



Illinois Board of Higher Education

JB Pritzker, Governor
Pranav Kothari, Chair • Ginger Ostro, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Illinois Public Universities and Private, Not-for-Profit Colleges and Universities

FROM: Ginger Ostro, Executive Director

DATE: July 25, 2025

RE: Request for Proposals: End Student Housing Insecurity

DUE DATE: September 8, 2025 at 12 p.m.

IBHE established the *End Student Housing Insecurity* (ESHI) grant to support institutions in addressing the root or systemic causes of homelessness and basic-needs insecurity among students. The state's higher education strategic plan, [A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth](#) calls for closing equity gaps for students who have been left behind, in part, by addressing student support needs, including housing insecurity and other basic needs. This grant is intended to support and supplement the work already taking place at the institutions under the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act¹ to address the housing insecurity and provide pathways to long-term stability for youth in care, at-risk, or currently experiencing homelessness.

The agency is seeking proposals that address homelessness, housing insecurity, and basic needs insecurity in holistic and transformational ways to improve completion and retention rates. Priority will be given to institutions that foster collaboration between local K-12 schools and HOUSE Liaisons to facilitate the transition to college for already identified housing insecure students or youth in care.

Eligible Institutions: Illinois public and non-profit, independent four-year institutions holding accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.

Grant Period: The anticipated grant period will be October 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

Grant Funding: Institutions may apply for grants in the amount required to implement the initiatives within the term of the grant. IBHE anticipates the typical award will be approximately \$200,000, depending on the proposal quality.

Application Deadline: The application materials must be submitted via email to ESHI@ibhe.org. Applications must be received by **12:00 pm on September 8, 2025** to be considered for funding.

Contact Person: For more information on this application, send inquiries to ESHI@ibhe.org.

¹ [PA 102-0083](#)

Background and Program Specifications

IBHE established the *End Student Housing Insecurity* (ESHI) grant to support institutions in addressing the root or systemic causes of homelessness and basic-needs insecurity among students. The state's higher education strategic plan, [A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth](#) calls for closing equity gaps for students who have been left behind, in part, by addressing student support needs, including housing insecurity and other basic needs. This grant is intended to support and supplement the work already taking place at the institutions under the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act² to address the housing insecurity and provide pathways to long-term stability for youth in care, at-risk, or currently experiencing homelessness.

The agency is seeking proposals that address homelessness, housing insecurity, and basic needs insecurity in holistic and transformational ways to improve completion and retention rates. Institutions must be in compliance with the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act requirements in order to qualify for ESHI grant. To be considered in compliance the institution must: (1) have a designated HOUSE Liaison; (2) the HOUSE Liaison completed the AY 2024-2025 training and returned their certification to IBHE; and (3) the institution completed the required annual reporting on HOUSE Liaison activities for FY 2024.

Additionally, within 30 days of award of an ESHI grant, grantees must provide a grant implementation plan that includes proposed standard policies and procedures for determining student eligibility for any proposed programs that provide direct student aid, such as emergency student stipends, including outlining any criteria that would make a student ineligible for aid.

Grant Priority

During the review process, priority will be given to institutions that are determined to be high-need by the percentage of MAP grant recipients at the institution. Additionally, priority will be given to institutions that foster collaboration between local K-12 schools and HOUSE Liaisons to facilitate the transition to college for students receiving services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and/or students under the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Also, five bonus points will be awarded to institutions that have not received an ESHI grant previously.

Funding Allowances

Institution proposals should reflect a comprehensive plan identifying services and supports needed to address root causes of homelessness and basic-needs insecurity, overcome barriers to student persistence and completion, and facilitate the transition from high school to college for homeless youth and youth in care. Supports and grant funding can include:

- Training and professional development for HOUSE liaisons and/or other staff related to addressing the unique needs of homeless students and students in care.
- Partnerships with local K-12 schools or community organizations to facilitate the transition for homeless students and students in care into higher education and provide resources and support along the way. (i.e., Summer bridge or mentorship programs designed for the specific needs of homeless students and youth in care)
- Room and board or housing fees for students receiving services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and/or students under the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services transitioning from high school to college. **This cannot exceed 30% of the total requested grant amount.**

² [PA 102-0083](#)

