



Fiscal Year 2027 Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program Application

Release Date: July 29, 2026

Proposal Submission Window: July 29, 2026 – August 28, 2026

APPLICATION OVERVIEW: All eligible schools (as described below) which offer commercial driver’s license (“CDL”) program(s) (as described below) may be eligible to submit an application to the Ohio Department of Higher Education (“ODHE”) in compliance with the criteria set forth below. If the respondent’s application is acceptable to ODHE, then an eligible school will be approved to solicit students enrolled in an approved CDL training program. Each enrolled student may apply for a grant and loan from the eligible school to participate in the CDL program. The participating eligible school, in cooperation with ODHE, will receive the grant and loan proceeds for enrolled students who applied for and are accepted into the CDL program. The participating eligible school will not be liable for the repayment of the loan made to the enrolled student but will be required to proactively counsel students prior to enrollment about program requirements, expectations, and timelines. ODHE, as loan servicer, will determine the rate and terms of each loan.

I. Background and Purpose of the Application

Background: Section 381.540 of Amended Substitute House Bill 96 of the 136th General Assembly appropriated funds in State Fiscal Year 2027 to ODHE to administer and provide grants and loans under the Commercial Truck Driver Student Aid Program established in Section 3333.125 of the Revised Code.

Purpose: To promote and encourage Ohio’s commercial driver’s job growth through educational training in programs related to employment opportunities. Schools must qualify as eligible along with their identified CDL program(s) in order for eligible students enrolled in these programs to be eligible for grants and loans under the Program. The funds awarded to eligible schools will be disbursed in the form of grants and loans to eligible students enrolled in approved CDL training programs at participating eligible schools.

II. Eligibility

An eligible school for this program is a commercial driver training school certified by the Director of the Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) as holding a license issued pursuant to Section 4508.03 or 4508.09 of the Revised Code, rules adopted under either of those sections, and other necessary standards and procedures as determined by the Director of DPS or a program exempted from licensure by the Director of DPS under section 4508.07 of the Revised Code but approved to be a commercial driver training school by the Chancellor of the Department of Higher Education and the Director of DPS for purposes of the student aid program at any of the following:

- (i) A state institution of higher education, as defined in 3345.011 of the Ohio Revised Code;
- (ii) A career college or school in this state that holds a certificate of registration from the state board of career colleges and schools under Chapter 3332. of the Revised Code;
- (iii) A private, nonprofit institution in this state that holds a certificate of authorization pursuant to Chapter 1713.of the Revised Code;
- (iv) A private institution exempt from regulation under Chapter 3332. of the Revised Code, as prescribed in Section 3333.046 of the Revised Code, if the program has a certificate of authorization pursuant to Chapter 1713. of the Revised Code; or
- (v) A career-technical center, joint vocational school district, comprehensive career-technical center, or compact career-technical center offering adult training.



III. Application Criteria

Applications are required to address the following:

1. Evidence of CDL program approval and a list of approved programs seeking support under this opportunity (Class A, Class B, etc.): CDL training programs licensed by the Director of Public Safety or approved by the Chancellor and DPS must submit the appropriate documentation prior to the release of funds in accordance with the procedures described in Part II.
2. Provide a copy of the school's license from the State of Ohio, if required to maintain a license pursuant to ORC 4508.03 or 4508.09.
3. Compliance with all Federal Regulations regarding commercial driver's license training for entry level drivers as described in 49 CFR 380. Proof of registration with the Federal Motor Carrier Services Association ("FMCSA") must be included.
4. Ohio Residents: Provide documentation that demonstrates and/or defines how program recipients will be limited to Ohio residents as defined in Ohio Administrative Code ("OAC") 3333-1-10.
5. Evidence and/or certification by the school that the licensed or approved school does not charge employers recruiting fees.
6. Grant and loan eligibility requirements: Include requirements that will be applied to students in the CDL training program.
 - The total amount of a grant and a loan awarded to an eligible student under this section shall not exceed the cost of tuition and related expenses for an eligible school's commercial driver training program.
 - The Chancellor shall award a loan to an eligible student in the same amount as the grant. A loan for an eligible student's program costs under this section shall not exceed ten thousand dollars.
 - Describe the strategies for counseling students about program requirements, expectations, and timelines, which shall include:
 - Process of submitting an application and ensuring the student signs a promissory note with ODHE; (promissory note to be provided by ODHE).
 - Process to cancel the note if a student completes the program and provides documentation of employment for one year as an Ohio resident.
 - That the first repayment begins 12 months after completing the CDL program and failing to secure and provide documentation of employment for one year as an Ohio resident, or immediately upon a student's disenrollment in a program, or failure to complete the program.
 - Recipient must either be employed as a truck driver by an entity that has a valid mailing address in the state or be self-employed as a truck driver using a valid mailing address in the state and being an Ohio resident on tax filings.
 - Attorney General to collect on a note for a student that has defaulted repayment.



