



American Student Assistance Awards More Than \$17 Million in Grants to Nonprofits Helping Middle and High Schoolers Achieve Postsecondary Education and Career Success

BOSTON – March 26, 2025 – American Student Assistance® (ASA), a national nonprofit changing the way kids learn about careers and prepare for their futures, today announced that the organization has awarded \$17.7 million to 30 mission-aligned, youth-serving nonprofits serving at least 14 states. The grants will significantly scale access to opportunities to improve career readiness outcomes for middle and high schoolers, specifically in the areas of work-based learning, social capital, education and career pathways, and career exploration.

“At ASA, over the past five years, our philanthropic grantmaking efforts in the youth career readiness arena have been critical in gaining valuable insight on what works best for young people, fueling innovation, expanding opportunity, elevating voices, and informing needed policy change. We congratulate our newest cohort of grantees for the hard-earned outcomes they’ve achieved, and we look forward to continuing our work with mission-aligned organizations looking to move the career-connected learning field forward to drive policy and systems change,” said Julie Lammers, Executive Vice President, American Student Assistance (ASA).

Industries covered by new grantees include advanced manufacturing, fisheries, healthcare, and social impact. Existing grantees represent additional industries like animation design, arts, construction, education, entrepreneurship, gaming, green jobs, and STEM. Grantees include the following:

[**CAPS Network**](#) has been awarded a two-year \$1.43 million grant over three years. This funding will support the development and expansion of the CAPS Middle School initiative in an effort to create profession-based learning experiences for younger learners.

[**Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)**](#) has been awarded \$1 million over three years. The funding will be used for thought leadership and advocacy efforts to map indicators to future and career readiness skills, a continuation of their Portraits of a Graduate initiative.

[**Colorado Succeeds**](#) has been awarded \$400,000 over two years. The funding will be used to support advocacy efforts to change systems in Colorado, by investing in data systems, communications, and advocacy tools for business coalitions and campaigns to destigmatize nondegree pathways.

[**The Education Trust**](#) has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant over three years. The funding will be used to support the expansion of the Education Trust’s Middle School Career Connected Learning Initiative that will advocate for policies and practices for high-quality career exploration and participation in postsecondary pathways. “With generous support from American Student Assistance, EdTrust is ensuring that all students—especially Black and Latino students and students from low-income backgrounds—have access to high-quality career exploration opportunities in middle school, setting them up for long-term success in education and the workforce. By advocating for equitable policies and practices, we are working to ensure every student has the resources and support they need to succeed,” said Kristen Hengtgen, Lead II, College and Career Readiness, Education Trust.

[**Empower Schools**](#) has been awarded a \$300,000 grant over three years. The grant will create college and career pathways for students in middle and high school in Indiana, as well as advance the Rural

Collaborative where rural school districts, higher education, and workforce partners create formalized partnerships to share research in four states. "We are grateful for ASA's support of our college-and-career pathways work which is centered on supporting students furthest from opportunity, especially those in rural communities. This grant award will advance both our state-specific work in Indiana focused on accelerating regional talent solutions that benefit students and employers, as well as our national efforts toward establishing thriving rural collaboratives that provide expansive opportunities in students' careers and lives," said Alyssa Morton, CEO and Partner, Empower Schools.

American Student Opportunity Collaborative, a fiscally sponsored initiative of the [National Rural Education Association](#), has been awarded a \$1.4 million grant over three years. The funding will be used to expand services and thought leadership into 10 states: Mississippi, Arizona, Alabama, West Virginia, Missouri, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, Oklahoma, and North Carolina. "Thanks to ASA's organizational support and financial generosity, our project is on its way to extend proven instructional and curricular access to rural kids across 10 states. There's a load of work left to be done, but ASA is a critical player in ensuring that every rural student has access to the courses they need to graduate, to matriculate successfully to university and career, and to maximize their personal potential," said Glen Lineberry, Executive Director, American Student Opportunity Collaborative.

[Rodel Charitable Foundation](#) has been awarded a \$1.5 million grant over three years. The organization will leverage the funding to deepen Delaware's high school pathways statewide system to expand into the middle school space through greater access to work-based learning and continuation of policy infrastructure to further expand the organization's work.

[SparkNC](#) has been awarded a \$1 million grant over two years. The grant will be used to fund statewide expansion of STEM career readiness programs across 20 school districts in North Carolina with a focus on rural areas. "SparkNC ignites futures in technology by helping young people develop not only high-tech skills but also success skills like collaboration, communication, and adaptability," said Dr. Lynn Moody, President of SparkNC. "ASA's generous support is supercharging our partnership with District C to provide Spark Teamship opportunities for learners across North Carolina where they solve real business problems for real companies."

"Meaningful internship opportunities are too often limited to a subset of students with social capital and family connections. We are thrilled to have the support of ASA as we work with our partners at SparkNC to scale innovative, accessible internship opportunities to more students in North Carolina through our Spark Teamship program," said Dan Gonzalez, Co-Founder and CEO, District C.

