



**PARTNERS FOR IMPACT:**

# **Community Colleges and Human Services Nonprofits BOOSTing Family Economic Success Through Organizational Policy and Practice**

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## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the many people who contributed to and reviewed this brief. In particular, we want to acknowledge the contributions from Boosting Opportunities for Social and Economic Mobility (BOOST) city partners and the national partners, The Kresge Foundation, Jobs for the Future (JFF), and Equal Measure. We also received early support from Cynthia Liston, Liston Consulting, in developing the brief and valuable feedback from Marjorie Sims, David Croom, and Jennifer Poci at the Aspen Institute; Tracy Wareing at the American Public Human Services Association; Stephanie Davison, Raquel Hatter, Ashley Johnson, and Bill Moses at The Kresge Foundation and Jennifer Freeman, David Altstadt, and Jessica Togli at Jobs for the Future (JFF). A big thank you also goes out to our editors and designers at JFF for their work on this brief.

## About JFF

Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the U.S. education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. [www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)

## About JFF's Language Choices

JFF is committed to using language that promotes equity and human dignity, rooted in the strengths of the people and communities we serve. We develop our content with the awareness that language can perpetuate privilege but also can educate, empower, and drive positive change to create a more equitable society. We will continually reevaluate our efforts as language usage continues to evolve.

## About BOOST

Launched by The Kresge Foundation in 2019, [BOOST](#) supports partnerships between community colleges and human services nonprofits in six cities nationwide to connect people with low incomes to critical human services and educational pathways that will help them climb the social and economic ladder.<sup>1</sup>

In America's cities, many people with low incomes dream of and strive for a more secure, prosperous future for their families. A high-quality college credential can connect parents with careers that help families achieve social and economic success. At colleges all around the country, students often juggle work, family, and school. If students receive the critical supports that human services nonprofits provide, more students will stay in college and graduate. Meanwhile, some people supported by human services nonprofits never connect to educational pathways on community college campuses that offer credentials aligned to quality jobs. Colleges and human services nonprofits often don't know they are serving the same families. There is an opportunity to provide coordinated supports that are holistic, equitable, and address the needs of both children and parents.<sup>2</sup>

This effort was co-designed and is led by the Education and Human Services teams at Kresge. The Education team seeks to increase college access and success, advance economic mobility and strengthen urban communities, with an emphasis on improving the educational outcomes and experiences of people with low-incomes, especially those living in cities, and underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, including first-generation, Black, Latino, Asian-Pacific Islander, Native American, veterans and immigrant students. The Human Services team centers racial equity and racial justice to advance family social and economic success from one generation to the next.<sup>3</sup>



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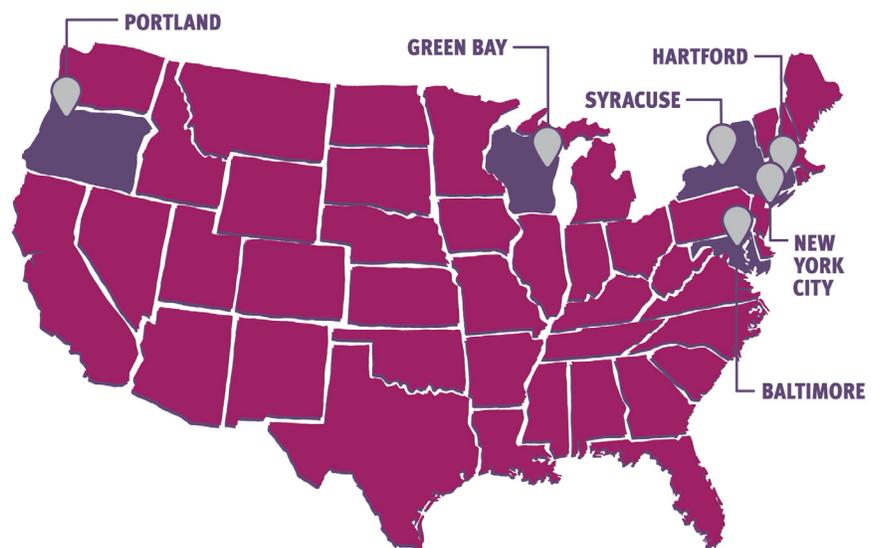
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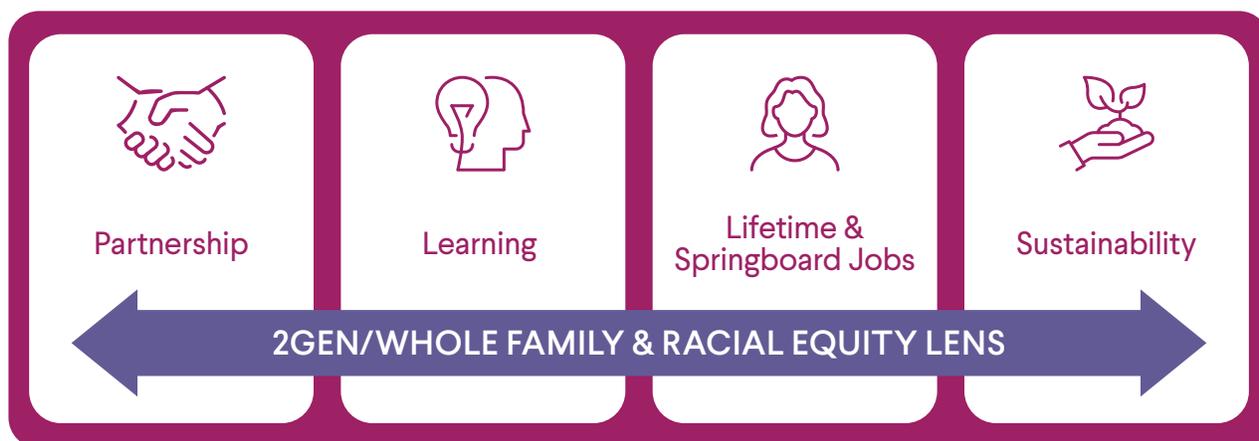
# 01.

