

National Governors Association Solutions: The Center for Best Practices

Opportunity for Policy Assistance and Grants

Educate for Opportunity: Supporting Governors' Efforts to Connect Postsecondary Education and Work

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Purpose

National Governors Association Solutions: The Center for Best Practices (NGA Solutions), in partnership with Strada Education Network, will support a cohort of states in aligning postsecondary and workforce priorities for adult learners, with a focus on using consumer data to analyze postsecondary effectiveness in solving for state workforce needs. NGA Solutions will provide a combination of financial and technical assistance to selected states, as well as [Gallup/Strada consumer insights data](#) for analysis.

Services and Resources for Six Participating States:

- Ongoing technical assistance from NGA Solutions experts and consultants tailored to the state's needs and priorities;
- Initial grants of up to \$100,000 per selected state to support planning activities, meetings, summits, publications, tools, and travel expenses, with opportunity to receive an additional \$50,000 to support innovative program and policy development;
- Participation in two national summits with other selected states and national experts; and
- Regular planning calls and up to four site visits by NGA Center experts or consultants to support the individual state's work.

Proposals Due: Friday, August 2nd, 2019 by 5:00 pm Eastern

Submission Information: Only one proposal per state will be considered and must be received from, or with the full support of, the governor's office. Prior to submission, please assemble all proposal materials into a **single PDF** document. Please email the proposal to NGA Solutions at postsecondary@nga.org.

Start Date: September 1, 2019

End Date: March 1, 2021

Selection Announcement: States will be notified about their award status in August 2019; as a requirement to accepting these funds, representatives from selected states are required to attend an initial kickoff meeting **September 18-20, 2019** in St. Louis, Missouri. More information will be shared via the acceptance notice.

Eligibility: States, commonwealths and territories in good standing with the National Governors Association are eligible to apply. Inquiries regarding membership standing should be directed to dwestgren@nga.org.

Optional Bidders' Webinars: NGA Solutions will have two bidders' webinars for interested states with more information, as well as opportunity for Q&A. The two webinars will take place:

- Wednesday, June 26, 3:00 – 4:00 PM EDT: [Register here](#)
- Wednesday, July 17, 3:00 – 4:00 PM EDT: [Register here](#)

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NGA Solutions: The Center for Best Practices

The National Governors Association (NGA) is a nonpartisan organization, located in Washington, DC, that represents the collective voice of the nation’s governors from 55 states, territories, and commonwealths. NGA Solutions: The Center for Best Practices, the research and development arm of NGA, provides policy assistance opportunities through which governors’ staff can learn about promising practices and develop innovative solutions in various areas of public policy including health, public safety, transportation, and education. The Economic Opportunity Division supports cross-cutting technical assistance across postsecondary, human services, workforce, and economic development policy areas.

Background

Forty-two states have set ambitious postsecondary attainment goals, but national data shows that [fewer than half of adults \(47.6%\) aged 25-64](#) have earned a credential beyond high school. These adults will be a necessary source of talent for states to reach their goals and to prepare a workforce to meet the needs of employers. State and institutional strategies to engage, or re-engage, adults should be fueled by the examination of meaningful data and a willingness to re-think approaches to meet the diverse needs of these students.

NGA Solutions is seeking applications from states that have a strong interest in bolstering postsecondary systems to support current and future state workforce needs. Applicants should indicate how participation in this project will catalyze innovation in how their state communicates with and serves adults who need access to postsecondary opportunities. Strong applications will also demonstrate how this project supports the governor’s current priorities, highlighting existing progress towards their goals. Applications should highlight how data collection and analysis is, and can be further, utilized to change the ways in which adult-focused programs are developed and deployed. Selected states will receive results from the recent [Gallup/Strada education consumer insights survey](#) and will be expected to integrate those results into the state’s broader data plan, as well as to create a system for sharing these results with institutions and receiving feedback. This project is focused on engaging states who have an appetite for innovation in a project that supports the development of data-driven strategic thinking and state-centered solutions to the challenges of postsecondary access for adults.

The project will be implemented in three phases. Throughout these phases states will have the opportunity to consider data sources focused on supply and demand in their state and the way in which consumers react to their current higher education systems. This deep-dive into data will inform the development of state-specific innovation strategies to meet workforce and consumer needs. The final phase will focus on implementation of these strategies with additional opportunities for states to apply for financial support of innovative policy and program development.

