College Success Grants FAQs

Updated as of January 31, 2025

Contents

General Questions

1. **If an institution applies for a grant with multiple deadlines and is denied the first time, can the application be revised and resubmitted to a later deadline?**

Yes. The State strongly encourages applicants who are denied in one cycle to request feedback, and then submit a revised proposal at a later cycle date. There will be no disadvantage to applying in a later cycle (unless there is no meaningful change to the grant application or project being proposed).

2. **Are these grants one-time or are they possibly eligible for renewal?**

These are one-time grants.

3. **Should the "rigorous evaluation" required for some grants be conducted by an external evaluator?**

We don't believe that it would be reasonable to require an external evaluation for grants of $1 million or less, so none of our Student Success grants require it. What the State wants to know, though, is that the program team has built data collection, analysis, reflection, and learning into the program design. The State prepared a short guide to what should be included in an evaluation plan, which can be found here. The evaluation plan should be designed at an appropriate scale for the project being proposed.

4. **Will there be a budget template provided?**

Yes, a budget template is included in the application materials for each grant.

5. **I've heard that some of the funds are federal. Will receipt of these grants require a single audit?**

It's correct that some of the funding will come from federal covid recovery fund sources, but these dollars are considered revenue replacement dollars, which are treated like state funds. Receipt of these funds, at any amount, does not create a subrecipient relationship or trigger a single audit requirement. Funds do not need to be included on the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards (SEFA).

6. **What will the reporting deadlines and requirements be?**

Reporting will be required quarterly and at the end of the project for Quick Start grants, and twice annually and at the end of the project for all other grants. Reporting requirements will be different for each grant and will reflect the evaluation plans, milestones, and metrics that were submitted as part of the awarded proposal and that the college plans to utilize as part of its own learning and evaluation. This will be developed as the grant agreement is finalized after the award but largely based on the information in the proposal.

7. **What is the report management system? Are the application and grant portal the same?**

The Office of Sixty by 30 is releasing a word document for each application type so that applicants can work on drafting and collaborating on an application with easy access to the questions. The actual application must be submitted through the EGrAMS portal, which will be opened at least two weeks prior to the application deadline. Reporting will also be done through the portal.

8. **Are there requirements on the start date and end date of a proposed project?**

Each grant category has a maximum timeframe described in the application. Applications should include milestones for when they can realistically kick off, assuming that award determinations are made one to two months after the application deadline and grant agreements are signed an additional month later.

9. **Will there be an opportunity for getting feedback on an idea before submitting an application?**

Yes. For the larger grants (Barrier Removal—Building Institutional Capacity, and College Success Accelerate and Go Big grants) there will be a prereview period prior to the application where applicants can get feedback on their proposals. The dates of the prereview and instructions for how to take advantage of prereview are included online and in the application materials.

In addition, applicants are encouraged to join office hours (which are posted weekly on the grants webpage) to share an outline of what they are planning and get informal sign-off that the application meets the minimum eligibility requirements.

10. **How will the review and selection process work?**

A review team composed of staff from the Office of Sixty by 30 and subject matter experts from outside of Michigan will use a rubric aligned to the evaluation criteria to evaluate the applications. Institutions may receive additional questions. For those seeking Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity or College Succes (Amplify, Accelerate, or Go Big) grants, an interview may be required.

11. **How can I ask questions that aren't answered in the grant application or this FAQ document?**

The Sixty by 30 team holds weekly office hours and ask that you join office hours to have your questions answered whenever possible. An updated zoom link is always available on our site (scroll to "Support Office Hours").

Budgets and Eligible Expenses

12. Can you please clarify if this is a reimbursement process or a grant that recipients spend down?

After award, grant dollars will be provided as reimbursements based on monthly reimbursement requests (known in the grants portal as Financial Status Reports). In cases where this arrangement creates hardship, institutions may inquire about receiving an initial advance. Institutions should request an advance after receiving notification that their grant has been selected for an award but before the grant agreement is signed.

