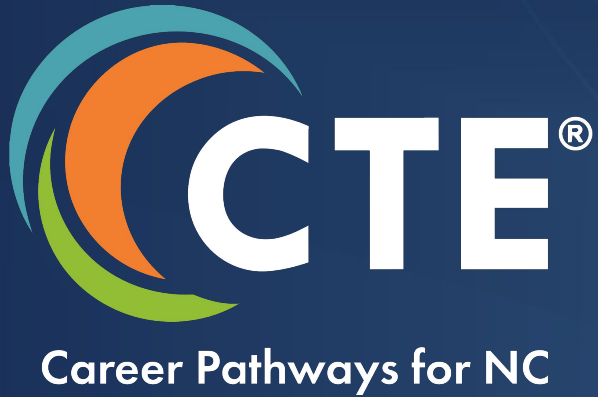




Education and Workforce Innovation Commission

2026-27 Grade Expansion Grantee Recommendations

Dr. Stacey Wilson-Norman, Chief Academic Officer, Academics Division

Trey Michael, Senior Director, Office of Career & Technical Education

Jacqueline Wyatt, Career Readiness Specialist, Office of Career & Technical Education

August 2026

ACHIEVING EDUCATIONAL **EXCELLENCE**



**Prepare Each Student
for Their Next Phase
in Life**

“ **Preparing students
for their next phase in
life begins by **expanding
access** to **high-quality
career-connected learning
opportunities.**** ”

Focus Area 3 | Promote Excellence for All



ACTION 1

Support PSUs in expanding access to rigorous pathways, such as AP, International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International, Career and College Promise (CCP), credentialed Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC), to ensure every student takes and passes a college level and career-connected course .

Education and Workforce Innovation Commission

Name	Title	Appointing or Designating Office
Dr. Annie Izod <i>(Designee for Lee Lilley)</i>	<i>Executive Director of the NC Works Commission</i>	The North Carolina Secretary of Commerce, Lee Lilley, or Designee
Kathie Sidner <i>(Designee for Peter Hans)</i>	<i>Director for Workforce and Partnerships</i>	The President of the University of North Carolina, Peter Hans, or Designee
Vacant	<i>The President of the North Carolina Community College System</i>	The President of the North Carolina Community College System, Dr. Jeffrey A. Cox, or Designee
Rupen R. Fofaria <i>(Designee for Eric Davis)</i>	<i>Director, Board Operations and Policy</i>	The Chair of the NC State Board of Education, Eric C. Davis, or Designee
Angela LeMay <i>(Designee for Mo Green)</i>	<i>Assistant Director, Office of Career and Technical Education, NC Department of Public Instruction</i>	The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Maurice Green, or Designee

Education and Workforce Innovation Commission

Appointed by The Office of the Governor

Dr. DeSandra Washington

*Vice President for Academic Support
Services and Civic Engagement,
Fayetteville Technical Community College*

Tamika Kelly

*President,
North Carolina Association of Educators*

Dr. Jairo McMican

*Associate Director of Equitable Programming
and Holistic Student Support,
Achieving the Dream*

Appointed by The Speaker of the NC House of Representatives

Richard L. Purcell

*Associate Director,
University Instructors*

Paul F. Worley

*VP of Workforce Development and
Chief Operations Officer*

Rachelle "Shelley" R. Wolford

*Chief People Officer,
Golden Corral Corporation*

Appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the NC Senate

Stephen Griffin

President, Insurance Peoples of NC

Randall "Randy" Burns

*Senior Executive Director for Campus Centers,
Catawba Valley Community College*

Satish Garimella

Council Member, Town of Morrisville

Commission Responsibilities

§ 115C-64.17

1

Operating Independently Within NCDPI

- Administratively housed in the Department of Public Instruction
- Exercises its statutory responsibilities independently

2

Administering the Education and Workforce Innovation Programs

- Oversees the Education and Workforce Innovation Grant Program
- Oversees the CTE Grade Expansion Grant Program



Career and Technical Education Grade Expansion Grant Program

§ 115C-64.17



Expand Access

Extend CTE opportunities to students in grades 6–7.



Invest in People

Fund licensed CTE educators, career development coordinators, and support personnel.



Strengthen Career Readiness

Build early awareness of career pathways and prepare students for future success.

Grant Evaluation Criteria

§ 115C-64.17



Program Expansion Plan

A clear plan to expand CTE opportunities for sixth and seventh grade students and strengthen local career pathways.



Budget & Funding Plan

A detailed funding request, use of grant funds, and identification of other available funding sources.



Staffing & Sustainability

A seven-year staffing and budget plan supporting personnel, career development, and program expansion.



Program Outcomes

A strategy for measuring and evaluating the impact of the grant on student outcomes.

