REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

COLLEGE ACCESS CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

December 3, 2010

Proposal Deadline
January 3, 2010
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Background
The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for partnership grants allocated under the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Program for Calendar Year 2011. The CACG Program is a federally funded formula grant that is designed to foster partnerships among Federal, State and local government entities and philanthropic organizations to significantly increase the number of underrepresented students who enter and remain in postsecondary education. The US Department of Education provides CACG grants to States to meet the needs of underrepresented students and families, with priority to those living at or below poverty, as authorized under Section 781 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended; 20 USC 1141.

The DHE will administer CACG funds by awarding competitive partnership grants to eligible not-for-profit organizations, including public and private 2-year and 4-year institutions of higher education. Partnership grants must be used to meet the goals and objectives established for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as awarded under the CACG and described in this RFP, to promote student access to and success in higher education.

U.S. Department of Education College Access Challenge Grant Program Purpose and Priorities
The purpose of the CACG program is to significantly increase the number of underrepresented students who enter and remain in postsecondary education. Partnership grants, under this RFP, will be awarded to organizations and institutions with demonstrated ability to provide services and activities authorized under the grant to help the Commonwealth of Massachusetts achieve established goals and objectives. Identified services that Massachusetts is required to provide under this grant are:

Authorized Activities/Services:
1) Provide information to students and families on postsecondary education benefits, opportunities, planning and career preparation;

2) Provide information on financing options, including activities that promote financial literacy and debt management among students and families;

3) Conduct outreach activities for students who may be at risk of not enrolling in or completing college;

4) Assist students in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);

5) Assist students and parents in utilizing the Commonwealth’s one stop college and career web portal, Your Plan for College.¹

¹ https://www.yourplanforcollege.org/
6) Implement professional development for guidance counselors at middle and secondary schools, and financial aid administrators and college admissions counselors at institutions of higher education, to improve such individuals’ capacity to assist students and parents with:

   a) Understanding:
      - Entrance requirements and process for admission to institutions of higher education, and
      - State eligibility requirements for Academic Competitiveness Grants or National SMART Grants;

   b) Applying to institutions of higher education, applying for financial assistance and scholarships;

   c) Activities that increase students’ ability to successfully complete the coursework required for a postsecondary degree (including tutoring and mentoring); and

   d) Activities to improve secondary school students’ preparedness for postsecondary entrance examinations.

6) Educational loans information, including repayment of student loans, student loan cancellation, or lowering of interest rates, and related debt management information.

CACG funding will be used to increase the college-going and completion rates for Massachusetts residents. With specific focus on disadvantaged and under-represented students, the CACG will concentrate efforts on four broad areas: (1) increasing the academic preparation of students so that they are prepared to enter and succeed in the college of their choice; (2) increasing college access by enhancing students’ and families’ knowledge of college options and financial aid; (3) increasing the persistence of students in college by providing them with education and support at key transition points, particularly prior to college entry and between the first and second years of college; and (4) increasing student and family capacity to manage education debt responsibility and successfully upon college graduation. The program supports partnerships to develop innovative initiatives that help the Department of Higher Education achieve success in meeting the goals of the CACG program.

Massachusetts College Access Challenge Grant Program
Goals and Objectives, Activities and Services, and Anticipated Outcomes Requirements

The Massachusetts College Access Challenge Grant Program will support regional partnerships with the aim of reaching students in every part of the state. Partnership grants will be awarded for services in six regions. The six regions to be served by Partnership Grants are:

- Berkshire County
- Central Massachusetts
- Greater Boston
- Northeast Region
- Pioneer Valley
- Southeastern Massachusetts
Goals and objectives identified for Partnership Grants funded under the College Access Challenge Grant Program are:

A. Increase student academic preparation for college and understanding of requirements for college admission

B. Increase the number of minority and low-income students who enter and succeed in college

C. Increase the number of minority and low-income students who apply for and receive financial aid (for which they are eligible)

D. Increase parental and family knowledge of the college application and financial aid process

E. Increase minority and low-income student and family knowledge of financing options for higher education and debt management

F. Increase adult learner knowledge of college and careers

CACG funds must be used to provide activities and services that support college access and retention of low-income and underrepresented students. Partners may provide a variety of activities, but **must include the following list of services:**

1. Provide integrated workshops, one-on-one advising, and mentoring activities to students.

2. Provide multiple opportunities to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) during specific or designated times, such as College Goal Sunday, as identified in the Partnership Agreement.

3. Provide a local and/or regional Parent Academies focused on college readiness, admissions and financial aid during times that will facilitate in maximum parental participation. Parent Academies must orient parents and families to the Commonwealth’s one stop college and career readiness portal, *Your Plan for College*.

4. Provide a series of community level debt management workshops for students and families, via a mandatory collaborative with a DHE designated vendor.

5. Provide “first-year experience” seminars and/or pre-college summer bridge programs for students entering the initial year of college, as specified in the Partnership Agreement.
6. Provide strategic workshops and related activities to facilitate adult learner knowledge of college and careers

The Department of Higher Education has developed an established set of anticipated outcomes related to the goals and objectives identified as a result of activities and services provided under each Partnership Grant. Partnership services must be targeted to facilitate the following lists of anticipated outcomes:

1. Improved student academic readiness and motivation for college
2. Increase in first to second year persistence in student enrollment due to mentoring, tutoring and related support services
3. Increase in the number of students and families completing the FAFSA, meeting priority deadlines for institutional and state financial aid
4. An increase and persistence in student enrollment due to access to sufficient resources to pay for college
5. An increased percentage of parents with a greater understanding and awareness of college opportunities, including available financing options
6. Parents/families and students will demonstrate knowledge of key factors of debt management and an ability to apply this knowledge to their personal circumstances, including repayment of educational loans
7. An increase in the number of students and parents who have been oriented to and utilize Your Plan for College.

