



## Super RAPIDS Regional Request for Proposals

**Release Date: September 5, 2023**

**Proposal Submission Window: September 5 – October 5, 2023**

**APPLICATION OVERVIEW:** All eligible institutions (as described below) in a Super RAPIDS region (as described below) may be eligible to submit an application to the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) requesting an award in the amount determined by regional discussion in compliance with the criteria set forth below to support workforce-based training and equipment needs.

### **I. Background and Purpose of the Application**

- a. Background: Grant funds are to be expended for the purposes set forth in Amended Substitute House Bill No. 33 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly for appropriation item 235688, Super RAPIDS.
- b. Purpose: The Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) will make strategic regional investments in equipment and facilities, as well as essential implementation-related expenses on a limited basis, to support collaborative projects among qualifying institutions to strengthen education and training opportunities that maximize workforce development efforts in defined areas of the state. These funds shall be used to support efforts to build capacity, remove employment and training barriers for prospective and unemployed workers, develop and strengthen business-led strategies in the impacted industries and provide local guided solutions to employment for communities in economic transition. These regional investments (in a total of seven regions – map available) will address regionally identified industry-specific occupation and skill requirements.

### **II. Eligibility**

- a. A state institution of higher education, as defined in section 3345.011 of the Revised Code and; an Ohio Technical Center, as defined in section 3333.94 of the Revised Code. Eligible applicants participating in Super RAPIDS will each submit an individual proposal for the amount corresponding to the agreed upon regional allocations. Private independent colleges and universities may partner with an eligible institution on an eligible project.

### **III. Application Criteria**

- a. Strong preference will be given to proposals that request funds for specific equipment for workforce education and training, and project related facility improvements that maximize workforce development efforts that build capacity, remove employment and training barriers for prospective and unemployed workers, develop and strengthen business-led strategies in the impacted industries, and/or provide local guided solutions to employment for communities in economic transition.



ODHE reminds each institution that Ohio's procurement policies encourage a competitive selection process that avoids sole sourcing purchases and encourages buying from Ohio vendors when possible. ODHE urges institutions to follow Ohio's recommended practices when purchasing RAPIDS equipment, which demonstrate fiscal stewardship and due diligence.

It is anticipated that the work covered by the RFP will begin December 2023 and continue through June 30, 2025, with a final expense report due September 30, 2025, to the Ohio Department of Higher Education. A desk and/or site audit will occur prior to the final closeout of the grant.

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

- a. Six regional awards of \$4,875,000 will be made and the seventh regional award to Northeast Ohio will be made in the amount of \$10,750,000 to be equally divided among three areas (\$3,583,333) within the region. The eligible applicants in each region can be found in Appendix A. If a region does not submit a Super RAPIDS regional budget and corresponding individual institutional RFPs within the timeframe that receive approval, the funds may be reallocated to other regions.
- b. The Chancellor, after considering the recommendations of reviewers, shall make the final determination about which proposals, if any, shall be recommended for funding. ODHE shall determine the amount of recommended funding for each applicant and the nature of any conditions on funding.

#### **V. Eligible Expenses and Project Term**

- a. Grant funds are to be expended for the purposes set forth in Substitute House Bill No. 33 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. Strong preference will be given to proposals that request funds for specific equipment for workforce education and training, and project related facility improvements. ODHE reminds each institution that Ohio's procurement policies encourage a competitive selection process that avoids sole sourcing purchases and encourages buying from Ohio vendors when possible. ODHE urges institutions to follow Ohio's recommended practices when purchasing RAPIDS equipment, which demonstrate fiscal stewardship and due diligence. It is anticipated that the work covered by the RFP will begin December 2023 and continue through June 30, 2025, with a final expense report due September 30, 2025, to the Ohio Department of Higher Education. A desk and/or site audit will occur prior to the final closeout of the grant.

#### **VI. Application Contact**

- a. ODHE will provide an opportunity for potential applicants to seek assistance regarding their application through a webinar on Friday, September 15, 2023, registration for which is available [here](#) along with other technical assistance. Applicant questions are to be submitted in writing via email to [superrapids@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:superrapids@highered.ohio.gov). Responses to questions will be posted online to provide the information to interested parties.
- b. Additional information regarding the program is available by contacting John Magill, Associate Vice Chancellor, Economic Advancement, by phone at (614) 752-9530 or by email at [superrapids@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:superrapids@highered.ohio.gov).



## VII. Application Review Process and Timeline

- a. 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 a review team following the rubric approved by ODHE. The Chancellor will make final decisions based upon the quality of the proposal in addressing the RFP criteria and its required elements. 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 the RAPIDS web page, [higher.ed.ohio.gov/super-rapids](https://higher.ed.ohio.gov/super-rapids).

- b. Timeline

Request for Proposals Released	September 5, 2023
Proposals Submission Window	September 5 - October 5, 2023
Proposal Review begins	October 6, 2023
Notification of Initial Awards	November 2023

\*Unallocated dollars as of November 1, 2023, may be reallocated to other workforce development and equipment investments.

## VIII. Application Submission

- a. A single regional budget spreadsheet listing allocations amongst eligible regional institutions should be prepared by the region and submitted with each institution's proposal.
- b. Participating institutions are to submit individual proposals and workbooks for their respective projects (required details in Section IX), along with the regional budget allocations to confirm alignment of allocations and participation in a region. All proposals are due no later than October 5, 2023, to [superrapids@higher.ed.ohio.gov](mailto:superrapids@higher.ed.ohio.gov).

## IX. Application Requirements

Please clearly label each of the following sections within the proposal submission of two attachments: The Project Narrative Attachment and the Budget Workbook Attachment.

