

Last Updated – Thursday, May 29, 2025

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

New England Prison Education Collaborative (NEPEC) Accelerator Grants Request for Proposals (RFP)

Year 1 (2025)

Note: *This FAQ is built to expand as the NEPEC Team fields additional important questions and points of clarification regarding the RFP for Year 1 Accelerator Grant funding. A “Last Updated” marker has been included at the top left of this first page of the document.*

Q: In Section IV of the Microsoft Form, we are asked to include information on current formal partnerships with correctional facilities. What does the term ‘Correctional Lead’ refer to?

A: *The ‘Correctional Lead’ refers to the main contact for programming for the higher education institution at each correctional facility in which it operates—or will operate—for the proposed project.*

Q: The form allows for a maximum of three correctional facility partnerships, but my institution is working or will be working with more than that. Where can I include this information?

A: *You can use the form to submit information for the first three facilities. You can then create an addendum to your form by sending the NEPEC Team an email with the remaining facility partnerships and corresponding information for each.*

Q: The project my institution is proposing could be seen as fitting under more than one of the eligible activities, but we would only like to submit one application. Can we request support for multiple eligible activities in a single proposal?

A: *Each proposal will be evaluated based on its alignment with a single eligible activity, so you should primarily speak to a single eligible activity in your application. In the case described here, your institution should select the activity you feel best describes what you are seeking funding for, although the narrative portion of your application can, of course, touch on your project's relatedness to/alignment with other eligible areas.*

Q: Who should sign the letter of institutional support? My institution doesn’t use the label president to describe the individual whose leads our executive team.

A: *While we have used the word “president” in our RFP and on the proposal form, the letter should come from the individual who leads your institution’s executive team, which might be someone with the title “chancellor” instead of “president,” for example.*

Q: Do any of the questions have a word limit?

A: *There is only one question on the form with a word range (Question 2 in Section VII), and that range was provided to gesture towards the substantive nature of that response.*

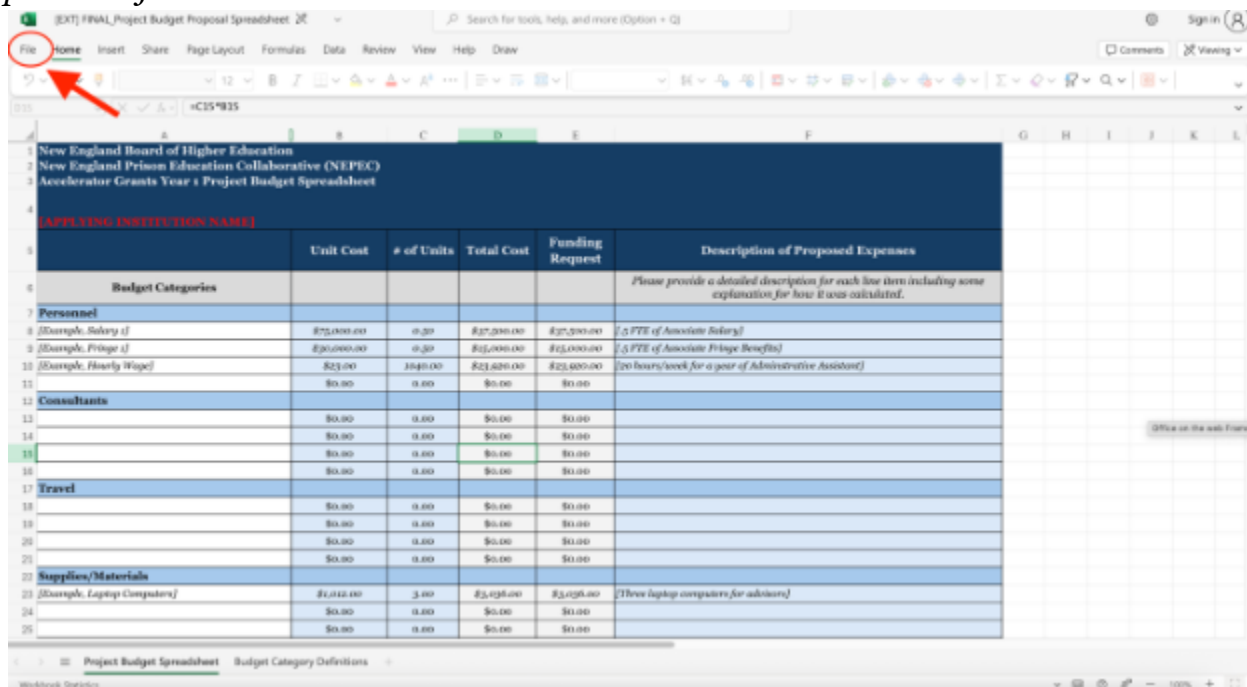
Q: Is there a way to save my progress on the Microsoft Form so that I can fill it out intermittently?

