

**State of California
Awards for Innovation in Higher Education**

I. Overview.

Introduction.

California's 2016-17 budget includes \$25 million for the Awards for Innovation in Higher Education. The program will support innovation at California's colleges—potentially with other partners—that is expected to reduce the time it takes students to complete degrees and credentials, reduce the total cost of attendance for students, or do both. The legislation specifically highlights the state's interest in efforts to:

- Redesign curriculum and instruction, such as through implementation of three-year degrees.
- Allow students to make progress toward completion of degrees and credentials based on demonstration of knowledge and competencies, including skills acquired through military training, prior learning, and prior experiences.
- Address financial need, including by increasing the number of students who apply for financial aid or reducing the costs of books and supplies.

Eligibility.

At least one California community college district or one California community college must be involved in the innovation described in the application. An application for an award, however, may represent the efforts of more than one organization.

Furthermore, an application must be submitted with the signature of the chief executive officer of a California community college district or California community college. That community college district or community college will serve as the fiscal agent for any award made for that application. A fiscal agent is responsible for distributing funds to any participants in the application pursuant to any agreement between the participants.

Award Selection.

The Committee on Awards for Innovation in Higher Education will make awards for the most promising innovations. The committee consists of the following members:

- Michael Cohen, director, California Department of Finance, and committee chair
- Lande Ajose
- Marisol Aviña
- Samuel Bersola
- Audrey Dow
- Cecilia Estolano
- Mitchell Stevens

The California Department of Finance serves as staff to the committee.

The legislation directs the committee to give preference to innovations that:

- Improve outcomes for students from groups that are historically underrepresented in higher education, such as low-income students, first-generation college students, students from underrepresented minority groups, students who are current or former foster youth, students with disabilities, and students who are veterans.
- Use technology in ways that are not common in higher education.

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II. Application Instructions.

Application.

Please complete both Section A (cover page) and Section B (narrative responses to application items).

For the application, please format your document using pages that are 8.5-inches wide by 11-inches long, with page margins that are at least 1-inch wide, and using a 12-point font. For Section B, please (1) begin your responses to each item on a separate page, (2) adhere to the page limits specified in each item, (3) include, in the page header, the name of the California community college district or California community college that will serve as the fiscal agent, and (4) include, in the page footer, the page number.

A complete application must be submitted to the committee by email and received no later than February 3, 2017, at 5:00 pm to be considered for an award. Please adhere to the following instructions related to delivery:

- Please submit the application to innovationawards@dof.ca.gov.
- Please complete the subject line of the email using the following convention: "Application Submittal: [Name of Community College District or Community College Serving as Fiscal Agent]."
- Please include both Section A (cover page) and Section B (narrative responses to application items) in a single attachment in Portable Document Format (PDF).

If a California community college district or California community college will serve as the fiscal agent for multiple applications, please assign a number to each application and include that number following the name of the California community college district or California community college as part of the submittal.

The applicant is responsible for ensuring receipt of the email and attachment.

All submitted applications will be made available publicly, including on the committee's website, upon receipt.

Notice of Interest.

We also ask that those interested in applying for an award provide notification by email on or before October 31, 2016. Submittal of a notice is not required to submit an application. These notices will be used only to plan for intake and evaluation of applications.

Please include the following information in the body of an email to innovationawards@dof.ca.gov: (1) the name of the California community college district or California community college that may wish to serve as fiscal agent for an application and (2) the names of other organizations that may wish to participate in the innovation.

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Section A. Cover Page.

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

– **Contact Information for Application Coordinator.**

Please include the following information for an application coordinator:

- Name and Title.
- Name of Organization.
- Email Address.
- Phone Number.
- Mailing Address.

(This individual will serve as the point of contact for any issues related to the substance of the application.)

– **List of Participants.**

Please list the organizations that will participate in the innovation described in the application.

– **Abstract.**

Please provide a brief abstract—250 words or less—about the application. This abstract will be used in summary documents produced by the committee.

– **Contact Information for Representative of Fiscal Agent.**

Please include the following information for a representative of the California community college district or the California community college that will serve as the fiscal agent for any award:

- Name and Title.
- Name of California Community College District or California Community College.
- Email Address.
- Phone Number.
- Mailing Address.

(This individual will serve as the point of contact for any issues related to disbursement of any award. This may be a different person than the application coordinator.)

– **Assurance and Signature.**

Please replicate the assurance below, followed by the printed name and signature of the chief executive officer of the fiscal agent:

“I assure that I have read and support this application for an award. I understand that, if this application is chosen for an award, [name of California community college district or California community college] will serve as the fiscal agent for the award and that the responsibility of the fiscal agent includes distribution of funds to any other participants in the application pursuant to any agreement between the participants.”

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Section B. Narrative Responses to Application Items.

1. From the perspective of students, what is the problem you are trying to solve? (Maximum of one page.)

A strong response will provide evidence of a problem that is significant because of the number of students impacted or the amount of resources affected and is relevant to challenges in higher education in California more broadly.

