

Are you an accomplished leader with experience working across postsecondary education or workforce training systems? Has this experience resulted in a deep knowledge of state and federal policies and funding streams related to public workforce training, credit mobility, prison education, data systems, or cross-sector workforce development? We're seeking a Deputy Director of Education Grantmaking to lead our Connect grantmaking strategy.

This strategy is one of our three new grantmaking strategies, which will launch in early 2025. While we'll maintain many of our current grantmaking priorities and goals, these new strategies deepen our ability to learn and build evidence across specific areas of postsecondary education and workforce training reform.

- **Expand:** Create more options for learners to engage in postsecondary education or workforce training that provides a path to living-wage employment in high-growth, high-demand fields.
- **Support:** Strengthen systems of academic and non-academic support and redesign structures to help learners navigate and succeed in postsecondary education and workforce training.
- **Connect:** Connect and align systems to ensure all learning counts toward credentials with labor market value and that learners do not experience dead ends.

As the Deputy Director of Education Grantmaking for our Connect strategy, you'll support a team of grantmakers in developing a pipeline of approximately \$30-40 million in new funding annually and oversee \$40-70 million in active grants. You'll also support a senior program officer in overseeing cross-cutting strategic media partnerships and field engagement, in partnership with our Strategic Communications team.

This position is based at our state-of-the-art headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin. Relocation support will be considered for individuals outside the Madison area. You'll have a hybrid schedule, generally working in the office three days a week and remotely two days a week. You'll also have opportunities to travel to conferences, convenings, and other events.

### ***Job Responsibilities***

On a day-to-day basis, you may do the following.

#### *Grantmaking Strategy Development and Management*

- Lead a grantmaking team in designing, implementing, and routinely improving a multi-year funding strategy focused on improving system alignment to minimize credit loss, strengthening measurement of and accountability for learner outcomes, and realigning public resources with evidence-based models and reforms.
- Maintain expertise in state and system policy, administrative practices, and other key leverage points for systemic change within postsecondary education and workforce training ecosystems.

- Develop and oversee annual grantmaking budgets and workplans and lead semiannual strategy reviews in partnership with the Learning and Impact team and other colleagues within the Education Philanthropy division.
- Oversee a high-volume pipeline of new grant concepts and proposals, providing support to grantmakers to ensure the efficient development and execution of strategy-aligned grants. In limited instances, deputy directors may also directly hold grants or oversee grantmaking initiatives.
- Prepare reports and other materials to communicate strategy progress and learning to the board of directors, in partnership with the vice president of education philanthropy, senior learning and impact officers, and director of learning and impact.
- Provide internal and external expertise and thought leadership on topics related to Ascendium's grantmaking strategy, maintain a network of partners and experts in related field(s), and represent Ascendium's philanthropy in strategic field engagements. Current deputy directors attend 8-10 conferences or other offsite meetings annually, with travel typically concentrated in spring and fall months.
- Provide guidance for strategic communications and field engagements related to advancing Ascendium's grantmaking strategy, in partnership with the Strategic Communications team.
- Oversee strategic media partnerships and field engagement across the Education Philanthropy division and support the work of a senior program officer specializing in those grants.
- Develop relationships with other national and regional funders working in postsecondary education and workforce training to exchange information, share lessons, and leverage each other's efforts.

#### *Team Development and Management*

- Provide day-to-day management of a team of 4-5 program officers ranging from early to advanced career professionals.
- Recruit, vet, and onboard team members when the opportunity arises for new hires, in partnership with Human Resources and the vice president of education philanthropy.
- Provide regular performance feedback, coaching, and guidance, including identifying and supporting direct reports' professional development in alignment with their roles and strategy objectives.
- Contribute to whole-division learning and professional development. Deputy directors have opportunities to serve in cross-cutting leadership roles within the team.
- With the Education Philanthropy leadership team, develop annual cross-team objectives, develop and be responsible for annual administrative budgets, conduct periodic policy review, and practice shared accountability.

### *Cross-Unit Collaboration*

- Collaborate with the director of learning and impact and the Learning and Impact team to draw insights, identify priority learning needs, support program officer team collaboration, and elevate learning across strategies.
- Collaborate with the director of grants management and the Grants Management team to ensure efficient workflow, address concerns that emerge from financial due diligence reviews, and ensure that any grant administration issues are resolved in a timely manner.

### ***Knowledge and Skill Requirements***

A highly qualified candidate will possess the following.

- Knowledge equivalent to a master's degree with training in social science, education, public policy, or a related field.
- At least 7-10 years of experience working in postsecondary education or workforce training systems adequate to have acquired deep familiarity with the landscape of key agencies, stakeholders, and constituents of those systems.
- Demonstrated experience working in partnership with leaders across sectors and systems.
- On-the-ground understanding of state and federal policies and funding streams, especially related to public workforce training, credit mobility/transfer, prison education, data systems, and/or cross-sector workforce development.
- Experience working in a state postsecondary or adjacent system or other state agency within postsecondary education or workforce training is preferred.
- Experience working at or in partnership with philanthropic organizations is preferred but not required. A candidate without grantmaking experience will be expected to train on philanthropic practice and legal considerations related to public charity tax status.
- Strong understanding of the role of strategic communications and media in advancing systemic change and of policymaker and institutional/system leadership audiences and their concerns, incentives, and interests.
- Effective interpersonal skills exemplified by initiative, courtesy, diplomacy, a positive attitude, and a high bar of professional ethics and integrity.
- Strong collaboration, communication, and leadership skills.
- Demonstrated experience effectively leading and managing a team of skilled professionals.

### ***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. Using our years of experience in the student loan industry, we've developed a suite of products and services that support academic achievement, financial wellness, and student loan repayment success.

We use the net proceeds from our business operations to fund our education philanthropy. Our strategic grantmaking provides funding to organizations that increase the number of low-income learners who succeed in postsecondary education and workforce training as critical pathway to upward mobility, regardless of economic background, race, rurality, or history of incarceration. Through that grantmaking and related investments in evidence-building and strategic field engagement, we seek to identify emerging innovations and reforms, validate their effectiveness, and expand proven strategies to promote large-scale, systemic change.

Our philanthropy is focused on addressing systemic barriers to upward mobility, which derive from class disparities in opportunity, as well as from policies and practices of exclusion and discrimination. As we strive to continually strengthen our potential for impact, we take responsibility as a funder for learning and evolving our practice to ensure that our grantmaking reflects the root causes of barriers to opportunity for all low-income learners. To that end, we are committed to ongoing learning to build our internal capacity and strengthen the ability of our grantmaking to advance equitable opportunity.

### ***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.
- Employer-provided legal insurance.
- Generous time off, including up to eight weeks of paid parental leave.
- Student loan repayment assistance and tuition reimbursement.
- Retirement savings plan with employer match.

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.

H-1B sponsorship (initiation or transfer) is not available for this position.

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 requires criminal, employment, and education background investigations before hiring.