



A STUDENT-CENTERED VISION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

**Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE)  
Frequently Asked Questions for  
Governor's Emergency Education Relief Funds II (GEERF II) Grants:  
Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge & Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program  
*Last Updated: March 31, 2021***

*Deadline for Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge Proposals: 5pm, Monday, April 5, 2021(Updated Deadline)*

*Deadline for Hunger-Free Campus Proposals: 5pm, Monday, April 12*

Governor Murphy has made \$29.5 million in funding from the U.S Department of Education through the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERF II) available to eligible New Jersey institutions of higher education through two grant opportunities:

- Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge (\$28.5 million): [Notice of Funding Availability](#)
- Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program (\$1 million): [Notice of Funding Availability](#)

On Tuesday, March 16, 2021, the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education conducted an informational webinar on these two grant opportunities. To view the full webinar, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4BPmaibxkQ>. The following document provides a summary of frequently asked questions from the webinar, but eligible applicants should refer to the original Notice of Funding Availability for information regarding the application process.

### **General**

- ***How long are the funds granted from the award available?***

Per federal guidelines set by the U.S Department of Education, all allotted funding must be expended by September 30, 2023. In preparing their proposal, institutions can plan from early summer to September 30, 2023.

- ***Does the word count include spaces also?***

The word count does not include spaces, only words, symbols, and captions used on any graphics.

- ***Are indirect costs, such as administrative overhead, allowed or required? If so, what is the percentage cap?***

Indirect costs are not allowed. Costs should be directly tied to the project activity and implementation plan and can be further justified/described in the budget template.

- *Can I get feedback on my application in advance or run ideas by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education prior to submission?*

No. OSHE will not provide input or feedback on proposals; however, OSHE can provide clarifying answers related to the Notices of Funding Availability. Institutions can also refer to OSHE's recorded webinar during which questions were answered:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4BPmaibxkQ>.

- *Can our institution get a deadline extension?*

Since these are competitive grants, no late applications will be accepted. However, please note OSHE has just extended the deadline for the Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge Grant to **5pm, Monday, April 5, 2021**. The deadline for the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program is **5pm, Monday, April 12, 2021**.

- *How do I know OSHE received the institution's application for the grant(s)?*

OSHE will confirm receipt of application within one business day.

- *Can we partner with other entities to help further our grant proposals?*

Institutions are welcome to strengthen their proposals by collaborating with organizations; however, applications will only be accepted by institutions and for the award cap amount listed.

- *Would footnotes be counted towards the word count?*

If a footnote is included as a source of reference or citation for the content in the grant, it will not count towards the word count. If the footnote is meant to provide new content or to lead to additional new information to support the grant, it would count towards the word limit for that section.

- *What if I have further questions about these grant opportunities?*

For questions about the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, please contact Stefani Thachik, Director of Policy and Outreach, at [Stefani.Thachik@oshe.nj.gov](mailto:Stefani.Thachik@oshe.nj.gov). For questions about the Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge, questions should be directed to [OSHE@oshe.nj.gov](mailto:OSHE@oshe.nj.gov).

### **OPPORTUNITY MEETS INNOVATION CHALLENGE (OMIC)**

For full details on the Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge, please refer to the Notice of Funding Availability.

- *When will grant awards be announced?*

The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education is anticipating grant award winners will be announced in early summer 2021.

- *How will the applications be reviewed and what are the points per section?*

Proposals will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee comprised of OSHE and partner state agency staff. The Evaluation Committee will evaluate, score and rank complete applications received by the deadline in response to the notice of funding availability. Additional pages beyond what is required in the notice of funding availability will not be included in the review.

The scoring summary includes:

| <b>Component</b>  | <b>Score</b>                                      |
|---|---|
| Cover Sheet   | Not scored, but required for complete application |
| <i>Narrative</i>  |   |
| Letter of Support on Organizational Capacity and Commitment | 5 pts   |
| Statement of Need   | 15 pts  |
| Goals of Project  | 15 pts  |
| Project Activity Plan                                       | 30 pts  |
| Evaluation  | 5 pts   |
| Commitment to Equity Statement                              | 10 pts  |
| Project Innovation and Sustainability                       | 5 pts   |
| <i>Budget</i>   |   |
| Budget  | 15 pts  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100 pts</b>                                    |

Final decisions across all five state plan categories will be made based on considerations to ensure sector and geographic diversity.

