

# EVERY STATE, EVERY STUDENT:

## Key Learnings for Statewide Efforts to Support Student Basic Needs

Approximately **60% of college students experience basic needs insecurity**, including lacking the food and housing needed to learn and thrive. Research shows that basic needs insecurity negatively impacts students' academic [performance](#), [sense of belonging](#), and [persistence](#).

As states seek to identify and address the systematic barriers to student success, reach their state educational attainment goals, and strengthen their economies and workforce, they are recognizing the need to proactively and comprehensively address student basic needs.

Several states have launched statewide efforts to better understand students' needs and pursue changes to policy and practice to create a more affordable and supportive higher education environment.

At The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, we have had the opportunity to assist several states in such work.

Coordinated basic needs efforts can create lasting systemic changes by:

- Cultivating a richer, shared understanding of today's students and their needs;
- Elevating and scaling impactful institutional policies and practices;
- Dismantling barriers and streamlining student access to existing campus, community, and state resources;
- Establishing a comprehensive support ecosystem that meets the needs of all students;
- Addressing longstanding inequities in access to a college credential.

### NEW JERSEY

We worked with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) to develop a [practitioner playbook](#) of best practices for cultivating and sustaining a supportive campus basic needs ecosystem.



### MICHIGAN

We collaborated with Michigan's Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) to lead the state's Basic Needs Task Force in identifying [12 priority recommendations](#) to secure student basic needs statewide.



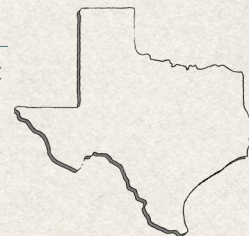
### MINNESOTA

We joined the Office of Higher Education's (OHE) Student Basic Needs Working Group to help [develop policy recommendations](#) to enhance the state's existing basic needs efforts, prompted by findings from our Student Basic Needs Survey.



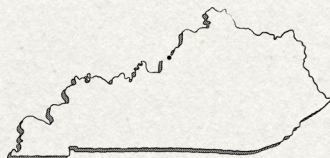
## TEXAS

We contributed to the [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's student success grants](#) by helping institutions strengthen their basic needs supports. More recently, we served on the state's Postsecondary Student Mental Health Coalition and helped to co-author both a state strategic plan for student mental health and a playbook for colleges and universities to advance a public health approach to student mental health.



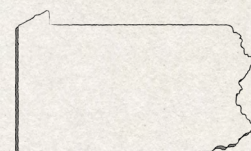
## KENTUCKY

Currently, we are assisting [Kentucky's Student Success Collaborative](#) in building resources to increase awareness and student uptake of available campus and community basic needs resources.

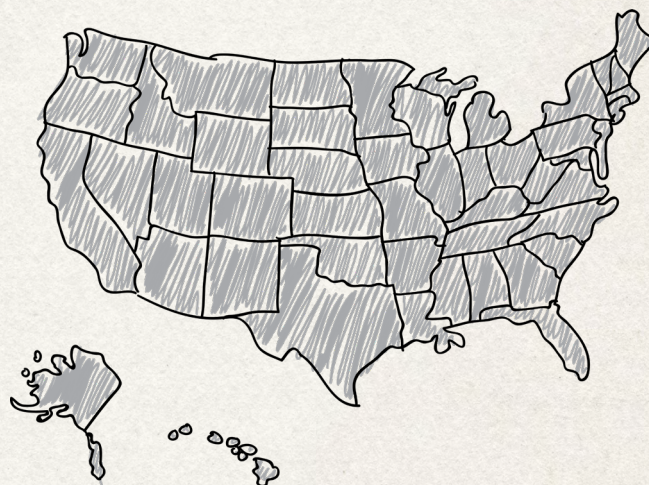


## PENNSYLVANIA

We are helping Pennsylvania better understand the needs of their students and contributing to coordinated data collection by [administering our student survey](#) at several Pennsylvania colleges.



In this series—**Every State, Every Student**—we draw upon these experiences and [offer strategies for establishing or strengthening a statewide task force or working group and identifying policy recommendations to remove basic needs insecurity as a barrier](#) to completing college.



We outline key considerations and decision points informed by our previous state partnerships to help set you up for success across each phase of the work:

1

Defining the Scope

2

Building a Team *for* and With Students

3

Understanding Current Needs: Inventorying the Landscape

4

Determining & Prioritizing Recommendations

5

What's Next?

Are you interested to embark on such an effort in your state? We would love to partner with you. Please reach out to [hopectr@temple.edu](mailto:hopectr@temple.edu) to discuss how we may contribute.

# EVERY STATE, EVERY STUDENT:

## Key Learnings for Statewide Efforts to Support Student Basic Needs

PART I

### Defining the Scope



Setting a clear purpose and focus is essential to making the best use of your time, energy, and resources. We created this guide to assist on that journey.

