Job Details

Learning and Impact Officer

Job Category: Team Leads, Supervisors, Professionals

Description

**Who We Are**

Ascendium Education Group (Ascendium) has helped millions of learners pursue postsecondary education since 1967, when it was formed to help fulfill the promise of the landmark Higher Education Act of 1965. Over the years, Ascendium has grown to become the nation’s largest federal student loan guarantor, providing information, tools and counseling to help millions of borrowers nationwide avoid default and keep the door to re-enrollment open. We guarantee federal student loans, conceive and develop innovative products and services that support student success and loan repayment, and invest in studying and improving postsecondary education practices through our philanthropy.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, net proceeds from Ascendium’s guaranty and other operations are used to fund [Ascendium’s philanthropy](https://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org/" \t "_blank).  The philanthropy team is comprised of program, grants management, and learning and impact staff who all have a shared commitment to advancing our mission. As a national funder, our mission is to elevate opportunities for learners from low-income backgrounds so they can achieve postsecondary educational and career success. Our grantmaking focuses on transforming systems of postsecondary education and workforce so they can support low-income populations, especially those in historically underrepresented groups: first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. The philanthropy team currently makes grants in four focus areas: Remove Structural Barriers to Success, Streamline Key Learner Transitions, Expand Postsecondary Education in Prison, Support Rural Postsecondary Education and Workforce Training.  Across our four focus areas, our funding supports innovative ideas, the creation of an evidence base, and the expansion and replication of effective practices.

Choosing a career with Ascendium Education Group means joining a nonprofit corporation dedicated to elevating opportunity for everyone. Learn more about Ascendium’s Education Philanthropy division  by visiting [www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org](http://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org/" \t "_blank) and Ascendium Education Group by visiting [www.ascendiumeducation.org](http://www.ascendiumeducation.org/" \t "_blank).

**Purpose of Position**

Reporting to the Deputy Director of Learning & Impact (L&I), the newly created position of L&I Officer will have primarily internal facing responsibilities for contributing to the three main workstreams of the emerging Learning and Impact unit: (1) collecting actionable information about Ascendium’s operations and impact, (2) facilitating learning practices across all four focus areas, and (3) effectively communicating resulting lessons learned to internal and external stakeholders. This position supports the philanthropy division’s efforts to both demonstrate the impact of our work and learn from our experiences in ways that sharpen our grantmaking strategy and practice. ***Ascendium staff are temporarily working remotely from their homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic; when the office reopens this position will work in Ascendium’s Madison, WI office.***

**Essential Functions**

* In partnership with the Deputy Director**,**refine a cohesive internal approach, called a performance measurement system, to systematically capture data on the context in which we operate, our efforts and our results.
* Collaborate with the grantmaking team to articulate their focus area theories of change; desired individual, organizational and system-level outcomes, as well as related measurable indicators; learning questions; and opportunities for third-party evaluations.
* Support building the knowledge and comfort of the grantmaking team on the above referenced topics, as well as the creation of tools (e.g., explainers) to support the grantmaking team’s practices related to measuring and evaluating the performance of grants and focus area strategies.
* Partner with grants management team to revise components of the administrative grant system— through front-end processes (e.g., solicitation of letters of inquiry and proposals) and back-end processes (e.g., interim and final reports)—to gather data that supports learning and measuring performance.
* Design and scope third-party evaluations of grant clusters, grant initiatives, and philanthropic strategy and support partner sourcing through request for proposal processes.
* Advise on performance measurement and/or evaluations of specific grants at the request of individual program officers and/or the leadership of the philanthropic team, especially as L&I introduces capacity building activities and various tools on these topics.
* Leverage resulting data and findings from our administrative grant system and third-party evaluations to support collective learning within the philanthropic team to strengthen the philanthropy team’s decision-making related to grants and strategies.
* Partner with the grantmaking team to publicly share lessons learned from our internal practices, performance measurement system, and evaluations, for the benefit of Ascendium partners and the broader field.
* Stay abreast of and contribute to effective learning, performance measurement, evaluation practices in the broader philanthropic field.
* Perform other related duties as assigned.

**Education/License/Certification/Experience Requirements**

* A master’s degree and five to seven years related full-time professional work experience, or a combination of equivalent experience and training is required.
* Experience with different approaches to data collection, including through performance management/measurement systems and through evaluations that included both qualitative and quantitative methods.
* Experience working in postsecondary education, philanthropy, and/or nonprofit organizations.
* Valid driver’s license.

**Knowledge and Skills Required for Position**

* Demonstrated commitment to Ascendium’s mission and to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
* Ability to work cooperatively and inclusively with others to achieve shared goals.
* Effective interpersonal skills exemplified by initiative, diplomacy, positive attitude and professionalism.
* Ability to develop and maintain strong working relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders.
* Experienced facilitator that creates psychologically safe spaces where staff can take risks, share divergent views, and ultimately arrive at a path forward.
* Willingness to learn and adapt to a fast-paced, continually evolving work environment.
* Capacity to create and build new systems, practices and cultures.
* Comfort with ambiguity and evolution, including in the position’s roles and responsibilities, in a newly emerging Learning & Impact unit.
* Track record of developing progresses that increase evidence use in decision-making across an organization or team.
* Strong project management skills with demonstrated ability to execute and follow through to achieve intended results, by honoring commitments, prioritizing work, and managing time and resources well.
* Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

**Please include a cover letter and resume when applying.**