



USA Funds Information for Grant-Seekers

www.usafunds.org/community/Pages/Grants.aspx

General Information

Please review USA Funds' mission, goals, operating principles, and eligibility criteria below to determine if our desired grant outcomes apply to your organization.

MISSION AND GOALS

USA Funds® is a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance postsecondary education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services.

Our access and outreach efforts are focused on a specific target population of students, including low-income and first-generation students, students of color, foster youth and adult learners. We support programs and organizations that aim to:

- Increase the number of students who complete postsecondary education credentials (colleges, universities, community colleges and private career schools).
- Improve financial literacy and financial education.
- Help provide financial access to postsecondary education for students and families.
- Help eliminate gaps in postsecondary educational attainment by race and income and improve college readiness, access and completion.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

USA Funds invests in organizations and programs that provide meaningful and measurable benefit to target population students and families. In general, we will evaluate all grant requests based on the effectiveness of achieving our goals and the ability to measure their impact.

USA Funds supports investments in direct service. An investment in direct service is one in which funds are awarded for a specific program within an eligible organization. We support programs that directly fulfill and help achieve USA Funds' mission and goals.

Before applying for a grant from USA Funds, grant seekers should consider the following questions to assist in determining alignment of the proposal to USA Funds' mission and goals:

- Does your organization and your program target the population that USA Funds seeks to serve?
- What are the specific outcomes that your organization and program strive to achieve? What outcomes do you seek for the target population and are these outcomes verifiable?

- How likely are you to achieve your desired outcomes? Does your leadership have a track record of success? Does your program have a track record of success? Does your organization have past achievements with programs and leadership experience that can be evaluated and verified?

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND FUNDING LIMITATIONS

- USA Funds does not make grants to individuals.
- USA Funds makes grants to national programs and to regional, state and local programs throughout the United States.
- USA Funds awards grants to organizations that are nonprofit and tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. USA Funds does not award grants to for-profit organizations or to private foundations as defined in IRC Section 509(a) or public charities as defined in IRC Section 170(b)(A)(vi).
- Funding from USA Funds generally is awarded for a one-year period. Grantees may, however, reapply for additional funding each year. Consideration of subsequent funding will include measurement and evaluation of the previous grant's impact and effectiveness as well as an evaluation of the organization's diversification of funding sources and plans for self sufficiency.
- As a general rule, USA Funds does not fund building projects (bricks and mortar), the purchase of capital equipment, debt retirement or solely operating expenses of an organization.

Grant Outcomes:

USA Funds will consider grant applications that lead to at least one of the following three outcomes:

1. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION READINESS

Within this grant category, USA Funds will support projects that aim to make students ready for postsecondary education. Students are ready when they have the knowledge, skills and behaviors to complete a postsecondary course of study successfully, without remediation (College Board, 2007). USA Funds will support projects and initiatives that eliminate barriers to postsecondary education readiness of students, especially low-income and first-generation students, students of color, foster youth and adult learners. Below are examples of potential barriers that this grant outcome aspires to eliminate.

Examples of Potential Barriers to Readiness

- Inconsistent attendance leading to dropping out of high school.
- Limited rigor of educational course work or relevance of the education experience.
- Inadequate formal educational guidance (family, community).
- Limited exposure to technology and career information.
- Poor transition points from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school.

In addition, grants with postsecondary education readiness as an outcome should achieve one or more of the following desired outcomes.

Desired Outcomes

- Increase the number of students who demonstrate they are actively taking steps to prepare and pursue a postsecondary education.
- Increase the number of parents and families who are actively taking steps to help prepare their children for a postsecondary education.
- Increase the number of students who demonstrate their preparedness for a postsecondary education or a career.

Increasing the number of students who are ready for a postsecondary education is the desired long-term outcome for all the grants in this category. Grantees in this category will have to select the relevant and appropriate leading indicators to demonstrate progress toward this outcome. We define leading indicators as short-term, measurable milestone achievements that indicate progress toward the desired long-term outcome, which is postsecondary education readiness.

