

# 2GEN COLLABORATIVE TOOLKIT:

## A PLACE-BASED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES



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# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE 2GEN APPROACH

For more than a decade, Ascend at the Aspen Institute has catalyzed a modern [two-generation \(2Gen\) approach](#) to drive better outcomes for children and families in low-income households and communities.

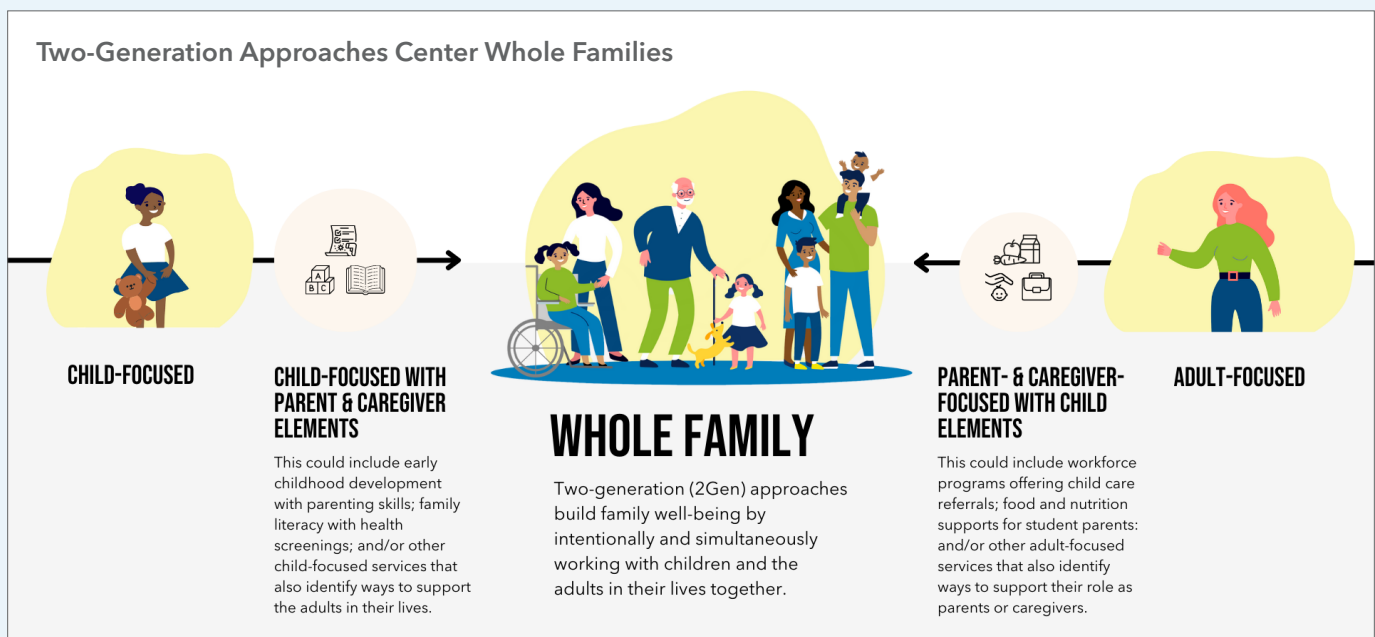
2Gen approaches build family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives together. 2Gen approaches center the whole family to create a legacy of educational success and economic prosperity that passes from one generation to the next. 2Gen approaches do not focus exclusively on either a child's development or an adult's needs, because their well-being is interconnected and interdependent. 2Gen approaches aim to integrate services and supports to move the whole family forward, benefiting both the child and the adult(s) in their lives.

There are many examples of emerging and sustained efforts to implement 2Gen approaches systematically at the local, state, and federal levels. Partnerships are the cornerstone of this ongoing work; Ascend engages with a multitude of organizations, public officials, and, of course, parents, to inform and advance policies and services to better support families.

