

AWARDS FOR INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICATION PACKAGE

Introduction

This year, Governor Brown and the California Legislature allocated \$50 million to recognize innovative and ambitious efforts to improve higher education. The Awards for Innovation in Higher Education will reward institutions and partnerships that are working differently to achieve one or more of the following priorities, as articulated in the Budget Act of 2014:

- Significantly increase the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded.
- Allow students to complete bachelor’s degrees within four years after beginning higher education.
- Ease transfer through the state’s education system by better recognizing learning that occurs across the state’s education segments and elsewhere.

The state’s future depends on improved outcomes in each of these areas, particularly for student groups that are currently underrepresented in higher education. To achieve these goals, California needs a well-functioning, sustainable higher education system that serves all students well. That system needs stable funding—which is why the state has provided steady increases in resources in recent years—as well as new strategies to better coordinate efforts across institutions and achieve more with existing dollars.

The purpose of the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education is to reward campuses that are already doing innovative work to increase the number of degrees they award, make the process more timely and efficient, or do both. As described in more detail below, award decisions will be made by the Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education (Committee). The Committee will consider a wide variety of innovations, both large and small, looking in particular for activities that can be replicated by other institutions, scaled broadly, and have the potential to achieve more equitable outcomes in higher education attainment. Appendix A includes a list, which is not exhaustive, of examples of innovations that campuses may wish to highlight in their applications.

Eligibility

Award applications must be coordinated and submitted by a representative of a UC campus, a CSU campus, or a California community college, with the concurrence of the chief executive officer of that institution. Community colleges play an important role in advancing the priorities of this program and are strongly encouraged to apply for an award. Any other UC campus, CSU campus, or community college, as well as any K-12 local education agency or private institution of higher education, may participate in the application. The coordinating institution will be responsible for distributing funds included in an award to any participants in the application and submitting required reports evaluating the effectiveness of the changes described in the application.

Award Selection

The Committee will select awardees based on the strength of innovations that are already underway. The application is a self-nomination for an award. **It is not a grant proposal to seek funding for future activities. Applicants are not asked to specify in this application how they would use award funds.** Instead, the program will reward institutions that are already taking actions to improve higher education in California.

The application instructions ask for information that will help the committee understand what the campuses are already doing to better use their available resources to improve degree completion, how they are making those changes, and what they hope to achieve.

The application contains 12 questions grouped into the following 4 sections: Context, Innovations, Sustainability, and Evaluation. The Committee has determined the following weights for each section:

1. *Context section:* 10 percent.
2. *Innovations section:* 40 percent.
3. *Sustainability section:* 35 percent.
4. *Evaluation section:* 15 percent.

The Committee will determine award winners and award amounts. To assist the Committee with its selection process, staff will read and evaluate each application, using the weights above to generate an overall score. Each application item contains a statement about the qualities of a strong application, and those qualities will be the basis for these evaluations.

Staff will provide the Committee with a ranking of the applications and with recommended award amounts based on the relative strengths of the applications, not the costs of any future activities the applicants may be planning. Staff intends to recommend that all awards be at least \$2.5 million, with the possibility of tiers of award levels. These recommendations will only be advisory. The Committee will have access to all of the submitted applications, and members may choose to create their own rankings. **Ultimately, the Committee will make all decisions on awardees and award amounts.** The Committee has expressed an interest in making awards for innovations that are diverse in size, program area, and service region, and may take into account any of these factors—or others—when making final decisions.

Use of Award Funds

As described above, the innovation awards function like prizes: winners will be selected on the strength of past and present innovations and not on their potential future use of award funds. In the spring of 2015, after the Committee has completed the award selection process and notified award winners of their award amounts, the winners will be asked to submit a report indicating how they will use those funds. The Committee must approve a winner's report before the Director of Finance will release funds to the winner.

Winners may choose to use award funds for expansion of activities described in their applications or for activities that are new and different from those described in their applications. The Committee's expectation is that funds will be used for appropriate, one-time purposes that are related to the priorities of the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education program (as described in the introduction above). While an award is a one-time allocation from the state, funds may be spent over multiple years if a winner chooses to do so.

General Instructions

The specific application instructions that follow describe a cover page and 12 items for which narrative responses are required. To facilitate comparisons across applications, please begin your response to each item on a separate page and adhere to the stated page limits, using a 12-point font and at least 1-inch page margins on 8.5-inch by 11-inch paper. Please number each page and include the name of the coordinating institution in the page header. If a campus is coordinating multiple applications, please assign each application a number and include that number following the name of the coordinating institution. The instructions indicate where supporting materials may be provided in labeled appendices. Please be advised, however, that applications will be evaluated primarily on the strength of the narrative responses.

