

# Designation as an Eligible Institution for Programs Under Section 312 of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965

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OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION



APRIL 1, 2026

# Today's Presentation

- Today's webinar is being recorded.
  - Transcribed TA Webinar Recording and Slides can be found at [OPE's Eligibility website](#) or the [HEPIS Help Page](#) (under "GEA Resources").
- This presentation is meant as a guide only.
  - Please refer to the [Notice Inviting Applications \(NIA\)](#) as well as the official Application Booklet for detailed instructions.
- Slides are available for download via [OPE's Eligibility Website](#).
  - Link in the bulleted list for today's webinar.
- This presentation will **not** have a live question and answer section.
  - Please use the **Q&A section** of the chat to ask any questions.
  - If your question can be answered, we will do so throughout the presentation.
  - All unanswered questions will be added to the [Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) webpage.

## Presenters

**Dr. Christopher McCaghren**

[Chris.McCaghren@ed.gov](mailto:Chris.McCaghren@ed.gov)

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs  
Office of Postsecondary Education

**Nemeka Mason-Clerc**

[Nemeka.Mason@ed.gov](mailto:Nemeka.Mason@ed.gov)

Education Research Analyst for Institutional Service  
Office of Postsecondary Education

**Jim Kiley-Zufelt**

[hepis@helpdesk.thetactilegroup.com](mailto:hepis@helpdesk.thetactilegroup.com)

Project Director  
The Tactile Group

# Agenda

- Statement from the Deputy Assistant Secretary
- Key Reminders
- Eligibility Overview
- Benefits of Applying for Designation of Eligibility
- Institutions Included in Eligibility Designations
- Who Should Apply for Eligibility?
- Eligibility & The Federal Cost Share Waiver
- Eligibility Matrix Process
- Guidance on Submitting:
  - An Application
  - Exemption Waiver Requests

# Statement by the DAS Dr. Chris McCaghren



## Aligned with [DOJ Legal Guidance](#)

Federal funding decisions reflect current legal interpretation



## Legal Review of Race-Based Eligibility

DOJ concluded that certain programs are unconstitutional



## Prioritizing Need-Based Approaches

Emphasis on student needs & institutional capacity



## Program Implementation May Evolve

Ongoing alignment with legal and policy guidance



# FY26 Eligibility Applications & Exemption Waivers Are Now Being Accepted

Tuesday, March 24 – Thursday, April 23, 2026  
at 11:59pm EST

<https://hepis.ed.gov/>

Key  
Reminders -  
Deadline

## Key Reminders - Resources

- Notice Inviting Applications (NIA)

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/03/24/2026-05689/eligibility-designations-programs-under-section-312-of-the-higher-education-act-of-1965-as-amended>

- OPE's Eligibility Website

<https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-higher-education/eligibility-designations-higher-education-programs>

- FY26 Eligibility Application Booklet

<https://www.ed.gov/media/document/higher-education-programs-fy-2026-eligibility-application-booklet-110253.pdf> – Also available via

OPE's Eligibility website & the HEP IS Help Page under "GEA Resources"

- FY26 Eligibility TA Webinar Recording and Slides

<https://hepis.ed.gov/main/help> - Under "GEA Resources"

# Eligibility Overview

- This process identifies an institution of higher education (IHE) as:
  - Eligible to apply for funding for programs under Section 312 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEA).
  - Eligible for the Federal Cost Share Waiver (FCSW).



# Benefits of Applying for Designation of Eligibility



**Apply for grants under specific grant program(s) they are eligible for, if those programs conduct competitions that year;**



**Be eligible to receive the Federal Cost Share Waiver (FCSW) which waives the matching requirement for Federal Work Study (FWS) and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG);**