A: *Unfortunately, Microsoft Forms does not allow you to save your progress, so we recommend completing the form when you have all your answers ready. To help applicants with this, we have included an informational document on our website that includes all of the questions on the form. You can access that document [here](#).*

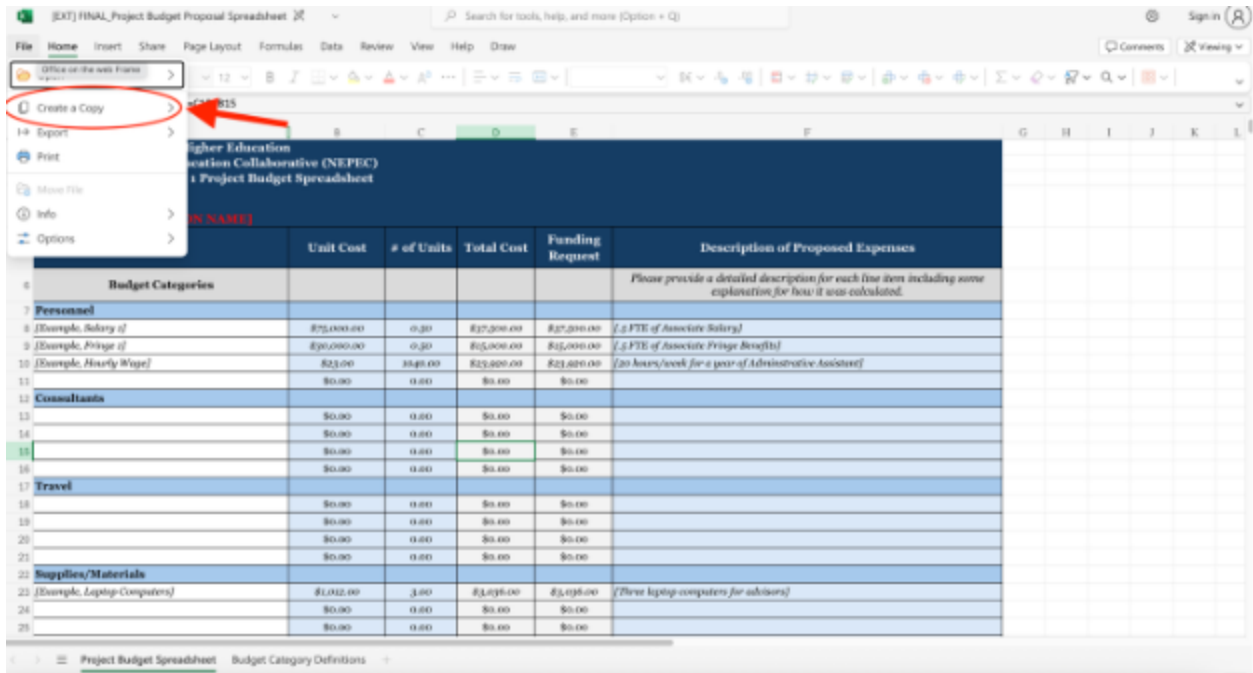
Q: How do I download the project budget spreadsheet?

