



GradNation Acceleration Grant Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the GradNation campaign?

The [GradNation campaign](#) mobilizes Americans to increase the nation's high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020 and put millions more young people in the path to adult success. America's Promise Alliance leads the campaign with its partners – the Alliance for Excellent Education, Civic, and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University. The campaign provides those working to increase high school graduation rates with data, best practices, and opportunities to connect and learn from one another.

2. What is the GradNation Acceleration Grant?

Based on the committed action of practitioners, we have learned a lot about how states and communities are successfully supporting students to high school graduation. In addition, we have collectively deepened our understanding of the barriers young people face in reaching graduation. The [GradNation Acceleration Grant](#) is led by America's Promise Alliance and generously funded by AT&T.

The grant opportunity seeks to support existing state- and community-level efforts to accelerate progress to a 90 percent graduation rate.

3. Specific states and communities in those states are eligible for the GradNation Acceleration Grant. What are the states?

Ten priority states are eligible for the GradNation Acceleration Grant: California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

4. How were the priority states identified?

America's Promise, along with its co-conveners, conducted data analysis to identify 10 states where graduating more students would have a measurable impact on the national graduation rate and on national equity gaps. Nationally, 251,625 more young people would have to graduate to reach a 90 percent graduation rate. As noted in the [2017 Building a Grad Nation report](#), improvements in the national graduation rate require improvement among five groups of students: low-income students, Black and Hispanic/ Latino students, students with disabilities, English-language learners, and those served by low-graduation rate high schools.

The 10 priority states were identified based on a two-step process, first using quantitative data and then qualitative factors. Using raw graduation rate data, we applied a point system that accounted for five indicators: the estimated number of non-graduates, number of disconnected youth, graduation rate gap from the national average, graduation rate change from the 2010-2011 school year to the 2013-2014 school year, and sub-group gaps for Hispanic, Black, economically disadvantaged, limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. Once the point system was applied, we identified 20 states with the highest scores. From the 20 states that emerged from the quantitative analysis, we applied qualitative factors to identify 10 states that had the greatest need based on the data *and* the conditions to accelerate progress. Qualitative factors at this stage included local conditions for timely action, such as policy or leadership conditions, and existing partnerships or coalition work to improve graduation rates.

5. What can the GradNation offer to organizations that are not in a priority state?

The GradNation Acceleration Grant is an effort within the broader GradNation campaign. America's Promise is committed to continuing to elevate best practices, provide virtual learning opportunities, and tell the story of what is working to get to a 90 percent graduation rate. Visit the [GradNation website](#) for more information on each Action Platform area, for upcoming webinars aligned to the GradNation Action Platform and to join the GradNation online community.

6. What is the application process? How will the finalists be notified?

The application process will be conducted as follows –

Application Submission

Applicants should submit their application for funding through the online application portal by midnight on Wednesday, November 8, 2017.

Review Period

America's Promise Alliance, AT&T, and partner organizations will review applications through December 2017. Please see the [GradNation Acceleration Grant Review Rubric](#) for a sense of the criteria being used to evaluate each application.

Application Notification

Applicants will be notified of a funding decision in January 2018 via an e-mail to the lead organization. AT&T and America's Promise reserve the right to ask clarifying questions or request additional from finalists.

7. What are the components of a strong application?

The strongest applications will describe a state-or community-level effort that demonstrates 1) an understanding of school-level and community-level graduation rates

and related data, 2) a collaborative relationship with high school(s) and/or a district, and 3) a commitment to meet the needs of students most at-risk of not graduating (low-income students, Black and Hispanic/Latino students, students with disabilities, English-language learners, and those served by low-graduation rate high schools). The proposal should describe how the organization is in a position to accelerate its impact on young people in one or more areas of the GradNation Action Platform.

An applicant may consider student groups other than the groups listed above if the state- or community-level data indicate a need to support those students towards high school graduation and postsecondary pathways. As one example, Native American students are not explicitly named above but district-level data may indicate a need to address their non-academic needs. An applicant should not be deterred from applying solely because the student group they will serve does not fit in one of the above-mentioned groups.

8. What activities is America’s Promise and AT&T interested in funding under the Acceleration Grant?

America’s Promise will fund applicants with proposals that demonstrate an understanding of student needs, have the conditions to accelerate progress, and articulate the desired impact. The range of possible activities is quite broad given the types of activities and strategies that may be used to improve graduation rates. However, the scope of the proposal must be within the content area of one or more GradNation Action Platform items.

America’s Promise acknowledges that limited funding over two years will not, alone, improve graduation rates. As such, proposal review and final awards will be considered in the context of a two-year implementation timeline and the available funding. Applicants are encouraged to braid or blend these funds with existing funds to support young people to graduation. For example, a community non-profit may already be engaged in a dropout prevention strategy but has an opportunity to add a component related to higher schoolers’ social-emotional needs. As another example, a state-level proposal may include a mix of re-grants to select districts and a state-level research effort focused on efforts to locate and re-engage students who leave high school in ninth grade.

9. Does this grant have to be used to create a new project?

No. This grant does not have to be used to create a new project. Rather, it is intended to support existing or promising projects. Note that the purpose of the Acceleration Grant application section titled “Ability to Accelerate” is geared towards determining whether an applicant can point to existing efforts or work to improve graduation rates and is able to accelerate efforts under the grant.

10. How will each application be reviewed?

America's Promise Alliance, with partner organizations with expertise in the GradNation Action Platform areas, will evaluate proposals using the review criteria included in this application package. Panels of three individuals will evaluate each proposal, score each proposal, and come together to determine which proposals should be funded in each category (two state-level and three community-level grants). Applicants are encouraged to download and review the GradNation Acceleration [Grant Review Rubric](#) to get a sense of the criteria by which proposals will be reviewed.

11. How will the funds be dispersed?

The grant period will be from January 2018 through January 2020. For state grantees, awards are up to \$125,000 total; funds will be dispersed in four equal parts, two times in each of the two years. Similarly, community grantee awards are up to \$100,000; funds will be dispersed in four equal parts, two times in each of the two years. The first half of the grant will be dispersed upon receiving the the executed signed agreement and the second half upon submission of grant progress report. Applicants are encouraged to download and review the GradNation Acceleration Grant [Budget and Budget Narrative Template](#) as they develop their proposals.

12. If my organization doesn't meet the requirements, but know organizations that does, can we share the funding opportunity?

Yes. We encourage you to share this funding opportunity with other organizations. Please note that applying organizations must meet the definition of "state level organization" or "community level organization" as described in the Funding Background document.

13. Who do I contact for more information?

Please visit the GradNation website for more information about the [GradNation Action Platform](#) and the [GradNation Acceleration Grant](#). If you have any questions, please contact gradnation90@americaspromise.org.