



NC ACCESS Subgrant Application Process – Guidance Document

Disclaimer: This document is for guidance purposes only and does not supersede any statute, rule, or policy. Please contact the NC ACCESS Program within the Office of Charter Schools at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction with specific questions.

Overview of the NC ACCESS Subgrant Program

In 2018, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) was awarded a Public Charter Schools Program (CSP) grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) of approximately \$26,600,000. The CSP grant will be used to implement the North Carolina Advancing Charter Collaboration and Excellence for Student Success (NC ACCESS) Program to:

1. Increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students¹ attending high-quality charter schools and expand the number of high-quality charter schools available to educationally disadvantaged students;
2. Develop a cohort of one hundred (100) charter school leaders who can develop and demonstrate best practices in serving educationally disadvantaged students²; and
3. Broadly disseminate best practices in serving educationally disadvantaged students and foster collaboration in the charter school community and between charter schools and traditional public schools.

The NC ACCESS program has allocated the majority of the CSP funds to advance Priority 1 listed above through school-level subgrants, though subgrant recipients must also demonstrate a desire to share best practices with both charter schools and traditional public schools. For each of the five (5) years of the federal CSP award³, the NC ACCESS Program will conduct a competitive subgrant application process and award subgrants to North Carolina charter schools that propose a comprehensive plan to increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students attending high-quality charter schools and/or expand the number of high-quality charter schools available to educationally disadvantaged students.

Application Process

The subgrant application process consists of four (4) parts:

1. **Letter of Intent:** Any school seeking to apply for an NC ACCESS subgrant must submit a letter of intent to NCACCESS@dpi.nc.gov **no later than 5:00 p.m. (EST) on January 15th** of the subgrant cycle in which the applicant wishes to apply. If the letter of intent is not submitted on time, the

¹ Educationally disadvantaged students are defined as students who are economically disadvantaged, English learners, students with disabilities, homeless or unaccompanied youth, migrant students, and immigrant students.

² Additional requirements for subgrantees include the participation in the year-long NC ACCESS Fellowship. For a complete list of requirements, see the [Requirements of Subgrantees](#) section of this document.

³ Additional funding after year two (2) is contingent upon accurate reporting, monitoring, and appropriation of funds from the USDOE.

applicant will not be eligible to apply for a subgrant in that cycle and will have to wait until the following year. The letter of intent should be no longer than two (2) pages and must include:

- a. the specific subgrant category under which the applicant plans to apply;
- b. a description of the applicant's desire and commitment to serve a greater number of educationally disadvantaged students; and
- c. a brief summary of the strategies the applicant plans to implement to fulfill their commitment to serve a greater number of educationally disadvantaged students.

The NC ACCESS Program team will review all letters of intent and determine schools' eligibility to submit a subgrant application.

2. **Subgrant Application:** Any school deemed eligible to submit an NC ACCESS subgrant application must submit a full and complete application in [Epicenter](#)⁴ **no later than 5:00 p.m. (EST) on March 1st** of the subgrant cycle in which the applicant wishes to apply. A full and complete application shall contain the following components⁵:
 - a. Applicant Contact Information
 - b. Signed Assurances
 - c. Application Narrative (no more than twenty (20) pages)
 - i. Enrollment Projections
 - ii. Education Plan
 - iii. Operations Plan
 - iv. If applicable, a school closure plan (no more than five (5) additional pages)
 - d. Budget, Budget Narrative, and Logic Model
 - i. Budget, using NC ACCESS Budget template
 - ii. Budget Narrative (no more than five (5) pages)
 - iii. Logic Model, using NC ACCESS Logic Model template
 - e. Competitive Preference Standards (optional)
 - f. Priority Consideration Status (optional)
 - g. Certification
 - h. Subgrant Application Appendices
3. **Application Review and Evaluation:** Between March – May, a team of NC ACCESS Program team members and external evaluators will review and evaluate each subgrant application.
4. **Recommendation and Approval:** Following the application review and evaluation, award approval recommendations will be made to the CSAB. The CSAB will take all recommendations, application reviews, and due diligence into account and make a recommendation for the approval of subgrants to the State Board of Education (State Board). The State Board will determine the final approval of all subgrant awards at their regularly scheduled June meeting.⁶

Guidance for Sponsors Submitting Applications

Technical Support and Assistance. The NC ACCESS team will host in-person and virtual trainings and information sessions throughout November – March to assist interested applicants in developing their applications. Please visit the [NC ACCESS page](#) of the Office of Charter Schools website for scheduling information.

⁴ Eligible applicants will be provided with access to the application portal in Epicenter.

⁵ Review the [NC ACCESS Program Subgrant Application](#) for specifics.

⁶ Unless otherwise scheduled by the State Board of Education.

Eligibility Requirements. The eligibility criteria for each of the four (4) subgrant categories is outlined below. All prospective applicants must meet the federal definition of a “charter school” and/or “developer” as outlined in the [NC ACCESS Program Subgrant Application](#).

