

GRANT INFORMATION GUIDE

Goodwill Excel- Baltimore Adult High School Pilot Program Grant Fiscal Year 2026

Maryland State Department of Education

200 West Baltimore Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Deadline September 10, 2025 No later than 5:00 p.m. EDT

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Program Description

This grant is intended to support the operating costs of the Goodwill Excel Center in Baltimore City as an approved Adult High School Pilot Programs (AHSP) in the State. The AHSP develops career pathways and equitable opportunities to ensure AHSP participants will have gained the ability to equip themselves with skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to pursue career pathways in high-growth industries.

AHSP seeks to develop additional partnerships and collaborations with a network of community schools, workforce development organizations, colleges, and universities. These partnerships and collaborations are aligned to improve literacy skills, as well as abilities to perform specific job functions to move adult high school learners forward in their careers.

AUTHORIZATION

House Bill 1381 (2017) and Senate Bill 630 (2021)

GRANT OVERVIEW

Name of Grant Program

Goodwill Excel-Baltimore Adult High School Pilot Program Grant FY26

Purpose

The purpose of the AHSP funding is to establish an alternative method for adults who did not graduate from high school to earn a high school diploma and potentially to earn postsecondary education credits and industry-recognized certification in an environment that meets the needs of the adult learner. The grant period for Fiscal Year 2026 is July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

Dissemination

This Grant Information Guide (GIG) was released on June 23, 2025.

Deadline

Proposals are due no later than 5pm on September 10, 2025

Grant Period

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

Funding Amount Available

This \$1 million grant funding is only available to The Excel Center in Baltimore City, operated through Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc.

Estimated Number of Grants

One (1)

Eligibility

Funding is awarded directly to Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc. to operate The Excel Center in Baltimore City, who are approved by the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Department of Labor as an official AHSP program. This funding opportunity is designed for and open to the Goodwill Excel Center in Baltimore City.

Submission Instructions

The Goodwill Excel-Baltimore AHSP program grant application can be downloaded from the MSDE Office of Grants Administration and Compliance website. A signed electronic copy in pdf format must be emailed as an attachment to <u>Kellise.williamson@maryland.gov</u> with the subject "AHSP Program Name_FY26 Application" by 5:00 p.m. on July 30, 2025. The Division of College and Career Pathways will begin reviewing applications on a rolling basis beginning June 30, 2025.

PROGRAM CONTACT

Kellise Y. Williamson

Postsecondary Credit and P-TECH Coordinator Office of College and Career Pathways (410)767-0319 <u>kellise.williamson@maryland.gov</u>

State Responsibilities

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Department of Labor (MDOL) will monitor grantee progress through project updates, financial reports, and an evaluation of outcomes based on grant goals. The MSDE program contact will review all applications for eligibility and selection for awards. MSDE will monitor grantee progress through interim reports to ensure that programs are being implemented according to their approved plan and with fidelity. MSDE will monitor grant programs to ensure that funds are spent as scheduled with monitoring of student outcomes, as well as provide technical assistance, financial reports, and conduct on-site or virtual monitoring visits.

Use of Funds

Approved program expenses will be reimbursed upon submission and approval of an invoice with supporting documentation (i.e., receipts, purchase orders, etc.). Other costs not listed here may be presented to the grant manager for determination of allowable expenditures. Approved program expenses will be reimbursed upon submission and approval of an invoice with supporting documentation (i.e., receipts, purchase orders, etc.).

Funds may be used for:

- Support operating expenses related to program implementation.
- Salaries
- Stipends
- Equipment
- Materials and supplies to support curriculum development, program outreach, and professional development. This may include materials for the Steering Committee and partnership meetings.
- Reimbursement for travel expenses cannot exceed local per diem rates, which are:
 - Mileage: \$0.655/mile
 - o Breakfast: \$15
 - o Lunch: \$18
 - o Dinner: \$30
- Administrative costs not to exceed 5% of the total grant, including indirect costs.

