



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FY2025**

### **ONE STEP AWAY State Grant Program**



**Applications Due  
Friday, July 25, 2025  
4:00 p.m.**



## Table of Contents

<b>Grant Program Timetable .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Who is a Near-completer?.....	4
Promising Practices.....	5
<b>One Step Away Grant Program .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Program Summary .....	5
Grant Program Goals and Objectives.....	7
Process for Identifying One Step Away Students.....	7
Fundable Activities .....	8
<b>Application Format and Delivery Instructions .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Required Application Components .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Needs Assessment .....	10
Project Objectives and Projected Outcomes .....	11
Management Plan .....	11
Operation Plan .....	12
Project Evaluation .....	12
Data Reporting Requirements.....	13
Budget and Cost Effectiveness .....	14
Assurance .....	17
<b>Application Receipt and Review Process .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Notice of Awards .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Fiscal Procedures .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix A: Application Checklist .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix B: Application Forms.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Appendix C: Post Award Grant Management .....</b>	<b>26</b>



Request for Proposals Issued	June 25, 2025
Technical Assistance	For technical assistance, contact Anthony Reiner at Anthony.Reiner@Maryland.gov
Applications Due by 4:00 p.m. to MHEC	July 25, 2025
Award Notifications (via email, by 12:00 am midnight)	August 5, 2025
Project Start Date	August 5, 2025
Grantee Post Award Data Submission Instructions	August 2025
First Payment - 50% of Award Funds	August 2025
Institutions forward One Step Away Student List to MHEC to match with MVA records	<i>by</i> August 15, 2025
MHEC forwards One Step Away Student List with updated addresses to institutions	August 25, 2025
Institutions issue initial contact letter or other communication to One Step Away Students	<i>by</i> September 2, 2025
Re-enrollment of One Step Away Students	Fall 2025 and Winter/Spring 2026 Semesters
Legislative Data Report Due	December 23, 2025
Interim Report Due	December 23, 2025
Release Remaining Grant Funds	January 2026
Project End Date	August 31, 2026
Final Narrative, Data, & Financial Reports Due (Any unspent grant funds to be returned at this time)	November 30, 2026



## INTRODUCTION

The Maryland General Assembly set a statewide completion goal that 55% of adult Marylanders will hold an associate or bachelor's degree by 2025. In support of this statewide goal, the *College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013*, was enacted. This statute creates policy framework for improving college completion in Maryland. Likewise, the 2017-2021 State Plan for Postsecondary Education established deliverables that include increasing college enrollments and completion.

The statewide completion goal, the *College and Career Readiness and College Completion Act of 2013*, and the *State Plan for Postsecondary Education* align with the state's competitive completion focused grant program, **One Step Away** (OSA). One Step Away provides funds to support public and independent nonprofit two- and four-year institutions' efforts to identify, re-engage, re-enroll, and graduate near-completer students. Near-completers are students who have accumulated a significant number of the credits needed to earn an associate or bachelor's degree but have stopped out or dropped out before completing that degree.

A successful near-completer graduate benefits students, institutions, and the state. Students gain a recognized employment credential that may lead to promotion in an existing career, new career opportunities, and the personal intrinsic value of obtaining a college degree. Institutions can increase graduation rates, expand their engaged alumni base, collect additional tuition revenues, and better recognize a return on investment for these students. The state benefits from an increased pool of college-educated, credential bearing workers with the skills needed to support its growing knowledge-based economy.

### Who is a Near-completer?

One Step Away provides funds to institutions to identify, contact, re-enroll and graduate stop-out and drop-out students who:

- 1) Have completed at least 75% of the credits required to earn an associate or bachelor's degree, or have received enough credits for an associate or bachelor's degree but have not been awarded the degree;
- 2) Are in good academic standing; and
- 3) Have dropped-out or stopped-out for at least 12 consecutive months.

Institutions are encouraged to target near-completers who may be able to graduate within the institutions reported six-year graduation rates (i.e., initial enrollment in the 2015-2016 academic years or later). **Institutions may also include near-completers from earlier initial enrollment years, as long as the “six-year graduation cohort” is included in the outreach and recruitment efforts.**

## Promising Practices

Improving college completion is a national education priority. While program specifics vary by state, findings by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) indicate a series of commonalities among successful initiatives for administering completion programs like One Step Away.

