

## Entering My Financially Sustainable Era

**Grant Type**

Mini Grant

**Application Type**

Final Application

**Project Manager 1 Name**

Alexei Marquez

**Project Manager 1 Status**

Staff

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**Project Manager 1 Department**

Thrive Center

**Project Manager 2 Name**

Fred Huang

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**Project Manager 2 Status**

Staff

**Project Manager 2 Department**

Thrive Center

**Project Manager 2 Role**

Co-lead

**Project Advisor Name**

N/A

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N/A@arizona.edu

**Project Advisor Department**

N/A

**Fiscal Officer**

Heather Christiansen

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**Fiscal Officer Department Name**

Office of the Provost

**Requested Funding Amount**

*Enter numbers only. Please only enter this number after completing the budget sheet (the budget template will round up your request).*

*Mini Grants may request \$500 up to \$10,000.*

*Annual Grants may request \$10,000 up to \$100,000.*

**Year 1:**

\$9900

**Year 2:****Year 3:****Project Name**

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**Primary Project Category**

Waste

**Secondary Project Category**

Campus Life (Health & Wellbeing, Behavior Change)

**Background and Context**

*Please provide relevant background information about your organization/team including your mission and/or expertise. Lay out the rationale for the proposed project, focusing on the issue that your project would address.*

*You may also share how the project is new or how it complements, builds upon, or scales existing initiatives.*

*This section is meant to give us more information about you and the context for the project, while the questions below provide space to go into detail about your proposal's plan and specifics.*

**Response:**

Thrive Center's Financial Wellness initiative focuses on a mission to support holistic student well-being by recognizing the diverse identities, lived experiences, and challenges that shape each student's academic and personal journey. To address the multifaceted impacts from levels of financial well-being, the Thrive Center has developed a comprehensive Financial Wellness initiative designed to provide our student population with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to make informed financial decisions during college and beyond.

Our expertise lies in delivering accessible and interactive financial education through multiple modalities. Peer Educator-led presentations foster collaborative learning and normalize financial discussions among students. One-on-one meetings with Peer Educators, a Graduate Assistant, or the Financial Wellness Coordinator to provide individualized guidance on issues such as budgeting, credit, student loans, and much more. Customized presentations, available in-person or virtually, extend our reach and allow us to meet the specific needs of diverse campus groups, like first-generation and low-income students.

The rationale for this proposed project is that financial insecurity can alter student experiences. These challenges disproportionately affect students from historically marginalized and underrepresented communities, amplifying inequities in academic and wellness outcomes.

While our current model has provided meaningful education and support through workshops under a Teach-and-Share model and peer-to-peer support, additional investment will allow us to broaden our reach, enhance program sustainability, and ensure that Financial Wellness remains a core component commitment to student success.

## **Project Description**

*Please provide a thorough description and explanation of your project. Be explicit in what your team is proposing. What will your project's outcomes be and how will you achieve them? Outcomes should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.*

### **Response:**

This project blends Financial Wellness (FinWell) and sustainability through our Teach & Share (T&S) model to reduce food waste and fast fashion. These issues carry significant financial and environmental implications, where our project seeks to empower students with knowledge and practical skills to make sustainable choices and support financial well-being.

The first, to reduce food waste, incorporates an ongoing FinWell program called Accessible Kitchen (AKTS). Piloted by a Basic Needs Infrastructure Grant, AKTS provides hands-on workshops where students learn to prepare meals utilizing Campus Pantry resources. These sessions highlight strategies for minimizing food waste, incorporating low-cost nutritious ingredients, and maximizing budgets. Students leave these sessions knowing estimated costs per meal considering price per serving of goods bought in grocery stores or from utilizing the pantry. By developing cooking skills and sustainable food practices, students reduce unnecessary spending on food/meals while contributing to waste reduction efforts. In collaboration with Campus Pantry, AKTS has an increasing

growth in unique students who attend and a steady increase in kitchen utilization in the Thrive Kitchen, suggesting that students are implementing these skills. AKTS sessions host anywhere from 10-15 students. Currently, the availability of these AKTS are in accordance with our Coordinator's calendar. Having a dedicated student staff would allow for more sessions to occur and more peer-to-peer connections to be made.