Funds may not be used for:

- Supplanting existing program funds.
- Capital improvements.
- Purchase of gift cards.
- Purchase of office furniture and equipment.
- Construction of temporary or permanent structures.

Program Requirements

The Goodwill Excel- Baltimore AHSP program grant is to support the ongoing operating costs of the adult high school pilot program implementation. The application for funding must include information about the services to be supported by the funding as well as the outcomes expected.

The academic curriculum has been approved by MSDE and aligned to State of Maryland requirements for a diploma. The curriculum is multi-layered and evidence-based to provide the adult student with opportunities to acquire the necessary skills and abilities to pursue career aspirations and/or post-secondary educational goals.

The AHSP may operate in partnership with a local community college, adult education providers, and community partners to provide participants of the program a new pathway to a diploma. In addition, the pilot program must provide academic classes and wrap around services to support adult students in their goal of becoming college and career ready.

The AHSP program is required to offer wrap-around services. These services are based on student needs and may include childcare, transportation, housing referrals, mental health, crisis intervention, substance abuse prevention or treatment and legal aid services. These types of support services assist adults with addressing complex needs in a positive way, in addition to contributing to the participant reaching their educational and career goals.

Specific requirements for the AHSP include the following:

- Verification of enrollment and/or recruitment,
- Diploma status, and
- Number of current enrollments.

It will also include a description of any programs or partnerships with organizations and businesses for providing job skills, industry certifications or higher education credits. Included in the application are the Goals, Impact and Measurable Success Criteria for the Adult High School Pilot Program, as well as a proposed budget and program assurances.

AHSP PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

A Pilot Must Meet the Following Requirements:

Advisory Board

An AHSP must have and be governed by an advisory board with between 11 and 25 members; MD Labor and MSDE each select 1 member of the board. Applicants must describe the role and function of the Advisory Board. A list of the current members is required.

Age Verification

The AHSP must serve adults over the age of 21, who do not currently have a diploma. Students may not have completed a General Education Diploma (GED) or National External Diploma Program (NEDP). Applicants must provide a description of enrollment verification.

Diploma Status

The AHSP must provide details of the verification process of student non-degree status.

Program Status

The AHSP must provide details regarding the process of verifying student status of program completion as well as for measuring student progress and college career readiness.

Partnerships/Collaborations

The AHSP is required to provide descriptions of any programs or partnerships with organizations or businesses for providing training, industry certifications, and/or higher education credits.

Enrollment Requirements

The AHSP is intended to serve up to 350 adult students aged 21 and over. Applicants must describe recruitment efforts to reach enrollment goals. Also, the enrollment management, including any procedures currently in place so the school does not exceed 350. (i.e. waitlist)

Wrap Around Services

The AHSP program must offer individualized wrap-around services that are provided to the student and the student's family. Applicants must provide a listing and description of all services provided.

Admission Standards

AHSP is required to provide policies and requirements for admission standards.

Application Requirements

PROPOSAL COVER PAGE

The cover page includes all contact information and grant partnership information including the contact information for the college and community partners. In addition, the applicant must provide the total amount of the grant and the organization's Employer Identification Number (EIN) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, if available. Applicants must also provide the address of the school location.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The application for funding must include information about the services to be supported by the funding as well as the outcomes expected. The project narrative consists of the following sections. These sections will be scored by reviewers.

- Project Abstract
- Extent of Need
- Evidence of Impact
- Goals, Activities, Benchmarks, and Outcomes
- Evaluation and Dissemination
- Plan of Operation, Key Personnel, and Timeline

PROJECT ABSTRACT

The project statement should briefly describe the project's outcome(s) and strategies (i.e., what the project will do and how it will do it.) Do not exceed the 100-word limit. This statement may be used in press releases, board exhibits, etc.

EXTENT OF NEED

Describe the conditions or needs to be addressed through the funding. The extent of need should describe how grant funds will address problems and show how those efforts are effective such as providing flexible schedules for busy adults and time needed to complete courses. It should also describe how the implementation of an innovative program measures competency standards and workforce readiness.

