A Collaborative Implementation Evaluation of the Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) Program

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Contents

Tables

Figures

Executive Summary

Representing over 20 percent of U.S. undergraduate college students, student parents are twice as likely to leave college without a degree compared with college students without children because of the extenuating obstacles they face (Gault, Holtzman, and Reichlin Cruse 2020). Student parents also tend to be students of color (IWPR and Ascend at the Aspen Institute 2019), and single mother students are more likely to live in poverty than other women (Reichlin Cruse et al. 2019).

To build and improve policies and programs that support student parents and their postsecondary attainment, Ascend at the Aspen Institute (Ascend) awarded Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grants to six public sector entities (i.e., states, counties, and cities). Each grantee proposed to apply a two-generation (2Gen) approach—providing services and supports to children and adults simultaneously to achieve population-level outcomes—to increase economic mobility and well-being via postsecondary completion for student parents. Ascend contracted with Insight Policy Research (Insight) to examine PAP program implementation from January to December 2022. This report describes Insight's methodology for examining the PAP program's treatment fidelity and program context and shares the findings related to the anticipated reach of the PAP program, sites' progress toward identified outputs, and common facilitating factors and challenges. The report then provides recommendations based on the findings. A brief profile of each site's implementation to date is also included.[1]

A. Methodology

Insight collaborated with Ascend and the six PAP sites to identify three common research questions applicable across all PAP sites:

1. What is the anticipated reach of the PAP program?
2. To what extent is the PAP program progressing toward its intended outputs?
3. What factors facilitate PAP program implementation, and what challenges hinder it?

Insight extracted and analyzed data from the sites' PAP grant proposals, logic models, quantitative data collection workbooks, and qualitative focus groups and data walks to answer each research question for each site and the PAP program overall. These analyses were supplemented by qualitative focus group data.[2]

B. Results

Overall, the PAP program represents an innovative approach to accelerate current partnership efforts, with the potential to support more than 43,000 student parents and their families by increasing access to supports such as early childhood education, housing, healthcare, and other supports that may increase postsecondary access and success for parents. Table ES.1 provides a selection of key successes the PAP sites have achieved to date.

[1] See appendix A.
[2] Appendix B includes the guide used to facilitate semi-structured focus group discussions with each site.

Table ES.1. Selected key successes reported by PAP sites to date

PAP Site		Key Successes
	Colorado Community College System	▪ Provided a voice for student parents through statewide Student Parent Advisory Group ▪ Developed recommendations for policymakers on statewide policy and practice based on student parent advocacy group feedback and Community College of Aurora needs assessment ▪ Offered services such as emergency financial assistance and family-friendly programming; redesigned public spaces to make it easier for parents to attend school with children
	Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Technical College System of Georgia	▪ Launched the Find Help resource/referral portal ▪ Held regular State Leadership and Community Advisory Council meetings ▪ Provided multiple trainings to staff working with student parents ▪ Established 15 Technical College System of Georgia staff as Gateway Partners to help students access Georgia's integrated eligibility system ▪ Influenced policy change in existing childcare subsidies program to prioritize student parents ▪ Hosted statewide 2Gen Summit to share lessons learned and discuss opportunities for sustaining 2Gen work across Georgia ▪ Supported and trained student parent advisors as council members ▪ Included sessions led by student parent advisors during the 2Gen Summit
	City of Long Beach	▪ Executed 2-year contract with options for 3-year extension with Fund for Guaranteed Income to support Long Beach Guaranteed Income implementation[a] ▪ Developed partnership with Long Beach Unified School District to implement survey collection on needs of student parents ▪ Launched Space Beach Teacher Externship professional development program for K–12 educators to create career pathways for students interested in aerospace and related industries
	Minnesota Office of Higher Education	▪ Hired Whole Family and Student Parent Coordinator to support key initiatives ▪ Provided five partner testimonies to Minnesota State legislature about policies supporting student parents enrolled in institutions of higher education ▪ Worked with Minnesota State Colleges and University system to develop comprehensive student parent data collection plan ▪ Collaborated with Minnesota Private College Council to identify resources and scholarships to support parenting students ▪ Participated in meetings about on-campus childcare supports ▪ Led efforts to develop Minnesota Student Parent Alliance advisory council ▪ Advanced $7 million proposal to governor's office for 2023 session to support direct services for student parents enrolled in institutions of higher education

PAP Site		Key Successes
	Pennsylvania Department of Human Services	▪ Collaborated with the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice to develop strong community and institutional partnerships ▪ Convened community and institutional partner organizations to raise awareness of existing state and community systems and resources that could be leveraged to expedite delivery of services to student parents ▪ Developed Parent Pathways Initiative to raise awareness among student parents of available services ▪ Engaged community colleges, agency staff, policymakers, and community organizations to raise awareness among student parents of support services
	Rhode Island Department of Human Services	▪ Influenced legislation to amend Rhode Island Works[b] program and enable parents from poorest families to receive 5 years of assistance (instead of 4) to obtain skills for well-paying jobs; attend Community College of Rhode Island for 2 years as their sole work-seeking activity; and keep more of their cash assistance benefit to supplement wages ▪ Improvements to Rhode Island Works also increased income to become eligible to enroll in state's Child Care Assistance Program from 180 to 200 percent of federal poverty level and increased limit at which enrolled families become ineligible for state's Child Care Assistance Program from 225 to 300 percent ▪ Additional new legislation allows student parents to avoid counting one-time State Child Tax Credit as income for tax purposes ▪ Provided referrals to several workforce training opportunities, including 15-week computer literacy course that has graduated eight parents so far ▪ Trained seven student parents on parent leadership team to facilitate 10-week Parent Leadership Academy course designed to empower student (or potential student) parents

[a] Long Beach Guaranteed Income is a pilot program that provides select families living at or below the poverty line in the 90813 ZIP Code the opportunity to receive up to $500 a month for 12 months.

[b] Rhode Island Works is a financial and employment assistance program for parents and families with little to no income who have children of high school age or younger.

C. Recommendations

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of the PAP program, grantees were able to make strong progress toward more than two-thirds (68.5 percent) of target outputs they self-identified in their grant applications. However, the findings also highlight several areas for future improvement. Although some of the challenges sites encountered are beyond Ascend's control (e.g., disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic), Insight suggests Ascend consider implementing the following recommendations to support currently funded sites and make the most of future related funding opportunities:

1. ***Provide support related to collecting data on student parents.*** For example, Ascend might consider holding a webinar (or webinar series) on analyzing data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to identify student parents or on submitting an institutional review board application (which is needed to conduct research on students, such as fielding a survey to student parents). Ascend can also consider providing case studies on how college systems have facilitated data sharing agreements with outside entities, such as state agencies, with sample agreements provided. Another opportunity to offer support in this area is by helping sites identify pain points and providing specific technical assistance to help overcome those pain points.
2. ***Require a letter of support from a partner with direct access to students.*** One strategy that may increase sites' opportunities to successfully engage student parents in the process is partnering with an organization working directly with students, such as a higher education institution or an organization providing student coaching. Such partners must be actively engaged in the process from start to finish to ensure their impact. To this end, Ascend might consider requiring letters of commitment from at least one partner with direct access to students and a concrete plan for meaningfully engaging that partner and its student parents throughout the proposed systems change process in future funding opportunities.
3. ***Explicitly allow the use of grant funds to compensate student parents for their time and expertise.*** In addition to increasing the likelihood of student parents' participation, accounting for and supporting the full cost—including intangible costs to participants and communities—is a best practice for funding equity-based research and initiatives (Chicago Beyond 2018). Ascend might consider stating explicitly in future requests for proposals that student parent stipends are an allowable use of funds.
4. ***Require evidence of commitment from leadership.*** In addition to creating a culture that values student parents and efforts to support them, committed leaders can protect team members' time to work on PAP grant activities or even spearhead efforts to fund positions devoted to student parent work. Ascend might consider requiring letters of commitment from the leadership at each partner organization in future funding opportunities to highlight clear champions for student parents in a position of influence or authority. Ascend might also consider requiring estimates of the level of time commitment key staff across the partners will devote to the effort to encourage sites to critically analyze availability and prioritize the project or determine they cannot devote the time necessary to effect change.

A Collaborative Implementation Evaluation of the Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) Program

A. Introduction

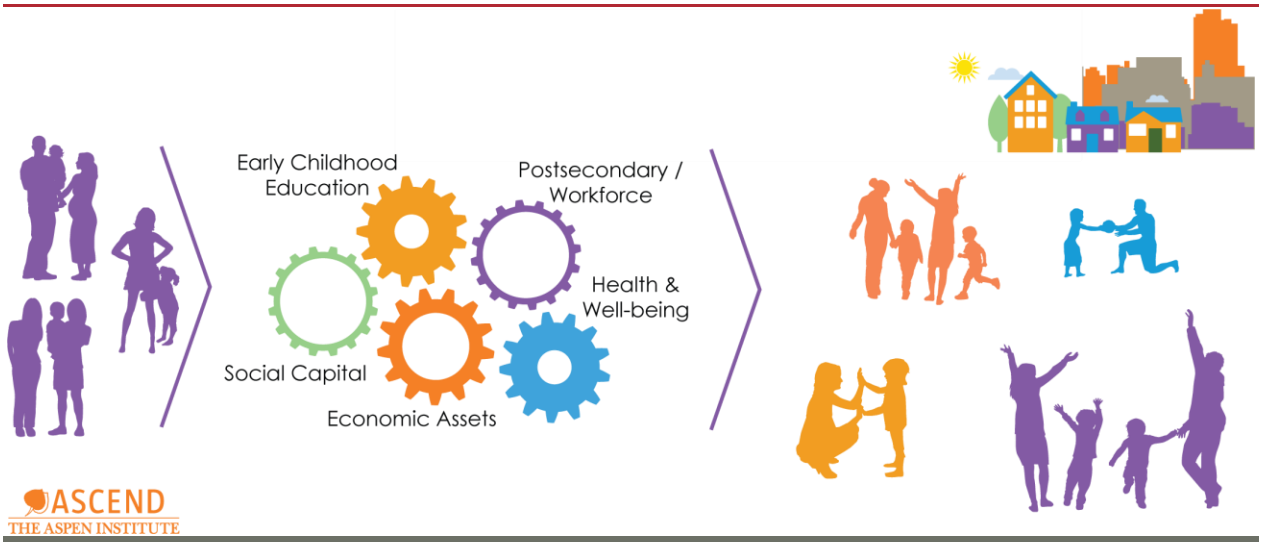
Over 20 percent of U.S. undergraduate college students (roughly 4 million) are parents or caregivers of dependent children (Gault, Holtzman, and Reichlin Cruse 2020). These student parents often lag behind their peers without children because of the extenuating obstacles they face. An analysis of national postsecondary data from the 2012–2017 Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Survey shows that over half of student parent undergraduates leave college without completing their educational programs within 6 years of enrollment (Contreras Mendez and Reichlin Cruse 2021). This makes student parents twice as likely to leave college without a degree compared with college students without children (Gault, Holtzman, and Reichlin Cruse 2020).

Still, with the exception of research that focuses on community college students (Barnett 2011), most studies examining and initiatives supporting postsecondary education focus on traditionally aged students who attend college directly after high school. While student parents are a subset of nontraditional students, little research has focused on evaluating supportive strategies to assist this group. Equity considerations are also important because student parents tend to be students of color (IWPR and Ascend at the Aspen Institute 2019), and single mother students are more likely to live in poverty than other women (Reichlin Cruse et al. 2019).

To build and improve policies and programs that support student parents and their postsecondary attainment, Ascend at the Aspen Institute (Ascend) spearheaded a two-generation (2Gen) approach. The 2Gen model assumes that to create a better tomorrow for children, policymakers must make tomorrow better for their parents. Ascend's 2Gen theory of change emphasizes the provisions of education, economic support, social capital, health, and well-being to create and pass down economic security for generations to come (see figure 1). With this in mind, Ascend awarded Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grants to six public sector entities (i.e., states, counties, and cities) committed to increasing economic mobility and well-being via postsecondary completion for student parents:

- Colorado Community College System (CCCS)
- Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Technical College System of Georgia (GA)
- City of Long Beach (Long Beach)
- Minnesota Office of Higher Education (MN OHE)
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS)
- Rhode Island Department of Human Services (RI DHS)

Figure 1. Ascend's two-generation theory of change



Source: Adapted from Sims and Bogle (2017)

Ascend contracted with Insight Policy Research (Insight) to examine PAP program implementation from January to December 2022. Implementation research can help establish that a program is being implemented as designed (implementation fidelity), promote understanding of the contexts in which the program is implemented (program context), and identify whether other programs with similar components exist (treatment contrast) (Weiss, Bloom, and Brock 2014).