The second addresses the environmental and financial costs of fast fashion. Through interactive programming with support from CATalyst Studios, students will learn practical skills such as repairing and upcycling clothing, assessing garment quality, and exploring sustainable thrifting alternatives. These sessions encourage students to view clothing as a long-term investment rather than a disposable commodity, reducing financial strain and contributions to textile waste. With the uncertainty of inflation of previously "affordable fashion", providing an opportunity to bring back recycled fashion to decrease the purchasing and discarding of environmentally hazardous clothing materials around campus. As described, these projects follow the T&S model, which prioritizes educational and applicable skills rather than a purely educational lecture style. Sessions will be interactive, peer-led, and designed to foster dialogue, ensuring that students acquire knowledge and leave with actionable skills and usage of campus resources. This project expands existing programming into applied sustainability education. Integration of financial literacy with environmentally responsible practices provides students with lifelong skills to reduce expenses, lower waste, and support holistic wellness. Outcomes are: 3 AKTS & 3 FastFashions in Spring 2026. Engage min. 150 participants. Achieve a 60% increase of confidence in sustainability concepts.

## Timeline

*Please provide a timeline breakdown for the key steps in your project. The timeline can be basic, but please include anticipated timeframes for each major step, including any key dates for when certain elements must start or be completed. The timeline can be in list format.*

### Response:

11/2025: Recruit and hire 2 Peer Educators for spring semester. This includes applications and interviews to be completed by 12/1/2025. These Peer Educators will be hired regardless of funding. Presently, FinWell has 10 vacant hours to back fill from the Fall semester.

12/6-12/10: 8 hours of Financial Wellness training for new hires, including deciding on 3 AKTS recipe creation and 3 FastFashion upcycle mini projects for the spring (pending approval) .

January: Co-leads will purchase materials needed for each Teach and Shares, including promotional materials for participants. Complete financial breakdown of materials per participant. Advertise selected dates and times to Campus Pantry and CATalyst Studios.

Peer Educators will create branded marketing materials and plan bi-weekly Teach and Shares (taking place Feb - April). Documentation of processes to help establish future T&Ss.

Starting 1/14/25, promotion of the 6 Teach and Shares through trellis registration, cross promotion in CATalyst and Campus Pantry with QRcodes. Direct recruitment of participants through Trellis by

soliciting participants for those who regularly use Campus Pantry and CATalyst Studios. Promote through Housing and Campus Health pipelines. Include social media promotion with Office of Scholarship and Financial Aid, Student Union, and Parent and Family programming.

One week before each scheduled session – promote via social media (Instagram), digital marketing and if time permits recording of reusable material for virtual project accessibility. After each session, Peer Educators will submit a written report about their past session, including participant feedback, what went well, what did not go well, and what needs to change (if any). During this time, adjust cost per participant accordingly to help determine sustainability of projects, recipes, and in person versus virtual needs.

5/2026: Wrap up all reports, including pre- and post-assessments, participant feedback, and demographic information for the entire project. Peer Educators work collectively and with the co-leaders to complete this

6/1/2026-6/30/2026: Co-leads to documents mini grant project and submit reports to Campus Sustainability Fund with results and learning outcomes achieved.

## **Budget Narrative**

*Use this section to provide supplemental justification for the items you are requesting on your budget sheet. Please break down your justifications into the budget categories: Personnel or operating budget. Do not list out each expense or repeat notes made in the budget template, but instead address why the line items are being requested and the purpose they will serve, providing elaboration when necessary.*

*If you are requesting funding for personnel, use this section to elaborate on the position you are creating and how the budget and timeline was established for it. If you plan to hire students, describe in what capacity. Describe relevant details thoroughly (wages, responsibilities, duration of job, extent of involvement, how you will solicit/ market these opportunities etc.).*

*Ensure the descriptions match the line items in the budget sheet.*

*If matching or supporting funds are secured for the project, identify the source and amount in this section, and detail the impact of the matching funds on your overall budget.*

### **Response:**

For this project, there will be two separate sustainability components, food waste and clothing waste – the budget accounts for the costs for personnel and materials.

