



U.S. Department of Labor on behalf of the  
U.S. Department of Education

# **Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education -- Postsecondary Student Success Grants Program**

Fiscal Year 2026 Grant Competition

Posted May 28, 2026

## **Contents**

Program Information .....	2
Eligibility.....	3
Eligible Applicants .....	3
Costs.....	3
Submission Requirements and Deadlines.....	4
Program Description .....	5
Overview .....	5
Priorities .....	6
Selection Criteria.....	11
Performance Measures .....	15
Application Submission Information.....	17
Application Review Information.....	19
Definitions.....	20
Award Requirements.....	26
Application Checklist .....	28

## Program Information

The Employment and Training Administration at the U.S. Department of Labor (Labor) is soliciting applications in support of the administration of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) -- Postsecondary Student Success Grants Program (PSSG) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the Secretary of Education (Secretary). The purpose of PSSG is to improve postsecondary student outcomes, including retention, transfer, credit accumulation, and completion, by leveraging data and implementing, scaling, and rigorously evaluating evidence-based strategies.

*Assistance Listing Number:* 84.116M.

*OMB Control Number:* 1894-0006.

Program authority: [20 U.S.C. 1138-1138d](#); the Explanatory Statement accompanying Division B of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 (Pub. L. 119-75).

*For further information contact:* Robyn Wood and Nemeka Mason-Clerc. Email: [pssg@ed.gov](mailto:pssg@ed.gov).

*Type of Award:* Discretionary grants.

*Estimated Available Funds:* \$45,000,000 (approximately \$22,500,000 for early phase grants and \$22,500,000 for mid phase grants).

*Estimated Range of Awards:* \$2,000,000-\$4,000,000 for early phase and \$6,000,000-\$8,000,000 for mid phase for the 48-month project period.

*Average Award:* \$3,750,000 for early phase and \$7,500,000 for mid phase for the 48-month project period.

*Maximum Annual Award:* \$4,000,000 for early phase and \$8,000,000 for mid phase for the 48-month project period.

*Estimated number of awards:* 6 early phase and 3 mid phase awards

*Project Period:* 48 months.

*Application Deadline:* June 29, 2026.

*Note:* ED is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

# Eligibility

## Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include institutions of higher education, a consortium of institutions of higher education, statewide systems of higher education, public and private nonprofit agencies or organizations, or any of the preceding entities in partnership with a non-profit or business.

Note: An applicant that is a nonprofit organization may, under [34 CFR 75.51](#), demonstrate its nonprofit status by providing:

1. Proof that the Internal Revenue Service currently recognizes the applicant as an organization to which contributions are tax deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
2. A statement from a state taxing body or the State attorney general certifying that the organization is a nonprofit organization operating within the State and that no part of its net earnings may lawfully benefit any private shareholder or individual.
3. A certified copy of the applicant's certificate of incorporation or similar document if it clearly establishes the nonprofit status of the applicant; or
4. Any item described above if that item applies to a State or national parent organization, together with a statement by the State or parent organization that the applicant is a local nonprofit affiliate.

## Costs

### Cost Sharing

Grantees must provide a ten percent match, which may include in-kind donations.

### Indirect Cost Rate Information

A grantee's indirect cost reimbursement is limited to eight percent of a modified total direct cost base. For more information regarding indirect costs, or to obtain a negotiated indirect cost rate, please see [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/intro.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/intro.html). (Requirement 2 from 2024 Notice of Final priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criterion (NFP))

### Administrative Cost Limitation

This program does not include any program-specific limitation on administrative expenses. All administrative expenses must be reasonable and necessary and conform to Cost Principles described in 2 CFR part 200 subpart E of the Uniform Guidance.

## Subgrantees

Under 34 CFR [34 CFR 75.708\(b\) and \(c\)](#) a grantee under this competition may award subgrants—to directly carry out project activities described in its application—to entities listed in the grant application.

## Supplement Not Supplant

Grant funds must be used so that they supplement and, to the extent practical, increase the funds that would otherwise be available for the activities to be carried out under the grant and in no case supplant those funds. (Requirement 5 from 2024 NFP)

## Use of Funds

In addition to supporting the costs of implementing the postsecondary student success intervention, grant funds must also be used for:

- (a) Developing and using data systems, tools, and training to implement data-driven processes and interventions as part of a comprehensive continuous improvement effort, as well as to administer the program effectively at the institution and/or State or system levels; and
- (b) Providing for rigorous evaluation of the program interventions. (Requirement 1 from 2024 NFP)

## Independent Evaluation

Grantees must conduct an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the project and submit the evaluation report to ERIC, available at <https://eric.ed.gov/>, in a timely manner. (Requirement 6 from 2024 NFP)

## Submission Requirements and Deadlines

Applications Available	May 28, 2026
Application Deadline	June 29, 2026
Deadline for Intergovernmental Review	August 28, 2026

**Applicants are required to follow the 2025 Common Instructions and Information for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs**, published in the Federal Register on August 29, 2025 (90 FR 42234) and available at [ED 2025 Common Instructions](#).

# Program Description

## Overview

PSSG is designed to improve postsecondary student outcomes, including retention, transfer (including successful transfer of completed credits), credit accumulation, and completion, by leveraging data and implementing, scaling, and rigorously evaluating evidence-based activities to support data-driven decisions and actions by institutional leaders committed to inclusive student success.

PSSG provides funding for the implementation and rigorous evaluation of evidence-based strategies that result in improved student outcomes. The program has two absolute priorities that correspond to varying evidence standards. This multi-tiered competition invites applicants that are in the “early phase” or “mid phase” of their evidence-based work to support students through credential attainment. Grant funding supports the evaluation, dissemination, scaling, and sustainability efforts of the activities funded under this grant. An early phase applicant must propose a strategy that at least meets the Demonstrates a Rationale standard and have a plan to complete a project evaluation that meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards with or without reservations. A mid phase applicant must propose a strategy that at least meets the Moderate Evidence of effectiveness standard, include a plan to scale this strategy to multiple sites and/or to a large number of students, and complete an evaluation that meets WWC standards without reservations.

In this competition, we encourage applicants to propose projects to implement innovative strategies to improve student outcomes, such as projects that leverage AI technology to improve developmental education; projects designed to serve as on-ramps to career pathways and improve workforce readiness through work-based learning opportunities; projects designed to lead to credentials in high-quality short-term programs that align with Workforce Pell Grant Program requirements; and other evidence-based strategies designed to improve credit accumulation, college retention and completion, including completion of registered apprenticeships.

The program also encourages leaders of States, systems and institutions to support data-driven decisions and actions that lead to improved student success. Postsecondary systems often struggle to retain students, support transfer, and ensure completion of credentials that lead to economic mobility. Traditional records do not fully capture learners’ skills, limiting their ability to demonstrate value to employers and institutions. Innovations such as Learning and Employment Records (LERs), AI-enabled digital wallets, and Registered Apprenticeships offer more transparent, skills-based pathways. By

leveraging these tools and associated data, institutions can drive more informed decisions, scale effective practices, and improve student outcomes aligned with workforce needs.