13. Will there be any match requirement?

There is no budgetary match requirement. That said, the presence of matching dollars can increase the strength of a proposal. For example, community partners committing some of their own resources to a Community Action Grant project shows a strong level of buy-in and collaboration. A college covering some costs of a project that is part of a College Success "Go Big" grant demonstrates that there is strong institutional support and real capacity and intention to make the program sustainable after the end of the state grant.

14. What happens if our plans change after we have received a grant?

We understand that plans can change, especially in a multi-year grant. Changes to the budget amounts, if the budget categories remain unchanged, of up to 5% of the award amount are allowable without a budget amendment. Changes of more than 5% of the award will require a budget amendment.

15. We'd like to fund something that we aren't sure fits into the list of eligible expenses, though we think it matches the intent of the grants. Is there any flexibility on those categories?

The Office of Sixty by 30 may approve additional eligible expenses. The easiest way to explore options is to ask about your particular ideas during a weekly office hours session. (Visit the grants webpage for updated times and Zoom links.)

16. Can funds be used to support out-of-state and international student success?

The strongest applications will create benefit across the institution. This may include benefits that are felt by all students, regardless of whether they are from Michigan or elsewhere. That said, it is unlikely that a successful College Success grant will have an exclusive focus on one of those groups of students.

For the Barrier Removal—Direct to Students grants, the State is not prohibiting that funds would benefit out-of-state or international students, although if they are to be the focus, the college will need to make a strong case that those are the students with the greatest need, as intended by the program.

17. Can any of the five grant categories be used for infrastructure or construction?

Funding infrastructure/facilities improvements is certainly not the primary goal/intent of this program. That said, facilities improvements are not prohibited as an eligible expense. A successful grant application that includes facilities improvements will make a strong case that the facilities upgrades will lead to stronger completion rates (not just, for instance, room for more students to enroll in a program without improving the completion rate).

18. Can grants be used for staff?

For the first four categories of College Success grant, personnel are eligible expenses in certain situations. It is not the State's intention to fund projects where staff that are actually needed on a permanent basis are funded temporarily with these grants, nor where new staff are in roles that are considered pilots. For instance, grant applications focused on growing an advising team without a true post-grant sustainability plan are unlikely to be awarded. On the other hand, creating a temporary position to carry out or oversee the project, when the project is truly about helping the institution undergo a transformation, would be eligible.

If a college seeks to fund new, permanent positions with one of the Student Success grants, one way to strongly demonstrate a plan for sustainability is to scale down the percent of the staff member's salary that is covered by the grant over time. For example, a college could use the grant to cover 80% of staff time the first year, 50% the second year, and 25% the third year, increasing the institutional support each year to fill the difference.

Please do note that stipends for staff who are taking on additional work for this project are supported and encouraged. Relatedly, funding for a temporary staff member whose role is to oversee a transformational project for 2-3 years would also be supported. The theme is that funding can be used for staff to support the intensive processes related to institutional change, not the ongoing work of general operations.

The response to this question is different for the Reconnect Community Action grant. For the Reconnect Entry Point Program, staff time is an expected cost, especially if it is aligned toward growing the strength and alignment of the collective effort. In the College and Career Navigators Program, staff are expected to be the primary expense and there is not a similar burden to prove sustainability as exists for the other four categories of grants.

19. Are indirect facilities and administrative costs allowable?

The answer to this varies for each grant category, as described below. Please note that some costs that might be considered administrative are eligible separate from indirect costs, and should be broken out (for instance, a portion of a person's salary to manage the program).

- Quick Start: indirect costs are capped at 10% of the grant award
- College Success (Amplify, Accelerate, Go Big): indirect costs are capped at 5% of the grant award
- Barrier Removal–Direct to Students: no indirect costs are allowed
- Barrier Removal–Growing Institutional Capacity: indirect costs are capped at 5% of the grant award
- Reconnect Community Action: indirect costs are capped at 10% of the grant award

20. Will the State provide a template for the reimbursement requests?

Yes. Grantees will submit reimbursement requests through the EGrAMS portal using the provided forms (Financial Status Reports). Financial Status Reports are required to be submitted monthly, even if no funds were expended for the month (in this case $0 would be submitted in each category on the report).