A complete application package may be submitted to the Director of Finance either by email or through a hard copy that is hand delivered or mailed. The application must be **received** no later than January 9, 2015, at 5:00 pm to be considered for an award. Please adhere to the following instructions related to application delivery:

- *Email Delivery:* Applications may be emailed to innovationawards@dof.ca.gov. Applicants should submit two emails. The first email should include the cover page and application narrative as an attachment in Portable Document Format (PDF), with a subject line using the following convention: “Application: [Coordinating Institution Name] – Cover Page and Narrative.” The second email should include the appendices accompanying the application as attachments, with a subject line using the following convention: “Application: [Coordinating Institution Name] – Appendices.” If a campus is coordinating multiple applications, please include the application number following the name of the coordinating institution.

The applicant is responsible for ensuring receipt of both emails and of all attachments.

- *Hand Delivery or Mail:* Applications may be hand delivered or mailed to the following address:

California Department of Finance
Education Systems Unit—Innovation Awards
7th Floor
915 L Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Please allow sufficient time for mail delivery. Applications must be received (not postmarked) by the deadline.

Applications that are incomplete or fail to follow these instructions may be penalized in the evaluation process or not considered for an award.

All submitted applications will be made available publicly shortly after the application deadline.

Questions

If you have any questions regarding the application package, please email innovationawards@dof.ca.gov or call (916) 445-0328.

COVER PAGE

Please include all of the following in a cover page to your application:

– **Contact Information**

Please include the following information:

Coordinating Institution—*This is the UC campus, CSU campus, or community college that is coordinating the application.*

Contact Person's Name and Title—*The contact person must be a representative of the coordinating institution and will serve as the single point of contact for the Department of Finance.*

Contact Person's Email Address

Contact Person's Phone Number

Contact Person's Mailing Address

– **List of Participants**

Please list all entities participating in the application. In addition, please include letters from the chief executive officers of each of these entities indicating support for the application in an appendix labeled Appendix A.

– **Application Abstract**

Please provide a brief abstract of your application (250 words or less) that describes the key changes you have initiated since January 10, 2014. This abstract will be used to describe and reference your application in summary documents.

– **Assurance and Signature**

Please replicate the following assurance, followed by the signature of the chief executive officer.

“I assure that I have read and support this application for an award. I understand that if this application is chosen for an award, my institution will be required to submit, for approval by the Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education, a report indicating proposed uses of the award funds and, as the fiscal agent, will be responsible for distributing funds to any other participating entities. I also understand that, if this application is selected for an award, my institution will be required to submit reports to the Director of Finance by January 1, 2018, and by January 1, 2020, evaluating the effectiveness of the changes described in this application.”

APPLICATION ITEMS

Context

(10 Percent Weight)

1. Please describe specific programmatic or institutional goals set by the participants in this application and how achieving these goals ultimately will increase the number of bachelor's degrees awarded, allow students to complete bachelor's degrees within four years, and/or ease transfer, particularly for student groups that are underrepresented in higher education. Please describe when and how these goals were developed and how they are used on an ongoing basis. *(1 page maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate clear, well-established goals that are aligned with the priorities of the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education, address achievement gaps, and used to guide changes to policies, practices, and/or systems.

2. Please provide a statistical profile of the students you serve, disaggregated by gender and the following ethnic and racial categories as they are defined by the United States Census Bureau for the 2010 Census for reporting purposes: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, White, some other race, and more than one race. Additionally, please provide information on the proportion of students who are current or former foster youth, students with disabilities, low-income students, and veterans. Please provide an analysis of the factors that affect the ability of your students to earn bachelor's degrees, graduate within four years, and/or transfer, including the particular factors that disproportionately affect student groups that are underrepresented in higher education. Please note which factors you believe can be influenced by changes to policies, practices, or systems. *(2 pages maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful analysis, based on credible evidence, of the factors that impede students' progress and the applicant's role in addressing those factors.

Innovations

(40 Percent Weight)

3. Please describe key policies, practices, and/or systems in place prior to January 10, 2014, that were initiated to achieve the goals identified in Item 1. Please describe the impact of these policies, practices, or systems, to date, and provide evidence of that impact. Please explain what lessons you have learned—from both successes and failures—and how you will apply those lessons to future actions. *(2 pages maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix B, limited to 10 pages maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate a record of actions that are innovative, aligned to the applicant's goals, and analyzed thoughtfully and used to inform future actions.

4. Please describe key changes to policies, practices, and/or systems that you have initiated since January 10, 2014, that are intended to achieve the goals identified in Item 1. Please explain why you think the changes you have initiated will achieve those goals and what you expect the impact of the changes will be. *(6 pages maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix C, limited to 15 pages maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate a coherent set of innovative and replicable changes guided by the goals described in Item 1 and linked to the challenges described in Item 2 that can be expected to have a significant impact.

5. Please describe any changes to policies, practices, and/or systems you will implement after January 9, 2015, that are intended to achieve the goals identified in Item 1, as well as the expected timeline for implementing those changes and the expected impact of those changes. Please include evidence of your commitment to these future changes. The purpose of this question is to understand your vision for continued improvement and innovation, not to determine how you will spend award funds if selected. As such, please list only those changes that you plan to implement regardless of whether or not you win an award. (2 pages maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix D, limited to 10 pages maximum.)

