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Upward Momentum Announces Inaugural Cohort of Grantees Bridging Urban & Rural Divides Across Missouri

10 organizations receive \$200,000 each to develop a collaborative approach in advancing economic mobility

ST. LOUIS (JULY 29, 2025) — Upward Momentum is proud to announce the inaugural cohort of 10 grantee organizations selected through its first-ever open call process under Bridging Divides — one of its core pillars for advancing economic mobility across Missouri. The organizations represent the critical work being done in urban and rural communities to ensure more families have access to opportunity and have the means to improve the lives of their families and families in their communities. Over the next year, these grantees will each receive a \$200,000 grant to create shared solutions as well as strengthen their own programs.

The cohort centers on the power of collective learning and collaboration to help leaders and institutions understand common issues, align resources and efforts, and collectively tackle obstacles to opportunity that reach as many families and individuals as possible. United by a shared commitment to helping Missourians improve their lives, this exchange will allow for approaches that are working in rural areas to be adapted in urban settings, and urban strategies to be applied in rural areas. The goal is to find solutions that are effective in both environments across the state that will advance upward mobility for people and communities facing the greatest need.

The open call process involved close collaboration with a set of seven Missourians to ensure each application received fair and consistent review. The applications were assessed across five areas, including track record of impact, focus on proven concepts, potential for scaling, dialogue and community engagement, and a commitment to collaboration.

The 10 selected organizations represent and serve rural and urban communities across Missouri, from Washington County to Cape Girardeau to St. Louis. They bring a range of expertise, working in mental health support, financial security and inclusion, food access, and other critical service offerings that strengthen local resilience and opportunity.

“East Missouri Action Agency is honored to have been selected for this cohort,” said Keri McCrorey, executive director of East Missouri Action Agency. “This partnership supports our



efforts in learning from others, creating real pathways for families to move up the economic ladder, and strengthening our entire community for generations to come.”

The inaugural cohort is another way in which Upward Momentum is prioritizing people in our state and making long-term investments that focus on fundamental change over generations. The 10 organizations include:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri (St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, and St. Charles, MO)
- Per Scholas (Kansas City and St. Louis, MO and seeking expansion into rural areas)
- Launch Code (St. Louis, MO and seeking expansion into rural areas)
- East Missouri Action Agency (Park Hills, MO and eight rural counties)
- HOSCO Shift (Kansas City, MO)
- Job Point (Columbia, MO)
- Center for Urban Agriculture (Columbia, MO)
- Connections to Success (Kansas City, MO)
- Heartland Center for Jobs & Freedom (Kansas City, MO and rural communities)
- St. Francis Community Services (St. Louis, MO and Washington County)

Visit www.UpwardMo.org to learn more and to sign up for email updates to stay informed.

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Upward Momentum is a Missouri-based philanthropic fund and collaborative for philanthropists and community members who are investing in bold, transformative interventions and partnerships that aim to address systemic inequities and improve opportunity for greater economic mobility for all.