



Maryland Higher Education Commission

ONE STEP AWAY

**Complete College Maryland
State Grant Program**

**Request for Applications
FY 2013**

**Applications Due:
Monday, November 12, 2012 4 p.m.**

Deliver Attn:
Melinda Vann
Director, Outreach and Grants Management
Maryland Higher Education Commission
6 North Liberty Street, 10th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

Maryland Higher Education Commission

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Grant Program Timetable

Request for Application Issued	September 25, 2012
Technical Assistance Meeting <i>Nancy S. Grasmick Building Conference Room 200 W. Baltimore Street Baltimore, MD 21201</i> Directions: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/aboutmsde/directions.htm	October 12, 2012 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 pm RSVP by October 11 to Isaiah Ellis at iellis@mhec.state.md.us
Technical Assistance Meeting <i>Ecker Business Training Center, Gateway Campus 6751 Columbia Gateway Drive, Columbia, MD 21046</i> Directions: http://coned.howardcc.edu/general_information/Maps_Directions_Parking.html	October 22, 2012 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 pm RSVP by October 18 to Isaiah Ellis at iellis@mhec.state.md.us
Applications Due 4 p.m. to MHEC	November 12, 2012
Initial Award Notifications (via email, no later than 12 midnight)	December 12, 2012
Grant Project Start Date	December 12, 2012
Grantee Meeting (post award & data submission instructions)	Late January/ Early February
Release of 50% of Award Funds	~January 30, 2013
Institutions forward One Step Away Student List to MHEC to match with MVA records	<i>no later than March 15, 2013 earlier submission recommended</i>
MHEC forwards One Step Away Student List with updated addresses to institutions	May 1, 2013 <i>earlier submissions may receive updated contact information sooner</i>
Institutions issue initial contact letter or other communication to One Step Away Students	<i>No later than May 31, 2013</i>
Re-enrollment of One Step Away Students	Begin Late Summer and/or Fall 2013 Semesters
Interim Progress Report Due	September 30, 2013
Release of Remaining Award Funds	~October 31, 2013
Grant Project Ends	June 15, 2014
Final Narrative & Financial Reports Due (Any unspent grant funds to be returned at this time.)	September 15, 2014
Final Data Report	January 30, 2015

**Same information is covered at both Technical Assistance Meetings.*

One Step Away Complete College Maryland State Grant Program

GRANT PROGRAM SUMMARY

Introduction

Governor Martin O'Malley set a statewide goal that 55% of adult Marylanders will hold an associate or bachelor's degree by 2025. This represents an eleven-point increase over the State's current attainment rate of 44%. To that end, the Governor and the legislature authorized the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to establish a competitive grant program to support higher education institutions' college completion efforts (HB 70, Chapter 395 (fiscal year 2012), and SB 150, Chapter 148 (fiscal year 2013)).

MHEC, in consultation with the State's Complete College America Advisory Committee, determined that a competitive grant program supporting the "near-completer" efforts of Maryland public and independent bachelor's degree granting institutions would help move the State towards its college completion goal. "Near-completers" are students who have accumulated a significant number of the credits needed to earn an undergraduate degree, but have stopped out or dropped out before completing that degree. The new Complete College Maryland Near-Completers Grant Program, entitled *One Step Away* –complements other statewide completion initiatives such as ADAPTS, the State's reverse transfer program which supports on associate degree completion. Maryland's current undergraduate graduation rate at public four-year institutions is 64%, with a range from 18% to 83% (MHEC Data Book 2012). There is significant opportunity to improve graduation rates through the One Step Away grant program.

Successful re-enrollment of near-completers benefits students, institutions, and the State. Students will gain a recognized employment credential that may lead to promotion in an existing career, new career opportunities, and the personal intrinsic value of a college degree. Institutions will increase graduation rates, increase their graduate alumni base, and collect additional tuition revenues. The State will benefit from an increased pool of college educated, credential bearing workers with the skills needed to support our knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, the return on state investment per full time equivalent undergraduate students each year will be improved by the increased number of college graduates.

One Step Away will provide postsecondary campuses with seed monies to identify, contact, re-enroll, and graduate stop-out and/or drop-out students who:

- 1) have completed at least 75% of the credits required to earn a bachelor's degree (90 credits for a 120 credit program); or have earned enough credits for a bachelor's degree but have not been awarded the degree; and
- 2) were initially enrolled in college during or after the 2005-2006 academic year;
- 3) are in good academic standing; and

- 4) have dropped-out or stopped-out for at least 12 months.

Degree-Eligible and Degree-Potential Students Defined

One Step Away students may be classified as either degree-eligible or degree-potential. Degree-eligible students are defined as those students who have accumulated the required number of credits, completed required courses, and hold a grade point average (GPA) above the minimum required for a degree, but have not received a bachelor's degree. These students may not realize that they have met the degree qualification threshold within their program of study; may qualify for a degree that is different from the one they were initially seeking; or they may not have met residency requirements or non-academic testing requirements associated with degree completion. It also includes students who have earned but not received a degree award due to financial holds or incomplete paperwork. Degree-potential students are defined as those students that have completed 75% or more of the credits needed to complete their bachelor's degree program (e.g. 90 or more out of a 120 credits program) and/or need to fulfill specific course or competency requirements. These students may be "nearly eligible" for the degree they were originally seeking or another, academically similar degree.