## Priorities

This notice includes six absolute priorities, one competitive preference priority, and one invitational priority. Absolute priorities 1 and 2 are from [34 CFR 75.226](#). Absolute priority 3 is from the Final Priority and Definitions-Secretary's Supplemental Priority and Definitions on Advancing Artificial Intelligence in Education (“AI Priority and Definitions”) published in the Federal Register on April 13, 2026 ([91 FR 18774](#)). Absolute priorities 4 and 5 are from the Final Priority and Definitions-Secretary's Supplemental Priority and Definitions on Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness (“Workforce Priority and Definitions”) published in the Federal Register on April 13, 2026 ([91 FR 18780](#)). Absolute priority 6 is from the 2024 NFP for this program ([89 FR 66225](#)). The competitive preference priority is from the Secretary’s Final Supplemental Priority and Definitions (2025 Supplemental Priorities), published in the *Federal Register* on September 9, 2025 ([90 FR 43514](#)).

Applicants are required to address one of the evidence priorities (absolute priorities 1 or 2), and one of the content priorities (absolute priorities 3-6). The Secretary also invites applications that will meet the invitational priority. All priorities that are being addressed must be identified in the abstract form and the project narrative section of the application.

*Absolute Priority:* For Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, these priorities are absolute priorities. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet one of absolute priorities 1 and 2. Additionally, applications must address one of absolute priorities 3-6. Each application must clearly identify the specific subset of the absolute priority for which a grant is requested.

*Competitive Preference Priority:* For FY 2026, and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, this priority is a competitive preference priority. An application may receive either 0 or 10 additional points under the competitive preference priority. ED will not review or award points where an applicant fails to clearly identify the competitive preference priority that it wishes ED to consider for purposes of awarding competitive preference priority points.

*Invitational Priority:* For FY 2026, and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applications from this competition, this priority is an invitational priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(1), we do not give an application that meets this invitational priority a competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

## Priorities

Priority Title	Required	Points	Priority Language
Absolute Priority 1: Early Phase Projects that Demonstrate a Rationale	Applicants must address AP 1 or AP 2.	N/A	Projects that are supported by evidence that meets the definition of Demonstrates a Rationale (as defined in <a href="#">34 CFR 77.1</a> ).
Absolute Priority 2: Mid Phase Projects Supported by Moderate Evidence	Applicants must address AP 1 or AP 2.	N/A	Projects that are supported by evidence that meets the definition of Moderate Evidence (as defined in <a href="#">34 CFR 77.1</a> ).
Absolute Priority 3: Advancing Artificial Intelligence to support Postsecondary Student Success	Applicants must address one of AP 3-6.	N/A	<p>Projects or proposals to expand the appropriate and ethical use of AI technology in education through one or more of the following:</p> <p>(a) Use AI to support postsecondary instruction, supplemental learning, or other assistance or resources to students who are below grade level, in need of remedial or developmental education, struggling to graduate with a regular credential from their education program, or otherwise in need of additional assistance to complete their program of study;</p> <p>(b) The use of AI technology to improve program outcomes.</p> <p><i>Note: Postsecondary instruction is inclusive of Registered Apprenticeships.</i></p>
Absolute Priority 4: Career Pathways and Workforce Readiness	Applicants must address one of AP 3-6.	N/A	<p>Projects or proposals that support workforce development programs that are aligned with State priorities by:</p> <p>(a) Promoting the attainment by individuals of an in-demand and high-value industry-recognized postsecondary credential, or</p> <p>(b) Providing work-based learning opportunities (e.g., internships, externships, pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and mentorships) for which a student may receive wages and/or academic credit.</p>
Absolute Priority 5: Developing or Expanding High-	Applicants must address	N/A	Projects or proposals that will support workforce development programs that are

<p>Quality Short Term Programs</p>	<p>one of AP 3-6.</p>		<p>aligned with State priorities. This may include one or more of the following:</p> <p>(a) Supporting the development of new high-quality, short-term programs that meet the eligibility requirements of the Workforce Pell Grants program in Section 83002(b) of the Working Families Tax Cuts Act (P.L. 119-21), including program length requirements and alignment with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations, as determined by the Governor in the state where the project is located; or</p> <p>(b) Supporting the expansion of high-quality, short-term programs that meet the eligibility requirements of the Workforce Pell Grants program in Section 83002(b) of the Working Families Tax Cuts Act (P.L. 119-21), including program length requirements and alignment with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations, as determined by the Governor in the state where the project is located.</p>
<p>Absolute Priority 6: Projects That Support College-to-Career Pathways and Supports</p>	<p>Applicants must address one of AP 3-6.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Projects that propose to build upon demonstrated progress toward integrating, or that propose a plan to integrate, career-connected learning and advising support into their postsecondary success strategies, which may include participation in experiential learning, to ensure students earn completions of value that lead to economic success and/or further education. Projects may include aligning academic coursework with career pathways and outcomes; developing and implementing program-level credential maps to create college-to-career pathways, including across institutions via transfer; integrating career planning, counseling, and coaching into holistic advising support; offering work-based learning opportunities aligned with students' programs of study; and providing navigation support to help graduates transition from college to career.</p> <p>Note: Program-level credential maps that interoperate into credential registries are</p>

			<p>inclusive of learning and employment records (LERs) via talent marketplaces.  Note: Work-based learning opportunities are inclusive of Registered Apprenticeships.</p>
<p>Competitive Preference Priority: Returning Education to the States</p>	No	0 or 10 points	<p>Projects or proposals that will be carried out by one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) State educational agencies (as defined in <a href="#">20 U.S.C. 7801(49)</a>),</li> <li>(b) State workforce development agencies or boards,</li> <li>(c) State vocational rehabilitation agencies,</li> <li>(d) State higher education agencies (as defined in <a href="#">20 U.S.C. 1003(22)</a>),</li> <li>(e) An Indian Tribe (as defined in <a href="#">25 U.S.C. 5304(e)</a>), Tribal organization (as defined in <a href="#">25 U.S.C. 5304(l)</a>), or Tribal educational agency (as defined in <a href="#">20 U.S.C. 7452(b)(3)</a>), or</li> <li>(f) Consortia of the entities identified under this priority.</li> </ul>
<p>Invitational Priority: Innovative, Evidence-Based Financing Models</p>	No	N/A	<p>Projects that improve postsecondary retention and completion rates, including critical persistence benchmarks, through innovative, evidence-based financing models that align public and private incentives to expand access to high-value education and workforce training programs.</p> <p>Under this priority, the Department is particularly interested in projects that pilot outcomes-based financing models using private capital to support postsecondary education and workforce training programs that demonstrate strong potential to improve persistence, credential attainment, completion, and earnings outcomes. Projects may include mechanisms in which investor returns are tied to measurable increases in participant earnings and associated incremental federal tax revenues, including through the use of longitudinal data and advanced evaluation methodologies. The Department is especially interested in projects that create sustainable</p>

			<p>market incentives to identify, scale, and continuously improve programs that deliver strong student success and workforce outcomes while reducing reliance on student debt and minimizing upfront federal costs.</p> <p>Note: Projects that meet this priority may leverage other funding sources for uses that may not be allowable uses of grant funds under this program, including payments for successful outcomes.</p>
--	--	--	---

An applicant must identify at least one, but no more than two, citations for the purpose of meeting the evidence requirements under absolute priorities 1 and 2. For more information on meeting the evidence citation requirement for this program, review the “Evidence Form” section of the Application Checklist.

