



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

## Talent Search Program

### Fiscal Year 2026 Grant Competition

Posted March 17, 2026

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## 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 Talent Search Program (TS) on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The purpose of the Talent Search Program is to identify qualified individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds with potential for education at the postsecondary level and encourage them to complete secondary school and undertake postsecondary education. Talent Search projects publicize the availability of, and facilitate the application for, student financial assistance for persons who seek to pursue postsecondary education, and encourage persons who have not completed programs at the secondary or postsecondary level to enter or reenter and complete these programs.

*Assistance Listing Number:* 84.044A.

*OMB Control Number:* 1840-0818.

Program authority: 20 U.S.C. 1070a-11 and 1070a-12.

*For further information contact:* Ben Witthoefft at [Ben.Witthoefft@ed.gov](mailto:Ben.Witthoefft@ed.gov) or 202-453-7576 or you may contact ReShone Moore, Ph.D., at [reshone.moore@ed.gov](mailto:reshone.moore@ed.gov) or 202-453-7624

*Type of Award:* Discretionary grants.

*Estimated Available Funds:* \$175,152,359

*Estimated Range of Awards:* \$250,000-\$10,000,000 per year.

### *Maximum Annual Award:*

- For an applicant that has not been designated by their Governor as the state-level applicant, the annual maximum award is \$1,000,000.
- 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 \$10,000,000.
- All projects must serve a minimum of 500 participants annually, and have an annual per-participant cost of no more than \$500.

*Note:* ED is establishing an increased maximum award amount for a limited number of state-level applicants to take advantage of how States are uniquely situated to serve more participants with fidelity and administer higher award amounts with appropriate fiscal oversight. Consistent with 34 CFR 75.232, ED will conduct a cost analysis of proposed projects prior to setting any final award amount to ensure all costs are necessary, reasonable, and allowable under applicable statutes and regulations.

*Estimated number of awards:* 175

*Project Period:* 60 months.

*Application Deadline:* May 1, 2026

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

# Eligibility

## Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible for a grant to carry out a Talent Search project:

- (a) An institution of higher education.
- (b) A public or private agency or organization, including a community-based organization with experience in serving disadvantaged youth.

Note: State educational agencies may apply as a public organization.

- (c) A secondary school (as defined in 34 CFR 643.7(b)).

Note: Charter Schools may apply as a secondary school.

- (d) A combination of the types of institutions, agencies, and organizations described in paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this section.

## Costs

### Cost Sharing

This program does not require cost sharing or matching.

### Indirect Cost Rate Information

This program uses a training indirect cost rate. This limits indirect cost reimbursement to an entity's actual cost, as determined in its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, or eight percent of a modified total direct cost base, whichever amount is less. For more information regarding indirect costs, or to obtain a negotiated indirect cost rate, please see [U.S. Department of Education Indirect Cost Information](#).

### 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 75.708\(b\) and \(c\)](#), a grantee under this competition may award subgrants to directly carry out project activities described in its application to the following types of entities: local educational agencies (LEAs), Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)s, secondary schools and other public or private entities suitable to carry out the activities

proposed in the application. The grantee may award subgrants to entities it has identified in an approved application.

### **Other**

An applicant may submit multiple applications if each separate application describes a project that will serve a different target area or different target schools. The term “target area” is defined as a geographic area served by a project, and the term “target school” is a school designated by the applicant as a focus of project services ([34 CFR 643.7](#)).

### **Use of Funds**

The Talent Search program authority specifies a list of required and permissible services.<sup>1</sup> The program regulations (34 CFR 643.31) identify unallowable costs in the Talent Search Program. Costs that are unallowable under the Talent Search program include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Stipends and other forms of direct financial support for participants.
- (b) Application fees for financial aid.
- (c) Research not directly related to the evaluation or improvement of the project.
- (d) Construction, renovation, and remodeling of any facilities.

## **Submission Requirements and Deadlines**

|                                       |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Applications Available                | March 17, 2026 |
| Application Deadline                  | May 1, 2026    |
| Deadline for Intergovernmental Review | June 30, 2026  |

**Applicants are required to follow the 2025 Common Instructions 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](#).

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<sup>1</sup> See section 402B(b) of the HEA: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-765/pdf/COMPS-765.pdf>

# Program Description

## Overview

In a rapidly evolving economy where opportunity belongs to those equipped with the right knowledge and choices, the Talent Search program serves as an essential early-intervention bridge for underserved learners nationwide. Talent Search aims to deliver personalized academic, financial, and college and career guidance while dramatically broadening awareness of a variety of accessible postsecondary pathways beyond high school.

