Aspen Prize Application Process

2023 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence
November 2, 2021

Today's Agenda

Timing	Topic
3:00-3:05 pm ET	**Introduction**
3:05-3:15 pm ET	**What makes an Aspen Prize winner?**
3:15-3:30 pm ET	**Aspen Prize process**
3:30-3:40 pm ET	**Aspen Prize application content**
3:40-3:55 pm ET	**Q&A**
3:55-4:10 pm ET	**Aspen Prize application tutorial**
4:10-4:30 pm ET	**Q&A**

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Important Dates and Resources

Upcoming dates and deadlines

- National Student Clearinghouse authorization form due November 9, 2021
- Application narrative and student progress data due December 13, 2021

Available resources

- Aspen Prize website with metrics on the top 150 institutions, an FAQ for applicants, and a recording of this webinar (available Nov 3).
- Dropbox link with a downloadable (but non-submittable) form of the application and data sheet, National Student Clearinghouse authorization form, FAQ document, and application instructions.

For additional questions, contact Rebecca Lavinson, Senior Program Associate, at
rebecca.lavinson@aspeninstitute.org

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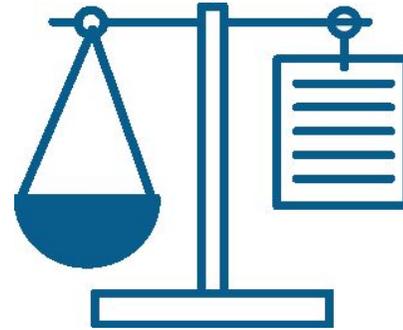# Goals of the Aspen Prize

Elevate the community college sector

Promote a new definition of excellence in student success

Facilitate the replication of effective practice

What makes an Aspen Prize winner?

1. Outcomes
2. Improvement
3. Practice
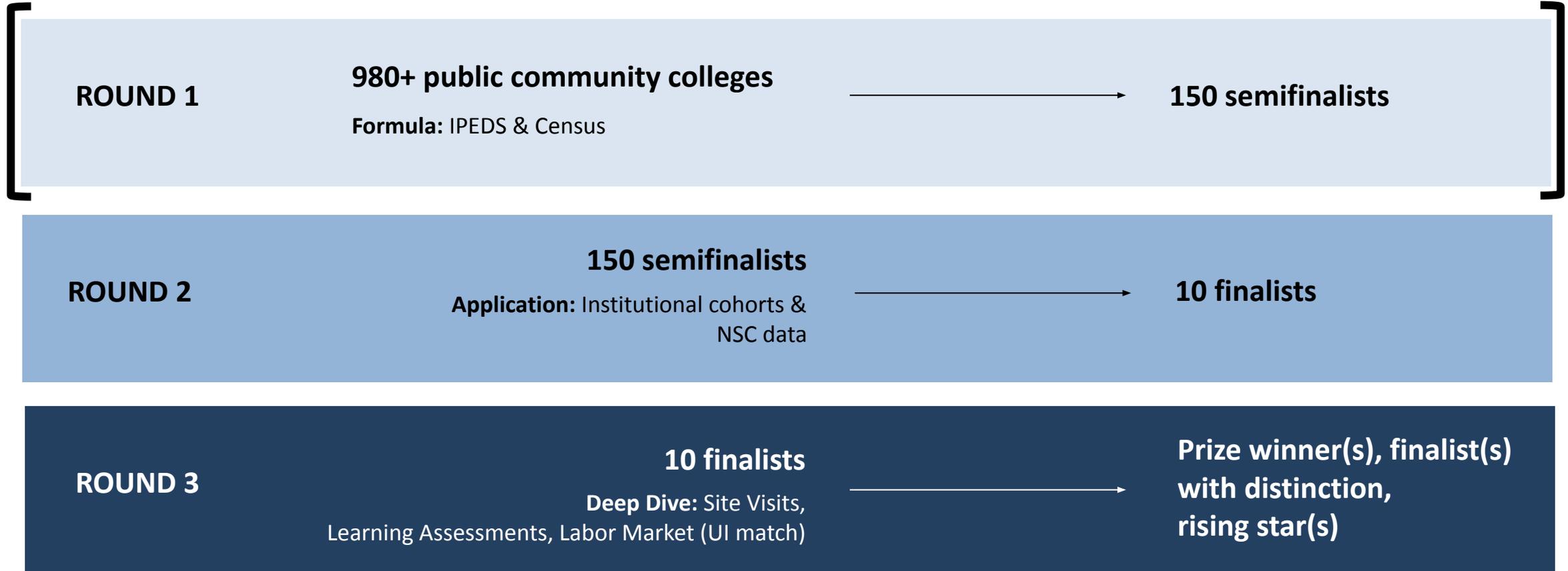4. Intentionality
5. Context and Degree of Difficulty

