

State Financial Aid Manual

Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Pilot Program

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About the Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding up to \$210 million annually in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

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Contents

Introduction	2
Program Objective	2
Definitions	2
Award Year	2
Academic Year	2
Complete Application	2
Financial Need	3
Full-Time	3
Part-Time	3
Priority Application Deadline	3
Eligibility	3
Eligible Institutions	3
Student Eligibility Requirements	4
Application Process	4
Priority Application Deadline	5
Award Selection	5
Award Amount Guidelines	6
Award Process and Calculation	6
All Grants and Scholarships	7
Awards for Summer Term	8
Notification of Awards	8
Award Amount Adjustments	8
Disbursement Process	8
Application Summaries	8
Payment Rosters to Institutions	8
Disbursement of Funds	8
Institutional Refund Process	9
State Audit Requirements	10
Records Available for Auditors	10
Documentation of Student Eligibility	10
Appendices	11
Appendix A: Refund Return Form	11

Introduction

This manual is written for Office of Higher Education (hereafter referred to as OHE) staff and college or university (hereafter referred to as institutional) staff for use in administering the Aspiring Teachers of Color (ATC) program. This manual is updated on a regular basis and subject to all subsequent changes in both federal and Minnesota state laws and regulations governing this program. Institutions are required to read all e-mail and written correspondence from OHE to keep informed of any changes in policy or guidance. Changes announced during the interim have the full force and effect of the State Financial Aid Manual.

Program Objective

Minnesota Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Pilot Program provides postsecondary financial assistance to eligible undergraduate and graduate students who are preparing to become teachers, have demonstrated financial need, and belongs to a racial or ethnic groups underrepresented in the state's teacher workforce.

Definitions

Award Year

An award year is the period of time between July 1 and June 30. It can also be referred to as the state fiscal year.

Academic Year

An academic year is the period of time in which a full-time student is expected to complete the equivalent of at least two semesters, two trimesters or three quarters; or at least 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours; or at least 900 clock hours. See the '[Common Definitions](https://ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/FAManual/CommonDefinitions.pdf)' (ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/FAManual/CommonDefinitions.pdf) chapter of this manual for more details.

Complete Application

Complete applications must include the following:

1. Student Section including all the required information that is signed and dated;
2. Completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Minnesota Dream Act application; and

3. College or University Section completed by an authorized representative at the college or university that includes all of the required information.

Financial Need

For the purposes of this program, financial need means a student's remaining need after the student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and the amount of all grant, scholarship, or other non-loan funding received is subtracted from the student's federal Title IV Cost of Attendance.

- Undergraduate students: Full time is 15 or more credits per term
- Graduate students: Full time is six graduate credits or more per term

Full-Time

For the purposes of this program, full-time study means the following:

Undergraduate Students: enrolled in a minimum of 15 or more credits per term

Graduate Students: enrolled in a minimum of 6 graduate credits or the equivalent credits per term

Part-Time

For the purposes of this program, part-time study means the following:

Undergraduate Students: enrolled in less than 15 per term

Graduate Students: enrolled in less than 6 graduate credits or the equivalent credits per term

Priority Application Deadline

Complete applications received on or before this date are processed and awarded as described in the 'Award Selection' section of this chapter. The date is annually established by OHE.

Eligibility

Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship eligibility has both institutional and student eligibility requirements.

Eligible Institutions

To be eligible, a postsecondary institution must:

- a. Offer an eligible Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (MN PELSB) approved teacher preparation program; or

- b. Offer a two-year program specifically designed to prepare early childhood educators.

Student Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, the student must:

- Be enrolled at an eligible institution located in Minnesota in a:
 - PELSB-approved teacher preparation program seeking initial licensure; or
 - Two-year program designed specifically to prepare early childhood educators
- Belong to a racial or ethnic group underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce
- Meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as defined in the '[Common Definitions](https://ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/FAManual/CommonDefinitions.pdf)' (ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/FAManual/CommonDefinitions.pdf) chapter of this manual
- Demonstrate financial need

Service expectation. An applicant who receives a scholarship under this section is expected to serve as a full-time teacher in Minnesota after completing the program for which the scholarship was awarded.

Application Process

A complete application must be on file in order for student to be eligible to receive funds.

Complete application includes:

- Completed student section of the ATC Application.
 - Paper/PDF application
 - Must be signed by student.
 - No typed student signatures are accepted.
 - Faxed or scanned images of applications with physical student signatures are accepted.
 - Online application
 - All required fields are completed.
 - Signature is typed.
- Completed institution section of the ATC Application.
 - Paper/PDF application and online application
 - All required fields are completed.
 - Signed by an authorized representative of the institution.

Institutions **should not** submit an institution section if a student has not completed the financial aid process at their institution. This includes students who have not yet submitted a FAFSA/MN Dream Act Application or have outstanding verification or conflicting information documentation to submit.

Institutions **should** submit an institution section if a student has completed all of the necessary steps at the institution to receive financial aid regardless of whether or not the college has established tuition and fees for the upcoming year, has the ability to provide a complete and final institution form, or can issue an award letter.

