

**Institutional Resilience and Expanded Postsecondary Opportunity Grants Program
(IREPO)
CFDA Number: 84.425P
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)¹**

Issued October 9, 2020

1. What is the purpose of Institutional Resilience and Expanded Postsecondary Opportunity (IREPO) Grants offered under section 18004(a)(3) of the CARES Act and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)?

The purpose is to provide financial support and enable institutions of higher education (IHEs) with the greatest unmet needs related to the Coronavirus to resume operations, serve the needs of students, reduce disease transmission, and develop more resilient instructional delivery models (*i.e.*, distance learning) to continue educating students who cannot, or choose not to, attend classroom-based instruction due to coronavirus.

2. Who may apply?

Eligible applicants that are IHEs as defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), or a consortium of such IHEs. For this program, we define institutions with the greatest unmet needs related to coronavirus as those that:

1. Had a student population enrolled at the beginning of the term that included March 13, 2020, or, if that date occurred during a break between terms, at the beginning of the term immediately prior to the break which included March 13, 2020, in which more than 30 percent of full-time students received a Pell Grant; and/or
2. Were underserved by other CARES Act programs either because:
 - a. The institution did not receive a loan under the Paycheck Protection Program established by the CARES Act; and/or
 - b. The institution serves large numbers of part-time students and, as such, received a reduced per-student allocation under section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act relative to institutions of the same or similar total enrollment that serve mostly full-time students; and
 - c. Had other unmet needs due to the novel coronavirus, as described by the institution in its application.

3. Are applicants required to address the Absolute Priority?

Yes. This program has one absolute priority, which applicants must respond to in order to be eligible to be reviewed. Within the absolute priority, applicants must demonstrate the greatest unmet needs related to coronavirus and show how this grant will enable them to resume operations, serve the needs of students, reduce disease transmission, and/or implement safe and effective instructional delivery models that will enable safe in-person learning and expand remote learning opportunities when necessary (see [Notice Inviting Applications](#) for information regarding the absolute priority).

¹ These FAQs constitute a guidance document. Guidance documents represent the Department of Education's current thinking on a topic. They do not create or confer any rights for or on any person or entity and do not impose any requirements beyond those required under applicable laws and regulations described. Guidance documents themselves lack the force and effect of law. For more information, see the [U.S. Department of Education's Guidance Homepage](#).

4. Are applicants required to address the Competitive Preference Priorities?

No, only the Absolute Priority is required. The Competitive Preference Priorities award extra points (up to 16) to an IHE's application. Applicants may respond to all, one, two, or none of the Competitive Priorities.

5. What is a "Notice of Intent to Apply"?

A Notice of Intent to Apply informs the Department of an applicant's plans to apply for the FY 2020 grant under the IREPO Program. The Notice of Intent to Apply helps the Department to review grant applications more efficiently and determine the approximate number of applicants expected to apply. Therefore, we strongly encourage each potential applicant to notify us in advance of their intentions to apply.

6. How does an applicant submit a Notice of Intent to Apply?

To submit a notice of intent to apply:

- Email Karen Epps at Karen.Epps@ed.gov with the subject line "Intent to Apply."
- Within the email body, include **the applicant's name and a contact person's name and email address.**

7. If applicants do not send a Notice of Intent to Apply before the deadline, can an applicant still apply?

Yes, applicants that do not submit a notice of intent to apply may still apply for funding.

Note: Applicants submitting a notice of intent to apply are not bound to apply or bound by the information provided.

8. In addition to the absolute priority and three competitive priorities, are there additional selection criteria to be competitive?

Yes, there are three selection criteria that applicants must address to be competitive. The points assigned to each criterion are indicated in the parentheses next to the criterion:

- (1) Greatest Unmet Need (up to 30 points);
- (2) Quality of the Project Services and Project Design (up to 40 points); and
- (3) Quality of Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources (up to 25 points).

An applicant can earn up to 95 points based on the selection criteria for the application. For additional information on the selection criteria and selection priorities, refer to the *Federal Register* Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) for New Awards for FY 2020, which is included in the application package.

9. Could applications for the FY 2020 grants under the IREPO Program be mailed or hand delivered?

Yes. However, the Department's preferred method to submit applications for the FY 2020 grants under the IREPO Program is electronically using Grants.gov at: <http://www.grants.gov>. If you

submit your application through Grants.gov, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement when your application was received.