"It's not just data, but student-centered practices and stories help determine the prize winner."
- Tom Brock, 2021 Aspen Prize jury member

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Aspen Prize Selection Process

ROUND 1

980+ public community colleges

Formula: IPEDS & Census

→ **150 semifinalists**

ROUND 2

150 semifinalists

Application: Institutional cohorts & NSC data

→ **10 finalists**

ROUND 3

10 finalists

Deep Dive: Site Visits, Learning Assessments, Labor Market (UI match)

→ **Prize winner(s), finalist(s) with distinction, rising star(s)**

Data is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and income wherever possible

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Round 1: Data Metrics and Advisory Panel members
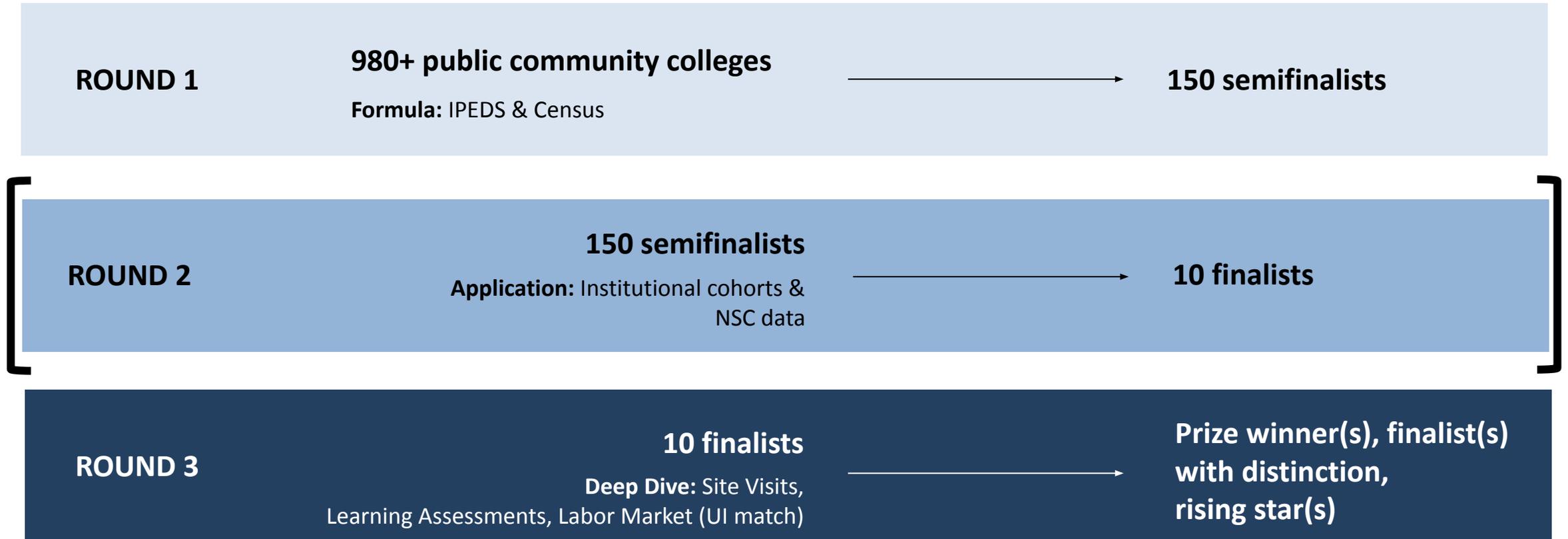From 980+ to 150

