STATE OF OREGON

COVER PAGE

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

SUPPORT FOR OREGON'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES & COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATIONS (FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUCCESS GRANTS)

Request for Grant Applications (RFA)

#17-191 / ORPIN #525-1050-18

Date of Issue: January 11, 2018

Closing Date: February 12, 2018

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Section 1 – Opportunity Overview & Eligibility; Program Goals & Outcomes; Grant Budgets; Completion Date

1.1 Opportunity Overview & Eligibility

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission ("HECC"), on behalf of the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development ("CCWD"), collectively, "Agency," is seeking applications for competitively awarded grant funding to a yet-to-be-determined number of Oregon's community colleges and community college foundations, for projects and programs that support student assistance programs that increase the number of underserved, low-income, and first-generation college-bound students who enroll in community college and make progress toward a degree or a certificate.

Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 341.526, as created by House Bill 3063 (2015) (Attachment C), provides that "Moneys distributed… may be used by a community college, or a foundation of a community college, for services that are designed to increase student enrollment, retention and degree and certificate completion, including counseling programs, college initiatives, advising services and assistance in obtaining financial aid.".

Agency invites interested Oregon community colleges and community college foundations, to submit applications for grant funding to perform projects that address one or more of the approved elements and objectives identified in Section 2, below.

Only Oregon community colleges and community college foundations may submit applications in response to this RFA.

1.2 Program Goals & Outcomes

The overarching goal of this RFA is to support equitable access to higher education by increasing the number of under-served, low-income and first-generation college-bound students who enroll in community college and make progress toward a degree or a certificate.

The primary mechanisms to accomplish that goal, within the scope of this program, include:

- Providing outreach to students or potential students;
- Engaging communities in supporting college access and students success;
- Providing student advising services, and
- Monitoring and awarding scholarships to students for the purpose of enrolling in community college courses.

This program includes measuring the outcomes of each project funded through this RFA, in terms of the number of students who are enrolled in community college programs and may receive financial assistance as a result of this RFA.

1.3 Grant Budgets

Agency received an appropriation of $3,111,000 for the purposes of accomplishing the goals described in ORS 341.526. These funds are available for award on a competitive basis. Funds will be awarded to projects that Agency regards as having the greatest potential for effectively enrolling and retaining the target students in community college certificate and degree programs.

Agency has not established individual Grant amounts or limits. Grant awards will be based on the number of students that applicants expect to serve. Proposals should not identify more than $3500 in grant funds for each student served, but may identify less. Agency reserves the right, and intends to make awards in amounts that will maximize the tangible return on the total fund appropriation. It is likely that the amount

of funding provided in each Grant will differ, possibly significantly, from other Grants awarded under this RFA.

1.4 Completion Date

The ***anticipated*** completion date for projects conducted with funding provided through this RFA, including delivery of required final reports, is June 30, 2019. Agency reserves the right to establish different project end dates, as they may be defined in any Grant issued pursuant to this RFA.

Section 2 – Approved Project Elements & Objectives; Other Application Requirements

2.1 "Future Connect"

Interested parties should note that House Bill 3063 (2015), which created ORS 341.526, is based on a successful program model, "Future Connect", developed by Portland Community College ("PCC") and its partners. Agency encourages applicants to investigate PCC's Future Connect program as a potential project example, and as a possible aid in forming respective projects for application under this RFA. Future C17-191onnect Evaluation (Attachment D), Gateway to College National Network Review (Attachment E) and final reports from past grantees (Attachment F) are included in this RFA for informational purposes.

2.2 Elements & Objectives

All applications must address the project goals referenced in Section 1.2, above, and must identify activities taking place at the community college in three areas: financial support for students, advising & mentoring of students, and connecting students to cohorts of peers. Applications should identify those activities that would be supported by grant funds and those that will be funded by other sources, where applicable. Other elements and objectives applicants should address in the application include:

- Developing a program or project that will eliminate barriers to attending college while providing on-going support to help students once they get to community college.
- Developing an outreach program to connect with and recruit area high school students.
- Developing a scholarship program that will help with tuition, books, fees, and supplies.
- Providing financial assistance counseling for other scholarships or grants.
- Developing a personalized advisor program to help students navigate their college experience, addressing academic and barriers to success issues.
- Providing students with ongoing career guidance with their personalized academic advisor.
- Providing access to internships to apply students' college experience and learning to real-world job opportunities.
- Providing students online access to the program or project on the community college's website.
- Developing partnerships with local business and other community partner programs that will provide a match amount to increase scholarship opportunities.

2.3 Other Application Requirements

Applications must identify any specific collaboration that a college may engage in for the performance of its proposed project, including the names of all partner organizations and each partner's respective role(s) within the project.