# Introduction

The [BOOST initiative](#) connects families with low incomes to critical human services supports and educational and career pathways to advance multigenerational family economic success.<sup>4</sup> In six cities — Baltimore, Maryland; Green Bay, Wisconsin; Hartford, Connecticut; New York City (Queens); Portland, Oregon; and Syracuse, New York—community colleges and human services nonprofits have partnered to support the economic advancement of families as part of the BOOST initiative. The partners at these BOOST sites are guided by six core tenets that advance family social and economic success: partnership, learning, lifetime and springboard jobs, sustainability, racial equity, and the two-generation (2Gen) approach, also sometimes referred to as the whole-family approach, as defined by [Ascend at the Aspen Institute](#).<sup>5</sup>



## BOOST CORE TENETS TO SOCIAL & ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT



BOOST partnerships place a particular emphasis on racial equity—both the process and outcome of seeking to understand and address the programmatic, institutional, and policy barriers families of color face in higher education and human services systems. Over time, BOOST partners have deepened their understanding of systemic racism and how it influences individual and organizational thinking and are now shifting their organizational practices to support more equitable outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

This brief explores how community colleges and human services nonprofits can partner to advance multigenerational family economic success and how these partners can lean into their unique strengths as they seek to achieve this goal. It looks at how the six BOOST sites are working to change policies and access funding at the institutional, state, and federal levels to support their partnership goals. It also highlights practices and insights learned from the BOOST initiative, with the intent of aiding and accelerating other efforts to follow this collaborative path.

These policies and practices are based on the belief that:

**a family's dream can be realized when supports from human services organizations are intentionally paired with a community college pathway that has been co-designed with whole families in mind.<sup>7</sup>**

# Advancing Equitable Family Economic Success Through Collaboration

## Recommendations for Community Colleges

**Understand the populations you are serving** to better coordinate services and supports.

**Create data-sharing agreements with partners.**

**Ensure that there are dedicated funding, staff resources, and structures** that allow students to easily access state and federal funding to meet their needs beyond tuition and receive holistic supports.

**Create smooth pathways** that provide foundational education skills, recognize prior learning, offer short-term credentials, and connect students to labor market opportunities.

## Recommendations for Human Services Nonprofits

**Promote outcomes for children and their parents through a family-focused infrastructure** that aligns programs, funding streams, and staff practices to support families in a holistic way.

**Strengthen and share practices that center the voices of families** and support them in identifying and achieving their social and economic advancement goals.

**Invest in establishing family-focused data systems** to track and understand how access to services and activities affects families.

**Maximize resources for families**, such as by blending and braiding funding with community college partners.

**Expand the long-term impact of internal workforce development services** through close collaboration with community colleges and other local workforce development partners.

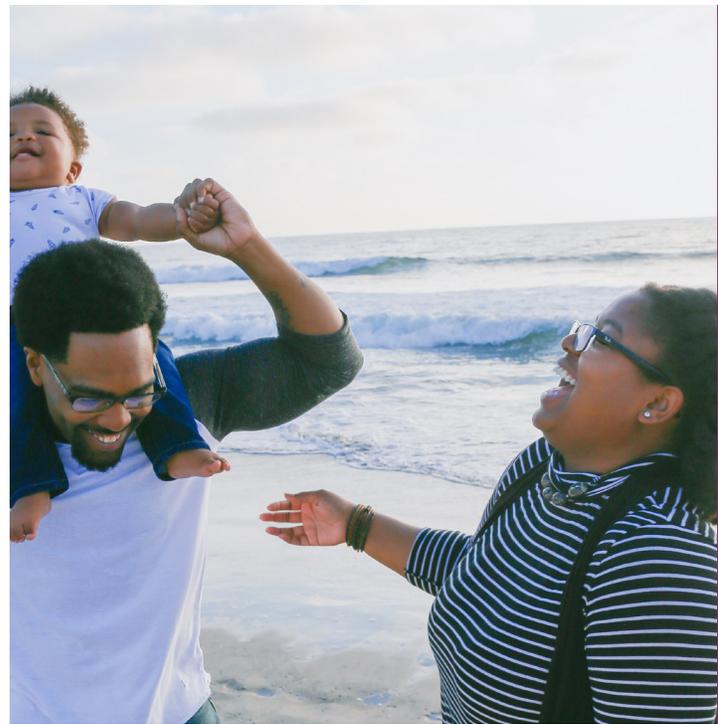


## 02.

# Collaborative and Systemic Approaches That Propel Families

## Partnering to Advance Family Economic Success

Each BOOST site consists of a partnership between a community college and a human services nonprofit. By understanding and elevating the strengths and roles of the distinct systems in which they operate, the two systems can partner to engage families and advance economic success. The imperative and impact of such partnerships are immense. Even as parents are striving to do their best to support their families, nearly one in five children in the United States lives in poverty.<sup>8</sup> About a quarter of today's college students have dependents, and the headwinds they face are strong: Research indicates that student parents must work more than 50 hours per week just to pay for education and child care costs, even after receiving traditional financial aid.<sup>9</sup> When these data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender, we see a greater need to focus on equity and identify the unique barriers faced by specific populations in our systems. Partnerships enable organizations to work together to advance mutually reinforcing goals:



First and foremost, the families involved achieve their economic advancement goals; human services nonprofits increase family economic success; and community colleges enable learners to earn credentials aligned to quality jobs.

