STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER SPECIAL PROJECTS

EmpowerED Community of Practice
2025-26 GRANT GUIDELINES

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

PO Box 42495, Olympia, WA 98504

SBCTC.edu

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges reserves the right to make changes to this document due to, but not limited to, federal, state, or local legislation or policy changes.

Deadlines and Milestones

Milestone	Dates (subject to change)
Grant Start Date	July 1, 2025
Billing deadline for expenses incurred through December 31, 2025	January 31, 2026
Billing deadline for expenses incurred through March 31, 2026	April 30, 2026
Final budget revision deadline for FY26 Expenses	June 15, 2026
Final Billing deadline for all FY26 Expenses*	July 15, 2026
Final budget revision deadline for FY27 Expenses	September 15, 2026
Grant End Date	September 30, 2026
Billing Deadline for FY27 Expenses Only*	October 15, 2026
Final Report Deadline	October 15, 2026

All FY26 expenses must be billed by July 15, 2026, in line with the end of the fiscal year. Only FY27 expenses will be accepted in the final October 2026 invoice.

Grant Contacts

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Overview

In March 2025, Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges (WACTC) procured a vendor to serve as a common advising platform, supporting institutions in their Guided Pathways efforts. This tool is intended to help institutions realize:

1. A two-way integration with the system office (increasing access to data, and decreasing local work); and
2. A student support approach that centers students and activates commitments to equity.

The Washington Student Success Center, in support of statewide Guided Pathways reforms, invites Washington state community and technical colleges to apply for funding to accelerate preparation for and implementation of the new statewide student success and advising platform. This initiative aligns with Guided Pathways principles by streamlining student support, improving advising structures, and fostering equitable educational outcomes.

Select colleges will receive a grant for approximately $45,000, technical assistance, and access to a dedicated community of practice facilitated by Jobs for the Future (JFF). JFF's mission is to drive transformation of the US education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all. Our goal is to align education, workforce, and employment changemakers toward a shared goal: In 10 years, 75 million people currently facing systemic barriers to advancement will be employed in quality jobs.

The Student Success Center will award Special Project grants to colleges in the CTC system handpicked to partner with SBCTC on this scope of work. Once selected, the college will be invited to complete an application in OGMS.

Grant funding is intended to directly support additional costs encumbered by the college due to the work described in the scope of work. Applicants are encouraged to consult with their business office to determine appropriate payroll and benefits costs when applicable. All costs must be directly allocable to the outlined scope of work. These funds cannot be used for indirect expenses such as college overhead expenses or college reserves.

Purpose

The purpose of the EmpowerED CoP grant is to:

● Pilot the new statewide student success and advising platform with up to five (5) early adopter colleges.

● Gather and act on students and stakeholder feedback to inform our statewide approach.

● Identify and alleviate barriers to implementation at the local and state levels.

- Build out processes and recommendations for implementation that support colleges in adopting the platform.

How Does the College Apply

Colleges interested in applying must submit a completed application via email to Amunoo Tembo, *Student Success and Pathway Navigation Policy Associate,* at atembo@sbctc.edu no later than April 15, 2025. Late submissions will not be accepted. Attachments must be in Microsoft Word or PDF format. Please do not submit zipped files or other file types.

Successful applicants will:

- Demonstrate a clear commitment to improving advising policies, processes, and student outcomes, with a particular focus on supporting students of color.

- Use a data-informed strategy, including setting and accelerating population-specific targets.

- Ensure meaningful student involvement in the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of advising initiatives.

- Show a willingness to share insights and best practices with other Washington institutions, serving as a peer leader to help develop actionable, scalable implementation models.

Priority consideration will be given based on:

- Geographic diversity

- Institution size

- Student demographics

Selected colleges will be directed to access the 2025-26 Student Success Special Projects Grant through the Online Grant Management System (OGMS).

If you do not have an account, contact your organization's Security Contact for access; you will also need your Security Contact to give you permission for FY26.

Application Process

An informational webinar will be held on Tuesday, April 8th at 11:00am for prospective applicants. Join us to learn more about the project, funding opportunity, and application process.

SBCTC suggests writing applications in a word processing program and pasting the application content into OGMS. This will help ensure you do not lose any content if the OGMS application times out.

