

Fiscal Year 2026 Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) Program Competition

Frequently Asked Questions

Grants.gov

Q: Why is the 'Apply Here' button greyed out when I view the EOC competition announcement in Grants.gov?

A: Usually, it has something to do with the account you are using to access Grants.gov. Please be sure that your account profile identifies you as an organization and not as an Individual. Individuals are not eligible applicants for this program.

Eligibility

Q: Is a for-profit business eligible to apply as an applicant under the category "a public or private agency or organization"? Or as a subgrantee?

A: Yes

Q: Are Indian Tribes, Tribal educational agencies, and Indian Organizations eligible applicants under the FY26 EOC grant application?

A: Indian Tribes, Tribal educational agencies, and Indian Organizations are generally considered eligible applicants, under the category of "a public or private agency or organization, including a community-based organization with experience in serving disadvantaged youth." These entities are also eligible to apply for additional points under the Competitive Preference Priority (CPP) but must clearly identify if they wish for ED to consider their application for the CPP.

Budget

Q: What budgets are required, and what do we put where?

- The ED-524 budget form is not included or required for this competition.
- The SF-424 cover page should reflect total funding requested for the first year only.
- The budget selection criteria section of the narrative should include both a detailed line-item table budget and a narrative explanation, for the first year only.
- SF-424A should also be filled out for the first year only. (Note: any costs that do not have a dedicated line, should be included in Other. Also, remember that any participant support costs, equipment over \$10,000, and the portion of each contract or subaward over \$50,000, should not have indirect costs charged against them.)

- The Budget Narrative attachment is where you will expand your budget, including details for all five years of the grant. Any details that you could not fully articulate on your SF-424A can be explained here.

Q: Do applicants have to submit a separate GEPA statement?

A: Applicants are not required to submit a separate GEPA statement. However, in completing the ED SF424 Supplemental Form, applicants must complete the required “General Education Provision Act Section 427 Assurance” in Question 2, including the dialogue box indicating the page numbers of the application associated with any additional indications of compliance.

Priorities

This notice includes one absolute priority, one competitive preference priority, and one invitational priority.

Absolute Priority

Q: Do all applicants have to address the Absolute Priority?

A: Yes, all applicants must address the Absolute Priority, or their application will be deemed unresponsive and will not be reviewed or not be funded.

Competitive Preference Priority (CPP)

- Creates a ‘competitive preference’ in this competition for any State educational agencies, State workforce development agencies or boards, State higher education agencies, or Indian Tribes/ Tribal organizations/ Tribal educational agencies.
- The CPP is for zero or 5 points.
- Any of the types of entities listed above will earn 5 points under the CPP, if they “clearly identify” that they are applying for the CPP. Applicants applying under the CPP will indicate as such on the Program Profile form and in the abstract.
- Multiple state entities within the same state may apply under the competition and be eligible for the CPP points.

Q: Can each SEA, SWDB and SHEA within a State receive CPP points?

A: Yes. One SEA, one SWDB and one SHEA within each State may each receive CPP points under their separate applications.

Q: What if my State has more than one SEA, SWDB or SHEA? For example, if my State has five SHEAs, can each SHEA receive CPP points?

A: No. As noted above, only one SEA, one SWDB and one SHEA within each State may receive CPP points under their separate applications. If there are multiple SEAs, SWDBs, or SHEAs interested in applying under this competition, which could raise a concern as to which SEA, SWDB or SHEA within the State should receive the CPP points for their application, then a decision should be made amongst that group of eligible entities (i.e., all SHEAs within a State) as to which one will seek CPP points within their State for their application. For example, a State with two or more SHEAs could contact their Governor, and provide a letter of support from their Governor of the Governor's indication of which SHEA should receive the CPP points for their State.

Invitational Priority

- This is an invitation to encourage new and innovative approaches. There are no additional points associated with this priority. The Invitational priority does not give an application a competitive or absolute preference over other applications.

Q: Should an applicant address both parts (a) and (b) of the invitational priority?

A: Yes.

Maximum Award Amount

- The default Maximum annual award for this competition is \$1,300,000.
- There are two circumstances in which an applicant may receive a maximum annual award above \$1,300,000 (up to \$3,000,000):

(1) "any Indian tribe receiving points under the competitive priority" may apply for a maximum award above \$1,300,000 but not exceeding \$3,000,000.

- **Please note:** The annual per-participant cost of a project cannot exceed \$280. Therefore, an applicant must propose to serve a very large number of participants to substantiate an increased maximum award amount.

(2) One applicant within each State may be designated by their Governor as the "state-level applicant" eligible for an increased maximum award amount, above \$1,300,000 but not exceeding \$3,000,000.

- (3) Needs to be a SEA, State workforce development agency or board, State higher education agency and be designated by the Governor by uploading a letter in the “Other Attachments” section of the application that designates the State level applicant.

Funding Levels

Q: Are current grantees required to stay at the funding level they currently operate under? Can they increase or decrease?

A: Current grantees are not required to stay at their current funding level. They can increase or decrease their funding request, so long as they maintain a per participant cost at or below \$280 per student served annually, with a minimum of 850 participants served annually.

Q: Are current EOC grants that have per participant costs greater than \$280 required to change their funding request and/or participant number so that they come in at or below \$280?

A: Yes, the application would need to be written in such a way that the per participant cost does not exceed \$280. This can mean requesting fewer dollars or serving more students.

