

# 2024 HEOP RFP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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## GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. The application is due October 20, 2023.

**Yes.**

2. Where is the application?

**In the RFP starting on page 44. The RFP is posted on the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) Website and directly at this link: [HEOP 2024-2029 RFP](#)**

3. When is the final version of the RFP due?

**NYSED issued the final version of the RFP on 8/18/23. Final proposals are due 10/20/23. We do not review draft proposals.**

4. Since the beginning of the academic year is very busy for staff, can the deadline be extended by a few weeks? This is a short turnaround to submit a proposal, particularly for programs that are starting new ones.

**No.**

5. What does the New York City Region include? (area or institutions) How do we know if our institution is considered in the New York City Region?

**All regions are organized by county. You can view the [Regents Higher Education Regions list](#).**

6. Will NYSED publicize the points that the different institutions received at the end of the process?

**No.**

7. When may an IHE submitting a proposal expect to be notified of the decision?

**Award notifications will be sent as soon as the application review is completed. These are expected to be sent in the beginning of 2024.**

8. For the letter of intent that is due on October 6, is there a specific format the letter should be in or form that should be submitted with it?

**No, a simple email to [rfpgc24-001@nysed.gov](mailto:rfpgc24-001@nysed.gov) will suffice and is encouraged, but it is not mandatory.**

9. Is this the acknowledgments form on page 47 or something else?

**The Acknowledgment Form is at page 47, and it needs to be submitted with the application.**

## FORMATTING

10. Where should the attachments be placed?

**Attachments should be placed at the end of the application or as individual files and labeled appropriately.**

11. Should all documents be combined via PDF?

**Documents may be submitted in Word or searchable/editable PDF files, either combined or individual files labeled appropriately. The only Excel files should be the Budget (FS10) and the Composite Budget. See page 2 of the RFP.**

12. Is there a limit to the attachments?

**No.**

13. Can the links listed in the RFP be checked? Some of them currently don't work, particularly the composite budget link.

**You can access the [HEOP Composite Budget here](#). The link was updated as of September 19, 2023. Please use the updated form to submit with your proposal.**

14. May all the attachments be added together at the end of the narrative for all the sections?

**Yes.**

## EXTRA CREDIT

15. Is there a 4-point option in the extra-credit section related to loans?

**No.**

16. Concerning commuter students, are there extra point options concerning NYC cumulative loans? Only resident students are listed.

**Yes, all commuter students can earn extra points. The maximum loan limits are the same for NYC and the rest of state for commuter students.**

17. Page 84: Extra Credit Section. For NYC Region Applicants, what is the loan amount for commuter students?

**See the answer to question 16.**

## FUNDING

18. In determining the number of FTE we are requesting for funding, what formula do we use to calculate FTE? How is this different from headcount? Where do we report each (FTE and headcount) on the RFP? Does 1 FTE equal 1 student like it does for staff?

**The definition of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) for Students is found on page 5 of the RFP: "The standard measuring unit used to calculate enrollment for students who are matriculated in a college or university."**

**One FTE is not necessarily one student. See pages 8-9 of the RFP for the explanation of Full-time Higher Education Opportunity Programs : "Students enrolled full-time in HEOP must carry a minimum of 12 credit hours or the equivalent per semester; therefore, the FTE for the program is calculated as follows: Total credits for the program year for all students for all semesters (including the special sessions) in the program divided by 24."**

**For example, if the total number of credit hours attempted for your 100 students enrolled for the academic year is 2,700, you would divide this number by 24. The FTE is 112.5 (2,700/24 = 112.5).**

**Proposed FTEs must be identified on the Application Cover Page. See page 44 of the RFP.**

19. Page 25 – Institutional Matching funds was 15% in the last funding cycle; why is it 25% now?

**Based on experience, NYSED has seen IHEs consistently exceed the 15% match, so 25% better reflects the actual contributions that the institutions are providing to support HEOP students.**

20. Page 31 & Page 33 – in one page you say the IHE is required to meet 95% of the contracted FTE's, but in the other you say 90% of the contracted FTE's which one is it?

**These are intentionally different thresholds. The requirement in section K to meet 95% FTEs is related to full reimbursement of funds as listed on their contract, while not meeting 90% FTEs for 2 consecutive years as stated in section L is related to probation procedures.**

21. Are the probation and satisfactory performance thresholds for FTE 90% and 95% respectively for 2024-2029? Please confirm the difference in this metrics.

