The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation are pleased to announce that 21 communities have been selected for iGraduate Montana Challenge Fund grants in the initial year of the new program.

The iGraduate Montana initiative is in partnership with the Office of Public Instruction and the Montana Department of Labor and Industry to leverage the successes and lessons learned from Graduation Matters Montana. iGraduate Montana seeks to increase high school graduation and expand workforce development activities, such as connecting students to high-demand career pathways, and/or post-high school education opportunities. The grant funded communities will work to catalogue and disseminate their activities across the state.

With nearly 30 applications submitted, a selection committee determined the top 21 proposals based on criteria such as demonstration of need, scope of impact, and strength of partnerships. Below is a list of successful applicants listed in alphabetical order:

- Billings Public Schools
- Cascade Public Schools
- Columbia Falls Public Schools
- Custer County School District
- Dawson County School District
- Hamilton Public Schools
- Hardin Public Schools
- Helena WINS
- Jefferson High School
- Libby Public Schools
- Lockwood Public Schools
- MSU-Billings
- MSU
- Park High School
- Polson Public Schools
- Red Lodge Public Schools
- Ronan Public Schools
- St. Ignatius Public Schools
- Troy Public Schools
- United Way of Cascade County
- Whitehall Public Schools

Grants ranged from $3,250 to $10,000 and many focused on bringing relevant career and college skills to students through strategies such as apprenticeships, work-based learning, mentoring, dual enrollment, career fairs, and college visits. The grant awardees will be partnering with Montana businesses and non-profits to create opportunities for students to explore in-demand careers and gain real world experience.