

College Access Challenge Grant Program

Request for Proposals

Introduction

Ohio's *Strategic Plan for Higher Education: 2008-2017* sets the goal of raising the educational attainment of Ohio's population both in absolute terms and relative to the states and nations against which Ohio competes for jobs and investment. Critical to achieving this goal is to make sure that Ohio's primary and secondary students have access to – and are prepared to take full advantage of – high quality, affordable higher education options that match their goals and abilities.

Both the public universities and community colleges in the University System of Ohio and Ohio's private higher education institutions have been working hard to make such programs available, and, as a result, there are today a robust and growing set of accessible and affordable higher education options for all Ohio students. Yet, too many Ohio students do not know about these options or how to access them, and the predominant message that too many students receive – incorrectly - is that college is unaffordable or inaccessible to them. This is particularly true of low-income and first-generation students.

No single grant program can address all of the college access issues faced by underserved and low- income students, but it is critical that available funds be spent in a focused manner to ensure the greatest positive impact. Therefore, the Chancellor of the Board of Regents will use the College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACG) to facilitate an increased understanding among this group of students about the affordable educational opportunities available to them in Ohio. Grants will be made to collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions, college access organizations, public school districts, and joint vocational districts to design and deliver messages to targeted audiences about the affordability of college in Ohio.

To ensure consistency of information and a centralized theme, the Ohio Board of Regents will develop a central, interactive online “portal” to provide the specifics on college access in Ohio. Grantees will be expected to provide advice and support in the development of the portal and demonstrate in their proposals how they will integrate the use of the portal in both the program that are the subject of the grant proposal and in their broader work.

Statement of Solicitation

The Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents requests proposals from collaborative partnerships consisting of higher education institutions, college access organizations,

public school districts, and joint vocational districts under the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) Program. The proposals should be submitted by the lead organization in the collaborative, but all organizations in the collaborative must sign the RFP. One or more collaborative will receive awards in each region of the state. The ability of the collaborative to significantly serve the entire region will be an important factor in the selection of grantees.

Overarching Initiative

Ohio Student Success Gateway – Student Portal

The overarching purpose of the RFP requires the grantees to provide advice and support in the development of the portal, and leverage their funds to integrate the portal into the organizations' college access programs.

Ohio students and their families have difficulty accessing accurate information about the availability and affordability of an Ohio post-secondary education. Numerous websites offer assistance and information, but many of these sites contain data and information that are inconsistent with overall messaging and often discourages students from exploring the full range of educational options offered in Ohio. Ohio will use a portion of College Access Challenge Grant funds to develop the Ohio Student Success Gateway – Student Portal. The portal will convey a consistent and streamlined message focused in the following areas:

- Affordability
- Efficiency
- Accessibility
- Articulation and Transfer
- Academic Preparation
- Links to High Demand Ohio Jobs and Careers

The core audience for the portal is Ohio students and families with special focus on low-income and first-generation college students. In future iterations, the portal's scope will be expanded to include information for teachers (pre-service and in-service), guidance counselors, school districts, Educational Service Centers, and community agencies.

The Ohio Board of Regents Technology Partners – Ohio Learning Network (OLN), eTech Ohio, Ohio Academic Resources Network (OARnet), and Ohio Articulation and Transfer Network (OATN) and representatives from Ohio's college access organizations will collaborate to develop the portal. OLN and eTech Ohio staff will convene grantees to focus on the initial design and deployment of the portal.

Supportive Activities

In addition to providing advice and support for the development of the portal, applicants should focus their proposals on at least one of the following program areas:

Guidance Counselors for College Access

Numerous studies suggest that the job of a high school guidance counselor becomes more challenging each year. The American School Counselor Association recommends a student-counselor ratio of 100 to 1. On average, in public schools across the United States, the ratio is closer to 260 students to 1 counselor (Clinedinst & Hawkins, 2009). For the 2008-2009 school year, the ratio in Ohio was 499 to 1. Students with college-educated parents receive good advice and assistance as they prepare to enter college; however, 6 out of 10 students enrolled in public schools come from families where neither parent attended college (US Department of Education, 2008). These statistics clearly show that counselors are overburdened and lack the support necessary to effectively guide students through the college enrollment and financial aid process. In addition, the majority of the students that guidance counselors serve do not receive reinforced messaging at home.