(a) Applicants addressing absolute priority 2 must:

(1) identify up to two studies to be reviewed against the WWC Handbooks (as defined in this notice) for the purposes of meeting the definition of demonstrates a rationale or moderate evidence;

(2) clearly identify the citations and relevant findings for each study in the Evidence form; and

(3) ensure that all cited studies are available to the Department from publicly available sources and provide links or other guidance indicating where each is available.

Note: The studies may have been conducted by the applicant or by a third party. The Department may not review a study that an applicant fails to clearly identify for review.

(b) In addition to including up to two study citations, an applicant must provide in the Evidence form the following information:

(1) the positive student outcomes the applicant intends to replicate under its mid-phase grant and how these outcomes correspond to the positive student outcomes in the cited studies;

(2) the characteristics of the population or setting to be served under its mid-phase grant and how these characteristics correspond to the characteristics of the population or setting in the cited studies; and

(3) the practice(s) the applicant plans to implement under its mid-phase grant and how the practice(s) correspond with the practice(s) in the cited studies.

**Note:** If the Department determines that an applicant has provided insufficient information, the applicant will not have an opportunity to provide additional information. However, if the WWC team reviewing evidence determines that a study does not provide enough information on key aspects of the study design, such as sample attrition or equivalence of intervention and comparison groups, the WWC may submit a query to the study author(s) to gather information for use in determining a study rating. Authors would be asked to respond to queries within 10 business days. Should the author query remain incomplete within 14 days of the initial contact to the study author(s), the study may be deemed ineligible under the grant competition. After the grant competition closes, the WWC will, for purposes of its own curation of studies, continue to include responses to author queries and make updates to study reviews as necessary. However, no additional information will be considered after the competition closes and the initial timeline established for response to an author query passes.

## Selection Criteria

Selection criteria outline how the application will be scored. The maximum possible total score an application can receive for addressing the criteria is 100 points. The maximum possible score for addressing each criterion is indicated in parentheses following the criterion. The selection criteria for this competition are from 34 CFR 75.210.

### **Absolute Priority One—Early-Phase Selection Criteria**

(a) *Significance.* (up to 15 points)

(1) The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of innovative and effective strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (up to 15 points)

(b) *Quality of the Project Design.* (up to 35 points)

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The quality of the logic model or other conceptual framework underlying the proposed project, including how inputs are related to outcomes. (up to 10 points)

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project proposes specific, measurable targets, connected to strategies, activities, resources, outputs, and outcomes, and uses reliable administrative data to measure progress and inform continuous improvement. (up to 10 points)

(iii) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including valid and reliable information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project. (up to 5 points)

(iv) The extent to which the proposed project represents implementation of the evidence cited in support of the proposed project with fidelity. (up to 5 points)

(v) The extent to which the applicant plans to allocate a significant portion of its requested funding to the evidence-based project components. (up to 5 points)

(c) *Quality of the Management Plan.* (up to 20 points)

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project.

(2) In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The feasibility of the management plan to achieve project objectives and goals on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (up to 12 points)

(ii) the extent to which the project director or principal investigator, when hired, has the qualification required for the project, including formal training or work experience in field related to the objectives of the project and experience in designing, managing, or implementing similar projects for the target population to be served by the project. (up to 8 points).

(d) *Quality of the Project Evaluation or Other Evidence-Building.* (up to 30 points)

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation or other evidence building of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the quality of the evaluation or other evidence building, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the effectiveness of the project on relevant outcomes that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks. (up to 20 points)

(ii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation or other evidence building will provide performance feedback and provide formative, diagnostic, or interim data that is a periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (up to 5 points)

(iii) The quality of the evaluation plan for measuring fidelity of implementation, to inform how implementation is associated with outcomes. (up to 5 points)

### **Absolute Priority Two—Mid-Phase Selection Criteria**

(a) *Significance.* (up to 15 points)

(1) The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the proposed project is relevant at the national level. (up to 5 points)

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of innovative and effective strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (up to 5 points)

(iii) The extent to which findings from the project's implementation will contribute new knowledge to the field by increasing knowledge or understanding of educational challenges, including the underlying or related challenges, and effective strategies for addressing educational challenges and their effective implementation. (up to 5 points)

(b) *Quality of the Project Design.* (up to 55 points)

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (i) The quality of the logic model or other conceptual framework underlying the proposed project, including how inputs are related to outcomes. (up to 10 points)
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project proposes specific, measurable targets, connected to strategies, activities, resources, outputs, and outcomes, and uses reliable administrative data to measure progress and inform continuous improvement. (up to 10 points)
- (iii) The extent to which the design for implementing and evaluating the proposed project will result in information to guide possible replication of project activities or strategies, including valid and reliable information about the effectiveness of the approach or strategies employed by the project. (up to 5 points)
- (iv) The extent to which the proposed project represents implementation of the evidence cited in support of the proposed project with fidelity. (up to 5 points)
- (v) The extent to which the applicant plans to allocate a significant portion of its requested funding to the evidence-based project components. (up to 5 points)
- (vi) The applicant's capacity (such as qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity), together with any project partners, to bring the proposed project effectively to scale on a national or regional level during the grant period. (up to 10 points)
- (vii) The quality of the plan to deliver project services more efficiently at scale and maintain effectiveness. (up to 5 points)
- (viii) The quality of the mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information and resources on its project to support further development, adaptation, or replication by other entities to implement project components in additional settings or with other populations. (up to 5 points)

(c) *Quality of the Project Evaluation.* (up to 30 points)

(1) The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation or other evidence-building of the proposed project.

(2) In determining the quality of the evaluation or other evidence-building, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the effectiveness of the project on relevant outcomes that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations, as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbooks. (up to 20 points)

(ii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation or other evidence-building will provide performance feedback and provide formative, diagnostic, or interim data that is a periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (up to 5 points)

(iii) The quality of the evaluation plan for measuring fidelity of implementation, to inform how implementation is associated with outcomes. (up to 5 points)

## Performance Measures

ED has developed the following performance measures for the purposes of the reporting to ED under [34 CFR 75.110](#).

*Program Performance Measures.* The Department developed the following program performance indicators to evaluate the overall effectiveness of this program:

Program Performance Measure 1	First-year credit accumulation.
Program Performance Measure 2	Annual retention (at initial institution) and persistence (at any institution) rates.
Program Performance Measure 3	Success rates including graduation and upward transfer for two-year institutions.
Program Performance Measure 4	Time to credential among completers.
Program Performance Measure 5	Number of credentials conferred.

**Note:** All measures should be disaggregated by Pell grant recipient status and should be inclusive of all credential-seeking students (e.g., full-time and part-time, first-time and transfer-in.)

For purposes of these performance measures, “credential” has the same meaning as “Recognized postsecondary credential.”

*Project-Specific Performance Measures.* Applicants must propose project-specific performance measures and performance targets (both as defined in this notice) consistent with the objectives of the proposed project.

Applications must provide the following information as directed under 34 CFR 75.110(b):

(1) Performance measures. How each proposed performance measure would accurately measure the performance of the project and how the proposed performance measure would be consistent with the performance measures established for the program funding the competition.

