

Grant Request for Proposal Student Loan Debt Counseling

S.F. No. 2415

91st Session of the Minnesota State Legislature (2019 Regular Session)

Grant Overview

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education (State) requests applications for a grant to be awarded to a Minnesota-based nonprofit qualified debt counseling organization to provide individual student loan debt repayment counseling to borrowers who are Minnesota residents concerning loans obtained to attend a postsecondary institution. The number of individuals receiving counseling may be limited to those capable of being served with available appropriations for that purpose. The purpose of the counseling is to assist borrowers to:

- (1) understand their loan and repayment options;
- (2) manage loan repayment; and
- (3) develop a workable budget based on the borrower's full financial situation regarding income, expenses, and other debt.

Funding Availability

- Total grant amount is \$388,000, split over two fiscal years (FY 2020 and FY 2021)
- Actual grant amount awarded is determined by the demand for counseling in relation to the \$194,000 fiscal year grant limit.
- Any unspent funds at the end of each fiscal year will be retained by the State. At the State's
 discretion, unspent grant funds from Fiscal Year 2020, may be carried over to Fiscal Year 2021.
 Individual counseling sessions can be provided until such time as the \$194,000 fiscal year limit
 has been reached. Applicants' price per counseling session will be a significant factor in the
 evaluation of proposals.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a committee representing content and community specialists with regional knowledge. We expect to announce selected grantees in January 2020. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract is fully executed and the grant has reached its effective date.

The project is anticipated to run from **February 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022.** The actual grant/project length and amount will be determined by the demand for counseling in relation to the \$194,000 fiscal year grant limit. The State can terminate future grant disbursements prior to \$194,000 being spent in any given fiscal year based on performance issues with the Grantee or if the program does not appear to be successful in achieving the desired goals.

Eligible Applicants:

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements in order to be fully considered for this grant opportunity. To be eligible to participate in the Student Loan Debt Counseling Grant Program a qualified debt counseling organization must:

- (1) have experience in providing individualized student loan counseling;
- (2) employ certified financial counselors; and



(3) be based in Minnesota and have offices at multiple rural and metropolitan area locations in the state to provide in-person counseling

Financial Review Process

All Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 and higher. In order to comply with Policy on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations

Please submit one of the following documents with your application, based on the following criteria:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit should submit their most recent boardreviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

Questions:

Questions may be submitted by phone or email to Maya Beecham at 651-259-3903 or maya.beecham@state.mn.us.

Application Content

Applicants are required to use the format that follows. The presentation may be tailored to suit needed planning and development and the style of the author, but each of the following components must be identified and addressed in the order shown.

- 1. Proposal Cover Sheet affixed to the top of the document. Use Appendix B.
- 2. Abstract summarizing the program, and project objectives. Use Appendix C.
- 3. Table of Contents with pagination.
- 4. **Program Narrative** not to exceed ten (10) numbered, double spaced pages. This excludes the cover sheet, abstract, table of contents, budget, budget narrative, and staff vitae. Use a 12-point scalable or larger font. Noncompliance with formatting stipulations will result in the proposal not being reviewed. The narrative should describe the proposed program or use of grant in the context of the selection criteria.

a. Eligibility

Provide information on services for individual in-person student loan counseling to Minnesota residents experiencing financial difficulties in repaying their student loans, and services in place to help borrowers 30 60 days delinquent on their student loans to: understand their loan and repayment options, manage loan repayment, and develop a workable budget based on the borrower's full financial situation regarding income, expenses, and other debt.