### Identifying Your Purpose

Identify the area(s) in which you would like to pursue change. Are you interested in making changes to state legislative policy, state agency policy and practice, institutional policy and practice, or a combination?

State efforts to date have focused on:

- Drafting policy recommendations for the state legislature;
- Identifying best practices for colleges and universities across the state to adopt;
- Building awareness of existing campus, community, and state basic needs resources ;
- Advancing changes needed to improve the state's financial aid system.

As you think about your focus, consider:

- ✓ Barriers students face that could be resolved or addressed through state action;
- ✓ Where legislation could address barriers to strengthening or expanding efforts to meet students' basic needs;
- ✓ Current or promising practices the state could help scale by funding, permitting, supporting;
- ✓ The knowledge, experience, authority, and capacity of those currently involved and/or those you can recruit into joining the work;
- ✓ Where you can make the most meaningful change(s) based on the current political and/or budgetary landscape;
- ✓ What will have the most significant and/or most immediate impact for students.

### Determining Your Goals

As you hone in on the specifics of the scope of your work, always keep in mind: "What are my goals?" Your goals may include broad awareness-building activities, such as developing a two-week outreach campaign about existing state resources to implement during the next academic term. You might also set one or more goals related to the uptake of the recommendations you develop. For example, your goal could be for 80% of public colleges and universities in your state to adopt a specific practice within the next year or for the state legislature to fund two programs you recommended establishing or enhancing during their next session.

Another approach could be to set impact goals, such as reducing the rate of food insecurity among parenting students by 20% over the next year or increasing the utilization of campus housing resources by 10% in the upcoming semester.

As you develop your goals, consider not only the current landscape, but also how your state's political, legislative, and/or budgetary landscape may look when you transition from finalizing recommendations to advocating for their adoption and/or implementation. In Minnesota and Michigan, for example, the state legislative and budgetary climate was more supportive of additional investment into basic needs programs and resources when their respective projects began than when they released their final recommendations roughly a year later.

Your goals may also be shaped by your budget and capacity. For example, do you have internal capacity to lead your state's basic needs efforts? Do you have funding to support those who contribute? For how long? Michigan received funding from The Joyce Foundation to hire The Hope Center to contribute to their efforts. In Minnesota, the state legislature helped compensate students for their contribution. Finally, take time to ensure that your goals align with your overall scope and that you can plot a clear pathway from the beginning of your work to the attainment of your goals.

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## Existing Statewide Efforts

Several states have launched collaborative efforts to address student basic needs, including:

### California

California's Intersegmental Working Group on Student Basic Needs was [tasked with developing a cost-effective, intersegmental statewide and/or regionalized approach—supported by concrete policy recommendations—that will help students in public colleges and universities meet their basic needs](#).

### Hawai'i

The University of Hawai'i System has created a Student Basic Needs Master Plan, which acts as a [“living document”—responding to measured changes in student basic needs insecurity and resource availability—and direct UH Student Basic Needs Committee priorities, goals and programming](#).

### Kentucky

The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative launched the Student Basic Needs Action Network [to identify challenges and opportunities among campus and community partners to increase access to basic needs supports for students](#).

### Massachusetts

The Basic Needs Security Advisory Committee was formed [to make policy recommendations](#)

[on how to address growing economic insecurity among students](#).

### Michigan

[Michigan's Basic Needs Task Force](#) was created to propose policy change so that financial insecurity is not a barrier to students' pursuit of educational goals.

### Minnesota

Minnesota's Student Basic Needs Working group was [charged with reviewing the current landscape of basic need initiatives, identifying areas of unmet or not fully met student needs, and proposing ideas that will help Minnesota implement, sustain, scale, or grow programs to better meet the basic needs of college students across the state](#).

### New Jersey

The New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, in partnership with The Hope Center, developed a basic needs playbook of recommendations and best practices to guide practitioners in [Enhancing New Jersey College Students' Access to Food, Housing, and Other Basic Needs Supports](#).

### New Mexico

The New Mexico Basic Needs Consortium's mission is [to reduce basic needs insecurity in New Mexico higher education through statewide collaboration](#).

## Pennsylvania

PA EmpowerU is leading state efforts [to create supportive collegiate environments](#).

