



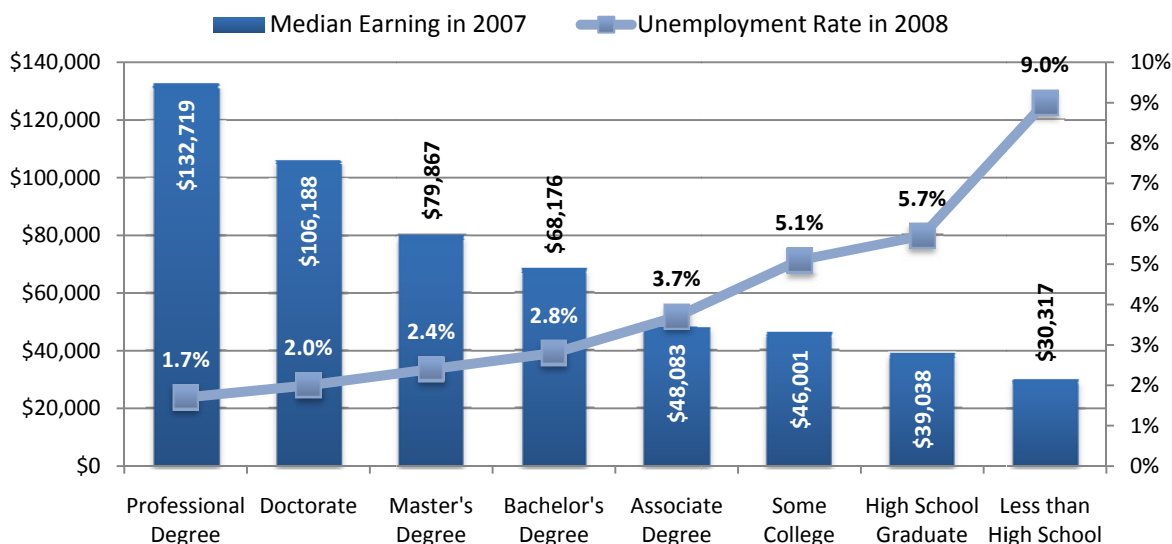
## **College Access Grants – Q & A** 2010 grant funding cycle

The following are answers to frequently asked questions about the *College Access Grants* program. This information may be useful as your high school prepares its grant funding application. Contact EducationQuest at 800.303.3745 extension 6906 or [grants@educationquest.org](mailto:grants@educationquest.org) if you have additional questions.

### **1. Why a *College Access Grants* Program?**

A college education is important to the economic vitality of the individual, communities and Nebraska. EducationQuest Foundation provides *College Access Grants* to help Nebraska high schools increase the college-going rate for their students. A better educated workforce benefits all Nebraskans. For the individual, it means a better chance at employment and increased earning power. For our communities and State, an educated workforce is the basis for economic growth and increased positive social behaviors.