In 2011, IHEP published an overview of national completion efforts for three significant projects, Project Win-Win (IHEP), Non-Traditional No More (WICHE), and Project Graduate - Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

In 2013, IHEP published the outcomes of Project Win-Win, Search for Our Lost Associate's Degrees: Project Win-Win at the Finish Line (<https://degreeswhendue.com/>).

Non-Traditional No More <https://degreeswhendue.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/WICHE-2010.pdf> recommends a concierge service, a single point of contact for re-enrolling students to assist as students re-enter the campus community.

To continue the completion work and increase degree-completion, IHEP launched a new initiative in November 2018, Degrees When Due. This program works with states and colleges to improve completion rates (<https://degreeswhendue.com/>).

## ONE STEP AWAY GRANT PROGRAM

### Program Summary

**Purpose:** The purpose of the One Step Away State Grant Program is to improve college completion rates by providing funds to Maryland two- and four-year institutions to identify, contact, re-enroll, and graduate near-completer students.

Near-completers are students who have earned at least 75 percent of the credits required for an associate or bachelor's degree or may have enough credits for an associate or bachelor's degree, but stopped-out or dropped-out for 12 months or longer without obtaining a degree.

**Grant Applicant Eligibility:** Accredited Maryland public and nonprofit independent two- and four-year, associate and bachelor's degree granting colleges and universities.

**Target Student Population:** Near-completer students who have stopped-out or dropped-out from college enrollment for at least 12 consecutive months, have completed at least 75% of the credits needed to earn an associate or bachelor's degree, and are in good academic standing.

Institutions are encouraged to target near-completers who may be able to complete within the institution's reported six-year graduation rate (i.e., initial enrollment in the 2018-2019 academic year).

Near-completer students are 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 an associate or bachelor's degree.

These students may not realize that they have met the degree qualification for 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. This category also includes students who have earned but not received a degree award due to financial holds or incomplete paperwork.

*Degree-potential* – Students who have earned at least 75% of the credits needed for an associate or bachelor's degree and still need to fulfill course or competency requirements. These students may be "nearly eligible" for the degree they were initially seeking or another academically similar degree.

**Grant Period:** August 5, 2025 to August 31, 2026

**Award Amount:** Up to \$60,000 per institution

**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).

## **Grant Program Goals, Objectives and Outcomes:**

The goal of the One Step Away State Grant Program is to improve associate and bachelor's degree attainment rates. Institutions are encouraged to develop proposals to improve their six-year graduation rates, but may also include earlier cohorts of near-completers. **Proposals must address the overarching grant program goals by including three of the following objectives:**

Objective 1: Develop new 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 that facilitate smooth re-entry 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 to 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 general studies or another type of associate or bachelor's degree program for which students who have accumulated 45 or 90 credits for an associate's or a bachelor's degree, respectively but not necessarily the correct credits for the initially 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 textbook waivers and tuition discounts.

## **Process for Identifying One Step Away Students**

A multi-step process to identify, contact, re-enroll and ultimately graduate near-completers was established based on best practices and research. Campuses should use the steps below, which have been adapted for Maryland's One Step Away initiative, to identify and contact near-completers.

1. Select students who have earned 75% or more of the credits needed for their associate (typically 45 credits or more) or bachelor's degree (generally 90 credits or more); have not been enrolled in the last 12 consecutive months; are in good academic standing; and who have not yet received an associate or bachelor's degree.

The resulting list may include both degree-eligible and degree-potential students.

2. Compare the list of potential students to the National Student Clearinghouse. The database helps determine if any student on the list is currently enrolled in another institution/state or has already received a degree from another institution/state. Students enrolled elsewhere or who have already earned a degree are not eligible to participate in the program.
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 an associate or bachelor's degree. Those students who remain will comprise the "degree-eligible/degree-potential" list. These students are the "One Step Away students."
4. Determine any administrative holds on degrees for the listed students and resolve as many of these as possible.
5. Forward the One Step Away Student List with student names and most recent directory information available from institutional records to MHEC by **August 15, 2025**.
6. MHEC will compare each institution's "One Step Away student" list to Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) records to obtain updated addresses for those students with Maryland driver's licenses or identification cards.

MHEC expects to return the updated addresses to the institution by **August 25, 2025**. Details on how to transmit student information via a secure network will be shared with grant awardees in a post-award email. *Near-completers' social security numbers and birthdates will be requested as unique identifiers for the MVA.*

7. After receiving the updated student name/address files from MHEC, initiate contact with the One Step Away students.

Institutions should make initial contact with the students by **September 2, 2025**, to encourage re-enrollment and completion for fall 2025 and winter and spring 2026.