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Grantees are required to submit annual evaluation reports and quarterly progress reports that are consistent with the project's goal and objective(s). Keep in mind that the final evaluation will consider the entire project, beginning to end. It should not be viewed as what is done after the project's completion, but as an integral element in the project's planning, design, and implementation. During the evaluation, applicants should consider the below questions:

- What other measurable improvements are expected to occur to expand the AHSP program?
- What data will be collected to prove that the program/activity has had the intended effects?
- How will this data be collected?
- What is the plan for disseminating formative and summative results to stakeholders?

Impact evidence identifies the consequences of actions taken and the extent to which the program or project goals were achieved. Evidence of impact is made clear through outcome evaluation and includes being clear about evaluation standards and identifying improvement.

GOALS, ACTIVITIES, BENCHMARKS, AND OUTCOMES

- Clearly state the overall goals of the project. Each application should include a minimum of three goals. These goals should directly address the primary challenges identified in the needs assessment. Ensure they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound, and inclusive/ equitable (S.M.A.R.T.I.E) and aligned with the intended outcomes. Goal statements should also include the specific populations that the selected strategies aim to serve. Describe how these populations will be impacted by the project's activities and outcomes.
- 2. Once you have identified a goal, devise strategies you will use to achieve it. You may want to identify a range of strategies that you will pursue. Explain the rationale behind selecting these strategies and how they are designed to support growth in the CTE/STEM pipeline.
- 3. List the activities that will be employed that align to the stated strategies.
- 4. Include the benchmarks that are indicators of the success of the implemented activities. Several activities may align to one or two benchmarks. Please make sure that the benchmarks are not additional activities but the result of the activities. The benchmarks should include a measure of success as well as a timeline of when the benchmark will be accomplished.
- 5. Identify the overall outcome that aligns to the goal. The outcome can be developed through an "If/then" statement. For example, If we develop strategies that are implemented through specific and aligned activities, and if those activities indicate the intended level of success (benchmarks), then the combined impact will lead to this outcome.

Strategies	Activities	Benchmarks
Strategy 1	Activity 1	Benchmark 1
	Activity 2	Benchmark 2
	Activity 3	Benchmark 3
Strategy 2	Activity 1	Benchmark 1
	Activity 2	l. Benchmark 2
	Activity 3	Benchmark 3

EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

Grantees must submit quarterly progress reports and annual evaluation reports aligned with the project's stated goals and objectives. The final evaluation will assess the project in its entirety, from inception to completion.

Applicants must evaluate the following required measures:

- **Evaluation Questions:** Identify the key questions the evaluation will address, grounded in the project's goals, objectives, implementation plan, and anticipated outcomes. Analyze the connection between the expected results, the specific activities undertaken, and the elements most critical to assess. Focus on what matters most in measuring the project's effectiveness and impact.
- **Evaluation Strategy:** Describe the methods you will use to answer the evaluation questions. Specify the criteria that will guide the assessment of lessons learned from the project. Additionally, identify which populations will be included in the evaluation process.
- Data: The type of data and method of data collection depends on the program's nature, the questions, and the evaluation strategy. What measurement tools and instruments will be utilized? How will you establish the baseline data? Ensure that both quantitative and qualitative data methods are incorporated. Explain how project staff will gather data from the different sites and organizations involved. When selecting data collection techniques, confirm that adequate resources are available to effectively implement them.
- **Evaluator(s):** Identify the individuals or teams responsible for conducting the evaluation. Outline their specific qualifications and expertise. Describe the roles and responsibilities of key personnel involved in the evaluation process.
- Budgeting of resources and staffing for evaluation: The application budget should allocate adequate funds to support a comprehensive and meaningful evaluation. Note: The evaluation will be conducted as an internal self-assessment and may be completed at no cost by the Council Chair, Co-Chair, or a designated representative.
- Dissemination: Provide details on how the project's findings will be shared with key stakeholders and other interested parties. Recognize that information needs and dissemination methods may vary among different audiences. Will the project have an online presence or participate in major national conferences to share lessons learned? Describe how and when project demonstrations will be made available. Additionally, include information about the types of reports and other deliverables that will be produced throughout the project.