DMAP members
- Kathy Booth, WestEd
- Sue Clery, ASA Research
- Darla Cooper, Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges
- Kimberly Dancy, Institute for Higher Education Policy
- Afet Dundar, National Student Clearinghouse
- John Fink, Community College Research Center
- Laurie Heacock, Achieving the Dream
- Kent Phillippe, American Association of Community Colleges
- Francisco Solis, San Antonio College
- Christina Whitfield, State Higher Education Executive Officers Association

Round 1: Data
From 980+ to 150

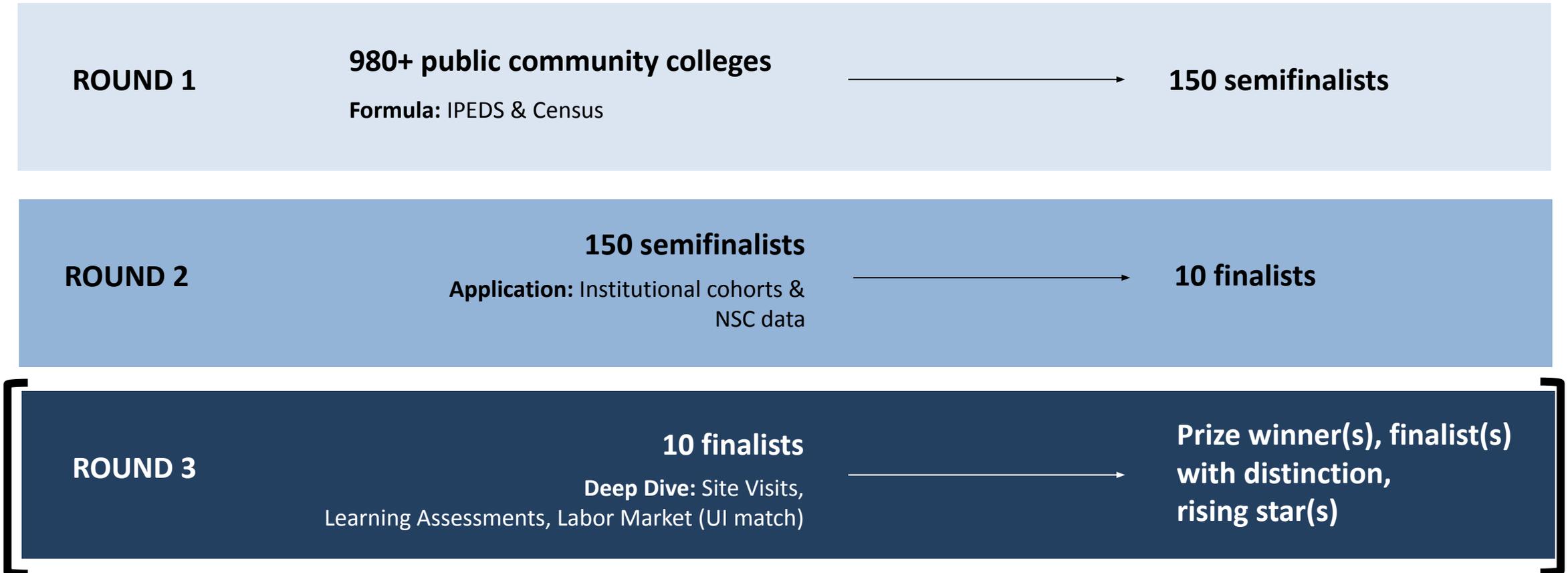| Performance	Change over time (improvement)	Equity
• First-year retention rate • Three-year graduation rate • Credentials awarded per 100 FTE students • Eight-Year completion rates for full- and part-time students.	• Performance variables - year-to-year increase or decline over 5 years	• Three-year graduation and degrees/100 FTE for students of color • Pell graduation rates • Median family income of service area • Percent receiving Pell Grants

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Round 2: Application and Selection Committee
From 150 to 10

1. **Selection committee round 1 reads**: each application is read twice and scored by members of the selection committee based on six domains:
   - Degree and Credential Completion
   - Transfer and Bachelor's Attainment
   - Workforce Outcomes
   - Teaching and Learning
   - Equity
   - Institutional Capacities and Culture

2. **Leadership calls**: Aspen staff and external experts conduct calls with presidents and leadership to gather clarifying information on the application and understand institutional priorities.

