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TO: The Illinois Higher Education Community

FROM: The Illinois Board of Higher Education

DATE: April 30, 2024

RE: Request for Proposals – FY25 Illinois Cooperative Work Study Grant

Due Date: Friday, June 14th at 12:00 p.m.

In anticipation of receiving funding for the Illinois Cooperative Work Study Grant (ICWS) in Fiscal Year 2025 (FY2025), the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is seeking applications for the FY2025 ICWS grant program. The ICWS program seeks to address financial inequities that have impeded equitable postsecondary outcomes for all Illinois students. The foremost objective of IBHE and the ICWS grant are to make postsecondary credentials for Illinois students attainable and affordable based on principles of the IBHE's Strategic Planning Initiative entitled: *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth*. The 25 strategies outlined in this plan are designed to accomplish three goals:

- *Equity*: Close equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind.
- *Sustainability*: Build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions.
- *Growth*: Increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth.

This will require the continued dedication and commitment of each institution's student support services to make degrees and credentials attainable, while optimizing funds and resources to make those degrees and credentials more affordable. To this end, the ICWS grant looks to fulfill its goals and objectives by endeavoring to ensure that participating institutions are serving diverse populations, being equitable, and supporting principles of inclusion in all areas of their work related to the program. Through the application, applicants must demonstrate diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values in their work with students. IBHE staff will be looking for this information throughout the application.

Eligible Institutions: Applicants eligible to receive grants are approved public and private, associate- and baccalaureate-degree granting Illinois colleges and universities.

Grant Period: The grant period will be July 1, 2024 to August 31, 2025.

Application Deadline: Only one proposal per institution may be submitted for this program. The application materials for FY2025 must be emailed to Outreachgrants@ibhe.org. The complete application must be received by 12:00 p.m. on Friday, June 14, 2024.

The application is included in this document and will also be available on the IBHE website at <https://www.ibhe.org/icws.html>.

Contact Person: For more information on this RFP, contact Outreachgrants@ibhe.org

Program Objectives

Grants shall be made for projects that support Illinois resident undergraduate students. The IBHE Program Objectives are to:

- *Expand opportunities for students to pursue internships, clinical placement, cooperative programs with business and industry, and other work opportunities linked to a student's academic program, with a particular emphasis on students who have historically been underrepresented in higher education;*
- *Strengthen cooperation between higher education, business, industry, and government;*
- *Encourage social and community service;*
- *Promote equitable outcomes for all students;*
- *Provide a diverse, inclusive environment;*
- *Maximize the use of matching contributions from business and industry, and governmental and social agencies;*
- *Create new opportunities for public/private partnerships;*
- *Integrate other components of student financial aid to reduce reliance on student loans; and*
- *Encourage students to seek permanent employment in Illinois.*

Fiscal Information

The FY2025 budget recommendations include \$980,500 for the ICWS grant program. A final allocation for the FY2025 ICWS grant program will not occur until a FY2025 budget is signed by the Governor.

The maximum request amount from each institution is \$50,000. A program audit is no longer required - grant funds must be used for student wages and salaries.

Proposal Format

Each proposal must be submitted in the format outlined below. Please review the attachments carefully. The following may be used as a checklist in assembling your completed proposal:

- **Uniform Application for State Grant Assistance (Attachment 1):** This form must be completed, dated, signed by the President/CEO of the applicant institution.
- **Program Goals and Objectives (Attachment 2):** Describe the goals and objectives of the program and how they relate to the IBHE objectives, and, in particular, the Strategic Planning Initiative. (Note: Since this synopsis may be used in public information documents, please refrain from using technical language not readily understood by the public). Please provide a comprehensive description of the goals, objectives, and the efforts the institutions will take to reach students who are from groups that are historically underrepresented in higher education, including students of color, low-income students, adult students, and rural students; timelines; and personnel responsible for completing the activities.
- **Project Narrative (Attachment 3):** Limit to five double-spaced pages. Provide a brief description of the program, including description of how the proposed program complements the institution's mission and how the program supports the institution's long- and short-term goals priorities of growing talent in Illinois. Demonstrate how the program will support the three goals of the state's strategic plan for higher education *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth*.
- **Budget (Attachment 4):** Provide a completed budget request form. Cooperative Work Study funds are to be used only for student wages and salaries. Grant funds may not be used for any administrative costs.

