

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:** Fiscal Affairs and Administrative Policy    **NO.:** FAAP 07-22  
**COMMITTEE DATE:** February 7, 2007  
**BOARD DATE:** February 15, 2007

---

**MASSACHUSETTS EDUCATIONAL REWARDS GRANT PROGRAM**

**MOVED:**            The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the attached Guidelines for the Massachusetts Educational Rewards Grant Program.

**Authority:**            MGL Chapter 29 Section 2SSS  
                              C. 123 of the Acts of 2006

**Contact:**             Dr. Clantha McCurdy, Vice Chancellor

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
EDUCATIONAL REWARDS GRANT PROGRAM FUND**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Educational Rewards Grant Program Fund is to offer financial aid support to dislocated or incumbent workers with very low income to enable them to receive the education they need to transition into jobs in targeted high-demand occupations. The grant program emanates from the economic stimulus bill that is contained in Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2006 (Ch. 29 Sect. 2SSS of the M.G.L.). Such a bill is relative to the economic investments in the Commonwealth to promote job creation, economic growth, competitiveness and overall stability in the Massachusetts economy. This need-based grant program is to serve as a last resort after all other federal and state financial aid sources have been exhausted in meeting postsecondary education enrollment costs. The Educational Rewards Grant Program also allows up to 30 percent of the award amount to be used by the student toward living expenses.

**DEFINITIONS:**

***ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION***

An eligible institution is defined as a public, private, independent, for-profit or non-profit, or vocational technical institution authorized to offer post-secondary certificate or undergraduate degrees. The institution must be accredited and eligible to participate in both Federal Title IV and Massachusetts State financial aid programs.

***ELIGIBLE PROGRAM***

A program is eligible if it is an accredited post-secondary certificate or vocational technology program or an associate or bachelor degree program in high-demand occupation fields.

The Board of Higher Education and the Department of Workforce Development, in consultation with the Massachusetts Workforce Board Association, State Workforce Investment Board, Reach Higher Initiative, and the Workforce Accountability Task Force, shall determine the eligible high demand occupations.

***ELIGIBLE STUDENT***

Student applicants enrolled in an eligible program must meet the following criteria to be considered for an award under this grant program:

- a) Shall be a dislocated worker or an individual whose income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level or meet other criteria as established by the Department of Workforce Development and the Board of Higher Education, in consultation with the Workforce Accountability Task Force.
- b) Has applied for financial aid using the standard Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and submit necessary documentation to verify an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- c) Is not in default of any federal or state student loans for attendance at any institution or owe a refund for any previous financial aid received.

- d) Is enrolled in a certificate or degree program and meets the institution's requirements for satisfactory academic progress.
- e) Is a Massachusetts resident domiciled in Massachusetts for at least one year prior to the beginning of the academic year.
- f) Is a U.S. citizen or an eligible non-citizen under Federal Title IV regulations.

***STUDENT AWARD***

The award under this program shall be a minimum of \$200 and a maximum of \$3,000 and shall be used to fund tuition, fees and books and may include up to 30 percent of the student's calculated cost of living as determined by the institution or the Board of Higher Education.

The funds from this grant shall serve as a last resort, after other federal, state and institutional aid has been exhausted. To comply with this provision, institutions shall complete and submit to the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance a detailed financial aid Cost of Attendance and a listing of all financial aid awarded.

Institutions must also report the student's enrollment information as requested.

***INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS***

Each institution must provide information to the Office of Student Financial Assistance regarding every student's award, credit hours, and financial aid budget plan for the current academic year.

One hundred percent of the funds allocated shall be used for awards for students. Funds that are not disbursed by the institution to the student, for any reason, must be remitted to the Office of Student Financial Assistance as required by the Refund Policy for State financial aid programs.

Education Rewards Grant funds awarded in excess of billed tuition and fees must be disbursed to the student for books and related living expenses, according to program guidelines.

***PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT***

All institutions must file a State Financial Aid Participation Agreement to be maintained on file at the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

***AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:***

It shall be the responsibility of each institution to maintain adequate documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the Educational Rewards Grant Program.

All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Chancellor, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records and documents are located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents for seven years. An institution may retain such records for a period of five years if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, Section 42.