



MHEC

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

Maryland Higher Education Commission

Maryland ADAPTS Grant Program
A Statewide Reverse Transfer Project

Request for Proposals

Due Date:
November 25, 2013

(Submit Original with Signatures, Three Additional Hard Copies, and One Electronic Copy)

Deliver to the Attention of:

Dennis L. King
Maryland Higher Education Commission
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Baltimore, MD 21201

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Maryland Higher Education Commission

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Secretary of Higher Education

Maryland ADAPTS Grant Program Timeline

October 22, 2013	Request for Proposals Issued
November 7, 2013	ADAPTS Conference Call 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. The provided dial-in number and conference call code should be used to attend the meeting Toll-free dial-in number (U.S. and Canada): (866) 247-6034 Conference code: 8337996036
November 12, 2013 3:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.	Technical Assistance Meeting Charles I. Ecker Business Training Center 6751 Columbia Gateway Drive Columbia, MD 21046
November 25, 2013	Proposals due to MHEC by 3:00 p.m. To include: original signed copy and three hard copies to Maryland Higher Education Commission, 6 N. Liberty Street, 10 th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21201; and one electronic copy to dking@mhec.state.md.us
Week of December 2, 2013	Proposal Review Panel Meeting
Week of December 9, 2013	Initial Award Notifications Reviewer Proposal Revisions and/or Questions Addressed to Campuses
December 20, 2013	Project Start Date and First Grant Payment Issued (Pending Receipt of Proposal Revisions if Applicable)
April 2014	ADAPTS Project-wide Meeting
June 2, 2014	Interim Project, Budget, and Data Report Due
June 16, 2014	Second Grant Payment Issued
December 19, 2014	Project End Date
February 27, 2015	Final Project, Budget, and Data Report Due
March 2015	ADAPTS Wrap-up Meeting

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BACKGROUND

Governor Martin O'Malley has set a statewide goal that by 2025, at least 55% of Maryland residents ages 25-64 will hold an associate's or bachelor's degree. This represents a 10 percentage point increase over the State's current attainment rate of 45.4%. Projections suggest that if no new interventions are implemented, the total number of degrees produced by all Maryland institutions will increase to 45,000 annually by 2025. However, to attain the level of degree awards necessary to reach the 55% goal, Maryland must go beyond current projections and produce 58,000 degrees per year. While these increases will be supported, in part, by natural enrollment growth (approximately 7,000-8,000 degrees), the majority of additional degrees must come from new initiatives like the one outlined in this Request for Proposals (RFP).

Maryland has taken a number of steps to move the State forward towards its college completion goal. Statewide completion strategy policies were enacted as part of the College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) integrated completion goals into the 2013 State Plan for Postsecondary Education, and has pursued external funding to support the State's completion agenda. In 2011, Maryland began a pilot reverse transfer program, ADAPTS (Associate's Degree Award for Pre-degree Transfer Students) with funding from a Complete College America (CCA) Completion Innovation Challenge Grant. Through this grant, a policy audit, an inventory of current institutional efforts to award reverse transfer associate's degrees, an expansion of Maryland's current articulation and transfer system (ARTSYS) to include reverse transfer (ARTSYS-RT), and training in the use of ARTSYS-RT were conducted. Through reverse transfer, community college transfer students who either have enough credits, or who are a few credits short of receiving an associate's degree at the time of transfer, can be retroactively awarded that credential once the appropriate credits are earned at the four-year transfer institution. A statewide reverse transfer program not only advances the State's efforts to reach its college completion goals, but it also equitably awards degrees to students who have earned them, thus providing them with a credential that improves their employment options.