IV. Anticipated Awards

The total of all awards under the CDL Program will not exceed the total funding available. The Chancellor is not obligated to expend all funds set aside for this initiative; a driving school may request up to \$125,000 to provide grants and loans to eligible students.

- The grant and loan combination may not exceed the cost of tuition and related expenses.
- The Chancellor may adjust award amounts based on availability of funds, demand for the program, quality of applications, and past program performance.
- Awards are distributed directly to the school on behalf of a student when all documentation and a signed promissory note has been received for that student.
- A school with more than one eligible location may receive a maximum of \$180,000 to be allocated as it determines among the locations.

Total Funding Available: up to \$2,955,000.00

V. Eligible Expenses and Project Term

Pursuant to Ohio Revised Code § 3333.125 and Rule 3333-1-09 of the Ohio Administrative Code awards under the grant and loan program are to be expended for grants and loans to eligible students who are enrolled in approved CDL training programs.

Individual student approval consists of a school submitting the student information for review to the state, and the state approving that submission, and the student signing the promissory note.

An approved program may consist of one or more cohorts, however, the maximum request per qualified CDL program(s) is \$125,000. ODHE will disburse funds under a given award during the 12-month period following the institution's execution of an award agreement.

ODHE may provide additional instructions and requirements for approved institutions.

VI. Application Contact

Any questions or concerns regarding this application should be sent via e-mail to cdl@highered.ohio.gov by August 1, 2026. Responses to the questions received will be posted in the ODHE RFP Portal at rfp.ohiohighered.org and online at <https://highered.ohio.gov/businesses/services-programs/cdl> by August 6, 2026. Additionally, ODHE will host an application webinar to provide additional information to interested parties. Details and registration information for the webinar will be posted at <https://highered.ohio.gov/businesses/services-programs/cdl>.

VII. Application Submission

Parties interested in submitting an application must create an account in the ODHE RFP Portal at rfp.ohiohighered.org. Once logged into the portal, parties can view the RFP and all related documentation including the questions and their responses related to the RFP.

All application materials can be downloaded from ODHE's RFP Portal at rfp.ohiohighered.org. Once a school has completed an application, the documents must be uploaded and submitted through the RFP Portal in PDF format. No other file formats will be accepted through the portal. No hard copies or emailed applications will be accepted.

The cost of preparation and submission of the proposal are solely the responsibility of the respondent.



VIII. Application Review Process and Timeline

Applicants are responsible for the submission of applications within the time frame set by the Chancellor. Applications become property of the Chancellor and are subject to public record laws of the state.

The Chancellor's staff will initially screen applications for completeness. The applicant must address any application deficiencies within a time period set by the Chancellor's staff. While all applications will receive careful consideration, the submission of a complete application does not guarantee funding.

Accepted applications will be reviewed and scored as detailed in the Project Narrative in Section IX, Paragraph C below. After considering the application scores and recommendations of reviewers, the Chancellor shall make the final determination regarding which applications will be eligible to receive funding.

The Chancellor, due to unforeseen circumstances, may revise the schedule and any changes will be communicated to the applicants. Information regarding the program will be posted at:

<https://higher.ed.ohio.gov/businesses/services-programs/cdl>.

Upon applicant approval, the Chancellor will provide an award letter to the school that includes the total amount awarded, followed by a grant agreement between ODHE and the applicant.

IX. Application Requirements

- A. Applications are limited to 20 pages plus attachments. The page limit includes, and must contain, a cover letter, an executive summary, project narrative, budget, and timeline. Schools are strongly encouraged to submit new applications and not copy prior applications as economic and workforce conditions are changing across Ohio.

1. The cover letter should not exceed one page and must identify primary, fiscal, and legal notice, contacts by providing the name, title, address, phone, and email address for each. Contacts, specifically the legal notice contact, should be an individual that is employed by the applicant. The cover letter must also include the requested total institutional award amount.
2. The Executive Summary is limited to one page.
3. The project narrative must contain detailed information about how the application meets the criteria set forth.
4. The project budget must document tuition and related eligible expenses for each CDL program.
5. The project timeline must include proposed activities and estimated completion milestones for each activity.
6. Application must be submitted in 10-point Arial Font and be double-spaced.

- B. Required Application Section: Executive Summary (1 page)

The Executive Summary describes how the CDL training program meets labor market needs, with an emphasis on employment opportunities in the region and Ohio. It will also explain the role of businesses, industries, and the eligible school to connect the CDL program to Ohio's economy.

