



Office of Exceptional Children

Exceptional Children Competitive Grant

Federal Funds: State-Level Targeted Assistance
2025-2026 School Year

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Competitive Grant Application Timeline

Important Dates¹

Grant Application Opens	Monday, October 13, 2025
OEC Office Hours: Grant Information Session	Friday, October 10, 2025 ~ 10:00 am
Grant Application Closes	Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ 5:00 pm
Grants Awarded	Friday, January 16, 2025

Technical Assistance

All technical assistance requests regarding the application process should be directed to the assigned IDEA Consultant: Regional Administrative Support.

- Amy Betz Amy.Betz@dpi.nc.gov
- Kelly Doppke Kelly.Doppke@dpi.nc.gov
- Dr. Alysha Gray Alysha.Gray@dpi.nc.gov
- Dr. Eleanor Patrick Eleanor.Patrick@dpi.nc.gov
- Tracee McManus Tracee.McManus@dpi.nc.gov
- Tracie Ross Tracie.Ross@dpi.nc.gov
- Traci Royal Traci.Royal@dpi.nc.gov is my cell
- Dr. Pam Watkins Pam.Watkins@dpi.nc.gov

Authoritative Source: Permissive Use of Funds

States may reserve a portion of their Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) federal grant allocation for other State-level activities. Funds reserved under this section may be used to carry out the following activities:

- For support and direct services, including technical assistance, personnel preparation, and professional development and training.
- To assist local education agencies (LEA) in providing positive behavioral interventions and supports and mental health services for children with disabilities.

¹ Initial application window. This document will be updated with the appropriate dates each time the grant cycle is opened.

- To support the use of technology, including technology with universal design principles and assistive technology devices, to maximize accessibility to the general education curriculum for children with disabilities.
- Development and implementation of transition programs, including coordination of services with agencies involved in supporting the transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary activities.
- To assist LEAs in meeting personnel shortages.
- To support capacity building activities and improve the delivery of services by LEAs to improve results for children with disabilities.
- Alternative programming for children with disabilities who have been expelled from school, and services for children with disabilities in correctional facilities, children enrolled in State-operated or State-supported schools, and children with disabilities in charter schools. ([34 CFR 300.704](#) State-level activities - excerpts)

Purpose of the Exceptional Children (EC) Competitive Grant

The Office of Exceptional Children (OEC) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) have prioritized improving outcomes for students with disabilities. While public school units (PSU) receive federal and state dollars according to a formula that includes average daily membership, the poverty index, and the number of students with disabilities on the December Child Count annually, other funding sources are often needed to make the critical difference in scaling up high leverage practices focused on academics and behavior.

The EC Competitive Grant Program is intended to provide an acute, time-limited, fiscal investment to support the recruitment and retention of EC personnel or improve instructional practices through activities such as professional learning, securing specialized materials and supplies, increasing accessibility to instructional environments, alternative learning programs, and/or fiscal incentives for licensed EC professionals.

Grant Cycle

The ability to accept and award applications is contingent upon the following:

- The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) budget reserved for state-level activities must be able to accommodate an award cycle.

- It has been determined that unexpended federal funds have an adequate period of performance to accommodate a cycle to include the appropriate encumbrance and liquidation timeline necessary for the effective use at the PSU-level.

If these conditions are met, a grant cycle will be initiated to include a 30 calendar day for each of the following:

- application submission timeline
- application review period
- window for awarding and allocating the funds to grant recipients

Application Requirements

Applications must be submitted through this Google form ([EC Competitive Grant Application](#)). Applicants should complete all sections of the grant prior to submission using the application template in the appendix to ensure all information can be transferred into the live application during one session.

The grant application includes the following required components.

Applicant Contact Information

1. Name of Public School Unit (PSU) and PSU Number
2. Name and email address of:
 - Primary Point of Contact for this Application
 - Superintendent/Head of School
 - Chief Academic Officer
 - Exceptional Children (EC) Administrator
 - Finance Officer

PSU Demographics

1. Total number of schools in PSU
 - Number of schools identified as TSI/CSI
 - Number of schools identified as Low-Performing
 - Number of schools identified as Continually Low-Performing
2. What was the most recent PSU Exceptional Children Determination?
 - Meets Requirements
 - Needs Assistance
 - Needs Intervention
 - Needs Substantial Intervention
3. Select the targeted funds being requested (select one)
 - PRC 118 (School Age: K-12+)
 - PRC 119 (Preschool: Ages 3-5)

Primary Focus of Grant Application² (select one)

- Alternative Programming
- Assistive Technology Devices/Support
- Improve EC Service Delivery
- Instructional Materials
- Positive Behavior Support for Students with Disabilities
- Professional Learning for Administrators
- Professional Learning for Instructional and/or Support Staff
- Recruitment and Retention of EC Personnel
- Transition Programs

Baseline and Evaluation Data

- Describe the data used to determine the primary focus of the grant application.
- Provide the baseline student outcome data to be used to measure the use of funds before the funds are awarded, during the use of funds, and after the funds have been expended.

