

# Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP

Application Deadline: February 7, 5PM EST



## Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP Frequently Asked Questions

### General Information:

1. **What is the difference between the Request for Proposals (RFP), the Notice of Interest (NOI) and the Invitation-only Proposal?**

The RFP is the phrase being used to describe the entire two-phase application process: Phase 1 is the NOI and Phase 2 is the Invitation-only Proposal. Organizations who submit an NOI in Phase 1 will be considered for Phase 2: Invitation-only Proposal.

2. **When is the Notice of Interest (NOI) due?**

An applicant's NOI must be submitted by February 7, 2025, at 5 PM EST. No exceptions.

3. **Where can I find additional information about the RFP?**

There are several resources available. Please refer to the following link to the Helios website:

<https://www.helios.org/latest/news/request-for-proposals-florida-student-postsecondary-success/>

- RFP FAQ document, which will be periodically updated as needed.
- Glossary of Terms
- Notice of Interest Evaluation Criteria
- Helios Community Investment Impact Metrics
- Recording of the January 15<sup>th</sup> webinar and the January 29<sup>th</sup> NOI Question and Answer session.

All inquiries regarding the RFP process, including technical questions about SmartSimple (the application submission platform) should be sent to [FloridaRFP@helios.org](mailto:FloridaRFP@helios.org). Applicants can pose questions via email for clarification about the questions asked in the NOI and Invitation-only Proposal; Helios will not provide guidance on the specifics of an individual application via email. Questions related to specific content or strategy in your proposal can be asked during the scheduled NOI Q&A webinar (January 29<sup>th</sup>).

**\*\*NOTE:** If applicable, updates to resources will be made available for Phase 2.

**4. Can I ask questions during the Notice of Interest Process?**

Yes, there are two ways you can submit clarifying questions. There will be an NOI Q&A session on January 29<sup>th</sup> where you can pose your questions, or you may send them up until 5 pm on February 5, 2025 to [FloridaRFP@helios.org](mailto:FloridaRFP@helios.org). Please note that questions related to specific content or strategy in your proposal should be elevated during the scheduled NOI Q&A session(January 29<sup>th</sup>) and will not be answered via email. All questions related to the NOI process should be submitted on or before 5 pm on February 5<sup>th</sup>.

**5. Will there be a presentation or interview stage?**

In Phase 2 of the RFP, invited applicants may have the opportunity to meet with Helios staff to present their proposal and answer questions.

**6. What happens after a proposal is selected for an award?**

If your proposal is selected for an award, the primary contact will be notified and our team will begin to work with you on an agreement, which includes a reporting and payment schedule.

**7. Is there minimum eligibility criteria required by Helios for an organization to receive a grant?**

All organizations receiving potential funding must meet the following criteria.

- Be a qualified 501(c)(3) organization (subtypes 509(a)(1) and 509(a)(2) only) or a public entity (e.g., city government, public school district, etc.) Applicants

may utilize a fiscal agent to assist in the submittal process. The fiscal agent's information must be provided in Phase 1 of the RFP. Please be advised that formal evidence of the relationship (Memo of Understanding, Letter of Agreement) will be required if approved for Phase 2 of the RFP.

- Must be in operation for at least two fiscal years.
- Must be in good standing with the IRS and Florida Division of Corporations.
- Provide services or programs within one (or more) of our six focus counties (Hillsborough, Pinellas, Orange, Osceola, Broward, and/or Miami-Dade).
- Have, and be in compliance with, an Equal Employment Opportunity Policy.

**8. Can existing partners with Helios apply through the Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP for Phase 1: Notice of Interest and, if invited, Phase 2: Proposal?**

We are seeking to identify “new” partners, which we define as organizations that do not have an open, active grant agreement with Helios. Organizations with Helios event sponsorships, emergency grants like hurricane relief, or donations made without a grant agreement, who do not have open, active grant agreements meet the criteria of a new partner and are eligible to apply. Applicants in the following scenarios are also eligible to apply:

- The applicant's current Helios grant agreement is ending within the next six months. However, any new application through the RFP should not be an extension of a project Helios already funded.
- The applicant is a current Helios grantee but is acting as a fiscal agent for another organization. In this instance, the fiscal agent organization would be eligible to apply through the RFP.
- The applicant is in a separate area of a larger institution that currently has a Helios grant (e.g., another college or center within a large university).

The intent of this RFP is to be inclusive, while also establishing new relationships with entities currently unfamiliar to Helios. If you have any questions about whether you qualify as a new partner, please send a description of your situation to [FloridaRFP@helios.org](mailto:FloridaRFP@helios.org).

**9. Who is Helios seeking to fund through the Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP?**

- Organizations based in Florida, meaning the organization is either incorporated in Florida or has a permanent physical presence (i.e., staff and/or office) in Florida.
- Educational organizations that provide instruction, training or improvements to an individual’s capabilities (e.g., school, college or university); education support organizations (e.g., Local Education Foundations, reform support organizations or other education-related intermediaries); or groups that provide instruction to the public on subjects useful and beneficial to the community (e.g., cultural organizations or community-based organizations).
- Programs and organizations within Helios’ focus counties, including Hillsborough, Pinellas, Orange, Osceola, Broward and/or Miami-Dade.
- If the organization focuses on supporting college students, the colleges or universities should be within one of these counties or the students being served at the colleges or universities should come from one or more of these counties.

