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**Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE)  
Colorado Open Educational Resources (OER) Grant 2024/25  
Request for Proposals (RFP)**

<b>Request for Proposals</b>	<b>2</b>
Purpose	2
Grant Outcomes	2
Process and Key Dates	3
Instructions for Proposal Submission	3
Grant Award Categories	3
Eligibility	6
Funding Guidelines	7
Selection Criteria	7
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>8</b>
Proposal Criteria	8
Project Funding Activity Ranges	10
Proposal Templates	12
<b>Reporting and Evaluation Requirements</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Grant Timeline</b>	<b>13</b>



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

# 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, September 16, 2024**.

## 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, instructors and/or staff of public institutions of higher education, individually or in collaborative groups, to support the creation, adoption, adaptation, expansion, and promotion of OER for specific courses, disciplines, or programs.

## Grant Outcomes

The 2024-25 Cohort 7 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 2025-2026;
- Advance student learning through improved collaboration, engagement, responsiveness, and curricular relevancy;
- Create multiple new z-degree pathways or finish z-degrees already under development for Colorado students to complete their degree 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.



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

## Process and Key Dates

Applications in response to the request for proposals (RFP) will be accepted beginning **August 16, 2024**. CDHE staff will host a series of webinars April - June 2024 with the opportunity for scheduled office hours until September 2024 to provide guidance on applications and answer questions about the requirements of this grant program. The deadline for proposals to be submitted is **September 16, 2024**.

Members of the Colorado OER Council and designees will review proposals and make recommendations to the CCHE by November 2024. CDHE staff will bring OER Council recommendations for review and approval from the Commission at the December 2024 CCHE meeting. Funds will be dispersed by the CDHE in January 2025. All funds must be expended by June 30, 2026.

Grantees must submit progress reports to CDHE in December 2025 and a final report by August 15, 2026. Unexpended funds are required to be returned to CDHE in August 2026.

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](mailto:OER@dhe.state.co.us)** as a **single attachment PDF by 5 p.m. MST on Monday, September 16, 2024**.

The proposal must be submitted as one PDF document and included as one attachment in the submission email, including any letters of support. Supplemental files will not be considered, but proposals may contain links to relevant information or examples. **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 will not be considered by the grant review committee.**

Additionally, all applicants must complete a [proposal contact form](#) to provide the name, title, institutional affiliation, and email of the project lead, and any additional grant contacts.

## Grant Award Categories

The Colorado OER Grant Program will fund six types of grants with a total allocation of \$1,000,000 for the 2024/25 Cohort 7 grant cycle. The \$1 million in funding for the cycle 7 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.**



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

All grant categories, with the exception of general incentive fund proposals, must specify the grant's collaborators, courses, and/or committed instructors. All grant categories, with the exception of individual course grants, must show evidence of multiple instructors executing the grant projects. All proposals are evaluated individually, but the OER Council will take into consideration if other proposals are addressing the same courses, previously funded OER grant projects, and past grant/reporting performance of the institution.

### **1: Institutional Z-degree**

"Z-degrees" provide students with a Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) pathway to complete their degree from start to finish with zero textbook cost. Z-degree grants will be awarded to institutions to convert degree coursework to OER whether through adoption, adaptation, or creation of OER. Z-degree grants will be awarded:

- **up to \$100,000** for proposals that will undertake a full z-degree addressing lower-level and upper-level courses for a degree; or
- **up to \$75,000** for an Associates degree, certificates, upper-level major coursework for a Bachelors degree, or graduate degrees.

Z-degrees should offer students a realistic pathway to complete their degree with zero textbook cost. All required courses must regularly offer an OER or no-cost section, but it is not required that every course offered by a department use OER to be considered a z-degree for the grant program. Grant funds may be used to fund the time to adopt or develop OER or other open source resources, including textbooks, homework systems, videos, quizzes, simulations, and other ancillary materials. No-cost materials that are not openly licensed may be used in a z-degree, but grants may not be used for materials or activities that are not openly licensed.

