

## INNOVATION INVESTMENT AWARDS SUMMARY

**Institution:** Central Michigan University

**Amount Requested/Received:** \$998,073/\$822,497

**Project Description:** Resulting from an extensive six-month evaluation and planning process, Central Michigan University (CMU) division of Innovation and Online (IO), in alignment with the Sixty by 30 attainment goal, proposes a grant to increase the degree completion of adult students by: (a) developing flexible in-demand learning experiences to increase adult credential attainment, and (b) replicating the Oregon State's Degree Partnership Program (DPP) model for dual admission and enrollment between CMU and Lansing Community College. As members of, and active participants in, the MI-Raise design lab, we have embraced the challenge of aligning existing support initiatives with innovative new practices to elevate Michigan's adult learner completion rates. During our six-month planning process and with the support of the MI-RAISE design Lab, we meticulously focused on several key areas, including: (a) identifying the adult learner population, (b) gaining a deeper understanding of their barriers, (c) studying best practices for adult completion, and (d) designing CMU Collaborate, a comprehensive program focused on adult completion, to establish diverse pathways for degree attainment. Additionally, we identified essential internal and external resources critical for successful implementation. With support from the IIA grant, we will allocate funding strategically to implement targeted program components, expand outreach to potential adult learners, and enhance our community college partnerships. Furthermore, IIA funding will be used to promote awareness of the educational opportunities, reduce barriers to transfer, and allow for the creation of multiple, career-aligned pathways to ensure credentials meet the educational and career goals of adult students.

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**Institution:** Glen Oaks Community College (with University of Olivet)

**Amount Requested/Received:** \$960,000/\$800,000

**Project Description:** Glen Oaks Community College (GOCC) is partnering with the University of Olivet (UO) to develop the GO2UO program that will streamline pathways to success for adult learners. The program will co-enroll students at both institutions in high-demand careers and follow best practices to provide support for success, graduation, and career placement. A large part of this project is attracting adult students who have not started or completed their higher education pathway and supporting them to graduation to help meet Michigan's Sixty by 30 goal.

The GO2UO Partnership will establish a new model for deep collaboration and system change between community colleges and universities. While most institutions have articulation agreements, these often do not significantly boost enrollment, retention, transfer, and success of adult learners. The GO2UO Partnership surpasses the Olivet Direct! Partnership with GOCC by offering guaranteed admission and transfer. It incorporates successful national models to provide simultaneous admission and flexible joint enrollment in online courses, along with shared services such as joint marketing, advising, and career services, including business-to-business enrollment partnerships. An innovative aspect of the partnership design is aligned credit for prior learning, including credit for workforce development training offered by GOCC, UO, or other organizations.

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Both institutions plan to improve their services for adult learners and to grow their enrollments in this demographic. The specific goals for this two-year project have been identified in the larger context of these strategic plans. The GO2UO partnership represents an improved value proposition for adult learners that, when marketed effectively, will assist both colleges with recruiting additional new adult students. The streamlined and flexible online course options, coupled with integrated advising and support services, will increase retention, persistence, and completion rates of adult learners at both institutions. Streamlined pathways and integrated advising will interest additional GOCC students to continue their education by completing a bachelor's degree at UO. Partnerships with business will support marketing and enrollment of adult learners, internships, and job placements.

The grant enables a stronger partnership between GOCC and UO. The institutions propose to combine efforts, share services, and align processes to attract, support, and ultimately graduate and place more adult learners by addressing barriers for adult student success. A direct outcome of this project will be documentation of the new partnership model for dissemination to other Michigan community colleges and universities.

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**Institution: Grand Valley State University**

**Amount Requested/Received: \$968,625/\$855,00**

**Project Description:** GVSU Omni's Prior Learning Accelerator and Competency-based Elevator (Omni PLACE) is an innovative educational initiative with two interacting pillars: the Prior Learning Accelerator will increase the impact of prior learning assessment by using multiple tools, including Generative AI, to identify skills and learning already mastered; the Competency-based Elevator will create competency-based, modularized microcredentials that bridge the gap between prior learning and required coursework for degree completion, enabling students to bundle prior learning with microcredentials to earn course credit. The program is specifically tailored for Michigan veterans and working adults, leveraging their existing knowledge and skills paired with upskilling modules to expedite their academic and career advancement.

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**Institution: Jackson College**

**Amount Requested/Received: \$317,477/\$317,477**

**Project Description:** The project aims to fully operationalize Competency-Based Education (CBE) at Jackson College to better serve adult learners. By leveraging a grant, the college will implement two primary tactics to enhance its CBE offerings. First, Jackson College will partner with the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) to receive institutional operations coaching, culminating in a pilot CBE manufacturing certificate program in Winter 2026. Second, the project will expand the Medical Insurance Coder Biller (MICB) program by creating six new industry-recognized credentials and offering a flexible six-month open-entry, open-exit online model.

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To support these initiatives, Jackson College will utilize targeted marketing strategies through CollegeAPP to reach adult learners in Michigan, emphasizing the flexibility and relevance of CBE programs. Additionally, the college will participate in national events like HEALTHCON to showcase its programs.

Jackson College is committed to making the necessary internal resources available and aligning these efforts with its Total Commitment to Student Success (TCS2) and strategic agenda. This project will provide personalized, competency-based education that allows adult learners to progress at their own pace, ultimately achieving their academic and career goals more efficiently.

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**Institution: Monroe County Community College**

**Amount Requested/Received: \$999,328/\$766,702**

**Project Description:** A central element of this grant proposal is to embed services within the Orchard East neighborhood, an economically disadvantaged neighborhood within the City of Monroe and most racially diverse area in Monroe County. MCCC will adapt programs recently developed through successful federal Title III, Detroit Drives Degrees Community College Collaborative (D3C3), Frontliners and Michigan Reconnect grants. MCCC's intention is to locate within Monroe County's most underserved neighborhood a resource hub for all adult students in the county.

