



## Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Program Request for Proposals

**Release Date: October 3, 2023**

**Proposal Submission Window: October 3 – November 1, 2023**

**PROPOSAL OVERVIEW:** Successful programs reaching across institutional boundaries to grow, diversify and strengthen the skills of Ohio’s home and community based behavioral health workforce require new strategies. All eligible institutions with the capacity to strengthen, grow, or build behavioral health program(s) and professional connections with community based behavioral health employers may apply to the Ohio Department of Higher Education in compliance with the criteria set forth below. If the respondent’s proposal is acceptable to ODHE, then an eligible institution may be eligible for funding.

### I. Background and Purpose of the Proposal

**Background:** The Ohio Department of Medicaid (“ODM”) in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (“OhioMHAS”) and the Ohio Department of Higher Education (“ODHE”) are engaged in a multi-faceted approach to boost the number of qualified graduates ready to enter the behavioral healthcare workforce and who are committed to serving in communities across Ohio.

**Purpose:** As an extension of the Great Minds Fellowship program, this program intends to strengthen, grow, or build behavioral health workforce programs, either independently or in a collaborative model, involving educational institutions and health centers that provide home and community based behavioral health services in Ohio Health Improvement Zones or U.S. Human Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Mental Health Shortage areas.

### II. Eligibility

Eligible institutions of higher education for this program are Ohio’s two-and four-year public and private, non-profit colleges and universities.

1. A state institution of higher education, as defined in 3345.011 of the Ohio Revised Code;
2. A private, nonprofit institution in this state that holds a certificate of authorization pursuant to Chapter 1713 of the Revised Code.

### III. Proposal Criteria

Consortia or collaborations of multiple eligible institutions of higher education and individual eligible institutions of higher education are encouraged to submit proposals.

Proposals are required to address the following:

1. Narrative detailing institution’s ability to strengthen, grow, diversify or build the behavioral health workforce pipeline in the identified CIPs; student recruitment strategies and models to address disparities among populations in high-risk and underserved, including racial and ethnic minority populations and rural communities, as well as Appalachian Ohio counties; models to rapidly increase the number of individuals traditionally underrepresented in Ohio’s behavioral health workforce (e.g. bi-lingual individuals, racial and ethnic minorities, males, etc.); capacity building; projected impact to the behavioral health workforce in Ohio; and sustainability of the program.

- Eligible CIPs
  - Marriage and Family Therapy: CIP 51.1505
  - Mental Health Counseling / Counselor: CIP 51.1508
  - Psychiatric / Mental Health Nurse / Nursing: CIP 51.3810
  - Social Work: CIP 44.0701, 44.0799, 51.1503
  - Substance Abuse / Addiction Counseling: CIP 51.1501
- 2. Describe the proposed goals and activities for the program; desired outcomes in the target population; and related requirements, expectations, and timelines.
- 3. Describe the need for funds, use of funds by activity, and include a detailed budget.
- 4. Collaborative proposals must include the following:
  - Collaboration to include at least one other eligible institution of higher education and may include other educational entities (high school, career center, Ohio adult career center, or another eligible institution of higher education) **and** at least one behavioral health center. Applications that demonstrate partnerships with partners located in or directly serving [Ohio Health Improvement Zones](#) or [HRSA Mental Health Shortage Areas](#) will be given preference.
  - Provide at least one letter of support from each collaborating institution and center describing how it contributes to the project's implementation and success, and the desired outcome in underserved areas.
  - Explain how/why collaboration between and among partners is critical to program success, describe how the partners are expected to collaborate throughout the program.

#### **IV. Anticipated Awards**

The total of all awards under the Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Program will not exceed the total funding available. The total number of awards will depend on the amount of each award. A competitive review of all eligible proposals will be conducted.

- There is no explicit minimum or maximum award; funding amounts will vary based on the individual characteristics of each proposal. The overall funding amount available of \$11 million would yield an average award of approximately \$275,000 if allocated evenly across 40 awardees, for example.
- It is expected that the majority of the individual proposal requests will be within or below the range of \$200,000 to \$400,000.
- A maximum award could rise toward or exceed between \$1-\$2 million if a significant collaborative proposal is proposed with multiple partners and significant projected benefits to the behavioral health workforce.
- The Chancellor may adjust award amounts based on availability of funds, demand for the program, quality of proposals, and past program performance.
- Awards are distributed directly to the lead institution in the proposal.

