

We're growing and need your help to take our grantmaking strategy to the next level! In the newly created Senior Learning and Impact Officer position, you'll lead grantmaking that builds rigorous, relevant and useful evidence about policies, practices and programs that warrant scaling. This will ensure that we, as well as policymakers and practitioners, know and act on the best evidence when making critical decisions about initiatives and reforms that will improve outcomes for learners from low-income backgrounds.

This position is based in Madison, Wisconsin, at our new, state-of-the-art headquarters. You'll have a hybrid schedule, working both in the office and remotely. You'll also have opportunities to travel to conferences, grantee events and other forums.

Job Responsibilities

Your day-to-day activities may include the following.

Validation Grantmaking Strategy

- In partnership with the director of learning and impact, leading investments in validation grants. (Validation grants are grants to support independent third-party evaluations that focus on determining reforms' effectiveness and on identifying the conditions and elements that contribute to success.)
- In partnership with the director of learning and impact, further developing and refining our grantmaking strategy and infrastructure to support investing in evaluations that examine workforce and postsecondary education reforms' effectiveness (with methods that support causal inference) and implementation.
- Further developing and embedding our commitment to equity into our validation grantmaking strategy and execution.
- Identifying and prioritizing opportunities for third-party evaluation that use mixed methods, in consultation with program officers representing our four funding focus areas and with the field. This may include designing, commissioning and overseeing literature reviews to assess the current evidence and guide future evaluation efforts.

Validation Grantmaking and Stewardship

- Sourcing and reviewing grant proposals for validation grants aligned to our focus areas and presenting them for funding consideration to Ascendium leadership and board members.
- Managing a portfolio of validation grants, which includes working with grantees to develop and register pre-analysis plans and reviewing reports to monitor progress and ensure adherence to standards of research quality and transparency.
- Providing strategic support to validation grantees through the sharing of best practices and connecting grantees to other resources necessary to help them succeed.

Field Leadership

- Representing Ascendium's education philanthropy and actively sharing lessons learned from funded evaluations for the benefit of our partners and the broader field by presenting at conferences and engaging in networks, workgroups and advisories.

- Coordinating with the Strategic Communications team to ensure findings from validation grants are shared through our media channels.
- Partnering with focus area colleagues to plan and execute Ascendium-led convenings that feature evaluation findings.
- Developing relationships and partnerships with national and regional funders of evaluations.
- Staying abreast of and contributing to evaluation in the broader philanthropic field.
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Other Responsibilities

- Contributing to the review of grant applications that include other types of evaluations at the request of individual program officers and/or philanthropy leadership.
- Advising on third-party evaluations of grant clusters, grant initiatives and philanthropic strategy advanced by other Learning and Impact team members.
- Collaborating with the director of learning and impact to establish priorities for administrative budget planning.
- Performing other related duties as assigned.

Knowledge and Skill Requirements

A highly qualified candidate will possess the following.

- Knowledge equivalent to a master's degree, Ph.D. or Ed.D. in education, education policy, economics, public policy, sociology or another relevant social field.
- Five or more years of progressive experience in evaluation and research, ideally in workforce or higher education.
- Knowledge and experience with mixed-methods evaluations that use quantitative methods to make causal inferences, including randomized controlled trials, regression discontinuity designs and quasi-experimental designs that use propensity score matching and other methods.
- Capacity to create and build new systems, practices and cultures to support making investments in and learning from rigorous and relevant evaluations.
- Ability to work cooperatively and inclusively with others to achieve shared goals.
- Effective interpersonal skills exemplified by initiative, diplomacy, a positive attitude and professionalism.
- Ability to develop and maintain strong working relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders.
- Willingness to learn and adapt to a fast-paced, continually evolving work environment.
- Comfort with ambiguity and evolution, including in the position's roles and responsibilities.
- Strong project management skills with a 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.

About Ascendium

Ascendium is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has helped millions of learners pursue postsecondary education since 1967, when we were formed to help fulfill the promise of the landmark Higher Education Act of 1965. Over the years, we've 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 reenrollment open. We also conceive and develop innovative products and services that support academic achievement, financial wellness and student loan repayment success and invest in studying and improving postsecondary education practices through our philanthropy.

We use the net proceeds from our guaranty services and other operations to fund our philanthropy. The Philanthropy team comprises program, grants management, and learning and impact staff who all have a shared commitment to advancing our philanthropic mission of elevating opportunities for learners from low-income backgrounds so they can achieve postsecondary educational and career success. Our grantmaking focuses on transforming postsecondary education and workforce training systems so they can support low-income populations, especially those in historically underrepresented groups, including first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. Currently, our philanthropy focuses on removing structural barriers to success, streamlining key learner transitions, expanding postsecondary education in prison and supporting rural postsecondary education and workforce training. Across these four focus areas, our funding supports innovative ideas, the creation of an evidence base and the expansion and replication of effective practices.

Other Information

Ascendium offers an [outstanding benefits package](#) designed to provide employees and their families with a high degree of security. These benefits include, but are not limited to:

- Comprehensive medical, dental and vision insurance.
- Generous time off.
- Continuing education opportunities, including tuition assistance.
- Paid volunteer time off.

Ascendium provides equal employment opportunity to all individuals regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, creed, disability, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law. We are strongly committed to this policy and believe in the concept and spirit of the law.

If you would like assistance with the application process, please email [Ascendium Human Resources](#). We invite all applicants to complete the Voluntary Affirmative Action questions when submitting application materials. The questions are found at the end of the online application process. To learn more about our commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity, please visit the [Ascendium Careers webpage](#). Ascendium has contractual obligations that require criminal, employment and education background investigations as a condition of employment.