



**Request for Proposals (RFP)**  
**West Virginia–Ireland Education Alliance**

Official Release: May 18, 2026

Proposal Deadline: Friday, August 14, 2026, at 4:00 PM EDT

## 1. Overview and Purpose

The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) invites proposals for participation in the **West Virginia–Ireland Education Alliance**, a statewide initiative established through legislative funding (House Bill 4087) to strengthen academic, cultural, and workforce connections between West Virginia and Ireland.

The initiative supports collaborative partnerships between:

- one four-year institution, and
- one community and technical college

in West Virginia, working jointly with one or more partner institutions in Ireland.

The Alliance is designed to:

- expand access to global learning opportunities for West Virginia students
- support the development of sustainable international partnerships
- foster academic collaboration and workforce-aligned engagement
- build institutional capacity for internationalization across the state

While faculty-led study abroad programs are a primary focus of the initial round, the initiative also supports partnership development, academic planning, and collaboration that may lead to future student mobility.

WVHEPC recognizes that institutions vary in readiness and existing international infrastructure. Institutions are encouraged to participate at the level most appropriate to their stage of partnership and implementation development. The initiative is designed as a phased, multi-year approach to partnership and capacity development across West Virginia higher education.

This RFP is designed to support both:

- partnerships prepared to move toward near-term program implementation, and
- partnerships engaged in structured development as a pathway toward future implementation

Funding for this initiative is subject to annual legislative appropriation.

## 2. First Round Focus (2026–27)

The 2026–27 funding cycle will prioritize faculty-led study abroad programs in Ireland, with initial program activity expected to begin in 2027.

While faculty-led programs are the primary focus, proposals may include related partnership activities that support program development and longer-term collaboration.

These programs are intended to serve as an initial phase of a broader institutional partnership that may develop over time. Proposals should reflect a clear and credible pathway through which proposed activities contribute to:

- sustained engagement with the Irish partner institution
- future academic collaboration (e.g., exchange, COIL, joint programming)
- longer-term workforce and institutional connections

The first round is designed both to support near-term program development and to establish partnerships with potential for continued growth beyond a single program cycle.

## 3. Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, proposals must:

- Be submitted jointly by:
  - one West Virginia four-year public institution, and
  - one West Virginia community and technical college*(Proposals should be submitted through a single lead institution on behalf of the partnership.)*
- Identify (or propose to identify) **a partner institution in Ireland**
- Designate **a lead institution responsible for overall coordination**, including communication with WVHEPC and project oversight
- Identify a **primary point of contact at each participating institution**
- Demonstrate **institutional support** for the proposed partnership
- Commit to **participation in WVHEPC-coordinated meetings, reporting, and shared learning activities**

#### 4. Partnership Expectations

Proposals should demonstrate a clear and intentional partnership between the participating West Virginia institutions and the Irish partner institution.

At a minimum, partnerships should reflect:

- **Active collaboration** between the four-year and community and technical college institutions
- A program or development approach that supports **meaningful participation from both institutions**
- Engagement with a partner institution in Ireland (confirmed or in development)
- **Institutional ownership** beyond a single individual, with involvement from relevant academic or administrative units

Proposals should describe, at an appropriate level of detail for their stage of development:

- roles and responsibilities of each institution
- how academic, administrative, and student support functions will be coordinated
- how students from both institutions will access and participate in the program

Partnerships should demonstrate a commitment to **shared design and implementation**, rather than functioning primarily as a coordination or referral model.

WVHEPC recognizes that partnerships may develop with different roles and levels of participation across institutions. Early-stage partnerships may emphasize direction and structure, while more advanced partnerships may demonstrate operational coordination and readiness. In many cases, responsibilities may be uneven at the outset, with the expectation that collaboration will deepen over time.

#### 5. Core Requirements

All proposals must demonstrate the following, at a level appropriate to their stage of development:

- A **credible Irish partner institution or institutions** (confirmed or in development), with evidence of engagement appropriate to the proposal's stage
- A **program or partnership concept** designed to contribute to an ongoing institutional relationship, rather than a one-time activity
- **Evidence of institutional commitment** beyond a single individual, including involvement of relevant academic or administrative units
- A **clear connection between proposed activities and longer-term partnership development**

Proposals that rely solely on individual faculty initiative without broader institutional support are unlikely to be competitive.

## 6. Funding Categories

To reflect varying levels of institutional readiness, WVHEPC will support proposals in two funding categories:

- **Implementation-Level Partnerships (up to \$50,000):**  
For partnerships prepared to move toward near-term program delivery and direct student engagement.
- **Development-Level Partnerships (up to \$25,000):**  
For partnerships focused on building relationships, institutional coordination, and capacity required for future program implementation.