[Bismarck Public Schools \(BPS\)](#) has been awarded a \$300,000 grant over three years. The funding will be used to create and expand a middle school career exploration facility for all students in three middle schools in BPS. "Bismarck Public Schools is grateful to ASA for the opportunity to expand career and technical exploratory experiences to our middle school students. Through the creation of a Middle School Career Academy, all students will participate in hands-on career activities throughout the school year," said Dr. Tabby Rosenberg, Principal at the Prairie Rose School.

[The Center for Teen Empowerment](#) has been awarded a three-year \$270,000 grant. The funding will be used to launch career-connected learning initiatives for careers in nonprofit, social services, public health, public service, and arts sectors. "Young people are the greatest resource for contending with pressing social issues; issues that impact them directly. At Teen Empowerment, we give our youth the space to become leaders in confronting daily social and racial justice challenges, where they work together to create ways to realize positive change in their own lives and for their communities," said Kay Mathew, Director of Development, Center for Teen Empowerment.

CAST has been awarded a \$300,000 grant over three years. The funding will be used to expand representation of persons with disabilities in fields, such as biomanufacturing, nano technology, or other advanced manufacturing industries.

City Year has been awarded a \$300,000 grant over three years. The funding will be used to adapt their G.R.O.W. (Goals, Reality, Options, Way Forward) initiative to support career exploration between middle school students and AmeriCorps members, integrating it within schools. "For decades, City Year has been developing our corps members to become the next generation of leaders through service. Over the years, we have developed frameworks for our corps and alumni that help them discern post-service pathways from college to career. With support from American Student Assistance, we are excited to adapt these successful frameworks for middle school students to encourage self-reflection and career exploration during these most pivotal years of their development," said Jim Balfanz, CEO, City Year.

Cultivate Pathways has been awarded a \$300,000 grant over three years. The organization will use the funding to expand their bilingual CCL to English learners in middle and high school, providing WBL experiences in digital literacy, IT, web design, computer programming, and culturally responsive family engagement. "Cultivate Pathways opens doors to career opportunities that otherwise would be out of reach. Ninety-five percent of our multilingual learner participants go on to college or career training. We are grateful for ASA's support which is an investment in multilingual learner futures," said Michele Rudy, Executive Director, Cultivate Pathways.

East Central Educational Service Center has been awarded a three-year \$300,000 grant. The funding will be used to pilot and develop a new career exploration program for middle school students in Indiana. "Forge Your Future is an experience that allows our underserved rural students to develop self-awareness by discovering their personal RIASEC codes and connect these interests to future careers. At ECESC, we believe that student strengths and interests are a blueprint to forging futures of success and impact, and we thank ASA for helping us further this mission," said Lindsey Lovern, ECESC Grant Coordinator.

The Greater Phoenix Chamber has been awarded a one-year \$200,000 grant. The grant will be used to expand the pathways program, ElevatedEdAZ, to additional partner high schools and serve 2,000 more students. The program will also offer industry credentials and dual enrollment credit, work-based learning, and educator externships.

Hawaii Workforce Pipeline, Inc. has been awarded a three-year \$297,000 grant, which will be used to expand the organization's efforts in coordinating career-connected learning, including career fairs, classroom engagements, industry mentorship, and internships, for the Windward School District. "Hawaii Workforce Pipeline, a nonprofit on Oahu, connects public high school students with structured internships in diverse job sectors, guided by their interests and career goals. Through professional development and hands-on experience, HWP empowers students to secure fulfilling careers that offer sustainable wages and long-term success in Hawaii," said Rachael Aquino, Executive Director, Hawaii Workforce Pipeline, Inc.

The Immokalee Foundation has been awarded a three-year \$292,000 grant to fund their Career Pathways program, which begins in middle school, and gives students from families in Immokalee, FL that have worked as migrant farmworkers for generations an opportunity to learn about in-demand careers that provide a living wage.

The Island Institute has been awarded a three-year \$300,000 grant to support its Lift All Boats Project, which provides equitable access to Maine's lobstering industry and mentorship to students from historically underserved backgrounds.

The Magnolia Project has been awarded a three-year \$225,000 grant to fund and scale the semester-long career exploration model for rural and low-income middle school-age students in Sonoma County, CA.

MicroSociety Inc. has been awarded a three-year \$300,000 grant to redesign and formalize the grades 6-8 model for 21st century learners. MicroSociety students construct a microcosm of adult society within their school. Professional mentors support students in their work and provide from-the-field knowledge. "At MicroSociety, we believe every student deserves early and sustained exposure to careers that can transform their future. Thanks to ASA's generous support, we will expand opportunities for middle schoolers to take on real job roles in their own student-run societies—where they connect academic lessons to real-world challenges, fueling their motivation to learn and succeed. Using our new digital platform, we will introduce students to emerging careers in technology, finance, and public service. These opportunities will help them discover where they fit in and see beyond their zip code to the limitless possibilities ahead," saidCarolynn King Richmond, President and CEO, MicroSociety Inc.

