Michigan-Regional Adult Initiative for Skills and Education (MI-RAISE) Design Lab

Participant Information and Invitation

# Introduction

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success (MCACS) is excited to announce a new opportunity for post-secondary institutions seeking to design innovative solutions to address systems change and challenges faced by the adult learner population. The Michigan-Regional Adult Initiative for Skills and Education (MI-RAISE) Design Lab will engage a cohort of postsecondary institutions in a design sprint to assess their local economies, markets for adult learners, and capacity to educate adult learners. The goal of this program is ultimately to use those data to design new evidence-based approaches to best serve adult learners. Post-secondary institutions with ideas for innovative solutions and/or an interest in identifying solutions to support adult learners in the state of Michigan are invited to participate.

As the state of Michigan looks to close equity gaps and achieve its broader Sixty by 30 attainment goal, the state is poised to make significant investments in educating, reskilling, and upskilling adult learners. These investments include MCACS’ Innovation Investment Award grants and the student success grants administered by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Office of Sixty by 30. To prepare post-secondary institutions to strategically utilize these grants and other potential funding opportunities, MCACS is partnering with Education Strategy Group to facilitate the MI-RAISE Design Lab. This design lab will assemble a cohort of institutions seeking to design and develop innovative solutions to increase academic persistence and degree completion among adult learners in Michigan. The adult learner population is defined as students over the age of 25. This cohort will support MCACS’ goal of meeting the need for a skilled workforce in the state by increasing the number of adults obtaining postsecondary credentials. These credentials open the door to higher-paying jobs, allowing more Michiganders to build better lives for themselves and their families.

The MI-RAISE Design Lab launches on November 14, 2023. Participation requires that the institution identify a design team and has a commitment from the organization’s leadership to participate in design meetings (see MI-RAISE Design Lab: Experience and Expectations Section). Design Lab participants will receive technical assistance and coaching to identify challenges and design innovations for serving adult learners. Participating institutions will be prepared to apply for the MCACS Innovation Investment Award (IIA) grants, which will be awarded in May 2024 and other funding opportunities. Note that institutions interested in the MCACS IIA grants can only apply for IIA if they participate in the MI-RAISE Design Lab, D3C3, or a similar planning process approved by the Center.

Interested institutions must follow the instructions below and submit the MI-RAISE Design Lab invitation forms by 11:59 PM on October 31, 2023 via email to TheCenter@talentfirst.net.

**Due Date:** October 31, 2023, 11:59 PM EDT

**Webinar:** October 19, 2023, 12:00 PM EDT

**MI-RAISE Kick-off (Save the date):** November 14, 2023, 3:00 PM EDT

**Questions:** For questions, contact Disraelly Cruz, [dcruz@edstrategy.org](mailto:dcruz@edstrategy.org), by October 17, 2023. The MI-RAISE team will issue an addendum with the Q&A by October 18, 2023.

# Eligibility and Overview

## Who is eligible?

Public universities and public and tribal community colleges serving the adult learner population defined as individuals with high school diploma or equivalency and are one year or more removed high school. Independent colleges and universities may partner with one or more of the above institutions to participate but cannot be a lead applicant.

## What innovations will be considered?

Ideas described in the invitation response must be focused on system changes based on best practices and must include a focus or outcome on one of the following key areas:

1. **Impact:** Increase the volume and completion rate of adult learners.
2. **Equity:** Address equity among adult learners.
3. **Collaboration:** Emphasize partnerships with other organizations and employers.

Ideas must also include one or more of the best practices that have been shown to increase adult learner completion listed below:

* Flexible scheduling
* Prior learning assessments
* Credit for prior learning
* Competency-based education
* Proactive advising
* Corequisite support and corequisite remediation
* Career-aligned pathways
* Work-based learning, apprenticeships, and corporate partnership programs
* Basic needs support
* Accelerated degree programs
* Eliminate barriers to transfer students
* Guided pathways

Innovations must be a) feasible given organizational commitment and resources, and b) would be effective in the organization’s specific context.

## What technical and financial support will be provided to each organization in the cohort?

MI-RAISE Design Lab institutionswill receive **-** technical assistance and coaching, meeting support, and peer collaboration to hone ideas and develop proposals to apply for IIA from the MCACS and student success grants from the Office of Sixty by 30.