The Project’s Three Phases:

Phase One: Leveraging Data to Empower Changemakers

Phase Two: Prioritizing Strategies for Change

Phase Three: Implementing the Long-term Change Process

Phase One: Leveraging Data to Empower Changemakers

Selected states will receive access to Strada/Gallup Consumer Insights survey data detailing the consumer experience in higher education in their states. In phase one, states will have opportunity to analyze this data, provide feedback on the survey, and draw conclusions about the data with help from experts. During this phase, participants will consider ways in which to integrate Consumer Insights into their broader data structures, looking at how this feedback connects to institutional outcomes data. NGA Solutions will provide technical assistance and share best practices for how to best utilize this new data source. States will also create plans for sharing this data across their postsecondary systems and engage institutions in considering opportunities to react and respond to the data. The Consumer Insights survey, along with other relevant data sources, will allow states to identify challenges and assets across their systems to inform strategy development.

Phase Two: Prioritizing Strategies for Change

During the second phase of technical assistance, NGA Solutions will support states in identifying opportunities for innovation to better connect governance structures, institutions, adult higher educational consumers, and the business community. Through site visits and other facilitated discussion, states will identify areas of need and create a plan for data-informed strategic changes to better align priorities of their workforce and higher education systems with industry and consumer need. NGA Solutions, along with national experts, will provide models of targeted state- and institution-level innovations to inform this planning. States will be asked to propose innovative solutions that they will work to implement throughout the final phase of the project. Additional grants, of up to \$50,000 per state, will be available during this phase of the project to catalyze implementation of selected innovative strategies.

Phase Three: Implementing the Long-Term Change Process

During phase three, states will work with NGA Solutions' staff and experts to begin implementation of their plans. Implementation does not need to be complete at the end of this phase; rather, success will be measured by the creation of a detailed 6-month to 1-year plan detailing actionable steps that have been completed and steps to continue moving forward after the project ends. States will be asked to present their innovative solutions at the final cross-state meeting.

Purpose and Priorities

NGA Solutions will provide technical assistance and grants of up to \$100,000 to six states to support governors' staffs in developing and beginning to implement a policy and programmatic agenda to better connect postsecondary education with state workforce demands, using, in part, data provided by Strada/Gallup. This project will focus on adult populations, with states having the opportunity to define their own population age range. NGA Solutions' priorities include:

- Assisting states in identifying successful program models and scaling those programs across the state, focusing on involvement from all postsecondary systems, including two- and four- year institutions;
- Clarifying the role governors can play in strengthening the connection between postsecondary systems and the workforce for adult populations, highlighting strong leadership examples from across the country;
- Facilitating state creation of innovative programs and policies to be presented at the final project Innovation Summit; and
- Demonstrating how data, particularly Consumer Insights data, can help identify new outcome metrics for adult-focused postsecondary education, including consumer satisfaction, and create expectations for thorough data usage in states.

Funding for this project is provided by [Strada Education Network](#).

Technical Assistance and Benefits for Participating States

This project seeks to provide governors and their policy advisors with expert assistance and consultation regarding connecting postsecondary systems to economic and workforce demand for adult consumers. Selected states will have access to a range of technical assistance services from NGA Solutions. Applicants may consider the following menu of services from NGA Solutions' experts in their applications:

- Research syntheses and sharing of information about other states' policies and practices;
- Support with developing an action plan to advance the state's postsecondary policy agenda;
- Review of state action plans, draft legislation, policy recommendations, or other documents;
- Support to help state leadership identify and engage key stakeholders and other national partners;
- Two cross-state summits, the second of which will highlight innovative solutions across states and will allow the cohort to share ideas with states outside of the cohort; and
- Meeting planning and support, including up to four site visits to identify policy priorities, refine the state's action plan, and outline innovative solutions to present at the final project summit.

Technical assistance will include customized one-on-one and cohort-wide support that addresses states' needs and facilitates the exchange of lessons learned and resources among participating states. The period of performance will begin September 1, 2019 and continue through March 1, 2021. The scope of work will be mutually agreed to by the selected states and NGA Solutions in keeping with the needs articulated in each application. In addition to technical assistance services, each state can receive up to \$100,000 to cover in-state planning and other costs related to bringing state and local leaders together to raise awareness and advance state policies related to the project activities. States will be eligible to receive a second \$50,000 grant in the second year of work, earmarked specifically for supporting innovative programs and policies, to be defined by NGA Solutions staff in partnership with states.