- *Will applications covering more than one category be given greater weight?*

No. Institutions should choose what best serves their campus population and would be the strongest proposals given the parameters. OSHE recognizes that student success requires a comprehensive approach and that each of the state plan components are critical – and often interconnected – to ensuring student success. Institutions may choose to submit an application for one or more state plan categories, and each category will be evaluated on its own merit.

- *Can the grant budget include scholarships to students to cover tuition?*

The funds cannot be used for general scholarships or to cover tuition, which would be an existing cost. Under the menu of interventions for Making College Affordable, funding could be used to provide emergency stipends to students, such as gift cards for gas, public transportation vouchers, or funds for childcare.

- ***For the menu of interventions under On-ramps to College, could the use of funding cover the cost of dual enrollment courses?***

Yes. This is an acceptable use of funds as the goal is to expand access by offering early college exposure and creating on-ramps to college. It could only be used for dual enrollment courses.

- ***For the menu of interventions under Research, Innovation and Talent, could the use of funding include stipends for students completing internships?***

No. Grant funds cannot be used to supplant compensation expenses for internships, externships, or other experiential learning work. However, non-salary wraparound support stipends (such as transportation voucher to/from their internship) for students in experiential learning opportunities would be allowed as a component in the proposal. If the institution is hiring a student intern to help with the program activity plan for this grant, that would be acceptable but would be included under the 25% cap towards salaries overall for the grant.

- ***For the menu of interventions under Research, Innovation and Talent, could the use of funding include stipends for students completing research?***

Salary or salary stipends would be allowed for students completing research at the institution, however, this would count towards the 25% capacity cap. Non-salary wraparound support stipends would also be allowed as a component in the proposal.

- ***How can we utilize funds for these grant programs?***

The Notice of Funding Availability includes examples of funding uses for each of the menu of interventions. The ‘examples of funding uses’ is not exhaustive; however, the funding must be tied to one of the interventions listed.

Institutions may not supplant funds. As stated under the Project Innovation and Sustainability category, projects should be introduced to campus and/or innovate pre-existing initiatives to generate stronger results or reach. For additional information about the budget, please see the Notice of Funding Availability.

- ***The Notice of Funding Availability states that if a proposal addresses more than one grant category, “[t]he content for both of these categories should be incorporated within one submission,” Does that mean that the content for both categories must be covered within the word count specified for each application section? (i.e., must cover both categories in the given word count?)***

Each institution should submit only one PDF submission and one budget template. The Notice of Funding Availability, starting on page 3, includes which elements need to be broken apart per menu intervention submitted. For example, there is only one application cover sheet, letter of support and commitment to equity statement per institution. The remaining elements should be submitted *per state plan category*.

If an institution is submitting for two categories, the submission with headings may look like this:

Application Cover Sheet

Letter of Support

Commitment to Equity

State Plan Category #1

Statement of Need for State Plan Category #1

Project Goals for State Plan Category #1

Project Activity Plan for State Plan Category #1

Project Evaluation for State Plan Category #1

Project Innovation and Sustainability for State Plan Category #1

State Plan Category #2

Statement of Need for State Plan Category #2

Project Goals for State Plan Category #2

Project Activity Plan for State Plan Category #2

Project Evaluation for State Plan Category #2

Project Innovation and Sustainability for State Plan Category #2

Budget Template- *tabs would be filled out for the two corresponding state plan categories*

- ***Will the institution be responsible for sustaining the initiative after the funding period ends?***

Yes. Institutions must outline how the grant will be institutionalized after the funding period as detailed in the project innovation and sustainability section.

- ***Will the grant cover part-time faculty and staff costs?***

Salaries and benefits may include costs associated with expenditures for employees (whether full-time, part-time, or student) whose services are directly related to the Opportunity Meets Innovation Challenge grant/intervention selected. The justification for the inclusion of these employee salaries should be tied directly to the activity plan. However, no more than a combined total of 25% of the total grant amount may be utilized for this purpose.

- ***Will funding be allocated equally across all funding priorities?***

Grants will be awarded across all categories, but funding amounts may differ based on proposals submitted.

Institutions applying in multiple categories can determine how they want to allocate their funding up to the maximum for which they want to apply based on their proposal and need.