Each type of organization brings its unique strengths to the BOOST partnership.



## HUMAN SERVICES NONPROFITS

These organizations use a variety of names to describe themselves, but they typically share some common values and approaches to supporting social and economic advancement that are guided by the goals and dreams of the families they serve. Within the BOOST framework, they apply the 2Gen approach as defined by Ascend at the Aspen Institute. The domains of that approach—early childhood education, economic assets (for example, cash, housing, and food assistance), and mental health—align with BOOST’s guiding principle of ensuring equity.<sup>10</sup>

The human services nonprofits at BOOST sites provide coaching and other ongoing supports to parents and children to identify their goals and meet their needs.<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that what are often called supportive services or wraparound services in the context of career pathways should be regarded as providing support toward key outcomes in and of themselves, not only addressing barriers to employment. Early childhood education, for instance, helps young children prepare for school and meet social and emotional milestones. Food assistance can reduce toxic stress and support health outcomes. Many of these organizations also provide workforce education programs and help to build social capital among the parents they work with—another critical component of a 2Gen approach.

As Ascend describes it, applying this 2Gen approach:

**“helps to immediately identify whole families’ needs and goals to inform integrations and alignments to programs that serve them, which maximizes long-term impact for families and communities.”<sup>12</sup>**



## COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community colleges play a key role in the economic success of millions of learners across the country. Postsecondary education is an important aspect of the 2Gen approach because it enables families to access employment pathways and build social capital and economic assets.<sup>13</sup> The community colleges that have partnered with human services organizations through BOOST support family economic success by providing parents with robust career pathways through education and credentials that align with their interests and can serve as a [springboard](#) to economic advancement.<sup>14</sup>

Many community colleges also provide [career navigation](#) supports and connect learners with employers offering quality jobs in addition to offering holistic coaching, which has been shown to lead to improved student outcomes in postsecondary education.<sup>15</sup> Community colleges often provide flexible programming that supports families by making it easier for student parents to balance education, work, and family. In addition, working with their human services partners, community colleges help students access broader support services, such as child care, transportation vouchers, and emergency aid, to help more students persist and earn credentials aligned to quality jobs. Finally, BOOST colleges use data to understand how policies and practices are addressing or exacerbating racial inequities in terms of access, completion, and employment.

One BOOST partner highlighted the value of collaboration this way:

**“The more connected we are—the more we’re acting as a coordinated system rather than individual institutions—the better that’s going to be for our communities, who will have easier and easier access to a wider variety of services.”**



## PARTNERSHIP TIPS FROM BOOST SITES

BOOST sites have identified several actions partners can take to successfully undertake the organizational policy and practice changes described in this brief:



### UNDERSTAND WHO YOU ARE SERVING:

Partners should collect and share data about the populations they're serving, such as whether

students have caregiving responsibilities, to better serve their needs. Identify the overlap between target populations your local human services organizations and community colleges are already serving.



### ESTABLISH TRUSTING

#### RELATIONSHIPS:

In BOOST partnerships, both the community college and the human services nonprofit come to the table with shared values. They recognize each other's specific contributions, create consistent channels of communication, and have honest conversations about challenges. These relationships matter and take time. As the partnership matures, a memorandum of understanding between the partners can embed the collaboration to ensure that it lasts beyond the tenure of current key personnel.



### SUPPORT THE WHOLE FAMILY:

Partners need to engage with families to provide resources for and meet the goals of each family member. For community colleges, this includes building the infrastructure needed to identify, track, and support student parents to provide a more effective whole-family approach. For human services organizations, it means simultaneously providing coaching and supports for children and the adult caregivers in their lives.



### SUPPORT LEARNING AND

**ADAPTABILITY:** Partners must be equipped to make programmatic, organizational, and systems changes

in response to environmental changes and new data. BOOST launched early in 2020—at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet with resilience, a bend toward learning and adaptability, and a commitment to families, BOOST partners continued to lean into each other's curiosities, support shared learning, and apply flexibility and adaptability to continue serving families.



### ELEVATE PARTICIPANT VOICES:

Partnerships must be designed and operated based on the needs and goals that participants and families are communicating to them. Both partners should use intentional processes and practices in their engagement with clients to understand, through a racial equity lens, who their students are, what is needed for families to achieve success, and how their specific role in the partnership can support multigenerational family economic success. The practice of listening to participants should be ongoing and institutionalized to elevate their voices effectively. For example, direct service staff members should be empowered to share what they are hearing from participants at decision-making tables, and/or participants themselves should have a seat at those tables. Those staff members should also participate in periodic training on topics such as racial equity and cultural competence and collaborate with one another to foster a sense of belonging among clients and students.<sup>16</sup>

## Policies for Community Colleges

Leaders at community college BOOST partners are taking advantage of institutional, state, and federal policies to provide comprehensive, affordable education pathways as well as stronger and more holistic supports for students, especially student parents. To effect these changes, they are also using expertise and resources from their human services partners. Below, we share insights from BOOST sites regarding how community colleges can lean into their core strengths and, by extension, work more effectively with their human services nonprofit partners to support the goals and dreams of families. Note that across these policies and practices, high-level commitment is critical; directors or vice presidents within student services and workforce development programs typically drive colleges' efforts.

