I.  Application Requirements

A. Format of application as a whole

Applications must be submitted in Arial font, 10 points or larger; there is an exception for tables and images. Please see below for page allocations and directions for each section of the application. Please clearly label each of the following sections within the application submission.

1. **Cover Page**: Institution(s) name(s); identify the primary contact, financial aid representative, and the legal notice(s) and authorized signatory by name, title, address, phone number, and email address.

2. **Executive Summary (one page)**: Include: 1) rationale for the amount requested; 2) a COF overview highlighting the selected academic programs; and 3) a synopsis of the plan to assist to students to complete on time.

3. **Project Narrative (no page limit)**: Should address the application criteria in order (see section B).

4. **Budget Narrative & Budget Table (one-two pages)**: The budget narrative will provide your estimated total four-year budget and average per-student scholarship amount. Each student is not required to receive the same scholarship amount, but your budget narrative should explain the rationale for your funding request.
   i. Number of students enrolled before the end of spring 2020, expected to complete by proposal number, academic year, and current rank that could receive support through this application.
ii. Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3333.66 establishes a minimum annual per-student award of $1,500 of Choose Ohio First funds for students receiving a scholarship toward a baccalaureate or associate degree.

iii. ORC 3333.66 establishes a minimum annual per-student award of $500 of Choose Ohio First funds for students receiving a scholarship toward a certificate program. The Choose Ohio First program supports students enrolled in a technical certificate program approved by ODHE.

iv. ORC 3333.66 establishes that the maximum per-student award for all students receiving a Choose Ohio First scholarship be calculated annually as one-half of the highest in-state undergraduate instructional and general fees charged by all state universities.

v. For reference, the 2020-2021 annual maximum per student award is $8,112.

vi. The budget narrative will also indicate how the institution proposes to provide the required matching funds and examples of how the institution will meet the required 1:1 match of institutional, public, and/or private resources. Matching funds should be supported by letters of commitment with specific amounts, or at a minimum by letters of support.

A. ODHE will also analyze previous years’ annual reports to review the awardee’s compliance with the FY16 grant agreement’s match requirement.

5. **Required Attachments:**

   A. List of CIP codes selected by the institution for this application in an Excel spreadsheet. This must match the CIP codes on your current COF agreement(s).

   B. Institutional support: Provide letters of support from each institution’s career services and academic support departments, along with all other partners responsible for the implementation of this project describing the specific actions underway or planned to support COF scholars.
a. The career service letter should describe institutional outreach to the business community and identify the office and individuals responsible for this work.

b. Identify the individual(s) who will lead the support and advising efforts;

C. Business support: Include unique, original letters of support from each business partner (minimum of two) that describes its relationship to the COF program, co-op and/or internship opportunities, and any other ways it promotes and engages with the program. Provide additional attachments, informational brochures, and social media links and other supporting materials as appropriate.

   a. Letters should describe workforce needs and skills supported by the learning outcomes in the programs selected.

B. Project Narrative and Criteria

   • Criteria: Total of 100 Points

   | Student Support          | 45 Points |
   | Work-Based Learning      | 35 points |
   | Programs of Study        | 20 Points |

   Project Narratives are required to address the following criteria and should provide complete responses that address the subsections under student support, work-based learning, and programs of study.

1. **Student Support (45 Points):** Describe and explain how the institution will aid students with retention and completion.
   
   a. Describe the extent to which the proposal increases the likelihood that students will successfully complete their degree programs in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, or medicine, or in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, or medical education; ORC 3333.62(P). This may include on-campus and remote advising and counseling resources.
      
      i. Include copies of emails, flyers, or another form of communication demonstrating how the applicant is providing the services, advising materials, student feedback, and examples of future outreach materials.
      
      ii. Provide data and student feedback on the success of student support during the grant.
   
   b. Provide information that may include student testimonials, documentation, and other data to demonstrate that students receiving the scholarship are satisfied. (ORC 3333.68C)

2. **Work-Based Learning (35 points):** Describe how the institution is assisting and will assist students in obtaining work-based learning experiences such as co-ops, internships, and research lab experience, based on student career goals. (ORC 3333.64)
a. Provide a list of internships, co-ops, and research lab experiences in which students participated during the grant.

