



Research Incentive – Request for Proposal

Timelines

Request for Proposals Released	March 30, 2026
Proposals Submission Window	March 31 – April 27, 2026
Questions From Respondents Due	April 13, 2026
Notification of Awarded Proposals	By May 18, 2026

Submissions

One electronic PDF copy file uploaded by the submission date to <https://rfp.ohiohighered.org>.

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Third Frontier Research Incentives Request for Proposals Submission

I. Program Overview

Section 381.670 (**Research Incentive Third Frontier**) of Amended Substitute House Bill Number 96 of the 136th Ohio General Assembly authorizes the Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) to use appropriated funds under this section to advance collaborative research at institutions of higher education and support programs and initiatives specifically identified in this section.

The initiative eligible for funding pursuant to this Request for Proposal (RFP) is:

Translational research in application of the Science of Reading through Structured Literacy pedagogy and programming.

II. Research on the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy

Improving literacy is fundamental to meeting Ohio's current and future workforce needs because it underpins nearly every skill required in a modern economy. Strong reading, writing, and comprehension abilities enable individuals to learn technical content, adapt to new technologies, follow complex instructions, and communicate effectively across diverse teams. As industries increasingly rely on data, digital tools, and continuous upskilling, workers with higher literacy levels are better positioned to be productive, innovative, and resilient in the face of change. This RFP supports Ohio's commitment to increasing literacy through the adoption of the Science of Reading throughout the state.

To this end, responses to this RFP will propose Centers of Excellence that enhance the adoption and effectiveness of Science of Reading research and implementation through Structured Literacy pedagogy. A Center of Excellence should:

- A.** Focus on researching methods of training professional educators in the fundamentals and effective application of the Science of Reading by:
 - 1. Producing easily accessible technical resources for educators in the foundations of the Science of Reading.
 - 2. Creating professional development training materials for teachers and faculty that translate Science of Reading research into pedagogical strategies for teaching reading.
 - 3. Assess the effectiveness of training materials while providing direct pedagogical training opportunities based on the Science of Reading to faculty and teachers.
 - 4. Developing the capacity to efficiently translate new research into products and materials that can be used by educators for teaching reading based upon the Science of Reading.

- B.** Develop a research program that:
 - 1. Collaborates with local districts to evaluate the effectiveness of Structured Literacy pedagogy.
 - 2. Cultivates expertise to conduct research on the application and effectiveness of structured literacy on student performance.
 - 3. Conduct research to identify processes, professional development tools, equipment and other products to advance the application of the Science of Reading across the education sector.

- C. Collaborate with other COEs regarding Science of Reading research including the research of effective professional development strategies.

All proposals, where applicable, should build upon existing work in Ohio that has advanced this work and should take into account Ohio's unique challenges and characteristics.

III. Eligible Applicants

- A. State universities as defined in section 3345.011 of the Revised Code.
- B. A community college established under Chapter 3354 of the Revised Code.
- C. A state community college established under Chapter 3358 of the Revised Code.
- D. A technical college established under Chapter 3357 of the Revised Code.
- E. A non-profit private institution of higher education with a Certificate of Authorization issued pursuant to Chapter 1713 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Eligible applicants are encouraged to form collaborative partnerships in order to leverage the collective capabilities of participating entities and increase the statewide impact of project awards.

IV. Anticipated Awards

The Chancellor is looking to establish up to 3 Structured Literacy Centers of Excellence. Each Center would have a projected budget between \$750,000 - \$1,000,000 per center.

V. Award Recommendations

The Chancellor, after considering the recommendations of independent reviewers, shall make the final determination regarding which proposals, if any, shall receive an award.

VI. Proposal Submission Process

Proposals can be submitted beginning March 31, 2026 and are due no later than April 27, 2026. They must be submitted in the following manner:

- A. One electronic PDF file uploaded to <https://rfp.ohiohighered.org>.
- B. Note: There will be no opportunity to discuss alignment of interest with ODHE prior to submission.

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 independent review team selected by the Chancellor. The Chancellor will make final decisions based upon the quality of the proposal in addressing the RFP criteria and its required elements and the recommendation of the independent review process. There is no set number of awards. 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 <https://rfp.ohiohighered.org>.

Funds will be available to awardees after execution of a Memorandum of Understanding with ODHE.