As one human services partner points out:

**“[I] can’t stress enough how important it was that the leadership at [the local college] was onboard—if they hadn’t responded, [our work] never would have come together.”**

Insights from BOOST sites suggest that community colleges should take the following actions:



### **Understand the populations you are serving to better coordinate services and supports.**

Knowing whether a student has family responsibilities is an important first step in helping to identify and coordinate supports and resources to improve student success. Colleges have made progress in examining disaggregated data to identify equity gaps, but few colleges track whether students have caregiving responsibilities. Collecting this data would enable colleges to better assess the unique experiences of students with caregiving responsibilities and whether those experiences vary by race or gender. Some BOOST sites have begun collecting this information from all of their students.

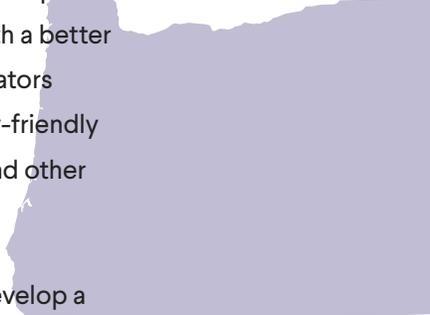


Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) in Green Bay, Wisconsin, revised its registration systems to include questions about students' parental status, number of children, and the children's ages. These data support its partnership with Forward Service Corporation (FSC) by making it easier to identify shared students/clients and refer parents to FSC if they are not already connected with the organization. The partnership's BOOST evaluator has also surveyed the student parents to understand what supports they may need; these data have also been disaggregated by race and ethnicity. This type of information helps the partnership recognize whether certain populations need different, specific supports or whether there are systemic barriers preventing some populations from accessing services. For example, the partners found that students with younger children have difficulty finding openings at child care facilities.



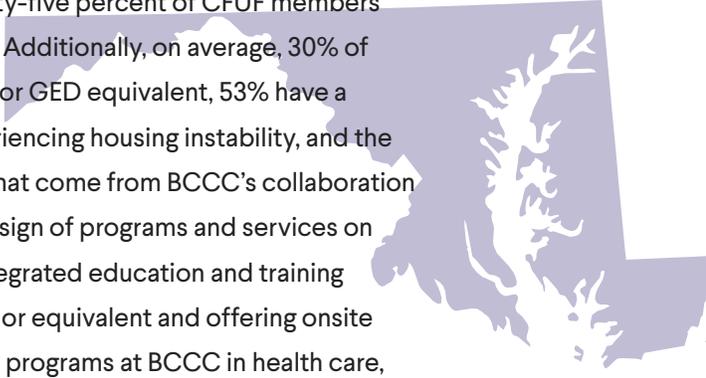
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In 2021, Oregon enacted [Senate Bill 564](#), allowing students to identify whether they are parents or guardians on forms that are used to collect demographic information annually at public postsecondary education institutions, including community colleges.<sup>17</sup> The language was crafted to include not only biological parents but also custodial grandparents, stepparents, sibling caregivers, and others caring for children. This policy shift will provide BOOST partner Portland Community College and other colleges in Oregon with a better lens into this student population. The information, as well as the benefits navigators described later in this brief, will allow the college to provide specialized, family-friendly resources and better align with its human services partner around child care and other related services.



OREGON

Beyond quantitative data, colleges can use their community partnerships to develop a more holistic understanding of their students. In Maryland, Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) invited the CEO of its partner, the Center for Urban Families (CFUF), to serve on the strategic advisory committee. Through this relationship, BCCC gained a stronger understanding of the population and neighborhoods it serves, including how redlining and historic underinvestment in predominantly Black neighborhoods continue to affect families. CFUF's members reflect the community that BCCC seeks to engage in its academic and workforce programs. Ninety-five percent of CFUF members identify as African American or Black and 71% as male. Additionally, on average, 30% of CFUF members do not possess a high school diploma or GED equivalent, 53% have a misdemeanor and/or felony conviction, 58% are experiencing housing instability, and the vast majority access income assistance. The insights that come from BCCC's collaboration with CFUF leadership enable it to better center the design of programs and services on students and their families, including offering more integrated education and training programs for learners without a high school credential or equivalent and offering onsite GED classes at CFUF that lead into springboard career programs at BCCC in health care, cybersecurity, and logistics.



MARYLAND



## **Create data-sharing agreements with partners.**

Community colleges and human services nonprofits at BOOST sites are establishing data-sharing agreements to better coordinate and track services for shared clients/students and to facilitate connections to resources such as child care assistance and transportation. Importantly, creating the agreement is critical but not sufficient—colleges must implement a strong coaching model, conduct cross-organization staff training, and offer support services either on campus or through warm handoffs and strong referrals with relevant nonprofits.