- **Category: Planning and Implementation.** Planning and Implementation subgrants will be available to charter operators entering their planning year. Since these schools will not have school accountability data to support their potential for success, applicants must demonstrate a strong commitment to and comprehensive plan for recruiting and effectively serving educationally disadvantaged students, as well as a desire to share best practices with both charter schools and traditional public schools. The Planning and Implementation subgrant allows both planning and implementation activities but **planning activities may not last more than eighteen (18) months**. A charter school or “developer” that has received a CSP grant directly from the USDOE through a separate competition is **ineligible** to receive a Planning and Implementation subgrant through the NC ACCESS Program.
- **Category: Implementation Only.** Implementation Only subgrants will be available to charter operators in years one (1) to three (3) of operation. Since these schools will have limited data to support their potential for success, applicants must demonstrate a strong commitment to and comprehensive plan for recruiting and effectively serving educationally disadvantaged students, as well as a desire to share best practices with both charter schools and traditional public schools. If state accountability data is available for a school applying for an Implementation Only subgrant, school accountability data will be evaluated. Eligible applicants must:
 - a. have maintained at least a “B” School Performance Grade (SPG), as determined by the NCDPI, for all years of data available;
 - b. have met or exceeded academic growth, as determined by EVAAS, for all years of data available; and
 - c. when applicable, have a graduation rate higher than the state average.Additionally, eligible applicants must not have any unresolved academic, financial, or operational issues. A charter school or “developer” that has received a CSP grant directly from the USDOE through a separate competition is **ineligible** to receive an Implementation Only subgrant through the NC ACCESS Program.
- **Category: Expansion.** Expansion subgrants will be available to high quality charter schools interested in expanding access for educationally disadvantaged students through the addition of grade levels and/or a substantial increase in student enrollment. In order to maintain a commitment to quality, expansion applicants must meet one (1) of the following three (3) eligibility criteria:
 - 1. “A/B” school and “Met/Exceed” growth for two (2) of the past three (3) years. Eligible schools must:
 - a. have maintained at least a “B” SPG, as determined by the NCDPI, for at least two (2) out of the three (3) years prior to their application cycle;
 - b. have met or exceeded academic growth, as determined by EVAAS, for at least two (2) out of the three (3) years prior to their application cycle; and
 - c. when applicable, have a graduation rate higher than the state average.
 - 2. “A/B” school for the past three (3) consecutive years. Eligible schools must:
 - a. have maintained at least a “B” SPG, as determined by the NCDPI, for all three (3) years prior to their application cycle; and
 - b. when applicable, have a graduation rate higher than the state average.

3. “C” school and “Met/Exceed” growth for the past three (3) consecutive years. Eligible schools must:
 - a. have maintained at least a “C” SPG, as determined by the NCDPI, for all three (3) years prior to their application cycle;
 - b. have met or exceeded academic growth, as determined by EVAAS, for all three (3) years prior to their application cycle; and
 - c. when applicable, have a graduation rate higher than the state average.

Additionally, eligible applicants must not have any unresolved academic, financial, or operational issues. If an applicant has received a previous subgrant under this funding or through a CSP grant directly from the USDOE through a separate competition, the school must provide at least five (5) years of improved educational results and expansion subgrant funds cannot not be used for the same activities as those that were funded under the previous subgrant.

- **Category: Replication.** Replication subgrants will be available to high quality charter schools that exhibit academic, financial and operational success and a desire to replicate their successful school model to serve a greater number of educationally disadvantaged students. In order to maintain a commitment to quality, replication applicants must meet one (1) of the following three (3) eligibility criteria:

1. “A/B” school and “Met/Exceed” growth for two (2) of the past three (3) years. Eligible schools must:
 - d. have maintained at least a “B” SPG, as determined by the NCDPI, for at least two (2) out of the three (3) years prior to their application cycle;
 - e. have met or exceeded academic growth, as determined by EVAAS, for at least two (2) out of the three (3) years prior to their application cycle; and
 - f. when applicable, have a graduation rate higher than the state average.
2. “A/B” school for the past three (3) consecutive years. Eligible schools must:
 - c. have maintained at least a “B” SPG, as determined by the NCDPI, for all three (3) years prior to their application cycle; and
 - d. when applicable, have a graduation rate higher than the state average.
3. “C” school and “Met/Exceed” growth for the past three (3) consecutive years. Eligible schools must:
 - a. have maintained at least a “C” SPG, as determined by the NCDPI, for all three (3) years prior to their application cycle;
 - b. have met or exceeded academic growth, as determined by EVAAS, for all three (3) years prior to their application cycle; and
 - c. when applicable, have a graduation rate higher than the state average.

Additionally, eligible applicants must not have any unresolved academic, financial, or operational issues.

Standard of Review. In accordance with Priority 1 of the NC ACCESS Program, all subgrant applications are evaluated and awarded based on an applicant’s plan and ability to increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students attending high-quality charter schools and expand the number of high-quality charter schools available to educationally disadvantaged students. To achieve this priority, applicants will be required to propose a plan that will:

1. support a significant increase in the enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students;
2. remove as many barriers as possible for educationally disadvantaged students; and
3. support educationally disadvantaged students in all aspects of their education.

All complete applications will be evaluated using the [NC ACCESS Program Subgrant Application Rubric](#). Applications must meet all general standards and score at least eighty out of a possible one hundred (80/100) points on the technical standards to be considered eligible for a subgrant award.

Submitting an Application. All sponsors submitting subgrant applications must do so in accordance with all deadlines outlined in the NC ACCESS Program Subgrant Application. All materials required for application including contact information, assurances, application narratives, budgets, budget narratives, logic models, and appendices must be submitted online via [Epicercenter](#). All written application materials, including the application, narratives, budget, logic model, and appendices, must be submitted as one (1) full PDF document. Additionally, a completed copy of the proposed budget using the [template](#) provided should be submitted separately in Excel format.