- Other measures to provide continuity and stability for students receiving services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and/or students under the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, such as dorm room supplies.
- Housing during academic breaks, such as Winter or Spring break. **This cannot exceed 15% of the total requested grant amount.**
- Homeless student identification and tracking efforts, including by increasing collaboration across campus units to determine the total number of homeless students and youth in care on campus as well as persistence and graduation rates.
- Outreach campaigns to increase student and staff awareness of institutional services and identifying at-risk students.
- Addressing basic needs insecurity by creating or expanding food pantry programs to include toiletries, hygiene products, childcare items, and/or clothing.
- Responding to basic needs insecurity by providing vouchers for transportation, food, medicine, laundry, and mental health supports to at-risk students.
- Student wraparound services that may include academic and career coaching, use of a benefits navigator, textbook and technology loaning programs, and childcare services on campus.
- Direct aid to students including housing vouchers/stipends, textbook scholarships, technology stipends, rental application fees, and utility bill assistance.
- Other programs and services aimed at serving the unique needs of homeless students and students in care.

Ineligible Funding Uses

Below are examples of funding uses that will **not** be eligible under the ESHI grant in FY 2025.

- Tuition and fees
- Any direct aid to students that will negatively impact the student's financial aid
- Residence housing fees except for (1) academic breaks and/or (2) students receiving services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and/or students under the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services transitioning from high school to college

Proposal Format

Each proposal must be submitted in the format outlined below. Please review the attachments carefully. The following may be used as a checklist in assembling your completed proposal.

1. **Uniform Application for State Grant Assistance (Attachment 1):**

This form must be completed, dated, and signed by the President/CEO of the fiscal agent.

2. **Proposal Narrative (Attachment 2):**

Maximum of 10 double spaced pages (size 12 in Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins). Within the proposal narrative, please explain how the proposal supports the institution's comprehensive plan to identify services and supports needed to address root causes of homelessness and basic-needs insecurity, to overcome barriers to student persistence and completion, and provide pathways to long-term stability for at risk students. The proposal should demonstrate how the institution

- Is compliant with the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act by (1) having a designated HOUSE Liaison; (2) completing the annual HOUSE Liaison training for AY 2023-2024 training and returning the HOUSE Liaison's certification to IBHE; and (3) having completed the required annual reporting on HOUSE Liaison activities for FY 2023
- will collaborate with local K-12 schools to facilitate the transition to college for students who received services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and/or a student under the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
- will address the root causes of homelessness in a holistic manner that accounts for the specialized needs for historically underserved populations (African American, Latino, Low-Income, working adult, rural, etc.);
- describe the methodology the institution will use to identify and determine a student's homeless, McKinney-Vento, and/or youth in care status. will evaluate the success of these initiatives in terms of the enrollment, retention, and completion outcomes of the identified student population(s) over the long term (not necessarily within the term of the grant);
- will guarantee that any direct student aid proposed in the grant will not negatively impact a student's financial aid and ensure that ESHI funds do not lower the amount of other financial aid for which the student may be eligible. Students shall not be required to utilize student loans in order to be eligible or receive ESHI funds;
- describe any eligibility requirements or means testing that the institution plans to use for providing direct aid to students and whether these requirements are evidence-based and will commit to providing a grant implementation plan with proposed policies and procedures for direct aid;
- will create a network of internal stakeholders to coordinate the execution of grant services, including administrative, financial, and student services in order to streamline services to students and reporting to IBHE;
- will commit to creating a continuity plan that will explain how the work taking place during the ESHI period will continue without ESHI funding with specific focus on how funding will be continued for any student who received direct student aid. Examples of direct student aid include, but are not limited to, rental assistance, utilities assistance, housing vouchers, and transportation stipends.

In addition (within the narrative) note:

- For public institutions, note how this proposal fits into the institution's submitted Equity Plan. For private institutions, explain how this proposal fits into the institution's broader equity strategies and work.

3. **A Grant Budget with narrative descriptions of each line (Attachment 3):**

Complete the budget template for each category including a detailed Budget Narrative of the estimated expenditures in the budgeted category. Within the Budget Narrative, please indicate how the budgeted items will achieve the plan in the Proposal Narrative. Indirect costs are limited to 10% of the total direct costs of the award. For any programs falling under the Grant Exclusive Category please breakdown the costs by line-item similar to the example below. Sign the certification statement indicating your institution is eligible for this grant program based on the criteria listed above.

