THE ASCEND FUND

Category	Score
Focus	/5
Potential for Impact	/5
Organizational Readiness	/5
Overall Impression	/5
Total	*/20*

Focus

- Is the applicant and the submitted proposal in alignment with the stated goals and approach of The Ascend Fund?
- Is the proposal designed to significantly increase the number of women serving in state legislatures in one of the targeted states?
- Does the application throw out preconceived notions of what political leadership looks like and find new strategies to identify women from a wide variety of backgrounds, especially those from under-represented communities, and enhance their ability to reach elected office?
- Does the proposed strategy focus on training, recruiting, and empowering a diverse field of women candidates and removing barriers to women running for office and winning?

0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5
Proposal fails to identify how it will expand the pathway for more women to run and win.	Activities outlined in proposal only loosely connected to effort to increase women's representation.	Proposal identifies need to transform the system but is focused only on the current election cycle.	Clear understanding of need to build political pathway, with strategy to do so.	Articulates advanced strategy for building a robust and durable political pathway for women to achieve political parity.
Proposal lacks focus on women and/or political engagement.	Proposal generally focuses on women's political engagement.	Proposal broadly focuses on women running for office.	Proposal specifically focuses on women running for the state legislature.	Proposal specifically addresses women running for the state legislature with demonstrated understanding of district targeting.
Proposal will not benefit a diverse population of women.	Proposal may benefit some women from under-represented communities, but not be design.	Proposal is proactively designed to identify women from a wide variety of backgrounds, but strategies are underdeveloped.	Proposal will consistently benefit a diverse population of women and prioritizes those from under-represented communities.	Proposal designed around effectively electing diverse populations with specific focus on women from under-represented communities.
Proposal fails to demonstrate understanding of barriers women face or how to dismantle.	Proposal reveals limited understanding of barriers women face but fails to connect to larger strategy.	Proposal shows basic understanding of barriers women face and presents straightforward approach to address.	Proposal demonstrates understanding of barriers women face and connects to effective mitigation strategies.	Proposal indicates sophisticated understanding of barriers unique to specific populations and provides evidence in support of

				highly tactical mitigation strategies.
Comments:				

Potential for Impact

- Does the proposal present an innovative, but feasible, solution to the challenge of getting more women to run for office?
- Does the proposal have strong potential to accelerate progress towards parity in the short-term (this election cycle) and over the long-term (next 30 years) and achieve lasting, positive change?
- Is the project replicable with an efficient ability to expand the scale and scope of the work in future years?

0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5
Proposal replicates what is currently being done with no changes.	Proposal replicates what is currently being done with minimal adaptations.	Proposal describes promising new adaptation to an existing approach.	Proposal describes creative ideas and vision for success.	Proposal presents innovative idea with clear vision for success.
Lacks implementation plan and unrealistic plan to scale.	Easy to implement because already being done, lacks plan to scale appropriately within time frame.	Ability to begin implementation during grant period, may struggle to scale over time.	Able to initiate proposal within grant period and scale over time.	Feasible to implement proposal in 12-15 months and scale over time.
Rate of change unlikely to increase beyond current trajectory. May struggle to sustain positive gains years over year.	Nominal improvement to rate of change. May struggle to sustain positive gains years over year.	Plan will accelerate pace of change towards parity but may not achieve targets and/or gains may not be sustained.	Plan will make significant progress towards parity within targeted time frame with demonstrated ability to sustain gains.	Realistic plan to achieve parity within targeted time frame or before in coupled with strategy to sustain gains.
Model is unique to location or organization and could not be replicated.	Model would require significant alternations to replicate.	Some aspects of model could be replicated elsewhere.	Most aspects of model could be replicated with moderate modifications.	Model could be easily replicated elsewhere.
Unlikely project could grow in either scale or scope in future.	Project could expand in scale or scope, but not both.	Limited expansion of scale and scope possible but could face significant challenges.	Expansion of scale and scope achievable with limited adjustments necessary.	Project could easily expand in scale or scope in future years.

Comments:

Organizational Readiness

- Does the organization have the leadership and staff with the skills and experience to implement the proposed solution?
- Is the leadership reflective of the targeted population and community broadly?
- Does the organization demonstrate a clear understanding and appreciation of the importance of an intersectional approach and diversity, equity, and inclusion in the work to elect women?
- Does the organization have the financial capacity to absorb the funding and are the project plan achievable and realistic within the available budget?
- Does the proposal provide evidence of past success in similar projects and in building collaborative ventures? Does the organization exhibit a willingness to partner with other diverse organizations in the future?

0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5
Lack of formal leadership and staff structure;	Loosely connected team with little to no relevant experience.	Loosely connected team with some experience in space.	Team comprised of accomplished professionals with relevant experience.	Led by an experienced team of qualified experts with deep direct experience.
Applicant has no experience working in political sphere.	Applicant has some experience working in political sphere.	Applicant has experience training and recruiting candidates to run for office.	Applicant has experience training and recruiting women to run for office with record of success.	Applicant has deep experience training and recruiting women to run for office with record of significant success at the state legislative level.
Leadership lacks diversity and is disconnected from population.	Leadership has limited diversity, but some connected to the targeted population.	Leadership credibly represents community being served.	Leadership is diverse with history of engaging with the targeted populations.	Leadership reflective of community and knowledgeably and passionately engaged with targeted population.
No reference to DEI or lacks clear understanding of work.	Limited understanding of DEI and little incorporation into work.	Stated importance of DEI and incorporated into project plan.	Elements of DEI incorporated into organization and connected to work and project plan.	Well-articulated understanding of DEI and clearly integrated into organization and work broadly, but also highlighted in project plan.

Insufficient financial capacity.	Project represents significant growth, potentially stretching organization's financial capacity.	Adequate financial capacity to execute project plan.	Good financial capacity with some flexibility to execute project plan. Could explore additional resources.	Flexible and robust financial capacity with ability to leverage additional internal and external resources.
Plan unrealistic and/or unachievable.	Plan unlikely to achieve all results.	Plan is cost effective and likely to achieve results.	Plan is both achievable and realistic and builds in contingencies.	Plan is both achievable and realistic, builds in contingencies, and demonstrates learnings from past experiences.
No evidence of past success or experience in collaborative ventures.	Limited evidence of past project success and some experience working in collaboration with other organizations.	Evidence of past successes working with other organizations on a small scale. No or limited experience building or leading coalitions.	Track record of programmatic success and strong experience participating in coalitions, with more limited experience building or leading coalitions.	Remarkable record of achieving programmatic goals and deep experience building, leading, and participating in diverse coalitions.
Comments:				

Overall Impression				
0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5
Comments:				