



Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

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Attachment A Instructions & Guidance

Alternate ID: FY21 Bridges to College
COMMBUYS Document #: BD-21-1088-RGT01-RGT01-57311

Background:

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) is pleased to issue this request for proposals (RFP) for adult college transition services focused on low-income and entry level workers seeking access to post-secondary education pathways leading to in-demand jobs and careers.

Grant funds shall be awarded competitively to adult basic education providers, including but not limited to local education agencies, community-based organizations, community colleges and correctional facilities.

Candidate organizations must have demonstrated prior success in bridging academic gaps of underserved populations resulting in college entrance, retention and completion.

The total funding available to be awarded through this competitive grant program is \$250,000. The DHE anticipates awarding up to five grants in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 reflecting the program design, number of people served and planned outcomes.

Purpose and Priorities:

The Bridges to College (BtC) program is intended to provide adult, low-income and entry level workers from underserved populations, education transition services that bridge gaps in academic achievement resulting in college entrance, retention and completion.

Proposals must support the transition of adult learners into credit-bearing college level coursework and should provide job readiness skills leading to careers that offer family sustaining wages and benefits. Proposals should be responsive to student academic and employment interests and inform prospective learners about regional labor market data and work opportunities as identified in the Workforce Skills Cabinet, Regional Blueprint plans <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/view-your-regions-blueprint>.

Proposals that demonstrate prior success in serving the intended populations, build upon existing and successful programs and propose to extend programs to serve more people and/or expand to other geographic areas will be given priority in the scoring and award process.

The BtC program is statewide in scope, therefore, proposals from across the commonwealth are encouraged.

Eligibility:

Required

Lead organizations must be adult basic education providers, including: local education agencies, community-based organizations, community colleges or correctional facilities. The lead organization must present outcomes data that demonstrates their prior success in bridging academic gaps of low-income and entry level workers from underserved populations resulting in college entrance, retention and completion aligned with student career interests and employer workforce demand.

Proposals must include the following elements, described in detail further in this document:

- Scope of Service
- Budget and Narrative
- Implementation Plan and Timeline

Proposals must delineate how the funds requested will be applied to providing training and supporting of specific cohort(s) of students to attain intentional outcomes during the time period of this grant.

Preferred

Prior award recipients of BtC funding that can demonstrate successful program implementations serving the target population and who propose to increase their capacity to serve more students and/or develop partnerships to replicate and extend the geographic reach of the initiative will receive additional consideration in the process of scoring proposals for award recommendation.

Proposals from new organizations or collaborations of organizations that may or may not have previously been awarded BtC funding, but otherwise can demonstrate prior success serving the intended communities, are encouraged.

Scope of Service

ABSTRACT (one-page summary)

- Lead organization and partnerships necessary to execute the proposal
- Principal objectives, goals and anticipated outcomes – transitions to college, workforce pathways
- Target populations (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, current education levels, other relevant status) including projected number of individuals to be served
- Proposed education programming, workforce training and readiness skills preparation, and other “wrap-around” support services

PROJECT NARRATIVE (10 pages – including the abstract)

Provide a detailed description of the proposed project addressing the following:

- Overview of the project and distinctive features
- Lead and partner organizations roles and responsibilities, anticipated sub-contracts (include letters of support in appendices, these are not counted in the 10 page proposal limit)
- Statement of need/opportunity to be addressed
- Project objectives, stated in measurable terms with projected outcomes
- Target populations to be served – provide a demographic breakdown (e.g., race/ethnicity gender, socio-economic status, current educational levels, other relevant status (e.g. incarceration); include unduplicated number of individuals/entities served

- Major project activities/services with specific details showing how each is designed to meet the BtC program goals and objectives
- Prior successful experience in implementing adult learner college transition services and related activities for the target population including but not limited to:
 - number of students that matriculated in previous 3 years from the proposed program into college credit bearing course work, broken down by program year
- Proposals must indicate the average cost per student (total funding requested/total number of students to be served) which is anticipated to range between \$2000 - \$7,500
- Plans to scale up/increase the reach and impact of existing initiatives in the same or other regions (identify partnerships as appropriate) to replicate best-practices, increase the number of participants served and expand the geographic reach of the project
- Plans for financial sustainability of the program activities beyond the FY21 BtC funding cycle
 - BtC is not intended and should not be viewed as a sustaining source of funding for any project.
 - BtC funds should be used to develop or enhance capabilities and promote partnerships, complement and extend services and address the needs of a greater number of recipients
- Identify any complementary funding sources

AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES/SERVICES

*Academic Preparation for College and Career – **Primary focus***

- 1) Activities that support and improve adult learners abilities to prepare for and successfully enter and persist in college programs with the goal of completing credit-bearing coursework towards a postsecondary certificate or degree. Suggested activities include:
 - foundational academic readiness for college-level coursework
 - college success readiness (college coursework rigor and expectations)
 - understanding of and preparedness for postsecondary placement examinations and/or degree program prerequisites
 - college success resources (advising, tutoring, mentoring, financial aid)
 - faculty engagement
- 2) Awareness of academic and career pathways. Suggested activities include:
 - experiential learning
 - internships
 - apprenticeships

*Outreach and Support Services – **Primary focus***

- 1) Engagement activities to attract adult learners who may be at risk of not enrolling in or successfully persisting through to completion.
- 2) Activities for adult learners to bridge the gap between high school/ABE/GED/ELL programs and college level coursework. Examples may include:
 - building relationships and networking with other students, faculty, staff and program/campus resources
 - assistance with completing college and career requirements via coaching/counseling and case-management (e.g. assistance with reapplying for FAFSA)

- enrolling into courses, career mapping and internship assistance
 - applying for and obtaining scholarships
 - opportunities to connect with resources on and off campus
- 3) Social support/transition services
- e.g. transportation, child-care
 - technology and Internet services for access to online learning

*Career Preparation for Workforce Readiness – **Secondary focus***

- 1) Inform adult learners about industry knowledge/skill/ability expectations and job/career readiness requirements.
- 2) Advise students about regional career opportunities based on their academic interests. Student supports may include but are not limited to:
 - workforce readiness skills (e.g. professional comportment, “soft skills” mentoring, resume development, interviewing skills)
 - work place performance expectations
 - description of pathways related to local/regional labor market needs supported by regional workforce development planning [Workforce Skills Cabinet - labor market information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/massworkforce/wioa/acls/local-plan/>]
- 3) Activities to engage adult learners in experiential learning opportunities (e.g. internships, job shadowing, apprenticeships, mentoring) with regional employers in high demand fields such as STEM, Health Care, Advanced Manufacturing, Hospitality and Business and Finance.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Describe the plan for implementation through the following chart (insert rows as needed):

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN Describe specific anticipated tasks, activities, outcomes and timeline as applicable. When discussing outcome/results, include benchmark data. The table should reflect stated activities, goals and strategies as described above. Feel free to adjust the table to share additional information or better illustrate your implementation strategy.				
Activities/Services [Actions]	Current Benchmark Data	Anticipated Outcome [Results]	Total Anticipated Beneficiaries	Timeline (when you will implement activity)

Evaluation and Reporting Requirements:

Project Evaluation

An independent external evaluation of proposed projects is NOT required. Given the limited timeframe for implementation of this project, any focus on self-evaluation should focus on formative rather than summative results, emphasizing continuous improvement practices and a consideration of the success and challenges of the proposed practices and services. Please reference the proposed evaluation and any related costs in the budget and narrative.

Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients must deliver an interim and final progress and outcomes report to the DHE describing progress in achieving the proposed project objectives. Reports shall focus on both qualitative and quantitative outcomes as measures of the programs impact on student progress and achievement. Grantees shall report on the number of adult learners served by the program (number recruited, enrolled, retained and completed) including completion of key program elements and assessments as indicators of their readiness to pursue and succeed at college enrollment.

Budget and Narrative

Please complete the attached budget spreadsheet with a breakdown of the requested funding from the DHE. Provide a budget narrative that includes calculations and breakdowns of budget amounts, description of budget items and describe any materials purchased. Provide a detailed explanation of any contracted services that are included.

Due to the cross fiscal-year nature of this funding (permitted by summer months spending line item language), it is essential that the budget narrative provide estimated spending broken down for the separate fiscal years (FY21 and FY22). First, from date of contract execution through June 30, 2021 (SFY21). Second, from July 1, 2021 through September 21, 2021 (SFY22).

Indirect costs are allowed up to 10%, reference the budget worksheet for a more detailed description of indirect cost guidelines.

Submission Instructions and Timeline:

Responses MUST be uploaded (as one single document) to COMMBUYS no later than the bid opening date and time: 12:00 Noon. ET March 1, 2021. Responses not posted to COMMBUYS will not be considered for evaluation. Do not email and/or mail responses to the department.

