

Grant-Making Guidelines — National Engagement and Philanthropy

USA Funds® is a nonprofit corporation whose mission — Completion With a PurposeSM — focuses on enhancing postsecondary education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services. The strategic direction of Completion With a Purpose is to support postsecondary education students' attainment and credentials and competencies that lead to productive and rewarding jobs and careers and thus to economic, civic and creative contributions to their communities and to society. We provide support services across the student lifecycle, from planning for and completing postsecondary education to helping students prepare for employment and career advancement. Our initiatives pay particular attention to the needs of low-income and minority students, adult learners and veterans returning to the civilian workforce.

ABOUT NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND PHILANTHROPY

The National Engagement and Philanthropy Team seeks to identify and support a robust program of grant-making and collaboration with like-minded organizations to advance Completion With a Purpose and ensure graduates are prepared for the workforce. In addition, we seek to engage in meaningful advocacy discussions with national, state and regional thought partners in support of our mission. With our limited grant-making resources, our funding priorities typically include grant-making for projects at the national, state and metropolitan levels with wide-reaching impact and innovation. We also will continue to fund a select group of innovative, community-based projects that are aligned with Completion With a Purpose.

Our Challenge: The 40/50 Problem

By aligning our grant-making with Completion With a Purpose, we provide students a more purposeful path into and through college and on to rewarding careers and successful lives. Our grant-making seeks to support organizations and initiatives that are innovative, impactful solutions to the 40/50 challenge confronting postsecondary education:

- ◆ According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 40 percent of students who begin four-year degree programs fail to complete those programs within six years.
- ◆ Research by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York finds that approximately 50 percent of college graduates are unemployed or underemployed following graduation.
- ◆ Half of nearly 5,000 former college students surveyed by McKinsey & Company would choose different academic programs or colleges if they could do it all over again.

Through philanthropic efforts, policy research, programs and services, USA Funds actively promotes innovation in the delivery of higher education, smoothing transitions at key junctures in the educational process, engaging employers to play a more central role in education and workforce development decisions.

Our Solution: Completion With Purpose Strategic Focus Areas

In support of Completion With a Purpose, we typically focus our grant-making support on four major strategic initiatives:

- ♦ **Employer Engagement:** Employers must play a more central role in determining the content of education, assisting with educational delivery, integrating work with education, and assessing the quality of education programs.
- ♦ **Innovation in College and Career Preparation:** New and emerging models of postsecondary education have the potential to reduce costs, shorten time to degree completion and enhance students' connection to the workforce.
- ♦ **Key Transitions:** Engaging at-risk youth and disconnected young adults in work experiences promotes successful completion of postsecondary education and career success.
- ♦ **Performance Measurement:** We support the collection, reporting and application of data to drive better education decisions by consumers, policymakers, employers and educators..

Our Guiding Principles

Our national engagement and philanthropic work is guided by these general principles:

- ♦ We value collaboration in the design and implementation of programs and projects.
- ♦ The projects we fund will be catalysts for systemic and large-scale change at national, state and metropolitan levels.
- ♦ Our projects will contribute to the momentum of disruptive innovation for postsecondary education and workforce training.
- ♦ We support national organizations and regional demonstration projects that offer strong potential for both short-term and long-term sustainability and impact.
- ♦ We are champions of policy research, deeper learning and communications that can broaden the scope and impact of our grantees' work.
- ♦ We insist that our grantees collect data and objectively measure and evaluate their work on three levels: stewardship, learning, and impact towards large-scale, systemic improvement.
- ♦ We are advocates of grantees who are good stewards of our funds and who support of our mission.
- ♦ We prefer projects that will help advance thought leadership in our strategic focus areas.

USA Funds considers grant proposals by invitation only. Grants can be awarded for single- and multi-year programs.

ABOUT USA FUNDS

Over the past half century, USA Funds has helped 22 million students and parents obtain more than \$250 billion in financial aid for higher education. We have also provided support for thousands of education and financial institutions nationwide.

Today, USA Funds has adopted "Completion With a Purpose" as the guiding principle for its philanthropic and investment activities, supporting initiatives that are focused on transforming the higher education experience for America's students so they are prepared for jobs in the 21st century economy.