Applying for Multiple Grants

21. Are there limits to how many grants institutions can be awarded as a whole in one of the grant categories? For example, our institution is made up of multiple colleges who are all looking for funds and resources. Do we need to compile those needs into one application for the university as a whole?

Yes, the restrictions on applications and awards per category apply across the institution. These are described in the Student Success Grants Guide. Successful Accelerate and Go Big applications are likely to cross over multiple colleges or divisions, but the application should not read simply as a compilation of multiple to-do lists. Successful applicants will describe a cohesive strategy, even if that strategy has multiple components.

22. Are organizations limited to one request per category?

Yes, no institution or organization will receive more than one grant per category. If an institution submits two applications in the same category, both will be denied as the double submission is evidence that these applications were submitted without leadership being involved in decisions about what to prioritize. In addition, as shown in the table referenced in the previous question, there are restrictions about which grants can be received at the same time.

23. The materials say that Quick Start grant activities have to be concluded before a college can receive an Accelerate, Go Big, or Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity grant. But Quick Start grants can be 6-8 months long. We don't understand how the timing works out.

An institution can apply for an Amplify grant while still receiving a Quick Start grant, but the questioner is correct that these three other grants may not be received concurrently with a Quick Start grant because presumably the Quick Start grant is helping to inform the design of the larger grant. The timing on turning around the Quick Start grant is intentionally tight, as these are not meant to be long-term processes. For many institutions, the work product at the end of a Quick Start grant should be a larger grant application, so additional time in between should not be necessary.

Having the Quick Start grant activities concluded does not mean that the grant must be entirely closed out, just that the activities are largely completed.

Applicant Eligibility

24. Are community-based nonprofits eligible for funding?

Community-based nonprofits are eligible grants recipients of the Quick Start, College Success (Amplify, Accelerate, and Go Big), Barrier Removal—Direct to Students, and Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity grants. (They are also eligible subrecipients if a college is the primary recipient.)

For College Success (Amplify, Accelerate, and Go Big) and Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity grants, the goal is institutional change at Michigan's public and tribal colleges to increase student success. An application will be successful when it can clearly describe how it will lead to embedded change at institutions. In most cases, applications will need to demonstrate that proposed projects reflect institutional priorities for college leaders, regardless of whether the college or a nonprofit partner is the applicant.

25. Are private colleges eligible for these grants?

No, per the state policy language, public colleges are eligible, as well as community-based nonprofits working with a college or colleges, but independent colleges are not eligible.

Particular Issues For Nonprofit Applicants

26. Does an application from a nonprofit in partnership with a college "count" against some of the limitations on applications (for instance, if a nonprofit receives an Accelerate grant, could a college that it partners with still receive a Go Big grant, since there is a prohibition on a college receiving both Accelerate and Go Big)?

Whether a nonprofit's application will count against the total limitations will depend on the project being proposed and cannot be answered without that context. To the extent possible, applicants should try to consider the intent of the State's guidelines, which is to provide some flexibility in how colleges and their partners share the work of institutional transformation without overtaxing the capacity of the colleges to achieve the project aims.

- Whether the college or the nonprofit is selected as the applicant should be based on the logic of the project itself. A reviewer of the grant application should be able to understand why the nonprofit is the appropriate applicant for the work being proposed.
- If the proposal appears to simply be an attempt to work around the limitations, it will be denied. For instance, a college submits an Accelerate application around gateway course redesign, and a nonprofit working with that same college submits an Accelerate application around holistic student advising, this will be interpreted as trying to skirt the restriction on a college receiving two Accelerate grants, though they might have different purposes. Both will be denied.
- The State is attempting to avoid funding nonprofits that are doing work that will feel like an appendage to the college's priorities. Instead, the State is seeking to fund nonprofits whose work will lead to an intrinsic change in the college's policies and practices.
- The State will query into whether the college truly has the capacity to deliver multiple projects regardless of whether it is the primary applicant or a partner. The application should clearly explain how it will organize the work to bring the capacity for multiple projects.
- If it is determined that a project awarded to a nonprofit will make a college partner ineligible for any category of future grant, that will be communicated by the State prior to signing a grant award.

