



The Ohio Higher Education *Finish for Your Future*
Adult Promise Initiative

Program Purpose

Goal:

Ohio is committed to providing affordable and equitable educational opportunities to adult students; *Finish for Your Future* establishes the goal to increase the proportion of adults over age 25 enrolled in public higher education from the current 27 percent to at least 40 percent by 2025.

Challenge:

Ohio has established an attainment goal that 65 percent of Ohioans, ages 25-64, will have a degree, certificate, or other postsecondary credential of value in the workplace by 2025; at present, Ohio is at 44.1%. If we are to reach this goal and develop the talent needed by employers, the number of Ohioans earning postsecondary credentials must dramatically increase. Demographic projections estimate that Ohio will face a decline in the number of high school graduates in coming years. Yet Ohio has 3.7 million adults between the ages of 25 and 64 who do not have a postsecondary credential. Of the nearly 470,000 students enrolled in Ohio's public postsecondary institutions in 2017, close to 27% are adults over age 25. Since the Great Recession, the proportion of adult students enrolling in postsecondary education and training has been in decline; in the five-year period between AY2011 and 2016, adult enrollment has declined by nearly one-third. ODHE is concerned by this enrollment trend among adult learners and is committed to establishing a goal that adults over age 25 will make up at least 40% of public higher education enrollments and completions by 2025. Additionally, Ohio will strive to close the equity gaps between underrepresented minorities and with adults in enrollment and completion.

There are two aspects to this challenge—building capacity and processes to enroll significantly more adult learners and increasing retention and completion of adult learners once they have enrolled. While Ohio needs to increase adult learner enrollment, we simultaneously need to improve adult student outcomes to help address the challenge ahead.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must be a state institution of higher education, as defined in section 3345.011 of the Ohio Revised Code. Additionally, only eligible state institutions of higher education that have completed the CAEL AL360 self-assessment at their own expense are eligible to apply and serve as lead applicants. Applicants may not seek reimbursement for the costs they incurred with the AL 360 with this award.

Institutions may apply as a single applicant or form regional consortia for this program. In the event that multiple institutions of higher education are applying, all participating institutions must have completed the AL 360. Collaborations with eligible public institutions of higher education and community-based 501(c)3 nonprofits are permissible. In the case of a collaborative proposal, an eligible institution of higher education must be selected to serve as the lead applicant.

I. Anticipated Awards

Five grants of \$50,000 each will be awarded for capacity building. Additionally, the five selected sites will be eligible to receive up to an additional \$40,000 each of funding from State of Ohio Short-Term Certificate Grant Program. The short-term certificate funds must be used in adherence to existing program guidelines and support adults over age 25. (The short-term certificate program is an award for need-based financial aid to students enrolled in public colleges/universities in a program that may be completed in less than one year and for which a certificate or industry-recognized credential is awarded in an in-demand job field.)

In the event of a collaborative application, the lead applicant must be a public institution of higher education and must have completed the AL360 self-assessment. If multiple public institutions of higher education are applying collaboratively, each participating public college or university must have completed an AL 360 and the budget may be up to \$50,000 per institution of higher education that has completed the CAEL AL360 self-assessment.

In the event a public institution of higher education is collaborating with a non-profit organization, the eligible public institution of higher education will be eligible for an award up to \$50,000 and will serve as the fiscal agent for the grant. Regardless of whether there are five separate \$50,000 awards or one award for \$250,000 for five collaborating public colleges/universities, the maximum amount to be awarded is \$250,000.

II. Eligible Expenses and Project Term

Awards under the *Finish for Your Future Grant* program are to be expended on eligible costs. Eligible costs must be expenses directly tied to the implementation of the project and may include personnel or equipment where appropriate. Indirect costs in support of the project may not exceed 8%.

Finish for Your Future Grant programs funded through this RFP will be on a 12-month time frame from the date an agreement is executed between the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the institution. A final program and expense report will be due from the institution 90 days after the end of the expenditure period.

