



GRANT APPLICATION

Innovation Investment Awards

Supporting system change for adult learner success.

Grant Opportunity Description

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success (The Center) is requesting proposals from Michigan postsecondary institutions seeking to implement innovative solutions for improving persistence and completion rates among adult learners over the age of 25. The Center is making \$5 million available in Innovation Investment Awards through a competitive award process.

The Innovation Investment Awards (IIA) will provide support to institutions that are committed to planning for, improving upon, or scaling implementation of promising reforms of policy and practice associated with the elimination of equity gaps and improved completion rates for adult learners.

Interested institutions must follow the instructions below and submit their grant application by 11:59 PM on July 15, 2024. Proposals submitted may not exceed \$1 million over two years. Applicants are encouraged to use the provided template to prepare a draft proposal, then submit the final application through the [Innovation Investment Awards website](#).

Important Dates:

Information Session:	April 23, 2024 @ 12:00 EDT Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMvf-GvrzosHNRWaGTFJYco3HxGBg-a50gl
Application Portal Opens:	May 1, 2024



Virtual Office Hours for Q&A	TBD several dates throughout the application window April – July, 2024.
Pre-review Proposal Drafts:	Submit by June 7, 2024 to: thecenter@talentfirst.net
Response to Pre-review Proposal Drafts:	June 14, 2024
Application Due Date:	July 15, 2024 by 11:59 PM EDT
Innovation Awards Announced:	August 8, 2024
Funded Project Dates:	September 1, 2024-August 31, 2026

Eligibility:

Public & tribal community colleges and public universities serving the adult learner population, defined as adults over the age of 25. Independent colleges may partner with a public institution on a joint application but cannot be the lead applicant.

Background:

As Michigan looks to close equity gaps and achieve the **Sixty by 30**¹ attainment goal, the state is making significant investments in educating, reskilling, and upskilling adult learners (age 25 and older).

The Innovation Investment Award (IIA) grant program is part of the concerted effort by the State of Michigan for institutions to more effectively serve adults to achieve the Sixty by 30 goal. The Center has coordinated the development of the IIA program with the Office of Sixty by 30 to augment the \$45 million in College Success Grants they are making available throughout 2024. Additionally, The Center has consulted with postsecondary institutions and organizations, nonprofits, and business groups in the development of the IIA program to maximize the opportunities supporting adult credential attainment.

The IIA program is designed to support [The Center’s goal](#) of increasing the number of adults obtaining postsecondary credentials. These credentials improve access to higher-paying jobs, resulting in increased opportunities for Michiganders age 25+ and their families.

The IIA program provides financial assistance for institutions implementing sustainable, integrated system changes aimed at increasing persistence and completion rates for adult learners. IIA was established in response to stakeholder feedback that there is limited large-dollar financial support for programs seeking to implement impactful system changes.

¹ Michigan’s Sixty by 30 - <https://www.michigan.gov/mileap/higher-education/sixty-by-30>



The intended overall outcomes of the Innovation Investment Awards include:

- Increasing progress towards achieving the state's Sixty by 30 goal through higher attainment rates for adult learners.
- Evaluating and determining the impact of system changes in addressing equity and increasing completion rates for adult learners.
- Documenting system changes and how they were achieved.
- Developing a statewide institutional mentorship program to assist other colleges and universities in replicating and scaling successful system changes.
- Igniting sustainable collaboration between community colleges, universities, independent colleges, employers, and other stakeholders.

Evaluation criteria:

Successful proposals will include a well-articulated focus area within adult postsecondary education, aligned to promising practices that achieve measurable impact on critical metrics that lead to higher adult learner completion rates and workforce outcomes for Michigan adults, and a feasible path for implementation specific to the institution.

