

Wyoming Community College Commission

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CARES Wyoming College Grant

Guidance

**Revised August 12, 2020 for clarification of certification date and electronic applications as well as clarification of qualifications in FAQ.*

***Revised August 18, 2020 for clarification of Unmet Costs related to TCA rather than Unmet Need, which includes EFC when using FAFSA.*

****Revised August 24, 2020 for the clarification that costs must be prorated for less than full-time per the AG's Office.*

Overview

This grant program will provide financial assistance to students who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The grants will cover expenses other than tuition and fees limited to housing and meals for students attending the University of Wyoming, the state's community colleges, private and technical colleges. The grant also provides marketing funds for the institutions to ensure the post-secondary institutions communicate with existing and potential students.

The Governor has allocated an initial \$50 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to the CARES Wyoming College Grant Program, which will assist students and their families who have been financially impacted by the coronavirus health emergency. The funding will help improve student retention at the state's higher education institutions and technical colleges to support the state's economic recovery.

To participate, students must be U.S. citizens who are either current or new students at UW, one of Wyoming's community colleges or any qualifying private or technical college located in Wyoming. Full-time students will receive **funding toward housing and meals** at each institution for the fall semester, while part-time students will receive a prorated amount according to the number of enrolled credit hours up to full-time. The financial assistance will be distributed as "last-dollar-in" financial aid, after other merit and need-based aid is applied, including scholarships and grants.

Funding is permitted for credit certificate or degree programs at any of the Title IV eligible and accredited post-secondary institutions that meet federal compliance requirements by the US Department of Education in Wyoming. Any private or non-profit Title IV eligible and

accredited credit granting post-secondary institution must seek eligibility through the Wyoming Community College Commission.

Funding is eligible only for students enrolled in courses starting before December 31, 2020. Courses must have been scheduled to begin prior to the aforementioned end date. As such, changes in course schedules for the purposes of meeting the deadline are not permitted. Funding may not be obligated nor encumbered for 2021 and may not be carried forward for expenditure in 2021.

Eligibility

US citizens impacted by COVID-19 who attend a Wyoming post-secondary institution “In-residence” including courses that are conducted synchronous as a substitute for in-person classes in order to mitigate COVID-19. Students must be Title IV eligible to receive funding per the CARES Act legislation. A certification of verification for each applicant is required and must be completed and processed through the applicable post-secondary institution’s Financial Aid office. Certification document is attached. Student certification document may be customized per institution to include logos and institutionally relevant information. The document may be converted to an electronic format and students may certify electronically only if authentication of student signature may be validated through a unique identifier or Single Sign-On portal. Institutions will be subject to audit requirements for student authentication.

Award Amount

Grant awards are limited to no more than the cost of food and housing per student that is not covered by other grants or scholarships for fall 2020 academic term. Award amount must be prorated for less than full-time attendance. Out-of-state students are eligible up to the amount of food and housing for Wyoming resident students for the institution of attendance. Students eligible for this aid may also be eligible for the CARES Wyoming Adult Grant in which CARES Wyoming College Grant is last dollar funding and limited to only unmet costs for housing and food costs after the CARES Wyoming Adult Grant (if applicable).

Institutional Process

Final Emergency Rules will be promulgated to administer this funding by the Wyoming Community College Commission, which is anticipated to occur on or around August 28, 2020. The Wyoming Community Colleges and University of Wyoming may proceed with certifying eligible students and packaging this aid for students using “P” pending approval beginning August 11, 2020. Other institutions must first seek eligibility through the WCCC.

The student eligibility and award amount must be tracked weekly by each institution and reported to the WCCC. Institutions must certify eligible students for the eligible academic term(s) no later than November 1, 2020. Funding will be administered through the WCCC on a reimbursement basis to the institution after the institution certifies student eligibility by no later than November 1, 2020.

Institutions are subject to federal audit requirements per the US Treasury Guidance.

FAQs

1. Given the “Unmet Costs” calculation for food and housing as a component of Total Cost of Attendance (TCA), does that mean a FAFSA is required? In other words, does the FAFSA just need to be completed to generate an accurate EFC (meaning, verified if selected for verification) or do they need to be eligible for Title IV aid?

Response: No. Per the CARES Act, the student must be Title IV eligible. However, institutions are not required to have students complete the FAFSA. Post-secondary institutions may use an alternative acceptable and US Department of Education recognized method for determining Unmet Costs for food and housing. Unmet Need has specific terminology for Title IV funds including calculation of Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is not required for these funds. Unmet Costs is calculated based on TCA for food and housing costs less other aid still available after other TCA costs are covered excluding loans and work-study. Individual institutions may require FAFSAs as their preferred method to determine Unmet Costs.

2. Are students eligible for credit and non-credit programs alike? If only for-credit programs, are they limited to just federal aid eligible programs?

Response: This grant is for credit only programs that lead to a credit certificate or degree. Funds may be expended for programs that have not received federal aid eligibility.