Personnel are captured under the role of a Peer Educator (PEs); one for each subject. PEs work 15 hours a week for the spring (1/14/26 to 5/6/26) plus 8 hours of training during the fall (12/8-12/10/25). Duties include creating, planning, and executing 3 T&S for their theme. Promotion and marketing of each T&S. Creating and implementing assessments, budget management and carryover from T&Ss. PEs will also participate in FinWell meetings and be available to meet one-on-one with

students during the week. This project is intended to ensure peer-led delivery and long-term program capacity if needed there is the opportunity to host additional T&S or record the content to be accessible for online students to ensure projects are available virtually to access beyond this grant.

Materials include food supplies, mugs, and hand sewing kits. For food supplies, the budget is accounting for enough to feed at least 75 student participants in AKTS. Mugs will be distributed to students on their first visit to AKTS sessions to be used when needed for certain recipes. The budget also allows for 150 of these multipurpose promotional mugs for participants to have upon completing their first T&S. Returners will be asked to bring back their items for subsequent projects. The provision of sewing kits will aim to have the same use after gaining skills from FastFashion. Kits will be portable and will be given to student participants at the end of their first visit to the FastFashions session. They can be used following the acquirement of entry-level sewing skills, like for quick self-repairs on clothing – a tear or a popped button. Promotional items will be given out with the goal that students will sustain abilities to maximize their budgets by using skills in AKTS and FashFashions.

Marketing and promotion for AKTS and FastFashions will include the creation and dissemination of fliers within the Thrive Center and to the student spaces under the Campus Community Connections hub (CCC). These will be created by Peer Educators and will be supported by Thrive Center Digital Content Assistants to ensure that UArizona branding requirements are met. Further distribution will occur to programs and initiatives under the Student Success District, to students in Thrive Center programming and to our partners.

Additional costs are limited to consumable materials for AKTS and FastFashions and account for any unexpected costs are buffered with session-to-session rollover material costs being accounted for. With past AKTS, cost per participant has ranged from \$3.20 to \$2.25. FastFashions would be the only budget for materials that would be purchased in bulk like thread, thimbles, and fabric. However, these costs are without CATalyst studio's inventory accounted for, which could decrease overhead costs.

## **Project Feasibility and Logistics**

*The Campus Sustainability Fund will only fund projects that have completed the necessary work to ensure they can succeed, be completed in the grant's timeline, or have an accurate budget.*

*Please provide a description of the work that has been completed so far to make this project feasible. Please provide a description of the work that has been completed so far to make this project feasible. If relevant partners have been contacted/coordinated with, please identify them in your response.*

*For example, have you received consent or authorization to complete your project (such as from Housing and Residence Life, Facilities Management, Parking and Transportation, etc.)? If you are making modifications to campus, do you have written authorization or official quotes from Facilities Management to accurately identify the cost of labor and supplies?*

### **Response:**

The Thrive Center has laid substantial groundwork to ensure this project is feasible, achievable, and