(2) Baseline (as defined in this notice) data. (i) Why each proposed baseline is valid; or (ii) if the applicant has determined that there are no established baseline data for a particular performance measure, an explanation of why there is no established baseline and of how and when, during the project period, the applicant would establish a valid baseline for the performance measure.

(3) Performance targets. Why each proposed performance target is ambitious yet achievable compared to the baseline for the performance measure and when, during the project period, the applicant would meet the performance target(s).

Applications must also provide the following information as directed under 34 CFR 75.110(c):

(1) Data collection and reporting. (i) The data collection and reporting methods the applicant would use and why those methods are likely to yield reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data; and (ii) the applicant's capacity to collect and report reliable, valid, and meaningful performance data, as evidenced by high-quality data collection, analysis, and reporting in other projects or research.

Depending on the nature of the intervention proposed in the application, common metrics may include the following: college-level math and English course completion in the first year (developmental education); unmet financial need (financial aid); program of study selection in the first year (advising); post-transfer completion (transfer); and re-enrollment (degree reclamation).

These measures constitute the Department's indicators of success for this program. Consequently, we advise an applicant for an award under this program to consider the operationalization of the measures in conceptualizing the approach and evaluation for its proposed project.

If funded, you will be required to collect and report data in your project's annual performance report (34 CFR 75.590).

# Application Submission Information

Application Submission Instructions: Applicants are required to follow the [Common Instructions and Information for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs](#), published in the *Federal Register* on August 29, 2025 ([90 FR 42234](#)), which contain requirements and information on how to submit an application.

## Registration

To apply, you must first be registered in two systems: SAM.gov and Grants.gov. If you are already registered, make sure your registration is active and up to date.

Grants.gov registration involves several steps including registration on [SAM.gov](#). You may begin working on your application while completing the registration process, but you cannot apply until all registration steps are complete. Once your SAM registration is active, it will take 24-48 hours for the information to be available in Grants.gov, and before you can apply through Grants.gov. For detailed information on the registration steps, please go to: [Grants.gov Applicant Registration](#). Please note that your organization will need to update its SAM registration annually.

### **SAM.gov**

You must have an active account with SAM.gov. This includes having a Unique Entity Identifier. SAM.gov registration can take several weeks. **Begin that process early.**

To register, go to SAM.gov and [click on "Get Started."](#)

Click on the Entity Registration Checklist for the information you will need to register in SAM.gov.

If you need help, you can call 866-606-8220 or live chat with the Federal Service Desk.

### **Grants.gov**

You must also have an active account with Grants.gov.

To register, go to Grants.gov and click "Register." When ready click on "Get Registered Now" and complete required fields.

For more information or assistance, click on "Applicant Registration Page."

ED strongly recommends that you do not wait until the last day to submit your application. Grants.gov will put a date/time stamp on your application and then process it after it is fully

uploaded. If Grants.gov rejects your application, you will need to resubmit successfully to Grants.gov before 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the deadline date.

You must provide the UEI on your application that was used when you registered as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) on Grants.gov. This UEI is assigned to your organization in SAM at the time your organization registers in SAM. If you do not enter the UEI assigned by SAM on your application, Grants.gov will reject your application.

A *Grants.gov* applicant must apply online using Workspace, a shared environment in *Grants.gov* where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. You begin by creating an individual Workspace for each application and establish, for that application, a collaborative application package that allows more than one person in your organization to work concurrently on an application. You will then complete the application forms in Workspace and submit the application when completed. For further instructions on how to apply using *Grants.gov*, refer to: <https://grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants>.

### **Intergovernmental Review**

This is subject to Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs) and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. One of the objectives of Executive Order 12372 is to strengthen federalism – or the distribution of responsibility between localities, states, and the Federal government – by fostering intergovernmental partnerships. This idea includes supporting processes that state or local governments have developed to coordinate and review proposed Federal financial grant applications. Grant applicants need to contact State Single Points of Contact (SPOC) for information on their state’s procedures. Multi-state applicants should follow procedures specific to each state. Further information about the SPOC and the official list of entities can be found at: <https://www.ojp.gov/IntergovernmentalReviewSPOCList.pdf>.

### **Verify Submission**

Verify that Grants.gov received your application submission on time and that it was validated successfully. To see the date/time your application was received, login to Grants.gov and click on the Track My Application link. For a successful submission, the date/time received should be earlier than 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on the deadline date, AND the application status should be: Validated, Received by Agency, or Agency Tracking Number Assigned.

If the date/time received is later than 11:59:59 p.m. Eastern Time, on the deadline date, your application is late. If your application has a status of “Received” it is still awaiting validation by Grants.gov. Once validation is complete, the status will either change to

“Validated” or “Rejected with Errors.” If the status is “Rejected with Errors,” your application has not been received successfully. Some of the reasons Grants.gov may reject an application can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/encountering-error-messages>. For more detailed information on troubleshooting Adobe errors, you can review the Adobe Reader Software Tip Sheet at: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility>. If you discover your application is late or has been rejected, please see the instructions below. Note: You will receive a series of confirmations both online and via e-mail about the status of your application. Please do not rely solely on e-mail to confirm whether your application has been received timely and validated successfully.

### **Submission Problems – What should you do?**

If you have problems submitting to Grants.gov before the closing date, please contact Grants.gov Customer Support at 1-800-518-4726 or email at: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) or access the [Grants.gov Self- Service Knowledge Base web portal](#).

## **Application Review Information**

*Review and Selection Process:* We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under [34 CFR 75.217](#), information outside the rank order of applications, including: the information in each application; and any other information—

- (1) Relevant to a criterion, priority, or other requirement that applies to the selection of applications for new grants;
- (2) Concerning the applicant's performance and use of funds under a previous award under any Department program; and
- (3) Concerning the applicant's failure under any Department program to submit a performance report or its submission of a performance report of unacceptable quality.

Before making awards, Department staff will screen applications submitted in accordance with the requirements in this notice to determine whether applications have met eligibility and other requirements, including whether an application may fail to meet the “General Terms and Conditions” applicable to awarded funds referenced elsewhere within this notice. This screening process may occur at various stages of the review and selection process. Applicants that are determined to be ineligible will not receive a grant, regardless of whether the application was included in the peer review process. Applications not selected for funding will be informed of the Secretary's decision in accordance with 34 CFR 75.218.

Peer reviewers will read, prepare a written evaluation of, and score the assigned applications, using the selection criteria provided in this notice.

For this competition, a panel of non-Federal reviewers will review each application in accordance with the selection criteria. The individual scores assigned by the reviewers will be added and the sum divided by the number of reviewers to determine the peer reviewer score received in the review process.

In addition, in making a competitive grant award, the Secretary requires various assurances, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from ED ([34 CFR 100.4](#), [104.5](#), [106.4](#), [108.8](#), and [110.23](#)).

### Tiebreaker

If there are insufficient funds to award multiple applications with the same score, the Secretary will select applications according to the following tiebreaker:

AP 1: (1) The application's score on the Quality of the Project Evaluation criterion; (2) the applicant that includes the IHE(s) with the highest percentage of undergraduate students who are Pell grant recipients, according to the most recent publicly available data available in IPEDS.