## **Fundable Activities**

One Step Away grant funds support evidence-based best practices and initiatives such as, but not limited to, the examples described in this Request for Proposals (RFP). 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 consist of:



**Degree Audit Infrastructure:** Efficient and accurate transcript and degree auditing are necessary to provide near-completers with information about the remaining required courses and possible course equivalents for degree completion. Software enhancements, computer-aided and automated reporting, short-term “audit” staff, and staff training may be needed to establish a sustainable system for identifying degree completion plans for near-completers. Funds may also be used to establish a rapid identification of students who stop-out or drop-out in a type of “early warning” system.

**Degree Program Completion Plan:** Institutions can provide either individualized degree completion plans 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. General studies majors with flexible requirements help near-completers with non-aligned credits to re-enroll and obtain a general education degree using their existing credits.

**Establishment of a “Concierge” or Near-completer Counselor Approach:** A trained concierge, dedicated near-completer counselor, or a small cadre of trained counselors can provide a “one-stop shop” or a single point of contact for returning adult students to expedite the re-enrollment process. If funds are requested for staffing, applicants should include a sustainability plan for the position when funds expire. A current staff member(s) might also be designated for this role, and receive training to be as efficient as possible. The assigned staff member(s) serves to advise near-completers, evaluate their transcripts, and provide instruction on the re-enrollment process.

**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 professional development programs to inform faculty and staff of effective completion strategies that can be implemented in the classroom and administrative support areas.

**Marketing and Outreach:** Institutions must first identify and re-engage students who might be eligible for a degree or who are a few credits short of what is needed 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.

**Student Financial Support:** Institutions have had success with emergency grants, tuition discounts, book vouchers, small fee and fee forgiveness, waiving testing or graduation fees, funding prior learning assessment portfolio work, transportation vouchers, and even childcare support. Developing payment plans for returning adults so they can pay monthly, rather than paying for the entire semester up front, is also a win-

win proposition. Students receiving more than \$2,000 in support per semester should demonstrate need (i.e., FAFSA completion, Pell-eligible).

**One Step Away (OSA) is not solely a financial aid program. Because OSA is a short-term grant program, it does not provide a sustainable source of financial aid.**

## **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
- Include the following, no points are awarded for these documents:
  - Application Cover Sheet (use the form in Appendix B)
  - Abstract (use form in Appendix B; 250 words or less)
  - Resumes for essential personnel
- Narrative maximum of 15 pages, numbered. Page number count excludes cover sheet, abstract, budget summary, budget narrative, resumes, and appendices
- See the application checklist in Appendix A.

### **Delivery Instructions**

- **Electronic applications due by 4 p.m. on July 25, 2025.**  
Email to Anthony.Reiner@maryland.gov
- *A copy of the abstract must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document.*

## **REQUIRED APPLICATION COMPONENTS**

### **Application Narrative and Budget**

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

#### **I. Needs Assessment (10 points)**

Develop a compelling needs statement to support the application using institution-specific data. 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 the institution's specific graduation rates, retention, and completion agenda may be included to set the context for college completion.

**The central focus of the needs assessment should be on the near-completer population based on your institution's data.** 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 cohort years to be included in outreach efforts.

Provide an overview of your organization's completion efforts and explain how the efforts fit with the state's completion strategy. This section should not be lengthy but should present a compelling argument supported by specific and quantifiable local information relative to your institution. Please refer to the Project Evaluation section for the data-reporting requirement for awardees.

## **II. Project Objectives and Projected Outcomes (10 points)**

Applications must demonstrate their institution's contribution to the overarching program goal to increase associate or bachelor's degree attainment rates for near-completers. Three or more of the grant objectives must be included. Applicants may add additional objectives including institutionally defined objectives as long as the minimum criteria as specified by this Request for Proposals are met.

For each objective, identify one or more projected outcome. Projected outcomes should be quantifiable and measurable. Include baseline data for comparison to convey that your goal is reasonable but ambitious.

## **III. Management Plan (15 points)**

The Management Plan supports the implementation of the project. The Management Plan does not contain direct service activities but instead describes essential personnel and the administration of the project (e.g., communications, overall guidance, the establishment of timelines & benchmarks). 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. Identify essential personnel general roles and responsibilities. Provide a clear organizational structure, a timeline for management actions, and milestones for accomplishing management actions. You may add a table to support the narrative.
2. Include activities such as planning and progress report meetings. Project management duties should be linked to the budget and the Operations Plan. **Include resumes/CVs for all key/essential personnel in an appendix.**

3. Demonstrate that the project director and other staff have sufficient time to conduct the project efficiently and according to 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 who are initially impacted by the grant but have received a degree by the grant end date.
5. Refer to the Timetable of this Request for Proposals for any due dates specified by the grant program. These due dates should be reflected in the Management Plan as appropriate.