Application Review

All proposals meeting the minimum criteria will be evaluated by a review panel, which will assess applications based on the guidelines and recommend funding decisions to the State Board. **Colleges will be notified of their application status by April 30, 2025**.

Disclaimer

SBCTC reserves the right to refrain from granting to any or all applicants. Additionally, SBCTC reserves the right to add additional grant requirements to applicants meeting minimum criteria to receive funds, but that are deemed to be higher risk grantees. Additional requirements may include, but are not limited to, additional reporting requirements or additional monitoring to assess the applicant's ability to adhere to grant requirements. Any additional requirements will be outlined for individual applicants prior to applicants accepting any resulting grant funding.

Administering the Grant

Awarded colleges are responsible for implementing the new advising tool at their institution. This process includes assessing local needs, developing an understanding of current advising practices, defining a technology-enabled future state for advising, technical setup including configuration, training and professional development, and establishing a support structure for sustainability.

If at any time throughout the execution of the grant uncertainties, questions, or difficulties in administering the grant arise, contact the Program Administrator at the State Board for support.

Responsibilities of the College

The responsibilities of the college include, but are not limited to:

- Implement an individual instance of the new student success and advising platform in fall 2025.

- Assign a primary point person for communication and coordination of project activities with SBCTC and Jobs for the Future. This individual should have a sophisticated understanding of their institution, current student support and guided pathways practices, the vision for future student support practices, and related technology. This skill set and experience is likely to be found in a middle- to senior-level administrator, such as an AVP, Dean, or Director. Institutional culture, size, and capacity will also influence who is most appropriate for this role.

- Establish a local team to facilitate implementation of the tool that includes representation from across college functions (including IT, academic advising, career services, transfer, financial aid, academic support, faculty, student services, and/or academic affairs leadership). Having decision-makers on the team will expedite implementation.

- Recommend a student representative to serve on a state-wide student advisory board to be made up of student representatives from across the five (5) early adopter institutions.

- Provide a letter of commitment or statement from the college President/Chancellor.

- Participate in required activities including two (2) in-person meetings and quarterly virtual community of practice meetings.

- Engage in exploration and documentation of current/planned advising practices, policies, and related efforts to facilitate peer learning.

- Share basic descriptive data with the SBCTC as a member of the community of practice (enrollment, persistence, transfer, graduation, post-completion outcomes, etc.).

- Maintain accurate grant contact information in OGMS/OBIS and with the State Board.

- Ensure accurate and timely billing to SBCTC.

- Maintain secure records including a copy of all reports, applications, and grant related documentation.

- Complete a signed assurances document and upload it to the application in OGMS.

Community of Practice (CoP)

SBCTC will collaborate with Jobs for the Future to facilitate a community of practice for grantees. This community of practice will allow state and college leaders to engage with JFF experts on ways to embrace an iterative approach and to share insights and lessons learned from their respective positions, accelerating statewide application of effective technology-enabled advising practices.

CoP topics will be determined based on early coaching calls and what is learned during the advising audit with institutional teams. Topics might include:

- Implementing new software,

- Inclusive decision-making (working across functional areas),

- Student-centered design,

- Making data actionable and iterative (creating feedback loops between policy and practice),

- Creating inclusive spaces for student co-design and shared governance, and

- Creating stronger policy and practice feedback loops between colleges and the state.

CoP sessions will also include time for peer sharing, guidance, and feedback and include student participants.

Reporting

Monthly Updates: Grant recipients will share implementation progress through regular engagement and structured touchpoints with the project team. These updates are gathered through:

- **Campus site visits** with college implementation teams
- **Coaching and check-in calls** (beginning Winter 2026 and continuing throughout the project)
- **Community of Practice meetings and facilitated discussions**

These touchpoints allow the project team to:

- Monitor progress and implementation milestones
- Surface challenges and promising practices in real time
- Provide targeted coaching and technical assistance
- Reduce administrative reporting burden on colleges

Grant recipients should be prepared to discuss progress, lessons learned, and emerging needs during these engagements.

Final Report: A final narrative report is due October 15, 2026. All participating colleges will submit a final narrative report summarizing their EmpowerED CoP work, including implementation activities, outcomes, lessons learned, and reflections on sustainability.