## BACKGROUND ON ASCEND'S PLACE-BASED WORK

Ascend has worked with several cities, counties, and states to integrate and deepen 2Gen approaches. In 2017, Ascend published the [Colorado Guide to 2Gen](#), which outlined objectives and opportunities for the state to expand its 2Gen efforts. The report also included an Action Plan — a tool for the state to track, measure, and achieve its 2Gen strategies. The Colorado Guide to 2Gen provided an important roadmap for community, county, and state leaders to expand 2Gen efforts around data collection, funding, centering family voice, communications, and policy and practices. Implementing the guide has resulted in increased access to affordable child care for families with low incomes; increased alignment among staff managing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and child care funding streams within the [Colorado Department of Human Services](#); improved community supports; and increased employer awareness and capacity to support parents with low incomes.

In 2021, Ascend received funding from the [Conrad N. Hilton Foundation](#) to deepen understanding about the experiences of young adult parents (18-24) in Los Angeles County and New Mexico. With a focus on Hilton's priority places for investments, Ascend set forth





to develop a place-based approach to advancing 2Gen approaches in the county and state. This collaboration resulted in two reports — [Meeting Young Parents Where They Dream: A Collaborative Framework for a 2Gen Approach in LA County](#) and [Meeting Young Parents Where They Dream: A Collaborative Framework for a 2Gen Approach in New Mexico](#) — that deepened understanding about the ways these parents navigate public systems so that systems leaders can better meet their needs and the aspirations they have for themselves and their children.

The convenings in Los Angeles County and New Mexico surfaced critical opportunities and challenges, which in turn informed the development of the Collaborative Frameworks and Plans of Action for each place. The Collaborative Frameworks are a vehicle for highlighting practices and policies aligned with a 2Gen approach, showcasing the impact of forging connections between organizations and state systems, and offering recommendations across sectors and at all levels. Ultimately, the Collaborative Framework and Plan of Action reports spark the collective imagination for what a 2Gen approach can look like and mean for families and communities. These tools are designed to fuel action to better serve young parents and their children across services and systems.

Ascend gained significant insights through this work in Los Angeles County and New Mexico, and we received multiple requests to unpack how the Collaborative Frameworks came about. We were asked to make our process more transparent and accessible so place-based 2Gen collaboration can be adopted and implemented more effectively in other communities. In response, we developed this Toolkit with the following goals:

- Outline key components of collaborative work rooted in place to advance a 2Gen approach.
- Demonstrate how these key components can be led by organizations in community.
- Identify entry points for organizations to start collaborating and offer tangible resources and examples to support doing so.



Ascend Parent Advisor Yarely Quintana-Chavez at Ascending Together, a convening of young families at Tamaya Resort, at Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico, May 11, 2023. Photo by David Lienemann for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## PURPOSE & VISION FOR A 2GEN COLLABORATIVE TOOLKIT

Through this collaboration and more than a decade of working with community leaders from across the country, we have identified five (5) key steps toward advancing 2Gen approaches and creating intergenerational mobility for young families:

1. Develop a demographic analysis to identify the racial, gender, economic, social, political, and educational backgrounds of young families.
2. Develop a landscape analysis of programs and policies supporting young families to increase understanding about the contexts in which many families live.
3. Develop a planning committee of community leaders across sectors to guide outreach, provide feedback, and identify gaps in knowledge and supports. Ascend's list of [Network Partners](#) can provide a starting point for outreach in your community.
4. Develop a cohort of Parent Advisors. Planning committee members are instrumental in engaging and nominating cohorts of local Parent Advisors to offer insight and feedback, as well as share their lived experiences to inform 2Gen work.
5. Develop and launch place-based convenings to bring together practitioners, parents, and policymakers in one place. Parent Advisors and planning committee leaders can co-design and support these convenings with key speaking roles.





