

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Request for Proposals: 2023 Summer Bridge Program Grants

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) is soliciting proposals from Kentucky’s public universities, the 16 Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) campuses and the member institutions of the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU) for grants of up to \$50,000 to support summer bridge programs focused on supporting the transition from high school to postsecondary and promoting first year college success. These funds are made available to support new and/or existing efforts or expand the depth and scope of summer bridge program implementation efforts currently supported across the state. The Summer Bridge Program Grants are designed to support Kentucky high school students who are incoming first-year students.

I. Background

CPE established an ambitious goal to raise the percentage of adults with a postsecondary degree or credential to 60% by the year 2030. Achieving this goal is critical if Kentucky hopes to remain economically competitive with surrounding states and attract more high-skill, high-wage employers. To accomplish this goal, CPE prioritizes equity as a cross-cutting strategy and defines it as the “creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs.” The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on education at all levels. Students graduating from high school are facing greater challenges navigating the path from secondary to postsecondary education.

Intentional efforts to expand existing or develop new summer bridge programs will help achieve Council goals and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Summer Bridge programming eases the transition to college and supports postsecondary success by providing students with the academic skills and social resources needed to succeed in a college environment. According to an external evaluation conducted by the

Education Strategy Group (ESG), Kentucky’s summer bridge programs in 2021 and 2022 “have been found to increase summer-to-fall matriculation and fall-to-spring retention rates for participants in comparison to similar students who do not participate. Additionally, numerous qualitative benefits have been reported...such as feeling more comfortable on campus.”

Summer bridge programs begin in the summer “bridge” period between high school and college, and may extend throughout the first academic year. Although the content of summer bridge programs can vary across institutions and by the population served, the summer activities typically last from one to six weeks and involve:

- (a) an in-depth orientation to college life and resources
- (b) academic and career advising
- (c) training in skills necessary for college success
- (d) accelerated academic coursework

II. Funding Opportunity

Funding is available from CPE through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The priority must be to provide the academic support necessary to improve college success and completion rates through summer bridge program development and programming.

III. Program Outcomes

Proposals should include, but are not limited to, the following outcomes:

- 1) Increase the number and diversity (racial, geographic, gender, socioeconomic, etc.) of students served face-to-face by summer bridge programming
- 2) Reduce access and performance gaps in college course completion
- 3) Increase fall to spring retention rates of summer bridge participants, leading to improved graduation rates

Grant recipients will be required to submit interim and final reports that include these outcomes.

IV. Elements of Institutional Proposals

Postsecondary institutions are invited to submit proposals to develop or expand summer bridge programming with the intent of supporting the transition from high school to postsecondary and promoting first year college success, especially for those who have been historically disadvantaged. Elements of the proposal should demonstrate the institution's commitment to:

- Promote face-to-face college readiness and transition skills, academic readiness skills, social and emotional resources and development and advising for incoming first-year students needed to succeed in a college environment
- Create a culture that encourages sociocultural adjustment through community-building and student voice that instills a sense of belonging
- Provide opportunities for career exploration and planning with a focus on in-demand academic and career pathways
- Incorporate financial literacy programming to include topics such as college affordability, financial aid resources and opportunities and personal finances
- Afford students access to accelerated academic coursework
- Offer near-peer support from student staff members and/or volunteers
- Engage diverse partners such as employers, faculty, alumni and community-based organizations
- Commit to ongoing support and incentives for participating students

Summer Bridge Project proposals shall not exceed five pages, excluding the budget and personnel addendum.

A. Project Description, Abstract and Narrative (50 points): The project should:

- a. outline the thematic focus of the program and discipline(s) to be addressed;
- b. list the name of the institution/department(s) involved;
- c. include the target number of students and proposed dates;
- d. describe the comprehensive recruitment plan that will help meet the student participation target;

- e. demonstrate understanding of the academic support system(s) that promote a college-completion culture;
- f. provide a comprehensive recruitment and professional development model for faculty and support staff;
- g. list the contributing partners that will support student mentoring or faculty requirements;
- h. explain additional proposed outcomes/learning objectives;
- i. create a data collection and evaluation model that includes a comparison group to assess the impact of the program.

B. Resources and Capacity (25): The proposal should provide:

- a. evidence of a commitment of institutional resources and personnel necessary to support the proposed activities, meet the project's objectives and assess the impacts of the program
- b. an explanation of the on-campus logistics of the program including lodging, meals, facilities, etc.
- c. a description of the qualifications of all key staff implementing the program, including education and/or work experience. Summer grant programs are encouraged to consider the diversity of their project team.

Resumes and/or curriculum vitae may be included in an addendum and as such, will not count toward the 5-page proposal limit.

C. Scalability and Ongoing Support (15): The proposal must provide:

- a. the institution's detailed plan for following up with participants throughout the school year
- b. convincing and compelling evidence that the project can be implemented fully over the life of the grant and sustained after grant funds are expended or the grant period ends

Program proposals that include a strong sustainability plan, such as in-kind contributions and community partnerships, are eligible for additional points.

