

How to Become a Basic Needs-Forward College



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About People-Centered Design at SJI

The People-Centered Design (PCD) team is part of Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI), a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting individuals from underinvested communities in building sustainable careers. SJI offers employment and training programs locally and provides research, evaluation, and technical assistance services to workforce development and higher education partners nationally. The People-Centered Design team partners with higher education institutions, government agencies, and community organizations to elevate student and participant voices, improve how programs and services work, use data more effectively, and connect more people to the resources they need.

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Purpose of this Guide

Who should use this guide?

This guide is intended for higher education staff, faculty, administrators, and practitioners who wish to strengthen the basic needs services and resources available to students at their institutions.

What this guide is designed to do

This guide is designed to help you determine how to advance your basic needs services in a way that **centers the needs and interests of students**. It describes key characteristics of “basic needs-forward” colleges and provides assessment tools and a step-by-step process to help you and your college progress further along the path to becoming basic needs-forward.

What’s included? What’s not?

This guide describes what it takes for a college to deliver high-quality, student-centered basic needs supports. It is not meant to offer a comprehensive list of supports that a college should provide, nor does it include a list of “best” or promising practices related to basic needs delivery, although we do include selected examples where relevant.

Important notes

We recognize that every college has unique populations, contexts, and local resources that will shape their approach to this work. While the practices described in this guide should be generally applicable, they draw from our work and interviews with a subset of institutions and may not reflect all possible approaches to building the capacity to deliver high-quality, student-centered basic needs supports.

We consider this guide a preliminary effort and expect it to evolve over time. We hope to be able to publish updated versions based on further research, on-the-ground work with institutions, and feedback from those who read and use it. As such, we would welcome your feedback on how it can be improved and made more useful to you. You can email your feedback to the People-Centered Design team at: pcd@seattlejobsinit.com.

How We Developed this Guide

For several years, the People-Centered Design team has worked with higher education institutions to both connect more students to basic needs supports and evolve their basic needs infrastructure. As part of this work, we have conducted interviews and surveys with students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with basic needs insecurity and accessing supports. We have also sought to learn how institutions can be proactive and creative in the basic needs space, focusing on the following questions:

1. What does a basic needs-forward college look like?
2. What does it take to get there?

To help answer these questions, we conducted a literature review and interviewed 20+ institutions, researchers, and practitioners across the country who have established or contributed to basic needs programs and their evolution. The goals of this project, which took place in summer and fall 2023, were to:

1. Learn how interviewees built the capacity to offer basic needs services effectively and sustainably
2. Advance a common understanding of promising practices for building a basic needs forward college
3. Develop practical guidance to aid institutions in carrying out this work

This guide shares selected findings from our research along with insights from our work on the ground with institutions. We hope that it can assist you in developing your own plan for advancing basic needs work at your institution.

How to Use This Guide

This guide has four primary sections:

1. [Key Definitions](#)
2. [Characteristics of Basic Needs-Forward Colleges](#)
3. [How Do Colleges Become Basic Needs-Forward](#)
4. [Your Path to Becoming Basic Needs-Forward](#)

Each section builds on the previous one, so it is most valuable to read them in order. However, if you'd like to jump directly into taking action, section four is where you will find a process and tools to help you determine key areas of focus and a plan for advancing your basic needs efforts.

Key Definitions

What are basic needs?

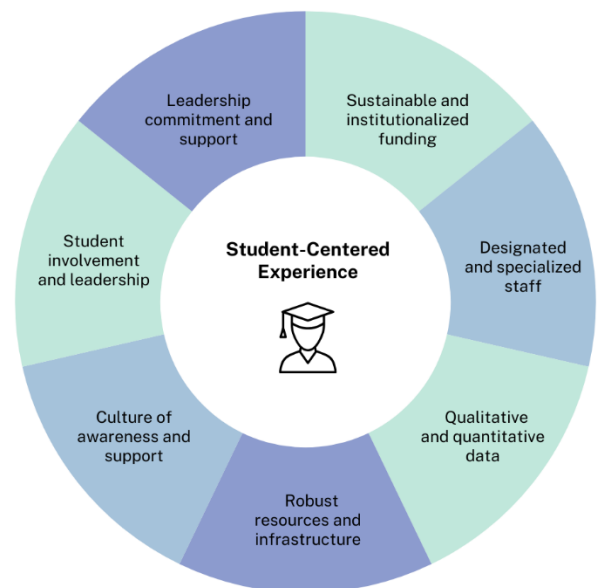
We define basic needs as essential resources that students need to survive and thrive in college and in daily life. These resources can include: food, housing, utilities, hygiene supplies, mental and physical healthcare, transportation, childcare, financial support to cover college costs and living expenses, public benefits (like SNAP¹), employment services, legal aid, and social and community support.

Note: This list reflects a holistic view of what comprehensive basic needs supports can look like, though colleges may not be able to provide or facilitate access to every service. Each institution should consider what falls within their capacity and scope and **prioritize based on the most pressing needs of their students.**

What is a basic needs-forward college?

While no two basic needs-forward colleges are the same, they frequently share the following characteristics:

1. They offer a **student-centered experience**, which means that they intentionally prioritize students' needs, interests, and experiences in the design and delivery of their basic needs services and resources.
2. They have established key **foundational components** which make it possible to provide students with basic needs supports sustainably and at scale. These foundational components include:
 1. Leadership commitment and support
 2. Sustainable and institutionalized funding
 3. Designated and specialized staff
 4. Qualitative and quantitative data
 5. Robust resources and infrastructure
 6. Culture of awareness and support
 7. Student involvement and leadership



In the sections that follow, we further describe what these characteristics entail.

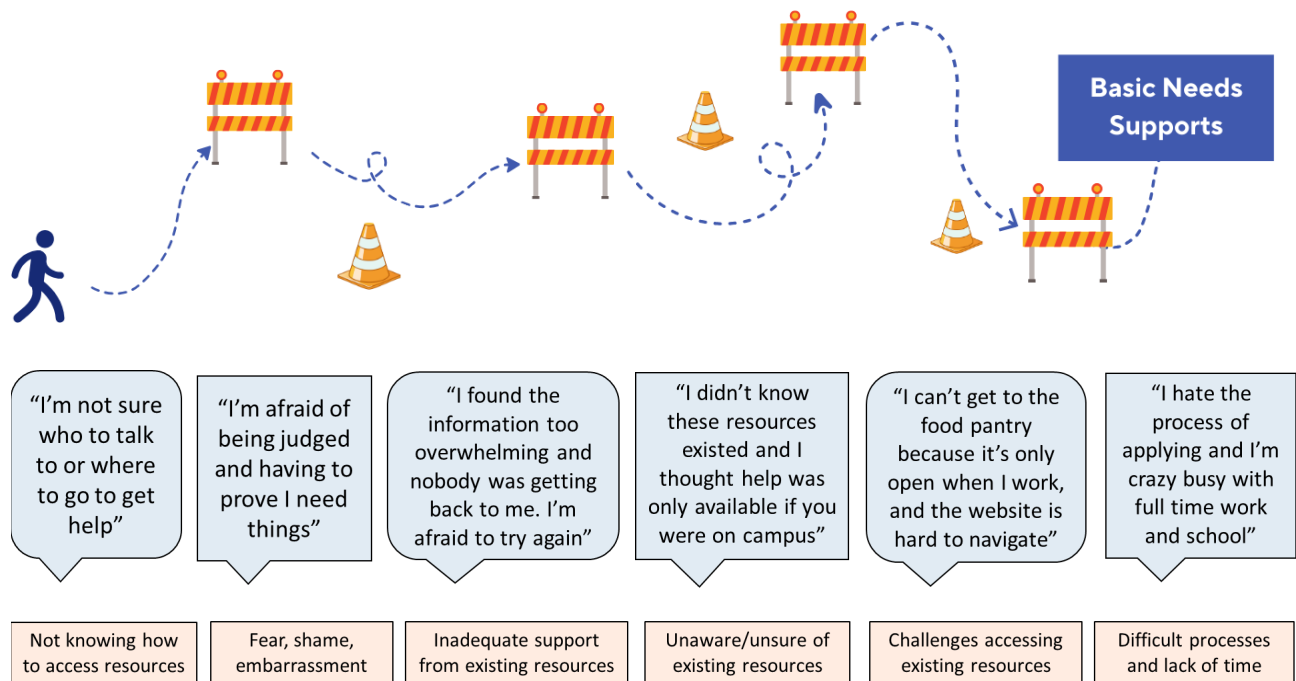
¹ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Characteristics of Basic Needs-Forward Colleges

Student-Centered Experience

How do basic needs-forward colleges offer a student-centered experience?

Basic needs-forward colleges ensure that students can easily access the services and resources that they need, when and how they need them, in a way that feels supportive and affirming. This is critical, as the process of accessing resources can be rife with challenges.