**See the answer to question 20.**

22. Is the listed amount \$9550 per FTE an actual figure, as the current FTE amount is approximately \$10, 256?

**This is a tentative amount. The final amount will be confirmed after the NYS Budget for 2024-25 is approved. If there are any unallocated funds, they may be distributed proportionally among awarded programs.**

23. Is the Executive Summary included in the 28-page requirement?

**Yes, and it is 1 page max.**

24. Page 8 – FTE calculation is this the same used when figuring out the budget of grant funding?

**Yes.**

## DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

25. What does *personal expenses with a limitation of \$1,000 per year, should be recoded under code 45 supplies and materials* mean? Provide examples of personal expenses.

**These can be personal expenses used for students to purchase school related materials and services in support of their academic career. Examples include non-covered healthcare spending, personal hygiene items, professional clothing for internships, and other miscellaneous expenses.**

26. Page 12: 1: HEOP Salary and Benefits: “.....*HEOP staff is expected to receive treatment identical to other institutional officers of similar rank with respect to salary increases and employee benefits.....*” What are the allowable exemptions or waivers to the expectation of identical treatment as written in this RFP?

**There are no allowable exemptions or waivers to this expectation; HEOP staff should be treated at least to the same level as their peers/colleagues.**

**However, identical treatment depends on their employment status, for example as a grant funded or non-grant funded employee. For further clarification, if HEOP staff are employed as “grant funded” employees, then they should be treated equitably as other grant funded employees at the institution. Likewise, if they are not employed as grant-funded employees, then they should be treated equitably as other “non-grant funded” employees at the institution.**

27. Page 12: 1: HEOP Salary and Benefits: “.....*HEOP staff is expected to receive treatment identical to other institutional officers of similar rank with respect to salary increases and employee benefits.....*”

Q. As a hypothetical example, a university decides to initiate a Voluntary Separation Program for employees which includes paying a severance package to eligible employees. Is the University required to use University or institutional operational funds to pay the severance package for eligible HEOP staff to meet the expectation of identical treatment as written in this RFP?

**The HEOP staff are hired by the institution and are regular employees, hence the institution should follow its standard and accepted procedures with regards to severance packages; eligible HEOP staff should be treated similarly and equitably as any other institution employees.**

**Please see the clarification at question 26.**

28. Page 12: 1: HEOP Salary and Benefits: “.....HEOP staff is expected to receive treatment identical to other institutional officers of similar rank with respect to salary increases and employee benefits.....”

Q. As a hypothetical example, a university decides to initiate a Voluntary Separation Program for employees which includes paying a severance package to eligible (based on duration of employment and age) employees. Is it allowable for the University to exclude HEOP staff from consideration based on being grant funded employees?

**Whether paid via institutional funds or by grant, they must receive equitable treatment. Please see the clarification at question 26.**

29. Based on the statement “Note: The NYS New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) can be used to provide reimbursement for credit hours only in developmental courses” (pg 4 – “Developmental Course” definition) – Can an IHE have students request TAP funds for the summer program if credit hours are earned?

**No. As identified in Section E. Full Need Packaging, “[f]irst-time HEOP Students attending the HEOP summer program cannot be charged for their attendance.” The HEOP Summer Program may offer Developmental Courses, however students cannot be charged so TAP funding cannot be requested. Note that TAP funding is limited and should not be used for just one or two courses.**

## STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

30. Is the credit limit for college credits earned while in high school based on the total earned or the total that is transferable to your institution?

**A student is ineligible for HEOP if, while in high school, they earned more than 15 college credits that would ordinarily be transferable to your institution. The exceptions are if those credits were earned while the student attended any of the following NYS sponsored pre-collegiate opportunity programs:**

- a. Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP)
- b. Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP)
- c. NYS My Brother’s Keeper (MBK)
- d. Smart Scholars Early College High School Program (SS ECHS)
- e. NYS Pathways in Technology Early College High School (NYS P-TECH)

See page 15 of the RFP.

31. Are there additional factors related to the pandemic that would be appropriate to consider from an equity standpoint?

**This is not a requirement of the RFP. Each institution may consider pandemic-related factors when developing their proposal.**

32. What qualifies as a serious mismanagement of household income?

**Please review pages 17-18 of the RFP for example documents that can be considered to determine serious mismanagement of household income. An example includes, but is not limited to, bankruptcy.**

33. What types of documentation is appropriate in this of serious mismanagement of household income?

**Any legal or financial documents the family/student provides you that highlights their situation.**

34. Is whether a student has foster care status is support for college from the foster care parent(s) a necessary factor to consider?