3. May this grant be used for students who also receive a CARES Wyoming Adult Grant? If so, which grant supersedes the other since they are both "last dollar" grants? Which takes precedence?

Response: This grant may be used in combination with the CARES Wyoming Adult Grant. The Adult Grant would be used first as a broader eligibility including childcare and transportation up to TCA. Should an eligible student still have unmet costs limited to only food and housing, the CARES Wyoming College Grant could then be applied.

4. “All other sources of tuition assistance first” - does that mean "gift" aid only (grants and scholarships), or does it include work-study eligibility assigned to the student, or student loans that the student has elected to borrow before this grant as announced? If so, does this mean institutions should calculate similarly as other aid and deduct from the student's calculated TCA and unmet costs in order to ensure grant funds are applied before a student takes on debt or having to work?

Response: Correct. Work-study and loans are not applicable. All other forms of grants and scholarships must be applied first including the CARES Wyoming Adult Grant. Only after all other funds are applied students may receive this grant if there is still an unmet cost for food and housing.

5. May institutions prorate the unmet food and housing costs based on enrollment of less than full-time?

Response: Yes, institutions must prorate for less than full-time enrollment based on TCA and any unmet food and housing costs that still exists after other sources of aid are applied excluding loans and federal work-study.

6. Is it accurate that the institution may need to reduce the grant amount, not solely because of enrollment status at less than full time, but because there is no remaining unmet costs for food and housing?

Response: Correct. The students must still have unmet costs to qualify for grants funds.

7. If the student has an unpaid bill from a prior term, but qualifies for this grant by meeting all eligibility requirements, can it be used to satisfy the prior bill?

Response: No. The grant is only for impacts due to COVID-19 for fall 2020 academic term(s).

8. Is there a particular award/transmission code the school should create to disburse the grant to the student's account (standardized between all schools for WCCC reporting)?

Response: Yes, the WCCC will provide information once the DG-IRC determines the code. This is anticipated no later than August 17, 2020.

9. Is this grant for the full academic year, meaning, a fall and spring disbursement? If funds are left at the time of the spring semester start, can a new enrollment get half an annual award for just the spring semester?

Response: No. This aid is only for the fall 2020 academic term(s).

10. Can a school award in arrears? Meaning, if the spring semester starts and the student finally submits/completes a FAFSA and is eligible, providing there's money left, can we award fall retroactively?

Response: No. This aid has an expenditure deadline of December 31, 2020. All eligible students must be identified and certified no later than November 1, 2020.

11. Will institutions get an individual allocation of funds, or do we draw from the same pot? If the same pot, how will we know how much is left in real time?

Response: No. The funding will be provided to the institutions on a reimbursement basis. The WCCC will be tracking the use of funds to ensure an accurate accounting of the funds and to revert any anticipated unused funds for the State to continue mitigating the impacts of COVID-19.

12. Any cut-off date to award after the semester starts?

Response: Yes, no later than November 1, 2020, for fall courses for eligible students.

13. Does a school disburse in good faith and is reimbursed by WCCC after the semester ends (like Hathaway, WY Works, etc)?

Response: Yes, see number 11.

14. To be clear on the "in-residence" course part, does "synchronous delivery" count as "in-residence"? Simplified, "synchronous delivery" is simply broadcasting the course on the day and time of the class via Zoom, so a student does not have to be physically on campus. Several courses at the post-secondary institutions will be delivered this way during fall 2020 due to COVID and are not considered "online" by HLC, so will these courses still be considered in-person?

Response: Yes, In-residence is applicable to the CARES Wyoming College Grant and is not applicable to the Adult Grant. Eligible students must meet the In-residence requirement of at least one in-person class.

15. There will be a paper application the school will give to a student to complete, then the College will retain the application, yes? Will WCCC need to see the application?

Response: Yes, there is required application/certification that each institution must use to determine student eligibility. The WCCC will not need to see the applications. Each institution will be required to certify to the WCCC that all students met the eligibility requirements. Institutions may convert the paper application/certification to an electronic format and allow for electronic submission provided the institution can verify by unique identifier such as a legal document signature software or student portal with Single Sign-On capacity. Institutions will be subject to federal auditing requirements related to the certification and should maintain the records including the ability to authenticate student signatures.

16. Do the Financial Aid Offices of the institutions have to confirm, verify, or otherwise document a student's attestation that they or their families have been negatively impacted due to COVID-19 such as unemployed or underemployed?

Response: Yes, this is part of the application and certification process.

17. Is an annual award disbursed in one lump sum or divided between fall & spring semesters?

Response: Awards are limited to only fall 2020 semester and may not be divided or encumbered for future use.

18. Any refund calculation required if the student drops, withdraws, is administratively withdrawn, or otherwise does not complete the semester?

Response: The certification requirement due no later than November 1, 2020 (unless otherwise approved by the WCCC), will be the only requirement.