Z-degree proposals should provide a detailed plan for the work that will be undertaken in 2025-2026 toward a z-degree. It is unlikely that a single year grant could be used to design and implement a z-degree unless significant work has already been undertaken previously. It is anticipated that grantees would submit proposals in subsequent years to complete the 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 of the grant period.

### **2: Collaborative Z-degree up to \$100,000**

A "z-degree" that is achieved through collaboration between two or more institutions (**K-12 and private institutions are 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 institution. Collaborative z-degree projects should result in a realistic pathway for students to complete their degree with zero textbook cost at each participating institution, such as sharing developed OER across



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

participating institutions or providing a z-degree path from one institution to another to complete a program.

Proposals must outline specific courses and have evidence of commitment by collaborating institutions and instructors. Grant funds may be used to fund the time to adopt or develop OER or other open source resources, including textbooks, homework systems, videos, quizzes, simulations, and other ancillary materials. Proposals should provide a detailed plan for the work that will be undertaken in 2025-2026 toward a z-degree, and evidence of commitment by all participating institutions and applicable instructors. Proposals should include an estimated timeline and courses in any future phases, but are not required to have a detailed plan beyond the phase of the grant period.

### **3: 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. Collaborative projects must provide a detailed plan with specific commitments from each institution, course, and instructors.

Examples of collaborative projects include multiple universities and community colleges working together to create course materials that will be utilized across multiple institutions at the conclusion of the grant, a collaborative effort for developing materials to be piloted at a different institution, and collaborating with students or K-12 educators to develop materials that will be implemented at a K-12 institution and/or materials designed for concurrent enrollment.

### **4: General Incentive Fund up to \$40,000**

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.

General incentive fund grants are limited to a single institution. Proposals must follow the project funding activities outlined in the funding guidelines section for their incentive structures. **This is the only category permitted to include a general incentive fund structure, or commonly referred to as "mini grants" at many institutions.**

Institutions with **institution-wide** automatic textbook billing programs **are not eligible** for the general incentive fund grants during this cycle.



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

**5: Small group** up to \$25,000

Grants run by a small group of committed faculty at a single institution to adopt, adapt, or create OER for multiple courses. Small group grants must include at least two faculty, instructors or staff, but are not limited to a single department. Small group projects may include working across departments at an institution, piloting OER work in a discipline as a potential z-degree, and projects outside credit-bearing courses.

**6: Individual Course** up to \$10,000

Grants that will adopt, adapt, or create OER and/or ancillary materials for a single course. Individual projects must follow the project funding levels outlined in the funding guidelines section. The full amount of funding will only be awarded to individual courses that will undertake significant individual projects that combine multiple funding levels into their project, such as review and development of ancillary materials in addition to authoring or adapting OER. All courses from concurrent enrollment and undergraduate courses to specialized graduate level courses may be included in individual course grants.

If you have questions about the correct type of grant for your project, please contact [OER@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:OER@dhe.state.co.us) prior to submitting the proposal.

## 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.
- Returning grantees that were not in compliance with reporting requirements in the 2023/24 cohort 5 grant are not eligible to submit a proposal in this cycle.
- Institutions with institution-wide automatic textbook billing programs, often referred to as inclusive access and equitable access programs, are not eligible for general incentive fund grants. Institutions that exempt OER or other no-cost courses permanently from flat-fee automatic textbook billing programs, with evidence such as a negotiated contract with the automatic textbook billing program vendor, may contact CDHE at [OER@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:OER@dhe.state.co.us) for the OER Council to consider reinstating their eligibility.

If you have questions about eligibility, please contact [OER@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:OER@dhe.state.co.us) prior to submitting the proposal.



