



RESOURCE TITLE:

50-State Comparison: Adult Inclusion in State Financial Aid Policies

In 2015, states collectively provided over **\$12 billion in financial aid** — a critical tool in college access and completion policy — for 4.5 million students. State financial aid programs generally provide dollars for qualified students to use toward their postsecondary expenses for a set period of time. In many states, financial aid programs are structured to provide support only for students matriculating directly from high school to college. When state aid policies include merit-based eligibility criteria, full-time enrollment requirements, deadlines based on the student’s high school graduation date, or early application deadlines — or when they exclude 2-year public institutions — the likelihood that an adult student can benefit from the program diminishes. In fact, while **52 percent of students enrolled in postsecondary education are over the age of 21**, an average of only **35 percent of state aid recipients are classified as independent** among 24 states reporting data. This disconnect is especially concerning considering that states cannot meet attainment imperatives without the participation of adult students.

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Education Commission of the States researched state financial aid policies in all states to provide this comprehensive resource, updated August 2017. Information is provided for the two largest financial aid programs (by expenditure) in each state, according to 2015 data. Click on the questions below for 50-state comparisons showing how states approach adult inclusion in state financial aid policies. Or choose to view a specific state's approach by going to the **individual state profiles** page. Additional information about state financial aid programs can also be found in Education Commission of the States' **state financial aid policy database**.


Questions

1. **Are awards based on academic merit, financial need, or other criteria?**
2. **Do students need to enroll full-time to receive aid?**
3. **Is eligibility linked to the date that the student graduated high school?**
4. **Does the state define a statewide application deadline, and if so, what is the deadline?**
5. **Which postsecondary sectors are eligible to participate?**
6. **All data points for all states**

Related Resources

- **Seeking Support: State financial aid programs and adult students**
- Center for Law and Social Policy: **Redesigning State Financial Aid to Better Serve Nontraditional Adult Students**
- **Redesigning State Financial Aid: Principles to guide state aid policymaking**
- **State Financial Aid 50-State Policy Database**

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Comparison

 **EDUCATION LEVEL:** Postsecondary

★ STATE(S): Nationwide

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