

# Social Capital: The Lifeline to Overcoming Barriers

Building Pathways  
to a Brighter Future



Health Profession Opportunity Grants

OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE



## **Social Capital: The Lifeline to Overcoming Barriers: Speaker Notes**

Thank you to moderator for introduction.

I was asked to speak about the Career Pathways Design Challenge the WATCH Project has been a part of for the last year.

# Minds That Move Us

## Career Pathways Design Challenge

For communities to design ***innovative*** education and training models that create ***social equity and economic mobility***, driven by market demands of business and industry and the needs of youth and adult learners.

## Minds That Move Us: Speaker Notes

**Minds That Move Us** is an initiative for communities to design innovative education and training models that create social equity and economic mobility for all learners.

The work is driven by public and **private partners working together with adult learners** to create models that can be scaled and replicated within industries.

# Minds That Move Us

## Partners

- Institute for Educational Leadership
- Coalition on Adult Basic Education
- National Association of State Directors of Adult Education

## Funder

- ECMC Foundation

## Minds That Move Us: Speaker Notes

The MTMU partners that support this initiative are:

Leading the way, the Institute for Educational Leadership, a non-profit organization focused on supporting leaders and expanding innovation. The two others many of us in the room might have worked with:

- Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE), and
- National Association of State Directors of Adult Education

In addition, a significant portion of the Minds that Move Us challenge is funded by the ECMC Foundation. The ECMC Foundation is **focused on helping adult learners from underserved backgrounds connect to short-term credentialed training up to and including associate degrees.**

# Team ASCENT



*Advancing Social Capital through Enhanced Networks & Technology*

1 of 10 National Teams

## ASCENT Team Members:

- Adult Learners
- Adult Education Program
- Central PA Workforce Development Corporation
- Central Susquehanna LPN Career Center
- Health Profession Opportunity Grant Program
- Nurse Assistant Residency Program – Geisinger Medical Center

## Team ASCENT: Speaker Notes

In the spring of 2018, the WATCH Project proposed ASCENT.

*Our idea was to develop peer-to-peer networks using technology to help build adult learner social capital (e.g., peer support, problem-solving, networking opportunities, etc.) and enable adult learners, often parents, to persist and complete education and training as they pursue a healthcare career pathway.*

Team ASCENT was selected as one of 10 national teams for the MTMU design challenge. We have spent the last year engaged in this innovative

Almost all the work is carried out and funded through leveraged support of the partners listed on the screen.

Our journey began last June when we traveled to Nashville to participate in the MTMU Design Camp.



# Reported Obstacles in Adult Learner Success

## Adult Learners Lack:

- Strategies for emergencies
- Support structures
- Awareness of help that is available
- Confidence to access supports
- Knowledge of how to ask for help



## Reported Obstacles in Adult Learner Success: Speaker Notes

I believe most of us in the room would agree that helping adult learners understand that advancing on a career pathway **is as much about who you know as about what you know**..... Team ASCENT was designed to help address the “who you know” barrier to build adult learner social capital.

We knew we could provide support services such as uniforms and mileage, but let’s think beyond tangible supportive services. Even a good case manager cannot provide the self sustaining safety net that is sometimes needed to help families stay on track. Take a moment and put yourselves in the lives of your participants or adult learners. What do you do when...

Your child is sick and you need to get to work or class?

Your family life is falling apart and yet you must keep up with your work and school responsibilities?

You can’t understand your studies and feel like you are the only person in class not getting it?

Or, maybe you have internal shame of not being able to handle your life, you feel the stigmas attached to the fact that you get food stamps and feel undeserving of extra help.

Maybe your main mode of communication is texting, certainly not talking. Or, maybe you have language barriers.

What do you do?

# Innovation & Approach of ASCENT

**Our Approach:** Customer-Centered Design

Engage Adult learners

**Our Solution:** Advancing Social Capital

**What is social capital?**



The benefits that people can accrue by virtue of their relationships in social networks.

- academic, emotional, financial supports
- new opportunities and career pathways
- Ability to persist and complete education and training

### **Innovation & Approach of ASCENT: Speaker Notes**

ASCENT's approach is a Customer-Centered Design where adult learners are engaged through: focus groups, shared stories, feedback in pilots and having been part of the team since its inception.

Our proposed solution **Advancing Social Capital** comes from the work of our HPOG/WATCH Project's 2-Gen approach recognizing that social capital is the "secret sauce" that is a vital component leading families to economic mobility.

# Focus Groups

Three groups of adult learners:

- Direct Care Workers / Home Health Aides
- English Language Learners interested in healthcare careers
- LPN students

## Focus Groups: Speaker Notes

In order to find and gather information from participants we held 3 focus groups:

- Direct Care Worker / Home Healthcare Aides
- English Language Learners interested in healthcare careers
- LPN Students

Our objectives were: To better understand

- Their peer to peer networks
- Their technology use and needs to build social capital
- Their networks and supports that help them be successful on a healthcare career pathway
- The needs and challenges encountered by adult learners who persisted and completed healthcare education and training programs

# Results of Focus Groups

## Lack:

- Free Time
- Transportation and Child Care
- Knowledge of Reputable Resources for Scholarships and Loans
- Emotional and Mental Health Supports - Belongingness

## Have:

- Desire to better themselves for others
- Access to internet, cell phones and social media

## Results of Focus Groups: Speaker Notes

We learned that participants:

- Want to be able to talk through their concerns with someone who they feel understands their struggles and has had similar experiences
- Want to minimize the TIME it takes to interact with social supports

Participants confirmed that:

- most have access to internet, cell phones and social media
- an overarching desire to better themselves for their children, and others not necessarily for their own self benefit.



# ASCENT Strategies

- Peer Ambassadors
- Networking Opportunities
- Technology

## **ASCENT Strategies: Speaker Notes**

As a result of the focus groups, ASCENT came up with three strategies to help participants build social capital:

- Peer Ambassadors
- Networking Opportunities, and
- Technology

# Peer Ambassadors

- Develop trust
- Build and sustain social capital
- Leadership skills
- Foundation skills

### **Peer Ambassadors: Speaker Notes**

Peer Ambassadors help adult learners with networking, while nurturing peer support, positive interactions and building a sense of belonging.

Peer Ambassadors build a sense of Belongingness throughout the career pathway - adult ed classrooms, American One Stops, post-secondary programs, online programs (ENGAGEMENT/PERSISTENCE) "You can do this."

# Networking Opportunities

- Integrated activities
- Social media
- Adult learner driven

## Networking Opportunities: Speaker Notes

We learned from our focus groups that adult learners are busy and have families. They don't have the time, or want to make the time, for extra activities during non-school hours.

Our goal is to design networking opportunities that are:

- Integrated into training programs – lunch time activities
- Use social media as a method to share timely information
- Most importantly, activities must be adult learner driven – we may think something is a great idea, but what adult learners value will be successful

- Nudging
- Signal Vine – text messaging platform
- Will help keep adult learners informed, engaged, and on-track

# Minds that Move Us

## Festival – Miami, Florida

- 10 Teams “Pitch” their idea
- Top three win \$100,000
- Additional Sponsors
- Vote for Team ASCENT!







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## Minds That Move Us

[mindsthatmoveus.org](http://mindsthatmoveus.org)

# Thank you!

