

Pathways Impact Fund

Cohort 2 Letter of Interest — Instructions & Application Guide

Overview of Investment

The [Pathways Impact Fund](#) (The Fund) at StriveTogether is pleased to announce a new funding opportunity for regional, place-based intermediary organizations who are committed to ensuring more young people are on purposeful pathways and gaining the experiences, beginning in high school, that build momentum toward well-paying careers and economic mobility.

Through this grant opportunity, The Fund aims to strengthen the connection between education and workforce systems — with an emphasis on grades 9–13 — by supporting place-based partnerships that are scaling integrated, evidence-based pathways experiences. Funding will support the development and expansion of aligned regional efforts that embed advising connected to students' goals, access to meaningful work opportunities, accelerated coursework and valuable credentials that lead to meaningful jobs. Purposeful pathways also center the student experience and create educational experiences that are linked to students' goals and identities. They incorporate purpose, belonging, and social capital as key accelerants to pathways design.

The Fund will award **\$900,000–\$1.5M over three years** to selected regional intermediary organizations working to scale the components of purposeful pathways that lead to direct student impact. Grantees will join a national learning network, receive tailored support, and engage in a national community of practice.

The Pathways Impact Fund is designed to support regional intermediaries to advance the following grantmaking goals:

1. Support the adoption of purposeful pathways, including component integration
2. Align education to regional economic and workforce needs
3. Support strategies to scale pathways programs and close opportunity gaps
4. Transform systems and unlock public and private dollars

Successful applications will demonstrate a commitment to scaling purposeful pathways programs as well as developing and scaling the core components of purposeful pathways.

The Pathways Impact Fund's vision for high-quality pathways is grounded in the purposeful pathways framework, described in "[A LaunchPad for Life: A Vision for Purposeful Pathways for All Students](#)". Reference the [High-Impact Practices Action Guide](#) for examples of integration in action. Reference the [Measurement Action Guide](#) for guidance on metrics for purposeful pathways components.

Application Process Overview

The application process will take place over two phases. This document covers Phase 1: the Letter of Interest.

| Phase 1: Screener and Letter of Interest (LOI) | Phase 2: Full Application (invitation only) |
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| <p>All applicants will first engage in a brief screener to confirm eligibility and minimum readiness, and then submit a Letter of Interest (LOI)</p> | <p>Full proposal from organizations invited to advance after LOI review. Assesses organizational depth, scale plan, and long-term capacity.</p> |
| <p>We're looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System infrastructure beyond a single program • Coherent delivery of all three pathway components at meaningful scale • A credible orientation toward growth | <p>We're looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed, evidence-based three-year scale plan • Demonstrated organizational capacity across six capability areas • Baseline data and a realistic budget for the grant period |
| <p>Responses should be factual and concise. Deep planning detail belongs in Phase 2.</p> | <p>Invited applicants only. Includes narrative questions, a structured three-year plan template, baseline data table, and required financial documentation.</p> |

Eligibility

Organizations must meet all eligibility criteria. **If you cannot confirm every item, you are not eligible.**

- Operate as a place-based regional or state intermediary (nonprofit, collaborative, public-private partnership, workforce board, postsecondary institution, or similar) that is directly embedded in and accountable to the communities they serve. Note: national intermediaries supporting regions from a distance are not eligible.
- Actively convene cross-sector partners across K–12, postsecondary, workforce, employers, and government, and lead coordination across sectors around a shared regional vision for pathways.
- Have formal governance documentation with core pathways partners (such as a regional strategic plan or charter) and established partnership agreements.

- Currently support implementation of all three purposeful pathways core programmatic components: accelerated coursework, career-connected learning, and high-quality advising, with K–12 district partners.
- Have a credible plan to scale pathways to new students over three years.

Timeline

- Letter of Interest submissions due: July 10. You will receive an email copy of your responses after submission.
- Applicants invited to Phase 2 (Full Application) will be notified by end of July.
- Full application window opens: August 3, applications due: August 28.
- Select applicants will participate in finalist interviews.
- Grant awards are slated to be announced in early November.

Grant Term and Use of Funds

Grant funds may support personnel and partner coordination; scaling purposeful pathway components; capacity-building to utilize or enhance data systems and data-sharing; student experience costs (e.g., work-based learning coordination, modest stipends, transportation); evaluation; and travel for the learning network.

Funds may not be used to build new data systems, fund capital projects, lobbying or political activity, or debt service. Direct tuition or scholarships to individuals are generally out of scope unless explicitly approved for program delivery.

Applicants should describe how funds will braid with public and partner dollars and how ongoing costs will be sustained after the grant.

What We're Looking For

Phase 2 invitations will go to applicants who demonstrate the strongest capacity for this work, coherent delivery, and a credible orientation toward growth.

Organizational profile

We're looking for intermediaries with an existing infrastructure of governance and cross-sector collaboration. These are partnerships that understand and can name systems barriers and galvanize the right cross-sector partners to address them. The net effect of this leadership is a credible operating model: knowing who's at the table, how decisions are made, how equity is centered, and how to sustain the momentum of the work in your community and region.