The remainder of this document details Insight's collaborative implementation evaluation of the PAP program from January to December 2022. Section B describes Insight's methodology for examining the PAP program's treatment fidelity and program context. Section C reports the findings related to the anticipated reach of the PAP program, sites' progress toward identified outputs, and common facilitating factors and challenges. Section D presents conclusions based on the results. Appendix A provides a brief profile of each site's implementation to date, and appendix B provides the guide used to facilitate semistructured focus group discussions with each site.

B. Methodology

This section describes Insight's research questions, data collection, and analytical approach to evaluate PAP program implementation to date.

1. Research Questions

Insight collaborated with Ascend and the six PAP sites to codevelop research questions of interest. As part of a March 31, 2022, convening of PAP sites, Insight facilitated a brainstorming activity (known as the Perspective Microscope Exercise) to generate questions of interest for an evaluation (i.e., what would be helpful for sites and the field to know) (We All Count, 2020). Sites were asked to consider several perspectives, including those of higher education administrators, workforce administrators, human service administrators, and student parents. After the convening, Insight compiled the evaluation questions sites brainstormed and shared them with Ascend. Together, Insight and Ascend identified three common research questions applicable across all PAP sites:

1. What is the anticipated reach of the PAP program?
2. To what extent is the PAP program progressing toward its intended outputs?
3. What factors facilitate PAP program implementation, and what challenges hinder it?

2. Data Collection

Insight used data from four sources to answer these research questions (see table 1).

Table 1. Data sources by research question

Data Source	1: Anticipated PAP Reach	2: Progress Toward Outputs	3: Common Facilitating Factors and Challenges
PAP grant proposals		●	
Logic models		●	
Data collection workbooks	●	●	●
Data walks/focus groups		●	●

Note: PAP = Policy Acceleration Partnership

PAP grant proposals

In February 2022, Ascend shared the six PAP sites' grant proposals with Insight for use in this study.

Logic models

In March 2022, Insight drafted a logic model for each site based on the contents of grant proposals to document a shared understanding of the intended inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts and guide later evaluation activities. As part of the March 31, 2022, convening, Insight worked with the sites to review the logic models for accuracy and finalize them for use in this study.

Data collection workbooks

Based on the research questions brainstormed during the March 31, 2022, convening and the sites' logic models, Insight developed workbooks to facilitate grantees' collection of progress and outputs data. As part of convenings held in June 2022, Insight worked with the sites to review and finalize the workbook. In fall 2022, the sites populated these workbooks with data and documentation sources used for this study.

Data walks/focus groups

In September 2022, Insight facilitated a virtual data walk with each site (Murray, Falkenburger, and Saxena 2016), where at least one senior leader and one data manager from each grantee partner collectively interpreted the data with Insight and the implications for action. To facilitate the discussion, Insight prepared data placemats (Pankaj and Emery 2016) to visually display preliminary analyses of the data shared via the data collection workbooks (i.e., progress toward outputs, anticipated reach, key successes to date). The data walks included identifying any facilitating factors or challenges sites encountered (see appendix B for a facilitation guide). All discussions were recorded and transcribed.

3. Analytical Approach

Insight conducted the following descriptive qualitative and quantitative data analyses to answer each research question.

Anticipated PAP reach

Insight conducted descriptive quantitative analyses of data and documentation shared by the sites via data collection workbooks to calculate the anticipated reach of the PAP program. Anticipated reach was measured by the number of students enrolled in sites' partner higher education institutions, particularly student parents and single student parents who are new to the college. Examining different subgroups of student parents, such as those who are single parents, is important because the population, and therefore its needs, are not homogenous. For example, student parents who are single may have more difficulty obtaining childcare than student parents from two-parent households. To the extent possible, analyses were conducted by site and overall.[3]

Progress toward outputs

In February and March 2022, Insight developed and applied a document review protocol to each site's grant proposal to develop a preliminary understanding of the intended grant goals/objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, and effects. In April and May 2022, after documenting and confirming that understanding in the logic models, Insight extracted each site's intended outputs and targets to guide output data collection via data collection workbooks. Insight conducted descriptive quantitative analyses of data and documentation shared by the sites via data collection workbooks to classify each output into one of four statuses for each site and overall. The following key explains progress toward the targets:

Key: Progress Toward Target

- Growing = 0–33 percent
- Moderate = 34–66 percent
- Strong = 67–100 percent
- Not reported = data are not yet available

Common facilitating factors and challenges

In September and October 2022, Insight conducted qualitative analyses of data walk/focus group discussions to identify specific facilitating factors and challenges each site encountered and synthesize common themes that emerged across the six sites. The team used NVivo to conduct inductive analysis, an approach that involves reading through the data and naming facilitating factors and challenges as they emerge rather than applying predetermined codes to the data (Bingham and Witkowsky 2021).

C. Results

This section describes anticipated reach, progress toward program outputs, and common facilitating factors and challenges across the six PAP sites. Brief profiles of each site appear in appendix A.

[3] Insight's ability to estimate anticipated PAP reach is limited by the availability of site data on student enrollment.

1. Anticipated PAP Reach

Four PAP sites reported data on the number of student parents enrolled at their partner postsecondary institutions (table 2). The GA team reported that 10,247 (7.1 percent) of the 143,691 students enrolled at partner institutions[4] are single parents. MN OHE reported that 28, 929 (12.8 percent) of 226,352 students enrolled at partner institutions[5] are student parents and 15,793 (7.0 percent) are single parents. Although the majority of MN OHE partner institutions' student parents and single student parents are continuing students, they reported 1,579 and 1,096 first-time student parents and single student parents, respectively. PA DHS reported 11,694 (25.8 percent) of the 45,401 students enrolled at partner institutions[6] are student parents. Like MN OHE, the majority of PA DHS partner institutions' student parents are continuing students; they reported 1,252 first-time student parents. RI DHS reported that 2,430 (14.1 percent) of 17,214 students enrolled in partner institutions[7] are student parents.

Because of challenges obtaining enrollment data,[8] CCCS and Long Beach did not report data on the number of students served by partner institutions. Taken together, these reports suggest the PAP program has the potential to reach a minimum of 43,053 student parents through its sites' activities. However, this is likely an underestimate, given half the sites were unable to report on the total number of student parents served by partner postsecondary institutions.

[4] Includes 22 technical schools and colleges and 5 adult education programs working under the Technical College System of Georgia (see table 2 for details); although Kennesaw State University was a project partner, their enrollment data were not available for inclusion in this estimate
[5] Includes all Minnesota institutions of higher education
[6] Includes Montgomery County Community College, Wilson College, Alvernia University, Reading Area Community College, Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education, Pittsburgh Scholar House, Mansfield University, and West Chester University of Pennsylvania
[7] Includes Rhode Island College and Community College of Rhode Island
[8] See section C3b of this report ("Challenges") for details.

Table 2. Number of students currently enrolled in partner institutions, by PAP site

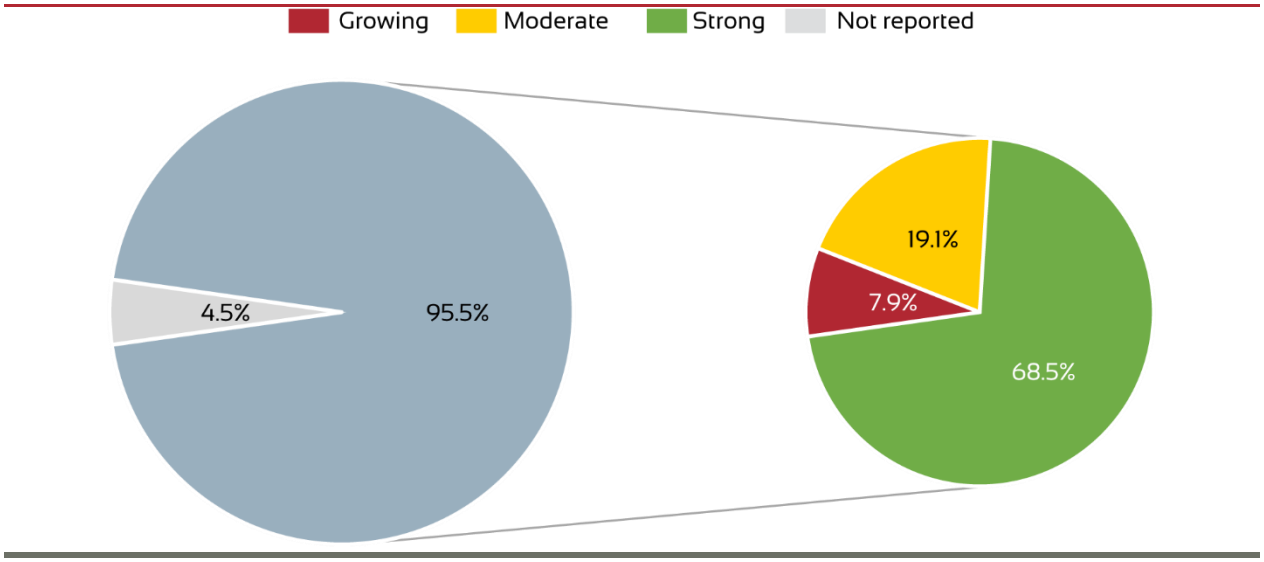
Number Enrolled	CCCS	GA[a]	Long Beach	MN OHE[b]	PA DHS[c]	RI DHS[d]	All Reporting Sites[e]
All students	n.r.	143,691 (100.0)	n.r.	226,352 (100.0)	45,401 (100.0)	17,214 (100.0)	432,658 (100.0)
Non-student parents[e]	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	197,423 (87.2)	33,707 (74.2)	14,784 (85.9)	245,914 (56.8)
Student parents	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	28,929 (12.8)	11,694 (25.8)	2,430 (14.1)	43,053 (10.0)
First-time students who are student parents	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1,579 (0.7)	1,252 (2.8)	n.r.	2,831 (0.7)
Continuing students who are student parents[e]	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	27,350 (12.1)	10,442 (23.0)	n.r.	37,792 (8.7)
Student parents who are not single[e]	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	13,136 (5.8)	n.r.	n.r.	13,136 (3.0)
Student parents who are single	n.r.	10,247 (7.1)	n.r.	15,793 (7.0)	n.r.	n.r.	26,040 (6.0)
First-time students who are single student parents	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	1,096 (0.5)	n.r.	n.r.	1,096 (0.3)
Continuing students who are single student parents[e]	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	14,697 (6.5)	n.r.	n.r.	14,697 (3.4)

Note: Column percentages (shown in parentheses) do not sum to 100 because subgroups are not mutually exclusive.
CCCS = Colorado Community College System; GA = Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Technical College System of Georgia; MN OHE = Minnesota Office of Higher Education; n.r. = not reported; PA DHS = Pennsylvania Department of Human Services; PAP = Policy Acceleration Partnership; RI DHS = Rhode Island Department of Human Services
N = 6 PAP sites
[a] Includes enrollment data for Albany Technical College, Athens Technical College, Atlanta Technical College, Augusta Technical College, Central Georgia Technical College, Chattahoochee Technical College, Coastal Pines Technical College, Columbus Technical College, Georgia Northwestern Technical College, Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Gwinnett Technical College, Lanier Technical College, North Georgia Technical College, Oconee Technical College, Ogeechee Technical College, Savannah Technical College, South Georgia Technical College, Southeastern Technical College, Southern Crescent Technical College, Southern Regional Technical College, West Georgia Technical College, and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College. Also includes five adult education programs through Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta Technical College, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Atlanta, Clayton County Schools, and Wiregrass Georgia Technical College
[b] Includes enrollment data for undergraduate students across all Minnesota institutions
[c] Includes enrollment data for Includes Montgomery County Community College, Wilson College, Alvernia University, Reading Area Community College, Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education, Pittsburgh Scholar House, Mansfield University, and West Chester University of Pennsylvania
[d] Includes enrollment data for Rhode Island College and Community College of Rhode Island
[e] Derived based on data provided
Source: CCCS Data Collection Workbook as of August 24, 2022; GA Data Collection Workbook as of October 14, 2022; Long Beach Data Collection Workbook as of September 29, 2022; MN OHE Data Collection Workbook as of October 21, 2022; PA DHS Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; RI DHS Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; site reviews of draft report

2. Progress Toward Outputs

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of the PAP program, all six PAP sites have made progress toward achieving intended outputs of grant activities. Overall, the sites identified and set targets for 89 intended program outputs and reported data on progress toward targets for 85 (or 95.5 percent) of those outputs (figure 2). The sites reported strong progress toward 68.5 percent of targets and moderate progress toward 19.1 percent of targets. The sites reported limited (growing) progress toward 7.9 percent of targets. The sites continue to implement their respective projects and will likely make continued progress toward achieving expected outputs.

