



Illinois Board of Higher Education

JB Pritzker, Governor
Pranav Kothari, Chair • Ginger Ostro, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Institutional Representatives at Eligible Public Universities

FROM: DFI Program Team

DATE: March 2, 2026

RE: **FY27/AY 2026-2027 New & Renewal DFI Applications - DUE APRIL 17TH**

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is seeking New and Renewal Fellow applications for the Fiscal Year 2027/Academic Year 2026-2027 Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois (DFI) Program. Please review the application materials carefully.

- Beginning with the FY27 application cycle, IBHE will be providing **both a New and Renewal application** for your applicants moving forward:
 - First-time/New applicants will use the New Fellow application.
 - Continuing/Renewal applicants will use the Renewal application.
 - All applications and materials must be certified/signed by the designated Institutional Representative.
- You will also receive the following accompanying materials:
 - ***Institutional Certification Form for Applications*** - this form must be completed by the Institutional Representative for each DFI applicant and attached to the application.
 - ***Repayment Compliance Procedures/Example Fellow Repayment Form*** - provides directive on newly implemented DFI repayment expectations and requirements.
 - ***FAQ document*** – highlights the primary statutory changes enacted into law last November (2025).

***Please scan and combine each individual application into ONE PDF and e-mail applications directly to DFI@ibhe.org – no paper copies will be accepted.**

***PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE FOR FY27/AY 2026-2027 –**

- Finalized/certified applications due to IBHE/DFI Staff – **April 17, 2026.**
- Application review and selection will be determined by the DFI Board.
- Institutional Representatives and selected Fellows will be notified upon approval by the IBHE Board in June.

*Information applicable to **New Applicants:**

- 2026-2027 New DFI Application
- Institutional Certification Form for Applications

- All information submitted must go through the Graduate School/Institutional Representative – applicants should not forward or submit any documentation directly to DFI Staff.
- Completed 2026-2027 academic year New DFI application forms must be certified and submitted to IBHE on or before **April 17, 2026**.

The following documentation constitutes a complete DFI **New** application:

- ✓ Official acceptance letter - (for degree program for which funding is being sought).
- ✓ Official letter/documentation from current or undergraduate institution Financial Aid or other institutional official on letterhead verifying the applicant received the Pell Grant as an undergraduate student at any point.
- ✓ Certification of full-time status.
- ✓ Completed application form - All questions on application form pertain to the degree program for which funding is being sought, unless otherwise indicated.
- ✓ Completed financial form certified by the institution - (and FAFSA).
- ✓ Completed essay submission.
- ✓ Three letters of **professional** recommendation.
- ✓ Only official transcripts (**no copies**).

*Information applicable to **Renewal Applicants:**

- 2026-2027 Renewal DFI Application
- Institutional Certification Form for Applications

- DFI Institutional Representatives must certify that an applicant remains eligible and meets the DFI renewal criteria.
- Completed 2026-2027 DFI Renewal Application forms must be certified and submitted to IBHE on or before **April 17, 2026**.

The following documentation constitutes a complete DFI **Renewal** application:

- ✓ A certified/signed application.
- ✓ An admission letter to your doctoral program if previously funded for a master's-level degree and now seeking funding for doctoral level.
- ✓ Certification of full-time status.
- ✓ Official letter/documentation from current or undergraduate institution Financial Aid or other institutional official on letterhead verifying the applicant received the Pell Grant as an undergraduate student at any point.
- ✓ Current CV

*All applicants must be certified and verified as FULL-TIME by the institution.

If you have any questions, please contact DFI@ibhe.org - we look forward to receiving your applications!