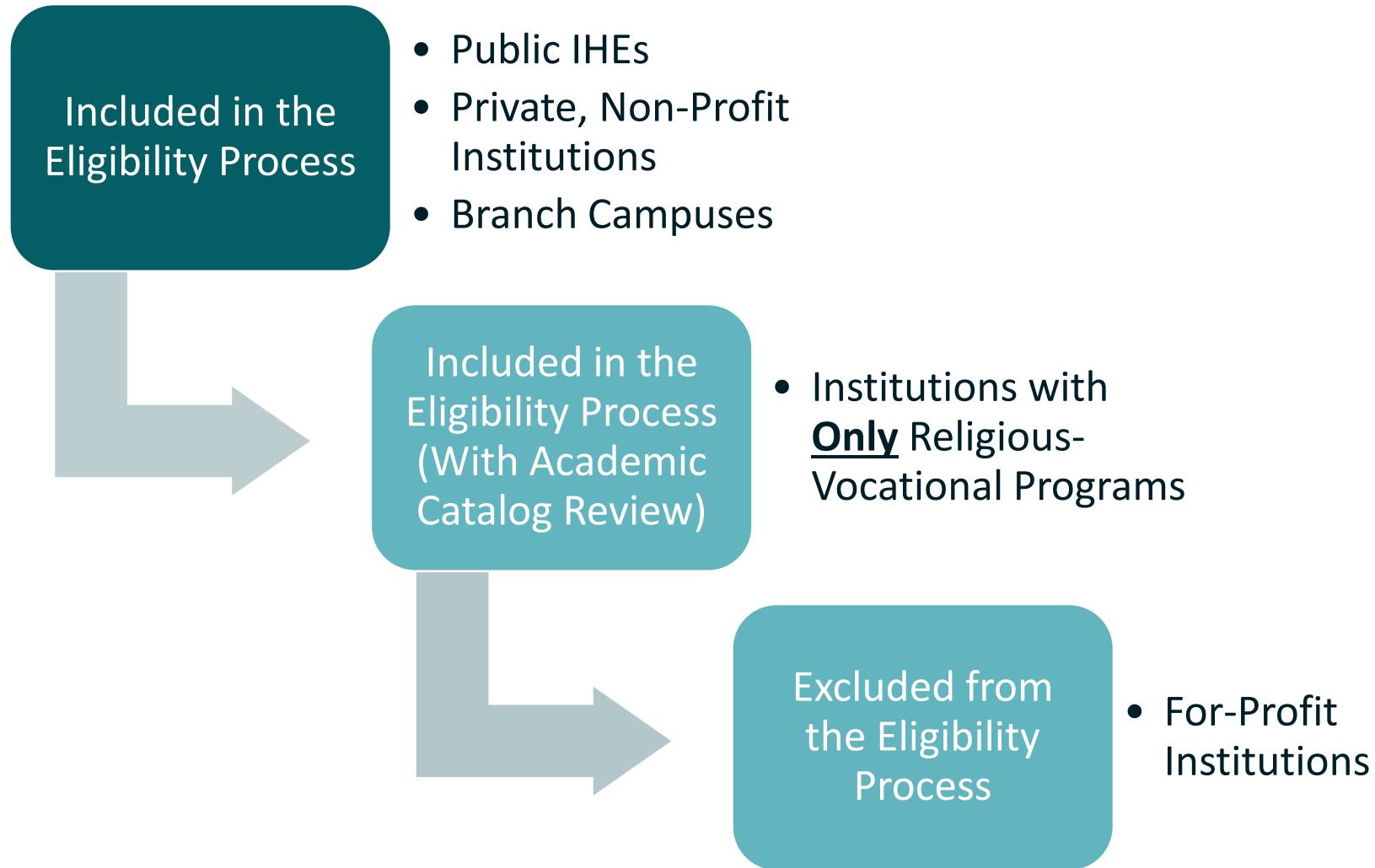
FY26 Eligibility grants the FCSW for the 2026-2027 academic year beginning July 1, 2026.



**Waive any matching requirements if applying for an Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language (UISFL) or Student Service (SS) grant by providing your eligibility letter as part of your application packet.**



# Institutions Included in Eligibility Designations



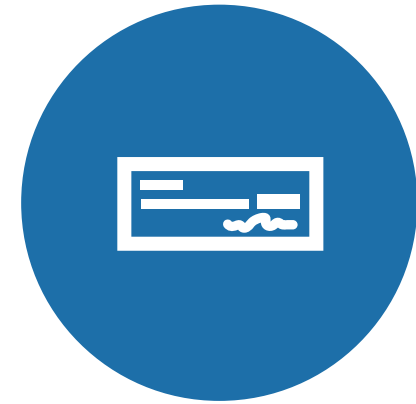
# Who Should Apply for Designation of Eligibility?



