

This Presentation for the FY 2026 Educational Opportunity Centers Program Pre-application Technical Assistance webinar has been Pre-Recorded

The EOC Team will be conducting a “Live” Question and Answer (Q&A) session at the end of today’s presentation using the Webinar Q and A box feature.



EOC Team

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Disclaimer

Do not rely solely on the information provided during the presentation or in this document. Please refer to the Application Notice and Instructions and the program regulations that are published in the **Federal Register**, as these are the official documents governing the Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) Grant Competition.

Workshop Overview

EOC PROGRAM
OVERVIEW

PARTICIPANT
ELIGIBILITY

APPLICANT
ELIGIBILITY

SELECTION
CRITERIA

PRIORITIES

SUBMISSION
LOGISTICS

QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS

Program Overview

- The EOC Program provides grants for projects designed to:
 - Provide information regarding financial assistance to individuals who want to pursue a program of postsecondary education
 - Provide assistance to individuals applying for admission to institutions that offer programs of postsecondary education
 - Improve the financial and economic literacy of participants.

Program Statute & Regulations



Statue-Title IV. Part A.
Subpart 2. Section 402B
of the Higher Education
Act of 1965, as amended



Program Regulations-34
CFR part 644

Permissible Services 1

Public information campaigns designed to inform the community about opportunities for postsecondary education and training;

Academic advice and assistance in course selection;

Assistance in completing college admission and financial aid applications;

Assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations;

Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial and economic literacy of participants;

Permissible Services 2

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GUIDANCE ON SECONDARY SCHOOL REENTRY OR ENTRY TO A GENERAL EDUCATIONAL (GED) PROGRAM OR OTHER ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL DROPOUTS

INDIVIDUALIZED PERSONAL, CAREER AND ACADEMIC COUNSELING

TUTORIAL SERVICES

CAREER WORKSHOPS AND COUNSELING

MENTORING PROGRAMS INVOLVING ELEMENTARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, FACULTY MEMBERS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, STUDENTS, OR ANY COMBINATION OF THESE PERSONS

Permissible Services 3

Activities designed for participants:

- with limited English proficiency;
- from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education;
- who are individuals with disabilities;
- who are homeless children and youth;
- who are foster care youth;
- other disconnected participants;

Other activities designed to meet the purposes of the Educational Opportunity Centers program.

Eligible Applicants

Institutions of higher education

Public and private agencies or organizations, including community-based organizations with experience in serving disadvantaged youth

- State educational agencies may apply as a public organization.

Secondary schools

- Charter Schools may apply as a secondary school.

A combination of the types of institutions, agencies, and organizations.

An applicant may submit multiple applications serving different target areas

Eligible Participants 1

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2/3 of all participants served must be both:

- Low-income and Potential first-generation college students.
- There is no low-income or first-generation college student requirement for the other 1/3 of participants.

U.S. Citizens

Permanent residents of the U.S., Guam, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Micronesia or Marshall Islands.

Eligible Participants 2

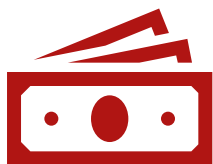
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Individuals who are at least 19 years of age, or those less than 19 years of age if there is no Talent Search project in the target area; and the individual's participation would not dilute the project's services to the adult population

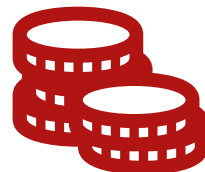
Any veteran, regardless of age

Competition Overview

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Funding available for
new grants: \$52,611,659



Anticipated number of
new grants: 55 new grant
projects



Funded for a **5-year**
performance period

Project Funding

- ▶ A new applicant **or** an applicant that is currently administering a EOC grant must propose to serve no less than **850** participants and the cost per participant cannot be greater than **\$280**.

Maximum Project Funding 1

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For an applicant that has not been designated by their Governor as the state-level applicant, the annual maximum award is **\$1,300,000**.



All applicants must serve a minimum of **850** participants annually.

Maximum Project Funding 2

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- ▶ For **one** state-level applicant that has been designated by their Governor as the state-level applicant, or for any Indian tribe receiving points under the competitive priority, the maximum annual award amount is **\$3,000,000**.