The **Project Narrative Attachment** should be one PDF document composed of the following components:

- a. **Executive Summary:** Include: 1) rationale for the targeted regional industries and in-demand occupations; 2) a synopsis of the plan to address workforce needs for these targeted industries and how it will maximize workforce development efforts; and 3) a description of the how the equipment investment will directly improve education and training learning outcomes at eligible regional institutions as found in Substitute House Bill No. 33, 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly; 4) a description of how the funds will build capacity, remove employment and training barriers for prospective and unemployed workers, develop and strengthen business-led strategies in the impacted industries, and/or provide local guided solutions to employment for communities in economic transition. If the institution will be committing or leveraging additional funds beyond their allocation from the region, please provide that written commitment in this letter.



**b. Collaboration:** Explain how/why collaboration between and among state institutions of higher education strengthens education and training opportunities in the area, and other workforce-related entities is critical to program success and document the collaboration expected throughout the project. Describe with two or three collaboration examples with other post-secondary institutions how the equipment investment will improve workforce education and skills for the regional industries.

**c. Targeted Industries and Occupations:** Identify the regional industries that will benefit from an increase in the number of individuals educated or trained for these in-demand jobs. Provide the Jobs Ohio industry North American Industrial Code System (NAICS) for each targeted industry, and list businesses participating in the project(s). Provide regional-level data tables by NAICS code supporting regional industry growth and demand with references.

Eligible sectors are: Broadband/5G; Cybersecurity; Healthcare; Transportation; Advanced Manufacturing; and Trades.

Identify and list the in-demand occupations by Job Titles and Standard Occupational Codes (SOC) that will be targeted through this workforce program. Provide state-level data tables by SOC that informs the focus on the targeted industries and in-demand jobs within the region with references. Baseline data related to labor market shall include Office of Workforce Transformation, OhioMeansJobs, labor market information from the Department of Job and Family Services and lists of in-demand occupations. Data from OhioMeansJobs can be found at <http://omj.ohio.gov/OMJResources/WorkforcePros.stm>.

**d. Third-party Equipment Quotes:** Please ensure the quotes show all associated costs for each piece of equipment or facility improvement related to the equipment project, the vendor's name, and match what is submitted in the accompanying Budget Workbook.

**e. Letters of Support from Businesses:** These must be original, distinct, and written by the business evidencing meaningful business support and engagement. Each letter must reference the equipment investment and related workforce development education and training. Please include at least two (2) per targeted industry sector. If investments are proposed for Broadband/5G and/or Electric Vehicles, where there is an industry-sector partnership (ISP) for the targeted industry sector, it is required to obtain an additional letter of support from the ISP to ensure alignment with statewide strategies. Detailed instructions for contacting the statewide ISP collaborators will be provided in the attached workbook and the webinar.

**f. Sustainability:** Describe how the project contributes to the overall value and impact provided by the institution to the region, and how the investment will be sustained beyond the grant period.

Include a GANTT chart spanning the project grant period and after with proposed activities, dependencies, and estimated completion milestone for each activity and Super RAPIDS investment.



The **Budget Workbook Attachment**: Please use the Excel workbook labeled Super RAPIDS Institutional Project Workbook on the [higher.ed.ohio.gov/super-rapids](https://higher.ed.ohio.gov/super-rapids) webpage next to the RFP to complete the following items. Return the workbook with the Project Narrative Attachment by October 5, 2023, to [superrapids@higher.ed.ohio.gov](mailto:superrapids@higher.ed.ohio.gov).

Tab 1 – Contact Information (*enter information here*)

Provide contact information for key personnel, fiscal contact, and legal notice.

Tab 2 – Example (*no edits required, to be used as a reference*)

Please use this example to help complete the application within the workbook.

Tab 3 – Total Budget Request (*enter information here*)

This tab should include the regionally determined allocations for each institution. The total regional allocations are listed in Section IV.A of this RFP. We encourage regions to allocate the total of their award to eligible institutions in the entire region. *Note: This table must match across all institutions in a region.*

Tab 4 – Project Request (*enter information here*)

a. Project Description-Collaboration (Column A)

Provide a brief written description in one-two sentences of purpose of equipment purchase and collaborative partners to demonstrate how this investment will respond to critical workforce challenges.

b. Equipment (Columns B through H)

Please list each piece of equipment with its unit price, number of units, ODHE funds requested towards that item, total cost of equipment, and any leveraged funds towards that item.

Ensure the names of the pieces of equipment align with the attached third-party equipment quotes. The prices should be clearly indicated on the third-party quotes and are matched to the workbook for ease of review. *Note: Column H should automatically sum to equal the units requested and the unit cost. Columns E and F should total to Column H, as well.*

c. Targeted Occupations and Industries (Columns I and J)

(Column I) List the regional industry sector NAICS code(s) pertaining to the use of that equipment.

(Column J) List the regional occupation SOC codes that are examples of occupations that utilize that equipment.

d. Business Support (Column K)

List business(es) supporting the purchase of the equipment. If applicable, list statewide industry-sector partnerships.

e. Sustainability Plan (Column L)

Briefly describe in a few sentences actions to be taken by the institution(s) to sustain the project beyond the grant period.



## **X. 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.

## **XI. Trade Secrets**

All lead applicants are strongly discouraged from including in a proposal any information that the lead applicant considers to be a "trade secret," as that term is defined in Section 1333.61(D) of the Ohio Revised Code. 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 in Section 149.43 of the Ohio Revised Code.

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.
    - a. The Ohio Department of Higher Education requires non-disclosure agreements from all non-ODHE persons who may have access to proposals containing trade secret information, including evaluators.
    - b. If the applicant claims that a record is not subject to disclosure under the Ohio Public Records law based on trade secret, it will bear costs of defending this claim.