

RFS | ASCEND

BUILDING THE BENCH FOR THE FUTURE

Run for Something (RFS) is a 527 political action committee and 501(c)(4) organization that recruits and supports young, diverse progressives to run for down-ballot races, building the bench of talented Democratic candidates for the future. In 2020, we're excited to launch our RFS Ascend program, aimed at providing high-impact donations to our top endorsed candidates.

BACKGROUND

Since 2017, RFS has become the preeminent organization supporting young, progressive candidates running for local and state legislative office. We've propelled hundreds of candidates to victory by providing 1:1 campaign support, elevating their profiles with the press, and connecting them to top-level resources provided by partner organizations.

We're thrilled that this year, Ascend PAC — an organization that has similarly focused on building the bench of Democratic candidates by providing direct financial support — is merging with RFS to help directly fund select RFS candidates in key target states, starting with Texas and Pennsylvania.

OUR APPROACH

The RFS Ascend program's approach reflects key elements of both Ascend and RFS's values and strategies:

The Long View. Our mission is to build the next generation of Democratic Party leaders. This work is less about 2019 and 2020 and more about 2030 and 2040. We only support first and second-time candidates running for local races — like school board, county commissioner, city council, district attorney, and state representative.

Impact. Our priority for investment will be high-leverage races. Candidates with budgets lower than \$250,000 will be prioritized over those with higher budget goals, so your donation will have a bigger impact. We'll also work with candidates in flippable races who are getting less attention.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Diversity, inclusivity, and creating a representative democracy are part of our core values — and are vital to a functioning democracy. We will endorse and support candidates whose diversity in gender, race, and sexual orientation moves us closer to that goal.

OUR WORK IN 2020

RFS plans to endorse at least 500 candidates in 2020. In the RFS Ascend program's first year, we aim to raise \$250,000 to benefit 20-30 candidates, all selected from the overall pool of RFS endorsees. We plan to expand our geographic footprint and the types of races RFS Ascend supports as we refine the process, but in this first year, we're focusing on state legislative candidates in Texas and Pennsylvania. They represent two critical states in 2020, and states we know well.

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SELECTION AND INVESTMENT PROCESS

Based on feedback from on-the-ground advisors and their own experience working directly with candidates, RFS regional directors will propose candidates to the Selection & Investment Committee, made up of RFS Ascend investors. This group will interview candidates and provide feedback to RFS leadership, who will make a final determination on which candidates receive funding. In 2020, most of our endorsements will take place in June, following the conclusion of the Texas and Pennsylvania primaries (though candidates that emerge later in the cycle will be considered through the same process).

Funding will then be distributed in three rounds -- late June/early July, September, and early October -- strategically timed to support campaigns at critical moments when they need funding most, and ensuring our chosen candidates are putting in the work and making the most of our investment. We will invest between \$2,500 and \$10,000 in each candidate's campaign, and all candidates we interview for selection will receive \$500.

SUPPORTING THE RFS ASCEND PROGRAM

The RFS Ascend program will reflect the high-impact investment and donor advisor model that Ascend PAC developed and refined over the past three years. We will continue to identify mid-level and high-dollar donors who support our mission, and provide them with the advice and guidance to effectively support emerging Democratic candidates.

Investors commit to donate between \$2,500 and \$10,000 per year. Half will go directly to RFS Ascend candidates, and half will support RFS as an organization (which allows RFS to run this operation and continue providing cost-free resources to the thousands of young, diverse progressives who raise their hands to run every year).

In exchange, investors can expect:

- Email updates sharing the impact of their investment and the candidates we endorsed.
- Periodic Zoom calls, where investors receive updates on the status of the program and have an opportunity to connect directly with our candidates.
- Invitations to local Run for Something events — virtual events for now, and in-person events when it becomes safe again.
- Ability to refer candidates for RFS's endorsement and the RFS Ascend program's support — all investors can suggest candidates for RFS to consider for our overall endorsement, as well as to be considered for selection by the RFS Ascend program.
- An opportunity to serve on the Selection & Investment Committee. All investors who commit to \$5,000 per year or more will be able to serve on the state-based Selection & Investment Committees.

Signing Up: To sign up as an investor, email us at ascend@runforsomething.net.