Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)
Colorado Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant 2023/24
Request for Proposals (RFP)

Request for Proposals

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) solicits proposals for grants designed to expand the use of open educational resources (OER) across public postsecondary institutions in the state. The deadline to submit a proposal for consideration is **Monday, December 18, 2023.**

Purpose

Senate Bill 21-215 and the associated appropriation provide funding for expanding the use of open education resources (OER) in Colorado. The Colorado OER Council, established by legislation, advises the Department of Higher Education on expanding the use of OER in public institutions of higher education around the state, including through the awarding and tracking of grant funds to create, adapt, adopt, and promote the use of OER. Proposals are solicited for funding: from public institutions of higher education to support creation, adoption, adaptation, expansion, and promotion of the use of OER across the institution and among multiple institutions; and from faculty and/or staff of public institutions of higher education, individually or in small groups, to support the creation, adoption, adaptation, expansion, and promotion of OER for specific courses, disciplines, or programs.

Grant Outcomes

The 2023/24 Cohort 6 Colorado OER Grant Program is anticipated to:

- Raise awareness of OER among faculty, staff, and students in the state of Colorado;
- Provide up to $1,000,000 in funding to institutions, faculty, and staff to support and expand creation, adoption, adaptation, expansion, and promotion of the use of OER in the state of Colorado;
- Save students at Colorado's public institutions of higher education at least $2 million in textbook costs in the academic year 2024-2025;
- Advance student learning through improved collaboration, engagement, responsiveness, and curricular relevancy;
- Create multiple new z-degree pathways for Colorado students to complete their degree pathway with zero textbook cost; and
- Demonstrate the evolution of Open Education in Colorado and evaluate the impact and benefit of Open Education to students and communities in terms of learning, culturally relevant resources and practices, and more.

Process and Key Dates

Applications in response to the request for proposals (RFP) will be accepted beginning **October 16, 2023**. CDHE staff will host a series of webinars from October to December 2023 to provide guidance on applications and answer questions about the requirements of this grant program. The deadline for proposals to be submitted is **December 18, 2023**.

Members of the Colorado OER Council and designees will review proposals and make recommendations to the CCHE by February 2024. CDHE staff will bring OER Council recommendations for review and approval from the Commission at the February or March 2024 CCHE meeting. Funds will be dispersed by the CDHE in May of 2024. All funds must be expended by June 30, 2025.

Grantees must submit progress reports to CDHE by January 2025 and a final report by August 15, 2025. Unexpended funds are required to be returned to CDHE by July 2025.

Note: In order to avoid conflicts of interest, OER Council members will recuse themselves from reviewing and/or recommending proposals which they have written and/or those from their home institutions.

Instructions for Proposal Submission

All proposals should be emailed to **OER@dhe.state.co.us as a single attachment in PDF format by 5 p.m. MST on Monday, December 18, 2023**.

The proposal must be submitted as one PDF document and included as one attachment in the submission email; letters of support may be attached to the application email as separate PDF documents. **Applicants should write their proposals toward the rubric in order to have a successful grant application. Proposals that do not address the rubric and do not utilize the supplied template may not be considered by the grant review committee.**

Additionally, all applicants must complete a proposal contact form to provide the name and full contact details (including name, title, institutional affiliation, and email) of the project lead, as well as any secondary or tertiary contacts for the project.

Grant Award Categories

The Colorado OER Grant Program will fund five types of grants with a total allocation of $1,000,000 for the 2023/24 Cohort 6 grant cycle. The $1 million in funding for the cycle 6 OER grants will be distributed to prioritize the funding of z-degrees and collaborative grants. **The Colorado OER Council aims to award at least $500,000 in grant funding to z-degree and collaborative proposals in this cycle**. Institutions may submit proposals in multiple categories.

- ○ 1A: **Complete General Education/AA + Major Z-Degree** up to $100,000
  Grants that will undertake a full zero textbook cost degree (z-degree), providing OER course options regularly from start to finish in general education and major(s) in order for a student to begin and realistically finish their degree with zero textbook cost.

  Cohort 6 proposals will likely only reflect the first stage of completing a z-degree and it is anticipated that grantees would submit proposals in subsequent years to complete a full z-degree. Z-degree proposals should include an estimated timeline and courses in future phases, but are not required to have a detailed plan beyond the phase the grant period will cover.