3. **Selection committee round 2 reads**: Based on the leadership calls and scores from the first round of reads, selection committee members participate in a second round of reads where each of the remaining applications is read and scored five more times for a total of seven reads per application.

4. **Selection committee meeting**: During a day-long meeting, selection committee members discuss the applications and select the top 10 Aspen Prize institutions to participate in the site visits.

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Aspen Prize Selection Process

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Round 3: Site Visits
Site visitor evaluations

- **Site visit teams** consist of 3-4 experts, including 1 senior Aspen staff member, 1 leadership expert, and 1 analyst, who conduct a 2.5 day site visit.

- Keeping the data in mind, site visitors learn about colleges' **vision, strategies, practices, measurable improvements, and continuous improvement** by meeting with all levels of faculty, staff, leadership, and external partners.

- Site visitors **score colleges according to the six domains**: completion, transfer, workforce, equity, teaching and learning, and institutional capacities and culture, and report back to the Prize jury.

Vision

Strategy

Practice

Measurable improvements

Continuous improvement
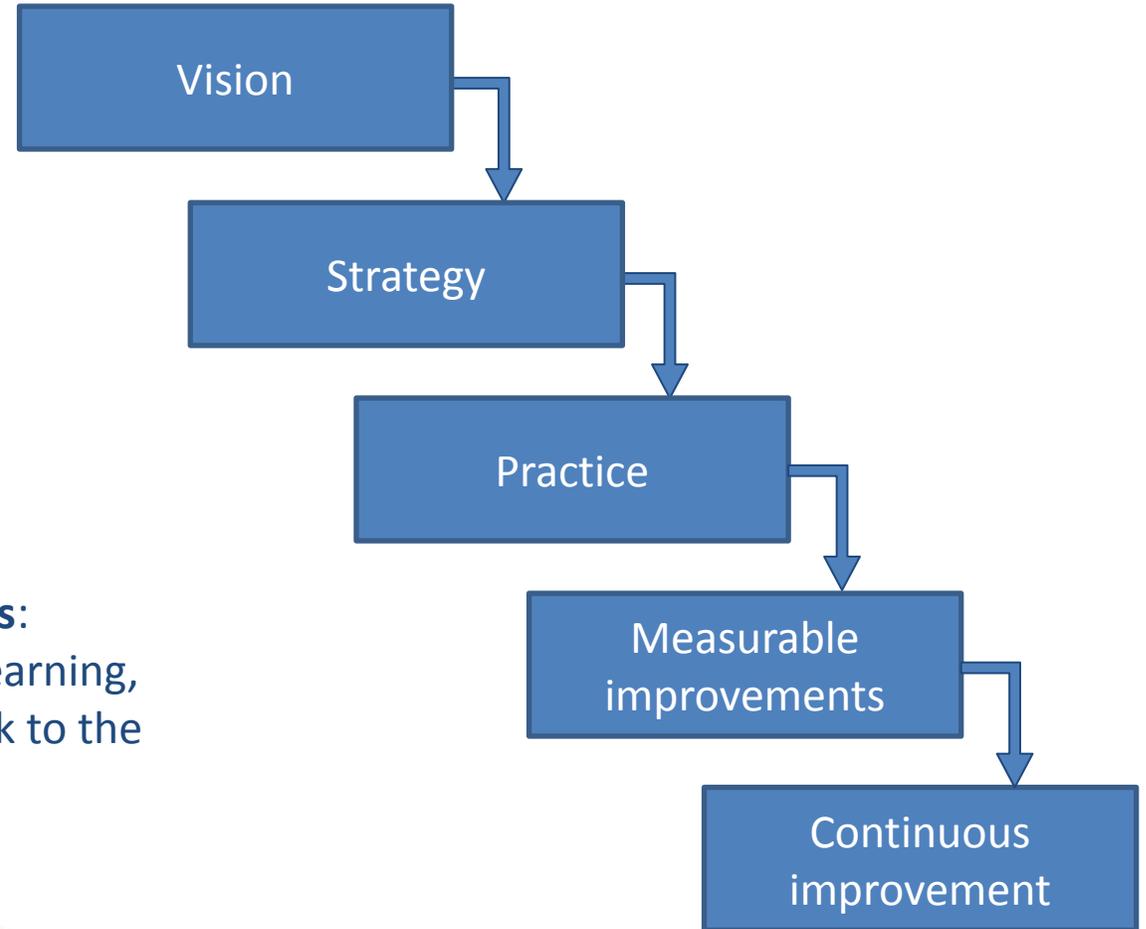
Round 3: Prize Jury
Jury meeting

- A Prize jury consisting of external experts reviews the qualitative information and quantitative scoring from the site visitors along with data.

