

Philanthropy Advocates, A Collaboration with Educate Texas

RFP for Advocacy Grants, Pathways to College and Career

Introduction

Philanthropy Advocates, formerly the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium (TEGAC), is a geographically and politically diverse consortium of 54 private, corporate, and community foundations from across Texas working together to promote, protect and improve public and higher education.

Research, innovation, seeding best practices, and rapid response form the foundation of what Texas philanthropy provides to state lawmakers and policymakers. Since 2012, Philanthropy Advocates has engaged the philanthropic sector to participate in research and advocacy around important public and higher education policy issues. Philanthropy Advocates is committed to serving as a trusted, non-partisan resource to Texas lawmakers that provides fact-based data on Texas public schools and post-secondary institutions. In 2019, we joined Educate Texas, housed at the Communities Foundation of Texas, to further our impact.

With our members' guidance, Philanthropy Advocates concentrates on public and higher education policy issues that have the greatest impact on student outcomes, including early grade success, pathways to college and career, effective teaching, and school finance.

Philanthropy Advocates has supported research and advocacy around effective pathways to college and career for close to a decade. In 2020, Philanthropy Advocates' membership decided to further our work in pathways to deeply focus on ensuring that the state meets its 60X30 goal: 60 percent of Texas adults will earn a post-secondary credential by 2030.

In order to move us closer to this goal, this past summer Philanthropy Advocates commissioned Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) to conduct research around student transfer. This research will identify systemic issues related to transfer, compile current approaches to reform transfer, and elucidate how COVID-19 has affected the education trajectory of community college students toward remaining at a two-year institution or moving to a four-year institution.

As a collaboration with Educate Texas, Philanthropy Advocates also works closely with the Texas Student Success Council, a group of diverse education leaders committed to shaping the state policy dialogue around increasing higher education attainment and preparing students to compete in the 21st century economy that is facilitated by Educate Texas. Both the policy recommendations of the Texas Student Success Council and the TACC research will both heavily inform Philanthropy Advocates' 2021 policy agenda as it relates to Pathways to College and Career.



Grant Details and Required Activities

As part of its ongoing efforts to provide objective and non-partisan data on public and higher education in Texas, Philanthropy Advocates is immediately seeking proposals from nonprofit organizations to assist and coordinate with Philanthropy Advocates, Educate Texas, and the Texas Association of Community Colleges to disseminate these research findings - as well as additional recommendations developed by the Texas Student Success Council - to the general public, media, and policymakers leading up to and through the 2021 Texas Legislative Session.

Philanthropy Advocates will award grants to nonprofit organizations with demonstrated experience and capacity to engage diverse audiences in these important public and higher education issues. Each organization may only submit one proposal. Proposals should include a full budget and the request should not exceed \$25,000.

Grant recipients must agree to:

- Participate and coordinate with Philanthropy Advocates, Educate Texas, and TACC in a strategic advocacy campaign to engage and educate policymakers and members of the media leading up to and through the 2021 Texas Legislative Session.
- Participate in regularly scheduled conference calls and select Philanthropy Advocates/Educate Texas meetings over the course of the grant period.
- Produce a brief report, outlining successes and challenges of the project at the conclusion of the grant period.
- Acknowledge funds granted under a grant agreement must be used for advocacy activities only and should not be used for direct or grassroots lobbying.

Grant Application Process

The application deadline is Friday, November 27, 2020. Grant awards will be announced by Friday, December 4, 2020. The grant period will begin January 1, 2021 and end on September 30, 2021.

Applicants should submit proposals via email to Becky Calahan at bcalahan@cftexas.org.

All proposals should include:

- Cover letter on organization's letterhead and signed by director
- Executive summary
- Narrative (no more than 5 pages) with project description, goals, activities, timeline, key staff, & plan to measure results
- Proposed budget
- Previous examples of media outreach and/or outreach with grassroots organizations
- Organization background

- Proof of nonprofit status:
 - W-9
 - Current list of Board of Directors
 - FY 2019 Financial Statement

Additional Background Information on Texas Student Success Council

In Texas, less than 25 percent of eighth graders go on to complete a higher education credential within six years—and for low-income and minority students, this percentage can dip below 15 percent. Yet of the 11.6 million jobs created nationally since the recession, 11.5 million require a postsecondary credential. The Texas Student Success Council was created in 2012 by Educate Texas to address this disconnect by developing policies that create smooth, streamlined pathways into and through institutions of higher education through initiatives that promote K-12 and higher education linkages, portability of credits and credentials, and greater alignment between education and the workforce. The Council is made up of a group of diverse education leaders committed to shaping the state policy dialogue around increasing higher education attainment and preparing students to compete in the 21st century economy.

Today, the Council continues to address the growing gaps between postsecondary access/completion and market demands. It is crucial that the state take this legislative session as an opportunity to address summer melt, growing unemployment numbers, and persistent systemic inequities that have been further exacerbated by COVID-19. Educating and re-skilling workers will be fundamental to the state’s economic recovery and ongoing economic health as we face a future in which the number of middle-skill jobs far exceeds the number of workers trained at the middle-skill level.

The Council will offer policy recommendations ahead of the 2021 Texas Legislative Session that we believe will contribute to economic recovery, the success of our students, and the development of data systems intended to address ongoing inequities in education and the workforce. These policy recommendations will make up much of Philanthropy Advocates’ 2021 policy agenda around Pathways to College and Career.

Additional Background on TACC Research Project

To best support students as they manage the multitude of challenges resulting from the pandemic, lawmakers and practitioners need to better understand how students are making education decisions in response to COVID-19. The decision to transfer from a community college to a university is especially critical, as over half of “good jobs” require a baccalaureate degree or higher (Carnevale, A.P., Strohl, J., Ridley, N., & Gulish, A., 2018); however, fewer than one in three Texans age 25 and older have attained this level of education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). To promote the prosperity of Texas communities and improve socioeconomic mobility in the state, more students need to complete a four-year credential.

Philanthropy Advocates has commissioned the Texas Association of Community Colleges to lead a policy research project to better understand the experiences of community college students who intend to transfer to a four-year institution, to translate the findings into a state and local policy context, and to share this knowledge broadly with the intention of influencing the improvement of transfer-related policy and practice. TACC will undertake three activities to fulfill these goals: 1) the administration of a survey to better understand how COVID-19 has impacted student education decisions, 2) an analysis of data about transfer in Texas, including the monetary costs to students and to taxpayers of inefficient transfer, and 3) a landscape analysis of the efforts of numerous groups working to improve transfer. Information from these three activities will be used to produce reports and policy briefs to educate members of the legislature and practitioners as the state works to create a transfer process that works for students. Insights from this research will also be incorporated into Texas Pathways Institutes and other Texas Success Center programming. The research findings will also inform the policy recommendations for Philanthropy Advocates' 2021 policy agenda.