Some estimated information may be submitted on initial institution sections if the institution is unable to obtain the actual information. For example, if the institution has not established tuition and fees or Cost of Attendance for the upcoming year, an estimated amount can be used but must be updated with accurate information as soon as possible to ensure awards are calculated accurately for eligible students.

Institutions are required to review and update the institution section for awarded students before approving the disbursement, at the time of disbursement, and after disbursement to ensure students continue to demonstrate financial need. Institutions can contact OHE directly to make updates to the institutional section or submit an updated institution section of the application to OHE.

Complete Application Date is the date all documentation needed for a complete application has been received by OHE.

Students who submit complete applications but who do not meet one or more eligibility requirement are notified by OHE.

Incomplete applications are not processed.

Priority Application Deadline

The Priority Application Deadline is annually established by OHE. Complete Applications received on or before the Priority Application Deadline are considered for awards as described in the 'Award Selection' section of this chapter.

Applications are accepted after the Priority Application Deadline but students are much less likely to be awarded depending on the availability of funds.

Award Selection

If there are insufficient funds to make full awards to all eligible applicants with complete applications received by the priority application deadline, awards are prioritized using a combination of the student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and student application completion date.

- Eligible applicants with the lowest EFC are awarded first

- Eligible applicants with identical EFCs are prioritized by student application completion date

Eligible applicants with complete applications received by the priority application deadline who are not awarded are placed on a waiting list by order of student application completion date.

Complete applications from eligible applicants received after the priority application deadline are placed on the waiting list by order of application completion date.

Award Amount Guidelines

Each term the student is eligible for an award, the **term financial need** from the award calculation is the **term award amount** based on the following guidelines:

Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled full-time in each term may receive a **maximum award amount** of \$10,000 per [academic year](#).

Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled full-time in only one term during the [academic year](#) may receive a **maximum award amount** of \$5,000.

The minimum award amount for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled full-time is \$1,000.

Awards for undergraduate and graduate students enrolled [part-time](#) are prorated on a per-credit basis.

Undergraduate and graduate students may receive a scholarship award in more than one academic year but may receive a total of no more than \$25,000 in scholarship awards from the program.

Award Process and Calculation

Award amounts are based on the student's financial need using the following calculation:

<p>Student's Total Cost of Attendance Used for Federal Financial Aid Programs for the year or term in which the student is applying for the grant.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Expected Family Contribution (from FAFSA/MN Dream Act Application)- Federal Pell Grant- Federal SEOG Grant- Minnesota State Grant- All other grants or scholarships <p>= Aspiring Teachers of Color Scholarship Award Amount</p> <p>(Based on Award Amount Guidelines)</p>

Student’s total Cost of Attendance is the federal Title IV Cost of Attendance which is used for federal financial aid programs and includes tuition, fees, books, supplies, transportation, room and board and miscellaneous expenses.

Federal or Minnesota work study funds should not be included in the calculation unless institution has first consulted with OHE and OHE has indicated it can be included.

Federal, state, or private student loans are excluded from the calculation.

All Grants and Scholarships

In general, grants and scholarships included in the Award Calculation are funds disbursed to the student that do not have to be repaid.

The following chart provides examples of aid that should be included and excluded in the Award Calculation.

Grants and Scholarships <u>Included</u> in the Award Calculation	Other Aid <u>Excluded</u> in the Award Calculation
Deaf and/or blind waivers Education Vouchers for Former Youth in Care Fostering Independence Grant ID Grant Institutional Scholarships Institutional Emergency Grant Funds Minnesota GI Bill Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program Minnesota Post-Secondary Child Care Grant Minnesota State Grant Minnesota Student Teacher Grants Minnesota Teacher Candidate Grant Pell Grant Privately Funded Scholarships SEOG Grant TEACH Grant Tribal Scholarships Tuition Waivers Vocational Rehabilitation Services Funds (DRS) WIOA Funds	ARP/CRRSAA/HERF funding CCAMPIS Federal Veterans Education Benefits Loans of Any Type Student payments on their account Third Party Payments (Including Dual-Training Grant) Work Study Awards

OHE strongly recommends that institutions consider formally adjusting/increasing a student’s Cost of Attendance (COA) when students have additional allowable budget expenses such as childcare and emergency costs.

Awards for Summer Term

ATC may be awarded in a summer term within the Award Amount Guidelines. For example, a full-time undergraduate or graduate student awarded \$10,000 for the academic year (fall and spring semesters) is not eligible for any additional scholarship funds in a subsequent summer term within the award year.

Notification of Awards

Students should be notified of their ATCS award through the typical awarding process conducted at each institution. Institutions may choose to notify students of estimated ATCS amounts prior to the semester starting and then award actual amounts later in the semester. Institutions may also choose to wait and notify students of the actual awards after enrollment, grants, and scholarships have been finalized and applied for the term.

Award Amount Adjustments

Award amounts are adjusted for various reasons. Institutions are responsible for informing students about all award adjustments.