On the Road Collaborative, based in Virginia, has been awarded a \$300,000 grant to scale up the organization's Academic Support and Career Enrichment programs to a new locality in the region. "On the Road Collaborative is overjoyed at having been selected as a grantee by American Student Assistance. We can't wait to bring our signature Career Enrichment program, which delivers extended, hands-on career experiences to youth, to a new region in our community," said Russell Leary, Co-CEO, On the Road Collaborative.

Partners for Youth with Disabilities has been awarded a three-year \$300,000 grant to expand the Career Immersion component of their career readiness programming, which provides individualized one-to-one and small group job counseling in Greater Boston. "Career Readiness empowers transition-age youth with disabilities with skills to increase employment opportunities through academic learning, mentoring, and real-world experiences. Last year, 51 percent of students secured an employment experience utilizing the knowledge and skills obtained through participation in the Career Readiness Program, compared to a national employment average of 22 percent for people with disabilities," said Joanna Dumas, Assistant Director, Youth Services, Partners for Youth with Disabilities.

The Rush University Medical Center has been awarded a two-year \$275,000 grant to fund the Rush Education and Career Hub (REACH) program, which will produce a toolkit and pilot programs, and offer technical assistance to other healthcare institutions to expand career-connected learning.

Squashbusters has been awarded a \$90,000 grant over three years to expand the career readiness component in its Engage, Enroll, Employ program for middle school and high school students. Squashbusters operates in three New England cities: Boston, Lawrence, and Providence.

Tarrant To & Through Partnership has been awarded a \$300,000 grant over three years to scale up the organization's Pathways to Careers (P2C) platform that guides parents and students in selecting a best-fit career pathway and supports advisors. Students and parents access the platform on their own time and share their selections with T3 advisors and high school counselors. "At T3 Partnership, we are committed to building clear pathways to bright futures for Tarrant County students by equipping them with the career tools and educational opportunities needed to thrive in the workforce. ASA's investment empowers us to think bigger and bolder in how we champion student potential, ensuring it translates into long-term economic mobility. Lasting impact is driven by a shared vision, and we are excited to unlock new possibilities and create meaningful change through this partnership," said Natalie Young Williams, President and CEO, T3 Partnership.

[Suits for Seniors](#) has been awarded a three-year \$150,000 grant, which will provide hands-on internships and new professional attire for students in Palm Beach County, FL. "Thanks to ASA's support, Suits for Seniors is expanding career pathways for students by connecting them to transformative internship opportunities. This initiative equips young professionals with real-world experience, industry mentorship, and essential skills to confidently transition into the workforce," said Jervonte Edmonds, Founder and CEO, Suits for Seniors.

[Uplift Education](#), the largest public charter school network in North Texas, has been awarded a three-year \$300,000 grant. The funding will support a pilot for a specialized Road to College & Career (RTCC) program focused on specialized populations, specifically Scholars with severe disabilities in self-contained classrooms, preparing them for life after high school.

[Foundation for California Community Colleges](#) has been awarded a two-year grant for \$250,000, which will fund research for equity gaps and long-term outcomes for dual enrollment students. "The [Success Center at the Foundation for California Community Colleges](#) is proud to be the first research project funded by ASA. Our project on career-connected activities in courses taken by California community college dual enrollment students will introduce a new dimension of understanding into the student experience," said Nadia Leal-Carrillo, Executive Director of Policy Development and Research for the Success Center. "We hope our findings will be the catalyst for local and state conversations across the nation to ensure career-connected activities provide dual enrollment students with equitable work-based learning experiences and help inform policy and programmatic changes that improve access and success for students who historically have been underserved by our educational systems."

In addition, ASA has renewed or committed to pooled funding ventures to maximize collective impact with other funders:

[Catalyze Challenge](#) has been awarded a three-year \$3.5 million grant to continue its efforts to accelerate innovative solutions. Since 2021, Catalyze has awarded more than \$14 million to over 60 organizations through national and regional challenges, with a positive impact on more than 45,000 learners.

[Pathways and Workforce Funder Collaborative](#), a fiscally sponsored project of [Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors](#), has been awarded a one-time \$325,000 planning grant. The Collaborative consists of education and workforce funders working to accelerate pathways and workforce outcomes for youth and young adults across the nation. "Thanks to our partnership with ASA, we are able to continue to facilitate co-investment, learning, and relationship building across 50 national and regional funders in the career pathways space," said Lindsay Wheeler, Facilitator for the Collaborative.

About American Student Assistance® (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit at the forefront of changing the way kids learn about careers and prepare for their futures through access to career readiness information and experiences for all. ASA helps middle and high school students to know themselves—their strengths and their interests—and understand their education and career options so that they can make informed decisions. ASA fulfills its mission—in schools and beyond the classroom—by providing free digital experiences, including Futurescape®, Next Voice™, and EvolveMe®, directly to millions of students, and through advocacy, impact investing, research, thought leadership, and philanthropic support for educators, intermediaries, and others. ASA fosters a generation of confident, crisis-proof young people

who are ready for whatever path comes next after high school. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-asa.

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