In 2012, Maryland was one of 12 states to receive an award from the *Credit When It's Due* (CWID) initiative led by the Lumina Foundation, and funded by a consortium of grantors. (Maryland's award is funded by USA Funds.) The overarching goals that were established for Maryland's CWID project were: 1) 100% of all Maryland community colleges, 100% of all Maryland public four-year institutions, and at least 50% of Maryland independent non-profit four-year institutions will participate in the award of reverse transfer associate's degrees by the end of the grant period; 2) at least 70% of all eligible Maryland community college transfer students will receive an associate's degree post transfer; and 3) stakeholders will demonstrate increased understanding of college completion issues as indicated by the development of institutional and statewide transfer and articulation policies that remove potential barriers and challenges to reverse transfer. Maryland's CWID project includes a competitive sub-grant program that provides financial incentives and support to Maryland institutions to expand the implementation of ADAPTS, the State's reverse transfer program. That is the focus of this current RFP. All Maryland public two-year and four-year institutions, and all Maryland independent non-profit institutions, are eligible to apply.

MARYLAND ADAPTS GRANT PROGRAM SUMMARY

Purpose and Required Activities

The overarching goal of the Maryland ADAPTS Grant Program is to assist the State and its higher education institutions in working toward the development of a statewide reverse transfer agreement and toward the

standardization of policies, practices, and systems for the awarding of reverse transfer degrees. In doing so, this Grant Program seeks to support the implementation of institutional policies and practices that promote reverse transfer; to strengthen the technological capabilities of colleges and universities to exchange electronic transcripts and participate in reverse transfer articulation; and to increase the number of reverse transfer degrees awarded across the State of Maryland. Proposed projects under this RFP may include activities such as enhancing or establishing an institution's technological infrastructure to award reverse transfer degrees, reviewing student transcripts, articulating program or course equivalencies, developing marketing and outreach materials, and implementing institutional policies, practices, and support services that promote reverse transfer.

Projects that show promise for replication, or for contributing to a statewide reverse transfer agreement or system, will receive priority funding under this RFP. While institutions may choose the exact focus of their individual project efforts, at a minimum, all must commit to:

1. Developing partnerships with one or more feeder institutions. Institutions must commit to exchanging transcripts, evaluating transcripts, and awarding associate's degrees within the timeframe of the grant.
2. Providing project data, including the number of potential reverse transfer students contacted, the number of transcripts exchanged and/or evaluated, and the number of associate's degrees conferred during both the interim and final reporting periods. A standard data collection form will be provided with the interim and final report templates.
3. Collaborating with MHEC in the development of a statewide agreement for reverse transfer.
4. Participating in interim and final project meetings, hosted by MHEC.

Eligibility

All Maryland public two-year and four-year institutions and Maryland independent non-profit institutions are eligible to apply.

Award Period

December 20, 2013-December 19, 2014

Award Range

The maximum award amount is \$25,000 per campus. At least 15 awards are anticipated.

Fundable Activities

Examples of fundable items include but are not limited to:

- Faculty or staff release time, short-term contractual personnel, or other personnel costs related to the award of reverse transfer associate's degrees.
- Technology development and technological assistance to implement automated transcript review and reverse transfer course articulation (e.g. ARTSYS-RT).
- Web site development, brochures, marketing materials, forms, letters, and other outreach methods for students.
- Personnel and partnership travel costs and meeting expenses related to reverse transfer.

Required Match

Institutions are required to provide a match equivalent to 20% of their grant request amount through in-kind funds or other supports, in order to ensure institutional buy-in and support for the long-term sustainability of the project.

For example, if the total asking amount is \$20,000 in grant funding, institutions would be required to provide a match of \$4,000. Institutional match should be included in the proposal budget.

Assurances (required - no points)

Each grant application must be accompanied by a Statement of Assurance signed by the President or the Provost/Chief Academic Officer. Letters of Support from the leadership of the departments from which key personnel are drawn are encouraged but not required. Use the form in Appendix I.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Application Format

The application narrative should not exceed 10 single-spaced pages. This page count excludes the cover page, abstract, budget, budget narrative, and appendices. (Note: Appendices are not required.) Please make certain to use one inch margins and 12-point fonts such as Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial, or similar. Tables may use 10-point font.