All submitted applications will undergo a completeness check to ensure all required submissions are included in the subgrant application. Incomplete applications will not be accepted or reviewed. Completed applications will be evaluated by members of the NC ACCESS team and external evaluators. Applicants will not be interviewed by the evaluation team. Only the full application and any necessary due diligence will be evaluated as part of the subgrant approval process.

Application Narrative. The application narrative of the subgrant application is divided into three (3) subsections: Enrollment Projections, Education Plan, and Operations Plan. Additional evidence can be provided in the appendices, if needed.

1. **Enrollment Projections.** This section requires applicants to provide all projected enrollment estimates for the next five (5) years and explain the rationale supporting the enrollment projections. Applicants should use all available data (eg. current enrollment data, waitlist data, local LEA demographic data, community demographic data, etc.) to support the enrollment projections. Additionally, this section requires applicants to outline how a weighted lottery will support the enrollment projections. Additional weighted lottery guidance can be found beginning on [page 6](#) of this document.
2. **Education Plan.** This section requires applicants to describe the education plan for the school, including how it is specifically tailored to support educationally disadvantaged students. This section contains six (6) questions covering topics like SMART goals, academic program and instructional/support strategies, discipline and school climate, and the school calendar.
3. **Operations Plan.** This section requires applicants to describe the operations plan for the school as it relates to specific goals of the NC ACCEESS Program, including how it is specifically tailored to support educationally disadvantaged students. This section contains seven (7) questions covering topics like staffing and professional development, marketing and recruitment, transportation, school lunch, contracted services, and parent/community engagement.

NOTE: All NC ACCESS Program subgrantees will be required to create and maintain a Parent/Community Advisory Council focused on increasing and improving services for educationally disadvantaged populations and soliciting feedback regarding potential improvements on the operational aspects of charter schools. Minutes from these meetings will be provided to NC ACCESS Program staff on an annual basis, and suggestions and feedback from minutes will be included in the NC ACCESS Program Annual Report. Membership on this advisory council can be no fewer than six (6) members, must reflect the diversity of the local area and parents of students in the school cannot represent over fifty percent (50%)

of the advisory council's membership. NC ACCESS Program schools will have autonomy to develop the mechanisms through which parent/community members are recruited and appointed or elected to the advisory council. Advisory councils must meet at least three (3) times annually and have met at least once within the first six (6) months after receiving the notification of a subgrant award.

Additionally, applicants applying for Planning and Implementation, Implementation Only, and Replication subgrants must provide a school closure plan utilizing the following best practices established by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and scholarship on charter school closure:

- Form a Student Transition Committee (STC) – This committee will consist of one (1) NC ACCESS program staff member (in an advisory capacity), at least two (2) members of the school's administrative team, at least three (3) parents from the school, at least two (2) members of the charter school's board, and if possible, one to two (1-2) members of the LEA district student reassignment office in which the school is geographically located. The NC ACCESS staff member can help facilitate the outreach and collaboration with the LEA. This committee will plan activities related to family and student support during the closure process. The committee will establish a Student Transition Plan (discussed below) that focuses on student reassignment into high-quality schools as quickly as possible following a school closure. The STC will work with quality local charter and district schools to establish enrollment preferences for displaced students.
- Develop a Student Transition Plan (STP) – The Transition Plan must include a plan to provide written notices to parents, schedule multiple informational meetings at varied times so that all parents have an opportunity to attend, provide individualized assistance to parents, and collaborate with the broader educational community in the event of a school closure. The STC must also work diligently to identify and address any barriers to providing transitional support to parents and students (i.e. providing written materials in appropriate home languages and offering meetings at different times of day). Clear deadlines for key reassignment activities must be established in the STP.

Weighted Lotteries. As a tool to support the enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students in high-quality charter schools, subgrantees must develop and implement a weighted lottery. In addition to the information regarding weighted lotteries outlined in [NC General Statute](#), the following parameters should be considered for NC ACCESS Program subgrantees. Please email NCACCESS@dpi.nc.gov for additional weighted lottery guidance.

The subgrant application will require prospective applicants to outline the specific parameters of how the school plans to implement a weighted lottery to support the enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students. There is no prescribed method that the NC ACCESS Program requires, however, weighted lotteries are typically conducted in one (1) of the following ways:

1. **Weighting a student's individual chances in the general lottery.** In this approach, a student who opts into a weighted lottery is given a statistically higher chance of being selected through a random, general lottery. For example, Student A, who qualifies for the weighted lottery, is weighted two times (2x) in a general lottery compared to Student B who does not qualify. An easy way to think about this is through a lottery that randomly pulls ping pong balls for available seats. Student A would receive two (2) ping pong balls placed in the lottery, while Student B would only

receive one (1). Therefore, Student A has a higher likelihood of being selected based on their additional weight.

2. **Conducting the weighted lottery prior to the general lottery.** In this scenario, students who qualify for the weighted lottery are randomly chosen until the specified target percentage is filled. Then, the remaining students who qualify for the weighted lottery, but were not selected, are placed into the general lottery pool, and the remaining seats are filled through a general lottery. For example, a school setting a twenty percent (20%) weighted lottery threshold would draw students qualifying for the weighted lottery first to fill that designated twenty percent (20%). Any student qualifying for the weighted lottery that is not selected in the initial drawing is then placed into the general lottery, and the school conducts a general lottery of all remaining students to fill the remaining eighty percent (80%) of seats.