Example Final Report Template

Funding Overview

Each participating institution will receive a minimum of $45,000 to support the following activities:

- Travel to community of practice events for shared learning and collaboration. *(Required)*

- Gathering student and stakeholder feedback to improve advising and student success initiatives. *(Required)*

- Build-out of advising processes to enhance student support services.

- Institutional capacity for data collection to inform decision-making.

- Professional development for faculty, advisors, and staff.

Student Compensation

Grantees must engage students in meaningful ways to inform local implementation efforts. Each college must designate a student representative to participate in the Student Advisory Board alongside representatives from five (5) early adopter institutions.

Colleges must fairly compensate students for their participation. State law allows student payments up to $200.00 per session per student (with approval, higher amounts may be considered). Alternative payment methods, such as contracts or institutional agreements, are also available for student compensation. It is recommended that colleges incentivize student participation in planned surveys and feedback sessions.

Budget & Invoicing Guidance

Budget Categories

The following list identifies eligible expenses for the General activity (also known as a budget line or line item). Expenses are broken out by category (also known as a budget column) as follows.

Salaries, Wages, and Benefits

Salaries, wages, and benefits for faculty and staff.

In your budget narrative, please be sure to include all position titles to be funded by the grant, percentages of effort/FTEF/hourly wage information, salary and benefit amounts, and a brief description of duties by position as they relate to the grant. If possible, please put each position on a new line of text.

Examples:

- 10 faculty stipends at $1,000 each for curriculum development = $10,000.

- Accessibility Specialist: 0.30 FTE = Salary: $24,000, Benefits: $12,000. Provides recruitment, retention, counseling, and accessibility support services for students.

- CTE Faculty for 40 hours at $35/hour = Salary: $1,400 total, Benefits: $560. Participation in an industry-based professional development experience.

Goods and Services

Items with an individual acquisition cost less than $10,000 or a useful life of less than one year or services of a routine nature necessary to carry out grant activities.

Examples: *instructional materials and tools, conference registration fees, copying, postage, printing*

Travel

Expenditures for transportation, meals, hotel, and other expenses associated with traveling related to allowable grant activities. Reimbursement for travel costs must be within OFM travel rates and regulations which can be found in the State Administrative and Accounting Manual (SAAM), Chapter 10.90. Please note, when the grant recipient (the college) reimburses travel under this grant using state funds, the same OFM travel rates and regulations must be applied.

Examples: *travel to related meetings, travel to trainings and professional development*

Contracts

Professional or technical services provided by a consultant (contractor) to accomplish a specific study, project, task, or other work statement. Please note that the rules that apply to the grantee (the college) under this grant must also be applied to the contractor.

Note*: Interagency agreements (contracts between two or more public entities) are considered services and should be budgeted and invoiced in the "goods and services" category.*

Capital Assets

Capital assets are defined as property or equipment with a useful life in excess of one (1) year and a per unit acquisition cost of $10,000 or more. Equipment purchased with grant funds shall remain the property of the grant recipient and their inventory control. ***All capital assets purchased with funds from this grant must be approved by the SBCTC prior to purchase.***

Funds may not be used to acquire equipment (including computer software) that results in a direct financial benefit to any organization representing the interest of the acquiring entity or its employees or any affiliate of such an organization.

Budget Revisions

SBCTC approval of a revised budget is required if there is more than a 10% variation in expenditure levels for any individual budget cell.

Budget revisions must be submitted to SBCTC via the Online Budget & Invoicing System (OBIS).

Final budget revision deadline: September 15, 2026

See the OBIS user manual (available in the Resources section of OBIS) for information on how to create and submit a budget revision. Be sure to update budget narrative answers as applicable.

Invoicing

Funds for this grant must be claimed on a reimbursement basis. No payments in advance of or in anticipation of goods or services provided under this grant shall be requested or paid. All costs must be reported for the period incurred.

Reimbursement requests must be submitted at least quarterly, but not more than monthly via OBIS. All costs must be submitted for reimbursement in accordance with the schedule shown below.

