



Choose Ohio First

FY27 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

October 16, 2026

1. **Will there be an information session?** An information session will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, September 11, 2026. This is a virtual session, and it will be recorded. The recording will be posted with the RFP materials on the ODHE RFP webpage. Attendees must register using the following URL and are encouraged to submit questions along with their registration: <https://oh-tech.webex.com/weblink/register/r25f7f3e5306cadeeda2682b350c906c0>
2. **Last year, each institution received a letter outlining the maximum award amount our institution could apply for. Were similar letters sent this year?** No. The amount of funds awarded to institutions will be determined by a combination of factors. Among the applicant pool, ODHE will utilize 2024 IPEDS data to determine each institution's market share of degree and certificate completions for COF approved CIPs. Additional award allocation factors will include the applicant's past COF program performance (if applicable) and the results of the proposal review and scoring process. Institutions are encouraged to develop proposals and funding requests that demonstrate the ability to increase the number of students entering and completing STEM programs.
3. **Are the enrollment numbers (historical, baseline, and pledge) supposed to reflect all STEM disciplines, or only those on which we focused on in our COF proposal?** Enrollment numbers should reflect the STEM CIP codes that are the focus of the COF proposal.
4. **Can we recruit different numbers of students for each year of the award? For example, cohort 1 AY29 = 12 students; cohort 2 AY30 = 10 students.** Yes. Use the enrollment growth pledge table and supporting material, to propose the enrollment growth that you think is reasonable and achievable each year of the program period. Include an explanation in the narrative.
5. **What counts for institutional 1:1 match?** Please refer to the [Financial Aid Guidance Memo](#) for the Choose Ohio First program for details regarding matching funds. The Financial Aid Guidance Memo can be found on the [Grantee Resources Page](#) on the ODHE website.



6. **Are there page limits for proposals?** Yes. Page limits for each section of the proposal are designated in the RFP. Reviewers are under no obligation to review material that exceeds the page limits set forth.
7. **What types of information regarding occupations and the state and regional economies should we include in our proposal?** Institutions may want to refer to:
 - OhioMeansJobs Workforce Demand and Supply Tools <https://workforcedatatools.chrr.ohio-state.edu/>
 - Ohio Longitudinal Data Archive <https://chrr.osu.edu/ohio-longitudinal-data-archive>
 - Ohio Labor Market Information <https://ohiolmi.com/>
 - The Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation Top Jobs List <https://topjobs.ohio.gov/top-jobs-list>
 - JobsOhio Regional Network partners <https://www.jobsohio.com/why-ohio/explore-our-regions>
8. **Are we eligible to apply for funding through the FY27 RFP if our institution received a Choose Ohio First award through a past RFP/funding round?** The FY27 funding round is a separate funding round from all previous funding rounds. Institutions that have awards under previous funding rounds are allowed to apply for funds through the FY27 RFP.
9. **Will ODHE be issuing an opportunity to apply for completion funds for the FY22 program?** We are working toward releasing an application in October. It will be a simple application, not a proposal, and will require institutions to request funds each year for the next four years based on the expected graduation of COF scholars in that program. An application for completion funds for the FY22 awards is a separate process from the FY27 RFP.
10. **The RFP states that an institution may submit only one proposal. Does this mean that the regional campuses can no longer submit a proposal separately? We'd appreciate your clarification.** Only one proposal per institution will be accepted. Proposals can include main and regional campuses and should describe how Choose Ohio First is part of a unified strategy to increase the total number of students enrolling and completing STEM degrees and certificates.
11. **Will the webinar be recorded?** Yes.



12. **Is double spacing strictly required for FY27 proposals or would single spacing (11 pt, 1-inch margins) also be acceptable, consistent with what has been used?** It is recommended that proposals follow the formatting requirements and the page limitations provided in the RFP. Reviewers are under no obligation to review material that exceeds the limits stated in the RFP. These standards are provided to facilitate consistency in the proposals and the review process.
13. **We currently have a COF grant that runs through 28-29; therefore this grant if awarded would overlap with one year of the prior award. Is that okay and would we request fewer dollars that first year and more later to continue the cohorts from our current grant and continue to support new cohorts?** The FY27 funding round is a separate funding round from all previous funding rounds. Institutions that have awards under previous funding rounds are allowed to apply for funds through the FY27 RFP and operate two or more programs even if the portions of the program period run concurrently. The FY funds are not intended to support students receiving COF scholarships from a previous funding round. Institutions are encouraged to consider the impact of operating multiple COF programs, such as the availability of matching funds, administration and reporting, and the ability to support students with work-based learning opportunities.
14. **Is the COF award allowed to stack on top of other awards like federal financial aid such that it reduces the total amount a student owes below the SAI?** Students are allowed to receive other scholarships and financial aid along with COF. COF funds are not refundable to the student. COF funds applied to eligible expenses cannot exceed the allowable expenses. Students cannot receive an overage or refund of COF funds, nor can a refund or overage of COF funds be applied to the student's account. It is acceptable for the institution to apply COF funds first (followed by federal loans and grants) in a way that produces a refund from non-COF sources. For the COF program, it is a matter of institutional discretion to apply aid in a manner and sequence that is most appropriate and beneficial to individual students.
15. **Can Federal Indirect Cost Rate be used as a source of matching funds?** A university's Federal Indirect Cost Rate cannot be used for matching funds for the Choose Ohio First program. Please refer to the Financial Aid Guidance Memo for additional information about matching funds.
https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/v1782221890/highered.ohio.gov/cof/FA_26-27_FINAL.pdf
16. **Regarding the required 1:1 match described on the call, does the match need to consist entirely of cash contributions, or may institutions count in-kind contributions toward the match, such as faculty/staff FTE or personnel time devoted to the project? If in-kind**