Total Funding Available: up to \$11,000,000.

#### **V. Eligible Expenses**

Awards under this program are to be expended for:

- Student scholarships - scholarship funds are for students that are Ohio residents within two years of graduating with an undergraduate or graduate degree. The student must commit to serving Medicaid enrollees in the community for one year either through an internship or upon graduation. Students are required to sign an agreement with the State of Ohio, committing to this requirement.
- Costs associated with student's education, including internship/work-based learning experiences.
- Student recruitment activities to increase the number of students enrolled in eligible CIPs and who are connected to career opportunities in community-based behavioral health services.

- Purchase/create and deliver curriculum or a program(s) that improves cultural competency in delivery of behavioral health services, improves clinical skills of students, or raises awareness about careers in behavioral health.

ODHE may provide additional instructions and requirements for approved institutions.

## **VI. Project Term**

The work covered by the grant will begin upon execution of the Award Agreement, and continue until March 30, 2025, with a final grant and expense report due August 30, 2025, unless these dates are extended by ODHE.

## **VII. Proposal Contact**

Any questions or concerns regarding this RFP and proposal submissions should be sent via e-mail to [bhworkforce@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:bhworkforce@highered.ohio.gov). ODHE will host an informative [webinar](#) on the RFP on October 17, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. Responses to questions presented during the webinar will be posted online to provide the information to interested parties. More details for the webinar will be posted at <https://highered.ohio.gov/behavioral-health>.

## **VIII. Proposal Review Process and Timeline**

Eligible institutions are responsible for submissions of proposals within the time frame set by the Chancellor. Proposals become property of the Chancellor and are subject to public record laws of the state.

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

Accepted proposals will be evaluated using the following Project Narrative. After considering the recommendations of reviewers, the Chancellor shall make the final determination regarding which proposals will be eligible to receive funding.

The Chancellor, due to unforeseen circumstances, may revise the schedule and any changes will be communicated to the respondent. Information regarding the program will be posted at: <https://highered.ohio.gov/behavioral-health>.

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

The schedule below may be revised by the Chancellor and ODHE due to circumstances; any changes will be communicated to the respondents.

- Release of RFP – October 3, 2023
- Webinar for RFP – October 17, 2023 11:00 a.m.
- RFP Proposals Due – November 1, 2023
- Review and Evaluation of Proposals – November 30, 2023
- Preparation of Grant Agreements – December 2023
- Disbursement to Institutions – December 2023 – January 2024
- Award Period Ends – March 30, 2025, unless extended by ODHE

## **IX. Proposal Submission**

Once an institution submits a completed proposal, it becomes property of the Chancellor and 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.

Proposals must be sent via email to [bhworkforce@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:bhworkforce@highered.ohio.gov). Proposals must be received by 11:59 p.m. on November 1, 2023, in the following manner:

1. Proposal submission as one electronic PDF file
2. Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Program Information Workbook (Excel file)

## X. Proposal Requirements

- A. Proposals 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.
1. The cover letter should not exceed one page.
  2. The Executive Summary is limited to one page.
  3. The project narrative must contain detailed information about how the proposal meets the criteria set forth.
  4. The project budget must document all eligible expenses for each goal of the program.
  5. The project timeline must include proposed activities and estimated completion milestones for each activity.
  6. Proposals must be submitted in Arial 10-point Font and double-spaced.

B. Required Proposal Section: Cover Letter (1 page)

The Cover Letter must identify a primary, a fiscal, and a 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 cover letter must also include the requested institutional award amount.

C. Required Proposal Section: Executive Summary (1 page)

The Executive Summary describes how the Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion program meets labor market needs, with an emphasis on employment opportunities in the region and Ohio. It will also explain the role of institutions of higher education in the behavioral health sector.

