



**Choose Ohio First
Request for Proposals (RFP)
Release Date: October 26, 2021
Submission Date: December 17, 2021**

I. Program Purpose

Choose Ohio First is part of a strategic effort to deepen Ohio's economic strength by developing talent in Science, including health professions, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)-related fields through the completion of post-secondary degrees and certificates. ODHE awards funding to Ohio's universities and colleges for Choose Ohio First scholarship programs that support students in academic programs developed by Ohio's two-year and four-year, public and private colleges and universities, along with their business partners. COF scholarship programs **recruit and retain students in STEM fields by providing scholarship funds and connecting students to work-based learning experiences and careers in STEM fields.**

II. Eligible Applicants

Proposals will be accepted from 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 STEM and STEM education are eligible. A full list of eligible programs, defined by CIP codes, can be downloaded from the following link: https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/COF/COF_CIPS_sept2020.pdf Selected CIP codes must match the CIP codes used at the institution(s).

IV. Anticipated Awards

Institutions may request between \$100,000 and \$1,200,000 in total funding for the five-year grant period.

ODHE will award an annual amount and total grant amount to the selected institutions based on a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process. The total amount granted to an institution will be divided into five equal installments to be used to support five distinct cohorts. Funding from annual installments may not be carried from year to the next.

The following tables are an example of how the annual funding would be awarded to two-year and four-year institutions if the total grant award is \$462,000.

Five-Year Funding Model for a Four-Year Institution						
	AY 22-23	AY 22-24	AY 22-25	AY 22-26	AY 22-27	
Cohort 1/Year 1	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000		
Cohort 2/Year 2		\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	
Cohort 3/Year 3			\$33,000	\$33,000	\$33,000	
Cohort 4/Year 4				\$33,000	\$33,000	
Cohort 5/Year 5					\$33,000	Total
Total Available to the Institution	\$33,000	\$66,000	\$99,000	\$132,000	\$132,000	\$462,000

Five-Year Funding Model for a Two-Year Institution						
	AY 22-23	AY 22-24	AY 22-25	AY 22-26	AY 22-27	
Cohort 1/Year 1	\$38,500	\$38,500	\$38,500			
Cohort 2/Year 2		\$38,500	\$38,500	\$38,500		
Cohort 3/Year 3			\$38,500	\$38,500	\$38,500	
Cohort 4/Year 4				\$38,500	\$38,500	
Cohort 5/Year 5					\$38,500	Total
Total Available to the Institution	\$38,500	\$77,000	\$115,500	\$115,500	\$115,500	\$462,000

V. Eligible Expenses and Project Term

Choose Ohio First funds can only be used for student scholarships that can consist of tuition, instructional and general fees, book vouchers, and meal plans. There must be a notification on the student's tuition bill indicating this use and Choose Ohio First scholarship as the funding source. 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 for public institutions are found at [https://www.ohiohighered.org/data-reports/tuition- financial-aid/](https://www.ohiohighered.org/data-reports/tuition-financial-aid/)

Student eligibility requirements are listed below.

- Ohio residents per the Ohio Revised Code 3333.61
- Full-time or part-time students
- First-time STEM degree-seeking students, including 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, and not 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

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.

Eligible expenses incurred on June 1, 2022, through June 30, 2027, are allowable under this award. It is the intention of ODHE to fund students to completion of a degree or certificate. Funding amounts in future 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 Process

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 the amount of recommended funding for each applicant and the nature of any conditions on funding which proposals. All fiscal agents on behalf of an applicant or consortia will be notified of the outcome of their proposal after the Chancellor makes funding decisions. All recommendations are subject to Controlling Board approval. If requested, fiscal agents must attend the Controlling Board meeting when proposals are considered for funding.

