

State of Oregon



ASPIRE CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS

Request for Grant Applications (RFA)

Initial Application Due on: December 6, 2024 at 4:00 PM

For questions, clarifications, or if you need this material in a different format, please contact Lisa Kelly-Harriman at Lisa.M.KELLY-HARRIMAN@hecc.oregon.gov.

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The State of Oregon, acting by and through the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (“HECC”), is issuing this Request for Applications (“RFA”) on behalf of the Office of the Executive Director.

HECC’s Office of Access and Completion’s (“OSAC”) ASPIRE program helps educate Oregon students to become career and college ready. ASPIRE offers education, resources, and mentoring opportunities for all students. Student supports include 1:1 and group mentoring, activities or events that focus on career exploration, career and college research, admissions applications, scholarships, and financial aid.

HECC seeks to fund community-based organizations, colleges, or universities to support their capacity building and to support the communities they serve through college access, career related information, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (“FAFSA”) and Oregon Student Aid Application (“ORSAA”) applications, and applications for financial aid. This is a competitive grant process targeting underserved populations and requiring multilingual and culturally competent services for students to better navigate and access college and career opportunities.

Funding will be awarded to entities who want to create or expand career and college preparation resources, transition activities, FAFSA/ORSAA completion, increase career and college resource opportunity awareness, develop staff training, coordinating initiatives, and systems development that prioritizes more equitable access, and participation for underserved populations. Additionally, grant recipients will work with OSAC to systematically foster a culture of FAFSA and ORSAA completion, grant, scholarship applications and training resource awareness.

HECC has committed \$589,000 in funds for this effort and anticipates the award of multiple Grants from this RFA. Award amounts not to exceed \$50,000. Regardless of award date, Grants will be structured to allow reimbursement for expenses incurred on November 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.

Eligibility Criteria

Organizations eligible to submit an Application under this RFA are: community-based organizations (non-profit organizations), colleges and universities, consortium of entities, private organizations exempt from taxes under sections 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code, and tribal organizations.

The authority for this RFA is ORS 350.075.

Community-based organizations include:

nonprofit organizations that are representative of a particular community or specific segments of a community and are located within or in close proximity to the community they serve

culturally-specific organizations who serve a particular cultural community, are primarily staffed and led by members of that community and demonstrate intimate knowledge of the lived experience of that community, including, but not limited to:

The impact of racism or discrimination on the community

Specific disparities in access to services and resources experienced by the community

Community strengths, cultural practices, beliefs and traditions

2. GRANT INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

Underserved Students for this Grant Opportunity

- Students aged 16+

- Communities of color
- Women
- Low-income communities
- Rural and frontier communities (Rural: an area that is ten or more miles from a population center of 40,000 people or more; Frontier: an area with six or fewer people per square mile)
- Veterans
- Persons with disabilities
- Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals
- Members of Oregon’s nine federally recognized Indian tribes
- Individuals who disproportionately experience discrimination in employment on the basis of age
- Individuals who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community

Grantees will participate in meetings with OSAC/ASPIRE and receive training on financial aid and FAFSA/ORSAA. Additional requirements:

- Site visits from OSAC representative(s)
- Mid-year progress report (due March 1, 2025)
- Final report (due July 25, 2025)

Successful Applicants will retain all grant records, including adequate documentation of each transaction, for a period of 6 years, as required by applicable law, after the expiration date indicated in the agreement.

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION: Individuals within a community, and communities within a larger society, need the ability to shape their own present and future, and the HECC believes that community-based organizations and colleges and universities are fundamental aspects of Oregon’s ability to thrive. Equity is both the means to success and an end that benefits us all. Equity requires the intentional examination of systemic policies and practices that, even if they have the appearance of fairness, may in effect serve to marginalize some and perpetuate disparities. The data is clear that Oregon demographics have been changing to provide rich diversity in race, ethnicity, and language. Working toward equity requires an understanding of historical contexts and the active investment in changing social structures and practice over time to ensure that individuals from all communities have the opportunities and support to realize their full potential.

Creating a culture of equity requires monitoring, encouragement, resources, data, and opportunity. The HECC applies its Equity Lens to all aspects of its work.

3. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All submissions shall be sent electronically to hecc.procurement@hecc.oregon.gov.

Submissions received after December 6, 2025 at 4:00 PM may not be accepted.

Submissions should be submitted in the format of Attachment A: Application.

4. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Project Abstract (max 100 words): 5 points

- Summarize your project.

Needs to be Addressed (max 300 words): 10 points

- In determining the need for the project, the evaluation committee considers the following factors:
 - The magnitude or severity of the problem(s) to be addressed. (Examples: As measured by the

described: Access gap, multilingual service needs, low FAFSA/ORSA completion, low to no college/postsecondary training access/completions, etc.)

- The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project.
- Cite appropriate references to data used in the application.