Common challenges cited by students include:

Challenges to awareness and access

- Limited awareness of resources
- Not knowing where to go and/or how to get started
- Confusion due to unclear or inconsistent information
- Complex bureaucratic processes (e.g., application, referral, and information verification processes)
- Rigid policies that do not accommodate their needs and realities

Challenges related to beliefs and emotions

- Fear and shame about the stigma of being basic needs insecure
- Feeling too overwhelmed to figure out how to access resources
- Believing that they are ineligible for resources
- Believing that others need resources more than they do
- Concern about the potential financial cost of seeking resources
- Concern about having to prove that they need and deserve support

Logistical and operational barriers

- Lack of time or competing demands (“too much on my plate”)
- Inadequate support and/or follow-up from staff
- Insufficient availability of services and resources
- Misalignment between available resources and students’ needs

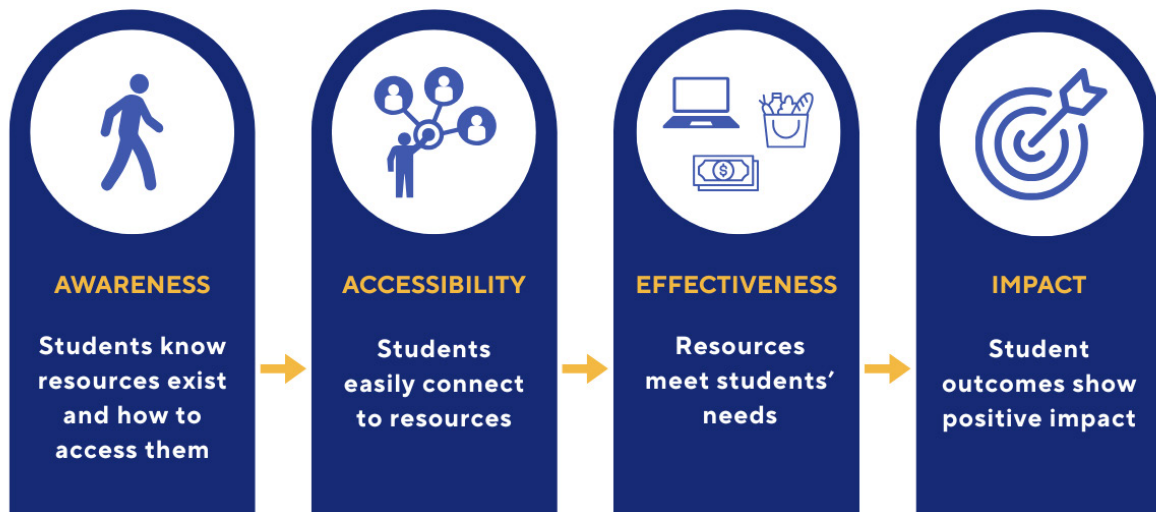
All too often, the onus falls on students to seek out resources, which means they must frequently navigate these challenges on their own. Basic needs-forward colleges are intentional about removing these challenges in order to simplify and streamline the path to resource access. In other words, they make it as easy as possible for students to get the help that they need.

What does a student-centered experience look like?

There are four outcomes that we believe are essential to providing a student-centered experience:

1. Awareness – Students know resources exist and how to access them
2. Accessibility – Students easily connect to resources
3. Effectiveness – Resources meet students’ needs
4. Impact – Student outcomes show positive impact

These outcomes are depicted in the figure on the next page.



We based this figure on our work with colleges and key characteristics that students have shared with us when describing positive experiences accessing basic needs resources. These characteristics include:

- **Timely information:** Students learned about the right resource(s) at the right time
- **Quick and easy assistance:** Students found it easy to apply for assistance, connect with someone who could help them, and/or quickly get answers to their questions
- **Positive impact and experience:** Students received resource(s) that either met or significantly reduced their unmet needs, and they reported an overall positive experience accessing them

Basic needs-forward colleges continuously work to evolve their basic needs offerings to achieve the four outcomes described above. This work typically entails the implementation of campus-wide practices, policies, and infrastructure that help foster these outcomes. For example, a college might have a *practice* of assessing students for basic needs insecurity and a *policy* to follow up with students facing acute insecurity within 24-48 hours. Their efforts might be supported by case management software (*infrastructure*) that allows staff to coordinate student support, thus reducing the need for students to visit multiple offices and explain their situation to multiple people.

The table on the next page shares additional examples that were present at many of the colleges we interviewed.

Example methods that help foster a student-centered experience

<p>Awareness</p> <p>Students know resources exist and how to access them</p>	College embeds student-friendly and up-to-date basic needs information in key student touchpoints and processes (e.g., website, registration, orientation, financial aid, advising meetings, classrooms, campus and sporting events, etc.)
	College assesses students for basic needs insecurity (using financial aid data and/or student surveys, for example) and proactively reaches out to students to match them with the appropriate services
	Faculty share information about basic needs services with students in class
	Staff/faculty/administrators receive training on basic needs services available at the institution, how to speak with students about basic needs, and how to easily refer students to services
<p>Accessibility</p> <p>Students easily access available resources</p>	Applications for basic needs supports are simple and do not request information already collected; support with the application process is readily available
	College has an alert and triage system that allows anyone (students, staff, faculty, administrators) to submit a student referral for basic needs support and receive a quick follow-up
	Staff use a case management system to coordinate basic needs service provision
	College has a centralized basic needs “hub” with services available at convenient times for students who work and/or have family responsibilities
<p>Effectiveness</p> <p>Available resources meet students’ needs</p>	College has a regular practice of identifying where gaps exist in its basic needs offerings and addressing these gaps
	College provides resources to students in a way that effectively meets students’ areas of unmet need (e.g., the number and amount of resources is sufficient and the format/process in which resources are provided is timely and friction-free)
	College has strong partnerships with community-based agencies and providers that either complement its services or offer resources that the college cannot provide directly
	College has designated basic needs staff who have training in key support areas (such as social work, mental health, and public benefits), and who can provide services and support in alignment with students’ needs and interests
<p>Impact</p> <p>Student outcomes show positive impact</p>	College tracks relevant quantitative and qualitative data to assess whether students’ unmet need is being met and/or substantially alleviated by college’s basic needs services/programs, and makes the changes needed to continuously improve these outcomes
	College tracks quantitative and qualitative data to assess whether basic needs supports correlate to students’ success at achieving their academic goals

How do basic needs-forward colleges know that their offerings are student-centered?

To help ensure that their offerings are student-centered, basic needs-forward colleges engage in the following practices:

1. They actively **seek input and feedback from students** to understand students' unmet needs, challenges, and expectations when accessing basic needs support. They then **use this information to craft, enhance, and improve** their basic needs services and resources.
2. They **track and measure the impact of these services** via data and indicators focused on the student experience.

Gathering and acting on student feedback

Basic needs-forward colleges gather student feedback via a combination of formal and informal engagement methods. Engagement methods exist on a spectrum, ranging from one-way feedback methods to deeper forms of student leadership and collaboration, as indicated in the table below.

Example student engagement methods

Type of Engagement	Example Methods
One-way feedback	Surveys, questionnaires
Two-way exchanges	Interviews, focus groups, informal conversations
Experience-based feedback	Secret shoppers, service walk-throughs ²
Student leadership and collaboration	Student advisory boards, student liaisons, student co-design teams or committees

Basic needs-forward colleges are intentional about their approach to student engagement, aligning their methods of engagement with the questions they wish to answer and the students they wish to engage. They consider whether specific voices are missing in their feedback and actively work to reach students from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances.

² Experience-based activities can also be done by staff and faculty periodically to assess—and better understand—the experience of accessing resources and what the process is like for students.

They are also intentional about turning student feedback into meaningful action. A college may, for example, use student feedback to:

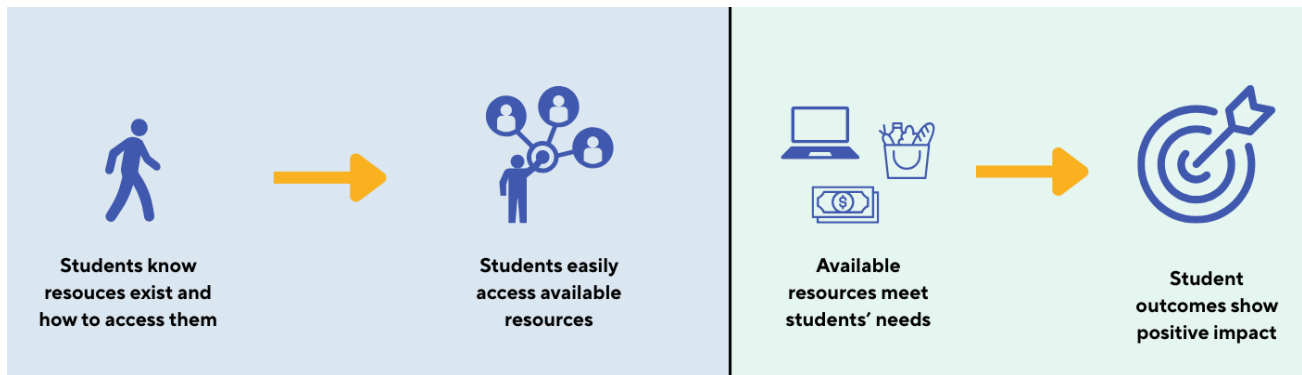
- Identify areas of unmet need and how to address it through targeted services and resources
- Assess the reach of current offerings and adjust outreach strategies to better connect with students who need support
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing resources in meeting or reducing students' unmet needs and make improvements where needed
- Gain insight into students' experiences accessing resources and make improvements based on their feedback

Tracking and measuring impact

To track and measure the impact of their offerings, basic needs-forward colleges ideally use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data and indicators. Indicators are measures that allow you to track progress over time and help you understand how close you are to a goal or desired outcome.

Below are example indicators that you can use to track progress toward the outcomes in the student-centered experience graphic above. We suggest disaggregating indicator data by demographic factors (such as age, gender, enrollment status, disability, etc.) to better understand how well you are reaching all students experiencing basic needs insecurity, and to identify any differences in access and support across different groups.