2. What is the innovation? (“Innovation” should be interpreted broadly and may not necessarily be a single activity. You should describe how you will address the program’s goal to reduce the time it takes for students to complete degrees and credentials, reduce the total cost of attendance for students, or do both.) (Maximum of two pages.)

A strong response will describe specific changes in policies, practices, and systems that constitute an “innovation” and articulate clearly the relationship between the problem described in the response to Item 1, this particular innovation, and the program’s goal, with the description of the innovation specifically addressing ways in which it improves outcomes for students from groups historically underrepresented in higher education and uses technology in ways uncommon in higher education.

3. How will you implement this innovation? (Maximum of two pages.)

A strong response will describe in a comprehensive way:

1. *The organizations involved in implementation, those affected by implementation, and the actions that will be taken to encourage their support.*
2. *Any potential risks of implementation and the actions that would be taken to mitigate those risks, with particular emphasis on risks related to technology and impacts on students from groups historically underrepresented in higher education.*
3. *A specific timeline of actions.*

4. Why do you believe this innovation represents a significant departure from the policies, practices, and systems that are prevalent in higher education in California? (Maximum of one page.)

A strong response will present a clear argument, with supporting evidence, about why the innovation represents an effort so distinctive from other efforts in higher education in California that it warrants the kind of outside support represented by the awards.

5. How can this innovation be relevant beyond the context in which you work—to challenges in California more broadly? (Maximum of one page.)

A strong response will present a clear argument, with supporting evidence, about why, and how, the innovation could be scaled broadly or replicated widely to have a significant impact on problems like the one described in the response to Item 1.

6. What are your qualifications to undertake this kind of innovation? (Maximum of one page.)

A strong response will describe specific qualifications, such as particular experiences (and the lessons learned from those experiences) or particular kinds of expertise among the participants in the application.

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7. How will you inform future efforts based on evaluation of the success of the innovation? (Maximum of one page.)

A strong response will describe the specific information that will be collected and the specific criteria that will be used to evaluate success, as well as the processes that will be used to continue to redesign policies, practices, and systems, based on that evaluation.

8. In what ways will additional funding support implementation of this innovation—in your context, in California more broadly, or across both? (Maximum of one page.)

A strong response will present a clear argument, with supporting evidence, about how one-time funds will (1) be used effectively and efficiently and (2) generate continued support for the kind of innovation described in the application.

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III. Award Selection.

The committee will decide (1) the applications that are selected for awards and (2) the amounts included in those awards.

Each application will be reviewed in the following sequence using the rubric shown in Figure 1 on the following page:

1. Each application will be evaluated by two separate readers. Readers will be assigned randomly to applications. (Therefore, the same two readers will not necessarily read multiple applications together.) If the difference between the two initial scores is less than 10 points, these scores will be averaged to produce a final application score.
2. If the difference between the initial two scores is equal to or greater than 10 points, the application will be read by a third reader. If the difference between the two closest scores (of the three scores) is less than 10 points, those two closest scores will be averaged to produce a final score.
3. If the difference between the two closest scores of the three readers is equal to or greater than 10 points, the application will read by a fourth reader. The two closest scores will be averaged to produce a final score.

Following this review, staff may request interviews with the applicants who attain the highest scores in the evaluation of their written applications. These interviews would be used to both (1) validate the narrative included in the application and (2) clarify understanding of the innovation.

Subject to approval by the committee, each award is expected to include at least \$2.5 million. Staff may also request that applicants provide additional detail about their proposed uses of funds.

The committee is expected to meet on March 24, 2017, and April 3, 2017. Any decisions about awards would likely be made at those meetings.

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Figure 1. Rubric for Staff Review of Written Applications.

Criterion	Maximum Points
Responsiveness to Stated Qualities of Strong Responses	
Item 1	4
Item 2	8
Item 3	8
Item 4	4
Item 5	4
Item 6	4
Item 7	4
Item 8	4
Overall Assessment	
Responsiveness to State Priorities — <i>Redesign curriculum and instruction, such as implementation of three-year degrees.</i> — <i>Allow students to make progress toward completion of degrees and credentials based on demonstration of knowledge and competencies, including skills acquired through military training, prior learning, and prior experiences.</i> — <i>Address financial need, including by increasing the number of students who apply for financial aid or reducing the costs of books and supplies.</i>	16
Opportunity for Significant Impact on Program Goals — <i>Reduce the time it takes students to complete degrees and credentials.</i> — <i>Reduce the total cost of attendance for students.</i>	12
Degree of Creativity	12
Efforts to Improve Outcomes for Students from Groups Historically Underrepresented in Higher Education	8
Use of Technology in Ways Not Common in Higher Education	8
Quality of Written Presentation	4
Total	100

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IV. Additional Information.

If you have any questions regarding this application package, please contact the following:

Christian Osmeña, Principal Program Budget Analyst
Yong Salas, Budget Analyst
California Department of Finance
915 L Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 445-0328
innovationawards@dof.ca.gov

For more information, please visit
http://www.dof.ca.gov/programs/Education/Index_Innovation_Awards.html.

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