Application Components

All applications should include the following components, in this order. Use appropriate forms when provided.

Cover Page

The Application Cover Page is provided in Appendix 2. The contact information and the original signature of the authorizing official (e.g. Chief Academic Officer, Provost, VP level or higher) should be included.

Abstract

Prepare a short abstract (approximately 500 words) describing your institution's proposed reverse transfer project. The abstract should be suitable for publication on the MHEC Web site, press releases, or other media.

Problem Statement and Scope

Provide a description of the reverse transfer issue(s) your institution seeks to address through the ADAPTS Grant Program. Include a description of your institution's prior work (if any) in reverse transfer. Also include supporting data about your target student population(s) if applicable.

Project Goals, Benchmarks, and Outcomes

State the overarching goals of your project, benchmarks you will use to assess your progress, and anticipated outcomes from your work.

Operations Plan

Describe your detailed plan of action for implementing your project, including a projected timeline for all major project activities and milestones.

Management Plan

Describe the management team that will be involved in your project, and a summary of their project roles and responsibilities.

Project Evaluation

Describe the formative and summative evaluation methods you plan to use to evaluate your progress and outcomes.

Budget

Prepare a project budget using the form provided in Appendix 2 of this RFP.

Budget Narrative

Prepare a brief budget narrative that details expenditures and explains related costs for each budget category.

Application Submission

- Institutions must submit both the hard and digital copies of the application to MHEC by 3:00 p.m. on November 25, 2013.
- All forms must be included with the application. The RFP and application forms are available at <http://www.mhec.state.md.us/grants/index.asp>.
- Applicants will be notified via email that their application has been received.

Proposal Review and Evaluation

Review panel members will read each application and score proposals based on the rubric below. Each application will be reviewed and scored by at least three reviewers. The review panel will be convened after members read the assigned applications individually. Panel members will discuss their scores, recommendations for funding, and any recommendations for adjustments to projects. They will share comments about improvements that are required to enhance fundability of a given project. Reviewer comments will be made available to all applicants whose applications are not funded. Recommendations will be presented to the Secretary of Higher Education or her designee for final funding determination. Consideration will be made to ensure that funds are distributed across a range of institutions and geographic locations across the state.

Each proposal will be evaluated by the review panel as follows:

Proposal Scoring Rubric

<u>Category</u>	<u>Maximum Points</u>
Problem Statement and Scope	10
Project Goals, Benchmarks, and Outcomes	30
Operations and Management Plans	30
Project Evaluation	10
Budget and Budget Narrative	20

Award Notification

Initial notification of awards will be sent to project directors via email during the week of December 9, 2013. Awardees may be asked to clarify certain information or make adjustments to their proposal based upon the reviewers' recommendations. Once all information and conditions are met, formal award letters will be mailed to grant recipients. Mandatory grant provisions and a Grant Award Notice will also be provided. Funds will be disbursed once all information and conditions are met. Please allow up to 45 days for funds to be processed through the Maryland Comptroller's Office.

Appendix 1: POST AWARD GRANT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

1. FISCAL PROCEDURES

All funds under this program must be assigned to a specific account. If an institution receives more than one grant award, separate accounts must be established for each. For this grant cycle, grant awards will be disbursed in two payments. The first payment will be 50% of the total grant award. The second payment will be the remaining 50% of the total grant award. This second payment will be made after the project's interim report has been approved. Expenditures in excess of approved budget amounts will be the responsibility of the recipient institution.

2. POST-AWARD CHANGES

The grant recipient shall obtain prior written approval for any change to the scope of the approved project. To request changes, request a project amendment from MHEC's Office of Outreach and Grants Management. The request must include an explanation of the specific programmatic changes and/or a revised budget, as applicable. If project activity dates have changed significantly since the application submission, you must submit a revised calendar of activity dates.