contributions are allowable, are there specific guidelines for calculating and documenting their value? Please refer to the Financial Aid Guidance Memo for details about matching funds.

https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/v1782221890/highered.ohio.gov/cof/FA_26-27_FINAL.pdf

- 17. Do students need to begin their study in fall semester, or may they begin summer and/or spring?** Students can be recruited into the COF program at any point in the academic year and must meet the eligibility requirements.
- 18. The Excel Workbook has at least one password-locked block area in the Alternate Contacts area.** This has been corrected.
- 19. Could you please clarify where the required application files should be uploaded in the online application portal?** Instructions for using the portal are included through a link at the top of the RFP portal. The option to upload files is now active.
- 20. Since the funding does not start until 2028, could we pledge to have started certain programs by then or do we need to have the programs already approved as of today?** The status of academic programs should be clear in every proposal, especially if they are not yet approved or authorized. A proposal with unapproved programs could present a strong case for increasing enrollment in STEM programs. It also has several challenges. First, ODHE will request approval from the State Controlling Board for the awards to institutions in November or December 2026. It would be difficult for ODHE to request approval for funding connected to an academic program that is not yet approved. Second, ODHE will utilize 2024 IPEDS data to determine each institution's market share of degree and certificate completions for COF approved CIPs, which will be a limiting factor for an academic program with no history. Third, COF is a competitive process and a proposal such as this will be competing with established programs that can describe and demonstrate successful outcomes with academic programs.
- 21. If we pick CIPs for the growth pledge, are those the only ones we are initially allowed to award, with the ability for students to switch majors as long as they stay in a state approved CIP? Or can we choose more CIPs that the growth pledge and award that way, with the intention of growing certain majors?** The selected CIPs will be used for your growth



pledge. You can award scholarships to students in the selected CIPs, and they will count toward your growth pledge. Let's call these the "FY27 IHE's Selected CIPs". You can also award scholarships to students that are not enrolled in one of the FY27 IHE's Selected CIPs as long as the academic program meets the eligibility standards (1) the CIP is on the FY27 COF Eligible CIP List and (2) the institution offers a program with that CIP that has been authorized or approved by ODHE. Let's call these the "COF Eligible CIPs". Students who receive a scholarship and are enrolled in a COF Eligible CIP will not count toward your enrollment growth pledge.

Here is a chart that provides the same information in a different format.

	FY27 IHE's Selected CIPs	COF Eligible CIP
The CIP is on the FY27 COF Eligible CIP List	Yes	Yes
Institution offers a program with that CIP that has been approved or authorized by ODHE	Yes (Associate of Science, Education programs and certificates could be a special case)	Yes (Associate of Science, Education programs and certificates could be a special case)
Institution selects CIP to be part of the FY27 COF program and commit to an increase in enrollment	Yes	No
Students enrolled in these CIPs are eligible for COF scholarships	Yes	Yes
Students enrolled in these CIPs count toward enrollment growth pledge	Yes	No

22. Could you confirm that eligibility follows the CIP code on the eligible list regardless of whether the degree is awarded as a B.A. or a B.S., and that a B.A. program in an eligible CIP is fully eligible? Eligibility is determined by the CIP code, and a BA would be eligible if the program has a CIP that is on the FY27 COF List and is part of the institution's program inventory in EDvera.

23. If a non-degree certificate program is authorized by the Ohio State Board of Career Colleges and Schools, is listed in EDvera, and has a CIP code appearing on the FY27 Choose



Ohio First Eligible CIP List, may that program be included as an eligible program in a Choose Ohio First proposal? Or, alternatively, must every program included in the proposal be specifically approved or authorized through ODHE itself, regardless of its authorization by another State of Ohio regulatory body and its listing in EDvera? For a program to be included in a COF award agreement and for students to be eligible for a COF Scholarship, the academic program must be specifically approved or authorized through ODHE. Associate of Science degrees and some Education programs are exceptions and ODHE has issued guidance specifically for those programs. The response to question 20 in the FAQ provides more information about *proposals* that include CIPs/programs that are not approved or authorized by ODHE.

