

## Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP

### Overview:

Helios Education Foundation has launched the Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP. The information contained in this document informs applicants of the relevant project details.

### About Helios Education Foundation:

Helios Education Foundation exists to support postsecondary attainment for all students, especially low-income and historically underrepresented communities in Arizona and Florida. Driven by our fundamental beliefs in community, equity, investment and partnership, Helios has invested more than \$350 million over 20 years in partnerships and initiatives focused on improving third-grade reading, college-going and postsecondary attainment in the two states we serve.

We use a multi-pronged approach, working across four domains that, together, support the significant change required to foster equitable progress across the education continuum: Community Investments, Public Policy, Research and Data, and Communications. We aim to promote initiatives that are culturally relevant, community-driven, and data-informed.

### Vision and Values:

Helios' vision is to ensure that every individual in Arizona and Florida has the opportunity to attend and is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education. We value:

- **Community** - We believe that education positively impacts the lives of individuals, which ultimately strengthens communities.
- **Equity** - We believe that every student, regardless of zip code, deserves a quality education.

- **Investment** - We believe college is an investment, not an expense, and the return on that investment pays dividends throughout a person’s life.
- **Partnership** - We believe that to realize our vision, there must be a commitment to intentional collaboration.

## Grounded in Data:

While Helios supports all students, we have a particular focus on closing persistent opportunity gaps. In Florida, there are populations of students who represent a significant segment of the state’s population who have experienced historical gaps in college enrollment and degree attainment. For example, data from the Florida Department of Education Scorecard show that only 47.2% of Black high school graduates enrolled at a college after graduation (See Table 1). Similarly, those students who are economically disadvantaged (eligible for free/reduced lunch) enrolled at a rate of 47.8%. Ultimately, lower enrollments in college after high school leads to lower postsecondary completion rates. In Florida, for example, only 35.1% of the State’s residents between the ages of 25 and 64 have a postsecondary degree (Table 2).

**TABLE 1: FLORIDA POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENTS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL 2021-2022**

American Indian/Alaskan Native	49.9%
Asian	73.5%
Black/African American	47.2%
Hispanic	54.8%
Multiracial	50.7%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	50.0%
White	54.6%
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	<b>47.8%</b>

Source: Report Florida Department of Education Report Card

**TABLE 2: FLORIDA POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT RATES 2022**

Asian	65.9%
Black/African American	35.1%
Hispanic	41.1%
White	50.5%
Multiracial	43.8%
<b>All</b>	<b>46.2%</b>

Source: Report from Lumina Stronger Nation

## Introduction and Purpose:

The purpose of Helios Education Foundation’s Request for Proposals (RFP) is to identify and invest in programs that have demonstrated success in closing the persistent college going and degree attainment gaps that exist for historically underrepresented students. Our goal is to identify and partner with organizations that demonstrate a commitment to creating equitable learning environments and fostering academic excellence among Florida students. We believe that through collaboration, we can develop innovative solutions that address systemic barriers and enhance educational access and achievement.

## Goals:

- Identify new partners engaging with historically underrepresented students in strategies to increase college enrollment and degree attainment.
- Provide funding to advance new or expanded, innovative programming focused on closing gaps for historically underrepresented students who have the most significant opportunity gaps in college enrollment and degree attainment.
- Learn from successful models of college access and degree attainment across Florida.

## Targeted Strategies:

We are particularly interested in partnering with nonprofit organizations that have demonstrated success working with historically underrepresented communities in advancing student enrollment and success in college. We seek to fund programs that also align with one or more of the following strategies:

- Advancing student success in accelerated coursework in high school, such as dual enrollment.
- Improving coaching and guidance in college preparatory activities.
- Supporting students in the transition from high school to college.
- Addressing low college enrollment rates as a result of chronic absenteeism in high school.
- Supporting activities designed to help students to persist in and graduate from college.

## Geographical Focus:

Helios operates in six counties in Florida with some of the highest populations and concentrations of historically underrepresented students, including Hillsborough and Pinellas, Orange and Osceola, and Miami-Dade and Broward. These regions combined are home to a near-majority of students in Florida who are historically underrepresented or low-income. Proposed projects must work within one (or more) of these six counties.

## Overview of RFP Process:

**The RFP is conducted in two phases.**

During Phase 1, interested organizations will submit a Notice of Interest (NOI), outlining organizational background, proposed project and alignment with the goals and strategies articulated in this RFP.

In Phase 2, Helios will invite select organizations from the NOI submissions in Phase 1 to develop and submit a full proposal.

## Eligibility Criteria:

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.)
- 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.
- Have, and be in compliance with, an Equal Employment Opportunity Policy.

## Who Will Helios Fund?

- 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 Funds, 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.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** For the purposes of the Florida Student Postsecondary Success Request for Proposals, current Helios partners with active grant agreements are not eligible to apply for this RFP. These organizations may serve as a fiscal agent/sponsor for another organization's project or may be a collaborative partner in a proposal, but they may not be the primary applicant for this RFP.

## What Won't Helios Fund?

- Capital campaigns
- Building new facilities
- Support to schools for general operating funds, teacher recruitment, professional development or classroom materials, unless related to a specific program or initiative to be funded
- Replacement funding for an existing program
- Replacement funding for public funds
- Organizations that do not have education support as their primary mission or organizational purpose
- Organizations serving students and families outside of the six focus counties: Hillsborough, Pinellas, Orange, Osceola, Broward and/or Miami-Dade.

## RFP Timeline:

- January 15th: NOI application process opens
- January 29th: NOI Q&A webinar
- February 7th: NOI submissions due by 5pm (EST), late submissions will not be considered
- February 18th: RFP portal opens, selected organizations invited to submit
- February 24th: RFP Q&A session
- March 10th: RFP submissions due by 5pm (EST)
- Late Spring 2025: RFP recipients notified