Requirements for State Participation

Selected states will be required to:

- Participate in an initial cross-state institute with NGA Solutions' staff and other participating states on September 18-20, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri to finalize its scope of work, intended outcomes, and timeline, as well as to learn more about priorities from NGA Solutions and Strada Education Network;
- Submit an initial action plan and statewide program scan, as well as an outline of how they are currently using key data to track postsecondary outcomes and connection to work;
- Submit a plan on how they will use Strada/Gallup insights to support program goals;
- Participate in a focus group analyzing the effectiveness of the Strada/Gallup insights;
- Participate in monthly check-in calls during the duration of the project ;
- Host three to four site visits with NGA Solutions' staff and national experts to review and refine policy priorities, goals, and strategies;
- Submit mid-term and final progress reports and financial reports summarizing their work, the extent to which the work met the benchmarks and outcomes, and any identified lessons learned through the project; and
- Create a deliverable (such as a dashboard, cross-agency summit, focus group etc.) that integrates Strada/Gallup data with other data and initiates a dialogue with institutions around consumer feedback, workforce needs, and leading metrics relevant to adult student populations.
- Participate in a final summit on strategies to serve adult students that will highlight the state's strategic priorities and project-related efforts.

Sub-grant Terms

NGA Solutions will enter into a sub-grant agreement with participating states for the project period starting September 1, 2019 through March 1, 2021. Final programmatic and financial reports will be due to the NGA Center no later than February 15, 2021.

Applicants will receive a sub-grant amount of up to \$100,000. Sub-grant funding will be disbursed to the governor's office or a state governmental entity designated as the fiscal agent by the governor's office in the state's application. Grant funds will be disbursed upon mutual execution of the sub-grant agreement. Financial and programmatic reports must be consistent with NGA Solutions' funding and reporting regulations and state regulations.

Allowable expenses include:

1. Staff Time. Coordination of the project may require dedicated staff time in the governor's office or at one of the partner agencies.
2. Travel and meeting costs for in-state meetings. State projects may require convening of the state work team, task forces, or other related groups or hosting a state summit. States may utilize sub-grants to help host and facilitate these meetings.
3. Consultants. The NGA Center and other national experts will serve as subject matter experts in the project and provide consulting services specific to the areas of interest identified in the state application to participate in the project. States may use sub-grants for any additional consultants necessary beyond the scope of the in-kind technical assistance, with prior approval by NGA Solutions.
4. Publication or website costs. This includes costs associated with publication or website design or printing of relevant resources, such as a report of policy recommendations or public engagement materials.
5. Other expenses as needed to achieve the states' goals with approval by NGA Solutions.

Note: Travel costs to the cross-state convening will be covered by NGA Solutions for up to **six** team members.

The period of the sub-grant agreement is contingent upon the length and end date of the underlying grants funding this project.

NOTE: Grant funds cannot be used for lobbying or the purchase of equipment. The prohibition on lobby includes influencing specific acts, bills, resolutions or similar legislative actions taken by a legislative body at the federal, state, or local levels. Pre-introduction work such as conceptualizing a policy issue, descriptive analyses, and other policy analysis tasks, which NGA Solutions engages in with the states regularly, does not fall under the restriction. The restriction on lobbying does not restrict actions connected with executive, judicial or administrative bodies, which would include regulatory rulemakings.

Eligibility

This opportunity is open to all U.S. states, commonwealths, and territories in good standing with NGA. Inquiries regarding membership standing should be directed to Dana Westgren at dwestgren@nga.org.

State Selection

NGA Solutions will consider the quality of the application based on the criteria below, as well as the extent to which the selected states represent diverse political leadership and geography.

The application must identify a state team of six that must include representatives from:

- The Governor’s Office, preferably the Governor’s Education Policy Advisor or relevant staff;
- A representative from the State Higher Education Executive Officer’s office
- A representative from the state agency responsible for Workforce Development/Labor Market Information; and
- A representative from a higher education institution or board.

And representatives from two of the state departments/agencies listed below:

- Department of Education (K-12);
- Human services agency;
- Community College Board; or
- Other related agency (please provide written explanation for this inclusion)

States should submit proof of commitment to serve for all identified individuals, either in the form of a direct letter from the identified individual or from that person’s supervisor.

Six states will be selected for participation in the project. Selected states will be notified of their selection status in August 2019. See the selection criteria below for more details on how applications will be reviewed.

Optional Bidders’ Webinars

The NGA Center will host two webinars on **Wednesday, June 26th and Wednesday, July 17th** for states interested in applying. The purpose of these webinars is to provide clarifications about the requirements of the Request for Applications (RFA) and the project. Participants can ask questions about proposal content, criteria, and process. **Please note that each webinar will share similar information;** applicants do not need to attend both.

