

# Frequently Asked Questions

Scholarship Opportunity for Local Health Department Staff to Become Certified in Infection Control

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## **What is the reimbursement budget per local health department?**

Each LHD will be reimbursed up to \$2,500 for their staff's exam fees and study materials. However, for LHDs planning to purchase exam registrations for more than 3 staff, for each additional individual who plans to be certified, \$500 may be granted to cover those registration costs up to \$5,000. The amount your LHD is awarded will be determined based on who you specify in the application.

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## **Does a staff member have to complete the infection control certification testing by the end of the grant period?**

No, but they should be registered to take the exam. All reimbursable grant activities, such as payment for exam fees and study materials, need to be completed by the end of the contract.

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## **What happens if a staff member fails the exam?**

This scholarship covers the cost of one exam. Additional exams are not covered by this scholarship.

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## **What is the "CIC Scholarship Community" on NACCHO's Virtual Community platform and how do I join?**

NACCHO's Virtual Communities (VC) were created to foster an online community-based platform that helps members better engage with their peers by networking, participating in discussions and sharing resources. Join NACCHO's "CIC Scholarship Community" to connect with other local health department staff looking to take the CIC or a-IPC exams.

The goal of the "CIC Scholarship Community" network is to answer questions on the CIC scholarship opportunity process NACCHO is offering, create space for peer discussions on how LHD staff can best prepare for the exams, and share exam training materials.

Start here: <https://virtualcommunities.naccho.org/home> and find instructions on how to create an account and use Virtual Communities here: <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Virtual-Communities-Guide-for-Members.pdf>.

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## **By when does a staff member have to sit for the exam?**

All reimbursable grant activities, such as payment for exam fees and study materials, need to be completed by June 30, 2024. Please refer to the [CBIC website](#) for more information about candidate eligibility and scheduling the examination.

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## **What is the process for reimbursement?**

Local health departments must purchase materials (including registration for the exam and enrollment in trainings) and submit a **single** invoice and all associated receipts to NACCHO for reimbursement by June 30th, 2024. Each LHD will appoint one point of contact (POC) to liaise with NACCHO and coordinate LHD staff taking CIC or a-IPC exams. The selected POC will submit only **one** reimbursement request email and will be responsible for organizing and submitting the required documentation for reimbursement. More formal instructions to follow notice of award.

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## **What criteria are used to select applicants?**

The goal is to maximize the impact of the scholarships, so selections will be based on the need for certification and the potential impact on the local health department and the community they serve. LHDs must demonstrate that this certification supports their current work or anticipated efforts in supporting healthcare facilities.

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## **Can the scholarship funds be used to cover recertification costs for staff who have already taken their initial CIC?**

There are two avenues for recertification through CBIC—by taking the test again or through continuing education. NACCHO can pay for the exam fees for recertification (and associated supplies as mentioned before) but we cannot pay for continuing education activities. This means we will not reimburse for conference attendance or training events not directly related to exam preparation.

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## **Does the scholarship also include the a-IPC (Associate – Infection Prevention and Control) entry-level certification?**

Yes, individuals can take either the CIC or the a-IPC exam through this scholarship opportunity.

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## **Can we view the full application before applying?**

The application is available on [OpenWater](#) and you can review and edit your responses before submitting.

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**On the CBIC website it says you need to have worked at least one year full-time. If my one-year date is prior to the June 30 date on the application. Could I still apply for the scholarship?**

Yes, as long as you register for the exam, and all reimbursable expenses are incurred by June 30, 2024 (the exam itself can be taken after this date but needs to be within 90 days of CBIC confirmation of eligibility).

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**Do I have to be registered for an exam before applying for the scholarship? Or can I apply for the scholarship and then later register for the exam?**

You can apply for the scholarship and then register. In fact, NACCHO can only reimburse your exam fees if they are incurred after your notice of award. If you want to include the exam registration costs as part of the scholarship, you will need to register before June 30 so that all reimbursable expenses are incurred by June 30, 2024 (the exam itself can be taken after this date but needs to be within 90 days of CBIC confirmation of eligibility)

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**What if I have my CIC, but I was interested in sitting for my LTC-CIP? Would this scholarship be applicable for this exam?**

No, this opportunity is only for the CIC or a-IPC exams.

