

FY2026 Innovative Bridge and Transitions Grant FAQ

A complete copy of the Notice of Funding Opportunity and a FAQ page can be found at the ICCB website. - <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/>

1. **To log into AmpliFund, use the same information you use to log into the GATA portal.**
 2. **If you experience difficulty accessing the application, please e-mail AmpliFund's Customer Success team directly.** support@il-amplifund.zendesk.com
 3. **An applicant must be pre-qualified in GATA prior to any grant application being scored.** If you have not met all of the pre-qualification requirements, your application will **not be scored**. Please go to the GATA portal to view the pre-qualification and other requirements. <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/GATA/Grants/SitePages/CSFA.aspx>
- Grantee Pre-qualification:** All entities must be qualified to do business with the State of

Illinois. To be qualified for a grant award, an entity must:

- Have a valid UEI number;
- Have a current SAM.gov account;
- Not be on the Federal Excluded Parties List;
- Be in Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State, as applicable;
- Not be on the Illinois Stop Payment list;
- Not on the Dept. of Health and Family Services Provider Sanctions list.

Pre-qualification status will be verified after Grantee Registration is registered and nightly thereafter. If an entity has a pre-qualification issue, the specific issue and remediation support is provided thru the grantee portal. Entities on the Federal Excluded Parties List are not eligible to do business with the State of Illinois.

1. Q: What is the Amplifund link to the application?

A:

<https://il.amplifund.com/Public/Opportunities/Details/4724ba62-8079-425d-938d-7f2e4217518a>

2. Q: Is this grant limited to serve people with disabilities?
A: *No, that is one of four options. It can be used to serve students with disabilities under Objective 4.*
3. Q: Previously, we submitted a proposal but was not chosen, can we submit again?
A: *Yes, with this being a one-year grant, any eligible applicant can apply each year, with or without previous funding.*
4. Q: With only one application per institution, can an organization with multiple locations apply in each location?
A: *No, the institution can only apply once.*
5. Q: Are programs serving prison populations eligible?
A: *Yes, as long as one of the objectives is selected and met during the grant.*
6. Q: Could an agency that serves both ESL learners and people with disabilities or build a new bridge curriculum and a new program serving those with disabilities apply for 2 different programs in 1 application?
A: *No, applicants can only apply for one objective within this grant.*
7. Q: If we currently have an Innovative Bridge and Transition grant, can we only apply if it scales our current activity or for new activities?
A: *If an applicant has an FY25 IBT grant, they should not apply to duplicate the activities. However, if they include a new/different population, add a focus area, or build on previous activities, that would be allowable for a new application.*
8. Q: Looking to sustain our new efforts beyond the innovation grant year, are there some projects that could be funded by the innovation grant that could not be supported with other grants?
A: *There is a list of example allowable grant activities in the NOFO on pages 4-5.*
9. Q: Do proposals need to address all of the objectives or just one or more?
A: *Each applicant needs to select **only 1 objective**.*
10. Q: Will these funds be available in future fiscal years?
A: *We hope so, but there is no guarantee.*
11. Q: Is it possible to use some of these funds for staff professional development that would lead to better services for students?
A: *Yes, as long as the professional development is tied to one of the objectives.*
12. Q: Is this a one-time grant or is there a possibility for funding over 2-3 years if the program needs additional funding to continue to develop what is started and if it resubmits an application?
A: *This grant is only for 15 months. It is possible that the grant will be available again in the future, but not for more than 15 months at a time.*
13. Q: Are paying student stipends allowable?
A: *Yes, they are.*
14. Q: Are equipment costs able to be included in the grant proposal?

A: Yes, they are.

15. Q: When is the deadline?

A: The deadline is October 3, 2025, at 3:00 pm.

16. Q: Will this webinar be recorded and available to us?

A: Yes, the link is on this website - <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/> under the ***"FY26 Innovative Bridge and Transitions Grant"*** section.

17. Q: With regards to the application narrative, may information provided in a table format be single-spaced?

A: Yes

18. Q: Do you want the application narrative in pdf format or in MS Word?

A: Either format is acceptable as long as it can be opened by our readers.

19. Q: Are faculty salaries an allowable expense in lieu of charging student tuition?

A: Faculty salaries are an allowable expense for this grant.

20. Q: For adults not enrolled in HS, do they need a GED or diploma to participate in the program?

A: Having a High School Equivalency document is not a requirement for this grant population. However, if the students are also being counted as Adult Education students, grantees will need to follow those pre-set requirements.

21. Q: When an institution submits one application is it limited to use that money only to programming in one APC office location? Our institution has a regional model with offices in more than one APC.

