

Grad Last Mile Fund

Tips & Tricks for Participating Schools

SPREADING THE WORD...

- A few programs post the application on their website but most take receive referrals from advisors, teachers, and the financial aid office.
- The programs who put the application on the website reported high number of applicants and quickly using up the funds.
- Some programs send targeted emails to qualifying students around midterm season if they have enough funds remaining to accommodate an influx of applications.

CREATING THE APPLICATION...

- A school with multiple emergency fund opportunities combines all emergency fund applications into one single Survey Monkey application. Students can mark themselves eligible for grad last mile funding. This ensures that they prioritize grad last mile funding but can look at other funds as well to meet the students need.
- Ask any data-related questions in the application that you cannot easily pull from your school's data system.

MAKING DECISIONS...

- Many schools found benefits in using a committee to make decisions with one member as the point person with the students and faculty.
- Ensure the student has explored and used all standard existing financial aid options prior to applying for Grad Last Mile funding.
- Multiple schools use a rubric to determine need and set a maximum dollar amount for each certain category. Certain schools set category caps at the amount they will fund a category without documentation of further cost. If the student provides appropriate documentation of further cost, they will exceed the category's cap.
- Few students have been denied across all programs. It is often because they have already maxed out emergency funds, do not qualify, will not respond to questions about their request, or their request is for more than an emergency situation.
- Ensure the application and decision process is equitable for each student. Set a clear precedent and refrain from making exceptions. If you make an exception, clearly document the reasoning and understand this sets precedent in for future cases with similar circumstances. If you are not willing to make the exception for every single student in the future, do not make the exception.

OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT...

- Don't underestimate the time commitment for your financial aid staff. For many schools, the Grad Last Mile program takes 3-5 hours to administer in slower weeks and 8-10 in busier weeks.
- The fund is open to DACA, Undocumented and TPS students with In-State status.
- Tracking your data is important, not only so you can report back to the Grad Last Mile program, but so you can show your university's administration how critical and beneficial the program is to the students and university.
- In all Grad Last Mile programs, the system often catches students who have additional obstacles to graduate in addition to financial need like unexpected exams, and uncompleted graduation forms.