- C. Required Application Section: Project Narrative

The Project Narrative must describe the CDL training program(s) and provide evidence that it will meet the criteria outlined in Section III of the application. The Project Narrative must respond to the five sections listed. Each section will be reviewed and scored according to the points assigned below. (100 points total)

1. Describe how the CDL program(s) address(es) specific existing and/or emerging CDL job training needs in a specific region and in Ohio. Applicants must submit labor market data from OhioMeansJobs.com or other information illustrating how the CDL program helps meet the need. (10 points)



2. Performance of the school's CDL training program(s), applicants must respond to the five questions (15 points)
 - a. Number of students enrolled in the program(s) in calendar year 2025;
 - b. Projected total enrollment for the next 12 months (i.e., calendar year 2027);
 - c. Total Number of students that completed the institution's program(s) in calendar year 2025;
 - i. Number of students completing the program and receiving a certificate,
 - ii. Number of students passing the Commercial Driver's License exam
 - iii. Number of students obtaining Ohio employment post-completion of the 2025 calendar year of its program(s).
 - (1) ODHE may also request additional post-completion state of employment and/or state of residence data.
 - d. Past Performance: Please include no more than one page of information about the applicant's past performance with the CDL Student Aid program including post-completion employment and CDL exam pass rates for students that received a grant. (30 points)
 - i. ODHE will review an applicant's past performance, including but not limited to timeliness of submitting required reports, expenditure rate, student completion, submission of employment verification forms, and number of students referred to the Ohio Attorney General for repayment, financial aid audits and achieving the goals of the CDL Student aid program, prior to making final recommendations and award decisions.
3. Cost of the CDL training program(s)
 - a. Provide the maximum per student cost of tuition and related expenses for each CDL training program seeking funding under this opportunity by completing the attached program budget form.
4. CDL Program student eligibility and loan counseling (25 points)
 - a. Provide documentation that demonstrates how program recipients will be limited to Ohio residents as defined in OAC 3333-1-10.
 - b. Describe the process used by the school to inform and counsel students about the grant and loan upon entrance and exit from the program.
 - i. Submit copies of pre- and post- completion loan counseling materials, information on loan documents and program and post-employment requirements.
 - (1) Describe the pre and post completion loan counseling procedure with specific steps and actions, including review of the employment verification form.
 - ii. ODHE will provide certain disclosure information and loan documents (i.e., the Promissory Note) to each approved school after the school receives an award letter from the Ohio Department of Higher Education for a qualified program.
 - (1) Pursuant to ORC 3333.125, Section E, Paragraph 3, the interest rate will be determined by the Chancellor if a student defaults. ODHE reserves the right to modify the term for a program within the guidelines provided for in the law.
 - (2) ODHE encourages schools to review a student's federal loan status prior to making an award.
 - c. Describe specific actions the school will take to assist ODHE to work with students to determine program employment compliance and help avoid student defaults.



- i. Sample promissory note and employment verification form can be found at <https://higher.ed.ohio.gov/businesses/services-programs/cdl>
- D. Marketing: Describe marketing efforts on behalf of the program; detail how the school will engage students and leverage other resources to reach potential students including OhioMeansJobs resources. An applicant may include appropriate supporting materials as attachments.(5 points)
- E. Program budget form – Excel workbook attached hereto as Attachment A
 1. Complete the school program budget for Class A, Class B, etc. driver’s license programs.
- F. Institutional timeline (15 points)
 1. Submit a 12-month project plan with key milestones for the program with a brief description of each step (one to two sentences).
- G. Required reporting

Prior to funds being distributed, specific student information is required to be submitted, as determined by ODHE.

In addition, each awarded institution will be required to file annual reports to ODHE in a form designated by the Chancellor. This information will include the following elements and may be revised by the Chancellor to provide further data and metrics to determine progress and impact:

 1. Amount of each grant and loan awarded.
 2. Number and percent of students receiving certificates and types of Driver’s License that were awarded funds.
 3. Percent of students that were awarded funds obtaining Ohio employment after completing the program (ODHE may also request additional post-completion state of employment and/or state of residence data).
 4. Entry level wage for students that were awarded funds obtaining employment after completing the program.
 5. Number of students in repayment, if applicable.

X. Legal Notices

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

The school understands the repayment of any loans awarded will be subject to the terms set in the promissory note by the Ohio Department of Higher Education. All future loans and students are subject to the terms and conditions of the promissory note.

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 re-issue 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 under the Loan Program. The State reserves the right to adjust the dates for this announcement for whatever reasons 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.



All 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 application 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

- A. All information submitted in response to this application is public information unless a statutory exception exists that exempts it from public release under the Ohio Public Records Act, as defined in Section 149.43 of the Ohio Revised Code. All schools are strongly discouraged from including in an 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.
- B. 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.
 - 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 school or business asserting trade secret bears the responsibility to take formal action if necessary and defend such assertion. Otherwise, public records laws may require disclosure.
- C. The Ohio Department of Higher Education requires non-disclosure agreements from all non-Ohio Department of Higher Education persons who may have access to applications containing trade secret information, including evaluators.