Promising Practices

Improving college completion rates has become a national education priority set forth by President Obama. As a result, most States have set rigorous completion goals.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/completion_state_by_state.pdf.) In 2009, Governor Martin O'Malley set a State goal to increase the number of Maryland adults with either an associate or bachelor's degree from 44% to 55% by 2025. Since that time, the Maryland Higher Education Commission has sought and administered grant funds to support institutional completion efforts such as developmental math course redesign, reverse transfer initiatives to award associate degrees to community college students who transfer prior to earning that degree (ADAPTS), and interventions that support college readiness, and college retention. Another way to improve college completion in Maryland is to re-enroll and graduate students who have stopped-out or dropped-out of college in good academic standing after earning a significant number of credits toward their bachelor's degree, or who may have earned the credits needed but have not received a degree.

Several states have engaged in near-completer programs since 2007. While program specifics vary by state, key findings by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) indicate a series of commonalities between successful initiatives that can be used to inform Maryland's One Step Away initiative. In 2011, IHEP published an overview of national completion efforts for three major projects, Project Win-Win (IHEP), Non-Traditional No More (WICHE), and Project Graduate -Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education ([http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/a-f/\(Brief\)_Crossing_the_Line-Near_Completion.pdf](http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/a-f/(Brief)_Crossing_the_Line-Near_Completion.pdf)).

Two key recommendations emerged from this analysis:

- 1) Successful initiatives must include mechanisms for efficient identification of near-completers, who may be referred to as “ready adults” or adult learners; and
- 2) Successful initiatives must include student support systems to facilitate stop-out/drop-out students’ return to the academic environment.

For example, Project Win-Win (<http://www.ihep.org/projectwin-win.cfm>) uses a robust seven-step system for near-completer identification which involves intra-state data crosschecking to identify and locate students. Degree audits are used to determine program eligibility. Non-Traditional No More (<http://www.wiche.edu/ntnm>) recommends a concierge service, a single point of contact for re-enrolling students that provides assistance as students re-enter the campus community Project Graduate (<http://www.knowhow2goky.org/pg/index.php>) includes services tailored to working adult populations such as expanded distance learning opportunities. These three programs represent effective and efficient outreach and support strategies that are designed to facilitate students’ ability to complete their degrees in a timely manner.

WICHE’s recent publication, *Going the Distance in Adult College Completion: Lessons from the Non-traditional No More Project* reports on completion projects undertaken in Arkansas, Colorado, Nevada, South Dakota, New Jersey, and North Dakota (<http://www.wiche.edu/info/publications/ntnmStateCaseStudies.pdf>). Arkansas and Colorado are the most similar to Maryland in their State’s higher education structure. In Arkansas, the Department of Higher Education successfully partnered with other state agencies to reach out to former students. These institutions also adopted a concierge-type system to guide near-completers through the reentry process (www.adultcollegecompletion.org/sites/files/documents/ntnmStateCaseStudies.pdf)

Identifying One Step Away Students

A multi-step process that campuses can use to identify, contact, re-enroll and ultimately graduate near-completers was established based on best practices and research on the near-completer work described above. Campuses should use the steps below, which have been adapted for Maryland’s One Step Away initiative, to identify and contact near-completers: These steps, adapted for Maryland’s One Step Away initiative, are outlined below:

1. Using institutional data systems, select students who entered the institution during the 2005-2006 academic year or later, earned 75% or more of the credits needed for their bachelor’s degree (generally 90 credits or more), have not been enrolled in the last 12 months, are in good academic standing (e.g. hold the minimum grade point average required for graduation), and who have not received a bachelor’s degree. The resulting list may include both degree-eligible and degree-potential students.

2. Compare the list of potential One Step Away students to the National Student Clearinghouse database to determine if any students on the list are currently enrolled in another institution/state or have already received a degree from another institution/state. Students who are enrolled elsewhere or have already received a degree should be removed from the list of eligible students.
3. Conduct a degree audit for each student identified to reach a final determination on degree eligibility/potential. Remove students that are not in good academic standing and that have not earned at least 75% of the credits necessary for a bachelor's degree. Those students who remain will comprise the "degree-eligible/degree-potential" list. These students shall be known as the "One Step Away students."
4. For the resultant list, determine whether there are any administrative holds on degrees and resolve as many of these as possible.
5. Forward the One Step Away Student List including names and most recent directory information available from institutional records to MHEC. MHEC needs to receive this list NO LATER THAN MARCH 15, 2013. Earlier submissions are recommended and strongly encouraged.
6. MHEC will compare each institution's "one step away student" list to Motor Vehicle Administration records to provide updated addresses for those students with Maryland driver's licenses or identification cards. MHEC expects to return the updated addresses NO LATER THAN May 1, 2013. Earlier institutional submissions are encouraged; MHEC will process the files as they arrive. Details on how to transmit student information via a secure network will be shared with grant awardees in a post award conference call or meeting in late January or early February.
7. After receiving the updated student name/address files from MHEC, initiate contact with the One Step Away students to invite re-enrollment or to inform student of possible degree award. Contact letters and/or emails should be signed by the President or other senior official from the campus. INITIAL CONTACT SHOULD BE MADE NO LATER THAN MAY 31, 2013 IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE ENROLLMENT IN LATE SUMMER 2013 AND/OR FALL 2013 SEMESTER. Institutions should be prepared to provide templates for finishing degrees that include formal class work, credit-by-examination, and/or development and review of a dossier that documents and validates experiential learning.