Ascending Together, a convening of young families at Tamaya Resort, at Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico, May 11, 2023.  
Photo by David Lienemann for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This Toolkit is for mid-level and senior leaders at nonprofit, philanthropic, and/or public organizations seeking to strengthen a regional or place-based 2Gen approach. Recognizing that the essence of a Collaborative Framework is engagement and partnership across various sectors, there is also an emphasis on including the recommendations and expertise shared by parents and family voices – one of Ascend’s [five guiding principles](#) of 2Gen.

## HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Our hope is to mobilize 2Gen approaches led by community-based experts and partners and strengthen outcomes for whole families. This Toolkit includes sections on 1) Conducting a Landscape Analysis; 2) Identifying Partners; 3) Planning a Convening; and 4) Developing a Collaborative Framework and Plan of Action; and 5) Sustaining 2Gen Collaborations. Each section is broken down into considerations, opportunities, and next steps.

## KEY CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPING A COLLABORATIVE TOOLKIT: A COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACH

As Ascend’s Founder and Executive Director Anne Mosle often says, “Change happens at the pace of trust.” We recognize the importance of relationships and collaboration for moving the work forward. With this in mind, it is critical to have trusted community partners in place, particularly when working in an unfamiliar context. This is why we consulted and partnered with local organizations and community members in LA County and New Mexico when designing collaborative efforts for 2Gen approaches.

2Gen approaches and solutions to economic mobility are contextual. At Ascend, we believe community leaders and families hold expertise on solutions. An important step in conducting this work is to reflect on position and power dynamics. The organization that will host and/or manage this work (the “anchor partner”) holds significant power in its design and implementation. Accountability and central coordination are critical when designing a convening that brings together multiple partners.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEADING PLACE-BASED WORK

Who will “hold” the work before, during, and after the convening? In shifting power to create a more inclusive and equitable process, organization leaders should consider some key criteria for ensuring an effective, results-oriented, equity-centered strategy that can lead to better outcomes for families. These strategies align to the [five principles for 2Gen action](#):



### Explicit outcomes rooted in family strengths

Ensure that the outcomes you are seeking from this work reflect and are informed by the resilience and strengths of families.



### Consider equity

Utilizing an equity lens for a 2Gen convening must be a condition that results in bringing together new and established partners to look critically and creatively at how a community addresses intergenerational opportunity. How is a racial, gender, and/or economic equity lens being applied to your convening design, speaker and participant lists, and outreach? What are the demographics of the community, and how will the voices of those most impacted by ideas generated at the convening be heard? What is the anchor partner’s history and journey in the context of equity, and how will they be addressed?



### Parent participation

It is important to consider ways to engage parents in the design of convenings, tapping community-based partners to support parents in giving their time and perspective to the anchor partner. A stipend to compensate parents for their expertise and to cover their time, potentially lost wages, and child care costs is also critical, as is ensuring that multiple parents are invited to participate.



### Cross-sector engagement

A key tenet of 2Gen approaches is that they transcend disciplines, industries, and sectors by addressing the needs and strengths of the whole family. Similarly, a convening designed to identify and support the growth of these approaches in a community should include the partners who reflect their potential implementation.



### Evaluation and assessment strategy

As the 2Gen field continues to grow and deepen, proof points that indicate the efficacy of these approaches are critical. The convening assessment should align with the anchor partner’s overall measures of success for their 2Gen lens and/or approach.



Participant of a CHIME convening mapping social capital. CHIME is an initiative of Accelerator Community Partner FamilyAid in Boston, MA. Photo by Family Aid ©

## STEP I: CONDUCT A LANDSCAPE AND DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In launching the 2Gen place-based work that informs this Toolkit, Ascend identified key partners to conduct a landscape analysis<sup>1</sup> to explore the policies and practices, as well as the gaps and roadblocks, that exist for young families in need of resources.

In LA County, we launched the landscape analysis with a mapping of multiple county departments and community-based organizations that serve young parents. We followed up on this search by interviewing more than 40 key informants to establish a baseline of opportunities available to young families, including programs, philanthropies, systems, and policies.