# MI-RAISE Design Lab: Experience and Expectations

To support cohort institutions, the MCACS, Education Strategy Group, and the MI-RAISE team will provide:

* Labor Market Supply-Demand Analysis
* Prospective Learner Data Mining
* Monthly design, technical assistance (TA), or planning workshops, action labs, or presentations from the MI-RAISE team and other national partners and topic leaders (three virtual ~2-3 hours each; two in-person ~6-8 hours each)
* Coaching to provide guidance, feedback, and support to leverage various data sources to develop/refine innovations, develop IIA grant proposal, and follow up supports after grant submission. (~6 hour per month)

MI-RAISE cohort institutions are expected to collaborate with the MCACS and Education Strategy Group, as well as coaches, consultants, experts, employers, nonprofits, and other organizations while developing their innovation. In addition, cohort institutions must agree to:

* Participating in the MI-RAISE Design Lab launch on September 14 at 3pm.
* Convene a cross-functional design team to participate in 6 cohort meetings to review data, identify obstacles, share learnings, and refine proposed ideas in collaboration with other cohort participants The cross-functional design team must include at least one individual that reports directly to or is a part of the institution’s executive leadership team.
* Collect and explore available data about current and prospective adult learners, their experiences, and the barriers they face to develop/refine targeted innovations
* Develop and submit a full proposal in response to the MCACS IIA grant RFP due May 2024 or student success grants administered by the Office of Sixty by 30.

The MI-RAISE Design Lab will last approximately 4-6 months. In that time, participating organizations will complete the following:

1. A self-assessment detailing:
   1. The size of the adult learner population at the institution.
   2. The completion rates, based on demographics.
   3. The institutional assets and opportunities across a number of domains connected to programs, policies, processes, and practices that support adult learner recruitment, enrollment, persistence, completion, and outcomes.
2. Specified benchmarks and timelines to increase adult completion rates overall and for specific subgroups.
3. A description of the capacity that exists within the institution to assess the effectiveness of the current adult support systems and ultimately evaluate the impact.
4. An asset map detailing local partners and resources the organization will use or include for implementation of the proposed innovation, as well as which organizations will serve as key project partners, including employers, nonprofits, other postsecondary intuitions, local workforce boards, etc.
5. A general idea of what financial and in-kind resources organizations can use to match or invest if they apply and are awarded the IIA funding.

Following the Design Lab, institutions that are awarded the IIA grants will receive coaching and follow up supports after grant submission through September 2024.

# Invitation

## Invitation Submission

Participating institutions must submit the responses to invitation questions with the completed cover page, institutional leadership letter of support, and assurances. The outline for your submission can be found on page 5 and must be submitted by 11:59 pm on October 31, 2023 via email to [TheCenter@talentfirst.net](mailto:TheCenter@talentfirst.net). Specifically, each application must include the following:

* Cover Page – Organizational Information (1 page, template)
  + Organization name
  + Organization address
  + Staff member responsible for leading the MI-RAISE participation
  + Design team members (name, job titles, emails), representing different areas of the institution (ex. academics, student affairs, workforce development, enrollment management, etc.). Minimum of 3 members
* Letter of Organizational Support (1 page max)
  + Letter of support from the organization’s president or other senior leadership
* Responses to Invitation Questionnaire (2 page max)
  + Demonstrated need for the innovation
  + Personnel identified to be on the design team and information about who could potentially carry out the implementation (same as the design team or department or does that shift to another team or department?)
* Assurances (1 page max)

## Proposal Review

Proposals will be reviewed by the Mi-RAISE team. The MI-RAISE team does not expect a detailed plan for the innovation in the project narrative, rather, applicants should demonstrate the following:

1. A need for the idea or solution
2. A commitment to increasing adult degree completion.
3. A commitment to the time and resources required to participate fully and meaningfully in the MI-RAISE Design Lab.
4. An understanding of the organization’s own adult learner population. This can be demonstrated by providing statistics on the number of adult learners, their demographics, and their academic success. It should also include a discussion of what challenges or gaps the institution is facing with respect to adult completion.
5. A basic idea of what innovation the organization would like to develop during the MI-RAISE Design Lab and ultimately implement –with implementation funding from either IIA or the Office of Sixty by 30 student success grants. The idea or solution needs to include one or more of the best practices listed above in the section “What ideas will be considered” and tailored to the organization’s unique adult learner context.
6. Support from organizational leadership.

