

# BOLD IDEAS FOR FAMILIES

## THE PRINCIPLES AND INNOVATIONS TO DRIVE FAMILY PROSPERITY REPORT AND THE ASPEN FAMILY PROSPERITY INNOVATION COMMUNITY INDEX



How can we reimagine the supports that families need to thrive in rapidly changing times? As America grapples with the coronavirus pandemic and the shock waves that will be felt for years to come, now is the time to address structural inequities and barriers to opportunity for children and families.

The **Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community** (Family Prosperity) has the big ideas to help us get there. Ascend at the Aspen Institute is a national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations to meaningfully improve economic, educational, and health opportunities and outcomes for families across the United States, and Family Prosperity is at the forefront of advancing prosperity and opportunity for generations to come.

Family Prosperity, led by Ascend and with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, brings together dynamic leaders and bold thinkers across business, government, and civil society to refine and amplify fresh strategies and solutions that strengthen parents' and families' access to everything they need to thrive. The vision of Family Prosperity is to ensure a stronger, deeper, more relevant set of policies and practices are in place at all levels of government and engage employers in private and public sectors to advance whole family stability and health.

Since 2017, Family Prosperity Partners have produced a wide range of research and resources to advance learning and action around what it takes to move families, especially those with low incomes, toward economic mobility. The community's work addresses a wide range of family-supportive policies and work-family supports, including paid family and medical leave, child care, health insurance and health care, employment benefits, and social safety net programs.

Ascend is proud to share two publications that elevate innovations from Family Prosperity and partners in Ascend's Network: the *Principles and Innovations to Drive Family Prosperity* report, and *Aspen Family Prosperity Innovation Community Index*.

- The **Principles and Innovations report** offers Ascend's perspective on opportunities for employers as well as policymakers and practitioners to support innovations that drive the cycle of family prosperity, rooted in six principles (see side-bar).
- The **Index** is a collection of resources created by Family Prosperity Partners and is divided into three wide-ranging areas of innovation: Research, Tools, and Dialogue. Policymakers will find leading-edge information about the impact of policy on family prosperity at the local, state, and national levels. Advocates will be equipped with tools and stories that bring to life the urgency of progress on family-supportive policies and practices. And institutional players like employers can reflect on the role of workplace benefits in the success of both business and family.

Six **principles** are necessary to achieve Ascend's vision of good jobs for all parents, including and especially those with low incomes:

- Equity;
- Transparency;
- Integration;
- Comprehensiveness;
- Effective implementation; and
- Adequate resources.

Together, these two publications include five types of workplace and job policy innovations that support those principles: Adequate pay and benefits; Transportation; Child care; Opportunities for workplace learning, skills development, and training; and Feedback loops that help drive dialogue between employers and employees.

Below are snapshots of different types of innovation – check out the publications for more!

- **Adequate pay and benefits:** The National Partnership for Women and Families published *Paid Family and Medical Leave: A Racial Justice Issue – and Opportunity*, which describes the vast disparities people of color face when it comes to the lack of employer-provided paid family leave, and shows how addressing our paid leave crisis is a racial justice issue that requires a carefully designed and implemented federal policy solution.
- **Child care:** United Teen Equality Center (UTEC), is one of five agencies that received grants from Massachusetts' Learn to Earn initiative, a targeted job-training program for unemployed and underemployed individuals receiving public assistance. In addition to providing education, skills training, job placement, and case management, the program provides family-focused supports and services, including child care, so the participants can fully engage in transitioning to work. A state-level interagency workgroup helps to resolve individual participants' job barriers — for instance, by connecting them to authorized child care vouchers or income-eligible child care subsidies — and a \$250,000 "Benefit Innovation Fund" is available to help participants and their families address issues such as child care.
- **Opportunities for workplace learning, skills development, and training:** West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (WMCAT) provides training in high-demand job skills, such as medical coding, pharmacy technology, and medical billing, to under- and unemployed adults. During the nine-month program, each student participates in a six-week, full-time externship with a local employer partner. Through partnerships with Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Arbor Circle, a provider of counseling, education, and prevention programs, participants also receive on-site emotional health services.
- **Feedback loops that help drive dialogue between employers and employees:** FedEx has a "survey- feedback-action" (SFA) cycle that asks every employee in its five subsidiary companies to complete a standardized, anonymous annual questionnaire that collects information on employees' goals, views on management, job conditions and rewards, and "what helps and hinders [them] in their work environment." Responses are aggregated by workgroup and reported to the workgroup's manager, who meets with all partners of the workgroup to examine specific concerns and their causes. The feedback meeting results in an action plan to address workgroup concerns, which is then implemented and monitored until the next year's SFA cycle.

As we look to the day this crisis is over and seek solutions to ensure our economy and health systems are never rocked so deeply again, we should do so in a way that offers permanent fixes for the millions of families who have experienced disruption and hardship on a daily basis for generations. This body of work represents the evidence to envision a future of family-supportive policies and practices in America – and the tools to get there.

**Find the reports on Ascend's website at [www.ascend.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.ascend.aspeninstitute.org).**