Figure 2. Status of outputs identified, overall



Note: PAP = Policy Acceleration Partnership
N = 89 outputs across 6 PAP sites
Source: Colorado Community College System Data Collection Workbook as of August 24, 2022; Georgia Data Collection Workbook as of October 14, 2022; Long Beach Data Collection Workbook as of September 29, 2022; Minnesota Office of Higher Education Data Collection Workbook as of October 21, 2022; Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; Rhode Island Department of Human Services Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; data walk transcripts; site reviews of draft report

However, variation is apparent in the total number of outputs identified across sites (table 3). MN OHE, PA DHS, and RI DHS demonstrated strong progress toward more than 80 percent of their targets, and GA and CCCS demonstrated strong progress toward more than two-thirds of their targets. However, Long Beach reported strong progress toward fewer than one-fifth of its targets. MN OHE, PA DHS, and RI DHS achieved at least moderate progress toward all the targets they reported on, while Long Beach, CCCS, and GA reported limited (growing) progress toward 45.5 percent, 5.9 percent, and 3.4 percent of targets, respectively. Little variation occurred across sites in the number of outputs with no reported data, and a relationship between the type of output and sites' likelihood of reporting data did not seem apparent. Examples of outputs for which sites reported no data include the number of student parents accessing the food pantry at the Community College of Aurora and MN OHE's coalition assessment.

Table 3. Status of identified outputs, by PAP site

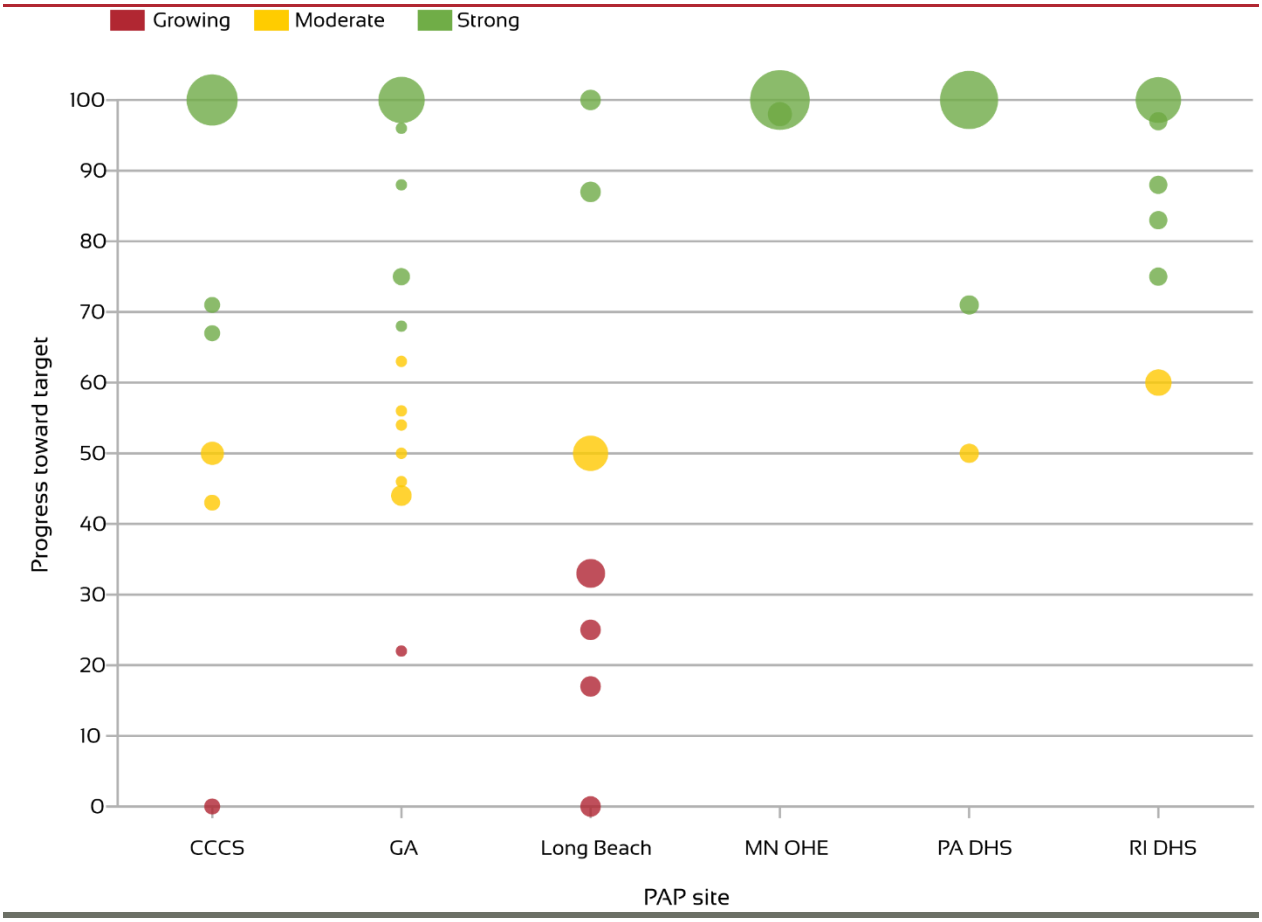
Outputs	CCCS	GA	Long Beach	MN OHE[b]	PA DHS[c]	RI DHS	All Sites
Total identified	17 (100.0)	29 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	89 (100.0)
● Growing	1 (5.9)	1 (3.4)	5 (45.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (7.9)
● Moderate	3 (17.6)	8 (27.6)	3 (27.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (8.3)	2 (16.7)	17 (19.1)
● Strong	12 (70.6)	20 (69.0)	2 (18.2)	7 (87.5)	10 (83.3)	10 (83.3)	61 (68.5)
● Not reported	1 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (9.1)	1 (12.5)	1 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	4 (4.5)

Note: Column percentages shown in parentheses
CCCS = Colorado Community College System; GA = Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Technical College System of Georgia; MN OHE = Minnesota Office of Higher Education; PA DHS = Pennsylvania Department of Human Services; PAP = Policy Acceleration Partnership; RI DHS = Rhode Island Department of Human Services
N = 89 outputs across 6 PAP sites
● = not reported; ● = growing; ● = moderate; ● = strong
Source: CCCS Data Collection Workbook as of August 24, 2022; GA Data Collection Workbook as of October 14, 2022; Long Beach Data Collection Workbook as of September 29, 2022; MN OHE Data Collection Workbook as of October 21, 2022; PA DHS Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; RI DHS Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; data walk transcripts; site reviews of draft report

Variation is apparent in progress toward targets within the status categories (i.e., growing, moderate, strong). Figure 3 illustrates each site's progress toward targets for each measured output (i.e., excluding those for which progress was not reported). The size of each data point on the chart reflects the proportion of the site's outputs at that value. Using CCCS as an example, it is evident their progress toward targets ranged from 0 to 100 percent. However, they reported completing the majority (63 percent) of their outputs, as indicated by their largest data point at 100 percent. The fewest CCCS outputs were 71, 67, 43, and 0 percent complete, as indicated by their smallest data points at those values.

Although two out of the six sites indicated no (0 percent) progress toward some of their outputs, all six sites indicated completing (100 percent progress) some of their outputs. In fact, five of the sites (CCCS, GA, MN OHE, PA DHS, and RI DHS) completed the bulk of their outputs, as illustrated by 100 percent data points that are large relative to the sites' other data points. Examples of outputs sites have not yet made progress on include meetings and trainings that had not yet convened and gap assessments that had not been conducted. Examples of outputs sites completed include hiring staff; engaging students and partners; and conducting outreach through phone calls, emails, and testimonies to legislature.

Figure 3. Progress toward target for measured outputs, by PAP site



Note: PAP = Policy Acceleration Partnership
N = 85 measured outputs across 6 PAP sites
Source: Colorado Community College System Data Collection Workbook as of August 24, 2022; Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Technical College System of Georgia Data Collection Workbook as of October 14, 2022; Long Beach Data Collection Workbook as of September 29, 2022; Minnesota Office of Higher Education Data Collection Workbook as of October 21, 2022; Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; Rhode Island Department of Human Services Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; data walk transcripts; site reviews of draft report

3. Common Facilitating Factors and Challenges

This section provides an overview of common factors that facilitated or challenges that hindered PAP program implementation. Themes presented here emerged during data walk discussions with more than half of the PAP sites.

a. Facilitating factors

When asked about key factors that have facilitated sites' progress toward their targets, sites touted strategic relationships/partnerships, commitment from leadership, funding from Ascend or other sources, relevant prior work, devoted staff, and engagement from students as contributors to their success.

Strategic relationships/partnerships

Consistent with the PAP's focus on accelerating current partnership efforts, sites indicated various facets of their partnerships that have proven critical to their success. For example, some cited the importance of cross-sector partnerships, while others indicated their progress would not have been possible without partners who had direct access to students.

PA DHS reported the commitment and participation of their cross-sector partners facilitated their success. For example, their community partner—the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (Hope Center)—was committed to helping student parents in any way possible. Hope Center employees became active members of PA DHS's advisory committee, and as a result, the Hope Center became advocates for student parents and dedicated themselves to learning how their resources could help student parents. PA DHS mentioned that without the support of their cross-sector partners, they would not have been so successful.

> *"I think it is a true cross-sector collaboration, which makes it so exciting as an advocate and a practitioner in the space to be able to really leverage. And we know that that's required at this point. That's a key learning. No single sector is able to really carry all of the work and coordination and data sharing and supports and alignment that's needed to do a full kind of comprehensive wraparound support for parenting student success. And I think this partnership is really a strong demonstration of that, that really working, coming together, community leads."*
>
> *—PA DHS team member*

MN OHE reported their partners' direct access to student parents was a main facilitating factor behind their success. Often, team members of MN OHE did not have face-to-face interactions with student parents. However, their partners Raise the Barr (a 2Gen program committed to increasing the economic mobility for single-parent students) and LeadMN (formerly the Minnesota State College Student Association) did. MN OHE relied on their partners to act as liaisons between them and student parents, answering questions the students had. MN OHE credits the success of their student parent recruitment to Raise the Barr and LeadMN's efforts.

> *"Not being an agency that works directly with parenting students has been a bit of a hindrance in terms of getting parenting students involved in some of the work. And so I've relied considerably on Stephanie and the folks at LeadMN help find parenting students who want to be involved and engaged in the work. And so I think that that's been a really strong suit about the partnerships that we've developed and that I would have very, very limited access in actually reaching individual students, but because we've got these other partners on board that are able to do that on my behalf or on OHE's [Office of Higher Education] behalf."*
>
> *—MN OHE team member*

Commitment from leadership

Sites also mentioned demonstrated commitment from leaders as an important factor that facilitated implementation of their PAP grants. Some discussed the value of support from leaders within their organizations, while others discussed the critical roles played by political leaders.

CCCS, GA, and PA DHS all noted strong commitment from internal leadership facilitated their success. These sites noted the buy-in they received from senior leadership in their respective organizations made implementation easier because they faced less pushback and more support when introducing new committees and ideas. For example, when CCCS wanted to incorporate more student parent voices and input in their committees, they received encouragement from their chancellor who already emphasized a focus on helping all aspects of students' lives.

> *"In general, just as a practice for the Colorado Community College System, there is a focus on the whole student. It's something that our chancellor and each of the [administrators] at the system office really center in just how we roll out different initiatives."*
>
> *—CCCS team member*

While some sites looked to internal leadership for support, RI DHS looked to elected officials for support and to ensure their initiatives kept moving. RI DHS uses the election cycle to develop and plan their initiatives.

> *"What is really beneficial to this group, and some of the connections that we've derived, is that we had a governor candidate attending our big meeting in July. We've got some connections with a handful of rep[resentative]s and senators that are…currently running. And a big platform for some of the work that we're doing is to engage with them prior to winning their election, as … they come in and tell you how great this initiative is and how excited they are to work with it."*
>
> *—RI DHS team member*

Before the primary season, RI DHS presented their initiatives to many political candidates. This ensured that regardless of the new administration, RI DHS can count on their political buy-in to keep their initiatives moving.