Below are USA Funds-selected leading indicators for the postsecondary education readiness category of grants:

Leading Indicators:

- Percentage/number of students who are newly enrolled in a rigorous postsecondary education preparatory program.
- Percentage/number of students who take the ACT/SAT and achieve a college-ready score.
- Percentage/number of students who complete college visits.
- Percentage/number of students who demonstrate an increased knowledge of postsecondary education opportunities.
- Percentage/number of students who have completed multiple applications to postsecondary education institutions.
- Percentage/number of 12th grade students who have completed the FAFSA by applicable deadlines.

- Percentage/number of students who complete multiple scholarship applications.
- Percentage/number of students who are on track for high school graduation.
- Percentage/number of students who graduate from high school.

2. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

Within this grant category, USA Funds will support projects and initiatives that advance or promote a broad approach to increasing the postsecondary education enrollment levels of students by eliminating barriers to postsecondary education entry for our target populations. Additionally, we will provide financial support to deserving students through organizations that award scholarships. Below are examples of potential barriers to postsecondary education enrollment.

Examples of Potential Barriers to Enrollment

- Students' financial limitations (perceived and actual).
- Lack of access to all forms of financial aid (scholarships, grants and loans).
- Inadequate academic preparation.
- Barriers related to postsecondary education advising, such as determining where to apply and completing all the application steps.
- Inadequate student support services.

Grants with postsecondary education enrollment as an outcome should achieve one or more of the following desired outcomes.

Desired Outcomes

- Increase the number of students who enroll in postsecondary education institutions by providing financial support and scholarships.
- Increase the number of students who access financial and scholarship support.

Similarly, since increasing college enrollment is a desired long-term outcome for grants in this category, grantees will have to employ the relevant and appropriate leading indicators for college enrollment to demonstrate progress towards this outcome. Below are USA Funds-selected leading indicators for this category of grants.

Leading Indicators:

- Percentage of students who receive scholarships/non-loan financing.
- Percentage of students who enroll in a postsecondary education institution.

3. POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION SUCCESS

Within this grant category, USA Funds will support projects and initiatives that work to improve students' retention, progression and, ultimately, their completion of a postsecondary education with manageable debt, as well as projects and initiatives that eliminate barriers to college completion. Below are examples of potential barriers to postsecondary education success.

Examples of Potential Barriers to Success

- Student's financial limitations (perceived and actual).
- Inadequate student support services.
- Poor transition points from high school to postsecondary education and from two-year postsecondary education institutions to four-year postsecondary education institutions.

Grants with postsecondary education success as an outcome should achieve one or more of the following desired results:

Desired Results

- Increase the number of students who complete their postsecondary education with a manageable debt load.
- Increase the number of students who have access to postsecondary education support services that enable them to complete their education programs.
- Increase the number of students who use scholarships as a means to support completion of postsecondary education.

The ultimate measure of success for this category of grants is four- through six-year graduation rates of students. Because this data will not be available in the short term, USA Funds will expect grantees to employ the relevant and appropriate leading indicators to demonstrate progress towards achieving the desired outcome of increasing postsecondary education success level of students. Below are USA Funds-selected leading indicators for this category of grants:

Leading Indicators:

- Percentage/number of students who progress to next grade level year to year.
- Percentage/number of students who complete renewal FAFSA forms.
- Percentage/number of students who remain enrolled at a postsecondary education institution.
- Percentage/number of students who receive scholarship/non-loan financing.

- Percentage/number of students who complete their degree or certification program.

GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

USA Funds accepts applications for grants using our online grant application process.

You first must complete the eligibility questionnaire that will determine if your organization's mission and prospective grant request coincide with USA Funds' mission, goals and grant-making guidelines. Based on your responses to the questionnaire, you will receive one of the following responses:

- Be directed to the online grant application.
- Be requested to complete a letter of inquiry.
- Receive a message indicating that your grant request does not match our guidelines.