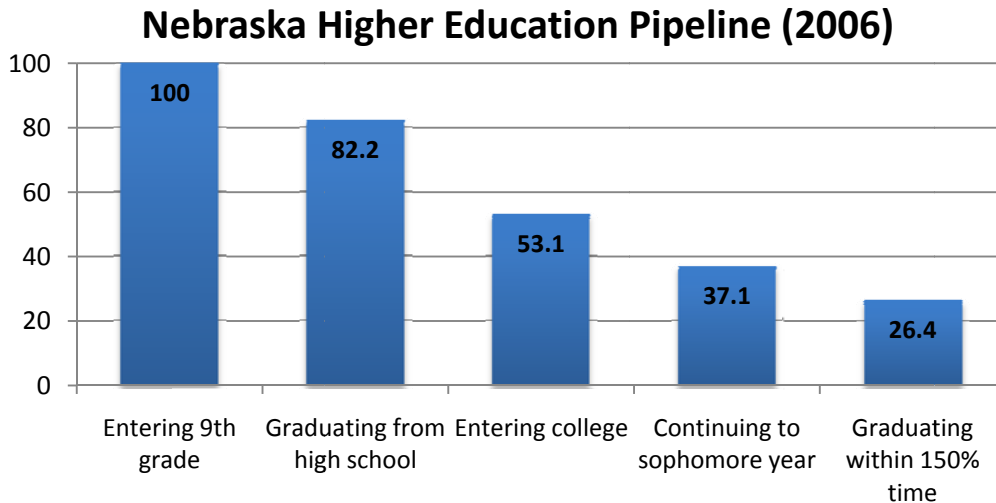
### **The College Degree Premium**



Source: Education and Training Pay chart. The Postsecondary Education Opportunity.

NOTE: Earnings for year-round full-time workers 25 years and over; unemployment rates for those 25 and over.

In 2006, for every 100 Nebraska students who entered ninth grade, 82 graduated from high school and 53 attended college. EducationQuest hopes to increase the number of college-bound students through the *College Access Grants* program.



Source: National Information Center for Higher Education  
Policymaking and Analysis - [www.higheredinfo.org](http://www.higheredinfo.org)

## 2. Who should apply for the *College Access Grant*?

Eligible Nebraska public or private high schools interested in increasing their high school's college-going rate can apply for a *College Access Grant*. Eligible high schools must be approved or accredited by the State of Nebraska to award a high school diploma.

## 3. How does my high school apply?

A representative of your high school must attend the free *College Access Symposium* hosted by EducationQuest Foundation on **March 18, 2010**, at BryanLGH College of Health Sciences in Lincoln.

To apply for the *College Access Grant*, complete the grant application, which will be distributed at the *College Access Symposium* or download an application from EducationQuest's Web site at [EducationQuest.org/accessgrants.asp](http://EducationQuest.org/accessgrants.asp).

Interested schools must submit a Letter of Intent by **May 1, 2010**, that:

- confirms the school's interest in applying.
- provides the timeline and process for determining the Class of 2009's college-going rate.
- describes and provides the number of students who will be part of the applicant high school's target audience.
- provides the anticipated enrollment (grades 9 through 12) for the 2010-2011 academic year.

The Letter of Intent may be submitted electronically to [grants@educationquest.org](mailto:grants@educationquest.org) or by regular mail addressed to:

College Access Grants  
EducationQuest Foundation  
1300 O Street  
Lincoln, NE 68508

**4. How does EducationQuest define 'college'?**

EducationQuest defines college as any accredited postsecondary institution including four-year universities/colleges, community colleges, or trade/vocational schools. Military service is considered postsecondary education for purposes of the EducationQuest grant program.

**5. Should I apply if my high school has a high college-going rate?**

EducationQuest is interested in applications from schools seeking to increase the college-going rate by 10% after four years in the program. If your high school has a high college-going rate and cannot benefit from the program, the high school's likelihood of being funded is low.

**6. Which students should be the focus of this grant?**

While all high school students can participate in college access activities, EducationQuest expects high schools to select and report on a specific target audience—one that will likely focus on underrepresented students in higher education. This includes:

- Underserved minorities
- First-generation college students – The U.S. Department of Education defines a first-generation college student as an individual who grew up in a household where neither parent (or guardian) had completed a four-year degree before the individual turned 25. EducationQuest expands this definition to include a two-year degree.
- Low-income students – Those students who are eligible to participate in the free or reduced lunch program.

A target audience must include enough students for the school to realize a 10% increase in the college-going rate. Your school's entire student population can be your target audience.

**7. How will EducationQuest calculate the college-going baseline for my high school?**

EducationQuest will calculate the college-going rate by dividing the number of students enrolled in college and military service by the number of graduating seniors.

Special Education students participating in core curriculum will be included in the calculation. Special Education students participating only in a functional curriculum will be removed from the calculation.

For purposes of the application, the baseline measurement will be graduating seniors from 2009. (If your school is funded, you will gather data for the class of 2010 and for each subsequent graduating class, through 2014.)