The grant recipient must also obtain prior written approval from MHEC's Office of Outreach and Grants Management to:

1. continue the project during any continuous period of more than three (3) months without the active direction of an approved project director;
2. replace the project director (or any other persons named and expressly identified as a key project person in the application) or to permit any such person to devote substantially less effort to the project than was anticipated when the grant was awarded;
3. make changes resulting in additions or deletions of staff and consultants related to or resulting in a need for budget reallocation; and
4. make budget changes exceeding \$1,000 or 10% in any category, whichever is greater.

3. PROJECT CLOSEOUT, SUSPENSION, TERMINATION

Closeout: Each grant shall be closed out as promptly as feasible after expiration or termination. In closing out the grant, the following shall be observed:

- The grant recipient shall immediately refund, in accordance with instructions from MHEC, any unobligated balance of cash advanced to the grant recipient.
- The grant recipient shall submit all financial, performance, evaluation, and other reports required by the terms of the grant in accordance with the due dates spelled out in this RFP.
- The closeout of a grant does not affect the retention period for State and/or grantor rights of access to grant records.

Suspension: When a grant recipient has materially failed to comply with the terms of a grant, MHEC may, upon reasonable notice to the grant recipient, suspend the grant in whole or in part. The notice of suspension will state the reasons for the suspension, any corrective action required of the grant recipient, and the effective date. Suspensions shall remain in effect until the grant recipient has taken action satisfactory to MHEC or given evidence satisfactory to MHEC that such corrective action will be taken or until MHEC terminates the grant.

Termination: MHEC may terminate any grant in whole or in part at any time before the date of expiration, whenever MHEC determines that the grant recipient has materially failed to comply with the terms of the grant. MHEC shall promptly notify the grant recipient in writing of the termination and the reasons for the termination, together with the effective date.

The grant recipient may terminate the grant in whole or in part upon written notification to MHEC, setting forth the reasons for such termination, the effective date, and, in the case of partial terminations, the portion to be terminated. However, if in the case of a partial termination, MHEC determines that the remaining portion of the grant will not accomplish the purposes for which the grant was made, MHEC may terminate the grant in its entirety.

Closeout of a grant does not affect the right of MHEC to disallow costs and recover funds on the basis of a later audit or review, nor does closeout affect the grantee's obligation to return any funds due as a result of later refunds, corrections, or other transactions.

4. RECORDS

A grant recipient shall retain the following records for a period of five (5) years after the completion of the grant project:

- records of significant project experience and evaluation results;
- records that fully show amount of funds under the grant, how the funds were used, total cost of projects, all costs and contributions provided from other sources, and other records to facilitate an effective audit.

5. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

To ensure accountability and sound fiscal management, MHEC's Office of Outreach and Grants Management serves as the State monitor of grant activities. In addition to requiring interim and final reports, MHEC staff may conduct site visits, undertake telephone interviews, or request written materials for this purpose.

6. INTERIM REPORTS

Forms for the interim report will be provided at <http://www.mhec.state.md.us/Grants/index.asp> at least one month prior to the report due date. Interim reports will include project narrative, data, and budget sections that include but are not limited to:

- Responses to questions posed on the interim report form (e.g., progress to date, whether project on track with original timeline, challenges encountered).
- Evidence that the project is progressing sufficiently to continue.
- Project data including the number of potential reverse transfer students contacted, the number of transcripts exchanged and/or evaluated, and the number of associate's degrees conferred.
- Budget report showing how much of the grant has been spent and how much remains in each line item of the original accepted budget application. Grantees should keep records indicating how funds are expended, the total cost of project activities, the share of the cost provided from other sources (in-kind or otherwise), and any other relevant records to facilitate an effective audit. Such records should be held for five (5) years after the grant ends. Any unspent grant funds must be returned with the final fiscal report.

