

Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant Overview

Student Eligibility: To be eligible to receive an award, an initial applicant must--

- Submit a complete Fast Track application with the Department of Higher Education.
- Be at least 25 years old or not have been enrolled in an education program at any level within the past two years.
- Enroll at least half-time at a participating institution in a program designated as eligible by the Coordinating Board.
 - Short-term (less than 300 clock hours) and noncredit programs meet this by definition.
- Complete the FAFSA.
- Apply for and accept all governmental financial aid, which excludes work-study and any loans, for which he or she is eligible.
- Have an Adjusted Gross Income, as reported on the FAFSA, of no more than \$80,000 for married individuals filing federal income taxes jointly or \$40,000 if filing in any other status.
- Be a Missouri resident and a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.
- Not have circumstances preventing receipt of federal Title IV student financial aid, such as being in default on a federal loan or having a criminal record preventing receipt of federal Title IV student financial aid.

For a renewal applicant, defined as an individual that has received a Fast Track grant in a previous academic year, the individual must meet all of the above requirements and, in addition, must be making satisfactory progress, which includes maintaining at least a 2.5 cumulative grade point average.

Applications and awards are available throughout the year. There are no deadlines for the application or FAFSA completion but both must be completed before a student can receive an award.

Because the grant may be converted to a loan if the individual does not complete the residency and work requirement described below, the student must submit all required documentation, including a promissory note, to the department prior to each disbursement of funds. Students must receive counseling regarding the nature and obligations of the program to ensure the decision to accept the award is fully informed.

The Fast Track grant amount is the remaining cost of actual tuition and fees, including program specific fees but excluding course fees, after any governmental sources of funding have been applied to the student's total tuition and fee costs. If that calculation results in a "zero award," the student is eligible for up to \$500 to cover any remaining educational costs. The \$500 payment is only available once per term and will be made whether the student is enrolled full- or part-time.

Renewal students have funding priority over initial students. If additional prioritization is needed, it will be based on the earliest date a Fast Track application is received by the department.

Students may transfer from one participating institution to another without losing grant eligibility but the department may adjust awards to reflect the tuition and fee costs at the new institution.

Applicants may complete more than one program and continue to receive funds until his or her eligibility expires.

A student's eligibility expires when any of the following occur—

- Receipt of the grant for four semesters or the equivalent
- Receipt of a bachelor's degree
- Reaching 200 percent of the academic time typically required to complete the program of study.

In order to avoid the grant being converted to a loan, the student must do all of the following.

- Maintain at least half-time enrollment in an eligible program until graduation. Students may take a leave of absence of up to 12 months without triggering this requirement.
- Graduate from an approved institution.
- Verify residency in the state for 12 months after graduation and maintain residency for at least three years.
- Achieve qualifying employment within 12 months of graduation and maintain qualifying employment for at least three years.

One-third of the aggregate amount received through the Fast Track program will remain a grant for each year of residency and employment. If the recipient maintains residency and qualifying employment for less than the full three years, any remaining balance will be converted to a loan and will be repayable with interest. Recipients must certify their residency and employment annually with the department.

The conversion of the grant to a loan may be waived in instances of death or permanent total disability of the recipient, spouse or child or when the recipient or spouse is serving in the military and transfers out of the state of Missouri.

The conversion of the grant to a loan may be deferred if employment is interrupted for the following reasons—

- Enrollment in at least half-time study at an institution of higher education
- Service to any branch of the armed forces
- Temporary disability that renders the recipient unable to be employed.

Recipients must promptly notify the department of any change in their enrollment or employment status that would trigger conversion of the grant to a loan.

If the grant converts to a loan, interest is charged on the unpaid balance of the loan. The interest rate is the rate for the federal Direct Subsidized Undergraduate Loans at the time the student entered the eligible program.

Recipients will receive a repayment schedule from the department, with the payment varying depending on the total amount owed plus interest. Repayment will normally be based on a 10 year repayment plan unless the \$50 minimum payment results in a shorter repayment period. Payments are delinquent if they are more than 10 days late. There is no penalty for early repayment.

Default on the loan occurs when a recipient fails to make three consecutive payments.

Principal and interest are due at the time of default, unless the recipient makes satisfactory payment arrangements within 30 days and makes three consecutive payments consistent with the arrangements.

Payment of principal and interest may be discharged for death or permanent, total disability.

Principal and interest payments may be deferred temporarily for the following reasons.

- Enrollment in at least half-time study at an institution of higher education
- Economic hardship as determined by the department
- Medical conditions, including but not limited to illness, disability or pregnancy
- Service in any branch of the armed forces.

Interest will not accrue during any deferment period.