1. Guiding Principles

Proposals must include the following key principles:

- Adult learner focus – efforts are intentionally focused on adult students and their needs to meet adult students where they are and support them in their credential completion journey. All components of the proposal must make the case for how proposed activities will contribute to improved outcomes for the adult learners that the institution wishes to serve.
- Equitable access and service to adult learners – the proposal must address how project activities will contribute to improved outcomes for adults from historically underserved and marginalized populations.
- Collaborative nature – the proposal should emphasize partnerships within the institution, other postsecondary institutions, employers, and other educational entities. All proposals must demonstrate that partners are committed to fulfill a specific and significant role in the design and implementation of project activities.

2. Evidence-Based Promising Practices

Proposals should be grounded in evidence-based promising practices while also incorporating innovative solutions and approaches, ultimately boosting adult learner completion rates and creating systems change. Recognized evidence-based promising practices can include:

- Flexible scheduling and accelerated degree programs
- Prior learning assessments and credit for prior learning
- Competency-based education
- Proactive and/or comprehensive advising support



- Corequisite support and corequisite remediation
- Work-based learning, apprenticeships, and corporate partnership programs
- Career-aligned and guided pathways
- Identify and eliminate barriers to transfer students
- Systematic approach to basic needs support in which funds are directed toward the approach itself, and not directly to students

Institutions can propose additional practices if they present the evidence supporting the practice.

3. Institutional Outcomes

- Articulate institutional outcomes that demonstrate a commitment to creating a culture of care for adult learners and guide them to successful credential completion.
- Implement sustainable system changes based on promising practices or innovative pilots that increase adult completion rates and address encompassing equity issues.

4. Institutional Capacity and Sustainability

- Proposals must be feasible given organizational commitment and resources, and effective in the organization's specific context to carry out the funded activities.
- Proposals must show how the proposed system change will be sustained beyond the funded project period.

Grant awards:

Institutions will be awarded up to \$1 million for the grant period of September 1, 2024 – August 31, 2026.

Eligible Expenses:

- FTE attributable to the implementation of the proposed project.
- Costs of consultants, vendors, and other contractors necessary to implement the project.
- Expenses related to the design and implementation of data systems related to the project and its evaluation.*
- Costs for training of staff, faculty, or partners related to the project.
- Travel expenses must be directly related to the project implementation and align with the federal [GSA rates](#).
- Supplies, materials, or other collateral necessary for implementation of the project.

Ineligible Expenses:

- Direct aid to students (i.e., emergency loans, textbook fund, etc.)
- Food and beverage
- Indirect costs (see SLFRF guidance attached)



- Tuition
- Replacement of an entire data system.*

*While grant funds can be used to support the design and implementation of data system improvements, funding is not intended to be used to replace an entire data system.

Application Components

Proposals will be accepted through the [IIA web portal](#) beginning May 1, 2024. Applicants are encouraged to create their own draft documents with the following components, which can be entered into the proposal platform.

- I. Cover Page
- II. Letter of Organizational Support
- III. Executive Summary
- IV. Project Narrative
- V. Budget, Allowable Expenses & Matching Funds

I. Cover Page (one page max)

Organization name:

Organization address:

Name and contact information of institutional staff member responsible for leading the IIA project:

- If a joint application, identify other partners, their commitment level, who their lead will be for the project. Please include letters of commitment from partners as an appendix.

II. Letter of Organizational Support (one page max)

Submit a letter of support from the institution's President articulating why the institution is seeking a grant to improve adult degree completion rates, and how it will contribute to the Michigan's Sixty by 30 goal. The letter should also include:

- A description of the capacity of the organization and its partners (if applicable) to carry out this project within grant project timelines
- A stated understanding of required commitments to operationalize the project.
- Agreement to meet with the project team leads at least monthly to discuss progress, assist with challenges on implementation and ensure support of institutional leadership.



III. Executive Summary (two page max)

Describe an overview of the proposed project including:

- The commitment to and demonstration of how the institution will use an adult learner-focused approach (See Guiding Principles).
- Identification of the staff member(s) who will lead and implement the project. This must include an internal research staff member capable of providing the required data for the evaluation.
- A description of the time commitment and level of engagement anticipated for institutional leadership during the implementation phase.
- Assessment metrics.

