



**Choose Ohio First
FY21 Request for Proposal
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

1. Can student funds, financial aid or other means, that are being used to finance a student's education beyond scholarships, be considered match toward the grant?
 - a. No, matching funds may not include direct student aid such as Pell or federal and state student support or tuition payments by the student.
2. Will the COF FY21 New Funding Webinar be recorded?
 - a. Yes, ODHE will post a recording of the webinar and a copy of the accompanying Power Point.
3. Is there a page limit for the project narrative section?
 - a. No, there is no page limit for the project narrative section. Applicants should prepare clear, concise responses that provide ODHE with the requested information.
4. Is only one submission permitted from the university as a whole or can we make separate submissions from individual departments or colleges within the university, as we previously have done?
 - a. Each institution may submit only one application that can encompass programs from individual colleges and/or departments.
5. What is an example of collaborating with another institution's application?
 - a. A university and community college may prepare a proposal that provides COF scholars the opportunity to seamlessly transfer between institutions and receive COF support each year of their academic journey.
6. Have the CIP codes been expanded to include environmental studies and psychology and many similar disciplines under STEMM?
 - a. Environmental studies and similar programs are eligible COF programs within the group Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources, with CIP codes beginning with 03. Psychology is an eligible program at the graduate level, but not at the undergraduate level.
7. The RFP shows cohorts lasting three years at community colleges. If a part-time student, for example, takes more than three years to complete, can they continue to receive COF funds until completion?
 - a. Yes, the institution may continue to support students until they complete.

8. In the annual minimum and maximum offered through COF, does this include fall, spring, and summer, or just fall and spring?
 - a. The minimum and maximum are spent over an academic year - summer, fall, and spring semesters, with summer being the leading semester.
9. We see that instructional costs, general fees, books, and meals are allowable. Is technology allowable, specifically laptops and hotspots?
 - a. Software and hardware technology are not eligible costs for COF. Beyond instructional and general fees, book vouchers and meal plans are approved as an eligible use of COF funds. The student's tuition bill shall reflect all eligible costs indicating this use. 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), unless the waiver is approved by the Chancellor. For example, a fee charged to students to provide health care coverage would not be uniformly assessed if students can opt out, and therefore would not be considered a general fee.
10. Please confirm, has the GPA requirement been removed?
 - a. The 3.0 GPA is a benchmark to help COF awardees identify students needing additional academic supports; it is not a program requirement.
11. May a regional campus submit an application?
 - a. Regional campuses may not apply separately. An institution with regional campuses may include those students as part of its proposal. The selected CIP codes are for the institution, including its regional campuses, and its students within the selected disciplines.
12. May an applicant include short-term certificates in its COF proposal?
 - a. Yes, an institution may include support for eligible short-term certificates that are included within the selected CIP codes.
13. Can COF funds provide scholarships for a master's degree program?
 - a. Yes, COF funds may be awarded to master's degree students, if the student is an Ohio resident who completed an undergraduate degree out of state or country but returned to Ohio to receive a graduate degree.
14. Can we apply for nursing and pre-med together in one application?
 - a. Yes, an institution's one application may seek funding for up to 45 CIP codes that may include nursing, pre-med, and other eligible disciplines.

15. Can we continue to support students recruited in the later years of the grant period (e.g., in years four or five) after the project period? And if so, do we consider that within the budget request?
 - a. Yes, ODHE intends, with the support of the Ohio General Assembly, to provide funding for students to complete their education after the initial five-year project period ends. The institution does not need to include a budget request beyond the five-year term of the program in its proposal.

16. Are we able to recruit students for academic year 20-21, if awarded? Or will there be a gap year for awardees?
 - a. The FY16 Choose Ohio First programs end on June 30, 2021. The FY21 awards will be announced in the spring of 2021. If an institution receives FY21 funding, it may provide scholarship funding to students beginning in academic year 2021-2022. Summer semester 2021 will be the first semester that students can receive COF scholarships awarded from the FY21 RFP.

17. Can institutional letters include letters from high school partners or other academic partners?
 - a. An institution may include letters from other stakeholders if it believes the information strengthens its proposal.