EducationQuest will accept the college-going rate if your school is currently using the National Student Clearinghouse's *StudentTracker* service. Contact EducationQuest for details. If your high school is not utilizing the services of the Clearinghouse, your high school is still responsible for reporting the baseline data.

**8. Why can't my school use the data collected when the students graduated in May/June?**

Exit surveys conducted in May or June may be a good predictor of college-going but do not consider students who encounter obstacles during the summer and choose not to attend. Your high school must collect actual enrollment data to ascertain the number of students who began college.

**9. How should we contact our students?**

In the interest of accuracy and lessening the burden to the high school, we recommend that your high school avail itself of the Nebraska Department of Education's agreement with the *StudentTracker* service. However, if your high school chooses not to do so, the applicant high school must still contact their students via phone, letter/postcard or email to determine enrollment status as of September, 2009. Response from either the student or an immediate family member is acceptable. A follow-up email, phone call, or letter/postcard is required for students not reached on the first attempt.

Your high school must attest that it attempted to reach **all** graduating seniors at least twice; that your high school reached a minimum of 70% of graduating seniors or their immediate family; or, present a compelling reason why you could not reach the 70% benchmark.

If your high school has a compelling reason why it cannot provide data on a minimum of 70% of the graduating class, please contact EducationQuest to discuss the options before submitting your application.

EducationQuest provides a template you can use to collect the data ("Graduate Survey") in the application.

**10. What format should I use for Section Six of the application?**

EducationQuest will accept any format that clearly provides a plan for each required activity.

An example:

**Required Activity:** *Attend an official EducationQuest College Fair or a Nebraska Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (NACRAO)-sanctioned Educational Planning Program by December of the senior year.*

**Activity:** *Attend October EducationQuest College Fair*

**Activity type:** *Enhanced (NOTE: should be New, Enhanced, or Existing)*

**Implementation:** *September – send information to all junior and senior households informing them of upcoming College Fair. Invite family member(s) to attend with student. Include permission slip. Coordinate transportation needs with district office. Recruit chaperones.*

October -- register students to attend College Fair. Use auto-dialer to contact target audience households with travel plan reminder. Secure student permission slips. Have students complete "what do I need to know about college" activity on bus to college fair. Student will complete an activity evaluation after returning indicating what two colleges they would like to attend and why.

**Target Audience:** All seniors, target audience juniors, and families. Students from other classes will be included if there are any open seats.

You should provide as much detail as you feel necessary to support your school's grant application.

When indicating *Activity Type*, indicate which of the following best describes the activity:

- New – high school has never held or conducted this activity. Grant funds will be used to support activity.
- Existing – high school plans to continue to hold this activity with no changes. Grant funds will not be used to support the existing activity.
- Enhanced – high school plans to use grant funds to modify an existing activity to better serve its students and families. An example could include a high school deciding to provide a light dinner before its annual financial aid night.

**11. What should the typical college access budget look like? How much detail does the application need to provide?**

EducationQuest's *College Access Grant* application requires that your high school submit a proposed program budget for the first year of funding. The application should include both a summary budget and a more detailed budget. The budget numbers must reflect the best estimate of the actual costs. In addition, sufficient detail must be provided to understand how proposed activities will be conducted with the budget amount proposed. As is generally the case, the application will conform to the high school's district requirements on expenditures.

Staffing expenses must also adhere to the high school or district's policies and procedures. EducationQuest grant funds are limited to those staffing expenses that are associated with the direct delivery or administration of the program. For example, some high schools and/or districts allow an hourly rate while others provide extra duty pay. Some high schools will absorb the staffing expense. In that case, the line item would be zero. Check with your high school or district's Human Resources or Business Office to identify the appropriate means of providing compensation.