Funding from Ascend or other sources

Sites suggested their progress toward target outputs would not have been possible without sufficient funding. Some described outputs made possible by funding from Ascend, and others cited funding from other sources.

While discussing recruiting student parent participation for their initiatives, PA DHS noted using their Ascend grant to compensate student parents for their time increased their participation. PA DHS recruited student parents for their committee through social media and established relationships, but compensation was the driving force behind increased participation.

> *"I think being able to really have funding to compensate them for their time is huge. And so, big thanks to this partnership and to DHS who ultimately turned over a little even more of the grant to be able to pay students."*
>
> *—PA DHS team member*

MN OHE indicated that one of their universities began using multiple funders to fund their childcare facility. Childcare often poses a challenge for student parents because of the burdensome cost (Goldrick-Rab, Welton, and Coca 2020; Williams et al. 2022). In the past, Minnesota's St. Cloud State University has used braided funding to prioritize slots at its campus childcare center for student parents. MN OHE

worked with St. Cloud to identify an opportunity to broaden the services included in a grant proposal. This update enabled the university to be more accessible and better meet the needs of student parents.

> *"They used about seven different funding streams to help fund these spots in their childcare facility, which is tremendous."*
>
> *—MN OHE team member*

Relevant prior work

Sites often attributed their success to relevant work they had completed prior to the PAP grant. For example, this included work to strengthen partnerships, gain community buy-in, and secure funding.

Long Beach's pre-grant work to join the Long Beach College Promise enabled the site to access more funding opportunities and stronger relationships with similar partners. Long Beach began working to increase their early childhood offerings.

> *"We have started to build upon our existing early childhood workgroup that we have here and that's housed under our City of Long Beach Health and Human Services Department, so we're able to come in and uplift the goals that we have identified as part of this grant."*
>
> *—Long Beach team member*

Before Long Beach received the PAP grant, they had already developed an early childhood workgroup that consisted of the Mayor's Fund for Education, the school district, childcare facilities, and other interested parties. Because of this previous work, Long Beach could put their funds to use as soon as they received the PAP grant.

Long Beach also indicated previous connections between organizations facilitated success. The Long Beach College Promise is a formal agreement among Long Beach colleges and education organizations that facilitates access to contextualized learning opportunities for students in the K–12 system. The Long Beach College Promise also creates opportunities for local youth to be exposed to college and workforce opportunities. This agreement enables Long Beach to access scholarships, federal and state resources, and the ability to underwrite the first 2 years of college for Long Beach youths. Without the formal agreement, Long Beach would not be able to offer these resources to their students.

Like Long Beach, GA indicated previous connections among organizations facilitated success. GA reported their previously established relationships across various agencies were a main facilitating factor behind their success. Before they received the PAP grant, GA had begun learning about and working toward a 2Gen approach by focusing on family-centered coaching to benefit their student parents. This pre-grant work grew the GA team's network to include community partners and organizations that wanted to participate in a 2Gen approach. Already having these connections with partners when the grant was awarded saved GA time and facilitated greater impact.

> *"I think it's one of the reasons why we have been able to be successful thus far is we've already had a lot of established relationships across agencies."*
>
> *— GA team member*

MN OHE contributed some of their success to previous work completed by a programming partner and direct service provider. This partner, prior to the grant, raised awareness of the importance of supporting student parents.

> *"It really helped that previous work had already been done by [Raise the Barr Employee] and folks at Raise the Barr to lay some of that groundwork and build some community around parenting students in the state already."*
>
> *—MN OHE team member*

Within the state, groundwork had already been accomplished. When the grant was awarded, a base-level understanding was in place regarding who student parents are and why they need extra support. MN OHE mentioned they would not be as successful with their grant without the earlier work because of the tight timeline.

Devoted staff

Sites often mentioned their success could be attributed to their dedicated staff. For example, staff members formed relationships with student parents and sites and created positions completely dedicated to the grant.

MN OHE and CCCS noted the addition of a full-time employee whose position focused on student parents was a success. For MN OHE, their employee has been able to give their full attention to implementing the PAP grant and working on state-level changes. Likewise, CCCS hired a full-time employee for the grant in February 2022. Since then, this employee has become acclimated to the grant and has begun fostering relationships with partners and encouraging the participation of student parents in their initiatives.

PA DHS mentioned the dedicated work of an employee and their team facilitated success within their respective grants. PA DHS noted an employee had gone out of their way to make connections and facilitate relationships with partners and student parents. While not all the employee's work is in the public view, the grant would not be successful without them.

> *"She's been doing a lot of behind the scenes support for the institutions to help them with this process. And I think that's been key."*
>
> *—PA DHS team member*

West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation—a partner organization dedicated to empowering people through housing, education, community outreach, and healthy living—hired a former student parent as the new parent engagement specialist. As a result, more student parents began participating in initiatives. RI DHS mentioned having an employee who has lived experience as a student parent encouraged more participation from current student parents.

> *"So I think what has gotten the momentum going with our student parents is that we actually hired one of our parent leaders to be part of, to be the new parent engagement specialist."*
>
> *—RI DHS team member*

More recently, that individual has been promoted to a full-time family coach position and had the opportunity to attend regional convenings and federal conferences as part of their role.

Engagement from students

Sites suggested the engagement of their student parents contributed to their success; for example, through advocacy groups and parent-driven change.

CCCS mentioned student parent engagement through their student parent advocacy group (SPAG) lead to their initiatives succeeding. Once the SPAG group had been created, representatives from across Colorado could come together to discuss initiatives and ways to help student parents.

Likewise, RI DHS indicated some of their success could be attributed to the parent-driven partnership with Dunamis Synergy. Dunamis Synergy is a parent-driven partnership within the West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation that incorporates a 2Gen initiative to support student parents while they acquire postsecondary credentials. This partnership is managed entirely by student parents and can offer a variety of supports. The partnership also offers RI DHS the ability to work with parents immediately through their program.

PA DHS reported parent-driven change led to success for their sites. PA DHS fostered relationships with student parents that encouraged them to attend committees to ensure their voices were being heard. This motivated student parents to join the PA DHS student committee. In these committee meetings, student parents identified obstacles they face on campus and theorized solutions to mend them.

> *"I think it's because of the strategy that we mapped out to do this work, really centering, first of all, centering parenting students as a core advising body. And I think [the parenting students are] learning a ton from that and they really value that. And it's something we hear across the board…, institutional partners taking a moment to pause and speak directly to the parenting student advisors and say how profound their input and expertise has been in their own learning and their own reflection and considerations of systems opportunities on their campuses."*
>
> *—PA DHS team member*

b. Challenges

When asked about challenges that may have hindered sites' progress toward their targets, PAP sites reported lack of available data, staff turnover or competing priorities, difficulty engaging students, inadequate funding, and COVID-19 as obstacles to their success.

Lack of available data

Sites reported difficulty finding data sources to inform their grants' implementation. For example, PAP sites often needed to request institutional review board (IRB) approval to collect data or propose policy changes.

After experiencing difficulties attempting to collect data on student parents through a third-party system, GA created their own survey. However, to obtain approval to begin the survey and data

collection on student parents, GA had to go through the IRB approval process, which has slowed their data collection process.

> *"So we don't collect that data at [PAP site]. I'm actually working on IRB approval to try to send out a survey to ask our students."*
>
> *— GA team member*

Other PAP sites mentioned difficulty accessing Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data on student parents. FAFSA data could help sites estimate how many student parents their campuses are supporting. However, FAFSA data are not without limitations. Notably, the FAFSA application collects information only on the number of dependents a student has and does not ask about the age of the dependents or whether those dependents are children (versus elderly parents, for example) (Gault, Holtzman, and Reichlin Cruse 2020).

CCCS explored the possibility of using FAFSA data to identify and engage student parents across its 13 institutions but called it an "ethical reach." Because FAFSA data are protected by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, CCCS would need permission from each institution to use the data. This protection prevented CCCS from using FAFSA data to retrieve contact information from students with dependents. CCCS also has a common application that includes an optional question about applicants' status as a single parent. However, CCCS had to seek permission from each of the institutions to use data from the common application, and only a small proportion of applicants responded to the item. These barriers prevented CCCS from capturing accurate information on student parents across the system.

> *"Given we are 13 colleges, it is something that all 13 colleges have to agree on that we would begin to collect this information, because we have a common application."*
>
> *—CCCS team member*

MN OHE, working with their partner Raise the Barr, have been exploring ways to ensure a more accurate count of student parents. The PAP site found data collection on student parents was not mandatory, so many institutions did not collect the data. While the FAFSA provided some information, the data likely undercount the number of student parents. An undercount could lead to less funding and support for current and potential new students. MN OHE is examining options to make data collection mandatory to ensure all institutions know their student parent population and are able to help them accordingly. MN OHE has applied for a technical assistance program to develop a comprehensive student parent and basic needs survey. If funded, this survey could be adopted across the state to provide a more accurate census of student parent needs.

Similarly, PA DHS relies on their partners for robust data collection. The educational institutions PA DHS works with do not know how to analyze FAFSA data to identify student parents. PA DHS is working toward training them to obtain this information. In the meantime, PA DHS relies on their partners[9] to

[9] Montgomery County Community College, Wilson College, Alvernia University, Reading Area Community College, Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education, Pittsburgh Scholar House, Mansfield University, and West Chester University of Pennsylvania

retrieve data on student parents. PA DHS mentioned the national data on student parents are limited. To help more student parents, more robust data collection efforts are needed.

> *"Nationally, the dearth of data on parenting students is a problem. … So, the first part is acknowledging [this]. And as we said … you value what you measure and you measure what you value. And if we are really serious as a state and a group of stakeholders, we need to actually go after this information. It's the only way that we're going to be able to align resources and be able to measure the impact of your intervention."*
>
> *—PA DHS team member*

Staff turnover or competing priorities

In contrast to the staffing sites touted as a key facilitating factor, sites also reported staffing as a key challenge. Challenges presented in the form of staff turnover and limited time because of staff's competing priorities.

Continual staff attrition was a challenge many PAP sites faced. Long Beach mentioned they had numerous staffing changes in the past year with some employees moving to the private sector. GA discussed turnover was a common theme among many departments.

> *"And sometimes it's a lot, it's that attrition … you'll have one agency that will have a turnover, and then you almost have to start from scratch. But that is not something that is specific to this grant. We're seeing it across other programs too."*
>
> *— GA team member*

Other PAP sites, including Long Beach, GA, and RI DHS, indicated they have experienced challenges related to hiring staff. RI DHS does not have the capacity to implement new grant initiatives because they do not have enough staff to lead the initiatives.

> *"It's just having the capacity because we're still short on staff … people are just not applying right now."*
>
> *—RI DHS team member*

GA and Long Beach team members noted they spend only a small amount of their time working on the PAP grant. Often grantees do not have the resources for staff to be completely devoted to working on and implementing the PAP grant. Employees have other tasks and responsibilities that take up most of their time, so the time they spend working on the PAP grant is limited.

> *"[Long Beach employee] used to oversee business engagement services as an officer here in Long Beach, and still does, but now, he's also split with business attraction and retention and business development services. Big undertakings, it's a lot of work, so he's just been split across a lot of different priorities. We try [our] best to coordinate and make sure that we are able to feed several birds with one seed. But also, on my end, there's been staff that have had positive changes in their life, however that's limited their availability."*
>
> *— Long Beach team member*

Difficulty engaging students

Although student engagement facilitated successful implementation for some sites, others encountered difficulty engaging students. For example, students were apprehensive because of the time commitment to participate and unclear expectations for participation.

PA DHS reported it was unclear to student parents what would be expected of them when they joined a committee. Involvement differed depending on the committee and role a student parent would take, so PA DHS was limited in the explanations they could give student parent prospects. PA DHS had a thorough application process, which also turned student parents away.

> *"It was kind of cumbersome with the paperwork. And a lot did not understand exactly what to expect. … If we were more in tune to exactly what you're looking for and how to help the parents to maneuver the application and really just tell them the importance of it, I think that was one of the things that could made the process a little better."*
>
> *— PA DHS team member*

MN OHE and PA DHS found student parents' availability often stood as a barrier to participation. Student parents often split their time among receiving an education, their children, and their jobs. Many student parents simply did not have the time or resources to commit to participating in extracurricular activities.

