



Request for Proposals: Adult-Focused State Promise Programs

Helping more adults achieve post-high school education is critical to Lumina's efforts to ensure 60 percent of working-age people have college degrees, certificates, or another credential by 2025 that prepares them for informed citizenship and success in a global economy. Among [today's students](#), nearly four of every 10 are older than 25. More than a quarter of them are raising children. And 58 percent are holding jobs while going to school. Too many state systems of higher education and individual colleges and universities are not designed to meet their needs. Lumina Foundation has been working with several states to address this challenge – and we are eager to expand this network.

Since 2016, Lumina has supported the [Adult Promise Initiative](#) through grants awarded to states working to improve residents' education levels beyond high school by making clear financial commitments and providing other forms of support benefiting adult students. The first cohort of states has been supported in partnership with State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) and includes Indiana, Maine, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Washington. These states are pairing a clear financial promise to adults who are pursuing education beyond high school with communications strategies and student services such as coaching, recognition of existing knowledge and skills, and guided degree pathways. These statewide campaigns, tailored to each state's unique situation and talent needs, work toward the shared aim of increasing education levels among adults. Some states focus on adults with some education beyond high school who have not yet earned a degree or other credential, while others focus on adults with nothing beyond a high school diploma or on both populations.

To build on this momentum, Lumina will fund a second cohort of Adult Promise states. We anticipate three to six states will be selected for funding and other support through an open, competitive process.

RFP Overview

Eligible applicants. Single state agencies, groups of state agencies with a state working together, coalitions of institutions and/or community organizations, or any combination of these entities may submit proposals. Current Adult Promise grantees are not eligible to receive new funds.

Only one award per state will be granted. Lumina encourages collaboration within states when developing initial letters of intent. If multiple letters of intent are received from a state, Lumina will alert the different parties of each other's proposals. If a state is invited to the formal proposal process, the foundation will require the entities to submit a joint application.

Grant amounts and matching-fund expectations. We estimate awards will range from \$100,000 to \$400,000 over 18 months, starting in August 2018 and ending by early 2020. Grant amounts will vary based on the state's budget request and the quality of the proposal. All grants that Lumina awards will have an expectation of either a financial or in-kind match intended to help grantees leverage additional support for this work and help sustain the effort beyond the period of the grant award.



Use of funds. Lumina funds should be spent on expenses related to building in-state partnerships necessary to launch proposed programs or to expand existing efforts. For example, states in the first Adult Promise cohort are using funds for outreach to adults, marketing, and other communications; programs that support adult students; and efforts to increase retention and completion among adults who enroll in post-high school programs. Lumina funds cannot be spent on scholarships, creating scholarship funds, or other forms of direct support to students.

Other benefits. Selected states will join a network of states, receive start-up materials from SHEEO, and be offered technical assistance from SHEEO and other content experts at live and virtual meetings and events. Lumina also might highlight states' achievements.

Selection Process

Selection of the second cohort of Adult Promise states will take place in two stages. **First, an interested applicant must submit a letter of intent of no more than three, single-spaced pages using 11-point font by noon EST Friday, June 22.** The strongest applicants will be invited to submit a formal application in July.

Criteria. Lumina Foundation, in consultation with SHEEO, will invite applicants to the second round of the selection process based on their ability to address the following criteria:

- ***A state-level financial commitment to adult students pursuing education beyond high school, with a special focus on eliminating racial disparities in education outcomes.*** We will consider states that have implemented and seek to expand an existing policy that makes tuition and fees more affordable for adults and states that are seeking to build momentum and support for a new effort.¹ We also will look at how states have assessed or plan to assess the needs of and target growing populations, with a focus on ensuring access to programs for African-Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians and their eventual completion of these programs.
- ***A clear articulation of state readiness for the work.*** We seek states that are excited about the potential for increased numbers of adults with education beyond high school to benefit their economies, communities, and individual residents. Applications should provide a clear explanation of their states' plans for changing public policies and institutional practices in ways that break new ground. States should explain how they have catalogued or plan to catalogue programs that serve adult learners. States should also explain how they would use the grant to identify barriers faced by prospective adult students and remove them. Finally, states should explain activities that potential grant funds would support to increase adult participation and success in post-high school education.

¹ Each state should describe the conditions necessary to advance the proposed work, including any changes that will be necessary to existing policies. However, Lumina's funds cannot be used to support lobbying or any related activities, including but not limited to supporting or opposing legislation.



- **Stakeholder buy-in.** We will consider how well the state will create buy-in among likely participating institutions as well as prospective support from other partners such as businesses and community organizations.
- **Budget.** States should put an overall budget request in their letters of intent. These budgets will have to be itemized until the formal application phase.

Next Steps

Lumina will host a webinar on at 3 p.m. EST Wednesday, June 6, to discuss the RFP process, allow current Adult Promise state grantees to share their experiences, and provide an opportunity for any potential applicants to ask questions. Please register here:

<https://luminafoundation.webex.com/luminafoundation/onstage/g.php?MTID=ec6cc94fb55a5b739a5bf24f72c8a7f6d>

Prospective applicants should consider using SHEEO's [Adult Promise Design Template](#) to inform their letters of intent. Summaries of each of the pilot plans from the first cohort of states are available [here](#).

Letters of intent should be sent to AdultPromise@luminafoundation.org by Noon EST on Friday, June 22. We will notify applicants in July about the statuses of their requests. Prospective applicants also may email this address with questions in advance of submitting letters of intent.