



**College Completion Innovation Fund
Request for Proposals – Round One
March 16, 2015**

Grant Application Deadline: April 26, 2015

Notification of Award: Early June, 2015

Submit all proposals to CCIFsubmissions@gradnyc.org

Graduate NYC's College Completion Innovation Fund will invest at least \$1 million in innovative and scale-up projects or programs that help improve college retention and completion rates in New York City. Grants will be made to support non-profit community-based organizations and/or undergraduate colleges that serve low-income students, first generation college goers, and/or students of color in the city. In addition to its role in catalyzing innovation and expanding successful projects, the Fund will facilitate ongoing dialogue and engagement related to increasing degree attainment in New York City.

College Completion Innovation Fund Goals

- Provide support for a mix of projects that increase college persistence and completion rates by either scaling up promising or proven practices or testing new models, programs or initiatives.
- Facilitate dialogue and increase learning about effective practices that improve college graduation rates.
- Draw attention to issues related to college persistence and completion and generate interest among funders both within this space and outside of it.
- Create incentives for policy and practice changes to achieve a more rapid acceleration of efforts to increase college retention.
- Share research and document local successes.
- Encourage greater collaboration among and between colleges and community-based organizations.
- Increase citywide awareness of the steps needed to successfully prepare for, enroll in and complete college.

Eligibility

The College Completion Innovation Fund (CCIF) will award innovation or scale-up grants to support early or middle stage projects that aim to significantly improve student outcomes in one or more of four categories: summer melt, remediation, college persistence, and two-year to four-year college transfers. Early or middle stage projects are defined as those that have been operational for less than four years. Eligible entities include New York City-based undergraduate colleges and/or non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs). A majority of students served by eligible projects will be low-income students and

all projects will serve low-income students, first generation college students, students of color and/or others who are traditionally underrepresented among college degree holders. Preference will be given to projects that utilize technology in new or innovative ways. Organizations must have a minimum of three years of experience implementing college access, retention, and/or success work for low-income students. Eligible CBOs must have a documented partnership with one or more New York City-based undergraduate colleges, or must demonstrate the ability to develop a partnership as part of the proposed project, where applicable. Organizations must have a demonstrated record of tracking and using data to inform programming, and a demonstrated staff capacity to carry out the proposed project. Grantees must have a 501(c)3 designation.

Available Funds

There will be two opportunities to apply for funding through the College Completion Innovation Fund via two separate Requests for Proposals (RFP). The Round One RFP will be available on March 16, 2015 with proposals due on April 26, 2015. The Round Two RFP will be available on October 1, 2015 with proposals due on November 15, 2015. Up to \$600,000 will be committed to projects through the Round One RFP process. Awards can be made in amounts from \$30,000 to \$300,000 total project budget for one, two, or three-year projects. The Fund seeks diversity in size and scope of grant proposals to optimize overall impact, and will likely fund projects in the \$30,000 - \$150,000 range. Initially, all contracts will be non-renewable. Funding is subject to:

- Availability
- Grantee compliance with state and federal requirements
- Demonstration of effectiveness and/or quality of implementation
- Accurate documentation and budgeting
- Timely reporting on program and budget

Grant Types & Categories

Two types of grants will be made for projects addressing one or more of the categories below.

- **Type I: Innovation Grants** will be made for projects that intend to try something innovative or something new to the organization. These innovations should have some proof of concept, have worked in another local or national context, or otherwise have some data or evidence that they may be successful in the proposed project. Projects of this type may also engage new partners or address more than one grant category (see below).
- **Type II: Scale-Up Grants** will be made to enable successful projects within a given organization to expand to serve additional students (e.g. new geographic areas, new groups of students, etc.) We also encourage innovation through technology, partnerships, etc. These projects or programs must be less than four years old.

All Type I and Type II grants should be designed to address one or more of the following categories:

- **Summer Melt:** Summer Melt refers to the pattern in which some students apply and are accepted to college, yet do not matriculate in the expected timeframe. The CCIF seeks projects that identify students at risk of not matriculating and take steps to increase the number of students who successfully enroll in college within the expected timeframe.

- **Remediation:** The CCIF seeks projects that aim to increase student success in entry-level credit-bearing college courses by providing students with alternatives to remediation and/or opportunities to accelerate progress through remedial coursework.
- **Persistence:** The CCIF seeks projects designed to increase college degree completion rates by significantly improving credit accumulation, momentum, and year-to-year persistence.
- **Two-Year to Four-Year Transfers:** The CCIF seeks projects designed to help students successfully transfer from two-year (associate degree) programs to four-year (baccalaureate degree) programs. The purpose of these grants is to increase associate degree completion prior to transfer and/or increase transfer students' success in four-year institutions.

All projects will be required to establish appropriate targets for persistence and completion measures. Projects may be one to three years in duration. Round One projects will begin in academic year 2015-2016.