- ○ 1B: **Major Coursework Z-Degree** up to $75,000
  Grants that will convert all required coursework in a major or certificate to OER whether through adoption, adaption, or creation of OER. Students would be able to successfully complete their major required coursework (with the exception of general education) without textbook cost.

  Cohort 6 proposals will likely only reflect the first stage of completing a z-degree and it is anticipated that grantees would submit proposals in subsequent years to complete a full z-degree. Z-degree proposals should include an estimated timeline and courses in future phases, but are not required to have a detailed plan beyond the phase the grant period will cover.

- ○ 2A: **Collaborative** up to $75,000
  Grants awarded to two or more institutions (**K-12 and private institutions eligible with a lead applicant that is a public institution of higher education**) to adopt, adapt, and create OER for multiple courses with the plan to use the developed course materials at each other's institutions at the conclusion of the grant
    - ■ *Example: Multiple universities and community colleges working together to create course materials that will be utilized across multiple campuses at the conclusion of the grant and/or as a collaborative effort for developing materials to be piloted at a different institution*
    - ■ *Example: Education faculty in higher education with involvement from students and/or K-12 educators adapt or develop course materials, but pilot and implement the materials at a K-12 institution and/or materials designed for concurrent enrollment.*

- ○ 2B: **Collaborative Z-Degree up to** $100,000
  Grants awarded to two or more institutions (**K-12 and private institutions eligible with a lead applicant that is a public institution of higher education**)

to adopt, adapt, and create OER with the express goal of establishing z-degrees at each participating higher education institution.

- ■ *Example: Three institutions collaborate together with faculty from biology to undertake the adoption, adaption, and creation of OER materials for major coursework in the B.S. Biology degree with the express plan to share the resulting materials and implement the use of the OER at each participating institution after the conclusion of the grant.*

- ○ 3: **Small group** up to $15,000
  Grants run by a small group of committed faculty at a single institution to adopt, adapt, or create OER for multiple courses, but not undertaking a z-degree initiative.
  - ■ *Example: Two or more faculty members in a department undertake OER adoption, adaption, or creation for multiple courses, but do not yet have the interest from colleagues to undertake a z-degree, or a small group of graduate faculty wish to convert a handful of graduate courses to OER but do not plan to transform an entire master's program. Small group grants may be a good grant to pilot the work for a potential z-degree.*
  - ■ *Example: Two or more faculty members from separate departments or fields seek to collaborate together to develop OER for their courses, such as implementation in interdisciplinary or special topic courses.*

- ○ 4: **General Incentive Fund** up to $25,000
  Grants that will fund a general incentive or stipend grant program to be distributed by the institution to provide funds to educators to adopt, adapt, or create OER for two or more courses at the institution. Proposals can contain a list of determined courses, or simply a plan for which departments will be the focus on outreach initiatives. Institutions are encouraged to consider the scope of the Colorado OER Professional Development Fund Application before including professional development fund requests in the OER grant proposal.

- ○ 5: **Individual Course** up to $5,000
  Grants that will adopt, adapt, or create OER for a single course. Creation of new open educational resource materials or projects with significant remixed materials will be considered up to $5,000. Proposals for adoptions and adaptions should not exceed $2,000. All courses from high impact undergraduate courses to specialized graduate level courses may be included in grants.

Eligibility

Eligibility for the grant program is as follows:

- Grants are open to any public postsecondary institution in the state of Colorado as defined in C.R.S. Title 23, which is inclusive of institutional systems;
- Any faculty, instructor, or staff member employed by a public institution of higher education in the state of Colorado may be the lead-PI;
- Private institutions, or regional campus collaborations, and local K-12 school districts may be partners on a multi-institution collaborative grant with public institutions of higher education as the lead applicant that will directly receive funds.
- Institutions with automatic textbook billing programs, often referred to as inclusive access and equitable access programs, are not eligible for the grant type 4: general incentive fund during this cycle.