- During a day-long meeting, the Prize jury ultimately selects the Aspen Prize winner.

- Aspen then uses knowledge from these site visits to inform content on community college practices for continuous improvement across the sector.

Vision

→ Strategy

→ Practice

→ Measurable improvements

→ Continuous improvement
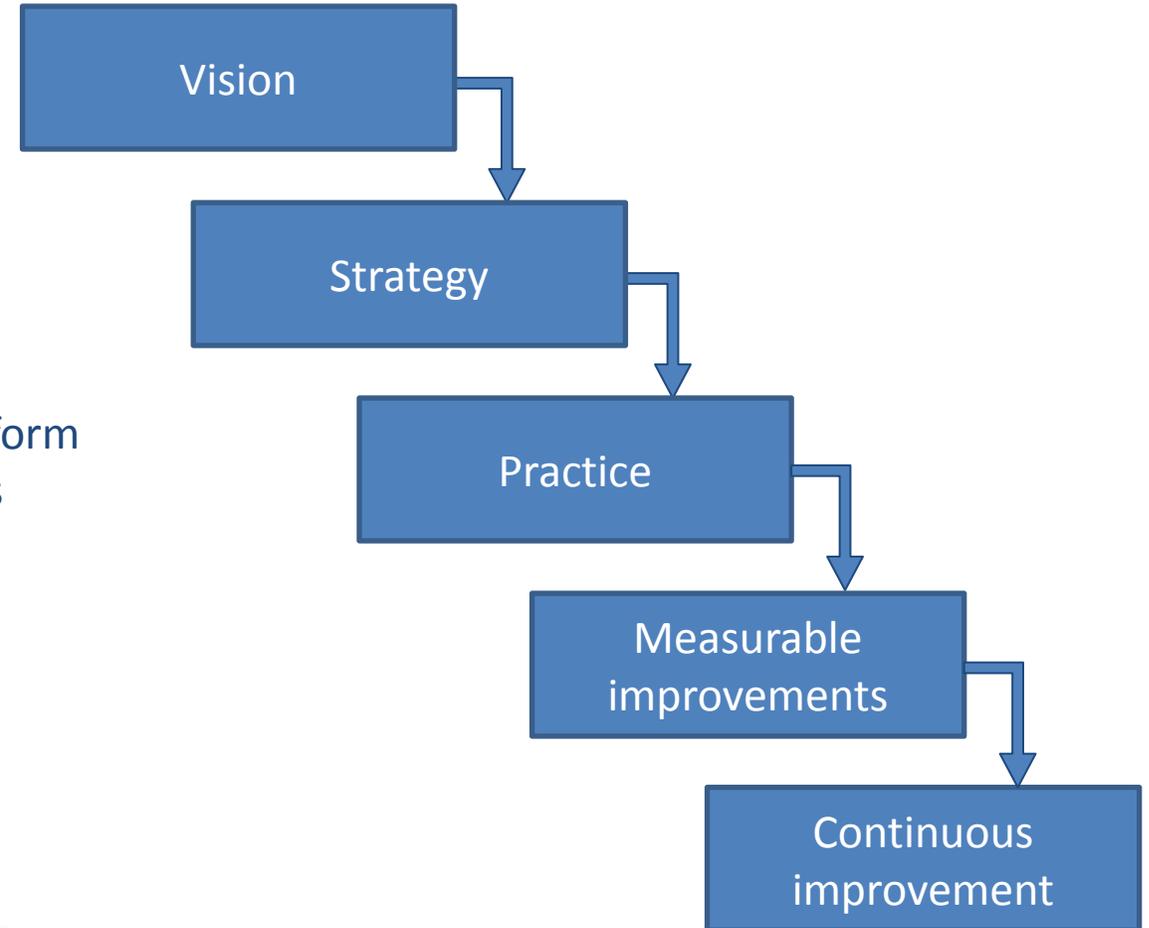
Aspen Prize Process: A Tool for Community College Improvement