A: No, funding is per institution and not tied to APCs. However, because it is per institution, applicants with multiple locations can use funding at those locations – such as satellite locations. This is NOT Adult Education funding. Therefore, APCs are not considered.

22. Q: If we have previously been awarded an IBT grant in the past, is it allowable to apply for support of the previously awarded program but scaling it in order to serve a larger number of participants?

A: That is a great way to apply again and demonstrate scaling of the program.

23. Q: Is preference given to applications that are submitted earlier if all applications are equivalent?

A: The time of submission does not impact allocation decisions, as long as the submission is prior to the deadline – October 3, 2025, at 3:00 pm.

24. Q: Are there any budget guidelines?

A: Please review the NOFO on pages 9, 11-13 for specific details.

25. Q: Will priority be given to programs that have not been funded previously? And, subsequently, will programs who have been previously funded, be penalized?

A: No priority or penalty is given to programs that have applied or been awarded previously. Each year, allocations are based on the application for that specific year.

26. Q: Do the apprenticeships need to be registered with the DOL or can they be non-registered

apprenticeship programs?

A: ICCB does not require apprenticeships be registered with US DOL for this grant.

27. Q: If we are doing Objective #2, do we need to choose a ,b, c, or d or can we do some of each?

A: Applicants will need to choose a specific subcategory (i.e., 2a, 2b, 2c, or 2d).

28. Q: Do letters need to be on partner letterhead? And, is there a minimum or maximum number of partner letters we need to include?

A: Yes, any reputable partner should have letterhead. We are only requiring a minimum of one partner letter this year. There is no maximum number of partners required. All letters will be uploaded in Amplifund.

29. Q: Do you want acronyms spelled out the first time I use them in a new section. I think often readers might look at one section without looking at a previous section.

A: Spelling out acronyms often is acceptable. We need it spelled out at least one time, at the beginning.

30. Q: You said an applicant needs to only choose one Objective. Is it ok to still include elements from other Objectives? For example, if we wanted to propose offering a career path training under Objective 1, can we still include supportive services to those students in our request (which are included under Objective 3)?

A: Applicants can combine various pieces together. However, that program will be held accountable to the objective they select and then need to follow through on it.

31. Q: Can you fund paid work experiences/paid Internships in a bridge or ICAPS?

A: Yes, that is allowable.

32. Q: Do we need to provide narrative in AmpliFund budget?

A: Not in the AmpliFund section. However, on the Excel file that is uploaded in AmpliFund, applicants need to include a budget narrative for each tab/line in the budget.

33. Q: If our proposal is primarily the development of a Bridge or ICAPS, how do we have a cost per participant? Do we need to pilot the course so that we can serve students?

A: There would not be a "cost per participant" for this type of grant. You will need to indicate at the top of the Performance Measures chart that this is a curriculum development or program development application. If you choose to run a pilot, your budget will be based on the cost per participant for the number of pilot students.

34. Q: Could we look at development of CBE certificate programs?

A: Yes, that is seen as "innovative."

35. Q: Can sections in Amplifund be uploaded at different times and saved or must all be uploaded in the same session?

A: Yes, information can be plugged in/uploaded and saved and then come back later to do more parts.

36. Q: Is integrating multilingual approaches to previously funded ICAPS and Bridges considered innovative?

A: Yes, it is.

37. Q: Is the cost per participant based on the full amount of the funds we receive or the instructional piece?
A: *The total allocation amount*
38. Q: May we complete the budget using the pdf budget template, or should we only use the excel sheet version of the template?
A: *Applicants may use either version of the template provided.*
39. Q: What is the minimum number of partners an applicant can have?
A: *The minimum number of partnerships required is 1. Partnerships are one of four "Priority Activities" described in the NOFO on pages 3-4. Additionally, these activities are included in the scoring rubric.*
40. Q: Are mentorship programs to help high school-aged students (16 and up) transition to college eligible as part any of the objectives?
A: *Yes, that would fit under Objective #2.*
41. Q: Would ICCB consider mentorship as part of wrap-around services?
A: *Mentorship could be part of wrap-around services as long as it is more than workplace based. If it is solely workplace based, that would not be "wrap-around."*
42. Are food and t-shirts allowable expenses for our target audience in this year's grant budget?
A: *T-shirts and other swag are not allowable. Food can be allowable in certain situations (i.e. part of a training for students is allowable, grocery cards are allowable.)*
43. We need clarification on one of the grant criteria. Our understanding is that this year's proposal needs to be a completely new initiative and not a continuation of the work included in our accepted proposal from FY25. Is this interpretation correct?
A: *No, projects can build on, expand, or scale work already established.*
44. We are proposing Pharmacy Tech bridge and CTE training. Would the cost of Pharmacy Tech Certification Exam vouchers be allowable under Objective 1 if purchased before 3/1/26?
A: *Yes, the cost of exam vouchers would be allowable.*
45. Q: Can an applicant request equipment in addition to the \$4,500 cost per student for objective 2b or is the total amount the \$4,500 per student?
A: *No, all costs are included in the cost per participant calculation. Example: total budget amount divided by the number of students projected to be served = the cost per participant.*
46. Q: Would it be acceptable for our project to serve adults who have already earned a GED or high school diploma and are enrolled in a credit-bearing community college program, but who are underemployed and need to transfer to a baccalaureate institution and earn a bachelor's degree in order to find employment in a high skill, high wage occupation?
A: *This would be an acceptable population to serve and this would fit well in Objective 2.*
47. Q: The Budget portion of the Amplifund portal does have several required fields. These fields match what the budget asks about individual positions. Since you are instructing us to not enter individual positions and instead enter only "Personnel," should we enter in the fields:

Name: "Personnel"
Position: "Personnel"
Salary Amount: [- the total personnel amount in budget -]
Percent of Time: 100
Length of Time: 1

And then do the same in Fringe Benefits section?

A: Yes, that is how programs will need to complete these fields.

48. Q: Where can we find information about stipends?

A: At the top of this page - <https://www.iccb.org/grant-opportunities/> Look for the document named "Guidance for Student Stipends within Grant Programs"

49. Q: We have not received funding before so don't have to fill out the duplication chart-- can I delete the chart to save space or does it need to stay in the narrative template?

A: Please leave the chart in the Narrative. Programs are welcome to reduce it as much as possible, but the chart needs to remain blank so readers know there was no previous funding through this grant.

50. Q: I know the narrative text has to be 12 pt font, double spaced. Does this apply to text within a chart I'm including in the narrative? Or can that font/spacing be adjusted to fit the chart as long as it's legible?

A: Charts and graphs can be single spaced. The font size needs to be no smaller than 10 point.

51. Q: For application components requiring an "Original Signature," do we need to print, sign with ink, and then scan the documents back to PDF? Or would an Adobe signature qualify as an original signature?

A: Either way is acceptable. Electronic signatures have become allowable in recent years.

52. Q: How do we include adjunct stipends and fringe benefits for PD training in the GATA budget? Should these items be included under Personnel and Fringe Benefits or should both costs be listed under Training & Education?

A: These costs would all be included in the Personnel and Fringe lines as this is for time worked. The actual training costs (fees, registration, etc.) would be in the Training & Education line.

53. Q: Regarding budget certification, I am planning to submit the Excel version of our budget per the guidance and FAQ. How should we add the certification signature if we are not submitting via PDF?

A: Signatures are acceptable in the following options:

1 – You can add a signature box through Adobe and sign electronically

2 – Print, wet sign, scan, save, upload in Amplifund

3 – Copy and paste a signature image file

****NOTE:** Be sure these are signed by an authorized party.

54. Q: Who should partners address letters of support to?

A: Please address support letters to: "Innovative Bridge and Transitions Grant"

55. Q: We are completing the IBT grant application and would like to provide tuition for IET students, but I am unsure what budget line to enter it in. Is student tuition in "Education and Training" (which I thought refers to staff education and training, not students'), or in

"Miscellaneous Costs"?

A: Tuition belongs in the "Miscellaneous" line. You are correct that "Education and Training" is for staff education and training, not students.

56. Q: We have a question regarding the target population. Does the target population requirement refer to new students or can it apply to students that we are currently serving?

A: The target population requirement applies to both new and current students.

57. Q: If partners give significant input on curriculum development input and to review the final curriculum and instructional materials, can we provide the partners a stipend or pay the partner some contractual fee?

A: Yes, that would be a contractual line item.

58. Q: The Non-Duplication chart template in the narrative form differs quite a bit from the one in the NOFO. Which one do you want us to use?

A: Please use the one in the narrative template.

59. Q: We have some grant exclusive items in our budget this year but there is no budget line for us to enter on Amplifund. We currently have these items listed under (other or miscellaneous costs). Is this acceptable?

A: Grant exclusive items are ONLY allowed with advance permission from ICCB. Items should be listed in the appropriate category in the budget.

60. Q: I just submitted our grant application for the IBT grant but realized after I hit submit that I attached the Budget that was not signed. I went back into Amplifund to see if I could attach the correct PDF but it said if I withdraw the application, I will not be able to resubmit. What can I do to submit the signed copy?

