



## Request for Application

### Parent Pathways Grant Program 2026

(Document #6100065123)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education (OPHE) is pleased to issue this request for applications for Parent Pathways Grant Program 2026 for eligible postsecondary institutions to fund scholarships and programming to address supports for parenting student success at postsecondary institutions. This document describes the requirements applicants will be expected to meet and the criteria that will be used to award funding.

The application submission window will open on **Monday, January 12, 2026**, and close at 5:00 PM on **Friday, February 6, 2026**. Grant agreement is from **June 1, 2026-June 30, 2027**.

Please complete and return your application submission via eGrants.

## Background

Studies indicate that one in five undergraduate college students is balancing the responsibilities of raising children while pursuing a postsecondary education<sup>1</sup> and almost half of these students do not earn a degree<sup>2</sup>.

Parenting students bear significant burdens and need additional support to navigate through their academic program successfully. In December 2022, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) released a policy report<sup>3</sup> following consultations with parenting students, postsecondary institution staff, subject matter experts, various state agencies, and community leaders. The Parent Pathways Learning Network (PPLN) concentrated on addressing the necessary support for food, childcare, housing, and financial aid. The results underscored the importance of integrating the firsthand experiences of parenting students into statewide policymaking. Governor Shapiro, in support of these findings, reallocated \$1.61 million in his 2025-2026 budget to support these students.

The Parent Pathways grant provides funding to institutions to directly support the persistence of these students in the form of tuition assistance, emergency funding, and wrap-around services.

<sup>1</sup>Young parenting students in higher education and the colleges that serve them ([childtrends.org](http://childtrends.org))

<sup>2</sup> [GAO-19-522 Highlights](https://www.gao.gov/assets/670/65222/GAO-19-522-Highlights.pdf). HIGHER EDUCATION: More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid

<sup>3</sup> [Parent-Pathways-Policy-Report.pdf](https://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/parent-pathways-policy-report.pdf)

## **Institution Eligibility**

For the purposes of this grant, “institution” shall include postsecondary institutions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with authorization to award an associate degree or higher academic degree, as defined in section 2001-J of the Public-School Code of 1949, as amended (24 P.S. §20-2001-J) and private licensed schools, as defined in the Act of December 15, 1986 (P.L. 1585, NO. 174). Only one proposal will be accepted from each institution. Applicants may not apply as a consortium. Only the main campus may apply, and funds can be disseminated to branches as the institution deems appropriate if awarded.

Institutions must be in a current good standing with PDE, including the completion/approval of all previous Final Expenditure Reports for any previous grant awards with PDE.

Proposals submitted by prior award winners should demonstrate how the program sustains or builds upon and enhances initiatives implemented by the institution in previous years. This would include providing qualitative and quantitative data, as available.

Priority of awarded program funds must be specific to Pennsylvania resident learners.

Parenting guidelines include biological and or legally dependent children, as defined by the United States tax code (under the age of 19 or 24 if a full-time student, or any age if permanently disabled, or a qualifying relative)<sup>4</sup>.

For priority consideration, institutions must be committed to serving parent learners by demonstrating that the campus has a proven network of resources and can show data and strong outcomes OR demonstrate the campus is actively working toward launching resources and programming in the upcoming year and can provide details of their upcoming work. Data and plans should be submitted in the uploads section of eGrants.

## **Funding and Eligible Programs**

The 2026 Parent Pathways Grant offers institutions the opportunity to apply for competitive funding not to exceed \$150,000.

Students receiving awarded program funds must have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and all gift aid is to be exhausted prior to utilizing funding. Final reporting will include a completed spreadsheet identifying the student's cost of attendance or gift aid as well as certification that funds were utilized to meet the Cost of Attendance (COA), which includes tuition, fees, housing, meals, books, and childcare. This includes all scholarships or emergency funded students.

Funds may be expended only on eligible programs, activities, and purposes identified in the proposal and approved by OPHE. Funds must be expended during the grant period and cannot be rolled over into a new grant year.

