

NORTH CAROLINA COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Guidance & Planning Document

Request for Proposals Opens: August 19, 2026

Proposals Due: October 18, 2026

Tentative Board Approval: December 2026

Direct all inquiries concerning this grant to:

Dr. Kristi Day
Kristi.Day@dpi.nc.gov

A. Funding Details

Session Law 2026-41 provides the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) with \$5,300,000 in nonrecurring funds to implement the North Carolina Competency-Based Education Innovation Grant Program (Program). Of that \$5,300,000, \$3,300,000 will be allocated to eligible public school units through grant awards to 10 participating schools, each in the amount of \$330,000. Grant applicants will submit a proposed budget that is aligned with all budget requirements listed in the application. Applicants should be mindful of their ability to spend all refunds within the grant period. The Program begins with the 2026-2027 school year and continues until the conclusion of the 2029-2030 school year. Public school units will submit applications and complete any planning or organizational duties during the 2026-2027 school year, with implementation of competency-based education in participating schools beginning with the 2027-2028 school year. **All funding and services must be complete by June 30, 2030.**

Grant awards will be in the amount of \$330,000 to each participating school. Participating schools will use the sum of \$95,000 each school year to receive training on the implementation of competency-based education in the school. The remaining grant funds must be used for costs associated with the transition to competency-based education, including travel costs and competency-based education resources.

B. Purpose of the Initiative

The purpose of the Program is to provide funding and support to schools and districts to support the transition to competency-based education models that focus on mastery of learning rather than instructional time. The grant aims to promote innovative instructional practices, flexible assessment models, and systemic shifts to ensure all students progress based on demonstrated proficiency.

Program objectives are as follows:

- (1) Redesign learning pathways – Support schools and districts in developing personalized CBE models that allow students to progress at their own pace.
- (2) Assessment innovation – Utilize formative and performance-based assessments that measure student mastery of skills and knowledge, including the use of AI learning tools.
- (3) Educator capacity building – Provide common professional development for educators on instructional strategies and assessment practices aligned with transitioning to competency-based education.
- (4) Develop strategies for statewide scaling and best practices – Develop and share resources, implementation strategies, and lessons learned to expand competency-based education across North Carolina.

C. Evaluation and Reporting Requirements

Each participating school must submit a quarterly progress report to NCDPI detailing implementation of competency-based education in the school. NCDPI will establish the due dates, information that must be submitted, and a mechanism for the submission of the progress reports. Progress shall include available student learning outcome data, including evidence of progress toward content mastery.

NCDPI will submit a final report on the outcomes of the Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 1, 2030. The report must include the following:

- (1) A summary of student outcomes reported by participating schools based on their quarterly progress submissions.
- (2) Any challenges experienced by participating schools or NCDPI with implementation of the initiative.
- (3) Recommendations for scaling the initiative statewide.
- (4) Any other information NCDPI deems relevant.
- (5) Any information requested by the Committee.

D. Award Information

Estimated Number of Awards:

Upon approval by the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE), NCDPI will award, based on the quality of the applications and the number of applications received, grant funds to 10 schools.

Estimated Size of Awards:

Each participating school will receive a total grant award of \$330,000 for the life of the program. All funds must be spent by June 30, 2030.

- A. Participating schools must use the sum of \$95,000 each school year to receive training on the implementation of competency-based education in the school.
- B. The remaining grant funds must be used for costs associated with the transition to competency-based education, including travel costs and competency-based education resources.

Project Period:

This Program will begin in the 2026-2027 school year and conclude at the end of the 2029-2030 school year.

E. Eligibility and Review Process

This grant program is open to all public school units. When selecting schools to participate in the grant program, NCDPI will prioritize schools that show a strong commitment to implementing competency-based education and innovation in assessment, as required by Session Law 2026-41.

NCDPI has created criteria to determine which schools are most ready to transition to competency-based education. These criteria are set forth in the Application Scoring Rubrics below.