Organizational Background and Capacity (max 200 words): 10 points

- Describe your organization's capacity to successfully implement this project. Include evidence of past successes, past work with specific populations to be served, evaluation strategies, and other evidence to support your organization's ability to do this work.

Project Plan/Timeline (max 500 words): 20 points

- Provide a detailed description of your proposed project, including its goals, objectives, activities, timeline, and budget. How will you include FAFSA/OARSAA outreach and working with OSAC? Feel free to choose from this list:
 - Create/expand career and college readiness center
 - Financial aid support (presentations, events, scholarships & grants)
 - FAFSA/ORSA completion
 - Work with students and families
 - Visits to colleges/universities
 - Attend career and college fairs
 - Mentoring (one-to-one, group, peer, class, staff/community volunteers, etc)
 - Assist students returning to college who have previously stopped out (adult learners/returning students)
 - Other
- Define "success" in the context of this project.
- Describe how you will measure success for this project. Please provide examples of measurables (qualitative/quantitative data).
- Is this work you are currently doing and/or are you proposing new programming and services? If you are expanding a pre-existing project, please explain in detail how these funds will enhance/improve the work.
- Identify any technical training or informational support that will be needed from OSAC and the HECC during the time period of the project, and ongoing post-grant window.

Partnerships (max 300 words): 10 points

- List the key partner organization(s) that will be directly involved in the proposed project/program and for each key partner, please answer the following prompts:
 - How will the partners contribute to the program's ability to identify, engage, and/or serve students?
 - How will the contributions of these partners aid in identifying, engaging, and/or serving students?
- List all current community-based programs and other partners currently involved with your organization and describe what their level of involvement would be in this project.
- List any other partners you would like to engage in this work:
 - Local Community College
 - Four-year college/university
 - Civic Organizations (Rotary, Lions, Elks, Kiwanis, etc)
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Business/industry (career presentation, mentoring, tours, job shadow, etc)
 - Trade organizations/unions
 - Student groups

- Community-based organizations
- College Access Programs
- Other

Cultural Competency (max 300 words): 15 points

Please address the following prompts in your response:

- Identify how your proposed services and activities will address the needs of underserved students, with attention to barriers and disparities faced by these individuals.
- Indicate if these services and activities are based on or aligned with promising practices, evidence-based practices, and/or cultural practices, or otherwise designed for these individuals.
- How does the program ensure safe, affirming, and inclusive spaces for all participants?
- How will you solicit and incorporate participant feedback into program design and delivery?

Budget Narrative (max 300 words): 5 points

- **Costs and Justification:** Explain how you estimated the costs for each budget item and justify the costs.
- **Itemization:** Itemize your budget sufficiently. Each budget item should be clearly identified and described.
- **Reasonableness:** Ensure that your budget is reasonable in relation to the proposed project. Consider the scope of the project, the resources required, and your organization's capacity when developing the budget.
- **Sustainability:** List efforts your organization will undertake, post-award period to sustain FAFSA/ORSA completion efforts, and postsecondary education access and success.

Total 75 points

Scenario Planning

The applications with the highest scores will be funded. In the event of a tie, the decision-making process involves having scorers re-evaluate the tied applications, and the selection will prioritize the one with the highest score for funding. This approach ensures that the project with the most favorable evaluation in terms of criteria and merit is chosen to receive funding.

Transparency in Decision Making

Funding decisions are rendered through the input of the review committee, relying on the prescribed scoring criteria.

HECC's final funding recommendations will consider the legislative purpose of the funds, applicant's past performance, and applicant's project's conformity with the HECC equity lens.

HECC may award Grant Funds for all or some of the dollar amounts requested in an individual proposal.

Feedback Mechanism

The feedback system for applicants involves notifying all applicants of their funding status on or before January 3, 2024.

5. SUCCESSFUL PROPOSER REQUIREMENTS

A. Taxpayer Identification Number

The apparent successful Proposer shall provide its Taxpayer Identification Number on a completed W-

9 form (which can be found here: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>). The apparent successful Proposer must provide its backup withholding status on the W-9 form if either of the following applies:

- When requested by HECC (normally in an intent to award notice), or
- When the backup withholding status or any other information of Proposer has changed since the last submitted W-9 form, if any.

HECC will not make any payment until HECC has a properly completed W-9.

B. Business Registry

If selected for award, Proposer shall be duly authorized by the State of Oregon to transact business in the State of Oregon before executing the Contract. The selected Proposer shall submit a current Oregon Secretary of State Business Registry number, or an explanation if not applicable.

All Corporations and other business entities (domestic and foreign) must have a Registered Agent in Oregon. See requirements and exceptions regarding Registered Agents. For more information, see Oregon Business Guide, How to Start a Business in Oregon and Laws and Rules. The titles in this subsection are available at the following Internet site: <http://www.filinginoregon.com/index.htm>.