ONE STEP AWAY GRANT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Purpose: The purpose of the One Step Away State Grant Program is to increase college completion rates by providing bachelor's degree granting Maryland institutions with seed monies to identify, contact, re-enroll, and graduate near-completer students.

Near-completers are those students who have earned a significant number of credits toward a bachelor's degree, or may have enough credits for a bachelor's degree but have stopped-out or dropped-out for twelve months or longer without obtaining an undergraduate degree.

Grant Applicant Eligibility: All accredited Maryland public and non-profit independent four-year bachelor's degree granting colleges and universities may apply.

Target Student Population: For the purposes of this grant, near-completer students are defined as students who enrolled for the first time during the 2005-2006 academic year or later, have stopped out or dropped out from enrollment at the higher education institution for at least 12 months, have completed at least 75% of the credits needed to earn a bachelor's degree (e.g. 90 credit hours or more for a 120 credit program), and are in good academic standing. Near-completer students may be identified as degree-eligible or degree-potential, defined as follows:

Degree-eligible – Students who have accumulated the required number of credits, completed required courses, and hold a grade point average (GPA) above the minimum required for a degree, but have not received a bachelor's degree. These students may not realize that they have met the degree qualification threshold within their program of study; may qualify for a degree that is different than the one they were initially seeking; or they may not have met residency requirements or non-academic testing requirements associated with degree completion. This category also includes students who have earned but not received a degree award due to financial holds or incomplete paperwork.

Degree-potential – Students that have earned at least 75% of the credits needed for a bachelor's degree and/or still need to fulfill specific course or competency requirements. These students may be "nearly eligible" for the degree they were originally seeking, or another, academically similar degree.

Grant Period: December 12, 2012 through June 15, 2014 (18 months).

Award Amount: \$25,000 - \$60,000 dependent upon the scope of the project

Institutional Match: Institutions must provide in-kind or matching funds in an amount equal to at least 1/3 of the total project cost (e.g. \$25,000 in match for a \$50,000 award for a total project cost of \$75,000).

Student Financial Aid: Institutions that are awarded a One Step Away grant may be eligible for additional funds of at least \$10,000 to be used solely as financial aid for returning near-completer students. These student financial aid funds will be awarded for campus-based administration to qualifying One Step Away students. Institutions must prioritize One Step Away financial aid funds for those near-completer students demonstrating the most financial need.

Grant Program Goals and Objectives: The overarching goal of the One Step Away State Grant Program is to increase bachelor's degree attainment rates for near-completers. Institutions are encouraged to develop applications that will also help to improve their graduation rates. In addition, the successful applicant/application will address the overarching goal by including two or more of the following objectives:

Objective 1: Develop new and/or improve existing outreach strategies to inform and encourage near-completers to re-enroll in college.

Objective 2: Enhance student support systems to include academic, financial, and/or social advising and supports that facilitate smooth reentry into the educational environment and retention through degree completion.

Objective 3: Increase re-enrollment rates of near-completers by offering a track/plan of study which will increase the speed of completion.

Objective 4: Establish and implement prior learning assessments or competency based testing to award college credit for returning adult learners.

Objective 5: Develop a general studies or other type of bachelor's degree program for which students with a large number of credits (e.g. 120 or more) but not necessarily the correct credits for the originally intended degree program may qualify.

Objective 6: Increase re-enrollment rates of near-completers by offering new campus-based sustainable financial aid options using campus or other financial aid resources for support such as text book cost waivers and/or tuition discounts.

Fundable Activities: One Step Away grant funds will support evidence-based best practices and initiatives such as, but not limited to, the examples described in this Request for Application. Applicants must demonstrate how the proposed activity will support and enhance the re-enrollment and academic progress of near-completers to include their degree completion. Fundable activities might include:

Marketing and Outreach - In order to help One Step Away students complete a degree, institutions must first identify and re-engage students who might be eligible for a degree or who need a few more credits to graduate. This process requires available and reliable student tracking data and consideration of the most efficient, accurate, and cost-effective student contact and incentive strategies.

Degree Program Completion Plan - To guide the degree completion process for returning near-completers, institutions can provide either degree completion plans that are individualized for each returning student, near-completer degree completion templates to offer more generalized pathways for large numbers of students or a combination of both.

Enhancement/Redesign of Degree Program - Creating a flexible degree program allows adult learners to use existing credits from many institutions toward a credential. Both Metro State in Colorado and, South Dakota State Universities (six institutions) created general studies majors with flexible requirements; these helped near-completers with non-aligned credit to re-enroll and obtain a general education degree using their existing credit. Similar to the Oklahoma University System's (nine institutions) organizational leadership bachelor's degree, these customizable degrees play an important role in helping near-completers finish a credential.

Establishment of a "concierge" or near-completer counselor - One of the biggest challenges to re-enrolling near-completers is getting adult learners the information they need efficiently and expeditiously. Potential students are often discouraged and frustrated by institutional admissions, financial aid, registration and information gathering (think voicemails that are not promptly answered, multiple phone transfers, etc.) processes. A concierge or dedicated near-completer counselor can provide a single point of contact for returning adult students to expedite the re-enrollment process. A concierge or near-completer counselor does not necessarily have to be a new hire, but can be a current staff member. The assigned staff serves to advise near-completers, evaluate their transcripts and provide instruction on the re-enrollment process. It is important for this staff member to have the opportunity to provide feedback to the college administration on how the institution can better serve this population. Colorado, Arkansas, Nevada and Kentucky have all used this concept with success.