Funding Targets and Timetable
The DHE currently has approximately $1.2 million available to support new CACG Grant projects via a competitive review process. DHE expects to fund up to six partnership grants ranging up to a maximum of $250,000 for the duration of this grant cycle. Partnership grants may be renewed for subsequent years, pending US Department of Education ongoing funding. The project cycle for this initial grant will be January 10 through September 30, 2011.

The announcement of awards will be made in January 7, 2010. Projects will commence upon approval of the Interagency Service Agreement (for awards to public colleges and universities) or the Standard Contract (for awards to independent colleges and universities and nonprofit organizations).

Upon receipt of an award, the designated partner becomes a sub-recipient of federal assistance. The partner, therefore, must retain all program and financial records related to this
grant for a minimum of five years. The sub-recipient also is required to provide records and financial statements as well as access to those records and statements such that DHE can assure that an audit of the sub-recipient meets the requirements of the Office of Management and Budget. Disbursement of funds is contingent upon an approved Interagency Service Agreement or Standard Contract.

### College Access Challenge Grant Program Timetable

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Request for Proposals (RFP) Release</td>
<td>December 3, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal Due Date</td>
<td>January 3, 2010, 5:00pm</td>
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<td>Announcement of Awards</td>
<td>January 7, 2011</td>
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<td>Commencement of Program Activities</td>
<td>January 10, 2011</td>
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<td>Completion of Program Activities</td>
<td>September 30, 2011</td>
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### Mandatory Partnership Requirements

Partners seeking funding under the CACGP must meet the following criteria to be eligible to receive grants under this program:

- Chartered prior to January 1, 2005
- A minimum of three years experience working with low-income students and families
- Proven success in implementing activities and services related to increasing access to higher education
- Knowledge, familiarity and experience in providing service within one or more of the geographic regions for which service is required
- Proven ability and experience in working collaboratively with other agencies in providing college access activities and services to students and families, specifically those who are low-income and under-represented populations
- Evidence of financial ability to match funds awarded under the terms of CACGP
COLLEGE ACCESS CHALLENGER GRANT PROGRAM
PROPOSAL APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- Project Abstract
- Project Narrative
- Expected Impact and Project Evaluation
- Proposed Budget
- Budget Narrative
- Letters of Agreement
- Resumes for Personnel
- Additional Material (if necessary)

All applications for funding must be submitted electronically via email by the published deadline. Applications must include the following information:

- **Project Abstract**
  Write a one page abstract (approximately 300 words) that describes the following: (a) organization and region (or regions) proposed to serve, (b) principal objectives, and (c) proposed project activities and services.

- **Project Narrative** – provide a detailed description of the proposed project which addresses the following:
  1. statement of the need for the project;
  2. overview of the project;
  3. project objectives, stated in measurable terms with outcomes;
  4. major project activities/services with specific details showing how each is designed to meet the stated CACG program goals and objectives;
  5. a timetable indicating the implementation and completion dates of all proposed activities and related services;
6. A description of previous experience in implementing successful college access services and related activities for the target population; include unduplicated number of individuals/entities served.

7. A description of the target population (e.g., ethnicity, gender, grade levels, teacher/pre-service teacher/administrator/other) and target school districts or schools; include projected number of individuals/entities to be served.

8. Implementation plan - describe how the project director will make annual performance information available to all project team members and other interested local stakeholders.

The Project Narrative should not exceed 5 double-spaced pages. This is the maximum length permitted; shorter, more concise narratives are encouraged.

- **Expected Impact and Project Evaluation**
  The proposal should address a local evaluation plan which should include a description of how this project will affect students and/or parent knowledge of higher education and college process, as well as the impact it will have on student access. Furthermore, it should describe how the project will be evaluated to determine whether or not the stated goals and objectives are met.

  The proposal should describe any data collection and overall summative evaluation plan. Summative evaluation should address primary outcomes related to the stated outcomes identified by the Department of Higher Education for this grant, based on the proposed project.

- **Budget Narrative**
  Provide a detailed Budget Narrative that includes calculations and breakdowns of budget amounts, description of budget items and describes any materials or software. If any contracted services are included, provide detailed explanation of such. Furthermore, describe all matched funding sources and amounts here. Note: For multi-year projects, it is permitted to have budgets that vary year-to-year; for example, some projects might focus on a single content area (math or writing) in the first year and plan to expand to both content areas in subsequent years or projects may simply add more activities in subsequent years. In any case, if the project changes year-to-year, include a separate budget discussion for each year.

- **Letters of Agreement** – Provide letters of agreement or endorsement from any entity directly involved in or expected to benefit from the activities and services provided under this grant, such as schools or school districts, institutions of higher education, or any other agency collaborating as a partner under this proposed project that will assist in the provision of services to promote student access and success in higher education.
• **Resumes for Personnel** – Attach an abbreviated resume (no more than two pages each) of project staff, to include project manager and other essential staff providing direct services to students and parents under this grant.

• **Additional Material** – Use this section to attach any material that is relevant to this proposal and which does not fit any of the above categories. Limit additional material to three double-spaced pages.

**Submission Instructions**

Email one copy of the application via email to Aundrea Kelley, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Deputy Commissioner for P-16 Policy and Collaborative Initiatives, at akelley@bhe.mass.edu.