

2018-19 FAFSA Completion Challenge FAQs

If you have not already done so, please visit the [FAFSA Challenge Grant](#) page to thoroughly review all grant resources and requirements. Should you still have questions about the grant, following is a list of frequently asked questions that may be of assistance.

FAQs

Q: Which cities are eligible to apply for the grant?

A: NCAN determined the list of 100 eligible cities using the Census Bureau's 2016 estimated population data, [WICHE's enrollment projections](#) and the [Office of Federal Student Aid's FAFSA completion data](#). The 100 eligible cities have a population greater than 100,000 and a FAFSA completion below the national average. Only cities on the list on [this page](#) may apply.

Q: How is "city" defined for purposes of this grant?

A: "City" is defined as the most populous incorporated places of the United States. As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, an "incorporated place" includes a variety of designations, including city, town, village, borough, and municipality. NCAN recognizes a different ranking is evident when considering U.S. metropolitan area population.

Q: Who are eligible applicants?

A: NCAN will accept grant proposals from *one* of the [listed organizations](#) in each city. Because NCAN will accept only one proposal per city, we encourage the listed organizations to work together to determine which among them is best positioned to serve as the applicant.

In each city, NCAN has included the following entities in the list of eligible applicants:

- NCAN-member organizations
- School districts
- Higher education institutions
- Local government agencies
- Community foundations
- Selected other organizations that lead citywide college access and success initiatives

Q: Do all partner organizations have to be on the eligible organization list?

A: No. Only the lead applicant must be on the eligible organization list.

Q: Do all partner organizations have to be within the city limits?

A: No. You may use partners inside the school district but outside the city limits.

Q: Is it the responsibility of the eligible applicants in each city to contact each other before applying?

A: Yes. NCAN will accept grant proposals from one of the listed [organizations](#) in each city. Because NCAN will accept only one proposal per city, we encourage the listed organizations to work together to determine which among them is best positioned to serve as applicant.

Q: What if the city can't decide on a lead applicant?

A: Collaboration and cross-sector partnerships are a key part of this grant. If we receive multiple completing applications from one city, we will do our best to understand the circumstances. However, know that the situation may reflect a lack of collaboration during the grant review process.

Q: How is “school district” defined if there is more than one school district in the eligible city?

A: You must include at least the largest school district from within the city boundaries. If it make sense for your geographic area, you are welcome to add additional school and/or districts with significant low-income student populations from within the city. Please contact NCAN to discuss your situation.

Q: Which district(s) must our application include if the applicant organizations serve multiple districts?

A: At a minimum, the application must include the largest school district within the eligible city. Expanding beyond depends on each city’s circumstance and the number of low-income students to reach in the other school districts. Please contact NCAN to discuss your situation.

Q: There is a requirement that the grantee have access to student-level FAFSA completion and demographic data. Is this the general FAFSA data by school or actually by student name?

A: You must have access to student-level FAFSA completion data to be eligible to receive a grant. You must also have access to student-demographic data from the school district so you can disaggregate the FAFSA completion data by a variety of characteristics including race, gender, ethnicity etc.

Q: Can you clarify if the challenge is to increase FAFSA completion rates by 5 percent or 5 percentage points?

A: The challenge is to increase FAFSA Completion rates by **5 percentage points**. Improvement rates will be calculated for the entire district.

Q: How will the additional monetary prize be measured?

A: The prize of \$100,000 will be determined by a committee of advisors who will primarily take into account the percentage point growth in FAFSA completion. They will look at a variety of factors including the degree to which the gaps in FAFSA completion have been narrowed among demographic groups for the class of 2019 over the class of 2018, the strength of the cross- sector partnership supporting this work, and implementation of innovative FAFSA completion strategies.

Q: Where can I read about successful FAFSA completion initiatives in other cities?

A: We encourage you review the report from the 2016-17 FAFSA Completion Challenge for information on successful FAFSA completion strategies.

Q: How do we submit the FAFSA Challenge Grant application?

A: Applicants will save Parts I, II, and III as one single PDF. Learn more by reviewing the Submission Instructions in the [grant application](#).

Q: Are the letter of commitment and supporting materials included in the 8 page narrative requirement?

A: No. The narrative has an 8 page limit. The supporting materials have a 5 page limit. Only one letter of commitment is required.

Q: Can we include the cost of travel to the Summer Institute in the budget?

A: Yes – you may include up to \$10,000 for travel to the Summer Institute and the 2019 NCAN National conference in Indianapolis. Attendance at both these events is required.

Q: What is the application timeline?

A: The application timeline is as follows:

- Call for Proposals released: March 14, 2018
- Prospective Applicant Webinar: Wednesday, March 21, 2018. [Here is a link](#) to that recording.
- Application Deadline: Friday, April 13, 2018, 11:59 p.m. Eastern
- Award Notification: May 13, 2018
- Grant Funding Start Date: June 1, 2018
- FAFSA Summer Strategies Institute: a week of June 18, 2018 (specific date and location TBD) (attendance required)
- Baseline FAFSA completion data for the class of 2018 due to NCAN: July 31, 2018
- Grant Funding End Date: June 30, 2019
- Grantee Final Report Deadline: July 31, 2019
- Prize Announcement: September 2019 at the annual NCAN conference in Indianapolis

Q: Where can I find the recorded webinar?

A: You may view the recorded webinar [here](#).

Still have unanswered questions? Contact Sara Melnick, Deputy Director, at melnicks@collegeaccess.org. NCAN will continuously update this list of FAQs as questions are submitted.