

2-GEN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS A 2-GENERATION (2-GEN) APPROACH?

A 2-Gen approach is a bi-partisan strategy for developing economic opportunities for families with low income through aligned and coordinated services for both generations. Rather than a new or different intervention, the 2-Gen model is a paradigm for thinking about social service delivery in which parents and children from the same family are served deliberately and simultaneously, leading to greater economic mobility over time. Research indicates that a 2-Gen approach to whole-family support can lead to better outcomes for both parents/caregivers and their children.



Adapted from Ascend at The Aspen Institute

In addition to integrating services across generations, the 2-Gen approach is most successful when services span across different dimensions of family well-being. Physical and mental health, financial security, stable housing and social capital all impact economic mobility and are important components of the 2-Gen approach. For a more detailed explanation of the 2-Gen approach in the Austin/Travis county area, check out the [Family Opportunity Roadmap: The Austin/Travis County 2-Gen Strategic Plan](#) and the [2-Gen video: Family Opportunity, Two Generations at a Time](#).

WHAT ARE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAMS THAT UTILIZE A 2-GEN APPROACH?

Families are dynamic and programs that follow a 2-Gen approach will look different to support the needs of their families. 2-Gen programming takes various shapes and forms, but most encompass some combination of supports for:

- **Children:** Before and after school programs for children over 6, early childhood education programs for ages 0-5, and mentorship programming
- **Parents:** Adult Basic Education programs (ABE), high school diploma or equivalency (HSE), English as a Second Language (ESL), postsecondary education, workforce training, or financial education classes
- **Whole Families:** Physical and mental health services, home visiting, stable housing, financial security, case management, and networks of professional and social support

WHAT IS THE FAMILY OPPORTUNITY ROADMAP: AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY 2-GEN STRATEGIC PLAN?

The Plan is the first community-wide strategic plan for 2-Gen in the nation! It outlines a set of common goals and strategies for the Austin community to expand and strengthen the 2-Gen approach with two primary objectives:

- **Increase the number of families** in Austin/Travis County who are served through a 2-Gen approach; and
- **Improve family outcomes** by strengthening existing 2-Gen programs and services.

The Plan illustrates our community's commitment to creating an ecosystem of programs and services that expand economic opportunity for families with low income. United Way for Greater Austin is the backbone organization implementing the Plan with deep collaboration from over 50 family-serving organizations in the community.

HOW IS RACIAL EQUITY INCORPORATED INTO THE 2-GEN STRATEGIC PLAN?

Economic opportunity in the Austin/Travis County area is closely correlated with ethnic and racial background. The Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities noted significant racial disparities in Austin in the areas of education, housing, health, finance, and criminal justice – areas that align closely with economic mobility and the 2-Gen framework. In response, the 2-Gen Strategic Plan incorporates specific strategies to focus resources on families of color experiencing institutional barriers based on documentation status, racial, and ethnic background. We welcome thinking partners in this process and continue to engage various community leaders in developing equitable responses.

HOW WAS PARENT AND COMMUNITY FEEDBACK INCORPORATED INTO THE STRATEGIC PLAN?

At the beginning of the strategic planning year, United Way staff convened numerous parent focus groups to inform the blueprint of the strategic plan. Input from the focus groups was categorized into the four elements of a 2-Gen approach (education, social capital, health and well-being, and financial security), to guide the formation of strategies. Several ideas emphasized by parents (e.g., the need for program offerings in the evening hours) were included as specific strategies in the plan as a result. The Overarching Systems Change pillar of the strategic plan is in direct response to themes and suggestions shared in these meetings, as some ideas did not fit neatly into one of the other four areas. As our community engages the implementation phase of this strategic plan, parent and community input is vital to developing an equitable and responsive delivery system. We welcome ongoing feedback and are in the development stages of a platform to garner consistent community and parent input.

HOW DOES A 2-GEN APPROACH IMPACT THE ECONOMY IN THE AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY AREA?

A 2-Gen approach strengthens the Austin/Travis County economy by aligning the nuanced systems that serve adults and children, leading to greater family economic mobility over time. A family of three living in Austin needs to earn at least \$50,824 to pay for basic expenses. In Travis County, over one-third of households earn less than that. These are generally working parents in a variety of positions, such as retail salespeople, laborers and movers, and customer service representatives which are vital to the Texas economy. The Austin Metro Area Master Community Workforce Plan (MCWP) seeks to help 10,000 economically disadvantaged individuals secure middle-skill jobs by 2021. However, due to economic pressure, many *parents* who could potentially fill those jobs are having to negotiate difficult decisions, like staying in a low-paying job to avoid paying for full-time child care. A 2-Gen approach to services invests in local talent to fill the gap in middle-skill jobs by removing many of the barriers to education that parents face in child care, healthcare, stable housing, and other economic areas. This makes it easier for parents to attain the education and training needed to access a middle-skill job with a family-sustaining wage. Through a community-wide 2-Gen approach, systems that serve parents and children are coordinated and aligned so that parents can participate in education, training, and ultimately the workforce, and earn a family-sustaining wage, while also preparing their children (the future generation) for success.

HOW DOES A 2-GEN APPROACH ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF FINDING QUALITY CHILD CARE IN THE AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY AREA?

Finding affordable, quality child care is a barrier for parents who seek education, training or work. In Travis County, 28% of households with children under 5 years old are low income. Limited income makes it nearly impossible for families to afford child care, much less high-quality child care. The average cost of full-day care for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children is \$8,904 per year, an amount near the cost of college tuition. As a result, parents are often forced to make difficult choices concerning whether to stay home with their child(ren), go back to school, or participate in the workforce. Sometimes it may make more economic sense for parents to stay home with their child(ren) as the cost of child care would be higher than what they can make working full-time in a low-skill job. This dilemma limits parents' ability to pursue education and economic opportunity. The 2-Gen approach to service delivery links child care, early childhood education, and out-of-school time programming with education and/or training programs for their parents. By providing services at the same time and same place for both generations, parents can more easily access child care options that fit their needs.

WHERE ARE 2-GEN EFFORTS HAPPENING ACROSS THE COUNTRY?

Across the country, states, communities, and organizations are exploring 2-Gen approaches in various ways. The **Colorado Department of Human Services** has integrated a 2-Gen approach into all of its services, as part of a statewide effort to integrate a whole-family lens. In **Cincinnati**, the United Way developed a 2-Gen model focused on human-centered design to support parents as they train and access high demand careers. In the **Bay Area**, the United Way incorporated 2-Gen approaches in their application questions by highlighting community partnerships in delivering services. In **San Antonio and Bexar County**, the United Way developed a coordinated and integrated data system influenced by 2-Gen social services. For more information, check out the **Ascend at the Aspen Institute**, an organization documenting and sharing lessons from all over the nation in the 2-Gen landscape.