Example:

15. <u>Grant Exclusive Line Item(s) Total</u>	\$30,000
A. <u>Grant Exclusive Line Item(s) -- Book Loan Program</u>	\$5,000
B. <u>Grant Exclusive Line Item(s) -- Tech Loan Program</u>	\$4,000
C. <u>Grant Exclusive Line Item(s) -- Student Vouchers</u>	\$20,000
D. <u>Grant Exclusive Line Item(s) -- Travel Vouchers</u>	\$1,000

Review of Proposals

Proposals will be reviewed, scored according to the rubric below, and selected by a committee convened by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Institutions with the highest scores based on the rubric below will be awarded funding up to the funding available. Institutions scoring below 60 points based on the rubric below will not be considered for funding. All applicants will be notified of the panel's recommendations via email message to each institution's primary grant contact.

FY 2026 ESHI Application Requirements and Scoring Rubric:

Submitted the Required Documents:

- ☐ Uniform Application for State Grant Assistance – **Attachment 1**
- ☐ Proposal Narrative – **Attachment 2**
- ☐ A Grant Budget with narrative descriptions of each line and signed certification statement – **Attachment 3**

Institutional Eligibility:

- Public University or Independent, Non-Profit 4-year institution YES ☐ NO ☐
- Higher Learning Commission accreditation YES ☐ NO ☐
- Compliant with Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act YES ☐ NO ☐
 - HOUSE Liaison designated in FY 2025
 - designated HOUSE Liaison completed training for AY 2024-2025 and returned certification to IBHE
 - HOUSE liaison completed annual reporting for FY 2024

If any of the above is NO, the institution is not eligible for the grant.

PROPOSAL REVIEW CRITERIA	MAX. POINTS
High need as defined by MAP-receipt (points determined by percentage of MAP students served at the institution in academic year 2024-2025).	20
Strength of institution's plan to collaborate with local K-12 schools to facilitate the transition to college for students receiving services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and/or a student under the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services	20
Strength of institution's plan to address root causes of homelessness in a holistic manner that accounts for the specialized needs for historically underrepresented populations (African American, Latinx, low-income, working adult, rural, etc.) and to provide pathways for long-term stability for such students.	15
Strength of institution's plan and commitment to evaluate the success of these initiatives in terms of the enrollment, retention, and completion outcomes of the identified student population(s) to bring long-term sustainability after the grant period. Institutions should specify the method and frequency of the data collection.	10
Institution commits to the creation of an implementation plan and a continuity plan within 30 days of award.	10
If proposing to provide direct aid to students via housing vouchers or other means, the strength of the institution's description of the program that includes how aid will be disbursed, any eligibility requirements or means testing that the institution plans to use, and whether these are evidence-based.	10

If not proposing direct aid to students, the strength of the institution's description of how proposed plan will benefit the targeted population including any means testing that will be used for access.	
Strength of institution's plan to guarantee that any direct student aid proposed in the grant will not negatively impact a student's financial aid and that students will not need to take student loans in order to be eligible for aid from ESHI. If not proposing direct aid to students, strength of institution's plan to guarantee benefits from proposed plan will be equitably distributed among targeted populations.	5
Strength of institution's plan to foster collaboration across campus units to improve the institution's identification and tracking efforts for students at risk of homelessness, youth in care, and students with McKinney-Vento status.	5
Institution describes how the proposed ESHI plan will further the institution's Equity Plan or other equity goals.	5
Five (5) bonus points will be awarded to institutions that have never received an ESHI grant	5
TOTAL SCORE	<u>105</u>

Items below are for informational purposes only and not required as part of the request for proposal submission.

1. Project, Expenditure Reporting and Grant Payments:

Each grantee will be required to submit project and expenditure reports. The reports will describe the progress of the project in carrying out the activities described in the proposal. The anticipated submission and period of these reports will be the following:

<u>Project Period</u>	<u>Submission Due Date</u>
Period 1 –October 1 to December 31, 2025	January 31, 2026
Period 2 – January 1 to March 30, 2026	April 30, 2026
Period 3 – April 1 to June 30, 2026	July 15, 2026
Close-out Report Due (narrative and financial)	July 31, 2026

2. Implementation Plan Template (Attachment 4):

This is the implementation plan template the institution will be required to complete within 30 days of award. This is not required to be completed and submitted with the request for proposal.

3. Continuity Plan Template (Attachment 5)

This is the continuity plan template the institution will be required to complete within 30 days of award. This is not required to be completed and submitted with the request for proposal.