> *"This particular population of students is also strapped for time and committing to partaking on another thing is really difficult."*
>
> *—MN OHE team member*

GA faced difficulty incorporating student parent voices in their committees. While team members attempted to recruit participants through social media and in-person interactions, student parents were often skeptical about participating and sharing their personal stories with strangers.

> *"But on the other side of that, we also have to remember that we're asking people to tell very personal stories. And sometimes they may be hesitant to want to talk to a group of people they don't really know about a … difficult situation for them."*
>
> *— GA team member*

Inadequate funding

Although sites mentioned funding as a contributor to their progress toward some targets, funding constraints hampered other efforts. For example, PAP sites struggled to disperse scholarships to marginalized students and fund staff members.

CCCS mentioned a barrier they found involved access to scholarships for undocumented students, particularly at institutions in rural areas of the state (because rural areas have fewer resources and therefore are not as well equipped to provide the financial resources to undocumented students as institutions in urban areas). While the PAP site could use their funding to create scholarships for some student parents, funding was limited to U.S. citizens. Specifically, CCCS team members were challenged

when creating scholarship funds for Colorado's Advancing Students for a Stronger Tomorrow (ASSET)[10] eligible and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)[11] eligible, and undocumented students.

> *"And then I also think, as we're getting into our workgroup and things of that nature, what we're finding is that we have a lot of really wonderful connections at all of the CCCS schools, but that they are also experiencing funding limitations and things. I think that, overall, what we're seeing is that we have the people there that want to help, we have the want and the need, it's finding appropriate funds and finding appropriate resources for our student parents."*
>
> *—CCCS team member*

While CCCS is determined to help these populations through their partnerships, their partners are experiencing the same challenges. Grants and funds have limitations on those who can receive and access them. A challenge for CCCS and their partners has been finding funding opportunities to help their ASSET, DACA, and undocumented students.

Although MN OHE used grant funds to support a new Whole Family and Student Parent Coordinator, the grant could not support the needs of individual institutions of higher education that work directly with students. These institutions often lack funds for staff who provide services and supports for student parents.

> *"That has been, I think, an area that will consistently, unless there's a major funding shift, bog down the work of actual parent-student support on campuses. And so unless positions are funded at the campus level, it's going to be a challenge to get the kind of results and it's going to continue to be a challenge."*
>
> *—MN OHE team member*

COVID-19

As one might expect, COVID-19 also presented challenges to PAP grant implementation. For example, employees were often out of the office because of illness, and many initiatives were not safe to hold in person.

Many sites struggled to meet their implementation goals with staff becoming ill and being out of the office for an extended time. Long Beach aimed to bring all their partners together in a convening. However, in early summer 2022, Long Beach's entire office became infected with COVID-19. This resulted in PAP grant implementation temporarily coming to a halt and the convening date being pushed back.

MN OHE reported COVID-19 altered their convening schedule and implementation. MN OHE hoped to have their convenings in person but shifted to a virtual format. The team now feels a mix of virtual and in-person events may be ideal for the future. Virtual events promote participation across the state, especially for rural communities and student support staff (or student parents themselves) who may not

[10] ASSET is a law that allows eligible undocumented students to receive in-state tuition and state financial aid at Colorado colleges (ASSET, 2022).
[11] DACA is an administrative relief program that protects eligible immigrants who came to the United States when they were children from deportation. DACA gives undocumented immigrants protection from deportation and a work permit (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2022).

have the funds or time available to travel for the meeting. In-person events may facilitate more meaningful networking.

> *"We originally thought they'd be in person and I think doing the webinar does allow some people who are in rural communities to participate who might not otherwise, but we know people are just burned out on the webinar thing."*
>
> *—MN OHE team member*

4. Site Profiles

To supplement the program-wide results described above, appendix A presents profiles providing a brief overview of each site's grant; graphically illustrating their location, logic model, and progress toward outputs; and highlighting site-specific successes and opportunities.

D. Recommendations

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of the PAP program, this study's findings highlighted several successes of the PAP program, including strong progress toward more than two-thirds of target outputs identified by PAP sites. However, the results also pointed to several areas for improvement. Although several of the challenges sites encountered are beyond Ascend's control (e.g., disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic), Insight suggests Ascend consider implementing the following recommendations to support currently funded sites and to make the most of future related funding opportunities.

1. ***Provide support related to collecting data on student parents.*** Sites reported difficulty finding data sources to inform their grants' implementation and monitor progress. This is reflected in unreported enrollment numbers under anticipated PAP reach. Some sites expressed interest in collecting their own data but encountered hurdles such as submitting IRB applications, coordinating agreements across multiple campuses, or requesting legislative changes to mandate data collection across many higher education institutions. Other sites expressed concerns about using extant data sources (e.g., from FAFSA applications). For example, one indicated their higher education partners did not know how to analyze FAFSA data to identify student parents, and another felt using FAFSA data for this purpose without explicit student consent would be an ethical reach.

   Lack of data on student parents is a widespread problem (Gault, Holtzman, and Reichlin Cruse 2020). Most campuses, state data systems, and national higher education datasets do not track student parent enrollment or their progress toward completion. Still, some federal data sources (e.g., FAFSA, the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study) and state data sources (e.g., the Technical College System of Georgia data, Washington State's Board of Community and Technical Colleges) on undergraduate college students with children do exist.

   Consistent collection and analysis of data on the parental status of enrolled students and their demographic characteristics (e.g., age and number of children, students' marital status, family income) could facilitate research on effective interventions to promote student parent success; inform the provision of services targeted to the student groups that need it most; and facilitate examination of the intersection of parental status with other student characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender (Reichlin Cruse, Richburg-Hayes, Hare, and Contreras-Mendez 2021).

To this end, Ascend could provide sites with support related to collecting data on student parents. For example, Ascend might consider holding a webinar (or webinar series) on how to analyze FAFSA data to identify student parents, holding a webinar on how to submit an IRB application, providing case studies on how college systems have facilitated data sharing agreements with sample agreements provided, and/or helping sites identify pain points and providing specific technical assistance to help sites overcome those pain points.

2. ***Require a letter of support from a partner with direct access to students.*** While some sites indicated student parent engagement was the lynchpin underlying their success, others encountered difficulty engaging students. Student parents face numerous demands for their time. They tend to spend much time caring for their family in addition to coursework and often a job (IWPR 2018; Reichlin Cruse et al. 2019). Single mothers also spend an average of 9 hours every day on caregiving and unpaid housework, limiting the amount of time they can spend on studying, sleep, exercise, or other activities that can play an important role in their academic and personal success (Reichlin Cruse et al. 2018). Most student parents (55 percent) also work 25 hours or more per week, and 52 percent are enrolled full time or a mix of full and part time (IWPR 2021). It is therefore no surprise that student parents must be selective about their engagements.

   This lack of student voice could be detrimental to PAP sites' initiatives. Although public sector entities (i.e., states, counties, and cities) may hold the power to implement systems change, they could miss out on relevant wisdom if conversations about systems change happen without student parents meaningfully present at the table (Chicago Beyond 2018).

   One strategy that may increase sites' chances of successfully engaging student parents in the process is partnering with an organization with direct access to students, such as a higher education institution or an organization providing student coaching. However, the partnership should not be passive. For example, one PAP site reported suboptimal student recruitment efforts because of their higher education partners' lack of knowledge about student parents' expected role. This problem could have been prevented had the higher education partner been actively engaged in co-defining student parents' role early with the site. As this example illustrates, partners with direct access to students must be actively engaged in the process from start to finish to ensure their impact. Ascend might consider requiring letters of commitment from at least one partner with direct access to students and a concrete plan for meaningfully engaging that partner and its student parents throughout the proposed systems change process in future funding opportunities.

3. ***Explicitly allow use of grant funds to compensate student parents for their time and expertise.*** A second strategy that may increase sites' chances of successfully engaging student parents is compensating them for their time and expertise. Student parents tend to have fewer financial resources than students without children. Over two-thirds of student parents (68 percent) have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold, compared with 49 percent of nonparenting students (IWPR 2021). A 2019 survey of student parents conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice indicates 68 percent experience food insecurity and 53 percent experience housing insecurity (Goldrick-Rab, Welton, and Coca 2020). This lack of financial resources is exacerbated by greater nontuition costs compared with the expenses of their peers without children.

   A Georgetown Center for Policy and Inequality study found older student parents (those 30 and older) spent an average of nearly $6,000 more annually on nontuition costs such as food, clothing, personal care, utilities, housing, and transportation than comparable students without

children between 2014 and 2018 (Palacios et al. 2021). Another study of the net price of college for student parents in California found that, on average, student parents pay nearly $7,600 more for college per child for items such as childcare and food than do students without children (California Competes 2020). Given these unique financial hurdles, student parents must choose how to spend their time wisely; unpaid time spent supporting PAP initiatives could be better spent earning money at a paid job.

In addition to increasing the likelihood of student parents' participation, accounting for and supporting the full cost—including intangible costs to participants and communities—is a best practice for funding equity-based research and initiatives (Chicago Beyond 2018). To this end, Ascend might consider stating explicitly in future requests for proposals that student parent stipends are an allowable use of funds.

4. ***Require evidence of commitment from leadership.*** Sites reported staffing as a key challenge, in part because of staff's competing priorities. Several team members lamented they can spend only a small portion of their time working on PAP grant activities because they have other tasks and responsibilities that require much time and attention.

   Another factor that seemed to facilitate sites' successful implementation of grant activities was having leaders who are committed to supporting student parents. In addition to creating a culture that values student parents and efforts to support them, committed leaders can protect team members' time to work on PAP grant activities, or even spearhead efforts to fund positions devoted to student parent work. Ascend might consider requiring letters of commitment from the leadership at each partner organization for future funding opportunities, in an attempt to highlight clear champions for student parents in a position of influence or authority. Ascend might consider requiring estimates of the level of time commitment key staff across the partners will devote to the effort. While Ascend cannot enforce the time commitments, such a requirement may encourage sites to critically analyze availability and prioritize the project or determine they cannot devote the time necessary to effect change (thereby leaving funding available to other partnerships more capable of executing changes).

Overall, the PAP program represents an innovative approach to accelerate current partnership efforts that has the potential to support more than 43,000 student parents and their families by increasing access to supports like early childhood education, housing, healthcare, and other supports that increase postsecondary access and success for parents. Applying these recommendations could help Ascend and other organizations with similar goals to facilitate meaningful systems change in support of student parents.

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Appendix A. PAP Site Profiles

Colorado Community College System

The Colorado Community College System (CCCS) received a Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grant to implement a statewide Student-Parent Advisory Group (SPAG) and develop plans to scale effective programs for student-parents. The SPAG advocates for student-parents across CCCS's 13 institutions by reviewing and making recommendations for revising state policies and practices. The programs provide support services to student-parents to assist them in earning postsecondary credentials that lead to careers offering living wages, opportunities for advancement, and continued learning in sectors with high growth and demand. The graphic below provides an overview of the resources CCCS has to implement this work (inputs), the activities they planned with those resources, and the changes or results they hope to achieve as a result of those activities (outputs, outcomes, and impacts).

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
▪ Partnerships with— – Colorado Community College System – The Bell Policy Center – Community College of Aurora – Colorado Department of Higher Education – Dolly Parton Imagination Library – Rotary Club of Aurora – Family Tree – U.S. Department of Labor Strengthening Working Families Initiative Grant ▪ Gary Community Investments Grant ▪ Aspen Institute Parent Powered Solutions Grant[a] ▪ Social programs (e.g., SNAP, CHP+, TANF) ▪ Existing campus-level student supports ▪ Project staff ▪ Aspen Partnership Grant	▪ Establish a statewide SPAG ▪ Quarterly SPAG meetings focused on: – Identifying barriers and service gaps within the CCCS. – Influencing policy and practice – Informing CCCS priorities – Standardizing data collection and sharing – Informing state policymakers ▪ Continue providing programs for student-parents at CCA such as: – Case management – Incentives to participate in policy and advocacy – Emergency funds – Parent-student coalition – Family-friendly spaces – Needs assessment – Rental program for high- priced items (e.g., pack and play) – Student-parent pantry – Dolly Parton Imagination Library – Champion training – Fox Family Day	▪ Host four quarterly meetings ▪ Publish four meeting minutes ▪ Issue guidance on data collection and sharing ▪ Provide recommendations on policies and practices affecting student-parents ▪ Give two presentations to policymakers ▪ Conduct biannual needs assessment ▪ Achieve 30 percent response rate on needs assessment ▪ Draft memorandum on service gaps for student-parents within CCCS ▪ Partner with 35 referral agencies ▪ Ensure 35 student-parents at CCA participate in policy activities ▪ Provide $5,000 in emergency support ▪ Distribute 800 activity books through Dolly Parton Imagination Library ▪ Provide access to food pantry for 35 student-parents at CCA ▪ Host two champion trainings for student-parents at CCA ▪ Host 100 student-parents at Fox Family Day ▪ Revise student-parent policies at CCA	▪ Increase enrollment of student-parents in CCA's Student Parent Service program by 2 percent from fall 2021 to fall 2022 ▪ CCA Student Parent Cohort provides direct support and financial services to 75 student-parents in fall 2022 ▪ 75 percent of students in fall 2022 cohort persist to spring 2023 cohort ▪ 90 percent of students feel supported by CCA and Student Parent Service program	▪ Improve long-term employment and transfer rates of student parents ▪ Increase social and economic mobility of student-parents ▪ Increase postsecondary enrollment of minor children of student-parents

Note: CCA = Community College of Aurora; CCCS = Colorado Community College System; CHP+ = Child Health Plan Plus; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; SPAG = Student Parent Advisory Group; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

[a] The Aspen Institute Parent Powered Solutions Grant is a fund led by student parents dedicated to supporting student parents' postsecondary success. CCA used the grant to create an advisory council of student parents dedicated to leading conversations and policymaking opportunities related to needs of student parents.

