



Request for Proposals: Strategic Impact & Innovation Grants

This document is for reference only.

Please submit application materials via the [online form](#).

Overview

The Strategic Impact and Innovation Grant Initiative, administered by the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC), provides funding of up to a total of \$250,000 over a two-year period to support high-impact initiatives that align with the strategic priorities of individual MHEC member states. This program encourages collaboration within a state—among institutions, systems, and sectors—to:

- **Incubate:** Develop and test innovative solutions that improve educational efficiency and outcomes.
- **Launch:** Implement coordinated, collaborative efforts to address pressing state-level challenges.
- **Scale:** Expand successful programs or policies statewide to increase impact and sustainability.

MHEC seeks to support solutions that support its Strategic Plan and that are responsive to individual state needs in areas such as affordability, credential attainment, student success, and workforce alignment.

Eligibility

Lead applicants must be from a public or nonprofit higher education institution, system office, or state agency in a MHEC member state. Proposals must demonstrate intra-state collaboration and include at least one partner organization from within the same state (e.g., another institution, workforce board, K-12 district, or nonprofit entity). Grants should be distributed through a fiscal agent such as a higher education system office. Applications must have endorsement from at least one of the state's [MHEC commissioners](#), but applicants are encouraged to seek endorsement from all commissioners from their state.

Rolling Submission Process

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis beginning August 15, 2025.

- Earliest Submission Date: August 15, 2025
- Proposal Review: Applications will be reviewed monthly
- Award Notifications: Within 45 days of review
- Final Report Due: Within 60 days of project completion

Review Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Alignment with [MHEC's strategic plan](#)
- Support of commissioners

- Alignment with identified strategic priorities of the state
- Strength, scope, and intentionality of intra-state collaboration
- Clarity, feasibility, and rigor of the project design
- Potential for scalability, sustainability, or long-term impact

Reporting and Knowledge Sharing Requirements

Grantees will be required to:

- Provide a written update on progress and outcomes two times a year, in April and September, to support MHEC sharing updates with its Commission at its annual Executive Committee and Commission meetings.
- Submit a final narrative and financial report
- Share tools, models, or resources created (under an open license, where appropriate) to benefit other MHEC states.

For questions on this process or application, please contact Carrie Wandler, Senior Director of Policy Initiatives (carriew@mhec.org).

Required Application Components

Applicant Information

- Institution, agency, or department
- Lead name
- Job title
- Email address
- Phone number
- Names and roles of collaborators

Project Narrative

Describe the project narrative. (Up to 750 words recommended, or more if needed.) Please include:

- Alignment with [MHEC's Strategic Plan](#)
- Strategic relevance and alignment with state priorities
- Description of the problem/opportunity and target beneficiaries
- High level goals, activities, and timeline
- Anticipated outcomes and evaluation approach

Narrative may be entered directly into the form or attached as a file.

Budget Summary

Please download the document linked below, complete it with your requested budget, and then upload the completed document in the field provided.

[MHEC Mini-Grant Budget Template](#)

Commissioner Support

Applications must have the support of one or more [MHEC Commissioners](#) to ensure strategic alignment with the Commission's priorities. Please provide the names of your supporting MHEC commissioners as well as names of other supporting leader(s).