NWTC advocated for increased data sharing and transparency with its human services nonprofit partner to better track, assess, and support families. Limited shared access through NTWC's early-alert and advising system allows nonprofit partner FSC to assist in providing support and guidance to clients who are enrolled in postsecondary education. The system lets FSC case managers celebrate academic successes and determine whether a client is struggling in a class and possibly in need of additional support services. Additionally, NWTC has a system that tracks referrals to other nonprofits in Green Bay and can see whether and how students are accessing those services.

BCCC and CFUF formalized an expanded partnership memorandum of understanding that includes a data use agreement. BCCC regularly provides reports from its systems on enrolled CFUF members' attendance, class performance, participation in clinicals, certification status, and course completions, among other metrics. This allows the partners to consistently analyze and evaluate how well students are doing and see where extra support may be needed. The college is also in the process of providing assigned CFUF staff members with direct access to its course management system.



## **Ensure that there are dedicated funding, staff resources, and structures that allow students to easily access state and federal funding to meet their needs beyond tuition and receive holistic supports.**

College navigators and success coaches who can offer high-touch advising supports to students should be considered among those investments. For students who are not already being served by a human services nonprofit, the people in these roles can serve as trusted connectors to internal and external resources. Multiple randomized controlled trials have shown that providing students with comprehensive supports—someone in a coach, case manager, or similar role—increases persistence and completion rates in both workforce development and postsecondary degree programs. Studies also indicate that this type of

proactive support can play a role in closing racial equity gaps in persistence and completion.<sup>18</sup> At many BOOST sites, these coaches work in collaboration with human services nonprofits to use their expertise around access to benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

In Hartford, Connecticut, a community college staff member performs intake interviews with SNAP-eligible clients to understand what other supports they may need, such as transportation services and access to child care. The state has a SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) coordinator at every community college, which means that students eligible for the benefit are more likely to access it. SNAP E&T coordinators also help eligible students use SNAP E&T funds to pay for workforce training. In Hartford, the BOOST partnership takes this one step further. Staff members from the Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Hartford and Capital Community College host “circles of support” so that groups of student parents can learn about the range of supports the organizations offer that can advance their success. Child care is provided for the student parents during these sessions.

Hiring staff members to connect students to public benefits is not part of most traditional higher education funding models. Oregon’s [HB 2835](#) is recent legislation that enables public higher education to better support students.<sup>19</sup> It requires each public university and community college in the state to have dedicated benefits navigators to help students access resources such as food and housing assistance.<sup>20</sup> As a result, Portland Community College has been able to hire additional staff members to comprehensively support students.

## INVESTING IN STAFF CAPACITY

Many BOOST sites offer cross-training between the community college and human services nonprofit to ensure that they are taking a similar, supportive approach to partnering with student parents. For example, at the Syracuse, New York, BOOST site, about 25 people across both organizations have been trained in EMPATH’s [Mobility Mentoring](#) model, which is defined as “the professional practice of partnering with participants so that over time they may acquire the resources, skills, and sustained behavior changes necessary to attain and preserve their economic independence.” In Green Bay, 86 people have been trained on the Transition To Success model, a framework that both partners have used to inform the practices described throughout this brief. Both the Green Bay and Queens BOOST sites have offered cross-training on racial equity in workforce development to establish a common language and develop shared approaches to dismantling institutional and systemic racism in their communities.



## Create smooth pathways that provide foundational education skills, recognize prior learning, offer short-term credentials, and connect students to labor market opportunities.

These pathway approaches are critical for serving learners who possess rich life and professional experience but may be working parents who need flexible models in order to participate in postsecondary education; immigrants who need to learn English while pursuing education; or those who need additional foundational skill development because they come from neighborhoods that have experienced historical disinvestment in education. Integrated foundational learning, such as GED courses and English classes, ensures that pathways meet students where they are. Credit for prior learning accelerates adult students in advancing toward the completion of a degree or credential. In addition, short-term credentials aligned to local labor markets give students the flexibility to earn a credential quickly while being on a path to further credentials. Human services nonprofits are valuable partners in creating these pathways because they understand the context of their clients' lives and the resources they may need to improve their economic security through longer-term pathways. Through BOOST, the partners examined the long-term economic success potential of different pathways, including through the lens of disrupting historical occupational segregation and other policies that can exacerbate racial achievement gaps.

In the Queens borough of New York City, LaGuardia Community College and Commonpoint Queens worked together to address the ways in which the workforce system's traditional approach to career pathway entry has affected racial equity. The partnership has supported a diverse group of English learners in successfully completing a community health worker training and internship program, leading to jobs in the community health field. The traditional training model would have limited immigrant communities' access because of the college's English proficiency requirements. LaGuardia was able to change testing requirements and accept non-U.S. high school diplomas for its Bilingual Community Health Worker Certificate Training Program. This program has provided local health care organizations with talent from diverse backgrounds who speak the languages of their patients and understand their cultures and backgrounds.<sup>21</sup> This work has not only helped remove barriers to family economic success for their specific target population but has also helped improve the cultural competence of the healthcare workforce and access to health care within the same immigrant communities. Building on this success, LaGuardia hired a community outreach liaison in its newly launched Office for Credit for Prior Learning. This individual works with community-based organizations on potential articulation to credit for the college's training programs and engagement of alumni of noncredit programs to enroll in its credit-bearing programs.<sup>22</sup>

In Syracuse, New York, the BOOST site partners realized that many of the parents of children participating in the Head Start program whom they sought to enroll in college coursework needed to first earn a high school equivalency diploma. This led to an expansion of the partnership. People's Equal Action and Community Effort (PEACE), Inc., has worked on securing onsite space at its Westside Family Resource Center for GED instruction. It is also working with both the State University of New York's (SUNY) Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) and the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison Counties Board of Continuing Education Services (OCM BOCES) to conduct online GED reviews and in-person, onsite GED classes. PEACE, Inc., staff members have also met with SUNY EOC counselors about their GED, certificate, and pre-apprenticeship programs and are working on establishing information release agreements that would allow PEACE, Inc., to share case notes about their shared clients. By adding these new partners, the BOOST initiative in Syracuse is expanding access to career pathways that will help families achieve their goals.

