Pennsylvania
Department of Education

2026 Request for Application PA Hunger-Free Campus Grant

(Grant Period May 3, 2027 – June 30, 2028)

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education (OPHE) is pleased to issue this request for application for the PA Hunger-Free Campus Grant to eligible postsecondary institutions. The PA Hunger-Free Campus Grant was developed to address food insecurity on campuses across the Commonwealth. This document describes the requirements applicants will be expected to meet and the criteria that will be used to award funding.

The application submission window will open at **12:00 AM on Friday, November 6, 2026**, and close at **1:00 PM on Friday, December 4, 2026.** Grant agreement is from May 3, 2027- June 30, 2028.

Please complete and return your application submission via eGrants.

Background

National data from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted that approximately 23% of college students experienced food insecurity in 2020.[1] In 2023-2024, the Student Basic Need Survey report, conducted through the Hope Impact Partnership, reveals that number has almost doubled, as 41% percent of respondents indicated experiencing food insecurity.[2] When combined with other basic need deficiencies, the ability to persist and complete an academic program becomes exponentially challenging. That same survey revealed that "79% of student respondents to our survey who had previously stopped out of college (and re-enrolled) or were considering stopping out of college, told us it was due to basic needs insecurity" or "financial reasons".[3]

According to Feeding America's "Map the Meal gap", food insecurity showed an increase for Pennsylvanians from 1.6% in 2022 to 13.5% in 2024[4] The impact is widespread among

[1] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Estimated Eligibility and Receipt among Food Insecure College Students*, GAO-24-107074 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 2024).
[2] The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, *The Hope Center 2023–2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report* (Philadelphia: Temple University, February 2025), Hope Student Basic Needs Survey Report 2023-2024
[3] The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, *The Hope Center 2023–2024 Student Basic Needs Survey Report* (Philadelphia: Temple University, February 2025), 7, Hope Student Basic Needs Survey Report 2023-2024
[4] Feeding America, "Map the Meal Gap," accessed October 7, 2026.

Pennsylvania's residents, but the effects can be devastating for PA's postsecondary learners seeking academic degrees or credentials.

While tangible measures of securing resources, both on and off campus, are essential to creating a well-stocked and robust food and basic needs support system, strategic efforts cannot discount efforts to educate and connect students to these resources.

The Office of the First Lady, Mrs. Lori Shapiro, continues to fully endorse the PA Hunger-Free Campus Initiative, which began in 2022. Postsecondary institutions have been invited to apply or renew for the PA Hunger-Free Campus or PA Hunger-Free Campus+ designation to demonstrate their commitment to addressing these needs and diminishing barriers for learners. In 2026-2027, the initiative continues to build a coalition of colleges and universities focused on addressing hunger and other basic needs for their students; creating opportunities for connection among student hunger advocates; providing resources and strategies for campuses; and supporting opportunities to apply for grants related to addressing food insecurity.

Criteria Areas

To achieve the PA Hunger-Free Campus and PA Hunger-Free Campus+ designation, institutions certified and demonstrated they met the following criteria areas:

1. The institution has a method to **directly connect students to food options** through one or more of the following: an on-campus, ADA-accessible food pantry, a local community-based food pantry, or a food delivery program.
2. The institution has strategies in place to **increase awareness of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)** eligibility rules for students, focuses SNAP outreach on potentially eligible students, and helps students apply for SNAP and other benefits. These strategies should include accessibility efforts such as providing materials in multiple languages.
3. The institution **has a task force** that meets regularly **to address basic needs initiatives**, including hunger, and raises awareness among students using trauma-informed approaches and an equity, inclusion, and belonging lens. The task force includes a variety of individuals on campus including, but not limited to students, faculty, financial aid staff, student support staff, and at least one member of institutional leadership (Cabinet, Vice President, etc.).
4. The institution **collects and reports data** to the college/university community and/or state on student food insecurity, such as participation in the Hope Center's #RealCollege Survey or Swipe Out Hunger's Impact Report.