Grant Funding Process

State law requires returning grantees to be prioritized **before** new applicants are considered.

STEP
1

Fund Returning Grantees

Applicants that received Grade Expansion Grant funding in the prior fiscal year are considered **first** in the application process.

STEP
2

Consider New Applicants

If funding remains **after** returning grantees are funded, the Commission may award grants to new applicants.

Grade Expansion Grant Parameters



Maximum Award

UP TO
\$65,000
PER GRANTEE

Grant Cycle

1-year award
(2026-2027)

Grade Expansion Grant Application & Scoring Process



Applications were evaluated through a consistent, transparent review process established by the Education and Workforce Innovation Commission.



Grant Application Results

Applications were reviewed and recommendations were developed in accordance with **statute and Commission action**.

Recommending 25 returning grantees also allowed the Commission to award **additional** Education and Workforce Innovation Grants.



57 Applications Submitted

Competitive applications received for the 2026–2027 grant cycle.



Priority Given to Returning Grantees

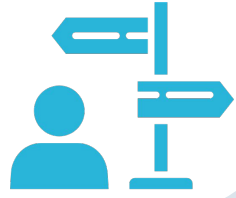
State law requires returning grantees to be considered before new applicants.



25 Returning Grantees Recommended

The Commission recommended the top-scoring returning grantees for State Board approval.

Career Exploration in Action



Carteret County Public Schools Steer Your Career Fair



Electric Utilities



Marine Patrol



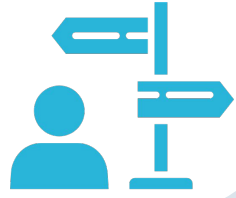
Fire & EMS



Health Care

Fifth grade students participated in the **Steer Your Career Fair** at **Carteret Community College**, where they explored career opportunities in Carteret County, connected with local professionals, and **experienced the vehicles and equipment used in a variety of careers.**