Applicant may submit questions regarding the proposal process and should be submitted in writing via email to csee@highered.ohio.gov and mdunn@highered.ohio.gov. Responses to questions will be posted online at [Grant Resources & Requests for Proposals \(RFPs\) | The Ohio Department of Higher Education](#).

VII. **Proposal Requirements**

A. **Format**

Proposals must be submitted in Arial font, 11 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.

1. **Cover Letter (one page):** Title of project; identify the primary contact plus the fiscal agent by name, title, address, phone number, and email address.
2. **Executive Summary (one page maximum):** Include: 1) brief overview of the initiative or program to be supported and research to be conducted; 2) a synopsis of the plan to execute the initiative or program proposed; 3) a description of the anticipated conclusions of the research or outcomes of the program or initiative; 4) a description of any potential development of new products or innovative advances based upon the research being conducted or program or initiative being advanced; 5) a description of how the initiative will support Ohio business, industry, or commerce.
3. **Project Narrative (6 pages maximum):** Should address the proposal criteria in the order outlined in **Section II**. The project narrative should describe prior work performed in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy, and how this project will advance the State's goals of creating materials and developing an infrastructure to enhance student literacy.
4. **Budget Narrative & Budget Table (two pages maximum):** The budget narrative will provide background related to the costs of the project and its deployment.
 - a. The budget narrative should include:
 - i. One to two paragraph descriptions of the activities and expenses included in each budget line.
 - ii. Prioritization of activities in order of most critical to project completion or success.
 - iii. Explanation of how the program's costs were calculated.
 - iv. Description of any matching funds that will be leveraged clearly labeled.
 - v. Note: Indirect costs are capped at a maximum of 8%.
 - vi. Note: the proposed budget should be for the full award period; both fiscal years, unless the applicant is specifically applying for only one year of funding. There is no minimum or maximum budget request.
 - vii. Note: direct training costs are not permitted.
5. **Partnerships and Collaborations** - List and describe any collaborations that will be part of the proposed research, program, or initiative. Describe the specific roles and responsibilities of each project collaborator. Collaborations must be documented in a letter of commitment from each anticipated collaborator. Note: Collaboration letters should be included in the proposal attachment and are not part of the project narrative page limitation.

6. **Support of Ohio Industry** - Describe how the initiative will support Ohio industry, business or commerce, specifically describe where applicable;
 - a. The specific industry potentially impacted by the initiative.
 - b. The size of the potential market impact of the initiative.
 - c. The specific industry problem being addressed.
 - d. The specific customer segment targeted by the initiative.
 - e. Any products or technologies being developed.
 - f. The potential economic impact of the initiative.
7. **Sustainability** - Describe how the initiative will be sustained beyond the funding period. **Note: Applicants should provide evidence of commitment to ensure sustainability after the funding period.**
8. **Project Plan** - This section should provide a clear description and timeline for activities to be undertaken and should:
 - a. Outline the roles and responsibilities of key staff members and provide brief biographies. Note: biographies should be included in the proposal attachment and are not part of the project narrative page limitation and not to exceed two pages per key staff member.
 - b. Provide a GANNT chart for the entire project with proposed activities, dependencies, and estimated completion milestone for each activity.
9. **Project Evaluation** - Explain how project success will be measured. The evaluation plan should include both formative and summative measurements where applicable. Project evaluation must include a system to measure the success of the research, program or initiative and the impact on Ohio business, industry or commerce. Specifically:
 - a. Describe the evaluation design.
 - b. Describe the ongoing evaluation process, including collecting data, analyzing data, and responding to data.
 - c. Provide a timeline for the evaluation process, including formative and summative evaluations complementing the project GANTT chart.
10. **Attachments (no page limit):** Proof of commitment from all parties responsible for the implementation initiative is required: this includes letters of commitment and/or agreements from collaborative partners if applicable.

VIII. Reporting Requirements

ODHE will monitor 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. All award expenditures must be properly documented following Ohio Revised Code and Administrative rules.

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 information submitted in response to this RFP become property of ODHE and 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: Respondents are strongly discouraged from including in an application any information that the respondent considers to be a "trade secret," as that term is defined in Section 1333.61(D) of the Ohio Revised Code. The respondent asserting trade secret bears the responsibility to notify ODHE of the trade secret exempt from Ohio public records law, take formal action if necessary, and defend such assertion at its own costs. Otherwise, public records laws may require disclosure.