Q: What budget categories are covered by the \$280 per participant maximum? Is it all budget categories, or only student service costs?

A: An applicant’s funding request is to cover every categorical line item of the federal budget—personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, student service items, other, and indirect costs.

Q: Can we scale the funding request to serve more students in later years?

A: No, applicants are required to request the same funding for each year of the grant.

Pre-Apprenticeships/Apprenticeships

Q: Where should pre-apprenticeships or other student activities be included in the objectives? Are these considered "Postsecondary Enrollment?"

A: Enrollment and completion of a Registered Apprenticeship does count as a recognized postsecondary credential and therefore does count towards the program objectives.

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(53) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Q: Is it an allowable cost to pay for pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship programs that lead to credentials?

A: Yes, depending on the exact expenses in question. Direct financial assistance to participants is not allowed, but certain tuition or supplies could be allowed.

Prior Experience (PE) Points/ Current Grant Questions

Q: Do we need to write to or explain our PE points somewhere in our submission?

A: No, all you have to do is include your current grant award number on your Profile form. Department staff will pull the PE results from the grant's past APRs, and those points will be added in the slate development process.

Q: Do we have to serve the same target areas to earn PE points? Can we add or change target areas?

A: Grants are required to serve a majority of their prior target areas to show continuity from one grant to the next, to receive PE points. But new target areas may be added as well.

Q: Will an EOC project discontinued in 2025 be eligible for that grant's PE points if it is submitted in the 2026 competition?

A: Yes

Q: Can a current grantee operated by a State higher education agency both receive its PE points and be designated by the Governor to write for and receive points under the Competitive Preference Priority?

A: Yes. However, please note that a state agency does not need to be designated by the governor to receive Competitive Preference Priority (CPP) points. To receive CPP points, an applicant must clearly identify that it is one of the following entity types: State educational agencies, State workforce development agencies or boards, State higher education agencies, or Indian Tribes/ Tribal organizations/ Tribal educational agencies.

The governor's designation is required only for the one applicant within each State that may be designated by their governor as the "state-level applicant" eligible for an increased maximum award amount, above \$1,300,000 but not exceeding \$3,000,000.

Q: If a current grantee, such as at an IHE, becomes partner to a State-level applicant writing to the CPP, can the current grantee's PE points be applied to the State-level application?

A: No, PE points only apply when the same institution is the lead applicant.

Q: Would a current grantee applying as a consortium be able to use their earned PE points?

A: Only if the current grantee is the lead applicant and continues to serve substantially the same target area(s) that it is serving under the current EOC project.

Q: How are PE points awarded?

A: An EOC project may earn up to a total of 15 points for each year assessed; the final PE score is the average of the total scores for (2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25) the three years assessed.

Attachments and Formatting

Q: Do we need to include letters of commitment, resumes, logic model, or a bibliography?

A: No

Q: What formatting is required? Can we single-space charts and tables?

A: Double spacing is highly recommended for your narrative, to ensure it is legible to the reviewers. Single spacing of charts and tables is allowable if that is the best way to clearly convey your information. It is suggested to use a common font size of at least 12.

Q: The Assurances/Non-Construction Programs (SF 424B) is not included on Grants.gov. How should the form be completed and submitted with the application?

A: Due to an oversight, the Assurances/Non-Construction Programs (SF 424B) was not included on Grants.gov. If the application is selected for funding, the applicant will be requested to submit the SF 424B form separately.

Personnel

Q: Can a project director be split over more than one similar TRIO grant?

A: Yes. Program regulations allow for splitting time over up to two additional similar projects. A waiver is required to split the director over 4 or more projects.

Other

Q: Where can I learn more about workforce development topics?

A: See [“America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age”](#).

Q: Does an application have to adhere to the performance measures included in the application?

A: Applicants are instructed to address the selection criteria in their project narrative. The performance measures will be addressed during data collection, which is the Annual

Performance Report that measures the projects yearly substantial progress towards reaching the four project objectives.

Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship Programs – Examples

The following are examples of pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs and may be used as a reference point for applicants in responding to the Absolute Priority.

Q: What are examples of pre-apprenticeships?

A: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Final Rule (20 CFR 681.480) defines a pre-apprenticeship as a program designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship program and includes five elements: (a) training and curriculum aligned with employer skill needs; (b) access to educational and career counseling and supportive services; (c) hands-on, meaningful learning activities connected to education and training; (d) opportunities to attain at least one industry-recognized credential; and (e) a partnership with one or more Registered Apprenticeship programs that assists in placing completers into Registered Apprenticeships.

Q: What are examples of a Registered Apprenticeship?

A: Registered Apprenticeships include industry-driven, high-quality career pathways where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce. Individuals can obtain paid work experience; progressive wage increases; classroom instruction; and a portable, nationally recognized credential. There are five key components of a Registered Apprenticeship:

1. Industry Led – Programs are industry-vetted and approved to ensure alignment with industry standards and that apprentices are trained for highly skilled, high-demand occupations.
2. Paid Job – Registered Apprenticeships are jobs! Apprentices earn progressive wages as their skills and productivity increase.
3. Structured On-the-Job Learning/Mentorship – Programs provide structured on-the-job training to prepare for a successful career, which includes instruction from an experienced mentor.
4. Supplemental Education – Apprentices are provided supplemental classroom education based on employers' unique training needs to ensure quality and success.
5. Credentials – Apprentices earn a portable, nationally recognized credential within their industry.

To learn more, please visit www.apprenticeship.gov