

The Academy Model for Parent-Learners (AMPL) Initiative

Call for Applications 2026-2027

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) invites community colleges and universities to participate in the Academy Model for Parent Learners (AMPL), a national initiative designed to help institutions of higher education (IHEs) better support students who are raising children while pursuing a postsecondary credential. Through a cohort experience, five selected institutions will assess their current policies, practices, and student supports, identify barriers facing parent learners, and implement specific strategies to improve persistence, completion, and career outcomes. Along the way, institutions will receive individualized guidance from CAEL, learn alongside peer institutions through a community of practice, and contribute to a growing body of knowledge about effective approaches for supporting parent learners.

Parent-learners—predominantly women, persons of color, and individuals from low-income backgrounds—represent more than 20% of the contemporary postsecondary student population, with single parents experiencing heightened levels of vulnerability. Notwithstanding their significant representation, these students are frequently marginalized within institutional data collection, strategic planning frameworks, and the provision of student support services.

AMPL is grounded in the belief that improving outcomes for parents in college requires more than adding a new program or expanding student support. It requires institutions to rethink how they serve parent learners across the entire student experience. That means aligning academic policies, student services, and workforce partnerships around the common goal of making it easier for parents to enroll, persist, complete a credential, and advance into careers with greater economic mobility.

Through a collaborative learning community, participating institutions will work together, learn from one another, and build practical individual and shared strategies that can be sustained long after the initiative concludes.

Why Participate?

Participating in the AMPL initiative offers a significant return on investment for institutions seeking to systematically improve outcomes for parent learners. By joining this cohort, your institution will receive the following support:

- **Evidence-Based Strategic Planning:** Utilize the Adult Learner 360 (AL360) diagnostic tool to shift from guesswork to data-driven, targeted, and cost-effective resource allocation.
- **Operational Capacity & Expert Coaching:** Gain 14 months of individualized expert consultation, saving the institution the time and cost associated with sourcing this level of support externally.
- **Financial & Resource Injection:** Leverage the \$15,000 project stipend and two years of CAEL membership to offset staff time and access high-value industry resources without additional overhead.
- **Scalable Infrastructure:** Move beyond temporary fixes to develop comprehensive, actionable implementation plans that create sustainable support structures, improving long-term metrics for persistence, completion, and career outcomes.
- **Peer-Validated Best Practices:** Accelerate internal development cycles by adopting proven policies—such as Credit for Prior Learning, process mapping, marketing, enrollment, industry and employer engagement, policy and parent-learner networks—shared directly through the community of practice.
- **Access to Professional Resources and the CAEL Conference:** Participants will attend an annual in-person convening alongside the CAEL conference, a premier event in adult education and workforce development. This provides direct access to networking, best practices, and innovative strategies for advancing adult learner outcomes.

The Commitment

- **Monthly Institutional Team Meetings (2-4 HOURS):** Participating institutions are required to convene monthly meetings with their designated cross-functional campus team (3–6 members). These sessions serve to track implementation milestones, review diagnostic AL360 data, facilitate inter-departmental collaboration, and ensure steady progress on institutional objectives.
- **Quarterly Cohort Meetings (1-2 HOURS):** Institutions will engage in quarterly virtual convenings with peer institutions in the AMPL cohort. These collaborative meetings provide a structured forum for sharing peer-validated best practices, mapping administrative processes, discussing policy adaptations (such as Credit for Prior Learning), and troubleshooting shared operational challenges.
- **Annual Individual Site Visit (8-16 HOURS):** Each institution will host one comprehensive annual site visit from CAEL project leaders and expert advisors. This visit allows for in-depth technical assistance, direct engagement with institutional

leadership and staff, evaluation of campus parent-learner resources, and tailored strategic coaching.

- **Annual In-Person Convening (24-32 HOURS):** Designated institutional team members must participate in one annual national in-person convening held alongside the premier annual CAEL conference. This gathering provides direct access to industry leaders, targeted professional development, networking opportunities, and national best practices for advancing parent-learner outcomes.