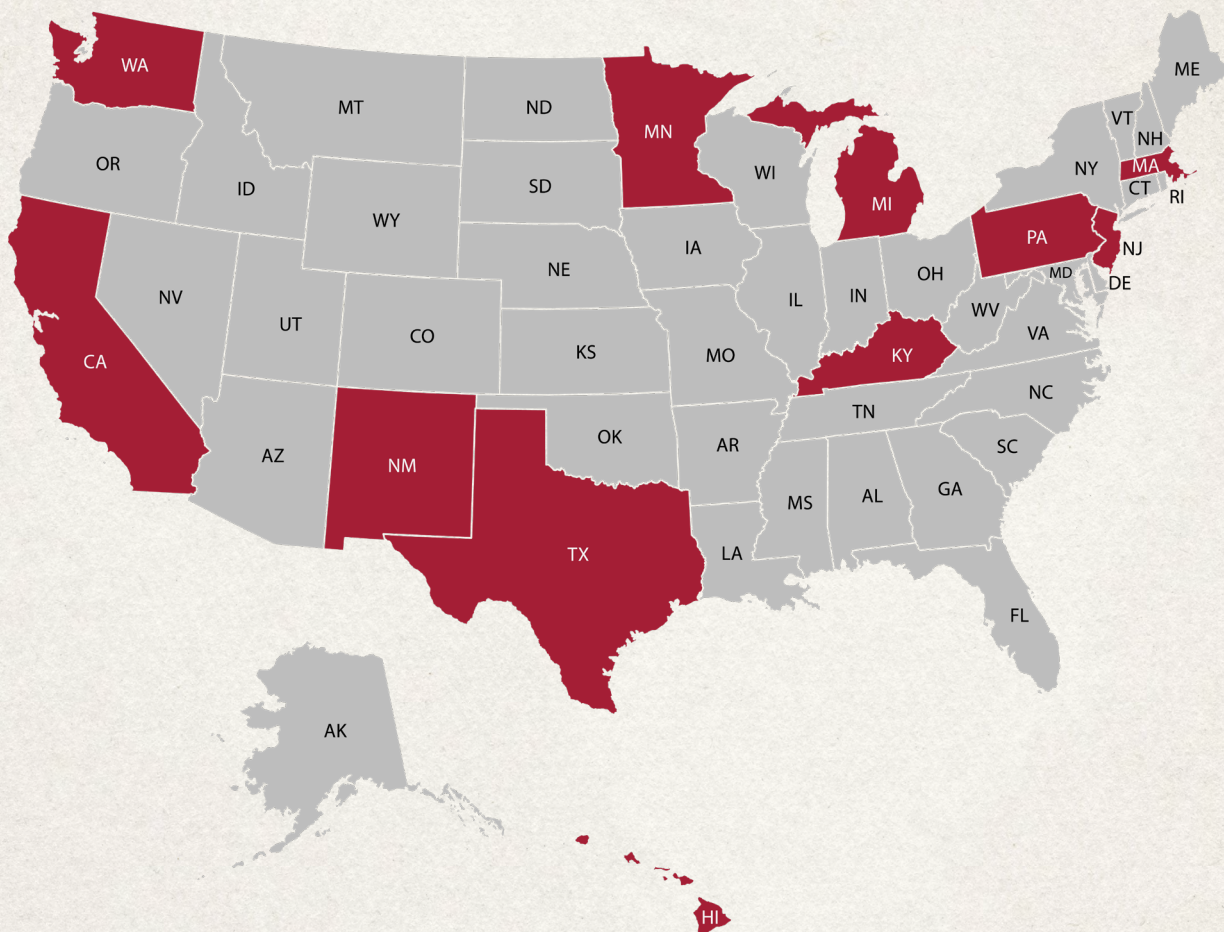
## Texas

The Postsecondary Student Mental Health Coalition is addressing student mental health by developing a state strategic plan and a playbook

for colleges and universities to advance a public health approach to student mental health.

## Washington

The Washington Student Achievement Council aims [to build strategies and catalyze partnerships to address postsecondary basic needs issues in Washington](#).



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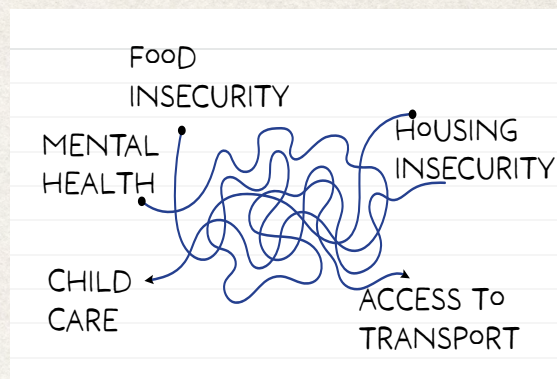
## Honing in on Specific Needs

Many states begin their work by identifying specific basic needs on which to focus. For instance, Michigan's basic needs task force identified food, housing, health & wellness, digital equity, and child care as priority topics for policy recommendations. Minnesota's Student Basic Needs Working Group focused on housing, child care, transportation, health care, mental health care, food insecurity, and financial stability while creating space for discussing additional categories as well as intersections between categories if/when they emerged. As their work developed, both groups added basic needs infrastructure as focus to capture recommendations and proposals necessary to support the ongoing planning, coordination, data collection, and assessment of their respective state's basic needs efforts. The categories you choose to focus on may reflect those used by Michigan and Minnesota or include others, such as personal hygiene, safety, or open educational resources (OER).