In order to respond to this bid, please register on the COMMBUYS website. If you need assistance with registering please contact the COMMBUYS helpdesk at: COMMBUYS@state.ma.us or (888) 627-8283 or (617) 720-3197.

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Proposals should be formatted not to exceed 10 pages, with standard 1" margins, 1.5 line spacing and 11-point font. The budget worksheet and budget narrative, appendices and letters of support do not count in the 10 page limit.

An information session will be held by conference call on February 5th, to respond to questions about the RFP. Information regarding the exact time and call-in number will be posted on COMMBUYS and the Department of Higher Education (DHE) website found here: <http://www.mass.edu/about/rfp.asp>. FAQs and responses will be posted to the Bridges to College section of the DHE website, as well as on COMMBUYS, within two business days following the information session.

Description	Date
Application Released	January 20, 2021
Information Session	February 5, 2021
Responses to Questions Posted	February 9, 2021
Proposal Due	March 1, 2021 (Noon)
Announcement of Awards	March 17, 2021
Interim Report	June 15, 2021
Completion of Program Activities	September 21, 2021
Final Report:	October 29, 2021

Projects will commence upon execution of the Interagency Service Agreement (for awards to public colleges) or the Standard Contract (for awards to community-based, non-profit organizations) with the disbursement of funds to be based on project requirements and achievement of milestones.

Inquiries:

No phone calls regarding this bid will be accepted.

If you have any questions, please send an email to David Cedrone at dcedrone@dhe.mass.edu, specify alternate ID # FY2020 Bridges to College in the subject line. Questions and responses will be posted to the COMMBUYS website: www.COMMBUYS.com, in same location as this BID: BD-21-1088-RGT01-RGT01-57311

Awards:

The governing Line Item language for the Bridges to College grant program in Chapter 154 of the Acts of 2019 the FY20 Massachusetts State Budget is as follows:

7066-0040 For adult college transition services focused on low-income and entry-level workers; provided, that funds shall be awarded competitively by the board of higher education to adult basic education providers, including local education agencies, community-based organizations, community colleges and correctional facilities with recognized success in bridging academic gaps of underserved populations and resulting in college entrance, retention and completion; provided further, that not less than \$250,000 shall be expended for Jewish Vocational Services with a targeted focus on academic and coaching support for immigrants and refugees; provided further, that program awardees shall report to the department of higher education on attendees' successful transition to college and that the program shall deliver to the joint committee on education and the house and senate committees on ways and means not later than February 17, 2021, an evaluation of the program and its impact on student achievement, particularly as it relates to closing achievement gaps; and provided further, that appropriated funds may be expended for programs or activities during the summer months.....\$500,000

The total funding available to be awarded through this competitive grant program is \$250,000. The DHE anticipates awarding up to five grants in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 reflecting the program design, number of people served and planned outcomes.

In the case of collaborative proposals that engage more than one organization in partnership, grant funds shall be awarded competitively to a lead institution acting as the fiscal agent to administer the grant funds, including any sub-contracts.

Per the line item language, expenditures may be incurred for programs or activities during the summer months, concluding not later than September 21, 2021.

Policies:

Grant Disbursement

Following the applicant's acceptance of the award letter, and the execution of the Interagency Service Agreement or Standard Contract the applicant can expect to receive an initial disbursement for start-up costs and then subsequent payments will be based on project deliverables (e.g. interim report or other milestones). A final payment will be made upon project completion and submission of a final spending report.

Publicity

Grant recipients are obligated to acknowledge the funding source in all print materials, websites and press releases.

Solicitor Responsibility

Solicitors may not alter (manually or electronically) the grant application language or any grant application component files. Modifications to the body of the grant application, specifications, terms and conditions, or application which change the intent of this grant application are prohibited and may disqualify a response. All costs associated with responding to this RFP are the sole responsibility of the responding organization. The DHE reserves the right to use any and all ideas included in any response without incurring any obligations to the responding firm or committing to awards for the proposed services. Responses are considered public information.

Performance

Any funds distributed to successful applicants are done so with the expectation that the awardee will deliver the programs as described and serve the numbers of participants detailed in the application. If the applicant is for some reason unable to fulfill the program described in the original proposal, we reserve the right to recover funds distributed.

Legal Disclaimer

This RFP does not represent a contractual agreement by the DHE to any applying organization. Selected organizations will enter into an Interagency Service Agreement with the DHE upon award.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL RESPONSES AND THE RIGHT TO CANCEL THIS REQUEST FOR QUALIFIED PROPOSALS (RFP) AT ANY TIME PRIOR TO AWARD.