**Project Application:**

**10. What do you mean by “historically underrepresented students”?**

For the purposes of this RFP, historically underrepresented students are those that data show are least likely to enroll in college and/or complete college and this gap has been demonstrated over time. Gaps for students can also be found in evidence-based college enrollment and college completion data in categories such as, “participating in and/or obtaining credit for accelerated coursework,” “high rates of chronic absenteeism,” or “low FAFSA completion rates.” Helios will rely on applicants to provide the data to support their identification of historically underrepresented students as aligned to our key metrics and outcome areas.

**11. Does the proposal have to align with any metrics?**

Yes. Helios has Community Investment Impact Metrics, a system of quantifiable metrics for each pillar to measure the effectiveness and impact of a project. Each proposal should include and align to at least one metric. The comprehensive list of Helios'

Impact Metrics for College Going and Postsecondary Attainment can be viewed at <https://www.helios.org/latest/news/request-for-proposals-florida-student-postsecondary-success/> under Resources.

**12. Is Helios focused on a particular age-range of students?**

Proposals should align to at least one of the Helios Community Investment Impact Metrics in the areas of College Going and/or Postsecondary Attainment and serve a population of students directly impacted by activities that improve outcomes in those areas. Based on the Helios Community Investment Impact Metrics, we expect that proposals will serve students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and/or traditional college-age students (ages 18-25). Helios is not focused on bringing working-age adults (ages 25-64) into college.

**13. The proposal focuses on college enrollment and postsecondary attainment, but does this also include Helios' focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency as a means to college readiness?**

For the purposes of this RFP, we are not considering proposals aligned to our 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading pillar. If you have an interest in that area, please send an email to [FloridaRFP@helios.org](mailto:FloridaRFP@helios.org).

**14. Since high school graduation or GED attainment is an essential step toward college-going, can our proposal focus on increasing high school graduation or GED attainment rates?**

While high school graduation or obtaining a GED are important steps toward postsecondary education, they do not serve as key predictors by themselves for college enrollment or success in postsecondary education. Successful proposals will include other key activities and metrics as outlined in the Helios Community Investment Impact Metrics in College Going and/or Postsecondary Attainment.

**15. Can scholarships be included as a primary activity and budgetary expense?**

Supporting financial access to college remains a high priority for Helios and scholarships are an allowable expense in the RFP. However, research shows that financial support alone is not enough to get students to and through college. Additional student supports are needed to help students access and graduate from college.

**16. Can our proposal focus on students going into a postsecondary career technical certification pathway and not one that will end in an associate or bachelor degree?**

Helios is supportive of all postsecondary education pathways. Helios' articulated focus is on assisting students completing 2- or 4-year degrees. If your project clearly links a career technical certification pathway to 2- or 4-year degree completion, we will consider proposals with that focus. The ultimate goal of the project focused on degree attainment should be 2- or 4-year degree completion.

**17. How will the Notice of Interest submissions be evaluated?**

A description of the evaluation criteria can be found at <https://www.helios.org/latest/news/request-for-proposals-florida-student-postsecondary-success/> under Resources.

**18. Can I save my work in the application and come back to it later?**

In the Phase 1: Notice of Interest form, all information must be entered and submitted at one time. You can minimize the browser window/tab and come back to the form, but you cannot *close out* of the browser window and come back later; **your information will not have been saved.**

**Budget:**

**19. How should I format my project budget?**

In the Phase 1: Notice of Interest, the project budget information requested will be provided in basic narrative form.

In the Phase 2: Invitation-only Proposal, the project budget information should be submitted in the Excel template provided by Helios with a detailed narrative budget section, organized by year.

- The project budget template includes:
  - All revenue expected for this project (pending and approved)
  - All projected expenses by clear categories, such as staff/salaries, supplies, convenings, project evaluation, etc.
  - Indirect costs should not exceed 10% and should be added as an individual line item, if applicable.

**20. What is the maximum budget amount my organization can request?**

Helios is not setting a maximum budget request amount. We want organizations to make an informed decision about what will be needed to effectively implement their proposed project.

*Here are a few considerations:*

- Budgets that rely on multiple funders to operate will generally demonstrate organizational commitment, showcase diverse community support and offer the potential for sustainability beyond Helios’ funding.
- We expect most grants will range from \$150,000 to \$300,000/year for up to three years. Requests could be more or less depending on the project’s needs.
- The budget request amount to Helios should not represent more than 25% of an organization’s overall budget.
- We encourage applicants to consider their request with an eye to sustainability. Projects that have elements of their budget that demonstrate sustainability beyond Helios’ grant funding will be looked upon favorably.

**21. Will Helios fund indirect costs?**

Applicants may request up to 10% of their overall requested project budget for indirect costs. Please see the [RFP Glossary](#) and review the Indirect Costs definition for more information.

**22. Will Helios fund capital expenditures?**

Helios will not fund capital expenditures for buildings, vehicles, furniture or renovations. Technology requests directly related to implementation and justified in the project activities can be requested.

**23. Will Helios fund personnel costs, including benefits?**

Helios will fund personnel costs directly related to the implementation of the proposed project. Applicants should allocate the appropriate portion of an employee's cost for the time the employee will spend on this project. Partial or full employee costs will be considered.