This grant opportunity is fully aligned with *America's Talent Strategy*, encouraging grantees to expand services to learners to explore a variety of postsecondary opportunities, including Registered Apprenticeship.<sup>2</sup> These options include enhanced programing focused on pre-apprenticeships and other work-based learning experiences that combine paid, on-the-job training with academic credit and industry recognized credentials in high demand fields such as skilled trades, healthcare, manufacturing, information technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and shipbuilding and other occupations critical for the defense industrial base.

Grantees should explore talent marketplaces, learning and employment records, and other mechanisms that present apprenticeships, career and technical education, and integration with the workforce system as equally viable and often faster routes to economic mobility as traditional college programs. Grantees are encouraged to develop applications that demonstrate connections with the workforce system, dual enrollment options, and resources dedicated to the data infrastructure necessary for Workforce Pell and other pathways that can minimize debt while accelerating entry into rewarding careers.

Talent Search project proposals should seek to serve learners from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, including students with disabilities, foster care youth, or otherwise disconnected youth. Grantees should, to the extent possible, develop applications that demonstrate how participants gain the early awareness, skills, confidence, and connections needed to either acquire a standard high school diploma or its equivalent and enroll in an in-demand postsecondary program. This grant is more than preparation; it is about empowerment. Through the Talent Search opportunity, we are seeking to not only increase postsecondary enrollment but aim to cultivate a generation of career-ready Americans.

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<sup>2</sup> [America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age](#)

## Priorities

This notice includes one absolute priority, one competitive preference priority, and one invitational priority. The absolute and competitive preference priorities are from the Secretary’s Final Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grant Programs (Supplemental Priorities), published in the *Federal Register* on September 9, 2025 (34 CFR Part 75).

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, the priority is an absolute priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(3), we consider only applications that meet the absolute priority. 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 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.

*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.

## Priorities

| Title   | Required | Points | Priority Language  |
|---|----------|--------|--|
| Absolute Priority— Expanding Education Choice | Yes      | N/A    | Projects or proposals that will do one or more of the following:<br><br>(a) expand access to education services that accelerate learning such as high-impact tutoring,<br><br>(b) expand access to one or more of the following at the high school or postsecondary level: distance education, pre-apprenticeships, or Registered Apprenticeships, including Registered Apprenticeships for in-school or out-of-school youth, or |

|   |    |               |  |
|---|----|---------------|--|
|   |    |               | (c) expand access to programs or coursework that lead to in-demand, industry-recognized postsecondary credentials.   |
| Competitive Preference— Returning Education to the States | No | 0 or 5 points | <p>Projects or proposals that will be carried out by one or more of the following:</p> <p>(a) State educational agencies (as defined in <a href="#">20 U.S.C. 7801(49)</a>),</p> <p>(b) State workforce development agencies or boards,</p> <p>(c) State higher education agencies (as defined in <a href="#">20 U.S.C. 1003(22)</a>), or</p> <p>(d) 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>)</p>   |
| Invitational Priority— Talent Marketplaces                | No | N/A           | <p>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:</p> <p>(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</p> <p>(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 Talent Search participants, employers, and education providers through a common currency of skills.</p> |

## 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 643.21.

- (a) *Need for the project* (24 points). The Secretary evaluates the need for a Talent Search project in the proposed target area on the basis of the extent to which the application contains clear evidence of the following:
- (1) A high number or high percentage of (i) low-income families residing in the target area; or (ii) students attending the target schools who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch as described in sections 9(b)(1) and 17(c)(4) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (4 points).
  - (2) Low rates of high school persistence among individuals in the target schools as evidenced by the annual student persistence rates in the proposed target schools for the most recent year for which data are available (2 points).
  - (3) Low rates of students in the target school or schools who graduate high school with a regular secondary school diploma in the standard number of years for the most recent year for which data are available (4 points).
  - (4) Low postsecondary enrollment and completion rates among individuals in the target area and schools as evidenced by (6 points)--
    - (i) Low rates of enrollment in programs of postsecondary education by graduates of the target schools in the most recent year for which data are available; and
    - (ii) A high number or high percentage of individuals residing in the target area with education completion levels below the baccalaureate degree level.
  - (5) The extent to which the target secondary schools do not offer their students the courses or academic support to complete a rigorous secondary school program of study or have low participation or low success by low-income or first-generation students in such courses (2 points).
  - (6) Other indicators of need for a Talent Search project, including low academic achievement and low standardized test scores of students enrolled in the target schools, a high ratio of students to school counselors in the target schools, and the presence of unaddressed academic or socio-economic problems of eligible individuals, including foster care youth and homeless children and youth in the target schools or the target area (6 points).

(b) *Objectives* (8 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the applicant's objectives and proposed targets (percentages) in the following areas on the basis of the extent to which they are both ambitious, as related to the need data provided under paragraph (a) of this section, and attainable given the project's plan of operation, budget, and other resources:

- (1) Secondary school persistence (2 points).
- (2) Secondary school graduation (regular secondary school diploma) (2 points).
- (3) Secondary school graduation (rigorous secondary school program of study) (1 point).
- (4) Postsecondary education enrollment (2 points).
- (5) Postsecondary degree attainment (1 point).