Grant Application Narrative

1. State specifically how the awarded funds will be used. Responses should include a plan with activities, targeted audience, timeline for implementation, expected and measurable outcomes to be achieved, and the evaluation method for the activity identified.

Itemized Budget

1. Include a narrative that identifies the projected expenses using the chart of accounts allowable for the use of federal funds.

Assurances

2. The PSU acknowledges the following and will provide the signatures of the PSU Superintendent/School Director, PSU Chief Academic Officer, PSU EC Administrator, and PSU Finance Officer.
 - It is understood that this grant is supported by federal dollars, and if awarded it is the PSU's responsibility to maintain fiscal effort with state and local funds as defined by the IDEA.
 - If federal funds are awarded to this grant application, we understand that these funds must be used for students with disabilities.
 - Competitive grants are acute, time-limited, fiscal investments intended to make a critical difference in the PSU's implementation of strategic

² Each primary focus listed correlates to the appropriate use of funds. See the section "Authoritative Source: Permissive Use of Funds" for additional information in order to select the focus that best represents the application.

planning to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. As such, this funding is not guaranteed annually.

Selection Criteria for Awards

The following rubric will be used to evaluate the grant application. Applications will be weighted on selected PSU Demographics in addition to the content provided for the substantive required components.

OEC Competitive Grant Rubric				
Required Components	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
PSU Demographics				
Percentage TSI/CSI Schools	1%-20%	21%-30%	31%-50%	51%-100%
Percentage Low-Performing Schools	1%-20%	21%-30%	31%-50%	51%-100%
Percentage Continually Low-Performing Schools	1%-20%	21%-30%	31%-50%	51%-100%
PSU EC Determination	Meets Requirements	Needs Assistance	Needs Intervention	Needs Substantial Intervention
Baseline and Evaluation Data				
Baseline Data	<i>Incomplete with no connections to the primary focus.</i>	<i>Present with weak connections to the primary focus.</i>	<i>Present with strong connections to the primary focus.</i>	<i>Present with explicit connections to the primary focus.</i>
Student Outcome Data	<i>Incomplete with no connections to student outcomes.</i>	<i>Present with weak connections to student outcomes.</i>	<i>Present with strong connections to student outcomes.</i>	<i>Present with explicit connections to student outcomes.</i>
Grant Application Narrative				
Action Plan	No activities connect to expected outcomes or can be measured.	Few activities are connected to expected outcomes and can be measured.	Most activities are connected to expected outcomes and can be measured.	All activities are connected to expected outcomes and can be measured.

Itemized Budget Narrative				
Projected Expenses	Projected expenses are not allowable for use with federal funds.	Few projected expenses align with action plan.	Most expenses are directly aligned with action plan.	All expenses are directly aligned with action plan.
Assurances				
Signatures	Incomplete	N/A	N/A	All required signatures were provided.

Selection Process

Using the NC State Board of Education Policy Manual for Contracts and Grants ([CNTR-001](#)), the OEC has established a Selection Process to ensure that grant applications have been evaluated fairly and on merit without bias or favoritism and that all selection criteria have been followed.

Level 1 Evaluation

The OEC will appoint a review team of at least 3 persons familiar with programs available for exceptional children. Individuals identified for technical assistance regarding the competitive grant process will be excluded from the review team.

The review team will independently, and without the Applicant Contact Information, score each application using the Selection Criteria for Awards. Then, the review team will convene as a group to come to consensus on the final rating and provide to the Senior Director of the OEC.

Level 2 Evaluation

Using the information from the review team, the OEC Senior Director and two OEC Assistant Directors (OEC Leadership Team) will determine the final applications to award. Should approved applications exceed the budgeted amount for the grant cycle, the OEC Leadership Team reserves the right to:

1. Prioritize funded PSUs on the basis of their PSU Demographics (i.e., TSI/CSI status, Low-Performing status, and/or EC PSU Determination), or
2. Utilize the PSUs' EC Child Count to disperse the total budgeted grant funds across selected PSUs.

Award Notification

PSUs who meet the selection criteria will be awarded to the extent the current budget for the grant cycle has funds available and upon approval by the NC State Board of Education.