Ohio will use a portion of the College Access Challenge Grant funds to support collaboratives that develop and deliver training for in-service and pre-service guidance counselors, teachers, and other educators to further expand the "college-knowledge" of underserved, low-income students. The training will provide educators with up-to-date information on college admissions and selection, financial aid, college savings, college entrance and readiness assessments, dual enrollment, career-technical education, college completion, and other post-secondary options. Guidance counselors and advisors will learn about potential barriers to student success, opportunities for support and resources, working with underserved students, identifying student aspirations, creating a post-secondary culture, developing partnerships between K-12 and higher education, and other topics that may not always be a part of curriculum in college or professional development programs. The training should align with and complement existing pre-service curriculum and/or professional development programs, and must fully integrate the use of a statewide student portal. Funds cannot be used to hire additional college counselors or advisors.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment options enable students to earn high school and college credit simultaneously while attending high school. Examples of dual enrollment options include: PSEO, Seniors to Sophomores, dual enrollment offerings on high school campuses, Early College High School, and some college tech prep programs.

Research indicates that dual enrollment programs have a positive effect on enrollment and success in post-secondary education. A study conducted by the National Research Center for Career-Technical Education examined students that participated in dual

enrollment programs in both Florida and New York and found that participation in dual enrollment was positively related to full-time enrollment in college, persistence and retention. Dual enrollment participants also earned above average grade point averages one year after high school graduation. When delivered at a convenient location by well-qualified faculty, dual enrollment programs offer a free or low-cost pathway to college courses. The Ohio Board of Regents established standards for the quality of coursework and faculty qualifications. College Access Challenge Grant funds will be used to provide program services that encourage students to enroll and succeed in appropriate dual enrollment courses. Services may include tutoring, mentoring, study skills or orientation workshops, and library and research seminars. Funds will be used to create new dual enrollment programs.

Evaluation of Dual Enrollment Programs

A central component of building awareness among low-income students and families about Ohio's dual enrollment opportunities is measuring the effectiveness of these programs and their impact on student enrollment and completion patterns. Ohio will use a portion of CACG funding to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of dual enrollment programs. Proposals must articulate a systematic approach to collecting, analyzing, and using data and information to determine whether dual enrollment programming is having the intended outcomes as identified. Applicants must clearly demonstrate the expertise of the lead agent in developing evaluations of system-wide initiatives, preparation of evaluation instruments, analysis of evaluations, and communicating the results to stakeholders and policymakers. Grantees will work collaboratively with the Chancellor's staff to identify needs, develop goals and a strategy to evaluate dual enrollment programs across the state.

Focus on Access and Success

Providing access to affordable higher education options does not in itself raise the educational attainment of Ohio's citizens – only college completion accomplishes that goal. Too often, the focus on college access programs does not adequately consider the goal of college completion. Academic bridge programs are critical to increasing student persistence, retention, and completion rates.

College Access Challenge Grant funds will be used to develop and implement programs that help low-income students make a successful transition from high school to college. The target/priority audience of students should be those for whom limited remediation will enable them to meet established placement policy benchmarks and college readiness expectations. Proposals should develop programming that ensures students get the remediation they need before they begin college in the areas of mathematics, English, language arts, and reading, and should align with statewide placement policy and college readiness expectations. Proposals also should explain how students will be informed about college life and culture, selecting peer groups, peer support, study and test taking skills, time management, Ohio's transfer and articulation policy, co-ops and internships, and study-abroad programs.

Timeline

- Anticipated RFP Release Date: February 4, 2011
- Informational Meeting: February 11, 2011
- Proposals Due: February 25, 2011
- Proposal Review: February 28 – March 7
- Recommendations to the Chancellor: March 11, 2011
- Awards Announced: March 18, 2011

Release of RFP

All RFPs covering funding programs administered under the auspices of the Chancellor will be published on the website of the Ohio Board of Regents (<http://regents.ohio.gov>).