Evaluation and quarterly progress reports should be consistent with the project's goals and objectives. An effective ongoing plan should evaluate benchmarks and help project staff make informed decisions.

PLAN OF OPERATION, KEY PERSONNEL AND TIMELINE

The Plan of Operation includes the strategies and activities that will be implemented to achieve your goals, outcomes, and milestones. List all major management actions necessary to implement the project during the funding cycle.

• Include a timeline and the key personnel associated with each component of the operation plan. For key personnel, include the program instructor(s) (if known), the program contacts for the AHSP program, the program director, and any other personnel who will be involved. Indicate names, titles, affiliations, roles, and responsibilities.

Convene the AHSP program advisory board and describe the extent to which the advisory board will be involved in the expansion or improvement of the AHSP.

Budget and Budget Narrative

The project budget should detail all related expenses of the AHSP Fiscal Year 2025 in a separate itemized budget. It should demonstrate to what extent the budget is reasonable, cost-effective and integrates other sources of funding (as required by the grant process). All costs described in the project narrative should appear in the budget narrative and must have a corresponding entry in the itemized budget. Reviewers should be able to see a clear connection between project activities and budget line items.

Clearly show the requested funds and in-kind contributions for each line item, if applicable. Indicate the source of the in-kind contribution. Both requested and in-kind funds must be reasonable with current market prices. Show how the expenses were calculated for each line item. Reviewers will use this information to determine whether the budget is reasonable and cost-effective. Use the format indicated by the following excerpt from a sample Budget Narrative.

Salaries and Wages (list separately for each position)

Line item	Calculation	Requested	In-Kind	Total
Project Manager	\$50/hr. x 40 hrs. per week x 52 weeks	\$83,200	\$20,800	\$104,000
Total for salaries & wages:		\$83,200	\$20,800	\$104,000

Appendices

The following appendices must be included but not apply to the page limit of the Project Narrative. Include other appendices as deemed necessary.

- Appendix A: <u>A signed recipient assurances page</u>
- Appendix B: The Grant Information Survey Form
- Appendix C: <u>A signed C-125 MSDE budget form</u>
- Appendix D: Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (W-9) Form

The Review Process

The review of proposals will be a three-part process:

- 1. Written applications will be pre-screened for submission requirements and inclusion of all required sections. Applications not meeting all pre-screen requirements may be returned to the applicant for revisions.
- 2. A review committee established by MSDE will evaluate applications using the scoring rubric. The scoring rubric is tailored to the grant program, its intent, and intended impact on the target population.
- 3. Final approval for awards will be determined by the review committee.

Review Committee

The committee will be composed of representatives from MSDE and the Division of College and Career Pathways. Reviewers will assign numerical scores to each proposal based on the criteria on the scoring rubric. Each application will be reviewed and scored based on all documents submitted. Applications may be returned to the applicant if some or all criteria do not meet the criteria standard.

Adult High School Pilot Program Scoring Rubric

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Exceeds Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
The project abstract outlines a concise and comprehensive summary of the target population, goals, strategies, and partnerships.	The project abstract addresses the required components.	The project abstract is missing or does not address the required components.