Student Financial Support - Relatively small amounts of money can make a big difference for One Step Away students. Institutions have had success with emergency grants, book vouchers, fee and fine forgiveness, and funding prior learning assessment. Developing payment plans for these returning adults so that they can pay monthly rather than paying for the entire semester up front is also a win-win proposition. Applicants that are awarded a One Step Away grant may be eligible for a minimum of \$10,000 in additional funds dedicated to financial aid for re-enrolled near-completers. One Step Away grant awardees may wish to propose additional student financial aid support to augment this amount.

Faculty and Staff Development - Efforts to support and enrich faculty and staff work, particularly as it relates to student success and college completion, can be supported by the grant. Applicants may propose programs developed to inform faculty and staff of effective completion strategies they can implement in the classroom and administrative support areas.

APPLICATION FORMAT & DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS

General Format Requirements

- 8-1/2 by 11-inch page (letter size)
- Arial, Times New Roman, Calibri or similar font type
- 12 point font for text, tables may use 10 point font

- Single spaced
- One-inch margins
- Numbered narrative pages
- Include the following, though no points are awarded for these:
 - Application Cover Sheet (use the form in Appendix B)
 - Abstract (use form in Appendix B; 250 words or less)
 - Table of Contents
 - Bios or short resumes for key project staff
- Narrative maximum of 15 pages. Page number count excludes cover sheet, abstract, budget, budget narrative, resumes, and appendices
- See the application check list in Appendix A.

Delivery Instructions

- Five (5) hard copies and one original of the application shall be delivered to the address indicated on the cover page of this Request for Application by 4 p.m. on November 12, 2012. Applications may be delivered in person or by mail but must arrive no later than the deadline indicated.

Deliver Attention to:
 Melinda Vann
 Director, Outreach and Grants Management
 Maryland Higher Education Commission
 6 North Liberty Street, 10th Floor
 Baltimore, MD 21201

- Electronic copy of the budget request excel spreadsheet must be submitted to mvann@mhec.state.md.us by 4 p.m., November 12, 2012.

REQUIRED APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Application Narrative (85 points)

The application narrative includes the following sections in this order: Needs Assessment, Objectives, and Projected Outcomes, Management Plan, Operation Plan, and Evaluation Plan. Points are awarded for each section as indicated. Label the narrative sections with the headings as indicated below:

I. Needs Assessment (10 points)

Using institution specific data develop a compelling needs statement to support the application. National data may be used as a brief introduction to the problem; however, the emphasis should be on your institution's particular issues. A general overview of institution specific graduation rates, retention, and completion agenda may be included to set the context for college completion, but **the central focus of the needs assessment should be on the near-completer population.** Provide any known

demographic information including gender, race, age, degree program, Pell eligibility or other relevant characteristics of this population. Indicate the number of possible near-completers that enrolled during the 2005-2006 or later academic year(s). Describe any current completion efforts and how the near-completers work fits with the institution's completion strategy. This section need not be lengthy but should present a compelling argument supported by specific and quantifiable local information relative to your institution. Please refer to the Evaluation Section for the data reporting requirement for awardees.

II. Project Objectives and Projected Outcomes (10 points)

All applications must demonstrate their institution's contribution to the overarching program goal to increase bachelor's degree attainment rates for near-completers. The application should also list the selected supporting objectives (see Project Objectives and Projected Outcomes, page 13). Two or more of the grant objectives must be included. Applicants may add additional objectives including additional institutionally defined objectives as long as the minimum criteria as specified by this Request for Application are met.

For each objective, identify one or more projected outcomes. Projected outcomes should be quantifiable and measurable. Include baseline data for comparison to convey that your goal is reasonable and ambitious. Please refer to Section V: Evaluation Plan for required data reporting.

III. Management Plan (15 points)

The Management Plan supports the implementation of the project. In other words, the Management Plan does not contain direct service activities, but rather describes the key personnel and the administration of the project (e.g. communications, overall guidance, establishment of timelines & benchmarks). Describe and explain direct service activities in the Operation Plan. Consider including representatives from institutional research, academic advising, the Provost's office, admissions and/or the registrar's office as part of the management team. The Management Plan should address the items noted below.

1. It identifies key personnel and their general roles and responsibilities for the project. It provides a clear organizational structure, a timeline for management actions, and milestones for accomplishing the management actions. You may wish to present key personnel roles and major management activities in a chronologically ordered table. It can also be presented as narrative.
2. It includes activities such as planning and progress report meetings, establishment of project timelines and progress benchmarks. Project management duties should be clearly linked to the budget and to the

Operation Plan. **Include short resumes, CVs or bios for all key project staff in an appendix.**

3. It demonstrates that the project director and other key staff have sufficient time to conduct the grant project effectively and in accordance with the established timeline. Demonstrate the adequacy of the project team to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget.
4. Discuss how the institution will sustain a near-completers initiative after the grant ends – particularly for those students that are initially impacted by the grant but have not yet completed by the grant end date.
5. Refer to the Timetable on page four of this Request for Application for any due dates specified by the grant program. These due dates should be reflected in the Management Plan as appropriate.