The applicant must be able to provide documentation for employed certified financial counselors; proof of experienced individualized student loan counseling; be based in Minnesota



and have offices at multiple rural and metropolitan area locations in the state to provide inperson counseling.

b. Project Description and Demonstrated Need

Describe the service(s) to be funded and how the proposed service will assist Minnesota residents experiencing financial difficulties in repaying their student loans.

c. Plan of Operation

Please provide a detailed plan of operation.

d. Adequacy of Resources, Quality of Personnel

Describe organizational resources to support the desired use for the funds requested. Describe how the organization will sustain proposed activities after grant funding. Describe the role of the proposed project staff and their time commitment to the project. Provide abbreviated staff vitae documenting related experiences and expertise in the course development or program expansion content area. Each abbreviated vitae is not to exceed two single-spaced pages and is to be attached as an appendix.

e. Budget, Budget Narrative, and Cost Effectiveness

Complete the budget form. Use Appendix D. In addition to the budget form, include a detailed budget narrative. The budget narrative must thoroughly describe each line item and provide justification for the expenditure.

f. Evaluation Plan

Provide details of an evaluation plan that will measure the success of the project goals. Indicate how participation and outcome data will be collected, analyzed, and reported to document progress toward meeting program goals.

5. Appendices (as required and necessary)

Appendices should be clearly labeled, paginated, and identified in the Table of Contents. Include the abbreviated two-page vitae or résumés of proposed project personnel.

6. Letters of Commitment

These are to be included in the appendix and should document endorsement for proposed activities.

7. Affirmative Action Certification Page (Appendix E)

Do <u>not</u> submit any other materials (binders, photos, etc.). Unrequested materials will not be reviewed.

Selected grantee will be expected to:

- Agree to comply with the required grants management policies and procedures set forth through Minn.Stat.§16B.97, Subd. 4 (a) (1), which includes annual grant monitoring and financial reconciliation.
- Review and ensure compliance with the requirements outlined in the grant contract agreement, which is available upon request.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation of proposals will be based on the following criteria:

1. Project Description and Demonstrated Need (20 points)

Describe the service(s) to be funded and how the proposed service will assist Minnesota residents experiencing financial difficulties in repaying their student loans.



- 2. Plan of Operation (30 points)
- 3. Quality or Proposed Design and Management (10 points)
- 4. Adequacy of Resources, Quality of Personnel (10 points)

Describe institutional resources to support the desired use for the funds requested. Describe how the institution will sustain proposed activities after grant funding. Describe the role of the proposed project staff and their time commitment to the project. Provide abbreviated staff vitae documenting related experiences and expertise in the course development or program expansion content area. Each abbreviated vitae is not to exceed two single-spaced pages and is to be attached as an appendix.

- 5. Budget, Budget Narrative, and Cost Effectiveness (10 points)

 Complete the budget form. Use Appendix E. In addition to the budget form, include a detailed budget narrative. The budget narrative must thoroughly describe each line item and provide justification for the expenditure.
- 6. Evaluation Plan (20 points)

Application Submission:

All applications <u>must</u> be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Time, on January 6, 2020. If applications are mailed, they <u>must</u> be postmarked by January 6, 2020. Late applications <u>will not</u> be considered. The applicant will incur all costs incurred in applying to this RFP.

Applications may be submitted in person, by fax, mail (postmarked January 6, 2020), or email to:

Maya Beecham Grants Coordinator Office of Higher Education 1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 200 St. Paul, MN 55108 Email: maya.beecham@state.mn.us

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Fax: 651-642-0675

Review Process and Timeline

The review committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. OHE will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. *The award decisions of OHE are final and not subject to appeal.*

RFP posted on the Office of Higher Education web site Questions due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time Applications due no later than 4:30 pm Central time November 20, 2019 December 16, 2019 January 6, 2020



Conflicts of Interest

We will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per Minn. Stat.§16B.98 and Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

Public Data

Per Minn. Stat. § 13.599

- Names and addresses of grant applicants will be public data once proposal responses are opened.
- All remaining data in proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by <stage agency here>> as part of the evaluation process
 (except trade secret data as defined and classified in § 13.37) will be public data after the
 evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have
 been fully executed).

Grant Provisions

Student Loan Debt Counseling S.F. No. 2415, 91st Session of the Minnesota Legislature (2010 Regular Session)

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses, (Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state).