In order to advance the NC ACCESS Program's explicitly stated goal of increasing the educationally disadvantaged student population in high-quality charter schools, subgrantees have two (2) options for the subgroups of students that are eligible to be considered for a weighted lottery:

Option 1 – Economically Disadvantaged: This option allows subgrantees to provide students who are economically disadvantaged with additional weight in the lottery. In this option, only students who meet the criteria of being economically disadvantaged are eligible for the weighted lottery. Socioeconomic status, and economic disadvantage specifically, is often the closest statistical indicator of educational disadvantage. Schools should still be mindful of the marketing and recruitment strategies they employ to ensure that just weighting for economic disadvantage does not exclude other categories of educational disadvantage.

Option 2 – Educationally Disadvantaged: This option allows subgrantees to provide students who are educationally disadvantaged with additional weight in the lottery. In this option, students who meet any criteria of the federal definition of "educationally disadvantaged" are eligible for the weighted lottery. In this option, no singular qualifying subgroup may be weighted differently than another. The subgroups of students defined as educationally disadvantaged are:

- Students who are economically disadvantaged;
- English learners;
- Students with disabilities;
- Homeless or unaccompanied youth;
- Immigrant students; and
- Migrant students.

Subgrant Budget Planning and Allowable Use of Funds. Sponsors submitting an application for NC ACCESS subgrant funding must submit a complete and realistic budget for the duration of the subgrant. Applicants must complete a proposed budget using the [template](#) provided as part of the subgrant application.

Charter schools may use CSP subgrant funds only for post-award planning and design of the educational program, and initial implementation of a charter school. [Uniform Guidance Title 2 - Subtitle A - Chapter II - Part 200 Subpart E](#) establishes principles for determining allowable costs for Federal grants to non-profit entities. As a general matter, costs must be reasonable, necessary, and allocable to meet the objectives of the grant.

Costs met through this grant must meet general criteria applicable to all federal grants. [Section 4303 \(h\) of the ESSA](#) defines the types of activities that may be paid for through this grant. Please also review the [nonregulatory guidance](#), issued by the USDOE in January 2014, in its entirety.

Per the federal regulations included in [Section 4303\(h\) of the ESSA](#), an eligible applicant may use subgrant funds to support activities related to opening and preparing for the operation of a new charter school which can include:

1. Preparing teachers, school leaders, and specialized instructional support personnel, including through paying the costs associated with:
 - a. providing professional development; and
 - b. hiring and compensating, during the eligible applicant's planning period⁷, one or more of the following:
 - i. Teachers.
 - ii. School leaders.
 - iii. Specialized instructional support personnel.
2. Acquiring necessary supplies, training, equipment (including technology), and educational materials (including developing and acquiring instructional materials).
3. Carrying out necessary renovations to ensure that a new school building complies with applicable statutes and regulations, and minor facilities repairs (excluding construction).
4. Providing one-time, startup costs associated with providing transportation to students to and from the charter school.
5. Carrying out community engagement activities, which may include paying the cost of student and staff recruitment.
6. Providing for other appropriate, non-sustained costs related to activities in opening and preparing for the operation of charter schools.

Additionally, applicants should include the following provisions in the proposed budget:

1. Set aside three thousand dollars (\$3,000) in "Support – Travel, Conferences, and Meetings" in year one (1) to cover travel costs associated with the NC ACCESS Fellowship;
2. No more than fifty percent (50%) of the total subgrant funding may be expended by the end of year one (1);
3. No more than seventy-five percent (75%) of the total subgrant funding may be expended by the end of year two (2); and
4. The entire subgrant cannot be expended in less than three (3) years.

Applicants must ensure that all costs included in the proposed budget are allowable, reasonable, and necessary considering the goals and objectives of the grant application. Any costs determined to be unallowable, unreasonable, or unnecessary will be removed from the final budget and a revised budget will be required.

Budgets under this grant should be developed within the parameters created by applicable federal statutes and regulatory and nonregulatory guidance. Applicants are expected to demonstrate how the proposed use of funds complies with the applicable statutory and regulatory requirements and to

⁷ Hiring and compensating personnel is restricted to activities performed during the planning period.

articulate how the proposed use of grant funds aligns with the mission and objectives of the charter school.

Applicants may find it helpful to use the following procedure in developing proposed budgets:

1. Review the allowable costs outlined in [Appendix A](#) of this document.
2. Review the Charter Schools Program [nonregulatory guidance](#) issued January 2014.
3. Review [Uniform Guidance Title 2 - Subtitle A - Chapter II - Part 200 Subpart E](#) for allowability of specific items generally. Please note that this document applies to all federal grants to non-profit organizations. It describes some expenses as allowable or unallowable generally, but it is not a list of expenses that are specifically allowable or unallowable under this grant. This document also governs the record keeping requirements for grantees.

Approval and Awarding of Subgrants

The State Board will grant final approval and award subgrants to selected schools. The State Board will render a decision at a regularly scheduled or special-called meeting. The State Board will consider the full record of review and the recommendation by the CSAB, but the State Board is not bound by the recommendation. The decision of the State Board is not subject to appeal.

Once subgrants are approved and awarded, the NC ACCESS team will contact each school to discuss next steps.

Requirements of Subgrantees

Approved subgrantees are required to participate in all aspects of the NC ACCESS Program. Failure to fully participate may result in the termination of subgrant funds.