AP 2: (1) The applicant proposing to serve the largest number of students; (2) the applicant proposing to implement at the most sites; (3) the application(s) with the highest score on the Quality of the Project Evaluation criterion; (4) the applicant that includes the IHE(s) with the highest percentage of undergraduate students who are Pell grant recipients, according to the most recent publicly available data in IPEDS.

## Definitions

The following definitions are from [34 CFR 77.1](#), the 2024 NFP, the AI Priority and Definitions, the Workforce Priority and Definitions, and the Secretary's Supplemental Priorities.

*Ambitious* means promoting continued, meaningful improvement for program participants or for other individuals or entities affected by the grant, or representing a significant advancement in the field of education research, practices, or methodologies. When used to describe a performance target, whether a performance target is ambitious depends upon the context of the relevant performance measure and the baseline for that measure.

*Applicant* means a party applying for a grant or subgrant under a program of the Department.

*Application* means a party applying for a grant or subgrant under a program of the Department.

*Artificial intelligence*<sup>1</sup> has the meaning set forth in [15 U.S.C. 9401\(3\)](#).

*Baseline* means the starting point from which performance is measured and targets are set.

*Continuous improvement* means using plans for collecting and analyzing data about a project component's implementation and outcomes (including the pace and extent to which project outcomes are being met) to inform necessary changes throughout the project. These plans may include strategies to gather ongoing feedback from participants and stakeholders on the implementation of the project component.

*Credential Registry*, with respect to a component of a Talent Marketplace, means a digital repository and database, maintained by a State or State Workforce Agency, as defined at [29 U.S.C. 3225a\(a\)\(8\)](#).

*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.

*Evaluation* means an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, practices, and organizations intended to assess their implementation, outcomes, effectiveness, or efficiency.

*Evidence-based, for the purposes of 34 CFR part 75*, means the proposed project component is supported by one or more of strong evidence, moderate evidence, promising evidence, or evidence that demonstrates a rationale.

*Evidence-building* means a systematic plan for identifying and answering questions relevant to programs and policies through performance measurement, exploratory studies, or program evaluation.

*Experimental study* means a study that is designed to compare outcomes between two groups of individuals (such as students) that are otherwise equivalent except for their assignment to either a treatment group receiving a project component or a control group that does not. Randomized controlled trials, regression discontinuity design studies, and single-case design studies are the specific types of experimental studies that, depending on their design and implementation (e.g., sample attrition in randomized controlled trials and regression discontinuity design studies), can meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations as described in the WWC Handbooks:

(i) A randomized controlled trial employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, or schools to receive the project component being evaluated (the treatment group) or not to receive the project component (the control group).

(ii) A regression discontinuity design study assigns the project component being evaluated using a measured variable (e.g., assigning students reading below a cutoff score to tutoring or developmental education classes) and controls for that variable in the analysis of outcomes.

(iii) A single-case design study uses observations of a single case (e.g., a student eligible for a behavioral intervention) over time in the absence and presence of a controlled treatment manipulation to determine whether the outcome is systematically related to the treatment.

*Independent evaluation* means an evaluation of a project component that is designed and carried out independently of, but in coordination with, the entities that develop or implement the project component.

*Learning and Employment Record*, with respect to a Talent Marketplace, means a digital tool maintained by a State or State Workforce Agency, as defined at [29 U.S.C. 3225a\(a\)\(8\)](#).

*Logic Model* (also referred to as a theory of action) means a framework that identifies key project components of the proposed project (i.e., the active “ingredients” that are hypothesized to be critical to achieving the relevant outcomes) and describes the theoretical and operational relationships among the key project components and relevant outcomes.

*Moderate Evidence* means evidence of effectiveness of a key project component in improving a relevant outcome for a sample that overlaps with the populations or settings proposed to receive that component, based on a relevant finding from one of the following:

(i) A practice guide prepared by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, 4.1, or 5.0 of the WWC Handbooks reporting “strong evidence” or “moderate evidence” for the corresponding practice guide recommendation;

(ii) An intervention report prepared by the WWC using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, 4.1, or 5.0 of the WWC Handbooks reporting “Tier 1 strong evidence” of effectiveness or “Tier 2 moderate evidence” of effectiveness or a “positive effect” on a relevant outcome based on a sample including at least 20 students or other individuals from more than one site (such as a State, county, city, local educational agency (LEA), school, or postsecondary campus), or a “potentially positive effect” on a relevant outcome based on a sample including at least 350 students or other individuals from more than one site (such as a State, county, city,

LEA, school, or postsecondary campus), with no reporting of a “negative effect” or “potentially negative effect” on a relevant outcome; or

(iii) A single experimental study or quasi-experimental design study reviewed and reported by the WWC most recently using version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, 4.1, or 5.0 of the WWC Handbooks, or otherwise assessed by the Department using version 5.0 of the WWC Handbook, as appropriate, and that—

(A) Meets WWC standards with or without reservations;

(B) Includes at least one statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect on a relevant outcome;

(C) Includes no overriding statistically significant and negative effects on relevant outcomes reported in the study or in a corresponding WWC intervention report prepared under version 2.1, 3.0, 4.0, 4.1, or 5.0 of the WWC Handbooks; and

(D) Is based on a sample from more than one site (such as a State, county, city, LEA, school, or postsecondary campus) and includes at least 350 students or other individuals across sites. Multiple studies of the same project component that each meet the requirements in paragraphs (iii)(A) through (C) of this definition may together satisfy the requirement in this [paragraph \(iii\)\(D\)](#).

*National level* means the level of scope or effectiveness of a project component that is able to be effective in a wide variety of communities, including rural and urban areas, as well as groups with different characteristics (such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, language, and migrant status), populations, and settings.

*Nonprofit*, as applied to an agency, organization, or institution, means that it is owned and operated by one or more corporations or associations whose net earnings do not benefit, and cannot lawfully benefit, any private shareholder or entity.

*Performance measure* means any quantitative indicator, statistic, or metric used to gauge program or project performance.

*Performance target* means a level of performance that an applicant would seek to meet during the course of a project or as a result of a project.

*Private*, as applied to an agency, organization, or institution, means that it is not under Federal or public supervision or control.

*Project* means the activity described in an application.

*Project component* means an activity, strategy, intervention, process, product, practice, or policy included in a project. Evidence may pertain to an individual project component or to a combination of project components (e.g., training teachers on instructional practices for English learners and follow-on coaching for these teachers).

*Public*, as applied to an agency, organization, or institution, means that the agency, organization, or institution is under the administrative supervision or control of a government other than the Federal Government.

*Quality data* encompasses utility, objectivity, and integrity of the information. “Utility” refers to how the data will be used, either for its intended use or other uses. “Objectivity” refers to data being accurate, complete, reliable, and unbiased. “Integrity” refers to the protection of data from being manipulated.

*Quasi-experimental design study* means a study using a design that attempts to approximate an experimental study by identifying a comparison group that is similar to the treatment group in important respects. This type of study, depending on design and implementation (e.g., establishment of baseline equivalence of the groups being compared), can meet WWC standards with reservations, but cannot meet WWC standards without reservations, as described in the WWC Handbooks.