IV. Project Narrative (10 page max)

i. Organizational overview

Provide a brief overview of the institution and external partners (if applicable).

ii. Institutional need and project relevance

Define the institution's understanding of and interest in improving persistence and completion rates in adult postsecondary education:

- Describe the proposed system change(s), including specific and relevant context where appropriate.
- Provide detailed information about the organization's adult learner population, including number served, learner demographics, academic success rates
- Specific barriers to adult completion that have been identified through an examination of quantitative and qualitative data, which will be addressed through the project.

iii. Project Description

The project description must include the following:

- Project goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes and interim success indicators aligned to a clear and reasonable implementation timeline
- Description of how the proposed project will address a learner-focused approach, use evidence-based best practice(s), meet the intended outcome(s), and show capacity for the institution(s) to implement.
- Detailed description of the system change(s) aligned to intended outcomes
- Detailed implementation plan aligned with the project objective, goals, outcomes, and timeline, noting ways in which the project is or will be integrated into existing institutional structures.
- Articulation of how institutional and grant resources will be aligned to implement and sustain systemic changes.
- Identification of the key stakeholders involved, commitments they have made toward the project, and what role they will play in the implementation process.



- Detailed description of the planning process undertaken to develop the proposed system change(s) and additional planning processes necessary to implement the proposed system change.
- Narrative of how this project will address labor market needs and result in greater access to high wage demand jobs in the state or Michigan service area.
- Sustainability plan to demonstrate the longevity and continued impact of proposed system change(s) including potential to scale and replicate.

iv. Resources and Personnel

- Define the institutional and partner resources, and commitments in place, and what will be put in place to implement the proposed idea.
- Describe the expertise and roles of the personnel for the project team (must include an institutional research staff member and member of the executive leadership team).

v. Evaluation

The Center is partnered with an external evaluator to support each awardee to build capacity to measure progress on their project:

- Description of the proposed student progress and student and success metrics, outcomes of the system changes, addressing equity gaps, and other intended outcomes for the project
- Commitment to The Center to participate in the IIA program evaluation and share the required data necessary to complete the evaluation and interim benchmarking to determine incremental progress to goals (See Commitments and Requirements for Awards below).

V. Grant Budget and Matching Funds (no page limit)

Include a line-item budget in Table 1. below (can be recreated in Word or Excel) with a narrative describing all direct and indirect costs associated with the project. Proposals that exceed the requested amount of \$1,000,000 over two years will be rejected.

Table 1. Requested Project Budget

Cost	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personnel			
Fringe			
Travel			
Consultant			
Supplies			
Other			
Total Direct			
Indirect			
Total Requested Costs			

Using Table 2 (can be recreated in Word or Excel), provide a line-item budget of in-kind and/or matching funding to support the project. Include a narrative describing all direct and indirect costs that will match the requested budget amount for the project. A minimum of 10% of the



total project budget must be included in the matching budget. In-kind support can include FTE directly attributable to the project, project-specific travel, and material provided by the institution from their existing budget to support the project. Please identify the costs listed as in-kind or direct funding for the project in the budget narrative.

Table 2. In-Kind or Other Funding Project Budget

Cost	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Personnel			
Fringe			
Travel			
Consultant			
Supplies			
Other			
Total Direct			
Indirect			
Total Matching Project Costs			

Commitments and Requirements for Awards:

Institutional Commitments

- In addition to demonstrating sustainability and scalability of the proposed project, **recipients will be required to provide 10% of matching funding or in-kind support from other sources.**
- Minimum of monthly meeting between the President and project team to discuss progress, assist with challenges on implementation and ensure support of institutional leadership.
- Recipients must commit to mentoring other institutions that seek to implement similar system changes on their campuses.
- Quarterly meetings with The Center to discuss progress options to accelerate the implementation.
- Periodic engagement with The Center or individual contracted by The Center for the purpose of documenting the implementation process.
- Recipients will be expected to participate in The Center’s external evaluation process. Recipients will need to sign a data sharing agreement and agree to share the required data such as de-identified transcript data of participants and non-participants to understand the impact of the project.