A strong application from a nonprofit organization will demonstrate that its project and strategy has high-level buy-in from institutional leaders and can lead to lasting change for its institutional partners.

Projects that rely on collaboration across multiple colleges might be especially appropriate for a nonprofit applicant who serves as the convener and coordinator.

The Barrier Removal—Direct to Students grants work differently for nonprofits and don't require the same level of partnership. Please review the application materials for more information.

27. I work for a nonprofit and would like to partner with a college. Do you have any pointers on how to do that?

These grants are probably not a good vehicle for partnership for a nonprofit developing a brand-new partnership with a college. The State will fund nonprofit-college partnerships that reflect a thoughtful and robust partnership.

Questions Particular to: Quick Start Grants

28. Can the quick start grant be used to fund student barriers, such as food pantry, material and supplies, clothing, housing?

No, to fund removal of student barriers, colleges should consider the Barrier Removal grants. Quick Start grants *can* be used to assess a college's barrier removal strategies and offerings, evaluate appropriate interventions, increase student voice in strategic plans for barrier removal, or otherwise plan for effective Barrier Removal grant applications to be filed at a later time, but not for the actual barrier reduction itself.

29. Would you recommend doing a quick start grant to get data to support a college success grant?

The State *highly* recommends the use of Quick Start grants whenever a college is considering it. The Quick Start grants are designed and available to help colleges figure out its most critical interventions for increasing student success. The Quick Start grant can help applicants prepare excellent, fundable applications grounded in student experience.

Questions Particular to: Barrier Removal – Direct to Students Grants

30. Are laptop purchases eligible? What about a loaner laptop program?

Laptop purchases, like books, represent additional costs that are barriers to low-income students when not covered by financial aid programs. These are eligible expenses. That said, a loaner laptop program is not eligible because the resources are ultimately owned by the colleges. A loaner laptop program *could* be an eligible expense for the Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity grants.

31. Is it allowable to endow the Direct to Students funds in a community college foundation? If so, we could provide emergency benefits in perpetuity.

These funds are intended to quickly help students who need additional support today and in the next 1-2 years. As such, an endowment is not an appropriate use.

32. Based on what you said about the direct to student barrier funding and how you already calculated the amount that every college can apply for, is there enough in the total grant funding that every college on the list could apply and be awarded?

Yes, every public college in Michigan could receive the Barrier Removal—Direct to Students funding. However, it is still a competitive application process and not an entitlement. Colleges must demonstrate that they can meet the evaluation criteria described in the application. Once the grant is awarded, colleges will be responsible for hitting their milestones and moving support to students, or may risk loss of the grant.

33. For the payments made directly to students with this grant, will the payment to them impact their Pell, unemployment benefits, or food stamps?

It is possible and colleges should take this into account during their project design. To be clear, the State isn't requiring that these funds be moved as payments as this questioner assumes. The application provides additional detail.

34. We want students to take on-campus work study jobs because they are important for students forming supportive relationships on campus, and provide helpful flexibility, but we can't compete with the salaries at fast food chains, for example. Could we use the Barrier Removal—Direct to Student funding to supplement work study wages with a stipend?

Yes, within the context of the theory that you provided, this is an eligible expense. The strength of this proposal is the connection to a theory for how it increases student belonging and connectivity on campus. Data that shows increased success for students who have on-campus work study jobs would further help strengthen the proposal.

35. Can we use the Barrier Removal—Direct to Student funding for:
  o **Physical and mental health copays?**
  o **Food pantry supplies?**
  o **Meals on campus?**
  o **Books?**
  o **Parking and transportation costs?**

Any of these expenses are eligible. The proposal should include a clear explanation of how students will be identified/targeted and why this is an important tactic for increasing persistence.