Per requirements set forth in Session Law 2026-41, the application will include the following:

- (1) A comprehensive plan outlining the school's vision for competency-based education.
- (2) A description of instructional and assessment shifts to be implemented.
- (3) A budget for use of grant funds and a sustainability plan to continue utilizing competency-based education after the conclusion of the grant period.
- (4) Commitments from public school units' leadership and stakeholders.

Key Dates and Review Process:

NCDPI Releases Applications	August 19, 2026
Grant Submissions Close	October 18, 2026
Level 1 Review	October 19-30, 2026
Level 2 Review	November 2-10, 2026
Level 3 Review	November 10-12, 2026
SBE Approval of Selected Grants	December 2026

Review Process Details

Applications for the Program must be submitted by 5 p.m. on October 18, 2026. Any applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed.

Every applicant must meet the eligibility criteria stipulated by applicable laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines established by the funding source. Only eligible applicants are encouraged to respond to the RFP, and it is crucial for applicants to clearly demonstrate their eligibility in accordance with the guidelines presented in the RFP. Proposals will be assessed in accordance with the procedures established in SBE Policy CNTR-001. Further information on CNTR-001 can be accessed [here](#).

All applications will be subject to evaluation based on the applicant's written responses addressing the criteria outlined in the rubrics included below. All submitted proposals will follow the review process delineated in the "Key Dates and Review Process" above. For more details about the review levels, please refer to SBE Policy [CNTR-001](#).

Below is a copy of the rubric used to review the applications. Public school units are not required to view or utilize the rubric, but it is highly recommended to ensure alignment and understanding of the review process.

Application Scoring Rubrics

This rubric below is designed to support the merit-based Level I evaluation required by SBE policy CNTR-001. Pursuant to SBE policy, NCDPI will appoint a review team of at least three impartial persons who are familiar with the subject area. Each review team is assigned a specific number of applications to evaluate. Review team members will individually review all proposals and rate each proposal on its merit within the categories listed in the rubric.

Level 1 Evaluation

Category	Points	Evidence of Quality	Score
Vision and Need	15	Clear, compelling vision grounded in local need and aligned to improved student experiences.	Score
Instructional Design	15	Strong alignment to standards; coherent competencies, learning progressions, personalization, and access for all students.	Score

Assessment Innovation	20	Credible plan for mastery-based assessment, quality assurance, accessibility, and communication.	Score
Leadership Commitment and Governance	15	Sustained leadership support, clear governance, and demonstrated implementation capacity.	Score
Implementation Readiness	15	Evidence of educator readiness, enabling conditions, realistic risk management, and support structures.	Score
Sustainability and Scale	10	Viable plan to sustain the work and share or expand effective practices.	Score
Stakeholder Engagement	5	Meaningful engagement of educators, students, families, and community partners.	Score
Budget Quality	5	Reasonable, allowable, and clearly connected to proposed activities and outcomes.	Score
TOTAL	100		

After all proposals are evaluated by individual team members, the entire review team will discuss each proposal as a group and come to a consensus on the final rating. Each proposal shall be included in one of the five quality bands listed below based on the proposal score.

Quality Band	Suggested Score Range	General Descriptor
Excellent	90–100	Exceptional proposal with strong evidence, feasibility, and likely impact.
Strong	80–89	Fully addresses criteria with credible evidence and a feasible plan.
Average	70–79	Generally sound proposal with some gaps or areas needing clarification.

Weak	60–69	Significant gaps in evidence, feasibility, alignment, or readiness.
Unacceptable	Below 60	Does not adequately meet required criteria or contains major deficiencies.

After consensus, each review team shall prepare comments on each proposal to be used in the approval/rejection letters sent to the applicants. The review team Chairperson will present findings to the Office Director.

Level II Evaluation

Applications recommended for funding by the review team will be reviewed by a smaller team of reviewers (which may include the Office Director and review team Chairperson). These reviewers will use the following criteria and will align applications with specific funding priorities.