Postsecondary institutions that received a PA Hunger-Free Campus+ designation implemented additional innovative solutions to address student hunger and other basic needs for their campus community in conjunction with demonstrating the criteria above. Examples of these initiatives included offering a variety of meal plans, including an option that provides ten or fewer meals weekly to avoid interfering with SNAP eligibility, creating, or implementing meal-sharing programs, educating student leaders on campus to develop student-centered programs, or facilitating innovative community partnerships.

Eligibility

For the purposes of this grant, “institution” shall include postsecondary institutions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with authorization to award an associate degree or higher academic degree, as defined in section 2001-J of the Public-School Code of 1949, as amended (24 P.S. §20-2001-J) and private licensed schools, as defined in the Act of December 15, 1986 (P.L. 1585, NO. 174).

To be eligible to apply for a 2026 PA Hunger-Free Campus Grant, the institution must have applied for and received PA Hunger-Free Campus or PA Hunger-Free Campus+ designations. Institutions must have received their designation by August 1, 2026, to be eligible.

Institutions must be in good standing with PDE including the completion/approval of all previous Final Expenditure Reports for any previous grant awards within PDE.

Only one proposal will be accepted from each institution. Applicants may not apply as a consortium. Only the main campus may apply, and funds can be disseminated to branches as the institution deems appropriate, if awarded.

Funding and Eligible Programs

The 2026 PA Hunger-Free Campus grant offers designated institutions the opportunity to apply for competitive funding in an amount up to:

- $20,000 for institutions with 3,000 or fewer learners;
- $40,000 for institutions with 3,001 to 7,000 learners; and
- $60,000 for institutions with 7,001 learners or more.

Funds may be expended only on eligible programs, activities, and purposes identified in the proposal and approved by OPHE. Funding requests can include a combination of any eligible program described in this request for application. Funding is not guaranteed to any applicant.

PDE reserves the right to award less than the requested amount and the requestor will be required to provide updated proposals based on this revised amount.

Eligible proposals must focus on addressing and/or expanding the Criteria Areas of the 2026 PA Hunger-Free Campus initiative, listed above in the Criteria Areas section of this document.

Allowable Expenses

Due to limited funding, only items directly related to eligible programs and activities covered in this request for application will be funded by the 2026 PA Hunger-Free Campus grant.

1. Purchase of perishable and non-perishable food items.
2. Purchase of basic needs items not to exceed 10% of total grant budget limited to personal/feminine hygiene products.

3. Partnering or collaborating with additional local agencies to connect students directly to expanded food options such as on-campus food pantries, local community-based food pantries, or food delivery programs.
4. Expansion of pantry services on campus, including record keeping/data collection systems implementation, purchase of refrigeration, shelving, and overall general upgrades to existing facility or additional locations.
5. On campus vendor swipe cards.
6. Travel costs that are associated with local community partnership meetings and pick up of food and pantry supplies (limited to gas and mileage), not to exceed 10% of total grant budget.
7. Travel costs that are associated with student transportation to access off-campus food services (i.e. gas cards or public transportation passes), not to exceed 10% of total grant budget.
8. Providing honorariums for dietary experts or stipends for staffing of food pantry services on campus not to exceed 20% of total grant budget.
9. Providing stipends for staff to assist students in completing applications for benefits such as SNAP, LIHEAP, etc. in the COMPASS system.
10. Programs that provide services for students on weekends, holidays, and breaks (ex: pre-bundled food).
11. Advertising/marketing materials to communicate the existence of services on campus and the hours of operation including awareness initiatives to ensure food insecurity is addressed in equitable ways and/or anti-stigma campaigns.
12. Alliance(s) with off-campus partners to facilitate the expansion of services on campus, (i.e., Swipe Out Hunger).