For expenses incurred	Invoice no later than
July – September	October 31, 2025
October – December	January 31, 2026
January – March	April 30, 2026
April – June*	July 15, 2026
July – September 2026*	October 15, 2026

*All FY26 expenses must be billed by July 15, 2026, in line with the end of the fiscal year. Only FY27 expenses will be accepted in the final October 2026 invoice.

All financial reports, including reimbursement requests, must be certified upon submission. Please read the certification statement within the OBIS invoice module and click on the check box to attest to the statement.

Invoices may be pulled for pre-payment review by SBCTC financial staff. If this is done, the invoice will be placed in "Audit" status in OBIS and the recipient institution will receive an automated email detailing the next steps. It is important to provide all requested back-up documentation as soon as possible, as OBIS will not allow additional budget revisions or invoices for the same award to be submitted while an invoice is in "Audit" status.

Grant Terms & Information

General

Funding for this project comes from the ECMC Foundation, a national organization committed to eliminating equity gaps in postsecondary completion by 2040.

Allowable Costs

All expenditures submitted for reimbursement under this grant must be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient administration of the approved grant program/project(s).

The following state and federal regulations must be followed:

Applicable Washington State Regulations

The State Administrative and Accounting Manual (SAAM) must be followed.

Expenditure Accounting

These funds must be kept in an account separate from all other funding sources.

For colleges these funds must be set up as a cost-reimbursement/as-incurred grant and be accounted for as grant and contract (fund 145). SBCTC reimbursement for this grant must be coded to 4020120. Set this grant up using the following information:

- Grant Type: Cost Reimbursable
- Sponsor ID: FIN00107
- Project Type: 02012
- Fund: 145
- Revenue Account: 4020120
- Contract Asset Account: 1010180

When entering this grant into ctcLink, be sure to select budget items based on the types of expenses the college will have. To view ctcLink budget items/accounts and expense accounts that roll up to each budget item/account, visit the ctcLink Project Tree QRG.

To add a new activity to an existing grant in ctcLink follow the Adding an Activity to an Active Grant QRG. Use this QRG to add new funding to the grant for a new activity or to add funds in an existing activity not previously entered in ctcLink.

Monitoring

SBCTC may schedule monitoring visits during and after the grant period to evaluate the fiscal progress and performance of the program and provide technical assistance. The purpose of monitoring is to ensure regulatory and contractual compliance on the part of grant recipients. To ensure compliance with grant requirements and to ensure that financial records support program expenditures, SBCTC staff will schedule on-site and/or virtual visits.

Open Licensing Policy

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Records Retention

Financial management systems shall reflect accurate, current, and complete disclosure of all cost expenses for grant activities. Grant recipients must maintain books and records, supported by source documentation, that sufficiently and properly reflect the source of funds and all costs expended for program purposes. These records and financial statements are subject to inspection, review, reproduction, and/or audit by SBCTC or its designee for at least six years after the dispersal of funds, the termination or expiration of the contract, or the resolution of litigation or audits related to the program, whichever is latest. Additional information on records retention may be found in Chapter 7 of the SBCTC Policy Manual.

Termination

This grant may be terminated by the SBCTC upon giving notice in writing to the grant recipient at least thirty (30) days in advance of the date of termination. If the grant is terminated for any reason, all reports and data gathered by grant recipient prior to termination shall at the option of the SBCTC, become the property of the SBCTC. If termination shall occur pursuant to this section, reimbursement to grant recipient shall be made on the basis of work performed prior to the effective date of termination as mutually agreed upon by both parties. Determination of final adjustments, either payments or refunds, shall also be mutually agreed upon by both parties.
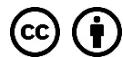
Termination for Cause

If for any reason, the grant recipient violates any terms and conditions of the Adult Basic Education program, SBCTC will give the grant recipient notice of such failure or violation. Grant recipient will be given the opportunity to correct the violation or failure within thirty (30) days. If failure or violation is not corrected, this grant may be terminated immediately by written notice from SBCTC.

Savings

In the event funding from state, federal, or other sources is withdrawn, reduced, or limited in any way after the effective date of this contract and prior to normal completion, the SBCTC may terminate the grant under the "Termination" clause, without the thirty-day

notice requirement, subject to renegotiation at the SBCTC's discretion under those new funding limitations and conditions.