**IHEs that meet the previous requirements and are not designated as eligible**



**IHEs planning to apply for a grant under Institutional Service including SIP grants**



**IHEs requesting a waiver of the non-Federal cost share requirements.**



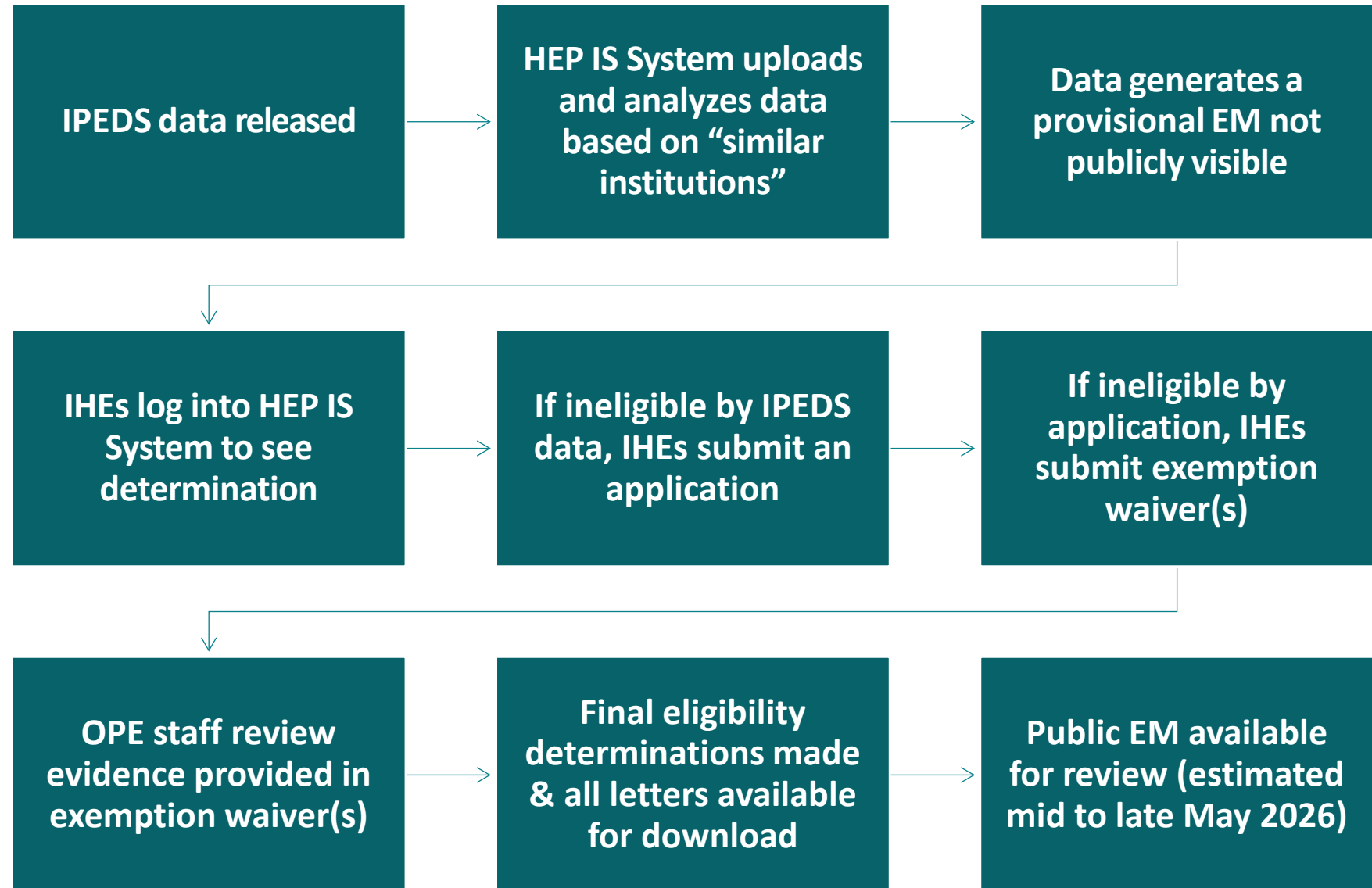
# Federal Cost Share Waivers

- Waives the non-federal share requirements for:
  - Federal Work-Study program (FWS)
  - Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)
- Administered through Federal Student Aid.
- Questions pertaining to these cost-share waivers must be directed to the Campus-Based Call Center:
  - 1-800-848-0978
  - [CODSupport@ed.gov](mailto:CODSupport@ed.gov)

# Federal Cost Share Waivers

- UISFL or SSS program grantees may receive a waiver or reduction of the required non-federal share for institutions for the duration of the grant.
- Program specific questions pertaining to the UISFL Program should be directed to:
  - Dr. Stacey Slijepcevic - [Stacey.Slijepcevic@ed.gov](mailto:Stacey.Slijepcevic@ed.gov)
- Program specific questions pertaining to the SSS Program should be directed to:
  - Mr. James Davis - [James.Davis@ed.gov](mailto:James.Davis@ed.gov)

Criteria derived from applicable legislation and regulations applied to IPEDS enrollment & financial data determine eligibility.



