



### **Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF)**

The Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, must cover necessary expenditures incurred due to COVID-19. This fund is intended to assist the higher education enterprise in dealing with challenges that have been created by the pandemic. Two primary focus areas are eligible for funding: efforts associated with preventing the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., expenses associated with social distancing) and technological improvements to facilitate distance learning.

#### **ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS AND INITIATIVES**

All regionally accredited public and private, nonprofit institutions of higher education (IHEs) domiciled in Tennessee. Eligible IHEs will be able to spend CRF allocations to support direct expenses related to minimizing COVID-19 spread, including:

**Social Distance Expenses:** As precautions for public health, IHEs are expected to make physical changes, limit enrollment in on-ground classes, and install or upgrade technology. IHEs may adapt classroom configurations to ensure classes are taught in a socially distanced manner. Similarly, residential IHEs may incur costs to provide student housing that complies with COVID-19 health precautions. IHEs may use their CRF allocation for classroom and/or residential modifications, as both qualify as public safety measures undertaken in response to COVID-19. Funds may be used to offset physical plant costs and to subsidize non-executive payroll expenses for faculty and staff whose services are substantially dedicated to mitigating the COVID-19 public health emergency.

**Online Transition:** IHEs are leveraging technology to manage social distancing recommendations while also preparing to suspend physical operations if needed to further COVID-19 outbreaks. Two common options include online course delivery to manage overflow from capped courses and shifting educational activities to an online format in late November to limit student holiday travel. Both options necessitate additional technical and personnel expenses. IHEs may use the CRF to expand and support online instruction, increase students' access to technology (e.g., supplying laptop computers, Wi-Fi hotspots, and digital subscriptions), and subsidize payroll expenses for new personnel or extended duties of existing non-executive personnel.

## **AWARD AMOUNT DETERMINATIONS**

The amount for which each institution is eligible is dependent upon the number of institutions who successfully apply for CRF and will be determined using a formula weighting institutions' proportionate share of low-income students. For institutions who award Pell Grants, THEC will use the number of Pell Grant recipients at the institution to determine the institutions' proportionate share of low-income students. For institutions who do not award Pell Grants, THEC will use the verifiable number of students who have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) below the threshold that would make the student eligible for a Pell Grant as an undergraduate student.

## **NOTICE OF INTENT**

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) requests Notices of Intent (NOIs) to identify eligible IHEs. All NOIs must be submitted on the form found at <https://www.tn.gov/thec/crf> and received by July 17, 2020. Any questions about submissions prior to that date should also be transmitted to [THEC.CRF@tn.gov](mailto:THEC.CRF@tn.gov).

An eligible institution's NOI must contain the following information:

- Demonstration of institutional eligibility (short statement demonstrating that they are public or private nonprofit institution of higher education domiciled in Tennessee).
- Identification of which initiative(s) they intend to pursue and a short statement outlining the institution's plans for the funds.
- Private, nonprofit institutions must also provide their Edison Vendor ID number for purposes of contract planning and in the alternative, initiate that process through THEC immediately.

Only institutions that submit a complete Notice of Intent by July 17 will be eligible to receive CRF allocations.

## **WRITTEN PROPOSAL**

THEC will respond to NOIs and confirm or deny eligibility to apply for CRF funds. Eligible IHEs will be given an approximate dollar amount to plan for award purposes. All IHEs must submit a full written proposal, to include:

- A narrative outlining how CRF funds will be used to support one or both allowable initiatives, including specific documentation related to each initiative as outlined in the requirements below;
- A breakdown of how the funds will be spent; and,
- How the funds will be successfully expended within the contract time frame.
- Public institutions must sign a certification that they will meet state and federal reporting and monitoring requirements for any CRF allocations received and spend funds according to the federal guidance

For written proposals including **Social Distance Expenses**, the IHE must include the following as it relates to their proposal:

- Confirmation/supporting documentation that proposed facility changes were not already budgeted expenses and are demonstrably due to COVID;
- Available data on total number of student housing units if facility changes are proposed;
- Detailed plans and budgets proposed for conforming residential spaces to comply with public health guidelines; and
- Confirmation/supporting documentation that any designated COVID payroll expenses will be tracked separately vs. regular recurring and budgeted payroll expenses.

For written proposals including **Online Transition Expenses**, the IHE must include the following as it relates to their proposal:

- Confirmation/supporting documentation that payroll costs to be incurred are not an already budgeted expense and are solely for developing the online transition due to COVID;
- Quotes supporting the institution's budgeted expenses for any equipment purchases made in support of the initiative;
- Supporting documentation demonstrating the IHEs ability to quickly launch the proposed online transition and incur reimbursable costs within the grant contract timeframe; and
- Any available per-student data that quantifies and supports the need for the online transition is directly tied to COVID.

Written proposals must be submitted by email to [THEC.CRF@tn.gov](mailto:THEC.CRF@tn.gov) no later than July 31, 2020. THEC will notify successful institutions of awards with finalized dollar amounts and the next steps for grant contracts for funds disbursement.

## **FUND DISBURSEMENT**

THEC will initiate grant contracts with participating public and private, nonprofit institutions. IHEs have until November 15, 2020 to expend all funds.

Contracting IHEs will receive advanced payment and will be required to submit reports demonstrating funds spent at designated time periods throughout the contract. THEC will require all institutions to submit a final report by December 1, 2020 demonstrating the use of funds in accordance with section 601(d) of the Social Security Act, per CRF guidance.