



Guidance Document Advanced Opportunity Aid

March 2021

Background: The **Montana Advanced Opportunity Act** was established with 20-7-1501-1503 and 1506, MCA, ([House Bill 387](#), 2019 legislative session), and provides state funding to school districts for expanding personalized learning opportunities for students to accelerate their career and college readiness and reduce out-of-pocket costs for families; empower students to actively engage in forming successful postsecondary pathways.

Accounting:

[20-7-1506](#), MCA

Recording Funds Received:

Fund 29
Revenue Code 3770

Recording Expenditures:

Fund 29
Program Code 377

Advanced opportunity aid **may be expended on any qualifying pupil** by the district subject to the following conditions:

(5)(a) at least 60% of a district's annual distribution of advanced opportunity aid must be spent or encumbered to address out-of-pocket costs that would otherwise, in the absence of such expenditure, be assumed by a qualifying pupil or the pupil's family as a result of participation in an advanced opportunity.

The trustees have full discretion to allocate expenditures among all pupils of the district or any select group of pupils, using any reasonable method they consider appropriate in their full discretion to meet the individual needs of each pupil who pursues an advanced opportunity.

The trustees may create free district initiatives of their own that satisfy the conditions of this subsection (5)(a).

Permissible expenditures include (5)(a):

- (i) dual credit tuition at any institution under authority of the board of regents;
- (ii) exam fees used for postsecondary advancement, placement, or credit, including but not limited to exam fees associated with the ACT, SAT, CLEP, career advancement, international baccalaureate, and advanced placement;
- (iii) fees charged by and any out-of-pocket costs of any business providing work-based learning opportunities to a qualifying pupil of the district, including the cost of workers' compensation insurance for work-based learning opportunities;
- (iv) exam and other fees of any industry-recognized credential or license for which a qualifying pupil is eligible as a result of participation in an advanced opportunity; and

- (v) the costs of participation for qualifying pupils that are identified as necessary, in the discretion of the district and upon request of a qualifying pupil, to maximize the benefit of an advanced opportunity for a qualifying pupil;

(b) Advanced Opportunity Aid Remaining that is not expended or carried forward for the purposes of subsection (5)(a) may be spent by the district to provide any K-12 career and vocational/technical education course offered by the district.

(6) A district qualified for funding under subsection (3) 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. The conditions under subsection (5) apply to any matched expenditures funded under this subsection (6).

Matched Expenditures from Adult Education:

Recording Expenditures:

Fund 17

Program Code 377

Applications:

The board of public education shall: (a) establish by rule the opening and closing dates for receipt of applications and annual reports.

To qualify for the funding and flexibilities in subsections (4) and (5), the board of trustees of a district shall submit an application that has been approved by motion of the board and signed by the presiding officer to the board of public education for approval of an advanced opportunity program on a form provided by the superintendent of public instruction.

Beginning in fiscal year 2021, the superintendent of public instruction shall provide advanced opportunity aid to each district qualified by the board of public education under subsection (3) by October 1.

Advanced Opportunity Aid must be distributed directly to the school district's flexibility fund under [20-9-543, MCA](#).

Additional questions can be directed to:

Mari Haefka at 444-9852 or Mari.Haefka2@mt.gov

Krystal Smith at 406-249-0758 or Krystal.Smith@mt.gov