



A NEW TAKE ON EARMARKS

CONGRESS HAS RESUMED LOCALLY FOCUSED FUNDING PROJECTS.
HERE'S HOW COMMUNITY COLLEGES CAN PARTICIPATE.

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THE NEWEST ROUND OF ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR the federal budget marks the return of locally focused funding streams, steered at the discretion of Members of Congress. The current 117th Congress allows elected officials to once again direct funding to specific projects in states and districts if the recipient is a government or non-profit entity. Community colleges received approximately \$71 million of support for these projects in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022. Now named Community Project Funding in the House of Representatives and Congressionally Directed Spending in the Senate, this type of funding was previously known as earmarks.

Due to the delay in the passage of the fiscal 2022 spending bill, Congress is immediately heading into the fiscal year 2023 (FY23) appropriations cycle. This means now is the ideal time for community colleges to reach out to their elected officials to be considered for funding for specific projects. Reaching out to your elected officials to inquire about their appropriations process and requesting a project submission for your institution is one way to secure additional resources. Keep reading for a how-to guide to submit projects, a short history of these programs, and examples of projects funded during FY22 as a starting place for ideas.

How to Request a Community Funding Project / Congressional Directed Spending Request

For colleges that may be new to the process, the best place to start is brainstorming which projects your school is interested in submitting. Be sure to consider the value to the community and ways to document community support for the proposal. Next, reach out to the offices of your elected officials to ask them to include your project on their request list. This is a great opportunity to utilize the connections and relationships you established during the National Legislative Summit if you participated.

A couple of things to keep in mind when you reach out:

- Reach out to both Washington, D.C., and district (state) staff. Some members of Congress may have their local staff lead the earmarks selection process, while others may have their D.C. staff do it.
- Ask if your member of Congress will be submitting Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending requests.
- Be sure to ask about timelines. The House process was expected to run from approximately April 4 – 30, with some subcommittees having earlier deadlines. There's no news yet on the Senate timeline.
- Ask what each office's internal timeline is, and any possible deadline, for submitting requests/projects.
- Ask for any application forms they have or for specific parameters they will use to select projects.
- Ask if they have a project size cap (in terms of funding) for projects they will submit.

The Appropriations Committees in the House and Senate have not yet announced their deadlines for Members of Congress to submit their list of requests. However, the committees were preparing for the FY23 cycle to kick off with President Biden's budget proposal, which was released in late March, and individual lawmakers are likely developing their slate of proposed projects to submit once details are finalized.

Please note, the first step is ensuring that your Member of Congress includes your project in their submissions, but that will not guarantee your project receives support. Members may only receive funding for a portion of their submitted projects. The projects that are included will be announced once the FY23 appropriations bills are approved by Congress. Ideally, this will be in September 2022, but it is possible it may slip until after the November election, so this process is not ideal for urgent or time-sensitive projects.

Background on “Earmarks”

For the past decade, Senators and Representatives have been unable to request funding for projects in their district or states after the 112th Congress disbanded the practice colloquially known as “earmarks.” The majority leadership banned the process due to concerns of wasteful spending and fraud. Last year, at the start of the 117th Congress, Appropriations Committee leaders in both the

House and Senate decided to revive the practice. However, they strengthened transparency measures by requiring that members publicly list all of their project-specific funding requests on their websites. Further, the House limits request expenditures to 1 percent of all discretionary funding. Each member of the House is limited to requesting 15 projects in FY23 (up from 10 in FY22). Additionally, eligibility is limited to government and non-profit entities.

For more details, links to the announcements from the Senate for FY22, the House Appropriations Chairs for FY22, and its FY23 updates can be found at <https://perspectives.acct.org/stories/congress-new-take-on-earmarks>.

Projects Funded in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022

The final FY22 funding legislation funded 80 projects directed to support community colleges totaling \$71,468,000. The Department of Education's Fund included \$55,745,000 as part of the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), while \$15,723,000 was included in the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) account.

The average funding amount for the projects selected was \$893,350, although the most recurring funding level was \$500,000. Individual project requests ranged from as low as \$2,000 from Houston Community College in Texas for program development to as high as \$5.1 million from Northern Virginia Community College in Virginia for a data center operations degree and certificate program.

The programs also varied greatly in content and purpose. Many of the projects were focused on workforce development programs, while others focused on equipment, development, and improvement of existing programs. Another recurring theme in the list of projects was student support services. For example, the Austin Community College District in Texas requested funds for childcare support for student parents and to establish a child development associate program. In Ohio, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College requested funds to provide support services to improve retention and graduation rates. In California, East Los Angeles College successfully secured funding to establish a collaborative partnership promoting college access and success.

A full list of the projects funded in the FY22 funding bill can be found at <https://perspectives.acct.org/stories/congress-new-take-on-earmarks>. To stay up to date on key legislative items, sign up for ACCT's Latest Action in Washington alerts by emailing publicpolicy@acct.org.



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