



Montana Advanced Opportunities Grant

Constitutional Players Convening

June 17, 2024

Introduction

The Montana Advanced Opportunities grant is a state-funded initiative designed to provide students with enhanced educational opportunities, preparing them for post-secondary education and the workforce. This review examines the grant's objectives, implementation, impact, and recommendations for improvement based on data and stakeholder feedback.

Objectives of the Grant

The primary objectives of the Montana Advanced Opportunities Grant include:

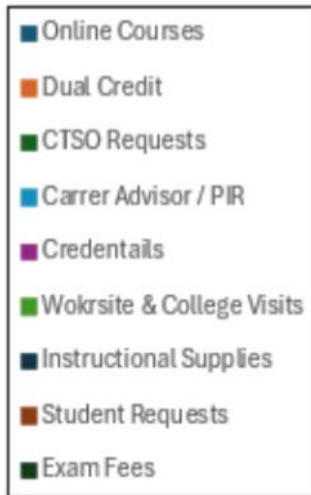
1. **Expanding Access to Advanced Courses:** Providing funding for junior and high school students to enroll in dual-credit courses, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and other advanced learning opportunities.
2. **Promoting Career and College Readiness:** Enhancing students' readiness for post-secondary education and careers through rigorous academic experiences, internships, and credentialing/certifications.
3. **Reducing Financial Barriers:** Assisting students with the costs associated with advanced coursework and post-secondary pathways, including tuition, fees, materials, and the costs associated with earning credits, certifications, and credentialing.

Implementation and Administration

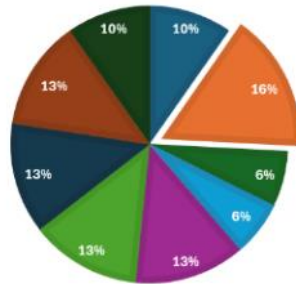
The grant is administered by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) in collaboration with local school districts. Key elements of the implementation include:

1. **Application Process:** Schools apply for grant funding through a streamlined process managed by OPI. The window opens the first Monday in December and closes the second Monday in January.
2. **Funding Allocation:** Funds are distributed based on a percentage of each district's total quality educator payment. Currently, elementary districts are funded at 4.5%, K-12 districts are funded at 18%, and high school districts are funded at 30%. Districts qualified for funding by the Board of Public Education, based on either their application or annual report, receive funding before October 1 of the fiscal year they're funded for. The order of funded districts is determined on a first-come, first-served basis.
3. **Monitoring and Reporting:** OPI monitors grant utilization and collects annual reporting from funded districts as required and outlined in HB257 and HB946 to ensure compliance and measured outcomes are communicated. Annual reports and data are posted to the Montana Advanced Opportunities [website](#).

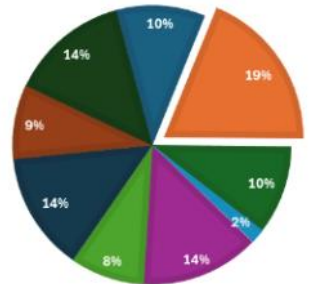
MTAO: Application of Funds



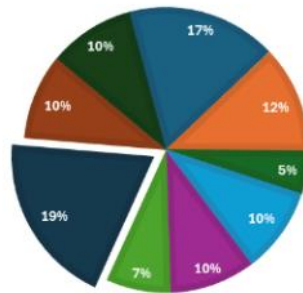
AA - 2023/2024 APPLICATION OF FUNDS



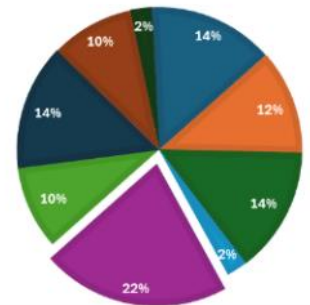
A - 2023/2024 APPLICATION OF FUNDS



B - 2023/2024 APPLICATION OF FUNDS



C - 2023/2024 APPLICATION OF FUNDS



Impact Assessment

1. Student Participation: Since its inception, the grant has significantly increased the number of districts and students it has benefited.

	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Number of Districts Funded	10	38	62	71	95
Number of Districts on Waitlist	18	0	0	0	9

2. Academic Achievement: Preliminary results suggest improved academic performance among grant recipients, with higher average scores in AP exams and increased college enrollment rates.
3. Equity and Access: The grant has effectively reached underrepresented students. It levels the playing field for students to ensure that their families' socioeconomic status doesn't impact their educational opportunities.

