

Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP

Application Deadline: February 7, 5PM EST



Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: January 29, 2025

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
- Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP Overview

- Recording of the January 15th webinar and the January 29th 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. 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 29th).

****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 29th where you can pose your questions, or you may send them up until 5 pm on February 5, 2025 to 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 29th) and will not be answered via email. All questions related to the NOI process should be submitted on or before 5 pm on February 5th.

5. Can I see the questions in the NOI before submitting through the Smart Simple portal?

The questions in the NOI can be accessed at:

<https://www.helios.org/latest/news/request-for-proposals-florida-student-postsecondary-success/>. The questions can be found in the resource section in a document titled: Florida Student Postsecondary Success RFP Overview

6. 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.

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.

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.

10. If an organization works in an education setting, but does not explicitly list education advancement as part of its mission statement, does that make them ineligible?

It is not a requirement for education to be listed in an organization's mission statement to be eligible for this RFP. Education strategies can be employed by the organization as a means to meet the organizational mission.

11. Our organization is based in one of the areas you have identified but serves college students statewide. Should we focus on the students we serve in the identified areas only?

For the purposes of this RFP, Helios is only interested in serving students in the six counties identified. Students from outside the area can be served by your organization, but not through this RFP.

12. **Why would an organization need a fiscal agent to apply?** Some organizations won't meet our organizational eligibility requirements and may select a fiscal agent to apply on their behalf.
13. **Can specific high schools or a school district apply to the RFP?** If a specific high school or school district meets the eligibility criteria described above, they are eligible to apply through this RFP process.

Project Application:

14. **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.

15. **Should the proposal focus only on “historically underrepresented students”?** We are seeking proposals that close the opportunity gaps for historically underrepresented students. If other students benefit as well, Helios sees that as a positive outcome.
16. **If the applicant is implementing a set of successful strategies in a small group of schools, can an expansion project test using these strategies in a new set of schools with an underserved population that is different than the schools currently served? Yes.**
17. **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.

18. 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 8th grade through 12th grade and/or traditional college-age students (ages 18-25). Helios is not focused on bringing working-age adults (ages 25-64) into college.

19. Is there a desired number of students to be served through project proposals?

There is not a required minimum or maximum number of students to be served by projects proposed through this RFP.

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

For the purposes of this RFP, we are not considering proposals aligned to our 3rd grade reading pillar. If you have an interest in that area, please send an email to FloridaRFP@helios.org.

21. 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.

22. Do you have a preference for organizations providing direct services to young people versus those working on systemic changes in/with schools/districts to increase college-going rates?

Both types of organizations and approaches are eligible through this RFP. We also support organizations working both in direct service and systems change.

23. 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 support may be needed to help students access and graduate from college.

24. 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's 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.

25. What is Helios' definition of "expansion" of a project/program? Could you provide a few examples of acceptable expansion activities? Expansion within this RFP could be the addition of new students, new activities and/or new goals within an existing programmatic framework. Helios is looking for new and innovative approaches to increasing college enrollment and degree attainment and not just providing funding to ongoing work.

26. 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.

27. 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:

28. 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.

29. What is the minimum or maximum budget amount my organization can request?

Helios is not setting a minimum or 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.

30. 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.docx](#) and review the Indirect Costs definition for more information.

31. 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.

32. While the proposal budget should include diverse funders, is there a percentage that should be funded by these other donors?

Helios is not prescribing a percentage of other funder contributions needed for a particular project. However, we encourage applicants to think about the diverse group of funders as a sustainability strategy. When evaluating applications, one consideration will be around the potential for sustainability after the Helios funding ends.

33. 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.

Post Award Information:

34. 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 a grant agreement, which includes a reporting schedule, grantee check-in calls, and a payment schedule.