Agency will measure the results of each funded project in part, by the number of individuals enrolled. Applicants must provide a means to quantify results, and must identify the means by which results will be reported to Agency. All reporting processes are subject to Agency's approval.

In addition to describing particular elements and objectives, applications must include narrative information that describes the following components:

- Strategy – how will the project achieve tangible results for improving college enrollment

opportunities for identified students?
- Partnerships – identify any project partners, and include commitment statement(s) (with partners' signatures); explain partners' roles.
    - Partnerships are not a requirement, but are ***strongly*** encouraged.
- Describe any "matching" funds or other outside project support.
- Outreach plan that factors in engagement with the local community/ target demographic.
- Staffing plan.
- Performance measures for the project – how will you measure success?
- Sustainability plan.
- Proposed project budget milestones.
- Schedule.

Section 3 – Grant Agreement Requirements

Agency will prepare grant agreements ("Grants") for projects selected for funding. These Grants will be based on the successful applicants' proposed activities, budgets and any negotiated adjustments. Any award of funds is contingent upon execution of a Grant acceptable to Agency. If a Grant is not executed Agency may reallocate the amount of that Grant to other applicants. The following requirements will be incorporated into all resulting Grants:

- All funds must be used for direct support of project objectives, and must be aligned with ORS 341.526.
- Periodic progress reports to Agency will be required – one at the project's midpoint, as well as a final project report. Report content will include, but not be limited to, descriptions of activities, progress to date, barriers and how they were overcome, partnership interactions, performance and outcomes measurement against established benchmarks and standards, and summaries of project expenditures. Exact progress report elements will be defined in the Grants.
- Payment for student tuition and course fees may be allowed based on goals and strategies proposed by the college or foundation.
- Meeting expenses can be included in budgets when there are clearly identified project-related purposes or outcomes for each such meeting.
- Administrative costs are allowed for these Grants, up to a maximum of 10 percent of the total grant amount. Administrative costs include indirect project costs (e.g., overhead) incurred by the grantee in the performance of the project.
- Funding may be allowed for activities that are already funded through other sources, if requested by applicants and approved by Agency in its Grant award.
- Mid-point monitoring will be conducted by the Agency, and an on-site review or conference call review may be conducted to assess progress. Partners involved in the performance of any funded project will be required to attend on-site or conference call monitoring meetings.
- Purchase of non-consumable equipment, of ***any*** value, will be considered and may or may not be approved by Agency. Such a determination will be made along with Agency's decision as to whether or not it will fund a grant application. For the purpose of this RFA, *non-consumable equipment* is defined as property that is durable and has an expected service life of two years or more. Non-consumable equipment includes, but is not limited to: software, computers, or similar information technology assets.
- Consumable supplies necessary to the successful implementation and performance of the project are allowable costs. For the purpose of this RFA, *consumable supplies* are defined as items that are consumed, or otherwise utilized, in the normal course of project activities (e.g., office supplies, textbooks, and similar items).
- Staffing costs may be allowed, provided they are clearly described in the application on which a Grant is based.

- Project activities and deliverables for the Grant must be completed by June 30, 2019. Final project reports and reimbursement requests must be submitted to Agency by July 31, 2019.
- **Note:** Funds that are not encumbered or spent by December 31st, 2018 may be scheduled for redistribution to other grant projects at Agency's discretion.

Section 4 – Schedule & Procedures

4.1 Schedule

The table below represents a tentative schedule of events. All times are listed in Pacific Time. All dates listed are subject to change.

Event	Date	Time
Questions/ Requests for Clarification Due	January 18, 2018	3:00 PM
Closing (Applications Due)	February 12, 2018	3:00 PM
Issuance of Notice of Award (approximate)	March 12, 2018	
Grant Award/ Project Start Date (approximate)	April 20, 2016	

4.2 Single Point of Contact (SPC)

The SPC for this RFA is identified on the Cover Page, along with the SPC's contact information. Applicants shall direct all communications related to any provision of the RFA, whether about the technical requirements of the RFA, contractual requirements, the RFA process, or any other provision only to the SPC.

4.3 Application Package Delivery Options & Requirements

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the requirements described in Section 5 of this RFA. Applications submitted in any format, or by any method other than those specified in this RFA will not be accepted for consideration or award.