In Hartford, BOOST partners collaborate to identify credentialing programs aligned with careers that support living wages. Capital Community College provides training in health care, trades/manufacturing, and IT. Employer-sponsored programs for the Asplundh Utility Arborist Trainee Program and the Eversource Lineworker Certificate Program are also available to BOOST participants. The college also supports academic success by providing pretraining workshops and embedded tutors within the courses. Additional resources available at the college include access to the Equity Center, which provides access to tutoring, disability services, and career development services.

In Green Bay, NWTC leaders and instructors reviewed the curriculum for three of FSC's professional certificate programs and worked to find classes that would fit with NWTC's credential-bearing programs. This led to a five-year articulation agreement that allows potential NWTC students to receive free college credit before their enrollment. This type of agreement to grant credit for prior learning enables learners to earn college credit for education and training received after January 1, 2019 from trusted external providers or on-the-job training. The articulation agreement provides an incentive for FSC clients to continue their education and pursue credentials that lead to greater family economic success.



NEW YORK



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## Policies for Human Services Nonprofits

Human services nonprofits work across multiple systems and funding streams and therefore can implement institutional policies to ensure that their activities support the whole family. This is one way human services nonprofits apply the 2Gen principle “align and link systems and funding streams.” This means the human services nonprofit, working in partnership with families, can identify the range of supports a family may need, including housing, transportation, food, and cash assistance—supports most community colleges cannot provide in a sustained way. Through the 2Gen approach, human services nonprofits connect these services to support not just family stability but family economic success, which includes focusing on postsecondary and employment pathways and ensuring equity within the delivery of services and coaching. Human services nonprofits can help drive innovation, assess new models and practices, and scale them so they can continue to meet the needs of families and support their economic success in partnership with community colleges.

More specifically, insights from BOOST sites suggest that human services nonprofits should take the following actions:



### **Promote outcomes for children and their parents through a family-focused infrastructure that aligns programs, funding streams, and staff practices to support families in a holistic way.**

For human services nonprofits, especially those that operate multiple programs, this means aligning programs, funding streams, and staff practices to support families in a holistic way. Moreover, it requires that they understand the goals of each family member and the family as a whole and the specific resources that may be needed to achieve their goals. The result is a unique package of supports for each family that, through partnerships with community colleges, addresses parents' educational and career goals.



In Hartford, Catholic Charities connects multiple programs to support children and their parents. The state of Connecticut has a home visiting program for new mothers; through this program, Catholic Charities visits new mothers, often while they're still in the hospital, to support parents and their babies. Families in the home-visiting program are often enrolled in Head Start and then the BOOST program. Combined, these programs support the early development of babies and toddlers, parent-child interactions, and parent educational and career outcomes.

Both Albina Head Start in Portland, Oregon, and PEACE, Inc.'s Head Start program in Syracuse [go beyond](#) supporting parents' engagement with their children.<sup>23</sup> At both sites, family workers partner with parents to identify their educational and career goals and connect them with partners, such as a community college or adult education providers, that can help them achieve those goals.



### **Strengthen and share practices that center the voices of families and support them in identifying and achieving their social and economic advancement dream.**

Human services nonprofits partner with families every day to support them in identifying and achieving their dreams. As a result, they have deep knowledge about the experiences of their clients. They develop feedback loops that enable families to inform changes to policies and practices that are often rooted in systemic racism. Through this expertise, human services nonprofits can support community college partners to shift their policies and practices to better serve families' needs.

CFUF uses [EMPath's Mobility Mentoring](#) model to understand and address the holistic needs of the families it partners with, including building their economic assets. CFUF stands at the front line of addressing some of Baltimore's most pressing issues, including poverty, unemployment, father absence, and family disintegration.<sup>24</sup> It supports noncustodial fathers in providing financial and emotional support to their children, creates opportunities for economic and financial security through work, and provides access to other key interventions and supportive services.<sup>25</sup> CFUF also collaborates with policy and practice changemakers to advocate for policies that effectively support families with low incomes and, specifically, Black fathers who have been systemically separated from their children.

Catholic Charities has numerous formal and informal practices in place to listen to and respond to families. For example, it uses focus groups and survey cohorts to understand people’s experiences in specific credential programs. Family navigators and coaches also listen to families to learn about their specific needs. More importantly, Catholic Charities staff members use this information to improve the organization’s programs. For example, BOOST Hartford decided to expand its career pathways options by providing individualized access to educational pathways instead of running cohorts in just one or two pathways. Additionally, Capital Community College collaborated with the University of Connecticut to study the benefits of child care stipends for college students. As a result of that research, Capital now provides stipends directly to students based on the number of children in the family as an additional benefit. Similarly, Catholic Charities had been providing vouchers for child care centers, but after families described the challenges this caused, it instead began offering vouchers for home-based care—an option that families find more accessible and feel more comfortable with.

