
Emergency Grants for Postsecondary Students

Annual Report

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About the Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding more than \$224 million annually in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

About This Report

This is a legislative-mandated report. As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197, this report cost approximately \$1,270.26 to prepare, including staff time.

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Executive Summary

The Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students (EAPS) Grant Program, originally established in 2017, continues to serve as a vital support for Minnesota students facing unforeseen financial emergencies that threaten their ability to persist in college. For 2026-2027, the Minnesota Legislature reaffirmed its commitment to the program through [Laws of Minnesota 2025 1st Special Session Chapter 5 Art. 1 Subd. 20](#) which authorizes the Office of Higher Education (OHE) to administer the 2026-2027 EAPS Grant.

In alignment with the legislative requirements, OHE implemented a structured and competitive process to solicit proposals from eligible postsecondary institutions, select grantees, and issue guidance on how grantees must award emergency assistance to students using grant funds. As a result of this process, 10 eligible nonprofit private postsecondary institutions and Tribal colleges were awarded a total of \$1,000,000 to support their student emergency assistance programs for fiscal years 2026-2027.

As required by law, this report provides the legislature with the following information:

- (1) how money was distributed among institutions
- (2) the process by which students apply for emergency assistance grants and institutions make a determination about whether money will be awarded
- (3) how many students received emergency assistance grants and the average award amount
- (4) the most common student needs that grants were awarded to meet
- (5) the average length of time between grant application and disbursement to students

Introduction

The EAPS Grant is administered by the Grants and Workforce Initiatives (GWI) division at OHE. Through a competitive process, OHE invites eligible postsecondary institutions to propose projects to support the emergency assistance programs on their campuses that address immediate, unforeseen financial emergencies that may disrupt their postsecondary education progress. OHE also issues guidance on how grantees must award emergency assistance to students using grant funds.

For 2026-2027, the program continues to focus on supporting eligible postsecondary institutions with grants to support student emergency assistance programs that address the emergency housing, food, transportation, and other needs of students.

OHE is responsible for reporting annually on the following:

- (1) how money was distributed among institutions
- (2) the process by which students apply for emergency assistance grants and institutions make a determination about whether money will be awarded
- (3) how many students received emergency assistance grants and the average award amount
- (4) the most common student needs that grants were awarded to meet
- (5) the average length of time between grant application and disbursement to students

Guidance on Emergency Grant Program Administration

OHE provided the following guidance for grantees in the Request for Proposals (RFP):

Grantees are required to follow the requirements listed below. Additional written guidance may be provided to grantees by email.

1. Individual emergency grants must not exceed \$1,500 per student at any one time
 - Should a need specific to housing exceed \$1,500, the grantee may make an exception based on the cost of living within the region in which the student resides
2. Grantees must set a limit on the number of times one student may receive an individual emergency grant over a specific period of time (ex. term, semester, academic year)
3. All contact with students related to this project must be documented by grantee staff
 - Conversations in person or over the phone can be documented by grantee staff through written notes
4. If a grantee chooses to provide emergency grant funds to students using gift cards, the grantee must have a process to document the provision of the gift card to a student including the name of the student and when the gift card was provided
 - Grantees will not be reimbursed for gift cards purchased but not provided to students
5. Grantees must abide requirements in the Expenditures section of this RFP

The following processes are suggested for project-delivery. If your project differs from what is suggested here, please clearly state how your proposed model differs from this in detail in your proposal.

1. **Identify Students with a Financial Emergency:** Grantees should have a plan in place to create a student-centered, proactive “front line” to identify and refer students to apply for an emergency grant. This “front line” cannot be centralized into one role; multiple supportive staff across departments should be able to refer students to this project when there is potential for these funds to benefit them. Ideally, students will be walked or “handed off” to the appropriate office where they can apply for an emergency grant and access other supportive services.
2. **Application Process:** Through a discussion of the students’ financial issue and the grant application/award process, staff assess the student for eligibility and begin to collect information for potential referrals that could be helpful for the student. Sometimes, there will be a clear case for a student to proceed in the process. Often, it may take a deeper look at the student’s situation to determine if there is indeed an unforeseen financial event involved and if/how the event is tied to chronic issues.
3. **Determine Student Eligibility:** Each grantee determines their own standards for financial eligibility based on demonstrated need using Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)/Minnesota State Aid Application data. Financial eligibility may differ from region to region based on local context and student demographics. For example, one institution may choose to use Student Aid Index (SAI) and unmet need to determine student eligibility, while another may use Pell Grant eligibility. The eligibility

standards that are decided by grantee should be followed consistently, unless there are significant extenuating circumstances.