A: *To download the budget spreadsheet, please follow the process below.*

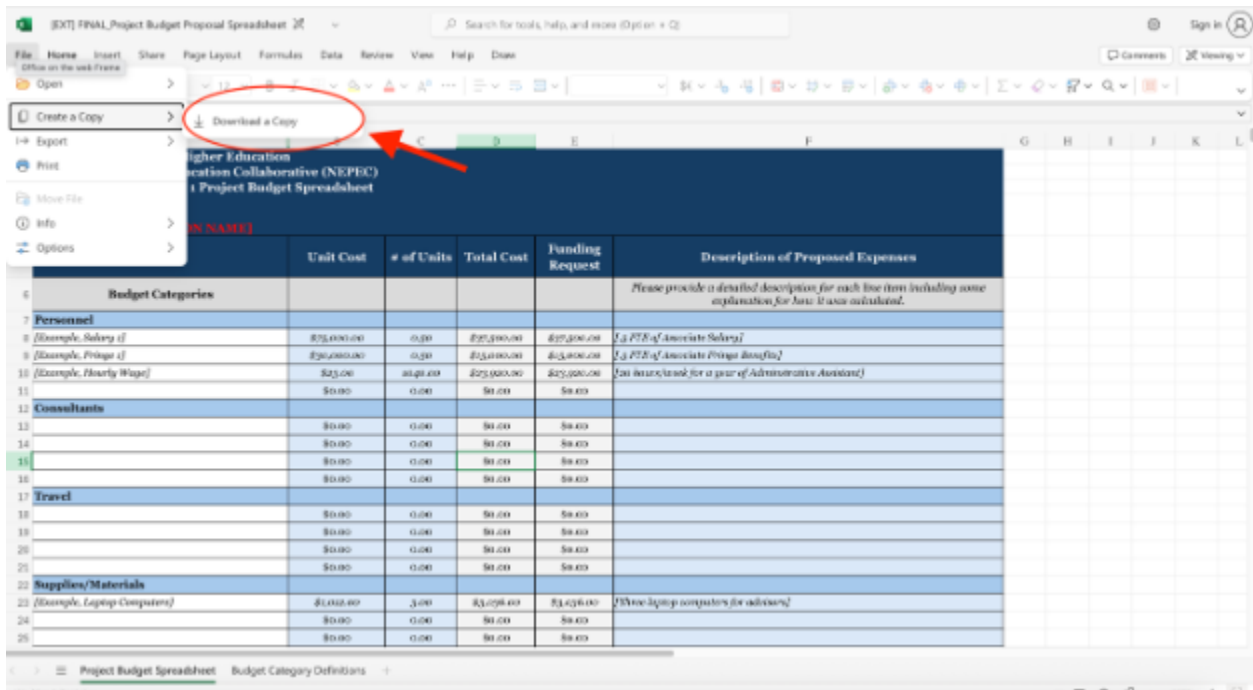
Step 1: After clicking on the project budget spreadsheet link included in the RFP, please press the file button.



Step 2: From the dropdown menu, click on the 'Create a Copy' option.



Step 3: Click on the 'Download a Copy' button. This will download the sheet as an Excel file on your device.



If you are still experiencing issues downloading the file, please reach out to us at nepec@nebhe.org for further assistance.

Q: My institution wants to use the Accelerator Grant to get the ball rolling on expanding our current Pell-eligible prison education program to a new location to fill a gap in access statewide. Do we need to have students being admitted through the program by the end of the 12-month grant period or can we use these funds to get everything ready to serve students in a slightly longer timeframe?

A: *Institutions can absolutely use these funds to get the ball rolling on programming that might not be feasible to go live to students in the short, one-year period of Accelerator Grant funding. The NEPEC Team understands that filling access gaps is no small feat and takes time; our hope is that these funds will help to meaningfully accelerate progress towards that go live date for your institution.*

Q: For institutions that are already in the middle of the PEP approval process, should the correctional letter of support required for this application be the same one that was secured from DOC leadership as part of the PEP approval process? Or should institutions be seeking a new letter from DOC leadership to satisfy the correctional letter of support requirement?

A: *It depends. The letter should reflect correctional support for the project for which you are seeking Accelerator Grant funding. For example, if the existing letter indicates support for the a program of study that has already been stood up in Correctional Facility A but your institution is applying for Accelerator Grant funds to scale that program to Correctional Facility B, then we would want your application to include a new correctional letter of support to speak to the new location where you are planning to build out your program.*

Q: For the eligible activity that involves “seeking support for an emerging PEP or the expansion of an existing PEP that relies on—or will rely on—partnership with one or more additional postsecondary institutions,” which institution should submit the application?

