The source of the Gilbert Grants is from direct allocations by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to private colleges and universities. In essence, it represents the Commonwealth's recognition of the private higher education sector's contribution to education, employment, industry and the options provided to Massachusetts residents who may otherwise have elected to enroll at a college or university in another state. WPI is required to make need-based awards from this allocation to Massachusetts residents.

The funding in this program varies year to year due to the uncertainty of budgets controlled by the Massachusetts Legislature. Therefore, there is no guarantee that assistance will continue from this particular fund in subsequent years.