



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: *GENDER PARITY IN STATE LEGISLATURES*

OVERVIEW

2021/2022 State Investment Cycle

The Ascend Fund seeks proposals from state and local based, nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations in **Michigan, Mississippi, and Washington** that are working to empower women to seek elected office or become leaders in their community or are interested in beginning this work. Selected organizations will work together with support from The Ascend Fund to build state-based coalitions. The coalitions will train and recruit diverse women to run for office on both sides of the aisle to increase the number of women serving in the state legislature.

The Ascend Fund will provide project funding in the form of multi-year, general operating grants. Applicants may apply for funding up to \$50,000 annually, and typical awards will range from \$15,000-\$30,000.

The Ascend Fund prioritizes applicants committed to addressing the unique barriers faced by underrepresented and marginalized communities. Additionally, we strongly encourage joint applications among organizations to leverage and share skillsets, experience, networks, and resources. Strong applicants will also indicate if your organization has the capacity to dedicate additional resources – staff time, existing relationships, funding, etc. – to the project.

Interested parties should apply online at: www.theascendfund.org/apply.

Join us on Tuesday, July 13th at 1PM ET/10AM PT for a Q&A session to answer any outstanding questions you have about the funding opportunity and grantmaking process. [Please RSVP here.](#)

BACKGROUND

While women are 51% of the U.S. population, they still make up less than 30% of our country's elected leaders – even accounting for recent and historic gains. Yet we know that when women run for office, they have the same chance of winning as men. And when women win, they influence meaningful changes in our society.

So why haven't women achieved equal representation in U.S. politics? For many women, the current pathway to elected office is often unclear, riddled with barriers and diversions, or worse, altogether inaccessible.

The Ascend Fund seeks to accelerate the pace of change toward gender parity in U.S. politics. We pool philanthropic capital and make mission-driven investments in nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations that break down the barriers preventing women from running for office and winning.



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Our approach is simple:

- **Establish a pathway** for more women to see themselves as candidates and normalize women's leadership.
- **Bridge the gap** by providing women with the tools, training, and resources to successfully run for office.
- **Transform the system** by dismantling roadblocks so elected officials reflect the diversity of the population.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

The Ascend Fund's strategy for achieving gender parity in politics starts with the states.

Critical policy decisions are made at the state level, so it is imperative that elected officials reflect the diverse population they represent. With 7,353 statehouse seats, in contrast to only 535 congressional seats, the opportunity exists to elect a larger number of women, while simultaneously building a bench of highly qualified candidates for leadership positions and other elected offices.

The Ascend Fund seeks to fund local and state-based organizations that will build a creative coalition of organizations in each state that will work together to build a pathway for women to public office. We encourage organizations with backgrounds and experience in, but not limited to, civic engagement, leadership development, coalition building, advocacy campaigns, grassroots organizing, racial justice, or gender equity to apply.

Proposals should focus on approaches to make state legislative seats more accessible to women, including but not necessarily limited to:

- **Coalition Building:** Build state coalition of like-minded groups that share a commitment to gender parity, racial equity, and reproductive rights.
- **Barrier Reduction:** Identify common and unique barriers hindering women's success in reaching state elected office and develop strategies to remove, reduce, or circumvent those barriers.
- **Targeted Recruitment:** Increase the number of women running for the state legislature through targeted, coordinated, community-based recruitment.
- **Candidate Training:** Provide women with the training, tools, resources, and support necessary to successfully run for the state legislature.
- **Messaging Campaign:** Highlight women's underrepresentation and normalize women's leadership through public messaging campaigns.



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MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants must be 501(c)(3) organization or be fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) organization, and in good legal standing with the IRS.
- Applicants must be nonpartisan and not endorse any particular candidate(s) or political party's agenda.
- The Ascend Fund generally does not provide funding that exceeds 25% of an organization's annual budget, except under extenuating circumstances, though organizations are encouraged to apply for up to \$50,000.
- State and local organizations, as well as national organizations with staffed, state-based chapters are eligible to apply.