Example indicators of a student-centered experience



Primarily Quantitative Indicators		
<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Accessibility</i>	<i>Effectiveness and Impact</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and/or percentage of students with unmet need who are aware of resources • Number and/or percentage of students with unmet need who know how to access resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and/or percentage of students who receive support/resources • Number and/or percentage of students who receive support/resources within x hours/days of initial contact • Length of time it took for students to connect with a staff person after making initial contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and/or percentage of students whose unmet need is met/alleviated through basic needs services/programs • Number and/or percentage of students who report having a supportive and positive experience when connecting with basic needs services/programs • Number and/or percentage of students who report that services/support helped them continue in their coursework and/or graduate • Retention, credential attainment, graduate rates, and/or career advancement of students who received resources vs. similar groups of students who did not receive resources (this would typically require a study such as a randomized control trial)
Primarily Qualitative Indicators		
<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Accessibility</i>	<i>Effectiveness and Impact</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources students are/are not aware of • Why students are aware or unaware of specific resources • How students learned about specific resources • What students know about how to access resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' experiences when accessing resources • How easy or difficult students found the process of accessing resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of time it took for students to receive resources • Extent to which the resources students received met or alleviated their areas of unmet need • Extent to which resources and services provided aligned with students' needs and circumstances • If/how students were helped by resources and services received in students' own words

Important notes:

- The example indicators above are both quantitative *and* qualitative, and this combination is essential. While it is common for institutions to establish primarily quantitative indicators, qualitative indicators are equally necessary to help you understand the extent to which your basic needs offerings are helping students and how and where to make improvements. For example, quantitative indicators might help you determine if there are gaps in students' access to and use of resources, but they rarely explain the "why." Qualitative data can help you identify and understand the causes behind the gaps.
- It is helpful to establish clear targets prior to selecting your indicators. Doing this will help you ensure alignment between what you are measuring and what you wish to achieve. You will also need to assess the data available to you to confirm that you will be able to reliably track each indicator. The table below provides an example of a target, indicator, and potential data source(s) that can be used to assess progress toward the third outcome described above ("students easily access available resources").

Outcome	Target	Indicator	Potential data source(s)
Students easily access available resources	By [date] increase the number of students with unmet need who receive basic needs support by XX%	# and % of students with unmet need who receive basic needs support on a monthly/quarterly/yearly basis	Student survey/assessment; data collected by college's basic needs service departments and/or benefits hub

Basic needs forward institutions have the student experience at the core of their basic needs services and supports. Below we discuss the foundational components that enable colleges to provide student-centered supports sustainably and at scale.

Foundational Components

What are the key foundational components needed to offer a student-centered experience?

Basic needs-forward colleges recognize that they must establish the right structures, resources, and capacities to sustainably offer the student-centered experience described earlier. We call these elements “foundational components.” Having these components in place, and continuously strengthening them, is the second part of being basic needs-forward.

Below are short descriptions of seven foundational components that have come up most frequently in our experience and work with colleges³, supplemented with illustrative quotes from our interviews.

Leadership commitment and support

What it looks like: The college president and administration are committed to building out student-centered basic needs supports across the institution. They demonstrate this commitment by:

- Incorporating basic needs into the college’s strategic goals/plan, ensuring the effective implementation of basic needs efforts, and normalizing the provision of basic needs supports in daily activities
- Advocating for, raising, and allocating funding for basic needs work
- Appointing one or more senior-level administrator(s) to spearhead and build out basic needs infrastructure, services, policies, and resources at the college and ensuring that they have the support and resources to carry out this work
- Communicating the importance of basic needs resources campus-wide, participating in basic needs-related activities, and learning from and acting on the recommendations of those leading the programs (including students)⁴

“Oh my gosh, you need good leadership! Leadership has to be aligned with the mission and values of basic needs and the connection to student success. If your leadership already started to say something like, ‘well, why are we doing social service?’ then they don’t get it. And they need to get it. So that’s the number one thing, is the top-down leadership.”

³ Foundational components are not necessarily listed in order of how frequently they were mentioned in our work or research

⁴ See also: Barnett, Elisabeth A, Selena Cho, and Andrea Lopez Salazar. “Implementing Caring Campus: Strategies College Presidents Use to Improve Culture and Support Reform,” 2023.

Sustainable and institutionalized funding

What it looks like: The college's funding for basic needs services, resources, and staffing is sustainable, diversified, and institutionalized. In other words:

- Available funding allows staff to promote basic needs services without worrying about having to turn students away if resources run out
- The college has diversified its basic needs funding sources and is not reliant on a single source
- Basic needs funding is an ongoing part of the college's budget
- The college has a funding plan in place to sustain and grow basic needs services and resources for at least the next two years
- Long-term funding is sufficient to allow the college the flexibility to pilot new projects or improvements with short-term funds

"[U]nfunded initiatives are very common in higher education...And so, to avoid that, I think lead with the idea of funding first. So...how are you funding the initiatives that you have in mind? I don't think that you have to have secured funding before you can start thinking about it, but I think that funding always has to be a part of the conversation."

Designated and specialized staff

What it looks like: The college employs staff with specialized training in basic needs, clearly designated basic needs-focused responsibilities, and sufficient time and capacity to provide services that are accessible, timely, consistent, and high quality from students' perspectives. This is achieved through:

- Enough staff to keep services open as often and as long as possible, including for students in evening programs or those needing access during irregular hours
- Staff receiving salaries that demonstrate their value, with caseloads that are not too high, which may reduce turnover and prevent the loss of knowledge and strategic vision
- A basic needs director who is not wearing too many "hats" and can dedicate their efforts to building out basic needs supports and making student-centered improvements
- Hiring or contracting staff with specific expertise, such as social workers or experts in public benefits (e.g., SNAP eligibility and enrollment)
- Staff having access to professional development, technical assistance, and other supports such as learning communities with colleagues (at both their own college and other institutions)

"[Basic needs work] can't be another hat for a person who was already working there...[Y]ou can pull a person from a job and give them a new job, but don't give them multiple jobs...Pay that person well and let them be able to oversee [basic needs]."

Qualitative and quantitative data

What it looks like: The college gathers, analyzes, and uses both qualitative and quantitative data to understand student needs, improve basic needs offerings, and grow support and funding for basic needs resources and initiatives. This entails having:

- Established processes—and ideally data systems—for collecting and tracking both quantitative and qualitative metrics (see the [“example indicators of a student-centered experience”](#) table above for example quantitative and qualitative indicators)
- The ability to use quantitative data to identify patterns in basic needs supports (such as usage rates or access gaps among groups) and qualitative data to understand the nuanced student experiences behind these patterns
- Strong cross-campus partnerships to facilitate data collection and analysis and the involvement of Institutional Research to help provide training and guidance on ethical, meaningful, and sound data interpretation
- The ability to use institutional data (e.g., student financial, demographic, or outcome data) to understand the impact of basic needs support on student success⁵
- A regular practice of using data for:
 - Continuous evaluation and improvement of basic needs supports
 - Building campus-wide awareness and support for basic needs work
 - Gaining buy-in from college leadership and providing leadership with the necessary information to allocate sufficient resources to basic needs initiatives
 - Securing additional funding by demonstrating both the importance and impact of basic needs services and resources

“Probably the most valuable thing we’ve done and continue to do is talk with students...Quantitative research is very important, but the qualitative model really lets them talk...and you can dig a little deeper...so we can best get ideas from what people really need, not what we think we need.”

⁵ For a discussion of traditional and holistic measures of student success that are, and could be, used by colleges, see: Blankstein, Melissa, and Christine Wolff-Eisenberg “Measuring the Whole Student: Landscape Review of Traditional and Holistic Approaches to Community College Student Success.” Ithaca S+R, September 30, 2020.

Robust resources and infrastructure

What it looks like: The college has a robust system of basic needs supports that effectively addresses a wide range of students' immediate and long-term needs. The college also has the physical, organizational, and technological infrastructure necessary to proactively connect students to these supports at scale. This is accomplished by having:

- A range of services that address key areas of need, such as food, housing, transportation, healthcare, emergency aid, financial assistance, social support, and help accessing resources like public benefits (e.g., SNAP), legal aid, and employment services.⁶
- Strong relationships with community organizations to address needs that the college cannot meet or supplement and complement current offerings
- Partnerships between basic needs staff, internal offices (e.g., Financial Aid), and public benefits experts to coordinate assistance in ways that avoid unintended impacts on students' eligibility for financial aid or other assistance (e.g., Pell Grants affecting Housing and Urban Development [HUD] funding, or emergency aid reducing financial aid or SNAP benefits, etc.)
- A one-stop basic needs "hub" that is centrally located and easily accessible to students, offering basic needs services at times that are convenient for students with diverse schedules. As much as possible, services should be available to students both in-person and online
- A clear and easily navigable website with up-to-date information on available basic needs resources, including how to access them (e.g., where to go, what to bring), locations, hours, and contact information
- An organizational structure (such as a committee) that coordinates basic needs services and outreach across campus and advocates for resources and policy changes (at institutional, association, state, and federal levels) to create systemic improvements with long term impacts for large numbers of students
- IT systems and infrastructure that make it possible to match students with resources, provide streamlined case management, obtain feedback from students, gather data, and track outcomes

"Partnerships are hugely important, a basic needs program cannot be effective without partnerships on campus...partner with as many community agencies as you can to make sure that you're closing the gaps and that you have something available for students instead of having to turn students away...partner with institutional effectiveness to get the data to inform your work."