A strong application will demonstrate the applicant's intent to continue to make changes and evaluate actions pursuant to a clear long-term vision guided by the goals described in Item 1 and consistent with the changes described in Item 4.

6. Please discuss how the changes described in your responses to the previous items will impact the average cost to award a bachelor's degree, considering costs borne by the state, the participants in the application, and students, as well as the magnitude of that impact. (1 page maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix E, limited to 5 pages maximum.)

A strong application will demonstrate an understanding of how programmatic and institutional decisions affect the average cost per bachelor's degree awarded and will present credible evidence that the applicant's innovations are likely to reduce that cost.

7. Please describe any risks or tradeoffs involved in the changes you are implementing and the way in which you will monitor and mitigate them. In particular, please address any potential adverse effects on student groups that are underrepresented in higher education. (2 pages maximum.)

A strong application will acknowledge and provide a thoughtful analysis of potential risks, tradeoffs, or unintended consequences, and will describe robust and credible strategies to mitigate them.

Sustainability (35 Percent Weight)

8. Please describe your key strengths and assets for encouraging a culture of innovation and adaptability within and across all entities participating in the application, sustaining the changes you are making and, ultimately, achieving the goals identified in this application. Please address leadership, institutional commitment, existing relationships among the application participants, and external partnerships or resources you are leveraging. (2 pages maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix F, limited to 10 pages maximum.)

A strong application will demonstrate a sustained record of leadership, shared vision and focus among the application participants, and long-term institutional commitment.

9. Please describe your strategies for engaging stakeholders (such as students, faculty, other education agencies or institutions, community members, and business leaders) and achieving commitment to the goals described in Item 1 and the changes to policies, practices, and/or systems described in the items in the Innovations section. *(1 page maximum. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix G, limited to 10 pages maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate a robust strategy for gaining and maintaining the support of key stakeholders that is sufficiently broad and deep to sustain the changes described in the plan in the event of changes in institutional leadership.

10. Please describe how the changes described in this application will be sustained within your existing financial resources. *(1 page maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate that the applicant will implement and sustain the changes described in the application without new funds from the state or students.

Evaluation **(15 Percent Weight)**

11. Please describe how you will evaluate—both quantitatively and qualitatively—whether the changes described in your responses to the items in the Innovations section will achieve the goals identified in your response to Item 1 and how you will use this feedback to inform future changes. Please include at least three specific quantitative measures you will monitor regularly, including at least one measure that can be observed and used to gauge progress in the near term (fewer than four years) and at least one measure that will reflect progress over the long term (four years or more). *(1 page maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful, systematic approach to evaluating progress toward each identified goal, based on quantitative measures and qualitative judgments that reasonably evaluate progress toward those goals, and to making changes that are informed by this feedback.

12. Please list your target outcomes for each academic year through 2018-19 for the measures identified in your response to Item 11, including targets for the student groups that are underrepresented in higher education. Please provide the most recent baseline measures for each target outcome for each participant in the application and identify which academic year that data reflects. You may use a table to reflect this data. Please also provide a narrative that explains how you chose your targets, including assumptions used and evidence you have to support those assumptions. Please identify your data source or provide enough information about how the data is generated to allow other entities to replicate the measures. *(2 pages maximum, including any table produced. You may include additional supporting materials in an appendix labeled Appendix H, limited to 10 pages maximum.)*

A strong application will demonstrate a thoughtful approach to setting ambitious targets for all students, informed by a realistic assessment of data.

APPENDIX A

Examples of Innovations

The following list, which is not exhaustive or organized in order of priority, includes examples of strategies that applicants may wish to highlight in their applications:

- Strengthening and streamlining pathways between K-12 schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and others, including by improving the sharing of information.
- Implementing more effective approaches to remedial education.
- Designing new instructional strategies or delivery methods that will improve student learning and increase the rate at which students complete courses, including by forming cohorts or special classes to improve student success and retention.
- Expanding the enrollment capacity of “bottleneck” courses that students need to complete to graduate but often cannot access due to existing enrollment constraints, including by offering larger online courses.
- Providing more opportunities for students to earn credit toward their degrees for knowledge and skills gained outside of traditional classrooms, such as on the job, in the military, or through independent study.
- Encouraging student behaviors demonstrated to lead to more successful outcomes.
- Rethinking instructor workload and course offerings to focus human resources in ways that meet the needs of students.
- Implementing smarter business and operational practices to reduce institutional costs.
- Better managing existing space and developing creative alternatives to address facility needs.
- Initiating significant planning activities related to establishing a four-year degree program at a community college.

The Committee has expressed particular interest in applicants who are using technology in creative ways to implement these strategies or other innovations that achieve the goals of the program.