

Request for Proposals (RFP)

AI Integration in Community Colleges Grant Program

Release Date: October 15, 2025

Application Due: November 14, 2025, 11:59 PM

Background and Program Purpose

Section 381.165 of House Bill 96 of the 136th General Assembly directed the Chancellor to create the Artificial Intelligence Integration in Community Colleges Pilot Grant Program to provide financial assistance to community colleges to implement artificial intelligence initiatives. The Ohio Department of Higher Education ("ODHE") is releasing this RFP to solicit proposals from eligible respondents.

Eligible Respondents:

This RFP is open to Ohio community colleges as defined in Ohio Revised Code 3333.168: "Community college" means a community college established under Chapter 3354, a technical college established under Chapter 3357, or a state community college established under Chapter 3358 of the Revised Code."

Eligible community colleges may apply individually or as a consortium.

Award Amounts:

In each fiscal year ODHE shall award five competitive grants of \$100,000 each. This RFP is for FY 2026 awards. Another RFP will be released for the FY 2027 awards.

Allowable Costs:

Eligible uses of the grant funds are as follows:

1. Integrating artificial intelligence curriculum into credential programs;
2. Establishing artificial intelligence-based College Credit Plus Program offerings;
3. Training faculty and staff on the uses of artificial intelligence technologies relevant to local industry or state needs;
4. Supporting students with practical artificial intelligence skills through certifications and project-based learning;
5. Purchasing artificial intelligence hardware and software;
6. Utilizing artificial intelligence in streamlining administrative functions and student services; and
7. Contracting with a vendor to provide any or all of the services described in this division.

Proposal Review Process and Timeline:

The schedule below may be revised at the discretion of ODHE. Any changes will be communicated to respondents at <https://rfp.ohiohighered.org>.

- Request for Proposals Released: October 15, 2025
- Webinar for RFP: October 20, 2025, 2:00 PM Link to [Webinar](#)
- Proposals Due: November 14, 2025, 11:59 PM
- Application Review Begins: November 17, 2025
- Notification of Awarded Proposals: December 2025
- Disbursement to Institutions: December 2025 – January 2026
- Award Period: Upon execution of an agreement with ODHE – June 30, 2027.

ODHE will provide information to interested parties and provide assistance to potential respondents during the October 20, 2025, 2:00 PM webinar, by responding to questions submitted via e-mail to ai@highered.ohio.gov. Questions must be submitted by October 20, 2025, 12:00 PM (noon) to be answered on the webinar. Responses to submitted questions, along with questions received in the chat during the webinar will be posted at <https://rfp.ohiohighered.org/>.

ODHE will initially screen proposals for completeness and eligibility. Any deficiencies must be addressed by the respondent within a time period set by the ODHE. While all properly submitted proposals will receive consideration, submission of a complete proposal does not guarantee funding.

Upon approval, the Chancellor will provide an award notification letter to the college, which will include the total awarded amount. ODHE and the respondent will enter into an agreement prior to funding being disbursed. Due to the RFP process and timeline, the timeline for the award agreement will be upon execution of the agreement through June 30, 2027.

Proposal Submission:

Proposals are due no later than **November 14, 2025, 11:59 PM**. They must be submitted in the following manner: One electronic PDF file including proposal and any attachments, along with the Excel budget spreadsheet uploaded to rfp.ohiohighered.org.

Consortia or collaborations of multiple eligible institutions are encouraged to apply.

Respondents are responsible for timely submissions of proposals. Proposals become property of ODHE and are subject to public records laws of the state. Proposals containing all the required elements will receive careful consideration but cannot be guaranteed funding. Accepted proposals will be evaluated and the Chancellor will make final decisions based upon the quality of the proposal in addressing the proposal criteria and its required elements.

Proposal Requirements:

NOTE: Please refer to the scoring rubric (Exhibit 1) for proposal development.

Format

Proposals must be submitted in a standard font, 11 point and double-spaced; there is an exception for tables and images, where the font may be single spaced. Please see below for page allocations and directions for each section of the proposal.

Cover Letter (one page maximum): The Cover Letter must include the title of the project, and identify a primary, fiscal, and legal contact by providing the name, title, address, phone, and email address for each. The legal contact has authority to review the award agreement on behalf of the institution. The primary institutional contact can also be a representative from the institution who will serve as the fiscal agent for the grant funds. If the proposal is a consortium proposal, also include contact information for the primary institutional contacts of consortia members.

Project Narrative (ten pages maximum): The project narrative should address the Proposal Criteria in order (see "Proposal Criteria" section).

Budget and Budget Narrative (two pages maximum): In the provided Excel spreadsheet, the budget and budget narrative will document:

- Itemized costs for the grant
- The underlying assumption for each cost (i.e., base cost of the item or service, how it ties to the overall outcomes associated with the proposal, and number of people involved/served, etc.)
- Any matching funds that will be leveraged, clearly labeled.

Proposal Criteria:

Project Narratives are required to address the following:

1. Project Design:
 - a. Please indicate which one or more eligible uses the grant is aligned to:
 1. Integrating artificial intelligence curriculum into credential programs;
 2. Establishing artificial intelligence-based College Credit Plus program offerings;
 3. Training faculty and staff on the uses of artificial intelligence technologies relevant to local industry or state needs;
 4. Supporting students with practical artificial intelligence skills through certifications and project-based learning;
 5. Purchasing artificial intelligence hardware and software;
 6. Utilizing artificial intelligence in streamlining administrative functions and student services; and/or
 7. Contracting with a vendor to provide any or all of the services described in this section.
 - b. Explain the intention of this project to embed AI into the general education curriculum. Support this with student outcomes and workforce readiness.
 - c. Specify if there is K-12 engagement or collaboration and a plan to develop CCP-aligned course development.