#### **IV. Operations Plan (30 points)**

The Operations Plan describes the activities that will achieve the project objectives and outcomes. The Operations Plan will:

1. Describe each activity implementation plan/strategy (i.e., when, where and how), and the essential 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 with tentative dates.
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 important elements of project success and must be planned carefully and implemented rigorously.
5. The Operations Plan should be presented as a narrative. A table should be added to support the narrative.

#### **V. Project Evaluation (20 points)**

The Project Evaluation is an integral part of the project's design and implementation. The evaluation plan should be linked to the 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 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 activities.

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 are 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. It should describe the activities conducted and the corresponding objectives and outcomes. Discuss how the 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 assisting the near-completers effort. **In addition, a final cumulative data report on the measures indicated below will be reported to MHEC as part of the interim report and final reporting for the project.**

### **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.
- The number of degree-eligible students awarded an associate or 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.
- 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/competency-based credits/CLEP.
- The number of degree-potential near-completers awarded an associate or 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 total amount of aid received through the grant.

### **Budget and Cost Effectiveness (15 Points)**

The application requires a Budget Summary and a Budget Narrative. Submit the Budget Summary using the excel spreadsheet provided in Appendix B There should be a clear link between all costs and the project activities that are detailed in the Operations Plan and management activities in the Management Plan.

At least 1/3 of the total project cost must be in-kind or a 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. 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.

The Budget Narrative explains the rationale for each line of the Budget Summary, both for grant expenditures and matching funds. The Budget Narrative should be labeled in the same order as the Budget 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 (percentage 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 essential 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 or one summer course equivalent.

##### 2. Other Personnel

List all support personnel individually by support category and the requested rate of pay or in-kind match. Support personnel must be 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 the column

#### B. Fringe Benefits

Calculate at the costs customarily 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 an excellent source of institutional in-kind match as is salary.

#### C. Travel

Enter travel costs, if necessary, for essential personnel to conduct off-campus activities. Mileage allowances may not exceed the state's approved rate for mileage reimbursement at the time of travel. All travel funding must be designated by place and position, approximate date, distance, and method of travel.

Conference travel will be supported on a limited basis and only as professional development for the near-completer “concierge” or the staff member responsible for establishing a “one-stop shop” for near-completers. The requested conference needs to be identified, and supporting information about how attendance will directly impact the institution’s near-completer program must be included in the justification.

**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 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 is not allowable.

Adequately documented contractual agreements for expenditures for 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 the 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 the sum of Items A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

**I. Indirect Costs**

The grant 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 the sum of Item H and I. Observe that the Total (Item J) in Column 1 for "Funds Requested" is the amount of the grant request. 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, and 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 budget complies with the requirements and guidelines outlined in this Request for Proposals;
- In-kind contributions are identified and included such that there is adequate support- including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources - from the institution; and
- Administrative costs are kept to a minimum.

**STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES** (required - no points)

A Statement of Assurances signed by the President or the Provost/Chief Academic Officer is required. Use the form in Appendix B.

**APPLICATION RECEIPT & REVIEW PROCESS**

Applications (**signed**) must be received by the deadline and include all necessary forms.

A panel of qualified reviewers will read each application and score each according to the grant selection criteria described. At least four reviewers will read each application.

Reviewers may be from Maryland or 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 are considered in the final awarding process.

If a grant recipient has materially failed to comply with the terms of a previous MHEC grant and has outstanding grant requirements from previous grants with MHEC, MHEC may deduct points from the total score.

## **NOTICE OF AWARDS**

MHEC will announce the grant awards by midnight on **August 5, 2025**.

## **FISCAL PROCEDURES**

All state funds under this program must be assigned to a specific account. 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 is received and approved. Projects may have award amounts adjusted based on the interim progress report. Expenditures exceeding the approved budget are the grantee's responsibility.

## APPENDIX A

### APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Every application should contain an original 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 Projected Outcomes
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Management Plan
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Operations Plan
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Project Evaluation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Budget and Cost-Effectiveness
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Budget Summary\*
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Budget Narrative\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Statement of Assurances\*
- \_\_\_\_\_ Project Staff Resume/CVs

\*Use the application forms included in Appendix B.