*Recognized postsecondary credential* means a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State involved or Federal Government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree, as defined in section 3(52) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

*Regional level* means the level of scope or effectiveness of a project component that is able to serve a variety of communities within a State or multiple States, including rural and urban areas, as well as groups with different characteristics (such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, language, and migrant status). For an LEA-based project, to be considered a regional-level project, a project component must serve students in more than one LEA, unless the project component is implemented in a State in which the State educational agency is the sole educational agency for all schools.

*Relevant outcome* means the student outcome(s) or other outcome(s) the key project component is designed to improve, consistent with the specific goals of the program.

*Skills-Based Job Description Generator*, with respect to a Talent Marketplace, means a digital tool, maintained by a State or a State Workforce Agency, as defined at [29 U.S.C. 3225a\(a\)\(8\)](#).

*State Higher Education Agencies means* the officer or agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of higher education. (Section 103(22) of the HEA)

*Subgrant* means an award of financial assistance in the form of money, or property in lieu of money, made under a grant by a grantee to an eligible subgrantee. The term includes financial assistance when provided by contractual or any other form of legal agreement, but does not include procurement purchases, nor does it include any form of assistance that is excluded from the definitions of “Grant or Award” in this part (See 2 CFR 200.92, “Subaward”).

*Talent marketplace* means a digital, interconnected system of technologies maintained by a State or State Workforce Agency, as defined at 29 U.S.C. 3225a(a)(8), that

(a) is publicly available;

(b) includes an integrated:

(i) Learning and Employment Record;

(ii) Credential Registry; and

(iii) Skill-Based Job Description generator;

(c) utilizes artificial intelligence to enable learners and jobseekers, employers, and education and training providers to transform, transcribe, and transact earned learning assertions, job descriptions, and degree and non-degree credentials into discrete competency statements; and

(d) may be curated into interoperable individual records of achievement and learning and employment recommendations.

*What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Handbooks (WWC Handbooks)* means the standards and procedures set forth in the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Version 5.0, or in the WWC Standards Handbook, Version 4.0 or 4.1, or in the WWC Procedures Handbook, Version 4.0 or 4.1, the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook, Version 3.0 or Version 2.1 (all incorporated by reference; see [§ 77.2](#)). Study findings eligible for review under WWC standards can meet WWC standards without reservations, meet WWC standards with reservations, or not meet WWC standards. WWC practice guides and intervention reports include findings from systematic reviews of evidence as described in the WWC Handbooks documentation.

*Work-based learning* is used in accordance with [20 U.S.C. 2302\(55\)](#), to mean sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-

depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.

## Award Requirements

### Terms and Conditions

If you are awarded a grant under this competition, you must ensure and may be required to demonstrate that federal funds will not be used under this project in any manner that violates the United States Constitution, Title VI or Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.](#) or [42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.](#)), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ([20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.](#)), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ([29 U.S.C. 794](#)), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 ([42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.](#)), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ([42 U.S.C. 12131 et seq.](#)), the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act of 2001 ([20 U.S.C. 7905](#)), section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended ([20 U.S.C. 1011f](#)), or other applicable federal law. To the extent that a grantee uses grant funds for such unallowable activities, ED may pursue termination under [2 CFR 200.340](#). The Grant Award Notification document accompanying your award may contain further terms and conditions, as necessary to ensure grantee compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and administrative priorities.

Please note the provisions of Executive Orders 14151, 14168, 14173, and 14190 as well as the U.S. Department of Justice’s July 29, 2025, non-regulatory “Guidance for Recipients of Federal Funding Regarding Unlawful Discrimination,” which clarifies the application of federal antidiscrimination laws to programs or initiatives that may involve discriminatory practices, including those labeled as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (“DEI”) programs.

Such activities may risk violating federal civil rights laws and may jeopardize federal funding. This includes any discriminatory equity ideology in violation of a Federal anti-discrimination law. A definition of “discriminatory equity ideology” is contained in Section 2(b) of Executive Order 14190. To the extent that an ED grantee uses grant funds for unallowable activities, ED reserves the right to take appropriate enforcement action, including recovery of grant funds.

### Applicable Regulations

(a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The Office of Management and Budget Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485. (c) The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for

Federal Awards in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended in 2 CFR part 3474. (d) The Supplemental Priorities. (e) The AI Priority and Definitions. (f) The Workforce Priority and Definitions. (g) The 2024 NFP.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 79 apply to all applicants except federally recognized Indian Tribes.

Note: The regulations in 34 CFR part 86 apply to institutions of higher education only.

# Application Checklist

The application will require you to fill out several forms, which are listed and linked in grants.gov. See below for a description of forms and sections:

## 1. Standard Documents

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424)
- Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424

## 2. Budget Information

- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF 424A)

## 3. Abstract Form

- Abstract — Attach this document to the Abstract Form in the Grants.gov application.

## 4. Project Narrative

- Application Narrative (Project Narrative Attachment Form)

## 5. Budget Narrative

- Budget Narrative Attachment Form

## 6. Other Attachment Forms

- Absolute Priority Narrative
- Competitive Preference Priority Narrative
- Evidence Form (1894-0001)
- PSSG Program Project Profile Form

## 7. Assurances and Certifications

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (Standard Form LLL)
- Grants.gov Lobbying Form

### Part 1: Standard Documents

Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424)

ED Supplemental Information for SF 424 ([Instructions](#))

This form requires basic identifying information about the applicant and the application. Please provide all requested applicant information (including name, address, e-mail address and UEI). **When applying electronically via Grants.gov, you will need to ensure that the UEI on your application is the same as the UEI**

**your organization used when it registered with the System for Award Management.**

Applicants are advised to complete the Application for Federal Assistance (Form SF 424) first. Grants.gov will automatically insert the correct Assistance Listing Number and program name automatically wherever needed on other forms.

Please do not attach any narratives, supporting files, or application components to the Standard Form (SF 424). Although this form accepts attachments, ED will only review materials/files attached in accordance with the instructions provided within this application.

**Part 2: Budget Information**

**Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (Standard Form 424A)**

The SF-424A Budget Information Form is required. This part of your application contains information about the Federal funding you are requesting. The form requires total funding requests for each year of the project, but only requires detailed information for Year 1 of the project. You will provide information on all years of the project, including an itemized budget breakdown for each year of the proposed project, in your Budget Narrative. Specific instructions for completing the Budget Narrative are provided within this application notice and instructions under Budget Narrative. Budget Narrative attachments are not included in the page count.

***Instructions for completing SF-424A:***

The SF-424A has six sections (A-F). While the form includes several sections and boxes, please use the information below to complete only the necessary sections.

**Section A – Budget Summary**

- *Section A-Budget Summary:* Enter the name of the grant program for which you are requesting funds in 1(a).
- *Section A-Budget Summary:* 1(b): Enter the Assistance Listing Number (Example 84.044A).
- *Section A-Budget Summary:* 1(e) “Federal”: Include the total amount requested for the entire performance period. The amount you enter here will auto populate in 5 (e).
- *Section A-Budget Summary:* 1(f) “Non-Federal”: Only include an amount in this section if you propose to include non-Federal financial resources as part of this project, including any non-Federal funds to meet any program cost sharing requirements. If not including non-Federal financial resources, leave this blank or include 0.

- *Section A-Budget Summary: 1(g):* If using Grants.gov form, the total amount included here will be auto-calculated based on what is included in 1(e) and 1(f).

