Montana College Access Challenge Grant

Financial Literacy Program

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Fiscal Year 2012-2013

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FORMS & APPENDICES

I. INTRODUCTION

The Montana College Access Challenge Grant - Financial Literacy Program is funded through the federal College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACG). The CACG is authorized under The Higher Education Opportunity Act (Public Law 110-315) which was enacted on August 14, 2008 to reauthorize and extend the Higher Education Act of 1965. The enabling statute is found in Title VII, Sec. 801, Part E (20 U.S.C. 1133 et seq). The CACG is a federally funded formula grant program designed to foster partnerships among federal, state, and local government entities and philanthropic organizations through matching challenge grants that are aimed at increasing the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education.

The Montana Board of Regents Affordability Taskforce has compiled and analyzed data which underscores the need for financial literacy education. These findings include:

- Average student loan debt and the percentage of Montana students borrowing continues to escalate with amounts higher than the national average.
- As of 2011, the average Montana bachelor's degree recipient, who borrows, owes $24,000, up from $20,000 in 2008.
- The average first-time, full-time resident student is now borrowing nearly $7,000 in their first year, up from $3,000 for the entering cohort in 2003.
- Low and moderate income students incur higher levels of debt, as well as non-traditional students at 2-year campuses.
- 63% of Montana students borrow to fund their education.
- 90% of Pell Grant recipients in Montana borrow with an average indebtedness of nearly $27,000.

The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) was designated by Governor Brian Schweitzer to receive funding of $1.5 million from the CACG for the period August 14, 2012 through August 13, 2013, of which $400,000 has been designated to financial literacy. Student Financial Services (SFS) within OCHE is administering the grant and is issuing this Request for Proposals. A limited number of sub-grants will be awarded to campuses to develop and enhance coordinated campus-based financial literacy programs that address the Affordability Taskforce findings. SFS staff, in conjunction with campuses, will facilitate and coordinate a more inter-connected and consistent approach to financial literacy throughout the Montana University System and the State. Sub-grants will be awarded with amounts ranging from a minimum of $5,000 to a maximum of $80,000.

The Goals of Montana's CACG are:

1. **Reduce unmet financial need of low-income students by providing targeted need-based aid**. Develop a targeted need-based aid program that will supplement existing state aid in an effort to increase college affordability and access for low-income and underrepresented populations.

2. **Strengthen Montana's financial literacy programs in an effort to reduce student loan debt.** Develop a coordinated and collaborative approach to financial literacy that enhances and connects existing state-wide efforts. This statewide program will advance best practices, target high-risk students, and focus primarily on educating low-income, as well as other underrepresented groups.

3. **Improve college access through enhanced outreach and communication to potential students and families.** Provide easy access to college and career information through the use of the Montana Career Information System (MCIS), as well as conduct regular outreach activities that emphasize college opportunities and student financial aid options with high school students, parents, and counselors. The intent of this effort is to focus on low-income and underrepresented groups.

This RFP is designed to address Goal 2: Strengthen Montana's financial literacy programs in an effort to reduce student debt, by developing a coordinated and collaborative approach to financial literacy that enhances and connects existing efforts. The program will advance best practices, target high-risk students, focus on low-income and other underrepresented groups as well as address the general student population need for financial literacy education. Campuses can apply for funding and implement the best practices identified in this RFP, while also expanding on those best practices and tracking and reporting their efforts. Each successful applicant will be assigned a program manager from the Commissioner's Office to assist with implementation and assess program effectiveness and compliance.

Any questions regarding sub-grant contractual terms and conditions or proposal format should be directed to:

Ronald J. Muffick
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
Director of Student Financial Services
406-444-0369
406-431-7914 - cell
rmuffick@montana.edu

II. REQUESTED PROPOSALS

The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Services (SFS) is seeking proposals for sub-grants to be awarded to campuses for the development and enhancement of coordinated campus-based financial literacy programs that enable a more inter-connected university system-wide and statewide financial literacy effort. These efforts must offer effective and innovative solutions to improve financial literacy among college students, engage students in managing their finances, reduce student loan debt of Montana college students, improve students' knowledge of available financial aid, and target students from low-income backgrounds and underrepresented groups, while also addressing the campus student population as a whole.