- d. Indicate whether this is a consortium project and what community colleges are participating.
 - e. Identify any other partners who will be involved in the proposed project including vendors and consultants.
 - f. Detail the proposed outcomes and how they will be assessed. Please provide an evaluation plan to assess the efficacy of this project. The plan should include interim measures that will inform continuous improvement.
 - g. Include a description of how the project connects to the college's strategic plan/long term goals and how this project will be sustainable after the grant.
- 2. Project Rationale: Detailed description, including:
 - a. Description of why the proposed project was identified and how it will benefit the students, employees and/or operations at the college, and external stakeholders.
 - b. Rationale for why partners were chosen, if any.
 - c. Rationale that explains how the proposed strategies were identified including any (1) supportive research studies, (2) data, such as student success metrics or workforce trends.
- 3. Project Plan: This section should provide a clear description and timeline for activities to be undertaken.
 - a. Provide a chart that outlines the key staff on the project, including their (1) roles and responsibilities and (2) relevant experience.
 - b. Timeline for milestones and planned activities for the proposed project including a detailed narrative with key partners and intended activities for each milestone listed.
- 4. Budget Narrative
 - a. The amounts for each budget line activity must be documented and justified in the budget narrative and summarized within the provided Excel workbook.
 - b. The narrative should include an estimate as to the timing of expenditures in relation to the project plan.
 - c. Costs should fall within comparative industry standards.

Scoring Rubric

Each proposal will be assessed according to the proposal criteria using the scoring rubric attached hereto as Exhibit 1. Please note, ODHE reserves the right to make edits to the rubric at any point prior to the start of the proposal review. The rubric is being provided for informational purposes only.

Reporting Requirements:

Section 381.165 of House Bill 96 of the 136th General Assembly requires the Chancellor to monitor the performance of each grant recipient in meeting the objectives of the program. Additionally, the Chancellor is required to submit a report with legislative recommendations for further development of the program to the General Assembly. To meet these requirements, in addition to standard financial and programmatic reporting, ODHE will require regular feedback and reporting from an awarded grant recipient. Additional details will be provided in the award agreement.

Legal Notices:

The respondent understands that if its proposal is accepted by ODHE, the respondent shall enter into an agreement with ODHE governing the use of the awarded funds. The respondent 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 proposal in full or in part, to request additional information to assist in the review process, to require new proposals from interested parties, to reject any or all proposals responding to this announcement, or to reissue the announcement if it is determined that it is in the best interest of ODHE. Issuing this announcement does not bind ODHE to making any awards. ODHE reserves the right to adjust the dates for this announcement for whatever reasons are deemed appropriate. ODHE reserves the right to waive any non-substantive infractions made by a respondent, provided that the respondent cures such infraction upon request.

All costs incurred in preparation of a proposal shall be borne by the respondent. Proposal preparation costs are not recoverable under an award. ODHE shall not contribute in any way to recovering the costs of proposal preparation.

Funding decisions are final. Respondents will be notified of the outcome of their proposal(s) at the conclusion of the review process.

The respondent understands that the information provided herein is intended solely to assist the respondent in submittal preparation. To the best of ODHE's knowledge, the information provided is accurate.

However, ODHE 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 proposal. ODHE retains the right to modify or withdraw this solicitation at any time. By submitting a proposal, respondents expressly agree to these terms.

Trade Secret:

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 take formal action if necessary and defend such assertion. Otherwise, public records laws may require disclosure.

Exhibit 1

Institution Name:		Project Name:	
Criteria	Below Expectations (0)	Meets Expectations (4–7)	Above Expectations (8–10)
Student Focus & General Education Integration	Proposal lacks clear connection to general education or student workforce readiness.	Proposal includes integration of AI into general education and addresses student competitiveness in the labor market.	Proposal demonstrates strong alignment with including AI in the general education curriculum with innovative strategies to embed AI broadly and enhance student employability.
Outcomes and Assessment	No clear metrics provided.	Proposal includes a plan for measurable impact.	Proposal outlines high-impact metrics (e.g., % of students reached).
Connection to College's Strategic Plan and Sustainability	No mention of a connection to the college's strategic plan or sustainability plan provided.	Proposal includes a basic connection to the college's strategic plan and a basic sustainability plan.	Proposal outlines a clear connection to the college's strategic plan and a robust plan for long-term sustainability.
Rationale and Preparedness	No clear rationale or timeline to implement.	Proposal includes a basic rationale for the project and general timeline to implement.	Proposal demonstrates a clear, convincing rationale for the project and demonstration of clear, reasonable timeline to implement for each milestone listed.
K-12 Leverage and CCP Integration	No mention of K-12 or CCP collaboration.	Proposal includes some engagement with K-12 or CCP course development.	Proposal demonstrates strong K-12 partnerships and a clear plan to develop CCP-aligned AI coursework.
Consortia Participation	Proposal is from a single institution with no collaboration.	Proposal includes collaboration or shared planning with other institutions.	Proposal is part of a well-structured consortium with a lead applicant and shared goals/resources.
Innovation and Replicability	Proposal lacks innovation or is not scalable.	Proposal includes some innovating elements and potential for replication.	Detailed analysis showing strategic shift in instructional delivery and replication.
Budget and Narrative	Budget is unclear or unjustified.	Budget is clear, justified, and aligned with project goals.	Budget is well-documented, cost-effective, and strategically aligned with project milestones and sustainability.
Total Points (out of 80)			