## **Section B – Budget Categories**

- Section B-Budget Categories:
  - Line 6. Object Class Categories: The categories listed here (a-k) are the categories you will need to further describe in the Budget Narrative. For this section, only include the total amount by category for Year 1 of the project. You will provide a breakdown by category for each year of the project in the Budget Narrative. If using Grants.gov, line 6 column (1) will be auto-populated with the name of the program for which you are requesting funding.
- *Personnel (line 6a.):* Enter project personnel salaries and wages only. Include fees and expenses for consultants on line 6f or 6h.
- *Fringe Benefits (line 6b):* The organization’s normal fringe benefits contribution may be charged to the program. Leave this line blank if fringe benefits applicable to direct salaries and wages are treated as part of the indirect cost.
- *Travel (line 6c):* Indicate the travel costs of employees and participants only. Include travel of persons such as consultants on line 6f or 6h.
- *Equipment (line 6d):* Indicate the cost of tangible, non-expendable personal property that has a usefulness greater than one year and acquisition costs that are the lesser of the capitalization level established by the applicant entity for financial statement purposes or \$10,000 per article. Lower limits may be established to maintain consistency with the applicant’s policy.
- *Supplies (line 6e):* Show all tangible, expendable personal property. Direct supplies and materials differ from equipment in that they are consumable, expendable, and of a relatively low unit cost. Supplies purchased with grant funds should directly benefit the grant project and be necessary for achieving the goals of the project.
- *Contractual (line 6f):* The contractual category should include all costs specifically incurred with actions that the applicant takes in conjunction with an established internal procurement system. Include consultant fees, expenses, and travel costs in this category if the consultant’s services are obtained through a written binding agreement or contract.
- *Construction (line 6g):* Construction funds are not authorized, unless specified by the program. If construction is allowable, include the amount request for construction costs.

- *Other (line 6h):* Indicate all direct costs not covered on lines 1-6. For example, include costs such as space rental, required fees, honoraria and travel (where a contract is not in place for services), training, and communication and printing costs. If applicable, include stipends under other. If stipends are included under other, do not include stipends when calculating the indirect cost. Do not include costs that are included in the indirect cost rate.
- *Total Direct Costs (line 6i):* The sum of lines 6a-6h. If using Grants.gov, this number is auto-calculated.
- *Indirect Costs (line 6j):* A grantee's indirect cost reimbursement is limited to eight percent of a modified total direct cost base.
- *Total Cost (line 6i and 6j):* This number should be equal to sum of lines 6i-6j (total of direct costs + indirect costs). If using Grants.gov, this number is auto-calculated. The sum for column one, labeled Project Year 6 (1), should also be equal to item 15a on the application cover sheet (SF Form 424).
- *Line 7. Program Income:* You may leave this field blank.

### **Section C – Non-Federal Resources**

This section should only be completed if you are proposing a cost share or if the program for which you are applying requires a Non-Federal cost share. If you include a cost share, provide a breakdown by including the dollars that will come from the applicant, State, and other sources, as applicable.

### **Section D – Forecasted Cash Needs**

- *Line 13. Federal:* The total for 1<sup>st</sup> Year column will automatically calculate based on the funding amounts included in Quarters 1-4. These quarters apply to **Year One ONLY**. Enter the forecasted cash needs from Federal sources for each quarter of the first program year. The amount entered for each quarter will be used to auto-calculate the amount in line 15 and is your forecasted needs. You will have an opportunity to provide updates to these quarterly amounts in post-award.
- *Line 14. Non-Federal:* The total for 1<sup>st</sup> year column will automatically calculate based on the funding amounts included in Quarters 1-4. These quarters apply to **Year One ONLY. Leave this blank for each quarter if you are not including any Non-Federal Funds.** If including non-Federal funds, enter the forecasted cash needs from non-Federal sources for the first quarter of the first program year. If not applicable, leave blank.
- **Line 15. (sum of lines 13 and 14):** If using Grants.gov, the total is auto-calculated.

## Section E – Budget Estimates of Federal Funds Needed for Balance of the Project

This section collects information for future funding periods. While the columns are labeled First (b) through Fourth (e), this is the section where you will include the **total** amount of Federal funds requested for Years 2-4, for four-year projects. You are only including the **total** amount of Federal funds requested for the outyears beyond Year 1. The total amount in Section D. line 13 plus the total amount in the outyears should match the project total requested in Section A line 5 (e).

- *Line 16 Column (a) Grant Program:* If using Grants.gov, this box will be auto-populated with the name of the program you included in Section A Line 1.
- *Line 16 Column (b) First:* Include the total amount requested for the first outyear. **Year 2 of the project.** Ensure this amount matches what is in your Budget Narrative.
- *Line 16 Column (c) Second:* Include the total amount requested for the second outyear. **Year 3 of the project.** Ensure this amount matches what is in your Budget Narrative.
- *Line 16 Column (d) Third:* Include the total amount requested for the third outyear. **Year 4 of the project.** Ensure this amount matches what is in your Budget Narrative.

## Section F – Other Budget Information

- *Line 21. Direct Charges:* You may leave this field blank.
- *Line 22. Indirect Charges:* Enter the type of indirect rate (provisional, predetermined, final or fixed) or 15% de minimis rate that will be in effect during the funding period, the estimated amount of the base to which the rate is applied, and the total indirect expense.
- *Line 23. Remarks:* You may leave this field blank.

## Part 3: Abstract Form

The project abstract should not exceed one double spaced page and should include a concise description of the following information:

- Project objectives and activities
- Applicable Absolute Priorities
- Applicable competitive preference priority
- Proposed project outcomes
- Proposed project partners with OPEIDs, if applicable

## Part 4: Project Narrative

This section should be attached as a single document to the Project Narrative Attachment Form in accordance with the instructions found on Grants.gov and should be organized in the following manner and include the following parts in order to expedite the review process.

Ensure that you only attach the ED approved file types detailed in the [2025 Common Instructions](#). When attaching files, applicants should limit the size of their file names.

### **Table of Contents**

The Table of Contents shows where and how the important sections of your proposal are organized and should not exceed one double-spaced page.

### **Application Narrative**

ED encourages applicants to limit this section of the application to the equivalent of no more than 65 pages. The recommended page limit does not apply to the cover sheet; the budget section, including the narrative budget justification; the assurances and certifications; or the one- abstract, the resumes, the bibliography, logic model, or the letters of support. However, the recommended page limit does apply to the **Project Narrative**.

## Part 5: Budget Narrative

This section should be attached as a single document to the Budget Narrative Attachment Form in accordance with the instructions found on Grants.gov. It should be organized in the following manner and include the following parts in order to expedite the review process.

Ensure that you attach the ED approved file types detailed in the [2025 Common Instructions](#).

Each application must also provide a Budget Narrative for requested Federal funds. The Budget Narrative for requested Federal funds should provide a justification of how the money requested for each budget item will be spent, and the total amounts for each project year should match the total amounts in Section E – Budget Estimates of Federal Funds Needed for Balance of the Project in SF-424A.