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

## Funding Guidelines

- Grants will provide a single year of funding that must be spent by June 30, 2026.
- Grant funding will not be allocated to cover full funding of full-time employee salaries, technology equipment, e-book subscriptions, access codes, the purchase of any books, printing, or indirect costs.
- Grants may fund temporary part-time positions, stipends for instructors or staff, and/or salary percentages. Proposals should follow the guidance for funding by project type and may structure payment methods based on project preferences or institutional guidelines.
- Successful proposals, particularly z-degree initiatives, that would continue to build upon the grant work may have the opportunity to submit a streamlined proposal for the next OER grant cycle.
- Professional development requests will be considered, but proposals must provide specific details and justification.
- Proposals that do not include a budget narrative will be returned.

If you have questions whether your proposal or a budget item is within funding guidelines, please contact [OER@dhe.state.co.us](mailto: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;



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

(vi) aligns with the current needs of higher education such as responsiveness 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, but must be included at the end of the document). A completed cover sheet, completed Colorado OER agreement, narrative, timeline, and budget are required. The proposal narrative must be followed, but it is permitted to propose an alternative budget format. 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. **These 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 explicitly address the following items:

- 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 overview of the OER project, the target population for the materials, the courses intended to be covered by the scope of the grant, and its team and/or project partners **[b]**;
- a description of how the proposed project will positively impact student success **[c]**;
- a plan to evaluate the grant 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, such as 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. **[c, k]**;
- description of how the proposed work will lower student costs **[d]**;





## **COLORADO**

**Department of  
Higher Education**

- description of how the proposed work impacts 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 **[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 **[f]**;
- demonstrated support from departmental or institutional leadership, which may be submitted in the form of official letters of support **[f]**;
- a realistic and detailed timeline for the project that includes creating OER content, implementing the OER materials, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the project **[g]**;
- 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, and/or providing other incentives to faculty for adapting and developing open educational resources **[g]**;
- 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 **[g]**;
- 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 Colorado including a description of any open licensing, which is detailed in the Colorado OER agreement page **[g]**;
- a plan for and commitment to sustaining the open educational resources initiative after the grant is completed **[g]**;
- specific identification of the ways in which the project supports or advances diversity, equity and inclusion **[h]**;
- a demonstrated commitment to and plan for accessibility and diversity of materials **[h, i]**;
- 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 **[i]**;



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

- a specific plan for how the OER initiative will be sustained after grant completion, including sufficient staffing, storage of materials, publicization of OER, and how the OER will be made publicly available [j];
- a description of 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 used in parts of the project, etc. [k];
- identification of institutional research partners that will assist with evaluation [f,k];
- a detailed budget plan describing utilization of grant funds [n];
- evidence of institutional or department support, such as in-kind funds, library, and/or staff time contributions [n];
- and letters of support.

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.

## Project Funding Activity Ranges

To ensure fair and consistent funding levels across projects, proposals in any category should use the funding ranges suggested here or should have a clear justification why the proposed project requires a higher level of funding. These ranges should be used whether the institution uses stipends, a percentage of an employee's salary, course release, or some other method of compensation. However, an institution may propose a different funding structure with specific justifications. The budget narrative in the proposal template requires specifying the amount of each funding component. Proposals may create their own alternative budget, but should follow a similar breakdown of requested funding. Proposals may contain multiple funding components, including funding for personnel not specified in the list below.

### **Activity 0: Training attendance (\$100 - \$1,000)**

Funding to incentivize instructors to participate in open education trainings, such as an introductory training on OER, a series of workshops, or a faculty learning community. The amount specified in this range should reflect time commitment from the instructor with lower amounts being utilized for a short training and higher amounts used for semester-long commitments. Food for trainings may be requested on a separate budget line.

### **Activity 1: Review (\$250 - \$2,000)**

Funding for institutional instructors, outside reviewers, students, and/or community members to review, test, or otherwise provide feedback about an OER. Funds may be requested for multiple reviews. Peer or student reviewers will most commonly be



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Department of  
Higher Education

awarded in the range of \$250 - \$500 with higher amounts awarded for community reviews to address the DEI in created OER. Proposals should justify the need for multiple reviews, types of reviews, and the requested amount. Budgeted amounts for review should reflect the role of the reviewer and time commitment for the type of review.