Absolute Priority

Expanding Education Choice

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Projects or proposals that will do **one or more** of the following:

(a) expand access to one or more of the following at the high school or postsecondary level:

- Distance education, pre-apprenticeships, and Registered Apprenticeships, including apprenticeships for in-school or out-of-school youth.

(b) expand access to programs or coursework that lead to in demand, industry-recognized postsecondary credentials.

Maximum Points

An applicant can score up to **105 points**:

I. Selection Criteria (up to 100 points)

points for addressing standard measures that are used to assess the quality of each application.

II. Competitive Preference Priority (0 or 5 points)

points for including specific strategies/activities in the proposed project under certain parameters.

Selection Criteria

Section	Points
A. Need	24
B. Objectives	8
C. Plan of Operation	30
D. Applicant/Community Support	16
E. Quality of Personnel	9
F. Budget	5
G. Evaluation Plan	8
Total	100

A. Need for the Project Maximum 24 points

20



A1. Low-Income-up to 6 points



A2. Postsecondary
Completion Rates-up to 6
points



A3. Postsecondary
Enrollment-up to 6 points



A4. Other Needs-up to 6
points

Need for the Project 1

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A1. Low-Income - A high number or percentage, or both, of low-income families residing in the target area.



A2. Education Level - A high number or high percentage, or both, of individuals residing in the target area with education completion levels below the baccalaureate level

Need for the Project 2

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A3. Further Education and Training - A high need on the part of residents of the target area for further education and training from programs of postsecondary education in order to meet changing employment trends.



A4. Other Needs - Other indicators of need for an Educational Opportunity Centers project, including the presence of unaddressed educational or socioeconomic problems of adult residents in the target area.

B. Objectives

Maximum 8 Points

B1. Secondary School Diploma or Equivalent

up to 2 points

B2. Financial Aid Applications

up to 1.5 points

B3. College Admission Applications

up to 1.5 points

B4. Postsecondary Enrollment

up to 3 points

Objectives 1

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B1. Secondary School Diploma

__ % of participants served during the project year, who do not have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, will receive a secondary school diploma or its equivalent during the project year.



B2. Financial Aid Applications

__ % of participants served during the project year who are not already enrolled in a postsecondary education program and who: 1) are high school seniors; 2) are high school graduates; or 3) have obtained a high school equivalency certificate, will apply for financial aid during the project year.

Objectives 2

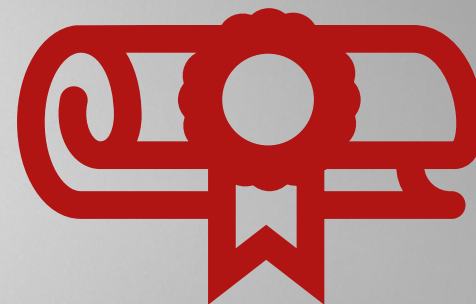
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B3. College Admission Applications

__% of participants served during the project year who are not already enrolled in a postsecondary education program and who: 1) are high school seniors; 2) are high school graduates; or 3) have obtained a high school equivalency certificate, will apply for college admission during the project year.

B4. Postsecondary Education Enrollment

__% of participants who graduate from secondary school and are not already enrolled in a postsecondary education program, will enroll in a postsecondary education program immediately following participation in an EOC program or will have received notification, by the fall semester, of acceptance but deferred enrollment until the next academic semester (e.g. spring semester)



Objectives – Parameters 1

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The objectives must be **outcome** driven.



Each objective will be assessed based on the degree in which it is **ambitious** and **attainable** .



Ambitious: The applicant's objectives are linked to the needs of the target population and have a high probability of yielding positive outcomes.



Attainable: The services outlined in the application (e.g., the plan of operation, applicant and community support, and the budget) will allow the applicant to achieve the goals and objectives of the project.

Objectives- Parameters 2

Applicants **MUST** include all 4 Standardized Objectives in the application.

Applicants **MUST** provide the percentage that the project proposes to achieve for each objective.

Standardized Objectives **MAY NOT** be changed or rewritten in any way.

