



**Department of
Higher Education**

Ohio Reach Postsecondary Designation



Request for Applications:
Ohio Reach Designation to Support Foster-Care Connected Students

Anticipated Timeline:

Request for Application Issue Date: January 22, 2024

Virtual Overview Conference: January 30, 2024

Written Question Period: January 30, 2024 - February 6, 2024

Application Due Date: March 1, 2024

Review Committee presents Recommendations to Chancellor: March 25, 2024

Projected Award Notification: April 8, 2024

Ohio Reach, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) and The Ohio Children’s Alliance (OCA), is accepting applications from accredited colleges, universities, and Ohio Technical Centers to provide supportive services to students with a history in foster care, kinship care, or out-of-home placement. The purpose of this directive is to establish supportive criteria, hereafter named the “Ohio Reach Postsecondary” Designation, necessary for Ohio’s public and independent colleges and universities and technical centers to be recognized as being supportive and inclusive of foster care-connected students. The Ohio Reach Designation Advisory Committee will evaluate applications and recommend institutions in Ohio to earn the Ohio Reach Designation.

Funding will be used to award grants to eligible institutions for the designation period of 2024—2027.

I. General Information

a. Overview Conference

Ohio Reach will hold a Virtual Overview Conference on Tuesday, January 30th, 2024, at 11am via Zoom. The link to the Virtual Overview Conference can be found at OhioReach.org. The purpose of the Virtual Overview Conference is to review the requirements of this RFA, to respond to participants’ questions regarding any aspects of the RFA, and to answer any questions posed prior to the Conference. Although attendance at the Virtual Overview Conference is not required, potential applicants are highly encouraged to attend. Questions may be posed and answered in this forum that will significantly increase the ability of the institution to submit a viable application. The Overview Conference is the most effective opportunity for the applicant to gain an understanding of the focus of the RFA and to ensure complete understanding of the submission requirements and processes. Ohio Reach and ODHE staff are prohibited from conducting conversations with individual applicants regarding the RFA between the date of the RFA’s release and the date of the award announcement.

b. Written Questions

Following the close of the Virtual Overview Conference, all questions from prospective applicants must be submitted in writing via email to OhioReach@ohiochildrensalliance.org with the RFA title specified in the subject line and will be answered via posting on the Ohio Reach website (ohioreach.org), with both the question and the answer displayed. Written responses to all questions received by Ohio Reach will be posted only once during the open RFA period. Questions submitted in writing following the Overview Conference through the February 6th at 5pm deadline will be answered and posted for viewing by applicants by 4:00pm on February 13th, 2024. In order to ensure that all prospective applicants have equal access to the information, questions submitted after the deadline will not be answered.

c. Application Submission

For your application to be considered, a completed and signed application form must be submitted via email to OhioReach@ohiochildrensalliance.org no later than 5pm on Friday,

March 1st, 2024. The applicant is responsible for ensuring the application is received prior to the deadline. Applicants are encouraged to consider the risk of technical difficulty and factor it into the timeline for submission. A return email will be sent confirming receipt of the application when received. Applications may not be delivered by mail or submitted in person. No extensions of time will be given. Applications will be reviewed as received and must be complete at the time of submission. All applications and accompanying documents will become the property of Ohio Reach and will not be returned. All documents submitted to Ohio Reach as part of your application may become public information. Ohio Reach and ODHE do not encourage the submission of confidential or proprietary information in response to this RFA.

II. Considerations

This RFA does not constitute an offer. Acceptance of applications for review does not commit Ohio Reach to make any award, nor is Ohio Reach liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of applications. The Ohio Reach Designation Advisory Committee reserves the right to make awards to a single applicant, multiple applicants, or to reject any and all applications or parts of applications received. If the Ohio Reach Designation Advisory Committee elects to initiate negotiations, these negotiations cannot involve changes in requirements or the applicant's application which would, by their nature, affect the basis of the source selection and the competition previously conducted. The Ohio Reach Designation Advisory Committee reserves the right to negotiate activities and costs on any and all applications or to cancel this RFA in part or in its entirety. Final awards will be subject to applicable rules and regulations under the funding requirements. Applications submitted in response to this RFA must comply with the specifications stated herein. Failure to adhere to the formatting requirements may result in the application being determined non-responsive and may result in the elimination of the application from consideration. The total amount per award and number of awards shall be determined by the number of applications received, the quality of the applications, and alignment with the selection criteria. It is our goal to expand opportunities to as many institutions as able.