VII. Proposal Review Process and Timeline

Proposals can be submitted beginning October 27, 2021, and are due no later than December 17, 2021 at 11:59 PM. They **must be submitted in the following manner with**

three elements:

1. One complete electronic PDF file sent to COF@highered.ohio.gov, including the proposed CIPs and budget.
2. One separate Excel file with two tabs. The first tab is the proposed program CIPs on the template provided:
https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/COF/COF_FY22-RFP-Required-Attachments-Budget-Table-CIP-List.xlsx
3. The second tab is the proposed program budget on the template provided:
https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/COF/COF_FY22-RFP-Required-Attachments-Budget-Table-CIP-List.xlsx

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:	October 26, 2021
Proposals Submission Window:	October 27 – December 17, 2021
Proposal Review Begins:	December 18, 2021
Notification of Awarded Proposals:	March 2022

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 Emily Turner, Director, Choose Ohio First, at 614.728-3090 or eturner@highered.ohio.gov.

VI. Proposal Requirements

A. Format of proposal

Proposals must be submitted in Arial font, 10 points or larger; there is an exception for tables and images. Please clearly label each of the following sections within the proposal submission. Refer to Section B for page length and requirements for each

section of the proposal. Each proposal should have the following five (5) sections:

- Cover Letter
- Executive Summary
- Project Narrative
- Budget Narrative & Budget Table
- Required Attachments

B. Requirements for each section of the proposal

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.

Executive Summary (maximum of three pages): Include:

- a. rationale for the selected populations for recruitment
- b. an overview of the selected academic programs
- c. a synopsis of the plan to address regional and statewide economic strengths and needs for these targeted academic programs
- d. how the COF initiative is part of the institutional strategic plan, supports student achievement
- e. institutional assistance it will receive that will lead to a successful implementation

Project Narrative: (maximum of 30 pages) Project Narratives are required to address the each of the following subsections. Page count does not include attachments and exhibits.

- project rationale
- recruitment
- student support
- work-based learning
- programs of study
- regional economic and statewide needs.

Project Rationale: Describe and explain the rationale for the institution's Choose Ohio First proposal.

Recruitment (25 Points): Describe and explain how the institution developed its Choose Ohio First recruitment and enrollment strategy. The response should include relevant data and demographic information, reference to institutional priorities, and other factors to support the strategy as well as:

- a. How the institution will recruit underrepresented populations in the Choose Ohio First scholars program per ORC 3333.62.
- b. How the institution will market Choose Ohio First opportunities to potential students. Provide specific information about marketing initiatives, outreach, or any other activities to further a Choose Ohio First recruitment strategy.

- c. Describe the institution's Choose Ohio First scholar selection process. Include copies of sample or past application materials, published guidelines, or any other related materials.
- d. Address the extent the proposal facilitates the completion of a baccalaureate degree in a cost-effective manner, for example, a 4-year program where students complete two years at a two-year institution and another two years at a state university or college (ORC 3333.62 (F)); and/or the extent to which the proposal encourages students to complete a certificate program at a state university or college (ORC 3333.62(G)).
- e. 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;(3333.62 (C)
- f. 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.

Student Support (25 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.
- b. Describe and provide examples of how the institution will encourage a cohort model for its Choose Ohio First students. Include examples of emails, flyers, or another form of communication that will be used for this program.

Work-Based Learning (25 points): Describe how the institution will ensure one hundred per cent (100%) of its Choose Ohio First Students will participate in a work-based learning experience through a co-op, internship, research lab experience, , or other work-based learning activity including STEM student teaching educator preparation program (ORC 3333.64). Describe how will students become connected to co-op, internship, laboratory research, or other work-based learning experiences. Describe how the institution will track the outcome and completion of the work-based learning experience. Include any business support letters or partnership agreements demonstrating there will be opportunities for students either on-site or remotely. Work-based learning experiences based in or connected to Ohio employers are preferred.

- a. 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. Provide 4-5 recent examples of successful co-op, internship, laboratory research, STEM student teaching education preparation, or other work-based learning activity at your institution.

Programs of Study (10 Points): **Submit a list of proposed CIPs with the academic program name, CIP code, and correlating in-demand occupations on the provided excel file template.** Proposed institutional COF programs must be on the list of eligible six-digit CIPs https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/COF/COF_STEM-CIPS_sept2020.xlsx. You may include no more than 45 CIP codes.