Project Timeframe - (September 2026 - September 2027)

The aim of the initiative is for participating institutions to achieve the following objectives:

- Conclude with a clear measurement, through the AL360 results, existing efforts to serve parent learners, how they are working, what impact are they making, what resources they take to deliver and what strategic improvements are required to improve/scale;
- Conclude with a comprehensive demographic and educational profile characterizing the parent-learner population within your own service area and participating cohort service areas to use for peer learning and comparison purposes;
- Conclude with a better understanding how parent learner data is collected, aggregated and analyzed and how institutions are using it to improve services for adult learners;
- Lift up varying types of organizational structures and capacity supporting adult learner functions across institutions
- Conclude with examples of how to monitor and implement interventions via policies and practices;
- Conclude with a complete and actionable implementation plan;
- Conclude with access to an emerging repository of existing strategic resources to optimize outcomes for parent-learners.
- Conclude with greater awareness of relevant and/or emerging national best practices related to optimizing parent-learner interventions and outcomes.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY & COMMITMENTS

Applicant institutions must adhere to the following requirements:

- A demonstrated willingness to participate in the AL360 assessment and academy model cohort.
- Collect and analyze student data.

- A formal commitment to fostering equitable parent-learner outcomes.
- Dedicated leadership, staff time and other resources required to fully participate in the academy, AL360, create and implement action plans and engage in the community of practice. ensure successful engagement in the initiative.

Selected institutions will be required to execute a stipend contract within 30 days of selection that delineates specific expectations, data-sharing, reporting obligations, and further institutional commitments.

ELIGIBLE USES OF FUNDS

Stipend funds are intended to support the institutional capacity required to successfully engage in the Academy Model for Parent-Learners (AMPL) initiative.

Stipend funds may be utilized for the following eligible activities:

- **Data collection and analysis:** Supporting the collection and analysis of parent-learner data for implementation planning and progress tracking. This includes efforts to monitor enrollment, credit accumulation, and credential completion.
- **Planning and readiness assessment:** Conduct an Adult Learner 360 (AL360) survey for students and staff
- **Project coordination:** Dedicated staff time to manage institutional participation, stakeholder relationships, and internal project alignment.
- **Personnel:** Supporting faculty and staff time dedicated to initiative planning, implementation, evaluation and participation in academy activities.
- **Implementation plan development:** Direct expenses incurred while developing and implementing comprehensive action plans to expand capacity for serving parent-learners.
- **Travel expenses:** Support attending annual convenings and other events throughout the duration of the project. This includes coverage for reasonable transportation, lodging, and per diem costs associated with mandatory participation in the national Community of Practice and the annual CAEL conference.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS & SUBMISSION

Please provide the following information, labeled and in the order specified below.

A. Strategic Initiative Overview

1. Describe your institution's vision for improving outcomes for parent learners and the goals you hope to achieve through participation in AMPL. Explain how this work aligns with your institution's strategic priorities, complements existing initiatives, and can be integrated into ongoing planning, assessment, and continuous improvement efforts.

B. Project Goals and Strategic Objectives

1. Describe the project your institution proposes to undertake through AMPL. Explain the challenges you hope to address, the goals you aim to achieve for parent learners, and how participation in the academy will help advance this work.

2. Strategic Alignment with Core Objectives: Elaborate on how the project will advance the initiative's fundamental goals, and the implementation of scalable, systematic support models for parent-learners.

3. Definition of Target Population: Define the specific demographic of parent-learners to be served.

4. Data Collection and Analytical Capacity: Detail the institution's current data collection system and what levels of availability it provides regarding disaggregated data. Identify specific systemic obstacles, such as limitations in institutional data systems that prevent the differentiation of parent-learners from the general adult student population.

5. Capacity and Institutional Resources

Applicants should identify a primary institutional liaison along with an institutional working group of 3-6 team members that includes someone a team member from **Institutional Research/Effectiveness**. Examples of potential team members may come from areas of the institutions such as: Academic Affairs Leadership (Deans, Department Chair, Faculty Champions), Student Success and Support (Registrar, Parent Learner Coordinator, Veteran and Financial Aid Advisors), and Career and Workforce (Adult Learner Specialists, Career Services staff, Internship/Apprenticeship Coordinators). This list is not exhaustive.

Submit applications and inquiries to Patricia Wallace at pwallace@cel.org

Submissions are limited to 8 pages.

Institutions will be selected in late September 2026, with activities beginning right away in September 2026 and running through September 2027. Selected partners must attend an

in-person convening from Nov 3, 2026 to Nov 6, 2026 in Pittsburgh, PA, held during the annual CAEL conference.

The submission deadline is 9/9/2026.