Accountability and Reporting

The grant recipient must submit a report to the commissioner by January 15 of the second year of the grant award. The report must evaluate and measure the extent to which program outcome goals have been met.

The grant recipient must collect, analyze, and report on participation and outcome data that enable the office to verify the outcomes.



The evaluation must include information on the number of borrowers served with on-time student loan payments, the number who brought their loans into good standing, the number of student loan defaults, the number who developed a monthly budget plan, and other information required by the commissioner. Recipients of the counseling must be surveyed on their opinions about the usefulness of the counseling and the survey results must be included in the report.

By February 1 of the second year of each grant award, the commissioner must submit a report to the committees in the legislature with jurisdiction over higher education finance regarding grant program outcomes.

Grant Payments

Per <u>State Policy on Grant Payments</u>, reimbursement is the preferred method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless <list state agency here>> has given the grantee a written extension.

Grant Monitoring

Minn. Stat. §16B.97 and Policy on Grant Monitoring require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants of \$50,000 and higher
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants of \$250,000 and higher
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants of \$50,000 and higher. For this purpose, the grantee must make expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents available upon request by the State.

The monitoring schedule will be: Scheduled at least once per fiscal year by OHE with grantee according to availability.

Grantee Bidding Requirements

(For Non-Government Organizations)

Any grant-funded services and/or materials that are expected to cost:

- \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- Between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- Between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.

For grant-funded projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, prevailing wage rules apply per; $\underline{\text{Minn. Stat. } \S177.41}$ through $\underline{177.44.}$ These rules require that the wages of laborers and workers should be comparable to wages paid for similar work in the community as a whole.

The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:



- State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically
 Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List
- Metropolitan Council's Targeted Vendor list: Minnesota Unified Certification Program
- Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: <u>Central Certification Program</u>

The grantee must maintain:

- Written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- Support documentation of the purchasing and/or bidding process utilized to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.

The grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN: http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us/debarredreport.asp

Audits

Per Minn. Stat. §16B.98 Subdivision 8, the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination requirements for all Grantees:

- A. The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified.

 Minn. Stat. §363A.02. The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.
- B. The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500
- C. The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the Minnesota Human Rights Act.



Voter Registration Requirement:

The grantee will comply with Minn. Stat. §201.162 by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

For more information about this RFP, contact:

Maya Beecham **Grants Coordinator Grants Division** Minnesota Office of Higher Education 1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 200 St. Paul, MN 55108 Email: maya.beecham@state.mn.us

Fax: 651-642-0675

Attachments

- Appendix A: Copy of Statute
- Appendix B: Proposal Cover Sheet
- Appendix C: Program Abstract
- Appendix D: Budget
- Appendix E: Affirmative Action Certification Page



APPENDIX A COPY OF STATUTE



LAWS of MINNESOTA: 2019 Minnesota Statutes

Chapter 136A, Section 136A.1788 Student Loan Debt Counseling

[136A.1788] STUDENT LOAN DEBT COUNSELING

Subdivision 1.**Grant.** A program is established under the Office of Higher Education to provide a grant to a Minnesota-based nonprofit qualified debt counseling organization to provide individual student loan debt repayment counseling to borrowers who are Minnesota residents concerning loans obtained to attend a postsecondary institution. The number of individuals receiving counseling may be limited to those capable of being served with available appropriations for that purpose. A goal of the counseling program is to provide two counseling sessions to at least 75 percent of borrowers receiving counseling.

The purpose of the counseling is to assist borrowers to:

- (1) understand their loan and repayment options;
- (2) manage loan repayment; and
- (3) develop a workable budget based on the borrower's full financial situation regarding income, expenses, and other debt.

Subd. 2. Qualified debt counseling organization.

A qualified debt counseling organization is an organization that:

- (1) has experience in providing individualized student loan counseling;
- (2) employs certified financial counselors; and
- (3) is based in Minnesota and has offices at multiple rural and metropolitan area locations in the state to provide in-person counseling.

Subd. 3. Grant application and award.

