**Early College Incubator Grant FC160**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**As of Thursday, 4/27/22**

**Q: When will the awards be announced?**

A: It is anticipated that these grants will be announced by June, 2022.

**Q: When do the grant funds need to be spent by?**

A: The FY23 grant funds will need to be spent by Aug.31, 2023 by which time a written plan for FY24 will have been submitted and approved for the continuation of pilot funds.

**Q: How is the Early College Incubator Grant funded?**

A: Federal ESSER funds.

**Q: What is considered “innovation” for this grant?**

A: Programs can propose what “innovation in program design and delivery” might be. Generally speaking, projects should be proposing something new and beyond the more traditional program within a school model that would typically apply for Designation. This grant is particularly looking for innovative ways to reach more underrepresented students, including creative use of technology, online formats, and intentional student supports while maintaining strong connections to college-going culture.

**Q: How many institutions can apply for each grant?**

A: This is an open grant opportunity.  As part of a commitment to innovation, this grant allows for multiple institutions to collaborate on an incubator project to increase access for more students.  There can only be one lead educational agency serving as the fiscal partner, but there is an expectation that the budget will be shared among partners to cover planning and piloting expenses. The Department will consider size and configuration of the proposed partnership and the number of partners/students involved, particularly those proposing to pilot, in determining grant awards. In terms of Designation, programs may be expected to apply 1:1 for that process or a different determination may be made on the basis of the outcomes of the incubator projects.

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**Q: Could a district serve as the lead applicant**

A: Yes.

**Q: What can the** **Early College Incubator Grant budget allow?**

A: This grant broadly allows for any planning expenses including stipends, staffing, and contracts for expert support. It also allows costs for transportation and textbooks, and course (including tuition) costs if you’re piloting. It does not allow for capital expenses. The grant is very flexible as it covers any typical expenses related to planning and implementing Early College.

**Q: Are indirect costs allowable under this grant?**

A: No, programs should not include indirect costs in their budget request

**Q: Are college course/instructional costs allowable under this grant?**

A: Yes, College course/instruction costs are allowable under this grant for planning/piloting activities.

**Q: Are fillable positions allowed in the grant, even if we won’t yet be filling that position until FY24?**

A: Focus on FY23 costs. If you don’t think you would hire until FY 24, then don’t put it in your funding until then. Please discuss future positions in your planning application, though, because it would be an important piece of your planning.

**Q: In the western part of the state at GCC, we would really like to pilot a model for a rural consortium. All of our schools are really small so it’s tough to have just one relationship with one high school. If we had a consortium of 5-10 high schools, would we need to have 5-10 applications?**

A: For this grant, you can apply as one. For designation that is yet to be determined, but you can apply as a consortium for this grant.

**Q: Can we use funds to pay for stipends to put the Part A designation application together and then Part B if we are invited to fill out Part B?**

A: Yes, the only thing we would caution is that if your application for this grant is along the lines of a traditional designation, then you should apply for traditional designation. The incubator grant may fulfill many aspects of traditional designation but will go beyond traditional designation to create a more innovative design or mode of delivery to reach students who otherwise would not have the Early College opportunity.

**Q: There is mention of prioritizing opportunities from participants from “chronically underperforming status”. Could you speak to that prioritization?**

A: The grant identified prioritization to mean schools with majority high needs, and chronically underperforming as well. We’re really looking at EC as an intervention for high school redesign. Any opportunity to expose more students to the rigor of EC is something we would prioritize.

**Q: Does the accountability status of the partner high school have any impact on the grant application?**

A: Not explicitly, except for prioritization for schools in “chronically underperforming status” (see question above). Also note the full list of priorities, which may be somewhat correlated with accountability status (and may come into play in determining grantees or sizes of awards): “Prioritization will be given to those partnerships serving a majority of high school students with high needs. According to the [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/help/data.aspx?section=students), students who are high needs are those designated as: low income, economically disadvantaged, an ELL, a former ELL, or a student with disabilities. Prioritization will also be given to partnerships that aim to serve students who are underrepresented in higher education, which also includes students who are first in their generation to attend college, and racially minoritized students. Priority will also be given to districts and schools in chronically underperforming status and schools who commit to serving at least 25% of their entire school population.”