**The FASFA rules must be followed when determining economic eligibility of Foster Youth.**

35. Can a preparer tax identification number (PTIN) be used in place of a parent signature on tax documents collected for proof of income? (pg. 17)

**IRS rules must be followed when completing tax returns and submitting for proof of income.**

36. On page 18, Eligibility Documentation Policy, is there flexibility with the 30-day time frame?

**Yes. This can be addressed on a case-by-case basis. At that time, an institution should contact the HEOP program office to receive guidance and approval.**

37. Financial Aid Award Letters; can they be kept electronically instead of physical copies?

**Yes.**

38. Household definition: does this language "as reported on FAFSA" refer to the number reported on FAFSA or the income reported on FAFSA.

**It refers to the number of people reported on FAFSA.**

39. More specifically, can the household number used for economic eligibility be inconsistent with FAFSA?

**The institution should follow the standard practices of its Financial Aid office.**

40. Reference to HEOP transfer app - we don't currently have one (we use IC CA supplement + HEOP verification form). Is this still sufficient?

**All HEOP IHEs general transfer applications must contain an option for transfer applicants to identify themselves as opportunity transfer students (HEOP/EOP/SEEK/CD). A copy of the general transfer application including this identifier should be a part of the IHE proposal. See the Opportunity Transfer Students section on pages 19-21 of the RFP.**

41. For the 15% rule, does the income referenced apply to the income reported that year or the year of eligibility?

**When you are reviewing applications, you must use the income reported for the year of eligibility (using the prior-prior year income). If the student does not meet the income eligibility for the year they apply for, you must look for a history of economic disadvantage as per RFP at pages 15-16.**

42. Do we need to evaluate how many students on our roster have exceeded the cutoff amount since HEOP admission to ensure we remain under the 15%?

**Yes.**

43. Since once HEOP, always HEOP, and if student income increases, they stay in the program, we don't have the ability to predict this.

**Yes, they will still be HEOP. Economic eligibility is considered only when students are admitted into the program.**

44. What happens if we exceed 15% of our population? "maximum of 15% of the total number of HEOP students enrolled by an institution at any given time may come from households whose income exceeds 185% of the.... poverty guidelines for the applicant's family size for the applicable year".

**You may not exceed it. If you do, then the HEOP support for any additional student(s) accepted while considering the policy for the 15% variation will be removed from the HEOP roster and the IHE will be responsible for their funding.**

45. Can the online "Get Transcript" tool with a message indicating that there are no tax records replace the completed 4506-T? Do we have to collect evidence that the completed 4506-T was submitted to the IRS (eg do we have to actually collect the letter from the IRS or the form itself, which may or may not have been submitted to the IRS)?

**Yes. Please consult your Financial Aid office for clarification.**

46. I wanted to share this information from the RFP with our Admissions office, but the first hyperlink does not work. Below is from the RFP, Educationally Disadvantaged, page 12, #8: *"Attendance in a high school designated as a Comprehensive Support Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support Improvement (TSI) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools (ATSI) as noted at..."* I copied and pasted the link into my web browser, and I received an error message back.

**The Listing of the Comprehensive Support Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support Improvement (TSI), or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools (ATSI) for the 2023-24 school year can be found on the HEOP website: [NYS District and School Accountability Statuses](#).**

## SCHOLARSHIP FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

47. "Recipients of Regents scholarships for academic excellence are not eligible" (pg. 13). How do we know who the recipients are? Is this information available on a public website for HEOP reference?

**HESC distributes the Scholarship for Academic Excellence (SAE). The Financial Aid office should be able to identify SAE awardees accordingly.**

48. Regents Scholarships for Academic Excellence: what happens if we learn that a student has been awarded this after we admit them? What if they meet all other criteria (since the high school has discretion on awarding)? Is there room to make a case?