Informational Meeting

A statewide informational meeting will be held to review the intent of the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) program and to summarize key points of the RFP. All questions must be submitted in advance of the meeting. Please send questions via e-mail to Charles Shahid at cshahid@regents.state.oh.us.

Proposal Review

All proposals will be subjected to an administrative review by the Chancellor's staff using the general proposal requirements specified in Section 6 of this RFP. The administrative review will cover compliance with RFP requirements for meeting the intent of the program and satisfying the evaluation criteria. Proposals found to comply administratively with the RFP requirements and program intent will be recommended for consideration for funding by the Chancellor's College Access Challenge Grant Program Review Panel, which will make recommendations directly to the Chancellor. Lead applicants will receive written notification on whether their proposal(s) will be referred to the Review Panel for funding consideration.

It is the responsibility of the lead applicant to ensure that the Chancellor's staff receives proposals in the prescribed manner on or before the published due date. Late proposals will be neither reviewed nor given further consideration. Lead applicants are advised to read this RFP carefully to ensure a complete understanding of the lead applicant's responsibility.

The Chancellor reserves the right to ask clarifying questions, request additional information, and require meetings to discuss the details of the proposal.

At least one award will be made in each region of the state. The maximum funding for a regional award is \$500,000 and will be paid through August 31, 2011. The ability of the collaborative to significantly serve the entire region will be an important factor in making the award. Only one proposal cycle is planned for the current year; however, if the

quality and number of proposals during this review cycle does not result in awarding the available funds, the Chancellor will ask for a second round of proposals.

Recommendations and Funding Decisions

The College Access Challenge Grant Review Panel will make funding recommendations to the Chancellor for consideration. The Chancellor shall take into account the evaluations and recommendations made by the Review Panel but will exercise independent judgment in making final funding decisions. Lead applicants will be notified in writing after the Chancellor makes the final funding decisions.

Grant Agreement Participation

After a given proposal has been selected for funding by the Chancellor, the Chancellor's staff will begin work to prepare the final grant agreement, which may include changes to the proposal and budget resulting from review findings, actions taken by the Chancellor, funding changes, or other reasons. Any organization that violates the terms of its grant agreement may be required to repay the award.

Award

A grant will be awarded based on the proposal either as submitted or amended with the inclusion of a revised budget or other amended conditions set forth by the Review Panel or the Chancellor. The grant will remain open for the duration of the project plus a one-year reporting period when annual reports are required. Funding at the requested levels will be contingent upon performance against stated goals. The maximum funding for a regional award is \$500,000.

The applicant understands that it will need to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Chancellor before the funding will be made available. The MOU will include the contractual obligations of all parties.

State of Ohio Compliance

The grant agreement will require the grantee to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws in the performance of the project.

Progress Reports and Metrics

Each grantee will be required to implement an evaluation plan. This plan should be part of the submitted proposal. Grantees are expected to complete the project as described in the proposal as accepted or as amended by the Chancellor's staff. The Chancellor's staff will assign a project administrator, who will work with the grantee throughout the duration of the project. Performance metrics will be used to measure progress on the grant. Grantees will be required to collect appropriately disaggregated baseline data to

measure progress on goals and submit periodic reports. Program progress reports should include the following elements:

- Documentation with benchmark data to measure progress
- Demonstration of the significant achievements of the program in terms of student success outcomes
- Documentation of collaborative efforts and the sharing of information

