

The **Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program (EETP)** provides forgivable loans to Nebraska teachers enrolled in an eligible graduate program at an eligible Nebraska institution. The EETP is part of the Excellence in Teaching Act passed by the Nebraska Legislature and signed into law on April 22, 2009.

Applications for the 2024-25 award year will be made available April 15, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. This will include any classes that **begin on or after July 1, 2024 through on or before June 30, 2025**. Funds cannot be requested until after July 1, 2024 and are available on a quarterly basis in July, October, January and April.

Current and previous recipients must apply again to be considered for 2024-25 funding.

Eligibility

An applicant must meet the following criteria to be considered for EETP funds:

- Be a certificated teacher employed at least half-time (0.50 FTE) to teach in an approved or accredited PK-12 school in Nebraska;
- Be enrolled at an eligible Nebraska institution in an eligible graduate program (a program of study leading to a graduate degree or a graduate course of study leading to an added endorsement in a shortage area);
- The graduate program leads to:
 1. A degree or added endorsement in a shortage area, or
 2. A degree in curriculum and instruction, or
 3. A degree in a subject area in which a secular teaching endorsement is already held*, or
 4. A degree in a subject area that will result in an additional secular teaching endorsement not considered a shortage area which the superintendent of the school district or head administrator of a nonpublic school believes will be beneficial to the students of the school district or school;
- Be a resident Nebraska student;
- Agree to complete the degree or endorsement program on which eligibility for EETP funds was based; and
- Commit to teach full-time in an accredited or approved public or private PK-12 school in Nebraska upon successful completion of the eligible graduate program for a time-period equal to the number of years required for loan forgiveness.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. Graduate programs resulting in obtaining an Administrative or Special Services Certificate are NOT eligible for the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program.
2. Individuals pursuing a Transition to Teaching permit or who are enrolled in the Transition to Teaching Program at UNK are not eligible for EETP funds, but may qualify for Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program ([AETP](#)) funds.

***Note:** If you qualify under this criterion and your degree program is not within your institution's educator preparation division, you must have your Program of Study signed by your degree advisor prior to submission with your application.

Amount

Eligible students may apply on an annual competitive basis for EETP funds in an amount of not more than **\$175 per credit hour**, up to a maximum of \$3,000. **Coursework eligible for payment includes classes** that have been identified by the institution in which the student is enrolled as part of their eligible graduate program and that **BEGIN during the loan award period (July 1 – June 30)**. EETP funds awarded to individual students may not exceed five consecutive years and returning recipients are not guaranteed additional funds. Funds are sent directly to the recipient.

Timeline for Applications

The deadline for 2024-25 applications is May 17, 2024, but remember **most funds are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis**. Application submission guidelines, deadlines and other information for each institution are available on the **EETP Application Materials** page of the Nebraska Teacher Education web site. The application page will be available March 29, 2024; the application will be available April 15, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

Applications submitted for consideration of EETP funds will undergo an initial review by the institution. The institution will then forward applications, to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) on or before May 29 for final review and approval. Selected recipients will be notified by NDE of their award amount and will receive an EETP Loan Contract that must be completed, signed and returned to NDE prior to any funds being made available. A delay in returning the contract may result in a postponement of available funds or the withdrawal of the award.

Application Requirements

Applications are **submitted to the institution in which the applicant is enrolled** and must include:

- A completed EETP Application for Funds; and
- A Program of Study approved by the eligible institution in which you are enrolled; and
 - **Note:** *If your degree program is not within your institution's educator preparation division, you must have your Program of Study signed by your degree advisor prior to submission with your application.*
- Other documents as required by the individual institution.

Upon approval of the application, NDE will provide the applicant with an EETP Loan Contract for review. The contract, with the applicant's original signature, must be returned to NDE prior to the loan being finalized. A delay in returning the contract may result in a postponement of available funds or the withdrawal of the award. **Incomplete applications received at NDE will not be considered for funds.**

Timeline for Fund Disbursement

EETP funds are available for disbursement after July 1 and are distributed to the recipient throughout the award period on a quarterly basis (July-Summer classes, October-Fall classes, January-Spring classes and April-Summer classes) as proof of registration is received at NDE, not as a lump sum.

- **Paperwork Requirements**
 1. Prior to receiving any money from the EETP funds, the borrower must **return a signed contract to NDE**.
 2. To receive funds, EETP recipients must **provide NDE with proof of registration documentation** (grade report/transcript) that they have officially registered for the class(es) for which payment is being requested. Payments are mailed directly to the borrower and may take up to four weeks for processing.

3. At the end of the contract period, EETP recipients must **provide NDE with proof of completion of the coursework** for which funds were awarded. This documentation (grade report/transcript) will serve to verify that you are in good standing with contract provisions and are not subject to immediate repayment.
4. At the end of the graduate program, EETP recipients must **provide NDE with proof of completion of the program** for which funds were awarded. An official transcript is required and will identify the beginning of the forgiveness time-period.

Forgiving the Award Funds

The borrower must successfully complete the eligible graduate program for which the funds were received and maintain certification and employment as a full-time teacher in Nebraska for a time-period equal to the number of years required for loan forgiveness.

- For recipients who received EETP funds for the first time **prior to July 1, 2016**:
 1. **At the end of the third consecutive year of teaching full-time in Nebraska following completion of the eligible graduate program:**
 - a. For each year, the borrower teaches full-time in a school NOT classified as a low-income school or very sparse district, the combined total of any EETP funds received will be forgiven in an amount of up to \$3,000.
 - b. For each year, the borrower teaches full-time in a local school system classified as very sparse or in a school building that meets the high poverty guidelines (low-income school) established by NDE in the year(s) in which loan forgiveness commences, the combined total of any EETP funds received will be forgiven in an amount up to \$6,000.
- For recipients who received EETP funds for the first time **on or after July 1, 2016**:
 1. **At the end of the third consecutive year of teaching full-time in Nebraska following completion of the eligible graduate program:**
 - a. The combined total of any EETP funds received will be forgiven in an amount of up to \$1,500.
 2. **Beginning with the fourth consecutive year of teaching full-time in Nebraska following completion of the eligible graduate program::**
 - a. For each additional year the borrower teaches full-time in a school NOT classified as a low-income school or very sparse district, the combined total of any EETP funds received will be forgiven in an amount of up to \$1,500.
 - b. For each additional year the borrower teaches full-time in a local school system classified as very sparse or in a school building that meets the high poverty guidelines (low-income school) established by NDE in the year(s) in which loan forgiveness commences, the combined total of any EETP funds received would be forgiven in an amount up to \$3,000.

Repayment

The EETP recipient will enter into a contract with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) which requires repayment of the funds, with interest, if the borrower:

- Does not maintain a minimum of .50 FTE employment as a certificated teacher in an approved or accredited PK-12 school in Nebraska while enrolled in the eligible graduate program;
- Does not remain enrolled in the eligible graduate program;

- Does not maintain resident Nebraska student status;
- Does not complete the requirements for program completion within five (5) years from the date of the initial EETP Loan Contract;
- Does not complete the program for which the loan was received;
- Does not maintain employment as a full-time (1.0 FTE) teacher teaching in an approved or accredited PK-12 school in Nebraska for the number of years that they are required to remain employed as a teacher under the EETP Loan Contract after graduation; or
- Does not provide NDE with the required documentation as outlined in the EETP Loan Contract.

Additional Information

Direct requests for additional information, or questions regarding the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program, to Kelcy Sass at kelcy.sass@nebraska.gov.

“This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document. For comments regarding this document contact nde.guidance@nebraska.gov”