In Syracuse, PEACE, Inc., regularly surveys families to identify any needed programmatic adjustments. Responses to survey questions about educational needs are shared with its training partners (Onondaga Community College, OCM BOCES, and SUNY EOC), which are now working together to clarify cross-institutional educational pathways. Additionally, PEACE, Inc., co-leads a group of direct service nonprofits to address the specific barriers and challenges identified by case managers. Together, these various organizations can work to address specific barriers for families in their communities and can advocate for changes at the systems level.





## Invest in establishing family-focused data systems to track and understand how access to services and activities affects families.

Human services nonprofits can be very large, serving hundreds or even thousands of families throughout the year. While staff members play an important role in connecting families to services, a centralized system can help ensure that adults and children receive comprehensive and cohesive services. Because they often serve both children and adults, human services nonprofits can play a vital role in tracking and understanding how access to services and activities affects families. Such data can also identify population-level trends and, when disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other demographic details, can help these organizations identify equity gaps.

At Commonpoint Queens, a new tracking system links children to their parents. While it is in the early stages of implementation, it has the potential to ensure that the thousands of families Commonpoint Queens works with can be connected to the full range of supports offered by the nonprofit.

FSC uses a system called Care Network that enables staff members to make internal referrals, coordinate data, share case notes, and in some cases use existing data for eligibility screening. This builds on FSC's practice of hosting "triangle meetings," in which families that access multiple programs can simultaneously meet with staff members from across those programs. In addition to facilitating access to supports and reducing barriers for individual families, the data system can be used to analyze program use and outcomes to understand where there might be inequities in service delivery.

The Syracuse BOOST site tailors its resources to specific age groups by tracking the number of children in each family and their ages in its system, which helps it to implement 2Gen practices more intentionally.



## Maximize resources for families, such as by blending and braiding funding with community college partners.

Human services nonprofits and community colleges can access numerous state and federal funding opportunities and use them to support whole families rather than addressing parents' and their children's needs separately. For example, human services nonprofits involved in the BOOST initiative access funds through TANF, SNAP, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Head Start, Community Services Block Grants (CSBGs), and state funds that support workforce development, early childhood development, K-12 tutoring, mentoring, housing, and transportation. Community colleges can also access funds that provide some of the same supports, including Pell Grants to support the cost of education. Using all these resources to support families can be a carefully crafted puzzle.

States' adoption of [innovative approaches to use SNAP E&T funding](#) is an important means of helping students succeed.<sup>26</sup> At the local level, the Hartford BOOST partnership ensures that families have access to the full range of resources available to them. Family support specialists at Catholic Charities assess people's eligibility for SNAP benefits and family-supporting funding to provide services such as transportation and emergency supports. They then work with their partners at Capital Community College to match clients with SNAP E&T and WIOA funding that can cover the cost of postsecondary education. To further support families, Connecticut State Colleges & Universities funds child care stipends for students who are enrolled in SNAP.

The BOOST partnership has created a strong foundation for Commonpoint Queens to pursue new funding streams in collaboration with LaGuardia Community College. For example, LaGuardia, along with Hostos Community College, a City University of New York institution, launched the NYC Accelerated Workforce Recovery Hub in January 2022 to train unemployed and underemployed workers for in-demand jobs. Drawing on lessons learned from BOOST, the college incorporated community partnerships into the design of the initiative and used them to expand its work with Commonpoint Queens, which will recruit students for the training programs and provide ongoing support to participants. The partners also collaborated to secure a Health Resources and Services Administration grant to extend the Bilingual Community Health Worker Certificate Training Program to additional cohorts.



## Expand the long-term impact of internal workforce development services through close collaboration with community colleges and other local workforce development partners.

Many human services nonprofits offer workforce development services, such as career counseling or short-term training programs that provide clients with the opportunity to earn the first credential on a longer-term career pathway. By working with community college partners, clients can then continue their education beyond the initial credential. This is important for advancing equitable family economic success, given that many community college programs lead to higher-wage jobs than the short-term training programs offered in many communities of color located in low-income areas. BOOST partnerships are structured to maximize the unique assets each partner can bring to the pathway, thus providing a more seamless and integrated experience for clients.

Through its partnership with LaGuardia Community College, Commonpoint Queens provides participants in the Bilingual Community Health Worker Certificate Training Program with the opportunity to earn college credits. Together, the partners are able to extend access to the program for English learners who otherwise would have limited access to training and work-based learning opportunities. The program offers a sequential and integrated bridge model that combines English classes with training and internships. The partners collaborate to provide contextualized English support for multilingual participants, evening classes for adult students, and access to college supportive services, including benefits counseling, a food pantry, mental health counseling, and on-campus child care. Through its employer relationships and other community partnerships, Commonpoint Queens is able to connect participants to services, internships, and jobs; it also recognizes that partnering with LaGuardia expands opportunities for its clients. Monthly partnership meetings to assess progress, examine data, and improve program quality based on employer and student feedback are a critical success factor.

CFUF added an education specialist to its team to help members navigate the college environment and to ensure that historically underrepresented populations have equitable access to community colleges. This education specialist walks members through the process of registering for classes, meeting prerequisite requirements, and gathering needed supplies. They also serve as a liaison between CFUF and BCCC and split their time between being onsite at CFUF and BCCC. BCCC also keeps this person up to date on CFUF members' class performance and enrollment and whether there are any issues with course completion. Staff members from CFUF and BCCC continue to meet weekly to troubleshoot challenges, discuss progress, and plan for the future.