7. FINAL REPORTS

Forms for the final report will be provided at <http://www.mhec.state.md.us/Grants/index.asp> at least one month prior to the report due date. Final reports will include project narrative, data, and budget sections that include but are not limited to:

- Responses to questions posed on the final report form (e.g., accomplishments, project goals and benchmarks met, challenges encountered).
- Institutional plans for project sustainability.
- Project data including the number of potential reverse transfer students contacted, the number of transcripts exchanged and/or evaluated, and the number of associate's degrees conferred.

- Budget report showing how much of the grant was spent and any remaining funds in each line item of the original accepted budget application. Grantees should keep records indicating how funds are expended, the total cost of project activities, the share of the cost provided from other sources (in-kind or otherwise), and any other relevant records to facilitate an effective audit. Such records should be held for five (5) years after the grant ends. Any unspent grant funds must be returned with the final fiscal report.

Final reports must be submitted by the stated deadline. Failure to submit a final report may make the project director and/or institution ineligible to apply for future grants from the State of Maryland.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SUPPORT AND DISCLAIMER

This sub-award is from a *Credit When It's Due* grant to MHEC from the Lumina Foundation for Education, supported by USA Funds. An acknowledgement of USA Funds must appear in any publication of materials based on or developed under this project.

MHEC has the exclusive right to select sub-grantees and subcontractors for the project. Neither *Credit When It's Due* nor the Lumina Foundation (USA Funds) has earmarked the use of the grant funds for any specific sub-grantee or subcontractor. MHEC is responsible for ensuring that all sub-grantees and subcontractors use grant funds consistent with the Grantor's Letter of Agreement and the proposal approved by USA Funds. Neither MHEC nor its sub-grantees or subcontractors may make any statement or otherwise imply to donors, investors, media, or the general public that the Foundation directly funds the activities of any sub-grantee or subcontractor.

Any agreements made between MHEC and sub-grantees and subcontractors must include the following language:

"Your organization has been selected to participate in this Project at our discretion. You may not make any statement or otherwise imply to donors, investors, media, or the general public that you are a direct grantee of the USA Funds ("Foundation"). You may state that MHEC is the Foundation's grantee and that you are a sub-grantee or subcontractor of MHEC for the Project."

MHEC must appear in any publication of materials based on or developed under this project. Publications other than academic journal publications must also contain the following disclaimer:

"Opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and no official endorsement should be inferred."

All media announcements and public information pertaining to activities funded by this grant program should acknowledge support of MHEC and adhere to the restrictions laid out herein.

At such time as any article resulting from work under this grant is published in a professional journal or publication, two reprints of the publication should be sent to MHEC's Office of Outreach and Grants Management, clearly labeled with appropriate identifying information.

Appendix 2: Application Forms

MARYLAND HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

**Maryland ADAPTS Grant Program
Request for Proposals**



Application Cover Page

Lead Applicant Institution: _____

Project Title: _____

Project Director: _____

Campus Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Campus Mailing Address: _____

Grants Office Contact, Name & Title (post award): _____

Campus Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Campus Mailing Address: _____

Finance or Business Office Contact, Name & Title: _____

Campus Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Campus Mailing Address: _____

Certification by authorizing official (Chief Academic Officer, Provost, VP level or above):

Name: _____ Title: _____

Signature: _____

Maryland ADAPTS Grant Program Budget

Institution/Project Director: _____

Budget Category	Description	(1) Budget Request	(2) In-Kind/ Match	(3) Total Budget
1) Technology and equipment	Sample Budget Line Item	\$1,000	\$200	\$1,200
	Subtotal	\$1,000	\$200	\$1,200
2) Technical assistance				
	Subtotal			
3) Training				
	Subtotal			
4) Travel				
	Subtotal			
5) Communication				
	Subtotal			
6) Staff				
	Subtotal			
7) Other				
	Subtotal			
Total				

Budget Narrative (please include an itemized description of each budget line above):

- 1) Technology and equipment
- 2) Technical assistance
- 3) Training
- 4) Travel
- 5) Communication
- 6) Staff
- 7) Other