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**What are the responsibilities of the POC on the application?**

The POC will be responsible for liaising with NACCHO and coordinating staff taking the CIC or a-IPC exams. The POC will manage award acceptance, reimbursements, and submit the sole application for the LHD, including individual staff information for exam participation.

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**Should staff interested apply separately for this opportunity or as an LHD?**

You should submit 1 application per LHD. Please coordinate with your LHD to select a point of contact who will complete the application.

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**What if my LHD has multiple qualified people that are interested in certification, is there some limit to the number that we can ask for?**

No, on a case-by-case basis NACCHO will consider additional funding for LHD's with qualified and eligible staff interested in pursuing these certifications with a maximum of \$5,000 awarded.

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**What if our health department is centralized, and we don't have any local health departments with independent funding?**

You can certainly apply for this opportunity for your regional staff!

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**What if I work for the state health department, am I eligible?**

Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity are local health departments, which include public health departments providing services locally or regionally, and tribal health departments that are active NACCHO members. If you are a state employee not operating at a local or regional level, you are not eligible for this opportunity.

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**I have completed the Nursing Home Infection Preventionist Training course and was wondering how much more in depth this would be? Also, about how much time weekly do you foresee this commitment being?**

This is a challenging question to answer because it will vary from person to person, but NACCHO did a similar scholarship program in 2016 and asked respondents how long they took to prepare, and found the results featured here: <https://www.naccho.org/blog/articles/naccho-assessment-certification-in-infection-control-local-impact-and-strategies-for-success>. Hopefully this can help guide you, we also recommend checking with your local APIC chapter who may be able to provide some insight, or even asking on the CIC Scholarship Virtual Community page!

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**On the application, where it says, “demonstrate that each individual meets (or will meet within the project period) the eligibility requirements for the exam,” I have reviewed the eligibility requirements to sit for the CIC exam and believe our staff meet the requirements. Do we need to provide the official, signed job descriptions and diploma/transcripts to apply for the scholarship, or is a narrative description of the qualifications acceptable at this time?**

You do not need to provide the official job descriptions. A brief narrative of the personnel’s experience and demonstration that you have reviewed the CIC criteria is sufficient.

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**When NACCHO reimburses the \$2,500 for the cost of exam fees & materials, will they reimburse the individual (staff/employee) or the health department?**

NACCHO prefers to reimburse the health department (particularly since the application is by health department rather than by individual). That said, if your health department has purchasing restrictions or challenges with this process and it will be an individual who is covering the upfront expenses, we can reimburse that individual if the receipts provided demonstrate they are the one who incurred the costs.

**Instructions for submitting an individual's reimbursements vs LHD:** The LHD's designated POC will still be responsible for acquiring all receipts and individual check requests to submit in one email which includes **all** of the purchases. More formal instructions to follow notice of award.

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**I was wondering if you could clarify "If you plan to take a course or training, or purchase materials to prepare for the certification exam, please provide the details below (who is offering it, eligibility requirements, names, etc.)." What exactly do you need?**

The intention behind this question is to verify that any courses or materials used to prepare for the exam meet a high standard and can be reimbursed by NACCHO. For example, texts purchased through APIC or courses from an academic institution would be considered reputable, but NACCHO may not be able to reimburse for a "course" offered by an independent and un-vetted consultant. If you know how you plan to prepare for the exam, let us know what materials you plan to use and who provides them, so we can verify that they meet the requirements. Conference sessions do not count towards this (NACCHO cannot reimburse for conference attendance).

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**What are acceptable vs not acceptable reimbursable expenses?**

Reimbursable costs include registration for the exam, re-certification exam costs, reference books and other study materials, practice exam costs, membership fees for the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), and registration and associated travel costs for trainings or courses to prepare for the exam. Note: If those trainings or courses are conducted through a university, additional documentation will be required. A few other specific examples from our last iteration included: for printing costs to print the APIC Certification Study Guide after it was purchased as a PDF; purchasing the Pink Book; purchasing the Red Book and diagnosis deck; and the Mometrix text and flashcards.