- ***Can proposals be used for non-credit programs or continuing education programs?***

Proposals will only be accepted for non-credit programs if these programs lead to and are directly tied to credit-bearing programs or degree pathways.

- ***If you propose two projects for a total of \$500,000 (\$250,000 each) and one is considered strong and the other not, would an award of \$250,000 be considered?***

Yes. Grant proposals will be reviewed in comparison to the state plan category. An institution could receive funding for one intervention but may not receive funding in another category.

- ***If an institution is eligible for \$500,000, may they apply for \$500,000 in one category and \$500,000 in a second category?***

No. Institutions may not apply for more than their maximum amount overall.

- ***If an institution is eligible for \$500,000, can they apply for each intervention at that full amount, or does it need to be split?***

Institutions can apply for one category for up to the maximum amount or split their maximum amount among the state plan categories according to what fits their proposal. It does not have to be split evenly.

- ***What happens to any unused funds at the end of September 2023?***

Once the allotted timeline to use the grant expires, any unused funds will no longer be available for use. The goal is for all funds to be used, so institutions should ensure applications and budgets are well developed and implemented. If an institution does not think they will utilize their full amount, they can submit an application for a lower amount.

- ***When can institutions expect to be able to use the funds awarded from the grant?***

OSHE will work to ensure that all funds are distributed as soon as possible and is aiming for early summer 2021 for the start of the grant expenditures, pending a signed Memorandum of Agreement.

- ***Is there a maximum number of projects that can be included in the comprehensive application and within each category?***

There is not a maximum number, but OSHE encourages applicants to ensure that they have strong and well-developed proposals for each category.

### **HUNGER-FREE CAMPUS GRANT PROGRAM**

For full detail on the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program, please refer to the Notice of Funding Availability.

- ***Do we have to use the survey indicated in the Notice of Funding Availability? What about alternative surveys, like the #RealCollege survey?***

If the institution utilized a student survey on hunger other than the one provided in the Notice of Funding Availability, you can email OSHE@oshe.nj.gov, and OSHE will evaluate the survey to determine if it is an appropriate substitute.

- ***Our institution does not have a dining hall or meal plan program to offer meal swipes. Can we still qualify for the grant?***

Yes. If an institution has an alternative to meal plan swipes, such as offering a certain amount of funds for free meal vouchers or gift cards to nearby food venues that would meet the requirement.

- ***Must institutions have already met all requirements to be considered a Hunger-Free Campus?***

Institutions must meet all of the requirements during the Academic Year 2020-2021, including summer 2021. If one of the components is in progress or will be implemented by the end of summer 2021, the institution should indicate this in its application. Institutions would have to submit documentation indicating that the requirement was completed prior to receiving funds.

There are currently no New Jersey institutions that have been awarded this designation. Institutions are able to prove they meet the qualifications for the Hunger-Free Campus Designation and may do so while also applying for the grant funds in their complete application to OSHE.

- ***How will the applications be reviewed and what is the scoring per section?***

Proposals will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee comprised of OSHE and partner state agency staff. First, the Evaluation Committee will review the applications to ensure they meet the requirements for the designation of ‘Hunger-Free Campus.’ If the institution does meet the requirements, the Evaluation Committee will evaluate, score and rank complete applications received by the deadline in response to the notice of funding availability. Additional pages beyond what is required in the notice of funding availability will not be included in the review.

The scoring summary includes:

| <b>Component</b>                 | <b>Score</b> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Narrative</i>                 |              |
| Contact Information              | Not Scored   |
| Letter of Support                | 5 pts        |
| Campus Hunger Task Force         | 15 pts       |
| Staff Member for SNAP Assistance | 10 pts       |

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Options for Students to Utilize SNAP                             | 10 pts         |
| Information on SNAP and other public benefits                    | 10 pts         |
| Participation in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week | 10 pts         |
| Evidence of a Campus Food Pantry                                 | 10 pts         |
| Evidence of a Swipe Out Hunger or Meal Plan Donation Program     | 10 pts         |
| Student Hunger Survey  | 10 pts         |
| Best Practices Campus Profile                                    | 10 pts         |
| Other  | Not scored     |
| <i>Budget</i>  |                |
| Budget   | 15 pts         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>115 pts</b> |

- *Can we include photos in the narrative?*

Yes. Photos and figures may be included. Caption text contribute toward the word count.