Sample budget summary for an intermediate high school (numbers are not provided for guidance but are merely illustrative):

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Travel (college visits, business visits, etc.)	\$ 5,000
Activities	\$ 1,500
Materials/Supplies	\$ 3,300
Postage	\$ 600
Printing	\$ 1,000
Staff	\$ 3,300
Other	\$ 300
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>

Sample budget detail for travel (again, numbers are provided as examples only):

**SAMPLE BUDGET: Travel \$5,000**

- \$1,350: College visits for senior students to [insert college name(s)]: 300 miles round trip – two buses @ \$2.25/mile = 600 miles
- \$900: College visits for junior students to [insert college name(s)]: 400 miles round trip – bus rental @ \$2.25/mile
- \$900: College visits for senior students to [insert college name(s)]: 400 miles round trip – bus rental @ 2.25/mile
- \$800: College visits for senior students: overnight stay in campus dorm: \$20/night per student, 40 students
- \$400: College visits for senior students: dinner meal \$10 per student, 40 students
- \$507: Career visits for freshman and sophomore students to regional medical center: 75 miles @ 2.25/mile (need 3 buses)
- \$99: Career visits for freshman students to three local/regional businesses: 108 miles total 1.10/mile (van rate)
- \$44: Career visit for sophomores and juniors to local manufacturing plant – target audience: 20 miles @ 1.10/mile (van rate) (need 2 vans)

**12. What are the odds of my high school being funded?**

Applicants will be evaluated against other schools in the same size category as your school. The outcome will depend on the number of schools that apply.

EducationQuest is interested in funding Nebraska high schools from across the state. In 2010, EducationQuest will fund up to:

- Three large high schools (over 1,500 students)
- Six intermediate high schools (300 to 1,500 students)
- Six small high schools (under 300)

**13. How much would my high school receive?**

Funding is as follows:

- \$100,000 over four years for large schools (\$25,000 annually)
- \$60,000 over four years for intermediate schools (\$15,000 annually)
- \$20,000 over four years for small schools (\$5,000 annually)

In addition to the primary award, schools will also receive a transition amount in the fifth year of funding. The fifth-year transition amount is:

- \$5,000 for large schools
- \$3,000 for intermediate schools
- \$1,000 for small schools

**14. How can we use grant funding?**

Grant applicants must provide a detailed budget that explains how the grant funding will be used. The budget is subject to EducationQuest's approval on an annual basis. Grant funding may be used to cover staffing expenses directly related the operation and administration of the college access program.

Activities should focus on students who might not otherwise attend college; however, grant funds can be used to serve all students.

EducationQuest will **not** fund:

- Scholarships for tuition, fees, room/board, or other expenses
- Travel outside the state of Nebraska
- Professional development for staff
- Any third-party contracts
- Capital equipment purchases, including computers
- Endowments
- Faculty/Staff clothing items
- Caps & Gowns for students or staff
- College application fees for colleges outside of Nebraska

On a limited basis, software may be an approved expense if directly related to the college access activity.

Grant funds can be used for the travel costs associated with attending required *College Access Grant* activities such as the *College Access Workshop* or *College Access Symposium*.

**15. How can we use transition funding?**

The primary use of your high school's transition funding should be to cover the costs associated with any end-of-program reporting requirements. If transition funds remain, your high school must use the remaining funds to support *College Access Grants* activities as your school seeks other sources to sustain the program.

**16. What reports are required if our high school is funded?**

The reporting requirements listed below are explained in detail in the application Appendix. Your school will report only aggregated data and will send no personally-identifiable student information to EducationQuest.

EducationQuest will require mid-year and year-end reports each year of grant funding including a progress report on college access-related activities, enrollments, and budgets.

Additionally, as part of the mid-year and year-end reports, aggregate data from the following surveys will be reported:

- Initial Student Survey
- Program Pre/Post Survey
- Annual Program Evaluation
- Graduate Survey

**17. How will our application be evaluated?**

Your high school's application will be evaluated primarily on whether you have a plan in place that provides the required college access activities and seeks to increase your high school's college-going rate by 10 percent, or provides compelling reason for a lower increase.