Applicants **MAY** include other process and outcome objectives, but it is not required. Points will not be added or subtracted if you provide additional objectives.

Objectives- Parameters 3

Applicant must provide **baseline data** to show why the proposed achievement rate for each objective is ambitious and attainable.

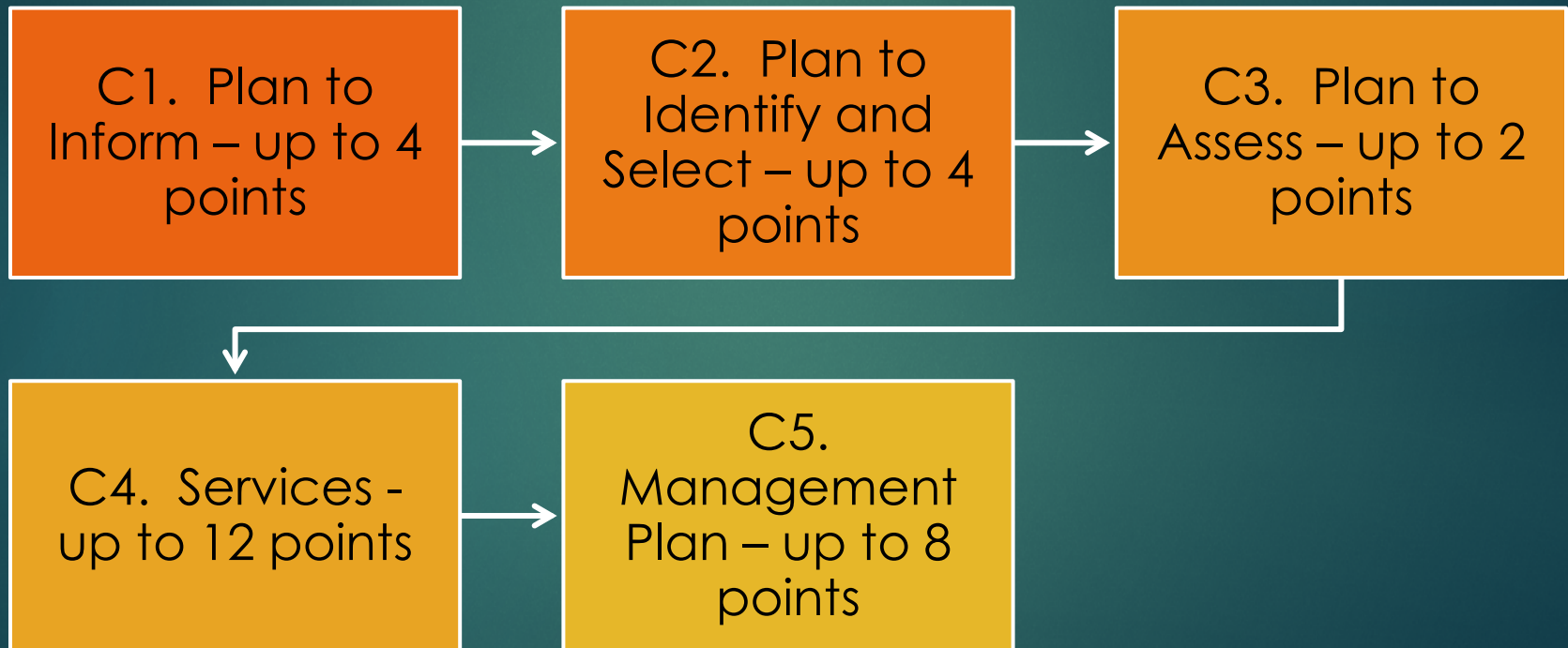
The proposed percentages for each standardized objective must be entered on the **program profile form** in addition to being addressed in this section.

Pay particular attention to the definitions related to your objectives on the Program Profile form.

C. Plan of Operation 1

Maximum 30 Points

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C. Plan of Operation

2

Maximum Points 30

C1. Plan to Inform

The plan to inform the residents, schools, and community organizations in the target area of the goals, objectives, and services of the project and the eligibility requirements for participation in the project.