- **SBE/DPI Priorities.** The applicant's attention to agency priorities will be taken into consideration.
 - **Geographic Area Needs.** Needs will be considered in the various geographical areas of the state. Attention will be given to appropriate statewide distribution of funds.
 - **Socioeconomic Needs.** The socioeconomic standing of each applicant will be taken into consideration.
 - **Number of Projects and Total Funding Received.** All projects and total amounts funded to each applicant during the current year and prior years will be compared with other applicants to ensure reasonable distribution of funds.
 - **Applicant's Prior Performance.** The applicant's prior and current performance in related areas will be examined to ensure a high probability of success.

Based on the above criteria, the reviewers will rate each proposal using the rating scale below.

Rating	Descriptor	General Standard
4	Excellent	Response is specific, coherent, evidence-based, highly feasible, and demonstrates strong readiness and statewide learning value.
3	Strong	Response addresses the criterion fully with credible evidence and a feasible plan.
2	Average	Response partially addresses the criterion but contains gaps in evidence, clarity, feasibility, or readiness.
1	Weak	Response provides minimal evidence or lacks a credible plan.
0	Unacceptable	Required information is missing or does not address the criterion.

Level III Evaluation

Using evaluation forms from the review teams, a combination of the Office Director, the appropriate Chief, the Deputy Superintendent, and/or Superintendent will jointly determine final selections of proposals to be presented to the SBE for approval.

F. How to Submit

The required application materials include the completed proposal form and supporting narratives.

Applicants must nominate a “CBE Lead” who will coordinate implementation and support the participating school at the district level, as applicable. The CBE Lead should complete the application in collaboration with the school’s principal, the district superintendent/charter executive director, and other applicable stakeholders (lead teachers, instructional coaches, etc.). This role is also responsible for ensuring that NCDPI receives quarterly reports, if selected for the grant.

To qualify for the grant, each component of the application must be completed and uploaded to the Google Form application as a PDF. To utilize the template in Google Docs, the application will prompt the applicant to make a copy. This will automatically create a copy of the Google Document in the applicant’s Google Drive.

Final submission of the application will be submitted via Google Form.

Links for Application Materials

[Application](#) (Complete, PDF, and upload to Google Form)

[Google Form](#)

North Carolina Competency-Based Education Innovation Grant Program

Application Planning Document

Purpose

This document is designed to assist PSUs with planning and submitting applications for the Competency-Based Education (CBE) Innovation Grant Program.

Application Period: August 19 – October 18, 2026

Submission Deadline: October 18, 2026; 5pm

Grant Contact: Dr. Kristi Day; Kristi.Day@dpi.nc.gov

Application Overview

Applicants should respond fully and concisely.

Program timeline. The grant program begins in the 26-27 school year and concludes at the end of the 29-30 fiscal year. The 26-27 school year will be for planning. The implementation of CBE will begin in the 27-28 school year.

Program intent. The grant program is intended to support schools that are ready to design, pilot, or expand competency-based education approaches that maintain rigorous academic expectations while increasing opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery through flexible, student-centered learning experiences.

Application components. The application includes questions related to vision, instructional design, assessment innovation, leadership commitment, stakeholder engagement, implementation readiness, budget, sustainability, and measurable outcomes.

Submission guidance. Applicants should ground responses in local data, current conditions, and realistic implementation plans. Responses should distinguish between existing practices and proposed work supported by the grant.

Section I. Applicant Information

Field	Response
Public School Unit	[Insert Text]
School Name	[Insert Text]
School Type	LEA school / charter school / regional school / laboratory school / other
School Address	[Insert Text]
Principal	[Insert Text]
Superintendent or Charter Leader	[Insert Text]
Primary Grant Contact	[Insert Text]
Email and Phone	[Insert Text]
School Grade Span	[Insert Text]

Field	Response
Student Enrollment	[Insert Text]
Number of Teachers	[Insert Text]
Is your school or district currently a part of the Golden Leaf Initiative? If yes, how so?	[Insert Text]

Section II. Vision for Competency-Based Education

Describe the local need, intended student experience, and strategic rationale for the proposed work.