SFS is interested in proposals that: (1) foster development of a coordinated and collaborative approach to financial literacy that enhances and connects existing efforts (2) advance best practices, target high-risk students, focus on low-income and other underrepresented groups (3) provide innovative approaches to financial literacy education for the entire student population (4) are capable of producing measurable outcomes that can be reported on a quarterly and annual basis.

SFS has developed best practices for CACG financial literacy sub-grants, identified in Appendix A. Proposals incorporating these focus areas will receive additional points and consideration during the review process.

Funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis. Continued funding for the sub-grant program is contingent on federal appropriations and alignment with the Montana Board of Regents' priorities for higher education access and success.

III. RFP TIMELINE

RFP process finalized, disseminated to campuses   August 31, 2012

Technical assistance conference call   September 7, 2012

RFP proposals due to OCHE by 5:00 p.m.   October 1, 2012

RFP proposals review process   October 2-16, 2012

Award notifications, grant period begins   October 17, 2012

Sub-grant period ends   July 31, 2013

Final report due   August 1, 2013

IV. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Each institution may submit one proposal. No sub-granting by institutions is allowed. Any contracts with consultants or outside entities that deliver financial literacy must be approved by the program manager at SFS. The RFP process is designed to achieve the goals of the CACG program and the Montana Board of Regents' Affordability Taskforce. Sub-grantees will provide students and families the necessary information to make sound education related financial decisions. Institutions will be provided funds through a competitive process. Projects will enable the development and sustainability of consistent, collaborative, innovative financial literacy programs at campuses throughout Montana.

Applicants must submit:

1. Application must be signed by Vice President of Student Affairs or equivalent for each campus.
2. One signed electronic version of the proposal in PDF format via email

Proposal format requirements:

1.   Font must be 12 points
2.   Total proposal must not exceed 20 pages, including forms

Proposals must be emailed to ademato@montana.edu no later than 5:00PM, October 1, 2012.

Questions should be directed to:

Ronald J. Muffick
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
Director of Student Financial Services
2500 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601
rmuffick@montana.edu
406-444-0369

Incomplete proposals, as well as any proposals that are below the minimum criteria, late, or submitted by ineligible entities will be automatically disqualified.

V. REVIEW AND AWARD PROCEDURES

An advisory committee will review all eligible proposals and determine the final sub-grant awards, which will be approved and awarded on **October 17, 2012**.

All applicants will be notified in writing of the decisions of the advisory committee. A non-funded applicant may request information, in writing, from the program director regarding the review of the proposal.

VI. PROPOSAL FORMAT

Proposals must include all required sections and forms. You must use the forms included here; do not create your own forms.

All proposals must include the following sections and forms:

1. Title Page (Form A)
2. Project Abstract
3. Project Narrative
4. Goals and Objectives Form (Form B)
5. Budget Narrative
6. Budget Narrative Form (Form C)
7. Statement of Assurances (Form D)

Title Page: Form A

Project Abstract (one page)

Provide an overview of the purpose, scope and goals of the project.

Project Narrative (10 pages or less) Provide thorough answers to the following questions:

1. Demonstrated Need:
   Describe the needs addressed by the project and explain why those needs are important to accomplish the goals described in this RFP.

2. Plan of Action:
   Clearly describe the plan of action for the project and what the project is trying to accomplish. This detailed narrative should identify the goals and objectives of the project and describe the activities and services that are related to the successful achievement of the goals and objectives. Include a project timeline. Estimate the number of participants to be served by the project and by each activity.

3. Outcomes:
   Provide a description of the proposed outcomes. The outcomes must be realistic and must have the ability to be measured. Describe the performance indicators that will be used to determine successful completion of the project.

4. Long-Term Impact:
   What is the potential long-term impact of the project? Describe the impact on other populations not directly involved in the project, if applicable. Can the project be utilized on other campuses?

5. Data Reporting:
   Describe the record keeping system for collecting and reporting student participation and outcome/achievement data. Specifically, what method(s) will your project use to collect and maintain student and family participation and outcome data? How will you track the indicators to determine the success of the project?

Goals and Objectives Form B

The project must contain measurable goals and objectives (see Form B). Activities, services, and anticipated outcomes should be clearly aligned with the goals and objectives of the project. The goals provide the overall context for what the project is trying to accomplish in the long-term and the objectives describe what the project is trying to achieve incrementally. Outcomes must be indicated and must be measurable.