Unallowable Expenses

Grant funds paid to the institution may not be used for direct salaries, fringe benefits, or operational rates. All budgets will be reviewed to evaluate appropriateness and connection to proposed grant activities and goals.

eGrants Access

Grant applications will be submitted through the eGrants system.

For access to the eGrants system and the related grant opportunities, prospective applicants should complete the eGrants Request Form. **Applicants must complete a new request form each grant cycle.** Please note that the person completing the grant application must have signatory authority to negotiate grants and contracts for the institution and be able to upload documentation into the eGrants system. Institutions with e-sign ability in eGrants will be able to utilize this feature to complete the application.

Grant Application Components

The PA Hunger-Free Campus grant application consists of four areas: Applicant Information, Program Information, Budget, and Compliance Objectives.

Area 1. Applicant Information

Applicant Information - In this section, institutions will provide detailed contact information for the individual responsible for the grant application. The applicant must make any changes to the institution's contact to ensure continuity of information between PDE and the institution.

Area 2. Program Information

Project Summary - In this section, the institution will provide the project overview, the grant amount requested, and the institution's specific plans to implement the proposed programs. If you have received prior Hunger Free Campus grant funding, fill in the requested information regarding those prior years' funds. Institutions should ensure their response is detailed and provide specific examples of how the initiative will be further developed on campus. Institutions are encouraged to upload letters of commitment for proposed partners in the Reporting/Guideline Upload section of the application. The institution must explain how campus administration, along with the developed task force, will be instrumental in the execution of the proposed goals/objectives. If your institution was a grant recipient last year, proposals must demonstrate how additional funds will expand upon previous initiatives.

Goals/ Objectives - Using the provided table, the institution should use the drop down menu to select the criteria area that will be focused on with the grant funds requested. Once the criteria area of focus has been selected, provide quantifiable goals/objectives, current baseline data, the measurable project outcome and the projected amount of funds to be used for that criteria area.

Area 3. Budget

Budget Narrative - In this section, the institution will provide an explanation of the budget items above and how they relate to the objectives of your proposal. Ensure that the budget narrative demonstrates how funds will be equitably used to support high-risk community members.

Budgets - The budget demonstrates a fiscally sound allocation of funds to successfully provide activities related directly to the 2026 PA Hunger-Free initiatives. Budgets should be detailed and aligned to the appropriate allowable expense as listed below. Round amounts to the nearest whole dollar. All budgets will be reviewed to evaluate appropriateness and connection to proposed grant activities and goals.

- **Food Services (Function Code 3100):**
  - **Object Code 571 – Food Service Management – Food Costs:** allowable expense #1,3,10
  - **Object Code 572 – Food Service Management – Non-food Costs:** allowable expense #2,4
  - **Object Code 600 – Supplies:** allowable expense #11
- **Support Services – Students (Function Code 2100):**
  - **Object Code 500 – Other Purchased Services:** allowable expense #6,7
  - **Object Code 300 – Purchased Professional Services:** allowable expense #9
- **Data Processing Services (Function Code 2840):**

    - **Object Code 300 – Purchased Professional Services:** allowable expense #5,12
    - **Object Code 650 – Supplies and Fees:** allowable expense #5,12
- **Instructional Services (Function Code 1691):**
    - **Object Code 330 – Other Professional Services:** allowable expense #8

Budget Summary - The budget demonstrates fiscally-sound allocation of funds to successfully provide activities related directly to the 2026 PA Hunger-Free Campus initiatives. Round amounts to the nearest whole dollar. Grant funds may not be used for direct salaries, fringe benefits, or operational rates; however, funds can be used for honorariums and stipends. All budgets will be reviewed to evaluate appropriateness and connection to proposed grant activities and goals.