IV. Operation Plan (30 points)

The Operation Plan describes the activities that will achieve the project objectives and outcomes. The Operation Plan answers the who, what, when, where, and how questions about the proposed project activities. The Operation Plan will:

1. Describe when, where and how each activity will be implemented and the key personnel responsible for each activity. Provide detailed information about what students and supporting faculty and staff will be doing during each activity.
2. Provide an activities timeline.
3. Explain how the services to be provided are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients of those services and to the project objectives.
4. Include specific information on how, when, where, and by whom the target student population will be recruited and retained. Recruitment and retention are essential elements of project success and must be planned carefully and implemented rigorously.
5. The Operations Plan can be presented as narrative, as a table, or a combination of both.
6. Refer to the Timetable on page four of this RFA for any due dates specified by the grant program. These due dates should be reflected in the Operation Plan as appropriate.

V. Project Evaluation (20 points)

The Project Evaluation is an integral part of the project's design and implementation, not something done after the project is completed. The evaluation plan should be clearly tied to project objectives and projected outcomes and provide both formative and summative information. The Evaluation Plan is a systematic means for monitoring and evaluating the program throughout the grant period, as well as a measure of the projects final results. The Project Evaluation describes how the baseline data was established and how the baseline data will be used to measure change associated with the project. Describe how the overall effectiveness of the project implementation will be assessed. Describe how data will be collected and analyzed to determine if projected outcomes were achieved. Show how the evaluation plan will be developed through cooperative planning with representatives from all departments involved in the institution's completion agenda (e.g. provost's office, admissions, registrar, financial aid, institutional research, academic advising, and student affairs).

Evaluation results will be reported in the interim and final project reports. The interim report will indicate what activities have occurred during the reporting period, the intended objectives, and outcomes for these activities as originally identified in the application, and the degree of progress to date. If the objectives and outcomes were not met, the evaluation report should discuss why and what modifications to the program will be made. The final report will include a comprehensive evaluation of the entire project. Much like the interim report evaluation, it should describe the activities conducted, the corresponding objectives and outcomes. Discuss how the actual objectives and outcomes were measured against the proposed objectives and outcomes. An overall assessment of the project should also be provided with recommendations for improved procedures and sustainability of the near-completers effort. **In addition, a final cumulative data report on the measures indicated below will be reported to MHEC six months after the grant end date or 24 months after the project begins.**

Data Reporting Requirements

All grant awardees must report the following:

Degree-Eligible Near-Completers

- The number of degree-eligible students identified to include gender, race, age and degree program aggregated demographic data
- The number of degree-eligible students successfully contacted (email and/or snail mail that is not returned)
- The number of degree-eligible students awarded a bachelor's degree during the grant reporting period by degree program

Degree-Potential Near-Completers

- The number of degree-potential students identified to include gender, race, age and degree program aggregated demographic data.
- The average number of credits toward degree of degree potential near-completers.
- The average length of time (in months) that degree-potential near-completers have been stopped-out or dropped-out.
- The number of degree-potential near-completers successfully contacted (email and/or snail mail that is not returned)
- The number of degree-potential near-completers that re-enroll to include gender, race, age, and degree program aggregated demographic data.
- The number of credit hours earned by degree-potential near-completers upon re-enrollment for the grant reporting period
- The number of credit hours awarded to degree-potential near-completers via prior learning assessments or competency-based credits (where applicable)
- The number of degree-potential near-completers awarded a bachelor's degree during the grant reporting period by degree program
- The number of re-enrolled degree-potential near-completers who received financial aid through the One Step Away grant program and the average amount of aid received through the grant.

Budget and Cost Effectiveness (15 Points)

The application requires a Budget Request Summary and a Budget Narrative. Submit the Budget Request Summary using the excel spreadsheet provided in Appendix B or downloadable at <http://www.mhec.state.md.us/Grants/CCM/OneStepAway.asp>. It includes columns for the budget request (grant funds), institutional match, and total project costs by expenditure type (line item). There should be a clear link between all costs and the project activities that are detailed in the Operation Plan and all management activities in the Management Plan.

Applicants must demonstrate at least 1/3 of the total project cost as in-kind or matching cash contribution. Institutional match can be provided as in-kind, such as staff time dedicated to the project, or other supports. This grant does not support indirect costs. However, applicants may claim up to 8% of the total project cost as indirect costs in-kind match. Institutions may also provide cash match, including support from institutional funds or other grant funds. **Please note that the budget request spreadsheet should be submitted separately electronically as well as in hard copy with the full application package.**

The Budget Narrative explains the rationale for each line of the Budget Request Summary, both for grant expenditures and matching funds. This narrative must show, in detail, how the amounts were determined (e.g. 6 units at \$100 per unit). The Budget Narrative should be labeled in the same order as the Budget Request Summary. These budget guidelines apply (arranged by line item corresponding to the budget summary):

A. Salaries and Wages

Note on Personnel: Personnel costs are the most likely source of in-kind matching funds for the institution. Request for grant support for staff will be carefully considered given that the grant is short-term in nature and cannot sustain new staff. If funds for new staff are requested, the applicant must demonstrate how the position will be sustained after the grant ends. Requests for short-term hires, faculty release time, etc. will be considered with the sustainability question in mind. Estimates of personnel time should be justified in terms of the tasks to be performed. Salaries are to be a function of regular appointment (% time commitment) for the academic year or the summer session, if applicable. Salaries cannot be drawn at a higher pay rate than that which the individual normally receives.