Monitoring and Reporting. Subgrantees are required to participate in all monitoring and reporting activities outlined by the NC ACCESS Program in accordance with federal rules, regulations, and guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Annual, on-site monitoring;
- Desktop monitoring;
- Monthly reimbursement requests;
- State and federal financial reporting and evaluation; and
- Annual progress reports toward goals.

NC ACCESS Fellowship. The NC ACCESS Fellowship is a year-long, immersive professional development program for leaders of schools awarded subgrants designed to provide subgrantees with the support and technical assistance they need in order to effectively develop, expand, and replicate their schools. The Fellowship is designed to support leaders from each NC ACCESS subgrantee school in the first year of the subgrant. Subgrantees are required to have two (2) members of the leadership team participate in all aspects of the program. The school leader is required to attend, and it is recommended that the second participant be another instructional leader in the school.⁸

⁸ The school leader, however identified or titled, is the lead administrator of the school. If the second participant is proposed to be someone other than another instructional leader, the subgrantee must notify the NC ACCESS team and the second participant must be approved by the NC ACCESS team.

The NC ACCESS Program is committed to increasing access for educationally disadvantaged students in high-quality charter schools in the State of North Carolina. As a result of this commitment, the NC ACCESS Program has developed the Fellowship for subgrantee charter school leaders to learn, develop, and demonstrate best practices in serving educationally disadvantaged students and fostering collaboration within the charter school community and between charter and traditional public schools. The sessions will include opportunities to build supportive and collaborative networks, share best practices, and engage in critical conversations with state and national experts who have experience in leadership best practices, developing, expanding, and replicating successful high-quality schools, and/or working with educationally disadvantaged populations.

Fellows will participate in both in-person and virtual sessions focused on developing leadership capacity and equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge to create and lead a learning environment that promotes learning for all students, especially those who are educationally disadvantaged. Additionally, training will be provided on the operational, fiscal, and academic components for successful school implementation, expansion, and replication. NC ACCESS Fellows will be asked to utilize the information provided during the institute to develop a structured action plan for the implementation of their subgrant.

In an effort to provide resources and technical assistance to potential NC ACCESS Program applicants and school leaders in NC and beyond, the NC ACCESS Program will develop a dedicated website that will serve as a repository for the School Leader Portfolios. New resources and portfolios will be added to the website each year, which will result in a robust online portal through which aspiring and current school leaders can find resources to help develop the quality of their school's programs and services, especially as it relates to serving educationally disadvantaged students.

The following are major components of the program that require subgrantee participation:⁹

- Twelve (12) Professional Learning Community meetings (both in-person and virtual);
- Completion of a portfolio of strategies, best practices, and lessons learned that will be posted publicly;
- Present at a state or national conference;
- Host a collaborative event at the subgrantee's school; and
- Provide mentorship and development support to future fellows.

⁹ Full details of the NC ACCESS program will be provided to approved subgrantees during program orientation.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How long does the application and approval process take?

The time spent writing an application will vary by applicant, but the NC ACCESS team will provide technical assistance leading up to the application deadline on March 1st.

The approval process from submission of the application to final approval of subgrant awards takes about three (3) months. Applications are due March 1st and the State Board will award subgrants in June. (*Note: Letters of Intent are due by January 15th.)

2. How do I know if my school is eligible for a subgrant?

Subgrant eligibility requirements are outlined in the [Eligibility Requirements](#) section of this document and in the [NC ACCESS Program Subgrant Application](#).

3. What is the difference between a Planning and Implementation subgrant and an Implementation Only subgrant?

Planning and Implementation subgrants are awarded to schools that have been approved for operation by the State Board and are going into their planning year. Planning activities may not last more than eighteen (18) months.

Implementation Only subgrants are awarded to currently operating schools that have been open for one to three (1-3) years.

4. What is the difference between a Replication subgrant and an Expansion subgrant?

Replication subgrants are awarded to schools that have been approved by the State Board to replicate a high-quality school model under a new charter.

Expansion subgrants are awarded to high-quality schools planning to expand enrollment or grade levels under the existing charter.

5. Which years of accountability data are used to determine eligibility?

The most current three (3) years of publicly available accountability data as published by the NCDPI. If less than three (3) years of data are available, the most recent available data will be used.

6. Is the weighted lottery a requirement?

Yes. Schools must implement a weighted lottery as a tool to support a significant increase in the enrollment of educationally disadvantaged students. Additional guidance on the weighted lottery can be found on [page 6](#) of this document.

7. Do I need to have been approved for a weighted lottery by CSAB and State Board prior to applying?

An approved weighted lottery is not a requirement prior to applying. Applicants are allowed to concurrently apply for a subgrant while they are in the process of obtaining approval from the State Board to implement a weighted lottery.

8. Do I have to provide transportation and lunch to receive a subgrant?

The application states that applicants must provide a plan for transportation and a comprehensive school lunch program. For example, that may or may not mean that the school itself is providing busing but has a plan in place to eliminate transportation as a barrier for educationally disadvantaged students. However, this is a competitive subgrant, so be mindful of how effectively your transportation and lunch plans support an educationally disadvantaged population. Please note, the school lunch plan is not required to be the National School Lunch Program but, if not, must still be a comparable, comprehensive lunch program.

9. My school received a Charter Schools Program Developer Grant for the “opening of new charter schools and for the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools” from the US Department of Education. Am I eligible to apply for an NC ACCESS subgrant?

No. Schools receiving Non-State Educational Agency grant awards from the USD OE’s Charter Schools Program are not eligible for an NC ACCESS subgrant.