A: *The institution that—in the case of an emerging PEP— would be applying to secure, or —in the case of an existing PEP—has already secured, PEP approval from the U.S. Department of Education should be the institution who completes the Accelerator Grant application.*

Q: Does this RFP exclude applications from programs that are planning to offer Pell-eligible programming in jails (instead of prisons)?

A: *No, as per the federal regulations from the U.S. Department of Education, institutions can seek PEP approval for a Title IV eligible program of study offered in a correctional facility, which is defined, parenthetically, in [September 2024 General Guidance](#) as “federal, state, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, juvenile justice facility, or other similar correctional institution.”*

Q: My institution has not yet taken the first step in the PEP approval process; can we still apply for an Accelerator Grant?

A: *Yes, to incentivize new program development where there is a demonstrated need,*

the RFP stipulates that institutions can apply if they are intending to begin the PEP approval process in the near future. There is a question in the Applying Institution section of the proposal form where institutions must identify where they are in the PEP approval process. The first option in that section is “The applying institution has not yet begun the PEP approval process.” A static version of all the questions in the proposal form can be found [here](#).

Q: My institution has more than one project idea that would fit within the five eligible activities for Accelerator Grants during Year 1. Are we limited to submitting a single proposal?

A: *No, institutions can submit more than one proposal for Accelerator Grant funding in Year 1. As per the RFP, though, no institution will be awarded more than one Year 1 Accelerator Grant.*

Q: Do Accelerator Grants only support institutions with programs of study that lead to an associate degree or a bachelor’s degree?

A: *No, Accelerator Grants this year support programs of study for Title IV eligible certificate programs as well as those programs of study that lead to an associate or bachelor’s degree.*

Q: If my institution runs a privately-funded higher education in prison program at present, can we apply for an Accelerator Grant under eligible activity five (i.e. an institution “seeking support for implementing a comprehensive reentry strategy—or meaningfully expanding an existing one”)?

A: *Unfortunately, in this instance, your institution would be ineligible. All institutions that apply for an Accelerator Grant in Year 1 of this funding opportunity, will need to identify where they are in the PEP approval process and so the idea is that all institutions who are applying for these funds—even under the reentry-focused activity—would either be in the PEP approval process or interested in beginning that process in the near future (making them either an “emerging PEP” if not already a “PEP,” in the nomenclature of the RFP).*

Q: Is there a limit on the percentage of the proposal budget that goes to personnel?

A: *No, there is no formal limit imposed upon any line of the proposal budget besides the indirect costs line, which is capped at 15% of the rest of the budget. Because reviewers will be evaluating the budget and the accompanying narrative, you will just want to keep in mind the need to explain sustainability, which could be particularly helpful to support a personnel-heavy proposal budget.*

Q: In the event that my institution is successful in its application for a Year 1 Accelerator Grant, what is the deadline for us to expend the associated grant funds?

A: The grant agreement will stipulate that grant funds should be expended within the twelve-month grant period, which would mean that these funds should be expended by the end of July 2026.

Q: My institution's project could fit into more than one of the five eligible activity categories. How should we navigate the question on the proposal form that asks us to select a single activity that best captures the proposed project?

A: Please respond to that question with the eligible activity that best aligns with your project but know that selecting the "right" category in the proposal form is not a major part of how your proposal will be assessed by our reviewers.

Q: It doesn't look like my institution will be able to submit a proposal based on the scope of the five eligible activities that were decided for Accelerator Grants in Year 1 of this funding. Will the RFP be the same next year (2026), or is it possible that the eligible activities for Year 2 will differ at all from those in Year 1?

A: Lucky for you, both the NEPEC Team and the Higher Education in Working Group members we worked with to shape this Year 1 RFP are very open to changing what this funding incentivizes in Year 2 of NEPEC Accelerator Grants in a way that is responsive to regional needs and consistent with the emphasis on holistic student success that underpins all NEPEC's engagement of higher education institutions.

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The NEPEC Team is here to support you and your institution as you work to apply for Accelerator Grants in Year 1 of this funding opportunity. If you have questions or points of clarification that are not answered here—or if you are interested in individually clarifying some parameter of the Request for Proposals, we completely understand!

We are just an email away at nepec@nebhe.org.