C2. Identify and Select

The plan to **identify** and **select** eligible participants

C3. Assess

The plan to assess each participant's needs for services provided by the project.



Plan of Operation

C4. Services

The plan to provide services that meet participants' needs and achieve the objectives of the project.

C5. Management Plan

The plan to ensure the proper and efficient administration of the project including, but not limited to, the project's organizational structure, the time committed to the project by the project director and other personnel.



D. Applicant and Community Support

Maximum 16 Points

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D1. Resources
– up to 8 points

D2.
Commitments
– up to 8 points

Applicant and Community Support 1

D1. Resources

Describe the facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources committed by *the Applicant*.



Applicant and Community Support 2

D2. Commitments

Resources secured through written commitments from community partners. An applicant that is:

- i) An institution of higher education must include in its application commitments from the community organizations;
- ii) A community organization must include in its application commitments from the institutions of higher education.

Note: Do NOT include letters of support in the application, you may instead summarize commitments in a list or chart.

Quality of
Personnel
**Maximum 9
Points**

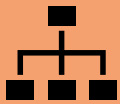
i. Project Director-
up to 3 points

ii. Other Personnel-
up to 3 points

iii. Plan to Employ-
up to 3 points

E. Quality of Personnel

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i) Qualifications required of the project director position.



ii) Qualifications required of each of the other personnel to be used in the project.



iii) The plan to employ personnel who have succeeded in overcoming the disadvantages of circumstances like those of the population of the target area.

Personnel - Parameters

Project Director: The project must have a full-time project director, unless:

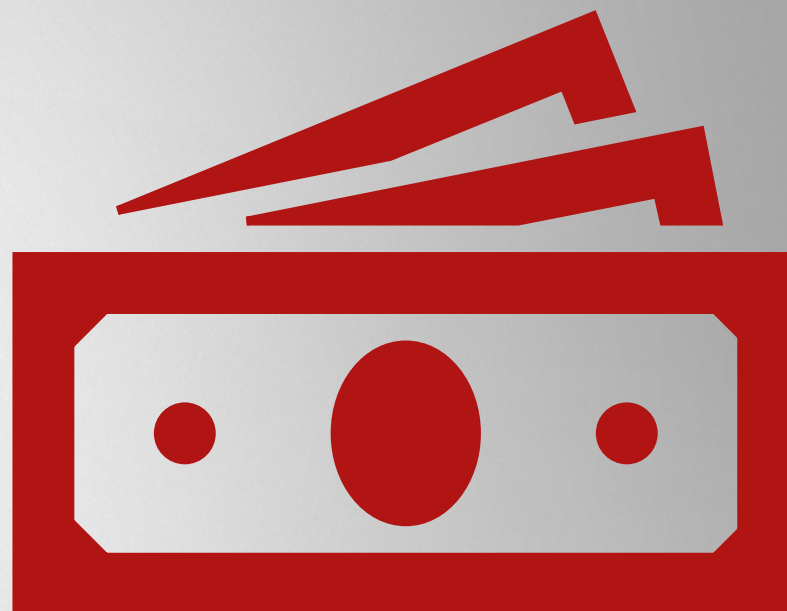
The director is also administering 1-2 additional programs for disadvantaged students operated by the sponsoring institution or agency; or

The Secretary grants a waiver of this requirement.

Note: Do not include resumes in the application.

F. Budget *Maximum 5 Points*

F1. Reasonable, Cost-Effective, & Adequate – up to 5 points



Budget

F1. Reasonable, Cost-Effective, and Adequate

The project budget must be reasonable, cost-effective, and adequate to support the project (e.g. achieving objectives and providing services to the target population).

Provide a budget summary (attached SF-424A) and a detailed line-by-line description of all costs within the narrative section for the *first year only*.

Note: EOC does not require cost-share or matching funds

Allowable Costs 1

- ▶ Transportation, meals, and with specific prior approval of the Secretary, lodging for participants and project staff for:
 - ▶ Visits to postsecondary educational institutions.
 - ▶ Participation in “College Day” activities.
 - ▶ Field trips for participants to observe and meet with persons who are employed in various career fields and can serve as role models for participants.
- ▶ Purchase of testing materials and test preparation materials for participants.