⁶See Speirs et al. 2023 for a related and helpful way of categorizing different types of needs.⁷ For an excellent report on partnering with financial aid offices, see: "Promising Partnerships: Supporting College Student Success Through Collaboration Between Basic Needs and Financial Aid Offices | JBAY," March 24, 2023. <https://jbay.org/resources/promising-partnerships-report/>.

Culture of awareness and support

What it looks like: A campus environment where access to basic needs support is normalized. Services are widely promoted and there is universal awareness of and open discussion about available resources. Students, faculty, and staff all understand how to access and provide support, helping create a stigma-free atmosphere around seeking help. Key aspects include:

- Highly visible basic needs resources that are consistently presented and promoted through multiple channels, with basic needs information integrated into regular campus communications and open basic needs-related discussions taking place in various settings
- Staff, faculty, and administration who are committed to basic needs work and trained in areas such as addressing basic needs insecurity, understanding the resources available on campus, discussing these resources with students, and making warm referrals to the appropriate services
- Clear policies that empower all departments and offices (e.g. financial aid) to actively participate in providing support, granting them the authority to make decisions and utilize available options to help students access resources⁷
- Continued advocacy for improvements and additional support and funding from leadership

“[W]e wanted...to make sure that regardless of where the student was in their journey, that the knowledge about basic needs [supports] was inescapable.”

⁷ For an excellent report on partnering with financial aid offices, see: “Promising Partnerships: Supporting College Student Success Through Collaboration Between Basic Needs and Financial Aid Offices | JBAY,” March 24, 2023. <https://jbay.org/resources/promising-partnerships-report/>.

Student involvement and leadership

What it looks like: Students play a central role in designing, implementing, and leading basic needs services and initiatives. Students are not just consulted, but are active, empowered partners, using their expertise and lived experiences to shape programs, reduce stigma, and drive institutional change. Core strategies include:

- Students in roles that go beyond advisory positions, serving as paid staff, ambassadors, advocates, and leaders in the college's basic needs work
- Meaningful student involvement in the entire process of designing and delivering basic needs supports, including awareness-building and marketing activities
- Including and amplifying the voices of students who are often underrepresented, ensuring that input comes from students with diverse backgrounds and experiences, not just from those with existing institutional power or privilege
- Demonstrating responsiveness to student feedback through direct, tangible programmatic and structural improvements based on their suggestions
- Recognizing and compensating students as subject matter experts and providing them with impactful leadership opportunities

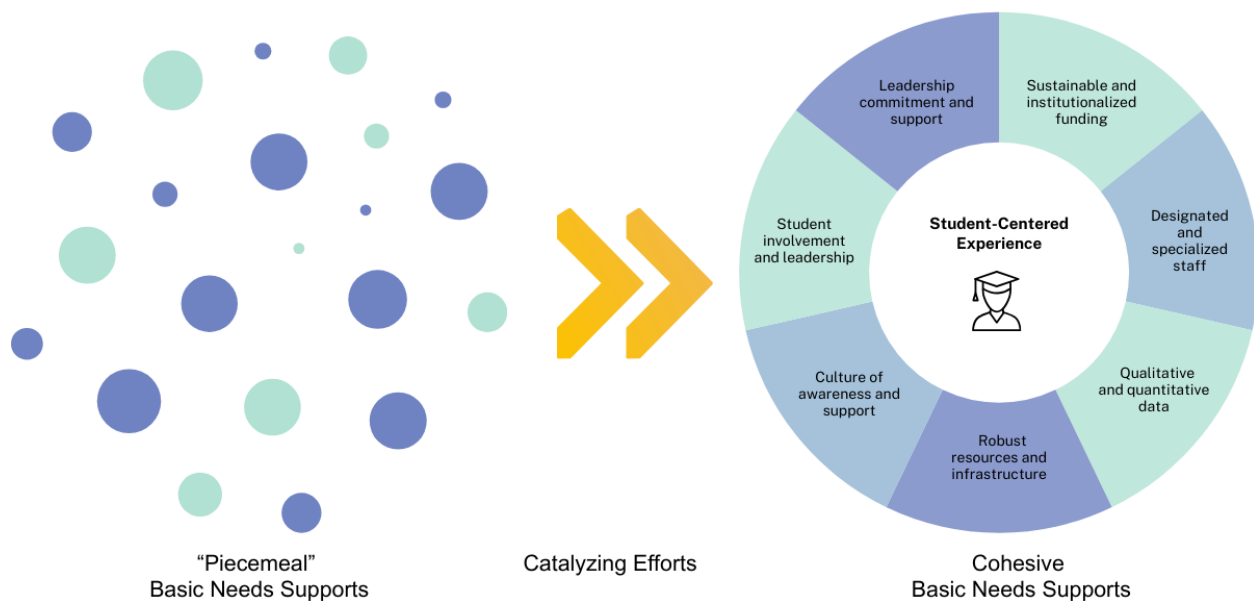
“My early strategies were if...I'm bluntly being told no, I need to then work with student leaders because they have a different access...to voice requests or demands... [It is important to be] working with both my partners and colleagues...but also really working with students - understanding what their needs and what their concerns are, and also helping them develop into leaders that can advocate better for this work.”

How Do Colleges Become Basic Needs-Forward?

The Impact of Catalyzing Efforts

The colleges we interviewed followed a common trajectory in becoming basic needs-forward. Each began with a “piecemeal” assortment of basic needs supports, which they transformed into more cohesive, student-centered offerings through a series of “catalyzing efforts.”

The journey to becoming basic needs-forward



Basic needs supports can be considered “piecemeal” when they are not consistently available to all students experiencing basic needs insecurity. A college may, for example, offer basic needs services that:

- Are unknown to many of the students who could benefit from them
- Live in specific departments (and are thus more readily accessible to students in those departments)
- Are highly valuable but restricted to specific groups or populations of students
- Are available across the institution but plagued by inadequate funding and/or staffing (e.g., a food pantry or emergency funds program that cannot easily meet demand and/or offers variable quality or service levels due to capacity constraints)

“Catalyzing efforts” are actions and events that can help the college develop the basic needs-forward characteristics described earlier: offering a student-centered experience and establishing the foundational components needed to do so sustainably and at scale. Catalyzing efforts generate momentum, awareness, and investment in basic needs supports at the college, providing the necessary push for institutions to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of becoming basic needs-forward. Below are some examples of catalyzing efforts that occurred at the colleges we interviewed.

- Staff led an effort to survey students to assess levels of basic needs insecurity. They presented survey results to leadership to make a case for making basic needs supports more widely available to students at the college
- Student groups mobilized to help pass a student fee referendum which supported the expansion of their small food pantry into a fully-fledged basic needs center with a wider array of resources
- The college president directed staff to prioritize basic needs in the institution’s strategic plan and supported efforts to build basic needs capacity throughout the college
- State legislation required colleges to establish basic needs-forward practices, such as developing basic needs centers (e.g., California) and putting basic needs navigators on public college campuses (e.g., California, Oregon, Washington, and Illinois)

Common Routes to Becoming Basic Needs-Forward

Every college starts in a different place and uses a different combination of catalyzing efforts. These efforts are shaped by each college’s unique context, which includes internal factors (such as senior leadership priorities and staff/student advocacy) and external factors (such as local higher education policy and available funding). These contextual factors influence which catalyzing efforts are most feasible and available to the college, as well as the “route” each college takes when transforming into a basic needs-forward institution. Below are three common routes that we have identified, based on the experiences of the colleges that we interviewed:

- Route 1: Leadership-driven approaches directed by the president and/or senior administration
- Route 2: Ground-up efforts driven by staff and student advocacy
- Route 3: Policy-mandated changes required by state legislation



Each route draws on a **specific combination of catalyzing efforts** paired with **strategic use of data** to build momentum and demonstrate impact.

Route 1: Leadership-driven approaches directed by the president or senior administration

Colleges that take this route have leadership that is supportive of and committed to basic needs work. Leadership ensures that basic needs work is a campus-wide priority and removes or mitigates obstacles to this work. Example catalyzing efforts driven by leadership can include:

- Initiating research and survey efforts to understand the types and extent of need for their students and what can be done to address it
- Embedding basic needs efforts into the college's strategic plan, goals, values, policies, and overall culture
- Establishing basic needs-focused staff positions and allocating resources to basic needs efforts
- Collaborating with other college leaders to learn, develop strategies, and advocate for policy change at association, state, and federal levels
- Leading fundraising efforts and allocating existing resources to build, expand, and improve basic needs services and resources at the college
- Ensuring active student involvement in basic needs initiatives
- **Data use:** Leaders use compelling, data-based evidence to drive strategy and fundraising, including data on basic needs insecurity and its impact on student outcomes, metrics on program usage and effectiveness, and student stories that highlight how basic needs services have supported their persistence and success.

Route 2: Ground-up efforts driven by staff and student advocacy

Colleges that take this route begin with limited institutional support. Their basic needs work is driven by fiercely dedicated and passionate staff and students who build momentum from the ground up. Example catalyzing efforts driven by staff and students include:

- Organizing volunteers to launch “scrappy” efforts such as providing “grab and go” snack packs to students, conducting short interviews with students to learn how to improve services, creating and posting flyers about available resources, and developing basic needs workshops for staff and faculty
- Building and maintaining internal and external partnerships to garner and coordinate basic needs resources and support for students
- Running small pilots to collect data that demonstrates both the need for and value of

“We just did [the basic needs work], and there wasn't really a good model for that before. I think a lot of it had to do with, people like [us] just not shutting our mouths about it...we fired up student government and we fired up other students on campus and we made it visible...people couldn't not see it.”

basic needs services, and using this information to raise campus awareness and demand support from leadership

- **Data use:** Staff and students strategically collect and use both new and existing data to raise awareness and grow support among leadership, partners, funders, and the campus community. Data can include the results of “scrappy” or pilot efforts and/or existing metrics such as usage rates, how long resources last, student experiences and stories, etc.