# Eligibility Matrix (EM) Process

# Key Variables That Determine General Eligibility



## Needy Students:

At least 50 percent of an institution's degree-seeking students received financial assistance under: the Federal Pell Grant, Federal SEOG, or the Federal Work Study programs.

**OR**, the percentage of an institution's undergraduate degree-seeking students who were enrolled at least half-time and received Federal Pell Grants exceeds the median percentage of the same at similar (type and control) institutions.



## Core Expenses per FTE:

Regular operational expenditures of postsecondary institutions

- Excluding auxiliary enterprises, independent operations, and hospital expenses).

These expenses are then divided by the FTE (12-month undergraduate enrollment for the academic year).

Compared to the average value for other similar (type and control) institutions.



# FY26 Eligibility Thresholds for Similar Institutions

Type of Institution	Base Year 2023-2024 Median Pell Grant Percentage	Base Year 2023-2024 Average Core Expenses per FTE Student
2-year Public	44%	\$19,004
2-year Nonprofit Private	48%	\$17,453
4-year Public	37%	\$39,350
4-year Nonprofit Private	36%	\$50,027



# Institution-Specific Eligibility Process

## PRE-ELIGIBILITY

Based on Department's review of 2023-24 IPEDS data

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1. Check your status at <https://hepis.ed.gov/>.
2. Deemed eligible? – Download letter of eligibility.
3. Not deemed eligible? – Proceed to the application.

## APPLICATION

Based on the Application Booklet

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1. Enter the required data and submit.
2. Deemed eligible? – Download letter of eligibility.
3. Not deemed eligible? – Proceed to exemption request.

## EXEMPTION REQUEST

Select the waiver request(s) required & applicable for the institution

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1. Enter the narrative, attach supporting documentation, and submit.
2. Department staff will review the submission and notify the institution in mid to late May.
3. Deemed eligible? – Download letter of eligibility.
4. Deemed ineligible? – Download letter of ineligibility which explains why your institution was denied.



# Eligibility Matrix (EM)

- The process resulted in the following seven categories:

Program Eligibility Code Definitions						
1	2	3	4	5	6	0
<b>Deemed Not Eligible</b> Does not meet various required criteria including general eligibility, curricula/degree offerings, or mandatory wait out periods			<b>Potentially Eligible</b> Requires exemption waiver(s)	<b>Deemed Eligible</b> Can apply for funding	<b>Current Grantee</b> of a specified program	<b>Branch Campus</b> IPEDS data not available

# Five Simple Steps to Check Eligibility

1

- Visit <https://hepis.ed.gov>

2

- Log in to the system following the instruction located below the “Login” button.
- Follow prompts to login via Login.Gov.
- If you already have a HEPIS account, follow the information in the Login Instructions.

3

- Click on “View Pre-Eligibility Information,” button.

4

- If institution meets the “Needy Student” and “Core Expenses” requirements, print your letter by clicking the “View/Print Your Eligibility Letter” button.

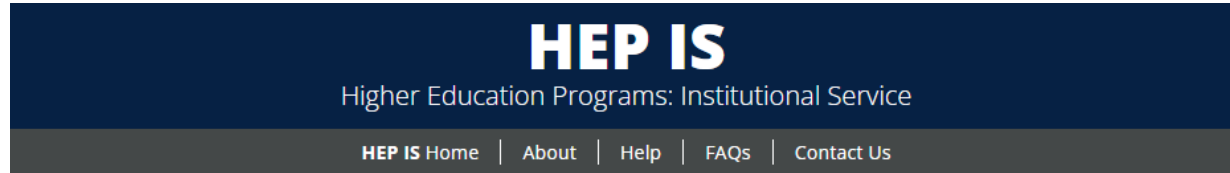
5

- If institution does not meet the requirements, enter an application and/or apply for an exemption waiver request



# Logging In

- **New user?** Click “Request Account” – You will be directed to the new user request form.
- **Returning User?** Click “Login” - You will be directed to the Login.gov website
- **NOTE:** Do Not Start At Login.gov! It won’t know where to send you after authentication unless you start at the HEPIS website.