4.4 Reservation of Agency Rights

Agency reserves all rights regarding this RFA, including, without limitation, the right to:

- Amend or cancel this RFA without liability if it is in the Agency's best interest to do so;
- Reject any and all Applications upon finding that it is in the Agency's best interest to do so;
- Waive any minor irregularity, informality, or non-conformance with the provisions or procedures of this RFA;
- Reject any Applications that fail to substantially comply with all prescribed solicitation procedures and requirements;
- Amend at Agency's sole discretion, any Grants awarded as a result of this RFA;
- Engage other grantees by selection or procurement independent of this RFA process or any Grants made under it;
- Accept applications in whole or in part. Agency is under no obligation to do so, but at its discretion may request additional information or clarification from applicants for the purposes of assuring a complete understanding of the applications and supporting an accurate review, evaluation and comparison;
- Require applications be modified if it is determined to be in the best interest of the public.
- Extend any Grant resulting from this RFA without an additional solicitation process.
- Modify the type of agreement vehicle employed, based on what Agency deems most appropriate

to the type of work for which funds may be awarded.

4.5 Application Withdrawal

An application may be withdrawn in writing on applicant's letterhead signed by an authorized representative and received by Agency prior to the time and date set for RFA closing. An application may also be withdrawn in person before the time and date set for RFA closing upon presentation of appropriate identification.

4.6 Application Modification

Modifications to previously submitted applications will be considered by Agency, if received prior to the scheduled closing date. Envelopes must be clearly marked: "Modification," with "RFA # First-Generation Student Success Grants" indicated. Oral, email, faxed or telephone modifications or corrections will not be recognized or considered.

4.7 Notice of Award

Agency shall provide written notice to each applicant of Agency's decision to award or reject its respective application.

4.8 Cost of Preparing and Submitting Applications

All costs incurred in preparing and submitting an application shall be the responsibility of the applicant and will not be reimbursed by Agency.

4.9 Public Records

This RFA and one copy of each application received in response to it, together with copies of all documents pertaining to the award of any Grant, shall be kept by Agency and made a part of a file or record which shall be open to public inspection in compliance with all applicable federal or state law. If an applicant believes that its application contains any information that is considered trade secret under ORS 192.501(2), or is otherwise exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law, ORS 192.410 through 192.505, the applicant must mark each sheet of such information with the following legend:

> *"This data is exempt from disclosure under ORS 192, and shall not be disclosed except in accordance with the Oregon Public Records Law, ORS 192.410 through 192.505."*

The Oregon Public Records Law exempts from disclosure only bona fide trade secrets, and some exemptions from disclosure apply only "unless the public interest requires disclosure in the particular instance." Therefore, non-disclosure of documents or any portion of a document submitted as part of an application may depend upon official or judicial determinations made pursuant to the Public Records Law.

4.10 Contractual Obligation

All applicants who submit an application in response to this RFA understand and agree Agency is not obligated to award a Grant or to enter into any agreement with any applicant and, therefore, has absolutely no financial obligation to any applicant.

4.11 Grant Amendments

Amendments to Grants may be made for unforeseen circumstances that occur as the project activities progress. Any amendments made to agreements resulting from this RFA will be within the general scope of ORS 341.526. Amendments must be in writing and signed by authorized representatives of both parties. Amendments must have all required approvals before the amendments are binding on the Agency.

Section 5: Application Package; Application Submittal and Format Requirements

5.1 Application Package Requirements

In order to be considered for Grant award, application packages must contain all of the following components:

5.1.1 Cover Letter

Each application must include a cover letter on applicant's letterhead that addresses the overall direction of and approach to meeting the intent of this RFA. The cover letter must identify the organization submitting the application, and must be signed by an authorized representative of that organization. The cover letter must include the following statement:

> *"As part of the following application, the signature affixed to this cover letter by an authorized representative of this organization affirms our acknowledgement, understanding, and acceptance of all statements found in Section 5.1.1 of the RFA."*

- Applicant agrees to be bound by all terms and conditions in the RFA.
- Applicant will not discriminate against a subcontractor in the awarding of a subcontract because the subcontractor is a minority, women or emerging small business enterprise certified under ORS 200.055.
- Applicant has completely read and understands all the provisions of the RFA.
- The application submitted is in response to the specific language contained in the RFA and applicant has made no assumptions based upon either (a) verbal or written statements not contained in the RFA, or (b) any previously-issued RFA or other solicitation.
- The application was prepared without collusion, fraud, or other dishonesty.
- Agency shall not be liable for any claims or be subject to any defenses asserted by applicant based upon, resulting from, or related to, applicant's failure to comprehend all requirements of the RFA.
- Agency shall not be liable for any expenses incurred by applicant in either preparing or submitting its application or in participating in the RFA evaluation/ selection or Grant negotiation process, if any.
- By submitting an application in response to this RFA, applicant is verifying that it can perform the activities described in the submitted application.

5.1.2 Narrative

Applications must include a written narrative addressing the project elements, objectives, activities and application requirements described in Section 2. The narrative should also demonstrate the applicant's capability and capacity to perform the proposed project activities, and should explain why Agency should select the applicant for a Grant award.