6. PUBLIC RECORDS

All information and records submitted to HECC are subject to the Public Records Law, ORS 192.311 to 192.478 and may be publicly disclosed. If Applicant believes that any information or records it submits to HECC may be a trade secret under ORS 192.345(2), or otherwise is exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law, Applicant must identify such information with particularity and include the following statement:

“This data is exempt from disclosure under the Oregon Public Records Law pursuant to ORS 192.[applicant to insert applicable subsection], and is not to be disclosed except in accordance with the Oregon Public Records Law, ORS 192.311 through 192.478.”

If Applicant fails to identify with particularity the portions of such information that Applicant believes are exempt from disclosure, Applicant is deemed to waive any future claim of non-disclosure of that information.

Attachment A | Request for Applications

ASPIRE Capacity Building Grants

ORGANIZATION CONTACT INFORMATION	
Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
GRANT ADMINISTRATOR CONTACT INFORMATION	
Name	
Title	
Email Address	
Phone Number	
FISCAL REPRESENTATIVE CONTACT INFORMATION	
Name	
Phone Number	
Email	
AUTHORIZED SIGNER FOR AGREEMENT	
Name	
Title	

Respond to the following questions or statements. Stay within the max word count; additional words will not be considered or read.

Project Abstract (max 100 words): 5 points Summarize your project

Need to be Addressed (max 300 words): 10 points

- In determining the need for the project, the evaluation committee considers the following factors:
 - The magnitude or severity of the problem(s) to be addressed. (Examples: As measured by the described: Access gap, multilingual service needs, low FAFSA/ORSAA completion, low to no college/postsecondary training access/completions, etc.)
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 - Community-based organizations
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2024-2025 ASPIRE Capacity Building Grant Proposed Itemized Budget

Program Name:		
Expenses*	Amount Requested	Description/Justification
Salaries and Benefits		
Equipment		
Materials and Supplies		
Meetings/Events		
Participant Support Costs (stipends, travel, fees, etc)		
Travel		
Other Goods and Services		
TOTAL GRANT BUDGET	\$	

*add additional items in the blank cells under Expenses

APPLICATION CERTIFICATION SHEET

Legal Name of Applicant: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

State of Incorporation: _____ Entity Type: _____

Contact Name: _____ Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Any individual signing below hereby certifies they are an authorized representative of Applicant and that:

1. I have knowledge regarding Applicant's payment of taxes and by signing below I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, Application is not in violation of any tax laws of the state or a political subdivision of the state, including, without limitation, ORS 305.620 and ORS chapters 316, 317 and 318.

Applicant does not discriminate in its employment practices with regard to race, creed, age, religious affiliation, gender, disability, sexual orientation, national origin. When awarding subgrants, Applicant does not discriminate against any business certified under ORS 200.055 as a disadvantaged business enterprise, a minority-owned business, a woman-owned business, a business that a service-disabled veteran owns or an emerging small business. If applicable, Applicant has, or will have prior to grant agreement execution, a written policy and practice, that meets the requirements described in ORS 279A.112, of preventing sexual harassment, sexual assault and discrimination against employees who are members of a protected class. HECC may not enter into an agreement with an anticipated grant price of \$150,000 or more with an Applicant that does not certify it has such a policy and practice. See <https://www.oregon.gov/DAS/Procurement/Pages/hb3060.aspx> for additional information and sample policy template.

2. Applicant and Applicant's employees, agents, and subcontractors are not included on:
 - A. the "Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons" list maintained by the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the United States Department of the Treasury found at: <https://www.treasury.gov/ofac/downloads/sdnlist.pdf>, or
 - B. the government-wide exclusions lists in the System for Award Management found at: <https://www.sam.gov/SAM>
3. Applicant certifies that, to the best of its knowledge, there exists no actual or potential conflict between the business or economic interests of Applicant, its employees, or its agents, on the one hand, and the business or economic interests of the State, on the other hand, arising out of, or relating in any way to, the subject matter of the RFA. If any changes occur with respect to Applicant's status regarding conflict of interest, Applicant shall promptly notify the State in writing.
4. Applicant certifies that all contents of the Proposal (including any other forms or documentation, if required under this RFA) and this Proposal Certification Sheet are truthful and accurate and have been prepared independently from all other Applicants, and without collusion, fraud, or other dishonesty.

5. Applicant understands that any statement or representation it makes, in response to this RFA, if determined to be false or fraudulent, a misrepresentation, or inaccurate because of the omission of material information could result in a "claim" (as defined by the Oregon False Claims Act, ORS 180.750(1)), made under Contract being a "false claim" (ORS 180.750(2)) subject to the Oregon False Claims Act, ORS 180.750 to 180.785, and to any liabilities or penalties associated with the making of a false claim under that Act.
6. Applicant certifies it will comply with the Pay Equity law, ORS 652.220, if applicable.

Authorized Signature

Date

(Printed Name and Title)