## Welcome to the HEPIS Web Portal

### News and Alerts

**10/3/2025** - Fiscal Year 2026 system opening and submission deadline dates have been posted below for most systems. Please check back frequently for updates.

### 2026 System Status and Important Dates

**Open** **Grant Eligibility Application system**  
System Opens 03/24/2026; Submission Deadline 04/23/2026

**Open** **IS Annual Performance Reporting system**  
Collection Starts 12/04/2025; Reports Due 01/30/2026

**Closed** **IS Interim Reporting system**  
(First Year Grantees ONLY)  
Collection Starts 04/01/2026; Reports Due 05/01/2026

**Open** **Endowment Financial Reporting System**  
System Opened 7/24/2020; stays open for catch-up reporting

**Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education**  
**Open** TPSID (P407A), TPSID-CC (P407B), PPSID-NTAD (407C), PSSG (P116M), & RDI (P116H):  
Collection Starts 12/04/2025; Reports Due 01/30/2026  
**Open** ALL OTHERS:  
Collection Starts 1/29/2026; Reports Due 5/1/2026

Returning User? Login Below.

Login

New to HEP IS? [Request Account.](#)

[Login Instructions](#)

### Find blank forms and guides

[Download blank forms and user guides for HEP IS systems.](#)

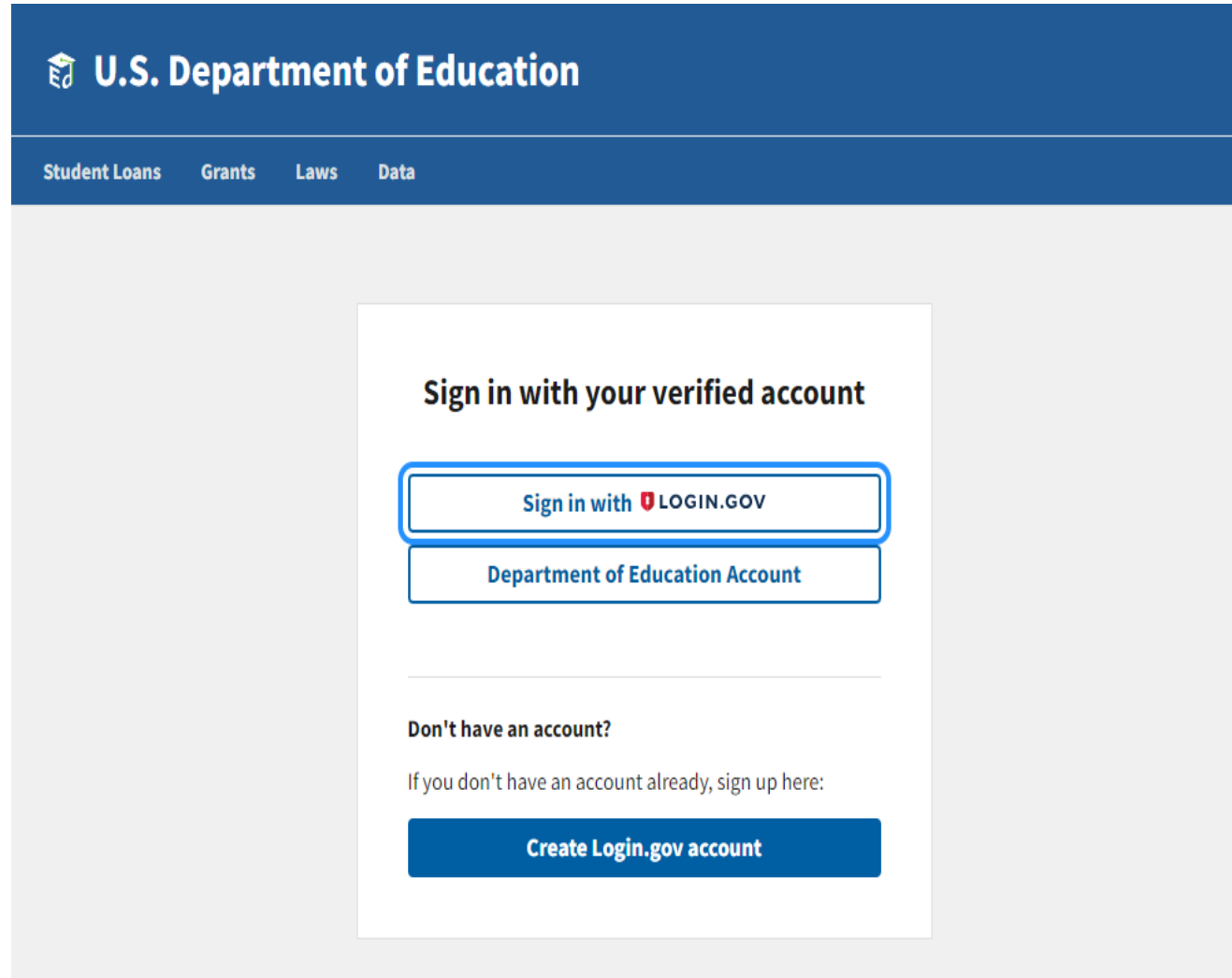
### Search the FIPSE Public Website

[Click here to view information regarding FIPSE grant information](#)




# Logging In

- **New user?** Click “Request Account” – You will be directed to the new user request form.
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- **NOTE:** Do Not Start At Login.gov! It won't know where to send you after authentication unless you start at the HEPIS website.



The screenshot shows the U.S. Department of Education website's login interface. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the U.S. Department of Education logo and name. Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "Student Loans", "Grants", "Laws", and "Data". The main content area is light gray and features a white box with the following elements:

- Sign in with your verified account** (Section Header)
- A button with a blue border and rounded corners that says "Sign in with  LOGIN.GOV"
- A button with a blue border and rounded corners that says "Department of Education Account"
- A horizontal line separator.
- Don't have an account?** (Section Header)
- The text "If you don't have an account already, sign up here:"
- A solid blue button that says "Create Login.gov account"



# Check Eligibility

- If you are Eligible, click the **LETTER** button to download a PDF copy.
- If you are Not Eligible the letter button will be greyed out, so click the **GO** button instead to enter the system.

The screenshot shows the HEP IS (Higher Education Programs: Institutional Service) web application. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the text "HEP IS" and "Higher Education Programs: Institutional Service". Below this is a navigation bar with links: "HEP IS Home", "About", "Help", "FAQs", "Contact Us", "Account", and "Logout". A grey banner below the navigation bar says "Welcome test@statecollege.edu". The main content area is titled "GEA - Grant Eligibility Application" and contains the text "Your Institutions in the GEA system:". Below this is a table with three columns: "OPEID", "Institution Name", and "Enter System".