This proposal leverages a cohort model to support adult learners by tailoring for the adult (25+) population proven systems changes initially designed for traditional age students. MCCC's Bridges to College program for adult learners will support students by:

- Supporting post-high school/GED reading, writing and math skill development.
- Offering a hybrid model of instruction that includes online and in-person learning.
- Engaging students in activities to prepare them for college and help them to build a sense of familiarity and belonging at Monroe County Community College.
- Providing one-on-one development of individual academic success plans with regular progress check-ins.
- Offering non-academic support including access to basic needs security.
- Providing opportunities to learn about financial aid and to gain career readiness and soft skills.

The programs to be embedded will include success coaching, retention specialists, mental health counseling, and short-term credentialing efforts. While the primary focus of this program and partnership is on adults specifically within this disenfranchised neighborhood, any adult in Monroe County and surrounding communities in Monroe County will be eligible for these services, including any adult learner age 25+.

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**Institution: Muskegon Community College**

**Amount Requested/Amount Received: \$671,400/\$634,400**

**Project Description:** Muskegon Community College's IIA project will improve the enrollment and outcomes for adult learners, helping Michigan reach its Sixty by 30 goal by implementing an adult learner navigator program. Specifically, the college plans to hire a project manager and two adult learner navigators who will transform MCC's approach to interacting with adult learners through a case management approach. This program will be modeled after the college's highly successful Early College program, which uses mentorship and guidance to support high school students in earning their high school diplomas and associate degrees. This first touch through post training approach will create relationships and accountability that will lead to improved adult learner persistence, retention, and success at MCC.

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**Institution: Northern Michigan University**

**Amount Requested/Received: \$981,856/\$905,750**

**Project Description:** The Michigan Adults Access to Credentials (Mighty MAAC) project, led by a collaborative team at Northern Michigan University (NMU), is designed to transform adult education in Michigan through the strategic implementation of a 60-Year Curriculum (60YC) model.

The adoption of this model is a bold attempt not only to change the elements of the adult education system at NMU, but to change the way those elements interface and, more importantly, change stakeholder understanding and expectations about what a college education entails, the value of postsecondary education, and how and when one engages with the university. Implementing the 60YC model involves a paradigm shift that incorporates all best practices in adult education and organizes them into a coherent whole by integrating credit and con-credit educational experiences throughout the learner's lifetime.

The MAAC initiative is designed to integrate evidence-based promising practices into a coherent whole in relationship to Michigan's economic and employment demands over time throughout the life of adult learners. The paradigm shift to the 60YC includes providing (1) competency-based education, (2) prior learning assessments with (3) ease of access through flexible scheduling, and (4) accelerated degree programs through online and in-person offerings (5) aligned to guided career pathways. The MAAC proposal seeks to (6) promote awareness of the opportunity for historically marginalized and underserved populations by clearly communicating the value of postsecondary education and how to navigate and leverage prior learning, credit, and non-credit experiences toward credentials. NMU's MAAC initiative also seeks to generate adult-specific (7) quality data to adjust (8) access to existing and needed student services. Project Objective 2, growing non-credit experiences, Objective 3, refining and increasing badging/alternative credentialing, and Objective 4, refining and scaling the CPL system, are evidence-based promising practices for (9) ensuring ease of access and (10) systematically eliminating known and yet-to-be-discovered barriers to credentials (e.g., time to degree, cost, and career-alignment).

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**Institution: Wayne State University**

**Amount Requested/Received: \$997,680/\$720,680**

**Project Description:** Our project adopts a learner-focused approach, utilizing best practices in adult education, including seamless easy to follow pathways, targeted academic advising, cohort-based learning models, and robust career services. The implementation plan spans two years with continued assessment beyond the two years.

Building on the groundwork established by the Equity Transfer Initiative transfer pathways, and adult learners supports, our project will: 1) establish pathways that include prior learning assessment, 2) provide all incoming students with a credit review, and 3) design academic programs that support PLA and pathways and lead to timely degree completion. Our plan for the first year of this project includes establishing a taskforce to create additional transfer pathways and agreements, develop PLA policies, and design tailored onboarding programs. The second year will launch prior credit policies, piloting PLA for all new students, signing transfer pathways (agreements), training staff on adult learner support and best practices, and rolling out enhanced onboarding programs. Grant funds will cover the development of new policies, staff training, adoption of new technology and PLA platforms.

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**Institution: Western Michigan University (with Kalamazoo Valley Community College)**

**Amount Requested/Received: \$756,000/\$620,000**

**Project Description:** The Completing the Kalamazoo Promise: Re-engagement of 25+ (Adult) Learners grant proposal is a partnership effort between Western Michigan University (WMU), Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC), and the Kalamazoo Promise (Promise) which seeks to recruit, identify, and support 25+ individuals in the Kalamazoo area who have remaining but unused Promise dollars (which can be used to pay for tuition and fees) and either enroll or re-enroll them at WMU or KVCC.

The Completing the Kalamazoo Promise grant aims to secure funding for Promise Coordinators and their support team, who will focus on re-engaging students aged 25 and older who still have remaining Promise funds and have not completed their college education. These coordinators will work to enroll or re-enroll these students at Western Michigan University (WMU) and Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

We know the support of the Promise is significant in getting students who “stop out” to re-enroll and continue. About 45% of KPS students who dropped out after their first year eventually re-enrolled, compared to a national average of 12% (Miller 2023). The goal of this grant proposal is to build capacity within the Kalamazoo Promise to go even further in re-engaging and re-enrolling 25+ aged students.