Budget Narrative (5 pages or less) Provide thorough answers to the following questions:

1. Budget:
   Describe the budget and the cost effectiveness of the project. Identify the expenditures and how they relate to the objectives and activities of the project.

2. Administrative Capacity:
   Please provide a description of the capacity and structure that you have in place to carry out the specified goals and objectives or your plan to develop such administrative capacity. Emphasize experience and skills directly relevant to the proposed project. If a staff member needs to be hired for a position please include a description of the qualifications sought for the position.

Budget Narrative Form C

The budget narrative outlines how funds will be used to accomplish the goals and objectives of the project. Each budget category from the budget summary form must be justified in this form. Applicants must include the basis for estimating costs of all project expenditures and how costs relate to proposed activities and services.

If you are claiming indirect costs, explain specifically what the indirect costs include (e.g., facilities, printing, accounting).

Statement of Assurances Form D

The appropriate authority must sign this form for the applicant.

VII. PROPOSAL SCORING

The following criteria will be used by the advisory committee to score proposals:

Demonstrated Need (in addition to basic eligibility) – 150 points
- Proposal clearly describes the need(s) addressed by the project and explains why those needs are important.
- Proposal demonstrates applicant's understanding of the need and how to address the need.
- Proposal identifies a target group and explains the applicant's current connection or experience with that target group.

Project Design – 225 points
- The project activities and services are clearly and fully described and fall within the authorized activities listed in the RFP.
- Project timeline is informative, realistic, and appropriate.
- Proposed activities are tied to the demonstrated need and correspond to the stated goals and objectives.
- Scope of project is clearly defined and appropriate.
- Project clearly strengthens financial literacy efforts and develops a coordinated and collaborative program that enhances and connects existing efforts while incorporating new ideas and concepts.

Goals/Objectives and Outcomes – 125 points
- Proposed outcomes are realistic and measurable.
- The goals and objectives form (Form B) is comprehensive.
- Goals, activities, and services are properly aligned with RFP requirements.

Applicant's Commitment and Capacity – 100 points
- The key personnel are well qualified to conduct the project.
- The applicant displays commitment to financial literacy education.
- The plan to develop or maintain administrative capacity is specific.
- The resources required for the project are available.

Budget and Cost Effectiveness – 100 points
- The proposed expenditures are directly related to the objectives and activities of the project.
- The proposed budget is cost effective and efficient.
- The budget narrative and budget narrative form (Form C) include a detailed explanation for each budget line.

Long-Term Impact – 100 points
- The project is of high quality and of sufficient duration and intensity to promote a lasting effect.
- The project will have a long-term impact on student population and can be replicated on other campuses.
- The project is scalable so that the size of the project could be changed to serve the needs of different groups.

Focus Areas – 200 points
- The program includes Best Practices as detailed in Appendix A.
- The program serves a specific targeted population.
- The degree to which the proposal demonstrates innovative and creative ideas.

Form A: Title Page

Montana College Access Challenge Grant
Sub-Grant Application Coversheet

Institution:	
Project Director:	**Telephone:**
FAX Number:	**E-Mail:**
Campus Mailing Address:	
Finance or Business Office Contact, Name & Title:	
E-mail:	**Telephone:**
Certification by authorizing official (V.P. of Student Services or equivalent)	
Name:	**Title:**
Signature:	

Form B: Goals and Objectives

Please provide a detailed description of the activities and services that your organization plans to provide using CACG funding in order to address the needs of underrepresented students.

A. Goals and Objectives	B. Activities and Services	C. Proposed Outcomes
Please provide measurable goals and objectives.	**List the activities and services that will be conducted to accomplish the goals and objectives.**	**List anticipated outcomes based on the implementation of services and activities.**
Example: To increase underrepresented students' and families' knowledge of postsecondary education financial options.	Example: conduct informational workshops with parents and students to share sources and availability of financial aid; develop materials/handouts outlining financial aid and financial literacy opportunities.	Example: 2011 survey results (85% participation rate) indicates that 95% of participating students are more knowledgeable about financial aid and financial literacy opportunities.
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Form C: Budget Narrative

Please provide a justification and specific detail for each budget category addressing expenditures.
GRANT FUNDS WILL BE PROVIDED ON A REIMBURSEMENT BASIS

Budget Category	Expenditure	Detail
1. Salaries and Wages		
2. Employee Benefits		
3. Travel		
4. Materials and Supplies		
5. Indirect Costs		
6. Equipment		
7. Other		

Form D: Statement of Assurances

COLLEGE ACCESS CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM

(Authorized under Title VII: Part E of Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended)

THE APPLICANT HEREBY ASSURES THE COORDINATING COMMISSION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION:

A. Administration of the activities and services for which this entity seeks assistance under this grant will be by or under the supervision of the applicant.