OPEID	Institution Name	Enter System	
0000000	Community State College University	<b>LETTER</b>	<b>GO</b>
0000001	Community State College University - North Campus	LETTER	<b>GO</b>



# Check Eligibility

- Click the **VIEW DATA** button to review your pre-eligibility data.


Welcome test@statecollege.edu

Community State College University

OPEID: 00000000

Please verify and/or update your institution details.

Verify/Update Institution Details

Your Eligibility Determination			
Type	Status	What it means	Details
Pre-eligibility	 Eligible: No	<p><b>An application needs to be submitted in order to be considered for eligibility.</b></p> <p>Based on the information in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), University of Alaska Fairbanks - Kuskokwim Campus has been designated as an ineligible institution for FY 2026 under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEA).</p> <p>However, if you feel this decision is incorrect and that your institution does qualify as eligible, you have the option of filling out an online application. Once submitted, this application will instantly determine your institution's eligibility based on your updated numbers.</p>	<p>View Letter</p> <p>View Data</p>
Application	Needed	Based on your data, you are ineligible, but able to fill out an application to apply for eligibility.	<p>Begin Application</p>
Exemption	N/A	You do not need to submit an exemption	N/A



# Check Eligibility

- Click the **BEGIN APPLICATION** button to apply for eligibility.

## Eligibility Letter

Click between the tabs to see your eligibility determination and view/download/print your eligibility letter.

Welcome test@statecollege.edu

Community State College University  
OPEID: 00000000

Eligibility Letter      Eligibility Information

### Eligibility

Your Eligibility Calculation for FY 2026		
	Eligibility Threshold	Your Eligibility Calculation
Pell Grant Recipient Percent of Half-time to Full-time Undergrads	44.0%	34.0% Should be $\geq$ eligibility threshold
Core Expenses per Full-time Equivalent	\$19,004	\$18,283 Should be $\leq$ eligibility threshold

**✘ Eligible: No**

[Begin Application](#)



# Before You Apply: What You Need

- Applications for eligibility due by **4/23/26 at 11:59PM EST** via <https://hepis.ed.gov/>
- [FY26 Eligibility Application Booklet](#)
- FY26 Eligibility uses IPEDS data from **Academic Year 2023-2024**
- Have the following information:
  - Institution/campus OPEID number
  - Total institutional enrollment for **Fall 2023**
  - Number of Pell recipients for **Fall 2023**
  - Number of students enrolled at least half-time in a degree program for **Fall 2023**
  - Total Core Expenses for **2023-2024**



# Total Institutional Enrollment

- **Fall 2023 unduplicated count** of enrolled undergraduate and graduate students.
  
