



Use of Provisos for Contracts with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to Increase Financial Aid Applications: A Guide for Community and Technical Colleges

Background

The 2022 Washington State Legislature allocated \$2.72M (\$80,000 each to 34 colleges) for colleges to contract with community-based organizations to assist with financial aid access and support in communities. The funds will be allocated to colleges for use beginning July 1, 2022 and must be expended by June 30, 2023. It is anticipated that the funding will be annual. This guidance is intended to assist colleges in deploying these funds and connecting their use with broader financial aid outreach efforts in our sector and across sectors.

Definition of a CBO

From federal law (20 USC § 7801): The term “community-based organization” means a public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that— (A) is representative of a community or significant segments of a community; and (B) provides educational or related services to individuals in the community.

Aim Higher Washington Training Project

The Aim Higher Washington (AHW) training collaboration is a component of the statewide, multi-pronged approach to increase financial aid application completion across Washington. The AHW training project is a cross-sector effort to train professionals and stakeholders in financial aid basics, navigation, and other skills so that training recipients can in turn provide financial aid training and assistance in their schools, colleges, and communities. To date, more than 800 Washingtonians have received this training. Aim Higher Washington can provide training and resources for colleges and the CBOs they engage with. The AHW steering group has representation from community colleges, higher education associations, 4-year institutions (both public and independent), CBOs, and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). More information can be found at the [WSAC Aim Higher Washington](#) website.

Identifying and Selecting CBOs

The purpose of the proviso funding is to increase financial aid knowledge and support in the communities that our colleges serve. To the extent that colleges already engage with CBOs that share this purpose, it is advisable to contract with them in order to build on existing collaborations. In cases where relationships with CBOs are not in place, the following considerations may be helpful in identifying CBOs to contract with:

- The proviso seeks to support college efforts to cultivate relationships with trusted messengers who play key roles in their communities
- Increasing financial aid knowledge and navigation is critical in low-income communities and communities of color, where the largest equity gaps in college-going and completion exist
- AHW partners include statewide and regional CBOs that share the goal of advancing college-going culture and increasing access to financial aid; we can connect colleges with those CBOs

Potential Uses of Contracted Funds

The proviso requires that colleges “spend” their allocations by contracting with CBOs. Although SBCTC requested funding for college staffing and other administrative costs, that funding was ultimately not provided in the proviso. CBOs have flexibility in how they use the funds, however there are two limitations. First, since these are state funds, CBOs must follow rules for allowable expenditure of state funds. Second, colleges and CBOs will need to develop a scope of work and identify contract outcomes, a process that will further focus the work of the CBOs.

Some examples of allowable expenditures of the state funds provided in this proviso are:

- Staffing costs at CBOs
- Training costs for CBO staff
- Computers, smart devices, internet access
- Promotion of activities and publication of materials
- Translation services

These examples are not intended to be a complete list. College business offices are a resource for determining allowable expenditures in the contracts.

Reporting

There is no Legislative reporting requirement attached to the proviso funds, however SBCTC anticipates we will be asked to provide an update to the Legislature. SBCTC will ask colleges to summarize their activity on an annual basis. Ultimately, the outcomes desired are increased financial aid applications, increased enrollment, and more students receiving financial aid. The [WSAC FAFSA data Tableau](#) is a resource for colleges in this reporting effort.

House Bill 1835 Pilot Project

Four community colleges will be collaborating with SBCTC, school districts, libraries, and CBOs in a pilot program to increase financial aid applications in low FAFSA/WASFA completion Education Service Districts. Although it is not a requirement, it is recommended that those four colleges align their pilot program efforts and use of these proviso funds.

Contact Us

Please do not hesitate to contact SBCTC or Aim Higher Washington at WSAC for consultation and assistance in this effort.

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