10. How many subgrants are awarded each year?

The number of subgrants awarded each year and within each category will depend on the strength of the applications submitted. Generally, between eight to twelve (8-12) subgrants will be awarded in each subgrant cycle. Fifty (50) subgrants will be awarded over the course of five (5) years.

11. How much funding is available to individual subgrantees?

Applicants applying for Planning and Implementation or Implementation Only subgrants may request up to eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000). Applicants applying for Expansion or Replication subgrants may request up to one million two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$1,250,000).

12. What if the total subgrant requests exceed available subgrant funding in a given year?

The strength of the application will determine which schools are awarded subgrants. The application does allow schools to identify competitive preferences to strengthen their chance of receiving a subgrant.

13. My school applied but was not awarded a subgrant in a previous application cycle. Can we apply again?

Yes. Schools who applied but were not awarded a subgrant in a previous cycle are eligible to apply again, provided that the school still meets the eligibility criteria outlined in the [Eligibility Requirements](#) section of this document and in the [NC ACCESS Program Subgrant Application](#).

14. I have applied for a charter school, but the CSAB has not yet made a determination on my application. Can I apply?

Yes. Charter school applicants currently in the state approval process are eligible to apply for a subgrant. The awarding of a subgrant is contingent on first being approved by the CSAB and State Board to operate a public charter school in North Carolina.

15. If I am applying for a charter school through the acceleration track, am I eligible for a Planning and Implementation subgrant?

No. Applicants currently going through the state approval process to open a charter school through the acceleration track are only eligible for an Implementation Only subgrant because the school's planning period will have expired by the time funds are available.

16. Who is my main contact during the application process?

Please contact the NC ACCESS team at NCACCESS@dpi.nc.gov or (919) 807-3981.

Appendix A

NC ACCESS Subgrant Allowable Costs Guidance

This appendix is intended to assist NC ACCESS subgrant applicants with planning and preparing budgets and budget amendments for CSP funds.

How to use this guide:

- Allowable costs are listed in the table on pages 14-18 below. Each budget category must be designated for use in the instructional program or support services program in the applicant's proposed budget.
- Some costs are never allowable within the CSP grant program. A list of unallowable costs is on page 19 of this guide.
- Whether a cost is allowable in the Planning or Implementation phase is indicated in the table below. "Yes" indicates a cost is allowable during the period; "No" means it is not allowable during the period.
- Do not copy and paste descriptions. This guide is meant to help schools determine whether a type of cost is allowable.
- Finally, if an item or service is not listed in this document, contact the NC ACCESS Program team to get help determining if a cost is allowable within the program.

Remember:

- All proposed budget line items must be reasonable, necessary, allowable, and allocable.
- Budget requests must align with state and federal laws and guidance.
- Subrecipients may be required to provide additional documents to the NC ACCESS Program team at any time.
- Regardless of threshold, equipment and computer hardware must be accountable and reported to the NC ACCESS Program team via required Inventory Reports.



Salaries			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Essential Staff Salaries Amount paid to employees of the school essential during pre-opening period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost allowable ONLY prior to school opening date. Include what the charter school's plan to include these staff in the budget is beyond the life of the grant. How will capacity be built through this staff member so that the staff member can either be sustained or will no longer be needed beyond the life of the grant? 	Yes	No
Employer Provided Benefits			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Essential Staff Fringe Benefits Amount paid to employees of the school essential during preopening period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost allowable ONLY prior to school opening date. Include what the charter school's plan to include these staff in the budget is beyond the life of the grant. How will capacity be built through this staff member so that the staff member can either be sustained or will no longer be needed beyond the life of the grant? 	Yes	No
Professional Fees and Contracted Services			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Professional and Technical Services Consulting costs for services related to start-up expenses and organization development. EXAMPLES: Legal costs for lease and charter contract negotiations, bylaws, policies; Consulting fees to develop organization policies and business plan, accounting/auditing professional to develop internal controls, accounting systems, and the development of auditable financial processes/financial reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of services/deliverables and/or expectation of outcomes. Cost allowable one-time ONLY during Planning OR Implementation (not allowable in both phases). 	Yes/No (see notes)	Yes/No (see notes)
Technology Installation Costs associated with the installation of instructional networks and hardware. EXAMPLES: Installation of classroom interactive systems, wiring computer lab, installation and wiring of school-wide wireless network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of services/deliverables, including cost breakdown. Capital improvements are not allowable. 	Yes	Yes
Audit Services First year audit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost allowable one-time ONLY during Implementation. Expense occurs at the end of the first school year. Recommended for Year-2 budget. 	No	Yes