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of CCCS's PAP grant, CCCS has made strong progress toward 12 of their 17 identified outputs to date (see table below).

Examples of key successes

1. **Provided a voice for student parents through the SPAG working group and needs assessment**. The SPAG examined barriers to postsecondary success among student parents and developed strategies for mitigating them. For example, the group identified shifting to online learning as a potential strategy for addressing barriers related to transportation and childcare. Community College of Aurora (CCA) also shared analysis of its needs assessment data with CCCS to raise awareness of student parents' needs. Input from student parents in the SPAG workgroup and findings from the needs assessment informed recommendations for policymakers on statewide policy and practice.
2. **Provided services for student parents during the grant period.** Emergency assistance has helped student parents remain in school when facing financial challenges. Redesigning public spaces, such as lactation rooms and family-friendly spaces, has made it easier for parents to attend school with children. Programming for single parents like the Fox Family Day has raised awareness among student parents of available services and supports.

However, the CCCS team also has opportunities for improvement. They have made limited (growing) progress toward 1 of their 17 identified outputs and were unable to report their progress toward one output. They reported encountering challenges such as time required to scale up their initiatives beyond CCA, funding limitations, lack of available data to inform their programming and monitor their progress, and lack of appropriate facilities for lactation rooms. Still, as CCCS's PAP grant draws to a close, the team continues to work toward scaling several of CCA's initiatives statewide beginning in fall 2022. CCCS is developing a toolkit for the other 13 institutions in the CCCS to highlight CCA's successes, limitations, and areas for potential growth serving student parents. CCCS will also engage leadership at the 13 institutions to secure buy-in for implementing services and supports targeted for student parents.

Output	Target	Actual	Progress toward target
1. Number of quarterly meetings	4	4	100%
2. Number of publications	4	4	100%
3. Guidance issued on data collection	Yes	Yes*	100%
4. Policy recommendations provided	Yes	Yes*	100%
5. Number of presentations to policymakers	2	2	100%
6. Biannual needs assessments	2	1	50%
7. Student-parent response rate to needs assessment	30 percent	12.5 percent	43%
8. Memo of findings on gaps within CCSS	Yes	Yes*	100%
9. Number of partnerships with referral agencies	35	25	71%
10. Number participating in policy activities	35	35*	100%
11. Amount of emergency support	$5,000	$5,000*	100%
12. Number of activity books distributed	800	800*	100%
13. Number of lactation rooms revamped	3	2*	67%
14. Number of student parents accessing food pantry	35	Not reported	not reported
15. Number of champion trainings hosted	2	0	0%
16. Number of participants at Fox Family Day	100	50	50%
17. Student policy on campus revised	Yes	Yes*	100%

Note: * These actuals are based on estimates shared during data walk discussions and site review of the draft report; CCCS did not provide documentation verifying attainment of these targets.
CCSS = Colorado Community College System
= not reported = growing = moderate; = strong
Source: CCCS Data Collection Workbook as of August 24, 2022, Data Walk transcript site review of draft report.

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and Technical College Systemof Georgia

Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) received a Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grant to improve and strengthen coordination across childcare, postsecondary education, and state benefit services. The project supports a state leadership council and three community councils, including student parent advisors. It also advances data-sharing efforts, continues development of a resource and referral portal (Find Help), and provides training for frontline staff and leaders. The graphic below provides an overview of the resources available to help implement this work (inputs), the activities they planned with those resources, and the changes they hope to achieve because of those activities (outputs, outcomes, and impacts).

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
▪ Partnerships with— – Atlanta Public Schools – Clayton County Schools – Atlanta Technical College – Wiregrass Technical College – Catholic Charities – Kennesaw State University – Nana Grants – TANF, SNAP, WIC, and WIOA – Georgia's Children's Cabinet ▪ State 2Gen Leadership Advisory Council ▪ Community 2Gen Advisory Councils ▪ Parent 2Gen Advisors ▪ Frontline Staff ▪ 2Gen Summit ▪ Social media accounts ▪ Aspen collaborations	▪ Develop State Leadership and Community 2Gen Teams, including parent 2Gen leaders ▪ Increase data-sharing opportunities for agencies to support families ▪ Continue development of resource and referral portal that can be used by families and shared by staff from different agencies ▪ Train front-line staff on Family-Centered Coaching and case management across DECAL & TCSG to strengthen staff skills and knowledge on supporting families ▪ Implement Georgia Gateway Partners at TCSG to reduce barriers for student parents applying for state benefit programs	▪ Establish State 2Gen Leadership Advisory Council ▪ Establish three Community 2Gen Advisory Councils ▪ Engage parent advisors ▪ Train parent advisors ▪ Parent advisors attend community and state meetings ▪ Parent advisors participate in 2Gen Summit ▪ Formal data-sharing agreement between DECAL & TCSG to streamline process for staff to access activity eligibility requirements for childcare services ▪ Referral/resource portal established ▪ DECAL & TCSG staff trained ▪ TCSG staff trained as Gateway Partners	▪ Increase parent voice in understanding barriers and identifying strategies to reduce barriers ▪ Implement policy changes to support student parents ▪ Student parent data shared between TCSG and DECAL to determine childcare subsidy eligibility ▪ Referral structure established for postsecondary education students ▪ Increase in knowledge and family-focused mindset, stronger coaching skills among DECAL & TCSG staff ▪ Strengthened collaboration, communication, and cross-agency trainings among staff who work with families	▪ Increased momentum for 2Gen approach ▪ Increased number of participants moving through adult educaion to credit-bearing postsecondary pathways ▪ Higher postsecondary graduation rates and higher earnings for student parents ▪ Increased number of student parents approved for childcare subsidies ▪ Improved social-emotional and school readiness skills among children because student parents have access to higher quality early education and school-age programs for their children

Note: 2Gen = two generation; DECAL = Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; TCSG = Technical College System of Georgia; WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; WIOA = Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Although it is too soon to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of the Georgia team's PAP grant, the grantee has made strong progress toward 20 of their 29 identified outputs to date (see table below).

Examples of key successes

1. Launched the Find Help resource/referral portal.
2. Held regular State Leadership and Community Advisory Council meetings and trained parent advisors.
3. Provided multiple trainings to staff working with student parents.
4. Established 15 TCSG staff as Gateway Partners to help students access Georgia's integrated eligibility system.
5. Influenced a policy change in an existing childcare subsidies program to prioritize student parents, leading to direct impacts on student parents' lives. As an example, a 24-year-old mother preparing to drop out of her educational program met with a Career Specialist. Familiar with the childcare policy updates, the Career Specialist was able to help the mother reapply for and receive the subsidy using Gateway Partners. The mother has since earned her GED and is a postsecondary student.
6. Organized a statewide 2Gen Summit to share lessons learned and discuss opportunities for sustaining 2Gen work across Georgia. Leaders of partner organizations attended and led sessions; the Summit also included sessions led by student parents.

Opportunities for improvement are also available for the Georgia team. They have made limited progress toward 1 of their 29 identified outputs. They have encountered challenges in sustaining student-parent and State Leadership Council member participation, staff attrition and competing priorities, disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, and lack of available data to inform programming and monitor their progress. As the Georgia team's PAP grant draws to a close, the team continues to build collaborations, foster meaningful professional development opportunities, and develop ways to meaningfully engage student parent leaders. These efforts will enable them to make lasting systems-level changes that influence student parents and their families.

Output	Target	Actual	Progress toward target
1. State 2Gen Leadership Council established	June 2021	July 2021	100%
2. Number of State 2Gen Leadership Council meetings held	8	7	88%
3. Number of State 2Gen Leadership Council participants attending meetings	All partners attend 67% of meetings	7 of 13	54%
4. Number of State goals shared	5	5	100%
5. Number of new State partnerships identified	10	10	100%
6. Community 2Gen Advisory Councils established	April 2022	March 17, 2022	100%
7. Number of Community 2Gen Advisory Councils established	3	3	100%
8. Number of Community 2Gen Advisory Council meetings held	18	21	100%
9. Number of Community 2Gen Advisory Council members attending meetings	All partners attend 67% of meetings	Cobb: 9/22 Lowndes: 10/15 Metro: 7/20	46%
10. Number of community goals shared	2	2	100%
11. Parent advisors identified	February 2022	February 14, 2022	100%
12. Number of parent advisor meetings held	2	3	100%
13. Number of parent advisors attending meetings	9 attend ≥ 1 meeting	5	56%
14. Number of goals identified for parent advisors	2	2	100%
15. Number of parent advisors attending orientation	9	4	44%
16. Number of parent advisors attending Values-Based Leadership Training	9	4	44%
17. Number of parent advisors attending Community Councils	5+ meetings attended by each member	Cobb: 3/3 Lowndes: 1/2 Metro: 1/3	63%

Output	Target	Actual	Progress toward target
18. Number of parent advisors attending state meetings	3 students attend 4 meetings	3 attended 2; 2 attended 1	50%
19. Number of parent advisors participating in 2Gen Summit	9	2*	22%
20. Formal data-sharing agreement between DECAL & TCSG	Implemented	In progress*	75%
21. Number of leaders completing leadership training	15 staff	15 staff	100%
22. Number of DECAL & TCSG staff completing Find Help Navigator training	200 staff	149 staff	75%
23. Number of DECAL & TCSG staff completing Find Help community engagement training	100 staff	44 staff	44%
24. Number of Parent Advisory Council members attending Values-Based Leadership Training	100 organizations	265 organizations	100%
25. Number of frontline staff completing mindset training	260 staff	177 staff	68%
26. Number of frontline staff completing Family-Centered Coaching	100 staff	96 staff	96%
27. Number of leaders completing leadership training	15 staff	15 staff	100%
28. Number of state agency and community leaders engaged in using 2Gen approach to support families	15 leaders/ partners	15 leaders/ partners	100%
29. Number of TCSG staff trained to be Gateway Partners	15 staff	15 staff	100%

Note : * This actual is based on anecdotal reports shared during data walk discussions and review of the draft report; the Georgia team did not provide documentation to verify.

2Gen = two generation;" = not reported = growing = moderate; = strong

Sources: Georgia DECAL & TCSG Data Collection Workbook as of October 14, 2022, data walk transcript, site review of draft report

City of Long Beach, California

Nearly 14 percent of households in the City of Long Beach (Long Beach) are headed by single parents, and more than two-thirds of households include children under 18. Long Beach received the Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grant to collaborate with local partners to reform programs and policies that routinely produce inequitable outcomes for its single mothers and their families. The logic model below provides an overview of the resources Long Beach has to help implement this work (inputs), the activities they planned with those resources, and the changes or results they hope to achieve as a result of those activities (outputs, outcomes, and impacts).