- For the Needy Student Requirement:
  - Do not include:
    - International students – Ineligible to participate in Title IV need-based financial assistance programs.
    - High school students – Enrolled in dual enrollment and ineligible to participate in Title IV need-based financial assistance programs.
  
- For the Core Expenses/FTE Requirement:
  - Include all students.



# Need- Based Financial Assistance

- Utilizes Title IV need-based financial assistance data
- Determines the institution's total **Fall 2023** **unduplicated** student head count of degree-seeking students who received any of the following:
  - Federal Pell Grant;
  - Federal Work Study; or
  - Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant.

# Need- Based Financial Assistance

- To compute the unduplicated student head count, include:
  - All certificate- and degree-seeking undergraduate students
  - All graduate students
  - Each student who received Title IV need-based assistance must be counted **only once** regardless of the number of need-based programs in which the student participated.

# Half-time Enrollment

- Enrollment of half-time, up to and including, full- time undergraduate students:
- Determine the institution's total **Fall 2023** undergraduate head count of students enrolled at least half time in degree programs.
- Exclude students who are ineligible for Title IV need-based financial assistance:
  - International students
  - High school students enrolled in dual enrollment

# Needy Student Requirement

- Your institution meets the needy student requirement if:
  - $\geq 50\%$  of **Fall 2023**, unduplicated undergraduate and graduate students received financial assistance from:
    - Federal Pell Grant;
    - Federal Work-Study; or
    - Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant programs (Part III, 1.B)

**OR**



# Needy Student Requirement

- Your institution meets the needy student requirement if:
  - The percentage of **Fall 2023** undergraduate, degree-seeking students who were enrolled on at least a half-time basis, and received Federal Pell Grants, exceeded the median percentage of undergraduate degree students who were enrolled on at least a half-time basis, and received Federal Pell Grants, at comparable institutions that offered similar instruction (Part III, 1.D)



# Core Expenses Per FTE

- Institutions applying for eligibility must use the Core Expenses reported to IPEDS for academic year **2023-2024**.
- Determine the Institution's Core Expenses for 2023-2024.
  - Do not include federal student financial aid.
  - If it is included in your reporting, deduct it from your Core Expenses.
- Average Core Expenses per FTE student.
  - The system will do this calculation for you.



# Application

- Complete and submit the application when ready.
- Applications are reviewed *automatically*.
- Results will be displayed onscreen immediately after submission.



U.S. Department of Education

Welcome test@statecollege.edu

Community State College University  
OPEID: 00000000

1. Application

2. Eligibility Determination

Step 1: Application

**Institutional Enrollment**

1. Total Institutional Enrollment (Fall 2023 Head Count):

**Institutional Statistics**

**1. Needy Student Requirement**

A. Fall 2023 Head Count Enrollment of Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Students:

B. Fall 2023 Recipients of Title IV Need-Based Financial Assistance:   
(Include only Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, College Work Study, and Perkins Loan)

**Needy Student Calculation 1: Percentage of Fall 2023 Degree-Seeking Students who were Recipients of Need-Based Financial Support**

C. Fall 2023 Enrollment of Half-Time up to and including Full-Time Undergraduate Students:

D. Fall 2023 Pell Grant Recipients:

**Needy Student Calculation 2: Percentage of Federal Pell Grant Recipients at the Applicant Institution**

# Understanding Exemptions



- Ineligible based on **system calculations**
- Exemptions allow **contextual evaluation**
- You can apply to **one or multiple options**
- Reviewed by **Eligibility staff**



# Exemptions: What You Must Do

- Refer to the [FY26 Eligibility Application Booklet](#)
- Needy Student and Core Expenses **have five exemptions options each**
  - Can respond to one or **multiple** options of each category
  - Selected exemptions **must relate to your institution context**
- Address the **full requirements of applicable waiver(s)**
- Provide **data + documentation + narrative justification**
  - Your responses **need data**; avoid dissertation length narratives
  - Support your responses from credible, recognized sources