24. **We have a program that is actively progressing through the accreditation process. We have our site visit scheduled for this week, having completed the required first year of program operation prior to initial accreditation review. Given this status, would the program be considered eligible under the grant's accreditation requirements, or must accreditation have already been formally granted at the time of application?** The program in question is listed in EDvera and on the COA, and would be eligible for the Choose Ohio First program, as long as the CIP code is on the FY27 COF Eligible CIP List.
25. **Based on past report submissions, what is the biggest mistake or data mismatch you see programs make that we should actively avoid?** Institutions are encouraged to address all requirements in the RFP and provide examples or evidence of the institution's ability to implement the proposal as presented.
26. **If a program is a 5 year program to completion due to coop rotations (4-5) what is suggestion to construct budget within the 4 year period term and completion grant?** The FY27 proposal process includes a budget model that allows institutions to propose budgets and request funds to recruit and support STEM students to completion.
27. **Can you provide advice on our proposal?** This is a competitive process, and we cannot offer advice on specific proposals or strategies. Proposals will be evaluated based on the rubric in the RFP. In addition, the Chancellor will consider 2024 IPEDS data, past performance with COF, and ability to increase the number of students entering and completing STEM programs. Proposals that are integrated with the strengths of the regional economy by demonstrating the ability to increase



enrollment and completion in STEM programs, aligned with JobsOhio's target economic sectors, connect students to Ohio-based work-based employers filling critical jobs or jobs offering strong wages, and/or have been identified by JobsOhio and/or the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation will receive additional consideration.

28. It is unclear to us whether we can include CIP codes covered in our funded FY26 proposal on the FY 27 proposal. Is this allowed? Yes, you can include the same CIPs codes in the FY27 proposal.

29. Our participating programs have existing articulation agreements with employer partners that demonstrate their support and collaboration. Would those agreements satisfy the employer support letter requirement, or would you recommend that we obtain separate letters specifically for the FY27 application? Please review information on attachments at the top of page 6 (section 5b) of the RFP for information about business letters of support. Also review sections d and f (work-based learning and regional and statewide economic needs and strengths), as letters of support may bolster these scored elements.

30. If a university has already submitted a proposal, is this an opportunity to submit a second, separate proposal? No.

31. Are we being invited to add more information to our initial FY27 COF Proposal, which was submitted by the October 1st deadline? This is an opportunity to provide additional information to support your proposal, if you choose.

32. Are we permitted to go beyond the page and attachment limitations, as well as the formatting restrictions? No.

33. Can institutions obtain feedback or additional details about their submitted proposals to determine whether supplemental materials are needed? We will not be providing feedback



on the proposal that was submitted. This is an opportunity to provide additional information to support your proposal, if you choose.

34. We have already applied for the Oct 1 deadline. So, we assume we need to do nothing further, correct? This is an opportunity to provide additional material to support your proposal if you choose. You are not required to submit anything else.

35. Did you get fewer applications than you hoped? We received 53 proposals, which is like last year when we received 59 proposals.

36. Will the open meeting still be held on Wednesday October 21? Yes. The public meeting will start at 2:00. Please register to attend through this link. Institutions are welcome to make a comment, but it is not required. If you intend to make a comment, please indicate as such during the registration process.

37. Will this extension delay the announcement of awards? This announcement will not delay the award announcements. However, awards are made at the Chancellor's discretion, and it is always possible that the schedule could change.

38. How will the ODHE be balancing those institutions who supplied all materials by the original due date with those who applied late? All materials submitted to ODHE through the proposal process, including those submitted during this additional window, will be reviewed equally.

39. I received the notice of the opportunity to submit supplementary materials. I don't remember this option in past years and am concerned that our application is missing something. I am sorry the announcement created concern. The opportunity to submit additional materials was a general offer to institutions to submit materials to support a submitted proposal. You are not required to submit additional materials, ODHE is not expecting additional materials, and ODHE was not implying additional materials are needed.

40. Is this extended opening time encouraging applicants to consider expanding their grant requests?
No. To clarify the announcement, institutions that have already submitted a proposal can provide



supporting materials for that proposal, and we will accept additional proposals for consideration from those that have not applied.

If an institution submitted a proposal, and subsequently requests to increase the funding amount, add CIPs, or make other substantive changes to the proposal, it would constitute a new, separate proposal and that was not the intent of this opportunity. We will, however, accept any information that supports the proposal as it was submitted, for example as letters of support, by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, October 19.