1. Professional Personnel

List all key personnel individually and the requested or matching salary amounts by indicating what percent of the individual's annual time will be committed to the project. Actual instructional compensation, if requested, is restricted to one course load equivalent for academic semester courses and/or one summer course equivalent.

2. Other Personnel

List individually all support personnel by support category and the requested rate of pay or in-kind match. Support personnel must be clearly justified and may include clerical and graduate or undergraduate student assistants. If effort is committed as an in-kind institutional contribution, that should be noted in column

B. Fringe Benefits

These are calculated at the costs normally paid by the institution for the salaried members of its faculty and staff who will be involved in the project (the amount is calculated for the percentage of effort in the project). Fringe is a good source of institutional in-kind match as is salary.

C. Travel

Enter travel costs, if necessary, for key personnel to conduct off-campus activities. Mileage allowances may not exceed the State's approved rate for mileage reimbursement at the time of travel. Currently this rate is \$0.55.5 per mile. All travel funding must be specifically designated by place and position, approximate date, distance, and method of travel. **Conference travel will not be supported.**

D. Equipment

Equipment means an article of non-expendable tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one (1) year and an acquisition cost per unit that is consistent with institutional policy. Equipment that is necessary to perform project activities should be leased or rented unless the cost to purchase is less or otherwise justified.

E. Materials and Supplies

Non-expendable supplies, including but not limited to books, computer software, office supplies, marketing and promotional materials, postage, copying, etc. that are necessary for the effective implementation of the funded activity, may be purchased only if they are necessary and appropriate to the project activities.

F. Consultant and Contractual Services

Use of program consultants must be justified and reasonable, and their pay should be a reflection of instructional time or time spent delivering other direct services (e.g., software programmer, external marketing firm). Travel and per diem expenses for consultants should not exceed the institutional or State rate, whichever is most restrictive. Preparation time for consultants will not be paid by the grant. Properly documented contractual agreements for expenditures to consultants or outside agencies for fees, travel, and routine supplies must be filed per institutional policy; and contractual payments cannot exceed institutional salary levels for similar work. Documentation for consultant services performed should be filed showing:

- Consultant's name dates, hours, and amount charged to grant;
- Names of grant participants to whom services were provided; and
- Results of subject matter of the consultation.

Contractual services might include design costs for marketing materials, contracted finder services, outsourced marketing, etc.

G. Other (specify)

Other may include communications, subsistence for workshops, open houses, or any expenditure item not fitting expenditure categories in A-F. If food/beverages are requested, the applicant should demonstrate how the purchase benefits the project. If meals are provided, State regulations apply and require that an agenda and an attendance list be supplied. Provide specifics and adequate justification for each expenditure item in this category.

H. Total Direct Costs

Enter sum of Items A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

I. Indirect Costs

The grant request does not support indirect costs. However, up to eight (8%) percent of the total project cost may be claimed as indirect costs for matching purposes.

J. Total

Enter sum of Item H and I. Observe that the Total (Item J) in Column 1 for "Funds Requested" is the amount of the grant being applied for. Be sure to reconcile the total in each line and each column.

The application's budget and cost-effectiveness will be evaluated on the extent to which:

- the budget is adequate to support the project; it should be clear that all activities are accounted for in the budget;
- the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives and design;
- the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of students to be served;
- the budget complies with the requirements and guidelines spelled out in this RFA;
- in-kind contributions are identified and included such that there is adequacy of support - including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources - from the institution; and
- administrative costs are kept to a minimum.

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 B.

APPLICATION RECEIPT & REVIEW PROCESS

Applications (an original and five copies) must be received by the deadline and include all requisite forms. The Budget Summary Request must also be submitted electronically as indicated. Applicants will be notified via email that their application has been received and assigned an application number.

A panel of qualified reviewers will read each application and score each according to the grant selection criteria described. Each application will be reviewed by at least four-reviewers. Reviewers may be from Maryland or from other states and will have suitable qualifications to review the applications. Reviewers will provide constructive written comments to be shared with applicants. Reviewers may recommend project adjustments, including budgetary changes. Review panel funding recommendations are forwarded to the Secretary of Higher Education (or designee) for final approval. Geographic distribution of grant awards along with reviewer recommendations will be considered in the final awarding process. If a grant recipient has materially failed to comply with the terms of a previous MHEC grant and/or has outstanding grant requirements from previous grants with MHEC, MHEC may deduct 10 points from the total.

NOTIFICATION OF AWARDS

A grant award will be issued after approval of awards and acceptance of the negotiated grant award amount by the project director. Preliminary notification of awards will be made no later than midnight December 12, 2012 by email. Formal award letters will be

issued once the final grant project and award are mutually agreed to by the grantor and grantee.

FISCAL PROCEDURES

All State 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 for the remaining balance will be made after the project's interim report has been received, reviewed and approved. Projects may have award amounts adjusted based on the interim progress report. Expenditures in excess of approved budget amounts will be the responsibility of the recipient institution.

