

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)

#22-051 / OREGONBUYS #52500-5835

Closing Date and Time: March 31, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. Pacific Time

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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 for projects and programs that increase the number of students who are underrepresented race/ethnicity as defined in ORS 342.120, low-income, and/or first-generation and who enroll in community college and make progress toward a degree or a certificate. ***Only community colleges and community college foundations are eligible to apply.*** Agency will determine the number of Grant recipients based on available funding and a comprehensive review of all applications received.

Oregon Revised Statute (“ORS”) 341.526 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 implement and sustain projects that address one or more of the approved elements and objectives identified in Section 2 below.

1.2 Program Goals & Outcomes

1.2.1 Overarching Goal

The overarching goal of this RFA is to support equitable access to and completion of community college certificates and degrees 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.

1.2.2 Allowable Access and Retention Strategies

Allowable strategies for increasing access and retention, within the scope of this program, **must** include one or more of the following:

- To support students with access to resources and supplies that eliminate the financial burden of attendance. These include, but are not limited to: transportation and childcare vouchers, laptops and mobile hotspots, eyeglasses, GED® testing fees, First-Year Experience course fee waivers, textbooks, calculators, and other supplies/materials needed for coursework.
- Providing academic and/or career advising & mentoring of students
- Helping students identify a pathway to completion, with the pathway identified within the student’s first two terms.
- Connecting students to cohorts of peers.
- Providing outreach to students or potential students.
- Engaging communities in supporting college access and student success.

1.2.3 Allowable Completion Strategies

Gaining access to college is an essential first step; without an increased ability to complete a certificate or

degree, not all students are able to achieve their educational and career goals. Notwithstanding strategies for increasing access and retention that community colleges may wish to support through this Grant program, **all Grantees must include one of the allowable completion strategies listed below as part of their application** for increasing the college completion of under-served, low-income, and/or first generation students. **Applications that only identify access strategies, without addressing completion strategies, will be deemed non-responsive and will not be evaluated.** Allowable strategies for increasing completion within the scope of this program **must** include one or more of the following:

- Enrolling more new-to-college students directly in college-level math and writing courses with co-requisite supports. Some examples are:
 - Developing or expanding co-requisite courses in math, especially high-enrollment and transfer courses.
 - Developing or expanding co-requisite courses in writing, especially WR 121, 122, and 227.
- Increasing the number and percent of students completing their college-level math (STEM or non-STEM) and writing requirements in their first 12 months of enrollment using strategies that have a demonstrated history of success.
- Significantly reducing the number full-time equivalent students taking developmental education courses, especially more than one level below college level.
- Increasing the number of students that complete 18 or 36 credits within their first 12 months of enrollment.

1.2.4 Optional Additional Access and Retention Strategies for Consideration:

- Developing or expanding advising and scheduling options that enable students to complete at least a half-time course load in their first year.
- Developing or expanding 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 or expanding an outreach program to connect with and recruit area high school students.
- Developing or expanding a scholarship program that will help with tuition, books, fees, and supplies.
- Significantly expanding the use of Open Educational Resources for students and decreasing textbook costs.
- 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.
- Developing partnerships with local business and other community partner programs that will provide a match amount to increase scholarship opportunities.

1.3 Grant Budgets

Agency anticipates receiving an appropriation of \$3.3 million for 2023-25 for the purposes of accomplishing the goals described in ORS 341.526. These funds will be available for award on a competitive basis. Funds will be awarded to projects that Agency regards as having the greatest potential for effectively increasing the college completion rates of the target students in community college certificate and degree programs. Grant

activities should be planned for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025. Agency reserves the right to amend the Grant Agreements to enlarge the duration and amount of Grant Funds as the legislature appropriates additional funds for the 2023-2025 biennium. For avoidance of doubt, applications to the RFA will be used to make awards for the appropriations for the 2023-25 biennium; there will not be a separate or additional RFA for those appropriations.

Agency has not established individual Grant amounts or limits. Grant awards will be based on the number of students that applicants expect to serve and the projected efficacy of the intervention. 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 is June 30, 2025. Final reports from Grantees will be due 30 days following the project completion date. 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 – Successful Program Models; Approved Project Elements & Objectives; Application Requirements

2.1 Successful Program Models

2.1.1 Future Connect

Interested parties should note that the statute implementing this Grant program, 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, in particular for access and retention strategies. See “Improving college students’ success through comprehensive financial and advising support: Findings from the Future Connect Evaluation”, for more information. The report can be found here:

<https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/future-connect-report-508.pdf>.

2.1.2 Accelerated Study in Associate Programs

The City University of New York’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs has a demonstrated history of increasing the number of students completing associate degrees, transfer to baccalaureate programs, and bachelor’s degree attainment. This program was replicated in Ohio and led to a doubling of graduation rates at a cost of \$2,331 per participant per year. See “Doubling Graduation Rates in a New State” for more detail, found here: https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/ASAP_brief_2018_Final.pdf.

2.1.3 Early Momentum Metrics

Research conducted by the Community College Research Center on Early Momentum Metrics has found that when students complete college-level English & math in their first year their completion rates are more than double when compared to baseline students. Similarly, completion rates are much higher for those that complete at least a half time load of credits (15 semester credits, equivalent to 18 quarter credits). If students successfully earn full-time or more than full-time credits, their award rates increase even further. See “Early Momentum Metrics: Leading Indicators for Community College Improvement” for more information, found

here: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/early-momentum-metrics-leading-indicators.pdf>.