Funding requests can include a combination of any eligible program described in this request for application. Funding is not guaranteed to any applicant.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Dependents | Internal Revenue Service](#)

- Parent Services Grant Funding – to expand or implement parent programming, resources, and supports.
  - Parent Programming – Through an application, acceptance, attendance and program completion/graduation or open access to resources for parenting students, i.e., gift cards, basic need vouchers, etc.)
  - Funding can be used for, but is not limited to, wrap-around services for students, expansion of childcare facilities (furniture, shelving, supplies), staffing salary support for parent navigators, transportation support (Uber, public transportation vouchers), and other expansion of work already being accomplished on campus.
- Parenting Student Scholarships
  - Scholarships may not exceed the COA.
  - The funds should be applied as last dollar and cannot supplant any federal, state, or institutional gift aid.
  - Priority should be given to senior students. Institutions must implement an equitable application process to ensure all parenting learners have the opportunity to apply.
  - The institution must work with the financial aid office to identify parenting students who have completed the FAFSA and have financial need to ensure communication with eligible students. In instances where FAFSA data is incomplete, institutions should secure other verifying documents including, but not limited to, relevant tax forms outlining child dependents, birth certificates of child dependents, etc.
  - Tuition, fees, and textbooks, priority to 2<sup>nd</sup> year community college students or senior parenting students (including outstanding balances for tuition, fees and textbooks).
- Emergency Funding
  - For the use of stipends/emergency funding up to a maximum amount as determined by the institution.
  - Emergency aid can be given to students after they have received their aid package. If the amount is for an education or basic need (budget) component, it doesn't have to be included in estimated financial aid or COA.
  - Emergency Stipends can be utilized as an on-demand emergency account for students who have received a parenting student scholarship or may be utilized for additional parenting students who have not received the scholarship.
  - Institutions must establish an emergency application process specific to parent learners and publicize the availability of this opportunity. (i.e., childcare, transportation needs, utilities, food, other).

## Allowable Expenses

Due to limited funding, only items directly related to eligible programs and activities covered in this request for application will be funded by the Parent Pathways Grant.

## **Unallowable Expenses**

All budgets will be reviewed to evaluate appropriateness and connection to proposed grant activities and goals for parenting students.

## **eGrants Access**

Grant applications will be submitted through the eGrants system.

For access to the eGrants system and the related grant opportunities, prospective applicants should complete the [eGrants Request Form](#). Please note that the person completing the grant application must have signatory authority to negotiate grants and contracts for the institution and be able to upload documentation into the eGrants system. Institutions with eSign ability in eGrants will be able to utilize this feature to complete the application.

## **Grant Application Components**

The Parenting Pathway grant application consists of four sections: Applicant Information, Program Information, Narratives, and Budget.

### **Area 1. Applicant Information**

In this section, institutions will provide detailed contact information for the individual responsible for the grant application. It is important to provide any changes to the institution's contact to ensure continuity of information between PDE and the institution.

### **Area 2. Program Information**

#### **Project Summary**

In this section, the institution will provide the project overview, the grant amount requested, and the institution's specific plans to implement the proposed programs. Institutions should ensure their response is detailed and provide specific examples of how the initiative will be further developed on campus. These should also be related to the policy recommendations of the Parent Pathways Learning Network which include Data, Food and Housing Security, Child Care, and Financial Aid. Institutions are encouraged to upload letters of commitment for proposed partners and how they will be instrumental in the execution of the proposed goals/objectives. The narrative should also address how their IHE supports their parenting learners and how they are planning to implement or expand support in the coming year.

#### **Goals/ Objectives**

Using the table provided, the institution should choose from the dropdown menu the criteria area that will be focused on *with* the grant funds requested (Criteria choices are *Parent Services Funding, Parenting Student Scholarships, Emergency Funding*). After choosing the criteria area of focus, provide goals/objectives, current baseline and historical data, the projected outcome, and the projected amount of funds to be used for that area.

### **Area 3. Budget**

#### **Budget Narrative**

In this section, the institution will provide an explanation of the budget items above and how they relate to the objectives of your proposal. Ensure that the budget narrative demonstrates how funds will be used equitably for supporting the highest-risk community members.