These categories represent points along a continuum of partnership development. Institutions should select the category that best aligns with their current readiness and proposed activities.

### A. Implementation-Level Partnerships

Implementation-level proposals should demonstrate readiness for near-term program activity, with initial implementation anticipated in 2027. Proposals should include:

- a confirmed or actively developed Irish partner
- a defined program concept or academic model (high-level)
- a feasible approach to coordinating key academic, administrative, and operational components
- a plan for student participation from both West Virginia institutions
- consideration of student access, recruitment, and cost

Funding should prioritize **direct program development and student participation**, including faculty involvement, travel, and program-related costs.

### B. Development-Level Partnerships

Development-level proposals support partnership-building, institutional coordination, academic planning, and operational readiness for future implementation. Proposals should demonstrate a credible pathway toward implementation, including:

- a confirmed partner or a credible strategy for partner identification
- a set of development activities aligned with partnership-building and institutional coordination
- clearly defined outcomes (e.g., partnership agreements, program plans, coordination structures)
- a realistic assessment of readiness and progression toward implementation

Funding should prioritize **partnership development, program planning, institutional coordination, direct student participation, and capacity-building activities**.

## 7. Allowable Use of Funds

Grant funds may be used to support activities directly related to the development and implementation of WV–Ireland academic partnerships and programs.

Funds may be used across the following categories:

- **Personnel and Coordination**  
Faculty and staff time supporting partnership development, program design, coordination, and implementation (including stipends or course release where appropriate)
- **Travel**  
Travel for partnership development, planning, site visits, and program implementation (in accordance with institutional and state policies)
- **Student Support**  
Scholarships or financial support to enable student participation
- **Program Costs**  
Expenses directly related to program delivery (e.g., instruction, logistics, materials, local coordination)
- **Partnership Development**  
Activities supporting relationship-building, academic planning, and agreement development
- **Supplies and Materials**  
Instructional materials or project-related resources
- **Other Direct Costs**  
Additional project-related expenses, as justified
- **Administrative / Indirect Costs**  
Direct project coordination and implementation support costs may not exceed 10% of the total award.

### Unallowable Costs

Funds may not be used for:

- General institutional overhead not directly related to the project
- Capital expenditures or major equipment
- Entertainment or non-program activities
- Expenses outside the approved project scope or grant period

### Use of Funds by Project Type

- **Implementation-level proposals** should prioritize program delivery and student participation
- **Development-level proposals** should prioritize partnership development, planning, and capacity-building

Budgets should be appropriate to the scope and stage of the proposed work.

## **8. Grant Administration and Fund Distribution**

Proposals must be submitted through a designated lead institution (see Section 3). If awarded, grant funds will be issued to the lead institution, which will serve as the primary recipient and fiscal agent for the project.

The lead institution will be responsible for:

- receiving and managing grant funds
- coordinating the distribution of funds to partner institutions, as appropriate
- ensuring that expenditures align with the approved project scope and budget
- submitting required financial and narrative reports on behalf of the partnership

Partner institutions will manage their portion of funds in accordance with their institutional policies and will provide necessary documentation and reporting to the lead institution. This structure is intended to support collaborative, multi-institutional proposals while maintaining clear and consistent financial oversight.

All budgets must use the standardized categories outlined in Section 7, which will also be used for reporting and financial review.

Budget modifications involving line-item changes exceeding 10% of the total grant award will require prior approval from WVHEPC.

All expenditures must comply with applicable institutional and state policies.

## **9. Disbursement of Funds**

Grant funds will be distributed to the lead institution according to a schedule defined in the award agreement. Disbursement may occur:

- as an initial award with subsequent installments tied to project milestones, or
- in phased payments over the course of the grant period

The specific structure will be determined based on the scope and timeline of the approved project and in accordance with HEPC financial and compliance requirements.

**The following sections (10-18) outline the application process and proposal requirements for this RFP.**

## 10. Application Overview

The application for this RFP is designed to be concise and focused. Institutions are not expected to present fully developed programs or complete institutional coordination at the time of submission. Instead, proposals should describe the partnership's **current context, direction, and a feasible pathway forward**. Detailed program design, institutional coordination, and implementation planning will be developed during the post-award phase (see Section 13).

Applicants will be asked to respond to a series of short sections aligned with the proposal requirements outlined in Section 11 and appropriate to the partnership's stage of development. At a high level, proposals will address the following areas:

### **Institutional Context and Readiness**

A brief description of the institution's current level of engagement with international programming or partnerships, including relevant experience, strengths, and key gaps or challenges.

