



**Choose Ohio First
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Release Date: September 24, 2020
Submission Date: December 9, 2020**

I. Program Purpose

The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) will make strategic investments to support expanded opportunities for students in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medical (STEMM) fields. The investments will directly impact the ability of the state of Ohio to educate and train students to meet Ohio's career and job opportunities today and tomorrow.

Choose Ohio First provides scholarships to students in innovative academic programs developed by Ohio's two-year and four-year, public and private colleges and universities, along with their business partners. The scholarships **connect students to work-based learning experiences and careers in STEMM fields** in order to recruit and retain these students in Ohio. Choose Ohio First is part of a strategic effort to deepen Ohio's economic strength by increasing the talent pipeline for STEMM-related industries, including computer science, through degree and certificate completion.

II. Eligible Applicants

Proposals will be submitted by Ohio's two-year and four-year public and private colleges and universities, acting alone or in collaboration with one or more public or private colleges, universities, or community colleges. A college or university may be the lead applicant on only one application, but may participate in collaboration with another institution's application.

III. Eligible Academic Disciplines

Academic programs (degrees and certificates) within STEMM and STEMM education are eligible. A full list of eligible CIP codes can be downloaded from the following link: https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/COF/COF_STEMM-CIPS_sept2020.xlsx. Selected CIP codes must match the CIP codes used at the institution(s).



IV. Anticipated Awards

Institutions may request between \$100,000 and \$1,600,000 in total funding for the five-year grant period.

ODHE will award an annual cohort and total grant amount to the selected institutions based on a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process.

5 Year Funding Model for a 4-year Institution				
X= 1 cohort				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
x	x	x	x	
	x	x	x	x
		x	x	x
			x	x
				x

5 Year Funding Model for a 2-year Institution				
X= 1 cohort				
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
x	x	x		
	x	x	x	
		x	x	x
			x	x
				x

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 recruit and enroll eligible students into designated STEMM and STEMM education academic programs. Student eligibility requirements are listed below.

- Ohio residents seeking a certificate or undergraduate degree
- Full-time or part-time students
- First-time STEMM degree-seeking students, external and internal transfer students
 - External transfer is the process of transitioning previously earned college credit at one institution of higher education to another. It is the mechanics of credit, course, and curriculum exchange.
 - Internal transfer is the process of transitioning a student who is currently enrolled at your institution, but not known to have previously been enrolled in the Choose Ohio First-eligible course of instruction (CIP) at your institution, into a Choose Ohio First-eligible CIP.
 - Internal and external transfer students must meet the listed COF student eligibility guidelines.
- 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 to be 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/>

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 RFP will begin June 1, 2021 and continue through June 30, 2026. Each awarded institution will use scholarship dollars to recruit and enroll new students during the five years of the grant period.

It is the intention of ODHE to fund students to completion. 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

Proposals 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 proposals, 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 proposals are considered for funding. All fiscal agents on behalf of consortia will be notified of the outcome of their proposal after the Chancellor makes funding decisions.

VII. Proposal Review Process and Timeline

Proposals can be submitted beginning September 24, 2020 (TBD) and are due no later than December 9, 2020 (TBD). 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 proposals. Proposals become property of ODHE and are subject to public record laws of the state. Proposals containing all the required elements will receive careful consideration but cannot be guaranteed funding. Accepted proposals 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 proposal in addressing the RFP 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>.

Request for Proposals (RFP) Release Date:	September 24, 2020
Proposals Submission Window:	September 24 – December 9, 2020
Proposal Review Begins:	December 2020
Notification of Awarded Proposals:	March 2021

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 jmagill@highered.ohio.gov, or Corey Dixon, Assistant Director, Choose Ohio First, at 614.644.5704 or cdixon@highered.ohio.gov.

VI. Proposal Requirements

A. Format of proposal as a whole

Proposals 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 proposal. Please clearly label each of the following sections within the proposal submission.