- a. The quality of the program that is the subject of the proposal and the extent to which additional resources will enhance its quality (3333.62 (A)).
- 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 the extent to the institution has committed to, or demonstrated, an increase in total graduates within STEM or STEM education, consistent with a goal to increase the total number of Ohio residents in the workforce who are highly qualified in these disciplines (ORC 3333.62(D)). The explanation may include information about:
 - i. specific program characteristics, research successes, and learning outcomes
 - i. retention and completion data within the program, including student employment outcomes, student transfer or placement rate in graduate/professional school
 - ii. program ranking for the previous three years (2018-2021)
 - iii. data may be confirmed using third-party data sources such as HEI, IPEDS, and National Student Clearing House

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 (ORC 3333.62 (B)), and the extent to which the proposal meets a statewide educational need (ORC 3333.62 (E)).

- a. Explain how the proposed program meets the talent and workforce needs of regional or statewide business or industry or K-12 education institutions in an in-demand occupation with long-term sustainability. The institution should provide occupational and industry level information to support its proposal. Submit data documenting the explanation. Data sources may include [OhioMeansJobs](#), [Workforce Data Tools](#), [TopJobs](#), US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Emsi Burning Glass, Ohio Labor Market Information, [U.S. Department of Education, Teacher Shortage Areas](#), and other resources. Provide specific references to regional and/or state workforce needs and skills gaps that the selected programs will help address.
- b. Businesses should include this information as part of their support letters.
- c. Provide data regarding employment or future educational plans post completion for students in the CIPs included in this proposal.

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

Criteria: Total of 100 Points

Recruitment	25 Points
Student Support	25 Points
Work-Based Learning	25 points
Programs of Study	10 Points
Regional and Statewide Economic Integration	15 Points
TOTAL	100 Points

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. Your budget narrative should explain the rationale for your funding request. The Choose Ohio First funding year begins July 1 and ends June 30.

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3333.66 establishes a minimum annual student award of \$1,500 of Choose Ohio First funds for students receiving a scholarship (ORC 3333.66 (A)(1) and a minimum annual student award of \$500 (ORC 3333.66 (A)(2) of Choose Ohio First funds for students receiving a scholarship toward a certificate program.

The maximum student award is half of the highest in-state undergraduate instructional and general fees charged by all state universities. For this purpose, if Miami university is implementing the pilot tuition restructuring plan originally recognized in Am. Sub. H.B. 95 of the 125th general assembly, that university’s instructional and general fees shall be considered to be the average full-time in-state undergraduate instructional and general fee amount after taking into account the Ohio resident and Ohio leader scholarships and any other credit provided to all Ohio residents. (ORC 3333.66 (A)(1). A student receiving multiple awards under division (A) of this section may not exceed the maximum permitted amount for each individual award.

For reference, the 2021-2022 annual maximum per student award is \$8,352 noted in the Choose Ohio First Guidance Memo found at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/cof/resources>

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The budget narrative should also indicate how the institution proposes to provide the required 1:1 matching funds using 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.

Required Attachments:

- A. List of CIP codes selected by the institution for this application on the provided Excel spreadsheet. Institutions can select up to 45 CIP codes for their Choose Ohio First Program. The Excel spreadsheet can be found at https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/COF/COF_FY22-RFP-Required-Attachments-Budget-Table-CIP-List.xlsx
- B. Budget table on the Excel spreadsheet found at: https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/default/files/uploads/COF/COF_FY22-RFP-Required-Attachments-Budget-Table-CIP-List.xlsx
- C. 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.
 - i. The letters should describe institutional outreach to the business community and identify the office and individuals responsible for this work.
- D. Business Support: Include customized, unique letters of support from each business partner (minimum of four) that describes its relationship to the COF program, co-op and/or internship opportunities, other work-based learning 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.
 - i. Letters should describe workforce needs and skills supported by the learning outcomes in the programs selected.
- E. Identify the individual(s) 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.
- F. Identify the individual(s) 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.

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. Promotion of Choose Ohio First and Use of Brand Management

All Choose Ohio First grant recipient organizations are encouraged to use the Choose

Ohio First logo and name on recruitment, scholarship information, and websites associated with the Choose Ohio First scholarship in an effort to raise awareness of the initiative. The Choose Ohio First logo is available in a .ZIP files or via Dropbox and will be provided along with the grant agreement.

X. 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.

XI. 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.