A: There is nothing that can be added after the submission button has been clicked. According to the rubric, you will lose 1 point for an incomplete budget.

61. Q: There are some key measures for our program that won't be available to us until after the grant period ends. While the work for those measures will be completed during the grant period, there is a lag in some of the college enrollment data, etc. Are those ok to still include in quarter 5 of the performance measures and then report out once we receive them? Again, these are key indicators for our program, we just won't have them for the student impact until fall 2026.

A: Yes. Please report in Q5 as appropriate and finalize numbers with us in the Close-out report.

63. Q: I am interested in the Innovative Bridge and Transitions Program and was wondering if private entities are eligible partners and subrecipients for this program.

A: Please see section B page 2 of the NOFO. If your entity falls under one or more of those categories, then you are eligible to apply.

64. Q: We were completing the IBT grant cover page and we don't see an option to select Objective 2d: Out-of-School Youth Career Activities.

A: There is a mistake on that form. Leave the top boxes unchecked and at the top of the description, please add "Objective 2d – Out-of-School Youth Career Activities."

65. Q: Question about Objective Four: Psychological Resources. Would the Ulifeline Mental Health Services online and services we offer on campus and off campus referrals along with our Wellness Room meet the Psychological Resources requirement?

A: Yes

66. Q: What is the difference between “supplant” and “supplement”?

A: *Supplanting is when “new” dollars are used to replace already budgeted dollars. Supplementing is adding dollars to what is already budgeted. For example, **supplanting** would be having 10 textbooks already in your Adult Education grant budget. Then, moving that money to personnel and putting the cost of all 20 textbooks in the IBT grant budget, which is not allowable. **Supplementing** is having 10 textbooks in the AE grant budget, leaving them, and paying for the additional 10 textbooks from the IBT grant budget, which is allowable.*

67. Q: Is it accurate that we can select an objective BUT have a component of the other objectives? i.e., we choose objective 1, but include serving individuals with disabilities.

A: Yes

68. Q: Is tuition expense assistance allowable?

A: Yes

69. Q: Is there a minimum request of funding?

A: Yes, \$75,000.

70. Q: If we choose for example goal 1 with the intention to develop new ICAPS programs, but we also budget for wraparound support for all students, not just those going into the new ICAPS programs, 1. would that be allowed? 2. who do we count for students served for the IBT grant? Just the ICAPS students or all students who received wraparound support?

A: *If you select Objective 1, that is your primary focus for the grant cycle. This means you would only count, and serve, the students in the ICAPS. If your primary goal is wrap-around support, then you would need to choose Objective 3 instead.*

71. Q: Our bridge classes will be developed for everyone, including adult ed and students with disabilities... so we should NOT choose just students with disabilities as target population focus, correct?

A: *You can include that population if they are using the IBT Grant funds.*

72. Q: If we have a current IBT grant, could we propose expansion of the current grant to serve more students?

A: No

73. Q: How are funding award levels determined?

A: *The funding process is explained in the NOFO on pages 11-12.*

74. Q: Is the non-duplication chart counted as part of the 12-page narrative?
A: *It is but should not take up much space. If you did not receive an IBT grant this past year, you will still need to complete the chart and then you can shrink it to minimize the amount of space it takes.*
75. Q: Is adding plumbing and a gas line to a room to make it a kitchen. Would that be allowable?
A: *No.*
76. Q: Is there a max cost per participant?
A: *Yes, details are explained in the NOFO on pages 11-12.*
77. Q: is de minimis still 10% or is it now 15%
A: *De minimis is explained in the NOFO on page 12. It is currently at 15% depending on your program's status.*
78. Q: Can you detail what specifically qualifies under Training & Education for staff development? And/or what is not allowable?
A: *This can be things like professional development, teacher training, necessary certifications, conferences, etc. These activities must be connected to the grant activities to be allowable. International travel/conferences would not be allowed.*
79. Q: Can we know our scores?
A: *Applicants that are not funded can request scores following allocation.*
80. Q: Will you provide applicants with the scored rubric upon award or non-award?
A: *The ICCB does not share the rubric document. Upon written request, we will share scores and comments from readers as to why points were deducted.*
81. Q: If we want to apply individually as an organization for IBT, and a community college also wants to write us into their application as a sub-contractor for part of their plan, is that allowed? Or can we only be in one or the other?
A: *An entity can apply as a single entity and also be a sub-contractor under a different IBT grant application. Please note, the lead applicant should be doing most of the work.*
82. Q: Austin Helping Hands provides pre-apprenticeship training for youth over 16 who have been affected by gun violence, in the areas of construction, plumbing and electrical engineering. They are not a credit-awarding organization and partnerships with colleges aren't really a part of the program model. It's trades-focused. Are they still eligible, and if not, would you be able to recommend other opportunities?
A: *No, because the grant uses state dollars, out of state entities would not be eligible for this grant.*
83. Q: For Objective 2a, can you please confirm whether noncredit training programs can be supported with grant funds? Some of our professional noncredit trainings like phlebotomy place students on a healthcare pathway that could lead to other credit-bearing training

programs in the future.