First-time applicants, or those who have not received USA Funds grant funding within the previous 12 months will be required to complete a letter of inquiry.

If you have questions about the process, please send an email message to philanthropy@usafunds.org.

To submit a grant request or a letter of inquiry to USA Funds, your organization should complete the following steps:

1. Go to www.usafunds.org/community/Pages/Grants.aspx and select "Grant Request Questionnaire."
2. For first-time applicants, create a login name. Select "I am a new online applicant." Enter your email address and create a new password.
3. Enter your Federal Tax Identification Number. Please note that you cannot continue with the eligibility questionnaire without a valid Federal Tax ID. Please send an email message to philanthropy@usafunds.org if you have any questions about this step.
4. Once you've successfully completed the eligibility questionnaire, you will be directed to complete the online Application for Grant or to submit a Letter of Inquiry.

Please ensure that you have the following information before you submit an application or letter of inquiry for review:

- Organization name, street address and website address (if applicable).
- Summary description of your organization's history, mission and goals.
- Summary description of your organization's project.

- Executive director name, email address and phone number.
- Contact person name, title, email address and phone number.
- Federal tax status and tax identification number.
- Total program and operating budgets.
- Region and population(s) served.
- USA Funds program area(s) served (postsecondary education readiness, enrollment and success).
- Results/outcomes to be achieved (specific goal statements are required).
- Total funds requested from USA Funds.
- How your organization proposes to use the grant funds.

If you are requesting funding for a specific project, you must provide the following information:

- Summary description of the project.
 - Detailed description of the project's goals.
 - Project leadership (names/titles, project experience/background).
 - Duration of the project.
 - USA Funds program area(s) served (college readiness, college enrollment and college completion).
 - Outcomes to be achieved (specific goal statements are required) and how you propose to measure and report the identified outcomes.
5. After you submit your online grant application or letter of inquiry, you will receive an email confirmation. After an initial review, you may be contacted by email or letter with a request to provide additional information. Please add philanthropy@usafunds.org and application.notification@usafunds.org to your email address book to ensure that these messages arrive in your in-box.
 6. The USA Funds Grant Review Committee will review your grant application within the appropriate grant cycle schedule for which your request was submitted. Following that review you will receive notification indicating whether your grant request has been approved or declined.
 7. If you are a new grantee or have not submitted a report or full grant proposal within the last 12 months, you will be asked to complete the letter of inquiry process. Your letter of inquiry will be reviewed within four to six weeks of submission. After the review process, you either will be contacted by a USA Funds program officer who will ask you to complete a grant application, or you will receive a letter indicating the reason your submission does not fit with USA Funds mission.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who can apply?

USA Funds generally makes grants to organizations classified as tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. You can find a complete list of our eligibility requirements under the section on “Eligibility Criteria and Funding Limitations” above. To learn if your organization is eligible for a USA Funds grant, take our brief [eligibility questionnaire](#).

The status of my organization’s 501(c)(3) is pending. Do I qualify to receive a grant?

No. USA Funds does not fund organizations with a pending 501(c)(3) status. Only organizations that are verified with a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) designation, as determined by the Internal Revenue Service, are eligible to receive a grant.

What is not funded by USA Funds?

USA Funds does not make grants to:

- Individuals.
- Endowments and private charities.
- Religious groups for religious purposes.
- National ceremonies, memorials, testimonials.
- Bricks and mortars.

Please review the funding guidelines under “Eligibility Criteria and Funding Limitations” above for a complete list of eligibility criteria.

Does USA Funds accept unsolicited requests for funding?

Yes. Any organization that successfully completes the eligibility questionnaire and a letter of inquiry will have its request reviewed by a USA Funds program officer.

What is USA Funds’ grant application process?