**Activity 2: Adopt as-is (\$1,000 - \$1,250)**

Funding for an instructor to revise a syllabus, update assignments, etc. when adopting as-is an existing open educational resource for use in their course.

**Activity 3: Minor Update (\$1,250 - \$1,750)**

Funding for an instructor to add minor updates to an existing open educational resource that they are not already using in their course, such as adding more inclusive language, inserting regional examples that are more relevant to Colorado students, or updating OER with more current information. Funding also covers revising their syllabus, updating assignments, etc. when adopting the updated resource.

**Activity 4: Maintenance of currently used OER (\$1,000 - \$2,000)**

Funding for an instructor to update the existing OER that they are already using in their course. This may apply to OER they adopted as-is or originally authored. Maintenance is most likely to apply for OER that needs updates to remain current due to new developments in the discipline, and may include funding to update course assignments in line with the OER maintenance. The requested funding amount should reflect the depth of maintenance.

**Activity 5: Remix existing OER (\$1,750 - \$3,500)**

Funding to remix multiple OER or adding major revisions to an existing OER. Remix projects may take the form of splicing together chapters from multiple existing open textbooks or adding original content into an existing OER. The resulting OER is custom course content that better meets the learning objectives of a course. Projects that do not add original content to the remix should be funded on the lower end of the range. The requested funding amount should reflect the depth of remixing needed, the amount of any original contributions, and any updates required to the syllabus or assignments.

**Activity 6: Author new OER (\$3,000 - \$6,000)**

Funding to create a new open textbook or similar substantial open educational resource. Proposals that include creation must demonstrate that authors have reviewed the available OER and that there are not quality OER currently available for the course content and/or to meet learning objectives. The requested funding amount should reflect the depth of work required to author a new open educational resource with detailed justifications. New open textbooks may include multiple authors, but proposals should provide justification and the requested amount reflect individual contributions. Publishing is available at no-cost to authors through the [Colorado Pressbooks Network](#).



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Higher Education

### **Activity 7: Develop ancillary materials (\$2,000 - \$10,000)**

Funding for the development of open source supplemental materials, such as homework systems, quizzes, simulations, virtual labs, etc. All open source ancillary materials must be developed for courses that are using OER or have other no-cost materials to students. Development of ancillary materials will not be supported for instructors that will be using the open source ancillary materials alongside a commercial textbook. The funding range is structured to accommodate projects of varying complexity and scale. At the lower end of the range, projects are likely to require development time and resources, and contribute to the enhancement of course content and student engagement. At the higher end of the funding spectrum, projects likely involve extensive research, development, and testing phases, as well as collaboration with subject matter experts or developers to ensure high quality and effectiveness of the materials.

## 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 2024 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 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 must 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.



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Higher Education**

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, 2026 must be returned to CDHE.

## Grant Timeline

<b>April 2024:</b>	RFP Release
<b>April - May 2024:</b>	Grant informational webinars
<b>September 16 2024:</b>	OER grant proposals due
<b>Fall 2024:</b>	Review of grant proposals
<b>November 2024:</b>	Recommendations for grant awards to CCHE
<b>December 2024:</b>	Award notifications
<b>February 2025:</b>	Funds to be disbursed by CDHE
<b>December 2025:</b>	Progress report due
<b>June 30 2026:</b>	All grant funds must be spent down
<b>July 2026:</b>	Remaining funds return to CDHE
<b>August 15 2026:</b>	Final reports due

Note: the timeline above includes some approximations.

For additional information, questions, or to schedule office hours to consult on a proposal, please contact: Chealsye Bowley, Director of Open Education and Learning Innovation, Department of Higher Education at [OER@dhe.state.co.us](mailto:OER@dhe.state.co.us)