



## **INFORMATION SESSIONS & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Information Sessions**

The Foundation will host two virtual, 1-hour information sessions for prospective grant applicants to provide further information on *College Matters: Reversing the Trend* and answer questions. To submit questions ahead of time, please email Foundation staff at [College@rmff.org](mailto:College@rmff.org).

Information sessions :

- January 10, 2024, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. [RSVP here](#).
- January 12, 2024, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. [RSVP here](#).

Prospective planning grant applicants are encouraged to attend one of these sessions. However, if you are unable to attend, the sessions will be recorded and made available upon request.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Was your question not answered below? Additional inquiries can be directed to Kami Nielsen, Senior Program Officer, at [college@RMFF.org](mailto:college@RMFF.org).

#### **Grant Eligibility**

#### **1. Is my school eligible to apply for planning grant funding?**

Public (traditional, charter and Innovation Network) high schools located in Marion County, Indiana, are eligible for *College Matters: Reversing the Trend* funding. The Foundation will consider one planning grant application per Marion County public school district, charter school network, or single-site charter/Innovation Network School.

#### **2. The Foundation will consider one planning grant application per school district, charter school network, or single-site charter/Innovation Network School. What does this mean for my school?**

The Foundation will consider one planning grant application per school district, charter school network, or single-site charter/Innovation Network school.

**Traditional school district with one eligible high school:** Each school district may submit one planning grant application for consideration. In the case that a school district has only one eligible high school, the district may apply for up to \$20,000 in planning grant funding to support activities at that high school. The planning grant application should include letters of support from the district superintendent and the principal of the eligible, applying high school.

**Traditional school district with more than one eligible high school:** Each school district may submit one planning grant application for consideration. If a school district has more than one eligible high school, two scenarios could occur:

- The district may apply for up to \$20,000 in planning grant funding to support activities at only one of the eligible high schools. The planning grant application should include letters of support from the district superintendent and the principal of the eligible, applying high school.

- If two or more eligible schools within one school district are interested in applying, the district may submit a joint application for up to \$20,000 in planning grant funding that demonstrates their plan to collaborate in implementation across the participating schools. The planning grant application should include letters of support from the district superintendent and the principals of each of the eligible, applying high schools. Note: the Foundation will not consider separate applications to support activities at multiple high schools within a single traditional district.

**Charter school network with more than one eligible high school:** Each charter school network may submit one planning grant application for consideration. If a charter school network has more than one eligible high school, two scenarios could occur:

- The charter school network may apply for up to \$20,000 in planning grant funding to support activities at only one of the eligible high schools. The planning grant application should include letters of support from the head of the charter school network and the principal of the eligible, applying high school.
- If two or more eligible schools within one charter school network are interested in applying, the network may submit a joint application for up to \$20,000 in planning grant funding that demonstrates their plan to collaborate in implementation across the participating schools. The planning grant application should include letters of support from the head of the charter school network and the principals of each of the eligible, applying high schools.

**Single-site charter school or Innovation Network School:** Each single-site charter school or single-site Innovation Network School may submit one planning grant application for up to \$20,000 for consideration. The planning grant application should include letters of support from the head of the school. *Innovation Network Schools should apply separately from the school district with which they are associated.*

**Partnerships across schools and/or school corporations:** If two or more eligible public high schools determine they could implement their proposed plan to increase college enrollment rates more effectively and sustainability by collaborating with each other, they may submit a joint application for up to \$20,000 in planning grant funding to support activities across the participating schools. The participating schools should identify one district, charter school network, or single-site school to serve as the lead planning grant applicant. Additionally, the planning grant application should also include letters of support from heads of all participating schools.

If multiple schools choose to apply together, and the application is selected, the planning grant will still be no more than \$20,000, and the four-year implementation grant will still be no more than \$1.5 million.

Please note that each eligible public high school may only be considered as part of one planning grant application.

### **3. Which schools are ineligible for grant funding through *College Matters: Reversing the Trend?***

- Non-public schools
- Schools located outside of Marion County, Indiana

- Virtual/online schools
- Public Elementary (K-5) and/or Middle (6-8) schools may be included as community partners, but they may not serve as the lead applicant for planning grant funding.