Funding Guidelines

- Institutions may submit multiple proposals across award categories. The OER Council will not award more than $50,000 to an individual institution with the exception of proposals that will address zero textbook cost degrees.
- Grants will provide a single year of funding that must be spent by June 2025. Successful proposals, particularly z-degree initiatives, that would like to continue their work beyond the single year of funding will have the option to submit a streamlined proposal again for OER grant cycle 7.
- The Colorado OER Council is awarding professional development funds through a separate process during 2023/24. It is encouraged to not add professional development funding, such as to attend an open education conference or complete a Creative Commons training, to your proposal and instead apply to the [Colorado OER Professional Development Fund](). Larger professional development plans, such as creating an institutional faculty learning community, may be considered for funding under the grant program.
- Proposals that do not include a budget narrative will be returned.

If you have questions whether an item in your budget is eligible for funding, please contact OER@dhe.state.co.us prior to submitting the proposal.

Selection Criteria

In making recommendations and awarding grants, the OER Council and the Commission will consider whether the proposed grant-supported activity:

(i) affects courses with high student enrollment or high textbook or materials costs and/or advances the State's progress toward Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) programs such as the creation of z-degrees, programs, certificates, pathways, courses, or sequences aimed at saving students money;

(ii) affects high-impact courses such as core courses, Guaranteed Transfer (GT) Pathways/General Education courses, courses within statewide transfer agreements, or courses included in concurrent enrollment agreements;

(iii) supports adoption, adaptation and/or development of open educational resources by teams of faculty, librarians, and instructional designers within a public institution of higher education or across multiple institutions, making it more likely that the resources will be used in multiple courses or sections;

(iv) includes a demonstrated commitment to and plan for accessibility and diversity of materials;

(v) aligns with departmental, institutional and/or state mission, goals, or strategic initiatives;

(vi) aligns with the current needs of higher education such as responsive to online education, anti-racist curriculum, advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, or COVID-19/other current events; and

(vii) advances existing institutional OER programs and sustainable initiatives.

Proposal

Please submit all required sections of the proposal in **one document, not to exceed ten pages** (letters of support are not included in the ten page limit). A completed cover sheet, completed Colorado OER agreement, narrative, timeline, budget are required sections. The agreement and templates are available in the RFP public folder. Additionally, all applicants must complete a proposal contact form to provide the name and full contact details for the proposed project.

Proposal Criteria

All OER grant proposals will be evaluated on the following criteria and all proposals should include all applicable points in their proposal. **This criteria will be considered by the grant**

reviewers in evaluating and scoring your proposal. Omission of any of these points will lower your final score and affect the funding of your proposal. In order to aid in successful proposals, the following list corresponds to the rubric items with denoted letters. Please write to the rubric to ensure the most successful proposal and address the following items in your proposal:

- a completed cover sheet that includes the project title, institutional affiliation, and contacts, and a completed Colorado OER Grant agreement **[a]**;
- project description that includes a clear project description, the target population for the materials, the courses intended to be covered by the scope of the grant, and its team and project partners **[b]**;
- a description of how the proposed project will positively impact enrollment **[c]**;
- a plan to evaluate that includes the number of students who are affected and the cost savings to students as a result of the open educational resources developed using the grant and/or the impact on student success, which may include DFW rates, assessment of student learning outcomes, enrollment, impact on retention and persistence, costs of resources replaced, survey data on student performance, student success or satisfaction with the OER, etc. **[d, m]**;
- affects courses with high student enrollment or high textbook or materials costs and/or advances the State's progress toward Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) programs such as the creation of ZTC degrees, programs, certificates, pathways, courses, or sequences aimed at saving students money **[e]**;
- identification of any library, instructional design, information technology, instructional, or administrative staffing, including project partners, to support the open educational resources initiative for which a grant is requested **[f]**;
- evidence of the existence of an open educational resources committee, whether formal or informal, or list of the personnel who will be involved in the proposed project. Individual project proposals without an OER committee will still be considered **[f]**;
- demonstrated support from departmental or institutional leadership is required and will be accepted in the form of official letters of support **[f]**;
- aligns with the current needs of higher education such as responsive to online education, anti-racist curriculum, COVID-19, or other current events **[g]**;
- specifically identities how the project supports or advances diversity, equity and inclusion **[j]**;
- includes a demonstrated commitment to and plan for accessibility and diversity of materials **[j, k]**;
- a plan for commitment to accessibility in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. sec. 12101 et seq., as amended, to enable persons with disabilities to access to the open educational resources developed or adapted using the grant **[k]**;
- a plan for expanding the adoption, adaptation and/or creation of open educational resources across the campus(es) or institution(s) that receive(s) the

grant, which may include awarding grants to faculty members, staff or faculty training and/or support, reducing a faculty member's required teaching hours, or providing other incentives to faculty for adapting and developing open educational resources **[h]**;