Appendix A

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Every application should contain an original and five (5) photocopies of the application packet, which must include the following, in the order indicated:

- _____ Cover Sheet*
- _____ Abstract*
- _____ Application Narrative (maximum of 15 pages)
 - _____ Needs Assessment
 - _____ Project Objectives and Outcomes
 - _____ Management Plan
 - _____ Operation Plan
 - _____ Evaluation Plan
- _____ Budget and Cost-Effectiveness
 - _____ Budget Summary*
 - _____ Budget Narrative*
- _____ Assurances*
- _____ Project Staff Résumé

*Use the application forms included in Appendix B. Forms are also available in electronic format at <http://www.mhec.state.md.us/Grants/CCM/OneStepAway.asp>

All applications must be ***received*** (not postmarked) by 4 p.m. on Monday, November 12, 2013. An electronic excel file of the budget summary must be sent to mvann@mhec.state.md.us by the same deadline.

Deliver or Mail Hard Copies to:

Melinda Vann
Director, Outreach and Grants Management
Maryland Higher Education Commission
6 North Liberty Street, 10th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

APPENDIX B

APPLICATION FORMS

- Cover Sheet
- Abstract
- Budget Summary
- Budget Narrative (example format)
- Assurances

**One Step Away
Complete College Maryland State Grant Program**

FY 2013 APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Project Title:

Higher Education Institution:

Project Director(s) Name and Title:

Campus Telephone:

FAX Number:

E-mail:

Campus Mailing Address:

Grants Office Post-Award Officer Name and Title:

Email address:

Phone number:

Campus Mailing Address:

Finance or Business Office Contact:

Name: Title:

Email address:

Phone number:

Campus Mailing Address:

Certification by authorizing official Name and Title (V.P. level or above):

Signature: _____

**One Step Away
Complete College Maryland State Grant Program**

Abstract

Project Title:

Higher Education Institution:

In 250 words or less, describe (for an educated general audience) your project activities. (Note that this may be reproduced as is or edited by Commission staff for inclusion in press releases and other publications describing the grant program.)

**One Step Away Complete College Maryland State Grant
BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY (use this Excel format)**

Project Title:

Higher Education Institution:

SOURCE OF FUNDS			
	COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 4
	Grant Funds Requested²	Institution Contribution³	Totals
A. Salaries & Wages List by name and title for existing staff, or position type, title for positions to be recruited			
1			
2			
3			
4			
Total Salaries and Wages			
B. Fringe Benefits			
C. Travel			
D. Equipment (specify)			
1			
2			
E. Materials and Supplies			
F. Consultant and Contractual Services			
G. Other (specify)			
1			
2			
H. Total Direct Costs (A through G)			
I. Total Indirect Costs (max. 8% of H)			
J. Total (H and I)			

Notes:

1. Add additional lines in the budget summary spreadsheet as needed.
2. Include all grant-funded expenses.
3. Include any contributions from applicant institution in this column. Include both cash and in-kind contributions, distinguishing in the budget narrative which type of contribution is provided for a given item.

BUDGET NARRATIVE (use this format)

Provide a detailed description of each expenditure in the budget summary spreadsheet. The description should include how the budget amount was computed as well as provide a clear description of the purpose of the expenditure relative to the project proposed in the grant application. *Refer to the budget narrative example below as a model.*

A. Salaries & Wages

1. Nathaniel Chase [Co-Project Director] will spend 10% of his time on project activities during the 2011-12 academic year. Maryland University requests the cost the university will pay an adjunct to replace him in one course (\$4,500). The university will contribute the difference between the \$4,500 requested and 10% of his annual salary as in-kind valued at \$3,500.
2. Jill Smith [Co-Project Director] – will spend 10% of her time on project activities during the program period. Salary in the amount of \$4,500 is provided as in kind contribution. ($\$45,000/\text{annual salary} \times .10/\text{percent} = \$4,500$)
3. Jo Daniel [Program Manager] will spend 30% of her time on project activities during the program period. Salary in the amount of \$10,800 is requested. ($\$36,000/\text{annual salary} \times .30/\text{percent} = \$10,800$)
4. Administrative Assistant: to be hired. $\$8.00/\text{hour} \times 5 \text{ hours/week} \times 36 \text{ weeks}$ Request = **\$1,440.**

B. Fringe Benefits

Fringe benefits for Jill Smith and Jo Daniel are provided as in kind - are calculated at 18%
 $4,500 + 10,800 \times .18 = \mathbf{\$2,754}$

C. Travel

Travel for program manager to offsite meetings with branch campuses for training of admissions staff

Request = $\$0.555 \text{ cents per mile} \times 10 \text{ trips} \times 30 \text{ miles/trip} = \mathbf{\$166.50}$

D. Equipment

No equipment requested.

E. Materials and Supplies

Guide to Succeeding in College (book) for students' to use during orientation, Request - $\$20/\text{per book} \times 50 \text{ students} = \mathbf{\$1,000}$

F. Consultant and Contractual Services

Shore Remedial Education Inc. hired to assess developmental math courses.

Request = $30 \text{ hours} \times \$40/\text{per hour} = \mathbf{\$1,200}$

G. Other

Information brochures on the reenrollment program, $5,000 \times .63 = \mathbf{\$3,150}$.

Postage for direct mail recruitment, $5,000 \times .44 = \mathbf{\$2,200}$

- H. Total Direct Costs** – sum total costs by column – report on requested funds and institution contribution

I. Indirect Costs – Eight percent of total project cost may be claimed as matching fund/institutional contribution; no indirect cost will be paid by the grant.

