

How-to guide: Financial aid for college completion night

OCTOBER 2020 AND JANUARY 2021

TOOLKIT STEPS

BY OCTOBER 16, 2020 AND JANUARY 15, 2021

- Schedule a date in November and another by mid-February to your financial aid for college completion nights. Financial aid for college completion nights can be held virtually or in person. This should include:
 - ❖ Partnering with a trusted community-based organization (CBO) or your local college or university to co-host your financial aid for college completion night.
 - > Some CBOs in New York that support college financial aid completion are **UnLocal in NYC**, **College Bridge Cafe**, and **Latino U College Access**
 - ❖ Making sure you have people staffing your virtual or in-person financial aid for college completion night who have expertise in completing the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, and NYS DREAM Act forms. Schools should identify 2-3 staff members to attend the **October, November, and January trainings available to schools that are using this Toolkit**. In addition, the CBO or local college or university you co-host with may have staff with expertise, or you can contact HESC at **PreCollegeServices@hesc.ny.gov**. HESC offers support to schools hosting FAFSA completion events free of charge. Ensuring translation services will be available to support families who may not speak English at home.
 - ❖ Scheduling the event later in the evening – start after 6pm – so that most families don't have to leave work early to attend.

IF YOUR SCHOOL IS IN-PERSON

- ❖ Schedule a training session for all school staff who will be at the financial aid for college completion night. Consider:
 - + Having your school counselor lead the prep so that all staff know how to answer common questions students and families have, as well as what applications they'll need to have with them. If your school counselor is unavailable or needs support on how to best support families to complete the FAFSA, NYS Application for TAP, or NYS DREAM Act forms, they can attend the free October, November, or January trainings offered to schools using this Toolkit, or contact **the New York State School Counselor Association**,

the New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association, or **New York Cares**. In addition, many CBOs and colleges/universities (including SUNY and CUNY locations) in your area may offer financial aid completion services for free

- ❖ Holding the event on a night when there is another mandatory event (like a senior night) when families will already be at the school and there are not other school events (athletics, band concerts, plays, etc.) that might prevent participating students and their families from attending.
- ❖ Scheduling the event to last at least 2 hours to give families time to complete the applications there.
- ❖ Providing child care services at the event – you should contact CBOs in your area who may be able to help.
- ❖ Providing food at the event – you should contact CBOs in your area who may be able to help.
- Book a space at the school or a community-based center nearby to hold the event. This should include:
 - ❖ Holding it in the school computer lab or another room where students and families will have access to computers and reliable internet.
 - ❖ Ensuring that students and families that bring their own laptops will have access to reliable internet.
- Having places where students and families can have privacy to complete their applications given the amount of private information that they'll need to share on the applications. **Use these templates** to post weekly updates to your school's Facebook and Twitter accounts about the financial aid for college completion night.

IF YOUR SCHOOL IS OPERATING REMOTELY

- ❖ Recording any presentation part of the event so that students and families who are not able to attend live can view the recording.

○ BY NOVEMBER 30 AND FEBRUARY 12

- **Use these templates** to post weekly updates (and daily updates in the week prior to the event) in English and Spanish on your social media accounts.
- HOLD YOUR SCHOOL'S FINANCIAL AID FOR COLLEGE COMPLETION NIGHT

○ BY DECEMBER 11 AND FEBRUARY 19

- **Use these templates** to post in English and Spanish about attendance and updates after your school's event.