Round 2: Application content

Evaluators will look for:
- Concrete examples of your college's student success strategies
- Evidence of their effectiveness or, where impact is not yet measurable, evidence of how the institution is assessing impact and making continuous improvements
- Scale

Aspen is interested in learning:
1. The specific student success challenges that have been identified
2. What student outcome goals were set to address those challenges
3. How the institution's most significant reform efforts are aligned with those goals
4. The scale at which any strategies described are currently implemented

You should highlight the biggest challenges your students face, programs to address those challenges, how you measure the impact of those programs, the scale of those programs, and your work toward continuous improvement.

Highlighting institutional priorities is key.

Round 2: Application content

Tips:
- **Write for an external audience:** Write the application in a way that someone without internal context can understand the practices.
- **Include quality over quantity:** Focusing on quality and intentional practices - including those that are/can be scaled to reach the right students and continuous improvement - is more important than listing every individual program.
- **Emphasize what you're doing, not what you want to do:** Evaluators look for great practices, outcomes, and continuous improvement rather than goal setting and ideas for future improvements.
- **Consider targeted vs. universal; internal vs. external:** It is important for evaluators to understand the scale of the practices, who they're targeting, and how.

Note: This is not a standardized test: Institutional context and mission matters to reviewers. Reviewers will be evaluating institutional effectiveness based on how institutions are serving students within their own context.

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Round 2: Application Overview (October 25-December 13, 2021)

1. **National Student Clearinghouse authorization form**
   - **Due November 9, 2021**

2. **Narrative Application:** 6 domains + executive summary and cover sheet
   - Cover sheet
   - Executive summary
   - Degree and credential completion
   - Transfer and bachelor's attainment
   - Workforce outcomes
   - Teaching and learning
   - Equity
   - Institutional capacities and culture

   Student Progress Data
   - Gateway course completion
   - Credit accumulation
   - Labor market outcomes (optional)
   - Transfer data (only if not reported to the NSC)

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Getting started: Locate the links to the two online application forms

You will have received two application links in an email, one for submitting the National Student Clearinghouse authorization form, and one for submitting the narrative and student progress data. The links and deadlines for submission are below:

- **National Student Clearinghouse authorization form (due November 9):** https://theaspeninstitute.submittable.com/submit/205675/2023-aspen-prize-application-national-student-clearinghouse-nsc-authorization
- **Narrative and student progress data form (due December 13):** https://theaspeninstitute.submittable.com/submit/c18088e0-63bc-4d9a-882e-b497037f5615/2023-aspen-prize-application-narrative-and-data-template

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Part 1: Complete the National Student Clearinghouse authorization form

National Student Clearinghouse authorization form (due November 9):

- Submittable platform link:
  https://theaspeninstitute.submittable.com/submit/205675/2023-aspen-prize-application-national-student-clearinghouse-nsc-authorization

- Downloadable form:
  https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/jtrpgkdpnfriuc9i6cbhs/National-Student-Clearinghouse-Authorization-Form.docx?dl=0&rlkey=5yht3x4or4n66b9uckue9nuy6

Part 1: Complete the National Student Clearinghouse authorization form

1. Download the National Student Clearinghouse authorization form

2. Sign the form

3. Upload the form

4. Submit the form by November 9

National Student Clearinghouse authorization form

The undersigned, as an authorized representative of this institution ("Institution"), authorizes and instructs the National Student Clearinghouse ("Clearinghouse") to use the Institution's data already provided to the Clearinghouse under the School Participation Agreement existing between them to prepare a study for the Aspen Prize competition.

The Clearinghouse will compare three cohorts of students who previously enrolled at the Institution with its nationwide postsecondary student database to determine the subsequent enrollment and academic achievements of those individuals. The Clearinghouse will use this information to prepare Institution level totals for first-time students with transfer-out and graduation rates.