- the manner in which the courses that use open educational resources will be identified for students prior to the time of course registration, which may include identification in the schedule of classes **[h]**;
- the plan for ensuring that open educational resources that are adapted or developed using the grant money are discoverable, publicized, and made available to other faculty, staff, and students within the public institution of higher education and other public institutions of higher education in the State of Colorado including a description of any open licensing, which is detailed in the Colorado OER agreement page **[h]**;
- a realistic and detailed timeline for the project that includes creating OER content, implementing OER content, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the project **[i]**;
- a plan for and commitment to sustaining the open educational resources initiative after the grant is completed **[l]**;
- the manner in which the grant recipient will evaluate the use of the open educational resources developed using the grant, including a plan for the collection of relevant data, e.g. number of students affected, costs of resources replaced, survey data on student performance and/or satisfaction with the OER, support (such as IT) used in parts of the project, etc. **[m]**; and
- a detailed budget plan describing utilization of grant funds and relevant letters of support. **[n]**

Please refer to the rubric for more details on the selection criteria. The letter at the end of each required section and criteria (ex: **[a]**) corresponds to the selection criteria in the rubric for this grant cycle to aid in successful grant proposals.

Proposal Templates

Proposals should follow the provided template and be submitted in a single PDF. The following templates are available in the Colorado OER Grant 2023/24 RFP public folder:

- OER Grant Proposal Template [Google Doc]
- OER Grant Proposal Template [Word file]
- Budget Template [Google Sheet]
- Budget Template [Excel Sheet]

You may use whichever file format you prefer to draft the proposal, but it **must be submitted as a single PDF**. Proposals that do not utilize the template, are not submitted as a PDF, or include multiple attachments (with the exception of letters of support) will be returned. Additionally, the public folder contains the rubric used to evaluate grants, informational webinars for the grants, glossary of terms, and sample OER grants that were previously successful.

Reporting and Evaluation Requirements

All successful grants provide a progress and final report during the grant period. Applicants should plan for how they will evaluate the use of open educational resources developed as a result of the grant. This should include estimates for the number of students who are affected and the cost savings to students as a result of the open educational resources developed using the grant. In addition to cost savings, other grant evaluation criteria may include the impact of using OER on student success. These can include, but are not limited to, DFW rates, assessment of student learning outcomes and student satisfaction, impact on retention and persistence or other student success measures.

Grant recipients are expected to participate in:
- reporting of selected data elements to CDHE to enable compliance with statutory requirements on reporting and evaluation,
- internal reporting and engagement with OER Council surveys,
- ongoing efforts to make sure the supported activities are accessible and
- participation in virtual and annual convenings arranged by the OER Council and CDHE.

All institutional proposals must plan ahead to provide requested data and collaborate with institutional partners to provide institutional level data, such as enrollment numbers, pass rates, and number of OER courses. Grantees that do not satisfactorily complete data reporting requirements may result in their institution being ineligible to receive grant funds in future cycles.

Funds awarded that have not been spent by June 30, 2025 must be returned to CDHE.

Grant Timeline

September 2023:   RFP Release
October - November 2023: Grant informational webinars and office hours
December 18 2023:   OER grant proposals due
January 2024:   Review of grant proposals
February 2024:   Recommendations for grant awards to CCHE
March 2024:   Award notifications
May 2024:   Funds to be disbursed by CDHE
January 2025:   Progress report due

June 30 2025:   All grant funds must be spent down
July 2025:   Remaining funds return to CDHE
August 15 2025:   Final reports due
Note: the timeline above includes some approximations.

For additional information and questions please contact: Chealsye Bowley, Director of Open Education and Learning Innovation, Department of Higher Education at **OER@dhe.state.co.us**