



Request for Concepts: Optimizing Higher Education in Prison

Higher education in prison (HEP) has recently emerged as a significant focus area in **our funding strategy**. In 2016, we commissioned a **HEP landscape scan**, and we subsequently made several **exploration grants** in the field. After listening to partners and learning more about existing programs and the common challenges they face, we recognized that many offerings and support services are insufficient and disjointed. It has become clear to us that additional research and improvements in HEP delivery strategies are needed in order to help more incarcerated learners succeed.

To address that need, we're launching "Optimizing Delivery Systems for Higher Education in Prison: Postsecondary Pathways for Re-entry Transition," an initiative to support the development and expansion of high-quality prison-based postsecondary education programs. The goal of this initiative is not to support the growth or development of individual programs. Our aim is to support efforts that can help us—and the field—learn what it takes to build the relationships and infrastructure necessary for the kind of systemic improvement, both academic and operational, that can be replicated and scaled.

We're excited to announce a Request for Concepts from HEP providers interested in partnering with us on this initiative. We are accepting Letters of Interest (LOIs) through August 1, 2019. Please read the **Request for Concepts** for full details and eligibility information. We look forward to hearing from you and learning more about your HEP programs! Know someone else who should hear about this opportunity? Please forward this newsletter or a link to the Request for Concepts.

We are conducting a webinar on Wednesday, July 17 at 2 p.m. CDT to share more about this initiative and answer your questions.

[Register for Webinar](#)



New Workforce Playbook Offers Guide to Aligning Community College Programs with Local Labor Markets

As employers across the country struggle to find qualified workers with industry-recognized credentials, many community colleges are looking for ways to better align their program offerings with labor markets in their region. To help them build more effective workforce programs, we awarded a grant to The Aspen Institute last year to support the **development of a "how-to" guide** for community college practitioners.

Released this month, "**The Workforce Playbook: A Community College Guide to Delivering Excellent Career and Technical Education**," is based on practices of 30 high-performing community colleges. The playbook outlines four key strategies: advancing a vision for talent development; delivering high-quality, relevant programs; taking intentional action to support students throughout their postsecondary journey; and developing mutually beneficial partnerships with employers. We believe this playbook will enable colleges to help more students from all backgrounds graduate with the right skills and credentials to build rewarding careers.



Achieving the Dream™

ATD Convening Builds on Work with Adjunct Faculty and Open Educational Resources

At the end of May, our grant partner Achieving the Dream (ATD) hosted its inaugural Teaching and Learning Summit in Minneapolis. The sold-out, three-day convening offered institutional teams opportunities to participate in collaborative learning across four tracks: Culturally Responsive Practices, Guided Pathways, Open Educational Resources (OER) and Adaptive Courseware for Early Success. Content for each track was informed by ATD's extensive work with community college partners that are implementing broad changes to improve student success. Participants in each track discussed actionable strategies and shared best practices with their peers.

Several of the sessions incorporated findings from Ascendium-funded projects, including **Engaging Adjunct Faculty** and the **OER Degree Initiative**. "It was gratifying to see a number of the ideas, tools and resources developed through initiatives we support presented at the summit," said Ascendium Senior Program Officer Sue Cui.



Missed Our June 5 Strategy Webinar? No Problem—We Recorded It

Last month, Ascendium unveiled a **new funding strategy** that will guide our philanthropy for the next three to five years. The new strategy builds on our existing grantmaking approach while expanding our focus into new areas and broadening our geographic scope.

On June 5, Ascendium's Amy Kerwin and Rebecca Villarreal hosted a webinar in which they outlined our strategy and described our four focus areas: Removing Systemic Barriers to Success; Streamlining Key Transitions; Expanding High-Quality Higher Education in Prison; and Developing Rural Education and Workforce Training. For those of you who were unable to participate in the live presentation, we recorded the webinar and have made it available on our website, along with supporting materials you can download: the **webinar PowerPoint PDF**, **FAQs** and an **informational handout**. We encourage you to check out the webinar at your convenience.

[Watch the Webinar](#)

Recent Grants

Recipient	Grant	Amount
Alliance for Higher Education in Prison	Higher Education in Prison Landscape Project	\$925,000
MDRC	Expanding Evidence-Based Strategies Across the Minnesota State System	\$520,000

On the Go: Find Ascendium Staff in the Field

United Negro College Fund Career Pathways Institute

July 1-3, Atlanta, GA

National College Access Network #FormYourFuture FAFSA Completion Institute

July 10-11, Dallas, TX

Vera Institute Convening of Second Chance Pell Sites and Partners

July 14-16, Washington, D.C.

Jobs for the Future Postsecondary State Network Meeting

July 17-18, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Wisconsin Technical College System Student Success Summit

July 23-24, Wausau, WI

American Association of State Colleges and Universities Academic Affairs Summer Meeting

July 25-27, Minneapolis, MN

Correctional Education Association Conference and Training Event

July 28-31, Detroit, MI