- (a) Applications for a grant shall be on a form created by the commissioner and on a schedule set by the commissioner. Among other provisions, the application must include a description of:
 - (1) the characteristics of borrowers to be served;
 - (2) the services to be provided and a timeline for implementation of the services;
 - (3) how the services provided will help borrowers manage loan repayment;
 - (4) specific program outcome goals and performance measures for each goal; and
- (5) how the services will be evaluated to determine whether the program goals were met.
- (b) The commissioner shall select one grant recipient for a two-year award every two years. A grant may be renewed biennially.



Subd. 4. Program evaluation.

- (a) The grant recipient must submit a report to the commissioner by January 15 of the second year of the grant award. The report must evaluate and measure the extent to which program outcome goals have been met.
- (b) The grant recipient must collect, analyze, and report on participation and outcome data that enable the office to verify the outcomes.
- (c) The evaluation must include information on the number of borrowers served with on-time student loan payments, the number who brought their loans into good standing, the number of student loan defaults, the number who developed a monthly budget plan, and other information required by the commissioner. Recipients of the counseling must be surveyed on their opinions about the usefulness of the counseling and the survey results must be included in the report.

Subd. 5. Report to legislature.

By February 1 of the second year of each grant award, the commissioner must submit a report to the committees in the legislature with jurisdiction over higher education finance regarding grant program outcomes.



APPENDIX B PROPOSAL COVER SHEET



OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT LOAN DEBT COUNSELING PROGRAM PROPOSAL COVER SHEET FISCAL YEAR 2020

Applicant Title	
Address	
Program Director/Contact	
Telephone Number () Email Address	
Have you received an Office of Higher E	Education grant within the last 10 years?YESNO
Proposal Funding	
Requested Funds for FY 2020	\$
Requested Funds for FY 2021	\$
Total Costs	\$



ORGANIZATION'S AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE INFORMATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all data in this proposal are true and correct. The document has been duly authorized by the governing body of the applicant, and the applicant will comply with program implementation and program reporting requirements if the grant is awarded.

Organization's Authorized Rep	presentative for Approving Proposal Submission (Plea	ase type or print name clearly):
Title:		
Phone: ()	Fax: ()	
Email:	Address:	
Signature of Organization's Au	nthorized Representative:	
		Date



APPENDIX C PROGRAM ABSTRACT



FISCAL YEAR 2020 & FISCAL YEAR 2021 PROGRAM ABSTRACT STUDENT LOAN DEBT COUNSELING GRANT PROGRAM

TARGET POPULATION: ANTICIPATED NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: OBJECTIVES: PROGRAM DELIVERY METHODS: ANTICIPATED OUTCOME: EVALUATION METHODS:
OBJECTIVES: PROGRAM DELIVERY METHODS: ANTICIPATED OUTCOME:
OBJECTIVES: PROGRAM DELIVERY METHODS: ANTICIPATED OUTCOME:
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ANTICIPATED OUTCOME:
EVALUATION METHODS:
EVALUATION METHODS:
EVALUATION METHODS:
(Use of this form is required).



APPENDIX D PROPOSAL BUDGET



Student Loan Debt Counseling Grant Program Budget Fiscal Years (FY) 2020 and 2021

A budget narrative that thoroughly describes each line item and provides justification for the expense must be attached and labeled Budget Narrative.

OR	GANIZATION:			FY 2020	FY 2021
1. PERSONNEL COSTS FOR GRANT ORGANIZATION EMPLOYEES			REQUESTED FUNDS	REQUESTED FUNDS	
Α.	Salaries for Grantee Personnel (Name and program position)	Hourly Rate	Number Of Hours		
		TOT	AL SALARIES		
В.	Fringe Benefits Based on (1.A.) Salaries	s Paid			
			(%)		
	(%)				
	(%)				
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS (Add salaries and fringe benefits)			l fringe benefits)		
2.	PERSONNEL TRAVEL (All travel mus Minnesota)	st be within the Sta	ate of		
A.	Program Director (if applicable)				
В.	Other Staff				
	,	TOTAL PERSON	NEL TRAVEL		



