



Tips and Tricks for New Schools

Spreading the word

- Some programs post the application on their website, which often results in a high volume of applicants and rapid use of available funds.
- Most programs rely on referrals from advisors, faculty, and financial aid staff who direct specific students to the online application. This approach helps target students with the greatest need.
- If sufficient funds remain mid-semester, consider sending targeted emails to eligible students to encourage applications.

Creating the application

- Most schools use an online process to collect student applications, using platforms like SurveyMonkey.
- Schools with multiple emergency funding sources often consolidate them into a single online application allowing students to indicate eligibility for the GRAD Last Mile Fund. This streamlines the process and ensures students are considered for all relevant support.
- Include data-related questions in the application that cannot be easily pulled from your institution's data systems. This will simplify end-of-year reporting.

Making decisions

- Many schools benefit from using a committee to review applications, with one member serving as the primary contact for students and faculty.
- Ensure students have explored all standard financial aid options before applying for GRAD Last Mile support.
- Consider using a rubric to assess need and set maximum funding amounts for specific expense categories. Some schools establish category caps unless students provide documentation of higher costs. If documentation supports a higher expense, schools may exceed the category cap.
- Denials are rare but typically occur when students have already been allocated the maximum Fund allocation (\$3,000), do not meet eligibility criteria, students fail to respond to follow-up questions, or students request support for non-emergency expenses.
- Maintain equity and consistency in the application and decision-making process. Avoid exceptions unless they are well-documented and applicable to future similar cases.

Other Considerations

- Be mindful of the time commitment for financial aid staff. Administering the GRAD Last Mile Fund may take 3–5 hours per week during slower periods and up to 8–10 hours during peak times.
- The fund is open to DACA, undocumented and TPS students with in-state status.
- Data tracking is essential—not only for reporting to the GRAD Last Mile program but also to demonstrate the program's impact to university leadership.

- The application process often uncovers additional barriers to graduation, such as missed deadlines for graduation forms or unexpected academic requirements. We suggest that schools refer students to support staff for assistance with these other potential barriers.