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STRIVETOGETHER AWARDS UP TO \$7 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE RESULTS AT MAJOR MILESTONES IN KIDS' LIVES

21 winning initiatives will advance equity and spread bold strategies to help children and families access opportunity and move up the economic ladder

CINCINNATI, OH — StriveTogether, a national nonprofit working to bring communities together around data to make decisions and improve results for kids, today announced the second set of awardees for its Cradle to Career Community Challenge grant program. Up to \$7 million over the next three years will fund projects across the country that advance equity and spread bold strategies to help students progress from kindergarten to postsecondary completion and a job.

“StriveTogether launched the Cradle to Career Community Challenge because we refuse to settle for a world in which a child’s ability to thrive is dictated by factors like race or income,” StriveTogether President and CEO Jennifer Blatz said. “From partners across the country, we know the urgency of this work and the value of creating lasting change in communities. We are proud to start this year supporting 21 new initiatives to get real results for youth and families.”

Communities in the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network were eligible to apply for the Community Challenge. This grant program seeks to create local change to enable economic mobility. The goal is to strengthen and align the many systems, such as education, employment, health and housing, that shape opportunity for children and families in America.

“Communities across the country are tackling big issues that are best solved at the local level,” said Nancy Zimpher, StriveTogether board chair and chancellor emeritus of the State University

of New York. “This Challenge is designed to help them think bigger and bolder. We look forward to spreading the ideas that prove most effective at getting better outcomes for kids.”

During this round of grants, the Community Challenge program consists of two funds:

- The **Accelerator Fund** will advance equity and systems change in communities to help them more quickly achieve proof point, an important measure of progress along StriveTogether’s framework for cradle-to-career work. The 10 selected communities were each awarded a maximum total grant award of \$550,000 over three years to reach proof point. This initiative also combines an intensive leadership development program with targeted training and technical assistance.
- The **Promising Practices Fund** is intended to fund local projects applying bold strategies that can be spread across StriveTogether’s national network. These projects will focus on deeper community engagement and align education with other sectors such as health, housing and transportation. Eleven community-based organizations were awarded grants of up to \$150,000 for one year.

The Accelerator Fund will support projects in 10 communities. During the first year, these communities will learn strategies and tools to apply to additional cradle-to-career projects in the second and third year of the grant. These first-year initiatives are:

Adams County, Colo. (Youth Initiative of Adams County)

- Facilitate collaboration across organizations and agencies to increase access to job opportunities with the goal of closing gaps in employment rates.

Baltimore, Md. (Baltimore’s Promise)

- Support students to enter the workforce after graduation by creating opportunities for occupational skills training, aimed at lowering poverty rates among young people and narrowing racial disparities.

Boise, Idaho (Treasure Valley Education Partnership)

- Address the impending shortage of qualified workers by empowering more low-income and Latinx students to earn postsecondary credentials, to support the state’s goal of having 60 percent of workers ages 25 to 34 years old hold a credential by 2025.

Charleston, S.C. (Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative)

- Ensure that the region’s students are ready for kindergarten by aligning organizations, individuals and resources in the community and committing to a shared vision.

Marin County, Calif. (Marin Promise Partnership)

- Align early childhood efforts to improve kindergarten readiness, including closing persistent gaps for students of color, low-income students and English language learners.

Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn. (Generation Next)

- Improve early-grade reading through a variety of methods, including teacher diversity, social-emotional skills, and academic and behavioral outcomes for young students of color.

Redmond, Ore. (Better Together Central Oregon)

- Unite the region around achieving better high school graduation rates, with the goal of ending significant disparities that exist for low-income students and students of color.

Rochester, N.Y. (ROC the Future)

- Support third-graders' ability to read on grade level through efforts that include revising the K-2 curriculum to be more developmentally and culturally appropriate.

South Bronx, N.Y. (South Bronx Rising Together)

- Close gaps between students in the South Bronx and greater New York City by improving third-grade reading outcomes, including building on and sharing successful practices across schools.

Summit County, Ohio (Summit Education Initiative)

- Connect more families with resources in education, health and social services to increase kindergarten readiness, with a focus on closing gaps for African American children and children from low-income households.

The Promising Practices Fund will support these 11 projects:

Austin, Texas (E3 Alliance)

- Create standardized tools and trainings to help school improvement networks accelerate better student outcomes, while also developing a set of practices to help other learning networks.

Baltimore, Md. (Baltimore's Promise)

- Connect data systems to link agencies across the city to access information about the needs of children, youth and families in Baltimore.

Boston, Mass. (Boston Opportunity Agenda)

- Identify and address systemic issues that cause students, primarily males of color, to put their college journeys on hold before obtaining a diploma or degree.

Bridgeport, Conn. (Bridgeport Prospers)

- Create a bundle of supports for children 0 to 3 years old, building on successful strategies to expand results.

Winston-Salem, N. Carolina (The Forsyth Promise)

- Activate the power of those with lived experience in planning and implementing strategies and solutions to change local systems.

Green Bay, Wis. (Achieve Brown County)

- Combine individual student-level records from seven school districts with data from partners in early education, health care and community programs, establishing a comprehensive set of data to inform local action.

Marin County, Calif. (Marin Promise Partnership)

- Pass a new graduation policy in the county’s school districts to set high expectations and provide access and support for required courses, ensuring that students of color, low-income students and English language learners graduate ready for college and career.

Northfield, Minn. (Northfield Promise)

- Establish a transportation co-op, developing a rural rideshare and expanding access to driver education courses, helping low-income parents get their kids to preschool, social services and medical appointments.

Pocatello, Idaho (imPACT East Idaho)

- Secure state preschool funds using digital engagement tools to develop local support, making a big impact in a state with the country’s lowest preschool participation rates and no public funding for preschool.

San Antonio, Texas (P16Plus Council of Greater Bexar County)

- Design and facilitate a collaborative effort around rethinking discipline to combat disproportionate disciplinary practices on a 10-campus pilot project ultimately aimed at increasing high school completion.

Southeastern Kentucky (Partners for Education at Berea College)

- Implement a service year model in rural areas to improve educational outcomes and reduce disparity gaps.

The Cradle to Career Community Challenge is funded by Ballmer Group, the philanthropy co-founded by civic activist Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft, chairman of the LA Clippers and founder of USAFacts. Since launching in 2018, the Community Challenge has committed to investing nearly \$30 million in 35 communities over the next three years.

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About StriveTogether

[StriveTogether](#) leads a national movement of 70 communities to get better results in every child’s life. We coach and connect partners across the country to close gaps by using local data, especially for children of color and low-income children. Communities using our proven approach have seen measurable gains in kindergarten readiness, academic achievement and postsecondary success. The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network reaches 10.5 million students, involves 10,800 organizations and has partners in 30 states and Washington, D.C.