### **Partnership Direction**

Identification of the Irish partner (if known) or a strategy for partner development, along with the general focus and intent of the partnership.

### **Proposed Activities and Student Impact**

A description of planned activities during the grant period and how these activities will support student participation and expand access to global learning opportunities.

### **Workforce and Strategic Alignment**

A brief explanation of how the proposed partnership may connect to workforce-relevant skills, career pathways, or institutional priorities.

### **Pathway to Development**

An outline of expected progress during the grant period and how the proposed activities may lead toward future program implementation or expanded collaboration.

### **Use of Funds (High-Level)**

A general description of how grant funds will be used to support proposed activities.

Proposals should be realistic, appropriately scoped, and aligned with the institution's current level of readiness. The application process is intended to support broad participation across institutions with varying levels of capacity. Institutions may participate in more than one proposal, provided each represents a clearly distinct scope of work or stage of development. An institution may not receive more than one award within the same funding category.

## **11. Detailed Proposal Requirements (Aligned with Section 10)**

The following sections expand on the application areas introduced in Section 10. Each subsection below corresponds to one or more of the core application categories and provides additional detail to support proposal development and evaluation. Applicants should address these areas at a level appropriate to their stage of development. Responses should remain concise; exhaustive detail is not required at the time of submission.

### **A. Partnership Overview**

*(Related to Section 10: Partnership Direction)*

Provide a brief overview of the proposed partnership, including:

- Participating institutions and their roles, including identification of lead institution
- Irish partner institution (confirmed or proposed), including current status of engagement or a strategy for partner identification
- Academic focus areas and how these align with institutional strengths and potential collaboration
- Individuals or units involved (if known)
- Expected next steps in partnership development

Descriptions should be specific and grounded, reflecting a clear and intentional direction appropriate to the partnership's stage of development.

### **B. Program or Development Plan**

*(Related to Section 10: Proposed Activities and Student Impact)*

Describe the proposed program (implementation-level) or development pathway (development-level), including:

- Key activities to be undertaken during the grant period
- Academic focus or thematic area
- How the four-year and community college partners will be engaged

Where applicable, proposals may also describe how the program or partnership could connect to workforce-relevant skills, sectors, or career pathways.

### **C. Expected Outcomes / Deliverables**

*(Related to Section 10: Pathway to Development)*

Identify 2–4 concrete outcomes expected by the end of the grant period. Examples may include:

- formalized partnership agreement
- defined program model or academic framework
- pilot or initial student experience
- coordinated plan for implementation

#### **D. Key Activities and Timeline**

*(Related to Section 10: Pathway to Development)*

Outline the primary activities that will be undertaken during the grant period and the general sequence of those activities.

This may include:

- partnership engagement and communication
- site visits or exchanges
- program development and coordination
- student or faculty engagement activities

#### **E. Institutional Context and Capacity**

*(Related to Section 10: Institutional Context and Readiness)*

Provide a concise description of:

- Current level of readiness, including relevant experience or existing activities
- Key strengths that support the proposed work
- Major gaps or challenges that may affect implementation
- A general approach to addressing these gaps during the grant period

For implementation-level proposals, institutions should demonstrate credible readiness for near-term program delivery. Development-level proposals are not expected to be fully formed but should demonstrate a clear direction and feasible pathway toward implementation.

#### **F. Academic Approach (if applicable)**

*(Related to Section 10: Proposed Activities and Pathway to Development)*

Describe how academic credit will be awarded (implementation-level) or how academic alignment will be developed (development-level).

This may include:

- general approaches to course structure or credit transfer
- coordination with relevant academic or administrative units (e.g., registrar, academic affairs)
- consideration of approval processes (as applicable)

Detailed agreements or approvals are not required at the time of application but should be considered as part of the overall development pathway.

## **G. Student Access and Participation**

*(Related to Section 10: Proposed Activities and Student Impact)*

Describe the anticipated student population and approach to participation, including:

- target student groups or disciplines
- approach to recruitment and access
- anticipated participation levels (if feasible)
- key considerations related to student cost and access

Estimates of participation levels are not required for development-level proposals. In some cases, proposals may include participation of students and/or faculty in an existing program, where appropriate, as a structured, transitional activity supporting partnership development and institutional capacity-building.

## **H. Sustainability and Future Development**

*(Related to Section 10: Pathway to Development and Workforce Alignment)*

Describe how the proposed activities may contribute to longer-term partnership development, including:

- potential for continuation, expansion, or repetition
- how the partnership may evolve beyond the grant period
- potential future areas of collaboration (e.g., exchange, faculty collaboration, research)
- connections to workforce development, industry engagement, or institutional priorities (optional but encouraged)

## **I. Budget Summary**

*(Related to Section 10: Use of Funds)*

Provide a high-level summary of how grant funds will be used, organized according to the standardized budget categories in Section 7.

