Updated 5/29/2024.

Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program (84.116N)

Frequently Asked Question (FAQs)

1. What is the purpose of the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students (Basic Needs) Program?

The Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program provides grants to eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs), or a consortia or system of such institutions, to advance systemic and sustainable solutions to student basic needs insecurity through support programs that address the basic needs of students and to report on practices that improve outcomes for students.

2. Who is eligible to apply?
Any community college, 2- and 4-year public and private Historically Black College and University, Tribal College and University, other Minority-Serving Institution, or a consortia or system of eligible institutions.

3. How do I document in my application that my IHE is eligible for a Basic Needs grant?
All institutions should include their UEI and OPEID number on the SF-424 form within the application. The Department will verify eligibility for community colleges as well as HBCUs and TCCUs based on those numbers. Minority Serving Institutions are responsible for demonstrating eligibility under this program and should include the most recent eligibility designation letter issued by the Department. That letter is available on your IHE's dashboard at the HEPIS website. Refer to the FY 2024 Eligibility Instructions for more information.

4. Can students apply for a grant under this program?
No. Only eligible Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) are eligible to apply.

5. How do I submit an application for a Basic Needs grant?
Go to www.grants.gov. Search for the Opportunity Number 84.116. Click on the "Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students" grant opportunity. The link to the online application will appear, along with links to the official Notice Inviting Applications, the Application Instructions booklet, the Pre-application Webinar schedule, and other competition documents.

6. When is the deadline for submitting an application for the FY 2024 competition?
The deadline for the FY 2024 competition is 11:59pm ET on August 5, 2024.

7. What are the funding priorities of the FY 2024 competition?

This competition includes two absolute priorities, two competitive preference priorities, and two invitational priorities.

Updated 5/29/2024.

Absolute Priority 1—Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change.

Projects that are designed to take a systemic evidence-based approach to improving outcomes for underserved students in one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Coordinating efforts with Federal, State, or local agencies, or community-based organizations, that support students, to address two or more of the following:

(1) Food assistance.
(2) Housing.
(3) Transportation.
(4) Health, including physical health, mental health, and behavioral health and trauma.
(5) Child care.
(6) Technology.

(b) Conducting community needs and asset mapping to identify existing programs and initiatives that can be leveraged, and new programs and initiatives that need to be developed and implemented, to advance systemic change.

(c) Establishing cross-agency partnerships, or community-based partnerships with local nonprofit organizations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, or others, to meet family well-being needs.

Absolute Priority 2—Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities.

Under this priority, an application must demonstrate that the project will be implemented by one or more of the following entities:

(1) Community colleges
(2) Historically Black colleges and universities
(3) Tribal Colleges and Universities
(4) Minority-serving institutions

Competitive Preference Priority 1—Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs (up to 7 points).

Projects that are designed to improve students' social, emotional, academic, and career development, with a focus on underserved students through creating a positive, inclusive, and identity-safe climate at IHEs through one or both of the following activities:

(1) Fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion for underserved students. (up to 3 points)
(2) Implementing evidence-based practices for advancing student success for underserved students. (up to 4 points)

Competitive Preference Priority 2—Increasing Postsecondary Education Access, Affordability, Completion, and Post-Enrollment Success (up to 3 points)

Projects that are designed to increase postsecondary access, affordability, completion, and success for underserved students by establishing a system of high-quality data collection and analysis, such as data on persistence, retention, completion, and post-college outcomes, for transparency, accountability, and institutional improvement.

Invitational Priority 1—Leveraging Public Benefit Programs.

Under this priority, we are particularly interested in projects that include one or more of the following activities:

(a) Establishing processes to automatically identify and conduct outreach to students who may be eligible for public benefit programs in accordance with recent Federal guidance.
(b) Conducting ongoing and timely surveys and assessments of student basic needs security, including surveys of student needs conducted upon enrollment.
(c) Providing referrals and case management to students to enroll in local, State, and Federal public benefit programs.

(d) Coordinating and collaborating with government and community-based organizations and providing direct services such as temporary housing, secure sleeping arrangements, free or subsidized food, and access to child care.

Invitational Priority 2—Developing a Campus-Wide Strategy to Address Student Mental Health Needs.
Under this priority, we are particularly interested in projects that are designed to develop a campus-wide strategy to address student mental health needs. This includes creating inclusive campuses, increasing the availability of supportive and treatment services and access to additional staff, and implementing best practices, such as auditing existing campus mental health supports for effectiveness; identifying gaps and taking steps to tailor interventions to better meet the needs of vulnerable populations; implementing skill-training interventions; conducting routine screenings for depression, suicide risk, and anxiety; and investing in suicide means restriction.