Note: Applicants must use the standardized objectives listed on the Talent Search Program Profile Form. These objectives cannot be changed or modified. Any other objectives will not be accepted or assessed.

(c) *Plan of operation* (30 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the applicant's plan of operation on the basis of the following:

- (1) The plan to inform the residents, schools, and community organizations in the target area of the purpose, objectives, and services of the project and the eligibility requirements for participation in the project (3 points).
- (2) The plan to identify and select eligible project participants (3 points).
- (3) The plan for providing the services delineated in 34 CFR 643.4 as appropriate based on the project's assessment of each participant's need for services (10 points).
- (4) The plan to work in a coordinated, collaborative, and cost-effective manner as part of an overarching college access strategy with the target schools or school system and other programs for disadvantaged students to provide participants with access to and assistance in completing a rigorous secondary school program of study (6 points).
- (5) The plan, including timelines, personnel, and other resources, to ensure the proper and efficient administration of the project, including the project's organizational structure; the time commitment of key project staff; and financial, personnel, and records management (6 points).
- (6) The plan to follow former participants as they enter, continue in, and complete postsecondary education (2 points).

(d) *Applicant and community support* (16 points). The Secretary evaluates the applicant and community support for the proposed project on the basis of the extent to which

the applicant has made provision for resources to supplement the grant and enhance the project's services, including—

- (1) Facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, and other resources committed by the applicant (8 points); and
  - (2) Resources secured through written commitments from community partners (8 points).
    - (i) An applicant that is an institution of higher education must include in its application commitments from the target schools and community organizations;
    - (ii) An applicant that is a secondary school must include in its application commitments from institutions of higher education, community organizations, and, as appropriate, other secondary schools and the school district; and
    - (iii) An applicant that is a community organization must include in its application commitments from the target schools and institutions of higher education.
- (e) *Quality of personnel* (9 points).
- (1) The Secretary evaluates the quality of the personnel the applicant plans to use in the project on the basis of the following:
    - (i) The qualifications required of the project director (3 points).
    - (ii) The qualifications required of each of the other personnel to be used in the project (3 points).
    - (iii) The plan to employ personnel who have succeeded in overcoming the disadvantages of circumstances like those of the population of the target area (3 points).
  - (2) In evaluating the qualifications of a person, the Secretary considers his or her experience and training in fields related to the objectives of the project.
- (f) *Budget* (5 points). The Secretary evaluates the extent to which the project budget is reasonable, cost-effective, and adequate to support the project.
- (g) *Evaluation plan* (8 points). The Secretary evaluates the quality of the evaluation plan for the project on the basis of the extent to which the applicant's methods of evaluation—
- (1) Are appropriate to the project's objectives;
  - (2) Provide for the applicant to determine, using specific and quantifiable measures, the success of the project in—

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

## 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 | The secondary school persistence of Talent Search participants   |
| Program Performance Measure 2 | The graduation rates of Talent Search participants   |
| Program Performance Measure 3 | The postsecondary enrollment rates, including Participation in Registered Apprenticeships, of Talent Search participants |
| Program Performance Measure 4 | The postsecondary completion rates, including completion of Registered Apprenticeships, of Talent Search participants    |
| Program Efficiency Measure    | The Federal cost per successful outcome  |

All Talent Search Program grantees will be required to submit an annual performance report documenting secondary school persistence, secondary school graduation, and postsecondary enrollment of their participants. Since students may take different amounts of time to complete their postsecondary education, multiple years of performance report data are needed to determine the postsecondary completion rates of Talent Search Program participants. The Department will aggregate the data provided in the annual performance reports from all grantees to determine the accomplishment level.

## Application Submission Information

Application Submission Instructions: Applicants are required to follow the [Common Instructions 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:*

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 643.24(c).

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 three non-Federal reviewers will review each application in accordance with the selection criteria, pursuant to 34 CFR 643.21. 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. Additionally, in accordance with 34 CFR 643.22, the Secretary will award prior experience points to applicants that have conducted a Talent Search project during budget periods 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024- 25, based on their documented experience. Prior experience points, if any, will be added to the application’s averaged reader score to determine the total score for each application. More information is available on the [Talent Search webpage](#).

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 for all applications with the same total scores, the Secretary will choose among the tied applications so as to serve geographic areas that would otherwise be underserved following the 2026 grant competition. The following iterative procedure will be applied to identify and recommend for award the applications from among the tied applications.