For the LA County demographic analysis,<sup>2</sup> customized tabulations of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample files were analyzed to create a demographic profile of young families led by parents between ages 18-24. The ACS is a continuous survey designed to collect detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing information about the nation's population. It is considered the gold standard for such information and is widely used by government agencies, private companies, and researchers for analysis, planning, programs, and resource allocation.

In New Mexico, the landscape analysis was informed by interviews with a small group of community leaders representing philanthropy, government, and the private sector, as well as 12 focus group sessions over a six-month period with a total of 20 young parents who were compensated for their expertise and time.

Additionally, Ascend worked with [New Mexico Voices for Children](#) to compile a demographic analysis of young families in the state based on IPUMS USA cross-tabulations using the U.S. Census Bureau's 5-Year ACS data for 2016 to 2020. The analysis showcased the demographic profile of New Mexico's approximately 23,306 young parents.

<sup>1</sup> Process of identifying the key players in a field, sector or geography and classifying them by relevant characteristics to help nonprofits understand the broader context in which they are operating, and design their strategy accordingly to maximize their impact. (*Bridgespan*, 2016)

<sup>2</sup> The study of a population-based on factors such as age, race, and sex. Demographic data refers to socioeconomic information expressed statistically, including employment, education, income, marriage rates, birth and death rates, and more. (*Investopedia*, 2024)



## CONSIDERATIONS

Partnerships were critical to obtaining this data and informing our work in each place; however, the process of data collection was not without its challenges.

There were several limitations to collecting data, particularly for young parents (18-24) and their children. One challenge was the data source itself — because profiles in ACS are based on a survey, they are statistical estimates subject to sampling errors. Related to sampling, incomplete analyses were a challenge; for example, many young parents live with their own caregivers, which is not always reflected in formally reported demographic data. In New Mexico, estimates were made based on the limited available data for young parents, and additional insights were extrapolated from young parent data where possible. It is recommended to determine an acceptable margin of error for the data and, when sharing, to acknowledge that estimates on data outcomes for children were made based on available data.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Despite challenges with how administrative data on young families with low incomes is reported, accessing and analyzing the data on young parents with children in LA County and New Mexico offered opportunities to forge new, more effective connections among organizations, departments, and agencies to address the multi-dimensional intersectionality of issues they faced. Organizations interested in collaborating to advance a 2Gen approach must invest in data collection that holistically captures the context and demographics of those they serve.

Once the data is available, organizations and agencies should seek opportunities to partner and compare data collection and analysis processes in order to make them more inclusive and accessible. Organizations will also benefit from collaboration by streamlining services and filling information gaps.

Finally, it is also important to interrogate internal processes related to funding and identify how resources can be used most effectively. In some instances, it is important to invest in programs that want to innovate and



Participants in discussion at the 2024 Aspen ThinkXChange breakout session, “Advancing Equity in Community Support Systems”. Photo by Dan Bayer for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

evaluate in the immediate term. To do so, philanthropies can support flexible, rapid-cycle evaluations appropriate for direct service organizations. Removing the requirement for a costly long-term evaluation upfront can incentivize partners to work together more effectively. In other instances, it is important to design longer-term strategies that support sustainability, particularly for partnerships that rely on public-private collaborations.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Start landscape analysis with online research or your organization’s database to learn about organizations that support families in your area.
- Identify the demographic your 2Gen collaboration aims to support. Review large databases (Census Bureau, American Community Survey, etc.) and then use relevant filters to narrow in on your specific population (zip code, age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, etc.).
- Partner with an organization that conducts demographic research with a racial equity and gender equity lens.
- Partner with community organizations to host or support focus groups/listening sessions with other organizations to better understand what they are experiencing with regard to funding streams, policy efforts, and collaboration.



Ascend Parent Advisors speaking at the 2024 Ascending in Wisconsin convening. Photo by RJ Harris Photography for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## STEP II: ASSEMBLE A PLANNING COMMITTEE & PARENT ADVISORY GROUP

Centering parents' voices and lived experiences is a guiding principle of 2Gen approaches. The 2Gen approach is rooted in the belief that parents are the experts on both their own lives and the strategies that aim to strengthen them.