**Pursuant to 8 CRR-NY 27-1.1(a), recipients of the Scholarship are not eligible for admission into HEOP. However, if the IHE made the eligibility determination and admitted the student to HEOP before the student received the Scholarship, the student may remain in that IHE's HEOP program. The IHE must keep documentation on file to prove the student's non-admissibility, by the college's regular admissions standards, in the degree program for which application is made.**

## INSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATION

49. Will future amendments be made to the RFP for any reference to expected family contribution (EFC) once the new FAFSA changes are made? (EFC to SAI) (pg. 5 & pg. 22)

**The HEOP program office will review any changes made to FAFSA at that time and make the appropriate amendments to the HEOP requirements.**

## MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LOANS /FINANCIAL AID PACKAGING

50. Please confirm that the maximum allowable loans refer to the federal direct loan program values a student may borrow.

**The “Maximum allowable loans” term identifies total loans and includes, but is not limited to, federal direct loan program amounts. See pages 21-23 of the RFP.**

51. Exceptions to the loan limits can be made for students who need to take out loans to cover the Student Aid Index (previously EFC). Does this mean that it is permissible in this case without NYSED prior approval?

**No. IHEs must not allow students to take out additional loans without prior approval. HEOP and Financial Aid offices at the IHE must work in conjunction to monitor HEOP students’ financial aid and ensure compliance with this mandate. See page 22 of the RFP.**

52. Does the exception refer to both annual and maximum loan limits?

**Yes. IHEs are held to both annual loans limits for first-time HEOP students, with no more than \$6,000 per year for residential students and \$4,800 per year for commuter students, AND to TOTAL loan limits for the student’s undergraduate career.**

53. Can exceptions to exceed loan limits be made without NYSED prior approval for students who wish to replace self-help funding in the form of FWS awarded?

**Yes, this is allowable when students decline Federal Work Study and wish to replace it with more loans. However, the IHE must document evidence of this decision and keep it in the student’s file.**

54. Can exceptions be made without NYSED prior approval for students who lose TAP for any reason including TAP SAP or failure to complete the application process?

**No, IHEs must contact NYSED to provide specific information about the student’s situation and obtain prior approval.**

55. If the student is responsible for misreporting income and/or educational data, the student will be removed from the program/roster with no liability for the institution. Please indicate with whom/what party the financial liability for tuition and other cost of attendance charges incurred will rest in this instance?

**The student and their family. Please contact NYSED as appropriate.**

56. What is the difference between commuter and residential students as it relates to off-campus housing?

**As per the definitions on pages 4 and 7 of the RFP:**

**“Commuter Student: A HEOP student who is living at home with parent(s) or guardian(s) or is living in their own permanent housing (not with a parent/guardian) and commutes to campus.**

**“Resident Student: A student who does not live at home (with parents or guardians) during the academic year, with criteria as follows: (a) an on-campus resident student is a student who lives in housing facilities owned and/or maintained by the institution; (b) an off-campus resident student is a student who does not live in institutionally provided housing.” A student will be considered a resident student if their off-campus housing is temporary and will be occupied only while the student attends the IHE.**

57. Who is responsible for maintaining resources when student loses TAP?

**As defined on page 5 of the RFP, Full Need Packaging is “Total resources, including all grants, expected family and institution’s contributions, work-study, and loans to fully meet the needs of a student attending a HEOP institution (including room and board, as needed); must be maintained for the duration of HEOP eligibility – even if the student loses TAP or its successor for any reason.” If, at any point during the program, a HEOP student loses TAP, that loss has no bearing on HEOP eligibility or funding. Eligibility for HEOP and eligibility for TAP are different and separate.**

58. Loss of TAP eligibility-Can HEOP funds be utilized to address loss in TAP?

**See the answer to question 57.**

59. What if a student does not apply for TAP?

**All HEOP students must complete an application for FASFA and TAP. A HEOP student should always be fully packaged. The student may have to take out more loans to fill in gaps in their aid. For individual cases please email NYSED with details.**

60. "Five-Year baccalaureate program...the student is eligible for up to 12 semesters of HEOP assistance." Does this include BS/MS programs where the student receives the BS and the MS on the same date?

**Yes, but only if the combined degree is 5 years in duration. Per the RFP on pages 8-9, "if a HEOP student is enrolled in a five-year registered academic program with NYSED requiring five years to complete (such as architecture, pharmacy, and engineering), the student is eligible for up to 12 semesters of HEOP assistance."**

**The HEOP support ends when the student receives their B.S. degree.**

## PRORATING LOAN AND EXCEPTIONS

61. Do the same loan limits apply if the student does not continue their enrollment in consecutive years?

**The loan limits may be updated to reflect the limits in the new RFP. However, the loans must be prorated based on the number of semesters of remaining eligibility.**

62. Does this practice create barriers to degree completion in addition to an increase in loans, retention, etc. for HEOP students who seek to transfer to a particular college for a specific major as they would be forced to transfer to another in order to resume eligibility due to "no seats" at the time of their original transfer?