Disbursement Process

Application Summaries

OHE will regularly send an email to institutions with application summaries of students who have applied and listed that they are attending the institution. The purpose of the application summaries is to notify institutions which students have applied and also to collect any missing information that must be provided by the institution.

OHE will review all eligible applications and make awards.

Payment Rosters to Institutions

OHE will regularly send an email to institutions with an award/payment roster. Institutions must review for accuracy and update, if needed, the current institutional form for each student on the award roster before the payment date listed on the award roster. This is to ensure that the student's award amount is accurate before funds are disbursed. Institutions must notify OHE if a student is ineligible before the payment date listed on the award roster. For students who are not eligible, institution must indicate reason for ineligibility.

Disbursement of Funds

Disbursements are made directly to the eligible postsecondary institution via EFT.

Institution may not make a payment to a student for a payment period or term until the student has registered for classes during that payment period or term.

Institution is liable for all funds that are disbursed to a registered student prior to the start of the enrollment period if that student fails to begin the enrollment period.

Disbursements must be based on the student's status as of the date of disbursement or the add/drop date as stated in the institutions' catalog whichever is later.

All related disbursement guidelines used for the State Grant program apply to ATC including determination of disbursement date, acceptable methods of disbursement, student authorization for EFT transactions, student account balance requirements and other applicable guidelines described in the 'Disbursement Process' section of the State Grant chapter in the Financial Aid Manual.

Institutional Refund Process

If a recipient fails to enroll or meet a program eligibility requirement, the entire grant must be returned to OHE within 30 days of the receipt of funds at the institution or when the recipient's ineligibility is determined whichever is later.

Institutions are required to review and make any necessary updates to the Institution Section throughout the award year for all recipients and within 30 days of any changes and make any necessary refunds. Please refer to the guidance below and ensure it is incorporated into the administration of this program at your institution.

If a recipient fully withdraws:

- **Before** the disbursement and **before** the end of the drop/add period, then the entire scholarship must be returned to the office;
- **After** the disbursement but **before** the end of the drop/add period, then the entire scholarship must be returned to the Office;
- **After** the disbursement and **after** the end of the drop/add period, the Office of Higher Education refund calculation must be used to determine the refund to be returned to the state.

Refunds must be returned with written documentation that, at a minimum, indicates the individual student for which the refund is being made, the amount of the refund, the aid year and term for which the refund should be applied and the reason for refund.

Institutions may choose to use the Refund Return Form provided by OHE (see Appendix A).

Refunded money is available for awards to other eligible applicants on waiting list.

State Audit Requirements

Records Available for Auditors

State auditors will periodically visit each participating institution to perform an audit.

The institution also has the option of hiring an outside auditing firm to conduct its state audits in conjunction with its audits of federal aid programs. (See 'Audits' under the Common Definitions chapter of the Financial Aid Manual for further information.)

Each participating institution must establish a procedure by which an audit can be conducted by going to no more than three administrative offices within the institution. In most cases, these will be the financial aid office, the business office and the registrar's office, but that choice is made by the institution.

Each institution must maintain and make available to auditors individual student financial aid files for ATC recipients.

Historical records and documentation must be kept on file for three years after the last day of the fiscal year or until all audit exceptions for the period are resolved.

Documentation of Student Eligibility

The postsecondary institution must have documentation showing that the student met all eligibility requirements as described in the 'Student Eligibility' section in this chapter.

Exception: documentation of the student's identification as belonging to a racial or ethnic group underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce is provided on the student form and maintained by OHE.

Appendices

Appendix A: Refund Return Form

MN Office of Higher Education Refund Return Form For Returning End of Year Balances or Post-Closure Refunds

Returning End of Year Balance

(for use with State Grant, Occupational Grant, State Work Study, Postsecondary Child Care Grant and MN GI Bill programs)

Program Name	Aid Year	Amount of Refund
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$
		\$

Returning Individual Student Refund(s)*

(for use with Indian Scholarship, State Grant, State Work Study, Postsecondary Child Care Grant and MN GI Bill programs)

Student's Name	SSN	Program	Amount	Term	Aid Year	Reason *	If Reason is PW or CH, please indicate enrollment level at: Time of Disbursement/ Current. If OT, provide explanation.
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				
	XXX-XX-		\$				

Reason Codes:
 NE = not enrolled for term/withdrawal before disbursement
 WI = total withdrawal from school after disbursement
 PW = withdrew from class but still enrolled
 CH = changed enrollment level, refunding full difference in awards
 OT = other (provide explanation above)

Return refund with form to:
**Minnesota Office of Higher Education
 Administrative Services Division
 PO Box 64449
 St. Paul, MN 55164-0449**

Person Returning Funds:		Phone Number:
Name of College:	School Code:	Date Completed:

*Schools should only return individual student refunds for State Grant, Occupational Grant, State Work Study, Postsecondary Child Care Grant and MN GI Bill programs if they occur after the school has closed out program activity for the aid year.