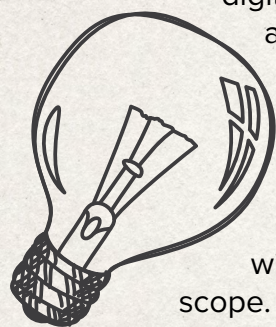
Focusing on and organizing by basic need type is helpful to identify relevant experts and comprehensive solutions within each area. However, it also has some limitations. Hope Center survey data reveal that different types of basic needs insecurity frequently overlap and intersect.

Students experiencing one form of basic needs insecurity are likely to be experiencing other challenges as well. For example, **78% of students experiencing food insecurity in our survey were also experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness; 53% of respondents who were experiencing basic needs insecurity related to food or housing were also experiencing anxiety and/or depression; and 28% of parenting students who missed three or more classes due to child care access had also missed class or work due to transportation access.** Relatedly, many basic needs solutions and

policy opportunities respond to more than one type of need. For example, basic needs hubs and navigators as well as policy opportunities to link data sources and enhance outreach for public benefits all serve to help connect students to a range of resources and meet multiple basic needs.



Michigan found that so many of its policy recommendations spanned food, housing, health, and digital equity that they ultimately organized [their report](#) into recommendations to bolster and enhance access to existing resources, establish new resources, and strengthen impact through improved data.



As in Michigan's case, you might also consider grouping ideas by broader conceptual categories instead of—or in addition to—organizing by specific needs. For example, it may be beneficial to organize recommendations by whether they will require institutional, legislative, or state agency authority, if all are within your scope. Alternatively, you may wish to differentiate between ideas that can be completed in the short-term versus the long-term or those that will require minimal resources to implement versus those necessitating a substantial investment of funds, personnel, and/or technology to achieve.

## Identifying Key Student Populations

Consider also how you will address the needs of specific student populations, such as:

- ☑ undocumented students
- ☑ rural students
- ☑ students of color
- ☑ adult students
- ☑ international students
- ☑ students involved with the carceral system
- ☑ LGBTQIA+ students
- ☑ parenting students,
- ☑ former foster youth
- ☑ community college students

One option is to opt for a “rising tide lifts all boats” approach that focuses on ideas that will do the greatest good for the greatest number of students. [Evidence](#) indicates, however, that an

intentional focus on equity is needed to address long-standing inequities and truly “lift all boats”. An alternative approach would be to focus on one or more specific populations as you identify policy opportunities or practices to scale. Or, add a focus like “addressing inequities” as part of your goals. Minnesota worked broadly but indicated “special population impact...in the overview for highlighted proposals” (p. 4 of their [report](#)). They aligned their efforts with the [state's educational attainment goal](#), which recognizes existing racial gaps in attainment and sets specific benchmarks for all races and ethnicities as interim goals.



Meanwhile, the Michigan task force met with students with a range of identities to better understand their lived experiences and to obtain their input on the framing and prioritization of the proposed recommendations.

## Tailoring your Communications

Who you communicate your work to, through what means, and with what language is likely to have significant bearing on your work's impact. Institutional leadership may be motivated by improving educational outcomes or by preventing overburdened staff from taking on additional responsibilities while state legislators may want to prioritize maintaining a balanced state budget.

Consider the type of content that your intended audience prefers. For example, state agency officials may value a detailed report that clearly outlines the technical details of a proposed change. Faculty, meanwhile, likely lack the time to pour over a lengthy document and prefer to receive information through a brief training session or webinar.

Flexibility and adaptability will be key to your success. What works well with one audience may not work with another. Individuals and groups within your target audience may vary as well. Some legislators may demand detailed data demonstrating the need and potential impact, while others may be more easily persuaded by student stories or other narrative framing. You might find success with some officials by outlining the economic impact of changes to existing policies and practices by demonstrating that certain changes would be easy and low cost—potentially even making existing workflows more efficient.



Often, one of the outcomes of a state basic needs task force or working group is a deliverable such as a report, toolkit, or policy agenda that identifies key challenges facing students in your state, describes promising practices or potential models for institutions to use in supporting students, or offers recommendations for changes to state or institutional policy and practice. Our report—

[Barriers to Bridges: Strengthening Michigan Communities by Addressing College Student Basic Needs](#)—in collaboration with the Office of Higher Education in the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential, emerged from the findings of one such task force. The [Minnesota Office of Higher Education also released a similar report](#) that can offer a blueprint for states looking to expand their basic needs supports for college students.

With your scope, goals, and audience defined, you can now begin identifying who you need on your team to advance progress. More details can be found in the next brief, [II: Building a Team for and with Students](#).