

Montana Office of Public Instruction

INVITATION TO APPLY

**MONTANA ADVANCED OPPORTUNITIES GRANT OPPORTUNITY**

**ISSUED BY**

Montana Office of Public Instruction

1227 11th Avenue, 2nd Floor

Box 202501

Helena, MT 59620-2501

Application Opens: 8:00 a.m. Monday, December 4, 2023

Application Closes: 5:00 p.m. Monday, January 8, 2024

Questions regarding this application should be directed to:

Montana Office of Public Instruction

1227 11th Avenue, 2nd Floor

Box 202501

Helena, MT 59620-2501

Krystal Smith, Program Manager

[krystal.smith@mt.gov](mailto:krystal.smith@mt.gov)

OVERVIEW

House Bill 387, The Montana Advanced Opportunity Act, sponsored by Representative Llew Jones, was signed into law on May 9, 2019. HB 387 amends section [20-7-701, MCA](https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0200/chapter_0090/part_0010/section_0160/0200-0090-0010-0160.html).

**Purpose: The Montana Advanced Opportunity Act:**

* + - * Expand personalized career and technical education opportunities for middle and high school pupils
* Reduce out-of-pocket costs for pupils and families in support of a pupil’s postsecondary success
* Empower pupils to actively engage in forming their postsecondary success path
* Provide expanded flexibility to districts in supporting each pupil’s postsecondary success path to align with each pupil’s individual interests, passions, strengths, needs and culture

**Definitions:**

*Advanced Opportunity* means any course, exam, experiential, online, or other learning opportunity that is incorporated in a district’s advanced opportunity plan and is designed to advance each qualifying pupil’s opportunity for postsecondary career and educational success.

*Advanced Opportunity Aid* means for fiscal years 2021 and beyond.

*Advanced Opportunity Plan* means a plan adopted by a board of trustees of a district that provides advanced opportunities for the pupils of the district.

**Specific requirements for the district of the application:**

* District development of an Advanced Opportunity Plan
* Include a strategic plan, with appropriate planning horizons for implementation - measurable objectives to ensure accountability, and planned strategies to:
  + Develop an advanced opportunity plan for each participating pupil grades 6-12 that fosters individualized pathways for career and postsecondary opportunities that honors individual interests, passions, strengths, needs and culture and is supported through relationships among family, teachers, businesses, peers, post-secondary, and the larger community.
  + Embed community-based, experiential, online and work-based learning opportunities and foster a learning environment that incorporates both virtual and face-to-face connections.
  + Ensure equality of educational opportunity to participate by all pupils of the district.
* The local school district’s application must be formally approved by the district’s board of trustees and signed by the district board chair.

**Key Dates:**

* Opening and closing dates for the Fiscal Year 2025 application:

1st Monday of December 2024 - 2nd Monday of January 2024 (December 4 - January 8)

* **Annual report** submission window is: 1st Monday December 2023 - 2nd Monday January 2024. (This applies to districts the received funds for FY 2024.)
* The application is available on the OPI website. This page also has a link to where all applications will be digitally submitted to the OPI via a Qualtrics survey.

Note:

All applications will be submitted from the OPI Montana Advanced Opportunities webpage.

All applications received by the OPI will be submitted to the Board of Public Education for qualification.

FUNDING

For fiscal year 2024, $4,00,000 was available for distribution of advanced opportunity aid to qualified districts. Applying and qualifying districts used $3,249,320.63 of these allocated funds. The FY 2024 payment will be distributed no later than October 1, 2023. When districts are funded, these state payments are deposited into the school district flexibility fund.

2023 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES:

HB257 increased the percentage of funding for Montana Advanced Opportunities schools as well as adjusts the percentages in which funding must be spent to support students’ post-secondary pathways.

For FY2025, an elementary district (K-8) would receive 4.5% of the total quality educator payment as defined in 20-9-306, MCA, from the prior year; a high school district would receive 30% of the total quality educator payment as defined in 20-9-306, MCA, from the prior year; and a K-12 district would receive 18% of the total quality educator payment as defined in 20-9-306, MCA, in the prior year.

Advanced opportunity aid may be expended by the district for any pupil from grades 6-12, subject to certain conditions specified in the bill. **A minimum of 75%** of the advanced opportunity aid payment must be used to address out-of-pocket costs for pupils or pupil’s family, as specified in the bill. The remaining funds, which is a **maximum of 25%** of the district’s advanced opportunity aid may be spent by the district to provide personalized K-12 career and vocational/technical education course offered by the district. Funded advanced opportunities can be offered in or out of the designated school hours.

A qualified district may supplement state funding of advanced opportunity aid with matched expenditures from its adopted adult education budget, not to exceed 25% of the district’s advanced opportunity aid payment. These funds must be used in the same manner the advanced opportunity aid payment is expended.

The following table shows the calculation to derive the appropriations for FY 2022, FY 2023 and FY 2024.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| FISCAL YEAR | Quality Educator Payment (prior year) | Elementary - 4.5% | High School - 30% | K-12 –  18% | Anticipated Appropriation |
| 2024 | $3,472 | $156.24 | $1,041.60 | $624.96 | $4,000,000 |
| 2025 | $3,566 | $160.47 | $1,069.80 | $641.88 | $4,000,000 |
| 2026 | $3,673 | $165.29 | $1,101.90 | $661.14 | $4,000,000 |

**Funding is provided on a “first come – first served” basis per HB 257 Section (3)(d).**

ANNUAL REPORT OF PROGRESS

A district’s annual report window of submission is: the first Monday in December through the second Monday in January. The following are the minimum annual report requirements for continued qualification:

* The number of pupils benefitting from advanced opportunity aid
* The number and type of credits and certifications or credentials earned by pupils who have been paid for by the program
* Projected growth of pupil participation
* Issues, experiences, and how issues are being addressed
* A report of progress towards measurable objectives under the district’s advanced opportunity plan and updates to the plan

**New to annual reporting for FY2025 under HB946 includes:**

* Total amount of money received and expended for the district
* For each opportunity afforded:
  + Description of opportunity
  + Identify if the opportunity occurred inside or outside of school
  + Number of students participating in the opportunity
  + Funds expended for each opportunity

**ASSISTANCE**

Technical assistance is available to any school district that has a need and is planning to apply for advanced opportunity funding. Krystal Smith, the program manager, is ready to support and assist your efforts: [krystal.smith@mt.gov](mailto:krystal.smith@mt.gov). The OPI participates in various conferences with Q&A sessions for districts. In addition, regularly scheduled Zoom webinars are offered for district staff. Finally, on-site technical assistance is also available. The remaining scheduled support Zoom webinars are: October 11th, November 16th, and November 30th, all from 1-2pm.