aligned with the Campus Sustainability Fund's expectations. Our FinWell program operates under a well-established T&S model, which provides a framework for designing and delivering interactive, skill-based workshops. Our team of PEs, a Graduate Assistant, and a Financial Wellness Coordinator, are equipped to develop and implement content around food waste reduction and sustainable fashion practices alongside campus community partnerships. Infrastructure and staffing needed to carry out this project are already in place; however, as our PEs are in their 4th year, hiring will move forward for Spring 2026 employment. There is unused student salary funding this semester, which enables this process to begin. Grant funding would fund these positions for a semester; these positions are aimed at rolling over into the next academic school year to cross train the grant funded PEs to be the "returning" PEs for FinWell. These positions will design and facilitate T&S sessions, ensuring peer-led delivery and long-term program capacity for the prospective projects. Their funding can be supplemented if they are Federal Work Study students (uncertainty with Department of Education cuts), more hours could be added to give more time for one-on-ones, hosting additional T&S, or recording T&S content to be accessible for online students – ensuring that both of these projects are available to access beyond this grant. Additional costs are limited to consumable materials for AKTS and FastFashions, unexpected costs and rollover material costs session-to-session will also be accounted for. Our AKTS component has been a standing series at the Thrive Center, for further development, more recipes and techniques will continue to utilize Campus Pantry for cost-per-meal calculations and sustainable ingredient use, curated for our student population and. AKTS has been functioning out of the Thrive Kitchen, no special certifications are needed. For FastFashions programming, CATalyst Studios are continuing partners for co-facilitating sessions and contributing resources like sewing machines and corresponding materials, which are at zero cost for enrolled students. The FinWell team will complete a certification at CATalyst Studios for sewing machines if there is not a CATalyst member available to attend our T&S. FastFashions programming will promote hand-sewing skills, though the Intro to Sewing CATalyst Studios certification will be promoted to our student participants. All skills taught and demonstrated will be ones that can be replicated with provided sewing kits. Physical modifications to campus spaces will not be required; no facilities management approvals or external construction quotes needed. Projects will be held in multipurpose spaces in the Thrive Center or through existing campus community spaces. Partner spaces like CATalyst Studios and the Student Union.

## **Environmental Sustainability Outcomes**

*Please provide a description of how you expect your project to advance environmental sustainability on campus. A definition of environmental sustainability is provided on our Guides and Tips page.*

### **Response:**

This project will advance environmental sustainability on campus by reducing streams of waste, food and textiles, while uplifting student experiences by sharing lifelong skills. Within our AKTS sessions, students will learn and apply strategies to reduce food waste while leaning into existing campus resources to support a Financial Wellness component. FastFashions programming will address the costs associated with updating wardrobes to fit evolving fashion trends. Students will learn about costs associated with repairing and altering clothing and will have an opportunity to practice these skills and learn about sustainable alternatives like thrifting. Projects are geared to adopt waste-

minimizing habits, increase awareness about financial choices, and make sustainable living accessible. Largely, they will contribute to an effort of reducing the release of greenhouse gases, and depletion of resources like land and water, and reduce environmental hazardous materials waste by giving these items a second or third way to be used.

Promotion for this project is set to be completely digital, including having students create marketing material without the use of AI. All of the presentation materials are AI free and will be created in-house with the supervision of one of the co-leaders. Promotional items are all counted for materials that are meant to be used immediately as part of the presentations or to be used outside of the event upon learning how to use them for their intended purposes. No promotional items are meant merely for promotion itself but to be cost-effective and multifunctional in their design.

## **Social Sustainability Outcomes**

*Please provide a description of how you expect your project to advance social sustainability on campus. A definition of social sustainability is provided on our Guides and Tips page.*

### **Response:**

Social sustainability will be targeted through continuing to frame our Financial Wellness initiatives through the lens of our student population. Understanding student lived experiences can extend from first-generation, low-income, and other historically marginalized backgrounds will support this project geared towards strengthening an overall well-being by sharing skillsets that are sustainable and affordable. We will have the opportunity to empower this student population and others on campus that take part in this initiative. Social sustainability is passed down from generation to generation; the project co-leaders have engaged in social sustainability from a financial perspective based on their own lived experiences and aim to show and pass on these practices to be student led for the future. More importantly, there is the understanding that work like this requires time, and as the world changes there is a need for student workers (especially those from low-income households, and disproportionately underrepresented students on campus) to be paid for their time while learning the skills needed to take on a project like this.

AKTS will not only share strategies in making meals that can be adapted to living in short term housing situations like dorms, but it will concurrently reduce barriers to nutrition and food security in places where produce may be limited in access. FastFashion workshops aim to produce a similar impact; by promoting clothing repair and self-alterations, students will also be able to reduce financial strain that may be associated with wardrobes while encouraging sustainable practices. These opportunities can also foster sustained use of campus resources, like Campus Pantry, CATalyst Studios, and Financial Wellness, while promoting a stronger community in recycling, repurposing and sharing materials that still have value if used outside of their original intended use.

