

**Fiscal Year 2026**

Strengthening Mental Health Supports at Illinois Community Colleges

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

**Application Due Date/Time:** September 30, 2025, 11:59 p.m.

**Submit Application To:** [iccb.studentservices@illinois.gov](mailto:iccb.studentservices@illinois.gov)

Note: Exempt from GATA

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO) SUMMARY INFORMATION**

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| **1.** | Awarding Agency Name: | *Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)* |
| **2.** | Agency Contact: | *Deana Schenk, Senior Director for Student Success, deana.schenk@illinois.gov* |
| **3.** | Announcement Type: | *Initial announcement* |
| **4.** | Type of Assistance Instrument: | *Grant* |
| **5.** | Funding Opportunity Number: | N/A |
| **6.** | Funding Opportunity Title: | *Strengthening Mental Health Supports at Illinois Community Colleges Project* |
| **7.** | CSFA Number: | N/A |
| **8.** | CSFA Popular Name: | N/A |
| **9.** | CFDA Number(s): | N/A |
| **10.** | Grant Period | *July 1, 2025-December 30, 2026* |
| **11.** | Anticipated Number of Awards: | *45* |
| **12.** | Estimated Total Program Funding: | *$5,800,000* |
| **13.** | Award Range | *$50,000-$180,000* |
| **14.** | Source of Funding: | *State* |
| **15.** | Cost Sharing/Matching Requirement: | *No* |
| **16.** | Indirect Costs Allowed  Restrictions on Indirect Costs | *Yes*  Indirect costs are capped at 15% of the budget (this is not an alternative rate **The rate applies to eligible categories\* up to the cap on the total award**. *\*Eligible categories include either those specified in a NICRA, or MTDCs for those who elected a de minimis rate.*) |
| **17.** | Posted Date: | *August 20, 2025* |
| **18.** | Closing Date for Applications: | *September 30, 2025, 11:59 p.m.* |
| **19.** | Technical Assistance: | *A Bidder’s Conference webinar will be held on August 28, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. Webinar link is provided at the end of this NOFO.*  *Additional technical and accessibility assistance will be provided throughout the grant period to grant recipients.* |

**A. Background and Purpose**

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is inviting eligible applicants to participate in the **Strengthening Mental Health Supports at Illinois Community Colleges** by applying for grants, which are GATA-exempt (as noted on the title page), $50,000 minimum and $180,000 maximum per institution. ICCB will fund a maximum of 45 community colleges to support existing MHEAC activities, expand existing supports, and implement new strategies to support mental health.

Awards under this opportunity are "Fixed Amount Awards"; the grant agreement will provide a specific level of support without regard to actual costs incurred under the award.  While total funding will be predetermined for awards, reporting will be required.  Grantee will receive the specific sum of the award regardless of the actual costs incurred.

This project is designed to assist and support colleges in implementing, scaling, and evaluating equitable, evidence-based mental health supports based on MHEAC requirements.

**B. Eligible Applicants**

Community colleges in the State of Illinois are invited to submit proposals under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

**C. Grant Objectives**

The objectives of this grant are to support new, expanded, and enhanced services to meet the mental health needs of students. The requirements align with the requirements of the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act. Applicants must select **at least one of the five** objectives below and **may choose more than one objective** based on campus needs and capacity. All activities should align with **at least one of the five** objectives. The objectives are detailed below.

* **Objective 1: Raise Awareness.** Institutions will increase awareness of mental health resources and reduce stigma among community college students through targeted outreach, education, and communication campaigns. Activities will focus on ensuring students know how to recognize signs of distress and how to access available on-campus and community-based support services.
* **Objective 2: Mental Health Training.** Institutions will provide training for faculty and staff to enhance their ability to recognize, respond to, and refer students experiencing mental health challenges. Training should incorporate evidence-based programs and culturally responsive approaches to provide inclusive, trauma-informed support.
* **Objective 3: Peer Support Programs**. Institutions will focus on efforts to develop, implement, enhance, and/or expand peer support programs. Appropriate supervision by trained professionals of peer programming and students should be provided. (Virtual options may be used with appropriate vetting to ensure virtual services are utilizing best practices.)
* **Objective 4:** **Local Partnerships.** Institutions will strengthen partnerships with local or virtual mental health providers to expand access to services, improve referral systems, and enhance coordinated care for students. Collaborative efforts will focus on increasing service availability, reducing barriers to off-campus support, and aligning crisis response protocols.
* **Objective 5: Evaluation:** This grant will support the development and implementation of evaluation strategies to assess the effectiveness, reach, and impact of campus mental health initiatives. Activities will include data collection, analysis, and continuous improvement efforts to ensure programs align with student needs and legislative goals.

**D. Required and Allowable Activities**

The expectation is that applicants will propose activities that will align with statewide priorities, as described in the Act, around mental health services to promote equitable access to student mental health supports**.** The following activities are allowable for grantees to carry out. Please note that this list is **not** exhaustive.