2.1.4 Corequisite Models of Developmental Education

A significant body of research exists that demonstrates improved college completion for students that enroll in corequisite remedial courses (Logue, Watanabe-Rose, Douglas, 2016:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0162373716649056>; Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, Jagers, 2013:

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/ccbc-alp-student-outcomes-follow-up.pdf>; Denley, 2016:

https://www.tbr.edu/sites/tbr.edu/files/media/2017/02/TBR%20CoRequisite%20Study%20-%20Full%20Implementation%202015-2016_1.pdf). Adopting corequisite models of developmental education in English/writing and mathematics has a demonstrated impact on student success and colleges that propose increasing the number of students placed into corequisite courses will receive additional weighting in the application review process.

2.2 Application Requirements

Agency will evaluate the results of each funded project on changes to the number and percentage of first-time entry (students enrolling in your college for the first time) underrepresented, low-income, and first-generation students who complete college-level math and writing requirements in their first 12 months of enrollment and the changes to the number and percentage of students with these characteristics who complete 18 or 36 credits in their first 12 months of enrollment, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, low-income, and first-generation status. Projects will also be evaluated on the cost per students.

Agency will provide a reporting template to successful applicants as part of their Grant Agreements.

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

- Completion Strategy – Describe the strategy or strategies you will use to increase college completion for identified students. Describe the steps you will take to implement the strategy or strategies. Explain how the project will achieve tangible results for increasing college completion or transfer opportunities for identified students. See Section 1.2.3 above.
- Enrollment or Retention Strategy – Describe the strategy or strategies you will use to increase enrollment and retention of identified student populations. What steps will you take to implement the strategy or strategies? How will the project achieve tangible results for increasing enrollment and retention opportunities for identified students? See Section 1.2.2 above.
- Partnerships – identify any project partners, and include commitment statement(s) explaining partners' roles (with partners' signatures—see Section 5.1.5 below)
 - Partnerships are not a requirement, but receive additional weighting in the review process.
- Describe how the program will be self-supporting after the Grant Period ends.
- Describe how your community college has the capability and capacity to perform the proposed project activities, and explain why Agency should select you for a Grant award.
- Data reporting – Please add the following information to the attached Data Reporting Template (Attachment A):
 - Provide headcount enrollment and pass rates for each math course offered by your community college in 2021-2022 including whether each course is college-level or is 1, 2, or 3 levels below college-level. Identify targets for year 1, 2, and 3 of the Grant.
 - Provide headcount enrollment and pass rates for each writing course (not including creative writing), including whether each course is college-level or is 1, 2, or 3 levels below college-level.

- Identify targets for year 1, 2, and 3 of the Grant.
- Provide number of first-time entry students completing college-level math and writing within their first year of enrollment for. For avoidance of doubt, “first-time entry” means a student’s first enrollment in any post-secondary education institution, not just at that particular community college. Identify targets for year 1 and 2 of the Grant.
- Staffing plan, including position descriptions, for staff positions that will be funded by the Grant.
- Project sustainability plan, in accordance with activities that will be covered by this Grant.
- Proposed project budget milestones.
- Project 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 between the parties. 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](#).
- Quarterly invoicing with activity description, and full activity midyear and final reports to Agency will be required. 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. Report templates will be included in the Grants.
- Grantees will be evaluated against their identified targets for Years 1, 2,. Grantees that fall significantly short of targets may lose eligibility for continued Grant funding.
- 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 to assess project progress may be conducted by the Agency, through on-site reviews or conference call reviews. Partners involved in the performance of any funded project will be required to attend on-site or conference call monitoring meetings. Additional meetings may be requested by Agency.
- 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, 2025. Final project reports and reimbursement requests must be submitted to Agency by July 31, 2025.

Note: Grant Funds for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025, that are not encumbered or spent by March 1, 2025, 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	March 17, 2023	3:00 PM
Closing (Applications Due)	March 31, 2023	3:00 PM
Issuance of Notice of Award (approximate)	May 15, 2023	
Grant Award/ Project Start Date (approximate)	July 1, 2023	

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, including questions 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 other 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.

4.5 Application Withdrawal

An application may be withdrawn only by a written request to withdraw on applicant's letterhead signed by an authorized representative and received via email to SPC 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 via email to the SPC prior to the scheduled closing date and time. Email must be clearly marked: "Modification," with "RFA #22-051 First-Generation Student Success Grants" indicated. Oral, faxed, mailed, or telephone modifications or corrections will neither be recognized nor 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 192.345(2), or is otherwise exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law, ORS 192.311 through 192.478, 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 192.311 through 192.478."

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 provide written narratives addressing each of the application requirements described in

Subsection 2.2. Please write your narratives for both the periods of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 and for July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 with the assumption that Agency will receive additional appropriations for the 2023-25 biennium to provide additional Grant Funds.

5.1.3 Proposed Budget

Applications must include an estimated project budget in the form of the 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 Data Reporting Template

Applications must include required data elements (Attachment A).

5.1.5 Technical Assistance Provider

Applications may include a plan with a separate budget that includes providing technical assistance to other Grantees. Technical assistance includes, but is not limited to: 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 **6 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 6-page limit.
- The budget, including any budget narrative, does not count toward the 6-page limit.
- Partner signature pages do not count toward the 6-page limit.
- Technical assistance narrative and budget should not exceed 2-pages in total and does not count toward the 6-page limit.

5.2.2 Sustainability

In accordance with the 2003 Oregon Sustainability Executive Order, applicants must 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 typed without expensive artwork, 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 described below. Applications submitted in any other format, or by any method other than those specified in this RFA **will not be accepted for consideration or award**.

Applications may be submitted as documents in electronic format, submitted as an attachment(s) in an **Email message** delivered to: HECC.Procurement@HECC.Oregon.gov. The subject line of the email containing an application must read: "RFA #22-051/ORBuys #5835."

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 Data Reporting Template

Attachment B Budget Worksheet