Applicants are required to follow the Common Instructions for Applicants to Department of Education Discretionary Grant Programs, published in the *Federal Register* on February 13, 2019 (84 FR 3768), and available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2019-02206>, which contain requirements and information on how to submit an application.

For details of hand delivery or mailed applications, review “Application Transmittal Instructions” within the application package.

10. What is the Notice Inviting Applications (NIA)?

The NIA, published in the *Federal Register*, is the official document describing the requirements for submitting an IREPO grant application. Applicants should not rely upon any information, besides the CARES Act statute, that is inconsistent with the information contained in the NIA. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Karen Epps at Karen.Epps@ed.gov.

11. After submitting an IREPO Grant Program application, can I “un-submit” the application in Grants.gov due to inadvertently omitting a document or discovery of an error?

No. If you discover you need to make updates or changes or if additions are needed after submitting your application, you must “**re-submit**” the entire application. If the Department receives duplicate applications, the Department will accept and process the application with the latest “date/time received” validation, provided the application was received by the deadline.

12. Can an eligible IHE submit more than one grant application?

No. For this competition, grants are awarded on a competitive basis; therefore, an IHE may submit only one application.

13. Can applicants request amounts over the maximum allowable award?

No. Awards will not be granted over the maximum allowable amount for a single budget period of 12 months. See the NIA for more information on maximum allowable amounts.

14. What is the project period after notification of award?

Up to 24 months. Applicants have the option of performing the proposed objectives in 12 or 24 months. Applicants who propose a performance period of 24 months must submit a budget and narrative for each 12 month period (This means a budget is required for Year 1 and Year 2).

15. Are there recommended page limits?

Yes. Applicants are encouraged to adhere to the *recommended* page limit for the Project Narrative (Part III of the application) of no more than **25 pages**.

The recommended page limit does not apply to Part I, the Cover Sheet; Part II, the supporting budget narrative for each line item on the ED-524 form; Part IV, the assurances and certifications;

or the one page abstract, the resumes, the letters of support, or the appendices. However, the recommended page limit does apply to the application narrative.

16. What documents and information are required under the IREPO Grant Program application?

The application package contains detailed instructions for every required component to include an Application Checklist. Applicants are required to address how each proposed performance measure would accurately measure the performance of the project and indicate how the proposed performance measures would be consistent with the performance measures established for this program. Applicants must provide the information noted in the application packet and found in the Notice Inviting Applications under the Performance Measures section.

In addition, applicants are required to submit a **Project Abstract** which is limited to a one-page single-spaced document. The abstract must include the name of the institution, city, and description of the proposed project. The abstract must be uploaded to the “ED Abstract Form” in the Grants.gov system as a .pdf document.

NOTE: If all required documents are not submitted with the application, it may be deemed ineligible.

17. What is the deadline for application transmission?

Deadline for transmittal of applications is on or before Tuesday, October 20, 2020, by 11:59:59 p.m., Eastern Time (ET). We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the last day to submit your application.

18. Could applicants that utilize distance education and technological advancements for health professionals serving medically underserved populations apply?

Yes. Under section 741(a)(3) of the HEA, the Secretary is authorized to make grants to improve postsecondary education through the establishment and continuation of institutions, programs, consortia, collaborations, and other joint efforts that utilize distance education and technological advancements to educate and train postsecondary students including health professionals.

19. Are Qualified Opportunity Zones Census Tract Number(s) required to be listed under Competitive Preference Priority 2?

Yes. To receive points for proposing to serve students who live in or attend high schools in an Opportunity Zone, applicants must provide the census tract number(s) of the relevant qualified Opportunity Zone, as designed by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code.

20. What is the estimated size of an award that can be made to an eligible applicant?

Based on the applicant’s budget, the estimated range of awards is \$1,000,000 – \$3,000,000.

21. How many awards will be granted?

Approximately 19 awards. The Department is not bound by any estimates.

22. Is there cost sharing or matching?

No. This program does not require cost sharing or matching.

23. Can a grantee award subgrants to carry out its project activities as described in its application?

No. A grantee under this competition may not award subgrants to entities to directly carry out project activities described in its application.