To inform the insights and recommendations offered throughout our 2Gen place-based collaborative effort, Ascend worked with a planning committee composed of 10-15 senior leaders working within organizations directly serving young families in each place. Largely but not exclusively from the Ascend Network, this group informed the landscaping process and identified assets, gaps, and opportunities for supporting families. The planning committee also supported this work by connecting Ascend with other partners and community organizations to recruit Parent Advisors living in New Mexico and LA County. In LA County, the planning committee also supported two focus group sessions with young Black mothers living with low incomes to learn more about their experiences, including barriers and facilitators to achieving their dreams and goals. While the planning committees Ascend engages with are typically not compensated (though travel and lodging are covered to attend the in-person convenings), the organization(s) leading place-based work may consider doing so. When developing a planning committee, it is important to offer a clear timeline and time commitment for engagement to ensure members can stay committed and present throughout the collaborative process.

Parent Advisors' insights elevate critical issues impacting their daily lives and inform both the focus of this analysis and the range of opportunities and recommendations surfaced from this work. Parent Advisors may or may not be employed, or have a position that allows them to take time away from their work to participate in engagements. As such, all members of our Parent Advisor cohorts received \$3,500 stipends for providing insight and feedback on the work and sharing about their experiences as young parents navigating complex public and nonprofit systems to acquire services and support. Through multiple calls and listening sessions, the Parent Advisors group ensured the voices of parents stayed at the heart of the work and deepened the practice of honoring and compensating the sharing of their expertise. Ascend also worked in partnership with the Parent Advisors to design sessions and choose speaking and facilitation roles to ensure their recommendations were central to the convening.



In both LA County and New Mexico, Ascend worked in partnership with a consultant to support monthly one-hour virtual listening sessions over the span of 10 months. Engaging with trusted, reflective, culturally competent partners when working with Parent Advisors is essential.

## CONSIDERATIONS

As experts, parents should be compensated for their time and guidance. It is important to identify funding for Parent Advisors' time during meetings and at any convenings hosted as part of collaborative 2Gen efforts. This is especially important given some will have to take time from work and child care duties to participate. Partnering with organizations that nominate parents to participate in this work is also important, given the myriad needs and questions that arise from parents engaged in providing their expertise and insights on their lived experience.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Positioning parents as experts is a powerful model for other organizations to learn from. Parents' lived experiences inform their expertise on what they know they need and what changes must occur to reach their full potential. As you develop a convening strategy and elicit insights from parents, consider opportunities for parents to share their recommendations specifically with systems leaders and policymakers.

Engaging community leaders is critical to this work. A dedicated planning committee will ensure the work is relevant and diverse. The planning committee can supplement parent insights with a wider lens, drawing from experiences working directly with families.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Develop a planning committee comprising leaders across sectors and areas doing direct-service work to support families in your place. Be explicit about time commitment and benefits to members upfront (this applies to Parent Advisors as well).
- Encourage the planning committee to nominate Parent Advisors to inform your strategy with their lived experience and expertise.
- Secure funding for the collaborative process and identify a budget, including Parent Advisor (and possibly planning committee) compensation.
- Host listening sessions with Parent Advisors and a trusted consultant to inform next steps.
- Review Ascend's [\*Ascending with Parents: A Guide to Centering Parent Voice in Policy & Practice\*](#) to learn more specifics about engaging parent voice in your work.



Ascend Parent Advisors speaking at the 2023 Aspen Forum on Children and Families. Photo by Stephen Jaffe for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©





Attendees of the 2024 Aspen ThinkXChange: The National Forum on 2Gen Approaches. Photo by Dan Bayer for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## STEP III: PLAN A CONVENING

At Ascend, “convenings” are strategic gatherings that bring together new and established partners and organizations to explore, co-create, and implement solutions for families with low incomes. They are designed with intentionality and action at the forefront. These convenings are not just a way for Ascend to facilitate better understanding and deepening of 2Gen approaches; they are also an important venue for communities to share their 2Gen approaches, identify opportunities for partnership, and support implementation. Therefore, we have included convening design in this Toolkit as an important mechanism toward building relationships and collaboration in service of a shared roadmap for 2Gen action.