D. Budget (10): Project proposals must include:

- a. a clear, concise and cost-effective budget plan that includes reasonable per student expenditures
- b. a detail of funding needed to support the per section cost for a summer bridge program with a justification of those costs clearly articulated in the budget narrative

Campuses that choose to include a fee may charge no more than \$500 per student to participate in the program. Indirect costs will not be allowed.

*An example budget format is included.

V. Allowable Expenses

Below is a list of allowable expenses that project awards may fund:

- **Personnel Compensation**: Compensation would generally encompass a portion of salaries, wages and benefits of personnel, including, but not limited to, project director and support staff. Allowable compensation must be additional compensation that is not included as “regular salary” or included in the institutional budget.
- **Equipment Usage and Consumable Supplies**: Funds expended on equipment usage and consumable supplies must not exceed 15% of the total project budget.
- **Fees to External Consultants**: Consulting assistance would generally include, but not be limited to, hiring chaperones, instructors or student staff.
- **Student Lodging and Meals**
- **Facilities Rental**
- **Other Direct Costs**: Approval of expenditures for Other Direct Costs is at the discretion of the proposal evaluation committee. These costs must be specifically identified and justified in the project budget. Funds expended on field trips and community-building activities must include an educational component and collectively must not exceed 10% of the total project budget. Scholarships and other student incentives for completion of Summer Bridge are allowable. Travel expenses associated with the annual one-day face to face Summer Bridge convening may be included as a direct cost.
- **Indirect costs**: Indirect costs are not permitted.

- **Student Fees:** If institutions choose to charge student fees to participate in a summer bridge program, the total charge may not exceed \$500.
- Grant funds may not be used for payments to administrators and executives of colleges and universities.

VI. Submission of Proposals

- A. CPE staff will host a one-hour virtual session on Friday, February 3, at 12:00 p.m. ET, to address any questions you may have about submitting a proposal. Please register for the virtual event [here](#). The session will be recorded and archived, and an FAQ document will be posted following the session.
- B. Applicants must submit one complete electronic version of the proposal.
- C. Proposals should be no more than five pages in length, excluding the budget and/or personnel addendum.
- D. Institutions may submit up to three proposals; however, awards will be issued based on rubric scores and available funding.
- E. Proposals must be received by **4:30 p.m. ET on Friday, February 17, 2023**, by the following designee:

Submit your Summer Bridge proposal to this Google Form:
<https://forms.gle/M23ed2JzBVKKsBAw5>

VII. Evaluation of Proposals

A review committee selected and coordinated by Council staff will be established to evaluate all proposals. Proposals must score at least 70 points to be considered for funding. The maximum number of grants is contingent upon the amount of funding available and confidence in the quality and feasibility of the programming proposed. The Council reserves the right, once an initial selection has been made, to negotiate the final terms of the agreement. Information about the selection process may be requested from the Council following award notifications.

VIII. Award Notification

All institutions submitting proposals will be notified in writing regarding the status of their proposal after all proposals have been evaluated on or before **Monday, February 27, 2023**. The Council reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals in whole or in part and to negotiate any or all aspects of a proposal. The Council bears no responsibility for any costs incurred while preparing any proposal.

The RFP can be viewed at <http://www.cpe.ky.gov/news/rfp>.

IX. Additional Requirements

All recipients of this funding will be required to identify the following for the 2023-2024 academic year:

- at least one financial point of contact who will ensure that reports and reimbursement invoices are submitted according to CPE policy and timelines.
- at least one programmatic point of contact who will oversee the implementation of the Summer Bridge program; participate in a community of practice (CoP), including monthly virtual sessions and attendance at one annual face to face convening; and ensure that the interim and final reports are satisfactorily completed and submitted on time.

X. Reporting Schedule

At a minimum, one mid-term progress report and one final program report shall be required and contain:

- the elements and outcomes of the institutional proposal listed above
- the description of the summer bridge program being implemented
- the number of students participating in programming
- any course descriptions or curriculum used in the program
- specific types of academic or social/emotional support programming provided to students in the program
- number of faculty and staff participating in the program
- descriptions of the professional learning experiences provided to faculty and staff supporting the program

- activities that occurred to date in implementing any summer bridge programming
- a summary of the institution's evaluation process and data collection, to date

The final report shall also include the information above and a progress analytics report outlining the successes and challenges faced in implementing the summer bridge program.

Mid-Term project reports must be submitted to CPE on or before **December 1, 2023**.

Final project report shall be submitted to CPE no later than **April 14, 2024**.

Additional updates may be requested by the CPE.

XI. Other Terms and Conditions

This is a reimbursement grant and any unexpended funds remaining after the expiration of the agreement will be forfeited by the institution. Reimbursement invoice requirements will be disseminated upon award. No extensions will be permitted.

Indirect costs will not be funded.

The anticipated effective date of contracts resulting from this RFP is April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024.

Grantees may be required to participate in activities related to an external evaluation process.