18. Can we include letters of support from potential industrial partners who will provide internships for COF students?
 - a. Yes, an applicant may include letters of support from potential industrial partners who may provide internships to COF students.

19. Is the work-based learning requirement 100% absolute for all COF participants?
 - a. A work-based learning experience must be made available to each COF scholar. ODHE recognizes that some students, due to personal situations, may not be able to take advantage of work-based learning at this time in their life.

20. Would matching funds from a company or hospital strengthen an application?
 - a. Matching funds directed to and tracked for COF activities, including additional scholarship resources, may be part of the match description. Additional private resources are welcome to help institutions meet the 1:1 requirement.

21. Is there an option for multi-institutional grants? Would a four-year institution be able to partner with a two-year community college to focus on transfer students?
 - a. Yes, a four-year institution may partner with a two-year institution to provide pathways that allow for seamless transfers and COF support for a student's entire educational pathway.

22. Do work-based learning experiences need to be paid?
 - a. ODHE strongly encourages institutions to connect students to paid work-based learning experiences; it is not a requirement.

23. Can curriculum-required training experiences (such as fieldwork, clinicals, practicum, etc.) be counted as work-based learning experiences?
 - a. No, a required training experience that is part of the curriculum does not count toward the required internships, co-ops, and/or research laboratory experiences that is not part of the curriculum.

24. If we lose a student in Cohort 1 at the end of year one due to major change or another reason, will we be able to add a student to that cohort in year two?
 - a. If a student leaves a cohort, an awardee may allocate COF funds to a new student of equal rank or greater. For example, a student does not return for his or her sophomore year an institution may offer a COF scholarship to an eligible student who is a sophomore, junior, or senior.

25. Although only one application per institution is allowed, can a community college partner with more than one four-year college?
 - a. Yes, a community college can partner with more than one four-year institution. An institution may be the lead applicant on only one proposal.

26. Can you provide more information about the 1:1 match, specifically in-kind funds?
 - a. Matching funds may be provided by institutional, public, and private funds. In-kind contributions may include, for example, faculty time spent directing the program or tutoring services directed toward COF scholars. All matching funds must be supported by appropriate documentation.

27. Some programs, particularly in the social sciences, are only classified as STEMM at the graduate level. So, is it possible for graduate programs (such as Clinical Psychology) who enroll students from non-STEMM undergraduate degree programs to apply for COF funding?
 - a. Ohio Revised Code 3333.66 allows graduate students to be funded by Choose Ohio First if they are Ohio residents returning to Ohio for graduate school after receiving an undergraduate degree in a different state or country. These graduate students must be enrolled in a COF eligible STEMM CIP; their undergraduate CIP code does not affect eligibility.

28. If a community college plans to collaborate with a 4-year partner school, can we only select one partner? And if a 4-year partner school decides to be included in our COF proposal, does that mean that they (as an institution) can't also apply for the grant?
 - a. An institution may partner with multiple institutions, but an institution can only be the lead applicant of one proposal.
29. Is a private, non-profit higher education institution eligible to apply for Choose Ohio First?
 - a. Yes.
30. Are there any specific format requirements for resumes that we are submitting as part of the RFP?
 - a. No, there is not a specific format required for resumes submitted as part of the RFP.
31. Are micro-credentials eligible as COF certificates?
 - a. No, unless the micro-credential is also a technical certificate approved by the Chancellor.
32. Does ODHE intend to issue another Choose Ohio First RFP next fiscal year (FY2022), and would an institution have another chance to submit a new proposal at that time?
 - a. ODHE continues to monitor the state's financial status and will decide on a future RFP later in the fiscal year. Yes, if there is a new RFP, an institution would be able to submit a new proposal.
33. Can any of the following be used as the institutional match: RAPIDS equipment used by COF students; short-term certificate grants made to COF students; institutional purchases of supplies for a COF program; and lab construction/remodeling for a COF program?
 - a. Institutional match may come from public, private, and institutional resources. However, no ODHE funds can be used as part of the match requirement. In the case of institutional resources including purchases, construction/remodeling, and other investments, the awarded institution must determine the value of the contribution in relationship to the COF program and student benefits. The calculations supporting the match must be included in the COF program files and available for ODHE or other agencies' review.