D. Required Proposal Section: Project Narrative

The Project Narrative must describe the Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion program and provide evidence that it will meet the components outlined in Section III Proposal Criteria. The Project Narrative must respond to the sections listed below:

1. Describe how the Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion program addresses existing and/or emerging behavioral health workforce needs in a specific region and in Ohio.
  - a. Detail student recruitment strategies to address disparities among populations in high-risk and underserved, including racial and ethnic minority populations and rural communities, capacity building, projected impact to the behavioral health workforce in Ohio, and sustainability of the program. Include expected outcomes and timelines specific to the number of students recruited.
  - b. Detail how the institution plans to build / strengthen relationships with behavioral health centers and other educational institutions in the region to upskill Ohio's behavioral health workforce and improve student connections to employment opportunities. Include expected number of students connected to employers.
  - c. Identify the desired outcome on home and community-based behavioral health services in Ohio Health Improvement Zones or U.S. Human Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Mental Health Shortage areas.
  - d. Submit labor market data from [Ohio Means Jobs](#), and factors identified in [Ohio Health Improvement Zones](#) or [U.S. Human Resources Administration \(HRSA\) Mental Health Shortage Areas](#) illustrating the how the Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion program addresses the identified needs and gaps. Include expected number of internships and employers added to each area.
2. Describe the goals and desired outcomes of the proposed project and align them with the identified needs and gaps described in X. Proposal Requirements D.1.
3. Describe how the activities are related to the identified goals, including:
  - a. The specific activities implemented or improved as a result of this program.
  - b. The plan on how to measure the outcomes during the program period to assess progress toward completion of goals.

4. Identify the following for each participating institution and/or agency:
  - a. Involvement with programs related to the identified CIPs (III. Proposal Criteria, 1.), Ohio Health Improvement Zones and/or U.S. Human Resources Administration (HRSA) Mental Health Shortage Areas, and home and community-based behavioral health services.
  - b. Roles and responsibilities in this program.
  - c. Capacity and capability to deliver successful completion of goals.
  - d. Desired outcome of participation in program / partnership.
5. Collaborative proposals must include the following:
  - a. Provide at least one letter of support from each collaborating institution and center describing how it contributes to the project's implementation and success, and the desired outcome in underserved areas.
  - b. Explain how/why collaboration between and among partners is critical to program success, describe how the partners are expected to collaborate throughout the program.

**E. Required Proposal Section: Program Budget**

1. Award funds may not be used to provide services for clients or patients.
2. Complete the Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Program Information Workbook (Excel document). Tab 1: Institutional Information and Tab 2: Goals and Budget
3. Provide a narrative justification for the proposed budget by activity, goals, and project timeline.

**F. Required Proposal Section: Timeline**

1. Complete the Behavioral Health Workforce Expansion Program Information Workbook (Excel document). Tab 3. Project Timeline
2. Provide a narrative for the activities planned emphasizing the completion milestones.

**G. Required Reporting**

ODHE will monitor each initiative for which an award is granted to ensure that there is fiscal accountability, operating progress, and that the desired outcomes are achieved. Regular reports will be required from all awardees. All awardees will submit the required data and metrics, expenditures, and briefings of project milestones and success stories.

Reports to be collected:

1. Fund Balance Updates – Due quarterly
2. Final Budget Report to include completed Goals and Budget and Project Timeline
3. Final Expenditure Report (FER). All funds are expected to be expended by March 30, 2025, with a final expenditure report due August 30, 2025, unless these dates are extended by ODHE, on forms and in a manner prescribed by ODHE.
4. Program/outcome data for students.

## **XI. Legal Notices**

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

The institution 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 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 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 a respondent, provided that the respondent cures such infraction upon request.

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal shall be borne by the respondent. 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.

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

## **XII. Trade Secrets**

- A. All information submitted in response to this RFP 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 Institutions are strongly discouraged from including in a proposal any information that the Lead Respondent 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 proposal is to be treated as a trade secret, the proposal must:
  1. Identify each and every occurrence of the information within the proposal with an asterisk before and after each line containing trade secret information and underline the trade secret information itself.
  2. Identify that the proposal 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 proposal 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 institution 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 proposals containing trade secret information, including evaluators.