		FY 2020 REQUESTED	FY 2021 REQUESTED
3.	CONSUMABLE SUPPLIES & INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS	FUNDS	FUNDS
Α.			
В.			
C.			
4.	UTILITIES AND COMMUNICATION		
A.			
B.			
C.			
5.	OTHER SERVICES		
A.			
B.			
C.			
6.	OTHER DIRECT COSTS		
A.			
В.			
	7. TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (Sum of items 1-6)		
	8. TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS (5%)		
	9. TOTAL COSTS (Sum of items 7-8)		
	10. TOTAL REQUESTED GRANT FUNDS		

Budget Submission Instructions

On the Proposal Budget – Provide an itemized budget breakdown for each budget category, including requested state funds and the required match.

Direct Costs – for line items 1-6, show the amount requested for each budget category. Indicate the total in line 7.

Indirect Costs – Indirect costs shall not exceed 5 percent.

Attach a budget narrative that **fully explains** how costs for each item were derived.



APPENDIX E AFFIRMATIVE ACTION CERTIFICATION PAGE



STATE OF MINNESOTA AFFIRMATIVE ACTION CERTIFICATE

(For Agency Use Only) Vendor #	
Contract Period: _	

If your response to this solicitation is or could be in excess of \$100,000, complete the information requested below to determine whether you are subject to the Minnesota Human Rights Act (Minnesota Statutes 363A.36) certification requirement, and to provide documentation of compliance if necessary. It is your sole responsibility to provide this information and—if required—to apply for Human Rights certification prior to the due date of the bid or proposal and to obtain Human Rights certification prior to the execution of the contract. The State of Minnesota is under no obligation to delay proceeding with a contract until a company receives Human Rights certification.

con	itract until a company receives Human Rights certification.
Miı	DX A – For companies which have employed more than 40 full-time employees within nnesota on any single working day during the previous 12 months. All other companies ceed to BOX B .
You	nr response will be rejected unless your business: has a current Certificate of Compliance issued by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) -or-
	has submitted an affirmative action plan to the MDHR, which the Department received prior to the date the responses are due.
	eck one of the following statements if you have employed more than 40 full-time employees in the statements are statements if you have employed more than 40 full-time employees in the statements are statements.
	We have a current Certificate of Compliance issued by the MDHR. Proceed to BOX C . Include a copy of your certificate with your response. We do not have a current Certificate of Compliance. However, we submitted an Affirmative Action Plan to the MDHR for approval, which the Department received on (date).
	Proceed to BOX C. We do not have a Certificate of Compliance, nor has the MDHR received an Affirmative Action Plan from our company. We acknowledge that our response will be rejected. Proceed to BOX C. Contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights for assistance. (See below for contact information.)
Aff rece	ase note: Certificates of Compliance must be issued by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. irmative Action Plans approved by the Federal government, a county, or a municipality must still be eived, reviewed, and approved by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights before a certificate can ssued.

Form continues on next page



BOX B – For those companies not described in BOX A

Check below.

□ We have not employed more than 40 full-time employees on any single working day in Minnesota within the previous 12 months. **Proceed to BOX C**.

BOX C – For all companies

By signing this statement, you certify that the information provided is accurate and that you are authorized to sign on behalf of the responder. You also certify that you are in compliance with federal affirmative action requirements that may apply to your company. (These requirements are generally triggered only by participating as a prime or subcontractor on federal projects or contracts. Contractors are alerted to these requirements by the federal government.)

Name of Company:	Date:
Authorized Signature:	Telephone number:
Printer Name:	Title:
	

For assistance with this form, contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights, Compliance

The Freeman Building 625 Robert Street North Saint Paul, MN 55155 Phone: (651) 296-5663

Toll Free Phone: (800) 657-3704

Fax: (651) 296-9042 TTY: (651) 296-1283

compliance.mdhr@state.mn.us www.humanrights.state.mn.us