This section requires an itemized budget breakdown for each project year and the basis for estimating the costs of personnel salaries, benefits, project staff travel, materials and supplies, consultants and subcontracts, indirect costs and any other projected expenditures. Be sure to complete an itemized budget breakdown and narrative for each year of the proposed project. Below is a breakdown of the categories to be included in the Budget Narrative for each project year:

- *Personnel*: List all staff positions by title including roles and responsibilities. For each position give the annual salary, the percentage of time devoted to the project, and the amount of each position's salary funded by the grant.

- *Fringe Benefits*: The institution's normal fringe benefits contribution may be charged to the program. Leave this line blank if fringe benefits applicable to direct salaries and wages are treated as part of the indirect cost.
- *Travel*: For grantee staff only, specify the purpose, number of staff traveling, mileage, per diem, estimated number of in-state and out-of-state trips, and other estimated costs for each type of travel.
- *Equipment*: Identify each item of equipment you expect to purchase that has an estimated acquisition cost of \$10,000 or more per unit (or if your capitalization level is less than \$10,000, use your capitalization level) and a useful lifetime of more than one year (see [2 CFR Part 200.1](#) for the definition of Equipment). List the item, quantity, and the unit cost per item.
- *Supplies*: Identify the cost of supplies (e.g., general office supplies, desk/chairs, laptops/printers, other specialty items) in the detailed budget per category. Except for general office supplies, list the item, quantity, and the unit cost per item. Supplies include all tangible personal property other than "equipment" (see [2 CFR Part 200.1](#) for the definition of Supplies). Items with a unit cost of less than \$10,000 are supplies, not "equipment."
- *Contractual*: The contractual category should include all costs specifically incurred with actions that the applicant takes in conjunction with an established internal procurement system. Include consultant fees, expenses, and travel costs in this category if the consultant's services are obtained through a written binding agreement or contract.
- *Construction*: Construction funds are not authorized.
- *Other*: Indicate all direct costs not covered elsewhere. For example, include such costs as space rental, required fees, honoraria and travel (where a contract is not in place for services), training, and communication and printing costs. List items, such as stipends or incentives, not covered elsewhere. Do not include costs that are included in the indirect cost rate.
- *Indirect Costs*: A grantee's indirect cost reimbursement is limited to eight percent of a modified total direct cost base. *Total Cost*: This number should be total direct costs + indirect costs.

The Budget Narrative provides an opportunity for the applicant to identify the nature and amount of the proposed expenditures. The applicant should provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers and project staff to understand how requested funds will be used, how much will be expended, and the relationship between the requested funds and project activities and outcomes.

In accordance with [34 CFR 75.232](#), ED staff perform a cost analysis of each recommended project to ensure that costs relate to the activities and objectives of the project, are reasonable, allowable and allocable. ED may delete or reduce costs from the budget during this review.

**Note:** Applicants are encouraged to review the Cost Principles described in 2 CFR part 200 subpart E of the Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance.

## 6. Other Attachment Forms

- Absolute Priority Narrative (no more than 3 pages)
- Competitive Preference Priority Narrative (no more than 1 page)
- Evidence Form (1894-0001)
- PSSG Project Profile Form

## Part 7: Assurances and Certifications

Be certain to complete all required assurances and certifications and include all required information in the appropriate place on each form. The assurances and certifications required for this application are:

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities**
- Grants.Gov Lobbying Form – “Certification Regarding Lobbying”**

**Note:** While it is required to submit the lobbying form that best meets an applicants’ situation, the two forms are classified as “optional” in Grants.gov to avoid submission errors when only one of the lobbying form is submitted.

## Attaching Files – Additional Tips

Please note the following tips related to attaching files to your application:

- When you submit your application electronically, you must upload any narrative sections and all other attachments to your application as files Portable Document Format (PDF). ED recommends applicants submit all documents as read-only flattened PDFs, meaning any fillable PDF files must be saved and submitted as non-fillable PDF files and not as interactive or fillable PDF files, to better ensure applications are processed in a more timely, accurate, and efficient manner.
- Grants.gov cannot process an application that includes two or more files that have the same name within a grant submission. Therefore, each file uploaded to your application package should have a unique file name.
- When attaching files, applicants should follow the guidelines established by Grants.gov on the size and content of file names. Uploaded file names must be fewer than 50 characters, and, in general, applicants should not use any special characters. However, Grants.gov does allow for the following UTF-8 characters when

naming your attachments: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore, hyphen, space, period, parenthesis, curly braces, square brackets, ampersand, tilde, exclamation point, comma, semi colon, apostrophe, at sign, number sign, dollar sign, percent sign, plus sign, and equal sign. Applications submitted that do not comply with the Grants.gov guidelines will be rejected at Grants.gov and not forwarded for review.

- Applicants should limit the size of their file attachments. Documents submitted that contain graphics and/or scanned material often greatly increase the size of the file attachments and can result in difficulties opening the files. For reference, the average discretionary grant application package with all attachments is less than 5 MB. Therefore, you may want to check the total size of your package before submission.

### **Helpful Hints When Working with Grants.gov**

Please go to <https://www.grants.gov/support> for help with Grants.gov. For additional tips related to submitting grant applications, please refer to the Grants.gov Applicant FAQs found at this Grants.gov link: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs> as well as additional information on Workspace at <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview>.

### **Slow Internet Connections**

When using a slow internet connection, such as a dial-up connection, to upload and submit your application, it can take significantly longer than when you are connected to the Internet with a high-speed connection, e.g., cable modem/DSL/T1. While times will vary depending upon the size of your application, it can take a few minutes to a few hours to complete your grant submission using a dial up connection. Failure to fully upload an application by the deadline date and time will result in your application being marked late in the G5 system. If you do not have access to a high-speed internet connection, you may want to consider following the instructions in the Federal Register notice to obtain an exception to the electronic submission requirement no later than 14 calendar days before the application deadline date.

### **Attaching Files – Additional Tips**

Please note the following tips related to attaching files to your application:

- When you submit your application electronically, you must upload any narrative sections and all other attachments to your application as files in Portable Document Format (PDF). ED recommends applicants submit all documents as read-only flattened PDFs, meaning any fillable PDF files must be saved and submitted as non-fillable PDF files and not as interactive or fillable PDF files, to better ensure applications are processed in a more timely, accurate, and efficient manner.

- Grants.gov cannot process an application that includes two or more files that have the same name within a grant submission. Therefore, each file uploaded to your application package should have a unique file name.
- When attaching files, applicants should follow the guidelines established by Grants.gov on the size and content of file names. Uploaded file names must be fewer than 50 characters, and, in general, applicants should not use any special characters. However, Grants.gov does allow for the following UTF-8 characters when naming your attachments: A-Z, a-z, 0-9, underscore, hyphen, space, period, parenthesis, curly braces, square brackets, ampersand, tilde, exclamation point, comma, semi colon, apostrophe, at sign, number sign, dollar sign, percent sign, plus sign, and equal sign. Applications submitted that do not comply with the Grants.gov guidelines will be rejected at Grants.gov and not forwarded to ED.
- Applicants should limit the size of their file attachments. Documents submitted that contain graphics and/or scanned material often greatly increase the size of the file attachments and can result in difficulties opening the files. For reference, the average discretionary grant application package with all attachments is less than 5 MB. Therefore, you may want to check the total size of your package before submission.