All applications are due by 4 p.m. on July 25, 2025 to [Anthony.Reiner@Maryland.gov](mailto:Anthony.Reiner@Maryland.gov)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **APPLICATION FORMS**

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

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

**FY 2025 APPLICATION COVER SHEET**

Project Title:

Higher Education Institution:

Project Director(s) Name and Title:

UEI Number:

Campus Telephone:

FAX Number:

Email Address:

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 your project activities. (Note that this may be reproduced as is or edited by MHEC staff for inclusion in press releases and other publications describing the grant program.)

**ONE STEP AWAY Complete College Maryland State Grant**

**BUDGET SUMMARY (use this Excel format)**

**Higher Education Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Project Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

SOURCE OF FUNDS				
	COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3	COLUMN 4
	<b>*GRANT FUNDS REQUESTED</b>	<b>**INSTITUTION CONTRIBUTION</b>	<b>***OTHER CONTRIBUTION</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
A. Salaries & Wages				
Professional Personnel				
[List each by name followed by title in brackets]				
1				
2				
3				
4				
Other Personnel (list categories & # of each in brackets)				
5. [ ]				
6. [ ]				
7. [ ]				
8. [ ]				
Total Salaries and Wages				
B. Fringe Benefits				
C. Travel				
D. Equipment				
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)				

\*Include all grant-funded expenses.

\*\*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.

\*\*\*Include any contributions from other partners in the grant project in this column.

## 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 project period. 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 for \$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 for \$10,800 is requested. ( $\$36,000/\text{annual salary} \times .30/\text{percent} = \$10,800$ )
4. Administrative Assistant: to be hired.  $\$12.00/\text{hour} \times 5 \text{ hours/week} \times 36 \text{ weeks}$  Request = **\$2,160**.

### B. Fringe Benefits

Fringe benefits for Jill Smith and Jo Daniel are provided as in kind - are calculated at 8%  
 $4,500 + 10,800 \times .18 = \mathbf{\$2,754}$

### C. Travel

Travel for program manager to offsite meetings with branch campuses for training of admissions staff  
Request =  $\$0.54 \text{ cents per mile} \times 10 \text{ trips} \times 30 \text{ miles/trip} = \mathbf{\$162.00}$

### 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 re-enrollment 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 for requested funds and institutional match.

### 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. In addition, 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.
4. It will comply with all relevant federal and state laws.
5. 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.
6. It will participate in any statewide assessment program or other evaluation program as required by the Maryland Higher Education Commission.
7. It will give the Maryland Higher Education Commission 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.
8. It will comply with all requirements imposed by the Maryland Higher Education Commission 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**

#### **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 key/essential personnel 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 activities. A single extension, which shall not exceed six months, may be made for this purpose and must be requested 30 days before the initially established expiration date. The request must explain the need for the extension and include an estimate of the unobligated 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 promptly as feasible after expiration or termination. In closing out the grant, the following shall be observed:

- The grant recipient shall immediately refund 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 federal rights of access to grant records.

**Suspension:** When a grant recipient has materially failed to comply with the terms of a grant, MHEC, with reasonable notice to the grant recipient, may suspend any 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.

Closeout of a grant does not affect the right of MHEC to disallow costs and recover funds based on 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 and submission of the final report:

- 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 programs. In addition to requiring an interim report and a final report, MHEC staff conduct virtual, on-site and desk monitoring visits, 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 MHEC. The project evaluation should be an integral part of the narrative report.

## Interim Report

For the report to be acceptable, it must address all questions in the 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 financial 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 all questions posed on the annual progress report form; and
- Evidence that the project is progressing sufficiently to continue.

## Final Report

Final reports will address items on the interim report but for the full term of the grant; the report includes a narrative and financial section. Failure to submit a final report may result in the project director being 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 compare to those stated in the application and the evaluation instrument(s) used. Final reports should include a participant chart, and report 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 a budget summary and a budget narrative, and signed by a financial officer serving as a 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. Any unspent grant funds must be returned to MHEC with the financial report.

The *Narrative Report* includes the results of the evaluation plan outlined in the project Application and document the project outcomes. This report 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 the project objectives and outcomes;
- Provide any specific data metrics to date as required by the grant;

- Include the full results of the 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.

### **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.

When 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, and must be clearly labeled with appropriate identifying information.