

Apply to Go Beyond the “X’s and O’s”
Request for Proposals



- Interested in preparing your sport coaches to go beyond the X’s and O’s?
- Interested in re-imagining coach training and education in your state or region?
- See opportunities to strengthen or improve coaching practices, behaviors, and supports in your state or region?
- Envision a sport environment where coaches use sports to help youth prepare for life?

Then this opportunity is for you!

Our Why: The United States has seen alarming rates of social, emotional, and mental health challenges among children and youth in recent years. Moreover, many young people participating in school- and community-based sport programs are experiencing added pressures, including the need to “catch up” academically and demands to excel both on and off the court. Coaches are key to supporting student-athlete development and ensuring youth sport experiences are maximized for the most benefit. Coaches also can leverage sport to help young people learn skills that extend beyond the sport and into life. However, findings from the recent [National Coach Survey](#) demonstrate that most coaches feel unprepared to support athletes beyond the “X’s and O’s” yet desire more training in these areas.

Million Coach Challenge: The [Million Coaches Challenge](#) (MCC), funded by the Susan Crown Exchange, began in 2021 and aims to train 1 million coaches in positive youth development by 2025. As part of the MCC, ten partners, including LiFEsports at The Ohio State University (OSU) and the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA), are collaborating to build coaches' knowledge, skills, and competencies to go “beyond the X’s and O’s.” Ohio has taken an innovative approach to train coaches that is now formally recognized as Coach Beyond. Learn more [here](#).

Coach Beyond Model: Over the last three years, leaders from LiFEsports at OSU, the OHSAA, and 16 partner school districts have been building Ohio’s state-wide infrastructure to empower coaches and athletic directors (ADs) to go beyond the “X’s and O’s.” Using strategies such as an audit of required coach trainings, a state-wide needs assessment survey of coaches, and the co-development of trainings and educational sessions in partnership with coaches, this model has led to over 12,000 Ohio coaches becoming trained in positive youth development practices.

More specifically, Coach Beyond functions as an innovative learning community and capacity-building initiative focused on changing the landscape of coach training by raising awareness of the value of a trained coach; exploring the background and experiences of coaches; providing trainings in timely and urgent areas of youth development (e.g., mental health); disseminating resources for coaches, athletic directors, and other sport stakeholders; and advocating for policies to improve sport contexts.

Building on the success in Ohio, leaders from LiFEsports, in collaboration with the Susan Crown Exchange, are seeking applications from State High School Athletic Associations or state partners (i.e., school districts, universities/colleges, and regional leaders) who are “READY” to join us in our efforts to prepare coaches to go “beyond the X’s and O’s.” Our explicit goal is to help state and local leaders convene to build a state-wide infrastructure to develop and improve coach education and training in their state. The following request for proposals has been developed to solicit applications from interested state-level athletic associations/organizations and partners.

Selected partners will receive:

- Annual seed funding to support convenings, personnel, and other goals developed by your identified State Team (up to \$45,000 annually, totaling up to \$90,000 over two years)
- Capacity-building supports from the LiFEsports/Coach Beyond Team
- Free access to Coach Beyond trainings, resources, and outreach materials
- Guidance, planning, and monitoring to help execute and support state goals and initiatives
- Research and evaluation tools from the LiFEsports/Coach Beyond Team to study innovations and systems-level changes over time

Applicant Requirements

- Application must come from a State High School Athletic Association, one that is a member of the National Federation of High School Sports (NFHS)
- Applicant must demonstrate access to a state-wide listserv of coaches to market and facilitate sharing of coach trainings and educational materials
- Documented state-wide and regional connections to key sport stakeholders and organizations (i.e., schools, districts, coaching associations, regional boards, etc.)
- Ties to policymakers and governing bodies overseeing coach education and training in your state or region
- Capacity and commitment to tracking coach participation in trainings over the two-year project to share with SCE and MCC partners

Expectations

- Demonstrate commitment and buy-in for two years from the Executive Director.
- Develop a State Team comprised of at least 6 school district leaders (e.g., athletic directors, administrators, teachers, or coaches) to commit to quarterly convenings beginning in Feb 2023 to give guidance to your organization regarding implementation efforts and to determine vision/goals/objectives and training strategy. This team should be representative of the diversity within your state.
- Develop a training strategy/dissemination mechanism for coach education, training, or curriculum in your state (in-person and online modules).
- Connect with national leaders involved in sport and youth development priorities such as the Susan Crown Exchange, NFHS, Aspen Institute’s Project Play, and others, as requested.
- Actively recruit school- and community-based coaches in your state to participate in state and national surveys focused on coaching and youth sport.
- Commit to using the results of surveys and convenings to improve school- and community-based sport in your state.
- Advocate for infrastructure changes, funding, and policy changes to improve access to quality coach training that prepares coaches to go beyond the X’s and O’s.

Proposal Submission Deadline: 5:00 p.m. EST; January 22nd, 2024

Award Notification: February 2nd, 2024

Project Timeframe: February 2024 – December 2025 (23 months)

Proposal Instructions

State High School Associations and partners are invited to submit a proposal demonstrating readiness and buy-in. Proposals should include a Project Narrative of no more than 5 pages, excluding a cover page and attachments. Proposals should be single-spaced, use 12-point font, and one-inch margins. **Please email final proposals by 5 PM EST on January 8th to anderson-butcher.1@osu.edu and cc: bates.485@osu.edu.** Include the following sections:

- **Ability:** Willingness to commit resources and manpower to implement state-wide learning community.
 - Provide a brief overview of your organization and discuss the expertise of key leaders who will be engaged and/or are interested in the project.
 - What resources, including staff, time, and existing fiscal resources, will your organization contribute to the proposed project?
- **Values:** Organization's history and commitment to supporting coaches through training.
 - Why is this project important to your organization and partners?
 - In what ways have you prioritized coach education in your state and identified need/demand? (e.g., policy initiatives/policy changes, mandated trainings, designated personnel to oversee training/education, state-wide convenings, etc.)
 - Share names and qualifications of your proposed State Team, how you identified these partners (e.g., athletic directors, superintendents, coaches, sport clubs and association leaders, etc.), and how they are representative of your state or region.
- **Information:** Organization's functioning and availability to disseminate and communicate with coaches, athletic directors, school districts, and other youth sport organizations.
 - Describe current communication strategies used by your organization to reach coaches. Be sure to include e-newsletters, social media, communications through other coaching organizations, and all channels your state can leverage to create buy-in and raise awareness.
- **Timing/Circumstances:** Timing of the project to coincide with other program or organizational activities and readiness of state team partners.
 - How does the proposed project align with other current organizational activities or activities taking place in regions within your state? In other words, why is now a good time for this project?
- **Obligation:** Felt need to do something or to take action.
 - What need will this project address in your state? Why is training a priority for you and your partners? Provide data related to needs of youth and coaches if possible.
- **Resistance:** Expected challenges or barriers.
 - What are some of the challenges which might impact your reach? Describe anticipated barriers you might anticipate and how you will address these barriers?
- **Yield:** Expected or desired outcomes.

- What outputs and outcomes do you anticipate from your proposed project? How many coaches are possible to train/reach in your state or region? What do you envision your long-term impact (e.g., policy/legislation, training requirements, etc.)? What policy changes within your organization and/or at the state level may occur as a result of this funded project?