OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

State Financial Aid Manual

Student Teacher Grants

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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.

Contents

Introduction

This manual is written for Office of Higher Education staff for use in administering the Student Teacher Grants which consists of the Student Teachers in Shortage Areas Grant (STSA) and Underrepresented Student Teacher Grant (USTG) Programs. It is subject to all subsequent changes in both federal and Minnesota state laws and regulations governing this program. This manual is updated on a regular basis. Institutions are required to read all e-mail and written correspondence from the Office of Higher Education (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

To provide postsecondary financial assistance to eligible students enrolled in Minnesota teacher preparation programs during one term in which the student is completing a required 12-week or more student teaching experience. The programs have two goals. One, to encourage individuals, particularly those who belong to a racial or ethnic group underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce, to become teachers. Two, to encourage students to teach in Minnesota in designated license shortage areas or in Minnesota's rural school districts.

Definitions

Complete Application

Complete applications must include the following:

- Student Section including all the required information that is signed and dated;
- Completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Minnesota Dream Act application; and
- College or University Section completed by an authorized representative at the college or university you attend that includes all of the required information.

Unmet Need

Having remaining need after the student's term Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and the amount of all grant, scholarship, or other non-loan funding received for the term is subtracted from the student's term federal Title IV Cost of Attendance.

Financial Need

Selection priority based on a combination of factors including, but not limited to, Expected Family Contribution, Family Income (from the FAFSA or MN Dream Act Application), and unmet need.

Priority Application Deadline

The date the application is set as a cut-off date for applications to be processed. Applications will still be accepted after this date, but they may not receive an award depending on funding available.

Shortage Area

License shortage area means a licensure area that is identified by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PESLB) in coordination with the commissioner using data collected for the teacher supply and demand report under MN Statute 122A.091, subdivision 5, provided that only licensure areas within the following fields may be identified as a license shortage area:

- English as a second language;
- Early childhood;
- Special education;
- Career and technical education;
- Science, technology, engineering, arts, and math, and
- World languages

Rural school district

Rural school district means a school district with fewer than 30 resident pupil units under Section 126C.05, subdivision 6, per square mile.

Eligibility

Postsecondary Institutions
To be eligible, a postsecondary institution must:

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

Student Eligibility
To be eligible, a student must:

- Be enrolled in a Minnesota teacher preparation program approved by the MN PELSB that requires at least 12 weeks of student teaching;
- Students may have already obtained an initial teaching license in another field but must still be completing a 12 week or longer student teaching experience and be enrolled in a program leading to a license in a new field.
- Must be completing an eligible student teaching experience in the term applying to receive grant.
- Student teaching experience location can be in another state or in a private or non-profit childcare/early childhood center as long as it is approved by the institution.
- Meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as defined by the institution;
- Not be in default on a federal or state student loan;
- Have not received a grant from this program in a previous term;
- Demonstrate financial need; and

Meet one or more of the following requirements:

- Intend to teach in a designated Rural School District in Minnesota.
- Intend to teach in an identified license shortage area.

- Belong to a racial or ethnic group underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce.

Any applicant who belongs to a racial or ethnic group other than White Non-Hispanic, as identified on the application, is considered as belonging to a racial or ethnic group underrepresented in the Minnesota teacher workforce.

Application and Awarding

Complete Application

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

A complete application includes:

- Completed student portion of the STG Application. It is preferred to have applications submitted through the online application form, however; PDF applications are available upon request to the OHE program administrator.
    - PDF applications must be signed by student.
    - Typed signatures only accepted on the online application form.
    - Faxed or scanned images of PDF applications with physical student signatures are accepted.
- Completed institution portion of the STG Application.
    - Signed by an authorized representative of the institution.
    - Institutions should not submit an institution form 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 form 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 forms 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 form 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 the Office directly to make updates to the institutional form information or submit an updated institutional section of the application to the Office.

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

Students who submit complete applications but who do not meet one or more eligibility requirement are notified by the Office of Higher Education.

Institutions are regularly sent an email with a report of all applications received listing the institution. The report includes the application information, application complete date (if complete), eligibility status, and award status of each application.

Priority Application Deadlines

Priority application deadlines are set for each term as a cutoff date for the processing of applications. Applications received by the priority deadline are considered on-time.

Applications will still be accepted after the priority dates but students are much less likely to be awarded depending on the availability of funds.

Amount of Available Funds

The amount of available funds for the fiscal year is separately allocated by term. One-third to fall terms and two-thirds to spring/summer terms.

Selection Process

Complete applications from eligible students are divided by term (Fall or Spring/Summer) and then into one of the Student Teacher Grant programs:

- Underrepresented Student Teacher Grant Program
- Student Teachers in Shortage Areas Grant Program

All complete and eligible applications received by the deadline will be considered for an award. If there are insufficient funds for all eligible applicants, all eligible applications will be prioritized based on the following:

- Those applications with the highest financial need will be awarded first.
- Then based on which program the student qualifies for, a different factor is applied to prioritize applications.
    - STSA: whether or not the applicant intends to teach in both a rural school district and a license shortage area.
    - USTG: ensuring the statewide distribution of funds.

Eligible applicants not awarded are then placed on a waiting list.

Award Process

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

> Student's Total Cost of Attendance Used for Federal Financial Aid Programs for the term in which the student is applying for the grant.
>
> - Expected Family Contribution (from FAFSA/MN Dream Act Application)
>
> - Federal Pell Grant
>
> - Federal SEOG Grant
>
> - Minnesota State Grant
>
> - All other grants or scholarships
>
> = Teacher Candidate Grant Award Amount
>
>   (Based on Award Amount Guidelines)

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.

Gift aid included in the calculation includes, but is not limited to:

- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal SEOG Grant
- Federal TEACH Grant
- Minnesota State Grant
- Minnesota Postsecondary Child Care Grant
- Minnesota GI Bill
- Tribal Scholarships
- Institutional Scholarships or Grants
- All other scholarships or grants
- Tuition waivers

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.

Award Amount Guidelines

The maximum award amount is $7,500. OHE may reduce award amounts based on the amount of available funding. The award is for one term only and must be awarded for a term in which student is completing an eligible student teaching experience. Institutions should not spread funds over more than one term even if student teaching experience is over more than one term.

Students selected for an award will be notified by OHE by the following dates:

- Fall awards: recipients will be notified by August 15
- Spring awards: recipients will be notified by December 1
- Summer awards: recipients will be notified by May 1

These deadlines do not apply in cases where grants are awarded to applicants who applied after the application deadlines and funds remained after the initial round of grants were awarded.

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 and funds are transferred 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.

The institution must reimburse program funds disbursed to the student prior to the start of the enrollment period if the institution cannot document that the student began the eligible student teaching experience.

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 the Student Teacher Grant 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 Form throughout the award year for all recipients and within 30 days of any changes and make any necessary refunds or contact OHE to determine if funds from one term can be transferred to another term or if a refund is necessary.

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.

Please use one refund form per grant program.

Institutions may choose to use the Refund Return Form provided by OHE.

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 USTG and STSA 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.

Student Eligibility

The postsecondary institution must have written 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.