The Award Notification to selected PSUs will include the total amount of funds, the primary focus identified in the grant application, the period of performance for the federal funds provided and the program reporting code (PRC) by which the funds will be distributed (PRC 118 or PRC 119). A template to support the awarded PSU with the completion of the reporting requirements will be included and is available for reference in the Appendix of this document.

Notifications will be issued by formal letter via electronic mail from the OEC concurrently to the individuals providing the assurances on the application and the primary point of contact identified, if different.

Awarded PSU Reporting Requirements

If awarded and at the conclusion of the funded activities, the PSU is required to provide a final report that includes expenditures and measurable outcomes achieved in comparison to the baseline data provided in the grant application. The final report shall also include the PSU's plan for maintaining the progress achieved and any continuous improvement activities identified as next steps. A template to support the awarded PSU with reporting requirements is available for reference in the Appendix of this document and must be submitted to the OEC using this Google form ([EC Competitive Grant: PSU Final Report](#)).

APPENDIX

Template: EC Competitive Grant Application

As a reminder, this template may be used to prepare for the official submission of the grant application completed using the online [Google Form](#).

Applicant Contact Information

1. Name of Public School Unit (PSU)
2. PSU Number
3. Name: Primary Point of Contact for this Application
4. Email Address: Primary Point of Contact for this Application
5. Name: Superintendent/Head of School
6. Email: Superintendent/Head of School
7. Name: Chief Academic Officer
8. Email: Chief Academic Officer
9. Name: Exceptional Children (EC) Administrator
10. Email: Exceptional Children (EC) Administrator
11. Name: Finance Officer
12. Email: Finance Officer

PSU Demographics

13. Total number of schools in PSU
14. Number of schools identified as TSI/CSI
15. Number of schools identified as Low-Performing
16. Number of schools identified as Continually Low-Performing
17. What was the most recent PSU Exceptional Children Determination?
 - ☐ Meets Requirements
 - ☐ Needs Assistance
 - ☐ Needs Intervention
 - ☐ Needs Substantial Intervention
18. Select the targeted funds being requested (select one)
 - ☐ PRC 118 (School Age: K-12+)
 - ☐ PRC 119 (Preschool: Ages 3-5)

Primary Focus of Grant Application³ (select one)

- ☐ Alternative Programming
- ☐ Assistive Technology Devices/Support
- ☐ Improve EC Service Delivery
- ☐ Instructional Materials
- ☐ Positive Behavior Support for Students with Disabilities
- ☐ Professional Learning for Administrators
- ☐ Professional Learning for Instructional and/or Support Staff
- ☐ Recruitment and Retention of EC Personnel
- ☐ Transition Programs

Baseline and Evaluation Data

19. Describe the data used to determine the primary focus of the grant application.
20. Provide the baseline student outcome data to be used to measure the use of funds before the funds are awarded, during the use of funds, and after the funds have been expended.

Grant Application Narrative

21. State specifically how the awarded funds will be used. Responses should include a plan with activities, targeted audience, timeline for implementation, expected and measurable outcomes to be achieved, and the evaluation method for the activity identified.

Itemized Budget

³ Each primary focus listed correlates to the appropriate use of funds. See the section “Authoritative Source: Permissive Use of Funds” for additional information in order to select the focus that best represents the application.

22. Include a narrative that identifies the projected expenses using the chart of accounts allowable for the use of federal funds.

Assurances

23. The PSU acknowledges the following and will provide the signatures of the PSU Superintendent/School Director, PSU Chief Academic Officer, PSU EC Administrator, and PSU Finance Officer.
- It is understood that this grant is supported by federal dollars, and if awarded it is the PSU's responsibility to maintain fiscal effort with state and local funds as defined by the IDEA.
 - If federal funds are awarded to this grant application, we understand that these funds must be used for students with disabilities.

Signatures

Date

PSU Superintendent/School Director

PSU Chief Academic Officer

PSU EC Administrator

PSU Finance Officer

Template: PSU Final Report – EC Competitive Grant Award

Please see the template below for preparing responses to be submitted through this Google Form ([EC Competitive Grant: PSU Final Report](#)).

1. Name of Public School Unit (PSU)
2. PSU Number
3. Name: Primary Point of Contact for the Final Report
4. Email Address: Primary Point of Contact for the Final Report
5. Total Expenditures (itemized according to budget)
6. Measurable Outcomes Achieved (in comparison with baseline data used in the grant application)
7. PSU Plan for Maintaining Progress Achieved
8. Next Steps: Continuous Improvement Activities