4. Feedback from Stakeholders: Students, parents, educators, district leaders, and community/industry members reveal high satisfaction with the grant, citing reduced financial hurdles for families and enhanced personalized post-secondary opportunities as key benefits.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Despite its successes, the Montana Advanced Opportunities Grant faces a few challenges:

1. Awareness and Outreach: Some students and families are unaware of the grant, particularly in remote areas. Enhanced outreach and communication strategies are continuing to be identified and utilized.
2. Sustainability of Funding: As demand for the grant grows in conjunction with the increased funding percentages from the 2023 legislative session, a waitlist for funding has developed again. Ensuring sustainable funding will be crucial. Options to address the funding would be to increase funds allocated to the grant or decrease funding formula percentage. Current budget constraints limit the program's expansion. \$4,106,510.45 would be needed in FY2025 to fund all qualified districts.

	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
Funding	\$750,000	\$1,315,479.73	\$1,759,628.07	\$4,000,000.00	\$4,000,000.00

3. Administrative Burden: Schools report administrative challenges in managing grant applications and reporting requirements due to school leadership turnover. Other districts, especially elementary, share they don't charge families for student career exploration or post-secondary pathway experiences. Enhanced outreach, communication and technical assistance for new school leaders.

Financial Allocations: 71 Districts

School District	FY2024 Payment Amount
Conrad High School	\$22,201.70
Conrad Elementary School	\$5,493.40
Billings High School	\$389,583.40
Billing Elementary School	\$139,543.72
Glendive Elementary	\$11,040.86
Dawson County High School	\$29,769.97
Great Falls Elementary Schools	\$93,522.14
Great Falls High Schools	\$233,026.75
Missoula High Schools	\$332,840.15
Missoula Elementary Schools	\$74,603.04
St. Ignatius K-12	\$41,809.82
Helena High Schools	\$215,423.71
Havre Elementary	\$16,211.46
Havre High Schools	\$46,684.51

Reed Point Elementary	\$1,028.06
Reed Point High School	\$6,093.36
Fromberg K-12	\$15,342.77
Hot Springs K-12	\$14,617.81
Alberton K-12	\$18,332.58
Superior K-12	\$22,342.32
Custer County High School	\$46,278.29
Darby K-12	\$20,311.20
East Helena K-12	\$90,037.99
Arlee Elementary	\$4,918.44
Arlee High School	\$16,946.83
Lewistown Elementary Schools	\$11,833.77
Fergus County High School	\$33,573.89
Fairfield Elementary School	\$3,003.71
Fairfield High School	\$15,259.44
Belgrade Elementary Schools	\$28,824.41
Belgrade High School	\$80,221.95
Grass Range Elementary School	\$1,063.21
Grass Range High School	\$4,701.78
Choteau HS	\$12,384.62
Choteau Elementary	\$3,431.03
St. Regis K-12	\$13,317.90
Hamilton K-12	\$83,849.01
Park High School	\$42,559.78
Livingston Elementary	\$13,918.64
Flathead High Schools	\$231,172.70
Kalispell Elementary	\$39,033.44
Westby K-12	\$6,874.56
Turner High School	\$5,461.11
Turner Elementary	\$1,055.71
Frenchtown K-12	\$84,369.60
Sweet Grass High School	\$19,030.03
Troy High School	\$14,408.45
Troy Elementary	\$4,322.69
Cayuse Prairie Elementary	\$3,825.22
Red Lodge High School	\$20,097.67
Red Lodge Elementary	\$4,660.64
Lockwood K-12	\$101,668.49

Ronan High School	\$29,901.21
Ronan Elementary	\$16,465.04
Belt High School	\$9,033.80
Belt Elementary	\$3,331.97
Sidney High School	\$36,061.23
Libby K-12	\$61,252.33
Wibaux K-12	\$13,430.39
Absarokee High School	\$10,301.42
Absarokee Elementary	\$2,142.05
Drummond High School	\$7,986.99
Corvallis K-12	\$80,494.85
Florence Carlton K-12	\$46,728.26
Joliet HS	\$12,473.16
Joliet Elem	\$3,538.05
Potomac Elementary	\$1,845.98
Stevensville Elementary	\$9,104.10
Stevensville HS	\$40,861.97
Whitefish Elementary	\$17,547.78
Whitefish HS	\$54,892.32

Previous years' allocations can be found [HERE](#) under "Financial Resources"

Upcoming: Developing Educator Capacity to Lead Educational Transformation and Advanced Opportunities

Project Overview:

- Knowledge Works and Montana OPI propose a collaborative initiative to advance education through **proficiency-based learning models**. This partnership leverages CGSA Grants, Comprehensive School Improvement Funding, and ESSER Leadership Funding.
- *The project's core objectives include developing educator capacity for leadership in educational transformation in proficiency and personalized learning, utilizing Montana's Innovative Through-Year Assessment, MAST.*
- Budget Allocation
 - Funding Resources:
 - CGSA - 4 years @~\$90,000 total
 - CSI - \$50-\$100k, Annually
 - ESSER Leadership - \$450K Initial

Contact Information:

Krystal Smith, Education Innovation Manager, OPI

Krystal.smith@mt.gov

406-594-1722