**Q: We had included a measure of academic maturity just to see where the students are.This is not a measure to exclude students. We wanted to measure it originally to describe our population. Shall we keep this one in or take it out based on what you are looking for in your approval process?**

A: Please make it a point to note in your application that this is not intended to exclude students, and to include more information about how your program will specifically work to include students beyond standardized measures.

**Q: There wasn’t any mention of MOUs in this planning grant, but obviously having letters of support would be helpful?**

A: That would be helpful, yes. We want to see commitment from the partners. We know that partnerships might be built on as planning continues but having a commitment to start from any identified partners is really important.

**Q: If we choose to continue to work more on the design of College and Career pathways, through MyCAP, which is the MA grant process for designing education and direction, and we provided education in all areas and highlighted emergent problems that we see now in our society. Can this be included? (Pathway work)**

A: Pathway work including MyCAP and Innovation Pathway work, may be considered in tandem with Early College work.

**Q: How will grant funding awards be determined for each proposed partnership?**

A: Each proposed project will be eligible for up to approximately $200,000 in initial funds in FY23, although possible consideration may be given regarding size and configuration of proposed pilot and the number of partners/students involved. Each project is encouraged to apply through a lead education agency (whether that is a K-12 institution, or institution of higher education. The lead agency will manage funds for all the proposed Early College partners in each project. As programs are defined and partners work towards consideration of Designation, they may be considered for funding on a 1:1 institutional basis.

**Q: Can institutional partners apply for this grant opportunity if they are already in a Designated Early College partnership with another institution?**

A: Yes, if each proposed partner has identified a need for additional Early College program beyond whatever current partnerships exist, and they are able to coordinate—not compete--with current existing partnerships to ensure students and families have the information needed to understand the Early College options available to them.

**Q: At what point, will proposed partnership be expected to reach full scale?**

A: Since these are considered pilot programs, it is not expected that they will operate at full scale until the conclusion of the pilot and the approval of Designation status. That being said, it is expected that incubator programs will be planning for a full scale of at least 25% of the school population and/or a minimum of 400 students, and the application should clearly reflect intention and vision for the full scale program and any details about timeline that can be provided.

**Q: On the web site it indicates "Additional FY24 funding may be made available upon approvals of these plans." should FY 24 be included in the $200000 budget request, or would that come later?**

A: That would come later. This budget is for 2023. Definitely allude to future plans for funding in the application for your plans in FY24, because that has to do with the vision of your program, understanding things may need to be modified along the way, but we want to focus on FY23.

**Q: What should we expect with respect to funding expected growth in future years?**

A: As noted in the question above, this grant is intended to support FY23 costs for planning/piloting. As noted in the RFP: “Each awardee will also be expected to establish a leadership team to work with a design consultant/coach procured by DESE and submit an implementation plan in writing at the end of FY23. Additional FY24 funding may be made available upon approvals of these plans.” Programs that achieve designation status will also be eligible for additional support grants and per-credit reimbursement support, subject to appropriation.

**Q: In addition to grant funds, how should each proposed Early College program be funded?**

A: In addition to grant funds, each partner institution (s) should plan on investing whatever additional funds are needed for the proposed project. Projects should consider how they will sustainably fund Early College programs beyond grant funding. Applicants should feel free to describe what other sources of funding may be tapped to develop the systems and support structures necessary to meet the full range of needs of students.

**Q: Are all grant awardees required to utilize coaches provided by DESE as part of grant award?**

A: Proposed programs are expected to engage with their assigned Early College coaches.  At minimum, assigned coaches will serve to guide the management of the pilot project and serve as a liaison between the department and pilot program, as well ensure that each pilot completes a written report and submits any necessary data.  For programs who desire coaching on technical aspects of Early College program, coaches will be made available to provide this assistance.