

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT TWO-GENERATION STRATEGIES

To learn more about Ascend at the Aspen Institute and two-generation approaches, visit:
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WORKFORCE. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) creates career pathways that prepare low-income and out-of-work individuals for living wage, family-sustaining jobs. This is accomplished through a series of federally-funded workforce development programs for youth aged 16-24 and adults, including job training and placement, literacy, postsecondary education, and vocational rehabilitation programs. WIOA focuses on building an adaptable American workforce that is ready to respond to changing labor market needs at the local, state, and national level and opens up unprecedented opportunities for service providers to take services to the next level.

INNOVATION. In 2014, Congress restructured and renamed the nation's workforce development programs to better serve low-income Americans and to facilitate the formation of cross-sector partnerships focused on improving economic outcomes in the United States. WIOA offers states and local agencies a host of opportunities to think about job training and educational tools in a new way, including by building meaningful partnerships with local service providers, the business community, institutions of postsecondary education, and other government agencies that support low-income families.

OPPORTUNITY. WIOA was born out of a major workforce development systems

shift that provides new opportunities for innovation and 2Gen engagement at the local, state, and national level. By harnessing the potential of WIOA, Ascend Network Partners can build 2Gen momentum in their communities and leverage federal resources to help families achieve educational success and economic security.

ACT. Implementation of the law began in July 2015 and will run through the next 12 months, with WIOA planning activities underway in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Each governor is currently developing a WIOA State Plan that outlines specifics for the state's workforce development program design, evaluation measures, and coordination with other government agencies and non-government partners. State Plans are due March 2, 2016, and may be focused exclusively on workforce development programming ("unified" plans) or – as the President has strongly encouraged – include strategies for coordinating and integrating WIOA programs with services provided by other state and local agencies, such as TANF, SNAP, social services, or housing assistance ("combined" plans).

GET INVOLVED

WIOA offers a host of opportunities to advance 2Gen strategies around workforce development and postsecondary programs. However,

action is required to ensure that your partners, policymakers, and community members are educated about and engaged in strategies to embed a 2Gen lens into all WIOA activities. You can influence WIOA implementation policy by:

- **Forming partnerships** with local workforce development programs or institutions of postsecondary education to build expanded two-generation programming in your community. This could include providing 2Gen training to workforce development programs or collaborating with local partners to expand services to families receiving job training or career pathways services under WIOA.
- Engaging your state's WIOA Task Force and other relevant policymakers to **advocate for the inclusion of 2Gen strategies in your state's WIOA State Plan**. This should include supporting a "combined" plan in your state to encourage cross-agency coordination and integration of services for low-income families. If you are not sure where to start, Ascend can help connect you with the appropriate policymakers and advocates in your area.
- **Using the power of your community and parent voices to educate federal policymakers about the significance of a 2Gen approach**. You can do this by signing up for updates from the US Department of Labor regarding WIOA implementation and submitting comments on the department's regulations and implementation guidance.

FIVE STRATEGIES FOR 2GEN ENGAGEMENT

Specific opportunities for including a 2Gen approach in WIOA State Plans include:

1. **Design State Plans that provide enhanced coordination between human services providers and workforce training and postsecondary education** programs to identify and better serve shared populations. WIOA explicitly prioritizes services to low-income individuals and those with barriers to employment, many of whom also receive TANF or SNAP benefits. By integrating human services and workforce development programs, local, state, and national service providers can more effectively and efficiently serve at-risk populations, including low-income student parents.
2. **Take advantage of WIOA's significant investment in low-income young adults, many of whom are parents**. WIOA mandates that 75 percent of state-wide grants and funds available to local areas under Title I of the law be spent on workforce

development programs for out-of-school youth. These funds can be used to help young adults secure living wage jobs or return to school.

3. **Recognize the importance of providing convenient, affordable child care** to parents attending school or workforce development programs. Use WIOA resources to incentivize partnerships with child care providers that deliver high-quality early childhood education programming.
4. **Provide year-round support for student parents** by coordinating workforce development or postsecondary education programs with human services, housing and food assistance, and child care programs so that low-income parents can access the supports they need 12 months a year, regardless of their school schedule.
5. **Allow time spent in school or workforce development programs to count towards TANF work requirements and child care subsidy eligibility terms**. Student parents are more likely to achieve educational success if their enrollment in school or workforce training programs is treated as work.

RESOURCES

There is a wide range of high-quality WIOA resources available online, including:

- The [US Department of Labor's WIOA resources site](#), where you can sign up for WIOA implementation updates and news.
- The National Skills Coalition's [Playbook for Creating Effective State Plans](#) under WIOA.
- The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)'s September 2014 [report on opportunities in WIOA](#).