Route 3: Policy-mandated changes through state legislation

Colleges that follow this route are required to expand their basic needs services by legislative mandate (typically at the state level). These mandates are often the result of sustained advocacy to inform and gain the support of state legislators by many individuals and groups, including colleges and students. Once enacted, the mandates can serve as catalyzing efforts by directing colleges to implement specific basic needs initiatives within a certain timeframe. They can provide colleges with structure and, in some cases, funding and resources, but require ongoing intentional efforts to expand and improve services. Colleges can leverage and grow their state-mandated work by:

- Building on the foundation provided by state directives and funding (if available) to develop the capacity they need to become basic needs-forward
- Putting in place core elements needed to deliver and grow student-centered services, such as student-centered policies, student feedback mechanisms, effectiveness metrics and indicators, and long-term staffing and funding plans
- Collaborating with peer institutions implementing the same mandates to exchange ideas and share lessons learned and successes
- Developing ways to demonstrate and communicate the impact of state policy changes and advocate for improvements and/or additional support
- **Data use:** Just as college leadership needs thoughtful and well-communicated data to support basic needs efforts, so do state legislators. This includes data on student needs, the impact of basic needs supports, and information on the necessary infrastructure and additional resources needed to deliver these supports effectively.

“That’s a huge thing that I try to tell people, especially as we have a bunch of new programs in the state...you need to track that what you’re doing is improving graduation, retention...we have to have the data to prove it.”

A Process to Foster Growth

Regardless of their route or specific context, the colleges we interviewed grew their basic needs programs through an iterative process. This process involved collecting data, building awareness and support, piloting changes and improvements, and demonstrating impact to gain additional support and drive further growth and investment. Below is a summary of the key steps and activities in this process.

1. Initial data collection

- Collect data and information to assess the current state of basic needs services at the college and identify gaps (e.g., gaps in access, availability, delivery, etc.)
- Survey students to understand the extent and scope of basic needs insecurity on campus (e.g., a college might administer a large national survey, contract with an organization to create and administer a customized survey,⁸ or engage in “grassroots” and less formal surveying efforts)
- Complement quantitative measures with qualitative student experiences

“We started collecting data before we knew what we were going to do with it...And then people were able to use that to help us get that message out where it needed to be because not all of us are influencers or decision makers. But if we can give the people who are the tools that they need to share at those places, then we’re going to do that.”

2. Build awareness and support

- Use data to convey the scope and impact of student basic needs insecurity to college leadership, funders, and the wider campus community
- Share student experiences to highlight the value of and need for basic needs supports (or any needed improvements and expansions)
- Form coalitions and advocacy groups to generate support from leadership, funders, and the campus community
- Work to shift institutional mindsets by reinforcing that meeting students’ basic needs, and removing barriers to access, is central to the mission of colleges, not separate from it
- Use data to make the case for investment in basic needs supports and secure funding

3. Pilot changes and improvements

- Use funding to start a (small) basic needs-related project to address existing gaps and/or enhance existing supports; focus on quality and effective implementation

⁸ Trellis’s Student Financial Wellness Survey is one such survey, the Hope Center at Temple University’s Student Basic Needs survey is another. SJI is also able to work with colleges to create and administer a customized survey.

- Carefully track demand, usage, outcomes, and impact (collect more quantitative and qualitative data about your improvements!)

“We were able to...pilot the [basic needs] program...it was effective, and it was working, it was making a difference. We were collecting data, and we could say, hey, the students who came in and met with us and got extra assistance ...they ended up passing those classes. And so we knew we were on the right track. And I think that that was a huge piece for the campus leadership – to join in and get behind it.”

4. Growth and institutionalization

- Share data from your pilot projects, highlighting improvements, gaps, and additional areas of unmet need, to secure additional support and funding
- Highlight policies, processes, and practices that may need to change to make identified improvements and increase access to available resources (e.g., eligibility criteria or bureaucratic red tape that create barriers for students with unmet need)
- Make your changes permanent by integrating them into daily work and establishing the capacity to sustain them going forward
- Use additional support and funding to make additional improvements and build on initial accomplishments

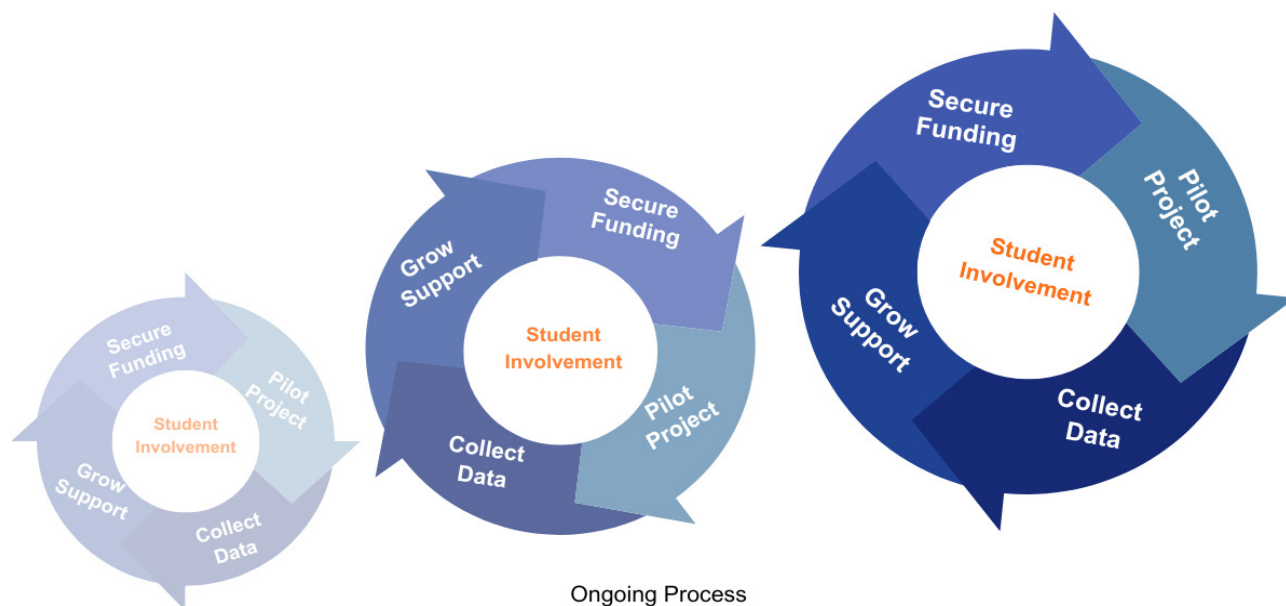
5. Repeat steps 1-4

- Continue gathering data, identifying gaps, advocating for, and improving your basic needs supports

Throughout this process, **student involvement is crucial**. The colleges that we interviewed noted that change is often driven by students and should be informed by student voices, experiences, and feedback. Their participation ensures that basic needs programs remain relevant and impactful, providing value to students *as defined by students*.

“[We need] student feedback so that the student is the focus – so that we’re not structuring systems to make our lives better, but that we’re making the student experience better, and that can only be known from the student voice.”

By engaging in this process, colleges can expand their basic needs services and supports over time, with each cycle building upon the last.



Your Path to Becoming Basic Needs-Forward

This section outlines a process to help you advance your basic needs efforts in alignment with a basic needs-forward approach. Below is an outline of key steps, followed by detailed guidance for completing each one. Also included are assessment tools and worksheets to help you identify where to focus your efforts and how to get started.

High-level steps

1. [Assess your current state](#)

In this section, you will assess current conditions at your institution to establish a baseline for your basic needs work and identify where to focus your advancement efforts. To do this, you will complete two assessments:

- Assessment 1: How **student-centered** is your current basic needs experience?
- Assessment 2: Do you have the **foundational components** needed to deliver a student-centered experience?

2. Identify opportunity areas and improvements

In this section, you will review the results of both assessments, identify opportunity areas, and determine improvements you can make in each opportunity area.

3. Develop catalyzing efforts and your path forward

In this section, you will identify one or more “catalyzing efforts” to help realize the improvements that you identified in step 2.

1. Assess Your Current State

First, it is important to assess your “current state” so that you can both establish a baseline for your basic needs work and identify what steps to take to advance your efforts. Recall from earlier that basic needs-forward colleges share two key characteristics: 1) they offer a student-centered experience, and 2) they have the foundational components needed to do so sustainably and at scale.

How basic needs-forward is your institution currently? To help you answer this question, we have developed two self-assessment tools: a **Student-Centeredness Assessment** and a **Foundational Components Assessment**. These tools can help you determine the extent to which your institution embodies these two characteristics and identify your opportunity areas (e.g., areas to focus your efforts that will lead to becoming basic needs-forward).

Student-Centeredness Assessment

This assessment is designed to help you assess the “student-centeredness” of your current basic needs experience, focusing on three categories: visibility and accessibility of resources, delivery of resources, and quality and value of resources.

