

# Professional Development Funds

The 2022-2027 Helena College Strategic Plan is supported by four guiding principles: Effectiveness, Stewardship, Impact, and Equity. A defining characteristic of stewardship is that we “leverage professional development to promote innovation and efficiency among all employees” and a strategic goal under this pillar is to “improve the return on investment in professional development activities.”

In keeping with the spirit of all four guiding principles, the college encourages professional development and provides significant funding resources to administrators, faculty, contract professionals, and staff members on an annual basis through a competitive application process. The following procedures for application, awarding and reporting of professional development funds were most recently updated on August 8/18/2025.

## Professional Development Funding Guidelines

---

1. Professional development is defined as the continuous process of acquiring *new knowledge and skills* that relate to one’s profession, job responsibilities, or work environment, regardless of job classification.
  - a. Permanent staff, faculty, contract professionals, and administrators may apply for funding at any point during their employment.
  - b. Adjunct faculty are invited to apply for professional development funds. To be eligible for funding, adjuncts must demonstrate significant institutional experience and commitment by completing a minimum of two academic terms of service not to include summer sessions. The requested training must occur during a period in which an adjunct is contracted for employment with the college or when a contract for future employment can reasonably be assured of being offered and accepted.
  - c. Applications from other temporary employees will be funded on a case-by-case basis.
2. Professional development activities eligible for funding may include, but are not limited to: credit and non-credit courses, conferences, workshops, seminars, webinars, video/teleconferences, printed or audio-visual materials, making presentations, writing articles/publications, conducting research, and participation with associations, committees or councils related to an academic discipline, business and industry, or higher education in general.
3. The professional development activity must relate directly to the applicant’s position or job classification and/or be of benefit to the applicant’s department/program. It must also demonstrate alignment with the College’s mission and one or more defining characteristics or strategic goals, as well as with program/departmental outcomes.
4. Funds are available to provide for the following costs: registration and/or training fees and tuition, transportation, lodging and meals. Other available funding sources must be identified.

5. The applicant is required to demonstrate how the training or information received will be shared with other staff and faculty who would benefit from it. This must occur in the same semester for which funding for the activity is received.
6. Memberships to professional associations are not eligible for professional development funding and should be included in program or departmental budgets; however, activities associated with such memberships may be eligible for funding. Membership costs may be included with an application for funding if they significantly reduce the overall cost for an event registration or any other eligible professional development activity.
7. The Helena College Budget Council requests that funds for mandatory or annual professional development activities be incorporated into departmental budgets whenever possible. The PD Committee prioritizes applications for less frequent PD activities and opportunities that arise after departmental budgets are set for the year.
  - a. Beginning in AY2627, any applications received from an individual to attend an event they attended both of the previous two years will require additional justification before the committee makes a decision.
8. Multiple applicants for the same activity will be funded on a case-by-case basis. Each application will need to demonstrate the need for multiple attendees.

## Application Process

---

1. Applicants must thoroughly complete a professional development application and provide documentation detailing the opportunity. Applicants must explain how the activity will benefit their work and the work of their program/department. They must also describe how it aligns with the college's mission, defining characteristics, strategic goals, and program or department outcomes.
  - a. A signed travel request/authorization form (RAT) is required for any activity that involves travel to another location.
  - b. If more than one employee is applying to participate in the same activity, each applicant will be asked to provide justification.
2. Completed application forms are first approved by the employee's supervisor. Supervisor approval indicates that the employee's participation in the activity is in the best interest of the department or college and the time spent away from their regular duties will not negatively impact their department.
3. Forms are then submitted to the Professional Development Committee for consideration.
  - a. Proposals less than or equal to \$200 will be decided by committee vote only.
  - b. Proposals greater than \$200 will be evaluated using a scored rubric.
4. To ensure adequate time for review, applications should be approved by the supervisor and submitted to the committee at least 3 weeks prior to the event date.
  - a. Due to the complexities of paying for transportation and lodging, applications for activities involving overnight travel should be approved by the supervisor and submitted to the committee at least 6 weeks prior to the event date, when possible.

5. All applicants will be notified of the status of their application within 10 working days of the receipt of the application, if possible.
6. Applicants who receive funding are required to submit a summary of the professional development activity and what they shared with their colleagues by the end of the semester in which their activity occurred.
  - a. This could include a write-up for the Monday Morning Memo, a presentation at the department or campus level, or a contribution to the PD Committee presentation during the State of the College. A summary of the activity and shared knowledge should be added to the accompanying Feedback Form on the employee's PD funding application in Vector.
  - b. Applicants are also required to submit copies of all expense and travel documentation to the committee.

## Disbursement of Committee Funds

---

- The amount available for professional development each fiscal year will be allocated by the Dean/CEO and Budget Council.
- Total available funding for the fiscal year will be divided between individual and all-campus events, and divided between 2 application periods (fall and spring/summer). Any remaining funds will be rolled into the next consecutive funding period within the fiscal year.
- Awarded applicants whose final expenditures exceed the approved amount due to failure to anticipate or include costs in their initial application that were necessary or reasonably expected will be asked to provide a justification of their expenses, and the committee will vote on whether to award additional funds. Changes in final expenditures due to uncontrollable or unanticipated circumstances are expected and will be accommodated (e.g., venue changes, etc.).