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
▪ Partnerships with— – The City of Long Beach – Long Beach City College – Long Beach State University – Long Beach Unified School District ▪ Collaboration with— – California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids – Greater Avenues for Independence – Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education – Community involvement from Long Beach College Promise with current program reach of 10,000 families – U.S. DOL Strengthening Working Families grant – Los Angeles county and Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs – LB Early Childhood Education Committee and strategic plan – CARES Act and Recovery Act funding and lessons learned	▪ Convene a full committee, executive committee, and five workgroups focused on updating Long Beach's Economic Blueprint: 1. Early Childhood Education Committee 2. Guaranteed Income Group 3. Aerospace Council 4. Long Beach College Promise Group 5. Long Beach Youth Services Network ▪ Explore possibility of universal transitional kindergarten ▪ Consider connecting participants to current parent engagement program	▪ Regular full committee, executive committee, and workgroup meetings ▪ Assessment of single-parent resources and gaps in the community ▪ Engagement of parent participants and partner agencies ▪ Expansion of access to childcare through additional employer and family-based options	▪ Published Economic Development Blueprint 2.0 report ▪ Fund or escrow account to support guaranteed income for 250 single-parent households @ $500/month for 12 months ▪ Opportunities for 2-gen exploration and awareness of aerospace and healthcare careers ▪ Support for 20 single mothers to seek and pay for childcare during their school/training toward employment ▪ Increased student parent high school completion	▪ Reduction of female-headed households living below federal poverty line within 90813 ZIP Code by 10 percent by 2024

Note: CARES Act = Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act; DOL = Department of Labor; LB = Long Beach

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of Long Beach's PAP grant, they have made strong progress toward 2 of their 11 identified outputs to date and moderate progress on 3 others (see table below).

Examples of key successes

1. Executed a 2-year contract with options for a 3-year extension with the Fund for Guaranteed Income to support Long Beach Guaranteed Income implementation.
2. Established a partnership with Long Beach Unified School District to implement a survey to collect data on the needs of student parents.
3. Launched a Space Beach Teacher Externship professional development program for K–12 educators to create streamlined, easy-to-navigate career pathways for students interested in aerospace and related industries.

However, the Long Beach team also has opportunities for improvement. They are still growing toward 5 of their 11 identified outputs and were unable to report their progress toward 1 other (the team did work through the mayor's office to create a government-run portal for parents seeking childcare but was unable to report the extent to which this portal expanded childcare access). They reported encountering challenges such as lack of capacity because of staff turnover, disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, and lack of available data to inform their programming and monitor their progress. Still, as Long Beach's PAP grant draws to a close, the team continues to progress toward a common interagency data-sharing agreement and publication of their Economic Development Blueprint 2.0 report, which has been approved by the City Council of Long Beach and is slated for publication soon.

Output	Target	Actual	Progress toward target
1. Regular full committee meetings	Monthly	2*	17%
2. Regular executive committee meetings	Monthly	None	0%
3. Regular Early Childhood Education Committee meetings	Monthly	Quarterly	33%
4. Regular Guaranteed Income Group meetings	Monthly	6*	50%
5. Regular Aerospace Council meetings	Monthly	Bimonthly	50%
6. Regular Long Beach College Promise Group meetings	Monthly	Quarterly	33%
7. Regular Long Beach Youth Services Network meetings	Monthly	Monthly	100%
8. Assessment of single-parent resources and gaps in the community	Complete findings report or memorandum	Implemented Needs Assessment Survey*	25%
9. Engagement of parent participants	15 parent participants	13 parent participants	87%
10. Engagement of partner agencies	10 partner agencies	5 partner agencies	50%
11. Expansion of access to childcare through additional employer and family-based options	Unspecified	Not reported	not reported

Note : * These actuals are based on estimates shared during data walk discussions and site review of the draft report; Long Beach did not provide documentation to verify.

= not reported = growing = moderate; = strong

Sources: Long Beach Data Collection Workbook as of September 29, 2022, Data Walk transcript, site review of draft report

Minnesota Office of Higher Education

OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Minnesota's Office of Higher Education (OHE), along with leading partner agencies Raise the Barr, the Minnesota State System of Colleges and Universities, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and the Minnesota Department of Health, received a Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grant to catalyze efforts to support the long-term, multigenerational success of Minnesota student parents and their families. Key initiatives included hiring a full-time Whole Family & Student Parent Coordinator and launching the Minnesota Student Parent Alliance. The logic model below provides an overview of the resources available to help implement this work (inputs), the activities they planned with those resources, and the changes they hope to achieve as a result of those activities (outputs, outcomes, and impacts).

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
▪ Partnerships with— – Raise the Barr – MN State System of Colleges and Universities – MN Department of Human Services – MN Department of Health – University of Minnesota – Children's Cabinet – LeadMN ▪ Full-time coordinator ▪ Meeting facilitator ▪ Student parent advisory council ▪ MN SPA ▪ State Longitudinal Education Data System ▪ Funding (PAP and other) ▪ Social media and public engagement calls, including support from MN Vikings	▪ Hire Whole Family and Student Parent coordinator ▪ Host three convenings to launch MN SPA ▪ Identify partners for coalitions ▪ Update initiative proposal to present to the Commissioner of Higher Education and the legislature for 2023 session ▪ Continue efforts to— – Plan student parent initiatives – Build coalition and partnerships	▪ Whole Family and Student coordinator hired ▪ Three convenings held ▪ Student parent initiatives identified ▪ Coalitions strengthened and expanded ▪ Policies presented to Commissioner of Higher Education/ MN legislature	▪ Help schools identify baseline measure of number of student-parents ▪ Plans to maintain the initiative developed and implemented ▪ Plans to support policy recommendations identified ▪ Formal commitment by all partnering agencies/ departments to continue monthly meetings and engagement of MN SPA and Student Parent Advisory Council ▪ Stakeholders support student parents/their children on education journey ▪ Increase student parent voice in understanding barriers; improving policies; and advancing legislation/ identifying resources	▪ Increase momentum for 2Gen approach ▪ Increase college admission and attainment rates for student parents by 15 percent ▪ Increase access to quality education and training programs for student parents by 15 percent by 2026 ▪ Higher postsecondary graduation rates and higher earnings for student parents (2 percent increase from estimated baseline by 2026) ▪ Improve educational outcomes (meeting developmental milestones) for children of student parents by 5 percent

MN SPA = Minnesota Student Parent Alliance; PAP = Policy Acceleration Partnership

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of Minnesota's OHE PAP grant, the grantee has made strong progress toward seven of their eight identified outputs to date (see table below).

Examples of successes

1. Hired the Whole Family and Student Parent Coordinator to support key initiatives. The position helped the partnership participate in meetings about on-campus childcare supports; share resources with the Minnesota Private College Council, including scholarships for student parents; and lead efforts to develop the Minnesota Student Parent Alliance advisory council.
2. Identified opportunities to gather data on student parent needs, including collaborating with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System to develop a plan for a comprehensive data collection program to better understand student parent needs and inform proposed policies.
3. Invited five partners to testify to the Minnesota State legislature about policies supporting student parents enrolled in institutions of higher education.
4. Added six partners to grantee's coalition.
5. Developed policy initiatives to support direct services for student parents enrolled in institutions of higher education. A proposal was made during the 2022 legislative session. Although this proposal was tabled, the PAP partnership helped maintain support for the proposal and again advanced a $7 million proposal to the governor's office for the 2023 session. Although the final status of the proposal remains unknown, the resubmission indicates growing systems-level support for student parents and their families.

The Minnesota OHE team also has opportunities for improvement. They were unable to report their progress toward one output. Some efforts started late because of hiring delays, concerns about aligning with the academic calendar to meet student needs, and the continued COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the team delayed the start of their convenings in hopes of holding in-person gatherings and to ensure student parent representatives would be available to attend. The convenings eventually shifted to virtual meetings; while limiting in-person networking, this shift may have increased access for rural partners. Other challenges have included lack of direct contact with students, lack of staff capacity because of competing priorities, funding limitations, and lack of available data to inform programming and monitor progress. As Minnesota's OHE PAP grant draws to a close, the team continues to build partnerships and meaningful participation from student parent partners that will enable them to sustain their momentum and make real change in the lives of student parents and their families.

Output	Target	Actual	Progress toward target
1. Whole Family and Student Parent Coordinator hired	May 2021	October 2021	100%
2. Convenings held	3	3	100%
3. Participants engaged in convenings	40–60 per convening	C1: 60 C2: 43 C3: 38	98%
4. Student parent representatives engaged in convenings	6–10 per convening	C1: 10 C2: 7 C3: 8	100%
5. Student parent initiatives identified	3	3	100%
6. Coalitions expanded	Add five or more new partners	6	100%
7. Coalitions strengthened	Receive annual feedback on coalition strength	Not reported	not reported
8. Partners testify to legislature	Testimony from five or more partners	5	100%

C1 = convening 1; C2 = convening 2; C3 = convening 3

= not reported = growing = moderate; = strong

Sources: Minnesota Office of Higher Education Data Collection Workbook as of October 21, 2022, Data Walk transcript, site review of draft report

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS) received a Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grant to support implementation of two-generation approaches intended to mitigate financial, health, housing, and educational barriers to postsecondary success for student parents. PA DHS established a Parent Pathways Advisory Committee (PPAC) to provide recommendations on policy affecting student parents. They also established the Parent Pathways Learning Network (PPLN) to provide 10 postsecondary institutions with training, technical assistance, and opportunities for peer learning on building systemic supports for student parents. The following logic model provides an overview of the resources PA DHS has to help implement this

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
▪ Partnerships with— – PA DHS – PA Department of Education – Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice ▪ PA Housing Finance Agency State funding for childcare ▪ "Jobs that pay" initiative ▪ Government support programs (TANF, SNAP, WIC, CHP+, etc.) ▪ Regional Accountable Health Councils ▪ Expanded SNAP eligibility ▪ Community Service Block Grants ▪ Trauma-Informed PA Plan ▪ Existing listservs of stakeholders ▪ American Rescue Plan Act ▪ Pending: Hunger Free Campus, $1 million ▪ Results of the spring 2020 Covid-19 Survey of Needs	▪ Conduct needs assessment of student parents ▪ Convene PPAC to – Advise administrators at colleges and universities and the Department of Education – Solicit feedback from student parents – Identify systemic barriers faced by student parents – Recommend strategies for addressing barriers ▪ Implement the PPLN ▪ Create a sustainability plan	▪ PA DHS participation on PPAC ▪ Hope Center participation on PPAC ▪ Community participation on PPAC ▪ Parent-student participation on PPAC ▪ Three PPAC meetings monthly ▪ Parent-student participation in all PPAC meetings ▪ Recommendations on basic needs topics ▪ Publish recommendations on barriers to completion ▪ Engage at least eight community partners ▪ Receive commitment from at least five institutions to implement parent pathways model ▪ Disseminate sustainability plan to at least 100 stakeholders ▪ Engage at least five educational institutions	▪ Seven parenting student program plans from PPLN participants ▪ Six recommended systems changes to be considered for implementation ▪ Four institutions implement the parenting student programs ▪ Four institutions financially support the Parenting Students program model ▪ Twenty-five parenting students across four institutions participate in Parent Pathway program models within the first two years ▪ Parenting students have a better understanding of and access to government services and supports ▪ A comprehensive toolkit for postsecondary institutions pursuing a parenting student program	▪ For parent students at PPLN institutions— – Increase postsecondary enrollment rate by 3 percent by 2025 – Increase access and use of food, housing, childcare and financial aid resources – Increase awareness and use of community-based resources – Increase access to housing ▪ For institutions participating in the PPLN— – Increase options for childcare to meet needs of parenting students

Note: CHP+ = Child Health Plan Plus; DHS = Department of Human Services; PA = Pennsylvania; PPAC = Parent Pathways Advisory Committee; PPLN = Parent Pathways Learning Network; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of PA DHS's PAP grant, they have made strong progress toward 10 of their 12 identified outputs to date (see table below).

Examples of key successes

1. **Collaborated with the Hope Center to develop strong community and institutional partnerships by centering parenting students as a core advising body.** Institutional partners have reported the opportunity to "pause and speak directly to parenting student advisors has had a profound impact on their own learning, reflection, and considerations of systems opportunities on their campuses." Convenings of community and institutional partner organizations also raised awareness of existing state and community systems and resources that could be used to expedite delivery of services to student parents.
2. **Raised awareness among student parents of available services.** Community engagement, such as working with teen parent programs to raise awareness of childcare services, has helped raise awareness among student parents of support services. PA DHS and the Hope Center reported, "We are doing a ton of community-based collaborative communication, targeted outreach, social media campaigns, and public events for student parents."
3. **Improved outcomes for student parents.** One recent student parent, a graduate of Temple, was hired in 2021 by a partner organization after her work was featured in an event sponsored by PA DHS and the Hope Center. She is working on the statewide hunger-free campus initiative because of her role with Swipe Out Hunger, a leading national organization seeking to eliminate hunger on college campuses.