Requirements of State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)

The IIA program, funded by a grant from the state using State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, includes multiple compliance requirements. Institutions receiving an IIA are considered a sub-awardee and therefore must comply with the timeline of expending all funds no later than



September 1, 2026. This will allow The Center to meet the required reporting and obligations of the contract with the State of Michigan.

Each recipient should review program requirements, including Treasury’s SLFRF Final Rule, Final Rule Overview, and the Uniform Guidance along with the recipient’s Award Terms and Conditions, to determine and record eligible uses of SLFRF funds. Per 2 CFR Part 200.303, your organization must develop and implement effective internal controls to ensure that funding decisions under the SLFRF award constitute eligible uses of funds, and document determinations.

Treasury’s Final Rule also provides more information on important restrictions on use of SLFRF award funds:

1. Recipients may not deposit SLFRF funds into a pension fund;
2. Recipients may not use SLFRF funds as non-Federal match where prohibited;
3. In addition, the Final Rule clarifies certain uses of SLFRF funds outside the scope of eligible uses, including that recipients generally may not use SLFRF funds directly to service debt, satisfy a judgment or settlement, or contribute to a “rainy day” fund. Recipients should refer to Treasury’s Final Rule for more information on these restrictions.

Evaluation of IIA Programs:

- The Center is partnered with an external evaluation organization that will work with each IIA recipient to develop a logic model for the project, evaluate their program and build capacity to measure progress. The Center will work with IIA recipients to evaluate the effectiveness of the system changes implemented and assist in determining return on investment for the overall IIA program. The evaluation will be focused on persistence and completion rates. Other components will be determined based on the assessment metrics included in the project proposal. The evaluation period will exceed the length of the grant period to understand the impact of the system changes.
- It is expected that some institutions will need to make improvements or modifications to their systems to effectively evaluate the impact of the system changes. Data system improvements and modifications are an eligible expense under IIA, and The Center can provide technical assistance in helping identify the data changes that are necessary for evaluation purposes.
- Additionally, The Center will document the efforts of the IIA projects, challenges encountered, and solutions developed during the process.

Application Assistance:

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success is available throughout the application window to assist grant applicants. The Center’s website will be regularly updated to post access to upcoming webinars and weekly office hours.

General inquiries should be directed to Michelle Burke, Director of Postsecondary Programs and Partnerships at m.burke@talentfirst.net or 616-888-3131.

Collaborate. Innovate. Transform.

833 Kenmoor Avenue SE, Suite B | Grand Rapids, MI 49546 | 616.871.2450 | info.talentfirst.net/mcacs



Applicants may also request a pre-review of draft proposals any time before June 7, 2024. Drafts may be emailed as a pdf attachment to TheCenter@talent.first.net. Please allow five business days for review and response.

About the Michigan Center for Adult College Success

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success (The Center) is an initiative of TalentFirst, created by the state of Michigan to meet the need for a statewide skilled workforce by increasing the number of adults obtaining postsecondary credentials. These credentials increase access to higher-paying jobs, allowing more Michiganders to build better lives for themselves and their families. Michigan's population is aging, and birth rates are declining. The state's residents have lower levels of education and skills compared to neighboring states and the nation overall. With more than 350,000 job openings, many requiring a postsecondary credential, upskilling Michigan's adult population is a priority.

For more context on the current state of workforce development and adult education in Michigan, please read the The Center's [Landscape Analysis](#).

The Center serves to identify promising practices and programming for increasing adult enrollment and completion by partnering with postsecondary organizations across Michigan. The Center is providing insight on how to effectively implement promising practices that meet the needs of the adults at postsecondary institutions by:

1. Building partnerships between postsecondary institutions, employers, nonprofits, and government.
2. Evaluating adult-education initiatives.
3. Tailoring promising practices to local, regional, and institutional contexts.
4. Supporting the state's investment in postsecondary education, and
5. Promoting what works.