Current pathways work

We're looking for communities who already deliver high-quality pathways experiences and are working towards connecting the components of high-quality pathways into a coherent student journey. The strongest candidates will be able to demonstrate an understanding and application of program implementation, quality standards, cross-sector data, student data, and regional labor market data into a continuous improvement loop. They will also be able to show how pathways foster purpose, belonging, and social capital for students.

Scale readiness

We're looking for communities with a credible vision for growth that doesn't sacrifice quality or equity. The strongest applicants will be able to show where growth will occur, how they will expand and sustain strategies to reach more students, and who will be impacted. Strong candidates will also demonstrate engagement with enabling conditions — such as a strong shared vision, governance structures that work across agencies, connected data systems, diverse funding sources, and employer commitments — and the ability to build and lead cross-sector data systems that support continuous improvement.

Letter of Interest: Section Summary

1. Organizational Profile

This section confirms who you are and that you meet the basic criteria to apply.

- Organization name, primary contact
- Annual operating budget
- Geographic scope of your work

- Core partner list across sectors (K–12, postsecondary, workforce, employers, government, nonprofit)
- StriveTogether Cradle to Career network alignment (if applicable)

2. Current Pathways Work

Describes the scale, integration, and quality of your current pathways work. The screener confirmed that you are implementing all three pathway components. This section asks for specificity: at what scale, how integrated, and for which students.

- 2a. Intermediary role — how do you support program implementation, what decisions do you influence and what would not happen without you? (250 words)
- 2b. Regional definition of high-quality advising — what criteria does your region use to define and count a student as having experienced it? (150 words)
- 2c. Regional definition of accelerated coursework — what criteria does your region use to define and count a student as having experienced it? (150 words)
- 2d. Regional definition of career-connected learning — what criteria does your region use to define and count a student as having experienced it? (150 words)
- 2e. Current scale — using your definitions from 2b–2d, report the most recent available data for each component: number of district partners, school partners, and students. (structured table; estimates acceptable)
- 2f. Integration strategies — how do you connect the three components into a coherent student experience? (250 words)
- 2g. Student agency — how does your work build purpose, belonging, and social capital, and how do you integrate student voice? (250 words)
- 2h. Outcome metrics currently tracked (checklist)
- 2i. Participation metrics currently tracked (checklist)

3. Scale Readiness

Describes your expansion strategy and the conditions in place to support it. Responses should be directional and grounded in what is already true, not aspirational planning.

- 3a. Scale vision — more students in current geography, new schools/districts, or both? Why? (250 words)

- 3b. Primary challenges — what are you trying to solve in expanding pathways to all students? (dropdown + 150-word open response)
- 3c. Enabling conditions — what conditions are you leveraging to support expansion? (dropdown + 150-word open response)

4. Sustainability

A brief preview of how you would sustain growth beyond the grant period. A detailed sustainability narrative and budget are part of the Phase 2 Full Application.

- 4a. How would you sustain growth beyond the grant period? (250 words)

5. Required Attachments

Upload the following with your LOI submission:

- Most recent annual report or organizational one-pager
- Governance documentation (e.g., board list, org chart, or bylaws excerpt)

Submission Instructions

- All required fields must be completed and all required attachments must be uploaded before submission. Incomplete submissions will not be reviewed.
- Word limits are indicated for each narrative question. Please do not exceed word limits.
- Tables and structured fields do not count toward word limits.
- All uploaded documents must be in PDF or Word format unless otherwise specified.
- If you have questions about eligibility or the application process, contact pathwaysimpactfund@strivetogether.org before submitting.

Glossary of Key Terms

Underserved students

Students of color (Black, Latino, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups); students from low-income backgrounds; first-generation college students; English learners; students with disabilities; and students from rural/under-resourced communities.

Intermediary

A cross-sector convener that sets shared vision, aligns partners, manages data, and mobilizes resources for systems change. An intermediary is not solely a direct service provider.

Integration

When two or more pathways components are connected to create a coherent, intentional experience for the same students.

Purposeful pathways

A coherent student experience in which high-quality advising, accelerated coursework, and career-connected learning are intentionally connected and designed to build students' sense of purpose, belonging, and social capital.

Credential of value

An industry-recognized credential with clear labor-market value leading to living-wage employment (degree or non-degree). Regions may use their regional/state definitions.

Longitudinal tracking

Following student cohorts from high school to postsecondary and after exit (e.g., 6–12 months+) to see postsecondary, training, employment, or other outcomes.

Scaling minimum

A credible plan to reach 1,700–2,500 new students over three years (preference 5,000+).

Enabling conditions

The policy, governance, funding, and systems conditions — such as cross-sector governance structures, data-sharing agreements, supportive state policies, and diversified funding — that allow pathways work to scale and sustain beyond individual programs or grant cycles.