**Priority Activities**

Detailed reporting, including institutional data on students served and services provided, is required from all funded institutions. Institutions must choose **at least one of the five** objectives listed above.

**Example of Allowable Activities**

**Objective 1, Awareness:** Examples of Allowable Activities

* Outreach and events to introduce students to available resources
* Hosting workshops or seminars that equip students with tools related to mental health
* Incorporation of mental health activities and awareness into New Student Orientation

**Objective 2, Mental Health Training**: Examples of Allowable Activities

* Purchasing or providing Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) certification or other approved training for faculty, staff, and peer leaders
* Developing internal capacity by preparing college staff to deliver ongoing mental health training to others on campus
* Training sessions focused on servingadiverse student population
* Providing professional development for staff providing direct mental health services to students

**Objective 3, Peer Support Programs**: Examples of Allowable Activities

* Training and professional development for staff supervising peer programs
* Payment for peers engaged as peer supports
* Subscription costs for online peer support programs

**Objective 4, Local Partnerships**: Examples of Allowable Activities:

* Establish services at college locations other than the main college campus
* Creating or improving a referral process between the college and local agencies
* Contractual agreements with mental health providers for services not provided on campus (including telehealth or other virtual services)

**Objective 5, Evaluation**: Examples of Allowable Activities:

* Designing logic models, outcome frameworks, or evaluation plans
* Conducting surveys, focus groups, or interviews with students and staff
* Contracting independent evaluators to assess program impact

**E. Application Package**

**This is a competitive process.** Applications submitted under this grant program will undergo a merit-based review process. All parts of the application package must be completed by the deadline to be considered. Applicants should ensure that all elements are clearly addressed. Applicants will receive a receipt of application. However, applicants **will not** be notified if any items are missing from their application. Applicants must use the templates provided on the **ICCB website:** [**https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/**](https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/)**.** Applicants must complete each section of the Application in its entirety, including the following information in the order listed below and utilizing a header for each Numbered Section.

1. **GATA-Exempt Grant Application**

Applicants must complete each section of the Application in its entirety, including the following information in the order listed below and utilizing a header for each Numbered Section.

1. **Cover Page**

The cover page must include the public higher institution’s name, address, telephone number, and website, as well as the contact information, including email address, telephone number and extension, and fax number of the President/CEO, Chief Financial Officer, and Project Coordinator/Administrator.

The cover page must include a statement that stipulates: “This application is being submitted on behalf of the <Institution’s Name>, and, if awarded, the applicant agrees to abide by the provisions and guidelines set forth in the application and by the ICCB. Furthermore, the application has been approved by an individual authorized to act on behalf of the institution.

1. **Abstract**

Provide an abstract of no more than one page that may be single-spaced and describes the following:

* A brief description of the proposed activities and services,
* A list of anticipated staff, consultants, partners, and service providers with whom the institution will engage.
* A list of the principal objectives.

1. **Project Narrative**

The Project Narrative submitted under this NOFO should be organized, clear, and understandable. The eligible applicant must submit a narrative of **no more than six pages** (charts and graphs are a part of the page limitation), double-spaced, 12-point font that must include the following information in the order listed below and utilizing a header for each of the bulleted Narrative Sections.

**Narrative Sections**

* **Basic Project Information**: Concise summary of the proposed project scope and impact, including a description of the target population of students to be served.
* **Statement of Need:** Institutional data should be provided to identify need for additional mental health services.
* **Program Justification:** This statement should provide data on potential student impact.
* **Fiscal Need:** The grant reviewer may not understand the specific financial needs of your institution and/or chosen program area(s) of focus. Financial need should be explicitly addressed.
* **Detailed description of the measurable project goals and objectives:** The goals and objectives must be measurable and include short- and long-term indicators of success. The expectation is that applicants will propose activities aligning with at least one of the identified project objectives. This must also include a project timeline that encompasses these goals. Clearly describe the project activities and associated timeline for each activity to be carried out during the grant period and the person responsible for carrying out each activity. Should include a description of the impact the project will have on students, the community, the institution, etc. Describe how the institution will determine success of the programming.
* **Description of any partnerships if applicable**: Provide the number of partnerships and a brief description of the role each partner will play in the grant project. ***Letters of Commitment/Support must be included for all external partners.***
* **Project Work Plan:** Clearly describe the project activities and associated timeline for each activity to be carried out during the grant period and person(s) responsible for each activity to be carried out during the grant period. The activities should clearly relate to the goals of the grant. *A chart or table is encouraged*. Please note that your work plan may change during the grant as a result of technical assistance offered by ICCB, ICSPS and the Illinois Campus Cares Technical Assistance Center and other partners. The Project Work Plan should provide an estimated number of students to be served and other indications of how the institution will determine success of the programming outlined. Within the Work Plan, applications should address how they will carry out the following activities:
  + *Building mental health services capacity.*
  + *All other activities carried out under the grant to support project goals*.
* **Desired Impact:** Provided a description of the impact the project will hopefully have on students, the community, the institution, etc. Included the number of students previously served
* **Description of applicant’s capacity and experience:** Description of the applicant’s capacity to execute the project**,** including a description of previous experience in implementing successful grant programs of a similar nature, and related activities such as wrap-around services for the target population.
* **Scalability or Replicability:** Description of how the project could be scaled or replicated by others in the State. *All resources and products developed with grant funds will be provided by the grantee to the ICCB for sharing with the field.*
* **Contingency Plan:**Provided a brief description of the plan and budget if funds are not able to be spent as originally defined in the application.