5.1.3 Proposed Budget

Applications must include an estimated project budget, Budget Worksheet (Attachment B), identifying anticipated cost elements and amounts for each. Agency will incorporate the estimated budgets in any awarded grants.

5.1.4 Partner Confirmation

Applications must describe any partners that the applicant may engage to perform the proposed project, including the role each partner will perform, and any benefits derived from the partner's participation. Applications must also include signed statements from all partner entities committing to participating in the applicant's proposed project, or at minimum, some verifiable proof that the partner is committed to the project.

5.1.5 Technical Assistance Provider

Applications may include a plan with a separate budget that includes providing technical assistance to grantees. Technical assistance includes organizing meetings or conferences for grantees and other interested community colleges, providing information or guidance on problem solving or program improvement, or assisting grantees with evaluation, data collection, or program improvement. These activities may be provided by the college or by a third-party partner. Applications to provide technical assistance will be reviewed separately from the rest of the application.

5.2 Application Submittal and Format Requirements

Applications must be formatted and submitted in accordance with the following requirements:

5.2.1 Page Limit

The narrative portion of the application must not exceed a **maximum of 4 pages**, with 1" margins and all text at least 11 pt. font. The narrative portion of the application must be in Microsoft "Word" application format, and *must not* be submitted in any write-protected format, or any other format that would restrict Agency's ability to manipulate application content in any way.

- The required cover letter (see Section 5.1.1) does not count toward the 4-page limit.
- The budget, including any budget narrative, does not count toward the 4-page limit.
- Partner signature pages do not count toward the 4-page limit.
- Technical assistance narrative and budget should not exceed 2-pages in total, does not count toward the 4-page limit.

5.2.2 Sustainability

In accordance with the 2003 Oregon Sustainability Executive Order, applicants shall submit applications in the simplest and most cost effective manner, providing a straightforward, concise description of the applicant's plans and ability to meet the requirements of the RFA. Applications should be submitted using 8½" x 11" white paper. Applications should be typed without expensive art work, unusual printing or other materials not essential to the utility and clarity of the applications.

5.2.3 Submittal

Applications must be submitted to Agency using one of the following methods. Applications submitted in any format, or by any method other than those specified in this RFA **will not be accepted for consideration or award.**

Applications may be submitted in sealed package(s) or envelope(s) by ***mail, delivery service or in person***, delivered to the SPC at the following address:

Higher Education Coordinating Commission
Attn: Karen DeHut
255 Capitol St. NE, 3rd Floor
Salem, OR 97310

Applications submitted using this method must include one original printed version of the application, including all required components and information; and one electronic copy of all application documents in the electronic format described in this Section 5.2.1, and recorded on compact disk or flash/ thumb drive media. The printed and compact disk/ flash/ thumb drive copies must be delivered together in a single sealed package to Agency. Applications must be delivered postage or shipping pre-paid. Agency will not accept Application packages with shipping fees or postage due. Faxed applications will not be accepted.

OR

Applications may be submitted as documents in electronic format, submitted as an attachment(s) in an **Email message** delivered to: Karen.E.DeHut@HECC.Oregon.gov. The subject line of the email containing an application must read: "RFA # 525-1050-18".

All electronic formatted versions of applications and attachments must be submitted in Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel application formats, and must not be write-protected. Applications submitted in .pdf format or any other format will be considered "non-responsive", and will not be considered.

Note: Signature pages can be submitted in .pdf format.

If applicants elect to submit applications by email, they must confirm Agency's receipt of their documents before the Closing Date and time by contacting the SPC, either by separate email or by phone.

Section 6 – Application Review

6.1 Review Process

A review team comprised of Agency staff and external reviewers will evaluate each properly submitted application. Reviewers will assess each application for merit in terms of potential/ estimated impact and advancement of the program goals and objectives described in this RFA, and on how the proposed project meets the required elements described in this RFA.

In its sole discretion, Agency may make multiple awards in response to this RFA. Such awards may be in similar or differing amounts.

By submitting an application, applicants acknowledge and affirm their acceptance of the decisions of the Agency's review process. Applicants may be required to revise the scope of their projects in order to satisfy Agency's goals and the requirements of ORS 341.526. For example, a proposed project may be selected for a Grant, only with the incorporation of Agency-directed modifications.

6.2 Disqualification

Any attempt by an applicant to influence a member of the review panel will result in the elimination of the application from consideration.

Section 7 – List of Attachments

Attachment A Sample Agreement
Attachment B Budget Worksheet
Attachment C HB 3063
Attachment D Future Connect Evaluation
Attachment E Gateway to College National Network review
Attachment F Final Reports from Grantees