



How to Become a Basic Needs-Forward College: The Workbook

Introduction

This workbook is for higher education staff, faculty, administrators, and practitioners who wish to strengthen the basic needs services and resources available to students at their institutions. It describes key characteristics of “basic needs-forward” colleges and provides a step-by-step process to help you adopt and advance this student-centered approach.

The content in this workbook comes from the guide [How to Become a Basic Needs-Forward College](#) by Bri Nguyen and Eileen Slesman Calderon from the People-Centered Design team at Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI). We suggest reviewing the guide before completing the exercises in this workbook.

Contents of this Workbook

Essential information before you begin

Below is a summary of key content from the *How to Become a Basic Needs-Forward College* guide that will help you complete the steps that follow.

[Step 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?

[Step 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.

[Step 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.

Essential Information Before You Begin

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, 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**.

Basic needs-forward colleges share the following characteristics:

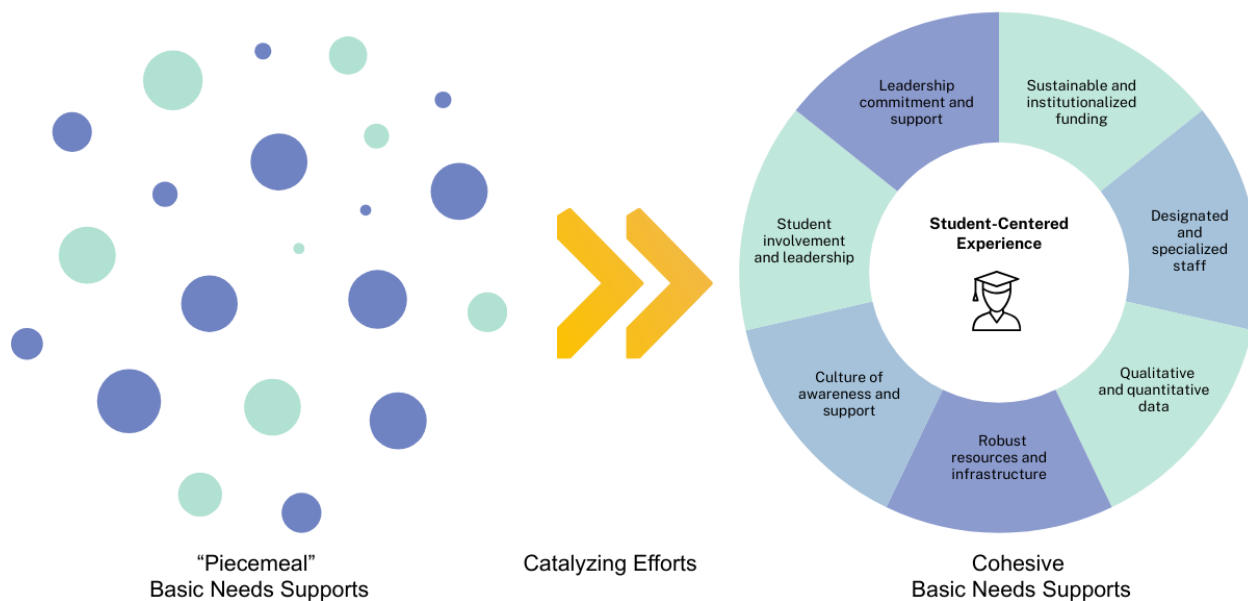
1. They offer a **student-centered experience**, which means they intentionally prioritize students' needs, interests, and experiences in the design and delivery of their basic needs services and resources.
2. They have established key **foundational components** that make it possible to provide students with basic needs supports sustainably and at scale.

- Leadership commitment and support
- Sustainable and institutionalized funding
- Designated and specialized staff
- Qualitative and quantitative data
- A culture of awareness and support
- Robust resources and infrastructure
- Student involvement and leadership

¹ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

How colleges become basic needs-forward

As described in the guide *How to Become a Basic Needs-Forward College*, many colleges follow a common trajectory in becoming basic needs-forward. They frequently begin with a “piecemeal” assortment of basic needs supports, which they transform over time into more cohesive, student-centered offerings through a series of “catalyzing efforts.”



“**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.

Examples of real-life catalyzing efforts:

- College staff led an effort to survey students to assess levels of basic needs insecurity and presented the results to leadership to advocate for expanded supports
- Student groups mobilized to help pass a fee referendum to grow a small food pantry into a fully-fledged basic needs center
- A 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 and putting navigators on public college campuses

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 in becoming basic needs-forward. Below are three common routes:

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

Colleges on this route have leadership that prioritizes basic needs work and actively supports its implementation. Leadership can drive catalyzing efforts by establishing dedicated basic needs roles, securing funding, supporting research, and integrating basic needs into strategic goals.

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

Colleges on 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. They drive catalyzing efforts by launching small and “scrappy” pilots, engaging in advocacy, raising awareness, and collecting and using data to make the case to leadership for increased support.

Route 3: Policy-mandated changes required by state legislation

Colleges on this route are required to expand their basic needs services by legislative mandate (typically at the state level). Once enacted, the mandates can serve as catalyzing efforts by directing colleges to implement specific basic needs initiatives within a certain timeframe.

Step 1: Assess Your Current State

This section contains two assessments that can help you evaluate the current conditions at your college.

- 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?

Completing these assessments and follow-up questions will help you both establish a baseline for your basic needs work and determine where to focus your advancement efforts.

Student-Centeredness Assessment

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?					Score
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?					
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?					Score
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?					
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.

<p>(1) Not at all</p>	<p>(2) Some interest from leadership, but little substantial action</p>	<p>(3) Committed leadership, building systems and investment</p>	<p>(4) Committed leadership, sustained investment, and established systems</p>
<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

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.

(1) No or minimal data collection and use	(2) Limited data collection and use	(3) Developing data collection and use	(4) Strategic and mature data collection and use
<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

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.

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

<p>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.</p>			
<p>(1) Students are not engaged</p>	<p>(2) Students provide info and feedback</p>	<p>(3) Students hold active roles</p>	<p>(4) Students are collaborators and leaders</p>
<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?

Step 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>

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?

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: Leadership commitment and support: <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: Sustainable and institutionalized funding: <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>

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>Leadership commitment and support:</i>		
<i>Sustainable and institutionalized funding:</i>		
<i>Designated and specialized staff:</i>		
<i>Qualitative and quantitative data:</i>		

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>Robust resources and infrastructure:</i>		
<i>Culture of awareness and support:</i>		
<i>Student involvement and leadership:</i>		

Step 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 in our 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 workbook. 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

Catalyzing Effort 2:

Step / Action	Owner(s)	Target Deadline

We'd love your feedback!

Please share your thoughts on the workbook and guide, and how they have worked for you.

You can email us at: pcd@seattlejobsinit.com

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.