Instructions: Read each area listed in the assessment and choose the score (1-5) which best reflects current conditions. If you do not have the information you need to answer the question, place a question mark in the box instead of a numerical score.

Please note that the questions on this assessment are **intended to reflect student experiences and should be answered using student feedback** (supplemented by any additional data that you might have on students’ connection to and use of resources). As such, we recommend that you first gather feedback from students via a survey or other assessment mechanism, then answer the assessment questions based on survey responses. However, college staff, faculty, and administrators can also take this assessment to gain insight into their perception of the “student-centeredness” of the college’s basic needs services.

Important note: This assessment uses **context-dependent terms** such as “small,” “large,” “many,” and “most” (e.g., “many students,” “most students,” etc.). We **intentionally do not define these terms** because the assessment is designed to be taken by institutions of varying sizes and varying numbers of students with unmet need. As such, strict definitions would not consistently apply. We ask instead that you define these terms based on your specific institutional context and the number of students with unmet need that you wish to connect with basic needs resources.

Student-Centeredness Assessment

Visibility and Accessibility of Basic Needs Resources					
1. To what extent are students aware that basic needs resources exist at the college?					Score
Only a small percentage of students know that basic needs resources exist at our college.			A large percentage of students know that basic needs and resources exist at our college.		
1	2	3	4	5	
2. Do students know where to go and how to access these resources?					
Many students are unsure of where to go and how to access resources at our college.			Most students know where to go and how to access the resources at our college.		
1	2	3	4	5	
3. How easy is it for students to see and find clear information about accessing resources?					
Information about resources is inconsistently shared with students and communication channels are limited. Not all resources are listed on our website. Some information is unclear, inaccurate, and/or outdated.			Information about resources is proactively and frequently shared with students through multiple communication channels. Our website contains clear, accurate, and up-to-date information about available resources.		
1	2	3	4	5	
4. How comfortable do students feel accessing resources at the college?					
Many students feel uncomfortable accessing resources, due to emotions such as embarrassment, fear, and/or overwhelm, and/or beliefs regarding ineligibility (“I wouldn’t be eligible for that”) or resource scarcity (e.g., “others need resources more than me”).			Many students feel comfortable accessing resources, trusting that our college will provide the support needed, and are thus less affected by emotions and concerns such as embarrassment, fear, overwhelm, ineligibility, resource scarcity, etc.		
1	2	3	4	5	
5. To what extent are resources and services available when students seek them out?					
Resources and services are inconsistently available when students seek them out (e.g., offices may be closed, appointments difficult to make, questions not sufficiently answered).			Resources and services are nearly always available when students seek them out (e.g., offices are open, appointments easy to make, questions sufficiently and quickly answered).		
1	2	3	4	5	
6. To what extent are students proactively assessed and matched with resources and services?					
The onus is primarily on students to seek out resources at our college. There is no system in place to proactively assess and match students with resources and support.			Students do not have to seek out resources at our college on their own. We have a system in place to proactively assess and match them with the resources and support that they need.		
1	2	3	4	5	

Delivery of Basic Needs Resources					
7. Do the accessibility and quality of available resources vary based on students' circumstances, backgrounds, or schedules?					Score
Resources can vary in accessibility or quality based on students' circumstances, backgrounds, or schedules (e.g., students who work may have difficulty accessing resources during the day).			Resources do not vary in accessibility and quality based on students' circumstances, backgrounds, or schedules.		
1	2	3	4	5	
8. How easy is it for students to receive resources?					
Many students encounter challenges or delays in receiving resources due to bureaucracy: rigid policies, inefficient processes and/or friction (e.g., complex paperwork, unclear info, verification requirements, long wait times).			Students receive resources quickly, with minimal hassles, delays, or friction. Policies are flexible and can be adapted to meet varying student needs and circumstances. Processes and requirements are smooth, easy, and efficient.		
1	2	3	4	5	
9. Can students easily access one-on-one support to address their specific needs?					
Many students find it challenging to quickly access one-on-one support from a coach, navigator, or basic needs staff member when they need it.			Students' needs are adequately met or alleviated through the array of resources and supports available at our college.		
1	2	3	4	5	
Quality and Value of Basic Needs Resources					
10. Do students consistently have good experiences when accessing and receiving resources?					
Students do not consistently report good experiences when accessing resources, whether they are accessing different types of resources or the same resources through different means (e.g. virtually vs. in person or at different campuses or offices).			Students consistently report good experiences when accessing resources, whether they are accessing different types of resources or the same resources through different means (e.g., virtually vs. in person or at different campuses or offices).		
1	2	3	4	5	
11. Do available resources meet or substantially alleviate students' identified needs?					
Some students continue to have unmet need after connecting with the resources available at our college (due, for example, to a limited array of resources and/or funding/staffing constraints).			Students' needs are adequately met or substantially alleviated after connecting with the resources available at our college.		
1	2	3	4	5	

12. Does data indicate that basic needs resources support students' ability to pursue their educational/career goals?					Score
We do not have data indicating whether resources support students' ability to pursue their educational/career goals. We do not know if resource use has an impact on persistence, completion, and/or graduation rates, or other student success indicators.			We do have data indicating that resources support students' ability to pursue their education and career goals, and data points to a positive impact on students' persistence, completion, and/or graduation rates, or other student success indicators.		
1	2	3	4	5	
					Score (out of 60 total)

Follow-up questions:

- As noted above, the questions on this assessment are primarily designed to be answered using student feedback. **Did you have access to the necessary student feedback and data to answer these questions?** If not, what student feedback and data would you need? How would you get it?
- Circle the areas where your score was 2 or lower, or choose a few that you'd like to improve. **What could you do to raise your scores?**

Foundational Components Assessment

This tool is intended to help you assess the extent to which you have the foundational components in place that are needed to deliver student-centered basic needs resources sustainably and at scale.

Instructions: Circle the number of the example that most closely resembles your basic needs programs. Below each chart are follow-up questions to consider. Describe why you chose what you did, where your program aligns with the option you chose, and where it may deviate. Then think about limitations and successes where appropriate. Each category also has an additional question(s) for reflection. *Feel free to choose the components that you wish to focus on now. You can always return to the others later.*

Leadership Commitment and Support

The college president and senior administrators are committed to building out student-centered basic needs supports at scale. They actively communicate the importance of basic needs supports, incorporate them into campus-wide strategy, secure and allocate funding for their development, and establish the necessary organizational structures and staffing needed to facilitate their expansion at the college.

(1) Not at all	(2) Some interest from leadership, but little substantial action	(3) Committed leadership, building systems and investment	(4) Committed leadership, sustained investment, and established systems
<p>Leadership views basic needs services as outside the college's role and disconnected from student success</p> <p>No dedicated funding or staffing for basic work, only smaller efforts or programs driven by staff, faculty, and/or students</p> <p>No integration of basic needs work into institutional strategy or goals</p>	<p>Leadership shows some awareness of and interest in basic needs issues</p> <p>Little to no dedicated funding, staff, or committees to drive and support basic needs efforts</p> <p>No (or minimal) integration of basic needs work into institutional strategy and goals</p>	<p>Leadership recognizes the importance of basic needs work and is engaged in building awareness around key areas of basic needs supports</p> <p>Some effort to secure and allocate funding for resources and some staff positions; committees exist to lead basic needs efforts</p> <p>Basic needs work is starting to be integrated into institutional strategy and goals, with emerging cross-campus coordination</p>	<p>Leadership is invested in the development of basic needs services and actively drives campus-wide awareness and support</p> <p>Sustained funding is secured and allocated for resources and established staff positions; systems are in place to maintain the work, track progress, and improve</p> <p>Basic needs work is fully integrated into institutional strategy and goals, with coordinated efforts across departments</p>

Follow-up questions:

- Why did you choose what you did? What might leadership need to see and/or hear to increase support for this work?
- How could you get that information? What data do you have (or could start collecting) that might make an impact?

Sustainable and Institutionalized Funding

The college's funding for basic needs services, resources, and staffing is sustainable, diversified, and institutionalized.			
(1) Very little if any	(2) Some limited funding	(3) Diverse funding with growing institutional support	(4) Substantial sustained funding
<p>Very little and inconsistent funding, often depending on individual donations with no (or minimal) institutional funding</p> <p>No or very little funding for basic needs staff; one or more staff may volunteer their time or can dedicate only a small number of paid hours to basic needs work</p> <p>Few and inconsistent resources for students, delivery often falls short of stated offerings</p>	<p>Some funding through short-term grants or specialized funding for certain students/ programs</p> <p>Funding covers a basic needs point person but they also have other responsibilities; little funding for support staff (many volunteer their time)</p> <p>Funding sufficient for current services but often runs out before the term ends, increasing hesitation to publicize resources broadly</p>	<p>Funding secured from diverse sources (e.g. federal and private grants, tuition and payroll deductions, corporate donations etc.) and some institutional allocations</p> <p>Stable funding covers a full-time basic needs coordinator/director and some paid support staff, but staffing is still insufficient for the workload</p> <p>Available funding aligns with current demand for resources, with some capacity to expand</p>	<p>Substantial ongoing budget allocations from the state and/or the institution with diverse additional funding to supplement, pilot, and grow programs and services</p> <p>Funding covers a full-time basic needs director and ample paid staff (including paid student positions)</p> <p>Funding enables robust services with room for expansion that can be promoted broadly to encourage greater use among students</p>

Follow-up questions:

- Why did you choose what you did? What challenges or limitations do you have due to funding? What are some successes and wins?
- What actions could you take to grow your resources and/or make them more sustainable (e.g., look for diverse funding sources, reallocate funding, advocate to leadership)?