EXTENT OF NEED

Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Exceeds Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
The main problem and contributing factors are clear, concise, and demonstrate understanding of the issues. The proposal details who is affected by the problem, when/where it exists, and its historical impacts on the target population(s). Current qualitative and quantitative data is cited to clearly illustrate the problem. Data is derived from a variety of sources, including state and local data references. Applicant demonstrates an extensive history of expertise and aligns with evidence-based practices specific to the population they intend to serve that illustrate progress in addressing the identified problems.	The main problem is clear and concise. The proposal identifies who is affected by the problem and when the problem exists. Data supports the identified problem. Local data is referenced to document the problem and includes demographic and other statistics. Applicant identifies demographics or other statistics relevant for the population(s) intended to be served. Applicant provides an example of their history of expertise or aligns to evidence-based practices specific to the population they intend to serve.	The main problem is missing or is not clear. The proposal does not accurately identify the target population(s). Data has not identified or does not support the problem stated. Applicant does not identify demographics or other statistics of the population(s) intended to be served. No citations or research included in proposal, The proposal lacks details of how the funds will address the problem.

GOALS, ACTIVITIES, BENCHMARKS, AND OUTCOMES

Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Exceeds Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
The applicant has provided clear and measurable goals that address the main gap (s) identified in the needs assessment and demonstrate a strong connection to AHSP programming. For each goal statement, the applicant has identified specific strategies, activities, benchmarks, and anticipated outcomes to be accomplished for every target population. The applicant has established detailed, ambitious, and measurable benchmarks to track progress throughout the year and has included a plan for regular monitoring and evaluation of progress toward the goals and activities. The goals, strategies, activities, benchmarks, and outcomes are well-aligned with the needs assessment and demonstrate a clear and strategic approach to addressing the identified gaps.	The applicant has provided goals that address the main gap(s) identified in the needs assessment and demonstrates some connection to AHSP programming. For each goal statement, the applicant has identified some strategies, activities, and anticipated outcomes to be accomplished for every target population. The applicant has established some benchmarks to track progress throughout the year and has included a plan for monitoring and evaluation of progress toward the goals and activities. The goals, strategies, activities, benchmarks, and outcomes are aligned with the needs assessment and demonstrate some approach to addressing the identified problem.	The applicant has not provided clear and measurable goals that address the main gap(s) identified in the needs assessment or demonstrate a connection to AHSP programming. For each goal statement, the applicant has not identified specific strategies, activities, or anticipated outcomes to be accomplished for every target population. The applicant has not established clear benchmarks to track progress throughout the year or has not included a plan for monitoring and evaluation of progress toward the goals and activities. The goals, strategies, activities, benchmarks, and outcomes are not aligned with the needs assessment or demonstrate a clear approach to addressing the identified gap(s).

EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION

Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Exceeds Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
Evaluation questions are included for each goal with considerable guidance toward implementation of aligned strategies and can be effectively and meaningfully evaluated. Clear evaluation strategy that includes alternative scenarios and criteria to ensure comprehensive evaluation. Multiple relevant, logical data types and collection methods are identified. Evaluators and their qualifications are indicated. Detailed dissemination plan on how the project findings will be shared to stakeholders, committee members, and the public including examples of how, when and through what methods.	Evaluations questions are based around the goal(s) and outcomes, provide guidance on the implementation, and can be evaluated. Clear evaluation strategy Clear data type(s) and collection method(s) are identified. Evaluator is identified. The dissemination plan includes how the findings will be shared to stakeholders, committee members, and the public.	Limited or no examples of evaluation questions. No evidence of evaluation strategy The data type and collection method are unclear. Evaluator is not identified. The dissemination plan does not clearly identify how findings will be shared.

PLAN OF OPERATION, KEY PERSONNEL AND TIMELINE

Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Exceeds Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
The proposal includes proposed activities that are innovative, evidence-based, and likely to transform AHSP for students. There is a timeline established for each phase of the program and lists the individuals responsible. A detailed plan of operation and timeline that addresses all program requirements. Detailed description of personnel responsibilities and timeline.	The proposal includes proposed activities that are evidence- based and meet the requirements for the selected strategy. There is a timeline for all key activities. Key personnel are selected that have relevant experience in the field. The names and titles of personnel are provided and the percentage of time they will dedicate to this program.	The proposal includes proposed activities that are listed and may not be clearly aligned to a strategy. There is no clear plan of operation. The timeline is either missing or does not include dates for all activities. Key personnel information is incomplete.

BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
Exceeds Criteria	Meets Criteria	Does Not Meet Criteria
The budget narrative is detailed and comprehensive of all activities necessary for successful implementation of proposal. The budget aligns directly to the proposal and does not rely entirely on grant funds for successful implementation. There are no mathematical errors, and all expenses are cost effective and appear necessary.	The budget narrative is complete. The budget aligns to the proposal and is free of mathematical errors. Expenses are reasonable and allowable.	Budget does not align with the proposal, includes cost that are not reasonable or allowable, or has several mathematical errors.

Reporting Requirements

Date	Reporting Requirements for Each Year
Ongoing	Fiscal and program monitoring; all invoices must be accompanied with supporting documentation.
January 15, 2026	Interim Report – collection captures mid-year data on activities that have taken place, milestones met (and not met), goals and objectives expectations, grant timeline adherence, how much of the budget has been expended, and summary of progress to date.
September 30, 2026	Final Annual Financial Report – collection captures how the grant has achieved its goals and objectives, and whether grant funds have been spent or obligated at the end of the grant period.

Grantees must comply with the following reporting requirements:

Notes: Any requests for amendments must be submitted at least 45 days before the grant period ends, and must be submitted using the C-125-B form found in the <u>Grant Budget Forms Workbook</u> on the <u>MSDE grants webpage</u>. Final invoices must be submitted no later than 60 days after the grant period ends.

Grant Application Timeline

This funding opportunity, including all attachments and updates, can be downloaded from the <u>MSDE</u> <u>Office of Grants Administration and Compliance website</u> and the Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils <u>webpage</u>.

Date	Timeline Event
June 23, 2025	The Grant Information Guide and the application for participating are released.
July 2, 2025	MSDE will hold a virtual customer service support session.
July 21, 2025	MSDE will hold a virtual customer service support session.
July 29, 2025	MSDE will hold a virtual customer service support session.
September 10, 2025	The grant application period closes.
September 10, 2025	MSDE begins reviewing applications for completeness and minimum requirements.
September 11 – September 20, 2025	MSDE Review Committee will evaluate proposals.
September 20, 2025	MSDE will notify applicants of the award status.
July 1, 2025	The grant period begins.
June 30, 2026	The grant period ends.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Maryland State Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry/national origin, color, disability, gender identity/expression, marital status, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. For inquiries related to Department policy, please contact:

Equity Assurance and Compliance Office Office of the Deputy State Superintendent for Finance and Operations

Maryland State Department of Education 200 W. Baltimore Street - 2nd Floor Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2595

410-767-0123 - voice 410-767-0431 - fax Deaf and hard of hearing use Relay.

The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) Sect 427

Each application must develop and describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the project or activity to be conducted with such assistance, by addressing the special needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries to overcome barriers to equitable participation.

Customer Service Support Sessions

MSDE will hold three customer service support sessions for interested applicants. During these sessions, MSDE personnel will provide an overview of the application process. The sessions will be on:

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Video call link: <u>https://meet.google.com/gtg-spzk-eyc</u>

Monday, July 21, 2025

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Video call link: <u>https://meet.google.com/eyd-wzch-ggo</u>

Tuesday, July 29, 2025

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Video call link: <u>https://meet.google.com/wsh-gajv-uzd</u>

MSDE staff will also be available to provide technical assistance throughout the grant application process. If you have questions about the application or the process, please contact:

PROGRAM CONTACT

Kellise Y. Williamson Postsecondary Credit and P-TECH Coordinator 410-767-0319 kellise.williamson@maryland.gov

This funding opportunity, including all attachments and updates, can be downloaded from the <u>MSDE</u> <u>Office of Grants Administration and Compliance website</u>.

Attachment

Goodwill Excel-Baltimore Adult High School Pilot (AHSP) Program Grant FY26 Application for Funding