24. Will there be an opportunity for public comments on the priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria?

No. To ensure timely grant awards, the Secretary has decided to forgo public comment on the priorities, requirements, definitions, and selection criteria under section 437(d)(1) of GEPA. This is the first grant competition for this program under section 18004(a)(3) of the CARES Act, and therefore qualifies for this exemption.

Please note that is a public comment notice out for the application package. If you wish to make comments you may do so at:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/08/25/2020-18594/agency-information-collection-activities-comment-request-cares-act-18004a3-discretionary-grant>.

25. Can a grantee provide direct financial assistance, such as grants or scholarships, to students who do not meet requirements of section 484(a) of HEA?

No funds available under section 741(d) of the HEA may be used to provide direct financial assistance in the form of grants or scholarships to students who do not meet the requirements of section 484(a) of the HEA. However, nothing in that section prevents a student who does not meet the requirements of section 484(a) from participating in programs funded under this part.

26. Will an applicant's past performance from a previous award be considered?

Yes, under 34 CFR § 75.217(d)(3), the Secretary may consider past performance such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.

27. If an applicant does not meet eligibility requirements, can the application still be considered?

Before awards are considered, applications will be screened in accordance with requirements in the NIA to determine whether they have met eligibility and other requirements. This screening process may occur at various stages of the process. Applications that are determined to be ineligible will not receive a grant regardless of peer reviewer scores or comments.

28. How will the Department review and score applications?

Peer reviewers will read, prepare a written evaluation of, and score the assigned applications, using the selection criteria and competitive preference priorities provided in the NIA.

29. Is an annual report required under this grant competition?

Yes. If you receive funding under this competition, you must comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170. At the end of the project period, grantees must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. For multiyear awards, grantees must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR § 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR § 75.720 (c).

30. What type of reporting information is required on an annual performance report?

Grantees must submit an annual performance report with information that is responsive to performance measures and specifies how each proposed performance measure would accurately measure the performance of the project. The proposed performance measures must be consistent with the performance measures established for the program funding the competition.

31. What are the IREPO Grant Program's performance measures?

The IREPO Grant program's performance measures are found in the [NIA](#) and are listed below:

- a. The number of online classes offered by the institution prior to the novel coronavirus, and the number offered during the project period;
- b. The number of students enrolled in online classes prior to the novel coronavirus, and the number enrolled in online classes during the project period;
- c. Average annual cost of tuition and fees paid by all students during the 2019-2020 financial aid award year, and the average annual cost of tuition and fees paid by all students during the project period.
- d. Average annual Federal student loan size among students and parents who took title IV loans during the 2019-2020 financial aid award year and during the project period.
- e. Total enrollment at the institution at the beginning of the term in which the novel coronavirus national emergency was declared, or if that declaration took place during a break between terms, the enrollment at the institution at the beginning of the term prior to the break during which the national emergency was declared; and total enrollment during each term during the project period.
- f. For projects that include dual enrollment opportunities for students:
 - i. The number of dual enrollment students served by the institution or consortium of institutions during the 2019-2020 award year, and the number of dual enrollment students served by the institution or consortium during the project period (disaggregated by gender, race, and whether or not they lived in or were educated in a rural community or Opportunity Zone);
 - ii. The total number of dual enrollment classes completed by students served by the project; the average number of classes completed by students served by the project; and the average number of college credits earned by those students as a result of this project; and
 - iii. The cost per student of each successfully completed dual enrollment class supported by these grant funds, including costs of instruction and costs of ancillary or support services

(and any differences in cost between dual enrollment classes provided to students at their high school versus those provided to students by the grantee IHE).

32. Can IHEs that received more than \$500,000 in other CARES Act funding apply for the IREPO Grant Program?

Yes, this funding opportunity is available to all accredited, nonprofit IHEs that meet the other criteria described in section 101 of the HEA and the NIA.

33. Does the Department plan to host pre-application webinars?

Yes. The Department hosted pre-application webinars in September. Please [click here](#) to access the presentation (PowerPoint, 2.1 MB).

34. Where can applicants find information about the IREPO Grant Program Competition?

Information regarding the IREPO Grant Program Competition is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerfirepo.html> and <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/caresact.html>.