Designated and Specialized Staff

The college employs staff with specialized training in basic needs, clearly designated basic needs responsibilities, and the time and capacity to provide services that are accessible, timely, consistent, and high quality from students' perspectives. Staff also have sufficient time to focus on building support and raising funds to ensure sustainability and continued expansion of basic needs services.

(1) Volunteer or limited part-time staff	(2) Some part-time staff with limited support	(3) Full-time coordinator with some specialized staff	(4) Full-time director; ample supporting and specialized staff
<p>Basic needs support is provided by a few passionate staff who volunteer most of their time</p> <p>No (or minimal) specialized staff for resources such as case management or public benefits such as SNAP</p> <p>No (or minimal) training in basic needs awareness or trauma informed care</p> <p>Limited hours, narrow range of services, and long wait times for students due to staffing capacity</p>	<p>A basic needs coordinator manages the program alongside other programs and primary responsibilities</p> <p>Some basic needs support staff; high turnover due to heavy workload and limited compensation, often resulting in loss of knowledge and strategic vision</p> <p>Few (if any) specialized staff such as social workers or public benefits experts</p> <p>Staff have minimal or inconsistent training in basic needs awareness, trauma informed care, or cultural understanding; minimal professional development opportunities</p> <p>Resources are available to students some days of the week; limited evening or non-standard hours</p>	<p>A full-time basic needs coordinator manages the program but has little capacity to develop the program or raise support/funding</p> <p>More basic needs support staff; some staff turnover affecting program development</p> <p>Some specialized staff such as social workers or public benefits experts but with high caseloads and limited capacity</p> <p>Staff have some training in basic needs awareness, trauma-informed care, or cultural understanding, with some professional development opportunities</p> <p>Resources are available most days of the week; some evenings and non-standard hours</p>	<p>A full-time director manages the program with enough capacity to also focus on program development and raising support/funding</p> <p>Well-staffed resources with low turnover, preserving institutional knowledge and aiding program development</p> <p>Ample specialized staff such as social workers or public benefits experts, with reasonable caseloads and sufficient capacity</p> <p>Staff receive comprehensive training in promising practices, trauma informed care, and cultural understanding, with access to professional development or learning communities</p> <p>Resources are available every day of the week, including evenings and non-standard hours</p>

Follow-up questions:

- Why did you choose what you did? What challenges or limitations do you have due to staffing issues? What are some successes and wins?
- What creative ways could you expand staff capacity or acquire more staff? Is there data you might have that could make the case for additional staff?

Qualitative and Quantitative Data

<p>The college gathers and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data to understand student needs, improve basic needs offerings, and grow support and funding for basic needs resources and initiatives. This data is integrated with institutional data (e.g., financial, demographic, or student outcomes). Strategic campus partnerships and staff training ensure effective data collection, analysis, and use.</p>			
<p>(1) No or minimal data collection and use</p>	<p>(2) Limited data collection and use</p>	<p>(3) Developing data collection and use</p>	<p>(4) Strategic and mature data collection and use</p>
<p>No or minimal program/service data (such as basic service counts) is collected</p> <p>No integration of basic needs data with institutional data</p> <p>No or minimal use of data for improvement</p> <p>No partnerships</p> <p>Available data not used to demonstrate need or advocate for support</p>	<p>Some data on program use/service delivery collected sporadically, along with basic assessments of student needs and occasional student feedback</p> <p>No or limited integration of basic needs data with institutional data, and little connection to student outcomes</p> <p>Data is occasionally used for improvement</p> <p>Beginning to use limited data to demonstrate impact and need for resources</p>	<p>More frequent tracking of select program use/service delivery data along with comprehensive assessments of student needs and more frequent student feedback</p> <p>Growing integration of basic needs data with institutional data facilitated through emerging partnerships with key staff and departments (e.g., institutional research); better connection to student outcomes</p> <p>Developing use of qualitative and quantitative data for improvement</p> <p>Strategic use of data to demonstrate impact and advocate for resources and support</p>	<p>Regular tracking of robust program use/service delivery data, capturing detailed outcomes and rich insights from students about their needs, experiences, and recommendations</p> <p>Full integration with institutional data through established partnerships with relevant staff and departments; institutional research helps understand and analyze data ethically and effectively; strong connection to student outcomes</p> <p>Routine use of qualitative and quantitative data for improvement</p> <p>Consistent use of data to drive decision making and secure ongoing investment</p>

Follow-up questions:

- Why did you choose what you did?
- What data could you start collecting now? What might it tell you?
- How could you partner with financial aid, institutional research, or other entities on campus to develop data collection and analysis practices and to link basic needs data to outcomes? What would that allow you to do?

Robust Resources and Infrastructure

<p>There is a robust system of basic needs supports on campus with strong community partnerships to supplement what the college provides. Services meet a range of basic needs and the college has the necessary infrastructure (physical, organizational, and technological) necessary to effectively offer these services at scale.</p>			
<p>(1) Minimal supports available to a small number of students</p>	<p>(2) Growing supports with emerging coordination</p>	<p>(3) Robust supports with developing infrastructure</p>	<p>(4) Advanced, coordinated system for support at scale</p>
<p>Limited to basic food pantry with minimal other supports and housed in small departmental spaces</p> <p>Support is siloed and uncoordinated, and available only to certain students in certain programs</p> <p>Minimal efforts at raising awareness among students</p> <p>Few or no community partnerships to fill service and expertise gaps in campus services</p>	<p>Growing range of supports with limited availability (e.g., insufficient for current level of need)</p> <p>Resources have some dedicated space but may not be centrally located or easily accessible</p> <p>Emerging coordination between staff, departments, and faculty to connect students to resources</p> <p>Some community partnerships to fill gaps in campus supports and provide expertise</p> <p>Limited use of technology systems for data management, case management, and outreach to students</p>	<p>Wider range of supports with better ability to meet current level of need</p> <p>Many resources are housed in a dedicated, centrally located space that is visible and easily accessible to students</p> <p>Regular coordination between staff, departments, and faculty to connect students to resources</p> <p>Growing community partnerships to enhance campus supports and provide expertise</p> <p>Some use of technology systems for data management, case management, and outreach to students</p>	<p>Robust range of supports with full ability to meet current level of need</p> <p>Most or all resources are housed in a centrally located and easily accessible “hub”</p> <p>Well-established coordination between staff, departments, and faculty to connect students to resources</p> <p>Strong community partnerships fully integrated into existing basic needs system</p> <p>Robust use of technology systems for data management, case management, and outreach to students; can be used at scale</p>

Follow-up questions:

- Why did you choose what you did?
- What are some support areas you still need to address (based on student data/feedback)?
- What might help better coordinate or scale basic needs efforts?

Culture of Awareness and Support

<p>Accessing supports is normalized on campus and all (or very close to all) students are aware of resources and how to access them. Staff and faculty are committed and trained in basic needs supports and promising practices, how to make warm referrals, and how to speak with students about resources.</p>			
<p>(1) Little to no awareness and support</p>	<p>(2) Growing awareness and support</p>	<p>(3) Broad awareness and support</p>	<p>(4) Developed culture of awareness and support</p>
<p>Awareness of student need and its effects is limited to staff in specific high need programs</p> <p>Limited promotion of resources often due to capacity and/or funding concerns</p> <p>Stigma creates a significant barrier to access</p>	<p>Beginning awareness campaigns across campus with evidence of increased knowledge about resources among students.</p> <p>Beginning efforts to make resources visible, decrease stigma, and normalize accessing resources</p> <p>Growing engagement and support from staff and faculty in a variety of programs and departments</p>	<p>Surveys or assessments show that a majority of students are aware of available resources</p> <p>Regular basic needs events and promotion at most campus activities with a variety of campus organizations, clubs, and departments involved</p> <p>Accessing resources is encouraged for everyone and becoming normalized</p> <p>Developing training for faculty and staff in basic needs insecurity, how to talk to students and how to make referrals to resources and support</p>	<p>Assessment data confirms high student awareness supported by focused touchpoints throughout a student’s college journey</p> <p>Accessing supports is normalized with minimal stigma</p> <p>Basic needs support is integrated into daily operations across all departments and groups with events and activities held frequently</p> <p>All faculty and staff are trained and engaged in basic needs support as a core part of their daily work</p>

Follow-up questions:

- Why did you choose what you did? What challenges do you experience in raising awareness? What are some successes that you have had?
- Identify a new partnership you could form to help raise awareness and reduce stigma.

Student Involvement and Leadership

Students play a central role in designing, implementing, and leading basic needs services and initiatives. The college: 1) demonstrates responsiveness to student input through direct, tangible improvements based on their suggestions, 2) engages students as active, empowered partners rather than just as consultants providing information and feedback, and 3) includes and amplifies the voices of students who are often underrepresented, rather than relying only on those with existing institutional power or privilege.