## **Student Leadership & Involvement**

*Please provide a description of how your project will benefit students on campus regarding the creation of leadership opportunities or student engagement. What leadership opportunities exist within your proposal? If you plan to seek student involvement, include relevant details thoroughly and how you will solicit/market these opportunities.*

**Response:**

Funding for this project will support our student staff, Peer Educators, in taking on roles of developing, facilitating, and evaluating events on food waste reduction and sustainable fashion. These roles will provide meaningful opportunities to build skills ranging from public speaking to community partnership building. Workshops will utilize the T&S model, ensuring peer-driven and relatable content, including opening of dialogue spaces for students to share their ideas and establish connections with like-minded individuals. In T&S development, our Peer Educators will lean into understanding our student populations to better cultivate meaningful project impacts and help push the concepts of accessibility, sustainability, and student driven initiatives on our campus.

As this project will be housed in the Thrive Center, physically located in the Student Success District, it provides additional opportunity for all students to engage in sustainability practices that can help better meet the growing needs of students as general costs of living and cost of attending college increase during these ever-changing political times.

Hiring of the incoming Peer Educators will occur in correlation with unused Fall 2025 student funding, presently at 22 hours to date to be used by end of Fall 2025. Recruitment of these students would be promoted through digital advertising through social media, partner newsletters, and email solicitation. After the interviewing process is complete, the 22 hours saved would account for enough hours to complete their hiring and training requirements of the two new students while the grant is still under review. Upon review and the hopeful awarding of the funding, these new Peer Educators could increase their hours to 15 to 20 a week to focus on their assigned projects. Without this funding, these students would be cross training to be the “returning” student workers for Fall 2026 and would need Federal Work Study to have more than 5 hours a week in the Spring.

## **Education, Outreach, and Behavior Change**

*What opportunities does this project provide for members of the campus/community to learn about sustainability? How will your project educate the campus community and/or incorporate outreach and behavior change, particularly those who are not currently engaged with sustainability or environmental work? Please provide a description of how you expect your project will communicate its impacts to the campus community.*

**Response:**

Our project creates accessible opportunities to engage with sustainability through skill-based education and application of acquired skills. Using sustainability within FinWell, this project aims to get students engaged in these practices. Applying a focus on food usage to eliminate waste and

upcycling clothing to reduce the impacts of fast fashion, participants learn that sustainable choices can conserve resources and positively impact spending, budgeting, and other themes under Financial Wellness. Other outcomes include sustainable impacts of food waste and fast fashion; examples being the millions of food waste accrued on college campuses and fast fashion as a heavy consumer of resources like water and energy.

Both series will be followed by the application of acquired skills (usage of hand sewing techniques or creation of AKTS meals). This is further encouraged through the provision of mugs and sewing kits for student participants. Impacts will be measured through pre- and post-surveys (PPS) on knowledge and confidence of themes within financial wellness and sustainability. FinWell regularly utilizes PPS for meetings and AKTS. Currently, AKTS implements two forms of assessment. PPS of student confidence has been supportive of AKTS findings of increased confidence within AKTS skillsets. The second form of assessment is a comment card, where students rate their satisfaction with the attended AKTS. Potential lifestyle changes can start here. Engaging in conversations with other students provides the space needed to address the stigmas that may arise from a financial lens but also from a waste standpoint as consumers. AKTS averages steady growth in student confidence in cooking skills. During Fall 2025 AKTS, 90% indicated an increase of confidence with 100% of students citing enjoyment of the recipes and the step-by-step instructions. Something that we are looking to duplicate with FastFashions.

The visibility of programming will be disseminated through social media, to inspire the larger Thrive Center network of students to participate in such events. We will outreach with other student resources in the Student Success District, partners for AKTS and FastFashions, Student Culture & Engagement Hub, ASUA, and Housing.

In pursuing a mini grant, this project's intention is to be frugal in its own sustainability and growth as it pertains to initiatives on campus. Although these projects are beneficial and useful, we cannot foresee the needs of future students until we can get a grasp on how our current students are wanting to shape their university years. Through this grant, focus can shift from executing the program planning to incorporate time and resources to collect data to demonstrate what students are learning outside of their academic experiences. These numbers show sustainable areas that current and future education administrations need to be more cognizant of when talking about a "student experience on campus".