**4. I work for a private school in Indianapolis. Can my school apply?**

No, only public schools are eligible to apply for grant funding through *College Matters: Reversing the Trend*.

**5. If my school did NOT apply for or receive planning grant funding, is my school eligible to submit a proposal for implementation grant funding?**

No. Only planning grant recipients will be invited to submit full implementation grant proposals for consideration by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation's Board of Directors. In addition, applicants that receive planning grants are not guaranteed to receive implementation grants.

**6. What organizations may be included as an external community partner in the planning grant application?**

Eligible public high schools may include in their planning grant applications any external community partners that are necessary or beneficial for planning for the implementation of sustainable, evidence-based plans to increase college enrollment. These external partners may include, but are not limited to, nonprofit or community-based groups, postsecondary education providers, middle school partners, or other external consultants. Planning grant applications must still come from an eligible, public high school, network or district and should describe the extent of any proposed external partnership in the planning grant application, including whether any of the planning grant funds would be used to support external community partners' activities.

Note that costs associated with the Foundation's technical assistance and evaluation partner will be fully covered by the Foundation and will not require grant dollars.

**7. I represent a community-based organization that offers programming related to one of the three identified strategies to increase college enrollment rates. Is my organization eligible for funding?**

Applications must come from eligible public high schools, districts or networks. However, applicants may partner with organizations to implement their plans to increase college enrollment rates. These partnerships should be described in the planning grant application.

**8. May school districts or charter schools apply for funding through a fiscal agent or other entity?**

No. Only public single-site charter and/or Innovation Network high schools, charter school networks, and school districts are eligible for grant funding. Grant recipients may collaborate with other entities to pursue contracts or other established partnerships, but the Foundation's grants will be awarded directly to the eligible school organization. Although grant recipients may engage other community partners in their efforts, grantees will have the ultimate responsibility to the Foundation for proper stewardship of grant funds, reporting and other obligations.

## Grant Award Amounts & General Questions

### **1. How much funding can my school, district or charter network request?**

Grant awards will be competitive, and funding will be awarded in two phases: planning and implementation. For the planning grant period, applicants may apply for up to \$20,000. For the implementation period, planning grant recipients will be invited to submit proposals for up to \$1.5 million over four school years (2024-25 through 2027-28).

### **2. How much money will the Foundation award during the two-year grant period?**

The Foundation anticipates awarding up to six planning grants of up to \$20,000 each (\$120,000 total), and up to six implementation grants of up to \$1.5 million each over four years (\$9 million total). The cost of the Foundation's technical assistance and evaluation partner will be fully covered by the Foundation and will not require grant dollars.

### **3. Are there any formatting requirements for planning grant applications?**

Applicants must limit responses to the planning grant application questions to no more than five (5) pages, not including attachments. Complete applications may be emailed to [college@RMFF.org](mailto:college@RMFF.org). Application materials may be combined or submitted as separate documents.

### **4. Are there any activities for which we may not use grant funds?**

Planning grant funds may not be used to support personnel costs or programming costs that are not associated with activities related to planning for the design, implementation, and long-term sustainability of proven, promising or innovative interventions that fall within one or more of three evidence-based strategies:

1. Strengthen college and career counseling;
2. Increase families' financial awareness and help students apply for financial aid; and
3. Bolster students' academic preparation for college.

Additionally, grant funds may not be used for indirect costs that are calculated as a percentage of the total proposed budget.

### **5. I do not know how to answer the question about tax-exempt status. Who should I contact?**

Questions regarding an applicant's tax-exempt status or IRS Letter of Determination may be directed to [college@RMFF.org](mailto:college@RMFF.org).

## Planning Grant Application Content Questions

### **1. My school is interested in applying but would like guidance on how to identify which evidence-based interventions would work best in our unique context. Can you provide guidance?**

The Foundation commissioned a study from the national research firm Mathematica to identify evidence-based strategies and specific interventions that can be implemented in high school to increase college enrollment. The [Request for Applications Appendix](#) includes a description of the three strategies with the strongest evidence:

1. Strengthen college and career counseling;
2. Increase families' financial awareness and help students apply for financial aid; and
3. Bolster students' academic preparation for college.