The Institution authorizes the Clearinghouse to send the resulting aggregate level report to the Aspen College Excellence Program ("Aspen"), who will then use it among other criteria for determining the Aspen Prize top ten, winner, and finalists-with-distinction. Data included in the report will include the number and percentage of students who completed a degree at the Institution, transferred to a four-year institution, and completed at a four-year institution. For each cohort, the Clearinghouse will provide Aspen with two-year outcomes, three-year outcomes, and six-year outcomes as available from the already submitted data.

Clearinghouse acknowledges that it shall comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), as amended, to the extent that FERPA applies to this authorization to prepare a study for Aspen. It also acknowledges and promises that it shall inform Aspen in writing of its obligation to comply with FERPA, to the extent that the Act applies to the report (and data contained therein) delivered to Aspen from Clearinghouse.

The Institution acknowledges that the Clearinghouse will not be responsible for the accuracy of the information provided to it by the Institution. There will be no charge to the Institution for this study.

This Authorization Form shall remain effective for the duration of the study, unless terminated earlier by either Party by providing fourteen (14) days written notice to the other Party.

Signed National Student Clearinghouse authorization form *

[3] Choose File

Upload a file. No files have been attached yet.

Acceptable file types: .csv, .doc, .docx, .odt, .pdf, .rtf, .txt, .wpd, .wpf, .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .svg, .tif, .tiff

[1] Please download the National Student Clearinghouse authorization form here, sign it, and upload the signed version above by November 9, 202...

Save Draft   Apply [4]

X _____
[2] Signature of authorized agent

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Part 2: Assign a point person

Assign a point person to be in charge of inviting "collaborators" and submitting the application.

The point person and collaborators can all work on the application within the platform at the same time.

It may be helpful to begin drafting your answers on a separate document, like the Word Document version of the application and the excel workbook located in the 2023 Aspen Prize Application Materials and Instructions [dropbox folder](#), and copy and paste the answers into the Submittable platform once complete. You can also answer the questions directly in the online platform.

The point person can also help to collect the information from the leaders, faculty, and staff involved in the application, and write up the answers to the application questions.

Part 2, Step 1: Invite collaborators and begin the application

Instructions for the point person:

1. Click on **Invite Collaborators** in the upper right-hand corner of the application.
2. A Dialog box will appear, asking you to enter the email addresses of your collaborators.
3. Enter the email addresses, then click **Invite**.
4. Collaborators will receive an email letting them know they are invited to collaborate on the application.

Follow this link from Submittable for additional information: **https://submittable.help/en/articles/3654810-how-can-i-invite-people-to-collaborate-with-me-on-a-submission**

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Part 2, Step 2: Review the instructions on how to complete the narrative application

- Information on the 7 narrative sections of the application and how the narrative will be assessed are located at the top of the application.

- Start by filling out the application cover sheet.

Component 2: Narrative Application

Due by Monday, December 13, 2021 at 11:00pm EST

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS OF THE NARRATIVE APPLICATION, INCLUDING:

- Cover sheet
- Section 1: Executive summary
- Section 2: Degree and Credential Completion
- Section 3: Transfer and Bachelor's Attainment
- Section 4: Workforce outcomes
- Section 5: Teaching and Learning
- Section 6: Equity
- Section 7: Institutional Capacities and Culture

HOW THIS APPLICATION NARRATIVE IS ASSESSED

Given the goals of the Aspen Prize, and the emphasis on continuous, college-wide improvement, the Aspen Prize selection committee will look at your narrative application for concrete examples of your college's student success strategies and evidence of their effectiveness at scale. Aspen understands that not all promising efforts can be easily evaluated in isolation, and that implementing comprehensive institutional change strategies may not show immediate impact on lagging indicators (such as completion rates, transfer and bachelor's attainment, and workforce outcomes). We ask, however, that wherever possible you share how the institution is assessing impact and making continuous improvements in key strategies.

In each section, describe:

1. What specific student success challenges have been identified
2. What specific changes in outcomes the college is aiming to achieve to address those challenges
3. How the institution's most significant reform efforts are aligned to achieving those changes in outcomes

The application narrative should give the selection committee a clear understanding of the scale at which any strategies described are currently implemented. Be as specific as possible about how widely an effort is scaled now (e.g., the number/percentage of students or course sections impacted) versus aspirations for how widely it will be scaled in the future. This is not to suggest that only large-scale strategies are valued; rather, Aspen is interested in whether each student success effort is (or is planned to be) implemented at a scale adequate to the specific student success challenges the college has identified, and how leaders are assessing the adequacy of those efforts and working to improve them.