III. Proposal Review Process and Timeline

The schedule below may be revised by the Chancellor due to circumstances. Any changes will be communicated to applicants.

Request for Proposals Released	March 8, 2019
Submit Questions from Interested Parties	March 8 - April 30, 2019
Proposals Due by 12 p.m.	May 1, 2019
Proposal Review Period Begins	May 2, 2019
Notification of Awarded Proposals	June 2019

Upon applicant approval, the Chancellor will provide an award letter to the selected institutions, which will include the total awarded amount.

IV. Proposal Submission

Applicants are responsible for submissions of proposals within the time period set by the Chancellor. Proposals must be received no later than May 1, 2019, and must be submitted in the following manner:

One electronic PDF file sent electronically to kwells@highered.ohio.gov

Proposals become the property of the Chancellor and are subject to public record laws of the state.

V. Proposal Requirements (not to exceed nine pages)

A. Format: Proposals must be submitted in Arial Font, 10 points or larger with standard margins; there is an exception for tables and images. Please see below for page allocations and directions for each section of the proposal.

- a. **Cover Letter (one page):** Title of project; identify the primary contact plus the fiscal agent by name, title, address, phone number, and email address.
- b. **Executive Summary (one page):** a) describe the proposed intervention(s), b) how proposed intervention responds to the institution(s) AL360 report(s) and institutional data; and c) how these efforts will support improved outcomes for adult learners.
- c. **Project Narrative (five pages):** Should address the proposal criteria in order.
- d. **Budget Narrative and Budget Table (two pages):** In a separate narrative and summarized in an Excel spreadsheet, the budget narrative & budget table will document itemized costs, including one-to-two-paragraph descriptions of the activities and expenses included in each budget line.

B. Proposal Criteria: Successful proposals will implement intervention(s) that responds to data from the AL360 report; projects may choose to accelerate strengths or address a current weakness identified in the report.

1. **Project Design:** A description of the proposed intervention(s) that address supports to increase the number and percentage of adult learners over age 25 enrolling and their subsequent retention and completion in public higher education. The AL 360 is intended to serve as a tool to help participating colleges and universities identify interventions that will better serve adult learners; please use the results of your AL 360 assessment to identify at least one intervention that will build your institutional capacity to increase adult learner enrollment, retention, and completion. This section should describe the identified intervention(s) and the project's expected accomplishments and proposed outcomes. Design should include the following elements:

- a. Describe how the proposed intervention will strengthen the institution(s) response to better serve adult learners' unique needs, e.g., policy and procedure review and revision related to barriers for re-enrollment and retention.

- b. Describe how the project will determine equity gaps and respond to them in ways that address changing demographic conditions.
- c. Clearly explain how the intervention will address student outcomes and establish measurable outcome goals for the project.

2. **Project Rationale:** This section should explain why this project is important and likely to succeed and will be sustained beyond the grant period. This section should address, but is not limited to, the items detailed below:

- a. Describe the problem to be addressed.
- b. Describe the research and/or prior experiences with relevant data including citations that support the proposed project. This should include results from the AL360 self-assessment report as well as any relevant institutional data.
- c. Detail the expected number of students to be impacted by this project, describe the importance of the project to students, and the measurable impact for these students academically and financially.
- e. Describe how this project will be sustained beyond the grant period and continue to provide substantial value and lasting impact.

3. **Project Evaluation:** Explain how project success will be measured.

- a. Describe the formative and summative evaluation design for the project. Clearly explain how the success of the intervention(s) supporting adult students will receive will be tracked and measured both during the grant period and beyond.
- b. Describe how a culture of continuous improvement will be built into the evaluation plan.

VI. Reporting Requirements

The Ohio Department of Higher Education will monitor each awarded project 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.

VII. 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 prior to the disbursement of said 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.

VIII. 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.
4. 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.”

5. The Ohio Department of Higher Education requires non-disclosure agreements from all non-Department of Higher Education persons who may have access to proposals containing trade secret information, including evaluators.
6. 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.