Within each of these strategies, the study identified examples of interventions that have strong evidence of success at increasing college enrollment. These examples of interventions are described in the [appendix](#). While the Foundation does not anticipate grantees will replicate any of the specific programs outlined in the appendix in full, they may design similar programs or incorporate components of different programs to create an innovative approach that is appropriate for their school.

Planning grant applicants are expected to identify in their applications which one or more evidence-based strategies they would like to address and to have initial plans about what types of programs or interventions they want to offer within those strategies. During the planning period, the technical assistance provider will assist grantees in refining their plans for implementing specific interventions and/or programs.

The Foundation also encourages interested planning grant applicants to attend one of the two informational webinars noted above before applying.

**2. My school is interested in applying and has identified an innovative intervention or set of interventions that aligns with one of the three evidence-based strategies but is not included in the appendix. Can we still apply for planning grant funding?**

Yes. The Foundation will consider applications that propose proven, promising or innovative interventions to increase college enrollment rates. When evaluating grant applications, the Foundation will consider whether there is strong evidence of effectiveness for a proposed intervention, or whether there is a strong rationale for its success in the applicant's specific context.

**3. What types of data or metrics will *College Matters: Reversing the Trend* implementation grantees be expected to track and report?**

During the planning phase, planning grant recipients will work with the technical assistance provider to determine the appropriate metrics to track implementation and the impact of their selected interventions to improve college enrollment. Examples of metrics that grantees may track can be found below. Additionally, implementation grant recipients will be required to report to the Foundation on an annual basis, including, but not limited to, data on FAFSA completion and college enrollment, both overall and for sub-populations, such as Black and Hispanic or Latino students and students from low-income households. The technical assistance provider will assist implementation grant recipients with this data reporting as needed.

Example	Example metric(s)
<i>Priority outcome</i>	
<b>College enrollment</b>	Percentage of high school graduates who enroll in a postsecondary institution
<i>On-track measures</i>	
<b>College applications</b>	Percentage of grade 12 students who submit at least three college applications
<b>FAFSA completion</b>	Percentage of grade 12 students who complete the FAFSA

<b>Early college aspirations</b>	Percentage of students in grades 9, 10, and 11 who plan to complete an associate's or bachelor's degree
<i>Implementation monitoring</i>	
<b>Recruitment and outreach</b>	Number of students identified for recruitment for an intervention service Number of outreach events
<b>Enrollment and services</b>	Number of students who enroll in intervention services Percentage of enrolled students who complete the intervention service
<b>Attendance and participation</b>	Percentage of enrolled students who attend 80% or more of the intervention services (e.g., program days, workshops, counseling sessions) Percentage of families of students in grades 11 and 12 who attend a school-sponsored or community-based event on FAFSA completion or college enrollment

**4. How does *College Matters: Reversing the Trend* relate to the Foundations' support for modern youth apprenticeship?**

The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation has awarded more than \$9 million since 2019 to support the launch of the Modern Apprenticeship Program (MAP) in Marion County and also a statewide community of practice focused exclusively on scaling modern youth apprenticeship. Modern youth apprenticeship experiences match high school students with paid “work and learn” experiences across a wide variety of industries, and also provide students mentorship opportunities, career exposure, recognized postsecondary credentials and college credit. The Fairbanks Foundation supports the modern youth apprenticeship initiative because it provides an entry point to good and promising jobs and also serve as a pathway to college. It could be the case that some *College Matters: Reversing the Trend* grantees incorporate MAP as a potential pathway for students to explore career options and related education and training pathways.

**5. How does *College Matters: Reversing the Trend* align with policies or programs being implemented by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and/or the Indiana Department of Education?**

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE) and Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) have served as key thought partners as the Foundation developed *College Matters: Reversing the Trend*. Both entities have goals related to increasing college-going rates in Indiana, and have initiatives focused on increasing supports for students exploring, enrolling in, and affording college. During the planning period, technical assistance provided by Mathematica to schools will support planning grant recipients in ensuring their implementation plans are aligned with any new state requirements and opportunities, such as Career Savings Accounts (CSAs).

For more information on policy and programmatic changes in Indiana related to increasing college-going rates, please review: 1) [Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Chris Lowery's November 2023 report](#); 2) [Carrying the Torch to Student Success](#) (IDOE's comprehensive school counseling model); 3) [Explore, Engage, Experience](#) (IDOE's recent grant initiative focused on career counseling).