Ascend recommends using planning guides to outline goals, outcomes, communication, follow-up strategies, and other aspects of the convening as a first step for planning with purpose and intention. To ensure your convening is relevant to the place and participants, you might consider including a pre-survey/questionnaire in your registration materials to get a better sense of areas of interest, opportunities, and challenges. (If you do this, make sure to align the questions with your post-convening survey to measure impact.)

## CONSIDERATIONS

Logistically, you should **secure a venue** that is accessible and aligns with the values and goals of your convening. Speakers should reflect a diversity of demographics, perspectives, and areas of expertise. Ascend's commitment has been to open each convening with a panel composed of parents, as well as to include parents throughout the convening as expert participants, speakers, and facilitators. We recommend this as a model for authentic parent engagement and commitment to the work. Read more about convening logistics and design in Ascend's [Designing Your Own 2Gen Convening](#) guide.

Explicitly state your commitment to equity in your **registration and outreach**, and intentionally invite people from a diverse range of organizations and sectors to ensure participants represent the intended audience and populations served. Even in close-knit communities, there are often several known “experts” on 2Gen topics. Develop an invitation list that also includes philanthropic partners, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, community members, and others working on these issues. Be mindful of any power dynamics and cultural norms that could influence who and how people participate, and be intentional about bringing new voices to the table.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Convenings, whether in-person or virtual, build relationships and trust and surface important gaps and barriers to moving 2Gen approaches forward. Community-based leaders and families do not often step away from the day-to-day work and engage with policymakers; likewise, folks at the state level do not spend enough time in the community. A convening emphasizing specific collaborative goals is an opportunity to align the nonprofit and public sectors and hear directly from families about what is and is not working for them.



Participants in discussion at the 2024 Aspen ThinkXChange breakout session, “Designing 2Gen Implementation: Moving from Codification to Scale.” Photo by Dan Bayer for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Begin working and co-designing with a planning committee and Parent Advisors to determine a set of goals and objectives for your convening.
- Develop a budget and secure funding to support your convening.
- Review Ascend's [Designing Your Own 2Gen Convening](#) guide to learn more about convening logistics.
- Partner with local leaders to determine a venue and logistics that reflect the communities you are focusing on.
- Continue to identify partners and community members that should be invited to your convening.
- Develop a pre-convening survey that will align with post-convening survey questions to measure impact.
- Select pre-readings alongside your partners. These can be from speakers, news articles, and other sources relevant to the place in which you're working.





Attendees engaging in an interactive art project at the 2024 Aspen ThinkXChange: The National Forum on 2Gen Approaches. Photo by Dan Bayer for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## STEP IV: DEVELOP A COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK & PLAN OF ACTION

Drawing upon the expertise of Parent Advisors and partners from nonprofit, private, and public organizations, the Collaborative Framework and Plan of Action distill key learnings and findings to inform and strengthen support for families within a city, county, or state. The goals of the tool are to better understand families' needs, highlight practices and policies that utilize a 2Gen approach, showcase opportunities to forge connections between organizations to streamline work, and offer recommendations across sectors and at all levels. In this section, we provide an overview of how to organize and develop this tool for your own community.

The document is organized as follows:

- a. **COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK.** An overview that captures some of the many organizations and agencies integral to supporting young parents and their children in a specific context/place (e.g., county or state). (sourced from the landscape analysis).
- b. **Family Profile.** Key characteristics and demographic data of parents and children (sourced from the demographic analysis).
- c. **Opportunities and Resources.** The resources that exist to support young families from a multigenerational perspective, and evidence of progress being made at the city/county/state level.
- d. **Challenges and Barriers to Success.** The most pressing issues and challenges families are facing in the city/county/state.
- e. **Plan of Action.** Opportunities and recommendations for strengthening a multi-generational approach across programs, partnerships, policies, and systems.
- f. **Template for Assessing Plan of Action.** Builds off insights from the Collaborative Framework and provides a blueprint of key actions to achieve better outcomes for families in the city/county/state.