b. Describe how the institution ensures its Choose Ohio First students participate in a co-op, internship, or research laboratory experience.
   i. How are students connected and supported with co-op, internship, and laboratory research experiences?
      1. Provide examples of career counseling advertisements, or job fair advertisements, and other ways students can become aware of co-ops, internships, and research experiences.

c. Programs of Study (20 Points): Applicants should list the current CIP codes supported by the FY’16 grant(s). Please list the academic program name, CIP code, and current approved proposal number(s) in an excel file. Describe the extent to which the application is integrated with the university’s or college’s mission and does not displace existing resources already committed to the mission (ORC 3333.62(F)).
   i. Include retention and completion data within the program, student employment outcomes, student transfer or placement rate in graduate/professional school, and program ranking for the previous three years (2017-2020).
   ii. Submitted data may be confirmed using third-party data sources such as HEI, IPEDS, and National Student Clearing House.

3. Past Performance/Compliance: ODHE will review applicant’s past performance – including annual reports – prior to making final recommendations and award decisions.

II. Eligible Applicants

Applications will be submitted by institutions, Ohio’s two-year and four-year public and private colleges and universities with operating FY16 COF grants and students that will be completing their degree or certificate in academic year 21-22 and beyond. One application should be submitted per institution, and should contain information regarding all of the completing FY16 COF grants.

III. Eligible Academic Disciplines

Academic programs (degrees and certificates) within STEMM and STEMM education are eligible and must conform to the institution’s current grant agreement. A full list of eligible CIP codes can be found in Exhibit C of this RFP. Selected CIP codes must match the CIP codes used at the institution(s).
IV. Anticipated Awards

Institutions may request between the anticipated amount of funds necessary for current students to complete on schedule or the four-year grant period, whichever is less.

V. Eligible Expenses and Project Term

Choose Ohio First funds can be used only for student scholarships. Selected colleges and universities will use the scholarship funds to support eligible students in designated STEMM and STEMM education academic programs that were recruited during the 2017-2021 active grant period for the FY16 COF awards. Student eligibility requirements are listed below.

- COF scholars recruited during the active grant period for the FY16 COF awards
- Ohio residents seeking a certificate or undergraduate degree
- Full-time or part-time students
- Students must major in one of the school’s eligible Choose Ohio First programs of study and/or be seeking a certificate in an eligible program
- Ohio residents returning to Ohio for graduate school after completing undergraduate studies in other states or countries

Beyond instructional and general fees, book vouchers and meal plans are approved as an eligible use of Choose Ohio First funds. However, there must be a notification on the student’s tuition bill indicating this use. The entire grant must be used for the listed eligible uses and not for administration.

General fees are defined as those assessed uniformly to all students and those that do not allow for a waiver to be offered to any student(s). For example, a fee charged to students to provide health care coverage would not be considered uniformly assessed if students can opt out, and therefore would not be considered a general fee. A list of reported and approved institutional general fee amounts are found at [https://www.ohiohighered.org/data-reports/tuition-financial-aid/](https://www.ohiohighered.org/data-reports/tuition-financial-aid/).

ODHE wishes to make applicants aware that COF funds may be used prior to or after the application of Pell assistance, at the discretion of the institution. All awards should be prepared with input from the institution’s Financial Aid office. It is anticipated that the work covered by the application will begin June 1, 2021 and continue through June 30, 2025. Each awarded institution will use scholarship dollars to support current students until they complete or the end of the grant period.

Funding amounts in subsequent years are subject to the appropriation of future general assemblies, controlling board approval (if applicable), performance of the grantee (including meeting project goals), the overall goals of the award cycle, and budget modifications of ODHE.
VI. Award Recommendations

Applications will be evaluated in compliance with the competitive process in Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3333.62. The Chancellor, after considering the recommendations of the review team, shall make the final determination about which applications, if any, shall be recommended for funding to the Controlling Board. ODHE shall determine the amount of recommended funding for each applicant and the nature of any conditions on funding. All recommendations of ODHE are subject to Controlling Board approval. If requested, fiscal agents must attend the Controlling Board meeting when applications are considered for funding. All fiscal agents on behalf of consortia will be notified of the outcome of their application after the Chancellor makes funding decisions.