Career Exploration in Action



Alexander County Schools Grades 6–7 Career Days



General Contractors



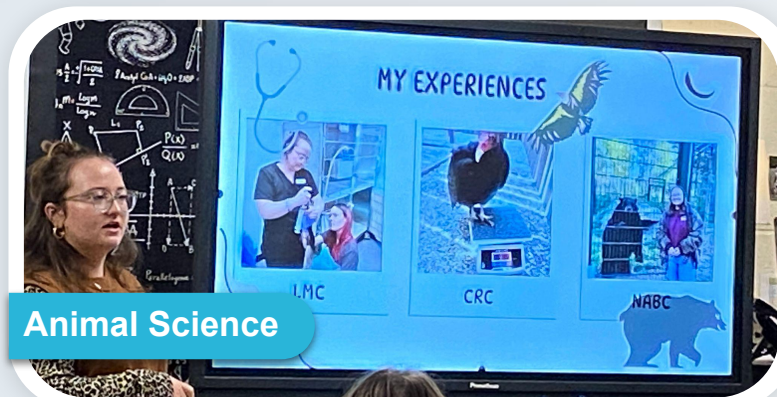
Law Enforcement



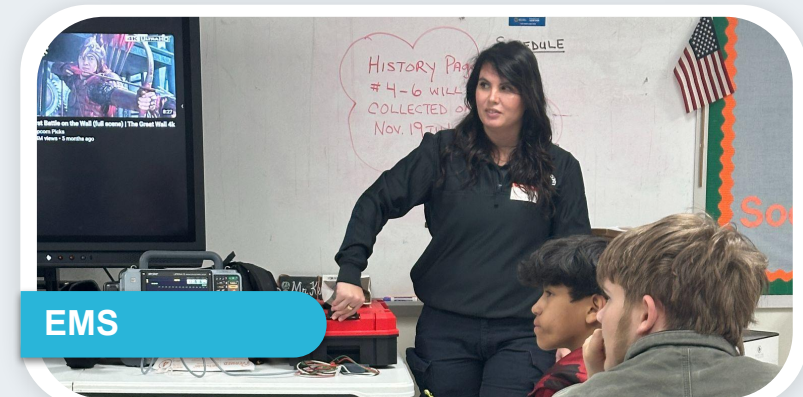
Fire & Rescue



Health Services



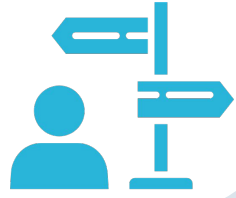
Animal Science



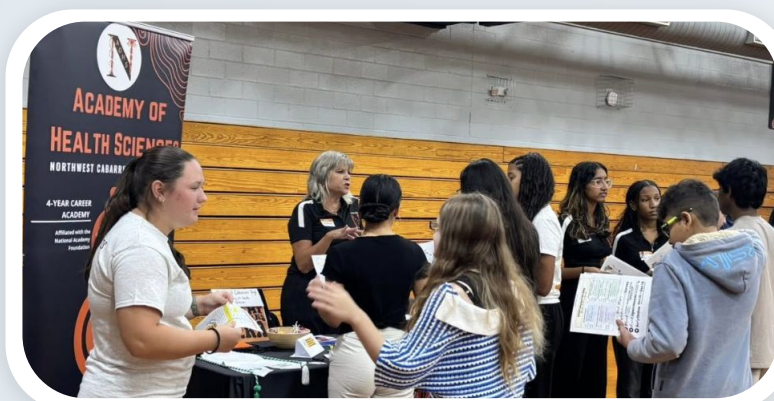
EMS

Alexander County Schools connected sixth and seventh grade students with local professionals through Career Days, providing hands-on experiences that expanded career awareness and inspired future opportunities.

Career Exploration in Action



Cabarrus County Schools Choice Program Middle School Roadshow



The **Middle School Roadshow** introduces students to **Cabarrus County Schools' high school options** and **Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities**. School staff and student representatives share program information, answer questions, and help students prepare for

Key Funding Considerations



Statutory Priority

State law requires funding priority for returning Grade Expansion Grant recipients.



Innovation Grant Opportunity

Applicants not funded through the Grade Expansion Grant remained eligible for the Innovation Grant.



Expanded Impact

Funding the top 25 returning grantees allowed **22 Innovation Grants** to be awarded—**double** last year's awards.



Needs-Based Awards

Applicants requested only the funding needed to implement their proposed programs, up to the maximum allowable award.

2026-27 Grade Expansion Grant

Recommendations for SBE Approval

Between the two EWIC grants, **all eight** State Board regions are represented.

PSU or School Name	Amount Requested	State Board Region
Alexander County Schools	\$65,000	Northwest – District 7
Alleghany County Schools	\$65,000	Northwest – District 7
Brunswick County Schools	\$65,000	Southeast – District 2
Cabarrus County Schools	\$65,000	Southwest – District 6
Carteret County Public Schools	\$65,000	Southeast – District 2
Cumberland County Schools	\$65,000	Sandhills – District 4
Elkin City Schools	\$65,000	Piedmont-Triad – District 5
Franklin County Schools	\$65,000	North Central – District 3
Hickory City Schools	\$65,000	Northwest – District 7
Hyde County Schools	\$65,000	Northeast – District 1
Johnston County Public School	\$65,000	North Central – District 3
Lenoir County Public Schools	\$65,000	Southeast – District 2
Martin County Schools	\$65,000	Northeast – District 1
McDowell County Schools	\$65,000	Northwest – District 7
Mount Airy City Schools	\$65,000	Piedmont-Triad – District 5
Mountain Island Charter School	\$65,000	Southwest – District 6
North East Carolina Preparatory School	\$65,000	North Central – District 3
Pender County Schools	\$65,000	Southeast – District 2
Public Schools of Robeson County	\$65,000	Sandhills – District 4
Randolph County School System	\$65,000	Piedmont-Triad – District 5
Roanoke Rapids Graded School District	\$65,000	Northeast – District 1
Rockingham County Schools	\$65,000	Piedmont-Triad – District 5
Sampson County Schools	\$65,000	Sandhills – District 4
Surry County Schools	\$65,000	Piedmont-Triad – District 5
Wilkes County Schools	\$65,000	Northwest – District 7

2026-27 Innovation Grant Recipients

PSU or School Name	Amount Requested	Applicant Type
Alexander Central High School	\$70,000.00	Individual School
Alleghany County Schools	\$33,300.00	District
Asheboro City Schools	\$60,000.00	District
Bethany Community School	\$70,000.00	Individual School
Cabarrus County Schools	\$70,000.00	District
Caldwell County Schools	\$70,000.00	District
Cumberland Schools	\$70,000.00	District
Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington	\$70,000.00	District
Halifax County Schools	\$70,000.00	District
Henderson County Public Schools	\$60,000.00	District
Hyde County Schools	\$70,000.00	Regional Partnership with School District(s)
McDowell County Schools	\$70,000.00	Individual School
Mount Airy City Schools	\$39,409.20	District
Mountain Island Charter School	\$70,000.00	Individual School
New Dimensions: A Public Charter School	\$60,375.00	Individual School
Public Schools of Robeson County	\$70,000.00	Individual School
Revolution Academy	\$70,000.00	Individual School
Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy	\$58,198.00	Individual School
Tyrrell County Schools	\$70,000.00	Regional Partnership with School District(s)
Uwharrie Charter Academy	\$70,000.00	District
Washington County Schools	\$70,000.00	Regional Partnership with School District(s)
Wilkes Central High School	\$70,000.00	Individual School

Questions?

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