## CONSIDERATIONS

Following the convening, synthesize the themes and feedback from participants, including Parent Advisors and planning committee members, and compare this information against the demographic data. What gaps emerged that can inform a framework for collaboration? Are issues such as child care, postsecondary education, and asset-building at the center? Where are the opportunities to advance a 2Gen approach in your community?

Work with the partners you identified in the beginning of the process to develop a strategy for dissemination to others who have a vested interest in the work, including but not limited to convening participants. To take things a step further, you might condense your report into a brief to share with policymakers and government officials, and/or offer to set up a meeting to expand on your findings and highlights. Consider working with consultants including copyeditors, designers, or strategic communications experts to ensure your report is accessible, user-friendly, and disseminated broadly and appropriately.

Remember to offer opportunities for feedback from your community, and integrate this feedback into an updated version of the document so it stays relevant.

## OPPORTUNITIES

There is a significant need for the public sector to listen to, learn from, and partner more effectively with community organizations to both spur new innovations and infuse capital — social, financial, and intellectual — into collaborations that will advance well-being for parents and their children.

Throughout our work, Parent Advisors, planning committee members, and convening participants repeatedly pointed to the importance of integrated approaches that provide opportunities for and meet the needs of children and the adults in their lives.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Consolidate your learnings and populate them into each piece of the Collaborative Framework outline.
- Work with consultants and contributors to support your messaging, receive feedback, and develop a strategy for dissemination.
- Share with your community broadly, but be prepared to tailor your messaging for various audiences.



Christina Morales, 2Gen Statewide Coordinator, Connecticut Office of Early Childhood in conversation with attendees at the 2024 Aspen ThinkXChange: The National Forum on 2Gen Approaches. Photo by Dan Bayer for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©



Attendees walking on the Aspen Meadows campus at 'Aspen ThinkXChange: The National Forum on 2Gen Approaches.'  
Photo by Dan Bayer for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## STEP V: SUSTAIN 2GEN COLLABORATIONS USING YOUR PLAN OF ACTION

It is critical to establish and implement mechanisms to continue any action or next steps identified at the convening and develop a strategy for follow-up to drive long-term change.

### COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES

Implementing feedback loops is one of the best ways to keep participants engaged in the work and sharing details about their next steps. One popular strategy is the post-convening survey. In these short surveys, we recommend soliciting specific information about connections made due to the convening itself, as well as concrete action steps attendees plan to take as a result. This is especially useful if you have conducted a pre-convening survey to better understand the impact of your convening through participants' responses before and after it took place.

Where appropriate, convening organizers can also conduct follow-up outreach to partners to track action steps that resulted from the convening. Feedback loops will provide clear ideas of where community momentum exists to create change.

As you continue to deepen the work, making sure leaders are aware of your efforts is critical. Consider how you and partners might brief city, county and/or state leaders on your learnings from both the Collaborative Framework and Plan of Action, and post-convening survey data.

### ALIGN FUNDING STREAMS

Sustainability also includes aligning funding streams; for example, analyzing feedback from the participant evaluations might identify emerging or new opportunities for funder investment, highlight gaps in current funding allocations, and help make the case for continued or expanded financial support from both public and private sector partners. By leveraging these insights, convening organizers can proactively engage funders in discussions about long-term commitments, innovative financing models, and strategic investments that will sustain and scale the impact of 2Gen initiatives over time.