Costs outside of the above are not covered. This includes staff time and conference attendance.

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**What if I received the scholarship last year but did not pass the exam? Can I still be included in the application this year?**

Yes, there are no restrictions for supporting staff who did not pass the exam the first time for exam fees. However, those individuals will not be able to submit reimbursement for the same study materials.

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**What materials were most helpful for passing the CIC?**

Based on the survey NACCHO conducted last year of the CIC scholarship recipients, these are the materials referenced to be most helpful:

- APIC Study Guide, APIC Text access, APIC review bundle (study guide & online course), APIC practice exams, CIC Study Guide and Practice Test from Mometrix, Infection Prevention Certification Review Course 4.0, State's provided exam prep resources (videos & webinars, check with your State!), University webinars, YouTube CIC review videos, practice exams, flashcards, peer groups/study groups (local/state, Zoom, Teams, etc.), supplementing textbook information with videos or CDC resources, networking with Infection Preventionists (IP), shadow an IP, join a local APIC chapter, and connect on CIC social media sites for support.
- YouTube Channels:
  - Kern Rivers CIC Review: <https://www.youtube.com/@kernriverscicreview683/videos>
  - CIC Epidemiologists: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmGZ4qSea1k\\_8hbwaGiDGQ/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmGZ4qSea1k_8hbwaGiDGQ/videos)
- YouTube Videos:
  - Understanding HepB Serology: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_9EBVPADNE&t=484s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_9EBVPADNE&t=484s)
  - Mnemonics for Remembering Gram Pos & Gram Neg Microorganisms: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSICImm3u3c&t=84s>
  - How to Memorize Antibiotic Classes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJEHcpD1kC8&t=10s>
  - How to Perform the Catalase Test: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krHqynVe6-g>
- Study Groups:, for example:
  - Florida Department of Health: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2814205911954342914>
  - University of Washington Infection Prevention team: [https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_7sbh9m4FQQicZHb7p3nxqQ](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7sbh9m4FQQicZHb7p3nxqQ)
  - Patty Montgomery's APIC CIC online study group and their Google Drive resource library: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dQP6eMcF7WNH1WxyYvj7G2HQ1yxN35FB>.
- While there are currently no specific study guides or exam prep books for the a-IPC test, individuals used the following CIC study books: Mometrix, CBIC, Trivium
- Check in with your peers on the Virtual Community to connect and share additional resources!

*\*\*NACCHO is not endorsing these materials and is only providing compiled data results.*

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## What tips and/or recommendations do you have for those taking the CIC or a-IPC exam?

Based on the survey NACCHO conducted last year of CIC scholarship recipients, these are the tips and recommendations referenced to be most helpful:

- You will need dedicated and uninterrupted time to study (we saw a lot of “study, study, study!”)
- Try to work with your employer to see if you can study during work since it is work related and will assist in work-related tasks.
  - You may refer your employers to the [2018 NACCHO Assessment: Certification in Infection Control: Local Impact and Strategies for Success](#)

- Once you register for the exam, you must take it within 3 months. Be strategic about when you register—a lot of folks said 3 months was not sufficient (and recommended 6).
  - Make sure you already have a plan in place before registering (study schedule created based on your comfort level to the material, materials ordered, etc.)
- Join or create a study group, stick to a study plan/calendar and pace yourself.
- Leverage practice tests, YouTube videos, and flash cards (not just textbooks)
- Pursue certification in cohorts if possible so that staff have other colleagues to talk to about studying and review content together.
- Take several practice exams and focus your studying on the areas that you know the least.
- The CIC is focused on hospital IPC rather than LHD Epis—if you are not working in healthcare settings, there will be interesting and helpful information, but a lot of it is very specific.
- Leverage partners—the state may have resources/recorded webinars, study groups, see if you can shadow a hospital IP, etc.
- Be confident and learn to apply theoretical concepts to practical situations, focus on the core concepts and applications.
- It was a lot of work to prepare (much more than most had anticipated), but it was worth it!