

California State Library

Career Online High School (COHS) Project

Information and Requirements

July 2021

What is COHS and why is it needed in California?

Career Online High School (COHS) is an educational program offered by Smart Horizons Career Online Education, which gives students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and credentialed career certificate at the same time. The goal is to bring non-traditional and/or adult learners back into the educational system and prepare them for jobs in growing sectors of the economy. Students graduate with the tools to take the next step in their careers or career education.

COHS is fully accredited by the AdvancED Accreditation Commission. This means that COHS is recognized nationally as a quality school system, delivering an accredited high school diploma. Established in 2011, COHS has a proven track record. Public libraries offering COHS in their communities have reported high retention rates.

The latest available data estimate that over 16% of California's population over 18 years of age has not attained a high school diploma. Among the 50 states, California shares last place with Texas in terms of percentage of adults with high school diplomas or equivalencies.

There are several differences between a GED equivalency and an accredited high school diploma. The most significant is the fact that some colleges, institutions, companies and organizations require a high school diploma and may not accept the GED. Research suggests that a high school diploma has far better economic outcomes than a GED. On average, those with high school diplomas end up earning an average of about \$1500 per month more than those with GEDs. See the related [Census blog post](#) for more information.

An additional plus for COHS is that students receive the benefit of earning a career certificate and completing additional job preparation and training, in addition to earning a high school diploma.

Why should my library apply to participate?

Public libraries are embracing new roles that allow them to be agents of transformative social engagement, actively working to better their communities. COHS is a service that libraries can offer which can make a huge difference in people's lives and the well-being of the community.

COHS is also feasible for libraries to implement, as it requires relatively few resources to manage once established.

What is the target population for this program?

The target population for this program is adults aged 19 and over. (For FY 2021-2022, the minimum age will be lowered to 18, in response to additional needs stemming from the pandemic.) These adults should reside within your library's jurisdiction and have a library card in good standing.

What will my library receive as part of this program?

Successful applicants will receive:

- Career Online High School scholarships (libraries will commit to giving out a specific number of scholarships and the State Library will fund at least half of them). **Please note that State Library support will increase during the period July to September 10, 2021.**
- Outreach materials and marketing support from Smart Horizons Career Online Education
- Intensive training and ongoing technical assistance

What will my library have to contribute as part of this program?

- Staff time and expertise, to manage the COHS program at your library
- A matching scholarship/student enrollment for each scholarship given to your library by the State Library (\$1095 per scholarship; libraries will generally be expected to purchase their matching scholarships within 6 months of starting the program). **Please note that during July-September 10, 2021, when a library joins the program and purchases one scholarship, the State Library will provide four additional scholarships. For libraries already participating in the program, during the period July-September 2021, the State Library will provide three additional scholarships for each scholarship a library purchases. See application links on the State Library website and on grants.ca.gov.**

Libraries should plan to award the first round of scholarships they commit to through this program within 12 months from when they begin their services.

Most of the staff time that your library will need to contribute will be at the beginning of the project, as you'll need to spend time being trained on the system, in developing your workflow and procedures, and in recruiting and interviewing candidates. Here's a general overview:

- Prospective students contact the library and receive an initial screening to determine that they meet some basic criteria (age 19 and over [age 18 and over for FY 2021-2022]; resident of the jurisdiction served by the library; having a library account in good standing). (Note: All coursework is available in English only).

- Candidates complete an online self-assessment and a 2-week prerequisite course, designed by COHS to determine if they will be successful.
- After completing the assessment and prerequisite course, candidates are interviewed by library staff, often from the library's literacy program. (As a seat is lost if a candidate drops out or doesn't earn a diploma within the 18 month timeframe, it's important for qualified staff to be part of the interview team in order to assess candidates' readiness and capacity to be successful in the time allowed.)
- Adult learners who pass the interview are then considered for a funded scholarship to attend Career Online High School.

Once enrolled, students are given access to the Career Online High School system, which can be used through any computer with an Internet connection. All coursework is web-based, and students can work from home as their schedules allow. Each student is paired with an online academic coach (provided by Smart Horizons Career Online Education as part of the COHS service), who provides the student with an individual career path, offers guidance, evaluates performance, and connects the student with the resources needed to master the courses.

COHS offers comprehensive, easy-to-use online tools for monitoring candidates entering the pre-assessment process, and for tracking the progress of enrolled students.

The State Library plans to offer an online toolkit for implementing the project (including sample workflows, procedures, documents, and "best practices"), as well as a fundraising toolkit. Our goal is to give you the tools and support you need to implement COHS as best fits your library and your community.

How will you evaluate applications?

Factors we'll consider in evaluating applicants: 1) local need; 2) geography (we want to test this program in a variety of libraries and geographies); 3) library/community support for matching scholarships; 4) adequate staff support.

Re: determining local need, for statistics by state, county, or local area, one source is the [U.S. Census American Community Survey](#).

What if I believe my library can't raise the funds to support matching scholarships?

The California State Library will consider a reduction in the matching requirement for your library on a case-by-case basis. Factors that will be considered in granting reductions include: library size and per capita funding; high unemployment in service area; low educational attainment (i.e., number of people in service area with less than a high school diploma or equivalency); etc. Your library must agree to fund at least one scholarship. You can request a reduction as part of the online application process.

How can my library apply?

Please visit the [California State Library's COHS web page](#) to apply. Application deadlines are March 10, June 10, September 10, and December 10 of each year.