8. What is the difference between an Absolute Priority, Competitive Preference Priority, and an Invitational Priority?

Applicants must address the **absolute priorities** in order to be considered for funding.

The applicant has the option of choosing whether to address one or more of the **competitive preference priorities** for which they may receive additional points.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to address the **invitational priorities**. Applications addressing invitational priorities receive no preference over applications that do not meet the priority and there are no additional points assigned.
.

9. Will pre-application technical assistance (TA) webinars be provided to potential applicants?

Yes. There will be 3 TA workshops conducted for applicants on June 12th, June 20th, and July 24th. Please visit the (INSERT LINK) webpage for more information.

10. What is the total project period for an award?

Applicants may request a performance period of up to 3 years (36 months).

11. What is the estimated range of awards?

The estimated range per grant $700,000 -$900,000 for the 3-year performance period. An IHE cannot be funded above the maximum award amount of $900,000.

12. Is there a cost matching requirement under the Basic Needs Program?

No, there is no cost matching requirement.

13. Are indirect costs allowed?

Yes. This program uses an unrestricted indirect cost rate. For more information regarding indirect costs, or to obtain a negotiated indirect cost rate, please see www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/intro.html.

14. Are subawards allowable?

No, subawards are not allowed under this program. However, grantees can partner or collaborate with other Institutions, organizations, businesses, etc. in the form of an MOU, contract, or other arrangement.

15. What is the difference in a subaward and contract (See § 200.331)**?**

A **subaward** is for the purpose of carrying out a portion of a Federal award and creates a Federal assistance relationship with the subrecipient. Characteristics which support the classification of the non-Federal entity as a subrecipient include when the non-Federal entity:

(1) Determines who is eligible to receive what Federal assistance;

(2) Has its performance measured in relation to whether objectives of a Federal program were met;

(3) Has responsibility for programmatic decision-making;

(4) Is responsible for adherence to applicable Federal program requirements specified in the Federal award; and

(5) In accordance with its agreement, uses the Federal funds to carry out a program for a public purpose specified in authorizing statute, as opposed to providing goods or services for the benefit of the pass-through entity.

A **contract** is for the purpose of obtaining goods and services for the non-Federal entity's own use and creates a procurement relationship with the contractor. Characteristics indicative of a procurement relationship between the non-Federal entity and a contractor are when the contractor:

(1) Provides the goods and services within normal business operations;

(2) Provides similar goods or services to many different purchasers;

(3) Normally operates in a competitive environment;

(4) Provides goods or services that are ancillary to the operation of the Federal program; and

(5) Is not subject to compliance requirements of the Federal program as a result of the agreement, though similar requirements may apply for other reasons.

16. Can we provide direct financial assistance to students?

Direct financial assistance is allowable in order to help meet students' basic needs, including direct financial support for housing, food, transportation, child care, technology, and healthcare, including physical health, mental health and behavioral health and trauma.

17. Can we provide support to students for child care expenses that are off campus?

Yes, grantees can use grant funds for on-campus or off-campus child care**.**

18. Can we provide tuition assistance to students?

No, tuition assistance is outside the scope of the Basic Needs program.

19. Can we purchase a refrigerator for food for participants?

Yes, funds could be used to purchase a refrigerator to store food as part of a system to provide food assistance to students, so long as the underlying costs of the refrigerator are reasonable.

20. Can funds be used to construct a dorm or other type of residence for students?

No. Grantees are prohibited from using Basic Needs funding for the acquisition of real property or construction under 34 CFR § 75.533. However, grantees can renovate an existing space on campus to provide temporary housing to students. Allowable renovation includes alterations in a previously completed building. The term also includes the extension of utility lines, such as water and electricity, from points beyond the confines of the space in which the minor remodeling is undertaken but within the confines of the previously completed building.

21. What kind of technology assistance is allowable under the Basic Needs Program?

Examples of technology supports include, but are not limited to, the purchase of laptops, calculators, hot spots, and internet costs in order to help students meet their basic educational needs.

22. Is the payment of security deposits, application fees, and basic furniture for eligible students allowed to support students with housing?

Yes, these expenses are allowed as part of grants designed to support students with temporary housing and securing sleeping arrangements.

23. Can we use funds to attend professional conferences?

This may be allowable only if it directly supports an objective of the grant (for instance, a Basic Needs Conference) and is reasonable and necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the approved grant.

24. Can we use grant funds to purchase a van for our food assistance program on campus (to help with collecting donations)?