***The following additional information should be included as part of your budget structure:**

- What is your *per student* request?
- How much per student, if any, is your institution supplementing through institutional contributions described in Attachment 5?
- Provide justification for the amount you are requesting.
- **Institutional Contributions (Attachment 5):** Indicate the amount your institution contributes with in-kind and institutional contributions to the Illinois Cooperative Work Study program. An in-kind contribution is a non-cash input which can be given a cash value. Examples of in-kind contributions may include program director's salary and fringe benefits associated with running the program. Contributions directly from the institution used to pay for student salaries, fringe benefits, etc. are considered institutional contributions.
- **List of Participating Employers (Attachment 6).** Please list all participating employers who have submitted letters of intent to participate in the program. Employers must be external and not associated with the institution receiving the award.
- **Linkage to Student's Academic Program Summary (Attachment 7).** Please briefly describe how the work opportunity is linked to a student's academic program for each employer listed in Attachment 5. Please describe how your project opportunities in this program will help students obtain Illinois employment post-graduation.
- **Employer's letters (Attachment 8).** A letter of intent on the employer's letterhead that clearly outlines the employer's commitment must include:
 - Length of the internship (weeks, hours, etc.);
 - Number of positions available;
 - How the work opportunity is linked to an academic program;
 - Total wage to be paid to the student; and
 - Employer's share or percentage of the total wage.

A signed contract of intent between the institution and the employer may be substituted for the letter of intent. Employers must submit a new letter of intent each year to participate in the program.

- **Evaluation Plan (Attachment 9):** Describe an evaluation plan that details how the project's effectiveness will be assessed in relationship to the stated objectives of the project and IBHE goals to close equity gaps, and that align with identified performance measures and standards for the program per the grant agreement. If the institution received funds from this program in prior years, indicate how the prior evaluations have informed the current program proposal. Identify plans for program and student outcomes, including plan for measuring student progress and engagement for employment in Illinois based on the participation in the program.

Attachment #10 is for informational purposes only and not required as part of the application submission.

Criteria for Review and Approval

Proposals will be reviewed and rated by Illinois Board of Higher Education staff. The following general criteria areas will be used to rate the proposals. **(100 total possible points)**

1. **Closes equity gaps and advances equitable workforce and economic development.** The proposal provides clear evidence of how this project will increase equity, address attainment and employment gaps at the institution through access to work experiences. The proposal clearly delineates plans to strengthen cooperation between higher education institutions, K-12 education, business, industry, and government; creates new opportunities for public/private partnerships with attention to diverse student groups; and encourages students across all social and economic spectrums to seek permanent employment in Illinois. **(25 points)**

2. **Leveraging Resources.** Please explain how you will work with low-income students and diverse students to reduce their reliance on student loans; maximize the use of matching contributions from business, industry, and government; and show alignment between the Cooperative Work Study Program and other campus work study programs. **(15 points)**

3. **Enhancing Academic, Employment, and Community Relationships.** The proposal provides a practical and sustainable plan for expansion of student internships, across racial and ethnic lines, linked to a student's academic field, and encourages social and community service, and the extent to which there are supports in place to ensure student continuance in the project or internship. **(15 points)**

4. **Program Recruitment, Selection, and Supports.** The proposal clearly articulates the student recruitment, selection, and support process and demonstrates this across racial, ethnic, disability, and other diverse lines. The proposal also outlines expectations and professional relationships between students, faculty, and employers; and defines responsibilities for student supervision and evaluation. Employer letters of intent to participate in the program clearly define their understanding and commitment to equitable consideration of applicants to their business including number and length of positions and employer share of wage or salary. **(20 points)**

5. **Program Evaluation.** The proposed evaluation process is designed to assess the effectiveness of the activities in relation to the goals and objectives and IBHE goals to close equity gaps. It includes clearly stated performance measures and tracking information for follow up of students' permanent employment in Illinois. Interim evaluation is provided, if applicable. If the institution received funds from this program in prior years, the proposal shows how the prior evaluations have informed the current program proposal. **(10 points)**

6. **Budget.** The extent to which the proposed budget is consistent with the scope of the proposed objectives and activities and the cost per student is justified. The budget reflects maximized use of matching contributions. **(15 points)**