



Request for Proposals to Develop Alabama Short-term Micro-credentials that Address Workforce Needs

The Alabama Commission of Higher Education (ACHE) invites proposals from public universities and community colleges to develop micro-credentials, which are short-term, for-credit certificates that prepare completers to gain immediate employment in a recognized [In-Demand Occupation](#). Institutions may request funds of up to \$5,000 to support curriculum development and/or delivery of new undergraduate or graduate micro-credentials. ACHE anticipates making 10-15 awards under this RFP.

Micro-credentials

Under the leadership of Governor Kay Ivey, Alabama has set a postsecondary education attainment goal of adding 500,000 credentialed Alabamians to the workforce by 2025. Alabama's [2021 Talent Development Strategic Plan](#) focuses preparing Alabamians with the education and training they need to step into high-demand, living-wage positions, and the plan highlights the importance of industry-aligned, short-term credentials that can be articulated with degree programs. While such credentials are more common within two-year community and technical colleges, there are opportunities for baccalaureate and graduate degree-granting institutions to develop innovative programs that advance their missions and support state strategic goals for talent development.

ACHE's current policies do not distinguish among different kinds of non-degree [certificates](#), and ACHE is exploring policy updates that would establish micro-credentials as a specific category of non-degree certificates. Awards granted under this RFP will inform policy development.

For the purpose of this RFP, micro-credentials should have the following features:

- Consist of or articulate to **at least 6 hours of academic credit** that can be applied to a degree program (i.e., not just elective credit)
- Clearly align with at least one occupation on Alabama's [Statewide](#) or [Regional](#) Lists of In-Demand Occupations
- Prepare students with industry-validated skills, either through an embedded industry-recognized credential (such as [CompTIA A+](#)) or through structured [work-based learning](#) with an employer partner
- Are structured so that working professionals and other non-traditional students can successfully complete the program
- Will not require more than 8 months to complete, on average

Allowable Expenses

Grant funds of up to \$5000 be awarded to the applicant's institution and can be used toward the following allowable expenses:

- Stipend or honorarium to support curriculum development and/or delivery
- Direct or indirect administrative costs of no more than 10% of the grant award
- Supplies, software, or other materials required to deliver the micro-credential
- Subscriptions or textbooks to support credential delivery
- Marketing or advertising activities to recruit participants
- Registration fees or other expenses for students to earn industry-recognized certification

Proposal Structure

Proposals should contain the following sections and be no more than 10 pages in length:

1. Description of the workforce needs that this credential seeks to address, including references to the In-Demand Occupation Lists
2. A detailed description of the proposed micro-credential; its objectives, length and industry-validated components. Please be sure to include detailed information on any embedded certification, competency-based elements, and/or work-based learning activities.
3. Discussion of the relationship to existing degree or non-degree offerings at your institution, including both a general discussion of curricular innovation and specific details around articulation of credit for the proposed credential
4. Implementation timeline to include internal curricular reviews, along with external review/approval by governing board, ACHE, and/or SACSCOC
5. Business model for the program to include projections of expenditures, revenues, new student enrollment, total headcount, completions, and sustainability (note: you are welcome to adapt ACHE's [proposal summary/business plan form](#))
6. Discussion of potential barriers to the establishment or success of the program and how these will be addressed
7. Identification of how the impact and effectiveness of the credential will be evaluated
8. An overview of the expertise of the individuals developing the program
9. A letter of support from a regional business that is interested in employing people with this credential
10. A letter of endorsement from the department head, dean, or chief academic officer

Review of Proposals

An institution may submit more than one proposal, though submission is not a guarantee of funding. The criteria for prioritizing proposals will be based upon the following desired aspects:

- The proposal's incorporation of industry-validated certification and/or work-based learning
- The proposal's ability to address an existing workforce need for the State or region
- The proposal's ability to articulate a business model that is self-sustaining in future years
- The ability of students to use this credential and earn college credit as a part of a larger academic or technical program
- The ability to earn a significant component of the credential online, asynchronously, or through another non-traditional delivery mode
- Prior history of the campus's success in degree/credential innovation, as well as successful stewardship of any prior ACHE grant funds received

Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis beginning June 28, 2021. Please submit completed proposals to Dr. Michael Walker-Jones, Outreach Coordinator, via email at Michael.Walker-Jones@ache.edu. ACHE may request additional information on a proposed initiative and/or recommend modifications to the proposal.