Allowable Costs 2

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Fees required for admission applications for postsecondary education, college entrance examinations, or alternative education examinations if no waiver of the fee is available or if paid to a third party.



In-service training of project staff.



Rental of building space, if not available at the site of the grantee and if the rented space is not owned by the grantee.



Purchase, lease, or rental of computer hardware, software, and other equipment, **service agreements for such equipment**, and supplies for participant development, project administration, or project recordkeeping.

Unallowable Costs

Tuition, fees, stipends, and other forms of direct financial support for participants.

Research not directly related to the evaluation or improvement of the project.

Construction, renovation, or remodeling of any facilities.

G. Evaluation Plan

***Maximum 8
Points***

**G1-2. Quality of
Evaluation Plan**

43



Evaluation

G1. Appropriate to the project's objectives.

G2. Uses specific and quantifiable methods to measure the success of the project in terms of:

- i) Progress made toward achieving objectives (formative evaluation); and
- ii) Achieving its objectives at the end of the project period (a summative evaluation); and
- iii) Provides for disclosure of unanticipated project outcomes, using quantifiable measures.

Evaluation - Parameters 1

- ▶ **Plans should clearly indicate:**
 - Types of data to be collected.
 - When data will be collected.
 - What data collection methods will be used.
 - How the data will be analyzed.

Evaluation - Parameters 2

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II. Prior Experience (PE) Points

Maximum Points 15

The **3-year average score** for PE is added to the total application score. Yearly point allocations are as follows:

1. Funded Number & Two-Thirds Requirement – up to 3 points
2. Secondary school diploma-up to 3 points
3. Postsecondary enrollment-up to 5 points
4. Financial aid applications-up to 2 points
5. College admission applications-up to 2 points

Fiscal Year 2026 Priorities

Absolute Priority – REQUIRED – *No Points Awarded*

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Your application must propose to expand access to at least ONE of the following pathways:

▶ Pathway 1

- Workforce Access
- Distance Education
- Pre-apprenticeship programs; or
- Registered apprenticeship programs

▶ Pathway 2

- Industry Credentials
- In-demand industry sectors
- Industry-recognized postsecondary credentials

III. Competitive Preference Priority

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Maximum Points: 0 or 5 points

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 a maximum of 5 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.

*This CPP should be done as a brief separate attachment, no more than 1 page recommended

CPP 1 – Returning Education to the States

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Projects or proposals that will be carried out by one or more of the following:



(a) State educational agencies (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7801(49)),



(b) State workforce development agencies or boards,



(c) State higher education agencies (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1003(22)), or



(d) An Indian Tribe (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(e)), Tribal organization (as defined in 25 U.S.C. 5304(l)), or Tribal educational agency (as defined in 20 U.S.C. 7452(b)(3))

Invitational Priority

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

Invitational Priority - Talent Marketplaces 1

- ▶ Projects that are designed to strengthen their career and personal counseling activities (as authorized in 402B(c)) to improve student persistence, postsecondary access and opportunity, and create a scalable data infrastructure that connects education to workforce outcomes by doing the following:

Invitational Priority- Talent Marketplaces 2

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(a) integrating learning and employment records (LER) with AI-enabled learner wallets to transform student support services into personalized, skills-based pathways to postsecondary success and employment, and



(b) expanding access to talent marketplaces composed of credential registries (e.g. publishing education and training programs in structured, open, linked, and interoperable data formats), skills-based job description generators, LERs that connect EOC participants, employers, and education providers through a common currency of skills.

Application Submission 1

Application Submission 2

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Application Available:
(March 30, 2026)

Deadline for
Transmittal:
(May 14, 2026)

Days allotted for
development &
submission:
(45 days)

Applications must be
submitted
electronically using
Grants.gov system.

