

Finish Line Grants Case Study: Learning from Two Partnerships

Alamance Community College-Regional Partnership and Pitt Community College-Region Q

About the Case Study

In 2018, Governor Roy Cooper established the Finish Line Grants program (FLG) to aid community college students in completing their programs when unforeseen financial challenges arise. The grants, funded through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, provide eligible students up to \$1,000 per semester to cover expenses that are inhibiting their ability to remain in school. All 58 community colleges in North Carolina are currently working in partnership with their local workforce development boards to implement the FLG program.

The FLG State Team (comprised of representatives from the NC Department of Commerce, the Community College System Office and the Office of the Governor) is interested in practices that have worked well for partnerships and in understanding patterns between partnerships that have supported a high number of students through Finish Line Grants.

A team of interns, two graduate students working in the Governor's Office and an undergraduate working for the North Carolina Community College System, conducted qualitative research investigating the practices used by two partnerships: Pitt Community College-Region Q Workforce Development Board and Alamance Community College-Regional Partnership Workforce Development Board. The team conducted fifteen interviews with college administrators, workforce development board staff and students.

Key Takeaways

Forming the Partnership

- Existing relationships between community colleges and workforce boards make the process easier
- Understanding the requirements and limitations of all stakeholders is key
- Best for community colleges to work with one workforce development board

Staffing

- It is important to have workforce development board staff on campus
- Managing the FLG takes substantial staff time

Student Outreach

- Partnerships found that promotion by community college instructors, financial aid staff and word-of-mouth are all powerful tools to increase applications

Application and Enrollment

- Simplifying the WIOA enrollment process allows students to enroll in one visit
- Having students consent to their school sharing personal information with the workforce board makes federal reporting requirements easier.
- A generous and empathic staff attitude leads to more grants awarded

Payment Process

- Partnerships can choose to have the community college pay for services with a credit card or have the workforce development board pay with a check; both methods have positives and negatives.



Helping Students Cross the Finish Line