# Needy Student Exemption Waiver Options

## Needy Student Waiver Option #1

- State provided more than 30 percent of your institution's budget
- Institution charged not more than \$99.00 per student for tuition and fees for AY2023-24

## Needy Student Waiver Option #2

- At least 30 percent of the students served by your institution were students from low-income families in AY2023-24

## Needy Student Waiver Option #3

- Substantially increased the higher education opportunities for low-income students in AY2023-24

# Needy Student Exemption Waiver Options

## Needy Student Waiver Option #4

- **Substantially increased** the higher education opportunities in for individuals who resided **in an area that is not included in a "Metropolitan Statistical Area" (MSA)** for AY2023-24

## Needy Student Waiver Option #5

- Located **on or within 50 miles of an American Indian reservation**

\*Note: Several of the Needy Student Waiver Options require data from the past five academic periods: 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24

# Core Expenses Exemption Waiver Options

## Core Expenses Waiver Option #1

- Low student enrollment in the Fall 2023 distorted your institution's Core Expenses per FTE undergraduate student

## Core Expenses Waiver Option #2

- Location of the institution in an unusually high cost-of-living area distorted your institution's Core Expenses per FTE undergraduate student

## Core Expenses Waiver Option #3

- High energy costs distorted your institution's Core Expenses per FTE undergraduate student

# Core Expenses Exemption Waiver Options

## Core Expenses Waiver Option #4

- **An increase in State funding...** distorted your institution's Core Expenses per FTE undergraduate student

## Core Expenses Waiver Option #5

- **Operation of high-cost professional schools such as medical and dental schools (post-baccalaureate programs)** distorted your institution's E&G per FTE undergraduate student

\*Note: Several of the Core Expenses Waiver Options require data from “similar IHEs”; can be IPEDS peer institutions, colleges/universities in the same system, state, or region, etc.

# Exemption Request

- Select an Exemption option(s) for Needy Students, Core Expenses, or both.
- Provide the necessary information and submit your request.
- Requests are reviewed *manually* after the system officially closes.



U.S. Department of Education

## Exemption

Prepare a separate narrative for each exemption option you select below that provides the required evidence for that option, and demonstrates that the exemption(s) applies to your particular institution.

The narrative must contain compelling evidence. Mere statements of fact may not be enough to support your request. You may also upload supporting documents for each option.

You must respond to all components of the exemption option and provide supporting documentation (relevant studies, recent reports and/or data, etc.) to justify your request for an exemption.

Check here to confirm that you have read and understand the statements above.

Welcome test@statecollege.edu

Community State College University

OPED: 0000000

1. Needy Student Requirement

2. Core Expenses

Review and Submit

### Step 1: Needy Student Requirement

#### Section 1

Select each box that applies and upload your supporting documents.

- A. At least 50% of degree students are recipients of need-based Title IV financial support.
- B. Enrollment exceeds the threshold for percentage of student receiving Pell grants for the fall 2023-2024 academic term.
- C. Requesting a exemption of the needy student requirement (Section 607.3(b) and Section 603.3(b) option(s)):
  - 1. The State provides more than 30 percent of the institution's budget and the institution charges not more than \$99.00 for tuition and fees for an academic year
  - 2. At least 30 percent of the students served by the institution in the base year were students from low-income families

# Helpful Hints & Reminders

- FY26 Eligibility is the year to **truly** refresh your institution's exemption waiver narrative.
  - Exemption waivers will be reviewed in order of submission.
- Formats for supporting documents:
  - **Acceptable formats:** Microsoft Word, Excel, PDF, GIF, or JPEG.
  - **Unacceptable formats:** External websites and hyperlinks – links will **NOT** be explored.
- **Data, Data, Data** and Supporting Documentation
  - Tables, maps, Pell vs. non-Pell comparative statistics, state budgets, posted AY2023-2024 Tuition & Fees; specific pages of Facilities Strategic Plan, etc.
- Do not include Personally Identifiable Information (PII).
  - Includes students' names, social security numbers, or institutional student ID numbers.
- This presentation does **NOT** supersede reading and following the instructions in the Application Booklet and the NIA.

# FY26 Eligibility Application Deadline

Thursday, April 23, 2026  
at **11:59pm EST**  
via <https://hepis.ed.gov/>

[OPE's Eligibility Website](#)

- **Contact Information**

Nemeka Mason-Clerc

[Nemeka.Mason@Ed.Gov](mailto:Nemeka.Mason@Ed.Gov)

202-987-1340

**Please do not wait until the last day to submit your application.**