USA Funds receives grant requests and issues new grants on a quarterly grant cycle. Please visit our website — www.usafunds.org/community/Pages/Grants.aspx — for the most up-to-date information regarding program officer contact information, grant deadlines and other pertinent information.

Do new grantees complete the standard application process?

No. New grantees and grantees that have not received a USA Funds grant within the past 12 months will complete the eligibility quiz and letter of inquiry. If, after completing this short quiz, your programming is in line with USA Funds’ mission, you will be directed to complete a letter of inquiry. Once you complete and submit this inquiry, USA Funds staff will review your letter of inquiry and determine if you will be requested to complete a grant application. Letters of inquiry are reviewed within four to six weeks of submission.

Can I get a copy of the online application form?

Yes. You can print a copy as you are completing the online application form. Click on the “Printer Friendly Version” link located in the top right corner of each application page.

Do I have to complete the application in one online session?

No. You can start the application and choose to save and finish it at another time. Click on the “Save and Finish Later” button located at the bottom of each application page.

Is my application automatically saved once I create an account?

No. To ensure that you do not lose data on your application, please click on the “Save and Finish Later” button at the bottom of each application page.

How do I return to an incomplete application that I’ve saved but not submitted?

Once you create an online grant application account, you will receive an email notification that includes the email address and password required to access your saved application.

Please add philanthropy@usafunds.org and application.notification@usafunds.org to your email address book to ensure that these messages arrive in your inbox.

Can I mail a paper copy of my grant request to USA Funds?

No. USA Funds does not accept paper grant requests. We will consider online applications only.

What are the types of programs that USA Funds supports?

USA Funds has three primary areas of focus in support of higher education: postsecondary education readiness, enrollment and success. Your grant request to USA Funds must align with at least one of these three areas of focus.

Does USA Funds fund programs nationwide?

Yes. USA Funds’ makes grants to national programs and to regional, state and local programs throughout the United States.

Does USA Funds support direct services projects?

Yes. We primarily support programs that directly fulfill and support USA Funds’ mission and goals.

Does USA Funds provide support for general operating expenses?

No. We do not make grants that solely support an organization’s operating expenses.

Does USA Funds support capital requests?

No. We do not issue grants to cover building projects or to cover capital expenditures.

Does USA Funds support events?

Yes, if they meet our “Eligibility Criteria and Funding Limitations.” Visit www.usafunds.org/community/Pages/Sponsorships.aspx for more information.

What are the submission deadlines for grant requests to USA Funds?

USA Funds processes grants within a quarterly grant schedule. Please visit our website — www.usafunds.org/community/Pages/Grants.aspx — for the most up-to-date information on our grant application deadlines and schedules.

How long does it take for a grant request or letter of inquiry to be approved?

Grant applications must be submitted by the deadline established for each quarterly grant cycle and will be approved based on the quarterly schedule that has been established. The program officer assigned to your grant will provide details on the grant cycle. Letters of inquiry will be reviewed within four to six weeks of submission and you either will receive a letter indicating we have declined your request or a call from a program officer to further discuss your submission. Please visit our website — www.usafunds.org/community/Pages/Grants.aspx — for the most up-to-date information on the grant deadlines and schedules.

What are the most common reasons for USA Funds to deny a grant request?

The most common reasons for denial of grant requests are non-conformance or lack of alignment with USA Funds’ mission and goals, and a lack of clear, measurable outcomes or results.

Is the grant-making process at USA Funds competitive?

Yes. USA Funds evaluates all requests received. We approve grants that provide meaningful and measurable benefit to target populations of students and families. We will evaluate grant requests based on the effectiveness of achieving these outcomes and the ability to measure their impact.

What are examples of programs currently funded or funded in the past?

USA Funds’ website — www.usafunds.org/community/Pages/Grants.aspx — offers examples of organizations and programs that USA Funds has supported.

What do I do if I have a question not answered on this page?

You may submit a question by email to philanthropy@usafunds.org.