Include a brief explanation of how proposed expenditures support the project's goals and activities.

Detailed budget development and refinement will occur during the post-award phase.

## **J. Institutional Support**

*(Related to Section 10: Institutional Context and Readiness)*

Provide a brief description of institutional support for the proposed project, including:

- identification of key individuals or units involved
- general confirmation of support from relevant leadership or offices

Formal letters of support and any additional required documentation will be requested during the award process.

## **12. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated in relation to the application areas outlined in Sections 10 and 11, and in alignment with the selected funding category and stage of development. Reviewers will assess each proposal based on the clarity, feasibility, and overall strength of its direction, including the partnership's level of readiness and the credibility of its progression toward implementation.

Expectations will be applied relative to the proposal's stage of development, rather than against a single uniform standard. Well-defined and achievable development pathways will be considered as competitive as implementation-ready proposals when aligned with the institution's current level of readiness.

Proposals will be assessed not only on the strength of their ideas, but on the realism of their assumptions, the feasibility of their approach within the institutional context, and the clarity of their pathway toward implementation.

Proposals that do not demonstrate sufficient readiness for implementation may be considered under the development category. Proposals that do not demonstrate a clear direction or feasible pathway may not be considered competitive for funding.

Proposals will be assessed using a structured evaluation framework that considers clarity, feasibility, alignment with the selected funding category, and the strength of the proposed pathway toward implementation.

### **A. Institutional Context and Readiness**

- clarity and candor in describing current conditions, strengths, and gaps
- alignment between proposed activities and institutional capacity
- credibility of the proposed pathway relative to the institution's starting point

### **B. Partnership Direction and Development**

- clarity and relevance of the proposed or intended partnership
- evidence of engagement or a credible strategy for partner identification and development
- alignment between partnership goals and institutional strengths

### **C. Proposed Activities and Student Impact**

- clarity and coherence of proposed activities or development pathway
- potential to expand student access to global learning opportunities
- appropriateness of scope and ambition relative to the selected funding category

#### **D. Workforce and Strategic Alignment**

- alignment with institutional priorities
- potential to support workforce-relevant skills, experiences, or connections
- connection, where appropriate, to economic or workforce needs in West Virginia

#### **E. Pathway to Development and Sustainability**

- clarity and feasibility of the proposed progression toward implementation
- potential for continuation, expansion, or longer-term partnership development
- alignment between proposed activities and long-term institutional impact

#### **F. Use of Funds**

- alignment between proposed use of funds and stated activities
- appropriateness of resource allocation relative to the project's stage of development
- feasibility of the proposed approach within the available funding

#### **Additional Considerations**

- **Alignment to Funding Category and Stage**
  - appropriateness of the proposal to its selected category and level of readiness
- **Category-Specific Considerations**
  - *Implementation-level proposals:*
    - readiness and feasibility of near-term program development and delivery
  - *Development-level proposals:*
    - clarity and credibility of the pathway toward implementation
    - alignment between proposed activities and expected progress during the grant period
- **System-Level Considerations**
  - overall balance across institutions, regions, and levels of readiness
  - potential to contribute to broader participation and capacity-building across the state

Detailed program design, institutional coordination, and implementation planning will be further developed during the post-award phase (see Section 13)

### **13. Post-Award Development and Implementation**

The application process is intended to capture direction, readiness, and approach. Detailed planning and coordination will occur during the award period, allowing institutions to build the structures required for implementation in a supported and staged manner.

During the post-award phase, institutions will be expected to further develop and document key components of the project, with guidance and coordination provided by WVHEPC throughout the process, including:

#### **Partnership Development and Structure**

- confirmation and strengthening of the Irish partner relationship
- refinement of roles and responsibilities across participating institutions
- development of coordination processes across academic, administrative, and student support units

#### **Program and Academic Planning**

- development of program structure, academic content, and delivery model (for implementation-level projects)
- alignment of academic expectations across institutions
- coordination with academic leadership and relevant units

#### **Academic Credit and Approval Processes**

- development of credit transfer and equivalency frameworks
- coordination with registrar and academic affairs offices
- advancement of required institutional approvals and agreements

#### **Student Access and Participation**

- refinement of recruitment strategies and student support approaches
- development of participation pathways across institutions
- alignment of program cost structures with student access goals

#### **Institutional Coordination and Capacity Development**

- engagement of relevant institutional offices (e.g., academic affairs, registrar, finance, student services, risk management)
- development of internal coordination structures to support program delivery
- continued assessment and addressing of institutional capacity gaps

#### **Budget Development and Financial Planning**

- refinement of project budgets using standardized categories (Section 7)
- alignment of expenditures with approved project scope and timeline
- coordination of budget management across partner institutions

## **Sustainability and Future Development**

- planning for continuation beyond the initial grant period
- identification of pathways for expanded collaboration (e.g., exchange, faculty collaboration, research, workforce-aligned initiatives)
- alignment of program model with long-term institutional priorities and structures

WVHEPC will provide guidance and coordination throughout the award period to support institutions in advancing these areas.