Professional Fees and Contracted Services (cont.)			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Instructional Staff Training Training for instructional staff designed to contribute to their professional or occupational growth and competence. EXAMPLES: In-service training, professional development, conferences, workshops, demonstrations, school visits to other charter schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of services/deliverables and/or expectation of outcomes for training. • Must include dates and duration, number of staff to receive training. • Additional justification may be requested for out- of-state travel, extraordinary costs. • Travel costs must comply with the applicable fiscal year per diem rates for North Carolina as outlined by the US General Services Administration. 	Yes	Yes
Instruction and Curriculum Development Services which are designed to aid in developing curriculum and understanding techniques for instruction. EXAMPLES: Consulting fees to develop program goals and objectives, assessment tools, curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of services/deliverables and/or expectation of outcomes. 	Yes	Yes
Instructional Support Stipend for providing student tutoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost allowable ONLY before school, after school, and/or on weekends • Cost may not exceed \$25.00 per hour 	No	Yes
Outreach and Recruitment Services to educate the community about the charter school mission, program, contacts, registration process, lottery, performance outcomes and to recruit leadership, instructional and professional personnel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must provide outreach plan. • Consultant (outreach professional, web designer, etc.) costs must be accompanied by documentation including scope of services/deliverables or expectation of outcomes. 	Yes	Yes
Dues and Fees Association Fees School Association fees or dues for membership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First year annual fees/dues ONLY; renewal dues are not allowable. 	No	Yes
Supplies and Materials			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Classroom-level Consumable Supplies Student workbooks, testing instruments, expendable items which are consumed as they are used. May include items with a reasonable life expectancy of less than a year. EXAMPLES: Workbooks, testing materials, paper, pencils, toner. Student headphones, non-scientific/basic calculators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be grouped into single line item with attached sample list. • NOTE: supplies or materials beyond reasonable start-up costs may be considered recurring expenses and may be unallowable. 	No	Yes



Textbooks & Curriculum Textbooks and curriculum can include textbook binding. EXAMPLES: Textbooks, supplemental instructional aids, curriculum packages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For packages (bundles, kits, etc.), attach example product specifications which must document quantities of items included. May include electronic media (e-books). If electronic media takes the form of annual subscription/renewable license, renewals are not allowable. May include workbooks. 	No	Yes
Supplies and Materials (cont.)			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
School Library/Media Center or Classroom Library Books Books for use in centralized school library/media center or individual classroom libraries. May be used as non-circulating reference or for student and teacher checkout. EXAMPLES: Encyclopedia sets, fiction and non-fiction books, novels, book series, book sets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May include electronic media (e-books). If electronic media takes the form of annual subscription/renewable license, renewals are not allowable. 	No	Yes
Technology and Equipment			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Instructional Computer Hardware Electronic devices capable of reading, processing and executing software programs. Includes peripherals and expansions. EXAMPLES: Laptops, desktops, tablets, servers, wireless access points, charging carts, classroom-level printers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual hardware: attach product specifications for example item. Costs may not include monthly service fees. 	No	Yes
Instructional Computer Software Instructional software/programs. May be delivered online or via tangible device (disc). Applies to purchased or rented items. EXAMPLES: Supplemental literacy programs, virtual instruction systems, tutoring programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all software, provide product specifications which describe the scope of the services to be delivered by the program. Must include duration of subscription/license (if applicable). May include electronic textbooks (ebooks). Renewals are not allowable. 	No	Yes
Instructional Equipment Non-computer hardware for instructional use. Durable goods with a reasonable life expectancy of over a year. May also include durable instructional equipment for special classes. EXAMPLES: Projectors, screens, document cameras, audio amplification, DVD players. Special classes: teaching clocks, microscopes, musical instruments, physical education equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual equipment: Attach product specifications for example item. Special Classes: Attach course listing which demonstrates specific class is part of daily curriculum. 	No	Yes



Technology and Equipment (cont.)			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Classroom Furniture Furniture and fixtures for classroom use. EXAMPLES: Desks, chairs, tables, bookshelves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual furnishings: attach product specifications for example item. 	No	Yes
Computer Lab Equipment Non-computer hardware for dedicated computer lab use. Durable goods with a reasonable life expectancy of over a year. EXAMPLES: Document cameras, projectors, audio amplification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual equipment: attach product specifications for example item. 	No	Yes
Computer Lab Software Dedicated computer lab software/programs. May be delivered online or via tangible device (disc). Applies to purchased or rented items. EXAMPLES: Computer science program, office software suite, graphics software, publishing software, internet tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all software, provide product specifications which describe the scope of the services to be delivered by the program. Must include duration of subscription/license (if applicable). Renewals are not allowable. 	No	Yes
Computer Lab Furniture Furniture and fixtures for dedicated computer lab use. EXAMPLES: Desks, chairs, tables, workstations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual furnishings: attach product specifications for example item. 	No	Yes
Administrative Computer Hardware Electronic devices capable of reading, processing and executing software programs. Includes peripherals and expansions. EXAMPLES: Front desk desktop, central printer, central copier, visitor registration hardware, inventory hardware, principal computer and printer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual hardware: attach product specifications for example item. ONE computer and ONE printer may be purchased for the principal/director use during Planning. Costs may not include monthly service fees. 	Yes	Yes
Administrative Computer Software Administrative software/programs. May be delivered online or via tangible device (disc). Applies to purchased or rented items. EXAMPLES: Inventory software, visitor registration software, office suite licenses for front desk and administrative staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all software, provide product specifications which describe the scope of the services to be delivered by the program. Must include duration of subscription/license (if applicable). Renewals are not allowable. 	Yes	Yes