36. Can we use the Barrier Removal—Direct to Student funding to provide institutional debt forgiveness, allowing a student with an outstanding balance to reenroll?

Putting this funding toward an outstanding student balance is allowable, but to be awarded, must be part of an application that includes additional components that will ensure that this will increase student success. This may include:

- A system to document/record that the student was aware and made a choice to use the funding to have their institutional debt forgiven. (This is mandatory.) Colleges may not simply apply funds to student accounts without the student expressing intent to reenroll.
- Additional requirements for participating students that provide support that can ensure they don't immediately face the same predicament (for instance, requiring students to attend mandatory advising appointments).
- Incentives for the student to stay enrolled (for example, allowing the student to reenroll without first forgiving the debt, and forgiving the debt after the student completes a semester).
- A limit that is set by the college based on their student data to maximize impact.

37. If we want to apply Barrier Removal—Direct to Student funding to a subset of student accounts, based on student factors and not necessarily emergencies, do we need an application (like an emergency grant application)?

A successful applicant will demonstrate that its plan for spending funds is likely to increase student persistence, based on evidence of best practices from elsewhere and your own student data. In general, these grants should not operate simply as additional financial aid or only to cover costs controlled by the college. The institution must have a plan for targeting students who are most likely to benefit, wherein a benefit includes ongoing enrollment. That may include emergency grants that are application based. It could also look like targeting a subset of students based on individual attributes and your own data about how infusions of support at key times can lead to persistence.

Questions Particular to: College Success (Amplify, Accelerate, Go Big) and Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity Grants

38. Can we use College Success or Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity grants to conduct a pilot project?

No, the state is not funding pilot projects. These grants are meant to fund well-founded, evidence-based, thoroughly planned institutional transformation projects that are high priorities to college leadership. Proposals should be based on a firm belief and commitment on the part of the applicant that the project is likely to be successful and that sufficient "testing" has already been done.

39. If we have multiple success projects we want to seek funding for, can we combine them into one Go Big application?

Successful Go Big applications will be tied together by a unifying theme or theory, even if they do include multiple elements. The strongest unifying themes will be directly related or in support to a key prong of the school's strategic plan.

40. Can we apply for a College Success or Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity grant if we haven't done a Quick Start grant?

Yes.

41. Can we use funding to pay for course release time for faculty who are taking on additional work that is critical to a College Success or Barrier Removal—Growing Institutional Capacity grant?

Yes, we view this as similar to providing stipends for faculty taking on additional roles and a reasonable strategy to ensure that sufficient faculty time can be devoted to ensure successful implementation, without creating a permanent new position that would require ongoing operational funding post-grant.

Questions Particular to: Reconnect Community Action Grants

42. The application materials say that the eligible applicant has to be a community college in partnership with county government. What if our county government cannot or does not want to participate?

The State is required to insist on the participation of county governments "where practicable." Grantees (collectives or community colleges) must demonstrate multiple sincere attempts to engage the county government (or county governments, in a multi-county geography) for an application to be considered. However, we understand that county government interest and capacity may vary widely. If your county government lacks capacity to engage, but would be willing to provide a letter of support that explains why it cannot be an active participating, this would suffice. If participation requests to government representatives are completely unsuccessful, the applicant should describe its outreach. In either case, the application can be strengthened by including strong partnership and leadership from a local workforce board, tribal governments, ISD, or quasi-governmental economic development organization, for instance. (These are partnerships that are also beneficial even when the county government is an active participant, but become even more critical to applications absent county government engagement.)

43. Could Adult Ed providers working to connect graduates to the community college be eligible as community partners?

The State is not limiting which community-based partners can participate in a collective funded by Reconnect Community Action grants and seeks to support broad collectives that include a diversity of education and community partners; certainly this can and should include adult education, though not as the only partner on an application.

44. Are county governments eligible applicants?

Per statute, only community colleges are eligible applicants for the Reconnect Community Action grants. However, we hope to see these grants used to fund work outside of the college that supports post-secondary education, increasing community alignment. Regranting is allowed.