- PDF file types only

Application Submission 3

The Application consists of *Four Parts*:

Part I - SF 424 Form (Cover Sheet)

Part II - ED 424A Form (Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs)

Part III - Attachments

- ▶ Abstract Form
- ▶ Narrative Form
- ▶ Program Assurance Page
- ▶ Profile Form

Part IV - Other Assurances and Certifications

Application Submission

Part I – Form SF-424

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ED Form 424 – The cover sheet requires information, such as:



Applicant's Legal Name



Type of Applicant
(state government/
nonprofit)



Descriptive Title of
Applicant's Project



Contact information

Application Submission

Part II – ED Form 424A

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ED Form 424A – The Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs Form outlines the financial plan for carrying out the project. The form requires information, such as:

Personnel

Fringe Benefits

Travel

Contracts

Equipment/Supplies

Indirect Costs

Application Submission

Part III

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ED Abstract Form – A one-page overview of the proposed project, such as target area, services, CPP, etc.



Profile Form – This form highlights critical aspects of the proposed project, such as:



PR/award number (if a current grantee), prior experience designation (if a current grantee), list of all target schools, number of participants, CPP, standardized objectives, etc.



Note: CPP must be presented in the abstract and also listed on the Profile Form.

2026 EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTERS PROGRAM PROFILE

Instructions: All applicants must complete this page. The completed page must be attached to the Other Attachments Form in the application package in Grants.gov (as a .pdf document) in the application.

DO NOT MODIFY OR AMEND THE CONTENTS OF THIS PAGE.

1. Applicants currently funded under the Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) Program (FY 2021-2026) must provide their current grant award number. This can be found in Block 2 of the Grant Award Notification. *New applicants should leave this item blank.*

PR/Award Number (Current Grantees Only please provide the last six digits of your current PR#): P066A _____

Is this application that's being submitted designated to receive prior experience: Yes No

2. State/Institution/Agency/Organization/School (Legal Name):

3. All applicants must indicate the address where this project will be physically located.

Project Address: _____
City, State, Zip Code _____

4. Multiple applications submitted: No Yes How many? _____

5. Application addresses Priorities (check all that apply):

Note: See pages 6, 7, and 8 of the Application Notice and Instructions to review the full language of each priority. Narratives for the Absolute and Invitational Priorities, and a letter from the State's governor stating that the application is designated for the CPP, should be included under Other Attachments.

- I. Absolute Priority - Expanding Education Choice

Projects or proposals that will do one or more of the following:

- a. Expand access to one or more of the following at the high school or postsecondary level: distance education, pre-apprenticeships, or Registered Apprenticeships, including apprenticeships for in-school or out-of-school youth
- b. Expand access to programs or coursework that lead to in-demand, industry-recognized postsecondary credentials

- II. Competitive Preference Priority- Returning Education to the States

Projects or proposals that will be carried out by one or more of the following:

- a. State educational agencies
- b. State workforce development agencies or boards
- c. State higher education agencies
- d. An Indian Tribe, Tribal organization, or Tribal educational agency

- III. Invitational Priority- Talent Marketplaces

Program Profile Form Page 1

Program Profile Sheet

page 2

6. List the target area(s) and estimated number of participants to be served in the area:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____
- (6) _____
- (7) _____

Note: The project must be located in a setting accessible to the individuals the project proposes to serve.

7. Provide the total number of proposed participants to be served each year: _____
(Note: Projects are expected to serve a minimum of no less than 850 participants annually and the same number of participants, each year. Two-thirds of the participants served must be low-income, first-generation college students).

8. Program Objectives:
Please fill in the proposed percentage for each objective.
Note: These are the same objectives that MUST be stated in Part III -- Project Narrative section of your application when addressing the Objectives and the Evaluation criteria.

A. Secondary School Diploma: _____ % of participants served during the project year, who do not have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent, will receive a secondary school diploma or its equivalent during the project year.

B. Financial Aid Applications: _____ % of participants served during the project year who are not already enrolled in a postsecondary education program and who: 1) are high school seniors; 2) are high school graduates; or 3) have obtained a high school equivalency certificate, will apply for financial aid during the project year.

C. Postsecondary Education Admissions: _____ % of participants served during the project year who are not already enrolled in a postsecondary education program and who: 1) are high school seniors; 2) are high school graduates; or 3) have obtained a high school equivalency certificate, will apply for college admission during the project year.