1. Describe your school's vision for competency-based education.

Explain why your school wants to transition to or expand competency-based education and how this work aligns with school and PSU priorities.

[Insert Text]

2. Describe the student experience you intend to create through this grant.

Address student agency, personalized learning, flexible pacing, opportunities to demonstrate mastery, and access to rigorous learning for all students.

[Insert Text]

3. What student, school, or community needs will this project address?

Use relevant quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate the need for the project, including student outcome data and, where applicable, socioeconomic, demographic, geographic, and population data.

[Insert Text]

Section III. Instructional Design

Explain how the proposed model will maintain rigorous standards while changing how students learn and demonstrate mastery.

4. How will the North Carolina Standard Course of Study remain the foundation of instruction?

Describe how standards alignment, grade-level expectations, and instructional coherence will be protected.

[Insert Text]

5. How will instruction be personalized while maintaining high expectations for every student?

Address pacing, learner pathways, scaffolds, enrichment, and access for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and other student groups.

[Insert Text]

6. What changes to scheduling, staffing, grouping, or use of time will be necessary?

Describe both anticipated changes and any constraints that must be addressed.

[Insert Text]

Section IV. Assessment Innovation

Describe how assessment will be used to determine mastery, guide instruction, and support continuous improvement.

7. Describe the instructional and assessment shifts your school plans to implement.

Examples may include performance assessments, formative assessment, student portfolios, exhibitions, capstone work, or multiple demonstrations of mastery.

[Insert Text]

8. How will the school ensure assessments are valid, reliable, accessible, and aligned to academic standards?

Describe quality review, calibration, scoring practices, accommodations, and educator training.

[Insert Text]

9. How will assessment information be communicated to students and families?

Address progress reporting, grading or reporting practices, and how stakeholders will understand competency-based information.

[Insert Text]

Section V. Professional Learning and Educator Capacity

10. Describe the professional learning plan for teachers, school leaders, instructional coaches, and other staff.

Include proposed topics, sequence, delivery methods, coaching or collaborative planning structures, and follow-up support.

[Insert Text]

11. How will educators be supported in changing instructional and assessment practices over time?

Describe protected planning time, collaborative teams, coaching, peer learning, and feedback cycles.

[Insert Text]

Section VI. Leadership Commitment and Governance

12. Describe the leadership structure that will guide the project.

Identify key decision-makers, project leadership roles, meeting structures, and how progress will be monitored.

[Insert Text]

13. How will school and PSU leaders demonstrate sustained commitment to implementation?

Address policy alignment, resource allocation, communication, problem solving, and continuity during leadership transitions.

[Insert Text]

14. Describe a previous instructional or organizational change your school successfully implemented.

What made the effort successful, and how will those lessons inform this project?

[Insert Text]

Section VII. Stakeholder Engagement

15. How have teachers, students, families, the local board, and community partners been engaged in developing this proposal?

Describe engagement completed to date and summarize major themes from stakeholder input.

[Insert Text]

16. How will stakeholders continue to participate during planning, implementation, and evaluation?

Include communication methods, feedback opportunities, and decision-making roles.

[Insert Text]

Section VIII. Implementation Readiness

17. What current conditions make your school ready to implement competency-based education?

Address leadership stability, educator readiness, school culture, instructional systems, assessment capacity, technology, scheduling flexibility, and community support.

[Insert Text]

18. What barriers or risks could affect implementation, and how will they be addressed?

Identify the most significant operational, instructional, technical, cultural, or policy challenges.

[Insert Text]

19. What support does your school need from NCDPI or external partners to implement successfully?

Prioritize the support that would have the greatest impact.

[Insert Text]

Section IX. Implementation Timeline

20. Provide a phased implementation plan for the grant period.

Include planning, professional learning, stakeholder communication, pilot activities, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and scale-up milestones.

[Insert Text]

Phase	Major Activity	Owner	Start	End	Evidence/Deliverable
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]

Section X. Budget and Use of Funds

21. Provide a detailed budget and explain how each proposed expenditure supports the project's goals.

Categories include professional learning, planning time, substitutes, travel, technology, CBE resources, evaluation, etc.