Other Pertinent Information

1. OBR will award grants to collaboratives representing five regions. The maximum award available is \$500,000.
2. The Chancellor reserves the right to fully or partially fund proposals, to request additional information, to require new proposals from interested parties, to reject any or all proposals responding to the RFP, or to reissue the RFP if it is determined that it is in the best interests of the State of Ohio. Issuing the RFP does not bind the State of Ohio to make an award.
3. The Chancellor reserves the right to adjust the dates for the RFP for whatever reasons deem appropriate.
4. The Chancellor's staff will administer the RFP.
5. All costs incurred in the preparation of the proposal will be borne by institutions/organizations – including lead applicants and collaborating partners. Proposal preparation costs are not recoverable under an award. The State of Ohio shall not contribute in any way to recovering the costs of proposal preparation.
6. All lead applicants will be notified in writing whether their proposals meet the requirements specified in the RFP and, therefore, whether their proposals will be submitted to the Chancellor for funding consideration. Lead applicants will also be notified of the outcome of their applications at the conclusion of the review process. The funding decisions of the Chancellor are final.
7. If requested, lead applicants selected for funding must attend the Controlling Board meeting when their application for funding is heard.
8. The Chancellor's staff, under the direction of Charles Shahid, Director of College Access Programs, will administer all grant awards.

Regions

The CACG framework presents a unique opportunity for Ohio's college access organizations and the University System of Ohio to collaborate to meet the needs of low-income students. For this reason, CACG funds will be distributed on a regional basis. Regional partnerships and collaboration are central to the successful implementation of proposals and the sustainability of program models. Proposals will be accepted from partnerships in the following five (5) regions:

Central

Ashland, Champaign, Clark, Crawford, Delaware, Franklin, Holmes, Knox, Licking, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Pickaway, Richland, Union, Wayne

Northeast

Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Summit, Trumbull

Northwest

Allen, Auglaize, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Logan, Lucas, Mercer, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Shelby, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, Wyandot

Southeast

Athens, Belmont, Carroll, Columbiana, Coshocton, Fairfield, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Hocking, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Stark, Tuscarawas, Vinton, Washington

Southwest

Adams, Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Darke, Fayette, Greene, Hamilton, Highland, Miami, Montgomery, Pike, Preble, Ross, Scioto, Warren

Each region will need to decide collectively which area of the RFP they choose to respond to.

Specific Proposal Requirements

1. Identification of the Lead Partner (Fiscal Agent) and Collaborating Partners

Lead partners or fiscal agents must be college access organizations or other not-for-profit organizations. Collaborating partners could include specific K-12 schools or local school districts, Educational Service Centers, universities or community colleges, businesses, community partners, and others deemed appropriate to the successful development and implementation of the proposal. A primary contact person must be identified in the grant, including name, title, institution, address, telephone, fax, and email.

2. Identification of Primary Focus of the Grant

Proposals must clearly indicate which activity it plans to support through its regional collaboration.

3. Description of Proposed Model and Implementation Strategy

Proposals must describe how the project meets the criteria and requirements of the grant, expected impact on students' academic preparation and college readiness benchmarks. Applicants are expected to provide a dollar-for-dollar match of the funds awarded through cash, in-kind support, or support from other non-federal sources to supplement the funds requested.

4. Audience and Beneficiaries

Grant awards must be used to fund strategies and programs that will ultimately benefit middle school and/or high school students, with priority consideration given to students and families who fall within the federal poverty guidelines. Activities supported by this grant include those that support student's ability to successfully complete the coursework required for a post-secondary degree. Proposals should indicate the number of students served, communication and recruitment strategies, and impact on students.

5. Sustainability and Replication

Proposals must include plans for sustaining the project beyond the term of the award. Proposals that address statewide and regional needs are encouraged.

General Proposal Requirements

Proposals must be submitted in the following manner:

- 6-10 pages in length – including the budget section
- Submitted on 8.5 x 11-inch paper
- Margins must not be less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of inch on all sides
- Font must be 10 point or larger
- All pages must be numbered consecutively using the format "Page # of total number of pages" (e.g. Page 2 of 10)
- The proposal title and lead applicant name must appear at the bottom of each page
- Should not include color photos that cannot be viewed clearly or understood when photocopied in black and white