1. **Cover Letter (one 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 selected populations for recruitment; 2) an overview and rationale of the selected academic programs; and 3) a synopsis of the plan to address regional and statewide economic strengths and needs for these targeted academic programs.
3. **Project Narrative:** Should address the proposal criteria in order (see section B).
4. **Budget Narrative & Budget Table (one-two pages):** The budget narrative will provide your estimated total five-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. 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.
- ii. 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.
- iii. 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.
- iv. For reference, the 2020-2021 annual maximum per student award is \$8,112.

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.

5. Required Attachments:

- A. List of CIP codes selected by the institution for this application in an Excel spreadsheet.
- B. Institutional support: Provide letters of support from each institution's career services and enrollment management departments, along with all other partners responsible for the implementation of this project describing the specific actions planned to support COF scholars.
 - a. The letters should describe institutional outreach to the business community and identify the office and individuals responsible for this work.
- C. Business Support: Include unique, original letters of support from each business partner (minimum of four) 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.
- D. Identify the individual(s) and submit resumes for those who will lead the recruiting and enrollment efforts. The Choose Ohio First enrollment strategy should include coordination and clear engagement with institutional admission and enrollment efforts.
- E. Identify the individual(s) and submit resumes for those who will lead the student support efforts. The Choose Ohio First student support efforts should



include coordination and clear engagement with institutional support systems and career services.

- a. Describe the frequency and nature of career support that will be provided to COF scholars.

B. Project Narrative and Criteria

- Criteria: Total of 100 Points

Project Rationale	10 Points
Recruitment	30 Points
Student Support	15 Points
Work-Based Learning	15 points
Programs of Study	15 Points
Regional and Statewide Economic	15 Points

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

1. *Project Rationale (10 Points)*: This section will explain how the COF initiative is part of the institutional strategic plan, supports student achievement, and the level of assistance it will receive that will lead to a successful implementation. It also must address the quality of the program(s) that is subject of the proposal and the extent to which additional resources will enhance its quality (ORC 3333.62 (A)).
2. *Recruitment (30 Points)*: Describe and explain how the institution developed its Choose Ohio First enrollment strategy. The response should include relevant data and demographic information, reference to institutional priorities, and other factors to support the strategy.
 - a. How will the institution market Choose Ohio First opportunities to potential students?
 - i. Provide screenshots or links to any social media platforms uses or online actions the institution launches.
 - ii. The response should include 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.
 - iii. Describe any other activities the institution proposes to complete to further its Choose Ohio First enrollment strategy for this award.
 - iv. Special considerations will be given to institutions that focus on the recruitment of women and socially disadvantaged individuals. Socially disadvantaged individuals are those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identification as members of groups without regard to their individual qualities. Socially disadvantaged individuals could also include:



1. At least one objective distinguishing feature such as race, ethnic origin, gender, physical handicap, long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society, or other similar causes not common to individuals who are not socially disadvantaged.
2. Personal experiences of substantial and chronic social disadvantage in society (OAC 3333-1-61 (F) (2)).

Provide evidence and documentation supporting specific planned actions during the grant period to recruit students with these characteristics. This may include screenshots or links to social media, copies of collateral, outreach plans to specific locations and groups, and alumni engagement.