## 03.

# Conclusion

The goals of BOOST are ambitious and complex—building on existing partnership strengths to meet and work with whole families where they are and where they dream. While the partners described in this brief have just begun a long-term journey to ensure that families experience more equitable and aligned systems, they hold tremendous potential for systemic transformation. Over three years, BOOST partners built their capacity to collaborate, deepened their understanding of the 2Gen approach and racial equity, and made organizational and systemic changes that will have a lasting impact on families. Our hope is that the policies and practices shared in this brief spark a desire among community colleges and human services nonprofits to consider how partners, working together with families, can support more just, equitable, and thriving communities.

As your organization examines how community partnerships and the policies you pursue can contribute to advancing multigenerational family economic success, consider these questions to shape partnerships rooted in the foundational tenets of BOOST:



**Partnership:** How do we ensure that we build a partnership that reinforces and furthers our common goals and those of the families we work with? What mechanisms are in place to keep the partnership on track, such as detailed memoranda of understanding, regular meetings, or shared training?



**Learning:** How can we instill a culture of continuous learning and adaptability across our organizations? What policies and practices ensure that participants and students inform our efforts?



**Sustainability:** How do we build a sustainable partnership grounded in systemic change that lives on beyond the individuals currently involved?

## Reflection questions for community colleges:

**Lifetime and springboard jobs:** How can we build career pathways that create opportunities for advancement rather than programs leading to static jobs? How do we account for the real experience of student parents—their wages and their career trajectories—during career coaching?

**2Gen:** Do we track student parents? If not, what systems might need to be put in place to identify student parents systemically? What do we do, or will we do, with the information when we have it?

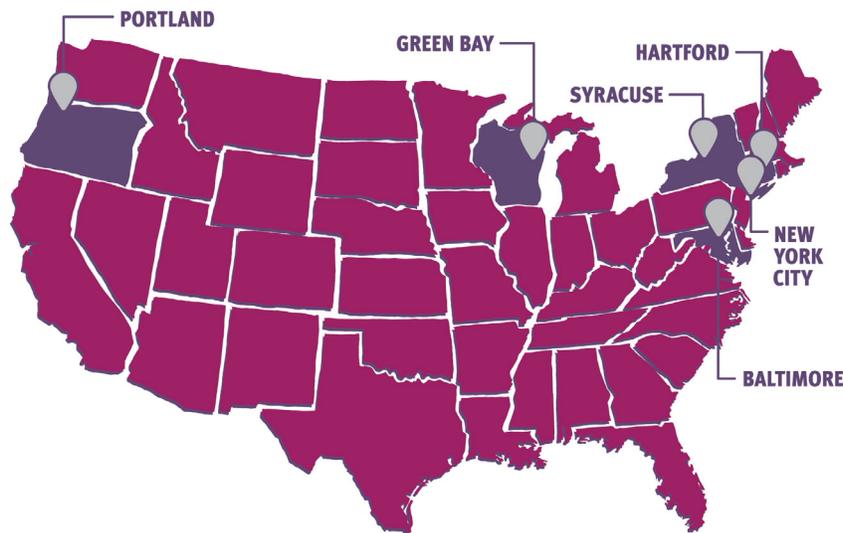
**Racial equity:** What institutional policies and practices support students who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color and students who may have barriers to success? How do we disaggregate data and investigate equity gaps?

## Reflection questions for human services nonprofits:

**2Gen:** How do we support children and their adult caregivers simultaneously? What outcomes do we track for children and adults, as well as for families as a whole?

**Racial equity:** What organizational policies and practices support participants who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color and address disproportionality in service delivery and outcomes? How have we explored the root causes and history of inequities within our community and the programs our organization operates?

For more information on BOOST, visit <https://kresge.org/initiative/boost/>.



# Use of ARPA and CARES Act Funds Among BOOST Sites

Some BOOST sites were able to apply resources that came from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to augment or expand their BOOST efforts.

## BOOST PARTNERSHIP

Baltimore

## USE OF ARPA FUNDS

In 2022, CFUF entered into an agreement with the Mayor's Office of Employment Development to provide occupational skills training to residents who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through its new Train Up initiative. The funding for this program was made available through a state ARPA grant. As recipients of some of these funds, CFUF and BCCC expanded their agreement, building on the relationship already established under the Baltimore BOOST program. The ARPA dollars have allowed CFUF to offer more training programs to members through BCCC. Some of the funds it received support staff salaries, including those of case managers. However, funding sources for direct member supports are clearly defined and depend on whether a member is going through BOOST or the Train Up program.

Green Bay

NWTC set aside funds for students affected by COVID-19; with a staff referral, students were eligible to receive a \$600 stipend per semester. As of spring 2023, the college was still disbursing funds to meet students' ongoing needs. ARPA funds also supported child care assistance for students in need, and enrolled students were offered additional funding based on the number of credits they were enrolled in.

Syracuse

As the Community Action Agency for Onondaga County, PEACE, Inc., received a substantial one-time federal CSBG through the CARES Act. PEACE, Inc., used CARES Act CSBG supplemental funds to support trauma-informed and 2Gen training for staff members and to support fatherhood and parent cohort groups coming out of the pandemic. A number of parents in the Head Start and family service cohorts have been successfully recruited and enrolled into GED and short-term certificate programs.

# Endnotes

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