B. The project will comply with all applicable Montana state laws.

C. The applicant will keep project records, including receipts for expenditures, and afford access to these records at any time. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Services (SFS) may find it necessary to assure the correctness and verify the reports.

D. I assure compliance with federal statutes and regulations governing the College Access Challenge Grant Program, Title VII Part E of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Department of Education General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) (specifically 34 CFR, Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, and 80).

E. I agree to comply with section 511 of the U.S. Department of Education Appropriations Act requiring grant recipients to acknowledge the amount and percentage of Federal and nongovernmental funding for projects when making any type of public announcement about awards.

_____   _____
Date   Signature of Vice President of Student Services

                               _____
                               Typed/Printed Name of Vice President of Student Services

                               _____
                               Institution

APPENDIX A:
AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES/SERVICES

Financial Literacy Concepts and Best Practices

1. An MUS or tribal campus employee designated as Project Manager who is responsible for day-to-day management and operations of the program.
2. Development of a campus-wide advisory committee with representation from related offices such as: Student Government, Admissions, Student Success Office, Financial Aid and Student Services, TRiO, Student Support Services, Veterans, Native Americans, and Advising Centers.
3. Use of Student Financial Services approved financial literacy education materials including *Dollars and Sense* workbook, www.mus.edu/prepare website and www.getmoneysmarts.org website for budgeting.
4. Enhanced loan entrance counseling for all new student borrowers
5. All freshman must receive financial literacy educational materials – at a minimum must receive MUS cards and GetMoneySmarts cards provided by SFS.
6. Low-income and underrepresented student populations must receive focused financial literacy education and specific targeted services.
7. Financial literacy education must include these topics:
   - Budgeting and debt management
   - Saving plans
   - Financial plan development and goal setting while in school
   - Credit reports/scores
   - Repayment plans for student loans and personal debt
   - Loan forgiveness programs
   - Planning for financial management after college
8. Students' surveys reflective of their knowledge level, opinions, and needs.

CAMPUSES ARE ENCOURAGED TO BE INNOVATIVE AND EXPAND UPON THE BEST PRACTICES.

Examples of expansion may include but are not limited to:

- Development and monitoring of early indicators of students with retention/completion and financial issues (i.e. satisfactory academic progress, late registration followed up by intervention).
- Target students with high student loan debts or when students meet certain thresholds of debt.
- Target specific groups of students (i.e. Native American, veterans, non-traditional).
- Combining academic advising with financial literacy.
- Combining online tools with in-person sessions.
- Guest expert speakers and forums.
- Enhanced loan counseling could include "Know Your Loan" sessions setting up logins to loan servicers, reference to National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS).
- Use of social networking – www.facebook.com/getmoneysmarts and www.facebook.com/montanauniversitysytem.
- Peer mentoring, including use of student government, interns, work study.

Documentation of Expenses

Grant funds are remitted after the sub-grant recipient has submitted a request for reimbursement to the designated program manager. Such requests are limited to the amount expended on the project as of the date of the request. **All requests for reimbursement must be accompanied by receipts of actual expenditures**. If providing receipts is prohibited due to administrative practices or verifiable auditing practices, the applicant must present to the Director of Student Financial Services the rationale for not complying with the receipt requirement and receive an exception authorization. In the case where the Director has agreed to receipts not accompanying requests for reimbursement, the applicant must keep receipts and have those receipts available for the designated program manager verification during site visits.

Reporting Requirements

Sub-grantees are required to submit quarterly progress reports, beginning January 1, 2013, that explain activities to date and progress toward the project's goals and objectives. An annual summary report must be completed by September 1, 2013 that includes reporting on outcomes and expenditures.

Evaluation

In addition to written reports, sub-grantee campuses will be evaluated by SFS Program Managers who will meet with campus personnel and attend campus events.