1. **Letters of Commitment from External Partners, if applicable.**

Intuitions must include signed copies of letters of commitment, with details of partnership and capacity, from each identified external partner.

1. **Uniform Budget**

All applicants must submit a proposed budget on the State of Illinois Uniform Grant Budget Template (*template provided*). Applicants should submit budgets based upon the total estimated costs for the project. For each tab in the budget template that includes room for a narrative, please include details for the costs. **Each funded category in the budget should include a narrative and breakdown of line items.** Gifts, giveaways, or Swag are not allowable expenses in a grant budget. All costs must be reasonable and necessary to achieve program objectives to be allowable costs. Grantees should ensure that they have the institutional capacity to fully execute this grant and all funding provided with it. Grant funds must be expended within the allowable timeframes of the grant period.

**F. Application/Submission Information**

Each grant application package must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m., September 30, 2025, to iccb.studentservices@illinois.gov. Grant application and materials may be found on the ICCB website at https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/.

One bidder’s conference webinar will be held. Bidder’s conference attendance is not mandatory. A recording of the information will be available.

**August 28, 2025, 10:00 a.m.**

**Participants may join the webinar using this link:** [**https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=m2c72f42878e6ff4cda9532ca899b4fa6**](https://illinois.webex.com/illinois/j.php?MTID=m2c72f42878e6ff4cda9532ca899b4fa6)

All questions must be submitted electronically to [mackenzie.montgomery@illinois.gov](mailto:mackenzie.montgomery@illinois.gov). in the subject line: [**Organization’s Name**] FY26 Strengthening Mental Health Supports at Illinois Community Colleges Project. All questions will be posted in an FAQ on the ICCB website.

**Paper copies of the applications are not permitted.** Applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of the e-mail containing the attachments. It is up to the applicant to ensure that all items in the package are attached and sent in the e-mail.

All applicants, whether funded or not, will be notified upon finalization of the allocations.

**G. Funding Information**

* *Grant Period:* The grant period is July 1, 2025 – December 30, 2026
* *Funding Availability:* A total of $5,800,000 is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the ICCB for grants to eligible entities for the implementation of the Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act as outlined under this NOFO. Only one grant application per college.
* Recipients are not eligible to renew or extend existing grant-funded projects but may supplement or scale current initiatives.
* *Funding Deadlines.* ***Please note that no extensions will be given for expending funds****.*
* Grant funds must be obligated by the end of the grant period.
* Goods and products must be received by 60 days after the end of the grant period unless written authorization extending the timeline is provided by the Grantor.
* Services must be fully delivered within the grant period.
* Grant funds must be expended by 60 days after the end of the grant period.
* *Indirect Costs are capped at 15% of the budget. Institutions use their approved indirect cost rate (as documented on the GATA grantee portal) to accumulate eligible indirect costs up to the cap.*
* *Allowable and Unallowable Costs* Grant recipients **must provide budget narrative** explaining the reasonableness and necessity of all costs.

**H. Grant Deliverables**

* Carry out deliverables of the proposed scope of work, encompassing all required activities for the selected Objective(s).
* Work to meet or exceed all of the identified indicators of performance.
* Report on achievement of performance metrics via required quarterly reporting and other supplemental reports as necessary.
* Participate in any required professional development, technical assistance, or learning workshops.
* Submit quarterly reports, which include programmatic, performance, and expenditure data, 30 days after the calendar quarter ends detailing the progress on funded activities. Reporting with commence with the calendar quarter ending after the execution of this agreement. Final close out reports, programmatic and fiscal, will be due 60 days after the termination of the award period. (Reporting templates and other instructions will be made available to grant recipients at a later date.)

**I. Review Criteria and Selection Process**

The ICCB staff will use the criteria listed in this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and a scoring rubric to review the applications and will award points accordingly. Decisions to award grants and the funding levels will be determined per application based upon compliance with the requirements of this NOFO and the scoring of the grant proposal.

Applicants must demonstrate that they meet all requirements under this NOFO as described throughout. Applications will be scored based on the following criterion, which are further detailed on the scoring rubric:

* Application, Cover Page, and Abstract: 10 Points
* Basic Project Information, Statement of Need, and Fiscal Need: 10 Points
* Overall Project Goals and Objectives & Indicators of Performance: 25 Points
* Project Work Plan, Partnerships, and Desired Impact: 35 Points
* Capacity, Scalability or Replicability, and Contingency Plan: 15 Points
* Uniform Budget: 5 Points

**J. State Awarding Agency Contact**

Deana Schenk, Senior Director for Student Success

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