To participate in the optional webinars, please register at the below links:

- Wednesday, June 26th: [Register here](#)
- Wednesday, July 17th: [Register here](#)

Submission Information

All proposals must be received by Friday, August 2nd, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. EST. Only one proposal per state will be considered and must be contain evidence of full support from the governor’s office. Prior to submission, please assemble all the state’s proposal materials into a single PDF document. **Please email the proposal to NGA Solutions at postsecondary@nga.org.**

Required Proposal Content and Selection Criteria (see pp. 6-7 for criteria)

- ☐ Letter of application from the governor;
- ☐ Letter from the sub-grant fiscal agent organization, if not the governor’s office;
- ☐ Letter of support from the K-12 and Workforce agencies, and from the State Education Executive Officer or applicable state higher education agency;

- ☐ Proposal narrative, including plans to integrate consumer insights into program planning (not to exceed 10 pages single-spaced)
- ☐ Budget template (see Appendix A) and one-page budget narrative (see Appendix B)
- ☐ Action plan template (see Appendix C)

All documents should be submitted as a single PDF document.

Application Letter

The letter of application, signed by the governor, should briefly articulate the state’s interest in and desired outcomes related to this project and how those outcomes fit within the governor’s larger education and workforce agenda. The letter must designate the person from the state’s leadership team who will lead the team’s efforts with NGA Solutions.

Fiscal Agent Letter

If the governor’s office will serve as the fiscal agent, please include contact information for the person that will serve as the agent. If the governor’s office chooses to designate another state governmental entity as the fiscal agent for this grant, enclose a brief letter from this entity indicating their willingness to assume this role, as well as a contact person and contact information for all grant-related issues.

Letters of Support

Given the collaborative nature of this work, as a requirement for application a state must provide a letter of support from each of the partner agencies, indicating how this project connects to their broader priorities and current activities. Letters should come from cabinet-level leaders of the relevant partner agencies.

Proposal Narrative

Below is a summary of the required proposal content along with the scoring values assigned to each category for the selection process. The proposal narrative **should not exceed 10 pages single-spaced, 11-point font, 1” margins** (Appendices, including budget and budget narrative, do not count toward page limit).

Selection Criteria (Total points possible = 100 pts)

Category	Description	Value
Context and Vision for Policy Change	<p>Describe the state context and the governor’s vision for improving and aligning postsecondary systems to support current and future state economic and workforce needs. Quantitative information should be incorporated where appropriate. This description should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an overview of the current state context around postsecondary and workforce alignment for adults, including key issues that the state wishes to address; • a definition of “adult” for this project context; 	25 points

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an analysis of how the current policy environment is conducive to change, including identification of other high-level leaders who are engaged in the issue; • an overview of existing data collection and analysis efforts related to the state's postsecondary workforce alignment goals and opportunities to strengthen or transform existing data systems; and • a description of the governor's top policy priorities related to postsecondary education and workforce alignment for adult learners during his or her current term in office and how they align with other existing initiatives. This could include the governor's focus on the issues in his/her legislative or budget priorities, state of the state addresses, high-profile meetings, or other efforts that fall within this area. If applicable, please also describe the governor's previous efforts to align postsecondary and workforce systems through legislation, budget proposals, or partnerships with the private sector. 	
Goals and Strategies	<p>Describe how your state anticipates using the technical assistance (TA) and the accompanying grant dollars to develop and implement the governor's policy priorities for advancing postsecondary workforce alignment policies. The application should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an overview of the state's data and policy goals for this project; • a description of the proposed strategies, activities and deliverables for this project, including the proposed allocation of the sub-grant, and a description of the TA services requested (see page 3 of the RFP for possible services). <u>Use the Action Plan template in Appendix C to indicate the goals, timelines and deliverables, indicators of progress and metrics of success, and how the state plans to use content expertise of the NGA center staff;</u> • an analysis of how the proposed strategies, activities and TA will help meet the state's identified goals; • a description of the indicators of progress toward the state's self-identified policy goals as well as metrics for success; • a description of how the state plans to analyze and integrate the Gallup/Strada education consumer insight survey results into its broader education plan and how the results from this survey will support the state's program goals for this project; and • drawing on the context and vision for policy change section, an analysis of the factors that may help the state accomplish its policy goals and any challenges that the state anticipates encountering. <p>The application should describe specific activities to achieve the project goals. In Appendix C, indicate goals, timelines and deliverables, indicators of progress/metrics of success, and how the state plans to use the content expertise of NGA Solutions' staff.</p> <p><i>Once a state has been selected, the NGA Center will work with that state to refine and strengthen its plan, as needed.</i></p>	40 points
State Team	Selected states must identify a leadership team that includes:	25 points

