



NYS Higher Education Services Corporation Transparency Plan February 2024

The New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) serves as a crucial pillar in the pursuit of post-secondary education achievement for individuals across New York. Established as New York State's student financial aid agency, HESC is a national leader in providing need-based post-secondary financial aid to students in need, offering vital support to students who might otherwise face financial barriers to their educational goals. HESC's vision is simple – we help you pay for college.

Among its key initiatives, HESC administers more than two dozen grant, scholarship, and loan forgiveness programs, including the NYS Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Excelsior Scholarship, as well as the New York State DREAM Act, which gives undocumented and other students access to state-funded financial aid.

HESC's commitment to students extends beyond financial aid; the agency is a valuable resource for guidance and assistance, helping students, families, and counselors navigate the college application and financial aid processes by offering over 200 public outreach events each year, including initiatives such as College Application Month (CAM) and NYS FAFSA Ready. HESC gives students and families the knowledge and tools they need to make informed decisions about their educational futures.

HESC puts college within the reach of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers each year with over \$800 million annually in grants, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs. HESC helps more than 300,000 students achieve their college dreams each year, providing critical financial aid that enables opportunities and development across New York State.



HESC's Public Engagement Efforts Since 2021

Since the last Transparency Plan was issued in 2021, HESC has taken steps to review its policies and procedures. The following are actions that HESC continues to implement.

1. HESC Complies with Federal and State Transparency Standards

The HESC executive team has assessed the agency's policies and procedures on transparency to ensure all its policies and procedures adhere to federal and New York State rules, including that:

- Persons with disabilities and individuals with language barriers can access all HESC programs and services.
- Board meetings and meeting agendas, minutes, and video recordings are made available to the public in a timely manner in accordance with the Open Meetings Law.
- The public can access digital data regarding grant and scholarship utilization through [Open NY](#).
- HESC customers can access agency records using the online GovQA platform.

2. HESC Public Board of Trustees Meetings

HESC held a public Board of Trustees meeting on December 7, 2023. The meeting was open to the public at two locations – in Albany and New York City. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube, and the recording was posted on the HESC YouTube site: [HESC Board of Trustees Meeting](#) (youtube.com). The next HESC public Board of Trustees Meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2024.



3. Enhanced Website User Experience

In early 2024, HESC is set to launch an innovative new agency website designed to transform the way the public accesses and utilizes NYS financial aid information.

HESC used direct feedback gained from the student, parent, and financial aid expert focus groups to develop and implement design changes to significantly increase the user experience. Accurate and timely information about financial aid programs, services, and upcoming events will be prominently featured. As part of its ongoing commitment to transparency and community engagement, HESC will continue to disseminate vital content through social media and offer access to annual reports and board meeting materials. The launch of the new hesc.ny.gov agency site in March 2024 marks a significant milestone in HESC's mission to make higher education more attainable for New Yorkers.

4. HESC Engages in Extensive Outreach

HESC has significantly increased our public outreach efforts to help students and families navigate the financial aid process, holding more than 200 public outreach events each year. Through virtual workshops, webinars, online resources, and collaborations with state organizations, high schools, colleges, and community-based partners, HESC has continued to provide support and guidance to ensure students can access the necessary financial aid for their education.

With these efforts, HESC has increased the number of FAFSA/TAP Completion events offered for college-bound students. These events help students complete and submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the NYS Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) application, which are crucial documents in securing financial aid.

HESC staff and academic volunteers also meet one-on-one with students and families in virtual Zoom breakout rooms to complete confidential financial aid forms privately. These events have included:

- Sixteen HESC-sponsored FAFSA/TAP Completion events from October through December 2021.



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Governor

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- Thirteen events from October through December 2022.
- Five statewide virtual School Counselor Workshops from September through December 2023 with a wide range of training topics, including unaccompanied homeless youth, students' special circumstances, and changes to the 2023-2024 and the 2024-2025 FAFSA forms.
- Fifteen FAFSA/TAP completion events from January through February 2024, with nearly 500 students attending.
- Two training events for school counselors, with nearly 1,700 NYS school counselors in attendance.

HESC 2024 Initiatives

In 2024, HESC will continue to identify opportunities to engage the public, wherever possible, to promote the agency's grants, scholarships, and loan forgiveness programs for students attending or planning to attend college. Our initiatives include:

1. HESC 2024 Public Board of Trustees Meetings

HESC will hold its next Board of Trustees meeting on May 15, 2024. Members of the public will be able to participate in two locations: Albany and New York City. The meetings will be livestreamed on YouTube, and the recordings will be posted on the HESC YouTube site.

2. Increase Direct Public Feedback

HESC is set to increase its direct public feedback for our outreach events to help improve outreach effectiveness and responsiveness. Event participants will be encouraged to share their experiences and insights through post-event surveys. This initiative will empower attendees to voice their perspectives, providing HESC with invaluable data to refine and tailor future events. By analyzing this feedback, HESC aims to continuously enhance the relevance and delivery of critical topics, ensuring that the services provided resonate with the needs and expectations of the public.



3. Expansion of HESC Outreach Efforts

As HESC pivots away from its role as a guaranty loan agency, it is sharpening its focus in 2024 on public outreach to maximize the impact of the agency programs and increase financial aid awareness across New York State. HESC will do this through:

- **Information Sessions:** Increasing the number of recurring and specialized webinars and information sessions tailored to the needs of students, families, and counselors across New York State.
- **Grow Partnerships:** Strengthening collaborations with high schools, colleges, and community-based organizations to better reach students and families where they are, providing localized support and information.
- **One-on-One Engagement:** Expanding the reach of personalized assistance through virtual events, facilitating private guidance for completing financial aid forms and applications.
- **Counselor Support:** Distributing comprehensive, easy-to-understand guides and resources to counselors, enabling them to better assist their students with the financial aid process.
- **Social Media Presence:** HESC plans to significantly increase its utilization of social media platforms to reach a wider audience and provide real-time updates and resources on financial aid and other important information through the channels being used by students today.

By intensifying these outreach initiatives, HESC aims to bridge the information gap and drive greater participation in state-sponsored financial aid programs, ultimately aiding more students in realizing their educational ambitions.