The applications with tied scores will be sorted according to three criteria. The Secretary will identify and recommend an award for—

First, the applications will be sorted, from low to high, according to the number of applications from the 2026 TS grant competition that have competition scores above the cutoff score that are within their Congressional District\*. Applications may be in a Congressional District from which zero, one, two, three, ... through 'n' number of applications received a score above the cutoff score. Applicants within Congressional Districts that have zero 2026 applicants above the cutoff will be sorted to the top of the Funding Band; the set of applicants within Congressional Districts that have one 2026 applicant with a score above the cutoff will be listed next; followed by the set of applicants within Congressional Districts with two awards, and so on.

Second, within each of those sets, the applicants will be sorted, from low to high, according to the educational attainment for 18-to-25-year-olds within the Congressional District. Specifically, the Congressional Districts have a value that measures the percentage of 18-to-25-year-olds who have, at some time, enrolled in postsecondary education.

Third, if two tied applicants are located in the same Congressional District, the applicant partnering with target schools with the largest aggregate number of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch will be sorted above applicants partnering with target schools with fewer aggregate numbers of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.

Once sorted, the tied applications will be awarded in rank order “down the slate” until all funds are exhausted.

Please note that Congressional Districts boundaries will be determined according to those drawn for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress since census data is not yet available for educational attainment in Congressional Districts drawn for the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

## Definitions

The following definitions are [34 CFR 77.1](#), [20 U.S.C. 7801\(49\)](#), ([20 U.S.C. 1003\(22\)](#)), and [20 U.S.C. 2302\(55\)](#), and the Secretary's Supplemental Priorities published in the Federal Register on September 9, 2025.

*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 ([34 CFR 77.1](#)).

*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 ([34.CFR 77.1](#)).

*Performance measure* means any quantitative indicator, statistic, or metric used to gauge program or project performance ([34 CFR 77.1](#)).

*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 ([34 CFR 77.1](#)).

*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. ([34 CFR 77.1](#)).

*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.

*State educational agency* means the agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of public elementary schools and secondary schools ([20 U.S.C. 7801\(49\)](#)).

*State higher education agency* means the officer or agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of higher education ([20 U.S.C. 1003\(22\)](#)).

*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 74, 75 (except for §§ 75.215 through 75.221), 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 regulations for this program in 34 CFR part 643. (e) The Supplemental Priorities.

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.

### **Continuation Awards**

In making a continuation award under [34 CFR 75.253](#), the Secretary considers, among other things: whether a grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the project; whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget; and, if the Secretary has established performance measurement requirements, whether the grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the performance targets in the grantee's approved application, or whether the continuation of the project is in the best interest of the Federal Government.

In making a continuation award, the Secretary also considers whether the grantee is operating in compliance with the assurances in its approved application, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department ([34 CFR 100.4](#), [104.5](#), [106.4](#), [108.8](#), and [110.23](#)).

# 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

- Talent Search Program Profile Form
- Talent Search Program Assurances
- Absolute Priority Narrative
- Competitive Preference Priority Narrative
- Invitational Priority Narrative

## 7. Assurances and Certifications

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (Standard Form LLL)
- Grants.gov Lobbying Form
- Assurances – Non-Construction Programs (SF 424B)

## **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)*: Indicate the applicant's approved indirect cost rate, per [34 CFR 75.560 - 75.564](#). If an applicant does not have an approved indirect cost rate agreement with a cognizant Federal agency, the applicant must apply to ED for a temporary indirect cost rate if it wishes to charge indirect costs to the grant. For more information, go to [ED's website](#). In addition, a grantee, if it is eligible, may also use de minimis rate as provided for under [2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#).
- *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 2-5, for five-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.
- *Line 16 Column (e) Fourth:* Include the total amount requested for the fourth outyear. **Year 5 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 pages and should include a concise description of the following information:

- Project objectives and activities
- Absolute Priority (either Absolute Priority 1, Absolute Priority 2, or both)
- Applicable competitive preference priorities
- Proposed project outcomes
- Proposed project partners, 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*: Indicate the applicant’s approved indirect cost rate, per sections [34 CFR 75.560 - 75.564](#). If an applicant does not have an approved indirect cost rate agreement with a cognizant Federal agency, the applicant must apply to ED for a temporary indirect cost rate if it wishes to charge indirect costs to the grant. For more information, go to [ED’s website](#). In addition, a grantee, if it is eligible, may also use de minimis rate as provided for under 2 CFR 200.414(f).
- *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 2 CFR part 200 subpart E of the Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance.

## 6. Other Attachment Forms

- Talent Search Program Profile Form
- Talent Search Program Assurances (Applicants can find the low-income levels for the current year in the Federal TRIO programs at <https://www.ed.gov/grants-and-programs/grants-higher-education/federal-trio-programs/federal-trio-programs-current-year-low-income-levels>)
- Absolute Priority Narrative (no more than 3 pages)

- Competitive Preference Priority Narrative (no more than 1 page)
- Invitational Priority Narrative (no more than 3 pages)

## **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.
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- 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.