- b. Describe in detail the institution's Choose Ohio First scholar selection process.
 - i. Include copies of sample or past application materials, published guidelines, or any other related materials.
 - c. Address the extent to which the proposal allows attendance at an institution that students otherwise could not afford to attend (ORC 3333.62 (N)) and the extent to which the proposal facilitates the completion of a baccalaureate degree in a cost-effective manner; for example, by facilitating students completing two years at a two-year institution and two years at a four-year institution (ORC 3333.62 (M)), and/or the extent to which the proposal encourages students to complete a certificate program at a state university or college (ORC 3333.62(S)).
 - d. For previously awarded Choose Ohio First institutions, describe enrollment strategies and submit evidence of past recruiting activities that may include collateral, dates and locations of outreach meetings, and other activities.
 - i. New institutional applicants and proposals for new programs may submit draft materials as exhibits.
3. *Student Support (15 Points):* Describe and explain how the institution will aid students with retention and completion.
- a. Describe and provide examples of student support services that the institution will provide to Choose Ohio First students to aid in retention and on-time completion. These services do not necessarily need to be Choose Ohio First exclusive, but an additional effort must be made to ensure awareness to Choose Ohio First students. This may include on-campus and remote resources.
 - b. Describe and provide examples of how the institution will encourage a cohort model for its Choose Ohio First students.
 - i. Include copies of emails, flyers, or another form of communication from a current Choose Ohio First program or a similar student support program on campus regarding events, meetings, or other group activity.
4. *Work-Based Learning (15 points):* Describe how the institution will assist students in obtaining work-based learning experiences such as co-ops, internships, and research lab experience, based on student career goals.
- a. Describe how the institution will ensure its Choose Ohio First students participate in a co-op, internship, or research laboratory experience.
 - i. How will students become connected to co-op, internship, and laboratory research experiences?



1. Include any business support letters or partnership agreements demonstrating there will be opportunities for students either on-site or remotely.
2. Provide examples of career counseling advertisements, or job fair advertisements, and other ways students can become aware of co-ops, internships, and research experiences.
- b. Describe how the institution will maintain and expand its business partnerships related to the selected CIPS.
- c. Explain how the institution will monitor, support, and mentor the students while they are in an internship, co-op, or research placement.
5. *Programs of Study (15 Points)*: Proposed institutional COF programs will be selected from the six-digit CIP codes from the list of eligible CIP codes. Please list the academic program name, CIP code, and correlating in-demand occupations an excel file. You may propose no more than 45 CIP codes.
 - a. Describe the extent to which the proposal 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)).
 - b. Provide an explanation of how the selected program(s) connect to the institution's strategic plan and the importance of the program(s) to the institution's mission and recruiting efforts.
 - c. Describe how the institution defines the quality of the program(s) selected. The explanation may include information about specific program characteristics, research successes, and learning outcomes.
 - 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.
 - d. Excel file of the CIP codes selected by the institution for the application.
6. *Regional and Statewide Economic Needs and Strengths (15 Points)*: Describe and explain the extent to which the proposal is integrated with the strengths of the regional economy and the extent to which the proposal meets a statewide educational need (ORC 3333.62 (B) and (ORC 3333.62 (H))).
 - a. Explain how the proposed program meets the talent and workforce needs of regional or statewide business or industry in an in-demand occupations with long-term sustainability. The institution should provide occupational and industry level information to support its proposal.
 - i. Submit data documenting the explanation. Data sources may include [OhioMeansJobs](#), [Workforce Data Tools](#), [TopJobs](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, Burning Glass, Ohio Labor Market Information, and other resources.
 - ii. Provide specific references (business examples are encouraged) to regional and/or state workforce needs and skills gaps that the selected programs will help address.



1. Businesses should include this information as part of their support letters.
 - b. Describe and provide examples with data of how the proposal is integrated with the strengths and opportunities of the regional or statewide economy.
 - c. Provide evidence demonstrating the extent to which the proposal will create additional capacity in educational or economic areas of need (ORC 3333.62 (J)).
 - d. Provide data regarding employment or future educational plans post completion for students in the CIPs included in this proposal.
7. *Past Performance*: ODHE will review applicant's past performance – including annual reports – prior to making final recommendations and award decisions.

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 proposal 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 proposal is to be treated as a trade secret, the proposal must:

1. Identify each and every occurrence of the information within the proposal with an asterisk before and after each line containing trade secret information, and underline the trade secret information itself;
2. Identify that the proposal 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 proposal 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.

- a. The Ohio Department of Higher Education requires non-disclosure agreements from all non-ODHE persons who may have access to proposals containing trade secret information, including evaluators.
- b. 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.