It is allowable to "provide free or subsidized food" to students through this program. However, the grantee should be made aware that equipment purchases that are "no longer needed for the original project or program or for other activities currently or previously supported by a Federal awarding agency" are subject to the equipment disposition requirements of 2 CFR 200.313(e), and that the grantee would be required to request disposition instructions from the Federal awarding agency (ED) if this were to occur. This should be noted to help the grantee decide whether it would prefer to purchase a van or rent one for the purposes of carrying out these grant activities, in order to avoid potentially having to compensate ED if the property is ever disposed of

25. What are the reporting requirements for grantees?

If you receive a multiyear award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary.

If you apply for a grant under this competition, you must ensure that you have in place the necessary processes and systems to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170 should you receive funding under the competition.

26. What are the Performance Measures for the Basic Needs Program?

For purposes of Department reporting under 34 CFR 75.110, the Department will use the following performance measures to evaluate the success of the Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program:
(1) The percentage of low-income students at the grantee institution served by any direct student service supported by the grant.
(2) The annual persistence rate at the grantee institution for all students who are served by any direct student service supported by the grant.
(3) By the end of the grant period, the rate of degree or certificate completion at the grantee institution for all students served by any direct student service supported by the grant.
(4) The level of basic needs insecurity among all students served by any direct student service supported by the grant, measured before and after implementation of the grant.

Note: For purpose of the performance measures, the term "low-income student" means a student—
(a) Who is eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant for the award year for which the determination is made; or
(b) Who would otherwise be eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant for the award year for which the determination is made, except that the student fails to meet the requirements of section 484(a)(5) of the Higher Education Act HEA, 20 U.S.C. 1091(a)(5), because the student is in the United States for a temporary purpose.

27. Where can I find resources for developing a logic model?

There are several resources for developing a logic model posted at Grants.gov under the Basic Needs Opportunity Number. Also, the Education Logic Model (ELM) application is a downloadable, browser-based application that will help you build a logic model by answering a series of questions.

In developing logic models, applicants may want to use resources such as the Regional Educational Laboratory Program's (REL Pacific) Education Logic Model Application, available at https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/elm.asp to help design their logic models. Other sources include: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014025.pdf,

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014007.pdf and

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northeast/pdf/REL_2015057.pdf.

Applicants can look for relevant research in ERIC, taking advantage of the ERIC thesaurus. This YouTube video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbtlWGCj2y0) provides tips on how to use ERIC to search for "evidence that demonstrates a rationale" on meeting basic needs for college students.

28. For the promising evidence standard, must I use studies from the Department's What Works Clearinghouse?

A study does not need to meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Standards to meet the definition of Promising Evidence. However, studies that meet the WWC standards and show a statistically significant effect of a project component on a relevant outcome do meet the Promising Evidence standard. Therefore, the WWC can be a helpful source for studies and research. If you choose to use studies from another source, you should include information in your application regarding the protocols and rigor of the source in its review of studies.

29. How to complete the Evidence Form (OMB No. 1894-0001)?

In this competition, you are asked to propose to implement a project component (or strategy) that meets the Demonstrates a Rationale standard and to design a project evaluation that could meet the Promising Evidence standard. Both elements should be addressed in the project narrative. In addition, applicants addressing the Demonstrates a Rationale selection factor under the Quality of the Project Design selection criterion should complete the Evidence Form to show how the project "Demonstrates a Rationale." As defined in the NIA, "demonstrates a rationale" means a key project component included in the project's logic model is informed by research or evaluation findings that suggest the project component is likely to improve relevant outcomes. You demonstrate your rationale by creating a logic model for your project; the logic model should include a project component that is informed by research. If your project meets the demonstrates a rationale standard, then on the Evidence Form, you should mark "Demonstrates a Rationale."

30. Should applicants complete all 3 columns on the Evidence Form (OMB No. 1894- 0001)?

Yes. In Column A (Research/Citation), you should provide the complete citation in APA, MLA, or other scholarly format. The citation should include the name(s) of the author(s), publication date, journal name or URL, title of study, and monograph or volume number, if applicable. If providing a URL, please ensure that the link is active, as Peer Reviewers are not permitted to consult outside sources when reviewing applications. Alternatively, you may also include a copy of the study or report in question. In Column B (Relevant Outcome[s]/Relevant Finding[s]), indicate the finding(s) of the study or report that is related to your project component (for example, the study indicates that use of "A" mentoring program shows positive gains over "X" number of years/months.") In Column C (Project Component/Overlap of Populations and/or

Settings), indicate the project component that you are including based on the results of the study and the specific population(s) and setting(s) to which the intervention will be applied. For additional information, see the instructions and examples provided on Pages 2-4 of the Evidence Form.

31. Is the logic model limited to one page?

No, the logic model is not limited to one page.

32. For the intergovernmental review, if our state does not have a SPOC, then is the review step optional?

Yes, complete this step only if it is applicable.