

# StriveTogether awards up to \$7 million in grants for communities to improve results at major milestones in kids' lives

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**21 cradle-to-career partnerships 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 cradle-to-career partnerships 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 the partnership to increase access to job opportunities, with the goal of closing disparity gaps in employment rates.

**Baltimore, Md. (Baltimore's Promise)**

Reduce the unemployment rate and number of opportunity youth by linking education and workforce systems, helping workforce providers better support young adults and connecting high school graduates with opportunities in skills training.

**Boise, Idaho (RISE: Treasure Valley's 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)**

Develop the capacity at agencies to link and share data about the needs of children, youth and families, with a focus on inequities so programs can respond faster with appropriate resources.

**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 universal supports for children 0 to 3 years old to ensure their good health, well-being and development success.

**Winston-Salem, N. C. (The Forsyth Promise)**

Activate the power of those with lived experience to plan and implement strategies that improve core outcomes by reducing racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps.

**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)**

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)**

Reduce disciplinary practices that disproportionately impact male students of color by building the capacity of local organizations to offer technical assistance across multiple campuses, in an effort led by My Brother's Keeper San Antonio.

**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.