An example of an “extenuating circumstance” might be the institution makes an exception for a student who cannot request aid from family due to abusive behavior or fear of retribution (where the student is, in effect, living independently) when those concerns are clearly stated.

While the program is intended to address issues of poverty among college students, it is encouraged that institutions use their own discretion (based on specific context) in order to award the funds to students equitably.

4. **Application Review:** Once student eligibility is determined, the students’ application should be reviewed by a committee. This committee should determine whether or not the student request is granted based on standards set by the grantee (i.e. a judgment made based on the students’ financial need, specific circumstance, and likelihood of dropout). It is recommended that the committee is cross-departmental and includes 2-3 staff/faculty, but the committee structure may differ by institution depending on available staff time and resources.
5. **Notify Student:** Students should be notified if they are approved or denied for an emergency grant. Next steps and clear expectations should be outlined in the notification. If the student was not recommended for an emergency grant, a notification should be sent to them explaining the decision made in addition to referrals and resources that may help alleviate the situation.
6. **Payment:** Payments may come from the grantee’s business office or other capable staff. Payments should be made within 3-4 business days of the submission of a complete application. Grant funds cannot be used to pay for ineligible expenses including tuition, fees, or books. If a grantee decides to award emergency grants using student accounts, they should clearly state in their proposal how they will ensure the funds are not used toward ineligible expenses.
Eligible forms of “payment” include:
 - a) Check written directly to the student
 - b) Check written to a third-party vendor
 - c) Electronic transfer into a student account
 - d) Gift card/prepaid credit card
7. **Follow-up:** The office that administers the emergency grant project should follow up with the student at least once within 10 days, and then again within 45 days. Follow-up should include a comprehensive referral to campus and community resources in addition to ensuring the student received the emergency grant and utilized it to meet their immediate need. A key aspect of this follow-up is to collect information around whether or not this intervention was successful and alleviated the immediate barrier to college attendance. A student satisfaction survey can be used by grantees with evaluative questions around the impact of the project.

If a student was not chosen to receive an emergency grant, the office should still follow up with them within five days of submitting a complete application. This would be a good time to refer the student to other resources from the grantee or in the community, if those referrals have not already been made.

FY2026-FY2027 Grantees

Timeline

- March 24, 2025: Request for Proposal Published
- May 8, 2025: Proposals Submission Deadline
- August 1, 2025: Awardees Notified
- September 2025 through June 30, 2027: Project Period Dates

For FY2026-2027, 11 proposals were received and in August 2025, \$1,000,000 in EAPS funds were awarded to 10 grantees.

Project Summaries

FY 2026-2027 projects began in September 2025. Thus, each summary includes the grant award amount and the estimated number of students to receive grants during the grant period. Future reporting will summarize key outcomes such as the number of students served, average award amounts, the most common emergency needs addressed, and the typical time between a student's application and the disbursement of funds.

Augsburg University

Project Title: Auggie Basics Emergency Grants

Grant Award: \$150,000.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 375

Carleton College

Project Title: Student Emergency Housing Assistance at Carleton College

Grant Award: \$90,500.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 219

Concordia College

Project Title: Emergency Grant Program for Concordia College Students

Grant Award: \$60,000.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 80

Hamline University

Project Title: Student Emergency Fund

Grant Award: \$148,750.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 170

Herzing University

Project Title: Herzing University's Home Base Project

Grant Award: \$150,000.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 50

Northwestern Health Sciences University

Project Title: Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students-Northwestern Health Sciences University

Grant Award: \$10,000.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 20

Red Lake Nation College

Project Title: Oshki Manidoo Emergency Aid Program at Red Lake Nation College

Grant Award: \$150,000.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 160

St. Catherine University

Project Title: St. Catherine University Emergency Assistance Grant Program

Grant Award: \$150,000.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 200

University of St. Thomas

Project Title: University of St. Thomas Student Emergency Grant

Grant Award: \$61,000.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 60

White Earth Tribal and Community College

Project Title: Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students (EAPS)

Grant Award: \$29,750.00

Estimated Number of Students to be Served: 40