Additional requirements, including reporting expectations, budget management, and documentation, will be defined in the award agreement.

## **14. Timeline**

WVHEPC recognizes that institutional decision-making, program approval, and student recruitment operate within academic cycles. The timing of proposal review and award notification is designed to support institutions in planning for program development and anticipated 2027 delivery.

### **Anticipated Timeline**

RFP Release: May 2026

Proposal Deadline: Friday, August 14, 2026, at 4:00 PM EDT

Review Period: August–September 2026

Award Notification: Fall 2026

Initial Program Activity (Implementation-Level Partnerships): Beginning 2027, depending on institutional readiness and program model

Grant Activity Period Ends: December 31, 2027

### **Project Sequencing**

Proposals should include a realistic sequence of activities aligned with the selected funding category:

- **Implementation-level proposals** should be positioned to move toward near-term program development and delivery
- **Development-level proposals** should outline a structured progression of partnership development and capacity-building activities

As described in Section 13, detailed program design, institutional coordination, and implementation planning will be developed during the post-award phase.

## **15. Reporting Requirements**

Funded partnerships will be required to submit brief narrative and financial reports to document project progress and use of funds.

### **Mid-Project Report**

- Brief update on project progress, activities completed, and any emerging challenges
- Summary of expenditures by standardized budget category (Section 7)

### **Final Report**

- Summary of project outcomes and activities
- Description of partnership development and/or program implementation
- Final summary of expenditures by standardized budget category (Section 7)

Financial reporting must include a budget-to-actual comparison, showing how funds were used relative to the approved proposal. All financial reporting must align with the standardized budget categories used in both proposal budgets (Section 7) and reporting. In addition to formal reports, funded partnerships will be expected to participate in WVHEPC- and WVAboard-coordinated activities, including:

- periodic check-ins
- knowledge-sharing sessions

Reporting is intended to support accountability, continuous improvement, and shared learning while remaining manageable for participating institutions. Additional guidance on reporting format and submission timelines will be provided in the award agreement.

## **16. Grant Period and Use of Funds**

Grant awards are funded through FY2027 appropriations but may include an approved project period extending through December 31, 2027, in accordance with HEPC and applicable state requirements. All funds must be used for activities occurring within the approved grant period, unless otherwise specified in the award agreement. Funds may support:

- near-term program development and implementation
- partnership development and planning activities that support future implementation
- For development-level partnerships, allowable activities may include partnership coordination, site visits, academic alignment, and program design.

Additional guidance on expenditure timing and documentation requirements will be provided in the award agreement.

Unspent funds at the end of the grant period will be addressed in accordance with award terms and applicable state requirements.

## **17. Documentation and Recordkeeping**

Awarded institutions are responsible for maintaining financial and programmatic records in accordance with applicable state and institutional policies.

Documentation must support:

- all reported expenditures
- use of funds in accordance with the approved project scope and budget

Records must be retained for audit purposes in accordance with applicable policies. Additional documentation requirements will be specified in the award agreement.

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## **18. Grant Closeout**

At the conclusion of the grant period, the lead institution is responsible for submitting final programmatic and financial reports on behalf of the partnership. Closeout requirements include submission of final reports (see Section 15) and any additional financial documentation required under state guidelines. Specific procedures, timelines, and required forms will be provided in the award agreement.

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## **Final Notes**

WVHEPC recognizes that institutions across West Virginia are at different stages in their ability to support international partnerships. This initiative is designed not only to support near-term program development, but to build the institutional relationships, structures, and capacity needed to sustain this work over time. The initial funding cycle is intended to support both successful program implementation and the development of a broader statewide foundation for sustained international partnership.

This initiative reflects the vision and leadership of the West Virginia Legislature, including sponsors of House Bill 4087.

## **Proposal Submission**

Completed proposals should be submitted electronically in PDF format by the proposal deadline to:

Clark Egnor, Ed.D.  
Director, International Programs  
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission  
clark.egnor@wvhepc.edu