A: Yes.

84. Q: I wanted to clarify how these grant funds can be used. My understanding is that they could cover the cost of an ICAPS class - for example, paying for a C.N.A. instructor. Is that correct? If so, would it also be possible to use the funds to cover tuition and fees for a student to enroll in a C.N.A. course? Since our program is small, we may only have one or two students in a C.N.A. ICAPS training, and in that case, covering tuition would be much less costly than funding an instructor for just a few students.

A: *IBT funds can be used for tuition as long as it is tied to the activities within the application. Keep in mind that an ICAPS is an ICAPS only if there is a support course included. So, if an applicant chooses Objective 1 – Adult Education Bridge and ICAPS Programming – and states they plan to build/support CNA ICAPS students, simply paying for the tuition for the CNA course and not providing an ICAPS support course, does NOT follow the activities within the grant application. If an applicant chooses Objective 3 – Wrap Around Support – and states they will be covering tuition costs for students as needed, the above scenario would be following the grant activities in the application. This is why the selection of the grant Objective is incredibly important.*

85. Q: Where can I find more information about the VEDA system?

A: *The VEDA system is a data base for tracking student data and participation. Training will be provided on the system to any programs allocated funding for Objective 2d. It is an already established data collection site used within other grant opportunities.*

86. Q: We want to stay within the 12-page limit while following the instructions on the narrative template. It states that we should use the header for each section but wanted to confirm that we did not need to include the question/requirements as well. For example, for the Statement of Need response we can just keep the Statement of Need header and delete the instruction language in blue ("Provide a description of.....").

A: *Yes, you can and should delete the blue text (the instructions) but keep the headers.*

87. Q: If we choose Objective 3, can we cover tuition for continuing education and training classes that transition students into employment?

A: Yes.

88. Q: What I'm asking is if the project would be eligible if they do not partner with colleges. If the program is strictly a pre-apprenticeship to employment pathway program.

A: *Yes, this program would be eligible.*

89. Q: Our current IBT grant is for January 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026 - in applying for a FY26 grant, do we need to have our grant period be April 1, 2026 - March 31, 2027, or is it allowable to have a period of time where the grants overlap (1/1/26 - 12/31/26 or 3/31/27)?

A: *No, your grant period would still be 1/1/26-3/31/27, you would simply have two grants running for the three month overlap. There is no guarantee that an FY25 grantee will be awarded in FY26.*

90. Q: Under what budget line(s) would the following fall?

- Background check fees
- Driving record fees

- Test fees
- Sheet metal and other PPE required for welding courses
- Uniform expenses
- Stipends for students
- Uber/Lyft, public transportation, gasoline gift cards (transportation assistance)

A: All of these would go under Miscellaneous unless they are being purchased through a contract. Then they would go on the contractual line.

91. Q: For the Planned Deliverables and Performance Measures (1/1/2026-3/31/2027) chart, how specific should we be per activity if we have chosen Objective 3?

For example, should we have a single activity stating we plan to serve 150 students total (then divide accordingly between the 5 quarters) or would you like those 150 students divided into several activities? eg: 20 welding students; 90 manufacturing students; 40 students ready to transition to college/career

A: This example is not an activity, but a performance measure. Be as specific as needed/wanted to be. If students are separated out across several measures, they would need to be on separate lines.

92. Q: Can you share who the partner letter of support should be addressed to--Angela Gerberding or someone else?

A: They can be addressed with "To whom it may concern"

93. Q: Regarding the project description section highlighted in blue. With the overall limit of 12 pages in 12-point font and double spacing, that section takes up valuable space. Is it possible to use the template without including that particular section?

A: See question and answer # 86.

94. Q: Do we have to keep the formatting (such as the boxes around each section) or is it permissible to remove those boxes while still keeping the required sections in the same order and with the proper headers?

A: The boxes can be removed, but everything needs to stay in the same order with the same headers.

95. Q: Can multiple CCC colleges apply for the IBT grant? Or since we are one entity can we only submit one application?

A: No, they cannot.