The PA DHS team also has opportunities for improvement. They have made moderate progress toward 1 of their 12 identified outputs and were unable to report their progress toward 1 output. They reported encountering challenges such as a changing political climate, limited staff capacity resulting from competing priorities, inconsistent student engagement, and lack of available data to inform their programming and monitor their progress. Still, as PA DHS's PAP grant draws to a close, the team continues to recruit institutions to implement and sustain its parent pathways model and promote the parent student voice on the PPAC.

Output	Target	Actual	Progress toward target
1. PA DHS participation on PPAC	Yes/No	Yes	100%
2. Hope Center participation on PPAC	Yes/No	Yes	100%
3. Community participation on PPAC	Yes/No	Yes	100%
4. Parent-student participation on PPAC	Yes/No	Yes	100%
5. Frequency of PPAC meetings	Three times monthly	2.14 times monthly	71%
6. Number of student parents participating consistently on PPAC	Unspecified	7	not reported
7. Recommendations on basic needs topics	Yes/No	Yes	100%
8. Identify, draft, revise, and publish recommendations on barriers to completion	Publish	Published*	100%
9. Engage community partnerships	≥ 8	11	100%
10. Number of commitments to implement parent pathways model	10	5	50%
11. Disseminate sustainability plan to stakeholders	≥ 100	>100*	100%
12. Number of educational institutions engaged	≥ 5	10	100%

Note : * These actuals are based on estimates shared during the review of the draft report; PA DHS did not provide documentation verifying the number of stakeholders reached through dissemination of its policy recommendations.
PPAC = Parent Pathways Advisory Committee

= not reported = growing = moderate; = strong

Sources: Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022, data walk transcript, site review of draft report

Rhode Island Department of Human Services

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (RI DHS) received a Policy Acceleration Partnership (PAP) grant to advance its Whole Family Approach Jobs (WFAJ) initiative, which focuses on identifying legislation and policy changes that are critical for the State to increase parents' ability to obtain the postsecondary credentials that are increasingly necessary to attain long-term self-sufficiency. More specifically, the PAP grant funds RI DHS efforts to advance the "young parent policy" RI DHS has identified as a core pillar of WFAJ in recent years. The logic model below provides an overview of the resources RI DHS has to help implement this work (inputs), the activities they planned with those resources, and the changes or results they hope to achieve as a result of those activities (outputs, outcomes, and impacts).

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
▪ Partnerships with— – College Unbound – Comprehensive Community Action Program – Dunamis Synergy Initiative – Office of Postsecondary Commissioner – ResCare/Equus – Rhode Island Community College – State representatives and senators – West Elmwood Housing Development Cooperation ▪ Cross-sector collaboration with postsecondary institutions and CBOs ▪ Parent leaders engaged in the Dunamis Synergy Leadership Team	▪ Encourage student-parent leadership through Parent Leadership Academy, Student Parent Advocacy group, employment of student parent leader on project ▪ Conduct student parent focus groups, student- parent-developed survey in collaboration with College Unbound ▪ Bring agency partners and CBOs together with parents to collaboratively develop strategic plan and aligned policy agenda ▪ Conduct outreach in support of legislation/ systems change ▪ Provide coaching and support to students (or potential students)	▪ Student parent leaders trained as advocates ▪ Student parent leader employed full-time on project ▪ Student parent participation in focus groups and survey ▪ Student parent participation in survey ▪ Parents and sectors included in creation of strategic plan ▪ Cross-sector collaborative meetings ▪ Planning committee meetings ▪ Student parent testimonies for supportive legislation/ systems change ▪ Emails and phone calls to representatives in Rhode Island Statehouse for supportive legislation/ systems change ▪ Media outreach efforts ▪ Students (or potential students) receiving coaching and support	▪ Increased student parent leadership in community ▪ Increased understanding of parent students' needs among collaborative partners ▪ Increased support for required resources and system/policy changes to help student parents attain postsecondary credentials among partners ▪ Increased student parent-focused advocacy, service coordination, and collaboration among partner agencies	▪ Increase percentage of parenting Rhode Islanders with college degree from 37 percent to 50 percent by 2025 ▪ Increase proportion of Rhode Island's single- parent families earning a livable wage from 33 percent in 2018 to 50 percent by 2025

Note: CBO = community-based organization

Although it is too early to assess longer term outcomes and impacts of RI DHS's PAP grant, they have made strong progress toward 10 of their 12 identified outputs to date (see table below).

Examples of key successes

1. Influenced legislation that amended the Rhode Island Works Program[a] as follows:
   - enabled parents from the poorest families to receive 5 years of assistance (instead of 4) to obtain skills for well-paying jobs;
   - allowed parents to attend Community College of Rhode Island for 2 years as their sole activity in pursuit of work;
   - allowed parents to keep more of their cash assistance benefit to supplement wages;
   - established a new Child Care for College initiative that increases the income limit for subsidized care through the Child Care Assistance Program;
   - increased the limit to enroll in the state's Child Care Assistance Program from 180 to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level; and
   - increased the limit at which enrolled families become ineligible for the state's Child Care Assistance Program from 225 to 300 percent.
2. Influenced new legislation that allows parents to avoid counting the one-time State Child Tax Credit as income for tax purposes.
3. Provided referrals to several workforce training opportunities, including a 15-week computer literacy course that has graduated eight parents so far.
4. Trained seven student parents on the parent leadership team to facilitate a 10-week Parent Leadership Academy course designed to empower student (or potential student) parents. They received a stipend for their training and will receive a stipend for facilitating the course, beginning with the first cohort in spring 2023.

However, the RI DHS team also has opportunities for improvement. They have made moderate progress toward 2 of their 12 identified outputs. They reported encountering challenges such as lack of capacity resulting from staff turnover, reduced student engagement caused by disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of available data to inform programming and monitor progress, and a changing political climate. Still, as RI DHS's PAP grant draws to a close, the team continues to build social capital that will enable them to sustain their momentum.

[a] RI Works is a financial and employment assistance program for parents and families with little to no income who have children of high school age or younger.

Output	Target	Actual	Progress toward target
1. Number of student parent leaders trained as advocates	10	6	60%
2. Number of student parent leaders employed full time on project	1	1	100%
3. Number of student parent focus groups	4	5*	100%
4. Number of student parent survey respondents	50	44	88%
5. Number of parents and sectors included in creation of strategic plan	10 parents,	6 parents*	60%
6. Number of sectors included in creation of strategic plan	6 sectors	5 sectors*	83%
7. Number of cross-sector collaborative meetings	4	4*	100%
8. Number of planning committee meetings	8	6	75%
9. Number of student parent testimonies for supportive legislation/systems change	2	2	100%
10. Number of emails and phone calls to representatives in Rhode Island Statehouse for supportive legislation/systems change	100	100*	100%
11. Number of media outreach efforts	10	>10*	100%
12. Number of students (or potential students) receiving coaching and support	70	68	97%

Note : * This actual is based on an estimate shared during Data Walk discussions; Rhode Island Department of Human Services did not provide documentation to verify.

= moderate; = strong = not reported

Sources: Rhode Island Department of Human Services Data Collection Workbook as of August 19, 2022; September 13, 2022, data walk transcript, site review of draft report

Appendix B. Focus Group Facilitation Guide Used During September 2022 Convening (Data Walk)

A. Breakout Topic 1: Introductions and Optional Review of Logic Model Outputs

Time: 5 minutes

1. [Note taker begins recording here.]
2. [Facilitator begins with brief reintroductions and summarizes how the breakout will work.]
    a. *For those who may not have been at the first two sessions, my name is* [insert facilitator name] *from Insight Policy Research. I've been working with the team throughout the year to provide technical assistance and evaluation support. I am joined by my colleague* [insert note taker name], *who will be taking notes, and [insert Ascend staff member name] from Ascend.* [Identify any new faces and ask them to briefly introduce themselves and their role on the PAP grant].
    b. *In the time since we last met, your team shared some data on the outputs you have achieved so far, and Insight conducted some basic analyses to assess your progress toward your intended targets. During the next 70 minutes, we'll focus on what we can learn from the outputs that have yielded the most success so far or are proving to be most challenging so far, with the goal of identifying any facilitating factors or challenges you may have encountered.*
    c. *Your team also shared some data on the number of students enrolled in your partner higher education institutions, and Insight conducted some basic analyses to estimate your grant's potential reach. During the next 70 minutes, we'll also spend some time reviewing and interpreting those numbers to make sure we have a shared understanding.*
    d. *Finally, we want to use this opportunity to make sure we're highlighting any key successes your site has experienced or opportunities for improvement your site has encountered to date. We'll review the written responses you shared in your data collection workbook and open the floor for any others that may not be captured there.*
    e. *This breakout will take about 70 minutes and will help inform the Policy Acceleration Partnership evaluation report. Responses may be attributed to [site name] in the report, but they will not be attributed to individuals. Please stop me at any point if you have questions. I will pause now; do you have any questions so far?*
    f. *Like last time, each site will be asked to report on a key takeaway from this breakout once we rejoin the whole group. This can be a success or an opportunity for improvement. Who would like to report on behalf of each group? [Pause for volunteers or select someone to fill the role.] I'll remind you about this at the end of the session, and the group can work together to decide on a key takeaway.*

B. Breakout Topic 2: Facilitating Factors and Challenges

Time: 30 minutes

1. [Facilitator transitions to discussion of the outputs illustrated on the data placemat. Note taker shares screen.]
    a. [Facilitator] *Let's start by focusing on the outputs classified as green. These are the ones that appear to have yielded the most successes early on based on the data you shared. Can you identify any key factors that have facilitated your progress toward your targets?*
    b. [Note: If the site has no green (strong) outputs, facilitator will probe the strongest gold (moderate) outputs instead.]
    c. [Facilitator] *Now let's turn to the outputs classified as red. These are the ones that appear to be most challenging so far based on the data you shared. Can you identify any particular challenges that may have hindered your progress toward your targets?*
    d. [Note: If the site has no red (growing) outputs, facilitator will probe the weakest gold (moderate) outputs instead.]
    e. [Facilitator] *Now let's turn to the outputs classified as gray. These are the ones you did not report in your data collection workbook.* [Facilitator will ask tailored questions to confirm whether they are actually unmeasured or should be considered zeros and classified as red. For example, if the site did not report the number of meeting attendees because it has not convened any meetings yet, the actual number should be reported as zero. By contrast, if the site did not report the number of students enrolled at partner higher education institutions because it has not been able to obtain data from the institutions yet, that number should be classified as not reported.]
    f. [Facilitator] [Only if the outputs classified as gray are truly unmeasured] *Were there any particular challenges that prevented your team from measuring your progress toward your targets?*

C. Breakout Topic 3: Anticipated Reach

Time: 15 minutes

1. [Facilitator transitions to the discussion of the anticipated reach illustrated on the data placemat. Note taker continues to share screen.]
    a. [Facilitator] *Now let's turn to the data you shared on the number of students enrolled in your partner higher education institutions, particularly student parents and single student parents who are new to the college (as opposed to transfer students).* [Facilitator will ask tailored questions to confirm and clarify these data. For example, are there any caveats to the data, such as reflecting some but not all partners? If any of the data are missing, can the site share more information about why, and if there are plans to try to obtain these data later?]

D. Breakout Topic 4: Successes and Opportunities

Time: 15 minutes

1. [Facilitator transitions to the discussion of the written responses highlighted on the data placemat. Note taker continues to share screen.]
    a. [Facilitator] *Now let's turn to the written responses you provided about the work your site has done so far.* [Facilitator will ask tailored questions to highlight the successes the site reported via its data collection workbook and then encourage the discussion about other successes each site would like to share that may not be captured in the data collection workbook.]
    b. [Facilitator] *Finally, I'd like to ask about any specific opportunities for improvement your site has encountered to date.* [Facilitator will use challenges discussed earlier as a starting point but also encourage discussion about others that may not have been captured already.]

E. Breakout Topic 5: Conclusion

Time: 5 minutes

1. [Facilitator concludes breakout. Note taker stops sharing screen.]
    a. [Facilitator] *That's about all the time we have for the breakout. As a reminder,* [group's speaker] *will have about 5 minutes to share one takeaway from our session and 5 minutes to take any questions from the other sites.* [Facilitate brief group discussion to identify a key takeaway.]
    b. [Facilitator] *Any last questions or concerns? Thanks so much for your participation today!*
    c. [Note taker downloads final version of breakout materials.]