# Invitation Form

## Cover Page – Organizational Information

**(1 page max)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organization Name:** |  |
|  |  |
| **Organization Address:** |  |
|  |  |
| **Institutional Lead:**  ***Names, Titles, Contact Information, Notation on who is a direct report to the institution executive leadership team.*** |  |
|  |  |
| **If applicable –**  **Partner Organizations:**  ***Names, Titles, Contact Information*** |  |
|  |  |
| **Design Team Members:**  ***Names and Titles*** |  |
|  |  |

Letter of Organizational Support

**(1 page max)**

Submit a letter of support from the institution’s President or other senior leadership. Explain why the institution is seeking a grant to improve adult credential/degree completion and commitment to the design and planning process.

## **Invitation Questionnaire**

(**2 page max)**

I. Need

* What challenges or gaps are you experiencing with respect to adult learner completion?
* What type of system change(s) are you interested in making? How are these applicable to your unique context?
* Who are your current and/or prospective adult learners? (Include a statistical snapshot of the number of adult learners, their demographics, and their success)
* What do you need to learn about your current/prospective adult learner population in order to develop/refine your innovation?
* What innovative ideas or solutions are you considering? Why these ideas or solutions?

II. Personnel

* Why was each member of the Design team selected?

Assurances

**(1 page max)**

If chosen, do you agree to participate fully and meaningful in the MI-RAISE Design Lab process (attend monthly meetings, work with coach, third party consultants, and subject matter experts, collaborate with other organizations, employers, and stakeholders to refine and develop your proposed intervention)?

**Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_\_**

Do you agree to devote enough staff and resources to meet the goals listed in the section MI-RAISE Design Lab: Experience and Expectations section?

**Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_\_**

Do you agree to provide the necessary data of participating and non-participating students to the MCACS, Education Strategy Group, and the contracted third-party evaluator, Basis Policy Research? It is the organization’s responsibility to ensure the data sharing agreements will be put in place during MI-RAISE to share the necessary data. MCACS, Education Strategy Group, and its third-party evaluator, Basis Policy Research, will ensure that the data shared is protected under the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

**Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_\_**

Do you have support from the organization’s President and other senior leadership?

**Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_\_**

# About the Michigan Center for Adult College Success

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success (MCACS) is an initiative of TalentFirst and was created by the state of Michigan to meet the need for a skilled workforce in the state by increasing the number of adults obtaining postsecondary credentials. These credentials open the door to higher-paying jobs, allowing more Michiganders to build better lives for themselves and their families. Michigan’s population is aging, and birth rates are declining. The state’s residents have lower levels of education and skills compared to neighboring states and the nation overall. With over 350,000 job openings, many requiring a postsecondary credential, upskilling Michigan’s adult population is a priority.

For more context on the current state of workforce development and adult education in Michigan, please read the Center’s [Landscape Analysis](https://info.talentfirst.net/landscape).

The Center serves to identify best practices and programming for increasing adult enrollment and completion by partnering with postsecondary organizations across Michigan. The Center is providing insight on how to effectively implement best practices that meet the needs of the adults at postsecondary institutions by:

1. Building partnerships between postsecondary institutions, employers, nonprofits, and government.
2. Evaluating adult-education initiatives.
3. Tailoring best practices to local, regional, and institutional contexts.
4. Supporting the state’s investment in postsecondary education, and
5. Promoting what works.

# About Education Strategy Group

The [Education Strategy Group](https://edstrategy.org/) (ESG) is a mission-driven consulting firm that works with education and workforce leaders to achieve greater impact. ESG works across sectors to move the needle on issues that are critical to improving student success and advancing equity. ESG has a deep commitment to improving equitable outcomes. ESG set goals in their strategic plan to increase the attainment of meaningful postsecondary credentials for all learners, with an emphasis on Black, Brown, and Indigenous populations.

ESG’s combination of content expertise, experience managing multi-site educational improvement initiatives, and commitment to and implementation of practices focused on equity and attainment has been a strong asset to previous work in Michigan, including projects with the Sixty by 30 office, Detroit Drives Degrees, and directly with several institutions. This experience provided a clear understanding of the Michigan context.

ESG enters this work from a strong starting point of experience, with assets developed in the postsecondary attainment and credentials space, such as its [Adult-Ready Playbook](https://edstrategy.org/resource/adult-ready-playbook/), which provides institutional strategies to improve outcomes for adult learners; [Building Credential Currency](https://edstrategy.org/resource/building-credential-currency/), which details a process to identify and promote quality non degree credentials; and [A More Unified Community College](https://edstrategy.org/resource/a-more-unified-community-college-lessons-from-the-non-credit-and-credit-alignment-lab/), which provides ample strategies to align non-credit to credit functions within a college. ESG has also done data analytics work to identify credentials of value for states and regions.