve on the task force.
  - i. Required representation from financial aid, institutional research, and student affairs.
  - ii. Recommended representation from academic affairs, the faculty, the Title IX office, child development center, and counseling services, dependent upon their existence on your campus.
- b. Discuss how/why your institution is well-equipped to achieve the results described above.
- c. Provide an example of another cross-campus systems change project your institution has participated in, including outcomes achieved (links to publications or reports from this effort may be included or attached).
- d. Note any previous affiliation or engagement your institution has had with the Aspen Institute.
- e. Is this work likely to be sustained after the grant period has ended? If so, please discuss how.

**5. Budget**

- a. Please use the form [here](#).

## 6. Budget Narrative

- a. Complete the project budget attachment.
- b. Include a description of each line item in your project budget (in the open space under the budget line items) and how the costs were calculated (e.g., personnel line item includes 50 percent of the project director's time, meeting costs line item includes food and beverages for three convenings, etc.). Technical assistance provider costs are covered by Ascend outside of institutional grants and should not be included in grant budgets. Modifications to the budget may be allowed if project needs change. Grant funds will be distributed in full upon receipt of the signed grant agreement.

## 7. Letters of Commitment

- a. Letters of commitment from the president/chancellor and a student parent representative.
- b. List of key community based and otherwise external partners to the institution who will be engaged in the proposed work, if applicable.

## Proposal Submission

Submit all required proposal components by 11:59 pm ET September 14, 2022 via [FormAssembly](#).

Frequently asked questions can be found [here](#). For all other questions, please contact us at [ascendpsp@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:ascendpsp@aspeninstitute.org).

## Grantmaking Process and Timeline

**RFP issue date:** Wednesday, July 20, 2022

**Virtual office hours (highly recommended for interested applicants):** [Thursday, August 18, 2022, from 1-2 pm ET](#) and [Wednesday, September 7, 2022 from 2-3 pm ET](#)

**Deadline for proposals:** Wednesday, September 14, 2022

**Fund partner public announcement:** Monday, October 3, 2022

**Grant period:** November 2022 through April 2024

**Mandatory kick-off webinar:** Tuesday, November 15, 2022

**Interim report due:** Thursday, August 31, 2023

**Final report due:** Friday, June 2, 2024

**Ascend lead:** David Croom, Associate Director, Postsecondary Success for Parents

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *What is an HBCU?* Retrieved from [What is an HBCU? | White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Tribal colleges and universities*. Retrieved from [Tribal Colleges and Universities | White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities](#)