[Insert Text]

Budget Category	Description/Justification	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total
Required: \$95,000 per year must be spent on training for CBE implementation	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]	[Insert Text]
			Total Requested	\$

Section XI. Sustainability and Scale

22. How will the school sustain competency-based education practices after grant funding ends?

Address staffing, recurring costs, policy or procedure changes, professional learning, leadership continuity, and integration into regular school operations.

[Insert Text]

23. How could the work be expanded within the PSU or shared with other North Carolina schools?

Describe practices, tools, evidence, or lessons that could be replicated or adapted elsewhere.

[Insert Text]

Section XII. Outcomes, Measures, and Evaluation

24. Identify two to three measurable implementation goals for the planning and early implementation period.

Examples may address educator readiness, completion of competencies, assessment development, or stakeholder engagement.

[Insert Text]

25. Identify two to three measurable student outcome goals for the implementation period.

Measures may include engagement, attendance, course completion, credit accumulation, academic growth, mastery, or other locally appropriate outcomes.

[Insert Text]

26. How will the school collect, analyze, and use data to evaluate implementation and improve the model?

Describe the school's local evaluation plan, including measures, data sources, responsible staff, evaluation methods, review cycles, and timelines for completing interim and final evaluations.

[Insert Text]

27. Describe the anticipated benefits of the project for students and educators.

Identify how this initiative will improve student learning experiences and educator practice.

[Insert Text]

Section XIII. Reflection

28. What excites your school most about this opportunity?

[Insert Text]

29. What is the most significant challenge you expect to face?

[Insert Text]

30. What would success look like at the end of Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3?

[Insert Text]

Section XIV. Readiness Self-Assessment

Rate the school's current readiness using the scale below and provide brief evidence for each rating.

Rating scale: 1 = Beginning | 2 = Developing | 3 = Ready to Implement | 4 = Established/Sustaining

Readiness Area	Rating	Evidence/Rationale	Priority for Support
Leadership commitment	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low
Teacher readiness and buy-in	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low
Standards-aligned curriculum and instruction	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low
Assessment literacy and performance assessment capacity	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low
Student-centered culture and learner agency	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low
Technology and data infrastructure	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low
Scheduling and operational flexibility	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low
Family and community support	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low

Readiness Area	Rating	Evidence/Rationale	Priority for Support
Continuous improvement processes	1 2 3 4	[Insert Text]	High / Med / Low

Section XV. Required Commitments and Assurances

- ☐ The applicant will maintain alignment with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and all applicable state and federal requirements.
- ☐ The applicant will participate in required NCDPI professional learning, technical assistance, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation activities.
- ☐ The applicant will collect and submit implementation and outcome data requested by NCDPI.
- ☐ The applicant will use grant funds only for approved purposes and maintain appropriate fiscal records.
- ☐ The applicant will engage educators, students, families, and other stakeholders throughout implementation.
- ☐ The applicant will share lessons learned, tools, and promising practices with NCDPI and other participating schools.
- ☐ The applicant understands that, if selected, the school will receive a grant award of \$330,000 and will comply with all statutory requirements governing the use of these funds, including the required allocation of \$95,000 each applicable school year for CBE implementation training.
- ☐ The applicant agrees to participate in required professional development and implementation support provided through NCDPI and the State-selected CBE vendor.
- ☐ The applicant agrees to participate in the statewide CBE Network, professional learning communities, technical assistance, and other collaborative learning opportunities established by NCDPI.
- ☐ The applicant agrees to implement standards-aligned proficiency scales and related CBE resources developed through the statewide initiative.
- ☐ The applicant agrees to submit quarterly progress reports to NCDPI, including available student learning outcome data and evidence of progress toward content mastery.
- ☐ The Superintendent/Charter Leader is aware of and supports this grant application.
- ☐ The Chief Finance Officer is aware of and supports this grant application.