34. Can the cost share contribution related to one COF program (such as engineering) be used for that program and another program (such as IT) if it is large enough to do so?
- No, funds must be designated individually for each specific COF award.
However, if the cost share contribution is large enough to individually cover one award, and there is enough remaining after being applied to the first award, a subsequent award may use the remaining portion of the cost share contribution that exceeded the necessary amount in a previous award. The funds must be different for each COF award's cost share contribution requirement.
35. Does the ODHE definition of work-based learning opportunities include clinicals (for health programs that require these) and/or apprenticeships (in addition to the listed examples of co-ops, internships, and research lab experience)?
- No, a clinical experience in the health care field would not meet the work-based learning opportunity. A required training experience that is part of the curriculum does not count toward the required internships, co-ops, and/or research laboratory experiences that are not part of the curriculum.
 - Yes, an approved institutional apprenticeship experience with appropriate learning outcomes and oversight would be eligible as a work-based learning experience.
36. Would a research capstone course, in physics, for example, qualify/meet the research lab work experience criteria?
- No, a capstone course does not meet the research lab criteria. A required training experience that is part of the curriculum does not count toward the required internships, co-ops, and/or research laboratory experiences that are not part of the curriculum.
37. Will the timeline/procedures for when COF funds are to be applied to a scholar's tuition bill remain the same for this FY21COF program?
- Yes, the planned FY21 COF program will follow ODHE's COF Financial Aid Guidance memo, updated annually. The current guidance can be found on our website at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/sqs/guidance-memos/FA21-007.pdf>
38. Are course lab fees an approved fee for COF?
- No, course lab fees are not approved COF fees.

39. How might colleges/universities provide additional work-based learning to COF healthcare and allied health students?
- a. ODHE encourages institutions to explore work-based learning opportunities for students that complement and enhance their career paths. This may include shorter internship opportunities or project-based internship opportunities.
40. May an institution provide the letters of support for research-based internship or co-op experiences from faculty?
- a. Yes, an institution may submit letters of support from faculty members who could facilitate a research-based internship or co-op experience.
41. Do the letters for work-based learning all need to come from external partners?
- a. No, though ODHE strongly encourages respondents to demonstrate that students will have connections to external public and private business work-based learning experiences.
42. Is there a specific format required for the cover letter?
- a. No, there is not a specific format required for the cover letter.
43. Who should be listed as receiving the legal notice?
- a. The individual(s) at your institution authorized to receive official legal notification from ODHE; most often, this is the president, CFO, and/or the provost.
44. Can proposals include programs that an institution is currently developing, or only those that have been previously approved by ODHE?
- a. An institution may not provide a COF scholarship to a student until after a program receives ODHE approval. An institution may submit CIP codes for its existing programs and new programs.
45. Would youths in foster care or those who have aged out of foster care be considered socially disadvantaged individuals?
- a. Yes, youths in foster care or those who have aged out of foster care may be considered socially disadvantaged individuals if the individuals fit within the OAC 3333-1-61(F)(2) definition.

A reminder that the actual payout is not to exceed a reimbursement for the funds spent on scholarships. For example, if an institution expects 15 scholarships per year and only has 10, then the institution can receive money only for the 10.

49. Could you clarify what is meant by the COF initiative, in the Project Rationale? Is it specific for the RFP's initiative or the COF overall initiative?
 - a. Please explain how the institution's COF proposal and selected programs are part of its strategic plan.
50. Would a non-credit certificate be eligible for COF funding?
 - a. No, a non-credit certificate would not be eligible for COF funding.
51. Regarding 1:1 matching, I read the FAQ and proposal regarding issues of in-kind and direct payments, but could you please clarify whether or not existing institution scholarships can count toward the 1:1 matching?
 - a. Yes, existing institutional scholarships may count toward the 1:1 match requirement. However, no ODHE funds can count toward the 1:1 match.
52. Are associate degrees offered at community colleges and regional campuses eligible for COF?
 - a. Yes, associate degrees are eligible for COF funding.
53. Who should act as the project lead or principal investigator (PI) for Choose Ohio First at an institution?
 - a. It is up to the institution to determine who should act as the project lead or PI for Choose Ohio First. The person holding this position varies by institution.
54. Do eligible technical certificate programs, especially short-term certificates, have the same COF work-based experience requirement as degree programs?
 - a. No; short-term certificates funded by COF are not required to provide the same work-based learning experiences as degree programs.
55. How would Community Colleges that use the subject codes for liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities (24.0101, 24.0102, 24.0103, 24.0199) for their programs distinguish STEM-eligible students?
 - a. In your proposal, please list the program CIP code and the eligible CIP code(s) that represent the STEM concentration(s) your students will be studying. For example, students with a curricular focus in biology would be reported with a program CIP code of 24.0102 with a concentration in biology 26.0101. If funded, ODHE will work with community college HEI liaisons and other data management staff to submit for reimbursement using eligible CIP codes. However, it is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that a student is in an eligible STEM concentration.