III. Awards

The Ohio Reach Designation Advisory Committee will issue a Letter of Intent to Award to the selected applicants and will notify unsuccessful applicants as soon as they have been eliminated from consideration. Until the selected applicant receives a fully executed and approved written agreement, there is no legal and valid contract, in law or in equity. The Ohio Reach Designation Advisory Committee reserves the right to ask clarifying questions, issue conditional awards and negotiate a best and final award. Ohio Reach will utilize an award process for payment, with funds released upon approval. Institutions will be responsible for submitting a budget form detailing expenses at the end of each State Fiscal Year. Additional payment policies and instructions will be described in award letters. Institutions will be awarded a minimum of \$2,000 to support programming expenses for the Ohio Reach Postsecondary Designation.

IV. Protest

An institution may protest the decision resulting from the review of this RFA by following the guidelines listed.

1. The Ohio Reach Designation Advisory Committee shall consider a written Notification of Protest that is received by the Committee within five (5) business days of the date of the letter notifying the applicant that the application submitted was not accepted. The following should be included in the Notification of Protest: • Name, address, telephone number, and email address of protester.
2. The institution must then submit, within five (5) business days of the Notification of Protest, a formal protest in writing that must include a detailed statement of the grounds for the protest including copies of relevant documents.
3. The Notification of Protest and the Formal Written Protest described in (a) and (b) above must be emailed to ohioreach@ohiochildrensalliance.org with Subject Line: Notification of Protest.
4. Once a properly filed protest has been received, independent reviewers will review the protest and notify the protestor within five (5) business days in writing of the result of the protest.

V. Application

Below are the criteria necessary to be considered for the Ohio Reach Post-Secondary Designation. After each item, please include a succinct statement that explains how your institution meets or plans to meet that criterion. When applicable, please include any web links that can also verify your statements. Supporting documentation or additional pages may be attached to the end of this application. If you have any questions, please contact ohioreach@ohiochildrensalliance.org.

“Students” as used below will refer to students that the Ohio Reach designation serves – those with lived experience in foster care, kinship care, or other out-of-home care placements.

5. Institutions must engage in targeted outreach to students, with efforts made to identify and support them. Targeted outreach can include on-campus marketing, financial aid outreach, partnerships with local child welfare agencies, or application questions. Please include a brief marketing plan below.

6. Expanding the eligibility of on-campus services: Many universities offer a variety of resources for students, including, but not limited to: group counseling, additional tutoring services, career counseling, and mentorship. Efforts should be made to expand the eligibility of restricted programs to include alumni of foster care, or to connect Ohio Reach students with these resources. If your campus offers these resources, please include details below.

7. Ohio Reach will offer free, online training and resources to Campus Liaisons. These trainings will cover topics from working with alumni of foster care to best practices for on-campus resources. Each designated Campus Liaison must commit to attending at least one virtual meeting per quarter, to total four per year. Please state your agreement below.

8. Each Institution must have a transition plan in place for the Campus Liaison, to ensure continuity of services for students if the role is vacated. Please state your commitment to notifying Ohio Reach of Liaison transitions in a timely manner. In addition, as Campus Champions transition, the Liaison should work within the departments to find suitable replacements. Please state your agreement below.

9. Campus Liaisons must collect student data in the following areas:
- a. Number of students served/registered
 - b. Student outcomes (drop out, stop out, graduation, continuation)
 - c. Demographics
 - d. Average GPA for registered students
 - e. Number of students accessing other campus resources (tutoring, career counseling, etc.)

A form will be provided to each Liaison for data collection. Liaisons will be required to submit the completed data form, with nonidentifying student information at the close of each semester. Please state your agreement below.

10. Each university program must offer a Mentorship program to Ohio Reach students (Mentorship programs can include: group mentorship, family style mentorship, peer mentorship, or regular check-ins with students). Please provide information regarding a proposed mentorship program for students.

Additional Criteria Not Required, But Strongly Recommended

If your university offers, or has plans to offer, any of these resources to students who are foster care alumni, please include details below.

- Year-Round Housing
- Career Counseling
- Cohort Structure
- In-depth Tutoring resources
- Community Leadership Opportunities
- Life Skills Learning Opportunities
- Transition Services for Students (Pre- and Post-University)

Regional Campuses

If your Institution of Higher Education has multiple Ohio locations or Regional Campuses, please either outline your plan to provide comprehensive services at all physical locations or submit a separate application for additional campus locations.

President or Provost Signature

Date