J. Total Cost – total by column/ fund type

ASSURANCES

The Applicant hereby affirms and certifies that it will comply with all applicable regulations, policies, guidelines, and requirements of the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and the State of Maryland as they relate to the application, acceptance, and use of One Step Away Complete College Maryland State Grant Program funds in this project. Also, the Applicant affirms and certifies that:

1. It possesses legal authority to apply for the grant; e.g., an official act of the applicant's governing body has been duly adopted or passed, authorizing filing of the application, including all understandings and assurances contained therein and directing and authorizing the person identified as the official representative of the application and to provide such additional information as may be required.
2. It will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d) prohibiting employment discrimination where discriminatory employment practices will result in unequal treatment of persons who are or should be benefiting from the grant-aided activity.
3. It will comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and any and all amendments to the ADA." I also recommend adding a catch-all clause such as "It will comply with all relevant federal and state laws."
4. It will expend funds to supplement new and/or existing programs and not use these funds to supplant non-grant funds or for any purpose other than those specified in this grant.
5. It will participate in any statewide assessment program or other evaluation program as required by the MHEC.
6. It will give the MHEC and/or the Legislative Auditor, through any authorized representative, the right of access to, and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the grant. It will maintain all records pertaining to this grant for a period of five years.
7. It will comply with all requirements imposed by the MHEC concerning special requirements of law and other administrative requirements.

Institution: _____

Signature of Authorized Institutional Authority (President or Provost) _____ Date _____

Name and Title, Printed _____

APPENDIX C: POST AWARD GRANT MANAGEMENT GRANTEE PROCEDURES

Post Award Changes

The grant recipient shall obtain prior written approval for any change to the scope of the approved project. To request changes, use the Project Amendment Request Form. Contact the MHEC grant manager for a copy of the form. The request must include an explanation of the specific programmatic changes and a revised budget, if applicable. If project activity dates have changed significantly since the application submission, you must submit a revised calendar of activity dates. The grant recipient shall also obtain prior written approval from the Office of Outreach and Grants Management to continue the project during any continuous period of more than three (3) months without the active direction of an approved project director; to 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; to make changes resulting in additions or deletions of staff and consultants related to or resulting in a need for budget reallocation; and to make budget changes exceeding \$1,000 or 10% in any category, whichever is greater.

Grantees must also request written approval to extend the expiration date of the grant if additional time beyond the established termination date is required to ensure adequate completion of the approved activity within the funds already made available. A single extension, which shall not exceed six (6) months, may be made for this purpose and must be requested no less than 1 month prior to the originally established expiration date. The request must explain the need for the extension and include an estimate of the un-obligated funds remaining and a plan for their use. The fact that unobligated funds may remain at the expiration of the grant is not in itself sufficient justification for an extension. The plan must adhere to approved objectives of the project.

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 within 90 days of the date of expiration or termination.
- The closeout of a grant does not affect the retention period for State and/or federal 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 the Commission 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.

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 (note that timesheets should be kept for volunteer hours, as well as for all paid hours); and
- participant data (which students, faculty members, etc. participated in which activities; specify names, dates and places).

Reporting Requirements

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

Formal interim and final reports are required from all grantees. At the end of the grant, both a financial and a narrative report will be due to the Commission. The project evaluation should be an integral part of the narrative report.

Interim Reports

An Interim Report Form will be provided. For the report to be acceptable, it must address all questions in Interim Report Form which may include but is not limited to:

- progress toward project goals, objectives and projected outcomes to date as defined in the original approved application;
- specific data / metrics required by the grant;
- a roster of participants for each activity if required;
- an “activity and participant information” chart if required by the interim report form;
- a summary of challenges and their impact on the project timeline;
- a fiscal report that shows how much of the grant has been spent and how much remains in each line item of the original accepted budget application;
- responses to the all questions posed on the interim report form; and
- evidence that the project is progressing sufficiently to continue.
- See Appendix B for the interim report form.

Final Reports

Final reports will address items on the interim report but for the full term of the grant; the report includes a narrative and fiscal section. Failure to submit a final report may make the project director ineligible to apply for future grants under MHEC’s purview. The final report includes the comprehensive evaluation of the grant. This evaluation will include the evaluation plan components from the accepted application. The evaluation should restate the objectives included in the application and discuss how the project outcomes compared to those stated in the application and the evaluation instrument(s) used. Final reports should include a participant chart if required but report the information for the full term of the grant (not just the second half of the grant).

The *Financial Report* should be structured like the approved budget, with both a budget summary and a budget narrative (see Appendix B for forms). It must be signed by a financial officer at the institution serving as the fiscal agent. Grantees should keep records indicating how funds were 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 should be returned with the financial report.

The *Narrative Report* includes the results of the evaluation plan outlined in the project application and document the project outcomes. These reports will:

- address the goals, objectives and projected outcomes of the project, comparing those that were named in the application to the actual results and explaining how

and to what extent project activities were successful in meeting project objectives and outcomes;

- provide any specific data metrics to date as required by the grant;
- include the full results of the evaluation plan (see Application Narrative, Evaluation Plan); this will include the results of the evaluation plan described in the application—and include the results and report of any evaluator paid by the grant;
- note where or how the project activities might be improved; and
- indicate the number of participants that were served if required. Include the participant table in the interim report form, updated for the full extent of the project, if required.

Acknowledgement of Support and Disclaimer

An acknowledgment of the Maryland Higher Education Commission must appear in any publication of materials based on or developed under this project. Materials 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 the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

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 the Maryland Higher Education Commission Office of Outreach and Grants Management, clearly labeled with appropriate identifying information.