Budget Details

No more than 10% of the grant can be used for planning purposes and no more than 10% of the total budget can be allocated to indirect costs. A percentage of the budget of each project should be allocated to evaluation. Grants of \$100,000 or more should include a more robust evaluation plan. Grant funds cannot be used for student scholarships.

Proposal Questions

Please address all questions on the proposal process, eligibility, and projects to Melissa Herman, GNYC Project Manager for the Fund at CCIFquestions@gradnyc.org by **April 16th (11:59 PM)**. Questions will be answered directly and posted in the FAQ section of the CCIF webpage (www.gradnyc.com/the-college-completion-innovation-fund). We will also host a **webinar on March 23rd at 1:00 P.M.**, which will be recorded and available on the website.

Proposal Submission

Applicants must complete a full proposal and send the proposal and all required attachments in a **single PDF attachment** addressed to Lisa Castillo Richmond, Executive Director, Graduate NYC at CCIFsubmissions@gradnyc.org by **11:59 PM EST on April 26, 2015**. Incomplete or late proposals will not be considered.

Review Process

Proposals will be reviewed by Graduate NYC staff for completeness and compliance with grant guidelines and eligibility requirements. Some applicant organizations may receive follow-up questions from the Graduate NYC staff. If a proposal is late, incomplete or eligibility cannot be established, the proposal will be eliminated from consideration. This decision will be final and applicant organizations will be notified in writing.

The CCIF Advisory Board will review all eligible applications to determine the proposals selected for funding.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Submission follows all given guidelines (page limits, answers all questions, provides all attachments)
- Project clearly addresses one or more grant categories
- Organization has proven track record of leading work in college readiness, access, retention, and/or success
- Project has some proof of concept or research base indicating it may be successful
- Extent to which ideas could be sustainable and replicated across other organizations or institutions
- For CBOs, priority will be given to those who have secured a higher education partner, if applicable
- Priority will be given to projects that have the biggest impact per grant dollar awarded
- Priority will be given to projects that utilize technology in new or innovative ways.

Notification of Award

The primary contact from the applicant organization will be notified of the proposal status by early June, 2015. The contract period will begin on August 1, 2015, unless there is an approved deferral until January or June 2016.

Deferral of Project Start

The CCIF may grant deferrals to organizations that are awarded Round One funding at their request. Academic year projects can begin during the fall of 2015 or may be deferred until spring 2016. Summer projects can begin during the summer of 2015 or may be deferred until summer 2016.

Reporting Requirements

Each grantee will be required to submit brief interim (six month) reports and a more comprehensive annual and final report. Grantees will also be in regular communication with Graduate NYC and will interact periodically with other CCIF-funded projects.

CCIF Round One Application

*Your proposal narrative, excluding attachments, should be no more than 8 pages (single-spaced, 11 point font and 1" margins). Proposals that exceed 8 pages will not be considered. Create attachments in your preferred format. Your submission should be sent in a **single PDF document** to the attention of Lisa Castillo Richmond, Executive Director, Graduate NYC, at **CCIFsubmissions@gradnyc.org**.*

General Overview

For Community-Based Organizations

1. Overview of organization
2. Describe your current college access and success work, its history, and outcomes.
3. What are your organizational goals and what college access and success indicators does your organization track?
4. Describe the current partnerships and collaborations that support your work.

For Colleges

1. Overview of college (total enrollment, student demographics, including % from low-income households, organization strengths related to the proposed project). Please provide the most recent completion rates (community colleges: provide 2-year and 3-year completion rates; 4-year colleges: provide 4-year and 6-year completion rates).
2. Describe any significant efforts aimed at improving retention and completion rates at your institution and provide a summary of their outcomes. What progress do you intend to make on these with the proposed project?
3. What department or division of the college will manage this project?
4. Describe the current partnerships and collaborations that support your work.

Proposed Project

5. Indicate grant type and category for which you are applying.
6. How many students and college campuses will be involved in/served through this project?
7. Describe the target population to be served (demographics/demonstrated need for service, estimate % of low-income students to be served and how you calculated this % [e.g. Pell eligible, undocumented %, etc.]).
8. Describe the project you will implement with CCIF support.
9. What is innovative about this project?
10. How will your project address equity gaps and increase diversity within higher education?
11. Do you have evidence that this project could work? Do you know of any other organizations/campuses already engaged in this work? If so, please provide a brief description.
12. What are your outcome goals for this project and how will you track them? Do you currently track these indicators?
13. Please describe any new partnerships that will result from this project.
14. How is your target population involved in informing your work as an organization?
15. Amount of funds requested.
16. Provide a detailed narrative of your organization's capacity (human and financial resources) and expertise to take on the described project.
17. How will this project, if successful, be sustained beyond the grant period?

Attachments

- Organization budget for current year and projected for project years (revenue/expense)
- Project budget and budget narrative
- Timeline of project activities
- Key staff bios (single paragraph for each)
- 501c3 status document
- Most recent audited financial statements
- List of Board of Directors
- Letter of support from project partners (if applicable and if not submitting a joint proposal with a partner organization)