56. Are we required to guarantee every COF scholar a work-based learning opportunity? If so, how many opportunities, how many hours per opportunity, and for what duration per opportunity?
- ODHE is looking for institutions to provide students with internship, co-op, and research experiences. The experience should provide meaningful and measurable educational and learning objectives that advance a student's career and education.
57. The recruitment section of the narrative asks for specific sites the institution will visit in person or virtually and a proposed outreach schedule. Possible locations may include high schools, career and vocational schools, ASPIRE sites, community events, and business associations. Our admission team visits a wide variety (hundreds) of schools and sites. Should we plan to provide the comprehensive list of hundreds of sites?
- ODHE encourages institutions to describe a comprehensive outreach and recruitment plan geared toward your institution's proposed COF program and its proposed budget. It may include the details that enhance and support the institution's goals.
58. We are preparing our proposal to submit for the Choose Ohio First (FY 2021) RFP. The guidelines suggest the submission of a single pdf file. I just wanted to confirm that all the required attachments will be part of this single file and there are no other forms we need to submit with our proposal.
- A single pdf file of your institution's proposal is to be submitted to COF@highered.ohio.gov.
59. Can Choose Ohio First funds be used to pay for co-op, internship, or research experience salaries?
- No, Choose Ohio First Funds can be used only as scholarship funds.
60. Is there a time limit from the date a student received his/her undergraduate degree or moved back to Ohio to the time he/she seeks a graduate degree? Similarly, does a former Ohio resident that left the state for an undergraduate degree need to have moved back to Ohio, or just seek a graduate degree from an Ohio institution?
- No, there is not a time limit from the date a student received his/her undergraduate degree or moved back to Ohio to the time he/she seeks a graduate degree. All Choose Ohio First scholars must be Ohio residents.
61. How can institutions submit an application that includes a pre-nursing and nursing program that allows students to progress during their time at the institution?
- The institution should include both eligible CIP codes in its proposal to support students along their educational journey.

62. Are students enrolled in competency-based education (CBE) programs eligible for scholarships, or must they be involved in traditional programs?
- Yes, competency-based education programs are eligible for Choose Ohio First.
63. The FAQ document that describes disbursement seems to state that each cohort should be the same size as the first cohort. Is there any ability to propose different-sized cohorts?
- Cohort funding amounts are modeled to remain the same each year, dependent on continued support from the General Assembly. An institution may adjust scholarship amounts and internally decide the number of students to award.
64. May different STEM departments working together on our Choose Ohio First proposal submit a letter of support to be signed by the numerous faculty members, chairs, directors, and administrators working together on this program?
- If your institution has multiple STEM departments working together on a proposal, a joint letter of support is acceptable. This is an institutional award, not a departmental award.
65. Are non-citizens eligible for receive COF?
- Non-citizens that are considered Ohio residents under [OAC 3333-1-10](#) are likely eligible for a COF scholarship. However, various immigrant statuses and non-immigrant visas may not make it so clear cut. We recommend working with your institution's financial aid department and/ or reaching out to ODHE to determine if a non-citizen student is eligible.
66. Regarding internal transfers, does ODHE interpret a "COF eligible CIP" as ANY CIP on the statewide list, or only one from the college's list?
- An internal transfer is eligible for a COF scholarship if the student transfers from any CIP code into one of the institution's approved eligible COF CIP codes, as listed in the award agreement.