Order and Content of Proposal Sections

- The first page of the proposal must be the completed standardized applicant information form and title page.
- Prepare and include an abstract that is no more than one page that summarizes the anticipated student outcomes of the project. Keep in mind that the abstract

may be used, in whole or in part, within various public documents released by the Chancellor's staff

- The lead applicant must provide an itemized budget for each year of the proposed grant period that includes funding for anticipated collaborating partners
- The proposal must not exceed ten (10) pages in total length – including the budget section

Proposal Evaluation

College Access Challenge Grant Proposals evaluation criteria:

- How well the proposal responds to the overall goals and objectives as outlined in the RFP
- The applicants history of success in convening interested parties and stakeholders
- Letters of support from all participants
- Capacity to meet the required program match
- Demonstrated history of working with low-income and potential first-generation college students
- Communication of a sustainability and replication plan
- Staff support for program management, implementation, and fiscal operations
- Communication of a clear and concise evaluation plan
- Geographic impact throughout the region

Legal

The applicant agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws in the conduct of the work hereunder.

The Chancellor 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 RFP, or to re-issue the RFP if it is determined that it is in the best interests of the State of Ohio. Issuing this RFP does not bind the State to making an award. The Chancellor's staff administers the program. The Chancellor reserves the right to adjust the dates for this RFP for whatever reasons are deemed appropriate. The Chancellor reserves the right to waive any non-substantive infractions made by an applicant, provided that the applicant cures such infraction upon the request of the Chancellor.

All costs incurred in preparation of a proposal shall be borne by the applicant. Proposal preparation costs are not recoverable under an award. The applicant understands that the information provided herein is intended solely to assist the applicant in submittal preparation. To the best of the Chancellor's knowledge, the information provided is accurate; however, the Chancellor does not warrant such accuracy, and any errors or omissions subsequently determined will not be construed as a basis for invalidating this RFP. Interested parties bear the sole responsibility of obtaining the necessary

information to submit a qualifying proposal. The Chancellor retains the right to modify or withdraw this RFP at any time. By submitting a proposal, the applicant expressly agrees to these terms.

The following disclosure document must be completed and signed by all participants in the collaborative. Failure to do so will nullify the RFP. Please send a hard copy of the disclosure document but not of the entire RFP.

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

STANDARD AFFIRMATION AND DISCLOSURE FORM

EXECUTIVE ORDER 2010-09S

Banning the Expenditure of Public Funds on Offshore Services

All of the following provisions must be included in all invitations to bid, requests for proposals, state term schedules, multiple award contracts, requests for quotations, informal quotations and statements of work. This information is to be submitted as part of the response to any of the procurement methods listed.

CONTRACTOR/SUBCONTRACTOR AFFIRMATION AND DISCLOSURE:

By the signature affixed to this response, the Bidder/Offeror affirms, understands and will abide by the requirements of Executive Order 2010-09S. If awarded a contract, the Bidder/Offeror becomes the Contractor and affirms that both the Contractor and any of its subcontractors shall perform no services requested under this Contract outside of the United States.

The Bidder/Offeror shall provide all the name(s) and location(s) where services under this Contract will be performed in the spaces provided below or by attachment. Failure to provide this information as part of the response will deem the Bidder/Offeror not responsive and no further consideration will be given to the response. Bidder/Offeror's offering will not be considered. If the Bidder/Offeror will not be using subcontractors, indicate "Not Applicable" in the appropriate spaces.

1. Principal location of business of Contractor:

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Name/Principal location of business of subcontractor(s):

(Name)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

(Name)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

2. Location where services will be performed by Contractor:

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Name/Location where services will be performed by subcontractor(s):

(Name)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

(Name)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

3. Location where state data will be stored, accessed, tested, maintained or backed-up, by Contractor:

(Address)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

Name/Location(s) where state data will be stored, accessed, tested, maintained or backed-up by subcontractor(s):

(Name)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

4. Location where services to be performed will be changed or shifted by Contractor:

(Address)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

Name/Location(s) where services will be changed or shifted to be performed by subcontractor(s):

(Name)

(Address, City, State, Zip)

(Name)

(Address, City, State, Zip)