Technology and Equipment (cont.)			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Administrative Furniture Front office furniture, fixtures and equipment. EXAMPLES: Desks, chairs, tables, fireproof filing cabinets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual furnishings: attach product specifications for example item. 	No	Yes
School Library/Media Center Technology Electronic devices capable of reading, processing and executing software programs. Includes peripherals and expansions. EXAMPLES: Desktops, circulation/check-out hardware.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual hardware: attach product specifications for example item. Costs may not include monthly service fees. 	No	Yes
School Library/Media Center Software Centralized library/media center software/programs. May be delivered online or via tangible device (disc). Applies to purchased or rented items. EXAMPLES: Circulation software, digital collections management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all software, provide product specifications which describe the scope of the services to be delivered by the program. Must include duration of subscription/license (if applicable). Renewals are not allowable. 	No	Yes
School Library/Media Center Equipment Non-computer hardware for centralized school library/media center use. Durable goods with a reasonable life expectancy of over a year. EXAMPLES: DVD players, listening stations, paper cutters, label makers, binding equipment, book carts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual furnishings: attach product specifications for example item. 	No	Yes
School Library/Media Center Furniture Furniture and fixtures for centralized school library/media center use. EXAMPLES: Desks, chairs, tables, bookshelves, book return, circulation desk, dictionary stands, book displays, podiums.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priced or unusual furnishings: attach product specifications for example item. 	No	Yes
Playground Structures and Equipment* EXAMPLES: Playscapes, tetherball sets, swing sets, portable basketball hoops. *NOTE: CSP Non-Regulatory Assurances must be met prior to approval of budget request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must include product specifications for example item. Equipment must be a part of daily student curriculum. Cannot be permanently affixed to the building/facilities. Ground cover, enclosures (fencing, landscape border) are not allowable. Capitalized improvements are not allowable. Costs associated with construction activities (engaging an architect, engineer, landscape architect) are not allowable. 	No	Yes



Travel, Conferences, and Meetings			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Travel Travel costs for school leaders, staff, and board to attend conferences and training. EXAMPLES: Training and professional development, site visits to other charter schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide scope of services/deliverables, and/or expectation of outcomes for training. Must include dates and duration, number of staff to receive training. Additional justification may be requested for out-of-state travel or extraordinary costs. Travel costs must comply with the applicable fiscal year per diem rates for North Carolina as outlined by the US General Services Administration. 	No	Yes
Other			
Purpose/Description/Examples	Acceptable Justification and Notes	Planning	Implementation
Communications Postage for promotional mailing at non-profit rate to promote new school program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide outreach plan. High costs must be supported with justification for quantity of mailed items. Must be fully expended during the grant period. 	Yes	Yes
Outreach and Recruitment Informational materials and intangible items to educate the community about the charter school mission, program, contacts, registration process, lottery, performance outcomes and to recruit leadership, instructional and professional personnel. EXAMPLES: Design and printing of brochures and postcards, radio spots, exterior school signage, television ads, website design, newspaper ads, outreach consultant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide outreach plan. All outreach materials must include registration information and state that the school is a tuition- free public charter school. Materials must be specific to school. NC ACCESS Program office may require pre-product proof to verify compliance. Promotional items are not allowable. School signage may not comprise a capital improvement (i.e. cannot be permanent). Materials must be fully distributed during the grant period. 	Yes	Yes
Facility Rent Mortgage, lease, or rent payment for school facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School lease must include effective dates, rent, and facility address. Cost allowable ONLY up to 3 months prior to school opening date. 	Yes	No
Insurance Insurance prepaid for up to one year. EXAMPLES: Property, officers and director's liability, commercial liability, employee liability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide effective date which is no earlier than 3 months prior to school opening date. Cost allowable one-time ONLY during Planning OR Implementation (not allowable in both phases). 	Yes/No (see notes)	Yes/No (see notes)
Miscellaneous General Administration Indirect Costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any school requesting indirect costs must have an approved documentation on-file with the NC ACCESS Program office. NC ACCESS Program office will verify percentage. 	Yes	Yes

Category	Unallowable Costs within the CSP Grant and Other Conditions Impacting Allowability
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field trips Extracurricular activities, programs, etc. Athletic (team/afterschool) equipment
Apparel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student or staff uniforms Athletic & extracurricular uniforms and costumes
Capital Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addition of permanent structural improvement or restoration of some aspect of a property that will either enhance the property's overall value or increase its useful life
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of new facility Construction on existing facility Building renovations, refurbishments, and restoration Activities for which an architect and/or engineer must be utilized
Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning supplies Cafeteria/food service supplies
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food or beverages Equipment and supplies used exclusively for the service of food/beverages (cafeteria equipment)
Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gift certificates Food Alcoholic beverages Awards and gifts
Lobbying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobbying or related expenses
Promotional items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotional materials (often imprinted), such as pencils, pens, balloons and notepads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROMOTIONAL ITEMS ARE NOT ALLOWABLE UNDER ANY CATEGORY, INCLUDING OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT
Professional Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting, auditing and legal fees not related to organizational start-up and planning
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placement fees (employment advertising is allowable)
Recurring Expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent/leases on or after first day of school Operating expenses and utilities, equipment leases, monthly and annual contracts Recurrent/repeated professional development and training Software license renewals Fees such as monthly insurance and payroll services, management company fees, service contracts, trash disposal, gas/electric/phone/water/utilities, cell phones, etc.
Renovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural (roofing, wall repair, electrical wiring/rewiring) Room additions or fixed partitions Security (fences, alarms, cameras) Painting Carpeting Landscaping
Salaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No salaries or related fringe benefits after the school opens
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student membership fees Student conferences
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No electrical installation or modification to room dividers or existing walls, floors, ceilings, or structural elements. Installation of computer network cabling is only allowable when not already present and may not comprise a capital improvement to the property
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel costs must comply with the applicable fiscal year per diem rates for North Carolina as outlined by the US General Services Administration.