



Expanding Opportunities in American Cities by Advancing Intergenerational Economic Success

The Human Services Program seeks to expand opportunities and equity within American cities by employing a systems approach to advance intergenerational economic success through the transformation of the social safety net and the establishment of a Human Rights Economy.

The efforts of the Human Services Program are rooted in power sharing, collaboration, co-learning, and co-creation with families, communities, and organizations across various sectors.

We uphold a strengths-based perspective, founded on the conviction that individuals are resilient, inherently capable, and possess self-agency. Central to our strategy is a two-generation approach, as articulated by Ascend at the Aspen Institute. This approach emphasizes intergenerational family prosperity and well-being by deliberately focusing on the success of both children and the adults in their lives simultaneously.

We promote policy and practice solutions through person-centered systems change, which begins with involving families as strategic partners in recognizing how structural barriers and practices disrupt the daily lives of families and hinder economic success, including the effects of historically inequitable systems that have marginalized indigenous peoples and communities of color.

The public human services sector serves as the primary support system for working families with low incomes. Our goal is to redesign systems to intentionally assist families in achieving stability through both cash and non-cash assistance. Our initiatives in this domain also encompass related public sectors (e.g., mayors, health, labor, and education).

To achieve economic success for families across generations, we concentrate our grant-making efforts on nurturing the upcoming generation of public and nonprofit human services organizations, creating localized opportunity ecosystems, and formulating supportive policies in conjunction with strong field-building initiatives.

Fostering the Next Generation of Human Services

To foster the next generation of human service organizations, with focus on public and nonprofit community-serving organizations who committed to ensuring all efforts are informed directly by the lived experience and expertise of families and communities.

These partners are dedicated to strength-based values, power sharing, and authentic engagement and partnership with families and communities. They are outcomes and data driven and have an intentional focus on a two-generation approach, person centered systems and policy change, equity and justice.



Our NextGen partners participate in various forms of engagement, including formal learning programs, learning and action communities, communities of practice, and demonstration projects for pilots.

Place-Based Opportunity Ecosystems

Local community, place-based opportunity ecosystems-made up of public and nonprofit organizations working across systems such as human services, early childhood, education and health-are integral to partnering with families to achieve intergenerational economic success.

Understanding local context is important. Intentionally engaging community residents and respecting and supporting community as the narrators of their stories is essential in place-based work. A grasp of the history of how systemic and structural inequity manifests in place is critical to identifying solutions. Additionally, direct engagement and meaningful partnerships with the local and state public sector are necessary to transform the social safety net and create enabling conditions to ensure families experience economic success.



Cross-Cutting Investments: Developing Supportive Public Policy and Field Building

Through our place-based opportunity ecosystems and NextGen initiatives, we utilize insights gained regarding the structural obstacles encountered by families to promote policy solutions, with a Human Rights Economy being paramount among these solutions. We regard families and communities as authorities on the future they aspire to create for themselves. Consequently, we emphasize the importance of involving families as agents of change in the development of policy solutions and the support of field building.

A Human Rights Economy, as articulated by the Institute for the Study of Race, Power, and Political Economies at The New School, is fundamental to our policy framework and prioritizes the well-being, needs, and rights of individuals and communities over mere profit-driven interests. By investing in people, we can cultivate an economy that ensures economic policies and practices foster social justice, equality, and dignity. We establish an economy that actively addresses and reduces discriminatory structures. We secure economic assurances that redirect resources to individuals and communities in greatest need. We create an inclusive and thriving economy that is oriented towards long-term planning. We seek policy and field building initiatives that emphasize the two-generation approach and its principles, along with other critical enablers that can transform the social safety net and advance a Human Rights Economy.

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