**Either the student accepts admission into the transfer school and forgoes HEOP due the lack of seats, or they delay admission and wait for a seat to open.**

63. Does this [*maximum loans*] include Parent Plus loans?

**No.**

## EXPENDITURES

64. What are allowable expenses besides indirect costs that can be used as the match?

**Any expenses related to the management of HEOP and address educational expenses for**

**HEOP students.**

65. Can institutional funded scholarships that are above what a student would normally be awarded be used as the match?

**Yes, however, the FA package cannot exceed the cost of attendance. Any institutional funds used to support the students can be used as the match.**

66. Can a small percentage of an Associate Provost, Provost or Dean's salary where the program would reside organizationally be used toward the match?

**Yes. As per the RFP page 23:**

***"The following costs are non-allowable:...3. Salary or stipend of the HEOP Director's Supervisor or someone designated as a Principal Investigator for the grant contract."***

**However, a small percentage of the supervisor's FTE that is documented work on HEOP may be used when calculating the required match.**

67. Are there limitations on Fringe benefits?

**As per the RFP page 27:**

***"The rate for fringe benefits cannot exceed the actual rate paid by the institution and should be recorded under Code 80 Employee Benefits."***

68. What does *Special testing, counseling and guidance services while screening potential enrollees* mean? Is this disability testing? Mental health referrals? Can you provide an example?

**This testing and services should be used to help identify their educational disadvantage and academic skills. By example, math and language skills testing.**

## **BUDGETS (FS-10)**

69. Are the composite budget pages supposed to be mailed?

**No.**

70. Is there an opportunity to know the scores as well as the grant readers comments from the previous RFP? It would be helpful for the continuous growth of my program. (strengths, areas for improvement, etc.)

**No. The success of your program is determined by the retention and graduation rates of HEOP students, not the scores provided to RFP applications.**

71. Can a summer program begin prior to the beginning of the stated RFP program year? (pg 1 – “programs may begin as early as July 1, 2024”)

**Yes, but there will be no payment from the NYSED for any expenditures before July 1, 2024 under the new contract.**

## MONITORING

72. In terms of program evaluations, does the reviewing committee typically consider historical data or metrics from previous cycles?

**The submitted proposal is scored by reviewers based on the criteria found in the RFP.**

## VENDOR RESPONSIBILITIES

73. Can you explain to the applicants where to find the NYS Vendor ID#?

**If you do not know your agency’s vendor ID number, contact the NYS Statewide Financial System (SFS) helpdesk at [helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov](mailto:helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov) to obtain it. If SFS notifies you that your agency does not yet have a vendor identification number – complete the [Payee Information and NYSED Substitute W-9](#) according to the instructions on the form. Submit both forms as both will be required for payments to your agency.**

74. Is the agency number different than the vendor ID?

**Yes. SED Agency Number / BEDS Codes can be found on the NYSED [Grants Finance's website](#).**

## PREQUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT

75. Can applicants get clearer instructions concerning the pre-approval process?

**Detailed information on how to register with the Grants Gateway and become prequalified is available on the [Grants Management](https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov) website (<https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov>) and at the following link: <https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/get-prequalified>.**

76. Who would I check with to verify that we are, in fact, already pre-qualified or if we need to do the process again specifically for this RFP?

**You can email [prequal@nysed.gov](mailto:prequal@nysed.gov) at any time to check. Prequalification is not per RFP.**

## PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

77. To confirm tables and charts do not count towards the maximum page limits in any section of the RFP?

**Confirmed.**

78. Is the HEOP Interim Report and CSTEP Final Report going to be postponed so current programs can work on their proposal submissions?

**NYSED, in its sole discretion, might postpone the HEOP interim report. Information about CSTEP is outside the scope of this RFP and the HEOP program office.**

79. Will the current RFP for 2024-2029 continue to be included as a part of the HEOP Grant Master Contract as Attachment C, named as Work Plan?

**Partially. The relevant sections of the RFP will be included as part of the HEOP Grant Master Contract as Attachment C, Work Plan Part 1. The template for 2024-2029 is posted on the HEOP website with the RFP.**