Application Cover Sheet

Institution name *

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Part 2, Step 3: Complete the narrative application

1. Make sure to answer all questions marked with a red asterisk.

2. Word count matters. The application will not accept an answer with a higher word count than indicated below the text box.

3. The application will automatically save as you work.

Please answer the three questions above ***** ① 1

B *I* U ≡ ≡ **"** 🔗

② 2   Limit: 1000 words

✅ Last Saved a few seconds ago ③ 3

Part 2, Step 4: Fill out the data section

You will be asked to submit data on:
- Gateway course completion
- Credit accumulation
- Labor market outcomes (optional)
- Transfer data (only if not reported to the National Student Clearinghouse)

You can find a **downloadable excel spreadsheet** with the data request organized into tables and tabs, which may be useful for gathering data from your institutional research representative before inputting into the portal's data fields, here. **However, unlike in previous cycles, Aspen will not be collecting final data submissions from institutions in a separate file.**

You will most likely need to work with your **institutional research department** to complete this section.

Part 2, Step 4: Directions for filling out the data section

Column A	Column B	Column C
Fall 2020 Cohort	Number of first-time, fall-entry students in the cohort	Metric cohort: Number of first-time, fall-entry students **required** to complete a "gateway" college-level **math** course
1 American Indian or Alaska Native		
2 Asian or Pacific Islander		
3 Black, non-Hispanic		
4 Hispanic		
5 White, non-Hispanic		
6 Two or more races		
7 Pell Recipient		
8 Non-Pell Recipient		

Number of first-time, fall-entry students in the cohort (column B)

B.1. American Indian or Alaska Native (gateway course) *

B.2. Asian or Pacific Islander (gateway course) *

B.3. Black, non-Hispanic (gateway course) *

B.4. Hispanic (gateway course) *

Fill in the boxes to the right. The table above is meant to act as a guide, with the letter/number combinations indicating the columns and rows of the table.

Part 2, Step 5: Apply

1. Click apply.
2. If there are any required questions that you did not answer, a notice will appear.
3. You will need to fix the error, identified below the question, to proceed.

Part 2, Step 6: Submission confirmation

Once you have successfully submitted your application, you will receive a notification on your screen and in your inbox.

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aspen institute

Success!

You'll receive updates from Submittable by email—to ensure you receive all notifications, follow these steps. You can also check on the status any time in your Submittable account.

Return to The Aspen Institute →

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for submitting your application on behalf of Aspen Institute for the 2023 Aspen Prize. The Aspen Prize selection committee will review your application, and the Aspen Prize team will reconnect if your institution is selected to continue the process.

Kind regards,

Rebecca Lavinson

Senior Program Associate, College Excellence Program

Aspen Institute

Rebecca.Lavinson@AspenInstitute.org

Round 2: Application
From 150 to 10

Labor market data tutorial

- Can be collected from a variety of sources, including state-run databases using unemployment insurance wage data or institutional surveys of students.
- Unemployment insurance wage matches offer most complete data
  - As a first step, contact your state's postsecondary education governing, policy, or coordinating boards for help accessing UI wage data.
  - Consider bundling your request with other Prize-eligible institutions in your state.
  - While Aspen only asks for the data in the template, consider using this as an opportunity to collect other data that would be helpful to your institution.

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Important Dates, Resources, and Next Steps

Upcoming dates and deadlines
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Available resources
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- Dropbox link with a downloadable (but non-submittable) form of the application, National Student Clearinghouse authorization form, FAQ document, webinar slides, and application instructions.

Next steps
- A team of external experts from the selection committee will review your application.
- The Aspen Prize team will share data specific to your institution benchmarked to the top 150 institutions.

For additional questions, contact Rebecca Lavinson, Senior Program Associate, at rebecca.lavinson@aspeninstitute.org

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THANK YOU

Ben Barrett	Rebecca Lavinson
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