D. Postsecondary Education Enrollment: _____ % of participants who graduate from secondary school and are not already enrolled in a postsecondary education program will enroll in a postsecondary education program immediately following participation in an EOC program or will have received notification, by the fall semester, of acceptance but deferred enrollment until the next academic semester (e.g. spring semester).

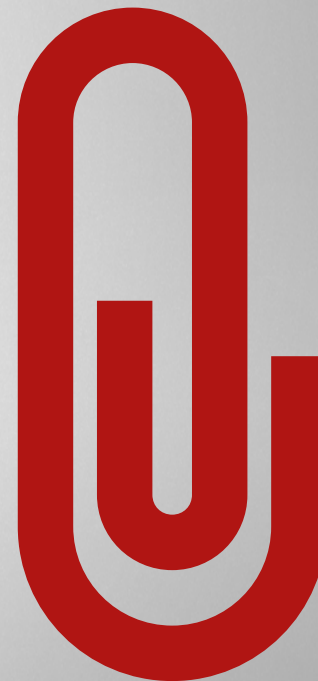
Application Submission

Part III – Project Narrative

Attachment Form

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- ▶ **Program Narrative Attachment Form** – This section addresses the selection criteria that reviewers will use to evaluate the quality of application, budget narrative, table of contents, and CPP.



Application Submission Part III

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Program Assurances

- ▶ 2/3 of students served must be low-income, potential first-generation college students;
- ▶ Collaborate with other Federal TRIO projects, GEAR UP projects, or programs serving similar populations that are serving the same target schools or target area in order to minimize the duplication of services and promote collaborations so that more students can be served;
- ▶ Located in a setting accessible to the individuals proposed to be served by the project; and
- ▶ Will not use the EOC project to recruit students to the grantee institution.



Application Submission Part IV

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Other Assurances, Certifications

- ▶ Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (SF 424B) – **applicant will submit if selected for funding**
- ▶ Grants.gov Lobbying Form
- ▶ Disclosure of Lobbying Activities



Application Submission

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Recommended 65-Page Limit – The program narrative is recommended to 65 pages.

(not including 1 page for the CPP and up to 3 pages each for the AP and IP.)

Other attachments and appendices will be counted as part of the application narrative.



Documents that *Do Not* count toward the recommended page limit:

Cover Sheet (SF-424)

Abstract

Profile Form

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

GEPA Statement

Assurances and certifications

Table of Contents


Post-Submission 1

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Pre-Screening – ED will determine if applications meet eligibility requirements.




First Peer Review – A panel of non-federal readers will evaluate and score each application on the basis of the selection criteria. Final scores are ranked in order, highest to lowest, on a funding slate.



Notice of Success – Successful applicants scoring within the funding range will receive a grant award notification after their U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators have been notified.

Post-Submission 2

Second Peer Review – ED will administer a second review of eligible unsuccessful applicants, upon request, based on an administrative or scoring technicality.



Note: We anticipate that all notifications will be sent and awards will be made by **August 2026** with a September 1st grant start date.

Terminology Used

- ▶ Employment and Training Administration (ETA)
- ▶ Pre-apprenticeships – defined in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations at [20 CFR 681.480](#)
- ▶ Talent marketplaces – in Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) [Connecting Talent to Opportunity \(CTO\) Challenge](#) (scroll to third section of the blog)
- ▶ Also in the [Challenge materials](#), see [Definitions and Key Terms](#)
- ▶ Learning and employment records (LER) – in the [CTO Challenge materials](#), see [Definitions and Key Terms](#) – Note that the CTO Challenge defines a LER as a digital tool maintained by a state workforce agency (SWA) for the purposes of that funding, but the common definition doesn't tie it to a SWA.
- ▶ AI-enabled learner wallets – this is not a term ETA has defined but is another way of talking about LER.
- ▶ Credential registries – in the [CTO Challenge materials](#), see [Definitions and Key Terms](#) – Note that the CTO Challenge defines a credential registry as one maintained by a SWA for the purposes of that CTO funding, but the common definition doesn't tie it to a SWA.
- ▶ There's a very well known Credential Registry maintained by the nonprofit [Credential Engine](#).



Questions and Answers