The plan should include the following:

- Describe why your high school requires assistance to increase its college-going rate.
- Establish a baseline college-going rate.
- Provide demographics of your student body.
- Provide attainable goals for the expected college-going rate increase for each year of funding.
- Describe activities that will achieve these goals, including the required activities explained in the application.
- Describe your staffing plan, including how your grant will be managed and what role your administration will provide to the program.
- Provide a detailed budget that links grant funding to your goals. EducationQuest will provide guidelines for the budget.
- Identify prospective community partners, including colleges, local/regional businesses, and community agencies that will assist at-risk students in your school.
- Describe your business/community partner's contribution, either in cash or in-kind, to match EducationQuest's funding on a 1:10 ratio. For example, if your high school's grant is \$5,000, your business/community partner(s) should contribute \$500, in cash or in-kind, annually.

**18. Why does EducationQuest require specific college access activities?**

EducationQuest has studied the issue of college access. The data shows that the required activities increase the likelihood that at-risk students will attend college.

As every school and student body is unique, each school is able to customize the way it decides to implement each grant activity to meet the needs of their students, families and community.

**19. Our school's policies require a consent form for off campus student programming. Do we have to adhere to this policy if we receive grant funding?**

Grant activities require taking students on a field trip to visit a college campus and may require conducting program activities outside of normal school hours or off-campus. Contact EducationQuest to discuss possible alternate activities that adhere to your school's policies. However, in all cases, school policies are pre-eminent.

**20. Why is there a business/community partnership requirement?**

EducationQuest believes that a business/community partnership can expose students to career opportunities that instill the importance of postsecondary education. In addition, when EducationQuest funding expires, the business/community partnership may provide support for continuation of the program and/or its activities.

A business/community partnership may already exist at your high school. The partner would need to agree to participate as a match partner (either money or in-kind) in your college access program. In addition, a consortium of community partners could be substituted for a single business partner.

Alumni/booster clubs or school foundations cannot serve as a partner. However, a community service club such as Rotary or Kiwanis could be a business/community partner.

Matching funds from the business/community partnership may be used for scholarships as long as the funding is not being diverted from an existing scholarship program.

**21. Why are families expected to be part of the program?**

Families (ideally a parent, but in their absence a legal guardian or other caring adult) are key to college access for all students. Students unlikely to attend college need even greater support from their families and the families need information on how to help their children attend college. *College Access Grant* programming should be used to provide college access information to families of the target audience.

**22. Who will review my school's application?**

EducationQuest's Grant Review Committee includes individuals with expertise in college access-related issues, at-risk youth programming, or a comparable field. The committee will conduct the review between mid June to early July, 2010.

EducationQuest will notify all applicants of the status of their application in mid July, 2010.

EducationQuest will carefully select reviewers and provide appropriate training to ensure the absence of any real or perceived conflict of interest. Specific scoring information will not be made public.

EducationQuest may ask applicants to clarify their proposal.

**23. Will our school be at a disadvantage without a professional grant writer?**

EducationQuest encourages our Grants Review Committee to examine the heart of the application rather than the professionalism of the writing. We are looking for schools to present a compelling case, identify an appropriate target audience and set attainable goals.

**24. When will grant funding begin?**

Selected high schools will be notified in mid July, 2010, and should begin college access activities as soon as possible. EducationQuest will send the first half of year-one's payment in October, 2010.

Grant funds will be transmitted electronically.

Selected high schools will also be required to notify EducationQuest of any leadership change in the grant program or school administration. Upon notice of a staffing change, EducationQuest will schedule a meeting to discuss the grant programs transition plan.

**25. What other assistance will EducationQuest offer in addition to grant funding?**

An EducationQuest staff member will work with your high school as questions arise. EducationQuest will serve as a college access resource and provide guidance as high schools implement the programs.

EducationQuest will host *College Access Workshops*. Attendance is expected during these day-long workshops where grant funded schools will have opportunities gain information on best practices in college access. There are two workshops a year.