SELECTION PROCESS & CRITERIA

- Applications are due Friday, August 13th at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time.
- This is a competitive grant process. Submitting a proposal does not guarantee funding. Panorama Global and The Ascend Fund assume no responsibility for applicants' costs to respond to this RFP.
- A Q&A session will be held Tuesday, July 13th at 1PM ET/10AM PT to answer any outstanding questions you have about the funding opportunity and grantmaking process. [Please RSVP here.](#)
- We anticipate disbursing grant funds on or around Friday, October 15th and funded organizations should plan to attend a virtual convening on Tuesday, October 26th.
- More information about The Ascend Fund, our work, and existing partners can be found on our website: www.theascendfund.org.
- Questions may be submitted to: ascend@panoramaglobal.org. We strive to respond to emails within 48 hours of receipt.



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ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

Are you a nonprofit?

A nonprofit is a registered charitable organization that has received verification of its tax exempt status from the IRS under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

A fiscally sponsored organization is a charitable entity or project that has entered into a legal agreement with a registered nonprofit to accept tax-deductible funds and provide fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services on its behalf.

- Yes
- No, but fiscally sponsored
- No

Primary Applicant Organization Name:

Primary Applicant Address:

Primary Applicant EIN:

Primary Contact Name:

Primary Contact Title:

Primary Contact Email:

Primary Contact Phone:

Organization Website:

Organization Social Handles:

What are the primary populations your organization serves?

Please elaborate on the primary populations your organization serves – i.e. women of color, low income women, LGBTQ women.

Does the head of your organization identify as any of the following? (Select all that apply) *

(*Person of color is defined as all individuals who identify as belonging to a racial or ethnic category other than white.)

- Woman
- Person of Color*
- LGBTQ+
- None of the above

Fiscal Sponsor Name:

Fiscal Sponsor Address:

Fiscal Sponsor EIN:

Fiscal Sponsor Primary Contact:

Fiscal Sponsor Primary Contact Title:

Fiscal Sponsor Primary Contact Email:



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Fiscal Sponsor Organization Primary Contact Phone:

Is your authorized signatory different from the primary contact?

- Yes
- No

Authorized Signatory Name:

Authorized Signatory Title:

Authorized Signatory Email:

Authorized Signatory Phone:

Does your team consist of two or more organizations?

We strongly encourage joint applications among organizations to leverage and share skillsets, experience, networks, and resources. If you have project partners, please list them using the legal name of each partner.

- Yes
- No

Project Partner Organization Name(s):

Project Partner Organization Address(es):

Project Partner Organization EIN(s):

Project Partner Organization Primary Contact(s):

Project Partner Organization Primary Contact Title(s):

Project Partner Organization Primary Contact Email(s):

Project Partner Organization Primary Contact Phone(s):

Would you like to add another project partner?

- Yes
- No

Requested Amount:

You may apply for funding up to \$50,000 per year. Typical awards will range from \$15,000-\$30,000 annually. The Ascend Fund generally does not provide funding that exceeds 25% of an organization's annual budget, except under extenuating circumstances, though organizations are encouraged to apply for up to \$50,000 per year.

Would you like to sign up for The Ascend Fund newsletter and be alerted when additional request for proposals are published?

- Yes
- No

May The Ascend Fund share your proposal with other funders?

- Yes
- No



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GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PROPOSAL

The Ascend Fund encourages applicants to challenge conventions. Throw out preconceived notions of what political leadership looks like and find new strategies to identify women from a wide variety of backgrounds and enhance their ability to reach elected office.

Interested parties should submit a proposal using the questions below as a guide. Please tell us about your organization, approach, and commitment to gender equity and representation. You may use whatever format is best suited to showcase your strengths.

1. Women face a myriad of barriers when running for office, from exclusionary party politics to persistent fundraising challenges. What are the specific barriers to political entry that women face when seeking to run for office in your state? If you were awarded a grant, how would your organization seek to overcome or eliminate these barriers and increase the number of women serving in the state legislature and achieve a truly representative democracy?
2. The Ascend Fund is establishing a pathway for women to see themselves as candidates. How has your organization sought to create a pathway for women to public office? If you have not engaged in this work before, how has your organization effectively organized around a particular advocacy, issue, or mobilization campaign? How can this model be used to empower, train, and recruit a diverse field of women to run for state legislative seats?
3. Collaboration is at the core of our work. To reach gender parity, the field must be united behind a shared strategy. To date, how has your organization worked with others in the field to elect more women? Moving forward, how will your organization work in a coalition with other organizations to train and recruit candidates from both sides of the aisle?

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

IRS Form 990 (from FY2020)

Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement (if applicable)



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