By aligning systems and funding streams, families also benefit. The process of enrollment, eligibility, and recertification is extensive and time-consuming for families, often requiring them to submit duplicative proofs of eligibility across multiple support systems with varying requirements. This can take days or even weeks each month, leading to missed work and school, and hindering their ability to increase their income. Streamlining these processes not only reduces administrative burdens but also empowers families to access the resources they need more efficiently, ultimately supporting their long-term stability and economic mobility.





An interactive mural at Ascending Together, a convening of young families at Tamaya Resort, at Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico, May 11, 2023. Photo by David Lienemann for Ascend at the Aspen Institute ©

## CONCLUSION

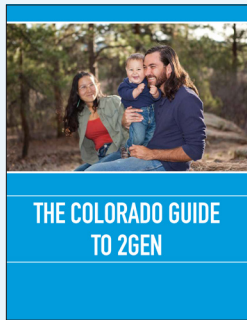
This work can be challenging, but also deeply impactful. Remember — you aren't alone! Ascend has a [Network](#) of over 600 organizations invested in helping families thrive. While the Ascend team is here to support you through the journey of launching your own place-based work, you might consider reaching out to some Partners in your city, county, or state to get started. See below for some impactful outcomes from taking a place-based approach using components in the Collaborative Framework — these might be included in your goals as you begin your outreach to partners:

- **Parent policy councils:** By engaging parents as leaders and representatives of 2Gen approaches, organizations develop cohorts of Parent Advisors that can be supported by a governor's office or philanthropy as a formal Parent Policy Council.
- **Increased awareness of barriers to postsecondary success and child care:** Demographic and landscape analyses surface significant gaps in coordination and partnership, which leads to important awareness from policymakers and funders on how and where to address gaps.
- **Innovations in transportation for student parents:** Collaborative Frameworks and Plans of Action have demonstrated a consistent lack of support for basic needs — most notably, transportation that is affordable and accessible — for student parents. As a result, leaders in states such as New Mexico are exploring how to increase access to bus lines and other forms of public transport.



# RESOURCES

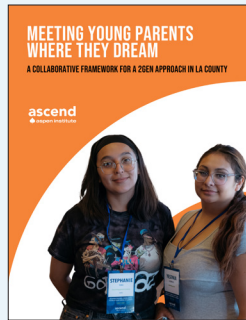
## PUBLICATIONS BY ASCEND AT THE ASPEN INSTITUTE



[Colorado Guide to 2Gen](#)  
(2017)



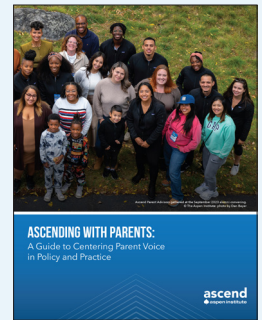
[Designing Your Own 2Gen Convening](#)  
(2019)



[Meeting Young Parents Where They Dream: A Collaborative Framework for a 2Gen Approach in LA County](#) (2023)\*



[Meeting Young Parents Where They Dream: A Collaborative Framework for a 2Gen Approach in New Mexico](#) (2024)\*\*



[Ascending with Parents: A Guide to Centering Parent Voice in Policy and Practice](#)  
(2024)

*\*Leveraging insights from the Collaborative Framework, the 2Gen Plan of Action is intended to provide a blueprint of actions that policymakers, practitioners, and philanthropies can take to better support young parents and their children and ultimately achieve better outcomes for young families in LA County (and New Mexico – see below). Template for Assessing Plan of Action (within the LA County Collaborative Framework, pp. 46-54).*

*\*\*Template for Assessing Plan of Action (within the New Mexico Collaborative Framework, pp. 49-52)*

## HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR PHILANTHROPIC LEADERS

- [Building a Trust-Based Philanthropy to Shift Power Back to Communities](#)
- [Shifting Power to Communities in Grant Funding](#)
- [How Funders of Collective Impact Initiatives Can Build Trust](#)
- [Practicing Participatory Philanthropy: Five Key Findings](#)
- [Whole Family Approaches to Economic Mobility: A Funder's Guide](#)

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