VII. Application Review Process and Timeline

Applications can be submitted beginning November 16, 2020 and are due no later than January 22, 2021. They must be submitted in the following manner:

A. One electronic PDF file sent to COF@highered.ohio.gov.

B. Applicants are responsible for timely submissions of applications. Applications become property of ODHE and are subject to public record laws of the state. Applications containing all the required elements will receive careful consideration but cannot be guaranteed funding. Accepted applications will be evaluated by an ODHE review team and may have representatives from other state agencies and other stakeholders, following the rubric approved by ODHE. The Chancellor will make final decisions based upon the quality of the application in addressing the application criteria and its required elements. The schedule below may be revised by ODHE due to circumstances and any changes will be communicated to the applicants via e-mail and posted on the Choose Ohio First web page, https://www.ohiohighered.org/cof.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Release Date:</th>
<th>November 16, 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application Submission Window:</td>
<td>November 16, 2020 – January 22, 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Review Begins:</td>
<td>January – February 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notification of Awarded Applications:</td>
<td>March 2021</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ODHE will provide an opportunity for potential applicants to seek assistance regarding their application through structured conference call(s) and other technical assistance. Applicant questions are to be submitted in writing via email to COF@highered.ohio.gov. Responses to questions will be posted online to provide the information to interested parties.

Additional information regarding the program is available by contacting John Magill, Associate Vice Chancellor, Economic Advancement, at 614.752.9530 or
VIII. Reporting Requirements

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) will monitor, which may include site visits and desk audits, each project for which an award is granted to ensure that there is fiscal accountability and operating progress, and that the desired outcomes are achieved. Regular reports will be required from all awardees through a standard reporting template or system. ODHE may request additional documentation up to three years after project completion to review the investments’ impacts.

IX. Legal Notices

The applicant understands that if its application is accepted by the state, the applicant shall enter into an agreement with the state governing the use of the awarded funds. The applicant agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations in the conduct of the work hereunder.

The state reserves the right to fund any application in full or in part, to request additional information to assist in the review process, to require new applications from interested parties, to reject any or all applications responding to this announcement, or to reissue the announcement if it is determined that it is in the best interest of the State of Ohio. Issuing this announcement does not bind the state to making any awards. The state reserves the right to adjust the dates for this announcement for whatever reasons are deemed appropriate. The state reserves the right to waive any non-substantive infractions made by an applicant, provided that the applicant cures such infraction upon request.

All costs incurred in preparation of an application shall be borne by the applicant. Application preparation costs are not recoverable under an award. The State of Ohio shall not contribute in any way to recovering the costs of application preparation.

The funding decisions are final. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application(s) at the conclusion of the review process.

The applicant understands that the information provided herein is intended solely to assist the applicant in submittal preparation. To the best of the state’s knowledge, the information provided is accurate. However, the state does not warrant such accuracy, and any errors or omissions subsequently determined will not be construed as a basis for invalidating this solicitation. Interested parties bear the sole responsibility of obtaining the necessary information to submit a qualifying application. The state retains the right to modify or withdraw this solicitation at any time. By submitting an application, applicants expressly agree to these terms.
X. Trade Secrets

All lead applicants are strongly discouraged from including in a application any information that the lead applicant considers to be a “trade secret,” as that term is defined in Section 1333.61(D) of the Ohio Revised Code. All information submitted in response to this RFP is public information unless a statutory exception exists that exempts it from public release under the Ohio Public Records Act in Section 149.43 of the Ohio Revised Code.

If any information in the application is to be treated as a trade secret, the application must:

1. Identify each and every occurrence of the information within the application with an asterisk before and after each line containing trade secret information, and underline the trade secret information itself;
2. Identify that the application contains trade secret information in the cover letter; and
3. Include a summary page immediately after the cover letter that lists each page in the application that includes trade secret information and the number of occurrences of trade secret information on that page.

To determine what qualifies as trade secret information, refer to the definition of “trade secret” in the Ohio Revised Code at 1333.61(D), which is reproduced below for reference:

(D) “Trade Secret” means information, including the whole or any portion or phase of any scientific or technical information, design, process, procedure, formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or improvement, or any business information or plans, financial information, or listing of names, addresses, or telephone numbers that satisfies both of the following:

(1) It derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from not being generally known to, and not being readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use.

(2) It is the subject of efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.

4. The Ohio Department of Higher Education requires non-disclosure agreements from all non-ODHE persons who may have access to applications containing trade secret information, including evaluators.
5. If the applicant claims that a record is not subject to disclosure under the Ohio Public Records law based on trade secret, it will bear costs of defending this claim.