#### **Instruction; Purchased Professional and Technical Services; Contracted Services; Supplies and Equipment**

The budget demonstrates a fiscally sound allocation of funds to successfully provide activities related directly to Parent Pathways initiatives. Round amounts to the nearest whole dollar. All budgets will be reviewed to evaluate appropriateness and connection to proposed grant activities and goals. **\*NOTE – If including travel expenses, please provide a description. Please use function code 1000-Instruction and object code of 500-Other Purchased Services for travel.**

#### **Budget Summary**

The budget demonstrates fiscally-sound allocation of funds to successfully provide activities related directly to Parent Pathways initiatives. Round amounts to the nearest whole dollar. All budgets will be reviewed to evaluate appropriateness and connection to proposed grant activities and goals.

#### **Compliance Objectives**

All grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement with PDE. All grant funds must be spent, and services performed/products received on or before **June 30, 2027**. PDE shall seek repayment of funds if it determines that funds were not utilized for the stated and approved purpose. Grantees will be required to submit reports in the eGrants system on forms supplied by PDE. Final Expenditure Reports must be submitted no later than **July 31, 2027**. Grantees are also expected to participate in PDE evaluation research, including staff interviews and student surveys.

### **Review Process and Scoring**

Applications will be reviewed on a competitive basis by a team selected by OPHE. All qualifying applications will be reviewed and scored based on a rubric. Each application will be scored twice by unique grant evaluators.

The criteria below will be evaluated to rank and score the applications according to the following attributes:

**Program Information Expectation:** Specific and comprehensive. Addresses all criteria. Complete, detailed, and clearly articulated information as to how criteria are met. Well-conceived and thoroughly developed ideas. Alignment and viability of goals and objectives to the PA Parent Pathways Learning Network recommendations.

**Budget Expectation:** Detailed and specific – aligns with the program information.

Program Information	Goals and Objectives	20 points
Program Information	Baseline Data	20 points

Program Information	Projected Outcomes	20 points
Budget Information	Budget Narrative and Detailed Budgets	40 points

Applications that do not include all the required information as stated in the application will not be considered for funding. All qualifying applications will be reviewed and scored based on a rubric. Each application will be scored twice by unique grant evaluators.

### **Award and Disbursement**

All grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement with OPHE. Once approved, the institution will invoice for payment of the grant. All invoices must be received within **30 calendar days** of notification of approval. Failure to meet the 30-calendar day deadline will result in an automatic forfeiture of funds.

All grant funds must be committed, and services performed by **June 30, 2027**. Awardees are encouraged to ensure all funding is spent by the end of the grant period. **NOTE: No-cost extensions will no longer be permitted.**

OPHE shall seek repayment of funds if it determines that funds were not utilized for the original stated and approved purpose. Institutions will be notified when their Final Expenditure Report is reviewed and approved. If unused grant funds are due to PDE, the institution will have **30 calendar days** to return funds.

### **Program Reporting and Evaluation**

Upon completion of the grant, grantees will be required to submit a final report on forms supplied by OPHE. **Final reports and correlating invoices/receipts must be submitted no later than July 31, 2027.** It is highly recommended to include various individuals involved in the grant administration activities coordinated across campus to ensure everyone is aware of the program reporting and evaluation deadlines.

### **Program Changes**

All requests for changes to the approved grant (changes in approved goals/objectives), must be submitted to the OPHE in writing no later than **August 3, 2026**. OPHE must approve program changes, or the grant will be rescinded.

### **Budget Revision Changes/Reallocation of Funds**

All requests for budget revision/reallocation of funds (shifting money from one function code/object code to another) must be submitted in eGrants, under the heading "Create Budget Revision". Once OPHE approves changes, you will be notified through the eGrants system.

**Please note: If you want changes in goals/objectives, see above heading "Program Changes".**

## **Technical Assistance**

Contact OPHE at [ra-edPPLN@pa.gov](mailto:ra-edPPLN@pa.gov) for technical assistance or to obtain answers to questions related to the grant application. All substantive questions must be submitted by **Tuesday, January 20, 2026**. Responses will be provided in the form of an FAQ distributed to all institutions on **Thursday, January 23, 2026**.

**Please ensure that staffing changes are communicated to our office, so your institution maintains access to the eGrants system.**

The deadline for submission is **Friday, February 6, 2026, at 5:00 pm**. Applications received after this time will not be considered.