(1) Students are not engaged	(2) Students provide info and feedback	(3) Students hold active roles	(4) Students are collaborators and leaders
<p>Students interact with basic needs programs only as service recipients</p> <p>Little is done to receive student feedback</p> <p>No student involvement in the design or improvement of basic needs programming and outreach</p>	<p>Students assist in events and services as staff or volunteers but do not actively shape programs or policy</p> <p>Students provide feedback through surveys and discussions; their input may inform decisions</p> <p>Student feedback is limited to one-way communication, without their involvement in decision-making, delivery design, and/or outreach</p>	<p>Students are actively involved in service design, delivery, and outreach, both as volunteers and as employees, with increasing levels of leadership</p> <p>Students may be on advisory committees or attend planning meetings</p> <p>Students contribute to program and service improvements, with limited involvement in decision-making and design, final authority rests with staff</p>	<p>Students hold leadership positions that acknowledge their lived experience and expertise</p> <p>Students advocate for and represent basic needs work to campus leadership</p> <p>Students develop programming, delivery design, and outreach alongside staff</p> <p>Students have the power and authority to create, lead, and make decisions about basic needs work</p>

Follow-up questions:

- Why did you choose what you did?
- How can you engage more students in this work? How might you move further to the right on the scale and involve students in more decision-making?

2. Identify Opportunity Areas and Improvements

Revisit your answers to the follow-up questions in each of your assessments and fill out the corresponding tables below.

Opportunity Areas: Student-Centeredness

Instructions: Review your scores for the Student Centeredness Assessment and your answers to the follow-up questions. Identify areas where you see opportunities for improvement (for example, areas where you scored 2 or lower or entered a question mark because you didn't have the data or information you needed). These are your "opportunity areas." Describe them in the first column of the table below, along with their priority level (low, medium, or high). In the second column, list options for making improvements in each area. In the third column, note which options you wish to prioritize.

Student-Centeredness

Opportunity area and priority level (low, medium, or high)	How can you improve in this area? (feel free to list multiple options)	Which improvement options do you want to prioritize? Why?
<p><i>Example: We don't have the student feedback and data to answer the assessment questions and understand how well we are meeting students' needs</i></p> <p><i>Priority level: High</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate whether we have existing data or information that can help us answer the assessment questions 2. Develop a college-wide student survey to get this data 3. Hold discussions with students to understand their experiences and hear their feedback and suggestions 4. Engage 1-2 secret shoppers to walk through the experience of accessing resources and share their feedback 	<p><i>Options 1, 2, and 4. We can look for existing data (option 1) and engage secret shoppers (option 4) while developing our survey (option 2).</i></p> <p><i>We can initiate options 1 and 4 quickly, and they can give us some immediate data and feedback. We'd like to start developing option 2 now so we can deploy it in 2 months (and every year after that).</i></p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 	

Opportunity area and priority level (low, medium, or high)	How can you improve in this area? (feel free to list multiple options)	Which improvement options do you want to prioritize? Why?
	1. 2.	
	1. 2.	
	1. 2.	

Opportunity Areas: Foundational Components

Instructions: Review your scores and your answers to the follow-up questions in each section of the Foundational Components Assessment. In the first column of table below, list how you can improve in each component, or select a few components to focus on. The improvements that you identify are your “opportunity areas.” In the second column, determine what you can do to make the improvements you identified in column one (list at least two options). In the third column, note which options you wish to prioritize.

Remember, improvements in one area can drive development in others (e.g., leadership support may help you gain more funding, which in turn can help grow staffing). Keep this in mind when assigning priorities.

Foundational Components

Opportunity area (how can you improve in this component?)	How can you make the needed improvement(s)? (feel free to list multiple options)	Which improvement options do you want to prioritize? Why?
<p>Example:</p> <p>Leadership commitment and support:</p> <p><i>Build administrative support for basic needs work</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Gather data on basic needs insecurity levels at the college</i> 2. <i>Gather data on existing services: how they have benefited students and where there are gaps</i> 3. <i>Work with VP/director/dean to present data to president and administration and ask for administrative support</i> 	<p><i>All three options are high priority. Ideally, options 1 and 2 would be completed first, then option 3.</i></p>
<p>Example:</p> <p>Sustainable and institutionalized funding:</p> <p><i>Increase the sustainability of our basic needs funding sources</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Inventory and assess the sustainability of our current basic needs funding sources. Determine if any are at risk and how to mitigate this risk</i> 2. <i>Investigate other potential funding sources and create a plan to pursue the most promising options</i> 3. <i>Meet with VP/director/dean about the possibility of including basic needs funding in our administrative budget</i> 	<p><i>All three options are high priority, but since we already know funding sustainability is a concern, we will prioritize options 2 and 3 if we have limited capacity.</i></p>
<p>Leadership commitment and support:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 	
<p>Sustainable and institutionalized funding:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 	

Opportunity area (how can you improve in this component?)	How can you make the needed improvement(s)? (feel free to list multiple options)	Which improvement options do you want to prioritize? Why?
<i>Designated and specialized staff:</i>	1. 2.	
<i>Qualitative and quantitative data:</i>	1. 2.	
<i>Robust resources and infrastructure:</i>	1. 2.	
<i>Culture of awareness and support:</i>	1. 2.	
<i>Student involvement and leadership:</i>	1. 2.	

3. Develop Catalyzing Efforts and Your Path Forward

Now that you have identified opportunity areas and prioritized improvements, you can determine your path forward. As mentioned earlier in this guide, one of the most effective ways to

accelerate progress is to achieve **early wins** through a set of “catalyzing efforts,” which are frequently paired with a strategic use of data. Remember that catalyzing efforts generate **momentum, awareness, and investment** in basic needs supports at the college, providing the necessary “push” to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of becoming basic needs-forward.

Use the four questions and tables below to construct your own catalyzing efforts, determine how you will collect and share data, and establish how you will take action by identifying owners and deadlines.

1. **First, review how you filled out the two tables in step 2.** List your **prioritized improvement options** (from the third column in each table) below. Keep these in mind as you determine what your catalyzing efforts might be. Note that some of your improvement options may be catalyzing efforts in and of themselves, and others may need to be combined or further developed to become catalyzing efforts.

2. **Determine if there is a “common route” that you can follow.** Review the “[Common Routes to Becoming Basic Needs-Forward](#)” section earlier in this guide. Is there a route that you can take or that you are already on? Consider the following questions:
 - a. Do you already have leadership support? (Route 1)
 - b. Do you need to organize grassroots efforts? (Route 2)
 - c. Do you have funding and priority areas already from state mandates? (Route 3)

If there is a route that aligns with your current circumstances, review the example catalyzing efforts associated with that route. The examples can help inform your own catalyzing efforts.

3. **Develop your catalyzing efforts.** What can you do to generate momentum, awareness, and investment in basic needs supports in the short term? Review the improvement opportunities you listed in question 1, above. Could carrying them out be catalyzing efforts in and of themselves? Or do they need to be combined and/or further developed to become true catalyzing efforts?

Use the table on the next page to develop your ideas. After you complete this table, you will determine how to complete each catalyzing effort in step 4 of this exercise.

Catalyzing Efforts

Actions or events that can help us move forward and generate momentum	What will this help us do or accomplish?	What data can we collect and/or share (related to this effort)?	What do we want the outcome of this effort to be?
<p>Example: Survey students to understand their level of basic needs insecurity, if/how available resources are meeting their needs, and which needs are most pressing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will help us identify service gaps and improvements to make to current services • Will provide us with data to share with leadership, our foundation, and the campus community to make a case for prioritizing, growing, and funding our basic needs services 	<p>Can collect and share survey response data, paired with any existing data that we have available (such as secret shopper feedback)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An administrative champion • Basic needs included as a priority in college goals/strategic plan • Development of a basic needs committee • Increased funding for basic needs work • A plan/action steps for improving current basic needs services to better align with students' needs
<p>Example: Over a 4-month period, gather data on students' use of a service, resource, or program, (such as emergency funds), its impact, and whether it can fully meet demand</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will help us demonstrate the value of this program and better describe how it has helped students • Will help us make a case for additional funding to expand this program 	<p>Can collect and share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative data: How many/which students use this program • Qualitative data: How students used emergency funds dollars; what this helped them do 	<p>Increased support and allocation of resources from college administration</p>

Actions or events that can help us move forward and generate momentum	What will this help us do or accomplish?	What data can we collect and/or share (related to this effort)?	What do we want the outcome of this effort to be?
<p><i>Example: Implement a pre-registration student assessment questionnaire to both raise awareness of available basic needs resources and enable timely follow-up with students who have acute need</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Will increase awareness of available resources</i> • <i>Will help us proactively connect more students with acute need with available resources</i> • <i>Will allow us to monitor basic needs insecurity each term and identify trends over time</i> 	<p><i>Can collect and share anonymized, aggregated findings and trends from assessment questionnaires to better understand unmet need and determine how to address it</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Greater awareness of basic needs resources among students and the larger campus community</i> • <i>A clearer picture and more up-to-date insights on students' basic needs challenges each term and stronger impetus for an effective institutional response</i>

Actions or events that can help us move forward and generate momentum	What will this help us do or accomplish?	What data can we collect and/or share (related to this effort)?	What do we want the outcome of this effort to be?

4. Determine how to carry out your catalyzing efforts. For each catalyzing effort, note down the key steps/actions that you will need to take to carry it out, who will be responsible for each step/action, and when it should be completed. When completing these tables, think about the following:

- a. What people/departments need to be involved? Do you need the support of specific individuals or teams?
- b. What partnerships do you need to move forward?
- c. What resources do you need?
- d. How will student voices be included in what you are doing?

Catalyzing Effort 1:

Step / Action	Owner(s)	Target Deadline
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Catalyzing Effort 2:

Step / Action	Owner(s)	Target Deadline
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

We'd love your feedback!

Please share your thoughts on the guide,
and how it has worked for you.

You can email us at: pcd@seattlejobsinit.com