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the senior staff member with the primary responsibility for handling higher education policy in the governor's office or another senior representative from the governor's office; a representative from the State Higher Education Executive Officer's Office or applicable higher education state agency; a representative from a higher education institution or board; senior representatives from <u>at least two</u> of the following: the state Department of Education (K-12), state agency with responsibility for Workforce Development/Labor Market Information, human services agency, Community College Board or another related agency (in the last case, please provide written explanation for this inclusion); a proposed team roster and a <u>brief summary</u> of each team member's current role and applicable experience <u>and proof of each member's agreement to participate in the project (e.g. a signed letter from the individual or his/her supervisor); and</u> identification of a team leader who will be responsible for both communicating with the governor's office regularly and will act as the primary liaison to the NGA center, as well as ensuring that the team is meeting regularly and making progress on the project's goals. 	
Budget and Budget Narrative	<p>The budget should detail the state's plans for spending the sub-grant and should be presented using the template in Appendix A. Activities should align to the governor's vision, should be sufficiently funded and the timeframes should be realistic.</p> <p>Use the template in Appendix B to provide a budget narrative that describes how the funds will be aligned to the state's action plan and project objectives.</p> <p>If accepted, the budget will become part of a sub-grant agreement between NGA Solutions and the state's designated fiscal agent. Further modification of the budget will require approval by NGA Solutions' staff.</p>	10 points

Disclaimers

This request for application is not binding on NGA Solutions, nor does it constitute a contractual offer. Without limiting the foregoing, NGA Solutions reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any or all applications; to modify, supplement, or cancel the RFA; to waive any deviation from the RFA; to negotiate regarding any application; and to negotiate final terms and conditions that may differ from those stated in the RFA. Under no circumstances shall NGA Solutions be liable for any costs incurred by any person in connection with the preparation and submission of a response to this RFA.

Upon receiving an application from a state, NGA Solutions will share a standard template of its sub-grant agreement. At that point, the governor's office or fiscal agent may propose modifications to the draft agreement, which may be incorporated into the agreement should the state be selected into the policy academy. NGA Solutions reserves the right to reject any proposed changes to the terms and conditions. Significant proposed changes, which could affect the agreements timely execution, could affect the state's selection as a successful applicant.

Appendix A Educate for Opportunity Budget Proposal Template

Instructions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Total budget amount may not exceed \$100,000 ▪ Please use template in <i>Appendix B</i> to provide a budget narrative detailing the cost assumptions for all items budgeted and how budget items connect to the proposed goals, strategies and activities identified in the action plan. Be as specific as possible. Additional information regarding budgeted line items may be requested after selection. ▪ Travel and lodging must be consistent with state guidelines. ▪ Consultant fees and honorarium expenses exceeding \$750 per day, not including travel and per diem, require written justification ▪ Travel and meals are not reimbursable unless the participants are on out-of-town travel status

NGA Center Grant Budget

<i>Cost Category</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Staff time	_____
Meeting/Summit Expenses (e.g. Space rental, audio/visual, food and beverage)	_____
Travel Expenses (e.g. Air and ground transportation, per diem)	_____
Consultants (including honoraria costs for expert speakers)	_____
Publication or website expenses	_____
Other Expenses (specify: _____)	_____
TOTAL:	=====

GRANT TOTAL (must not exceed \$100,000)



**Appendix B
Educate for Opportunity
Budget Narrative**

Staff Time:

Meetings:

Travel:

Consultants:

Publications:

Other:

Appendix C: Educate for Opportunity Action Plan

Instructions and Guidelines:

- Please fill out the chart below, including descriptions of activities that correspond to the application goals, descriptions of deliverables, indicators of progress/measures of success and target date(s) for completion, requested technical assistance, and budgeted amounts for meeting, travel, and other costs.
- Please complete Appendix A and B (budget proposal template and narrative) detailing the cost assumptions for all items budgeted below and how the allocations will support the articulated goals of the project. Be as specific as possible. Additional information regarding budgeted line items may be requested after submission.
- Grant allocations and technical assistance requests should comply with state and federal requirements.
- Travel, lodging, and meal costs must be consistent with state guidelines and are not reimbursable unless participants are on out-of-town travel status.

Goals	Activities	Deliverables	Indicators of Progress/Measures of Success	Timeline, Target Date(s) for Completion	Requested Assistance from NGA Center	Amount Budgeted (max. \$12,500)
GOAL 1: <i>Example:</i> Use consumer insights data to create success metrics for state public institutions.	Analyze Strada/Gallup data, looking for leading indicators for success.	Summary report on best practices for institutions.	Report distributed to institutions, bringing them to the table to discuss metrics for success.	October 2020	Policy analysis and summary report support	N/A
GOAL 2:						
	Total					