



GOLDEN STATE EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is this program?

This program is designed to encourage and support individuals who suffered COVID-related job loss to enter, continue and complete college and job training programs. The program was established and funded in the 2021 California Budget Act, mainly with one-time federal COVID recovery dollars, to offer this one-time financial incentive. Half of the funds must go to individuals supporting dependent children (a student parent).¹

Why am I just hearing about this now?

This new program was approved by the Legislature in July 2021. Since then, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) has been designing a phase-in strategy to focus outreach on, and make dollars available to, specific populations of individuals, with the intent to expand outreach to additional populations, on a quarterly basis, throughout 2022.

What students are eligible for the grant?

Eligible individuals must:

- Have lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Have not been able to find an equivalent paying job since
- Not have been enrolled in an education or training program at the time of their job loss
- Meet the income and asset requirements associated with Cal Grant A eligibility

How much money are students eligible for? What's the total budget for the program?

CSAC intends for awards to be \$2,500. In total, approximately \$500 million is available (statewide) on a one-time basis, of which \$472.5 million is available from federal State Fiscal Recovery Funds.

Do these funds offset student's financial aid, public assistance supports or unmet financial need?

No. Funds must be used to supplement a student's financial aid package and financial supports. Funds may not be used to replace any existing or anticipated grant financial resources. Since this grant is a one-time, non-recurring payment, it will not impact a student's public assistance (e.g., CalWORKs) provided that, if the

¹ A "dependent child" or "dependent children" means a child or children, as applicable, under 18 years of age whose parent or legal guardian is the student and if the child or all the children collectively receive more than 50 percent of their support from the student.

student elects to save the grant, their savings do not exceed the \$10,000 statutory maximum.

Are the grants given to students taxable income?

The GSETGP Grants are considered disaster relief payments. While CSAC does not believe these payments are income subject to federal taxation, institutions should consult with their own counsel to confirm.

Are the grants considered financial aid, and considered in the context of other financial aid students may be receiving?

As specified by the United States Department of Education, the grant is not counted as income for calculating a family's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) under the Federal Methodology or as estimated financial assistance for packaging purposes.

Do colleges provide matching funds?

To the extent practicable, colleges are encouraged to match the GSETGP grants with college, private or other resources.

Where can individuals enroll using this grant?

Phase 1 is limited to public colleges and universities. In future phases, regional K12 Adult Education and Community College Non Credit programs, and approved training programs will be eligible to receive funds. Individuals enrolled in only these institutions are eligible to receive a grant. Grant funding should be used to access an educational program or qualified training program at an institution of higher education or to obtain training from a provider that is included on the state's Eligible Training Provider List.

Are individuals enrolled in a bachelor's degree program or Graduate Program eligible for the grant?

Yes, as long as these individuals were not enrolled in their program at the time of their job loss.

Are individuals who were not formally laid off, but had a decrease in wages due to COVID-19, eligible for the grant?

To be a displaced worker, individuals would have to had lost their jobs completely, and not just experience a decrease in wages or business.

Will applicants need to fill out a FAFSA or California Dream Act application to apply?

No. This program is outside the traditional student financial aid system and will use a separate stand-alone application that can be accessed on CSAC's website. That said, we always encourage students enrolling in college to complete the FAFSA or Dream Act application.

How will individuals know about this grant opportunity?

During Phase 1 CSAC is using FAFSA/Dream Act data to focus the promotion of this grant directly to students (via email). CSAC has also outreached to campus-based programs serving low-income student parents to better promote the program.

Why is CSAC implementing this program in phases?

This is a new program for CSAC that does not use the FAFSA/Dream Act Application as the basis for the award. As such, we needed to put new systems in place, including direct outreach to potential applicants and a stand-alone application. We want the opportunity to test those systems rather than inviting all individuals to apply at once.

Additionally, the implementing statute requires that half the program dollars be awarded to student parents. To this end, CSAC chose to focus initially (in Phase 1) on student parents, in particular those who are receiving CalWORKs assistance (through the county) for themselves and/or their child(ren).

When will the Phase 1 online application be “live”?

Beginning in mid-March 2022, individuals will be able to apply online at: www.gsetg.csac.ca.gov

How complicated is the application?

The application is brief and simple. Students will be asked to login to their existing CSAC account, or be asked to create one.

Students with a FAFSA or California Dream Act application on file will not need to provide financial information. Those without those financial aid applications on file will be required to provide their income and asset information to verify financial eligibility for this program.

The application form will ask up front if a student and/or their child(ren) are receiving support from their local county CalWORKs program. If they certify “yes” the application will bypass the need to input income and asset data.

Are student parents eligible to apply throughout the program?

Yes. We will continue to accept applications from each of the prior phases throughout the entirety of the program timeline.

Are undocumented students eligible to apply and receive funding?

Yes, undocumented students are eligible for state funds and encouraged to apply to the program. Undocumented students with or without a California Dream Act ID will be able to apply using the online application. If students face any issues with their application, they should reach out to CSAC at GSETGP@CSAC.CA.GOV to work with program analysts regarding the issue they are facing.

Who is included in the future phases?

Phase 2 will outreach to student parents enrolled in noncredit and K12 Adult Career Technical Education programs. Subsequent phases will be communicated and rolled out through the remainder of the fiscal year.

What is the role of college financial aid offices?

CSAC will process the applications and, via its customary financial aid channels, provide college financial aid offices with a roster of awardees along with the funds (via paper checks). College financial aid offices will be responsible for ensuring that the student was enrolled at some point during the academic year and for disbursing the funds directly to the student.

Do students have to be enrolled full time in for-credit instruction?

No. Students need to be enrolled but there is neither a minimum unit requirement nor a satisfactory academic progress requirement. Noncredit students are eligible for the grant and encouraged to apply.

Should students still receive their grant funding if they withdrew or failed their classes after their enrollment was verified?

Yes. Since the student was enrolled at some point during the academic year, they are eligible for the grant funding.

Can checks be mailed to the student?

CSAC will mail student's checks to their respective institution. Institutions are welcome to mail that check to their student, but first verify that the mailing address for the student is accurate and consider sending the check through certified mail, as the check replacement process is lengthy.

How long can an institution keep a check for the student to pick up?

CSAC's goal is to get the funding to the student as soon as possible. The check itself can hold for a year, but as soon as the institution is able to arrange pick up or mailing it to the student would be best.

Can student enrollment be verified via batch enrollment, like the Cal Grant?

No. Since this is a smaller and shorter-term program, the batch enrollment process is not available.

Can a student be eligible if they were already enrolled at the time if they were displaced from work, if they changed their major or program?

No, these students would not be eligible for the program. The statute specifies that eligible applicants for the GSETGP are students who were not already accessing an educational or training program

Administration Costs

Colleges will receive 1% of the funds allocated to the institution to cover administrative costs. This funding will be processed and sent to campuses following

the conclusion of the Academic Year, after CSAC's deadline to verify student enrollment for GSETGP. Indirect costs incurred by the colleges attributed to the federal State Fiscal Recovery Funds are limited to 10 percent of direct administrative costs, pursuant to federal guidance.

Reporting Requirements

Each college is required to confirm an applicant's enrollment status. CSAC will report on other demographic information, including race/ethnicity, status as a parent, and documentation status on a quarterly basis. Additional reporting requests may also be made by CSAC.

Records are required to be retained for 5 years past December 31, 2026 (the end of period of performance).

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