Compliance Obligations

1. All grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
2. Once approved, the institution will invoice for payment of the grant. All invoices must be received within 30 calendar days of notification of approval.
3. Institutions are encouraged to expend all grant funds and funds must be spent, services performed, or products received or committed to, on or before **June 30, 2028**.
4. PDE shall seek repayment of funds if it determines that funds were not utilized for the stated and approved purpose.
5. Grantees will be required to submit reports in the eGrants system on forms supplied by PDE.
6. Final Expenditure Reports must be submitted no later than **July 31, 2028**. (**Note: New 2027**, Final Expenditure Reporting can be accessed when a fully executed agreement is received. Expenses and statistics can be entered into eGrants and tracked throughout the year, for ease of record keeping.)
7. Grantees are expected to participate in PDE's evaluation research, including staff interviews and student surveys.

Review Process and Scoring

Applications will be reviewed on a competitive basis by a team selected by OPHE. All qualifying applications will be reviewed and scored based on a rubric. Each application will be scored twice by unique grant evaluators.

The criteria below will be evaluated to rank and score the applications according to the following attributes:

Expectation	Criteria	Score
Program Information	Goals and Objectives	20 points
Program Information	Baseline Data	20 points
Program Information	Projected Outcomes	20 points
Budget Information	Budget Narrative and Detailed Budgets	40 points

Program Information Expectation - Specific and comprehensive. Addresses all criteria. Complete, detailed, and clearly articulated information as to how criteria are met. Well-conceived and thoroughly developed ideas.

Budget Information Expectation - Detailed and itemized - Aligns with the program information.

Applications that do not include all the required information as stated in the application will not be considered for funding. Applications that include unallowable expenses or exceed the identified threshold of spending on allowable expenses will not be reviewed or scored.

Award and Disbursement

All grantees will be required to sign a grant agreement with OPHE. Once approved, the institution will invoice for payment of the grant. All invoices must be received within **30 calendar days** of notification of approval. Failure to meet the 30-calendar day deadline will result in an automatic forfeiture of funds.

All grant funds must be committed, and services performed by **June 30, 2028**. Awardees are encouraged to ensure all funding is spent by the end of the grant period.

NOTE: No-cost extensions are no longer permitted.

OPHE shall seek repayment of funds if it determines that funds were not utilized for the original stated and approved purpose. Institutions will be notified when their Final Expenditure Report is reviewed and approved. If unused grant funds are due to PDE, the institution will have **30 calendar days** to return funds.

Program Reporting and Evaluation

Upon completion of the grant, grantees will be required to submit a final report on forms supplied by OPHE. Final reports and correlating invoices/receipts must be submitted **no later than July 31, 2028**. **NOTE: New for 2026, Final Expenditure Reporting can be accessed when a fully executed agreement is received.** Expenses and statistics can be entered into eGrants and tracked throughout the year, for ease of record keeping. It is highly recommended to include various individuals invoiced in the grant administration activities to coordinate across campus to ensure awareness of the program reporting and evaluation deadlines.

Program Changes

All requests for changes to the approved grant **(changes in approved goals/objectives),** must be submitted to OPHE in writing no later than **July 1, 2027**. OPHE must approve program changes, or the grant will be rescinded.

Budget Revision Changes/Reallocation of Funds

All requests for budget revision/reallocation of funds (shifting money from one function code/object code to another) must be submitted in eGrants under the heading “Create Budget Revision”. Once OPHE approve changes, you will be notified through the eGrants system.

*Please note: If you want to make changes to proposed goals/objectives, see above heading “Program Changes”***.**

Technical Assistance

Contact OPHE at ra-edhungerfreecampus@pa.gov for technical assistance or to obtain answers to questions related to the grant application.

- All substantive questions must be submitted by Monday, November 30, 2026.
- Responses will be provided in the form of an FAQ distributed to all institutions on Wednesday, December 2, 2026.

Please ensure that staffing changes are communicated to our office, so your institution maintains access to the eGrants system.

The deadline for submission is **Friday, December 4, 2026, at 1:00 pm**. Applications received after this time will not be considered.